Hello, Harford County!

Fall is a time for winding down. The season is coming to a final close as we harvest the last of the crops. Outdoor recreation is coming to a close—whether we like it or not!—as our daylight hours get fewer and fewer. And with the first few frosts now behind us, weeds are winding down, too.

If you are concerned with pasture or hayfield management like I am, you will have noticed that some of the peskiest weeds have disappeared. Crabgrass is one that stands out in my mind, especially because of the large bare patches it has recently left behind. Unless you’ve been extremely diligent with your mowing regimen this season and also very lucky, that crabgrass sowed at least a few seeds in your soil and will reappear as soon as environmental conditions are right in the spring.

Why be concerned with crabgrass? After all, it’s not toxic. It’s palatable, and it can actually be very highly nutritious. It can also be relatively high yielding. However, those bare patches that crabgrass leaves after one or two fall frosts will provide the perfect opportunity for more weeds to encroach in the spring. A vigorous established stand can prevent weeds from taking hold, but a bare spot provides a clear view to the sun and gives new weeds an opportunity to take hold. Crabgrass is one of the worst weeds in my mind because it opens the door for more and more weeds to start growing.

But don’t despair! There are some actions you can take now to work toward a more weed-free pasture in 2014. First and foremost, that includes dealing with those bare spots before spring. Plan to overseed your affected fields in late winter so that there is grass seed in the soil to compete with the weed seed that is also there. The freeze-thaw cycle and adequate rainfall during this time period helps seed get into the ground without requiring the use of a seed drill. You can either broadcast over the entire field or simply scatter some seed in the bare patches.

You can also turn animals out into the newly seeded field as the action of trodding hooves helps to increase seed to soil contact. If you choose to do this, however, remember to keep animals off of pastures when the ground is saturated. In muddy situations, hooves can do more damage than good. It’s also important to remove animals from the pasture as soon as the new grass germinates and to keep them off the pasture until it becomes well-established. If animals are allowed to graze new plants before they develop a strong root system, the delicate plants will die and your hard work will be for naught.

You can overseed either with your cool season pasture species of choice or a small grain like oats. If you winter seed with an annual small grain, you may also need to seed in late summer with a perennial forage species, but you will get bare spot protection earlier in the season. Oats will germinate when the soil is about 40 degrees F, but Tall Fescue won’t appear until soil temperature reaches about 60 degrees F. Earlier shading of bare spots can make a big difference in terms of weed encroachment.

Consider the season of frost as nature’s gift to the crabgrass warrior. The control has been taken care of for you, saving you the expense and labor of controlling it yourself. Take this opportunity to give desired species the competitive edge and give yourself a head start on controlling pasture weeds in 2014.

Sincerely,

The Harford County Extension Office will be closed on November 11 in observance of Veteran’s Day and on November 28 & 29 in observance of Thanksgiving.
University of Maryland Extension will conduct a class called “Managing for Today and Tomorrow” during the winter of 2014 at four sites in Maryland and Delaware, including Harford County. Managing for Today and Tomorrow, an Annie’s Project class, is a program designed to help women become involved in the journey of transitioning the farm legacy. Special focus will be placed on the woman’s role in transition planning, which is the process of creating and implementing an overall strategy to move the farm business from one generation to the next. Topics for the session cover succession planning, estate planning, retirement planning, and business planning. Participants do not need to have completed Annie’s Project to enroll in this class; new students are welcome! The Harford County course will be six Thursday evening sessions and will be held at Harford Community College in Bel Air, MD. Class will run from 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Thursday evenings, January 16 through February 27, 2014; no class will be held on February 6. The cost of the entire course, including meals and materials, is $60. Registration will be on a first-come, first-served basis as limited space is available. For more details and to register, visit www.extension.umd.edu/annies-project or www.2014anniesmtt.eventbrite.com. Specific details regarding the Harford County class syllabus will be available in December.

**Acidified Foods Training Workshop**

Canning salsa, pickles, and other acidified foods for sale requires special training. Hosted by the University of Maryland’s Department of Nutrition and Food Science, the “Understanding Acidified Foods” Workshop is designed to teach the basics of food safety requirements and regulations in the manufacture of acidified foods in Maryland. Whether you have a business you wish to expand or are just in the planning stages, this workshop will be helpful to you! Registration is $200 per person and must be received by November 12. To obtain a registration form, for questions, or for more information, please contact Mary Pandian at 301-405-4521 or mpandian@umd.edu.

**Marketing 101 Resources Available Online**

Are you considering branching out into a new market? Planning to offer new or different products or services? Want to reach a different customer base? If so, check out our Marketing 101 resources available online at extension.umd.edu/agmarketing/marketing-101.
Keeping Horses on a Budget

Horses are expensive, but you can cut your horse keeping costs by employing the right attitude and strategies! Learn how to critically examine your finances in order to determine where and how you can save money in caring for your horses. A variety of tips for saving will also be discussed. This session will be geared toward adults and older youth, but younger horse lovers are welcome to attend with a parent or guardian. Registration is $5 per person and includes printed materials and refreshments. Space is limited, so advanced registration is requested by December 3.

Horse Care 101 for New and Prospective Owners

Are you an equine novice considering buying your first horse? Make sure you’re educated before you take on ownership! This seminar will address required care, what to expect in terms of cost, and how to find the perfect horse for you. This session will be geared toward older adults and youth, but younger horse lovers may attend with a parent or guardian. Registration is $5 per person and includes refreshments and a folder of printed resources. Advanced registration is required by November 18 as space is limited. To register, call 410-638-3255 or send an e-mail to sbh@umd.edu with your name and phone number.

2013 Lambing and Kidding School

The school will include separate, concurrent educational tracts for youth and adult participants. The school is intended for beginning producers as well as experienced ones. The youth program is suggested for youth ages 12 and above. The main speaker will be Dr. Mara Mullinix. Dr. Mullinix has a mixed veterinary practice in Monrovia, Maryland. She has considerable experience working with small ruminants and is the consulting vet for the Western Maryland Pasture-Based Meat Goat Performance Test. The cost of attending the Lambing & Kidding School is $40 per person; $25 per youth (age 18 and under). Checks made payable to the University of Maryland should be mailed to Lambing & Kidding School, Western Maryland Research & Education Center, 18330 Keedysville Road, Keedysville, MD 21756. It is also possible to pre-register and pay online at 13LKschool.eventbrite.com. The deadline for pre-registration is Friday, November 22. Conference proceedings will be provided via a flash drive. There will also be a live internet connection so that participants can use their laptops or tablet computers to access program materials during the school. A notebook containing the conference proceedings may be pre-ordered for an additional $10. For more information, check out www.sheepandgoat.com/programs/13LKSchool.html.

December 7, 2013
8:30 a.m.—5:00 p.m.
Western MD Education Center
Keedysville, MD

December 5, 2013
6:00 p.m.—8:00 p.m.
Harford County Extension Office
Forest Hill, MD

November 20, 2013
6:00 p.m.—8:00 p.m.
Harford County Extension Office
Forest Hill, MD

Horses are expensive, but you can cut your horse keeping costs by employing the right attitude and strategies! Learn how to critically examine your finances in order to determine where and how you can save money in caring for your horses. A variety of tips for saving will also be discussed. This session will be geared toward adults and older youth, but younger horse lovers are welcome to attend with a parent or guardian. Registration is $5 per person and includes printed materials and refreshments. Space is limited, so advanced registration is requested by December 3.
Many farm and ranch operations are family owned and operated and include workers of all ages. As a result, older adults are more prevalent in production agriculture than in other occupations. Between 2002 and 2007, the average age of farm operators increased from 55.3 to 57.1, and the number of farm operators over the age of 75 increased by 20% (2007 Census of Agriculture). Senior farmers and ranchers can offer valuable insight and wisdom gained from their years of work experience. It is important to keep communication channels open with senior workers, provide necessary worksite accommodations, and implement changes to keep them safe.

According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), when it comes to work-related injuries, older workers are at a disadvantage compared to their younger counterparts because older workers are more susceptible to injuries and typically have a longer recuperation period (NIOSH, 2009). In an article in the October 2005 *Monthly Labor Review*, Samuel Meyer notes that in the period between 1995 and 2005, a farmer over the age of 55 was over 10 times more likely to be involved in a fatal-injury incident involving tractors, equipment, or animals. Senior farmers and ranchers are typically at a higher risk for work-related injuries and death due to the effects of the aging process. These effects can include: reduced reaction time, balance, and strength; changes in cognition levels; decreased visual acuity; and hearing loss.

These types of changes can affect the work that senior farmers and ranchers can safely complete. Agricultural producers and family members need to consider ways to make adjustments and modifications to better accommodate the needs of senior workers. To decrease the risk of injury, those working with senior farmers and ranchers should take the following actions:

- **Vision Testing:** Ask that senior workers have their vision tested regularly and abide by doctors’ recommendations regarding any driving restrictions.
- **Communication System:** Keep a communication system, such as cell phones or two-way radios, available to senior workers at all times.
- **Fall Prevention:** Take steps to reduce the risk of falls. Increase the level of lighting in barns, shops, and other buildings. Clear walkways, add nonslip surfaces to walkways, and add steps and handrails to stairs and elevated equipment.
- **Medication:** Encourage senior workers to consider whether prescription and over-the-counter medications could affect their ability to safely operate equipment and machinery. Ask them to check for any warnings on medication labels.
- **Rollover Protection:** Make sure that all the primary tractors in the operation are equipped with rollover protection. Consider trading in an older model tractor for a newer model that is equipped with better seating, accessibility, and rollover protection.
- **Rest and Fluids:** Have senior workers take necessary rest breaks and encourage them to get ample sleep, especially during high-stress times of the year such as harvesting. Provide...
frequent opportunities for senior workers to drink plenty of fluids.

- **Health Conditions:** Be aware that health conditions can cause changes in a worker's ability to safely complete a farm task. Understand that limitations or worksite accommodations may be necessary for senior workers to remain in production agriculture. Ask senior workers to consult with their physicians about participating in programs of strength training, stretching, and cardiovascular exercise to maintain or improve health status.

- **Hearing:** It is common for senior workers to have some level of hearing impairment that can make it difficult for them to hear warning signals and approaching animals and co-workers. Encourage senior workers to have their hearing checked by an audiologist to determine whether hearing aids are applicable to their work environment. Provide workers with any necessary hearing protection. Due to hearing impairments, the use of agricultural hand signals may be even more valuable to senior farmers and ranchers.

- **Tractor Operation and Driving:** Ensure that each tractor in the operation is equipped with properly working lights, brakes, and fenders and that shields are in place. Limit tractor driving to daytime hours, and ask workers to avoid roadways that are heavily traveled.

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**Comment Period Open for Proposed Changes to PMT**

*Release from Maryland Department of Agriculture (abridged)*

Proposed changes to the Maryland Phosphorus Management Tool were published in the Maryland Register on October 18, 2013. MDA is offering a 30-day public comment period on the proposed changes ending November 18. The proposal published on October 18 reflects the most recent changes made after an earlier version was met with concerns from the agriculture and environmental communities. The PMT was originally published in the Maryland Register on January 25, 2013. MDA had petitioned the committee on July 11 to request an emergency status for the proposed changes to the PMT regulations to that they would be in place for the fall planting season. The Emergency Request was withdrawn in late August, leading to the current proposal. The proposal as submitted to AELR, along with the Extension Bulletin to be incorporated by reference in the Maryland Nutrient Management Manual, are available on MDA’s website at mda.maryland.gov/Pages/Proposed- Regulations.aspx. Comments may be sent to Earl F. Hance, Secretary, Maryland Department of Agriculture, 50 Harry S. Truman Parkway, Annapolis, MD 21401; or via e-mail to Earl.Hance@maryland.gov; or via fax to 410-841-5914.

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**Lawn Fertilization Certification Exam**

Lawn care professionals hired to apply fertilizers to lawns are now required to be certified by MDA’s Nutrient Management Program or work under the direct supervision of an individual who is certified. The Maryland Department of Agriculture and University of Maryland Extension will offer a certification exam for lawn care professionals who want to become certified to apply fertilizer to turf. Optional training sessions are offered before the exam. To register, visit www.mda.maryland.gov/fertilizer or call MDA at 410-841-5959.
Do you have fields that have excessive phosphorus levels? The way we are handling it has changed! Any time a field has a Phosphorus Fertility Index Value (FIV) of 150 or greater, a study needs to be completed to determine the feasibility of additional applications of phosphorus. In recent years the tool used has been the Phosphorus Site Index (PSI), but we now have a new tool – the Phosphorus Management Tool (PMT). In order to complete the PMT study, additional information about the soil is required – the Degree of Phosphorus Saturation, or DPS. Temporarily, we are permitted to estimate the DPS; however, in the future DPS analysis results will be required for fields with excessive phosphorus.

How do you get a DPS result? Soil testing labs can test for DPS. Alternatively, if the lab tests for aluminum (Al) and iron (Fe) using Mehlich-3 extraction method, DPS can be calculated using NuManPro 4.0, the software we use to write your nutrient management plan. Here is what to expect from each of our recommended soil testing labs.

Labs that do not charge extra for the DPS:
- **AgroLab Inc.:** The “University of D P Sat Ratio” is the same as DPS and is part of their standard soil test.
- **Brookside Laboratories, Inc.:** Al and Fe are routinely reported for option SOO1. NuMan Pro 4.0 can calculate DPS from this information.
- **Spetrum Analysis, Inc.:** Will report DPS for UM-PMT when ordering S1 or S2 option.
- **University of Delaware Soil Testing Program:** The “Percent P Saturation” is the same as DPS and is included in B1 Routine Analysis.

Labs that charge separately for the DPS:
- **A&L Eastern Agricultural Lab, Richmond:** Al and Fe can be requested for an additional $3 per sample.
- **Agri-Analysis, Inc.:** Al and Fe can be requested for an additional $3 per sample. NuMan Pro 4.0 can calculate DPS when soil test includes Mehlich-3 Fe and Al.
- **Pennsylvania Agricultural Analytical Services Penn State University:** Al and Fe can be requested for an additional $6 per sample. NuMan Pro 4.0 can calculate DPS when soil test includes Mehlich-3 Fe and Al.

Labs with special consideration:
- **Water Agricultural:** Maryland samples should now be sent to Waters-Kentucky. Why? They use Mehlich-3 as an extractant. Fe and Al can be obtained when one requests the Basic Test 4 + AL. Write “M3 and nutrient management” on soil submission form.

As a special note, some labs automatically run a full range of nutrient testing and keep the information electronically. If the owner of the soil later request additional information, the lab may have it and can provide the information for an additional fee. These labs can retroactively provide the DPS or Fe and Al. Agri Analysis, Penn State, and A&L fall into this category. Waters, however, does not routinely analyze for Al and only keeps soil samples for one month.

The information included in this article is from the new “Comparison of Soil Test Labs” Fact Sheet. You may request an electronic or hard copy from the Harford County office or find it online at extension.umd.edu/anmp.

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**Nutrient Applicator Voucher Renewal Opportunities**

Do you apply nutrients (manure or commercial fertilizer) to 10 or more acres in Maryland? If so, you are required to hold a Nutrient Applicator Voucher. Vouchers must be renewed by attending a recertification training at least once every three years. Nutrient Applicator Voucher sessions will be held in Harford County as part of the Midwinter Meeting on February 4, 2014 and on March 12, 2014 from 10:00 a.m. to noon. An online session will also be held on April 4 from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Mark your calendar now! If you cannot make one of these dates, you may attend training in another county. Call the Harford County Extension Office at 410-638-3255 for more information or to sign up.
As a producer, you have firsthand knowledge of your own crops, animals, and equipment. Who better to write your nutrient management plan than you? This course will teach you how to do it! You will receive a comprehensive training binder, voucher training credits, and certification (pending a passing score on the exam) to write nutrient management plans for your own operation. Space is limited, and registrations are accepted on a first-come basis. Paid registrations must be received 10 days before the first class. Classes will be cancelled if there is lack of interest. Copies of the registration form are available from the Harford County Extension Office. For more details about the program, call 410-841-5959.

**Operations with Animals on Pasture**

- **December 2, 4, and 19**
  - 5:30 p.m.—9:00 p.m.
  - Howard County Extension Office
  - Ellicott City, MD
  - $20 registration fee per person

**Crop Operations Using Manure and Fertilizer**

- **January 28 and February 10**
  - 9:30 a.m.—4:30 p.m.
  - Wye Research and Education Ctr.
  - Queenstown, MD
  - $35 registration fee per person (includes lunch on first day)

- **February 18 and March 3**
  - 9:30 a.m.—4:30 p.m.
  - Washington County Extension Office
  - Boonsboro, MD
  - $35 registration fee per person (includes lunch on first day)

**Now is the Time to Consider Lease Renewals**

As we approach the end of the year, many farmers and their landlords will be making decisions on renewing land leases. Should the rent be increased? Should additional terms be included? As you begin these discussions, farmers and landlords should consider reviewing the “Agricultural Leasing in Maryland” booklet. This booklet is full of helpful tips and consideration both parties should make when leasing land. The booklet also contains form leases that can be used for both parties to begin to develop their own leases and plans. Free copies of this resource are available at the Harford County Extension Office. You can also access the publication online at extension.umd.edu/grainmarketing/lease-agreements.

Think your current rental rate is too low or too high? Need help coming up with a fair rental rate? Then check out AgLease101.org, a product of the North Central Farm Management Extension Committee. This site provide worksheets and other documents to help landlords and farmers develop rental rates that work for them.

To help you determine the right rental rate, you may also consider some statistics from the National Agriculture Statistics Service. The average cash rental rate for Maryland (including non-irrigated and irrigated cropland as well as pastureland) in 2012 was $82.00 per acre. In Harford County, the average rental rate for non-irrigated cropland in 2012 was $72.50 per acre.
Every year, hundreds of thousands of Americans are sold substandard cord wood. And if you heat with pellets, there are new developments you should know that will impact the fuel you buy.

**Firewood**

Firewood dealers come in all shapes and sizes, and although they may appear to be established or questionable, that does not necessarily mean you will be dealt a good or bad hand.

**Before you buy.** Ask the dealer what the moisture content of the wood is and how long since it’s been split, not since it’s been felled. When the tree was cut is not nearly as important as when it was split, since seasoning really begins after splitting. Ask what size truck the dealer delivers in and if it’s truly a full cord of wood (4’ x 4’ x 8’). If the wood is delivered in a standard pick-up truck, you won’t be getting a full cord. If you want it stacked, ask how much extra that will cost since stacking is typically not included. One benefit of stacking is that you can see whether you got a full cord.

**Species.** The species you select impacts the quality of your fire and the overall wood burning experience. Fruit or nut species—such as cherry, apple, hickory, and pecan—can give off a pleasant aroma when burned in a fireplace. However, if you are burning wood in a stove, you should not smell any smoke. Softwoods, green woods, and straight-grained wood such as pine generally are easier to split than others. Softwoods also tend to ignite quickly and are ideal for kindling. Hardwood species like oak are denser, making them more difficult to split but good for sustaining longer fires and producing more heat. It is good to have both types on hand.

**Price.** According to an informal survey conducted by University of Maryland Extension, the average price per cord of oak or mixed hardwood firewood in Maryland was $208 in 2011, up 40% from 2006. The value ranges from $180-$235 per cord. Prices tend to be higher in Central and Southern Maryland and lower in Western Maryland and the Eastern Shore. If you pay to look around before you buy. Sometimes you get what you pay for, so don’t just buy by price.

**Moving firewood.** As of July 2011, there is a ban on moving hardwood firewood out of the Emerald Ash Borer quarantine zone. This means you cannot transport firewood from west to east across the Bay Bridge or the Susquehanna River.

**Seasoning.** Freshly cut firewood can have a moisture content of us to 50%, but it needs to dry until it is below 20% to burn efficiently. Wood that has a moisture content of over 20% is more difficult to light, gives off less heat, and increases the risk of a chimney fire due to creosote build-up. Dry wood will appear grey, develop splits or cracks on the ends and have bark that is peeling off. Seasoning firewood requires 6 to 9 months but is easy to do. Logs should be cut into pieces 3” less than the size of the firebox. Stack wood to facilitate air flow through the openings, which will aid in drying. Do not stack the wood directly on the ground. Use a wood shed or a wood rack that provides some space between the ground and the wood. Cover the top of the stack but not the sides.

**Buying Pellets**

Pellets should be made of pure wood with no additives. No binder is necessary as naturally occurring lignin in the wood melts when it cools. One common myth is that hard wood pellets will have more BTU’s than soft wood. Once wood is densified, it will all have the same BTU content. The quality of pellets can vary significantly and once you find a good brand that works well in your stove, stick with it. Often people think the stove is not working properly when in fact they are using a substandard pellet.

High quality pellets are dry, hard, durable, and produce little ash. All pellets should have chloride levels of less than 300 parts per million. Pellets should be no more than 0.5% dust. One way to check pellet quality is to measure the amount of dust in the bag. A 40 pound bag of quality pellets should have less than ½ cup of dust at the bottom.

It’s best to store your pellets in a dry garage, basement, or other place where they won’t get wet. Pellets don’t need to be seasoned like firewood, but it’s good to keep them covered to protect from moisture.

This is an excerpt from UME Fact Sheet FS-937. The full publication is available online at extension.umd.edu/learn/pubs.
Sweeping health care reform legislation means hundreds of millions of Americans will soon have more options than ever when it comes to health insurance. Yet research shows the vast majority of people in this country are uncomfortable, overwhelmed, and intimidated when it comes to making decisions about health insurance coverage. That’s why a team of experts from across the nation, led by the University of Maryland Extension, developed Smart Choice – a comprehensive, research-based, unbiased curriculum designed to equip people with the tools they need to make the best decision possible for their families when choosing health insurance. Smart Choice is the result of two years of research and pilot-testing that will roll out this fall through a series of educator and consumer workshops. Through these workshops, participants will learn how to analyze what they need and want from health care providers, compare plans, calculate how much health insurance will affect their financial budgets, and ultimately apply the information and knowledge gained to make a smart choice. Advanced registration is required. To register, call the individual location you plan to attend. For more information about Smart Choice, visit extension.umd.edu/insurance or call Dr. Virginia Brown at 410-386-2760.

- Joppa Library Branch, **November 18**, 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m., 410-612-1660
- Harford Extension Office, **December 10**, 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m., 410-638-3255
- Aberdeen Library Branch, **January 11**, 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m., 410-273-5608

The Maryland Board of Public Works has approved $1.5 million in funding for the collection of scrap tires – allowing the program to place a greater emphasis on large tires from farm equipment. The program is seeking to increase the collection of scrap farm tires, which because of their size create challenges in collection and handling. Tires may not be disposed of in landfills because they do not compact and tend to float to the top of the landfill. When improperly disposed of, scrap tires can create risks to the environment and public health through the potential for fire and by providing habitat for such disease-carrying pests as mosquitoes and rodents. Several drop-off events have already been held this year. Upcoming events are scheduled for: Oct. 27 (agricultural tires only) at Central Landfill in Elkton, Cecil County; Nov. 9 at the Citizen Drop-Off Center at Western Sanitation Yard, 701 Reebird Avenue in Baltimore City; Nov. 9 at Hobbs Road Landfill in Denton, Caroline County; Nov. 10 at Brown Station Road Sanitary Landfill in Upper Marlboro, Prince George’s County; Nov. 16 at Forty West Landfill in Hagerstown, Washington County; and Dec. 7 at Appeal Landfill in Lusby, Calvert County. For more details, contact MDE’s Scrap Tire Program at 410-537-3314.