

# ANR NEWSLETTER

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## Virginia Cooperative Extension

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information on research  
and programs

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## LEGACY PLANNING

Jennifer Gagnon-  
VA Forest  
Landowner  
Education Program,  
Virginia Tech

While most people have heard of estate planning – making plans for what happens to your stuff after you pass away - fewer have heard of legacy planning. Legacy planning includes estate planning, but it is much more. You can pass your land on to your heirs with estate planning, but that doesn't ensure they will manage it according to your wishes and your land ethic. Legacy planning is the on-going process of sharing with your heirs your desire for how your land is managed in the future, your desire to see it stay intact, in forest, and in family. It's the process of passing on your values along with your stuff.

Join the Generation NEXT Team in September to learn the 9 steps to successful legacy planning. They will be covered in a 4-part webinar series

Sept. 16, 17, 23 & 24

Registration is only \$40.00 for your entire family (even if they are scattered far and wide) and includes a copy of our brand new 56-page full-color book Legacy Planning: A Guide for Virginia landowners.

## WHAT'S THAT WEED?

Sara Rutherford- Extension Agent



### Dog-fennel (*Eupatorium capillifolium*)

Dog-fennel can be found growing from 20" to 6.5 ft. in height, with one to several stems emerging from a thick woody base. Fine white hairs can be found along young stems. Stems branch in the upper flowering portions. Many small flower heads form in the upper stem branches. When crushed, leaves give off a strong fennel or licorice-type odor. Dogfennel characteristically shows itself in nurseries, orchards, crops with decreased tillage, and landscapes. It also grows in abandoned fields and roadsides.



- For help with weed identification or for control options, please contact Sara Rutherford at the Greensville -Emporia Extension office.

## Upcoming Programs

All program dates and formats are subject to change

**August 25- Aquaculture Webinar** 10:00am-11:00am via Zoom. Topics: recreational fisheries, processing fish for home use, potential sale of aquaculture products. Please register in advance at [www.ext.vsu.edu](http://www.ext.vsu.edu) under calendar of events to receive the program link.

**August 31- Pesticide Collection event for farmers, homeowners, golf courses and ag businesses** 9:00 am to 1:00pm at the SVCC Truck Driving School located between the National Guard site and the airport: 1112 Courtland Rd. Emporia, VA 23847. If you did not pre-register with VDACS, you may bring items for collection to the site the day of. The contractor has the right to refuse any unknown products or products that are not permitted for disposal. Call the extension office for more information: 434-348-4223.

**September 8 - Fall and Winter Pond Maintenance** from 10:00am to 11:00am via Zoom. Topics: Water quality, dam structures, weed control & winter drawdown. Please register in advance at [www.ext.vsu.edu](http://www.ext.vsu.edu) under calendar of events to receive the program link.

**Throughout September- Legacy Planning** September 16, & 17, 23 & 24. Join the Generation NEXT Team to learn the 9 steps to successful legacy planning. This is a 4-part webinar series. Register online using the link below

<https://forestupdate.frec.vt.edu/online-registration.html> OR [register by mail](#).

**September 17- Native Tree ID Walk** from 10:00am to 12:00pm at River's Edge Farm, 11254 Purdy Rd. Jarratt, VA 23867. Learn how to identify 20+ species of Virginia's native trees. We'll even throw in some non-native species, too! Cost: \$12.00 per person. Limited to 25 participants. Register by September 7, 2020. Call the extension office for more information or to register: 434-348-4223. Payment is due at the time of registration. To pay with a credit card, visit [www.register.ext.vt.edu](http://www.register.ext.vt.edu) and select Agriculture under the Program heading; course C-02-0033.

## Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease

### VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES

#### What is Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease?

Rabbit hemorrhagic disease virus serotype 2 (RHDV2) is a highly contagious and lethal virus that affects all rabbit and hare species. It is not a human health concern. RHDV2 is easily spread via direct contact with infected live or dead rabbits or during interactions with scavengers, insects, and dogs that have had previous contact with infected rabbits. The virus can remain active for months in the environment and rabbits may be exposed to the virus directly from the habitat in which they live. The virus also remains active for extended periods on clothing, footwear, and equipment but it is inactivated by a 10% bleach solution. The virus spreads easily and rapidly through rabbit populations and over 80% of infected rabbits may die from RHDV2, potentially causing severe local or landscape-level rabbit population declines. RHDV2 has been diagnosed in domestic rabbits in various states, including Ohio (2018), Washington (2019), and New York (2020). It was also been detected in wild rabbits in the southwestern U.S. and Mexico in 2020.

#### How to Minimize the Spread of RHDV2 (Hunters)

- Do not release domestic rabbits into the wild
- This practice is illegal and can spread disease
- Do not move wild rabbits for any reason, including stocking or dog training purposes, as translocation of rabbits can facilitate spread of disease
- Attempt to eliminate all contact between dogs and dead rabbits
- Apply a dry pet shampoo (and follow the directions on the product label) to dogs after the last hunt of the day or in between hunts if the dogs are traveling the same day to a new hunting area located greater than 5 miles away
- After cleaning rabbits, do not leave remains where they can be spread by scavengers
- Bury rabbit remains deep enough to discourage scavenging or double-bag and discard in a trash bin, trash dump, or at a landfill
- Wear rubber gloves when cleaning rabbits and wash hands thoroughly when finished
- Clean all knives, tools, and surfaces used to process a rabbit with detergent and then submerge in a 10% bleach solution for at least 10 minutes
- After handling dead rabbits, wash or change clothes and disinfect the soles of your footwear with a 10% bleach solution before traveling to new hunting areas or handling domestic rabbits
- Cook rabbits thoroughly to at least 165°F
- If you have pet domestic rabbits, do not handle them until you have showered and changed clothes after cleaning or handling dead wild rabbits.

**More information for rabbit breeders and pet rabbit owners can be found here:** <https://www.dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife/diseases/>

**Having problems with wildlife?** Call the Wildlife Conflict Helpline: 855-571-9003

# Fescue Toxicosis in Livestock

**JOHN FIKE- EXTENSION FORAGE SPECIALIST, VIRGINIA TECH**

Tall fescue (*Festuca arundinacea*) is a productive cool-season grass and the predominant forage in Virginia. The majority of tall fescue grown in Virginia contains a fungal endophyte – a fungus that helps the host plant cope with abiotic (e.g., drought and flood) and biotic (e.g., insect and grazing animal) stressors. However, toxic compounds (ergot alkaloids) produced by this endophyte can reduce grazing animal performance.

Fescue toxicosis is the general term describing three disorders related to the consumption of ergot alkaloids: fescue foot, fat necrosis, and summer syndrome or summer slump. Specific production losses from fescue toxicosis result from poor reproductive performance, reduced weight gain, and lower milk production. For further information regarding the effects of and management strategies for tall fescue toxicosis, see VCE publication 418-050, “Making the Most of Tall Fescue in Virginia.”

Understanding both the risks posed and the management needed to address fescue toxicosis issues on the farm is often best facilitated by assessing fungal infection levels in pastures. Two different tests are required to determine both the presence of the endophyte and the level of alkaloids in tall fescue. Information gained by testing pastures can help producers develop grazing and mitigation strategies to avoid severe incidences of fescue toxicosis. Knowing endophyte levels and typical alkaloid concentrations across the farm can help producers make decisions about grazing management (e.g., which animals go where) and feeding and supplementation strategies that could reduce the potential production losses associated with the toxin burden. Repeated testing during a grazing season can help determine the possible benefits of pasture renovation or the addition of legumes.

Effects on livestock- Alkaloids depress prolactin, and in turn reduce milk yield. These compounds also cause constriction of blood vessels. Thus, cattle can't easily dissipate heat in summer and they can't easily heat their extremities in winter. That's why they form wallows or head to surface waters in summer and they can lose ear tips, switches, and even hooves in winter. In the picture to the right, cattle on toxic fescue have formed a wallow simply by splashing water out of their tubs. Note cattle in the background grazing novel endophyte (non-toxic) fescue. Alkaloids also depress reproductive performance.



Effects on Horses- Mares grazing endophyte-infected tall fescue pasture have lower conception rates, increased embryonic mortality, and increased abortions, resulting in fewer live foals. Pregnant mares are most sensitive to infected tall fescue during the last three months of gestation, and especially during the last 30 days; negative responses can occur even in the presence of low ergot alkaloid levels. For live foals, gestation lengths and weights can be greater, which can increase the difficulty of foaling (dystocia) and increase foal and mare deaths. Placentas, which often are retained, can be thicker and difficult for foals to shed. Because foals in turn may be weak at birth, this can further increase their mortality. Mares can have lower blood prolactin levels which may cause agalactia (no milk production). Lactating mares placed on infected tall fescue pastures have been known to stop lactating within a few days. Many of the symptoms associated with fescue toxicosis in pregnant and early-lactation mares can be treated with domperidone under veterinary supervision. There is no firm evidence that any other class of horse is adversely affected by toxic tall fescue pasture. In fact, in most areas of Virginia, endophyte-infected tall fescue is probably one of the best, most durable forages for horse pasture. For more details on managing fescue problems with horses, see VCE publication 406-475.

Excerpts from Pub SPES-6NP, SPES-114P & SPES-21. To view these publications in their entirety, visit <https://pubs.ext.vt.edu> & search for the publication number.

## Upcoming Programs

**November 18 - Household Well Water Testing:** Kit pick up will occur November 13, 16 and 17 at the extension office in Emporia. Nov. 18th is the sample drop off date from 7:30am-9am. The registration deadline is November 9, 2020. A generous sponsorship will be provided by the Chowan Basin Soil and Water Conservation District. The first 20 registrants, with wells located in Greensville county, will receive a free sample kit. This sponsorship is on a first come, first served basis. Additional kits per household and those registered after the sponsored kits have been spoken for, will be charged the regular rate of \$60.00 per kit. Call the extension office for more information or to register: 434-348-4223.

## Reminders

\* VSU's College of Agriculture offers many educational programs, online webinars, Facebook live events, workshops and field days when possible. To find out more, visit: <https://ext.vsu.edu/calendar>

\* There is a \$50.00 fee for all returned checks.  
\* If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services or other accommodations to participate in extension activities, please contact the Greensville-Emporia extension office, (434) 348-4223, during the business hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00p.m. to discuss accommodations at least 5 days prior to the event. \*TDD number is (800) 828-1120.

## Spurweed in the Lawn

### Dr. Jeff Derr- Virginia Cooperative Extension

I often get calls in the early spring from homeowners complaining of a lawn weed that hurts their bare feet or the paws of their pets. Please take a moment to read what Dr. Derr has to say below about controlling this spiny weed.

"Spurweed (also called lawn burrweed) is a lawn pest well known throughout the warmer-climates of the mid-Atlantic for its potential to inflict genuine physical pain to people and pets. It becomes a major problem in the landscape in mid-late spring when it flowers and sets fruit that are surrounded by razor sharp spines. It is a nuisance to pets, with the sharp spines potentially getting lodged into their paws.

Make a note on your calendar to treat your lawn IF you have previously identified it in the turf. Spurweed can be controlled by an application of just about any fall applied preemergent herbicide in late August to the first week of September (remember this chemical application will eliminate your ability to seed new grass in the fall). You can also control spurweed quite easily with most broadleaf herbicides (products containing 2,4-D, dicamba, MCPP or MCPA, etc.) If you treat the weed while it is young and actively growing in the fall or early winter, you can get an upper hand on control.

This is one of the pests that causes much more concern than just a disruption of turf uniformity and appearance-- it is a pest that actually inflicts physical pain if not managed appropriately."



## Saying Goodbye

Sara Rutherford

Caroline Taylor, pictured left, was chosen as the Jr. Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences, or Jr. MANRRS, intern at the Greensville/Emporia Extension office for the summer of 2020. The national Jr. MANRRS Program is designed to stimulate the interest in science, technology, engineering, agricultural, and mathematics fields, or STEAM. The goal is to encourage students in grades 7-12 to attend college and pursue agriculture, natural resources, and environmental sciences degrees. Caroline worked under the supervision of 4-H agent Hannah Parker and was a great asset to our local 4-H STEAM programming efforts. Although Caroline wasn't able to work hand-in-hand with students and teachers, she was able to accomplish many things pertinent to the internship.

With the restrictions of no in-person summer programming statewide in 4-H, her internship experience was mostly virtual. She improved her skills with video recording and editing, presenting programs virtually, research and communicating in a professional work environment. We commend Caroline for her efforts to make the best of her internship and gain valuable experience along the way. At the conclusion of the summer, Caroline will return to Longwood University as a senior where she is majoring in mathematics with a concentration in secondary education. Caroline resides in Greensville county, so we know we'll see her again soon. Thank you for all of your contributions this summer, Caroline!

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