

ANR Newsletter

Greenville-Emporia
Spring 2025

Page 2

- Upcoming programs
- 'Bee' ready

Page 3

- The importance of biosecurity

Page 4

- Biosecurity continued
- Reminders



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Winter Extension Programs

Sara Rutherford- Extension agent

In December, our Extension Master Gardener volunteers held their annual holiday wreath workshop. Participants learned about local, native evergreens and other ornamental evergreens best suited to making fresh wreaths and other holiday arrangements. In January, we hosted our private pesticide applicator recertification course where Extension specialists, like Dr. Matthew Chappell keep our growers up-to-date on sustainable growing methods. In February, we held our commercial pesticide applicator recertification class where landscapers, turf managers and applicators mitigating human health pests received timely information to treat pests, like bed bugs, in safe and effective ways.

Pictured (left to right): Wreath workshop participant; Dr. M. Chappell- private pesticide recertification class; Juan Romero presenting- commercial pesticide recertification class



What's that weed?

Sara Rutherford- Extension agent



Pictured above (left to right): Yellow woodsorrel in the lawn; close up of flowers; spreading rhizomes of a young oxalis plant.

Yellow woodsorrel - *Oxalis stricta*

Are those shamrocks in my yard? Why yes! Yellow woodsorrel is a member of the Oxalidaceae family and is classified as both an annual and perennial. Plants have taproots and rhizomes that produce new plants at nodes. This species produces yellow flowers, seed capsules, and seeds from late spring to early fall. Seeds germinate during spring and give rise to new plants. Leaves droop and fold at night, then expand in daylight. Flowers are eventually replaced by elongated cylindrical seed capsules that range from 1/3 to 3/4 inch in length. When mature, capsules split and eject seeds into the air, often landing several feet from the capsule. Infestations of yellow woodsorrel can be reduced by improving turf density through fertilization, regular mowing, and use of turfgrasses well-adapted to site conditions. If you suspect you have this weed and desire identification confirmation, please call the Greenville/Emporia Extension office. For more information on this and other weeds, visit <https://weedid.cals.vt.edu>.

Upcoming Programs



Bee ready for spring

Virginia State Beekeepers Association

March 7- Paraquat Certification training at the Greenville/Emporia Extension office at 9:00am. If you have not taken paraquat training in the past three years, you will need to re-certify if you plan to purchase or use paraquat products in 2025. This training will last approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes. Call or email us to pre-register.

March 20- Birds, Bees and Urban Trees at the Greenville/Emporia Extension office. Join us and Dr. Trakela Wright-Hicks, urban forestry specialist from Virginia State University, to learn about the way birds, bees and humans interact with trees in urban landscapes. Cost: free! To register, please visit www.ext.vsu.edu/calendar. For more information, contact Marilyn Estes at 804-481-0485 or mestes@vsu.edu.

March 21- Soil fertility & crop nutrition workshop and cover crop field tour at the Tidewater AREC, 6321 Holland Rd. Suffolk, VA 23437 from 8:00am until 4:45pm. Presentation topics: row crops & soil fertility, plant nutrition and cover crops (including rotation, herbicides and benefits). Open to farmers, industry, and government agencies. Lunch will be provided. Free event but registration is required through this link: <https://bit.ly/CoverCropFieldDay25> Contact Dr. Hunter Frame with questions; whframe@vt.edu

March 25- Starting seeds with purpose at the Washington Park Community Center- 750 Dry Bread Rd. Emporia, VA 23847, from 1:30pm until 2:30pm. Join us to learn successful ways to start seeds indoors. Gain hands on experience by planting your own seeds to take home and grow for this year's garden. To register, please call 434-348-4223 or email Sara, srutherford@vt.edu by March 21st. This is a free class and space is limited.

Spring is right around the corner, which means it's time to get everything in order before the bees kick into high gear. The last thing you want is to scramble for equipment when your hives need space, so now's the time to take stock, make repairs, and get ahead of the game. If you're expanding this year, make sure you have enough gear ready to go before the season gets busy. It's easier to prep now than mid-flow when the bees need more space.

Take inventory

First things first—what do you have, and what do you need? Go through everything: hive bodies and supers, bottom boards, inner covers, outer covers, frames and foundation, queen excluders, feeders, spare boxes.

Check for damage

Winter is rough on woodenware, and stored equipment isn't immune to issues either. Look for: cracks, warping, or rot—replace what's too far gone. Mold or mildew—a light bleach solution (1:10) works, but let it dry completely. Weak joints—reinforce anything loose with glue and screws. Pest damage—check for wax moths, mouse nests, or anything that shouldn't be there.

Fix it now, not later

If something's broken but fixable, now's the time. Re-glue and reinforce joints—frames, hive bodies, bottom boards. Sand down rough edges—smoother wood is easier to work with. Repaint or stain—protects from weather, but use bee-safe materials. Replace brittle foundation—if it's falling apart, toss it.

Build what you need

If you're adding hives or need replacement parts, go ahead and build now. That means: assembling and painting woodenware so it's dry and ready. Putting together frames and foundation so they're not in pieces when you need them. Setting up swarm traps if you plan on catching feral bees this season.

Sterilize & clean equipment

Reusing old equipment? Make sure it's disease-free. Scorch with a propane torch—quick, effective, and kills anything lingering; soak in a bleach solution—works for plastic foundation and wooden parts (rinse well); vinegar soak— for propolis and wax buildup.

Check your bee yard

Before spring gets wild, take a look at your setup: Make sure hive stands are sturdy and level. Clear out weeds or debris from around the hives. Check that lids fit tight and nothing's been knocked out of place.

If you're installing packages, making splits, or expecting swarms, have everything ready before you need it. Spare hive boxes, extra frames, swarm lure—have it all set so you're not scrambling. A little prep now saves a lot of hassle later. Get your gear in order, and when the bees are ready, so are you.

Five steps to protect poultry from avian influenza

Authors- Leonie Jacobs and Michael E. Persia, School of Animal Sciences, Virginia Tech

Biosecurity refers to measures to prevent the introduction or spread of harmful organisms and disease that pose a risk for human or animal health. Biosecurity serves three important functions: It can help protect your flock from bacteria, viruses, and other microorganisms that can make your birds sick; it can reduce the risk of transmission of diseases to neighboring flocks; and it can protect human health by reducing the risk of zoonotic (i.e., spreading between animals and humans) infections.

A highly pathogenic strain of avian influenza (H5N1), or bird flu, is currently present in the United States and in Virginia. The outbreak started in early 2022 and continues as of this writing in 2024. So far, the disease has infected commercial and backyard poultry flocks resulting in the loss of over 90 million birds. Virginia has been spared to an extent, with approximately 40,000 birds affected to date. This specific strain is considered highly pathogenic because it causes major losses among flocks, with over 75% mortality rates reported. In addition to high mortality, other symptoms of infected birds may include swelling of the head, eyelids, comb, wattles, and hocks; purple discoloration of the wattles, combs, and legs; and nasal discharge, coughing, or sneezing. Domestic poultry, including chickens, ducks, turkeys, geese, quail, and pheasants, can become infected with avian influenza. In a 2022 report, the U.S. Department of Agriculture advised that this strain shows a tremendous ability to spread through contact with wild migrating waterfowl. More recent reports of avian influenza spreading to mammals, including wildlife and livestock, has created added concern, especially for animal production and human health.

What can you do?

1. Limit exposure to wildlife, including wild birds and rodents

Here are some practical steps you can take to limit your birds' exposure to wildlife:

- Store feed in closed bins and feed your flock inside the coop (chicken house) or enclosed run (covered outdoor area).
- Keep your flock away from wild bird feeders, bird baths, and other places that attract wild animals
- Remove debris and other items near your coop to reduce the risk of animals nesting or hiding there
- Develop and implement a rodent control plan.
- Keep coops and runs wildlife-free by using appropriate fencing and overhead cover. Burying fences about 1-2 ft or adding fence skirts may prevent animals from digging under fencing. This step will also reduce flock predation.

2. Clean, sanitize, and disinfect

Remove excess feed and waste products from the coop in a timely fashion. Any equipment or tools used in the coop should be cleaned, sanitized, and disinfected before being used around the flock. This is especially important for tools and equipment that are shared between different flocks. Cleaning includes removing debris and organic material from surfaces with soap and water. Sanitizing involves killing bacteria on surfaces using chemicals, while disinfecting kills bacteria and viruses on surfaces using chemicals. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has a list of products that are effective against avian influenza: [https:// www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/epas-registered-antimicrobial-products-effective-against-avian-influenza](https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/epas-registered-antimicrobial-products-effective-against-avian-influenza).

3. Quarantine new birds and sick birds

New birds should be kept separate from the existing flock. Purchase poultry from reliable, certified disease-free hatcheries. These are certified by the National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPPI), which has a list of certified hatcheries by state on its NPPI Participants by State/Territory web page <https://www.poultryimprovement.org/statescontent.cfm>.

Programs continued

April 22- Edible gardens: Growing fruit and vegetables at the Washington Park Community center- 750 Dry Bread Rd. Emporia, VA 23847, from 1:30pm until 2:30pm. Join us to learn successful ways to grow fruits and vegetables at home this season. Learn the best ways to start and care for fruit and veggie plants in containers, raised beds or in garden soil. Plant your own fruit or veggie seeds to take home, grow and enjoy. To register, please call 434-348-4223 or email Sara Rutherford, srutherford@vt.edu by April 17, 2025. This is a free class and space is limited.

Virginia State University's College of Agriculture offers many educational programs, online webinars, workshops and field days. For upcoming events and educational programs, please 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 at the Greensville/Emporia Extension office, please contact the Greensville-Emporia Extension office, (434) 348-4223 (*TDD number is (800) 828-1120), during the business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday to discuss accommodations at least 5 business days prior to the event.

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Biosecurity continued

When adding new birds to your flock, keep them separated for two to four weeks before introducing them to the existing flock. New birds may carry pathogens you do not want to introduce to your current birds. Monitor the new birds' health and behavior twice daily to ensure the birds are healthy and behaving normally. If abnormalities are observed, veterinary care may be required.

In addition, when your existing birds show signs of disease, separate them from the others immediately to reduce the risk of spread. Keep in mind that chickens will hide signs of disease when they can, so once they do show signs, the disease is likely in the later stages and very serious.

Signs of illness include

- Dullness or depression
- Fatigue (lethargy)
- Inattentiveness
- Anorexia
- Isolating
- Hunching

4. Keep dedicated shoes for the poultry area and wash/sanitize your hands

There are two parts of our bodies that are primarily used to interact with the world. The first is our hands, as we manipulate and move everyday objects within our daily routines. Washing hands, or at the minimum using hand sanitizer, before and after handling poultry will greatly reduce the risk of inadvertent disease transmission to and from the flock. The second, less obvious interaction occurs through our feet, including each step taken in the world. Dedicated footwear or disposable shoe covers that is changed immediately before entering the coop will reduce transmission of microorganisms from the bottom of shoes worn throughout the day and will limit the risks of people bringing in pathogens from elsewhere.

5. Avoid transmission between flocks

Whenever you, your family or friends interact with your flock or outside flocks (other birds), there is a chance for disease transmission. Therefore, you should leave a 72-hour period between visiting your flock and other birds. This rule should be in effect to protect your birds (before you reenter your flock) and to protect other birds not in your flock (wait 72 hours before you interact with other birds). As noted above, hand and shoe sanitation is critical, but in addition, always wear clean clothes when interacting with your birds.

If your birds do get sick, seek veterinary treatment. If high and unexplained mortality is present, report the disease for verification and additional resources. If a veterinarian with poultry experience is available in your area, bring your bird(s) to them for an appropriate diagnosis. Some infectious and contagious diseases, such as avian influenza, are serious for poultry health and are limited in treatment options, which means that they are required to be reported to state or federal authorities. In Virginia: Contact the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) at 804-692-0604 or vastatevet@vdacs.virginia.gov to report a case of disease.

Source: VCE Publication APSC-2000P