Warmer than normal temperatures over the winter resulted in a reduced peach crop, lower quality in regards to shipping standards, and narrower margins for our producers. Why? Trees require cold temperatures to adequately set sound flower buds. So, those pleasant temperatures you enjoyed with lower heating bills really are not what peach farmers need. This was also accompanied by a very untimely dry summer. Grain crops such as corn and soybeans took a hit on yields and price. High prices received at the elevators a couple of years ago are no more.

Cattle prices have also dropped to correct for a glut of meat in the marketplace. More cattle on farms nationwide has brought home the message that good prices are often met by more production meaning lower prices. For Edgefield cattlemen, it is something that has been expected as production meetings have always been aware of the cycles in the market economy.

Commodity Prices Return to “Normal”, While Weather is all but.

No one in production agriculture likes to admit that prices received for our crops are too high. I think the proper term the economist use when we enjoy $9.00 corn, $7.00 wheat, and a $14.00 soybeans is “unsustainable”. The market will not support them long term. Last year, the historic drought in much of the US, along with crop shortages worldwide, resulted in a windfall for producers who produced crops and took advantage of timely marketing strategies.

What we now see, is increased production, much expanded acreage, and the “correction” in the marketplace we knew would come. Fortunately, input costs of fertilizer is decreased somewhat. Fuel and chemical prices on average are stable. It is important for Extension to continue offering educational trainings either statewide or local to keep producers ahead of their bottom line. Area producers are urged to take advantage of such events as planned.
Focus on Soils and Soil Health
Greg Henderson, Area Horticulture Agent

Ongoing research on the Ridge to address orchard longevity has seen some success in how orchards are managed. Since the inception of a USDA grant funded study of soils and orchard health here on the Ridge Area, more cover has been introduced and maintained in our expansive production orchards. However, educational opportunities are ever present and needed.

Earlier this summer, Extension professionals, Certified Crop Advisors, and USDA NRCS field staff took part in a full day of classroom and field studies of the nature and properties of our soils here on the Ridge. Where available, road cuts were utilized to look at the soil profiles to understand how variable we truly are in having more Piedmont clay soils on the northern reach of the production area, to very deep sand on the southern reach. This variability makes more site specific production and management decisions unique as they pertain to fertilizer, lime, and water (irrigation).

The availability of practical trainings such as these keep assist in keeping agents and agency staff aware of the basic science that drives production.

Agents and NRCS field personnel in “in depth” discussions of soil health properties inherent to our Upper Coastal Plains soils.

Disaster Aid for Row Crop Producers
Jay Crouch, Area Agronomy Agent

The October 2015 rain event that led to historic flooding in South Carolina occurred at the worst time for many farmers. Cotton, peanuts, and soybeans ready for harvest were left standing in water where flooding occurred, or were so rain soaked by the continual rains that quality of the crops left them unable to be marketed. Lack of a marketable crop put an extremely large financial burden on many farmers who were left unable to repay operating loans. The South Carolina General Assembly passed legislation, named Farm Aid, that made available to eligible farmers financial assistance to be used for paying crop production expenses. Farm Aid eligibility software was developed in cooperation with the South Carolina Department of Agriculture and Clemson University and used information on crop sales, acres planted, and harvest records to determine payments made to farmers. Workshops were held across South Carolina that allowed farmers to bring their own records in for application, or one on one meetings were held with farmers for the same purpose. In excess of twenty one on one meetings were held in Newberry, Saluda, Edgefield, and Aiken Counties with several farmers qualifying for much needed assistance.
The Soil Tells the Story
Greg Henderson, Area Horticulture Agent

The 1981 Soil Survey of Edgefield County listed 31 different soil series across the county. The main production area for fruit and commodity crops range from moderate to well drained clay loams to very deep loamy sands. The trend to more precision management of nutrients and water necessitates a basic understanding of how both move through the soil. A research project begun in May of 2015 is currently tracking nutrient migration throughout the upper soil profile depth to a more restrictive clay layer. This ranges from as shallow as 8 inches to in excess for 110 inches. Funded by Titan Farms and J W Yonce & Son, along with the expert leadership of Dr. Virgil Quisenberry, retired Clemson Soil Scientist, we have mapped most of the major soil series that are planted to peaches along the Ridge. While preliminary results are pretty well as expected with our hypothesis, tree utilization of residual fertilizer and subsequent input savings will be focused on in the coming season.

It is thru the strong partnership of grower and specialist support that studies like these are limited only by the vision and understanding of the industry’s needs. This project was expanded on JW Yonce & Sons operation this past summer and is ongoing.

Livestock and Forages in Edgefield County
Gary Coleman. Area Livestock Agent

Gary Coleman, our area livestock and forage agent has had a busy year trying to help producers in Edgefield County weather the drought storm and control army worms in their pastures and hay fields. Gary has continued to work closely with backyard poultry producers, young farmers, and our neighboring honeybee associations serving Edgefield County. He is trying to encourage more producers to think outside of traditional farming practices in order to survive the harsh floods, droughts, and insect problems that have occurred over the last four years. While working with producers to improve their forages and pastures, Edgefield County Cattlemen have done a great job in selling unproductive animals when cattle prices were at an all-time record high and they are showing great interest in buying back quality cattle once weather conditions change. Gary continues to work on a Small Ruminate program that has been helping producers build quality meaty type animals and stronger marketing strategies for their operation.
Forestry & Natural Resources Provides Expertise
Stephen Pohlman, Area Forestry & Natural Resource Agent

Clemson Extension continues to deliver forestry programs through the Edgefield County Forestry Association. This large and active organization is an affiliate member of the S.C. Forestry Association and offers many educational opportunities to clients interested in forestry. The Edgefield Association held four meetings on the following topics: How To Survive an Ice Storm, The Forest Resource and Industry Outlook in South Carolina and Edgefield County, Opportunities for Youth Through Forestry and Natural Resources, and Feral Hogs. Average attendance for these meetings was 45-55 landowners and forestry professionals.

Clemson Extension also supports the citizens of Edgefield County by use of an Area Extension Forestry & Natural Resources Agent who provides advice on forest management and wildlife management through habitat modifications and food plots. This agent also aids with forestry related issues including disease and insect identification, pond issues and urban tree questions.

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<th>2016 Pond Management Workshop</th>
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The Pond Management Workshop was a program for landowners who wanted to obtain a better understanding of the dynamics of balancing a pond. The Edgefield Extension Office teamed with the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) to provide this program. The NWTF hosted the site for the workshop inside the NWTF Headquarters. The program was presented by Clemson Extension Pond Specialist Cory Heaton. Participants were encouraged to interact with the speaker, thus giving landowners a better understanding to the questions they had. Questions ranged from how to implement for their particular situation, to weed identification from their personal pond.

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<th>Forest Genetics and Seedling Tour</th>
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South Carolina Forestry Commission (SCFC) and Clemson Extension held a joint meeting about forest genetics and seedlings on June 28, 2016. The tour was hosted at the SCFC Taylor Nursery located in Trenton, SC. The field tour was sold out with 50 landowners, with participants coming from the surrounding area counties. Tim Adams (SCFC Director of Forest Products Marketing) was the guest speaker for much of the program. Gene Kodama (SCFC State Forester), Hamp Holmes (SCFC Taylor Nursery Director) and Stephen Pohlman (Clemson Extension Forestry Agent) also spoke at the event. Participants were treated to a hay ride of the Taylor Nursery facility to see the operation side of growing seedlings before they can be sold to the public. Participants also saw the SCFC’s genetic trials where they test their crosses and get some of their seed sources.
4-H in Edgefield County Continues to Grow
Julia Miller Cox, 4-H Agent

Afternoon County Clubs
- Strom Thurmond CTC 4-H Shooting Sports Club is led by Jeremy Brooks at the Strom Thurmond Career Center. Contact Jeremy for more information.
- Aiken/Edgefield 4-H Shooting Sports Club is led by Jason Rhodes. If you are interested in joining this club or obtaining more information about this club please contact Jason Rhodes at (803)640-5848.
- Edgefield County General 4-H is led by Julia Cox. This club is open to participants ages 5-19 and teaches individuals about the 6 different program areas in South Carolina 4-H (agriculture & animals, healthy lifestyles, leadership & citizenship, personal development, natural resources, and STEM). If you are interested in joining this club or obtaining more information about this club please contact Julia Cox at (803)649-6297 ext 121 or Julia7@clemson.edu.
- Aiken/Edgefield 4-H Horse Club is led by Marianne Matos. This club will teach participants 9 and older proper horse care and riding techniques. This club meets in Aiken County, and anyone interested in joining this club or obtaining more information about this club should contact Marianne Matos at (570)517-9453.

In-school Programs
- Embryology
- STEM
- Livestock
- Wildlife and Natural Resources

CAMPS
- Wildlife Adventures Day Camp (ages 5+)
- Cooking Camps
- 4-H20 Camp (ages 9+)
- Beginner Sewing Camp (ages 9+)

The Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to people of all ages, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital or family status and is an equal opportunity employer.