Oconee County Extension Staff Grows

Morris Warner, County Coordinator

This has been a good year for Oconee Extension. I think you will see we have been involved in some excellent education programs. The Extension Staff has enjoyed the opportunity to serve the citizens of Oconee County. We have two new staff members since last year. Mallory Dailey joined us in January of 2016 as the 4-H Agent for Oconee. Mallory came to us as a recent graduate of Clemson University. She previously worked as a Naturalist, and her background is primarily in wildlife. Also, we have Kerrie Roach that will be working with commercial fruit and vegetable growers. Kerrie had previously been an Extension Agent in Henderson County, North Carolina for NC State Extension.

As we come to the close of another year, the big thing on everyone’s mind and in conversation is the drought. How dry it is ..... How dry will it get ..... How long will this last? All good questions. My advice is use your best estimate of the future. NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) has a weather prediction center that at this point gives us the best estimate of long range weather. Their prediction indicates that we are in for a long dry spell yet Farmers should be making plans accordingly. The decisions are tough when we experience these types of situations, but given the predictions it’s better to bite the bullet ... do what you need to do to assure your survival. That may mean selling cows or making different cropping plans for the coming year. Our staff is here to help you work through those decisions.

The national Cooperative Extension Service engages citizens to improve economic development and quality of life by delivering research-based information in agriculture, natural resources, food safety and nutrition, economic and community development, and 4-H youth development. South Carolina Cooperative Extension is based at the state’s two land-grant institutions – Clemson University and South Carolina State University. Clemson Extension agents are located in all 46 counties and at the University's 5 Research and Education Centers.
Commercial Fruit Grower Meeting  
S. Cory Tanner, Area Horticulture Agent

Upstate SC is a vibrant fruit-growing region with a number of large and small commercial operations producing a variety of fruit crops. Commercial fruit growers need and want continuing education opportunities to stay current with best management practices and pest management strategies. Additionally, these professionals are required to obtain pesticide license recertification credits to maintain their pesticide applicator licenses as required by law. To meet this need, a team of Clemson Extension Agents coordinated the 2016 Oconee County Fruit Growers Meeting on March 2, 2016. At this meeting, held at the Clemson University Musser Fruit Research Farm in Seneca, SC, Regional Extension Specialists from Clemson University and North Carolina State University presented up-to-date recommendations for peach and apple production. The half-day program included presentations about peach pest management, orchard weed management, fire blight management in apple, and apple rootstock selection; followed by a tour of the apple rootstock trial and training systems. Attendees received resource materials, two SC pesticide license recertification credits, and lunch. Thirty-eight commercial fruit growers and aligned industry professionals attended the program. Most attendees were from Oconee and the surrounding Upstate counties of Anderson, Pickens and Greenville.

Backyard Barnyard Program  
Lindsey Craig, Area Livestock and Forages Agent

In May 2016, Backyard Barnyard: A Hands-on Guide to Small Livestock Farming, was held at Roper Mountain Science Center in Greenville County. The program was a joint effort between upstate area livestock and forage agents Cassie Wycoff and Lindsey Craig. This one-day workshop offered many unique sessions including in person weed ID, beekeeping, chicken farming, small ruminant farming, hog farming, raising horses and beef cattle.

The class had over 20 participants from multiple counties who practiced some hands-on techniques. Some of these activities were ear tagging and giving vaccinations. Most of the participants had small farms themselves or were interested in raising food for their family on limited acreage. The class was a great success with future plans to move this program to other counties with even more topics to be covered.

Oconee, Pickens, and Anderson Counties Master Gardener Program  
Layla Burgess, Urban Horticulture, Master Gardener Coordinator

The Master Gardener program begins with a 16-week training course covering subjects from soil and plant physiology to vegetable & fruit gardening along with improving the homeowner landscape. Participants then use knowledge acquired to serve the local communities by disseminating valuable information and educating others. Fourteen students attended the 2016 training course and eleven students graduated as Certified Clemson Extension Master Gardeners. One additional student graduated the online training course as a Certified Clemson Extension Master Gardener and four 2015 graduates completed certification. In addition to the Master Gardener Training Course, students are required to volunteer 40 hours of their time back to their local community to become fully Certified Clemson Extension Master Gardeners. According to IndependentSector.org, volunteer hours are worth $23.56/hour in South Carolina (latest index April 2016). Our 2016 Master Gardener Class (15 students) will potentially donate 600 hours to South Carolina valued at $14,136 worth of volunteer service to the local community. Completion of certification by the four 2015 class graduates contributes an additional 160 hours to South Carolina carrying a value of $3,769.60. For the program period July 2015 to June 2016, the sixteen newly Certified Clemson Extension Master Gardeners contributed a total of 640 hours valued at $15,078.40 worth of volunteer service. Three Certified Clemson Extension Master Gardeners were reactivated to alumni status during this period.
Oconee County Offers Confined Animal Manure Manager Trainings

Morris Warner, County Coordinator, Livestock and Forages Agent

The Confined Animal Manure Manager (CAMM) program team consists of agents and specialists with Clemson University, the Clemson Extension Service, the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control, and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. The team was assembled in 1998 to comply with State Regulation R.61-43, which states:

An operator of a new or existing swine facility, lagoon, manure storage pond, or manure utilization area shall complete a training program on the operation of swine manure management created by Clemson University.

An operator of an animal facility or manure utilization area shall attend a training program on the operation of animal manure management under the program created by Clemson University.

During 2015-2016 Oconee Clemson Extension has cooperated with the statewide team to provide this critical training for area farmers. Two trainings were held to allow producers to obtain recertification credits (2-01-2016 and 6-13-2016). Trainings provided 2 hours of recertification credits to attending farmers. A total of 59 farmers were trained for a total of 118 hours of recertification credits for farmers towards CAMM requirements.

Youth Bee Camp Grows in Popularity

Mallory Dailey, 4-H Agent

Beekeeping is no longer, just for adults. After the success of last year’s youth beekeeping camp, County Extension Agent, Morris Warner enlisted the assistance of new 4-H Agent, Mallory Dailey to expand the camp. The camp almost tripled in size from the year before. Eleven youth from Oconee, Pickens, and Anderson counties attended the four-day camp which even drew attention from the local media. The Seneca Journal featured the camp in a cover story page in the newspaper, and local news station, WYFF4, sent out a film crew to the camp and aired segments as a feature story on the evening news. The youth were taught the basics of beekeeping and the importance of pollinators. This year, the camp added an additional day, so the participants would have more hands-on opportunities with beekeeping. The campers opened a colony to observe the bees, learned how to light a smoker, and had the opportunity to extract honey from the hive. During the week, the kids learned about how different plant sources changed the taste of honey due to the pollen that the bees collected. Dr. Jennifer Tsuruda, Extension Beekeeping specialist brought different kinds of honey for campers to try. Each year we hope to build the camp and continue to provide youth with beekeeping opportunities in the future.

Produce Safety Alliance Training

Adair Hoover, Area Food Safety Agent

Food safety continues to be an important topic in South Carolina. An upcoming resource that will directly benefit Oconee County produce growers is the newly developed Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) training. This training educates produce farmers on the up-to-date safety practices and regulations that will soon be required by the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). In preparation, a group of Clemson Extension Food Safety Agents and Agricultural Agents have teamed up to become trained and certified to teach produce safety to SC farms. In 2017, PSA trainings will be delivered across the state to Produce farmers. Farmers will receive comprehensive information on food safety practices and regulations directly related to growing, harvesting and distributing fresh produce. This will enable them to produce foods that are in compliance with the upcoming FSMA regulations.
An important food safety program in SC is the ServSafe Managers Certification. According to the United States Department of Agriculture in 2012 Americans spent more than 43.1 % of their food dollars on meals outside of their home. The Clemson Extension food safety team is working hard to help ensure that food service establishments are producing and selling safe, wholesome foods. We do that through training and certifying managers of food service establishments. This year we have offered more than 10 ServSafe manager trainings in the upstate certifying managers from Oconee, Pickens, Greenville and Anderson counties. These classes ensure that food service professionals are up-to-date on current food safety issues and practices, with the expectation that the information will be passed on to their staff who have direct contact with food.

Food safety is important throughout the year but holiday season offers some extra challenges. Often people spend more time eating at parties, dinners and in other group settings. Oconee County residents are encouraged to take a minute to think about food safety in advance. One way to get quick reminders of some common food safety fouls during holiday dinners is to check out the Food Safety for Reel video: Holidays, Handwashing, and Hygiene. This 3-minute video will remind you of a few ways to be safe when eating in group settings and hopefully give you a little laugh. To watch it go to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQ6jGdg-gul&feature=youtu.be

The Upstate area of South Carolina is not known as a large Corn and Soybean Production area of the state, however, there are still a large number of row crop producers who either farm full or part time. These producers are still in need of valuable research based information provided through Clemson University to help them maximize their production systems. With the emergence of the new invasive insects like the sugarcane aphid, glyphosate resistant weeds, and diseases like Asiatic soybean rust, the need for this type of program is even more critical.

The annual “Upstate Row Crops Production” meeting was held in Anderson County on February 3, 2016. Over 20 local producers from surrounding counties participated in this program. Producers were given information on weed management options for corn and soybeans, insect and disease management in soybeans, and Clemson’s Certified Seed Program and official variety trials (OVTs) conducted across the state.

The 2016 producer meeting had 27 row crop producers in attendance from five upstate counties. All producers expressed that they gained valuable knowledge, which will help them be more profitable in their row crop production. Many of our state Extension specialists participate in this meeting where they relay information from their research trials to our upstate producers. Producers can then utilize what they learn in making their farming operations more efficient and profitable.

Row Crop producers from area counties

4-H Horse Shows Return to Oak Grove Arena
Mallory Dailey, 4-H Agent

Saturday afternoons are no longer quiet at Oconee County 4-H’ Oak Grove Barn and Arena, thanks to a new 4-H Volunteer, Kayla Duncan. When Kayla was growing up in Oconee County, she participated in horse shows at the arena on a regular basis, and discovered her love of horses. Wanting to provide the same opportunities for the children in Oconee County as she did growing up, she became a 4-H Volunteer and started the “Oconee County Rough Riders Horse Club.” Since the club started in November of 2015, the club has hosted five horse shows at the Oak Grove Arena, conducted monthly meetings, and has already made a tremendous impact on the community.

Oconee Co. 4-H Member

Food Safety in Oconee County
Adair Hoover, Area Food Safety Agent

Bringing Growers and Specialists Together
Chris Talley, Agronomy Agent, Upstate
Oconee Forestry Targets Youth  
Carolyn Dawson, Area Forestry Agent

Forestry programs often target landowners and professional members of the timber industry when offering educational programs. In an effort to reach out to children and educate, involve, and hopefully spark a career in forestry or natural resources, the Oconee forestry agent annually participates in several forestry youth programs. The South Carolina Forestry Commission holds the annual Wood Magic Fair in which Clemson Extension participates. Several educational stations such as good fire-bad fire, paper making, gifts of the forest, and board cutting teach youth the role that forestry plays in their everyday lives. This year approximately 500 kids attended the week-long event.

Each year, Clemson Extension also participates annually teaching at the Little Cane Creek Farm’s corn maze. Educational stations are set up and kids are taught concepts in forestry, wildlife and taking care of natural resources.

Clemson Extension Continues to Receive Title III Funding  
Carolyn Dawson, Area Forestry Agent

Clemson Extension continues to receive Title III funding from Oconee County in order to administer Firewise programming. This year we received approximately $34,000. Extension partnered with the SC Forestry Commission to use the Firewise program to educate communities and homeowners in high risk areas on ways they can take ownership of protecting their homes from damage or destruction from potential wildfire. Wildfire risk assessments are conducted that can be used to write action plans for communities. The objective of these plans is to set clear priorities for wildfire threat mitigation. Prioritized recommendations are included for reducing wildland fuels and structure ignitability to better protect the community and its essential infrastructure. The assessment and plan involve local fire departments to coordinate the firefighting resources within the community. This year Beacon Shores and Port Santorini completed the required wildfire mitigation recommendations in their communities and as a result, received their Firewise Community USA awards and signs.
Rabbit Showmanship Offered at the State Fair

Tina Reif, 4-H Program Coordinator

While some view a rabbit as simply a pet, 4-H views a rabbit as one of the great opportunities to teach responsibility, showmanship etiquette, public speaking skills, and confidence. The “Tri-County Furry Friends 4-H Rabbit Club” began 5 years ago to promote and encourage youth in the tri-county area to show their rabbits, both in 4-H and even further into the professional rabbit show world. The youth in the club have had the opportunity to show in showmanship and breed classes. They have also taken written tests, created educational poster displays, competed in breed identification contests, and judging contests. At monthly club meetings, Tina Reif, club leader and Program Coordinator for Oconee Co. 4-H, teaches a variety of topics related to rabbits. Youth members continue their learning experience by completing project book work. Two years ago, Tina began talking with the livestock show committee for the South Carolina State Fair about allowing the rabbit project youth to have a show during the state fair. As a result, the 2016 South Carolina State Fair saw a new livestock show this past October. For the first time in the history of the State Fair, Rabbit Showmanship was offered. The morning of the show twenty-four youth from across the state gathered in eager anticipation. The future of the rabbit livestock project is strong as it grows across the state. Oconee County 4-H has taken the lead with this project and will continue to be an active part, introducing more youth to the joys of showing rabbits.

Commercial Fruit & Vegetable Agent Starts Work in Oconee County

Kerrie Roach is a recent addition to the staff in Oconee County as a commercial fruit and vegetable agent. Kerrie came to Clemson after working for NC Cooperative Extension for 7 years as a horticulture agent. As a Clemson alumnus she is excited to be back ‘home’.

In the few short months she’s been with Clemson, Kerrie has started working closely with apple and peach growers in the upstate along with getting to know the commercial vegetable producers in the tri-county area. She is excited to get a program started and build it over many years. She just wrapped up a weed identification training class a few week ago with more than 40 growers in attendance.