Pasture Reminders
By Jim Green, NCSU Department of Crop Science

August is a busy haymaking month, but there are a few timely tips that may be helpful in managing pasture and hayland. To stimulate established warm-season grass yields, maintain agronomic rates of nitrogen in a timely manner. If moisture stays limited, then consider carefully the amount of nitrogen applied. Remember that inorganic nitrogen is usually used or leached or rendered unavailable after about 6 to 8 weeks. If a seeded variety of Bermuda has been planted, competition from grassy plants like crabgrass, broadleaf signal grass, goosegrass, and foxtails will likely be very competitive during this establishment phase. The only way to control this competition is with mowing or grazing with a high stock density. It is best to mow or graze before the competing grasses reach 8-10 inches tall, but do not cut or graze the Bermuda seedlings below about 2-3 inches during this early establishment phase. Control summer pasture weeds before they get to tall and mature; herbicides, mowing, or high stock density grazing will be useful in controlling most weeds. When plants are under severe moisture stress, be aware of the potential for nitrate toxicity, especially with plants growing on sites receiving high levels of nitrogen. If soil moisture does become limiting and growth of grasses slows significantly or it stops, do not allow animals to continue to graze the plants below their target “stop grazing” heights. A plant that is shorter than it should be will not respond to favorable moisture when it does return. In addition, cattle grazing grass that is below 2-3 inches tall are not able to get their daily needs; so put them in a sacrifice area and feed hay or other ingredients while protecting the pasture. Grazing height and frequency affects root development as much or more than top growth. Overgrazing can weaken stands and reduce yield potential. Restrict the free access of animals to riparian areas during hot weather by offering alternative drinking water locations, shade, and minerals away from the sensitive zones when soils are wet and subject to trampling damage.

Take soil samples from fields that will be overseeded or planted during the fall. Apply lime as far in advance to planting as possible, especially if pH is less than 5.5.

NPDES versus State Non-Discharge Permit Requirements

Please refer to the following information referencing the differences of an NPDES and a State Non-Discharge Permit.

NPDES: Form due by March 31st each year. (Note: Sludge survey information should also be turned in at this time.) 1/4 of the farms did not meet the deadline. This is a violation and could result in such.

STATE: No annual certification requirement.

NPDES: All facilities will receive notification from DWQ by January 2006 about performing the Phosphorous Loss Assessment Tool (PLAT). The producer has 6 months to complete PLAT. Any necessary changes to the CAWMP as a result of PLAT must be made by July 1, 2007, which is the permit expiration date. (As of June, there were 28 changes that had to be made out of 500 PLAT ratings).

STATE: The producer has 12 months in which to have PLAT run on waste application fields.

Large Round Bale Safety

Large round baling creates unique safety problems for forage producers. Large round balers have many moving parts that
can cause injury or death if a person becomes entangled. Never leave the tractor seat until the power take off (PTO) has been disengaged, the engine is shut off, and all moving parts have stopped. Please refer to the following safety tips provided by Emily Adams, Extension Agent in Onslow County:

• A round baler is bulky and reduces operator vision to the rear. When the bale chamber contains a bale, rear vision may be completely eliminated. Be watchful when backing the baler.
• Be sure no one is near the rear gate when it is being raised and lowered. Keep everyone clear of the rear baler during unloading. Large round bales can roll after discharge when on hilly terrain.
• Before servicing, cleaning, or adjusting a round baler, disengage the tractor PTO and shut off the engine. Never attempt to pull hay or twine from an operating baler.
• Block the gate before working under it. Use the safety lock system for the baler gate or the safety stops for the gate lift cylinders.
• Always keep the PTO properly shielded.
• Always shift the tractor transmission into park and lock the brakes, or block the baler wheels if the baler is not hitched to a tractor, before working on or under the baler.
• Never allow passengers to ride on the baler during operation or transport.
• During operation, remain seated on the tractor seat to reduce the chance of falling into the path of the baler.
• Be extremely cautious when operating a baler on uneven terrain. The baler could tip sideways if it strikes a hole, ditch, or other irregularity, especially if carrying a nearly completed bale.
• Do not make sharp turns; with the tractor wheels set wide to straddle windrows, rear tires could strike the baler tongue on sharp turns.
• Never be in a hurry about anything to do with the baling operation.
• Keep safety signs clean, readable, and free from obstructing material. Replace damaged or missing safety emblems with new ones. Instruct all operators on the meaning of the hazard signs.

Agronomic Reports Online
The North Carolina Department of Agriculture’s Agronomic Division currently has the following estimated processing times:

• Soil samples - 7 days
• Nematode samples - 2 days
• Plant samples – 2 days
• Waste/solution samples – 2 days

You can download soil test forms and information about taking, submitting, and interpreting soil samples at the following url:
http://www.ncagr.com/agronomi/sthome.htm