

New Year's Resolutions

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Howdy. I trust that everyone ate just as much over the Christmas Holiday as you did over Thanksgiving. Hopefully, travel was smooth and there were no major incidences that affected you or your families. I certainly enjoyed the time with mine and Reyna's families in Texas. They probably were not as worried about seeing us as they were about seeing Raylee. Anyway, it was nice to be able to go home for a little while.

I thought discussing New Year's Resolutions would be appropriate for the time. I never really have been a big New Year's resolution maker because I usually thought of it as doing something that you tried and failed to accomplish in the past. However, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a resolution as a formal expression of opinion, will, or intent voted by an official body or assembled group. I wanted to discuss a few of the things that the North Carolina Livestock Advisory Committee and I have discussed implementing in the future, specifically this next year. I realize that you can only accomplish so much in a given time period, but we have set our goals high for 2005. I learned from my time as a 4-Her that you set goals that seem just out of reach; otherwise, you will not work as hard to achieve them because you already know you can.

The first event that I attended in North Carolina was the State 4-H Livestock and Skillathon Contests. The participation was good, but I would like to see it grow. In order for growth to occur, I feel that we must really provide premium livestock that represents the importance of the event. I will be calling some of you asking if you would be willing to donate some of your livestock for use in the Livestock Contest and then allow you to take them back home. I would like to display cattle classes on halter, just as they are at the National Contest in Louisville, KY. We will put together one or two classes of purebred heifers and maybe one class of yearling bulls. A production scenario and data will be provided on these classes. Also, we will be trying to get four or five steers from the spring shows that we can target for a really nice market steer class. Three classes made up of one or two gilt classes and one or two market hog classes will represent the swine portion of the contest. Additionally, three classes made up of one or two ewe classes and one or two market lamb classes will represent the sheep portion of the contest. Finally, we will add one class of meat goats to the contest. I feel that we should only use this class as a practice class this year and will make it part of the contest in the future. I think we need to make sure that coaches are comfortable with our meat goats and a certain degree of consistency is achieved before we count this class in the total score. For those of you that are wondering why meat goats are going into the Livestock contest, look around and recognize that like it or not the meat goat is the fastest growing livestock industry in the United States right now. Goats will be making their debut in a collegiate contest this year and probably soon to follow in the National 4-H contest. We do not know when that decision will be made, but our kids will be ready when the time comes. Questions will be asked on one cattle, sheep, and swine class. Seniors will give a set of reasons on one cattle, sheep, and swine class, and Juniors will give a set of reasons on a cattle class and either a sheep or swine class. If you are interested in donating some

livestock or would like to volunteer to help, please call me. In order for this contest to be a great success, we need more help than what Anna and I can provide between us and the few “regular” volunteers that we have from year to year. Please help us make this the best State 4-H Livestock Contest ever and set a pattern for the future.

Abby Hucks, Kendra Kaiser, Justin Whitley, and Bain Wilson made up the 2004 North Carolina 4-H Livestock Judging team that competed at the National contest in Louisville, KY held in conjunction with the North American International Livestock Exposition. I think we did very well, and these kids should be congratulated on their hard work and dedication to the team. I know none of us were completely satisfied with our overall standing of 14th in the nation out of 31 teams. However, we did have some individual and team honors. Bain Wilson was 10th High Individual in sheep and the team placed 7th. Kendra Kaiser was 8th High Individual in swine and the team placed 5th. We placed our cattle well, but ran into some trouble in the reasons room. I was very proud of the kids. I think they had a great time, learned a lot, and represented our state well.

[Pictured from left to right are Phillip Rowan, CEA Pitt County – Coach of State Winning Team; John Barnes, Alternate – Wilson County; Abby Hucks – Nash County; Justin Whitley – Wilson County; Bain Wilson – Stanly County; Kendra Kaiser – Wilson County; Milo Lewis – Pitt County; and Brian Faris – Livestock Specialist and Coach. Not pictured is Redden Lewis from Pitt County.] Redden was burned while preparing food for the Livestock team’s fundraiser at the Angus Advantage Sale. He is alright other than it required him to miss the trip to Louisville. I will say that Redden was a joy to coach and has a good eye for livestock.

The State Skillathon Contest will continue to improve. I think we had a good contest this past year and at the State Fair. Some of the participants and coaches have said that it has been difficult, but I assure you that it will not get any easier. Anna has done a good job of bringing these contests up to a similar level of difficulty as many other states and the National contest.

Brandon Burgiss, Lauren Kloc, Callie McAdams, and Jesse Scott made up the 2004 North Carolina 4-H Skillathon team that competed at the National contest in Louisville, KY held in conjunction with the North American International Livestock Exposition. Callie McAdams was 4th High Individual in Quality Assurance and 8th High Individual Overall in the contest. The team finished 10th in the nation out of 18 teams. This team was under quite a bit of pressure to succeed considering North Carolina had the National Champion team in 2003. We will be striving to regain that title next year. Congratulations to these kids on their hard work. [Pictured from left to right are John Brasfield – Stokes County Team Coach; Brandon Burgiss – Stokes County; Lauren Kloc – Stokes County; Jesse Scott – Stokes County; Callie McAdams – Orange County; and Brian Faris – Livestock Specialist and Coach.]

Since we are talking about judging, I think it would only be fitting to discuss implementing some judges’ trainings. Each year, agents across the state have difficulty finding judges to evaluate livestock at their county fairs, showmanship circuit shows, and other livestock shows. The difficulty lies in the fact that we have so few numbers of judges that will perform the task. Therefore, I would like to start some judging schools for cattle, sheep, swine, and meat goats. First, the schools will be conducted by some of the top judges that we currently have in our state and some out of state. Second, we will begin to establish some consistency in type of livestock and showmanship techniques that

should be required. Yes, everyone has their own opinion yet we still need to establish some consistency. Third, we will be able to provide a list of those “certified” judges that have attended these schools over the State 4-H Livestock Program webpage. This list could be accessed by any agent or volunteer that may be required to secure judges for different livestock shows, and some judges will be automatically placed on the list due to their qualifications from judging past events. Fourth, those judges who become certified will be responsible for self-policing the quality and character of the judges who become certified. Fifth, we will open this up to anyone that wants to participate. During the training, you will evaluate numerous classes of livestock and must be able to defend yourself through presentation of oral reasons. Now, the reasons style associated with 4-H Livestock Judging will not be required; however, you must be able to stand in front of a group and fairly defend your placings. If you do not choose to participate in the schools, I feel it is like voting in an election, you really will not have any reason to complain about the way a judge evaluates livestock. Please be looking for this program coming in the near future.

Schools, schools, schools...maybe I should change “schools” to “educational opportunities”. I hope to begin offering 4-H Livestock Project Schools. I would like to take a week and offer a school or camp for different livestock projects focusing on areas like selection, nutrition and feeding, health care, grooming, and showmanship. I have had the opportunity to serve as instructor at a 4-H Livestock Project School and was amazed at the improvement in showmanship skills I saw within the time of the school. Additionally, the quality of livestock and success of those kids that had attended improved year after year. For example, during the first half of the week we would offer schools for cattle and swine projects and the second half of the week would focus on sheep and meat goat projects. Kids will be asked to bring one or two animals to the school so that they may get hands-on experience with their own project. Currently, the “hold-up” on these plans are finding the facilities and working on the cost. This is a program that I really have high hopes for and will offer the best educational opportunity to our youth.

Volunteers, we have not forgotten about you. In order for 4-H Club work to even happen, we must have volunteers. To have volunteers, we must have those willing to give up some of their time and energy to help their 4-H program. Folks, our agents are good, but they are not super humans. We are working on some plans to offer more volunteer training. I have proposed a Meat Goat Volunteer Workshop for the 2005 NC 4-H Volunteer Leaders’ Conference on Saturday, February 5th. If the proposal is accepted, I will have an hour and a half workshop targeted at helping volunteer leaders feel comfortable offering suggestions to youth on selection strategies and showmanship. If time allows I will touch on some other issues, but I want leave some time for questions.

I am sure many of you are wondering about the State Fair. Well, I am working closely with my Livestock Advisory Committee on a proposal for maintaining and improving areas in the cattle, sheep, swine, and meat goat shows that will be submitted to NCDA officials for final approval. Everyone must realize that change is inevitable. I realize you all have been hearing this same song for several years now, but I hope we can do some things that will really help our exhibitors. Please be patient with this process. Rome was not built in a day, right? Also understand that proposed changes will be the general consensus of those members serving on the Livestock Advisory Committee and

will represent the best interest of our present and future 4-Hers across the entire state. This committee is made of livestock and 4-H agents, livestock producers, volunteers, 4-Hers, and a member of NCDA. Our goal is not to please everyone, but try to guide this program towards growth and success for years to come.

Folks, I realize this has been a long article, but I want you to know what is going through our minds in the state office. If you would like to help accomplish any of these events or have any comments, questions, or concerns, please feel free to contact me by phone 919-515-7722 or email brian_faris@ncsu.edu OR you can contact Anna Munday at 919-515-4467 or anna_munday@ncsu.edu. Thanks for your time.