



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Dr. M. Norris Adams will focus on orthopedic procedures at the Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center.

IN BRIEF

Lameness surgeon joins Tech facility

LEESBURG — Dr. M. Norris Adams has joined Virginia Tech's Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center as a clinical assistant professor in equine lameness and surgery. In this role, Adams will focus on elective orthopedic procedures and will assist with the expansion of the center's outpatient services program.

Adams comes to the center with a diverse background in private practice. He worked as an associate veterinarian and surgeon in New York, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut before moving to Virginia to serve as a clinical assistant instructor in large animal surgery at the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine's Veterinary Teaching Hospital in Blacksburg.

For the past eight years, Adams has practiced in northern Virginia at both the Piedmont Equine Practice in The Plains, and the Middleburg Equine Clinic in Middleburg.

2008 gardening lecture series

The Piedmont Master Gardeners Association will be offering its annual gardening lecture series from March 6 through March 27. The series will run for four consecutive Thursday evenings from 7 to 8:30 pm. The lectures will be held in Room A at the Albemarle County Office Building, 5th Street Extended.

■ On March 6, Nancy Newman will present "Monarch Butterflies. A Charlottesville local, Nancy has spent the last ten years as the outreach educator for the Virginia Museum of Natural History.

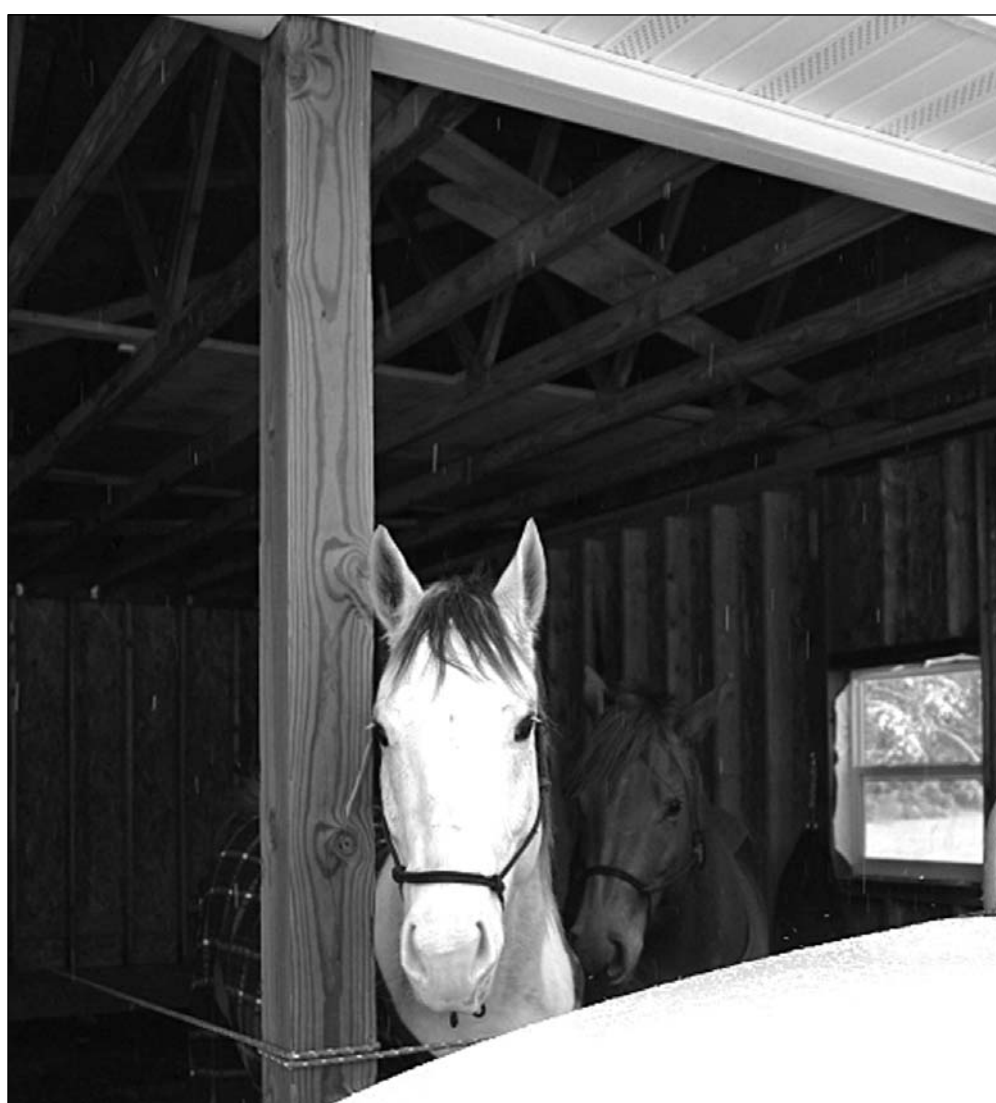
■ On March 13, Norie Burnett will present "Moss Gardening. Featured in many major gardening publications,

■ On March 20, Mike Andruczyk will present "Water-Wise Gardening." He will help us understand how we, personally and collectively, can help improve water quality and decrease soil erosion while simultaneously improving the aesthetics in our neighborhoods.

■ On March 27, Marc McVicker will present "Landscaping Your Home - Beautifully and Wisely." An experienced landscape designer, McVicker is a fount of practical knowledge.

The fee for the entire series is \$25 or \$8 for each individual lecture. Pre-registration is strongly advised and registration forms and directions may be obtained by calling the Extension office at (434) 872-4580.

CONTRIBUTED REPORTS



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Max, front, and Roo, David and Anita's trusty horses, escaped their fencing last week during the heavy snow — giving the couple quite an adventure in tracking them down.

A wandering we will go

Well, we had some real fun last week, I can tell you! The terrible twins, Max and Roo, decided to go on an adventure of their own Thursday, just as the heavens opened and dropped some six inches of snow on us!

Now, I know that six inches of snow is a mere drop in the ocean to a lot of you Americans, but the last time I saw snowfall this deep and quick was when I was still in short-trousers, and my Mum was taking me off to school.

Anita and I had gotten up really early that morning and moved the horses' electric fence to an area of trees so that they could get some shelter from the weather.

Now, I have to point out here that this portable electric fence has been all around the country with us and has proven invaluable. Both horses have fully respected it and, apart from one incident in Missouri, where some random raccoons gave them an unexpected fright during the night, we have never had any trouble with them.

Pleased with our efforts, Anita and I retired to the house to have a well-earned "cuppa" and some breakfast. The bread hadn't been in the toaster long enough to brown, before Anita looked out and saw that the whole electric fence had been knocked over, tangled up, and dragged through the trees. What was worse, there was no sign of the horses whatsoever!

By now, the snow was really coming down and although we dashed out of the house to the field, the horses couldn't be seen anywhere and their tracks were already covered. We ran back to the truck to go look for them, and luckily, just as we were coming out of the driveway, a cyclist (yes in the snow!) was going by and



DAVID AND ANITA HASBURY-SNOGLES

told us he had seen a couple of horses about a mile or so down the road!

Of course, we had run straight out of the house with no cell phone, no hats or wellies (galoshes), and, of course, never even thought about taking any tack with us other than halters and lead ropes.

About a mile and a half later, we spotted their bright blue and red blankets in someone else's back yard; luckily no damage appeared to have been done to either horses or property, and we were eventually able to corner them and get their halters on. Anita and I took turns leading the horses and driving the truck back home on thick, snow-covered roads.

While we were rounding the horses up, an older gentleman came along in his car — at this point, you never know whether the greeting you receive is going to be a friendly one or a "get off my land with both barrels blazing" kind of reception. As luck would have it, he spoke to us in a friendly manne. Apparently, there had been several telephone calls made around the area, all reporting some loose horses; without our even knowing it, quite a few people were on the lookout for us!

In trying to explain who we were, I told the old chap I write a column for the local newspaper, and he asked me if I knew the English couple

riding around America! When I informed him we were those people, he replied "Oh, you don't look as old as your picture." I took that as a kind of back-handed compliment!

About a mile down the road, we finally turned onto Glebe Way, where another truck pulled alongside us and the two ladies inside told us they were from a nearby farm. They had 22 horses, all of whom were accounted for, but having seen our horses earlier, they were now just making sure we got back OK.

We finally got the horses back to the house and tied them up in the garage. We found some rope and hooks and made a makeshift barn for the horses so that they would be safe out of the snow. We hadn't been able to put the electric fence up again for a few days, as it had snowed so much that we couldn't actually see where the poles were, and a lot of the black rope holders had popped off the poles and disappeared in the deep snow!

I'm happy to say that, despite the continuing deep freeze around here, we have now managed to salvage enough of the fencing to get a temporary paddock set up in the neighbouring field, and the horses can once again enjoy the (slightly) warm sunshine during the day.

Max and Roo enjoyed their impromptu little adventure together (our suspicions are that Max led Roo astray), but have thought twice about doing it again, as I explained to them on the long walk back who would be preparing their breakfast and supplying their hay tomorrow morning — we humans have our uses you know!

David Snogles can be reached at david_hasbury@yahoo.com

A useful tool for crop budgets

Just returned from several days in Blacksburg where agents from across Virginia gathered at our annual meeting to receive training and share programming information among peers.

We learn a lot from each other and gain useful information to bring back home from an excellent group of Extension specialists. I attended classes that gave me updates on direct marketing, grass-finished beef, small poultry flocks, beef cattle diseases and crop and livestock budgets.

Considering the time of year, I know many of you are laying plans for the coming spring. You are pricing fertilizer, seed, chemicals and equipment so as to be ready for the planting time I said last week could be as soon as 60 days from now.

The Agriculture Economics Department at Virginia Tech has done an excellent job of updating our crop and livestock budgets. The new crop budgets are my focus for this article. You can access them online if you search for "Virginia Extension," then when you get our site open, look for "Educational Programs," which will bring up a group of choices. Among those choices will be "Farm Business Management." Under this section ask for "crop budgets" and then open those that pertain to your operation.

If you do not have a computer, the library has a public access machine you can use to get this information or you can come by our offices here on West Street, and Peter Callan and I can help you with working out budgets using our computers.

The work our economists have done not only updates prices and income in the budgets, but also have new flexibility so you can input your own numbers in key places for costs and your own income projections.

Of course, your income projections would be based upon cash contract arrangements made or other forward pricing you have done. The folks who conducted the training pointed out that Extension budgets are not intended to be the only source of information you use, but should be adjusted with real numbers to reflect your conditions.

Finding break-even crop prices or maximum allowable costs for inputs are new oper-



CARL STAFFORD

ations that these budgets will allow. You can manipulate the budgets to find out these answers. For example, you can find out how much you can afford to pay for nitrogen in the corn budget if you know how much your corn will be worth at harvest.

With currently projected prices, some of you could pay more for nitrogen and still make a profit — if you can lock in a price that supports this higher nitrogen price. Another flexible part of these new budgets is in figuring out how high the price must be to support your projected costs. The value of these decision aids depends on the numbers you are using.

Variable and fixed costs are represented in all of our budgets. Those costs that do not change with any level of production are considered to be fixed. You have sunk costs in machinery that do not change whether you run the equipment over 10 acres or 1000 acres. Those costs that change with different levels of production are variable costs.

Typically, for your corn crop, this would be fuel for tractors, fertilizer or seed for each acre you plant. These costs go up and down with your level of production, but the fixed costs do not — they stay the same.

We have budgets for corn, soybeans, small grains, hay and pasture. There are a number of variations including different types of tillage, equipment size, efficiency, yield level and chemicals used.

Custom operators will be interested to learn that the budgets have tables that help you price the value of your custom work. These include horsepower, traction, fuel consumption, maintenance, implement size and field efficiency. All of these variables will impact your bottom line and they all need your attention before spring.

Carl Stafford is Culpeper County Extension Agent, Animal Science. He can be reached at ccstaffo@vt.edu.

U.Va. cutting down 100-year-old oak

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS Cabell Hall off Jefferson Park Avenue.

CHARLOTTESVILLE — And down goes an ancient oak tree. When the university's Board of Visitors appointed the school's first president, Edwin Anderson Alderman, the tree was nothing more than a seedling.

The University of Virginia is removing a giant 100-year-old oak tree because it has extensive rot in its roots and trunk. The 110-foot tall tree has a 152-inch circumference and is located near New University officials decided to remove the tree amid concerns that it would tumble on to the nearby road.

ASK THE JEWELER
at Petersen Jewelers

Q: Is there a list of Birthstones of the Zodiac?

A: Yes, there are several. A number of these lists agree that the ruby is the birthstone for Capricorn, the sign for December 22 – January 20, and that the garnet is the birthstone for Aquarius, the sign for January 21 – February 18.

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