

Collaborative Creativity:
Crafting the Stalk Newsletter



Theresa Pittman, Virginia Cooperative Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent, Northampton County; Dr. Mark Reiter, Eastern Shore Agricultural and Research Extension Center Director and Soils & Nutrient Management Specialist

Introduction

Discover the art of teamwork and innovation in newsletter production. Accomack & Northampton County Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) ANR agents and the Virginia Tech Eastern Shore Agricultural Research and Extension Center (ESAREC) Director produce a monthly collaborative newsletter: "The Stalk" designed for maximum impact reach to their stakeholders. Following is a deep dive into the collaborative processes that drive the success of The Stalk.

From brainstorming sessions to final edits, we will highlight the generation process of engaging and relevant content that resonates with our audience, making each edition of The Stalk a must-read. Design and layout are crucial elements of our work. Learn about the principles that make their newsletter visually appealing and easy to read. We will share tips on using design tools and software to create professional-looking publications that captivate our readers.

Managing the production timeline is another critical aspect. We will review best practices for planning, setting realistic deadlines, and allocating resources efficiently. We will share how we handle unexpected challenges in newsletter production, turning potential obstacles into opportunities for innovation.

Celebrate the power of collaborative creativity. Whether you're a seasoned professional or just starting out, we trust you will find practical advice and creative ideas to enhance your work and build a community of like-minded individuals passionate about content creation and communication.

Planning and Brainstorming

The Stalk Newsletter aims to serve as a vital communication platform within the agricultural sector, fostering informed decision-making and community engagement. Its primary purpose is to disseminate timely and accurate information to a diverse audience, including farmers, agricultural professionals, researchers, policymakers, and concerned consumers.



To achieve this, the newsletter focuses on a broad range of relevant research and extension topics, such as sustainable farming practices, innovative agricultural technologies, market trends, policy updates, and success stories from local farmers. To ensure content relevance and audience engagement, the brainstorming process actively involves Extension Agents, Extension Specialists, and students from agricultural programs at the ESAREC. Their fresh perspectives and insights on contemporary issues enrich the newsletter's content, making it a valuable resource for the entire agricultural community..

Team members from VCE and the ESAREC maintain a standing monthly meeting to discuss each upcoming edition of The Stalk. Meetings cover an overview of each member's responsibility for content and lead to further valuable collaboration opportunities between each organization beyond the creation of the newsletter.

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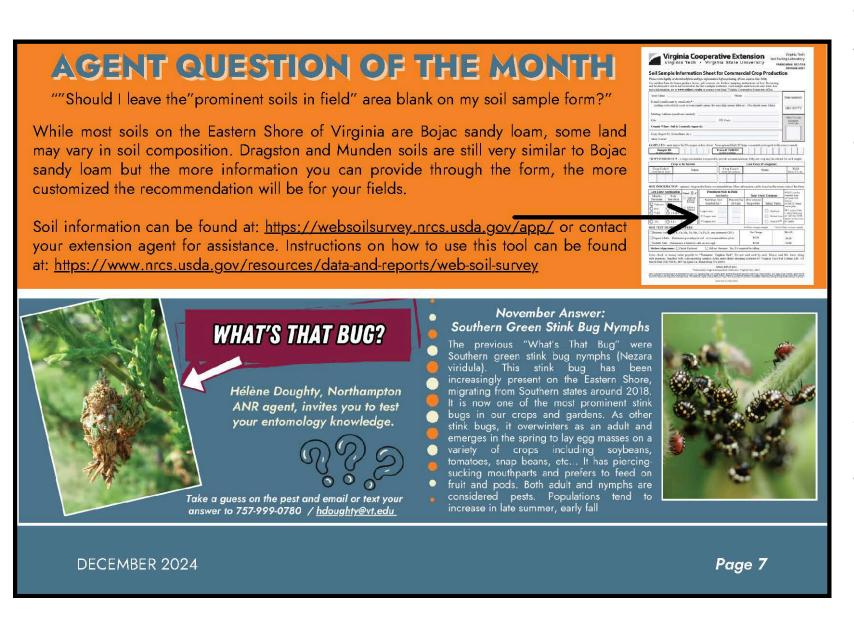
Content Creation

The Stalk Newsletter production adheres to a structured workflow. Following content brainstorming, roles and deadlines are assigned, with contributions expected from agents, specialists, and students. Collaborators work through Microsoft Teams for calendar settings, task reminders, file and photo sharing options. Clear deadlines are established for all assets to be submitted to the graphic design team, ensuring timely production. Writing emphasizes clarity, conciseness, and engaging language, with a mandatory peer-review process for editing and proofreading to maintain high-quality standards. Visual appeal is enhanced through the incorporation of high-quality images, prioritizing photos that capture the essence of events by showcasing attendees, award winners, and engaging activities.

Members of the team have standing features such as "Agent Question of the Month" or "What's That Bug?" providing engaging educational snippets for all stakeholders on a variety of agricultural topics.

Design and Layout

The Stalk Newsletter adheres to a rigorous design process to ensure optimal dissemination of information. A visually appealing and easily readable template is selected, incorporating VCE branding through consistent use of designated colors, fonts, and stylistic elements. Content organization is paramount, with a structured layout and flow tailored to each edition. Some months prioritize Specialist research findings, while others focus on agriculture awareness initiatives or upcoming events. To enhance readability, clear headings, subheadings, and bullet points are employed. Strategic placement of high-quality photos and graphics breaks up text, maintains visual interest, and complements the overall message. Each edition is reviewed for ADA and accessibility compliance.



is created through the online design platform Canva for the of the newsletter platform facilitates collaboration seamless designers. The platform allows for easy sharing of design drafts, enabling team members to feedback and provide real-time make Additionally, Canva's sharing options ensure that the newsletter publicly shared while stil allowing for necessary adjustments before publication.

environmentally friendly than ever before.

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Distribution and Promotion



The Stalk Newsletter employs a multi-faceted distribution strategy to ensure maximum reach and accessibility. Distribution methods include print copies disseminated through targeted mailings, email broadcasts to stakeholders, and online publication on the Accomack/Northampton VCE and ESAREC websites, and relevant social media platforms. To enhance accessibility, the newsletter utilizes Canva, a design tool that allows for careful consideration of font choices, color contrasts, image proportions, and the inclusion of alternative text for all images. This ensures readability for individuals with visual impairments Continuous improvement is fostered through a robust feedback collection process. Surveys, questionnaires, and informal conversations with readers are actively sought to gather valuable insights and identify areas for enhancement in future editions. This data-driven approach ensures that the Stalk Newsletter remains an effective communication tool that meets the evolving needs and preferences of its diverse readership.

Conclusion

The creation of the Stalk Newsletter is a testament to the power of collaboration and shared responsibility. Teamwork is essential, with each member contributing their unique skills and perspectives. We actively involve specialists and students in writing, photography, and design, providing valuable hands-on experience and fostering creativity. Clear and consistent communication among all team members ensures that the process runs smoothly and efficiently. We maintain a high standard of professionalism, focusing on quality and attention to detail in every aspect of the newsletter. Finally, we celebrate our successes, recognizing the hard work and dedication that goes into each edition and the positive impact it has on our community.

Impact

"The Stalk has really helped my business, allowing for opportunities to stay aware of educational programs and providing information I can take to the fields"

"I appreciate the collaboration between research and extension. The Stalk shows me that all agents are working together well for the ultimate benefit of our local agriculture"



"I look forward to reading the Stalk to stay informed on the latest research and extension work on the Eastern Shore and beyond"

"As a retired farmer, staying connected to the community and the latest agricultural developments is important to me. Reading 'The Stalk' keeps me informed about local happenings and innovations in farming. It's like having a conversation with old friends and staying rooted in the land I love."





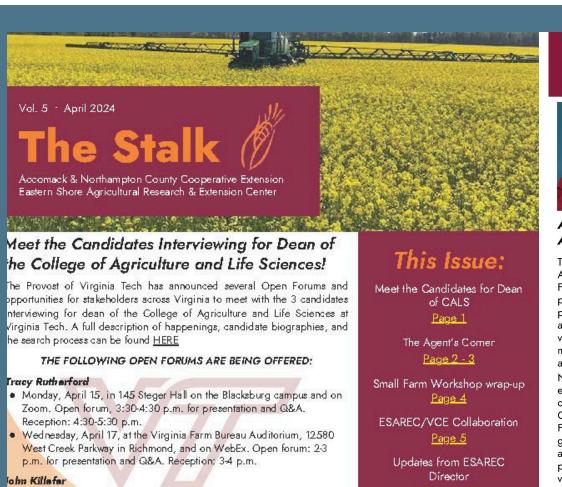












Thursday, April 18, in the Holtzman Alumni Center Assembly Hall on the

Friday, April 19, at the Virginia Farm Bureau Auditorium, 12580 West

Creek Parkway in Richmond, and on WebEx. Open forum: 2-3 p.m. for

Monday, April 22, in the Holtzman Alumni Center Assembly Hall on the

Wednesday, April 24, at the Virginia Farm Bureau Auditorium, 12580

West Creek Parkway in Richmond, and on WebEx. Open forum: 2-3

Blacksburg campus and on Zoom, Open forum: 3:30-4:30 p.m. for

Blacksburg campus and on Zoom. Open forum: 2:00-3:00 p.m. for

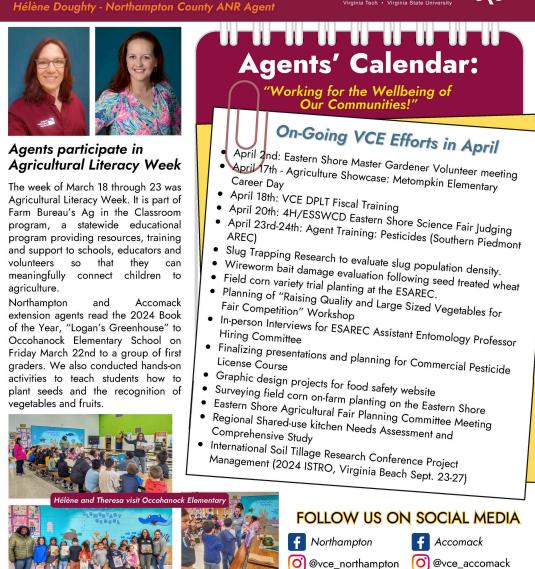
presentation and Q&A. Reception: 3-4 p.m.

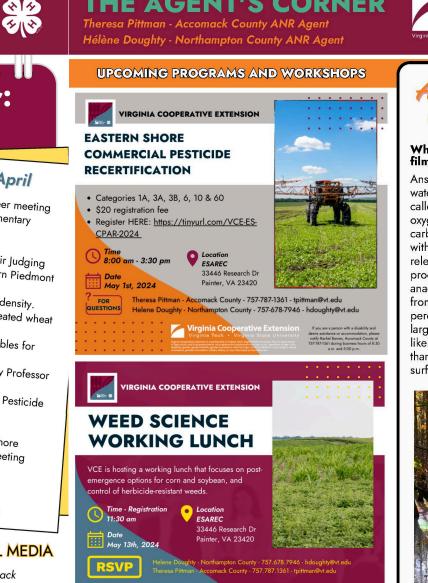
presentation and Q&A. Reception: 3-4 p.m.

presentation and Q&A. Reception: 4:30-5:30 p.m.

p.m. for presentation and Q&A. Reception: 3-4 p.m.

Mario Ferruzzi





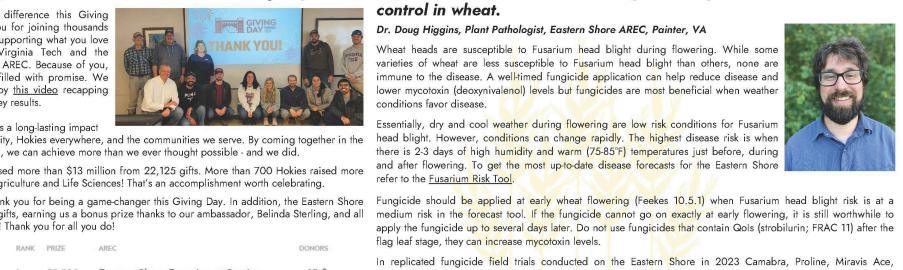
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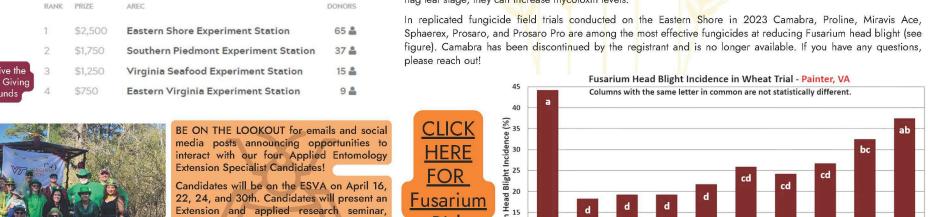


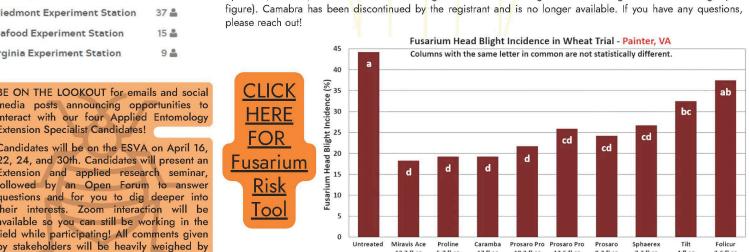
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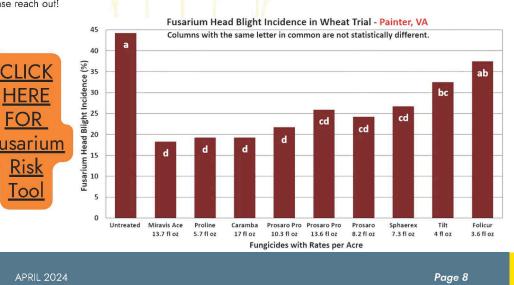


ick's Day Parade. Spreading the cheer of the Eastern Shore! the search committee in deliberations.









Pay attention to the weather during flowering for economic disease



Cover Crop Termination, Timing, and

Dr. Vijay Singh, Assistant Professor & Extension Specialist, Weed Science lanting season is approaching fast, and growers who planted cover crops in past fall need to terminate them timely. In general, there are three major factors which growers need to consider for deciding time of termination. First, termination timing should allow naximizing of cover crop biomass, which suggests late termination, however, (2) timing should also consider maturity of cover crop, and cover crop should be terminated pefore it matures or produce seeds, especially, brassica species (e.g. rapeseed

termination timing based on herbicide program, herbicide residual time period and its impact on timing of main

In general, growers in our region can target third week of April to first week of May for termination of cover crops i they are planning to plant corn crop. For soybean and cotton, cover crops can be terminated by second to third Herbicides are the most preferred tools for termination of cover crops and glyphosate is the most common

herbicide. However, our previous experiences indicate that glyphosate alone is not sufficient for terminating high biomass cover crops. Combining glyphosate with roller crimper, and/or with 2,4-D for broadleaved cover crops (e.g. rapeseed, mustard, hairy vetch, red clover) helps in better termination. Paraquat (Gramoxone) can also be used to terminate cover crops, and has shown excellent efficacy on broadleaved cover crops, but paraquat alone may not be a good option for cereal rye termination as it may re-grow after some time. Both glyphosate and paraquat are non-residual herbicides, however, glyphosate may take more time to completely kill cover crop compared with paraquat. Paraquat requires greater carrier volume (15-20 gallons/ac) for excellent control compared with glyphosate (10-15 gallons/ac). Among other options, Liberty (glufosinate) can be used for termination of cover crops in late April or May when temperature is above 72 F accompanied with bright sunny

Consider tankmix applications for greater termination efficiency and burndown of other weeds. For soybean system, Select ma 6 – 8 oz/ac) can be tankmixed with glyphosate. Add 2,4-D amine (16 fl oz / ac) with glyphosate (Roundup Powermax 22 - 32 fl oz/ac), glufosinate (Liberty 43 fl oz/ac) or paraquat (48 oz/ac) if targeting broadleaved cover crop species in corn nd soybean systems. If using 2,4-D in combination, plant corr at least 7-days after application. Considering adding AMS (8.5 os/ 100 gallons) to glyphosate for greater efficacy. Sharpen (z/ac) can be used with glyphosate for termination but maintain a window of 14-days before planting soybean. Follow label guidelines and mixing of adjuvants for herbicide safety



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