

# SHENANDOAH VALLEY

Agricultural Research and Extension Center, McCormick Farm



David Fiske (right), superintendent (2000-2018), discussing summer stockpiling at the biennial Field Day 2017

“Ten years ago, the SVAREC managed its pastures like most farms - making hay from excess growth in spring, allowing grazing through the summer and fall, and then feeding hay all winter. Each winter, animals were fed hay for 150 days. The resulting situation, one shared by beef producers across the country, was a crippling feed bill.”

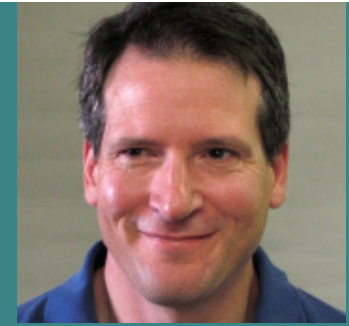
Research at McCormick Farm, led by Superintendent David Fiske, explored a better way. Rather than making hay from excess spring growth only to carry it back to the field six months later, Fiske stockpiled a portion of the pasture acres and allowed grass to accumulate in the field. This summer stockpile would not be grazed all season; Fiske called it “storing feed in the field, rather than in the barn.” This summer stockpile would then be rationed out in small sections for grazing in late summer and fall. This provided valuable pasture during a time of year often characterized by drought and allowed the remainder of the farm’s pastures to rest and accumulate fall growth for grazing in winter.

The resulting winter grazing from the summer stockpile system reduced the farm’s hay feeding to just 85 days on average for the next ten years. The innovative concept of summer stockpiling has been shared through Extension programs and articles, and dozens of farmers have adopted the practice in Virginia and other states throughout the Southeast.

“The research on summer stockpiling was inexpensive, and its effect was a practical solution born of necessity. It is a good reminder of the roots and purpose of the Agricultural Experiment station,” said **Matt Booher**, Extension agent, Augusta County.

## PARTNER WITH US

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“I have conducted forage research related to livestock at the SVAREC for over 10 years. In that time, I have had four master’s degree students, one doctoral student and a post-doctoral associate who conducted research at the station. The staff and facilities were a big factor in helping my students complete their work successfully. All of my former students are currently working in the forage-livestock industry in different capacities.”

**BENJAMIN TRACY**  
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF  
UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS  
SCHOOL OF PLANT AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES



“Working collaboratively with the SVAREC, we’ve established a native warm season grass stand which we are incorporating into our rotational grazing management. Their help, and the relationships we’ve made, have been extremely beneficial to us and our farm.”

**REBECKA SZARZYNSKI**  
OWNER/OPERATOR OF  
MOUNTAIN GLEN FARM

# SHENANDOAH VALLEY AREC, McCORMICK FARM AT A GLANCE



## DISCIPLINES

- Forestry and silvopasture
- Pasture systems research
- Ram performance testing
- Beef cattle production

## INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGIES

- Calan feeding system
- Portable solar-powered Calan gate feeding system
- Novel fescue systems
- Temple Grandin cattle handling facility
- Weather station with real-time weather data

## FACILITIES

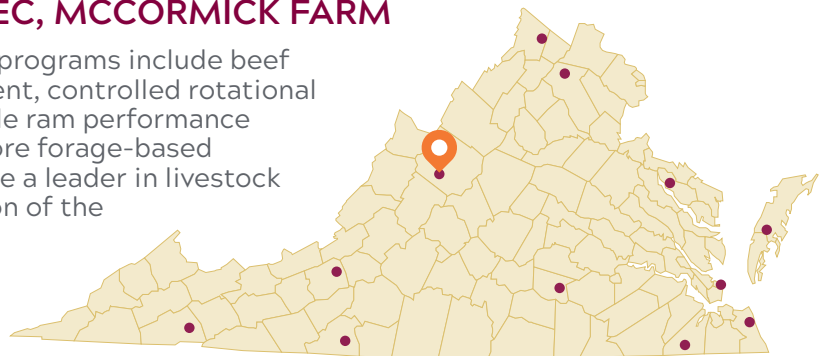
- Over 900 acres of owned and leased land
- Three barns (bank barn, feeding barn, sheep barn)
- A two-acre National Historic Landmark Memorial Plot, including a Grist Mill and Museum

## INDUSTRY PARTNERS

- Forage industry
- Beef cattle Industry
- Sheep industry

## ABOUT THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY AREC, MCCORMICK FARM

The Shenandoah Valley AREC and McCormick Farm programs include beef cattle, breeding, reproduction, nutrition, management, controlled rotational grazing, and forage systems. Sheep programs include ram performance testing. The goal of the work is to help develop a more forage-based sustainable agricultural industry in Virginia and to be a leader in livestock and forage-based research in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States.



## A COLLABORATIVE NETWORK

The ARECs are a network of 11 centers strategically located throughout the state that emphasize close working relationships between Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station, Virginia Cooperative Extension, and the industries the work with. The mission of the system is to engage in innovative, leading-edge research to discover new scientific knowledge and create and disseminate science-based applications that ensure the wise use of agricultural, natural, and community resources while enhancing quality of life.

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