

For Your Driving Safety...

Safety is a top priority for every farmer, and it is in the best interest of all rural drivers to be watchful on the road, especially during planting and harvesting times.



Many farmers often run harvest machinery well into the night, and when vegetables are being harvested,

buses and other vehicles carrying migrant workers will be entering and leaving fields at various times of day. Expect to share the road with tractors, farm trucks, combines and all types of machinery, even after dark. Be careful, and please be patient—farmers try to be extra careful and considerate of other drivers while moving machinery on public roads.

Johnsongrass and Gypsy Moth Control Programs

Accomack County has a local ordinance for the control of johnsongrass—a fast-growing noxious weed that can choke out crop plantings. The county also has an active gypsy moth control program to protect wooded areas and commercial timber tracts. It is unlawful to allow johnsongrass to set seed. If you discover gypsy moth infestations, report them to the Accomack County Extension Unit office, 757-787-1361, ext. 14. Someone will visit the site and talk with the property owner about the proper type of pest control needed for the situation. You're welcome to call the same phone number with questions about johnsongrass.



Want More Information?

An annual brochure, *Accomack County Agriculture Information*, is published by the Accomack County Unit of Virginia Cooperative Extension and is available to the public. It includes statistics related to crop and livestock production and sales and local weather conditions, as well as other county-specific farm data. To request a copy or find out where you can pick one up, call the county Extension office at 757-787-1361.

This brochure was prepared by Jim Belote, senior Extension agent (Accomack County Extension Office, P.O. Box 60, Accomac, VA 23301) with input from the Accomack County Farm Bureau Board of Directors.

This project was sponsored by Accomack County Farm Bureau (P.O. Box 306, Accomac, VA 23301; 757-787-4208).



Helping you is what we do best.

Welcome to Accomack County

...where agriculture is a way of life.
We're glad you've decided to live here!



AGRICULTURE IS A MAJOR INDUSTRY and a way of life in Accomack County, and it has been for generations. The county has 318 farms that occupy a cumulative 91,056 acres, as well as 104,715 acres of land in timber.

In 2004, Accomack farm and forestry products generated more than \$180 million in sales, making Accomack the third-ranked county statewide in terms of farm receipts.

Accomack is Virginia's No. 1 corn-, soybean-, wheat- and tomato-producing county and the No. 2 poultry-producing county. Perdue Inc. and Tyson Foods have processing plants in the county, and Accomack growers produce more than 37 million broilers for processing.

What is an Agricultural and Forestal District?

Accomack County is unique in that it offers farmers protection for their farming practices that many other localities do not. The county has 22 agricultural and forestal districts, or AFDs, that cover nearly 84,000 acres—more than any other Virginia county includes in a similar program.

Land in AFDs is given protection against eminent domain, and owners automatically qualify for land use tax assessment. Local government cannot pass ordinances that restrict or regulate farm structures or farming and forestry practices in these districts except for public health or safety purposes. Protection for certain farming and forestry practices also is provided through the Virginia Right to Farm Act.

If you live in or near an AFD, please understand that certain farming practices occur on a seasonal basis, and that farmers work to minimize the impact of their activities on the environment in general.

Farm Ponds and Irrigation

Accomack County is blessed with numerous farm ponds, many of which were built with help from the Soil Conservation Service in the 1930s through the 1960s. Much of the soil on Accomack farms requires irrigation, especially for corn, tomato, potato and vegetable production if there isn't frequent rainfall during the growing season. In many farm areas irrigation

equipment is used both during the day and at night, when overhead irrigation prevents water loss through evaporation. As often as possible farmers try to use pond waters for irrigation to conserve water in the deeper aquifers. Unlike a deep well, the water level in a pond provides a visual measure of recent rainfall.

Local Farming Practices

Rural residents may notice certain farming practices occurring almost year-round.

Two crops per year are planted on much of the county's farmland. As a result, plowing, disking, planting and the application of fertilizer and crop chemicals can occur 10 to 12 months a year, depending on weather conditions.



Poultry growers produce five to six flocks annually in each poultry house, which generates manure throughout the year. Consequently, application of poultry litter to agricultural lands can occur at just about any time of year.

The following are some, but not all, of the farming practices to expect in Accomack on an annual basis:

- ▶ Corn is planted in April and May and harvested in late August, September and October. Most spraying for pests is done before, at or just after planting, but it can occur periodically during the growing season.
- ▶ Soybeans, which occupy most of the county's cropland, are planted from late April to mid-July. They are harvested in September, October, November and occasionally December. Expect spraying for pests just before, at and



after planting; however, spraying for pests can occur periodically at any time during the growing season—particularly in August and September. Much of the spraying is done by airplane.

- ▶ Wheat and barley are planted from October to December. They are harvested in June and early July with a crop of soybeans being planted immediately afterward, sometimes on the same day as harvest. The no-till soybeans are usually the last to be harvested in November and December. Expect spraying for pests just before, at and after planting, just after the crop emerges, and from February to late May.

- ▶ Staked tomatoes are Accomack's largest vegetable crop. They are planted from April through June and harvested from late June through October, with the heaviest months of harvest being July and September. Most tomatoes are planted on black plastic, staked and frequently sprayed for pest control. From just before planting to just after harvest, expect intensive work in all tomato fields because of the intense management required for quality fruit.
- ▶ Other produce such as cucumbers, snap beans, melons, sweet corn, squash and sweet potatoes are grown on smaller-acreage fields than grains, tomatoes and white potatoes. Many can be planted as either spring or fall crops, and most require intensive management, so expect to see various agricultural activities during their respective growing seasons.
- ▶ White potatoes usually are planted in March and April and harvested in June and July. Spraying for pests can occur at any time during the growing season.
- ▶ After a crop is harvested, field activities include applying lime, fertilizer or manure, breaking up compacted soil, and other preparations for the next crop to be grown that year or the following year.

