COMPLETE HOME SERVICES™

MOUNTAIN TALK

News From Them Thar Hills!

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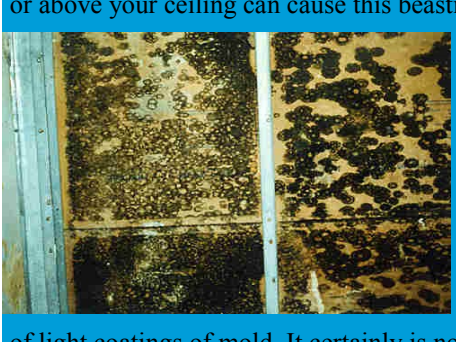
Problems With Grey Matter?

No, not that which resides betwixt your ears. I'm speaking of MOLD!!! We have done several mold cleanings this year and they were all the result of extended absences on the part of the home owner while the house sat unattended and with no de-humidifier. A damp, closed-up house can turn into a mold farm in nothing flat! The two pictures here show what appears to be an *Aspergillus species.* The client's husband had a stroke and was living in Florida with their son for about 15 months. When they returned to their mountain home they were dismayed to discover that mold had coated all of their walls, floor, pictures, clothes, dishes, kitchen cabinets (inside and out) and anything else you can think of. Leather articles, such as the belt at right, are especially vulnerable when it comes to mold. Old furniture, such as the circa late 1800's foot pedal organ at left, can be severely affected as well. Since it was a relatively light coating of mold we donned protective masks and went to work with bleach water, wiping everything that could be safely cleaned. She refused to throw everything out that had mold as she wanted to preserve some cloth items as well as pictures on the wall as well as in photo albums. Did you know that old reel to reel and VHS tapes make an excellent medium for mold growth? They can be *very* expensive to remediate.

Often of greater concern is the dread *Black mold (Stachybotrys sp.)*. Toxic black mold usually needs a greater quantity of moisture to grow. A sneaky leak in between the walls, under the floor or above your ceiling can cause this beastie to rear it's slimy head. It can cause a plethora of symptoms that can defy diagnosis if the cause of the symptoms is not discovered. Black mold is not usually airborne as it can take some jarring action to dislodge the spores. If it were to get into you're a/c duct system… well, that's quite a different story. Black mold can be very difficult to remove. **We are not a mold remediation company!** We only take jobs involving light grey mold infestations. They are *relatively* easy to get rid of. Enough people scrubbing down surfaces with bleach water can usually take care of light coatings of mold. It certainly is not our favorite job but it usually comes with some heartbreaking tale, such as the afore mentioned job. It's hard to turn down an elderly couple who can't even get people to call them back and feel they've nowhere else to turn.



In short, the easiest way to avoid these issues is to install a dehumidifier, set it to 50%, install an optional drain hose, run it into a tub, shower or a similar drain and leave it running. It does use some electricity but is *much* cheaper than calling us in to wash down everything in your house! If that doesn't sound palatable you certainly don't want to have to call a professional mold remediation service. Ka-ching $$$.

Complete Home Services offers Complete Home Monitoring! You can choose one of two options to decrease the likelihood that either one of the situations mentioned above ever occurs. Discovering issues before they develop into problems is one of the hallmarks of Complete Home Monitoring. Visit our website, Complete Home Services , for more details and then give Cindy or myself a call and we can work out a plan to suit your particular needs

Holy Cows!

Throughout my meager 47 years on the planet I have donned many hats. Two of my favorites, Organic agriculture and animal husbandry, are the ones I've spent the most time in. We live on 9 acres and currently manage an additional 50. We used to manage/rent a good bit more but then the price of land in the area skyrocketed and folks didn't think people would want to buy their land if there were cattle on it. So we had to move all of our cattle to our land even though it was much too small to support the number we had. We were fortunate enough last year to reach an agreement with a nice lady 1.5 miles from the house to clean up her place in exchange for me keeping the cows there. The land and the fences needed quite a bit of work due to years of neglect but they are coming along nicely.

The cattle we raise are Australian Lowline Angus. While not a miniature breed of cattle they are definitely smaller than their contemporary counterparts. While a typical Angus bull can weigh 2000 lbs. my bulls weigh about 1000 lbs. This translates to my being able to run more head per acre as well as harvest more pounds per acre. Lowline cattle produce superior beef on pure grass very efficiently. My herd matriarch is a 13 year old registered cow named Brambletye Sante Fe. She was being used as a brood cow for embryo collection prior to being purchased by a partnership in which I was involved. I have since bought out and traded the others to become her sole owner. We harvested her embryos from breeding her with several different Lowline bulls as well as bulls from other breeds. My goal is to have a herd of half-blood mama cows that I will breed back to my prize bull, Valentino, for the purpose of producing pure grass fed beef. We wait until our heifers (virgin cows) are 2 years old before we breed them instead of the industry standard which is 15 - 18 months. This allows them to reach their potential and allows us the time to adequately judge their worthiness as breeders for our program. If they don't meet our criteria for our breeding program we either sell them to someone or put them into our terminal beef production program. That's just a fancy way of saying someone gets to eat them. If we get a male, and he is not a full blood, he stays on mama until around 10 months or so. The industry standard ranges from 7 months to as little as 90 days for beef breeds. After weaning we band the bulls to turn them into steers. We use banding because it is bloodless and less traumatic resulting in no down time. Why don't we just leave them "intact"? Bulls can be VERY destructive to fences, equipment, each other and people. There is also a "taste" that comes along with an intact bull. Some segments of the population, mostly in other countries, actually prefer the stronger taste of an intact bull.

Valentino

Cattle are ruminants and as such are designed and were created to only eat grass and forbs. One can feed them grain and get faster weight gain but this comes at a price. Grain based feed can be very expensive. Grain in cattle also produces meat that has an extremely high fat content. It also produces a condition called acidosis in which their rumen, a "stomach" of sorts that pre-digests grass, can turn very acidic. Not only does this make it very hard for the cattle to digest the grass and other greens but makes them ill as well, necessitating the use of antibiotics and other drugs. Feed lot cattle, where about 90% of the beef produced in this country originates, are fed ever increasing amounts of grain based feed laced with a steady diet of antibiotics until their internal organs begin to suffer from the acidosis and subsequent build up of toxicity. It is at this point they are harvested for public consumption. Most cattlemen I know raise their cattle in a like manner "cause that's the way it's done." Most of the people I know doing it this way are great folks who seem to really care for their animals so don't think that these are cruel masochists who care nothing for their animals, it's just the way it's done.

Sante Fe

Valentino

Choice is a great thing. Grass fed beef is a sustainable efficient method of beef production. We raise all of our beef animals organically on grass without wormers, antibiotics or other drugs. We harvest our beeves from 18 - 24 months of age. We usually dry age the hanging sides from 3 - 4 weeks. The result is a tender, tasty product that we stand behind 100%!

This is just an informative article and a tease because as a result of loss of pasture and subsequent lack of breeding, until recently, I won't have any beef for sale for at least another year, maybe two. When I do you will read about it here.

Bella, our first "mama" cow. The result of five years of breeding. 18 mos. old.

August Mountain Event

Each Fri., Sat. and Sun. - Appalachian Fresh Market

The Farmers Market @ Summit Street

Corner of East First Street and Summit next to The Swan Drive-In. The old state farmers market has re-opened with fresh produce provided by growers from several counties, as well as craftsmen from the region displaying their crafts. Friday's from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m., Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Each Sat. - Blue Ridge Farmers Market

West Main Street across from the Fannin County Courthouse. Local farmers set up with their crops for sale, farm fresh eggs, produce etc.... also locally made products and crafts. Every Saturday from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. Vendors pay $3.00 for market space and they set their own prices for the items they sell. They will also be offering classes on select dates with topics such as "Local Herbs," "Cooking with fresh herbs and vegetables". Vendors contact 706-258-4552.

7 - Smokey Bear's Birthday Party

Ocoee Whitewater Center in Ducktown, TN Highway 64 West, Copperhill

Smokey Bear will be 66 years old this year. In his honor, the USDA Forest Service is throwing a birthday party at the Ocoee Whitewater Center on August 7th from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. Come help Smokey celebrate his birthday and enjoy a fun-filled day in the Cherokee National Forest. It promises to be a fun family day with games, goody bags, fire prevention programs, prizes, and plenty of cake and ice cream. Bring a camera and have your picture taken with Smokey. While you're at the Ocoee Whitewater Center, you may want to hike or bike the Old Copper Road Trail, watch rafting on the Ocoee River, visit the gift shop, grab a bite at the café, or just take in the scenery from the rocking chairs on the deck. There is no charge to attend other than the usual $3.00 per vehicle day use fee. The Ocoee Whitewater Center is located in the heart of the Cherokee National Forest on U.S. Hwy 64, 6 miles west of Ducktown, TN and 30 miles east of Cleveland, TN. Ocoee Whitewater Center 423-496-0104

7 - Cruise-In on the Square

Courthouse Square, Blairsville, GA 1:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Classic cars, trucks and motorcycles on display around the Courthouse Square from 1:00-5:00pm. Registration is free to any car enthusiast, no admission charge to public. Raffles, food, music and fun for all.

9 - Garden Tour at Georgia Mountain Research & Education Center

9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

The Ethnobotanic Gardens and Woodland Medicine Trail at the Georgia Mountain Research & Education Center. The GMRE Center is located 3 miles south of the Blairsville Square on Hwy 19/129S.

The Preservation Committee of the Community Council of the GMRECenter is pleased to announce that the demonstration gardens, woodland trail and Interpretive Center will be open to the public on Mondays, 9:00 am -12:00 pm, from June through September. Exceptions to that schedule will be days when the Research and Education Center is closed (Sept. 6 and 13 this year.) Group tours can be arranged by contacting Clare Johnson at the GMRE Center.

12 - 14 - Georgia Mountain Moonshine Cruiz-In

Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds Hwy 76 in Hiawassee

Live mountain music shows, hundreds of hot rods, swap meet, a "Moonshine Run for Cash" folk show exhibits, Pioneer Village, automotive vendors, mountain crafts, lots of fun. Appearing live Sam Memmolo of "Two Guys Garage" See a real Moonshine Still in the works! Daily from 9:00 - 5:00 p.m. General Admission $8 per day / Three day pass $20.00 / Children 12 and under Free. Live concert on Friday and Saturday evenings at 7:00 p.m. To purchase tickets to the concert, visit www.georgiamountainfairgrounds.com

19 - Poets and Writers Reading Poems and Stories

7:00 PM - 8:00 PM Library, Keith House John C. Campbell Folk School Brasstown, NC

Once each month, Poets and Writers Reading Poems and Stories is held at the Folk School in the Keith House Living Room. Two members of North Carolina Writers Network West read their original work for an audience of Folk School students and the community. These writers and poets come from all over the southwestern mountain area of North Carolina, north Georgia and South Carolina. The featured readers for this month's reading are: Jayne Ferrer Jayne Jaudon Ferrer is the author of four books of poetry, one of which has remained in print for twenty years and is currently in its third edition. An award-winning copywriter and freelance journalist earlier in her writing career, Ferrer lives in Greenville, South Carolina, and is the host of www.YourDailyPoem.com. Learn more about her at www.jaynejaudonferrer.com. Anne Harding Woodworth Anne Harding Woodworth's most recent book is Spare Parts, A Novella in Verse (Turning Point, 2008), and her most recent chapbook is Up From the Root Cellar (Cervena Barva Press, 2008). Her poetry, essays, and book reviews have appeared in U.S. and Canadian journals, such as TriQuarterly, Rain Taxi, Painted Bride Quarterly, Connecticut Review, Antigonish Review, and Poet Lore, as well as at several sites on line. She has an MFA in poetry from Fairleigh Dickinson University and is a member of the Poetry Board at the Folger Shakespeare Library. She divides her time between Washington, D.C. and Cedar Mountain, NC

20 - 21 - Rodeo

Kiwanis Fairgrounds, Blue Ridge Jones Street off of E. 2nd Street

Rodeo starts at 8:00 p.m. Gates open at 6:00 p.m. Western Rodeo event with Bull riding, saddle bronc riding, calf roping, bareback, steer wrestling, team roping, barrel racing & special events. Tickets: $10.00 in advance, $12.00 at the Gate, Children 8 and under free with paying adult. Advanced tickets may be purchased beginning August 1st at; United Community Bank (Blue Ridge & McCaysville) Kevin Panter Insurance, Parris Pharmacy, BB&T of Blue Ridge and Appalachian Community Bank. 706-632-6644

21 - Annual Tomato Festival at Crane Creek Vineyard

916 Crane Creek Rd, Young Harris, approx 30 minutes from Blue Ridge

Celebrate the fruit of the other vine with your friends and family at Crane Creek Vineyards! Local restaurants and food vendors will be out giving away samples of their cuisine. Chef David and his Culinary Team will be preparing lunch for everyone with all things tomato. This is a great day of food and wine! Tickets will be sold at the door: adults $20, ages 13-20 $10, children under 12 free. Ticket price includes wine tasting, souvenir wine glass, lunch and admission to all of the activities. Festivities from 11:00 to 6:00 p.m. Crane Creek Vineyard 706-379-1236

28 - 29 - Young Harris Art Festival

Young Harris Mayors Park 10am -5pm daily

This festival features a baking and canning competition judged by the extension offices of Union and Towns County and the executive chef at Brasstown Valley Resort with ribbons being awarded. There is no fee to enter the contest and no fee to enjoy the show. Highly skilled artisans will be demonstrating there work. Soap making, pottery, blacksmithing and chain saw art are just a few of the exhibitors. Over 50 vendors and great food will be available to enjoy.

28 - 29 - Wilderness Survival Weekend

Amicalola Falls State Park Hwy 515 south towards Atlanta, turn left on Hwy 52, follow signs to park
10 AM - 5 PM Saturday and Sunday This weekend will be sprinkled with basic skills classes suitable for the whole family. No registration required for programs. $5 parking. Amicalola Falls State Park 706-265-1969

DAM!

In case you weren't aware TVA is repairing the Lake Blue Ridge dam. As of August 1st Old Hwy. 76 is closed to traffic for about two years. The work will include repairing the penstock (a pipe or conduit used to carry water to a water wheel or turbine) and repairs to the dam itself. TVA is currently drawing down the water at an accelerated rate so they can access the afore mentioned structures to facilitate repairs. The rate of withdrawal is currently at 7 feet per week until the middle of august when it will be reduced to 3 feet per week. TVA hopes the work on the lake side of the dam will be completed by Spring of 2011 at which time the lake will be allowed to begin refilling. The rate of the refill will depend on the rain.

So, we are losing the lake for about a year and access over the dam for two years. After that we hope to have a safer dam and avoid deep draw downs every 5 years, as it has been. Maybe it would have been cheaper to employ the unemployed to plug up the leaks with inserted fingers. Idle hands are the devil's workshop, don't ya know. The increase we've seen in the general crime rate (bad checks, forgeries, theft, breaking and entering) seem to bear that out. I suppose the TVA option is of a more permanent nature although it would have made a great picture, all those fingers in the dam.

...a note from Cindy

Don't be caught off guard! Know what is going on at your vacation home!

If you are one of the lucky ones who has arrived at your cabin to always find everything perfect, you are in the minority. Some circumstances you may be familiar with might be - mice, water leaks, fallen trees, furnace or ac malfunction, refrigerator out, well pump out, hornet nests, mold, beeping smoke detectors or, yes, even exploded soda cans. Some of these items are just plain annoying and others can cost you thousands of dollars. In addition to a tough economy, break-ins are on the rise making it a wise decision to have your home monitored.

We now offer gold and platinum monitoring plans. By subscribing to one of these special plans you can have piece of mind and the ability to have us deal with problems before they become a costly situation. In addition you are eligible for all of our services including 24/7 emergency calls.

Click on the link below to see the finer details of these two invaluable services so you can make the choice that's right for you and your home!

Complete Home Monitoring

To remove your name from our mailing list, please click here.

Questions or comments? E-mail us at donald@gamtnhome.com or call 678-439-9125