Atascosa Ag Newsletter

Courtesy of: Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office Atascosa County

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Questions? Call us! 830-569-0034

Check out our website at Atascosa.agrilife.org

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AgriLife Learn Offering Free Courses Online

Texas A&M AgriLife Learn Online is full of free and low cost educational courses available to the public. Head to https://agrilifelearn.tamu.edu/ and check out courses on Animals and Livestock, Plants and Garden, and Wildlife. The following courses below are free or low cost. Simply select a course, create an account and check out! If the course is free, no payment information is needed.

Animals and Livestock:

Beef Quality Assurance– best management practices, safe handling of cattle, environmental stewardship

Basic Beef Cattle Production- genetics, ruminant nutrition, USDA beef grading, marketing and more

Beef Literacy– feeding cattle, antibiotic use, technologies in beef production, feedyards, the nutritional value of beef in the diet, and environmental considerations, covers the path of beef from the ranch to the plate

Drought Cattle Management-learn about healthy and adequate water and forage availability, destocking, and nutrition programs for your beef program.

Cattle Reproduction (advanced course)- covers AI, embryo transfer, sexed semen, and more

Plants and Garden:

Gardening 101– basics of gardening, from plant development, landscaping for conservation, and creating a garden suited for your wants and needs

Intro to Plant Disease Diagnostics- how to detect pathogens and pests, and plant pathology basics

Wildlife:

Private Land Stewardship Lessons -This course will help you find and navigate resources available to private land stewards

Wildlife Lessons- learn about wildlife conservation and mitigation, including game, non-game, endangered and threatened species, and habitats

Upcoming Events and Educational Opportunities

During these unprecedented times we are faced with the unique challenge of finding new ways to deliver educational material to our constituents to achieve Texas A&M AgriLife Extension's vision to "Help Texans Better Their Lives." With that we are offering some distance learning opportunities so you can learn more, but in the safety and comfort of our own home.

May 15 Online Beef Cattle and Forage Management Program will be held from 9 a.m.-noon on May 15. The program, presented by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service offices in Atascosa, Bexar, Guadalupe and Wilson counties, will offer one general Texas Department of Agriculture continuing education unit for attendees. The cost is $10. Attendees will need a laptop or desktop computer and internet access. To register, email Chris Lambert at christopher.lambert@ag.tamu.edu. Once registered, attendees will be provided the link for participation. Make checks payable to Bexar County Ag and Natural Resources Committee and mail to Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, 3355 Cherry Ridge, Suite 212, San Antonio, TX 78230.

Program Topics and presenters will be:

COVID-19 and Its Potential Impact on the Cattle Market, David Anderson, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension economist.

Purchasing Replacement Females - How to Invest My Dollars, Joe Paschal, Ph.D. AgriLife Extension livestock specialist.

Tips for Getting the Most Return out of Pastures, Josh McGinty, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension agronomist.

Cost-Saving Tips for Managing Brush, Bob Lyons, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension range specialist.

Biosecurity with Animal Issues During and After a Disaster, Bryan Davis, AgriLife Extension disaster assessment and recovery agent.

May 19th Wildlife Damage Management Series This session will cover "Skunks, Coons, Opossums, and More." Presenters are Dr. Maureen Frank and Dr. John Tomecek, Extension Wildlife Specialists. The series will be conducted online from 12:00-1:00pm. Cost is $10.00 per session. Checks should be made payable and mailed to Atascosa Wildlife and Fisheries Committee, P.O. Box 379, Leming, Texas 78050. Each session will offer one (1.0) I.P.M. continuing education credit for Private, Commercial and Non-Commercial Applicators. Certificates of completion will be mailed after participant attendance is verified and payment is processed. Please RSVP by the Friday prior to each event by calling 830-569-0034.

Reproduction Management Workshop previously scheduled for May 20 Postponed to October 2020

Contact the office if you need CEU hours for pesticide applicator license holders

Huisache Herbicide Spray Timing

Check out this Huisache timing study by Range Specialist Dr. Bob Lyons

We have traditionally thought that fall is the best time to spray huisache. A Texas Tech study showed that there might also be a spring window for spraying.

A study was conducted in 2017 and 2018 in Atascosa County in conjunction with Corteva Agriscience to test spring versus fall ground broadcast herbicide spray timing. Applications of 20 gallons/acre of spray-volume were made with an ATV equipped with two Boom Buster nozzles.

Treatments in 2017 were applied April through June and September through November (Figure 1) and plant-mortality evaluations were conducted one- and two-years post-treatments. Treatments in 2018 were applied May through June and September through November and plant-mortality evaluated at one-year post-treatment (Figure 2) with two-year evaluations scheduled for this year.

Figure 1. Plant-mortality (%) by month and season average for spring versus fall huisache herbicide applications.

For 2017, there was no difference in average plant-mortality (Figure 1) for spring (84%) and fall (92%) treatments. The May treatment was lower than other months because of mechanical problem during application. There did appear to be a declining trend in fall plant-mortality from late October to November.

For 2018, average plant-mortality (Figure 2) was lower in spring (69%) versus fall (100%) at one-year post-treatment. This difference appears to be related to rainfall and soil moisture. At this site, spring was dry and fall was wet.

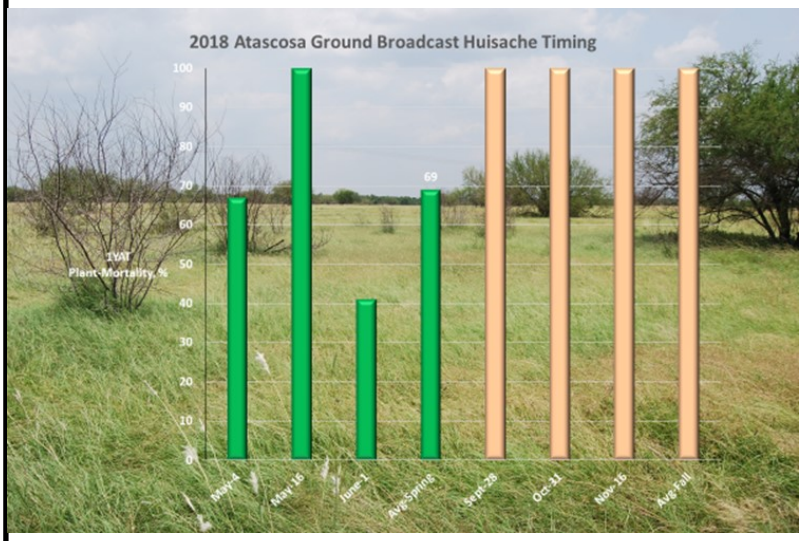


Figure 2. Plant-mortality (%) by month and season average for spring versus fall huisache herbicide applications.

From these two sites, it appears that spring huisache herbicide applications can be successful if there is adequate rainfall to promote a full, healthy leaf canopy.

From previous aerial and ground broadcast and individual plant leaf-spray work, some expectations and suggested spray-considerations have emerged.

Regarding expectations, aerial work has shown consistently that higher plant-mortality can be expected with plants less than 7 feet tall, except for the bushy growth-form. The Texas Tech study suggested higher mortality for plants growing in predominantly clay soil than for plants growing in predominantly sandy loam / sandy clay loam soil.

Regarding spray-considerations:

1. Full, healthy leaves are a must, created by adequate cumulative rainfall of either
   - -3 or more inches 2 weeks prior to spraying or
   - -4 or more inches 4 weeks prior to spraying.
2. Soil temperature at 12 inches deep needs to be a minimum of 75°F.
3. Spray droplet-size in the range of 350-450 microns

Atascosa County Wildlife Monthly Management Highlight by TPWD Wildlife Biologist Matthew Reidy

© Jerod Foster, Courtesy of the Nature Conservancy

I am sure many of you know the old adage "April showers bring May flowers". This does not usually hold true for our part of Texas. However, this year April precipitation has benefited most of the county. With average highs approaching 90 degrees in May, wildflowers and grasses should be actively growing. What does this mean for Atascosa county landowners? It is usually entails sharpening shredder and lawn mower blades for regular shredding of pastures and lawns. However, you should take caution and not get too overzealous with your lawn and pastures. May 1st is the average start date of nesting for bobwhite quail in South Texas. When tall grasses and forbs are shredded during this time, it drastically reduces available nesting sites for quail. Without good nesting cover, quail populations will not be able to "boom" with good rainfall. Furthermore, many other grassland and shrubland bird, mammal, and reptile species are also actively breeding and nesting at this time. Quail, wild turkey, cottontail rabbits, and horned lizards to name a few need standing grasses and forbs (wildflowers) to provide nesting cover, screening cover, and food access during this time. Generally, in our part of South Texas, April through July is the primary season for grassland nesting wildlife. It is ok to maintain the yard around your house as well as keep ranch and pasture roads open. However, if you enjoy grassland wildlife such as quail, leave the shredder in the barn and allow the pastures to remain uncut.

May Beef Quality Assurance Tip By Jason Banta

Spring is generally the time of greatest forage production for most producers in Texas, Oklahoma, and the Southeast. If excess forage is not available during this time of year than the operation is likely overstocked and stocking rates should be reduced. Regardless of forage species, overgrazing leads to reduced forage production and potential stand loss overtime. If plants are grazed at an appropriate height for a given species, roots will grow deeper and increase in mass. This allows the plant to take in more nutrients and reach soil moisture at a greater depth when conditions are dry. For more information check out the articles published the Animal Science Department at Texas A&M University at https://animalscience.tamu.edu/livestock-species/beef/publications/#pasture

Multiple Cases of Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Confirmed in 4 Counties in Texas

Situational Update from the Texas Animal Health Commission:

Since Tuesday, April 14, 2020, the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) has received two new confirmed cases of Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus 2 (RHDV2) in domestic rabbits in El Paso County. To date, there have been 3 confirmed cases of RHDV2 in domestic Texas rabbits.

"The Commission would like to urge all rabbit owners and breeders to protect their rabbits from diseases like RHDV2 by increasing biosecurity on their farms and in their homes," said Dr. Andy Schwartz, State Veterinarian and TAHC Executive Director. "At this time, biosecurity is the best thing you can do…"

RHDV2 is a fatal, viral disease that affects both domestic and wild rabbits, including hares, jackrabbits and cottontails. It does not affect human health or affect other animal species.

The highly contagious foreign animal disease spreads between rabbits through contact with infected rabbits or carcasses, their meat or their fur, contaminated food or water, or materials coming in contact with them. RHDV2 can persist in the environment for a very long time.

These factors make disease control efforts extremely challenging once it is in the wild rabbit populations.

Recommended Biosecurity Measures Include:

- House domestic rabbits indoors if possible.
- Do not allow pet, feral, or wild rabbits to come in contact with your rabbits or gain entry to the facility or home.
- Always wash your hands with warm, soapy water between pens and before and after entering your rabbit area.
- Keep a closed rabbitry. Do not introduce new rabbits from unknown or untrusted sources.
- If you bring new rabbits into your facility or home, keep them separated from your existing rabbits. Use separate equipment for newly acquired or sick rabbits to avoid spreading disease.
- Control flies, rats, cats, dogs, birds, etc. that can physically move the virus around on their feet or body.
- Do not collect outdoor forage and browse to feed rabbits since it may be contaminated
- Remove brush, grass, weeds, trash, and debris from the rabbitry to reduce rodents.
- Protect feed from contamination by flies, birds, rodents, etc.
- Remove and properly dispose (i.e. bury or incinerate) of dead rabbits promptly.

- When moving rabbits or restocking pens disinfect all equipment and cages with 10% bleach mixed with water or other approved products. Properly dispose of bedding. Items made of wood are difficult to disinfect and best discarded.
- Breeders should review their biosecurity plans for gaps and all rabbit owners should establish a working relationship with a veterinarian to review biosecurity practices for identification and closure of possible gaps.

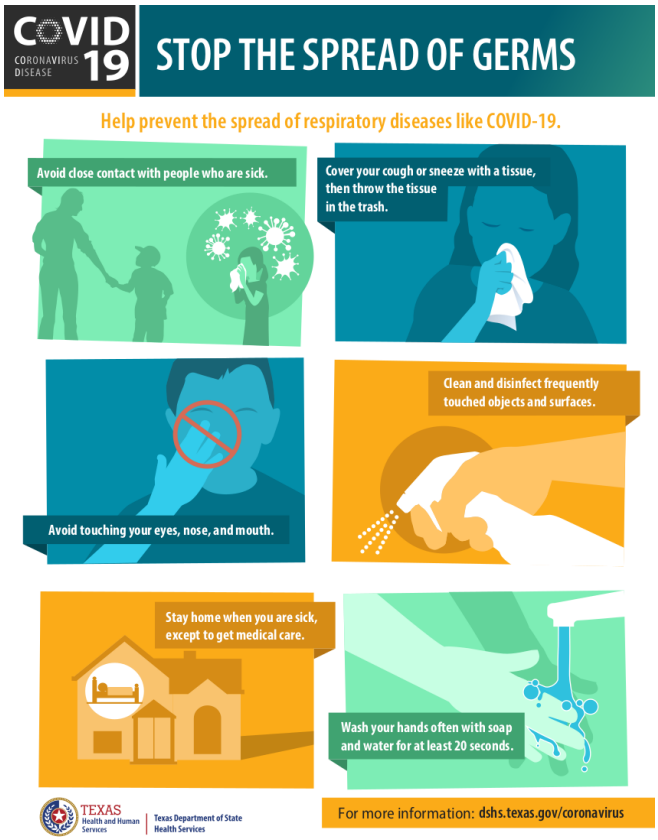
"Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) will be monitoring wild rabbit populations to determine the extent of the disease," said Dr. Bob Dittmar, TPWD wildlife veterinarian. "We are continuing to receive reports of dead rabbits from the western part of the state." People can contact their local TPWD wildlife biologist if they notice sick or dead rabbits. We want to reassure everyone this disease does not affect people or other animals.

To view the full text of this update visit https://www.tahc.texas.gov/news/2020/2020-04-22_RHDV2.pdf

For More Information and Updates visit the TAHC Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Website at https://www.tahc.texas.gov/animal_health/rabbits/

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension COVID-19 Update and Resources

While all face to face events regarding AgriLife Extension are cancelled or postponed until May 4th, we still are upholding our commitment to Helping Texans Better Their Lives. Here at the Extension office we deal with three of some of the most important things in your life: Your Food, Your Health, and Your Children. For a complete list of available resources check out https://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/coronavirus/



Food: Our local farmers and food producers are working hard to ensure a safe wholesome food product from their fields to your table. For our beef producers here in the county https://beeffax.tamu.edu/ is a great resource for cattle market updates.

Health: As we adjust to our new normal our FCH Agent Dru Benavides has some awesome resources on our Facebook page to help stay active, manage stress, adhering to guidelines on social distancing, and how to safely shop at the grocery store. When out shopping for essential items it is important to remember the following tips:

1. If possible go by yourself, the less people out minimizes the chance of exposure and spread
2. Only touch products you will buy
3. Sanitize cart and cart handles before shopping
4. Keep your distance from others, CDC Guidelines say 6 feet apart at all times
5. Go with a paper grocery list, be prepared so you minimize the amount of time at the store, and throw away your list when you're done shopping
6. After you get home thoroughly wash produce and disinfect items such as boxes and cans with sanitizing wipes, or make your own sanitizing solution with 1/3 of a cup of bleach to a gallon of water.
7. Sanitize commonly touched items such as, door knobs, light switches, refrigerator door handle, faucets, car keys, and counter tops. Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds after using cleaning products.

Children: As home becomes school and school becomes home, 4-H has some amazing educational resources to help facilitate school lessons with agriculture, learn about 4-H projects, and some at home projects to help the community. Join District 12 4-H with 12 at 12. A Facebook Live event every Tuesday and Thursday at noon. There will be quizzes, project exploration, and interaction with other 4-H'ers. Also Check out the Texas 4-H Facebook page for daily activities and videos! Contact Ashlie Stayton at the extension office for even more 4-H resources.