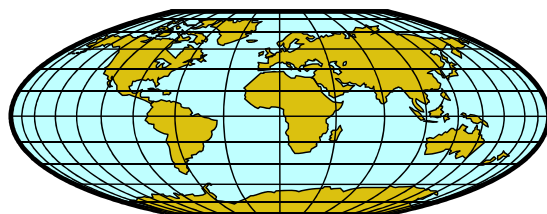


# Austin County Ag News



## Summer 2012

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### **Austin County Livestock Assn. Meeting**

The annual Austin County Livestock Association meeting will take place on Thursday, June 7<sup>th</sup>. This year's meeting will be held at the Industry Fireman's Hall in Industry. The board of directors has again decided to offer two CEU's for pesticide applicators prior to the meeting, one in Laws and Regulations and one in IPM. The CEU program will consist of a Weed Management Update from DuPont Field Representative Jack LeClaire, followed by an update on pesticide laws and regulations from TDA Field Inspector Melissa Barton. The CEU meeting will begin at 3:00 p.m. with registration and the program will go from 3:30 p.m. until 5:30 p.m. The social will begin at 5:30 p.m. and the meeting will start at 6:30 p.m. Guest speaker will be Dr. Peter Wunderlich, DVM.. He will be discussing herd bull maintenance.

A registration fee of \$15.00 per person will be charged prior to the CEU meeting, which includes the annual membership fee. This money is used for the payment of the meal at the annual meeting, and coverage for a \$500.00 reward for the recovery of stolen livestock. Dues are also used in awarding college scholarships to Austin County youth. All livestock raisers are encouraged to attend and become a member of the association.

**Austin County  
Soil and Water Conservation District  
Banquet of Champions**

The annual Austin County Soil and Water Conservation District will be held on Thursday, June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012 at the Fireman's Hall in Industry, at 7:00 p.m. Anyone receiving an invitation for the banquet is asked to RSVP by June 8<sup>th</sup>. The banquet annually recognizes youth that have participated in the coloring contest and essay contest. Also, the Conservation Homemaker and Conservation Rancher of the year are honored at the banquet.

**Private Applicator Training  
and Testing August 22<sup>nd</sup>**

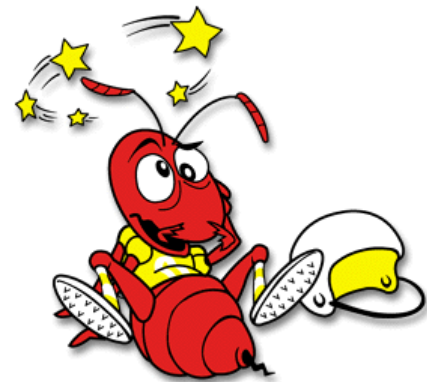
If you are planning on using a state limited use or state restricted use pesticide, such as Grazon P+D, 2 4-D, Weedmaster, etc., and need a license, the Extension Service will be sponsoring a Private Applicator Training and Testing on Wednesday, August 22<sup>nd</sup>, at the Texas AgriLife Extension Office in Bellville. The training will last from 8:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. A representative from the Texas Department of Agriculture will be on hand to administer the 100 question exam following the training. If you complete the training portion and then score a 70 or above on your examination, you will be eligible to apply for your Private Applicator License, which will allow you to purchase all state limited use and restricted use pesticides used in agriculture. There is a \$50.00 fee to attend the training. Your registration fee includes the study materials and refreshments. You are strongly encouraged to pick up your materials early and read through them prior to coming to the training. To reserve your spot at the training, contact the Extension Office.

**Fire Ant Management  
Program**

Fire ants, who needs them? These destructive little pests have caused millions of dollars worth of damage in the relatively short time frame that they have been in Texas (since 1957). Is there anything that can be done to stop them? The Horticulture committee of Austin County is sponsoring a Fire Ant Management program for the general public on Thursday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2012, at First National Bank Civic Center Building in Bellville, from 6:00 - 8:30 p.m. The program will focus on the best management practices that anyone can do to bring fire ants under control. Special program topics will include:

- History and Morphology of the Red Imported Fire Ant
- Researched Based Fire Ant Control Measures
- Integrated Pest Management Approach to Control
- Update from the Fire Ant Research Project Team

Two CEU's will be given to all pesticide applicators. 1 IPM and 1 General CEU.



## Texas A&M Beef Cattle Short Course

The 58th annual Texas A&M Beef Cattle Short Course will be taking place on August 6-8, at the Rudder Theater Complex on the Campus of Texas A&M University in College Station. This year's Short Course will include such topics Animal Reproduction, Genetics, Range and Forages, Beef Quality Assurance Training for Cattle Producers, Cattlemen's College, Beef Industry Trade Show and as always a prime rib dinner on Tuesday night. The registration fee is \$160.00 per person and includes meals, a copy of the proceedings and free parking and shuttle service. Registration is due by August 1<sup>st</sup>. A registration form and a copy of the tentative agenda can be accessed from the internet by going to <http://animalscience.tamu.edu>. You may also call the Extension Office at 979-865-2072 and we will mail the form to you.

## Multi-County New Landowners Educational Series

The Multi-County New Landowners Educational Series will resume on **Friday, August 17<sup>th</sup>**, at the Gen VI Ranch near Fayetteville. The August program will be an overview of Weed and Brush Control for small acreages. The program is open to anyone that wants to attend, but it specifically targets new landowners in the Austin, Colorado, Fayette and Washington County areas. The programs are held on the third Friday of the month, and all begin at 1:30 p.m. and lasts until 5:00 p.m. Registration is \$15.00 per person and includes refreshments, an evening meal and your educational materials. Three (3) CEU's will be offered to all pesticide applicators.

The program for September will focus on Horticulture, in particular, growing wine grapes, fruit orchards, pecans and landscape trees. This program is set for **Friday, September 21<sup>st</sup>**, in Columbus. This will be a tour of different farms devoted to small scale horticulture type crops. The field day will begin at 1:30 p.m. with registration at the farm, with the program and field tour to follow. The \$15.00 registration fee applies. Anyone interested in coming is asked to contact the Extension Office prior to coming so we can know how many to plan for. Three (3) CEU's will be offered for all pesticide applicators.



## Big Tomato Contest and Vegetable Show

The Bluebonnet Master Gardeners Association proudly announces the 7<sup>th</sup> annual Big Tomato Contest and Vegetable Show on Saturday, June 9<sup>th</sup> at Linseisen's Feed and Supply in Bellville. Vegetable gardeners from anywhere in the world are eligible to participate in the contest, which will award prizes in several different categories, such as the Biggest Tomato, as well as prizes in many other vegetable categories. Growers are asked to drop off their entries between the hours of 8:30 and 10:00 a.m. An educational program on growing vegetables will be given at 10:00 a.m. The results of the contest will be announced at 11:00 a.m.

There will be fresh vegetables for sale during the contest until 12:00 noon. \$200.00 cash prize and gift certificates will be given to the top prize winners. For more information and contest rules, contact the Extension Office.

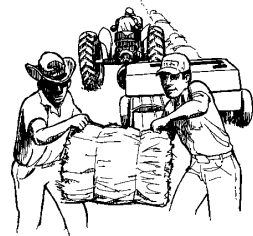
## Wildflower Photo Contest

Did you take any wildflower photos this year? If you answered yes, then please consider submitting your photos via email or drop it off at our office for our Wildflower Photo Contest, sponsored by the Horticulture Committee of Austin County. Winners from the contest will be selected and announced at the Wildflower Symposium on October 25<sup>th</sup> in Industry. Contact the Extension Office for more information.

## Fall Forage Seminar and Austin County Hay Show

This year's show will be held in conjunction with the annual Fall Forage Seminar, sponsored by the Beef and Forage Committee of Austin County. The Seminar and Show will take place on Friday, September 28<sup>th</sup>, at the Austin County Fairgrounds in Bellville. The seminar is scheduled to begin with registration from 1:00 - 2:00 p.m., with the program starting at 2:00 p.m. and concluding at 5:30 p.m. This year's seminar will cover such topics as utilizing a soil test for proper fertilization, controlling pasture pests such as gophers, fire ants, grasshoppers and army worms, weed control and weed control product updates, and a growers panel made up of successful growers from the area. A total of three (3) CEU's will be given to pesticide applicators. Supper will be served at the conclusion of the seminar, all compliments of the Beef and Forage Committee and their sponsors.

Judging of the hay samples will take place prior to the seminar, with the winners of the show being named at the conclusion of the seminar. Anyone feeding hay is encouraged to submit a sample of their hay for analysis. The Beef and Forage Committee is encouraging beef cattle producers to simply turn in a sample of their hay for analysis. The analysis will be done by the Texas A&M Forage testing lab and the results will be handed out during the meeting.



The Hay Show will allow any hay producer from Austin, or a surrounding county to enter forage samples in the show. The focus of the show is to emphasize the importance of utilizing high quality hay. Producers may submit as many samples as they wish for the show, in each of the following categories; Coastal Bermudagrass, Other Bermudagrasses, Other Perennial Warm-Season Grasses, Annual Warm Season Grasses, Cool Season Grasses, Legume-Grass Mix and Legumes. There is no entry fee, however the deadline for entering the show is September 2<sup>nd</sup>. Please refer to the Austin County Hay Show Guidelines which are available online at <http://austin.agrilife.org/> and at each of the drop off locations.

Hay samples may be turned in at the Austin County Extension Office, Harrison's Farm Service and Linseisen's Feed in Bellville, Steinhauser's and Wilderness Farm and Ranch in Sealy, Dudensing Farm Service and Schulz General Store in New Ulm, and Lindemann's Store and Blezinger's Inc. in Industry by September 7, 2012.

Please contact the Extension Office to preregister at (979) 865-2072, so we can have an accurate count for food and refreshments.

## **Fundamental Changes To The US Beef Cattle Industry**

(Contributed by Eric Brast, former Assistant Director and Instructor in the Ranch Management Program, TCU School of Ranch Management)

This time of year many young people experience the fun and celebration of graduation and the apprehension and eagerness about their futures. It is a time of maturity and growth. It is against that backdrop that perhaps the following article may be of some use to young people entering a path toward production agriculture. I think it reminds us to be 'students' of the things we enjoy doing and our choices for careers.

For young and old alike, the current cattle cycle is presenting history in the making. Never-before pricing of calves and yearlings brings thoughts of expansion and 'good times'. It certainly is a good market and profits in the cow/calf sector are very good. That said, success in agriculture of the future will demand below-the-surface analysis of markets and trends. The generations of young farmers and ranchers to come will be charged with being part animal scientist, part veterinarian, part commodity broker, part accountant and part counter intuitive analyst. They will need to ask questions that some may see as nonsense. For example, would many people today ask this question, "Are these high prices good for the cattle business long-term? Many ranchers are glad to have the prices and hope they head higher; that is an understandable desire. However, are the prices damaging to the future producers in the beef cattle industry? I think so.

Current prices for calves and yearlings mean large losses for the feedlot business. In fact, many feedlots will close, in part because of the high prices-they simply do not have the large sums of money or equity now needed to keep feedyards full of high-priced cattle. Consider this, in less than one year, the equity needs to feed cattle have increased more than 30%. For large scale feeders, in a 30,000 head yard, with 40% company-owned cattle, the need for equity has increased from \$1.8mln to \$2.7mln, in less than one year. For an individual, this means the needed equity to feed 100 head of cattle increased from \$15,000 to \$22,500. For young producers, this is significantly more equity needed to feed one pen. For lenders, this increase in 'down money' provides some degree of security as collateral, but does not address market or production risk on those cattle. If the markets change, because our meat becomes higher priced in the international market place or the cattle don't perform on feed, the loss in equity will move above the 30% 'down payment'. For the consumer, the price of cattle has translated into much higher beef prices at the food counter, and in a recession, US consumers are more price-conscious than ever. Finally, when you calculate breakevens on cattle being fed today, and notice losses from \$150-\$200 per head, you have to ask the question posed above.

So, for feedlots and others in the industry, this is a historic time. It would be worthwhile to discuss 1973-1975 with dad, granddad, mom or aunt; ask them about the 'crash of '74'. We may be at an equally important part of the maturation of the cattle business in the United States, albeit in a time of record high prices. Many producers will insist that the feedlot business has little to do with them. That may be true, until calves are taken to the sale barn and fewer buyers appear with fewer orders to buy cattle, because we have fewer people feeding cattle and fewer operating feedyards. At that point, the business of a feedyard will become very clear to a lot of producers.

Because of current realities in the business, feedlots will work to preserve themselves and their assets. Some feeders will consolidate and aggressively align themselves with packers to survive, and as noted above, others will simply close. In visits with owners of yards in Texas, Kansas and Nebraska and as echoed by Cattle Fax of Denver, Colorado, within 5 years there may be as few as 20 large feeding companies finishing 80% of all fed cattle. Companies like Cactus, Cargill, 5 Rivers and Gottsch will become larger. They will do so to survive and to capture market share. Independent feeders face a string of challenges, even if they own multiple yards. Independents will survive longer in the North and in the Cornbelt for several reasons, but within 5 years, there will be far fewer independent yards and fewer choices for yards in which to finish cattle. As a result, fewer yards will place orders for the feeder cattle produced by the cow/calf sector.

You have heard it much lately, and the speed with which information is exchanged echoes the fact; we live and operate in a global environment. For example, the US dollar's lack of strength against major world currencies has made our beef an economical buy to people across the world, and we have sold a lot of it. Remember, though, countries like Australia, Brazil and Argentina have sold a lot of beef as well. If the dollar's value changes very much at all, with prices of our cattle, and therefore our beef products at these levels, we will quickly be priced out of the world markets. Australia and Brazil are not bashful in their desire to take our market share; they have gained some of our market after every major beef cattle health scare in the United States. Once a competitor takes a share of the market, it is difficult to regain. That brings us to the cost of production with these high cattle prices. Consider this, In conversation with a large rancher in Brazil (he owns 200,000 mother cows), he marked his cost of production for a 500lb calf at \$175.00 USD. He simply could not imagine a breakeven cost of \$500-\$700 for a 5-weight animal. Our breakevens, even for efficient producers were foreign to him.

Given, Brazilian beef is mostly grass fed, which suits a lot of the Australian and Pacific Rim consumers very well. That said, it is important to realize a couple of facts from recent ownership changes in the cattle business. About 4 years ago now, JBS, the Brazilian parent company of 5 Rivers Ranch Cattle purchased one-time feeding capacity of 500,000 head and the Monfort/Swift Packing Company and paid cash. Today, they feed over 1mln cattle each year, and they are the largest red meat packer in the world. Why would an agricultural giant from a land-rich nation purchase such assets, where cost of production is so much higher than their own? It is a good question. What do you think might be at work in that business decision?

No matter how you answer the last question, suffice it to say that structural changes are taking place in the US cattle business, which will change production agriculture careers for generations. For today's college and high school students, there may well be a very different beef cattle business than the one of the last 20 years. Equity, finances and marketing will be more important than ever. I think it demands that young people choose carefully their place in production agriculture. Do your homework before committing time, finances and hard work. Finally, try to develop a clear vision of how you want to be involved in agriculture. The world moves too fast to allow time for 'do-overs' and mom and dad may not want to dedicate family resources to 'experimentation'. In closing, the current changes in the beef cattle business are historic and will provide a lesson for producers of all ages. For young people interested in agriculture, the current cattle cycle provides an opportunity for us all to reflect upon the business of agriculture and our role in the industry.

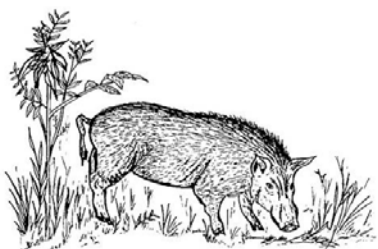
## **Food Preservation in the 21st Century**

EEA (Extension Education Association) of Austin County and the Austin County Horticulture Committee will be sponsoring a Food Preservation program and workshop on Thursday, July 19th at the Hill Community Center in Sealy, Texas. Food preservation concepts from canning to dehydration will be covered in detail.

The educational program will be instructed by Dr. Jenna Anding, Associate Department Head and Extension Program Leader for Nutrition and Food Sciences with Texas AgriLife Extension Service in College Station. The morning session will begin at 9:00 a.m. and conclude at noon. Registration for the morning session is \$35.00 and will include the "So Easy to Preserve" book, a class binder, recipes, tips and tasting.

At the present time, the afternoon session is full to capacity but a waiting list is available. If you have questions or would like to register to participate, please contact Michelle Allen at (979)865-2072 for more information.

## **Feral Hog Symposium**



Feral hogs have been a problem for many landowners throughout Texas for many years, but what exactly is a feral hog and how did they get here? The term feral is generally used to describe something that was once domesticated and is now wild, thus this is the case with Feral Hogs. Our current feral hogs are most likely decedents of formerly domesticated swine herds that were allowed to roam free and graze. This is of course a far cry from the method that most use to raise hogs today, utilizing confinement pens, sterile environments and exceptional disease control precautions. Without man's intervention and controlled breeding, feral hogs have been able to adapt to their environments and multiply rapidly. This has lead to our current situation of feral hogs rooting up hay meadows and destroying property. Many landowners have tried various methods for trying to control feral hogs. Everything from hunting, shooting, trapping and even exclusion, but nothing seems to have made a dent in their population.

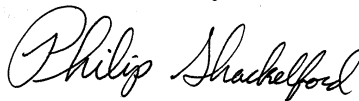
If you are interested in learning more about controlling feral hogs, then please mark Friday July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2012 on your calendar. The Texas AgriLife Extension Service and the Cat Spring Wildlife Cooperative will be cosponsoring a Feral Hog Symposium at the Cat Spring Ag Society Hall in Cat Spring. Specialist with the Texas AgriLife Extension Service Wildlife Services and Wildlife Biologists will be speaking on the feral hog biology, the best methods for controlling feral hogs, the feral hog abatement project and special considerations to utilize in dealing with feral hogs on your property. The meeting is scheduled to begin at 2:30 p.m. with registration and the program will follow around 3:00 p.m. and last until 6:30 p.m.

Three (3) CEU's will be given to pesticide applicators. A \$20.00 registration fee will be charged at the door, which will include your meal, refreshments and handout materials for the meeting. Anyone interested in attending is asked to contact the Texas AgriLife Extension Service of Austin County to let us know you're coming.

## Upcoming Events

- |        |       |   |   |
|--------|-------|---|---|
| June   | 1     | - | Beef and Forage Committee Meeting                       |
|        | 7     | - | CEU Program Opportunity - Austin County Livestock Assoc |
|        |       | - | Austin County Livestock Assn. Meeting                   |
|        | 9     | - | Big Tomato Contest & Vegetable Show                     |
|        | 14    | - | S.W.C.D. Banquet of Champions                           |
|        | 16    | - | Brenham Vegetable Show                                  |
|        | 22-23 | - | Austin County Fair, Summer Music Fest                   |
| July   | 4     | - | Independence Day Holiday, Office Closed                 |
|        | 10    | - | Dupont Huisache Field Day, Bar D Ranch - Chappell Hill  |
|        | 13    | - | Feral Hog Symposium                                     |
|        | 18    | - | Leadership Advisory Board Meeting                       |
|        | 19    | - | Food Preservation Workshop                              |
| August | 3     | - | Beef and Forage Committee Meeting                       |
|        | 6-8   | - | Beef Cattle Short course, TAMU                          |
|        | 17    | - | Multi County New Landowners Series                      |
|        | 22    | - | Private Applicator Training and Testing                 |
| Sept.  | 3     | - | Labor Day Holiday, Office Closed                        |
|        | 5     | - | Horticulture Committee Meeting                          |
|        | 7     | - | Hay Show Entry Deadline                                 |
|        | 13    | - | Fire Ant Seminar  |
|        | 21    | - | Multi County New Landowners Series                      |
|        | 28    | - | Fall Forage Seminar and Austin County Hay Show          |

Sincerely,



Philip Shackelford  
County Extension Agent-Ag  
Austin County