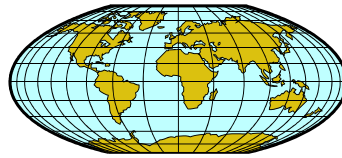


Austin County Ag News



Spring 2015

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Beef Cattle Management Series

The Beef and Forage Committee will be sponsoring a Beef Cattle Management Series this spring devoted to beef cattle producers interested in rebuilding their cow herd. The first in the series will take place on Friday, March 20th, at Four County Auction Center in Industry. Registration is scheduled from 1:00 pm to 1:30 p.m. with the program to follow. Doug Pierce, Ag Science Instructor for Blinn College, will be speaking on replacement heifer selection and nutritional needs of the developing female. Dr. Levi Russell, Extension Economist, will provide information related to the economics of raising versus purchasing replacements.

The program will begin with registration at 1:00 p.m. with the program scheduled to last from 1:30 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. At the conclusion of the program, there will be a complimentary meal prepared by First National Bank of Bellville and sponsored by the Beef and Forage Committee of Austin County, Austin County Farm Bureau, Austin County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Austin Livestock Association. There is no registration fee, however anyone wanting to participate is asked to contact the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office via the website <http://austin.agrilife.org> and register. You may also call in with your intentions of registering for the event by calling (979) 865-2072. Refreshments will be provided, and two CEU's will be given to all pesticide applicators in the General category. There will also be 2 credits given for the Beef Quality Assurance Program.

The next scheduled meeting in the series will take place on Friday, May 8th, at Four County Livestock, from 1:00 - 5:00 p.m. The focus of this seminar will be on bull selection, nutritional needs, breeds and health. Registration information will be posted on the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service of Austin County website at <http://austin.agrilife.org>.

Private Applicator Training - April 1st

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 Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service of Austin County will be

sponsoring a Private Applicator Training on Wednesday, April 1st , at the Extension Office, located at 20 S. Holland in Bellville. The training will last from 8:30 a.m. until 12:00 p.m, and is a mandatory component in the process for acquiring a private applicator license. The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) no longer does testing at County Extension Offices, instead the tests are given at centers located at one of 22 regional testing centers across the state, four of which are in Houston. The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) has contracted with PSI Services (PSI) to administer exams for agricultural pesticide applicator licensing.

Upon completion of the training, potential applicators must first apply for a license with TDA. Go to the TDA website at: <https://texasagriculture.gov/LicensesRegistrations.aspx>. You may also call TDA at (800) 835-5832 or (512) 463-7622 for assistance. Upon approval from TDA, you will be sent an Examination Eligibility Letter, along with instructions for paying and scheduling the examination. Potential applicators are responsible for contacting PSI to pay for and schedule the examination. You may either schedule via the Internet at www.psiexams.com , or schedule over the telephone at (800) 733-9267.

There is a \$60.00 fee to attend the training. Your registration fee includes the study materials and refreshments. You can reserve your spot at the training by going to our website <http://austin.agrilife.org> or by calling (979) 865-2072 .

Spray Permits Required for a Portion of Austin County

As a reminder to anyone that will be using state limited use or state restricted use herbicides in Austin County, a permit to apply these herbicides must be obtained through the Texas Department of Agriculture if you plan on spraying in certain portions of the county. The following areas of Austin County must acquire a permit as is specified in the Texas Agricultural code, chapter 75,

- I.*) Only the portion of Austin County lying east and south of the line beginning at the point where state highway 36 crosses the north county line, thence southerly along Highway 36 to FM 949; thence westwardly along FM 949 to the San Bernard River
- 2.*) Between March 15th and July 31st, in that portion of Austin County lying south of Interstate Highway 10, the following restrictions on the use of 2,4-D formulations shall apply:
 - (A.)* The application by aircraft is prohibited
 - (B.)* The use of all ester formulations by any method is prohibited

Permits may be obtained from the Texas AgriLife Extension Service of Austin County at (979) 865-2072, or visit our website at <http://austin.agrilife.org> Forms can also be obtained by contacting the Texas Department of Agriculture Gulf Coast Regional Office in Houston at (713) 921-8200.

Turf and Landscape Tree Seminar

Spring is right around the corner, and our area will soon be bursting with blooming plants, green grass and warmer temperatures. As spring and subsequently summer approaches, homeowners begin to think about taking care of their lawns, gardens and shade trees, and as a county agent, the calls will begin coming in from clientele regarding fertility needs of landscape plants, water requirements, insect control and disease management.

In an attempt to assist landscape enthusiasts with their questions regarding management of turf and trees, the Horticulture Committee of Austin County will be sponsoring a Turf and Landscape Tree Seminar at the W. E. Hill Center in Sealy on Thursday, April 30th, 2015. The program will focus on the two most important features in most landscapes, turf grass and trees. Dr. Casey Reynolds, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Turf Grass Specialist, will get things kicked off with a presentation on common varieties, establishment, nutritional needs, water concerns and common pests and diseases in turf. Daniel Lewis, staff forester with the Texas A&M

Forest Service, will provide information related to keeping your trees healthy all year long. His presentation will include information regarding planting, drought tolerant varieties, health and maintenance.

Registration will take place from 6:00 p.m. until 6:30 p.m., with the program to follow. Two CEU's will be given to all pesticide applicators. A \$15.00 fee will be charged at the door per person. A light meal, drinks and refreshments will be available. Anyone wanting to participate is asked to contact the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office via the website <http://austin.agrilife.org> and register. You may also call in with your intentions of registering for the event by calling (979) 865-2072.

Master Gardener Plant Sale - (New location)

The Bluebonnet Master Gardener Association's annual plant sale will be held on Saturday, April 11, 2015 from 8:30 a.m. until 4 p.m. at Liedertafel Building in Sealy. This will be held in conjunction with the Sealy Spring Picnic.

Included in the sale will be plants that are drought and heat tolerant, cold hardy, and low maintenance. Expect many Earth Kind varieties, succulents, Texas Super Stars, herbs, annuals and perennials, as well as some unique and hard to find plants. Fruit trees can also be ordered on the day of the sale with delivery at a later date. Experts will be available to give demonstrations on irrigation, water catchment systems, and to answer gardening and watering questions. Proceeds will advance education, scholarships and beautification for Austin, Colorado, Fayette and Washington counties.

For additional information, contact Renee Kofman 832-492-3293 or visit <http://www.bluebonnetmastergardener.org>. Bluebonnet Master Gardener Association is part of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Texas A&M System.

Multi-County New Landowners Educational Series Continues

The Austin, Colorado, Fayette, and Washington County offices of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service will host their next Multi-County New Landowner educational program on **Friday, March 20th, 2015**. This program will be held at the property of Jim Willis, 3295 FM 949, Cat Spring, TX 98733 beginning at 1:30PM. Directions and a map will be posted on the New Landowner Program website, and are available at county offices. This meeting will discuss native prairie restoration and wildlife management. Jim Willis will discuss his involvement in the Wildlife Habitat Federation, a group that provides technical expertise and restoration services to landowners in an effort to re-establish native upland wildlife and game habitat. Mr. Willis will share his experiences in working with various landowners to restore native grasses, and the consequent restoration of wildlife habitat. Also in attendance will be Mark Lange, Wildlife Biologist for Austin and Colorado Counties with Texas Parks and Wildlife. He will discuss how native prairie restoration is a good fit for meeting the requirements of a wildlife-based tax valuation. Participants can register at the door on the day of the program for \$20.00 per person. Three CEU's (2 General & 1 IPM) will be offered to pesticide applicators in integrated pest management. Participants with special needs requiring auxiliary aid should contact the Colorado County office of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service prior to the program in order for appropriate accommodations to be arranged.

The afternoon program will be held outdoors, so it is advised that those planning to attend bring a lawn chair and wear comfortable clothing to fit the outdoor conditions on that day. We will also be visiting a few other properties where restoration work has been done, and some transportation will be provided.

The April program will focus on Stock Pond Management. The program will be held on **Friday, April 17th**, at

the SPJST Cooper Farms in Fayette County (2001 Waldeck Road in Ledbetter, Texas 78946). The program will begin at 1:30 p.m. with registration at the site. Peter Wood, Extension Fisheries Specialist, will be the featured speaker. Mr. Wood will cover several topics that would be of interest to new landowners and seasoned landowners alike, such as aquatic weed control, pond construction, stocking recommendations, management of shoreline and tank dam vegetation, and fertilization of farm ponds.

Registration for the program is \$20.00 per person. Your registration fee will include all of the handout materials and refreshments. Three (3) CEU's will be offered for all pesticide applicators, one general and two integrated pest management (1 General & 2 IPM). Anyone wishing to have pond weeds identified is asked to bring their weeds freshly pulled and in a mason jar or zip lock bag.

May's program will focus on pasture management and forage production. This program is set for **Friday, May 15th**, at the Hobson's Choice Ranch, near Cat Spring (10305 Jalowy Road, near Cat Spring). The field day will include an overview of the value added hay production, information on irrigation to maximize production, and the how to's of adding value to your hay crop. The field day will begin at 1:30 p.m. with registration at the farm, followed by the program and field tour. The standard registration fee of \$20.00 applies for attending the program. Three (3) CEU's (2 General & 1 IPM) will be given to pesticide applicators, and handouts will be provided.

Anyone interested in attending either or both of these programs is asked to contact the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office via the website <http://austin.agrilife.org> and register. You may also call in with your intentions of registering for the event by calling (979) 865-2072.

Texas Community Futures Identification Forum

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service has a rich history of providing educational programs that address the most critical issues in Austin County. In order to make sure that the programs being planned for the future are on target, we invite your participation in an Issues Forum to be held on Thursday, April 23rd, at the Bellville United Methodist Church, at 234 S. Masonic in Bellville. Registration for the event will take place from 6:00 - 6:30 p.m., with the forum beginning at 6:30 p.m. A light meal will be served prior to the beginning of the forum. Our expectation is that the forum will last less than two hours, as we understand the value of your time. Your opinion is highly valued in our community, so we truly hope you can join us.



If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension office of Austin County at 979-865-2072. You may call in your registration or you can register online by visiting our website at <http://ausitn.agrilife.org>. Thank you very much for your involvement in this forum, and we look forward to seeing you on April 23rd.

USDA Reminds Austin/Washington County Producers of March 15, 2015 Sales Closing Date for Non-insurable Crops

Farm Service Agency (FSA) urges producers who want to purchase coverage through the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) to do so before the sales closing date of March 15, 2015.

NAP provides financial assistance to producers of noninsurable crops when low yields/grazing loss, loss of inventory or prevented planting occur due to natural disasters including drought, freeze, hail, excessive moisture, excessive wind or hurricanes.

In order to meet eligibility requirements for NAP, crops must be noninsurable, commercially-produced agricultural commodity crops for which the catastrophic risk protection level of crop insurance is not available. FSA policy has changed - for the 2015 crop year, producers in Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota and Texas who annually plant crops used for mechanically harvested livestock feed, can purchase both NAP coverage at the catastrophic level or higher (“buy-up”) and Rainfall Index – Annual Forage Insurance plan coverage offered through Risk Management Agency (RMA); however if a NAP payment and indemnity benefit are payable, the producer must choose. The producer cannot receive benefits under both.

The Agricultural Act of 2014 (the 2014 Farm Bill) allows producers to choose higher levels of NAP coverage. Previously, the program offered coverage at 55 percent of the average market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of expected production. Producers can now choose higher levels of coverage, up to 65 percent of their expected production at 100 percent of the average market price. It is important to note that the higher coverage is not available on grazing crops.

The following crops in Austin/Washington County have a NAP application closing date of March 15, 2015: BEANS , CANTALOUPE, CUCUMBERS, EGGPLANT, GUAR, OKRA, PEAS (BLACKEYE, COW, CROWDER, PURPLE HULL & SNAP), PECANS (NATIVE & IMPROVED), PEPPERS, PUMPKINS, SORGHUM FORAGE (ALUM, CANE, SUDAN & SWEET), SQUASH, SWEET CORN, TOMATOES, & WATERMELONS

Eligible producers must file the application and pay a service fee by the March 15, 2015 deadline. Producers also pay a fixed premium for higher coverage. Beginning, limited resource and under served producers may request a waiver of the service fee and a 50 percent premium reduction when the application for coverage is filed.

Springing Cows with Spring Approaching

by Ashton Logsdon, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Intern

No matter what, everybody will have times of the year that seem to be more stressful, and important than the rest of the year... cattle producers are no different. For most producers, the winter and spring seasons are the most important times of the year; winter being a time where natural forage becomes more scarce, and spring being when most cow/calf ranchers plan for their cows to calve; which both seasons coincide with the most critical times in a cow's nutrition which are 30 days before calving all the way to 70 days after calving. Unfortunately these seasons happen back to back; making it stressful on both the producer and their cows.

During the winter, as forage becomes more scarce, producers will more than likely need to supplement, or give extra feed to their cattle to help them maintain their body weight. Though during this time that may be hard to do considering that as the cow gets closer to calving, her nutrient requirement will constantly be going up, and it also does not help that the more the producer needs to feed the more that comes out of their pocket. During the winter make sure that your cows are receiving at least 6-7% CP (crude protein) but preferably 8-9% from whatever means you are feeding them. Also providing free choice minerals for your cows is very important at all times of the year, but especially during winter months around calving season because pregnancy and high milk production will increase the needs for Ca (calcium) and P (phosphorus). If not consuming adequate amounts, various deficiency disorders can develop, such as osteomalacia in adults, milk fever, etc.

Since cows must lactate, repair their reproductive tracts, resume heat cycles, breed, increase activity, and grow, if they are still young, this makes the post-calving period the highest nutritional demand in a cow's life. All

these processes put considerable strain on the cow. However, her voluntary feed intake or how much feed she will eat, is highest after the calving period. If she is not fed to meet her nutritional demands, she will fail or be delayed in rebreeding and can lose up to 100-115 lbs. after calving. The key is to remember is that you are now essentially feeding two animals at the same time until the calf is weaned, so making sure to provide enough nutrients whether by natural or provided forage, and through the use of supplementation. As said before, this also includes providing vitamins such as but not limited to calcium and phosphorus in free choice form to help encourage speedy recovery and growth.

Even though at the end/beginning of each year, we, producers seem to become stressed; what with all the holidays, family time, and everything else coupled with our cattle, it can get pretty busy. Though this year we can take care of some of that by making sure to provide proper nutrition for our cows during the most critical times... Now if only it was that easy to pick out gifts for the holidays.

For more on cow nutrition and livestock management, contact the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at (979) 865-2072, or visit our website at <http://austin.agrilife.org> and click the Ask the Agent tab.

Grass-fed Beef Conference Scheduled May 28-29 in College Station

With consumer interest heightening about where food comes from, grassfed beef producers will have the opportunity to learn more about marketing opportunities as well as production trends during a May 28-29 conference in College Station. Dr. Rick Machen, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension beef cattle specialist in Uvalde, said producers can learn about all aspects of grassfed beef production techniques at the conference, which will be held at the Rosenthal Meat Science Building on the Texas A&M University campus.

“One of the highlights will be Dr. Monte Rouquette, Forage Agronomist from Overton,” Machen said. “Monte has clearly demonstrated how to produce forage finished beef in East Texas. He’s among the best forage agronomists in the southern US and has years of experience.” Given the ongoing drought across much of the South Central US, sustainable forage production is atop everyone’s items of interest list.

“As always, a significant emphasis in this year’s conference will be the importance of a sustainable (both quantity and quality) forage supply. Perhaps the most difficult part of a grassfed beef production system.” The conference will cover a broad range of important topics pertaining to grassfed beef production and is open to both beef producers and consumers. The following topics will be discussed: overview of the beef industry; defining natural, grass-fed and organic beef; growing forage – the fundamentals; cattle types suited for grass-fed beef; forage-based nutrition for cattle; preventive herd health; handling cattle for wholesome beef; carcass fabrication; consumers and their expectations; marketing a unique product; and economics and sustainability. A live carcass fabrication demonstration will be a second day highlight. Cost is \$250 through May 15 and \$300 after.

To register online, visit <https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu/> and enter keyword “grassfed” or call (979)845-2604.

Farewell

Whoever 'they' are have said that all good things must come to an end, and apparently that time has come for me as the County Extension Agent for Agriculture and Natural Resources in Austin County. Effective April 1, 2015, I will assume a new role on the campus of Texas A&M University of Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist in the office of Organizational Development. My role of Extension Specialist will be that of working with and training new county agents with program development and evaluation of Extension educational programs. I will also be teaching a few classes on campus in the Agriculture Leadership, Education and Communication Department. I'm not real sure exactly what my day to day activities will be, but the first order of business is to make sure I know how to get to my office in the morning and find out what time we eat lunch.

My time here in Austin County has been the happiest of my entire life. I have had the opportunity to do some great things and work with some very special people. Extension is successful not because of the County Agents that occupy the office, but because of the people of the county that work with and interact with those agents. Extension is considered 'Grass Roots', because we utilize local people to identify local problems and address local issues. The network of Extension agents, Extension Specialist, Extension Support Staff and Program Area Committee members all working together is what makes a program successful. The real key for any County Agents' success or failure is his or her ability to built and cultivate a relationship with clientele. Some folks like to tease me that each time I walk into a room, I work the crowd, shaking hands and speaking to most everyone I know. That's not because I'm running for a political office, it's because I genuinely like you and I want you to know that I care about what's going on in your life. When I was interviewing for this new position, I was asked the question, "what will you miss the most about leaving your current job?" I didn't even have to think about this one, I will miss the community. The community and network of volunteers and friends that I have had the honor to work along side and serve with for the past 15 years.

In the interim, the other agents in the Austin County office will step up and make sure that all the programs that have been planned for 2015 will take place. The program area committees will also be assisting in this effort until a new agent is hired. It's hard to say when that will be, but hopefully it will not take long and a new County Agent for Agriculture and Natural Resources will be here. I can only hope that he or she enjoys it as much as I have. I once wrote an article for the local news papers entitled, 'My, How Times Flies.' In it, I stated how amazed I was at the passing of time and how fast it has flown by. When I moved here, my intentions were to possibly work on a PhD at Texas A&M, and once I was done, return back home to the area where I had grown up. Then, as fate would have it, LIFE got in the way and my plans changed. Now, this is home for me and my family and although I will have a new title and job, my home will remain here in Austin County. I will gradually have to transition from a role as the County Agent into my new role, that of an Extension Volunteer and 4-H Dad here in Austin County. You will still see me in town at a ball game, at church with my family, at the grocery store, the coffee shop and the county fair, and you will still see a article from time to time in the local news papers. My sincere hope is that I have had as great an impact on your life as you have had on mine. Austin County is a special place because of the special people to that live here. It was an honor to serve as your County Agent and I wish you all the best. Farewell.

Upcoming Events

- | | | | |
|-------|----|---|---|
| March | 20 | - | Beef Cattle Management Seminar, Four County Livestock, Industry, 2 CEU's, 2 BQC's |
| | | - | Multi County New Landowners Series, "Wildlife Management", Cat Spring, 3 CEU's |
| | 30 | - | Mill Creek Water Shed Meeting, Bleiberville VFD |
| April | 1 | - | Private Applicator Training and Testing |
| | 3 | - | Good Friday Holiday, Office Closed |
| | 11 | - | Master Gardener Plant Sale, Sealy |
| | 17 | - | Multi County New Landowners Educational Series, "Stock Ponds", SPJST Cooper Farms in Ledbetter, 3 CEU's |
| | 23 | - | Texas Community Futures Forum, Bellville |
| | 25 | - | Austin County Fair Steer and Heifer Tag In |
| | 27 | - | Mill Creek Water Shed Meeting, Bleiberville VFD |
| | 30 | - | Turf and Landscape Tree Seminar in Sealy, 2 CEU's |
| May | 6 | - | Horticulture Committee Meeting |
| | 8 | - | Beef Cattle Management Seminar Series, Four County Livestock in Industry |
| | 15 | - | Multi County New Landowner Educational Series, "Pasture Management & Forage Production", Hobson's Choice Ranch, 3 CEU's |
| | 25 | - | Memorial Day Holiday, Office Closed |

Sincerely,



Philip Shackelford
County Extension Agent - AG/NR
Austin County