

## Clay County Agriculture News

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### Feral Hog Program to be Held on November 29

The Clay County Hog-Out Program continues through December 31. Anyone interested in the program is encouraged to attend a Feral Hog Program on Thursday, November 29 at Jeff Fitts Barn in Henrietta beginning at 6 pm. Eddie Hood, Texas Parks and Wildlife, is scheduled to discuss the regulations, rules and permitting of hunting, trapping and selling of feral hogs. Local trappers and buyers will be on hand to talk about control techniques and trapping secrets. There is no cost to attend the program and a meal will be provided. Several more hog traps will be given away as door prizes. However, you must be at least 18 years of age to be eligible to win a trap and the traps must be used in Clay County. Sponsors for the event include Clay County Commissioners Court, Little Wichita Soil and Water Conservation District, USDA-NRCS, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service – Clay County and Boss Hawg Pig Traps. RSVP to the USDA-NRCS office at 940.538.4681, ext. 3 by Monday, November 26 if you plan to attend.

### Fall Beef Cattle Update Set for December 4 in Henrietta

The new cattle traceability rule and a cattle market outlook will be the focus of the Fall Beef Cattle Update Meeting to be held in Henrietta on Tuesday, December 4. The meeting will be held at the Holman Center beginning at 4 pm.

Dr. Max Dow, with the Texas Animal Health Commission, will discuss a requirement for adult cattle in Texas to have an approved form of permanent identification in place at change of ownership that is scheduled to go into effect January 1, 2013 according to the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC). The amended rule permanently cancels the brucellosis test requirement for adult cattle at change of ownership, which was unofficially suspended in the summer of 2011. Although testing of adult cattle is no longer required with the rule change, all sexually intact cattle, parturient or post parturient, or 18 months of age and older changing ownership must still be officially identified with Commission approved permanent identification. Dr. Dow will discuss acceptable identification devices/methods, such as USDA metal tags, brucellosis calfhood vaccination tags, US origin 840 series Radio Frequency Identification tags (RFID), and breed registration tattoos or firebrands.

Also on the agenda for the day will be a market outlook from Stan Bevers, AgriLife Extension Economist. Stan will detail the cattle, corn and wheat markets, as well as give an overview of the total agricultural economy and how it ties into consumer attitudes and ideas. Mike McDonald, USDA-Farm Service Agency District Director, will give an Ag Policy update.

Another topic that is always on the minds of producers is updated regulations on pasture herbicides. Tony Dean, USDA-NRCS District Conservationist will discuss pasture herbicides and give an EQIP update.

The clinic will provide producers with two hours of TDA continuing education credits.

The cost of the program will be \$15 per person and will include a meal and all program materials. RSVP to the extension office by Friday, November 30 for meal purposes. Meeting sponsors include Ann and Wilson Scaling and Capital Farm Credit. Contact Missy at the extension office at 538.5042 or 538.5052 with any questions about the program.

### National Beef Quality Audit Revels Trends in Beef Production

Continued expansion of branded beef programs and cattle herds with black hides are several trends identified in the 2011 National Beef Quality Audit, according to Dr. Jeff Savell, Texas A&M AgriLife Research meat scientist. Savell said the audit revealed cattle with predominantly black hide color increased from 45.1 percent to 61.1 percent since the 2000 audit. There were also a significant reduction in the amount of mud and manure on hides, he said, as the industry has maximized cattle cleanliness to reduce the threat of potential contaminants coming into plants.

Branded beef programs continue to rise. There are 6.4 programs per processing plant. Savell said plants have also modified the way they sort cattle as a result of these branded beef programs. More plants are doing a lot of pre-sorting for age and source and various branded beef programs, and have specialized days of harvest for them due to the retrospective requirements by these programs.

Carcasses are getting heavier, but yield grades are about the same. Average carcass weight for steers is 852.7 pounds and 776 pounds for heifers. Of the many national meat processing plants that were studied, Savell said harvest floor data indicated that individual electronic identification reached 20 percent compared to 3.5 percent in the 2005 audit. Also found was 15.7 percent having metal clip tags compared to 11.8 percent in 2005.

A big concern of major restaurant chains and the beef industry as a whole is animal welfare. Many have evaluated cattle handling operations and made changes, such as chute gates and how they may interfere with cattle movement and potential bruising. Savell said bruised carcasses declined by 77 percent in 2011, signaling heightened awareness and attention by the industry regarding cattle handling.

### **TAHC Announces Details of New Cattle Traceability Rule**

A requirement for adult cattle in Texas to have an approved form of permanent identification in place at change of ownership will go into effect January 1, 2013 according to the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC). The Commission amended its rules in June of this year to enhance the effective traceability of beef cattle movements in Texas, which is the cornerstone of disease control activities. Implementation of the changes was delayed by the Commission to ensure cattle producers understand the requirements and can prepare for the changes.

The amended rule permanently cancels the brucellosis test requirement for adult cattle at change of ownership, which was unofficially suspended in the summer of 2011. Although testing of adult cattle is no longer required with the rule change, all sexually intact cattle, parturient or post parturient, or 18 months of age and older changing ownership must still be officially identified with Commission approved permanent identification. This change primarily affects beef cattle, as dairy cattle in Texas have had an even more stringent identification requirement in place since 2008.

Before August of 2011, official identification devices such as eartags were applied automatically at the time a brucellosis test was performed. The inadvertent loss of the identification devices applied to cattle when brucellosis testing stopped has threatened TAHC's ability to effectively trace cattle as part of any ongoing disease investigation.

The TAHC routinely performs cattle health investigations where the identification and location of exposed/infected animals is critical to success. For example, 30 Brucellosis reactors, over 300 Bovine Trichomoniasis affected bulls and 22 bovine tuberculosis cases have been investigated by the TAHC to date in 2012. The new traceability rule will help preserve the TAHC's ability to identify and trace animal movements quickly and effectively, no matter which disease is involved.

A complete list of acceptable identification devices/methods may be found at [www.tahc.state.tx.us](http://www.tahc.state.tx.us), but the most commonly used devices include USDA metal tags, brucellosis calfhood vaccination tags, US origin 840 series Radio Frequency Identification tags (RFID), and breed registration tattoos or firebrands. Producers are encouraged to contact their veterinarian or TAHC to determine which method of tagging will be best for their operation.

Free USDA metal tags, and a limited number of free applicator pliers (dependant on available funding) will be provided by the TAHC to producers wishing to use them. The tags and/or pliers may be obtained by contacting local TAHC field staff and USDA APHIS Veterinary Services representatives. The TAHC is developing tag distribution partnerships with interested veterinary practitioners and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension offices. Producers may locate the closest tag distributor online at [www.tahc.state.tx.us](http://www.tahc.state.tx.us).