

Agriculture Newsletter

COLORADO COUNTY

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EXTENSION

October 2015

15 CEUs
available
inside

Tawny Crazy Ant Confirmed in Colorado County

By Stephen Janak - County Extension Agent, Ag/NR, Colorado County

The presence of Tawny Crazy Ant (*Nylanderia fulva*, aka Raspberry Crazy Ant) has been recently confirmed in Colorado County. Three samples were collected - two from Columbus and one from Weimar - and sent to urban entomologists at Texas A&M University for identification. All three samples came back positively identified as the invasive ant from Brazil which was first found in Pasadena, Texas in 2002. This information has been shared with the Texas Department

of Agriculture, who can approve the extended use of certain pesticides through a Section 18 Quarantine Exemption for the control of this ant. While the pesticide in question (fipronil) may only be applied by licensed Pest Control Operators or commercial/non-commercial applicators, this exemption will at least give residents of Colorado County the ability to do something more than was previously allowed. It also will allow industry to use certain pesticides that eliminates ants in potting medium so that they will not be spread to other areas of the state.

While the species is not fully understood yet, it is known that they can cause significant economic impact. They do not sting like fire ants, but they do bite and have been documented attacking the nose, eyes, and hooves of livestock, and can be a serious threat to newborn calves that are covered in amniotic fluid. There are also reports of death of fowl and chickens who suffocated because of masses of ants clogging their airways.

Additionally, the ants tend to congregate in electrical



Tawny Crazy Ant tending aphids. Photos by Danny McDonald

equipment and can cause short-circuits and malfunctions. This likely starts when one random ant wanders into electric equipment and is shocked. When this happens, the ant releases pheromones which attracts other ants. The three most common devices affected are circuit breakers, switch boxes, and pumps. This could prove problematic for those who rely on water pumps for irrigation.

It is important that landowners are diligent in preventing the spread of these ants. Be extra aware when transporting bags of trash or leaves/lawn clippings, potted plants, soil, hay bales, sacks of grain or feed, mowers, balers, other farm equipment, and electrical units such as pumps. It is true that these ants drive away the Imported Red Fire Ant, but those landowners who now have TCA would love to have the fire ant back instead of this new invasive species. **Landowners can use common contact insecticides (permethrin, pyrethroids, acephate, fipronil) according to label to create a temporary barrier and to help protect trees and landscape plants. Other products such as Alpine WSG, TopChoice, or Taurus G can be used in yards to help extend the barrier.**

If you suspect you have an infestation of this ant, please let me know so that we can track the spread of this invasive species, document losses, and work to eradicate it.

For more information please contact me at the office or by email: stephen.janak@ag.tamu.edu

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UPCOMING EVENTS/PROGRAMS

Soil, Forage, and Water Testing Campaign to be held during November

The Beef and Forage Committee of Colorado County is pleased to offer a soil, forage, and water testing campaign for Colorado County landowners. During the month of November, residents may have these agricultural tests done at a special discounted rate and without shipping. Testing forms and supplies must be picked up at Bernardo Farm & Ranch, Colorado Feed Company, Dudensing Farm Service, Eagle Lake General Store, Garwood Farmers' Co-op, M-G Farm Service Center, and Sandy Creek Country Store. Soil, forage, and water samples may then be dropped off with the completed submittal form at any of the above businesses at any time from **November 2-27**. Results will be mailed during December, or they may be picked up at the Extension office. This will be agricultural soil testing (not urban landscape use), hay or forage testing for protein, energy, and digestibility, and water testing for livestock or irrigation use (no bacteria testing).



Colorado County Corn and Cotton Variety Trials Wrapped Up

Thank you to our cooperators, Leopold Grain and Chad Mahalitic, for assisting with this local research project year after year. The corn results are in and are available at the office, or we can send them to you. Corn ranged from 96-127 bu/acre. Cotton results are still being processed, and will be made available to you as soon as we have them.

Texas Ag and Timber Registration Renewal (Tax-free Ag Use)

Several years ago, ag producers in the state had to obtain a registration number to get the ag sales tax exemption. All of these initial registrations will expire on **December 31, 2015**. They must be renewed for continued use. The easiest way to do this is to call the comptroller's office (Only takes a few minutes). You will need your current ag registration number and Social Security number. You can call to renew your number 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call: 1-844-AG RENEW or 1-844-247-3639. After you renew with TDA, a confirmation letter and your new card will be mailed in 5-7 days.

After a Wet Winter, Texas Could Dry Out

One report from Meteorologist/Climatologist Brian Bledsoe suggests that the El Nino weather pattern will persist through April/May of 2016, but will quickly weaken and head towards a La Nina pattern. This can mean a significant drying, starting with Southeast Texas. Basically, the back half of 2016 could end up very dry for much of Texas. Plan forage supplies and insurance coverages accordingly. For more info: (979)732-2082.

Austin County Pecan Show

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension of Bellville will be having their annual Pecan Show and Bake Show. To be held Friday, **November 20th** at the Courthouse and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office in Bellville. Entries will be accepted from 8:30am until 10:00am. For more information, call 979-865-2072.

Monsanto Dekalb DKC 66-96	127.7
Terral Seed REV 23BHR55	127.2
Golden Acres	121.9
Mycogen Seeds	120.6
Monsanto Dekalb	117.7
Advanta Phoenix	117.5
CPS Dyna-Gro	114.2
Syngenta NK	113.3
B-H Genetics	110.9
Golden Acres G5535	96.0

Beef Cattle Field Day

Jackson County Cattle Raisers Assn. will be sponsoring a Beef Cattle Field Day, Thursday, **October 29th , 5:30 p.m.** at Sam & Jessica Hoerster Ranch, County Road 401, off Hwy 111 North. Live demonstrations of Pregnancy Using Ultrasound, Ultrasound to Determine Carcass Merit in Live Cattle, Discussions of Selection Procedures for Weaning and Yearling Age Heifers and Bulls. There will be door prizes, hamburgers and refreshments provided. For more information call 361-782-3312.

Austin County Citrus Field Day

The Horticulture Committee of Austin County will be hosting a Citrus Field Day at the Hill Center in Sealy on **October 30th**. Registration begins at 1:00 p.m. The cost of the program is \$20.00. Private Applicators will receive **1 hour General, 1 hour Laws and Regs in CEUs**. For more information call 979-865-2072.

5 Hour CEU Event in Cuero

On Monday, **November 2, 2015** the DeWitt County Beef and Forage Committee will sponsor a **5 Hour CEU** event to be held at the Cuero VFW Hall, on Hwy 183, just north of Cuero. The program will run from 12:30pm-6:00pm, and RSVP is not necessary. Cost will be \$20 per person, and refreshments will be provided. For more information, call (361)275-0816.

Fayette County 6 CEU Ag. Conference - November 13

The Fayette County Fall Ag. Conference will be held **November 13th** at the Fayette County Fairgrounds and will offer **6 CEUs: 1 General, 2 Laws & Regs, 3 IPM**. Topics will include a Laws and Regulations update, Brush Management, FSA updates, and Aquatic Vegetation Management. Pre-registration is \$30 paid by November 10th. Registration is \$40 at the door. Registration begins at 8am. For more information, call (979)968-5831.

November New Landowner Program

Friday, **November 20th** New Landowner program will cover Livestock Production for Small Acreage. The program will be at Washington County Fair Grounds, 305 E. BlueBell Rd. Registration is \$20.00 per person and includes refreshments and your educational materials. **Two (2) CEU's** will be offered to all pesticide applicators. Program is open to all landowners, new or otherwise.

Refugio Crop Consultant Workshop

On **December 16, 2015** at Bonnie View Community Center there will be a Crop Consultant Workshop. Topics include Sugarcane Aphids, Weed Control, Sorghum Seeding Rates, Soil Moisture Conservation, Weather and Drones. Registration Fee is \$25.00 and will begin at 8:00 a.m. **CCA CEUs include 1 hour – IPM, 3 hours – Crop Management, 2 hours – Soil & Water Management**. For more information contact 361-526-2825.

Chronic Wasting Disease Confirmed in Lavaca County Captive White-tailed Deer Herd

On September 15th, Texas Animal Health Commission and Texas Parks and Wildlife announced that a captive white-tailed deer in Lavaca County has been confirmed positive for Chronic Wasting Disease. The newly quarantined Lavaca County facility is a result of testing animals that originated from a Medina County captive herd where CWD was detected back in June of 2015. Landowners, especially those with captive white-tailed deer herds, should be aware of the signs of CWD and to report any possible cases to their local wildlife biologist. For more information: 979-732-3458

U.S. EPA Proposes Pesticide Applicator Certification and Training Regulation Changes

All licensed pesticide applicators should take note: The US EPA has proposed some regulation changes that would effect private, commercial, and non-commercial applicators in the certification and recertification processes. The complete and original announcement from EPA may be found here: <http://www2.epa.gov/pesticide-worker-safety/epa-proposes-stronger-standards-people-applying-riskiest-pesticides>.

The proposed regulation:

- *Establishes a first time-ever nation-wide minimum age of 18 for certified applicators and persons working under their direct supervision.*
- *Requires all applicators to renew certifications every 3 years.*
- *Requires additional specialized certifications for people using high-risk application methods (fumigation and aerial).*
- *Requires first time annual safety training and increased oversight for persons working under the direct supervision of a certified applicator. Training includes reducing take-home pesticide exposure to protect worker families.*
- *To renew their certification, commercial applicators must earn 6 CEUs covering core content and 6 CEUs per category of certification, or they must pass written exams for core and each category of certification.*
- *To renew their certification, private applicators must earn 6 CEUs covering the general private applicator certification requirements and 3 CEUs per category of certification*
- *Applicators must earn at least half of the required CEUs in the 18 months preceding the expiration of their certification.*

There is an open, 90-day comment period which ends **November 23, 2015**. All licensed applicators are encouraged to utilize the comment period to voice their opinion on the proposed changes. When commenting, providing experience and credentials, data, facts, and well-supported comments has much more impact than a thousand rambling, angry letters. **Visit this site to comment:** <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=EPA-HQ-OPP-2011-0183>

If you have questions or if we can help you, please give us a call: (979)732-2082

Veterinary Feed Directive Update

The revised VFD rule went into effect October 1, 2015. This rule transitions many of the feed medications that are currently available "over-the-counter" into the VFD drug category, where their use in or on animal feed must be under the professional supervision of a licensed veterinarian. As of September 2015 there are three VFD drugs - florfenicol (Nuflor - swine; Aquaflor - aquaculture), avilamycin (Kavault; swine), and tilmicosin (Pulmotil; swine, beef, dairy). By January 1, 2017, all medically-important antimicrobials intended for use in feed that are currently available "over-the-counter" will become VFD drugs. Additives such as lasalocid (Bovatec-cattle, Avatec-poultry), monensin (Rumensin-cattle, Coban-poultry), bacitracin, bambarmycins (Flavomycin - swine, Gainpro - cattle), and amprolium **are not** "medically-important" and will not fall under the VFD unless they are used in combination with a VFD drug. To write the VFD order, the licensed veterinarian must have an established veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR) with the producer.

DTN Article Highlights Yield Exclusion Benefits

A recent DTN article highlighted the benefit of the new Yield Exclusion policy for crop insurance. By using Yield Exclusion, Beeville farmer Matt Huie erased four near-zero yield years due to drought, and his Actual Production History yields jumped 40-60%. Yield Exclusion was a last-minute addition to the 2014 Farm Bill and was designed to help farmers erase catastrophic loss years from their 10-year APH. Any increase in premiums as a result of the option can likely be mitigated by buying up a lower coverage amount.

To Plant or Not to Plant Cool Season Annual Forages?

Hopefully, by the time you are reading this newsletter, the first significant rainfall in months has fallen on your place and your pastures made it through the drought with enough forage to keep the soil from washing away and to help the rain infiltrate the soil. The NOAA has predicted a wetter-than-normal winter, which should mean optimum growing conditions for cool-season forages. With this recent rain, forage seeds can now be planted into soil moisture, and we can hope to anticipate more moisture to come. If this holds true, be prepared to manage forages which were overseeded in warm season perennial pastures (bermudagrass, bahiagrass). Excess winter forage in April and May can significantly slow down spring green-up of pastures. Prepare to increase stocking rate on these pastures or harvest excess forage as hay to allow warm-season grasses access to sunlight and good growing conditions.

Research Shows Economic Value of Castration, Polled/Dehorned Calves, Black Baldy

AgriLife Extension research in South Texas shows a statistical economic advantage of marketing polled and dehorned calves, black baldy calves, and castrated steers. Data was collected during 2014 and 2015 at auction barns in Bee, Karnes, Jim Wells, Live Oak, and Starr counties. Results showed red and spotted calves were discounted an average of -\$9.00 per cwt and -\$33.00 per cwt, respectively. Horned calves received a -\$6.30 per cwt. discount, and full-blood *Bos indicus* calves received a discount of -\$22.90 per cwt. However, calves with 0%, 25%, 50%, and 75% *Bos indicus* influence received no discount. This implies that producers can take advantage of the increased productivity of Brahman-influenced breeding stock without taking a discount on the calves produced.

Additionally, the financial benefit of castration and implantation averages \$81 for calves between 550 and 750 lbs. and ranges from \$30 for 550lb calves to \$154 for 750lb calves. Bull and steer calves sold between 350 and 500lbs only differed by \$0.06 per pound, but above 500lbs the price difference grows dramatically. Thus, producers can either 1) avoid the discounted price for bull calves by selling below 550lbs or 2) castrate steers at lower weights and receive a premium relative to bull calves at weights above 550lbs. In most cases, management costs of castration and implantation is much lower than the increased revenue potential at heavier market weights; thus, the benefits outweigh the costs.

The full reports are available at our office or online at:

<http://agrilife.org/coastalbend/program-areas/agricultural-economics-for-the-texas-coastal-bend/economic-reports-related-to-texas-coastal-bend-agriculture/>

As always, please feel free to contact me about your individual issues, needs or concerns.

I can be reached by phone at 979-732-2082

or email at stephen.janak@ag.tamu.edu.

Sincerely,



Stephen D. Janak

County Extension Agent—Ag/Natural Resources—Colorado County

colorado.agrilife.org

Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating. Individuals with disabilities who require an auxiliary aid, service or accommodation in order to participate in this meeting are encouraged to contact the County Extension Office at (979) 732-2082 ten (10) days prior to the meeting to determine how reasonable accommodations can be made.

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