

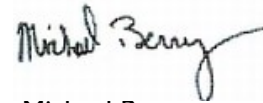
Comanche County Agriculture Newsletter Agriculture News

January—February 2017

Inside this issue:

Fever Tick	1-2
Tick Collection	2
Soil Testing	3
Upcoming Events	3-4

For most of agriculture 2017 is starting out on a good foot. Cattle prices have rising a little and show some hope of staying at this level. Milk price predictions are calling for better prices for the dairymen this year, that will help the whole county. We have very good top soil and sub soil moisture. So far, this winter every time I think we are going to get dry, we get a good rain. The climate model predictions are calling for equal chances of wet and dry. I guess that means they really do not know what the weather is going to be, but at least we are getting a good start. 2017 is shaping up to be a year of dealing with issues we thought we had long since licked. Two issues that we had all but forgotten that have the potential to be very serious are the screwworm and the fever tick.



Michael Berry
 County Extension Agent—Ag/NR
 Comanche County

Fever Tick

Seems like we are reliving some the trials our grand and great-grandparents faced. Some of the older (more experienced) cattlemen may remember having to round up cattle and run them through dipping vats as a means of controlling fever ticks. Most of us have just heard stories about fever ticks, but never really think about it because it is usually confined to the Permanent Quarantine Zone (PQZ) along the Rio Grande River from Del Rio to Brownsville with occasional movements outside caused by deer or antelope (Nilgai in Cameron, Willacy and Kenedy/Kleberg counties). The four counties listed have portions that are now Controlled Purpose Quarantine Areas (CPQA).

Just recently the tick has been found as far north as Live Oak County, which is way out of the Permanent Quarantine Zone. Unfortunately cattle from Live Oak County were dispersed across the state before this infestation was found. Some counties close by include: Mills, Bell, Falls and Milam. These counties now have quarantined premises, where the cattle were brought from Live Oak County. The good news is no ticks have yet been found on the herds where these cattle have been relocated, but those herds have been quarantined and are being checked. You may ask why the sudden reoccurrence of the fever tick? Joe C. Paschal Livestock Specialist Texas A&M AgriLife Extension explains it this way: A number of factors (long term) have contributed to an increase in the outbreaks including reduction in grasslands (which ticks dislike) and increase in brush (which ticks love) for hunting, (hunters don't worry about ticks on deer and deer managers may not know about them), increase in wildlife populations (no screwworms, better habitat management, warmer weather), absentee landownership, and of course cattle producers who for lack of knowledge or management don't know about ticks (the major cause in my opinion). Since most of Texas has not had to worry about the ticks since the 1940's it stands to reason that there is a lack of knowledge about them.

Fever Tick (continued)

Fever ticks once ranged as far north as Virginia and in 1906 the forerunner of the USDA, the Bureau of Animal Industry, began a national campaign to eradicate the tick from the US. By the 1940s, the tick had been eradicated to the southwestern boundary of Texas running from Del Rio to Brownsville; this was designated as the PQZ. Livestock in the PQZ have to be dipped or sprayed with Coumaphos (Corral) before they can be moved. At one time it was thought that the tick only fed on cattle, it is now known that it will feed on deer (and other cervids) and antelope (like Nilgai) and can be carried far from the PQZ. The ticks (both species) are one host; the female engorges blood along the brisket, elbow, flank and perianal regions where the hide is thinnest. Males can be found crawling anywhere on the hide.

The fever tick (there are actually two species) is not the cause of the tick fever, it is merely the host to a protozoa called Babesia which causes the disease which destroys red blood cells. About 90% of the cattle that contract Babesiosis get sick and have a high mortality.

We try to control the ticks so they can't carry the fever. Mexico has both the fever ticks as well as Babesiosis according to USDA and TAHC. To be clear the NONE of the fever ticks found in Texas this far are carrying the Babesiosis protozoan. But, the only way we can prevent the disease is to prevent the ticks that is why they are regulated and unwanted.

If cattle fever ticks are found on an animal on your premises a TAHC representative will create a plan to most effectively and efficiently rid your premises of fever ticks. The options include but are not limited to: 1) the first option for treatment is a ready-to-use injectable. Dectomax is given on a 25 to 28 day schedule for the 6 to 9 month quarantine period. 2) The second option is a prescribed schedule of dipping the cattle on the premises every 7 to 14 days for 6 to 9 months. The dipping schedule is based on the fever tick's life cycle. The cattle from a quarantined pasture are sprayed on the ranch or trucked to an authorized dipping vat, where they are treated under the supervision of a TAHC or USDA inspector, who must certify that 100 percent of the herd was treated. The animals are returned to their pasture, where more ticks will attach to the animal before the next scheduled dipping. This procedure is repeated again and again to "clean" the pasture of ticks during the minimum 6 to 9 month quarantine period. 3) The third option for eliminating the fever tick operates on the principal of "starving out" the tick, by removing the hosts. This approach, known as "vacating" the pasture, can be a more economical option for some ranchers as it cuts the costs of repeatedly rounding up, transporting and dipping cattle. This option begins with dipping the cattle on a 7 to 14 day schedule. The cattle must have two consecutive tick-free inspections and dipping's before the herd can be moved to a new, tick-free pasture. The tick-infested pasture is then left empty, or vacated, for nine months. Although vacating the premises of all livestock is often less expensive for the landowner, it is much less effective in eliminating fever ticks due to free-ranging deer and exotics. The white-tailed deer, nilgai, and other wildlife that can carry the fever tick must be treated by approved methods during the period the pasture is left vacant in order to reduce the perpetuation of the tick. None of these options are very easy or economical.

In South Texas Dr. Paschal says that the best way to control ticks on cattle are tick tags and the best way to control ticks in your pasture is through good grazing and brush management. Ranchers with good herd health management programs usually have fewer problems with any ticks. Let's hope no ticks are found on the quarantined premise herds that are located throughout the state. If Texas cannot control this outbreak, there could be a quarantine or restriction of livestock movement out of the state by USDA which would have a hundred million dollar impact so this is really a serious situation.

Tick Collection

I know by now you are tired of reading about ticks, but here is a way you could help. The Tick Research lab in the Department of Entomology at Texas A&M have been collecting ticks for some time. I believe this started off as an anaplasmosis project, but now has even greater implications. If you are interested in helping we have tick collection kits at the office. The kits include everything you need for collecting and sending ticks to the lab, including a postage paid envelope. The ticks can be collected from anything or anywhere, they just want to see what types of ticks are located in various counties. You are not required to include your name or any information other than when, where and what county the tick was collected.

Soil Testing

Now is an excellent time to pull soil test to get ready for the upcoming season. This is probably one of the most economical viable management tools available. With the incredible yields reported on most hay meadows this past year and the leeching associated with all the rainfall, we have probably removed more nutrient's from our soils than we realize. With the abundance of hay available, you may or may not want to fertilize for top yields this coming year. However you do want to keep your soil productive and healthy. The only way to know what your soils need for either high yields or just maintenance is through soil testing.

This is also the time to be applying some nutrients. If you need lime you will want to get it out as soon as possible. Depending on rainfall lime can take several months to breakdown and go to work in the soil. The same can be said for phosphorus. During the prolonged drought many folks understandably skimped on their potash and phosphorus applications, and only applied nitrogen or applied very little potash and phosphorus. These dry years were followed by some wet years and excellent production; this has made it very difficult to get some of these soils caught-up on these key nutrients.

The only way to find out what your soil really needs is with a soil test. These tests are pretty cheap \$10.00 from the Texas A&M Soils Lab, and even free from many of the fertilizer dealers in the area. Who knows when the water spigot will cut off, being informed will help you get the most from moisture.

Upcoming Events

We have several excellent programs scheduled for the next month, be sure to come to all of them.

Commercial Vegetable Production Program

In an effort to support the \$3.5 million vegetable and melon industry in the county, the Comanche County AgriLife Extension office will be hosting a Commercial Vegetable Production Program, Friday, February 10th at the Comanche Community Center. Registration will start at 9:30 and the meeting will run from 10:00 AM until 2:00 PM. We are fortunate to have two excellent speakers on the Agenda. Dr. Joe Masabni, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Small-Acreage Vegetable Specialist, will be talking about the Food Safety Modernization Act, crop rotations and fertilization. Dr. Allen Knutson, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Entomologist, will be talking about vegetable pest and pest control. We will be offering 3 CEU's 1IPM and 1 L&R and 1 general at the program.

Dairy Health Series

The second session of this series will be held on Wednesday, February 8th at 12:00 at the Comanche Community Center. This portion of the series will focus on basic animal husbandry skills including proper injection methods and sites, basic medication and vaccine handling. The final portion will be on Wednesday, March 8th, also at the Community Center at 12:00. Dr. Swiger will be talking about internal and external parasites in dairy herds. Lunch is provided by the excellent dairy sponsor Comanche County Electric Coop. at each of these programs. Please feel free to bring you herdsmen to the programs. Please call and let us know how many you have attending to help ensure the correct meal count.

Peach and Fruit Orchard Care and Pruning Workshop

This program will be held on Friday, February 17th at 1:30 at Worthington Orchard located at Proctor on HWY. 377. Dr. Worthington will be offering general management tips on orchard care. The program will focus on pruning. Come ready to work this is a hands-on workshop; everyone will have the opportunity to prune some of Dr. Worthington's trees. Be sure to wear long sleeves and bring your gloves and your pruning shears.

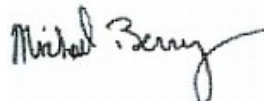
Upcoming Events (continued)

Last Chance Video CEU Program

This is an opportunity for anyone that still need a few CEU's and might have missed out on the many CEU's offered this past year. The program will be held at the Comanche Community Center on Tuesday, February 21st from 1:00 until 4:00. There is a \$15.00 fee for the program and 3 CEU's will be offered 1 L&R, 1 IPM and 1 general. Remember this is only videos, no actual speakers.

Soil and Crop Health Program

This program will be held on Thursday, February 23rd at the Comanche Community Center. Registration will begin at 9:30 and the program will run from 10:00 AM until 2:30 PM. We have an excellent program scheduled. Dr. Sam Feagley will talk about proper collection and interpretation of soil samples. He will also discuss soil effects from manure and fertilizer applications and the long-term implications both positive and negative. Dr. Emi Kimura will discuss the effects of soil compaction from heavy equipment on our cropping fields. Goodyear Tire will also discuss new technology and research being developed to aid in lowering compaction of fields as a result of heavy equipment traffic. We will be offering 3 general CEU's at this program.



101 W. Central, Suite B-101
Comanche, TX 76442

Phone: 325-356-2539
Fax: 325-356-3710
E-mail: mwberry@ag.tamu.edu

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
The Texas A&M University System
101 W. Central, Suite 101—B
Comanche, TX 76442-3264

