

Comanche County Agriculture Newsletter

Despite a relatively dry August and September, we had a pretty good summer. There was a lot of hay and silage made this summer. Cotton yields range from fair to really good, with some irrigated cotton reaching the 4 bales per acre mark. Despite a rough scab year, on managed orchards pecan quality and quantity appear to be very good. Let's hope everyone gets good prices for their crops.

Small grains were a struggle to get going this fall. We had the worst fall armyworm invasion I have ever witnessed, I do not think there was a small grain field they did not visit. 10's of thousands of acres had to be sprayed to save both small grain and Bermuda fields. Many have asked why we had this large population of armyworms. I talked to our best entomologist, they all said it was just a perfect year for the numbers to reach high levels from south to north Texas. The relatively wet and cool conditions allow them to survive at high numbers. They catch the southerly winds to Comanche. Then the rainfall we had in late September sprouted lots of small grain and grew some good tender Bermuda for them to eat. Right around Columbus Day the army was on the march.

Body Condition Scores

BCS is a tool used to evaluate the relative fatness or body composition of your cattle. As everyone knows when we get into the winter months it becomes increasingly hard to raise a cow's BCS. The target BCS for your cattle going into the winter should be 5 or 6. A cow with a BCS of 5 is not a fat cow just average. The ribs will not be noticeable and areas on both sides of tail head are fairly well filled. If you have fall calving cattle or cattle with young calves, you may want to consider separating them and feeding them extra to insure their BCS scores stay around 5. This will insure better pregnancy rates for these cattle, and keep you from having to over-feed dry cows. By just raising your cows BCS score from 4 to 5 you can increase your pregnancy rates as much as 20 %. That can mean several more calves on the ground and more returns for you down the road. We have handouts with descriptions and pictures of the different BCS available at the office.

Grass Tetany and Bloat

Now that we have finally had some good moisture we should be able to turn our small grains around and get some grazing. I love to see cattle grazing a field of pretty green small grains, however there are issues associated with small grains you need to be watchful for. Grass staggers or tetany and bloat are two potential ailments to watch for, and make efforts to prevent for cattle grazing small grains this winter and spring.

Grass Tetany is caused by limited dietary intake of magnesium (Mg), this leads to low Mg blood levels in the cow. This happens when cattle are grazing rapidly growing grass with a slow uptake of Mg from the soil. This results in very lush pasture with low Mg levels. Grasses that have been fertilized heavily tend to have more issues with low Mg. The grass grows simply so fast that it does not take up enough Mg from the soil, and thus your cattle are grazing grass with very low Mg levels.

Springing cattle and cattle in early lactation that are still milking heavy are most susceptible to grass tetany. Stocker cattle and dry cows rarely show signs of tetany, but who wants to graze dry cows on these excellent pastures. Stocker cattle are typically your best option. Cattle that have developed grass tetany are likely to get it again, so those animals may need to be culled from the herd.

Prevention rather than treatment is key. Treatment is difficult because tetany moves so fast you may find a field with several dead cattle before you have time to act. Being prepared can offer timely treatment that could save an animal. Mg injections under the skin, and intravenously can be emergency treatments that may save cattle. Preventions for grass tetany would include making efforts to insure that cattle are receiving proper daily Mg levels in a mineral or water soluble form when grazing lush winter pasture. Feeding roughage to cattle for several days before turning out on lush winter pastures can also help. Keeping a close eye on your cattle, and working with your veterinarian or nutritionist prior to turning out on lush winter pasture will be very important.

Bloat is another more common cattle ailment that can result from grazing excellent fast growing, lush winter pasture. Typically, we see bloat during the fall or spring flush when the grass is growing rapidly. The nutrients in this high-quality forage are readily digestible, meaning they will be immediately utilized by the rumen microbes, which leads to a rapid production of gas in the rumen. The gases in this frothy bloat cannot be dispelled quickly enough by the animal. This leads to the classic bloat symptom of a distended abdomen (left side of animal). This build-up of gases causes discomfort and possibly death, if not treated.

Cattle that recover from bloat are very likely to get bloat again when the conditions are right.

There are many options to aid in preventing bloat:

- Feed cattle plenty of dry hay before turning out on small grain pasture.
- If possible, turn cattle for the first time at mid-day after grass has dried off.
- Use of a surfactant or anti-foaming agent in water or to any feed supplement.
- Feeding poloxalene (Bloat Guard), in minerals, feed supplements, blocks etc...
- There is evidence that the addition on Monensin (Rumensin), can aid in controlling bloat in stocker cattle.

Treatment of bloat if caught early on can be as simple as removing animal from pasture and feeding dry hay. For acute cases of bloat more immediate attention will be required to prevent death of the calf. Some tools to keep on hand when grazing small grain pastures include a good ¾ to 1" diameter rubber hose 3 to 4' long, defoaming agent, and maybe a trocar or sharp knife. In most acute cases a stomach tube can relieve the bloat; if needed the animal can also be giving an anti-foaming agent down the same tube. It is best not to use a drench gun on cattle with bloat, as they may aspirate the liquid into their lungs. A small piece of PVC pipe can be used to prevent the calf from biting down on the hose while tubing. If you have no experience in tubing cattle or using a Trocar, it would be best to get a veterinarian or an experienced cattleman to treat your cattle, until you learn how. You can do more harm than good if tube is misplaced or Trocar is not used properly.

These are a couple of very manageable issues than can be associated with grazing good winter pasture. Do not let them scare you away from an extremely valuable feedstuff. There is no more satisfying or profitable way to put weight on calves.

Texas A&M Forest Service Tree Orders

If you want to replace some trees that have fallen victim of drought stress, or add more to cover potential future losses, we have an offer for you. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension in Comanche County will again make available to homeowners and landowners a chance to purchase tree seedlings for establishment on your property. The final date to order seedlings is by 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 13, 2018. Feel free to stop by the office to find out about varieties and prices.

Upcoming Programs

Comanche County Pecan Show

It is hard to believe it is already pecan show time again. The Comanche Pecan Show is an annual event that has been held for as far back as anyone can remember. It is a terrific opportunity to show off one of the most valuable commodities produced here in the county. This year's show will be held on Friday, December 1st at 8:30 a.m. at the Comanche Community Center with judging beginning as soon as we complete the processing of pecans. Entries will be accepted from pecan growers in Comanche, but the pecans must have been grown during this year and by the person entering. Pecan entries need to be dropped off at the Comanche County Extension office by 5:00 p.m. on November 29th. If you cannot get the pecans to us on the 29th, please call and let us know what you will be bringing. It helps us to have all the entries already entered in the computer program before processing starts.

A pecan entry must have a minimum of 45 nuts and be labeled with a variety name, exhibitor name, address, and phone number. Growers are limited to one entry of each variety but there is no limit on numbers of entries of seedling or native pecans. I encourage you to enter a sample of your best pecans in the show. There is no charge and you might win a major award.

Farm and Ranch Program

Private Applicators License must obtain 15 hours of CEU's every five years to renew/recertify their license. These hours must be from 2 hours of Laws and Regulations, 2 hours of Integrated Pest Management (IPM), and any mix of these and General hours to equal the required 15 hours of CEU's. Licensed commercial and non-commercial applicators are required to recertify every year by obtaining five continuing education credits; with one credit each from two of the following categories: laws and regulations, integrated pest management or drift minimization.

Once again, we will be offering the opportunity to get a lot of CEU's in one day. The program will be held on Thursday, December 14, 2017. This seminar will offer eight (8) CEU's for the private applicator license and certificate holders. The approved credit hours are: four (4) General, two (2) Laws and Regulation and two (2) IPM hours. Commercial and non-commercial license holders will be able to obtain all of their needed hours for license renewal with the first 5 hours of the program. This year's program will be held at Cook's Fish Barn. The cost of registration is \$50.00, which includes lunch. Doors will open at 7AM at with program starting at 7:30AM. 8 CEU's in one day makes for a very long day. Please call or come by the office to get registered for the event. Comanche County Agents office: 325-356-2539.

Comanche County

How A Cowboy Gives Thanks

Steve Lucas

*Most folks' lists will be fairly short, though the Lord's been good to most.
They don't want to say too much; they sure don't want to boast.
But I'll warn you, if a cowboy has been invited to the feast
Be prepared for an oration of twenty minutes at the least.*

*'Cause a cowboy's seriously thankful for the blessings God bestows
Most days it's just him and the Lord, and you can bet he knows,
That the miracles he sees every day come from heaven above
He and God have a relationship; it's almost hand in glove.*

*So he can't wait to share what he's seen with anyone who'll listen
'bout the beauty of fall colors and spider webs that glisten
In the morning sun, and calves sleeping in the shade.
He won't take the credit; it's all what God has made.*

*He won't see folks getting antsy, or the dinner getting cold
He'll just keep sharing his long list. He cannot be controlled.
So go ahead and eat your dinner, he won't mind you anyway.
He'll eat his later with his dog and horse. It's just the cowboy way*

*On Thanksgiving Day, folks will join in houses across our land
To share the things they are thankful for, both the little and the grand
Like health and wealth and family, food, pets and friends they've made,
paid off loans, new smart phones, and their daughter's passing grades.*

Happy Thanksgiving Everyone!



Michael Berry
County Extension Agent
Agriculture/ Natural Resources
Comanche County

Central Texas Irrigation Summit

This program will be held on December 12th, at the AgriPlex Building located on highway 36 between Comanche and Gustine. The program will begin at 8:30 and run approximately until 4:00. This will be an in-depth irrigation program and modest trade show. Topics covered will include: precision irrigation, site specific irrigation, center pivot control systems, variable rate injecting, subsurface drip irrigation advantages and disadvantages, drip irrigation components, crop requirements, and more. We have the leading researchers and scientist in their fields covering these topics. If you irrigate or ever plan to irrigate you will want to get this program on your calendar. There is no charge the meal and fees will be covered by our excellent sponsors. 2 CEU's and 1 DOPA credit will be offered.

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

