

# Comanche County Agriculture Newsletter

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Despite the tumultuous start to the year, Comanche County and Central Texas farmers have been very busy, planting, harvesting, milking, calving and the hundreds of other everyday jobs required to keep our county, nation and world with a secure food supply. One would think under the circumstances, perhaps farmers would slowdown or cut back a little play it safe until things settle down. That has not been the case, ask any of our good local ag businesses and they say they have been as busy as ever providing services to local farmers. Regardless of the pandemics, riots, and political unrest that the rest of us struggle with farmers and ranchers are the steadfast constant that keeps us fed and clothed.

Here in the county agent's office we are trying to get back to some semblance of normalcy. We are taking appointments and doing field visits. We also have several good research trials ongoing in the county and have our first turn-row meeting coming up this month, with hopefully more programs coming up soon.

## **June is Dairy Month**

One group of farmers that have been hit especially hard as a result of the pandemic are our local dairy farmers. Dairy production is by far the largest economic contributor to our local economy with an average of over \$100,000,000.00. Yes, that is 100 million in milk sales alone in Comanche County. Most local business and government entities owe their livelihood to this sector of our economy. When the local dairy families struggle, we all struggle. However, like all farmers our dairy families are resilient and find ways to get through low prices and difficult times.

June is designated as the month to celebrate the importance of the dairy industry and the value of milk products in the diet. For over 35 years the local dairy families lead by the dairy wives have worked hard to provide the yearly Dairy Breakfast Appreciation Event. Unfortunately, due to the size of the event and state restrictions the dairy breakfast will have to be canceled this year. All is not lost, the families will be offering a drive thru ice cream event on Wednesday, June 17<sup>th</sup> from 11:00 Am until 1:00 PM in the parking lot of the old SHOPKO building. This is for anyone that would like some ice cream. The group will also be providing dairy products to local nursing homes, school and first responders. Be sure to come by on June 17<sup>th</sup> for some great ice cream.

## Aid to Agriculture-CFAP

On May 19, 2020, USDA released details of the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP). CFAP's \$19 billion package contains two primary components. First, USDA will partner with regional and local distributors to purchase \$3 billion in fresh produce, dairy, and meat and provide those commodities to those in need. The bulk of the program is designed to provide \$16 billion in direct support to farmers and ranchers affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Eligible commodities for the direct support include:

- Livestock: cattle, hogs, and sheep (lambs and yearlings only)
- Dairy
- Wool
- Non-specialty crops: malting barley, canola, corn, upland cotton, millet, oats, soybeans, sorghum, sunflowers, durum wheat, and hard red spring wheat.
- Specialty Crops -- Fruits: apples, avocados, blueberries, cantaloupe, grapefruit, kiwifruit, lemons, oranges, papaya, peaches, pears, raspberries, strawberries, tangerines, tomatoes, and watermelons
- Specialty Crops -- Vegetables: artichokes, asparagus, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, garlic, iceberg lettuce, romaine lettuce, dry onions, green onions, peppers, potatoes, rhubarb, spinach, squash, sweet potatoes and taro.
- Nuts: almonds, pecans, walnuts

Other: beans, mushrooms

Signup will be from May 26 to August 28, 2020. Once signup begins, eligible producers should call their county Farm Service Agency (FSA) office 325-356-2568 to schedule an appointment.

To help affected producers navigate this new program, Agricultural and Food Policy Center (AFPC) at Texas A&M University co-directors, Dr. Bart Fischer and Dr. Joe Outlaw, and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service economists, Dr. David Andersons and Dr. Justin Benavidez authored a timely report. *Overview of the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP)* is available at <https://www.afpc.tamu.edu/research/publications/files/699/RR-20-02.pdf>. The report provides an excellent overview of the program, provides clarification on payment rates and eligible commodities, payment limits, income tests, and payment reductions. It also provides payment calculations and examples by commodity.

## Aid to Agriculture—CFAP (Continued)

The report's lead author, Dr. Bart Fischer, notes that while CFAP provides a significant amount of aid, there are a number of losses not covered. A previous AFPC report, estimated Texas agricultural losses alone could exceed \$8 billion. That report can be read at <https://afpc.tamu.edu/research/publications/files/698/RR-20-01.pdf>.

Dr. Fischer identified some areas of concern not addressed by CFAP:

- **2020 Row Crops:** CFAP only provides assistance for crops held in inventory as of January 15, 2020. In other words, it provides no assistance for the 2020 crop year.
- **Livestock:** While livestock producers in general and cattle producers in particular are the biggest recipients of assistance from CFAP, the estimated support for cattle is still significantly less than half of the damages estimated by industry. While animals in inventory from April 16 to May 14, will be eligible for a CFAP payment, there likely will be calls to provide additional assistance to producers who had to depopulate animals in response to COVID-19. Also, those producing poultry on contract and paid by pounds produced may accrue significant additional losses.
- **Others in the Supply Chain:** CFAP provides no direct benefits to anyone in the supply chain after leaving the farm gate. For example, ethanol producers are under tremendous strain. Also, the merchandising supply chain for cotton has incurred significant carrying charges, logistical costs, and market disruptions not currently addressed by CFAP.

As Congress continues to debate the next steps, these and other issues will be in the forefront.

Before your FSA appointment, I would encourage you to fill out a copy of the inventory form provided by the local FSA office. The form is available on our county website at: <https://comanche.agrilife.org/agricultural-2/cfap/>, or we can email or send you one in the mail. Having this form completed when you go to the FSA office will speed things up considerably.



## **Grasshoppers**

When we get some good rains in the spring, it does a lot to control the grasshopper population. The small nymphs cannot survive heavy rainfall or large rain events. Despite lots of overcast drizzly days, we actually had a very dry early spring. A lack of many or any large rainfall events allowed the nymphs to mature to baby grasshoppers. Once they reach this growth stage they are not affected by rainfall. We really have a large population of baby grasshopper out there right now and as these little buggers get larger you can expect to find considerable damage in many crops and pastures. There are many good products you can use to manage grasshoppers, two that have some good residual control include Dimilin and Prevathon. Dimilin is an excellent product before the grasshoppers get wings, but I think most grasshoppers are already too large for it to be effective. Prevathon provides excellent control later in the year and will work on the larger grasshoppers we have now; it will provide up to 6 weeks of residual control and cost around \$13.00 an acre. Other good insecticides that provide immediate results, but do not have lots of residual control include any generic products containing lambda cyhalothrin, which cost approximately \$3.40 per acre, and Mustang Max which cost around \$4.75 an acre to treat. There are other pasture products available, but these tend to be the most cost effective. Check with one of our good local agriculture business and see what they are recommending. For homeowners trying to control grasshoppers in their yards, landscapes and gardens Cyfluthrin, bifenthrin, permethrin, cyhalothrin and carbaryl are some of the active ingredients that control grasshoppers and that are formulated and packaged for homeowner use. Look for one of these insecticides listed in the active ingredients on the product label. Read the label carefully to determine if the site you wish to treat (vegetable garden, fruit trees, etc.) is listed on the label as an approved site.

## **Federal Feral Hog Program**

Feral hogs are one of the most expensive pests for farmers and landowners, please do not forget to sign-up for this program. This program is geared toward reducing the feral hog populations in several counties within the Leon River Watershed including Comanche, Erath and Eastland Counties in our area. The program will have several aspects including trap loans and assistance and some education. However, for now the most important thing is to get ahold of one of our Wildlife Services technicians that will be getting folks signed-up and assisting in baiting and hunts. They are happy to work with you over the phone to get you signed-up. They also like all the information they can get, neighbors that might have hog issues, current and past damage, where damage occurs the most and even where you might think the hogs are coming from.

Our technicians are Thomas O'Donnell at cell: 254-842-4259 or Brianna Graham at cell: 830-326-1429, please give them a call or feel free to give us a call at the office if you have questions.

## Corn Silage Turn-Row Meeting

This year we have worked with local seed distributors and have an excellent set of corn silage trials. We will be offering a turn-row meeting at the trial location on Thursday, June 25<sup>th</sup> starting at 6:00 PM at the trial's location. We will have seed representatives discussing their various hybrids. We will also have Corn Specialist Dr. Ronnie Schnell on hand to discuss "[Effectiveness of Stacked Traits in Aiding in Insect and Weed Control](#)". Also included in the program is Dairy Specialist Dr. Jennifer Spencer talking about "The Relationship of Nutrient Management with Manure Management". [We may also have someone on hand to discuss the upcoming Federal Feral Hog Program in the county.](#)

This will be an excellent program with topics of interest to all of our corn silage growers in the county. We will also be awarding 1 IPM CEU and 1 DOPA credit. In order to properly plan for the meal (due to COVID we are not allowed to have buffet type meal) we must have RSVP for anyone wanting to attend the event. I would encourage everyone to bring a lawn chair for supper and after supper speakers. Please call the office at: 325-356-2539 or send Mrs. Cindy a quick email: [Cindy.Duran@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:Cindy.Duran@ag.tamu.edu) if you plan to attend.

Proper COVID-19 prevention protocol will be followed at the program.

### The Woolly Croton Stripper

The old farmer was tired of shredding the stuff,  
 this year he had had enough.  
 He called his county agent to see what would work,  
 what would kill this weed that was driving him berserk.  
 His agent told him to use 2,4-D amine,  
 of the Woolly Croton scourge, it would keep his pasture clean.  
 He followed the label and did everything right,  
 he bragged of his accomplishment to his wife at supper that night.  
 He checked his work each and every day,  
 and wondered why some of the weeds were not fading away.  
 By the end of the week it was easy to see,  
 on every turn he overshot his mark by a foot or three.  
 His wife how she did nag, Get a GPS, use some foam use some soap,  
 the way that field looks folks will think you are a dope.  
 By September, the doves they did fly,  
 to the Woolly Croton strips that were now three feet high.  
 The old farmer, he feels sad, his good plan just went bad.  
 When up pulls a fancy Dallas businessman,  
 with his checkbook in his hand.  
 I will pay you \$1000.00 perhaps more,  
 to hunt your wonderful dove corridor.

We are back open but still appreciate a phone call or email to set appointments.

**Please call the office at 325-356-2539.**

Emails:

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