TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

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ERATH COUNTY
AG PRODUCERS NEWS
erath.agrilife.org

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FSA Accepting Emergency Loan Apps

Erath County declared eligible

Erath County was declared eligible for Farm Service Agency (FSA) disaster emergency loans on January 7, 2015. Generally, that means that farmers who have lost at least 30 percent of their production or suffered any physical loss due to the drought are eligible for FSA loans.

Proceeds from crop insurance and/or hazard insurance are taken into consideration when determining a producer's eligibility and total loss.

FSA Acting Farm Loan Manager, Melody Medders, is urging farmers who are interested in receiving an emergency loan to submit their applications into FSA as soon as possible. Mrs. Medders said, "We hope farmers will get their applications in early rather than waiting until near the deadline which is September 8, 2015. The longer they wait, the more chance there is for long delays. If the applications come in early, we can avoid backlogs and speed up the process."

FSA is a credit agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It is authorized to provide disaster emergency loans to recognized farmers who work at and rely on farming for a substantial part of their living. Eligibility is extended to individual farmers who meet U.S. citizenship requirements and to farming partnerships, corporations or cooperatives in which U.S. citizenship requirements are met by individuals holding a majority interest.

The FSA office in Stephenville is located at 245 S. Virginia St. in Stephenville, Texas. Stop by or give them a call at 254-965-3169.

IN THIS Issue

2015 Strategic Planning Lectureship

King Ranch Institute for Ranch Management

Date:
March 6-7, 2015

Fees:
$300 - Covers materials, equipment, refreshments and lunches.

Location:
Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Center
Texas A&M University-Kingsville
Kingsville, Texas

For more info visit:
http://krirm.tamuk.edu/

Homeowner Turfgrass Field Day

Friday, January 30, 2015
2 - 4 pm

Texas A&M AgriLife Research & Extension Center

- Turfgrass Management
- Weed Management
- Drift Minimization
- Rain Water Harvesting

Learn about:

- Fertilizer programs for the homeowner
- Weed control in the home lawn
- Drift minimization techniques
- Rain water harvesting

To register: Call (254) 965-1460 or send email to erath-tx@tamu.edu

Speakers:

- Dr. Dotty Woodson, *Extension Program Specialist -Water Resources* at Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Dallas
- Dr. Hennen Cummings, *Associate Professor and Director of Turfgrass Management* at Tarleton State University
- Lonnie Jenschke, *County Extension Agent - Ag/NR* at Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Erath County

1 hour General CEUs offered for TDA Private Applicator license holders

For more info visit:
erath.agrilife.org

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

GENERATION NEXT

Our Turn to Ranch

Join us for a 2-Day Agricultural Business Start-Up School

- ✓ Gain ideas about operations you can add to an existing ranch
- ✓ Learn options for setting up grazing & wildlife leases
- ✓ Discuss business types, tax info, & insurance needs
- ✓ Exposure to all the latest land management tools & techniques

Available In

San Angelo: March 5th-6th

Stephenville: March 12th-13th

Corpus Christi: April 9th-10th

Course Includes: 2 Days of Expert Instruction, a Resource Notebook & File Drive, 5 included meals, and Earn a Generation Next School Completion Certificate

Registration Fee: $100 ($25 discount for students)

Limited to the first 50 people per location

To Register: https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu/ESSM

Or call 979-845-2604

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Leaf Beetles Attack Saltcedar in Texas Again

SALTCEDAR LEAF BEETLE

The saltcedar leaf beetle feeds only on saltcedar and athel. Athel is a closely related species that grows along the Rio Grande River in Texas. If saltcedar or athel trees are not present, the larvae starve to death.

Saltcedar beetles were first estab-lished in Texas in 2004 at Big Spring, TX. Since then, there have been no reports of beetles or larvae feeding on any other plant. except saltcedar and its close relative athel (Tamarix aphylla).

Larvae of the saltcedar leaf beetle feed on saltcedar leaves and tender bark. Larvae feed for about 12-14 days during the summer. Full grown larvae are about 1/3 inch long. Several generations are completed per year. The adult stage overwinters on the ground under leaf litter and in bunch grasses.

BY ALLEN KNUTSON

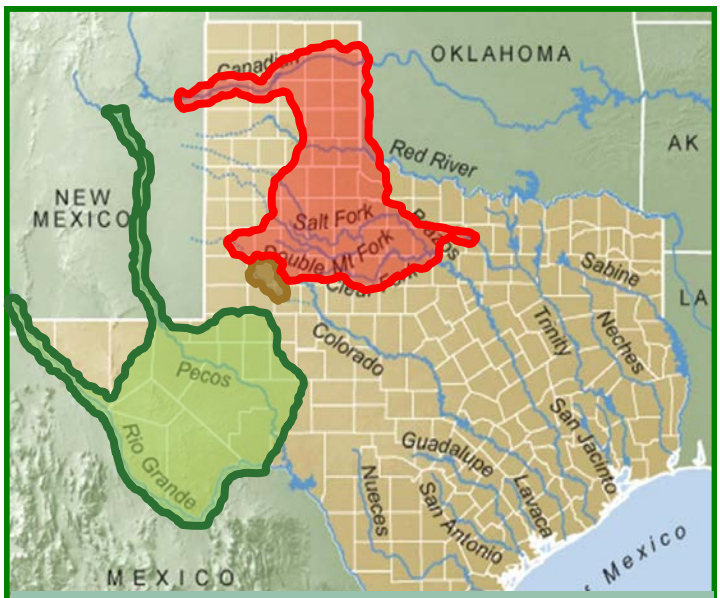
After a slow start this past summer, saltcedar leaf beetle populations increased and defoliated saltcedar trees again in many areas of Texas in 2014, further weakening trees defoliated in previous years. In areas where trees have been defoliated for 3-4 consecutive years, trees are dying back and canopies are thin and declining. There are now 3 species of leaf beetles established in Texas.

Rio Grande and Pecos Rivers. The subtropical leaf beetle is well established in far west Texas on the Pecos River and on the Rio Grande from Big Bend National Park to El Paso. In 2013, this species dispersed along these two rivers into New Mexico. However, it has not yet been reported downriver from Big Bend National Park. The species got off to a slow start in 2014, and beetles were absent from many sites. Beetle numbers finally increased in September and defoliated trees at some locations. About 5-10% of the saltcedar trees at these sites on the Rio Grande between Lajitas to Candelaria appear to be dead due to feeding by beetles.

Texas High Plains - The larger tamarisk beetles, originally from Uzbekistan, is well established in the Texas High Plains and Rolling Plains and adjacent areas in Oklahoma. In 2014, beetles defoliated large areas of saltcedar at Palo Duro Canyon and along the Prairie Dog Town Fork of the Red River and the Salt Fork near Clarendon, TX. Defoliation was also widespread at Lake Meredith and on the Canadian River, but was more localized than in 2013. The Uzbek beetle also tracked the Canadian River west and was reported for the first time in New Mexico when it was found at Ute Lake, near Logan, N. M.

Upper Colorado River - The third species, the Mediterranean leaf beetles, origi-nally from Crete, was found only in Howard and Martin Counties but again extensively defoliated large areas of saltcedar.

Upper Brazos River - A surprise find in 2014 was the presence of leaf beetles defoliating saltcedar at Possum Kingdom Lake in late July. A survey of the Brazos River and its tributaries above Possum Kingdom in August found beetles at Lake Graham and at four bridges crossing the Brazos in Young, Baylor and Knox counties. At some sites, beetles had defoliated up to 80% of the saltcedars. Leaf bee-tles



Approximate distribution of the subtropical leaf beetle in the Trans Pecos region (green area), the Mediterranean leaf beetle in the upper Colorado River (brown area), and the larger leaf beetle in the High, South and Rolling Plains of Texas (red). Beetles are not present throughout the shaded regions, but if not present, are likely to dis-perse in the future to new sites within the shaded region.

Leaf Beetles

CONTINUED

Rio Grande River near Presidio, TX. Sept. 2014. Canopy dieback & tree death due to repeated feeding during 5 years by saltcreek beetles. (photo by A.M. Hilscher)

were also present on the Double Mt. Fork of the Brazos in Knox, Stonewall and Fisher Counties and the saltcedar trees visible from the HW 70 bridge north of Rotan were heavily defoliated.

At Hubbard Creek Reservoir, near Brekenridge, leaf beetles had defoliated several areas of saltcedar growing near the lake shore. Leaf beetles were also found on the Clear Fork of the Brazos River in Shackelford and Jones County, at Lake Stamford in Haskell County and Lake Fort Phantom Hill north of Abilene. However, saltcedar trees were much less common and beetle numbers much lower at these sites.
The beetles found on the Upper Brazos are the larger tamarisk beetle, D. carinata, originally collected from Uzbekistan. This species is widespread in the Texas High Plains and northern Rolling Plains and in late 2013 was found as far south as Aspermont (Stonewall County). The species naturally dispersed from this area south to Abilene and southeast to Possum Kingdom Lake and now is found throughout the Upper Brazos River Basin. This natural move-ment apparently occurred during the fall of 2013 through the summer of 2014, and represents a movement of more than 100 miles cross-country (Aspermont to Possum Kingdom Lake). Finally, leaf beetles were found defoliating saltcedars at Lake Bridgeport, part of the Trinity River Basin, in Wise County in 2014. This is the now the most easterly population of leaf beetles in Texas.

More To Be Done - As of 2014, leaf beetles were present on an estimated 60% of the saltcedar acreage in Texas. There are still large infestations of saltcedar where leaf beetles are not yet present, including the Lake Spence and Lake Ivie reservoirs on the Colorado river. Efforts to establish beetles at these two reservoirs during the past 4 years have not been successful and the Mediterranean beetles in the upper Colorado River have not moved down river. In the future, the larger tamarisk beetle from the north or the subtropical beetles from the south may reach these reservoirs. Also, the saltcedar infestations the Lower Rio Grande Valley are distant from any leaf beetles population.

Impact of Beetle Feeding on Saltcedar Trees - Saltcedar is hard to kill. Leaf beetles kill trees by slow starvation. Feeding by larvae and adults removes the green foliage necessary to make food, the carbohydrates, needed by the tree. Larvae also feed on tender bark, causing branches ends to die back. Saltcedar trees draw upon carbohydrate reserves stored in the root crown to regrow new leaves during the summer. However, if trees are again defoliated by beetles that season, food reserves again decline as the tree tries to produce new leaves. During the winter, the tree survives on the stored carbohydrates and further depletes these reserves. With limited food in the spring, the green canopy is reduced as upper branches die back. Due to this stress, new leaves and branches are small and deformed, a condition termed epicormic growth. As beetles continue to feed on trees for several years, the tree declines further until only a few green shoots are present and some trees die. For seedling trees, death can be more rapid. While the process is slow, other plants begin to grow as the open canopy allows sunlight to reach the soil and without leaves during much of the summer, water use is less. Leaf beetles will never eradicate saltce-dar, but it should be less abundant where beetle populations persist.

Texas Watershed Steward Program

March 25, 2015

A Texas Watershed Steward Program has been scheduled for March 25, 2015 from 1:00pm to 5:00 p.m. It will be held in Dublin at the Dublin Rotary Club. Please mark your calendars and more information will be released as we get closer to the date.

All watersheds in Texas are threatened by nonpoint sources (NPS) of pollution which are detrimental to the valuable water resources of the state. To help combat this threat, federal and state water resource management agencies have adopted a watershed-scale approach for managing water quality. One vital component of this approach involves engaging local stakeholders to become actively involved in planning and implementing water resource management and protection programs in their watershed.

To support this need for stakeholder involvement, the Texas Watershed Steward (TWS) program was initiated to provide science-based, watershed education to help citizens identify and take action to address local water quality impairments.

Texas Watershed Stewards learn about the nature and function of watersheds, potential impairments, and strategies for watershed protection. The TWS program is implemented through a partnership between The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB).

Public participation is the focus of the Texas Watershed Steward program. Active public participation in local watershed management efforts is critical in addressing local water quality problems and concerns. The program is open to all watershed residents including homeowners, business owners, agricultural producers, decision-makers, community leaders, and other citizens.

For more info on TWS, visit: **http://tws.tamu.edu**

In final spending bill, salty food & belching cows are winners

WASHINGTON — Health insurance companies preserved their tax breaks. Farmers and ranchers were spared having to report on pollution from manure. Tourist destinations like Las Vegas benefited from a travel promotion program.

Also buried in the giant spending bill that cleared the Senate on Saturday and is headed to President Obama for his signature were provisions that prohibit the federal government from requiring less salt in school lunches and allow schools to obtain exemptions from whole-grain requirements for pasta and tortillas...

The National Cattlemen's Beef Association scored several victories that require the government to keep its regulatory hands off farms and ranches.

The bill says the government cannot require farmers to report "greenhouse gas emissions from manure management systems." Nor can it require ranchers to obtain greenhouse gas permits for "methane emissions" produced by bovine flatulence or belching. The Environmental Protection Agency says on its website that "globally, the agriculture sector is the primary source" of methane emissions.

The spending bill requires the E.P.A. to withdraw a new rule defining how the Clean Water Act applies to certain agricultural conservation practices. It also prevents the Army Corps of Engineers from regulating farm ponds and irrigation ditches under the Clean Water Act.

"This is a major victory for farmers and ranchers, who consistently tell many of us that they are concerned about the potential of the E.P.A. and the Army Corps of Engineers' overreach into their operations," Representative Mike Simpson, Republican of Idaho, said.

The Cactus Moth

A BIOLOGICAL CONTROL AGENT FOR PRICKLY PEAR BECOMES AN INVASIVE PEST IN NORTH AMERICA - by Allen Knutson

photos by Christine Miller, Univ. Florida

The use of the **cactus moth**, *Cactoblastis cactorum*, as a biolog-ical control agent for prickly pear cactus in Australia is one of the most successful programs using an insect to control a weed. Prickly pear was introduced into Australia and cultivated to rear a small insect that feeds on this cactus. The insect, cochineal, was then and is today collected from the pads and processed to extract a bright red dye. The prickly pear planted in Australia soon escaped cultivation and became a very severe pest of grazing lands. By 1925, 60 million acres were infested and about 30 million were so densely infested with prickly pear that the land was nearly impenetra-ble by man or cattle.

Entomologists found the cactus moth caterpillar feeding on prickly pear in Argentina and it was collected and released into Australia in 1925. During the next few years, the cactus moth destroyed the prickly pear infestation and the land was reclaimed for grazing and agricultural use.

The cactus moth was released to control prickly pear in some Carribea-nean Islands in the 1950s. Unfortunate-ly, in 1989 the cactus moth was discov-ered in the Florida Keys. This discovery raised the alarm because the cactus moth feeds not only on prickly pear, but on many of the other 60 species of cac-tus in the genus Opuntia that are found in the US. Many Opuntia species are not weeds but play an important role in ecosystems. Some species are endan-gered. Also, if the cactus moth reached Mexico, it could be a serious pest of prickly pear used as food for humans and livestock and valued at $80 million annually. The cactus moth could also threaten the ornamental cactus industry. Thus, in the US, the cactus moth is con-sidered an invasive pest and is under federal quarantine regulations.

From Florida, the cactus moth moved along the Gulf Coast as far west as the coast of Louisiana. Control ef-forts are focused on removing prickly pear plants along the Gulf coast and quarantine of cactus plants from infested areas. To-date, cactus moth has not been reported from Texas.

The caterpillar of the cactus moth is initially pink in color but becomes red-dish-orange with black dots that con-nect and form transverse bands. Cater-pillars feed on the tender tissue inside the prickly pear pad. The larvae eventu-ally hollow out the pad which yellows and dies. The mature caterpillar is about one inch long and several can feed to-gether within a pad.

Sign up to get reminders of upcoming programs via text

Text @erathag to 81010

FARM BILL DECISION AID

ATTN PRODUCERS:

When making decisions concerning the new farm bill, **DON'T FORGET** that there is a web-based model to help you as a landowner and farmer to make informed decisions about your farm operation.

This decision aid is available at https://usda.afpc.tamu.edu.

This tool will incorporate price and yield risk impacts on farms and also calculates the expected payments for different farm program and insurance options.

Four modules are currently available:

1. payment yield update
2. base reallocation and ARC/PLC decision
3. 2014 farm bill insurance
4. ARC/PLC evaluator for generic (cotton) base.

There are also two national trainings, several workshops and podcasts recorded on the website to help with your decision process. The videos are available at http://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3AOliVZMvOStCUJz-ShLzw

TIPS TO MAINTAIN YOUR PESTICIDE APPLICATOR LICENSE

So what CEU's do you need to maintain your pesticide license? For Private Applicators: 15 CEU's every five years, including a minimum of 2 in Laws and Regulations, and 2 in Integrated Pest Management (IPM). Up to 10 CEU's may be obtained through TDA approved home study programs, including online courses. For Commercial and Noncommercial Applicators: 5 CEU's annually, including at least 1 CEU each in two of three special topics: Laws & Regulations, IPM, and Drift Minimization. CEU's from TDA-approved home study may be used to re-certify only every other year. No CEU carryover is allowed as CEU's must be acquired prior to renewal. Extra CEU credit obtained in one renewal cycle cannot be forwarded and used in the next renewal cycle.

Retain your Certificates of Completion obtained from participating in CEU courses. Although some commercial trainers may provide duplicate certificates, there is no recourse for lost certificates from the Extension Service. No single source provides cumulative tracking of all the CEU's that you acquire. It is up to the individual to keep their certificates on file so they can be accessed if you are subject of a TDA audit.

Shortly before your license or certificate expires, you will receive an application for renewal from the Texas Department of Agriculture. Be sure to notify TDA if your address has changed. After you submit the application for renewal, your license or certificate should arrive within a few weeks. Keep your Certificates of Completion for one year following renewal.

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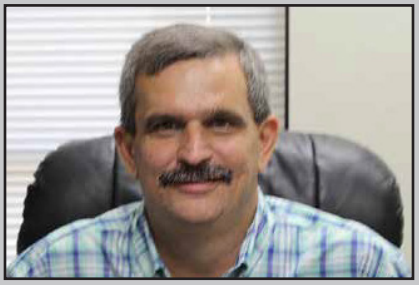
For more information on any of the articles or activities listed in this newsletter, please contact the Erath County Extension Office at 254-965-1460 or visit us on the web at: erath.agrilife.org



Lonnie Jenschke
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Ag & Natural Resources