



Across the Fence

Fort Bend County Agriculture News

May-June 2012

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Controlling Brush in Range and Pasture Land

By Dr. Allen A. Malone

Huisache and Macartney rose are common brush problems in Fort Bend County. These are aggressive species that limits your forage production and can also decrease your wildlife habitat. Control methods for these types of brush species will require multiple treatments over the years. Individual plant treatments often yield the best results but may not be the most economically feasible method depending on the severity of the infestation.

Huisache - The *Leaf Spray Method* works best on Huisache that are bushy and has many stems. This is a foliar application that is applied during the Fall months (September - November). Several products may be used including Grazon P+D (Applicator License Needed to purchase product). You will also need a surfactant to break the surface tension on the leaf and a dye to determine which plants have been treated. Simply apply the mixture to the foliage of each plant until the leaves glisten but are not dripping.

The *Stem Spray Method* works best to control young trees or those with few basal stems. This application works well any time of the year but best results are achieved during the spring - summer growing season (NOW). Several products can be used in basal treatment as well, but a mixture of Remedy (No applicator license needed) and diesel has proven to be very effective. Simply apply the mixture to the base (1 to 12 inches high) of the plant but be careful not to make puddles or pools.



Huisache

Macartney Rose - The *Leaf Spray Method* works best on Macartney Rose; however, dense stands may require mechanical control methods or prescribed burns. The foliar application is applied during the Spring months when soil temperatures reach 75 degrees. DO NOT APPLY WHEN FLOWERS OR FRUIT ARE PRESENT. (For best results treat during the Fall months). Several products may be used including Grazon P+D (Applicator License Needed to purchase product.) You will also need a surfactant to break the surface tension on the leaf and a dye to determine which plants have been treated. Simply apply the mixture to the foliage of each plant until the leaves glisten but are not dripping.



Macartney Rose

Keep in mind that for effective control, treatments will have to be made multiple times over the next few years. It is also important to follow label directions when using any herbicide; use inconsistent with the label is a violation of the law. For more information contact the extension office.



What Is Lean, Finely Textured Beef?

For one it's not new. Lean, finely textured beef (LFTB) is simply beef and not slime, pink or otherwise. And it's not "additive" or "filler". According to the American Meat Institute, LFTB is produced through a mechanical process similar to a centrifuge in which fat is spun away from beef trimmings, producing a product that is 95% lean or higher. LFTB is added to fed-beef carcass trim to produce ground beef of varying fat content. During the process, ammonium hydroxide is used as an antibacterial. Some reports have claimed this is harmful to your health. Ammonium hydroxide is found naturally in all plant and animal proteins. In a typical bacon cheeseburger, every component contains ammonium hydroxide, in the following amounts: bun = 440 ppm, bacon = 160 ppm, cheese = 813 ppm, condiments = 400 ppm, beef = 200 ppm. This nonsense about LFTB is hurting the beef industry, and may drive good companies out of business that employ hundreds of people, could increase the need for more imports of lean trim, and will increase the cost of ground beef to consumers. (Partly summarized from information on www.beefisbeef.com, downloaded (4/2/12).

"Pigeon Fever" in Horses Update

Contrary to what the name might imply, pigeons have nothing to do with transmission of the equine disease known as "pigeon fever", which is also called Dryland Distemper. "Pigeon Fever" causes abscesses and swelling in the horse's pectoral region (breast muscles) causing a "pigeon-like" appearance, and is caused by the bacteria *Corynebacterium pseudotuberculosis*. Pigeon fever is most common in dry areas of the Western United States, but cases diagnosed in other parts of the country may be on the increase.

Cases of pigeon fever tend to be seen more in summer and fall but can happen anytime of the year. While the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) regulates a



number of equine and livestock diseases, the TAHC has no specific authority to regulate pigeon fever and therefore does not require vets to report cases. However, the TAHC has noted an upswing in calls and questions about this disease. The Texas Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory obtained over 350 positive cultures for *C. pseudotuberculosis* in 2011 compared with less than 100 cases each year from 2005-2010. The Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital at Texas A&M diagnosed more than 4 times as many cases in 2011 compared with 2010. A number of factors could be at play, including the recent severe drought, as well as fly activity.

Horses affected by "pigeon fever" can show a variety of signs including fever, weight loss, swelling of the breast muscles or ventral abdomen (belly), and other areas of the body. Abscesses caused by the disease are usually external, and so the swelling is visible. Less commonly, the abscesses form inside the horse's body where they are more difficult to detect. Treatment of horses with internal abscesses can be difficult, with major complications possible. Prompt veterinary care greatly increases treatment success and reduces complications in any case of pigeon fever.

It is important to realize the bacteria can live for extended periods of time in dry soil. Research shows that flies carry the disease and are crucial to transmission, so good fly control is a must. Basic sanitation is also critical - affected horses should be isolated, and abscess drainage (pus) should be disposed of properly. The draining material contains large amounts of the bacteria and contaminates the area around the horse, potentially spreading the disease. It is also important to promptly treat any wounds that could become contaminated by flies or dirt.

Because of this infectious disease and many others that can affect your horse, the TAHC encourages you to call your veterinarian at the first sign of any illness or injury.

Additionally, if you organize an equine event, "pigeon fever" is one of many infectious diseases for which planning is encouraged.

The Californian Department of Agriculture recently released a helpful Biosecurity Toolkit for Equine Events. They include tips to prevent the spread of abscess diseases like “pigeon fever” and strangles, as well as a wide variety of other infectious diseases. The toolkit is available online

<http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/animal>

health/pdfs/Biosecurity Toolkit Part 2.pdf

The American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) also has information about “pigeon fever” available at

http://www.aaep.org/health_articles_view.php?id=358

The TAHC thanks Dr. Piper Norton of the Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences for her assistance with this update.



Farm Service Agency announces Wildlife SAFE program

USDA Texas Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced that FSA has allocated an additional 400,000 acres nationwide to the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) program that improves habitat for high-priority wildlife species.

SAFE is a voluntary conservation initiative that provides an opportunity for grassroots conservation partners to develop related projects to address high priority wildlife needs through habitat restoration. For additional SAFE project area details or other questions, please contact Fritz Matetzschk at (281) 232-6898 x 2.

Aggie's View

Driving through the county and consulting with many of the local producers, there are a couple of things that the agricultural producers in the county might want to be on the lookout for.



Leafhoppers



Thrips

- **Thrips** - Thrips are very small, elongate, cylindrical, gregarious insects ranging from 1/25 to 1/8 inch in length. Thrips feed on the foliage and flowers where they puncture the plant cells with their rasping-sucking mouthparts and withdraw cell sap. Feeding activities produce bleached, silvered or deformed leaves and necrotic spots or blotches on flower petals.
- **Leafhoppers** - Leafhopper adults are elongated, wedge shaped and somewhat triangular in cross-section. They jump and fly off readily. Depending on species, they range in size from 1/8 to 1/2 -inch and their bodies are colored yellow, green, gray or they may be marked with color patterns. Very common and various species feed (with sucking mouth parts) on the juices of a wide variety of plants; occasionally injuring plants and transmitting plant diseases; medically harmless although adult leafhoppers are capable of biting, temporarily producing pain. Marginal chlorosis (yellowing) and necrosis (browning) of injured leaves is often called “hopperburn” or “tip burn”.

Upcoming Ag Events:

Download Registration forms or flyers from our website:
<http://fortbend.agrilife.org>

- **Wednesday, May 2, 2012 - Ag/Hort. Advisory Committee Meeting - 7:30 a.m. at the Extension office**
- **Tuesday, May 8, 2012 - AG'tivity Barn Committee Meeting - 6:30 p.m. at the Extension office**
- **Tuesday, May 15, 2012 - Fort Bend Horse Task Force 7 p.m. at the Extension office**
- **Friday, June 15, 2012 - Fort Bend County USDA Annual Crop Certification Deadline**
- **Thursday, June 21, 2012 - Ag Legislative Tour**
- **Thursday, June 21st & Friday, June 22nd, 2012 Summer Basic Horsemanship Clinic**
- **Wednesday, June 27, 2012 - Crops Tour**