

May 16, 2014

AGRIVIEW

By: Rick Hirsch
County Extension Agent

All aboard! The 51st annual Henderson County Farm & Ranch Tour will be departing the Cain Center on Tuesday, May 20th at 9:00 a.m. Coffee and donuts will be available at 8:00 a.m. Tickets for the luncheon may be obtained at any of the tour's sponsors or the Athens Chamber of Commerce for \$5.00 each. Tickets are not required for the tour. The tour will culminate with a luncheon back at the Cain Center. The luncheon will include the presentation of the Joe B. Fulgham Agriculturist of the Year Award.

The farm & ranch industry remains one of the largest sources of income in the Henderson County area. The Athens Chamber of Commerce sponsors this event which is dedicated to highlighting the importance of this industry.

The Farm & Ranch Tour began 51 years ago under the direction of Jay Benson, Wyndel Tackett, J. D. Lewis, Woodrow Walker, Buford McLaughlin, Hub Moon, John Corley and others. The tour is organized by a number of volunteers and is funded by donations for the business community. Without the support of our sponsors the tour would not be possible.

Athens and Henderson County have a rich history in the agriculture industry. The major production areas include beef cattle, nursery crops, fruits and vegetables, hay

production, timber and horses. Beef cattle production and horticulture continue to be the leader in agriculture production in the county. Fertile, well managed, pastures and productive cattle go hand in hand. Various types of perennial grasses are the most widely used forage for grazing and hay production. Wildlife management is on the rise as more land users see the economic value and conservation importance of wildlife.

Production is not the only part of agriculture that helps to drive the economy in our area. There are numerous businesses that are directly or indirectly related to agriculture. Farm and ranch supply stores, marketing companies, equipment dealers and many others serve agriculture producers.

Stops for this year's tour include the following properties.

① TVCC Ranch - The TVCC Agriculture and Ranch Management program is unique among college programs in that the college maintains a registered Charolais beef herd and puts together a show string for the major livestock shows.

The Ranch operation began when Amoco Corporation gave the college a 25-year lease on 254 acres of land to start the Ranch Management program in 1975. The initial cattle herd was donated in September 1976 and consisted of 104 cows, heifers, and calves. In the fall of 1977, the college received another donation by Baldwin Associates of Dallas of 54 head. In September of 1999, TVCC purchased the 254 acres from the Amoco Corporation.

Through the years, there has been continued effort to work on improving the genetics of the herd. Since 1977, numerous Charolais breeders have donated various individual cattle, semen, and embryos to the program. TVCC agriculture and ranch

management instructors use modern approaches in the genetic improvement of the herd and teach these methods to their students.

The college ranch has given the TVCC agriculture and ranch management students hand's on experience since its establishment. Along with the obvious animal science experience, students also receive experience with forage tests, forage management, erosion control, and crop science.

② Rafter C Ranch - The Rafter C Ranch is approximately 900 acres of rolling hills covered with coastal Bermuda grass and mixed hardwoods. It is owned by Pete Carr and the ranch manager is Clay McCallie. The ranch is home to 270 horses, 50 bulls and 60 roping steers. This livestock is the center of the rodeo operation.

Pete Carr's Classic Rodeo produces a minimum of 32 rodeos a year, stretching from Eagle, Colorado to South Haven, Mississippi, and all over Texas. This past year at the National Finals Rodeo, the ranch was well represented with 17 horses and 10 bulls picked to perform, more than any other stock producer in the country.

The ranch is home to Wise Guy, past Bucking Horse of the Year, and Dirty Jacket. More cowboys scored over 90 more times on this horse than on any other horse in history.

The goal for any Pro Rodeo producer is to be the PRCA Producer of the Year, and that is surely in the cards for Pete Carr's Classic Rodeo.

③ Sanctuary Ranch, L. P. - Sanctuary Ranch is located about five miles west of Cross Roads. The ranch operates on just less than 3,000 acres and is divided into a three different segments, the primary of which is cattle. A closed heard of 280 Brangus X cows are bred to Angus bulls for commercial beef calves. Through strict selection, a small group of replacement heifers are kept each year.

Another segment of the ranch is wildlife. With MLD permits through the Texas

Parks & Wildlife, the ranch is able to manage the native whitetail deer. Along with this, we have recently begun a breeding program that consists of 40 doe in a deer breeding facility. The offspring of these breeder doe are to be released into the wild through a release program to enhance the genetic quality of the native deer. The ranch is also lucky enough to have a 28 acre lake that is managed for bass.

The third and final segment of the ranch is the recreational segment that is enjoyed by the owner, family and friends.

The keynote speaker at this year's luncheon will be Ronnie McDonald. Former Bastrop County Judge Ronnie McDonald was named executive director for Texas A&M AgriLife's community relations and strategic partnerships in June, 2013. In this capacity he serves as the executive director of the Texas Rural Leadership Program, Inc. and provides leadership as an ex-officio member of the board of directors.

McDonald was Bastrop County judge from 1998-2012 during a time in which the population of the county doubled. He oversaw a \$31 million county budget. Most recently, he was government relations and education liaison for the firm McCreary, Veselka, Bragg and Allen in Round Rock.

Prior to being elected county judge, McDonald was in the state comptroller's office as assistant executive director for Family Pathfinders and executive assistant to then-comptroller John Sharp, who is now chancellor of the Texas A&M University System. McDonald graduated from Texas A&M in 1993 with a bachelor's in political science and business.

McDonald now works with the directors of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Texas A&M Forest Service to provide direction on strategic priorities and focus. He serves as the primary contact point for other partners by providing updates on a variety of joint interests such as natural disasters, providing AgriLife agency support to

rural communities and grant/partnership opportunities.

IMPORTANT DATES:

May 20th - Farm & Ranch Tour - Buses depart Cain Center 9:00 a.m. - \$5.00

Lunch - Tour Free

*Rick Hirsch is the Henderson County Extension Agent - Agriculture for the Texas
A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Visit our web page at <http://henderson.agrilife.org/>.*