



Courthouse, 3rd Floor
100 E. Tyler St., ste. 300
Athens, TX 75751
Phone: (903)675-6130
Fax: (903)677-7222
<http://henderson.agrilife.org>

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AGRIVIEW

By: Rick Hirsch
County Extension Agent

The Henderson County Beef Cattle Committee is pleased to announce their upcoming Cattleman's Cow/Calf Clinic, set for April 3rd at the Henderson County Fair Park Complex in Athens.

New products, declining cattle numbers, and fluctuating markets are all challenges and opportunities for today's beef producers. To assist cattlemen in staying informed in these challenging times, the Henderson County Beef Cattle Committee has developed this clinic with you, the producer, in mind. A diverse group of nationally known speakers will address a broad spectrum of topics. Additionally, there will be livestock working demonstrations, cattle exhibits and a product exhibit area. All of this and a great meal to boot!

Registration for the clinic will begin at 3 p.m. and cost \$15. It will include a barbecue meal and 1.5 continuing education units for holders of Texas Department of Agriculture private pesticide applicator's licenses. To register, contact the Henderson County AgriLife Extension office at 903-675-6130. Preregistration is recommended due to

dinner being served. The program will begin at 3:30 p.m. and should last until about 8 p.m.

Speakers and topics include: "Revitalizing Pastures in 2014," by Dr. Vanessa Corriher-Olson, AgriLife Extension forage specialist, Overton; "Leases and Leasing: What the producer and landowner need to know," by Tiffany Dowell, Attorney and Extension specialist, College Station; "The Benefits of Crossbreeding to the Cow-Calf Producer," by Dr. Todd Thrift, Department of Animal Science, University of Florida; and "The Advantages of Pasture, Range and Forage Insurance," by Dr. John Walker, resident director of research, animal science, rangeland ecology and management, San Angelo.

In addition to the inside presentations, there will be livestock working demonstrations by Dr. Jason Cleere - AgriLife Extension beef cattle specialist, cattle exhibits and a product – exhibit area.

FERAL HOGS

Expanding feral hog numbers represent a significant threat to agriculture and water quality in many areas of the state. Wherever feral hogs are found, they leave evidence, or sign, of their passing, and as feral hog populations expand, landscape damage increases. While the most noticeable sign of feral hog activity is damage caused by their destructive rooting behavior, it is not the only indicator of their presence. In times of drought, rooting is minimal, and other signs are more common. Hog wallows, rubs, tracks, trails, droppings, and beds are all telltale signs of their presence. Hogs are very mobile, and in many cases may routinely travel from one field that offers cover to another field that provides food. To increase trapping success, it is best to determine key travel corridors, which frequently include creeks, sloughs, ponds and other water sources. Understanding feral hog behaviors and signs is central to developing management

strategies to reduce their numbers.

As feral hogs feed, they severely impact native plant and animal communities, as well as agricultural crops and livestock. Extensive disturbance of vegetation and soil occurs because of rooting and may result in a localized shift in plant community composition. This can be detrimental to hay pastures, native range, lawns, and gardens alike. Rooting can also reduce the number of plant species in an area. Feral hog diets shift throughout the year, depending on availability of a wide variety of food items, and during periods of drought, in many cases putting them in direct competition for food with native wildlife species.

During warmer months, feral hogs create wallows in moist areas near ponds, creeks, and sloughs to access cool mud, which helps to avoid summer heat and ward off biting insects. Fecal material deposited in these locations is likely to contribute bacteria and pathogens to stream systems. In hot weather, hogs often lie in wallows during the day. After wallowing, hogs rub on fixed objects to remove dried mud, hair, and parasites. Trees, fallen logs, fence posts, rocks and utility poles are commonly used for rubbing, particularly if they are located near water or wallows. Hogs have an affinity for utility poles treated with creosote, and many poles within a hog's home range will have visible markings.

As is the case in many areas across Texas, feral hog numbers appear to be on the rise in the Henderson County area. To prevent negative impacts to agriculture and water quality, an integrated management approach of multiple techniques often yields the best potential for success. Large corral traps have proven extremely effective for reducing hog numbers quickly and should be considered in most management efforts. Feral hogs typically travel in large family groups called sounders, and a large corral type trap can be effective in capturing the entire group.

Most corral traps are constructed with 20' x 5' sheep/goat panels with 4" x 4" square

mesh and steel T-posts. This type of panel will not allow smaller pigs to fit through the mesh or larger hogs to climb out of the trap. Shorter 4' panels may allow some trapped hogs to escape. If captured hogs will be sold for processing, these panels also reduce damage to the animals' nose, face, and mouth. As with box traps, many different door designs are available for corral traps. The best design for your management efforts depends upon available time, the number of hogs present, the degree of labor required, and material cost. Large sounders are seldom trapped using small traps, and hogs that escape or are not captured may become wary of encountering them in the future. While small traps do catch hogs of all sizes when limited space prevents using larger traps, they are not the most effective method for capturing a large number of hogs. For these situations, a large teardrop-shaped trap is best. The design also serves as a chute for loading hogs onto a trailer if they will be sold for processing. For more information contact the County Extension Office.

IMPORTANT DATES:

- April 3rd - Cattleman's Cow-Calf Clinic – 3:00 p.m. - \$15.00/Person – 1.5 C.E.U.'s – Henderson County Fair park Complex – Athens
- April 5th - HCLS Kick-off Dance – 7:30 p.m.-11:30 p.m. - Senior Citizens Center, Athens - \$5 per person. All proceeds benefit the Henderson County United Way
- April 7th-12th - Henderson County Livestock Show – No gate fees –
www.hclsathens.com to view schedule of events

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

Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin. The Texas A&M University System, U. S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.