

## *Top of the Windmill Newsletter*

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### ***Beef Cattle Production series set for January 8, 2018***

The Texas Beef Council (TBC) and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service have teamed up to present a special Beef 706 program, a three-part series of hands-on sessions focusing on beef quality management and marketing opportunities. This program is available to beef cattle producers from the Hill Country of Texas. The checkoff-funded program is designed to help producers maximize profits and have a better understanding of the production process after their cattle enter the feedyard.



Session one will be held January 8, 2018 at Gillespie Livestock Auction in Fredericksburg, TX. Here industry experts will discuss factors effecting feeder calf pricing, grading, and selection and backgrounding. Producers will then choose a calf to monitor through the production system at the following two sessions. During session one topics will include; Factors that Impact the Quality and Value of Feeder Cattle, steps through the feeding process to include feed & health costs, death losses, projecting slaughter cattle prices. Participants are divided into groups, allowed to select live cattle and purchase through a mock auction, then follow those cattle through grading and a hands-on cutting session which allows the participants a chance to experience first-hand the differences encountered in carcass composition. Their resulting information is then evaluated in terms of the value differences calculated between animals and how that translates back to value differences in the live animals that are not typically relayed to the producer under a traditional beef marketing scenario.

Session two will be held July 12, 2018 at Behrens Feedyard in Luckenbach, TX. During this session producers will get an inside look into the feeding industry and see the progress of their feeder calf chosen in the first session. Producers will also learn more about factors impacting feedyard performance, feed costs, health costs, as well as estimated live grading of the calves.



Session three will be held August 2018 at the meats lab at Texas A&M University in College Station, TX. This two-day

session will allow producers to see their finished cattle and participate in a hands-on exercise that takes their chosen fed cattle from session one through the harvest, grading and fabrication process. In the final session, industry experts will discuss the cattle's value highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of marketing cattle on a grid versus a live basis.

The cost of the program will be \$50.00/participant for all three sessions and can be paid at the first session on January 8th. This cost is refundable based on full participation in the program. To register for this program, please contact either the Gillespie County office at (830) 997-3452, or the Kendall County Office at (830) 249-9343 or the Kerr County Extension office at (830) 257-6568.

### ***Green Stormwater Infrastructure Seminar January 3, 2018***

UGRA, the City of Kerrville, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, and the Hill County Master Gardeners are hosting a free seminar on Wednesday, January 31, 2018 from 11:45 AM – 2:00 PM. Lunch is included. Topics include: Introduction to green stormwater infrastructure and development, design, and maintenance considerations. For more information and to register, view the following link:  
<http://www.ugra.org/pdfs/StormwaterFlyer.pdf>



### ***When Can I Prune Shade Trees***

With the onset of winter following several good freezes we are set for pruning here in the Hill Country. While many trees may be pruned any time of the year, for example, pecans, cedar elms and ashe juniper, the live oak must be pruned during the winter months following several good freezes. These freezes should slow down the movement of any insects, in particular, the nitidulid beetle that transmits oak wilt from Spanish Oaks to Live Oaks. Oaks just as any shade tree require pruning for several reasons: prune out excess branches to prevent rubbing together, removal of broken or damaged branches, double leaders or narrow v-shaped crotches. Annual upkeep on many trees helps to maintain a strong structural support and reduce the breakage of limbs during the growing season. Most home owners should limit their tree pruning to small branches which can be reached from the ground. The pruning of large branches and work off the ground should involve professional tree experts with proper equipment.

Many folks are under the impression that large shade trees need pruning just because they're getting too big and pretty or because it's a certain season. We witness this all across the state. Before having a tree trimmed, know why and how it should be done. Many pruning jobs could be avoided by knowing the growth habit of a specific tree and planting in a location that is sufficient for the mature size of the tree. Find out how fast and how large a tree normally grows. With this information you can avoid many maintenance requirements. Logic and reason also apply. For example, don't plant a white oak directly beneath utility lines. As the tree grows and interferes with the lines, the tree will be pruned. This completely destroys the natural character of the tree and

often leads to its early decline. The same is true when choosing a tree for a planter or other limited space. Consider small or intermediate size trees such as Crape Myrtle, Foster Holly, or Redbud.

Trees planted in proper locations in the Hill Country should not need to be topped. Topping shade trees may often be recommended to prevent causing damage to the home. However, shoots which grow after topping are weaker than the original limbs. Shoots then must be selectively pruned to train for a main branch. Shoots left alone will be more likely to split off and cause damage unless they are removed every few years. Also, wood rots are more likely to be a problem in topped trees, resulting in poorer tree health and greater likelihood of limb breakage.

The only time wound dressing or paint is essential is in the pruning of oaks, especially when pruning is done out of necessity during the growing season. During this time pruning paint helps to deter beetles from being attracted to the freshly cut surface. Painting fresh cuts during this time should be done with a latex paint. Wound dressing or tree paint on all other trees is not essential; recent research has pointed out that tree paint or wound dressing is not as advantageous as previously thought. Dressings may actually harbor disease organisms rather than exclude them. It has also been determined that wound dressing slows the wound callusing (often called healing) process, rather than speeding it up. A good, clean unpainted pruning cut, while unsightly at first, will probably callus faster than a painted one.

If you have any questions concerning this article contact Roy Walston at the Kerr County Extension office at 830-257-6568.

### ***BALL MOSS***

Ball moss is an epiphyte. It is capable of manufacturing its own food from nutrients and moisture taken from the air. Unlike mistletoe, it does not derive its food from the host. Although often associated with plants that are in an advance stage of decline, it is not the cause of the decline. In some areas, the moss becomes so dense, that it possibly is restricting normal bud development. Although spread is somewhat restricted, the area of the state where the moss is found continues to expand. Roughly ball moss is found within the area formed by drawing a line from Del Rio to Fredericksburg to College Station to Bay City to Corpus Christi and back to Del Rio.



Small seed are produced in a capsule on a slender 3-5 inch stalk. The stalk extends above the bunchy plant growth. When mature the capsule opens and seed are released into the air. They are carried by air currents until they contact the rough bark of the tree. The seed stick onto the surface and germinate. As the plant grows, root like structures attach the young plant to the rough surface. In the case of a tree this is the older bark. Although the structures extend down into the bark, they are not true roots. They are called 'hold fasts'. Although ball moss will attach itself to many different rough surfaces, property owners are most concerned about shade trees.

Control: Ball moss is controlled with foliar applications of Kocide DF, Blue Shield and Champion are approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). These products are most

effective when applied in late winter. The time between February and mid-May is suggested as the best period for treatment. A rain following treatment application is necessary for maximum effectiveness. It is speculated that the moss quickly takes in nutrients through its leaf like structures following rain or heavy dew. When evaluating the copper fungicides as a control for ball moss, an application was observed to remain on the tree for 7 months before significant rain occurred. Soon after that the moss was observed to die. Retreating is suggested if the trees are heavily infested. This is necessary because of the difficulty in getting complete coverage. It is suggested that the copper be applied at the rate of 4-6 pounds of Kocide DF or similar type product per 100 gallons of water. Spray trees to drip point with the spray directed at the moss infested limbs. Within a few months the moss will have a dry, gray unthrifty appearance. It will be several months after the application, before the moss will begin to fall from the tree. The hold fasts will have to decay sufficiently to release the moss from the bark. Strong windstorms can decrease the time required for removal of the moss following its death.

Copper is a heavy metal and possibly acts as a poison that blocks the normal biochemical functions. Copper can cause foliage burn to some plants and should be used with caution around plants not listed on the label. Peach, plum, apricot and nectarine in leaf are especially susceptible to injury from spray drift. Apples and pears are not affected by the copper fungicides. Kocide and the other copper hydroxide fungicides are frequently recommended for the control of fire blight on pear and apple trees. The fungicides are approved on a local needs registration in the southeastern United States for the control of certain pecan diseases. A second concern is that spray drift can temporarily stain structures a light blue. Use precaution when applying the copper sprays. Spray on days when the wind is blowing away from sensitive areas. It will wash off when exposed to frequent rain.

Mechanical removal has been used successfully. However, new plants are formed as new seed land on the limbs. Safety is also a concern, moss is present on many of the small limbs and branches of a tree. This creates an unsafe condition when trying to remove the moss.

### ***Feral Hog Update on Sodium Nitrite Toxicant***

Field trials will begin next month for a new wild pig toxicant, sodium nitrite.

- Sodium nitrite kills wild pigs by affecting the ability of red blood cells to take up oxygen. The pigs become drowsy and then fall asleep and die, so the toxin is considered to be humane.
- To reduce non-target exposure, researchers have developed a bait dispenser with a heavy lid.
- Field testing is one of many steps in registering a toxicant. Numerous studies on the toxin have already been conducted in controlled environments, and the results of many of those studies have been published in peer-reviewed journals.
- As with any wildlife management tool, toxins are just one approach to wild pig management. Landowners should consider their situation, goals, and resources when choosing any wildlife management tool.