

Scott Strawn CEA-AG
402 Expo Dr
Perryton, TX 79070
Tel: 806-435-4501
scott.strawn@ag.tamu.edu

TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION

Northeast Panhandle Crops Conference

TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION

Thursday, March 3, 2022

8:30 AM - 12:00PM

Ochiltree County Expo Center

Perryton TX

Admission \$10 Registration Fee

Topics

Carbon Farming Basics-What is carbon farming?
Mid to Late Season Wheat Management
Considerations for High Yielding Grain Sorghum
Manage High Input Costs Without Sacrificing Profits
Early Season Management of Cotton-Getting Started Right

3 CEUs for pesticide applicators (2 General, 1 IPM)

Scott Strawn
CEA/AG
806-435-4501
Ochiltree
scott.strawn@ag.tamu.edu

Lunch Provided!!

JR Sprague
CEA/AG
806-862-4601
Lipscomb
JR.Sprague@ag.tamu.edu

FEBRUARY 2022
OCHILTREE COUNTY AG NEWSLETTER

Master Irrigator Workshop

The North Plains Ground water Conservation District is sponsoring the award winning Master Irrigator program once again for producers in the district. This includes Ochiltre County Producers. Class Dates are March 23, 30, April 6, and 13. Topic areas covered are: Agronomics, Irrigation, Scheduling, Systems, and Special Topics.

Registration fee for the course is \$100

For more information and to register go to - <https://northplainsgcd.org/masterirrigator>



Time of Feeding Influences Time of Day When Cows Calve Benefits of Night Feeding

Mark Z. Johnson, Oklahoma State University Extension Beef Cattle Breeding Specialist

Calving season is a critical time of year in cow-calf operations. Calving, especially during winter months, can be challenging. If you are interested in simplifying calving season, this week's topic addresses a simple change in management that can result in more cows calving during the day time. Calving during daylight means calves are born during times of warmer temperatures, cows calving are easier to find and provide assistance if needed and accordingly, more calves saved and alive. The simple management change that leads to more cows calving during daylight hours? Feeding cows at night.

There are several data sets collected over time that indicate feeding cows at dusk will increase the number of cows calving during the day time. Bear in mind, feeding cows in the evening does not completely eliminate cows calving during the night but does result in a distinctly higher percentage of cows calving in daylight hours. In one of the largest trials conducted, 1331 cows on 15 farms in Iowa were fed once daily at dusk, 85% of the calves in those herds were born from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm. It is noteworthy that the change from morning to night feeding can be made as soon as a week before calving and result in the benefit of more calves born during the day. But keep in mind, night feeding for several weeks prior to calving season is even more effective in getting more calves born during the day time.

References: <http://beef.unl.edu> Dr. Glenn Selk explains how feeding cattle later in the day can help ensure calves will be born during the day on SUNUP TV. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0AOOSfH4Q_o

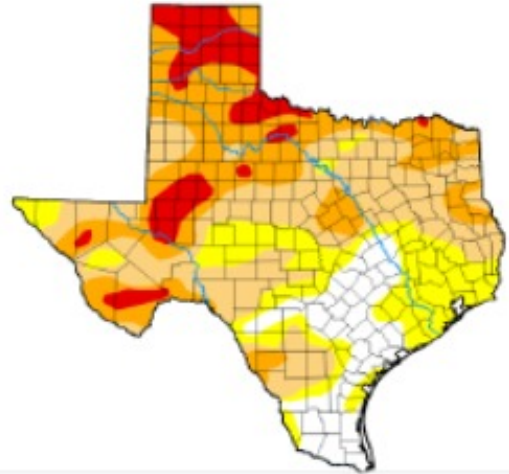
DRY WEATHER & NITROGEN PRICES

Dr. Calvin Trostle, Extension Agronomy

Wheat Conditions in Texas

As you too well know conditions across most of Texas have gradually turned dry and worse into extreme drought (Fig. 1). For the northwest half of Texas winter is not the time we regularly get much moisture. Historically if wheat is established it can be pretty tough and can usually hang on until spring moisture comes, hopefully in time to take advantage of the burst of forage growth after jointing or for grain.

Figure 1. U.S. Drought Monitor for Dec. 30, 2021. Red is extreme drought; orange is moderate drought. (Source: U.S. Drought Monitor, <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>)



For much of northwest Texas dryland wheat establishment is the issue. There appears to be a substantial difference due to planting date. Dr. Jourdan Bell (jourdan.bell@ag.tamu.edu), AgriLife Extension Agronomist, Amarillo, notes 2021 planting date had a significant impact on much High Plains wheat. If soil moisture was still available at earlier planting dates (September for grazing, by early October for grain) then the all-important stand establishment was achieved. Some stands look surprisingly good. This is the best situation you could hope for in our current weather—stand establishment. At least the potential is still in the crop pending further moisture.

Later-planted wheat has struggled with establishment. One issue with late planted wheat is recent light showers wet the soil about 2-3" deep. This has potentially provided enough moisture to germinate seed and possibly emerge or help poorly established wheat hang on. However, there is a zone of dry soil underneath this seed. Roots will not penetrate dry soil. In effect wheat is trapped above this dry zone with moisture only available in the top 2 or 3". This moisture is not enough to sustain the wheat for long. It is worsened by warm days and winds. Without sufficient moisture to bridge the soil dry zone, wheat potential is very low. Earlier planted wheat where moisture was available did not have this dry zone. It has rooted deeper and can hang on for two months or more.

Grazing on dryland wheat in the Rolling Plains, South Plains, and Panhandle has been very limited to none without irrigation. Some Central Texas wheat is also beginning to lose grazing potential.

DILEMMA: TOP-DRESSING WHEAT AND HIGH FERTILIZER N PRICES

Nitrogen prices are in many cases more than double vs. one year ago. Spot price checks across Texas for popular N fertilizers for top dressing wheat are \$910-950/ton for urea (46-0-0) and \$645-695/ton for liquid urea-ammonium nitrate (UAN, 32-0-0). Hence the cost of a unit of nitrogen (1.0 lb. of actual N) is \$1.00 to \$1.09 (100 lbs. of urea would be 46 lbs. of actual nitrogen). Variables in N fertilizer prices mostly reflect transportation. Fertilizer prices closer to Borger and Beaumont, TX for example, are lower due to N fertilizer manufacturing facilities.

Farmers face decisions on what if any top-dress N to consider for Texas wheat. The following factors will influence spring top-dress N decisions:

- Late winter wheat condition including soil moisture
- Price of nitrogen fertilizer
- Wheat price prospects
- In-season winter soil testing wheat fields for soil N status

Late winter wheat conditions and soil moisture

As described above much of the Texas wheat crop is facing poor conditions due to drought. Warmer than normal temperatures have compounded this issue by forcing premature use of scarce soil moisture now when it is less likely to contribute to yield vs. delayed moisture consumption to drive reproductive growth starting at jointing.

Some farmers may have applied N already ahead of seeding. Others may have declined to do so due to already existing dry conditions. If you have a wheat crop that appears to be worth fertilizing, then consider the additional topics.

Price of nitrogen fertilizer

As noted above N prices are at record highs. At current prices farmers may decide not to topdress any N. Remember, though, “you can’t get something from nothing” for very long if your wheat crop does have potential but has little nitrogen to drive growth. Second only to available moisture, nitrogen is likely the next most important yield-limiting factor in Texas wheat.

Will N fertilizer prices decline by the time I need to topdress N? Fertilizer supply will affect prices, too. If supplies are sketchy in late winter, then do not expect substantial changes in N fertilizer prices. At this time, it would not appear prices could change much for wheat farmers in central Texas and further south consider topdressing. These N applications are needed by jointing, and that could be occurring in a little over a month in those regions.

Dr. Mark Welch (mark.welch@ag.tamu.edu), Professor & AgriLife Extension economist, College Station, commented on fertilizer and commodity prices on 12/15/2021: “The price move we see in nitrogen is driven by higher natural gas prices and higher grain prices. But the degree of price increase in fertilizer is out of proportion to the prices of natural gas and grain. No surprise that fertilizer is higher, but not this high. Both the price of natural gas and grain are likely to be lower in 2022. I do not see record high N prices continuing long term. But that does not mean they will drop much by late winter/spring when we need to get fertilizer applied for first wheat then summer crops. Growers in north Texas and especially the High Plains will have more time before making a final decision on N.”

“For different crops, even with these higher input prices, the returns above variable costs in my 2022 budgets appear better than they were last year looking ahead to 2021. Our output commodity prices are still high enough to make these higher fertilizer input prices manageable. The risk of course is we get all these high-priced inputs locked in and then see output (crop) prices fall by harvest.”

Regardless your production objective remember the first units of N you apply to a field or a crop are the most valuable. The first 33% of N you apply is more valuable and will give a better return than the last 33%. Even though fertilizer N prices are high, at least some N likely still offers a more certain net return than larger amounts. Reducing N applications may be the right decision, but eliminating all N is not.

Wheat price prospects

The Kansas City Board of Trade is the common futures market that indicates trends and levels in the wheat market for Texas. For the week of Jan. 3, 2022, futures for July 2022 are about \$8/bushel. This is high. The board futures, however, are not what the cash market could be at Texas wheat harvest time. With prices like this, a simple yardstick to apply is **“At these high prices for wheat (or other crops) are prices likely to increase further or decrease?”** Barring any significant market news like droughts in other wheat-producing countries or higher than expected demand or export sales, wheat prices probably are more likely to decline. So, should you lock in wheat prices? If you are irrigated or in a Texas region where rainfall is expected, then consider doing so. Otherwise, with the drought across much of Texas this is too risky and of no consideration for wheat in dryland settings.

In-season winter soil testing for wheat—Action item!

We typically view soil testing as an off-season task. Soil sampling for wheat most likely occurs in August to possibly October depending on your Texas location. The impetus for soil testing is greater when fertilizer—and crop commodity—prices are high. On one hand you do not want to spend unnecessarily for fertilizer. On the other hand, you want to ensure potential for higher yields to take advantage of higher wheat prices and increase profitability.

Traditional soil testing is only a six-inch sample. This is changing. Major agriculture states like Kansas and North Dakota now recommend 24” sampling (as one depth) for all nutrients. The potential presence of nitrate-nitrogen (NO₃⁻) is the driver for deeper soil sampling. In any Texas soil, for any Texas crop, Texas A&M AgriLife research suggests nitrate-N down to 24” is fully available to your crop. Credit all this N toward your fertilizer requirement. It is not uncommon for farmers to find 30 to 60 lbs. of N per acre in the top 24”, often double or more what is expected. This represents a potential fertilizer N savings of at least \$15 to \$30 per acre.

Even if you applied some pre-plant fall N to your wheat, consider soil testing now to determine what is available. I recommend for 2022 Texas winter wheat sampling now at least 18” deep and preferably 24”. Sampling only 6” now is of little value for an existing wheat crop.

FEBRUARY 2022

OCHILTREE COUNTY AG NEWSLETTER


Scott Strawn-CEA-AG
Ochiltree County