

Fall 2012



TEXAS A & M AGRILIFE EXTENSION SERVICE

Parker County
Ag News

Most of you have probably observed not only this year but over past years that many weeds that invade our pastures are now flowering or have seeded out. I mention this because most weeds are easiest identified during their later maturity stages. That is why this weed program is being presented in the fall, because after seeing pictures of weeds, it is the best time of year to then go and identify your weeds. We call this a weed inventory and if you know what weeds you have now, hopefully you will be better able to control them next spring. This fall inventory idea came from Dr. Eddie Funderburg, Senior Soils & Crop Consultant with the Noble Foundation in Ardmore, Oklahoma. As he says, "If you have a lot of weeds in a certain place this year, you will probably have them again in that place next



year and taking a weed inventory allows you to target the difficult spots, prepare for them and develop a plan that can save money."

We are privileged to have Dr. Funderburg coming to Parker County, Monday, October 29 to present a program on this subject starting at 6:30 p.m. at the Parker County Agricultural Services Center, Extension office meeting room, 604 North Main, in Weatherford, 76086. One (1) CEU for

pesticide applicators will be available.

The cost for this program is only \$10.00 per person payable at the door.

Even though we don't spray weeds right now, it is an excellent time to improve your weed control program next year by working out a spray plan and budget that includes the correct herbicide to use and when to use them. As Dr. Funderburg says, "Many of the weed control failures we see are due to using incorrect products for the targeted weeds or spraying at the wrong time. Taking a weed inventory can ensure that you spray what you want to spray, where you want to spray and control what you want to control."

Hope to see you Monday evening, October 29th.

Five new Lone Star Healthy Streams manuals available

A group of research scientists, resource conservation agencies, agricultural groups and producers have collaborated to compile five new Lone Star Healthy Streams manuals, all of which are now available to the general public, according to sources.

The Lone Star Healthy Streams program aims to educate Texas live-

stock producers and land managers on how to best protect Texas waterways from bacterial contributions associated with livestock production and feral hogs, said Jennifer Peterson, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service program specialist—water quality.

Peterson and Dr. Larry Redmon, AgriLife Extension state forage specialist,

are working to get the manuals to producers and others needing best management practices for reducing E. coli bacteria in rivers and streams. The two said about 300 Texas water bodies currently do not comply with state water quality standards established for E. coli.

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Texas Animal Health Commission announces details of New Cattle Traceability Rule



Austin—A requirement for adult cattle in Texas to have an approved form of permanent identification in place at change of ownership will go into effect January 1, 2013 according to the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC). The Commission amended its rules in June of this year to enhance the effective traceability of beef cattle movements in Texas, which is the cornerstone of disease control activities. Implementation of the changes was delayed by the Commission to ensure cattle producers understand the requirements and can prepare for the changes.

The amended rule permanently cancels the brucellosis test re-

quirement for adult cattle at change of ownership, which was unofficially suspended in the summer of 2011. Although testing of adult cattle is no longer required with the rule change, all sexually intact cattle, parturient or post parturient, or 18 months of age and older changing ownership must still be officially identified with Commission approved permanent identification. This change primarily affects beef cattle, as dairy cattle in Texas have had an even more stringent identification requirement in place since 2008.

Before August of 2011, official identification devices such as ear tags were applied automatically at the time a brucellosis test was performed. The inadvertent loss of the identification devices applied to cattle when brucellosis testing stopped has threatened TAHC's ability to effectively trace cattle as part of any ongoing disease investigation.

The TAHC routinely performs cattle health investigations where the identification and location of exposed/infected animals is critical to success. For example, 30 Brucellosis reactors, over 300 Bovine Trichomoniasis affected bulls and 22 bovine tuberculosis cases have been investigated by the TAHC to date in 2012. The new traceability rule will help preserve the TAHC's ability to identify and trace animal movements quickly and effectively, no matter which disease is involved.

A complete list of acceptable identification devices/methods may be found at www.tahc.state.tx.us, but the most commonly used devices include USDA metal tags, brucellosis calfhood vaccination tags, US origin 840 series Radio Frequency Identification tags (RFID), and breed registration tattoos or firebrands. Producers are encouraged to contact their veterinarian or TAHC to determine which method of tagging will be best for their operation.

Free USDA metal tags, and a limited number of free applicator pliers (dependent on available funding) will be provided by the TAHC to producers wishing to use them. The tags and/or pliers may be obtained by contacting local TAHC field staff and USDA APHIS Veterinary Services representatives. The TAHC is developing tag distribution partnerships with interested veterinary practitioners and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension offices. Partner contact information will be published as it becomes available. Producers may locate the closest tag distributor online at www.tahc.state.tx.us.

Remember this rule only affects adult cattle at the time of change in ownership.

Call before you dig . . .

Call 811 before you dig. Always know what's below before digging in the ground or you run the risk of breaking an underground gas or electric line. Every three minutes nationwide, an underground utility line is damaged during a digging project. So it is important for projects big and small to call 811 before you dig to have professional locators mark the approximate locations of underground lines with flags, chalk-based spray paint or both.

Manuals, *cont.*

By getting best management practices to landowners dealing with beef and dairy cattle, horses, poultry or feral hogs, they hope to help landowners further protect Texas waterways from sediment, nutrient and pesticide runoff, Peterson said.

The Lone Star Healthy Streams program is a partnership between AgriLife Extension, the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board and the Texas Water Resources Institute. The

program is funded by the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board through Environmental Protection Agency 319 funds.

The Lone Star Healthy Streams program has been well received by producers across the state and endorsed by seven livestock groups and three natural resource agencies, Redmon said.

Printed copies of the manuals are now available by contacting Peterson

at 979-862-8072 or jlpeterson@ag.tamu.edu. The manuals also are available electronically for download from the AgriLife Extension Bookstore website at <http://agrilifebookstore.org>. Publication numbers for the manuals are: Beef Cattle, B-6245; Dairy Cattle, B-6253; Horses, B-6254; Poultry, B-6255; and Feral Hogs, B-6256.

More information on the Lone Star Health Streams program can be found at <http://Lshs.tamu.edu>.

Replacement heifer selection

By: Blair Fannin, b-fannin@tamu.edu

Beef producers considering restocking herds should do so slowly, allowing time for pastures to recover and effectively choose cattle that are a right fit for their operation.

Dr. Ron Gill, AgriLife Extension beef cattle specialist in College Station, says producers need to choose replacement heifers and cattle that are best adapted to their environment.

“You also need to find cattle that you can breed to the right bull, producing the calf quality and traits that you need,” he says. Appropriate frame size is another thing to consider. We tend to get cattle that are big. When we go back in and restock, get some cattle that are more moderately framed perhaps so (ranchers) can run more of them on a given piece of land and produce more calves. Your total pounds produced per acre normally goes up when you have smaller cows

on an operation. If you look at total pounds produced, that’s the business we are in; selling pounds and getting more pounds per acre.” Gill says he sees some Texas ranchers holding off and patiently waiting before restocking. “I think they are waiting and I’m encouraging them to wait until the timing is right,” he said. “We need to be ready to rebuild and look for some bargains.”

Gill says some cattle shipped out of state last year during the Texas drought may need to come back to the Lone Star State as drought has ravaged the Midwest and parts of the southeastern U.S. He says there may be potential to pick up some cattle at bargain prices for these types of cattle, but overall urges producers to ease back into restocking and be mindful of good biosecurity practices. Gill advises producers to be aware of trichomoniasis or “trich,” a sexually transmitted disease that can cause female cattle to abort.

“If you are buying bred females in the last two-thirds of gestation, trich is normally not an issue,” he says. “If you are buying open cows or short-bred cows, trich is something you should be concerned about because they can abort.” Also Bovine Viral Diarrhea (BVD) is a virus cattleman should be mindful of when purchasing cows, Gill says. “If you are bringing in a set of cows, I strongly recommend they be tested. When you buy cattle, don’t mix with your home cattle until you are sure they are straight. Be sure and get with your veterinarian and develop a biosecurity program to take every precaution you can to prevent introduction of health problems into your herd.”

Gill says generally cattle producers should be cautious and stock conservatively. “Don’t jump back in as most pastures haven’t recovered anyway,” he says.

Prussic Acid

With the chance of frost being near, prussic acid in forages can pose a significant risk to certain grazing and barnyard livestock. Plants that accumulate prussic acid include:

Forage or plant	Prussic acid
Pearl and foxtail millet	Very low
Sudangrass and sudangrass hybrids	Low to moderate
Sorghum-sudangrass hybrids	Moderate to high
Forage sorghum	Moderate to high
Shattercane	High
Johnsongrass	High to very high
Grain sorghum	High to very high
Sorghum alnum	High to very high
Arrowgrass	Low
Velvetgrass	Low
White clover	Low
Birdsfoot trefoil	Low

Under normal conditions, when these plants are actively growing and healthy, they contain low levels of

prussic acid because the compound breaks down over time, thus eliminating toxic accumulations. Unlike nitrate, prussic acid may be present for a while and then dissipate from plants especially when cut and properly cured for hay.

Prussic acid accumulation can happen when:

- There are poor growing conditions that prevent stems from developing properly.
- Recent hay harvest or grazing causes slow and stunted growth of new plant tissue.
- Nitrogen fertilizers are over-used or there are other soil fertility or nutrient imbalances.
- Plants develop new growth after a prolonged drought.
- Plants are injured by herbicides, **frost**, hail, or other events.

Symptoms of prussic acid poisoning

The plants listed above pro-

duce cyanogenic glucosides (prussic acid) as they grow. Glucosides are sugar compounds that break down in the rumen, freeing the cyanide from the sugar and forming hydrocyanic acid. Hydrocyanic acid (HCN) is commonly known as cyanide. The HCN combines with hemoglobin to form cyanoglobin, which does not carry oxygen. Livestock poisoned by cyanide have respiratory stress similar to that caused by nitrate poisoning. A blood test can quickly distinguish between nitrate and prussic acid poisoning. If prussic acid is the toxic agent the blood will be cherry red, unlike the chocolate brown blood seen in nitrate poisoning. Horses, hogs and other non-ruminant animals are less affected by prussic acid because their stomachs convert the prussic acid to less toxic formic acid and ammonium chloride.

The Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory (TVMDL), specializes in toxicological analysis of feeds, forages and animals. The TVMDL can do both nitrate and prussic acid testing. The TVMDL can be reached at 979-845-3414.

Test your soil, save on input

Due to the drought last year and the hot dry summer this year, there can be a substantial amount of fertilizer remaining in the soil for next year if you fertilized improved pasture last year or this spring.

To be certain, you are advised to soil test each field you plan to fertilize. Fertilizer prices remain very high as we are looking at 70 cents or more per pound of nutrient for nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. It is a significant part of the overall input cost for forage production.

A soil test is a “tried and tested method” for determining the correct fertilizer product and rate of application. Applying unnecessary nutrients is expensive and does not improve forage yield or quality. A soil test allows us to credit any carryover fertilizer due to the drought and can save producers a significant amount of money. In areas where soil acidity is a concern, test soon so that limestone, if needed, can be applied this fall and

allowed to react and increase pH by next year. In other areas, soil testing for warm-season forage production should be done in winter or early spring.

Soil sample forms and other information related to forage fertility are available at the Parker County Extension office or online at <http://soilcrop.tamu.edu>.

AgriLife agencies include A&M to align with statewide system

College Station—Four state agricultural agencies—three of which have served Texans for about 100 years—have added A&M to their names to reflect their connection to the system that includes Texas A&M University.

The new names—Texas A&M AgriLife Research, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Texas A&M Forest Service and Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory—are among seven agencies that changed as of September 1, following a vote by the Texas A&M University System Board of Regents.

The changes were recommended by Texas A&M University System Chancellor John Sharp, who believed that the previous names of the agencies did not adequately benefit the statewide organization. “There is no better set of agriculture and life sciences agencies in America, and I am confident the shared equity presented through a direct association with Texas A&M will only enhance the already strong AgriLife brand. My goal is to enhance total brand equity and value,” Sharp said.

AgriLife Extension serves people in all 254 counties with objective, research-based education programs and services in agriculture and natural resources, 4-H and youth development, family and consumer sciences, and community economic development.

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

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*Improving Lives.
Improving Texas.*

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service educates Texans in the areas of agriculture, environmental stewardship, youth and adult life skills, human capital and leadership, and community economic development. Extension offers the knowledge resources of the land-grant university system to educate Texans for self-improvement, individual action and community problem solving. The AgriLife Extension Service is a statewide educational agency and a member of the Texas A&M University System linked in a unique partnership with the nationwide Cooperative Extension System and Texas County Commissioners Courts.

We're on the Web!
<http://parker-tx.tamu.edu>



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