

Winter 2014/15



TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE

Parker County
Ag News

I hope each of you had a Merry Christmas and are having a great start to the new year! Even though you received a flyer about this event a few weeks back, I wanted to let you know that we still have room left for some more folks to attend if you need CEUs. This is a great opportunity to obtain 5 CEUs in one day or to pick up some great information from some outstanding speakers even if you don't have a license. **The deadline to register is set for Friday, Jan. 16.**

Speakers scheduled include: Rickey Linex, NRCS Wildlife Biologist with the Zone 5 office in Weatherford will be speaking on **“Plant Identifi-**

cation and Plant Uses for Livestock & Wildlife.”

Dr. Janis Reed, Extension Environmental and Pesticide Safety specialist from College Station will cover our **“Pesticide Laws & Regulations.”**

Dr. Larry Redmon, State Extension forage Specialist from College Station will speak on **“Pasture & Hay Field Management, Bermudagrass Stem Maggot, Nitrogen Stabilizers, & Fertility.”**

Eddie Funderburg, Nobel Foundation Forage & Pas-

Pesticide Safety should always be taken seriously. Know proper procedures before you handle chemicals.

ture Specialist will be coming from Ardmore, Oklahoma to speak about **“Grassy & Broadleaf Weed Control in Pastures.”**

James Jackson, Extension Range Specialist from Stephenville will speak about **“Weed, Brush, & Prickly Pear Control.”**

This conference is going to be one of our best ever and I hope to see you there!

Growing Parker County Peaches—Feb. 3



A seminar on how to grow quality Parker County peaches will be held Tuesday, February 3 at the County Extension office meeting room starting at 6:30 p.m. Gary Hutton of Hutton's Fruit Farm, Weatherford, and my-

self will present timely, up to date information on how to grow the best peaches possible. We will cover site selection and planting, variety selection, spacing, watering, training, fertility, pruning, thinning, insect and disease control, and harvesting. We will also answer questions participants may have at the end of the program. We should conclude around 8:00 p.m. This program should be of great benefit to those want-

ing to start a small orchard or just have a few backyard peaches.

The cost for the program is \$10 per person and can be paid at the door.

The Extension office meeting room is located in the Parker County Ag. Services Center/Dona Brewer Bldg. at 604 North Main in Weatherford. Hope to see you there.

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AgriLife Extension entomologists brace for possible new ag pest



Tawny crazy ant has potential for profound effect on production agriculture, experts say. The tawny crazy ant, a relative newcomer to the U.S., is expanding its range, causing concern among Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service entomologists, said a state entomology leader.

“The tawny crazy ant is an invasive species that came into Texas a little over 10 years ago in the Houston area and has been a problem in some residential areas there since that time,” said Dr. Charles Allen, AgriLife Extension entomology program leader/Texas A&M University.

“Much of the impact so far has been in urban areas where it is attracted to electrical circuits and can short them out, much as fire ants do,” Allen said. “But what we know about the ant leads us to believe it could be important, possibly very important, for an entirely different reason to Texas crop producers,” Allen said. We can’t say they have caused much damage to agriculture to date, but there is a potential for them to cause a significant amount of damage,” Allen said. Dr. Danny McDonald, now at Sam Houston State University, earned his doctorate at Texas A&M University working on the tawny crazy ant. He said the tawny

crazy ants, like a lot of other ants, protect and tend aphids and other pest insects that produce honeydew the ants eat. The main difference is the sheer numbers involved with the crazy ant. What happens is an aphid population that initially may not be too serious, suddenly becomes explosive because the crazy ants are moving aphids in high numbers to their correct host plant where they protect them from many of the aphids’ predators and parasites, McDonald said. “So, if the tawny crazy ant does become important (as a threat to agricultural crops), this will be the reason,” Allen

said.

The tawny crazy ant was formerly called the Raspberry crazy ant after Tom Raspberry, a pest management professional from Pearland who in 2002 first realized they were something new, said Allen. The accepted common name, tawny crazy ant, was established by a committee of the Entomological Society of America in 2012, he said. “They call them crazy ants because they don’t trail like other ants, but move in all kinds of directions,” Allen said.

“They don’t have a single nest where the queen stays, but rather have multiple nests and queen areas; like a super colony made up of a lot of smaller colonies. In areas where these ants are, we have documented decreases in arthropod diversity and population densities,” he said. “Reduction of density and diversity of arthropods can fundamentally affect the proper functioning of an ecosystem and can result in a cascade of negative effects on populations of organisms that rely on them. He said they’ve found a home along the Texas Gulf Coast but now have moved into San Antonio, Austin and the Bryan-College Station a “This ant is something that’s on the radar. It is not a problem in agricultural crops yet, but we know it’s out there and that it has the potential to cause damage.”

Allen said at this point nobody knows how far north the ants can survive cold weather.

“The land grant university system is being build on behalf of the people, who have invested in these public universities their hopes, their support and their confidence”

- Abraham Lincoln

“Agriculture is our wisest pursuit, because it will in the end contribute most to real wealth, good morals and happiness.”

- Thomas Jefferson

“I know of no pursuit in which more real and important services can be rendered to any country than by improving its agriculture, its breed of useful animals, and other branches of a husbandman’s cares.”

- George Washington

New Trich Rules

The Texas Animal Health Commission has adopted some changes to the Trichomoniasis control program as follows:

1) if a bull is sold and later found to be infected, other bulls from the herd of origin may be required to be tested if the bull was not exposed to females after its

sale and prior to testing by the new owner;

2) if a bull has strayed on to property not owned or managed by the bull’s caretaker and is found to be infected then other bulls from the unit of origin and bulls on the premises where the bull was last located must all be officially tested;

3) the TAHC can evaluate the effectiveness of a herd control plan to monitor progress;

4) all premises under a Trich Herd Certification Program must have perimeter fences adequate to control movement in and out of the premises.

Cameron County Temporary Cattle Fever Tick Preventative Quarantine Area Update

AUSTIN - Recently, the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) confirmed the presence of cattle fever ticks on Cameron County premises located outside the permanent quarantine zone in south Texas. In order to protect the land, premises, and animals from exposure to cattle fever ticks, the TAHC created a temporary preventative quarantine area (TPQA) in Cameron County. An effort to facilitate the Cameron County Fever Tick response operations, an office has

been set up. The location of the TAHC/USDA Cameron County Fever Tick Response Office is 105 West Ocean Boulevard, Los Fresnos, TX 78566. The schedule may be found on the TAHC website at http://www.tahc.texas.gov/animal_health/fevertick/fevertick.html. The spraying location is currently at the Los Fresnos Rodeo Arena. On January 15, 2015, this location will be moved to 30934 FM 1561. "Our primary goal is to protect the health of Texas livestock and maintain marketability," said Dr. Hank

Hayes, Incident Commander for the event. "We are here to help and work with local ranchers and producers." For more information about the temporary preventative quarantine area and movement requirements, call 956-546-6004 or 512-937-8843. For additional information about the Cattle Fever Tick visit, http://www.tahc.texas.gov/animal_health/fevertick/fevertick.html http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_diseases/tick/downloads/pest_alert.pdf

Confirmed Avian Influenza in Washington State

Two highly pathogenic strains of Avian Influenza (AI) have been detected in Washington State, one in a captive falcon facility and one in a wild duck. AI has **not** been discovered in Texas. While some AI viruses affect humans, these particular strains are not a threat

to people. The TAHC would like to take this opportunity to remind poultry owners to remain vigilant in examining the health of their birds. If your birds exhibit unusual death loss or signs of illness, or you observe large scale sickness and

mortality of wild birds, call your private veterinarian or the TAHC immediately at 1-800-8242. Read more about the AI outbreak in Washington state at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal_health/2014/SA_WA_avian_influenza.pdf.

Rookie ranchers learn from the best

For a new or novice landowner, taking on all the responsibilities associated with maintaining a ranch can be intimidating. To help ease this transition, Ranch Management University serves as an introductory course and one-stop shop for beginning ranchers. The workshop covers a wide range of topics associated with ranching and provides a support network to its participants.

Ranch Management University is a five-day event held each April and October in College Station and is paid for by participants. A number of subjects are covered, including livestock and wildlife management, pasture management, natural resource stewardship and water quality issues.

Participants receive specific training on livestock management practices, such as administering vaccinations and dehorning, as well as land management practic-

es, such as introduced and native forage management. Ranchers also learn about issues related to land stewardship, including stocking rates or the amount of livestock a particular piece of land can support.

"When they go home, they actually have the resources to go back and do what we discussed during the week," said Dr. Larry Redmon, program coordinator.

The workshop also provides a unique opportunity for participants to interact with experts, including Texas A&M University faculty and AgriLife Extension specialists. This mentorship does not end when the workshop ends; faculty and specialists make themselves available to participants if they need additional support.

"We don't expect them to be perfectly knowledgeable when they come out, but at least they know some questions to ask and some things to be aware of," Redmon

said. "And they know who they can contact, because we give them a list of all the faculty involved in the workshop, and they can contact those people at any time and ask them questions."

"At the end of the first day, they're all good friends even though they were strangers when they started," Redmon said. "It's amazing how these groups come together and really start to share." Over their years of running the workshop, Redmon and his colleagues noticed a need for a similar program designed specifically for women who have unexpectedly become landowners. They will be developing such a workshop in the future, he said.

The date for the next Ranch Management University is March 30—April 3, 2015. Learn more about Ranch Management University at forages.tamu.edu/workshop.

AgriLife Extension website features new aquaculture-related videos

COLLEGE STATION – The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service’s Aquaculture Fisheries and Pond Management website unveiled last January has added four new video releases to their growing “school” of free pond management resources, said the site’s creator.

Dr. Todd Sink, AgriLife Extension fisheries specialist at College Station, said the videos, all under the website’s pond management header, are just the latest in the increasing number of resources to populate the site.

“The two just out are part of our Pond How-to Series and are entitled, ‘Interpreting Your Water Quality Report for Your Pond’ and ‘Controlling Algae in Farm Ponds.’

“They are available on the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Aquaculture Fisheries and Pond Management website at <http://fisheries.tamu.edu/pond-how-to-series->

videos/ and on the Texas A&M University Wildlife and Fisheries Extension YouTube Channel. “The other two videos released earlier this year are there too. They are ‘Cooking Fish 101’ and ‘Fish



Removal with Rotenone’.”

The 10-minute Interpreting Your Water Quality Report for Your Pond video goes down the list of the report and its many

facets. The algae control video is about nine minutes long and features wildlife and fisheries students identifying various types of algae present in Texas ponds, explaining their positive or negative traits and offering control solutions and their levels of effectiveness. These control methods range from using biological controls such as grass carp and tilapia species, which feed on the algae, to pesticide controls, coloring the water to shade out the plants and using pond-bottom aeration.

The earlier videos demonstrate how to prepare a pond for restocking by removing the existing undesirable fish population using the restricted use pesticide, Rotenone. That video is about five minutes long.

“As with all the material on the website, video viewers can rest assured that the material offered is credible, vetted, up-to-date, and in the case of the recipe video, personally taste-tested,” Sink said.

Temple Grandin stresses the little things to handle livestock

When it comes to handling livestock, observing the little things can make for a more pleasant experience – both for the animal and the livestock, according to Dr. Temple Grandin, Colorado State University professor and animal scientist.

“I stress to students the need to be observant,” said Grandin, who has advised ranchers, feedlots and meat plants throughout the U.S. and Canada on handling equipment as well as developing animal welfare guidelines for the meat industry.

Dr. Temple Grandin, Colorado State University professor and consultant specializing in cattle handling and animal welfare, gave a lecture to Texas A&M University department of animal science faculty recently in College Station.

“I’m a visual thinker, and it’s all about the details when it comes to cattle and horses and what they are afraid of,” she told faculty members. “It’s the little things.”

Such things as a dangling chain in a loading chute or dogs roaming around the holding pen and chute – all can make livestock frightened and hard to handle for producers.

Grandin, who is autistic, said her condition has helped her get a better understanding of animals’ sensitivities to bright light, sudden movements and strange objects. Grandin said much unwanted cattle behavior can be avoided if basic livestock handling practices are followed. Research has shown that yelling and whistling will elevate the animals’ heart rate, Grandin said. “Never surprise an animal,” she added.

With cattle prices at historic highs, Grandin said, many ranchers are shipping calves with little or no preconditioning. Many are penning and loading sale-weight calves onto the trailer for the first time without any pre-conditioning programs. “With prices high, calves are being weaned on trucks,” she said. That

makes it even more difficult to eliminate stress on calves as they are sold off of ranches and transferred to feedlot operators and other segments of the beef industry, Grandin said.

Many have never been exposed to handlers on foot, horseback or both, she said. The simplest advice on handling animals, according to Grandin: “Don’t get animals excited in the first place.”



How Fast Should Heifers Be Developed?

Over two years, spring-born, weaned Angus heifers initially averaging 557 lb were developed for 202 days on a ration of grass-alfalfa hay with some barley supplement. Heifers were fed to reach either 55% (moderate gain, MG) or 62% (high gain, HG) of anticipated mature weight of 1400 lb. The higher rate of gain was accomplished by feeding 28% more digestible energy during the development period.

Development cost was significantly lower for MG (\$58/head or 23% less). At the end of the development period, HG weighed significantly more than MG (872 lb vs. 778 lb) and were significantly higher in BIF Frame Score, rib and rump fat cover, and internal pelvic area. At the end of development in June, all heifers were placed on the same pasture and breeding commenced. At start of breeding, significantly more HG were cycling than MG

(52% vs. 20%). MG gained significantly more than HG during summer grazing (1.83lb/day vs. 1.55 lb/day) but by preg-



nancy check in October HG were still significantly heavier (1054 lb vs. 990 lb) and higher in Body Condition Score (2.8 vs. 2.6 on 1-5 scale). Pregnancy rate did

not significantly differ, (88% for HG and 86% for MG).

The study was continued for re-breeding as 2-yr-olds and 3-yr-olds. As 2-yr-olds, HG continued to be significantly heavier just before calving but this was not the case for 3-yr-olds. There was no significant difference in first - or second-calf birth date, % calved in first 21 days, birth weight, calving difficulty, weaning weight, cow BCS, or rebreeding %. As has been found in other recent research, development to first breeding of approximately 55-57% of anticipated mature weight is more economical and results in

no reduction in performance, if nutrition is adequate during breeding.

(J. Animal Sci. 92:3116; Univ. of Saskatchewan, Univ. of Nebraska)

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

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.

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE

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