

August 2016



TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE

**Parker County
 Ag News**



I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself, my name is

Jay Kingston and I am the new County Extension Agent – Agriculture & Natural Resources for Parker County.

I began my duties on July 11th and come to you from Jayton, Kent County in west Texas.

I have a total of 17 years experience as a county agent serving in

Kendall, Gillespie and Kent Counties. I am a graduate of Texas A&M University and am married with 3 children.

I look forward to working with you and providing excellent educational programs in the future. If I can help you in any way please give me a call or email.

Estate Planning - Sept 16th

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is partnering with the Texas Land Conservancy to provide an educational program targeted to North Texas landowners. The event will focus on tools to help families hold on to their piece of Texas while stewarding natural resources and wild places.

Topics addressed will include conservation easements, estate planning, wildlife tax valuation, state and federal assistance programs, and a

talk from a Parker County landowner with an active conservation easement. This event is set for Friday, September 16, 2016 and will be held at the Parker County Extension Office at 604 N. Main in Weatherford.

There will be a \$10 registration fee which will include lunch.

Further details will be shared as the agenda is finalized.



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What Texans Need to Know About Zika Virus

By: Sonja L. Swiger, Assistant Professor and Extension Livestock/Veterinary Entomologist & Michael Merchant, Professor and Extension Urban Entomologist

What Is Zika?

Zika is a mosquito-transmitted disease caused by the Zika virus. This virus is not new, but from 2007 to 2014 the virus spread into new countries and perhaps became more dangerous to people. The illness caused by the Zika virus is usually mild compared to other mosquito-carried illnesses like dengue fever, West Nile virus, and chikungunya. Only one in five people infected with Zika will feel ill. These individuals typically develop mild symptoms that include fever, joint pain, red itchy eyes (conjunctivitis) and rash. Symptoms typically occur 2 to 7 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. Symptoms in some individuals may be more severe. The association between Zika and Guillain-Barre syndrome (a type of paralysis) is under investigation.

Until recently, Zika was considered a mild disease with few lasting effects. However, public health officials are now concerned that pregnant women who contract Zika can pass the virus on to their unborn babies, which may result in a birth defect known as microcephaly. Microcephaly is a condition where the fetal brain and head do not fully develop and reach normal size. Currently, there is no vaccine or preventive treatment for Zika, nor is there a cure for microcephaly. For more information about the effects of Zika on humans, see <https://vitalrecord.tamhsc.edu/zika360/>.

How Do I Get Zika?

A person gets Zika from the bite of an infected mosquito. In turn, mosquitoes get the virus when they bite a person who is infected with the Zika virus. The best carrier (vector)

of the Zika virus is the yellow fever mosquito, *Aedes aegypti*. The Asian tiger mosquito,

Aedes albopictus, can also carry the Zika virus. The degree to which *Aedes albopictus* may be contributing to Zika transmission in the Americas is unknown. Both these mosquitoes are common in Texas, and may be found in the same communities.



Since 2002, the most important mosquito-transmitted disease in Texas has been West Nile virus.

West Nile virus is carried by a different mosquito, the southern house mosquito, *Culex quinquefasciatus*. Unlike the *Culex* mosquitoes which fly only at night, *Aedes* mosquitoes are active throughout the day and into the evening. For this reason, it is critical to protect against mosquito bites both day and night.

Under certain circumstances, Zika can also be transmitted sexually from men to women. To date, this is the only way local transmission of Zika is known to have occurred in the United States. In countries where mosquitoes spread Zika, sexual transmission of the virus is relatively less common. For this reason, the US Centers for Disease Control recently recommended that women with confirmed cases of Zika, or who have experienced symptoms of the virus, wait at least eight weeks after the start of their symptoms before trying to get pregnant. Additionally, men with confirmed cases of Zika, or who have had symptoms of the virus, are now advised to wait at least six months after their symptoms begin before having unprotected sex. These

recommendations are based on current knowledge of how long the Zika virus remains active in the body and in semen.

Should I Be Worried About Zika?

As of March 2016, the Zika virus has not been locally transmitted by mosquitoes to humans in Texas. Currently, the risk of Zika infection in Texas appears negligible. During the winter and early spring, the principal risk is for travelers to areas where Zika is active. However, local transmission of Zika might be possible during the active mosquito season (average daily temperatures above 75 degrees F) and more people return to the State while infected. This risk is expected to remain low for most of Texas. Your local health department, the Texas Department of State Health Services, and the local media are good sources for changes in the risk of Zika in your area. The most current information on Zika in Texas is at: <http://texaszika.org/>.

Stopping Zika

There are two steps you can take to reduce your risk of getting Zika or West Nile virus from a mosquito. First, you can make your home environment less likely to breed mosquitoes. Second, you can reduce your risk of a mosquito bite by dressing appropriately and wearing mosquito repellent when you are outdoors.

All mosquitoes require bacteria-laden water in which to breed. *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes breed in small water- and debris-filled containers like bottles and cans, buckets and wheel barrows, tarps, gutters, birdbaths, flower pot dishes, and tires. Any container that can hold water for 8 to 10 days can produce dozens to hundreds of mosquitoes a day. Clean rainwater or irrigation water that fills a container with organic material (leaf debris, grass clippings, etc.) takes

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Zika Virus *Continued*

about four days to produce enough bacteria to sustain mosquito breeding. Because the mosquitoes that carry Zika fly less than 200 meters from their larval breeding site, most of the biting mosquitoes in your backyard come from containers in your or your close neighbor's yard. Again, the first step to stopping Zika is to fill or eliminate any water containers around your home. For more information about mosquitoes and how to check your yard for mosquito breeding sites, visit: <http://mosquitosafari.tamu.edu>.

Mosquitoes can bite any time you are outdoors—even for short trips to water the garden or pull weeds. Anyone staying outdoors for extended periods in mosquito-infested areas should wear long sleeves, long pants and light-colored, loose fitting clothing to

prevent mosquitoes from biting. Skin applied repellents can also provide good protection for 2 to 12 hours. DEET, picaridin, and IR-3535 are some of the better repellents for exposed skin; however, for shorter exposure times many other effective products are available. For more information about choosing a repellent, see the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's repellent calculator: <http://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-insect-repellent-right-you>

Precautions For Travelers

Texas' proximity to Mexico and other Latin American countries where Zika is common, make it one of the highest risk areas for Zika in the United States. Anyone traveling to and from areas where the Zika virus is present should take special precautions to avoid getting the vi-

rus or spreading it to others. This includes avoiding mosquito infested areas, wearing long sleeved shirts and long pants when in mosquito prone areas, and using a good repellent.

In addition to being careful to avoid Zika when traveling, it's important to avoid passing on the Zika virus when you return home. Even travelers who feel well can pass on the Zika virus. Eighty percent of those who get Zika will not know they have been infected. To minimize this risk, returning travelers should wear repellent for at least a week to avoid the possibility of introducing the virus to your community.

For more information and links to resources: <http://preventingzika.org/>

Cattle Producers Learn How to Deal with Smaller Profit Margins

Writer: Blair Fannin, 979-845-2259, b-fannin@tamu.edu

After two years of historic high cattle prices, a record 1,900 producers attending the Texas A&M Beef Cattle Short Course in College Station learned more about the current decline in prices and maintaining profitability despite declining profit margins.

"We've had quite a run over the past two years with regards to high cattle prices," said Dr. Jason Cleere, conference coordinator and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service beef cattle specialist, College Station. "Cattle prices fell considerably last fall and ranchers are concerned with where they will go in the future." "If prices would just stabilize, it would take some panic out of the market," said Greg Goudeau, cattle

producer and owner of Navasota Livestock Auction Co.

"We've seen quite a slide, 40 percent, which is quite challenging," said Gerald Sullivan, who co-owns Santa Rosa Ranch in Navasota and Crockett with his daughter, Kelley Sullivan. "Not everything is bad, not everything is good. We're also seeing an uptick in per capita consumption of beef. That's directly related to the cost as far as I am concerned. I believe we are going to be looking at two or three years of this before we see a turnaround. I'm not sure where the bottom is at this point, but we've seen this before."

Dr. Ted McCollum, AgriLife Extension beef cattle specialist, Amarillo, said during the general session, "It's like a game of limbo right now. How low can you go?

Price discovery in the fed cattle market has been



an issue as well as volatility in the futures markets and relation to the cash markets."

Duane Lenz, CattleFax market analyst, said it was the best of times when prices rallied to historic levels in 2015 and hundreds of dollars in profit margins were raved.

"Looking back at historical returns, in 2015 it wasn't good; it was really, really good," he said.

But when prices started to break going into the fall and spiral

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Summertime Pond Management Requires Planning and Caution

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Phone calls about out-of-control aquatic vegetation are a common midsummer occurrence, said Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service wildlife and fisheries specialist Dr. Billy Higginbotham.

However, he said, pond owners should proceed with caution when treating aquatic weeds in ponds where fish are important resources.

Higginbotham said thinning or eradicating aquatic vegetation can improve the overall environment for the pond and increase the pond's utility for recreation, livestock watering and/or irrigation. However, in larger ponds managed for largemouth bass and appropriate forage species, some degree of aquatic vegetation coverage may provide beneficial habitat and harbor food items.

Because of potentially extensive coverage, there are dozens of native and invasive species of aquatic vegetation that cause ecological and economic impacts throughout Texas, he said. And positive identification is the key to successful control of aquatic vegetation.

"I recommend people use the AgriLife Extension website <http://aquaplant.tamu.edu> for assistance in identification and control recommendations," Higginbotham said. "There is a wealth of information available to help guide landowners."

The site assists with identification including descriptions and photos and also provides treatment advice, such as whether biologic controls are available and gives multiple herbicide options, their effec-

tiveness and how to calculate the area and volume of ponds for applications.

Higginbotham said landowners should treat ponds in stages if maintaining fish populations is important. Treating an entire pond with herbicides during the hotter months can create an oxygen debt, due to decomposing vegetation, especially algae and other submerged vegetation, and cause fish losses.

"This is typically a summertime problem because water at higher



temperatures holds less oxygen than would be possible at cooler temperatures," he said. "If treatment is necessary during the heat of the summer, break the pond up into sections and treat only 15-20 percent of the pond at a time with one week in between treatments."

Higginbotham said lower water levels typically found in late summer can also aid landowners who want to renovate their ponds. Reduced volume of water requires fewer treatment chemicals to remove the existing fish population, which might include undesirable species, in order to establish and support fish species that offer better angling opportunities.

"Landowners with unbalanced

fish populations may also want to remove existing fish populations and start over, especially in smaller ponds less than one surface acre in size that lend themselves more for the management of single species that accept a pelleted ration, such as channel or blue catfish, hybrid stripers or hybrid sunfish," he said.

Removal of existing species not easily managed in these smaller ponds, or that will compete directly with the desired fish species or in some cases prey directly upon stocked fingerlings, can be accomplished using rotenone.

Rotenone is a restricted use pesticide, therefore pond owners need a Texas Department of Agriculture pesticide applicator license to purchase and use, or must hire a licensed applicator, Higginbotham said. The liquid formulation of rotenone is easier to use, Higginbotham said, because it mixes easily with water and can be applied by pump or by mixing into the prop wash of a small outboard motor. Protective gear should be worn during the application process including eye-wear, gloves and long sleeves to avoid skin contact with the pesticide.

Rotenone prevents the fish from taking oxygen from the water. Fish should begin surfacing within 30 minutes of the application, depending on species. The fish, however, cannot be consumed because the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has not established residue levels for rotenone. Landowners should wait at least two to three weeks to restock the pond after the rotenone application, he said. It is safe for livestock to consume water that has been treated with rotenone, except for swine.

Cattle Profits *Continued*

downward, Lenz said feeder operators who paid high bids began holding on to cattle, feeding them longer, hoping for prices to come back up to a level of profitability. When those cattle went to slaughter, weights were significantly higher and lots of beef was on the market.

That also pressured prices downward, he said. As a result, that left a lot of beef that continues to be cycled through the chain, which has weighed heavily on prices. Commodities across the board, led by the energy sector, have seen sharp declines due to global economic concerns, which hasn't helped spark strong rallies in cattle prices.

Looking forward, Lenz said consumption is forecasted upward and export demand for beef is also projected higher in the coming years.

That's good news, he said, as lower cattle prices have also trickled down to the retail meat case and major grocery chains have returned to featuring beef cuts in weekly sales flyers.

Though prices won't reach historic levels seen in 2015, the floor price for a 550-pound steer is targeted at \$155 per hundredweight, he said.

"Could we see \$150 to \$155 in the coming years? We probably could," Lenz said.

But just two weeks ago, Lenz said Kansas fed-cattle prices



reached as low as \$115 per hundredweight.

"Now we're getting in the mid-\$120s," he said. "There's no reason we can't be there as we finish out the year. But going into next spring, \$105-\$110 is a possibility." By comparison, 2015 prices got as high as \$275 per hundredweight for a 550-pound steer.

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.

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The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife.

The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating