

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE

Walker County Agriculture News Update

January/February
2016

Greetings from the Walker
County, Texas A&M AgriLife
Extension office!

WOW! THANK YOU! In late December, the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office (Ag & 4-H) teamed up with New Waverly FFA to determine the best ways for presenting agricultural education in the electronic age. Your response was great! Thanks to your participation, the AgriLife Extension Office has been provided with immensely valuable information to utilize for your benefit. As time progresses, you should see some further educational adaptations made to meet your indicated desires and preferences.

As the 2016 stock show season and all the youth events to follow are starting; I think that the following videos are good ones to help focus on 4-H & Youth Development efforts. 4-H isn't just about raising an animal or making a project. Think about the messages here, we are talking about the future:

Walker County Ag/Youth Leadership Video: Be a Hero, Be an Advocate with Texas 4-H. This video is from a 4-H Youth Leadership project we filmed in 2014. I chose to share it with you because it hits the theme of this newsletter (EXACTLY). I hope that you will notice and appreciate the connection after reading completely through this edition. By the way; Sam Houston is on my list; but he isn't in the top three. You will understand what I mean regarding that later on. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-SsRgofduUo>

Global 4-H/Youth Learning to Feed Their Communities: 4-H in Africa. If you are interested in seeing where we as a country were about 100 years ago regarding agricultural production education, take a look at this video. 4-H was designed originally to improve the lives of families through youth education. The point here is to get an idea of how the rest of the world needs the knowledge, skills and technology that we in the U.S. have begun to take for granted. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RDjaUus6wQo>

Ranch Management University

April 4th - 8th, 2016

8:00 AM

G. Rollie White visitor's Center

7707 Raymond Stotzer Pkw., College Station, TX

Preregistration through 3/29/16 \$500.00

<https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu/index.cfm/productDetails/ProductID/1931/>

The Ranch Management University is an intensive 5-day event targeting new or inexperienced ranchers and landowners and covers the fundamentals of soils and soil fertility, forage establishment, pasture management, and utilization by livestock. Basic livestock management practices such as castrating and vaccinating calves are demonstrated. Grazing management, stocking rate, and body condition scoring are also highlighted. Additionally, several wildlife management topics are covered for those interested in managing white-tailed deer, turkey, quail,

feral hogs, and farm ponds. Approximately one-half the workshop involves lectures and discussion, with the remainder consisting of the field demonstrations of various how to methods of soil sampling, planting, calibrating sprayers, and inoculating legume seed. Various forage species, including bermudagrass, small grains, annual ryegrass, and clovers are studied by workshop attendees. Additional demonstrations covers deer necropsy, hog trap management, and pond fisheries management. In addition, all meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks) and an RMU workbook are provided.

Poultry Production (Back Yard Flock Topics):

I chose the following presentation set because it contains topics or concepts which a number of you indicated may be of interest. Poultry is a topic I usually do not delve into very often with our newsletter. Each webinar link below will also include any fact sheets or event materials provided to support the session.

[Raising chickens for meat production](#) (Scheduled live for January 6 at 10:30 CST)

[Producing poultry meat on pastures](#) (60 minute previously recorded session)

[Meat quality issues with small and backyard poultry flocks](#) (60 minute previously recorded session)

[Basics of poultry processing](#) (60 minute previously recorded session)

If you view one or two of the webinars, please let me know whether you liked it (or) otherwise.

Volunteer Opportunity: Plant a Longleaf Pine Centennial Forest

The Big Thicket National Preserve is seeking volunteers to assist in restoring the natural beauty and health of a historic longleaf pine forest area in Southeast Texas. Their planting seasons are; January to March & again in November to December of 2016. They are asking for volunteers (individuals or groups) to come and plant their own "Piece of the Thicket" in an area to be known as the Centennial Forest. For additional information, contact: Ken Hyde (409) 951-6820, Kountze, TX., or ken.hyde@nps.gov

I Laughed!

We get some really useful information from Joe Paschal, Extension Beef Specialist stationed in Corpus Christi. A few weeks ago, he started sending out information from scripts he had been writing to present for a podcast hosted out of San Antonio. In his email, he made a comment about podcasts and mentioned that he wasn't really sure what they were.. We had just begun collecting data on our Ag Communications Survey, and I thought many of you may be in the same boat. I replied back to him, "Internet Radio Shows". A discussion ensued and he found some of my comments interesting regarding the initial data you were providing to us from the online survey.

Evaluating and Improving Cow Body Condition

By Joe Paschal, Extension Beef Specialist

As winter has finally settled in, it might be a good time to take a minute and look at the body condition score of your cows. Cow body condition score is a good indicator of the nutritional status of your cowherd. They range from one, very thin, to nine, obese, but the critical scores are four, five and six. A cow with a body condition score of four has the last few ribs (but not the backbone) showing while a cow with a condition score of five has no ribs showing and is usually considered ideal. A cow with a condition score of six has hooks and pins that are rounded in appearance due to fat cover.

Good cow body condition is important to fertility, including rebreeding after calving, but also helps in providing energy for the stress of calving and in providing higher quality colostrum. Thin cows take longer to rebreed after calving, have more calving stress and lower quality colostrum.

A cow usually loses a condition score at calving so cows that are in a body condition score four or lower will be more difficult to rebreed.

The difference in body weight between each of these three scores is about eight percent or about one hundred pounds. Since cows are lucky to maintain their weight during winter, you should evaluate and supplement your cows, if necessary before calving. Cows on dry or frosted forage might need protein supplementation to meet protein needs and improve digestibility. Cows on very low quality forages or hay may need both energy and protein to regain the necessary body condition. Testing hay or forages will help you determine their nutritional needs.

Contact your local county Extension agent for assistance and advice. Additional information can be found on the web site maintained by the TAMU AgriLife Research & Extension Center in Vernon, TX: [Overview of Body Condition Scoring System](#) (and) [Photo-Guide to Body Condition Scoring Beef Cattle](#) (or) If you would prefer a detailed publication: [Body Condition, Nutrition and Reproduction of Beef Cows](#)

USDA Microloans to Help Farmers Purchase Farmland and Improve Property

WASHINGTON, Jan. 19, 2016 — Agriculture Deputy Secretary Krysta Harden today announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will begin offering farm ownership microloans, creating a new financing avenue for farmers to buy and improve property. These microloans will be especially helpful to beginning or underserved farmers, U.S. veterans looking for a career in farming, and those who have small and mid-sized farming operations.

“Many producers, especially new and underserved farmers, tell us that access to land is one of the biggest challenges they face in establishing and growing their own farming operation,” said Harden. “USDA is making it easier for new farmers to hit the ground running and get access to the land that they need to establish their farms or improve their property.”

The microloan program, which celebrates its third anniversary this week, has been hugely successful, providing more than 16,800 low-interest loans, totaling over \$373 million to producers across the country. Microloans have helped farmers and ranchers with operating costs, such as feed, fertilizer, tools, fencing, equipment, and living expenses since 2013. Seventy percent of loans have gone to new farmers.

Now, microloans will be available to also help with farm land and building purchases, and soil and water conservation improvements. FSA designed the expanded program to simplify the application process, expand eligibility requirements and expedite smaller real estate loans to help farmers strengthen their operations. Microloans provide up to \$50,000 to qualified producers, and can be issued to the applicant directly from the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

This microloan announcement is another USDA resource for America’s farmers and ranchers to utilize, especially as [new and beginning farmers and ranchers](#) look for the assistance they need to get started. To learn more about the FSA microloan program visit www.fsa.usda.gov/microloans, or contact your local FSA office. To find your nearest office location, please visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Any Chance You Want to Try an Online Course?

Think about it, you can work at your own pace.. with your own schedule.. Just in case you feel like giving it a try, here are a few options:

[Tomato 101](#) (\$20.00)

While you’re waiting for spring to come, get ready for those summer tomatoes by taking Tomato 101. This online course teaches the basics of growing tomatoes in your garden, and allows you to cover the material at your own pace and on your own time schedule. The course is divided into 9 sections and covers:

- Thinking about tomatoes
- Getting Dirty
- Planting

- Training
- Watering
- Fertilizing
- Plant Problems
- General Care
- Conclusion

This online program allows you to work at your own pace and create your own schedule, so begin when you're ready.

[Fire Ant Control Made Easy \(Free\)](#)/Watch the Recording

Frustrated trying to control fire ants? If so, join us for an online seminar.

Killing fire ants is actually easier than you think—if you understand how they live. This seminar will help you learn how to apply integrated pest management tactics that are as economical and environmentally friendly as possible. You'll also learn about fire ant biological control agents such as the Pseudacteon phorid flies.

In This Issue:

THE GUY AHEAD OF HIS TIME

If you could talk to three people..

Hours of travel time motoring down the road can lead to some interesting conversation. Or worded differently; items which the family will talk about can be random when closed up in a vehicle for four or five hours. Thoughts sometimes just happen and periodically they are even verbalized. Sometimes that is a good thing..

By now you can probably guess they may even be written down.

The old question of *"If you could talk to three people, living or otherwise. Who would they be?"* arose during holiday windshield time. Past an important group of loved ones whom I would appreciate more time with; I found this one an easy answer.

Keep in mind that I have always been and will always be a fan of history related subjects. Here is the part where I am resisting the urge to make the statement that many of our problems occur because we forget our history. Glad that didn't slip out. My three people, not necessarily in order:

- J. Frank Dobie, Professor of History, University of Texas. I am sure a few of the guys from TAMU just cringed, but stay with me. Dobie descended from a South Texas ranching family and had the opportunity to hear stories first hand from many of the old-timers, or possibly "a guy who knew a guy". Fortunately, he was born with the ability to record their tales in an interesting fashion for the rest of us to read. Dobie in (my opinion) was the greatest Texas story teller ever chipped "Out of the Old Rock" to shamelessly borrow one of his book titles. The fancy biography's call him a folklorist. The opportunity to sit around a campfire, enjoying a good steak and agricultural products from Tennessee, and hear his tales first hand; would be unbelievable. It would be better yet if Bedichek and Webb were there with him, but they didn't make the list.
- Thomas Jefferson, third President of the United States, and major acknowledged writer of the Declaration of Independence. FYI: This is the guy that sent Lewis and Clark across newly purchased ground which would later allow our country to nurture the crops and provide the resources to grow the nation we are now. Just in case you don't remember all the history here, this was a purchase that he didn't authorize through Congress; it was done via a treaty which was later ratified by the Senate. What's the biggest

check you ever wrote that you didn't know you could cover? Jefferson was also known for his horticulture efforts and evaluation of many, then mostly unknown plants in our country. The discussion issue here would start on how his personal actions varied from his written thoughts. Clarification on that subject would be interesting to say the least. We would talk gardens later on. As an interesting side note, he was known to receive important visitors wearing his house shoes with a great lack of formal dress – considered very odd behavior for the day and time but possibly done to make a statement about his personal impression of the visitor. I think I could relate..

- George Washington Carver, Professor, Tuskegee Institute Agriculture Department and Agricultural Experiment Station. The subject of this article..

Read on please.

The Guy Ahead of His Time

By Reggie Lepley, CEA-Ag

Very recently, last week actually; I was flipping through the TV channels and came across the biography of George Washington Carver. This was about the time a lady made the statement “You just have to wonder what he could have done with a computer” or something along those lines. I was really disappointed to hear that on TV. Why, you may ask? Well I had already had that thought myself.

It appears I don't have as many original thoughts as I think I do. Major disappointment..

You just have to wonder how a person with very limited early education and no existing opportunities can motivate himself to help so many others. Born into slavery toward the end of the Civil War, Carver left home on his own to attend school. Working his way through school, he farmed land for himself and secured a loan for additional education.

As the first black student at Iowa's Agricultural College, he studied botany. His 1894 thesis was titled “Plants as Modified by Man.” It seems this isn't a new topic, I hope the anti-tech crowd is paying attention. Adding to his list of firsts, Carver was later the first black faculty member at Iowa State.

His personal interests included art. He often entertained himself by creating paintings of plants and flowers. Later work would include chemistry; developing paint from soil and other natural products including sweet potatoes. He would have been right at home with our Extension Master Gardeners and I can just imagine him teaching a Master Gardener class. They would grow stuff left and right and then go out and paint a building with it and finish up planting additional plants for landscape.

Carver worked tirelessly to educate others and share his knowledge. Crop rotation was desperately needed due to poor soil conditions following years of growing the limited marketable crop of the time. I will let you work out what that crop was –it's no fun if you don't have to look something up and you usually will retain the information longer. Remember we don't want to lose our lessons of history.

Legumes could help replenish soil health and peanuts were one of the options. The problem was marketing.

Just because you can grow something; that still doesn't mean anybody wants to buy your crop. Carver worked diligently developing and promoting uses supporting product marketing. Some of his effort included publishing recipes for human consumption; he compiled and wrote cookbooks. If any Extension Ag Agent from a one agent county just read that, I know they cringed. [How to grow the Peanut and 105 Ways of Preparing it for Human Consumption](#) is posted online. It is an interesting document and I encourage you to take a look.

Carver wasn't limited to soils, agronomy and horticulture, as he wrote about farm economics and animal science topics as well. During his lifetime of work, he authored [43 bulletins](#) spanning the years 1898 to 1943 describing farming techniques and methods to improve the life and income of all farmers in his region of Alabama.

Other legumes such as soybeans and cowpeas were evaluated. "How to grow the cowpea and 40 ways of preparing it as a table delicacy" was one of his published efforts of 1917. His 1918 tomato bulletin featured 115 ways to prepare the crop for the table. This information was taken out to the country and provided to the farmers and their families who needed it.

He developed a large number of [sweet potato products](#) which you can view on the Tuskegee web site. This list includes flours (4), starches (4), molasses (3), synthetic ginger, after dinner mints (3), stock feed (3), dyes (73), and so on.

What would he have done with our current technology? I wonder that as I am typing out this written article and thinking there is so much more to do..

Just so you have the full story. George Washington Carver, was on my radar during the discussion initiating our "three people" talk because I had been evaluating a couple of sweet potato pie recipes. I knew the connection. Both recipes turned out exceptionally good; but neither were as good as my grandmother's.



If you have questions or would like more information regarding Extension Educational Programs, call us at (936) 435-2426.

Reggie Lepley

Reggie Lepley,
County Extension Agent – Agriculture & Natural Resources
Walker County
(936) 435-2426

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Provisions from the American Disability Act will be considered when planning educational programs and activities. Please notify the Walker County Extension Office if you plan on attending an Extension Educational program and need specialized services. Notification of at least three to five days in advance is needed, so that we may have ample time to acquire resources needed to meet your needs.

Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information or veteran status. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating