



Walker County Agriculture News Update

October 2015

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

Reminder: The Fall Hay Evaluation program & STEAK Dinner will be October 14th
(look for additional information in this newsletter & Call Your Reservation In)

New Walker Co Ag Video: Fall Flowering Plants of a Wet Spring with Dr. Barron Rector. This production was filmed entirely onsite in Walker County. If you are wondering what some of those “weeds” are out in the pasture, this video may help you identify them and provide a little information on what they may or may not be good for.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQYN5ghF6NM>

New Walker Co Ag Video: Honey Locust Control: 45 DAT IPT Foliar Evaluation. This video is the 2nd in the series with the Honey Locust Control Video we posted in the August edition of Walker County Agriculture News. In this video we are evaluating chemical effectiveness 45 day after treatment of the foliar spray individual plant treatments. It will be next year before we know the true effectiveness of these products, but at this time they are looking very good.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0g7dk1LD1XM>

I will start the written information in the October Agriculture News Update with a **Repeat of Important Information**. If you haven't figured this out, whenever I post something regarding a comment period, it will directly affect us in Walker County. This particular one will impact anybody with a Pesticide Applicators License or anybody who wants to obtain one in the future. I suggest you read this one closely and follow the links to the additional information.

EPA Proposed Certification & Training Regulation Changes

By Don Renchie, Extension Program Leader & Coordinator, Pesticide Safety Education Program

On August 5, 2015, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a proposal to revise the “Certification of Pesticide Applicators” rule. EPA administrators stated, *“The rule would help keep our communities safe, protect the environment and reduce risk to those applying pesticides. Pesticide use would be safer with increased supervision and oversight. The proposed changes will help ensure that the riskiest pesticides are used safely”*.

On August 24, 2015 the Federal Register Notice (FRN) was posted beginning a 90 day comment period on the proposed regulations. These proposed regulation changes affect pesticide users in all sectors (agricultural, structural, public health, and governmental) if the applicator uses or supervises the use of Restricted Use Pesticides (RUP).

The link below will provide direct access to the EPA website where interested parties can review the FRN, Proposed vs. Current C&T Regulation Comparison Table (attached as an Adobe file), and the Preamble document. The Preamble document provides detailed information on the proposed changes, the rationale for the changes, and procedures for your customers to submit comments directly to EPA concerning the C&T Regulations during comment period.

In addition, you will find (attached) a WP document which is Texas' version of the EPA comparison chart. It clearly delineates the changes which will impact pesticide applicators in Texas. EPA is accepting comments on the

proposal until November 23, 2015. For more information and to comment on the proposed legislation, visit this link to the EPA website: <http://www2.epa.gov/pesticide-worker-safety/epa-proposes-stronger-standards-people-applying-riskiest-pesticides> While many commodity and farm advocacy groups may submit comments during the acceptance period, it is also paramount that information be made available to our customers to facilitate individual participation in this regulatory process. The comparison table quickly allows applicators to examine what EPA proposes to change in the existing regulations and determine what if any impact the changes may have on their agricultural or other business enterprise.

Texas Agricultural and Timber Registration Number (Sales Tax #)

We have been advised that producers are being contacted about renewing their Texas Agricultural and Timber Registration Number. This program is administered by the State Comptroller's Office and allows producers to purchase certain items for their operation without paying sales tax. As you may recall, several years ago producer's had to obtain a registration number to get the sales tax exemption. All of these initial registrations will expire on December 31, 2015 and must be renewed for continued use. Everyone who currently holds a registration number should receive information by mail for renewal. Here is the renewal information <http://comptroller.texas.gov/taxinfo/agriculture/renewNumber.html> . Additional information on the Ag and Timber number and renewal can be found at the following link <http://comptroller.texas.gov/taxinfo/agriculture/> . Information on how to get a number if you do not have one http://comptroller.texas.gov/taxinfo/taxpubs/ag_timber_exemption.html .

USDA Disaster Declaration (Drought Related)

Judge Pierce delivered this information to me this week. Farm Service Agency (FSA) has been notified to make emergency loans available to eligible applicants in Walker County as a contiguous county to a September 23, 2015 disaster declaration. Details can be obtained from the local FSA office (Bryan, TX (979) 846-4814).

Additional relevant information is that the Small Business Administration (SBA), in an agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), provides low-interest federal disaster loans to eligible small business dependent on farmers and ranchers in counties that have received a disaster declaration from the Secretary of Agriculture. Per the news release provided "Eligibility for these loans is based on the financial impact of the disaster only and not on any actual property damage." Applicants may apply online using the Electronic Loan Application (ELA) via SBA's secure website at <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela/> .

Fall Hay Evaluation (flyer attached)

October 14th, 2015

6:30 PM

Walker County Storm Shelter

\$5.00 registration includes a Steak Dinner!

1 Hour CEU credit available

Abundant rain during the early part of 2015 means that there should be hay in the barns. Is it good hay, or is it not? The only way to know the quality and feeding value of your hay is to have it tested. The Extension Livestock & Pasture Committee wants you to know your hay quality so informed decisions can be made. Topics of discussion during the educational presentation will be directed toward the value of your hay, and cattle herd health through the winter. Sam Houston State University's own Dr. Bobby Lane and Dr. Stanley Kelley will be presenting this vital information for us. "Eat'em Up Kats!" We are teaming up with our program sponsors again this year to provide a valuable educational program and free hay testing to assist you. This educational event is being supported by Walker County Farm Bureau, Silveus Insurance Group (Rangeland Division), and American Plant Food, Inc. We appreciate their continuing and long term support.

Reservations will be required for meal planning, call the Extension Office at (936) 435-2426 to reserve your steak!



Ribeye Steak at the 2014 Fall Hay Evaluation! We take beef seriously.

22nd Annual Southeast Texas Grounds Maintenance Conference

October 15th, 2015

7:30 AM

Lone Star convention Center (FM 1484, Conroe, TX)

5 Hour CEU credit (TDA or Structural) available

Preregistration by 10/5 \$50.00 (after 10/5 \$70.00)

The program will cover a variety of current subjects including: turfgrass management, chemical application techniques, insect pest management, laws and regulations and more. Program registration includes refreshments and a catered lunch. For more information or to register, contact (936) 539-7822.

Texas Pollinators Garden Symposium (flyer attached)

October 16th, 2015

8:00 AM

Walker County Storm Shelter (455 Hwy 75 N, Huntsville, TX)

Preregistration by 9/16 \$75.00, after 9/16 & at door \$95.00

This will be a special treat for the plant/butterfly/hummingbird/honey bee enthusiast! The Walker County Master Gardeners have an outstanding line up of speakers for this day long program. Your registration fee will get you LUNCH & a TEE SHIRT! How cool is that? Plus, we have world famous gardening author Felder Rushing as the Butterfly Gardening

Keynote Speaker!! You don't want to miss this one. Henry Flowers, Garden Director at Round Top Festival Institute will talk Herbs in the Pollinators Garden. Chris Moore, Vice President of Texas Beekeepers Association will explore Bees as Pollinators. To round out this outstanding line up, AgriLife Extensions own Dotty Woodson will talk about Water Collection for the Garden. Commercial vendors will be on site with a variety of interesting items to view.

Preregister at www.walkercountymastergardeners.org

Don't Miss the WC Master Gardeners
Fall Plant Sale & Butterfly Festival:
October 17, 2015
At the Walker Co AgriLife Extension Office
8:00 AM until 2:00 PM
Bring the Family!

Cow Country Congress set for Oct. 23 at Maysel Ranch in Fairfield (flyer attached)

By Blair Fannin



FAIRFIELD – Area beef producers will learn how to prepare cattle for feedlots and hear the latest in feral hog management at the Cow Country Congress 2015, scheduled October 23 at Maysel Ranch near Fairfield.

The ranch is located east of Fairfield off of State Highway 84. Turn south on County Road 441 and continue for 3.3 miles. The ranch is on the right.

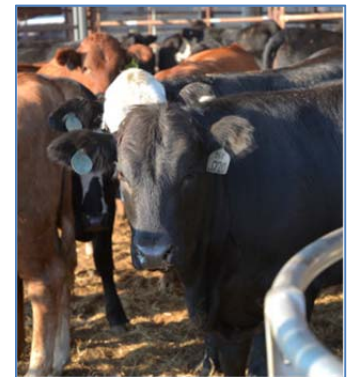
“The goal for this program is to provide cattle producers with the knowledge and skills to be profitable in their operation,” said Erin Davis, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service agent for Freestone County. “With Cow Country Congress, we want to keep the producers up to date with the latest tools available to them for use in their day-to-day operations.”

Davis said the program will include an overview of the Maysel Ranch by owner Burt Richards. His son, Joe Richards, who is a feedlot owner/operator in Hereford, will discuss cattle management and preparing cattle for the feedlot.

Cooper Terrill, AgriLife Extension agent for Falls County, will give a presentation on feral hogs and demonstrate the “BoarBuster,” an automatic trap developed by the Noble Foundation.

“We’ll also have Dr. Larry Redmon, AgriLife Extension state forage specialist from College Station, who will discuss proper hay storage,” Davis said.

Dr. Ron Gill, AgriLife Extension beef cattle specialist, College Station, will give a talk on Advocating for Agriculture.



Cattle management and preparing cattle for the feedlot will be discussed at the 2015 Cow Country Congress scheduled Oct. 23 at the Maysel Ranch near Fairfield. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service photo by Blair Fannin

Larry Hand, special ranger with the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association Region 6, Tyler, will conclude the program with a discussion on cattle theft.

Davis said a legislative update is set for noon.

Cost is \$20 and includes a steak lunch. Door prizes will be awarded as well as a number of vendor booths for attendees to visit. Two Texas Department of Agriculture continuing education units will be offered.

Attendees are encouraged to RSVP for an accurate meal count by calling the AgriLife Extension office in Houston County at 936-544-7502 by Oct. 16.

Heads UP/Hold the Date: (future calendar date announcement)

January Pesticide CEU Recertification Conference

January 8th, 2016 (Friday)

At the Walker Co Storm Shelter

The annual recertification event is coming together nicely. I am working on a very interesting and new set of topics to provide you with some really good information. At this time it is looking like we will be offering 5 hours of CEU credit once again through the conference. Place the date on your calendar now and save it –you don't want to miss this one! Scheduled topics for this event are as follows:

- Feral Hogs
- Brush Control Research & Findings
- Ecology & Impacts of Weed Management
- Potential for Variable Rate Technology Uses in Agricultural Pest Control
- Pesticide Laws & Regulations Update
- Pesticide Safety Issues.

In This Issue:

OF QUAIL AND OTHER WILD THINGS

If you build it, will they come?

Occasionally I have the opportunity to do some very interesting things in this line of work. This is one of the things that make AgriLife Extension a satisfying job. I enjoy the access provided to view a variety of landowners' properties with the added value of hearing about the work they are doing with the land. Goals for management vary greatly. Some individuals are livestock people, some are wildlife people, and in Walker County some are timber people. It gets interesting and the challenges grow when these goals start to mix and intermingle.

Of Quail and Other Wild Things

By Reggie Lepley, CEA-AG

When you get a phone call and the person on the other end of the line starts out by saying, "I have an opportunity for you," I usually immediately look to make sure the doorway isn't blocked in case a quick escape is needed. Recently one such call turned out rather well.

I was offered the opportunity to attend the Statewide Quail Symposium in Abilene, TX. There were a number of very good technical subject matter presentations given during the event; however, the highlight of the symposium for me was the onsite tour of the Trail Ranch in Albany, Texas. I have always been fond of the central and west central Texas countryside so the opportunity to ride in the back of a pickup with a bunch of other Extension Agents from across the state was a good afternoon excursion. During the tour we viewed a variety of equipment utilized for brush control, listened to speakers which included the ranch owner/manager, AgriLife people, Texas Parks & Wildlife people and a few others from various conservation minded groups. Good information and interesting viewpoints abounded.

One of the items which were mentioned included a statement on brush control. As you may be aware, "Brush Sculpting" has been a hot button phrase for a number of years. Basically this means taking out what you don't

need based on your management goal, leaving what you do need based on species of both plant and animal involved, plus location of said brush while providing the management to perpetuate the desired result for the length of the management practices life expectancy. Note: I think I picked that last part of the statement about life expectancy of practices from the New Landowners Information meeting with NRCS a few weeks ago. I guess the moral of that story is if you have an open mind, maybe you will learn something that can be put to use somewhere else down the road.

Anyway back to the brush control/sculpting thoughts. "If you kill it, make sure you didn't need it.", was the statement made by Dr. Dale Rollins, Extension Wildlife Specialist. He finished the sentence with "you better make sure you know what it is good for". At least that is how I remember him saying it.

Point being, there are a number of plant species that provide great benefit to our land and the creatures which live upon it which may not readily exhibit those positive attributes to the landowner.

Know your plants. Much easier said than done; however, with a little work anything is possible. Another Extension Specialist that opens a lot of these type doors to me is featured in the video linked at the opening paragraphs of this newsletter. If you haven't already followed that link to view the video of Flowering Plants Following a Wet Spring with Dr. Barron Rector, I suggest you make time. The "Rest of the Story" so to speak regarding attributes which plants provide to our land is always extremely interesting and Dr. Rector is a master of those topics.

Back to the item of Quail birds of which we initially started talking about. Anybody out there in Walker County have any wild quail? I suspect that animal (the truly wild version) is few and far between in these parts. Since I have been in Walker County, I have bumped into a few coveys (back in the early 90's), and a pair which I could find repeatedly (during the mid-90's). I suspect that pen raised birds may have been involved at least for some of those encounters; however, both episodes spanned 2 or more years. Pen raised birds aren't supposed to survive long in the wild. But sometimes if conditions are right, might they?

If you build it, will they come?

Proper land management to provide a suitable habitat, along with a host of other practices and effort may very well help. The big problem with this one is the habitat needs of the animal. Land management goals of one project may not fit well with another. We have a lot of new landowners in Walker County who may be surprised to learn something that the old timers know well. We used to have quail here, actually in hunt-able numbers. No, I'm not kidding you. I have to admit, I don't remember those times as I never saw the wild coveys rise and scatter in front of a dog when walking through pastures or harvested timber land. Tales regarding local quail hunts which I have heard were relayed from several guys around Huntsville who would regularly work bird dogs in the afternoons and weekends. They did this up into the early to mid-1980s.

Hmm, what happened? You will get a lot of opinions on that topic. Fire ants, bermudagrass, insecticides, herbicides, predators, disease, parasites, habitat change, and weather.. That's enough. The answer which I heard during the symposium is "Yes, probably."

Yes, probably what?

Disclaimer here, I don't have a crystal ball but my personal thoughts on the subject have always meshed really well with this answer to the question of probably what. It was said during the symposium; all of these items listed in some small or large way most likely have an impact on quail population. I drove to Abilene, Texas to hear this. I enjoy seeing Texas so the drive wasn't a problem with me. But I already knew the answer.

For your educational benefit, I will relay some of the symposium information in a very short synopsis. Keep in mind this is my paraphrased version. Fire ants have been shown to impact quail populations; however, the most recent study utilizing ant population control on the Texas Coastal Plains showed no impact from fire ant numbers. Remember we have had fire ants here in numbers since the mid-60s. Temperature & humidity can impact the nesting success of quail. Oh boy, that one caught my attention when he said humidity. Walker County definitely has humidity. The guy that made that presentation just happened to sit at my table during the lunch break. I asked him, "If humidity really affects quail, how did we ever have any quail in east Texas"? His eyes got kind of big

when I asked that; however, he had a good, somewhat evasive but telling answer, which I will get to in just a bit. Insecticides were a topic I wanted a little more info on. There was a poster on display that showed yes there can be some possible detrimental developmental impact from consumption of treated seed. They are awaiting final results. Also, the talk on trapping and relocation of radio collared birds over a two year period showed released birds moving away from farmed agricultural land into rangeland areas. For those of you worried about birds eating under deer feeders, aflatoxins studies have not shown indications of direct negative effects on quail. Impact of predators; wild, feral, or domestic, each individually or all together can be a locally limited player. Why yes that can have a potential impact, probably a larger issue for those of you wishing to establish populations from pen raised birds. I heard that one in wildlife biology during a college class 25 years ago. This now leads us into the first of what I will call the BIG TWO.

The two biggest issues affecting quail are probably land use changes/habitat modification and weather/rainfall.

Our land use has changed. Quail much like many other wild animals need a variety of land, cover and food sources. Actual wide spread farming of crops in our area is limited and much less than it used to be. Relatively few of us garden anymore and most of the backyard gardens we have are small compared to what they once were. Native pastures with clumps of grass good for nesting & seed production with bare ground in-between have been replaced with improved grasses from Africa or South America. We tend to manage for thick stands of grass so additional livestock can be grazed more efficiently. Brush and shrubs have been removed from the pastures to make way for the improved grasses. So what do you do to rectify this situation? The simple answer if you wish to manage for quail is providing bare ground supporting plant progression. Buy a disk for your tractor and use it. Disk in strips, come back a month later and disk beside the first strip, then repeat the following month. You will provide open bare ground (hopefully near shelter areas for predator escape) and promote the growth and progression of seed bearing annual plants.

Weather is the next big one. Quail population fluctuation where there are birds, is mainly a direct correlation to rainfall. The quail hunters in the group were positively beside their selves anytime a speaker mentioned current quail populations. Due to the abundance of early rains this year, quail populations have just about exploded in numerous areas across the state. An outstanding to banner year is expected for quail hunting. I was surprised those guys weren't warming the dogs up in the parking lot between sessions.

We don't have any wild quail here in Walker County, Texas for me to work with as an Extension demonstration; however, I have done some result demonstration work with deer management. If you are interested in seeing what impact rainfall has on wildlife populations on one ranch, take a look at this chart showing deer counted vs. rainfall received over a 21 year period in Walker County. Yes, there is a correlation impact.

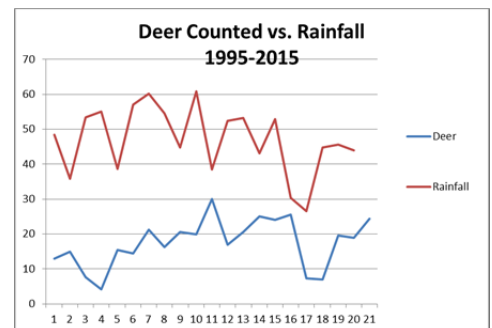
"Yes, probably everything has some little impact on quail populations." That was the way my question was answered. Before the symposium was over, several other speakers said the same thing. I'm sure they covey'd up and compared notes.

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

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE



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