

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE

Walker County Agriculture Update

March 2018

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

“Our job is to sharpen our tools and make them cut the right way...the sole measure of our success is the effect which they have on the forest.” Aldo Leopold

You just read the theme for this newsletter...

The end of hunting season usually puts me into thoughts revolving around Aldo Leopold's writing. I really would like to have more of his work in my library. If you haven't spent time reading his literature, I highly encourage the investment in time to do so. We need to spend more time in this country learning from those who have dedicated their efforts to understanding what it is that they see and then have the capability to express the interpretation into meaningful words so that others may also see.

Although I am aware he and I are not in the same league, I hope I don't fall too short.

Glad to have you here! Read on.

- ***When you have the opportunity, let others hear your message.***

Upcoming Events:

Spring Plant Sale

Walker County Master Gardeners

Saturday, March 10, 2018

8:00 AM – 2:00 PM

At the MG Greenhouse & Gardens

Texas AgriLife Extension Office (102 Tam Road, Huntsville, TX)

The 2018 sale will feature: Tomatoes, Peppers, Herbs, Roses, Natives, Ornamentals, Perennials, Spring Bulbs, Seeds, Shrubs, Trees, and much more.

Educational seminars to be held on-site:

9:00 AM - Tomatoes

9:30 AM – Vermicomposting with worms

10:00 AM -Herbs

Other notable features for the day will include a bake sale and the famous Walker County Area Beekeepers Association local honey for sale. Additional information



will be posted on the MG Facebook page: Walker County Master Gardeners. Recommendations are to be early as the favorites often go fast!! Be sure and plan your visit around the educational seminars -Great information for gardeners!

Proceeds from the Master Gardener plant sale provide for educational supplies and material assisting with workshops, classes and learning events throughout the year. Another item not often noted is that this volunteer group funds expenses associated with maintaining the educational demonstration gardens and greenhouse at the AgriLife Extension office. If you are working with difficult soils, challenging locations, or simply want to learn what grows well in Walker County, the demonstration gardens are a resource you need to visit.



Walker County Farmers Market Organizational Meeting Wednesday, March 28, 2018

6:00 PM

Texas AgriLife Extension Service (102 Tam Road, Suite B, Huntsville, TX)

Anyone wanting to participate in the Walker County Farmers Market is invited to attend. This market has been held annually since the mid 1960's and is a great marketing opportunity for local vegetable producers. Join us to activate your membership and help set the opening date for 2018

Pond & Lake Aquatic Management Workshop SERIES (CEU's provided)

You are encouraged to attend either workshop or both as needed.

Pond & Lake Part #1

(2 hours CEU credit available)

Tuesday, April 17th, 2018

(6:00-8:00 PM)

Walker County AgriLife Extension Office (102 Tam Rd & SH75 N, Huntsville, TX)

\$10.00/participant for each workshop

RSVP to (936) 435-2426

Pond & Lake Part #2

(3 hours CEU credit available)

Monday, April 30th, 2018

(6:00-8:00 PM)

Walker County AgriLife Extension Office (102 Tam Rd & SH75 N, Huntsville, TX)

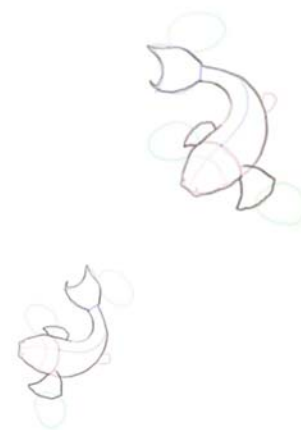
\$10.00/participant for each workshop

RSVP to (936) 435-2426

Dr. Michael Masser will be our guest speaker for both aquatic workshops. We will be taking an "in-depth" (pun intended) look at some of the common issues and situations which pond and lake owner experience. If you need help and want to have a real aquatic expert assist you with pond management questions, Dr. Masser is somebody you need to meet!

Workshop Topics:

Part 1: Water Quality Management for new or newly refurbished impoundments, Fish Selection & Stocking with additional information on related management needs.



Part 2: Aquatic Weed Identification & Control Options, Management needs/issues into the Summer season.

Out of County Events:

Ranch Management University

April 2-6, 2018

G. Rollie White Visitor's Center (7707 Raymond Stotzer Pkwy., College Station, TX 77845)

Cost: Participant/\$500.00 person

Registration/More Info: <https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu/productListingDetails/2490>

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 cover deer necropsy, hog trap management, and pond fisheries management. Plenty of time is allowed for interaction with Texas A&M University faculty with expertise and experience in all management facets of the soil-plant-animal interface and wildlife management.

The course will begin at 12:20 pm on Monday, April 2, 2018 and conclude at noon on Friday, April 6, 2018. On Tuesday - Thursday we will begin with breakfast (7:15 am) and end with dinner (7 pm). NOTE: all meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks) and an RMU workbook with all Power Point presentations, contact information, glossary, etc. and a flash drive containing hundreds of relevant publications are provided.

2018 Grassfed Beef conference

May 31-June 1, 2018

TAMU Rosenthal Meat Center (730 Olson Blvd., College Station, TX 77845)

Cost: Participant/\$50.00 person

Registration/More Info: <https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu/productListingDetails/2536>

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is pleased to announce the seventh conference focused on grassfed beef production. Consumer interest in natural, grassfed and organic beef continues to rise. If you'd like to learn more about grassfed beef production and how it's different, mark your calendar for May 31-June 1, 2018 to be in College Station for this year's Grassfed Beef Conference.

We're excited about the interest among participants and the outstanding lineup of speakers that will come together for this information-sharing opportunity. Here's a chance to learn more about beef production... from pasture to plate.

Here's a quick preview of the agenda:

- Overview of the US Beef Industry
- Defining natural, grassfed and organic, Where can you best fit
- Growing forage – the fundamentals that allow for the production of high quality grass finished beef
- Cattle types suited for grassfed beef
- Forage-based nutrition for cattle. Can actively growing forages meet your nutritional demands?
- Preventative herd health
- Handling Cattle for Wholesome Beef
- Carcass fabrication... a demonstration. Understanding what you have to sell

- Consumers... and their expectations
- Taste of Texas Beef
- Marketing a unique product
- Sustainability

In This Issue:

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Seasons end; seasons beginning...

It is no secret that I love to be outdoors during deer season. Many years ago, the secretaries here at our office gave me a sign stating, "Business hours subject to change during hunting season." Those who really know me are aware that I like to be up in a tree with a bow whenever possible. I find the extra test of skill requiring proximity to exceptionally wary species as challenging but very doable when the secrets are mastered.

I remember sitting in a low tree stand one afternoon watching a doe and two fawns forage in front of me. This went on for some time. It was a warm day and at some time I leaned back on the tree enjoying the sunshine while just keeping the doe in the corner of my eye. She was the one I was really worried about spooking. Several minutes later, I felt something move against my leg which made me literally jump.

TREE SNAKE! The thought immediately flashed through my mind!

Luckily the doe had her head down and didn't notice my movement which was considerable. After I realized nothing was climbing my pants leg and furthermore I hadn't been bitten, I looked down. Both fawns were directly under me, one was happily chewing on the rope I had pulled my bow up with.

Crisis averted.

I spent the next ten minutes wiggling the rope to play with the fawn. The only new response I received was to attract the other fawn so that I had two of them chewing on the rope with me on the other end six feet above their heads. A real tug of war game. Lesson of the day, if you want to attract deer, wiggle a rope at them. Be careful with that thought and don't take it too far. I know somebody who roped one once -it didn't go well, and his horse didn't like him for some time afterwards.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

By Reggie Lepley

The journey to learn the secrets of the stick and string hunting method took years to gather in my tool box of life. With that said, sometimes I still fail in epic fashion. Those who have had a native whitetail look you directly in the eyes and repeatedly blow at you from five yards away on a still morning will fully understand. It is fulfilling knowing you were close enough to drop a rock on them and although they didn't like you being there, they still didn't fully understand what they were looking at.

This scenario is among my personal versions of great fun. Purposefully achieving similar close encounters with a wild animal is a challenge. That's a great part of what makes it all worth the effort.

As I get older I have found the challenges of life rank high as the reason to pursue goals.

I appreciate the value wildlife brings to both the ecosystems we manage and our added enjoyment of life. I also understand the importance of setting goals for ourselves to support these enhancements.

On the occasions where I can match work to my version of fun I am very, very happy. I found myself assisting a landowner cooperater with wildlife management documentation on the Texas Parks & Wildlife's (TP&W) new Land Management Assistance (LMA) website this year. Due to the Managed Lands Department (MLD) options here in Texas, many landowners can extend their efforts of active wildlife management via hunting to the end of February.

Texas truly is a great state.

TP&W's online system for entering harvest data and completed management practices allows/requires the landowner to have greater responsibility in the documentation process. Being a new system, there have been a few "growing pains" in learning the system and its process. Overall, I can't complain as my issues related to the login availability of the online software and not the actual navigation or inputting of information.

We have had a long standing cooperative effort to document whitetail deer management on this property. Over the past 23 years, we have collected what I consider fascinating information. I am not a math centered individual; however, these numbers repeatedly draw me in like the proverbial "moth to a flame" each time I review them.

Upon reflection, it is probable that since I can visualize the number set based on personal observations through time of seeing where we started and where we are now, the impact of this work has such high value to me.

This is an appropriate time to include another of Aldo Leopold's famous observations. *"The central thesis of game management is this: game can be restored by the creative use of the same tools which have heretofore destroyed it- axe, plow, cow, fire and gun"*.

You may remember seeing snippets of collected data at numerous Walker County AgriLife wildlife educational programs over past years. I always reference this data as being utilized to evaluate trends in the overall target population.

The words "target population" aren't entirely correct. Yes, this project specifically evaluates and monitors the whitetail deer herd; however, the health of this population allows us to somewhat infer the status of other wildlife as well.

To stay with the theme of Leopold quotes, *"If the land mechanism as a whole is good then every part is good, whether we understand it or not...To keep every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering."*

Promoting and actively managing habitat suitable to the native whitetail species encourages environmental situations which by turn benefit many species. Management of plant edge communities provides uneven aged growth suitable to song birds and many smaller foraging mammals. Maintaining older growth plant environments suits nesting locations for birds, mammals, reptiles, perches for raptors and so on. Controlled burning slows invasive plant species, opens land for native species regeneration, supports growth of nectar producing plants or those serving as hosts to immature forms of pollinators, clears flight paths, and supports soil nutrient recycling promoting mast production beneficial to many mammals and birds. Fencing certain pieces of property to exclude grazing either

permanently or periodically, provides time for native plant regeneration or establishment depending on the situation with the added benefit of cover enhancement necessary during critical times such as during birthing or nesting season. Alternatively, fencing can force the utilization of areas needing the benefits of reduction grazing. Work to control invasive species frees space and forage for many native species.

That was just a brief list of wildlife management benefits not even directly mentioning items such as water quality enhancements, carbon sequestration, species diversity, and so forth. So, you see wildlife management impacts the things that make big news stories on the national news.

Occasionally I encounter somebody who proudly proclaims they don't allow any hunting on their land. Do you think they just impressed me? Unless their extremely intuitive, they may never know what I am thinking, but you can only put so many cattle on a piece of ground until you have problems. I will mention that concept; however, I usually suspend the theoretical conversation as I have learned many in our population just don't get it and just don't want to. Don't believe me?

Spend some time on social media and see for yourself.

Wildlife population stocking rate/carrying capacity concepts are like that of domestic animals. A certain sized piece of property can only provide for "X" number of animals with their needs of food, water, and shelter. If the herd isn't being managed with strategical efforts it probably cannot meet the needs of the animals. The health of the wild native population will suffer. Food can become scarce, disease can become commonplace and shelter can become insufficient.

There is a reason these animals have existed throughout history alongside their predators. Regardless of your thoughts whether we need wolves, bears, and large cats roaming our fields and woods, we removed much of the predation threat for our own species safety and that of our domestic animals. Without large predators roaming the ecosystem, we must fill that void and prevent overpopulation. It is our responsibility now like it or not, to fill the natural void.

I mentioned my tree snake experience earlier. Well, I have had numerous snake encounters while hunting which predispose me to certain reactions. Those of us who spend time out and about, know these things do happen.

I have one buddy who laughs uncontrollably whenever he thinks about the time I had waded as far into the South Texas brush as I was going to. As I couldn't see my feet due to the density of brush, I was well beyond personal comfort levels. He was at that moment about seven feet further in with a couple of very large, very unhappy rattlesnakes. I carefully handed my pistol to him -and left...

Just this year I found two different snakes inside the same hunting blind on separate occasions. I let them hunt in that blind on both those afternoons. They serve their purpose within the natural system and I don't want the responsibility of hunting their prey.

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

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