

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

Walker County Agriculture Update

June 2018

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

“Nature moves towards balance.” Joel Salatin

Summer weather has arrived...

The heat is like, well it is just like summer in late May already. Be sure to mulch your plants to conserve moisture, reduce soil heating, reduce evaporation rates, and prevent moisture robbing weeds! Avoid overhead watering, utilize drip irrigation or even flood irrigation to reduce excessive evaporation on these hot days. When you are watering your lawn, do so early in the morning so that the moisture can soak into the deeper soil profiles. Watering late in the day or evening still can allow fungal pathogens to become active when we have somewhat cooler nights. For lawn watering apply 1” of water per week all at one time if your soil type and slope will let you - this promotes deep rooting which will allow the turf to withstand these hot temperatures.

*Future Program Note: We have begun planning for our **2018 Cow Country Congress!** SAVE the DATE! **October 19, 2018.** Trust me on this one, you will want to join us in Leon County to visit the Triple Son Farms. This ranching location has some interesting ties to history plus they raise some exceptionally high quality F1 Brahman/Angus cross cattle. Look for yourself and see what the excitement is about: <http://www.triplesonfarms.com>

For what it is worth... I really didn't intend on focusing so much on wildlife in this newsletter. Some things just seem to line up and happen. If you will work with me, we can call it Natural Resources subject matter. That sounds a bit more diversified don't you think?

Glad to have you here! Read on.

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

Upcoming Events:

We will be joining the statewide Wildlife Fact Check Series of educational programs to allow us to delve deeper into the wildlife topics we started in 2017 and continued with last year. If you want to glean additional information on the overall picture of managing wildlife resources, this will be a fantastic opportunity to hear presenters that we have not yet been able to bring to Walker County. Bring your lunch to the Walker County, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension office and learn! **Be sure to RSVP in order that we will have a seat for you.** This is important as some days we will have other events ongoing and seating may be very limited.

Managing Deer & Livestock

Thursday, June 7th, 2018

(11:30 AM Registration, Noon – 1:30 PM Program)

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

\$10.00/participant for each workshop

RSVP to (936) 435-2426 to confirm a seat in the class.

Exotic Ecology

Friday, June 29th, 2018

(11:30 AM Registration, Noon – 1:30 PM Program)

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

\$10.00/participant for each workshop

RSVP to (936) 435-2426 to confirm a seat in the class.

Predators and Deer

Friday, July 20th, 2018

(11:30 AM Registration, Noon – 1:30 PM Program)

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

\$10.00/participant for each workshop

RSVP to (936) 435-2426 to confirm a seat in the class.

Diseases Shared by Livestock & Wildlife

Friday, August 10th, 2018

(11:30 AM Registration, Noon – 1:30 PM Program)

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

\$10.00/participant for each workshop

RSVP to (936) 435-2426 to confirm a seat in the class.

The next presentation (Native Plants & Water) blends well with the series above or can stand on its own merit. This is one that will be included in the Urban Wildlife Series being scheduled in Bexar County. Yes, we will be joining them via the web to explore this very relevant and interesting topic.

Every Drop Counts – Native Plants & Water Conservation

Friday, August 31st, 2018

(10:00 AM - Noon) *Note the time is different from programs above

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

\$10.00/participant for each workshop

RSVP to (936) 435-2426 to confirm a seat in the class.

Looking for locally grown produce?

Walker County Farmers Market (Grand Opening Date)

June 2, 2018

8:00 AM

West Hill Mall Parking Lot

The 2018 Walker County Farmers Market will open in the parking lot of West Hill Mall located in Huntsville, Texas beginning **June 2nd, 2018**. Hours for the market will be 8:00 AM until sell-out on Saturdays and Wednesdays.

Local producers will have a variety of farm fresh produce throughout the summer including; Tomatoes, Melons, Yellow Squash, Zucchini Squash, Potatoes, Lettuce, Onions, Peppers: (Poblano, Bell, Jalapeno, Banana, & others), Corn, Purple Hull Peas, Black Eyed Peas, Pinto Beans, Snap Beans, Okra and a seasonal variety of herbs.

Farmers interested in participating in the market are encouraged to contact the Walker County, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension office at (936) 435-2426 for additional information.

Out of County Events:

Wildlife Workshop

June 1st, 2018

8:30 AM – 4:00 PM

Gus Engeling Wildlife Management Area (16419 US-287, Tennessee Colony, TX 75861)

Cost: Participant/\$30.00 person (Lunch provided/1 hour IPM CEU offered)

Registration/More Info: contact the Freestone County Extension Office at 903-389-3436, RSVP by April 29 (we are past the date-call them if you are interested)

Whether you own your property or lease a property for hunting, being able to manage the available habitat is key to success. This workshop will focus on putting several different tools in your toolbox regarding wildlife and habitat management.

Program topics: Deer Management, Identifying Predation from Carcasses, Non-Game Wildlife Management, Livestock Management, Prescribed Burning, Restoration of Native Grasses & Forbs, Axe & Fire: Managing Post-Oak Savannah Woodlands, Tour the Gus Engeling WMA.

Viticulture Education:

Measuring & Monitoring Berry Ripeness

Wednesday, June 20, 2018

3:00 – 5:00 PM

Austin County Vineyard (133954 FM 1094, Cat Springs, TX)

To register contact Fran Pontasch, (979) 458-0131 or fmPontasch@tamu.edu

Pond management phone calls:

Weeds in Ponds...

The warm weather has gotten our pond/aquatic weeds off to a rapid start. I am seeing and hearing about problems that we normally don't have until a bit later in the summer. If you are having weed problems in your pond, give me a call and we will work out an appropriate solution and options that fit your situation. If you like the DIY method, give our Aquaplant web site a spin, it is a great reference with links to many control options allowing you to find something that works for you. <https://aquaplant.tamu.edu/>

In This Issue:

FERAL HOG MANAGEMENT

Everybody starts someplace...

New experiences: sometimes the items we take for granted can be better seen through the eyes of others. When that also lines up with a "new to them" experience it's interesting to remember the excitement of the situation of your first experience as well. There is a story there but I'm not telling that one today.

On a recent trip to the western side of central Texas for a spring turkey hunt I had the opportunity to view someone's initial stages of something. Something probably to become a lifelong frustration.

Riding with the rancher's son and my buddy; the three of us were looking over and around the pasture. Searching out likely spots to set up on some sharp eyed, late season gobblers was our goal. We had been visiting as the truck bounced over rocks and through the mesquite.

"Ag" guys typically talk about a lot of the same things. Seems it's just our nature. Things like cattle markets, show sheep, pickup trucks, and rain; you know, the standard stuff from our world. Sooner or later problems and changes in the normal are mentioned. We had been hearing how the coyotes had been really bad this year with the sheep and how feral hogs are starting to show up around this area which had never really had many.

FERAL HOG MANAGEMENT

By Reggie Lepley

"But I've never seen them here", he said. My buddy and I just looked at each other with a knowing thought of that situation can sure change when you're talking about pigs.

About that time, we drove out on a new pipeline right of way to see three hogs looking at us about a hundred yards away. You want to talk about timing?

"Stop!! Y'all got a rifle with you?" Stupid question, but he asked it anyway. "Of course," was the answer. *Here is a fact for those that don't know: We have pigs where we come from; you can't shoot them if you don't have anything to shoot them with. It's that simple, we shoot wild pigs in our pastures.

We just happened to have a hog control tool in the truck. "Let me get it up and running for you", I told him. As he and I bail out of the truck, he digs the rifle case out of the pile of shotguns and other gear. I reach over and take it to start powering up the scope. Yeah, it's wearing an electronic gadget for optics. Slow to start and way too many settings for quick use; but, hey it can see in the dark if it needs to...

That's a useful capability for pig hunting.

I hand him the rifle and figure out quickly that he doesn't have much time on that type of gun when he asked me how to load it. This could be fun to watch unfold. We get it loaded and I show him the controls before he takes off into the brush after the pigs.

Of course, my buddy and I knew when you bust a group of pigs, the likelihood of them not running far is slim. If you scare them they will usually run for a while. He didn't know that. It's called acquired knowledge learned from experience.

Everybody must learn their own lessons in life. I seem to make that statement often.

So, we go on about our business without him, still looking around for turkey sign while he works on some cardio exercise.

About twenty minutes later we drive back and pick him up to listen again to how he has never seen pigs on this place. Somewhere in here on the timeline one of us tells him those days are over. Get used to the idea; you have pigs... My buddy starts in telling him how to make sausage.

Damage caused by feral hogs is a major problem for agricultural landowners and wildlife managers. Damage caused by the feeding habits of feral swine is the most often noted issue. As populations continue to grow, the potential to spread disease is another increasing concern.

Texas Agrilife Extension has a wealth of knowledge and information available regarding control options for feral hogs. You will notice I didn't say eradication. Control is the key word. Control efforts require active participation.

If you don't want to work traps or shoot pigs when you have the opportunity, you will have pigs until your neighbors tend to them for you. Then other pigs will move back in on everybody. It is a rule of physics, and all forms of agriculture that "Nature abhors a vacuum". Something will fill the space.

Our AgriLife publication list related to these animals is well populated with up to date material:

<https://feralhogs.tamu.edu/resources/publications/>

The single most effective method where you can't fly helicopters (we have a lot of trees in Walker Co) is to utilize corral traps with an effective gate design. The remotely activated drop style traps are becoming popular; however, they do come with a large price tag. These designs and their "techy" equipment allow you to time your catch to maximize effectiveness which is a large positive.

Proper placement and baiting of the trap set up is key to increasing the catch regardless of what trapping system is utilized. Pre-baiting both locations and trap sets will help you catch more animals when the time is right. I strongly suggest you read the Training Wild Pigs to Bait publication found at the link printed above. Speaking of baiting, we even have a recipe for making hog bait.

Hog Bait Recipe:

40-50-gallon metal trash can

150 lbs. corn

8 lbs. sugar

1 packet, yeast

*Optional: 5 packets of strawberry flavored gelatin type product.

Fill can with water 3-4 inches above corn, mix to combine ingredients. Place trash can in direct sunlight for 2-3 weeks.

*Note: *If you live in town, you may not get invited back to the block party. Whew, that stuff gets "ripe"!*

There have been studies conducted to determine the best flavored additives for bait recipes. Flavoring such as anise, bubblegum, butterscotch, berry, strawberry, caramel, apple, pig frenzy, blended cheese and banana were evaluated. Campbell et al 2006; APHIS-WS, TAMU-K found that liquid berry and strawberry were visited two times more than other attractants and 4 times more than the control.

Many of you are familiar that there is work being done with toxicant type products. There are still items which need to be sorted out before any kind of approval for the use of these products is remotely possible. Work has been ongoing with species specific delivery systems. Current information indicates that a bait formulation change is possibly needed which may set this project back even further. Past all that, the social view of utilizing a toxicant to control mammals will have to be overcome. That may be the real challenge in the process. A lot of landowners have pig problems; however, there are a lot more non-landowners who don't see or understand the damage.

So, back to the story... Bouncing through even more rocks, we top out above a half dry creek bed when he hollers, "Stop! Stop! There's More of Them!"

As he bails for the second time that evening, the pigs run across in front of the truck headed to the brush at full speed. I remember saying, "don't forget to power that thing up", as he's getting out.

After another twenty minutes he comes back to tell us how he chased them a quarter mile down the creek. "The story only gets worse", he said. "I finally got a line on them, but the scope was dark". "Did you power it up, I asked?"

"Yeah", he says looking down at his feet, "but the scope cap was still on..." His next comment was, "at least I got my daily exercise."

Been there, got that ripped t-shirt myself. In my case it was hearing the loudest thing in the world, which is the hammer dropping on an empty 300 Win Mag chamber while 30+ hogs are (still) running in front of you across a wide-open pasture.

In my head, I heard that guy from the movie Silverado holler, "You're empty Mister!"

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



Reggie Lepley

Reggie Lepley,
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Walker County
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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