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The WilCo Brush and Forage Management Workshop was a huge success with over 35 people in attendance! AgriLife Extension Specialists spoke on the two topics and answered specific questions from producers about the issues they are facing.

It was a great turn out for the Williamson County Seed Cotton Program on August 3! The program was hosted at the Taylor Public Library and had over 25 producers in attendance. Participants received educational programming on the seed cotton program that is part of the 2018 Bipartisan Budget Act. Producers have decisions to make about ARC and PLC payment methods.

Thank you to our sponsors who made this wonderful event possible! Taylor Compress and Plains Cotton Cooperative Association.

Several agents in the Extension Office were fortunate enough to attend a professional development trip to the Pacific Northwest through their professional organization, TCAAA. The agents saw multiple types of farming operations and were able to receive valuable knowledge that can be beneficial to our producers here at home.

Have a question? Call us!
512-943-3300
What’s the best option? Buy your replacements or raise them?

The discussion on whether or not to buy or raise replacement heifers has been raging for generations. Here’s a look at the pros and cons of each.

There are any number of good ways to start a discussion at the sale barn café. All you have to do is proffer an opinion on a management idea, or even just ask a question, and an argument will quickly arise.

With weaning time getting closer, here’s one to try: What’s better—buying replacement heifers or raising your own?

Which one is the best? Like so many things in agriculture, the method that works for one operation may not be the best option for another. That’s why it’s so important to know what the costs are for a particular method while understanding what benefits you’ll get in return.

The pros and cons of any method should be considered before making a decision. With home-raised replacements, you should know exactly what you’re getting. You’ll also be able to sell any extra bred heifers at a higher price than feeder heifers that are not bred.

The downside is it requires a much higher level of management in order to have a well-functioning breeding program, which means you need to take into account the costs and timelines for general management of your operation. It also means you’re going to have an animal that’s utilizing the available forage while not producing a calf, and you’ll need a plan to prevent inbreeding.

On the other hand, if you purchase your replacements, there will not be any missed animal production because those heifers will be calving that year. This option also allows for new genetics to be brought into the herd.

Unfortunately, with this option you cannot guarantee the genetics of the calf that will come from the purchased bred heifer. In order to purchase replacements that increase your chances of getting what you want, you will face a higher purchase price.

Before making your decision, take a step back and decide what is feasible from your operational standpoint and management abilities. Are you able to spend more time developing the replacement type you want or would your time be better spent managing purchased replacements that don’t require that commitment or resources? The options outlined here are just some of the many ways to obtain replacement heifers for your herd.

What’s the spread?

How often do you see or hear something about “the spread” in beef carcass prices? Quite a few people in the cattle business know “the spread” refers to the difference in carcass price between USDA Select and Choice quality grades. This difference has varied over recent years from near zero to around $25/cwt carcass, averaging somewhere near $10.

There is also a spread between Low Choice and upper two-thirds Choice or higher brands, the most prominent of which is Certified Angus Beef® (CAB). That spread is much more consistent than Select-Choice”, not varying much from $10. There is also a spread between upper two-thirds Choice and Prime. Those producers able to merchandise these differences can realize meaningful effects on the bottom line.

Written by: Jason Bradley
- Noble Research Institute,
Ardmore, Okla
Williamson County Beef Cattle
Symposium & Industry Trade Show

Date: Thursday, September 6
Place: Williamson County Expo Center
Time: 8 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Doors open at 7 a.m.
1 CEU Offered!

Please register by calling 512 - 943 - 3300
Breakfast and steak lunch provided!

Private Applicator Training
Date: September 21
Place: Williamson County
Extension Office
Time: 8 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Cost: $60

Williamson County
Crops Conference
Date: Tuesday, Oct. 16
Place: KC Hall, Taylor
Time: 8 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Last Chance CEU Program
Date: September 21
Place: Williamson County
Extension Office
Time: 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.
Cost: $30
1 General, 1 IPM, 1 Laws&Regs

3 CEU Offered!
The fall armyworm, Spodoptera frugiperda, is a common pest of bermudagrass, sorghum, corn, wheat and rye grass and many other crops in north and central Texas. Larvae of fall armyworms are green, brown or black with white to yellowish lines running from head to tail. A distinct white line between the eyes forms an inverted “Y” pattern on the face. Four black spots aligned in a square on the top of the segment near the back end of the caterpillar are also characteristic. Armyworms are very small (1/8 inch) at first, cause little plant damage and as a result often go unnoticed. Larvae feed for 2-3 weeks and full grown larvae are about 1 to 1 1/2 inches long. Given their immense appetite, great numbers, and marching ability, fall armyworms can damage entire fields or pastures in a few days.

Once the armyworm larva completes feeding, it tunnels into the soil to a depth of about an inch and enters the pupal stage. The armyworm moth emerges from the pupa in about ten days and repeats the life cycle. The fall armyworm moth has a wingspan of about 1 1/2 inches. The front pair of wings is dark gray with an irregular pattern of light and dark areas. Moths are active at night when they feed on nectar and deposit egg masses. A single female can deposit up to 2000 eggs and there are four to five generations per year. The fall armyworm apparently does not overwinter in north Texas, but survives the winter in south Texas. Populations increase in south Texas in early spring and successive generations move northward as the season progresses.

Management. Fall armyworm outbreaks in pastures and hay fields often occur following a rain which apparently creates favorable conditions for eggs and small larvae to survive in large numbers. Hay fields with a dense canopy and vigorous plant growth are often more susceptible to armyworm infestations than less intensely fertilized and managed fields. Irrigated fields are also susceptible to fall armyworm infestations, especially during drought conditions. Also monitor volunteer wheat and weedy grasses in ditches and around fields which may be a source of armyworms that can move into the adjacent crop.

Look for fall armyworm larvae feeding in the crop canopy during the late evening and early morning and during cool, cloudy weather. During hot days, look for armyworms low in the canopy or even on the soil surface where they hide under loose soil and fallen leaves. A sweep net is very effective for sampling hay fields for fall armyworms. When fields are wet with dew, armyworms can stick on rubber boots worn while walking through the field. Small larvae chew the green layer from the leaves, creating a “window pane” effect and later notch the edges of leaves.

The key to managing fall armyworms is frequent inspection of fields to detect infestations before they have caused economic damage. Once larvae are more than ¾ inch long, the quantity of foliage they eat increases dramatically. During their final 2-3 days of feeding, armyworms eat 80% of the total foliage consumed during their entire development.

The density of armyworms sufficient to justify insecticide treatment depends on the stage of crop growth and value of the crop. Seedling plants can tolerate fewer armyworms than established plants. Infestations of more than 2-3 armyworms (1/2 inch or longer) per square foot may justify an insecticide application. If practical, apply insecticides early in the morning or late in the evening when armyworm larvae are most active and therefore most likely to come into contact with the insecticide spray. If the field is near harvest, an early harvest, rather than an insecticide treatment, is an option.
All information was sourced from CME and USDA-ERS respectively.
Agriculture ... is our wisest pursuit, because it will in the end contribute most to real wealth, good morals & happiness.

LETTER FROM THOMAS JEFFERSON TO GEORGE WASHINGTON 1787

UPCOMING EVENTS

September 6
Williamson County Beef Cattle Symposium and Trade Show

September 21
Private Applicator Training/Last Chance CEU

October 16
Williamson County Crops Conference

November 8
WC Wild Hog Program

December 8
District 8 Farm and Ranch Seminar (8 CEU's)

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