

**News From Your County Agent**  
**By Marcel Valdez, CEA-ANR**  
**Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service**  
**Zavala County**

Well the whoopla about the solar eclipse is now over and we can go back to regular programming. Of course we only got about 65 to 70 percent sun blockage by the moon however our time will be here in just 7 short years. According to experts Zavala County will be able to see a total solar eclipse in seven years short years, on April 8, 2024. A map with the path of the April 8, 2024 total solar eclipse is already available for viewing at the [http://xjubier.free.fr/en/site\\_pages/solar\\_eclipses/TSE\\_2024\\_GoogleMapFull.html](http://xjubier.free.fr/en/site_pages/solar_eclipses/TSE_2024_GoogleMapFull.html). On another note, the first decent chances of rain come to our area by the end of the week, I hope the experts are right about this event like they are about predicting solar eclipses.

**Two Rivers Ranch to Host Livestock Management Workshop**

Two Rivers Ranch will be the location of the Livestock and Grazing Management workshop to be held on Wednesday October 4, 2017 beginning at 8:30 a.m. The ranch is located 14.7 miles south of Sabinal on FM 187. There will be a \$10.00 dollar registration fee which will include 2 CEU's for pesticide license holders(1 CEU in IPM and 1 General) plus lunch sponsored by Hondo Veterinary Hospital and Lyssy and Eckle feeds. Brad Pfeil, Ranch Manager and Kason Haby, NRCS, will discuss forage quality information collected from several buffelgrass fields and effects of management activities including prescribed burning and grazing intensity. Billy Griffin will demonstrate use of temporary electric fencing and discuss water considerations to improve grazing efficiency. We will then move just down the road to the historic Shudde Ranch owned by Gerry and Janelle Shudde. There Dr. Ron Gill, AgriLife Extension Livestock Specialist, will give an overview of the Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) program, discuss proper mineral supplementation and give a Low Stress Livestock Handling demonstration. Dr. David Galewsky, Hondo Veterinary Hospital, will discuss important cattle vaccinations in this region and show proper injection sites and handling. Participants are requested to bring a folding chair for the event. For more information about this event contact the Zavala County Office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883. You are encouraged to RSVP by September 27 to [Kason.haby@tx.usda.gov](mailto:Kason.haby@tx.usda.gov) or call 830-741-0717.

**Zika Virus Carrying Mosquito Surveillance Started This Week In Zavala County**

The mosquito-transmitted Zika virus is a potential threat to the health of unborn babies in Texas and other states, and the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service has stepped up efforts to educate the public on ways to protect themselves from this new menace, and help to identify potential Zika virus carrying mosquitoes in Zavala County. Zavala County AgriLife Extension, Zavala County and the City of Crystal City began a 4 week mosquito surveillance across to county by setting up traps in Batesville, Crystal City and La Pryor to capture mosquitoes and then send these specimens to the lab in Stephenville to be identified as *Aedes aegypti* and *A albopictus* mosquitoes that transmit Zika which can occur commonly in our backyards where their eggs are laid and larvae live in standing water. Like other mosquito species, they are active at sunrise and sunset, but commonly bite throughout the day as well. Fighting Zika will be much different than fighting West Nile virus. *Aedes*

mosquitoes infected with Zika are not easily detected, so health officials have to rely on actual human cases to identify hot spots or trapping samples and evaluate them in a laboratory which is what is taking place in Zavala county this week. We live in a global movement era today. As people travel and return from areas affected by Zika, some will return carrying the virus. When Aedes mosquitoes bite infected people, they acquire the virus. The mosquito then transmits it to an uninfected person, passing the virus to them.

Epidemics are expected as infected people arrive and locally acquired infections occur. There are many media account reports about women infected by the virus while pregnant are known to have babies with severe neurological defects. Aside from mosquito infections, additional cases may occur from sexual transmission of the disease. So at this point, controlling mosquitoes and protecting yourself from infection are the two key factors in the rigorous defense against this new mosquito-borne virus threat. In the mean time remember the “Four Ds” as a first line of defense. They are: Drain: Empty standing water, thus eliminating mosquito breeding sites. Dress: Put on long sleeved shirts and pants when going outside. Defend: Apply mosquito repellent when going outside. And Dusk and Dawn: Avoid outdoor activity during these two most mosquito-active periods. Other simple steps such as repairing screen doors and window are critically important to keeping mosquitoes out. Managing landscape water features is another key area in the fight against the spread of the Zika virus. Mosquito dunks, commonly sold in garden centers for mosquito control in home water features, can be used to treat water that cannot be readily drained. The dunks contain insect growth regulators or mosquito-specific bacteria to effectively control mosquito larvae. Neither approach is harmful to fish or other aquatic organisms. Unfortunately city and county truck-mounted sprayers are less effective at killing Aedes mosquitoes, so stopping these mosquitoes in each and every backyard is even more important. Everyone will need to pitch in. Anything that holds water should be dumped or treated. Breeding areas can include sites as benign as containers under potted plants and bird baths. Other trouble areas are old tires, empty cans and bottles, kiddie pools, buckets, boat tarps and even clogged gutters.

It doesn't take much water for them to reproduce. Small containers can hold enough water to breed mosquitoes. Aedes mosquitoes don't travel far from their larval habitat, so if you've got them, chances are you unknowingly raised them.

There are many mosquito repellents available, but all approved formulations share two commonalities. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency registration of these repellent products means first, that the active ingredient has been tested and is safe for people to use, and second, that it's effective in repelling mosquitoes when used as directed. EPA and the Centers for Disease Control have evaluated scientific reports and conclude mosquito repellents containing DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, called IR3535, as active ingredients provide reasonably long-lasting protection from mosquito bites. Users should always read and follow label instructions. Most repellents can be used on children over two months of age, with the exception of those containing oil of lemon eucalyptus, which should not be used on children younger than 3 years old. For babies under two months of age, infant carriers fitted with mosquito netting are recommended. Pregnant and breast-feeding mothers can safely use EPA-approved insect repellents. Constant vigilance is the key to slowing Zika and other mosquito-borne diseases such

as West Nile virus. We will keep you informed once results are in from the Lab on the mosquito samples that will be submitted from Zavala County for the next 4 weeks.

### **Tip of The Week: Rural Roadway Safety-We Need To Do Our Part**

Corn harvest is almost complete, cotton harvest will follow soon and fall planting activities will also spring into action across our area and our state. Each year accidents involving tractors and other farm machinery occur on rural roads. The National Safety Council estimates that 15,000 collisions involving farm vehicles happen every year. Although, only 19% of Americans live in rural areas, 55% of highway deaths occur on roads that are considered rural. According to NIOSH, the average age of tractors in operation in the United States is about 26 years old. Thus, a significant number of tractors are still in use that are not equipped with advanced steering, braking, and shifting technologies that would make driving on rural roadways safer.

Safety tips for drivers on rural roads:

- Be aware of the size of farm equipment. A typical paved rural road is 18-20 feet wide. The average width of farm equipment 13 feet.
- Slow down as soon as you spot a piece of farm equipment
- Watch for hand signals.
- Be aware of the Slow Moving Vehicle sign (see red and orange image below).
- Watch for flashing amber lights.
- Do not speed past farm machinery.
- Do not stop or pull out in front of a slow moving vehicle.
- Don't expect farm equipment to stay on the shoulder.

Safety tips for farm machine operators:

- Display a slow moving vehicle emblem on all equipment that travels at speeds less than 25 mph. Check slow moving vehicle emblems for bright and reflective colors according to code. Replace all faded or defective emblems.
- Obey traffic laws, including speed limits, traffic signals and signs.
- Pull over and allow traffic to pass when it is safe to do so.
- Lock brake pedals together to assure straight-line stops.
- Avoid moving farm equipment on public roads after dark or in limited visibility.
- Ensure your equipment has proper lighting. Check your state laws for specific requirements.
- Only hitch implements to the tractor's draw bar or hitch points.
- When towing equipment without brakes, maintain a speed of 20 mph or less. For towed equipment with brakes, travel at 25 mph or less. Ensure that the towed load does not weigh more than 4 times the weight of the tractor.
- Slow down for turns and curves.
- Do not allow extra riders on the tractor or implement.
- If your tractor has a cab or roll bar, wear your seat belt. If your tractor does not have a roll bar or cab, consider a retrofit. It could save your life.

To all the motorists out there: Even though it is inconvenient to get behind farm equipment, it is not the worst thing that could happen. Don't put your life at risk or the equipment operator's life

at risk to try and save a few minutes. Be safe and be thankful for those that produce food for you to eat every day. M.V.

August 21-25, 2017

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