

News From Your County Agent
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Thank you for reading this week and greetings to all of you. I hope all of you enjoyed the big game this past Sunday which should officially bring an end to football season until the fall. Of course sports analyst concur that this was a special game indeed with new records being set and a very exciting game to watch. Now the focus will be on professional basketball and of course baseball will be the sports to watch until pre-season football which is scheduled to begin around the second week of August. I am sure all of us can survive 7 months without football much to the delight of our spouses.

Update On An Old Problem

I don't want to be redundant about the information which I shared with you a week or so ago about the fever tick, but since we have at least one pretty serious outbreak with trace cattle movements to 34 other counties I thought that a little review of why we worry about the fever tick. Even though we are now in February we can still refer to this day in time as the new year and we start the year faced with an old pest, the fever tick. As I have mentioned before the fever tick (actually there are two different species) once ranged as far north as Virginia and is the host for the blood parasite that causes Cattle or Tick Fever. This disease can kill as many as 90% of the affected cattle. Beginning in 1906, the USDA Fever Tick Eradication Program eliminated fever ticks down to a 500 mile stretch of Texas along the Rio Grande. This line runs from Del Rio to the Gulf of Mexico and is known as the Permanent Quarantine Zone. Inside the Zone, actually a buffer between the US and Mexico (which has both the ticks and the disease), fever ticks are often found since the river is not a perfect barrier. Wildlife and stray cattle from Mexico can bring ticks across. Tick riders patrol this Zone on horseback to look for cattle with ticks. Outside the Zone, the fever tick is not usually found unless it is carried by wildlife or in a special case, by an exotic antelope, the Nilgai. Cattle and other livestock inside the Zone must be treated for ticks with an insecticide and inspected before leaving.

Recently fever ticks (but not the disease) were found in Live Oak County requiring a Temporary Quarantine Zone to be established by the Texas Animal Health Commission, the state regulatory agency responsible for animal health. TAHC is inspecting and treating affected herds to reduce the economic impact on producers. Cattle producers have their choice of two treatment options or their pastures can be vacated for 6-9 months to starve the tick. For more information on fever ticks or cattle ticks contact your local county Extension agent or beef cattle veterinarian. Additional information about the status of the fever tick in Texas go to the Texas Animal Health Commission website at: http://www.tahc.texas.gov/news/brochures/TAHCBrochure_FeverTickFAQ.pdf .

District 12 4-H Online Photography Contest Sign Up Opens Next Month

It's time for Zavala County 4-H members to start taking pictures and plan to upload their favorite pictures online for the virtual 4-H district photography contest. District 12 will be hosting its annual 4-H Photography

Contest for 4-H'ers in District 12. The contest will be open to all three age divisions (Junior, Intermediate, and Senior) and the theme will be "*Reflections*". The contest will be done on-line including submission of photos and judging. The 2017 District 12 4-H Photography Contest Rules are currently available on the District 12 4-H website at <http://d124-h.tamu.edu>.

Each county is allowed to enter 1 photo per category in each of the three age divisions for a total of 45 eligible photos. Counties should plan on hosting a county photography contest to determine which entries will qualify for the District contest. Entering multiple photos in the same category could result in disqualifying entries for that category and age division. Each 4-H'er entering photos for the District 4-H Photography Contest must register online through 4-H Connect. The registration fee will be \$8.00 per photo entry. Online registration will open March 1, 2017 and will end March 21, 2017. Payment must be made on 4-H connect at the time of registration. Payments made by check must be postmarked within three business days of registration submission. No late entries will be accepted. No refunds will be given.

All photos must be submitted through 4-H CONNECT as part of the registration process. Please read these submission rules and requirements very carefully to prevent disqualification of entries. Photos must be in the correct format for proper evaluation. Entry steps, categories and other submission requirements are attached. Submit your photo(s) online between March 1 and March 21, 2017 as part of the registration process. All entries with submitted eligible photos will be judged between April 5th and April 11th via an online evaluation process. To insure uniformity in the judging process all state judging criteria will be used for all submitted photographs. Be sure to review the attached judging guidelines. All judges will be able to evaluate entries and provide individual feedback for respective photos. A custom-designed t-shirt is available to be purchased by participants when they register for this event on 4-H connect. The T-shirts will also be distributed to agents along with the awards in May. 4-H members can contact county offices after that date to receive their shirts. All proceeds from shirt sales are used to support District 12 4-H Events and Council leadership and service activities. For more information about this exciting contest contact the Zavala County Office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883 or visit the District 12 4-H website at <http://d124-h.tamu.edu>. I hope we have some ZAVALA COUNTY 4-H MEMBERS PARTICIPATE THIS YEAR-GOOD LUCK.

Tip of The Week: Monarch Butterflies Make Priority List-What Can You Do To Help

Last month on January 13, the monarch butterfly was designated as a new national priority species of Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW), a partnership between the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. With this designation, the monarch butterfly will join species, like the New England cottontail and golden-winged warbler, whose habitat needs are representative of healthy, functioning ecosystems, and where conservation efforts benefit a wide variety of species. In the agencies' partnership, the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners interested in enhancing habitat for these species through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, and Conservation Stewardship Program, which are all funded under the Farm Bill. USFWS' role in the partnership ensures regulatory predictability, which allows participating landowners to continue working their land with NRCS conservation systems in place, regardless of the monarch's legal status under the Endangered Species Act.

Conservation plans are targeted for a 10-state area in the Midwest and southern Great Plains, including Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, and Wisconsin. The so called Monarch Butterfly highway for both spring and fall migrations go right through Zavala county (see maps at

(www.monarchwatch.org) and (www.learner.org), which is very unique for our area. These states represent the core of the monarch's migration route and breeding habitat. NRCS will work with participating landowners to plant and enhance stands of milkweed and other nectar-rich plants. Milkweed, the primary food source for monarchs, helps to support other pollinator species and provides habitat for agriculturally-beneficial insects. Besides helping bees with pollination efforts Monarch butterflies also deter predators with a chemical in their bodies that is foul-tasting and poisonous.

All of us can help but producers in Zavala county can make simple and inexpensive tweaks on working lands that provide monumental benefits to monarch butterflies and a variety of other insects and wildlife. By adding the monarch to Working Lands for Wildlife, we can accelerate conservation for the species at the heart of its migration corridor. Both the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) have committed significant funding to monarch conservation efforts and contribute to a multi-agency, international strategy to reverse the monarch's population decline in North America. According to USFWS, monarch populations were estimated at one billion butterflies in 1995 and have decreased to an estimated 34 million. The U.S. has a goal of increasing the eastern population to 225 million butterflies by 2020, indicated in the National Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators. USFWS is also working with partners, including the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, National Wildlife Federation, and the Mexican and Canadian governments to leverage resources and investments to support and implement conservation actions throughout North America including Zavala County. Monarchs funnel through Texas both in the fall and the spring. During the fall, monarchs use two principal flyways. One traverses Texas in a 300-mile wide path stretching from Wichita Falls to Eagle Pass. Monarchs enter the Texas portion of this flyway during the last days of September. By the third week of October, most have passed through into Mexico. The second flyway is situated along the Texas coast and lasts roughly from the third week of October to the middle of November. On average the peak time to see Monarchs in our area is from March 1-15. Good luck spotting these magnificent creatures and have a wonderful week. M.V.

February 6-10, 2017.

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