

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

A very cold weekend began with a cold blast making its way into our area on Friday and bringing temperatures down to the point of freezing waterlines, water troughs and making it so cold that it was rather uncomfortable to bare, but it is winter and living in Southwest Texas that can only mean one thing.....we will be back into spring like conditions soon, like the end of this week when we are expected to enjoy comfortable 70+ degree weather once again. Greetings to all of you and thank you so much for reading this week.

New Veterinary Feed Directive Law Updates to Be Provided Thursday

A major change began last week on January 1, 2017, for the judicious use of antimicrobials in medicated feed for food animals (such as livestock, poultry, and aquaculture). These changes mean some antimicrobial drugs used in medicated feed will change from over-the-counter (OTC) drugs to veterinary feed directive (VFD) drugs. To use a VFD drug in medicated feed the animal producer needs an order from a veterinarian. That order is called a veterinary feed directive (VFD). The FDA recently revised the rule for the authorization, manufacturing, distribution, and use of VFD drugs and VFD medicated feed. This rule impacts: veterinarians; the distributors of the VFD feed such as commercial feed mills or feed retailers; and the animal producers who are referred to in the rule as clients. An update on this new law will be provided to all interested livestock producers in the area on Thursday January 12, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. at the Zavala Agricultural Exposition Grounds in Crystal City. The Veterinary Feed Directive update will be provided by Dr. Benjamin Fox from the Southwest Texas Veterinary Medical Center in Uvalde. All livestock producers are encouraged to attend this free update. For more information contact the Zavala County office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883 or by e-mail at mj-valdez@tamu.edu

Art and Photography Opportunity For 4-H Youth

The Texas 4-H Youth Development Program is partnering with the Texas A&M Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory to help celebrate their 50th Anniversary of ensuring the safety of our state. To do this the TVMDL is sponsoring a coloring contest for Texas 4-H Clover Kids and an art and photography contest for 4-H members. The contest will run from January 1, 2017 to April 1, 2017 and all entries will be scanned and uploaded into 4-H CONNECT. This does mean that all Clover Kids will need to have an active profile in 4-H CONNECT to enter. For more information to review and to share with your 4-H families please see the attached pdf document. If you have any questions please feel free to contact TVMDL directly at 979-845-2679 or the Zavala County office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883 or by e-mail at mj-valdez@tamu.edu.

Tip of The Week: Stockshows a Test of Ethics

This week many Zavala County youth will be participating in the 2017 Zavala County Junior Livestock Show. Each year I am compelled to share light on the real purpose of livestock shows and most importantly the practice of good ethical behavior from everyone involved. Youth gain in many ways as a result of conducting livestock projects. You've all seen the list before. It includes learning responsibility, caring for another living thing, making good decisions, managing money, keeping

records, good sportsmanship and so forth. These are pretty important personality characteristics, and when a young person does the daily chores and keeps records of what they do they grow in these important ways.

The livestock show is the Grand Finale for the project for 4-H members in the Zavala County junior fair. This event is a highly visible event in the community. It's a competition to see who is the best showman, or who raised the best lamb, steer, or barrow. Members display a great deal of pride when they exhibit their animal. All of these things are good.

Over the last few years these shows have come under close scrutiny. Headlines have been printed about the champion animals having been raised with the use of illegal drugs. Exhibitors have been caught abusing their animals to make weight requirements for the show. Some people have gone to court and served jail sentences over some of these incidents. A new word has popped into the vocabulary regarding youth livestock events, and that word is ETHICS.

There have now been two National Youth Livestock Program Ethics Symposia held. Many states including Texas have instituted programs to educate participants about ethics. A Code of Ethics has been written and adopted by the International Association of Fairs and Expositions. In Texas this program is called "Quality Counts" and all exhibitors at the major show level must take an online quality counts exam before they are allowed to enter a major show, and I feel It's time to put the teaching of ethics into the Zavala County youth livestock program in a county wide effort for everyone involved.

First of all, I want to be perfectly clear and state that I definitely **do not** think we have a major problem in this area with our young people. On the other hand, I also do not think we are free of situations that some would call unethical. Second, I feel that learning is a lifelong opportunity and "the study of standards of conduct and moral judgment." Should be the kind of thing all young people should be taught, every opportunity we have as educators, parents, project leaders and stockshow boards.

The reason young people conduct projects is to learn by doing. Therefore, we should let them do the feeding, cleaning, clipping, grooming, and fitting of their animals. Sure, they need someone to teach them, but they don't learn if someone does it for them. And who should teach and provide that help? It's probably best if it's another 4-H or FFA member, parent, leader, teacher, brother or sister. It should definitely not be someone hired to do the job. Professional fitters have no place at a 4-H or FFA livestock show, except to be a part of the audience.

Teaching ethics in the livestock program starts at home and at local clubs. It can't be legislated. Sure, there needs to be rules by which shows operate, and penalties that will be imposed if those rules are broken. Some shows have exhibitors agree to a Code of Conduct before they participate. But ethics deals with doing the right thing, not just what is within the bounds of the rules. It is not what you can get away with. Ethics is an attitude, and involves a conscience. Ethics is taught by example - a good example. Adults can only be reminded of what's right or wrong, because they have already learned this. Young people, on the other hand, are still learning. We have a teachable moment this week during the Zavala County Junior Livestock Show! The lessons learned now will last a lifetime.

I want to close by wishing each participant the best of luck and I hope the experiences you will encounter this week will help you develop into productive young people. Thank you to all the 4-H volunteers, parents and 4-H members that assist the 4-H program and make it what it is in Zavala County. Have a great Stockshow Week. M.V.

January 9-13, 2017.

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