

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

I hope all of you have been busy trying to keep your landscapes alive, staying cool and have managed to deal with extremely hot and dry conditions across the area. Good news is that according to weather experts by the time you read this article there are very good chances that some of you will be getting a good shower or two as rain chances increase drastically by mid-week. Let us hope that they are right for a change. Greetings to all of you and thank you so much for reading this week.

State Lamb and Goat Validation Tag Orders Due Soon

It's time to order ear tags for the 2016-17 Texas 4-H/FFA Lamb, Goat, Breeding Goat & Breeding Sheep Validation Programs. The deadline for ordering tags will be August 26, 2016. However to ensure that the Zavala County tag order reaches the state office in a timely manner I am requesting that all state lamb and goat validation orders are received in the Zavala County office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service office by 5:00 p.m. on Thursday August 18, 2016. The state sheep and goat validation office has sent order forms to County Agents only so it is imperative that you pay and place your tag order with our office. To place an order please call the Zavala County office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883.

The appropriate tags for the state sheep and goat validation tags which must be ordered by this deadline are market lambs(blue RFID Tags), Wether Dams(White RFID-WD tags), Registered Breeding Sheep(Flock tag), Market Goats(red RFID tags), Wether Does(Purple RFID-WD tags) and Registered Breeding Boer Goats(Flock tags). All of these tags will be submitted on one order form. Only one order per county for all FFA chapters and 4-H clubs will be taken. Orders must be in writing, no phoned orders.

Tags will cost \$10 each for market lambs, market goats, wether dams and wether does. Validation for breeding sheep and breeding goats is \$7.50 per head. After the August 26, 2016 deadline, late tags may be ordered if needed at a cost of \$20 per tag for lambs, goats, wether dams and wether does and late entries for breeding sheep and breeding does will be \$15.00 per head. For more information regarding the state sheep and goat validation process contact the Zavala County office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883.

Update on GMO Laws

As passed by the House and Senate, the federal Genetically Modified Organism(GMO) labeling law will require companies to disclose the presence of genetically modified ingredients. Companies will have the option of how they want to do that, which could be done by text, phone number, website link, or QR code that can be read by smartphone. One of the biggest arguments in favor of the federal GMO legislation was the fear that each state would end up passing different laws, making the situation confusing for consumers and burdensome for businesses. After all, different countries have different laws regarding GMO labeling and food companies have adapted their practices and products to sell their products in places with varying regulations which could be the same thing that could happen in each state if states adopt GMO legislation of their own.

So what is next? The bill may have passed Capitol Hill and is awaiting for President Barack Obama's expected signature, but it will take years for the new bill to be implemented. The bill doesn't go into effect for a couple of years, there are no penalties to enforce, and it doesn't disclose in a consumer-friendly way the existence of genetically engineered ingredients in a particular product. So as for this update you can rest

assured that you will not hear about this GMO law for at least the next couple of years.

Tip of the Week: Home Owner Well Water Tips

A couple of months ago the Zavala AgriLife Extension Service in collaboration with Dimmit, La Salle, Frio and Atascosa counties held a regional private water well screening that had mixed results. If you did not participate in this screening and you are still in need of testing your well water here are a few tips that might help you with this process. What I did learn from conducting these water well screenings is that the harder something is to understand or execute, the less likely a well owner is to act. This is true of water testing, well maintenance and groundwater protection.

Three common questions well owners have regarding water testing are: (1) “What do I test for?” (2) “How do I get a water test?” and (3) “How do I interpret my test results?” The National Ground Water Association(NGWA) recommends that well owners test annually for bacteria, nitrate, and anything of local concern. Our screening event provided bacteria, nitrate, salinity and hydrocarbon screening. If the screening was negative there was nothing else the well owner had to do. If the screening was positive then the recommendation was made to submit a water sample for a detailed water test. I will let you know when we plan to host another water well screening event. Some drinking water testing labs provide a clear interpretation of water results, but others provide test data without much explanation. NGWA recommends well owners ask their lab or local health department to interpret test results.

Many well owners have no idea what regular well maintenance should be done. For simple guidance on well maintenance, well owners can access NGWA’s Well Owner smartphone app and its web version of the app. Another obstacle for some well owners is where to start in finding a water well system professional to conduct maintenance on their well. Go To <http://www.wellowner.org/finding-a-contractor/contractor-lookup/> to access NGWA's Contractor Lookup service, which lists NGWA-member and NGWA-certified water well system professionals.

You might be able to get a water well assessment for your well. The Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP) is seeking additional private well owners to receive an in-person water well assessment completed at the well using a new assessment tool. The assessment tool will help a well owner understand the potential risks and vulnerabilities that might impact the drinking water. It considers site conditions, geology, land use practices, well construction, and maintenance. RCAP will not be opening the well or sampling from the tap. To nominate your well for an assessment, please send an email to Steve Wilson at sdwilson@illinois.edu with the well owner name, email address, and telephone number along with the well location. For more information about water wells go to the <http://www.wellowner.org/tools/> for more information from the National Ground Water Association, including water well phone apps. Have a great week. M.V.

July 25-29, 2016.