

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

What a wonderful way to end the weekend with much needed rainfall across the county and for the most part the rains were hail free. Rainfall amounts vary across the county but overall everyone got a good much needed soaking. On my way to the office I must have heard at least 4 Memorial day commercial's everything from Memorial Day weekend car sales, furniture sales, home improvement sales and others. This solemn event has been commercialized way to much along with veterans day and others. Please take a few moments this coming Memorial Day weekend and pause and share with your family the REAL meaning of Memorial Day and what it signifies to ALL of us.

**Zavala County Sugarcane Aphid Update**

Over the past week producers in Zavala county have reported sugarcane aphids in some fields so we know the pest is already making its presence felt in the county. If you find sugarcane aphid in planted sorghum in Zavala county, or receive a report from a consultant, grower, applicator or your neighbor that you believe is reliable and can identify sugarcane aphid please let me know by calling 830-374-2883 or by e-mail at [mj-valdez@tamu.edu](mailto:mj-valdez@tamu.edu) so that I can report it to our statewide tracking program. You may also report cases of found sugarcane aphid directly to Dr. Allen Knutson at [allen.knutson@agnet.tamu.edu](mailto:allen.knutson@agnet.tamu.edu) or Dr. Robert Bowling at [robert.bowling@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:robert.bowling@ag.tamu.edu). Information from AgriLife Extension on scouting, thresholds, insecticides and integrated pest management practices for sugarcane aphid is also posted on the site. You can view the current sugarcane aphid distribution by going to our tracking map on line at <https://www.myfields.info>.

Since it was first discovered feeding on sorghum in 2013, the sugarcane aphid has become an annual pest, infesting both grain and forage sorghums. The tiny insect sucks plant sap, causing leaves to yellow and die, thus reducing yields. In addition to the feeding damage to the crop, the aphids' sticky excrement called honeydew, can actually become so heavy that it can gum up combines and forage harvesters, rendering them inoperable. For more information on sugarcane aphid, see the AgriLife Extension websites <http://txscan.blogspot.com/> and <http://betteryield.agrilife.org/>.

**Reminder-Steer Projects Due Next Month**

If you are planning to show a steer project you need to have these animals in your possession and have them validated by June 24, 2017. If you need assistance in locating a steer project contact the Zavala County office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883. If you already have a steer in your possession please let us know as well so that we can get all the validation information out to you In a timely bases.

**Tip of the Week: Zika In Texas Is A Real Concern-How To Manage The Risk**

Recent rains over the weekend coupled with increasing temperatures make ideal conditions for mosquitoes to breed and multiply in large numbers including those that carry the ZIKA virus. On May 4, 2017 Governor Abbott and Texas Department of State Health Services Commissioner (DSHS) John Hellerstedt, M.D., issued a letter to all mayors and county judges across Texas about the ongoing risk Zika poses to communities across the state.

The letter states "Your role as county judges and mayors places you at the forefront of emergency response. We know you are committed to protecting your community, and we are asking for your help carrying out certain critical functions in your jurisdiction." The letter goes on to say "with the ongoing risk posed by Zika, we are requesting your continued assistance in delaying locally transmitted Zika virus in Texas this year by promoting precautions to prevent mosquito bites and taking action to reduce mosquito breeding grounds in your communities". As your county Extension agent I am glad to help our local mayor and county judge with these efforts through this news media and help get the word out about the importance of preventing Zika and other mosquito vector health issues in both humans and animals. So far this year there have been 12 cases

of Zika in Texas including a case in Bexar county so the risk for us is there, so please do your part to prevent any cases in our county and area.

Below are Zika Virus Protection and Prevention recommendations from the governor's office as outline in the letter submitted to local officials across Texas.

#### Zika Virus Protection and Prevention

##### **Measures to Protect Communities from Zika Virus**

- conduct neighborhood outreach about active precautions individuals can take to protect themselves and their families from mosquito bites;
- initiate or enhance monitoring and surveillance of mosquito activity;
- develop a local contingency plan for mosquito abatement and surveillance, and plan for additional control measures if needed;
- keep public drains and ditches clear of weeds and trash so water will not collect;
- implement efforts to clean up illegal dump sites and collect heavy trash; and
- encourage people to report illegal dumpsites and standing water and respond quickly to these complaints.

##### **Here are some measures Individuals should use to Protect Themselves from Mosquito Bites**

- wear insect repellent,
- cover up with long-sleeved shirts and long pants,
- keep mosquitoes out with air conditioning or intact window screens, and
- limit outdoor activities during peak mosquito times.

##### **Measures for Individuals to Prevent Mosquito Breeding**

- At least weekly, carefully check the area around your home, school or workplace for mosquito breeding areas:
- clear and empty gutters;
- empty or get rid of cans, buckets, old tires, pots, plant saucers and other containers that hold water;
- remove standing water around structures and from flat roofs;
- change water in pet dishes daily;
- rinse and scrub vases and other indoor water containers weekly;
- change water in wading pools and bird baths several times a week;
- maintain backyard pools or hot tubs;
- cover trash containers;
- water lawns and gardens carefully so water does not stand for several days;
- screen rain barrels and openings to water tanks or cisterns; and
- treat front and back door areas of homes with residual insecticides if mosquitoes are abundant nearby.
- If mosquito problems persist, consider pesticide applications for vegetation around the home such as roundup and other weed and grass killing products.

Remember these mosquito controls are only effective if everyone does their part. Together it can be done. Have a wonderful week. M.V.

May 22-26, 2017.