

**News From Your County Agent**  
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**Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service**  
**Zavala County**

Greetings to all of you and thank you for reading this week. It is amazing what a few hours can do to our Southwest Texas weather. Super bowl Sunday was as hot as the game was between the Eagles and the Patriots with temperatures in the 80's. Then a few hours later the temperatures started dropping and Monday was back to jacket weather. According to weather professionals we will be back to winter for a few days. Just when we thought we were going into an early spring. I guess we will just have to wait.

**Youth Wildlife Camp Applications Now Open**

If you are looking for a camp for your youngster to attend this summer the youth wildlife camp might be the one you are looking for. The camp will be held on July 23-27 at the Sproul Ranch in Ft. Davis Texas. Applications are now open for the Wildlife Conservation Camp sponsored by the Texas Chapter of the Wildlife Society. Applications can be completed by visiting <http://www.wildlifecamptx.org/>. Complete camp details can also be found on that webpage. Applications must be submitted by May 1, 2018. Space is limited so encourage your youngsters to explore and apply soon for this hands on, broad experience surveying and learning about the habitats of Texas, the wildlife we live with, and the management techniques and careers encompassing our wildlife. For more information or to obtain a copy of the flier promoting this event contact the Zavala County Office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883.

**District 12 4-H Roundup Registration Begins Next Month**

In an effort to encourage youngsters from Zavala County to compete at the district level, I am providing this information to hopefully stir some interest in these valuable contest. Registration for all Roundup events will be online through 4-H CONNECT and will require individual registration, along with certification at the county and district levels. The registration fee will be \$15.00 per person per contest. Individual online registration will open March 6<sup>th</sup> through March 27<sup>th</sup>. Check-in on the day of Roundup will begin at 9:00 a.m. (Kleberg Ag. Bldg. Foyer), participant/judge's orientation will follow at 9:30 a.m. (Kleberg Ag Auditorium), and the contests will begin at 10:00 a.m. Here are a few other details about specific contests: Share-the-Fun: Contestants must provide their own music, instruments (including pianos), stands, props, etc.. A multi-channel mixer/PA system will be available to contestants. Special needs must be communicated well in advance to discuss availability. The other contest area at roundup are Educational Presentations: Contestants must ensure contestants have appropriate audio/visual equipment (i.e., laptops, projectors), if needed for their presentations. All contest are described in detail in the 2018 District 12 4-H Roundup Rules and Guidelines and the 2018 Texas 4-H Roundup Rules and Guidelines. It is the responsibility of the contestants/parents to know the rules, time limits, etc. for the contests in which they plan on competing. Please go to <https://agrilife.org/d124h/4-h-event/roundup/> or contact the Zavala County Office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883 for more information.

**Tip of the Week: Tips To Present A Major Grass Fire Event**

Good rains last year provided abundant moisture to get our grasses and other vegetation a very good growth spurt. As a result we ended up with a good stand of grass and then winter came along and these grasses have gone dormant and hold a potential to burn easily and quickly. Remember strong windy conditions are just around the corner triggering red flag warnings and adding another danger

to the already risky fire hazard. A good starting point is understanding rural grassfire risk. Grassfires can start and spread quickly and are extremely dangerous and can travel up to 15 miles per hour and pulse even faster over short distances. Grass is a fine fuel and burns faster than bush or forests. Grassfires tend to be less intense and produce fewer embers than bushfires, but still generate enormous amounts of radiant heat. Common sense tells us that the taller and drier the grass, the more intensely it will burn. The shorter the grass, the lower the flame height and the easier the fire will be to control. Short grass under 4 inches in height is a much lower risk but can also spread to taller grasses and then you have a fire that could be a big problem. Remember grassfires can start earlier in the day than bushfires, because grass dries out more quickly when temperatures are high. Now that you understand the risk of rural grass fires here are some common sense tips to prevent them:

- Don't throw cigarette or cigar butts on the ground or out of a vehicle. Dispose of them properly and make sure they are completely extinguished.
- Do not burn trash, leaves or brush outdoors; If there is a permanent burn ban in the county and during certain times of the year bans are implemented in many outlying areas.
- Keep a 30-foot "safety zone" surrounding the home clear of brush and cedar, especially for those living in a woodland area. Grass should be cut short in this area as well. For homes that sit on a steep slope, the safety zone should be increased accordingly.
- Stack firewood at least 15 feet and uphill from the home.
- Rake leaves, cut off dead limbs and twigs, and mow grass regularly. Cut tree limbs within 15 feet of the ground and remove dead branches that extend over the roof.
- Don't park cars, trucks, or recreational vehicles on dry grass or shrubs. Exhaust systems on vehicles can reach a temperature of more than 1000 degrees; it only takes about 500 degrees to start a brush fire in the summer.
- Use an approved spark arrester on all internal combustion engine-powered equipment. This special muffler helps ensure that sparks generated by off-road vehicles, chainsaws and other equipment don't start wildfires. Check and replace spark arresters periodically.
- Maintain equipment in good working order.
- Parents should emphasize to their children the dangers of playing with fire. Many grass fires are started by children who have no idea how quickly flames can grow and spread.
- Homeowners who barbecue should maintain a 10-foot area free of brush and shrubbery around grills and propane tanks. Non-flammable screens should be placed over the grill (with mesh no coarser than 1/4 inch thick). Never leave a grill unattended. After use, place grill ashes in a metal bucket and soak in water.
- Keep a shovel, bucket of water, fire extinguisher, or other fire suppression tools on hand.

Depending on the type of vegetation that you have in the area where you live, a wildfire can also be classified more specifically as a brush fire, bush fire, desert fire, forest fire, grass fire, hill fire, peat fire, vegetation fire, or veld fire. Regardless what they are called they can be dangerous and cause loss of property or even life so let us all do our part to prevent them. Have a great week. M.V.

February 5-9, 2018.