

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

Green grass and wildflowers blooming make a good backdrop for our Easter week. Our friends up north are still battling snow and ice which is more like Christmas than Easter but they too will soon enjoy the beautiful sights and sounds of spring. Greetings to all of you and thank you so much for reading this week. I wish all of you a happy, safe and wonderful Easter weekend with friends and family. HAPPY EASTER!

Regional Ag. Symposium-“Putting Money Back in Your Pocket” To Be Held April 17

Zavala, Uvalde and Kinney county Extension agents will host an agricultural producer’s symposium on April 17, 2018 at the Uvalde County Fairplex in Uvalde. The event will be conducted via remote web transmission from the Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center in Corpus Christi to the Uvalde site, one of 19 sites across the state that will be participating in this valuable educational program. Participants will receive 2 continuing education units(CEU’s 1-general, 1 IPM) for those who hold a Texas Department of Agriculture pesticide applicators license. Those in attendance that need the required Auxin specific training will receive this update from 12:30 to 1:15 and receive 1 additional CEU in Laws and Regulations. If you do not need this training or have received it at another meeting you will NOT be required to stay through 1:15.

The event will kick-off with breakfast and registration from 7:30 to 8:15 a.m. and the program is scheduled to conclude around noon for lunch. Some of the topics that will be discussed include “The Forgotten Goat” by Dr. Joe Paschal, Extension Livestock Specialist, “Cost Saving Tips for Brush Control” by Dr. Megan Clayton, Extension Range Specialist, “Potential Profitability of No-till vs. Conventional Cotton & Grain Sorghum” Mac Young, Risk Management Specialist and other related topics.

There is a \$20.00 dollar registration fee to attend the symposium which will cover breakfast and lunch. If you are interested in participating you are asked to register or RSVP by Friday April 13th online at kinneyextension.ticketleap.com/agsymposium/ or call 830-563-2442 in Kinney county or 830-374-2883 in Zavala county or in Uvalde county at 830-278-6661. The Uvalde county Fairplex is located at 122 Veterans Lane, Uvalde, TX 78801

Reminder Private Water Well Screening Event Will Take Place April 18

Zavala, Dimmit, Frio, Atascosa, and McMullen Counties of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is hosting a water well screening on Wednesday, April 18 at the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service offices for Zavala County at 221 N 1st Ave in Crystal City, Dimmit County at 539 Industrial Boulevard, in Carrizo Springs, Frio County at 400 S. Pecan Street, Pearsall, TX Atascosa County at 25 E. 5th Street Leming, TX and McMullen County County Courthouse, HWYS 72 &16 Tilden TX in to give area residents the opportunity to have their well water screened.

Results will be available on Friday, April 20th, at your Local County Extension Office. If results indicate high levels of contaminants then owners are advised to get a full water test done by a

certified water testing lab. If samples submitted are within tolerable limits the well owner do NOT have to do any additional testing and thus save the cost of a full blown water test. The screening is presented by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. According to John W. Smith, AgriLife Extension Program Specialist private water wells should be tested annually. It is very important that only sampling bags from the Zavala, Frio, Atascosa, McMullen or Dimmit County AgriLife Extension offices be used and all instructions for proper sampling are followed to ensure accurate results.

Area residents who want to have their well water screened, will need to pick up a sample bag and sampling instructions from the Zavala County AgriLife Extension office (830-374-2883), the Dimmit County AgriLife Extension office (call 830-876-4216 for more information), Frio County AgriLife Extension office (830-334-0099), McMullen County AgriLife Extension office (361-274-3323) or the Atascosa County AgriLife Extension office (830-596-8997).

The cost is \$15 per sample and samples must be turned in by 9 a.m. on April 18th. Samples will be screened for common contaminants, including fecal coliform bacteria, nitrates, high salinity and presence of hydrocarbons. The presence of fecal coliform bacteria in water indicates that waste from humans or warm-blooded animals may have contaminated the water. Water contaminated with fecal coliform bacteria is more likely to also have pathogens present that can cause diarrhea, cramps, nausea or other symptoms. Water with nitrates at levels of 10 parts per million is considered unsafe for human consumption. Nitrate levels above 10 parts per million can disrupt the ability of blood to carry oxygen throughout the body, resulting in a condition called methemoglobinemia. Infants less than 6 months of age and young livestock are most susceptible.

Salinity as measured by total dissolved solids will also be determined for each sample. Water with high levels may leave deposits and have a salty taste, and using water with high levels for irrigation may damage soil or plants. For more information, please contact your local County Extension Office . To learn more about the programs offered through the network or to find additional publications and resources, please visit <http://twon.tamu.edu>. Support for the Texas Well Owner Network program is provided through Clean Water Act nonpoint source funding from the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Tip of the Week: Food Safety for Easter Weekend

Nothing is more important to everyone than a good Easter egg hunt and good food during Easter weekend. This is a great time to remember and practice good food safety practices to insure that everyone enjoys the Easter festivities and prevent anyone from getting sick due to improper food preparation and storage. Let's begin with the eggs. Did you know that Salmonella bacteria can be found on both the outside and inside of eggs that appear to be normal? The larger the number of Salmonella present in the egg, the more likely the egg is to cause illness. To enjoy eggs without the risk of getting sick: Store eggs in the refrigerator. Discard any cracked or dirty eggs. Be sure to wash hands and any surfaces (counter tops, utensils or dishes) after contact with raw eggs. Cook eggs thoroughly until both the yolk and white are firm. Cooking reduces the number of bacteria in an egg. Lightly cooked egg whites and yolks have both caused outbreaks of Salmonella infections. Recipes containing eggs mixed with other foods should be cooked to an internal temperature of 160 degrees F. Eat eggs promptly. Don't keep them warm or at room temperature for more than two hours. DO

NOT EAT hard-boiled eggs used for an egg hunt or as decorations if they have been at temperatures above 40 degrees F for more than two hours; discard them.

After a day of hunting for eggs and chasing the kids around the yard on Easter, it's time for the family to enjoy that delicious south Texas BBQ they have been waiting for. Whether you're hosting or being a good guest and bringing a dish, safe food handling and cooking will make or break the party. Nobody wants to be known as the person who got everyone sick! Cold food should be cold (<40°F) using coolers and ice packs. Use separate coolers for food and beverages. Not only will this keep beverages from becoming contaminated in case of a leakage, but it keeps food cold by limiting how many times the cooler is opened. Pack and separate foods that will be cooked versus foods to be eaten raw. Reinforce with plastic baggies to keep all foods safe. Double bagging is a good thing in this situation! Clean all produce. Create your own fruit and veggie wash by mixing 2 cups cold water, 1/4 cup white vinegar, and 2TB lemon juice in a spray bottle. Spray on to food, let rest 2-3 minutes, then rinse.

Always marinate foods in the fridge- never leave sitting out on a counter or outdoors. If you want to use the marinate during the cooking process reserve a portion of marinade in a separate container if you plan to brush on while cooking or serve as a sauce. **NEVER** reuse marinade that has been in contact with raw meat! Keep trays separate that will hold raw food versus cooked food. Disposable foil trays are good to hold my raw food because they get chunked immediately once food is placed on the grill. Avoid cross-contamination between utensils, surface areas, and raw meats touching cooked foods or raw fruits or veggies. Place cooked food under a shaded area never in direct sunlight.

Finally remember foods kept between 40°F-140°F are in the “Danger Zone” if left for more than 2 hours (or 1 hour if the outside temp is $\geq 90^\circ\text{F}$). Bacteria loves to grow in the heat! Keep cold foods $\leq 40^\circ\text{F}$, and don't let sit out for longer than 2 hours. Keep cold foods in the shade and/or on ice. Take a deep foil pan, fill it with ice and a little water, and then put another foil tray snugly on top. Hot food should be kept $\geq 140^\circ\text{F}$ and not left out longer than 2 hours. Keep food covered when possible. You never know what will land on your food when outdoors. Just think about all the different places flies land on before they come to your food- ew! Grilling is one of the oldest methods of cooking and socializing, dating back to our cave-dwelling ancestors. We've advanced from the “meat on stick” mentality, but the food-handling habits of some backyard chefs still need evolution.

For example, your risk of getting food poisoning spikes during the summer, thanks to the draw of eating outdoors and the fact that bacteria grows quickly in hot weather. Yet only 23 percent of home cooks use a food thermometer to check whether their meat is cooked enough to kill such bacteria and ensure food safety. Thankfully, by following these easy precautions you can mitigate or eliminate food safety risks, so that your meal is as safe as it is satisfying. Have a very Happy and Safe Easter week. M.V.

March 26-30, 2018.

The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife.