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

The first day of fall officially arrived this weekend on Saturday, September 22nd according to all the 2018 calendars including my IPhone but it was official at 1:54 a.m. (UTC) Sunday, September 23rd for countries in the northern hemisphere. Regardless whether fall arrive on Saturday or Sunday the temperatures on both days were very fall like for sure thus reinforcing the fact that we are now in the FALL season of the year. It has been a while since I have heard such a humming of lawn mowers across town as folks are trying to keep up with the fast growing lawns and fighting the mosquitos which seem to be bigger and very active. Better get the grass mowed because more rain is coming in the 7 day forecast for our area. Greeting to all of you and thank you so much for reading this week.

4-H and FFA Quality Counts Website Closes Temporarily

We have several families in Zavala county that have ordered major show tags for their animal projects and thus will participate in a major show in Texas this fall and the spring of 2019. One of the requirements is for all youth participating any major show must complete a quality counts ethics training, obtain a verification number to be used when entering a major show. As you know, we have recently released our new Quality Counts program at the end of last month. Since the launch, the system has come across technical difficulties that were unforeseen before release. If you have tried to complete this online course I know and are aware of these issues that are potentially causing frustration for some of our Zavala County families. The site administrators are working quickly with the website developers to alleviate these problems and ensure a successful experience going forward. We are hoping for solutions by the end of the week.

Therefore to better serve the users, the site is going to temporarily close to allow for full updates to alleviate the previous limitations. In some cases the online learning module is freezing in some instances. Due to the size of the learning module file, combined with poor internet connectivity in certain areas of the state, the system has been stalling. Ag Communications will be trying to break the file into pieces for more efficient operation. We have been told the system will not be down more than two days(September 24-26). While the file size will change, the intend is for the user experience to remain the same. Work and progress that has been done on the system so far has been captured for users at this point. In the event that work is lost, the system will have the ability to direct participants to the test.

In terms of the course in general, we know that livestock projects have always been a family project. Adult educators, parents and volunteers are intended be part of the educational process. Extension agents will work with exhibitors and students on completing the Quality Counts course. The new program does take more time to complete. Please plan ahead for a comprehensive learning experience. I appreciate your patience and support in the launch of this program. I will communicate through this media and other communication avenues when the course is turned back on as soon as possible.

Hog Validation Deadline Is Next Month

The lamb and goat validation process was completed this weekend now it's the swine exhibitors turn. Saturday, October 20, 2018 is the deadline for all Zavala County youth who plan to show in the 2019 Zavala County Junior Livestock Show to get a hog project. Also on this date these animals will have to be officially entered into the show through the Zavala County hog validation process. All hog projects and the exhibitors are required to be ready at their home or location where the hog projects are being raised so that they can be validated. The validation committee will come by each exhibitors home/pens and have their animals tagged and entries paid to be officially entered in the show. The validation process will begin at 8:30 a.m. There will be a $20.00 validation fee per family and a $5.00 tag for each animal validated. There is no limit on the number of animals that an exhibitor can validate and there is no minimum weight requirements at validation. However, at show time in January an exhibitor can show up to 3 animals but no more than 2 animals of the same species and they can only sell one animal in the sale. If you need assistance in locating a hog project before this validation date, please contact the Zavala County Office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883 for more information.

Tip of the Week: Recent Rains Cause Armyworm Activity-How to Manage The Pest

While recent rains were a great welcome to the area this has led to Fall Armyworms showing up in pastures in a big way since the rains. Wheat and oat planting is either underway or eminent in many areas of the county. Growers should be aware that they should: 1. Delay planting, 2. Scout these crops carefully until the weather gets cold, and 3. Be prepare to spray for armyworms. While armyworms show up in certain crops and pastures large Bermuda grass lawns can also be susceptible to this pest so keep an eye on your lawns as well.

The fall armyworm, Spodoptera frugiperda, is a common pest of bermudagrass, sorghum, corn, wheat and rye grass and many other crops in Texas. Larvae of fall armyworms are green, brown or black with white to yellowish lines running from head to tail. A distinct white line between the eyes forms an inverted "Y" pattern on the face. Four black spots aligned in a square on the top of the segment near the back end of the caterpillar are also characteristic. Armyworms are very small (1/8 inch) at first, cause little plant damage and as a result often go unnoticed. Larvae feed for 2-3 weeks and full grown larvae are about 1 to 1 ½ inches long. Given their immense appetite, great numbers, and marching ability, fall armyworms can damage entire fields or pastures in a few days.

Once the armyworm larva completes feeding, it tunnels into the soil to a depth of about an inch and enters the pupal stage. The armyworm moth emerges from the pupa in about ten days and repeats the life cycle. The fall armyworm moth has a wingspan of about 1 ½ inches. The front pair of wings is dark gray with an irregular pattern of light and dark areas. Moths are active at night when they feed on nectar and deposit egg masses. A single female can deposit up to 2000 eggs and there are four to five generations per year. The fall armyworm apparently does not overwinter in north Texas, but survives the winter in south Texas. Populations increase in south Texas in early spring and successive generations move northward as the season progresses.

Management. Fall armyworm outbreaks in pastures and hay fields often occur following a rain which apparently creates favorable conditions for eggs and small larvae to survive in large numbers. Hay fields with a dense canopy and vigorous plant growth are often more susceptible to armyworm infestations than less intensely fertilized and managed fields. Irrigated fields are also susceptible to

fall armyworm infestations, especially during drought conditions. Also monitor volunteer wheat and weedy grasses in ditches and around fields which may be a source of armyworms that can move into the adjacent crop. Look for fall armyworm larvae feeding in the crop canopy during the late evening and early morning and during cool, cloudy weather. During hot days, look for armyworms low in the canopy or even on the soil surface where they hide under loose soil and fallen leaves. A sweep net is very effective for sampling hay fields for fall armyworms. When fields are wet with dew, armyworms can stick on rubber boots worn while walking through the field. Small larvae chew the green layer from the leaves, creating a "window pane" effect and later notch the edges of leaves.

The key to managing fall armyworms is frequent inspection of fields to detect infestations before they have caused economic damage. Once larvae are more than ¾ inch long, the quantity of foliage they eat increases dramatically. During their final 2-3 days of feeding, armyworms eat 80% of the total foliage consumed during their entire development. The density of armyworms sufficient to justify insecticide treatment depends on the stage of crop growth and value of the crop. Seedling plants can tolerate fewer armyworms than established plants. Infestations of more than 2-3 armyworms (1/2 inch or longer) per square foot may justify an insecticide application. If practical, apply insecticides early in the morning or late in the evening when armyworm larvae are most active and therefor most likely to come into contact with the insecticide spray. If the field is near harvest, an early harvest, rather than an insecticide treatment, is an option. Parasitic wasps and flies, ground beetles, and insect viruses help suppress armyworm numbers. However, these natural enemies can be overwhelmed when large numbers of migrating moths move into an area and weather conditions favor high survival of eggs and larvae. Always read and follow all label instructions on pesticide use and restrictions. This information is provided for educational purposes only and not intended to replace any proven management practices. Have a great week. M.V.

September 24-28, 2018.

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