

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 so much for reading this week. We started the week with rain activity across the county after a few days of dry warm weather. According to weather experts by the time you are reading this column we will be in a dry pattern once again and the first real cool front is only a few days away. In the mean time mosquitoes continue to cause havoc for those of you that spend a few hours of the day in the outdoors. Additionally many folks have asked about when the annoying butterflies will get out of our area(Please see the tip of the week for this information). Despite the mosquitoes, butterflies and tall fast growing grasses and weeds everything looks very nice and green, sure beats the alternative.

Private Water Well Screening To Take Place Next Month

Do you have your own water well? Have you had it screened lately? if this is your case then you might want to consider participating in our multi-county water screening event coming to you soon. The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is hosting a water well screening on November 1, 2018 at the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service office for Zavala County at 221 N 1st Ave in Crystal City, to give area residents the opportunity to have their well water tested.

Results will be available on November 5th at the County Extension Office. The screening is presented by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. “Private water wells should be tested annually,” said John W. Smith, AgriLife Extension Program Specialist. “It is very important that only sampling bags from the Zavala County AgriLife Extension office be used and all instructions for proper sampling are followed to ensure accurate results.”

I suggest that area residents who want to have their well water tested, pick up a sample bag and sampling instructions from the Zavala County AgriLife Extension office (830-374-2883). The cost is \$15 per sample and samples must be turned in by 10 a.m. on November 1, 2018. 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,” Griffin said. “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 about this valuable program contact the Zavala County Office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883. Remember free water collections bags and instructions may be picked up at the Zavala county office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 221 N 1st Ave in Crystal City, Texas.

Produce Safety Rule Required Training Available For Producers In Leming October 26th

The Zavala County office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in collaboration with the Texas Department of Agriculture and the Atascosa County office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service will host a PSA training opportunity for agriculture producers. The Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) has been tasked with developing the standardized national produce safety training program to prepare fresh produce growers to meet the regulatory requirements in the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule (PSR). The Produce Safety Rule outlined in §112.22© , states that “at least one supervisor or responsible party from the farm to successfully complete food safety training at least equivalent to that received under the standardized curriculum recognized as adequate by the Food and Drug Administration.

The standardized curriculum developed by the Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) is recognized by the FDA as adequate and meets the requirements of the PSR. This training will be available to ALL produce growers in the Wintergarden area on Friday October 26, 2018. Registration will begin at 8:30 a.m. with the training to begin promptly at 9:00 a.m. and conclude at 5:15 p.m. The meeting will be held at the Atascosa county Extension office located at 25 east 5th street in Leming, Texas 78050. Cost to attend this program is \$40.00 per participant to cover the noon meal, printed training materials and other resources. After attending the entire course, participants will be eligible to receive a certificate from the association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO) that verifies they have completed the training course. To receive an AFDO certificate, a participant must be present for the entire training and submit the appropriate paperwork to their trainer at the end of the course. To register

for this training you may register online at <https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu/productListingDetails/2655> or you may contact the Atascosa County office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-569-0034 or the Zavala County office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883.

Tip of the Week: American Snout Butterfly Invasion To Clear Up Soon

Recently I have received a few phone calls and e-mails of folks wanting to know when this pesky butterfly invasion that smears windshields, clogs car grills and covers the headlights of vehicles will go away. What may appear to be some kind of butterfly invasion in South Central Texas is really just an annual migration of the American snout butterfly. Right now these snout butterflies are migrating through the region in huge numbers on their way toward the Rio Grande River area which takes them through some parts of Zavala and neighboring counties. The insect gets its name from the elongated mouthparts called “palps” that extend from the head.

An estimated 25 million per minute southeasterly-bound snout butterflies passed over a 250 mile front from San Marcos to the Rio Grande River, according to AgriLife Entomologist. This year we had rain at the right times to help their population. What the rain actually does is increase the number and size of leaves on the tree that are the snouts’ primary food source – the spiny hackberry. All of us in south Texas are familiar with the spiny hackberry bush which produces small orange berries (which I used to eat as a kid). With more food, the females lay more eggs in the summer. Those eggs hatch and the caterpillars eat the new growth. The caterpillars can only eat new growth from the spiny hackberry because it is tender enough for them to chew. This population explosion we are seeing is the result of those caterpillars becoming pupa and emerging to migrate down south. While the snouts can be annoying and leave a mess on a car during a road trip, there is really no way to avoid them and they do serve a positive environmental purpose. Like bees, butterflies are good pollinators and provide a service to both agriculture and the homeowner through plant pollination. Now when will they go away? On average a typical snout migration usually takes about 18 to 20 days and may involve more than 6 billion butterflies. They have been around for a few days already so they will be gone soon, within the next 6 days. Have a great week. M.V.

October 8-12, 2018.

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