

News From Your County Agent
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We definitely know that summer officially begins on Friday June 21st and recent hot temperatures remind us that we are at that point in the year. Of course we only have 2 weeks left in June then on to July and before long it will be August and September before our weather pattern will change once again as we move into fall. Despite hot temperatures almost all areas across the county remain green thanks to recent rainfall but it will not be long before we will begin needing more. Greetings to all of you and my hopes are that each of you had a wonderful father's day weekend.

Final Reminder For Steer Validation This Weekend

This is your final reminder to find and get a steer project before the deadline this Saturday. The annual steer validation for all steer projects in Zavala County will be held this Saturday June 22, 2019 beginning at 9:00 a.m. at the Chaparrosa Ranch facilities located south of La Pryor. If you plan to show a steer at the county show you will need to have purchased these animals by this day and bring the animals to the validation site in order for you to be eligible to show in the 2020 Zavala County Junior Livestock show. If you ordered a state steer validation tag and plan to show a steer project in San Antonio, Houston, Austin or any other major show in Texas you must also have these animals validated on this date. If you need more information about the steer validation process contact the Zavala County office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883.

Governor Abbott Signs Bill Legalizing the Cultivation of Industrial Hemp

Industrial hemp, which contains less than 0.3% THC, the psychoactive element in marijuana—was legalized at the federal level in December 2018 as part of the farm bill. Hemp products were already allowed to be sold and consumed in Texas, but state law prohibited farmers from growing the crop. Although HB 1325 has been signed into law by the Governor last week, it is still currently illegal to grow hemp in Texas until the following are completed:

- .USDA must finalize writing their regulations and guidelines
- .TDA must finalize writing of its regulations and guidelines and have them approved by USDA
- .Potential growers will have to complete the licensing process and obtain a license.

We don't know a timeline on these steps being completed, but USDA anticipates its part to be done by the end of 2019. Currently Texas A&M AgriLife Extension is forming an Industrial Hemp Educational team that includes Extension Dept. Specialists in Soil and Crop Science, Ag Economics, Ag Communications, Texas Department of Agriculture, Regional Program Leaders, and County Extension Agents to help develop resources for Agents to be the educators regarding the legal production of industrial hemp. More important information will be available soon and I will be sure to pass this information along to all interested parties.

Tip Of The Week: Prevention of Heart Worms In Your Beloved Pets

Recent rainfall across Zavala county has contributed to our current beautiful green landscapes but it also increases the risk of mosquito related illnesses for both people and your beloved pooch. First beginning with mosquito breeding grounds. All of us have to do our part in preventing Zika and West Nile diseases in our area by eliminating areas where mosquitoes grow and cause an explosion

of mosquito numbers. Old tires, buckets, bird baths and other containers that hold water are excellent breeding areas for mosquitos, thus increasing their numbers and increasing the risk of diseases in both humans and pets.

Mosquitoes are needed to cause heartworm disease. Heartworm disease is a serious disease that results in severe lung disease, heart failure, other organ damage, and death in pets, mainly dogs. It is caused by a parasitic worm called *Dirofilaria immitis*. The worms are spread through the bite of a mosquito. The dog is the definitive host, meaning that the worms mature into adults, mate, and produce offspring while living inside a dog. The mosquito is the intermediate host, meaning that the worms live inside a mosquito for a short transition period in order to cause heartworm disease. The worms are called “heartworms” because the adults live in the heart, lungs, and associated blood vessels of an infected animal.

In an infected dog, adult female heartworms release their offspring, called microfilariae, into the dog’s bloodstream. When a mosquito bites the infected dog, the mosquito becomes infected with the microfilariae. Over the next 10 to 14 days and under the right environmental conditions, the microfilariae become infective larvae while living inside the mosquito. Microfilariae cannot become infective larvae without first passing through a mosquito. No mosquito means no heartworm disease. When the infected mosquito bites another dog, the mosquito spreads the infective larvae to the dog through the bite wound. In the newly infected dog, it takes about 6 to 7 months for the infective larvae to mature into adult heartworms. The adult heartworms mate and the females release their offspring into the dog’s bloodstream, completing the lifecycle.

The severity of heartworm disease is related to how many worms are living inside the dog (the worm burden), how long the dog has been infected, and how the dog’s body is responding to the presence of the heartworms. The dog’s activity level also plays a role in the severity of the disease and in when symptoms are first seen. Symptoms of heartworm disease may not be obvious in dogs that have low worm burdens, have been recently infected, or are not very active. Dogs that have heavy worm burdens, have been infected for a long time, or are very active often show obvious symptoms of heartworm disease such as a general loss of body condition, a persistent cough, and tiredness after mild activity. Trouble breathing and signs of heart failure are common. Not all dogs with heartworm disease develop severe signs of the disease. However, if left untreated, heartworm disease will progress and damage the dog’s heart, lungs, liver, and kidneys, eventually causing death.

The treatment for heartworm disease is not easy on the dog or on the owner’s pocket book. Treatment can be potentially toxic to the dog’s body and can cause serious complications, such as life-threatening blood clots to the dog’s lungs. Treatment is expensive because it requires multiple visits to the veterinarian, bloodwork, x-rays, hospitalization, and a series of injections. Prevention is the best treatment. Preventing heartworms begins with controlling mosquito populations and the use of heartworm preventing medications. Many products are FDA-approved to prevent heartworms in dogs. All require a veterinarian’s prescription. Most products are given monthly, either as a topical liquid applied on the skin or as an oral tablet. Both chewable and non-chewable oral tablets are available. One product is injected under the skin every 6 months, and only a veterinarian can give the injection. Some heartworm preventives contain other ingredients that are effective against certain intestinal worms (such as roundworms and hookworms) and other parasites (such as fleas,

ticks, and ear mites). Year-round prevention is best! Talk to your dog's veterinarian to decide which preventive is best for your dog. Cats can also get heartworms after being bitten by an infected mosquito, although they are not as susceptible to infection as dogs. A cat is considered a resistant host of heartworms because the worms do not thrive as well inside a cat's body. Both indoor and outdoor cats are at risk for heartworm disease. Let's do our part to control mosquitos and provide a healthy environment for both us and our beloved pets. Have a wonderful week. M.V.

June 17-21, 2019

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