

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

Greetings to all of you and may you all enjoy the extended Labor Day weekend safely with friends and family (please checkout our labor day holiday safety tips in this column). Slowly but surely our weather pattern is changing as evident from the strong rain storms that moved through the county over the weekend. Some folks reported a little over half an inch and some lucky ones had more than that this past Saturday night. After all we will be welcoming in the month of September over the weekend so yes it is time for our weather patterns to start changing. Thank you for reading this week.

**Del Monte To Close 2 More Plants In U.S.**

According to information obtained by the Zavala County AgriLife Extension Service through CBS news, Del Monte is selling its manufacturing assets at its plant here in Crystal City, where 120 people worked full-time and another 300 were seasonal employees. Del Monte is also selling a facility in Cambria, Wisconsin, that employs about 35 people and as many as 280 seasonal workers. This past week Del Monte Foods announced it is closing two of its remaining 10 U.S. plants, laying off hundreds of workers, as the food company looks to further cut costs amid headwinds that include tariffs and rising metal packaging costs. The layoffs add to a tally that is already the highest for the food manufacturing industry in a decade.

Food manufacturers laid off nearly 16,000 workers in the first seven months of the year, up 85% from a year ago and the highest total for the sector in that period since 2009, according to outplacement firm Challenger Gray & Christmas. Del Monte Foods, the U.S. subsidiary of Del Monte Pacific, in the fall plans to close its plant in Mendota, Illinois, laying off nearly 500 workers at the facility that packages products including peas, carrots and mixed vegetables. It also plans to shutter its plant in Sleepy Eye, Minnesota, where as many as 400 are employed during the processing season. Workers will be laid off in stages, with the two facilities closing around the end of October after the packing season and then conclude when labeling and shipping is done in June according to a company spokesperson. Approximately 188 full-time employees and 656 seasonal employees will be affected by the facility closures. Founded in California in the 1880s and known as Cal-Pac and later changed its name to Del Monte Foods. In 2014 Del Monte Foods sold its canned fruits and vegetable business to its Philippine parent for \$1.68 billion. The company operates a large pineapple plantation in the Philippines.

**Reminder-Lamb and Goat Validation is Next Month**

It's time to remember that you should be looking for lamb and goat projects in preparation for the 2020 stockshows. Some of you have already informed me that you already have your goat and lamb projects but many of you still need to get yours in time for county validation. Validation for all county lambs and goats will take place in September. Lambs and breeding ewes will be validated beginning at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday September 21, 2019 ZAE Grounds Crystal City. Validation for meat goats and breeding Does will take place at 10:00 a.m. also on Saturday September 21, 2019 and it will also be held at the ZAE Grounds Crystal City. If you need assistance in locating a lamb or goat

project for the 2020 show please contact the Zavala county office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883. This deadline will be here before you know it so don't wait until the last minute.

### **Tip of the Week: Labor Day Safety Tips**

Just as Memorial Day has become embedded in American culture as the day marking the beginning of summer, so too Labor Day, celebrated annually on the first Monday of September, has come to signify summer's end. Serving as bookends to the summer season, both holidays are celebrated with three-day weekends that include travelling to visit friends and family, barbecues and picnics, swimming, and parades. Although it may seem strange to celebrate the value of labor by taking time off from work but the holiday is what it is. Each year an average of 8,900 home fires are caused by grilling, and close to half of all injuries involving grills are due to thermal burns. In 2014, 16,600 patients went to emergency rooms because of injuries involving grills. A failure to clean the grill was the leading factor contributing to the fire in one-fifth of all grill structure fires (19%). In 17%, something that could catch fire was too close to the grill. So use common sense, clean the grill, check for leaks and survey the surroundings and include a fire extinguisher close by.

Of course the grill is a big safety concern when grilling but how safe is the food you are preparing for the labor day feast? Food safety during this huge grilling day is another area to pay close attention at and insure that everyone will have a great meal and minimize the risk of a food borne illness. Along with fire safety, food safety is another important factor to consider when grilling. You don't want to remember labor day as the day you or someone in your family got sick from a foodborne illness. To keep cookouts safe, it's important to ensure a clean grilling workspace and safe food preparation. Maintaining food quality and freshness by ensuring proper temperatures during its storage and when cooking are vital to food safety. You need to begin by choosing meat, poultry or seafood that's fresh and of high quality.

At the grocery store, select your meat last and get it home as soon as possible. If the trip from the grocery store to home is more than 30 minutes, take a cooler for refrigerated items. Poultry, fish, seafood or ground beef should be cooked or frozen within a day or two, and steaks or pork chops should be cooked or frozen within four to five days. Remember, the safest way to thaw meat or poultry is by placing it in the refrigerator a day or two before you plan to cook it. You can also thaw in the microwave, but if you do, cook the food right away; don't let it sit. However, some foods may not thaw out evenly and other parts of the food may be partially cooked, so it's still better to let them thaw out in the fridge.

Regardless, never thaw meats at room temperature as this may increase the number of germs related to foodborne illness. If refrigerated food is being transported to another location for cooking, it should be kept at 40 degrees or colder, using a cooler and ice or ice packs. You should only take as much as you plan to cook and eat that day. Raw meat, poultry or seafood should be tightly wrapped or stored in a sealed bag or container and kept in a different cooler to reduce the risk of cross-contamination.

Make sure your hands, the cooking area and all cooking utensils are clean to reduce the spread of germs to the food. If you're cooking away from home and not sure about a water source where you're going, take your own water and paper towels or use antibacterial towelettes or hand sanitizer.

Unwashed utensils and platters can still contaminate food, even if you've maintained proper food storage, preparation and cooking standards. If you've placed raw meat or fish on a platter before grilling, do not use that same plate to serve the food unless it first can be cleaned with hot, soapy water. Foods on a grill can brown quickly and look as though they are sufficiently cooked when they are not, so a food thermometer is the only way to ensure cooking to a safe internal temperature. Cook all poultry to 165 degrees, fully cooked meats like hotdogs to 165degrees and hamburgers to 160 degrees. Beef, pork, lamb, veal steaks, chops and roasts should be cooked to at least 145 degrees.

For safety, however, allow these foods to rest for 3 minutes after removing them from the grill before serving. After cooking, be sure to keep the food hot until it is served – at least 140 degrees—otherwise refrigerate it right away. Keep food covered and never let it sit out for more than two hours, and if the weather is 90 degrees or hotter, eat or store it within one hour. It is recommended for you to remember that more than two hours is bad for you, but if it's outside, that should be just one hour. Have a happy and safe Labor Day weekend and happy grilling. M.V.

August 26-30, 2019

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.