

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

Monday was officially the first day of fall, September is almost over and our weather pattern is like if it was still July! Well that's Texas weather which means one thing-it will change before we least expect it. A urgent reminder to all of you about the high risk of wildfires in our county. Early rains in the spring produced a lot of vegetation and now this vegetation is extremely dry and a high risk of catching fire. This past week volunteer firemen were busy fighting grass/brush fires in the county so please be careful. Greeting to all of you and thank you so much for reading this week.

Grain Sorghum Ballots Available At The Zavala County Extension Office

Texas Grain Sorghum Producers Board will hold its biennial election on October 30, 2019. The current terms of five (5) of the fifteen (15) board members will expire this year. Three board member will be elected in the south district, which is the district in which Zavala county is located. Any person living within the counties in the south district who are engaged in the business of producing, or causing to be produced, sorghum for commercial purposes, is eligible to vote, including owners of farms, their tenants and sharecroppers, if such person is subject to paying the assessment that is collected on sorghum in Texas. Eligible voters in the districts may take part in the 2019 election. Ballots for this election may be obtained from the Zavala County office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service by calling 830-374-2883 or coming by the office located at 221 North First Avenue in Crystal City or by email at Zavala@ag.tamu.edu. You can also contact the Texas Grain Sorghum Board (TGSB) staff by contacting Morgan Webb at (806) 438-5994 or by e-mail at morgan@texassorghum.org. Ballots must be post marked before midnight October 30, 2019.

Hog Validation Is Next Month

A quick reminder to all Zavala county 4-H families that are planning to be involved in the 2020 Zavala county livestock show with a hog project you need to make plans to have them validation next month. All market hogs will be validated on Saturday, October 19, 2019 beginning at 9:00 a.m. at the exhibitors property where the hogs are located. If you need assistance in locating a hog project for the 2020 show please contact the Zavala county office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883. Please plan accordingly and do not wait until the last minute.

Tip of the Week: Safety Tips to Protect Your Property From Wildfires

As I mentioned in the opening of this weeks column there are parts of the county that have very dry vegetation that is a hazard for a fire to occur. Driving across the county I saw several places with dry grass and brush just a few feet from a structure which can mean disaster if this dry vegetation was to catch on fire. Texas is on pace to see the highest number of wildfires in the state in seven years, according to Texas A&M Forest Service data. The Texas A&M Forest Service tallied 893 wildfires in Texas in 2018. That's higher than the number of wildfires in each year from 2012 through 2017. With these figures in mind we have seen several fires in Zavala county this summer and unfortunately there could be more so the public must be careful and in some cases prepare for a wildfire incident. Of course total destruction of property for the most part can be prevented. You can't fight back a wildfire that is encroaching on your home or business. However, you can take steps to protect it and evacuate when necessary. Learn how you can help protect your home or business from a wildfire.

One of the first steps you can take to defend against a wildfire is limiting the fuel sources around your home or business. One of these preventive measures is to clear combustible materials such as dried leaves and grass and brush. During extremely dry conditions cut down any tree limbs that are 8 feet or closer to the ground. This will help prevent the fire from spreading into your property's tree line.

Remove any vines or vegetation that is on the side of your house or business. It is also a good idea to place any flammable lawn furniture in storage when not in use. Try using non-flammable exterior decor, such as gravel as opposed to wood chips.

Another tip is to create "fuel breaks" in your property. Hopefully, these areas will help stop the spread of a fire. These can be gravel pathways or driveways. Clear combustible vegetation as well. Most folks like to bbq and we often do not

pay much attention where we keep the firewood or scrap wood. Be sure your dry bbq wood pile is at least 100 to 200 hundred feet from your home. Outside your home, make sure you have enough garden hose available to reach any part of your property. Designate water sources and make sure that the fire department can access them if they need to. Water sources are areas such as swimming pools, ponds, lakes, wells and fire hydrants.

Once the fire is over do not go back to your property until officials declare it safe to do so. Watch out for ash pits and hot spots. Even after a fire is extinguished, small fires can flare up without warning. Check your house and surrounding property for hot spots and extinguish them immediately. Also, be on the lookout for ash pits. These are holes filled with hot ashes left by burned trees. Mark ash pits to help prevent others from falling into them and injuring themselves. If damage has occurred take photos and video and make a written list documenting your damaged property. Contact your insurance company immediately to report the damage. Wildfires are some of the most destructive forces of nature. There isn't much that can be done to deter a wildfire's path. Fortunately, there are ways to help mitigate property damage and keep your employees and loved ones safe. Be safe and prepare for wildfires, this can happen at any time but especially during these extreme weather conditions. Have a good week. M.V.

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