

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

Greetings to all of you and good bye to October and hello November. Temperatures have been more like fall than winter but for most of us this is a good thing. All we need is to add more chances of rain to this nice cool weather and most folks would be delighted. I hope all of you have a nice spinach festival week and REMEMBER those farmers that continue to grow spinach in our county that entitles everyone to call Crystal City the spinach capital of the world.

Hemp Production Rules Set By USDA

Zavala county farmers who have been contemplating Hemp production now have some regulations and guidelines to look at before venturing into the production of this crop. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) on Tuesday, Oct. 29, announced the regulations and guidelines for domestic industrial hemp production, giving farmers a roadmap for the 2020 growing season. The interim final hemp production rule creates much-needed standards for production, testing and licensing. This is the long-awaited interpretation from USDA of what Congress passed in the 2018 Farm Bill as it relates to the legalization of hemp production. This interim final rule provides clarity to producers on everything from crop insurance, THC testing methods, crop destruction protocols to interstate commerce. Hemp farmers have struggled getting financing for their operations as the banking industry needed guidance from USDA. The interim final rule allows bankers to serve the hemp industry. The banking industry largely has awaited these regulations in order to develop guidance regarding deposits derived from hemp operations, Without these regulations, the banking industry hasn't been willing to take the risk of accepting deposits or lending money to these businesses. Now with these regulations and guidelines in place they provides a positive enforcement of receiving financing for hemp operation.

The USDA also developed guidelines for sampling and testing procedures that are being issued concurrently with this rule. These documents provide additional information for sampling agents and hemp testing laboratories. More information about the provisions of the interim final rule is available on the U.S. Domestic Hemp Production Program web page on the Agricultural Marketing Service website. Once state and tribal plans are in place, hemp producers will be eligible for a number of USDA programs, including insurance coverage through Whole-Farm Revenue Protection. For information on available programs, visit farmers.gov/hemp. Farmers should review the hemp production rule and provide feedback to USDA. The public can provide comment through the Federal Register for a period of 60 days beginning Oct. 31.

A New Law Will Require Prescriptions For All Animal Antibiotics

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration now is moving forward with a law to bring all antibiotics used on animals grown for human food consumption under veterinary oversight. What this means is that producers will only be able to get antibiotics for their animals by prescription. The FDA is responsible for protecting public health by ensuring the safety, efficacy and security of human and animal drugs and the food supply, among other things. The Food and Drug Administration, Center

for Veterinary Medicine is requiring that all medically important antibiotics for food animals have to go through veterinary clinics, and develop a valid veterinary client-patient relationship.

This new law means producers will not be able to get medications from the feed store, co-op, or online, as they could previously. It is going to cause a little bit of difficulty because producers that want to use antibiotics, that need to use antibiotics, are going to have to work with their beef cattle or livestock veterinarians and develop this veterinary client-patient relationship. This includes county Extension Agents who advise 4-H families in the use of antibiotics in 4-H animal projects when these products are needed on sick 4-H animal projects. This new guidance is expected to become official by the end of 2020. There will be a two-year phase-in, and by the end of 2023 all antibiotics for use in food animals will be by prescription only.

Tip of The Week: Want A Green Lawn In The Winter-Over Seeding With Cool Season Grasses

Do you like having a green lawn throughout the year? Do you like to mow, irrigate, and fertilize during the winter? Is it appropriate to overseed your lawn for the winter? These are just a few questions that you need to ask yourself before you overseed your turf. Warm season grasses such as Bermuda and zoysias go dormant during the winter months and can be over seeded with a cool season grass variety to maintain green color and adequate quality. This DOES NOT include St. Augustine grass which stays green-and-growing all South Texas "winter" long-unless we have a hard freeze below 20 degrees F. To gather some insight on this topic, I contacted my AgriLife Extension Colleagues Drs. Jim McAfee and Roger Havlak, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Turfgrass Specialists. The following is what they have to say about overseeding.

The best time to overseed the home lawn is now (early November), but more accurately after the first frost. Annual ryegrass is the fastest germinating variety and probably the cheapest. It looks very similar to perennial ryegrass with a dark green color and shiny leaves. Annual ryegrass grows quickly and requires frequent mowing (around 2 to 2.5 inch height) especially during late fall and early spring. Their water use rates are moderate and fertility requirements are low - maybe one to two pounds of nitrogen over the winter months. For a dense stand of rye grass, overseed at a rate of about 10-12 pounds of seed per thousand square feet which is a lawn about 33 feet wide and 33 feet long . And keep the lawn irrigated for several weeks to ensure germination. There are a couple of new annual ryegrasses from Lloyd Nelson at the Overton station. One is Excella and the other is Pantera. While these are annual types, they look and grow more like the perennial types. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension recommends the Pantera (better color) for homeowners anytime. The annual types will die out faster in the spring and therefore don't create as much a problem for the warm season turfgrass growing in the lawn.

Before you go out and buy a bag of annual rye grass to over seed your lawn THINK about this first. Overseeding this fall might lead to warm-season turf with some very serious problems next year because of the hot dry summer we have had this year. A healthy warm season turf being over seeded is severely weakened as it is from the competition of the aggressive cool-season turfgrass being planted into it. Over seeded warm-season turfs are weak and sickly looking in the spring when they transition back to the dominant turf - imagine what you will likely have if you are overseeding an already thin turf this fall. Next year will be the easiest transition year you have ever had - know why?

There won't be a transition for a lot of us because there won't be a warm season grass remaining! Instead of overseeding, you should raise the turf cutting height and make sure to apply a Winterizer fertilizer. Allow it to fully prepare for the upcoming winter by naturally hardening off through the day/night heating/cooling patterns of this time of year . You should also consider replacing large areas of damaged turf with Floratam St. Augustine until late November.

And finally if you have some bald spots (thin turf) in your yard expect a lot of winter weeds in an area with a thin turf cover. The thin turf that has received some rainfall during the last couple of weeks is sure to be invaded by a bumper crop of winter weeds. If you are not over-seeding, apply a fall pre-emergence herbicide AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. What is being used: these are the most common choices - prodiamine, pendimethalin, Balan plus oryzalin (Amaze) and dithiopyro (Dimension). All of these are excellent PRE materials, each with their own strengths and weaknesses. The purpose of using a pre-emergence is to not allow winter weeds to germinate and rob what little grass you might have from the much needed nutrients it will need to make a comeback next spring. Be very careful with late season cultivation events on warm season grasses after the summer we have had. The weaker your warm-season turf is, the more likely the damage this winter. So check soil moisture and pamper your lawn this winter for a good return next spring. So the question is-will you overseed or not?? The answer is up to you. Have a great week. M.V.

November 4-8, 2019.