

News From Your County Agent
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Texas A&M AgriLife E
Zavala County

A light winter weekend and back to a late summer weather pattern has been the story for us in Southwest Texas. After temperatures back into the 90's by mid-week we are supposed to drop back to the 80's when this week is all said and done. Of course we are still in dire need of some rainfall and we do have a slight chance during the week so let's hope that these rain chances materialize into something good that we can mention next week in this column. Greeting to all of you and thank you so much for reading this week.

County Swine Validation Is Upon Us-Saturday

This is the final 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. All market hogs will be validated this coming Saturday, October 19, 2019 beginning at 9:00 a.m. at the exhibitors property where the hogs are located. If you have a hog project that needs to be validated please contact the Zavala county office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883 to insure that we have you on the validation list. Remember that there is a \$20.00 validation fee charged per family by the Stockshow Board (ZAE) plus \$5.00 per tag for each hog project validated.

District 12 4-H Archery Entries To Open Soon

The District 12 4-H Shooting Sports Archery Match (Modified 600 & 3-D) will be held on December 7, 2019 at the Duval Shooting Complex in Benavides. Registration for this event will be open to all counties in District 12. Counties are not limited in the number of 4-H members that register from their county. Registration will take place on 4-H Connect and must be done by individual 4-H members. Coaches will not be able to register members. ***Registration will be open from November 4th through November 26th*** at \$16 per event (Modified 600 & 3-D) or \$30 for both. **There will not be a late registration period or on-site registration.** All contestants must be registered by the dates specified above.

This is a 1-day event with both matches on Saturday, December 7th based on the following schedule: 8:00-8:30 a.m. Registration & Equipment Inspection (*bring your bow and arrows to the registration for inspection*) 8:30-8:45 a.m. Mandatory Orientation & Safety Meeting. 9:00 a.m. Match Begins Seniors – Modified 600 match first, followed by 3-D Juniors & Intermediates – 3-D match first, followed by Modified 600. For complete details about this event including rules and regulations contact the Zavala county office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883

Tip of the Week: Wild Hogs What You Need To Know About These Pests

We at the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service conducted survey study in 2004 to estimate the annual damage done in Texas by these unwanted invaders. Current estimates of the damage they cause nationwide range from \$800 million to \$1.5 billion annually. My colleague Josh Helchel, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension associate with the Texas A&M Natural Resources Institute (NRI) recently shared some startling statistics about wild pigs and the damage they are doing to the state—as well as ideas, tricks and tips that may help us combat them.

Pigs may not appear to be the smartest animal in the world, but they are in fact smarter than many species we hold in high regard. Some experts and studies argue that dolphins, killer whales and elephants all have lower IQs than wild pigs. Pigs are widely considered among the brightest of species—and they do beat out man's best friend in the brains department. The U.S. is estimated to have 4 million wild pigs, and we've got

well over half of the pig population in the Lone Star State alone, based on a 2012 study. That study had Texas at 2.6 million; current population models predict our actual figure is now closer to 3 million. Wild pigs are also largely nocturnal, which means you are more likely to see the damage they do than see the animals themselves. On May 31, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott signed Senate Bill 317 into law. This permit allows any landowner, landowner's agent or lessee to take wild pigs without a hunting license. The only time a hunting license is required is on Texas public lands. Unfortunately, recreational hunting alone cannot control the wild pig problem.

Over 79 percent of Texas is deemed a suitable habitat for wild pigs, according to NRI. Wild pigs can now be found everywhere, from farms to the lands surrounding suburban shopping malls. Sows, females, can roam a territory of around 2 miles, or 1,100 acres. That also means that if your neighbor or a neighboring county has wild pigs, odds are it is just a question of time until you do too. Experts agree that given current technology, complete eradication of wild pigs in Texas isn't realistic right now. It doesn't help that pigs are the most prolific large mammal when it comes to reproduction. A sow can average 1.5 litters a year and each litter typically produce five to six piglets. Even given mortality rates, we'd need to eliminate 66 percent of our wild pig population annually just to stop our population numbers from growing.

Not only can wild pigs infect our water resources with E. coli, but they may also carry 15 other diseases, some of which can be transmitted to people. Swine brucellosis and tularemia are two particular concerns to humans. There is also the threat of tick-borne diseases like Lyme and Rocky Mountain spotted fever. That said, when handling a dead pig make sure protective latex gloves and eye wear are worn and avoid bodily fluids. Like all pork, wild pig meat must be cooked to a minimum of 160 degrees before it can be safely consumed.

As we mentioned earlier, pigs are smart—really, really smart. If you set a trap that only captures one or two animals at a time, odds are pretty good you won't catch any other wild pigs that saw the earlier misfortune of their brethren. You need to have a trap large enough for the entire sounder, or group, or you'll be looking for alternative means to capture the pigs from the sounder that got away. We at Texas A&M AgriLife Extension are working together with Extension staff in developing other wild hog control strategies and will make those available when they are completed. Have a great week. M.V.

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