

**News From Your County Agent**  
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**Zavala County**

**USDA suspends timeline for transition to electronic ID**

As I informed you in the spring last April, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced they would transition from metal identification tags to electronic identification tags in beef cattle, dairy cattle and bison. The previously announced transition dates are suspended. The USDA is reviewing agency policy to determine how they will proceed with the timeline associated with the transition of visual to electronic official ID for cattle and bison. What do you need to know about official ID?

- Questions about the rollout should be directed to: [traceability@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:traceability@aphis.usda.gov)
- Official identification requirements for cattle and bison in Texas or entering Texas remain unchanged.
- The USDA is allowing tag companies to continue manufacturing and selling metal NUES tags until further notice.
- To prepare for any future tag requirement decisions, producers should make sure they have a Premises Identification Number (PIN) or Location Identification Number (LID). You can obtain a PIN or LID by contacting the TAHC Animal Disease Traceability team at [animal\\_id@tahc.texas.gov](mailto:animal_id@tahc.texas.gov) or 512-719-0733.
- Metal NUES Brucellosis vaccination tags for accredited veterinarians are still available from the USDA.

The Zavala County office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in collaboration with the Texas Animal Health Commission will keep producers and veterinarians updated when any decisions are made by the USDA.

**Less than 29 Day Before The Zavala County Junior Fair**

We are now less than a month away from the 2020 Zavala County Junior fair which will take place January 9, 10 and 11, 2020 at the ZAE show grounds in Crystal City. Many 4-H members have been busy preparing for the show and once again the success of the show for the young people that participate is the financial contributions that many individuals make to insure the students are rewarded for their hard work. We encourage businesses in the area to make plans to attend the annual sale of animals on Saturday, January 11, 2020 at 1:00 p.m. If you are not able to attend in person you can make a contribution to the animal sale by sending your pledge/donation to the Zavala County AgriLife Extension office at 221 North First Avenue, Crystal City, Texas 78839. A complete schedule of the show will be provided in this newspaper at a later date. I just wanted to start promoting this event which is a valuable educational experience to many young people in Zavala County.

**Tip of the Week: A Little History and 3 Tips To Keep Your Poinsettias Healthy This Holiday Season**

Now with Thanksgiving behind us we focus our direction to Christmas trees, holly, mistletoe, and of course poinsettias which remind us of how so many of our Christmas traditions are rooted in agriculture. We are also lucky to live in a state with diverse agricultural production. Texas farmers grow Christmas trees and poinsettias in addition to our traditional crops like spinach, corn, wheat, cabbage and cotton. There are about 150 Texas farmers who grow approximately 200,000 Christmas trees annually, some are cut at the farm and sold at garden centers and others are sold on the farm as a cut your own enterprise making it a nice experience for many Texas families. So when you gather 'round the tree on Christmas morning, you may be celebrating beneath the boughs of a Texas-grown pine.

And what's prettier than poinsettias in dreary Texas December weather? Poinsettias received their name in the United States in honor of Joel Roberts Poinsett, who introduced the plant into the country in 1828. Poinsett was a botanist, physician and the first United States Ambassador to Mexico. He sent cuttings of the plant he had discovered in Southern Mexico to his home in Charleston, South Carolina. The word Poinsettia is traditionally capitalized because it is named after a person. In Mexico and Guatemala the Poinsettia is known as "La Flor de la Nochebuena" (Flower of the Holy Night, or Christmas Eve). The beautiful bright red "flowers" on the Poinsettia plant are actually colored bracts (modified leaves). NOT flowers. The yellow flowers, or *cyathia*, are in the center of the colorful bracts. The plant drops its bracts and leaves soon after those flowers shed their pollen. For the longest-lasting Poinsettias, choose plants with little or no yellow pollen showing.

Poinsettias are a popular gift among neighbors, friends and loved ones in November and December—for good reason. The bright red and dark green leaves bring a pop of color and living touch of holiday cheer to homes and businesses. Once again, Texas growers are helping in bring you that festive foliage. One facility in East Texas grows around 1 million poinsettias annually, with many other nurseries and greenhouses across the state also busy growing the plants and other seasonal ornamental plants.

Although poinsettias may seem finicky, they're actually pretty easy to care for. Here are three simple tips to follow that can help you in keeping your poinsettias looking perky all season long.

- Poinsettias don't like cold and are sensitive to temperature fluctuations. Keep them in a warm spot away from doors and drafty windows.
- Don't overwater! This is the most common mistake poinsettia owners make. If the Poinsettia you received or purchased has a decorative foil around the pot, take the plant out of the foil wrapper surrounding the pot before watering. Allow the water to completely drain before placing it back in the foil.
- They need plenty of sunlight. Bright, indirect light is best. Aim for at least eight hours a day.

While Christmas decorations are a sight to behold, nothing is more beautiful than a family enjoying the holidays together. I hope your family enjoys a safe and happy holiday season with Texas grown Christmas trees and Poinsettias!!!! Have a great week. M.V.

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