

Livestock & Natural Resources Newsletter

FALL 2009

Texas AgriLife Extension Service– Bexar County Office
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2009 San Antonio International Farm & Ranch Show October 8 – 10, 2009 Freeman Coliseum & Grounds 3201 East Houston Street

Come this fall for the 1st Annual San Antonio International Farm & Ranch Show. We will have seminars on the latest technology advancements in the farming and ranching industries. The 160 acre complex has over one million square feet of indoor facilities to showcase our exhibitor's 2010 products and services.

Preview the largest indoor AG related climate control facility in Texas that is under construction and will be ready for our 2010 show.

Educational presentations over the three day show period will address topics including: New Seed Developments, Conservation Tillage Treatments, Precision Agriculture GPS/GIS use on the Farm, Fertility Management, Wind & Solar Energy for the Farm, Bio Fuels Update, Whitetail Management, Quail Management, Sheep and Goat Marketing, Nature-Based Tourism, Grass Fed Beef, Growing Grapes in the Texas Hill Country, Fire Ant Management and IPM Control, Feral Impacts and Biology.

More information on the show and the educational opportunities and credits available can be found at:

<http://www.farmandranchexpo.com>

Admission is free and parking is \$5.00

Managing Wildlife During A Drought October 7, 2009 9:00 am – 3:00 pm Devine Community Ctr. 200 East Hondo Ave. Devine, Texas

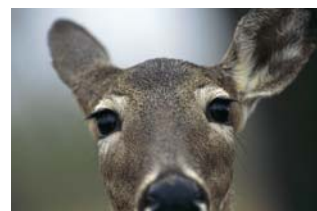
There will be a \$10 Registration Fee. Register by calling (830) 249-6163 or email alamorcd@gmail.com.

One (1) Laws & Regulations
Two (2) General CEUs will be given

For additional information, visit the website at www.alamorcd.org

Topics will include:

- Deer Management: A Hands Off Approach
- Wildlife Tax Appraisal
- Hunting: Know the Law
- Deer and Boll Weevil
- Deer Nutrition, Drought & Cows
- Deer Management Permit Program
- Deer Browse Surveys: Balancing Deer Numbers & Habitat Before the Next Drought



Destocking Strategies During Drought

by Ron Gill, Ph.D., Professor and Extension Livestock Specialist, Texas A&M University

The following discussion will focus on what cattle to cull first and why. The first culls should be any spring or summer calving cow that does not have a calf at side.

Normal rates of pregnancy loss and calf death loss will result in 5 to 15% of the cow herd meeting these culling criteria. If a cow calved last fall, winter or this spring and lost a calf, sell regardless of age or pregnancy status. This is no time to wait for next year's income. This just accelerates recommended or normally practiced culling procedures. Also included in this first round of culling are replacement heifers that have been purchased or raised but not already in production. During drought, first calf heifers will wean the lightest calves and have the lowest rebreeding potential of any age class. Removing replacement heifers, will result in a 7 to 10% reduction in stocking rate and forage demand. Supplemental feed requirements will also be reduced because replacement heifers have high nutrient requirements. At this stage of culling, herd size can be reduced 12-25% without impacting this year's weaned calf crop. Next, cull shortbred fall calving cows and long bred spring/summer calving cows. Few cows will meet these criteria unless the breeding season was extended last year due to dry conditions. In contrast, 5 to 15% of the cows may be identified as late-bred in herds with extended or year-round calving seasons. Palpation and identification of cows by stage of pregnancy will be required to use this culling practice.

At this point, a 15 to 40% reduction in cow numbers can be attained without significantly impacting this year's weaned calf crop.

While cattle are corralled, carefully inspect all aspects of the cow's anatomy and current production levels. This would include teeth, feet, legs, udders and calf at side. Consult any production or herd records during this process to prevent overlooking cows with marginal production history. If records are not available a visual assessment of calf at side will have to suffice. Be sure to individually identify cows if they are to be commingled after evaluation.

Continued decline in forage conditions will require culling cows raising the current year's calf crop. While such drastic measures will affect this year's income, culling marginal cows will improve production capability in the remaining herd. Shipping cows with calves is difficult for most producers. Therefore, culling

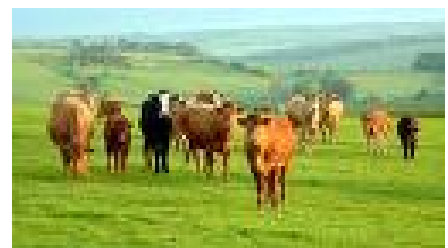


producing cows should be based on historic production records, the current calf at side or soundness. The goal of this culling phase is to remove a sufficient number of cows to ensure adequate forage is available to carry the remaining herd at least through weaning. Short and broken mouth cows should be culled first because they will not have acceptable productivity under drought conditions. The next step would be to cull the genetic bottom of the herd until targeted levels of herd reduction are met. At this stage, the culling priority on 40-70% of the cow herd has been established. Before culling deeper into the productive cow herd, determine whether the remaining cows are bred and consider whether to sell open cow-calf pairs before weaning. If calves weigh 400 pounds or greater consider weaning and selling the calf and open female separately. Calves weighing less than 400 pounds, and their dams, should be marketed as pairs. At this point all the easy culling decisions have been made.



Cows that fall into this category are thin (BCS 3 and under) middle-aged cows and thin to moderate (BCS 4 and under) first and second calf cows. Both groups will have lower conception rates and wean lighter calves than cows in better body condition. This process will normally identify another 0-10% of the herd. When cows were sorted on calf quality or pregnancy status, most cows with low rebreeding potential would have been identified for culling. Further culling will require eight year old or older cows to be sold despite condition or current production status. Aged cows will be the first to decline in production potential in the future. Many producers will sell all older cows (6 and over) and keep all replacement heifers, first-, second- and third-calf cattle. By doing so, the most productive animals are sold and cows that will wean the lightest calves and have the lowest rebreeding potential are kept. Age culling will normally identify another 5-10% of the cow herd. Many cows in this category will have been culled in previous culling steps. After the herd is culled to this point, the only cow culling option left is based on uniformity. Sell the smaller and the larger end of the cows. Some culling on uniformity can be done a step or two earlier in this strategy outline, but the other steps will identify cattle with lower production potential.

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Beyond this point, destocking options are limited to selling remaining calves and liquidating the herd. By this time all that will be left are 4-7 year-old cows that represent only 10-30% of the original cow herd. Most producers will try to purchase feed to keep the nucleus of the breeding herd together. At times a lifetime of work and dedication to building a herd is at stake. From a purely economic standpoint purchasing forage to maintain the remaining cows cannot be justified. There are many times when emotions overcome common sense and sound economics. There is nothing wrong with that phenomenon as long as the short term emotions do not jeopardize the long term survival of the ranching enterprise or the economic security of the family.



CONGRESS, INTENT ON NAIS, IGNORES LIVESTOCK PRODUCERS

Efforts by the beef industry to keep Congress from making a National Animal Identification System (NAIS) mandatory may be futile as it seems the momentum is swinging in favor of creating such a database.

Testimony was delivered to the House Subcommittee on Livestock, Dairy and Poultry recently from both sides of the issue, but it was clear that NAIS opponents were not to have their concerns heard. After hours of testimony in favor of NAIS were given by academics and government officials from the U.S. Canada and Australia, just 10 minutes of time were reserved for rebuttals, split between two livestock groups.



Two Horses in East Texas Die from Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE); Vaccinate Your Horses and Protect Against Mosquito Exposure!

By Carla Everett, TAHC

Two horses, one in Jasper County and the other in Newton County, in East Texas have died from Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE). Humans also are susceptible to EEE, which causes inflammation of the brain. The disease is spread by mosquitoes, and measures should be taken to prevent human and animal

exposure to the biting pests.

“As part of their routine health care, horses in all parts of the state should be vaccinated to protect against dangerous mosquito-borne diseases, including West Nile Virus, and Eastern and Western Equine Encephalitis (EEE and WEE),” said Dr. Bob Hillman, Texas’ state veterinarian and head of the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC), the state’s livestock and poultry health regulatory agency.

“It takes a week to 10 days after vaccination for the animal to develop protective antibodies, and booster shots must be administered as directed by the vaccine manufacturer to maintain the highest level of protection,” he said. “As effective as vaccines are, however, they are not foolproof, and rare instances of disease can occur. Therefore, it is essential that you protect yourself and your horses against mosquito exposure with a repellent containing DEET.”

Dr. Hillman also said other preventive measures should include draining stagnant water, where mosquitoes can breed, and using approved products that kill mosquito larvae in desired water sources, such as troughs, ponds and fountains. Avoid being outside at night or at dawn, when mosquitoes are most active, wear long sleeves when possible, and consider sheltering horses at night.

“Contact your veterinarian immediately, if your horse acts erratically, is confused, staggers or collapses. These are clinical signs of an encephalitic, or brain inflammation, condition, and a blood test is needed to confirm the diagnosis. With appropriate supportive care, about half of infected horses may survive. An infected horse will not spread the West Nile Virus, EEE or WEE to humans,” said Dr. Hillman. Although they are not regulatory diseases, these mosquito-spread infections are reportable to the TAHC, due to their potential to cause human illness. In 2009, a horse in Washington County, also in East Texas, has been confirmed to have West Nile Virus.

EEE also has been reported in July in horses in Florida, Louisiana, Missouri and Virginia.



Car Slump Hits Cattle Industry as Demand for Leather Declines

Trimming the fat from the U.S. auto industry could mean leaner long-term profits for cattle packers and producers, which sell bovine hides for leather car seats and upholstery.

Leather makers already are overloaded with unwanted cattle hides and skins because the global economic downturn has depressed consumer demand for cars and leather goods. Unsold cattle hides in the first quarter of 2009 were significantly discounted for sale, added to mounting inventories or destroyed.



Texas Plant Disease Diagnostic Laboratory Goes Main Stream



The Texas Plant Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (TPDDL) is going high tech in the information world. In the era of “fast” information, the Plant Clinic is experimenting which different ways to connect with our AgriLife Extension faculty and personnel through social networking avenues. The Clinic has a page on Facebook that we try to post interesting happenings, news and photos that are seen at the TPDDL. Come check us out and become a fan on Facebook. Kevin Ong, director of the TPDDL, has just begun tweeting. No! He did not become a bird, but is experimenting with Tweeter. Tweeter is “a service....to communicate and stay connected through exchange of quick, frequent answers...” This micro-blogging service is one avenue to get quick blurbs out about interesting plant disease/plant health issues quickly. You can follow the TPDDL tweet at <http://tweeter.com/txplantclinic> or sign up to follow the tweet on your phone.



South Texas Producers Given Priority in USDA's Grassland Reserve Program

Grassland owners in south Texas, the area hardest hit by the state's drought, will be given priority consideration to participate in USDA's Grassland Reserve Program (GRP), a \$4.2 million conservation program in Texas.

“While GRP is open to anyone who owns grassland, we are giving priority consideration to drought areas so ranchers can protect their land resources through rental agreements or perpetual easements,” said Don Gohmert, state conservationist for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Texas.

Extreme or exceptional drought has been designated in 78 counties in South Texas by the U.S. Drought Monitor. Landowners in these counties can sign-up for GRP to be compensated to defer cattle grazing until grassland conditions improve.

“Areas in South Texas are the driest in the entire country based on USDA's Drought Monitor,” said Juan Garcia, Farm Service Agency (FSA) state executive director for Texas. “By enrolling in GRP, landowners can defer grazing, protect their land, and receive compensation.

GRP is a continuous sign-up program, but landowners are encouraged to apply as soon as possible to be eligible for the 2009 funding cycle, which ends in September.

**Unwanted Pesticides
or Used Motor Oil?
Don't Dump on Texas!
Bring them to this
Free Collection Event for
Proper Disposal!**

**Wednesday, October 28 –
Collection Hours: 8 am – 1pm**

**Guadalupe County
Road and Bridge
2605 N. Guadalupe St.
Seguin, TX 78155
Travis Franke, CEA
830-379-1972, t-franke@tamu.edu**

Rainwater Harvesting Workshops
The Antique Rose Emporium
7561 E. Evans Rd.

Monday, October 26
Rainwater Collection
For In Home Use
6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

Billy Kniffen
Rainwater Harvesting Specialist

Bryan Davis
Natural Resources Agent



Tuesday, October 27
Rainwater Collection for Landscape
and Wildlife
9:30 am - 12:noon

Billy Kniffen
Rainwater Harvesting Specialist

Bryan Davis
Natural Resources Agent

David Rodriguez
Horticulture Agent

Cost of the programs are \$5 per person RSVP by
October 23 to Annette at (210) 467-6575.

Make check payable to:

Bexar County Agriculture Committee

The Bexar Beef Cattle Committee

3355 Cherry Ridge, Suite # 212
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(210) 467-6575

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