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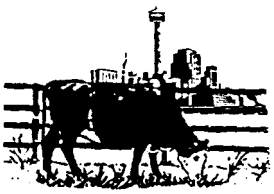
The Bexar County Beef Cattle Newsletter



September - 2003

Private Applicator Trainings

Bexar County Extension office will be conducting a Private Applicators Training on Thursday, September 4th beginning at 8 a.m. located at 3355 Cherry Ridge Dr. S-208, San Antonio. Class is $25 which includes the study manual.

Two CEU Classes Offered

Wednesday, November 5th and December 10th from 9 a.m. till noon at the Bexar County Extension office in S-208. 3 CEU's will be offered for both classes. Details will be finalized by October 1st. Please RSVP by October 29th.

Join Agriculture Commissioner Susan Combs

Wednesday, September 10, 8 a.m. at a Town Hall Meeting in the Atascosa County Livestock Showbarn, 2209 Oaklawn, Hwy. 97 West in Pleasanton. Come to this open forum and discuss issues that are affecting Texas agriculture and rural communities. Some of the issues include: rural economic development, water, agricultural marketing, trade, labor and regulatory issues. For more information contact John McFerrin at 512/463-4879.

Hail Damage To Texas Crops

Two weeks of consecutive hail storms destroyed more than 200,000 acres of cotton in the High Plains. Producers are debating whether to collect insurance on their destroyed crops or wait and hope the crop recovers. Prior to the storms, producers were heavily irrigating their crops. This left the seeds sitting in cold, wet soil and many now have seedling disease. The storms, however, did benefit producers in other ways. This is the first year since 1997 that producers will be able to plant into moisture rich soil.

New Muscle Builder for Cattle

Elanco has received FDA approval to market Optaflexx™ for use in feeding cattle. The active ingredient is ractopamine, the same as in Elanco's swine product Paylean ® . Indications are that the product will increase weight gain, improve feed efficiency, and increase red-meat yield, with no effect on beef tenderness, taste, or juiciness. The product is a beta agonist, not an antibiotic or steroid. As with the swine product, the European Union will not allow its use. The product is expected to be available to feed producers in the next few months.

U.S. Health Officials Restrict Importation Sales Of All Rodents From Africa

Blair Fannin, (979) 845-2259, b-fannin@tamu.edu

Individuals are urged not to release animals exposed or infected with monkeypox into the wild, a Texas Cooperative Extension veterinarian said Thursday.

"Release of exposed or infected animals may result in monkeypox becoming an endemic disease in the United States," said Dr. Bruce Lawhorn, Extension veterinarian with the College of Veterinary Medicine department of large animal medicine and surgery at Texas A&M University. "Every community and individual needs to do their part to prevent this from happening."

U.S. health officials on Wednesday prohibited the importation of all rodents from Africa and placed a ban on the movement of prairie dogs, which have been linked to the recent outbreak of monkeypox, a rare viral disease capable of being transmitted from affected animals to humans.

A joint order issued by the Centers for Disease Control and the Food and Drug Administration restricts the sale and transportation of certain rodents within the United States. A ban has also been placed on the sale and movement of prairie dogs between states and within state boundaries. The order prohibits all dealers, including flea markets, pet stores, wholesale dealers, or individuals from transporting, selling or releasing these animals.

The order includes prairie dogs and the following rodents from Africa: tree squirrels; rope squirrels; Dormices; Gambian giant pouched rats; brush-tailed porcupines and striped mice. The order does not apply to those who transport these animals to veterinarians, animal control officers or other entities pursuant to instructions issued by federal, state or local government authorities.

"Monkeypox got its name because it was first described in sick laboratory monkeys in 1958," said Lawhorn. "However, veterinarians, veterinary technicians, animal control officers, pet store and animal owners need to be aware that a pet rodent, ground squirrel, prairie dog or rabbit with monkeypox will likely be sick and have symptoms such as fever, cough, conjunctivitis, lymph node swelling followed by a rash," he said.

Some affected animals may die while others will recover, according to Lawhorn. Animals that appear healthy but have

been implicated as a probable source of infection for a human case should also be treated as a monkeypox suspect.

"All suspected cases of monkeypox in animals should be reported immediately to state or local health department officials," Lawhorn said.

Special handling and infection control procedures for health care professionals and paraprofessionals and animal control personnel are available at the Centers for Disease Control Web site http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/monkeypox .

In humans, the clinical features of monkeypox are very similar to those of smallpox, except that lymph node swelling is associated with monkeypox. About 12 days after exposure, sickness begins with fever, headache, muscle aches, backache, swollen lymph nodes, overall feeling of discomfort, and exhaustion.

Within one to three days (sometimes longer) after the start of fever, a raised rash occurs, often first on the face but sometimes initially on other parts of the body. Each rash site goes through a vesicle and pustular lesion stage, followed by crusting and scab formation; the scabs then fall off. The entire illness lasts about two to four weeks. The fatality rate for monkeypox in Africa is as high as 10 percent of those people who are infected; this compares to a 30 percent case fatality rate for smallpox (variola major), before it was eradicated worldwide.

Limited person-to-person spread of monkeypox has been reported in disease-endemic areas in Africa, according to health officials. Contrast this with the very rapid spread of smallpox from person-to-person, Lawhorn noted.

Health officials have said the virus entered the United States via imported rodent species from Africa. The transmission of the virus likely occurred in the storage and handling of the imported rodents during sale and distribution within the United States. It resulted in secondary transmission to domestic prairie dogs housed in the same animal holding facility or pet shop.

"Since a monkeypox outbreak like this has never before occurred in the U.S., no one really knows the complete host range of mammals that might be infected," Lawhorn said. "The broad host range for monkeypox is what enables it to survive in nature. One of the reasons that worldwide smallpox eradication was possible was because of its extremely narrow host range."

Lawhorn stressed the importance of not releasing animals that are exposed or infected with monkeypox into the wild. All suspected cases of monkeypox should be reported immediately to state or local health department officials directly or through your veterinarian, Lawhorn added.

As of Wednesday, health officials confirmed a total of nine human cases of the disease - four in Wisconsin, four in Indiana and one in Illinois. No one has died from the disease.

Health officials have recommended smallpox vaccination for people exposed to monkeypox. The smallpox vaccine can prevent monkeypox for up to two weeks after exposure to the virus, but is most effective in the first four days.

For more information, Extension has a fact sheet titled "Bioterrorism Preparedness: Smallpox and Related Viruses" available on the Web at http://tcebookstore.org/pubinfo.cfm?pubid=1570 or refer to the Centers for Disease Control at http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/monkeypox . Also, go to the Texas Department of Health at http://www.tdh.state.tx.us/default.htm

Weaned Calf Price, When Is It Highest?

Compiled by Joe Pena, Extension Economist Management

The majority of cow/calf producers sell calves at weaning. When do weaned calves bring the highest price? According to Harlan Hughes, North Dakota State economist, this has changed a little over time, moving from June to April. Still, calves that are weaned and sold then are born in the fall. And cost of production for fall-born calves is generally higher than for spring-born, because you're wintering a cow that is lactating instead of dry. Beyond April, prices have tended to decline into the fall. But Hughes says in recent years there has been a "mini-peak" in calf prices in September, before dropping considerably in October and November.

Mid-Year Cattle Inventory Down 1.1 Percent: Markets Improve Indications of Inventory Expansion

Compiled by Joe Pena, Extension Economist Management

The cattle market has continued to show strength after the mid-June weakness. The recent weakness appeared related to uncertainty associated with reports of mad cow disease in Canada in May. Since then, the market that been showing improvement, apparently in anticipation of a lower mid-year inventory. USDA banned Canadian Cattle imports after the mad cow disease reports. Last week, rumors that USDA might phase out the ban since Canada was considering a ban on U.S. beef imports in retaliation, did not materialize. Cattle futures rose the limit and continued to show strength as it appeared that the ban on Canadian cattle imports will go on for several more weeks. Beef demand appears good in spite of recent events which affect the market. Also, it appears that the residual market weakness as a result of the 9-11 disaster if finally behind us. The continued inventory decline, especially reduced supplies of calves, appears to support a relatively good market outlook for at least the next two seasons.

Herd Expansion

While the last five cattle inventory reports (Jan. 1 and mid-year) appeared to indicate that herd re-building was probable, an expansion of the herd failed to materialize. Persistent dry periods since the major drought of 1996, especially the very dry springs of 2002 and 2003 and weak fed cattle prices appeared to have discouraged an expansion. Producers have continued to reduce their breeding herds since 1995. While extended dry periods and post 9-11 market weakness may have discouraged

the industry, this year's mid-year report again appears to indicate that herd re-building may be gradually underway. In additional, if the Canadian beef import ban remains in place through late summer, fed cattle prices should hold or improve slightly over current levels and will help the market. Further market improvement may encourage re-building.

While the cattle inventory is continuing to decline, the rate of decline appears to be slowing down. The total number of beef cows and heifers that have calved at 33.6 million head was down 0.4 percent from last year and down 0.9 percent from an inventory of 33.9 million head two years ago. This slow-down of the breeding herd liquidation rate appears to indicate that the liquidation phase may have bottomed and a herd expansion may be underway. In addition, while pastures and ranges are gradually recovering from this spring's drought, indications of abundant supplies of forage as a result of excellent June-July rains may encourage producers to retain heifers for the breeding herd rather than place them on feed.

The slow-down is further indicated in the beef cow replacement rate. The July 1, 2003 inventory of beef heifers kept for breeding at 4.6 million head has remained the same for the past two years. The inventory of other heifers (feedlot heifers) at 7.7 million head was down 2.5 percent from 7.9 million a year ago, and down 6.1 percent from an inventory of 8.2 million head tow years ago. According to USDA's July 18, 2003, Cattle on Feed report, as of July '03, heifers and heifer calves on feed at 3.751 million head were down 5.6 percent from last year and 15.6 percent below the same period in 2001.

High Calf Prices

The 2003 calf crop is estimated at 38.0 million head, down 0.5 percent from calf crop of 38.193 million of 2002 and down 0.7 percent from a calf crop of 38.28 in 2001.

In addition, USDA's July 11, 2003 supply/demand report pegged the U.S. corn corp as 10.27 billion bushels, up 14.0 percent from last year's crop of 9.0 billion bushels, causing futures price bids for corn commodity contract to establish new life-of-contract lows. This could indicate that corn and the cost of gain will remain relatively inexpensive in relation to the price of calves, feeders and slaughter.

Market

It appears that market strength will continue. Demand appears good despite the set backs mentioned above and the estimate of red meat supplies are down. Market weakness associated with the impact of the 9-11 disaster and a weakening U.S. economy appears behind us. Also, it appears that this summer's market weakness as a result of mad cow disease reports from Canada appear to be fading. The reduced inventory and good demand appear to indicate continued market strength for, at least, the next two seasons. Keep in mind, however, that the recent market strength is associated with the ban of cattle imports from Canada. Trade with Canada will be re-opened sometime in the near future. The market is expected to react to this trade.

Beef Quality Assurance Training

Beef producers can get free training to help them become more competitive by attending the Texas Beef Quality Producer training sessions. Fall programs have been scheduled for: Sulphur Springs, Thursday, Oct. 9 at the Civic Center, Overton, Friday, Oct. 10 at the Research Center, Buffalo, Wednesday, Oct. 29 at the Civic Center and Glen Rose, Thursday, Nov. 13, Somerville County Expo Center. RSVP at least a week ahead to TSCRA at 1/800/242-7820 ext. 118 and ask for Mark Perrier. The Texas Beef Quality Producer Program is a multi-level program that teaches the principles of Beef Quality Assurance, a proven system of sensible management practices that help improve the quality and safety of beef.

The program is a cooperative effort among Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association, Texas Cooperative Extension and the Texas Beef Council. Texas Veterinary Medical Association provides valuable input.

The Bexar County Beef Cattle Newsletter
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September 2003

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OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunity	Location	Date	Contact
Private Applicator Training	Bexar County Extension office	Sept. 5	Pam 210/467-6575
Town Hall Meeting	Atascosa County Livestock Showbarn	Sept. 10	John 512/463-4879
CEU Workshops	Bexar County Extension office "	Nov. 5 Dec. 10	RSVP to Pam 210/467-6575

Fire Ant Awareness Week is

September 7-13, 2003

Nathan Riggs, Extension Agent -
Integrated Pest Management, Bexar County

Fall (September and October) is the best time to treat fire ants because they generally slow down during the winter. Extension urges homeowners to use bait insecticides against fire ants in the fall because baits can be broadcasted and left to serve their purpose. In the fall, faster-acting baits produce better results because they begin to act before cool weather arrives. All fire ant baits are formulated with corn and oil-the oil being the attractant for the ants. They suck the oil (which contains the active ingredient) from the corn and pass it along to the other ants in the colony, including the queens.

When considering which bait to use, one must consider the site on which it will be applied. If you are treating an area where food animals (cows, sheep, goats) are grazing, then Amdro® or Justice® fire ant bait are the only fast-acting bait options available. Amdro® may also be applied around horses, but not allowed around chickens or other fowl. Amdro® begins to work within 7 to 10 days when broadcasted at the rate of 1 lb/acre or 3 to 6 days if used as a mound treatment. Justice® begins to work in as little as two days when applied to individual mounds. Justice is not recommended as a broadcast-applied bait. Logic® hormonal fire ant bait has long been a familiar fire ant remedy in the war on fire ants. However, using Logic® in the fall will not bring desirable results until March or April of the following year. Having said that, Logic® is still a good option for spring use. It is approved for use around homesteads and in horse pastures ONLY. This is due to the fact that horses are not considered food animals in the U.S. Hormonal fire ant baits act on the fire ant queen's reproductive system, preventing the production of fertile eggs, and also help prevent the development of ant larvae to the adult stage. The same broadcast rates apply with Logic® (1lb/acre) but complete coverage is not necessary as with Amdro®. Extinguish™ is another bait option for the spring. It is another slow-acting hormonal bait with activity similar to Logic®. Extinguish™ may be applied to cropland (including vegetable gardens), grazed areas, and rangeland either as a broadcast (1lb/acre) or mound treatment. All broadcast bait applications cost $12 to $15 per acre including labor. Baiting individual mounds increases costs to about $100 per acre in heavy infestations.

For more information on fire ant biology and control, call Nathan at the Bexar County Extension Office (210.467.6575), or e-mail Nathan (n-riggs@tamu.edu) or check out the Texas Fire Ant Program website at http://fireant.tamu.edu for lots of information

Protecting Penned Animals From Fire Ants

(Fire Ant Program Fact Sheet #43)

Nathan L. Riggs, Extension Agent - IPM (Fire Ant Project), Bexar County and Bastiaan M. Drees, Professor and Extension Entomologist

The red imported fire ant, *Solenopsis invicta* Buren (Hymenoptera: Formicidae), poses serious threats to many insects, small mammals and young animals. Although this is true for animals that are roaming free, in a large corral or pasture, confined animals are at an even higher risk of attack. Confined livestock for 4-H or FFA programs (such as rabbits, chickens, pigs, sheep and goats), pets in kennels, horses in stables and exotic animals in zoos are a few just of the many vulnerable areas where fire ants can become a problem.

Fire ants cause a number of problems for managers of penned animals. They are primarily a nuisance because workers coming into contact with ant mounds or sources that have attracted ants can suffer from multiple stings that may be medically serious (see Fire Ant Plan Fact Sheet, FAPFS #023, on the Texas Fire Ant Project web site, http://fireant.tamu.edu). Occasionally, foraging ants are recruited to moisture associated with newly born or hatching animals, stinging animals multiple times and occasionally killing them (see FAPFS022). In addition, the ants are attracted to electrical and utility units and can cause equipment failure (see FAPFS011).

Attraction to manure and feed. Fire ants are omnivorous, feeding on a variety of food sources, although certain insects are their primary food source. They are also attracted to sources of water when conditions are dry. Many times, confined animals produce manure that breeds high populations of flies and other manure or dung-feeding insects. Fire ants are naturally attracted to these areas and build nests nearby with foraging trails that lead into the penned area. Not only can the fire ants feed on the manure insects in the pen, but they are also attracted to many types of animal feed. Fire ants have been known to feed on dry dog food, livestock feeds containing molasses and other types of "sweet" or oil-containing feeds. An animal may also be stung in the mouth if it feeds on fire ant-infested feed. Animals may go off such infested feed for a short period of time.

Prevention and control considerations. Integrated pest management considerations and management alternatives for eliminating problems caused by red imported fire ants include cultural, non-chemical practices as well as judicious use of selected insecticides (see Texas Cooperative Extension publications B-6043, "Managing Imported Fire Ants in Urban Areas," and B-6076, "Managing Red Imported Fire Ants in Agriculture", and FAPFS019, "Red Imported Fire Ant Management Considerations for Beekeepers").

Non-chemical preventive practices. To keep fire ants from causing these problems, only give the amount of feed that the animal can eat and not leave any remaining in the bunk or bowl. Also be sure that the feed or food is stored in a way that ants cannot get into it. Some pet bowls (e.g., Fool-A-Bug®) claim to prevent insects from accessing food.

Keep cages and premises as clean of all food sources and sources of water as possible. Remove excrement, soiled bedding, and boards or other debris. Fix leaky faucets and improve drainage. For caged fowl, remove cracked eggs.

Ants can get into cages housed on supports or benches by crawling up the legs or support beams. Barriers can be used, such as placing legs in cans of soapy water or other suitable fluid. Other non-insecticidal barrier concepts are discussed in B-6043. In addition, ants occasionally gain access by crawling on objects such as tree limbs, clothes or electrical cords (not major power lines) touching or connected to the cages. These should be removed and/or re-positioned to prevent ant entry, taking care and using safe practices including cutting off power before performing this activity.

Regularly inspect the area around the pens for fire ant mounds (see FAPFS007), properly identifying the ant species (see FAPFS010 & 013) and consider all management options (see FAPFS012).

Chemical control options. Always select products with directions for treating the site(s) where the animals are located. Fire ant baits are recognized as one of the least toxic approaches for treating fire ants around animals (see B-6099, "Broadcast baits for fire ant control," and FAPFS014, "Fire ant control methods around pets"). In the case of goats, sheep, cattle, horses, pigs, and dogs in outdoor corrals and other animal holding areas, certain fire ant bait products (e.g., Extinguish®, containing s-methoprene; Amdro®Pro or Siege®Pro, containing hydramethylnon) can be broadcasted applied as directed at a rate of 2 to 3 oz/ 5,000 sq. ft. or 1½ lbs per acre or applied to individual ant mounds. Avoid direct exposure of animals to bait granules. Justice®, containing spinosad, should be applied at 1½ oz / 1000 ft^2 or 3 lbs per acre, but it is not registered for broadcast application in pastureland. Whenever feasible, treat an area around the penned animals at least 120 ft. wide for maximum protection of these sensitive sites from ants foraging from nearby colonies (Martin et al. 1998. SW Entomol. 23:221-228).

Treating around rabbit cages should involve a combination of fire ant bait products applied beneath and around the vicinity of the cages and, if necessary, application of a long-acting contact insecticide to the cage legs and ground around supports to prevent fire ants from getting into cages. One product, Y-Tex® GardStar® 40% EC containing permethrin, is registered for treating fire ants in and around pens and kennels and can be used both as a surface spray and a mound drench. Take all necessary precautions to see that the sprays do not contact the rabbits or their cages.

For poultry and caged fowl, treatment options must include careful planning (see B-6076 for management options for poultry houses, livestock barns and feedlots). For caged birds not in contact with the ground, fire ant bait products registered for use in these sites will work well, although ants may be more attracted to competing food sources if sanitation practices are poor. If birds (including ratites - ostriches and emus) are housed on the ground in pens or yards, chickens, ducks or turkeys will eat any bait particles they can reach. In those cases, confine birds in their enclosure prior to applying the bait to the yard, or apply in such a way the birds can not reach the bait. Also, if concerned about fowl eating bait, consider applying the bait at night while the birds are roosting. In warm weather, fire ants will usually collect most of the bait by morning.

Many other types of treatments for individual imported fire ant mounds may be suitable for use around animal pens, including hot water drenches or products containing orange oil containing d-limonene and synergized pyrethrins (see FAPFS012, 036, 039). Some of these alternatives are considered "organic" and leave very little, if any, residues and will provide relatively fast control of offending fire ant mounds. All things considered, it is still difficult to totally protect penned animals from fire ant stings. This fact sheet will provide some clues and suggestions for reducing the potential for fire ant-related problems.

Acknowledgments. The author wishes to thank Dr. Kathy Flanders, Extension Entomologist, Auburn University, Dr. Bruce Lawhorn, DVM with the College of Veterinary Medicine, and Dr. Jeffery K. Tomberlin, Extension Livestock Entomology Specialist, Texas Cooperative Extension for their review of this manuscript.

For more information on fire ant management, see Extension publications B-6043, *Managing Red Imported Fire Ants in Urban Areas*; B-6076, *Managing Red Imported Fire Ants in Agriculture*; B-6099, *Broadcast Baits for Fire Ant Control*; or L-5070 *The Texas Two-Step Method Do-It-Yourself Fire Ant Control for Homes and Neighborhoods*. Also visit our web site at http://fireant.tamu.edu.