

## *The Bexar County Beef Cattle Newsletter*

June - 2005

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### **Introducing New Bexar County Natural Resource Agent**



**N**elson Diarte has joined Texas Cooperative Extension as the new agent for natural resources in Bexar County. He will coordinate a variety of programs related to natural resource conservation and protection.

Diarte has more than 20 years experience in farming, including 10 years experience helping small farmers and families with agricultural development and resource management.

Diarte will work with several water management organizations throughout the county on conservation and quality. This will include working with San Antonio Water System to promote the Seasonal Irrigation Program, a joint Extension and SAWS program that reduces household water use by millions of gallons annually.

Diarte's professional experience ranges from working as an Ag. Extension Agent, to an Area Field Supervisor in Paraguay's agriculture ministry to a technical trainer for the Peace Corps and adjunct professor at the Universidad Nacional de Asunción.

He has a master's degree in agricultural education and certificate in international agriculture and resource management from Texas A&M University. He has received both Fulbright and Paraguay-Kansas Partners scholarships.

### **Private Applicator Training**

**B**exar County Extension Office will be conducting a Private Application Training on Thursday, June 2, 2005 beginning at 8:30 a.m. located at 3355 Cherry Ridge Dr., Ste 208. Class is \$25.00 which includes the manual and worksheet. Please contact Sheilah at 210/467-6575 for more information.

### **Bexar County Beef Cattle Scholarship Winners!**

Congratulations to Kimberly Littlefield and Stacie Mahan. They will each receive a \$500.00 scholarship, from the Beef Cattle Committee, toward their college career.

### **Ranch Estate Planning- "Keep the Ranch in the Family"**

**S**ome of the topics covered will include: The Will; A Living Trust; Estate Tax Deferral; Special Use Land Valuation; Life Insurance and It's Role in Estate Planning, and much more.

**Date:** August 3 - 5, 2005

**Place:** Texas A&M~ College Station Conference Center

**Cost:** \$100.00 includes materials, refreshments, and lunch

For further information please call 979/845-2226 or Email Sharon, [s-wehring@tamu.edu](mailto:s-wehring@tamu.edu).

Also, join the Animal Science Department at the **Beef Cattle Short Course and Trade Show**, August 1-3, 2005.

For more information contact: Larry Boleman or Veronica Rosas at 979/845-3579

### **Landowner Educational Series**

**T**exas Cooperative Extension – Comal County will be conducting a series of educational meetings (from May through October) to address topics that are important to all landowners in Comal County. The Comal County Program Council Ag and Natural Resources Committee sponsor the series of meetings and field days. The committee has put together a diverse set of topics (some of which will include CEU opportunities) that should be of interest to all landowners.

For further information please contact Glenn Avriett, CEA/NR, at (830) 620-3440.

## 2005 Bexar/Comal/Guadalupe County Beef Cattle

**Field Day-** *Jerry Warren, Ag-Agent Bexar County*



The threat of rain and thunderstorms did little to squash the enthusiasm of approximately 120 people that attended the Beef Cattle Field Day at the Connell Life Skills and Livestock Center at

Boysville on Saturday, May 14, 2005.

This program focused on the co-existing of wildlife and cattle operations. Program topics included Pasture Plant Identification suitable for wildlife, by Dr. Jim Cathey, Extension Wildlife Specialist, Uvalde; Brush Control, by Dr. Bob Lyons-Extension Range Specialist, Uvalde; Cattle Conditioning-what the optimum level is to maintain a healthy cow-calf operation, by Dr. Rick Machen, Extension Livestock Specialist, Uvalde, Ferol Hogs (Trapping and Control Management, by Leroy Moczygemba (Hog Trapper), and Helen Holdsworth, Texas Wildlife Association.

The program offered hands on demonstrations of different designs for Hog Traps and brush spraying techniques.

Attendees were treated with a Bar-B-Q lunch catered by Grady's Bar-B-Q and refreshments that were furnished by our sponsors; Bill's Tractor, St. Hedwig Feed, Elanco, and

The event was coordinated by the Bexar County Beef Cattle Committee and the Extension offices in Bexar, Comal and Guadalupe counties.

### Texas Livestock Health Officials to Randomly Select Cattle for TB Testing

*Texas Animal Health Commission*



**T**exas livestock health officials will randomly select nearly 2,000 of the state's purebred or seed stock beef herds for cattle tuberculosis (TB) testing this summer, to fulfill disease surveillance obligations of the Texas Cattle TB plan. The blueprint for regaining Texas' TB-free status was developed in 2002 by cattle industry representatives, with a recommendation for the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) to implement a TB testing effort. The plan calls for TB testing all of the state's 811 dairies and about 2,400 purebred or seed stock beef herds. Dairy herd testing has been completed, but only about 500 owners of purebred or seed stock beef herds have volunteered

their herd for a test. Federal funds for herd testing "expire" October 1, so the TAHC is tackling the problem with a high-tech version of drawing names from a hat.

"In early March, we reconvened the Texas TB Task Force, which included leaders from the purebred cattle industry, to determine how to get herds tested and meet the agreement made with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which has funded the plan," said Dr. Bob Hillman, Texas' state veterinarian and executive director of the TAHC, the state's livestock and poultry health regulatory agency. "Random selection of herds was seen as the most equitable way to complete a statistically valid disease surveillance of purebred and seed stock cattle herds. By mid-April, a computer program will pick names from a database listing purebred and seed stock producers. We then will contact the ranchers to line up the test that will be conducted by private veterinarians at no cost to the herd owner."

"We will try to accommodate ranchers' schedules, and if an owner wants to volunteer their cattle for TB testing, we welcome their participation," he said. "No herd is too small for testing." Dr. Hillman said more than 500 private veterinary practitioners in Texas have completed additional TB training and are on contract with the TAHC to conduct herd tests. To volunteer herds for a test, locate a contract veterinarian, or obtain information, ranchers should contact their local TAHC area office or the TAHC headquarters in Austin at 1-800-550-8242.

Dr. Hillman explained that dairies, purebred and seed stock beef herds were targeted for testing, because, during the past 22 years, TB has been detected in 15 Texas dairies and six purebred cattle herds in nine counties, including El Paso, Karnes, Comanche, Pecos, Uvalde, Fayette, Culberson, Grayson, Zavala and Hamilton counties. Dr. Hillman stressed that dairy and purebred beef cattle are no more susceptible to TB than commercial cattle, but they usually are maintained in more confined conditions, which are conducive to TB transmission. He pointed out that milk from the dairies is safe, as pasteurization, or heat treatment, kills the bacteria. Meat also is safe, as carcasses are inspected for wholesomeness at slaughter, and cooking meat also kills bacteria.

In 2000, Texas gained cattle TB-free status, with the exception of the El Paso Milk Shed, where dairies with low levels of recurring infection were still present. In

2002, the USDA pulled Texas' 'free' status, after two infected herds were detected and depopulated, explained Dr. Hillman. A third TB-infected herd was detected and depopulated shortly afterward. During the statewide dairy testing, which involved more than 335,000 head, an infected herd was identified in Hamilton County and was depopulated in 2004.

“Completing the disease surveillance of the purebred and seed stock beef herds is extremely important,” stressed Dr. Hillman. “It will allow Texas to fulfill its agreement with the USDA and states that receive Texas cattle. We can then move forward to regain TB-free status and avoid interstate movement restrictions on Texas cattle. Secondly, it will provide Texas ranchers the assurance that there is no undetected infection in these valuable herds.”

Dr. Hillman said other segments of the TB plan are ongoing and include:

- testing dairy and breeding cattle being moved from Texas
- improved slaughter inspection by the USDA's Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS)
- requiring yearly TB tests on roping steers imported from Mexico
- continuing work with Mexican states on TB control and eradication

“Cattle TB is not a disease we can learn to ‘live with,’” stressed Dr. Hillman. “The contagious TB bacteria can cause cattle to develop internal lesions, and in rare instances, can cause human illness. Regaining cattle TB-free status must be a priority. In Texas, 2,000 ranchers will make a profound difference by completing this disease surveillance effort.”

### **Electrical Safety Awareness Sheds Light on Hidden Farm Hazard**

*David W. Smith, Extension Farm Safety*

**A**mong all farm hazards, electricity is the one most commonly overlooked. According to the National Safety Council, more than 500 people die from electrocution each year. The Bureau of Labor Statistics – Census of Fatal Occupational Industries ranks agriculture second in number of electrocution deaths among major industries. In 2004 Congress declared May National Electric Safety Month in an effort to promote electrical safety.

When most people consider all the dangers that exist on farms, tractors, machinery, and livestock are usually at the top of the list. After all, these hazards are visible and resulting injuries are often serious. In observance of National Electrical Safety Month, farm families and farm workers should also consider the potential electrical hazards in the farm environment. Even a small amount of exposure to electrical current is dangerous. It takes less than 15 milliamperes to produce a painful shock. This is only a fraction of the electrical current needed to power a 60-watt light bulb, which draws about 500 milliamperes. More than 20 milliamperes of current can be deadly, especially to small children. An average electrical circuit in a home or barn will draw 20 to 30 amps. Potential farm electrical hazards exist anywhere you have electrical equipment in the vicinity of water, such as electricity-powered center pivot irrigation systems and pumps near ponds or manure pits. Contact with overhead power lines claims many lives each year, as workers move grain augers, maneuver irrigation pipe, and use tractors to transport tall machinery. Insulated electrical wiring in old barns and building that is damaged by rodents or animals, exposes workers to live wires and increasing the risk of fires. Electrical circuits on motors and other machinery that do not have adequate grounding is just an accident waiting to happen.

Take this anniversary of National Electrical Safety Month to discuss electrical hazards with your family and farm workers. Use this opportunity to share the following safety tips.

- Inspect center pivot irrigation systems and pump motors for proper grounding and test for stray current. Be sure to turn off the main electrical supply before making any repairs.
- Clearly mark existing overhead power lines where tall equipment will be moved. Make sure all farm workers are aware of the danger.
- Inspect barn wiring, electrical connections, and power outlet boxes. Replace wire with exposed insulation and make sure all electrical boxes are grounded and have safety shields.
- Throw away damaged extension cords. Never use them as a rope to tie or hold objects. Trim tree limbs clear of power lines, and never let children climb in trees close to power lines.

For more information on electrical safety on the farm, visit the Agricultural Health and Safety web sit at <http://agsafety@tamu.edu>.

## Feral Hogs Making a Mess of Texas

*Betsy Blaney, Associated Press*



**W**ild hogs are mangling fields and pastures with their razor-sharp tusks. They're wrecking ecosystems by wallowing in streambeds. They're even killing and eating smaller animals.

In short, the nation's largest feral hog population is making a mess of Texas.

Farmers and ranchers - who sustain an estimated \$52 million annually in damage at the snouts of the rapidly growing wild hog population - are asking the Legislature and hunters for help controlling the estimated 2 million animals.

"Bring an AK-47, because that's what you'll need," Canton cattlerancher Don Metch said.

The nocturnal, omnivorous hogs can grow to 400 pounds and have four fierce-looking tusks that can extend five inches from their top and bottom jaws. They're more bristly and muscular than domestic pigs, and they can be ill-tempered when cornered.

Feral hogs are found in 230 of the state's 254 counties, according to Texas Parks and Wildlife Department estimates. Nationwide, hogs number 4 million in 42 states, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates.

They're spreading into states where they haven't been seen before, such as Illinois and Kansas, said Eric Hellgren, a professor of wildlife ecology at Oklahoma State University.

The Texas Department of Agriculture has asked legislators for \$500,000 to start a two-year pilot program to study the hogs in hopes of controlling them. In the meantime, Texas relies on its year-round hunting season.

Still, the hogs are causing all sorts of damage in the nation's No. 2 agriculture state. They uproot sweet potatoes, peanuts, corn, rice and other crops. So keen are their snouts that hogs can pull up plants one by one. But they're typically not so tidy and just tear up pastures. Sweet potato farmers have reported dozens of

acres destroyed in one night. Beef producers say the hogs knock down fences and tear holes in pasture to get to grass roots and grub worms. They also kill goats, sheep and other small livestock.

"When I mowed that pasture, it was like riding a rodeo horse," said Metch, the Canton cattle rancher. "They're nasty, and they got big appetites, and they're multiplying."

The hogs are descendants of domestic pigs brought to America in the 1600s by French and Spanish explorers, and of Eurasian boars brought for hunting in the early 1900s.

They reproduce so rapidly that there's a joke among wildlife officials: When a sow has six piglets, you can expect eight to survive.

Sows can have two litters a year, and their female offspring can get pregnant as early as six months. "It all paints a picture of very rapid expansion," said Billy Higginbotham, a Texas Cooperative Extension wildlife and fishery specialist.

Two years ago in East Texas, the damage was so bad that Van Zandt County officials offered a \$7 bounty for a matched set of hogs ears. The program ended in 2004 after residents cashed in on more than 2,000 hogs.

But wildlife officials hope hunters keep on hunting - and even expand their efforts.

"What we need is more processing plants," said Brian Cummins, an extension agent in Van Zandt County. "And a good sausage recipe."

## Are the Cows, Bull Ready for Breeding Season?

*Country World*

**B**eef cattle breeding season will begin soon. That means cattle should be receiving adequate nutrition, Texas Cooperative Extension reports.

Although cattle are reproductively active throughout the year, spring is "deal calving season" for most of Texas, said Dr. Joe Paschal of Corpus Christi, Extension livestock specialist.

With 13.8 million head, Texas ranks as the leading state for cattle and calves, according to the National Ag Statistics Service. About 70 percent to 75 percent are born during the spring.

Spring is the best calving time because more forage is available.

“(Forage) provides adequate nutrition to the cow and her calf through the milk,” Paschal said.

To calve during the spring a cow must be bred about nine and a half months earlier, said Paschal.

The abundance of spring-born calves can affect the following fall market when the calves are weaned, Paschal said. “Early in September, the market raises as the demand for feeder calves increases. Then sometime in October, the demand is overwhelmed by the supply and prices begin to slip,” he said.

Calves are born all year, but Dr. Bruce Carpenter of Fort Stockton, Extension livestock specialist, said the rule of thumb for almost all of Texas is “do not calve in the summer: too hot, too stressful.” The exception is Far West Texas where summer rain and cool nights are normal.

“The key is to have cows enter the calving season in good body condition; no ribs showing,” Carpenter said. “After (the cow) has had a baby, it is usually too late to change her condition with supplemental feed.”

According to the Texas A&M University department of animal science website (<http://animalscience.tamu.edu>) body condition is a system used to judge a cow’s nutritional condition. It is scored using a nine-point scale with one being very thin and nine being extremely fat.

“Basically, body condition is just gauging the level of fatness,” Paschal said.

Body condition is also a factor to successful breeding.

“Cows that are in poor condition either at calving or breeding, do not have estrous cycles and the vast majority do not breed back, Carpenter said. “If they do, they breed back late, becoming late calvers, placing them at risk next year for breeding failure.”

Cows to be bred should have a body condition of at least five, Paschal said, which means moderate condition. Heifers to be bred should have a body condition at least five, Paschal said, which means moderate condition. Heifers to be bred should have a body condition of at least five, Paschal said, which means moderate condition. Heifers to be bred should

have a body condition of at least six, or moderate to good body condition.

Technology has introduced other breeding options, such as artificial insemination and embryo transfer. However, these methods aren’t beneficial for all cattle operations.

“Artificial insemination and embryo transfer are tools,” Carpenter said. “Like any tool, each is right for some jobs and not others.”

Both offer ways to access high to very high quality genetics, he said, but not without costs.

Before using one of these methods, Carpenter said, producers should ask themselves two things, “One: what their market is, can it be recouped? Two: what their management capabilities are.”

Each method will fail if cows aren’t under good management, he said.

Cattle producers in the Coastal Bend are working fall calving cows, according to Darrell Dromgoole, district Extension administrator in Corpus Christi.

Calves in the Rolling Plains weighed heavier than normal at spring branding, said Galen Chandler, district Extension administrator in Vernon.

Cattle markets are strong in West Central Texas, said Scott Durham, district Extension administrator in San Angelo

## Shoo Fly, Don’t Bother Me or My Cattle



South Texas’ fly population exploded with the onset of warm weather. The population usually begins to rise in May, but the onset began in April this year. The pests’ early arrival is causing problems for cattle. Extension experts report horrific pink eye problems. When horn flies get water cattle’s eyes, they pick up the infection and spread it to other cows. However, there are several options to control the pests. Oilers full of insecticide can be strung around feeding areas. Ear tags infused with insecticide can be applied when cattle are wormed and will provide continual protection for six months. Growth regulators fed to cattle are also commonly used. Experts suggest using a combination of the methods. For more information contact Dr. Jeffery Tomberlin, (254)968-4144.

## Texas Cattle and Calves on Feed Down One Percent From Year Ago

*Southern Livestock Standard*

Cattle and calves on feed for slaughter market in Texas feedlots with capacity of 1,000 head or more totaled 2.62 million head on April 1, down 1 percent from a year ago. According to the monthly report released by the Texas Agricultural Statistics Service, the estimate was down 3 percent from the March 1 level. Producers placed 480,000 head in commercial feedlots during March, down 2 percent from a year ago, but up 41 percent from the February 2005 total. Texas commercial feeders marketed 540,000 head during March, up 2 percent from last year and up 50 percent from the February 2005 total.

On April 1, there were 2.18 million head of cattle and calves on feed in the Northern High Plains, 83 percent of the state's total. The number on feed across the area was down 1 percent from last year, and down 3 percent from the March total.

March placements in the Northern High Plains totaled 417,000 head, up 49 percent from the February total. Marketing were up 57 percent from last month to 468,000 head.

Cattle and calves on feed for slaughter market in the United States in feedlots with a capacity of 1,000 head or more totaled 10.9 million head on April 1, 2004.

Placements in feedlots during March totaled 1.76 million head, 3 percent below March 2004. March placements of cattle and calves weighing less than 600 pounds totaled 299,000 head; 600-699 pounds totaled 320,000 head; 700-799 pounds totaled 614,000 head; 800 pounds and greater totaled 527,000 head. Marketings of fed cattle during March totaled 1.97 million head, up slightly from 2004.

## Beef Consumption Projected Down; 2006 Cattle Prices Forecasted Down

*WASDE*

Total U.S. meat production in 2006 is forecast above 2005 as gains are expected in both red meat and poultry production likely will be constrained by heifer retention and lower cow numbers, normalized trade in cattle less than 30 months old and higher slaughter weights are expected to raise beef production. Pork production is forecast slightly higher as producers continue their cautious expansion. Although returns to hog producers have been good and feed prices are

expected to remain moderate, increased meat supplies are expected to result in lower hog prices, pressuring returns for hog producers during late 2005 and into 2006. Broiler and turkey production is forecast to rise as moderate feed costs and relatively stable broiler and turkey prices encourage expansion. Egg production is forecast higher in 2006 as prices in the latter part of 2005 recover.

Red meat poultry production in 2005 is reduced from last month. The beef production forecast is reduced because slaughter in the second quarter is expected to be lower than previously forecast. Small changes are made to production of other meats. Meat exports in 2006 are forecast higher than 2005 due to increased pork and poultry shipments. Small gains in 2006 beef exports are currently forecast as major markets are assumed closed due to the BSE discovery in 2004. Meat imports are forecast to increase slightly in 2006.

Import forecasts for 2005 are reduced slightly from last month reflecting weaker-than-expected beef and pork shipments during the first quarter. Beef imports are also reduced slightly due to expected short-term disruptions imports of beef from Brazil. The broiler export forecast for 2005 is reduced as first quarter shipments were smaller than previously expected.

Cattle and hog prices in 2006 are forecast to weaken as supplies of meat are expected to increase in broiler production are moderate. Turkey prices are forecast to decline slightly. Egg prices will increase as production increases modestly.

In 2005, the cattle price forecast is increased to \$85 to \$89 per cwt and hogs are raised to \$48 to \$51 per cwt. Tight supplies of cattle and hogs are pushing prices higher. Broiler and turkey prices are unchanged.



## SBA Economic Injury Loans Available

*Business owners urged to apply*



**B**usinesses in some Texas counties can now apply for low interest Economic Injury Disaster Loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). These loans are available to help businesses meet normal operating expenses that cannot be met due to the effects of a disaster. Excessive rain and flash flooding that occurred October 1, 2004, and continuing, caused many farmers and ranchers to experience reduced incomes which may have had an adverse economic effect on businesses depending upon these producers. Farmers and ranchers are not eligible for this loan program but may be eligible for disaster assistance through other

Federal agencies. Businesses in the following counties are eligible to apply:

Bexar	Comal	Hays
Blanco	Guadalupe	Kendall

To obtain an application or receive additional information, interested business owners may call the SBA toll-free at 1-800-366-6303 or TDD 817-267-4688 for the hearing impaired. The deadline for filing an application is October 11, 2005.

## Mailing List

**T**o help defray costs, we are updating our mailing list. If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, please contact Sheilah by phone (210/467-6575) or email at ([sjwright@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:sjwright@ag.tamu.edu)). **Be sure to indicate that you wish to be removed from the Beef Cattle Newsletter list.**

**The Bexar County Beef Cattle Newsletter**  
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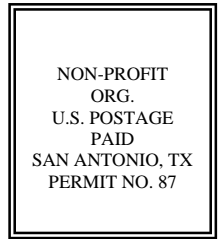
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