AgriLIFE EXTENSION
Texas A&M System

Jack County
100 N Main, Courthouse
Jacksboro TX 76458
940-567-2132
Fax 940-567-2014

Brought to you by your County Agent

Volume 2/10 Issue 3

We're on the Web!
http://jack-tx.tamu.edu

Inside this issue:

Explore the Texas AgriLIfe Extension bookstore at the following web address https://agrilifebookstore.org

Heath Lusty, BS, MS
County Agent Agriculture & Natural Resources.

USDA announces new framework for animal disease traceability

Source: TSCRA

Agriculture Secretary Vilsack announced Friday that USDA will develop a new, flexible framework for animal disease traceability in the United States, and undertake several other actions to further strengthen its disease prevention and response capabilities.

"After concluding our listening tour on the National Animal Identification System in 15 cities across the country, receiving thousands of comments from the public and input from states, tribal nations, industry groups, and representatives for small and organic farmers, it is apparent that a new strategy for animal disease traceability is needed," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "I've decided to revise the prior policy and offer a new approach to animal disease traceability with changes that respond directly to the feedback we heard."

The framework, announced today at the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) Mid-Year meeting, provides the basic tenets of an improved animal disease traceability capability in the U.S. USDA's efforts will:

- Only apply to animals moved in interstate commerce;
- Be administered by the states and tribal nations to provide more flexibility;
- Encourage the use of lower-cost technology; and

Be implemented transparently through federal regulations and the full rulemaking process.

"One of my main goals for this new approach is to build a collaborative process for shaping and implementing our framework for animal disease traceability," said Vilsack. "We are committed to working in partnership with states, tribal nations and industry in the coming months to address many of the details of this framework, and giving ample opportunity for farmers and ranchers and the public to provide us with continued input through this process."

One of USDA's first steps will be to convene a forum with animal health leaders for the states and tribal nations to initiate a dialogue about the possible ways of achieving the flexible, coordinated approach to animal disease traceability we envision. Additionally, USDA will be revamping the Secretary's Advisory Committee on Animal Health to address specific issues, such as confidentiality and liability.

Although USDA has a robust system in place to protect U.S. agriculture, with today's announcement, the Department will also be taking several additional actions to further strengthen protections against the entry and spread of disease. These steps will include accelerating actions to lessen the risk from diseases--such as tuberculosis --posed by imported animals, initiating and updating analyses on how animal diseases travel into the country, improving response capabilities, and focusing on greater collaboration and analyses with states and industry on potential disease risk overall.

More information on USDA's new direction on animal traceability and the steps to improve disease prevention and control is available at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/traceability.

Texas Brigades summer camp registration begins

Registration for the Texas AgriLife Extension Service's Texas Brigades camps this summer has begun. Youth are taught leadership skills and natural resources conservation at the camps, each of which are limited to 20-30 students from ages 13 through 17, said Dr. Dale Rollins, AgriLife Extension wildlife specialist at San Angelo and the concepts originator. "The camps are designed to develop life skills such as critical thinking and team-building through fun and interesting activities that focus on a particular game species," Rollins said.

"As I reflect on my career, the dividends I've witnessed from the Brigades camps are not only professionally rewarding, but they also stoke my fires daily to push for conservation education," he said. "And I believe those same sentiments apply to each and every one of the 100 or so volunteers who assist with the various camps. "A lot of high school students aspire to find a career in wildlife management, but the field has always been highly competitive. Participation in the Brigade camps offers them a chance to get not only a taste for such careers, but also to develop a network of contacts who can help them achieve their career goals. The Brigades network is one big family."

Camp dates and locations:

– 11th Battalion South Texas Buckskin Brigade – Carrizo Springs, June 13-17.

– 18th Battalion Rolling Plains Bobwhite Brigade – Coleman, June 19-23.

– 13th Battalion South Texas Bobwhite Brigade – Campbellton, June 27-July 1.

– 5th Battalion Bass Brigade - Santa Anna, July 12-16.

– 9th Battalion North Texas Buckskin Brigade – Albany, July 18-22.

Parents love the program, said Helen Holdsworth, San Antonio-based Texas Brigades executive director. "We receive many positive reports back from cadets and parents about the Brigades. One father sent a letter recently thanking us for having such an influence on his daughter," Holdsworth said. The father wrote, "Her development, manifested by her newly-heightened initiative, competitiveness and motivation, is in large part to be attributed to her Brigade journey,…"

A young man, who attended both the Bobwhite and Buckskin Brigades, is attending the University of Alabama at Birmingham majoring in political science, Holdsworth said. "He received a 4.0 last semester and credits many of the lessons he learned at camp in helping him be successful in college. We are not just educating Texas youth about wildlife," she said. "We are developing the future leaders of Texas and the nation."

The camps are a partnership effort of the Texas Wildlife Association, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, several universities, conservation groups, local soil and water conservation districts, private businesses and individuals with an interest in wildlife and youth leadership development.

Tuition is $300 per cadet per camp, but sponsors are available to provide financial aid when needed, Rollins said. The Jack County Wildlife Management Association has graciously agreed to sponsor another youth from Jack County to attend The Texas Brigades this year. If you know of an interested youth, please have them contact Heath Lusty, Jack County Extension Agent, at 567-2132.

"We're also always looking for highly motivated adults from 20 to 60 years of age who are willing to serve as 'covey' 'school' or 'herd' leaders," Rollins said. "They'll get a one-of-a-kind intensive workshop in the game species they choose. But even better, they'll get a full helping of appreciation and optimism about today's youth and what a powerful impact they can have on conservation."

Applications may be completed online or downloaded at http://www.texasbrigades.org . For more information, contact Holdsworth h_holdsworth@texas-wildlife.org or Kassi Scheffer at kscheffer@texas-wildlife.org at 800-TEX-WILD or 210-826-2904.

Grain sorghum production workshop set for March 9 near Vernon

A mini-workshop aimed at grain sorghum production in the Rolling Plains has been scheduled for March 9 by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service and the United Sorghum Checkoff Program. The program will be held from 9:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. at the Texas AgriLife Research and Extension Center-Vernon at 11708 U.S. Highway 70 South (just northeast of Lockett on U.S. 70).

Aspects of sorghum production to be discussed include seeding rates, planting dates, hybrid selection, insects, herbicide options and economics, according to Calvin Trostle, AgriLife Extension agronomist in Lubbock. Two continuing education units – one general and one in integrated pest management – will be available, Trostle said. Lunch will be sponsored by the United Sorghum Checkoff Program and will feature an update on the current sorghum checkoff program, he said.

RSVPs are requested by March 8. For more information or to reserve lunch contact Heather Easterling at 940-552-9941, ext. 252, hmeasterling@ag.tamu.edu .

MU researchers are determining why some cows need less food to achieve weight goals

Source: University of Missouri press release

When corn prices increased from $1.50 to $4.75 a bushel, American cattle ranchers were hit hard with higher feed prices. Because feed constitutes approximately 60 percent of production costs, that price hike took many businesses out of the black and into the red. Researchers at the University of Missouri may someday be able to help ranchers identify cattle that mysteriously have the ability to gain weight while eating less. By breeding herds of these otherwise ordinary animals, farmers may be able to decrease one of their significant business costs.

MU researchers are precisely measuring what the test cows eat and drink compared to their weight gain. A computer notes the time of the cow's arrival and departure and how much feed the cow ingests.

Monty Kerley, a professor of nutrition in the Animal Sciences Division of the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, is leading the effort to study why these cows — some of which eat a third less than their pasture mates — are more efficient at using energy for maintenance and growth. At a research facility near Columbia, Mo., his team is monitoring the feed intake and weight gain of cattle thought to be more efficient.

Some cows are just more efficient than others

Farmers have noted for centuries that some cows hit weight targets while eating less than their herd mates. These efficient cows seemed identical to others of the same breed. It was not until science began to understand cell biology that an inkling of a reason began to appear.

The first research on the subject was published in 1963 by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. There, experiments confirmed that some otherwise average cows gained more weight even though they were fed the same amount of feed as other animals. That research was picked up years later in Australia, where it was determined that superior weight gain per a set amount of feed was an inheritable trait that could be passed on to offspring through selective breeding.

More recently in North America, researchers conducting bovine genetic research have confirmed that DNA influences weight gain. Their research indicated that, theoretically, it may be possible to produce cows that require 40 percent less feed per unit of weight gain. "We would love to go to the rancher and say, 'Hey, we can reduce your feed cost 40 percent with the same weight gain,'" said Kerley.

Two years ago, MU researchers started looking for the specific biological phenomenon that creates feed-efficient cattle. With knowledge of the genetic mechanisms, they hope to create a practical plan that farmers can use to breed feed-efficient herds. They are testing animals specifically bred to have this efficiency trait at MU's South Farm Agricultural Experiment Station, a research facility located south of Columbia.

For feed efficiency, look into the cell

The MU team began its research by examining the cellular machinery of efficient cattle. The researchers studied the basic compound that cells use for energy, ATP, *adenosine triphosphate*. The cell subunit responsible for capturing energy as ATP is the mitochondria. Within the mitochondria is a chain reaction, the electron transport chain, which synthesizes ATP. The electron transport chain is a series of proteins aligned together in specific sequence on the mitochondrial membrane.

All biological functions in an animal are regulated by ATP. It has been called the most widely distributed high-energy compound within mammals. About 50 grams of the stuff can be found in humans at any one time. ATP supplies energy for the body to perform work, such as muscle contraction, and for the cells to synthesize the multi-thousands of types of macromolecules that the cell needs to exist.

Like the way a high-energy sports car's use of fuel differs from that of a dump truck, some animals have mitochondria that synthesize ATP faster and more efficiently than that of other animals. Researchers believe animals that synthesize ATP faster reach satiety sooner because their energy needs have been met. When satiety is reached, the animal stops eating because it is no longer hungry.

MU scientists are determining whether rapid ATP synthesis is caused by differences in the proteins that make up the electron transport chain. If these differences can be determined, this knowledge could help ranchers to breed the more efficient cows. The researchers think that they know the genetic traits of the more efficient cows. The next step is to verify the data.

Watching Bossie's weight, electronically

A herd of potentially efficient cows is being studied at MU's South Farm to determine just how feed-efficient they can be. To do this, the researchers are precisely measuring what the test cows eat and drink compared to their weight gain.

Conventional methods of measuring feed intake and periodic weighing wouldn't yield the precise data needed, Kerley said. So, each cow carries an electronic identification tag attached to its ear. When the cow ambles over to a

feed bunk, a computer notes the time of the cow's arrival and departure and how much feed the cow ingests.

When the animal drinks, it stands on a scale that automatically keeps track of its weight. All data are collected on a spreadsheet and then used to calculate residual feed intake – a measure of metabolic efficiency. Ordinary cows are measured as a control group.

The feed/weight system at MU is the only one of its kind in North America. MU animal-science students help coordinate the research, giving them theoretical and practical knowledge in gathering and evaluating such data. It will take almost two years to gather enough data to verify that the test herd has greater efficiency.

Less food, lower emissions

Kerley noted an interesting side benefit to making cows more feed efficient. When feed intake is reduced, methane emissions and manure production decrease, too. "There is almost a linear relationship," he said. That, Kerley said, has fascinating prospects for commercial agriculture. "If 'cap and trade' regulations, in some form, become part of America soon, it is likely that cattle producers will have to defend themselves against claims of methane emission by ruminants if they wish to stay in business," Kerley said. "If a farmer can demonstrate reduced carbon production, then he or she might be able to 'sell' pollution credits to an energy producer, like an electrical power plant. That will provide the farmer one more income stream."

Two-year Texas drought ends

Source: SA Express-News

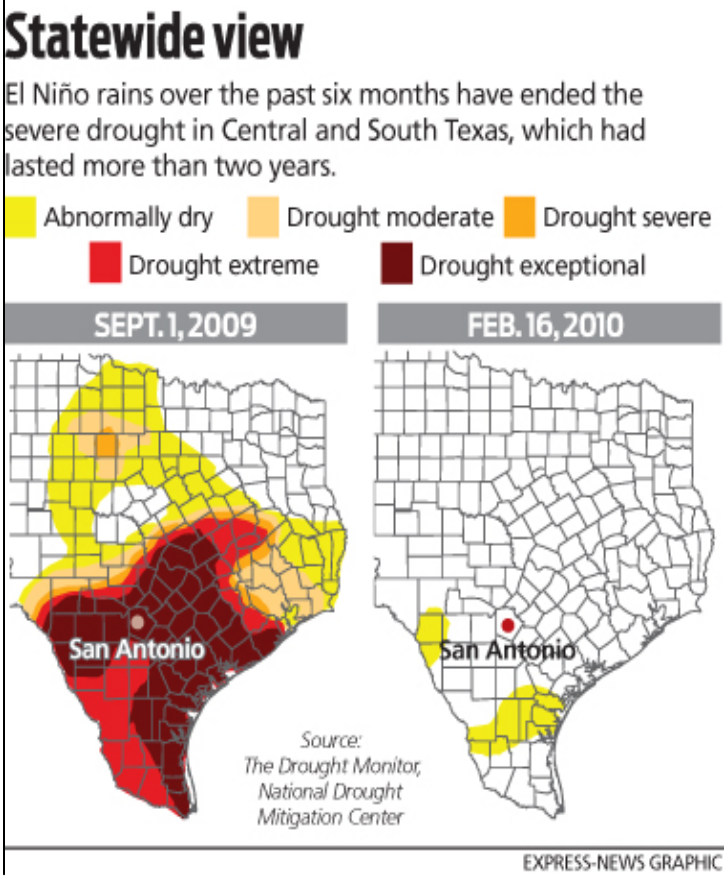
The drought that blistered Texas for the last two years has ended, thanks to El Niño rain patterns, the National Weather Service says. The state had been enduring some of the nation's most severe drought conditions until rains started falling about six months ago. The new federal drought map and Texas climatologist John Nielsen-Gammon both agree the state is finally done with drought conditions. Now there are only a few counties considered abnormally dry, but not drought-stricken. This time last year, more than 60 percent of the state was suffering drought conditions.

El Niño is a weather system that is linked to periodic warming in the tropical Pacific Ocean along with winds and air pressure changes that can affect weather around the world. Rainfall from the weather system has been credited for increasing "soil moisture, reservoir storage and river flows," for many river basins across the state. Long-term forecasts point to more rain activity in the future, with a higher chance of above-normal movement in the next 90 days.

Patrick McDonald, spokesman for the National Weather Service in New Braunfels, said that though the drought is over, that's not the case for many state waterways. "Agriculturally, the drought is over for farmers and ranchers," McDonald said. "But for people who want to use rivers and lakes for fishing, tubing and recreational purposes, we could use more water." McDonald said eight Texas counties still were deemed extremely dry. Nationally, Michigan and several Western states still are under some drought conditions, but only Hawaii has areas of extreme drought.

Travis Miller, a professor and leader of the Extension Program at Texas A&M University, said there's hardly any sector of agriculture that doesn't benefit by the ending of the drought. "All of our plants grow better and the animals have more to eat," Miller said. "The issue at hand is the parts of the state that had more than above-average rainfall." Miller said the Central to North Texas blacklands, stretching from Austin to Paris and west to Gainesville, typically plant 750,000 to 1 million acres of wheat and only half the crop was planted because of wet conditions in the fall. He said most of the fields east of Interstate 35 were too wet to cultivate and haven't seen a tractor or field work since early October.

Miller said corn is one of the spring crops that farmers like to plant early due to its sensitivity to high temperatures. "We're going to see nice pastures, early growth depending on temperature and hopefully see some nice wildflowers," Miller said. "So a lot of farmers are champing at the bit. It's been a real challenge. They have everything ready to plant and get into the fields."



New feral hog publications aim to help landowners thwart growing menace

Source: AgriLife News

The Texas AgriLife Extension Service has developed five new feral hog control publications to help landowners corral this growing menace, according to an AgriLife Extension specialist. These publications were funded by the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency through a Clean Water Act § 319(h) nonpoint source grant. Publications are available online at: http://plumcreek.tamu.edu/feralhogs/ .

These publications specifically target the Plum Creek Watershed in Hays and Caldwell counties, an area especially hard hit by the marauders, but are applicable wherever feral hogs are a problem, said Dr. Jim Cathey, AgriLife Extension wildlife specialist at College Station. Chancey Lewis, AgriLife Extension wildlife assistant at Lockhart and his colleagues developed the new publications. Lewis works closely with landowners in Hays and Caldwell counties, giving instruction and technical guidance on hog trapping, as part of the implementation of the Plum Creek Watershed Protection Plan.

The five publications are:

– "Recognizing Feral Hog Sign," deals with the evidence or sign the hogs leave in passing. By being able to read sign, Cathey said landowners can learn where the animals are traveling and apply the appropriate management technique to reduce their numbers.

– "Corral Traps for Capturing Feral Hogs," discusses large traps that Cathey said have proven useful in reducing hog numbers quickly. According to Lewis, feral hogs typically travel in large family groups called "sounders," and a corral trap can often be used to capture the entire group.

– "Box Traps for Capturing Feral Hogs," deals with a second option that should be considered after corral traps, Cathey said. While they are not the best choice for removing large hog numbers, box traps, because they are readily movable, can be used to quickly remove small numbers from trouble spots.

– "Snaring Feral Hogs," offers instructions on placement and handling of snares. Snares are ideal for situations where feral hogs have become wary of box or corral traps. Snares are also much cheaper than traps, according to Lewis.

- "Building a Feral Hog Snare," provides step-by-step instructions for producing snares used for catching feral hogs.

For more information contact Lewis at 979-393-8517 or cdlewis@ag.tamu.edu .

Two long-established roses earn Earth-Kind distinction

Source: AgriLife News

They embody traits few others share – beauty, toughness and easy maintenance – and that has earned them the highest distinction a rose can achieve, said Dr. Steve George, a Texas AgriLife Extension Service horticulturist in Dallas. Cecile Brunner and Reve d'Or were recently named Earth-Kind Roses by a team of horticulturists with AgriLife Extension. Only 21 roses hold the title. Reve d'Or, originally released in 1869, earned an additional honor by being named 2010 Earth-Kind Rose of the Year, George said. "Both roses are simply gorgeous," he said.

Cecile Brunner, introduced in 1881, is light pink and the bush grows to about 4 feet by 3 feet, George said. Adapted throughout Texas, it's a repeat-bloomer, fragrant and tolerates some light-dappled shade in the afternoon. It is also known as the "Sweetheart Rose."

Reve d'Or (pronounced rehv dohr) is medium-yellow, fragrant, nearly thornless and also a repeat-bloomer. Adapted to all of Texas except the upper Panhandle, the bush is a vigorous climber that will grow 10 feet to 18 feet tall and about 8 feet wide, he said. Its name is French for "dream of gold." "Reve d'Or is the healthiest yellow rose that we have ever tested," he said.

There is more to these roses than good looks, George said. Earth-Kind Roses are robust and thrive in tough conditions. Grown and evaluated over eight years on average, the roses are not fertilized or pruned when tested. They are not treated with pesticides, and are watered far less than other roses. They also are grown on their own roots, as opposed to those grafted onto other plants. The results are roses that are easy to grow and maintain, he said.

To be Earth-Kind, a rose must have received the designation from AgriLife Extension, an agency of the Texas A&M System. Earth-Kind is a registered trade mark of AgriLife Extension. "These winners of the prestigious Earth-Kind designation are long-lived, tolerant of most any soil and are so environmentally responsible that almost never will you need to apply harsh pesticides or even commercial fertilizer," George said. "These are truly roses with which anybody can be successful."

George and the team of Earth-Kind rose evaluators offer growing tips:

- The roses should be planted where they receive at least eight hours of direct sunlight daily.
- Their location should allow for good airflow over the leaves.
- They should be planted in well-aerated soils. (Visit the Earth-Kind Rose Web site for details on how to manage specific soils.)
- They need the year-round protection of a 3-inch layer of organic mulch over their root systems.

A list and descriptions of all Earth-Kind Roses can be found at http://earthkindroses.tamu.edu .

Commissioner Staples makes formal request to Texas Supreme Court on case involving private groundwater rights

Agriculture Commissioner Todd Staples announced Friday the Texas Department of Agriculture has filed an amicus letter brief, or formal comments, supporting private property owner rights in the *Edwards Aquifer Authority and the State of Texas v. Burrell Day and Joel McDaniel* case, pending before the Texas Supreme Court. The Edwards Aquifer Authority (EAA) is proposing a law change that would leave existing and future groundwater users with limited or no ability to protect their investments or rights.

"Texans just passed Proposition 11 to protect the right to own land, and I am encouraging the court to uphold the laws that protect our groundwater," Staples said. "The Texas Department of Agriculture has a responsibility to ensure the court understands the potential impact of the Edwards Aquifer Authority's position on agriculture. If the court supports the EAA's position, landowners may lose ownership rights in the water beneath their land. The Texas Constitution and state law clearly recognize those rights and provide a regulatory framework to protect them."

The case is set for oral arguments on Feb. 17 at 9 a.m. at the Texas Supreme Court building in Austin. The brief can be read and downloaded for posting or reprint by clicking here.

Up Coming Events

3/11-3/12	Wichita Falls Ranch & Farm Expo
3/18-3/20	TSCRA Annual Convention – Ft Worth
3/24	Hay, Beef, & Forage Day - Graham

For More Information Contact Heath Lusty @ 940-567-2132