

Burleson County Tribune Farm & Ranch Times

FALL 2020

Students in Ag Ed earn growth, opportunity

Burleson County Ag programs are offering students more and more opportunities.

Caldwell's new CTE building will house kennels for animal science and a walk-in floral cooler for floral classes.

Somerville will offer Landscape and Turf Management and Principles of Manufacturing, and has made changes to the mechanics shop, helping students earn certifications.

Snook ISD's Ag program saw an increase from 46 to 70 students last year. Some classes available are Advanced Floral Design and Agricultural Power Systems.

For more about Ag education in the county, see story on page 4.

Farmers say grain sorghum looks strong

Recent market trends also improving

With a return to a more normal weather pattern, Burleson County's grain sorghum farmers had a good year in 2020.

After wet weather delayed planting and field preparation last year, the county saw a productive spring with adequate rainfall, giving the crops a good stand, farmers said.

As with corn, farmers could have used some additional moisture as a dry spell set in during July and August, but the grain sorghum typically handles heat well -- making it one of the county's most durable crops.

Burleson County Extension Agent John Grange said this year's crop has a strong quality, thanks mostly to steady and timely rains in the spring.

And farmers are optimistic about the yield potential, Grange said.

"I am hearing yields between the 5,000-7,000 pounds per acre range,"



JOE AND JAY Wilder look over their grain sorghum crop with Burleson County Extension Agent John Grange. The sorghum crop did well in 2020. -- Tribune photo by Roy Sanders

Grange said. "It really depends on the soil profile. In the areas where we had more of the blackland, the yields were better as moisture was held longer, versus the more sandy soil profiles."

Even with a dry spell that

lasted about eight weeks this summer, farmers, who began harvesting in early August, remained hopeful.

"Sorghum is a heat tolerant crop that really does well in the hotter temperatures. It is a great crop to use as a rotational crop

for our land," Grange said. "Our mix of spring moisture and hot summers allow this crop to really thrive especially in the Brazos Bottom where we have such a productive soil profile."

In addition, prices have
See SORGHUM, page 2

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Caldwell, Texas

Brian & Debra Chapman



SORGHUM

FROM PAGE 1

generally been good, and “they can also make hay out of the stalks after harvest.”

Jay Wilder, a longtime grain sorghum producer with his father Joe Wilder in the Brazos Bottom, said this year’s crop looked good.

“It was pretty good, average or a little above, and the quality was good all the way through,” Jay Wilder said.

Wilder agreed with Grange that the crop productivity varied depending on the soil type.

“The blackland soil was good, and the sandy soil needed a little bit more rain,” Wilder said.

But even with the heat stress in the later weeks, “it should be a decent year,” he said.

Wilder said he expected a 6,000 pound per acre yield.

“We would like for it to be more, but at least it will be that,” he said.

See SORGHUM, page 3



THIS GRAIN SORGHUM FIELD is combined on Joe and Jay Wilder’s field in the Brazos Bottom. The crop got enough moisture in 2020 and did well. -- Tribune photo by Roy Sanders



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SORGHUM

FROM PAGE 2

Last year, with the wet fields and inadequate time to prepare the field, the Wilders' yields were just about 5,000 pounds an acre after planting one month later than usual.

John Giesenschlag, another long-time grain sorghum producer in the Brazos Bottom, said he anticipates yields in the 5,000 to 6,000 pounds an acre range.

But Giesenschlag said the crop looked better than it turned out.

"It showed a lot of promise, but then it ran out of water," Giesenschlag said. "I was not disappointed, but I thought it would be a better crop than that. I expected 7,000 pounds an acre on some fields."

Giesenschlag said in mid-August that it had been 60-80 days since the last good rain.

Fortunately, grain sorghum remains a durable crop in the Brazos

Bottom, utilizing water efficiently and getting the most out of most rainfall.

Vince Patranella of Brazos Bottom Crop Care along F.M. 50 talks to a lot of farmers.

"We had quite a bit more promise earlier, but when we got to the harvest the yield was not a bumper crop," Patranella said. "It will be decent yields, but we need to have a little bit better yield for good profitability."

However, farmers are more encouraged by the profit potential for grain sorghum, compared to corn, he said.

John Miller of Southwest Agribusiness Consulting in Snook said markets are improving for grain sorghum.

"Sales of grain sorghum have been on fire at Gulf Port locations recently as China has roared back into this market after a long absence," Miller said. "As Chinese import tariffs on U.S. grain have been relaxed in recent months under

the Phase One agreement, animal feeders and Baijiu distillers that depend heavily on grain sorghum have picked up right where they left off several years ago."

While there are numerous other dependable buyers of U.S. grain sorghum, such as Mexico, China has again become our primary market for 2020, he said.

Grain sorghum prices at the

Port of Houston have traded in the \$9.25 per hundredweight area recently, which is far above the year-ago level of \$7, he said.

"It is hard to know how long China will continue their U.S. purchase program," Miller said. "For now, however, this has been a great opportunity for local farmers to capitalize on a truly global market."

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Burleson County ag programs make improvements

Burleson County school districts are tackling the new school year with COVID being an unpredictable issue to its campuses.

Despite the changes brought forth by COVID, the schools' ag programs are making changes to offer their students more opportunities for development and growth.

At Caldwell High School, renovations for the new Career and Technology Education (CTE) building will allow the ag program more opportunities for hands on learning, Caldwell ag science teacher Halley Reynolds said.

With the addition of adding more classrooms, the CTE building will house kennels for the animal science classes and a walk-in floral cooler for the growing floral classes, Reynolds said.

Along with the additions of the CTE building, the Caldwell ag program has added new courses and sections to create new career pathways for students.

"In the past two years, we've had ag business and ag communications added to our program which can be a stepping-stone to any pathway," Reynolds said.

Caldwell will also be offering Principles of Agriculture to the incoming eighth-graders so they will have a foot in the door to take more ag-related classes when they reach the high school level, Reynolds said.

The ag program will also be starting a Bass Club in coordination with the Texas High School Bass Association, Caldwell ag science teacher Christine

Vogler said. These competitions will be a great way for students to compete to earn scholarships.

"With these new additions and improvements, we are optimistic of bringing in new members to the FFA and ag programs," Vogler said.

At Somerville High School, ag teachers Greg Moore and Jonathan Meurin have had an influx of new students to their program.

"We are reaching a wide variety of students and our membership has increased greatly in the FFA program and ag classes," Meurin said.

In the past school year, memberships numbers have tripled in the FFA program, Meurin said.

In the 2020-2021 school year, they will be adding a new Landscape and Turf Management course to the ag program, Moore said.

"We are hopeful that with the addition of Landscape and Turf Management we'll be able to add more courses to create new career pathways for students," Moore said.

In the future, they are hoping to add Floral Design and Horticulture to create a plant science pathway, Moore said.

They will also be adding a new Principles of Manufacturing course for students to take that will give them the opportunity to take an additional robotics course to earn an optional certificate, Meurin said.

Along with the addition of new courses, Meurin and Moore are hoping to make changes to the ag me-

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Caldwell High School ag science teacher Lisa Pieper opens the door to the new floral cooler in the new CTE building. The cooler will allow more space for more student designs made in the floral classes.

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Somerville ag science teacher Jonathan Meurin demonstrates the new plasma cutter added to the ag program at the high school. This plasma cutter will allow students a new tool to create and cut metal into cool designs.

AG

FROM PAGE 4

chanics shop to give students more opportunities to learn skills and earn certifications.

"We just got a new plasma cutter which will be a cool addition to the shop," Meurin said. "We are wanting to renovate the ag mechanics shop to give students the opportunity to certify, but more than anything, we want students to learn the skills in an environment that is educational and hands on."

In the past school year, Somerville also started offering a junior FFA program for students in third through seventh-grades with hopes

of spreading awareness about the ag program, so they'll enroll once they reach the high school level, Meurin said.

"We are pushing to change the mind-sets at Somerville when it comes to our FFA program," Meurin said. "We want to change the mentality of what our program can offer."

In the past years at Snook High School, they have been making leaps and bounds as far as their involvement with livestock showing, ag mechanics program and LDE and CDE teams, Snook ag science teacher Rachel Bentke said.

Bentke said the FFA ag program experienced an increase from 46 members to 70 members in the 2019-



Snook High School students Jason Barker, Justin Supak, and Darrell Moore are competing in a build-off competition in Rockdale.

2020 school year.

They also began offering Advanced Floral Design and Agricultural Power Systems which are two new programs added to give students more opportunities to continue pathways after high school, Bentke said.

Snook ag science teacher Dustin Adams said that ag mechanics portion of the program has grown immensely since he first began working at the high school.

"Ag mechanics has always been a passion of mine, so when I arrived in Snook, I wanted to share that passion with my students," Adams said. "We have had more and more students showing interest in designing and building their own projects

to show around the state, and many of them have been very successful in doing so."

Adams said students have made everything from trailers and truck beds to feeders and gates, and everything in between.

Students have also been able to exhibit those creations at various competitions some including the Burleson County Fair, the State Fair of Texas, the Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo and the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

"We are constantly working on improving our program and the facilities. We also have an amazing community that supports everything we do," Adams said.

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Cattle ranchers need some more rainfall

Hay-making potential needed for winter

Cow-calf producers in Burleson County had plenty of promise for cattle and pasture conditions in early 2020.

Rainfall was sufficient and timely, and pastures fared well, ensuring some good subsoil moisture, and they remained hopeful about hay-making potential well into the year.

But entering mid-August, many ranchers were getting concerned about a lack of rainfall.

More than two months had passed without what Burleson County's producers like to call "a good rain."

So the situation was getting critical, even though other factors, such as beef market demand and cattle prices at the sales, continued to look promising.

The issue is critical for cow-calf producers who need hay-making potential to survive through the winter feeding

See CATTLE, page 7



THE CATTLE GRAZE ON this acreage at Bar T Ranch off County Road 333 near Caldwell. Ranchers are hoping for more rain for pastures. -- Tribune photo by Roy Sanders



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CATTLE

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period.

Burleson County Extension Agent John Grange said in mid-August that all ranchers were getting concerned.

"We sure could use some rain. Early on, I think our pastures were in very good condition that set us up for the summer, but it has been hot and dry and it really has taken a toll on pastures," Grange said. "We really need some moisture to help give our pastures a boost and to replenish our stock tanks."

Grange said stock tanks are "fair but dropping."

"We will need some moisture to help fill our ponds back up," he said.

Grange said producers have also been helped this year by generally steady feed prices.

"As long as our grain prices remain steady, our feed prices will hold," Grange said.

The bigger question is likely hay supplies, he said.

"These last few weeks have been tough on setting us up for some late season cuttings," Grange said.

And generally, herd sizes in the county have remained steady with no major shifts in the last year, he said.

At the weekly cattle auctions in the area, livestock commissions say their numbers have generally remained steady and prices have improved.

Carl Herrmann at Caldwell Livestock Commission said the overall cattle market has been good recently "in spite of everything going on (regarding COVID-19)."

"The last three or four weeks it (the overall cattle market) is actually getting better all the time," Herrmann said.

Several months ago, there was a backlog at slaughter plants, effectively shutting plants down, and that situation has improved, Herrmann said.

Market demand is also good, he said.

"It has been really good, especially for hamburger meat. Our packer cows

See CATTLE, page 8



CARL HERRMANN, SEATED in the pen, and Leslie Herrmann, upper right, are pictured at the Wednesday, Aug. 12, sale at Caldwell Livestock Commission. -- Tribune photo by Roy Sanders



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CATTLE FEED IN this feeder at Bar T Ranch off County Road 333 near Caldwell. -- Tribune photo by Roy Sanders

CATTLE

FROM PAGE 7

and bulls are getting a good price," he said. "It depends on what you read, but our exports are good in the last few months. We are shipping a lot of beef to different places."

And cattle prices at the weekly auction are improving, he said.

"Right now, our light calves for the fall are getting better prices. They are getting higher," he said.

Prices from the Wednesday, Aug. 19, sale included:

* Steers, 200-300 pounds, \$150-\$180 per hundredweight; 700-800 pounds, \$120-\$128 per hundredweight.

* Heifers, 200-300 pounds, \$120-\$170 per hundredweight; 700-800 pounds, \$105-\$128 per hundredweight.

Herrmann also said his numbers at the sales remain strong -- about 900 a week.

Ranchers are steadily bringing cattle to market, he said.

"Right now, nobody is keeping any heifers, maybe a handful of them," Herrmann said. "The market the last few years had not been great, and expenses were the same or higher, so people were selling heifers to compensate for their cash flow to pay the bills and taxes. There is not a lot of heifer retention going on right now."

Pete Scarmardo is the owner of Brazos Valley Livestock Commission in Bryan and Scarmardo Cattle Co., of Caldwell, a feeder cattle operation.

Scarmardo said in mid-August that cattle prices at the livestock commission had been strong in the previous two to three weeks -- "depending on what class you are looking at."

Some are bringing 10-15 cents a pound or more, Scarmardo said.

Scarmardo said he expects that trend

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CATTLE

FROM PAGE 8

to continue for a while. However, in the fall when there are too many cattle in the market and if health issues become a factor, "it could limit some of the upside that the cattle will bring."

At the Tuesday, Aug. 18, sale, the prices were:

* Feeder steers, medium/large No. 1's, 200-300 pounds, \$180-\$210 per hundredweight; medium/large 1-2's, 200-300 pounds, \$165-\$175 per hundredweight.

* Feeder steers, medium/large No. 1's, 700-800 pounds, \$125-\$132 per hundredweight; medium/large 1-2's, 600-700 pounds, \$126-\$132 per hundredweight.

* Feeder heifers, medium/large No. 1's, 200-300 pounds, \$157-\$175 per hundredweight; medium/large 1-2's, 200-300 pounds, \$145-\$155 per hundredweight.

* Feeder heifers, medium/large No.

1's, 700-800 pounds, \$103-\$112 per hundredweight; medium/large 1-2's, 600-700 pounds, \$110-\$118.

Regarding the number of cattle coming to market, Scarmardo said the numbers are staying consistent -- "not up a bunch but not down, just pretty consistent."

For live cattle, Scarmardo said futures prices had rebounded and were going higher. December futures traded at \$1.12 a pound, up to \$1.16 a pound for February and \$1.18 for April.

For the overall cattle market, Scarmardo said demand remains good even during the COVID threat.

"Our demand for exports is great. We don't know how the rest of COVID will play out, but it looks upbeat for the cattle market so we can get more for all our cattle," he said.

However, markets always remain volatile and uncertain, so there are no guarantees, he said.



PETE SCARMARDO OF Scarmardo Cattle Co., is pictured. Scarmardo also owns Brazos Valley Livestock Commission in Bryan.

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Dusek selected for TALL Program team

Addressing agricultural leadership issues

Andrew Dusek of Southwest Agribusiness Consulting, Inc., of Snook was recently selected to participate in the Texas Agricultural Lifetime Leadership (TALL) Program.

The Gov. Dolph Briscoe Jr., TALL Program seeks to create a cadre of Texas leaders to help ensure effective understanding and to encourage positive action on key issues, theories, policy and economics that will advance the agriculture industry.

It is established on the ideals of leadership, issue and policy awareness and basic agricultural principles and strives to prepare men and women for the challenges faced by agriculture in the future.

As part of the program, a lunch and tour at Royalty Pecans was sponsored by several Burleson County businesses including the Tri-County



TALL PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS are pictured, including Andrew Dusek, front, center.

Field Crops Committee and Citizens State Bank.

Members enjoyed a meal and talked with several local bank

leaders and farmers from the area about current issues and events in the Brazos Bottom and then took a walking tour of the Royalty Pecans pecan orchard.

Dusek will also go to the Lubbock/ Amarillo area in late October for their second session to tour feedlots and packing plants, to see the Texas Tech University System's agricultural research efforts and to visit farms and ranches in the area.

The TALL Program takes 20-25 professionals employed in Texas agriculture for a two-year curriculum consisting of approximately 45 days of training and development, to further their industry knowledge as well as develop their leadership skills and network of contacts. They

will travel to various regions within the state seeing different facets of agriculture and food/fiber industries and take a few trips out of state during this two-year period.

The two-year curriculum began in July with the first session in College Station. Members spent four days learning about the land-grant university system and how it shaped modern education today, the history and current research of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension System and visiting and observing local agriculture in the Brazos Bottom.

The days were filled with presentations from industry professionals and university professors and on-site visits to agriculture-related businesses in the area.



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County's corn crop did well in 2020

Farmers expecting improved yields

It was time for Burleson County's corn farmers to catch a break, and they did.

After an excessively wet year in 2019 when farmers were unable to get into their fields when they needed to, timely rains occurred at just the right times.

And it showed in the product.

All of the county's corn farmers reported a quality crop with a good stand with adequate yield potential.

Burleson County Agent John Grange said "we had a really good stand this year."

"We had some good moisture at the beginning of the planting season that really helped the crop get established," Grange said.

A later summer dry spell, lasting about eight weeks concerned all row crop farmers. But the subsoil moisture from the earlier rains made the difference.

"While the spring rains were very beneficial, we could have used some June-July rains to help in the late growing stages," he said.

Grange said the county again averaged about 70 percent irrigated corn and about 30 percent dry land and about the same amount of acreage.

And the yield potential looked generally good.

"Most yields I am hearing is the 120-140 bushels an acre range," Grange said. "It really depends on the soil profile. In the areas where we had more of the blackland, the yields were better as the moisture was held longer versus the more sandy soil profiles."

Caldwell farmer Barney Homeyer said he was grateful for a better year for weather.

"Last year, it was so wet that you couldn't even get the land prepared. We planted late, and it didn't work

See CORN, page 12



DENNIS HOMEYER HARVESTS this corn at the family farm off State Highway 21 East near Caldwell. The Homeyers had a good corn crop this year. -- Tribune photo by Roy Sanders

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CORN

FROM PAGE 11

out well -- about 100 bushels. It was just a mess," Homeyer said.

This year the rains were more timely, and "we always had enough rain to keep it going," he said.

"This is one of the better crops we have ever had. Now you just need a price to make a profit," Homeyer said.

In Snook, Edmund Sebesta said he too had a good year for corn.

"Everything was good, and everything hit just right," Sebesta said.

He anticipates average yields in the 120 bushels an acre range for both dryland and irrigated, he said.

In the Brazos Bottom, John Malazzo said his crop was "a little better than I expected it to be, probably around our five-year average."

The irrigated land will be in the 160-185 range, and dry land will be 120-130, he said.

Malazzo rated the crop as about an eight on a one to 10 scale and better than last year.

"We have an excellent stand," he said.

Though initially concerned that the stands were a little shorter than usual, the yields were not affected, he said.

Snook farmer Walt Vajdak said he would average about 125 bushels an acre -- "a very good crop."

"We had ample rains during most of the growing season. The quality was really good, and the bushel weight was excellent," he said.

Vince Patranella of Brazos Bottom Crop Care along F.M. 50 talks to a



DENNIS HOMEYER WORKS at his family's corn farm off State Highway 21 East near Caldwell. Corn farmers say it was a good year. -- Tribune photo by Roy Sanders

lot of farmers daily and got a good cross section of news throughout the growing season.

"Our corn was not a bumper crop, but it was decent," Patranella said.

If only market prices were better.

The crop most likely "won't pencil in any kind of profit," Patranella said.

Though corn prices are clearly not what farmers consider ideal, John Miller of Southwest Agribusiness Consulting in Snook said on Aug. 17 that the market did get a bit of a boost in early August.

"The corn market has seen new life the past week or so given a renewed concern over U.S. production outcomes and stronger demand," Miller said.

Until recently, uncertainty related to whether or not COVID-19 would continue to stifle the economy has kept corn prices in check given the



BARNEY HOMEYER LOOKS over this corn at his farm off State Highway 21 East near Caldwell. Farmers say this year's corn crop was a success. -- Tribune photo by Roy Sanders

ethanol connection to gasoline use, he said.

"With schools and businesses starting to open up again, gasoline and ethanol use has increased, helping to stabilize corn futures prices," Miller said. "In addition, China has been purchasing large quantities of corn and soybeans from the U.S. While China has a long way to go to meet the Phase One agreement levels, recent exports to that country has added life to this market."

On the supply side, the U.S. corn crop has been one of the highest rated in years, with over 70 percent seen as good or excellent, he said.

However, on Aug. 10 a windstorm

called a derecho (straight line wind) toppled several million acres of corn across Iowa, a key corn state. While experts are determining the ultimate losses there, traders have become nervous that this event could lower overall corn supply by significant levels, Miller said.

"It has been these key factors that have pulled corn futures from recent lows of near \$3 per bushel to the current level of \$3.30 on the September contract," he said.

Although well below year-ago levels, the current price recovery is a welcome sight to local farmers just completing a good harvest season, Miller said.

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Backyard eggs: Tips for cleaning and storing eggs

Stay safe and get the most out of your hen's eggs

By: Adam Russell

It's a good time to talk about food safety, egg handling and storage now that your backyard flock is laying eggs or getting close to laying, said a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service expert.

Craig Coufal, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension poultry specialist, College Station, said handling, cleaning and storing eggs safely is important to prevent food-borne illnesses related to poultry.

"These are our best recommendations on handling eggs from the nest to storage," he said. "They're meant to prevent cross contamination and preserve egg quality until they're used."

Coufal also produced a webinar series that provides a full range of information regarding backyard flocks, egg production and recommended egg handling.

Collect clean eggs

Coufal said clean eggs start in the

coop. Remove chicken waste, sanitize roosts and nest boxes, and replace nesting litter regularly.

It's a good idea to prevent hens from roosting in the nest boxes at night, Coufal said, to reduce waste accumulation. Clean out nest boxes regularly to reduce egg contamination. Well-maintained nests also reduce egg breakage.

Collect eggs as soon and often as possible, Coufal said. Prompt collection of eggs reduces the likelihood they will be broken or become dirty.

"Collecting eggs twice a day or once a day at minimum will translate into cleaner, fresher eggs," he said. "The quicker you get those eggs cleaned and stored in the refrigerator the better."

Cleaning eggs

Eggs are porous and have active bacteria on the outside, so they should not be dipped or soaked in soapy water, Coufal said.

There are many ways to wash an

egg, but the temperature of the wash water is the key factor, he said. The wash-water must be warmer than the egg. Avoid using dish soap or scented cleaning solutions as they can affect the eggs' taste.

After washing, eggs should be rinsed with clean water that is slightly warmer than the wash water, he said. The eggs should be allowed to air dry and then stored.

"It's an easy process that can reduce the chances of foodborne illnesses," he said.

Storing eggs

Coufal said eggs should be refrigerated as soon as possible. Refrigeration preserves quality and reduces the potential for bacterial growth.

"There is a lot of discussion about room-temperature versus refrigeration," he said. "Eggs will naturally degrade more rapidly at room temperature. An egg stored at room

temperature might be edible for only three weeks compared to 15 weeks if it's refrigerated."

Eggs should be stored at or below 45 degrees, he said.

Salmonella

There were 1,134 people infected with outbreak strains of salmonella in 2019, according to the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control. Two deaths were reported, including one in Texas.

The majority of salmonella cases involved contact with chicks or ducklings, but Coufal said handling eggs can also spread the bacteria that naturally occurs in the intestinal tract of chickens.

"Proper sanitation is the best defense from salmonella," he said. "Washing the eggs and properly washing your hands and any tools used any time you handle eggs, or the chickens, will help prevent contamination."

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Snook student awarded America's Farmers Scholarship

A 2020 Snook High School graduate was awarded a scholarship from America's Farmers Grow Ag Leaders.

Sierra Sebesta was awarded a \$1,500 scholarship due to her in-

terest and pursuit of an ag-related career.

Sebesta will be attending Texas A&M University in the fall to study Animal Science.

Grow Ag Leader scholarships,

administered by the National FFA Organization, are available to high school seniors and college students pursuing degrees in ag-related fields.

Grow Ag Leaders sponsored by Bayer Fund is committed to improv-

ing educational opportunities for students across the country by helping with college expenses and assisting their pursuit of an ag education, Amy Simpson, Community Engagement Manager with Bayer Fund said.

Nitrogen requirements eyed for Brahman cattle

By: Kay Ledbetter

A recently funded Texas A&M AgriLife study will determine differences in nitrogen requirements between Brahman type cattle and other cattle.

Measuring these differences may allow cattle producers to reduce the protein in cattle diets by allowing for precise diet formulations.

"Implementation of precision diet formulation in cattle diets can be the answer to producing a more affordable beef with a smaller environmental impact," said Tryon Wickersham, Ph.D., Texas A&M AgriLife Research, scientist and associate professor in the Department of Animal Science in the Texas A&M College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

"We believe development of feeding systems that account for differences in cattle type will reduce over and under supplementation, allowing us to optimize growth, reproduction and animal health outcomes," Wickersham said. "Additionally, precise feeding systems will reduce the environmental footprint of beef production."

Cattle are divided into two subspecies, *Bos taurus taurus*, which generally have no hump and originate

from Europe, and *Bos taurus indicus*, generally having a hump and originating in India.

"These cattle were selected under very different conditions and have developed the capacity to thrive under different conditions," Wickersham said. "These adaptations affect the way they perform and have not been well accounted for in current beef cattle feeding systems, increasing the environmental and economic cost associated with beef production."

Wickersham's study is designed to address the relationship between urea recycling, microbial nitrogen capture and supplementation strategies in both types of cattle consuming low-quality forage.

"Cattle provide a valuable service to society by converting low-quality sources of nutrients such as grasses, crop residues and byproducts into beef, which is a high-quality source of amino acids, minerals and vitamins," Wickersham said.

"However, there is room to improve the efficiency of this conversion to reduce the environmental effects of beef production and increase consumer access to these vital nutrients," he said,

"thus allowing more people to consume a diet meeting their requirements."

Increasing productivity

"We believe reducing the over provision of protein by 10 percent potentially reduces nitrogen excretion from cattle by approximately 22 pounds per head per year or 704 million pounds for the U.S. beef industry per year," Wickersham said. "The potential savings, on a soybean meal-equivalent basis, is \$1.4 billion per year."

Wickersham's latest research project, supported by an almost \$500,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Institute for Food and Agriculture, is titled "Enhancing sustainability of beef production by elucidating subspecies differences in urea recycling in response to supplementation."

"We are doing this research because improper supplementation to cattle has environmental and economic cost, which ultimately decreases the affordability of beef for consumers," Wickersham said.

The role of supplements

"Supplements are expensive and rep-

resent an increased use of nutrients," Wickersham said. "By developing feeding systems that account for differences in cattle type, we can reduce the effects of cattle production without compromising the animal's nutritional status."

Completion of the proposed project will provide data allowing for precise delivery of supplemental nitrogen for cattle grazing low-quality forage across a wide array of production systems, he said. Capturing data in both subspecies enhances the global utility of these projects for meeting the increasing demand for animal proteins.

Wickersham chose to address the problem of over and underfeeding of protein in cattle diets by elucidating the differences in nitrogen utilization and recycling to improve the capacity to describe urea recycling and microbial capture of recycled nitrogen, both essential to precision diet formulation.

"Ultimately, we believe precision diet formulation will reduce both overfeeding and underfeeding of nitrogen and increase the environmental, economic and social sustainability of beef production," Wickersham said.

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DAVE LENNOX

Fall weed control vital for area lawns, fields

By: John M. Grange

*Burleson County
Extension Agent*

Fall weed control can prevent winter weeds in home lawns, sports fields and golf courses.

In Central Texas, early September is the time to apply fall pre-

emergent herbicides.

Pre-emergent herbicides should be applied BEFORE fall germinating weeds take off and begin stealing precious nutrients from turf.

These early applications are the most effective means for control of annual grassy weeds in turf grass.

Post-emergent herbicides work best if weeds are still in the seedling stage of development as annual weeds are most easily and economically controlled while they are young and tender.

If a turf grass is completely dormant, (this requires an actual winter) herbicides such as Glyphosate or Glufosinate - ammonium can be used to kill winter weeds.

However, be aware that non-dormant turf grass will be adversely affected by the afore mentioned products.

Fall is the ideal time to fertilize warm-season and cool-season grasses. Early to late October is

the ideal time to make this application utilizing a fertilizer with a ratio of 3-1-2 or 4-1-2.

Do not apply more than one actual pound of Nitrogen per 1000 square feet to St. Augustine turf. Lawns growing in heavier textured clay soils may not need the application of phosphate (the second number).

Slow release fertilizers don't necessarily have to be used since cooler temperatures and shorter daytime hours limit the growth of grass.

For more information on this topic contact John Grange at (979)567-2308 or log on to <http://aggi-eturf.tamu.edu>.

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Extension Service offers Supplemental Feeding Tips

By: John M. Grange
*Burleson County
 Extension Agent*

Simply put, supplemental feeding is intended to supplement, not completely replace, an existing food source.

When applying it to cattle, supplemental feeding usually occurs when forages (standing grass or hay crops) are limited or of poor quality. There are no “magic bullets” or “fix-all” supplemental products.

It all comes down to some basic questions; “What’s missing in the cow’s diet?” “What is the cheapest and easiest way to put it back?” “What’s currently available?” and “Do I have the means to utilize it?”

The two primary “things” that are usually missing in a cow’s diet are protein and/or energy. If the herd is only missing protein, there’s no need to spend money on energy too. So, identifying the problem is the initial step.

When evaluating and comparing feed supplements, livestock producers should consider nutrient content and price per pound of nutrient(s) in the supplement. Producers should not focus on price per bag, tub, or bale!

Supplements come in a variety of forms: blocks, tubs (extremely low viscosity), cubes, liquids and meals. Deciding which form to use should depend on the producers ability to handle, store and feed the product efficiently.

Most of the time, producers have a source of poor quality (relatively indigestible) forage. In this situation, fortified molasses products can be used to help the cow digest the forage by providing necessary proteins (something the poor quality forage is lacking) allowing microbial productivity to continue in the rumen of the cow.

However, producers should understand not all molasses supplements contain the same source of additional

protein. Some supplements utilize high amounts of non-protein nitrogen or NPN, like urea, as the protein source.

High NPN supplements should only be used when plenty of dormant forage is available and dietary protein requirements are lowest (dry mature females).

The primary problem with feeding high NPN supplements to beef cattle when insufficient forage is available is the potential of ammonia toxicity causing the death of the animal.

Overall, molasses is an excellent supplement for improving ruminant dietary efficiency. It is a cost effective energy supplement and improves the utilization of dry matter. Fed wisely, it can be an effective tool. However, when forages are short, supplements with NPN need to be avoided.

During periods of drought, forage production is obviously limited and livestock managers commonly pur-

chase hay to feed through the winter months, occasionally the summer months too.

Forage analysis of hay reveals vital information pertaining to available protein and energy. If sufficient protein and energy are present in the hay and cattle consume 2.5-3 percent of their body weight each day additional supplementation is unnecessary. If hay fails to provide sufficient protein and/or energy, then additional supplements are needed.

The only way to know if additional supplements are necessary is to test all forages, purchased or produced. In short, it makes economic sense to conduct forage analysis to ensure livestock are correctly fed.

Additionally, hay supplies that provide sufficient protein and energy are worth more money than poor quality hay that lacks enough protein and/or energy to be fed as a stand-alone feed.



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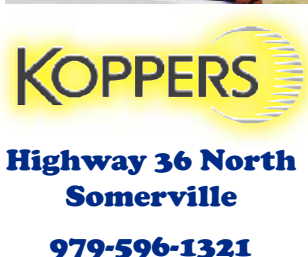
- Never stand an irrigation pipe on end near a power line.
- Do not spray water on power lines, equipment or structures. A stream of water hitting a power line can create a path for electricity.
- Locate irrigation pumps at least 100 feet away from overhead lines. This distance will provide a safe area if you have to pull your pumping or well equipment for repairs.
- Stack irrigation pipe, hay and hay bales away from power lines.

USE CAUTION WHEN MOVING EQUIPMENT NEAR POWER POLES

Beware of hooking guy wires when moving equipment. Keep vehicles, tools, pipes and people clear of guy wires at all times. Always lower equipment, tools and pipes before moving them anywhere near power lines. When you do move equipment near power lines, have someone spot for you.

EQUIPMENT AND POWER

- If your tractor, truck, combine or other equipment makes contact with a power line, stay on board to remain safe. Be sure to warn others to stay away from the area. If the equipment is operable and can be moved out of contact without doing additional damage to the line or poles, do so.
- As long as the equipment is in contact with a line, do not step off the equipment. If you must get off because of fire or another emergency, JUMP clear of the equipment with both feet together, making sure that you never touch the equipment and the ground at the same time. Once off the equipment, hop away, keeping both feet together.



Cotton crop productive despite recent dry spell

Irrigated land doing better than dry land

The county's cotton crop got just enough rain to be productive in 2020, with irrigated land doing substantially better than dry land, most producers say.

Spring rainfall was adequate to good for most row crop producers in the county this year which gave the cotton crop a good start.

But a prolonged dry spell in July and August took its toll on the dry land crop. So yields will vary widely this year depending on the field.

As in past years, the county had about 70 percent irrigated land and about 30 percent dry land -- with the usual amount of overall acreage planted.

Burleson County Extension Agent John Grange said overall "our cotton is looking very healthy."

"I have seen some really good stands with some large bolls on the plants," Grange said. "I am never one to predict yields as you never know until it is harvested, but I think we have a really good year to have a good crop."

Throughout the years, the Brazos Bottom area has remained one of the most productive areas in America for cotton production.

"Our Brazos Bottom is known to have some of the most fertile land compared to the Mississippi Delta," Grange said. "This is very conducive for crops such as cotton. Cotton is a heat tolerant plant that also can handle some drier weather. We do have some very good water sources that allow for irrigation that helps us keep our crops very productive."

Caldwell area cotton producer John Malazzo is among those who have planted cotton for decades in the Brazos Bottom. Malazzo said his yields and crop quality will vary this year.

"It depends on what spot your are standing on," Malazzo said in early August. "We just walked through some tremendous cotton, probably as good as we have ever had, but we

have got some in the sandy soil that is not as good."

Some of the dry land fields were one or two rains short of having good yields this year, Malazzo said.

"The irrigated land looks good, and the dry land is all over the board," he said.

Snook cotton farmer Edmund Sebesta said his crop looks good overall -- with yields of 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 bales an acre on dry land and 2 bales or better on irrigated land.

Sebesta said his crops did reasonably well with this year's rainfall.

Walt Vajdak, another Snook cotton farmer, said in early August that the crop "was coming along well."

"We had some spotty rains. The ones that got rain the other day did well," Vajdak said. "The others are starting to suffer, but it is a fair crop I believe."

Vajdak said the potential is there for 2 bales an acre cotton, although "whether it will be there when we are ready to pick is the question."

"There could be a weather issue that could mess with you," he said.

Jay Wilder, a cotton producer in the Brazos Bottom said his irrigated land looks good.

"The dry land could have used one more good rain, but it will be OK," Wilder said. "It could have used more water, but for what we have gotten it should be decent."

Wilder said he hoped to average about 2 1/2 bales an acre for this year's yield.

John Giesenschlag, also in the Brazos Bottom, had a similar experience, saying the dry land cotton "is burned up," while the irrigated land "looks pretty fair."

"But it does not look like a bumper crop to me," Giesenschlag said.

Vince Patranella of Brazos Bottom Crop Care agreed with the producers about this year's potential.

"The jury is still out on it, but the irrigated cotton looks relatively good.

See COTTON, page 19



JOE AND JAY Wilder look over their cotton crop in the Brazos Bottom with Burleson County Extension Agent John Grange. Their cotton crop did well this year. -- Tribune photo by Roy Sanders

COTTON

FROM PAGE 18

But because of intense heat, I don't see it being a bumper crop."

And farmers are keeping a close eye on markets, Patranella said.

Although yields could be adequate, will there be a good market price?

John Miller of Southwest Agribusiness Consulting in Snook said the cotton market has been more adversely affected by the economic slowdown related to the COVID-19 epidemic.

"Before the pandemic hit earlier this year, U.S. cotton had been seeing strong export numbers again, a trend that continued actually well

into the late spring," Miller said. "By mid-summer, however, the lack of consumer activity created a backlog of cotton and cotton products throughout the world even to the point where overseas spinning mills either canceled or delayed prior purchase agreements with U.S. merchants."

There has been a small price recovery, but this has been based more on production losses than any major improvement in demand, he said.

The extreme dry and hot conditions across the Texas Panhandle has been going on most of this season and has resulted in the loss of almost three quarters of the non-irrigated cotton there and upwards of one-



WALT VAJDAK LOOKS over his cotton crop in the Snook area. Cotton farmers say the crop generally did well although some later rains would have helped. -- Tribune photo by Roy Sanders

third of the irrigated crop, he said.

"These losses alone could account for up to 2 million bales. Add to that losses from the recent hurricane that surprised the Rio Grande Valley and led to a near total destruction of a strong crop," Miller said. "Hurricane Hanna brought more wind and rain than expected and potentially took out upwards of 250,000 bales of what would have been a very strong crop."

Added to the situation across West Texas and we might see total U.S. cotton crop reduced to below 17 million bales, he said. This compares to plans for up to 20 million bales just

a few months ago, he said.

The December cotton futures are currently trading between 63 and 64 cents a pound with the most recent high being 65 cents a few weeks ago, he said.

"While this is still a market very much dependent on how the overall economy will behave in the face of unknowns about COVID-19 going forward, these production losses have set the stage for better prices moving forward -- and will coincide with what we hope will be a great crop for local cotton farmers."

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County agents name Patranella Man of the Year

By: John M. Grange
*Burleson County
 Extension Agent*

The Texas County Agricultural Agents Association has honored Vince Patranella as its Man of the Year in Texas Agriculture.

TCAAA bestowed Man and Woman of the Year awards to individuals in recognition of their outstanding leadership in agriculture or agribusiness and their support of AgriLife Extension educational programming efforts.

Patranella grew up on a family farm raising cotton, cattle, and grain in the Brazos River Bottom between Caldwell and Bryan.

Upon graduating from Texas A&M University in 1969 with a degree in Agronomy, he entered into the fertilizer, seed, and chemical business, in addition to running a farming and cattle operation with his brother.

In 1971, Vince opened Brazos Bottom Crop Care, supplying agricultural inputs to the farmers and ranchers in the Brazos Bottom area.

Vince's primary business objective is always to offer the best service and recommendations to his customers based on good farming practices at a fair and reasonable cost-effective price.

In 2021, Vince will be celebrating 50 years with Brazos Bottom Crop Care. In those 50 years he has hired in excess of 200 Texas A&M University students, some being sons and daughters of original student employees who have gone on to be quite successful in various agricultural fields.

Throughout the years, Vince has held many positions on numerous agricultural related boards in both Burleson and Brazos counties along with contributing financially towards agricultural education programs -- helping farmers and ranchers to better improve their operations.

Vince and his wife, Kathy, continue to fund scholarships for outstanding high school students willing to pursue a career in an agricultural-related field. They feel the backbone of our very existence in this country is based on agriculture.

"Vince has been a huge asset to not only the programming efforts in Burleson County, but in Brazos and Robertson county as well. The value he brings to Texas A&M AgriLife Extension as well as to our producers is priceless" John Grange, CEA Ag/NR Burleson County.



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Suggestions offered for control of webworms

By: John M. Grange
*Burleson County
 Extension Agent*

Each fall, a short drive down a city street reveals some unsightly problems in many pecan trees.

The fall webworm (*Hyphantria cunea*) is a common pest of trees and attacks more than 88 different kinds of plants!

Fall webworms are known for their large webs that may be present in many fruit, nut and ornamental trees as well as shrubs. Heavy infestations are rarely fatal, but if they occur repeatedly over several years they can stress trees and make them susceptible to drought, disease or other insect pests.

The fall webworm moth is white and has a wing span of 1 to 1.5 inches. Sometimes there are small, dark spots on the forewings. Full grown larvae are

approximately 1 inch long, pale green or yellow and covered with tufts of long white and black hairs.

Fall webworm larvae often cover entire branches with their webs and feed on the tender parts of leaves within the web, leaving the larger veins and midrib.

There can be two to four generations of fall webworms each year and Texas with the first generation occurring as early as April in south Texas.

The last generation of the year occurs in the fall and is usually the most damaging.

Fall webworms overwinter as pupae on the ground or on rough tree bark with the moths emerging in the spring to disperse and mate. Female moths deposit hair-covered egg masses on the underside of the leaves of their food plants once in their life cycle.

An egg mass may be deposited as either a single or double layer and can contain up to 600 eggs. (Egg masses of the walnut caterpillar, another common pest of pecans, are not covered with hairs.)

Soon after the eggs hatch the larvae start building a silk web and consume leaves within the web, they expand the web to take in more foliage. The life cycle from egg to adult requires approximately 50 days.

Fall webworms can be controlled without insecticides by removing and destroying leaves with egg masses or by pruning smaller branches covered by webs. Many beneficial insects feed on fall webworm larvae but may need assistance penetrating the web.

If webs are too numerous or too high in a tree to treat individually, insecticides can be used to prevent damage. Hose-end

sprayers or commercial high-pressure sprayers are best for reaching upper portions of tall trees.

Since webworm larvae remain inside their webbing, insecticide sprays must penetrate the web to be effective.

For best control, wait until eggs hatch and before larvae develop dense webs. Insecticides containing acephate (Orthene®), *Bacillus thuringiensis* (B.t.), carbaryl (Sevin®), tebufenozide (Confirm 2F®) as well as numerous other products are effective. Insecticides containing B.t. or tebufenozide are selective for caterpillars and do not harm beneficial insects, however they must be applied when caterpillars are small for effective control.

Regardless of the product used, always read and follow label directions.

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Cool temps, moisture bring fall armyworms

By: John M. Grange
*Burleson County
 Extension Agent*

There are several different armyworms that cause damage in landscapes, cultivated fields and pastures.

The fall armyworm is no stranger to Central Texas. The life cycle of this seasonal pest is as follows:

* 1) winter is spent primarily as pupae, although all stages may be encountered during mild winters;

* 2) adults emerge in late spring, mate and lay eggs on host plants;

* 3) females lay clusters of a hundred or more eggs that are covered with fuzzy gray scales from her body;

* 4) eggs hatch in about 10 days and the larvae grow and molt over a 2-3 week period and consume massive quantities of forage (leafy material) before digging a burrow in the ground and pupating into an adult;

* 5) adults (moths) emerge roughly two weeks later. These adults have dark gray mottled fore wings marked

with light and dark areas. Outstretched wings measure about 1.5 inches from tip to tip.

Caterpillars grow to about two inches in length and can be marked with green, brown, or black colors arranged in stripes with darker stripes along the sides.

The front of the dark head capsule is marked with a pale-colored upside down "Y."

Armyworms feed on a wide variety of plants and can occur in incredibly high numbers in specific areas giving way to their name...armyworms!

Control is relatively easy, but, timing of application is the key to success. Products using carbaryl or malathion are effective.

As with all pesticides, always consult the label before making application. As fall approaches, cooler and hopefully wetter conditions will allow forage growth in pastures and hay fields.

These conditions also favor armyworm development. The lack

of significant forage production throughout the warm-season makes fall growth even more valuable.

Forage producers will need to con-

tinue monitoring pastures and hay fields for grasshoppers as well as armyworms in the coming weeks.



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Fall Ideal for Planting Trees and Shrubs

By: John M. Grange
*Burleson County
 Extension Agent*

With Cooler temperatures quickly approaching, the comfortable air temperature certainly makes working outside more pleasant and the fall is the ideal time to add perennial plants to landscapes.

While many people prefer the spring to establish perennials in the landscape, planting in the fall has distinct advantages.

Daytime temperatures during the fall are cooler than the summer so plants do not suffer moisture loss related to heat stress. Roots continue to grow when the soil temperature is 40 degrees F or higher allowing roots to grow during one of the "least stressful" periods of the year.

When spring arrives, the expanded root system is ready to take full advantage of spring sunshine and moisture.

Fall planting is the optimum time to plant balled and burlapped trees and shrubs. The fall and winter months allow ample time to recover from transplanting before spring growth begins, and more importantly before summer heat arrives.

Keep in mind; bare root plants (pecan trees, roses and fruit trees) should only be planted in late winter when they are completely dormant.

When purchasing landscape plants, try to utilize reputable

dealers that carry and sell healthy plants... bargains aren't always the best deal!

If something seems too cheap, evaluate the plant closely. Chances are there is a reason it is discounted. After all, if the plant dies how good a deal was it?

Before purchasing the plant or shrub, consider its purpose. Will it be used for shade, privacy, wind break, etc... Good planning is a worthwhile investment of time that will pay off in greater enjoyment of a useful and attractive plant.

Plants, like people, grow up! Small plants in a one gallon container will look much different in five or ten years. Be sure adequate room was provided for the mature size of the plant. Here are some basic guidelines when planting trees and shrubs:

* Dig a hole for the plant such that the root ball sits squarely on soil and has about six inches clearance from the root ball to the sides of the hole. Be careful not to dig the hole deeper than the root ball.

* Plant the tree or shrub slightly above the level of the surrounding soil, to allow for settling and increased soil drainage.

* While handling the root ball (not the trunk of the plant) carefully, place the tree or shrub in the hole. Be sure to remove container before planting.

* Backfill the hole using the native soil removed while digging.

Do not use soil amendments when planting large trees or shrubs. Water the plant thoroughly to settle soil around the roots and eliminate air pockets.

* Do not fertilize tree or shrub before or after planting. Wait until early spring to lightly fertilize. Heavy applications can burn or even kill the plant.

* Watering is essential when transplanting! At the time of planting, soak the root ball and surrounding soil. Thoroughly

watering every seven to 10 days significantly increases plant survival. Too frequent watering may encourage root rot. Remember, more trees and shrubs fail from over watering than under watering.

* After planting and watering, add 4-6 inches of mulch around the base of the plant to help prevent weeds and conserve moisture. Pine bark, compost, grass clippings or leaves make good mulch.

Shrubs for Central Texas

- Abelia
- Aralia
- Artemisia
- Bridal Wreath Spirea
- Chinese Photinia
- **Crape Myrtle**
- Hollies
- Ligustrum, Variegated
- Loropetalum
- Mexican Feather Grass
- Nandina
- **Rosemary**
- Santolina
- **Texas Sage**
- **Vitex**
- Wax Myrtle
- Yucca



Crape Myrtle



Texas Sage



Vitex



Rosemary



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What fruit crops to grow?

By: John M. Grange
*Burleson County
 Extension Agent*

With the approach of fall and winter, home owners need to begin planning fruit plantings for the coming year.

Questions to ask include:

* Can you expect success if you plant a fruit or nut tree?

* Are you willing to do what must be done to insure production?

* Do you have a suitable location?

When you are deciding whether to grow fruits or nuts, consider the time, labor, logistics, and chemicals involved in producing the crop.

Some crops, referred to as low-maintenance types, include blackberries, figs, Japanese persimmons, and pears. Productively speaking, the hardest to care for and most cantankerous crops are peaches, plums, apricots, and pecans.

For maximum production, fruit plants need at least six (6) hours of full sunlight daily. If you moved to the country for beautiful live oak scenery and shade, don't expect fruit and nut

trees to do well in that environment. Extremely shaded landscapes are not ideal sites for fruit planting.

Soil and drainage are also important considerations.

Most fruit and nut species cannot tolerate excessive periods of "wet feet." Fruit trees planted in soil with poor drainage show reduced growth, pale green leaves, iron chlorosis, zinc rosette, leaf abscission, and, in some extreme cases, drought stress.

These symptoms are brought about by the plants' inability to absorb nutrients and water from the soil. For nutrients and water to enter the plant oxygen must be adjacent to the roots.

If oxygen is not available in the soil, the plant is unable to absorb the essential nutrients necessary for growth. In some instances, the plant will not be able to absorb even though it may be standing in water.

Growing trees and shrubs on large raised beds can improve soil drainage where the native soil is unsuitable.

To evaluate soil drainage, dig a hole

32 inches deep, and 8 inches in diameter and fill it with 7 gallons of water. The hole should drain in less than 48 hours.

If it is empty in 1 hour, your site has excellent internal drainage.

There is very good internal drainage if the hole is empty in 8 hours.

If the hole is empty in 24 hours, there is good internal drainage.

If the hole is empty in 48 hours, you have adequate soil drainage.

At the end of 48 hours, if the hole still contains water, it will be extremely difficult to produce regular crops of high quality fruits on that soil.

A fruit crop does best in soils with excellent soil drainage. Peaches and plums need very good soil drainage. Apples, pears, and grapes need good soil drainage, while pecans, figs, and persimmons can survive with adequate soil drainage.



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Texas Crop and Weather Report – August 2020

Food grains show steadiness amid COVID-19 commodity troubles

By: Adam Russell

Beef consumers should be seeing lower prices on beef, whether steaks or ground chuck, at grocery stores as production increased and wholesale prices continue to decline, said a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service expert.

David Anderson, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension economist, College Station, said the U.S. Department of Agriculture retail market report showed prices on beef and other meats are moving downward.

Retail choice beef of all cuts – steaks to ground chuck – averaged \$6.84 per pound in July compared to \$7.56 per pound in June, he said. However, prices are still higher than this time last year when choice beef averaged \$6.07 per pound.

“Even though they’re coming

down, we’re way above prices at this time a year ago,” he said.

Anderson said the price decline for beef at grocers reflects a lower wholesale price trend. Retail prices for pork and chicken also slipped since June.

Wholesale choice beef cutout value was \$2.05 per pound last week, basically where it was before COVID-19, he said. Wholesale prices were falling, and retail prices are just now catching up.

Despite wholesale prices dipping, COVID-19 restrictions continue to contribute to retail prices being higher than a year ago, Anderson said.

“Restaurants are still not open or open at full capacity, so there is stronger demand at the grocery store for beef,” he said. “There is more costs to put products on shelves, packaging and demand

for different cuts compared to restaurants, adjustments to how the stores operate, and stores don’t have an incentive to lower prices if the product is in high demand.”

Anderson said research shows lower prices can be delayed between wholesalers and the consumers. Retail prices go up quicker than they come down.

“There’s research on what’s called asymmetric prices – they don’t go up and down at the same pace,” he said. “There’s a term ‘sticky prices,’ regarding grocery store prices that may be higher than expected considering wholesale prices, but that are nevertheless going down as data suggests. As buyer we’d like to see them come down quicker.”

Calf prices improving

Calf prices are trending higher for 500-600-pound steers yet still a little lower than pre-COVID-19 prices, but Anderson said that could be seasonal. March prices are typically higher compared to mid-summer. And calf prices have been steadily climbing since before the pandemic.

Anderson said there is a demand for cattle, and lower corn and feed prices than a year ago adds more value to maintaining herds.

“Calf prices are better, and we aren’t seeing emerging drought in

parts of the state leading to large runs of cattle that might affect prices negatively,” he said. “That could change in the coming weeks without rain.”

Drought monitors show extreme drought continues in parts of West Texas and the southern Panhandle, but much of North and Central Texas has been trending toward drought conditions due to lack of rain and triple-digit temperatures.

If that trend continues, Anderson said culling could flood local markets and lead to price declines for producers.

If calf and cattle prices continue their steady climb or begin dropping due to cattle sell-offs in drought-stricken parts of the state, the ripple effect likely won’t reach consumers anytime soon.

“We shouldn’t see any sharp price adjustments,” he said. “Beef prices are moving the direction they should for consumers and producers, but with restaurants dealing with the pandemic, a large number of unemployed Americans, a huge reduction in GDP, those recessionary impacts plus increasing meat supplies should reflect lower prices at the register.”

See REPORT, page 27

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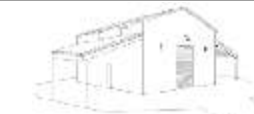


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REPORT

FROM PAGE 26

AgriLife Extension district reporters compiled the following summaries:



A map of the 12 Texas A&M AgriLife Extension districts.

CENTRAL

Intense heat and dry conditions persisted. Daytime temperature highs were 100-107 over the last 10 days. All dryland meadows and pastures looked burned up. Most cattle producers started supplementing with cubes or hay with little to no grazing left. Calf weaning started early in an attempt to reduce feeding requirements. Irrigated crops still looked good. Corn and sorghum harvests were rolling along.

ROLLING PLAINS

Conditions remained hot and dry, except for a small number of areas that received light rain. Cotton was in fair to good condition but needed moisture. Pasture and rangeland conditions were fair to good but could also use moisture.

COASTAL BEND

Persistent hot and dry conditions allowed field activities to continue. Corn harvest continued in the upper end of the reporting area with exceptional yields reported. In southern parts of the district, cotton harvest was in full swing with many operations reported hitting the halfway point. Yields were consistently 2-3-plus bales per acre. In other areas, cotton was being defoliated and will soon be ready for harvest. Rice harvest continued with excellent harvesting conditions and yields reported. Continued dry conditions quickly diminished rangeland and pastures. Some hay was being cut. Livestock water was getting short and becoming a concern. Livestock were in good condition, and the calf crop looked

to be a little heavier than normal. Non-irrigated pecans were shedding nuts due to dry conditions.

EAST

No measurable rain fell across most of the district. Harrison and Jasper counties received some rain. Pasture and rangeland conditions were good. Subsoil and topsoil conditions were adequate. Hay production continued despite the excessive heat and dry conditions. Livestock were doing fair to good. Fall calving began. Armyworm infestation reports increased, and Bermuda grass stem maggots were reported. Wild pig activity continued.

SOUTH PLAINS

Subsoil and topsoil moisture levels increased due to the recent rainfall received in some counties, but more rain was needed. Peanuts continued to progress and were generally disease free. About two-thirds of cotton fields had less than 2.5 nodes above white flower. Producers continued to scout fields for pests. Cattle were

in good condition.

PANHANDLE

Most crops were suffering from hot, dry conditions, and moisture was much needed. Most northern parts of the district reported adequate subsoil moisture. Central and southern parts of the district reported short to very short subsoil and topsoil moisture. Pasture and rangeland conditions were good to very poor. Corn and sorghum were in poor to excellent condition. Cotton was in good to fair condition with fields setting bolls. The northeastern section of the district reported damaging hail and straight-line winds. Peanuts were doing well.

NORTH

Most counties reported adequate to short topsoil moisture. Weather conditions were hot with some counties reporting 104-105-degree temperatures. There was sporadic rain reported across the district, but pastures were still dry. Heavy fall armyworm activity.

See REPORT, page 28

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REPORT

FROM PAGE 27

ity was reported. Feral hogs were still active.

FAR WEST

Temperatures averaged above 100-degrees by midday with lows in the high 70s and low 80s at night. Scattered thunderstorms delivered only trace amounts of

recorded rainfall. Soil moisture levels were very low, making the ground very hard. Crop conditions were worsening. Cotton crops were maturing under irrigation. Dryland producers planted some hay grazer in places that received rain. Pecan orchards were starting to mature and will be preparing for harvest soon. Producers continued to feed livestock and

wildlife. Producers shipped some late lambs and goats. A few wildfires were reported.

WEST CENTRAL

Dry and hot conditions continued, with some rain reported in parts of the district. However, most areas remained in drought conditions. Sorghum and corn harvests were in full swing. Dryland cotton harvest was all but done. Irrigation was not keeping up with crop water demand. Pastures were dry, and wildfire dangers were a concern throughout the district. The local goat market was down some, but prices were still very high overall. Other livestock markets were steady.

SOUTHEAST

Conditions remained hot and dry. Hay fields were browning out. Spring gardens were just about gone. All corn and sunflower acres were harvested. Rangeland and pasture ratings were excellent to very poor with good ratings being the most common. Soil moisture levels ranged from adequate to very short with adequate levels being the most common.

SOUTHWEST

Hot, dry conditions continued with only trace amounts of precipitation reported. Triple-digit temperatures were stressing crops, pastures and rangeland. Kendall County reported that trees were going dormant early. Caldwell County reported all corn and sorghum were harvested. Livestock were in fair to good condition. Beef cattle and sheep prices looked decent. Fall shearing of Angora goats began. Supplemental feeding continued for livestock and wildlife.

SOUTH

Northern, eastern and western parts of the district reported hot weather conditions with very short to adequate soil moisture levels. Soil moisture levels in southern parts of the district were adequate to surplus. Corn and grain sorghum harvests were complete. Yield reports were erratic with some exceptionally good yields in the mix. Cotton bolls were open-

ing, and the crop was nearing harvest. Peanuts were progressing. Both crops were under irrigation. Pasture and rangeland conditions continued to decline in drier areas due to excessive heat and lack of moisture. Pasture and rangeland conditions remained fair in areas that received recent rains. Zapata County reported grasses were green and growing. Grazing increased for ranchers who were able to reduce supplemental feeding. Duval County reported cattle prices dropped. Some producers sold some livestock to reduce grazing pressure on native rangelands and pastures. La Salle County reported a daytime high temperature of 105 degrees. Ponds were starting to dry up, and livestock were spending more time in the shade. Wildlife were starting to suffer and were moving to find water. There were more quail coveys, and deer were in better condition. Irrigated crops like watermelons and cantaloupes were producing normally, and the coastal Bermuda grass pastures were producing good bales. Seed bed preparation for spinach, cabbage and mixed greens continued. Hay producers were cutting and baling their second cutting as hay prices reached \$65 per round bale on average. Cameron County reported the majority of cotton acres had been destroyed by Hurricane Hanna. Many cotton fields in Hidalgo County will not be harvested because of the deteriorating quality following the hurricane. Even some late-planted cotton fields that farmers thought might be salvaged were now being reported as total losses. Many sesame fields will not be harvested as well. Citrus growers were reporting significant damage to their grapefruit crop. Orange producers reported less damage to trees and fruit. Pastures with good drainage were in good condition following the heavy rains, but pastures with poor drainage still had standing water and were not fairing so well. There were minimal reports of livestock losses due to the hurricane.

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Melon crop damaged by May hailstorm

Below average crop still salvaged

The watermelon crop in the Brazos Bottom was stressed this year due to some major hail damage in May.

But the Wiggins family was able to salvage enough of it to make a crop in 2020, said Jody Wiggins of Wiggins Wholesale on F.M. 50.

It was clearly an unusual year, and the Wiggins family had an understandable sense of what might have been.

Again planting 440 acres in the Brazos Bottom, the crop clearly looked promising after planting ended in late March and early April.

The harvest was from June 22 to through July.

The hailstorm was clearly the game-changer.

"It devastated over half the crop," Jody Wiggins said. "Our harvest was late, and yields were off due to the hail."

Wiggins said they were forced to grow plants out of the hail damage.

"We had a good root system, and it wasn't too hard. But the damaged vines could not carry the load as the crop ripened, and most everything ripened in a three-week period," he said.

Stressed crews were able to save most of it, Wiggins said.

"They really did a good job and loaded 540 loads in 22 days from July 10 to July 31, the hottest part of the summer," Wiggins said.

So it was all about recovery.

And yields were off somewhat, he said.

"We discarded nearly 20,000 pounds per acre due to hail damage," Wiggins said.

It was the second year in a row that yields were below what the Wiggins family likes.

Last year, they barely made 45,000 pounds an acre. A good year is considered 55,000 to 65,000 pounds an acre

And the market is not really favorable this year, with prices in the 16-22 cents a pound range.

Ideally, melon growers like prices in the 22-25 cent range on a good year.

"The market is depressed due to a lot of acres in Missouri, Indiana and North Carolina coming in at the same time," Wiggins said. "The Texas market is still holding decent due to good quality and demand in the state."

The Wiggins family has farmed in the Brazos Bottom since 2002.

Wiggins has turned over much of the operation to his son Clint Wiggins, who now handles most of the day-to-day operations.

Wiggins said his family enjoys farming in the rich Brazos Bottom soil, and they plan to stay.

In addition to the local crop, they also planted 540 acres in Edinburg.



JODY WIGGINS LOOKS over his watermelon crop in the Brazos Bottom. A May hailstorm seriously damaged the crop.

A large photograph showing a white semi-truck with a black trailer filled with watermelons parked in a vast green watermelon field. Several people are visible working in the field around the truck. In the top left corner of the image, there is a logo that reads "WIGGINS WATERMELONS" with a stylized green 'W' and a watermelon icon. At the bottom of the image, there is a large blue text overlay that says "Thank you for sharing your county with our business." in a bold, italicized font.

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Vegetable Garden Planting Guide

| Vegetables | Seed/Plants Per 100 ft. | Planting Depth (in.) | Distance Between (inches) | | Avg. Crop Height (ft.) | Spring Planting As To Avg. Frost-Free Date | Fall Planting As To Avg. Freeze Date | Days to Maturity | Avg. Harvest Season (Days) | Avg. Crop (per 100 ft.) |
|-------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|-------|------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Asparagus | 1 oz/66 plants | 1-1½, 6-8 | 36-48 | 18 | 5 | Feb 3-Feb 7 | Not Recommended | 730 | 60 | 30 lbs |
| Beans, Green Bush | ½ lb | 1-1½ | 24-36 | 3-4 | 1½ | Mar 17-Apr 14 | Aug 1-Sept 15 | 45-60 | 14 | 120 lbs |
| Beans, Green Pole | ½ lb | 1-1½ | 36-48 | 4-6 | 6 | Mar 17-Apr 14 | July 28-Aug 11 | 60-70 | 30 | 150 lbs |
| Beans, Lima Bush | ½ lb | 1-1½ | 30-36 | 3-4 | 1½ | Mar 17-Apr 14 | Aug 15-Sept 15 | 65-80 | 14 | 25 lbs shelled |
| Beans, Lima Pole | ¼ lb | 1-1½ | 36-48 | 12-18 | 6 | Mar 17-Apr 14 | July 28-Aug 11 | 75-85 | 40 | 50 lbs shelled |
| Beets | 1 oz | 1 | 14-24 | 2 | 1½ | Feb 3-Feb 17 | Sept 1-Oct 1 | 50-60 | 30 | 150 lbs |
| Broccoli | ¼ oz | ½ | 24-36 | 14-24 | 3 | Feb 3-Feb 17 | Aug 15-Sept 30 | 60-80 | 40 | 100 lbs |
| Brussels Sprouts | ¼ oz | ½ | 24-36 | 14-24 | 2 | Feb 3-Feb 17 | Aug 15-Sept 30 | 90-100 | 21 | 75 lbs |
| Cabbage | ¼ oz | ½ | 24-36 | 14-24 | 1½ | Feb 3-Feb 17 | Aug 15-Sept 30 | 60-90 | 40 | 150 lbs |
| Cabbage, Chinese | ¼ oz | ½ | 18-30 | 8-12 | 1½ | Feb 3-Feb 17 | Aug 11- Aug 25 | 65-70 | 21 | 80 heads |
| Carrot | ¼ oz | ½ | 14-24 | 2 | 1 | Feb 3- Feb 17 | Sept 1-Sept 30 | 70-80 | 21 | 100 lbs |
| Cauliflower | ¼ oz | ½ | 24-36 | 14-24 | 3 | Not Recommended | Aug 15-Sept 20 | 70-90 | 14 | 100 lbs |
| Chards, Swiss | 2 oz | 1 | 18-30 | 6 | 1½ | Feb 3-Mar 3 | Aug 15-Sept 15 | 45-55 | 40 | 75 lbs |
| Collard | ¼ oz | ½ | 18-36 | 8-16 | 2 | Feb 3-Mar 3 | Aug 25-Sept 22 | 50-80 | 60 | 100 lbs |
| Corn, Sweet | 3-4 oz | 1-2 | 24-36 | 12-18 | 6 | Mar 17-Apr 28 | Aug 11-Aug 25 | 70-90 | 10 | 10 dozen |
| Cucumber | ½ oz | ½ | 48-72 | 24-48 | 1 | Mar 17-Apr 28 | Aug 25-Sept 8 | 50-70 | 30 | 120 lbs |
| Eggplant | ¼ oz | ½ | 24-36 | 18-24 | 3 | Mar 31-Apr 28 | July 28-Aug 25 | 80-90 | 90 | 100 lbs |
| Garlic | 1 lb | 1-2 | 14-24 | 2-4 | 1 | Feb 3-Feb 17 | Not Recommended | 140-150 | — | 40 lbs |
| Kale | ¼ oz | ½ | 18-36 | 8-16 | 2 | Feb 3-Mar 3 | Aug 25-Sept 22 | 50-80 | 60 | 100 lbs |
| Kohlrabi | ¼ oz | ½ | 14-24 | 4-6 | 1½ | Feb 3-Mar 3 | Aug 15-Sept 20 | 55-75 | 14 | 75 lbs |
| Lettuce | ¼ oz | ½ | 14-24 | 2-3 | 1 | Feb 3-Mar 31 | Sept 1-Sept 30 | 40-80 | 21 | 50 lbs |
| Cantaloupe | ½ oz | 1 | 60-96 | 24-36 | 1 | Mar 17-Apr 28 | July 28-Aug 11 | 85-100 | 30 | 100 fruits |
| Mustard | ¼ oz | ½ | 14-24 | 6-12 | 1½ | Mar 17-Apr 28 | Aug 15-Sept 30 | 30-40 | 30 | 100 lbs |
| Okra | 2 oz | 1 | 36-42 | 24 | 6 | Mar 31-Apr 28 | July 28-Aug 25 | 55-65 | 90 | 100 lbs |
| Onion (Plants) | 400-600 | 1-2 | 14-24 | 2-3 | 1½ | Jan 6-Feb 17 | Aug 15-Sept 15 | 80-120 | 40 | 100 lbs |
| Onion (Seed) | 1 oz | ½ | 14-24 | 2-3 | 1½ | Jan 20-Feb 3 | Sept 8-Sept 22 | 90-120 | 40 | 100 lbs |
| Parsley | ¼ oz | ½ | 14-24 | 2-4 | ½ | Feb 3-Mar 17 | Aug 15-Oct 6 | 70-90 | 90 | 30 lbs |
| Peas, English | 1 lb | 2-3 | 18-36 | 1 | 2 | Jan 20-Mar 3 | Sept 15-Nov 3 | 55-90 | 7 | 20 lbs |
| Peas, Southern | ½ lb | 2-3 | 24-36 | 4-6 | 2½ | Apr 1-Jun 30 | Aug 15-Sept 1 | 60-70 | 30 | 40 lbs |
| Pepper | ¼ oz | ½ | 24-36 | 18-24 | 3 | Mar 24-May 12 | July 28-Aug 25 | 60-90 | 90 | 60 lbs |
| Potato, Irish | 6-10 lbs | 4 | 30-36 | 10-15 | 2 | Feb 3-Feb 17 | July 28-Aug 11 | 75-100 | — | 100 lbs |
| Potato, Sweet | 75-100 plants | 3-5 | 36-48 | 12-16 | 1 | Mar 31-May 12 | Not Recommended | 100-130 | — | 100 lbs |
| Pumpkin | ¼ oz | 1-2 | 60-96 | 36-48 | 1 | Mar 24-Apr 14 | Aug 11-Aug 25 | 75-100 | — | 100 lbs |
| Radish | 1 oz | ½ | 14-24 | 1 | ½ | Feb 3-Apr 14 | Sept 22-Nov 17 | 25-40 | 7 | 100 bunches |
| Spinach | 1 oz | ½ | 14-24 | 3-4 | 1 | Jan 20-Mar 10 | Sept 15-Nov 3 | 40-60 | 40 | 3 bushels |
| Squash, Summer | 1 oz | 1-2 | 36-60 | 18-36 | 3 | Mar 24-Apr 14 | Aug 4-Aug 25 | 50-60 | 40 | 150 lbs |
| Squash, Winter | ¼ oz | 1-2 | 60-96 | 24-48 | 1 | Mar 24-Apr 14 | Aug 11-Aug 25 | 85-100 | — | 100 lbs |
| Tomato | ¼ oz/50 plants | ½, 4-6 | 24-48 | 18-36 | 3 | Mar 17-May 12 | Aug 11-Aug 25 | 70-90 | 40 | 100 lbs |
| Turnip, Greens | ½ oz | ½ | 14-24 | 2-3 | 1½ | Feb 3-Mar 3 | Aug 25-Nov 3 | 30 | 40 | 50-100 lbs |
| Turnip, Roots | ½ oz | ½ | 14-24 | 2-3 | 1½ | Feb 3-Mar 3 | Aug 25-Nov 3 | 30-60 | 30 | 50-100 lbs |
| Watermelon | 1 oz | 1-2 | 72-96 | 36-72 | 1 | Mar 17-Apr 28 | July 28-Aug 11 | 80-100 | 30 | 40 fruits |

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Recipients advised to report unsolicited seed shipments

By: Kay Ledbetter

Texas residents are now among those across the nation receiving mysterious seeds delivered by mail in tiny bags marked as jewelry.

U.S. Department of Agriculture officials are on alert because these seeds are unsolicited.

Kevin Ong, Ph.D., Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service plant pathologist and director of the Texas Plant Disease Diagnostic Laboratory in College Station, said the concern arises because these packages have seeds in them instead of what is listed, and there is no information on what type they might be.

"We don't know what kind of seeds they are," Ong said. "Not knowing what the seeds are could potentially open our agriculture industry up to noxious weeds. If that proves to be the case, if they take hold, they could impact agriculture negatively."

According to USDA-Animal, Plant Health Inspection Service, APHIS, the Plant Protection and Quarantine, PPQ, regulates the importation of plants and plant products under the authority of the Plant Protection Act.

PPQ maintains its import program to safeguard U.S. agriculture and natural resources from the risks associated with the entry, establishment or spread of animal and plant pests and noxious weeds.

These regulations prohibit or restrict the importation of living plants, plant parts and seeds for propagation.

"Seeds for planting can be produced all over the world and some you buy may come from other countries," Ong said. "Companies that sell these seeds have the necessary permits. In this situation, the source is not readily known. What USDA wants to know is why are people getting these and are they noxious weeds."

Do not simply discard these seeds as they can potentially germinate and escape into nature, Ong said. All cases should be reported to USDA, and all packages should be kept secure until USDA gives further instructions.

All incidences of receipt of these un-requested seeds in Texas should be reported to USDA-APHIS by sending an email to Carol Motloch, USDA-APHIS' Texas PPQ state operations coordinator, at carol.m.motloch@usda.gov.

Other states should send emails to SITCMail@usda.gov. The email should include a contact email and phone number as well as a description of package information. Sending a photo of the label and material would also be helpful.

"First, if you didn't order it, we don't want anyone planting these seeds or even opening the packages," said Larry Stein, Ph.D., Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service horticulturist, Uvalde. "It could be a scam, or it very well could be dangerous."

"We recommend anyone receiving the seeds send an email to USDA and then wait to see if they are asked to send them in," Stein said. "We would not advise throwing them away until more information is known because they might contaminate the landfill."

To date, packages containing these mystery seeds have also been received in Washington, Virginia, Utah, Kansas, Louisiana and Arizona.

Advice from Texas Department of Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller is that anyone receiving a foreign package containing seeds should not open it. Keep contents contained in their original sealed package.

"I am urging folks to take this matter seriously," Miller said in a press release. "An invasive plant species might not sound threatening, but these small invaders could destroy Texas agriculture. TDA has been working closely with USDA to analyze these unknown seeds so we can protect Texas residents."

An invasive species is an organism that is not native to a particular region. The introduction of this "alien species" can cause economic or environmental harm. In agriculture, an invasive species can destroy native crops, introduce disease to native plants and may be dangerous for livestock.



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