

Livestock & Natural Resources Newsletter

APRIL 2009

Texas AgriLife Extension Service– Bexar County Office
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<http://bexar-tx.tamu.edu>



Trichomoniasis

Beginning April 1, 2009, breeding bulls entering Texas from any other state must be either 24 months of age or younger and certified as a virgin or be tested negative for cattle trichomoniasis within 30 days prior to entry. The entry requirements are part of a regulatory package adopted by the commissioners for the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) February 24 to address trichomoniasis a venereal disease of cattle that causes infertility and abortions, and results in extended breeding seasons and diminished calf crops, which costs livestock producers valuable income. Cattle trichomoniasis is not a human health issue. The second phase of the program, which will address in-state movement of Texas breeding bulls, will go into effect January 1, 2010.

In-State Breeding Bull Regulations Begin January 1, 2010

The second phase of the Texas Cattle Trichomoniasis Program will begin January 1, 2010, and will require that Texas breeding bulls offered for sale, lease, exchange or otherwise change possession for breeding within the state be certified as virgin bulls or be tested negative prior to selling, loaning, exchanging, giving or otherwise changing the possession of a breeding bull. (No test or certification is required for bulls shipped or sold directly to slaughter).

Country of Origin Labeling C.O.O.L.

Agriculture Secretary, Tom Vilsack, announced that the final rule of the Country of Origin Labeling C.O.O.L. program will go into effect as scheduled on March 16th. He also released a letter inviting stakeholders to follow additional voluntary labeling practices. The rule, published in the Federal Register on January 15, 2008 has been under regulatory review by

USDA pursuant to a January 20, 2009, memorandum from the President's Chief of Staff.

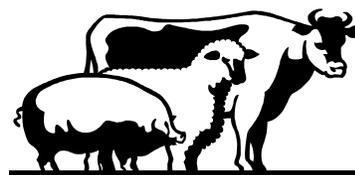
"I strongly support Country of Origin Labeling – it's a critical step toward providing consumers with additional information about the origin of their food," said Vilsack. "The Department of Agriculture will be closely reviewing industry compliance with the rule and will evaluate the practicality of the suggestions for voluntary action in my letter."

During the regulatory review process, Secretary Vilsack determined that allowing the rule to go into effect and carefully monitoring implementation and compliance by retailers and their suppliers would provide the best avenue to evaluate the program. This evaluation period will inform the Secretary's consideration of whether additional rulemaking may be necessary to provide consumers with adequate information.

The COOL regulation required country of origin labeling for muscle cuts and ground beef (including veal), pork, lamb, goat and chicken; wild and farm-raised fish and shellfish; fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables; peanuts, pecans, macadamia nuts, and ginseng sold by designated retailers. These commodities must be labeled at retail to indicate the country of origin.

The final rule outlines requirements for labeling covered commodities and the record keeping requirements for retailers and suppliers. The rule prescribes specific criteria that must be met for a commodity to bear a "United States Country of Origin" declaration. The rule also contains provisions for labeling covered commodities of foreign origin.

The Texas and Southwestern Cattle raisers association has excellent, easy to understand information about COOL on their website. Visit it at: <http://www.texascattleraisers.org/COOL>



Downer Cattle

Agriculture Secretary, Tom Vilsack, announced a final rule to amend the federal meat inspection regulations to require a complete ban on the slaughter of cattle that become non-ambulatory disabled after passing initial inspection by Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) inspection program personnel.

The final rule amends the federal meat inspection regulations to require that all cattle that are non-ambulatory disabled (“downer”) cattle at any time prior to slaughter at an official establishment, including those that become non-ambulatory disabled after passing ante-mortem inspection, be condemned and properly disposed of according to FSIS regulations. Additionally, the final rule requires that establishments notify inspection program personnel when cattle become non-ambulatory disabled after passing the ante-mortem, or pre-slaughter, inspection. The rule will enhance consumer confidence in the food supply and improve the humane handling of cattle.

“President Obama has strongly stated his support for efforts to improve food safety,” said Vilsack. “This rule is designed to enhance consumer confidence and humane handling standards and will provide clear guidance that non-ambulatory cattle will not be allowed to enter the human food supply.

It is a step forward for both food safety and the standards for humane treatment of animals.”

Under the final rule, cattle that become non-ambulatory disabled from an acute injury after ante-mortem inspection will no longer be eligible to proceed to slaughter as “U.S. Suspects.” Instead, FSIS inspectors will tag these cattle as “U.S. Condemned” and prohibit these cattle from proceeding to slaughter. Discontinuing the case-by-case disposition of cattle that become non-ambulatory disabled after ante-mortem inspection will eliminate the time FSIS Public Health Veterinarians spend conducting additional inspections on these animals, thereby increasing the time inspection program personnel can allocate to other inspection activities. With this final rule, these cattle now must be humanely euthanized.

On July 13, 2007, FSIS published the final rule, “Prohibition of the Use of Specified Risk Materials for Human Food and Requirements for the Disposition of Non-Ambulatory Disabled Cattle; Prohibition of the Use of Certain Stunning Devices Used to Immobilize Cattle During Slaughter” (the SRM final rule). The SRM final rule allowed a case-by-case re-inspection of cattle that became non-ambulatory disabled after ante mortem inspection to address the rare situations in which an animal that is deemed by FSIS as fit for human food at ante-mortem inspection subsequently suffers an acute injury.



Drought Management Tips

Unfortunately, droughts are common in Texas, and because droughts are inevitable, livestock managers need to plan for them. That plan should include strategies for finances, grazing management, and stock reduction, as well as for vegetation recovery after the drought ends. If stock remain in a pasture too long without adequate forage, long-term carrying capacity for both livestock and wildlife may be severely reduced.



Several kinds of ecological damage could occur from overgrazing including: more rainfall run off when there is too little plant and litter cover on the soil surface, leaving less moisture in the ground for plant production, increased soil erosion, and plant root masses eventually become depleted, reducing the plant's ability to recover after grazing or extreme environmental conditions, and finally undesirable plant species invade.

Now that we are in a severe drought, livestock producers need to consider some culling options. Most of us have spent years building our herds and careful consideration needs to be taken and some systematic culling decisions should be made. Consider culling animals in this order;

1. Dry, open cows not raising offspring
2. Cows palpated open (not pregnant)
3. Animals with structural or production defects
4. Young replacement females (heifers, ewe-lambs, nanny-kids)
5. Cows palpated with short-term pregnancies (short-bred)
6. Older animals with offspring at side, but with worn teeth
7. Older animals with offspring at side
8. Thin, quality females, with offspring at side
9. Good condition, mid-aged females (4 to 8 year old cows, 3 to 5 years old nannies)

The key to survival lies in balancing forage supplies with the animals' daily demand for dry matter, as well as their ever-changing requirements for diet quality. So as a livestock producer faced with a severe drought, here are some actions that warrant serious consideration;

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1. Move yearlings or replacement females to lease grass, or sell them.
2. Wean calves, lambs or kids at lighter weights.
3. Supplement only as designated cash reserves will allow, because borrowing money to buy feed only increases risk..
4. Cull livestock.
5. The last option would be to liquidate all livestock.

It is critical that de-stocking is done in a timely fashion. If some culling begins early, total livestock reductions will likely be less severe. If stock remain in a pasture too long without adequate forage, long-term carrying capacity for both livestock and wildlife may be severely reduced. Good rangeland managers work to maintain as much carryover forage on the ground as possible to protect the soil, so that when it does begin to rain again, your rangeland is able to trap and store that valuable water resource.

Remember, we are one day closer to the next good rain!

Crop producers are faced with the decision of what crop to plant with no soil moisture. A computer tool is currently on line at <http://coastalbend.tamu.edu/droughtinfo.htm> to help evaluate Crop Insurance Alternative Options between cotton and grain sorghum. Additional drought management information is also available at this website.

Dairy Cull Expected to Cut into Beef Market

Fed cattle trade was sluggish at on Thursday, with little activity. Analysts said they expected trade to come in at least steady with the previous week. However, a surge in the future markets Thursday had improved feedlot optimism. Vetterkind Cattle Brokerage analyst, Troy Vetterkind, said he expected that there was some potential for late trade to gain perhaps \$1, particularly in the southern Plains. Prior week live sales sold between \$83 and \$84 while dressed cattle traded at \$132-133.

Happy Fiesta Week!



Growing Grapes

The Viticulture Extension Program is pleased to announce a new web page providing information for home gardeners on grape growing. Grapes are a very popular fruit for the home garden. Many different varieties are available with adaptation to different climates and suitability for fresh eating or processing into juice, jelly, or wine. Grapevines can also contribute to an attractive home landscape when grown on an arbor, pergola, or along a fence.



The resources on this page provide information on the general care and management of grapevines in the home garden and landscape. Specialized topics also covered include pruning, and disease and pest management. The page can be found on the Grape Growing menu of the Texas Winegrape Network <http://winegrapes.tamu.edu> or follow the link below to go directly to the new Grape Gardening page:

<http://winegrapes.tamu.edu/grow/gardening.html>



Texas Emissions Reduction Plan

The Texas Emissions Reduction Plan was established by the Texas Legislature to provide monetary incentives for projects to improve air quality in areas of the state that do not meet certain standards established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. As a part of the TERP initiative, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) operates five grant programs. All are designed to reduce emissions of nitrogen oxides, which are usually a by-product of high-temperature combustion. The Texas Department of Agriculture is partnering with TCEQ to increase the agriculture industry's awareness about TERP. TCEQ has dedicated \$5 million of TERP funding to assist farmers and ranchers in replacing or repowering gasoline and diesel engines used in agricultural production. This partnership creates an opportunity to save money, increase production efficiency and improve air quality. The current grant cycle is Dec. 1, 2008 through spring or summer 2009. To assist potential applicants in determining eligibility and completing applications, TCEQ is now hosting grant workshops across the state. Eligible counties for this grant cycle include: Bastrop, Bexar, Brazoria, Caldwell, Chambers, Collin, Comal, Dallas, Denton, Ellis, Fort Bend, Galveston, Gregg, Guadalupe, Hardin, Harris, Harrison, Hays, Jefferson, Johnson, Kaufman, Liberty, Montgomery, Orange, Parker, Rockwall, Rusk, (Continued on next page)

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Smith Tarrant, Travis, Upshur, Waller, Williamson, and Wilson. For questions regarding the TERP grant Program please contact TCEQ at: Main Local Number: 512-239-4950 Toll Free: 1-800-919-TERP (8377) Fax: 512-239-0077, Attn: TERP Program E-Mail: terp@tceq.state.tx.us

TDA Secures Exemption to Control Sandburs in Pastures, Helping Hay Producers

Austin - The Texas Department of Agriculture has been granted approval by the Environmental Protection Agency to issue a Section 18 specific exemption allowing the use of pendimethalin (Prowl H20) to control sand bur species in Bermuda grass pastures and hay fields.



At a time when drought has severely limited forage production, eliminating sandburs will assist in the recovery of pastures and improve grazing and hay opportunities in the event of rainfall.

Prowl may be used following all directions, restrictions and precautions on the product label, as well as restrictions within the exemption notice. The exemption expires June 30, 2009.

Applications can only be made by certified applicators, licensed applicators or persons under the direct supervision of license applicators.

For more information, contact your county Texas AgriLife Extension Service office or TDA at (512) 463-7544 or 800-TELL-TDA. A copy of the approval notice is located on the TDA Web site at TexasAgriculture.gov

Bill Introduced to Limit Drug Use in Livestock By Martha Hollinda Garrett

Keeping livestock healthy has always been important to livestock producers and is considered as one of the major components to profit and to overall food safety. But a recently introduced bill could change this long standing practice and threaten livestock producers with more regulations.

During the week of March 16th, a bill was introduced in the House of Representatives by Louise Slaughter D-NY and in the Senate by Edward Kennedy D-MA, that would ban the use of antibiotics important to human health from being used on cattle, hogs, sheep and poultry unless animals are ill. In addition, the bill also authorizes funds to farmers to help defray costs of phasing out non-therapeutic use of medically important antibiotics, and provides for research and demonstration projects to assist farmers in this transition.

In an interview carried by Scripps Howard News Service, Texas A&M University's Ron Gill, a professor and extension livestock specialist, said barring antibiotics would decrease farm efficiency by about 15 percent, and more animals would need to be used to produce the same amount of product we have today. This would ultimately affect the consumer's pocketbook.

With the way the economy is right now, we're trying to do everything we can to produce the same quality product at the lowest cost," he said. "If this were based on sound science and data, I would back it up – but it's not."

Gill explained that of the 27 million pounds of antibiotics used on farms each year, about 39 percent of those have no relation to human antibiotics.



Massive Land Bill Signed into Law -Controversial Measure Will Lock Up 2 Million Acres

The massive omnibus public lands bill passed by Congress in March was signed into law by President Barack Obama. The measure is the largest move by the government to lock up land in 25 years, setting aside 2 million acres as protected wilderness under several programs.

In Cooperation with.....

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Commissioner, Pct. 1

Kevin A. Wolff
Commissioner, Pct. 3

Paul Elizondo
Commissioner, Pct. 2

Tommy Adkisson
Commissioner, Pct. 4

2009 Bexar/Guadalupe/Comal County Beef Cattle Field Day

When.....Saturday, May 9, 2009

Where.....Boysville, Inc.

Connell Life Skills &
Livestock Center
8555 E. Loop 1604 N.,
Converse, TX 78109

Time..... 8:30 – 9:00 am Registration
9:00 am – 3:00 pm

Topics to Include:

- ◆ Brush Management (Effects of Drought on Brush Control Methods, Chemical to Use, Etc.)
- ◆ Livestock Options Best Suited for Small Landowners
- ◆ Pesticide Laws & Regulations
- ◆ Beef Cattle Health & Nutrition – How to Manage During Drought and COOL Update
- ◆ Laws & Regulations for Farming & Ranching Equipment

Three (3) CEUs will be Offered

The cost of the event is \$15 early registration, \$20 at the Door. Please Make Your Check Payable to Beef Cattle Account and Mail to: Beef Cattle Field Day, 3355 Cherry Ridge Dr., Suite 212, San Antonio, TX 78230

**RSVP to Annette at (210) 467-6575
by Wednesday, May 6, 2009**

Private Applicator Training

When.....Thursday, June 4, 2009

Where.....Texas AgriLife Extension
Service, 3355 Cherry Ridge
Suite 208

Time.....8:30 am – 12:30 pm

The cost is \$42.00, which includes the manuals and worksheet. To make a reservation, please call Annette at (210) 467-6575

The Bexar Beef Cattle Committee

3355 Cherry Ridge, Suite # 212
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