



The Bexar County Beef Cattle Newsletter

June - 2006

TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS

If you would like to continue receiving our quarterly *Beef Cattle* Newsletter, you must complete the enclosed registration form and mail it to: 3355 Cherry Ridge, Suite 212, San Antonio, TX 78230, fax to 210-930-1753 or email it to jw-warren@tamu.edu on or before August 4, 2006, in order to receive the September/October newsletter. If you have any questions please call Jerry Warren, CEA-Ag, Bexar County at 210-467-6575.



PRIVATE APPLICATORS TRAINING

Bexar County Extension Office conducts Private Applicators Training every first Thursday in March, June, September, and December. The training begins at 8:30 a.m. Our office is located at 3355 Cherry Ridge Dr., Ste 208. Class is \$25.00 which includes the manual and worksheet. Please RSVP to Sheilah at 210 467-6575.

NOTE: The June 2006 Private Applicators class will be held on Thursday, June 8th (the SECOND Thursday in June).

CEU OPPORTUNITIES



Small/New Landowners Can Learn about Livestock Options at June 14 Workshop

By: Paul Schattenberg

Small and new landowners from throughout the state are invited to attend the Livestock Options Workshop on June 14 in Southeast Austin. The workshop will be 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at the Hornsby Bend

Wastewater Facility, located on Farm-to-Market Road 973 North, Del Valle.

Speakers will address the topics of stocker cattle, fire ant treatment, and meat goat and sheep management. Sessions on fence building and agriculture tax exemption laws also will be presented.

"This workshop will benefit the small landowner and new landowner who want to know more about the type of livestock or wildlife that will best suit their enterprise, as well as learn about the agricultural tax exemptions to which they are entitled," said Brad Pierce, Texas Cooperative Extension agent for agriculture in Travis County.

Three continuing education credits – one general and two integrated pest management – are available to attendees.

For more information, contact Pierce at (512) 854-9600.

32nd ANNUAL CONVENTION AND TRADE SHOW

The Independent Cattlemen's Association of Texas will be holding its 32nd Annual Convention and Trade Show in San Antonio at the El Tropicano, a Clarion Hotel. On June 14-16, the convention will host a variety of educational programs. In addition, the trade show will offer a display of everything from animal identification tools to animal nutrition products. Full registration (*includes all sessions/conferences, trade show, meal functions and social*) \$165.00. If you plan to attend only on Thursday or Friday registration is \$90.00 per day. There are a host of other sessions you can register for, for an additional fee. If you have any questions concerning registration please call the ICAA office at 512-620-0162 or via email at tica@icatexas.com.



52nd ANNUAL TAMU BEEF CATTLE SHORT COURSE

The 52nd Annual TAMU Beef Cattle Short Course will be held August 7-9, 2006 at the TAMU University Center and Rudder Tower in College Station, Texas.

Drought and increasing expenses have made this a challenging year for cattle producers, said Dr. Jason Cleere, Texas Cooperative Extension beef cattle specialist and conference coordinator. Fortunately, good beef cattle prices have helped offset the higher costs, Cleere said, but producers are wondering how long the higher prices will last.

These are just a couple of the many issues and topics that will be addressed at the 2006 TAMU Beef Cattle Short Course. "The 2006 Short Course will be one of the most important programs of the year for today's beef producers looking to the future," said Dr. Larry Boleman, Assistant Deputy Vice Chancellor and conference director. Boleman added that there will be information available for the most novice producer as well as for the most seasoned producers.

One of the most popular features of the Beef Cattle Short Course is the "Cattleman's College," where participants can choose workshops and topics from a field of approximately 16 different subjects on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. These concurrent workshops will feature information on ranch management, nutrition, reproduction, genetics, pastures, carcass evaluation, record keeping, and much more.

The popular live animal handling programs will feature demonstrations on chute side calf working, cattle behavior, penning, sorting, and selection. All these sessions are especially important to support Beef Quality Assurance credits for producers.

In addition to the Cattleman's College sessions, a key general session will be offered on Monday afternoon. The goal of the Beef Cattle Short Course each year is to provide the most cutting-edge information that is needed by beef cattle producers," said Cleere. During the general session industry experts will discuss weather

patterns, rising energy costs, and provide a market outlook.

Participants will be able to obtain a pesticide applicator's license or acquire numerous continuing education units if already licensed.

Additionally, the Beef Cattle Short Course trade show, which features more than 100 agricultural businesses or service exhibits, will be available in the University Center.

Registration is \$120 per person and includes educational materials, a copy of the Beef Cattle Short Course Proceedings, trade show admittance, tickets to the special prime rib dinner, 5 additional meals, and refreshments. Complete information and scheduling will be mailed to previous participants in June. Producers may register online at <http://animalscience.tamu.edu> or by contacting Cleere's office at (979) 845-6931.

The following is a list of private companies that offer **CEU** opportunities throughout the region and throughout the year:

High Sierra Education

Contact: Larry Franke at 830/620-4440

Chrysalis Education

Contact: Dennis Maloney at 806/468-8583

CTN Educational Services

Contact: Tommy Kezar at 512/288-8288

USDA/NRCS

Contact: Vivian Garcia at 361/241-0609

USDA RELEASES NATIONAL ANIMAL ID IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

TSCRA

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has released details of the implementation plan for the establishment of the National Animal Identification System (NAIS).

The implementation plan continues to set an aggressive timeline for ensuring full implementation goals to enable the NAIS to be operational by 2007, and to achieve full producer participation by 2009.

In summary of implementation strategies, USDA says the NAIS is currently a voluntary program. However, USDA said it may be required to implement regulations if the marketplace, along with state and federal identification programs, does not provide adequate incentives for achieving complete participation.

National ID Implementation Timeline

- March 2006** - Individual animal identification begins; Animal Identification (AIN) system operational
- June 2006** - Cooperative agreements (CA) with private/state animal tracking databases (ATDs)
- Jan. 2007** - 25% of premises registered
- Feb. 2007** - Private and state animal tracking databases and animal trace processing systems (ATPs) operational
- Jan. 2008** - 70% of premises registered; 40% of animals identified
- Jan. 2009** - 100% of premises registered; 100% of animals born in the past year identified; 60% of animals less than one year of age have complete movement data

Lack of Rainfall Brings Some Poisonous Forages

By: Dr. Steve Livingston



Drought conditions in Texas have sent many ranchers "scraping" for enough hay and forage to meet livestock needs. With many hay barns empty and little promise of hay production in some areas, ranchers who still have cows have resorted to alternative feeds such as cotton seed, burned prickly pear cactus, and other roughages to substitute for the 26 pounds per day of dry matter, usually consumed by the average cow. Texas Cooperative Extension agronomist Dr. Steve Livingston said that when South Texas wheat crops failed due to drought, some of these fields were cut for hay. Even now, there is talk of cutting failed sorghum and corn fields as livestock feed, and this presents some special cautions. Livingston said that nitrate poisoning is common in droughted corn and sorghum when high rates of nitrogen fertilizer are used, and the nitrogen becomes trapped in the lower portion of the stalk. Such forage should be tested for nitrates before it is fed to livestock. Many forages with high nitrate levels can be fed in moderation or mixed with other forages to dilute the nitrate salt. Texas Cooperative Extension Service publication L-5149 discusses how to identify high nitrate levels and options available to farmers and ranchers. Nitrates remain trapped in the plant even when cured as hay. Nitrates combine with hemoglobin molecules in

the animal's circulatory system, and the ability to carry oxygen is decreased. If livestock break through fences and get access to droughted corn, poisoned animals will begin staggering, will develop muscle tremors, rapid pulse and urination, and eventually asphyxiate. Livingston said the result is similar to carbon monoxide poisoning. If a veterinarian is notified quickly, some animals may be saved by methylene blue injections.

Livingston also discussed prussic acid poisoning that results from feeding johnsongrass or sorghum-sudan haygrazers that have been under drought stress, and have rebounded and produced growth after a recent rain. Prussic acid is deadly when the forage is green and growing in the field, but the acid dissipates when the forage is fully cured as hay. To avoid prussic acid poisoning, freshly-cut or standing fields of droughted haygrazers or johnsongrass should not be used for grazing, but instead cut for hay and fed only after being tested for nitrates. Prussic acid poisoning is instant and deadly. It is easy to avoid, but almost impossible to correct.

Sill a third means for livestock to be poisoned, is through poisonous weeds that produce many undesirable compounds. Many of these weeds are not routinely eaten by livestock, but may be utilized when there is nothing else to eat, or when moved from one location to another. Silverleaf nightshade berries, lantana, seedling cocklebur, coffee senna, milkweeds, curly dock, and other plant can be toxic to livestock if consumed in large quantities. Even the leaves of white oleander are poisonous and should be avoided. Sometimes uninformed residents will dump pruned plants on the road side or within access of livestock, and this too may result in livestock death.

Contact your TCE Extension Agent for information on where to send nitrate samples for testing.

MANAGING MARBLING

Dr. Harlan Ritchie, Michigan State University, recently summarized factors affecting marbling:



Breed - of the major breeds found in the U. S., Angus, Red Angus, and Shorthorn average highest in marbling.

Genetic selection - is possible because marbling is moderate to highly heritable. Genetic tools available include EPD, DNA, and genetic markers.

Health - as has been well documented, including through the Texas A&M Ranch to Rail feedout program, cattle that never get sick in the feedyard tend to average higher in marbling.

Disposition - ill-tempered, aggressive cattle tend to marble lower, and also have higher rates of sickness/death and gain slower.

Early weaning - calves weaned earlier than usual and continuously fed high-energy rations to typical slaughter weights tend to marble higher. But they also are more susceptible to disease.

Creep feeding - for at least 80 days on high-energy supplements tends to increase marbling.

Season - cattle slaughtered in the Fall tend to marble lower. This may be related to the fact that fall-slaughtered cattle are typically weaned in the fall and grown on lush forage such as wheat pasture before finishing. Such forage is very high in Vitamin A, of which high blood levels have been shown to decrease deposition of marbling.

High-oil corn - cattle fed high-oil varieties of corn tend to marble higher.

Restricted growth - cattle subjected to restricted rates of growth (perhaps less than 1.0 to 1.25 lb/day) for several months after weaning tend to marble lower after finishing.

Implants - if slaughtered at the same age or after the same length of feeding, implanted cattle tend to marble lower. However, they also gain faster and more efficiently to heavier weights with more desirable Yield Grades. Implanted cattle fed to the same Yield Grade/carcass fatness as non-implanted cattle tend to marble at similar levels.

Ionophores (Rumensin, Bovatec, Cattlyst), ractopamine (Optaflexx), and MGA (melangesterol acetate) - do not seem to affect marbling, when fed at recommended levels

Termites Swarming in Texas



By: Edith A. Chenault

It's spring, and termites are swarming. With that comes another chance for termites to invade homes and businesses in Texas.

Two major groups of subterranean termites – natives and Formosan, – make Texas their home.

Native subterranean termites have already swarmed in South Texas, and it is now swarming season in Central and North Texas, said Dr. Roger Gold, Texas Cooperative Extension entomologist.

Considered the most destructive insect wood pests in the U.S., subterranean termites cause more than \$2 billion in damage each year. Subterranean termites are found throughout the U.S., with the greatest concentration in the Southeast.

Native subterranean termites live in nests or colonies in the soil, Gold said, and feed on dead trees and brush. But when land is cleared of this material for construction of buildings, termites will attack these structures, he said.

These insects enter buildings through wood in direct contact with the soil, shelter tubes they build or directly through cracks or joints in and under foundations, he said.

The primary native subterranean termite – which is swarming now – is coal black to yellow-brown, about one-fourth to three-eighths of an inch in length (a little longer than a pencil eraser), and has wings with a few distinct veins, he said.

Formosan termites swarm in the summer. This termite is a newcomer, having only been in Texas for a little more than 50 years

The ones that swarm are yellowish-brown, about a half-inch long, and have wings with two heavily pigmented veins near the front edge and no connecting cross veins.

Formosan termites often make aerial nests – commonly called a carton – of wood, saliva and fecal material. These can be as large as several cubic feet and may not have ground contact.

Even though they cause the same type of damage as native subterranean termites, they inflict this damage more rapidly.

Also, more than 47 plant species – such as pecan, citrus, wild cherry, cherry laurel, sweet gum, cedar, willow and wax myrtle – have been attacked by Formosan termites.

"Formosan termites also have been known to eat through non-cellulose material, such as thin sheets of soft metal such as lead or copper, asphalt, plaster, creosote, rubber and plastic searching for food and moisture," Gold said.

If termites are found swarming around or inside a home, don't panic, Gold said.

"Termites usually work slowly, so your house will generally not collapse or be ruined overnight," he said.

He advised following these steps:

- Take the time to learn more about termites, their biology, inspection techniques and treatment options.
- Do not permit anyone to rush you into buying termite control services. Take the time you need to make an informed decision.

If you are unsure about termites being present, arrange for a thorough termite inspection with a licensed, reputable company.

"Know that costs of inspections, estimates and terms can vary significantly among companies," Gold said. "Ask for inspections from three or more companies. Ask for recommendations from your friends and neighbors. This is the best way to get an honest opinion about a termite control service."

South Central Texas Abuzz with Bee Activity

By Paul Schattenburg,



The buzz on bees in South Central Texas is growing louder and will be that way for months, said a Texas Cooperative Extension expert.

"We've been getting a lot of calls lately relating to bee activity in the area," said Molly Keck, Extension entomologist for Bexar County. "Bees are becoming much more active now and that activity will continue throughout the summer and beyond."

Many area residents have found large bee swarms on their property, Keck said, while others are seeing increased activity from established nests.

"It's scary for a lot of people when they see a huge ball of bees huddled together on a wall or in a tree near their home," she said. "But generally bees are docile unless disturbed."

Bees clustered together in a tight ball-like shape typically represent a "true swarm," Keck said.

"The bees in a true swarm are usually in transit from one place to another," she said. "They are trying to relocate because they have outgrown their old nest or the queen is getting older. The worker bees gather all around to protect her, and that's what makes the ball shape. Scout bees will leave the 'mass' to search for a home in the nearby area."

Sometimes swarms find a home in the crack of a wall, the opening of a tree or some other accommodating feature, Keck said.

"Along with the swarming, we're getting a lot of calls about bee activity from what turns out to be a disturbance of established nests," she said. "When people get more active and start mowing their lawns and doing other outdoor activities, the bees get more active too."

"Bees that have been more or less dormant for months often become agitated by vibrations from lawnmowers, weed eaters or other lawn maintenance equipment. They leave the nest, which may be in a wall crack or other opening, to

investigate the sound and protect the nest from what they perceive to be a threat."

While patience and a respectable distance are enough to resolve many bee encounters, a relatively simple and inexpensive treatment can help, Keck said.

"Soap and water will do the trick," she said. "If you mix about 1 cup of soap per gallon of water and apply it using a fine mist setting on a pump sprayer, that will kill them. The soap and water mixture causes the bees to dry out and die."

"The treatment is very effective," she said. "You can see the bees drop immediately after you apply it."

But treating the bees isn't the only option, Keck added. Bees can be re-located.

"Bees are among the most beneficial insects," she said. "Along with producing honey, bees are responsible for the majority of all pollination, including pollination of the vegetables and fruits we eat."

Bees are used to pollinate about 130 vegetable, fruit, and nut crops throughout the U.S., and bee pollination adds more than \$14 billion annually in improved crop yields and quality nationwide, according to Extension entomologists.

Because of their value, whenever possible it's important to try and relocate bee swarms or nests rather than treating them, Keck said.

A licensed beekeeper can remove and relocate the bees, she said.

"But be sure the beekeeper is licensed by the Texas Structural Pest Control Board," she said. "Otherwise, they can't legally charge for removing the bees."

For more information on bees, go to <http://honeybee.tamu.edu> .

Please visit our website at:

bexar-tx.tamu.edu

(Click on Agriculture and Natural Resources)

*for updated information on
Private Applicator
CEU'S and more*

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