



## Winter 2016 - Ag Newsletter

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### Ag Blog and Newsletter Online:

Visit <http://agrilife.org/agnewsandviews>  
and our county website periodically at  
<http://bexar-tx.tamu.edu>

### Calendar of Events

Jan 12 – Bexar County Beef Cattle Short Course  
Jan 19 – Bexar County Beef Cattle Short Course  
Mar 2 – Private Applicator Pesticide Training

### Did you know?

#### TEXAS RANKS FIRST

- Sales of cattle and calves
- Sheep and wool
- Goats and mohair
- Upland cotton, cottonseed and products
- Sorghum grain
- Farm and ranch land
- Farms and ranches

## 2017 Beef Cattle Short Course

Reserve your spot today to attend the Bexar Beef Cattle Short Course January 12<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> at Palo Alto College. The program is hosted by the Bexar Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee and sponsored by Capital Farm Credit with support from Dow AgroSciences. Registration will start at 6:00 p.m. both evenings with the program to begin at 6:30 p.m.

Topics and presenters include:

### January 12<sup>th</sup>

Beef Cattle Herd Health and the Veterinary Feed Directive – What Producers Need to Know - Dr. Joe Paschal, Extension Livestock Specialist, Corpus Christi, TX  
Pesticide Laws and Regulations - Bryan Y. Davis, County Extension Agent – Ag, Wilson County

### January 19<sup>th</sup>

What's New in Range Weed and Brush Herbicides and How to Calibrate Your Spray Equipment - Dr. Bob Lyons, Extension Range Specialist, Uvalde, TX  
Pesticide Laws and Regulations - Vick Alexander, Texas Department of Agriculture Inspector

**A total of three hours of CEU credit** will be offered for attending both educational programs (1 hr. Gen; 1 hr. L&R; 1 hr. IPM). In addition, refreshments, door prizes and vendors will be available. Registration fee is \$15/session. Call and sign up today!

## VFD Update

As of January 1, 2017, animal producers will not be able to purchase feeds over the counter that contain antimicrobials deemed important for human health. Instead, to buy and use feeds containing those antimicrobials, animal producers must be authorized by a licensed veterinarian who is operating under the Food and Drug Administration's revised Veterinary Feed Directive, or VFD, rule.

The VFD rule has been in effect for 20 years, but it affected only a small number of producers and just a few antimicrobials. As of January 1, changes to the rule will mean that it will impact most animal producers and apply to many more antimicrobials.

The antimicrobials that will be covered by the VFD rule are considered "medically important," because they are important for human health. A list of medically important antimicrobials is in Appendix A of FDA's Guidance for Industry #152:

<http://www.fda.gov/downloads/AnimalVeterinary/GuidanceComplianceEnforcement/GuidanceforIndustry/UCM052519.pdf>.

And, information on drugs transitioning from over-the-counter status to VFD status is available here:

<http://www.fda.gov/AnimalVeterinary/DevelopmentApprovalProcess/ucm482107.htm>.)

Also, after January 1, animal drug sponsors will have removed the claims of "growth promotion" and "feed efficiency" from the labels of medically important antimicrobials. Animal drug sponsors, in cooperation with CVM, are currently changing the labels for their products so that production claims such as "growth promotion" or "feed efficiency" will be gone from labels, thus those uses will no longer be permitted.

Animal producers must have a VFD order – issued by a licensed veterinarian, operating under a veterinarian-client-patient relationship – to use a feed with a medically important antimicrobial.

The feed distributor that the producer works with must receive the order before releasing the VFD feed to the animal producer. The veterinarian can, for example, give the producer a second copy of the order (one for the producer to keep, and one for the producer to give to the feed distributor), or the veterinarian could send the order directly to the feed distributor.

The animal producer must use VFD feeds only in accordance with the VFD order. In other words, the producer can feed only those animals identified by the order, and only during the time period specified in the order. Feeding animals other than those specified in the VFD order or feeding them beyond the expiration date of the VFD order is considered an "extra-label" use of feed. That's an illegal use. Once the order expires, if continued treatment is required, the animal producer must get a new VFD order from the veterinarian.

The changes in the VFD rule will help FDA address the issue of antimicrobial resistance. In principle, giving antimicrobial drugs to food-producing animals at low levels for long periods of time and giving the antimicrobial drugs to large numbers of animals may contribute to the development of antibiotic resistance, which makes diseases caused by resistant bacteria more difficult to treat. Finding antimicrobials to treat a disease is far more difficult when the disease is caused by resistant bacteria.

A veterinarian's involvement is important because veterinarians have the medical training necessary to diagnose the disease and to identify the appropriate antimicrobial for the specific situation. The veterinarian's involvement will help to ensure judicious use of antimicrobials.



## Pesticide Applicator Training

A Private Applicator Pesticide Training program is scheduled for Thursday, **March 2<sup>nd</sup>** at the Bexar County Extension Office, 3355 Cherry Ridge Street, Suite 212. Registration will begin at 8:00 a.m. with the training to follow at 8:30 a.m. Lunch will not be provided. This training is for people who do not have a license or those who had a license that expired at least a year ago. If you plan to attend, please call the Bexar County Extension Office to sign up. Study materials are available at the Extension Office and can be picked up in advance. The program registration fee is \$50/person and includes study materials. Participants should plan on bringing a calculator and photo ID.



## 2016 Agricultural Custom Rates

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service has published the results of the 2016 Texas Agricultural Custom Rates Survey online at <http://agecoext.tamu.edu/resources/custom-rate-survey/>. The publication includes data on tractor rental, tillage operations, planting, fertilizer applications, harvesting, land preparation, brush control and various other operations and services. “A survey was distributed to select farmers, ranchers, landowners as well as custom operators across Texas. The results helped establish a baseline of rates statewide to further assist with questions related to custom-hire activities”, said Dr. Steven Klose, AgriLife Extension Economist in College Station. “This publication provides a range of rates for different services, whether you are using or providing those services. It’s a handy resource to have for year-round activities.

## Manure Scoring Determines Supplementation Needs

With the change in season and forages entering dormancy comes the need to pay closer attention to your supplementation strategy to ensure cows do not lose body condition.

The perennial question of “How can you keep a cow from losing condition without overfeeding her?” can be answered fairly accurately by looking at the manure pat. When combined with other estimates such as forage availability and quality, a diet can be quickly changed to meet the cow’s nutrient requirements rather than waiting for body condition to fall low enough that the producer will notice a change. Manure scoring can indicate the quality of nutrition a cow has had in the past one to three days, while body condition score will indicate the nutritional history of the past several weeks to months.

Manure is scored on a 1 to 5 basis, with a score of 1 being very fluid and 5 being extremely dry and segmented. The next few paragraphs will detail each score and associated diet quality. Reference photographs have been included with approximate levels of dietary protein and energy (TDN) listed.

A manure score of 1 is of cream soup consistency. It can indicate a sick animal or a highly digestible ration that contains excess protein, carbohydrates or minerals, and low fiber. The addition of hay will slow down the rate of passage and thicken the manure.

Manure that will score a 2 doesn’t stack; the pat is usually less than 1 inch thick and will lack consistent form. This manure has the consistency of cake batter. Excess protein, carbohydrates and low fiber characterize the diets that produce this manure. Rate of passage is very high, and adding hay to this diet will slow it down to allow for more absorption in the intestinal tract.

Manure score 3 is ideal and will typically start to take on a normal pat form. The consistency will be similar to thick pancake batter. It will exhibit a slight divot in the middle. The pat will be deeper than a score 2 pat, but will not stack. This diet is not lacking nutritionally, yet is not in excess for the cow and her physiological stage. Score 4 manure is thick and starting to become somewhat deeper, yet is not stacking. The consistency of the manure will be equivalent to peanut butter. This manure indicates a lack of degradable rumen protein, excess low quality

fiber or not enough carbohydrates in the diet. Supplementation of additional protein with high rumen-degradable protein can increase total diet digestibility. Cottonseed meal and soybean meal are excellent sources of this type of protein.

The highest and least desirable score is 5. This manure is firm and stacks over 2 inches in height. It will also have clearly defined segments and is very dry. This manure indicates the cow is eating a poor quality forage diet that is inadequate for protein and carbohydrates, and high in low quality fiber. Rate of passage has slowed down to the point that excess water has been reabsorbed in the intestines. The rancher will need to consider additional supplementation to meet the cow's protein and energy requirements.

Cattle have to be in good health for manure scoring to be accurate. Manure scoring is a valuable tool to determine the quality of nutrition the cow has recently consumed and can be used effectively to adjust supplementation to prevent loss of body condition.



Score 5: < 6% CP; < 55% TDN of diet

## Maintaining Optimal Bull Fertility

Joe C. Paschal, Livestock Specialist  
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension  
Corpus Christi, Texas

Breeding season is almost here for most of us and I thought it might be a good time to relate some basic points on maintaining optimal bull fertility.

Bulls need to be fertility tested about 45-60 days prior to turnout. This allows ample time for retesting or replacement. Bulls should be vaccinated for diseases and treated for internal and external parasites at this time. Visit with your local veterinarian for specific recommendations for your area.

If you have purchased or acquired new bulls they should be trichomoniasis tested when they are fertility tested before purchase. Trich is a venereal of cattle that is carried by bulls but causes early abortion in cows. It is recommended and required by state law that breeding bulls be tested whenever they change hands. There is a vaccine labeled for use in healthy animals that reduces the effect of the disease on aborting those early pregnancies. Some veterinarians are recommending its use when a fertility test is conducted.

At turnout, bulls should be in a body condition score of 7, with no ribs showing and hips or hooks and pins rounded. Bulls will lose about 2 condition scores during a 3 month breeding season so they should begin with some fat cover. If bulls lose weight during breeding



Score 2: > 20% CP; > 68% TDN of diet



Score 3: 12-15% CP; 62-70% TDN of diet

season supplement or replace them. Thin bulls produce less and a lower quality semen.

The bull to cow or breeding ratio will depend on the age of the bull as well as the pasture conditions. For young bulls, those less than 24 months of age, a good rule of thumb is a cow for every month of age. Older bulls can be turned out with 20-35 or more cows depending on pasture size, pasture conditions, and age of the bulls.

Bulls reach their sexual peak at about 4-5 years of age and begin to decline after about 7 years of age. There will be exceptions to this of course.

If you have more questions about this or other topics discussed, contact your local County Extension Agent or beef cattle veterinarian.

