

“The Blog is Back”

I am excited to get back to blogging, amongst other things, and honestly have caught up enough to think about some of the things that slipped through the cracks this fall. 2015 is almost gone and I for one am glad to be moving on and looking forward. I think it was Charlie Chaplin that said, “If you aren’t looking up, you won’t see the rainbow”. I assure you that my head is up and I’m looking forward to 2016 and all the opportunities in front of us. There are numerous challenges ahead of us and I’m confident we can and will make a difference for each other and the people we serve.

If you noticed a change in the way the website and this blog look, thank Jordan Chandler. She is my new support staff “expert” that replaced Jerri Hamar and she is doing outstanding work. Most of you know what a big challenge she has in front of her (dealing with me) but she has already proven she can handle it. There will be features on the site that will hopefully provide links, dates, and information in one location. Good stuff and I hope it will be helpful to you.

Professional Development

I am waiting on a couple of specialists to confirm dates but I plan to have the professional development tracts together this week for you to select 2016 trainings. There will be 5 choices to choose from including; **Cotton Weed Pests, Cotton Disease/Nematodes, Fertility, Small Grain Diseases and Viruses, and Feed Grain Forage, Hay, and Silage**. Each one of you will select the tract to follow for 2016 training and you will be required to participate in all of the activities within that tract. You can also optionally participate in any of the other trainings offered. If you have an in-depth plan in one of the areas mentioned above, it will be an easy decision. If not, you will need to select the one most appropriate to your county needs.

As discussed at our retreats, the reasons for the targeted, in-depth trainings are the following;

- To develop confidence and competence in subject matter so that you will be comfortable presenting this information through educational deliveries including teaching at programs. You should also feel comfortable discussing this information and answering questions about these topics
- The tracts will change from year to year so that you will be able to expand these competencies over time and eventually develop expertise in a commodity or program area.
- At the end of the year, we (specialists, DEA, myself) will evaluate your participation and level of competencies to determine if you are certified to move to additional training areas. This certification will be valuable for dossier submission, performance appraisal expectations, and strengthening your marketability.
- I’m interested in you learning a little at a time. We are all at different levels of expertise and each has strengths and weaknesses. Please look at this as an opportunity to grow in your job. It is not our intention to compare you to anyone else in the region but to make sure you have a chance to gain confidence, competencies, and credibility in areas of Agriculture.
- Specialists are being encouraged to utilize your skill level and allow you to teach at least a portion of the information when you are ready. They won’t hang you out to dry but at some

point you may be asked to share what you know. After you are certified, you can assume even more of a role in teaching.

- This will only be successful if you take it seriously. That means attend trainings, GET ENGAGED, listen at programs, and do some additional learning on your own. Learning is a choice.

Remember; this is a jog, not a sprint to the finish. I want you to learn valuable information from our experts and eventually show off your knowledge to the people in your county. This can be done face to face, through news media, newsletters, twitter, etc. It just needs to be done so that you and our agency remain credible in Agriculture.

Result Demonstration Summaries

As with each year, result demonstration summaries are due at the end of the year. The templates for your summaries can be found on the following link <http://extensionanr.tamu.edu/>. If you have the results compiled for these tests, send them in by January 1st. If you are waiting on results, send them in as soon as the results are compiled. I look forward to seeing and sharing your successes.

2016 Specialist Schedules

There are some outstanding county programs being planned for 2016. I am particularly impressed with the ownership many of you have taken in the planning of the Regional programs in the coming year. In addition to your county and multi county programs, we have two Regional events taking place in January;

- January 12 -- Risk Management Conference, Cagle's Steakhouse, Lubbock, TX
- January 26 – Sorghum Program, Dumas, TX

These planning groups have been great with the development of these programs. We need everyone's help to market these outstanding programs.

On a similar note, great job by those of you on the Small Grains committee that planned, implemented, and evaluated the Regional program at the Amarillo Farm Show. Incredible job and let me say I was very proud to be associated with you. Excellent showing!

Program Plans

One last thank you for putting the time in to develop and complete your program plans for 2016. I know how difficult it can be to complete all tasks this time of year but it is equally fulfilling to know that plans are complete. Most importantly, each and every one of you has a plan in place to be very successful. If everything happens as planned, it will be a tremendous year. Thank you for your commitment to quality education in Agriculture and all you do for the people in your counties.