

SUMMER/FALL 2020

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

TARRANT COUNTY

West Nile

Jacklyn Jones-Doyle, County Extension Agent, Agriculture/Natural Resources

Fall is finally just around the corner, or at least what we in Texas can consider fall, but with it also brings about that “wonderful” little bug – the mosquito. Which for the Equine industry it brings on a whole different set of concerns – West Nile (WNV).

West Nile virus is defined as a zoonotic disease, which means it can be transmitted between animals and humans. The virus is generally transmitted from birds by mosquitoes to horses, humans, or any other animal. For this reason, the virus is more common in the summer or fall when birds are migrating. Most animals are dead-end hosts for the virus and are not directly contagious from animal to animal or animal to human.



Since the fatality rate for horses exhibiting clinical signs of WNV is over 30 percent, utilizing a vaccine is recommended by all veterinarians.

All West Nile vaccines on the market carry a one-year duration of immunity. Veterinarians recommend horses previously vaccinated, be vaccinated annually in the spring, prior to the onset of the insect vector season; but the important issue is to get the horse vaccinated and then put on a spring vaccination schedule. Horses that have never been vaccinated should receive their initial shot, 3-4 weeks later a booster, and then an annual booster.

“Vaccination has significantly decreased the incidence of West Nile disease in horses in the face of a steady increase of case numbers in humans, where there is no vaccine available,” says Dr. Leslie Easterwood, Clinical Assistant Professor at the Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences. “Horses are recommended to be vaccinated twice yearly in areas of the country where mosquitos are present all year.”

As a horse owner, it is important to have a close working relationship with your veterinarian and have an equine wellness plan in place, especially during West Nile season. The sooner the symptoms are identified, and the horse receives treatment, the better chance the horse has in surviving. According to Easterwood, one-third of all equine West Nile cases generally survive with proper intervention.

“If an owner sees neurologic signs of wobbly stance, unsteady movement, depression, not eating, with or without muscle twitching, they should call their veterinarian right away,” explained Easterwood, even if the horse has been vaccinated.

Although the West Nile vaccine has proven effective, Easterwood reminds horse owners that no vaccine is 100 percent protective.

Horse owners should take steps to reduce the number of mosquitos around their facilities by eliminating standing water, keeping stalls and pens clean, using equine mosquito repellents, fly sheets, and fly masks, plus placing fans inside stalls since mosquitos have difficulty flying in the wind. But most importantly, horse owners should have a working relationship with their veterinarians in order to ensure the best health of their horses!

Director's Message



Courtney Davis,
 Tarrant County Extension Director

To say that our 2020 Extension programming year has looked a bit different would be an extreme understatement. COVID-19 has thrown us all for a loop but I’m extremely proud of our Tarrant County AgriLife team as they’ve adjusted, adapted, and overcome!

Throughout the last nearly six months, we’ve been able to continue to serve the residents of Tarrant County proudly through virtual programs, meetings and even consulting in the field via Facetime! In addition, we have all expanded our “job descriptions” to include necessary duties like PPE distribution for Tarrant County child care providers and providing data entry for COVID-19 testing sites. While navigating a global pandemic is not ideal, the teamwork and fortitude we’ve witnessed as individuals, local groups, our local government and state agencies work together to provide for our communities has been refreshing.

We miss doing face-to-face programming. We miss the happy “hum” of volunteers in the office. We miss being *out* in the community. We will get back to that. Until then, continue to check your emails and follow us on social media to stay up-to-date on the virtual programs and other happenings right here in Tarrant County. And, if there’s anything our office can do to help, please let us know!



Dump the Afternoon Slump

Robin Hall, Extension Agent, Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program

Have you ever experienced the afternoon slump? You know, when you start the day energized and productive only to slip into brain fog and fatigue after lunch? Has the afternoon slump ever hit so hard that you can barely keep your eyes open in front of the computer? If this has, indeed happened to you, I have a few suggestions that might set you on the right track.



and the desire to eat. This may help prevent the dreaded afternoon slump and the mindless snacking that often accompanies it.

Another suggestion is to include foods from at least three food groups at each meal and snack. This allows the body to digest and absorb the nutrients from those foods over a sustained period helping your energy levels remain balanced.

On the other hand, just as there are foods that can prevent the afternoon slump, there are also foods that can make it worse. As you may guess, heavily processed foods and refined sugars such as candy, sodas, cookies, and snack cakes can lead to dips and spikes in your blood sugar, which tend to fuel afternoon slumps. The added sugars in these foods, and others, can negatively impact your energy in the long run.

Balancing lunch to include both carbohydrate- and protein-rich foods prevent postmeal fatigue by slowing the rate of digestion and stabilizing, both blood sugar and energy levels. Some examples of balanced lunches include:

- Salad with a variety of veggies, topped with chickpeas, avocado dressing, and a sprinkle of sunflower seeds
- Whole grain pita pockets stuffed with hummus, lettuce, tomato, and onion
- Bean burritos filled with corn, onion, spinach, zucchini, and bell peppers and topped with guacamole
- Dairy or soy yogurt mixed with chopped fruit, nuts, and seeds
- Avocado spread on whole grain bread or crackers with an egg and/or hemp seeds

Adapted From: Lunch and Snack Ideas to Counter the Afternoon Slump by Ginger Hultin, MS, RDN, CSO. *Today's Dietitian*. Vol. 22, No. 6, P. 14-16

Sluggishness is often a result of hormonal changes that occur throughout the day, as well as age, hydration status, and sleep habits. However, the most common culprit of the afternoon slump is poor food choices at breakfast and/or lunch. It is tempting to reach for a sweet snack or cup of coffee to stave off the low energy levels experienced during the afternoon, but you might want to think twice when deciding what to eat to keep you energized.

Protein-containing foods and foods high in fiber would be a good starting point; they are more filling than foods containing added sugars. High-protein breakfasts, such as those containing eggs have been shown to lead to more healthful lunch choices. People who consumed 30g of protein for breakfast were shown to have better satiety levels through increased fullness, reduced food cravings, and less unhealthy snacking in the evening when compared to those who either skipped breakfast or consumed a breakfast with less protein.

Along the lines of protein, pasta made from beans and lentils; hummus; nuts; and Greek yogurt would also be suitable foods to incorporate into meals and snacks. Research has been conducted on each of these foods and has found that they control appetite and delay subsequent eating. Consuming nuts such as almonds and pistachios, for example, have been shown to lower blood sugar and reduce hunger

Keepin It Cool

Alaina Woolsey, County Extension Agent,
Family & Community Health

Let's face it, it's hot outside and it will continue to be for a while. I don't know about you, but I'm always searching for ways to quickly cool down and if it's a snack, a bonus. That's why I'm sharing this easy recipe for homemade fruit popsicles. It's a great way to get an additional serving of fruits into you, or your kid's diet, helps cool you down and it's a super flexible recipe as well. If working outside, playing outside, or working out in the heat, you can also add in some electrolyte powder to help keep your body functioning optimally.

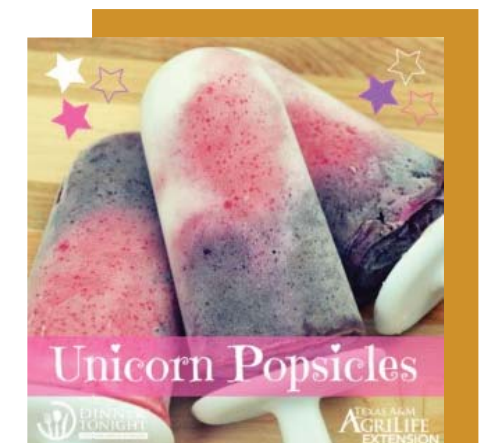
All humans need electrolytes, our bodies cannot function without them and they're key for normal functioning of our body, especially cells, nerves, and muscles. Electrolytes are minerals like potassium, sodium, and magnesium and are found easily in fruits and vegetables. It's also important that we keep our electrolytes in balance, and in Texas, one of the quickest ways to find ourselves out of balance is excessive sweating and/or not drinking enough fluids. Low electrolytes can feel like fatigue, headache, nausea, blood pressure changes, muscle cramps, low energy, and simply not feeling well.

As mentioned above, an easy way to make sure we have enough electrolytes is to make sure we're eating fruits and vegetables and drinking enough fluids. Popsicles are a refreshing and creative way to eat some of summer's best products, berries and watermelon! Below is an easy recipe from Dinner Tonight to help get those creative juices flowing! Feel free to change the fruit, maybe a mango, peaches, raspberries, whatever tickles your fancy!

Unicorn Popsicles | makes 6 popsicles

- 2 cups non-fat vanilla yogurt
 - 1 cup strawberries, hulled
 - 1 cup blueberries
 - 1/4 cup coconut milk
1. Wash your hands and clean your preparation area.
 2. Run your strawberries, blueberries, and the top of the can of coconut milk under cool running water.
 3. Blend 1 cup of the yogurt and the strawberries together in a blender until smooth. Reserve strawberry mixture.
 4. Blend 1 cup of the yogurt and the blueberries together in a blender until smooth. Reserve blueberry mixture.
 5. In popsicle mold evenly distribute coconut milk, then strawberry mixture, then blueberry mixture. Freeze for a minimum of 3 hours. Store in the freezer for up to 1 week.

<https://dinnertonight.tamu.edu/recipe/unicorn-popsicles/>



Master Gardeners

Steve Chaney, County Extension Agent, Horticulture

Many of you have heard the term Master Gardener and wondered where that came from?

The Master Gardener program was founded in 1973 by Dr. David Gibby, a Seattle-area Agricultural Extension Agent along with others at WSU, one of the nations land-grant institutions that foster practical education through outreach "extensions." WSU's extension Master Gardener model has spread to most states and has now gone international. In the U.S., MG's start out with varying gardening experiences and then receive extensive training, for a small fee, in best practices for residential gardening. They then take a certification exam and can access up-to-date horticultural information through their own state extension service.

In the beginning, Master Gardeners helped suburbanites manage their lawns and ornamental plantings. Since then, community gardens and a surge in the culinary arts have sparked interest in herbs and vegetables, however the pendulum swings back and forth. We say its not about knowing everything; its about knowing where you can find the information needed to address the question at hand.

Requirements vary from state to state, most volunteers can expect to train at a minimum of 40 hours, spend about the same amount of time volunteering their first year and be required to meet annual volunteer and continuing education minimums. Volunteer opportunities nationwide include staffing hotlines and help desks; assisting with instructional gardens at schools; making presentations at state and local fairs, shows, farmers markets, and other public gardens; and in general, taking gardening know-how to the public. Extension Master Gardeners are not allowed to use their title commercially.

You ask what do these Master Gardeners get from all their effort, they get a lot of personal value from their activities, including the chance

to become more proficient gardeners themselves.

"They are getting enjoyment and the opportunity to contribute and give back to their community. Our communities are getting a great unbiased benefit as well."



Here in Texas we have well over 7,000 active Master Gardeners representing 120 some odd counties and volunteering nearly 500,000 hours back to their communities each year. Here in Tarrant County, we are very lucky to have one of the State's largest and most active groups with over 400 active MG's that annually volunteer 50,000+ hours every year. I couldn't possibly do my job as well without them, they multiply my efforts 30 fold! They have a very active Speakers Bureau and do hundreds of talks a year in the community, answer over 3,500 calls to our office each year on horticulture related issues, maintain many many school and public projects plus they are just great people and friends!

If you're interested in learning more and possibly joining up with an amazing group such as ours, plan on attending our Orientation Day on September 22 at 10 am virtually. Give our office a call at 817-884-1945, provide them your contact info and they will remind you and send you the link to join virtually. With the pandemic going on we have had to switch to virtual education for most of what we are doing for your safety, so hope you can join us. With a little work on your part, hopefully, in the future, you can refer to yourself as a "Master Gardener" as well. Even better than that, you can refer to yourself as a member of TCMGA, one of the best organizations in the nation.

Happy Gardening my friends!

Want Birds and Butterflies? Just Add Sugar(berry)

Laura Miller, County Extension Agent, Horticulture

Spending more time at home during this COVID 19 crisis has many people appreciating our urban wildlife. One of the best tree species for attracting birds and butterflies is also one of our most abundant native tree species, *Celtis laevigata*, the Sugarberry.

Our native oaks are almost universally beloved, but this is a tree that does not get a lot of respect despite being one of the top three species of the tree canopy in Tarrant County. In addition to *Celtis laevigata*, Texas is also home to the very widely distributed *Celtis occidentalis*, Northern or common hackberry. *C. laevigata* can be distinguished from *C. occidentalis* by its narrower, smoother leaves. *Laevigata* means smooth. Ironically, Sugarberry bark is anything but smooth. Many descriptions call it warty. It is a favorite of tree vandals who appreciate the abundant scar tissue it forms, providing a noticeable record of exactly who "was here".

Mature trees in preferable sites can reach 50 feet in height. Most specimens will be much smaller. It is not considered to be a long-lived tree but can survive for up to 150 years. As with any other landscape tree, pruning a young tree to a central leader will greatly improve the odds that it will have a long and happy life as well as result in a more attractive tree.

In addition to growing in straight lines along fences past and present, Sugarberry is often found growing along the streams and rivers of the Cross Timbers. It can tolerate a wide range of annual rainfall, anything from 20-80 inches per year, and grows in a wide variety of soils. Those aptly named sugary berries are consumed and subsequently spread by a wide variety of birds.



Warty trunk of the sugarberry

Its value as a food source to wildlife is where this species shines. The "sugar berries", small round drupes, are set early in spring and often remain on the tree after the leaves have fallen. Both resident and migratory birds enjoy them. Anyone who wants to attract mockingbirds, bluebirds, cardinals, doves, robins, cedar waxwings, orioles, and warblers, along with plenty of sparrows,

should consider planting a sugarberry or allowing one that the birds **will** plant to remain.

If butterflies are your goal, this tree is a larval food source for emperor, snout, question mark and hackberry butterflies. In the summer of 2015, people who had never given their sugarberry trees a second look suddenly noticed the presence of webs and absence of leaves, especially in NE Tarrant County. The causal insect was eventually identified as *Sciota celtidella*, a rather unremarkable moth, which in most years blends into the background about as well as the average sugarberry. <https://citybugs.tamu.edu/2015/08/28/hackberry-defoliator-in-north-dallas-area/>

Birders and butterfly enthusiasts are not the only people who appreciate this tree. Anyone who enjoys gall making insects could not plant a more interesting species. It is a challenge to find an individual tree that does not have any galls. The most common is used to identify the species. Known as the Hackberry nipple gall, it is formed by a psyllid. <https://texasinsects.tamu.edu/hackberry-gall-psyllid/>

Although commonly occurring and often overlooked, Sugarberry is uniquely valuable as a source of food and shelter to the birds, bees, butterflies, and other inhabitants of Tarrant County.

Camps Go Virtual During COVID-19

Jordan Peldyak, 4-H Extension Agent, Cooperative Extension Program



Photo courtesy of canva.com

COVID-19 has definitely been an event that no one could of ever predicted. The consistent changing of our everyday lives has forced us to shift and pivot on how we live our lives. This couldn't be far from the truth when looking at how education will be offered this coming school year as well. The Texas A&M Extension Service in Texas has really tried to adapt as well with how we will offer our programs throughout the year. Summer camps that were normally offered in person were transformed to virtual platforms.

During the month of July as a part of the Prairie View A&M 4-H program we offered three different camps for three weeks. The first camp was 4-H Youth Lab. This camp was geared towards high school age students. The camp focused on college and career readiness on-line. Using the virtual platform Zoom participants logged in daily while Extension Agents conducted individual program sessions for the students. Two field trips were even offered virtually using virtual reality goggles to tour Prairie View A&M

University and to explore Agriculture careers. These goggles were used in part with cell phones that had apps that were downloaded to view the content through the goggles.

The second camp was called Jr. Youth. This camp was geared towards middle school aged youth. Extension Agents from around the state put together an agricultural awareness camp virtually. This camp used agriculture lessons and videos to show the importance of conserving our natural resources and learn what possible careers students may be interested in pursuing. The last camp was an elementary aged virtual camp. This camp focused on Ag conservation lessons and careers. Many speakers from Texas Parks and Wildlife aided the agriculture lessons with real life career experiences for students to listen to. Open discussions with speakers and agents were also utilized with Zoom breakout sessions.

As school returns in the fall, education and Extension will continue to find new ways to reach our audiences, whether it be in person or virtually. As COVID-19 continues and education shifts everyday the new ideas and ways of doing things will be a challenge. As Extension Agents, we will continue to find new and initiative ways to better serve the lives of Texans.

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION SERVICE
PO BOX 1540
FORT WORTH TX 76101 1540

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CONTACT US

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
Tarrant County Office
200 Taylor St., Suite 500
Fort Worth, TX 76196
TEL: 817.884.1945
FAX: 817.884.1941

E-mail: Tarrant-TX@tamu.edu
Website: <http://tarrant-tx.tamu.edu>



EDITORIAL TEAM

Courtney Davis
County Extension Director

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