

Cass County Ag News

Winter, 2008

Announcements

Texas Animal Health Commission Reminder

Cows, heifers, and bulls 18 months or older must be tested for brucellosis within 30 days before sale.

Horses, mules, donkeys, and asses must be tested for equine infectious anemia within 12 months before private sale.

For information call TAHC, Area 8 at 1-800-687-8242. ◻

2009 Master Gardener Training Class

Registration Deadline: February 6, 2008
Class Begins: February 16, 2009 (For more details, see page 3 of this newsletter.) ◻

Native Plant Society of Texas, Caddo Wildflower Chapter

New meeting location and date beginning in January: Horne Enterprise Building, Intersection of Hwy 43 and 77, Atlanta, TX. 4th Tuesday of each month at 7 pm. ◻

Cass County Cattlemen's Association Jr. Winter Livestock Show

This annual Jr. Winter Livestock Show will be held on January 31, 2009 at the Expo Building in Atlanta, TX. This is an open show and has divisions for heifers and steers. ◻

Four-States Agricultural Exposition

Time for the annual 4-States Expo to be held this year on February 12, 2009 at the Four-States Fair Grounds in Texarkana, AR. Registration is between 8 and 8:30 a.m. with concurrent sessions beginning at 8:30 am. Continuing education units offered: 5 hours. ◻

2009 Four-States Lawn and Garden Conference

March 31, 2008 is the date scheduled for this conference which is held annually at the Southwest Center in Texarkana, TX. 5 continuing education units will be offered. More details will be available later. ◻

Shorten Calving Season for Success

Cost is probably the most important reason for a short, controlled breeding season. It costs money to string calves throughout the year. The argument that producers use is that they would rather have a calf anytime of the year rather than having no calf at all. The fact is that many producers don't realize that late-born, light-weight calves cost just as much to raise as heavyweight calves.


Over the past year, 600 to 700 pound calves are bringing about the same as 300 to 400 pound calves. This should send up a red flag to all cow-calf producers to get their calves as big as possible as quickly as possible.

Producers in our area should try to have the majority of their calves born the first of January through mid to late March. This short calving season has several advantages. First, the most important reasons is an economic one. A controlled breeding and calving season will simplify and reduce feeding cost. The herd can be fed at a plane of nutrition that will optimize production because all cows will be in a similar production phase. Second, a short breeding season takes advantage of the best available forage to get cows ready to re-breed. To start calving at the first of the year, put bulls with the cows in late March. To end the calving season in mid to late March, pull the bulls off around the first week of June. Third, less labor is involved in working the calves. Instead of having to work the cattle several times during the year, one can wait and work the cattle all at once.

Producers who practice a year-round calving season, should look closely at tightening down calving seasons to two short seasons, one in the spring and the other in the fall. Forage availability in the spring

often concentrates 80 percent of calving into a three to four month period, usually from February through May. By shortening the breeding season and rolling the late-calving cows into a fall calving program, you shouldn't have to sacrifice too many cows.

After one or two breeding seasons, all cows that fail to re-breed within their breeding season should be culled.

A result demonstration done several years ago in Milam County showed that calves born in February were 95 pounds heavier than calves born in June. When calves were selling at \$1.20 a pound we didn't pay too much attention, but when a 600 pound calf and a 300 pound calf are worth 85 cents per pound, producers need to rethink their calving program and make needed changes. 

Cattle Brucellosis Tests Still Required for Change of Ownership

Selling or buying cattle? A cattle brucellosis or "Bangs" test is still required for changing ownership of adult cattle in Texas according to Dr. Bob Hillman, Texas state veterinarian.

Cattle producers have enjoyed class "free" status since February 2008, but testing is still required at livestock markets, special sales, and private treaty sales for at least two years.

Dr. Hillman stated that "this testing requirement is part of the national brucellosis program standard, and it assures that a state is clearly free of the disease and that we can quickly identify and deal with reintroduced or yet undetected infection."

Slaughter testing surveillance will continue across the country for an indefinite period, to ensure that the disease is completely eradicated from cattle herds in Texas and other states.

Cattle that are sexually intact and 18 months of age or older must be tested prior to sale. The test requires a small blood sample from the animal, collected by an accredited veterinarian or TAHC or USDA personnel. A chute-side test is conducted at livestock markets on sale days, with laboratory confirmation by the state/federal laboratory.

For private treaty or special sales, an accredited, private veterinary practitioner can draw the blood sample and submit the blood sample to the state/federal laboratory, where the test will be run. Cattle owners should allow at least four days for private testing, to allow for shipping the blood samples and receiving the test results that will be recorded on the document that will accompany the animal to the sale.

Brucellosis status can be lost if two infected herds are detected within a two-year period. Montana recently lost its brucellosis-free status due to exposure to infected wildlife in the Greater Yellowstone Area; widespread testing must be conducted to regain the ranking.

Dr. Hillman also reminds cattle owners, especially those in the eastern portions of the state, that heifers should be vaccinated against cattle brucellosis, particularly if they be used as breeding animals.

Accredited veterinarians can administer the RB-51 vaccine to heifers between the ages of four and 12 months to provide lifelong protection against the disease. Source: The Cattlemen, Dec. 08. ●

Horticulture Corner

The Proper Pruning of Crape Myrtles

Don't commit crape murder! The practice of chopping off the tops of crape myrtles has become very commonplace. Many people believe that severe pruning is required to promote flowering; some prune because the plant is too large for the space provided; others see their neighbors doing it and feel the need to follow suit. Light pruning is usually all that is needed.

The key to proper pruning is to never trim anything larger than a pencil. Remove all suckers. Suckers are the shoots that form at the very base of the plant. Basal sprouts (suckers) may occur whether the tree is being pruned or not. Pull these out when succulent instead of pruning them.

When selecting new plants, remember that the older varieties are more susceptible to powdery mildew disease. Fortunately, there are varieties that are resistant to that disease. These include Natchez, Tonto, Yuma, and Zuni. Different hybrids range in height from 8 to 25 feet and they come in many different colors. Contact the Extension office for more detailed information on growing crape myrtles. ●

Become a Texas Master Gardener

Who are Texas Master Gardeners? They are members of the local community who take an active interest in their lawns, trees, shrubs, flowers, and gardens. They are enthusiastic, willing to learn and to help others, and are able to communicate with diverse groups of people.

Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Cass County, is planning a Texas Master

Gardener Training Program beginning on February 16, 2009.

To help you decide if the Master Gardener program is for you and if you should apply, ask yourself these questions:

- ☺ Do I want to learn more about culture and the maintenance of many types of plants?
- ☺ Am I eager to participate in a practical and intense training program?
- ☺ Do I look forward to sharing my knowledge with people in my community?
- ☺ Do I have enough time to attend training and to complete the volunteer service?

If you answered "yes" to these questions, the Master Gardener program could be for you.

Training: The program offers a minimum of 50 hours of instruction. Classes are scheduled on Mondays and Thursdays of each week from 6:30 pm to 9 pm.

Volunteer Commitment: In exchange for training, participants are asked to volunteer their time to community service projects and to the county Extension program.

Cost: The price is \$85 which include a handbook and many extra inserts and related materials. The cost also covers building use and guest speaker fees.

For more information and application forms, contact the Extension office at 903-756-5391. The class is limited to 15. Visit the Texas Master Gardener website at <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu>.

Deadline for registration: Feb. 6, 2009. ☐

The information given herein is for educational purposed only. Reference to commercial products or trade names is made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service is implied.

Helpful Websites

| TOPIC | WEB ADDRESS |
|--------------------------------|---|
| General Information | http://texasextension.tamu.edu |
| Forages and Grasses | http://forages.tamu.edu |
| Horticulture | http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu |
| Turfgrass and Lawns | http://aggieturf.tamu.edu |
| Bookstore | http://tcebookstore.org |
| Soils and Crops | http://soilcrop.tamu.edu |
| Forest Science | http://forestry.tamu.edu |
| TDA | http://www.agr.state.tx.us |
| Cass County | http://cass-tx.tamu.edu |
| Animal Science | http://animalscience.tamu.edu |
| Texas Animal Health Commission | http://www.tahc.state.tx.us |
| Plant Pathology | http://plantpathology.tamu.edu/Textlab/index.htm |
| Feral Hogs | http://feralhogs.tamu.edu |
| Pond Management | http://aquaplant.tamu.edu |

Go to the following website for information on disaster preparedness regarding agriculture:

<http://texashelp.tamu.edu/005-agriculture/index.php>

Prepared for you and published quarterly
by
Gene Bobo,
Cass County Extension Agent -
Ag and Natural Resources.
E-mail: ngbobo@ag.tamu.edu