

# Cass County Ag News

Winter, 2011

---

## Announcements

### Four-States Ag Expo

February 10, 2011

The 2011 Four-States Ag Expo will be held at the Four-States Fairgrounds in Texarkana, Arkansas on February 10, 2011. Registration begins at 8:00 a.m. and the seminars end around 3:15 p.m. Pesticide license holders can earn up to 5 CEUs. Lunch will be provided. ■

### Become a Texas Master Gardener

Beginning February 21, 2011

The Cass County AgriLife Extension Service is planning a Texas Master Gardener training program beginning on February 21, 2011 at the Linden Church of Christ Fellowship Hall located on Highway 8 in Linden. The course offers a minimum of 50 hours of instruction on various topics regarding horticulture and gardening. Classes are scheduled from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. on Monday and Thursday of each week. The course will cost \$90 which covers a handbook with many extra inserts and related materials, building use, and guest speaker fees. Application forms and additional information are available from the office by calling 903-756-5391. Registration deadline is February 15, 2011. ■

## Stress-Free Cattle Handling

Ever wonder why there is so much whooping and hollering when working cattle? There may be several reasons, but handling cattle effectively is not one of them. Cattle can be best handled with low-stress techniques relying on minimal use of strategically-applied pressure. This method is based on the following principles:

1. Cattle want to see you.
2. Cattle want to go around you.
3. Cattle want to be with and will go to other cattle.
4. Cattle can think of only one thing at a time.

Based on these principles, the following points apply:

1. The only way to work cattle quickly is slowly.
2. Work from the front to draw cattle to you.
3. Apply pressure when cattle have a place to go.
4. Pressure from the side
5. Cattle must be comfortable to go by you and stay straight.
6. Pressure cattle from behind only when absolutely necessary.
7. When working cattle, move in triangles.

8. Going with the flow of cattle slows them down or stops their movement.
9. Going against the flow of cattle initiates or accelerates their movement.
10. Cattle work best when *they* are ready. You have to get them there.

These points are discussed in detail at <http://animalscience.tamu.edu/images/pdf/beef/cattle-handling-pointers.pdf>.

## Trichomoniasis Regulations Changed

Changes to trichomoniasis regulations were adopted by the Texas Animal Health Commission effective November, 2010. A negative test is now valid for 60 days instead of the previous 30 days and that test may be transferred to a buyer. The same time extension and transfer provision now apply to bulls issued certificates of virgin status. Bulls imported from out of state must still be tested within 30 days of entry but bulls imported from certified artificial insemination facilities are exempt from testing. All of these changes apply ONLY if bulls have not been commingled with females. Untested, non-virgin Texas bulls may now be sold and placed in a trichomoniasis-certified feedlot before slaughter instead of having to be sent directly to slaughter. When bulls test positive, producers on adjacent premises are now notified by TAHC veterinarians and encouraged, but not required, to test their bulls.

## Weaning Techniques for Beef Calves

Weaning is the most stressful time a calf will experience. It has been documented that health problems such as bovine respiratory disease (pneumonia, “shipping fever”, etc.)

usually begins with stress at weaning.

Factors that can cause stress, and quite often lead to sickness in calves, are dust, bawling and dehydration. All three are highly irritating to animals (and people, too); and singly or in combination can injure delicate membranes in the calves’ respiratory tract and may contribute to extra weight loss.

Other circumstances that can cause undue stress at weaning occur when calves are worked or processed on the day they are weaned. Vaccinations, horn tipping, branding and castration are necessary and a part of normal management but should be done at least 30 days prior to weaning.

Low-stress implement techniques are ones where neither the cow nor calf really knows what is happening. This is done by allowing calves and their mothers to voluntarily remain in contact, but without suckling. The calf quickly gets used to eating on his own and over a few days time, the calf will get used to not being with his mother. Usually within a few days to a week calves are completely weaned.

With low-stress weaning, a couple of methods can be employed to stop the suckling process while still allowing calves to have contact with their mothers. With fence-line weaning, calves are placed in a small pasture or trap adjacent to their mother. Calves should have access to grazing. If grass is short, plan on plenty of good quality hay. Calves as young as 3 months can be weaned this way, as their rumens are fully developed and are able to digest roughage. You may want to include some type of supplement (concentrate or creep feed). Access to clean water is also important. Fence-line weaning requires a good fence. Calves shouldn’t be able to crawl under or between wires to nurse through the fence. If you don’t have pastures or traps available, fence-line weaning can be used with corral fences.

Another key element in low-stress weaning

and fence-line weaning is the physical management of the cows and calves the day of weaning. There should not be any other management practices carried out on the day of separation.

**Source: Beef Cattle Penning - Fall 2010** ■

## Horticulture Corner

### Time to Control Lawn Burweed

If you had lawn burweed last summer, or sticker weed as some refer to it, but did not apply a pre-emergent herbicide in the fall, then you probably have even more growing this year. Lawn burweed will produce painful stickers that you will have to endure each time you walk barefoot on your lawn...unless you take immediate action to control them now.

Currently this weed is soft and green, looking like a dwarf carrot top, approximately 1 inch tall. In the next few weeks it will contain thousands of tiny fish hook stickers, if not controlled. If your lawn is presently infested with lawn burweed, and the fruiting clusters have not yet formed, you should act immediately to control them. Once the fruiting clusters have formed, and produced the tiny seeds and spines, killing the plants will eliminate the weeds, but the tiny spines and seed will remain to inflict pain for another summer.

Contact broadleaf herbicides applied now will kill burweed before the stickers develop. Lawn herbicides containing a combination 2,4-D, MCPP and dicamba work well on lawn burweed. Be sure the herbicide is labeled for your grass species. Always read and carefully follow pesticide labels. ■

### It's a Great Time to Have Your Soil Tested

If your garden performed below expectations last year, or maybe things just didn't grow quite right, a few dollars invested in a soil test may be just the solution. A properly prepared and fertilized garden soil is the real key to successful gardening in most areas of Texas. You can't look at the soil, taste it, smell it, or feel it to tell whether your soil is low in nitrogen, high in phosphates, or maybe just right. One sure way to overcome the mystery, and avoid confusion when it comes time to purchase fertilizers, is to have your garden soil tested.

Why is it important to know how much phosphorus or nitrogen is in the soil, or what the pH of the soil is? The answer is simple. Vegetables don't do well in improperly fertilized soil, whether it be too fertile or not fertile enough.

The soil test report will tell you the level of nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, calcium, and magnesium available to your garden plants. It will also indicate the pH (acidity or alkalinity) of your garden soil. For the most part, this is all you need to know to properly fertilize your garden soil, and insure a bountiful harvest.

To take a soil sample, make a hole about a foot deep in the garden with a spade or sharpshooter. Throw out the first spadeful of soil. Then, from the back of the hole, cut a slice of the soil ½ inch to 1 inch thick. Be sure the slice is at least 6 to 7 inches in depth, with fairly even width and thickness. Then place the soil slice in a plastic bucket or tub. Repeat this procedure 4 to 6 times in different spots in the garden, depending primarily on the size of the garden.

Thoroughly mix the composite of the soil, and mail it to the Soil Testing Laboratory at Texas

A&M University or Stephen F. Austin State University. Soil testing is a service provided, for a fee, by the University. Soil test kits, with instructions, can be obtained from the County Extension Office.

If a soil sample is taken in late winter or very early spring, you should expect to get your results back within 2 weeks. If you wait until spring, it may take considerably longer to get your results. An adequate soil test, properly done and properly interpreted, will go a long way toward insuring a bountiful harvest from this spring's garden. ☐

### Vegetable Planting Guide

It will be soon time again to begin planting gardens. Here are a few "do's and don't's".

#### DO:

- √ use recommended varieties for your area of the state
- √ take soil samples for testing every 2 to 3 years
- √ apply preplant fertilizer to garden area in recommended manner and amounts
- √ examine garden often to keep ahead of potential problems
- √ keep garden free of insects, diseases, and weeds
- √ use mulches to conserve moisture, control weeds, and reduce ground rots
- √ water as needed, wetting soil to a depth of 6 inches
- √ thin when plants are small
- √ wash and clean garden tools and sprayer well after each use
- √ keep records of garden activities

#### DON'T:

- ⊗ depend on varieties not recommended for your area, but do try a limited amount of new releases
- ⊗ plant so closely that you cannot walk or

- work in the garden
- ⊗ cultivate so deeply that plant roots are injured
- ⊗ shade small plants with taller growing crops
- ⊗ water excessively or in late afternoon
- ⊗ place fertilizer directly in contact with the plant roots or seeds
- ⊗ allow weeds to grow large before beginning to cultivate
- ⊗ apply chemicals or pesticides in a haphazard manner or without reading the label directions
- ⊗ use chemicals not specifically recommended for garden crops
- ⊗ store leftover diluted spray ☐

### Helpful Websites

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

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