

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE

Walker County Agriculture News Update

January 2017

Greetings from the Walker
County, Texas A&M AgriLife
Extension office!

"Agriculture engenders good sense, and good sense of an excellent kind." –Joseph Joubert

I would agree...

Welcome to the New Year! Okay I may be a few days early in order to get this newsletter to you before the holidays. We have covered some ground since the last issue and are preparing for another very busy year here at the Walker County, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension office. This newsletter may be a bit shorter in order to get this information out as quickly as possible.

From all of us, we wish you the most joyful holiday season with family and friends. Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Glad to have you here! Read on.

- *When you have the opportunity, let others hear your message.*

Upcoming Events: (6 CEU's in Walker Co. and up to 7 CEU's in Montgomery Co.)

Walker County Annual CEU Recertification Conference (6 TDA, CEU's requested)

Friday, January 13th, 2017

(7:00-7:50 AM) Registration to approx. 3:00 PM

Walker County Storm Shelter (455 SH75 N, Huntsville, TX)

\$40.00/participant with lunch, \$30.00/participant without lunch

RSVP by 01/10/17 to (936) 291-1901 ex 3502

We have another great CEU recertification coming up in January!

Mosquito Vector Control/Reduction of the Zika Threat

Dr. Paul Nester, Extension Program Specialist II-IPM

Turfgrass Weed ID, Management & Control Options

Dr. Casey Reynolds, Assoc. Professor & State Turfgrass Specialist

Forage Weed Management & Control

Dr. Larry Redmon, Assoc. Department Head & Extension Program Leader

Weed Control: Application, Equipment and Drift Management

Dr. Barron Rector, Associate Professor and Extension Range Specialist

Pesticide Laws & Regulations Update

Dr. Don Rennie, Extension Program Leader for Agricultural & Environmental Safety

**Walker Co.
Annual CEU
Program**

1st Friday Webinars (Monthly Horticulture Topics)
Walker County, Texas AgriLife Extension Office
12 Noon – 1:00 PM

Interested in some additional horticulture topic trainings? If so, here is the answer! These webinars will be shown at the Extension office. Trainings will be held the first Friday of the month starting in February. If you wish to attend, RSVP to (936) 435-2426. I will be providing this set of diverse presentations as continuing education credit for our Walker County Master Gardeners; however, anyone is invited to attend. Bring your lunch with you! The first three in the 2017 schedule are:

February 3 **Ten Steps to a Successful Vegetable Garden**
March 3 **What You Should Know in a Vegetable Garden**
April 7 **Composting**

White Tail Deer Management Series: Spring Management Workshop #1
February 28, 2017

7:00 PM
Walker County, Texas AgriLife Extension Office
\$10/person RSVP requested (936) 435-2426

This workshop will kick off the 2017 wildlife education classes. Dr. Larry Redmon will be with us to investigate how feeding, planting, and nutrition can possibly benefit wildlife management efforts for white tail deer. Anybody who has ever wanted some advanced information regarding wildlife management without the college course expenses will be interested in participating in this series of presentations.



Out of County Events: (but not very far)

1st Annual Southeast Texas Town & Country CEU Recertification Seminar
December 15, 2016
7:00 AM until 4:00 PM
Lone Star Convention Center
9055 Airport Road
Conroe, TX 77303
\$70.00/participant after Dec 2. (Contact the AgriLife office at (936) 435-2426 for registration.)

TDA & Structural
License CEU's

We invite you to join us for this first annual Southeast Texas Town and Country Recertification Seminar. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension strives to provide programs based on producer/ applicator needs. This year we have produced an educational program to provide a cross-section of information to assist producers/ applicators to gain valuable skills and techniques.

We have included special sessions for PCOs (ants update, landscape disease problems, herbicides, turfgrass selection). We hope you can join us for this top notch, intensive day of training, specially designed to serve the diverse needs of the residents of Southeast Texas.

Participants are not required to attend the entire conference to receive CEU credits for the sessions they attend.

Continuing Education Credits pending:

TDA-2 IPM, 1 Laws and Regs, 4 General

SPCB-1 Weed, 1 Pest, 1 IPM, 1 Laws and Regs, 1 L&O

***The following VFD information is a repeat. If you have been receiving my newsletters for any length of time, you will know if I leave something in repeatedly, you need to take notice. It can impact you in some way.**

Veterinary Feed Directive

The veterinary feed directive (VFD) became effective October 1, 2015 and all changes associated with medically important antimicrobials that are now available over-the-counter (OTC) must be implemented by January 1, 2017.

Animal feeds containing antibiotics medically important to humans and sold OTC at the feed store will require a VFD from an accredited veterinarian before the producer will be able to purchase that medicated feed. It is advisable that the producer get with their veterinarian well in advance of the date they need the feed to obtain the VFD since some feed dealers may not have the feed in stock and need to make it or order it. The maximum length of a VFD is 6 months. A new VFD is required after that.

The VFD will require a valid Veterinary Client Patient Relationship (VCPR) meaning that the veterinarian must know something about what the producer raises and can trust them to follow directions. Also, the veterinarian is responsible for filling out the VFD form and for sending it (in person or by mail, email or fax, NOT verbally) to the feed dealer. All three parties will need to keep these records for at least 2 years.

Additional information which should answer questions you may have on this subject is attached to this newsletter. Please see the attachment: [The Veterinary Feed Directive \(VFD\) and Related Information for Livestock Producers](#), by Dr. Ted McCollum, TX A&M AgriLife Extension, Beef Specialist.

Climate Science Online Class Opportunity

Climate Science is a self-directed course. After completing the course you should have a better understanding of climate terminology, and be better prepared to process and interpret climate information as it is discussed in literature and in the media. If you have questions about the climate science class, please contact David Smith with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension at davidsmith@tamu.edu

Online course enrollment link: <http://campus.extension.org/enrol/index.php?id=780>

In This Issue:

PRESCRIBED FIRE

When you're hot, you're hot! Don't' burn my fence down...

As an agricultural educator, I find this job very interesting and most of the time really fun. Walking people through the learning processes common to agricultural production provides for a wealth of personal satisfaction. There is a lot to common agriculture practices that the experienced producer or landowner takes for granted. Sometimes, I slip into that thought process as well, even though I try not to in order to remain objective and responsive to the needs of the individual whom I am working with.

New agricultural landowners want to “soak it all in”, but there usually comes a time when we can say something that seems to shut down the forward momentum and sometimes even put a little fear in their eyes. I’ve seen eyes widen like that more than one time. It usually happens when fire is referred to as an agricultural tool. At that instant, I know they are recalling rampaging visions seen on the T.V. news.

I have seen the T.V. news also. I have also seen what true wildfire can do here in Walker County. That is not a pleasant site. We are not at all talking about the same thing; in this article we are talking about a tool known as prescribed fire.

There is a science to fire. This science is a serious subject requiring study, understanding, and respect.

Modern natural history deals only incidentally with the identity of plants and animals, and only incidentally with their habits and behaviors. It deals principally with their relations to each other, their relation to the soil and water in which they grow, and their relations to the human beings who sing about 'my country' but see little or nothing of its inner workings. This new science of relationships is called ecology, but what we call it matters nothing. The question is, does the educated citizen know he is only a cog in an ecological mechanism? That if he will work with that mechanism his mental wealth and his material wealth can expand indefinitely? But that if he refuses to work with it, it will ultimately grind him to dust? If education does not teach us these things, then what is education for?
–Aldo Leopold “Natural History: The Forgotten Science” 1938

It has been a long time since I quoted this guy in a newsletter, oh how I miss that. There is a reason Leopold is considered the father of many modern conservation and ecology efforts, specifically wildlife management.

PRESCRIBED FIRE

By Reggie Lepley

I was invited to participate in a focus group meeting this past month to discuss a very interesting topic and research model. In a somewhat short description, the group holding the focus group is looking at issues which preclude or restrict landowners from adopting the tool known as fire. This meeting was one of three to be held across the state. There were a few county agents in attendance with landowners, members of burn associations, professional foresters and wildlife managers, ranchers, plus several other state and federal conservation managers.

We talk about utilizing fire at almost any and all educational events that involve pasture management related to weed control. As a tool, fire is discussed every educational venue involving brush control; rangeland management; timber management; and wildlife management.

The true value of this tool and the value it provides for management cannot be emphasized enough.

The county agents in the focus group were there to provide insight into the thought processes of our clientele regarding the subject. We work with land managers that see the benefits. We also work with those who never see the benefits because the dark side of the tool is just too much to get past. There is a learning curve here.

This is a topic where the applicator must be an educated individual. There are issues beyond the relatively common factors due to liability concerns. Insurance is one of the hurdles that must be addressed by the manager applying the tool of fire to their land. If you choose to investigate the topic; I encourage you to learn all that you can from qualified individuals. This article is only an introduction to the topic and should be viewed as such.

If you have never read Aldo Leopold's, "*A Sand County Almanac*", please do yourself a favor and buy a copy. Don't borrow one, buy it! Next to soil sampling, this will be some of the best money you ever spend. I have no doubt. Consider it the most valuable gift you have ever given yourself –seriously that's how good it is.

Leopold's descriptions of how five basic tools; readily available to all agriculturists, can be applied creatively to the land is a central element in any land management toolbox. These five tools are: axe, cow, plow, fire, and gun. As with any tool, improper use of a tool can damage as easily as it can construct. You have to be able to close the lid to the tool box as well...

Our efforts as a civilization to tame the wilderness have removed many natural forces previously impacting our lands. We want our existence to be safe and secure. Interestingly enough, removing fire from the natural world has done just the opposite.

Historically fire was a key part of the ecosystem in Texas on a roughly 6-10 year cycle. The prairies burned more frequently, the timberlands a little less frequently but the cycle was there. These cycles of fire and renewal allowed the natural system to work: holding back invasive plant species; providing openings, allowing sunlight to reach the ground and forbs to grow for animals; returning nutrients to the ground; and improving soil water infiltration. That was only the short list.

Removal of fire in our ecosystems has allowed the invasive encroachment of open areas, forested lands to become a thicket and an overabundance of fuel to accumulate. These conditions provide tinder to wildfire simply waiting for ignition and destruction. Add to this mix an expanding human population of residences and construction and the issue magnifies. This would be the wall of flames we see on the news.

When carefully applied prescriptions for managed burns are utilized we can mitigate the capabilities of extreme destruction. We can at the same time direct grazing patterns of animals to areas of renewed growth. The tracks of animals can then be sent to other locations in order to allow the ground to rest. This is a high level of management. Interestingly enough, fire works best under conditions provided by high levels of management. Poorly managed ground otherwise encourages wildfire conditions as opposed to the benefits we are discussing.

Factors affecting fire include fuel and its quantity, wind speed, topography, soil moisture, humidity, and air temperature. There are educational opportunities to learn these interactions; and the methods of application which can control fire to the point which it travels only to where it is needed, rather than where it would go without direction. Applications of proper fire breaks, back fires, back lines, and then the head fire can do great things under correct conditions when guided by an educated hand.

If you wish to learn the science and application of prescribed fire, one of the best ways to do so is to join a Prescribed Burn Association. There are several scattered around the state. No we don't have an active group here. You will be encouraged to attend burns to see the processes. With this support and involvement you learn the tools, strategies and conditions which must be met for a safe and constructive fire. This also allows you to know more about the process which will make your own efforts much less intimidating when the time comes.

Being respectful of, and at the same time comfortable enough with the tool to not be intimidated is important.

Resources for learning about prescribed fire include:

[Prescribed Burn Associations in Texas](#)

[Prescribed Burn Program](#) - TDA

[Prescribed Range Burning in Texas](#)

[Prescribed Burning Glossary](#) – Noble Foundation

[Living with Texas Fire](#) – TX A&M AgriLife Extension (prescribed burning video series)

And if you wish to participate in a little more formal version of self-paced training for additional education, you can enroll in the Prescribed Rangeland Burning online course. This educational material utilizes the videos mentioned previously plus additional reading and information which will walk you through much of the process. This is

presented in a seven part format which will have you ready to attend a hands-on burning workshop. Course enrollment can be found at: [Prescribed Rangeland Burning](#) There is no cost for this online training.

The last prescribed fire I was involved in found me on the back fire, working what would ultimately be utilized as the back line designed to stop the later ignited head fire. As our fire boss left to go to another part of the field, his last words to me were “Don’t let my fence burn down.”

“Ok, got it under control” was my reply.

When the fire approached the fence line I was looking at the weeds populating the fuel load, and found myself thinking I need to let that burn an extra little bit. Conditions were right and the movement of the flame was not beyond what could be managed. At some point I looked up to see a few cedar fence posts flame up down the line. In the process of extinguishing those flaming posts, I looked back at the corner set. Yep, lit like a candle, they were on fire too. Not a problem to put out and no real damage...but it left a bit of visual evidence. You can just imagine the comments when the boss came to pick me up.

He did have a clean fence line when we were done... I reminded him how much money we saved him on herbicide costs.

If you have questions or would like more information regarding Extension Educational Programs, call us at (936) 435-2426.

Reggie Lepley



Reggie Lepley,
County Extension Agent – Agriculture & Natural Resources
Walker County
(936) 435-2426



Provisions from the American Disability Act will be considered when planning educational programs and activities. Please notify the Walker County Extension Office if you plan on attending an Extension Educational program and need specialized services. Notification of at least three to five days in advance is needed, so that we may have ample time to acquire resources needed to meet your needs.

Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information or veteran status. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating