



Walker County Agriculture Update

**May (Update
Edition) 2020**

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

This newsletter contains updates, new information and some reminders of opportunities. I encourage you to take full advantage of the online educational resources which are being shared.

Information is flying in at unbelievable rates. To the point it is hard to keep up with opportunities being offered, thus I am finding the need to continue to push relevant information out to you. I understand the dislike some may have of online training resources; however, there is a lot of excellent information to be gained by participation in selected events. As agricultural producers I recommend you keep abreast of what is going on.

As we all continue this “Social Distancing” thing:

Remember, as you venture out into public, please be very cognizant of your personal space, sanitation, and possible exposure situation. Accurate information regarding the Coronavirus (COVID-19) is best obtained from the CDC at the following link: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>

Remember to wash your hands regularly! Stay healthy!!

If you are a Facebook person: check out Texas A&M AgriLife-Walker Co. I have been posting short timely videos that you may find of interest. We have been spending time in the garden this spring; however, there are some pasture, pond, and wildlife sessions coming up.

Upcoming Events:

Intersection of the Cattle and Beef Industry webinar series (multiple sessions)

Cattle producers, consumers and decision makers will have an opportunity to learn more about the current issues in the cattle and beef industries through the *Intersection of the Cattle and Beef Industry* webinar series. North Dakota State University Extension is co-hosting the series with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and West Virginia University. Beginning May 12 and every Tuesday and Thursday through June 25 a series of webinars will begin to go more into depth in each of these topics and many more. These sessions will be recorded.

The first webinar will be Thursday May 7 at 7:00 pm CDT. Register for the webinar at: www.ag.ndsu.edu/livestockextension/intersectionwebinars

Here is a list of topics to be discussed:

- May 7, 2020, Overview of MCOOL, Imports and Exports, Packer Profits, Local Meats, Protein Industry Euthanasia, and Beef Check Off
- May 12, 2020, In depth perspective of MCOOL, Imports and Exports
- May 14, 2020, In depth perspective of Packer Profits
- May 19, 2020, In depth perspective: Will we be euthanizing cattle like hogs and poultry?
- May 21, 2020, In depth perspective of Local meats: Challenges and Opportunities
- May 26, 2020, In depth perspective of The Beef Checkoff
- May 28, 2020, In-depth perspective of how cattle are priced: a discussion about price and value discovery, and the futures market
- June 2, 2020, Virtual Packing Plant Tour
- June 4, 2020, In depth perspective of Ground beef, heavy carcasses and imports
- June 9, 2020, In depth perspective of Domestic and International supply and demand
- June 11, 2020, In depth perspective of Historical Overview of the Beef Industry from the Jungle to Today
- June 16, 2020, In depth perspective of Changes in how beef is supplied to grocery stores and restaurants
- June 18, 2020, In depth perspective of Steer and Heifer Complex
- June 23, 2020, In depth perspective of Cow and Bull Complex
- June 25, In depth perspective of Drop credit, hide and offal

Small Acreage Big Opportunity

May 16, 2020 (Webinar)

8:30 AM – 4:00 PM (9:00 AM program start)

Cost \$ 25.00 (provides access to online resources & presentations)

Register at: <https://www.texas-wildlife.org/resources/events/small-acreage-big-opportunity-richmond>

A program especially tailored to small acreage landowners in the Gulf Coast Prairies, Piney Woods, and Post Oak Savannah of Texas. A program especially tailored to small acreage landowners of the state. Program will focus on strategies that improve wildlife diversity through soil health, brush, and invasive grass management, etc. Program will also include presentations regarding wildlife tax valuation and regional cost-share programs. Join us to learn:

- Brush management
- Reseeding native grasses
- Soil health
- Creating wildlife habitat
- Earning 1-d-1 wildlife tax valuation
- Cost share opportunities
- Meet landowners who are doing the work
- And more!

Ranchers Agricultural Leasing Workshop

½ Day Online-You pick your date & time!

Cost \$ 75.00

Register at: <https://agrilifelearn.tamu.edu/product?catalog=AGEC-002>

Participants will be able to obtain all the information shared at our half-day leasing workshop from the comfort of their own home, anytime, at their own pace.

The course is designed for both landowners and lessees and focuses specifically on grazing, hunting and livestock leases. Tiffany Lashmet presents on the various legal issues to consider, including why written leases are important, the key terms to include in a lease, and steps to protect one's operation from liability if someone is injured on the land. Dr. Greg Kaase covers the economics of leasing, including common lease payment structures and how to find average cash lease rates in various parts of Texas.

To date, over 1,200 Texans have attended our live events and 100% said they would recommend this program to a friend.

Additional Items and Information of Note:

Walker County Farmers Market (We are getting much closer to calling a meeting one way or another) If you were a member last year, please be watching your email.

If you are interested in participating in the 2020 Walker Co Farmers Market, please call the AgriLife office at (936) 435-2426 or send me an email r-lepley@tamu.edu. We will be holding the market this year; however, we have been holding off on having our organizational meeting for a short time. I want to make sure that we have complete and updated contact information for any local vegetable or fruit producers interested in the 2020 Farmers Market.

Agricultural Commerce/travel during COVID-19

It has been deemed essential for agriculture producers to continue to function and conduct business. With that said, a letter has been issued by Texas Department of Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller that one would need to have on hand, probably in your vehicle when conducting business related to agriculture.

In anticipation of a need to mitigate potential complications for the agriculture community for the Governor's Executive Order GA-12 that went into effect at noon March 31, 2020, please see the following:

- Agricultural movements are included in the Critical Infrastructure movements allowed under GA-12 and other quarantine-related activities.
- The amount of movements across the Texas-Louisiana border for regular commercial agriculture activities (both large and private producers) is high.
- To prevent overloading TDEM with requests for individual movement "permits", we would like to use the Letter issued by the Texas Department of Agriculture on Agriculture Critical Infrastructure as official documentation for allowing movement.

Please reference the link below for the Letter for Ag Producers:

https://www.texasagriculture.gov/Portals/0/forms/COMM/Essential_Worker_Travel_Form_3.25.2020.pdf

In addition, TAHC requested confirmation that the TDA Essential Critical Infrastructure Worker letter is acceptable documentation to possess related to Governor's Executive Order GA-12.

My Next topic: People on Social Media.... (SMH) The Murder Hornet debacle; anatomy of bad/poor news reporting for the sake of a headline. Here is the real info provided by Mike Merchant, AgriLife Entomologist...

Giant hornets genuinely frightening

Posted on May 5, 2020 by mike.merchant

(Last Updated On: May 5, 2020)

The Asian giant hornet has recently been spotted close to the Canadian border in Washington state. Photo courtesy Washington State Department of Agriculture.



Last year's quiet arrival of a foreign wasp known as the Asian giant hornet is no longer a secret outside of Washington state. Within the past few days, all the major TV networks have broadcast stories of the arrival of the wasp to the Pacific Northwest. Known to entomologists as *Vespa mandarinia*, it has been named by the press the 'murder hornet'.

It's hard to argue with the name 'murder hornet' given that this wasp causes 30-50 human deaths a year in Japan. And the threat is serious enough that the Washington State Department of Agriculture has devoted a website to the pest and assigned public engagement officer, Karla Salp, to handle public concerns. "Our hope is to eradicate it before it can get established in Washington," she said. "Barring that, containing it is our second goal."

Let's face it, the thought of giant stinging wasps touches our deepest fears. If proof was needed of how scary wasps are to most people, look no further than the *Hunger Games* and its "tracker jacker" wasps. Even Hollywood knows the idea of being attacked by a swarm of wasps or bees is horrifying in the most primal way (and therefore sells tickets). How bad?

Given the fact that lots of other stinging wasps and bees are already a part of the landscape in Texas, why the fuss? After all, it's just another wasp. One of the reasons the Asian giant wasp generates so much attention is its size. At 1 1/2 inches long (queens up to 2 inches) it is reportedly the largest wasp in the world. Its sting is excruciating and, unlike the honeybee, it can sting repeatedly.

The Asian giant hornet has a distinctive yellow-orange head and heavier body than those of our largest native wasps.

Photo courtesy Washington State Department of Agriculture.



And while we are talking bees, a gang of 30 Asian giant hornets can take out a hive of 30,000 honeybees in a few hours. The European honeybee—the predominant species used by beekeepers—lacks the behavioral defenses that Japanese honeybees use against this wasp. With its giant jaws capable of decapitating honeybee defenders, and an exoskeleton impervious to bee stings, the giant hornet makes a formidable

foe. To make matters worse, beekeepers who encounter these wasps face 1/4-inch-long stingers that penetrate standard beekeeper garb.

Impact on Texas

The bottom-line is that the chance of Asian giant hornets invading Texas soon is slim, given that at the moment only a few wasps have been found in only one county in the far northwest corner of the U.S. Also, hornets are less likely to be transported by humans than many other exotic insects, like fire ants or emerald ash borers.

As with any social insect, hornets live and survive in colonies, not as individuals. So an individual wasp that accidentally flies into a vehicle and gets transported cannot survive away from its colony. The only way to spread the wasp is by transporting an entire subterranean nest, or to transport a (much rarer) previously mated queen, capable of starting a new nest on her own.

Natural spread on the ground could certainly also occur, but it should take much longer. In China the wasps seem to favor forested areas and avoids high altitudes and open grasslands. Texas does not seem to be ideal habitat for this wasp. Nevertheless, it's hard to feel completely safe from an insect that just successfully hopped an ocean. And according to Salp there is genetic evidence that the Asian giant hornet (against all odds) slipped into British Columbia not once, but twice in the past year.

Look-alikes

*The cicada killer wasp, *Sphecius speciosus*, is another large wasp, approaching the length of the Asian giant wasp, common in Texas.*

It's not unusual when a scary new pest gets reported in the news for everyone to start seeing them in their backyard (it's a natural human response to believe that if something bad is going to happen, it will happen to us personally first). But in this



case, there are much better explanations for big hornets in your backyard. In Texas one of our largest stinging insects is the cicada killer wasp. Cicada killers range in size from 1 to 1 1/2 inches-long, approaching the Asian giant wasp in length. Although the bodies of cicada killers are more slender, and heads not as distinctively orange, they are still easily mistaken for the more sinister giant hornet. Washington state officials are also responding to a worried public. "We have created a chart to show people the size differences in native bees and wasps compared to the Asian giant wasp," said Salp. "Its common to see other wasps and mistake them for the giant wasp."

In Texas, it is highly unlikely that the Asian giant hornet will be spotted for many years, if ever. But if you see something unusual, a good picture is usually sufficient to roughly identify a bee or wasp. Send the image to your county Extension office with a description of the city and county and date where it was taken. Also, as accurately as possible estimate the length of the insect. The better the picture and description, the more likely you are to get an answer.

And, as for now, don't watch the Hunger Games if you want to sleep well tonight.

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



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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