

AGRICULTURAL Program Update

2009 COW COUNTRY CONGRESS

-TO BE HELD IN WALKER COUNTY!!

Many of you may remember that due to Hurricane Ike, we had to cancel the Cow Country Congress program last year.. There was a lot of interest in the 2008 Cow Country Congress which was planned for Corlay Ranch, outside Dodge, TX. Due to the excitement created by this location, we are planning on making up the canceled program and holding the 09 Cow Country Congress in Walker County on Friday, September 25th.

Each year Cow Country Congress rotates through a seven county area. Counties which are hosts for this annual event include: Walker, Madison, Trinity, Houston, Leon, Freestone, and Anderson. This annual event has been held since the early 1980's.

Cow Country Congress has become an educational "institution" for many ranchers in our area. The program has developed a true following, with a number of people who travel from county to county each year to attend. We would like to invite you to come out and be a part of the excitement.

The opportunity to see some unique agricultural

operations and facilities, visit with commercial exhibitors, and enjoy a fine catered lunch with a lot of really good information thrown in makes the day truly worth your participation. We look forward to having you attend the program with us. Enclosed in this newsletter (on page 3) is a program flyer with RSVP information, times and details.

Additional information (including a map) can be found on the Walker County Extension web page at <http://walker-tx.tamu.edu>

WALKER COUNTY ANIMAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

Thankfully -up until now it has been a quiet Hurricane Season and we have avoided the widespread fires other parts of the US have seen. Planning and preparing for disasters, natural or otherwise has become an ongoing process in today's world, even in Walker County, Texas.

Individuals interested in assisting with animal related, emergency situations are encouraged to contact the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, Walker County office (936) 435-2426 or the Walker County Emergency Management Department (936) 435-2400 for more information on how you can help out.

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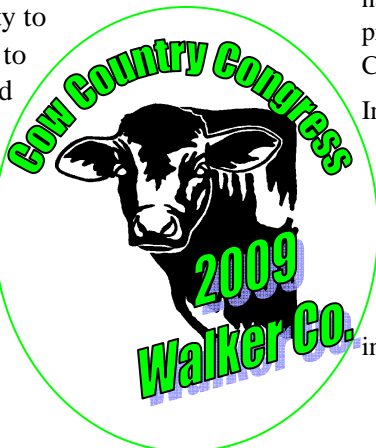
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TOO MUCH INFO!

One of the real problems that presents itself each time one of these newsletters is developed is that there is always more information I would like to share. Due to printing and mailing costs, we often have to thin the topics or the information which actually makes the newsletter.

We are going to try something new this time. In addition to this mailing of the *WC Ag Program Update*, there will be a complete online posting of information with a little less formatting and a whole lot more information on the Walker County Extension web site.

If you do not have access to the web, call me and I will get you a full print copy (all 15 pages!)—otherwise, please take a minute to go to our online site, <http://walker-tx.tamu.edu> and view the "09 Summer -Wagon Load" in our newsletter section.



IS YOUR HOME SAFE FROM WILDFIRES?

Texas Forest Service

- Defensible space around your home is an area cleared of brush, cedars, and other combustible materials equal to 1 1/2 times the height of your home plus 30 feet.
- Trim limbs overhanging the roof.
- Remove flammable tree debris, including leaves and twigs, from rooftops and gutters.
- Choose FireWise landscaping, such as hardwoods, rather than evergreens.
- Store firewood a minimum of 30 feet from your home.
- Space trees 15 to 20 feet apart and remove limbs within 15 feet of the ground.
- Remember, fire travels 16 times faster up slope. If your home is on a ridge top, keep

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SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY AGRICULTURE CENTENNIAL

Stanley Kelley, Chair, Department of Agricultural and Industrial Sciences

This is an unprecedented time for the Department of Agricultural and Industrial Sciences at Sam Houston State University as they celebrate their Centennial Anniversary for teaching Agriculture.

In the early 1900's, the Texas Legislature determined the need for Vocational Agriculture to be taught in the public schools of Texas but they also recognized that well-trained and qualified teachers was essential to teach the young men and women about agriculture. In 1909, this initiative led to the establishment of the Department of Agriculture at Sam Houston State University and by 1918 Sam Houston State was the only college recognized by the Federal Vocational Board as a Vocational Agriculture Teacher training institution in the United States.

In this 100 year time span, the department has expanded from teaching only courses on farming and raising livestock to technical courses in animal and plant genetics, floral design, agri-business, and alternative fuels and energy. Today's students at Sam Houston can select degrees in General Agriculture, Agriculture Engineering Technology, Agri-business, Animal Science, Horticulture and Plant Science, Wildlife Ecology and Teacher Certification. In the past 15 years, the department has experienced exceptional enrollment growth with a record enrollment for this academic year of over 1,100 students from across the state, nation, and globe, with Ag students from Canada, France, India and China.

The department will celebrate their successes on September 25 and 26. For more information and a schedule of activities please call 936.294.1189.

2009 NEW FARMER & RANCHER WORKSHOP SERIES WAS A SUCCESS!



An enterprising group of agriculturally related organizations joined forces this spring to reach out to new landowners in Walker County. This effort was made to help assist new landowners who have purchased 1-500 acres of Walker County land within the past five years. Workshops held this spring covered: Beef Cattle, Range Pasture & Forages, Timber Management, and Wildlife & Aquatics. We find that new landowners often have many questions on these (and other) topics. We hope that our 09 workshop participants were able to get the majority of their initial questions answered. As most of our experienced landowners know all too well, when you answer one question, two or more often come up due to the "if then" situation. We look forward to continuing this program track in future years.

Special thanks to our program cooperators and sponsors, you made the workshops a huge success!

2009 Program Cooperators:

- Sam Houston State University –Agricultural Sciences Department
- Walker County Soil & Water Conservation District
- Natural Resource Conservation Service
- Walker County Farm Bureau
- Walker County Timber Growers Association
- Texas Forest Service
- Texas Parks & Wildlife
- Walker County Extension Livestock & Pasture Committee
- Walker County Extension Leadership Advisory Board
- Walker County Extension Master Gardener Association

2009 Program Sponsors:

- Novartis Animal Health
- Dow AgroSciences
- Steely Lumber
- Walker County Farm Bureau
- Texas Farm Bureau Insurance

If you wish to sign up for the 2010 workshop series, please contact the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Walker County office at 936 435-2426 to be placed on our course list.

Texas Animal Health Regulations –TRICHOMONIASIS

Bulls entering Texas for breeding purposes must be certified as virgin & not be more than 24 months old, or be tested negative for cattle trichomoniasis within 30 days prior to entry.

***Beginning 1/1/10:** Texas breeding bulls undergoing change of possession in TX must be certified as virgins or be tested negative within 30 days prior to sale, lease, loan or exchange. Additional information is available from the Texas Animal Health Commission at <http://www.tahc.state.tx.us>

Walker County – 2009 Host for

Cow Country Congress

Corlay Farm & Cattle Co.

Dodge, Texas (FM 405)

September 25, 2009

8:30 AM – Registration

Registration Fee: \$10.00 per person

R.S.V.P. is required for Meal Planning prior to September 21

Contact Your Local County Extension Office.

9:00 AM – Welcome:

Topics & Presentations:

"Smart Fertilizer - Planning, Purchasing & Utilization"

Artificial Insemination & Embryo Transfer for small producers-

Realistic Expectations, Logistics, Equipment & Practices

Forage Legumes-

Can They Meet Your Needs

Alternative Methods for Legume Establishment

Native Forages

Selection, Establishment & Management

Noon Meal: Chicken Fried Steak and ALL the Trimmings!

Afternoon Concurrent Sessions:

Beef Quality Assurance –Chute Side Management

Facilities for working Whitetail Deer

Tour of Deer Breeding Pens

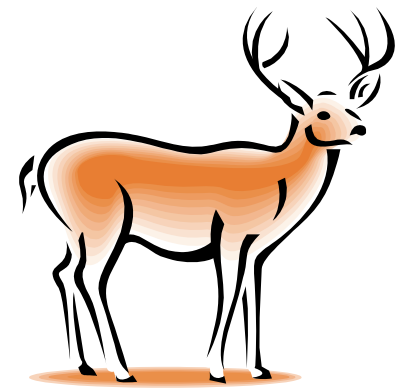
**2 HOURS
of TDA
C.E.U. CREDIT**

**3.5 HOURS of BQA
C.E.U. CREDIT**

**Additional program information is available
from the Texas Cooperative Extension
Office, Walker County (936) 435-2426.**

*Visit With
Commercial Vendors from a
Variety of Ag Support Industries*

*This program is supported by the Extension
Beef & Forage Committees from Walker, Madison,
Houston, Trinity, Leon, Freestone and Anderson Counties.*



COMMUNITY HORTICULTURE EDUCATION (LANDSCAPE & GARDEN PROGRAMS)

Upcoming Programs & Events presented by the ,
Texas AgriLife Extension, [Walker County Master
Gardener Association](#):

- August 14, 2009 - 10:00 a.m. "**Fall Gardening**" presented by WCMG's Bill Dawson, Butch Maywald, and Mark Short at the Huntsville Public Library.
- October 8, 2009 at 6:30 p.m. "**Locally Grown or Adapted Plants for Walker County**" Featuring Bulbs, Daylilies, Shrubs, Trees etc. presented by WCMG's Jean Marsh, Gail Warren, Jenny Covington, Rhonda Hanks at the Walker Co Extension Office.
- Oct. 10, 2009 - **Fall Plant Sale**
- Feb. 23, 2010-6:30 p.m. at Extension Office "**World's Healthiest Vegetables**" presented by WCMG Darnell Schreiber at the Walker Co Extension Office.
- March 9, 2010-6:30 p.m. at Extension Office "**Cooking with Herbs**" presented by WCMG Darnell Schreiber at the Walker Co Extension Office
- March, 13, 2010 - **Spring Plant Sale**

Be sure and check the *Huntsville Item* for the Walker County Master Gardener column each Wednesday! Interested in becoming a Master Gardener, learning more about horticulture and being part of this energetic group? Contact the Walker County Extension office for more info! The 2010 class list is building.



GOOD INFORMATION "REVISITED"

Sometimes I like to go back through our "old" information and see what we were concerned about during the time it was printed. Not surprisingly, I have run across several years where the shortage of rainfall was the issue of the day. In the Summer 1999 issue of *Walker County Livestock & Pasture News*, I found an article on watering trees. This information is still valid and applicable. The reason I find this interesting is that we sometimes seem to forget that we have been through dry periods before and that it will be dry again. Our planning and conservation methods often are a victim of the "Out of sight, Out of mind" syndrome. Keeping conservation practices in the forefront of our home landscape education is one of the purposes of our Walker County LEAF-PRO educational programs.

Watering Trees in Dry Weather

During periods of dry weather we need to be aware of the needs of our landscape trees. These plants provide aesthetics and value to our property. Although trees are valuable assets to our property, watering decisions need to be made carefully for economic reasons. Most trees require 1-3 inches of rain per month to remain healthy. If you water during dry spells you need to know the equivalent rates.

1 inch of rain = 5 gallons of H₂O per square yard.

2 inches of rain = 10 gallons of H₂O per square yard.

3 inches of rain = 15 gallons of H₂O per square yard.

- How does this affect your landscape? If a tree has a canopy area of roughly 10' x 10' this = 100 square feet which is 11.11 square yards.

(This is a small tree!)

To water a (10' x 10' canopy) tree

1 inch: 5 x 11.11 = 55 gallons

2 inches: 10 x 11.11 = 111 gallons

3 inches: 15 x 11.11 = 166 gallons

If you have a yard with a number of trees, it is not hard to see how your water bill could suffer. Water conservation is going to be a continuing concern for the future. You can make a difference with educated decisions regarding home water use. Contact the Walker County Texas AgriLife Extension Office for additional information.

Note: Our recent dry weather will continue to impact trees for the next year or more. Moisture related stress encouraging some of our common tree diseases, combined with insect activity will be an ongoing landscape issue for the foreseeable future.

FORAGE TESTING FOR NITRATES AND PRUSSIC

Tony Provin, State Soil Chemist and Laboratory Director
Soil & Crop Sciences, Texas AgriLife Extension Service

The Texas AgriLife Extension Service Soil, Water and Forage Testing Laboratory (SWFTL) has received numerous corn and sorghum samples containing highly elevated nitrates, often at levels significantly high enough to prevent safe use of the forage. Agricultural producers can follow several steps to minimize nitrates in the baled forages, including raising the cutter height to leave the high nitrate lower stalk in the field.

Since nitrate accumulation and prussic acid formation occur in different parts of the plant, no one sample will adequately address both potential threats. Producers should sample multiple plants and segregate the lower stalks into ground-8" and 8-16" samples. The cutting heights are only suggestions and should be based on the producers equipment and ability to bale the hay in standing stalks. The more aggressive sampling protocol will allow a producer to better understand the concentrations of nitrates in the lower stalk and then raise or lower the cutter bar to maximize forage baled or minimize the nitrates in the baled hay. While stalk nitrate levels are highest in these lower stalks, a producer may elect to measure the nitrate concentrations in the remaining plant to provide added assurance that it is safe for grazing, in the event the lower 16" of stalk is highly elevated with regard to nitrates.

Prussic acid accumulation only occurs in a select number of crops and weeds. In general, concern is mostly directed to sudangrass, sorghum, johnsongrass, shattercane and any crosses or hybrids of these species. A more complete listing is available in E-543, Nitrates and Prussic Acids in Forages. For these species, prussic acid can form in the newest leaves or recently damaged leaves. Samples collected for prussic acid analysis should be comprised of the newest leaves and damaged leaves. Sampling instructions for prussic acid is described in this publication or producers can contact the Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory (TVMDL) for further sampling and testing information. Unlike nitrates, prussic acid will dissipate after cutting; however, tight bales may require more than 9 months for prussic acid levels to decline below levels of concern. Nitrates levels will remain constant unless significant water leaches through the bale, a factor often reducing the feeding value of the hay to near zero. If the crop is still green and good rain is in the near-term forecast, delaying cutting may allow for nitrates in the plant to be converted to protein and other nitrogen containing compounds and structures. Generally, 3-5 days is required, following adequate rainfall, for significant nitrate reductions.

A number of sources can be located both on the web and through university publications citing defining safe nitrate levels. The cited values will vary considerably and are often significantly more conservative of the 1% nitrate value historically recognized by the Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory (TVMDL). Producers should be cautioned that the TVMDL 1% level assumes that cattle are healthy, have good conditioning and have an overall high energy level in their diets. Prior to feeding forages with nitrate levels in the 0.5-1% range which are going to be fed to weak, lactating and animals with reduced body condition scores, producers should consult their veterinarian. Producers should also avoid using average nitrate values within the forage, as more timid or later feeding cattle will likely be exposed to a higher percentage of lower stalk material, thus resulting in the consumption of unsafe levels of nitrates. The use of a bale grinder can be used to reduce selective feeding. Grinding nitrate tainted forages with clean forages, thus lowering the nitrate levels to less than 1%, is another management option available to some producers.

Both the SWFTL and TVMDL routinely analyze forages for nitrates, while the TVMDL is the sole prussic analyzing laboratory within the Texas A&M University System. Both laboratories prioritize these samples during times of drought and attempt to provide next business day results.

WE KNOW IT'S BEEN DRY:

THINK ABOUT HAY TESTING

The Extension Livestock & Pasture Committee continues to encourage producers to have their hay tested each year.

Unfortunately many think of this educational project as a contest between hay producers. *You can be assured that we don't test hay for that purpose.* The only way that you can possibly know the value of the hay you are feeding to your cattle is to have the hay tested for quality.

Without testing, you can easily fail to meet the basic nutritional needs of your cattle. While we sometimes know our hay is deficient in quality, we sometimes are not aware of exactly how low the quality really is. It's easy to think that we are feeding enough to get by, but it is entirely possible to go into the winter with an unseen downward nutritional plane. Many times this reduced nutritional level can not be easily pulled out of prior to the spring calving season. Weather conditions do play a big part in this issue, will we have good growing conditions for our cool-season pastures, will it be wet or cold? Calving in poor condition results in lower milking ability hence lighter calves, and if not corrected in the cow herd, you can expect lower rebreeding percentages. This is the classic cow herd version of a train wreck. Years when hay is short in supply are the years when you should make an extra effort to have your hay analyzed for quality.

WILDFIRE SAFE..



(Continued from page 2)

combustible materials and plants at least 75 feet from the down slope side of your house.

- Clearly mark your home address from the main road and make sure your driveway is accessible to firefighting equipment.
- Have faucets on all sides of your home, and whenever possible, provide firefighters and additional water source such as a pool or pond.

ANIMAL ISSUES..

(Continued from page 1)

We have both Large & Small Animal working groups. Each group has teams that include: Facilities, Transportation, Registration, Feed, & Medical. If you have skills, knowledge or time - we need your help! We need to know that you are interested and available before we have an emergency situation.

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 two weeks in advance is needed, so that we may have ample time to acquire resources needed to meet your needs. Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating. The information given herein is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names is made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by Texas AgriLife Extension Service is implied.

If you have questions or would like more information call us at (936) 435-2426.

Walker County Extension Office:

102 Tam Road Suite B, Huntsville Texas 77320

<http://walker-tx.tamu.edu>



Sincerely,

Reggie Lepley

County Extension Agent – Agriculture

Walker County

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