

texas

neighbors

SPRING 2021

Stop and smell
the flowers

Pages 34-35





Americans are positive about climate-smart practices on the farm



By Russell Boening
President
Texas Farm Bureau

U.S. farmers and ranchers have long been at the forefront of climate-smart farming. We use scientific solutions, technology and innovations to grow crops and care for livestock.

By doing so, we protect soil and water, efficiently manage manure and produce clean and renewable energy. We also capture carbon and improve sustainability.

It's quite the success story. Over the past two generations, American farmers and ranchers have nearly tripled the amount of food grown in the last 70 years with the same or fewer resources.

Farmers have also put 140 million acres in conservation programs and more than doubled the amount of renewable energy sources we use.

Doing more with less is an understatement.

The carbon footprint of U.S. agriculture is also shrinking. Agriculture accounts for about 10% of total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. That's far

less than transportation, electricity production, commercial and residential, and industry sectors.

And its footprint could soon be even less. Net zero emissions in some sectors of agriculture are a real possibility.

I'm proud of these accomplishments, and it appears the public understands and supports our commitment to protecting the soil, air and water.

According to a recent [national public opinion poll](#) from the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF), a majority of U.S. adults have a positive view of farmers' sustainability practices, and an overwhelming majority trust farmers.

The survey of 2,200 U.S. adults found that more than half (58%) rate the sustainability practices of U.S. farmers positively, with broad agreement from a majority of adults across demographic groups.

The survey also explored public attitudes about the environmental sustainability achievements of farmers and ranchers, as well as future direction to advance climate-smart farming. Overall, the public agrees farmers shouldn't be expected to bear the financial burden alone.

More than four in five adults (84%) say environmental sustainability and economic sustainability are both important for farmers, and most adults say both are very important. More than four in five adults also say feeding the world (84%) and farmers passing farms on to future generations (83%) are important.

Looking to the future, the survey explores how Americans think sustainability efforts on farms and ranches should be funded. Seventy percent of adults say government incentives to encourage farmers to adopt additional sustainable agricultural practices would be effective. More than three-quarters of adults believe it is important for the government to fund science-based research (76%) and improve infrastructure (78%) to support agriculture.

At a time when some corporations are making sustainability commitments that include or impact agricultural production, a bipartisan majority of adults (62%) say corporations should compensate farmers for the additional cost of implementing environmental practices to help achieve sustainability goals.

The survey also revealed there is still work to be done to increase awareness of agriculture's comparatively small contribution to greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S. More than four in five adults (84%) were not able to correctly identify agriculture's impact.

On a brighter note, nearly half of adults (45%) correctly ranked agriculture as the smallest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions by economic sector.

The survey demonstrates that Americans are impressed by advancements in climate-smart farming. That should give all of us confidence going forward.

Farmers and ranchers are part of the climate solution. And we're working hard every day to continue that contribution and success.



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True Grit

Michelle Tidwell trains horses, beats cancer

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

When someone has true passion for their career, it shows. And when someone sticks with that career through adversity and challenges, they have true grit.

Madison County Farm Bureau member Michelle Tidwell has both.

She's the assistant horse trainer at Cahill Quarter Horses in Madisonville, a role she's filled for more than 20 years now.

Tidwell said she's just one of those lucky people who had the opportunity to take what they love and turn it into a career. But those who know her best know differently.

She's a hard worker, dedicated to her students and the horses she spends her days training at Cahill Quarter Horses.

The operation is a one-stop training shop for riders and horses. Riders of all ages from the area come to learn from Tidwell and Cahill, and people can send their horses to the Cahill facilities to be trained, as well.

"We spend most of our days riding. We ride the horses, come back and get another one and just keep going. We have clients that come in and out for lessons all day, too. Once a week, the farrier comes out, and sometimes we take horses to the vet. So, we're always busy," she said. "We train kids as young as four or five all the way up to adults 70 and older, from those who are just interested in riding for fun to people who show."

There are challenges to both. But Tidwell noted with a wry smile that training horses is much easier than training people, although some are more stubborn than others.

"Just like people, horses have all sorts of personalities. Some of them are happy to see you. Some of them are a little grumpy," she said. "But as far as their desire to work, the biggest thing with horses is consistency. Every day, it's consistency. They're fed at the same time or within very close to the same time of it. They go through the same routine each day, and that's how you get them trained."

In May 2019, life was busy, but good. Then one simple phone call changed everything.

It was her doctor, and the diagnosis was breast cancer. But not even cancer was going to stop Tidwell from pur-

“I may have found professional success, but there’s always the desire to be better than you were yesterday.”

— Michelle Tidwell

suing her passion.

Her hard-won grit and determination, honed from years of experience in the show ring, carried her through.

“When I had radiation, I told the doctor I had to be done by Nov. 5, because I was going up to the World Show that year,” she said. “I just kept getting up and going on with each day.”

After a surgery, four rounds of chemotherapy and several rounds of radiation, all scheduled around her horse-showing schedule, Tidwell was pronounced cancer-free.

Her determination and positive attitude throughout the experience didn’t go unnoticed by others. At the 2019 American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) World Championship Show, Tidwell was named the first-ever recipient of the Carl McCuiston True Grit Award.

She holds a special connection to the man whose name graces the award. McCuiston was a longtime AQHA Professional Horseman who, like Tidwell, was diagnosed with cancer but didn’t let the disease slow him down.

He passed away in December 2018, and the award was created in his honor to recognize an AQHA Professional Horseman who goes above and beyond.

“Carl was a one-of-a-kind individual. He worked relentlessly behind the scenes at all the world shows, anywhere you needed him. He helped push cattle. He helped move trail poles. He never tired,” Tidwell said. “Even when times were against him, he never quit. Those were pretty big shoes to fill there, but it was a very nice honor. I was very honored to be the first recipient.”

Never slowing down, never giving up. Being so passionate about what you do so that your light shines bright for the world to see. That’s Tidwell.

She has passion and true grit.

“This was probably a hobby that became a job, but the cool thing is that it changes. I may have found professional success, but there’s always the desire to be better than you were yesterday,” she said. “Sometimes it works. Sometimes it’s a little bit trial-and-error, but each day is a new day with new challenges. In life, with the horses, here at the barn—there’s always going to be a challenge. No matter how life’s got you down, just keep coming back.”



At Cahill Quarter Horses, Tidwell works with clients of all ages.



She also trains horses for owners who are interested working or showing the animals.



Clients learn in individual and group settings.

FANCY FOOTWORK

Horse hooves need daily care

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

Many new horse owners are surprised at the amount of work that goes into a horse's upkeep.

Along with basic feeding, watering and grooming, horses must have routine checkups and vaccinations, farrier visits and teeth floating.

But an important and sometimes-overlooked aspect of general care and maintenance is hoof care, according to American Quarter Horse Association Professional Horseman and longtime horse trainer Michelle Tidwell.

"If the hooves and feet aren't good, you won't have a well enough horse to ride, work or whatever you need the horse to do. You always want to take care of them no matter what their job is," she said. "If the horse is in pain, he or she won't perform to the top of their ability."

To keep hooves and feet healthy, Tidwell recommends checking your horse's feet and picking them out daily.

"With all the rain and moisture we've had this year, horses' hooves are especially susceptible to diseases like thrush," she said. "Left untreated, it can get quite bad and do some damage to the horse's feet and hooves."

Horseshoes only cover the hard keratin material around the outside of the hoof, leaving the sensitive sole, or "frog," exposed. Small sticks, rocks and other debris can get caught in the area and cause pain like what humans feel when a pebble gets in a shoe.

Hoof picks can be used to gently dislodge debris and accumulated mud from around the frog, leaving the area clean and dry.

Horses are like humans in that some just naturally have stronger hooves than others, she noted.

"Some people grow great fingernails, and they're hardy and tough. Some people have fingernails that break and split easily," she said. "Horse hooves are the same way. Some of them just don't

have strong hooves. Some of that is hereditary, some of it is care."

Serious cracks, splintering or uneven wear of the hoof can indicate an issue.

Horses with too much starch in their diet may "founder" or develop laminitis. Horses suffering from grass founder usually eat too much green grass or another high-carbohydrate forage and have too many undigested sugars and starches in their bodies.

This leads to insulin resistance, and insulin is unable to move sugar into body tissues. Similar to human diabetics, insulin resistance in horses can cause destruction of blood vessels in feet, which in turn decreases blood flow to the area.

A lack of blood flow in the laminae causes swelling and inflammation in the hoof, often followed by hoof wall separation, rotation of the coffin bone and extreme pain.

Common signs of founder are sudden limping or gait changes, a reluctance to move and exces-

sive head bobbing while walking, she said. A horse in pain will spend more time lying down or may shift weight repeatedly from one leg to another as it attempts to alleviate pressure on the affected foot/feet.

Overweight horses tend to founder more easily, as do most ponies.

"It's extremely painful for horses to develop laminitis. Sometimes you can turn it around with diet and proper shoe work," Tidwell said. "It's not unmanageable, but sometimes it doesn't work out well. And it's a long road to recovery. So, it's best to avoid the conditions that may cause them to founder in the first place, if at all possible."

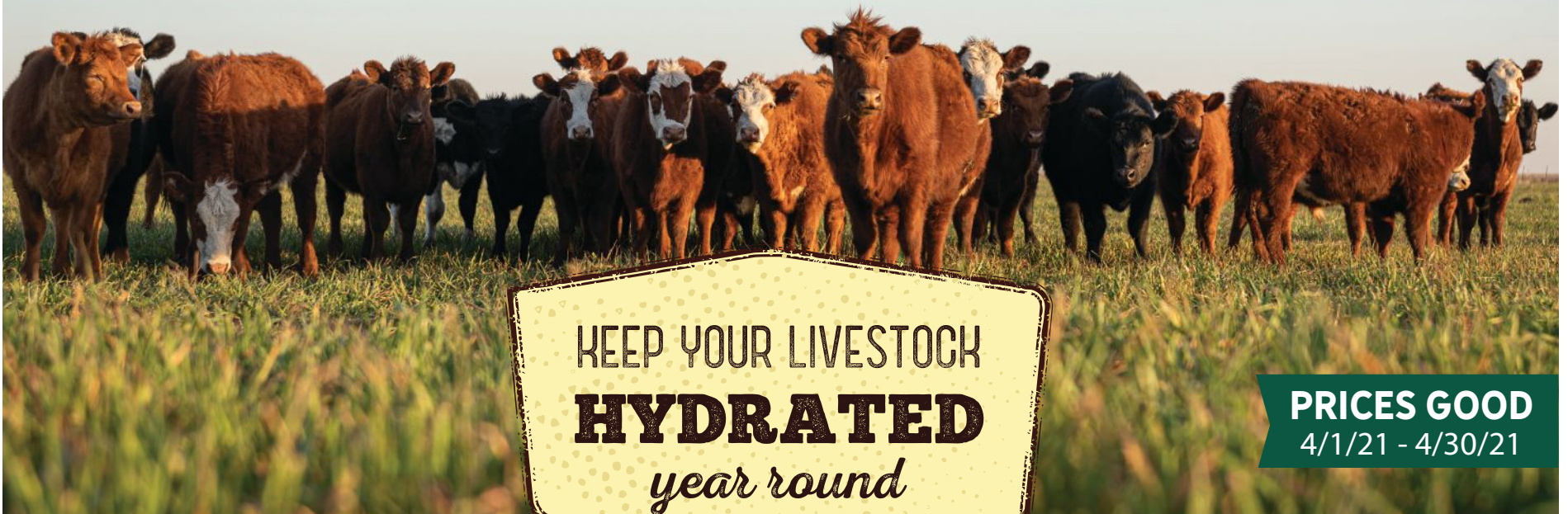
Supplements and hoof dressings are available to strengthen hooves. Tidwell said these items are sold at almost every feed or tack store. But if you're unsure if diet has played a role in the horse's foot problems, always consult a veterinarian first.



Michelle Tidwell changes bandaging on a pony being treated for abscesses in its front two feet. Ponies and overweight horses are more likely to founder or develop laminitis.



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Quotes, Questions or Comments? Contact Cliff Mulanax at cmulanax@mccoys.com or visit mccoys.com/farmandranch

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Teachers can apply for TFB's Summer Ag Institute

**By Julie Tomascik
Editor**

Teachers can grow their knowledge of agriculture and learn to incorporate agricultural concepts in their classroom with help from Texas Farm Bureau (TFB).

The state's largest farm and ranch organization will host its annual Summer Ag Institute (SAI) June 14-17 in Waco at the TFB Conference and Training Center.

Teachers from across the Lone Star State get a first-hand look at agriculture through the professional development event.

"Teachers really enjoy the SAI experience, because it truly allows them to see agriculture in action and also participate in hands-on activities and opportunities that they can relate to their classroom content," Jordan Walker, TFB associate director of Organization, Educational Outreach, said. "The environment of SAI encourages teachers to engage in active learning much like they facilitate in their classrooms."

Regardless of the subject, agriculture has a place in the classroom, Walker noted.

"Agriculture is present in everything we do, and the industry has advanced significantly over the years to include incredible science, technology and growing career opportunities. Increasing agricultural literacy among today's teachers and students expands knowledge of how agriculture is imbedded in the science, social studies, math and so much that students learn each day," she said. "When we increase agricultural literacy, we increase awareness and grow more educated consumers and, ultimately, leaders of the next generation."

Teachers get to see the agricultural concepts demonstrated by educational professionals through SAI. They will also make connections with farmers, ranchers and industry professionals.

And there will be several opportunities for teachers to get their hands dirty.

Teachers will visit area farms, ranches and other agricultural businesses, as well as hear from a U.S. Department of Agriculture scientist and a soil expert from the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The Texas Beef

Council also will provide a fun, interactive demonstration to connect the beef process from pasture to plate.

"Many topics will be covered over the four-day institute, but teachers can definitely expect two key takeaways—that agriculture can be incorporated into any subject and there are many resources available to help do just that," Walker said. Upon completion, teachers bring home activity ideas, lesson plans and a wealth of resources. Teachers also receive 36 hours of continuing professional education credits as authorized by the Texas Education Agency.

Any certified, active K-12 teacher of any subject can register to attend.

The cost is \$375 per person, which includes lodging and some meals, but county Farm Bureaus often offer sponsorships to cover the cost for local teachers. Teachers will be notified of their sponsorship status after registration is complete.

For more information and to register, visit texasfarmbureau.org/aitc or contact Walker at 254-751-2569 or edoutreach@txfb.org.

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Teachers will dig into the science of ag this summer

By **Julie Tomascik**
Editor

Texas teachers will get to the science of agriculture in Texas Farm Bureau (TFB)-hosted workshops this summer. Held in four locations across the state, the Summer Ag Academies offer teachers practical experience in agriculture-related concepts, and they can take home resources to use in their classrooms.

The Summer Ag Academies are one- and two-day professional development events to immerse teachers into agriculture.

"Teachers will learn about a variety of topics at each of the different Summer Ag Academies," said Jordan Walker, TFB associate director of Organization, Educational Outreach. "The main goal is to give teachers a glimpse of agriculture and showcase presentations that help them learn how to incorporate agriculture into the classroom."

There is no cost to attend the academies.

Certified, active teachers of all subject areas can benefit from the material that is

shared, Walker said.

For more than 20 years, TFB has hosted professional development events in the summer to help Texas teachers make the connection with agriculture, providing them innovative techniques to incorporate the subject in their curriculum.

The curriculum provided by TFB is aligned with Texas teaching standards to help teachers better incorporate the material in the classroom.

Teachers also receive continuing education credits in addition to the resource material.

"The Summer Ag Academies are free, provide resources and expertise for the teachers to take back to the classroom and open up networking opportunities with industry experts and fellow teachers who are interested in or already incorporating agriculture into the classroom," Walker said.

Additional information and registration details for the Summer Ag Academies are available online at <https://texasfarmbureau.org/aitc>.

For more information, contact Walker at edoutreach@txfb.org or call 254-751-2569.

This year's
Summer Ag Academies
will be held at the
following locations:

June 14

Burleson
K-5 teachers

July 22

Fort Bend
K-8 teachers

July 19-20

New Braunfels
K-12 teachers

July 27

Lubbock
K-12 teaches

Pound Cake

INGREDIENTS

1 lb. salted butter, softened
2 1/2 c. sugar
6 large eggs
4 c. all-purpose flour
3/4 c. milk
2 tsp. vanilla extract

INSTRUCTIONS

- Preheat oven to 300 degrees F.
- Beat butter at medium speed with an electric mixer until lighter in color and creamy. Don't overbeat.
- Gradually add sugar, beating until light and fluffy.
- Add eggs, one at a time, beating until yolk disappears.
- Add flour to creamed mixture alternately with milk. Beat at low speed until blended after each addition and until smooth. Begin and end this step with flour.
- Stir in vanilla.
- Grease and flour a 10-inch tube or bundt pan.
- Bake at 300° for 1 hour and 40 minutes or until wooden toothpick inserted in center comes out clean.
- Cool in pan on a wire rack 10 to 15 minutes.
- Remove from pan, and cool completely on a wire rack or plate.

Baking time: 1 hour and 40 minutes

Number of servings: 10-12



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2021 Texas Farm Bureau PHOTO CONTEST

It's time once again for the annual Texas Farm Bureau photography contest, when you or someone you know can share your best pictures with the entire Lone Star State and maybe even win a cash prize.

The deadline for photo submissions in the 2021 contest is June 1.

The contest is limited to members of the Texas Farm Bureau and their immediate families.

Rural settings and rural lifestyles are the preferred themes for all submissions, and contestants are limited to one entry per person.

Four top winners will be selected and published in the July edition of *Texas Agriculture* and the summer edition of *Texas Neighbors*. First place will be awarded a \$250 cash prize, second place will receive \$200 and two honorable mentions

will receive \$100 each.

As in years past, both digital and printed photographs may be submitted. To enter, follow these simple rules:

Digital entries should be e-mailed to photocontest@txfb.org. For publication purposes, photos entered in the contest must be at least 1024 X 768 pixels or higher.

Print entries may be mailed to Photo Contest, TFB Communications Division, P.O. Box 2689, Waco, TX 76702-2689. A self-addressed, stamped envelope needs to accompany your print photo entry if you want your photograph returned.

Include a brief description regarding the entry, plus the participant's name, address, telephone number and valid Texas Farm Bureau membership number.

More information is available at <https://txfb.us/photocontest21>.

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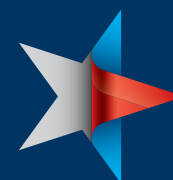
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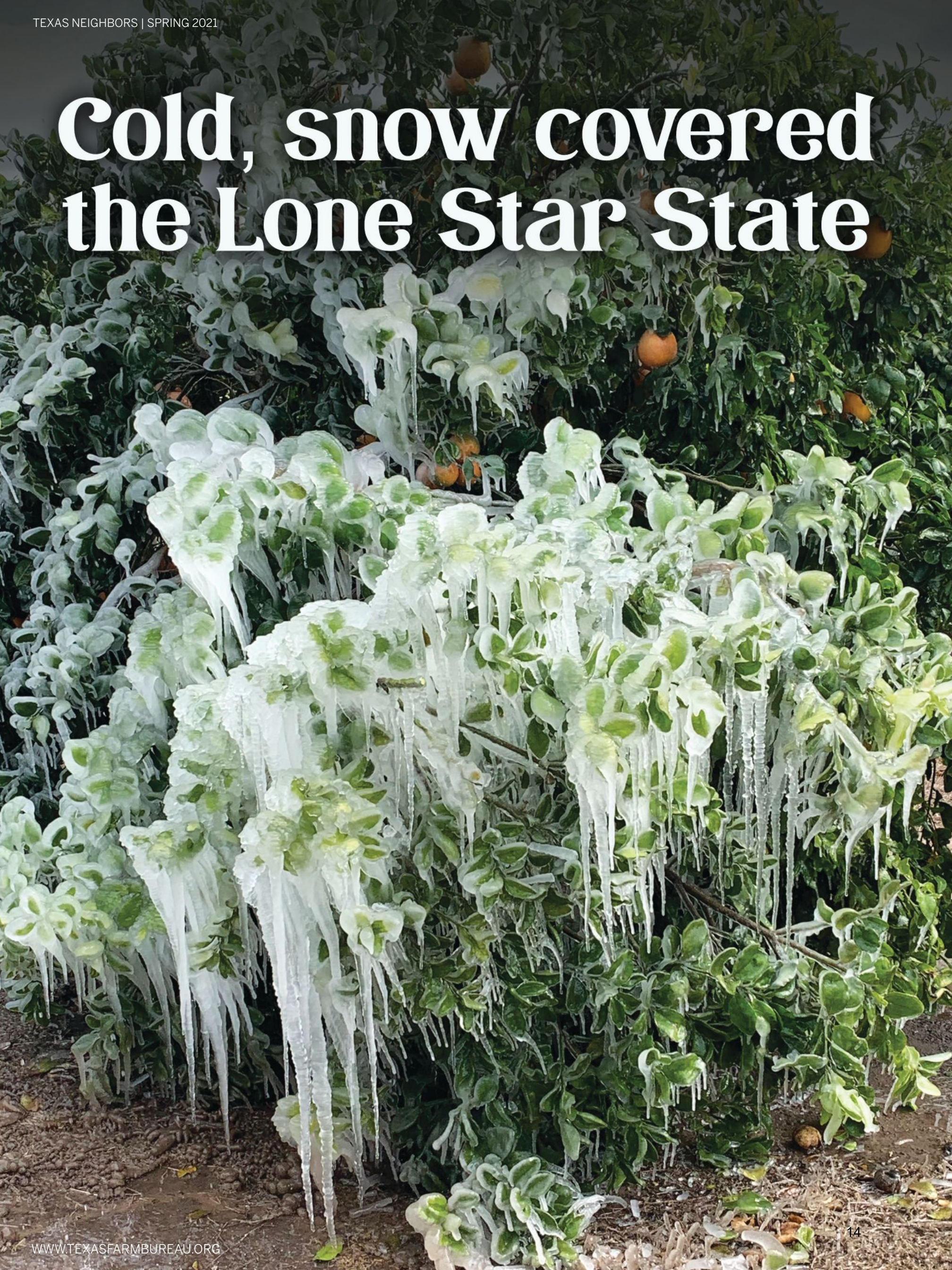
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TEXAS FARM BUREAU®

Cold, snow covered the Lone Star State



Winter Storm Uri causes over \$600 million in ag losses

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

Citrus. Livestock. Vegetables. Winter Storm Uri left virtually no aspect of Texas agriculture untouched, with losses by individual farmers and ranchers across the Lone Star State ranging from mild to extreme.

Cumulatively, the damage to Texas agriculture totals at least \$600 million, with a final number likely coming in much higher, according to Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service economists. And the repercussions will last for years.

Citrus crops in the Rio Grande Valley were hit the hardest, with initial losses of at least \$230 million reported.

Rio Grande Valley citrus growers lost nearly all the Valencia orange crop to the late winter freeze, said AgriLife Extension Economist Dr. Luis Ribera. He noted if the storm had come any earlier, the damage to Texas citrus would have been much worse. But since grapefruit harvest was underway, farmers lost about 60 percent instead of the entire crop.

The \$230 million figure includes losses from this year's crop but also includes damage to blooms and buds that were the start of next year's crop, Ribera explained. It does not include the cost of citrus trees that die or are so badly damaged they have to be replaced.

Lemon and lime orchards suffered more damage due to the trees' lower cold hardiness. Nearly 200 acres of in South Texas were completely destroyed and will have to be replanted, wiping out the potential for lemon or lime harvest for at least three to five years.

Vegetable farmers in the Rio Grande Valley and Winter Garden are reeling from Winter Storm Uri's effects, as well, with losses pegged at about \$150 million in the produce sector.

Cool-season crops, including leafy greens, beets, cabbage, celery and broccoli, were lost. So were warm-season crops intended for early harvest like potatoes and melons.

Another prominent Rio Grande Valley crop, sugarcane, is facing losses, but it's too early to tell how much damage was done to next year's crop.

Ranchers are suffering impacts of the extreme cold weather, too. The livestock sector in Texas, which includes cattle, sheep and goats and poultry, is expected to have at least \$228 million in related losses.

Poultry losses encompass loss of birds, damage to housing facilities and increased heating costs, according to AgriLife Livestock Economist Dr. David Anderson.

"Beef cattle losses include estimated value of death losses, additional feed use, lost winter small grain grazing, lost weights and feed efficiency in feedlots, and losses due to delayed marketing," he said. "Sheep and goat losses include estimated death losses, and dairy losses include cattle death loss, lost milk production and the value of milk dumped due to transportation problems and processing delays."

Additional costs for extra feed, fuel or electricity to run heaters to keep livestock warm and physical damages to the operation were included in estimates, added Amarillo AgriLife Economist Dr. Justin Benavidez.

"A rancher will typically feed two or more round bales per cow during winter. So, if hay isn't available, they still have to purchase some type of supplemental feed, and all this is costly," Benavidez said.

Because the storm hit during spring calving and lambing season, many newborn animals were lost. But the losses would have been far

Early estimates show that the damage to Texas agriculture totals **more than \$600 million.**

Citrus crops:
at least **\$230 million**



Livestock:
at least **\$228 million**



Vegetable Crops:
at least **\$150 million**



- A loss of over **\$42 million** in sales of onions
- A loss of over **\$27 million** in sales of leafy greens
- A loss of over **\$20 million** in sales of watermelons
- A loss of over **\$15 million** in sales of cabbage
- A loss of over **\$42 million** in additional vegetable and herb sales



worse if ranchers had not acted quickly and rescued as many of those newborns as possible.

But these losses will extend past just the current livestock generation, he said. The loss of an animal this year impacts subsequent herd size by taking out potential replacement animals.

Losses to the greenhouse and nursery sector are expected to be high from Winter Storm Uri.

Damage to landscape plants, shrubs and trees was severe, noted Dr. Marco Palma, horticultural marketing expert in the Department of Agricultural Economics at Texas A&M University. He said AgriLife and the Texas Nursery and Landscape Association are still awaiting responses from a statewide survey before providing any preliminary estimates.

"It will take some weeks before we get a full picture of the immediate losses, but they will easily be in the tens of millions and probably in the hundreds of millions of dollars," Palma said. "The green industry will experience increased labor, fertilizer and other costs as part of the price of replacing the plant material that was lost during the winter storm."

Damages to fruit and nut orchards, vineyards, grazing crops and major commodity crops like corn and wheat are still being tallied.

“

This is heartbreaking, I guess. I mean, to see all this, see everything that you've been living with for 70 to 90 days and then right about harvest and you lose everything.

Brandon Laffere
Owner of L&L Farms

”



Heartbreak in South Texas

Gut-wrenching. The Texas citrus crop ruined. Watermelon plants wilted. Broccoli destroyed. Lettuce disintegrated. When Winter Storm Uri hit, it brought more than sub-freezing temperatures, ice and snow. It brought devastation, and Texas farmers and ranchers felt the chill.

“I've never experienced anything like this. I mean, this wiped us out completely,” Brandon Laffere, owner of L&L Farms, said.

Brandon's family has grown vegetables near Uvalde for three generations. This area of Southwest Texas is called the Winter Garden due to its normally mild winters, allowing for a salad bowl of crops to flourish. But this year, Uri ravaged those greens with an arctic blast. Lows in the teens. Days of continuous freezing temperatures and a white blanket of snow and ice. When the ground finally began to thaw, Brandon's hope for a bountiful harvest melted.

“This is heartbreaking, I guess. I mean, to see all this, see everything that you've been living with for 70 to 90 days and then right about harvest and you lose everything,” he said.

Farmers like Brandon were hit hard. Texas vegetable growers across the state took at least a \$150 million hit. Without any kind of crop insurance available to vegetable farmers, there isn't much to do but plow up the pieces and hope for next year.

About four hours south in the Rio Grande Valley, Mike Helle raises watermelons, honeydew melons, onions and more near Edinburg. His melons were just breaking through the soil when Uri arrived, bringing bone-chilling winds and low temperatures near 20 degrees. The young shoots simply couldn't withstand the bitter cold.

“That's heartbreaking. This field was beautiful. The crop had been in the ground. It was starting to take off and everything looked wonderful, like a picture,” he said. “It's pretty tough to go through that. You get knots in your stomach, just thinking what happened, could have happened, or what could you have done. We did all we could.”

Mike's son, also named Mike, has been farming with his dad for about eight years. This isn't the Rio Grande Valley's first freeze, but it is his first time to feel the frigid bite of a frozen crop.

“The first day, we had about 18 hours under freezing. The next day was about 15 hours under freezing. By Friday when the sun came out, we could really tell the damage,” Mike said. “It was time to start thinking about what we needed to do the following week to replant and start over.”

The two Mikes are going to try again. They were able to find some watermelons from Georgia to replant. They are hoping this time around Mother Nature isn't as bitter. Many of the workers helping them replant would normally be in the Texas citrus orchards, but the main thing growing on those branches now is uncertainly. This year's crop is ruined, and some of next year's is, too.

“We got down to 21 degrees for about four hours straight, and we spent a total of over 53 hours below freezing,” Dale Murden, president

of Texas Citrus Mutual, said. “The fruit that you see on the tree doesn’t like it much below 28. Trees don’t typically like it below 26. That night of the freeze, I’d cut open fruit and it was ice inside.”

Once it ices over inside, citrus fruit turns to mush.

“It’ll eventually fall to the ground, and it renders that basically useless.” he said. We’re trying to salvage what we can right now for juice, but it’ll all be on the ground before we can get around to get what’s remaining.”

Only about half of the grapefruits were already harvested. Almost all of the late oranges were still on the trees. The extent of the damage to the trees isn’t fully known yet. Branches will have to be cut back. Some trees may have to be replaced. It could take up to seven years for citrus growers to recover. Farmers like Dale are hoping customers stick with them.

“I might not be on the shelf for a couple of years, but remember that you liked Texas grapefruit and Texas oranges, and when we get back on the shelf, just support us,” Dale said.

For one chilling week, Winter Storm Uri held the Lone Star State in an icy embrace. One that will be etched in the memories of Texas growers for years to come. But farmers and ranchers will do what farmers and ranchers always do: Persevere. Moment by moment. Step by step. With a hope and determination that will never freeze.



Winter storm devastates Texas crops, livestock

In February, extreme cold weather devastated agriculture in the Lone Star State. The winter storm system stretched from the Texas Panhandle to the Rio Grande Valley, and from Far West Texas into East Texas, clutching every county of the Lone Star State in an icy embrace for several days. Temperatures were as low as -20 at the Palo Duro Reservoir in Hemphill County, with readings in the teens and lower 20s as far south as the Rio Grande Valley and negative readings as far south as Central Texas.

On the following pages, we bring you some of the stories of Texas farmers and ranchers who braved the bitter cold and deep freeze. We don't yet know the magnitude of what the storm will cost Texas farmers and ranchers, but we have seen stories of hard work, hope, compassion and neighbors helping neighbors. And the beating heart of Texas agriculture is the people.

**By Julie Tomascik
and Jennifer Whitlock**

Bone-chilling winds. A layer of ice, then snow topped with more ice. A white blanket covered Texas. It was something so beautiful, yet so dangerously devastating.

February's historic winter storm brought record-setting low temperatures to the Lone Star State, leaving farmers and ranchers racing to care for their livestock, crops and families.

For many, it was hours spent providing extra hay, feed and straw for bedding to keep animals warm. For others, it was monitoring fields and orchards. Harvesting what they were able and hoping, praying and working to save what they could, although knowing some crops would be a total loss.

They did much of this on very little sleep and oftentimes without electricity.

But it was a critical time. Critical just like farmers and ranchers. They answered the call to tend poultry and livestock at all hours of the day and night, lending a hand when needed.

Despite the physical and mental toll, farmers and ranchers kept going. Because it's just what they do. This winter storm showed America the true strength and unwavering dedication of Texas farmers and ranchers.

And it's one winter Texans, farmers and ranchers won't soon forget, even long after the snow has melted.

Chelsea Sage

At the very top of Texas, temperatures dropped. Fast. The cold settled in for over a week, bringing frigid weather to an area of the state that's used to snow and cold.

In Texline, Austin and Chelsea Sage watched the weather, like any farm and ranch family does. They saw the predicted temperatures. But nothing can truly prepare a Texan for cold like what they experienced. The low was -14, and the area spent a week at below-freezing temperatures.

"We're used to cold, but we're not used to it getting that cold for that long," Chelsea said. "But we do what we have to do—no matter the weather. It's just what farmers and ranchers do. No one ever said it would be easy, and it's definitely not easy when we face weather like this. But somehow, we find a way to stay strong. We get the job done, because we have to."

For the Sages, the job was chopping ice and feeding hay. Fortunately, their cows didn't start calving until the week after the storm.

"Compared to others up here and around the state, we were very fortunate with how we fared and how our livestock fared," she said. "We didn't lose any cattle. It could've been much worse for us, and it was for so many families."

They won't begin planting corn until mid-April, so the little moisture that the snow and ice brought was beneficial for the area that's been in drought for several months.

"Farmers and ranchers are made strong. This storm wasn't good for any of us, but somehow we will all make it. We have to," she said.

“Farmers and ranchers are made strong. This storm wasn't good for any of us, but somehow we will all make it. We have to.”

Chelsea Sage
Dallam County



Photo courtesy Chelsea Sage in Dallam County.



Photo courtesy Chelsea Sage in Dallam County.

“ It was a pretty exhausting and stressful week. If we had any less people helping us, I don’t know how we would have managed. ”

Kyle Humphrey, Hopkins County

Kyle Humphrey

Preparations began the week before the storm for Kyle Humphrey and his family on their dairy farm in East Texas. They hung tarps to help keep heat in the barns and stacked hay bales as a wind break. They put plywood along some fences, too.

The temperature kept dropping until it eventually reached -2 degrees, but it really felt like -12.

“That’s what my phone said, and it was cold. We tried to make sure nothing froze, and we could keep milking,” he said.

They had one delay on Monday. It took them about an hour to determine one of the sensors on the vacuum lines had ice on it. And the rolling blackouts could have spelled trouble for the dairy, but they had a tractor ready to run the generator just in case.

“The blackouts started at 2 a.m. on Monday. After we figured out what was going on, we started the tractor and the generator and ended up running it for 103 hours straight,” Humphrey said. “Our power did eventually come back on, but we still left the tractor and generator running just to be sure.”

In many of their pastures, they have water troughs that are plumbed from the underside. Without any exposed water lines, nothing froze and their cows in those pastures had access to water.

But in other pastures, they had to haul water or chop ice.

That wasn’t the only issue they faced, though. Icy roads meant milk trucks couldn’t make it to the dairy, and the Humphreys had to dump their milk. About 150,000 pounds, which is about 21,000 gallons of milk, never made it to its destination.

“I don’t know how to explain it. I’ve seen us dump milk for other reasons, but seeing it because of a snow storm was surreal,” he said.

They also lost a few of their beef and dairy cows due to the challenging weather.

“It was a pretty exhausting and stressful week. If we had any less people helping us, I don’t know how we would have managed,” he said. “I’m pretty thankful for how things went.”

They learned a lot, too.

“Next time, we’re going to be even more prepared. We’ll buy more heaters to have on hand,” he said. “We do plan to put in some more water troughs that are fed from the bottom side. That way, hopefully next time, we won’t have to haul as much water.”



Photo courtesy Kyle Humphrey in Hopkins County.



Photo courtesy Kyle Humphrey in Hopkins County.



Photo courtesy Bruce Wang in Cochran County.



Photo courtesy Bruce Wang in Cochran County.



Photo courtesy Kaylin Isbell in Williamson County.

“ We’re in a lot better shape than a lot of our fellow farmers. A lot of people lost everything they had,” he said. “We’re getting things harvested and out the door, and we realize just how fortunate we really are in this situation. ”

Brian King, Dimmitt County

Brian King

Brian King feels fortunate. The onion transplants he grows at Dixondale Farms in Dimmitt County mostly escaped damage.

When the weather forecasters began predicting an arctic blast, King and his crews started watering the plants thoroughly. Because plants that are well-watered are better able to withstand a freeze.

The Friday before the cold spell arrived, Dimmitt County also received a welcome half-inch of rainfall, giving the plants even more moisture. In another stroke of luck, the storm system dropped an inch of snow on top of the plants, insulating them from the freezing temperatures and helping keep the ground warmer underneath.

“We got down to 13 degrees with a wind chill of zero,” King, who is the production manager at Dixondale Farms, said. “Soil temperatures stayed about 40 degrees under the snow, so that helped us a lot. We haven’t experienced any weather like this since the late 1980s.”

One week after the icy blast, King was feeling pretty confident about the crop.

“I don’t think we’re going to lose more than 10 percent. We had a lot of frost damage on the top and leaves themselves,” he said. “Everything is fine, it’s just an appearance factor for our customers. Some of our plants’ leaves may not be that uniform dark green like they normally would be, but the plants are still hearty and healthy.”

King and his wife, Emily, have said many prayers for their neighbors, many of whom grow produce like spinach and cabbage.

“We’re in a lot better shape than a lot of our fellow farmers. A lot of people lost everything they had,” he said. “We’re getting things harvested and out the door, and we realize just how fortunate we really are in this situation.”



Photo courtesy Emily King in Dimmitt County.

Michael Skala

Although he's facing some losses in his oat fields grown for grazing, Michael Skala felt lucky to have escaped more damage to his crops and cattle.

"When the storm rolled in, it brought a layer of ice with it, so it iced over our wheat and then snow fell on it, basically creating an insulating layer. We have a little bit of leaf burn from the ice, but the entire week the wheat was pretty well protected from the cold weather," Skala, a Falls County farmer and rancher, said. "Now it's warmed up and the wheat has really taken off, and it's outgrowing that leaf burn pretty quick."

His grazing oats, however, didn't fare as well. They have more leaf burn, but Skala hopes to get another month of grazing from the oats to help get the cattle through the spring.

"Otherwise we will be haying really heavy and putting feeders out, which can get expensive in a hurry," he said.

Along with the coldest weather in recent memory, Winter Storm Uri brought a host of hardships to farmers and ranchers. It's an experience Skala hopes to never have again.

"Our infrastructure is not built for that type of weather. Buildings aren't built for it. Houses aren't insulated for it. Our power grid went down from all the ice, and it was pretty bad. Everybody was prepared for a few days, but nobody was prepared for 10 days of it," he said. "We were lucky we weren't watering any livestock using public utilities. We have tanks in all of our pastures, but I know people who were watering livestock, and if you were on a public system and watering livestock, you were hauling water out of tanks and wherever you could find to get water to them. It got pretty tough. Hopefully, it's a once-in-a-lifetime event that we won't ever see again."

David Alders

In Nacogdoches County, poultry grower David Alders said he was facing one of his worst nightmares amidst the brutally cold weather.

"We had a confluence of factors. Lack of power was a big one. At my farm, we lost power that Tuesday morning through Sunday evening and were running exclusively on generators to keep the water well, heaters, fans and computer systems going," he said. "It was hard not knowing if we had adequate fuel supplies."

The feed mill was also unable to operate, causing poultry farmers across the region to run out of feed.

"I had birds between four and five weeks old, and we had a real problem getting food to them. Starting on Monday, I went with a pretty severe rationing program where I just ran feed two or three times a day and didn't leave it on at all. Normally, it's free choice where they can eat as much as they want," Alders said. "On Tuesday, I ran completely out at one house and we had to carry feed by bucket from other houses to that one, which is no easy task to start with and then adding in the cold weather and loss of power...it was pretty miserable."

Alders ran completely out of feed on Thursday, and he felt helpless.

"If a boiler goes down in the feed mill, which is apparently what happened at one point last week, they're not able to produce the amount of feed we need. It took from Thursday until that next Tuesday at noon before I got any feed delivered. As growers, we have birds up to nine weeks of age, so when the power comes back on there's an incredible pent-up demand for all the feed mills can produce," he said. "They delivered 150,000 pounds, or three semi-truck loads, of feed to me. That's not an amount of feed you could buy from a feed store and haul back home in your pickup, even if the roads were passable."

The good news is Alders didn't have any chickens starve. There



Photo courtesy Michael Skala in Falls County.



Photo courtesy Michael Skala in Falls County.

was a decent supply of feed and insects in the bedding scattered on the floors for the chickens to scavenge, which is natural chicken feeding behavior. But the lack of normal rations most likely stunted their growth.

"I haven't heard yet whether we'll keep them back a few more days to give them time to reach their target weights or not, but that's a pretty likely scenario," he said.

High gas bills are another impact he'll soon face.

"This bad weather is going to severely impact my bottom line. I don't know what my gas bill is going to be, but it's probably three or four times what it would be normally because the heat never cut off for five or six days straight," he said. "We ran heat continuously for a solid seven days. That's an extreme gas usage. I'd estimate fuel losses will be in the range of five figures—\$10,000 or more probably."



Mike Meador received his chicks right before the cold weather set in. This is the inside of one of his barns. Photo courtesy Mike Meador in Nacogdoches County.

Mark Verstufyt

Once beautiful and green, rows of lettuce now sit wilted and brown in Mark Verstufyt's field in Bexar County. The lettuce, another crop damaged by the frigid temperatures and snow, was close to harvest.

Many vegetable and fruit farmers are facing a total loss of the last of their cold weather crops, which still had several weeks of production before the spring season set in.

Although the lettuce isn't salvageable, Verstufyt's cattle did make it through the storm.

"We never hauled so much hay," he said. "We fed cubes, had molasses tubs, fed square-baled peanut hay, which has a lot of protein. But when it gets that cold for that many hours and it's wet, it's hard on the animals, hard on the crops."

He can't remember it being this bad since 1985 when they had 13 inches of snow.

They suffered losses, but Verstufyt is still optimistic.

"We have our health, and we're still here. That's the main thing," he said. "Everyone had issues across the state, but somehow, it'll all work out in the end."

And when the snow melted, it added a little more moisture to the fields, a blessing with planting season now underway.

"When the snow finally melted, it didn't run out of the field. So, that helps. We have more moisture to help with planting," he said.

The silver lining to a disastrous week for Texas agriculture.



Photo courtesy Casey Verstufyt in Bexar County.

Melody Kneupper

"The first night was probably the worst," Melody Kneupper said.

She and her husband, Cody, raise sheep, goats and cattle in Kendall County.

That first night they were worried about their livestock and what the rest of the week would bring. How cold would it get? Did they do enough to prepare? Could they get everything done each day?

With determination and faith, they did.

"We were feeding our cows, sheep and goats every other day before it snowed, because we knew our livestock needed to be warm and in as good of shape as possible," she said.

Their efforts proved beneficial. Their teamwork helped them complete the chores each day, and all their livestock made it through the storm and below-freezing temperatures.

The windy and hilly roads of the Hill Country proved difficult to navigate when covered with snow and ice, but the Kneppers braved the treacherous conditions to care for their livestock. And those that belong to their neighbors, too.

"We had to help out our neighbors. We have one who lives in Austin, and he has goats, cattle and sheep," she said. "So, we were feeding for him, because there was no way he could make it from Austin."

That's just what ranchers and Texans do. They help each other.



Photo courtesy Melody Kneupper in Kendall County.

Weathering the storm

The snow is melted, but the memories and experiences are still fresh.

While the extent of Winter Storm Uri's damage to Texas won't be known for several months, or maybe even years, farmers and ranchers are moving forward. One calf, one lamb, one seed at a time.

There are many stories of resilience, compassion and devastation across the Lone Star State. We have more coverage of Winter Storm Uri on our website at texasfarmbureau.org. Additional information about disaster assistance programs can be found at texasfarmbureau.org/winter-storm-resources.



Photo courtesy Erika Archie in Coryell County.




Texas Farm Bureau launches Student Success Series

To help students put together the pieces of the leadership puzzle, Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) launched three new summer programs and updated one program through what is now called the Student Success Series.

“Our students are our future, and we can help them put together the pieces that make up a successful leader through our Student Success Series,” Mia Balko, TFB director of Youth Outreach, said. “Students will learn more about themselves, grow leadership skills, develop a better understanding of advocacy and learn more about Farm Bureau. They will also connect and network with industry experts and take home Farm Bureau swag.”

The Student Success Series features both in-person and virtual experiences. The programs are open to students in eighth grade through seniors in high school.



JUMPSTART

Students entering eighth grade in August 2021 are eligible to participate in the Jumpstart virtual program. Students participating in this program become familiar with TFB and learn information about Texas agriculture. They will also hear from students who previously participated in TFB’s youth programs, such as the Youth Leadership Conference and the Free Enterprise Speech Contest. Participants will also become familiar with basic leadership skills that will prove beneficial while in school and on the job.

Modules for this free event will be available June 1-30.




ACTIVATE

Students entering their freshmen year in August 2021 are eligible to participate in the Activate virtual experience.

Participants will be challenged to create a plan for leaving a lasting legacy that can inspire others. They will explore career opportunities and trends, and they will learn how to be engaged in personal and professional etiquette. A TFB virtual scavenger hunt also will be part of the activities.

Modules for the free event will be available June 1-30.



ENGAGE

Students who will be sophomores in August 2021 are eligible for the Engage experience. This face-to-face event will take place in each of the 13 TFB districts this summer. Specific information on dates and locations will be made available on the Student Success Series web page.

Students participating in this program will continue to learn more about TFB, become familiar with entrepreneurship by engaging community leaders in discussions and learn the importance of social media and how to have an engaging presence. Other activities include learning about Texas and its rich history.

This event will have a \$100 registration fee that will be covered by the county Farm Bureau.

Students who complete the Engage conference will be eligible for a new presentation-style contest and its associated scholarships.



THRIVE

Formerly known as the Youth Leadership Conference, Thrive is for students who will be juniors or seniors in August 2021.

In this virtual event, students will dive into public speaking, the free enterprise system and the Constitution. They will hear from a motivational speaker on leadership topics and learn more about using reputable sources for advocacy efforts on social media.

Students will also participate in a virtual TFB scavenger hunt.

Modules for this free event will be available July 1-31.

Students who complete the Thrive conference will have taken the first qualifying step to participate in the Free Enterprise Speech Contest and be eligible for its associated scholarships.

Additional Details

Registration for the Student Success Series programs closes May 5. All students will be eligible for prizes for completing the modules, which will be hosted via Google classroom for the virtual experiences.

For more information and to register for the Student Success Series, visit texasfarmbureau.org/student-success-series.



THIS IS FARM BUREAU

Book helps children learn about dairy farming

At a time when consumers of all ages are growing in curiosity about where their food comes from, a new children's accurate ag book introduces readers to the round-the-clock work and ingenuity of dairy farming. *Tales of the Dairy Godmother: Chuck's Ice Cream Wish* is now available from Feeding Minds Press, the American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture's publishing venture.

"*Chuck's Ice Cream Wish* is a delightful and educational story that we hope will engage young readers and spark curiosity about where their food comes from," Daniel Meloy, executive director of the Foundation said. "That's our goal with every resource the Foundation provides, and we're excited to add this story to the

growing library of books that tell the story of modern agriculture."

In this "dairy tale," a young boy named Chuck wishes for all the ice cream he can eat, prompting his "Dairy Godmother" to show up to grant his wish with a dairy farm, where he gets a firsthand look at all the hard work and care that goes into producing his favorite treat.

Just like young Chuck, readers can learn more about the real work of a dairy farm, and the story doesn't stop on the last page. The Foundation also released a companion video to introduce readers to a real dairy farmer named Chuck, former Maryland Farm Bureau President and "ice cream farmer," Chuck Fry.

"Whether the Dairy Godmother



takes you on your first farm visit or you are well acquainted with the wonders of dairy farming, we invite you to dig in and sprinkle a little farm-grown joy around," Meloy said.

Chuck's Ice Cream Wish is the

second title from Feeding Minds Press, which published *Right This Very Minute* in January 2019. The book is available for purchase directly from [Feeding Minds Press](https://www.feedingmindspress.com), as well as on Amazon and Barnes & Noble online.

Texas Farm Bureau unveils Helping Hands program

A record-breaking winter storm dealt yet another blow to Texans who are still reeling from effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Resources are stretched thin, and the list of people and organizations who need assistance is long.

In the past year, Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) sponsored two co-op contribution programs, Feeding Texas and Feeding the Need, to help county Farm Bureaus provide relief for hungry Texans at a local level.

Through those efforts, TFB assisted 161 county Farm Bureaus in contributing \$560,000 in much-needed aid.

But the recent winter storm has brought additional challenges to many Texans. And TFB is ready to help again.

The TFB board of directors authorized the Texas Farm Bureau Helping Hands Program to meet a variety of needs in communities across the state.

"We continue to believe that county Farm Bureaus are best

suited to determine needs in their communities and facilitate the distribution of funds at a local level," TFB President Russell Boening said. "This unprecedented weather brought a whole new host of hardships to an already-vulnerable population, many of whom were still struggling with loss of employment or other issues related to the pandemic."

Through the Helping Hands Program, TFB will provide a 2-to-1 match for county Farm Bureau contributions up to \$750 for any qualified donation. Entities that provide food and shelter or meet other basic needs should be a priority, as well as other non-profits that were affected by this historic weather event.

Photo courtesy Katy Darden



This program will be in effect for expenditures incurred from Feb. 15 through April 30, or until budgeted funds are exhausted.

"TFB considers itself one big family, and like any family would do in a time of need, we're reaching out to our brothers and sisters

to lend a helping hand," Boening said. "Neighbor to neighbor, friend to friend, we're all in this together, and that's how we will get through it."

[Contact your local county Farm Bureau office for more information.](#)

Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network signs 100th affiliate station

The Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network signed its 100th radio station, reaching the largest number of affiliates in the network's 19-year history.

"We are thankful to the more than 100 radio stations that affiliate with us to bring the latest agricultural and rural news to their communities," Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network Manager Carey Martin said. "It's a huge milestone for us, and we're overjoyed in reaching it. It's a great opportunity to share the stories of Texas farmers and ranchers who grow our food, fiber and fuel."

The network specializes in programming for the agricultural audience, covering state legislative and regulatory issues, crop and livestock conditions, market information and analysis and national policy issues from Washington, D.C.

According to the 2019 AMR Farm Radio Listening Study, the

Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network had the largest farm and ranch listening audience in Texas.

"That audience is much bigger now, thanks to the addition of more than 40 radio stations in the last year," Martin said.

A new revenue-sharing model has played a big role in the recent growth. The network shares its advertising revenue with the radio stations that air Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network programming.

"The more programs they air, the more revenue potential they have," Martin said. "Stations find that very attractive, especially when the ongoing pandemic has cut sharply into local radio advertising."

The network has the largest and most-experienced farm news team in Texas, anchored by Martin, Tom Nicolette and Jessica Domel. New reporter additions have strengthened the programming lineup, including Texas

Panhandle reporter James Hunt and livestock auction market reporter Larry Marble.

"James Hunt has been a fixture in the Panhandle as a farm broadcaster and radio talk show host for decades, and Larry Marble has been reporting on Texas livestock auctions for over 25 years," Martin said. "We're happy to add that extensive knowledge and experience to our team."

The network also recently launched a daily farm news podcast, Texas Ag Today. Several radio stations air the podcast as a long-form morning farm and ranch news program.

Two-thirds of the network's affiliated radio stations air all the programs offered.

"It's a great relationship that allows us to support agricultural communities across Texas by providing the news and market information that they may not hear otherwise," Martin said. "We can also support locally owned,

small-town radio stations by sharing our advertising revenue, helping them to stay on the air and provide a valuable service to their communities."

The network also launched two new programs.

Around the Caprock is a daily show that shares the stories of farming and ranching in the Texas High Plains.

Walking the Pens is a daily two-minute show that includes coverage of livestock auction results from across the state with market trends on cattle, sheep and goats.

The Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network has rated highest for Texas farmer and rancher all-day listening since 2011, according to the AMR Farm Radio Listening Study for counties surveyed in Texas.

You can also listen to programs aired by the Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network on texasfarmbureau.org/radio.



Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network

No. 1 Agriculture News Network in Texas.

The stories that matter. The network you trust. Thank you for making the Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network the number one and most listened to agricultural news radio network in Texas.

Farmer Radio Listening Study for all Texas counties surveyed.

Abilene	96.1 FM	KORQ	Commerce	105.9 FM	KGVL	Hondo	1460 AM	KCWM	Quanah	1150 AM	KOLJ
Amarillo	103.9 FM	KBZD HD3	Corpus Christi	99.1 FM	KRYS	Kenedy	92.1 FM	KCAF	Quanah	100.7 FM	KOLJ
Austwell	105.9 FM	KIBQ	Corsicana	1340 AM	KAND	La Grange	104.9 FM	KBUK	Ranger	98.5 FM	KWBY
Ballinger	1400 AM	KRUN	Crockett	1290 AM	KIVY	La Grange	1570 AM	KVLG	Reno	98.9 FM	KLOW
Beeville	1490 AM	KIBL	Crockett	102.9 FM	KIVY	Lamesa	690 AM	KPET	Rockdale	98.5 FM	KRXT
Beeville	97.1 FM	KIBL	Crockett	105.5 FM	KIVY	Lamesa	105.1 FM	KPET	San Antonio	680 AM	KKYX
Big Spring	1490 AM	KBST	Crockett	92.7 FM	KIVY	Levelland	1230 AM	KLVT	San Antonio	104.9 FM	KKYX
Big Spring	103.9 FM	KBST	Dalhart	1240 AM	KXIT	Lubbock	94.1 FM	KSSL	Seguin	1580 AM	KWED
Boerne	1500 AM	KBRN	Dalhart	94.5 FM	KXIT	Madisonville	1220 AM	KMVL	Seymour	1230 AM	KSEY
Boerne	103.9 FM	KBRN	Detroit	104.3 FM	KFYN	Madisonville	98.9 FM	KMVL	Seymour	94.3 FM	KSEY
Bonham	1420 AM	KFYN	Dilley	95.3 FM	KVWG	Madisonville	102.7 FM	KMVL	Shamrock	92.9 FM	KSNZ
Bonham	95.7 FM	KFYN	Dimmitt	1470 AM	KDHN	Madisonville	100.5 FM	KMVL	Smiley	103.9 FM	KBQQ
Brady	1490 AM	KNEL	Dumas	800 AM	KDDD	Mansfield LA	92.7 FM	KJVC	Spearman	98.3 FM	KXDJ
Brady	95.3 FM	KNEL	Eastland	97.7 FM	KATX	Marshall	103.9 FM	KMHT	Sterling City	100.5 FM	KSCK
Breckenridge	1430 AM	KROO	El Campo	1390 AM	KULP	Mason	102.5 FM	KHLB	Stephenville	93.1 FM	KSTV
Cameron	105.1 FM	KMIL	El Campo	106.7 FM	KULP	Memphis	105.3 FM	KLSR	Sulphur Springs	107.1 FM	KRVA
Canadian	102.9 FM	KSNZ	Elk City, OK	98.9 FM	KSNZ	Meyersville	100.1 FM	KQBQ	Sulphur Springs	1230 AM	KSST
Canton	1510 AM	KWJB	Graham	1330 AM	KSWA	Pampa	96.3 FM	KSNZ	Sweetwater	1240 AM	KXOX
Canton	95.1 FM	KWJB	Greenville	1400 AM	KGVL	Paris	1490 AM	KPLT	Sweetwater	96.7 FM	KXOX
Carthage	104.3 FM	KGAS	Greenville	93.5 FM	KIKT	Paris	96.3 FM	KPLT	Temple	1400 AM	KTEM
Center	930 AM	KDET	Haskell	97.1 FM	KVRP	Paris	93.9 FM	KOYN	Tyler	104.1 FM	KKUS
Childress	96.1 FM	KCTX	Hebbronville	104.3 FM	KUFA	Pearsall	1280 AM	KMFR	Vernon	101.7 FM	KOLJ
Christine	96.9 FM	KWYU	Henderson	1470 AM	KWRD	Pearsall	94.7 FM	KMFR	Victoria	107.9 FM	KIXS
Clarendon	99.3 FM	KEFH	Hereford	860 AM	KPAN	Perryton	93.7 FM	KEYE	Waco	1050 AM	KEKR
Comanche	94.3 FM	KYOX	Hereford	106.3 FM	KPAN	Perryton	1400 AM	KEYE	Waco	99.3 FM	KEKR
Comanche	1550 AM	KCOM	Hillsboro	1560 AM	KHBR	Post	107.3 FM	KSSL	Wichita Falls	97.5 FM	KXXN
Comanche	100.1 FM	KCOM									



MYSTERY SEED SHIPMENTS SOLVED

BUT BEWARE WHEN BUYING SEEDS ONLINE

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

Many home gardeners are busy planning this year's garden, circling favorites in seed catalogs and bookmarking webpages on the internet to order later.

But buyer beware. Not all seeds sold online are safe for import into the United States.

[Last year's puzzling flood of mystery seed packages](#) from foreign countries had the unintended effect of reminding Americans that people and businesses which buy or sell plants and seeds for planting from another country through an e-commerce site must comply with all applicable U.S. import requirements.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) [says](#) sellers must obtain an import permit from APHIS and a phytosanitary certificate from the national plant protection


organization of the country of origin, as well as properly label plants and seeds to be eligible to sell them in the U.S. Those who do not do so are breaking the law.

Why is it so important?

Because unregulated plants and seeds can pose a significant risk to American agriculture. Insect pests and pathogens could spell disaster for thousands of farmers and ranchers, all from the simple act of planting a seed.

Some plants are even prohibited. Parasitic plants can overpower native species, devastating wildlife habitats and ecological systems. Noxious weeds like [giant salvinia](#) are fast-growing and hard to control.

To learn more about buyer responsibilities, required documents and plants and seeds with additional requirements as well as to view a list of prohibited plants and seeds, visit APHIS [online](#).



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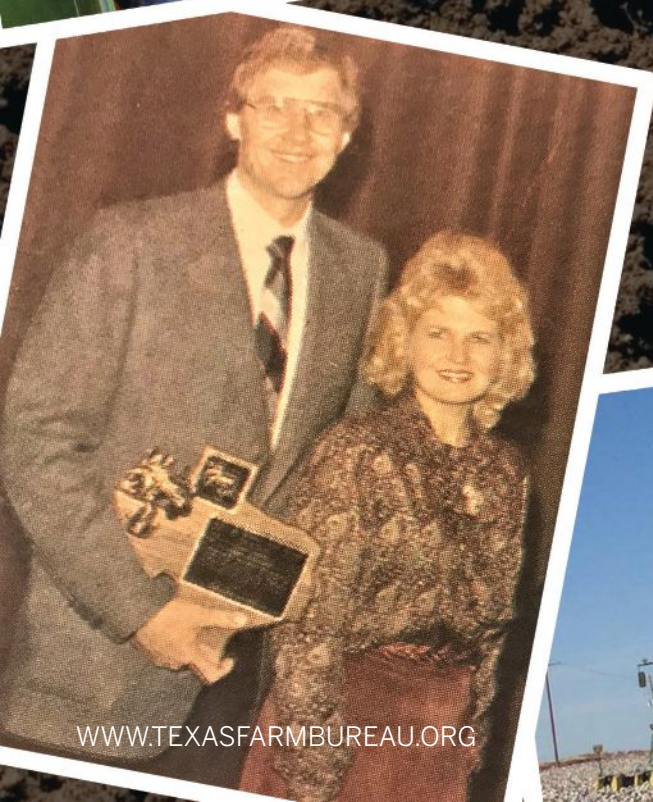
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Dan Smith ends 46-year farming career

“With all the ups and downs, there are still far more ups than there are downs. It truly is the greatest lifestyle.”

Dan Smith



By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

For Dan Smith, farming isn't just a career. It's a lifestyle he's enjoyed since he was born on the Texas South Plains. One that supported his growing family and provided him with some of the highest highs and the lowest lows.

But most of all, he said, farming was just in his blood.

"I grew up on the family farm, and my wife, Reeda Cay, grew on a farm about six miles away. We've lived in Lockney all our lives except the years we were in school at Texas Tech," he said. "We graduated college, came back, and we live in the house that I grew up in. This house was built by my grandfather, passed down to my parents, and then we raised our kids here."

The couple always knew they would return to their hometown after graduation. Dan was so eager to get back to farming in Floyd County, he tried to move back home at the end of his first semester of college. But his father wanted Dan to finish college first.

"After my first semester in college, I came home for Christmas and brought everything with me," Dan recalled. "My father said, 'Let's get something straight. I'm not going to help you unless you bring me a college degree.' He was going to Texas Tech when World War II broke out, and he went into the service. But he never did go back after the war. He just said, 'I didn't get to finish college. So, if you want to come back and farm, you finish school first.'"

During his junior year of college, 140 acres came up for rent around Christmas. Dan's dad told him it was a little earlier than their original agreement, but the land was a good deal.

At the age of 20, Dan started farming. He drove back and forth from Lubbock after school and on the weekends to grow his crops.

Nearly half a century of farming

After graduating at the age of 23, Dan and Reeda Cay were officially farming full time.

Over the last four decades, the couple saw many changes in agriculture. Changes brought more technology to agriculture and made farming even more efficient.

"My dad saw a lot of advances, but I don't think any generation saw the technology advance like I did," he said. "The technology really cut down on labor and increased productivity. Farms could get bigger and you could grow more cotton with less labor. We had to. We had to keep getting bigger and bigger to stay in business."

From that first 140-acre rented farm to farming about 7,000 acres at his biggest point, Dan feels like he's seen it all.

"In farming, I've been on top of the world, and I've been at the bottom of it too many times. In most professions, you work hard, you do your best, you do a great job, and you advance. Your salary improves. Your lifestyle gets better. The standard of living goes up. But in farming, you can be the best farmer possible and handle all your finances

the best you can, and you can still lose your shirt. And it's through no fault of your own," he said. "Weather and markets, especially when they both team up together, that's when it can really, really get you. You don't always have this dependable, steady, guaranteed income source, even though you're doing a great job."

Reflecting on his farming career, Dan said it's still the best choice he could have ever made for himself and his family.

"With all the ups and downs, there are still far more ups than there are downs. It truly is the greatest lifestyle. When and you have a bumper crop, there's just no better feeling," he said. "If I had it to do all over again, I'd still do it. I'd like to know everything I know now and go back and redo it, of course. I'd know when to sell and when not to. It's the greatest life but also the toughest. You really have to experience it to understand it. I think's the best thing to say about life on the farm or ranch."

Texas Farm Bureau involvement

Early on, his farming career took an unexpected turn when a Floyd County Farm Bureau board member asked him to consider running for the board. This led to a lifetime of other agricultural experiences.

Dan and Reeda Cay were appointed to the Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) Young Farmer & Rancher (YF&R) Advisory Committee in 1984, and Dan was elected District 2 state director in 2012. He's seen a lot of changes at TFB throughout the years, but he said one thing has never changed: agricultural advocacy led by passionate people.

"Texas Farm Bureau really is a grassroots organization run by the members. We say that, because it's true. The resolutions every year at the state convention are very important because that's the road map Farm Bureau's going to follow that year," he said. "Texas Farm Bureau has certainly changed with agriculture as agriculture has changed. If you take the Farm Bureau of the '70s and the Farm Bureau we have now, the core of it's the same, but we have changed as times have changed, and it's always been for the better."

Life after retirement

Now, he's retired. He sold most of his equipment in an auction in February, except for a few older tractors. But he couldn't quite give up farming forever. A love of the land is rooted in his soul, so Dan kept 900 dryland acres to farm to "stay busy."

And he wants his grandchildren to have farm experiences, too.

"My daughters, Tikka and Michelle, both live in cities, but they do care about the farm. They always want to know what's going on, and the grandkids want to ride the tractor," he said. "I did keep a couple of tractors, so I can still take them out when they come visit. They made it real clear we better still be able to take tractor rides."



TEXAS AGRICULTURE STATS



Agriculture employs
1 out of every 7
working Texans



The economic impact
of the Texas food and
fiber sector totals about

**\$100
BILLION**

Texas has more farms than any state:

248,416

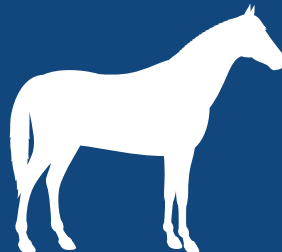


The average size
of a Texas farm
is **511**
acres



Texans ranks first in the nation for:

- number of cattle and calves
- cotton
- sheep
- goats
- hay
- horses
- mohair



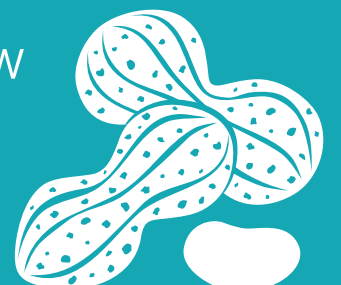
252,273
male
farmers



156,233
female
farmers

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Planting cotton with Colin Chopelas

In San Patricio County, Colin Chopelas is planting seeds in his field. The tiny seeds will grow into plants that produce the fiber we all know—cotton.

He's a fifth-generation farmer. Agriculture is in his roots.

"Farming is a great career, great way of life. It's obviously extremely difficult at times. A lot of factors you can't control, but it's certainly extreme-

ly rewarding. You get to work with your hands every day. You get to work outside. You get to see something that you put the effort and the time into and get to reap the rewards at the end of the day," he said. "There are a lot of variables that can change with the weather or the market, or just bad luck. But for the most part, it's something you really visually get to see the accomplishments you've made year in and year out."

Ride along with Colin, and watch this cotton crop get its start.

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the **#1**
cotton
growing state



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- **215** pairs of jeans
- **249** bed sheets
- **690** terry bath towels
- **1,217** men's t-shirts
- **1,256** pillowcases
- **4,321** mid-calf socks

And more!

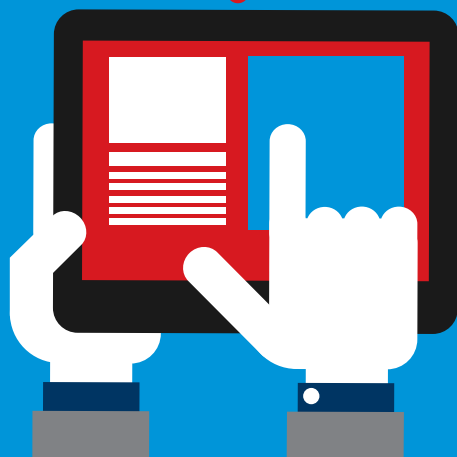


One acre of land can produce about
821 lbs.
of cotton



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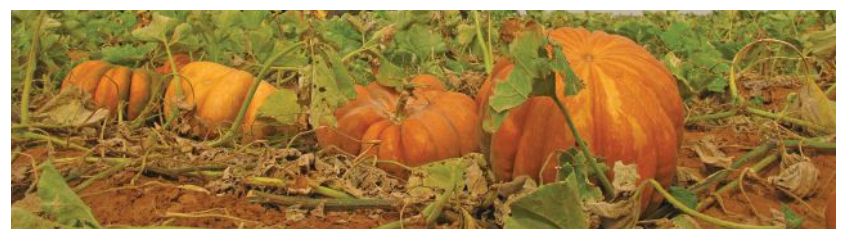
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The people and places of the Lone Star State



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TEXAS IS blooming

Hallelujah! Spring has sprung. Finally.

Texas parks and roadsides are sure to be alive with color in the coming weeks. Some already are! And bluebonnet photos are a family tradition for many.

But there are a few things to keep in mind as you snap those photos.

In Texas, private property means private. Don't cross the fence. Don't park in someone's driveway. Put simply, don't trespass. That's not the Texan way.

Be safe! Wildflower season means plenty of traffic on the roads, so always pay attention to your surroundings. Stopping on

the side of the road can impede traffic, and there's always a risk of someone losing control of their vehicle and running off the road. Be smart and avoid this danger. No photo is worth risking your life or your loved ones' lives!

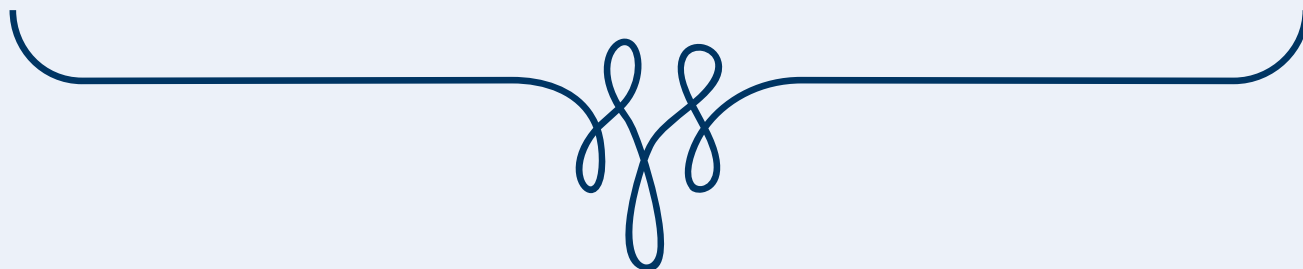
Check the area before setting up for photos. Wildflowers are perfect ground cover for animals of all kinds, including snakes, insects and the occasional small vermin. Just because you don't see them at first glance doesn't mean they're not around.

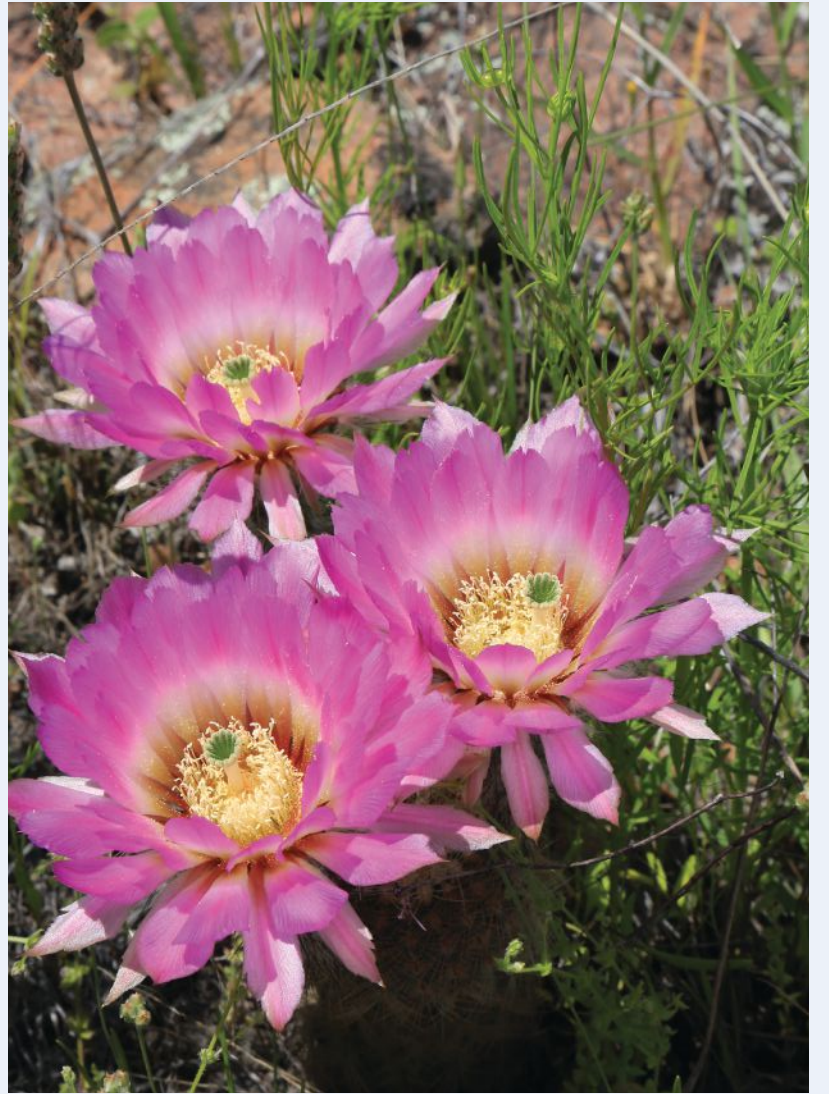
You don't have to be a professional photographer to get the shot! Remember to pay attention to lighting and composition. Check for fence posts, power lines

and other objects in the background of the photo. The harsh Texas sunlight can be a challenge with photographs. Sometimes you'll need to adjust your subject and angles to get the best shot with the right lighting and composition.

Whether you're using your phone or camera, anyone can take good photos. It just takes a little bit of thought and some practice.

Texas is blooming right now. From wildflowers to crops emerging from the ground, the Lone Star State is coming alive again this spring. Take a road trip and enjoy all that our beautiful state has to offer.





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