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May 7, 2021

Texas Agriculture

Published by Texas Farm Bureau for commercial farmers and ranchers



Saddled and ready

Michelle Tidwell takes the reins of her future

Pages 16-17

Texas farmers, ranchers at the forefront of climate-smart farming

Sustainable. Climate-smart farming. Those aren't new terms for agriculture, but they're popular among consumers and businesses.

For you and I, the ones who work the land, it means doing more with less. We're putting scientific solutions, technology and innovation to work on our farms and ranches. We're protecting our land, air and water. Just like we've always done.

A lot of people point at agriculture as a big contributor of greenhouse gas emissions. It's simply not true.

New data reveals U.S. agriculture contributes around 10% to overall greenhouse gas emissions by economic sector. That share drops to -2% when additional carbon absorbing practices are factored in.

Farmers and ranchers are also taking active steps to make their footprint even smaller. For example, farmers are converting waste into energy, and they are participating in conservation programs, which preserve green spaces (like grasslands, forests and wetlands) that absorb greenhouse gases.

More than 140 million acres of

U.S. farmland are used for conservation efforts and wildlife habitats. That land area is equal to the states of California and New York combined.



By Russell Boening
President

Livestock emissions are a frequent target. But science confirms livestock emissions continue to make up less than 4% of overall greenhouse gasses by economic sector. Meanwhile, U.S. farmers and ranchers have increased production while decreasing per-unit emissions.

In the past 30 years, dairy and milk production has increased 48%, while per-unit emissions for dairy have declined by almost 26%. Beef production has increased 18%, while per-unit emissions have fallen more than 8%. Pork production has increased 80%, while per-unit emissions have fallen nearly 20%.

Doing more with less is a staple for agriculture. Over the last 70 years, U.S. farms have nearly tripled in production while the amount of resources used has remained rather stable. Compared to 1990, farmers would have needed almost 100 million additional acres to harvest the same amount of corn, cotton, rice,

soybeans and wheat they produced in 2018.

Sustainability is more than a popular buzzword. It's an everyday reality that Texas farmers and ranchers, like you and me, work hard to achieve.

And sustainability cannot be achieved without profitability.

Agriculture leads the charge in sustainability with farmer and rancher innovation, technology and common sense to do more with less. Today, tomorrow and for years to come, farmers and ranchers will continue to adapt, grow and cultivate a sustainable future.

Farmers Doing More With Less

Nearly 100 million more acres needed in 1990

to match 2018 production



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Gary Joiner
Publisher

Carey D. Martin
TFB Radio Network Manager

Cindy Wennin
Graphic Designer

Julie Tomascik
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Bull reproductive soundness may be affected by frostbite

In the wake of Winter Storm Uri, ranchers should consider conducting breeding soundness exams (BSEs) on bulls to determine if those animals were affected by frostbite.

“While always a good practice, conducting a BSE this year is probably more important than ever in the recent past,” Dr. Jason Smith, a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension beef cattle specialist in Amarillo, said.

That’s because bulls with frostbitten reproductive organs may contribute to delayed breeding seasons, lower conception rates and lighter calf weaning rates. Even without observable injury, low sperm count and quality may also occur.

A pre-breeding BSE is the sole method of objectively evaluating bulls prior to turning them out, Smith added.

Early reports indicate higher-than-usual rates of BSE failure and deferment for retesting in bulls with visible signs of frostbite.

The damage is probably from excessive testicular heating as a response to frostbite, Smith said. Similar instances of epididymis injury can also occur in the hot summer months from extreme heat stress.

“We also preliminarily expect younger bulls to have been more resilient to the extreme cold, as they



have a greater ability to raise their testes to regulate scrotal temperature and prevent frostbite. However, we do not yet have the objective data to support that notion,” Smith said.

This year, ranchers should request their veterinarian conduct complete BSEs, including Trichomoniasis testing, sperm motility and morphology and physical defects, according to AgriLife Beef Cattle Specialist Dr. Ron Gill.

Even in years without the extreme stress of an Arctic blast, Gill noted a BSE failure rate of 15-20 percent, or about one out of every five bulls, is average.

“A key takeaway from this is to not panic and not immediately cull all bulls that fail a BSE or are deferred for re-test,” Gill said. “Once

results are known on the initial tests, plans can be made to locate additional sires if needed, or a plan can be developed to rotate sires in and out during the breeding season.”

It’s important to complete BSEs so ranchers don’t lose out on valuable profits through the use of a non-breeding or low-performing bull.

“This extreme weather event is one of many reasons why working with your veterinarian to conduct a pre-breeding BSE on all bulls is always advised, regardless of past performance,” Smith said. “This is also true for recently purchased bulls that underwent a BSE prior to the winter storm. For producers who do not routinely conduct pre-breeding BSEs, this would certainly be the year to start, and to start early.”

Lone Star Land Steward Awards to be hosted online

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department will once again recognize and honor private landowners for their accomplishments in habitat management and wildlife conservation through the Lone Star Land Steward Awards.

This year’s event will be hosted virtually on May 27.

You can watch the online event by visiting [www.tpwd.texas.gov/landwater/land/private/lone_star](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov/landwater/land/private/lone_star_land_steward)

[land_steward](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov/landwater/land/private/lone_star_land_steward).

Lone Star Land Steward Awards recognizes private landowners in Texas for their exemplary contributions to land, water and wildlife stewardship.

With 95% of the land in Texas under private ownership, the conservation and stewardship efforts of landowners are of vital importance to all Texans. The agency believes that celebrating the proud legacy, culture

and heritage of stewardship in the state is of equal importance.

Launched in 1996, the Lone Star Land Steward Awards are part of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department’s Private Lands Program. The awards program is designed to educate landowners and the public and to encourage participation in habitat conservation.

Texas Farm Bureau is a sponsor of the event.

FCC encourages public to measure broadband speeds

As part of the Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC) Broadband Data Collection effort to gather comprehensive data on broadband availability across the United States, the agency is encouraging the public to download the FCC’s Speed Test app.

The app is currently used to collect speed test data as part of the FCC’s Measuring Broadband America program.

The app provides a way for consumers to test the performance of their mobile and in-home broadband networks. In addition to showing network performance test results to the user, the app provides the test results to the FCC while protecting the privacy and confidentiality of program volunteers.

“To close the gap between digital haves and have nots, we are working to build a comprehensive, user-friendly dataset on broadband availability. Expanding the base of consumers who use the FCC Speed Test app will enable us to provide improved coverage information to the public and add to the measurement tools we’re developing to show where broadband is truly available throughout the United States,” said Acting Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel.

The network coverage and performance information gathered from the Speed Test data will help to inform the FCC’s efforts to collect more accurate and granular broadband deployment data.

More information about the app is available on the FCC website at www.fcc.gov.

The FCC Speed Test App is available in the Google Play Store for Android devices and in the Apple App Store for iOS devices.

TFB announces 2021 scholarship recipients

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) announced the organization's 2021 scholarship recipients, awarding \$199,500 to graduating high school seniors and enrolled college students this spring.

"These scholarships from Texas Farm Bureau help students pursue educational opportunities and puts them on the path to finding a career they are passionate about," said Mia Balko, TFB associate director of Organization, Youth Outreach. "We are proud to invest in their future and the future of Texas."

Thirteen graduating seniors were awarded Young Farmer & Rancher scholarships. One student received the Dick Mitchell Memorial Scholarship, and 13 seniors were awarded district memorial and honorary scholarships.

An additional 39 high school seniors received district scholarships.

Enrolled college students also received financial assistance from TFB.

Three Young Farmer & Rancher Enrolled College Student scholarships were awarded, and four additional college students received the Student Teaching Award Scholarship, which will assist recipients with expenses associated with off-campus student teaching.

The \$20,000 S.M. True Jr. Agricultural Scholar Award winner will be announced later this month.

TFB also awards \$25,000 to high school students through FCCLA, Texas 4-H and Texas FFA, as well as \$1,500 through the Texas Rural Education Association Scholarship.

TFB's Free Enterprise Speech Contest winners were awarded \$27,500 in scholarships, and \$35,000 was made available to students through Texas State Technical College.

To view the list of winners, visit texasfarmbureau.org/youth/youth-opportunities.

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Digital tool links imagery and data to aid decisions

K.C. Windham got a new and different picture of his Clyde, Texas, ranch when he enrolled in LANDVisor™ advanced brush management.

The ranch has been in his family for four generations, and he has seen it all from horseback since he was big enough to ride. But LANDVisor gave him a detailed new picture — interactive digital maps with data — identifying soil types, key plant species, their density, current and potential grass production and where he'd get the most return from his investment.

But help with planning is only half of what the new technology offers. Mesquite is notoriously difficult to kill. A critical element in successful control is timing the spray application when the mesquite is most susceptible.

LANDVisor monitors the health of the mesquite foliage, its growth stage and other environmental factors. That information determines when the mesquite is ready to spray.

"With this program, you don't have to guess," Windham says. "If you have to budget for brush control, this really helps you out."

For more information, visit LANDVisor.Corteva.com.

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Managed Lands Deer Program enrollment now open

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

Enrollment for the 2021-22 hunting season is open for the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD) Managed Lands Deer Program (MLDP).

The voluntary program is intended to support sound management and stewardship of native wildlife and wildlife habitats on privately-owned Texas lands. It's a mutually beneficial arrangement for the landowners, said Alan Cain, TPWD White-tailed Deer Program leader.

"As a participant in the program, landowners enjoy the benefits of an extended deer hunting season and, in some cases, enhanced or customized bag limits specific to that particular property," he said. "But for the department, it gives us access and opportunity to work with landowners across the state on a large scale. We're able to monitor deer harvest, which is an important aspect of habitat and management and conservation. Too many deer on the landscape can cause impacts to native vegetation, which impacts habitat for other wildlife whether that be wild turkey, quail, Texas horned lizards or songbirds. So, keeping deer numbers in check works to the good of everything."

New this year are enrollment fees for landowners, which Cain said will be used to hire additional biologists to support the program. He noted the fees became necessary after a substantial increase in program participation over the past 20 years.

"Back when MLDP started, we had about 80 biologists working with the program and about 800 properties enrolled. Fast-forward to today, and we had the same number of biologists but around 12,000 enrollments," he said. "We were at the point where we weren't providing the level of service we needed to landowners, as well as to be able to accomplish everything else our staff needed to do. So, we had to find a way to provide additional funding to support new staff to keep providing the same level of service and technical guidance our landowners need."



The fees vary based upon the option selected at enrollment and how many properties the landowner enrolls.

Landowners may choose one of two options: conservation or harvest.

The harvest option is what Cain called "self-service." Landowners enroll online to receive deer harvest recommendations, tag issuance and general guidance about wildlife and wildlife habitat management. He said participation in the harvest option provides longer seasons and enhanced bag limits with minimal TPWD involvement, but landowners do not receive technical assistance from TPWD wildlife biologists.

"For the harvest option, there are no real requirements or prerequisites to get into the program. You just need to log in, create an account in our land management assistance (LMA) online system," Cain said. "Once you create an account, you'll have to draw your property boundaries out, and then you can enroll in MLDP."

The fee for the harvest option is \$30 per property or management unit and \$30 for an aggregate site. Tags can only be issued for white-tailed deer under the harvest option.

The conservation option fee is \$300 for the first management unit and \$30 for each additional management unit, or \$300 for an aggregate site.

Under aggregate acreage proper-

ties, multiple landowners may combine contiguous tracts of low-fenced properties to create an aggregate site for enrollment. Each landowner is required to create an LMA account online, provide TPWD a map of their property boundaries and acknowledge consent for their properties to be part of the aggregate acreage. MLDP tags issued to aggregate sites may be used on any tract of land within the aggregate acreage.

"One thing to note is the conservation option has some prerequisites to enroll. You must have two years of data on previous deer population and harvest numbers, and you must have conducted two habitat management practices in each of the two most recent years prior to the year that you're seeking enrollment," Cain said. "Once you're enrolled, you must conduct three habitat management practices every year. Deer harvest may count as one of those practices, but that has to be worked out with your biologist beforehand."

To remain enrolled in MLDP under the conservation option, landowners must provide TPWD with the current year's deer population numbers and report harvests at the end of the season.

The MLDP season runs about five months, from around the first of October through the end of February. More information on MLDP and the fee structure is available at tpwd.texas.gov.

Report highlights how stagnant U.S. public funding for agricultural research threatens food systems

Stagnant public funding for agricultural research is threatening the future vitality of U.S. food systems—posing risks to farmer productivity and profitability, the steady supply of affordable food for consumers, and ultimately global food security, according to a new report.

The report, jointly commissioned by Farm Journal Foundation and the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) and authored by the IHS Markit Agribusiness Consulting Group, highlights the vital importance of public funding for agricultural research and development.

New innovations are crucial so that farmers and ranchers can increase their productivity and meet rising global demand for food.

The world population is expected to reach 10 billion by 2050, and food production will need to increase by 60%-70% to meet rising demand.

While private-sector funding for agricultural research and development has been increasing, U.S. public spending has been flat for the past decade.

“The U.S. has always been a leader in agricultural innovation, but we’re at risk of losing that advantage by falling behind the rest of the world in research and development,” AFBF President Zippy Duvall said.

Public investment is crucial, as private companies have less incentive to research subjects that benefit society broadly but offer potentially lower monetary returns, such as in the areas of environmental, animal health, specialty crop and food safety research.

Private companies primarily focus research spending on only a few major crop and livestock markets, leaving other sectors under-explored.

Other countries are seeing the value of investing in agricultural research, putting the U.S. at risk of losing its competitive advantage in agricultural production and exports.

China became the world’s largest public funder of agricultural research and development in 2009, and India and Brazil are also making significant investments.

It can take years to develop and bring new technologies to market, so research funded today must seek to anticipate and solve the problems of tomorrow, AFBF said.

“This report shows the clear need for agricultural research to benefit not only farmers, but our entire food system and every person who eats,” Duvall said. “Research will unlock the answers to growing more crops even as we face increasingly volatile weather, help to create a more resilient food system supply chain and provide food that’s higher in nutritional value. It’s the golden ticket.”

In order to make agricultural and food supply chains more resilient, the national organization noted increased research funding is needed across the board.

The battle against crop diseases and pests is continually evolving as diseases and pests develop resistance to established crop protection practices, and new diseases and pests emerge to pose new threats to crop production.

The paper focuses on the key areas of crop breeding, crop protection, animal health, animal disease and foodborne illness, climate change and global pandemics as case studies.

“COVID-19 should be a wake-up call that more public research funding is needed to address unexpected shocks,” Tricia Beal, CEO of Farm Journal Foundation, said. “The pandemic created huge challenges for agricultural supply chains around the world. It also showed just how quickly pathogens can spread. Increased public support for agricultural research is crucial for finding solutions to make our entire food system more resilient.”

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Study shows repealing stepped-up basis would damage economy

Any change in capital gains tax policy that eliminates or scales back stepped-up basis could result in a massive tax burden on the agricultural sector, according to new analysis by the American Soybean Association and the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF).

To minimize the impact of burdensome capital gains taxes, farmers and ranchers use stepped-up basis, which provides a reset for the asset value basis during intergenerational transfers. The magnitude of the tax burden that would be felt if basis is taken away or reduced would likely significantly exceed the annual income generated by the assets, something that has American farmers concerned.

“The value of farms is tied up in land and equipment, and many hardworking farmers struggle just to make ends meet,” AFBF President Zippy Duvall said. “Eliminating stepped-up basis would make passing the family farm to the next generation much more difficult when the capital gains taxes would exceed a farm’s net income in many cases and require years to pay off. We urge lawmakers to leave stepped-up basis intact to ensure farmers can continue feeding America’s families.”

Tax policy is important in helping farmers pass their operations on to



Proposals to impose capital gains at death and to repeal stepped-up basis would be devastating to family farms and ranches.

future generations.

“To reduce the capital gains tax, farmers and ranchers use stepped-up basis, which provides a reset for the basis during intergenerational transfer or to the market value at the date of death,” John Newton, former chief economist for AFBF, said. “Without stepped-up basis and considering the dramatic increase that we’ve seen in land values in the recent decades, many farmers would face a burdensome tax hike through capital gains taxes when they sell all or a portion of the farm’s assets.”

Newton noted the tax would be a

financial burden for farms for up to a decade.

“I think one way to put that into perspective is to think about the income generation on the farm,” he said. “So, we looked at cash rental rates across the country, and that \$500 to \$1,000 per acre in taxes in many cases was 400 to 500 or even 1,000 percent of the cash rental rate, so it’s a hefty tax hike that would take several years—four, five, six or as many as ten years to meet that tax obligation.”

Study results

A new report released in April

finds that repealing the step-up in basis tax provision would damage the gross domestic product (GDP) and significantly decrease job creation. The study was commissioned by the Family Business Estate Tax Coalition, which includes nearly 60 organizations representing family-owned businesses.

The study found middle-class, family-owned businesses would be particularly hard hit by the repeal. Currently, when someone inherits assets, they aren’t taxed on the appreciation that happened before they inherited them. If family-owned farms, small businesses or manufacturers are forced to pay capital gains accrued by the prior owner, they would likely face large tax bills that put the future of their business at risk.

According to the study’s findings, repealing the step-up in basis would result in 80,000 fewer jobs in each of the first ten years; 100,000 fewer jobs each year thereafter; and a \$32 reduction in workers’ wages for every \$100 raised by taxing capital gains at death.

It would also reduce GDP relative to the U.S. economy in 2021 by about \$10 billion annually and \$100 billion over 10 years.

“Farmers and ranchers have been able to pass their farms on to the next generation thanks to the stepped-up basis tax provision,” Duvall said. “The value of many farms is tied up in land and equipment, and most farmers don’t have large amounts of money on-hand to pay capital gains taxes. They could be forced to sell the farm or take out costly loans just to pay capital gains taxes. Eliminating the stepped-up basis isn’t a tax on the rich. It’s a tax on the middle class. We urge President Biden to remain true to his word that he won’t increase taxes on hardworking, middle-class Americans.”

AFBF has more information on stepped-up basis, capital gains tax and estate taxes at fb.org/market-intel.



Farms and ranches are often kept in the family for many years. Tracking the appreciation of land and equipment over a period of decades would be extremely complex, and the value of land is likely to have increased so much that without stepped-up basis, the next generation of farmers and ranchers could be forced to sell their farms.

Texas Legislature nears finish line for the session

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

The 87th Texas Legislature regular session will soon draw to a close on May 31. The lingering impact of the COVID-19 pandemic overshadowed the opening days of the session and led to a quiet start.

But it quickly caught up to the pace of what is expected during a “normal” session once committees started hearing bills. Now, lawmakers, lobbyists and stakeholders are facing a busy final month, said Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) State Legislative Director Charlie Leal.

“There are several upcoming dates that dictate what will happen the rest of the session,” Leal said. “In the Texas House, particularly, they have set deadlines on their calendar that are ‘cutoff’ dates, and certain things have to have happened before then for a bill to receive consideration or see movement to the next step.”



The last day for House committees to report House bills is May 10.

House rules do not specify a deadline for committees to report measure, but Leal said, realistically, it’s the last day a bill could be reported

out of a House committee and still be placed on the House calendar, which does have hard deadlines. The House must distribute the last House daily calendar with House bills and House joint resolutions by

10 p.m. on May 11.

Another important date on the House calendar is May 23. By 10 p.m., the House must distribute its last House daily calendar with Senate bills and Senate joint resolutions.

The final major deadline is May 30. Leal noted this is the last day for the House to adopt conference committee reports or discharge House conferees and concur in Senate amendments, and it’s the last day for the Senate to concur in House amendments or adopt conference committee reports.

On May 31, the last day of 87th Regular Session, or sine die, only corrections may be considered in both chambers.

Gov. Greg Abbott has until June 20 to sign or veto bills passed during the regular session. Bills without specific effective dates become law on Aug. 30.

A full recap of the legislative session will be available in the June issue of *Texas Agriculture* and on the website at texasfarmbureau.org.

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Immigrant crisis impacts farmers, ranchers in Lone Star State

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

A recent surge of immigrants illegally crossing the U.S.-Mexico border has drawn national attention to the Rio Grande Valley and South Texas, with many calling the situation a humanitarian crisis. Local government resources are being exhausted in counties in and around the border.

But it's not just an immigrant crisis, said Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) District 13 State Director Scott Frazier. During a U.S. House Judiciary Committee press conference in Edinburg in April, Frazier said Texans are also negatively impacted by the massive influx.

Frazier said the human smuggling, trafficking and violent acts of crime perpetrated against immigrants is horrendous and not to be downplayed, but destruction is also inflicted on Texas farmers and ranchers in the midst of the chaos.

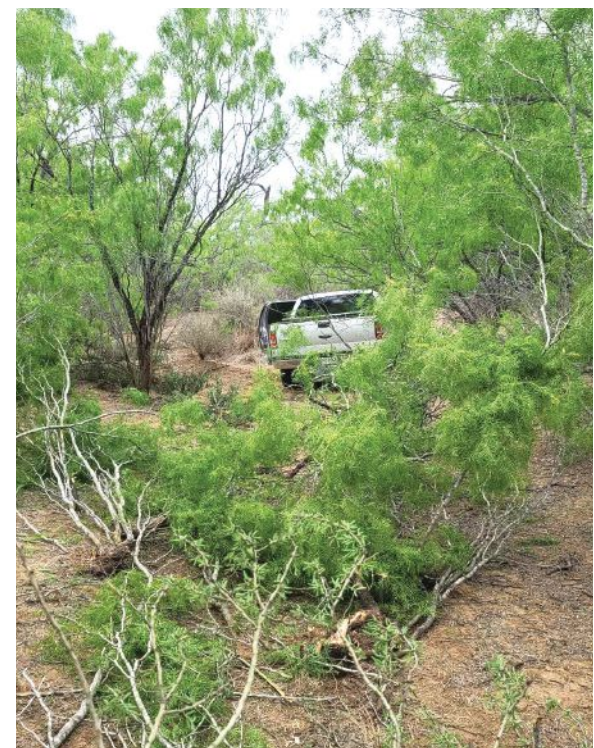
"You see the human smuggling and trafficking going on, small children being thrown over fences and dropped over fences, and things like that are terrible to see," he said. "But the damage they do to farms and ranches when they knock down fences during bailouts and various things, those hurt people on this side."

Farmers and ranchers also face threats to themselves, their families and their employees from human smugglers, known as "coyotes," and Mexican cartel members engaged in human trafficking.

Coyotes and cartel members illegally lead groups of people into the U.S., frequently using stolen vehicles with the seating removed to pack in as many people as possible. The criminals abandon the vehicles on rural stretches of roadways when law enforcement attempt to pull them over and destroy private property as they try to escape, according to Frazier.

"They'll just run through a fence and tear up anything they need to, to try and get away," he said.

Immigrants avoiding apprehen-



Texas farmers and ranchers find clothes and abandoned vehicles on their property. Fences, gates and other personal property are often damaged and destroyed when illegal immigrants move through the area.

sion will scatter throughout the area, sometimes breaking into nearby homes, barns and vehicles along the way.

Additional challenges posed by groups of immigrants traveling across farms and ranches include the need to clean up large amounts of trash left behind. South Texas farmers and ranchers say it's also not uncommon to find stragglers who have been abandoned by the coyotes, because they were too weak or ill to keep up.

While farmers and ranchers do have a need for a robust labor force, entering the U.S. illegally is not the way to go about gaining employment, Frazier said.

He worries halting the construction of the U.S. border wall will have other negative effects on Texas agriculture and Rio Grande Valley residents, as well.

"Right now, since construction is on hold, we basically have these gaping holes in the levies that, if we were to get a flood event, would be catastrophic to many folks on the border in agriculture and outside of agriculture, also," he said in an in-

terview with the Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network. "When the work on the border wall was stopped, levies were left knocked down or unfinished. They protect not only farmland but cities and towns from floods. So, if we get a big flood event, it will certainly damage a lot of crops and livestock, but it will also damage towns and cities along the river downstream from where the levies were breached."

The 10-member delegation of the U.S. House Judiciary Committee, led by House Minority Whip Steve Scalise, met with U.S. Customs and Border Patrol officials, toured migrant processing facilities and visited the border wall outside McAllen in April to learn about the immigration crisis.

Frazier met with the lawmakers to discuss the challenges and issues Texas farmers and ranchers face in dealing with increased illegal immigration across their lands.

Border crisis impacts webpage

The impacts of the crisis along the U.S.-Mexico border are many. For farmers and ranchers in Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and California,

the crisis threatens personal safety, causes serious financial hardship and disruption, and overwhelms local resources.

TFB launched a webpage to document impacts of the border crisis on Texas farmers and ranchers, as well as impacts on farmers and ranchers from other border states.

TFB is working on the project with Arizona Farm Bureau, New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau, California Farm Bureau Federation and the American Farm Bureau Federation.

The page will include videos, photos and other materials provided directly by individuals and families impacted by the crisis. The page also will include information of interest from governmental agencies.

The goal of the page is to allow the general public to see and hear first-hand accounts of the crisis.

TFB will promote the page and its content to the public and to the media in an effort to affect change and achieve Farm Bureau policy in securing the border.

Visit [texasfarmbureau.org/border-crisis-impacts](https://www.texasfarmbureau.org/border-crisis-impacts) to watch the videos.



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Elbel wins TFB Virtual Collegiate Discussion Meet

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Issues facing farmers and ranchers were the focus of Texas Farm Bureau's (TFB) Virtual Collegiate Discussion Meet. Clayton Elbel from Texas A&M University was named the winner of this year's contest following a discussion on the public's perception of family farms.

Elbel is a junior on a combined degree program through the Bush School of Government. He is studying agricultural economics and also working toward his master's degree in public administration.

The Virtual Collegiate Discussion Meet, conducted using web conferencing this year, is designed to replicate a committee meeting where discussion and active participation are expected from each collegiate participant.

The annual contest is hosted by TFB's Young Farmer & Rancher (YF&R) Advisory Committee and offers college students an opportunity to dive deeper into agricultural issues and network with fellow students.

This year, Elbel and 14 other college students from across the state

participated in the virtual competition.

"This is a unique contest that helps students develop their problem solving skills through research and collaborative discussion," Laura Henson, YF&R Advisory Committee member, said.

Topics of discussion included Farm Bureau membership growth and engagement, balancing agriculture's water needs while maintaining vibrant communities, and how farmers maintain ownership of intellectual and proprietary information.

The four finalists included: Elbel, a junior at Texas A&M; Haylee Young, a junior at Texas Tech; Trace Dodd, a junior at West Texas A&M; and Courtney Herrera, a senior at Sam Houston State University.

Participants were scored based on their speaking skills, effective problem solving and cooperative communication with other contestants.

"I really believe that it's competitions like this that help expand our knowledge and build that next generation of agriculturalists," Elbel said.

He wants to pursue a career in ag-

ricultural policy and be an advocate for farmers and ranchers.

"I think it's something we need to keep in mind that our food and fiber system is the cornerstone to successful foreign policy, and to continue America's global leadership years down the road, agriculture is going to be that first step," he said.

At Texas A&M, Elbel serves as a state senator in the Texas A&M Student Government Association and is a College of Agriculture and Life Sciences representative. The Spring Branch native was also a former Texas FFA state officer.

As the top contestant, Elbel took home a \$2,500 cash prize and a plaque. He will also represent Texas in the American Farm Bureau Federation's 2022 Collegiate Discussion Meet contest.

Young, the runner-up, received a \$1,500 cash prize and a plaque.

The remaining finalists each received a \$750 cash prize and plaque.

These participants also made the elite eight round preceding the final four: Rebekah Annan of Prairie View A&M University, Saydee Jo Detwiler of Tarleton State University, Morgan Johnson of Texas Tech Univer-



Clayton Elbel

sity and Michael Weinstein of Texas A&M University.

Other participants were Alejandra Camarillo, West Texas A&M; Mallori Christian, Texas A&M; Payton George, West Texas A&M; Gabriel Guterrez, Palo Alto College; Mason Hines, Texas A&M; Logan Paetzold, West Texas A&M; and Lyndee Yoder, West Texas A&M.

Learn more about TFB collegiate and young farmer and rancher activities at texasfarmbureau.org/YFR.



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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.

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.

"I think that might've been my first word, actually. Horse. I was just a horse-crazy little girl. I grew up riding. Then, when I got to college, I started taking things a little more seriously. I was taking lessons here and just learning more and more," she said. "After college, I would get a job, then come back to the horses.

Every time I would try to go a different direction, I would end up coming back to it. It was just this cycle, and I was trying to show horses on the side when finally Nancy [Cahill] said, 'Why don't you just come work for me?' And that was kind of it. I've been here since 1998, and I think it was just meant to be."

But those who know her best know differently. Tidwell is a hard worker, dedicated to her students and the horses she spends her days training at Cahill Quarter Horses.

"We spend most of our days riding. We have a list of horses on the board and our helper, Cruz, saddles the horses and puts them on a walker to wait for us. We ride the horses, come back and get another one, and just keep going," she said. "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."

The operation is a one-stop train-

ing shop for riders and horses. Riders of all ages from the area come to learn from Tidwell and Cahill, and owners can send their horses to the Cahill facilities to be trained, as well.

"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," Tidwell said.

Around 2006, she took her career one step further by becoming an American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) Professional Horseman. This membership signifies a horse trainer is highly qualified and specializes in preparing riders for entering horses into competitions.

American quarter horses are versatile, sure-footed and at home in a variety of settings. The membership organization offers multiple programs and opportunities for people of all ages to get involved in promoting one of America's most popular and oldest horse breeds.

"AQHA is more than just horse names on a paper. It has so many different aspects. There's racing, showing, ranch heritage, youth, breeding programs," Tidwell said. "You can benefit from whatever you want to do in AQHA. It's more than just being a member and being part of the breed registry."

Her involvement with AQHA has grown throughout the years. Tidwell now holds three judges' cards, serves on the AQHA Professional Horsemen Committee and is first vice president of the Texas Quarter Horse Association (TQHA). She also serves on the Halter and Performance committees for TQHA.

Life was busy, but good. Then one simple phone call changed everything in May 2019.

"When the doctor called, they wanted me to come in. I said, 'I don't really have time,' because that's the busy time of our show season. I have a lot of judging assignments. It's sum-

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

— Michelle Tidwell

mer. It’s just really busy,” she said. “But they were calling to tell me I had breast cancer.”

Not even cancer however, was going to stop Tidwell from pursuing 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 arranged 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 AQHA World Championship Show, Tidwell was named the first-ever recipient of the Carl McCuistion True Grit Award.

She holds a special connection to the man whose name graces the award.

McCuistion 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.”



Michelle Tidwell was diagnosed with breast cancer, beat the disease and continues her career as the assistant horse trainer at Cahill Quarter Horses.



Tidwell was the first recipient of the Carl McCuistion True Grit Award.



Tidwell works with clients of all ages and skill level.



She also trains horses for owners who are interested in working or showing animals. Clients learn in individual or group settings.



U.S. food, ag sectors fuel the national economy

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

A new report shows just how vital the U.S. food and agriculture sectors are to fueling the American economy.

A nationwide economic impact study commissioned by 33 food and agricultural groups, including the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF), found the food and agricultural sectors support more than 40 million jobs and contribute nearly \$7 trillion to the U.S. economy each year, while exports contribute another \$155 billion.

“The agriculture and food industries in the U.S. feed, clothe and fuel the American economy. Not only that, these sectors drive nearly 20 percent of U.S. economic activity and employ tens of millions of Americans,” John Newton, former AFBF chief economist, said. “This study is critical in showing how food and agriculture support both our local and national economies.”

Farmers, ranchers, agricultural



laborers, food scientists, food inspectors, factory workers, truck drivers, grocery store employees and countless other Americans link together in the food supply chain every day to bring the food grown on U.S. farms and ranches to grocery stores, restaurants and dinner tables across the nation.

To measure the total economic impact of the sectors, the analysis also



includes the indirect and induced economic activity surrounding these industries.

The report, Feeding the Economy, considered direct economic impact, supplier economic impact and induced economic impact.

For the study, the food industry includes businesses involved in food agriculture, food manufacturing, food wholesaling and food retailing.

Industries are linked to each other when one industry buys from another to create its own products, according to study methodology.

The mining, construction, manufacturing, wholesale, retail, transportation and communication, finance, insurance and real estate, business and personal services, travel and entertainment and governmental sectors all benefit from agricultural and food activity, the study's authors concluded.

This study sheds light for policymakers on how the food and agriculture sectors feed and fuel the American economy.

Together, the food and agriculture sectors directly support about 20 million jobs, or more than 13 percent of U.S. employment.

In Texas, food and agriculture supports an estimated 3.7 million jobs with an economic impact of \$614.5 billion annually.

The research used to develop the study was funded by The Goodstone Group and conducted by John Dunham and Associates.

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TFB summer conference offers new perspectives, updates for members

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

The Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) Summer Leadership Conference, set for June 21-23 in San Marcos, offers farmers and ranchers from across the state the opportunity to catch up on the latest in Texas agriculture.

Topics for this year's conference include issues important to Texas farmers and ranchers both at home and on a global scale, said TFB President Russell Boening.

Climate change, carbon sequestration markets, soil health improvement practices and cover crops, cattle marketing, foreign policy and the economy, and pesticide regulation and registration will be covered.

Also on the agenda is a legislative wrap-up session from the 87th Texas Legislature and an overview of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and how the agency works to

help farmers, ranchers and rural Texans.

"We have our annual meeting every December, so the summer conference presents another opportunity six months apart where we can get farmers and ranchers together to discuss issues with commodities and legislative topics," Boening said. "In December, we're tending to the business of the organization—creating bylaws, electing state directors, voting on policy resolutions and recognizing our members and county Farm Bureaus. This conference is a chance to inform our membership of what's going on in a more general sense. It's much more informational and focused on discussing these issues and how they affect our members."

TFB's commodity advisory committees also meet during the summer conference to discuss current issues and possible solutions related to agricultural commodities in the state.

TEXAS FARM BUREAU'S Summer Leadership Conference San Marcos • JUNE 21-23

The Summer Leadership Conference is one of the first large in-person events TFB has hosted in over a year. The novel coronavirus pandemic of 2020 temporarily halted TFB in-person meetings. But with vaccine rates rising and the governor declaring Texas "open for business," things are slowly returning to a new normal.

"This year, there may be some additional measures taken to make sure folks are safe as we gather in groups, but we're ready to get back to business," Boening said. "We have a good lineup planned with lots of information that should be relevant

to our members and help them make the best business decisions for their operations, so we're looking forward to it."

Registration begins at 9 a.m. on June 21, with a county presidents' dinner set for that evening. June 22 will be an all-day event with a group lunch. The conference will adjourn after a morning general session on June 23.

A tentative agenda and room reservation form is available at texasfarmbureau.org. The deadline for room reservations is May 14, and rooms must be cancelled by June 14 to avoid cancellation penalties.




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TEXAS AGRICULTURE

Young farmers, ranchers grow understanding of policy process

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Legislative updates, policy issues and agricultural advocacy were among the topics highlighted during the Texas Farm Bureau Young Farmer & Rancher (YF&R) Conference.

More than 150 young farmers and ranchers and college students gathered in Round Rock for the April 9-11 meeting.

“Since the Texas Legislature is in session, our Young Farmer & Rancher Advisory Committee thought that would provide great topics for our conference this year,” Kaylin Isbell, TFB’s YF&R Advisory Committee chair, said. “We felt it was important to explain how the legislative process works and encourage young people to get involved in legislative issues and have a voice at the Capitol.”

As Texas becomes increasingly urban, rural representation in Austin and Washington, D.C., is more important than ever.

“Our generation can make a difference in agriculture, and we have to step up and be a voice for our industry if we want to see a future ahead,” Isbell said. “It’s our job to help our elected officials understand more about agriculture and build relationships with them.”

Legislative updates

From eminent domain and rural broadband to truth in labeling, the young professionals were able to learn about the latest on bills from Reps. DeWayne Burns, Cole Hefner and Mary Gonzalez, who all joined the conference virtually.

Political consultants shared more about political action funds and gave insight on the importance of grassroots involvement to support candidates.

Legislative process

Speakers noted staying engaged throughout the legislative session is important to enact change.

“Nothing moves the Legislature like constituents and folks impacted by the laws that are being presented—speaking up on behalf of good laws and weighing in on laws that are bad for rural Texas,” State Rep. Brad Buckley said. “We, as legislators, need to know what people are thinking, and that’s what moves the needle in Austin.”

Buckley discussed how a bill becomes law in Texas and encouraged the young farmers and ranchers to get more involved in the legislative process.

“Getting a bill to become a law is a difficult process, and it’s important for folks of common interests



Chet Garner, host of the TV show The Daytripper, shared about storytelling. He told participants that they are all storytellers and should take advantage of any opportunity to tell the stories of small town America and agriculture.

and common goals to come together to support legislation that’s important to their industry or way of life,” he said. “Rural Texas needs every young person to take the baton and run with it. It’s time to stand up for those values that make Texas, Texas and to make sure the rural way of life and agriculture remains viable in our state.”



State Rep. Brad Buckley discussed how a bill becomes law in Texas and encouraged young farmers and ranchers to get more involved in the legislative process by testifying before committees or watching committee hearings online.

Growing relationships

The weekend was also about growing relationships and networking with others across the state.

“The Young Farmer & Rancher activities, especially this conference, are great for networking with others across the state and learning from each other,” Isbell said. “We also had a large group of college students here



Casino Night was a fun way for the young farmers and ranchers and college students to begin the weekend of learning during the 2021 Young Farmer & Rancher Conference in Round Rock.



In addition to learning about legislative activities and advocacy efforts, participants spent time networking and learning more about TFB’s Young Farmer & Rancher contests and opportunities.

with us, about 45 students. It's great to see our YF&R program continue to grow and get more young people involved in Farm Bureau."

Chet Garner, host of the TV show *The Daytripper*, and motivational speaker Matt Rush also addressed the group. Both speakers offered advice and encouraged the young farmers and ranchers to grow through action and lead with service.

Upcoming events

For more information on the YF&R program, upcoming events and the annual contests, visit texasfarmbureau.org/YFR.

Contact Roger Hall, TFB associate director of Organization division for Leader Development, with questions at rhall@txfb.org or call 254-399-5021.



Members of the 2021 Young Farmer & Rancher Advisory Committee posed with motivational speaker Matt Rush.

WTAMU launches first Collegiate Farm Bureau program in Texas

Julie Tomascik
Editor

Farm Bureau history was made in Canyon this year. The Collegiate Farm Bureau of West Texas A&M University (WTAMU), the first student organization of its kind in the Lone Star State, was established.

"Once we started talking about advocacy, giving back to the community and ag education to youth, we really had a large group of students interested in being part of this club," Dr. Nate Wolf, WTAMU professor and club advisor, said. "They are energized and passionate about agriculture and leaving their mark on the world."

Students in the organization are members of a Farm Bureau family. Some are from out of state, and they represent diverse backgrounds and college majors, including agricultural business, animal science, agricultural education and agricultural communications, among others.

"I'm so proud of our group for pushing through all the requirements and COVID-19," said Kaysi LaPoint, the first president of the collegiate organization and a native of Greeley, Colo. "We are a passionate group of students who want to promote agriculture and want to get

involved in the community."

The students learned more about establishing an organization, creating bylaws, adopting a Constitution and other real-world applications, LaPointe noted.

And their plans for the year could have more students interested in joining the collegiate group. They hope to have guest speakers and tour farms and businesses to learn more about the diversity of agriculture.

"We hope to utilize resources from Texas Farm Bureau and other organizations to network and learn all we can," said LaPoint, who is a junior majoring in animal science with a minor in agricultural business and economics.

As part of the activities for the year, 14 students made the trip to Round Rock to attend the Young Farmer & Rancher Conference. They were able to network with young producers and other college students during the event, helping them grow confidence and an understanding of the legislative process.

"We want to help engage the youth and partner with not only Texas Farm Bureau, but the surrounding county Farm Bureaus. We want to get out in the community, in classrooms, around campus and

share more about agriculture," Wolf said. "We hope we continue to grow and become stronger, better advocates for agriculture."

The Collegiate Farm Bureau of West Texas A&M University also received a \$500 mini-grant from the American Farm Bureau Federation.

The Collegiate Farm Bureau program is part of the Young Farmer & Rancher program and works to engage agricultural students from college campuses and introduce them to Farm Bureau.

TFB is working with five colleges and universities—WTAMU, Midwestern State University, Sam Houston State University, Tarleton State University and Vernon College—as part of a pilot program to establish a Collegiate Farm Bureau program.

For more information about TFB's Collegiate Farm Bureau program, contact TFB Associate Director of Organization, Youth Outreach Mia Balko at mbalko@txfb.org or 254-399-5037.



Dr. Nate Wolf (back left) and TFB YF&R Advisory Committee District 1 representative Landon Friemel (far right) pose for a photo with the WTAMU Collegiate Farm Bureau members at the YF&R Conference in Round Rock.

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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>.

Texas gains two seats in Congress after census

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

The fast-growing Texas population earned the state two additional congressional seats—the most of any state in the nation—after the 2020 U.S. Census.

For the next decade, Texas will have 38 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives.

“We are glad to see Texas’ political clout expand by adding two new congressional seats. Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) looks forward to building relationships with additional leaders in Congress after restricting is finalized and changes go into effect in 2022,” TFB National Legislative Director Laramie Adams said.

The additional seats also means Texas will now have 40 votes in the Electoral College.

Despite losing one seat after the census, California continues to have the largest congressional delegation and share of Electoral College votes.

Other states losing seats after the



census include Illinois, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

Five other states—Colorado, Florida, Montana, North Carolina and Oregon—are each gaining one seat.

The remaining states will not see changes based on the 2020 census.

Texas’ congressional delegation currently includes 22 Republicans and 13 Democrats. One seat remains vacant after the recent death of Republican Ron Wright.

The population in the Lone Star State is now at 29,145,505, which is up significantly from the 25.1 million in 2010.

And the U.S. resident population, which represents the total number of people living in the 50 states and the District of Columbia, was 331,449,281. That’s an increase of 22,703,743 or 7.4% from 308,745,538 in 2010.

Congressional and state House and Senate districts need to be reconfigured before the 2022 elections to account for the state’s explosive growth in the last decade.

Most population growth continues to be in cities and suburbs, and new districts must be drawn to reflect that.

“Releasing the number of seats each state will have is the first major step in the redistricting process,” Adams said. “The 2020 census shows our U.S. and Texas population is growing. The challenge to states like Texas is making sure rural representation remains.”

The impact of the new districts on rural areas will depend on where

they are added.

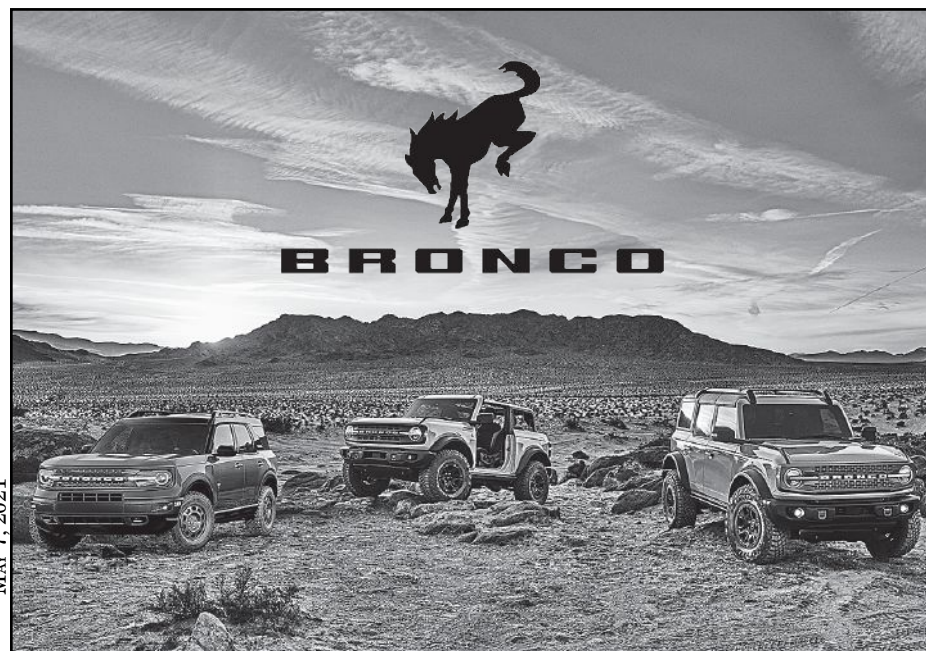
“The Texas State Legislature has the responsibility to redistrict the Texas Senate and House and Congressional districts. A special legislative session will likely be called to accomplish this long, complicated process. However the new districts are drawn, Texas Farm Bureau will engage and work with new Congressional leaders to show the issues that face farmers and ranchers and help them better understand agriculture,” Adams said.

The census results were initially delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Now that the apportionment counts are delivered, we will begin the additional activities needed to create and deliver the redistricting data that were previously delayed due to COVID-19,” Acting Census Bureau Director Ron Jarmin said.

Redistricting data include the local area counts states need to redraw or “redistrict” legislative boundaries.

The Census Bureau estimates states will receive redistricting data by Aug. 16.



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Teachers can attend Texas Farm Bureau's Summer Ag Academies

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 can attend free summer workshops to learn more about how to incorporate agriculture in the classroom.

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 reg-

istration details for the Summer Ag Academies are available online at texasfarmbureau.org/aitc.

For more information, contact Walker at edoutreach@txfb.org or call 254.751.2569.

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

June 14 Burleson K-5 teachers	July 19-20 New Braunfels K-12 teachers	July 22 Fort Bend K-8 teachers	July 27 Lubbock K-12 teachers
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USDA inspecting citrus trees in Rio Grande Valley

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

Fruit trees in residential yards and commercial properties in Cameron, Hidalgo, Webb, Willacy and Zapata counties are being inspected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) for signs of invasive citrus pests and diseases.

Inspectors are hanging traps with lures to combat the Mexican fruit fly, which poses a serious threat to the citrus industry. The invasive species has been detected in the Rio Grande Valley, leading to quarantines in Cameron and Willacy counties.

Mexican fruit flies are drawn to ripening fruit, where females will lay eggs. The eggs hatch into larvae, which tunnel through the flesh as they eat, causing fruit to rot.

While the insect poses no risk to humans, damaged fruit may be unfit to eat because of rot. Residents

can help reduce risk by removing all mature citrus fruit, including fruit that fell on the ground, as soon as possible. Fruit that is not consumed should be double-bagged and placed in the trash.

Moving or mailing homegrown fruit from quarantined areas is inadvisable due to the risk of spreading the pest.

Residents are also asked not to compost fruit or vegetables from quarantine areas because larvae may still be present in the decomposing produce.

APHIS and TDA surveyors also will be examining fruit trees for signs of citrus canker and other diseases. Citrus canker is a disease caused by the bacterium *Xanthomonas citri*.

The bacterial disease does not harm humans but causes significant damage to citrus trees. Fruit from trees infected with citrus canker is safe to eat but sometimes unmarketable due to its blemished appearance.

After making its way to the U.S. from Asia where it originated, citrus canker is now considered endemic in Florida.

But with help from residents, officials are working to prevent a permanent encroachment into other southern states.

The disease was detected and confirmed in Cameron County in 2015 and in Hidalgo County earlier this year. It has also been found in the greater Houston area, where there are several active quarantine zones. All varieties of citrus and citrus plant materials are subject to quarantine restrictions and requirements.

The agencies ask residents and business owners to cooperate with survey teams and allow them on to the property for survey work to help stop the spread of these threats to the Texas citrus industry.

USDA and state surveyors working in the field are following all Centers for Disease Control and



Citrus canker leaf, stem and fruit lesions found in Cameron County during a survey. USDA photo by D. Bartels.

Prevention (CDC) health guidelines, including social distancing. These surveyors will have official credentials identifying them as USDA or TDA employees.

For questions about citrus surveys or to report a citrus concern, contact the local APHIS office.

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TFB youth speaking contest showcases free enterprise knowledge

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

After months of pandemic-related travel restrictions, the 2020 Free Enterprise Speech Contest was finally held as an in-person event in April 2021 at the Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) Conference and Training Center in Waco.

The Free Enterprise Speech Contest is an opportunity for high school students to share their perspective on the benefits of the free enterprise system and the U.S. Constitution while competing to earn scholarship money.

Contestants are judged on speech organization, language, use of notes, persuasiveness and application of the topic in speech, said Mia Balko, TFB associate director of Organization, Youth Outreach.

To compete in the Free Enterprise Speech Contest, students must have participated in TFB's Virtual Leadership Conference last summer.

The 13 students were selected in the fall during virtual district contests. Each won a \$1,500 scholarship at the district level and were competing to win additional scholarship funds and prizes.

Jim Wells County Farm Bureau member Trevor Martinez took home first place, earning a \$6,000 scholarship.

Martinez, the son of Carlos and

Tammy Martinez of Premont, is a junior at Bishop High School. He is an honors student and is active in FFA, 4-H, National Honor Society, the youth board of the local Rotary Club and his church, First Baptist Church Premont.

He is secretary of the Premont Cactus Club, second vice president of Jim Wells 4-H, a delegate-at-large for Texas 4-H and a certified peer visitor for the National Amputee Coalition.

Martinez plans to attend Texas A&M University or Texas A&M University-Kingsville and major in chemistry or biology with the intent to pursue a career in forensics or the pharmaceutical industry.

"My key takeaway from the Virtual Leadership Conference last summer and this experience is almost everything revolves around the free enterprise system in our country. We're lucky we live in a society and nation that embraces free enterprise," he said.

Runner-up in the competition and winner of a \$3,000 scholarship was Holly Alderson of Guadalupe County.

Alderson, the daughter of Doug and Vicki Alderson, is a junior at Marion High School.

She is active in the National Honor Society, FFA and 4-H. Alderson is a Texas 4-H Livestock Ambassador,



Trevor Martinez
Free Enterprise Speech Contest
winner

Guadalupe County 4-H Ambassador, vice president of Santa Clara 4-H Club and sentinel of Marion FFA.

Alderson plans to attend Texas Tech University and major in agribusiness. After college, she plans to pursue a career in livestock photography and marketing.

"Trevor, Holly and all of our contestants delivered great speeches detailing the benefits of the free enterprise system and how it's integral to our nation's success," TFB President Russell Boening said. "It's wonderful to hear from young people who are knowledgeable about our economy, our government and Farm Bureau. We're proud of these students' hard work and the roles they will play in the future of



Holly Alderson
Free Enterprise Speech Contest
runner-up

agriculture."

Four other finalists and winners of \$2,000 scholarships were Caroline Alders of Nacogdoches County, Faith Geistweidt of Gillespie County, Laura James of Fayette County and Callie Welty of Johnson County.

Other contestants and winners of \$1,500 district scholarships were Jonathan Connell of Mitchell County, Avery Flanagan of Runnels County, Lillianna Gonzales of Jack County, Cassidy Halfmann of Falls County, Hannah Ritchie of Smith County, Bryson Stone of Lynn County and Sarah Stovall of Moore County.

More details about the contest and other youth opportunities are available online at texasfarmbureau.org/youth/youth-opportunities.

New educational hemp video series now available from AgriLife Extension

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

Texas farmers interested in growing hemp have a new resource to turn to, thanks to a grant from the Southern Risk Management Education Center.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service produced a series of educational videos to address issues regarding Texas hemp production, including legal challenges and economic factors.

The 29 short videos, now available on YouTube, are the culmination of months of work between AgriLife Extension Specialist in Agricultural

Law Tiffany Dowell Lashmet and faculty at the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Agricultural Economics Department.

Information in the video series includes a basic overview of growing hemp and legal and regulatory considerations.

In addition, economic considerations, crop insurance and market outlooks are covered.

"This is a really great wealth of information for anyone interested in growing hemp and even those who may already be growing it. Hemp has the potential to be another source of revenue for Texas

farmers, and we have many farmers who are eager to learn more about growing it since it was legalized last year, but until now it was hard to find a solid resource with Texas-specific information," Brant Wilbourn, Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) associate director of Commodity & Regulatory Activities, said. "There are some issues, like the legal implications, that make growing hemp a little more challenging than other crops. So, it's good to have a trusted source to find some of that information."

The Extension Agricultural Economics Department has a webpage

dedicated to hemp resources at <https://agecoext.tamu.edu>.

Videos are categorized by topic: basics, legal considerations, economics/budget, crop insurance and other resources. Clicking on each of the topics will lead to a list of related video content.

The three-hour series is also available as a playlist under the Extension Agricultural Economics Department's YouTube channel.

More information on growing hemp in Texas is also available from the Texas Department of Agriculture at www.texasagriculture.gov/regulatoryprograms/hemp.aspx.

Farm Bureau Farm Dog of the Year nominations open until July 2

Farmers and ranchers are invited to submit nominations for the 2022 Farm Bureau Farm Dog of the Year contest, supported by Purina.

This is the fourth year of the contest, which celebrates farm dogs and the many ways they support farmers and ranchers in producing nutritious food for families and their pets.

The grand prize winner—Farm Bureau Farm Dog of the Year—will win a year's worth of Purina dog food and \$5,000 in prize money. The winner will be recognized at a Farm Dog of the Year award ceremony at the American Farm Bureau Federation Convention in January 2022.

Up to four regional runners-up will each win \$1,000 in prize money.

"We're excited to host this popular contest again and provide the general public with another glimpse into daily life on the farm," said AFBF President Zippy Duvall. "Farm dogs often play a dual role as both working dogs and companions to farm families, which is especially important because farming and ranching can be stressful, even on the best days."

Scientific research insights provided by Purina reveal that interacting with pets can provide health benefits. For example, after spending

just 20 minutes with a dog, people experienced a significant increase in levels of oxytocin, a hormone that plays a role in moderating stress. This was also associated with a decrease in heart rate and an increase in self-reported sense of well-being. Following the interaction with the dog, people were in a more positive emotional state.

Desired attributes for the Farm Dog of the Year include helpfulness to the farmer and his/her family, playfulness and obedience.

The 2022 Farm Dog of the Year will also be featured in a professionally-produced video.

"For the fourth year in a row, Purina is proud to support the American Farm Bureau Federation's Farm Dog of the Year contest," Jack Scott, vice president of Sustainability at Purina, said. "Pets have a positive impact on people's lives as companions and contributors to farmers' and ranchers' operations. The outstanding nominations received help demonstrate that people and pets are better together. We look forward to hearing and seeing many more stories in this year's contest."

Farm dog owners must be Farm Bureau members to enter their dogs

in the competition.

The second annual social media contest, People's Choice Pup, was a popular element of the Farm Dog of the Year competition in 2021. Profiles of the top 10 dogs will be shared beginning in October, with the public invited to vote. Bragging rights and a year's worth of dog food from Purina will be awarded to the People's Choice Pup.

Eligibility guidelines and submission requirements are available at <https://www.fb.org/land/fdoty>.

Farm Dog of the Year nominations, which include written responses to questions, still photos and a video clip (optional), must be received by July 2, 2021, for consideration.

The 2019 Farm Dog of the Year winner was Woody, owned by Texas Farm Bureau members Joe and Mary Sheeran.

In 2020, the winner was an Australian Shepherd named Flint owned by Utah Farm Bureau members



Woody, owned by Joe and Mary Sheeran of Texas, was the first dog to win the title Farm Dog of the Year.

Rhett and Beth Crandall. The 2021 winner was an Australian Shepherd named Bindi, owned by New York Farm Bureau member Sonja Galley.

Digital sheep, goat course launches

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service launched a new digital education course, Sheep and Goat Ranching 101. The series of 12 videos cost \$25 and allows participants to learn at their own pace.

"This online course is for people new to the sheep and goat industry," said Dr. Reid Redden, AgriLife Extension sheep and goat specialist and director of the Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Service Center at San Angelo. "This course covers the basics of what people need to know, everything from how much animals typically cost to the type of facilities you'll need to have to raise sheep and goats."

This online course is geared toward beginners and taught by AgriLife Extension specialists, agents and graduate students.

Using instructional videos, the experts walk viewers through the first steps to getting an operation started. They also provide viewers with the basic knowledge needed to

maintain an operation.

Redden said the course provides essential information for small farms or ranches with less than 100 acres, new landowners or managers and retirees moving back to the homestead who may be thinking of raising small ruminants.

An Advanced Sheep and Goat Ranching online course is currently being developed and will also be available at the Texas A&M AgriLife Learn website, <https://agrilifelearn.tamu.edu>, when completed.

Texas A&M AgriLife Learn offers online courses and flexible digital solutions to meet the training and educational needs for learners in Texas and beyond. AgriLife Learn serves adult and youth learners of every type and offers a catalog of courses over a broad range of topics and skills, including Texas Department of Agriculture continuing education unit courses, professional development courses and free educational courses.

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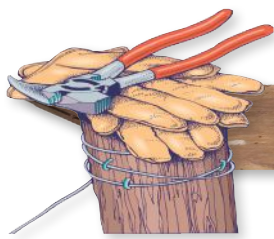
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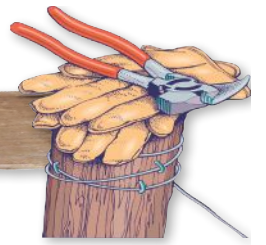
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