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July 2, 2021

Texas Agriculture

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**Photo contest
winners announced**

Pages 16-17

Grassroots advocacy is key to Texas Farm Bureau efforts

These are excerpts from President Russell Boening's address at the Summer Leadership Conference in San Marcos.

We just came through a challenging time. We had to clear many hurdles that we've never faced before. And, yet, this organization learned how to adapt and produce positive results.

From successes at the state legislature to the co-op contribution programs that we partnered with county Farm Bureaus to help those in need in our communities and to the membership and program accomplishments of our organization, we've done a lot.

We've proven that this organization can adapt to almost any adversity. That's the nature of our membership. That's the nature of our business, and that's the nature of our organization.

We approached Farm Bureau activities in the last year in new ways that may have appeared controversial at times, and you may have any questioned some of the approaches. That's okay. It was new to all of us, and we were trying things for the first time.

I'm pleased to say, ultimately, our decisions were successful.

Despite these unprecedented, historic challenges, this organization and our companies remain sound, strong and able to serve our members.

Some of our most recent accomplishments occurred in Austin during the Texas Legislature that adjourned on May 31.



By Russell Boening
President

We accomplished meaningful eminent domain reform for Texas landowners. For several years, we had been basically butting heads with one of the most powerful lobbies in Austin to try to achieve

our policy goals. We never wavered, though.

We stayed focused. We continued to fight the good fight. And we were successful this session because of perseverance and your efforts.

There was another accomplishment that defied long odds. The Legislature said "yes" for a Texas Farm Bureau health plan for its members.

There are powerful interests in Austin that did not want our bill to become law. The health-product marketplace is very competitive.

But we did it, and I'm proud of the outcome. We basically received

authorization to do something in the state of Texas that few other membership organizations can pursue.

It says a lot about Farm Bureau and its credibility. It says even more about you and all Farm Bureau members who might benefit from the health plan offerings.

We're working on many other issues right now that are large in scale and scope. I'm talking about markets, taxes and changes in government regulations, to name a few.

All of the issues are critical to our success and to our survival as farmers and ranchers. Our policy goals are clear and well-defined.

Recently, I was in Del Rio for Governor Abbott's Border Security Summit. I came away with a much better understanding of the gravity of the situation.

Folks, this is not a partisan issue. This is an American issue. This is a humanitarian issue that cannot be ignored. A solution must be found.

We don't care where the solutions come from. We will work with whom ever we need to work with to find answers.

Our effort on the border crisis has the full weight and influence of Farm Bureau behind it. On June 3, all 50 state Farm Bureaus, Puerto Rico Farm Bureau and the American

Farm Bureau called on the Biden administration to act. Texas Farm Bureau instigated the letter.

Our voices were heard. Recently, Farm Bureau representatives of the four border states met with White House officials to discuss the situation and the need for swift action by the administration.

Meanwhile, stories from farmers and ranchers on the frontlines of this border crisis continue to arrive. We're doing our best to share those stories with the American public and the American media. We have a page on our website dedicated to these testimonials.

National media outlets have called and pursued stories because of the experiences being shared by Farm Bureau members. We are moving the needle, but much work remains.

Our Summer Leadership Conference provides us the tools and knowledge to tackle issues of importance to Texas agriculture.

Your leadership and commitment to Farm Bureau is what sets us apart.

Better things are ahead—big, important and amazing accomplishments await, because we have the grassroots power that few organizations can match.



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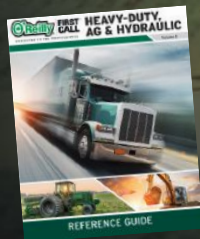
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ADV 1611

New video series teaches ranchers about beef checkoff

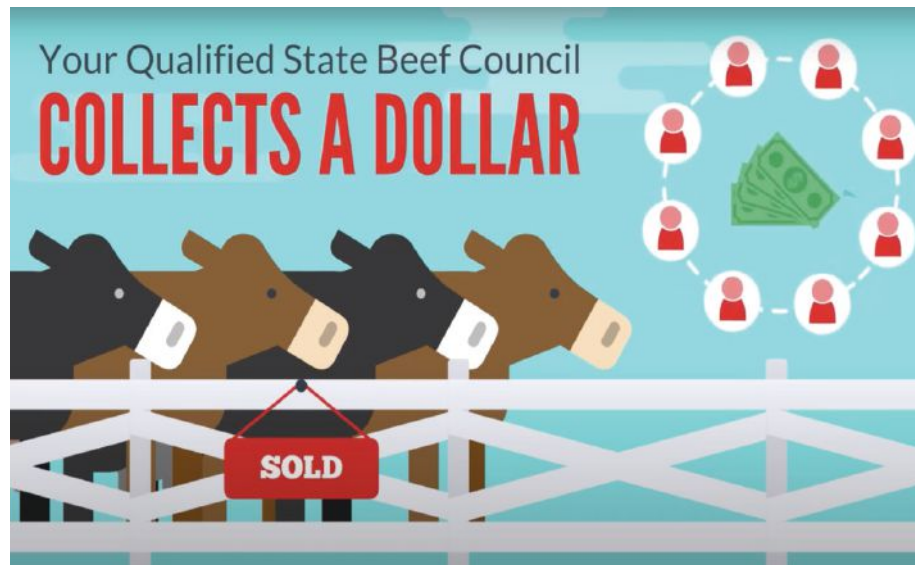
The Cattlemen's Beef Board and Oklahoma Beef Council collaborated on a series of entertaining videos that explains how the beef checkoff works.

Each of the five videos is designed to be a resource that will help cattle producers and other members of the beef community better understand the program and how checkoff dollars are used to drive demand for beef through promotion, education and research efforts.

"We want cattlemen to have a sound understanding of their beef checkoff program, and we've created these videos to help reach that goal," Heather Buckmaster, Oklahoma Beef Council executive director, said. "We hope all cattlemen will take a moment to watch these videos and then share them with others in the beef community."

The short, animated videos explain the somewhat complex checkoff system in a simple way.

They present facts about how the beef checkoff works, what the pro-



gram does, who decides what projects the checkoff funds and answer key questions producers often ask about their beef checkoff dollars.

"These videos are proof that checkoff education can be fun and entertaining," said Libby Stauder, checkoff communications and education manager at the Cattlemen's Beef Board. "Plus, we're so excited to have broadcast legend Ron Hays as the voice of

the project. It really was a great collaborative effort, and we look forward to rolling these out across the country so that producers and importers everywhere can better understand their beef checkoff program."

The videos are available on DrivingDemandforBeef.com or on the Oklahoma Beef Council's YouTube channel by clicking on the Beef Checkoff Explained playlist.

USDA proposes updates to Packers and Stockyards Act

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will begin work on three proposed rules to support enforcement of the Packers and Stockyards Act.

The 100-year-old law was designed to protect poultry, hog and cattle ranchers from unfair, deceptive and anti-competitive practices in the meat markets.

USDA proposed a new poultry grower tournament system rule, with the current inactive proposal to be withdrawn.

One of the rules the agency proposed will provide greater clarity to strengthen enforcement of unfair and deceptive practices, undue preferences and unjust prejudices.

USDA also will re-propose a rule

to clarify that parties do not need to demonstrate harm to competition in order to bring an action under section 202 (a) and 202 (b) of the Packers and Stockyards Act.

"The pandemic and other recent events have revealed how concentration can take a painful toll on independent farmers and ranchers, while exposing working family consumers to higher prices and uncertain output," U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack said. "The Packers and Stockyards Act is a vital tool for protecting farmers and ranchers from excessive concentration and unfair, deceptive practices in the poultry, hog and cattle markets, but the law is 100 years old and needs to take into account modern

market dynamics. It should not be used as a safe harbor for bad actors. The process we're beginning today will seek to strengthen the fairness and resiliency of livestock markets on behalf of farmers, ranchers and growers."

The planned Packers and Stockyards Act proposals will support USDA's efforts to ensure fairer and more resilient markets for farmers and ranchers.

According to USDA, in the last five years, stresses and disruptions caused by concentration in livestock markets have impacted not only producers, but consumers, as well.

For more information, visit www.ams.usda.gov/services/enforcement/psd.

What happens in the city doesn't stay there. It makes its way to farms and ranches.

Strong agricultural leadership, however, can make a difference in the field and beyond the fence row—in court rooms, Congress and local and state organizations. And Texas Farm Bureau's (TFB) AgLead program can help.

The two-year program takes participants across Texas, the country and the world to discover agriculture and leadership from a new perspective.

AgLead members develop a variety of skills and knowledge regarding leadership, communication, public policy, regulatory issues, advocacy and more.

A maximum of 20 participants will be selected for the program—10 participants between the ages of 25-40 as of Dec. 31, 2021 and 10 participants age 40 and older as of Dec. 31, 2021.

AgLead members learn about agriculture from the farm to the factory and beyond, including visits to some of the nation's most diversified and innovative agricultural operations, processors, packagers and marketers.

Applications and supporting documents must be submitted by Sept. 1. The first session of the new class will be held this November.

Participants must be a TFB member at the time of application and throughout the program, if selected.

To review and download an application, visit texasfarmbureau.org/aglead. Additional details regarding costs and estimated travel dates are also available.

For more information, contact Roger Hall, TFB associate director of Organization Division, Leader Development, at rhall@txfb.org or call 254-399-5021.

Beef Cattle Short Course registration discount available to members

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) members still have time to save on registration for the 67th annual Texas A&M Beef Cattle Short Course Aug. 2-4 in College Station.

“All farmers and ranchers, regardless of ranch size and experience, with an interest in beef cattle are encouraged to attend the event,” Tracy Tomascik, TFB associate director of Commodity and Regulatory Activities, said.

The fee is \$210 for those attending in person and \$160 online. The prices go up to \$250 and \$200, respectively, after July 27.

TFB members will receive \$20 off

both the in-person and online registrations.

The discount is applied at registration when you use the code TXFB.

On the agenda

The Beef Cattle Short Course is the largest educational event of its kind and offers participants the opportunity to explore all topics of beef cattle production.

The three-day event will include more than 20 sessions covering basic practices, new technologies and hot topics. Six live demonstrations and the traditional prime rib dinner will be part of the short course.

More than 2,000 ranchers, beef industry representatives and exhibitors are expected to attend this

year’s in-person event.

A trade show will feature about 140 agricultural businesses and service exhibits.

TFB will also have one of the new Doorways to Agriculture mobile learning barns on display. The mobile trailer features games and activities that encourage adults and children to learn more about food, fiber and all of Texas agriculture.

“This is an opportunity to show others in agriculture some of our traveling educational exhibits,” Tomascik said. “We hope Farm Bureau members will stop by and see the tools we are using to engage with students in the classroom and with the public at statewide events.”

Registration details

The short course is hosted by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Department of Animal Science at Texas A&M University.

For more details on the Beef Cattle Short Course and to register, visit <https://beefcattleshortcourse.com> or call 979-845-6931.

Contact Tomascik at ttomascik@txfb.org or 254-751-2266 with questions regarding the TFB member discount.

For a full list of benefits and services available to TFB members, visit texasfarmbureau.org/member-benefits.

Texas Farm Bureau to offer campaign seminar this September

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

Many private citizens feel a call to serve others in an official capacity, but it can be intimidating to leave the quietness of relative anonymity and campaign for public office.

To help begin that journey, Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) will host a two-day strategy seminar this September for candidates, spouses and others involved or interested in the campaign process.

“This seminar is to train people who want to run for office about best management practices as far as running a campaign. Things like candidate consideration, issues, communication tactics, volunteers and election strategy will be covered,” TFB Associate Director of Government Affairs Billy Howe said. “It’s geared toward those who want to run and either their spouse or campaign manager. We also encourage anyone to attend who just wants to learn more about how campaigns function and understand the entire process better.”

A campaign training seminar program was implemented with the help of the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) in the 1980s.

The information, strategies, videos

and training sessions are continually updated and revamped for today’s challenges and political climate.

It’s important to help find and train candidates who are well-versed in production agriculture and understand the challenges faced by rural Texans, farmers and ranchers, Howe said.

“One of our goals as an organization is to have more people in elected office that are involved in agriculture or have firsthand knowledge of agriculture,” he said. “If we can help them understand how to run an effective campaign and get elected, that meets one of our main organizational goals and provides farmers and ranchers another voice in the legislative process or local governments.”

The seminar will be held Sept. 29-30 at the TFB Conference and Training Center in Waco.

Topics covered include evaluating the candidate and electorate, selecting a campaign theme and issues, campaign structure, role of a campaign manager, budgeting, identifying voters, using polls, Election Day activities and much more.

The event runs from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Wednesday and 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Thursday.



“This seminar provides all the information necessary to run a successful political campaign,” Howe said. “Many of our current elected officials have participated in the process and found it very valuable in preparing them to step into public office for the first time. No matter at what level, if you’re considering running for office, it’s definitely a worthwhile investment of your time and money.”

Registration is \$100 per candidate and \$100 per spouse or campaign manager attending alone.

If the spouse or campaign manager is attending with the candidate, the cost is \$60. One \$40 member dis-

count per candidate is available for those with a current TFB membership.

The registration fee covers candidate materials, a mock interview video, two breakfasts and lunches and one dinner. Lodging is separate. Hotel reservations are available by contacting Betsy Simon by phone at 800-537-8294 or email at bsimon@txfb.org.

Registration closes Aug. 30. To register, visit texasfarmbureau.org and select the blue bar on the home page titled TFB Campaign Seminar.

Contact Howe with questions at bhowe@txfb.org or 254-751-2208.

Summer conference covers carbon markets, agricultural trends

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Climate, the meat packing industry and trade were among the topics highlighted during the Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) Summer Leadership Conference.

About 400 farmers and ranchers were in San Marcos June 21-23 for the meeting.

Carbon markets, climate issues

Discussions about climate are opening up new opportunities for income for Texas farmers and ranchers through agricultural ecosystem credit markets.

“These markets are moving quickly and changing rapidly,” Shelby Meyers, American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) economist, said. “There are many things to consider when evaluating whether or not you want to participate in a market designed to sell ag ecosystem asset credits.”

Questions to consider include who will pay for the verification, financial barriers, technical support and rural broadband, education and how to ensure data privacy.

As more information becomes available about the credit systems and market opportunities, AFBF will provide updates in Market Intel reports. Those reports can be found online at fb.org/market-intel or on TFB’s Climate Issue Resources webpage at texasfarmbureau.org/climate.

John Neilson-Gammon, the state climatologist, discussed weather patterns and the regional forecast.



During the 2021 TFB Summer Leadership Conference in San Marcos, members heard from a variety of speakers on trending topics that will affect agriculture’s future.

A panel of three Farm Bureau members—Tommy Henderson of Clay County, Barry Evans of Swisher County and Donnie Dippel of Fayette County—discussed soil health and their experiences with cover crops.

Beef packers, alternative proteins

The beef packing industry is under much scrutiny with calls from agricultural organizations and lawmakers to investigate the cattle market.

Kate Miller, the chief operating officer for Fort Worth Meat Packers, shared what it takes to run a packing plant—the costs, labor and other challenges associated with turning live cattle into marketable beef—with TFB members.

“Packers need cattlemen and cattlemen need packers,” she said. “But it’s important to remember that beef and cattle aren’t the same commodity.”

The packing industry has been in a consolidation pattern, leading to a larger supply of market ready cattle than packers can process. Compounding the issue were historic events like the Holcomb fire in 2019, pandemic restrictions and labor shortages that temporarily slowed down processing.

These market interruptions and consolidations have led to wide differences in the value of cattle compared to beef.

Miller followed up with insight from her career in the meat industry and experience opening Fort Worth Meat Packers, which processes about 1,500 head a week, informing members there are extreme challenges in expanding processing capacity in the near future.

An educational session on plant-based alternative proteins included a sample taste-test of three Gardein products and a discussion on alternative protein history and current market trends by Matt Walters, H-E-B’s director of Meat Procurement.

An update on the beef checkoff was provided by Molly McAdams, the new Texas Beef Council executive vice president.

She highlighted promotional efforts and advertising campaigns by the checkoff to strengthen demand for beef. McAdams also shared information about outreach efforts with dietitians, teachers, students and chefs.

Trade, economic outlook

Engaging world customers helps keep U.S. agriculture growing.

“About 97% of the world’s population lives outside the U.S.,” Kyle Gilliam, manager of Global Strategies and Trade for the U.S. Grains Council, said. “Free trade agreements are how we advance our overall trade, and it’s important to continue developing relationships all across the world.”

Since over 20% of U.S. agricultural production is exported each year, trade plays an important role in the economic outlook for agriculture.

Dr. Bart Fischer, co-director and assistant research professor at the Texas A&M Agricultural Food and Policy Center, talked about that outlook and factors to consider.

The International Monetary Fund predicted a sharp V-shaped economic recovery in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. While Fischer said the prediction has held true so far, the agricultural sector may be impacted by one or more factors soon. Exports, cattle markets, inheritance taxes, environmental actions and government farm assistance programs can all cause major shifts in agricultural economics, according to Fisher.

The next farm bill will also play a role in the agricultural economy.

87th Texas Legislature recap

TFB Government Affairs staff discussed legislative wins during a panel discussion. Several of TFB’s legislative priorities, including eminent domain, feral hog control and rural broadband, were signed into law by Gov. Greg Abbott.

A more detailed recap is available on pages 12-13.

Additional sessions

Additional sessions covered pesticide regulations and registrations with Bayer Crop Science.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Director Jeff Hyde provided an update on opportunities and challenges facing the agency, and TFB Director of Communications Gary Joiner shared how to fact check news sources and information you find online.



This is an ad the national beef checkoff program is running to promote beef to consumers. Other advertisements and research, promotional and educational information is available at texasbeefcheckoff.com.

Rep. Arrington honored with Farm Bureau's Golden Plow Award

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

For his commitment to sound agricultural policy, Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) and American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) presented U.S. Rep. Jodey Arrington with the prestigious AFBF Golden Plow Award.

The award is the highest honor the national organization gives to sitting members of Congress.

“Since taking office to serve the Texas 19th Congressional District in 2017, Congressman Arrington has been a steadfast advocate for farm and ranch families across the state and nation,” TFB President Russell Boening said. “He has led efforts to strengthen the farm safety net, promote international trade, improve tax policy, reduce government regulations and expand rural infrastructure, among others.”

As a member of the U.S. House Ways and Means Committee, Arrington helped address taxes, trade, energy and agriculture. He also co-

chairs the Rural Health Care Task Force and was appointed to serve a second term as deputy chair of the National Republican Congressional Committee.

“Thanks to Congressman Arrington’s efforts, the estate tax exemption was doubled,” AFBF President Zippy Duvall said. “He continues to work toward the goal of full repeal of the estate tax, which threatens the economic sustainability of our farm and ranch businesses.”

Boening noted Arrington’s experience and knowledge of agriculture, government and the private sector proves beneficial in Congress.

“Congressman Jodey Arrington fights hard for farmers and ranchers in Texas and across the country,” Boening said. “He is a leader who truly understands the determination of those involved in agriculture and works each day to provide more opportunity for rural America. Texas Farm Bureau thanks him for his service and congratulates him on this



U.S. Rep. Jodey Arrington (center) receives the Golden Plow Award from American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall (left) and Texas Farm Bureau President Russell Boening (right) in San Marcos during TFB's Summer Leadership Conference.

honorable achievement, which is awarded to only one member of the entire U.S. House of Representatives annually.”

AFBF’s Golden Plow Award recognizes members of Congress who exemplify agricultural leadership and support of Farm Bureau poli-

cies. Recipients are chosen for having a philosophy or record that demonstrates a commitment to sound agricultural policies supported by Farm Bureau, the private enterprise system, fiscal conservatism and reduced federal regulation of businesses and individuals.

Rep. Brady recognized with TFB's Distinguished Service Award

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) recognized U.S. Rep. Kevin Brady with its Distinguished Service Award, citing his leadership and outstanding service to Texas farmers and ranchers.

Brady represents Texas’ 8th Congressional District, a position he has held since 1997.

He is the lead Republican on the U.S. House Ways and Means Committee. While serving as chair of this committee, Brady championed the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. This legislation reformed the U.S. tax code for the first time in more than 30 years, providing needed relief for farmers and ranchers and creating millions of American jobs.

“Any time Texas farm and ranch families need help, we know we can always depend on Congressman Brady to provide commonsense solutions,” TFB President Russell Boening said. “He has proven this

throughout his tenure in Congress by helping with Texas Farm Bureau priority issues such as trade, taxes, regulatory reform, farm policy, disaster assistance and more.”

Brady is a recognized national leader in free trade. He led efforts to ratify the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement, which modernized NAFTA and provided more opportunities for agriculture. While in Congress, he has helped successfully secure passage of 13 of America’s 15 free trade agreements.

He served as chair of the Joint Committee on Taxation and as a member of the Joint Economic Committee of the House and Senate. Brady also chaired both the Health Care and Trade Subcommittees of Ways and Means.

“We are presenting him with Texas Farm Bureau’s Distinguished Service Award for his unwavering dedication to Texas agriculture,” Boening said. “He is a true problem solver who we



U.S. Rep. Kevin Brady (left) receives the Distinguished Service Award from Texas Farm Bureau President Russell Boening (right) during TFB's Summer Leadership Conference in San Marcos.

can always depend on to work across the aisle to get the job done.”

TFB’s Distinguished Service Award is the highest honor the organization bestows upon an individual.

It is presented only with the unanimous consent of the organization’s board of directors. The award is not given every year, but only to the most deserving of individuals.

Contraceptive available to help control wild pigs

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

A new hog contraceptive is available in Texas to help control the growth of the feral hog population over time.

HogStop is a male contraceptive developed by Daniel Loper, his father Dr. Daniel C. Loper and their partner, Brad Fails.

“It’s an all-natural feed bait that is made out of ingredients we feed the cattle and deer, and we just combined it in such a way to use it on feral hogs to make the boars sterile,” Loper said in an interview with the Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network. “It’s just designed to make the boars less fertile, so we can get a hold on the feral hog population.”

According to a recent U.S. Department of Agriculture survey, feral hogs cause more than \$230 million in losses annually to Texas agriculture. And those damages are expected to grow.

Farmers and ranchers have testified before lawmakers, saying hunting and trapping alone can’t control the invasive species.

That’s where Loper hopes the HogStop product can help.

HogStop is a bait feed developed by the trio, who tested formulas to find a feed that would be palatable for hogs.

“Hopefully, we just keep seeing



Feral hogs cause extreme damage to Texas agriculture and urban areas each year, but a new contraceptive aims to help control the invasive species. Photo courtesy U.S. Department of Agriculture.

numbers reduce and reduce and reduce, because the reproductive cycle is three months, three weeks and three days. So, if we can just interrupt a couple of those reproductive cycles, we’re really reducing the threat of the feral hogs,” he said.

A field study showed boar fertility was reduced after five days of eating the feed and that it maintained fertility interruption for at least 30 days, according to Loper.

HogStop is considered a 25(b) pesticide under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act by the Environmental Protection Agen-

cy, which means it does not have to be registered by the Texas Department of Agriculture before use.

Loper recommends farmers and ranchers purchase feeders to keep out other animals and feed the product year round.

“We’ve developed hog-specific feeders to keep out other animals, and it impacts monogastrics more than it does ruminants,” Loper said.

The trio has been working on the product for about three years. As a former Texas dairy farmer, Loper’s dad’s experience in ruminant nutrition and background in nutritional

biochemistry helped in the development.

“My dad, through his experience, knew that certain feeds impact fertility in animals,” Loper said.

The product is manufactured in Texas and is produced in cooperation with Hi-Pro Feeds. It is available wherever Hi-Pro products are sold.

The trio also established relationships with Barclay and Wild Pig Feeder, two companies that manufacture two different feeders designed to target wild pigs.

“We’ve got the product. We’ve tested it. We’ve shown that it does show a reduction in fertility and morphology and motility in these boars,” Loper said.

He noted it also impacts sow fertility, but it was tougher to trace.

With the feral hog population on the rise, the threat to fields, pastures, water sources and livestock also increases.

The invasive species can degrade water quality and introduce E. coli, making the water unsafe to drink. They also pose a threat to livestock and wildlife, preying on small animals.

“Farmers and ranchers need every tool possible to help control the ever-growing feral hog population,” Tracy Tomascik, TFB associate director of Commodity and Regulatory Activities, said.

For more information about HogStop bait feed, visit www.hogstop.com.

TFB launches webpage focused on climate issues, resources

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

To help farmers, ranchers and landowners navigate information related to agricultural sustainability, climate issues and carbon markets, Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) launched the Climate Issue Resources webpage.

The information and resources are available at texasfarmbureau.org/climate.

“There are many emerging ideas and platforms related to climate and carbon markets, so it’s important to stay informed,” Jay Bragg, TFB as-

sociate director of Commodity and Regulatory Activities, said. “This webpage serves as a resource that will be continually updated with information to help farmers, ranchers and landowners have accurate information available to them.”

The webpage includes sections on sustainability, carbon markets, policy, research reports and news related to climate issues.

“This page outlines trending topics and information to help Farm Bureau members better understand the opportunities, challenges and other considerations they should

take into account before enrolling in carbon or sustainability markets,” Bragg said.

He noted Texas farmers and ranchers work to be environmentally and economically sustainable. Agricultural research and voluntary stewardship investments and practices, some of which are outlined in the farm bill, have helped farmers strengthen their stewardship efforts.

New analysis of data from the Environmental Protection Agency also highlights agricultural emissions reductions and the importance of developing new research and technolo-

gies to capture more carbon in cropland and pastureland, he said.

“Farmers and ranchers across the state and nation use climate-smart practices that reduce emissions, enrich the soil and protect our air and water,” Bragg said. “This resource page provides research documents, articles and policy information to keep farmers and ranchers informed on the many topics related to sustainability and climate issues.”

View the resource information at texasfarmbureau.org/climate or contact Bragg for more information at jbragg@txfb.org.

CRP general, grasslands signup deadline

Farmers, ranchers and landowners can sign up for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) General and Grasslands programs.

USDA updated both signup options to provide greater incentives for farmers and ranchers to enroll.

General signup

Through CRP, farmers, ranchers and landowners establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species to control soil erosion, improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat on cropland.

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) also added a new Climate-Smart Practice Incentive for practices that sequester carbon and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

FSA also added a one-time "inflationary" adjustment for payment rates, as well as having more flexibility on adjusting soil rental rates.

Grasslands signup

CRP Grasslands helps landowners and operators protect grassland, including rangeland, pastureland and certain other lands, while maintaining the areas as grazing lands.

FSA updated the Grasslands Signup to establish a minimum rental rate of \$15 per acre, as well as new National Grassland Priority Zones.

How to enroll

To enroll in the programs, farmers, ranchers and landowners should contact their local USDA Service Center by the July 23 deadline.

To enroll in the CRP Grasslands signup, they should contact USDA by the Aug. 20 deadline.

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Successful state legislative session for Farm Bureau, agriculture

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

Texas lawmakers approved several bills during the 87th Legislative Session that will impact farmers, ranchers and rural Texans.

“Major progress was made in areas of importance to farmers, ranchers, private property owners and rural Texans. Particularly, we saw success in eminent domain reform,” Charlie Leal, Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) state legislative director, said. “That has been a goal of Texas Farm Bureau for several sessions. So, it’s good to have accomplished protections and to have a more fair and transparent process for landowners. We look forward to seeing how that will help in eminent domain transactions between landowners and private entities moving forward.”

Strengthening private property rights

Landowners deserve fair treatment when facing eminent domain proceedings. Too often, this doesn’t happen when they’re approached by condemning entities seeking easements for pipelines, transmission lines and other projects across their lands.

But the passage of HB 2730 brings meaningful changes that benefit private property owners.

“The bill makes the process more fair and transparent by requiring the landowner to get an initial offer that is clear whether or not it includes damages to the remainder. The legislation also requires the landowner to receive an easement agreement up front with standard terms. The bill also improves the landowner bill of rights that landowners will now get with or before the initial offer,” Leal said. “It creates a penalty for land agents that act unethically and provide lowball offers to landowners.”

Rep. DeWayne Burns and Sen. Lois Kolkhorst worked tirelessly on the issue for six years, and TFB is grateful for their dedication and drive to see their constituents receive a fairer eminent domain pro-



Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) had a successful legislative session, and many bills that will positively impact agriculture were signed by Gov. Greg Abbott. Those bills include eminent domain reform, authorizing TFB health plans as a member benefit, feral hog control, rural broadband and more.

cess, Leal said.

Feral hog control

An issue plaguing rural Texans—and quickly encroaching upon suburban and urban areas—is feral hog damage. The population of this invasive species has exploded in recent years with few viable control methods in place.

But a rider in the state budget now allocates funding to the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service to research and develop further methods of feral hog control, including a feral hog toxicant that has been approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency but is not yet available in Texas.

“The study of the use of warfarin-based feral hog toxicants and the proposed program and study by AgriLife will allow landowners to have access to these products if the study proves successful, which we believe will happen,” Leal said.

Improving rural Texans’ lives

Small towns and rural communities are not known for dependable, high-speed internet access.

Awareness of this issue was highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic as families were forced to work and learn at home, often relying on subpar internet connections.

HB 5 seeks to help Texans by expanding broadband service to underserved areas, including rural settings that have long been overlooked by internet service providers.

“The bill will create a statewide broadband development office that would promote research and develop the expansion of access to broadband service throughout Texas,” Leal said. “It sets up a development council, as well, bringing in representatives from all sectors of Texas, including ambassadors for the rural and agricultural sectors. This will allow the state to set a statewide plan and bring down federal allocation funding when available.”

An additional bill, HB 3924, will improve the lives of many self-employed Texans through the offering of affordable, non-insurance health plans.

Under the new legislation, TFB can offer these health plans to members who may struggle to find afford-

able health care coverage.

“These plans are not insurance, but they offer extensive health coverage benefits,” Leal said. “We feel as though they’re a good option for people who don’t have access to health insurance through their employer and don’t receive subsidized coverage under the Affordable Care Act. Other state Farm Bureaus have offered similar programs for years, and their members have found them to be of great value.”

Protecting farmers and ranchers

TFB has long advocated for policies and laws that protect farmers and ranchers.

The Farm Animal Liability Act (FALA) expansion bill, HB 365, strengthens some of those protections by ensuring farmers and ranchers receive the same liability shields already in place for other agricultural activities.

The original Texas statute said people hosting agritourism events such as livestock shows, rodeos and other activities were protected against liability for “property damage or damages arising from the personal injury or death of a participant in a farm animal activity or livestock show” where people can reasonably expect to be around livestock.

But in a case that went before the Texas Supreme Court last year, the court determined FALA did not apply to farmers and ranchers doing normal ranching activities.

Thankfully, Leal said lawmakers saw the inherent inequality of the court’s application and drafted legislation to correct it.

Now, FALA is expanded to livestock owners on their private property, as well.

Another bill Leal noted will be beneficial to farmers and ranchers is HB 1480.

“This bill, known as the agriculture trespass bill, creates a criminal offense for anyone who damages or vandalizes or seeks to destroy or cause any kind of harm to any animal or crop facility and its contents,”

he said. "This is an issue that we have seen with activist groups who have sought to utilize employment and trespass on these facilities in order to gain notoriety for themselves or their groups."

Keeping Texas agriculture strong

Several bills were also passed that will help keep Texas agriculture strong.

Sunset reviews of TDA, the Texas Animal Health Commission and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department were completed with recommendations from the legislature to continue those agencies.

Continuation of TDA included funding for the Texas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation and the Texas Prescribed Burning Board, two programs Leal said are crucial to Texas farmers and ranchers.

All three agencies received extensions until 2033, which is the maximum period (12 years) agencies can operate without undergoing another sunset review, according to Leal. He said it is a testament to the efficien-

cy and importance of those agencies to have received the maximum extension period.

Another area which will strengthen Texas agriculture is a cooperative agreement between TDA, state universities and "interested parties" to research and develop methods of detection and mitigation of crop pests and diseases.

Under HB 2089, interested farming and ranching organizations like TFB and commodity-specific organizations may create partnerships with TDA and a state university to undertake research and development projects.

Those projects will prove beneficial to Texas agriculture as the participants work to eradicate plant pests and diseases, Leal added.

Bills that did not pass this session

"We can't win them all, and that was the case for a few bills we were working on this session," Leal said. "Unfortunately, there was no new legislation approved for protection of surface water and groundwater

rights or truth in labeling. There was a hemp farming bill that would have aligned state regulations with those of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, but there were some disagreements between the House and Senate that ultimately failed the bill."

These bills may not have passed, but Leal said TFB members who participated in the legislative process this session have much to be proud of.

"When I go into legislative offices, I want them to see the Farm Bureau pin on my lapel and remember our county leaders and members in their district who sent me to represent them. We had a phenomenal session and achieved many of our goals," he said. "That's directly attributable to the active involvement from our members and county leaders being so engaged with their lawmakers."

TFB will continue the fight for rural and agricultural policy between now and the next legislative session.

"We remain engaged with lawmakers and their staff throughout the 'off season' to help them remain



Gov. Greg Abbott announced a special session will begin July 8.

aware of issues that affect their constituents and our members," Leal said. "Our grassroots policy development process ensures our members' voices are heard, and we remain committed to bringing those voices to the legislative process."

For more information on the various bills, view previous issues of the *Austin Newsletter* at [texasfarmbureau.org/advocacy/austin-newsletter](https://www.texasfarmbureau.org/advocacy/austin-newsletter).

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Farmers, ranchers share tax concerns with Brady during forum

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

Farmers and ranchers from across Texas' 8th Congressional District recently shared concerns on the Biden administration's proposed tax increases with Congressman Kevin Brady.

At a forum discussion in Porter hosted by Texas Farm Bureau (TFB), Brady candidly discussed President Joe Biden's proposal to increase some taxes and reverse portions of the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

"We know from the Family Business Estate Tax Coalition that repealing this one provision, the [step-up in basis tax] provision, will cost over a million U.S. jobs in the first 12 years and a whopping 100,000 every year after," he said. "And it doesn't stop there. Paychecks go down, and the U.S. economy shrinks because of this. It's unfair. It's wrong, and it punishes the wrong people for working their whole lifetimes."

Farmers such as Charles Ring, who grows cotton, sorghum and corn, relayed stories of how retroactive changes to capital gains taxes in 2021 and eliminating the step-up in tax basis of property could have devastating effects on their business.

Currently, Ring said he owns older cotton pickers that he'd like to trade in to purchase new machines. But when he asked his CPA if he would have to pay capital gains taxes on the "income" from the trade-ins, the accountant was unsure.

"The money I receive from the old pickers is 'ordinary income' under the current rules, but we've got stepped-up basis and [Section] 179 to counteract that," he said. "But if we lose any of that, I could come up with a ton of income that's not even related to production."

Eliminating the stepped-up tax basis and taxing unrealized capital gains at death would affect not only current farmers and ranchers, but future generations, TFB District 11 State Director Allen Kaminski told Brady.



Texas Farm Bureau members told U.S. Rep. Kevin Brady that proposals to impose capital gains at death and to repeal stepped-up basis would be devastating to farms and ranches.

"We've had an operation in our family for over 125 years, and I'm 58 years old," he said. "My two daughters, my six grandchildren...where I'm located, outside of Houston, I'm not sure they can afford to keep the operation going when we pass if these tax changes come into play. I'd like this land to stay in my family."

Death taxes don't just impact the wealthy, Brady responded. Farmers, ranchers and small business owners receive the brunt of tax increases with the elimination of stepped-up basis, he said.

But he urged those in attendance to keep sharing their stories and concerns with legislators on both sides of the aisle. Getting those in favor of increasing taxes and eliminating certain provisions to change their minds may be difficult, but it can be done if their constituents speak up.

"I think [the lawmakers pushing for changes] expect to get these changes because they don't talk about you. They talk about the wealthy, so there's no sympathy for you," Brady said. "But the minute you start talking about family-owned farm businesses, everything changes. If we do our job correctly, we will stop this."

Changes to capital gains tax policy that eliminate or scale back stepped-up basis could result in

massive tax burdens for farmers and ranchers, noted TFB National Legislative Director Laramie Adams.

Under current tax law, transfers at death are not treated as a "sale" and capital gain is not taxed. Those inheriting farmland may also increase the tax basis of the property to fair market value without paying capital gains tax. The property is instead "stepped up" to current value, so capital gains taxes are only paid on appreciation since the property was inherited.

Many farms' value lies in the land and equipment, Adams explained. So, eliminating that stepped-up basis would make passing down family farms and ranches more difficult, because capital gains taxes would likely exceed the farm's net income.

"As our members discussed with Congressman Brady, the step up in basis is a tax tool farmers and ranchers routinely use in passing operations and land from one generation to the next. If stepped-up basis is taken away from them, taxes would likely significantly exceed annual income generated by the land, which means they would probably have to liquidate to pay the taxes and lose their family land and livelihood," Adams said. "That's not fair to those families who are working to preserve that operation for the next generation, and that's not how

things are done in this country. We don't reward hard work by effectively taking away their children's right to inherit."

He repeated Brady's warning that repealing stepped-up basis will also damage the U.S. economy.

In a recent report for the Family Business Estate Tax Coalition, the conductors of the study found middle-class, family-owned businesses would be hardest hit by the repeal. The gross domestic product relative to the U.S. economy in 2021 would be reduced by about \$10 billion over 10 years, with farmers, ranchers and other small businesses bearing the weight of the economic downturn.

"American Farm Bureau Federation and Texas Farm Bureau are working diligently with our lawmakers to make sure everyone is aware of how detrimental these changes could really be for family farms and ranches," Adams said. "We are encouraging our members to reach out and share their concerns with us and their legislators, because this is a very real, very urgent issue, and family legacies are at stake. The difference in being able to pass your farm or ranch down to your children or grandchildren hangs in the balance, so this is definitely something we need all our members to engage in and act upon."

TFB is planning more tax forum discussions across the state. If you are interested in participating, contact Adams at 254-751-2654 or by email at ladams@txfb.org.

"We've hosted about 45 farm tours since January with our congressional delegation. This tax issue is one of the top issues we hear about," Adams said. "We have the stories. We just need to make sure they're shared. When you can put it in your own words, raw video, anything you can send us that Farm Bureau and other agricultural organizations can share and help amplify that message...well, it seems simple, but real people sharing their real concerns is very powerful."

USFWS grants Texas program permit for black vulture management

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

More ranchers are finding their livestock, particularly newborn or young animals, falling victim to black vultures. Although the birds are primarily carrion scavengers, they're also a predatory species that kill kid goats, calves and lambs when the opportunity arises.

"Traditionally, black vultures are only found in South Texas, but in the last decade they've expanded, and the population has grown. They've always been a problem for ranchers, but with the expansion in range and numbers, it's become an even bigger problem," Texas Wildlife Services (TWS) Program State Director Mike Bodenchuk said. "And now we've seen changes in Texas livestock production. Where people used to breed wool sheep, they're raising hair breeds. Hair breeds might be lambing year-round, calves are hitting the ground in unusual seasons or what used to be unusual season, and now we've got a bigger problem because there are a lot of vultures in the summer and fall."

The crafty birds have learned to home in on livestock birthing areas.



Black vulture populations have increased over the last decade, bringing about a rise in livestock attacks, as well. Newborn livestock are particularly vulnerable.

Although they assist in cleaning up afterbirth and stillborn livestock, they also gather in large numbers to attack females during the birthing process, resulting in lost replacement animals and sometimes lost mothers, as well.

It may be tempting to shoot black vultures that are attacking livestock, but Bodenchuk cautioned they're protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which pre-

vents people from killing vultures or any other migratory bird without a permit.

So, to help Texas ranchers who are losing livestock to black vultures, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) granted a permit to the Texas Wildlife Damage Management Association (TWDMA) for black vulture management. TWDMA is a member of the cooperative TWS.

Previously, those experiencing issues with the birds could obtain a depredation permit from FWS, but it's a time-consuming and detailed process. Now, a sub-permit can be quickly issued by TWDMA.

"The traditional permitting process through FWS can be long and problematic. You must apply online, pay online and then there can be a 60- to 90-day wait, which for most people, is too long," Bodenchuk said. "But the blanket permit issued by FWS to TWDMA allows the association to give sub-permit status to livestock producers. They can contact the Wildlife Services district office, speak with a biologist and the association can issue a permit usually within about 48 hours."

Depredation permits allow for lethal removal of a few vultures to reinforce nonlethal harassment. Under the sub-permit, ranchers can remove up to five black vultures

each. The blanket permit issued by FWS to TWDMA allows for the lethal removal of up to 750 vultures in Texas.

Non-lethal control methods include auditory and visual dispersal methods like lasers, propane cannons and "effigies," decoy birds hung head-down as though they were dead.

Lethal control serves as a deterrent to remaining members of the bird's flock, Bodenchuk said.

He also noted TWS recommends ranchers hang the dead vultures in a nearby tree because vultures don't like to come near a dead vulture.

"So, by shooting one and hanging it as an effigy, a rancher can reinforce hazing and chase another 50 of them off," he said.

The organization recognizes the permit cap of 750 is limited, but there is a possibility it might be extended if there's enough need.

Bodenchuk said TWS biologists would be "triaging" cases to make sure those who have the most need can get a permit.

Ranchers should call their TWS district office to start the sub-permit application process.



The birds are known carrion scavengers but will turn predatory if the opportunity arises.

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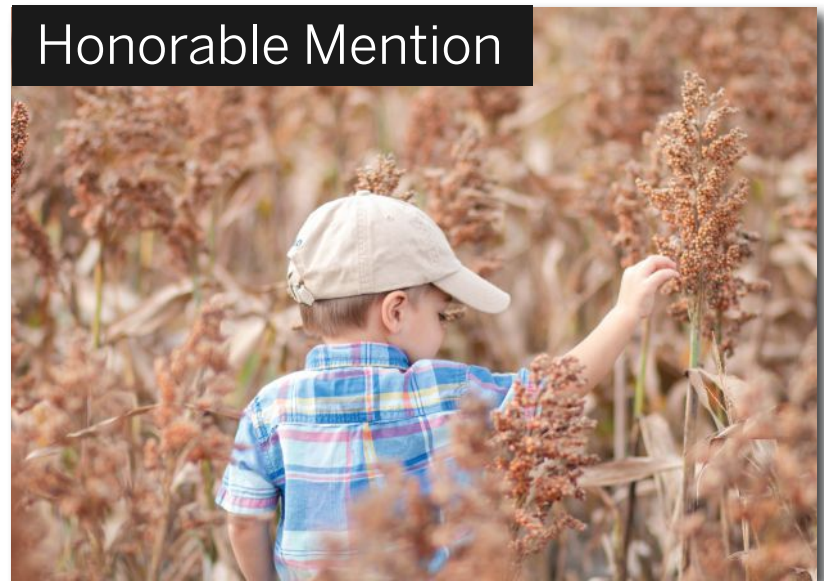
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Hundreds of photos from TFB members across the state were submitted to this year's contest. Though it was a difficult task, TFB staff critiqued the photos capturing various parts of the Lone Star State and selected this year's winners.



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PLACE

Mia Meehan of Grandview captured Texas' sunniest and brightest crop—sunflowers—with a busy little bee hard at work.



Honorable Mention

A future farmer dreaming of his own crops. Kayla Otahal of Corpus Christi received Honorable Mention with this photo of her son checking a field of grain sorghum.



Honorable Mention

Squad goals. Lana Fernandez of Post snapped this photo and earned Honorable Mention.



2nd
PLACE

Social hour before the work begins. Our second place photo was submitted by Dessie Elledge of Petrolia.

MORE GOOD PHOTOS

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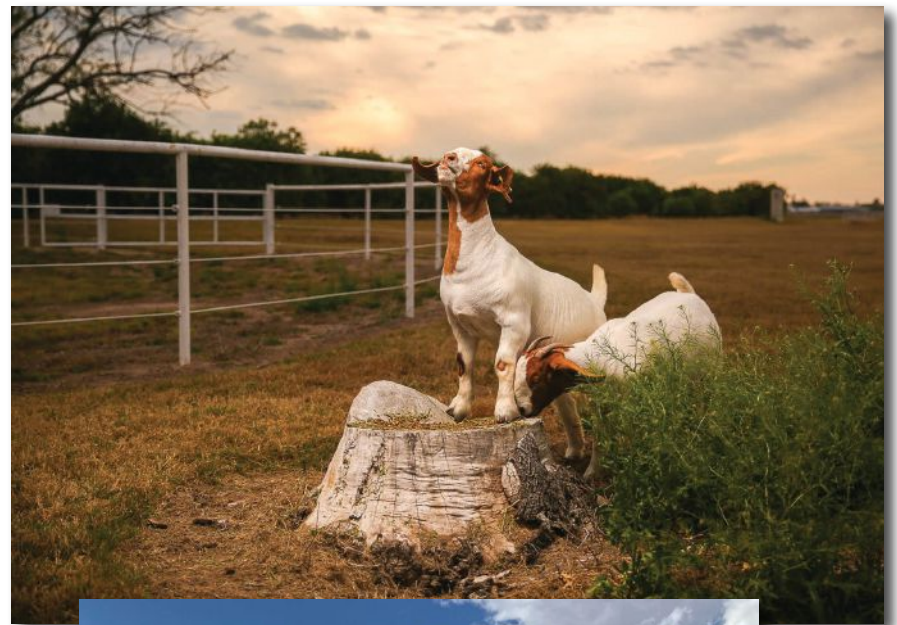
Praisin' and grazin'. This photo was captured by Wyatt Robbins of Mission.

Prepping the ground for planting. Kailynn Peugh of Ackerly submitted this photo.

Fog Horn the Rooster. Kinley Felps of Blanco captured this photo.

Fill 'er up! Dakota Davidson of Detroit captured this photo of golden kernels spilling into the hopper during harvest.

Under cover! Paul Estrada of Lubbock captured this photo of an adult Texas Horned Lizard on the flatlands of the Lone Star State.



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Representatives introduce legislation on cattle market transparency

Recently introduced legislation would create greater price discovery and transparency within the cattle market, while giving producers more tools and useful information. The Farm Bureau-backed Optimizing the Cattle Market Act of 2021 would direct the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to create a cattle formula contracts library and increase the reporting window for “cattle committed” from seven to 14 days.

The bill, introduced by Reps. Vicky Hartzler (R-Mo.) and Emanuel Cleaver (D-Mo.), would also require USDA, in consultation with the department’s chief economist, to establish mandated minimums for regional negotiated cash and negotiated grid live cattle trade and to consider stakeholder input through a public comment period. Consideration must also be given to peer reviewed economic research from land grant universities.

According to bill language, the minimums may be weekly or another periodic basis, must account for black swan events and must be reviewed every two years.

The bill notes that after three

years, a cost-benefit analysis should be conducted to determine the operation and effect of regional mandatory minimums.

“America’s families are paying more for meat at the grocery store while rock bottom prices are paid to farmers. Ranchers can’t continue to lose money on the cattle they work hard to raise. Farmers and ranchers have legitimate questions, and this legislation takes important steps toward ensuring they have fair access to markets and are fully informed on pricing,” American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall said. “We appreciate Rep. Hartzler and Rep. Cleaver for introducing the Optimizing the Cattle Market Act of 2021, and we look forward to working with Congress to make certain farmers and ranchers can continue to put dinner on the table in homes across America.”

The measure also expresses that there is a need for expedited reauthorization of the Livestock Mandatory Reporting program, including base prices subject to the same reporting requirements as negotiated cash and the creation of a contract



The Optimizing the Cattle Market Act of 2021 was recently introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives to address issues in the cattle market.

library. It directs USDA to provide educational outreach activities for producers on how to best use the library.

“This legislation aims to usher in transparency improvements and restores accountability in the industry to lift up these struggling sectors and embark on a new chapter of progress for our cattlemen and women,” Hartzler said. “I am proud to introduce the Optimizing the Cattle Market Act to make this a reality

for our nation’s trusted agricultural partners.”

The Optimizing the Cattle Market Act of 2021 is similar to Sens. Deb Fischer (R-Neb.) and Ron Wyden’s (D-Oregon) Cattle Market Transparency Act of 2021 (S. 543).

More information on the new legislation, cattle transactions and regional minimum negotiated trade is available from AFBF in Market Intel reports found at fb.org/market-intel.

Farm Bureaus urge federal government to address border crisis

Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) spearheaded a national Farm Bureau effort urging top Biden administration officials to recognize the border crisis and take swift action to help farm and ranch families impacted by the surge of illegal immigration.

A letter sent to Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Secretary Tom Vilsack of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Secretary Deb Haaland of the U.S. Department of the Interior was signed by TFB, 49 other state Farm Bureaus, the Puerto Rico Farm Bureau and the American Farm Bureau Federation.

“We have been listening to the concerns of our members and hearing how their livelihoods are being affected by the surge on the border. Farm and ranch families, many of

whom have owned land for generations, are bearing the brunt of this unprecedented influx and have never seen a more dire situation,” the groups wrote in the June 3 letter.

The Farm Bureaus said while illegal immigration is often perceived primarily as a southern border issue, communities across the country are being negatively impacted. If not properly addressed, these issues will only continue to multiply and escalate, according to the Farm Bureaus.

“They shared how their crops and property are being damaged, which in turn has caused financial hardship. For example, these landowners are experiencing cut fences, destroyed crops, compromised water sources, vandalism, litter on their property and more. Most important-

ly, the security and safety of these families are at stake given the current circumstances,” stated the letter.

The Farm Bureaus said local and state border security resources have been exhausted, leaving little help for farmers and ranchers. The organizations requested federal authorities work promptly to provide additional resources and enforce legal immigration to secure U.S. borders.

The groups say human smugglers (Coyotes) are making false promises and doing whatever it takes to get paid and get away, including jeopardizing lives and property. In their desperation to evade law enforcement, Coyotes abandon people, steal vehicles, vandalize property and threaten the safety and livelihoods of farmers and ranchers, according

to the Farm Bureaus. The groups noted Coyotes are often criminals who smuggle drugs and firearms into the country, frequently leaving them on property, causing unrest for farm and ranch families.

“The current situation should not be acceptable to you or to any American. People are being treated as a disposable source of income, and landowners are living in fear while Coyotes reap a windfall from leaving people destitute. You must not allow this to continue,” the letter stated.

Farmers and ranchers along the border continue to share stories of financial hardship and disruption from the surge of illegal immigrants. View their stories on Texas Farm Bureau’s Border Crisis Impacts webpage at texasfarmbureau.org/border-crisis-impacts.

Summer Ag Institute brings agriculture to Texas teachers

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

Teachers from across Texas grew their agricultural knowledge and cultivated techniques to incorporate agriculture into the classroom at this year's Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) Summer Ag Institute.

During the four-day professional development event June 14-17 in Waco, the educators toured farms, ranches and agribusinesses in Central Texas. They participated in hands-on activities to replicate in their own classrooms and heard from experts on topics important to Texas' vibrant agricultural sector. The group also visited a facility that creates livestock feed rations and met with a rural veterinarian to learn about livestock feed and animal care.

"The Summer Ag Institute is almost a week of hands-on, interactive learning to really drive home the agricultural concepts they're learning about," Jordan Walker, TFB associate director of Organization Division Educational Outreach, said.

The group traveled to Waco Wetlands, where they learned about water conservation and water testing.

Conservationists from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service also talked about cover crops, rotational grazing and other conservation practices farmers and ranchers engage in to ensure the best use and care of their land.

Farm tours

In Cameron, the teachers visited the Livestock Nutrition Center, where feed is custom blended for ranchers according to their herd's needs.

During a tour of the facility, the group learned how byproducts of human food and fiber production—like cottonseed, beet pulp and peanut hulls—are a quality source of nutrition for livestock.

The educators toured 44 Farms, a large-scale Angus cattle ranch, Director of Customer Experience



At TrueHarvest Farms in Belton, a hydroponic lettuce and leafy greens grower, teachers followed the greens process from seed to harvest to learn more about hydroponic food production systems.



At Livestock Nutrition Center in Cameron, the teachers learned about sustainability and how farm byproducts are used for animal feed.

James Burks explained how the operation produces top-quality beef cattle genetics for a variety of purposes including seedstock, herd improvement and feeder calves. He also discussed their direct-to-consumer beef sales, as well as their efforts to bring beef to restaurants and Walmart stores through an exclusive partnership program.

In Rogers, the teachers learned about honey production at Walker Honey Farm.

The farm sells a variety of raw

honey and honey-based food products, beeswax soaps, candles and craft meads, drinks and wine. During the tour, teachers learned about pollinator gardens, apiary and beekeeping, large-scale honey production and how mead is made.

At TrueHarvest Farms in Belton, a hydroponic lettuce and leafy greens grower, teachers followed the greens' process from seed to harvest to learn about hydroponic food production systems.

The group visited with John Ev-



Teachers explored the new Texas Farm Bureau interactive Doorways to Agriculture mobile learning barn.

ans, a fifth-generation farmer and rancher in Little River Academy. Evans discussed his family farm's evolution over the generations and how he used his background in technology to update some farming practices to increase yields and reduce inputs.

Hands-on activities, workshops

The group also participated in hands-on activities and lessons they can use in their classrooms, as well as learned from industry experts and fellow teachers.

Previous TFB Outstanding Ag in the Classroom Teacher winners Martha McLeod and Mary Beth Bauer shared their experiences incorporating agriculture into the classroom and provided several lesson plans they developed using agricultural concepts.

In a session with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Entomologist Sonja Swiger, the group learned about insect classifications and life cycles. The lesson concluded with building insect habitats out of everyday objects. Swiger noted these habitats can easily be incorporated into classrooms at very low costs by using objects purchased at discount stores and having the stu-



Teachers received a lesson on plant propagation in the classroom, courtesy of the McLennan County Master Gardeners.

dents build them.

The evening featured an interactive demonstration by the Texas Beef Council connecting the beef cattle industry from pasture to plate. Teachers pulled on aprons to grill their dinner while learning more about nutritional science and culinary arts.

The teachers received lessons on

plant propagation in the classroom, courtesy of the McLennan County Master Gardeners. They participated in a variety of activities to learn about propagation and seed germination that can easily be replicated in their classrooms.

Other sessions included information from the Texas A&M Forest

Service and a visit from Southwest Dairy Farmers' mobile dairy barn.

Teachers from urban and rural areas alike enjoyed the experience.

San Antonio teacher Janell Nihipali, who teaches middle school math, science and social studies, said she is happy to take what she learned back to her students, many of whom live in apartments where they don't have access to farms or even their own lawn.

"I am super excited to show them there are things they can do with their families, even in their apartments, with plants and animals that they otherwise wouldn't experience," she said.

Teachers of subjects seemingly unconnected to agriculture—like business, computer science and digital media—left SAI with a new passion for sharing agriculture with students.

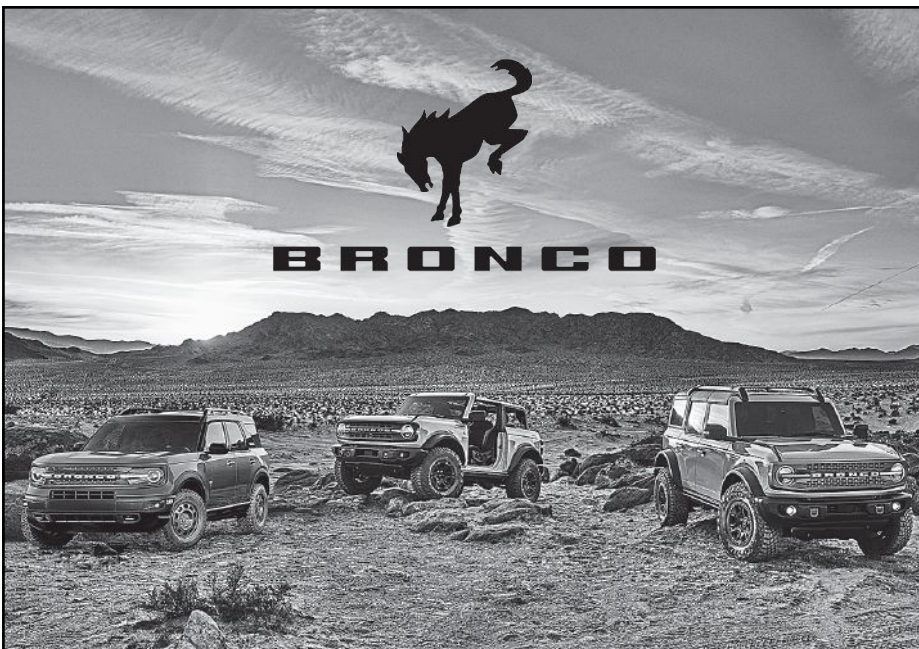
"All of my professional development has been sitting in a room learning about viruses and cybersecurity and computer programming problems. Here, we got out and got hot, dirty and stinky—all the things

that kids love. It's the first time in my life I've done anything like this, and I'm hooked," Muenster Public School teacher Richard Harris said. "I teach kids about viruses and worms in computers, and now I'm going to be able to integrate entomology and plant propagation into their lessons. I've learned things about the dairy system that are highly technical, cotton gins, all the automated tractors and plows and equipment. It's been tremendous."

There's room for agriculture in any subject and at every grade level, Walker noted.

"Our goal is to show teachers how accessible agriculture is, no matter the subject or grade, and to help them find ways to work that into their daily lessons and curriculum so they can help their students understand more about how our food gets from the field to tables around the globe," Walker said.

For more information on SAI and other educational opportunities available, visit texasfarmbureau.org/aitc.



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USDA announces more pandemic aid for farmers, businesses

Additional aid to farmers, ranchers and businesses as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Pandemic Assistance for Producers initiative was announced June 15.

Earlier this year, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced plans to use available pandemic assistance funds to address a number of gaps and disparities in previous rounds of aid.

As part of the Pandemic Assistance initiative announced in March, USDA pledged to continue Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) payments and to provide aid to producers and businesses left behind.

Implementation of the assistance will continue within 60 days to include support to timber harvesters, biofuels, dairy farmers and processors, livestock farmers and contract growers of poultry, assistance for organic cost share and grants for personal protective equipment (PPE).

"USDA is honoring its commitment to get financial assistance to producers and critical agricultural businesses, especially those left out or underserved by previous COVID aid," Vilsack said. "These investments through USDA Pandemic Assistance will help our food, agriculture and forestry sectors get back on track and plan for the future. Since January, USDA has provided more than \$11 billion of assistance directly to producers and food and agriculture business."

In March, USDA announced \$6 billion in available funds through Pandemic Assistance to support a number of new programs or to modify existing efforts.

The following programming is planned for implementation within 60 days, which will continue to be focused on filling gaps in previous rounds of assistance and helping beginning, socially disadvantaged and small- and medium-sized producers that need support most:

- \$200 million: Small, family-owned timber harvesting and hauling businesses
- \$700 million: Biofuels producers



The latest round of pandemic aid announced in June includes assistance for food, agriculture and forestry sectors.

• Support for dairy farmers and processors includes:

- ▶ \$400 million: The new Dairy Donation Program to address food insecurity and mitigate food waste and loss
- ▶ Additional pandemic payments targeted to dairy farmers who have demonstrated losses that have not been covered by previous pandemic assistance
- ▶ About \$580 million: Supple-

mental Dairy Margin Coverage for small and medium farms

- Assistance for poultry and livestock producers left out of previous rounds of pandemic assistance:
 - ▶ Contract poultry growers
 - ▶ Livestock and poultry producers forced to euthanize animals during the pandemic (March 1, 2020 through December 26, 2020)
- \$700 million: Pandemic Re-

sponse and Safety Grants for PPE and other protective measures to help specialty crop growers, meat packers and processors, seafood industry workers, among others

- Up to \$20 million: Additional organic cost share assistance, including for producers who are transitioning to organic

The funding associated with USDA Pandemic Assistance is meant to serve as a bridge from disruptions associated with the pandemic to longer-term investments to help build back a better food system.

USDA also announced \$5 billion in a mix of loans, grants and innovative financing to make meaningful investments to build a food system that is more resilient against shocks, delivers greater value to growers and workers and offers consumers an affordable selection of healthy food produced and sourced locally and regionally by farmers and processors from diverse backgrounds.

For more information, visit farmers.gov/pandemic-assistance.

Deadline approaches for Young Farmer & Rancher contests

The deadline to apply for Texas Farm Bureau's Young Farmer & Rancher contests is fast approaching.

Applications for the Outstanding Young Farmer & Rancher Award and Excellence in Agriculture Award are due Aug. 2.

Applicants for both contests must be between the ages of 18 and 35 as of Jan. 31, 2022, and be current TFB members in good standing.

Applicants can apply as individuals or married couples.

Outstanding Young Farmer & Rancher Contest

The Outstanding Young Farmer & Rancher Contest recognizes young farmers and ranchers who are actively engaged in farming or ranching full time.

This year's state winner will receive the title to a ¾ ton diesel pickup, sponsored by Texas Farm Bureau Insurance Companies; a \$5,000 cash

award, sponsored by Farm Credit Bank of Texas; and expense-paid trips to both the TFB Annual Meeting and American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) Annual Convention.

Two runners-up will receive a \$500 cash award, sponsored by Southern Farm Bureau Life Insurance Company, and expense-paid trips to the TFB Annual Meeting.

All district winners will receive a \$1,000 cash award from Farm Bureau Bank.

Excellence in Agriculture Contest

The EIA Contest rewards TFB members who are involved in agriculture but don't make the majority of their income through production agriculture.

Eligible applicants include farm store managers, crop consultants, agricultural educators and those

who are employed by an agricultural business or agency.

The state winner will receive a UTV, sponsored by Southern Farm Bureau Life Insurance Company; a \$5,000 cash prize, sponsored by Farm Credit Bank of Texas, and expense-paid trips to both the TFB Annual Meeting and AFBF Annual Convention.

The two runners-up will receive a \$1,000 cash award, courtesy of Farm Bureau Bank, a \$500 cash award, sponsored by Southern Farm Bureau Life Insurance Company, and an expense-paid trip to attend the TFB Annual Meeting.

Contest Information

Applications, sample questions and instructions are available online at texasfarmbureau.org/YFR.

For questions about the contest, email youngfarmers@txfb.org or call 254-399-5021.

Broadband bills would help bridge digital gap

Two bills introduced this spring would help improve access to broadband in rural America.

Farm Bureau supports both the Eliminating Barriers to Rural Internet Development Grant Eligibility (EBRIDGE) Act (S. 1695, HR 3193) and the Broadband for Rural America Act (HR 3369).

The EBRIDGE Act

The EBRIDGE Act seeks to ensure local communities can partner with the private sector in carrying out broadband projects and gives communities more flexibility in complying with their funding match requirements.

“Broadband is critical for farmers, ranchers and rural communities,” American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall said. “With 17% of rural Americans still without reliable broadband, the digital divide restricts access to essential education, health care and business resources, as well as limits farmers’ capacity to use the

latest technology to meet sustainability goals. Farm Bureau appreciates Reps. Sam Graves (R-Mo.) and Michael Guest (R-Miss.) for introducing the Eliminating Barriers to Rural Internet Development Grant Eligibility Act.”

The bill would eliminate barriers to investments in broadband in distressed communities by making them eligible for Economic Development Administration grants.

It would also clarify that eligible recipients may include public-private partnerships and consortiums to leverage private sector expertise in project development and provide flexibility in the procurement process to account for the limited availability of broadband services in distressed communities.

The measure would clarify that funds can be combined with other federal resources and provide flexibility on accounting for in-kind methods to meet non-federal cost share.

The Broadband for Rural America Act

The Broadband for Rural America Act would provide more than \$7 billion in authorizations for U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) broadband connectivity programs.

“Farm Bureau appreciates the Agriculture Committee’s commitment to strengthening our rural communities and thanks Ranking Member Thompson (R-Penn.) for introducing the Broadband for Rural America Act, which would provide greater investment in USDA broadband programs, as well as foster greater coordination among federal broadband deployment efforts,” Duvall said.

The measure would authorize \$3.7 billion per year for critical rural broadband programs, including the ReConnect Rural Broadband Program, the Middle Mile Broadband Program and the Innovative Broadband Advancement Program. It would target limited resources so assistance is focused on the most



Two broadband bills introduced in Congress would help bridge the digital gap for rural America.

rural and least-connected residents, who are often the most expensive to connect.

The bill would also promote borrower accountability and develop new tools to ensure promised services are delivered to rural communities.



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EPA intends to repeal, rewrite Navigable Waters Protection Rule

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Army Corps of Engineers announced intent to repeal and replace the Navigable Waters Protection Rule.

The American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) calls the intent to rewrite the water rule a blow to agriculture.

“The American Farm Bureau Federation is extremely disappointed in the Environmental Protection Agency’s announcement of its intention to reverse the environmentally conscious Navigable Waters Protection Rule, which finally brought clarity and certainty to clean water efforts,” AFBF President Zippy Duvall said. “Farmers and ranchers care about clean water and preserving the land, and they support the Navigable Waters Protection Rule.”

Agricultural groups expressed concern of returning to burdensome and unclear regulations.

“When you start talking about

ephemeral features, features that are ditches or even less than ditches, they only have water in them when it rains, all of a sudden you’re really kind of glossing over the fact that you’re regulating land use, as opposed to water,” AFBF Senior Director of Regulatory Relations Don Parrish said. “If that’s their target, the whole issue of where water ends and land begins, there’s a real question mark on the landscape, and it’s going to create all kinds of issues.”

Farm Bureau noted the Navigable Waters Protection Rule announced last year accomplished the goals of clean water, clear regulations and respect for property rights. EPA’s intent to reverse the rule washes all of that away, AFBF said.

“(EPA) Administrator Regan recently recognized the flaws in the 2015 Waters of the U.S. Rule and pledged not to return to those overreaching regulations. We are deeply concerned that the EPA plans to reverse the



Navigable Waters Protection Rule, which puts the future of responsible protections at risk. We expected extensive outreach, but (this) announcement fails to recognize the concerns of farmers and ranchers,” Duvall said. “We call on EPA to respect the statute, recognize the burden that overreaching regulation places on farmers and ranchers and not write the term ‘navi-

gable’ out of the Clean Water Act. On this issue, and particularly prior converted croplands and ephemerals, we also urge Secretary Vilsack to ensure that we don’t return to the regulatory land grab that was the 2015 WOTUS Rule. Clean water and clarity are paramount, and that is why farmers shouldn’t need a team of lawyers and consultants to farm.”



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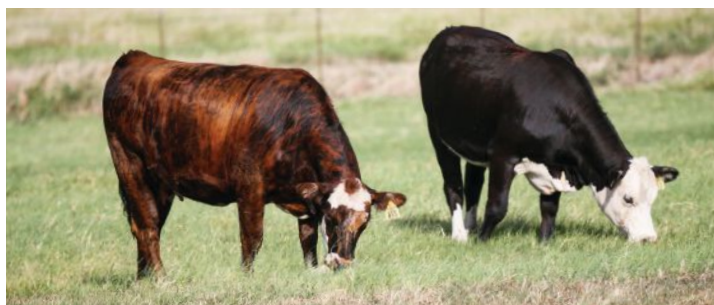
Young Farmer & Rancher Fall Tour set for Sept. 10-12, Granbury

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Young producers will get a look at North Central Texas agriculture through the 2021 Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) Young Farmer & Rancher (YF&R) Fall Tour. It's an opportunity for farmers and ranchers between the ages of 18-35 to meet with fellow producers and learn about other agricultural perspectives.

This year's tour is set for Sept. 10-12 in Granbury and will focus on livestock and dairy production, along with hydroponics and the growing urban population's effect on agriculture.

"The tour is an opportunity to help young farmers and ranchers strengthen relationships, form new friendships and learn from other producers across the state. We all face many of the same challenges, but each region of our state has challenges that are unique to that area," Kaylin Isbell, TFB YF&R Advisory



The 2021 Young Farmer & Rancher Fall Tour is set for Sept. 10-12. Registration closes Aug. 5. This year's event will include a look at agriculture in the Granbury area. Horse photo courtesy Oswood Stallion Station.

Committee chair, said. "For the North Central Texas region, urban sprawl is a major issue. We'll hear from farmers and ranchers on how they've adapted to the changing landscape to stay in production agriculture."

Because agriculture plays a crucial role in the state's economy. From crops to livestock and value-added products to niche markets, the impact of agriculture adds up.

"There's a place for young farmers and ranchers to grow in agriculture," Isbell said. "Learning from others on this Fall Tour will allow all of us to

take home new ideas and new strategies that we can implement."

The three-day tour will feature farm and ranch visits, discussions on urban sprawl and opportunities to network with other participants.

"Visiting this area of Texas will give young agricultural professionals—farmers, ranchers, business owners, teachers or anyone interested in agriculture—a glimpse into producers' management strategies and production methods," Isbell said.

Registration is open through Aug. 5. There are two registration packages

participants may select from that will include lodging, meals, transportation and the cost of all tours. A third registration package is available for those who do not require lodging.

Interested members can learn more and register for the tour online at texasfarmbureau.org/YFR.

For assistance with registration, contact Chrystal Gardner at 254-751-2489 or at youngfarmers@txfb.org.

Contact Hall at 254-399-5021 or rhall@txfb.org with questions.



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USDA puts \$55.2 million into expanded meat, poultry access

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced \$55.2 million in competitive grant funding available through the new Meat and Poultry Inspection Readiness Grant (MPIRG) program. The new program is funded by the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021.

“We are building capacity and increasing economic opportunity for small and mid-sized meat and poultry processors and producers across the country,” U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack said. “Through MPIRG, meat and poultry slaughter and processing facilities can cover the costs for necessary improvements to achieve a Federal Grant of

Inspection under the Federal Meat Inspection Act or the Poultry Products Inspection Act or to operate under a state’s Cooperative Interstate Shipment program.”

USDA encourages grant applications that focus on improving meat and poultry slaughter and processing capacity and efficiency; developing new and expanding existing markets; increasing capacity and better meeting consumer and producer demand; maintaining strong inspection and food safety standards; obtaining a larger commercial presence; and increasing access to slaughter or processing facilities for smaller farms and ranches, new

and beginning farmers and ranchers, socially disadvantaged producers, and veteran producers.

Eligible meat and poultry slaughter and processing facilities include commercial businesses, cooperatives and tribal enterprises.

MPIRG’s Planning for a Federal Grant of Inspection project is for processing facilities currently in operation and are working toward federal inspection.

Applicants can be located anywhere in the states and territories.

MPIRG’s Cooperative Interstate Shipment (CIS) Compliance project is only for processing facilities located in states with a Food Safety

and Inspection Service (FSIS) CIS program. Texas is not one of these states.

Applications must be submitted electronically through www.grants.gov by Aug. 2.

AMS offers webinars for applicants to help walk them through the Request for Application. Grant management specialists are also available to answer questions or emails regarding the program and application process.

For more information about grant eligibility and program requirements, visit www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/mpirg or contact mpirg@usda.gov.

TPWD issues emergency order in response to chronic wasting disease

The Texas Parks & Wildlife Department issued an “emergency order” to impose additional movement and testing restrictions on deer breeding facilities that are affiliated with six deer breeding facilities where chronic wasting disease (CWD) has been positively detected.

Existing rules already restrict the movement of deer from 264 sites in 95 counties that are directly linked to these CWD-positive facilities, but further measures are being implemented.

TPWD and Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) are addressing risks and improving management strategies to protect big game resources from CWD in captive or free-ranging cervid populations.

Officials have taken action to secure all cervids at the CWD-positive facilities with plans to conduct additional investigations for CWD.

Those breeding facilities that received deer or shipped deer to those facilities during the last five years are under movement restrictions and cannot move or release cervids until cleared by a herd plan. The additional measures in this emergency order includes enhanced testing requirements for facilities with close epidemiological ties to the CWD-positive facilities and antemortem testing

of deer from all movement qualified deer breeding facilities prior to transfer to a release site.

TPWD said these requirements are necessary to further minimize risk of CWD spreading into Texas’ free-ranging white-tailed deer herd and to protect the captive deer breeding industry.

As the state veterinary diagnostic laboratory, the Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory (TVMDL) uses surveillance testing to help wildlife producers and wildlife/animal health agencies to ensure the health of species susceptible to the disease.

CWD was first recognized in the United States in 1967 and has since been documented in captive and/or free-ranging deer in 26 states and three Canadian provinces.

In Texas, the disease was first discovered in 2012 in a free-ranging mule deer along a remote area of the Hueco Mountains near the Texas-New Mexico border. It has since been detected in 228 captive or free-ranging cervids, including white-tailed deer, mule deer, red deer and elk in 13 Texas counties.

CWD is a fatal neurological disease found in certain cervids, including deer, elk, moose and other members of the deer family. CWD is

a slow and progressive disease.

Due to a long incubation, cervids infected with CWD may not produce any visible signs for a number of years after becoming infected. As the disease progresses, animals with CWD show changes in behavior and appearance.

Clinical signs may include progressive weight loss, stumbling or tremors with a lack of coordination, excessive thirst, salivation or urina-

tion, loss of appetite, teeth grinding, abnormal head posture and/or drooping ears.

For more information about CWD, visit the TPWD Chronic Wasting Disease page on tpwd.texas.gov or the TAHC website at texas.gov/animal_health.

A full list of TVMDL’s test offerings are available at <https://tvmdl.tamu.edu>, and laboratory experts are available at 979-845-3414.

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TFB awards scholarships to 4-H, FFA, FCCLA students

Each year, in addition to the scholarships available to youth statewide, Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) awards scholarships to high school seniors through the Texas FFA Association, Texas 4-H Foundation and the Texas Association of Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA).

TFB is a longtime supporter of the three youth organizations, working with the students on leadership development, service learning and agricultural advocacy and literacy to help cultivate strong leaders for Texas agriculture's future.

Texas FFA recipients



Blake Mills

Blake Mills is the state president of Texas FFA. He graduated from Center Point High School and plans to attend Texas Tech University to major in agriculture and applied economics.

He was active in his FFA chapter where he participated in several career development events and exhibited livestock at county and state stock shows.

In addition to being the Texas FFA state president, Mills was active in UIL One Act Play, a PALs mentor and a leader in several student organizations on campus.



Emilee Sanderson

Emilee Sanderson is the first vice president of Texas FFA. She graduated from Blackwell High School and plans to attend Texas Tech University to major in agriculture and applied economics.

In addition to serving as an FFA officer, Sanderson competed in five varsity sports, UIL speech and debate, as well as exhibited sheep at state and county shows.

She is active in her church and enjoys studying agricultural policy and was a part of the Congressional Youth Advisory Committee for U.S. Rep. Mike Conaway.

Texas 4-H recipients



Jack Bishop

Jack Bishop graduated from Needville High School and plans to pursue a degree in aerospace engineering at Texas A&M University.

He was a member of Fort Bend County 4-H Club, including the 4-H Youth Pork Producers, where he served as president from 2018-2021. He was also the Fort Bend County Council president, Blue Baron 4-H president and served on various livestock committees.

He is the recipient of a Gold Star Award, the highest award a 4-H member may receive. Bishop also showed livestock through 4-H.



Garrett Meier

Garrett Meier graduated from Bandera High School and plans to pursue a business degree at Texas A&M University.

He was a member of the Pioneer 4-H Club and active in shooting sports, participated in livestock judging and showed cattle and sheep.

He was a county council delegate in 2016, 2018 and 2019 and district council delegate in 2017. Meier served as president of the Bandera 4-H County Council and was president of the Bandera County 4-H Shotgun Club. He also volunteered for various 4-H and community events.

Texas FCCLA recipient



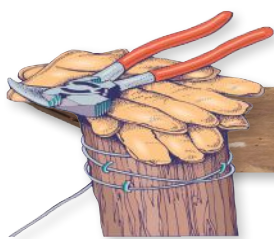
Hailie Council

Hailie Council graduated from Three Rivers High School and plans to attend Texas A&M University to major in biomedical sciences and eventually become an oncologist.

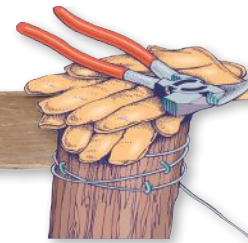
In addition to serving as a state FCCLA officer, Council was the reporter for her local FFA chapter and chapter president of the National Honors Society. She participated in one-act play, UIL speaking and writing events, FFA speaking events and student council. She also served as a Boys and Girls Club mentor and assisted with the monthly food drives at her church.

2022 scholarship applications and eligibility will be available in late December

For more information on youth activities and opportunities, visit texasfarmbureau.org/youth



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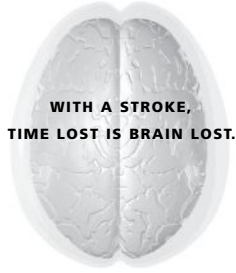
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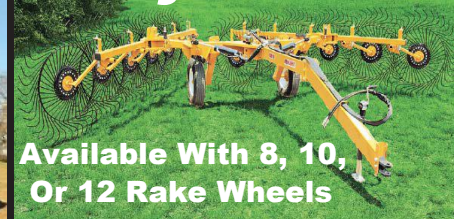
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