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November 6, 2020

Texas Agriculture

Published by Texas Farm Bureau for commercial farmers and ranchers

**Young farmers, ranchers
cultivate a bright future**

Outstanding YF&R finalists

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Farm Bureau's focus, work extends beyond election outcomes

For nearly a century, Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) has endured and survived election cycles.

Our organization's structure is designed to move forward and work with whoever is elected. And that's exactly what we do.

The policy positions adopted each year by TFB voting delegates are not contingent on the outcome of elections. The policies are not based on the prospect of certain individuals being in office to achieve those policy goals. Our mission as the Voice of Texas Agriculture remains constant, regardless of election results.

A turbulent election cycle can sometimes create distractions to the work of organizations. Fortunately, TFB guards against those distractions and remains focused on pursuing the policy ideas brought forward by its members.

Our TFB Resolutions Committee met this month to discuss and consider policy resolutions approved by county Farm Bureaus across the state. This is an important step in our policy development process. The grassroots ideas from county Farm Bureaus are evaluated by farmers

and ranchers from each of TFB's 13 districts.

The policy resolutions recommended by the TFB Resolutions Committee are provided to voting delegates for consideration at the TFB annual meeting. This year's annual meeting business session is Dec. 5 in Waco.



**By Russell Boening
President**

Following the annual meeting, the TFB board of directors establishes state and national policy priorities for the year. These are issues critically important to agriculture and rural Texas. Direction from county Farm Bureau leaders throughout the policy development process aids in the development of this roadmap.

The priority designation by the board for the 87th Texas Legislature and the 117th Congress (First Session) ensures that those state and national issues most important to agriculture and rural Texas garner the attention they deserve.

Our advocacy, however, extends beyond the halls of Austin and Washington, D.C. It's farmers and ranchers engaging. It's connecting with consumers on their concerns.

And it's growing relationships to strengthen the trust and importance of Texas agriculture.

Advocacy in Farm Bureau wears many hats, but it has a common goal. That goal is securing a bright future for providers of food, fiber and fuel—and the Lone Star State—for

generations to come.

Election outcomes do not take away our focus from the work you count on us to accomplish. TFB continues to press forward. We work with those who have been elected, and together, we make sure the Voice of Texas Agriculture is heard.

Your Texas Agriculture Minute

Getting to the root of the wild pig problem

**By Gary Joiner
Publisher**

Wild pigs are not just a Texas problem. Thirty-five states are battling the feral swine.

But Texas has the most, and the problem keeps growing.

Recent research points to well over 2.5 million wild pigs in our state. Only one county out of 254 in Texas has been spared from the invasive species.

The pigs are prolific, too. In one year, a female can produce 50 to 100 hogs.

Texas farmers and ranchers see the impact first-hand. Some growers lose at least 30 percent of their crops to wild pigs each year.

Crops such as corn, wheat, oats and rice are hit hard. The wild pigs also prey on young cattle, sheep and goats.

Controlling the growing population is not easy. There is no one silver bullet, and that includes hunting. It will take a multi-faceted approach from both public and private sources to manage the pig problem.

More control tools are needed, and research is underway to determine which methods are effective and environmentally safe.

Texas farmers and ranchers are hopeful new strategies will get to root of the wild pig problem, and soon.



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November 6, 2020 Vol. 36, No. 5

ADVERTISING: **Kelly Bogard**, Advertising Manager, (254) 751-2420; **J.L. Farmakis** (Representative for outside Texas), New Canaan, CT (203) 966-1746.

TEXAS AGRICULTURE is published 12 times a year by Texas Farm Bureau, 7420 Fish Pond Road, Waco, Texas 76710, (254) 772-3030. Changes of address may be sent to TEXAS AGRICULTURE, Box 2689, Waco, Texas 76702-2689.

Subscription price to Farm Bureau members is included in annual membership dues.

All advertising is subject to publisher's approval. Texas Agriculture reserves the right to reject any ad.

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Texas Table Top blog: tabletop.texasfarmbureau.org

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TFB members get limited time Ford offer

In the market for a new vehicle? Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) members receive \$1,000 bonus cash on the purchase of eligible 2020/2021 Ford and Lincoln vehicles.

This offer is available for Farm Bureau members through Jan. 4, 2021.

“Texas is a big state, and Texas Farm Bureau members travel many miles for work and leisure,” said Whitney Richter, marketing coordinator for TFB’s member benefits program. “Farm Bureau members can get the ‘best in Texas’ with Ford and your Farm Bureau membership. So, take advantage of this limited time offer when searching for a new vehicle.”

Visit fordfarmbureauadvantage.com to take advantage of this offer. On the website, enter your member information, zip code and select the vehicle of interest to download the certificate to present to the local Ford dealership.

To be eligible for this private offer, individual, family or business



members must maintain an active TFB membership for 30 consecutive days prior to the purchase.

This special offer may not be available with some other offers.

F-150 and Super Duty vehicles are not included in this offer and will remain at \$500 bonus cash.

If you have questions or need help obtaining the certificate, call 254-399-5034, email memberbenefits@txfb.org or visit your county Farm Bureau office.

“Being a Texas Farm Bureau member is like being part of a very large family who works to take care of each other,” Richter said. “We bring exclusive benefits and services straight to you to help make life a little bit easier.”

In addition to the Ford program, TFB members can also take advantage of savings with more than 60 member exclusive discounts.

For a complete list of benefits and services for TFB members, visit texasfarmbureau.org/memberbenefits.

XtendFlex soybeans approved, paves way for U.S. launch

Bayer AG announced the European Commission (EU) approved the company’s XtendFlex soybean technology for food, animal feed, import and processing, paving the way for Bayer to launch XtendFlex soybeans in the U.S. and Canada in 2021.

“XtendFlex soybeans will be Bayer’s second major product launch in soybeans in the last five years,” President of Bayer Crop Science North America Lisa Safarian said in a press release. “The upcoming launch in 2021 highlights the strength of the Bayer soybean pipeline, as well as the investment that Bayer continues to make in our soybean portfolio and the Roundup Ready Xtend Crop System.”

The latest soybean technology builds on existing Roundup Ready

2 Xtend soybean crops that tolerate glyphosate and dicamba application with the added benefit of glufosinate tolerance.

Bayer noted XtendFlex soybeans provide growers with additional flexibility in managing hard-to-control and herbicide-resistant weeds.

Approval by the EU represented a final hurdle in bringing the technology to market. Bayer will launch the technology in the U.S. and Canada, and the company expects to see 20 million acres of soybeans planted in North America next year.

Texas farmers planted 100,000 acres of the crop last year, which was only about half of the soybeans planted in the state in 2018.

At the time, economists pegged the decrease in acreage as a result of

continued trade tensions with China. But this year’s new-crop sales analysis point to a return to bigger numbers and better prices in the coming years, fueling farmer optimism.

“We’ve seen great demand for XtendFlex soybeans from our customers,” Lisa Streck, Bayer soybean launch lead, said. “Based on that demand, we’ve developed a supply plan to meet the market demand in 2021, across all maturities, Bayer brands and licensees. This technology offers outstanding yield potential and weed control flexibility that will benefit soybean farmers across the U.S.”

Visit <https://RoundupReadyXtend.com> to learn more about XtendFlex soybeans.

NRCS announces deadlines for EQIP funding

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Texas announced Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding application deadlines.

The first deadline is Dec. 4, 2020, and the second funding application deadline will be Feb. 21, 2021.

Applications are taken year-round for NRCS programs, but deadlines are announced to rank and fund eligible conservation projects.

Farmers and ranchers interested in signing up for EQIP funding should submit applications to their local USDA service center.

If already a USDA client, farmers and ranchers can submit applications online via farmers.gov.

EQIP is a voluntary conservation program that provides financial and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers. The program also promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible national goals.

Technical assistance is provided without a fee from NRCS specialists to help landowners and land managers plan and implement conservation practices to help them meet their land management goals, address natural resource concerns and improve soil, water, plant, animal, air and related resources on agricultural land and non-industrial private forestland.

The program was reauthorized in the 2018 Farm Bill.

For additional information, visit www.nrcs.usda.gov.

Applications for EQIP are accepted on a continuous basis.

USDA to distribute \$1.68 billion in CRP payments

Landowners, farmers and ranchers enrolled in 21.9 million acres of the Conservation Reserve Program should begin receiving \$1.68 billion in annual rental payments, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

“CRP is one of the many ‘tools’ that USDA offers to producers and private landowners to help best manage sensitive lands,” Richard Fordyce, Farm Service Agency (FSA) administrator, said. “Lands enrolled in this program conserve soil, improve water quality, provide habitat for wildlife, sequester carbon and benefit agricultural operations.”

Through CRP, farmers and ranchers establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees, to control soil erosion, improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat on cropland. Farmers and ranchers who participate in CRP help provide numerous benefits to the nation’s environment and economy.

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest private-lands conservation programs in the U.S. It was originally intended to primarily control soil erosion and potentially stabilize commodity prices by taking marginal lands out of production. The program has evolved over the years, providing many conservation and economic benefits.

The program marks its 35-year anniversary this December.

The successes of CRP contribute to USDA’s Agriculture Innovation Agenda and its goal of reducing the environmental footprint of U.S. agriculture by half by 2050.

CRP participants with contracts effective beginning Oct. 1, 2020, will receive their first annual rental payment in October 2021.

For more information on CRP, visit fsa.usda.gov or contact your local FSA county office.

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Sign up for your complimentary newsletter at TexasBeefCheckoff.com to stay up to date on how your checkoff dollars are being put to use.



Deadline nears for producers enroll in CFAP 2

More than \$7 billion in payments has been issued to farmers and ranchers through the second round of the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP 2).

“America’s agriculture communities are resilient but still face many challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These payments directed by President Trump will continue to help this critical industry recoup some of their losses from ongoing market disruptions and associated costs,” U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue said. “This program builds upon the over \$10 billion disbursed under the first round of CFAP. Agricultural producers who have been impacted by the pandemic since April 2020 are encouraged to apply for assistance.”

Since CFAP 2 enrollment began on Sept. 21, FSA has approved more than 443,000 applications.

Nearly 27,000 applications for a total of \$325.978 million have been approved for Texas farmers and

ranchers.

The top five states for payments are Iowa, Nebraska, Minnesota, Illinois and Kansas.

Through CFAP 2, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is making available up to \$14 billion for farmers and ranchers who continue to face market disruptions and associated costs because of COVID-19.

CFAP 2 is a separate program from the first iteration of CFAP (CFAP 1).

Farmers and ranchers who participated in CFAP 1 will not be automatically enrolled and must complete a new application for CFAP 2.

USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) will accept CFAP 2 applications through Dec. 11.

CFAP 2 supports eligible producers of row crops, livestock, specialty crops, dairy, aquaculture and many other commodities, including many that were ineligible for CFAP 1.

FSA’s CFAP 2 Eligible Commodities Finder makes finding eligible

commodities and payment rates simple. Access this tool and other resources at farmers.gov/cfap.

CFAP 2 payments will be made for three categories of commodities: price trigger commodities, flat-rate crops and sales commodities.

Price trigger commodities are major commodities that meet a minimum 5-percent price decline over a specified period of time.

Flat-rate crops are crops that either do not meet the 5-percent price decline trigger or do not have data available to calculate a price change and will have payments calculated based on eligible 2020 acres multiplied by \$15 per acre.

Payment calculations for sales commodities will use a sales-based approach, where producers are paid based on five payment gradations associated with their 2019 sales.

FSA offers multiple options for farmers and ranchers to apply for CFAP 2.

Producers with an eAuthenti-

cation account can apply online through the CFAP 2 Application Portal.

Also available is a payment calculator and application generator that is an Excel workbook that allows farmers and ranchers to input information specific to their operation to determine estimated payments and populate the application form, which can be printed, signed and submitted to the local FSA office.

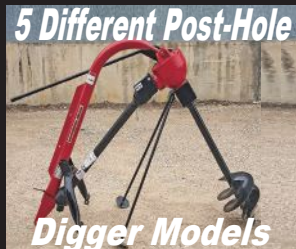
Farmers and ranchers can also download the CFAP 2 application and other eligibility forms from farmers.gov/cfap.

Producers of acreage-based commodities will use acreage and yield information provided by FSA through the annual acreage reporting process.

Farmers and ranchers have the option to complete their application by working directly with their local FSA staff or online through the CFAP 2 Application Portal.

To find the latest information on CFAP 2, visit farmers.gov/CFAP or call 877-508-8364.

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OUTSTANDING YOUNG FARMER & RANCHER FINALISTS



Matt and Jessica Hanslik
Hallettsville



Slayton and Abby Hoelscher
Wall



Alton and Adrienne Synatschk
Olton

Texas Farm Bureau names outstanding young farmers, ranchers

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Young farmers and ranchers are cultivating a bright future for agriculture and for Texas.

This year's Outstanding Young Farmer & Rancher (YF&R) contest finalists recognized by Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) share a drive, dedication and passion for agriculture.

They plant seeds of faith, nurture their fields and pastures and care for their families. They also commit time to their communities, county Farm Bureaus and TFB.

Each year, TFB's Outstanding YF&R competition recognizes the accomplishments of some of the state's top agricultural leaders between the ages of 18 and 35 and rewards them for their hard work, dedication and determination.

The 2020 Outstanding YF&R finalists are Matt and Jessica Hanslik of Hallettsville, Slayton and Abby Hoelscher of Wall and Alton and Adrienne Synatschk of Olton.

Finalists were chosen from TFB's district winners.

The Hansliks have a crossbred cattle operation and raise purebred Charolais cattle. They also grow corn and hay.

The Hansliks are part owners of an all-natural fertilizer company. The fertilizer company recycles dry

poultry litter from poultry layer facilities and provides custom application for farms and ranches.

Jessica is also a regional sales manager for Cal-Maine Foods, a shell egg producer.

Both are active in Lavaca County Farm Bureau. Jessica serves on the board of directors, and Matt is the county's committee chair for Youth and YF&R Activities. Jessica also serves on TFB's Poultry Advisory Committee and served on the 2020 TFB Resolutions Committee.

Previously, the couple served as District 12 representatives on TFB's YF&R Advisory Committee.

They have two children.

Slayton and Abby Hoelscher grow corn, cotton, grain sorghum, peanuts and hay in Tom Green and Haskell counties.

Slayton is a first-generation farmer whose passion for agriculture began with a small garden and greenhouse and grew to a thriving farming operation.

The couple is implementing minimal and no-till practices on their farms to enhance microbial activity and reduce soil erosion.

Abby also works at Mueller Metals and Spring Creek Products.

The Hoelschers serve as the District 6 representatives on TFB's YF&R Advisory Committee.

Slayton serves on the Tom Green County Farm Bureau board of directors, and he is the county YF&R chair.

They are both active in YF&R events and county activities.

Alton and Adrienne Synatschk grow corn, cotton, grain sorghum and wheat. They also raise stocker cattle, maintain a cow-calf herd and operate several custom businesses—spraying, swathing and trucking. In addition to that, Alton farms and ranches in a separate partnership with his two brothers.

Adrienne also works at the Olton Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture.

The young couple is active in TFB and Lamb County Farm Bureau. Alton serves as the president of Lamb County Farm Bureau. He previously served as the secretary and as the county's YF&R chair.

Alton is a past participant of TFB's AgLead program, a two-year leadership development program that takes participants across Texas, the country and the world to discover agriculture and leadership from a new perspective. Adrienne is in the current class of AgLead.

The couple has four children.

The winner of this year's Outstanding YF&R contest will receive the title to a ¾ ton diesel pickup,

courtesy of Texas Farm Bureau Insurance Companies, and a \$5,000 cash award, courtesy of Farm Credit.

The runners-up will receive a \$500 cash award, courtesy of Southern Farm Bureau Life Insurance Company.

The state winner will advance to compete in the national contest.

The national winner will receive a new Ford vehicle up to a value of \$35,000 and paid registration to the Farm Bureau FUSION Conference in Oregon, courtesy of Ford. The national runner-up will receive a Case IH Farmall 50A, courtesy of Case IH.

Third place in the national EIA contest will receive a Case IH 40" Combination Roll Cabinet & Top Chest and a \$500 Case IH parts card, courtesy of Case IH; a \$2,500 Investing Your Future cash prize, courtesy of American Farm Bureau Insurance Services, Inc.; and \$1,850 worth of Stanley Black & Decker merchandise (PROTO, DeWalt, Stanley, Lenox & Irwin), courtesy of Stanley Black & Decker.

Fourth place in the national contest will receive a Case IH 40" Combination Roll Cabinet & Top Chest and a \$500 Case IH parts card, courtesy of Case IH.

Information on the contest can be found at texasfarmbureau.org/YFR.

OUTSTANDING YOUNG FARMER & RANCHER FINALIST



Matt and Jessica Hanslik

Grow: **Corn and hay. Raise cattle. Market all-natural fertilizer.**

Location: **Hallettsville**

Children: **Blakely and Kade**

By Jennifer Dorsett
Field Editor

It's an age-old question—which came first: the chicken or the egg? The fertilizer or the feed? According to Matt and Jessica Hanslik, it's all interconnected.

On their farm and ranch in Lavaca County, they grow corn and hay, raise cattle and are part owners of an all-natural fertilizer company, in which they take chicken litter and “upcycle” it for use as farm fertilizer.

The idea for the fertilizer business was hatched when Jessica, a manager for a shell egg company, suggested they begin using chicken litter from area broiler houses to fertilize their fields.

“Then, the company that I work for moved from waste lagoons over to dry manure belts, where manure is conveyed on moving belts outside of the chicken houses. We saw this as an opportunity, so we put a business plan together and started picking up the dry poultry litter and spreading it out on other farms and ranches,”

she said. “The chicken manure is full of organic matter and micronutrients. We use it as an all-natural alternative to liquid fertilizer to fertilize the fields, which grow the corn and the hay, which feeds the animals and in turn, provides food for us. So, it all comes full circle.”

Now, in addition to farming and ranching full time, Matt sells the chicken litter to other local farmers and ranchers who are interested in using the fertilizer to boost yields in their own operations.

The path to where they are today involved much planning, ingenuity and hard work.

Growing up in suburban Tomball, Jessica was introduced to agriculture through FFA. During high school, her love for the industry bloomed. Jessica went on to earn a degree in poultry science from Texas A&M University, which led her to her career with Cal-Maine Foods.

“My husband and I are blessed to have the opportunity to do what we love. I love that I’m able to use what I learned in school in both my career and on our operation,” she said. “Matt originally worked for a large energy company right out of college. He had just a regular 8-to-5 job, but his passion was really to be out here on the farm, working every single day. Starting this fertilizer company has allowed him to go ahead and start farming full time.”

Matt, a fifth-generation farmer and rancher, has always had a passion for agriculture and the rural lifestyle.

“I grew up here, working alongside my dad and grandfather raising cattle, corn and hay. I went to school at Texas A&M-Kingsville, and I came home every weekend to work on the farm. It’s just what I always wanted to do,” he said.

The Hansliks are heavily involved in Farm Bureau at the county and state levels. Matt currently serves as the Lavaca County Farm Bureau’s committee chair for Youth and Young Farmer & Rancher activi-



ties. Jessica is on the Lavaca County Farm Bureau board of directors. She also serves on the Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) Poultry Advisory Committee and served on the 2020 TFB Resolutions Committee.

Previously, the couple served as District 12 representatives on TFB’s YF&R Advisory Committee.

Their advocacy work through the organization and the ability to continue the family tradition and raise their children, Blakely and Kade, in the same way is an honor, Matt said.

“Living on a farm is very rewarding. It makes me proud to see all our hard work pay off when we are harvesting, cutting hay or selling cattle,” he said. “It’s a great feeling

to be a role model for my kids and to be part of the 2 percent feeding the rest of the world. There are a lot of long hours and late nights, but it’s all worth it.”

Although it wasn’t how she grew up, Jessica can’t imagine a different lifestyle for their family.

“I definitely wouldn’t have it any other way. Our kids are learning life lessons here on the farm—hard work, ethics and responsibility,” she said. “It’s just a different way of life than living in the city. We go to church on Sundays, and after church, we go feed all the cows. We’re constantly out here working. We’re not inside people. All the extra stuff to do out here is just fun for us. We don’t consider it work.”

OUTSTANDING YOUNG FARMER & RANCHER FINALIST



Slayton and Abby Hoelscher

Grow: **Corn, cotton, grain sorghum, hay and peanuts.**

Location: **Wall**

By Jennifer Dorsett Field Editor

For first-generation farmer Slayton Hoelscher, growing crops and thriving in an uncertain environment are two of the biggest rewards in agriculture.

“I started gardening in my parents’ backyard at about 10 years old with a few squash plants. Then, we moved to a new property, and I filled up five acres with cantaloupes, watermelons and all kinds of vegetables. I just loved growing it. Every year, I got bigger and bigger and just was growing more and more,” he said. “Now, we operate around 1,850 mostly irrigated acres in Tom Green and Haskell counties.”

It’s a labor of love he shares with his wife, Abby. Although she grew up on a farm and was familiar with the trials and tribulations of agriculture, she’s enjoyed the challenge of helping grow their farm while she and Slayton build a life together, as well.

“When we started dating, Slayton

only had one farm—about 150 acres. Now, he’s farming almost 2,000 acres. So, I’ve seen him grow a lot,” Abby said. “Ever since we were kids, we’ve loved agriculture, and we both always wanted to be farmers. Somehow that worked out, and we love it.”

The transition from backyard vegetable plot to farming corn, cotton, grain sorghum, hay and peanuts requires management skills, long hours, conservation practices and hard work.

Besides helping Slayton around the farm and keeping the books for the operation, Abby works in marketing and sales at Mueller Metals and Spring Creek Products. Working as a team and being creative in their operational scope has helped them accomplish their farm goals, Abby said.

“We help each other out a lot with the paperwork and physical labor. Since day one, we’ve been diversified, because we’ve had to make ends meet to pay bills,” she said. “We’ve done oil field rentals, washed trucks and bought and sold equipment, as well as run our farming operation. We also operate with older equipment and invest our profits into purchasing land rather than new equipment, so that’s how we’ve been able to grow so much.”

They’ve also grown through their involvement with Texas Farm Bureau (TFB).

“I took over my grandpa’s spot on the Tom Green County board, and they talked me into going to a Young Farmer & Rancher (YF&R) Fall Tour that year. We haven’t missed an event since,” Slayton said.

Now, they serve on TFB’s YF&R Advisory Committee as District 6 representatives. Slayton remains on the Tom Green County Farm Bureau board of directors and also serves as the county YF&R chair.

“I got involved because of Slayton and his involvement, and we do fall tours, district meetings, collegiate events and all of that stuff. It’s a lot of fun and a great way to connect



with other farmers and ranchers our age,” Abby said.

Becoming full-time farmers hasn’t been without challenges, but it’s an accomplishment they’re both proud of.

“We started small. We didn’t jump out there and spend a bunch of money on having nice, shiny equipment. We just had an old, open cab tractor. Our goal is to keep being diversified and expanding, not just in our area, but other areas, other counties. If we make some money, we try to reinvest it—whether it’s equipment, land, just improvements,” Slayton said. “You can never predict what’s coming, but if you’re 51 percent right, then I think you’re doing good. As long as you’re not 51

percent wrong, because then you’re going backwards.”

It’s a way of life that can be difficult, but Abby wouldn’t have it any other way.

“It’s all I know, but I love it. I love being out in the field. I love the smell of the crops being harvested. There’s something about seeing them early in the morning or late at night and just noticing a change,” she said. “Just being able to drive around each day and see the difference in the crop and how much they’ve changed from day to day, and we can talk about it. We both enjoy it. We love to see the result of our hard work at each harvest, and we hope to share it with our children some day.”

OUTSTANDING YOUNG FARMER & RANCHER FINALIST



Alton and Adrienne Synatschk

Grow: **Corn, cotton, grain sorghum and wheat. Raise cattle. Custom spraying, swathing and trucking.**

Location: **Olton**

Children: **Emilee, Bailee, Kylee and Brantley**

By Jennifer Dorsett
Field Editor

In Lamb County, Alton and Adrienne Synatschk are carrying on a family tradition of raising crops, cattle and a family on the South Plains. And they'll continue to do so as long as they're able.

"Farming is getting more difficult here, and 2020 has been one for the ages—just a dry, challenging year," Alton said. "But I knew since I was small this was where I wanted to live and how I wanted to raise my family."

That perseverance and grit is what makes farming on the South Plains possible. It's a legacy and a lifestyle the couple enjoy while raising their four children—Emilee, Bailee, Kylee and Brantley.

"I grew up in Hart, just north of Olton, helping my dad and my granddad on the farm and the love for that is just bred into me," Adrienne said. "I couldn't think of a better way to raise my kids. After they grow up, even if they don't come back to farm, at least they know

where their food comes from, where their clothes come from. And maybe they won't be so disconnected from agriculture."

The Synatschks grow corn, cotton, grain sorghum and wheat. They also raise stocker cattle each fall, maintain a cow-calf herd and operate several businesses—custom spraying, swathing and trucking. Alton also farms and ranches in a separate partnership with his two brothers, raising more cattle and growing additional row crops.

"It didn't take long after we moved back to the farm for us to realize that we'd need to expand our operation," Alton, a third-generation farmer, said. "These expansions include our multiple custom businesses, the spraying, swathing and trucking. And we're constantly integrating different types of technology into our operation."

Embracing technology has allowed them to continue farming in adverse circumstances.

"The biggest challenge around here is the dropping water table," he said. "It's probably the only place in the world where you're trying to make the same crop you had last year. We use GPS systems, pivot trackers, soil moisture probes and drone technology to make sure our operation is running efficiently and effectively."

They make the most out of each crop, feeding cow-calf pairs on grass in the summer and cornstalks during the winter. The stocker calves are run on winter wheat pastures, which prevents topsoil loss while providing animal feed. Nothing goes to waste.

When Adrienne isn't helping Alton on the farm or ranch, she's at the Olton Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture, where she is the office manager. She said her career lets her share her love for agriculture with different audiences.

"We're always looking for ways to advocate for agriculture and rural communities," she said. "In 2018, I hosted Olton's first Ag Awareness



Day. We brought in 30 different people to come talk to over 400 students from the Olton, Springlake-Earth and Sudan school districts to learn about different aspects of agriculture. It was pretty cool to show them where it comes from and help them learn more about that and how farming works here in our area."

The young couple stays busy, but both make time for involvement in Texas Farm Bureau (TFB).

Alton has been involved in TFB since high school when he attended the Youth Leadership Conference. After serving as Lamb County Farm Bureau's Young Farmer & Rancher (YF&R) chair for several years, Alton was appointed secretary for the Lamb County board of directors be-

fore becoming county president earlier this year.

In addition to their YF&R and county involvement, Alton is a past participant of TFB's AgLead program. Adrienne is in the current class and said the program has helped her grow professionally and prepared her for a new role on the local economic development committee.

Although raising a family, maintaining a diversified operation and working a full-time job can be stressful, together, Adrienne said they make it work.

"He knows what he has to do. I know what I have to do," she said. "Farming is a choice we have made together, and it's one of the best decisions we've ever made."

OUTSTANDING YOUNG FARMER & RANCHER DISTRICT WINNERS



District 2

Alton and Adrienne Synatschk

Alton and Adrienne grow corn, cotton, grain sorghum and wheat in Lamb County. They also raise stocker cattle, have a cow-calf herd and operate several custom businesses—spraying, swathing and trucking. *State Finalist*



District 3

Austen and Rachel White

Austen and Rachel raise cattle and grow wheat and cotton in Wilbarger County with Austen's family. They use niche marketing programs while partnering with a program-specific feedyard to maximize their income by retaining ownership.



District 5

Patrick and Alexandria Williams

Patrick and Alexandria have a commercial hay operation in Smith County. They also operate Williams Spray and Fertilize, LLC—a joint business venture with their family for hay production and pasture management.



District 6

Slayton and Abby Hoelscher

Slayton and Abby grow corn, cotton, grain sorghum, peanuts and hay in Tom Green and Haskell counties. Slayton is a first-generation farmer whose passion for agriculture began with a small garden and grew into a thriving farm. *State Finalist*



District 7

Eric and Alisha Schwertner

Eric and Alisha farm and ranch in Runnels County. They grow irrigated and dryland cotton, wheat, grain sorghum and silage corn. They also have a hay operation and raise cattle. Eric owns and operates a custom harvesting business.



District 8

Travis and Kaylin Isbell

Travis and Kaylin raise commercial cattle and dorper sheep in Williamson County. They also grow hay and oats, as well as do custom hay baling. In addition, Travis manages two small cow-calf operations in the area.



District 9

David and Kaelee Fallin

David and Kaelee raise roping steers and horses for team roping in Nacogdoches County. The couple has a cow-calf operation and a small hay baling operation. Kaelee also breeds show rabbits for FFA and 4-H students.



District 10

Robin Giles

Robin and Misty raise registered Angus cattle, fine wool sheep and Angora goats, as well as manage wildlife habitat, in Kendall County. The couple manages the 130-year-old farm, ranch and agritourism operation with Robin's parents.



District 11

Dillon and Kori Berglund

Dillon and Kori grow rice and corn in Wharton County. They help develop habitat for migratory birds and use government programs to effectively shape the land they rent and own to enhance the drainage for the most efficient water usage.



District 12

Matt and Jessica Hanslik

Matt and Jessica have a crossbred cattle operation and raise purebred Charolais cattle, selling registered bulls and heifers. They are also part owners of an all-natural fertilizer company, and they grow corn and hay in Lavaca County. *State Finalist*

District Winner Prize Package

New this year, all district winners received a \$1,000 cash award from Farm Bureau Bank.

YF&R Online Auction Details

Each year, the Live and Silent Auction at the annual meeting is the major fundraiser supporting the YF&R scholarships.

This year, the auction will be held online at www.biddingforgood.com/texasfarmbureau. **Bidding will open at 8 a.m. on Nov. 30 and close at noon on Dec. 5.**

Contact youngfarmers@txfb.org if you have questions about the auction.

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Webinar addresses landowner negotiations in eminent domain

By Jennifer Dorsett
Field Editor

Landowners received valuable information on negotiating fair eminent domain agreements in a recent webinar hosted by Texas Farm Bureau (TFB).

Eminent domain reform remains a priority issue for the organization, according to TFB President Russell Boening.

In lieu of planned in-person meetings across the state that were canceled due to the ongoing pandemic, the Eminent Domain: Negotiating a Fair Deal webinar sought to address some common questions and experiences landowners may have when faced with eminent domain proceedings.

“It’s well-known in Texas that property owners struggle with a lack of balance in our state’s eminent domain laws and in the takings process. Across the state, there can be widespread frustration and dissatisfaction with the status quo,” Boening said. “We at Texas Farm Bureau continue to push each legislative session for some common-sense reforms ensuring a more fair, more transparent process with some built-in property right protections for us as landowners. But after the eminent domain reform legislation failed to pass in our last session, Texas Farm Bureau decided that landowners needed some help, and we needed it now.”

During the webinar, participants heard insights from attorney Jim Spivey and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Agricultural Law Specialist Tiffany Dowell Lashmet. Participants also received details on several helpful resources on eminent domain from TFB’s Government Affairs staff.

When negotiating a fair deal, Spivey reminded landowners that even though eminent domain authority ultimately means that entity is going to take or use the land, that doesn’t mean the landowner should receive unfair or low compensation.

“The thing to realize is, in the con-



Private property owners can learn more about negotiating a fair deal when faced with eminent domain from a recent Texas Farm Bureau webinar.

demnation context, this is a forced sale. A landowner is not in an equal bargaining system because in most situations, if you don’t think you have a fair deal, you say no, and both sides part ways. But in the condemnation context, you don’t get to say no. They’re going to condemn your property,” Spivey said. “And so the issue of fairness is oftentimes the issue of getting the most money that they’ll pay or getting the most money from a decision-maker. But the standard is, when your property is being taken, you’re entitled to just and adequate compensation. That’s the constitutional protection when somebody exercises exhaustive power of eminent domain.”

He discussed various issues that often arise in eminent domain agreements, including easement terms, damages to the remainder or main portion of a property not included in the easement, obtaining fair appraisals for just compensation and defining the highest and best use of land.

The initial agreement offered to landowners by an entity using eminent domain is often inadequate, Spivey said. He suggested landowners negotiate for key terms and provisions like those detailed in TFB’s landowner handbook. Spivey also recommended landowners have a lawyer review any agreement carefully before the landowner signs anything, especially any warranty provisions made.

“It’s very important to have somebody read the ultimate document

before you sign it to make sure that document accomplishes what you believe that you’ve negotiated for,” he said. “It is a critical point, because you don’t want to be involved in any lawsuit involving allegations of document ambiguities. Those can be very expensive litigation with a lot of uncertainty involved.”

Spivey also discussed the process of condemnation and what landowners can expect when taken to a special commissioner’s court when their land is condemned.

“In a condemnation matter in Texas, there’s an administrative phase to the case, and then there’s what I would call the regular lawsuit. So, before a condemning authority can even file a petition in condemnation, it has to do several things,” he said. “It has to send in what’s called an initial statutory offer letter, in writing to the landowner, offering to pay for what they’re seeking to acquire, and it must provide the landowner with the Landowner Bill of Rights. After that initial offer letter is sent, the condemning authority has to wait at least 30 days before they provide you with a final written offer.”

Although many landowners feel intimidated and panic when presented with a condemnation lawsuit, he urged caution and reminded participants to seek the advice of an attorney before completing a deal.

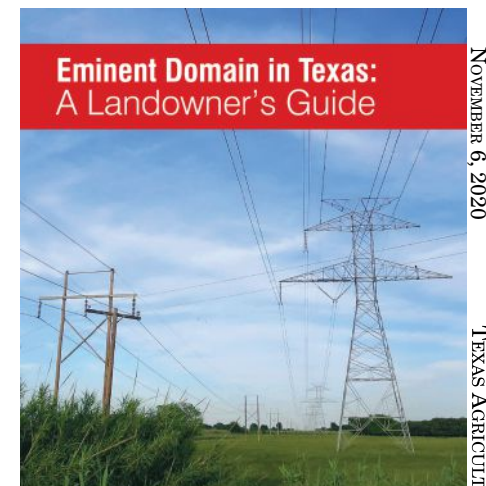
“Over the years, there have probably been many landowners who settled condemnation matters when they received a petition condemnation, because nobody wants to get

sued. It can cause a lot of stress,” Spivey said. “Remember, they’re condemning your property. You’re entitled to be paid. How much? That can be an issue of dispute, but you’re entitled to be paid for what has been taken.”

The webinar concluded with a question-and-answer session with Lashmet and Spivey, along with an update from Boening on TFB’s plans for eminent domain reform in the upcoming legislative session.

“It’s unfortunate that our laws don’t provide some of the guarantees that landowners need to receive. Our current law is hollow when it comes to landowner protections or the substance to force entities to negotiate in good faith,” Boening said. “But thankfully Rep. DeWayne Burns and Sen. Lois Kolkhorst, who have been our champions in the past, remain devoted to the legislation that we negotiated throughout the last session. Moving into 2021, we know that the pandemic has created some unprecedented and unpredictable circumstances for how legislation will advance in the future at the Capitol. But regardless of that, we remain steadfast, and we’re thankful that our bill authors feel the same way.”

To watch the webinar, visit [texasfarmbureau.org/eminentdomain](https://www.texasfarmbureau.org/eminentdomain). A link to the recording is under the Landowner Informational Meetings section.



A free handbook is available online to help landowners better understand the eminent domain condemnation process and their rights.

Texas startup named semi-finalist in AFBF Ag Innovation Challenge

By Jennifer Dorsett
Field Editor

The 2021 Farm Bureau Ag Innovation Challenge seeks to identify top entrepreneurs working to address challenges farmers and ranchers face on their operations, such as access to labor, optimizing yield and reducing operating costs.

A Texas startup has placed in the top 10 semi-finalists of the national competition, thanks to the company's cutting-edge approach to gathering data while facing an age-old problem: lack of internet access on many farms and ranches.

Parasanti, a veteran and farmer-led company, offers a simple, affordable, Internet of Things (IoT) plug-and-play solution to farmers and ranchers seeking to capture and analyze data, all without the need for a broadband connection.

"Farmers and ranchers need hyper-localized insights from their on-farm data. They have data coming off their farms but really no way to derive insights that would help them do things like increase crop yields or monitor weather patterns," Max Adams, Parasanti's head of business development, said. "But we call ourselves the 'blue collar ana-

lytics company.' What that means is we're dedicated to providing and delivering advanced analytics to those who traditionally haven't had access to them, with a particular emphasis being on the farmer and the rancher. Farmers can just plug their sensor into the ground and go from zero to insights in a matter of seconds."

The company's flagship product package is a sensor, edge device and software program.

The edge device stores data from the sensor, which can be uploaded to a computer, phone or tablet.

The Parasanti software on the edge device analyzes the data sets based on each customer's unique needs.

The sensors can pull in an array of farm data, including soil moisture, alkalinity, conductivity and UV light exposure.

Adams noted ranchers could use the data sensors to collect biometric data from livestock to determine illness, times of peak fertility and more.

This data has been collectable for quite some time, he said. But since most devices and software on the market require internet access, it was basically useless to farmers and

ranchers for real-time analysis.

The company's co-founder, Josh Seagroves, an Army veteran who now farms in Williamson County, found himself in a similar situation in combat in Afghanistan.

"One of the issues Josh encountered while being in Afghanistan and Iraq was there's a great flow of downstream data, but not so much upstream," Adams said. "Frankly, it's still a problem today, and believe it or not, the same issues with data really mapped over to the farm and rural areas in the United States, as well, where there wasn't good bandwidth connection. So, Josh, as both a veteran and a farmer, saw those parallels and wanted to build a product that solved the issues for those spaces."

Parasanti has already found success working with farms across the country, including Sohnrey Family Foods from Northern California. According to Adams, since Sohnrey implemented Parasanti devices into the family's rice farming operation, they have been able to cut water usage by about 10 percent, or 360 million gallons.

"Recently, we've been having conversations with a couple of large pe-

can and tree orchards in Texas that we're looking to kind of expand our operation with," Adams said. "We're very excited to see where our participation in the contest takes us. We're looking forward to it."

As one of the 10 semi-finalist teams in the Ag Innovation Challenge, Parasanti was awarded \$7,500 in start-up funds.

The company will compete for the Farm Bureau Entrepreneur of the Year Award during the AFBF virtual convention in January.

During the virtual event, \$15,000 will be awarded to two finalist teams, \$20,000 will be awarded to the People's Choice Award winner and \$50,000 will be awarded to the 2021 Farm Bureau Entrepreneur of the Year.

The AFBF challenge is funded solely by corporate sponsors—Farm Credit, Bayer Crop Science, John Deere, Farm Bureau Bank, Farm Bureau Financial Services and FMC Corporation—to ensure the national organization can continue the competition to support startup businesses.

More information about the contest is available at fb.org/land/ag-innovation-challenge-2021.

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Texas Farm Bureau to host hybrid annual meeting

Texas farmers and ranchers will address organizational policy issues and recognize successes from the past year during the 87th annual meeting of Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) on Nov. 30 and Dec. 5.

This year's annual meeting will include both online and in-person sessions.

"The Texas Farm Bureau board of directors approved a plan to hold a hybrid annual meeting," Si Cook, TFB COO/executive director, said. "This plan addresses the uncertainty surrounding potential restrictions that may be placed on large group meetings as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic."

The annual meeting will open with a virtual session via Zoom. The virtual opening session is set for 6:30-8 p.m. on Nov. 30.

During the virtual session, Gov. Greg Abbott will address TFB members. The 2020 Outstanding Young Farmer & Rancher and Excellence

in Agriculture award winners will be named, and Pioneer Award winners will be recognized.

District caucuses will be held either virtually or in-person Dec. 1-4.

The annual meeting will conclude with an in-person business session on Saturday, Dec. 5, at the Convention Center in Waco. CDC guidelines will be followed during the meeting.

The business session will feature TFB President Russell Boening's address, recognition of retiring state

directors and the election of new state directors.

Members from the state's 205 county Farm Bureaus also will work together to craft policy positions and prepare for the challenges agriculture faces.

"Although our annual meeting will be different, we will still evaluate policy to look at ways to strengthen agriculture and private property rights in our state and nation," Cook said. "The COVID-19 pandemic has

created some additional uncertainty for agriculture, but it has also shown the nation that farmers and ranchers are critical and essential to keep our country running."

Voting delegates will receive an email to register and can make hotel reservations through Betsy Simon at bsimon@txfb.org.

Contact your county Farm Bureau office with questions regarding registration.

The latest agenda and annual meeting information will be posted online at texasfarmbureau.org.



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Cuellar recognized with TFB 2020 Distinguished Service Award

U.S. Rep. Henry Cuellar of Laredo was presented Texas Farm Bureau's (TFB) Distinguished Service Award in his hometown on Oct. 22.

Cuellar represents Texas's 28th Congressional district, a position he has held since 2005. He serves on the U.S. House Appropriations Committee. He is the vice chair of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security, while also serving on the Defense Subcommittee and the Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies.

"Henry Cuellar has very strong

ties with farmers and ranchers in his district. But his work and efforts on issues such as international trade benefit all of Texas agriculture. Our organization appreciates Congressman Cuellar's service and commitment to our state's agricultural community," TFB President Russell Boening said.

TFB's Distinguished Service Award is the highest honor the organization can bestow. 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, according to Boening.



U.S. Rep. Henry Cuellar was recognized with the 2020 Texas Farm Bureau Distinguished Service Award for his dedication to agriculture.

Enrollment begins for ARC, PLC safety net programs for 2021

Farmers and ranchers can make elections and enroll in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for the 2021 crop year.

These key U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) safety net programs help farmers and ranchers weather fluctuations in either revenue or price for certain crops, and more than \$5 billion in payments are being distributed to farmers who signed up for the 2019 crop year.

Enrollment for the 2021 crop year closes March 15, 2021.

ARC provides income support payments on historical base acres when actual crop revenue declines below a specified guaranteed level. PLC provides income support payments on historical base acres when the effective price for a covered commodity

falls below its reference price.

Covered commodities include: barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium and short grain rice, safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat.

2021 Elections and Enrollment

Farmers can elect coverage and enroll in crop-by-crop ARC-County or PLC or ARC-Individual for the entire farm, for the 2021 crop year.

Although election changes for 2021 are optional, enrollment (signed contract) is required for each year of the program. If a farmer has a multi-year contract on the farm and makes an election change for

2021, it will be necessary to sign a new contract.

If an election is not submitted by the deadline of March 15, 2021, the election defaults to the current election for crops on the farm from the prior crop year.

For crop years 2022 and 2023, farmers will have an opportunity to make new elections during those signups. Farm owners cannot enroll in either program unless they have a share interest in the farm.

2019 Crop Year ARC, PLC Payments

FSA began processing payments in mid-October for 2019 ARC-County (ARC-CO) and PLC on covered commodities that met payment triggers on farms enrolled for the 2019 crop year. In addition to the \$5 billion now in process, FSA anticipates it will issue additional payments by the end of November for 2019 commodities covered under ARC-Individual (ARC-IC) and additional commodities that trigger PLC and ARC-CO payments for which rates have not yet been published.

Farmers who had 2019 covered commodities enrolled in ARC-CO can visit the ARC and PLC webpage for payment rates applicable to their county and each covered commodity. For farms and covered commodities enrolled in 2019 PLC, the following

crops met payment triggers: barley, canola, chickpeas (small and large), corn, dry peas, grain sorghum, lentils, peanuts, seed cotton and wheat.

Oats and soybeans did not meet 2019 PLC payment triggers.

The 2019 PLC payment rates for the following covered commodities have not been determined: crambe, flaxseed, long and medium grain rice, mustard seed, rapeseed, safflower, sesame seed, sunflower seed and temperate Japonica rice. Payment rates for these commodities will be announced at a later date.

Web-Based Decision Tools

In partnership with USDA, the University of Illinois and Texas A&M University offer web-based decision tools to assist farmers and ranchers in making informed, educated decisions using crop data specific to their respective farming operations.

Gardner-farmdoc Payment Calculator is the University of Illinois tool that offers farmers the ability to run payment estimate modeling for their farms and counties for ARC-County and PLC.

Texas A&M's ARC and PLC Decision Tool allows farmers to analyze payment yield updates and expected payments for 2021.

For more information on ARC and PLC, visit fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/arcplc_program/index.



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Ag, youth unite in show ring despite COVID-19

Texas Farm Bureau sponsors The United Livestock Show in Waco

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

The lights are on, and the barns are full. The smell of fresh shavings and dirt fill the air.

Although the stands aren't packed, the excitement and anticipation builds. Because youth exhibitors are on the fairgrounds, ready to show in the first-ever United Livestock Show.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing requirements cancelling many events, the Heart O' Texas Fair & Rodeo and the State Fair of Texas partnered to host the unique, one-time youth livestock show in Waco.

The event included breeding heifers, prospect steers and purebred breeding gilts.

Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) participated as a sponsor of The United as part of its long-time support of Texas youth and its strong relationship with both stock shows.

"Because of the pandemic, the two fairs were cancelled, and we weren't able to utilize our Doorways to Agriculture exhibit to engage the public," TFB Organization Director Whit Weems said. "Our sponsorship of The United represents an opportunity for us to redirect those resources that we usually invest at both shows in urban outreach."

TFB's redirected funds were the prize money for the show. Fifteen exhibitors would each take home part of the \$22,500.

For each division—heifers, steers and gilts, the grand champion received \$2,500. The reserve grand champion received \$2,000, third overall \$1,500, fourth overall \$1,000 and fifth overall \$500.

"The United was a fantastic event," Weems said. "Two youth livestock shows worked together to provide an opportunity for Texas 4-H and FFA members. We're proud we were able to play a role in this event."

It was historic, unprecedented and inspiring. Volunteers and stock show staff worked tirelessly to pull together a stock show that will be remembered for many years.

"The United was something that was born out of necessity, and it was born out of friendship," Darryl Real, senior vice president of



Agriculture and Livestock for the State Fair of Texas, said.

Real and Wes Allison, Heart O' Texas Fair & Rodeo president and CEO, are longtime friends. And both knew the importance of an event like this.

"The foundation of the State Fair is promoting agriculture, education and community

involvement. We were proud to host this event with Heart O' Texas," Real said. "And it does our hearts good to push forward, to have found a way to make things happen for the youth in our great state. This gave the kids an opportunity to show."

But The United was more than a livestock show. It was an event that brought hope, a sense of normalcy and allowed seniors to compete once again.

"It was devastating hearing show after show cancelling this year," Ashlyn Summers, a senior at Waxahachie High School, said. "Knowing they started The United was a bright spot. I'm just extremely thankful and just so happy I had the chance to show."

She showed. And she won.

Summers earned the title of Supreme Champion Purebred Breeding Gilt with her Berkshire pig. With that title, she won a banner, buckle and a cash prize from TFB.

"Winning this show, it means so much," Summers, who has been showing for 12 years, said. "I'm going to have a banner and a buckle that, hopefully, no one will ever have again, because I hope we don't need another United show like this. But it's more than the banner and buckle. It's the memories I'm going to take with me."

It was the show of a lifetime for many exhibitors.

"It was a relief to get to show. We kept working, kept grinding all year hoping that we would get to show this fall," said Mason Leifeste, a freshman at C.H. Yoe High School in Cameron.

He, too, took home a banner, buckle and a cash prize for exhibiting the Supreme Champion Breeding Heifer.

Leifeste has been showing cattle for over 10 years, but this win topped all the others.

"I've had some pretty big wins over the years like winning the heifer



Winners of The United breeding heifer show were named on Oct. 4.



Winners of The United purebred breeding gilt show were named on Oct. 18.



Winners of The United prospect steer show were named on Oct. 9.

show at San Antonio, but winning The United is the highlight of my show career. It's the only show like it," he said.

His Charolais heifer Sparkles did just that in the ring—she sparkled and shined. The slap on the heifer's rump from the judge sealed the win, and although the stands weren't as packed as they would be at a normal major livestock show, the win was still just as sweet.

"It was a good show, and winning was a moment I won't ever forget," Leifeste said.

Mason Grady, a fourth-grader from Grandview, had his moment to shine, too.

He won a banner, buckle and cash prize for exhibiting the Overall Grand Champion Prospect Steer.

And he said showing his Charolais steer, Possum, in the grand champion drive was fun.

"It felt good to be back in the ring and competing for the overall champion. This means so much to me, and I'm very excited I won," Grady said. "I'm thankful they were able to put on a show for all of us."

Grateful words from a sincere young man.

And that appreciation was felt by all who walked through the barns and into the ring. The event brought the stock show community together, and it allowed the world to see the good livestock shows do for

Texas youth.

"So many people just keep telling us 'thank you for having a show,'" Allison said. "But that's what we're ultimately here for—the kids. Although we miss having carnival rides, fair food and those kinds of things, we felt like it was our duty to try to do everything we could to help make this happen for the kids."

And that's what they did.

"We have a great group of volunteers who stepped up and helped. We worked with our city and county officials to make something happen for the kids. Although we were only allowed to have parents and FFA and 4-H advisors here with the exhibitors, it's still a special feeling to host the show," Allison said. "With help from Texas Farm Bureau and the State Fair of Texas, we brought back some normalcy for our youth. And that's what's important."

Youth exhibitors showed up in large numbers. Nearly 1,200 heifers and more than 530 steers and 225 pigs were exhibited in Waco.

"This is a one-of-a-kind show, and I hope and pray that it stays that way," Allison said.

But The United will always be remembered as the show that went on.

And when the banners fade, the friendships and memories that were made will last long after. Because in a year that was filled with uncertainty, something good happened.



Texas Farm Bureau state directors presented the checks to the winning exhibitors in the ring during the champion drives for each livestock division.

For each division—heifers, steers and gilts,
the grand champion received \$2,500.
The reserve grand champion received \$2,000, third overall
\$1,500, fourth overall \$1,000 and fifth overall \$500.

Top 5 Purebred Breeding Gilts
Supreme Champion: Ashlyn Summers
Reserve Champion: Ava Luke
3rd Overall: Savannah Johnston
4th Overall: Lauren Brusher
5th Overall: Savannah Johnston

Top 5 Prospect Steers
Grand Champion Overall: Mason Grady
Reserve Champion Overall: Kenzie Neve
3rd Overall: Addie Potts
4th Overall: Jade Stone
5th Overall: Jagger Birkhead

Top 5 Breeding Heifers
Supreme Champion: Mason Leifeste
Reserve Champion Overall: Stiles Patin
3rd Overall: Jarrett Worrell
4th Overall: Caleb Bram
5th Overall: Kanin Cleere

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Hunters reminded of fever tick quarantine zones in South Texas

By Jennifer Dorsett
Field Editor

With the white-tailed deer hunting season officially open across the state, Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) reminds hunters in South Texas that additional protocols must be followed when handling white-tailed deer and other cervids to help stop the spread of fever ticks.

“Hunters play a critical role in protecting our state from the further spread of fever ticks,” Angela Lackie, assistant executive director of TAHC Animal Health Programs, said. “We are asking for their help this hunting season to ensure this tick is not inadvertently transported to unaffected areas of the state when harvested deer or exotics are moved from fever tick-infested areas.”

White-tailed deer, nilgai antelope, black buck, axis deer and other exotic cervids harvested on premises under fever tick quarantines must have the animals inspected and treated by a TAHC or U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) representative before removing the car-

cass, hide, cape, head or animal from the premises.

“These steps are critical because the nymphs, one of the life stages of the cattle fever tick, can be very tiny and can easily go unnoticed,” TAHC Laredo Region Director Dr. Muzafar Makhdoomi said in an interview with the Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network. “That’s why all capes have to be removed and treated, because even though we’re pulling off the adult ticks, which are larger in size and visible to the eye, there’s still going to be that possibility that some of the ticks are smaller, and we may not be able to see them.”

Those tiny pests can cause big problems if allowed to reproduce, he noted.

“There’s a chance that nymphs, which are present on the hide, will molt to an adult, drop off and start a whole new infestation,” Makhdoomi said. “I want to emphasize that each adult engorged female can lay up to 4,000 eggs, which means that there could be 4,000 new ticks arising from that egg mass, and it can easily lead to initiation and perpetuation

of a new infestation.”

While additional precautions are needed when hunting, moving, capturing or harvesting cervids from quarantined areas, TAHC works to make the inspection and treatment process quick and simple.

“We have put out the phone numbers for our counties on our website, and we have inspectors on duty during normal hours and after hours, including the weekend,” he said. “I just request that hunters please be patient, because there could be multiple calls coming in.”

The only exception to calling the deer hotline is for hunters on the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge in Cameron County.

Hunters there will need to go to a designated common location, where a member of TAHC staff will assist them with inspection and treatment of the cape.

It’s fine for hunters to skin the hide on the property they’re hunting, Makhdoomi said. But TAHC strongly recommends hunters put a tarp on the ground before skinning the animal, so any fever ticks that

fall off during the process can be gathered by TAHC or USDA staff.

Makhdoomi noted hunters should store the hides in a trash bag, so TAHC can treat those, as well.

Failure to get hides inspected before leaving the area is a criminal offense.

“I want to put the message out to hunters that we’re not looking to fine people. We are looking for cooperation and compliance,” Makhdoomi said. “However, if they move hides without inspection, it would be a level-two offense, and that could range from first offense of between \$150 to \$300. Recurring offenses can incur an administrative penalty of up to \$1,000 dollars, which would be addressed through the local Justice of the Peace codes.”

Portions of Cameron, Jim Hogg, Jim Wells, Hidalgo, Maverick, Starr, Webb, Willacy and Zapata counties have established fever tick quarantines.

A list of contacts, current quarantine maps and more information on fever ticks is available at www.tahc.texas.gov.

Pasture, Rangeland and Forage Insurance sign up deadline nears

Ranchers are familiar with how dry Texas can get.

Pasture, Range, and Forage (PRF) Insurance is a risk policy designed to provide annual protection for farmers and ranchers who rely on forage products to support their livestock operations.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Risk Management Agency offers the PRF program and policies covering the 2021 calendar year through crop insurance agents until Nov. 15. Premiums will be billed on Sept. 1, 2021.

“In the face of uncertain weather conditions, insurance becomes a critical component in producers’ risk management portfolios,” said DeDe Jones, AgriLife Extension risk management specialist in Amarillo.

Premiums for PRF Insurance vary by county, use for grazing or

hay, coverage level, productivity level, intervals chosen and grid location.

Farmers and ranchers are not required to insure all acres for the entire 12-month period.

Payment is not determined by individual damages, but rather area losses based on a grid system.

Farmers and ranchers can select any portion of acres to insure, but a minimum of two and a maximum of six two-month periods must be selected.

Coverage levels between 70 percent and 90 percent are available, Jones said. Once coverage is selected, the producer also chooses a productivity factor between 60 percent and 150 percent. The productivity factor is a percentage of the established county base value for forage.

The base value is a standard rate



Forage insurance can be purchased for perennial pasture, rangeland or forage used to feed livestock.

published by the Risk Management Agency for each county. It is calculated based on estimated stocking rates and current hay prices.

The program uses a rainfall index to determine potential indemnity payments.

Alfalfa and other irrigated hay can be insured under a PRF policy at different coverage levels and higher base values.

For more information, visit rma.usda.gov or contact your insurance agent.

Report examines cattle market issues, solutions

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

A new report unveiled this fall by the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) provides an in-depth look at the extreme market volatility in the beef cattle industry.

Ten state Farm Bureau presidents, including Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) President Russell Boening, served on the Cattle Market Working Group and spent more than two months investigating factors that led to market disruptions.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, American consumers were spending more on food away from their home. Once social distancing and shelter-in-place orders were implemented, consumer purchasing habits shifted almost overnight to meals at home. That impacted animal protein supply chains and shut down the food service demand channel.

Consumers began panic buying at grocery stores, and the surge in demand at the retail level happened quicker than the supply chain could react. Temporary closures and labor shortages at meat packing plants due to COVID-19 outbreaks also slowed and reduced production.

And prices for ranchers were dramatically impacted.

“The COVID-19 pandemic clearly disrupted markets and our processing systems, but cattle producers were also affected by the closure of the Tyson beef packing plant in Kansas after a fire late last year,” Boening said. “The working group invited input from economists, government staff, university staff and other industry experts to help us better understand these two events and the factors impacting the beef industry and our Farm Bureau members. We wanted to know if the markets reacted the way they should have and to see if anything could be done to alleviate future serious price swings like we saw recently.”

Key discussion topics included mandatory minimum negotiated trade, risk management and education, small capacity meat packing and the Grain Inspection, Packers and



Stockyards Administration (GIPSA).

The group discussed mandatory minimum pricing regulations that would alter beef pricing dynamics.

Members of Congress have proposed various plans to improve market transparency with mandated minimum cash purchase requirements for packers.

The group reviewed the idea that, in the case regulatory action is required, rules that allow for variance in minimum purchases between cattle feeding regions would be an appropriate place to start considerations.

“Fed cattle marketing in the Texas Panhandle is accomplished very differently than in Midwestern states,” Boening said. “We don’t want to mandate anything in the free market, but if things don’t change to allow for increased transparency in the cash market and more robust price discovery, we don’t want a one-size-fits-all approach.”

That led the working group to a “triggered”-style mandatory minimum pricing idea that is set on a region-by-region basis. A mandatory cash purchase minimum would be prompted for packers if those in a designated region fail to buy a predetermined number of fed cattle on the cash market in a given timeframe.

The group also discussed risk protection extensively, Boening said.

“Historically, not many cattle producers have used risk management tools,” he said. “But those tools, like

the Livestock Risk Protection insurance, could be useful for producers of all sizes, especially if they could be adjusted to be more affordable for smaller producers. More education about the resources and tools available would be helpful, too.”

The group is also interested in AFBF working with the Chicago Mercantile Exchange to better address concerns for smaller producers.

Policy solutions that would allow smaller packing facilities to play a larger role in the food supply chain were among others issues discussed.

Several bills have been introduced in Congress to address the issue, but the group also considered creating incentives for smaller packing plants to become federally inspected.

“Big packers process about 80 percent of fed cattle in the country,” Boening said. “That means there’s not a lot of small to very small producers. Some of that’s a regulatory

burden, because a larger packer can spread those costs out over a number of cattle. We understand the safety of our food is paramount, but the working group really considered several options and talked about ways to use innovative technology to help with the inspection process.”

Farm Bureau believes in the need for robust enforcement through GIPSA and supports strengthening the agency’s ability to enforce market rules. The working group recognized the need to continue to advocate for these policy positions to make sure markets are fair.

“This was a good opportunity to work with other state Farm Bureaus and to hear what members in other states are concerned about. We’re all facing similar issues, but we may have different ideas on how to provide solutions,” Boening said. “AFBF is well respected, so when you put together a working group from the 10 leading cattle states in this country, I think this report will have an impact. It was a great opportunity to represent TFB members and work with states to surface some ideas for our membership to look at in the policy development process going forward.”

In addition to TFB, other state Farm Bureaus represented on the working group were: Arizona, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska and New York. AFBF Vice President Scott VanderWal of South Dakota served as committee chair.

To view the full report, visit fb.org. Other market analyses are available at fb.org/market-intel.



Pandemic brings new attention to cattle industry

By Jennifer Dorsett
Field Editor

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted issues within the beef industry, and members of Congress introduced several bills aimed at solving some of the concerns.

In the U.S. House of Representatives, House Agriculture Committee Chairman Collin Peterson (D-Minn.) and others introduced the Requiring Assistance to Meat Processors for Upgrading Plants (RAMP-UP) Act, which would establish a grant program to help existing meat and poultry processors move from state to federal inspection facilities, giving access to markets across state lines.

Another bill, the Direct Interstate Retail Exemption for Certain Transactions (DIRECT) Act introduced over the summer by Reps. Dusty Johnson (R-S.D.) and Henry Cuellar (D-Texas), would allow state-inspected meats to be sold across state lines through e-commerce. The bill would allow small producers and

processors an additional option to directly market to consumers.

The bill would also maintain traceability of sales easily accessed in the event of a recall; allow retail sales to consumers, minimizing the risk for further processing in export and keeping equivalency agreements with trading partners intact; and allow states operating under the Cooperative Interstate Shipping system to ship and label as they are currently.

The House's latest meat-related bill, the bipartisan Strengthening Local Processing Act, would increase the federal government's share of meat inspection funding and help small processors expand capacity through a series of grant programs.

In the Senate, a proposal introduced by Sens. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) and Jon Tester (D-MT) in May would mandate U.S. meat processing facilities to purchase 50 percent of their weekly livestock volume on the open market, an attempt to increase price discovery participation by beef

packers.

The Haulers of Agriculture and Livestock Safety (HAULS) Act, introduced in the Senate by Agriculture Committee member Deb Fischer (R-Neb.), would help accommodate the seasonal spikes in transportation of food, fiber and other agricultural supplies by modernizing the ag exemption to the hours-of-service rules.

The legislation would eliminate the "planting and harvesting periods" requirements to ensure uniformity across the country. Most states have adopted a year-round ag exemption to accommodate the diverse range of crops and modern practices that keep trucks moving ag products year-round.

The bill would provide a 150-air-miles exemption from hours-of-service regulations on the backend of hauls, and it would update the definition of an agricultural commodity for purposes of determining eligible freight for the ag exemption.

In addition to the HAULS Act,

Fischer introduced the Cattle Market Transparency Act.

The bill would establish negotiated cash minimums, but the proposal differs from others because it uses regional mandatory minimum thresholds instead of a national mandate.

A similar bill, the Price Reform in Cattle Economics (PRICE) Act, was introduced in the House by Johnson.

While both bills push for greater transparency and a library for beef cattle contracts similar to that in the pork sector, the PRICE Act also asks for another U.S. Department of Agriculture study on buying live cattle on the open cash market before setting any mandatory minimums.

Some existing legislative proposals, including the DIRECT Act Johnson co-sponsored earlier this year, are included in the new bill.

"These are some of the bills that Congress is considering as it looks at ways to make our food system more resilient," Tracy Tomascik, Texas Farm Bureau associate director of Commodity and Regulatory Activities, said.



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EXCELLENCE IN AGRICULTURE FINALISTS



Cody Berry
Huntington



Laura Reed
Aubrey



Jessica Rumbaugh
El Campo

Texas Farm Bureau recognizes young ranchers, professionals

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

A passion for agriculture, their community and family earned three agricultural professionals recognition in the 2020 Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) Excellence in Agriculture (EIA) competition.

The finalists in this year's contest are Cody Berry of Huntington, Laura Reed of Aubrey and Jessica Rumbaugh of El Campo.

TFB's EIA award recognizes young men and women ages 18 to 35 who are involved in agriculture but do not earn their primary income from a farm or ranch enterprise.

Cody Berry is a high school agricultural science teacher and FFA advisor at Hudson ISD.

Berry helps his students in extracurricular agricultural activities, including stock shows, career development events, leadership development events, ag mechanics, speaking contests and more.

He was recently selected to serve as secretary and a member of the Executive Committee of the Area IX FFA Association. He also served as the district secretary and president. In these roles, Berry helps coordinate district and area FFA events.

He and his wife, Madisyn, have two daughters and own land in

Angelina County that they plan to convert into pasture to support commercial beef production. He also owns a small business that specializes in custom contract mowing and land management.

Berry is an Angelina County Farm Bureau board member and previously represented District 9 on TFB's Young Farmer & Rancher Advisory Committee.

Laura Reed is a high school agricultural science teacher and FFA advisor at Denton ISD.

In addition to teaching, Reed helps her students with career development events, leadership development events, livestock projects, Norman Borlaug World Food Prize projects and other FFA activities.

As an FFA advisor, Reed has led students to qualify for the state Veterinary Science Career Development Event and brings agriculture to life for students who live in an urban area.

Reed often raises laying hens and hogs to give her students hands-on experiences with animal agriculture, and she is the district species advisor for sheep, goats and poultry.

She and her husband, Allen, have one son and are expecting another son in December.

Reed is active in Denton County

Farm Bureau where she has coordinated Mobile Learning Barn visits and assisted with county activities.

Jessica Rumbaugh owns a real estate brokerage that specializes in acreage properties. She offers education and assistance for landowners on agricultural tax exemptions, wildlife management and how to use land for its best intended value.

Rumbaugh also owns and manages a direct-to-consumer grassfed beef operation in El Campo.

She trains the horses they use on the farm and competes in working ranch horse competitions where she's won multiple championship titles.

Rumbaugh and her husband, Ben, have two children and they serve as the District 11 representatives on TFB's Young Farmer & Rancher Advisory Committee. Rumbaugh is also a Wharton County Farm Bureau board member.

She is a member of the American Farm Bureau Federation's (AFBF) GO Team, a national grassroots outreach advocacy group, and a graduate of AFBF's Women's Communications Boot Camp.

The winner of this year's contest will receive a UTV, courtesy of Southern Farm Bureau Life Insurance Company, and a \$5,000 cash prize, courtesy of Farm Credit.

The two runners-up will receive a \$1,000 cash award, courtesy of Farm Bureau Bank, and a \$500 cash award, courtesy of Southern Farm Bureau Life Insurance Company.

The state winner will advance to compete in the national contest hosted by AFBF.

The national winner will receive a new Ford vehicle up to a value of \$35,000 and paid registration to the Farm Bureau FUSION Conference in Oregon, courtesy of Ford. The national runner-up will receive a Case IH Farmall 50A, courtesy of Case IH.

Third place in the national EIA contest will receive a Case IH 40" Combination Roll Cabinet & Top Chest and a \$500 Case IH parts card, courtesy of Case IH; a \$2,500 Investing Your Future cash prize, courtesy of American Farm Bureau Insurance Services, Inc.; and \$1,850 worth of Stanley Black & Decker merchandise (PROTO, DeWalt, Stanley, Lenox & Irwin), courtesy of Stanley Black & Decker.

Fourth place in the national contest will receive a Case IH 40" Combination Roll Cabinet & Top Chest and a \$500 Case IH parts card, courtesy of Case IH.

Information on TFB's EIA contest can be found at [texasfarmbureau.org/YFR](https://www.texasfarmbureau.org/YFR).

EXCELLENCE IN AGRICULTURE FINALIST



Cody Berry
Huntington

By Jennifer Dorset
Field Editor

Cody Berry knew from the time he was young he wanted to go to college and come back home to Hudson ISD to teach agricultural science.

His family roots run deep in the area, and agriculture is a family tradition, as well.

“I went to school at Hudson, just like my grandfather and father before me. My daughter June will be the fourth generation to attend school here,” Berry said. “My family has always been involved in production agriculture in some way. I intend to raise my family with that same opportunity to see what agriculture can offer them.”

Growing up, Berry was heavily involved in 4-H and FFA, and he helped his dad bale hay when he wasn’t at school, all of which instilled a strong work ethic and drive to succeed.

After attending college at Stephen F. Austin State University and earning a degree in poultry science, Berry returned to Angelina County and taught agricultural science in a neighboring school district for one year. Then, in a stroke of luck, an agricultural science teacher position opened at Hudson High School, allowing him to fulfill his lifelong ambition to teach at the school where

he learned so much.

“I wanted to be an ag teacher at Hudson, because that was where my heart is. I’m very proud to give back to the community that gave to me,” he said.

Now, he teaches students a variety of agricultural concepts, and Berry hopes he imparts some useful life lessons along the way.

“A lot of my students’ home life is not as stable as mine was, and a fair amount of them don’t have a father figure,” Berry said. “So, I feel like it’s important for me to try to teach them life lessons, to understand that life’s not fair, but it’s okay. You’re going to get what you put into it.”

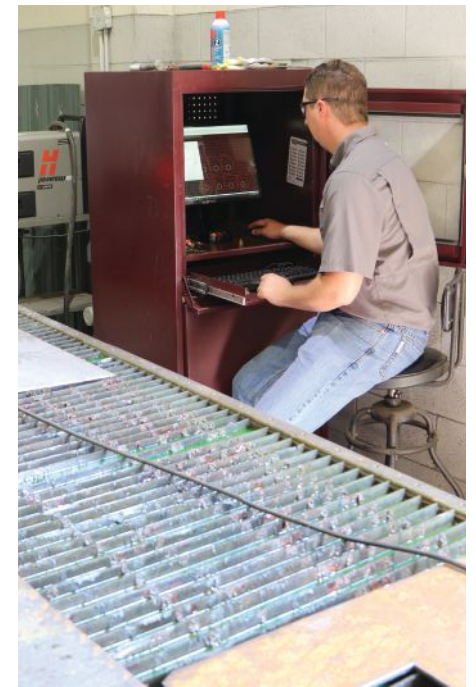
Berry conducts a broiler chicken project in his classroom each year, beginning with fertilized eggs and ending with a field trip to Stephen F. Austin State University to process the birds into retail cuts. The experience shows his students what it takes to bring meat to their plates and helps them understand and respect animal agriculture.

Even though Hudson is a small, rural community where many of his students’ families are involved in agriculture, Berry hopes every student who walks through his door takes away a better understanding of agriculture.

“Here, we’re mostly pine trees, cows and chickens,” he said. “There’s very little farmland production agriculture, but my involvement in Farm Bureau has helped me learn more about other types of agriculture. I’m able to bring that back to the classroom and teach my kids about those things, too.”

After all, agriculture is the basis of life, he said.

“Agriculture is in everything we do. It’s there in the morning on our breakfast plate. It’s there at night when we lay our head on the pillow. Virtually every aspect of our life is impacted by agriculture. Whether it’s from the food we eat, the clothes we wear or the house we live in, it all began with agriculture at some



point,” he said. “I feel there’s no other job out there that relates to production agriculture in the way that my job does. Every day, I get to walk into my shop and engage young minds and promote agriculture with them. Whether it be through a small engines class or welding or livestock production, I can introduce them to a new topic in agriculture that they can use in their everyday life, and that’s a pretty good feeling.”

He helps shape students’ lives and their knowledge of agriculture in the classroom, in the stock show ring and through other hands on FFA extracurricular projects.

But he also hopes to have an impact outside of the classroom.

In addition to teaching, Berry and his wife, Madisyn, own land in Angelina County that they plan to convert into pasture to support commercial beef production.

Berry also owns a small business that specializes in custom contract mowing and land management.

His desire is to raise his two daughters in agriculture. Their small acreage and his small business will help his daughters understand the role of production agriculture and might just inspire them to follow in his footsteps.

EXCELLENCE IN AGRICULTURE FINALIST



Laura Reed
Aubrey

By Jennifer Dorset
Field Editor

Laura Reed may have taken a roundabout path to her career as an agricultural science teacher, but her passion for agriculture led the way back to her roots.

“I’m originally from the small town of Tatum, which is out in the Pineywoods of East Texas. I grew up on a small hobby farm, and I was taught that agriculture was just a way of life. It didn’t take me long to fall in love with all things involving animal agriculture and taking care of the world given to us. I spent all of my youth involved in Rusk County 4-H and FFA, and I thought I wanted to be a veterinarian,” Reed said. “But I realized after working at a vet clinic that maybe that wasn’t the life for me, and I had a really influential government teacher in high school. So, I ended up going to the University of Texas at Austin and studying government and education.”

After a year of unsuccessfully searching for a government teaching position, Reed was hired to teach middle school English. While teaching English, she began working on a master’s degree in agricultural science from Texas A&M University-Commerce.

Now, Reed teaches agricultural science at Denton ISD in a sprawl-

ing suburban high school. Students in her classes live in a variety of environments—from large, mixed-use apartment communities full of stores and restaurants to small hobby farms just outside the city.

She wants her students to understand the degree to which agriculture impacts everyone.

“Agriculture is everything in life, but where I teach, kids are not generally exposed to agriculture,” she said. “They definitely need to know where their food comes from, where their clothes come from, where basically everything comes from.”

Leading her students on a journey to better understanding agriculture fulfills her sense of purpose, too.

“I can be a constant advocate for agriculture to some students who have no prior knowledge of where their food or clothing comes from, and it brings me great satisfaction to be able to see the light bulb moment when they realize that agriculture is literally the world’s most important subject,” Reed said.

Throughout the years, Reed has raised laying hens, rabbits and hogs to give her students hands-on experiences with animal agriculture and to teach them about genetics, nutrition, marketing and other aspects of the business.

The students who gain the most from the experience, Reed said, are often those who know the least about agriculture on the first day.

“I’ve personally seen how students’ perceptions of agriculture can change as their agricultural knowledge grows. I taught a student for three years who was vegan,” Reed said. “While she never abandoned her vegan diet, nor did I expect her to do so, she had a different understanding of animal agriculture by the time she graduated.”

It was an eye-opening experience for both the student and Reed.

“By showing her large- and small-scale production methods and taking her to the livestock barn, she could personally see that animals were not in a constant state of abuse and that



they were fed and medicated with precision. By the end of high school, she was able to defend animal agriculture and could differentiate between propaganda designed to be a smear campaign against certain industries,” she said. “She was also able to voice her concerns about the animal industry in an environment where there was no judgement. Just as she listened to my lessons daily, she was given a platform to ask questions and be heard. By allowing her to do this, we had an open line of communication that brought our two sides closer together.”

Through her work, Reed hopes to continue setting her students’ feet on

the path to agricultural awareness.

“I want my students to take away real concepts and truths about agriculture instead of just what they’re being fed,” she said. “I want them to not necessarily feel like they need to argue against all those things, but they have the knowledge to make good informed decisions about the food they’re buying.”

She also wants to foster that passion for agriculture and knowledge in her own children. Reed and her husband, Allen, have one son and one on the way.

They just might follow a path, even if it’s in a roundabout way, like Reed’s.

EXCELLENCE IN AGRICULTURE FINALIST



Jessica Rumbaugh
El Campo

By Jennifer Dorset
Field Editor

Jessica Rumbaugh wants people to understand the true value of rural land ownership.

It's a message she hopes will help property owners keep their land in agricultural production for as many years as possible, preserving a way of life that is quickly becoming less common.

"As the broker and owner of Texas Land and Home Real Estate, my business model is very education-centered, and I work hard to encourage people to view farm and ranch properties as an investment asset rather than only looking at that land for future development for buildings," she said. "We're losing a staggering amount of farmland annually across the country, and while I recognize in my role in real estate that development and population growth is inevitable, I try to share with buyers why agriculture is so important, why it's such a necessary and vital resource."

Her family also has a cow-calf operation, raising grassfed beef for direct-to-consumer sales.

Rumbaugh personally delivers most of the beef she sells to people in Houston, Austin and everywhere in between.

While she's been successful in

real estate and beef production, it's not a career path she initially saw herself taking.

"My roots run deep in agriculture. Both of my grandfathers are from this area, where I've grown up, as well. I worked in Houston and didn't really like that, so we came back here to get back into agriculture," Rumbaugh said.

Once home in Wharton County, she realized agricultural advocacy was more important than ever.

"Now, I'm a fourth-generation farmer and rancher, and I think it's easy in agriculture to just focus on your day-to-day operation and what's right in front of you, like keeping plants alive or livestock alive," she said. "But we have to look beyond that and realize that we have to be involved in leadership, in advocacy and talking to legislators and engaging the public, because it's so much more than just a production operation. We really have to advocate, because there are just so many people who don't understand why we do what we do."

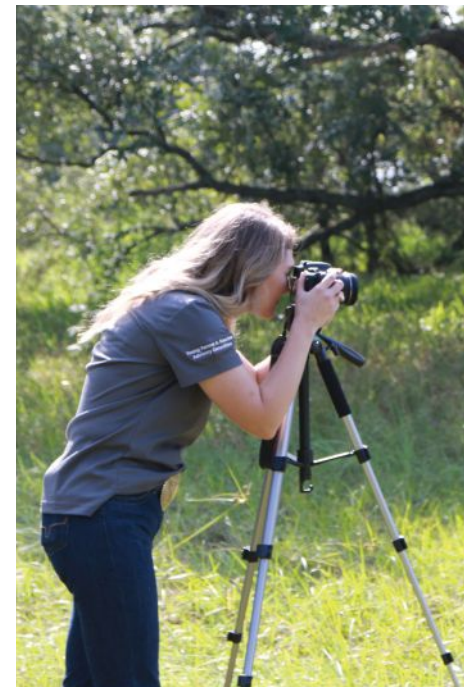
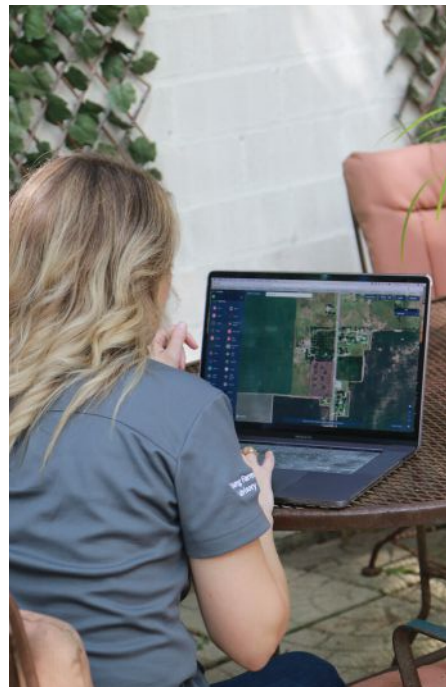
Being a vocal advocate and leader in her industry is another way of carrying on family traditions.

"I feel like I'm following in the footsteps of my grandfather, who was a trailblazer and leader in this area as far as what he did and all the boards he started and all the things he helped to found here," she said.

Connecting buyers with contacts to help manage agricultural tax exemptions and providing resources to encourage them to keep their land in production gives her a sense of purpose.

Farm Bureau has been a valuable tool in helping her develop those connections and cultivating strong relationships.

"My training and experiences through Farm Bureau have really helped me connect to people and help them learn more about what they can expand that piece of property into," she said. "My goal is to en-



courage and educate urban clients to invest in land ownership in rural areas, and in turn, to help keep that rural land in use—whether for agricultural use or wildlife habitat."

And she hopes her beef business helps urban residents better understand agriculture, too.

"It was through our contacts in the city, both from our old corporate sales jobs and then even through my real estate business, where people said 'Hey, can we buy some beef from you?'" Rumbaugh said. "Now, I interact with so many people who have probably never talked to someone who does anything in agriculture.

They get to see that agriculture is not some huge, corporate-run business. It's people like me, just a young mom sometimes hauling her kids while dropping off my beef."

She and her husband, Ben, have two kids. She wants their children to learn from her and be passionate about agriculture and be a voice for farmers and ranchers.

"We definitely want our kids to learn that hard work pays off. We want them to learn that every day the animals rely on you, people rely on you," she said. "They see us work hard, and that's extremely important."

In a nutshell: Millican Pecan is a family business

By Jennifer Dorsett
Field Editor

Pecans and Texans are two things that just go together.

For the Millican family, their pecan-growing roots run as deep as those of the more than 100-year-old trees found on their property.

Winston Millican's great-great-great grandfather, E.E. Risien, founded the West Texas Pecan Nursery at the junction of the San Saba and Colorado rivers, where the original orchard still produces to this day.

Over the years, Risien and his descendants contributed to many advancements in the Texas pecan industry, including the development of new varieties and helping establish San Saba as the Pecan Capital of the World.

And the family's dedication to growing a quality product they're proud to put their name on has never changed.

"I'm fifth-generation, working on the sixth generation, and a lot of the



Winston and Kristen Millican check their pecan crop in their San Saba County orchard. Courtesy photo.

older farmers around are getting to the point where they don't want to do the harvesting anymore, so there's a lot of opportunities for that," he said.

When he and his wife, Kristen, graduated from Texas A&M University in 2002, the couple knew they wanted to move back to San Saba.

In the year before they graduated college, Kristen said Winston approached her with the idea of growing an online presence and adding

catalog sales as part of the farm's business plan.

"So, we developed the website. My dad is a computer programmer, and he did much of the layout design for us," Kristen said.

Winston laughed as he recalled the early days of development.

"Back in 2002 when we started, we were seniors in college, and we'd just gotten married the summer before. We did crazy stuff. We would print



The Millicans continue the pecan-growing tradition. Courtesy photo.

our own catalogs in our apartment," he said. "We had shifts. She would fill the printer up with ink and paper one time, and then the next time I would do it. Just a lot of trial-and-error stuff where we had to learn as we went."

Through an increased retail presence, they've been able to expand their product offerings, as well. While fresh pecans remain their best seller, they also have baked goods, candies and various pecan products.

Today, Kristen is very involved in the retail operation and focuses on the website and marketing, while Winston, his parents and aunt and uncle focus on growing, maintaining and harvesting the orchards.

It's a lifestyle and a partnership they enjoy and appreciate.

"I really like getting to work with my family," he said. "It's nice to be able to know that you're going to go out with a partner and do things that are going to be worthwhile."

Kristen is proud to contribute to the Millican family legacy in her own way, as well.

"For me, marrying into the business and the family and seeing the sacrifices they've made over the years to continue doing what they've been doing for so long, it really helps to kind of ground you," she said. "For us, there's just this real responsibility to stick to something and knowing we don't want to be the ones to let our family down. But it's a good pressure, and it's really grounded us. Our vision for the future is fully rooted in the heritage of our past."

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International water treaty causes concerns for Texas farmers

By Jennifer Dorsett
Field Editor

Longstanding issues with Mexico meeting water debt obligations as outlined in a 1944 water treaty have left Texas farmers and ranchers along the Rio Grande River Basin high and dry, concerned for their operations' future viability.

Irrigation water is a necessity to grow crops in the semi-arid to arid climates of Far West Texas, the Winter Garden and the Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV), all of which rely, to varying degrees, on the Rio Grande River.

The river's basin stretches from Hudspeth County to the southernmost tip of Texas in Cameron County.

Surface water from the Rio Grande River, the LRGV's only useable water source, is stored in Amistad and Falcon International Reservoirs. The dams and lakes are jointly managed by the U.S. and Mexico under the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC).

Mexico is supposed to deliver an average of 350,000 acre-feet (AF) of water annually, for a total of 1.75 million AF over a five-year cycle.

But in mid-September, Mexico had sent less than half of what it owes the U.S., according to a letter sent by Texas Gov. Greg Abbott to U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

And Mexico was already behind from the last cycle, leaving Texas farmers and government officials leery the nation would uphold its end of the treaty.

"Only recently, after the peak irrigation season, has Mexico begun to make minor progress on deliveries through direct transfers of water from the international reservoirs," Abbott wrote. "It is vital that this water be delivered to the international reservoirs due to allocations year-round from the reservoirs, which are especially important during peak irrigation season (March-July). In general, lack of water negatively impacts multiple stakeholders within the Rio Grande Valley, forcing Texas water users to secure alter-

nate sources of water, change crops and reduce operations."

Two days before the Oct. 24 close of the five-year cycle, Mexico reached an agreement with the U.S., transferring ownership from Mexico to the U.S. the water held in Lakes Amistad and Falcon until the nation's water debt was rectified.

While it looks good on paper, Hidalgo County citrus grower Dale Murden said the compromise is of no real help to LRGV farmers.

"It's a double-edged sword. They've made a paper transfer. Instead of getting a share in any inflows into the Amistad and Falcon reservoirs, they'll give it to us," Murden said. "But 100 percent of nothing is nothing. Until it rains, I couldn't take advantage of that, even if I wanted to."

In late October, IBWC data showed Falcon was at 21 percent of conservation capacity and Amistad was at 37 percent.

"What's frustrating is we give them so much more from the Colorado River than they give us from the Rio Grande," Murden said. "It's not like we have our water down here physically. They didn't transfer any water from where they have it, but I guess it's bankable. At least we know that any inflow that comes in, it's ours until their debt is paid."

But how the Mexican water debt issue affects Texas agriculture is even more complicated than a direct lack of water access for farmers.

"Another side of this story is that the water Mexico has not sent is going to Mexican pecan orchards in Delicias, near the La Boquilla Dam," Bob Whitney, executive director of the Texas Pecan Board, said. "One of the major flows of the Rio Grande River from Mexico is from that dam and reservoir, but that water is being used for agriculture in the Chihuahuan Desert, which happens to be the major pecan production area of Mexico."

The area has expanded rapidly in pecan acreage over the last 15-20 years, mainly because the farmers have access to water from the La Bo-

quilla reservoir, Whitney said.

"Mexico has now become a world leader in pecan production because of that area. In some years, Mexico is now outproducing the United States in pecan production. It's an issue for our pecan producers because our price is lower, and in some cases, low enough that Texas pecans are not purchased because Mexico pecans are purchased instead," Whitney said. "They're brought in as a shelled product, and there are Texas pecan shellers not running right now, because they can't compete with the Mexico pecan production costs."

Texas pecan growers struggling with low prices are competing in a hugely imbalanced market created by water in Mexico that's been promised to the U.S., he added.

"Our growers are complaining about Mexican pecans, because they get told that buyers are not going to buy their pecans, because they're waiting to see what Mexico is going to do and what the prices are going

to be from Mexico," he said. "It's a frustration that the very water that they use to support their industry is water that our Texas producers need in the Rio Grande Valley. So, it's what might be called a double-whammy to Texas farmers."

Satellite imaging shows the increase in agricultural production in the Chihuahuan Desert over the last 20 years, Murden said.

The new agreement with Mexico is thanks in large part to the work of Abbott, U.S. Rep. Henry Cuellar, and State Rep. Lyle Larson, Murden said.

While the agreement should bring water back to the reservoirs on which he and other farmers and ranchers in the area depend upon, he said it will be an ongoing issue.

"I'm not ungrateful, and we really do appreciate all the hard work our legislators have put in to rectify the problem," Murden said. "It's just a never-ending issue with Mexico and the water debt."

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Teachers engage online, learn about ag resources

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Regardless of the subject, agriculture has a place in the classroom, and teachers received tools and resources needed to incorporate agriculture into their curriculum during Texas Farm Bureau's (TFB) Teacher Ag Academy last month.

"Teachers are always looking for resources, no matter if you've been teaching for one year or 12 years," Pam Hennigan, a fourth grade math and science teacher at Dodd Elementary in Wylie, said. "We're looking for activities that are fun for the students, but new resources also brings back excitement for us as teachers. This event was fast-paced and engaging. It made learning fun on a Saturday morning."

The Teacher Ag Academy was a virtual professional development event designed to show teachers how to bring agriculture to life in the classroom and allow them to ask questions and network with other educators.

The free event included three presentations and a virtual farm tour.

"Professional development opportunities are vital to having educators expand and diversify the material taught in the classroom. Our goal at Texas Farm Bureau is to provide valuable opportunities that allow teachers to learn what resources are available and how to truly utilize those resources to increase agricultural literacy," Jordan Walker, TFB director of Educational Outreach, said. "This opportunity allowed teachers from across the state, no matter their location, to engage in learning from experts and other educators without traveling a far distance or incurring expenses."

Presenters took the educators on a virtual nature walk and conducted science experiments. Each session showed how concepts students are learning in the classroom can relate to agriculture.

The teachers toured Volleman's Dairy in Gustine to see how farm-

ers and ranchers use science and technology. The live question-and-answer session allowed them to better understand modern agricultural practices.

"I'm pioneering a STEM class. All of what I learned, I can work into that course," said Alyssa Mathes, a science, history and STEM teacher at Tom Bean Middle School. "The dairy tour, which was the last part, was the culmination of everything we learned. What that farmer does involves social studies, science and STEM. He has to have marketing skills. He has to understand technology and adapt. He's always learning."

The workshop also sparked ideas on how teachers can build relationships with area farmers and county Farm Bureau offices.

"It inspired me to think about how I can work with local farmers and have them share information with us. It could be virtual. They could come to the classroom. I'd like to connect my students more with the

community and with the agriculture in our area," Alyssa said. "I think I learned enough information from this one workshop to keep incorporating into lessons for years to come."

The program offered teachers a few hours to engage, learn and gather agricultural resources from TFB and the American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture.

"Students need to be engaged, and that puts pressure on teachers. We're constantly adapting, and the online resources Farm Bureau showed us will be great to have as I look for ways to incorporate agriculture in what I teach in my classroom," Hennigan said.

Teachers earned continuing professional education credits during the Oct. 12 virtual event, and each participant received a TFB Commodity Map that shows where various commodities are grown and raised in the state.

For more information on educational opportunities and Ag in the Classroom materials, visit texasfarmbureau.org/aitc.

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Texas Tech vet school accepting applications for inaugural class

By Jennifer Dorsett
Field Editor

The Texas Tech University School of Veterinary Medicine is on track to open for the 2021 fall semester after meeting a key achievement in the accreditation process.

The American Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education (AVMA-COE), the accreditor of veterinary medical programs in the U.S., issued a Letter of Reasonable Assurance to the school on Sept. 16.

“That means we’re open for business,” Dr. Guy Loneragan, dean of the School of Veterinary Medicine, said in an interview with the Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network. “The national accrediting body issued us what’s called a letter of reasonable assurance, which means that if we follow the plan as they’ve researched and investigated, then they have reasonable assurance we will meet the standards and gain accreditation. So, that’s huge. That’s our biggest academic hurdle overcome.”

Interviews for the first class of students will occur in February 2021, followed by official enrollment in April. Courses are set to start on Aug. 16, according to Loneragan.

The inaugural class is expected to include 60 students.

“We’re going to grow slowly,” he said. “The next year, we’ll bring in a class of 80 students. Then, we’ll go to 100 students, which is going to be our maximum class size.”

The university has a specific mission to meet veterinary needs in rural and regional communities of Texas. So, Loneragan expects many applicants to be from those rural areas and have life experiences consistent with those settings.

“We have devised recruitment, admissions, curriculum and experiential learning specifically to address the needs of rural and regional communities,” Loneragan said. “That includes partnering with veterinarians all across Texas, in rural and regional communities, to give students

that hands-on, real-world experience in the communities that the students will likely come from and we hope will go and end up working in.”

Provisional accreditation begins on the date the school sends letters of acceptance to the first class of students. After the inaugural class takes the final licensing exams in 2025, the school will be fully accredited if Texas Tech demonstrates it continues to meet standards of accreditation.

“There’s definitely a feeling of excitement. There was a lot of effort, a lot of discussion to get this new program off the ground, but that excitement is not limited to campus. It’s palpable within the university, but also within the communities that we serve,” Loneragan said. “This process, while it feels like a whirlwind, has been five decades in the making. The vet school was first proposed in the early 1970s when the medical school was created. It’s been a process since then, but now we’re finally here. We’re open for business. We’re

accepting applicants, and we’re about to begin teaching the first class next fall.”

It’s all possible because of the support received from communities and agricultural organizations in Texas, he said.

“If we look at just the accreditation process and the achievement of getting that letter of reasonable assurance, so many people get to celebrate that achievement,” he said. “If you look at who made that possible, it was industry groups. It was donors. It was foundations who made that possible, and Texas Farm Bureau was one of the very first groups that got behind us and publicly supported us, which led to legislative funding for our program, which ensured the financial stability of our program, which helped us get accreditation.”

For more information about Texas Tech’s School of Veterinary Medicine and the application process, visit www.depts.ttu.edu/vetschool.

Applications are due Dec. 21.



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China continues to stock up on U.S. ag goods

By Jennifer Dorsett
Field Editor

China is making big strides in fulfilling its obligations to purchase more U.S. agricultural commodities under a phase one trade deal between the two nations, according to a joint release from the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in late October.

“This agreement finally levels the playing field for U.S. agriculture and is a bonanza for America’s farmers, ranchers and producers,” U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue said. “Being able to participate in this market in a more fair and equitable way has generated more sales that are supporting higher prices and strengthening the rural economy.”

As of late October, China has purchased more than \$23 billion in

agricultural products, representing about 71 percent of the nation’s target under January’s phase one agreement.

An interim report released by USTR and USDA highlighted some impressive sales of agricultural commodities.

“Export sales reporting indicates that as of Oct. 8, outstanding sales this year far exceed the number reported in the same period in 2017, which is the year used to determine baseline sales for purposes of the phase one agreement,” USTR said in the report. “These export sales numbers indicate strong actual export totals through the end of the year.”

U.S. corn purchases from China have reached an all-time high of 8.7 million tons, and soybean sales to China have made the strongest mar-

keting year start in history at 17.4 million tons, doubling 2017 levels.

Pork exports to China also hit record highs in the first five months of 2020. U.S. beef and pork exports to China through August are already triple what was sold in 2017.

Sorghum exports from the U.S. to China are on pace to hit new highs, as well. The latest figures show from January to August, sorghum exports to China totaled \$617 million, up from \$560 million for the same period in 2017.

Other agricultural products are benefitting, too.

Sales of pet food, alfalfa hay, pecans, peanuts and prepared foods are expected to hit record or near-record sales.

China implemented at least 50 of the 57 technical commitments under the agreement, according to the in-

terim report.

“Since the agreement entered into force eight months ago, we have seen remarkable improvements in our agricultural trade relationship with China, which will benefit our farmers and ranchers for years to come,” USTR Robert Lighthizer said.

In Texas, farmers and ranchers are ready to fulfill increased export demands of several key commodities, including corn, sorghum and beef, said Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) National Legislative Director Laramie Adams.

“We appreciate everything the administration and leaders of Congress have done to level the playing field in our current trade deals and for finding ways to expand our export markets,” Adams said. “The future looks bright, and we’re looking forward to sending even more exports of Texas-grown agricultural products to China.”

EPA announces dicamba registration renewals for five more years

By Jennifer Dorsett
Field Editor

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Andrew Wheeler announced in late October the agency approved registration for five years on two dicamba products and extended the registration on a third product, while imposing some restrictions on the herbicide’s use.

“With today’s decision, farmers now have the certainty they need to make plans for their 2021 growing season,” Wheeler said. “After reviewing substantial amounts of new information, conducting scientific assessments based on the best available science and carefully considering input from stakeholders, we have reached a resolution that is good for our farmers and our environment.”

The EPA decision comes after the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit vacated the product’s pesticide registrations in June.

Two over-the-top (OTT) dicamba products, Bayer AG’s XtendiMax with VaporGrip Technology and



BASF’s Engenia herbicide, were given registration approval by EPA for a five-year period. Sygenta’s Tavium Plus VaporGrip Technology product registration was extended for the same timeframe, ending in 2025.

The registrations are only for use on dicamba-tolerant cotton and soybean crops.

Control measures were added to the products’ registrations, including requiring a pH-buffering agent to be tank mixed with the products to control volatility and requiring a

240- to 310-foot downwind buffer, in certain animal species’ habitat areas. Other control measures include prohibiting OTT application on soybeans after June 30 and cotton after July 30, as well as simplifying label and use directions to help growers and applicators understand when and how to apply dicamba.

In the announcement, EPA said new registration labels also provide new flexibilities for farmers and states, including opportunities to reduce downwind spray buffers using

approved hooded sprayers.

“If a state wishes to expand the federal OTT uses of dicamba to better meet special local needs, the agency will work with them to support their goals,” EPA’s statement said.

Texas farmers, who have long battled herbicide-resistant weeds such as palmar amaranth, have much-needed certainty going into the planting season.

“We’ve worked extensively with lawmakers, farmers and other stakeholders to make sure Texas farmers have the tools they need to grow their crops, including different options for fighting difficult-to-control weeds that have gained resistance to some herbicides,” Brant Wilbourn, Texas Farm Bureau associate director of Commodity and Regulatory Activities, said. “We’re glad to see EPA reviewed the science carefully and approved the registration of these important crop management tools.”

To view the final registration of these dicamba products, visit the docket at [regulations.gov](https://www.epa.gov/regulations).

Wortham retiring from Texas Beef Council

By Jessica Domel
Multimedia Reporter

After more than 30 years, Richard Wortham, executive vice president for the Texas Beef Council, will retire at the end of the year.

Wortham began his career at the Texas Beef Council in the late 1980s, joining his wife Pam who was a graphic designer for the organization.

Since then, he's seen many changes in the Texas beef industry, at the council and with the beef checkoff.

"I've been with the checkoff since the very beginning," Wortham said. "What was really encouraging to me is that after two failed referendums in the late '70s and early '80s, the producers came together and voted in this program."

Over the years, the beef checkoff has funded campaigns like Beef Loving Texans, which promotes beef to consumers, and some projects that impact consumers and ranchers, but aren't necessarily visible right away.

One of the defining moments in Wortham's career was handling the discovery of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), or mad cow, in Texas in 2003.

"The night of Dec. 23, I began driving back to Austin not knowing what the 24th was going to bring as it relates to issues response, but one of the things that reassured me as I drove back was that the industry, and through the checkoff, had developed a BSE plan in the event that announcement was ever made," Wortham said.

He said if you compare all the work done after the announcement was made in the U.S., and what happened in the United Kingdom after a case was discovered there, you can see what a difference the checkoff-funded plan made.

"We didn't suffer a beef demand problem here in the U.S. The international markets were closed, which impacted us for a number of years, but I think the way the industry handled that specific issue speaks volumes for the work, forward-thinking and the planning to make sure that if it

was ever announced, we would have a very solid plan to roll out to the U.S. public," Wortham said.

The beef checkoff plays an important role in research into consumer attitudes and perspectives, as well.

"Some of the issues we have to deal with today weren't even on the radar in 1986 or 1988," he said.

The checkoff continues to promote beef both at-home and abroad and continues to fund projects that help tell the stories of U.S. ranchers to ensure consumers know where their food comes from.

He said the program has been around so long now, it's easy to become complacent and forget how much work went into establishing the checkoff.

"In some cases, some of the producers who are paying in the checkoff now weren't even born," he said. "There's talk about potential referendums. If that's the case, it's not whether you make changes to a checkoff, it's

whether you want to keep it."

Wortham encouraged ranchers to consider what the program does and how it works on behalf of those paying into it.

Every time cattle are sold, a dollar is collected, and that money is used, in a broad sense, for promotion, research and education.

"Research is the groundwork and framework that all of our programs are built on," Wortham said.

The checkoff also funds work to promote U.S. beef abroad.

"In 1990, beef exports totaled \$1.6 billion of beef and beef variety meats," Wortham said.

At the time, beef exports added \$87.35 to fed cattle.

"Exports in 2019 totaled \$8.1 billion," he said. "In 2019, the export market added a little over \$321 to every fed animal in the United States. Have the international markets grown? Yes, they have, and they're adding value back to producers."



The Texas Beef Council and state checkoff continue to invest heavily in growing demand for U.S. beef in the global marketplace.

As for the future, Wortham looks forward to hunting, fishing and spending time with his family.

"I'll probably spend more time with the grandkids. I plan on doing a lot of fishing and hunting and really more just doing what I want to do. I'd like to do some community service," he said.

Wortham will be succeeded by Dr. Molly K. McAdams, president and co-founder of Om3. (*see story below*)

McAdams named Beef Council executive vice president

Molly K. McAdams, Ph.D., has joined the Texas Beef Council (TBC) as its new executive vice president. McAdams will replace Richard Wortham, who will retire from the position in December after 30 years of leadership with TBC.

McAdams will be responsible for providing vision and strategic planning, ensuring TBC's fiscal health, optimizing staff recruitment and development, overseeing programs, serving as a staff liaison to several committees and numerous other duties.

Prior to accepting her new position with TBC, McAdams was the president and co-founder of Om3, where she used her in-depth knowledge of food and animal science, marketing and manufacturing to help small to mid-sized meat producers grow their businesses. She also spent nearly 13 years with Texas grocery chain H-E-B, starting out as the cooked meats business devel-

opment manager, then moving on to the director of business management role before eventually becoming vice president of the company's "Own Brand" and its corporate health and wellness officer.

McAdams is a former member of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education and Economics Board, as well as a former member, vice chair and committee chair for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association's (NCBA) Product Enhancement Committee.

McAdams received her bachelor's and master's degrees in animal science/meat science from the University of Florida before achieving her doctorate in agriculture from Texas Tech University.

"The role of the executive vice president at the Texas Beef Council is extremely important, and we knew it would be a challenge to replace Richard when he announced his retirement earlier this year," said



Brad Hastings, TBC chairman from Amarillo. "Molly brings many years of beef industry experience to the table, as well as a truly entrepreneurial spirit. Her fresh perspective and outlook will be invaluable as we continue to drive the Texas beef industry forward in the years ahead."

For more information about Beef Loving Texans and the Texas Beef Council, visit beeflovingtexans.com.

COVID-19 pandemic drives more Texans outdoors

By Jessica Domel
Multimedia Reporter

Many Texans explored activities outdoors they may not otherwise have made time for as the COVID-19 pandemic led to shutdowns across the state and nation.

“From an outdoor recreation perspective, we have seen a huge uptick in interest in outdoor-related trends—hunting, fishing, boating, camping and kayaking,” Carter Smith, executive director of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), said. “People, particularly in the cities, were very anxious to get outside, really for their mental, emotional and psychological health, if nothing else.”

Fishing license sales rose 25 percent year-over-year.

“I think many people were confronted with either shelter-in-place or stay-at-home orders or the choice of going fishing, and going fishing they chose,” Smith said.

The fishing and hunting license year runs Aug. 15 to Aug. 15.

So, the increases in fishing license sales at the start of the pandemic shutdowns in Texas are included in the prior license year.

“Last year, we had about a nine percent increase in hunting and fishing license sales over our previous record year, which was in 2017,” he said. “We were a little anxious to see what was going to happen with the advent of duck season and whether or not we’d see the trends continue with people buying licenses in mid-to-late August in anticipation of the first of September.”

People continue to head outdoors. “Our license sales to date are about nine percent above where they were last year,” Smith. “We feel really good about people getting out and bird hunting and planning to get out and hunt.”

Smith noted Texans were not deterred when some stores closed and TPWD offices closed to the public.

“We’ve seen around a 70 to 75 percent increase from last year in

the internet purchase of our hunting and fishing licenses,” Smith said.

That reflects the increased use of smartphones and TPWD’s efforts to make agency-related offerings smartphone friendly.

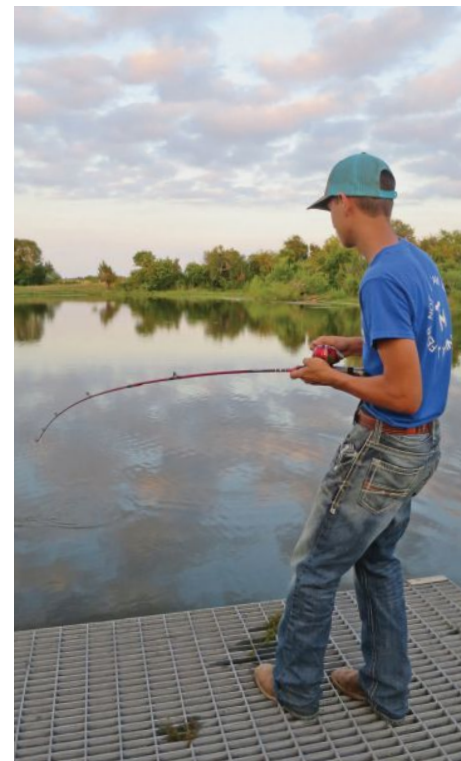
“The legislation that was passed last session allowed for people to be able to show, essentially, digital proof of a license in the field to our game wardens if they didn’t need to tag a deer or turkey,” Smith said.

Hunting and fishing licenses can be purchased on the TPWD website, by phone or in-person at more than 1,700 retailers across Texas.

Funds from hunting and fishing license sales directly fund conservation efforts and recreational opportunities.

An administrative fee of \$5 is assessed when buying a license online.

Due to the pandemic, fulfillment of licenses purchased online may be delayed.



Hunters and anglers who don’t need tags can show the receipt from the license purchase to law enforcement, if needed.

More information on hunting and fishing regulations are available at tpwd.texas.gov.

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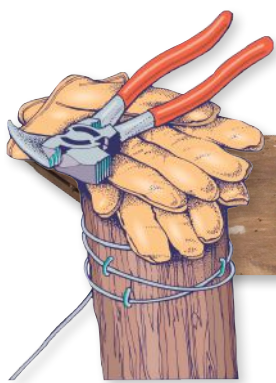
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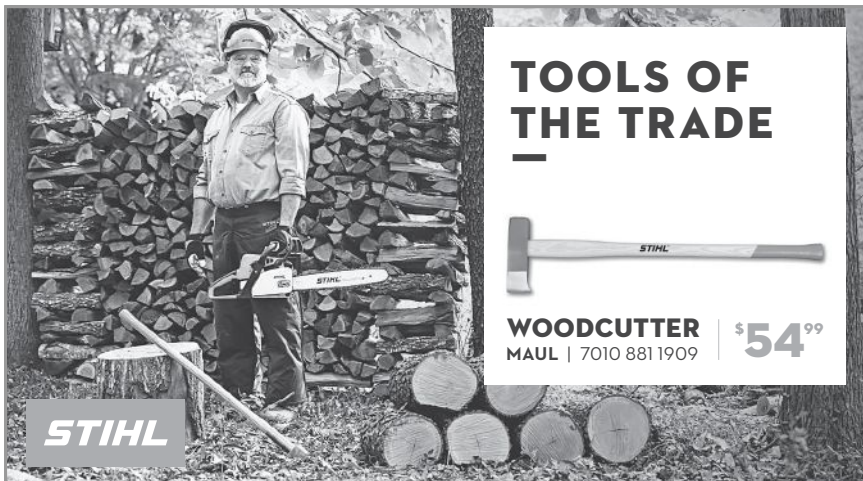
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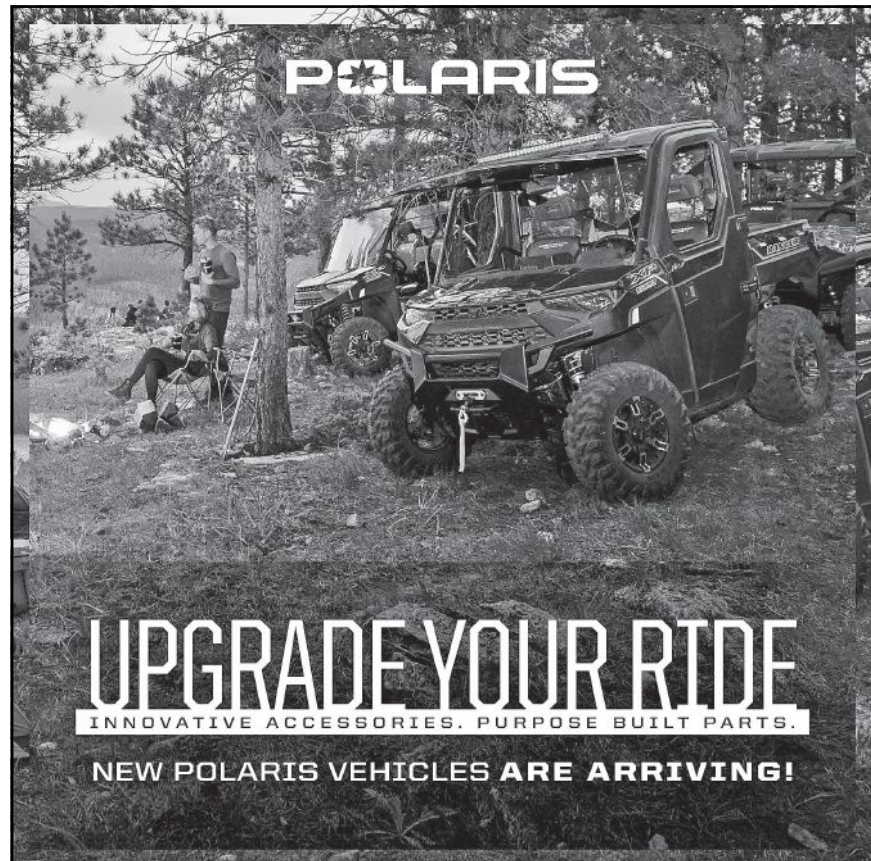
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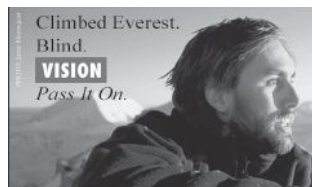
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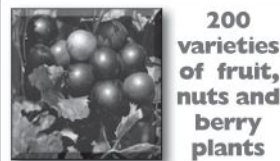
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