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Texas Agriculture

November 5, 2021

Published by Texas Farm Bureau for commercial farmers and ranchers

Perfect for Peanuts Texas farmers grow a crowd favorite

Pages 20-21



Looking for answers to questions on voluntary carbon markets

A lot of work remains on the establishment of voluntary carbon markets for farmers and ranchers.

Count me among those waiting for more information to better understand the opportunities and challenges of these markets.

The U.S. House Committee on Agriculture recently hosted a hearing on the topic. Committee Chairman David Scott said voluntary carbon markets could help farmers, ranchers and foresters capture a new income stream.

That sounds encouraging, but there appear to be more questions than answers right now.

Questions include determining how carbon is measured, how baselines are determined and data privacy issues. There are also concerns about costs of implementation and foregone income calculations, ease of participation and contract provisions.

Farmers and ranchers already use climate-smart practices. Any efforts to streamline carbon markets should incentivize those existing practices.

It's important that any kind of mandatory effort, like a carbon tax or cap, is avoided. Carbon credits should be fully researched by the

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and other federal agencies to help standardize the credit market accounting and to ensure it's a scientifically sound and practical solution. And it must be economically viable for farmers and ranchers to participate. Otherwise, the voluntary markets will struggle.



By Russell Boening
President

A Market Intel series published by the American Farm Bureau Federation highlights the opportunities, challenges, policy levers and overall operation of

agriculture ecosystem credit markets. We've positioned the series on the Climate Issues Resources page of the Texas Farm Bureau website at texasfarmbureau.org/climate.

The five series are outlined below. *Agricultural Ecosystem Credit Markets* provides a primer on agriculture ecosystem credit markets. With so many emerging ideas and platforms, it's important to explore how these markets are developing and operating, as well as who is behind them and why.

Common Land-Use Practices Under Consideration for Conservation

Adoption discusses USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service conservation practices commonly used in agriculture ecosystem credit market contracts and current adoption rates.

Barriers to Participation in Ag Ecosystem Credit Markets considers some of the barriers to participation in agriculture ecosystem credit markets that farmers and ranchers may face.

Is Carbon a Commodity? discusses how agricultural ecosystem credits could be priced and purchased,

particularly if they were priced as a commodity.

Good Business Practices for Farmers Participating in Agriculture Ecosystem Credit Markets looks at the development of good business practices for agriculture ecosystem credit markets and assesses the markets' long-term impacts.

The information is helpful. A good understanding is essential before any decision can be considered.

Many important questions remain, though, and farmers and ranchers await those answers.



A lot of work remains on the establishment of voluntary carbon markets for farmers and ranchers.



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GOP offers alternative to Biden's 30x30 plan

President Joe Biden's 30x30 plan, also called the America the Beautiful initiative, aims to place 30% of the nation's land and waters in conservation status by 2030. But members of Congress offered an alternative they say is more realistic and less disruptive to agriculture.

In a plan released by the Senate and Congressional Western Caucuses, the Republicans allege Biden's plan is too ambiguous and that the administration doesn't yet know what percentage of land and waters are already meeting conservation status.

The group of 13 senators, including U.S. Sen. John Cornyn of Texas, and 27 representatives said their plan is a "healthier alternative" that focuses on increasing the percentage of conservation status of public lands and waters by using outcome-based conservation practices.

Their 10-year initiative to conserve and restore public lands prioritizes: forest health; eradicating invasive species; better managing the growing wild horse and burro population; the restoration of more Superfund sites; cleanup and restoration of abandoned mines and orphan wells; protecting water infrastructure; and increasing tourism for national parks to boost funding for maintaining and enhancing those properties.



Members of Congress have proposed an alternative plan to President Joe Biden's 30x30 initiative that they say is more realistic and less disruptive to agriculture.

Preserving private property rights is imperative to meeting these objectives, the plan noted. Public lands also benefit from public-private conservation partnerships through grazing, hunting, logging and mineral development.

"We need an all-hands-on-deck, collaborative approach if we are to reach our conservation ambitions," the lawmakers said. "Western land users are the original conservationists. No one knows better the importance of stewarding our resources and achieving sustainable yield and healthy landscapes than those

whose livelihoods depends on them."

On the other side of the aisle, Democrats recognized increased funding of U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) conservation programs and voluntary conservation efforts from farmers and ranchers are needed to achieve Biden's 30x30 plan.

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, who supports the 30x30 initiative, told reporters at a press conference last month he was working to ensure enough technical assistance was available through USDA to help farmers and ranchers with more conservation planning.

USPS implements changes to mail delivery standards

The U.S. Postal Service (USPS) implemented changes to mail delivery standards for first-class mail and periodicals that are expected to impact rural areas more heavily.

The changes took effect Oct. 1.

The current three-day standard for first-class mail will change to five days for delivery anywhere within the U.S. The USPS explains the delivery standard change in terms of "local area" delivery and mail "trav-

eling longer distances." The two-day standard for delivery within a "local area" will remain unchanged. USPS has increased time-in-transit standards by one or two days for certain mail that are traveling longer distances.

It is anticipated that rural areas will feel the effects of the changes in mail delivery standards because of the greater distances for mail to travel in most cases.

With new service standards implemented, USPS offers several tips for consumers to prepare for the new delivery timeframes. For mail or correspondence that requires a deadline, the Postal Service encourages consumers to plan ahead and send their mail early. If it would take you more than a day to drive your mail to its destination, make sure to give your long-distance mail some extra time to travel with USPS.

Texas Farm Bureau annual meeting set for Dec. 3-5

The Texas Farm Bureau Annual Meeting is set for Dec. 3-5 in Corpus Christi.

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

About 1,000 farmers and ranchers are expected in Corpus Christi to discuss the latest agricultural issues and recognize successes from the membership year.

Activities that will be held during the meeting include the Young Farmer & Rancher Discussion Meet and the Dueling Pianos Welcome Event.

The Excellence in Agriculture and Outstanding Young Farmer & Rancher winners will be named.

TFB member benefits and services will be on display, along with the state winners of the County Activities of Excellence Award.

Other recognitions scheduled for the meeting include the Pioneer Awards, Media Awards, Communications Awards and Outstanding Ag in the Classroom Teacher.

Gov. Greg Abbott will provide a video message, and Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick has been invited to address members.

A delegate luncheon and YF&R Live Auction will be held before the business session. The money raised during the live auction benefits TFB's scholarship program.

During the business session, members will discuss state and national policy resolutions to guide the organization's advocacy efforts.

For the latest on the annual meeting schedule, visit [texasfarmbureau.org/annualmeeting](https://www.texasfarmbureau.org/annualmeeting).

New USDA crop insurance for selling locally

Small farmers who sell in local markets will have a new crop insurance option. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) approved a new Micro Farm policy that simplifies record keeping and covers post-production costs like washing and value-added products.

USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) created this new policy based on research directed by the 2018 Farm Bill, and it includes feedback from farmers who grow for their local communities.

The policy will be available beginning with the 2022 crop year.

"We are excited to offer this new coverage for producers who work to provide their communities with fresh and healthy food," RMA Acting Administrator Richard Flournoy said. "USDA is focused on supporting local and regional food systems, and this new crop insurance policy is designed with this important sector of agriculture in mind."

The new policy is offered through Whole-Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP), and it has distinct provisions that can provide more access to the program.

USDA officials said no expense or individual commodity reporting is needed, simplifying the recordkeeping requirements for farmers.

The revenue from post-production costs, such as washing and packaging commodities and value-added products, are considered allowable revenue.

The Micro Farm policy is available to farmers who have a farm operation that earns an average allowable revenue of \$100,000 or less, or for carry-over insureds, an average allowable revenue of \$125,000 or less.

RMA's research showed that 85% of farmers who sell locally reported they made less than \$75,000 in gross sales.

For more information, visit rma.usda.gov.

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Funding for WHIP+ extended through 2021

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

A recent stopgap bill funding the federal government through December also contained an expansion of U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) disaster assistance programs, including the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus (WHIP+).

On Sept. 30, President Joe Biden signed the legislation, which retroactively extended WHIP+, the On-Farm Storage Loss Program, Milk Loss Program and Tree Assistance Program through 2020 and 2021.

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack was appropriated \$10 billion for these programs to help farmers and ranchers affected by natural disasters. This amount surpasses uncovered crop loss estimates analyzed by the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF).

In a recent Market Intel column, AFBF Associate Economist Daniel

Munch said this funding is vital to farm stability and ensuring a safe and secure domestic food supply.

“2020 brought 22 separate billion-dollar weather events to the doorsteps of farmers and ranchers nationwide,” he wrote. “With severe drought, fast-spreading wildfires, ice storms and hurricanes, 2021 is likely to rival its predecessor in economic impacts to agriculture.”

Originally, WHIP+ was only available to farmers and ranchers in the counties that received qualifying presidential emergency or USDA secretarial disaster declarations due to qualifying events and related conditions. Derechos, severe drought (D2) as categorized by the U.S. Drought Monitor, smoke taint in vineyards and hailstorms were not explicitly listed as qualifying weather disasters.

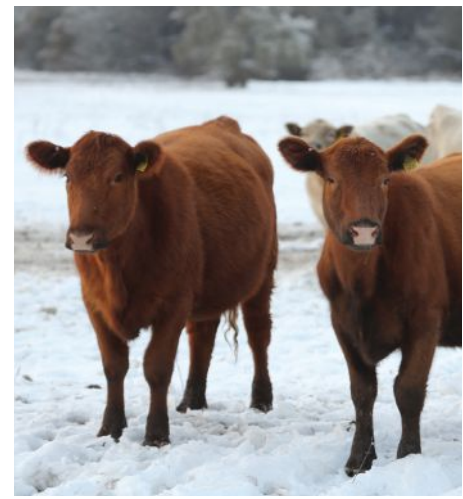
Now, derechos, winter storms, polar vortexes, freeze, smoke exposure and crop quality losses are covered

under WHIP+.

Losses from drought are now eligible if the drought is categorized as D2 for eight consecutive weeks or extreme drought (D3) or higher at any time during the calendar year. The bill also restated losses due to previously covered conditions—such as excessive heat, excessive moisture, hurricanes and wildfires—continue to qualify for assistance.

The legislation specified \$750 million was set aside for livestock losses related to drought and wildfires during 2021.

“We’re thankful Congress saw the need to extend these programs through last year and this year,” Texas Farm Bureau National Legislative Director Laramie Adams said. “In February, Texans experienced the worst winter storm in recent memory, and our farmers and ranchers suffered some historic losses at that time. We also have had farmers and ranchers impacted by hur-



Funding for WHIP+ was extended, and more weather disasters now qualify for coverage through the program.

ricanes and flooding on more than one occasion. Additionally, producers have experienced drought in certain regions of the state. We appreciate our lawmakers making sure all types of natural disasters were included in WHIP+.”

Information on applying for additional WHIP+ funds will be released by USDA later this year.

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OUTSTANDING YOUNG FARMER & RANCHER FINALISTS



Travis and Kaylin Isbell
Florence



Travis and Bethany Wanoreck
Orange Grove



Austen and Rachel White
Vernon

Texas Farm Bureau names outstanding young farmers, ranchers

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

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 2021 Outstanding YF&R finalists are Travis and Kaylin Isbell of Florence, Travis and Bethany Wanoreck of Orange Grove and Austen and Rachel White of Vernon.

Finalists were chosen from TFB's district winners. A panel of volunteer judges conducted interviews with the finalists via Zoom.

Travis and Kaylin Isbell

Travis and Kaylin raise commercial cattle and stockers, as well as a Dorper sheep flock. They grow grass hay and winter oats and have a custom hay business.

They implement no-till farming

practices, along with the use of cover crops, to increase plant diversity and organic matter. They also utilize rotational grazing to help maximize their pastureland.

Travis manages two other ranches, and Kaylin is a part-time farm and ranch real estate agent.

Both are active in Williamson County Farm Bureau. Travis serves on the board of directors and is the county's YF&R chair.

They represent District 8 on the TFB YF&R Advisory Committee, and Kaylin serves as the chair. They are both active in YF&R events and other TFB events and activities.

Travis and Kaylin live in Florence with their two children, Trigg and Kyndal.

Travis and Bethany Wanoreck

Travis and Bethany are first-generation farmers who grow cotton, corn, grain sorghum and wheat. They also have a custom planting and harvesting operation.

The couple implements minimum tillage and strip-till practices on their farms to help reduce soil erosion and increase organic matter.

Bethany is also the district nurse at Orange Grove ISD.

The couple represents District 13 on the TFB YF&R Advisory Committee. They are active in YF&R events

and activities, as well as local county Farm Bureau events. Travis has served on the Nueces County Farm Bureau board of directors for several years and is currently the vice president.

Travis and Bethany live in Orange Grove with their three children: Wyatt, Brynlee and Taryn.

Austen and Rachel White

Austen and Rachel have a cow-calf operation, run stocker cattle and grow hay, wheat and dryland cotton.

The couple focuses heavily on genetic traits to improve their cow-calf herd. They use value-added marketing programs while partnering with a program-specific feedyard to maximize their income by retaining ownership.

Their cattle are Source and Age Verified, Verified Natural Beef and Global Animal Partnership-compliant.

In addition to farming and ranching, they provide custom spray and hay work. Rachel is also an instructor at Vernon College.

The couple previously represented District 3 on the TFB Young Farmer & Rancher Advisory Committee. Austin also serves as the vice president of the Wilbarger County Farm Bureau board of directors and

is the county's YF&R chair. They have been active in county and state Farm Bureau activities, including YF&R events.

Austen and Rachel live in Vernon with their daughter, Macy.

Contest awards

The winner will be announced at the TFB Annual Meeting Dec. 3-5 in Corpus Christi.

The winner of this year's contest will receive the title to a ¾ ton diesel pickup, sponsored by Texas Farm Bureau Insurance Companies; a \$5,000 cash award, sponsored by Farm Credit Bank of Texas; and expense-paid trips to the TFB Annual Meeting and American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) Annual Convention.

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

All district winners (featured on page 11) will receive a \$1,000 cash award from Farm Bureau Bank.

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

Information on the contest and TFB's Young Farmer & Rancher program can be found online at [texasfarmbureau.org/YFR](https://www.texasfarmbureau.org/YFR).

OUTSTANDING YOUNG FARMER & RANCHER FINALIST



Travis and Kaylin Isbell

Grow: **Hay and raise cattle; custom hay operation**

Location: **Florence**

Children: **Trigg and Kyndall**

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Tradition runs deep for Travis and Kaylin Isbell, who are leaving their mark on Texas agriculture.

The young couple raises commercial cattle, stocker cattle and Dorper sheep on their Williamson County ranch.

After graduating from Tarleton State University, the high school sweethearts came back to Florence to take over Travis' family's ranch.

"Since we came back, we've added more leased land to the operation," Travis said. "But we're also focusing more on soil health, land stewardship and increasing our carrying capacity, so we're not just leasing more land, but we're getting more out of the land that we already have."

They implemented no-till farming practices and rotational grazing, as well as added cover crops to increase plant diversity and organic matter. They also diversified by adding a flock of Dorper sheep, in

partnership with Travis' parents, and custom hay work.

But urbanization and water issues could limit their opportunities to expand.

"There has been a significant increase in growth and development in the area over the last three years," Travis said. "That's putting pressure on our water and natural resources and taking prime agricultural land out of production."

Despite the challenges that urbanization brings, the Isbells persevere. Their kids—Trigg and Kyndall—can be found riding horseback through the herd, helping process cattle and caring for the horses and livestock.

"What makes us a little unique is that we do the majority of our cow work on horseback," Kaylin said. "We try to preserve the ranching heritage. We've added technology to our operation, but we still like to do a lot of the work in the traditional way."

And for Travis and Kaylin, having their kids working alongside them is what it means to be a family ranch.

"I think it's important to have our kids grow up in this lifestyle," Travis said. "Seeing our kids help us, learn from us and work with us, well, it's just something we knew we wanted. We wanted them to be raised in this type of environment."

They're instilling a passion for agriculture in their kids and showing them the value of hard work.

"We've always said 'quality over quantity.' We don't want to be the biggest, but we want to raise high-quality cattle and high-quality forage that we can be proud of," Kaylin said.

As a family, they stay busy. Travis and Kaylin are active in numerous organizations, including Texas Farm Bureau. Kaylin is also a part-time farm and ranch real estate agent, and Travis manages two other local ranches. Their kids



are active in school, rodeo and have started showing sheep.

Through the hectic days and busy seasons, the couple remains steadfast in their faith, family and agriculture.

"In our operation and our life, our faith comes first. Even if it's a super busy time of the year, we make sure that we're at church, and our kids are at church," she said. "Putting faith first and then having family second has always been our priorities."

And they both want consumers to understand they are caring for the land, the animals and natural resources.

"The biggest thing is just how important these animals are to us—

that we're caring for them, not mistreating them," Travis said. "I wish consumers could come spend a day with us to see how we care for our livestock."

It's also important to the Isbells that land is kept in agricultural production wherever possible and to stay profitable so the next generation can carry on the tradition of the family's ranching heritage.

"We think it's so important to keep land in agricultural production," Kaylin said. "We want our kids to be able to work this land. We're fourth-generation ranchers on this place. It's important to us that it stays that way and that the land continues to be used how God intended it to be used."

OUTSTANDING YOUNG FARMER & RANCHER FINALIST



Travis and Bethany Wanoreck

Grow: **Cotton, wheat, sesame, corn and grain sorghum; custom planting and harvesting**

Location: **Orange Grove**

Children: **Wyatt, Brynlee & Taryn**

By Jennifer Whitlock Field Editor

Farming is tough. Being first-generation farmers can be even tougher. Travis and Bethany Wanoreck know this from experience, but nine years in, they say they're happier than ever with the choice they made.

It was the only thing Travis ever wanted to do, but the dream seemed impossible when he graduated high school.

He grew up on a family farm in Eola, but his dad quit farming in the mid-'90s, and his grandparents' land was already leased out to other farmers.

So, he went to college and then to work for Helena Chemical. The company stationed him in Robstown, and he met Bethany while attending church in nearby Orange Grove. In 2012, Travis' grandfather purchased 190 acres of land in Bee County to lease to the young couple.

And that's how the Wanorecks became first-generation farmers in

the Coastal Bend.

"We started from the ground up, literally. It's hard getting capital and starting out on your own," Travis said. "And the financial system in general has just become so much tighter, so they're not as willing to lend to young people without much collateral."

Now, they grow cotton, sesame, wheat, corn and grain sorghum on owned and leased land across three counties, as well as custom planting and harvesting for other area farmers.

Growing up in Orange Grove, Bethany was exposed to agriculture by showing animals in 4-H and FFA. But she didn't know much about farming until she started dating Travis.

Now, she splits her time between working for Orange Grove ISD as a school nurse and helping Travis on the farm.

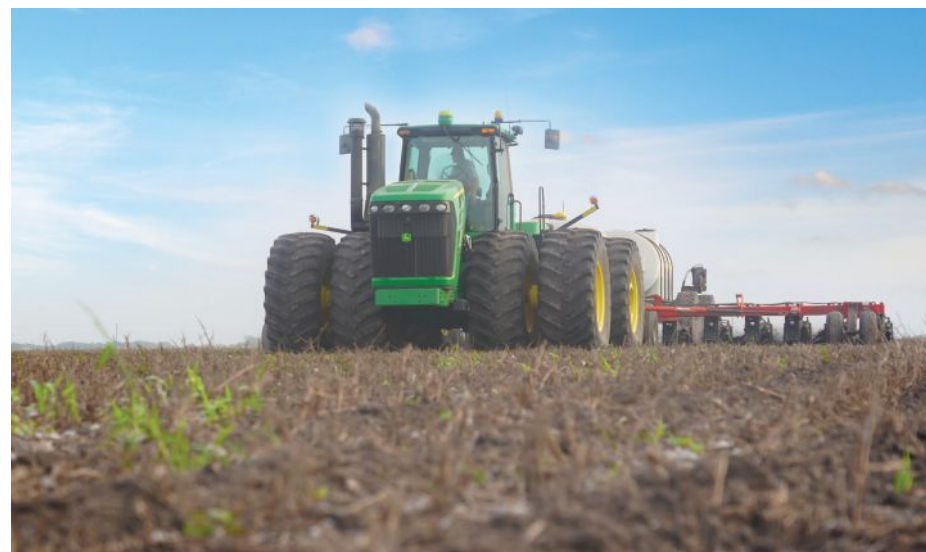
"My job allows me to be more flexible with the farm. We have summers off, which is during our harvest time down here. So, that allows me to be home with the kids while Travis is harvesting. But it also allows me to help out as far as cooking meals, delivering meals to the field, running around after parts, doing payroll and paying bills, while Travis is out harvesting during the summertime," she said.

Bethany also helps in the field.

"He'll throw me on the tractor for plowing or something like that. I help move equipment, move the grain header, drive the grain cart, whatever he needs," she said. "Since we farm across three county lines, moving equipment is a full-time job some days."

Their three children love being able to go spend time with Travis on the tractor after school or during school breaks.

And it's nice to be your own boss and make your own schedule, although Travis noted with a laugh that Mother Nature is the true boss of his time.



"It's like that old saying, 'If you love what you do, you'll never work a day in your life.' I love what I'm doing and just wouldn't want to raise my family any other way," he said.

That doesn't mean he always finds farming easy. In fact, each year is a struggle, with its own set of troubles and challenges.

"Since we picked up quite a bit more land these past couple of years, our biggest challenge is finding labor—good help that's willing to work and stick with it," he said. "And there are always other things we can't control. This year, it was too wet. Last year, it was too dry. The year before that, the markets were low. There's no one challenge

that's greater than the other, so we just always try to make a good crop and sell it at the right price and hope for the best."

And the couple wants consumers—both local and across the nation—to know they're doing everything they can to be good stewards of the land they've been entrusted to farm.

"I just want consumers to know, my child is right there with me in whatever I do on the farm. I'm not going to expose them to something that's harmful to them," Travis said. "There's nothing on my farm I wouldn't feed to my family or have them wear. I'm just trying to do the best I can with what we have, trying to feed and clothe the world."

OUTSTANDING YOUNG FARMER & RANCHER FINALIST



Austen and Rachel White

Grow: **Cotton, wheat, hay and raise cattle; custom hay operation**

Location: **Vernon**

Children: **Macy**

By Jennifer Whitlock Field Editor

Sometimes, being a farmer or rancher just runs in the blood. The call is so strong, there's never any question as to what that person will grow up to do.

That's the case for Austen and Rachel White, who co-own Angus, Red Angus and Sim-Angus cow-calf herds, run stocker cattle and farm dryland cotton, wheat and hay with Austen's father and uncle in Wilbarger County.

From a young age, Austen knew he wanted to be involved in the family farm and ranch. As soon as he graduated from Tarleton State University, he eagerly returned home to help run the family business.

Rachel was also raised on a family farm in Nebraska but moved to Texas to attend college and follow her dream of rodeoing at the professional level.

She met Austen at Tarleton. They were married in 2015 and are now raising their family on the same

land Austen grew up on.

"My great-grandparents established this farm in 1919, and I knew I wanted to follow in their footsteps to help preserve the lifestyle they built for their family," Austen said.

He's proud of the progress his family has made in marketing their beef cattle since he joined his dad and uncle.

Their cattle are Source and Age Verified, and they use marketing programs like the Global Animal Partnership (GAP) beef standards and certification to maximize profitability. They also retain ownership of their cattle in the feedyard.

Austen and his family concentrate heavily on genetics to raise more efficient cattle that have outstanding carcass grades.

"While our cow-calf herd has become the main focus of our ranch, we remain committed to growing the same crops that served as the foundation of our multi-generational farm over 100 years ago," he said.

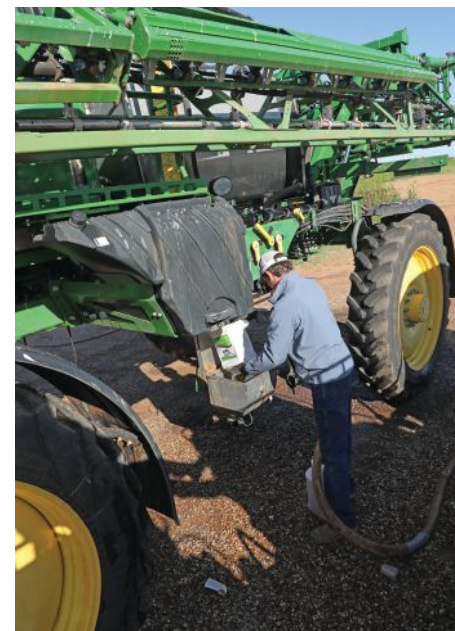
During the day, Rachel works at Vernon College as an instructor and is the tutoring center coordinator. Weekends and spare time go to pitching in around the farm and riding horses with their daughter, Macy.

"We're privileged to raise our family on the land that we love so much and to enjoy the lifestyle that it provides us," Rachel said. "To us, there is no better job in the world, and we are fortunate we get to wake up every morning and do what we love. We feel blessed we're able to raise Macy this way, too."

Whether it's checking cows or riding in the tractor, Macy loves being on the farm.

Austen and Rachel want her to achieve whatever goals she sets later in life, but they both hope she wants to be the sixth generation involved in the family business someday.

But managing a family busi-



ness, while enjoyable, is also challenging at times. Volatile markets, the coronavirus pandemic's impact on supplies and weather add stress for the young couple, but together, they make it work.

"If I could share anything with a consumer, I'd want people to know what it's really like out here—how hard we work, how much we care. I wish I would have had someone riding around with me during that winter freeze, because the pickup cab was full of calves I was trying to keep warm," he said. "And I knew there was no way I was going to get to them all, and it was just a really sick feeling, to have no control over the situation and lose those animals. That storm was a very hard

time for all of us."

The couple stays busy managing the farm and ranch while juggling family responsibilities, but it's a life they both love and embrace.

"We're blessed to be able to continue to farm the land we have and to help provide our neighbors with high-quality products, whether it's a ribeye steak or a cotton T-shirt," Rachel said. "A love for farming runs deep in our family, and we enjoy being a small part of what feeds and clothes our great country."

Their roots are firmly planted in Wilbarger County and the family farm, where they hope to continue to provide for their family and others through the crops they grow and the cattle they raise.

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District 2
Ladd Wilkes

Ladd Wilkes grows wheat, hay-grazer and cotton in Terry County. He started farming in 2019 with organic, dryland crops but later switched to conventional growing methods and began using drip irrigation.



District 3
Austen and Rachel White

Austen and Rachel White raise cattle and grow wheat, hay and cotton in Wilbarger County with Austen's family. They use marketing programs and partner with a program-specific feedyard to maximize their income. *State Finalist*



District 4
Harry and Ashley Hudgins

Harry and Ashley Hudgins manage a cow-calf and stocker operation in Grayson County, and they market their cattle as GAP-certified. They also have a heifer development program to sell replacement heifers to other ranchers.



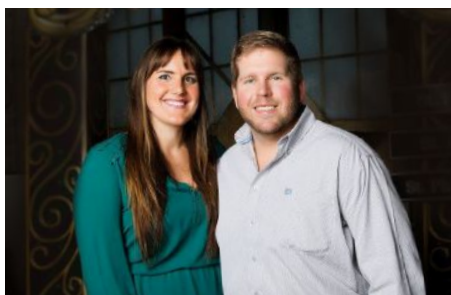
District 5
Patrick and Alexandria Williams

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



District 6
Slayton and Abby Hoelscher

Slayton and Abby Hoelscher grow irrigated cotton, along with corn and grain sorghum, 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.



District 7
Jay and Francie Clark

Jay and Francie Clark raise cattle, replacement heifers and hair sheep using regenerative agriculture practices in Brown County. They raise and market their livestock as GAP-certified. They also manage a special event venue located on the ranch.



District 8
Travis and Kaylin Isbell

Travis and Kaylin Isbell 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. *State Finalist*



District 10
Austin and Heather Courmier

Austin and Heather Courmier have a cow-calf operation and raise yearlings in Kimble County. In addition to their diverse cattle operation, they also raise and train working cow dogs and performance horses.



District 11
Dillon and Kori Berglund

Dillon and Kori Berglund grow rice, grain sorghum and corn in Wharton County. They help develop habitat for migratory birds and work to effectively shape the land they rent and own to for the most efficient water usage.



District 12
Cassidy and Hailey Hayes

Cassidy and Hailey Hayes grow corn and cotton in Calhoun County. They raise a small herd of American-cross cattle, and the couple also has 90 sows used primarily for the production of show pigs for 4-H and FFA students.



District 13
Travis and Bethany Wanoreck

Travis and Bethany Wanoreck are first-generation farmers who grow cotton, wheat, sesame, corn and grain sorghum in Nueces County using minimum and strip till practices. They also have a custom planting and harvesting operation. *State Finalist*

Upcoming TFB Young Farmer & Rancher Events

The YF&R Discussion Meet will be held Saturday, Dec. 4, at the TFB Annual Meeting in Corpus Christi.

The YF&R Conference is set for April 1-3, 2022, in College Station.

More details will be available next year on texasfarmbureau.org/YFR.

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TFB opens doors to agriculture with new exhibit at stock shows

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Through Doorways to Agriculture, Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) is helping consumers of all ages explore the captivating world of Texas agriculture and learn how it touches their lives every day.

With less than 2% of the nation's population actively farming and ranching, many Texans are several generations removed from agriculture.

"A lot of people are four, sometimes five, generations removed from the farm, and we think it's essential they reconnect to agriculture. That's why Farm Bureau's interactive exhibit, Doorways to Agriculture, is so important," Dakota Massey, TFB associate director of Urban Outreach, said. "Through the exhibit, we focus on facts, information and the stories of farmers and ranchers. We want to connect what happens on farms and ranches to the products they buy in the grocery store and use at home, at school and everywhere in between every day."

Thousands of people visited the exhibit at the State Fair of Texas in Dallas, Heart O' Texas Fair and Rodeo in Waco and the Brazos Valley



Interactive displays in the Doorways to Agriculture exhibit encourage visitors to learn more about agriculture and how everyday objects get their start on farms and ranches. This fall, the exhibit was on display at the State Fair of Texas in Dallas, Heart O' Texas Fair and Rodeo in Waco and the Brazos Valley Fair and Expo in Bryan.

Fair and Expo in Bryan this fall.

The exhibit features state-of-the-art touchscreen kiosks, oversized interactive "books" for children and a theater screening videos produced by TFB. A walk-through trailer full of displays and games that encour-

age visitors of all ages to learn more about where their food, fiber and more comes from is also part of the exhibit.

"So many people don't realize just how important agriculture is—not only for food, but for things we use every day. Agriculture plays a role in our toothpaste, shampoo, cabinets, clothes, schoolbooks and so much more. No matter which door you walk through in your home, you can find an item that's a product or byproduct of agriculture, and that took the involvement of farmers and ranchers," Massey said. "Doorways to Agriculture helps bring little pieces of that into their minds and connect how important farmers and ranchers are to their lives."

The exhibit shows how modern agriculture is outfitted with technology to be more efficient and productive. It highlights stories of farmers and ranchers and helps consumers connect with the families behind the products they use every day.

Doorways to Agriculture also offers tactile learning experiences to make it interesting to all ages and

learning styles.

"We're bringing agriculture to life one stock show and trade show at a time," Massey said. "And it feels good to be talking with fairgoers again after so many events were cancelled last year during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Visitors are excited to interact with our modern exhibit and learn about what farmers and ranchers do."

And there are more plans for the exhibit in the future. Doorways to Agriculture will make appearances next year at the Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo, San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo and the Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show.

The exhibit first debuted in 2020 at the Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo. However, due to the novel coronavirus pandemic, fairs and stock shows were cancelled or offered limited attendance, so the exhibit was not on display last spring or fall.

For more information on the Doorways to Agriculture exhibit, visit texasfarmbureau.org/youth/ag-in-the-community.

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Deadline nears for PRF, API insurance

Farmers and ranchers have until Dec. 1 to make coverage decisions and complete reporting activities for the Pasture, Rangeland, and Forage (PRF) Pilot Insurance Program and Apiculture Pilot Insurance Program (API).

PRF and API are both Rainfall Index crop insurance policies designed to aid farmers and ranchers in case of a lack of precipitation that affects available forage for livestock and honeybees.

The plans consider a decline in rainfall by comparing it with the historical average precipitation for the same area during the same period of time.

PRF is designed to help protect a rancher's livestock operation from the risks of forage loss. In 2020, ranchers insured almost 160 million acres and nearly 32,000 policies to protect \$2.9 billion in liabilities.

API provides a safety net for beekeepers' primary income sources of honey, pollen collection, wax and breeding stock. In 2020, farmers covered about 1.8 million colonies under 3,300 policies to protect \$250 million in liabilities.

Crop insurance is sold and delivered solely through private crop insurance agents. A list of crop insurance agents is available at all USDA Service Centers and online at the RMA Agent Locator.

Learn more about crop insurance and the modern farm safety net at rma.usda.gov.

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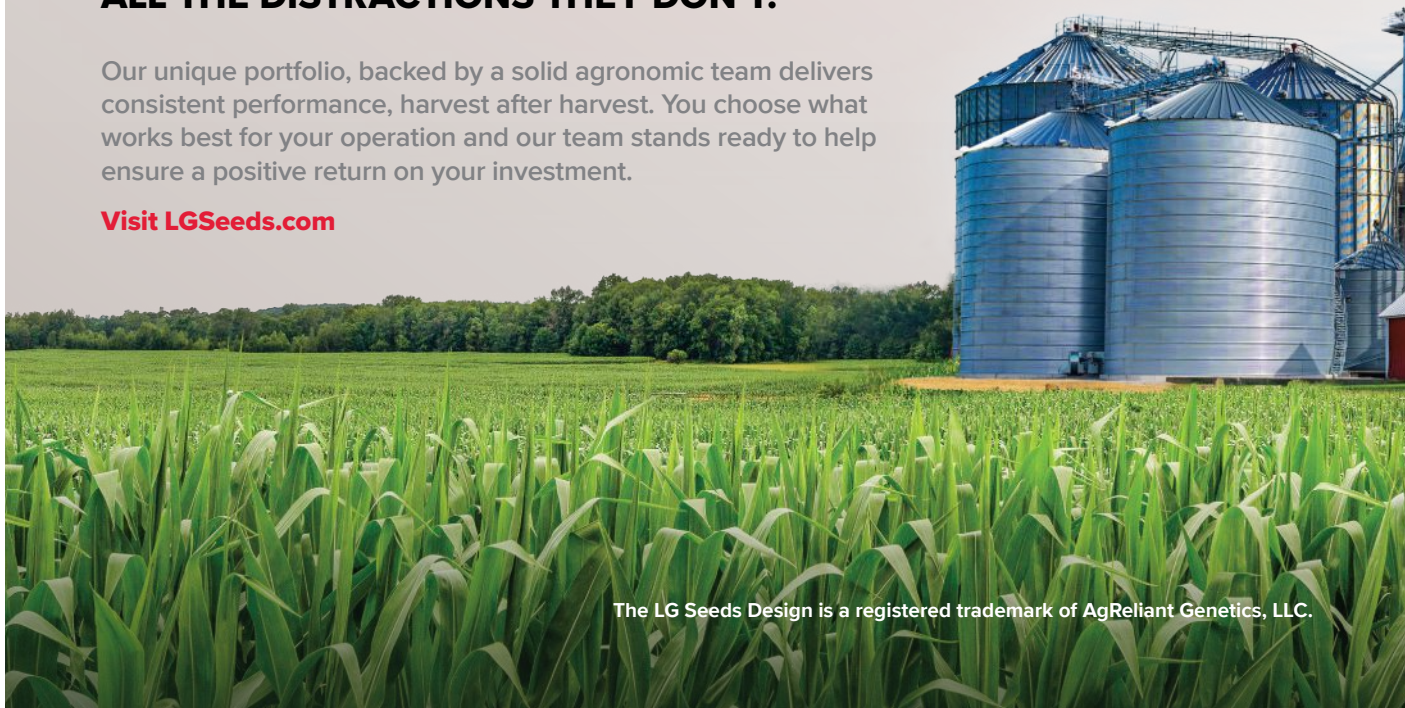
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New comprehensive report on U.S. cattle market published by AFPC

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

An extensive report on the U.S. cattle market, including information on supply chain disruptions, was published in early October.

The report was completed by the Agricultural and Food Policy Center (AFPC) at Texas A&M University in response to a request from Congress and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

“This is the product of a collaboration between the AFPC and the Office of the Chief Economist at the USDA,” said Dr. Bart Fischer, co-director of AFPC and one of the book’s editors. “The work originated from a request by the bipartisan leadership of the Committee on Agriculture in the U.S. House of Representatives during the 116th Congress.”

The book, *The U.S. Beef Supply Chain: Issues and Challenges*, is the result of a cattle markets workshop hosted by AFPC in June. Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) had representatives in attendance at the meeting.

“We are pleased to see the House Agriculture Committee make the beef cattle market a priority last year,” Tracy Tomascik, TFB associate director of Commodity and Regulatory Activities, said. “Now that this report has been published, we look forward to continuing our work with those representatives to find workable solutions to the challenges farmers and ranchers are facing.”

Several market disruptions, including the 2019 Kansas meatpacking fire and the COVID-19 pandemic’s effect on packing plants, are addressed in the book.

“In our discussions among cattle industry stakeholders, the viewpoints on solutions to current concerns about cattle markets were highly diverse,” said Dr. David Anderson, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service agricultural economist, who contributed to and was an editor for the book.

Price discovery

Although less than 30% of the transactions are from cash negotia-



The book, The U.S. Beef Supply Chain: Issues and Challenges, is the result of a collaboration between Texas A&M’s Agricultural and Food Policy Center, national experts and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

tions, economists consulted for the report felt fed cattle price discovery was robust. They did note that additional transparency would help build confidence in the market.

There was consensus that price discovery is valuable to how cattle markets, including fed cattle markets, function.

“But agreement on any related policy changes remains an open question, and there is also concern about the unintended negative consequences of otherwise well-intentioned policy changes,” he said.

The report noted that reliance on formula pricing significantly reduced transaction costs associated with negotiation and induced predictability in the supply chain.

Market concentration

Findings from the AFPC’s evaluation of cattle market concentration confirmed and validated the connection between fed cattle price and packer capacity.

“With respect to fed cattle pricing, research shows that alternative marketing arrangements do not create power because they do not change underlying supply and demand fundamentals,” the report noted.

Research confirmed that increased operating efficiencies of larger packing facilities offers a market benefit to cattle producers. This inherently creates some buyer leverage due to the limited number

of packers, but researchers indicated their findings show it is a small impact.

The cattle business is cyclical, and that must be taken into account, the authors noted.

“While cattle supplies have outpaced available packing capacity, that will not always be the case,” the authors said. “As a result, anyone who decides to build additional capacity must understand those market dynamics and be aware that packer margins can plummet with that cycle.”

The report also noted the decline in packing capacity is not a recent event but has occurred over several decades.

“Expansion of small and regional packing capacity needs to be done in

a way that is sustainable and economically viable,” it states.

Minimum cash transactions

The report notes that imposing mandatory minimums on negotiated, or cash, transactions could negatively effect cattle producers, potentially imposing billions that would be passed down to cattle producers in the form of lower prices.

More information

“It is abundantly apparent the U.S. cattle and beef industry represents one the most complex set of markets in existence today,” Anderson said.

The book breaks down many of those complex issues and addresses the overall situation of the U.S. cattle market.

The full book can be viewed on the AFPC website at afpc.tamu.edu.



The 180-page book addresses the overall situation in the U.S. cattle market in 10 chapters. It focuses on price determination, price discovery, market reporting, supply chain coordination, negotiated cash trade targets and more.

AgriLife economist cautiously optimistic on cattle markets in 2022

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

Beef cattle markets have been extremely volatile over the past three years, but one Texas A&M AgriLife Extension economist believes the remainder of 2021 and early 2022 will prove steadier.

Processing capacity remains a limiting factor in beef cattle markets, said AgriLife Extension Economist Dr. David Anderson, but the fed cattle market has been slowly improving over the past few months.

“Our ability to slaughter animals and our ability to process those carcasses, turn them into primal cuts, fill boxes and get them out to restaurants and grocery stores...I think we have a real capacity problem,” he said. “Some of that is a labor shortage on the processing side, and that’s holding down better cattle prices, but the constraint is also boosting consumer prices. So, we’re still seeing that in the marketplace with higher prices while dining out

or shopping in-store, but we are also seeing some creeping up of cattle prices a bit over the last little while.”

Cheaper corn prices and increased rainfall in Texas led to better profits for many Texas ranchers on fall calves, according to Anderson. Calf prices may still not be what some would consider great, but he pointed out they are higher than last fall and better than the five-year average.

As the national cow herd shrinks slightly due to drought in the West and Midwest, he said prices should continue to climb some into 2022.

“I think for the rest of the year, nationwide, we’re going to have higher prices than we did last year for calves and feeder cattle,” Anderson said. “And as that drought continues to shrink the cow herd, it will really put some pressure on markets when we have fewer cows, so I’m pretty optimistic for next year that we’ll have higher prices overall than this year.”

Another factor he thinks will sup-

port better cattle prices for ranchers is the boom in beef exports and slight decrease in imports seen across the U.S. lately.

“Brazil had some problems in exporting to China recently, and Argentina banned exports back in August in an attempt to reduce prices for domestic consumers. So, I think we’ve expanded our exports to fill those gaps from those countries,” he said.

Beef imports were a little lower in early fall.

“Most of what we import are trimmings to make hamburgers, and that’s where most ranchers see the most direct effect of trade imports, particularly in the cull cow market. So, as we import less, domestic prices will be less affected,” he said.

While he believes prices should continue that upward trend, Anderson cautioned supply chain issues can still negatively impact ranchers’ bottom lines. Labor shortages in the transport sector, rapidly increasing fuel prices and a somewhat weak



overall economic outlook may work against cattle markets in 2022.

“Our costs are higher, and I think we’re all facing that as consumers ourselves, and it will take some time for that to get worked out,” he said. “Those things hit ranchers just like it hits the rest of us, but I am optimistic as we finally begin to move out of the turmoil of the pandemic.”

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TFB Radio Network ranks at the top once again

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

The new ratings are in, and the Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) Radio Network was once again named the top network in farmer and rancher all-day listening for Texas counties surveyed through the 2021 AMR Farm Radio Listening Study.

This is the sixth survey in a row for the TFB Radio Network to receive the top ranking. The survey is conducted every two years to learn more about agricultural producers' preferences for radio content.

"I think the multi-year run as the number one farm radio network in Texas shows that Texas Farm Bureau has a lot of loyalty and credibility with farmers and ranchers in our state," Carey Martin, radio network manager, said. "They know they can trust what we put on the air, and we have built a reputation as a reliable source of information for them. It also shows the commitment that

Texas Farm Bureau has made to the radio network in the form of resources that are needed to maintain that credibility."

AMR surveyed over 800 Texas farmers and ranchers who have at least \$50,000 a year in farm sales. The study covered all commodities, but the majority of respondents had beef cattle, cotton, corn, grain sorghum or wheat.

"The survey gives us a good idea of which radio stations farmers are listening to and at what times of the day they are listening," Martin said.

Results of the survey also help the TFB Radio Network track progress.

"In the last study two years ago, the Panhandle was probably the weakest area of the state for us. We hardly had any radio stations there. As a result, we only had about 23% of the Panhandle producers listening to us," he said. "Over the past two years, we worked hard to add stations in that part of the state, and

now we have 83% of farmers and ranchers there listening."

Research conducted by the National Association of Farm Broadcasting shows that radio remains an important daily information source for farmers and ranchers. And TFB continues to provide quality content to affiliate stations across the state.

The TFB Radio Network now features over 120 affiliate stations, the largest number of affiliates in the network's 19-year history.

"We've doubled the number of stations in the last two years," he said. "Radio is a relationship business, so we've spent the last two years building those relationships with radio station managers. We've also adjusted our advertising model to incentivize more stations to affiliate with us."

The TFB Radio Network has the largest and most-experienced farm news team in the Lone Star State, anchored by Martin, TFB Senior Network Producer Tom Nicolette

and TFB Multimedia Reporter Jessica Domel. New reporter additions strengthened the programming lineup, including Texas Panhandle reporter James Hunt and livestock auction market reporter Larry Marble.

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

The network airs 11 daily programs and one weekly program. The TFB Radio Network also launched a podcast, *Texas Ag Today*, last year that many radio stations air as a long-form morning ag news program.

"We are one of the largest and most-listened to farm radio networks in the nation, and that's something to be proud of," Martin said.

The complete list of affiliate stations is listed below. To listen to one of the many programs aired on the TFB Radio Network, visit texasfarm-bureau.org/radio.

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Amarillo	710 AM	KGNC	Crockett	1290 AM	KIVY	Hondo	1460 AM	KCWM	Quanah	100.7 FM	KOLJ
Amarillo	103.9 FM	KHNZ	Crockett	102.9 FM	KIVY	Kenedy	92.1 FM	KCAF	Ranger	98.5 FM	KWBY
Amarillo	96.5 FM	KDDD	Crockett	105.5 FM	KIVY	La Grange	104.9 FM	KBUK	Reno	98.9 FM	KLOW
Austwell	105.9 FM	KIBQ	Crockett	92.7 FM	KIVY	La Grange	1570 AM	KVLG	Rockdale	98.5 FM	KRXT
Ballinger	1400 AM	KRUN	Dalhart	1240 AM	KXIT	Lamesa	690 AM	KPET	San Angelo	92.7 FM	KDCD
Beeville	1490 AM	KIBL	Dalhart	94.5 FM	KXIT	Lamesa	105.1 FM	KPET	San Angelo	1260 AM	KKSA
Beeville	97.1 FM	KIBL	Detroit	104.3 FM	KFYN	Levelland	1230 AM	KLVN	San Antonio	680 AM	KKYX
Big Spring	1490 AM	KBST	Dilley	95.3 FM	KVWG	Lubbock	94.1 FM	KSSL	San Antonio	104.9 FM	KKYX
Big Spring	103.9 FM	KBST	Dimmitt	1470 AM	KDHN	Madisonville	1220 AM	KMVL	Seguin	1580 AM	KWED
Boerne	1500 AM	KBRN	Dimmitt	102.7 FM	KDHN	Madisonville	98.9 FM	KMVL	Seymour	1230 AM	KSEY
Boerne	103.9 FM	KBRN	Dumas	800 AM	KDDD	Madisonville	102.7 FM	KMVL	Seymour	94.3 FM	KSEY
Bonham	1420 AM	KFYN	Dumas	103.5 FM	KDFY	Madisonville	100.5 FM	KMVL	Seymour	105.7 FM	KSEY
Bonham	103.9 FM	KFYN	Dumas	95.3 FM	KDDD	Mansfield, LA	92.7 FM	KJVC	Shamrock	92.9 FM	KSNZ
Brady	1490 AM	KNEL	Eastland	97.7 FM	KATX	Marshall	103.9 FM	KMHT	Smiley	103.9 FM	KBQQ
Brady	95.3 FM	KNEL	El Campo	1390 AM	KULP	Mason	102.5 FM	KHLB	Spearman	98.3 FM	KXDJ
Breckenridge	1430 AM	KROO	El Campo	106.7 FM	KULP	Mason	101.7 FM	KZZM	Sterling City	100.5 FM	KSCK
Cameron	105.1 FM	KMIL	Elk City, OK	98.9 FM	KSNZ	Memphis	105.3 FM	KLSR	Stephenville	93.1 FM	KSTV
Canadian	102.9 FM	KSNZ	Fredericksburg	910 AM	KNAF	Meyersville	100.1 FM	KQBQ	Sulphur Springs	107.1 FM	KRVA
Canton	1510 AM	KWJB	Giddings	96.3 FM	KGID	Mineola	99.9 FM	KMOO	Sulphur Springs	1230 AM	KSST
Canton	95.1 FM	KWJB	Graham	1330 AM	KSWA	Pampa	101.3 FM	KHNZ	Sulphur Springs	101.3 FM	KSST
Carthage	104.3 FM	KGAS	Greenville	1400 AM	KGVL	Paris	1490 AM	KPLT	Sweetwater	1240 AM	KXOX
Center	930 AM	KDET	Greenville	93.5 FM	KIKT	Paris	96.3 FM	KPLT	Sweetwater	96.7 FM	KXOX
Childress	96.1 FM	KCTX	Greenville	105.9 FM	KGVL	Paris	93.9 FM	KOYN	Temple	1400 AM	KTEM
Christine	96.9 FM	KWYU	Greenville	107.7 FM	KGVL	Pearsall	1280 AM	KMFR	Temple	94.3 FM	KTEM
Clarendon	99.3 FM	KEFH	Haskell	97.1 FM	KVRP	Pearsall	94.7 FM	KMFR	Tyler	104.1 FM	KKUS
Comanche	94.3 FM	KYOX	Hebbronville	104.3 FM	KUFA	Pecos	97.3 FM	KDNZ	Vernon	101.7 FM	KOLJ
Comanche	1550 AM	KCOM	Henderson	1470 AM	KWRD	Perryton	93.7 FM	KEYE	Victoria	107.9 FM	KIXS
Comanche	100.1 FM	KCOM	Henderson	98.5 FM	KWRD	Perryton	1400 AM	KEYE	Wichita Falls	97.5 FM	KXXN
Corpus Christi	99.1 FM	KRYS	Hereford	860 AM	KPAN	Perryton	96.7 FM	KEYE			

Unsecure border ushers in risks to Texas, U.S. animal agriculture

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Illegal immigrants could put livestock in Texas and the U.S. at risk for diseases. But that threat is currently low, according to Texas' state veterinarian.

In September, more than 10,000 illegal immigrants overwhelmed officials and residents in Del Rio. That surge opened the border to a potential for disease exposure.

"We watched that situation carefully as it unfolded, and it has a potential to reoccur again," Dr. Andy Schwartz, Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) state veterinarian and executive director, said. "It had some modest impacts on agriculture, but fortunately, we've not detected any major impacts."

TAHC staff and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) monitored the situation for introduction of diseases that could be harmful to livestock and animal agriculture.

"What caused the initial concern was that we knew there were a large number of people from Haiti, and recently, African swine fever was discovered there and in the Dominican Republic," he said. "Our concern was perhaps these individuals might be carrying some food with them, such as raw or undercooked meat or dried meat, that might contain the African swine fever virus."

But as TAHC and APHIS learned more about the illegal immigrants, the agencies realized the travel timeline didn't pose a significant threat.

Other diseases monitored by TAHC and APHIS include foot-and-mouth disease, tuberculosis, brucellosis and cattle fever ticks. These diseases could bring significant disruptions to the livestock industry in the state and across the nation.

"We have to be a little bit concerned about cattle fever ticks and that ticks can get on some bedding, on clothes and be transported across on or by the people. Fortunately, in this part of the state, due to the arid



Farmers and ranchers should monitor their herds and flocks closely to safeguard against disease threats that could be ushered into Texas due to an unsecure border and the increase in illegal immigrant activity.

climate, there aren't a lot of cattle fever ticks there," Schwartz said. "With all the concerns with people in law enforcement there, it did disrupt some of the normal inspection processes that USDA does along that portion of the river with Mexico that goes from Del Rio down to Brownsville. That's our permanent cattle fever tick quarantine zone. So, it did temporarily disrupt some inspection activity there, but that has gone back to normal now."

Other disruptions affected transporting feeder cattle. About 1.2 million head of feeder cattle cross the border into the U.S. each year.

"That flow of cattle there was temporarily interrupted when the trucks couldn't get across the bridge, and they had to divert to other ports to come into the country. But that was resolved when the bridge was opened up again," he said.

USDA has a robust process in place for importation of livestock from Mexico that includes requirements for surveillance for tuberculosis in Mexico, and then testing of the individual animals that cross

the border.

A good biosecurity plan can also help farmers and ranchers guard against diseases.

"That means to be careful where you buy from, make sure you're not buying diseased animals. If at all possible, isolate them for a time after you get them to your facility, so that any incubating disease would have time to show itself before you commingle them with the remainder of the herd," he said. "And then watch and guard against on-farm traffic. Individuals coming from other facilities can carry viruses and bacteria on their clothing, and that can also travel in trailers and crates and between facilities. So, we encourage producers to practice good biosecurity to protect themselves against a disease outbreak."

The horse import process at the border also changed recently, Schwartz noted.

USDA is now holding horses at the border for seven days to get past an incubation period of a disease, Venezuelan equine encephalitis, that's been discovered in Mexico.

"That's something that horse owners are probably familiar with seeing it on the vaccine bottle and hearing about it, but it's a viral disease that can be fatal in horses, and it has been discovered in Mexico," he said. "So, as horses are being imported from Mexico, they're held seven days at the border as a precaution. I'd mention that to anyone who's importing horses to know it's going to take a little bit longer, but to also reassure our horse-owning public that we are taking appropriate measures to prevent disease incursion."

Farmers and ranchers are encouraged to notify their local veterinarian, TAHC and APHIS if they see signs of a potential disease outbreak or strange looking ticks.

TAHC operates a 24-hour hotline for reporting diseases. Farmers and ranchers can call 800-550-8242 to report any suspected foreign or emerging animal disease.

More information on animal health, diseases and biosecurity measures can be found on the TAHC website at tahc.texas.gov or USDA's website at aphis.usda.gov/.



Farmers in the Texas Panhandle go nuts for growing peanuts

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

In the Texas Panhandle, a few things are for certain—the wind will blow, the cotton will grow and so will peanuts.

For Michael Newhouse, who farms in Donley County, growing peanuts works well with their crop rotation.

“We’ve grown Spanish. We’ve grown Runners, and we try to save our best ground for Virginias. They’re really susceptible to disease. We don’t have a guaranteed place for Virginias every year, but if we have an opportunity, we try to grow them,” Newhouse said. “They usually bring really good money.”

The soil in Donley County, and across the Panhandle, is ideal for

growing peanuts.

“Our soil type is really good for peanuts, and we like to rotate our cotton with peanuts,” he said. “It seems to cut out our diseases. We don’t have as much disease pressure if we rotate cotton and peanuts, and vice versa.”

Since peanuts are legumes, they grow underneath the soil. They’re known as nature’s zero waste plant, because everything from the roots to the hulls are used.

Peanut plants also have a unique ability to improve the soil. They take nitrogen from the air and produce their own in the ground, which benefits other crops, as well. And with fertilizer prices steadily climbing, it’s a benefit that peanuts don’t require as much fertilizer.

That’s a vital part of the equation for maximizing yield and efficiency, and this year’s growing season was a good one.

“It rained pretty often. I can’t remember exactly how much we got, but the rain just was incredible,” he said.

The difference between peanuts and other nuts is the water needed to grow the crop.

“Take an almond for example. It takes 5 gallons of water to produce an ounce of peanuts. It takes 80 gallons of water to produce an ounce of almonds,” he said. “Up here, where water is scarce and we don’t know how long it’s going to last, we feel like we’re doing our part growing peanuts and conserving water.”

The crop takes about six months

to grow. Newhouse typically plants around the first of May and digs the peanuts at the beginning of October.

“In September, usually mid-September or so, we’ll start scratching peanuts,” he said.

To do a scratch test, Newhouse takes each pod and scrapes the hull. The color tells the maturity of the peanut. Immature peanuts have white inner husks. As the peanuts mature, their color darkens to orange, then brown and finally black.

“We like it when there’s a black scratch, kind of a caramel-looking color,” Newhouse said.

And then they dig them up.

“The digger goes in and runs about four inches deep, and there’s a big knife that runs under each row. That knife cuts right below where the root

knife cuts right below where the root is,” he said. “You can cut too shallow and shave your peanuts, but if you get it set just right, it goes underneath the plant and it lifts it up onto a chain. And that chain is shaking. It shakes the dirt off. And as it goes over the back, it actually takes that plant and flips it 180 degrees and places it back on the ground.”

The peanuts will sit in the field, depending on weather, for about a week to dry. Then, they combine them.

They can harvest about 80 acres a day, Newhouse noted.

After months of work, Texas farmers are happy their peanut crop is in

demand across the state and around the country.

Because during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, baseball stadiums were closed to fans, and that meant the demand for the salty sports snack was low.

But games are open to fans again, which is a big market for the Virginia variety—the largest of all peanut varieties.

“The Virginia is mainly used if you go to a ballpark, a racetrack or something like that,” Newhouse said. “They’re in-shell peanuts. That means they want the shell to be pretty. They want it to look nice for the consumer to say, ‘I want to eat

this peanut.”

Runners are known for having an attractive, uniform kernel and are typically used for oil and peanut butter. They are the most-widely consumed variety, according to the Texas Peanut Producers Board.

Valencia peanuts usually contain three or more kernels in a longer shell. They are a sweet peanut with a bright red skin. This variety is mostly served roasted or sold in-shell or boiled.

The Valencia’s primary producing region, according to the Texas Peanut Producers Board is in West Texas and New Mexico.

Spanish peanuts are used for pea-

nut candies, peanut snacks and peanut butter.

“Spanish peanuts are mainly grown for PayDays, for your candies,” he said. “We grow a high oleic variety here, and because it’s a high oleic variety of Spanish, the shelf life is longer.”

From Newhouse’s field to the store, the ballpark or a sandwich, peanuts are a crowd favorite.

“It’s pretty neat to grow something that goes directly to the consumer,” he said. “A lot of these peanuts stay right here in the U.S. And if you go to the store and get a PayDay, it could be made with some Texas peanuts, and that’s really neat to me.”

Did You Know?

1. It takes about 540 peanuts to make a 12-ounce jar of peanut butter.
2. By law, any product labeled “peanut butter” in the U.S. must be at least 90% peanuts.
3. Texas grows all four varieties of peanuts—Runner, Valencia, Spanish and Virginia. Texas farmers also grow organic peanuts. Texas is the only state to grow all four varieties.
4. One acre of peanuts can make about 30,000 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.
5. Texas is the fourth-largest peanut-growing state.
6. Peanut butter is the leading use of peanuts in the U.S.
7. November is National Peanut Butter Lovers’ Month.



This variety pictured is a Runner. It is the most widely-consumed variety. This medium-sized peanut is used for oil and for peanut butter. Because they are high oleic, they have a longer shelf life.



Michael Newhouse inspects his peanuts that have been drying in the field. Harvesting peanuts is a two-step process—digging and thrashing. Newhouse said they can combine about 80 acres in a day.

Cattle contract library bill passes Ag Committee

The U.S. House Agriculture Committee voted to advance the bipartisan Cattle Contract Library Act of 2021 (HR 5609). The bill must still be approved by the full House and Senate before it could be signed into law.

The bill was introduced by Rep. Dusty Johnson of South Dakota and Rep. Henry Cuellar from Texas.

As it currently stands, the bill would establish a library of contracts for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to report terms of alternative marketing agreements between packers and producers. This would equip ranchers with additional market data needed to make informed marketing and business decisions. The USDA library would provide producers with key details on cattle contracts, including the type and duration.

A similar library, although smaller, currently exists for the pork sector.

The contract library was on a list of requested items that representatives of livestock and agricultural organizations developed earlier this year.

The information would be made available in weekly or monthly reports that would include the total number of fed cattle committed under contracts for delivery to packers within the six-month and 12-month periods following the date of the report. They would be available by region and contract type.

The number of contracts with an open commitment, along with any limitations on number of cattle to be delivered under such contracts, would also be included.

The type of contract included in the cattle contract library would cover the mechanism used to determine the base price for the fed cattle committed to a packer under the contract, such as formula purchases, negotiated grid purchases, forward contracts and other purchase agree-

ments, as determined by the U.S. secretary of agriculture.

In the case of a contract in which a specific number of cattle are not solely committed to the packer, an indication that the contract is an open commitment and any weekly, monthly, annual or other limitations on the number of cattle that may be delivered to the packer under the contract must be reported.

The measure would amend the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 to ensure the data is reported and published with other ongoing reports authorized by the Act.

USDA would be authorized to issue grants to universities, associations or other institutions that can work directly with ranchers to disseminate and analyze data to drive marketing decisions.

"The Cattle Contract Library Act ushers in greater transparency and competition to an industry that desperately needs it," Johnson said. "I'm

grateful to the farmers and ranchers for their critical input to come to a consensus, and I'm glad the committee answered this request."

Cuellar has worked in Congress to ensure the success of agriculture.

"Throughout my time in Congress, I have worked hard to ensure the success of the agriculture industry—one that is a critical facet of our nation's economy. The bipartisan Cattle Contract Library Act will further this agenda through the creation of a contract library that will provide cost transparency in the cattle market," Cuellar said. "We must support all of our cattle businesses, including our small producers, who are indispensable for our country's food supply chain."

Texas Farm Bureau, the American Farm Bureau Federation and several other cattle and agricultural organizations support the legislation. It is also widely supported by both Republican and Democrat lawmakers.

The hearing was held Thursday, Oct. 21.



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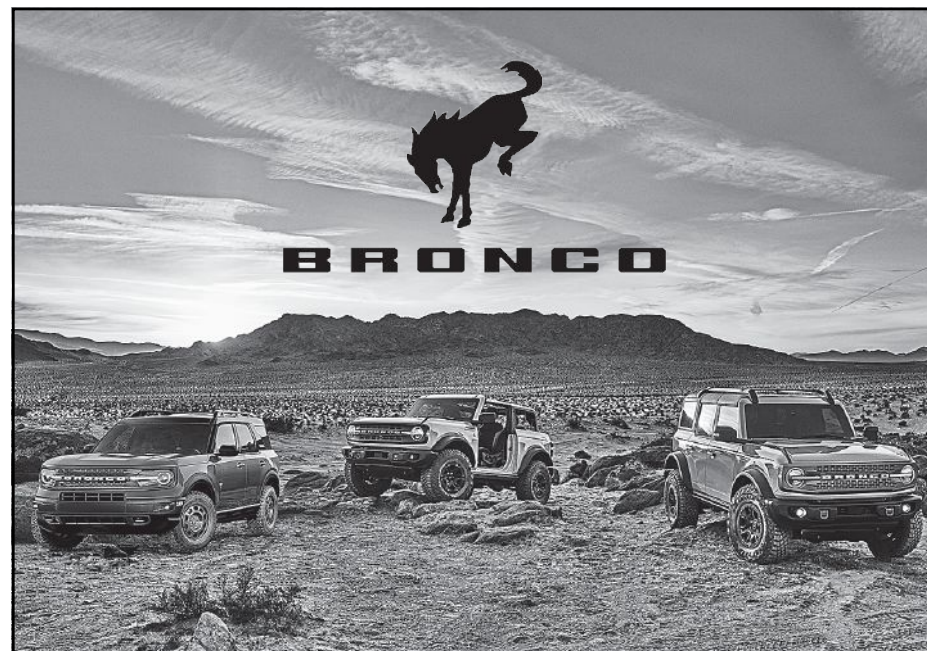


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Lawmakers introduce bill to limit foreign ownership of U.S. ag land

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

Foreign ownership of American agricultural land doubled from 2009-2019, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) data.

Since 2015, foreign holdings have increased an average of nearly 2.3 million acres annually, with almost 35.2 million acres across the U.S. held by foreign owners.

That has American farmers, ranchers and legislators increasingly concerned.

Congressmen Ronny Jackson and Filemon Vela, both of whom represent Texas, introduced the Foreign Adversary Risk Management (FARM) Act to combat foreign interference in the agricultural supply chain.

“Foreign interference in America’s agriculture supply chain poses a serious national security threat, especially given that the worst proponent is the Chinese Communist Party. I represent the top-rated agriculture district in Texas, so protecting this vital industry and its overarching supply chains will always be among my top priorities in Congress,” Jackson said. “Our adversaries are working overtime to undermine American interests, and the FARM Act will be an important step to secure America’s food supply by identifying and responding to inappropriate interference.”

The Lone Star State’s largest farm and ranch organization, Texas Farm Bureau (TFB), supports the FARM Act.

“As Texas has experienced a surge of foreign investors buying agricultural land, it is critical that proper oversight is provided to ensure our national security. We are pleased this bill accomplishes this goal, while in turn protecting private property rights of landowners who wish to sell their property,” TFB President Russell Boening said. “We appreciate these congressional leaders for their steadfast leadership on this issue, and we look forward to working with them to secure passage of this



U.S. lawmakers have introduced a bill, the FARM Act, designed to address foreign ownership of American farmland.

bipartisan legislation.”

Through the FARM Act, the legislators seek to modernize the Committee on Foreign Investment in the U.S. (CFIUS).

CFIUS, created in 1950, is an interagency federal committee that reviews transactions involving foreign investment in U.S. businesses and real estate transactions. The committee is chaired by the Secretary of the Treasury and contains members from several other federal agencies, including the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security. The Director of National Intelligence and Secretary of Labor are non-voting, ex-officio members of CFIUS.

Currently, if CFIUS determines a transaction presents national security risks, the committee may enter into an agreement with or impose conditions on parties to mitigate those risks, suspend the transaction or refer the case to the president for a decision.

Under the new bill, CFIUS would be required to monitor foreign investment into agriculture more closely and add the Secretary of Agriculture as a member of the committee. The FARM Act also would require the USDA and Government Accountability Office to investigate and report to Congress on the national security implications of foreign investment into American agriculture.

Foreign ownership of agricultural land could easily become an issue of

food security, Vela noted.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Americans saw food supply chains stretched and weakened. In the future, foreign agricultural landowners could use those tensions against the U.S. if allowed to purchase more land unchecked, according to the lawmakers.

“Our food systems are vital to our national security, and we must be vigilant to preserve their integrity. As we saw following the pandemic, food processing plants were forced to close and shipping routes for agricultural inputs were delayed. It disrupted the supply chains farmers use to get products from the farm to consumers, which contributed to declining food security in the United States,” Vela said in a statement. “This bill increases federal scrutiny of foreign investments in U.S. industry that could undermine our agricultural supply chains by adding the Secretary of Agriculture to CFIUS and designating agricultural supply chains as key infrastructure under the CFIUS review process.”

The move comes in the wake of criticism of foreign-owned agribusinesses, such as Brazilian-owned JBS SA, receiving USDA assistance through “trade aid” programs. Chinese-owned Smithfield Foods also would have received aid from USDA, but the company voluntarily requested to terminate a contract

before that money was received.

A 2018 report by USDA’s Economic Research Service said China’s need for agricultural resources and technology is behind Chinese investment in foreign agriculture and food sectors.

In less than a decade, China’s agricultural investments abroad grew more than tenfold.

Now, China holds about 192,000 acres, or \$1.9 billion worth of U.S. farmland, according to the latest USDA Farm Service Agency foreign agricultural land holdings report.

Forestland accounted for almost half of all foreign-held acreage, with 25% going to cropland and another 24% classified as “other agricultural land,” comprised of pastures, rangeland and the like. The remaining 2% of foreign-owned is made up of non-agricultural land holdings.

The top country holding American agricultural land is Canada, with 10.5 million acres or 29% of all privately-held land in the U.S.

USDA attributes most purchases of agricultural land by foreign countries for use as wind farms.

Texas has the largest amount of foreign-held agricultural land in the U.S. at over 4.4 million acres. Maine is the second largest at 3.3 million acres, and Alabama comes in third at 1.8 million acres. More than 500,000 acres of Texas farmland were purchased by foreign investors in 2019.

Hunters critical in ongoing cattle fever tick fight

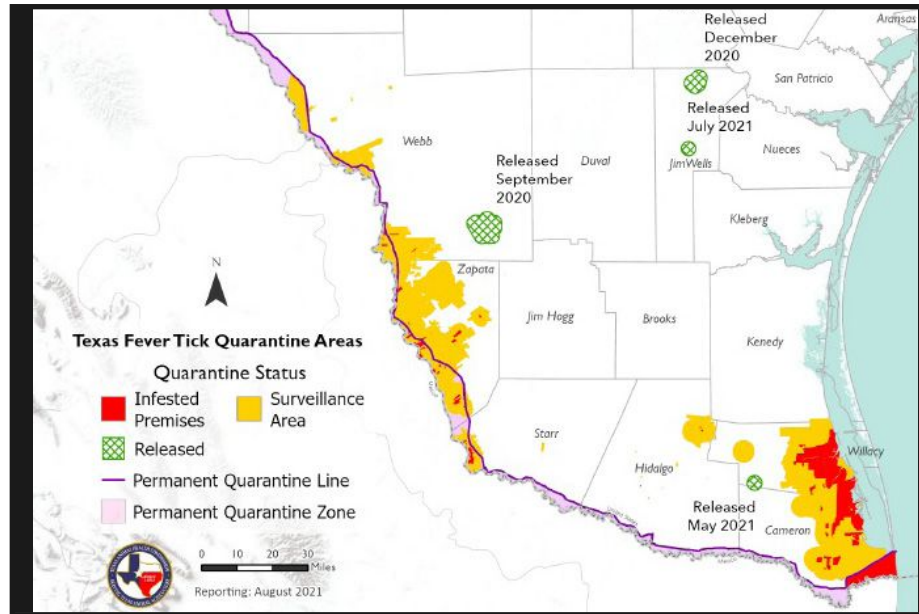
By Jessica Domel
Multimedia Reporter

The Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) is asking people who plan to hunt in the Lower Rio Grande Valley to help prevent the spread of cattle fever ticks.

“We are asking for hunters’ help to ensure fever ticks are not inadvertently transported to unaffected areas of the state when harvesting deer or exotics from fever tick-infested areas,” Dr. Andy Schwartz, TAHC state veterinarian and executive director, said. “Hunters can play a critical role in protecting the state from the further spread of fever ticks.”

TAHC wants hunters to contact one of their inspectors, or an inspector from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, to test their white-tailed deer, nilgai, antelope, black buck, axis deer or other exotic cervids before leaving the place they bagged it.

“We call it a scratch inspection. They will feel around, especially under the armpit area and in the ears,



looking for ticks,” Dr. Angela Lackie, TAHC assistant executive director of Animal Health Programs, said. “If ticks are found, we’re going to harvest those so we can identify what type of tick they are.”

The inspector then treats the carcass or hide for ticks to prevent transporting them to an unaffected area.

“Cattle fever ticks are very specific for cattle, and because nilgai antelope are also in the *Bovidae* family, cattle fever ticks seem to like them, as well,” Lackie told the Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network. “They will also go on our cervids.”

If a hide is not checked, a hunter may inadvertently take the ticks from a quarantined area in the Lower Rio Grande Valley and infect a new area.

That could be detrimental to the cattle industry.

“Cattle fever ticks spread babesia, which is a lot like an anaplasmosis type of disease. It affects the red blood cells. Animals will no longer thrive and can die very suddenly,” she said.

Cattle in other parts of the state and nation don’t have a resistance to babesia.

“We could see 100% mortality rates in areas where the babesia is being spread,” she said. “It could have a huge economic impact from not only the mortality of animals, but also from the loss of markets and marketability of cattle in the U.S.”

Hunters are encouraged to have deer tested before leaving the location where it was bagged, even if the property does not have cattle on it.

“In the past, a lot of our pasture lands had cattle on them, and we were able to gather the cattle every 21 to 28 days, scratch for cattle fever ticks, and then treat them,” Lackie said. “Now, we’re seeing more premises that don’t have any livestock, and it’s primarily just our wildlife.”

She said they’re relying on hunters to be the first line of defense in areas where there might be fever ticks, but there aren’t any cattle.

“Their cooperation could help us really understand better, on some of our vacated premises, whether or not we’ve got cattle fever ticks in those areas,” Lackie said.

There are cattle fever tick quarantine and surveillance areas in portions of the following counties: Cameron, Hidalgo, Maverick, Starr, Webb, Willacy and Zapata.

A list of inspectors hunters may contact for testing is available on tahc.texas.gov.

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Texas receives CWD funds from APHIS

Texas was one of the states that received funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). The funding will help develop and implement chronic wasting disease (CWD) management and response activities in wild and farmed cervids.

Texas received \$429,597 of the \$5.7 million allocated from APHIS.

The Texas Animal Health Commission received the grant for the project titled Whole Genome Predictive Genetics and CWD Disease Response Strategies.

The remaining funds were distributed to 19 other states and 8 Tribes or Tribal organizations.

APHIS based its funding allocations on priorities that were collaboratively established with state agricultural and wildlife representatives, Tribal officials and the cervid industry.

APHIS received 64 proposals. To evaluate the projects, APHIS conducted scientific and program panel reviews of the proposals and worked with submitting entities where needed to refine the scope of the most promising projects.

Agriculture, food industries advised to prepare for cyberattacks

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

In an increasingly digital world, federal agencies say critical infrastructure industries of the United States—including agriculture—are being targeted for cyberattacks.

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and National Security Agency (NSA) released an alert in mid-October warning the food and agriculture sector to beware of BlackMatter ransomware attacks, in which an organization's electronic data are encrypted and held hostage by hackers until a ransom is paid to restore access.

Since July, BlackMatter, a Russian cybercrime cell, has targeted many critical infrastructure entities, including two in the food and agriculture sector.

BlackMatter is a ransomware-as-a-service tool, meaning the developers profit from cybercriminal affiliates who deploy it.

A separate private industry notification from the FBI's Cyber Division in September noted one U.S. bakery company lost access to its computer systems in July through a ransomware attack, halting production, shipping and receiving for one week.

"Ransomware may impact businesses across the sector, from small farms to large producers, processors and manufacturers, markets and restaurants," the FBI stated.

Financial loss, loss of productivity, remediation costs, loss of proprietary information or personally identifiable information and reputational damage are just some of the losses businesses may incur from a ransomware or cyberattack, according to the FBI.

An Iowa grain cooperative, NEW Cooperative, was also recently targeted, with BlackMatter attackers demanding \$5.9 million to restore access to its data. The systems attacked controlled crop irrigation, livestock feed schedules and inventory distribution, a letter from Iowa Sens. Chuck Grassley and Joni

Ernst to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said.

"NEW Cooperative controls 40% of the grain distribution in the country," the senators wrote. "The company's rapid return to alternative operations averted a crash in grain prices, but the threat of continued attacks has dire consequences."

The legislators asked DHS to further investigate recent BlackMatter attacks and to explain how the agency is preparing the agricultural sector against future incidents.

BlackByte, another ransomware group, claims it attacked Farmers Cooperative Elevator Co. in Iowa. They threatened to release sensitive data—such as sales, financial and accounting information—if the ransom wasn't paid.

"The extent of the damage from the NEW Cooperative and Farmers Cooperative Elevator Co. attacks is not isolated to the grain market. Feed from the cooperatives' grain supply sustains millions of livestock," the senators said. "These attacks will affect the supply chain that puts food on the shelves in grocery stores across the country."

Ongoing ransomware attacks affecting the food and agriculture sector demonstrates the importance of cybersecurity as an element of supply chain security, the agencies said.

To prevent ransomware or cyberattacks, individuals and businesses should take proactive measures, including the use of strong passwords, routine update and backup procedures and implementing multi-factor authentication, according to the CISA, FBI and NSA alert.

Strong passwords should not contain personal information like a birth date, address or phone number, because that information is readily available online and easy to guess. CISA advises using both upper and lowercase letters, numbers and special characters in creating strong passwords.

Multi-factor authentication often requires a code sent directly to the user's associated phone number or

email to complete logging into a device, making it less likely a random hacker can gain access.

Security basics like keeping operating systems and web browsers up to date, using antivirus software and backing up data in case it is lost or damaged can help keep systems protected, as well.

"The threat of ransomware goes beyond specific impacts to a victim company. It has risen to a national security issue," Rob Joyce, NSA director of Cybersecurity, said in a statement. "Employing the mitigations in the joint advisory with CISA

and FBI will protect networks and mitigate the risk against BlackMatter and other ransomware attacks."

JBS, one of the world's largest meatpackers, was hit by a cyberattack in June, which forced the shutdown of several slaughterhouses.

Other cyberattacks in the food and agriculture sector have happened throughout the year, and the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing about the threat of ransomware attacks in late July.

For more information and best practices on securing computer systems, visit stopransomware.gov.



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EXCELLENCE IN AGRICULTURE FINALISTS



Chase Brooke
Anna



Jacob and Laura Henson
Lingleville



Heston and Stevie McBride
Lampasas

Texas Farm Bureau recognizes young ranchers, professionals

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Dedication to agriculture, their community and their families earned one individual and two couples recognition in this year's Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) Excellence in Agriculture (EIA) competition.

The finalists in this year's contest are Chase Brooke of Anna, Jacob and Laura Henson of Lingleville and Heston and Stevie McBride of Lampasas.

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.

Chase Brooke

Chase Brooke is the Agriculture and Natural Resources County AgriLife Extension agent in Collin County, one of the fastest growing areas in the state. In this position, he provides education and research-based information to local farmers, ranchers and landowners to help them find solutions to challenges they face.

He also hosts workshops, educational outreach events and clinics to help connect local producers with the latest in management techniques, agricultural technology and local, state and federal regulations.

Brooke continues to help on his

family's ranch in Coryell County by controlling and managing invasive species, caring for livestock and helping plan for the future of the property.

He's involved in the community by serving on local boards and organizations, including the Collin County Farm Bureau board of directors. Brooke attends numerous TFB events, including county events and Young Farmer & Rancher activities.

He and his wife, Jennifer, live in Anna.

Jacob and Laura Henson

Jacob is a gunsmith for Infinity Firearms, where he does blend, fit and final finish on their line of custom handguns. Laura is a visiting instructor in Agricultural Communications at Tarleton State University.

As an instructor, Laura uses her production agriculture background to share her experiences and inspire the next generation of agricultural communicators to increase the understanding of farm and ranch practices, agriculture's role in sustainability and the need to do more with less.

Jacob and Laura are part owners in a commercial cattle herd and help operate Laura's family's farm, white-tailed deer ranch and silage harvesting business. They also own a small business marketing agency and a growing fruit and vegetable

operation. They sell the tomatoes, squash, peaches, blackberries, peppers and other fruits and vegetables at area farmers markets. They also offer canned goods made from their produce.

Laura serves on the Erath County Farm Bureau board of directors and assists with county activities. The Hensons attend TFB events throughout the year, and they also represent District 7 on TFB's Young Farmer & Rancher Advisory Committee.

They live in Lingleville and are expecting their first child in January.

Heston and Stevie McBride

Heston and Stevie work alongside each other in their agricultural business venture and on the ranch.

They are the owners and operators of AgroTech, an agricultural service business that provides liquid feed, custom hay services, herbicides, agricultural equipment rentals, dyed diesel and more to farmers and ranchers in the Lampasas area.

The small business helps meet a need in the community and surrounding counties.

Together, they manage a cow-calf operation. Heston trains horses and enjoys roping and showing at working cow-horse events.

They also work alongside Heston's family to grow Kleingrass and

coastal Bermudagrass hay for their cow-calf herd.

The couple is active in Lampasas County Farm Bureau, and Heston serves on the board of directors. They attend Young Farmer & Rancher activities and other Farm Bureau events.

The couple lives in Lampasas with their son, Hetch.

Contest awards

The winner will be announced at the TFB Annual Meeting Dec. 3-5 in Corpus Christi.

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

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

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

Information on TFB's EIA contest and Young Farmer & Rancher program can be found online at texasfarmbureau.org/YFR.

EXCELLENCE IN AGRICULTURE FINALIST



Chase Brooke
Anna

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

A typical day may find Chase Brooke hosting workshops, classes or demonstrations for the public on agricultural topics. He might be conducting a farm visit to offer technical assistance or working with a school to help educate students on agriculture. He might even be promoting agricultural advocacy at the local community college.

That's because he's the Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension agent in Collin County.

He works to provide education and information to farmers, ranchers and landowners, as well as consumers.

Although no two days are ever the same, Brooke has the satisfaction of knowing he's making a difference in his community by promoting the story and science of agriculture.

"Agriculture is important as it not only provides food and fiber, but also by the foundational connections it has to other industries. From finance and marketing to IT and automation, agriculture engages with a broad swath of the economy, often in ways that are not explicitly recognized," he said. "This is important to me, because it means that every farmer and rancher supports a network of in-

dustries that contribute to a healthy local economy. Keeping agriculture strong means keeping our communities—and our families—strong."

After spending most of his formative years in Mexico, Brooke attended middle and high school in suburban Southlake, where he met his now-wife, Jennifer.

When he lived in the metroplex, Brooke felt most at home spending time at his family's ranch in Coryell County. Working cattle, fixing fences, hauling hay and other aspects of ranching taught him the value of hard work. It also instilled an enthusiasm for agriculture that grew into a passion and a career.

Brooke graduated from Texas A&M University with a bachelor's degree in spatial sciences and a master's degree in ecosystem science and management, then took a job as a research technician at Michigan State University.

But the cold was too much for this Texas boy, he said with a grin.

So, he and Jennifer returned to Texas, where that passion for agriculture came full circle when he was hired by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Collin County.

The position seems custom-tailored for a person of his agricultural and suburban background. Collin County is one of the fastest-growing areas in Texas, with a 198% increase in population from 1990 to 2010.

"We're growing so quickly. Many of our landowners are first-time landowners, so my role in Extension is to give them the information they need to lower that learning curve, help them love their land and meet their goals," he said. "I also do a lot of outreach and education with all kinds of organizations to help connect people with agriculture. I remind them that we still have a very robust agricultural economy, but it goes beyond planting seeds and harvesting. The technical aspects, the tying in of all these different fields and components come together to intertwine in a community, even one



as large as those we have up here."

Getting suburbanites interested in agriculture and helping them separate truth from sensationalism can be an uphill battle some days, he said. But it's a battle worth fighting, and it's fulfilling.

"My favorite part of my job is working with people. Being able to go out and do a farm visit, helping someone identify a challenge and ways to fix it, that's a good feeling," Brooke said. "Or letting people know there are local farms and local food available here. Showing them where to make connections with agriculture in more than just

a textbook sense. To me, that's the greatest part—the people I meet and having a tangible impact on my community."

And he still plays a role on his family's ranch. He helps control and manage invasive species, cares for the livestock and helps plan for the future of the property.

"All the good character-building manual labor I did as a teenager out there really instilled a passion for agriculture and natural resource management," he said. "I like to go back to the ranch every chance I get and just spend time working to improve our operation."

EXCELLENCE IN AGRICULTURE FINALIST



Jacob and Laura Henson
Lingleville

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

To say Jacob and Laura Henson have a lot of irons in the fire would be an understatement.

Between partnering with their family on a custom silage business, commercial cattle herd and white-tailed deer high-fence hunting operation, the Hensons also own a small marketing company and a growing fruit and vegetable operation.

They live in Lingleville and have full-time “day jobs.”

Jacob is a gunsmith at Infinity Firearms, and Laura is a visiting instructor in Agricultural Communications at Tarleton State University in Stephenville.

But their shared dedication to agriculture keeps them going day after jam-packed day.

“My dad started the silage business when I was about five years old, so I really don’t know anything besides that,” Laura said. “Growing up where my parents had an agribusiness and I was an employee, I had a firsthand view of the issues and struggles that go along with the industry. It’s motivated me to go beyond the farm to help combat some of those issues.”

Jacob grew up in nearby Eastland, where his family had a small

cattle and hay operation.

“I’ve always been involved in agriculture in some aspect, as early as I can remember,” he said. “I grew up raising and showing steers through 4-H and FFA, helping out on my family’s operation and participating in rodeo and team roping, just always with that connection to agriculture.”

After meeting at Tarleton State University and marrying, the young couple began expanding beyond the family businesses.

Laura was motivated to create a marketing agency after seeing an unmet need for affordable communications and marketing options for small businesses. She offers logo and website design, video and photography services, social media management, promotional products and custom screen-printed T-shirts and vinyl decals.

The fruit and vegetable venture came about as a way for Jacob to decompress after spending long weeks indoors at the gunsmith facility. What started as a small backyard garden has grown into several hundred square feet of production space, with plans to expand their production and market reach even more in the future.

Tomatoes, squash, peaches, blackberries and peppers, as well as canned goods made from the produce, are picked, washed, transported and sold at local farmers markets by the young entrepreneurs.

“My grandparents always had a big garden, so my desire to have a garden and grow vegetables was simply out of nostalgia for that connection to my family and that way of life of being self-sufficient,” Jacob said. “And now we’re finding our footing in vegetable production and fulfilling that need and desire for locally-sourced produce for other families.”

In addition to their many ventures, Laura enjoys her role as a college instructor.

“Many of my students are agricul-



tural majors with no actual production background experience. Just a couple of weeks ago, I had a class where every kid in that room was an ag major and didn’t know what the USDA was,” she said. “That just shows the need for people who come from a production background to make the effort to share their knowledge. So, that’s my goal, to be able to stay in production because I love it so much but also to use my experiences to help this next generation, as well.”

As they build their business legacy together, they’re also building a life, memories and a family.

Their first child is due in January, and the Hensons are excited to raise their daughter in the same rural lifestyle they enjoyed growing up. They can’t wait to teach her about agriculture and have her learn those rural values as she grows up involved in their businesses.

“With a little one coming soon, we’re going to have to make some changes because we stay so busy,” Laura said. “But we can’t wait to do the same things for her and let her work in the garden or whatever businesses we have and learn all the good things about agriculture like we did.”

EXCELLENCE IN AGRICULTURE FINALIST



Heston and Stevie McBride
Lampasas

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

Heston and Stevie McBride are booth rooted in agriculture. They are third-generation ranchers who have a passion for the land, cattle and running successful businesses.

They raise cattle and are the owners and operators of AgroTech, an agricultural service business that provides liquid feed, dyed diesel, fertilizer, herbicides, agricultural equipment rentals and more to farmers and ranchers in the Lampasas area.

“Heston and I both come from long-time ranching families. We met in college at Tarleton State University, and we found we both shared a love for cattle and ranching. So, we pursued that when we graduated by moving to East Texas, where he took a ranch management job,” Stevie said. “We ended up moving back closer to his hometown when we had an opportunity to, along with a couple of partners, acquire AgroTech.”

Stevie oversees the administrative aspects of AgroTech—paperwork, accounting and other jobs that need to be managed at the office.

Heston handles the operational side of the business. He directs the employees on jobs, handles customer inquiries and helps clients decide

which fertilizers or herbicides they may need or what equipment to rent.

“We specialize in fertilizer and herbicide applications for hay and forage production. Our clients are mainly landowners in Lampasas, Llano and Mills counties,” he said. “We try to tailor our business, so we have something to offer operations of all sizes.”

Many of their clients are first-time landowners or people who have moved from larger cities to the more suburban or rural setting of Lampasas and the surrounding areas. That’s changed how the McBrides approach customer interactions.

Heston noted he spends more time on education and assisting them in making appropriate land management decisions.

The couple also manages a small commercial cow-calf herd through leasing several properties across two counties.

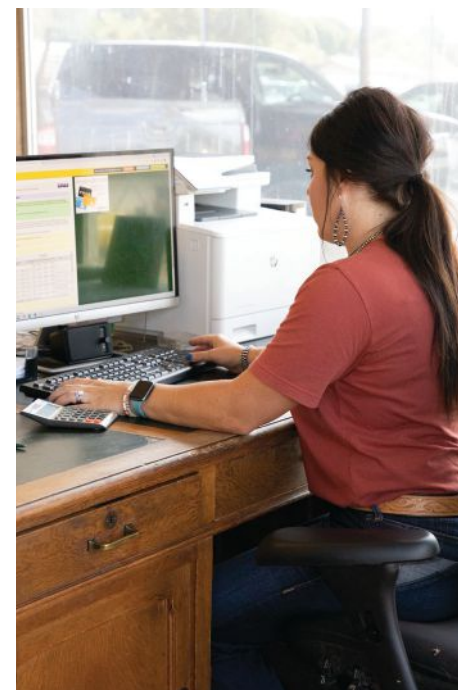
Raising cattle is something both of their families were involved in as they were growing up, and it’s a venture they wanted to continue as adults.

Working alongside the love of her life can be fun, Stevie said. It’s also tough to manage the work-life balance, however.

“I don’t really get to say, ‘Hey, when you get home, you take care of the baby while I go do this,’ because we work together all the time, and we do everything else together, too. We both have to load up and feed cows after work or go fix fences or do whatever needs to be done. We have a business, a cattle herd and a family,” she said.

Managing a business and a cattle herd takes many hours during the day.

“There’s a lot of struggle that goes on behind the scenes. We deal with a lot of things that, typically, most people don’t experience or would never understand. So, sometimes there’s a lot of heartache involved. But we always, always try to remain



positive. And we love our lives,” Stevie said. “We like to stay busy, and we get to do everything together, so it works for us.”

In the future, they’d like to expand their cow-calf herd and get more involved in working cow-horse shows. They hope to see their son, Hetch, involved with the horses and cattle, too.

For now, they’re enjoying their time as a busy, young family.

It’s challenging sometimes to own and operate a small business in a small town and manage their cattle herd. But Heston said there are many rewards, too.

“There’s a lot of freedom that comes with owning and operating your own business,” he said. “We felt like this was something we wanted to pursue, and we’ve both been really happy and are glad we chose this path.”

And there’s nothing like an agricultural community in which to raise a family, Stevie added.

“Agriculture has always been near and dear to my heart. I grew up that way. Heston grew up that way,” she said. “The people are great, and we definitely want to continue on that path and raise our son in the same kind of community we grew up in.”

New USFRA docudrama highlights agriculture's sustainability

A new short film released by the U.S. Farmers & Ranchers in Action (USFRA) highlights the role farmers and ranchers are taking in forging climate solutions with help from science, experts, investors and partners.

The docudrama, *The Carbon Neutral Pig*, follows the real-life journey of Marlowe Ivey who has taken over her dad's North Carolina pig farm and is working to make it carbon neutral.

"Change has got to start somewhere" becomes a key line as Ivey encounters people online and in her community that criticize pig farming as being harmful to the planet and telling Ivey that change is needed.

Ivey in turn sees her farm as a place where she can make positive change, using science and experts to evolve and improve the closed-loop processes her dad started in the 1980s and 1990s with pigs, soy and corn. Ivey is currently working toward a methane-capture system to

power the farm.

The Carbon Neutral Pig touches on several climate-smart ag practices Ivey uses. It's the second short docudrama in a series about U.S. farmers and ranchers harnessing technology and tenacity to improve their practices, provide social benefit, remain economically sustainable and act as partners in national and global climate action.

The first of the series was the award-winning *30 Harvests*, featuring the story of Texas row-crop farmer and Texas Farm Bureau member Jay Hill.

USFRA connects food and agricultural leaders to take bold action to co-create sustainable U.S. food systems. *The Carbon Neutral Pig* was produced with support from United Soybean Board and North Carolina Pork Council.

USFRA premiered the film on Sept. 16 at its 2021 Honor the Harvest Forum, where more than 150 leaders in the U.S. food and agriculture sector explored the challenges



U.S. Farmers and Ranchers in Action (USFRA) launched a new docudrama, *The Carbon Neutral Pig*, to show the role of farmers and ranchers in creating climate-solutions. The short film follows North Carolina pig farmer Marlowe Ivey. Photo courtesy USFRA.

facing agriculture and co-designed solutions.

"We produce these films to reflect what we hear from farmers and ranchers and to illustrate the importance of them being at the table during conversations about climate change," Erin Fitzgerald, CEO of USFRA, said. "This is a call to leaders in food, finance and science to

support their efforts. Farmers and ranchers experience the effects of climate change firsthand. They have experience on the land that others don't, and their work can be solution-driven. But they can't do it alone."

The film, which runs about seven minutes, can be viewed online at media.usfarmersandranchers.org.

USDA announces climate-smart agriculture, forestry initiative

The Food and Agriculture Climate Alliance (FACA) is encouraged by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's recent announcement inviting proposals to advance voluntary climate-smart farming and forestry practices.

The alliance is pleased to see USDA embracing an incentive-based approach that would increase demand for climate-smart farm, ranch and forestry products, while building trust that the climate benefits are real and verifiable.

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced the Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry Partnership Initiative saying USDA hopes to receive proposals from a wide variety of stakeholders interested in voluntarily collaborating to test wide-ranging ideas that sequester carbon and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions on farms and working lands.

Vilsack credited FACA, saying the department drew heavily from alliance recommendations released in May 2021 when forming the program.

USDA also acknowledges the need identified by FACA to build confidence in these climate benefits by investing in measurement, monitoring and verification to lay the groundwork for success and potential actions by Congress.

The alliance supports this "walk before you run" approach by government to advance climate-smart practices. FACA has long stressed that there is no one-size-fits-all solution and is pleased USDA is inviting proposals that would add value to and encourage new markets for the full range of farm, ranch and forestry products, grown and raised on farms, ranches and forests of all sizes.

The alliance also supports equi-

table opportunities and applauds USDA's stated goal to reduce barriers to participation for all farmers, ranchers and forest owners, including producers of color and others who have been historically under-represented.

"Secretary Vilsack's focus on pilots to get the policy 'right' will help inform future discussions and ensure we are doing the best for the environment, our farms and ranches, and rural communities," said Zippy Duvall, FACA co-chair and president of the American Farm Bureau Federation. "Reducing barriers, addressing challenges and encouraging opportunities for all farmers and ranchers, no matter the size of their farm or where they are located, will be key to success."

FACA consists of 80 organizations representing farmers, ranchers, forest owners, agribusinesses, manufacturers, the food and innovation



sector, state governments, sportsmen and women and environmental advocates. More information and a full list of members can be found at AgClimateAlliance.com.

FACA's original 40 recommendations are outlined in a 50-page report and summarized in a one-page hand-out available on the website.

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African swine fever continues to spread, vaccine may be available soon

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

Samples collected recently from pigs in the Dominican Republic and Haiti have been confirmed positive for African swine fever (ASF), bringing the disease even closer to U.S. shores and the U.S. pork industry.

ASF is a major concern to hog farmers across the nation, but especially those in the South, where feral hog populations are firmly entrenched. Texas, which ranks 13th in the nation for pork production, has a feral hog population of at least 2.9 million, according to Texas Parks and Wildlife Department data.

While ASF does not impact human health, it is fatal to swine and spreads easily between domestic and feral populations. Securing the U.S. domestic herd is vital to those animals' health.

"We have a domestic herd of over 1 million swine here in Texas. Although pork production isn't in the state's top 10 agricultural com-

modities, the industry is important and significant," Dr. Angela Lackie, Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) assistant executive director of Animal Health Programs, said. "Another important segment of the swine industry of Texas is the transitional swine industry that makes up show pigs, niche markets and supplemental income for families."

The fear is that the feral hog population could become an unchecked reservoir for the deadly disease, threatening the health of domestic hogs and suspending pork exports for years or even decades.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is aware of those risks and has contingency plans in place, according to Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Wildlife Services National Feral Swine Program Biologist Dr. Vienna Brown.

"We already have the National Feral Swine Damage Management Program, so in terms of removing feral swine and conducting surveillance

work, we are utilizing that framework to prepare for ASF," she said in a September webinar. "And in 2019, we rolled out morbidity and mortality surveillance for ASF in partnership with our state and federal partners."

Any feral hog that is sick or dead without apparent cause is reported to APHIS, and the agency tests the samples for classical swine fever and ASF.

There is no current ASF vaccine on the market, so hog farmers can only cull infected herds to stop the disease. But a vaccine candidate developed by USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) has been shown to be effective at preventing current strains of ASF in European- and Asian-bred swine.

In USDA trials, onset of immunity after vaccination was revealed in about one-third of the swine by the second week post-vaccination, with full protection in all swine in the trial achieved by the fourth week.

"We are excited that our team's research has resulted in promising

vaccine results that are able to be repeated on a commercial level, in different pig breeds and by using a recent ASF isolate," Dr. Douglas Gladue, a foreign animal disease researcher for ARS, said. "This signals that the live attenuated vaccine candidate could play an important role in controlling the ongoing outbreak threatening the global pork supply."

Scientists have been searching for a viable vaccine solution for years. To date, ARS has engineered and patented five experimental ASF vaccines. The agency also has seven licenses in conjunction with pharmaceutical companies to develop these vaccines, with additional partnerships under evaluation.

ARS notes a commercial vaccine for ASF will be an important part of controlling the virus in outbreak areas. Researchers will continue to determine the safety and efficacy of the vaccine.

For more information on ASF, visit aphis.usda.gov.

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Farm Bureau helps candidates pave path for successful campaigns

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

As the 2022 election year approaches, Texans interested in running for political office attended Texas Farm Bureau's (TFB) Campaign Seminar to learn the mechanics of running a successful campaign.

Over 20 participants attended the seminar held in Waco in late September.

"Many individuals want to run for office, but they don't quite know what to do or how to do it. This campaign school is different in that we can teach it for candidates running at any level of office," Cody Lyons, American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) director of Advocacy and Political Affairs, said. "They learn how to campaign effectively so that they can scale it to fit their district and race. We've taught this campaign school for candidates running statewide, running in urban areas and running in rural areas. The concepts we teach are exactly the same. It's helping them build their organization and developing their messages so they can reach the voters and get themselves elected."

Participants learned more about the mechanics of running a successful campaign, organizing a campaign, recruiting supporters and staff and evaluating their ability to serve.

They learned how to select issues they believe will resonate with voters, and Lyons shared tips on how to craft their messages to gain voter support.

"This campaign school gives participants the skills, knowledge and information to win their race. We work through a variety of different modules and concepts from what the candidates need to consider to run, looking at the electorate, what issues are going to be important for this upcoming election and how to build their organization. But most importantly, we teach them to how to communicate their message with the voters," Lyons said.

The seminar is offered in the year



Participants work through several modules and concepts on how to effectively run a political campaign during the Campaign Seminar held at the Texas Farm Bureau Conference and Training Center Sept. 29-30.

before campaign season kicks off. It is available to TFB members and non-members.

It helps Farm Bureau identify potential candidates for political offices at the state and congressional levels.

"This program is beneficial because Texas Farm Bureau can help candidates get elected," Lyons said. "Relationships are vital for any elected official. When someone goes through this campaign school and gets elected, they remember Texas Farm Bureau was there to help them do that. What better way to start building that relationship than helping them before they are elected to an office?"

But this election year will be different since it's a redistricting year. The impact of the new districts will be a major factor in the upcoming elections.

"Redistricting plays more into what they need to consider, what the election may look like. The candidates need to understand which voters are going to be new to their district, which voters may have moved out, what are the demographics when it comes to occupation, age and gender. All of those things are going to matter," Lyons said. "It matters for the candidates to know who the voters are, to know how they can reach out to them, and how they are able to influence or persuade those voters



Cody Lyons, AFBF director of Advocacy and Political Affairs, leads the discussion on recruiting supporters and developing messages that resonate with different demographics.

to vote for them on election day."

To help possible candidates become more comfortable with the media and talking with constituents, TFB staff conducted mock interviews on potential topics they could face when running for office.

"I think it's important, especially for a grassroots organization like Farm Bureau and all of us agricultural advocates, to understand how we communicate, how we can target groups, how we can understand what it is that the population is asking and how we can address those questions," Isaac Sulemana, Hidalgo County Farm Bureau member and current AgLead-FarmLead participant, said.

"At the end of the day, communication is really key, not just to campaigning, but to policymaking and sharing your message with anyone."

Each participant was able to broaden their understanding of the campaign process.

"This is my first time running for office, and I really came to learn how to run a campaign, the financial aspects, campaign strategies and things of that nature," Clay Jostes, Live Oak County Farm Bureau member, said. "It's been a real eye-opening learning experience for me."

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



Isaac Sulemana conducts a mock interview with Texas Farm Bureau's Communications staff to help practice for live and recorded interviews.

Rural Texans lose ground in state redistricting

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

Every U.S. Census is followed by the legislative redistricting process in which political district boundaries are redrawn according to population shifts.

Data released by Texas State Demographer Dr. Lloyd Potter shows the state's population ballooned to more than 29 million people in 2020, an increase of 15.9%, or almost 4 million people, since the last Census in 2010.

Texas became significantly more urban, and district maps have been drawn accordingly, leaving rural Texans with fewer representatives.

"We lost three rural seats in the Texas House through redistricting this year. Three rural state representatives in Northeast Texas, South-Central Texas and Southeast Texas decided not to run again, and their counties were absorbed into surrounding rural districts," Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) Associate Legislative Director Billy Howe said. "We had one district redrawn to where it isn't considered rural anymore, but a new rural district in Central Texas was created. So, we ended up only losing a net of three rural districts."

Because of the increase in the state's population, Texas now has a



Agricultural and rural advocacy is more important than ever as redistricting causes rural Texans to lose some representation.

total of 38 congressional districts, up two from the last census count.

Out of the 38 congressional seats, 31 Texas Senate seats and 150 Texas House seats, Howe noted respectively, only eight, four and 30 are now considered rural districts, or districts where the majority of counties have a population of less than 100,000 people.

He added even though most districts are majority urban now, rural voters do still ultimately help determine who wins elections. So, being proactive voters and advocates for agriculture and rural communities

remains very important.

"As an organization, TFB must be proactive, because we now have more rural counties paired with suburban and urban counties in these political districts," he said. "We'll have someone new representing those rural counties, so we really need to stay engaged and actively meet with them. We must share with them the needs of their rural constituents to help them understand the importance of agriculture and rural communities."

And when there's an open seat, Howe noted TFB and other agri-

cultural organizations in the state must continue to seek out and help elect candidates in urban districts who understand agriculture and small towns.

"This has been the case over the past 30 years, as rural representation has diminished, but it's exacerbated now as our urban centers continue to gain even more people, and rural counties continue to shrink or stay the same in terms of population. To be successful on our priority legislative issues, we must have votes from legislators and congressional members from urban areas," he said. "So, that means we don't only focus on communicating with our rural representatives who know us and understand us. We have to include all Texas lawmakers in our outreach and education efforts to help them understand the unique issues and concerns rural constituents face. If they don't know anything about us, they can't help us. We absolutely must be sure we're doing the best we can to reach every legislator so they know why these issues are priorities for us."

Census data for redistricting are available from the Texas Demographics Center at demographics.texas.gov.

New maps of Texas districts are available from Texas Legislative Council at dvr.capitol.texas.gov.

Agricultural populations decline in Texas, other major farm states

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

An *Agri-Pulse* analysis of 2020 census data yielded some surprising results when it comes to rural and agricultural populations.

Although some states like California, Indiana, Iowa and Wisconsin are seeing people move into their most productive agricultural counties, Texas, Kansas and Oklahoma are watching agricultural county populations decline.

"These are long-term trends that are endemic and sort of built into the very structure of agriculture, which is designed to grow and scale and replace labor with capital," Matthew

Sanderson, a former sociology and anthropology professor at Kansas State University and editor-in-chief of *Agriculture and Human Values*, said in an interview with *Agri-Pulse*.

Nine of Texas' top 10 most agriculturally-productive counties are in the Texas Panhandle: Castro, Dallam, Deaf Smith, Hansford, Hartley, Lamb, Parmer, Sherman and Swisher. Even as the Lone Star State saw explosive population growth over the past decade, those counties lost residents at a rate of 3.9-11.2%.

Oklahomans followed a similar migration pattern, with eight of the state's top 10 agricultural counties losing residents since 2010.

In Kansas, only three of the top agriculturally-productive counties—Finney, Ford and Scott—had population growth, with the remaining seven losing more people than moved in.

The growth of those three counties points to an emerging trend in which rural areas with processing facilities are attracting new residents.

But in rural Texas, farmers are experiencing a labor shortage. To cope, they buy larger and more automated equipment to get the job done, Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) District 1 State Director Pat McDowell noted.

And as fewer people work on farms, the effect flows downhill into rural communities. With fewer residents

purchasing from local stores and businesses, those companies shut their doors, forcing folks to travel to regional hub cities for goods and services.

"People want to move to San Antonio or a suburb of Dallas or a suburb of Houston," McDowell, a farmer and rancher from Shamrock, said. "They want to move there because of the economic climate. They can pretty much find a job anywhere they want to."

It's not just an economic dilemma for rural and agricultural populations. Political representation shifts along with the population, causing concern among agricultural organizations like TFB.

Texas students can 'farm' from school with TFB next spring

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Next spring, young students across Texas can once again virtually visit farms and ranches right from their classrooms through Texas Farm Bureau's (TFB) Farm From School program.

"This program is unique because the students get to learn from a real farmer. It is personal in that classrooms can ask questions and see the real happenings of what is taking place on the farm at that time," said Jordan Bartels, TFB associate director of Organization Division, Educational Outreach. "Students get to see just how diverse Texas agriculture is through the live visits to farms and ranches all across the state."

The program is popular in Texas schools. The September visit, as part of the Fall 2021 program, had over 9,500 students participate, and teachers in higher grade levels showed interest in the program.

So, Farm From School will expand

to include students in kindergarten through fifth grade in Spring 2022.

"Farm From School has proven to be a popular program because it offers students the opportunity to learn from a real farmer in live, virtual visits from the field, and students never have to leave the classroom," Bartels said. "This program allows farmers and ranchers to bring education and information to students who otherwise might never have the opportunity to see how pumpkins, peanuts and more are grown and harvested."

Each visit will feature a different commodity and farmer to showcase the diversity of Texas agriculture.

"With students today being several generations removed from the farm, there is a need to help students understand where their food, fiber, fuel and other items come from and how agriculture is science, math, social studies, STEM and so much more," Bartels said. "Agriculture connects directly to what they

learn each day in their classrooms."

Classrooms will connect virtually with the farmers and ranchers once a month from February through May. Student questions can be submitted via the chat function on the virtual platform during the visits.

"We encourage farmers and ranchers across the state to share this program with teachers they may know," Bartels said. "After all, what better way to educate and engage young students about agriculture than to have them learn directly from a farmer or rancher?"

TFB will also provide TEKS-aligned lessons, activity books and other companion resource materials for the virtual farm visits.

Public, private and homeschool educators who teach kindergarten through fifth grade are eligible to participate and can sign up on TFB's Agriculture in the Classroom webpage at texasfarmbureau.org/aitc.

Sign up closes Jan. 7, 2022, for the spring semester.




Farm From School is a popular Ag in the Classroom program offered by Texas Farm Bureau. K-5 teachers can sign up by Jan. 7 to participate in the spring semester.

Additional details about the program, including dates and crops featured, will be added online as they become available.

Contact Bartels at edoutreach@txfb.org or call 254-751-2569.

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Students earn recognition, awards from TFB's SOFA Challenge

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Discussing agricultural issues and solutions earned four high school students recognition from Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) through the inaugural Speak Out For Agriculture (SOFA) Challenge.

“High school students are able to grow and build on basic discussion and critical thinking skills through the SOFA Challenge,” Whit Weems, TFB director of Organization Division, said. “The event fosters an environment for understanding important issues facing farmers and ranchers and how the students can work toward change in membership organizations and in agriculture.”

As the winner, Laura James of Flatonia earned a \$2,500 scholarship, jacket and banner.

Tristyn Reed of Pearland was named runner up and received a \$1,500 scholarship, jacket and banner.

Two finalists—Kaylee Eaton of Troy and Kennedy Hobbs of Thorndale—were each awarded \$750 scholarships and jackets.

The top 16 contestants received a \$125 gift card.

The event was open to high school students who are active in Texas 4-H and Texas FFA with an interest in agriculture, membership organiza-



The inaugural SOFA Challenge winners included: (left-right) Laura James of Flatonia, first place; Tristyn Reed of Pearland, second place; Kaylee Eaton of Troy, finalist; and Kennedy Hobbs of Thorndale; finalist.

Top 16 contestants of the SOFA Challenge

Clancey Bagby

Savannah Bearden

Riley Beaver

Kaylee Eaton

Olivia Fine

Emily Glaze

Hallie Hackett

Treylyn Hancock

Kennedy Hobbs

Laura James

Hadlee Ladewig

John McCullough

Jacie Pennington

Charlee Proctor

Tristyn Reed

Rhea White

tion involvement or public policy.

Nearly 30 students participated in the contest, which began with a speech in the preliminary round. Additional contest rounds featured discussions on the impact of local food movements and how farmers can influence a predominantly urban Congress.

The contestants were responsible for the exchange of ideas and information to solve the problem addressed in the topic and to develop action plans for a solution.

“This was a new Farm Bureau contest to foster more engagement with young students who will be the future leaders of Texas and agricul-

ture,” Weems said. “They were able to talk through possible solutions or develop goals for improvement. Their ideas and thoughts are important as agriculture continues to change and adapt.”

The contest was sponsored by TFB and hosted by the Heart O’ Texas Fair & Rodeo in Waco Oct. 2-3.

American Farm Bureau Convention set for January 2022 in Georgia

Registration is open for the 2022 American Farm Bureau (AFBF) Convention.

The convention will be held in-person Jan. 7-12, 2022, in Atlanta, Georgia, with a virtual option for portions of the event available to those not attending in-person.

“People, Purpose, Possibilities—Growing Tomorrow, Together” is the theme of AFBF’s 103rd consecutive convention, a “can’t miss” event that offers the inside scoop on policies and perspectives that will affect farms, ranches and agribusinesses in 2022 and beyond.

“This is your chance to look beyond the horizon at the future of

agriculture, sharpen your skills and help set the agenda in Washington,” AFBF President Zippy Duvall said. “I look forward to seeing you in January in my home state of Georgia as we begin another year of growing together.”

Attendees may participate in educational workshops to advance their leadership skills, expand business acumen and gain insight into the policies and trends impacting food production.

The convention also offers the opportunity to learn about cutting-edge innovations in agriculture, hear from powerful speakers and explore a dynamic trade show with

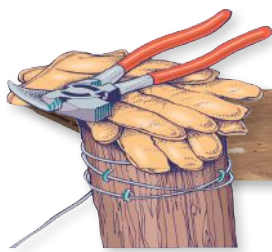


exhibitors showcasing the latest in agricultural technology, tools and services.

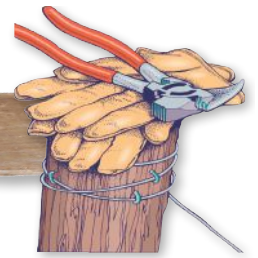
Workshop topics range from the 2023 farm bill, market outlooks, cli-

mate policy and trade to ag education resources, effective advocacy and mental health.

For more information and to register, visit annualconvention.fb.org.



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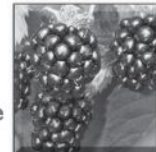
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