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Texas Agriculture

May 6, 2022

Published by Texas Farm Bureau for commercial farmers and ranchers

**Texas Farm Bureau offers
new health coverage
options to members**

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TFB advocating for secure border, raising awareness of impacts

Have you noticed how nearly all national news outlets have moved on from covering the crisis at the southern border?

Not newsworthy, I guess, for those news executives who live hundreds or thousands of miles away from the region.

It's frustrating for me, and it must be infuriating for our members who live in border areas and live the nightmare every day.

The American public deserves better. The question is what can we do about it? The answer is plenty, and a lot of work lies ahead.

One year ago, Texas Farm Bureau dedicated significant resources and effort to bring attention to the impacts of the border crisis on farmers and ranchers.

In that time, our demands to the Biden administration that it "secure the border now" have not wavered. Our focus to add volume to the voices and personal accounts of farmers and ranchers under siege has not diminished.

The Border Crisis Impacts page on our website anchors our outreach effort. The page has generated nearly 13,000 views, and the Texas Farm

Bureau member-produced videos on it have garnered nearly 156,000 views on social media.

And is there any recent "news" about the border the public should be aware of? You better believe it.



**By Russell Boening
President**

There were 221,303 total migrant encounters at the southern border in March, the highest number since President Biden took office and the highest number in 20-plus years.

This means there have been 1,026,460 encounters in the first six months of fiscal year (FY) 2022, which began Oct. 1, 2021. In the first six months of record-setting FY '21, there were 570,826 encounters.

That represents a 79% increase from year to year.

There are also the getaways who are not caught. Massive numbers are getting through, as many as 400,000 last year, and perhaps as many as 300,000 in the first six months of this fiscal year, according to reports.

Our organization has said from the beginning the situation on the border is not sustainable. And the crisis is only getting worse.

It's critical the American public knows what's happening. Something

must be done NOW.

National news media may ignore the realities of the border crisis, but Texas Farm Bureau is not.

It is imperative that the federal government takes action right away and assumes its responsibility to secure the southern border. Elected officials and representatives from both sides of the aisle have called for action, but this administration

has ignored those calls, as they have ours. Immigration laws should be enforced. We continue to communicate that message to Congress and the administration.

We also support increased efforts by the state of Texas to secure our border with Mexico.

We are committed to advocating for our members as the Voice of Texas Agriculture.

Your Texas Agriculture Minute

U.S. ag: Doing more with less, sustainably

**By Gary Joiner
Publisher**

America's growers are feeding more people while minimizing their greenhouse gas emissions and overall environmental footprint.

They use scientific solutions, technology and innovations to grow crops and care for livestock.

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

It's a remarkable story of success. To feed a growing nation, American farmers are producing 80% more pork, 48% more milk and 18%

more beef than 30 years ago.

At the same time, farmers and ranchers have reduced greenhouse gas emissions to produce each of our meals by 24% since 1990.

Doing more with less is an understatement, but there's still room for improvement. And we're seeing it in agriculture.

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America's farmers and ranchers are part of the climate solution, working hard everyday in a sustainable way.



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Texas Tech vet school hosts ribbon cutting ceremony

An official ribbon cutting ceremony was held April 22 for Texas Tech University's School of Veterinary Medicine in Amarillo.

"The Texas Tech University School of Veterinary Medicine, like Texas Tech University, was established to fill a vital need," Texas Tech President Lawrence Schovanec said in a news release. "As the first century of Texas Tech University comes to an end, we can be proud that the School of Veterinary Medicine strengthens the foundation and expands the capability of our university to serve West Texas, our state and the nation for the next 100 years and beyond."

Supporters, including Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) leaders, and dignitaries from Texas and New Mexico attended the event.

TFB President Russell Boening, Vice President Pat McDowell, Secretary-Treasurer Pete Pawelek and State Directors Walt Hagood, Mark Daniel, Sam Snyder, Mickey Edwards, John Griffith and Allen Ka-



Texas Tech University held a ribbon cutting for its School of Veterinary Medicine in late April. Courtesy photo.

minski were in attendance.

After the ribbon cutting, guests toured the campus and got a first-hand look at the 185,000 square-foot facility that includes interactive classrooms, state-of-the-art research laboratories, teaching laboratories, student support areas and much more.

The Texas Legislature approved funding and the creation of the Tech vet school in 2018, and in March

2021, the school was granted provisional accreditation.

The School of Veterinary Medicine broke ground in 2019 and the first class of students walked in the door in August 2021, but this ceremony was a way to celebrate and officially commemorate the school's opening.

The first graduating class will be the class of 2025. Texas Tech selects 60 students each year to join the university's veterinary program.

Samsung donates to Williamson CFB rural tornado relief fund

The Williamson County Farm Bureau board of directors, working with Williamson County Commissioner Russ Boles, agreed to coordinate a non-profit relief fund for rural residents of Williamson County impacted by tornadoes that hit Williamson County on March 21.

Williamson County Farm Bureau coordinated with Texas Farm Bureau to establish a fund for Williamson County relief efforts.

Samsung made a \$10,000 donation to the relief fund in April.

The deadline for Williamson County residents to apply is May 31, and funds will be distributed by June 30.

Applications are available at the Williamson County Farm Bureau office or by calling 512-365-5212.



Williamson County Farm Bureau President Bob Avant (lower right) was presented with a \$10,000 check from Samsung to the Texas Farm Bureau Foundation at the April 19 Williamson County Commissioners Court meeting as a donation to the Williamson County Rural Relief Fund established by Williamson County Farm Bureau. Pictured from right to left on the front row are Avant, Michelle Glaze (Samsung), Dana Harris (Samsung) and Brandt Rydell (Mayor of Taylor). Pictured from right to left on the back row are Commissioner Russ Boles, Commissioner Valarie Covey, Judge Bill Gravell, Commissioner Cynthia Long and Commissioner Terry Cook. Courtesy photo.

EPA data shows ag continues to improve

Data from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) shows agriculture consistently accounts for just 10% of all U.S. greenhouse gas emissions.

"The other thing that we have is the ability for us to sequester greenhouse gas emissions, and our land use, land use change and forestry sector represents about negative 12.7%, which means pulling those emissions out of the air," Shelby Myers, American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) economist, said. "And it increased year-over-year by 4% from 2019 to 2020. And so, when you combine our ability to sequester greenhouse gases with staying just 10%, we're actually at negative 2% overall."

She noted conservation efforts by farmers and ranchers are reducing emissions.

"Agriculture continues to make great strides in its ability to implement voluntary conservation practices, and we've seen these be very successful over the last couple of years, and in particular, it's led to a year-over-year reduction in agricultural emissions from 2019 to 2020 by at least 4.3%," she said.

There's plenty of things for farmers and ranchers to celebrate, Myers added.

"Our ability to do more with less is certainly something to be celebrated. Since 1990, per capita emissions for agriculture has decreased 20%," she said. "That means we're feeding more people, and we're producing at a high efficiency but also doing it in ways that are conserving resources and taking care of our land and natural resources, so ag continues to show itself as a strong partner in reducing greenhouse gases."

Inflation drives up food prices

Inflation continues to rise as the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports year-over-year inflation in March was 8.5%, and Americans are seeing the highest level of inflation in 40 years, American Farm Bureau Federation Chief Economist Roger Cryan said.

“The Federal Reserve Bank has the levers to manage the money supply, and there was a 40% increase in the money supply from March 2020 to last December,” Cryan said. “So, for almost two years, a lot of folks out in the economy had faith in the system and prices didn’t move much, but now there’s so much money out there, inflationary expectations are building and what we’re seeing now is an acceleration of inflation. I’m not sure whether or not to define this as runaway inflation, but it will start to look like that.”

Inflation has several effects for farmers and ranchers.

“Inflation creates a lot of price uncertainty. It creates a disconnect between long-term and short-term pricing. It creates a lot of, sort of, chaos among relative prices that you don’t necessarily have when things are stable,” he said. “It also creates a disconnect between long-term and short-term lending, although the long-term lending rates are rising also, and the 30-year mortgage rate is rising relatively quickly.”

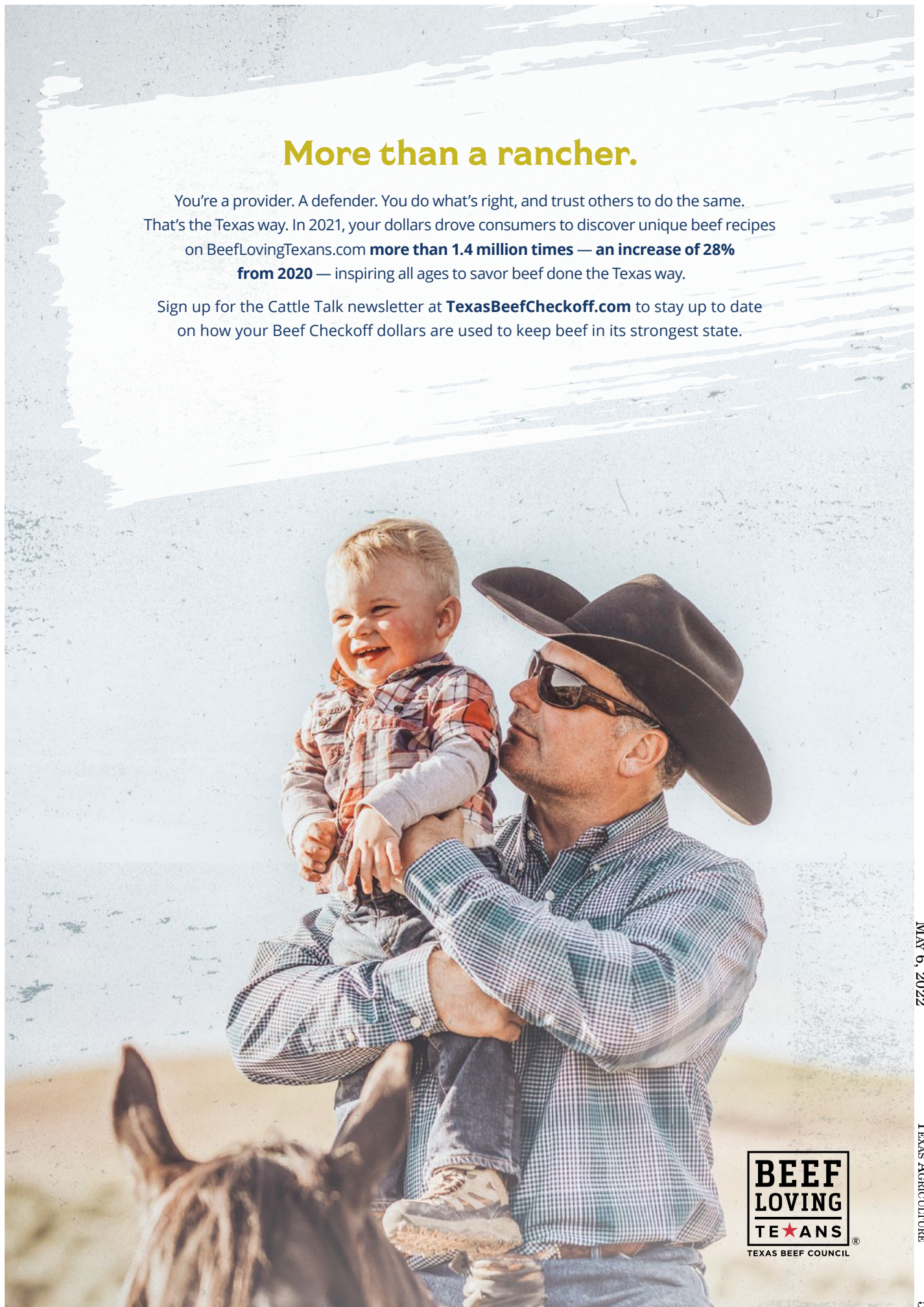
He expects inflation to linger for a year or two.

“Even if the Fed starts to get us back toward what should be the normal rate of growth in the money supply, there’s just a lot of liquidity in the market that needs to work its way through the system. We certainly hope the Fed starts paying attention to the money supply, and I hope that they recognize that that’s really the indicator that they need to be paying attention to,” Cryan said. “Stopping inflation is really critical. It’s important that we deal with this. There may be some short-term pain to getting this over with, but it’ll be nothing like long-term pain if we don’t.”

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2022 Young Farmer & Rancher Conference Highlights

TFB conference inspires, equips young farmers, ranchers

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

A statewide Young Farmer & Rancher (YF&R) Conference provided networking and educational opportunities for farmers, ranchers, ag professionals and college students.

Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) hosted the event April 1-3 in College Station.

“This conference was a good networking and learning opportunity,” Travis Wanoreck, TFB’s YF&R Advisory Committee chair, said. “We were able to learn about a variety of topics through our breakout sessions, and we were able to meet with the speakers and others from across the state.”

Breakout sessions covered several topics, including marketing and sponsorships in agriculture, farm safety, using spray drones on farms and ranches, bridging generational gaps and creating valuing in the workplace. Another session also highlighted TFB’s educational outreach efforts to increase agricultural literacy in classrooms and communities.

Wanoreck noted many issues face agriculture. From decreasing availability of land to high costs of production and increased regulations, it’s tough for young farmers to get started in agriculture. But their desire, optimism and willingness to learn helps counter those obstacles.

“The sessions gave us good information to apply to our family farms and businesses and to help college students who will be pursuing careers on and off the farm,” he said.

It was a record attendance for the event.

Nearly 200 young farmers, ranchers, ag professionals and college students between the ages of 18 and 35 were in attendance.

“We saw many new faces at this year’s conference,” Wanoreck said. “It’s good to see our Young Farmer & Rancher program growing and reaching more college students and



Attendees put a pin on a map of Texas to showcase which Texas Farm Bureau counties and districts were represented at the conference.



A session on marketing and sponsorships helped attendees learn more about navigating opportunities to promote their brands and products.



Young farmers, ranchers, ag professionals and college students heard from keynote speaker Dr. Tobin Redwine (left) and attended breakout sessions on farm safety, using spray drones in agriculture, bridging generational gaps and creating value in the workplace.



young producers. It’s great to get the future of agriculture involved in Texas Farm Bureau.”

The conference also featured the Collegiate Discussion Meet, where Stephanie Bushnell of West Texas A&M University earned the top honor and will advance to represent TFB

in the national contest next year.

During the conference, young farmers and ranchers raised funds to contribute to the TFB West Texas Wildfire Relief Fund, and Oklahoma Farm Bureau’s Young Farmer & Rancher Program also donated \$500 to the relief effort.

Upcoming YF&R activities include district events and the Fall Tour, which is scheduled for Sept. 9-11 in Amarillo. Registration and details will be announced later this year.

For more information on young farmer and rancher activities, visit texasfarmbureau.org/YFR.

2022 Young Farmer & Rancher Conference Highlights

More photos from the conference...



Justin Hale and Zac Goodwin won “Best Costume” during the “Night at the Races.” They were stall boys and had Seabiscuit with them.



Rebekah Annan (left) won the “Best Hat” award during the “Night at the Races.” She is a college student at Prairie View A&M University.



The YF&R Advisory Committee made and sold Derby hats for the “Night at the Races” event. The proceeds went to TFB’s West Texas Wildfire Relief Fund.

Bushnell wins Texas Farm Bureau Collegiate Discussion Meet

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Issues facing farmers and ranchers were the focus of Texas Farm Bureau’s (TFB) 2022 Collegiate Discussion Meet. Stephanie Bushnell from West Texas A&M University was named the winner of this year’s contest following a discussion on foodborne illnesses.

The Collegiate Discussion Meet is designed to replicate a committee meeting where discussion and active participation are expected from each student.

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

Bushnell is a senior studying agricultural education. She is active in West Texas A&M Collegiate Farm Bureau, Collegiate FFA and Texas AgriWomen. The Colorado native is also a member of Randall County Farm Bureau.

This year, Bushnell and 15 other college students from across the state participated in the competition.

Topics of discussion in the first

two rounds covered right-to-farm laws and how Farm Bureau can be more inclusive of all agricultural and production practices.

The four finalists included: Stephanie Bushnell, West Texas A&M University; Ryan Heitschmidt, West Texas A&M University; Lucas Bradshaw, Texas A&M University; and Kyleigh Hemken, Tarleton State University.

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

As the top contestant, Bushnell took home a \$2,500 cash prize and a plaque. She will also represent Texas in the American Farm Bureau Federation’s 2023 Collegiate Discussion Meet contest.

“I am very thankful for the opportunities I have had both with Colorado Farm Bureau and with Texas Farm Bureau, and I look forward to staying involved with Texas Farm Bureau as I start my career as a high school agricultural science teacher and first-generation agriculturalist,” Bushnell said.

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

He is majoring in animal science



Collegiate Discussion Meet finalists left to right with YF&R Advisory Chair Travis Wanoreck: Ryan Heitschmidt, runner-up; Stephanie Bushnell, winner; Kyleigh Hemken, finalist; and Lucas Bradshaw, finalist.

and serves as the Ag Advocacy Committee chair for West Texas A&M Collegiate Farm Bureau.

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

Bradshaw is pursuing a degree in agricultural economics at Texas A&M, and Hemken is studying animal production, with a minor in poultry science, at Tarleton.

Other participants included: Brenna Beckendorf, Tarleton State University; Morgan Bradshaw, Tar-

leton State University; Cord Brown, Tarleton State University; Megan Condry, West Texas A&M University; Mia Encinias, West Texas A&M University; Eathan Coy Hammit, Sam Houston State University; Courtney Herrera, Sam Houston State University; Niquole Knapp, West Texas A&M University; Abby Law, Tarleton State University; Raelynn Rhodes, Tarleton State University; Kirby Russell, West Texas A&M University; and Carley Turner, Angelo State University.

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Texas Legislature to study interim charges related to agriculture

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Interim committee charges were announced for the Texas Senate and Texas House.

During the non-legislative year, policy issues are assigned to committees in the Texas Senate by Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick and in the Texas House by Speaker Dade Phelan. Agency officials, organizations and other experts are often invited to testify on issues pertaining to various committees.

As freshman legislators and seasoned colleagues return to Austin, Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) leaders and staff prepare to advocate for agriculture and the organization's priority issues.

"The interim studies are seen as sort of an unofficial starting point for preparing the next legislative session," TFB State Legislative Director Charlie Leal said. "Throughout the entire process, Farm Bureau legislative staff worked closely with legislators and their staff on ensuring issues important to TFB members were included."

The charges help guide the Senate and House heading into the 88th

Legislature, which is set to begin in January 2023.

Texas Senate interim charges

Property tax relief, supply chains, rural connectivity and meatpacking facilities are among the interim topics the Senate is studying.

The Finance Committee will examine property taxes and recommend ways to reduce the property tax burden. Senators will review and report on proposals to use or dedicate state revenues in excess of the state spending limit to eliminate the school district maintenance and operations property tax.

Supply chain issues became apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Business and Commerce Committee will study the recent issues and recommend actions to mitigate future disruptions.

The Business and Commerce Committee also will monitor the implementation of legislation that would expand broadband throughout rural Texas.

The need for additional meatpacking facilities in the Lone Star State will be one area the Water, Agriculture, and Rural Affairs Commit-



The next Texas legislative session doesn't gavel in until January 2023, but much of the work will be done in the coming weeks and months.

tee will focus on this year. They will evaluate and report on the increased costs to Texas ranchers and revenue lost in the Texas economy when meatpacking facilities are used outside of Texas.

"These are topics of major interest to our members, to all of Texas agriculture and to rural communities," Leal said.

Texas House interim charges

The House will study feral hogs, right to farm, groundwater permitting and border security, among others.

The Committee on Agriculture and Livestock will focus on the experimental use program for feral hog abatement and the right to farm in Texas.

A rider in the state budget, which passed in last year's legislative session, allocates funding to the Texas Department of Agriculture and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service to research and develop further methods of feral hog control, including a feral hog toxicant that has been approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency but is not yet available in Texas. The interim charge will ensure proper legislative oversight of the program.

The right to farm charge will study the impact that local government regulations and requirements have on agriculture, Leal noted.

The Committee on Natural Resources will study groundwater management policy and regulatory

framework, as well as provide recommendations on the permit application process.

The border security charge, which will also be studied by the Senate, will focus on the impact of Operation Lone Star. Lawmakers will identify and report on resources needed to ensure support of the State National Guard, as well as overall resources necessary for border security for future legislative consideration.

"Feral hogs, the right to farm, groundwater and border security are key areas of concern for farmers, ranchers, landowners and Farm Bureau," Leal said. "Communicating with lawmakers throughout the interim studies allows us to share the needs of rural Texas."

Other topics the House is studying that relate to agriculture include the Universal Service Fund, inflation, extraterritorial jurisdiction and annexation powers, wildfires and prescribed burns, alternative-fueled vehicles, rural employment, Daylight Saving Time and cattle theft.

Throughout the year, the committees will ask for testimony and information regarding the various topics.

"Farm Bureau and our members will be invited to testify on several of these topics since they pertain to agriculture and rural Texas. If we're not invited, we'll request to testify in order to provide information from our members' points of view," Leal said.



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Applications open for TFB's Young Farmer & Rancher contests

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

The applications for the Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) 2022 Outstanding Young Farmer & Rancher (YF&R) and Excellence in Agriculture (EIA) contests are now open.

"Texas has diverse and unique farms, ranches and businesses, and the TFB contests are a great way to highlight them," Travis Wanoreck, TFB YF&R Advisory Committee chair, said. "Every farmer and rancher—regardless of size, commodity or farming practices—has a place in Texas agriculture and Texas Farm Bureau."

The annual contests are a way to highlight and reward the achievements of the younger generation.

Applicants for both contests must be between the ages of 18 and 35 as of Jan. 31, 2023, and be current TFB members in good standing.

Applicants can apply as individuals or married couples.

"Our young farmers and ranch-

ers in Texas are innovative, diverse and dedicated," said Roger Hall, TFB associate director of Organization Division, Leader Development. "On the farm or on the job, they are doing great things and representing Texas agriculture. These contests allow Farm Bureau to showcase their endeavors and reward them for it."

But there's more to the contests. Both contests can serve as a tool to help guide farmers and ranchers in personal and professional growth, Hall noted.

"Completing the application is a time of self-reflection on your business. Did you adapt in the last year or five years? What did you learn? How can you improve? The self-growth and awareness in all areas of your farm is truly beneficial," he said.

Outstanding Young

Farmer & Rancher Contest

The Outstanding YF&R Contest recognizes young farmers and

ranchers who are actively engaged in farming or ranching with a majority of their net income subject to normal production risks.

"This contest highlights and rewards dedication and ingenuity, but it also gives young farmers and ranchers an avenue to promote agriculture, sustainability, conservation efforts, advocacy and more," Hall said.

One winner is chosen from each of TFB's 13 districts. Of those, three finalists are selected after a second round of judging. The judges will then visit with the three finalists to determine the overall winner.

Excellence in Agriculture Contest

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

Eligible applicants for the contest include, but are not limited to, farm store managers, crop consul-

tants, agricultural educators and those who are employed by an agricultural business or agency.

"Agriculture needs large and small farms and ranches, but it also needs the businesses and industries that support farmers and ranchers," Hall said. "Through the EIA Contest, TFB recognizes members who are involved in ag-related careers but still make time to be involved in production agriculture."

Contest Information

Applications for both the Outstanding YF&R and EIA contests are due Aug. 5.

Applications, sample questions and instructions are available online at [texasfarmbureau.org/YFR](https://www.texasfarmbureau.org/YFR).

Prize packages for both contests will be released soon and will be available on the website.

For questions about the contest or other young farmer activities, email youngfarmers@txfb.org or call Hall at 254-399-5021.

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Landowner takes eminent domain case to Texas Supreme Court

The Texas Supreme Court earlier this year heard oral arguments in a case between a Brazoria County landowner and a subsidiary of Enterprise Product Partners.

At the heart of the case is the proper use of eminent domain.

It all began in 2015 when Terry Hlavinka was approached by Enterprise to acquire an easement for a pipeline. In 2016, Enterprise's wholly owned subsidiary, HSC, served Hlavinka notice that it intended to condemn a 30-foot route across his property.

Hlavinka's land, which lies between Chocolate Bayou and Halls Bayou in eastern Brazoria County, has more than four dozen different pipelines running across it. So, it wasn't Hlavinka's first time negotiating an easement.

"They basically offered us pennies on the dollar," Hlavinka said. "We said no for a lot of reasons. It wasn't market value. It wasn't what a willing buyer and a willing seller would settle on."

So, HSC filed condemnation proceedings, attempting to take the land with eminent domain authority.

Hlavinka challenged HSC's offer in a Brazoria County court. But the trial court excluded Hlavinka's testimony related to the damages and the methodology of valuation for the easement.

That wasn't all.

HSC claimed common carrier status, which would allow the company to use eminent domain to obtain the property through condemnation proceedings.

The pipeline, called the Oyster Creek Lateral Project, would carry polymer grade propylene made by Enterprise in a six-inch pipeline from Texas City to a plant owned and operated by Braskem America, Inc., the sole Enterprise customer for this pipeline. There are no interconnects to the pipeline, and no other customers.

Under Texas law, to qualify as a common carrier with the power of eminent domain, the pipeline



The Supreme Court of Texas heard oral arguments on an eminent domain case, Terrance Hlavinka, et al. v. HSC Pipeline Partnership LLC, with far-reaching implications for Texas landowners. Terry Hlavinka (right) and his brother, Kenneth, stand on the Hlavinka property in Brazoria County. Courtesy photo.

must serve the public. It cannot be built only for the builder's exclusive use. Hlavinka argued this pipeline should not be considered a common carrier line.

"It was a private transaction between two companies, never intended to be available for the public," he said.

Hlavinka also argued that the trial court in Brazoria County didn't have jurisdiction over the matter because HSC was not a common carrier, and therefore, did not have the authority to use condemnation.

When the court ruled against Hlavinka, he appealed the court's condemnation proceedings. Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) and Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers, along with several other agricultural organizations and private property rights groups, filed an amicus brief supporting Hlavinka.

"Farm Bureau and Cattle Raisers were the first ones to step up. You filed an amicus brief at the First Court of Appeals. I'd say that was a catalyst," Hlavinka said.

The First Court of Appeals in Houston reversed a portion of the trial court's judgment, ruling Enterprise had not presented evidence or public use, and the evidence of voluntary sales on Hlavinka's property

is relevant for purposes of establishing fair market value. Hlavinka noted that decision has helped other landowners in the state.

Although the legal wins have been big so far, justice does come with a price.

Hlavinka has been fighting the pipeline company for six years, investing a considerable amount of time, effort and money.

"I've learned a lot about the law and find it intriguing. I've negotiated a lot of pipeline easements over the last 20-30 years, so I think I had a pretty solid knowledge of what pipeline companies are allowed to do and what they're not allowed to do," Hlavinka said. "I would rather not have to go through this process and gain this much knowledge about the law, because it's quite expensive. The Enterprise-HSC folks have at least four law firms working on this project. With billion dollar earnings every few months, the other side has virtually unlimited financial resources, but we are undeterred."

The Texas Supreme Court is expected to rule before its summer recess.

"Now, it's going to be ultimately up to the Supreme Court to uphold our constitutional rights which requires that anyone using eminent

domain strictly conform to law and that landowners receive adequate and just compensation for the property," he said.

Private property rights

TFB has been advocating for eminent domain reform and was successful in the 87th Texas Legislature, helping establish new legislation to protect and improve landowner rights in negotiations with entities using eminent domain authority.

"Landowners shouldn't have to spend as much time and money as Mr. Hlavinka just to get a company claiming eminent domain authority to offer what's right and fair. That's why we filed an amicus brief, because helping in this case can help determine how future cases are settled," Regan Beck, TFB director of Government Affairs, said. "The First Court of Appeals' opinion reinforced the importance of property rights and that landowners have a right to a fair process to determine adequate compensation for the taking of their land."

Hlavinka said he's heard from other landowners and lawyers who have used his case in mediation efforts to reach a settlement.

For more information on eminent domain resources, visit texasfarmbureau.org/eminentdomain.

Supreme Court to hear case challenging Prop 12

The U.S. Supreme Court will hear a case against California's Proposition 12 filed by the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) and the National Pork Producers Council (NPPC).

California's Proposition 12 seeks to ban the sale of pork from hogs that don't meet the state's new production standards, even if the pork was raised on farms outside of California. The rule states that any whole pork meat from hogs born of sows not housed in conformity with the law cannot be sold in the state of California, regardless of whether the animal was raised in-state or out-of-state.

"AFBF is pleased with the Supreme Court's decision to consider the constitutionality of California's law imposing arbitrary requirements on farmers well outside its borders. We share California's goal of ensuring animals are well cared for, but Prop 12 fails to advance that goal," AFBF President Zippy Duvall

said. "We look forward to presenting the facts to the court, including how Prop 12 hamstring farmers' efforts to provide a safe environment for their animals, while harming small family farms and raising pork prices across the country. One state's misguided law should not dictate farming practices for an entire nation."

The law's effective date was delayed until July, according to an order issued in January by a California judge.

AFBF and NPPC noted Prop 12 has far-reaching consequences and could potentially "drive smaller hog farmers out of business and undermine the overall global competitiveness of the U.S. pork industry."

NPPC has fought against the ballot initiative since it was approved in November 2018, arguing at the U.S. district and appellate court levels that Prop 12 violates the Constitution's Commerce Clause, which grants Congress the power to regulate trade among the states and lim-

its the ability of states to regulate commerce outside their borders.

"Supporters of Proposition 12 claimed it would improve animal welfare and food safety. The law fails to address either of those issues," Duvall said. "Farmers know the best way to care for their animals. This law takes away the flexibility to ensure hogs are raised in a safe environment while driving up the cost of providing food for America's families."

The California Department of Food and Agriculture admitted the initiative will have no effect on food safety and actually will increase the mortality rate for sows subjected to it.

"We are extremely pleased that the Supreme Court will consider the constitutionality of Proposition 12, in which California seeks to impose regulations targeting farming practices outside its borders that would stifle interstate and international commerce," NPPC President Terry Wolters said.

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Texas Farm Bureau Summer Conference to be held June 20-22

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

The Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) Summer Conference, set for June 20-22 in Marble Falls, offers farmers and ranchers from across the state the opportunity to catch up on the latest in Texas agriculture.

"This year's conference will cover current topics and give Farm Bureau members a chance to discuss various issues facing agriculture in the state and the nation. Industry experts will be on hand to share their knowledge, too," TFB Director of Government Affairs Regan Beck said.

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

Registration for the conference begins at 9 a.m. on Monday, June 20, with a welcome dinner that evening at 6 p.m.

Tuesday, June 21, will be an all-

day event with a group lunch. The conference will wrap up on Wednesday, June 22.

"This annual conference is a way for our members to stay up to date on commodity and regulatory activi-

ties, as well as emerging issues in agriculture," Beck said.

A tentative agenda and room reservation form are available at texasfarmbureau.org.

The deadline for room reserva-

tions is May 13, and rooms must be cancelled by June 13 to avoid cancellation penalties.

Contact Betsy Simon at bsimon@txfb.org or 254-741-2624 with questions about reservations.

Save on Beef Cattle Short Course registration fee

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) members can save on the registration fee for the 68th annual Texas A&M Beef Cattle Short Course in College Station Aug. 1-3.

Registration for the event is \$240 for those attending in person and \$160 online. The prices go up after July 27.

TFB members will receive \$20 off the in-person and virtual registrations.

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

"This annual event covers animal health, reproduction, genetics,

forage production and many other relevant topics to today's cattle producers," Tracy Tomascik, TFB associate director of Commodity and Regulatory Activities, said.

The three-day event will include more than 20 sessions covering basic practices, new technologies and hot topics. Live demonstrations and a trade show exhibit, as well as the traditional prime rib dinner, will also be part of the short course.

More than 2,000 ranchers, beef industry representatives and exhibitors are expected to attend this year's event.

A number of pesticide CEUs and veterinarian CEUs also will be

available to attendees.

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

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

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

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

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Hay, feed donations pour in for ranchers with wildfire losses

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Donations of hay, feed and fencing supplies arrived by the truckload for farmers and ranchers affected by the wildfires in March and April.

Some donations came from fellow Texans and others from farmers and ranchers across the country.

And county Farm Bureaus were doing their part to help, too.

Karnes County donations

Harley Jarzombek, a young Farm Bureau member in high school, helped coordinate hay donations from Karnes County.

Truckloads of hay traveled over 300 miles to Eastland County to help neighbors in need.

“When we found out about all these fires up in North Central Texas, I knew right away I wanted to do something to help, because they’re our family in the end,” she said in an interview with the Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network. “So, me and my parents put together a hay drive.”

They found hay. They found trucks. And they found drivers. All with the same goal in mind—help farmers and ranchers suffering from the wildfires.

“We’re just trying to help out the

people who need it most,” she said. “They need rain and hay. We can’t give them rain, but we can give them hay.”

Karnes County Farm Bureau made a financial commitment to transport the hay. The county donated \$2,400, and that covered the fuel cost for four semi-trucks to haul hay to Eastland County.

Jarzombek is also putting together a load of feed from cash donations she collected.

“There are a lot of different organizations and a lot of different people helping to get hay and feed and supplies up to Eastland County,” Jarzombek said. “My family and I and the people of Karnes County wanted to help, too.”

What remains in Eastland County and in other counties across the state is devastation. But this tragedy, Jarzombek said, shows the generosity of farmers and ranchers and of agricultural organizations—each working to help those in need.

Anderson County donations

Many ranchers in Glen Cove in Coleman County lost grazing, farm equipment and hay to a wildfire that burned about 8,100 acres.

They received an outpouring

of support from Anderson County Farm Bureau members.

Donations of hay and cattle feed were trucked from Palestine to Glen Cove—roughly 265 miles apart.

“We put together 84 round bales of hay and six tons of range cubes, and our county board paid for the bill with some help from other Farm Bureau members in the county,” Ted Britton, Anderson County Farm Bureau president, said.

Much of Texas is in a drought

and input costs for hay—fertilizer, equipment and herbicides—are high right now. But that didn’t stop Farm Bureau members from helping each other.

“All of a sudden, farmers and ranchers in Glen Cove needed help, and it showed up,” Keith Phillips, Coleman County Farm Bureau president, said. “This shows what kind of a family Texas Farm Bureau is. We’re just one big family here to help each other, especially now.”



Harley Jarzombek and her dad, Gary Jarzombek, present a check for fuel on behalf of Karnes County Farm Bureau to Kenworth Krause (left), one of the drivers who hauled the donated hay. Courtesy photo.



Harley Jarzombek helps strap down a load of hay headed for Eastland County. She spearheaded one of the donation efforts in the area. Photo courtesy Gary Jarzombek.



Kenworth Krause delivered a load of hay from Karnes County to Eastland County in April to help wildfire victims. Photo courtesy of Krause at the donation site in Eastland County.



Anderson County Farm Bureau and members helped cover the costs for hay and feed donations to wildfire victims in Glen Cove.



Members of Anderson County Farm Bureau and Coleman County Farm Bureau posed for a picture at the donation site. Courtesy photo.

The relationship between the two counties goes back to a recent Farm Bureau meeting that Britton and Phillips both attended, and they stayed in contact since then.

“I gave him a call to see if they were okay, if they were affected by the fires,” Britton said. “They weren’t, but he said a lot of their neighbors were, and he started telling me about the loss of homes, loss of cattle and loss of grazing. So, I

asked him, ‘what do you need?’”

Phillips made some phone calls and relayed the needs to Britton—cattle feed and hay.

Anderson County Farm Bureau board members and individuals in and around Palestine jumped into action. Donations of hay, cattle feed and money to help finance the trip came pouring in.

“We hate that they had the fires, but we are glad that we could help

them in their time of need,” Britton said.

Two different areas of Texas were connected by helping hands, hearts and trailers.

“It’s difficult to recover from these fires but seeing other Farm Bureau friends ready to help those affected was truly something,” Phillips said. “I have never experienced anything like this before, and I was proud to be a part of it.”

Statewide donations

Other county Farm Bureaus, individuals and organizations have helped collect and distribute feed, hay and fencing supplies to Texas farmers and ranchers affected by the devastating losses.

Texas Farm Bureau is still accepting donations to the West Texas Wildfire Relief Fund. Donations can be made online at texasfarmbureau.org/wildfire-relief-fund.

Texas Farm Bureau wildfire relief fund applications due May 31

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Homes, barns, equipment and more were destroyed, and livestock were lost in the wildfires earlier this year.

Farmers and ranchers affected by the wildfires can apply for unreimbursed agricultural losses through TFB’s West Texas Wildfire Relief Fund. Applications, which can be found on the relief fund webpage, are due May 31.

“We encourage farmers and ranchers who suffered losses from these devastating wildfires to apply for assistance through Farm Bureau’s relief fund,” TFB President Russell Boening said. “We don’t know the full extent of the damage caused by the fires, but it will be significant.”

Completed applications can be returned to county Farm Bureau of-

fices or to the Texas Farm Bureau Agriculture Research and Education Foundation, West Texas Wildfire Relief Committee, P.O. Box 2689, Waco, Texas 76702-2689. Include “Attention: Chris Daughtery” on the envelope.

TFB established the relief fund in March to collect monetary donations to aid in the relief effort following the devastation from the wildfires.

Dry, windy conditions fueled the fires, and the risk for fire danger is still high as drought conditions persist.

“We know many farms and ranches were hit hard by the wildfires,” Boening said. “A lot of our members, friends of agriculture and other organizations have helped raise money through our foundation to help farmers and ranchers cover unreimbursed agricultural losses.”

TFB is still accepting monetary do-



Applications for assistance from Texas Farm Bureau’s West Texas Wildfire Relief Fund are due May 31. Photo courtesy Sam Snyder.

nations through the Texas Agriculture Research and Education Foundation. Contributions are tax-deductible, and all funds collected will be distributed.

For more information and an application for wildfire assistance, visit texasfarmbureau.org/wildfire-relief-fund.

Vampire bats could move into Texas from Mexico

Vampire bats are mainly found in Mexico and Central and South America, but their habitat has been expanding north into the U.S. over the past few years.

In Mexico, vampire bats cause about \$47 million a year in damages through livestock predation and public health risk concerns. The warm-blooded flying mammals are particularly attracted to cattle, according to Dr. Joanne Maki, a rabies expert and technical director for the North American Veterinary Public Health group at Boehringer Ingelheim Animal Health.

“It also feeds on other livestock, but primarily cattle, and those animals suffer because of the blood meals being taken,” Maki said in an interview with the Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network. “Not only are those animals at risk for potentially having rabies transmitted by the bite of a vampire bat, but due to the blood meal the vampire bat consumes, it stresses the cattle or stresses the

horse, and you see a decrease in that animal’s production levels.”

Since the vampire bat has been detected as close as 35-40 miles south of the Texas-Mexico border, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and other governmental agencies have increased surveillance.

Maki noted feedlots, farms and wild animal habitats are being surveyed for signs of vampire bat feeding.

“If someone has an animal with an atypical bite wound, such as on the ears or neck or withers where vampire bats feed, [USDA’s] Wildlife Services wants to know about it,” she said. “The Texas Department of State Health Services should also have more information about the surveillance program, awareness and resources for people interested in learning more.”

The rabies case-reporting system in Texas is linked with federal information, which helps equip the Lone Star State to handle a potential

vampire bat spread, Maki said.

Signs and symptoms of rabies in animals

In animals, rabies manifests in one of two forms: furious and paralytic. Maki noted the form is influenced by the animal species.

“Dogs and cats quite often get the furious form of rabies, the typical thing we think of when we think ‘rabid animal.’ Foxes can also become very aggressive, lose their fear of humans and attack and bite them,” she said. “But the other form, paralytic or ‘dumb,’ is when the rabies virus basically causes paralysis in an animal, and they’re showing neurological symptoms like staggering or weaving around during the daytime when that wildlife species would normally be out only at night.”

Other animals with paralytic rabies may hide under vehicles or in sheds or other places around homes and businesses because they’re sick and have lost their innate sense of self-preservation. Maki said this



Vampire bats have been expanding their habitat north over the past few years. Photo courtesy USDA.

form can be even more dangerous to humans because people may think the animal needs help and approach it.

“Cattle often get the paralytic form. But since there are a lot of different diseases that can cause neurological symptoms in livestock, we want to be sure livestock owners are aware that rabies may be the issue,” she said. “Recumbency, not being able to rise, weakness in the hind legs, stumbling, hitting the head on a fence—those are not normal behaviors for a cow. Livestock producers should associate these signs with rabies, especially in unvaccinated animals or those with lapsed vaccinations, so they do not end up exposing themselves while handling that sick animal.”

Maki advises ranchers to contact a veterinarian immediately if they notice livestock exhibiting these symptoms. Veterinarians are best qualified to make preliminary differential diagnoses between rabies or other issues while handling the animal safely.

“If you’re bitten and the animal is rabid, the post-exposure prophylaxis is expensive. The technology has changed and the number of doses of vaccine you would receive are not as plentiful or as painful in the past, but it’s still expensive,” Maki said.

Ecologists and other scientists are working on both sides of the border to monitor vampire bats and provide timely information, she added.

Get more information on the USDA APHIS Rabies National Management Program’s webpage on aphis.usda.gov.



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Report highlights food, agriculture impact on U.S. economy

A new Feeding the Economy report shows just how vital the U.S. food and agriculture sectors are to fueling the Texas and American economies.

A study commissioned by 30 food and agricultural groups, including the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF), found food and agriculture supports more than 43 million jobs and contributes \$7.43 trillion to the U.S. economy each year.

The report, which was released this spring, is a historic farm-to-fork economic analysis that shows how these sectors influence the local and broader U.S. economies. It also showcases the resiliency and strength of both sectors.

“American agriculture is really the foundation of our lives and our economy,” AFBF Chief Economist Roger Cryan said.

This study reveals the numbers of these indispensable sectors, he noted.

Amidst the global supply chain and inflation crises, these sectors exported \$182.91 billion worth of goods, helping the U.S. maintain its position as a leading player in global agriculture.

In 2021, these sectors contributed



The Feeding the Economy study underscores the resiliency and strength of America’s food and agriculture sectors. Two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, both sectors continue to add jobs, provide safe food and feed the U.S. economy in the face of global supply chain challenges and more.

a total of \$3.01 trillion to the U.S. economy.

In Texas, the economic impacts are Lone-Star big. Food and agriculture provides four million jobs and \$194.2 billion in wages. Total output for the Texas sectors was \$631 billion.

To measure the total economic impact of the sectors, the analysis also includes the direct and indirect economic activity surrounding these industries, capturing both upstream and downstream activity.

For example, when a farm equipment retailer hires new employees because farmers are buying more tractors, experts consider the new salaries an indirect impact. Similarly, when a retail associate spends a paycheck, an induced economic impact occurs. Together, these have a multiplier effect on the already formidable direct impact of food and agriculture.

“Restaurants and the agricultural community are inextricably linked. Together, we support the communi-

ties we call home with fresh ingredients and nutritious meals. America’s farmers and ranchers provide safe and abundant food options to more than one million restaurant locations, and we’re looking forward to continuing our strong partnership as the restaurant and foodservice industry continues its recovery,” said Marvin Irby, interim president and CEO of the National Restaurant Association.

The full report is available at FeedingTheEconomy.com.

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Young farmers, ranchers appointed to state advisory committee

Twenty-three young producers were appointed to Texas Farm Bureau's 2022 Young Farmer & Rancher Advisory Committee.

An individual or a couple from each TFB district serve two years on the committee. The district representatives are named by TFB President Russell Boening.

Committee members are responsible for recommending, promoting and evaluating programs and activities that encourage young people to become involved in Texas Farm Bureau at the local, state and national levels.

"Leaders are needed for the future of agriculture and Texas Farm Bureau. This program can help us achieve that

because it provides young farmers, ranchers and ag professionals with opportunities for leadership development, networking and personal and professional growth," Travis Wano-reck, committee chair, said.

The committee plans the YF&R Conference and Fall Tour each year, as well as hosts various district events

and activities in the spring and summer.

Want to get involved or meet your YF&R district committee representative? Check out the information below or visit texasfarmbureau.org/YFR for more information.

Please note Districts 6 and 10 are currently vacant.

Meet the Texas Farm Bureau Young Farmer & Rancher Advisory Committee.



District 1

Landon and Brianna Friemel

Landon and Brianna Friemel farm cotton, wheat, corn and sorghum and raise cattle with Landon's brother through their business, Rockin L Enterprises. Landon and his brother also own a metal fabrication shop and run a custom swathing and manure-spreading business. Brianna runs a home-based jewelry design company and is a partner in an event venue. They have three children: Madisyn, Masyn and Mason.



District 5

Patrick and Lacey Williams

Patrick and Lacey Williams are fourth-generation farmers in East Texas. They specialize in hay production using sprig cultivation and liquid fertilization with weed and pest control. They have a small cow-calf herd and work with Patrick's brothers for feed and pasture production for their cattle. Lacey assists with the farm and is a registered nurse specializing in labor and delivery.



District 2

Alton and Adrienne Synatschk

Alton and Adrienne Synatschk grow corn, cotton, grain sorghum and wheat in the Texas Panhandle. In addition to the row crops, they raise stocker cattle, maintain a cow-calf herd and operate several custom businesses—spraying, swathing and trucking. Alton also farms in a separate partnership with his two brothers, and Adrienne is a teacher. The couple has four children: Emilee, Bailee, Kylee and Brantley.



District 7

Jacob and Laura Henson

Jacob and Laura Henson are part owners in an Angus-cross commercial cattle herd and help operate Laura's family's farm, white-tailed deer ranch and silage harvesting business. Jacob works for Infinity Firearms, and Laura is an instructor at Tarleton State University and owns the small-business marketing company Laura Henson Designs. They have one daughter: Ashton.



District 3

Colby and Allison White

Colby and Allison White are the sixth generation to farm peanuts, wheat and cotton in Wilbarger County. They farm with Colby's dad and granddad on the multi-generational family farm. Allison helps out by bringing meals to the farm and is the Vernon High School cheer coach. They hope to pass on the family farming legacy to their three children: Hayslee, Drayson and Coburn.



District 8

Heston and Stevie McBride

Heston and Stevie McBride are the owners and operators of AgroTech, an agricultural service business that provides liquid feed, custom hay services, herbicide application, agricultural equipment rentals, dyed diesel and more to farmers and ranchers in the Lampasas area. The young couple also manages a cow-calf herd and grows hay. They have one son: Hetch.



District 4

Brandon and Kaitlyn Boerner

Brandon and Kaitlyn Boerner are part owners and operators of their family's fifth-generation farm. They grow wheat, peanuts and oats alongside Brandon's family in Grayson and Hunt counties. The couple also manages their cow-calf herd. In addition to farming and ranching, Brandon works for SMA, Inc. - America's Ag Parts Supplier, and Kaitlyn is a veterinarian at a local animal practice.



District 9

Preston Loggins

Preston Loggins graduated from Texas A&M University with a degree in agricultural leadership and development and a minor in agronomy. During college, he served as an intern in the U.S. House of Representatives. Loggins is the incoming chairman of the Angelina County Barrow show and serves as an Angelina County Youth Fair board member.



District 11

Kevin and Jackie Seawright

Kevin and Jackie Seawright are first-generation swine farmers. They own and manage Right Track Farms, where they breed show and meat market pigs. They have expanded their farm to include vegetables and chemical amino acid/protein application. Kevin is also an agronomist and manages environmental compliance for K3BMI, and Jackie is a quality assurance and food safety manager at Colorado County Rice Mill, Inc. They have one son: Jackson.



District 12

Matthew & Breanna Krueger

Matthew and Breanna Krueger raise commercial cattle, grow winter oats and harvest Sudan and irrigated coastal Bermudagrass in Bexar County. In addition to their farm and ranch, the couple manages a custom hay and harvest business. Matthew is a full-time farmer, and Breanna works as a fuels analyst at a local utility company. Together, they are working to care for their land and livestock. Matthew and Breanna live in Stockdale with their son Stetson.



District 13

Travis and Bethany Wanoreck

Travis and Bethany Wanoreck are first-generation farmers who grow cotton, grain sorghum and wheat in Bee, Jim Wells and Nueces counties. They also custom sow wheat and custom harvest cotton. The couple implements minimum tillage and strip-till practices on their farms to help reduce soil erosion and increase organic matter. Bethany, a registered nurse, is the district nurse at Orange Grove ISD. The couple has three children: Wyatt, Brynlee and Taryn.



Ex-officio

Eric and Alisha Schwertner

Eric and Alisha Schwertner grow cotton, corn, sorghum and wheat. They grow hay for their cow-calf herd, and Eric owns and operates a custom cotton harvesting business. Alisha is a product manager for John Deere. The couple has three boys: Lane, Caleb, and Eli. The Schwertners are currently serving their second year on the AFBF YF&R Committee. Alisha was elected the 2022 committee chair and is the first from Texas to lead the national committee.

Have an interest in Texas Farm Bureau's Young Farmer & Rancher programs and activities?
Visit texasfarmbureau.org/YFR for more information!

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Mike Atkinson grows over 60 different vegetables year round on his family's fourth-generation farm outside of Houston.

Fields of Spring yield fruits, vegetables for Houston neighbors

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

From strawberries to blueberries and collards to kale, Mike Atkinson's fields yield a bountiful harvest for his Houston neighbors.

His farm in Spring, on the outskirts of Houston, thrives despite urban encroachment.

"When we came here in 1961, I'd tell everybody we're a mile-and-a-half from I-45, and we're the third house on the left. Now, we're the third million house on the left," he said. "There's not much farmland left. Farmland in Klein and Spring is all good farmland, and a lot of the good farmland in this part of the world is covered up with houses and concrete, roads, people and apartments."

But the houses upon houses in the surrounding subdivisions also bring opportunity for Mike and his family.

The fruits and vegetables they grow are sold to local restaurants and in a market on their farm. They also have strawberries and blueber-

ries for families to come out and pick on their own.

"It's fun to see the families come out, and we do tours here all the time, too. A lot of times people really don't understand when they've lived in the concrete jungle of Harris County, they don't understand what it's like to come to a farm. They think potatoes grow on a tree. They don't know carrots grow underneath the ground," Atkinson, a Harris County Farm Bureau member, said. "There's a lot of things that a lot of the inner-city people do not understand. It's a cultural shock to them when they come to the farm. They'll say they didn't know all of this took place so close to Houston."

In the spring, Atkinson grows strawberries and then transitions to tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, cucumbers and squash, among others.

He grows broccoli, collards, mustard, turnips, kale, spinach, beets, radishes and many more vegetables in the fall.

Atkinson and his employees har-



Atkinson and his employees harvest the crops by hand and then deliver to local restaurants.

vest everything by hand and deliver it to stores and restaurants in the area.

"We sell to 22, and we are really not looking to get any more. That's all we can do," he said. "We want to give real good service to the restaurants that we do have. That's a main thing. We're service-oriented."

It's a quick turnaround from field to local restaurants.

"What we harvest today, we'll

take to the restaurants first thing in the morning. Everything is picked today and sold tomorrow, and even a lot of times, it's picked today and sold today," he said.

But they are working to transition to more u-pick and agritourism opportunities, as well as the on-farm market, and away from the bulk wholesale produce.

They started the market in 2004.



The Atkinsons offer u-pick strawberries and blueberries. They also host tours to help their Houston neighbors connect to agriculture.

“It was my wife’s idea,” he said. “Every year, it’s kind of gotten bigger and bigger.”

Expanding the on-farm market and u-pick options will offer some flexibility to Atkinson and his crew.

“We’re leaning to get a little more from the bulk wholesale produce into the u-pick and the agritourism part of people coming here directly to the farm and purchasing stuff here,” he said. “It’s easier for us. We don’t have to worry about driving down the road and going anywhere. We can get a lot more done in a day’s time if we’re here at the farm.”

And with the increasing costs for fuel, fertilizer and seed, Atkinson is looking for ways to maximize his productivity.

Last year, Atkinson paid about \$450-\$500 a ton for fertilizer.

“Now, it’s over \$1,200 a ton. It’s tripled in price,” he said.

And fuel costs are climbing, too.

“Last year, we were running through \$2,000 worth of fuel a month, and now we’re running through \$5,000 worth of fuel a month,” he said. “We’re doing the same thing. We’re not doing any more. It’s just the cost has gone up,

and anything that we have to get shipped in here to use is just an astronomical amount in freight.”

But despite the challenges that urban sprawl and increased production costs bring, Atkinson doesn’t want to do anything else other than farm.

“It’s all I’ve ever done. I don’t know what it’d be like to do anything else,” he said. It’s hard, but like I say, that’s all I’ve ever done. I won’t ask anybody who works for me to do anything that I haven’t done. I guess in business, no matter what, you got to start out at the

bottom and work your way to the top. This day in time, I’d rather be out here harvesting by hand. I don’t care how hot it is. I don’t care what we’re picking—cucumbers, tomatoes, watermelons. I don’t care what it is. I’d rather be out there than all the other stuff that I have to deal with on a daily basis about getting fertilizer, ordering this, taking care of this, writing this, going there, doing this.”

To put it simply, Anderson likes being a farmer, and his Houston neighbors and customers appreciate what he brings to their tables.



The vegetables are delivered fresh to local restaurants.

Atkinson Farms is surrounded by homes in Spring, which is a suburb of Houston. Mike Atkinson farms with his wife, Theresa, and their son, Bobby.

Stress assistance available for ag communities

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Those in the agriculture, forestry and commercial fishing industries continually face high levels of stress, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention noted suicide rates are higher for the agricultural community.

To help address the need for stress assistance within the agricultural community, the Southwest Center for Agriculture Health, Injury Prevention, and Education (SW Ag Center) partnered with AgriSafe Network and the Texas Department of Agriculture to launch resources.

Those resources are available on the SW Ag Center webpage at uthct.edu.

The AgriStress Helpline for Texans also launched, and those who wish to access it for immediate assistance can call 833-897-2474.

Not only is it crucial for the agriculture, forestry and commercial fishing industries to have resources



A new AgriStress Helpline was launched specifically for Texas. Farmers, ranchers, landowners, ag professionals and others can call 833-897-2474 for assistance.

at their disposal during a crisis but to also know what stress looks like in themselves and others, the SW Ag Center said.

“Simply put, essential workers need essential mental health resources. Yet, when resources are made available, some rural residents do not access them due to bar-

riers like cost, location and stigma,” a SW Ag Center news release stated.

A study recently released by the American Farm Bureau Federation noted a majority of rural adults (52%) and farmers/farm workers (61%) are experiencing more stress and mental health challenges compared to a year ago, and they are

seeking care because of increased stress.

The study showed the stigma around seeking help or treatment for mental health has decreased, but it remains a factor, particularly in agriculture.

“It’s up to each of us to keep looking out for our family, friends and neighbors and let them know they’re not alone when they feel the increasing stress that comes with the daily business of farming and ranching,” AFBF President Zippy Duvall said in a news release earlier this year.

Access the resources from the SW Ag Center uthct.edu.

If you or someone you know is struggling emotionally or has concerns about their stress levels or mental health, visit the Farm State of Mind website at farmstateofmind.org. Resources and contact information are available for crisis hotlines, treatment locators, tips for helping someone in emotional pain and ways to start a conversation and resources for managing stress, anxiety or depression.



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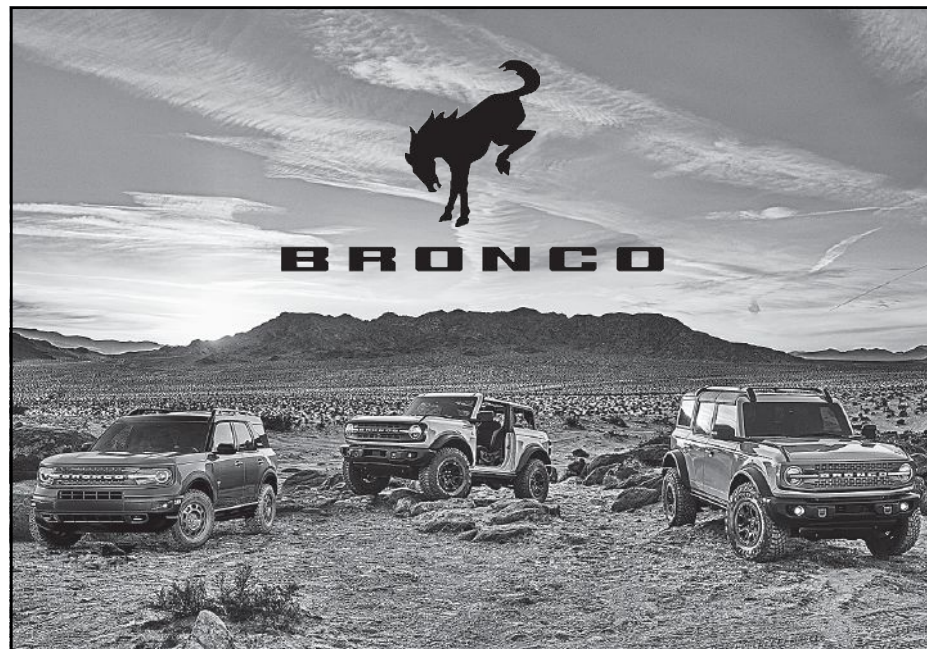
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Texas Farm Bureau offers new health coverage options to members

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) members will have the opportunity to find more affordable health care options for themselves and their families.

Applications for the new Texas Farm Bureau Health Plans will be available beginning May 16, with the benefits taking effect June 1, 2022.

“Texas Farm Bureau has always been responsive to the needs of our members,” TFB President Russell Boening said. “We are proud to provide this option to our membership through Texas Farm Bureau Health Plans.”

The health plans include individual and family plans, as well as dental and vision coverage.

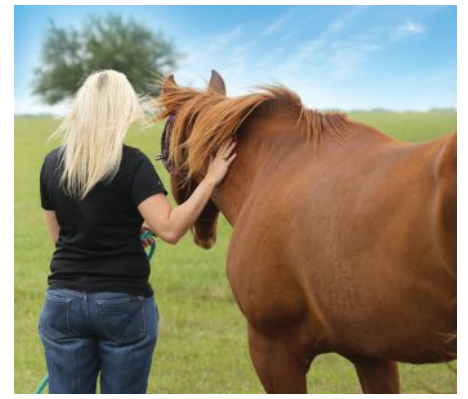
Each applicant will be individually rated based on their medical history. This can result in offering coverage for significantly less than can currently be found in the health care marketplace.

Finding affordable health care is a challenge for TFB members, many of whom are self-employed as farmers or ranchers.

“Farmers, ranchers, those who work on farms, agribusiness owners and workers, rural entrepreneurs and those who are small employers have told us it is difficult to access or afford traditional health plans,” Si Cook, TFB executive director and chief operating officer, said. “This is a way to help our members, reduce uninsured Texans, support rural hospitals and make sure rural communities have access to the same standards and services as other parts of the state.”

TFB was established to serve its members and offering these health plans is another opportunity to do so, Cook said.

“With members in all 254 counties, we already have the organizational structure in place to support the sales and distribution of these plans,” Cook said. “The resources and structure of state Farm Bureaus across the nation have already proven this



The plans feature many standard health benefits, including:

- Office Visits
- Preventative, Routine and Wellness Services
- Outpatient and Rehabilitative Services
- Lab Work
- Emergency Room Services
- Maternity, Newborn and Pediatric Care
- Hospitalization
- Telemedicine
- Mental Health and Substance Abuse Counseling and Treatment
- Prescription Drug Benefits
- Dental and Vision Coverage

is a successful and viable model, and we know this can be a good option for TFB members who need alternative health care coverage other than what's available to them today.”

The plans, which are a contractual agreement, will be overseen by a third-party administrator and will offer a grievance process equal to the process required by the Affordable Care Act. Any person feeling aggrieved may file a complaint with the

Texas attorney general.

“It is important to note that TFB Health Plans are not insurance and that coverage through our plans is only offered to members of our organization,” Cook said. “Creating TFB Health Plans was a team effort within the Farm Bureau family. It took a lot of hard work and determination, and we are proud of the results.”

A bill, HB 3924, allowing TFB to use its statewide infrastructure to

provide health plans to members was approved by the Texas Legislature last year. There were several lawmakers in support of the bill, showing the Legislature recognized the need for more options.

Members will be able to apply for the health plans starting May 16.

For more information on the health plans and to receive a quote, visit www.tfbhealthplans.com or call 877-500-0140.

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Senate Ag Committee reviews cattle market reform legislation

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

The Senate Ag Committee held a hearing April 26 to review and discuss transparency and oversight within cattle markets.

Producers and economic experts testified as part of an industry wide panel, and numerous cattle and farm organizations, including the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF), submitted written comments on the Cattle Price Discovery and Transparency Act (S 4030).

The bill establishes regional mandatory minimum thresholds of negotiated cash and negotiated grid trades based on a region's 18-month average trade.

AFBF's written comments outlined the organization's opposition to mandatory minimum thresholds included in the bill, which was authored by Sen. Deb Fischer (R-Nebraska) and Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa).

"AFBF remains opposed to the

provisions included in Section 2 and Section 7 specific to the establishment of federal mandatory minimum thresholds under which certain percentages of cattle are purchased. We are also concerned that there is a lack of economic evidence that suggests mandatory negotiated pricing raises prices for producers," AFBF President Zippy Duvall wrote.

Mandatory minimum negotiated trade regulations have been a primary concern throughout the industry over the last several years.

"Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) members have been focused on this issue since the Kansas packing plant fire in the summer of 2019," Laramie Adams, TFB's National Legislative Director, said. "It's an important topic and TFB members have been engaged in developing broadly supported policy and regulatory items to improve cattle market transparency on state and national levels."

The hearing comes after the bill

authors reworked the bill in response to opposition from cattle producers across the U.S. passing policy that opposes mandated cash trade.

"TFB crafted and passed national policy at the AFBF convention in January that opposes any mandatory purchase minimums through cash bids," Adams said. "The senators took note of that but fell short of removing such language from S 4030. Many studies from top economists at renowned universities say this bill, as written, will hurt the very cattlemen and women it is intended to help. We must not ignore the facts. We will keep working on this issue, but we must ensure the legislation that passes actually helps producers."

Economic analysis from industry experts have repeatedly shown that these provisions, no matter how well intentioned, are likely to cost the industry and decrease the value of calves.

A report released by the Agri-

cultural and Food Policy Center at Texas A&M University concluded negotiated trade mandates are expected to have negative effects on short-term cattle and calf prices. The economists noted the report showed the region that includes Texas would see the greatest negative impact from the imposition of mandatory trade minimums.

TFB and AFBF remain committed to working with Congress to find solutions with broad industry support.

"As discussions surrounding cattle markets and producer profitability continue, AFBF looks forward to working with the bill's sponsors and the Senate Agriculture Committee to identify reasonable solutions that benefit cattle producers nationwide," Duvall wrote. "AFBF encourages the committee to consider alternative language that promotes transparency and price discovery without a federal mandate."

Nominations open for 2023 Farm Bureau Farm Dog of the Year

Farmers and ranchers are invited to submit nominations for the 2023 Farm Bureau Farm Dog of the Year contest, supported by Purina.

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

The grand prize winner—Farm Bureau Farm Dog of the Year—will win a year's worth of Purina dog food and \$5,000 in prize money.

The winner will be recognized at a Farm Dog of the Year award ceremony at the American Farm Bureau Federation Convention in January 2023.

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

The 2023 Farm Dog of the Year will also be featured in a professionally produced video.

Scientific research insights from a collaboration between Mayo Clinic and Purina reveal that interacting

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

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

Farm dog owners must be Farm Bureau members to enter their dogs in the competition.

The Farm Bureau Farm Dog of the Year contest is sponsored by the American Farm Bureau Federation.

The third annual social media contest, People's Choice Pup, was a popular element of the Farm Dog of the Year competition in 2022—reaching 133,000 people—and will



Texas Farm Bureau members can nominate their farm dogs for the 2023 Farm Bureau Farm Dog of the Year Contest. The winner takes home a cash prize and a year's worth of Purina dog food. Nominations are due July 1.

return for 2023. Profiles of several dogs nominated for the contest will be shared beginning in October, and the public invited to vote. Bragging rights and a year's worth of dog food from Purina will be awarded to the People's Choice Pup.

Eligibility guidelines and submis-

sion requirements are available at fb.org/land/fdoty.

Farm Dog of the Year nominations, which include written responses to questions, at least one still photo and a video clip (optional), must be received by July 1, 2022 for consideration.



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Ag Literacy Week brings agriculture to life in Texas classrooms

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Teachers across the state brought agriculture to life for their students through Texas Farm Bureau's (TFB) Ag Literacy Week, which was held in conjunction with National Ag Week, on March 21-25.

"The goal of this program was to increase agricultural literacy among students across Texas. We wanted to provide a way for teachers to connect agriculture to topics and concepts they are teaching in their classrooms in a way that highlighted the importance of the crops and livestock that are raised throughout the state and beyond," said Jordan Bartels, TFB associate director of Organization Division, Educational Outreach.

Over 1,100 public, private and homeschool teachers signed up to receive a free, accurate ag book to read during the week, as well as an educator's guide that included several classroom activities.

The free book that was provided by TFB was *Full of Beans: Henry Ford Grows a Car*. The short book highlights how Henry Ford was determined to build his most inventive car—one completely made of soybeans. The book inspires readers to think innovatively and includes accurate, educational information about soybeans.

Teachers like Ann Hudson, a fourth-grade math and science teacher at Crestview Elementary in Waco ISD, used the free resources to introduce agriculture into the week's lesson plans.

"The book was really informative about how soybeans are used to make plastic for cars and how they can be used to make other things like fabric and paint," Hudson said. "The kids really enjoyed it. They thought it was interesting, and it brought agriculture to the classroom in a way that they can understand it."

She used the educator's guide to continue incorporating the book and its information in classroom activities.

"We graphed the bushels per acre



Ann Hudson's fourth-grade class at Crestview Elementary in Waco read the accurate, agricultural book *Full of Beans: Henry Ford Grows a Car* as part of Texas Farm Bureau's Ag Literacy Week March 21-25.



After reading the book, the students applied what they learned to different aspects of their classroom activities and lessons, including math and science.

for a couple different decades in U.S. history, and they got to see the growth in the yield of soybeans over time," Hudson said. "This ties back to our data and analysis unit, and it also gets them experience with finding real figures and applying them to math in real life. It also ties into our science curriculum, talking about producers in the environment

and how they interact with their own ecosystem."

Agriculture can be incorporated into any subject, but especially science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

"I like to bring agriculture into STEM," Hudson said. "There are lots of different graphs and figures that you can make about yield and pro-

duction and the life cycle of animals that really just brings everything full circle back into the classroom. I feel like integrating ag into STEM really brings it to life for them."

TFB's goal is to expand student knowledge about agriculture and help students grow into more informed consumers, while also providing resources that educators can use.

"I think it's great that Farm Bureau is providing these resources and making these lessons available, because I had no idea that book existed. I am planning on incorporating it further into our lesson plans," Hudson said.

View the Ag Literacy Week hashtag #ReadAgBooksTX on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to see more teachers reading the book.

TFB also works year-round to increase agricultural literacy in Texas classrooms through a variety of in-classroom programs, lessons, resources, grants and teacher professional development. More information on those opportunities and resources is available at texasfarm-bureau.org/aitc.

Avian influenza detected in Texas pheasant flock

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) was detected in a commercial pheasant flock in Erath County in early April.

This is the first confirmation of HPAI in Texas in 2022.

The Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) continue to monitor the situation.

Following an increase in bird deaths, samples from the flock were tested at the Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory, part of the National Animal Health Laboratory Network, and confirmed at the APHIS National Veterinary Services Laboratories in Ames, Iowa.

State officials quarantined the affected premises, and birds on the property have been depopulated to prevent the spread of the disease. The plan for the control of avian influenza includes coordination of resources and response, and proto-

cols for quarantine, testing, disposal, cleaning, disinfection and monitoring.

"Texas has been actively preparing alongside the USDA to respond to HPAI," Dr. Andy Schwartz, TAHC executive director and state veterinarian, said. "We'd like to encourage Texas poultry owners to educate themselves on this disease and be vigilant in taking steps to protect their flocks from avian influenza."

There have been more than 600 detections of HPAI in wild birds across 31 states, and 158 detections in commercial and backyard flocks across 25 states.

The number of HPAI cases in the U.S. are outpacing the 2014/2015 outbreak, but the higher numbers might be attributed to improvements in detection and reporting protocols.

American Farm Bureau Federation economists analyzed HPAI detections in commercial flocks and found the Mississippi flyway is the

most impacted, with 49% of detections, followed by the Central flyway at 36% and the Atlantic with 15% of cases. As of press time, the Pacific flyway has not had a reported case.

While avian influenza has affected the laying hen population, inventory of eggs is actually 38% higher in 2022 than during the same time in 2015.

Anyone involved with poultry production from the small backyard to the large commercial producer should review their biosecurity activities to assure the health of their birds.

In addition to practicing good biosecurity, all bird owners should create barriers between their birds and wild birds and report sick birds or unusual bird deaths to state and federal officials.

Producers are encouraged to consider bringing birds indoors, when possible, to further prevent exposures, and avoid visits to other premises that also have birds.



Texas poultry producers are urged to increase biosecurity measures to prevent avian influenza from spreading. Photo courtesy TPWD.

If you notice a sudden increase in the number of sick birds or bird deaths, contact TAHC at 1-800-550-8242 and/or USDA at 1-866-536-7593.

More information about avian influenza is available at tahc.texas.gov.



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TEXAS AGRICULTURE

31

New technology helps improve ag sustainability

By Carey Martin

TFB Radio Network Manager

Sustainability is a big buzzword in agriculture, and new sprayer technology unveiled by John Deere will make Texas farms even more environmentally friendly. It's called "See and Spray," and that's an accurate description of what it does.

Using cameras and computer processors, the sprayer can tell the difference between the crop and the weeds, then tell the spray nozzle to spot spray only the weeds.

"It has 36 cameras across the top of the boom. Think of those as the eyes of the system," said Kathleen Sprouse, senior product manager for Blue River Technology, a subsidiary company of John Deere. "Then, there are 11 processors along the boom that decide if there's a weed or the crop based on the images. If it sees a weed, the system actuates the exact supply nozzle to just cover that weed."

This entire process takes a mere 0.2 seconds while the sprayer is traveling up to 12 miles per hour.

The See and Spray technology has been tested in Texas.

"We've been down here for more than a year in different parts of South Texas working with the King



Rio Grande Valley farmer Sam Sparks has been testing John Deere's See and Spray technology for over a year.

Ranch and having phenomenal performance," said Franklin Peitz, tactical marketing manager for John Deere sprayers.

One of the biggest benefits of the See and Spray technology is the reduction in herbicide use when spot spraying versus spraying the herbicide on the entire field.

"We're seeing up to two thirds savings on non-residual herbicides," Sprouse said. "This technology brings farmers an incredible opportunity to reduce their spending on herbicide."

Farmers are known to be skeptical of big claims like that, but John Deere has made a believer of at least

one Texas farmer.

Sam Sparks farms more than 10,000 acres in the Rio Grande Valley and has been testing the See and Spray technology for over a year.

"To be honest with you, I didn't really believe at first that these cameras and the technology were going to be able to communicate with the sprayer in a precise manner," Sparks said. "But I was just blown away at the results we were seeing. Being able to operate at 9, 10, 12 miles per hour, and the machine is able to pick up on these weeds, spray them and move down the road."

Sparks said the benefits are im-

mense, in addition to the obvious savings on chemical costs.

"You're saving on diesel, labor and wear and tear on equipment. You're not stopping as often to fill up the sprayer," he said. "It all adds up to what I believe is a lot of money."

Another benefit of the new sprayer is the ability to combine two chemical treatments into one. The tank is split into two separate tanks, and there is a second set of nozzles along the back of the boom, which would allow for a spot treatment with the front set of nozzles and a broadcast spray of the entire field with the back set.

"If they want to spray a fungicide, insecticide or residual herbicide broadcast, then spot spray a non-residual, they could do that all in one pass, which could only have previously been done in two passes," Peitz said.

For now, See and Spray can only be used in cotton, corn and soybeans with 30-inch rows or greater.

John Deere is planning a limited roll out of the sprayers in select states, including Texas.

"We will have our initial ordering this fall in Texas, Mississippi, Tennessee, Illinois, Iowa and Nebraska," Peitz said. "Next year, it will be available across the United States."

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Changes to white-tailed, mule deer hunting regulations in Texas

By Jessica Domel
Multimedia Reporter

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission approved several changes to deer hunting regulations for the upcoming season.

White-tailed deer

One of the approved changes clarifies the definition of buck and antlerless deer for hunters and law enforcement.

Alan Cain, white-tailed deer program leader for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), said this addresses the oddball tagging requirement scenarios like shed antler bucks, antler does or buck fawns.

“Staff propose(d) to clarify the antlerless deer are deer having no antler point protruding through the skin or a deer that has completely shed its antlers,” Cain said. “Buck deer will be defined as deer having antler point protruding through the skin or a deer having antler growth in velvet greater than one inch.”

Typically, male deer are referred to as bucks, while female deer are referred to as does. However, because of certain conditions like bucks that have lost their antlers, it may be difficult for hunters to determine the sex of a deer when hunting from a distance.

A hunter may think they shot a doe only to find out later that it is a male deer without antlers, which may be prohibited at that time.

Because of this confusion, years ago TPWD began using the term “antlerless deer” to refer to does and those deer without antlers.

“Bucks in velvet” has also been a long-standing conundrum, according to the proposal.

The recently approved change is designed to ensure the definitions are as clear and specific as possible.

The commission also approved changes to what hunters can use to prove a deer’s sex after harvest.

Before the change, hunters were required to keep a buck’s head.

“Staff propose(d) another option, which includes the tail and unskinned skull cap with antlers

attached, and again, that’s a second option,” Cain said. “This additional proof of sex aids in (Chronic Wasting Disease) CWD management, allowing the hunters to leave the most infectious part of the deer at the site of harvest, so we’re not hauling brain material around to other parts of the state, potentially spreading the disease.”

Cain said hunters may still keep the deer’s head for mounting, if they’d like. This is just an additional way to provide proof of sex.

The commission also approved definitions to two types of commercial cold storage facilities.

Mule deer

To curb excessive mule deer buck harvest, the commission approved a proposal extending mule deer antler restrictions in an additional 21 counties in the Panhandle.

Shawn Gray, TPWD mule deer and pronghorn program leader, told the commission the move follows a successful experiment that began in 2018 and 2019 in seven southwest Panhandle counties.

“Prior to the experiment in the Southeast Panhandle, excessive buck harvest occurred primarily because of increased lease hunting and the popularity of mule deer hunting,” Gray said. “This excessive buck harvest affected the mule deer buck sex ratio in the area, with our survey data indicating a post-season sex ratio of about five does per buck.”

Intensive buck harvest also impacted the buck age structure.

“Because of this, staff received many requests from landowners and hunters to improve the buck age structure of the mule deer herd in this area of the Panhandle,” Gray said.

Using white-tailed deer antler restrictions as a model, TPWD staff collected data on mule deer during ongoing research projects and hunter-harvested mule deer to estimate the ear tip to ear tip spread of bucks standing in the alert position.

“Because the average ear tip to ear tip spread on Panhandle



Several changes were recently announced by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission to Texas hunting regulations for white-tailed deer and mule deer.

mule deer bucks is 21 inches, staff propose(d) to use a restriction with an outside spread of the main beams of 20 inches to protect younger age bucks,” Gray said.

Gray told the commission data suggest the antler restriction protects at least 80% of one-and-a-half to three-year-old bucks and about 80% of bucks four-and-a-half years of age or older would be harvestable.

“With this proposal, any buck with an outside spread of 20 inches or greater would be legal for harvest. Thus, any buck with a spread less than 20 inches would not be legal to harvest regardless of unbranched antlers,” Gray said.

The antler restriction does not currently apply to properties in the Managed Lands Deer Program.

The counties impacted by the new regulation include: Andrews, Armstrong, Bailey, Briscoe, Castro, Childress, Cochran, Collingsworth, Cottle, Dawson, Donley, Foard, Floyd, Gaines, Hale, Hall, Hardeman, Hockley, Lamb, Lynn, Lubbock, Martin, Motley, Parmer, Randall, Swisher, Terry and Yoakum.

Hunters in Terrell County, which is not in the Panhandle, would also be required to follow the new mule deer antler regulations.

The department also lengthened mule deer hunting season from nine

days to 16 days with a special archery season.

Hunting with firearms proposal

After much opposition, the commission withdrew a proposal that would have allowed deer hunting with firearms in four North Texas counties that are currently archery-only.

TPWD presented the proposal to the commission after receiving a petition asking that firearm hunting be allowed once again in Collin, Dallas, Grayson and Rockwall counties.

“In response to the large number of comments received in opposition to the proposal, and with the direction from the commission, staff are pulling this part of the proposal from the consideration,” Cain told the commission. “We would like to propose to retain one portion of the proposed changes, and that’s to require mandatory harvest reporting in these four counties for buck and antlerless deer, so we can monitor harvest up there.”

The commission approved the mandatory harvest reporting.

The changes to deer hunting regulations for 2022-23 were approved but have not yet been posted in the online Outdoor Annual. It will be updated later this year.

For more information on deer hunting regulations and other hunting and wildlife information, visit tpwd.texas.gov.

Workshop shows teachers how farmers use science, drones

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Texas high school science teachers learned about the science behind drone technology and its role in agriculture through a new workshop.

The Fields of the Future: The Science of Drones in Agriculture workshop was hosted by Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) and the National Ag in the Classroom Organization (NAITCO) in partnership with the Agricultural Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) April 9-10 in Bryan.

“The goal of the workshop was to give high school science educators the opportunity to work with drone experts and other scientists who are using the technology and other unique methods to learn more about agriculture,” said Jordan Bartels, TFB associate director of Organization, Educational Outreach. “Farm Bureau, NAITCO and partners at USDA wanted to provide an experi-

ence and information that will aid teachers as they work to incorporate agriculture in their classrooms.”

Twenty teachers attended the hands-on workshop, and each received a free MAVIC-MINI II drone and lesson resources.

Participants learned how to fly the drone and how it is used to help farmers from an agricultural engineer in USDA’s Aerial Application Technology Research Unit.

They also learned how drones are used in research projects and problem-based learning. This session was led by a science teacher who uses drones with his students to study the watershed around the school, looking to pinpoint pollution sources and to suggest possible solutions.

“During the workshop, teachers learned, among other things, how drones are currently used in agriculture to observe crops, livestock and land,” Bartels said. “The drones they received are capable of taking



Twenty teachers participated in the Fields of the Future: The Science of Drones in Agriculture workshop held in April.

pictures that can be used to observe plants and more.”

Since the workshop, teachers have posted pictures of their students using the drones on Earth Day to make species observations and look for pollution sources around the school campuses.

Others, like Laurie Heron-Beau-

lieu who teaches at Magnolia High School, are using the lessons and concepts learned to grow an awareness of agriculture.

“I learned something from every presenter. Everything they taught, I can use in my physics classroom,” Heron-Beaulieu said. “I’ve been to a lot of workshops, but this was one of

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Each teacher took home a free drone to use in their classroom to help connect agriculture to science.

the few that I can say is adaptable to any area and is something I can use right away.”

There are about 2,000 students in Magnolia High School, and Heron-Beaulieu believes what she learned

at the workshop can be applied to classroom activities for any of those students.

“I can use what I learned at the workshop for my AP Physics kids and for our students who have spe-

cial needs,” she said. “Many of my students want to be engineers, but they don’t know what kind of engineer. I’m trying to get them to branch out from petroleum engineer to an agricultural engineer, and some of

the information I learned can help do that. There’s a wide diversity of positions out there in agriculture that many of them could be a good fit for.”

TFB believes in bringing agriculture to life in classrooms across the state to increase agricultural literacy and awareness in students in all grades.

“Simply put, agriculture is science,” Bartels said. “Everything in agriculture is ultimately based on scientific concepts and research, so it is imperative that we help students make those connections as they explore the world around them in and out of school.”

This project was supported by a grant from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture, AFRI Professional Development for the Agricultural Literacy Priority Area.

For more information about TFB educational opportunities and other Ag in the Classroom activities and resources, visit texasfarmbureau.org/aitc.



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2022 Texas Farm Bureau

PHOTO CONTEST

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

The contest is open to Texas Farm Bureau members or an immediate family member (i.e., spouse, child, sibling, or parent).

Rural settings and rural lifestyles are the preferred themes for all submissions, and contestants are limited to one entry per person. Four top winners will be selected and published in the July edition of *Texas Agriculture* and the summer edition of *Texas Neighbors*.

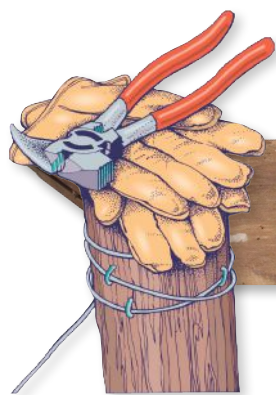
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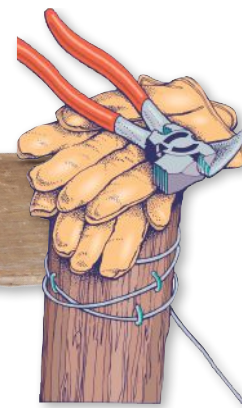
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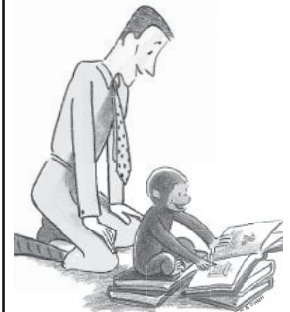


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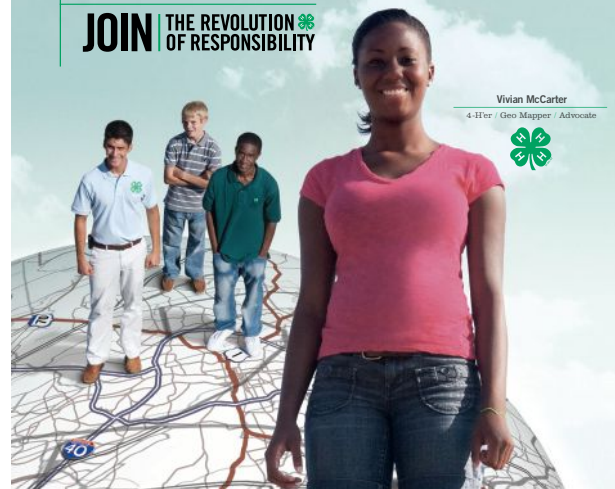
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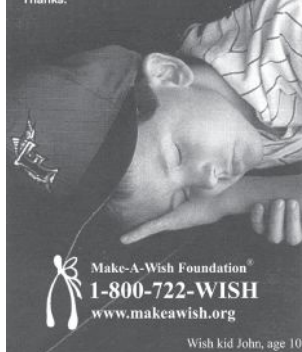


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