

Marion County Extension Newsletter

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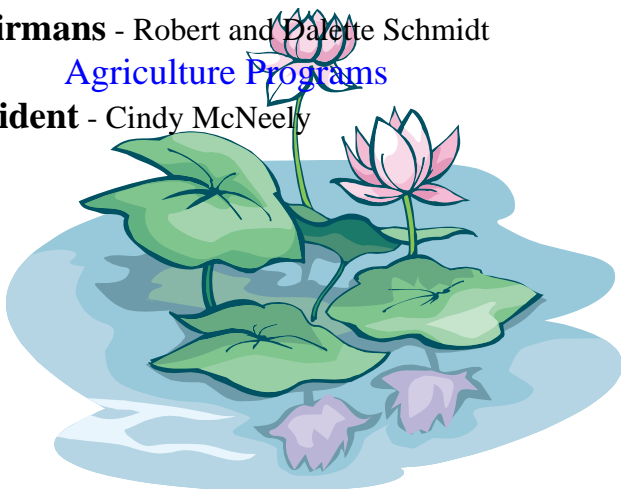
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Chairmans - Robert and Paulette Schmidt

Agriculture Programs

President - Cindy McNeely



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Happy and Safe Holidays

With the holidays fast approaching we want to take this opportunity to wish everyone a happy and safe holiday season. Celebrations and spending quality time with family can often be the special gift they are looking for. The opportunity to spend time building and sharing special memories, telling family stories (and/or occasionally slight or small tiny lies????) and even doing the “remember when” times, build strong bonds and lasting relationships for our children and their children. Cherishing and sharing special moments, is usually more precious than any gift one could ever purchase and can also be seen as a way of passing down family history.

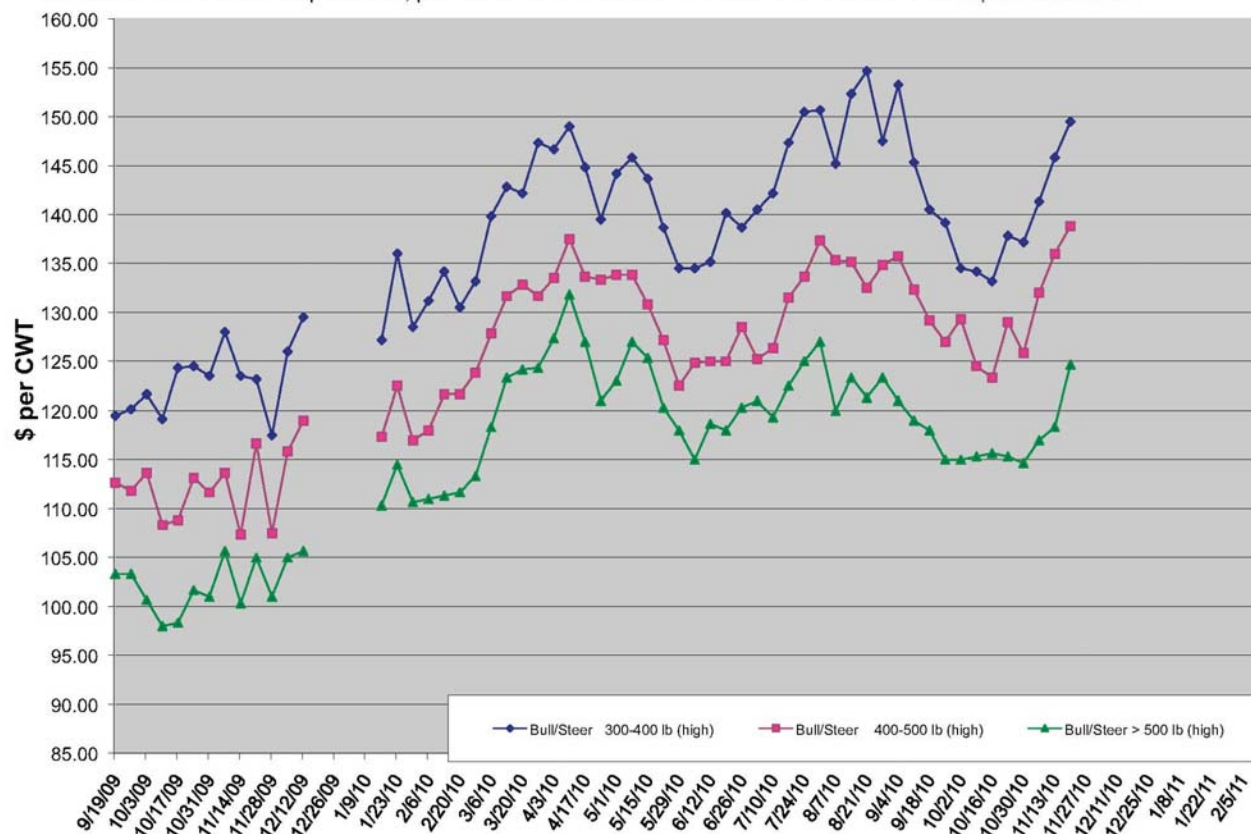
Beef Today

Calf Price Trends

Trend of Highest Prices Reported for Various Weight Calves, Average of 3 East Texas Livestock Auctions

For a weekly email copy of this chart, please contact your Local Texas AgriLife County Extension Agent

For information on beef cattle production, please visit the Texas A&M Extension Beef Cattle Website: <http://beef.tamu.edu>



Comparison of enhanced cow, non-enhanced cow, and USDA select beef cuts

In an effort to improve eating quality, beef from cows is sometimes “enhanced” by injecting various solutions. A study was conducted to compare enhanced cow strip loins, top sirloin butts, and ribeyes with the same cuts from cow beef that was not enhanced and from USDA Select grade beef. At 14 days post-slaughter, half of the cow cuts were injected with phosphate, salt, rosemary, potassium lactate, beef stock, ice, and water. At that time, all cuts were fabricated into 1-inch-thick steaks which were used for shear-force test, taste-panel test, and retail shelf-life test. Evaluations were then conducted at 14, 21, and 28 days after slaughter. In all results to follow, differences noted were statistically significant ($P < 0.05$)

Compared to enhanced cow and Select, steaks from non-enhanced cows had higher shear-force (lower tenderness), lower taste-panel tenderness scores, and higher taste-panel scores for connective tissue. Enhanced steaks had higher scores for taste-panel juiciness than non-enhanced cow and Select steaks. Enhanced steaks had higher scores by taste-panel for salty flavor and soapy flavor. Non-enhanced had higher scores for grassy/cowdy flavor and greater surface discoloration in the retail case. Select steaks were brighter in lean color. The authors concluded that enhanced cow steaks equaled Select steaks in tenderness and juiciness. However, they indicated that more study was needed to determine importance in enhanced steaks of flavor differences and lean color on consumer acceptability. (J. Anim. Sci. 88:3683; Oklahoma St. Univ.)

2010 tax planning: Confusing, yet similar, system in place**Ag producers may benefit from some tax considerations**

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Year-end tax planning for agricultural producers and general taxpayers must be done by “what is known” regarding current federal tax code, even though there’s uncertainty about extending certain tax cuts, according to Texas AgriLife Extension Service economists.

COLLEGE STATION - Year-end tax planning for agricultural producers and general taxpayers must be done by "what is known" regarding current federal tax code, even though there's uncertainty about extending certain tax cuts, according to Texas AgriLife Extension Service economists.

Jose Pena, AgriLife Extension economist-management at the Texas AgriLife Research and Extension Center in Uvalde, said it's currently unknown if Congress will extend tax cuts that are part of the 2001 Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act.

If the tax cuts imposed under the Bush administration are not extended, all tax rates will rise for all individual taxpayers, including those subject to the lowest tax rates, he said.

"Year-end tax planning appears confusing as the political climate in Congress changes and Congress remains in a stalemate over extending the tax cuts, which are scheduled to expire Dec. 31," Pena said.

A hot-button item among agriculture producers is the estate tax, which was repealed in 2010. Under current law, there is no federal estate tax, but heirs who sell appreciated assets may face capital gains taxes.

"In 2011, the estate tax is set to return with a \$1 million exemption and a top rate of 55 percent on the largest estates," Pena said. "But it appears some Congressmen are pondering a \$3.5 million exemption with a 45 percent top rate, which over the years would evolve into a \$5 million exemption and a maximum tax rate of 35 percent. It appears, however, that the estate tax is not going to disappear."

Meanwhile, he said, agricultural producers and small business owners may be able to take advantage of some extended tax cuts as part of the Small Business Jobs Act of 2010 signed into law in September.

"This extended some of the business tax cuts which had expired in 2009," Pena noted.

He said some of extensions and allowances from which agricultural producers may derive a tax benefit include:

- Extending and increasing the Section 179 expensing option for depreciable property used in business (computers, office furniture, equipment, vehicles or other tangible business property) to a maximum of \$500,000 for tax years 2010 and 2011 only.
- Extending the 50 percent bonus depreciation for 2010, which was set to expire at the end of 2009 for new property as long as the property is placed into service before Jan. 1, 2011.
- Allowing the deduction of cell phone business use without documentation.
- Temporarily increasing the amount of start-up expenditures that small businesses can deduct from their taxes in 2010 from \$5,000 to \$10,000 (with a phase-out threshold of \$60,000 in expenditures).
- Allowing a deduction for the cost of small-business health insurance premiums in calculating self-employment taxes.

The increased Section 179 expensing option and the 50 percent depreciation provision can give agricultural producers a great ability to manage income and Social Security taxes for 2010, said Dr. Wayne Hayenga, Texas A&M University professor emeritus and AgriLife Extension agricultural economist.

"Some producers who bought equipment in 2010 may be able to almost eliminate taxable income for the year," Hayenga said. "And cash-basis producers can use expensing to avoid tax on income carried forward from prior years. They can also use it to avoid income and Social Security taxes on much of their 2010 income."

He added that current discussions in Congress regarding cutting the tax rate for 2011 also likely will have an impact on agricultural producers.

"It probably wouldn't make sense for producers to lower their taxable income, missing out on otherwise allowable personal exemptions and deductions," Hayenga said. "Also, some producers may want to report sufficient income to qualify for an earned-income credit."

Pena said tax breaks that expired at the end of 2009 included deduction for classroom expenses for educators; tuition and fees deduction for college; additional standard deduction for property taxes; additional standard deduction or itemized deduction for sales taxes paid on a new vehicle; itemized deductions for state and local sales taxes in lieu of state income taxes; tax-free exclusion of the first \$2,400 in unemployment benefits; and tax-free exclusion of IRA funds donated directly to charity.

"In addition, required IRA payments from IRA plans resume this year," Pena said. "Congress also did not extend last year's waiver of required IRA distributions for those age 70 ½ or older."

He added that the \$1,000 child tax credit available through 2010 as part of the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 and the 2009 stimulus package will be reduced to \$500 in 2011.

"And cost-of-energy efficiency improvements may be entitled to a tax credit of 30 percent of the purchase price up to a maximum credit of \$1,500," he said. "But that credit will be offset by the alternative minimum tax in 2010 unless Congress changes the rules."

The AgriLife Bookstore has several publications on agricultural taxes and general tax issues (<https://agrilifebookstore.org>) or visit the Internal Revenue Service website (<http://www.irs.gov>).

Who do consumers think is the most credible source for information on animal care?

Not who we would hope. In a recent survey on consumer trust in the food system, reported by the Center for Food Integrity at the Food System Summit, 15.9% of respondents named the Humane Society of the United States as the most credible source for information on care of farm animals. This was followed by farm-animal veterinarians (12.3%), USDA representatives (12.0%), and People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA, 11.5%). Operators of large livestock farms came in last (5.5%). (Texas Cattle Feeders Association newsletter; downloaded 10/20/10).

From the Garden



This amazing Lemon Tree is doing quite well in Marion County at the Home of Duke and Betty Morgan's. The most common types of lemon trees are Meyers and Rough Lemon. The largest lemon producers of the world are Argentina, Italy, Turkey, Spain, Greece, and the USA. A carton of lemons weights 38 lbs. In 2000 the value of the lemon production was \$24 million and 2007 \$55 million. What ever you decide to grow and cultivate you may find some interesting facts. If you have uncommon crop give me a call I would like to know and feature your unique crop in the Extension news letter. Bafry@ag.tamu.edu

Senior Explosion

Many great things have happened since our last letter: The Senior Explosion by all reports was a great success with the State AARP office sharing information on the New Health program and about the push to keep Social security strong. She gave five things seniors should know and remember about Social Security: 1. Americans earn and pay for Social Security's guaranteed retirement benefits by making contributions out of each paycheck a person receives throughout their working career. 2. Social Security guarantees benefits are a rock solid commitment to American families. She also stated that companies can go out of business, pensions can be terminated, the stock market can take a nose dive but, if we contribute, our social security benefits will be there in good times and bad times. 3. The average persons Social Security retirement benefit will only replace about \$4 out of every \$10 they earn while working. It is not a sole source of income but, should strengthen a workers' pension and private savings. 4. The Social Security System has been running a surplus and has not contributed one dime to our nation's current deficit and should not be used for deficit reduction. It is believed that social security surpluses may have been masking the true size of the federal deficit for decades. The speaker suggested that the current Social Security fund is worth 2.5 trillion and will continues to grow to an expected \$4.3 trillion by year 2023. 5. Social Security can pay full benefits for the next 25 years according to the speaker. Findings in a recent report by a US Senate Special Committee on Aging confirms this and found that if modest changes can be made in the near term, it will ensure future generations receive an adequate benefit and strengthen social security's financing for the long term.

For more information go to: WWW.aarp.org/strengthensocialsecurity.

Benefits Program for Veterans Wives and Widows

The program for seniors inspired yet another program that brought more than 20 veterans and widows to a special program for veterans. Specialist Jeanine Milligan, from the State Veterans Land Board answered numerous questions regarding the status of vets in Texas. She stated that there were more than 1.7 million civilian vets in Texas which is 12% of the population eighteen and over and that Texas has the largest Veteran population. There are 803,000+ over the age of 60 and 169,000+ over the age of 80. Mrs. Milligan stated that approximately 78% of eligible veterans and 85% of eligible spouses have not applied for benefits. She also stated that service connected veterans currently receiving compensation from the USD VA 100% level are due to either: 100% disability rating or individual unemployability.

For more information on this presentation call 214-450-3221 or visit the Harrison County office and ask for Kerry Easley. He can also be reached at 102 W Houston ST in Marshall, Texas. 903-935-8415-EXT 1291.

Small Business Development

A Small business development program was also held and the focus was on small business loans ranging from \$500-\$100,000. The applications were available at the workshop but, can be obtained by calling Jimmy Henry from the Cooperative Extension Program, Prairie View A&M University at 936-261-5115. Participants also learned how to make money selling to the government. Information on grant writing was also discussed.

For Your Health

For those of us that are approaching the good old days a recent article in USA Weekend. (Nov.5-, 2010 p. 21) states that instead of adding so many things to our to-do list, we should take things off and began doing the things we really enjoy doing. The writer suggest that life is filled with so many things we don't like to do that the principle is that many of these things can be left undone without much repercussion. Chris Guillebeau in his book "The Art of Non Conformity" states that making a "to stop doing list" where the goal will be to eliminate the things that prevent you from devoting most of your time to projects and activities you enjoy doing. Three steps given are: Identify what is important, Brainstorm, and then take action. The thought driving this message for the New Year is: Don't put anything on there you don't want to do or know you're really not going to do.

Special Holiday Tips

(1) Eat Healthy (2) Exercise often (3) Add Stop Smoking/Chewing of tobacco products to your resolutions list if you feel you can achieve it. (4) Add regular health screening to your 2011 goals (5) stick to the shopping list (6) Beware of the Sodium traps found in nuts and other fast foods. (7) Give up the Fruit Cake for angel food cake topped with fresh fruit. (8) Instead of Chocolate treats, serve fruit topped with dark chocolate. (9) Instead of cheese dip, serve chunky cranberry dip and (10) when you are stressed from all the changes, e-mail Pamela Lincoln at: plincoln@ag.tamu.edu for Holiday Stress Relief. Mrs. Lincoln states that within five minutes, you will feel energized and back in your festive mood. Her tips are great for your health followed by: brief relaxation, deep breathing and stretching.

Retirement Celebration

Mrs. Hampton is retiring and leaving us after 25 years of beautiful and faithful service. We invite you to help us wish her well on Friday December 17, 2010 from 2-4 pm. Many youth and adults have benefitted from her service and she will be missed.

USDA REMINDS PRODUCERS OF UPCOMING LIVESTOCK DISASTER ASSISTANCE DEADLINES

(**Linden, TX**), Dec. 6, 2010 – Cass-Marion County USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) Executive Director Ralph Jordan, reminds eligible ranchers and livestock producers of the Jan. 30, 2011 deadline for applying for benefits under the provisions of the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) for losses incurred during calendar year 2010. Counties recently determined eligible for LFP benefits are Edwards, Kerr, Kimble, Real and Sutton.

“We anticipate more counties may become eligible between now and the end of the calendar year, so livestock producers should stay tuned,” said Jordan.

LFP provides payments to eligible livestock producers that have suffered livestock grazing losses due to qualifying drought or fire. Fire losses apply only to federally managed rangeland. Eligible livestock under LFP include beef cattle, alpacas, buffalo, beefalo, dairy cattle, deer, elk, emus, equine, goats, llamas, poultry, reindeer, sheep and swine. For losses due to drought, qualifying drought ratings are determined using the U.S. Drought Monitor located at <http://www.drought.unl.edu/dm/monitor.html>.

“It is imperative that livestock producers meet this deadline for disaster assistance as there are no late file provisions for LFP, said” Jordan. “To insure a smooth application process, producers should have all required supporting documentation with them at the time they visit our office to apply for benefits.”

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In order for an LFP applicant to qualify for program benefits, the applicant must have purchased insurance coverage through FSA's Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) or the Pasture, Rangeland and Forage Insurance-Rainfall Index for Grazing (PRF-RI) program offered through the Risk Management Agency (RMA).

Producers who meet the requirements of a socially disadvantaged, limited resource, or beginning farmers or ranchers, as defined in the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and

Trade Act of 1990, Section 2501 (e) (7 U.S.C. 2279(e)), do not have to meet this Risk

Management Purchase Requirement (RMPPR).

LFP program applicants should note that in addition to risk management provisions, certain payment limitation and adjusted gross income eligibility requirements must be met in order to qualify for livestock disaster program benefits.

For more information or to apply for LFP and other USDA Farm Service Agency disaster assistance programs, please contact the Cass-Marion County FSA office at (903) 756-5431, ext.2. Information can also be obtained on line at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>.

Upcoming Events

AARP meetings 3rd Thursdays of the month at 2:00 at Kelly Park Community Center

Marion County Farmers Market meeting set for January 11, 2011 at 2:00 P.M. Kelly Park Community Center

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“Improving Lives. Improving Texas.”