

Marion County Extension Newsletter

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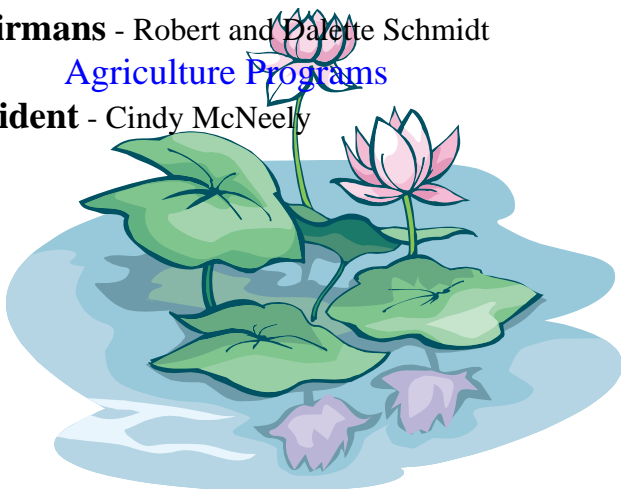
President - Ted Barrow

Beef Committee

Chairmans - Robert and Paulette Schmidt

Agriculture Programs

President - Cindy McNeely



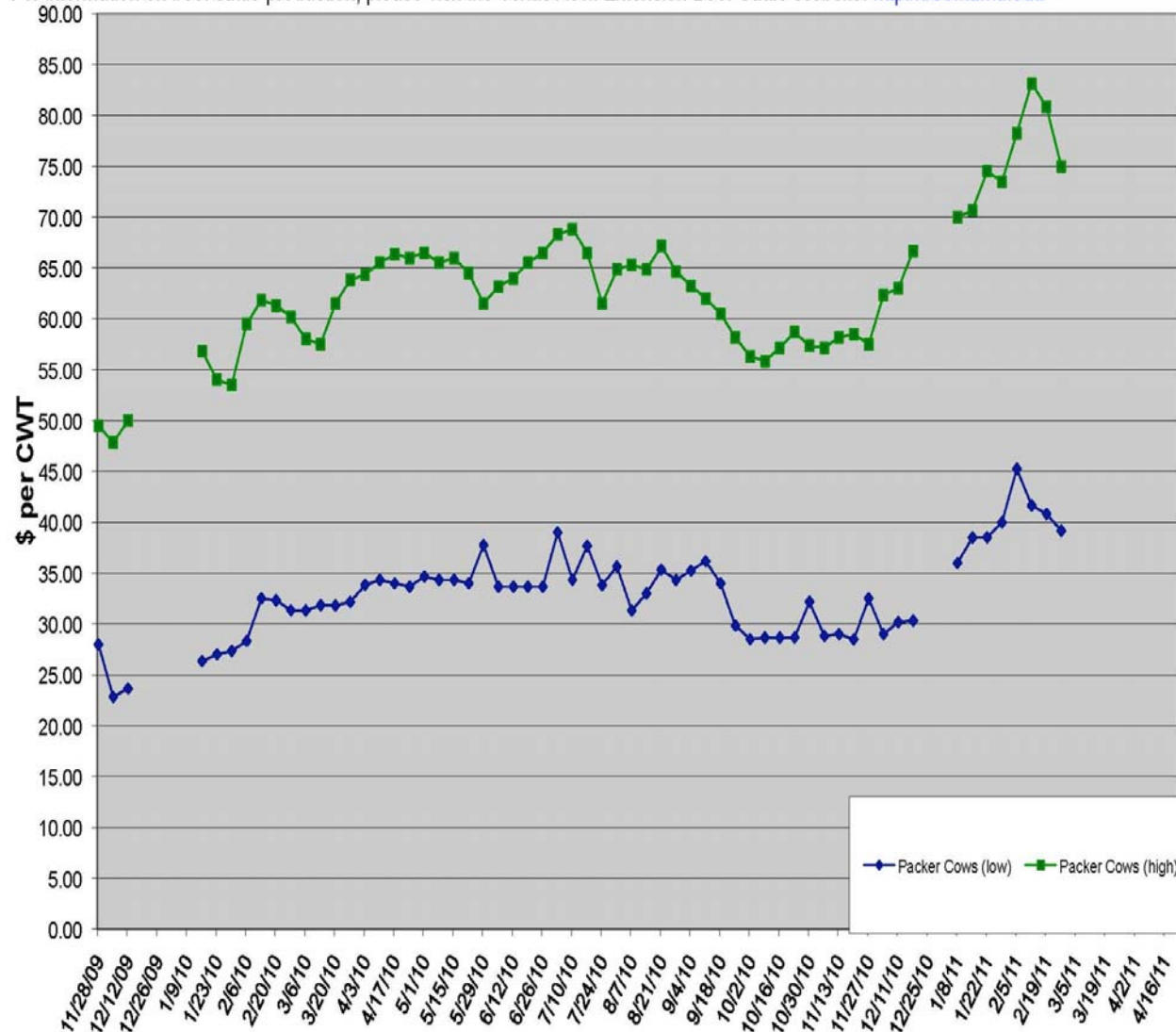
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Beef Today**Packer Cow Price Trends****Trend of High and Low Prices Reported for Packer Cows, Average of 3 East Texas Livestock Auctions**

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>



MIDDLE EAST UNREST COULD DRIVE FERTILIZER COST UP By: Robert Burns

Truck spreading fertilizer on a pasture Middle East unrest could drive nitrogen fertilizer costs up to 2008 levels, according to a Texas AgriLife Research expert. Warm-season grasses used for livestock production in much of Texas and the South are dependent upon large amounts of nitrogen fertilizer. (Texas AgriLife Extension Service photo by Robert Burns)

OVERTON — Escalating unrest in the Middle East is not only going to continue to drive gasoline and diesel fuel prices up to 2008 levels, but there's a good chance it will do the same to the costs of fertilizing pastures, according to a Texas AgriLife Research expert. Even if it doesn't further contribute to rising fertilizer costs, they're high enough already that livestock producers "absolutely must learn to better manage nitrogen applications to stay in business," said Dr. Monte Rouquette, AgriLife Research forage scientist. Rouquette is one of the instructors at the upcoming Pasture and Livestock Management Workshop, a 2 ½ day course set March 29 -31 at the Texas AgriLife Research and Extension Center in Overton. The course has always been about helping both novice and experienced producers how to better manage inputs and utilize forage resources. Now, with fertilizer costs rising again, it's more critical than ever for those in the cow/calf business to "fine-tune livestock production inputs and management skills from the grass roots up," he said. "The cost of ammonium nitrate today is \$460 per ton, or about 68 cents per pound," Rouquette said. "Last year about this time it was 53 cents per pound." For the last six to 10 years, fertilizer costs have been rising, he said. The prices relaxed somewhat in the last three years from 2008 when they reached 70 to 75 cents per pound. But even before the Middle East meltdown, prices had been steadily climbing. Though nitrogen fertilizer is made from natural gas, all fuel prices are linked, he explained, so the increase in one leads to a rise in others. There's also the associated cost of transporting and applying fertilizer as the cost of diesel rises. This all could mean that cow/calf and other livestock producers will have to drastically rethink their production strategies as all the modern, improved warm-season grasses are big users of nitrogen.

"We are revisiting the dilemma of the price of fertilizer becoming a major constraint on pasture use, and that would indicate that if managers don't have efficient cattle that have sales value — as well as a plan for utilization of the forage that is produced — then fertilizers may windup on the endangered list," Rouquette said. Dealing with these issues and others will be a major thrust of the grazing school, he said. "Even in better economic times, we've heard enrollees say time and time again that what they've learned in the first morning saved them many times over the cost of the course," he said. Registration for the course is \$350 per person. The fee includes breakfast and break refreshments along with two noon and evening barbeque and ribeye steak meals. Enrollment is limited to 60 individuals. The limitation on class size allows workshop attendees to have plenty of time to visit one-on-one with AgriLife Research and AgriLife Extension faculty to discuss specific aspects of their operations, he said. As of March 1, 51 had already registered. All instructors are scientists and educators with AgriLife Research, the Texas AgriLife Extension Service and Texas A&M University. All hold doctorate degrees related to their area of instruction. The courses will be held at the Texas AgriLife Research and Extension Center at Overton.

Workshop instruction is divided between the classroom and the field. In-field demonstrations cover all aspects of running a beef operation, including establishing and maintaining high-quality forages, calibrating sprayers, taking soil samples, castrating and vaccinating cattle, and dehorning calves, Rouquette said.

A full agenda can be found at http://overton.tamu.edu/beef_cattle/grazing_school/grazingschool.php.

To register or for more information, contact Jennifer Lloyd at 903-834-6191 or jllloyd@ag.tamu.edu. Lloyd will have information on class openings, local accommodations and driving directions to the center, Rouquette said.

Marion County Extension Issue Identification Forum

An online Issue Identification Forum is being held in Marion county, to assist local Extension Agents and the Leadership Advisory Board identify the most critical issues affecting local citizens. Our local Extension program has a rich history of providing educational programs that address the most critical issues in the county, related to Agriculture and Natural Resources, Families and Health, Youth Development and Community Development. In order to make sure that the programs being planned for the future are on target, we invite your participation in the Online Issue Forum.

To participate, go to <http://extensionissues.tamu.edu>. The online survey should take you no more than 10 minutes to complete, and will provide us with valuable insight into the issues facing citizens in Marion County. Your opinion is highly valued in our community, so we truly hope you will take a few minutes to participate.

The online forum is currently open, and will remain open for input until midnight on March 25, 2011. The link to the survey is prominent on the website, but should you have any problems, please contact the Extension office at 903-665-2421.

Herbs to the Rescue: Fend Off Deer with Aromatic Plants

Many of the plants that enhance the flavor of our foods also leave a rich aroma as we brush against them in the garden, cut a few for soup or dry them in the fall. Although aromatic and pleasant to us, many herbs have the opposite effect on deer and other animals that find them unpalatable. For that reason, herbs are some of the best plants to fend off garden nibblers, said Oregon State University horticulturist Linda McMahan. She offers advice on how to use aromatic herbs to our advantage. "A word of caution: even the toughest of deer-resistant plants might not always be good deterrents," she said. "Deer in one area, even a neighborhood, may learn to tolerate some plants while deer in other areas may choose to avoid them." Many herbs originated in the Mediterranean or other dry-summer regions of the world and are familiar to us for culinary reasons. The same odors that enhance a stew often will dissuade deer. Sage, for example, is known botanically as *Salvia officinalis*, and many colorful varieties are available in addition to the standard sage-green. The same can be said for rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*), oregano (*Origanum*), mint (*Mentha*), thyme, including creeping thyme (*Thymus* species and varieties) and dill (*Anethum graveolens*). Other attractive and traditional aromatic herbs that usually repel deer are lavender of all kinds (*Lavandula*), catnip (*Nepeta*), germander (*Teucreum*) and lavender cotton (*Santolina*). For shrubs, try aromatic ones like sagebrush (*Artemisia*), Pacific wax myrtle (*Myrica californica*) or fragrant sumac (*Rhus aromatic*). Dwarf or prostrate conifers often work well, are all aromatic and include junipers, cedars and mugo pines (*Pinus mugo*). Although it's not fool-proof, you can experiment with other strong-smelling plants to see which ones work in your area. McMahan advises checking the USDA growing zones before you plant, as various areas have conditions that may not be good for all the plants listed here. Oregon has six of the 11 plant hardiness zones in the United States.

From the Garden**Top Five Easiest Plants for Beginner Gardeners**

The possibilities for a new garden can seem endless, but choosing what to grow can make all the difference, especially for beginner gardeners. University of Georgia horticulturalists Bob Westerfield and George Boyhan know what it takes to create a prosperous garden. They have created the following helpful hints and a list of the top five easiest plants for beginners: Green beans, "A trick for green beans is to soak

the seeds in a glass of water overnight and then plant them the next day,” Westerfield said. “This speeds the germination process.”

Green beans are warm season vegetables that are more tolerant of cooler temperatures. Planting green beans early is not as problematic as it is with other vegetables. They also do not need a lot of fertilizer. Radishes, “The absolute easiest plant to grow is a radish. They are practically bomb-proof,” Westerfield said. It is the fastest developing vegetable, taking about 28 days to mature. Eggplants, This vegetable can be grown in a tomato cage or staked. They are easy because they are seldom bothered by problems like insects. They are also extremely prolific. Ratooning is a technique that helps rejuvenate the plant and produce a second crop. To do it, “cut back the plant eight to 10 inches from the ground,” Boyhan said. Peppers need plenty of room to expand. They can handle light frost and cooler temperatures. “Peppers are fun to grow because there are so many shapes and colors available,” Westerfield said. “Colors range from dark green to chocolate and even a purple hue.” Tomatoes, although Boyhan referred to tomatoes as “tried and true” and Westerfield noted they are the most popular vegetable, both say tomatoes can be quite problematic for beginner gardeners. Tomatoes are usually staked or caged and grown from transplants. Because they are tropical plants, tomatoes are susceptible to humidity, rainfall and high heat. They are also quite disease-prone. Lots of tomato varieties exist, but Westerfield says the easiest to grow is the cherry tomato. The fruit is the size of a cherry or grape and the plant is more forgiving in terms of diseases.

Gardening tools

Even after choosing the most appropriate plants, no garden can be successfully maintained without gardening tools. Essential tools include hand tools like a hand trowel and shovel, a hoe and tomato cages or stakes (if the plants call for them). “A mini tiller is handy, too, but if the garden is large, I suggest investing in a large tiller,” Westerfield said. “It’s worth its weight in gold.” Boyhan says the biggest problem home gardeners can face in the garden is weeds. “It is important to get out there and take care of the weeds when they are small, he said. “Do not let them get big.” Sunlight, soil, water and fertilizer are vital to the success of a garden. Gardeners might not realize, however, that soil temperature is also crucial. “The biggest key to growing vegetables is knowing the soil temperature and what plants work best at that temperature,” said Westerfield.

4- H and Youth Development

4-H Youth are still needing leaders to assist with our Round –up activities as coaches for drama, public speaking, method demonstrations and any of the other contest youth may participate in. Volunteers are also needed to judge the different contest at the county level. For more information, Contact the county office for dates.

The 4-H Sportfishing series is underway and 32 people attended the March 7th program with Justin Rackley Professional Bass angler and Texas A&M University representative as the program speaker. Youth gained a lot of knowledge including: seasonal bass patterns, rods and reels, fish anatomy, lures and selects, how to tie a polymer knot, Fish ID, and Casting. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department had great demonstrations to add to the educational experiences. Everyone is welcome to participate on March 21st and 28th at 3:30 PM at the Jefferson Jr. Highschool auditorium. Speakers include pro cat fisherman Gary Woliford and pro crappie fisherman Fred Doolley.

An Eye Opening Revelation on Community and Regional Planning and Development

Recently, I attended the National Tourism Conference and needless to say learned many new and exciting trends related to tourism in rural towns and communities. Steve Burr, an educator from the Institute for Outdoor Recreation and Tourism at Utah State University states that “Tourism relies on the development and utilizations of natural, historical, cultural, and human resources as tourist attractions and destinations, creates recreational uses for these amenity resources, and converts these into income producing assets. Consequently, he continues,” there is great interest in tourism development to help diversify rural economies and contribute to overall community development. It is, he states, important to consider tourism development in a sustainable manner, with approaches that are environmentally sound, economically viable and socially responsible and acceptable. In working with community stakeholders interested in sustainable community tourism development, one useful approach, such as an organizing framework, is an active collaborative learning process focusing on three inter-related arenas: community engagement, (meaning members from all areas of the county/community) resource identification and management, (those not actively invited or encouraged to participate may hold the key to some of the answers or solutions for these resources) and small business development /entrepreneurship. This he concludes, puts community leadership in control, directing planned tourism development. Leadership, partnerships, and collaborative planning are key organizing principles that assure long-term success in tourism development, as is wise stewardship of resources, all of which contribute to enhancing the sustainability of rural community life. “ One other speaker went on to say that cities and county governments, non profits and other organizations should have a seat at the table to form a plan that is community orientated.

Kelly Park Play Ground Update

Sincere appreciation to those of you who continue to support our efforts with the EYSC park project. Many have come to help us spread the mulch as well as donated mulch. We now have a new slide set and to see the youth and their parents in the park playing is a beautiful site. There is still work to be done that we hope to have accomplished by the 1st of May 2010. Resources needed to date are funds to purchase the basket ball goals and get them set, more mulch needs to be spread, and we are in need of about 15 to twenty cross tires to complete blocking off the traffic through the park and keep the mulch from washing. We started with the cement ones and if anyone knows where we might get enough to complete the project, please call and give us a number or make that call for us and tell us when to pick them up. This is a human and material resource task that we really need help with. Spring is also coming and the flower beds need new plants. Winter has been really hard on the plants. Contributions are welcome. If you have a need to thin your monkey grass, we can use it to add to the borders of the beds.

Small Business Development / Housing Program to be Held

A small business development workshop will be held at the Jefferson Community Center on March 30. The program will also work with citizens that are in need of home building and repairs and will have on site representatives from USDA and Prairie View A&M University in attendance as well as other business representatives on site to address the needs of those in attendance. For more information on this program, call our office; pick up a copy of the Jefferson Jimp or call program Coordinator, Tosha Moore.

Local AARP Diabetes group held their regular meeting with Agent presenting information on program designed to assist members searching for their ancestral roots. We learned that two of our members had pictures documenting their ancestors were members of the buffalo soldiers. This sparked an interest in research on African American History in Jefferson Marion County. Members were committed to do more work on. If Families are interested in doing the research, Contact our office and ask for information and people that will help in your plight. The next regularly scheduled meeting of the group will be on March 17 at 2: pm at the Kelly Park building. Their guest speaker will be a representative from the Women's center. She will be discussing issues faced by battered women and families, signs to look for and how we as citizens can assist in recognizing those that might need help. The April date is on the 21st and the focus will be on Benefits for seniors. In May the program will address Cultural Awareness and will feature short programs from other Africa and other foreign countries. As always, the public is invited.

Upcoming Events**Harrison/ Marion Counties Beef Program** with special guest Floron Faries

Professor and Extension Program Leader for Veterinary Medicine, Texas AgriLIFE Extension Service

Topics: "Assisting Difficult Calving" and "Cattle Internal Parasite Control"

Date: Thursday, April 7, 2011

Time: 6:00 P.M. – 8:00 P.M.

Location: Kelly Park, a meal will be provided.

Cost: \$20.00

1 CEU for private applicators will be given

Please RSVP before April 6, 2011, 903-665-2421

Leadership Advisory Meeting

Marion County will have an Issue ID meeting at Kelly Park on March 29th at 6 P.M.

Come and share in this process to help our Extension office serve you better. We will work for 1 hour and work in areas of Agriculture, 4-H, Food and Consumer Science, and Community Development.

No Cost

Marion/ Cass Counties Pond Management Program

Date: April 28, 2011

Time: 9 A.M - 1 P.M.

Cost: \$20.00

3 CEUs for private applicators will be given

Location: Cass County Law enforcement Training Center

Address: CR 1913

Linden, TX 75563

R.S.V.P. April 26, 2011 903-665-2421

For more information contact: BROCK FRY 903-665-2421, GENE BOBO 903-756-5391

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“Improving Lives. Improving Texas.”