

# Marion County Extension Newsletter



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### Topics Covered:

- |  |        |
|--|--------|
| - Merry Christmas!                     | page 2 |
| - Beef Today                           | page 2 |
| - Why Think about Winter Weather       | page 3 |
| - Leadership Marion County             | page 6 |
| - Growing Fishermen!                   | page 7 |
| - FDA: Food Holiday Safety success Kit | page 7 |
| - Publication Credit                   | page 9 |

**Merry Christmas!**

**The Marion County Extension Office wants to wish you and your family a most warm and Merry Christmas. Please be safe this holiday season as a new year is within a month away. Christmas is a time to be thankful for cooler weather and rains. The summer burn ban is over and all that stuff that was pilling up, well it can go up in smoke. Maybe you will have a vacation or staycation either way we hope that it is the best one ever.**

**Beef Today**

Cattle theft is on the rise in Marion County, here are some important precautions to help save you from the heart ache of missing your cattle. It is that time of the year and with the worst economy in many years, thieves are looking for an easy way to get some quick cash. During September and October there were trailers and cattle stolen and while it may not have been totally preventible here are things to consider to make it harder on the felons:

1. Watch for thieves feeding your cattle by a fence. Observe bare spaces next to fences
2. Lock gates.
3. Brand cattle and horses. Make sure the brand is recorded with the county clerk.
4. Put driver's license number on all saddles, tack and equipment.
5. Videotape horses and tack. Keep complete and accurate descriptions on file. Establish an organized, easy-to-find proof of ownership file to save valuable time in recovery process.
6. Count cattle regularly.
7. Don't establish a routine when feeding. Vary the times you feed.
8. Be cautious about who gets keys and combinations.
9. If possible, park trailers and equipment where they are out of view from the roadway.
10. Keep tack rooms and saddle compartments on trailers locked.
11. Don't feed in pens.
12. Participate in neighborhood Crime Watch programs.
13. Don't build pens close to a roadway.
14. Never leave keys in tractors or other equipment.
15. Know the credibility of the people that work for and with you.

It is up to you to protect what is yours. These key things can help avoid a costly losses on the farm.

## Why Think about Winter Weather?

In many parts of Texas, severe winter weather can threaten your safety and the safety of your property. Blizzards, heavy snow, freezing rain, ice, and freezing temperatures occasionally cause havoc in parts of Texas. Winter storms are known as deceptive killers because most deaths are indirectly related to the storm. Some causes of injury and death include hypothermia from prolonged exposure to the cold, carbon monoxide poisoning from defective heating units and/or poor ventilation, and automobile accidents. According to the National Weather Service, about half of people who die from hypothermia are over the age of 60. The majority of fatalities that occur due to ice and snow happen in automobile accidents; other fatalities occur because people are caught out in the storm. Even if you think you are safe and warm at home, a winter storm can become dangerous if the power goes off. With a little planning, you can protect yourself and your family and keep your property losses to a minimum.

## What Should I Do to Protect Myself?

**1. Make a family disaster plan.** Prepare for winter weather hazards that may affect the area in which you live by making a family disaster plan. When making a plan, you will need to consider whether you will evacuate or shelter in place. When winter storms are approaching, we typically have some warning, which gives us time to better prepare. If the storm brings unexpected severe weather, families need to know how they will communicate. Determine what you will do if you shelter in place and lose power. How will you care for your animals? What do you need to do to prepare if someone in the household has special needs, and how will you accommodate them? You need to know how to shut off the water at your meter. Your family disaster plan will help you to respond appropriately and make wise decisions about winter weather emergencies.

**2. Get prepared.** The main concerns related to winter weather are loss of heat, power, and telephone service, as well as a shortage of supplies if storm conditions are severe or continue for more than a day. **Take an inventory** of emergency items on hand to make sure you have everything needed to survive for three to five days. Make two lists—one of what you already have and one of what you will need. Don't forget to check camping gear that may be stored away; items such as propane camping stoves, lanterns, matches, and sleeping bags can be very useful. The disaster supplies listed below serve as a general guideline. Each family is unique and has different needs, so adjust the contents of your kit accordingly.

- ☐ **Flashlights.** Be sure to have extra batteries.
  
- ☐ **Telephone.** If your electricity is lost, cordless phones will not work. However, as long as the phone lines are functioning properly, an old-fashioned style phone with a cord connecting the handset to the phone base will work. Cell phones may or may not work. Battery powered two-way radios are one way to stay in communication with family members who are inside the radio's range limit.
  
- ☐ **Extra set of car and house keys.** Store an extra set of keys in a place outside your home that you know you can access in case of an emergency. If electric power is lost, garage door openers will not work, and an extra set of keys may come in handy.
  
- ☐ **Battery-powered NOAA weather radio and an A.M./F.M. battery-powered radio.** These radios may be your only links to outside information. Be sure to have extra batteries.
  
- ☐ **Water.** Keep a three-day supply of **bottled water**. Have available one gallon of water per person per day for drinking. During extended storms, water from the water heater tank can be used for drinking. If you have advanced warning of a storm, the bath tub can be filled with water to be used for flushing toilets.
  
- ☐ **Food.** Keep high-energy foods on hand such as dried fruit, nuts, cereal, granola bars, and other food that requires no cooking or refrigeration.
  
- ☐ **Cash.** Keep extra cash in an easily accessible place in case of an emergency. ATM machines may not work if electricity is lost.
  
- ☐ **First aid kit, baby supplies and prescription medication.**
  
- ☐ **Heating fuel.** Check your fuel level frequently during the winter months, and make sure to refuel your tank before it is empty. Fuel carriers may not reach you for days after a winter storm.
  
- ☐ **Emergency heat sources.** Fireplaces, wood stoves, and kerosene heaters are good "alternate" sources of heat in an emergency situation. **Never burn charcoal indoors! It releases carbon monoxide.** If you choose one of these appliances to heat your home, know how to use it safely and appropriately. If you use a gas-powered portable generator, it must be set up in a dry outdoor area and away from air intakes to avoid carbon monoxide -

poisoning. Know what wattage the generator will support, and carefully follow the manufacturer's directions for use. The generator will be helpful when there is electrical power loss. Depending on the generator, it may be used to run some appliances, but it may not have enough wattage for running an electric space heater. Check the wattage requirements.

– Mid-Sized generators (4,000–5,000 watts) will power your basic survival appliances, including your refrigerator, sump pump, furnace fan, and several other appliances.

– Large generators (6,000–9,000 watts) will help make the power outage experience more peaceful, supplying power to even more appliances.

– X-Large generators (10,000+ watts) supply enough electricity to restore power to small homes. Most include an electric starter, which is ideal for elderly homeowners who are unable to pull the cord.

☐ **Fire extinguishers, smoke alarms, and carbon monoxide alarms.** Test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms once a month to ensure they work properly. The U.S. Fire Administration recommends that you replace the batteries every six months. Know how to safely and properly use a fire extinguisher, and maintain it by checking the pressure level gauge at least once a year.

**3. Be prepared while traveling in a vehicle.** Take extra precautions to avoid extreme winter weather while on the road. Plan trips and check the latest weather reports before traveling to your destination. Fully check and winterize your vehicle before the winter season begins. This preparation includes checking the battery, ignition system, thermostat, lights, flashers, exhaust, heater, brakes, defroster, tires, antifreeze, windshield washer fluid, and oil. Keep your gas tank near full to avoid ice in the tank and fuel lines. Avoid traveling alone, and let a friend or family member know your travel route/itinerary.

Carry a winter storm survival kit in your car, which should include:

- ☐ mobile phone, charger, and battery; blankets/sleeping bags;
- ☐ flashlight with extra batteries; first-aid kit; knife;
- ☐ drinking water; high calorie, non-perishable food; extra clothing to keep dry;
- ☐ large empty can to use as emergency toilet;
- ☐ tissues and paper towels; small can and waterproof matches;
- ☐ sack of sand or cat litter for traction; shovel; windshield scraper and brush;
- ☐ tool kit; tow rope; battery booster cables; water container;
- ☐ compass and road maps; and emergency flares and fluorescent flag.

**4. Dress for the season.** Wear several layers of loose fitting, lightweight, warm clothing instead of one layer of heavy clothing. Dressing in layers allows for an easy adjustment if you become too hot or cold. Make sure that outer garments are water-repellent. Wear a hat, as half of your body heat can be lost from the head. Cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs from extremely cold air.

**5. Prepare animals/pets.** Farm animals and pets require extra attention when it's cold outside. Take extra precautions to ensure the well-being of your animals by providing plenty of water and food, as well as appropriate shelter. For more information on winter care for animals visit, [http://www.americanhumane.org/site/PageServer?pagename=pa\\_care\\_issues\\_wintercare](http://www.americanhumane.org/site/PageServer?pagename=pa_care_issues_wintercare).

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*This information was written by Janie Harris and Lisa Norman with Texas AgriLife Extension, The Texas A&M University System, November 2005, <http://fcs.tamu.edu/>.*

### Leadership Marion County

Bringing back and oldie, but goodie Extension program (Texas Rural Leadership Program). This program has innovated itself since the last classes were put on in Marion County. In 1995, Leadership Marion County was responsible for bringing International Paper company to Jefferson. This group previously lasted 3 years and went inactive. If successful this group will make networks around the region and develop a plan for further growth of Marion County. Great communities do not happen by accident, they are well planned and lots of consideration goes into planning for them. Leadership by many individuals makes for the best model and Leadership Marion County should strive to become the best leaders around. For more information about Leadership Marion County please contact the Marion County Extension Office 903-665-2421.

**GROWING FISHERMEN!**

On November 14, 2011 several Texas High School Bass Championship hopefuls took off from a day at school to compete in the first of three qualifying tournaments to represent Jefferson High School at the Championships in Temple during the spring. The next tournament will be held in February or March and the championship is usually in April. These 4-H members have been meeting and planning these tournaments and getting educated about what competition fishing is all about. The president of the club is Seth McGregor, Vice President Ryan Gibbons, Secretary Jacob Kendrick, Treasurer Kenneth Vaughn, other members include: Jaylon Stanley, Jacob Laster, Dillion Williams.

The tournament day was perfect with high temperatures in the lower 80's and the fish were biting. Here are the results of the tournament and standing so far. 1st Jacob Kendrick - 7.40 lbs, 2nd Seth McGregor - 3.18 lbs, 3rd Ryan Gibbons 2.87 lbs. Every student caught fish on this day, some just caught more than others. If you would like to help support the Jefferson Bass Assassins or join please contact the Marion County Extension office at 903-665-2272. There will be educational opportunities to increase your catch during the winter months as we prepare for the final run and determine the top students at Jefferson High School.



not pictured Jacob Laster.

**FDA: Holiday Food Safety Success Kit**

Many people don't realize that food safety is the most important ingredient in preparing food for the holidays. The Holiday Food Safety Success Kit, developed by the non-profit Partnership for Food Safety Education, provides tips on how to make sure holiday meals are safe as well as delicious. Recipes, shopping checklist, food safety tips, and children's activities are included in the multi-media program.



**GET THE KITCHEN READY** TheKitchen(See Safety Shopping List for things you will need on hand to have a “food safe” kitchen for the big feast).

Use hot water and soap to clean the sink, counters, cutting boards, pans, knives, thermometer and other utensils and serving pieces. You might want to sanitize the countertop and your cutting boards. To do this use a diluted bleach solution of 1T unscented liquid bleach (not more) to 1 gallon of water. Let the bleach solution stand on the surface for a few minutes; then rinse and blot dry with clean paper towels.

Have plenty of clean cloth towels (or paper towels) on hand for the meal preparation and clean-up. If you use cloth towels, wash them often in the hot cycle of your washing machine.

Clear a large enough space on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator to accommodate the turkey. Check the temperature of your refrigerator. It should be 40 °F or below as measured with an appliance thermometer. [Click here for more on refrigerator temperature.]

Make sure you have a food thermometer and calibrate it if necessary. [see Speaking of Thermometers, below]

When preparing the meal, rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under running tap water, including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten. Blot dry with a clean cloth towel or paper towel.

Sharpen knives yourself or take them to a professional if necessary.

Wash your hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds before and after handling food.

Remind others who will be in the kitchen handling food to wash their hands too.

#### AND SPEAKING OF THERMOMETERS ...

Using a food thermometer is the only reliable way to ensure safety and to determine desired "doneness" of meat, poultry and egg products. Cooking these foods to a safe minimum internal temperature as measured with a food thermometer will destroy any harmful microorganisms.

#### Types of Thermometers

Food thermometers come in several types and styles, and vary in level of technology and price. To select the type that will work best for you, get more information on thermometers from USDA.

Digital Food Thermometers, Dial Food Thermometers, Single-Use Temperature Indicators, Pop-Up Timers

#### Using the Food Thermometer

Most available food thermometers will give an accurate reading within 2 °F to 4 °F. The reading will only be correct, however, if the thermometer is placed in the proper location in the food. If not inserted correctly, or if the food thermometer is placed in the wrong area, the reading will not accurately reflect the internal temperature of the food. In general, the food thermometer should be placed in the thickest part of the food, away from bone, fat or gristle.

#### Check Manufacturer's Instructions

Before using a food thermometer, read the manufacturer's instructions, which should tell you how far the thermometer must be inserted in a food to give an accurate reading. If instructions are not available, check the stem of the food thermometer for an indentation, or "dimple." This shows one end of the location of the sensing device. Dial thermometers must penetrate about 2 to 3 inches into the food. Most digital thermometers will read the temperature in a small area of the tip.

#### AVOID CROSS-CONTAMINATION in the KITCHEN

Wash hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food and after using the bathroom, changing diapers and handling pets.

In the refrigerator, store turkey and other raw foods that will be cooked on the bottom shelves and ready-to-eat foods on the top shelves. Put turkey in a rimmed pan to catch any leaking juices.

Designate separate cutting boards for raw meats or clean and sanitize cutting boards between uses for different foods.

Clean and sanitize knives between uses on different foods and place only sanitized knives back in their racks.

Sanitize any utensil, equipment or food contact surface after it has been in contact with raw foods, especially meat or eggs.

Never move boxes or containers that may have been stored on the floor onto countertops.

The non-profit Partnership for Food Safety Education saves lives and improves public health through research-based, actionable consumer food safety initiatives that reduce foodborne illness. Sign up to be a BAC Fighter at [www.fightbac.org!](http://www.fightbac.org!)

For more information about food safety and more on the Holiday food safety kit click on the link below:

<http://www.holidayfoodsafety.org/>



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