Marion County Extension Newsletter
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TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

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Happy Holidays!

The Marion County Extension Office wishes each of you a wonderful Holiday Season. It has been an eventful year with the Forestry programs, Community and Economic Development programs "Leadership Marion County", 4-H and Youth development "Jefferson Bass Assassin's" Going to the High School bass Championships, and all the camps and activities, Health and Wellness "Biggest Loser" etc. Get some rest and get healthy for 2013, we are sure 2013 will be bigger and better than ever.

From the Garden

Nancy Roe
Extension Horticulturist

Compost is a partially stabilized product of microbial decomposition of organic materials. It can increase water and nutrient holding capacity of sandy soils; increase aeration and internal drainage of clay soils; add nutrients; increase populations of earthworms and soil microorganisms; and suppress some plant diseases.

Growers considering use of a particular compost should know something about its origin and production methods.

Feedstocks are the materials used to produce compost. A compost may be made of one or several of the following feedstocks:

Mixed municipal waste: (household garbage) If all recyclable materials are removed, this feedstock contains mainly paper, fabrics, and food wastes. If it is not sorted, materials such as batteries, household chemicals, and construction debris can add heavy metals or other undesirable components.

Biosolids (sewage sludge): This is the semi-solid material that results from treatment in a municipal waste water treatment plant. It is usually a good source of nitrogen and phosphorus. Biosolids for composts should be low in heavy metals (arsenic, cadmium, chromium, copper, lead, mercury, molybdenum, nickel, selenium, and zinc). Biosolids from residential communities generally do not contain high levels of heavy metals. In areas where industry is contributing to the liquid waste stream, the metals may be a problem if pollution control laws are not enforced. High salts may also be a problem in biosolids. Yard trimmings: (grass clippings, leaves, and woody materials from tree and shrub pruning) These materials are usually free from contaminants, although plastic yard clean-up bags may sometimes be included. If construction debris is allowed, it should not include treated lumber and non-organic materials such as shingles and nails.

Animal manures: (poultry, horse, dairy, or feedlot operations) Some may contain straw, hay, or woody materials as bedding. The poultry manures are usually highest in nitrogen and phosphorus. Salts can be a problem in some manures.

Food wastes: (from restaurants, institutions, or food processing plants) They may include all types of foods, as well as paper that has been used in food preparation or serving.

In Texas, the TNRCC compost regulations classify 4 levels of compost facilities:

- "Exempt" facilities compost only yard trimmings, clean wood, vegetative material, paper, and manure.
- Facilities in the "Notification" tier may compost those materials plus meat, fish, dead animal carcasses, oils, greases or dairy materials.
- "Registration" is required if biosolids or sorted municipal waste are included.
- Facilities which compost mixed municipal waste must obtain a "Permit".

Composting Methods vary depending on factors like feedstock, amount of compost, facility size, time requirements, weather, equipment required, and economics.

Static piles: Feedstocks are piled and allowed to set undisturbed until it has composted. This is the least expensive, but slowest method. Material on the outside of the pile may not be exposed to heat needed to kill weed seeds or disease organisms.

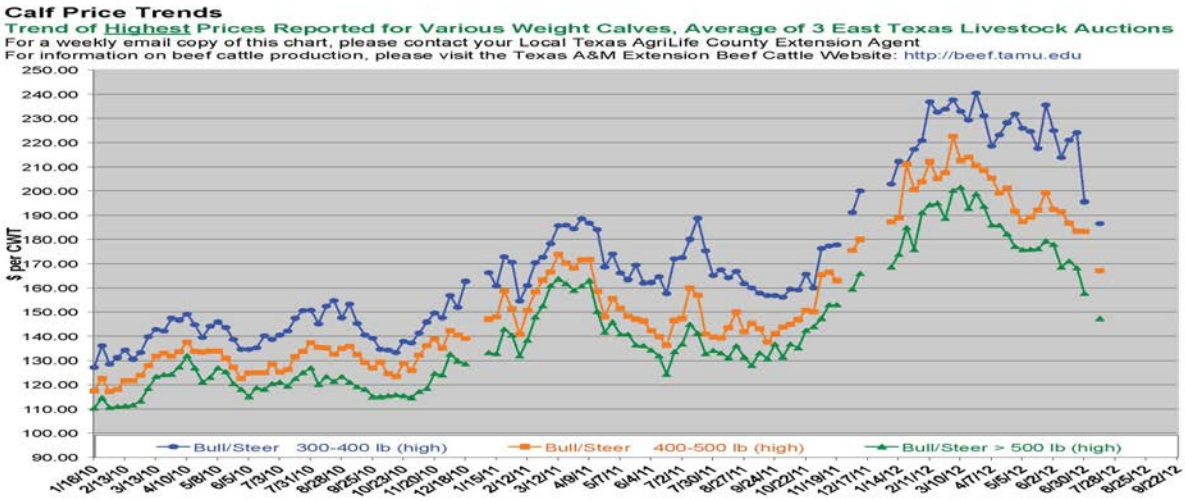
Aerated static piles: Air is circulated through piles by a system of pipes and fans. Turned windrows: These may be turned by front end loaders or compost turning machines. Frequency of turning varies according to the operation. Within limits, more frequent turning tends to speed up composting.

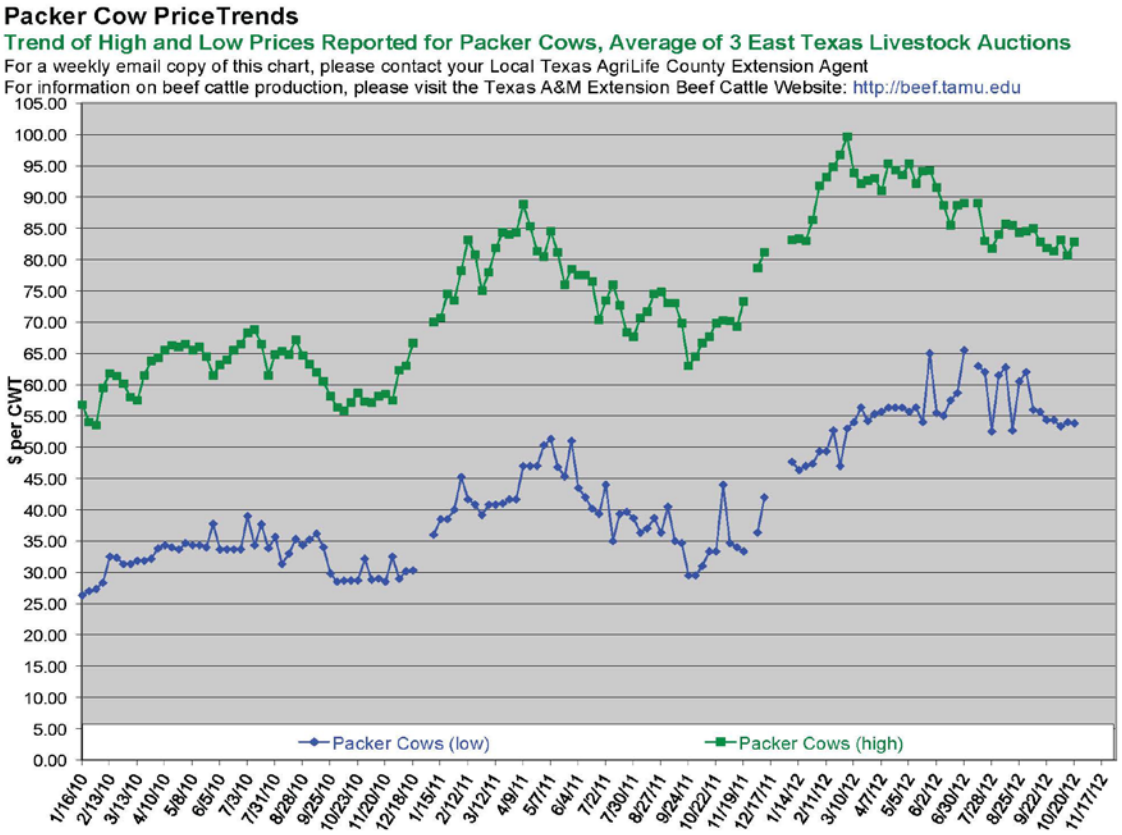
In-vessel system: These use some kind of closed vessel-it may revolve or contain an auger to turn the compost. Some of these are anaerobic (without air) systems.

These methods may be combined; for instance, material may be composted in a vessel system for a period of time and then turned out into static piles.

Next issue will have information about compost characteristics and safety.

Beef Today





MARKET COWS – DON'T FORGET THEY'RE PART OF INCOME

Sometimes we tend to think calves are the income from a beef cow herd, but calves are only part of the story. In a typical herd where replacement heifers are saved for breeding about 50% of income is from steer calves, 30% from heifers not retained for breeding, and 20% from marketed breeding stock. Producers need to pay attention to factors affecting value of marketed breeding stock. That may mean such things as increasing sale weight and body condition, if done economically, and marketing when prices are higher. Fall (especially October) has historically been the worst time to sell packer cows and bulls because marketings are typically highest at that time.

By Dr. Stephen Hammack, Professor & Extension Beef Cattle Specialist Emeritus

AgriLIFE EXTENSION
Texas A&M System

Upcoming Regional Beef and Forage Programs

February 22, 2013	**East Texas Pasture Management Program** Location: Overton, TX Registration Options: onsite and preregistration
March 22, 2013	**Central Texas Pasture Management Program** Location: Stephenville, TX Registration Options: onsite and preregistration
April 26, 2013	**Hay Production and Purchasing Program** Location: Overton, TX Registration Options: preregistration only
August 23, 2013	**Winter Pastures for Central and East Texas** Location: Overton, TX Registration Options: preregistration only
October 18, 2013	**Forage Systems for Cattle Operations** Location: Overton, TX Registration Options: preregistration only

These programs are hosted by Dr. Vanessa Corriher, Forage Extension Specialist, and Dr. Jason Banta, Beef Cattle Extension Specialist, and are developed to provide in depth training of various beef and forage management topics.

For more information on these programs please visit http://overton.tamu.edu or contact Michelle Sensing @ 903-834-6191.

Educational programs of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, or national origin.

Health and Wellness

Common Cold Checklist

When you have a cold, use this checklist to decide whether a visit to the doctor is necessary.

This checklist is for anyone over 2 years old who is in good general health. People with other health problems and children below age 2 may need to see a doctor even before these warning signs are present.

Always listen to your doctor if he or she gives you advice that is different from this checklist.

See your doctor if there are any of these warning signs:

- Oral temperature above 103 degrees Fahrenheit (39.4 degrees Celsius).
- Bad pain in any of these places: chest, head, stomach, ears or glands in neck.
- Shortness of breath or wheezing.
- Sore throat that is getting worse and oral temperature above 101 degrees Fahrenheit (38.3 degrees Celsius) for 24 hours.
- Sore throat and oral temperature above 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.8 degrees Celsius) for two days.
- Oral temperature above 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.8 degrees Celsius) for three days.
- Any of these signs that have lasted a full week: fever, sore throat or very runny nose.

This checklist was developed and tested by researchers at the MU School of Medicine, Department of Family and Community Medicine, and originally published in the following article: Carl R. Roberts, Peter B. Imrey, James D. Turner, Michael C. Hosokawa, Joan M. Alster, *Reducing Physician Visits for Colds Through Consumer Education,* Journal of the American Medical Association, volume 250 (Oct. 21, 1983) 1986-89.

Community Development

Measuring Up:
Benchmarking Regional Success

Studies benchmarking regional competitiveness are common in the popular press, especially on the Web. High rankings or grades often find their way to the home pages and press releases of cities or states that are eager to broadcast their success. Benchmarking studies are popular because they condense a large amount of information into a single data point, allowing the easy comparison of regional economies. Benchmarking studies also can help communities chart their progress over time.

So, what do the rankings mean? What are leaders to do if they aren't where they want to be on that ladder or if their community is too small to be included in metropolitan indices? And, by the way, what exactly makes a region competitive?

Regional competitiveness:

"[U]ltimately competitive regions and cities are places where both companies and people want to locate and invest in."—Kitson, Martin, and Tyler, 2004[1]

There is no standard definition of what makes a competitive. Competitiveness is based on rare, nontradable factors that give regional firms a competitive advantage and help them earn a greater share of global markets.[2] In turn, employees and the overall community benefit from more and better jobs, higher incomes, and increased quality of life. Competitiveness moves past industrial recruitment and aims for sustainable development based on regional strengths.

Rankings:

Studies with different data, study methods, and definitions of competitiveness can arrive at vastly different conclusions about what regions are competitive. For example, in June 2009 Kiplinger[3] and the Brookings Institute[4] both released regional competitiveness studies. Both studies focused on jobs and income, critical elements to regional survival in an economic downturn. However, Brookings Institute also had a real estate component, and the studies combined their measures differently. Only three of Kiplinger's top 10 cities (out of 361 metropolitan areas) were in the Brookings Institute's top 20 (out of 366 metro areas). In Texas, only Austin ranked highly in both studies.

In fact, a 2007 study showed that county rankings were highly sensitive to the way data were combined.[5] The researchers created seven indices using different ways of combining the same data for 3,074 US counties. Under three methods, both Dallas County (Dallas) and Harris County (Houston) were in the top 20 US counties, but Dallas and Harris Counties ranked in the bottom 20 counties under two methods. In one of the two indices in which Dallas fared poorly, remote Loving County also ranked in the bottom 20, but in the second, Loving County ranked 12th!

How to use benchmarking studies:

Given the actual and potential disparity of rankings, it's clear that benchmarking studies have a certain margin of error. However, they can also provide valuable information, especially if you are willing to dig a little deeper into the studies. These tips can help you understand benchmarking studies in the context of your community:

Consider the purpose of the study. Some studies focus on business growth, while others focus on quality of life. Check the purpose of the study you are looking at to consider whether the study fits your community's goals. If you can't find a stated purpose, examination of the variables and weights used in the study will often reveal the true purpose (see below).

Reflect on the rankings. Given what you know about the ranked cities from the media, your travels, or your research, think about whether the rankings seem plausible. Does the study rely on inputs (e.g. workforce education, infrastructure, or R&D funding) or outputs (e.g., population, employment, and per capita income)? Your city may be growing by leaps and bounds, and an output study a few years down the road will recognize the value of your inputs today.

Consider realistically whether your community could or would want to emulate some of the ranked cities. If not, then looking to "winners" for advice could be a surefire way to lose support for your economic development efforts. On the other hand, there may be parts of the study that are relevant to your community's goals and where you could learn from successful communities.

Look at the underlying data. Move past the overall rank and consider the variables used. Are the variables relevant to the study's stated purpose and to the goals your community wants to measure? Are important variables missing? Do variables seem to be measured appropriately?

Evaluate the study methodology. Try to find out how the variables were combined (e.g., averaging raw scores, statistical weights, etc.). Understand why the variables are combined in a particular way. Be critical though—do you really think that the percent of high school dropouts and the number of parks deserve equal weight in attracting new industries to town? If data or sub-scores for variables are provided, look at those scores to measure your community's progress toward its goals.

Realize that less data is available for smaller regions. Many data sources collect information on metropolitan areas. That means that many variables simply aren't available for small towns, rural areas, and sometimes even small cities. For example, the Census Bureau's American Community Survey publish data for densely populated areas annually, but less populated regions must rely more heavily on decennial Census figures.

Being Competitive:

Regional competitiveness is influenced by current practices and the region's socio-economic history. Community leaders should consider whether copying other region's successful development plan is a wise strategy. Adoption of some practices may be beneficial. However, adopting the practices of a community with a different history could have a harmful effect on the region.

Community leaders may look for successful regions that have a similar structure and history. These regions may provide more relevant case studies in competitiveness.[7] Yet each community has its own strengths upon which to be competitive, and the unique aspects of your community hold its potential. Wholesale copying of another region's development strategy is unlikely to be sustainable.

For more information contact:

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6 [1]Kitson, Michael, Ron Martin, and Peter Tyler. 2004. *Regional Competitiveness: An Elusive yet Key Concept? Regional Studies.* 38(9): 991-999. [2]Stolarick, Kevin. 2009. "Best Cities: It's All About Jobs." *Kiplinger's Personal Finance*, July. [3] Berube, Alan, Howard Wial, Alec Friedhoff, and David Warren. 2009. MetroMonitor: Tracking Economic Recession and Recovery in America's 100 Largest Metropolitan Areas. Washington DC: Brookings Institute, June. [4]Ma, Hao. 2000. "Competitive Advantage and Firm Performance." *Competitiveness Review* 10(2): 15-32. [5]Mack, Elizabeth, Tony H. Grubesic, and Erin Kessler. 2007. "Indices of Industrial Diversity and Regional Economic Composition." *Growth and Change* 38(3): 474-509. [6]Fisher, P. 2005. *Grading Places: What Do Business Climate Rankings Really Tell Us?* Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute. [7]Barkley, D.L. 2008. Evaluations of Regional Competitiveness: Making a Case for Case Studies. Fellows address to the Southern Regional Science Association, Arlington, VA, March 27-30.

4-H and Youth Development

In Full Swing!

The Marion County 4-H program is excited about the opportunities for 4-H youth this year. 50 students and 18 adult leaders are involved with 4-H in Marion County. Some are involved with poultry, rabbits, goats, beef, and swine projects. 4-H has much more to offer than cows, plows, and sows. Opportunities exists for youth to give an illustrated talk, method demonstration, singing, play

an instrument, leadership, citizenship, public speaking, and much more. For an example check out the local Jefferson Great Outdoor club which deals with wildlife and camping. Maybe you are into fishing check out the Jefferson Bass Assassin's 4-H club which fishes to go to the Texas High School Bass Championships with the The Bass Federation in April. You may want as Holly Belknap did last year go to Texas 4-H Congress or National 4-H Congress. Take over the Capital and be a part of the legislature. If you want to learn more about how things grow you may want to join the Back to Earth 4-H Club, or are you a shutter bug and like taking photographs look into joining the Shutter 4-H Club.

To find out more information about the 4-H clubs of Marion County or get involved give us a call 903-665-2421 or shoot me an email bafry@ag.tamu.edu .

Upcoming events

December 6, 2012: Beef committee meeting: Discussing the New Year regulation with the Texas Animal Health Commission about tagging the cattle you plan to sale.

December 12, 2012: Leadership Marion County: Strategies for Obtaining and Using Qualitative and Quantitative Data

January 10, 2013: 4-H Leaders Volunteer Training: Club activities

January 15, 2013: Forestry Committee meeting: Discussing and planning the forestry programs, and result demonstration.

For more information contact the Marion County Extension office.

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