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Trans-Pecos Wildlife Conference promises answers to wide range of questions

By: Steve Burns

ALPINE – Organizers of the 2016 Trans-Pecos Wildlife Conference promise an exciting new program for this year's event set for Aug. 3-5 in Alpine.

"This multi-agency opportunity will be a hard-hitting, high-quality educational experience for anyone interested in wildlife in the Trans-Pecos region of Far West Texas," said Dr. John Tomecek, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service wildlife specialist at San Angelo. "Our speakers will include ranchers, researchers, outfitters and other 'students of wildlife,' including former Texas Parks and Wildlife Department commission chairman Dan Allen Hughes Jr."

Pronghorn antelope, such as this trio near Marfa, are but one of the wildlife species to be discussed during the Trans-Pecos Wildlife Conference Aug. 3-5 in Alpine. (Texas A&M AgriLife Communications photo by Steve Byrns)

The program is being co-hosted by AgriLife Extension, the Borderlands Research Institute at Sul Ross, the Texas Wildlife Association, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Individual registration is \$95 by

July 25 and \$110 thereafter. For more information contact Tomecek at 325-657-7311, John.Tomecek@ag.tamu.edu or register online at <http://www.texas-wildlife.org/resources/events/trans-pecos-wildlife-conference>.

Day 1 activities open at 5 p.m. with registration and social at the Granada Theatre, 207 E. Holland Ave. Evening topics and speakers will include a presentation and discussion session by the Texas Deer Study Group; Antler Development on the Apache Ranch, Hughes; and Lessons Learned from Decades of Deer Management, Greg Simons, Wildlife Systems Inc., owner/operator, San Angelo.

Day 2 opens with registration from 7:45-8:30 a.m. followed by the general session, Scale of Wildlife Management. The conference will then break into concurrent sessions II through V for the remainder of the day.

Concurrent sessions will include:

— Session II, Carnivore and Non-game Management: Identifying predation on wildlife and livestock, Mountain lion ecology, Managing songbirds, and Opportunities for landowners.

— Session III, Managing Habitats in the Desert: Using guzzlers to enhance wildlife.

— Session IV, Big Game: Mule deer management, Antler development in mule deer, Pronghorn restoration, Desert bighorn sheep restoration.

— Session V, Game Birds: Boom-bust dynamics for desert quail, Habitats and feeding for quail, Managing wetlands in the desert.

The final day of the conference will be a half-day field tour leaving at 8:30 a.m. to the historic CF Ranch in the Davis Mountains where various range and wildlife management practices will be highlighted. These will include Getting to Know Your Mule Deer Food Plants, and a comparative anatomy session that will demonstrate why deer, aoudad, elk and pronghorn antelope eat the nutrients and select the habitats they do.



Permian Basin Oil and Gas Stewardship Conference marks fourth year



AgriLife Extension program set for Aug. 5 in Kermit

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KERMIT –The Permian Basin Oil and Gas Stewardship Conference, now in its fourth year, is set from 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Aug. 5 in Kermit.

The multi-county Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service program will be at Jerrie's Café, 247 W. U.S. Highway 302.

"We've seen lots of changes in ranching and in the oil and gas industry over the four years we've held this program here in the Permian Basin," said Caleb Eaton, AgriLife Extension agent in Ward County. "And although the price of oil and steers is a lot lower now than when we first started this

educational effort, our region is still very much in the business of producing oil and beef."

Permian Basin Oil and Gas Stewardship Conference set for Aug. 5 in Kermit. (Texas A&M AgriLife Communications photo by Steve Byrns)

Dena Floyd, AgriLife Extension agent in Winkler and Loving counties, said this year's program will be steeped in a positive light.

"This year we want to look at success stories between agriculture and the energy industry," she said. "So even as both markets soften there are plenty of opportunities for success still available."

Floyd will speak on Ranch Safety for Oil and Gas Operators. She will be followed by Dr. Monty Dozier, AgriLife Extension Southeast regional program leader at Bryan, who will present Alternative Waters for Hydraulic Fracturing.

Dozier will share the results of a study in the Eagle Ford Shale on using alternative waters for energy use and how those same practices could be implemented in the Permian Basin.

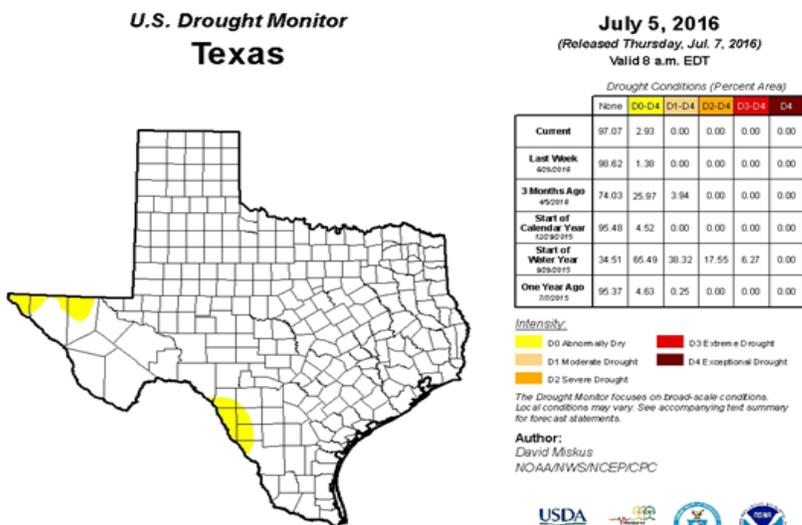
The keynote luncheon speaker will be Commissioner Ryan Sitton of Houston, Railroad Commission of Texas.

The final program speaker will be Dr. Katie Lewis, Texas A&M AgriLife Research soil scientist at Pecos. Her presentation, Ag Use of Recycled Produced Water, will deal with a project conducted on the research station at Pecos last year using recycled water to irrigate cotton.

Individual registration is \$30. RSVP by July 29 to the AgriLife Extension office in Winkler County by calling 432-586-2593 or email Dena.Floyd@ag.tamu.edu. The fee includes lunch.

Participating counties are Ward, Andrews, Winkler, Loving, Andrews, Ector, Crane and Reeves.

"although the price of oil and steers is a lot lower now than when we first started this educational effort, our region is still very much in the business of producing oil and beef."



Texas A&M AgriLife study shows bull selection critical in rebuilding herds



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CORPUS CHRISTI — The importance of bull selection to South Texas cow/calf producers in rebuilding their herds has been fleshed out in a new publication by experts at the Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center at Corpus Christi and Texas A&M's department of agricultural economics in College Station.

"Profitability of Beef Cattle Best Management Practices in South Texas: Improving Profitability with Genetically Superior Sires and Higher Breeding Ratios," is the latest addition to Farm Assistance Focus, a series of cow/calf publications dating back to 2006.

A recent Texas A&M AgriLife study details the importance of selecting genetically superior bulls in rebuilding a cow/calf operation. (AgriLife Extension photo by Joe Paschal)

"Most of these publications are relevant to other areas of the state even though they reference South Texas," said Mac Young, a Texas

A&M AgriLife Extension Service program specialist in Corpus Christi and one of four authors of the study.

All the publications can be viewed at the AgriLife Extension's website at <http://agrilife.org/coastalbend/program-areas/farm-assistance/>.

Other authors of the study include Joe Paschal, AgriLife Extension livestock specialist, and Levi Russell, AgriLife Extension agricultural economist, both in Corpus Christi, and Steven Klose, AgriLife Extension economist in College Station.

"Cow/calf producers in South Texas and across the state have been rebuilding herds since 2014 and will probably continue doing so for the next three years or so," Young said. "The rebuilding of herds is based on high market prices in 2014 and early 2015, and improved grazing conditions in late 2014 and 2015 in many parts of the state."

Based on detailed economic analyses, this most recent study concludes that bull selection can have "a major impact on herd performance and bottom-line profits. Bulls should be more than cow fresheners, used only to produce an average performing calf crop. Higher prices for better quality genetics

will normally be returned from higher returns from calf sales."

The study notes that many beef producers often use price as their primary criteria in selecting a breeding bull in an attempt to control costs. But they fail to consider "the value of the proven genetics in the higher-priced bull."

But it is not enough to just use genetically superior bulls, Young said.

"Those superior bulls need to breed as many cows as possible to maximize the impact of his genetics in the cowherd and profitability," he said. "Increasing the breeding ratio — number of cows bred to a bull or bull-to-cow ratio — assists in offsetting the additional cost of the genetically superior herd sire."

The study illustrates the financial implications of genetically superior bull selection and an increased breeding ratio on herd performance and profitability of South Texas ranching operations.

"Not only are the calves of higher quality, heavier and more uniform, and more desirable to the buyer who is willing to pay more, the replacement females from these genetically superior bulls will improve the genetics of the cow herd," the study states.

The study uses 2016 as the base year for a 10-year analysis of a representative ranch, and projections are carried through 2025.

The issue of bull selection will be presented at the 2016 Ag Symposium at the Corpus Christi center on April 19, Young said. He will also likely be presenting the topic at county programs throughout the year.

For more information, visit the AgriLife website noted above or contact Young at 361-265-9203.

"the value of the proven genetics in the higher-priced bull."

Hay bales are an investment worth protecting

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FORT WORTH — Springtime hay season is ramping up and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service agent Fred Hall, Tarrant County, wants to remind producers that bales are an investment worth protecting.

Hay quality is a key component to animal performance and proper hay storage is a key component to hay quality, Hall said. Hay loss can be expected, even under a barn, so mitigation and risk management are the keys to protecting as much of your investment as possible.

“They get a fantastic bale made and by not moving them off-field they endanger the stand and lose quality forage for their livestock,” Hall said.

“Storing bales properly can reduce losses and save producers money.”

Once bales have cured they should be taken to a permanent storage area and stacked, he said. The cutting, baling and hauling represents much of the cost of baled hay. Depending on yield, a 1,500-pound bale can cost up to \$45 to cut, roll and transport. Hundreds of round hay bales for sale near Kaufman. Storing hay outdoors can lead to losses due to weathering. Proper storage methods can reduce losses and save forage and money.

(Texas A&M AgriLife photo by Robert Burns)

If the bale is valued at \$100, the forage in the bale is worth \$55. It makes sense to protect bales and the \$45 per-bale investment as much as possible, Hall said.

When bales are stored outside and uncovered, weathering may affect hay quality up to 12 inches deep, he said. The depth will vary based on factors such as regional climate, the bale’s density, the storage location and

methods of protection used to mitigate weathering.

The general expectation, however, is there will be a 4- to 6-inch weathered layer for bales stored outside on the ground. This is important, Hall said, because the outer portions of bales make up a substantial portion of the bale’s volume.

Bales left in fields are exposed to the elements in all directions, he said. If three inches of the outside surface of a 5-foot by 6-foot bale are spoiled, it represents about 30 percent of the hay in that bale. In a 1,500-pound a 30 percent loss represents 450 pounds of hay. Producers should remove bales from fields as soon as possible to prevent damage to the hay and to the field, Hall said. Storing bales properly reduces the number of exposed surfaces and can reduce losses, especially if shelter is provided. Storing hay in barns can be a cost-effective method of protecting it for some producers. Barn storage protects the hay’s nutritional value and aesthetics. Plastic wraps can also be used to reduce losses.

Hall said hay stored outside is subject to wetting and drying cycles that degrade and leach nutrients from bales. Over time, this causes the fiber component of the forage, which is indigestible, to represent a larger percentage of the bale’s dry weight. The loss of total digestible nutrients can often be as much as 15 to 20 percent in weathered bales.

Bales left in the field often flatten out and soften, which makes loading, handling and hauling those bales difficult because some bales will fall apart and dry matter losses will increase, Hall said. To reduce losses on hay stored outdoors, run rows of hay bales on an upland site away from shade trees. Sunshine speeds up the drying process. Hall recommends placing bales in a north-south orientation and southern exposure. Set bales in rows so that the

flat sides are touching and the round sides are separated. This keeps rain from ponding on top of bales.

Also, Hall said, rows should be at least three feet apart to allow for sunlight and good air circulation. Keeping bales off the ground, either by using pallets, crossties, or rocks, is critical in preventing substantial losses especially in rainy seasons.

Texas A&M AgriLife studies suggest that often 50 percent or more of the storage losses associated with outside storage occur where the bale touches ground. Dry hay touching damp soil draws moisture into the bale.

Some producers store bales in the “mushroom” style, where bottom bales are on end, Hall said. This style provides less protection than end-to-end, especially if the rows are tight to each other. It’s been found that the bottom bales also tend to act as a wick and draw moisture from the ground.

The result of poor storage techniques is a weathered layer that is very low in quality and unpalatable to livestock, he said. Leaving hay in the field for extended times can expose the bale but also inhibit forage growth.

Forage plants smothered by a hay bale will be suppressed until the bale is removed. The longer the bale stays in one spot, the less likely the forage plants will recover. The area then becomes a prime site for weed invasion if the bales sets for over a week. Weed control costs add to the variable cost of the next crop or fixed costs if the field has to be renovated, he said.

Accessing moist fields can also cause damage to forage, especially legumes and forbs. Wheel traffic can hurt regrowth, he said.

Continued on Page 5

Hay Bales Continued..

AgriLife Extension agricultural economist Dr. Jason Johnson, Stephenville, said protecting hay through proper storage is protecting their time and money invested during production.

"It is better to have not made a hay crop at all and lost all of the pre-harvest expenses than to make a crop, spend the money to cut and bale it, and let it waste away losing all its feeding value and negatively

affecting regrowth because the bales were not handled, moved, and stored properly," he said. "In the end you will lose more money with that scenario than if you had never harvested a single bale."

For more information about protecting hay check out the publication "Round Bale Hay Storage" at: <http://agrilife.org/urbantarrantag>.



As pastures wither, poisonous plants can become a problem



AgriLife Extension sets Aug. 15 pasture and poisonous plant management workshop in Lubbock

Writer: Steve Byrns, 325-653-4576, sbyrns@tamu.edu

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LUBBOCK – Sparse pastures can force hungry livestock to eat toxic plants. To help producers manage their land properly, the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service will conduct a pasture and poison plant management workshop Aug. 15 in Lubbock.

The free educational program, which starts at 6:30 p.m., will be in The Bank Lobby located at 916 Main St., said Robert Scott, AgriLife Extension agriculture and natural resources

agent in Lubbock County.

"We've had a few cases of weed toxicity and I've noticed some toxic weeds in the county," Scott said. "With the pastures burning up in this summer heat, toxic weeds will be more evident as more desirable forage is eaten, so livestock will be more likely to feed on them.

"Our speaker will be Dr. Tim Steffens, AgriLife Extension rangeland resource management specialist at West Texas A&M University. And as the workshop's name implies, he'll speak on poison plant management and pasture management."

RSVP by noon Aug. 15 by calling 806-775-1740. More information is also available by calling that number.

Rancher's Breakfast

When: August 15, 2016 at 8:00 AM

Where: Crane County Extension Office, 900 W. 6th Street

Speaker: Dr. Bruce Carpenter – Extension Livestock Specialist

The Crane Rancher's Breakfast is scheduled for August 15th at 8:00 AM in the Crane County Extension Office. You are invited to come and eat breakfast, meet the new extension agent, receive an industry update from Extension Specialist, Dr. Bruce Carpenter, and talk about ag programs that you believe would be helpful to the county producers. If you have questions or would like an issue to be addressed in terms of the agricultural industry, now is the time to bring them to the table!

*If you plan on attending, please call 432-558-3522 or email Lyndi at lyndi.owensby@ag.tamu.edu to **RSVP by August 8th**. We look forward to hearing from you!*

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

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"The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating"

HOPE YOU CAN JOIN
US FOR THE
**RANCHER'S
BREAKFAST**
ON AUGUST 15TH.
SEE PAGE 5 FOR
MORE DETAILS



Agent's Note

In my short time here, I have seen more rain at one time than I have ever before! The wet start to the summer has resulted in a greener landscape. While these last two weeks have been hot and dry, hopefully the rains return soon to maintain the rangeland. If there is a particular issue or question that you would like to see addressed in the next newsletter, please don't hesitate to call or come by. I look forward to meeting and working with you all!

Best Wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lyndi R. Bryant". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

CEA-AG/NR
Crane County