TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

# Range & Ag. News

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## Texas: 2 Invasive Mexican Grasses Turning Up In State - Info You'll Need

*By: Steve Bryns, Texas A&M*

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service has new publications on two opportunistic and invasive grasses from Mexico now spreading into some of Edwards Plateau and Concho Valley pastures, said Dr. Morgan Russell, lead Author of both publications.

Russell, AgriLife Extension range specialist at San Angelo, said the culprits are Mexican needlegrass, which is infiltrating mostly from oil and gas operations, and Mexican feathergrass, a popular ornamental, which is escaping landscapes and cropping up rangeland.

The publications are Mexican Needlegrass by Russell and Dr. Roger Q. "Jake" Landers, AgriLife Extension range specialist emeritus, Menard, and Mexican Feathergrass by Russell and Dr. Barron Rector, AgriLife Extension range specialist., College Station.

"Mexican needlegrass is an introduced species from Mexico, though we don't know how it first got here," Russell said. " Range professionals are getting more questions about it as ranchers notice the grass in their pastures, mostly along disturbed sites such as oil and gas locations, pipelines and along caliche roads."

Russell said identification is straight-forward as the grass is very noticeable when spotted in pastures.

"It can look a lot like Texas wintergrass, which is a very common species to most ranchers here," she said. "But it is much rougher and coarser with very saw-toothed leaves that scratch when you wrap you hands around it. You can really feel those edges and know what you're dealing with. That texture is why livestock mostly shun it."

Russell said Landers first noticed the grass more than 30 years ago in Menard County and wrote a paper on it in the 1980s.

"But then the flurry of interest waned until today when we are seeing surge in the Mexican needlegrass population and density, so we are focusing more on it now and are using some of that earlier work that Dr. landers provided Texas A&M AgriLife."

The other pest, Mexican feathergrass, is a common plant material in the region's landscape trade, Russell said.

"It's kinds of ironic that Mexican feathergrass is such a threat to native pastures," she said. "It's a great ornamental grass here and you see it all over. It's very fine textured with a pretty seed head and it doesn't become overgrown like some other grasses do in the landscape. Aside from its beauty, its popular because it's so well adapted to dry arid environments and very shallow soil. It can practically be planted in a flower bed and walked away from and it will maintain itself."

Russell said problems occur when it escapes those flowerbeds into native pastures.

"In some areas where it has escaped, we are noticing prolific seed production and establishment in nearby ornamental landscapes and also in pasture surrounding those ornamental landscapes," she said. "Consequently, we're watching rangeland being invaded by the grass in some areas."

Russell said Mexican feathergrass has been declared a noxious species in California and a couple of other Western states but not in Texas, though the potential and opportunity exists for it to become a problem.

Mexican grass is palatable, se said, but only during the prime growing season.

"Once it produces its seed head it rapidly deteriorates in palatability and nutritional value, so most grazing livestock given the choice will venture away from it to graze more desirable forage. Doing so further gives this invader a competitive edge as the better plants are eaten, thus lessening the competition for water and nutrients.

"They are perennial though and will green up again next spring, so producers should make a point to keep an eye out for them next year."

For info on these and other rangeland issues, contact Russell

## 45th Annual Sheep & Goat Field Day/Expo

The 45th Annual Sheep & Goat Field Day will be from 8-11:30am on August 17th, 2018 at the Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center on U.S. Highway 87 north of San Angelo.

The field day will showcase work being conducted at the center, said Dr. John Walker, Texas A&M AgriLife Research center director. Presentations will include animal evaluation using records, livestock guardian dog technologies, and measuring wool yield and fiber diameter with near-infrared spectroscopy.

Following the field day, activities will move to the 1st Community Federal Credit Union Spur Arena for a noon meal and the start of the Texas Sheep and Goat Expo.

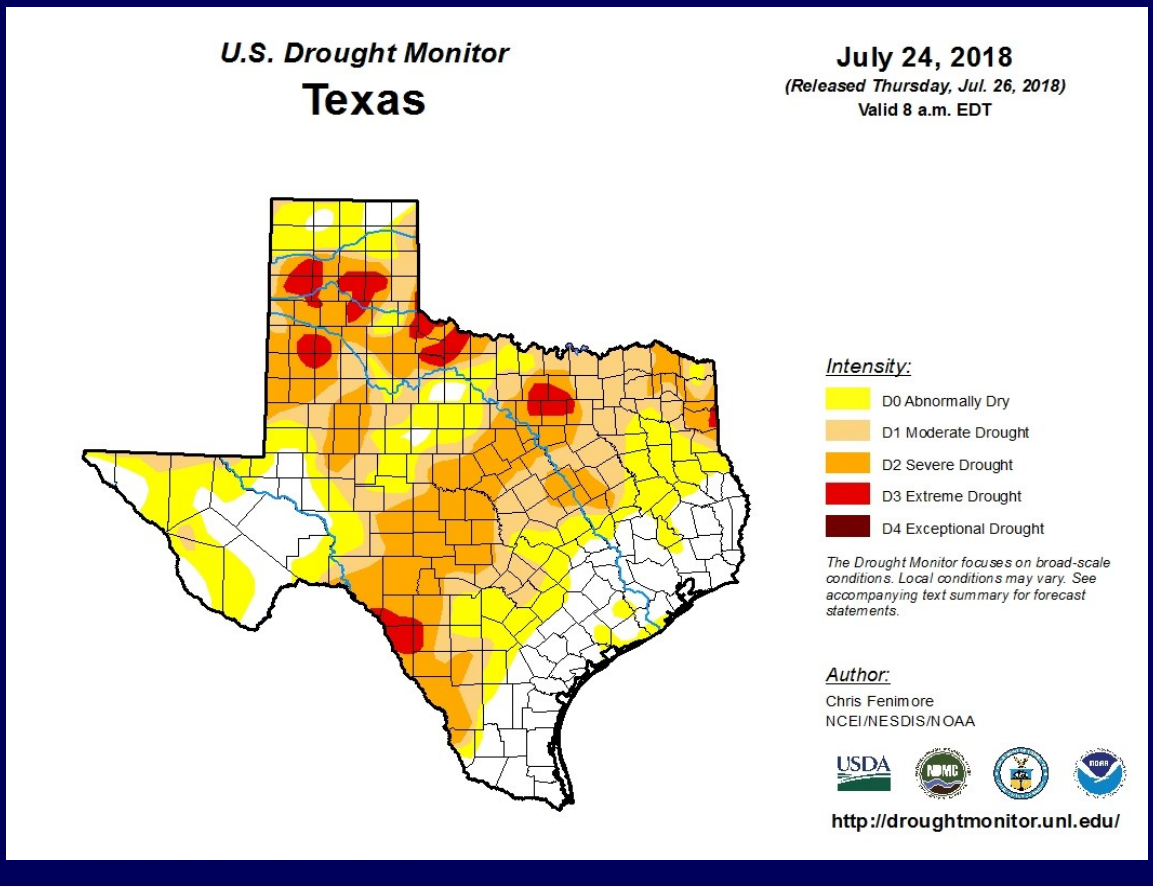
**FIELD DAY**: Free and open to public.

**EXPO**: Adult registration is $40 and youth registration is $15. The fees include all meals, snacks and educational materials associated with the expo. Online registration ends Aug 14th, though registration will still be available at the field day and again at the door at the expo.


## Livestock Weekly: Markets 7/26/18

### San Angelo-USDA

- Slaughter lambs were $10-20 higher, feeder lambs firm to $5 higher, nannies firm. Receipts totaled 6100 head.
- Calves and yearlings were $1-3 lower, slaughter cows and bulls $3 lower, stocker cows and pairs weak to slightly lower. Receipts totaled 1159 head.
- Slaughter meat goats were $5-10 higher. Goat slaughter under federal inspection the week ending July 7 totaled 8539 head. Goat meat imports ending July 14 totaled 354 metric tons.



# Continued drought could lead to culling herds

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OVERTON— Beef producers should be making plans regarding their herds in case drought conditions continue, said a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service expert.

Dr. Jason Banta, AgriLife Extension beef cattle specialist, Overton, said a shortage of forage and hay could mean producers will be forced to reduce herd numbers. Having a plan to cull herds can save producers money in the short– and long– term.

Banta said there was very little hay carryover from last year due to the extended winter. Cooler than normal temperatures into spring also meant the first hay cutting, which is typically one of the best, was subpar.

The second cutting was also below normal in quantity and quality due to drought, he said. Drought conditions are also affecting hay availability in other nearby states, including Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, and Arkansas.

"That means that hay supplies will be tight," he said. "It means they will need to look at stocking rates and begin thinking about reducing their herd numbers to save some forage supplies and reduce the need for hay in the winter."

Producers should adjust their stocking rates to avoid overgrazing pastures, Banta said. If moisture is received overgrazing makes it more difficult for grasses to recover.

To capitalize on rain, producers should consider keeping a nitrogen fertilizer source with low volatility on better-producing pastures, Banta said. Ammonium nitrate can sit on fields for several weeks with very little or no volatilization concerns.

"There should be nitrogen on pastures in the event that an unexpected rain comes," he said. "It's important because you never know when we might get moisture. It takes less rain to produce one ton of forage when there is good nitrogen available. So its best to capitalize on any moisture we get."

Banta said producers should also be mindful to maintain cow body condition. Keeping weight on cows is much easier than recovering lost pounds.

Producers may want to wean calves one to two months earlier than usual to help keep cows in better shape going into winter, he said.

"Letting a cow get below a body condition score of 4 will increase the cost to get them back to where they need to be," he said. "A bred cow will do what she has to do to bring her calf to term, but getting her bred the next time is what we're trying to preserve."

Banta said the U.S. cattle herd is the biggest it's been since 2009 so producers need to maximize the value of culls amid lower prices. Poor body conditions can mean even lower prices and lower weights. Taking culls to market in good condition can help maximize dollars per head.

If conditions continue to decline, Banta said producers should be prepared to cull their herds.

"There's no perfect strategy, but there are different options when it comes to culling," he said.

Cows with problems, such as bad udders, bad feet, a bad eye or temperament should always be the first to go.

If additional herd reduction is needed, the list below presents one option:

- Virgin replacement heifers
- Late calvers
- 2–year-old cows (they have the lowest reproductive rates)
- 3-year-old cows
- Mature cows (least affected by difficult conditions)

"Virgin replacement heifers are at the top of the list to sell first because those heifers generally have good value as feeder heifers or for breeding in other parts of the country," he said. "There are pros and cons to every strategy, the pros of this approach are lower feed costs and more calf income in the short run. However, it will mean higher replacement rates over a short period of time in he future."

Another strategy is to sell the traditional culls, followed by the late calvers and any cows age 11 or older. After that a percentage from each remaining group, including virgin heifers, young cows, and mature cows, would be sold. This approach keeps the herd age structure intact, but results in higher feed costs and less calves to sell in the short term.

"Cattle prices are lower than in previous droughts so producers cant spend as much on feed and expect a return when they go to sale," he said. "We're not at the point to cull that deep, but it tis time to plan and possibly initiate the first parts of the plan. The key is to be ahead of things rather than having to react to a bad situa-

Beef producers might start considering culling options in case drought conditions continue to decrease forage and hay availability. (Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service photo by Adam Russell)

# 64th Texas A&M Beef Cattle Short Course Aug. 6-8 in College Station

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May 25, 2018


COLLEGE STATION – The 64th Texas A&M Beef Cattle Short Course Aug. 6-8 at Texas A&M University in College Station will highlight a cattle market outlook as well as issues affecting beef producers.

The short course is the largest beef cattle educational event in the country and attracts more than 1,600 beef cattle producers from Texas and abroad, according to organizers. The short course is hosted by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the department of animal science at Texas A&M.

"Several factors are impacting our cattle producers across Texas including dry conditions over many of the regions," said Dr. Jason Cleere, coordinator and AgriLife Extension beef cattle specialist in College Station. "We will have a weather outlook, plus a comprehensive cattle market outlook that producers can use to determine their marketing plans for the next year." An added component to the frot of this years short course is the Ranch Horse workshop on Aug. 5 for beef short course registrants. Cost is $50 at the door for those not registered for the short course.

A fence building demonstration will be held as part of the 64th Texas A&M Beef Cattle Short Course Aug. 6-8 in College Station. (Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service photo by Blair Fannin

The day-long program will feature AgriLife Extension experts and topics that include equine nutrition, hay and pasture management, and routine health maintenance. There will also be a presentation on the history of the King Ranch. For more information, call 979-862-5980.

The short course also features 22 sessions covering basic practices, new technologies and other important industry topics. These sessions provide participants with an opportunity to choose workshops based on their level of production experience and the needs of their ranch.

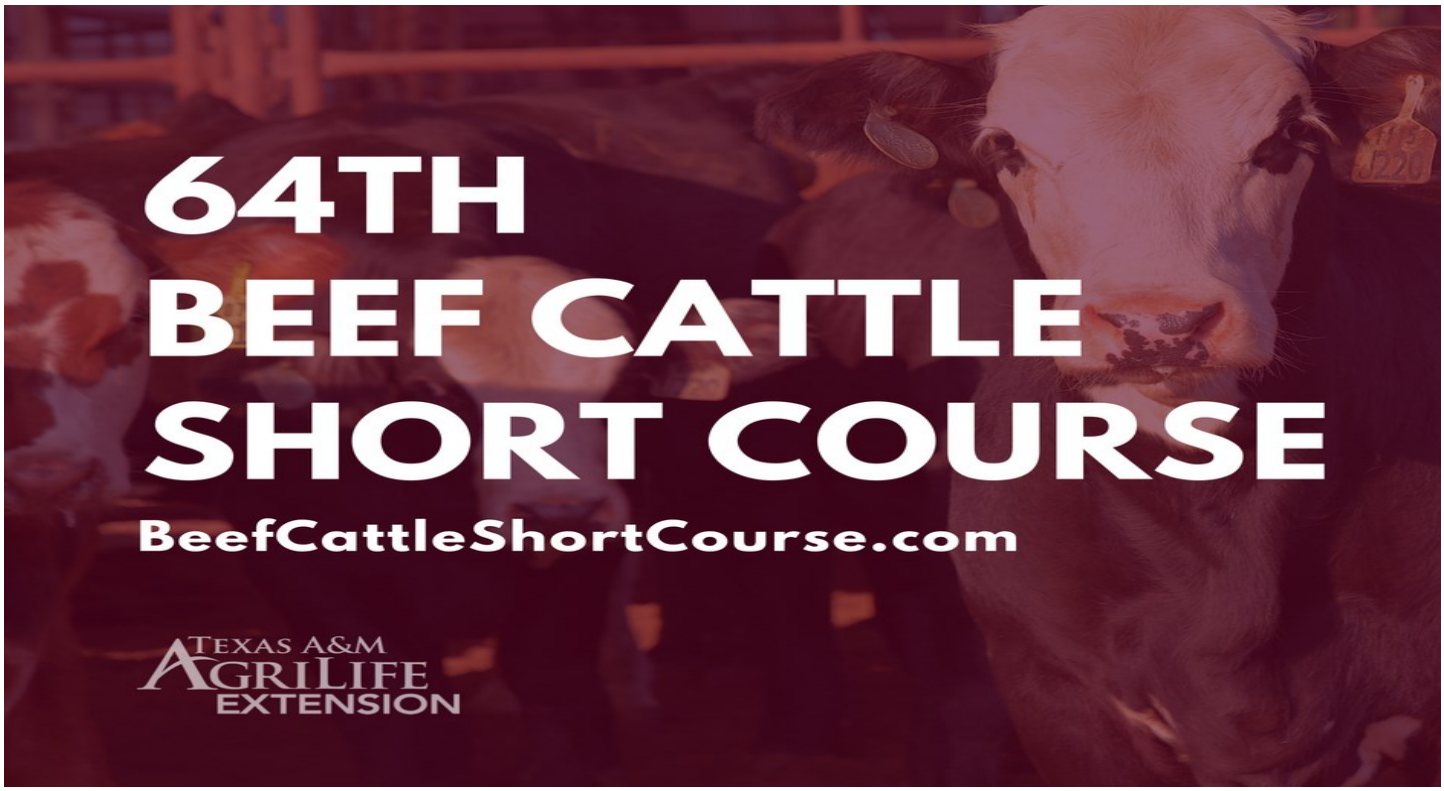
"Concurrent workshops will feature information on forage and beef cattle management, health, nutrition and reproduction, record keeping, genetics, purebred cattle and much more," Cleere said. In addition to classroom instruction, participants can attend one of the program's popular demonstrations on the morning of Aug. 8, he said.

"There will be demonstrations on live cattle handling, chute-side calf working, brush management, fence building, year is to provide the most cutting-edge information needed by beef cattle producers. We have information everyone can take home and apply to their operations."

Participants can earn at least nine Texas Department of Agriculture pesticide continuing education units if they are already licensed, Cleere added.

An industry trade show, featuring more than 130 agricultural businesses and service exhibits, will also be held during the event. "And the famous Texas Aggie Prime Rib Dinner is always a highlight of the short course," Cleere said.

Registration is $210 and covers all meals, including the prime rib dinner, breaks and printed materials. To register, go to https://beefcattleshortcourse.com/.



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# Agent Introduction

Hey y'all! My name is Sami Lindsey and I am your new County Extension Agent of Crane County. I graduated from Texas Tech University with a Bachelors degree in Animal Science with an emphasis on Animal Production. I grew up in the small town of Memphis, Tx on a cotton farm. I have a love for Ag and strive to educate people in the right way. I hope to be as beneficial to you as I can possibly be. I have included with this newsletter a post card that is pre-stamped. Please fill it out and drop it in your mailbox at your earliest convenience. Also please let me know what you would like to see more of in the newsletters as well as what you would like to see in programming this upcoming year. I look forward to meeting and working with you all. If you are ever in town, swing by the office and say hi! I would love to meet you!

CEA-AG/NR
Crane County