

# LOST PINES COUNTY AGRICULTURE NEWSLETTER

December 2022

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## MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Dakota Kempken

It's Christmas time once again. And this year, I hope everyone takes the time to be with your loved ones. It may be cliché, but this season is an excellent time to reflect on the past year and appreciate the blessings that have come upon you. Enjoy the holidays, and I will see you in 2023!

## **EXTENSION AGRONOMIST DR. JOSH MCGINTY PROPOSES CULTIVATION OF PRICKLY PEAR CACTUS FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION**

Prickly Pear Cactus (*Opuntia spp.*) is a nuisance cactus species that can be found just about all over Texas excluding the eastern portions of the state. While not too much of a nuisance species here compared to down south and out west, prickly pear is still present in Bastrop County. While many landowners consider this succulent to be a nuisance species, with it being so easy to spread and seemingly impossible to kill, it still has its benefits. De-spined pads are both edible and have anti-diabetic properties, and the fruits are often turned into a jelly.



To capitalize on these products, and potentially create a more diverse use for the cactus beyond wildlife, Extension agronomist Dr. Josh McGinty is currently seeking to develop a market for these products by securing stakeholder support for a USDA grant to begin research. If this is a field that might interest you, or if you know of anyone who may be interested in seeing this develop, I encourage you to fill out the letter of support that accompanies this newsletter and email the completed letter to me, or to Dr. McGinty at [Joshua.Mcginty@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:Joshua.Mcginty@ag.tamu.edu)

## **HOW TO RECOGNIZE FALL ARMYWORM DAMAGE AND TREATMENT**

Another consequence of the warm and wet the fall season has been allowing for extended activity of insect pests. For producers growing winter forages, this includes fall armyworms. Normally, fall armyworms (as the name implies) are most active during late summer to mid fall (July - September), but wet weather can influence outbreaks up until first frost.

Fall armyworms can be incredibly destructive to hay meadows, pasture, and cultivated fields. As the name suggests, infestations move like an army through a field consuming grass leaf material, forming small, almost transparent holes in the leaf blades. Oftentimes damage starts at the tip of the blade and progresses downward. In crops such as corn or sorghum, this can look like large holes cut into the leaf blade. With enough damage, this can result in mass plant die-offs that form large brown patches in fields. Sometimes this can be confused for drought stress, but armyworm damage can be distinguished by the easily definable lines separating effected areas from non-effected.



As a member of the lepidoptera order, the larvae, which are responsible for the damage, can be relatively easy to control in the event of an outbreak. Pyrethroid-based insecticides are a relatively cheap and easy product to get hold of, and can be effective against small and large caterpillars after roughly three days. A much more selective option, however, would be bt-based insecticides. These bacteria-derived

products will exclusively target insects in the lepidoptera order, making them effective against FAW larvae. However they will also kill beneficial, pollinating insects in this order such as most butterflies. So be cautious with this chemical and know what is in your field before spraying. Alternatively, mitigating the spread of the adult moths can also help prevent infestations. This can be done through regular trapping during the active periods or promoting beneficial predatory insect habitat nearby valued crop areas.

Once the first frost hits us, the threat of fall armyworm damage will be significantly reduced until their next active period, as they are highly susceptible to the cold. However knowing the signs now can greatly help prevent serious damage and loss in the future.

## **INFLATIONARY CHALLENGES AFFECTING RETAIL BEEF PRICES**

*Blair Fannin - AgriLife Extension*

Though retail beef prices are lower than a year ago, prices remain historically higher as inflationary challenges affect the overall U.S. economy and projected fewer cows heading into 2023, according to a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service livestock economist. "Retail beef prices are lower than a year ago even though the total Consumer Price Index number is 7.1% higher than last year," Anderson said. "(Retail beef prices) have been lower for several months now. And they are lower than last month. However, the level of prices remains high in comparison to the past several decades." Anderson said there are signs that consumers are looking at alternative beef cuts as a cost-savings measure at the retail meat case.

"I think there's evidence that consumers are switching to less expensive items," he said. "For example, maybe buying fewer ribeye cuts and more less-expensive steaks or more ground beef. Overall, beef demand remains good, and people continue to buy. That's one reason retail prices have remained high since folks are buying. The impact of higher costs throughout the economy and higher interest rates will impact people's budgets and people will buy less of all kinds of goods. That will bring down prices and inflation." Prime rib will continue to be featured on many dining tables this holiday season despite costing more, Anderson said.

## AUCTION BARN REPORTS

### Giddings Livestock Commission

December 12th, 2022

#### Steers

Weight	Avg	High
150 - 300	175	242.50
300 - 400	189	235.00
400 - 500	182	222.50
500 - 600	166	195.00
600 - 700	146	185
700 - 800	130	152.50

#### Heifers

150 - 300	165	215
300 - 400	158	200
400 - 500	152	200
500 - 600	140	195
600 - 700	135	167.50
700 - 800	120	182.50

As 2022 comes to an end, beef production across the U.S. has been at a record pace due to drought conditions over much of the country. Meanwhile, wholesale beef prices are well below a year ago. The lower wholesale prices are very slowly translating into lower retail prices, Anderson said. Anderson said the overall U.S. cow herd will see a 3% reduction compared to a year ago.

“We are headed to fewer cows in the U.S.,” he said. “Beef cow culling is up 28% in our region over a year ago. So, we are headed to tighter beef production and given biology we’ll have tighter beef production into at least 2025. Drought recovery and prices/costs that get ranchers back to some profits will be required to rebuild herds.”

## SOIL AMENDMENTS

*Vanessa Olson - Extension Forage Specialist*

Soil additives are different from traditional fertilizers and soil amendments in that they usually have little or no nutrient content. There is no requirement for these products to have a guaranteed analysis label, as long as they make no claim(s) regarding fertilizer value (i.e. N-P-K). Many of these products state on the label that they are not a substitute for a fertilizer program, but enhance the effectiveness of fertilizer normally applied or make nutrients in the soil more available to the crop. They are claimed to improve soil physical, chemical, and biological properties to improve nutrient and/or water availability in the soil and increase crop nutrient uptake.

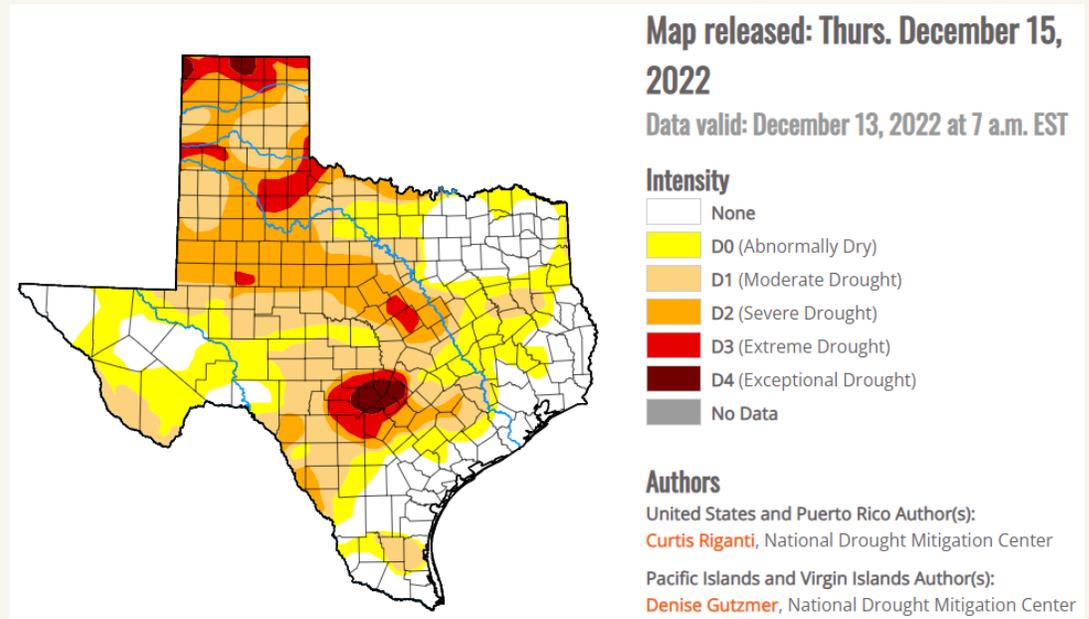
Most traditional soil amendments and commercial fertilizers have been tested extensively through research trials to document both their benefits and limitations. The benefits from many of these non-traditional products have not been proven scientifically by independent research



(McFarland et al., 1998: [Non Traditional Soil Additives](#)). Sometimes crop yield can be reduced by some soil additives (Bauder, 1976), but often, **no positive or negative effect can be substantiated**. Therefore, be very cautious before making a decision to use these products.

The best advice that can be given to growers is to evaluate new products carefully and insist upon local or regional research data (not testimonials) demonstrating product effectiveness and value. Since there are so many products on the market, it is difficult for Extension personnel and university researchers to test all of the products. Nevertheless, Extension agents and specialist may still be able to give you some information based on their experiences with similar products.

## TEXAS DROUGHT MONITOR UPDATE



## WINTER GARDEN ACTIVITIES TO GET READY FOR THE NEXT PLANTING SEASON

The winter time is traditionally a relatively inactive time for home gardens, and even for production of most row crops. However this does not mean that all plant production activity needs to stop until the next growing season. Below are some helpful wintertime activities that can help you prepare for the next growing season:

- Incorporate organic material/compost into the soil - Organic material is a material that provides many essential nutrients for crops, can improve moisture retention capabilities, and can help lower soil pH
- Begin a compost pile with fallen leaves or former plant material from the previous growing season. Composting is an incredibly easy activity to start, that can be commonly done around the home.
- Get soil tested to determine nutrient needs for optimal growth. Contact our office to pick up a testing kit or for more information on soil testing.
- Perform much needed maintenance on equipment to get it ready for next season.

Wt	Rng	Avg
<b>Steers</b>		
100 -199	120.00-172.00	155.50
200 -299	60.00-262.00	172.56
300 -399	60.00-270.00	191.46
400 -499	80.00-230.00	184.32
500 -599	85.00-210.00	169.57
600 -699	88.00-180.00	159.30
700 -799	130.00-169.00	149.96
800 -899	134.00-155.00	144.60
1000+	93.00	93.00
<b>Heifers</b>		
100 -199	110.00-145.00	128.33
200 -299	55.00-252.00	143.86
300 -399	77.00-228.00	169.33
400 -499	60.00-210.00	160.26
500 -599	94.00-181.00	150.40
600 -699	39.00-167.00	141.85
700 -799	118.00-148.00	135.17
800 -899	125.00	125.00
1000+	107.00-110.00	109.00

# AROUND THE COUNTY

## AUCTION BARN REPORTS

### Gonzales Livestock Market

November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022

#### Steers

Weight	Price
150 - 300	257.00 - 259.00
300 - 400	225.00 - 245.00
400 - 500	210.00 - 220.00
500 - 600	180.00 - 195.00
600 - 700	167.00 - 176.00
700 - 800	151.00 - 165.00

#### Heifers

150 - 300	200.00 - 217.00
300 - 400	210.00 - 215.00
400 - 500	195.00 - 205.00
500 - 600	168.00 - 186.00
600 - 700	148.00 - 161.00

#### Yearling Bulls

700 - 900	80.00 - 95.00
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#### Stocker Cows

	750.00 - 2,300.00
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## FREEZING TEMPERATURES ON THE WAY

The first hard freeze of the winter will be arriving this Thursday, December 22<sup>nd</sup>. Not much precipitation can be expected for most of the county, so luckily we might not be at risk of a white Christmas. Make sure you take steps to stay prepared before the freezing temperatures arrive!

- Keep pipes indoors on a drip to keep water moving
- Keep plenty of hay readily available to help keep livestock warm
- Protect valued plants by bringing them inside or loosely covering them
- Keep an eye on stock tanks for freezing to ensure livestock have access to water
- Mound up soil around the union of any grafted plants to provide insulation

## COUNTY LIVESTOCK SHOWS BEGIN IN JANUARY WITH THE BASTROP COUNTY JUNIOR LIVESTOCK SHOW

The Bastrop County Junior Livestock show will officially kick off the 2023 spring livestock show season on January 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> in Elgin. The Youth Fair will kick off the annual show on the 13<sup>th</sup>, with the livestock show taking place the following day. The Bastrop County Junior Livestock Show is one of 3 county livestock shows that help demonstrate the hard work and dedication that our 4-H and FFA members put into their livestock projects. I hope to see you at the show in January!

## MAJOR LIVESTOCK SHOWS TO BEGIN IN JANUARY

Along with the first of the three county livestock shows, our county 4-H and FFA members will also be travelling across the State of Texas, competing in major livestock shows such as Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo, San Angelo, San Antonio, and Houston. As we move into one of the busiest time of the year for our 4-H members, please be wishing them good luck and safe travels while they continue to work on their animal projects.