

LOST PINES COUNTY AGRICULTURE NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2025



HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

Dakota Kempken

With the start of the holiday season also comes cool season duties. The late fall and winter months are the perfect time for much-needed pasture renovations to help get ready for next warm season. While this winter is expected to be drier and normal than normal (insert sarcastic "yay" here), growers and producers should still take the opportunity to make sure equipment and water pumps are prepped for a possible winter storm come 2026. Until then, pasture renovation methods like discing and leveling, weed clearing, and cool season forage planting can help keep your property productive and ready for the warm season.

EHV-1 AND EHM VIRUS DETECTION AND MANAGEMENT

An outbreak of Equine Herpes Virus (EHV-1) has recently been detected in the Waco area, triggering concerns of the outbreak growing in the area and spreading throughout more of Texas. Often linked to EHV-1 is the danger of Equine Herpes Myeloencephalopathy (EHM), a neurologic disease that often accompanies EHV-1. EHV-1 causes respiratory diseases, abortion, and neonatal death.

Signs of EHM in horses can include a number of symptoms, including:

- 102°+ fever
- Nasal discharge
- Lack of coordination
- Weakness in the hindquarters
- Lethargy
- Head tilt
- Leaning or resting against a wall or fencepost

EHM is a viral disease that spreads through both direct and indirect contact, and can be diagnosed with a nasal swab or by collecting a blood sample from a symptomatic horse. Because of its high ease of transmission, Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) must be notified within 24 hours of detection.

Preventative vaccination is available and can reduce the risk of infection and severity of clinical signs. Proper biosecurity should be practiced as well in the event of a suspected case. Horses suspected of being infected should be quarantined away from the herd, and hands should be thoroughly washed with soap and hot water between contact with horses.

If you suspect a horse to be infected with EHV-1 or EHM, contact TAHC at 512-719-0700.

COST-SHARE PROGRAM AVAILABLE TO HELP PREVENT SOUTHERN PINE BEETLE THREATS

Texas A&M Forest Service

[Texas A&M Forest Service](#) is offering landowners financial and technical assistance through the Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program. Applications for this cost-share program are open now and will close on Jan. 31.

The program provides eligible landowners with technical and financial assistance to reduce the threat of future southern pine beetle infestations and outbreaks by thinning pine stands.

Eligible landowners will receive \$50 per acre with a 100-acre maximum to assist with their first forest thinning. They may also receive \$5 per acre to offset the cost of using a professional consulting forester. Landowners may receive no more than \$5,000 in total in assistance for thinning and/or consulting. “The Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program helps landowners reduce the risk that southern pine beetles pose to Texas forests through stand thinning while also promoting overall stand vigor, growth and health,” said Allen Smith, Texas A&M Forest Service forest health program leader.

Eligible applicants must own a minimum of 10 contiguous acres composed of at least 70% pine trees; tree stands must start with a minimum of 120 square feet per acre basal area; tree stands must be thinned to 80 square feet per acre basal area or less; and thinning of stands must be completed within 14 months.

This program is designed to assist only first-time pine stand thinning operations.

Funding priority will be given to eligible applications within Angelina, Cass, Cherokee, Hardin, Harrison, Houston, Jasper, Liberty, Marion, Nacogdoches, Newton, Panola, Polk, Rusk, Sabine, San Augustine, San Jacinto, Shelby, Trinity, Tyler and Walker counties.

[Applications](#) should be submitted through the landowners’ local [Texas A&M Forest Service office](#). Notification of application approval status will be completed by March 1. Applications will be approved on ranking metrics. For more information about eligibility and cost-share rates, visit the [Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program webpage](#).

STRATEGIES FOR DROUGHT

Dr. Vanessa Olsen – Extension forage specialist

During a drought, little can be done to increase forage pasture growth. Proper management can minimize impacts of drought on your operation when it does, and it will, occur. Careful management early in a drought can minimize long term stand damage and help maintain forage yields when rains do come. If pastures are managed properly during times of low moisture, the effects of drought will be less severe and pastures will rebound faster when precipitation is sufficient. Remember, management practices that minimize damage to pastures during drought are also the same for maintaining healthy pastures in a normal year.

Managing livestock: Reduce stocking rate if you believe forage supply will be limited. First, cull cows that are open, in poor condition, or have poor disposition. A veterinarian can palpate cows for pregnancy and check for health problems that

warrant elimination from the herd. Cows that are not pregnant are difficult to justify feeding expensive hay. Moving cattle to leased grazing lands where forage is available is an option to move cattle from stressed pastures without selling off a portion of the herd. Another option is early weaning and sale of calves. This reduces the stocking pressure and reduces the nutrient requirement of the cows (reducing forage intake by 20%) because the heavy nutrient demand at lactation is stopped. The longer decisions to decrease livestock numbers are delayed the sooner the forage supply will be exhausted. Delaying the decision to reduce stocking during a drought accelerates financial losses of the livestock production enterprise.



Grazing management: Lack of moisture suppresses plant growth and retards root development. Allow 6-8 inches of new growth before allowing livestock to graze. A healthy pasture will have 3 to 6 inches of stubble. In severe drought, pastures may not reach this stubble height, so these pastures should be deferred

until the time of dormancy (when nights are 55 degrees F for warm-season grass pastures) and then grazed to 3 -4 inch stubble height. Those pastures with little or no green growth are living off the roots and root mass has declined substantially. Roots must be replaced or bare areas will increase and invader grasses/weeds will prevail. In addition, overgrazing of plants removes the buds needed for re-growth. If insufficient stubble remains, water capture and infiltration is reduced. So, when it does rain again less water will enter the soil stores for plant growth. Stocking rates must be reduced on all types of forage. Fertilizer inputs should be reduced or stopped during periods of reduced precipitation, and rotational stocking should be considered to increase harvest efficiency, forage utilization, and flexibility of her management.

Weed management: Do not apply herbicides during a drought. Plant mechanisms in response to a drought will prevent adequate entry of herbicides into plants and result in a high cost application with little control of the specific weed.

WEED OF THE MONTH: CHEATGRASS

Cheat Grass, AKA Japanese Brome, is a hardy cool season bunchgrass that favors almost all soil types, making them widespread across Texas. Stems are tall and slender, bending at the base. Nodes are swollen and brown with fuzzy sheaths.

Leaves are long and thin. The seed heads are flat, hairy spikelets at the end of the stems. Cheat grass has very little grazing value and matures around the time that native grasses start growing, causing competition issues. Funny enough, its poor



value as a forage grass and high competition against favorable forages led to its name, Cheat Grass, as landowners believed that they were cheated in their grass seed purchase with the inclusion of Japanese Brome.

Controlling Cheat Grass can be notoriously difficult due to their resilience and adaptability.

Prescribed burns can provide adequate control for one year, but the possibility of recovery is high from dormant seeds. Regularly repeated burns can result in adequate control as the local population slowly declines. Multiple herbicides can also be effective.

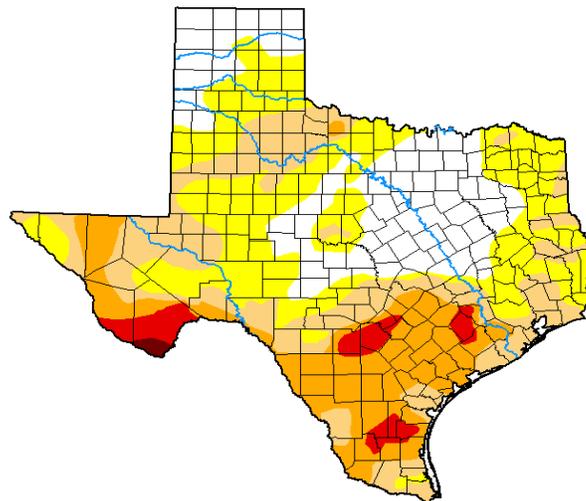
Herbicides listed for Cheat Grass:

- Glyphosate (Roundup, Rodeo, etc.)
- Picloram (Tordon 22K)
- Imazapic (Plateau, Impose)

TEXAS DROUGHT MONITOR UPDATE

U.S. Drought Monitor Texas

December 2, 2025
(Released Thursday, Dec. 4, 2025)
Valid 7 a.m. EST



Intensity:

- None
- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Moderate Drought
- D2 Severe Drought
- D3 Extreme Drought
- D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>

Author:

David Simeral
Western Regional Climate Center



droughtmonitor.unl.edu

AUCTION BARN REPORTS

Giddings Livestock Commission – December 1st

| Weight | Steers | | Heifers | |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|---------|----------|
| | Avg | High | Avg | High |
| 150 – 300 | \$466 | \$545 | \$417 | \$545 |
| 300 – 400 | \$420 | \$535 | \$406 | \$550 |
| 400 – 500 | \$394 | \$500 | \$362 | \$430 |
| 500 – 600 | \$359 | \$425 | \$350 | \$402.50 |
| 600 – 700 | \$337 | \$375 | \$337 | \$357.50 |
| 700 – 800 | \$277 | \$315 | \$270 | \$330 |
| Packer bulls | | | | |
| | Top | \$180 – 190 | | |
| | Medium | \$160 – 175 | | |
| Stocker Females | | | | |
| | Stocker pairs | \$1,250 – 3,500 | | |
| | Bred cows | \$1,500 – 3,450 | | |
| Packer Cows | | | | |
| | Top | \$135 – 162 | | |
| | Medium | \$115 – 130 | | |
| | Thin | \$70 – 110 | | |

Lockhart Auction – November 21st

| Weight | Steers | Heifers |
|-----------|----------------|-----------------|
| <300 | \$285 – 630 | \$250 – 485 |
| 300 – 400 | \$275 – 495 | \$250 – 480 |
| 400 – 500 | \$275 – 445 | \$240 – 485 |
| >500 | \$270 – 415 | \$215 – 465 |
| | Packer Cows | \$75 – 162 |
| | Packer Bulls | \$144 – 190 |
| | Stocker Cows | \$1,250 – 3,900 |
| | Cow/Calf Pairs | \$1,400 – 4,100 |

Gonzales Livestock Market – November 22nd

| Weight | Steers | Heifers |
|-----------|----------------|-----------------|
| 150 – 300 | \$400 – 650 | \$375 – 550 |
| 300 – 400 | \$355 – 500 | \$315 – 410 |
| 400 – 500 | \$295 – 425 | \$280 – 390 |
| 500 – 600 | \$275 – 425 | \$265 – 351 |
| 600 – 700 | \$275 – 351 | \$310 – 317 |
| 700 – 800 | \$280 – 315 | |
| | Yearling Bulls | \$185 – 275 |
| | Stocker Cows | \$900 – 2,700 |
| | Pairs | \$1,800 – 3,400 |

LUNCH AND LEARN: PEST AND PREDATOR MANAGEMENT

2 IPM CEU's OFFERED

- Predator/Prey Relationships
- Scouting methods and track ID
- Setting an Economic Threshold
- Predator exclusion and nonlethal control
- lethal control methods
- feral hog toxicants



\$10 due to the Bastrop Extension Office by December 11th

Friday, December 12th

11:00am - 1:00PM

Bastrop Community Center

15 American Legion Dr. Bastrop, Tx 78602

Cash (exact change),
check, or online payment
accepted. Scan the QR
code or click the link
below to pay online

[Eventbrite registration link](#)



For more information, contact Bastrop County Extension:
512-581-7186 or dakota.kempken@ag.tamu.edu

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating

PEST AND PREDATOR MANAGEMENT LUNCH AND LEARN ON FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12TH

Predators and wildlife “pests” like raccoons, feral hogs, etc. are a natural part of the ecosystem and have an important role to play, but conflict emerges when those pests and predators begin to run into conflict with landowner and livestock producer goals. Join us for a lunch and learn on Friday, December 12th from 11:00am to 1:00pm at the Bastrop Community Center (15 American Legion Dr. Bastrop, Tx 78602) for discussion on how to understand predator/prey relationships, scouting methods, and both lethal and nonlethal control methods, including the current situation around feral hog toxicant development.

2 IPM CEU’s will be offered for licensed pesticide applicators who attend. A \$10 registration fee will be due to the Bastrop Extension office by Thursday, December 11th. Exact change, check, and online payment at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/lunch-and-learn-pest-and-predator-management-tickets-1975126450382?aff=oddtcreator>. For more information, please contact the Bastrop Extension Office at 512-581-7186.

COOL SEASON GRAZING LUNCH AND LEARN ON TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16TH

Join us for a lunch and learn on Tuesday, December 16th at 11:30 for a casual discussion on cool season grazing. This short discussion will center around cool season forage varieties, forage establishment and management, and grazing strategies to conserve cool season forage without sacrificing warm season forages. This is a FREE lunch and learn available both in-person at the Bastrop Community Center and online via Microsoft Teams for those wanting an online option for listening from home or work.

Participants can sign up by contacting the Bastrop County Extension office or by scanning the QR code on the attached flyer on page 8. For more information or to register, please contact the Bastrop Extension office.

LUNCH AND LEARN: COOL SEASON GRAZING

Seeding and Maintaining pastures in the cool season



Join in person, or online!

- Tuesday, December 16th
- Bastrop County Extension Office
 - 15 American Legion Dr. Bastrop, Tx
- Program begins at 11:30am

Sign up by contacting:
Bastrop County AgriLife Extension
512-581-7186
dakota.kempken@ag.tamu.edu



Or sign up by scanning the QR
code

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating

FERAL HOG GATE AVAILABLE FOR RENT

The Bastrop County Agriculture/Horticulture Program Committee has acquired a swinging feral hog gate for rental to Bastrop County landowners struggling with feral



hogs. This is a single swinging gate that can be fitted onto an existing corral via T-post or bailing wire. Rental of the gate will cost \$75 per month with a maximum of two months. For more information or to inquire about the gate's availability, please contact the Bastrop County Extension office.