

LOST PINES COUNTY AGRICULTURE NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2026



WARM AND DRY SPRING IS EXPECTED THROUGH MAY

Dakota Kempken

Warm spring temperatures are expected through May along with dry conditions, spelling trouble for warm season forage emergence. Though a cold front is expected to bring in rain this weekend to kick off March, however dry conditions are expected to persist through the rest of the month.

ESTABLISHING BERMUDAGRASS PASTURE

Spring is around the corner, and with spring comes warmer temperatures. For new hay/livestock producers, the warm weather signals the time to plant warm-season pastures, with the most popular grass used by producers being Bermudagrass. When looking to establish a bermudagrass pasture, there are important things to keep in mind.

About Bermudagrass:

Bermudagrass is an introduced warm-season perennial grass that is able to spread very rapidly by growing underground stems, called rhizomes, as well as horizontal surface stems, called stolons. Bermudagrass is popular among hay and livestock producers because they are more drought and grazing resistant compared to other grass species. It prefers open areas and grows best in well-draining soil, however there are multiple hybrid varieties available that allow producers to grow bermudagrass in a wide range of environments across the United States.

Bermudagrass is often planted either by seed distribution or by planting sprigs, or the stem from a plant that can grow running stolons. Sprigging is the only way to propagate most hybrid varieties, as they do not produce viable seeds.

Planting Bermudagrass

Planting bermudagrass pasture should be treated the same as planting more conventional crops. It is important to ensure a proper seedbed is prepared prior to planting in order to achieve a better stand and increase its yield potential. Weeds should be sprayed with herbicide in the summer to early fall one year prior to planting to remove competition with your future stand, and conduct a soil test the fall prior to planting and apply lime/fertilizer accordingly. Discing the pasture can also help eliminate trash and reduce soil clod sizes, which can inhibit growth. If planting for hay, ensure the pasture is smoothed out after discing.

Bermudagrass sprigs should be planted in mid-spring, when temperatures are warmer, and the threat of freezes is reduced. While planting throughout the summer is possible, the stand will have less time to establish and will be more susceptible to drought loss. Sprigs should be planted at 2 to 2 ½ inches deep on dryland pasture, or 1 ½ to 2 inches deep in irrigated fields. If planting bermudagrass seeds, planting should begin later into spring, when daily low temperatures reach around 60°F for optimal germination. Disperse seeds at around 5-10 lbs/acre, then pack the soil in with a roller to maximize seed-to-soil contact.

Once the stand is established, it is important to maintain proper irrigation on irrigated fields and fertilization in order to maximize plant productivity throughout the growing season. Contact your local County Extension Agent for guidance on establishing and maintaining bermudagrass pastures.

TEXAS BEEF HERD SIGNALS HIGHER PRICES AHEAD FOR PRODUCERS AND CONSUMERS

Adam Russell – AgriLife Today

The latest [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#) cattle inventory report delivered another clear signal that the U.S. beef herd has yet to turn the corner, and Texas remains central to the story, said [Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service](#) experts.

Texas A&M AgriLife experts anticipate a slower cattle herd rebuild and tighter cattle supplies will continue to ripple from cow-calf operations all the way to grocery stores (Courtney Sacco/Texas A&M AgriLife)

Nationally, the number of beef cows dropped just over 1%, a sharper decline than many market analysts expected, said David Anderson, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension economist in the [Texas A&M Department of Agricultural Economics](#).

In Texas, the nation's largest beef-producing state, cow numbers dipped by about 30,000 head, but producers held back 50,000 more heifers — an 8% increase in replacements that could signal the early stages of a slow rebuild, Anderson said.



He said strong calf prices and historically tight cattle supplies continue to shape producer decisions about growing their herds.

“That suggests we’re bottoming out — holding a few more replacements for future growth,” Anderson said. “But there’s nothing here that suggests rapid growth.”

A slower rebuild and tighter cattle supplies will continue to ripple from cow-calf operations to feedlots and packers, all the way to grocery stores, Anderson said.

Beef herd numbers signal slow rebuild

The rebuild process appears far more measured than past post-drought recoveries, said Jason Cleere, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension beef cattle specialist in the [Texas A&M Department of Animal Science](#). Heifer retention ratios are trending upward across many regions of the state, yet high prices are causing some ranchers to weigh short-term returns against long-term herd growth.

Bred-heifer values reaching \$4,000–\$5,000 have created an incentive for producers to sell rather than hold on to calves, he said.

“There’s pressure to just sell them and take advantage of the market and then worry about rebuilding next year,” he said. “Many producers also remember the last rebuild — how fast it went and how fast prices plummeted afterward. They’re just a touch more cautious this time around.”

Texas’ long-term cattle capacity has also been thinned by rapid urban expansion, land fragmentation, and the conversion of quality pasture into solar and other non-agricultural uses. Those losses, Cleere said, translate directly into fewer cows in the statewide and national herd.

Cleere said emerging drought around the state could also influence cattle producer decisions related to their herds.

Historically high prices could go higher

Anderson said the January inventory report is typically a strong indicator for how the year will shape up. Cattle physiology is already shaping the coming years. Most heifers are ready to breed by 15 months, and calves gestate for more than nine months. Calves reach finishing weight in 18-20 months.

Anderson and Cleere expect calf prices could go even higher in 2026 and 2027 due to tightened supplies. Last week, 500-600-pound steers were selling for \$450 per hundredweight on average in Texas, compared to \$326 per hundredweight at the same time last year.

Margins should remain strong for cow-calf producers, potentially even better than last year, supported by lower feed costs and sustained demand, Anderson said. But the year’s outlook for Texas will hinge heavily on how the drought evolves.

“You don’t see a lot of market reaction to the January report, but it’s one that tends to place an anchor for where things are, and that has a longer-term effect on prices,” Anderson said.

WEED OF THE MONTH: SAND LOVEGRASS

Sand lovegrass, often called the “ice cream grass of the prairie,” is a native perennial bunchgrass found throughout much of central Texas and the Great Plains. This densely packed bunchgrass can reach anywhere from 2 – 5 feet in height and can be best recognized by its large, purplish seed spikelets 1 – 2 feet long, making a very showy display in late summer. Branches are straight, rough to the touch, and green to reddish-purple in color. Sheaths of the leaf blades are hairy at the base, but nodes are hairless. This grass species prefers growing on upland, sandy soils, along roadsides, and in open woodlands, making it an ideal rangeland species for Bastrop County’s sandy soil textures.



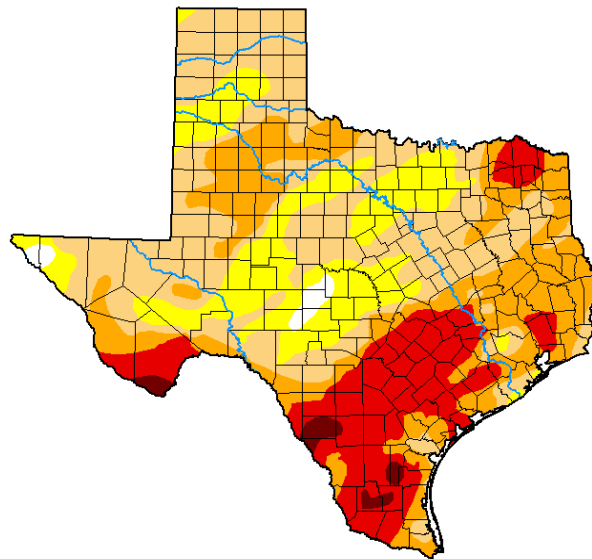
There is a reason Sand lovegrass is called the ice cream grass of the prairie. Not only is it desirable to wildlife, but it is also regarded as a highly desirable forage for livestock due to its highly palatable taste and nutritional content in spring and early summer. While palatability decreases with maturity, it is

still considered desirable by livestock. If considering native forage options or restoring native rangelands, this would be a fantastic grass species to plant.

TEXAS DROUGHT MONITOR UPDATE

U.S. Drought Monitor
Texas

February 24, 2026
(Released Thursday, Feb. 26, 2026)
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>

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U.S. Department of Agriculture



droughtmonitor.unl.edu

AUCTION BARN REPORTS

Giddings Livestock Commission – March 2nd

Weight	Steers		Heifers	
	Avg	High	Avg	High
150 – 300	\$631	\$750	\$505	\$730
300 – 400	\$562	\$675	\$491	\$600
400 – 500	\$489	\$575	\$445	\$545
500 – 600	\$437	\$535	\$403	\$515
600 – 700	\$387	\$455	\$371	\$455
700 – 800	\$359	\$402.50	\$322	\$390
Packer bulls				
	Top	\$190 – 220		
	Medium	\$165 – 185		
Stocker Females				
	Stocker pairs	\$2,500 – 4,150		
	Bred cows	\$1,950 – 3,400		
Packer Cows				
	Top	\$155 – 190		
	Medium	\$136 – 154		
	Thin	\$95 – 135		

Lockhart Auction – February 27th

Weight	Steers	Heifers
<300	\$430 – 750	\$400 – 670
300 – 400	\$420 – 680	\$365 – 560
400 – 500	\$380 – 655	\$360 – 535
>500	\$280 – 545	\$265 – 515
	Packer Cows	\$105 – 184
	Packer Bulls	\$160 – 207
	Stocker Cows	\$1,600 – 4,400
	Cow/Calf Pairs	\$2,050 – 4,500

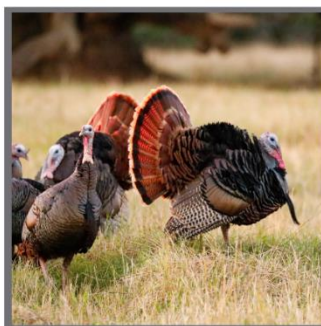
Gonzales Livestock Market – February 28th

Weight	Steers	Heifers
150 – 300	\$425 – 850	\$375 – 650
300 – 400	\$420 – 655	\$350 – 520
400 – 500	\$390 – 620	\$320 – 465
500 – 600	\$350 – 545	\$315 – 445
600 – 700	\$320 – 465	\$350 – 385
700 – 800	\$355 – 380	
	Yearling Bulls	\$275 – 325
	Stocker Cows	\$1,200 – 3,800
	Pairs	\$1,800 – 4,300

GAME BIRD MANAGEMENT

**Friday, April
24th**

- Game birds of Bastrop County
- Habitat management
 - grasslands
 - ag land
 - forests
- Challenges in conservation
- predator management



**\$10 due by
Wednesday, April
22nd**

Check or exact change
accepted

Bastrop County Community Center
15 American Legion Dr. Bastrop, Tx

Doors open at 10:30am. Program
starts at 11:00am.

Please RSVP by Wednesday, April 22nd

For more information or to RSVP, please contact Bastrop
County AgriLife Extension at 512-581-7186!

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

BASTROP AREA LIVESTOCK SHOW ON SATURDAY, MARCH 7TH

Come out and support our Bastrop County junior livestock exhibitors at the Bastrop Area Livestock Show on Friday and Saturday, March 6th through 7th at the Mayfest Park livestock show barn, Bastrop. Western art, Public speaking, and ag mechanics contests will take place on Friday the 6th, and the livestock show and premium sale the next day on March 7th.

SMITHVILLE LIVESTOCK SHOW ON APRIL 11TH

Come out and support our Bastrop County junior livestock exhibitors at the Smithville Livestock Show on Friday and Saturday, April 10th through 11th at Vernon Richards Park. Market rabbits will show on April 10th and large livestock and poultry will show on the 11th with the premium sale following.

GAME BIRD MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP ON FRIDAY, APRIL 24TH

Rangeland management and 1-D-1 wildlife exemptions remain increasingly popular among Bastrop County landowners. For those interested in learning about a personally rewarding and potentially entertaining sporting opportunity, join us at the Bastrop County Extension Office (15 American Legion Dr. Bastrop) for a seminar on game bird management on Friday, April 24th at 11:00am. Attendees will be versed in local game bird behavior and diet, habitat management in grasslands, agricultural land, and forests, and predator management. A \$10 admission fee will be due to the Extension office by Wednesday, April 22nd by check or exact change payment. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at 512-581-7186!