

# Ag Matters

Agriculture and Natural Resources Newsletter



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## Record Turnout Makes Hemp Workshop a Success!



The College of Agriculture and Human Sciences (CAHS) held its first hemp program, *Growing Hemp: Are you Ready?*, on February 6, 2020, which quickly became the epicenter of excitement on "The Hill," as farmers, herbalists, entrepreneurs, and others came out to eagerly obtain information about the Hemp industry and to learn about the potential of growing Hemp in Texas. The workshop agenda had a diverse line up of speakers including CAHS research scientists, representatives from United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS), Texas Hemp Harvesters Associations

and FARMACOPIA Farms, who provided information and answered questions about the status of Hemp in Texas; USDA and Farm Bill provisions; the economics of growing Hemp; cultivation and management, harvest and postharvest processing, cannabidiol (CBD) and Hemp products. Participants indicated they were very pleased with the information they received and left feeling more aware and educated about Hemp production and economics. The survey administered at the end of the program showed that 84 percent of the participants who completed the survey increased their knowledge about Hemp production, and 68 percent intend to adopt practices learned during the program. The workshop was organized by the Cooperative Extension Program (CEP), Agriculture and Natural Resources Unit in collaboration with the Cooperative Agricultural Research Center and with support from CEP, CAHS Fiscal Management, Information Impact Center (IIC), Agro Innovation & Technology Center (AITC), and the entire CAHS.



## Tree, Grape, and Muscadine Pruning Workshops

By Brandon Hawkins, M.S., AgNR Extension Agent, Bowie County



On February 18, 2020, Prairie View A&M University Cooperative Extension Programs' Ag and Natural Resources Extension Agent, Mr. Brandon C. Hawkins, M.S., Ad.Ed., educated limited resource producers on how to prune & train peach trees in the orchard on Berkins Farm in Wamba Community at the CEP Fruit Tree Pruning Workshop 101. Mr. Hawkins also talked about different varieties of plums, apples, figs, grapes, muscadines, pecans, and pears that grow well in Zone 8b in the Ark-La-Tex Region. Producers had the opportunity to prune & train Peach "Elberta" variety on the farm. Mr. Hawkins discussed rotational spraying practices and how to establish a home/farm orchard. On February 2, 2020, Hawkins also hosted the Grape & Muscadine Pruning Workshop & Vineyard Tour at Los Piños Ranch and Vineyard in Pittsburg, TX. Participants were educated about grape varieties, training/pruning grapes, and toured a winery. For more information about these or other agriculture topics, contact Mr. Brandon Hawkins at the Bowie County Extension Office at (903) 628-6702.



## Increasing the Efficiency of Artificial Insemination and Embryo Transfer

By W.B. Foxworth, Ph.D., A.J. Ho Watson, D.V.M, S.D. Horner, M.S., and G.R. Newton, Ph.D.



The mission of the International Goat Research Center (IGRC) at Prairie View A&M University is to advance the science of goat production and use this information to improve the livelihoods of the people in Texas, the Gulf Coast region and developing countries abroad. We are focusing our efforts in the areas of goat breeding and reproductive management. Technologies in these areas are moving rapidly and hold great promise to reduce production costs and increase genetic merit and farm profits. We compared, using a fixed-time artificial insemination (FTAI) program, the pregnancy per artificial insemination (P/AI) between traditional transcervical artificial insemination (TCAI), which requires more technical proficiency, and a new RamGo intracervical insemination technique (ICAI). No difference in P/AI was noted between TCAI and ICAI techniques (30.8 and 45.7 % respectively). ICAI requires less technical proficiency and is a practical technique for FTAI in the goat. This demonstrates that ICAI can be an effective tool for genetic improvement in goats by limited resource farmers.

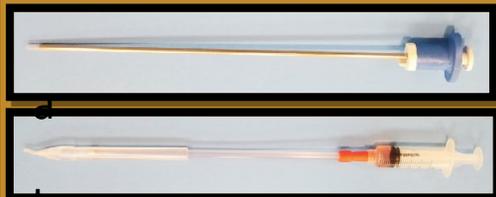


Figure 1. Transcervical AI (a) – A traditional 0.5 cc small ruminant insemination gun was inserted into the external os cervix and manipulated past all cervical rings. 0.5 cc of semen was deposited in the uterine body. Intracervical AI (b) – A commercial RamGo (TecnoGen, Mexico) intracervical catheter tip was inserted into the external os cervix and introduced into the first cervical ring. 0.5 cc of semen + 2 cc of proprietary semen media were deposited in the cervix.

## Strawberry Production Workshop

By Peter Ampim, Ph.D., Asst. Professor and Kesha Henry, Ph.D., AgNR Extension Program Specialist



The Strawberry Production Workshop held on Thursday, January 23, 2020, featured the basics of strawberry production and an overview and update on the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) sponsored project titled *Enhancing Productivity and Resiliency of Texas-grown Strawberries through Research and Grower Training*.

The workshop, which was attended by about 50 participants, mainly farmers, started with a welcome from Assistant

Professor and Project Co-Lead, Dr. Peter Ampim, followed by greetings from the Dean and Director of Land-Grant Programs, Dr. Gerard D'Souza. The Project Lead/Professor & Extension Horticulturist from Texas A & M AgriLife Extension, Dr. Russ Wallace gave a presentation on strawberry do's and don'ts, and overview of the project. Dr. Mahta Moussavi presented on postharvest quality and safety of strawberries while Nathan Hermond, CEP AgNR Extension Associate, talked about insects affecting strawberries. Following the presentations, Dr. Eric Obeng gave a tour of the project research plots on the Governor Bill and Vara Daniel Farm and Ranch. A survey conducted at the end of the workshop showed that 82% of the participants increased their knowledge about strawberry production and 76% intend to adopt strawberry production practices learned during the workshop.



This project is funded under the TDA's Specialty Crops Block Grant Initiative. The workshop which was organized by Drs. Peter Ampim and Kesha Henry was a joint effort by the Cooperative Extension Program's (CEP) Agriculture and Natural Resource (AgNR) Unit's Specialty Crops Program the Cooperative Agricultural Research Center.

## Small Ruminant Workshop

By Derrick Banks, AgNR Extension Agent, Fort Bend County

Goat production in the U.S. is gaining popularity. Their small size make them better suited for small acreage farming, compared to cattle. Goats eat more browse plants than other domestic livestock species therefore, they are one of the best species for managing or clearing woody plant habitats. The Small Ruminant workshop in Fort Bend County discussed issues surrounding why livestock producers should consider raising goats, herd health, proper parasite control, and nutrition management. Ashley Pellerin and Derrick Banks with the Cooperative Extension Program, effectively provided small ruminant producers in Fort Bend County with a hands-on educational program, which taught producers how to check the heartbeat on small ruminant animals, recognize breeding signs, and demonstrated how FAMACHA cards could be used to detecting parasite levels in Small Ruminants.



This program educated and evaluated small ruminant producers on herd health and maintenance, small ruminant nutrition and protecting animals from predators which are one of the biggest problems in sheep and goat production. As rural areas are developed, predation from bobcats and foxes has decreased, but coyotes, unconfined dogs, and feral hogs will be an increasing threat. Following predators, internal parasites are the next biggest threat to a goat or sheep enterprise. Ashley Pellerin educated producers on the most costly gastrointestinal parasite, the *Haemonchus contortus*, commonly called the barber pole worm. There are only a few approved oral medications that control this pest in sheep and goats, and *H. contortus* has already become resistant to some of these medications. The Small Ruminant Program stressed the importance of consulting your veterinarian for help in setting up a program to manage parasites and other health problems.



Banks discussed the variations in mature commercial meat goats and hair sheep cost from \$50 to \$500 per head, depending on quality. The cost of maintaining the breeding herd or flock (including feed, hay and health care costs) can vary widely. Profitability largely depends on the animals' reproductive performance. The higher your production cost, the more kids/lambs you must produce for your enterprise to be profitable. While it is not likely that you will enjoy huge profits from livestock production on a small acreage, these enterprises, if managed properly, should qualify your land for the

agricultural exemption from *ad valorem* taxes. For additional information: CEP EA Derrick Banks, Fort Bend County Extension Office, PH: (281) 342-3034 or [derrick.banks@ag.net.tamu.edu](mailto:derrick.banks@ag.net.tamu.edu).

## High Tunnel Construction Workshop

By Stedman Douglas, AgNR Extension Agent, Waller County



Mr. Stedman Douglas, AgNR Extension Agent, Waller County, coordinated two High Tunnel Construction Workshops on January 25, 2020. The workshops are part of AgNR's Urban Agriculture Program. The first workshop was from 8:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. at Navasota Baptist Church in Navasota, TX followed by the second workshop from 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 PM and was also held in Navasota. More than 30 participants took part in this hands-on interactive learning method, which covered key concepts on high tunnel construction, soil health, and more. Both workshops were supported, in part, by the USDA and Texas Farm Bureau.

For additional information on this or other agriculture topics: CEP EA Stedman Douglas, Waller County Extension Office, PH: (979) 826-7651 or [shdouglas@pvamu.edu](mailto:shdouglas@pvamu.edu).

## Soil & Fertility Management Workshop

By Rolando Zamora, AgNR Extension Agent, Willacy County

On January 28, 2020 agent Ronnie Zamora EA-AgNR hosted a half day hands on Sustainable Agriculture Program on Soil & Fertility Management Workshop at Salina's Family Farms in Lyford, Texas. The program included topics on soil fertility, cover crops, high tunnels, tomato varieties, and building a fast and economical trellis to support plant stem growth.

Agent Zamora presented information on the benefits of planting cover crops and the value it has towards providing organic matter and beneficial insects along with better fertile soils, and less soil erosion. After the presentation, the 25 participants took a tour of the farm and viewed several varieties of cover crops planted on the farm which included cow peas and an Australian clover legume variety. We discussed the method of planting which included a 3 point drill planter purchased through grant funding of the specialty crop program. Mr. Cruz Salinas who is the owner of Salina's Family Farm provided a demonstration of how to build a trellis inside a high tunnel green house. Once we explained the practice, participants then tried putting together a trellis on their own so that they can be able to build a trellis at home.



For more information: CEP EA Rolando "Ronnie" Zamora, Willacy County Extension Office, PH: (956) 689-2412 or [rrzamora@pvamu.edu](mailto:rrzamora@pvamu.edu).



## Tips for Getting Started in Goat Production

by Ashley Pellerin, M.S., CEP Extension Program Specialist

Goat meat, milk, and milk-based by-products are increasing in popularity in the United States. Texas has the largest number of total goats per head than any other state (NASS, 2019). Though Texas varies in climate from east to west, there are still some universal considerations that should be made when planning to enter the goat production business. Assuming a producer has already identified a target market and has a grasp on current market trends, the land is the most important place to start.

When you enter into the livestock industry, you are also signing up to be a steward of the land. Proper external fencing for goats is a priority as it keeps your animals in and predators out. Old cattle fencing can be modified to provide proper protection for goats. Once fenced in, taking an assessment of the pasture and forage availability will aid in determining the appropriate stocking rate for your herd. This assessment will prevent over- or under-grazing of pastures and will be of great help when deciding where to place internal fencing for pasture rotations. Once divided, ensuring each pasture has adequate forage availability and access to fresh, clean water is critical to managing and maintaining a healthy herd. Appropriate shelter should also be available for animals during extreme weather, especially rain. Poor land management can contribute to an increased risk of health and nutrition concerns. It can also increase maintenance costs that are associated with increased supplemental feeding and medical treatments to maintain animal health.

After a land management plan is established, breed selection is next on the list. During a market assessment, producers should have been looking at what breeds will satisfy the desires of their intended market and personnel availability. Common meat goat breeds include Boer, Kiko, and Spanish breeds. Savannah's are gaining popularity, but there is still much research to be done to see how they compare the other breeds. Boer-Spanish crosses are common among Texas meat goat producers (percentages may vary). Popular dairy goats are LaMancha, Alpine, Nubian and Saanen. Penn State Extension specialists note, "The lactation period for dairy goats averages 284 days, with peak production usually occurring 4 to 6 weeks after kidding." (Saun, Kime, & Harper, 2008). This extended duration requires increased personnel and feed costs associated with extended maintenance for maximum milk production.

The goat industry can be profitable if producers take the time to understand the market and properly prepare themselves and the land for the task. The considerations mentioned here should be written into a farm business plan and adjusted as needed. Should you need help with a farm management plan, visit your local County Extension Agent or Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office for assistance.

Citations:

Saun, R. J. V., Kime, L., & Harper, J. K. (2008). *Dairy Goat Production*. Retrieved from <https://extension.psu.edu/dairy-goat-production>  
National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). (2019) *Animals and Animal Products: Livestock*. Retrieved from <https://usda.library.cornell.edu/>

## PROGRAM LEADER'S CORNER

**Ready Set Grow!** Prairie View Agriculture and Natural Resources Department (AgNR) has now entered into a new year and a new decade to provide extension education to limited resource producers and landowners in Texas. This 2020 year appears to be an even more eventful year. In the wake of: the new value-added commodity crop, hemp, the challenge of controlling feral swine, the rise of animal care production practices for livestock, addressing food deserts, adopting agroforestry practices, and the need for better agriculture production and land management resources, the AgNR department is implementing aggressive education and training programs. We are planning nearly 150 educational programs related to livestock management, sustainable agriculture, specialty crops, urban agriculture, small farm outreach, and farm financial resource management to educate farmers and ranchers in Texas. As most of us are aware, the future of agriculture is subject to: scientific and technological revolutions, farmer's making a profit and cutting cost, and increasing production yields. Even in the revolutions, the economics of agriculture still challenge society with the fundamental questions: (1) what is the level of produce and services to provide?, (2) how shall they be produced?, and (3) for whom should the product and service be produced for? In 2009, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) report suggested that by 2050 agricultural production will need to increase by 70% to meet projected demand. The economic growth, progress, and stability in agriculture production will produce economic stability. The Prairie View A&M University (PVAMU) Cooperative Extension Program-Agriculture and Natural Resources unit (AgNR) is committed to building a strong Agriculture and Natural Resources Unit to address agricultural production and agricultural economic issues facing farmers, ranchers, and producers today.

Clarence Bunch, Ph.D., AgNR Program Leader



- Texas Department of Agriculture has release released recently published rules for Texas hemp program
- Texas farmers and ranchers got more than \$1.6 billion in help last year from the federal government in the form of loans, disaster assistance and incentives.
- Ag Connect farmers consider the number one agriculture issue is new government mandates and regulations.
- Prairie View Farmer's Market first Thursday (student) and Saturday of every month beginning in March
- **Agricultural and Timber Exemptions in Texas**  
*Info compiled by Nelson Daniels, Ph.D., AGNR Extension Program Specialist*
- Farmers, ranchers, beekeepers, and timber producers can claim exemptions from some Texas taxes when purchasing certain items used exclusively to produce agricultural and timber products for sale. This exemption can even be claimed on retail purchases by individuals raising livestock and other agricultural items for Future Farmers of America and 4-H and Youth Development Programs. Some of the items that qualify for these exemptions include seeds, plants, feed, and livestock. The exemption also includes medications purchased with a prescription from a veterinarian.
- If you previously had an Ag/Timber number, it expired on December 31, 2019. You must renew your number to continue to claim an exemption on your qualifying agricultural and timber purchases made after that date. Renewals can be completed over the phone by calling 844-AGRENEW (844-247-3639) or online through the Ag/Timber Registrations/Renewals eSystem using your WebFile number. Otherwise, log on as a returning user. The application takes about 10 minutes to complete. No signature is required, and Texas Comptroller will issue your ag/timber number at the end of the application process.

### United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Updates

- The Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) program has updated its online training modules to make them more realistic and useful. The new modules are now available to those who are first becoming BQA certified online and those who are getting recertified as required after three years.
- United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) continues to collect responses to the **2019 Organic Survey** and the 2019 Census of Horticultural Specialties, both once-every-five-year special studies to the 2017 Census of Agriculture.
- **Producers Assistance Program Sign-Up Deadline Approaching** - USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) enrollment deadline for the Agriculture Risk (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for the 2019 crop year is **March 16, 2020**. ARC and PLC provide financial/economic protections to farmers/producers. Extension Directors Administrator are encouraged to promptly spread the word for producers to call their [FSA county office](#).

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## Upcoming AgNR County Events

**February 2020**

**Fort Bend County**

**February 29th**

**Hunting 101: Feral Hog Control  
Richmond, TX**

**March 2020**

**Bowie County**

**March 2nd**

**Rain Garden Workshop  
Naples, TX**

**Waller County**

**March 5th & 7th**

**Prairie View Farmers' Market  
Panther Plaza Retail Center  
Prairie View, TX**

**Waller County**

**March 27th**

**Cover Crops Management  
Workshop  
Prairie View, TX & Hempstead, TX**

**Prairie View A&M University**

**Main Campus**

**March 30th**

**Pollinator Workshop  
Prairie View, TX**

**April 20th-25th**

**AG Day On The Hill**

**Main Campus**

**Prairie View Texas**



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