

# Ag Matters

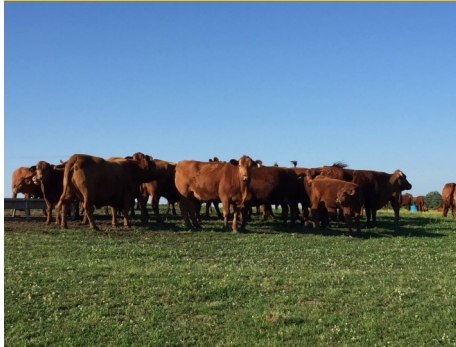
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A&M UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE  
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Cooperative Extension Program

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## What's Happening In The County!

By Rolando Zamora, AgNR Extension Agent, Willacy County

For more than 20 years, the Prairie View A&M Cooperative Extension Program has collaborated with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Rio Grande Valley Beef Improvement Association to conduct a very successful program known as the RGV Bull Grain Test and Heifer Development Program. We designed the RGV Bull Grain Test and Heifer Development Program because the South Texas beef cattle producers lacked access to a standardized program or uniform environment to compare and evaluate their bull development and lacked the ability to identify which bulls within a herd are genetically superior in feed conversion and reproductive ability.



*Black Brahma bull*



*Measuring a bull's height*

The program has several objectives: 1) to provide South Texas beef cattle producers with a standardized program and uniform environment where bulls may be developed and evaluated, 2) to teach producers how to identify bulls within their herd which may be genetically superior in growth and reproductive traits, 3) to promote the use of genetically superior bulls in South Texas cow/calf operations, 4) to assist cooperating producers in the marketing of genetically superior bulls, and 5) to provide commercial cattlemen with a source of genetically superior bulls for their own operations. Processing started October 9th and Day-1 of the gain-test was October 23, 2019. Ranchers pay a membership fee and deliver bulls and heifers to Rio Beef Feed Yard in the Rio Grande Valley, where cattle are monitored and evaluated for 112 days. Our more predominant breeds to participate in this program include: Brahma, Santa Gertrudis, Simbrah, Beefmaster, and other American type breeds. Annually, we average more than 90 bulls and 50 heifers that are consigned through our program. Among the data collected, ultrasound is one of the measures used to monitor the rib-eye area and back-fat thickness. The information gathered helps select the higher-performing animals for the herds. Upon completion of the program, awards are provided to within groups and breed categorized by Calf, Junior, Intermediate, and Senior for the top-performing bulls.

## Winter Pasture Program

By Corey Hicks, AgNR Extension Agent, Houston County



*Feral hog presentation*

On OCTOBER 4, 2019, PRAIRIE VIEW A&M Cooperative Extension Program hosted a Winter Pasture Program in Houston Co. The program offered farmers and ranchers tips and education on using sustainable practices that will help save them time and money. The topics covered were The Benefits of Planting Cool Season Grass, Fall Armyworm Control, USDA Cost-Share Programs, and Feral Hog Eradication. Along with education, this program allows farmers the opportunity to meet directly with Federal, State, & Local USDA officials, Community Based Organizations, as well as other Agriculture distributors.

## Research Update

By Peter Ampim, Ph.D., Assistant Professor



Prairie View is conducting research on the **EPRTG Strawberry** project, which is a collaborative project with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, Prairie View A&M University, GROW North Texas, a non-profit organization, the Poteet Strawberry Festival Association, and six strawberry growers in the State of Texas.

The overall aim of the project is to increase the productivity of strawberry growers, to supply locally grown berries, and to increase the profitability and resiliency of the Strawberry Industry in Texas. The specific project objectives include (1) using bio-based products to enhance root zone health, increase rooting and strawberry crown production; (2) incorporate low tunnel technology to protect quality and prevent fruit diseases; (3) provide alternative fertilizer management strategies that reduce labor and improve nutrient uptake by variety in the diverse regional climates; (4) improve weed management strategies to reduce hand-weeding costs; and (5) provide Texas strawberry growers, agents and specialists, and the industry with up-to-date, intensive and regionally appropriate production training through statewide workshops, on-farm field days, and online training programs.

As Lead Researcher on this project, Dr. Ampim is also collaborating with Limited Resource producers, Milton and Diann Woods, owners of Milliesbarn Veggie

## Women in Agriculture

By Kimberly Perry, AgNR Extension Agent, Harris County



*Dr. Dawn Mellion-Patin delivering keynote speech to participants at Women in Agriculture Conference*

On October 4th, 2019, Prairie View Cooperative Extension Program Agriculture & Natural Resources Harris County Agent Kimberly Perry, partnered with Dr. Lisa Morano, Director of the Center for Urban Agriculture and Sustainability in conducting a Women in Agriculture (WIA) Conference.

More than 90 participants attended the conference which was held at the University of Houston Downtown's new science building. Dr. Dawn Mellion-Patin, Vice Chancellor for Extension and Outreach at the Southern University Ag Center, was the keynote speaker and set the tone by delivering a speech challenging the roles women play and encouraging them about the importance of self-care.

The goal of this one-day conference was to address common agriculture topics of interest to women, selected primarily by women within the agricultural realm, which is rarely the case. It featured agricultural topics related to areas such as backyard chickens, by Nicole and Michael Gram from the Garden Hen; understanding the tribulations of starting a pecan orchard by Mrs. Gina Brown; benefits of rainwater harvesting by Ms. Nell Wheeler, from Metal Rain Tanks, LLC.; developing business plans by Dr. Nelson Daniels, Extension Program Specialist for the Prairie View Cooperative Extension Program, AgNR; new and innovative technology within agriculture by Mr. Paul Winski (Horticulture Agent for Texas A&M AgriLife Extension); vegetable growing by Ms. Teresa See, Harris County Master Gardener; and sustainable agriculture and the future by Ms. Cath Conlon from Blackwood Educational Land Institute in Hempstead, TX. As we plan for next year, we hope to grow this conference so it can become bigger and even better. Special thanks to the committee members, volunteers and the participants who attended and made this conference a huge success.

## Controlling Feral Hogs

By Derrick Banks, AgNR Extension Agent, Fort Bend County

Through the Feral Swine grant provided to Prairie View Cooperative Extension Program from USDA APHIS, we implement a Feral Swine Program in partnership with various agencies, such as Texas Parks and Wildlife, Texas Animal Health Commission, Texas Farm Bureau, The Feral Hog Coalition, Fort Bend County Master Naturalists Volunteer group. It is estimated that there are over a million feral hogs in Texas. In fact, the Texas Parks and Wildlife reported that they cause more than \$50,000 in damage each year. Controlling feral hogs is a priority. In the state of Texas, the Texas Department of Agriculture, Farm Bureau, Prairie View Cooperative Extension, to name a few, have made feral hogs a top priority.



*Feral hog inside of a trap*

The Feral Swine Program (also known as Controlling Feral Hogs) in Fort Bend County was started to address the issue of feral swine infestation in the county, where feral swine compete for territory due to rural and urban development. This program targeted landowners within areas where feral swine were considered to be an infestation across Fort Bend County. Since the inception of the Feral Swine Grant program, more than 700 feral hogs have been trapped and 20 traps have been built by the Feral Hog Coalition at multiple sites throughout Fort Bend County and across the State of Texas. In Fort Bend County, feral swine damage is an ongoing and increasing issue among producers and landowners. Often the hogs live along the river system in heavily wooded or overgrown areas where they multiply through prolific reproduction rates and are known to cause widespread damage to agriculture crops and to cause serious accidents with motor vehicles on the roadway.

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*Feral hog inside of a trap*

On average, the Fort Bend County Extension Office conducts at least 15 site visits per month in rural development communities to meet with farmers and ranchers and to conduct demonstrations about feral swine damage prevention. A result demonstration using applied research has allowed us to work one-on-one with landowners and to use different trapping methods in various areas throughout the county to collect data on methods of trapping feral hogs and preventing/eliminating feral swine issues. We have also conducted demonstrations to educate about corral trap, and to provide a step by step guide on how to select a trapping site, construct the trap, trap the hogs, and to provide resource information for feral hog removal. The Boar Buster and Jager Pro feral swine trapping systems were replicated during these trials to determine the most effective means for trapping an entire sounder of feral swine. Once captured, the hogs were removed from the trapping sites, transported to (TDA certified) buying stations (holding sites), and weighed. According to the research, demonstration, and programming efforts, trapping feral swine in a corral style trap is the most efficient way to remove a large sounder.

As a result of the feral hog programs provided by the Cooperative Extension Program, producers in Fort Bend County are becoming more aware of eradication techniques and are becoming more successful and efficient in managing feral swine issues on their property. The Cooperative Extension Program has conducted quality in-depth programming on the basic biology of feral swine and on the sausage making process, with emphasis on food safety and educating producers on the proper techniques for handling feral swine meat while avoiding contamination. With the funds provided by the Feral Swine Grant, more traps were built in other areas to show producers various trapping methods to prevent feral swine damage. The project's ongoing research will continue to provide public services by increasing awareness of solutions for controlling feral swine.

## NextGEN School Garden

By Stedman Douglas, AgNR Extension Agent, Waller County

On October 23rd, Prairie View A&M University's College of Agriculture and Human Sciences, along with its Cooperative Extension Program, and Agriculture and Natural Resources unit, held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the NextGen Community Garden Project at H. T. Jones Elementary. Waller County Extension Agent Stedman Douglas coordinated the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the NextGen, a school garden program that uses the STEAM concept to incorporate Stem scope and STAAR key concepts into a hands-on interactive learning method. There are six hundred potential student participants. This project was funded by East Texas Precast and a grant by the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service.



*H. T. Jones Elementary school children standing around NextGEN Community Garden.*

## Farmers' Market Initiative

By Angela Moore, AgNR Program Specialist



*Farmers' Market organizers at vegetable stand*

CEP-AgNR is developing a model Farmers' Market initiative as part of its Urban Agriculture Program which is aimed at addressing the issue of food deserts. Producers are invited to participate in the Prairie View Farmers' Market. To get a Farmers' Market Application, contact Angela Moore, Program Specialist at (936) 261-5002 or by email at [almoore@pvamu.edu](mailto:almoore@pvamu.edu).

## An Ounce of Disaster Prevention

by Noel M. Estwick, Ph.D., Assistant Professor and 1890-EDEN Project PI

At one point or another, we were advised to follow the Benjamin Franklin axiom that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." It is ironic that Franklin coined that term as part of a talk about fire safety ("In Case of Fire," n.d.). We battle fires and deal with storms and winter events more frequently than any other time in history. The threat of disasters is no less a reality for agricultural producers; in fact, disaster-related disruption in the agricultural industry directly affects the entire economy and the quality of life for every human being.

Given the increasing frequency and intensity of disasters, agricultural producers should adopt a plan that is deliberate about protecting their families and businesses in times of disaster. The 1890-Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN) Advisory Group (AG), is composed of the nineteen 1890 Land-Grant Universities, is helping agricultural producers become more disaster resilient and to integrate disaster planning in farm operations. EDEN is a network of Cooperative Extension Services and Sea Grant Programs that collaborate to improve the delivery of services to citizens affected by disasters. A good start is to consider the following steps to take before, during and after disasters:

**Before a disaster** 1) Maintain inventories of livestock, equipment and chemicals, 2) Identify and document potential hazards at your operation.

**During a disaster** 1) If necessary, notify first responders about potential hazards, and 2) Shelter livestock and/or have a plan to release them to higher ground.

**After a disaster** 1) Ensure that water is safe for human and animal consumption, and 2) Verify inventory of animals and equipment.

To date, this initiative has been included in the Tennessee New Farm Academy, hosted by Finis Stribling, III at Tennessee State University in August



*Noel M. Estwick and Finis J. Stribling, III presenting in "Integrating Disasters Management in Farm Management Planning", Nashville, TX. August 2019*

2019. The 1890-EDEN AG and the PVAMU CEP, in association with the 100 Ranchers Community Based Organization, hosted a second workshop held in Walker County, Texas, in October 2019. The AG has forged partnerships with FEMA, and other Federal and non-Federal agencies in order to carry out its mission. Current funding is from the USDA-NIFA through Purdue University and Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE). For more information visit [extensiondisaster.net](http://extensiondisaster.net) or contact [nmestwick@pvamu.edu](mailto:nmestwick@pvamu.edu)

Reference.

In Case of Fire. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.ushistory.org/franklin/philadelphia/fire.htm>

## PROGRAM LEADER'S CORNER

As we close out 2019, in a year when Texas top agriculture commodities include cattle, milk, broiler, cotton, corn, hay, sorghum, eggs, wheat, vegetables, and rice, Prairie View's Cooperative Extension Agriculture & Natural Resources (AgNR) unit has had an eventful 2018-2019 programming year. We have worked with a number of producers to educate them about livestock and crop utilization production. We also have held multiple outreach workshops in several counties to make veterans, farmers and ranchers aware of USDA programs. We have done this while transitioning in leadership. Jim Collins, in his book *Good to Great*, wrote "the world is changing, and will continue to do so. But that does not mean we should stop the search for timeless principles." This is a revealing truth. As the new AgNR Program Leader, I search for timeless principles to expand. It is effective leadership that strengthens old relationships and builds new relationships. Under my leadership, the AgNR unit will strengthen relationships with Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and existing partners and build new relationships with Ag leaders and other federal, state, and local organizations. Furthermore, a timeless principle recognizes that change is constant. So it is with AgNR. We are developing new programs, improving our program implementation processes, hiring additional Extension Agents, expanding program focus across county lines, introducing AgNR programs into other counties, as well as conducting campus demonstration programs on the farm. As we continue to address agricultural issues in rural and urban locations, our aim is to provide a holistic educational approach to help improve farmers' overall condition, integrate new technology, and create sustainable agriculture operations. Over the next five years, we will continue advancing our research-based education to teach existing producers and to reach the next generation of farmers in our efforts to sustain agriculture throughout the State of Texas.

Clarence Bunch, Ph.D., AgNR Program Leader

# AG NEWS

- The baseline report stated that, "U.S. corn production is projected to continue to grow over the next decade as trade tensions with China constrain soybean plantings while expanding meat production increases feed usage.
- "Lower [soybean] prices for U.S. farmers reduce incentives to plant, and plantings are expected to drop roughly 6.5 million acres at the start of the projection period.
- Drought took a toll on the Texas peanut crop this season. The high temperatures in July and August and no rain attributed.
- African Swine Fever, trade, plant-based protein, flooding in the Midwest, a packing plant fire – all led to market uncertainty in 2019. But they also represent opportunity, and the beef industry is poised for higher prices during 2020. While the focus has been on export opportunities, particularly in the face of African Swine Fever (ASF) in China, reduced cattle numbers will be significant to next year's cattle market.
- WASHINGTON, —U.S. Department of Agriculture Deputy Under Secretary Scott Hutchins recently announced that the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) has invested \$11 million in research that will support specialty crop farmers.
- TUCSON, ARIZONA, —A new tool from the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) can predict the odds that honey bee colonies overwintered in cold storage will be large enough to rent for almond pollination in February. Identifying which colonies will not be worth spending dollars to overwinter can improve beekeepers' bottom line.
- AUSTIN, TX - October 29, 2019, Texas Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller announced the USDA has released the interim final rules for the U.S. Domestic Hemp Program. These rules define the 2018 Farm Bill and serve as a framework for states like Texas that are planning to build an industrial hemp growing program. With these guidelines in place, the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) can now submit a state hemp plan to USDA for approval.

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## Upcoming

### AgNR County Events

#### November

**Harris County**

**November 20th**

**Urban Garden Certificate Program**

**Bowie County**

**November 12th**

**CEP Ark-La-Tex Clusters Co-op**

**Farm Tour**

**Rhea Goat Farm**

**Fort Bend County**

**November 16th**

**Controlling Feral Hogs Workshop**

**Jones Creek Ranch Park**

#### December 2019

**Fort Bend County**

**December 6th**

**Small Ruminant Workshop**

**Waller County**

**December 6th**

**Planning for Spring: A Livestock**

**Management Program**