

Randall County AgriLife Extension

“HAPPENINGS IN AG REPORT”

December 2012



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News and Views Straight From The County Agents Desk



As we reach the end of 2012 and reflect back there's no hidden secret that it's been yet another difficult one for agriculture producers of Randall County. As drought conditions continue only receiving *11.92 inches* for the entire year. This is slightly better than the 2011 season where we only had *8.49 inches*. Over the past 10 years on the average, it has taken us at least two years to reach our annual rainfall average for our area which is 17-19 inches per year. This coupled with the fact that we've had our fair share of extreme high winds makes moisture retention virtually impossible.

Ag: How can we adopt? For producers we are going to have to start thinking and implementing production practices differently from our traditional methods. Some examples here may include utilization of more no-till practices, concentrating full circle center pivot irrigation to 1/2 field production and if possible, consider installing drip systems.

Current County Crop Situation

Row crop acres throughout the county are currently laid-by as all crops have been harvested at this time. These acres are anxiously awaiting some type of moisture. What we are in need of is establishing a good subsoil moisture profile that can be retained and utilized for spring planning and currently there is no profile established. Preferably a good slow 2 inch or more rain would be ideal, however we wouldn't turn down a significant snowfall either.



Wheat: Irrigated fields are currently active with moderate plant growth. These fields look decent but are in need of a good general rain. Dryland fields currently have limited to no plant growth due to extreme dry conditions. This leaves us with wheat plants that have vertically no root system. With fields currently being grazed, this means the entire plant is being pulled up resulting in a terminated plant with possibility of future harvest for grain.

Grain Sorghum Seed Cost & 2013 Supply

The following information is provided by Dr. Calvin Trastle, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Agronomist, Lubbock, Texas

No kidding, seed is in short supply for 2013 due to reduced hybrid seed production in both 2011 and 2012. An increase in expected acres will further shorten supplies. This has created the highest grain sorghum seed cost we have ever seen.

Action Tips for Grain Sorghum Seed:

- If you anticipate needing grain sorghum seed in 2013 I urge you to check with your preferred seed dealer now. Supply is declining and prices are subject to change (they won't be going down!). The longer you wait the less selection you will have.
- Be cautious about moving to a maturity of grain sorghum seed that is not appropriate for your production system. If all you can find is early maturity hybrids, then call another dealer. Don't book a medium-long or long season hybrid for dryland just because that's all you can get.
- Evaluate your seeding rate. For grain sorghum seeding rate targets in the South Plains or Texas High Plains, consult the two different United Sorghum Checkoff Program grain sorghum pocket guides that cover the Texas High Plains at <http://sorghumcheckoff.com/farmer/production-tools/> {These include editions for West Texas (South Plains, Concho Valley, Rolling Plains), and High Plains (Texas Panhandle)}. Many producers in Texas still plant more seed than they need, sometimes at the expense of grain yield. I would rather pick a preferred hybrid and reduce the seeding rate by 20% to stretch a limited supply of seed than go with something I am not familiar or is less appropriate.



Here is a sampling of grain sorghum seed prices (Dec. 18, 2012) from four seed companies with Texas High Plains sales. This represents both regional and national brands. Prices are the same across Texas.

Company #1: Concep III treated seed only (allows use of Dual Magnum herbicide), \$109/bag. Gaucho or CruiserMaxx treated, about \$159/bag. Three of six primary hybrids sold out, 1 is thin, 2 with modest supply. Discount 6% if paid by 12/31, 4% discount if paid in Jan.-Feb.

Company #2: \$100 to \$135/bag, depending on hybrid. Add \$18/bag for Concep III. Gaucho treatment about \$13-15/bag. Other premium comprehensive seed treatments somewhat higher than Gaucho. Seed supply is extremely short, and some hybrids are sold out. No pre-pay discounts as seed supplies are too short.

Company #3: All hybrids are \$172-184/bag which have Concep III and CruiserMaxx. They don't sell grain sorghum seed any other way. All medium maturity hybrids sold out (at least in High Plains), but some supplies left of medium-early and medium-long. 7% cash discount if paid by Jan. 18, and quantity discounts available.

Company #4: \$102/bag for older lines, \$110/bag for newer lines, all Concep III treated. Up to \$64/bag for Poncho treatment. Seed supplies low and company will re-allocate remaining seed stocks in early January. Call about discounts.

What is a Sufficient Stand in a Wheat Field?

The following information is provided by Dr. Calvin Trostle, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Agronomist, Lubbock, Texas

We are sometimes amazed at what a poor thin struggling wheat crop can deliver in the spring if timely rains come and it has access to nitrogen. I have seen many fields over the years that I wouldn't have given \$20/acre for based on their appearance in mid-February, however, natural precipitation, irrigation (if available), and sufficient nitrogen can revitalize such a crop and produce surprising results.



For irrigated wheat, stands that have as little as 10 plants per square foot, especially earlier planted wheat (by early November in the northwest South Plains, mid-November in the lower South Plains) have ample time to tiller and generate significant yield potential in spite of a thin stand. For dryland wheat, 7-8 plants per square foot can still deliver modest results. Much of the potential

success in these fields indeed lies in the ability of the plant to tiller to compensate for thin stand.

Can N fertilizer help thicken a stand up?

Yes. Extension has often noted that thin stands can be helped by advancing some of your N forward to help drive some compensatory tillering. This is especially important if you have no pre-plant or at-plant N down on the field, which should be the case if irrigated.

Wheat prices are attractive for 2013:

Prospective wheat prices for 2013 will urge some growers to do their best to drive for yield if the weather will allow it.

Some producers have indicated they may take more of their wheat to grain (vs. forage) and then fallow that half a circle and grow a half circle of summer crop (rather than harvesting the wheat for forage then planting a full circle of summer crop—this will help manage limited water). We have time to make this decision.



Interestingly, Extension has received inquiries about taking irrigated wheat cover crops into grain. Seed rates as low as 30 lbs./A of an acceptable grain variety (but not beardless wheat), especially if planted earlier by mid-November, can deliver surprising grain yields because they have plenty of time to tiller. Producers who consider this should apply perhaps 20-25 lbs. N/A now as cover crop wheat is never fertilized. Multi-year yield data from Gaines and Yoakum Counties suggest that 30 lbs./A seeding rate yielded only about 10-15% less than irrigated wheat seeded at 60 lbs./A.

New Texas ID Begins January 1, 2013

The following information is provided by Dr. Steve Hammack, Professor & Extension Beef Cattle Specialist Emeritus, Texas A&M University

Beginning January 1, 2013, by virtue of a Texas Animal Health Commission ruling, all adult cattle in Texas must have an approved form of perma-

nent identification in place **at any change of ownership**.

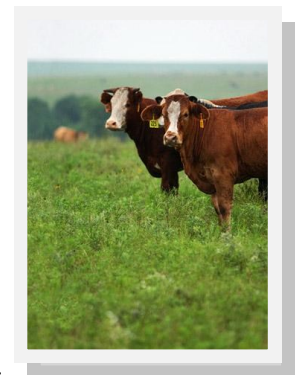
This includes sexually intact beef cattle 18 months older and above, and Mexican-origin event cattle. Not included are nursing calves, steers, spayed heifers, bulls, heifers under 18 months (unless they are about to calve), and cattle moved directly to slaughter.

Forms of identification currently approved by TAHC for this purpose are:

- USDA alphanumeric National Uniform Eartagging System (NUES) silver metal tags
- USDA brucellosis calfhood vaccination tags (either USDA orange RFID or metal)
- Dairy Herd Improvement Association (DHIA) tags with 9-digit American number
- Official breed association registration tattoo (unique to the individual animal)
- Official breed association registration fire or freeze brand (unique to the animal)
- USDA approved 15-digit Animal Identification Number (AIN) tags including:
 - 900-series RFID tags if traceable to herd owner
 - USA prefix RFID tags
 - 840-prefix RFID tags (if premises location is registered)
 - 840-prefix non-RFID tags (if premises location is registered)
- Cattle-style clip, flap, or button tag (if owner and individual animal is identified).



Tattoos and brands that are not part of breed association registration procedures **are not** approved forms of ID. A database of official ID numbers assigned will be maintained by TAHC, but there will be no tracking required of individual changes of ownership.



For those preferring to use USDA metal tags, TAHC will provide free tags and pliers. They may be obtained from local TAHC field staff or USDA-APHIS Veterinary Services representatives. Some interested veterinary practitioners will also have tags available. In addition, tags and pliers will be available through the Randall County Extension Office by calling (806) 468-5543. For more information contact Texas Animal Health Commission at (512) 719-0710 or www.tahc.state.tx.us.

Looking Back at 2012, Addressing Critical Ag. Issues

As we look back at 2012 and focus on the critical Ag. Issues. I feel certain that most would agree that **WATER** Education was the most critical topic for 2012 and will continue in 2013. I think it's important to highlight a few key educational programs that were conducted through Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Randall County and highlight the impact we are making in the lives of Randall County clientele.

Response: Dealing with Decades of Drought (DDD Conference) was held on March 27, 2012.

A total of 39 producers attended. Drought Production Management strategies for row crop as well as cattle production was the focus. Program topics included: Grain Production and Marketing Outlook as Drought Continues, Maximizing Summer Forage Crops When its Dry, Cattle Management- The Good, The Bad, The Ugly, Crops Irrigation-Efficiency and Timing and final the featured topic: "*Dust Bowl Days, Are They Coming Back?*"



Results: Producers learned that with today's AgriLife recommendations for improved cultivation practices along with implementation of no-till systems where by previous crop stubble is left undisturbed, any potential return of the 1930's *Dust Bowl Days* will be virtually eliminated.

Response: Randall County Crops Tour: Water Conservation Education has never been more important to Ag. Producers.

To address this critical issue Randall County Extension recently presented a program highlighting the importance of periodic on-the-farm irrigation well efficiency test. This demonstration was recently showcased during the 36th Annual Randall County Crops Tour held Sept. 18, 2012. Forty-two producers attended the Gruhlkey Brothers Farm and learned the process for well pumping efficiency, electricity consumption, pumping depth along with input and output horsepower. All figures are calculated to determine final pumping efficiency.



Results: This particular test indicated the well is pumping 177 GPM at a 66.9% efficient. Recommendations are to reset choke valve to 3.5 and set PSI at 20 to increase efficiency by 10.8%. A simply test, alerting producers to make minor adjustments for a more efficient well and at the same time contribute to lowering input cost and conserving underground water.

Response: Randall County Summer Dryland

Forage Test: With drought conditions continuing and hay supplies remaining limited, many Randall County Producers have recently inquired interest in obtaining in-

formation regarding recommended dryland summer forage production.

Therefore, the Randall County Texas AgriLife

Extension Service conducted a Dryland Summer Forage Result Demonstration this summer on the Kuhlman Farm, located just east of Canyon. Four summer forage varieties were selected. The primary *objective* of this study was to compare both *quality* and *yield*. The plot was planted on May 5, 2012 at a rate of 11 lbs. per acre. Harvest and variety samples were collected on July 20, 2012.



Results: Final test results and data concluded no significant difference in variety performance. However stalk size and plant height did vary. The *Sweeter-N-Honey* (non) BMR plants at harvest were 4ft. In height, with stalk 1/4 inch in diameter. On the other hand the *Bundle King* BMR was 2 1/2 feet in height with stalk at 1 inch in diameter. *What does this tell us?* Perhaps for baling one might prefer forage that genetically is bred to reach much taller heights with smaller stalk, and if a producer was interested in grazing only, preference would be smaller plants with much thicker stalk.



Upcoming Events

Southwest Beef Symposium—January 15 & 16, 2013 in Lubbock, Texas at the Overton Hotel. This will be an outstanding beef educational program featuring a group of expert speakers and panelist in all areas of the beef industry. Registration is \$70 per participant and deadline is January 7, 2013. For more information and registration details visit web site at <http://swbs.nmsu.edu>.

Randall County Junior Livestock Show— January 19-21, 2013. The 65th Annual Randall County Show is once again set to be held at the West Texas A&M Horse Center. Schedule will be as follows:

Friday Jan 18- 5:30 pm Rabbit Show

6:30 pm Lvst. Judging Contest

Saturday Jan. 19— 8 am Goat Show followed by Lamb Show

11 am Heifer Show followed by Steer Show

1 pm Gilt Show followed by Barrow Show

Monday Jan. 21— 6 pm Buyers Meal (WT Alumni Banquet Hall) 7 pm Premium Auction Sale

Texas Beef Quality Producer Training— January 19, 2013 in Clarendon, Texas. Registration will be at 9:30 am at the Donley County Extension Office. The Beef Quality Assurance is a national effort in the beef industry that focuses on proven management practices that help ensure safety and quality of beef and is designed for both cow/calf and stocker producers. The training will cover Beef Quality Assurance principles. Industry updates and record keeping. Please RSVP your attendance by calling the AgriLife Extension office in Donley County at (806) 874-2141.

*From All of Our Extension
Family to Yours:
Wishing You and Yours
A Very Merry Christmas
and A Happy New Year!*



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