HALE COUNTY

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

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THE GRAZE

A quarterly newsletter with livestock and agronomy updates.

In this issue:

High Plains wheat farmers increasingly consider wheat for forage

Wheatlage an alternative forage source for beef, dairy operations

BY KAY LEDBETTER

Wheat has long been grown on the Texas High Plains, but fewer producers are taking the crop to grain harvest, opting instead to cash in on diverse forage options for livestock producers, according to Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service personnel.

While summer annual forages, including corn and forage sorghum, are primarily used for silage, wheat silage provides Texas cattle and dairy producers an alternative forage source and farmers an option to market their product, said Jourdan Bell, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension agronomist, Amarillo.

Wheatlage is growing in popularity with livestock producers. (Texas A&M AgriLife photo)

Wheat offers more than one end use

Because of wheat's flexibility, Bell said, it provides many producers an opportunity to harvest for grain or for forage based on markets or weather. With recent freezes, farmers in the southwestern Panhandle are beginning to chop many fields for both hay and silage.

"A wheat crop can be grazed, baled or cut as green chop or as wheatlage if it is not taken to the grain stage," she said. "While grain harvest in the High Plains is typically in late May to early June, forage options allow the farmer to harvest their crop during April. In some cases, this might also allow the farmer to plant a summer crop."

Bell explained wheatlage is the process of cutting and ensiling wheat as a silage crop to preserve forage quality. Wheatlage is generally chopped at the soft dough stage when the moisture is favorable for fermentation.

Green chop wheat is either fed directly or wilted in the field prior to ensiling. Green chopping optimizes forage quality because crude protein and digestibility are greater at earlier growth stages, she said, because green chop wheat is generally cut at the boot stage. At boot, the head is still enclosed in the flag leaf sheath, and the moisture content at this stage is approximately 80%.

"There is generally a significant reduction in yield when chopping at boot rather than at soft dough," Bell said. "At soft dough, the early grain development as well as added biomass contributes to higher yields, although quality is reduced."

Wheat at the boot stage. (Texas A&M AgriLife photo by Jourdan Bell, Ph.D.)

Recent freeze may prompt more wheatlage

Rick Auckerman, AgriLife Extension agriculture and natural resources agent in Deaf Smith County, reported that earlier-planted fields were at boot to heading at the time of the April 13 and April 17 freezes.

Auckerman said while it is still too early to fully assess injury, many producers are concerned about yield losses because temperatures were less than 28 degrees for 2 to 8 hours. He is already starting to see freeze-related injury including some cracking or splitting stems and enlarged internodes, but the heads are still looking good.

Fortunately, the injury is not as widespread as anticipated, he said. However, producers who are concerned about freeze injury are opting to take advantage of a strong forage market. Some wheat has already been swathed for hay, and silage chopping should begin in the next seven to 10 days.

In the northwest Panhandle, wheat acres for forage continue to increase in response to livestock demands.

“Although many producers are concerned about freeze-related yield reductions, a large percent of the wheat acres was already contracted for green chop or wheatlage,” said Mike Bragg, AgriLife Extension agriculture and natural resources agent in Dallam and Hartley counties.

Wheat plots at soft dough stage. (Texas A&M AgriLIfe photo by Jourdan Bell, Ph.D.)

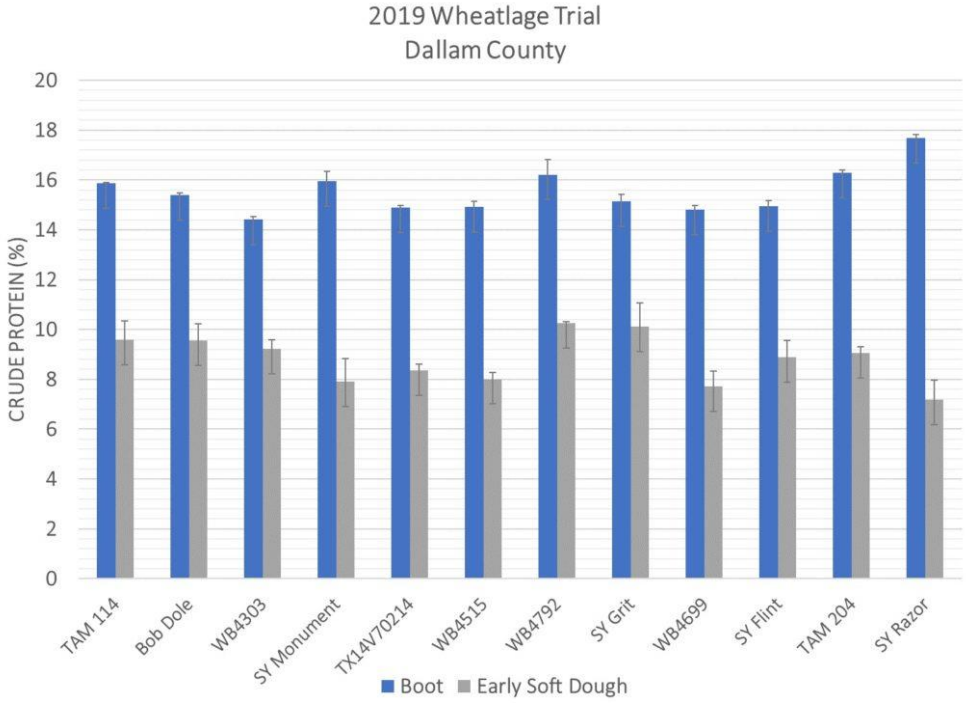
Bell said producers are applying one more irrigation to preserve yield and quality on wheat that will be cut for forage due to dry conditions. It is also expected irrigation will continue on fields for grain production if the dry weather persists.

End-use changes forage yields

Because of the increased demand for green chop and wheatlage, Bell and Bragg initiated a wheatlage trial in 2018 at 3B farms in northwest Dallam County. Many producers were inquiring about yield penalties when wheat harvesting occurred at the boot stage rather than soft dough, so Texas A&M AgriLife data is helping producers decide how and when to market their forage.

Bell said the average yield for all evaluated varieties was 3 tons per acre on a dry matter basis at boot in comparison to an average of 7 tons per acres for the same varieties harvested at soft dough in the same field. While there was a yield reduction when harvesting at an earlier growth stage, data demonstrated that if quality is the goal, an earlier growth stage may be desired.

Bell and Bragg are repeating the trial during this production season.



“If the producer is not compensated for a reduction in yield when harvesting at boot, there is often a significant economic loss,” Bell said. “Knowledge of the yield loss may help the producer negotiate the price.”

Covid-19 relief for farmers, ranchers

Texas A&M publication identifies federal COVID-19 relief most applicable to agricultural producers

BY PAUL SCHATTENBERG

The Agricultural and Food Policy Center at Texas A&M University in College Station has developed a briefing paper that identifies provisions most applicable to agricultural producers in the three recent Congressional interventions to stimulate the economy and provide COVID-19 relief.

“Texas A&M AgriLife is providing information and marshaling its resources to help agricultural producers through this difficult time to ensure consumers have access to healthy food and other essential agricultural products, ” said Patrick J. Stover, Ph.D., vice chancellor for Texas A&M AgriLife, dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and director of Texas A&M AgriLife Research. “This publication will direct farmers and ranchers to helpful resources for financial relief in order to remain operational until the situation improves.”

To date, Congress has intervened on three separate occasions to provide relief funding related to the COVID-19 pandemic, said Bart Fischer, Ph.D., center co-director and one of the report’s authors.

“The latest package — the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act, also known as the CARES Act — provides $23.5 billion for the Secretary of Agriculture to assist agricultural producers,” he explained. “There was $9.5 billion for COVID response and $14 billion replenishment for the Commodity Credit Corporation, which serves as the traditional funding arm of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).”

Fischer said USDA is working out the details of how to use this funding and expects a plan will be forthcoming soon.

“While the CARES Act funding applies broadly to agricultural producers, most expect the funding to be used primarily for beef, pork, dairy and specialty crop producers.”

”The CARES Act provided the $9.5 billion to prevent, prepare for and respond to coronavirus by supporting U.S. agricultural producers impacted by the pandemic,” said Joe Outlaw, Ph.D., Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service agricultural economist and center co-director who co-authored the report. “This funding would apply to producers who supply local food systems, such as farmers markets, restaurant and schools, as well as livestock and dairy producers and those who produce specialty crops.”

The funding was provided independently of the Commodity Credit Corporation, and while the CARES Act provided it with additional funding, it did not increase its borrowing authority.

“While the CARES Act funding applies broadly to agricultural producers, most expect the funding to be used primarily for beef, pork, dairy and specialty crop producers,” Outlaw noted.

The act also provided additional flexibility for marketing loans, extending the maturity date by three months for loan commodities, Fischer said.

Perhaps most notably, the act provided $349 billion for the Paycheck Protection Program, or PPP, a new lending program of the Small Business Administration program for which farmers and ranchers are eligible.

The Agricultural and Food Policy Center at Texas A&M University has identified COVID-19 relief most applicable to farmers and ranchers. (Texas A&M AgriLife photo by Kay Ledbetter)

“Despite some initial confusion, farmers and ranchers are eligible to apply,” Fischer explained. “The loan, both principal and interest, is forgivable as long as certain conditions are met.”

He noted, however, initial PPP funding was quickly exhausted, and Congress is now in the process of approving additional funding for the program.

Fischer and Outlaw said the Agricultural and Food Policy Center is currently working on an assessment of damages to Texas agriculture due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, once the USDA announces details of producer support from the CARES Act, the center will draft a follow-up report covering those details.

Fischer also noted Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program Plus, or WHIP+, signup is underway, and USDA is reminding farmers they may be entitled to some relief through that program as well.

Starting March 23, producers who suffered losses from drought or excessive moisture in either or both 2018 or 2019 can apply for WHIP+ assistance at their local Farm Service Agency office. Some area of the county in which their loss occurred must have been rated D3 or higher on the U.S. Drought Monitor during one or both of those calendar years.

More detail on the WHIP+ program can be found in the AgriLife Today story “Disaster relief authorized for crop producers affected by extreme drought.”

“While WHIP+ is for loses from past crops, it comes at a particularly helpful time as producers are trying to cash flow this year’s crop against a backdrop of terrible prices,” Fischer said.

The Agricultural and Food Policy Center has also produced COVID-19 Impact on Texas Production Agriculture — a publication on the economic impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on various agricultural commodities throughout the state.

Covid-19: AFS's Dale Woerner outlines meat production changes ahead

BY NORMAN MARTIN

From beef to pork, what you can buy at the grocery store and for how much might be changing. The reason: Meat processing plants are temporarily shutting down by force or choice in at least eight different states.

But, experts and producers worry these shutdowns could lead to meat shortages. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, when you compare the second week of April in 2019 to 2020, beef production is down nearly 20 percent, but the demand is up.

‘Agriculture, in general, is a *low-margin* business… Frankly, right now with prices the way they are, they [livestock producers] are losing money.’

Earlier this week New Orleans' WVUE-TV Anchor/Investigative Reporter **Lee Zurik** detailed how these pandemic-related changes could affect you. As part of his report, Zurik interviewed **Dale Woerner**, who holds Texas Tech University's Cargill Endowed Professorship in Meat Science Sustainability and an associate professor with the Department of Animal and Food Sciences.

"The demand in hamburger or ground meat products really increased over the last month because that's what people like to cook in their homes," Woerner said.

Looking ahead though, he said, consumers might need to adjust the type of meats they're buying. "We're producing a lot less meat," he said, "so we'll see less meat available for consumer as a result of less animals being harvested."

Meat production slowdowns will have an immediate effect on the producer, where some will be fighting for survival. "Agriculture, in general, is a low-margin business," Woerner said. "These guys are working hard to make any money as it is. Frankly, right now with prices the way they are, they [livestock producers] are losing money."

Woerner's research and teaching focus is on meat quality, processing, cookery, flavor and nutritional value, as well as red meat composition, yield and international marketing, innovative carcass cutting strategies, meat shelf life and livestock quality management systems.

Woerner, who joined the faculty in 2018, earned his bachelor's (*2003*) and master's (*2005*) degrees at Texas Tech. His doctorate is from Colorado State University. His position in Tech's Department of Animal and Food Sciences was made possible by a $750,000 donation from Cargill, one of the nation's leaders in developing and providing food and agricultural products for the public.

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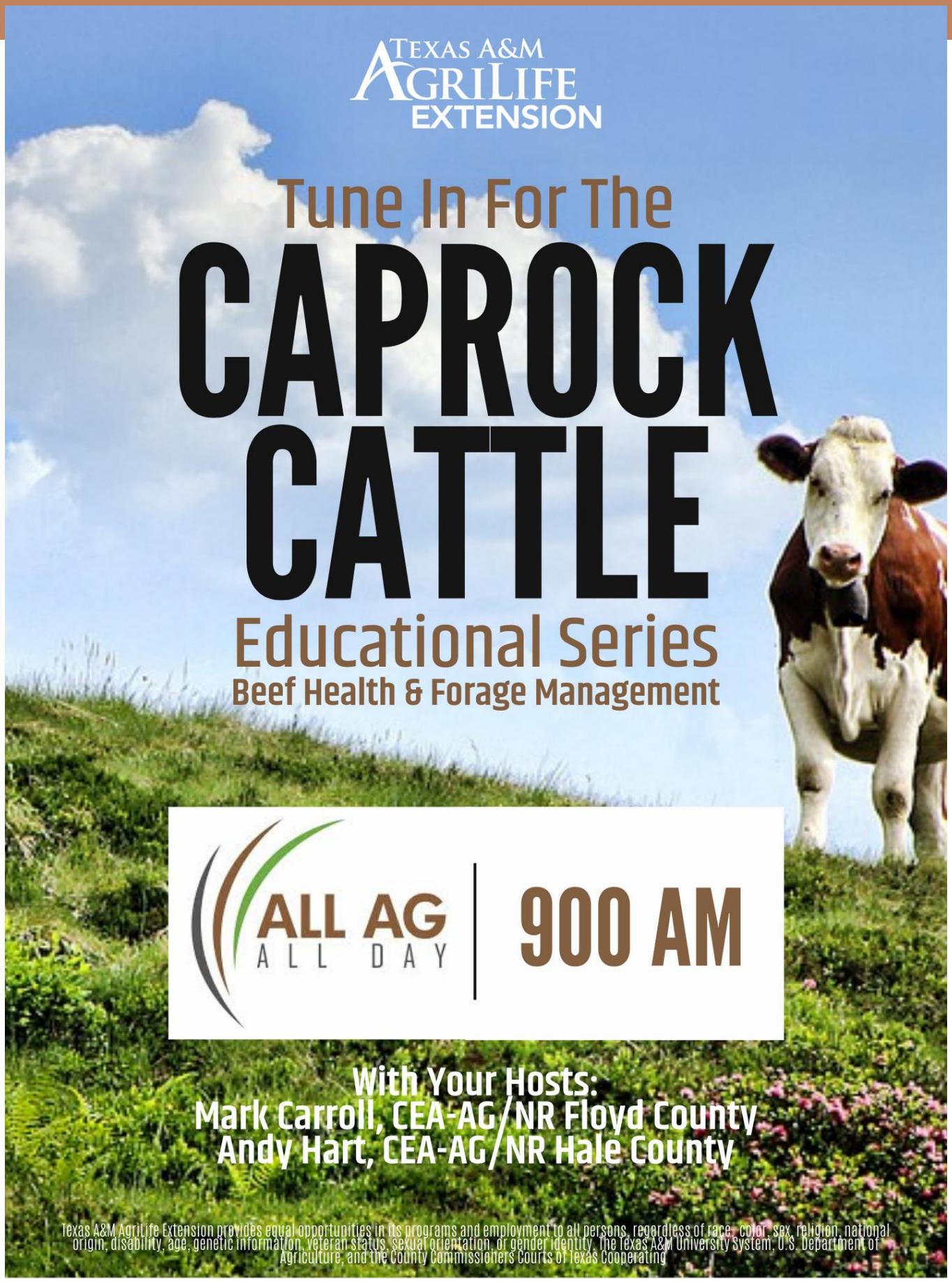
0424NM20 / To see WVUE-TV Lee Zurik's full report, "Meat processing plants making changes during COVID-19 pandemic," please click here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Andy Hart, CEA-AG/NR Hale County
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2020 Beef Management & Economics Series

presented online via Zoom

All Programs 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. (central time)

One time $10.00 pre-registration fee (attend one or all sessions)

CC/Debit/PayPal ONLY ($10 + $2.24 one-time payment fee per participant)

Register Here: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/102698491954

Upon registration, participants will receive email confirmation with additional instructions

HEALTH & REPRODUCTION

Tuesday, May 5th

Reproductive development & herd health

Breeding Soundness Exams and Bull Fertility

Preventative Herd Health Management for Reproduction

Economics of reproduction decisions

Thursday, May 7th

Keep / Cull Decisions / Body Condition Scores

Potential Predator Issues and Control Options

Economics of management decisions

FORAGE HEALTH & GRAZING CONSIDERATIONS

Tuesday, May 19th

Integration of livestock into farming practices

cover crops / water conservation / water management

soil health / weed management

opportunities and challenges

crops, and livestock diversification

Thursday, May 21st

Creating a Better Grazing Management Plan

Using supplementation to strategically influence grazing distribution

Risks associated with prussic acid in forages

Economic decisions impacting forage availability

NUTRITION & SUPPLEMENTATION

Tuesday, May 12th

Meeting the nutrient requirements of beef cattle in a forage-based setting

Making economical supplementation decisions

Economics and risk involved with nutrition decisions and supplementation decisions

BEEF QUALITY & EFFICIENCIES

Tuesday, May 26th

A look at the efficiencies of a dairy farm

Research and Carcass Data

Dairy/Beef Cross Calves

Update on quality and management to improve carcass quality

Beef/ Industry Panel – Opportunities and Challenges

Market outlooks for 2020 and economics of quality beef improvement through genetics

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

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TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

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Hale County Agriculture

http://hale.agrilife.org

All Ag, All Day
900 AM KFLP

Register at: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/102698491954. AgriLife is excited to announce an online beef series starting May 5. It is a 6-part series focusing on Beef/Range issues and emphasis on economics at each program. Programs all start at 6 p.m. and the cost is a $10.00 one-time fee that allows you to attend all 6 sessions.

Thanks,

Andy Hart

Subscribe to the newsletter here.

Ledbetter, Kay. (2020, April 23). High Plains wheat farmers increasingly consider wheat for forage. AgriLife Today
https://agrilifetoday.tamu.edu/2020/04/23/wheatlage-growing-in-popularity-for-high-plains-producers/

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https://agrilifetoday.tamu.edu/2020/04/21/covid-19-relief-for-farmers-ranchers/

Martin, Norman. (2020, April) Covid-19: AFS's Dale Woerner outlines meat production changes ahead. CASNR NewsCenter.
https://www.depts.ttu.edu/agriculturalsciences/news/posts/2020/04/afs-covid-woerner-outlines-possible-meat-production-changes.php?fbclid=IwAR26sqKOAYYZtOcMcl0WueKSlAMtAoRK-AwL7Dpebs1QAw12VAjVhJLpqMU

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