

December 20, 2024 | ISSUE 15

THE GRAZE

A quarterly newsletter with livestock and agronomy updates.



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A banner for the Mid-Plains AG EXPO. It features a photograph of a field of tall, golden grasses with a bright sunburst effect in the background. The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension logo is in the top right corner. The text 'Mid-Plains AG EXPO' is prominently displayed in green. Below it, the date 'January 22, 2025' and location 'Hale County Justice Center Assembly Room, 225 Broadway, Plainview, TX 79072' are listed. A QR code is in the bottom left, and the text '7 CEUs Available • Cost \$30 • RSVP Required - 806-291-5267' is in the bottom right. Green geometric shapes are overlaid on the image.



7 CEUs Available • Cost \$30 • RSVP Required - 806-291-5267

Outstanding YF&R Finalist: Layton and Jessi Schur

Texas Farm Bureau | Texas Agriculture Daily

BY SHELBY SHANK, FIELD EDITOR



In the heart of Hale County, Layton and Jessi Schur are building something special—a family operated, direct-to-consumer retail store, providing their community with fresh produce and beef from their farm.

“We take pride in offering our homegrown products four days a week at our brick-and-mortar storefront,” Jessi said. “Our vegetables are harvested daily to ensure peak freshness for our customers, and our beef is raised with the utmost care to guarantee quality.”

In 2019, Layton had a dream to market their cattle directly to consumers. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, that vision quickly became a reality.

“We sold three whole steers in under 30 minutes,” he said. “We knew that meat alone would not be enough, so we expanded into a market garden.”

The Schurs grow over 40 different vegetable varieties, specializing in staple summer crops on their 22-acre market garden, and raise Limousin cattle.

Outstanding YF&R Finalist: Layton and Jessi Schur Layton and Jessi Schur have a direct-to-consumer retail store in Hale County, providing their community with fresh produce and beef from their farm and market garden. They also grow grain sorghum and cotton.



Their beef operation is the cornerstone of their farm. Layton’s grandfather started raising Limousin cattle in 1970, and over the years, Layton has expanded their bull business to include buying back calves from local producers to sell in their market.

“My family’s legacy and dedication to farming have driven me to continue improving and expanding our operation,” Layton said. “With the support of my wife and the involvement of my parents, we are committed to providing high-quality, locally-grown products and beef.”

This year, they will process over 100 beef cattle, ensuring a consistent supply of beef.

Located on the square in downtown Plainview, their storefront, Frontier Market, offers more than fresh food. It bridges the gap between the farm and consumers.

“In our rural community, many people are far removed from farming and don’t know where their food comes from,” Jessi said. “Our storefront allows us to connect directly with consumers and build personal relationships.”

They sell their beef and produce at several farmer’s markets in the area, too.

Layton also grows sorghum and cotton on the same land his grandfather bought in 1956, carrying on a legacy set before him.

“I’ve worked on my family’s farm my whole life and have watched significant changes, particularly the rapid decline of water,” Layton said. “This has necessitated a shift in farming practices from heavy tillage to more sustainable methods, including cover crop rotations to preserve the soil’s health.”

Each day, Layton and Jessi work to cultivate and deliver a high-quality product while staying true to their motto: Farm. Fresh. Local.

Outstanding YF&R Finalist: Layton and Jessi Schur Layton and Jessi Schur have a direct-to-consumer retail store in Hale County, providing their community with fresh produce and beef from their farm and market garden. They also grow grain sorghum and cotton.

Once an elementary school math teacher, Jessi now runs the storefront full time.

“We were both raised with faith and are still dedicated to our church and community,” Jessi said. “We have found immense joy and bonding in building our business together. We are passionate advocates for transparent farming practices and always welcome consumers to visit and see how their food is grown.”

The Schurs have also expanded their services to include a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) subscription and a bundle marketing service, which allows customers to purchase curated selections of their produce and beef.

“I’m very fortunate to grow up on the land my granddad started, and now I am able to return to those same acres where my dad still farms,” Layton said. “My wife and I have established our dream produce operation, serving our community with locally sourced meats and homegrown vegetables.”

Layton and Jessi are involved in both state Young Farmer & Rancher events and county Farm Bureau activities, as well as their church where Layton served as a head elder and now head trustee.

In January, they welcomed their first child, Sedonia, into the family.

“She’s already a part of everything we do. We look forward to her growing up with the same passion and love for agriculture as we do,” Jessi said.

[Watch a video with the Schurs.](#)

Outstanding Young Farmer & Rancher Contest



The Schurs are finalists in TFB's Outstanding Young Farmer & Rancher Contest.

The contest recognizes young men and women ages 18 to 35 who are involved in agriculture but do not earn their primary income from a farm or ranch enterprise.

Information on the contest and TFB's YF&R program can be found online at texasfarmbureau.org/YFR.

New world screwworm confirmed in Mexico

Texas Farm Bureau | Texas Agriculture Daily

A destructive parasite found in livestock and other warm-blooded animals has been identified in Mexico. The New World screwworm (NWS) was confirmed in a cow on Nov. 22, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

As a result, USDA placed restrictions on imports of animals originating from or transiting through Mexico.



The screwworm was found in a cow at an inspection checkpoint in the southern Mexico state of Chiapas, close to the border with Guatemala.

Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) is working closely with USDA to implement existing response plans to enforce pest monitoring at Texas' southern border and into the state.

This detection follows the progressively northward movement of the pest through South and Central America. As a protective measure, animal health officials ask that ranchers along the southern border and those traveling from NWS-affected areas monitor their livestock and pets for signs of NWS and immediately report potential cases.

The USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is the regulatory agency responsible for ensuring the nation's commercial supply of meat, poultry and egg products is safe and properly labeled. Any evidence of screwworm infection would be identified during FSIS inspection processes, and adulterated product derived from the affected animal would not be allowed to go into commerce.

General disease information and how to prevent the spread of NWS can be found on the TAHC and USDA websites and below.

What is New World screwworm?

New World screwworms (NWS) are larvae or maggots of the NWS fly (*Cochliomyia hominivorax*), that cause the painful condition NWS myiasis. NWS flies lay eggs in open wounds or orifices of live tissue. These eggs hatch into dangerous parasitic larvae, and the maggots burrow or screw into flesh with sharp mouth hooks. The wound can become larger, and an infestation can often cause serious, deadly damage. NWS primarily infest livestock, but can also affect other mammals, including humans, and birds.

The parasite was last eradicated from the United States in 1966, with costly efforts by federal and state animal health officials, livestock producers and veterinary practitioners. Eradication efforts have continued in Central America, but the pest is considered endemic in Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic and South America.

Clinical signs

Clinical signs of NWS myiasis may include:

- Irritated or depressed behavior
- Loss of appetite
- Head shaking
- Smell of decaying flesh
- Evidence of fly strike
- Presence of fly larvae (maggots) in wounds
- Isolation from other animals or people

Transmission

NWS infestations begin when a female NWS fly is attracted to the odor of a wound or opening of a live warm-blooded animal to lay eggs. These openings can include wounds as small as a tick bite, nasal or eye openings, umbilicus of a newborn, or genitalia.

One NWS female fly can lay 200-300 eggs at a time and may lay up to 3,000 eggs during her lifespan.

Eggs hatch into larvae (maggots) that burrow into an opening to feed. After feeding, larvae drop to the ground, burrow into the soil, and emerge as adult NWS flies. Adult NWS flies can fly long distances, and the movement of infested livestock or wildlife can lead to spread of even longer distances.

Diagnosis

There are several flies associated with wounds, but only NWS feed on living tissues, versus dead tissues and fluids. The identification of NWS is done by larvae collection and evaluation. NWS larvae have a series of backwardly protruding spines around a tapered body, giving a screw-like appearance, helping to identify the pest.

Anyone who suspects suspicious wounds, maggots, or infestations should notify a veterinarian immediately.

Reporting New World screwworm

TAHC must be notified within 24 hours of all suspected and confirmed cases of NWS. Reports can be made to any TAHC region office by anyone, not just veterinarians or diagnostic laboratories. Suspected infestations of NWS should be immediately reported.

Prevention

To avoid introduction of NWS, keep open wounds clean and covered and treat clothing, gear, and people with proper repellents. When traveling, especially in NWS-infested areas, ensure pets and vehicles are inspected for NWS flies and larvae. Monitor pets and livestock for clinical signs of NWS and immediately report suspicions.

Treatment and eradication

Animals infested with NWS, myiasis or secondary infection should be immediately treated with an appropriate method by a veterinarian. Left untreated, animals may die within one week of infestation.

Eradication of NWS infestations is accomplished through the sterile insect technique. Sterilized male flies are released to mate in an area with an established NWS population. Females, only mating once in their lifetime, then lay nonviable eggs. The population decreases without the addition of new larvae and dies off naturally over a few lifecycles.

Additional New World screwworm information and resources

- Texas Animal Commission: [New World Screwworm Fact Sheet](#)
- Animal Health Resources: [United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, New World Screwworms](#)
- Human Health Resources: [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, New World Screwworm Myiasis](#)

Improve respiratory health with winter stress management

TEXAS FARM BUREAU

Cattle comfort this winter has multilayer benefits. Concentrate on these three areas to keep stress down and immune function up.

If you've ever gone out to break ice while you had a cold, you know it can feel miserable simply breathing. Respiratory disease in the winter feels awful, for both humans and cattle.

Thankfully, there are ways to manage the top three winter stressors that make cattle more susceptible to bovine respiratory disease (BRD), said Peggy Thompson, DVM, Boehringer Ingelheim.



“Stress can have a negative effect on all immune function. That means it affects both innate immunity, which is the system they are born with, and adaptive immunity, which recognizes foreign pathogens from previous natural exposure, vaccination or maternal antibodies through colostrum,” explained Dr. Thompson. “The needle is not a silver bullet. Animal care and management affect how cattle will respond to both vaccination and health challenges.”

Here are three management areas on which to concentrate this winter:

Winter weather

Cattle require adequate energy and protein to maintain their immune function during cold weather. For every degree below an animal's lower critical temperature — the lowest temperature they can comfortably experience — their energy requirements increase by 1%.¹

“If we can prepare an animal for a storm event with additional nutrition and management, then they will have a better opportunity to handle situations outside of our control,” explained Thompson. “Every time an animal has to create an immune response, they have to use more protein and energy. So when they have to fight a stressful event like a storm, having a nutritional reserve will help them overcome it.”

It's also important to keep cattle dry and protected from the wind, with added bedding and windbreaks to help increase comfort and boost their immune system.¹

“When animals are wet, their ability to maintain normal body temperature becomes more difficult, requiring more energy and potentially compromising their immune response,” said Thompson.

Transportation

Whether in a potbelly trailer or a stock trailer between pastures, transportation in the winter adds another layer of stress. To minimize cold stress during transport, Thompson advises adjusting airflow in trailers to maintain ventilation without causing drafts or allowing in diesel fumes.²

“It's also important to have well-rested drivers, drivers who know how to handle cattle in a low-stress manner, and properly maintained equipment to avoid delays and unnecessary stress during transport,” she added.

Weaning

Weaning is already stressful for cows and calves, and weaning during winter for fall-born calves can compound the issue.

Calves are dealing with a new food source, separation from their mothers, vaccinations and transport; winter weather adds more stress to the mix.³

Thompson emphasizes that reduced feed intake due to the weaning transition can tax the immune system even more. Ensuring calves are familiar with the weaning area, including where water sources and feed bunks are before they're weaned from their dam can help ease the transition.

Commingling post weaning also increases stress. "Animals are learning a new social structure and potentially dealing with exposure to other pathogens from new animals, all of which negatively affects their immune system," said Thompson. Sometimes commingling is unavoidable, but, if possible, she suggests limiting it to smaller groups.

Several practices can mitigate weaning stress. For example, gradual weaning methods can ease the transition.³ Thompson is also in favor of techniques like using a nose flap to reduce suckling or implementing fence-line weaning so calves can see and interact with their mothers for several days.

Prepare for the inevitable

"You can't eliminate all threats associated with the winter environment," she asserted. "You can only plan ahead and provide the opportunity for calves to handle them."

That provided opportunity has many forms: through vaccination, stress-reducing preventative management, and biosecurity to lower pathogen exposure.

Though even with the best winter management, sometimes pathogens overwhelm a calf's immune system. In these cases, work with your veterinarian to find and administer an antibiotic that works quickly to provide [the fastest relief](#). By preventing or quickly treating winter respiratory disease, you can increase cattle comfort and performance.

"Plan ahead and involve your veterinarian and advisors to ensure nutrition and health are managed in a way for optimal success this winter," concluded Thompson.

References:

¹ Wyffels SA, Dafoe JM, Parsons CT, et al. The influence of age and environmental conditions on supplement intake by beef cattle winter grazing northern mixed-grass rangelands. *J Anim Sci* 2020;98(7):skaa217. doi: 10.1093/jas/skaa217

² Schwartzkopf-Genswein K, Ahola J, Edwards-Callaway L, et al. Transportation issues affecting cattle well-being and considerations for the future. *The Prof Anim Scientist*, 2016;32(6):707–716.

³ Freeman S, Poore M, Pickworth C, Alley M. Influence of weaning strategy on behavior, humoral indicators of stress, growth and carcass characteristics. *Transl Anim Sci* 2020;5(1):txaa231. doi: 10.1093/tas/txaa231

7 Lessons We Learned When We Added Sheep to Our Regenerative Ranch

By [Green Cover Seed](#)

One year after the first 39 head arrived, our flock is growing — and so is its positive impact.

With anything new, there's a learning curve.

Ranching is no exception — especially when you're talking about adding a new species.

I've been managing Noble Research Institute's Coffey Ranch in Love County, Oklahoma, since November of 2019. But in the spring of 2021, [things changed a little when we unloaded 39 sheep](#) on the once exclusively cattle operation.

When you add sheep to a cattle operation, you're no longer putting all your eggs in one basket."

Here are seven lessons we've learned one year after converting to a [regenerative](#) ranch with [multiple species](#).

1. Sheep are more resilient than you've heard.

We've all heard "sheep are just looking for a place to die." But I no longer believe it. In fact, I think I know where the saying comes from: They're so tough, you may not notice they're sick till it's too late.

A cow is so large, she can afford to show a little bit of weakness. But a 120-pound ewe is on all the predators' lists and doesn't have that luxury.

Of course, for a healthy flock, it's important to choose your stock wisely and make sure they fit your environment and goals. We chose Dorpers, which are low-maintenance hair sheep.



We purchased our sheep from our friends at The Dixon Water Foundation in Texas. They've been running sheep a little while and, essentially, had done a lot of the heavy lifting. They'd done a lot of culling already and had identified the hardy animals.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention one health issue we ran into that reminds you how different cattle and sheep can be. When we first got the sheep, we hauled some heavy-bred females. We later learned animals that carry multiple fetuses can get gestational toxemia from that kind of stress. It causes glucose, mineral and vitamin deficiencies and can be fatal.

2. You will have to make infrastructure changes.

At Coffey Ranch, we weren't set up for sheep, and getting there required some time.

When we had a new south boundary fence put in, we made it sheep- and goat-proof. The rest of the property is fenced with single-strand high-tensile wire put in for cattle. But we have had good success with containing the sheep behind a single strand of poly wire.

Placement is important, though. We learned if the electric fence didn't hit the sheep on their nose (where their hair didn't insulate them), it wouldn't be effective. So that means the fence wire is anywhere from 16 to 18 inches off the ground.

Because this is a native tallgrass prairie, and we get forages that grow 3-to-6-feet tall, it means I have to brush-hog strips of pasture down to about 12 inches tall to get the sheep fence in. And that adds extra preparation time to the moving process.

We also needed a portable feeder pen for our guardian dogs so it can be moved as the flock grazes new paddocks.



3. A good dog is a sheep's best friend.



takes time.

Our guardian dogs are invaluable to a sheep operation, because they keep predators away.

We're a little dog-heavy right now, with four on the place, but when we purchased that first flock, we bought two dogs that were already bonded with them. One of them is pretty old, so we wanted to make sure we had time to get replacement dogs trained up. So, we added two 6-month-old pups in June 2021.

That was a learning experience, too. You've got young pups learning from the older dogs. Both the older dogs and the sheep have to bond with and accept the new dogs. All of this

4. Ewes with lambs at their side can be moved — and it helps with parasite prevention.

Since I was new to managing sheep, I didn't always go with my gut at first. One time in particular, I wish I had.

In regenerative ranching, we move animals frequently. However, I'd been told not to move ewes with baby lambs on their side. Folks scared me to death, saying the animals would get confused if I did.

So, I left them in the pasture too long, and they ended up getting parasites. We had to deworm



them. Now, I move them as I normally would any other time of the year, and it's worked out.

5. They're flightier, but that's not always bad.



One way sheep are different than cattle is in their flight zone, the distance you have to stay away from an animal for it to feel comfortable.

Of course, once they get used to you, it'll shrink a little. But sheep remain flightier than cattle and also want to stick together more than cattle do.

The good news is, they're actually easier to move than cattle. Additionally, if they escape, if you find one, you've found them all.

6. You may be surprised how much you like them.

Sheep are cool critters. I was surprised to learn how much I enjoy working with them. They're easy to deal with and be around, especially once you adjust to the differences between sheep and cattle. And I really like that they help us utilize the resources that God gives us better than if we were only running cattle.



7. Financially, they just make sense.

By diversifying, you can dramatically improve your bottom line. When you add sheep to a cattle operation, you're no longer putting all your eggs in one basket. When cattle prices drop, you've got sheep to sell, too. And instead of having to spray for weeds, sheep will use those weeds to make you money. It's a win-win.

Additionally, sheep are cheaper to get into — you can pay them off in a year or two. And once you're set up, each step of the way is less intensive than and less expensive than cattle. You don't have to precondition them. It's cheap to supplement them during the winter, too. We're talking a couple of pounds of alfalfa per day per head to get them through the worst part of winter. Finally, you can just load them up and go when you're ready to sell.

We're still learning, but I can say this with confidence: Sheep have had a positive impact at Coffey Ranch.

Registration Open! | Grazing Resource & Animal Managements Academy



Grazing Resource & Animal Management Academy begins January 2025!

Please complete your registration by submitting payment to our office by January 8th. Your registration will be complete once payment is received.

If you missed the initial registration, don't worry you can still register and pay. All are welcome!

Visit our website for registration and more details about the academy.

<https://hale.agrilife.org/ag/livestock-ag/grama-academy/>

Tune In For The

The
GRAZE



ALL THINGS LIVESTOCK AND RANCHING
Educational Series




900 AM


**1st Friday Of
The Month
11 AM**

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 [All Ag, All Day](#)
 900 AM KFLP

Upcoming Programs/Events:

Please call (806) 291-5267 to sign-up or if you have any questions.

The Mid-Plains Ag Expo – Great Speakers, Lunch, 7 CEUs, Auxin Training [RSVP Here by Jan. 16th!](#)

January 22, 2025
 Hale County Justice Center Assembly Room (Main Entr.)
 225 Broadway
 Plainview, TX 79072

Grazing School [Register by Jan. 8th!](#)

Begins January 2025
 Hale County Extension Office
 225 Broadway, Ste. 6
 Plainview, Texas 79072

AM Radio – The GRAZE Educational Series First Friday of Every Month @ 11:00 AM Aired on Radio: All Ag, All Day – 900AM

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