

Houston County Winter Agriculture Newsletter

Winter 2015

March 2, 2015



Dates of Interest

March 13, 2015

Deadline for Home & Garden Entries—County Ext Office

March 28, 2015

Cottage Food Business Workshop 10 am-2:30pm Nacogdoches
Call 979-458-2025 for more info

April 7-10

Houston County Fair
(see page 2 for details)

April 17, 2015

Beef Cattle Workshop Series 1, Corrigan

Beef Quality Assurance (BQA)

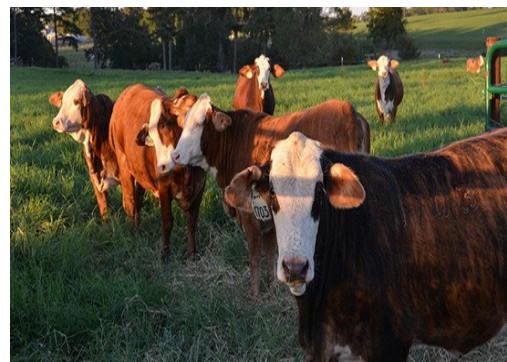


The mission of the Beef Quality Assurance Program is to promote management practices that enable cattle producers to improve beef quality and strengthen consumer confidence in beef as a safe, nutritious, wholesome food product. Program participants receive education and hands-on training to learn about animal health products, feedstuffs, feed additives and medications, care and husbandry practices, and other core practices. The BQA Pro-

gram also provides systematic information to cattle producers nationwide on production methods and practices for improving beef quality and safety under a wide variety of management and environmental conditions.

BQA-certified calves receive an estimated \$1.59 per hundred weight price premium (Montana State Univer-

sity estimate). For approximately 790,000 head of weaned and stocker calves owned or managed by participants in the Texas BQA Program, the increase in gross returns was estimated at \$7.2 million for 2011.



WORMS -- NATURE'S GARBAGE DISPOSAL

Worm composting or vermiculture is a great benefit to the gardener. Earthworms aerate the soil, increase water absorption and add nutrients to the soil by their continuous ingesting and digesting. The de-

posits left by the worms, called castings, contain five to ten times the soluble plant nutrients as the original soil. Earthworms have been converting organic waste into usable form for millions of

years. They provide a simple, environmentally sound means to change organic waste into a nutrient-rich material that can be used on your plants or lawn. Though most of us are familiar

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2015 Houston County Fair Schedule

*****Monday, April 6, 2015*****

5 P.M. – UNTIL FINISHED.....SET – UP FAIR GROUNDS

*****Tuesday, April 7, 2015*****

2 P.M.- 3 P.M.Check in QUILT ENTRIES-Ag Extension Office
4 P.M. – 6 P.M.Check in Home & Garden Entries - Civic Center (except baked goods)
**4 P.M. – 6 P.M.Check in REPLACEMENT HEIFERS,
HOGS, MARKET LAMBS, MARKET GOATS, STEERS,IN-COUNTY HEIFERS**
5 P.M. – 5:30 P.M.Register for Pet Show
6 P.M.PET SHOW
7 P.M. – UNTILSIFT OF ALL PROJECTS

Wednesday, April 8, 2015

Wednesday, April 3, 2019

8 A.M. – 9 A.M.	Check in Shop Projects
8 A.M. - 9 A.M.	Check in Home & Garden Baked Entries (Civic Center)
9 A.M.	JUDGE SHOP PROJECTS
10 A.M. – 3 P.M.	Civic Center closed to Judge Home & Garden Entries
12 P.M.	Check in RABBITS AND SIFT WITH SHOW TO IMMEDIATELY FOLLOW
4 P.M.	Civic Center - Pictures of Home & Garden Fair Best of Class & Best of Show Winners
5:30 P.M.	LAMB SHOW FOLLOWED BY GOATS

Thursday, April 9, 2015

10 A.M. REPLACEMENT HEIFER SHOW (Interviews to be held last)
12 P.M. – 12:30 P.M. Check in Broilers WITH SHOW TO IMMEDIATELY FOLLOW
2 P.M. IN COUNTY HEIFERS FOLLOWED BY STEERS
3:00 P.M. – 6:00 P.M. Civic Center open for Home & Garden Viewing
***** NO FOAL FUTURITY SHOW *****
6:30 P.M. BREEDING SWINE SHOW followed by MARKET HOG SHOW

Friday, April 10, 2015

8 A.M. – 9:30 A.M. Pick up Home & Garden Entries – Except Best of Show
1 P.M. Set up for Sale of Champions (All those in Sale of Champions)
4 P.M. – 5:30 P.M. BUYER'S APPRECIATION DINNER
5:30 P.M. Line up for Sale of Champion Participants
6:00 P.M. SALE OF CHAMPIONS

Saturday, April 12, 2014

9:00 A.M. – until.....CLEAN-UP

**2015 Home & Garden ENTRIES DUE MARCH 13 at the County
Extension office by 4:30 pm**

Closed 12-1 for Lunch

Unpredictable Weather

“Udderly” unpredictable weather has kept Texas cattle producers busy trying to keep herds healthy. Rainfall paired with “yo-yo” high and low temperatures have made cattle more susceptible to disease. With increased risk, producers need to keep an eye out for problems.

A wet animal during cold temperatures needs greater

attention than it normally would. Respiratory problems are the most common ailments for animals in this type of weather. Symptoms are coughing and wheezing, along with a runny nose and eyes. You have to be a great observer of the animal. With all these changes you need to pay attention because they have a greater opportunity to

get sick.

As soon as symptoms are spotted, do something about it so the animal doesn't get any sicker.

If problems develop, contact your veterinarian.



Worm Composting continued.....

with composting leaves and plant waste outdoors, a small composting bin stored under the kitchen sink can be a convenient way to dispose of kitchen waste.

The Smith County Master Gardeners recommend a special brown-nosed, or red wiggler garbage-eating worm (*Eisenia foetida*) for this purpose. They are a practical way to reduce the volume of kitchen waste by up to 98%. One pound of worms (approximately 1000 worms) can consume one-half pound of food per day, and they double in number every 90 days. They are odor free and will eat most fruit and vegetable waste (raw or cooked), coffee and tea grounds, egg shells, bread, etc., though citrus, dairy and meat products and onions should be avoided.

Worm composting can also be an excellent way to involve children in caring for the environment.

Gardening magazines are an excellent source for suppliers of worms for composting.

For outside use, place your “worm farm” in an area protected from high temperatures. The worms will die if exposed to temperatures of 100 degrees or more. A plastic or wooden container two feet square and one foot deep will accommodate one pound of worms. Provide drainage and aeration by drilling about a dozen 1/8" holes in the bottom and sides of the container.

Soak shredded newspaper in water. Squeeze the excess water out and line the bottom of the worm container. Add a couple of handfuls of soil, sand, leaf mold or finished compost on top of the newspaper. This worm bedding should be kept moist.

Finally, add the worms. You can use worms purchased at any lo-

cal stores that sell earthworms. Feed the worms small amounts at a time, at first. The worms will eat any kitchen waste or table scraps, coffee grounds, tea bags or egg shells.

In three months, the worms will have about doubled their population and it will be time to harvest the compost.



TAMU-EX-AQFI 001
Revised May 2013



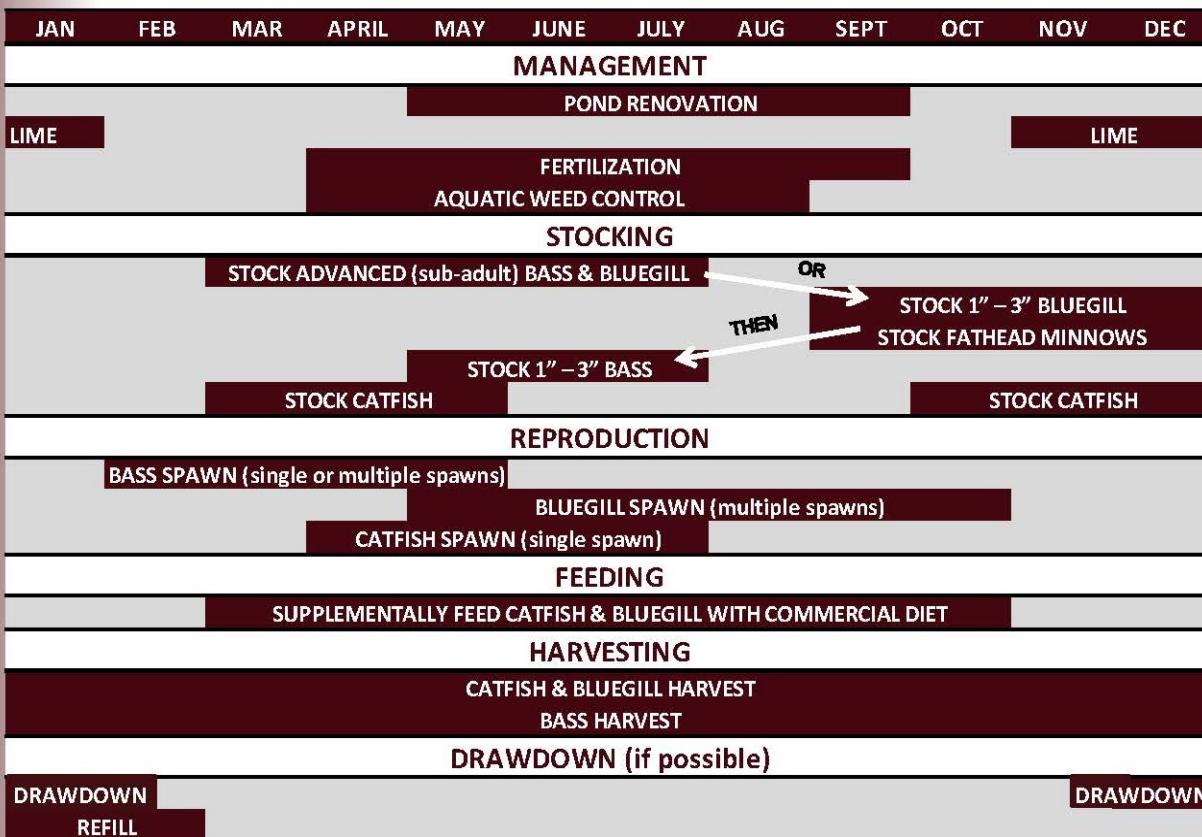
TEXAS FARM POND MANAGEMENT CALENDAR

Billy J. Higginbotham

Professor & Extension Wildlife & Fisheries
Specialist

Todd D. Sink

Assistant Professor & Extension Fisheries
Specialist



• **POND RENOVATION** – Ponds that become imbalanced due to stunted fish populations and/or undesirable species should be renovated utilizing rotenone. Liquid or powder 5 percent rotenone at 10 pounds of powder or one gallon liquid/acre foot of water kills most problematic species. Treated water is safe for livestock. Restocking is possible three weeks after treatment.

Best months: May-September (when water temperature is above 70° F).

• **LIME** – Agricultural limestone applications are necessary in ponds with pH below 6.5 and/or total alkalinity below 20 ppm. Waters in this category may limit fish growth and reproduction. East Texas ponds in particular should be tested before stocking. Be sure to use the same lime as used on pastures and hay meadows.

Best months: November-January.

• **FERTILIZATION** – Inorganic fertilizer can be utilized to increase fish production 2-6 fold by increasing the food supply. Apply granular 10-20-5 at 100 pounds/surface acre followed by one or two reduced rate applications of 35 pounds/surface acre as needed to maintain the bloom. Liquid fertilizer such as 16-34-0 is also utilized at 1-2 gallons/surface acre with reduced rate applications as needed. Apply water soluble fertilizers such as 10-52-4 at 6 to 10 pounds per acre with reduced rate applications as needed. Never fertilize and lime a pond at the same time. Fertilization should be continued on an annual basis.

Best months: Start in early April, end in September.

Ponds Continued....

TEXAS FARM POND MANAGEMENT CALENDAR



• **AQUATIC WEED CONTROL** – Consider using triploid grass carp as a *biological* control treatment if plants they control are present. Initiate *herbicide* weed control when growth begins in the spring. Proper plant identification is essential to providing good control. Do not treat an entire pond with heavy weed infestations in the summer. Spot treat in hot weather to avoid oxygen depletion. Visit our aquatic weed website for help with plant identification and treatment options: <http://aquaplant.tamu.edu>
Best months: Start in April or May – spot treat only throughout summer as needed if fish are important.

• **STOCKING** – Rates given are for new or renovated ponds only (no fish present). Muddy ponds and *all ponds less than one surface acre* should be stocked with only fathead minnows (at 500/surface acre as supplemental forage) and catfish or hybrid sunfish or hybrid striped bass. Stocking rates range from 100 to 1000 fingerlings per acre for these species depending on the frequency and quantity of feeding.

Best months: March-May or October-December.

Ponds larger than one surface acre are suitable for management of bass-bluegill or bass-bluegill-catfish. Occasionally, supplemental forage species (threadfin shad, fathead minnows, tilapia and/or redear sunfish) are stocked in addition to the bluegill. Stock twenty 6-8" bass and thirty 3" or larger bluegill per surface acre, if available. Do not stock hybrid sunfish in a bass pond.

Best months: October-December (bluegill); March-early July (bass).

If only 1-3" bass and bluegill are available, stock 500 bluegill/surface acre in the fall followed by 50 bass/surface acre the next spring. Catfish stocked with bass-bluegill should be at least as large as the bass fingerlings (stocking rate 50/surface acre). All stocking rates for bass-bluegill-catfish strategies can be doubled if a fertilization program is utilized. To maintain catfish populations in a bass pond, stock 25-50 8" or larger catfish/surface acre every 3 to 5 years.

• **SPAWNING** – Catfish stocked alone should not be encouraged to reproduce by adding spawning habitat. However, when stocked with bass and bluegill, spawning cavities can be added to the pond to increase catfish reproduction. Bass initiate spawning in March (February in southern portions of Texas), with some females spawning more than once before summer. Bluegill are essential as bass forage because of their ability to spawn throughout the summer (May-October), providing abundant forage for maintaining a bass population.

• **SUPPLEMENTAL FEEDING** – Supplemental feeding greatly increases the pounds of catfish that can be supported in ponds and lakes. Bluegill also benefit from a regular feeding program. Use a floating ration containing at least 28 percent crude protein. Feed at three percent body weight or all that will be eaten by the fish in 10-15 minutes. DO NOT feed more than 15 pounds per day without supplemental aeration. Feed may also be offered once a week during the winter on warm, sunny days only.

Best months: March-November and during prolonged warm periods during the winter.

• **HARVEST** – Hook and line harvest is encouraged as soon as catfish reach edible size. Catfish produced for income should be removed and sold (if appropriate) by the end of the growing season (November-December). However, since most pond owners simply raise catfish for their own recreation, carry-over of fish from one year to the next is common. Mature fish (3-4 years) may spawn and the resulting offspring stunt or the carrying capacity of the pond (maximum of 1000/pounds/surface acre with daily feeding) will be exceeded if the fish are not routinely harvested. Return all bass less than 15" long during the first three years after stocking. From the fourth year on, remove twenty-five 8-12" bass, return 12-15" bass, and keep or return those bass over 15". Do not remove more than 25 pounds of bass per acre per year to prevent overharvest. No limit should be placed on the number of bluegill harvested.

Best months: All year.

• **CATCH RECORDS** – Anglers should maintain accurate records on the number and size of each species caught during each fishing trip. Harvest can then be monitored to determine when restocking and/or harvest restrictions become necessary for certain species.

Best months: All year.

• **DRAWDOWN** – Ponds larger than one surface acre containing bass and bluegill may benefit from annual drawdown of 1-3 feet. This technique concentrates forage (bluegill) and makes them more available to bass. Exposed shoreline areas can be planted with a combination of winter grasses following drawdown to provide nursery habitat for sportfish fingerlings the next spring. Winter drawdown can also serve to kill problematic weeds.

Best months: Drawdown in November, refill before bass spawning season (March).

For additional information and resources please visit our Extension websites at:

<http://wildlife.tamu.edu> and <http://aquaplant.tamu.edu>

If you would rather receive an email version of our newsletter and other program information instead of a mailed copy—please call our office and request to be added to our email list.

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1:00 pm to 4:30 pm

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