

PANOLA COUNTY AGRILIFE EXTENSION

316 W. Sabine St., Carthage, TX 75633

(903) 693-0380

www.Panola.AgrLife.org

[/PCAgriLife](#)

THE PANOLA EXTENSION

March 2025

UPCOMING EVENTS

- 3/3:** Project Fair Exhibits Check in, 3:30-6:30, Civic Center Conference Rooms
- 3/3:** Cow Patty Plop Fundraiser begins, 9:00am, Expo Hall
- 3/4:** Project Fair Awards, 5:00pm, Expo Hall
- 3/5-7:** Panola County Junior Livestock Show and Project Fair
- 3/12:** Diabetes Support Group, 10:00am, Sammy Brown Library
- 3/14:** Master Gardeners meeting, Noon, Sammy Brown Library
- 3/15:** Texas 4-H Virtual Fishing registration closes
- 3/17:** Mental Health Task Force Meeting, Chamber of Commerce, 9:00am
- 3/17:** ALPA Meeting, 6:00pm, Extension Office
- 3/21:** Pond Field Day, Bar None Cowboy Church, 8:30am
- 3/25:** Horticulture in the Evening, 5:30pm, Sammy Brown Library
- 3/28:** Sabine River Valley Horticulture Conference, 8:30am, Carthage Civic Center
- 3/28:** Panola 4-H Baked Potato Meal order forms due into the Extension Office
- 4/1:** Come Alive in D5 Registration closes
- 4/4:** Panola 4-H Baked Potato Meal Pick-Up, Expo Hall
- 4/11:** District 5 Senior Leadership Lab, Palestine, TX
- 4/11:** Master Gardeners Meeting, Noon, Sammy Brown Library
- 4/14:** Food Handlers Class, 5:30pm, Chamber of Commerce
- 4/15:** Horticulture in the Evening, 5:30pm, Sammy Brown Library
- 4/25-26:** Come Alive in D5, District 5 Round Up at Panola College



TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

New “Healthy” Label Guidance on Food Packaging



Written by Clarissa Moon

The FDA has been notorious for not always regulating health claims on food packaging like we consumers think or would like them to. However, this past December, they announced a final rule on a “healthy” claim that manufacturers can voluntarily put on food packages starting April 28, 2025. This is great news since a) the last time “healthy” was defined for packaging was in the 1990s and b) the new definition is consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans!

To meet the new criteria to be considered “healthy”, a food product needs to

1. contain a certain amount of food from at least one of the food groups or subgroups (such as fruit, vegetables, grains, fat-free and low-fat dairy and protein foods) recommended by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, and
2. meet specific limits for added sugars, saturated fat and sodium (since many Americans over-indulge in these areas).

Once this rule goes into effect, many nutrient-dense foods will qualify for “healthy”- such as eggs, low-fat dairy, seafood and nuts. Water will, ironically, qualify as well. While it is not considered part of a food group, it is considered an “optimal” beverage by the Dietary Guidelines. Some other foods, however, will no longer qualify. These include fortified white bread and highly sweetened yogurts and cereals.

The FDA is also in the process of potentially developing a symbol that manufacturers could use on packaging to show that a product qualifies as “healthy”. Who knows if and when this will happen, but it’s at least on their radar.

While these new guidelines won’t be a magic bullet to solve all of our diet-related and chronic disease problems, it’s at least a step in the right direction! This should be a good tool to help consumers easily identify healthy food choices from the other calorie-dense options.

Sources: <https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/fresh-take-what-healthy-means-food-packages>

<https://www.fda.gov/food/nutrition-food-labeling-and-critical-foods/use-term-healthy-food-labeling>



Nutrition Facts Valeur nutritive		
Per 1 cup (250 mL) / par 1 tasse (250 mL)		
Amount Teneur		% Daily Value % valeur quotidienne
Calories / Calories 80		
Fat / Lipides 0 g		0 %
Saturated / saturés 0 g		
+ Trans / trans 0 g		0 %
Cholesterol / Cholestérol 0 mg		
Sodium / Sodium 115 mg		5 %
Carbohydrate / Glucides 12 g		4 %
Fibre / Fibres 0 g		
Sugars / Sucres 11 g		0 %
Protein / Protéines 9 g		
Vitamin A / Vitamine A		
Vitamin C / Vitamine C		15 %
Calcium / Calcium		0 %
Iron / Fer		30 %
Vitamin D / Vitamine D		0 %
		45 %

Buzzing Beauty

Create a Pollinator Paradise in Your Backyard!

By: Lee Dudley



Imagine stepping outside to a garden alive and buzzing with activity, filled with the sweet hum of life. Hummingbirds zip through the air like tiny acrobats, butterflies fluttering from bloom to bloom, and bees busily collecting nectar, all ensuring plants thrive. Not only is this a beautiful scene, but also essential for a healthy environment. Pollinators play a critical role in plant reproduction, helping produce the fruits, vegetables, and flowers we enjoy. Without them, our ecosystems and our food supply would suffer.

So, how can you invite these essential creatures into your yard? Creating a pollinator-friendly landscape is simpler than you might think!

The first step to attracting pollinators is planting the right flowers. Choose native plants like coneflowers, bee balm, black-eyed Susans, and milkweed, which provide nectar and serve as host plants for butterflies. Having a mix of plants blooming in different seasons, ensure pollinators have a continuous food source. Hummingbirds are especially drawn to tubular flowers like salvia and trumpet vine, while bees love lavender, sunflowers, and clover.

Many chemical pesticides harm the very creatures you want to attract. Instead of using harsh chemicals, opt for natural pest control methods, such as introducing ladybugs and praying mantises or using organic sprays. A pesticide-free garden ensures that bees and butterflies can safely gather nectar without harm.

Pollinators need more than just food; they also need water and shelter. A shallow water dish with pebbles or a birdbath provides a much-needed drink. Leaving a small brush pile, undisturbed soil patches, or even installing bee houses can give pollinators a place to nest and rest.



A variety of plant shapes, sizes, and colors will attract a wide range of pollinators. Mixing wildflowers, shrubs, and trees creates a layered habitat that benefits different species. The more diverse your garden, the more visitors you'll welcome!

Want to take your gardening skills to the next level and learn how to maximize your yard's pollinator potential?

Join us for the
**Sabine River Valley Horticulture Conference
on March 28th at the Carthage Civic Center!**

This exciting event will feature expert presentations, including:

- **Pollinator Gardening:** Learn how to create a thriving pollinator-friendly space.
- **Unleash Nature:** Master Rewilding: Discover how to restore a natural ecosystem in your garden.
- **Growing the Layered Garden:** Explore creative planting strategies for year-round beauty.

The conference runs from **9:00 AM to Noon**, with registration starting at 8:30 AM. The cost is just **\$10 per person**, and refreshments will be provided. Seating is limited to the first 60 participants, so be sure to RSVP by March 25th by calling (903) 693-0380.

By making small changes to your home landscape, you can create a haven for hummingbirds, butterflies, and bees—ensuring that these crucial creatures continue to thrive. Let's work together to make our gardens bloom with life, one pollinator-friendly plant at a time!



Sabine River Valley Horticulture Conference

Friday, March 28 • Registration 8:30am
Program 9:00am-Noon • \$10/person
Carthage Civic Center

RSVP by March 25: 903-693-0380 | Limited to First 60 to RSVP

Pollinator Gardening: Essentials of Creating a Pollinator-Friendly Garden
Dr. Andrew King: Assistant Professor of Horticulture AgriLife Extension

Unleash Nature - Master Rewilding: Understand How to Rewild your Garden Restoring a Natural Ecosystem. *Dr. Greg Grant: AgriLife Extension Service Horticulture Agent Smith County*

Growing the Layered Garden: Master Creative Planting for All Four Seasons using your Natural Surroundings. *Kim Benton: AgriLife Extension Service Horticulture Agent Cherokee County*



CULTIVATE YOUR GARDEN

Panola County Master Gardeners Noon Meetings

Join the Panola County Master Gardeners for our monthly Friday Noon Meetings at Sammy Brown Library—a fantastic opportunity for gardeners of all levels to learn practical Texas horticulture tips, share experiences, and enhance your garden's vitality. These sessions are designed to provide expert advice and hands-on strategies that will help you navigate the challenges of gardening in our unique Texas climate while connecting with a community of passionate local growers.

Mark your calendars for these exciting events:

March 14th: March into Gardening: Texas Horticulture Basics with the Master Gardeners

April 11th: April Blossoms: Essential Texas Gardening Basics with the Master Gardeners

May 2nd: May Garden Mastery: Preparing for Texas Summer with the Master Gardeners

June 13th: June Garden Journey: Thriving in the Texas Heat with Master Gardener Expertise

Join us at noon and let our expert Master Gardeners guide you on a journey to cultivate a thriving, beautiful garden!



Horticulture in the Evening

March 25 • 5:30pm • Sammy Brown Library

Topic: Small Space, Big Vines: Mastering Grapes and More in East Texas Backyards

Join us on March 25th at the Sammy Brown Library for an inspiring evening hosted by the Panola Master Gardeners. Registration begins at 5:30 PM, with the program starting promptly at 6:00 PM. We are excited to feature Dr. Michael Cook, a distinguished horticultural expert, as he presents "Small Space, Big Vines: Mastering Grapes and More in East Texas Backyards." This engaging session is perfect for gardening enthusiasts eager to explore how to cultivate grapes and other viticulture plants in the limited spaces of East Texas backyards.

Dr. Cook will share innovative space-saving strategies, offer advice on selecting the best grape varieties, and provide practical tips for day-to-day care to ensure successful harvests. Whether you are a seasoned gardener or just starting out, this evening program is designed to equip you with the knowledge to transform even the smallest garden into a thriving vineyard. Don't miss this opportunity to learn from a local expert and connect with fellow garden lovers in our community.



Lifestyle Changes to Lower Heart Disease Risk

Health Harvard

Nearly half of all premature deaths may be due to unhealthy lifestyle choices, such as insufficient exercise, poor diet, and smoking. These risk factors increase the risk of high blood pressure, diabetes, heart attack, and stroke.

The good news is that lifestyle changes can make a difference. In a study analyzing over 55,000 people, those with favorable lifestyle habits such as not smoking, not being obese, engaging in regular physical activity, and eating a healthy diet lowered their heart disease risk by nearly 50%.

The American College of Cardiology (ACC) and the American Heart Association (AHA) recently published guidelines detailing lifestyle and behavioral recommendations to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD) in those who do not yet have it. The guidelines addressed diet and nutrition, exercise and physical activity, body weight, and tobacco use. They draw from existing evidence that healthier lifestyle choices can reduce the risk of premature death and disability due to heart disease.

The ACC/AHA guidelines included specific dietary recommendations such as eating a diet high in vegetables, fruit, legumes, nuts, whole grains, and fish. They also recommend limiting sodium, saturated fats, refined carbohydrates, sweetened beverages, and processed meats, and omitting trans fats.

What other lifestyle changes can I make to lower my risk of heart disease?

A healthy lifestyle involves a range of healthy behaviors. One way to think about heart disease risks and corresponding lifestyle changes is the acronym ABCDES:

- Alcohol
- Blood pressure
- Cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Exercise
- Smoking

Let's go through each of these elements.

Avoid alcohol in excess

While the benefit of light to moderate alcohol consumption is somewhat controversial, excessive alcohol consumption is associated with increased risk for death, heart disease, and liver disease. Studies show harm occurs when individuals consume more than 100 grams of alcohol, or about 7 drinks, per week. A standard drink — 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of distilled spirits — contains 14 grams of alcohol.

Which diet can lower blood pressure?

Following a healthy dietary pattern, such as the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet, can help to lower blood pressure. The DASH diet is specifically designed to lower blood pressure. It emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, legumes, nuts, seeds, and lean meats. These foods are typically high in fiber and low in saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium.

Studies suggest that the DASH diet can lower systolic blood pressure (the top number) by about 8 mm Hg and diastolic blood pressure (the bottom number) by about 4 mm Hg, and reduce mortality.

How can I lower cholesterol?

Elevated cholesterol is a risk factor for heart disease and is associated with higher risk of death. While genetics play a role, excessive weight, physical inactivity, type 2 diabetes, and excessive alcohol intake also contribute to high cholesterol.

Research suggests that reducing saturated fat in the diet and replacing saturated fat with polyunsaturated fat may lower cardiovascular risk. This means replacing butter, coconut oil, palm oil, shortening, or lard with olive, safflower, canola, corn, sesame, soybean, and sunflower oils. The Mediterranean diet has been found to lower cholesterol and reduce CVD risk. This diet is rich in fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, and whole grains, with limited consumption of red meat and sweets. Olive oil is the main source of dietary fat.

Eating foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, trout, tuna, herring, and mackerel, also helps to reduce heart disease risk.

How can I reduce my risk for diabetes?

Diabetes is a major risk factor for heart disease. Fortunately, lifestyle changes can help. For example, if you have prediabetes, losing at least 7% of body weight and engaging in 150 minutes or more per week of moderate-intensity physical activity has been shown to reduce the risk of progressing to diabetes.

Healthy diets, such as the Mediterranean diet and the DASH diet, and plant-based diets emphasizing foods higher in fiber and omega-3 fatty acids, and lower in glycemic load and saturated fats, are also recommended.

How much exercise do I need?

The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans from the US Department of Health and Human Services recommend that all adults ages 18 to 64 engage in at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic exercise per week or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity per week — or an equivalent mix of the two. Activities such as brisk walking, running, swimming, biking, and other aerobic exercises are all good options.

As a general rule, being active is better than being sedentary. For example, taking at least 4,400 steps daily is associated with lower risk of death than taking only 2,700 steps per day.

How bad is smoking for my health?

Smokers have a higher heart disease risk than never-smokers, and two to three times the risk of death. The more you smoke, the higher your risk of death.

Quit-smoking medications like varenicline (Chantix) and bupropion (Wellbutrin), and nicotine replacement therapies, are generally safe and can effectively help people quit smoking..



POND FIELD DAY

March 21 • Bar None Cowboy Church • 8:30am

9162 TX-43, Tatum, TX 75691

\$20 Registration • 8:30am-2:00pm • 3 CEU's

Lunch provided sponsored by the Rusk and Panola Soil Water Conservation Districts

TOPICS



Fish Management Strategies
Chemical / Mechanical Control Methods
Biological Control Methods
Spray Drone Demonstration

RSVP by March 17 903-657-0376

Panola 4-H Council

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT

March 4-6 • Carthage Civic Center

1702 South Adams, Carthage, TX 75633

We will be collecting items for local Women's Shelter

DROP ITEMS OFF AT THE CIVIC CENTER

Soap • Lotion • Shampoo and Conditioner
Towels • Tooth Brushes • Hair Brushes • Wash Cloths
Feminine Hygiene Products • Wipes • Diapers
Sippy Cups • Kid's Books

Tuesday, March 4: 5:15-6:00pm
Wednesday, March 5: 12:00-4:00pm
Thursday, March 6: 12:00pm-4:00pm

In honor of The Pay Days' 2nd place finish at District 4-H Food Challenge on February 21, here is a recipe that inspired the dish they made at one of their last practices!



Congratulations to
Brooklyn Morris, Lailah Rogers, Harper Harris and Ellie Young!



Jean's Banana Pudding Parfait

myplate.gov/recipes/jeans-banana-pudding-parfait

Ingredients:

- 8 ginger snap cookies (crushed)
- 7 medium ripe bananas (sliced thin)
- 1 cup nonfat milk
- 1 1-oz box instant sugar-free, fat-free vanilla pudding
- 1 1/4 cups low-fat vanilla yogurt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup fat-free frozen whipped topping (thawed)
- 10 8-oz parfait cups or drinking glasses
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon for garnish (optional)



Instructions:

- In a large bowl, whisk together the milk and pudding mix; blend well (about 2 minutes).
- Add yogurt and vanilla extract; blend until smooth.
- Stir the thawed whipped topping into the mixture.
- Line the bottom of the parfait cups with a teaspoon of crumbled ginger snaps.
- Layer 6 banana slices on top of the cookies; then 2 tablespoons of the yogurt mixture on top. Repeat with another layer of the ginger snaps, bananas, and yogurt mixture.
- Top with cinnamon or crushed cookie for garnish.
- Cover and chill in refrigerator.



Panola County

4-H CLUBS

Club Name	Club Manager	Meeting Date & Time
ALPA Adult Leaders & Parents Association	Corie Young 903-692-7737	1st Monday, 6:00pm Extension Office
BECKVILLE 4-H	Brandy Dudley 903-690-1108	2nd Sunday, 5:00pm Beckville Sunset Elementary
CARTHAGE 4-H	Rachel Laney 940-232-5412	4th Tuesday, 6:00pm Expo Hall
DEBERRY 4-H	Shawntel Wells 903-690-6552	3rd Thursday, 7:00pm 332 CR 310 DeBerry
FAIRPLAY 4-H	Eric Pellham 903-754-2582	2nd Monday, 6:00pm Allison Chapel UMC in Fairplay
GARY 4-H	Jennifer Whitby 903-692-1729	3rd Monday, 6:00pm Gary ISD Cafeteria
SHOOTING SPORTS 4-H	Mauri Pierce 903-263-7551	4th Sunday, 3:00pm Expo Hall
STILL WATERS 4-H	Casey Price 903-445-8001	3rd Tuesday, 6:00 pm Still Waters Cowboy Church

PROJECT FAIR



MARCH 3-7, 2025



DIVISIONS:

Foods
Fabric and Fiber Arts
Arts and Crafts
Legos
Photography
Floral Design
Educational Displays
Clover Kids



SCHEDULE:

Monday:

Exhibits with attached entry tags may be dropped off at the Civic Center Conference Rooms

Tuesday:

Closed judging, awards will be announced at 5:00pm. **Open for viewing 5:15-6:00**

Wednesday - Thursday: Public viewing 12:00-4:00

Friday:

Exhibits will be moved from the Conference Rooms to the Gymnasium in the Civic Center. They will be displayed during the buyers' luncheon and released from 2:00-4:00pm.

79th 2025 PANOLA COUNTY JUNIOR LIVESTOCK SHOW SCHEDULE

*****All events happen at the Carthage Expo Hall unless noted.***

Monday, March 3

5:30-6:30pm... Weigh out of Steers (Dr. Yates- Carthage Veterinary Hospital)

Tuesday, March 4

9:00 am..... Pen of Heifers in place @ Expo & Exhibitor's Check-in (with Bruce Johnson)

9:30 am..... Pen of Heifer Orientation meeting and turn in record books

10:00 am..... Exhibitors take Pen of Heifer Exam

10:30 am..... Pen of Heifer Exhibitor interviews begin

1:00 pm..... Pen of Heifer Judging Begin

5:30 pm..... Buyers Dinner

6:00 pm..... Pen of Heifer Winners Announced

6:30 pm..... Pen of Heifer Sale – Sold in the Ring

(All Pen of Heifers removed from barn following conclusion of sale)

Wednesday, March 5

10am-12pm.... Barrows, Goats and Lambs Weigh-In

12pm..... All Ag Mech Projects must be IN PLACE (front of Expo, check in with Jason Payne)

12:30pm..... Broilers & Rabbit Check-In/Weigh

1pm..... Broiler Show followed by Market Rabbit Show

Thursday, March 6

****Age Division Showmanship follows each species**

7 am..... Gilt Check In (with Jessica Shadix)

8 am..... Barrow Show begins followed by Gilt Show

10 am..... Ag Mechanics Show Judging begins, Awards immediately following

1 pm..... Lamb Show followed by Goats

..... ****Pee Wee Showmanship to follow Goat Show**

Friday, March 7

****Age Division Cattle Showmanship follows cattle show**

6 am..... All Cattle must be in place, check in (at show office)

8 am..... Cattle Show begins with Mini Hereford (pre-junior show), Market Steers, Heifers

8 am..... Ag Mechanics Silent Auction begins

10:45 am..... Buyers Lunch (Civic Center)

12:00..... Presentation of Sponsor Buckles and Awards

1 pm..... Sale of Champions begins

3 pm..... Ag Mechanics Silent Auction Ends; students responsible for removing/delivering projects by 7pm

Texas 4-H Virtual FISHING TOURNAMENT



FISH: APRIL 5 - MAY 20

Registration: February 15 - March 15

Fish in YOUR location

Freshwater and Saltwater Divisions

Upload pic of YOUR catch in FishDonkey Tournament app to win PRIZES

[Complete rules of play on District 5 website, click here!](#)

COME ALIVE IN DISTRICT 5

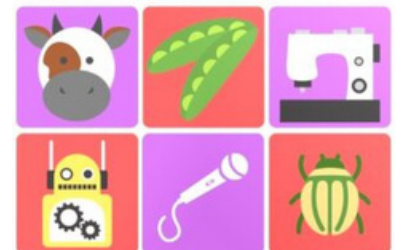
April 25-26 • Panola College

Regular registration is open till April 1



Entomology Collection
Storyboard
Fabric and Textiles
Fashion Show
Duds to Dazzle
Quiz Bowls
Leaders 4 Life
Photography

Educational Presentations
Public Speaking
Ag Product ID
Horticulture ID
Consumer Decision Making
Robotics Challenge
Lego Challenge



Panola 4-H - ALPA Fundraiser

BAKED POTATO MEAL



Friday, April 4 - Expo Hall

>> Orders Due March 28 <<

\$10 Meal will Include:

1 Cooked Baked Potato

Pulled Pork
Shredded Cheese
Sour Cream
Butter
BBQ Sauce

\$2 Drinks

Drinks will be available for purchase at the Expo Center for pickup and dine-in only. Not for delivery.

Pick up

at the Panola Expo Center

Delivery

Carthage City Limits
(minimum of 4 orders)

Panola County Area
(minimum of 8 orders)

Community Dropoff Locations
(we will call to arrange)

Payment Options: Cash, Check payable to Panola ALPA, or Venmo @panola_alpa

To Order: Call 903-693-0380 or
Email PanolaALPA@gmail.com

Check the Desired Option

☐ Dine-In ☐ Pick-Up ☐ Delivery

Contact Information

Name: _____

Contact Number: _____

Delivery Information

Business (if applicable): _____

Delivery Address: _____

Circle desired delivery time:

10:30 11:00 11:30 12:00 12:30

Number of Meals _____ x \$10 = _____

Number of Drinks _____ x \$2 = _____

Pickup & Dine-In Only

Total

Enhancing Profitability with Internal Parasite Control

By: Lee Dudley



Small management decisions can yield big returns for beef cattle producers. One such decision is to control internal parasites in both cattle and calves with treatments twice a year. Not only do parasites sap energy and reduce weight gains, but they also compromise overall health and immunity—especially in young, developing calves.

Why Control Internal Parasites?

Internal parasites, such as stomach worms, lung worms, liver flukes, and coccidia, can severely impact cattle performance. Calves, with their still developing immune systems, are just as susceptible as adult cattle. Field trials have shown that deworming nursing calves along with their dams in the spring can boost daily weight gains by 0.1 to 0.2 pounds, potentially adding around 25 extra pounds per calf by weaning. Given the profit margins and current market prices, an investment of roughly \$3.50 per animal in deworming treatments can result in significant economic benefits.

The Science Behind the Timing

Parasite life cycles are closely tied to environmental conditions. Worm larvae are most active when soil temperatures range from 55°F to 85°F, especially during rainy periods in spring (April through June) and fall (October). By administering treatments during these times, producers can effectively break the parasite life cycle, preventing a buildup of infective larvae on pastures. This strategic timing reduces the parasite load in the animals, curbing potential weight loss and health issues.

Management Practices to Enhance Treatment Efficacy

While deworming is critical, it works best when paired with sound pasture and nutritional management:

- **Nutrition:** A balanced diet rich in protein not only promotes growth but also enhances immunity, making cattle less susceptible to worm infestations.
- **Rotational Grazing:** Rotating pastures limit continuous exposure to parasite larvae. Giving pastures time to rest helps reduce larval survival.
- **Avoid Overcrowding:** Lower stocking rates reduce manure accumulation, which in turn limits the spread of infective larvae.

Benefits of a Biannual Deworming Program

Implementing a twice-yearly deworming schedule helps keep both adult cattle and calves in top condition. With reduced parasite loads, cattle can convert more of their feed into muscle rather than fighting infections. Over time, this leads to improved weight gains and better overall health, ultimately resulting in higher premiums at market.

By embracing a proactive parasite control program, local beef cattle producers can protect their herds, improve weight gains, and enhance profitability—even when market prices are tight. Regular, strategically timed treatments, combined with robust pasture and nutrition management, form the cornerstone of a healthier, more productive herd.



Managing Warm-Season Forages for Beef Cattle: Economic & Production Benefits

By: Lee Dudley

Forage management is a cornerstone of profitable beef cattle production in East Texas. The availability and quality of warm season forages directly impacts a herd's health, gain, and overall profitability. Proper planning and management of these forages ensure that cattle receive adequate nutrition while reducing the need for costly supplemental feeding.

Warm-season perennial forages, such as Bermuda grass and Bahiagrass, provide the foundation for many Texas cattle operations. These grasses offer a reliable forage source during the growing season, requiring strategic management to maximize production and maintain nutritional value. Warm season annual forages, including sorghum-sudangrass and pearl millet, serve as valuable options to supplement grazing in times of forage shortages.

Without careful management, overgrazing and inadequate fertilization can lead to pasture degradation, requiring expensive restoration efforts. A balanced forage supply reduces reliance on hay and commercial feed, which are increasingly costly. By maintaining a consistent and high-quality forage base, producers can improve cattle performance and reduce input costs.

The key to sustainable pasture management is to ensure that forage production meets livestock demand throughout the year. Overgrazing not only reduces forage availability but also weakens root systems and decreases pasture resilience. Studies indicate that forage inventories can fluctuate by as much as 100% between years, making it essential for producers to routinely assess forage inventories adjusting stocking rates accordingly.

A good rule of thumb is to conduct forage assessments in March, July, and November. These evaluations help predict forage shortages and allow producers to make proactive decisions—such as adjusting herd size, supplementing with hay, or implementing rotational grazing systems.

The economic benefits of proper forage management are substantial. For example, hay production is a significant cost factor in beef cattle operations. Texas ranchers harvest over 4.4 million acres of hay annually, valued at over \$1 billion. However, by improving grazing efficiency, producers can reduce the amount of hay needed for winter feeding, thereby lowering operational expenses.

Implementing a well-planned forage program that includes fertilization, rotational grazing, and weed control enhances pasture productivity. Strategic fertilizer applications, based on soil test recommendations, can significantly increase forage yield, improving carrying capacity and overall efficiency.

To optimize warm-season forages, consider the following strategies:

- **Soil Testing & Fertilization:** Apply lime and nutrients according to soil test recommendations to promote healthy forage growth.
- **Rotational Grazing:** Rotate cattle between pastures to allow forage regrowth and prevent overgrazing.
- **Stocking Rate Adjustments:** Maintain a balance between forage availability and animal intake to sustain pasture health.
- **Supplementation Planning:** Use hay and winter forages strategically to bridge seasonal gaps.
- **Weed & Brush Control:** Implement chemical and mechanical weed control methods to reduce competition for soil nutrients.

Managing warm season forages effectively is essential for maintaining productive pastures and maximizing economic returns in beef cattle operations. By balancing stocking rates with forage production, improving soil fertility, and incorporating rotational grazing, producers can enhance forage quality, reduce supplemental feed costs, and improve overall profitability. A proactive approach to forage management ensures a more resilient operation that can withstand the challenges of fluctuating weather patterns and input costs.

Planting Fruit Trees in East Texas:

March is the Time to Grow!

By: Lee Dudley

March is the perfect time for East Texas homeowners to plant fruit trees, taking advantage of the warming soil and increasing daylight. Whether you're looking to grow peaches, pears, or plums, proper planning and care will set your trees up for success.

Selecting varieties adapted to the East Texas climate is crucial. Here are some excellent options for Panola County:

- **Peaches:** Harvester, Red Globe, and June Gold perform well with proper management.
- **Pears:** Kieffer and Orient are excellent choices due to their resistance to fire blight.
- **Plums:** Methley and Bruce thrive in our region and produce delicious fruit.
- **Apples:** Anna and Golden Dorset work well for homeowners wanting a crisp apple crop.

Tips for Successful Planting

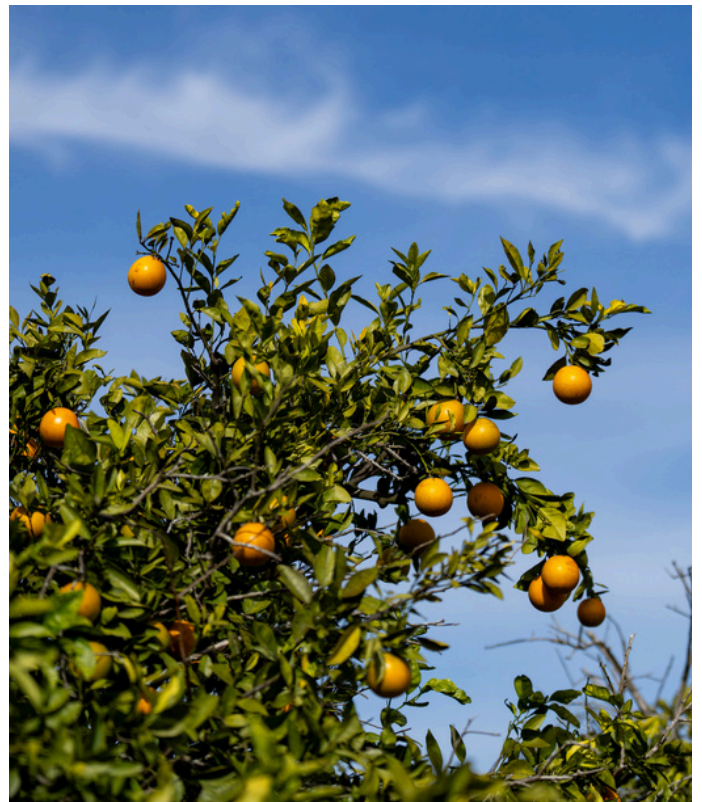
- **Pick the Right Spot** – Fruit trees require full sun (at least 6-8 hours daily) and well-drained soil.
- **Soil Preparation** – Conduct a soil test to check pH and nutrient levels. Adjust soil pH if necessary to be around 6.0-6.5.
- **Proper Spacing** – Provide adequate space for root and canopy development. Generally, trees should be planted 15-20 feet apart.
- **Dig a Suitable Hole** – The planting hole should be twice as wide as the root ball but no deeper than the root system.
- **Plant at the Right Depth** – Avoid burying the graft union (the swollen area near the base of the tree) to prevent disease issues.
- **Mulching & Watering** – Apply a 3-inch layer of mulch around the base, keeping it a few inches away from the trunk. Water deeply but infrequently encourages strong root growth.

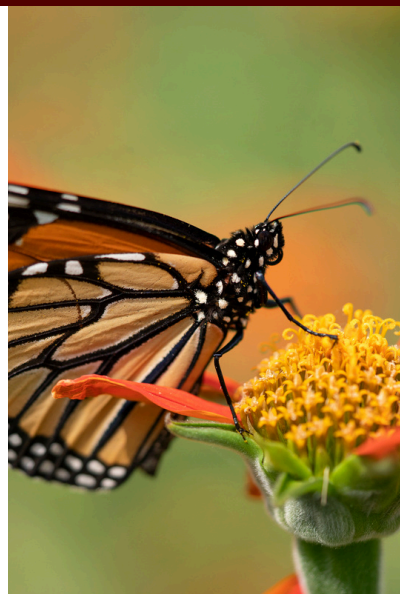
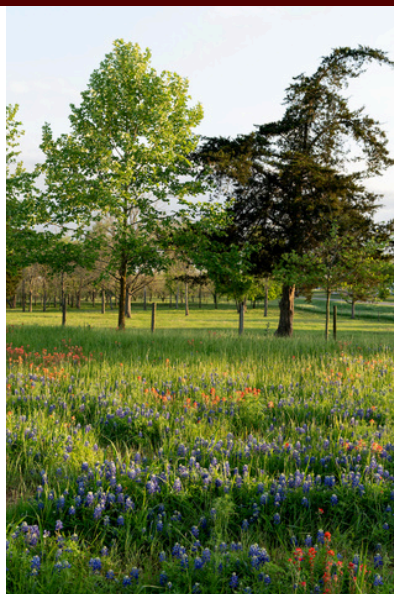
Ongoing Tree Care

- **Pruning:** Remove dead or diseased branches in late winter before new growth starts.
- **Pest Management:** Monitor for insects such as plum curculio and peach tree borers and apply appropriate control methods as needed.
- **Fertilization:** Use a balanced fertilizer based on soil test recommendations. Too much nitrogen can lead to excessive foliage and reduced fruit.

Get Expert Help

For more guidance on selecting and caring for fruit trees, contact the **Panola County AgriLife Extension Office** at (903) 693-0380 or visit us at **316 W. Sabine St., Carthage, TX**. With the right preparation, your fruit trees will provide beauty and bounty for years to come!





— THE PANOLA EXTENSION —

Panola County AgriLife Extension Service

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