

News From Your County Agent
by Marcel Valdez, CEA-ANR
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
Zavala County

Greetings to all of you and thank you so much for reading this week. A warm spring like weather pattern has been in place for a few days already. By mid week we should have a decent chance of rain, not much but something is better than nothing. Please be advised that winds on Wednesday might be very strong increasing the chances of wildfires to be at a very high risk. The State of Texas State Operations Center(SOC) predicts of possible wind gust approaching 35 to 40 miles an hour. Don't light any fires and secure anything that you do not want ending up on your neighbors yard.

4-H Center Hiring Summer Staff

The Texas 4-H Center is busy recruiting summer staff to facilitate our summer 4-H programs at the Texas 4-H Center. Any former 4-H members who have completed one year of college and are interested in working with youth, are encouraged to apply. We have several former Zavala County 4-H members that are eligible for these positions and are encouraged to attend.

If you want a summer job where you can play with kids, swim, dance, and have fun while gaining valuable leadership experience? Consider applying for a Texas 4-H Center Summer Staff position. The 4-H Conference Center provides an opportunity for you to work in an atmosphere where you will not only impact the lives of young people, but also learn a lot about yourself and make life-long friends. Each position provides valuable leadership training, work experience, fun and profit for individuals who truly desire to be part of a positive summer experience for over 3,000 youth.

Requirements of applicants:

- * Successful completion of one year of college or other work by June 1, 2016
- * Be enthusiastic, creative, hardworking and dependable
- * Be able to get along with others and work as a team

If are interested in being a part of the summer staff at the 4-H Center, please visit our website at: <http://texas4hcenter.tamu.edu/> to fill out an application. Applications are due March 15, 2016.

Farmers and Ranchers Are Reminded of CRP Sign Up Deadline

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is reminding farmers and ranchers that the competitive sign-up deadline for its most popular voluntary conservation program, the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), is Feb. 26, 2016. This will be one of the most competitive general sign-up periods in history, in part due a statutory limit on the number of acres that can be enrolled in the program. The most competitive applications will be those that combine multiple conservation benefits, such as water quality and wildlife habitat.

For the past thirty years, CRP has provided financial incentives to farmers and ranchers to remove environmentally sensitive agricultural land from production to be planted with certain grasses, shrubs and trees that improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and increase wildlife habitat. Since 1985, CRP has sequestered an annual average of 49 million tons of greenhouse gases, equal to taking 9 million cars off the road; prevented 9 billion tons of soil from erosion, enough to fill 600 million dump trucks; and reduced nitrogen and phosphorous runoff by 95 and 85 percent, respectively. CRP also protects more than 170,000 stream miles with forests and grasses, enough to go around the world seven times. The program has allowed for the restoration of 2.7 million acres of wetland. For an interactive look at USDA's work in conservation and forestry over the course of this Administration, visit <http://medium.com/usda-results> This is an external link or third-party site outside of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) website..

For more information on Farm Service Agency (FSA) conservation programs, visit the Uvalde FSA office at 103 WEEPING WILLOW UVALDE, TX 78801-6803- (830)278-2014, the Dimmit County FSA office at 200 S 1ST ST CARRIZO SPRINGS, TX 78834-3314- (830) 876-2115 or the Zavala County SWCD office at 319 N 1ST AVE , CRYSTAL CITY, TX 78839-3302- (830)374-3838 or go to www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation.

Tip of the Week: Zika Virus and Domestic Animals

Since the release of information to the public about the Zika virus in humans some folks have been wondering if domestic animals could be susceptible, especially horses since the virus is related to other horse viruses. At this time there is currently no evidence that Zika virus can infect horses. Zika—which is a mosquito-borne virus related to West Nile Virus and dengue fever—has only been found in nature in humans and nonhuman primates.

It's possible that horses could be exposed if they live in areas where infected Aedes egyptii or Aedes albopictus mosquitoes are present; however, exposure doesn't necessarily mean disease. For example, a horse could be exposed to a person with chickenpox but wouldn't get sick because the chickenpox virus is unable to infect horses. As far as we know, Zika virus is the same, but this hasn't received any research of which I'm aware.

What about other domestic animals. Again, we need to think about the question. Infected means they get exposed to the virus and it replicates in the body. That may occur, but we don't have any evidence of it at this point. The more relevant question is whether animals can get sick from Zika virus exposure, and there's also no evidence of that to date. A third aspect is whether infected (but potentially healthy) animals could be a reservoir for the virus, being able to pass it on to mosquitoes. There's no evidence of that, either.

So, the clearest answer is probably "maybe." When it was a flu-like illness confined to some regions in Africa, Zika wasn't a high priority so research hasn't been extensive. The risk to pets in areas where the virus is circulating (areas where there are Aedes egypti and Aedes albopictus mosquitoes) is probably very low. It would be good to look into the risks associated with domestic animals, including their susceptibility to disease and potential roles as reservoirs, but the likelihood that there is a relevant issue with either of these is probably remote. It's good to see that people are thinking more broadly about infectious diseases but please keep in mind that there is still a lot to be done to learn more about this

disease. We know what it does to unborn children but we do not have any evidence at this time on how it can affect domestic animals. The news media will provide additional information as we get it from the professionals dealing with this virus on a daily basis. Have a great week-M.V.

February 22-26, 2016