

**News From Your County Agent**  
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**Zavala County**

Finally a break from rain, thunder and hail threats was enjoyed by everyone in our area over the weekend. Reports of 3 plus inches of rain across the area will make for a good start to our spring this year. Sunny days ahead will definitely help with getting things growing really fast including native grasses on range and pastures much to the delight of our livestock producers. Once wet fields dry a little I am sure many folks will resume corn, sorghum and cotton planting in and around our area. Enjoy the sights and sounds of spring and thank you so much for reading this week.

**National Agriculture Day Celebrated This Week**

March 15 is National Ag Day, a time when producers, agricultural associations, corporations, universities, government agencies and countless others across America gather to recognize and celebrate the abundance provided by American agriculture. Agriculture provides almost everything we eat, use and wear on a daily basis, and is increasingly contributing to fuel and other bio-products. Each year, members of the agricultural industry gather together to promote American agriculture. Everybody needs to understand the value of agriculture in their daily lives. Here are just some of the key reasons why it's important to recognize—and celebrate—Ag Day each year: Increased knowledge of agriculture and nutrition allows individuals to make informed personal choices about diet and health. Informed citizens will be able to participate in establishing the policies that will support a competitive agricultural industry in this country and abroad. Employment opportunities exist across the board in Agriculture. Career choices include:

- farm production
- agribusiness management and marketing
- agricultural research and engineering
- food science
- processing and retailing
- banking
- education
- landscape architecture
- urban planning
- energy
- and other fields.

Beginning in kindergarten and continuing through 12th grade, all students should receive some systematic instruction about agriculture. Agriculture is too important a topic to be taught only to the small percentage of students considering careers in agriculture and pursuing vocational agricultural studies. Agricultural literacy includes an understanding of agriculture's history and current economic, social and environment significance to all Americans. This understanding includes some knowledge of food, fiber and renewable resource production, processing and domestic and international marketing. So on March 15<sup>th</sup>, please pause and thank agriculture for all that it provides to make our country so fruitful. National Ag Day is organized by the Agriculture Council of America (ACA). ACA is a nonprofit organization composed of leaders in the agricultural, food and fiber community, dedicating its efforts to increasing the public's awareness of agriculture's role in modern society.

**4-H Lamb, Goat and Steer Exhibitors Reminded to Order Tags**

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service office in Zavala county is currently taking orders for state fair of Texas lamb and goat validation tags and orders for the 2016/17 state steer validation program. Cost for the tags is \$10 per tag. All animal projects that plan to participate in the State Fair of Texas and at any other major stock show in the state must be validated through the state validation program. The validation program consist of having the animals tagged with a state validation program tag, hair sample for DNA analysis, nose printed for identification purposes and tattooed with the county assigned number. For more information about this validation program and to place a tag order contact the Zavala County office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883.

### **Tip of the Week: Spring is Here-Time To Consider Your Lawn Fertility Program**

Spring has arrived to the Zavala County area and for many of us it is time to begin evaluating our landscapes and reviewing our fertility plans for our lawns. Lawns bring much value to your home not to mention the benefits of reducing noise, preventing soil erosion and releasing precious oxygen into the air. If you have collected a soil sample and have submitted for analysis you are already on first base in terms of making a wise decision as to what to apply and how much to apply to your lawn based on your soil sample lab results. If you have not done a soil sample I strongly recommend you do that now and get your results back before you start spending money and time applying something that your lawn may not need. Soil sample instructions and soil sample collection bags are available from the Zavala County office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service office. Come by the office at 221 North First Avenue in Crystal City or call us at 830-374-2883. Here is a Texas A&M AgriLife Checklist that you can use to make the proper fertilizer applications for your lawn. This checklist assumes you know the type warm season grass in the lawn: Bermudagrass, Buffalograss, centipedegrass, St. Augustinegrass (commonly referred to as carpet grass) or Zoysiagrass.

1 Balance the lawn you would like with level of work and inputs. Management levels can be broadly defined as: Low – the minimum level of management required to maintain turf density; Moderate – management required for enhanced visual appearance and quality; and High – management needed for lawn areas with greater expectations (highly visible, recovery from traffic/use).

2 Measure your lawn and refer to its size when buying lawn care products. Those who know the size of their lawn are less likely to purchase and apply too little or too much fertilizer. It's the first "step" to measured lawn care! Start by measuring each lawn section in square feet. Then add up the sections to arrive at the total size of the lawn in square feet. This publication will recommend fertilizer application by the amount of product to apply per 1,000 square feet.

3 Soil Test every 2 to 3 years, it is easy to do and inexpensive. This test kit is available through the Zavala County Extension Office or can be found by visiting <http://soiltesting.tamu.edu>

4 Select fertilizer nutrient analysis (also called grade or ratio) based on soil test recommendations. If you do not have a current soil test, apply N using a fertilizer analysis ratio (the three numbers that appear on the fertilizer package) that is 4 to 6 parts N, 1 part P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> and 2 to 4 parts K<sub>2</sub>O. Get a soil test before your next fertilizer application to determine future needs.

5 Match annual nitrogen application program to your grass type and level of work and inputs. Nitrogen levels differ for each warm season grass type. Base the use of a low, moderate or high annual nitrogen program on grass needs and expectations. The annual nitrogen program amounts are split into a number of single applications of 1 pound of nitrogen or less per 1000 sq ft. These programs are: **Low Annual Program:** Apply nitrogen during the spring and/or fall. This program works where 1 or 2 applications are deemed adequate. **Moderate Annual Program:** Builds upon the "Low Level Program" applications with one additional supplemental summer application to improve turf density and quality. **High Annual Program:** Builds upon the "Low Level Program" applications with 2 to 3 supplemental summer applications to enhance quality as needed.

Important Note: This information was drawn from the more complete Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service publication entitled "Lawn Fertilization for Texas Warm Season Grasses: Frequently asked Questions" (Reference number: SCS-2005-15). It is an excellent reference and further explains the principles behind the 10 point checklist and other important areas not covered in this tip of the week: environmental issues with nitrogen and phosphorus, applying fertilizer uniformly, how other factors (shade, soil, etc.) affect fertilizer use; and how to best evaluate lawn fertilizers. Have a great week. M.V.

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