**Delta/Franklin Counties Agriculture and Natural Resources Newsletter #1**

As we begin a new year in the counties, I would first like to start off saying I hope each and every one of you had a wonderful holiday season spending time with friends and family. I look forward to what 2013 has to bring for Agriculture in our counties. I hope this newsletter series will help you understand our position and role in the community at the Extension office. The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension service is an educational agency that provides information and educational programs and activities for the citizens of the county. I am here to help you with your questions regarding agriculture whether it is concerning beef cattle, dairy cattle, horses, sheep, goats, swine, pets, row crops, forages, trees, horticulture, small acreage questions, land and homeowner questions.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my first few months as your agriculture and natural resources extension agent in Delta and Franklin Counties. I have met many people throughout these first few months and I look forward to the citizens that I will meet in the future. I strongly encourage you to give us a call or stop by at any time whether you have a question about something or if you just want to stop by and chat.

As most of you know, Delta and Franklin counties are known for having a strong history in agriculture. Our world today would not exist without the presence of agriculture. Agriculture is apparent every day in our lives whether you are buying a loaf of bread from the grocery store to make yourself a sandwich when you get home from work, having an apple as an afternoon snack, or watching a calf being born at 11:30 at night just to make sure it is able to get up and nurse to be healthy. Somewhere in the world at every second of the day, a farmer or rancher is working diligently to not only provide for his family, but to provide the whole world with nutrient rich commodities to ensure our daily health. I know that we are extremely fortunate to have some very experienced farmers and ranchers in Delta and Franklin Counties, and we all thank you for your hard work and dedication that you contribute to the whole world.

Throughout this year, we have some Multi-County educational programs that we will be participating in. Most of these programs will offer Continuing Education Units. Each newsletter will have an upcoming events section to make you more aware of specific dates.

**Upcoming Events**

**January 22, 2013**

Titus County C.E.U. Program

Cost: $30

5 C.E.U.’s will be provided; also a Pesticide Applicator Training will be offered so if you need a pesticide license, this would be a close place to obtain one.

**January 30, 2013**

Northeast Texas Cattleman’s Conference

Place: Winnsboro City Auditorium

Registration: $15

4 C.E.U.’s provided for TDA Private Applicator License (2 hours general/1 hour IPM/1 Laws & Regulations)

RSVP by Jan. 24: Delta County Extension office 903-395-4400 ext: 230 or Franklin County: 903-537-4017

**February 16, 2013**

Franklin County Horse Coggins and Vaccination Clinic

Place: Mt. Vernon Sherriff’s Posse Arena, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

**March 1, 2013**

East Texas Forage Conference

Place: Rains County Extension Office

Registration: $15

3 C.E.U.’s provided along with 2 Dairy Outreach Program Area (DOPA) credits

RSVP: Delta County Extension office 903-395-4400 ext: 230 or Franklin County: 903-537-4017

**Winter “Hot Topic”…Feral Hogs**

As we close out 2012 and begin 2013, we are receiving the precipitation that all of us have been hoping and praying for. With moisture in the ground and cooler temperatures, we are experiencing apparent signs of feral hogs. Throughout Texas, the number of feral hogs is increasing rapidly causing impaired water quality, native plant damage, animal community damage, landscape and garden wreckage, and animal production is being affected in many areas of Texas. To properly control the rising numbers of feral hogs, landowners and managers need to understand the behavioral traits and signs that are caused by these creatures. Signs left by feral hogs create evidence that they have been in the specific area. The most noticeable sign left behind is the damage caused by their destructive rooting behavior. Throughout the drought we have experienced, noticeable rooting damage has not been visible due to the dry ground, but with the precipitation that we have received, rooting will be more and more apparent. With feral hogs, comes routine travel and mobility from field to field. For trapping success you should notice signs that help determine their traveling routine. Creeks, sloughs, rivers, and ponds are all water resources that will help in figuring out traveled paths to trap feral hogs.

**Rooting Damage**

When feral hogs feed, damage may occur to native plants, animal communities, and agriculture crops. Damage to lawns, gardens, pastures used for hay production, and native range occur when hogs root. Reduction in the number of plant species in a specific area can also occur due to this damage.

**Feral Hog Nutrition**

The diets of feral hogs differ throughout the year and are determined by the availability of various food items. During a drought, hogs are in competition with other native species for acorns, pecans, and other food sources. Hogs can cause severe damage to crops. They not only eat the seed, but they have the capability to trample down emerged crops.

**Trails and Tracks**

Trails and tracks will help determine the size of the pack, size of the animal, and the direction of travel. The track will consist of two rounded toes and could possible show two dewclaws found on the upper hind leg. A path or trail will indicate frequent usage.

**Bedding**

Shallow beds will be created by hogs to overturn the soil and expose cooler soil for them to lie in. During the heat of the day, most of a hogs’ time is spent in these beds. Hog beds can be found in areas that contain vines, fallen trees, or thorny plants. These places offer shade and cooler areas for the hogs during the heat. To search for these bedding areas, follow the trails and tracks.

(Information for this article provided by: *Recognizing Feral Hog Sign.* Chancey Lewis, Matt Berg, Nikki Dictson, Jim Gallagher, Mark McFarland, and James C. Cathey\*. \*Former Extension Assistant; Extension Program Specialist; Extension ProgramSpecialist II; Assistant Extension Wildlife Specialist; Professor and Extension Soil Fertility Specialist; and Associate Professor and Extension Wildlife Specialist; All of The Texas A&M University System)

I hope you have enjoyed the first newsletter of the year. I plan to make this a quarterly newsletter including upcoming events and information on seasonal issues that may be of interest to you. If you have any questions please feel free to call us anytime.

Sincerely,

**Cody Maxwell, MS**

Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service

Delta/Franklin Counties CEA-ANR

Delta Co. office: 903-395-4400 ext.230

Franklin Co. office: 903-537-4017