

April 2024

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Sutton County Agriculture/Horticulture Newsletter

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Managing For El Niño/ La Niña Growing Season

It has been on the radar for a while now, but El Niño is going through a rapid decay and is predicted to become La Niña this summer. There are some questions about the speed and intensity of La Niña developing this summer. The change back to La Niña may take some time for the atmosphere to respond. That creates some questions about management for producers and land managers. As such, the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is offering an educational program on April 30, 2024 at the Sutton County Civic Center to address some of those concerns. On-site registration is at 8:30 a.m. and the presentations begin at 9 a.m.

Topics:

Three Month Forecast – Mike Castillo, *National Weather Service*

How information for the forecast is gathered, how the probability is calculated, the forecast itself, and the historic variations that occur from that forecast.

Creating A More Efficient Water Cycle – Natural Resource Conservation Service

Discussion of how vegetation and soil properties affect infiltration of water into soil. Offer land management strategies that help improve the infiltration rate.

Strategies For Seeding Degraded Rangeland – *Natural Resource Conservation Service*

Site & Risk Assessment, Vegetation Removal, Seedbed Preparation, Species Selection, Seeding, Establishment & Aftercare, Long-term Management.

Herbicide Do's & Don't's - James Jackson, *Alligare Range Specialist*

Discussion of common mistakes or assumptions made when treating for weeds and brush as well as offer improved practices for mixing order and application methods.

Sprayer Calibration Tips (Demonstration)– James Jackson, *Alligare Range Specialist*

Discussion of calibration and considerations for herbicide applications using ATVs, backpack sprayers, pump-up sprayers as well as discussion of basal and cut-stump treatments.

\$25 SINGLE/\$40 COUPLE BY APRIL 25TH OR \$30 SINGLE/\$50 COUPLE AT THE DOOR

Make checks payable to
SUTTON AG PROGRAM FUND;
Mail to P.O. Box 1047
Sonora, Texas 76950

For more information, call the **Sutton County Extension Office at (325) 387-3101**

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3 Texas Department of Agriculture continuing education units (CEUs) are available for those with a pesticide applicator

Plant Recovery After Wildfire Takes Time

After the recent Texas Panhandle wildfires, we may have wondered about regrowth. The sight of blackened earth after a fire can be intimidating. The loss of standing vegetation affects not only the availability of livestock forage, but also nesting habitat, cover, and feed for wildlife. Fire also removes cover which exposes the soil to water and wind erosion.

Luckily, Mother Nature will restore the grass ecosystem. How plants respond after wildfire depends on plant characteristics, environmental characteristics, and management.

A plant's characteristics determine how well it responds to fire. Grasses can be burned to the ground, but their crown and root system remain intact below the soil. It's actually amazing how the temperature can be high at the soil surface, but a few centimeters below surface the temperature is much lower.

Root systems vary widely. In general, short grass species have shallow root systems while taller grasses have deeper roots. Grasses have fibrous roots that hold the soil together, while many forbs have taproots and don't hold soil nearly as well. Tall grasses (often classified as bunch grasses even though they have structures that can allow them to spread) respond differently to fire than sod-type grasses like buffalo grass. Bud locations greatly influence how the plant responds to fire.

Many grasses are amazingly well adapted to fire and to grazing. They have many locations on the plant that they can regrow from. Forbs and shrubs, however, are limited in the number of growing points. Nonetheless, many woody plants can re-sprout from roots, rhizomes or buds located just below the soil surface. So when the top growth is removed, they can still regrow.

The growing environment also plays a major role. The key environmental characteristics include precipitation, the fire itself, and land management before and after the fire.

We have no control over precipitation. During drought, wildfire can have a much more severe impact on plants. The intensity and duration of the fire can also affect response. Though in prescribed burns, we have some control due to different methods of burning, we don't have much control during wildfires.

The one thing we do have control over is our management. Range managers manipulate the intensity of grazing through stocking rate. And it's not just about how many animals are in a certain size pasture, but also how long they're in that pasture. The most palatable plants are going to be grazed first.

Timing can influence plant response to grazing. It's beneficial to establish a management plan that will defer grazing until after first frost. If you defer rangeland towards the end of the growing season, you'll allow grasses to seed out. Secondly, deferment will maintain and improve plant vigor and productivity as well as reestablish litter and standing vegetation (which reduce soil erosion). It will also develop cover and nesting habitat as well as provide fawning cover for deer. Deferment will allow forb production which benefits wildlife and reduces the potential for toxic plant consumption by livestock.

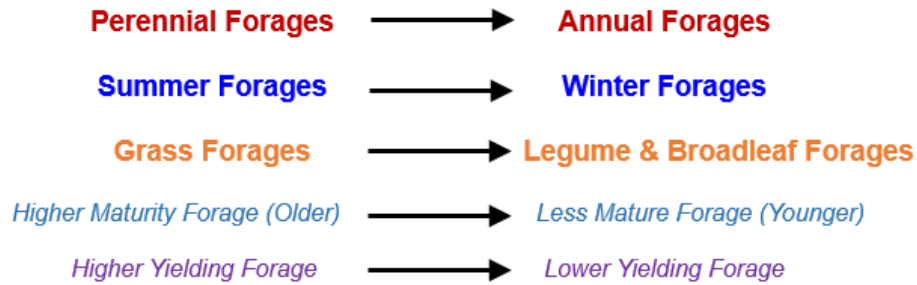
All may appear lost, but with time and rain, pastures burned by recent wildfires will come back stronger if livestock are not restocked too early.



Basic Guidelines Explain Differences in Forage Quality

~ Excerpt from agronomic Memo compiled by Dr. Calvin Trostle, Professor & Extension Agronomist, Lubbock.

These simple rules of thumb help producers better understand qualitative forage differences.



Increasing Forage Quality



Here's a simple guideline for thinking about forage quality. A version of the above graphic was shared by New Mexico State University forage agronomist Leonard Lauriault, Tucumcari.

AgriLife Extension conducts many programs across Texas on different kinds of forages. We all know forage quality is important. Most hay growers, buyers, and feeders do not test for it. (Alfalfa is one exception as a high value crop.) In fact, most forage changes hands in Texas with no measurement of forage quality. If there is any assessment of forage quality, it is 'eyeball' analysis. But forage quality indeed is a value factor. Forage is not just about tons of hay per acre.

Simply, as one moves from a perennial forage to an annual forage the quality of that forage generally increases. This is for many different traits such as reduced lignin, improved digestibility, protein, etc. Likewise, a similar trend occurs for warm-season vs. cool-season forages and for grasses vs. legumes.

Of course, growth stage matters as earlier forage harvest is higher quality than later harvest. It should be worth more in the hay market, if buyers recognize forage quality and are willing to pay for it. Also, the same wheat variety or sorghum/sudan hybrid—in the same field—will generally have higher forage quality where yields are lower.

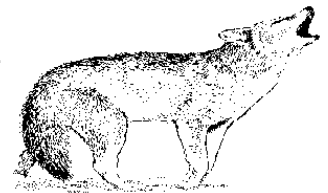
The driving factor for many forage harvest decisions is tonnage. This often discards consideration of forage quality.

Bottom Line—Stage of Growth

Within any individual forage stage of growth matters the most. The choice of forage depends on cost, the type of animal being fed and their nutrient and energy requirements, the needed forage yield, and availability. Many efforts to grow higher quality forage are undone by allowing forage to mature further than intended.

Sutton County Predator Management Association

If you are not a member, please consider joining the Sutton County Predator Management Association. If you are, there is also a reminder that it is time to pay annual dues.



Funds collected go towards support equipment for our county trappers. This includes the upkeep of such equipment (4-wheelers, radios, hog traps, etc.). A bounty is also paid on predator pelts. These can be bobcat, coyote, etc. However they must be from properties which have joined the trapping club.

For more information, contact association secretary, Patti Prather, at scpma.sonora@gmail.com.

April Horticulture Tips



PLANT:

Transplants of warm season vegetables such as tomatoes and peppers can be set out now. Any transplant must be acclimated before being planted into the garden. The way to acclimate your transplants is by moving the plants outdoors, out of the direct sun and wind for a few days. Next, move them into partial shade. Complete these steps gradually over the course of a week, then move them into full sun.

FERTILIZE:

Roses have high fertilizer requirements. Use a complete fertilizer for the first application just as new growth starts. Then use ammonium sulfate every 4 to 6 weeks, usually just as the next growth cycle starts following a flowering period.

Apply a 2-1-1 or 3-1-2- analysis fertilizer to your warm season grasses. Use the same high nitrogen fertilizer for shade

trees, evergreens and ground covers. Add iron later this month for plants that show chlorosis (yellowing leaves with dark green veins). Sweep iron products off any surface that could be stained.

BE ON THE LOOKOUT:

- Continue to spray rose varieties susceptible to black spot using a spray containing a general fungicide. Use as directed on the label.
- Check new tender growth for aphids on annuals and perennials.

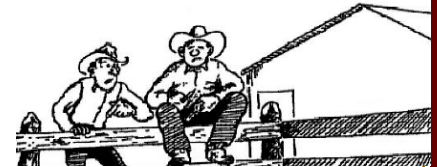
MISCELLANEOUS CHORES:

- Flower and vegetable seeds left over after planting the garden can be saved for the next season by closing the packets with tape or paper clips and storing them in a sealed glass jar in the refrigerator until needed.
- Check garden hoses and replace them if they're leaking. Sharpen garden tools, oil pruners and loppers.

Parting Thoughts..... About gardening

Your first job is to prepare the soil. The best tool for this is your neighbor's motorized garden tiller. If your neighbor does not own a garden tiller, suggest that he buy one. ~Dave Barry~

A man should never plant a garden larger than his wife can take care of. ~T.H. Everett~



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Managing For El Niño/ La Niña Growing Season
April 30, 2024
Sutton County Civic Center
Program starts at 8:30 a.m.



Name: _____
Address: _____
Email: _____
Pesticide Applicator Lic. #: _____
Telephone #: _____

\$25 Single/\$40 Couple by April 25th
Or \$30 Single/\$50 Couple At The Door
3 CEUs available for those with a
Pesticide Applicator license.

Please make check payable to:
Sutton Ag Program Fund
P.O. Box 1047
Sonora, Texas 76950

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If you are interested in attending this program and require auxiliary aid, please call the Sutton County Extension Office at 325-387-3101 to determine if reasonable accommodations can be made.