

POSTAL CUSTOMER

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Ethanol mandate changed market

5A



## GROCERY PRICES RISE

Texans paid more in June

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## PROGRAMS FOR WOMEN NOTED

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# Cattle Care



Summer heat places plenty of stress on cattle and other livestock, to minimize the risk of injury and illness, low-stress handling methods are recommended.

-- Staff photo by Riffle

## Low-stress handling ideal

By **MINDY RIFFLE**

Country World Staff Writer

As summer temperatures soar, reducing livestock stress is of the utmost importance.

"Anytime we put any kind of stress on an animal, whether it be physical stress, nutritional stress or a psychological stress, any time we stress those animals we begin to open the door where they

could potential stress the system and they could be overcome by some sort of infection or something," said Jason Cleere Texas AgriLife Extension Service beef cattle specialist.

Low-stress handling of livestock not only promotes their health and safety, but that of the rancher as well.

Please see **HANDLING, 2A**

# Spill plan rules to go into effect

By **CLAY COPPEDGE**

Country World Staff Writer

New regulations concerning on-farm petroleum storage have been coming for a long time, but it looks like they will finally be here to stay on Nov. 10 of this year. Unless the deadline is extended again, that is when farmers storing more than 1,320 gallons of fuel on their farm will be required to have what is called an SPCC plan.

SPCC is short for Oil Spill

Prevention, Control, and Countermeasures Program, an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulation that dates back to 1971, when it was first introduced as part of the Clean Water Act; it was amended in 1990 by the Oil Pollution Act. The original 2006 compliance date for regulation of on-farm fuel storage was extended to 2008, and then 2009, and now seems set to go into effect this year.

Please see **SPILL, 3A**



A new oil spill prevention program will go into effect later this year. The regulations require anyone storing more than 1,320 gallons of fuel on their farm to have an SPCC plan.

--Staff photo by Coppedge

# Texas location provides real research

By **CLAY COPPEDGE**

Country World Staff Writer

Someone driving past the land known informally as the 'Riesel watershed' near the town of that name in McLennan County, would likely be unable to distinguish it from the surrounding farms where fields are sown with corn, wheat, or oats and cattle graze in the pastures. That it is indistinguishable from nearby farms is part of the point at Riesel, where some of the most important agricultural research of the

last seven decades has originated.

Daren Harmel, an agricultural engineer with the Agriculture Research Service (ARS), the chief in-house scientific research agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is the Research Leader at the Grassland, Soil and Water Research Laboratory in Temple, and also the site manager at Riesel. Harmel has always been partial to research that can be applied directly to help farmers and ranchers in the real world, which is why

he likes the work that's been done at Riesel since it was founded in 1937 by the USDA Soil Conservation Service as a response to the devastation wrought by the Dust Bowl.

"The thing I like about the work at Riesel is that it's done on actual fields," Harmel said. "We're not taking a few square feet of land and studying that to get our results. Our data come from growing crops and livestock on the same scale as actual

Please see **RESEARCH, 4A**



Research conducted at the 'Riesel watershed' are done on a full-scale basis for the most accurate results.

--Photo courtesy of ARS

# Counties declared natural disaster areas

*From U.S. Department of Agriculture*

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has designated 213 counties in Texas as primary natural disaster areas after one of the worst droughts in more than a century. The state sustained excessive heat, high winds and wildfires that burned hundreds of thousands of acres.

The drought, wildfires and other natural disasters — which began Jan. 1, 2011, and continues — caused 30 percent or more loss of forage crops, pasture, corn, oats and wheat in the following counties: Anderson, Cochran, Galveston, Jim Hogg, Midland, Scurry, Andrews, Coke, Garza, Jim Wells, Mills, Shackelford, Angelina, Coleman, Gillespie, Johnson, Mitchell, Shelby, Aransas, Collin, Glasscock, Jones, Montgomery, Sherman, Archer, Collingsworth, Goliad,

Karnes, Moore, Smith, Armstrong, Colorado, Gonzales, Kendall, Morris, Somervell, Atascosa, Comal, Gray, Kenedy, Motley, Starr, Austin, Comanche, Gregg, Kent, Nacogdoches, Stephens, Bailey, Concho, Grimes, Kerr, Newton, Sterling, Bandera, Cooke, Guadalupe, Kimble, Nolan, Stonewall, Bastrop, Coryell, Hale, King, Ochiltree, Sutton, Baylor, Cottle, Hall, Kleburg, Oldham, Swisher, Bee, Crockett, Hamilton, Knox, Orange, Taylor, Bell, Crosby, Hansford, La Salle, Palo Pinto, Terrell, Blanco, Culberson, Hardeman, Lamar, Panola, Throckmorton, Bosque, Dallam, Hardin, Lamb, Parker, Titus, Bowie, De Witt, Harris, Lampasas, Parmer, Tom Green, Brazoria, Deaf Smith, Harrison, Lavaca, Pecos, Travis, Brazos, Delta, Hartley, Lee, Polk, Trinity, Brewster, Denton, Haskell, Leon, Potter, Tyler, Briscoe, Dickens, Hays, Liberty, Presidio, Upshur, Brooks, Donley, Hemphill,

Limestone, Rains, Upton, Brown, Duval, Hidalgo, Lipscomb, Randall, Val Verde, Bureson, Eastland, Hockley, Live Oak, Reagan, Victoria, Burnet, Edwards, Hood, Loving, Reeves, Walker, Caldwell, El Paso, Hopkins, Lubbock, Refugio, Waller, Calhoun, Ellis, Houston, Lynn, Roberts, Washington, Callahan, Erath, Howard, Madison, Robertson, Webb, Cameron, Fayette, Hudspeth, Marion, Rusk, Wheeler, Camp, Fisher, Hutchinson, Martin, Sabine, Wichita, Cass, Floyd, Irion, McCulloch, San Augustine, Wilbarger, Castro, Foard, Jack, McLennan, San Jacinto, Willacy, Chambers, Fort Bend, Jackson, McMullen, San Patricio, Wood, Cherokee, Franklin, Jasper, Medina, San Saba, Young, Childress, Freestone, Jeff Davis, Menard, Schleicher, Zapata, Clay, Frio and Jefferson.

Farmers and ranchers in the following counties in Texas also

qualify for natural disaster assistance because their counties are contiguous: Bexar, Ector, Hunt, Milam, Runnels, Williamson, Borden, Falls, Kaufman, Montague, Tarrant, Wilson, Carson, Fannin, Kinney, Navarro, Terry, Winkler, Crane, Gaines, Llano, Nueces, Uvalde, Wise, Dallas, Grayson, Mason, Real, Van Zandt, Yoakum, Dawson, Henderson, Matagorda, Red River, Ward, Zavala, Dimmit, Hill, Maverick, Rockwall and Wharton.

All counties listed above were designated natural disaster areas June 24, 2011, making all qualified farm operators in the designated areas eligible for low interest emergency (EM) loans from USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), provided eligibility requirements are met. Farmers in eligible counties have eight months from the date of the declaration to apply for loans to help cover part of their actual losses.

FSA will consider each loan application on its own merits, taking into account the extent of losses, security available and repayment ability. FSA has a variety of programs, in addition to the EM loan program, to help eligible farmers recover from adversity.

USDA also has made other programs available to assist farmers and ranchers, including the Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program (SURE), which was approved as part of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008; the Emergency Conservation Program; Federal Crop Insurance; and the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program. Interested farmers may contact their local USDA Service Centers for more information. Additional information is also available online at <http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov>.

## Research

From Page 1A

farms."

Harmel is deeply respectful of the Riesel facility's rich history — he has published a paper about it — but just as excited about the work still being done there.

One of two original ARS experimental watersheds still in

operation — the other one, near Coshocton, Ohio, is on the federal chopping block — Riesel's research has led to the development of watershed models that are used across the world for hydrological studies and are part of an assessment tool to evaluate conservation measures in the country's farm bill.

Most of the early work at Riesel consisted of analyzing data from various rain gauges and watersheds to determine the impact of conservation practices on erosion control.

"In the 30s, there wasn't the data to show how well conserva-

tion practices worked," Harmel said. "The Soil Conservation Service was fairly sure that these practices would improve water quality and quantity as well as conserving the land, but they couldn't know how well they worked until they studied how much soil and water could be saved with conservation practices like terracing and contour plowing. Riesel was one of three experimental watersheds that were established to do those studies."

Today, the station's 840 acres are divided into watersheds where the staff operates 17 runoff

stations, 15 rain gauges, a weather station and seven shallow groundwater wells to monitor things like the effect of poultry litter on crop production and the watershed. Some of the research has changed but Harmel said that Riesel's primary goal — to help farmers and ranchers manage their land to their benefit and also the benefit of the environment — has not changed.

The research being done at Riesel using poultry litter as a fertilizer is a good example. Working with the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board and Texas AgriLife Extension and Research, the research looks at poultry litter's effectiveness in supplying essential nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorous to crops and pastures and also the impact it has on water quality.

"Poultry production in Central Texas has increased dramatically in recent years," Harmel said. "There's a lot of turkey production around Waco. There's also a new Sanderson Farms chicken processing facility there, which has led to an abundance of poultry litter that's available for farmers to use as a soil amendment. You have to ask how you use it, how much do you use, and what impact does it have? That's what we're working to find out."

Beyond that, questions about poultry litter's impact on waterways have to be answered, especially in the wake of controversy a few years ago in the nearby Bosque watershed over large dairy farms' impact on water quality, particularly in Lake Waco, where that city gets its drinking water.

Initial studies have shown that poultry litter applied at a rate of two tons per acre for crops and two to three tons per acre for pastures is the optimum rate in terms of farmer profits and also for keeping nutrients out of waterways.

"There were a lot of fingers pointed at agriculture in the Bosque watershed a few years ago, but other sources of nutrients such as natural sources, urban

runoff, and waste water treatment plants are also significant contributors," Harmel said.

Part of the solution for the dairy industry has been the recycling of waste into compost, which is applied by the state's transportation department along roadways and by farmers and ranchers on their fields and pastures. That's the same thing that's being done with poultry litter as that business has exploded in the region.

Harmel said that the process of turning the dairy manure into compost kills most of the bacteria; at Riesel they are looking at "in house windrow composting" of poultry litter. The litter is laid out in long rows, or windrows in the poultry houses, and turned a couple of times over the course of a couple of weeks before it is applied to the field or pasture. The hope is that this process both reduces odor and kills a lot of the bacteria in the litter before it has a chance to make it into a nearby waterway.

"This kind of work is so important not just to farmers and ranchers but to everybody that it's hard to see why so much money for agricultural research is being cut in this country," Harmel said.

"I would hate to see a large-scale drought create food shortages before people see the vital importance of agricultural research. The value has been long-proven. At least \$10 of economic benefit is generated by every one dollar of agricultural research. USDA research — both through universities and ARS — solves problems related to our food supply, food safety, plant and animal health, childhood nutrition, water quality and a lot more.

"Most ARS scientists aren't sitting in labs and testing theories. A great deal of our work is done on the land, like it is at Riesel, so we can tell farmers and ranchers what to expect from the way they manage their land. That's always going to be vital information as long as people need food to live," Harmel said.

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