

SUMMER 2023

AgReview

Mason County Agriculture Newsletter

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Why Should I get my Soil Tested?

This question is asked by everyone from home gardeners planting their tomatoes to farmers planning out their crop rotations and homeowners looking to keep a lush lawn.

Jake Mowrer, Ph.D., Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service extension associate professor, Soil Nutrient and Water Resource Management in the Texas A&M College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Department of Soil and Crop Sciences, said soil testing is important because it determines three things:

- Existing nutrients of the soil.
- Any nutrient deficiencies and needs.
- Potential growing constraints.

“Soil testing measures the nutrients and other aspects of soil fertility related to crop, garden and ornamental plant growth,” Mowrer said. “Indirectly, soil water is important in that nutrients must be dissolved in it to be taken up by plants.”

Establishing the right fertilizer and nutrients Mowrer said soil tests are important to home gardeners because they provide a guide for your plants’ nutrient needs and help maximize yields efficiently.

“Soil testing does two important things. First, it measures the amount of nutrients your soil will provide to a plant during the growing season,” Mowrer said. “Second, it establishes the basis for making fertilizer recommendations to make up the difference between what the soil provides and what the plant requires to complete its growth cycle.”

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Trailer Safety In Texas

Agricultural producers use a variety of trailers to carry out daily business, including trailers to haul livestock, feed, supplies and implements. Routine safety towing tips should be kept in mind before venturing out on the road, according to a [Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Disaster Assessment and Recovery unit](#) agent.

“We see it so frequently when traveling across the state where a vehicle is on the side of the road with a broken-down tow vehicle, a blown-out tire or broken axle,” said Jeff Fant, AgriLife Extension Disaster Assessment and Recovery agent, San Angelo. “After spending my college years working for a livestock/horse trailer manufacturer and the rest of my adult life in law enforcement and disaster response, I’ve found that the best insurance against these catastrophes is proper preparation and preventive maintenance.”

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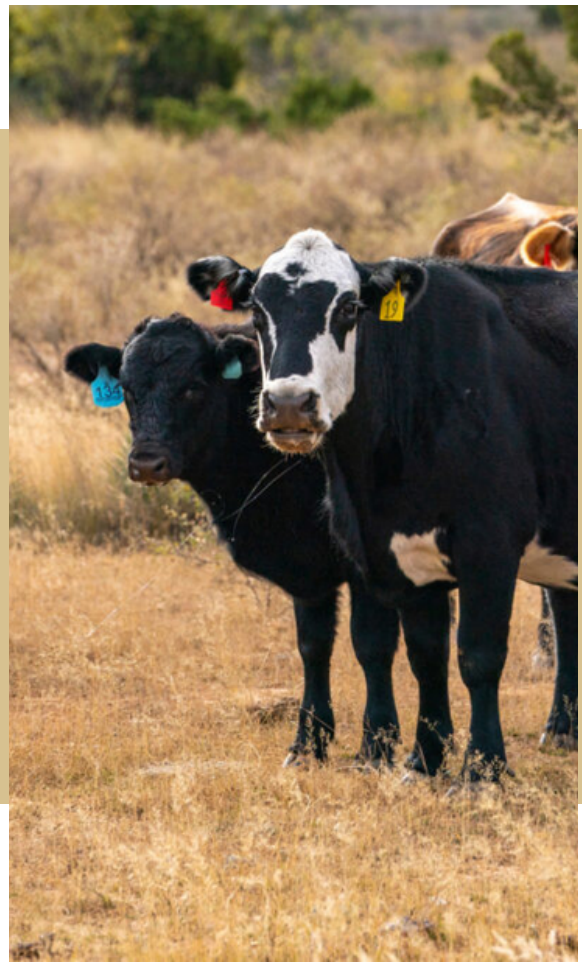
Anthrax: A Concern for Herbivores

As we enter summer months, livestock producers and outdoor enthusiasts across the state, especially those in South Texas, have more to think about than rising temperatures.

Anthrax, sometimes incorrectly referred to as bovine anthrax, is a bacterial disease caused by *Bacillus anthracis*, which occurs naturally in soil. The [Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory](#), TVMDL, historically sees a rise in positive cases in June, July and August, followed by a slow decrease through September and October.

How concerned should you be about anthrax? Two [Texas A&M AgriLife](#) experts weigh in and explain what anthrax is and what you should do if you suspect a positive case in your area.

[Terry Hensley, DVM](#), is the TVMDL assistant agency director and a [Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service](#) veterinarian. He has broad knowledge of veterinary medical topics and has been a valuable resource for the [Texas Animal Health Commission](#), TAHC, [Texas Parks and Wildlife Department](#) and the public during [previous outbreaks](#).



[Narayan Paul, Ph.D., DVM](#), Diplomate ACVM, is a board certified veterinary clinical microbiologist and the bacteriology section head for TVMDL, where anthrax testing takes place.

How do animals contract anthrax?

Hensley: Anthrax is not contagious like the flu. The most common route of infection is by ingestion of the bacterial spores from contaminated forage, soil or water. Infection by inhalation or through skin wounds is also possible.

The disease can infect all animals with some being more susceptible than others. Herbivores such as cattle, sheep, goats and horses, as well as wild herbivores like deer, are more susceptible than swine and carnivores such as dogs.

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Meat Prices Up, Down as Grilling Season Kicks Off

Grilling season has begun, and consumers should expect a mixed bag when it comes to meat options for summer cookouts, according to a [Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service](#) expert.

David Anderson, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension economist, Bryan-College Station, said the summer grilling season typically kicks off during Memorial Day weekend, as Americans come together to celebrate and remember the nation's military veterans.

This year, consumers will likely see lower prices for some grilling favorites like pork spareribs and chicken wings, and higher prices on beef favorites like briskets and steaks, Anderson said.

“It looks like we should be able to find some deals on chicken and pork for cookouts, but retail beef prices continue to stay high on most cuts. Even ground beef for hamburgers is a little higher this year compared to this time last year.”



Brisket, burgers cost more at start of grilling season

Wholesale beef prices are higher across primal cuts, and Anderson attributes the rising prices to lower beef production. Beef production is down 5% compared to last year, when the U.S. set a record.

“We’ve had a shrinking beef cattle herd the last few years, and so many cows and heifers went to market because of drought,” he said. “Demand doesn’t seem to be slowing, which is contributing to higher retail prices.”

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Sam Spradlin

Mason County Extension Agent
Ag & Natural Resources



505 Moody Street
Mason, TX 76856



(325) 347-6459



sam.spradlin@ag.tamu.edu



www.mason.agrilife.org



Mason County
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

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Upcoming Events

PRIVATE APPLICATOR TRAINING

MASON | AUGUST 1

TEXAS SHEEP & GOAT EXPO

SAN ANGELO | AUGUST 18-19

VINE TO WINE - VITICULTURE

MASON | SEPTEMBER 14

MASON COUNTY BEEF CATTLE WORKSHOP

MASON | OCTOBER 11

HILL COUNTRY CATTLEMAN'S CONFERENCE

SAN SABA | OCTOBER 25

MASON COUNTY RANGELAND FIELD DAY

MASON | DECEMBER 8

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