

County Agent's Notebook

By Leroy Hajdik

County Extension Agent

Meet consumer demand

The help the Texas cattle industry meet growing consumer demand for lean beef, scientists with the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station are expanding their research into lean beef production. The researchers see the demand for lean beef as an opportunity for the cattle industry to increase total beef sales.

traits of naturally lean cattle. Meat processing also will be studied to improve trimming and handling methods. In addition, consumer preference studies and a review of federal grade standards will be conducted to determine if the grading and labeling of lean beef should be clarified. Finally, another phase of research is underway to evaluate lower-valued cuts of beef for use in reconstituted meat products. The potential benefit to the

Texas cattle industry from lean beef production is substantial. Because lean cattle would require a shorter stay at the feedlot—possibly 30 days less than other cattle, production costs could be cut dramatically. Experiment Station scientists estimate an annual savings of up to \$215 million. Carcass yields of lean cattle also would have less waste and thus provide more net income, up to \$135 million annually for Texas producers.

Spider mites - tiny pests cause big problems

Spider mites are tiny but they can cause big problems in home gardens.

These pests prefer tomatoes, beans and peas and do most of their damage in hot, dry weather.

Spider mites, also called red spiders, are only 1/60th of an inch in length and vary in color from white to green to red.

The tiny pests can build up quickly and completely engulf plants. They lay eggs on the underside of leaves, which hatch in four to five days. A complete life cycle takes three weeks, and as many as 20 overlapping generations can occur in a single year.

Mites spin a thin web which often can be seen on the underside of an infested leaf. They feed by inserting their mouthparts into the tissue and sucking juice from the plant. While feeding, they inject toxic substances into the plant.

Infestations of spider mites can be identified by tiny white spots on the underside of a leaf. Heavy infestations cause bleaching or yellowing, first along the main leaf veins and then throughout the plant. The

plant may also shed buds and small fruit. Spider mites can completely defoliate a plant if not controlled.

Control of spider mites is often difficult and requires from two to four applications of insecticide at five-day intervals. Plants should be checked frequently for spider mites since the pests can build up rapidly.

Insecticides registered for controlling spider mites in gardens are diazinon, kelthane, malathion, etion and sulfur. However, avoid using sulphur on vine plants as severe plant damage could occur.

As always, read and follow label directions on all insecticides.

LCRA board schedules meeting

The Lower Colorado River Authority board of directors has scheduled a special board meeting in New York City in late July.

The purpose of the meeting is to approve the authority's 1985 series of revenue bonds.

The directors were scheduled to fly to New York City on July 21 and hold their special meeting July 25. However at the last regular board meeting, financial advisor John Hinton asked the meeting be moved up to July 22 or 23.

Downgrading of the authority's bond ratings and its "deteriorating perception in the bond market" were among the reasons cited by LCRA and its Association of Wholesale Customers in their recent attempt to receive a \$35.1 million rate increase from Central Texas ratepayers.

However, opposition from several LCRA customers — including the cities of Bastrop, Smithville, Lampasas and Giddings and Bluebonnet and Pedernales cooperatives — and the state Office of Public Utility Commission ordering a \$32.9 million rate decrease.

Commissioner's meeting routine except for discussion of jail food

The July 8th county commissioners meeting was rather routine, and included a presentation by Sheriff Jim Broussard on the cost of prisoner meals, as well as establishment of a new labor policy that forbids overtime.

Broussard's appearance was made because of concerns voiced at the last commissioners' meeting over purchases at the Nada Grocery. Broussard was asked to investigate making wholesale food purchases, to see if the county could save money.

At last week's meeting, the sheriff said the purchases at Nada Grocery are for food and jail supplies, including the paper plates and cups used to feed prisoners. Paper goods, he said, are used to avoid the expense of dish washing.

The sheriff corrected the impression that food purchases were more than \$2,000 monthly. His records for the last six months show \$7,901.53 was spent at the grocery for food, and that was used to provide 5,911 prisoner meals; each meal averages \$1.34 he said, with an average monthly expenditure of \$1,317 per month.

Broussard said he makes the food purchases in Nada because of his policy of making departmental purchases throughout the county, such as vehicle repairs in Columbus and something else in Weimar.

From the information he has so far, he thinks the per-meal cost would be higher through food wholesalers. However, he recently purchased 16 cases of paper plates and other paper goods from a Houston distributor which imprinted the wrong name on them and could not ship them to the original purchaser.

Jails are required by the Jail Standards Act to provide nutritional meals. Broussard said the meals he serves are checked by the nutritionist at

the Columbus hospital. He emphasized that no deputies are led at the jail. The 1985 food budget at the jail is \$30,000, and for the first 50 percent of the year, Broussard has spent only 40 percent of the funds.

The sheriff said he is looking at another expense area — the laundry. "Maybe you (commissioners) ought to be looking into a washer and dryer so we can do our own," he said.

The no overtime ruling came to help the county comply with the Fair Labor Laws. Commissioners also ruled that if overtime is needed, department heads must report it personally to commissioners, and that affected employees should be given compensatory time off instead of additional salary.

The exception is in the Sheriff's Department where the normal work week for deputies is 52 hours. Those men and women will receive the same size paycheck as they do now, but their pay will be divided into 40 hours at one rate, and 12 hours at time-and-a-half. Commissioners asked county auditor Lee Briscoe to send each deputy a letter explaining the changes, since his office will be required to keep records on the number of hours an employee works.

In other business, commissioners:

Accepted a bid from McRora for 13 pages and chargers at \$245 each, with warranty and additional battery at \$32 each. Total cost is \$3,601. Warranty will be done by Hallettsville Communications, RCA and NEC did not respond to the bid request.

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hearing on at their 22 meeting to set a 30 MPH speed limit on Montezuma St. from the western Columbus City limits to the cemetery. Commissioner Jerome Wicke agreed it was a good idea, but suggested the city pay for the signs and install them, since it is instituting the request.

Agreed to pay minimum wage for election judges and clerks, and were scheduled to appoint a presiding judge for the Freilburg area, but took no action.

Approved the use by the Live Oak Art Club of the courthouse square for an ice cream social tentatively scheduled from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. August 18. Rest room facilities will not be needed. The club is purchasing the Brunswick Building for a county art center, and is holding various fundraising activities.

Denied a request by Haber Oil Co. to lease 3.6 acres of county land in Stiles Precinct 4 for \$25 per acre per year for the surface rights.

Approved payment of bills, including \$13,189 for repairs to a John Deere motor grader in Wicke's precinct. The repairs were done at a Houston industrial John Deere company.

Learned the valuations for 1985 scheduled to be certified this week show the county will lose about one percent value for the general fund valuation in, and a little more than that for the additional road and bridge tax. Last year, the general fund values were \$731.4 million, and this year they will be \$739.0 million. The road and bridge valuations last year were \$727.0 million and this year they will be \$717.9 million. Although it wasn't discussed, the exemptions allowed decrease.

Learned St. Michael's Church in Weimar filed an application for bingo.

Learned that the Columbus unit of the ambulances corps made 67 calls in June. Weimar had 19 and Eagle Lake had 33.

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That was one of several items before council at its two-monthly meeting last week.

The men voted adoption of two ordinances, discussed the city's position in competition for a federal grant to improve drainage and sewer in the Rice Mill area, and discussed other items.

One of the ordinances increased garbage collection fees by \$1 monthly for residential customers, and at least by that much for commercial users. The action was necessary because Sprint, the company that operates the U.S. 71 landfill near Altair that the city uses, has increased dumping fees from \$1.25 to \$3 a yard. A 10-cent per yard cost will be allowed if the city pays promptly.

The other ordinance was adopted after three readings, and sets the speed limit on Frazar Drive at 20 MPH. The limit is for the entire length of the street from its western intersection with Waddell St. to its eastern intersection with Waddell.

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Rail crossing guard at Lake St. possible

Drivers who use Lake St. to cross the Southern Pacific tracks at Post Office St. may feel a little safer sometime about the end of next year or early 1987. City Manager Robert Klockman said the crossing now quality's for a federal program and he was instructed by city council last week to apply for the grant for a flashing-light crossing guard like the one at McCarty.

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