

Helping rice farmers predict crop development

Current low commodity prices and high input costs mean rice farmers must simultaneously cut production costs and maximize yield potential. And, since the average Texas rice farm is 500 acres, producers often face the cost of hiring additional help. Fortunately for these farmers, technology

can transform a farmer's toolbox to include a cutting-edge forecasting machine.

Using any standard home computer with Internet connection, rice farmers can now access a web-based program called the Rice Development Advisory (RiceDevA), which is designed to as-

sist them in tracking crop growth and development.

Created at the Texas A&M University System Research & Extension Center in Beaumont, the program is user-friendly with advanced options for creating, running and displaying field growth forecasts for different rice varieties in the Texas Rice Belt.

According to Dr. Ted Wilson, director at the Beaumont center, the program is a useful tool for rice farmers, even those with very little computer experience.

"The pop-up menus and fill-in-the-blank windows walk you through in a step-by-step fashion to input all the necessary information," Wilson said. "Once the raw data is loaded, the farmer can log in as often as they want to check on the progress of their fields."

Based on the variety, location, planting date and weather data, RiceDevA can tell farmers when the rice is likely to reach certain stages, such as tillering, panicle development or full heading. Since the timing of fertilizer applications for rice production is so critical, the RiceDevA can be like another pair of eyes in the field, alerting farmers to apply nitrogen for maximum effectiveness.

For added flexibility, RiceDevA allows farmers to choose weather station data or add in their own data from personal weather stations on their farms.

Scientists at the Beaumont center have gone a step further and are work-

ing to help farmers predict crop yields.

The team is currently developing a Web-based version of the Rice Cultivar Selection Program (RiceCSP), which has been proven to accurately predict rice crop growth stages and crop yields.

It accounts for changes in crop development due to temperatures, rainfall, solar radiation, soil type, fertilizer application, water management, plant-

ing density, row spacing and other factors. RiceCSP, which is scheduled for release in spring 2006, will give more options to users to manage and predict their rice crops.

According to Wilson, the team is just getting up.

"As we continue to increase our knowledge and understanding of the rice cropping system through our research, we are also realizing the in-

creasing importance of extracting and integrating knowledge in agronomy, physiology, ecology, entomology and economics into a system that is user-friendly and easily accessible," Wilson said.

"Such an integrated system would greatly help rice producers and consultants in managing their crop production." For more information, go to beaumont.tamu.edu/RiceDevA.

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Rice CISD Dress Code

The District's dress code is established to value grooming and hygiene as a means to ensure personal safety and to prevent academic disruption or interruption. Students should learn to dress appropriately for the school/work environment. Given that school is the students' workplace, they are expected to dress in a way appropriate to that environment. Parents are asked to assist administrators and faculty in keeping with dress code policy to minimize disciplinary actions against such violations.

All students should be well groomed with daily personal hygiene habits.

CLOTHING

- Should be appropriate in size to cover undergarments, midriff, chest, back, and upper-thighs.
- Clothing and accessories with suggestive symbols, writing, or subliminal messages are considered a personal safety hazard and disruptive to the learning environment and therefore not permitted.

HAIR

- Abnormal hair color or hairdo is prohibited.
- Hair may not cover the eyes.

BOYS

- All pants and shorts must be worn above the top of the buttocks.
- Pants legs may not drag on the floor.
- Shirts may be worn untucked but must not extend below the bottom of the buttocks.
- No tank tops, basketball jerseys (unless worn over a T-shirt), or muscle shirts.
- No earrings.
- Facial hair must be shaved at all times.
- Sideburns are allowed but cannot extend below the bottom of the earlobe.
- Hair must not be bound in a ponytail. Rubber bands and ties on braids must match hair color.

GIRLS

- Pant legs may not drag on the floor.
- No slits in skirts allowed if higher than the longest finger when standing erect.
- Midriffs and crop tops which allow for exposure of skin at any time in the mid section are not allowed.
- Sleeveless shirts are allowed but must be evenly cut from the armpit around the top of the shoulder.
- Hair rollers are not permitted.
- Earrings allowed in ears only.
- Shirts may be worn untucked but must not extend below the bottom of the buttocks.

MISCELLANEOUS PROHIBITED ITEMS

- Torn or see-through clothing.
- Clothing with suggestive writing, pictures, emblems, or symbols.
- Dark glasses or sunglasses.
- Caps, hats, or bandanas
- House shoes, sleep wear, or beach sandals.
- Any clothing that the administration determines is inappropriate.
- Cutoffs, spandex and pajamas.
- Bare feet.
- Rakes, picks, or grooming combs may not be worn in hair.

The campus principal shall have the final say so in all matters relating to the dress code.

The District Dress Code may be found in the Rice CISD District Student Handbook. The Rice CISD District Student Handbook and the Student Code of Conduct may be viewed on the Rice CISD website at www.ricecisd.org.

More Vesicular Stomatitis (VS) confirmed in Texas, New Mexico

Horses on a total of three sites in Texas and four premises in New Mexico are known to be infected with Vesicular Stomatitis (VS), a painful blistering disease of livestock, such as horses, sheep, swine and deer.

The viral disease appears spontaneously and sporadically in the southwestern U.S. and is thought to be transmitted by sand flies and black flies. The VS cases this spring are the first to be confirmed since 1998.

"The most recent confirmed cases in Texas involve three horses on a ranch near Denver City, in Yoakum County, about 80 miles southwest of Lubbock, and one horse near Del Rio, in Val Verde County about 150 miles west of San Antonio," said Dr. Bob Hillman, Texas' state veterinarian and head of the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC), the state's livestock and poultry health regulatory agency.

The country's first VS cases this year were confirmed May 19, in three horses, which are confined to their ranch in Reeves County, in far west Texas.

To prevent animal-to-animal disease transmission, the TAHC requires that the VS-infected animals and other livestock on the premise remain quarantined until 30 days after all VS blisters or lesions heal, a process that usually takes two to three weeks. Prior to quarantine release, the animals will be re-examined by a state or federal regulatory veterinarian, to prevent the spread of disease to other premises.

Dr. Steve England, state veterinarian for New Mexico, said a "handful" of horses on four small premises near Carlsbad, New Mexico, were found to be infected since June 4. The animals remain quarantined.

"During an active year for VS, it's not unusual for this unpredictable disease to be found scattered across several counties and states," said Hillman. "We urge owners and private veterinary practitioners to report clinical signs of the disease to their state veterinarians' offices. A disease investigation will be conducted with laboratory tests run at the National Veterinary Services Laboratory in Ames, Iowa. There is no charge for these services."

Signs of VS (which include blisters, open sores or erosions in an animal's mouth, on the muzzle, teats or hooves) mimic those of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), an extremely dangerous and highly contagious foreign animal dis-

ease that can affect cattle, sheep, swine and deer, but not horses. Laboratory testing is needed to differentiate between VS and FMD, or to determine if the animals had contact with a toxic plant or poison.

During a VS outbreak, animal health officials across the country may place additional testing requirements or restrictions on livestock originating from states with infection.

The TAHC has directed private veterinary practitioners to carefully inspect animals for VS and document the exam on certificates of veterinary inspection (health papers) issued for livestock leaving Texas.

A similar statement also is required on paperwork for livestock entering Texas from other states with VS infection.

Hillman recommended producers or veterinarians check with each state of destination prior to shipping live-

since been sold?

Pension Weary

Dear Weary,

Not knowing your rights is like not having any rights at all. But, you'll be happy to know when it comes to pension rights, there are organizations and resources that can help you.

ERISA

In 1974, Congress passed the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA), which protects the assets of millions of Americans so that the money they place in private employee retirement plans during their working lives will be there when they

retire. ERISA is a federal law that requires the administrator of a pension to give you in writing a free copy of your "summary plan description" or SPD. The SPD is an important document that tells you what your pension plan provides and how it operates. It also tells you when you begin to participate in the plan, how your service and benefits are calculated, when your benefit becomes vested, when you will receive payment and in what form, and how to file a claim for benefits. In addition to the SPD, the pension administrator must also give you a copy of the plan's summary annual report (Form 5500). This is a summary of the annual financial report that most pension plans must file with the Department of Labor. If you haven't received either of these annual reports from your employer, ask for them.

Savvy Tip: If you have questions or concerns about your pension plan contact the Employee Benefits Security Administration at the U.S. Department of Labor at 1-866-444-3272 or visit www.askebsa.dol.gov.

Pension Protection

The Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC), created by ERISA, is a federal agency that protects all defined benefit pensions. The PBGC acts as a pension insurance program that protects nearly 44.3 million American workers in more than 31,000 private plans. It does not, however, protect defined contribution plans (usually 401(k) options). Your SPD will indicate if your plan is protected by the PBGC. For more information visit www.pbgc.gov.

Pension Search

If you worked for a company in the past that went out of business or ended its defined benefit pension plan, you may be entitled to pension money and not even know it. To help you search for lost pension visit the PBGC at www.pbgc.gov and click on "Pension Search," or call 1-800-400-7242.

Your Secretary of State office is another good tracking resource if you've lost touch with a former employer, or if they've merged a time, or two since you left the company. To locate your Secretary of State office visit www.nass.org/sos/sos.html or call the National Association of Secretaries of State at 202-624-3525.

Savvy Resources

Pension Rights Center: A consumer organization dedicated to protecting and promoting the pension rights of American workers, retirees and their families. They offer pension information, resources, publications and free counseling projects in many areas around the country. Visit www.pensionrights.org.

Send your senior questions to: Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070, or visit www.savvysenior.org.

Colorado County Fair Poster Contest set

979-732-3564 or fair director Pamela Potter at 732-2705.

"When love speaks, the voice of all the gods make heaven drowsy with the harmony." — William Shakespeare, *Love's Labor's Lost*

"If you would be loved, be lovable." — Benjamin Franklin

"Time is a great healer, but a poor beautician." — Lucille S. Harper

"Forgive but never forget." — Attributed to John F. Kennedy by Ted Sorensen

"Cherish forever what makes you unique, because you're really a yawn if it goes." — Bette Midler

"What our contempt doth often hurl from us, we wish it ours again." — William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*

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July 22, 2004 Report
Animals on hand: cattle, 1885; seven goats. **Sellers:** 333.

Packer cows: higher dressing utility & cutter cows, 58-66 per lb.; lower dressing utility & cutter cows, 50-57 per lb.; thin cows, 42-49.

Packer bulls: heavyweight bulls 76-82; utility cutter bulls, 66-74. Head tested: 256.

Stocker/Feeder Calves/Yearlings
 Steers #1: 200-300 lbs., \$1.65-1.85; 300-400 lbs., \$1.40-1.65; 400-500 lbs., \$1.25-1.39; 500-600 lbs., \$1.15-1.25; 600-700 lbs., \$1.08-1.18; 700-800 lbs., 99¢-1.07.

Steers #2: 200-300 lbs., \$1.45-1.63; 300-400 lbs., \$1.28-1.40; 400-500 lbs., \$1.12-1.24; 500-600 lbs., \$1.06-1.16; 600-700 lbs., 98¢-1.07; 700-800 lbs., 89-98¢.

Heifers #1: 200-300 lbs., \$1.50-1.75; 300-400 lbs., \$1.28-1.40; 400-500 lbs., \$1.18-1.28; 500-600 lbs., \$1.10-1.20; 600-700 lbs., \$1.00-1.10; 700-800 lbs., 90¢-1.00.

Heifers #2: 200-300 lbs., \$1.30-1.45; 300-400 lbs., \$1.18-1.27; 400-500 lbs., \$1.08-1.17; 500-600 lbs., \$1.00-1.09; 600-700 lbs., 92-99¢; 700-800 lbs., 80-89¢.

Good stocker cow/calf pairs, \$850-1000 by the head; medium cow/calf pairs, \$775-845; common cow/calf pairs, \$675-770; good stocker cows & heifers, \$750-875; medium stocker cows & heifers, \$625-725.