October Marked As Breast Cancer Awareness Month

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The pink ribbons that have become so recognizable remind us that increasing communication and understanding about the disease are important steps in fighting breast cancer.

But if you are a mother (or father) diagnosed with breast cancer, communicating frightening news with your children can be a heart-wrenching task - and a task some parents try to avoid altogether.

Talking about cancer with your children is important and can help them understand what you are going through and deal with their own fears and sadness. In honor of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Peter van Dernoot, author of "Helping Your Children Cope With Your Cancer: A Guide For Parents and Families". (Hatherleigh Press, $15.95) offers some advice for talking to your children about your cancer:

- Provide honest, timely, open, ongoing conversation--it can help your children develop healthy, adaptive behavior to your cancer. From the beginning, finding the right words in the right way (and even the courage to speak) is a defining step.

- Make the underlying message to your children that you're doing everything possible to win the cancer battle, and that your love and caring of them continues unabated.

- Encourage and enable your children to express their thoughts and concerns. Young children may choose to make drawings; older children may wish to write. Keep a journal for discussion.

- Expect to repeat elements of your discussion with your children. Just as adults do not satisfactorily process information in a crisis, children need to hear explanations more than once.

- Inform other adults who are in frequent contact with your children of your situation, especially teachers, coaches, Scout leaders, and such. When your children are away from home, they still need to feel loved, protected, and cared for.

Although your children may appear to be "toughing it out" when they are not with you, these key adults can do much to lessen the pain by listening, encouraging, and by simply being a friend and protector.

- Find ways to lessen interruption of family time. For instance, provide daily "Updates" to family and friends using e-mail, thus reducing the number and impact of well-meaning but potentially intrusive phone calls.

- Try to preserve the children's basic routines (soccer games, school activities), which will help them maintain a level of emotional normalcy.

- Involve your children in appropriate activities, such as meetings with your doctor and shopping for wigs, if they show a readiness.

- Find age-appropriate children's support groups. It is beneficial for them to learn that their situation is not unique. Other kids also have parents with cancer.

Moreover, the professionals on staff and other children will help your children to "open up" and express their concerns.

- Finally, monitor your own emotional, physical, spiritual, and optimistic levels. To be sure, it won't be easy. But it is helpful to remember that your children's level of tension will reflect yours. So, give thought to getting support for yourself.

Not every piece of advice will work in all situations. And you may not know for years how well your children have coped. But you will find the right combination.

And the result will be that your children will be better equipped to adapt to the changing family dynamics and their changing senses of self, now and in the future.

Texas Crop Weather Report

Agricultural Summary

Most of the rainfall in Texas was in South Texas and coastal areas, where up to an inch was recorded.

Spotty showers near the Oklahoma border in the Northern Low Plains and Cross Timbers contributed up to 0.25 inches of rainfall.

Otherwise, except for widely scattered traces of rain, the state was dry.

Pasture conditions improved in South and South Central Texas, the Edwards Plateau, and the Lower Valley because of rainfall received prior to this week.

Hay crops were being laid down and baled at a rapid pace in the High Plains.

Field Crops Report

Small Grains: Producers continued to plant wheat in the Plains, and fields that were already planted were coming up well.

More moisture was needed to complete planting and ensure stand establishment.

Producers planted small grains in the Cross Timbers, where emerged fields were stressed by dry conditions.

Planting of small grains continued in the Blacklands, Edwards Plateau, and South and South Central areas.

Cotton: Cotton matured quickly in the Northern High Plains, where cotton bolls continued to open.

Producers throughout the Plains applied harvest aids to fields.

Harvest was expected to begin in about three weeks in the Northern High Plains and in about a week in the Northern Low Plains. Harvest was just beginning in the Southern Plains.

Gins were expected to run for another three or four weeks in the Blacklands, where harvest was nearly complete.

Bolls were mostly open in the Trans-Pecos. Wet soils continued to delay the completion of harvest in coastal areas. Statewide, cotton condition was mostly fair to poor.

Corn: Harvest progressed as fast as the combines would allow in the Northern High Plains. The corn condition statewide was mostly fair to very poor.

Sorghum: Grain sorghum continued to progress to maturity in the Northern High Plains. Statewide, sorghum condition was mainly fair to very poor.

Peanuts: Harvest continued at a slow pace in the Southern High Plains, but it was expected to pick up soon.

Harvest was expected to begin the Northern Low Plains and South Texas in about a week. Peanut condition statewide was mostly good to fair.

Rice: The condition of rice was mainly good to fair statewide.

Soybeans: Statewide, the condition was mostly fair to very poor.

Fruit, Vegetable and Specialty Crop Report

Pumpkin harvest was in full swing in the Northern High Plains, where a smaller crop was expected.

Producers harvested watermelons in the Southern High Plains.

Producers continued to plant green beans in South Texas and prepared land for planting onions, cabbage, and carrots.

Pecans: Producers harvested pecans in the Cross Timbers. The crop was expected to be very short due to lack of rain. Nut filling was nearly complete in the Trans-Pecos.

Livestock, Pasture and Range Report

Pastures were in good condition in the Plains. Haying was in full swing in the Northern High Plains, where hay supplies were expected to be excellent because of August rains.

Ranches in the Northern Low Plains were getting ready for annual horse sales.

Extreme dry conditions and wind set back growth of pastures in the Cross Timbers and forced some producers to cut Bermuda hay and supplement cattle.

Cattle sales decreased somewhat in the Blacklands because of improved grazing conditions.

Ranchers in North East Texas continued to search for hay for current and winter feeding, and some were feeding full time because of poor pasture conditions.

Producers in East Texas reduced herds and planted winter pastures, including clovers and ryegrass, where there was enough soil moisture.

Producers in the South East were getting in their last cutting of hay for the year.

Pastures improved in the Edwards Plateau, South and South Central Texas, and the Lower Valley in response to recent rains.

Some fall shearing was underway in the Edwards Plateau.

Grazing conditions continued to be excellent in the Upper Coast, where frequent rains have made haying difficult in some areas

USDA Introduces Underwriting System

Lenders will soon have the ability to underwrite USDA Single Family Housing Guaranteed Loans using the new Guaranteed Underwriting System (GUS). GUS was developed by USDA Rural Development to automate a manual underwriting process, which considers loan applications for approval. A unique GUS feature is that it determines a borrower's income and a property's eligibility for the Single Family Housing Guaranteed Loan Program.

"The Guaranteed Rural Housing Program not only provides decent and affordable housing, but is an important component of USDA's economic development efforts," said Bryan Daniel, Texas State Director of USDA Rural Development. "The availability of affordable housing is often a key element in whether a business decides to locate or remain in a rural community."

GUS will enable participating lenders to receive faster loan decisions, streamlined documentation requirements, better quality loans, more consistency in program delivery, and will fulfill legal requirements under the Government Paperwork Elimination Act and the Freedom to E-File Act.

USDA Rural Development began a national market test of GUS on August 1, 2006, with eight lenders. In Texas, Allied Home Mortgage Capital Corporation piloted the program under the direction of David Hail, Vice President. Additional lenders will be added to the market test later this year in preparation for full GUS implementation in January 2007.

Guaranteed Loans are made to qualifying low- and moderate-income families to purchase homes in rural areas. The loans are made by mortgage lenders, such as banks, credit unions and mortgage companies.

The USDA Rural Development local office that serves your area can be located at www.rurdev.usda.gov/tx/officeinfo.html, or call the State Office Housing Program at (254) 742-9770. Allied Mortgage Capital Corporation can be reached at 2602 Ridge Road, Suite 200, Rockwall, Texas 75087, (972) 772-5140, or at www.alliedmtgcapital.com.

Pig Inventory Down One Percent

The Sept. 1 Texas hog and pig inventory, at 980,000, was down one percent from the September 2005 total of 990,000 head.

The number of breeding hogs totaled 100,000 head, equal to last year's total, according to figures released by the Texas Field Office.

The Sept. 1 market hog inventory was down one percent from a year ago to 880,000 head, 90 percent of the total hog and pig inventory.

The inventory of market hogs weighing less than 60 pounds, at 320,000 head, was up 10 percent from the previous year.

The inventory of hogs weighing 60 to 119 pounds, at 195,000 head, was down seven percent from the September 2005 inventory.

Market hogs weighing 120 to 179 pounds totaled 180,000 head, an eight percent decrease from last year; hogs weighing 180 pounds or more, at 185,000 head, were down five percent.

The June-August 2006 Texas pig crop totaled 483,000 head, an increase of 18 percent from last year.

Pigs per litter averaged 9.65, up six percent from the previous year.

State Director, David Abbe, reported that 50,000 sows farrowed in Texas during June through August 2006, up 11 percent from last year.

The U.S. inventory of all hogs and pigs on Sept. 1, is estimated at 62.7 million head, up one percent from Sept. 1, 2005 and up two percent from the June 1, 2006, inventory.

The breeding hog inventory, at 6.08 million head, was up two percent from last year.

Market hog inventory, at 56.6 million head, was up one percent from last year.

The U.S. pig crop for June-August 2006, at 26.7 million head, was up one percent from 2005.

U.S. producers intend to have 2.92 million sows farrow during the September-November 2006 period, up one percent from the actual farrowings during the same period in 2005.

Intended farrowings for December 2006-February 2007, at 2.90 million sows, are up two percent from the same period last year.