



Harrison County Extension Office

102 West Houston * Marshall, Texas * 75670 * (903) 935-8413
<http://harrison.agrilife.org/>

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TO: News Article: Marshall News Messenger

BY: Randy Reeves, County Extension Agent - Agriculture

East Texas School For Novice Ranchers Accepting Students

(Information from Robert Burns, Extension Communications Specialist)

Though usually billed as being for novices, this year's three-day Pasture and Livestock Management Workshop will have information that all ranchers, both beginners and experienced, can use to cut costs and raise profits, according to the faculty at the Texas AgriLife Research and Extension Center at Overton.

Set March 27-29 at the center, the workshop is now accepting students. As in previous years, registration is limited to 60 to allow plenty of one-on-one time between the instructors and students.

"The drought, its effects upon current and summer pasture conditions, hay supplies — and even the cost of corn is a game changer," said Dr. Monte Rouquette, Texas AgriLife Research forage scientist, and one of the program instructors. Of course, Rouquette said, the foundation of any cattle business anywhere is built upon good grazing and forage management, and that's largely what the school is about.

Most of the instructors hold doctorates in their fields and are either with the Texas AgriLife Extension Service or AgriLife Research. They have expertise in forage breeding and production, soil fertility, wildlife management, beef cattle nutrition and marketing. Having knowledge in these areas can mean the difference between profiting from the cattle business or having it become a huge money pit, he said.

Registration for the three-day school is \$350, which includes meals, including lunches, barbecue, a steak dinner, continental style breakfasts, break refreshments and educational materials.

"We've heard again and again from students that what they've learned in the first morning paid for the cost of the course many times over," said Dr. Greg Clary, AgriLife Extension economist and one of the course instructors.

Though the grazing school was originally designed for the local novices in 2001, attendance soon expanded beyond the region, attracting students nationwide and out-of-country with varying levels of expertise. Some graduates have found the intensive course so valuable, they have returned a second year to take it again, Rouquette said. Some have returned a third year.

“Usually, about 25 percent of the enrollment consists of people who are absolutely new to ranching and pasture management, 50 percent who have some knowledge, and 25 percent who have extensive experience,” Rouquette said. The school is split between the classroom and instruction in the field. In-field demonstrations cover all aspects of running a beef operation, from establishing and maintaining high-quality forages, calibrating sprayers, taking soil samples, castrating and vaccinating cattle, and de-horning calves, said Dr. Vanessa Corriher, AgriLife Extension forage specialist and workshop instructor, Overton.

Also included will be training on writing a business plan for a ranch, keeping proper records, choosing the appropriate forage species for different soils, understanding soil fertility, establishing forage systems that minimize winter feeding costs, setting correct stocking rates, choosing the right cattle breeds, promoting good animal health and marketing cattle.

Dr. Jason Cleere, Texas AgriLife Extension Service beef specialist, lectures at a previous Pasture and Livestock Management Workshop. Instruction is mixed between the classroom and the field. (Texas AgriLife Extension Service photo by Robert Burns)

Also, dealing with wild pigs, aka feral hogs, has become crucial to ranchers throughout Texas. There will be extensive instruction on trapping and other types of control by Dr. Billy Higginbotham, AgriLife Extension wildlife specialist, Overton, a nationally recognized expert in the field, Rouquette said.

A full program agenda can be found at <http://overton.tamu.edu/beef-cattle/grazing-school-2012/> .

A registration form can be printed out from the same webpage and mailed with a check to the center. Participants may also reserve an opening by phone or email by contacting Jennifer Lloyd, 903-834-6191 or jllloyd@ag.tamu.edu. Lloyd will have information on class openings, local accommodations and driving directions to the center, Rouquette said.

Driving directions may also be found at <http://overton.tamu.edu/info-maps-history/> .

For further information on Extension programs, call us at (903) 935-8413, or visit us on the web at <http://harrison.agrilife.org/>

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