

Making a Difference in *Fort Bend* County...

1st Quarter Newsletter

January-March 2021

Special Topics for Winter 2021

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- COVID-19 Biology
- New Project Recognition Opportunity—FBC 4-H
- Livestock & Forage Production in FBC is Vital
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- Fort Bend County Ag Values for 2020
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Jan.-Mar. 2021

TOTAL CONTACTS

(virtual contacts skew totals)

262 Educational Sessions
124,469 Contacts
2,874 Social Media Posts
61,602 Soc. Media Followers
45 Newsletter Editions
15,681 Newsletter Contacts
422 Volunteers Assisted
822 Volunteer Hours
97 Edu. Resources Used

Clientele Reached:

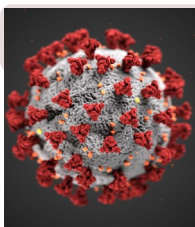
24.4% Youth
37.6% Adults
38.0% Undetermined

Director's Message: Texas Speaks! - A chance to speak up.

Texas Speaks is a survey that is being conducted by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service giving communities across the state an open forum opportunity to express the strengths and needs of their communities. The survey, is being conducted online and takes less than 10 minutes to complete.

"This is an opportunity to empower and listen to the people of Texas," said Scott Cummings, AgriLife Extension program leader for Organizational Development. The survey aims to engage as many citizens as possible while gaining accurate information to help support Texas communities at both state and local levels. "Extension is a grassroots organization, and in Texas, we have held that grassroots practice since inception," Cummings said. "We serve and have a presence in every county in the state of Texas. To help identify both the issues and successes in each county, it is important to listen to the people in those counties." The anonymous survey will be looking to understand and solve issues facing Texas communities, identifying relevant issues fundamental to the program development of AgriLife Extension, and it will include an open feedback section for areas not listed within the survey.

Data from the Texas Speaks survey will be compiled at local levels and given to stakeholders. Statewide data will be made available to state agencies and decision-makers. To participate go to: <https://texasspeaks.tamu.edu>.

COVID-19 Prevention (from www.cdc.gov)

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by SARS-CoV-2, a new coronavirus discovered in 2019. The virus is thought to spread mainly from person to person through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. Some people who are infected may not have symptoms. For people who have symptoms, illness can range from mild to severe. Adults 65 years and older and people of any age with underlying medical conditions are at higher risk for severe illness.

The Facts:

- The COVID-19 virus can spread through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks.
- Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after someone is exposed and can include fever, chills, & cough.
- Some of those infected lack symptoms, which is why everyone should take preventive actions.
- Anyone can have severe illness from COVID-19, especially older adults and people of any age with underlying conditions.
- If you test positive or negative for COVID, you still should take steps to protect yourself and others.

Prevention Tips:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid close contact with people outside your home. Stay at least 6 feet from others.
- Wear a mask in public, even if you don't feel sick to protect others in case you are infected.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or the inside of your elbow. Throw used tissues in the trash and then wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.
- Stay home if you have symptoms such as fever, cough, shortness of breath.
- Seek emergency medical care if you develop severe symptoms, such as trouble breathing, chest pain, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, or pale, gray, or blue-colored skin, lips, or nail beds, depending on skin tone.

Fort Bend County Ag Values for 2020 (year-end)

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension's "Estimated Value of Agricultural Production & Related Items", otherwise known as the Agricultural Increment Report is an annual summary of the incremental revenue that is generated by each Texas county for that production year. The County Extension Ag Agent (CEA) for each county solicits production information from agricultural producers for all their crop and/or livestock production and yields then computes dollar-wise production estimates using local market year average prices.

Fort Bend County's Actual Estimates for the close of 2020 is as follows:

- Rice: 2,572 acres harvested, producing 282,920 cwt, valued at \$4,028,781
- Yellow Corn: 21,727 acres harvested, producing 3,345,958 bushels, valued at \$10,640,146
- Hay: 11,600 acres harvested, 46,400 tons, valued at \$5,104,000
- Sorghum (Milo): 14,000 acres harvested, 1,450,400 bushels, valued at \$5,656,650
- Cotton (lint): 34,794 acres harvested, 31,175,424 lbs, valued at \$17,769,992
- Cottonseed: 22,547 tons, valued at \$5,974,955
- Soybeans: 1,222 acres harvested, 36,049 bushels, valued at \$309,661
- Nursery Stock: Bedding Plants, valued at \$15,450,000; Cut Flowers, \$51,5000
Flowering Potted Plants, valued at 30,900,000; Foliage Potted Plant, \$15,450,000
Woody Ornamentals (combined), valued at \$25,750,000; Turf/Sod, valued at \$1,236,000
- Cattle: Slaughter Cattle—21,000 head, valued at \$16,800,000; Goats—325 head, valued at \$52,000
Hogs—200 head, \$50,000; Hogs (feeder)- 100 heads, valued at \$15,000
- Other: Aquaculture—60,000 lbs, valued at \$90,000; Horses—1,250 head, valued at \$650,000
- Hunting Leases (deer, dove, hogs): 6000 acres, valued at \$125,000



Texercise! An ideal program for seniors.

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service collaborated with the Mamie George Senior Community Center and the Bud O'Shieles Senior Citizens Center in Fort Bend to conduct the *Texercise* program. *Texercise* included 8 weeks of both fitness and educational programs. Throughout this period of time, regular physical activity helped to reduce the risk of chronic diseases. The program is designed to help participants create a habit of regular exercise and healthier food choices.

Texercise promoted healthy muscles, bones and joints, improves flexibility, improves balance and coordination, increases stamina, and reduces the cost of medical care. The goals were to provide adults with relevant nutrition education and access to available food resources, increase consumption of vegetables and fruits, and engage in regular physical fitness activities. This program helped enhance fitness by making it fun and competitive at the same time. Additionally, participants become aware of diet related diseases.



RESULTS- This year's results were skewed do to the effects of Covid-19. The Covid-19 pandemic happened at the beginning of the program and all programming was cancelled as a result. All senior centers were closed down due to the seniors being at an increased risk. As a result of this event 30 participants enrolled for an online version of *Texercise*, where exercises were demonstrated and nutrition class were presented virtually. The evaluation summary is as follows: self-assessed sample Pre-test taken (50%) were overweight, out of the post-tests taken, (30%) said that they did some form of physical activity daily. The post-tests revealed that (40%) improved flexibility, (50%) were able to identify food groups. (50%) reported that they would continue exercising after the program. (50%) reported that they would make an effort to eat healthy and exercise daily. The estimated cost analysis and public value for the *Texercise* program is \$441.66 per person.

The Value of the Master Gardener Program in FBC

The Master Gardener program educates participants on sound horticultural practices, with the intent of creating good environmental stewards. This program requires participants attend fifty hours of classroom instruction. Classroom instruction introduces the participants to the basics of horticulture including trees, perennials, landscape design, propagation, turf, entomology and pathology, and the Earth-Kind® approach. This year, due to COVID-19 restrictions, we participated in an online pilot program which, despite the lack to time to prepare for, was quite successful. A total of 31 individuals enrolled in the Fall 2020 virtual Master Gardener class, consisting of 15 sessions totaling 56 hours of education and in return are expected to give fifty hours of volunteer service to Texas A&M AgriLife Extension to become a certified Texas Master Gardener. Beyond the annual training of new master volunteers, we build better value into keeping Master Gardeners as active volunteers within the program. With an ongoing attrition rate of 88%, we continue to hold a complete active membership of 197 Fort Bend Master Gardeners. Each year, we typically offer our members 12 hours of continued education (recertification training) to help expand their knowledge and confidence. Due to COVID-19 limitations we were only able to offer 5 hours for 2020. We continued a Lunch & Learn program series of recertification training for our members, but COVID-19 impacts only allowed us to offer 3 hours in 2020. Topics for these programs range from taxonomy to plant research and data collection. Though we decreased our county-based programming, we were able to offer continuing education for our members totaling an estimated 550 hours from partner programs including Gardening on the Gulf Coast, Water University, Harris County Home Grown, Native Plant Society, Urban Harvest, Bexar County Backyard Basics, Texas Master Naturalist, among others.



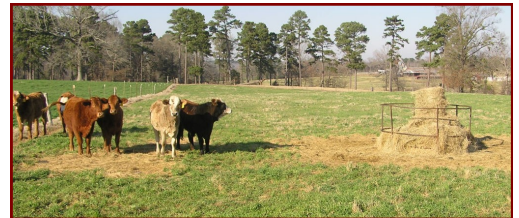
New Project Recognition Opportunity - 4H/YD

The Fort Bend County 4-H program is introducing a new project recognition opportunity with Project Pins starting January 1, 2021 with a deadline of June 7, 2021. Project Pins were created to acknowledge youth who have completed a 4-H project during the 4-H year to show growth in their project area, leadership, and personal development. A 4-H Project has four components: 1) Learning Experiences of 6 or more sequential learning experiences of 20-60 minutes in length totaling 2 hours or more, 2) Community Service, 3) Leadership, 4) Exhibition of Project Work. To receive pins, applicants will be required to submit six project experiences thru the online application located on the Fort Bend County 4-H website under the Awards section which will be reviewed after submission. Applicants may enter for as many pins as they would like depending on how many projects you've accomplished in the 2020-2021 4-H year, but applicants will need to submit a new entry for every project completed. Should you have any submission issues or questions, please do not hesitate to contact the office at (281) 342-3034 or by email at fortbend4h@ag.tamu.edu. The application can be found at the following link: <https://agrilife.org/ftbend4h/beyond-the-project/awards/>.

Livestock & Forage Production in FBC Vital!...even during COVID-19

To meet the needs of FBC Beef & Forage Producers, Phillip Thielemann, our CEA-ANR promoted several Coronavirus Food Assistance Programs for producers. These webinar presentations provided an overview of the CFAP and offered clarification on eligibility, pay limits, and payment calculation examples for the ranchers affected by COVID-19. They learned what was needed to sign up to receive assistance and when to expect receipt of funds. They also received information regarding farm loans available through FSA and conservation programs through NRCS. As the COVID Pandemic persisted. Some of the outcomes included.

- Over 225 calls, emails & in-house visits address livestock, forage production & landowner inquiries
- 15 site visits were performed by Mr. Thielemann since employment in March, 2020.
- 258 people reached as a result of programs such as IPM, range/pasture mgt., livestock mgt., & landowner liability issues
- Over 70 members of our ANR clientele participated in our Livestock/Forage and Landowner Programs including:
 - *Winterizing the Cattle Herd
 - *Southeast Weed and Brush Control in Forages
 - *Landowner Liability Protection
 - *Land Tax Appraisal Part 1 – Agricultural
 - *Land Tax Appraisal Part 2 - Wildlife



Howdy! A word from Phillip Thielemann, Co. Ext. Agent—Agriculture

Whether you are an agricultural producer, landowner or just have an interest in Fort Bend Agriculture, here is hoping your 2021 is off to a great start. We can all agree that 2020 saw some unprecedented times. From shopping to travel, to just visiting with friends and family, the pandemic has done a lot to change the way all of us conduct our daily lives. The Fort Bend County AgriLife Agriculture and Natural Resources Department has certainly encountered its fair share of unprecedented times as well. For many of you, the only way you have heard from us may have been through social media, phone, and periodic emails. Actually, that has been the only avenues we have been allowed to use. At this point we are still, "may I say" in a hold position as far as face-to-face meetings are concerned. Being safe is priority, so we will continue to follow any county mandates until such time allows for more face-to-face interaction.



Periodically, we receive information that may be beneficial to you. The information may be important dates, articles written by our Extension specialist or just announcements of upcoming educational programs & events. We will use the format that you see in this publication, but still be on the lookout for occasional emails regarding specific pertinent announcements as well.

Fort Bend County still commands a large presence in terms of agricultural production such as Cotton, Sorghum, Corn, Rice, Soybeans and Livestock. As well, Fort Bend County population is growing at a very rapid rate, so we will also provide helpful information for landowners "new" and "not so new" in this newsletter. Here's hoping this information will be beneficial and valuable to you.

The FBC Equine 4-H Program is Back Up & Running

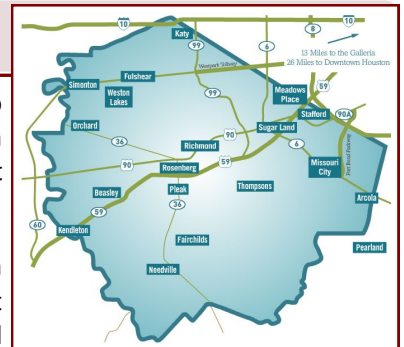
After a hiatus for several years the 4-H Equine program is back. Damion Turner, County Extension Agent for 4-H/Youth Development had planned, reorganized and implemented a new horse program that has proved to be quite successful thus far. The plan includes:

- Turner's Tuesday Tips—pre-taped video-related segments ideally suited for virtual audiences.
- Monthly educational videos beginning in May, 2020 in which various topics related to equine/livestock project education. The use of various social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube). Over 1500 individuals were reached and impacted through online platforms.
- Equine Project Member Highlights
 - ⇒ 25 FBC 4-H horse project members participated in the event. Members were asked to submit photos of active involvement with their horse project. The photos and write-ups were posted online weekly through our social media and online platforms. Over 1,000 individuals were reached through online platforms.
 - ⇒ Equine Project competition trainings and clinics In person training were held in the months of August-February on the Second Tuesday of Every Month in which approximately 10-20 participated monthly. In conjunction with monthly competition trainings. Horse project clinics and education events were given through the months of August to March on the first Sunday of every month at the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds. Approximately 10-20 were in attendance, with the efforts lead by club leaders and extension staff.
 - ⇒ 2020 Fort Bend County Horse Show (First)
 - ⇒ Coordinated and organized the first Fort Bend County Horse Show. This was a multi-county event with Fort Bend and Brazoria Counties. Event was held in Fort Bend County at the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds. There were 10 FBC 4-H horse project members that participated in multiple: Speed, English and Reining events. Buckles and awards were donated by Bob Berg Buckles in the monetary amount of \$2500. Efforts lead by club leaders and extension staff.

Fort Bend County Continues Growth!

Once a small community with a couple hundred thousand residents, Fort Bend has grown to nearly 900,000 people at the end of 2020, and projections are growth will continue. Growth projections estimate the county will exceed 1 million residents by 2027, and by 2050, the Fort Bend County is expected to have 1.8 million residents.

Growth is not new to Fort Bend. From 2010 to 2020, the population in Fort Bend grew from 590,253 to an estimated 857,324. Comparing the past 29 year growth with the expected next 29 year growth demonstrates that, although the growth won't be as massive as the initial growth phase, the numbers are still significantly impactful. From 1992 to 2021, Fort Bend grew by 239 percent, and from 2021 to 2050, that increase is expected to be about 144 percent.



To view upcoming programs visit us online at fortbend.agrilife.org;

For more info: Call 281-342-3034 or Email us at fort-bend-tx@tamu.edu.

- * Grow Your Own Warm Season Vegetables, April 8, 9-10:30 am, online/virtual
- * Parenting Connections Workshop, April 13, 10-11:00 am, online/virtual
- * Food Handlers Course, April 21, 9-11:00 am, online/virtual
- * Senior Health & Safety Day, April 25, 10-12:00 noon, online/virtual
- * Parenting Connections Workshop, April 27, 10-11:00 am, online/virtual
- * Child Passenger Safety Program, May 8, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm, online/virtual
- * TX Landowners Series –Leasing/Eminent Domain, May 9, 10-12:00 noon, virtual
- * Grand-Parenting in the 21st Century, May 9, 11-12:00 noon, online/virtual
- * Disaster Preparedness, May 11, 9-10:30 am, online virtual
- * Grow Your Own Warm Season Vegetables, May 12, 9-10:30 am, online/virtual
- * Food Manager Certification, June 15 & 16, 8:00-5:00, online/virtual
- * Develop Your Child's Self-Esteem, June 17, 10-12:00 noon, online/virtual
- * Youth Cooking Demos., June 22 & 24 @ 10:30-11:30 & 1:30-2:30, online/virtual
- * Food Safety- Before, During & After Pregnancy, June 23, 10-12:00 noon, online

List of Upcoming Events



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