

Coastal Bend CATTLE GUARD

CURRENT LOCAL LIVESTOCK REPORTS AND NEWS

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Livestock merit second look for latent storm effects More issues may materialize weeks after freezing temperatures

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The ice has disappeared and pastures are drying, but cattle producers should not consider Winter Storm Uri something of the past. Livestock should continue to be watched as the weather warms, according to Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service experts.

Frost starts to gather on the backs of a cattle herd near Corpus Christi. (Texas A&M AgriLife photo by Joe Paschal)

“Like most livestock operators, I worried about my cattle and young calves in this weather,” said Joe Paschal, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension livestock specialist, Corpus Christi. “I did not think that it was going to get as bad as it did. I wrapped pipes, turned on heat lamps and let troughs run over. I put out extra bales of hay and moved things around in the barn to allow the cattle to get in out of any rain and wind. I was not even thinking of snow or ice.”

Paschal said many livestock owners took similar actions and made it through the frigid temperatures and icy conditions. But he warned livestock producers the coast is not clear just because the ice is gone.

Latent effects to watch for in livestock

Ted McCollum, Ph.D., retired AgriLife Extension beef cattle specialist, Amarillo, came up with a list of “latent effects” after a blizzard hit the Texas Panhandle in late 2015. Similarly, Paschal said, the 2021 weeklong freezing temperatures and wind chill could have latent effects or an especially long-lasting impact on livestock.

Extra hay was put out for cattle that were seeing snow for the first time in their lives. (Texas A&M AgriLife photo by Maggie Berger)

Tails, ears and even cows’ teats and udders and bulls’ prepuces, sheaths and scrotums



Extra hay was put out for cattle that were seeing snow for the first time in their lives. (Texas A&M AgriLife photo by Maggie Berger)

could be frostbitten, causing some partial loss or loss of function in the next few weeks. Look for raw or bleeding skin or scabbed over areas. Veterinary treatment should be considered, especially for frostbitten prepuces, to prevent infection. While these are not long-term threats to the animal’s well-being, they could affect reproductive function.

Cows with frostbitten udders or frozen teats may be sensitive, reducing milk production and consumption by their calves for a few days. Unless infection ensues or the udder or teats are severely damaged, there may be only some mastitis and partial loss of udder function. Cows calving this spring could also be affected, but it would not be noticeable until they calve and begin lactating, so they should be evaluated then as well.

Lost reproduction

Short-bred heifers and cows may abort their fetuses as a result of the stress, and long-bred cows can abort calves that were nearly term. This is especially true, but not limited to, high percentage Bos indicus or Brahman-type,

cattle, said Corrie Bowen, AgriLife Extension agriculture and natural resources agent, Wharton County.

This hard freeze hit late in the winter during the beginning of calving season in many areas of Texas. In the past, freezes like this occurred in December when cows were still heavy bred. This is what made this hard freeze different and so deadly to calves, Bowen said.

Early abortions have been reported as a result of the weather by Ky Pohler, Ph.D., reproductive physiologist for the Texas A&M Department of Animal Science. Pohler detected early embryonic losses using ultrasound in a research herd in College Station.

Pohler said Texas cattle that do not typically experience this type of weather and are adapted to tropical and subtropical climates. Additionally, these cattle went from grazing winter forage and early spring forage to either eating hay free choice or receiving some other type of supplement. This major shift in nutritional sources and the additional stress from the weather

could have had a negative impact.

He said he would anticipate seeing slightly higher pregnancy loss in cattle that were between seven and 45 days of gestation during this weather event. It is not something that will be a complete reproductive failure, but something to keep an eye on.

Bull soundness

Prepuces and scrotums of bulls exposed to freezing temperatures and wind chills might be frostbitten, especially bulls with slightly larger sheaths and prepuces. Bulls being used now or considered for use should

have a breeding soundness examination, BSE, performed on them. Semen production is a long-term process and fertility could be impacted for one or two months.

Bulls for breeding in fall calving herds should have a BSE performed as soon as possible to check for injury and semen quality to ensure a high percent calf crop. Cows in fall calving herds that are not bred could have delayed estrus and pregnancy, resulting in late calves. Estrus activity should return to normal in a few weeks if there are no other injuries.

Stress and disease

Cattle and other live-

stock that survived the extremely frigid temperatures for days are physically very stressed, even those that were adequately supplemented and sheltered. Producers should monitor their herd’s body condition scores and possibly increase supplemental feeding for the remainder of breeding season or calving for spring calving cows.

Tom Hairgrove, DVM, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension cattle veterinary specialist, Bryan-College Station, said young cows and calves fed and kept up near wet hay or bedding could contract coccidiosis. Look for bloody or black scours in stressed calves. He said that internal parasites could also be an issue in stressed cattle.

Hairgrove also emphasized that stressed cattle are more susceptible to increases in internal parasite infestations, such as stomach worms. Cattle looking thin, anemic and perhaps scouring could be suffering from increased parasitism.

“Observe your livestock closely for other signs that, even though they survived the weather, might indicate something is just not quite right. Chances are that many effects from the week-long hard freeze will be seen for several weeks so be looking for signs of illness or poor doing cattle or calves,” Paschal said. “After all, that’s just good animal husbandry.”

USDA NRCS makes funding available through Texas Partners for Conservation program

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Texas today announced opportunities for partners to receive funding through its Texas Partners for Conservation Program. Applications must be submitted through grants.gov by June 1.

“Conservation of our natural resources can be achieved through effective collaboration with our network of partners to leverage NRCS resources and develop state and community level conservation leadership,” said Kristy Oates, NRCS state conservationist for Texas. “This partner-led approach will accelerate the development of conservation plans to address environmental quality issues on agricultural lands within Texas and improve outreach to historically underserved producers.”

Priority will be placed on Conservation Technical Assistance projects that:

- Provide high quality technical services that help customers achieve their conservation goals.
- Increase adoption of conservation in Texas.
- Increase easement outreach, training, and education.

Priority will be placed on Outreach projects that:

- Provide high quality technical services that help historically underserved producers achieve their conservation goals through NRCS conservation practice standards.
- Increase participation of historically underserved producers in conservation programs (technical and/or financial assistance) by at least 1 percent of the total number of participants reached.
- Provide training opportunities through one-on-one consultations, workshops, conferences, or any other event that focuses on historically under-



served producers.

- Provide a method to follow-up with historically underserved producers to measure rate of success of their participation in both technical and financial assistance by NRCS staff.

Provide training opportunities, outreach, and education on easements through one-on-one consultations, workshops, and conferences.

There is no cost sharing or matching requirement for this opportunity, but this factor is considered in the review process. The funding floor is \$25,000, and the ceiling is \$75,000. These numbers refer to the total agreement amount, not any specific budget period.

All funding applications for USDA-NRCS-TX-21-NOFO0001103 must be submitted via grants.gov by June 1, 2021. For assistance with the registration process, contact grants.gov applicant support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov.

Successful applicants are required to have an administrative and technical contact participate in the Texas NRCS training for Administration of Federal Agreements. This training is usually held within six months of the award start date.

For more information about NRCS and its conservation programs, visit www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov.