



# What's Up, Doc?

**Grayson County Agriculture and Natural Resources Newsletter**

**Vol 3: Issue 9 (Sept 2024) by D. Chad Cummings**

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### **Wildlife Issues**

This month, we look at several wildlife related articles to bring in the 2024 hunting season. Statewide we are looking pretty good with most locations experiencing timely rainfalls this summer and fall.

(Cummings, 2022 – Brownwood, TX)

# USDA Crop Report for late Aug (Grayson County)

**August 26, 2024**

Hot, dry weather continues to persist. Soil moisture is depleting rapidly. Most crop fields have been harvested or baled for hay. Fields are worked and prepped for fallow or winter crops.

Hay pastures are growing slowly, but multiple producers have commented that they are hesitant to cut yet due to the limited amount of regrowth. Fertilization operations have halted in hay meadows without ample rainfall chances. Hay quantities are still considered to be lower than expected given the ample spring/early summer moisture.

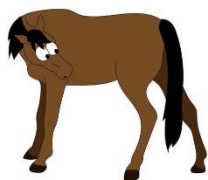
Livestock condition continues to be good to excellent.

No major disease or insect pressure to date. Fall armyworms are beginning to lessen due to heat and lack of moisture. With cooler temps, they may resurge

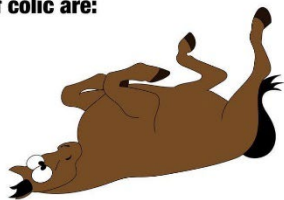
## RECOGNIZING COLIC

Horses show signs of abdominal pain in a wide variety of ways.

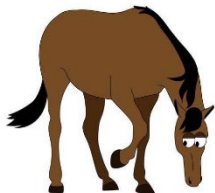
**Among the more common signs of colic are:**



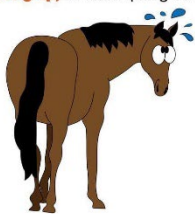
Turning the head toward the flank, **kicking or biting at the belly.**



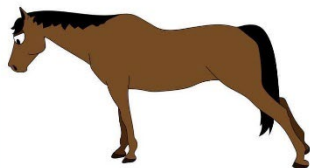
**Repeatedly lying down, rolling, and getting up,** or attempting to do so.



**Pawing.**



**Inappropriate sweating, rapid breathing** and/or flared nostrils, **elevated pulse rate.**



**Stretching out as if to urinate,** without doing so.

**Leaving food behind** or completely disinterested in food; putting the head down to water without drinking.

**If you suspect your horse is suffering from colic, alert your veterinarian immediately.**

They may not need to come out and examine the horse if the colic signs are mild, but leave that decision to the veterinarian.

As the weather changes, and forage quality and quantity change this fall, be on the look out for changes in your horses' behavior. Colic and other GI issues can sneak up on them.



## New Landowner 101: What to Do in Sept?

1. Soil test in food plots and in pastures, lawns, and gardens.
  - a. <http://soiltesting.tamu.edu>
  - b. Get forms from the website above or at our office (Courthouse, A-G-1)
2. Plant fall wildlife food plots or cool-season livestock forage (Slide below) in late August through September. Seedbed preparation (herbicide to control existing plants or light tillage) is a key to successful stand establishment.
3. Avoid herbicide applications to drought stressed or heat stressed brush or weeds. Herbicides will not work as well and may cause grass injury in extreme conditions. Individual plant treatments to actively growing brush are one method to decrease potential grass injury.
4. Clear trees and shrubs from pond and tank dams (roots can cause leakage, and utilize much water, especially Eastern Red Cedar and Willow).
  - a. At our New Landowner Conference on Oct 18, in Gunter, TX we will discuss fall and winter brush control options for producers.
  - b. <https://grayson.agrilife.org/event/fall-new-landowner-conference/>

### Planting Options

	Seeding Rate (lb/ac)	Planting Depth	Months of Use
Ryegrass Only	25-30	0-0.5 in	Feb to May
Small Grain Only	90-100	1-1.5 in	Dec to April
Ryegrass & Small Grain	15-20 (ryegrass) 90-100 (small grain)	See above	Dec to May
Ryegrass & Legume	15-20 (ryegrass) 2/3 of pure stand seeding rate (legume)	0-0.5 in (ryegrass) 0-1.0 in depending on legume	Feb to May

Table courtesy of Dr. Vanessa Corriher Olson, Overton, TX.

# Texas hunting season outlook positive based on timely rains

## Texas Crop and Weather Report

August 27, 2024 - by [Sarah Fuller](#)

Timely rainfall benefited Texas wildlife and set the stage for a positive fall hunting season outlook, according to a [Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service](#) expert.

Although more than half of the state is experiencing some [form of drought](#), some eastern portions have seen [above-normal precipitation](#) since January.



“Many times, it’s not even how much rain an area receives, but when they receive it,” said Jacob Dykes, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension wildlife specialist and assistant professor in the [Texas A&M College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Department of Rangeland, Wildlife and Fisheries Management](#), Corpus Christi. “Late winter and spring rains greatly facilitate the growth of vegetation that provides both nutrition and habitat cover needed for a wide range of species.”

### White-tailed deer

With a statewide population of roughly 5 million, Texas is home to more white-tailed deer than any other U.S. state.

Thanks to mostly positive environmental conditions leading up to the summer fawning season, Dykes said much of the state should see an abundance of new, healthy additions to the population.

“Gestation and lactation are especially stressful times for does, but thankfully, we have groceries on the ground in the form of vegetation to fulfill those nutritional requirements,” he said.

Following birth, this vegetation also provides critical cover to protect fawns from predators.

Dykes said does and fawns aren’t the only ones who benefit from abundant browse.

“Many bucks will experience an increase in body mass as well as antler size,” Dykes said. “The late summer months are when we see those final touches on antler growth, and bucks with access to abundant nutrition will do very well.”

## Quail

While annual quail populations naturally fluctuate, Texas has seen a steady decline in both bobwhite and scaled quail over the past three decades, Dykes said.

While caused by several factors, loss of quality habitat is a leading component.

Although current [bobwhite](#) and [scaled quail](#) populations are lower than biologists would like to see, [Texas Parks and Wildlife Department](#) surveys indicate both populations are stronger than they have been since 2018.

“Right now, quail are in full reproductive mode,” Dykes said. “Here in South Texas, we have chicks on the ground, and males still call to attract mates. Populations seem to be in pretty good shape right now.”

However, Dykes emphasized these potentially short-term rebounds can vary by county and even by property depending on land-use practices.

“There are a lot of different reasons why we are having a tough situation with sustaining abundant quail and turkey populations, especially in the southeast portion of the state,” Dykes said. “Much of it comes down to land-use practices and management activities —many areas just don’t have adequate brooding cover to support the birds once they are hatched.”

## Turkey

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department [reported](#) increased turkey nesting success and recruitment in 2023 thanks to abundant acorn production and warm, late winter conditions across much of the Rio Grande wild turkey range.

Dykes said the young turkeys, known as jakes, from the 2023 hatch should provide ample spring season hunting opportunities, although hunters may want to wait until the birds are a bit older.

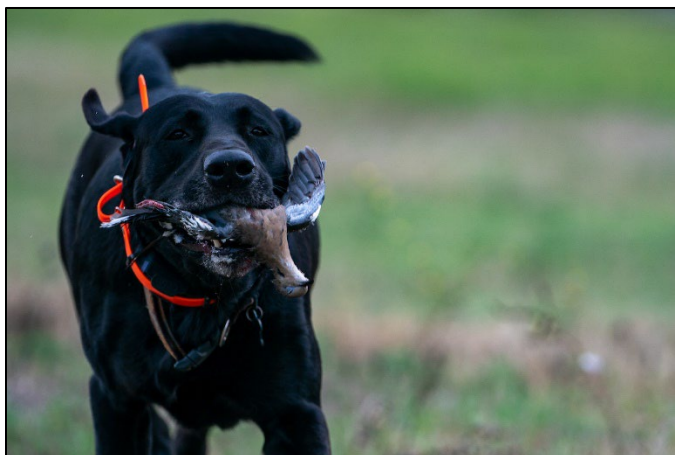
“Two years and older are what most turkey hunters are after because they have the beard length and spurs that hunters appreciate,” Dykes said.

## Dove

The 2023 dove season was a good one, and based on the latest [Texas Parks and Wildlife dove surveys](#), the 2024 season shows great promise.

Texas Parks and Wildlife biologists estimate statewide populations of roughly 34 million mourning doves and a record-high 13 million white-wing doves.

Owen Fitzsimmons, Texas Parks and Wildlife webless migratory game bird program leader, said abundant precipitation across much of the state significantly contributed to these positive numbers.



“Conditions have been great overall, with the exception of some very dry areas in the Hill Country and Trans-Pecos, but some July rain may have helped there,” Fitzsimmons said. “I think we’re in for a good-to-excellent dove season in most areas.”

Fitzsimmons said areas that received summer rains should also see late-summer herbaceous growth that will serve as a food source for doves later in the season as well.

## Changes to rules and regulations

Before taking to the field, Dykes said it is imperative that hunters familiarize themselves with the latest hunting rules and regulations.

This spring, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission approved more than a dozen modifications and clarifications to the 2024 and 2025 [Statewide Hunting and Migratory Game Bird Regulations](#).

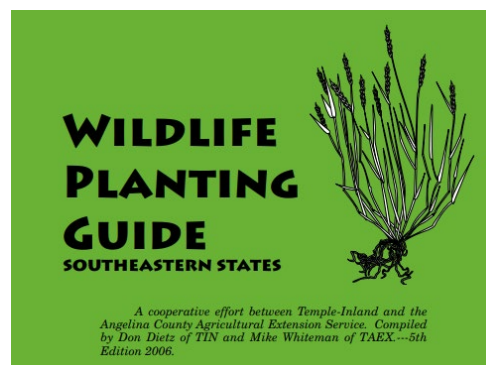
Among these changes are expanded days for white-tailed doe harvest in 43 counties in the Post Oak Savannah and Pineywoods ecoregions and reduced turkey bag limits or total turkey season closure within other counties.

“Wildlife are an important resource that contributes to the ecology, culture and economy of the state,” Dykes said. “It is critically important that we do our part to conserve and manage these diverse species with science-based data so we can continue to appreciate them for years to come.”

### Wildlife Plantings Fall / Winter

Plant Species	Seeding Rate/ Lbs. Per Acre	Broadcast / Row Cropped/Drilled	Inoculant Yes / No	Planting Dates	Planting Depth	Annual or Perennial	Targeted Wildlife	Wildlife Benefit	Comments / Suggestions	Soil Tolerance	Maturation
<b>Clovers:</b>											
Arrowleaf	8	B	Yes	October	1/4-1/2"	A	D,T,Q	forage, insects	excellent choice for turkey,deer	well drained	July
Berseem	20	B	Yes	October	1/4-1/2"	A	D,T,Q	forage, insects	tolerates acid soils, short lived	widely adapted	May
Crimson	20	B	Yes	October	1/4-1/2"	A	D,T,Q	forage, insects	excellent choice for quail	widely adapted	May
Red	15	B	Yes	October	1/4-1/2"	A & P	D,T,Q	forage, insects	good for quail and deer	widely adapted	July
Subterranean	15	B	Yes	October	1/4-1/2"	A	D,T	forage, insects	good reseeded, forms mats	well drained, no deep sand	May
White/LAS1	4	B	Yes	October	1/4-1/2"	A & P	D,T,Q	forage, insects	survives well on wet soils	sandy loam to clay	Perennial
<b>Small Grains:</b>											
Elbon Rye	100	B	No	October	1-1 1/2"	A	D,T,Q	forage, insects, cover	not recommended for quail except for cover, very cold tolerant	sandy to loam	April
Oats	100	B	No	October	1-1 1/2"	A	D,T,Q	forage, insects, cover	hard on soil, rotate annually, subject to freeze damage	well drained	April
Wheat	75	B	No	October	1-1 1/2"	A	D,T,Q	forage, insects, cover	cold tolerant	widely adapted	April
<b>Other:</b>											
Ryegrass	30	B	No	October	1/4-1/2"	A	D,T,Q	forage, insects, cover	lower in nutrition but reliable, well adapted to no-till, reseeds	widely adapted	May
Chicory	5	B/D	No	October	1/4-1/2"	P	D	Forage	Perennial, Plant in fall but provides spring/summer food plot	widely adapted	July
<b>Winter legumes:</b>											
Alfalfa	20/15	B/R	Yes	Sept/Oct.	1/2-1"	P	D,T	forage, insects	requires moderate to high pH.	well drained	April-May
Austrian Pea	35	B	Yes	October	1-1 1/2"	A	D,T,Q	forage, insects	heavily browsed by deer	sandy loam, wet	May
Hairy Vetch	20-30	B	Yes	October	1/2-1"	A	T,Q	forage, insects	good ground cover	sandy to loam	May
Singletary Pea	35	B	Yes	October	1-1 1/2"	A	D,T,Q	forage, insects	heavily browsed by deer	sandy loam, wet	May

Targeted Wildlife Abbreviations: D= Deer / DV= Dove / Q= Quail / T= Turkey / W= Waterfowl



# Planting the seeds of a successful hunt

AgriLife Extension wildlife specialists encourage preparation for cool-season food plots

*AUGUST 14, 2023*

As cicadas herald the dog days of summer and triple-digit temperatures blanket the state, cool, quiet mornings in a deer blind overlooking a food plot are a distant dream.



However, if you want to ensure mornings like this in the future, the time to begin preparing a food plot is now, said Jacob Dykes, Ph.D., [Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service](#) wildlife specialist, Corpus Christi.

## **Food plot benefits to wildlife**

Dykes, assistant professor in the [Texas A&M College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Department of Rangeland, Wildlife and Fisheries Management](#), said warm- and cool-season food plots provide benefits beyond attracting white-tailed deer during hunting season. They also support other mammal and bird species during times when forage isn't abundant and create opportunities for wildlife viewing.

While game feeders dispensing corn or pelleted feed are a popular option in Texas, Dykes said they don't offer the same benefits as food plots.

"Most feeds are imperfect in that they take a cookie-cutter approach to nutrition and are formulated for the average animal," Dykes said. "But wildlife are rarely average and have different nutritional needs based upon their stage of life."



“A food plot with different forages provides deer with the opportunity to choose what they need as they balance their nutrient requirements.”

Eating vegetation may also have other benefits such as antimicrobial and antiparasitic properties, Dykes said.

Further, because food plots disperse deer over an area as opposed to concentrating them in a single spot, there is a reduced risk of disease transmission between animals.

## **Ensuring successful food plots from the ground up**

While planting cool-season food plots in Texas typically takes place from September through October, preparation should begin sooner.

“My first recommendation is to always have your soil tested,” Dykes said. “It doesn’t matter how much you plan or how much fertilizer you use — if the soil pH isn’t where it needs to be, nutrients are not going to be available to the plants.”

Soil pH measures the level of soil acidity or alkalinity and ideally should measure in the range of 6-7, Dykes said.

The AgriLife Extension [Soil, Water and Forage Testing Laboratory](#) offers Texans a full suite of soil tests. In the case of food plots, the laboratory’s routine soil analysis provides landowners with the information and subsequent recommendations needed to achieve ideal soil conditions.

Additionally, Dykes said landowners should take environmental conditions into consideration when establishing food plots.

“For example, if you know an area of your property is prone to flooding, that’s not the best spot to plant your food plot,” Dykes said.

It also helps to think like a deer when appraising potential plot locations.

“Deer want cover they can use as an escape,” Dykes said. “If you already know that deer are using a particular part of your property, my recommendation would be to simply place your food plot in that area.”

## Plot size and composition

Dykes said the most common question he receives regarding food plots relates to the size needed to be effective.

"I've planted plots that were one-tenth of an acre, and I've planted plots that were 25 acres," he said. "It just depends on the density of deer on your property and the resources you have available."

Dykes said if the deer population is high, they can completely devour a plot in a matter of days — especially if you plant a desired crop like soybeans.

While pre-mixed options are available from retailers, Dykes prefers ordering seeds separately and preparing the mix himself.

"Typically, all mixes contain ryegrass, which I am not a big fan of," Dykes said. "It's always going to be beautiful and green, and that's why it's included."

Dykes said ryegrass, not to be confused with cereal rye, contains less crude protein and is less palatable and digestible than other cool season options.

Because of its hardy nature, ryegrass can also out-compete other species in the seed mix and become an issue if it establishes on your property.

Aside from ryegrass, Dykes said plenty of options remain for cool-season crops including brassicas, clovers, winter peas and more.

"I really like the standard mix of winter wheat, oats, crimson clover and arrow leaf clover," Dykes said.

Landowners can [access information](#) on seeding rates and planting depth for Dykes' recommended cool-season mix in a guide published by AgriLife Extension.

Thanks to the successional growth stages of this species mix, Dykes said the life of the food plot can be greatly extended and serve hunters through the spring turkey season.

That is, of course, if the plot receives sufficient moisture.

"Lack of rainfall is probably one of the biggest limiting factors for successful food plots in Texas," Dykes said. "I highly recommend food plots, but I always include the

disclaimer that if it doesn't rain or receive supplemental water, the plants won't grow."

## Breaking ground

After addressing any soil issues, Dykes advises a combination of herbicide and disking to remove existing vegetation and establish a good seed bed.

Fertilizer can also be applied at the time of seed dispersal.

This process typically takes place in the late summer to early fall when rain becomes more dependable. The timeframe also provides around two months for the food plots to germinate and attract white-tailed deer before the November general hunting season begins.

"I start watching the weather in mid-September," Dykes said. "If I see that the forecast includes rain the following week, I'll plant the seeds that weekend."

## Challenges and management

Deer aren't the only wildlife attracted to newly established food plots. The rooting and foraging habits of feral hogs can destroy them.



"If you have a feral hog problem, you need to address that before you plant what essentially amounts to a buffet," Dykes said.

In order to reduce the impact of white-tailed deer on a newly established food plot, Dykes said the most common method is a two-tiered polywire electric fence. The

inner tier of the fence perimeter typically consists of three to four strands of polywire with a strand of polytape forming the outer tier.

Dykes also recommends placing an exclusion cage within the plot.

The cage, which can be constructed using something as simple as chicken wire, prevents feeding in a single area. This untouched boundary sheds light on plant growth, as well as how heavily deer are browsing the plot.

"I've had cases where landowners think their food plots were doing poorly, but they were actually performing very well," Dykes said. "The deer were just coming through and mowing everything down."



In addition to annual food plots, Dykes said separate perennial plots comprised of durana or ladino clover are also beneficial.

"I love perennial plots because if you miss the opportunity to plant your annual food plot, the perennial plot will hopefully provide some forage to hunt over," Dykes said.

For landowners hoping to make an even longer-lasting impact, Dykes encourages the planting of trees beneficial to wildlife, such as oaks and common persimmon.

"It all comes down to creating beneficial habitat for the deer," Dykes said. "If you create good habitat on your land, they won't have a reason to leave."

# Plants, Insects, and Diseases Active Now

## Plants

Drought/heat induced stress is widespread in all plants currently. Warm season plants have matured to flowering in many species. Warm season weeds including goatweed, bitter sneezeweed, ragweeds, lambsquarters, marshelder, and sunflowers in flowering stage or beginning to dry down. Fall milkweed growth has matured to pod production in many pastures.

Second crop of hay is baled across much of the county on improved forages.

## Insects

June bugs, butterflies, moths, grasshoppers, and flies are very active in urban environments. Stable flies, horn flies, and Tabanid flies are active. Some noctuid moths and larva (armyworms, cutworms) are present and feeding, but no major outbreaks currently.

## Diseases

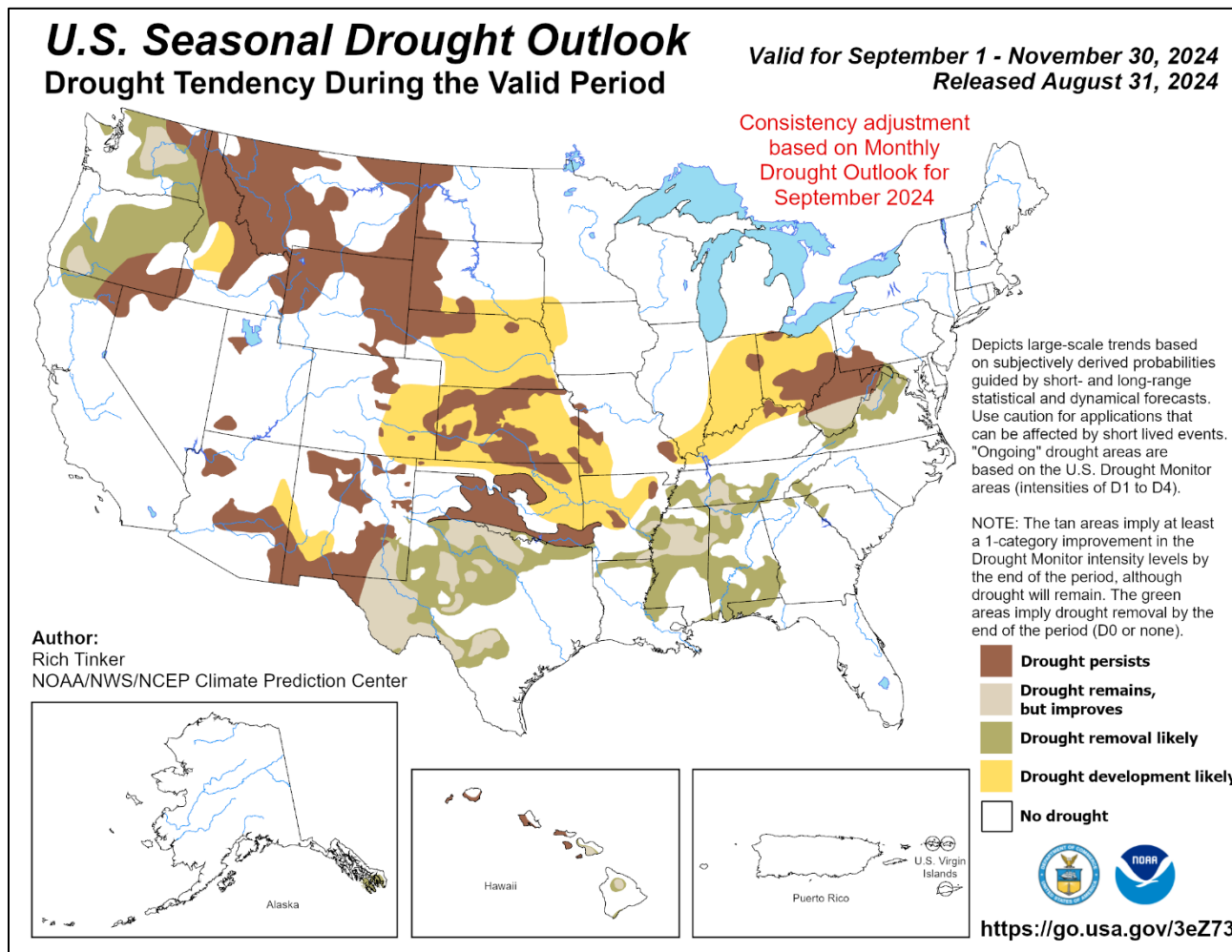
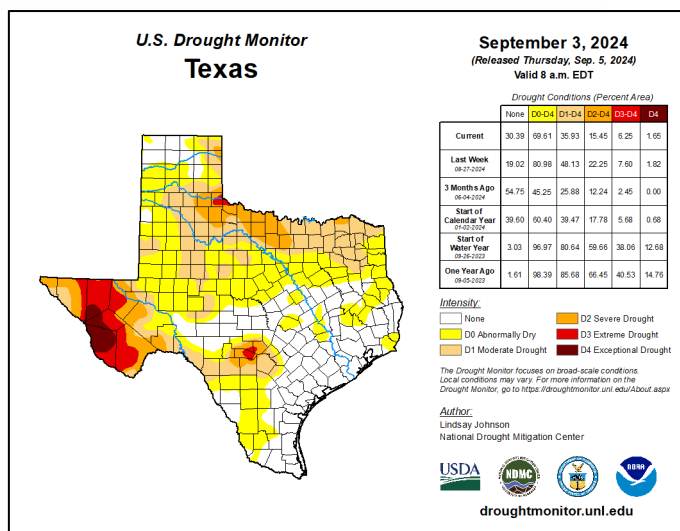
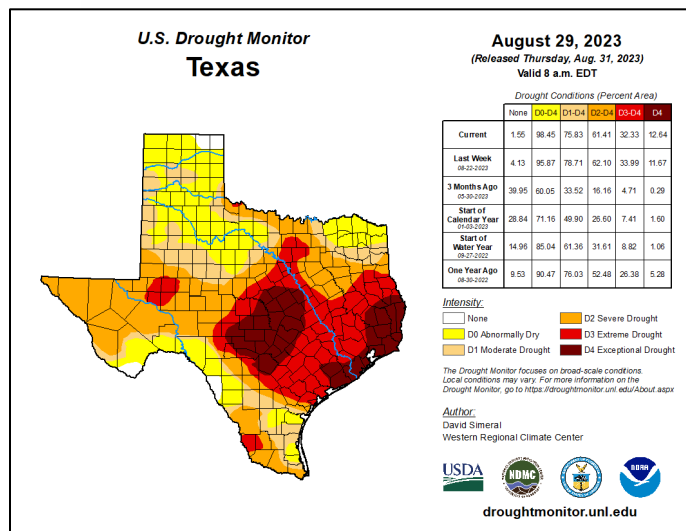
Tree disease or injury/death reports have been common in the office over the last few months. Many are a result of extreme weather conditions over the past 2 years coupled with an insect or disease pathogen stressor. Most healthy trees are very resilient to external stresses.

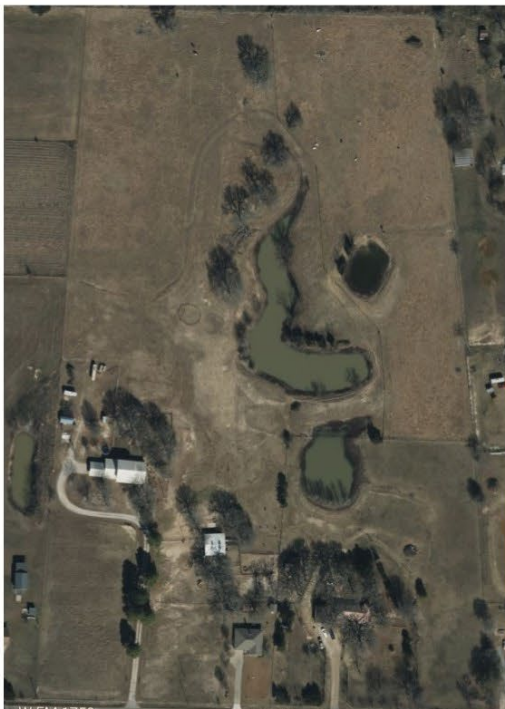
No major disease issues to report currently in crops, lawns, or pastures.

**D. Chad Cummings, PhD**

[chad.cummings@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:chad.cummings@ag.tamu.edu)

# Current US drought monitor & 3-month climate prediction





TEXAS A&M  
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**GRAYSON**  
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## FALL NEW LANDOWNER CONFERENCE

- SPECIAL VALUATIONS FOR AG, BEES, & WILDLIFE
- FALL/WINTER TREE HEALTH & MANAGEMENT
- POND VEGETATION ID & MANAGEMENT
- POND ASSESSMENT & PONDSIDE DEMONSTRATIONS

1 CEU IPM, 2 CEU GEN



**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2024**

10:00 AM TO 3:00 PM

BELLA TERRA VENUE

1384 KERFOOT DR,

GUNTER, TX

To register online, go to [grayson.agrilife.org](http://grayson.agrilife.org). Register by September 30, 2024.

For questions, email [chad.cummings@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:chad.cummings@ag.tamu.edu) or call (903) 813-4202.

**Fee of \$20 paid online, or at the door.**



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## **WEED CONTROL UNIVERSITY SERIES - SESSION 1**

**WHAT IS A WEEDY PLANT VS INVASIVE SPECIES, HERBICIDE  
MODES OF ACTION, AND WINTER BRUSH MANAGEMENT  
OPTIONS**

**3 CEUs**

**WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 13, 2024  
1:00 TO 4:00 PM**

**GRAYSON COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
ANNEX ASSEMBLY ROOM  
100 W. HOUSTON ST.  
SHERMAN, TX 75090**

**3 GEN CEUs**

**FEE: \$20 PER ATTENDEE**

**CHAD CUMMINGS  
GRAYSON COUNTY  
(903) 813-4202  
[CHAD.CUMMINGS@AG.TAMU.EDU](mailto:CHAD.CUMMINGS@AG.TAMU.EDU)**

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TEXAS A&M  
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# **WEED CONTROL UNIVERSITY SERIES - SESSION 2**

**PRE-EMERGENT HERBICIDES FOR PASTURES AND LAWNS,  
DRIFT MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

**2 CEUs**

**WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 11, 2024  
1:00 TO 4:00 PM**

**GRAYSON COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
ANNEX ASSEMBLY ROOM  
100 W. HOUSTON ST.  
SHERMAN, TX 75090**

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**FEE: \$20 PER ATTENDEE**

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# 2025 North Texas Pest Management Conference

**Tuesday, January 21, 2025**

**Municipal Ballroom, Sherman, TX**

**8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Registration opens at 8:00 a.m.**

## Event Highlights:

**>5 CEU's Structural (pending approval by TDA)**

**\*\* Including 1 PEST CEU, 1 TERMITE CEU**

**>5 CEU's Agricultural (pending approval by TDA)**

**\*For structural and agriculture TDA license holders**

**\*Catered lunch, light breakfast items**

**\*Expert Presentations over ag and structural pest issues**



Pre-registration is requested: Please mail the attached conference registration form and fee of **\$100** to:

**Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service**

**Attn: Pest Conference  
100 W. Houston St.  
Courthouse A-G-1  
Sherman, TX 75090**

For more information call Chad at 903-813-4202 or email [chad.cummings@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:chad.cummings@ag.tamu.edu)

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# Events Coming Up in NTX

**Oct 18**

- 2024 Fall New Landowner Conference (*Gunter*)

**Oct 22 and 29**

- Goat and Lamb Validation for TELS show and Winter/Spring Major Shows (youth; *Denison*)

**Nov 8-10**

- Learn to Bird 2024 (*Grayson County*)

**Nov 13**

- Weed Control University Series Session 1 – 3 CEUs (*Sherman*)

**Dec 11**

- Weed Control University Series Session 2 – 2 CEUs (*Sherman*)

**Dec 21**

- Fur, Feather, and Friends Small Livestock Show (youth; *Denison*)

**Jan 21, 2025**

- NTX Pest Management Conference (*Sherman*) - > 5 CEUs Ag and SPCS including PEST and TERMITE categories

Visit our website at [Welcome to Grayson County - Grayson \(grayson.agrilife.org\)](https://grayson.agrilife.org/) (<https://grayson.agrilife.org/>) to sign up for the events.