

Useful Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Resources Available to Ag Producers Online

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The internet has certainly evolved into a powerhouse of information. It's easy to use, and most of the time a search engine will produce what you are looking for. But sometimes, there's the exception to that rule. There's times when I am looking for information that apply to our area, our climate, our soil types, and our overall growing conditions – and a search engine still won't find it. It's answers to these kinds of questions that we want to come from a local source, with knowledge and work in your area of Texas.

There are several Extension resources that I want to share with residents and ag producers in the Wharton County area. The first one is an option, or an addition to our Wharton County Extension website, <http://wharton.agrilife.org>. It's called Ask-an-Expert. This is a "button" that when clicked will allow one to ask a question of Cooperative Extension/University staff and volunteers from across the United States. It's almost like calling or emailing me, the County Agent, here at the Extension Office. But it's way more than that. When one posts a question on Ask-an-Expert, the system knows what county the question originated in. So, I get an email notice from the Ask-an-Expert system of the question. I can answer the question directly by replying to the originator of the question, or I can pass the question on to an Extension Specialist within the Texas AgriLife Extension System, draw from previous related questions, etc. This option is new to Wharton County as it was added to our website during the summer of 2012. I first started working with Ask-an-Expert in January 2012 while serving in one of the pilot counties for Ask-an-Expert, Brazoria County. By October 2012, I had answered 140 questions in the Ask-an-Expert system. It's catching on here in Wharton County as we do receive a few questions through the Ask-an-Expert option. Maybe this article will generate more!

It never hurts to know exactly where to go to get the information. This can certainly be the case with searching for crop, livestock, and forage budgets. This is something that we get requests for each year, and I think more people would utilize these annual production system budgets if they knew that they were available. They're great in that they list input expenses that you might not have thought of, they suggest costs of those inputs, but do allow the producer to enter their actual cost of that input. The budgets for our area of the Texas Gulf Coast are available at <http://agrilife.org/coastalbend/program-areas/agricultural-economics-for-the-texas-coastal-bend/crop-enterprise-budgets/>. These budgets can also be located at <http://agecoext.tamu.edu/>. When searching for crop or livestock budgets in this site, it's important to know that Wharton County is located in Extension District 11. You'll find the budgets under the button for Resources.

You'll also find another excellent resource at the <http://agecoext.tamu.edu> website known as the Custom Rates Survey. The data presented in this publication represent the responses of a survey conducted in January through March of 2011 by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Department of Agricultural Economics. Survey respondents include both providers and users of custom services, and data reflect the prices paid for typical farm and ranch custom operations. The survey data and publication include rates for tractor rental, row crop field operations, harvesting, hay baling, various

land improvements, and livestock services. Reliability of rates and statistics reported are highly dependent on the number of responses in each category. Categories were left blank if fewer than three responses were collected. A new survey is provided every-other –year. The 2013 survey will be posted on the website this year.

The Upper Coast Crop Improvement Newsletter that is prepared by Mr.Clyde Crumley, our Integrated Pest Management Agent, is emailed to 400 area cotton producers, technical/sales representatives, agribusinessmen, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and Texas A&M University Staff personnel. These newsletters describe current pest problems, control strategies and pest biologies in the southeast Texas cotton crop. This newsletter is also available at <http://wharton.agrilife.org>. Another site where growers can find back issues as well as up-to-date IPM newsletters during the cotton growing season is <http://www.tpma.org/>

Producer's needing data from variety trials conducted in our area and across the state on corn, soybeans, rice, grain sorghum, and more can find this information at <http://varietytesting.tamu.edu>

The Crop Weather Program (CWP) offers easy access to weather data, decision-making tools and calculators to aid crop managers in their production of cotton. Utilizing an established network of weather stations along the Texas coastal plains, CWP has the data growers need to make better decisions about their cotton crops. The ability to store and compare calculated crop/field data provides users of this unique system with easy to use solutions to complex cropping problems. The weather stations monitor in-field environmental conditions that have a direct impact on crop performance cropping activities (e.g. 10 day avg soil temp at 3" and 8", cumulative rainfall, heat unit calculations, and potential evapotranspiration calculations). We have a crop weather program weather station here in Wharton County, and the link to the crop weather program is <http://cwp.tamu.edu>

The annual Rice Production Guidelines that was once printed is now available online. It can be downloaded at <https://beaumont.tamu.edu> . Be sure to click on the eLibrary to find the rice production guidelines.

Here's one that I frequent a lot when answering horticultural calls, it's <http://aggiehorticulture.tamu.edu>. This site has publications for small growers all the way to commercial growers. It's worth the time to look around in this site to see what a great job our Extension Specialists have done to prepare such useful resources to the people of Texas.

Again, the web address for the Wharton County Extension website is <http://wharton.agrilife.org>. By going to our site you can learn of upcoming events, learn how to register for upcoming events, find newsletters, and find links to popular sites like our Wharton County 4-H website. Contact information for each of our staff members is also available on our county website.