



WINTER 2026

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Cherokee County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office | PO Drawer B | 165 East 6th Street  
#104 | Rusk, TX 75785 903.683.5416 | [cherokee.agrilife.org](http://cherokee.agrilife.org) | [facebook.com/cherokeecotxext](https://facebook.com/cherokeecotxext)

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.

CHEROKEE CO AGRILIFE NEWS

# 4-H Headlines



**District 5 4-H  
presents  
Record Book Components**

*February 19, 2026*  
**5:30 to 7:00 pm**

**Join in the live FREE broadcast by clicking [HERE](#) to register.  
Participation link will be emailed the day of training.  
Register by February 16, 2026**

**Record Books:  
Showcasing your 4-H Career  
workshop for  
Agents, Parents & 4-H Youth**

**NEW**

Texas Record Books have been completely updated for 2026!  
Learn what is new and what to include!

Jheri-Lynn McSwain, Ph.D., District 5  
4-H Youth Development Program Specialist  
903-834-6191 or [jlmcsawain@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:jlmcsawain@ag.tamu.edu)

The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife.

Record Book Training Link: [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSedEx9wKPNX24Xls8oJ1q3mgnzzy4UOums4mnKy7R\\_ZwZw5mQ/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSedEx9wKPNX24Xls8oJ1q3mgnzzy4UOums4mnKy7R_ZwZw5mQ/viewform)

## Dec. 6, 2025-Feb. 14, 2026 EXTENDED LATE DEADLINE

Entry forms will be accepted WITH a \$50.00 late fee per entry for the following divisions.

- Rabbits (meat pens & breeders)
- Poultry (Breeder ONLY)
- Horticulture
- Ag Mechanics
- Horses
- Photography
- Baked Goods
- Canned Goods

[CCJLS Rules Here](#)

**EAST REGION 4-H**

**MEAT JUDGING & IDENTIFICATION**

**NEW!** Judge the quality and retail value of meat

Three individuals wearing orange hard hats and white coats are examining raw meat on a table.

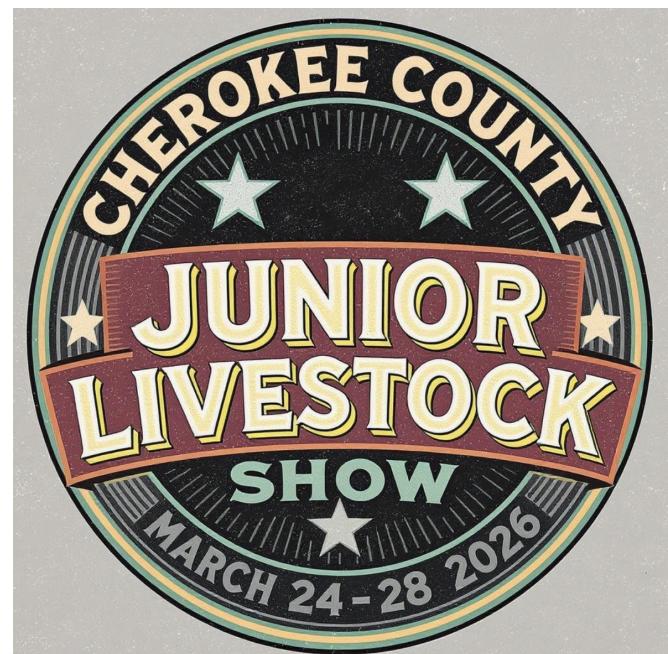
**NEW LOCATION | MARCH 21, 2026**  
MINEOLA PACKING COMPANY  
906 E BROAD ST  
MINEOLA, TEXAS 75773

Register on 4-H Online \$25  
January 5 - February 26  
[texas.v2.4honline.com](http://texas.v2.4honline.com)

Late Registration \$50  
February 27-March 2  
4-H members 3rd - 12th grades

**District 5 Rules** [D54h.tamu.edu](mailto:D54h.tamu.edu)  
Contact your local County Extension office for more information

If you need any type of accommodation to participate in this program or have questions about the physical access provided, please contact Carolyn Walton at 903-834-6191 by February 26, 2026. The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife.



# CHEROKEE COUNTY 4-H SPRING SHOWCASE

RUSK CIVIC CENTER | 555 EUCLID STREET | RUSK, TX

## FEATURING:

- Baked Goods - Cakes & Cookies
- Photography - Colored and Black & White
- Canned Goods
- Horticulture
- Open to all Cherokee Co 4-H
- Adult Divisions in Each Category
- Ribbons & Prizes
- \$5 Entry Fee per Entry with 100% Payout

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March 5th - Drop off from Noon to 5pm

March 6th - Judging starts 8:30am & Awards at 3:30pm

Additional information and rules coming soon!

Youth under age 18 are to be supervised by the Parent/Guardian or designee, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension is not providing supervision for this event.

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## CONTACT US AND LEARN MORE:

(903) 683-5416

[stephanie.walley@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:stephanie.walley@ag.tamu.edu)





Aaron Low • Cherokee CEA-Ag/NR • [arlow@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:arlow@ag.tamu.edu)

## BREAKFAST CEU SERIES

Those in need of CEUs for their TDA Pesticide License can join us on the FOURTH Tuesday of each month for our Breakfast CEU Meetings.

Each meeting will be a "Dutch treat" breakfast and those in attendance will receive one hour of pesticide CEU credit.

There will be a one-time \$10 fee for attending the yearlong Breakfast CEU Series.

The following dates, times and locations have been set. *Please note the later start time for January's meeting.*

Jan 27th	Miss Mollie's Diner	7:00am
Feb 24th	Beverly's Café—Jacksonville	6:30am
March 24th	County Ext Office—Rusk	6:30am

## Common Winter Weeds in Pastures and Hay Meadows

### Buttercup (*Ranunculus* spp)



Buttercup growing in a ryegrass pasture in East Texas.

Spray buttercup in late February or early March before it flowers. This weed is easily controlled with 2,4-D amine, Metsulfuron 60 DF, Cimarron Plus, Grazon P+D, GrazonNext HL and dicamba + 2,4-D (Weedmaster). In dormant bermudagrass/bahiagrass glyphosate (Roundup) will control buttercup at normal use rates.

### Groundsel (*Senecio* spp)



Mature Texas Groundsel

Metsulfuron 60DF or Cimarron Plus has proved to be the most effective herbicide for groundsel control. Apply in the rosette stage (~March). Grazon P+D provides partial control.

### Red Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*)

Grazon P+D provides excellent control of red sorrel. Metsulfuron or Cimarron Plus is also very good. Treat anytime the red sorrel is actively growing. Remedy Ultra is not effective on red sorrel.

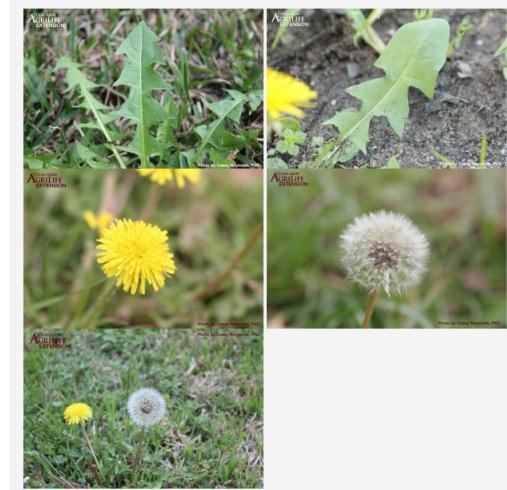
### Thistles



Thistle in rosette stage

Although there are at several different species of thistle in Texas, most are closely related and control recommendations will not differ. **Best time to control with a herbicide is when thistles are in the rosette stage. The rosette stage is when the thistle forms a low-growing ring of leaves.** As they mature they are harder to control and may require higher rates of herbicide to have effective control. Grazon P+D, GrazonNext HL and dicamba + 2,4-D (Weedmaster) provide excellent control of thistles.

### Dandelions (*Taraxacum* spp)



The key to effective control is spraying while dandelions are in the rosette stage of growth (before the flower stalk appears). 2,4-D or 2,4-D + dicamba (Weedmaster) can provide excellent control. Metsulfuron 60 DF or Cimarron Plus are also very good options.

# New World Screwworm Fact Sheet

Authors: Phillip Kaufman<sup>1</sup>, Sonja L. Swiger<sup>1</sup>, Andy Herring<sup>2</sup>

In response to the increased activity in Mexico regarding New World screwworm, Texas A&M AgriLife brings together its research, teaching and extension expertise to help educate and provide research-backed information to Texas citizens.

[Download a printable PDF version of this fact sheet](#)

## Background

The New World screwworm (NWS, *Cochliomyia hominivorax*) is a parasitic fly native to the Western Hemisphere. It lays eggs in the living tissue of fresh wounds in warm-blooded animals. The larvae (maggots) feed on the host's flesh, causing severe wounds and often death if untreated.

The pest was eradicated in the U.S. in the 1960s. Since then, it occasionally reemerges and has resurfaced in Central America and Mexico. They are controlled only through the release of sterile males, known as the sterile insect technique (SIT). This approach, along with regular active surveillance and livestock inspections, has proven highly successful.

As of May 2025, renewed attention to this parasite is crucial, as it may pose future risks to livestock and wildlife.

## Signs of New World Screwworm in Animals



**Figure 1.** Screwworm infestation in dog

The name screwworm refers to the feeding behavior exhibited by the maggots as they burrow (screw) into the wound. These maggots and their feeding cause extensive damage by tearing at the hosts' tissue with sharp mouth hooks. The wound will become larger and deeper as more and more eggs hatch and larvae feed on the living tissue. This results in serious and often deadly damage to the animal if not discovered and treated.

Continual and regular monitoring and evaluation of all livestock are important for herd and flock biosecurity and health considerations. Producers should be alert for possible signs associated with potential infestation including: Foul-smelling wounds with visible maggots, Animals biting or licking at wounds, Lesions in navels, ears, dehorning or branding sites, Unusual restlessness or lethargy



**Figure 2.** Screwworm larva

In the New World screwworm, the larval stage (Figure 2) is responsible for inflicting significant injury and economic loss. These larvae inhabit the wounds of living animals, where they cause extensive tissue damage. Mature larvae can reach 17 mm in length (2/3 of an inch) and have spines that protrude from the body and wrap around in a spiral giving them the name screwworm. Official identification of larvae is based largely on the presence or absence of dual internal breathing tubes. Confirmation of the fly identity can be determined only by a trained individual.

## Identifying Screwworm Flies

Adult New World screwworms, *Cochliomyia hominivorax*, (Figure 3) are metallic blue blow flies with three distinct stripes that run down the top (thorax) of the fly just behind the head with large orange eyes. This fly resembles the closely related secondary screwworm, *Cochliomyia macellaria*, which is also a metallic blue blow fly with three distinct stripes, but the stripes all begin at the same point behind the head. Adult secondary screwworms do not deposit eggs on living animals, and their larvae do not infest them. Therefore, they do not pose a threat to animal health.



**Figure 3.** Adult New World Screwworm fly

Adult flies of interest can be photographed and emailed to the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at [screw-worm@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:screw-worm@ag.tamu.edu).

Report any mammals or birds (wild or domesticated) with signs of irritated behavior or head shaking, those that express a smell of decay but are alive, or those that show evidence of fly strike and/or the presence of fly larvae (maggots) in wounds.

## Screwworm in the New World

Screwworm infestations occur in Jamaica, Cuba and across South America. Increasing detections of this fly north of its containment barrier, the Darian Gap in Panama, were noted in 2023. Typical insecticide suppression of the New World screwworm is less effective than with other insect pests due to its wide host range and occurrence on wildlife.

## Potential Control Products for use in the U.S.

U.S. producers have not treated livestock for NWS in more than 40 years. Although this health threat has not been experienced in several decades, several treatment strategies exist today and should always be used in consultation with your local veterinarian. Treatments could include:

- Preventive measures: treat wounds promptly and maintain sanitation
- After infestation: topical larvicides (e.g., coumaphos, permethrin), cleaning and removal of larvae

[U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service \(USDA-APHIS\) list of potential pesticides against New World screwworm \(PDF\)](#)



# Garden of Learning

Cherokee County Horticulture Newsletter

Kimberly Benton, County Extension Agent—Horticulture  
[kim.benton@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:kim.benton@ag.tamu.edu)



HORTICULTURAL SCIENCES

## MASTER GARDENER TRAINING

*Looking for something positive and productive to add to your life?*

Master Gardening is a perfect way get deeper into the science of growing plants (50+ hours of Hort Science) and give back to the local communities.

The orientation class will be Tuesday, February 3, 2026, 9am, at the Annex building in Rusk, 165 E 6th Street, Rm #102. Classes go from **February through April on Tuesday and Thursday mornings.**

Please call 903-683-5416 or email [kim.benton@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:kim.benton@ag.tamu.edu) for more information.



*Our application process is online now, so everyone interested should go ahead and fill out an application [here](https://evs.tamu.edu/application/master-gardener) (<https://evs.tamu.edu/application/master-gardener>)*

## CHEROKEE COUNTY ANNUAL SEED SWAP

Friday, February 6th, 9am-1pm | Rusk Civic Center—555 Euclid Street, Rusk, TX 75785

2026 Upcoming Programming:

Growing the Mighty Muscadine in East Texas—1/16 10am, Jacksonville Public Library

Digging Deeper into Gardening: What to Plant for East Texas Spring Gardens 1/26—Annex Building or via zoom (register [here](#))

Master Gardener Training Orientation—2/3—Annex Building, Rusk

Cherokee County Seed Swap—2/6—Rusk Civic Center

Seed Starting Workshop—2/8—2:30pm—Annex Building, Rusk

East Texas Fruit Nut and Vegetable Conference—2/20—Tyler

Master Gardener Conference “If Trees Could Talk” - 3/14—Jacksonville

CCMGA Spring Plant Sale - 4/11, Demonstration Garden, Jacksonville

## Growing the Mighty Muscadine in East Texas

Now is the perfect time to dig a little bit deeper into the fun of growing the East Texas native muscadine grapes. How to grow them, as well as updates on new seedless varieties soon available.

Door prizes will include some grapevines looking for new homes!

Friday, January 16th

10am

Jacksonville Public Library

526 E Commerce St, Jacksonville, TX 75766

It is hard to believe that even though we just had our first hard freeze, that is it time to plan for those juicy amazing tomatoes that you can show off at **TomatoFest** 2026. That time is indeed here!

Whether you want to grow the biggest, the best plate of 3, try out that new cherry tomato category, or some wild and wonderful heirloom/open-pollinated varieties, now is the select your varieties and plan your seed sources. We will definitely have lots of good tomato varieties at the **Seed Swap** on February 6th, and there some wonderful online sources as well.

Start your seeds at the end of January or the beginning of February so that you will be able to put your plants out in March. Add fertilizer to the soil at planting, and fertilize again when the tiny fruit start forming. Make sure they are planted in full sun, and that they get plenty of water! See you in June at **TomatoFest**!



# EAST TEXAS FRUIT, NUT, & VEGETABLE CONFERENCE

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2026



**7:30 am to 8:00 am Registration**

### 8:00 am Summer Success with Southern Peas

Dr. Greg Grant, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service  
Smith County Extension Agent, Horticulture

### 9:00 am Pecan Production for Homeowners & Small Orchards

Mr. Bob Whitney, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension  
Organic Program Specialist I - Stephenville Research  
and Extension Center

**10:00 am Break**

### 10:15 am Growing Grapes Organically

Mr. Michael Cook, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension  
Viticulture Program Specialist II - North, Texas

### 11:15 am Specialty and Uncommon Fruits

Dr. Tim Hartmann, Assistant Professor & Extension  
Specialist - Horticultural Sciences - College Station

**12:15 pm Adjourn**

#### **Location:**

St Louis Baptist Church  
4000 Frankston Hwy  
Tyler, Texas 75701

#### **Time:**

Registration opens: 7:30 am  
Program Starts: 8:00 am  
Adjourn: 12:15 pm



**Registration:**

**Go to the link or scan QR code :**

<https://pci.jotform.com/form/253487081484061>

Register Online **20.00** dollars per person

Register Onsite **30.00** dollars per person

(Registration will accept credit/debit card

5% conveniences fee on all transactions)

Any questions please contact- (903)590-2980



## Stephanie "Amy" Walley

Cherokee Family & Community Health Agent  
[stephanie.walley@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:stephanie.walley@ag.tamu.edu)



FAMILY AND  
 COMMUNITY HEALTH  
 TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

# LIFESTYLE CHANGES 2026

## WHAT'S FOR DINNER TONIGHT



## WHAT DOES YOUR FITNESS PLAN LOOK LIKE- ON A BUDGET ?

What does your fitness plan look like in 2026— on a budget? Put your tennis shoes on the ground and get moving! Take advantage of free exercise classes in your community or simply enjoy a walk outside. Include activities that bring you joy, like dancing, laughter, and spending time with friends. Build strength, improve flexibility, and give your body the relaxation it deserves. Movement doesn't have to be expensive to be effective. Call a friend, make a plan, and let's get moving together. Small steps every day can lead to big changes for your health and happiness.



## CHILI MAC

SERVINGS: 6

### INGREDIENTS:

½ lb. extra lean ground beef chuck or round  
 1 small onion, chopped  
 ½ medium green bell pepper, chopped  
 1 c. elbow macaroni, dry  
 1(8oz) can tomato sauce, unsalted  
 2 c. water  
 1 tsp chili powder  
 ½ tsp salt  
 1c. canned, low sodium pinto beans  
 ½ c. reduced fat cheddar cheese, low sodium

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Wash your hands and clean your cooking area. In a large skillet, brown the meat and drain off any remaining fat. Add the onions and green peppers to the meat. Cook for 5 minutes on medium to low-high heat. Add remaining ingredients, *except cheese*. Cover and cook on low heat for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add cheese and continue to heat until melted. Serve immediately.

## REST & RELAXATION

Most adults need 7–9 hours of sleep per night, with older adults typically needing 7–8 hours. For exercise, health guidelines recommend about 150 minutes of moderate activity per week, which averages to 30 minutes a day, five days a week. Alternatively, 75 minutes of vigorous activity per week can meet the same goal. In addition, adults should do strength training at least two days per week, targeting major muscle groups. Getting adequate sleep and regular physical activity supports heart health, mental well-being, and overall energy levels.

# WHAT IS HAPPINING IN 2026?



**Family Mealtime**

Join us for a series of fun and easy challenges designed to strengthen family bonds and make mealtime a meaningful experience. Here's what we've got planned:

**ACTIVITIES:**

- ✓ Family Dinner Week
- ✓ Tech Free Challenge
- ✓ Dinner Conversation Starters
- ✓ Kids Cook Week
- ✓ Clean-Up Crew

## A Little Winter Fun in the Kitchen!

**WEEK 1: FAMILY DINNER WEEK:** COMMIT TO HAVING DINNER TOGETHER AS A FAMILY AT LEAST 4 TIMES A WEEK. IF 4 TIMES A WEEK SOUNDS TOO CHALLENGING, TRY ADDING ONE EXTRA MEALTIME MORE THAN YOUR TYPICAL WEEK. LET'S MAKE MEALTIME A PRIORITY! ADDING ADDITIONAL FAMILY MEALS MAY TAKE SOME ADDITIONAL PLANNING, CHECK OUT OUR LIST OF SLOW COOKER RECIPES OR AIR FRYER RECIPES TO MAKE DINNER EASIER.

**WEEK 2: TECH-FREE TABLE CHALLENGE:** MAKE DINNER A SCREEN-FREE ZONE. PUT AWAY THE PHONES, TVs, AND TABLETS AND FOCUS ON EACH OTHER. ☺ TECH FREE WEEK IS A GREAT TIME TO DISCUSS TABLE MANNERS! TABLE MANNERS ARE AN IMPORTANT SKILL FOR KIDS TO LEARN, READ MORE ABOUT TABLE MANNERS HERE AND START CREATING A POSITIVE MEALTIME EXPERIENCE!

**WEEK 3: DINNER CONVERSATION STARTERS:** ENGAGE YOUR KIDS WITH FUN CONVERSATION TOPICS. ASK YOUR KIDS ABOUT THEIR DAY, FAVORITE HOBBIES, OR DREAMS FOR THE FUTURE! LET'S MAKE EVERY MEAL A TIME TO CONNECT. ☺ LEARN MORE ABOUT WHY FAMILY MEALTIME IS IMPORTANT AND HOW IT CAN BENEFIT YOUR FAMILY AND CHILDREN.

**WEEK 4: KID COOKS WEEK:** WHETHER THEY HELP WITH THE CHOPPING OR THE COOKING, GET THEM INVOLVED IN THE KITCHEN. LET THEM HELP PLAN AND PREPARE ONE MEAL THIS WEEK! ☺ CHECK OUT OUR LIST OF KID FRIENDLY RECIPES TO GATHER SOME INSPIRATION FOR YOUR KIDDOS!

**WEEK 5: CLEAN-UP CREW:** MAKE POST-DINNER CLEANUP A TEAM EFFORT. ASSIGN TASKS AND WORK TOGETHER TO TIDY UP AFTER DINNER.

## UNPLUGGED LIFESTYLE CHANGES IN 2026 STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR A HEALTHY NEW YOU.

APRIL 14, 2026

9:00 A.M.-2:00 P.M.

LOCATION TO BE ANNOUNCED  
JACKSONVILLE, TEXAS 75766

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO "UNPLUG"?  
STRESS, BLOOD PRESSURE, CHRONIC ILLNESS

EDUCATIONAL LUNCH PRESENTATION  
MEDITATION / EXERCISE

CALL 903-683-5416 TO RESERVE YOUR SEAT  
FUNDDED BY: TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE CHEROKEE  
COUNTY AND TLL TEMPLE MEDICAL FOUNDATION



# Calendar of Events

## **January**

- 1 CEO Closed—New Year's Day
- 16 East Region AgriLife Expo—Tyler
- 16 Growing the Mighty Muscadine in East Texas—Jacksonville Public Library, Jacksonville
- 19 CEO Closed—MLK Day
- 26 Digging Deeper into Gardening: What to Plant for East Texas Spring Gardens—CEO or Zoom
- 27 Breakfast CEU Series—Mollie's Diner, Alto

## **February**

- 3 Master Gardener Training Orientation—CEO, Rusk
- 6 Annual Seed Swap—Rusk Civic Center, Rusk
- 8 Seed Starting Workshop—CEO, Rusk
- 16 CEO Closed—Presidents' Day
- 20 East Texas Fruit, Nut, and Vegetable Conference—Tyler
- 24 Breakfast CEU Series- - Beverly's Café, Jacksonville

## **March**

- 2 CEO Closed—Texas Independence Day
- 5-6 Cherokee Co 4-H Spring Showcase—Rusk Civic Center
- 14 Cherokee Co Master Gardener Conference “If Trees Could Talk” - Jacksonville
- 24 Breakfast CEU Series—CEO, Rusk
- 24-29 Cherokee County Junior Livestock Show—Cherokee Co Expo, Jacksonville

**\*\*\*Chair Yoga Continues Every Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday 1:30-2:30pm @ Rusk Civic Center\*\*\***



# 2026 Breakfast CEU Series

Join us on the FOURTH Tuesday of each month for a "Dutch Treat" breakfast followed by a one hour pesticide topic. Current TDA private applicator holders will earn 1 CEU hour each month they attend. There will be a one-time fee of \$10 for the entire series. Please note the later start time for Alto meetings.

January 27th	Mollie's Diner - Alto	7AM
February 24th	Beverly's Cafe - Jacksonville	6:30AM
March 24th	Cherokee Co Ext Office - Rusk	6:30AM
April 28th	Mollie's Diner - Alto	7AM
May 19th ** (3rd Tuesday)	Beverly's Cafe - Jacksonville	6:30AM
June 23rd	Cherokee Co Ext Office - Rusk	6:30AM
July	NO MEETING	
August 25th	Mollie's Diner - Alto	7AM
September 22nd	Beverly's Cafe - Jacksonville	6:30AM
October 27th	Cherokee Co Ext Office - Rusk	6:30AM
November 17th ** (3rd Tuesday)	Mollie's Diner - Alto	7AM
December	NO MEETING	

If you need any type of accommodation to participate in this program or have questions about the physical access provided, please contact Aaron Low at 903-683-5416 at least 2 weeks prior to the program.

Questions? Please contact  
Aaron Low at  
903-683-5416 or  
[arlow@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:arlow@ag.tamu.edu)

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.

TEXAS A&  
AGRILIFE  
EXTENSION



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RUSK, TEXAS 75785

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