

Keys to Agronomy

SEPT '25

In this issue: ● New AgriLife Year ● Evapotranspiration ● The Homeowners Hub
● Pesticide Applicator Training ● Upcoming Events ● Save the Date



CELEBRATION



another AgriLife year complete

August 31 is the closure of a year for AgriLife. Agents are quickly crunching numbers to put into reports and preparing for our year evaluations, all while still in the middle of cotton growing season, and preparations are happening for winter crop planting. I'm not a huge sentimental person; however, I do enjoy looking back at all that was accomplished, the meetings that were held, the new growers I was able to meet, and the relationships I continue building with those I work with more frequently. So what did 2024-2025 look like and where are we heading for 2025-2026? If you want to take a closer look at last year, my agent reports are attached to the end of this newsletter!

FOCUS: COVER CROPS & COTTON ECONOMICS

NON

- 7 Field Trials (3 RACE, 3 Wheat, 1 Forage)
- 3 Field Days (TAWC, Winter Cover, Early Season Cotton)
- 5 Meetings (2 Profitability, 1 Insurance, 2 Water)
- 5 Trainings (2 Private Applicator, 3 Auxin)
- 6 Conferences (2 Lamb, 2 Castro, 2 Hale)
- 3 Youth Events (2 Ag Days, 1 In School)
- 12 Fields Soil Sampled
- 704 Social Media Followers (501 Facebook, 141 Instagram, 62 X)



Let's
Celebrate

Contact Me!

Got an idea, question, or
comment?

Kristie Keys
kristie.keys@ag.tamu.edu
325-665-8790

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

A NEW YEAR

Let's take a peek at what's ahead for 2025–2026! I already have some great programs on the calendar (and a few more in the works). Here's where you come in: I want to hear from you! The best way you can help is by showing up, sharing feedback, and telling me what topics you'd like to see offered.

You're the reason my position exists — seriously! Thanks to upper administration recognizing a need, this area has an Agronomy Agent. Fun fact: there are only two of us in the entire state! We collaborate and work closely together to make sure our growers, producers, and even homeowners have access to solid, research-based education.

As you look through the list of upcoming topics, reach out if something catches your eye so I can make sure it fits your needs. And if there's one you think doesn't fit the area, let me know that too, no hard feelings, I promise! You'll just be saving me from planning a program no one attends (and I'll thank you for it!).



2026 Focus: Water Use & Quality Native Grass Recovery & Management



Oct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ag Mastermind- Produced Water
Nov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ag Mastermind- ???
Dec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lamb County Crops Conference • South Plains Professional Applicator Conference
Jan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Castro County Crops Conference • Mid-Plains Ag Expo
Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative Crops Conference • Pesticide Applicator Training • Auxin Training • Soil Sampling • Soil Stewardship Program

Mar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ag Mastermind- Nozzeling Your Pivot • Rainwater Harvest Program • Pesticide Applicator Training • Auxin Training • Soil Sampling
Apr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ag Mastermind- Watering Your Yard • Pesticide Applicator Training • Auxin Training • Soil Sampling
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ag Mastermind- Soil Health Institute
Jun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ag Mastermind- Bamert Tour
Jul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well Water Testing
Aug	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAWC Field Day

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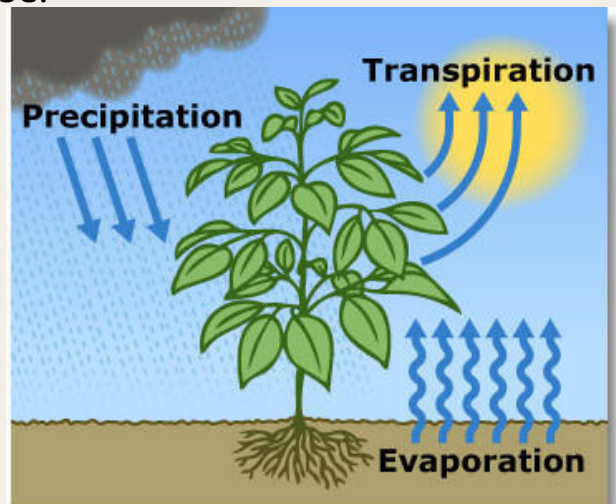


EVAPOTRANSPIRATION

Water management is always at the heart of successful crop production in the Texas High Plains. With limited rainfall, declining groundwater levels, and high summer temperatures, every drop of water counts. One of the most useful, yet often overlooked, tools for managing water efficiently is understanding evapotranspiration, or ET, also used interchangeably with crop water use.

So, what exactly is ET?

Evapotranspiration is the combined process of evaporation (water loss from the soil surface) and transpiration (water used and released by plants). In short, ET tells us how much water is leaving a field, whether through the soil or the crop itself. By tracking ET, producers can estimate how much water a crop actually needs and when to irrigate



Why ET matters here?

On the Texas High Plains, our climate brings high winds, intense sunlight, and low humidity, the perfect combination for high evapotranspiration rates. Crops can lose significant amounts of water through ET during peak growing months. Understanding these patterns helps producers fine-tune irrigation schedules, reduce unnecessary water use, and maintain yield potential.

Using ET data for irrigation decisions

Producers can access local ET data through tools like TexasET Network or local weather stations that report daily ET values. By comparing current ET data with soil moisture and rainfall, irrigators can better determine when and how much water to apply. This data-driven approach reduces overwatering, lowers energy costs, and conserves water resources from the Ogallala Aquifer, a critical priority for our region's agricultural future. Matching crops to water availability and scheduling irrigation around ET rates helps ensure sustainable production across the High Plains.

The bottom line

Evapotranspiration may sound technical, but it's really just a way of reading what your crops are telling you about their water needs. When producers use ET data alongside local weather reports and soil moisture sensors, they can make more informed irrigation decisions that save time, money, and water — all while supporting long-term productivity in the Texas High Plains.

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THE HOMEOWNERS HUB

Lawn Transition

FROM SUMMER TO FALL/WINTER

Shorter days, cooler mornings, and that irresistible craving for a pumpkin spice latte, it must be fall... or at least what fall should feel like here on the South Plains! As your lawn starts slowing down for its winter nap, now's the time to give it a little extra attention to set it up for a healthy comeback next spring.



Keep mowing while your grass is still actively growing. Before dormancy, raise that cutting height just a bit to help shade out winter weeds and protect the soil. Once your grass growth slows, mow mainly to control weeds, just be sure to bag those clippings to keep seeds from spreading

- Bermuda- ½ - 1 inch
- Fescue- 2 - 2 ½ inches



Your lawn doesn't need much water now, just about 1 inch every 4-6 weeks until it's completely dormant. Water in the morning so leaves have time to dry out before nightfall, which helps reduce the chance of disease during cooler, damp weather.



Fall is a great time to pull a soil sample!! Knowing your soil's nutrient level can help you plan smart for spring fertilization applications. Landscape soil tests cost around \$45 (lab dependent) per sample. A small investment with a big payoff! If you are interested, give me a call and I'll schedule a time to come out and pull a sample, send it off, and help you understand your analysis.



This is the perfect time to apply a pre-emergent herbicide to stop winter annual weeds before they ever show up.

If you're working with tall fescue (a bunching grass, not a spreading type), consider overseeding to keep your lawn thick and full.

It's also a good idea to know your historical first freeze date as this may dictate how quickly you should begin your fall lawn care. In the Lubbock area it is October 21-31. Check your location by visiting plantmaps.com

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APPLICATOR CONFERENCE

Whether you already hold an applicator license or are just thinking about getting one, this conference is designed with you in mind!

☛ Day 1 is packed with educational sessions for everyone: great topics, practical tips, and industry updates.

☛ Day 2 is your chance to take the next step and work toward becoming a licensed applicator!



**TEXAS A&M
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EXTENSION**

DECEMBER 2-3, 2025

**South Plains Applicator
Conference**

HOSTED BY:
KRISTIE KEYS (CASTRO/HALE/LAMB COUNTY)
(325) 665-8790
MARK CARROLL (FLOYD COUNTY)
(806) 983-4912

**OLLIE LINER CENTER
2000 S. COLUMBIA ST
PLAINVIEW, TEXAS 79072**

**5 CEU's
Pending TDA
Approval**

DAY 1: CEU CONFERENCE

Training for Municipal/Parks Employees, School Maintenance, Golf Course Grounds Keepers, Landscape Pest Management Professionals, Turf Management Professionals, Lawn Care Companies, Others Interested

- Turfgrass Maintenance & Drift
- Weed Lifecycle, Identification, & Integrated Approach to Weed Management
- School IPM
- Right of Way
- Nuisance Animals
- Hands-On Demonstrations (Start-Up Equipment/Chemical Needs)
 - Commercial/Non-Commercial
 - Structural
 - Drones

Tentative Agenda

REGISTRATION & SPONSORSHIPS



REGISTRATION CLOSING 11-21-2025

DAY 2: PREPARATION FOR THE TDA COMMERCIAL/NON-COMMERCIAL PESTICIDE APPLICATOR LICENSE TRAINING

Dr. Mark Matocha-Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

Commercial applicator: operates a business or is employed by a business that applies restricted-use or state-limited-use pesticides to the property of another person for hire or compensation.

Noncommercial applicator: is required to be licensed, but does not qualify as a private or commercial applicator. A noncommercial applicator does not solicit pest control but works exclusively on the property of their employer.

Noncommercial political subdivision (NCPS): an applicator employed by a political subdivision of the state of Texas or a federal agency operating in Texas.

Categories:

- Landscape Maintenance (3A)
- Vegetation Management/Right-of-Way (5)

DAY 2: PREPARATION FOR THE TDA STRUCTURAL PEST CONTROL LICENSE TRAINING

Mr. Jacob Wightman, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

Structural Pest Control Service licenses and regulates pest management professionals who apply pesticides in and around structures.

- A review of the Pesticide Applicator General Standards Manual & SPCS Laws & Regulations
- An approved course to fulfill the structural apprenticeship/noncommercial licensing requirement of taking a minimum 6-hour approved technician training course.

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.

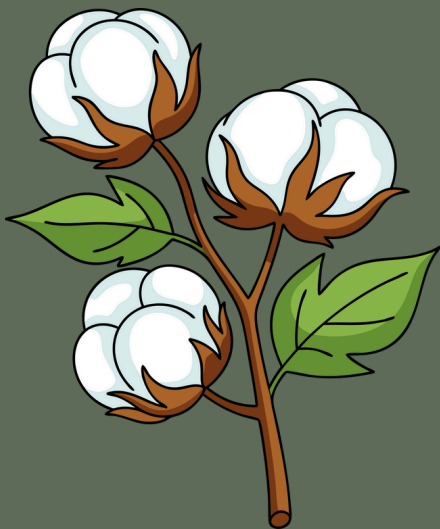
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EVENTS



Crosby & Floyd Co. Field Day



October 10, 2025



9AM Crosby Co Irrigated RACE Trial



Hear updates from specialists & industry personnel

9AM Crosby Irrigated RACE Trial

on CR130 2.5 mi E of US62 near Cone
(33.769436, -101.343612)

10AM Crosby Dryland RACE Trial

S of FM193 near Mt. Blanco
(33.769436, -101.343612)

11AM Floyd Irrigated RACE Trial

on FM651 3 mi S of US62
(33.769436, -101.343612)

Noon Please join us for lunch & Cotton Agronomy Program Update

Floyd County Friends Unity Center
990 FM 786, Lockney, TX 79241

CEUs Available



Please RSVP to
Rebekah Ortiz by 10/6
806.695.5531



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YEARLY TRAININGS

AUXIN

1 L&R

\$10

- ✓ LAMB COUNTY - JAN 26 @ 12PM
- ✓ CASTRO COUNTY - FEB 18 @ 9AM
- ✓ HALE COUNTY - MAR 24 @ 11AM

PRIVATE APPLICATOR

3.5 hours
Includes training,
study materials,
and spray log

\$100

- ✓ LAMB COUNTY - FEB 5 @ 8AM
- ✓ HALE COUNTY - MAR 24 @ 1PM
- ✓ CASTRO COUNTY - APR 10 @ 9AM

PARAQUAT



FREE

- ✓ REQUIRED EVERY 3 YEARS
- ✓ TAKEN INDIVIDUALLY ONLINE

RSVP TODAY!!

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YOU OPINION PLEASE!!

The Center for Advancing Sustainable and Distributed Fertilizer Production (CASFER) at Texas Tech University's Institute for Sustainability and Circular Economy is conducting a research study on Farmer Feedback on Fertilizer Preferences in the United States, which will inform research focusing on Stakeholder Engagement, Process Optimization, and Models for Economic Fertilizer Resilience to develop Business Cases.

We are seeking farmers and producers in the United States to provide feedback on fertilizers. You will be asked to share information about the types of fertilizers and methods of application used, as well as challenges with current fertilizer options and knowledge about experimental fertilizers. Please take a few minutes to complete this online survey. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and there are minimal risks associated with it. You can complete the survey and submit it at any time. It should take no more than 10 minutes of your time.

Please indicate whether you would like to be considered for the producer focus group and participate in the first test validation trial. The experimental fertilizer will be delivered to your field at no cost, and application fees will be covered. If you are interested, please send an email to the CASFER team at casfer@ttu.edu. We will contact you with a detailed description of the study.

[Survey Link Click Here](https://ttucasfer.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3k3lwsFEpYvuDhc)

Copy & paste into your browser

https://ttucasfer.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3k3lwsFEpYvuDhc



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Save the Date



- October 10: Plains Cotton Growers Advisory Group (Lubbock)
- October 24: Plains Cotton Growers Advisory Group (Lubbock)
- October 30: Ag Awareness Day (Littlefield)
- November 7: Plains Cotton Growers Advisory Group (Lubbock)
- November 21: Plains Cotton Growers Advisory Group (Lubbock)
- December 2-3: South Plains Applicators Conference (Plainview)
- December 5: Plains Cotton Growers Advisory Group (Lubbock)
- December 9-10: Plant Protection Conference (College Station)
- December 16: Lamb County Crops Conference (Littlefield)
- December 17: Online CEU Conference (All Counties)
- January 15: Castro County Crops Conference (Dimmitt)
- January 22: Mid-Plains Ag Expo (Plainview)
- March 3: Alternative Crops Conference (Olton)

****Stay tuned to social media and newsletters for more events****



<https://castro.agrilife.org/agronomy/>



<https://www.facebook.com/castrohalelambagronomy/>



<https://www.instagram.com/castrohalelambagronomy/>



<https://twitter.com/KeysToAgronomy>

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