

Keys to Agronomy

MAY '26

In this issue: ● Precision Ag Tools ● Early Season Garden Pests
● Vector CEU Program ● Scout School ● Save the Date

As input costs continue to increase and water availability declines across the Texas High Plains, precision agriculture tools are becoming more important for day-to-day management decisions. One area where these tools can provide value is irrigation management. Precision irrigation tools help producers better understand crop water use and can improve efficiency by providing trend data on soil and crop water status. This information can support more informed decisions about irrigation timing and frequency. Among the available options, soil moisture monitoring devices are a commonly used tool to help improve irrigation efficiency, crop performance, and overall input management. These systems measure the amount of water in the soil and track changes over time.

- Common sensor types include: Capacitance sensors, Tensiometers, Time Domain Reflectometry (TDR)

Benefits

1. Improved irrigation efficiency

- These tools allow producers to base irrigation decisions on actual soil moisture levels and crop demand rather than a set schedule, helping reduce over- or under-watering.

2. Enhanced yield potential

- Maintaining adequate soil moisture during critical growth stages supports crop development and can help reduce stress that may limit yield.

3. Data-driven decision making

- Soil moisture data can be tracked over time, allowing producers to observe trends across seasons and make adjustments to irrigation strategies as needed.

Disadvantages

1. Upfront cost

- Equipment costs can vary widely depending on the system, and initial investment may be a consideration for some operations.

2. Installation requirements

- Proper installation is essential for accurate readings. Sensors must be placed correctly in the soil profile to reflect field conditions.

3. Data interpretation

- Collecting data is only part of the process. Understanding soil moisture readings and trends takes time and experience, and misinterpretation can lead to less effective irrigation decisions.

4. Field variability

- Soil conditions can vary within a field, and a single sensor location may not represent the entire area. In some cases, multiple sensors are needed for a more complete picture.

Soil moisture monitoring tools are widely available and can provide valuable information for irrigation management. While they can improve water use efficiency, crop performance, and input management, they do require an investment of both resources and time. With proper use and understanding, these tools can be a helpful addition to many production systems across the Texas High Plains.

Contact Me!

Got an idea, question, or
comment?

Kristie Keys
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THE HOMEOWNERS HUB

With the rise in temperatures also comes the increase of early-season insects in gardens and landscapes. New plant growth, cool nights, and a little bit of rainfall followed by warming days create the ideal environment for several common pests, including aphids, flea beetles, and thrips. These insects can quickly damage vegetable gardens, ornamentals, and young landscape plants if left unmanaged. Young plants, seedlings, and transplants lack the established root systems and foliage needed to tolerate damage. Understanding how to identify these pests and implement timely, practice control strategies is key to protecting your plants while minimizing unnecessary pesticide use. Early detection can prevent plant loss or stunting, reduce the need for repeated insecticide applications, and support beneficial insects that naturally suppress pests. Using IPM (Integrated Pest Management) strategies, you manage pests while minimizing risks to human health and the environment, relying on chemical treatments only as a last resort.



Aphids are small, soft-bodied insects that cluster on new growth, undersides of leaves, and stems. They can be green, yellow, brown, or black. Aphids feed by sucking sap and excrete clear, sticky “honeydew” that can often grow black, sooty fungus. This inhibits sunlight from leaves which can cause stunting, deformation, and discoloration of leaves. You might also notice slight leaf curling. Lady beetles and lacewings are natural predators of aphids. For small infestations, use a blast of high-pressure water to dislodge aphids. Using a slow-release fertilizer to control excessive new growth can also help control aphid population flare ups. Avoid using broad spectrum pesticides that destroy beneficial insects.



Thrips are tiny, fast-moving, slender insects that feed on plant tissues by rasping and sucking. They are often difficult to see without magnification. Damage from thrips includes silvery streaking or strippling on leaves, distorted growth, and reduced flowering or fruit set. Early detection is the key to preventing plant damage, yield loss, and population outbreaks. Monitoring thrips can be done by shaking branches over a white piece of paper and looking for dashed lines to appear, or clipping buds and placing them into a jar of 70% alcohol and shaking to dislodge. Yellow sticky cards can also be used to monitor populations. To control thrips, remove weeds that can host thrips.



Flea beetles are small, dark beetles that jump when disturbed. There are many species of leaf beetles, so color may vary. They create characteristic “shot-hole” damage on leaves, especially on vegetables like tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, and leafy greens. Healthy, vigorous plants can usually outgrow minor damage. Placement of sticky traps around the garden can help monitor activity. Severe infestations stunt plants and reduce yields.

Early-season insect pests are a common challenge for homeowners and garden growers, but they can be managed effectively with vigilance and a balanced approach. By combining regular monitoring with practical control methods, you can protect your garden and landscape while supporting beneficial insects and environmental health.

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LOOKING FOR A FEW CEUs?



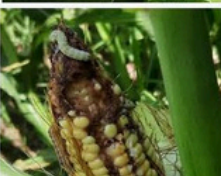
South Plains Field Scout School

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Center Lubbock

May 29, 2026

TPMA Texas Pest Management Association
PO Box 16523, Lubbock, Texas 79490

3 TDA
CEUs



8:30-9:00 am. **Registration**

9:00-10:15 am. **Cotton Agronomy & Pest**

Dr. Suhas Vyavhare, Dr. Ken Lege, Blayne Reed

10:15-10:40 am. **Break / Hands on Cotton Plant**

Mapping

High Plains IPM Team

10:40-12:00 pm. **Corn and Sorghum Agronomy & Pest**

Blayne Reed, Dr. Tyler Gilreath

12:00-1:10 pm. **Lunch (on your own)**

1:10-1:45 pm. **Scouting for Plant Diseases**

Dr. Ken Obasa

1:45 – 2:10 pm. **Weed, Herbicide Damage, &**

Deficiency Scouting

John Thobe

2:10-2:25 pm **Break / Hands on Cotton Plant Mapping**

High Plains IPM Team

2:25-2:45 pm. **Beneficial Arthropod ID**

Dr. Suhas Vyavhare

2:45- 3:15 pm. **Peanut Scouting 101**



Sponsored By:



The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension High Plains IPM Team

Blayne Reed, Program Specialist III-IPM Mid-High Plains & Upper Rolling Plains / John Thobe, Program Specialist I—IPM West Plains / Dr. Suhas Vyavhare, Extension Entomologist – Lubbock / Dr. Tyler Gilreath, District Entomologist-Amarillo / Keegan McCollum, Program Specialist I—IPM, Sandy Lands IPM / Dr. Ken Obasa, Pathologist-Amarillo / Dr. Ken Lege, Cotton Agronomist-Lubbock



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GRAIN GRADING

Sponsors



2026 Grain Grading Workshop

August 12 or August 13, 2026
West Texas A&M Ag Pavilion
600 WTAMU Drive
Canyon, TX 79015
806.677.5600

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Canyon will conduct two one-day workshops on the grain grading of corn, wheat, and sorghum.

Workshops will be held August 12 and August 13 at the West Texas A&M Ag Pavilion at 600 WTAMU Drive, Canyon, TX 79015

A \$100.00 registration fee is charged to cover costs associated with instruction, lunch, equipment and materials used in the workshop.

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, gender identity, or any other classification protected by federal, state, or local law and will strive to achieve full and equal opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife.

Event Speakers

Tim Hall
Federal Grain Inspection Service
Kansas City, MO

Dr. Vinicius Gouvea
Assistant Professor, Ruminant Nutrition,
Texas A&M AgriLife Research
Amarillo, TX

Dr. Jourdan Bell
Associate Professor & Extension Agronomist
Texas A&M AgriLife Research
Amarillo, TX

DeDe Jones, M.B.A.
Extension Risk Management Economist
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
Amarillo, TX

One-Day Grain Grading Workshop for corn, sorghum & wheat handlers & producers

To help grain handlers recognize features that affect its grade, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service will hold two one-day workshops at the West Texas A&M Ag Pavilion in Canyon. A workshop is offered on August 12 and repeated on August 13 and runs from 9:00am until 4:00pm. Participants will learn the importance of grading grain, become familiar with grain grading standards, develop proper sampling techniques, and identify different types of damage that occur and their potential impacts on grade and feeding value. Participants work hands-on with grain samples to enhance the learning experience.

Registration is open to anyone interested in grain grading.

Workshop cost is \$100.00 per participant and includes lunch. Pre-registration is required since registration is limited to 30 people per day.

For more information, contact:
DeDe Jones at 806.677.5667
or djones@ag.tamu.edu

Registration

Register and pay for Grain Grading at:
<https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu/agec-ev-050>

Pre-registration is required due to class size being limited to 30 participants per day.

Registration deadline is Tuesday, August 11.

Event Schedule

Registration
8:30 am - 9:00 am

Morning Session
9:00 am - 12:15 pm

- Why grade grain?
- Grain quality and the feedlot industry
- Current grain standards and upcoming changes
- Hands-on wheat grading workshop

Afternoon Session
1:00 pm - 4:00 pm

- Hands-on corn grading workshop
- Hands-on sorghum grading workshop

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CATTLE SURVEY

Sand Crack Survey

Responses Needed

Seeking Texas producers' input on sand crack (vertical fissures in the hoof) prevalence and risk factors.

Sand cracks cost producers time and money—your input can help change that. Even if you do not have sand cracks in your herd, we still encourage you to share your feedback with us!

Survey link:

Click [HERE](#) to go to the survey or scan the QR code!



Contact us with questions or if you wish to get a physical copy of the survey to send in



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY
Agricultural Sciences & Natural Resources

Davis College™



Requirements:

- More than 20 head of cattle grazing pasture in Texas
- Survey will take ~5 minutes to complete and ask questions about your cattle herd and production practices
- Answers will be anonymous

Contact Info:

Kennedy Surratt- Undergraduate Researcher:

kesurrat@ttu.edu

Emma Fukuda- Graduate mentor:

emfukuda@ttu.edu

Dr. Whitney Crossland - Principal Investigator

Whitney.crossland@ttu.edu

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Save the Date



- May 29: Field Scout School (Lubbock)
- June 5: Scout School (Bakers Farm, Morton)
- June 12: Scout School (Levelland)
- July 1-2: Soils Camp (Olton)
- July 2: Soil Stewards (Olton)
- July 7-9: Water Well Quality Testing (all counties)
- July 23: Rainwater Harvesting (Littlefield)
- July 30: Bamert Tour (Muleshoe)

Stay tuned to social media and newsletters for more events



<https://agriflifeextension.tamu.edu/counties/castro/>



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



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



<https://twitter.com/KeysToAgronomy>

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