Hog Heaven – or not

Mitigating a hog-wild problem

Heading to check corn only to find trampled fields puts a pit in any farmer's stomach. Yet, this dilemma is all too often the case for farmers in parts of the state – and a growing problem in others. Texans have seen the feral hog population increase over the years, and with millions of dollars in damage.

Though feral hog management has been in place since the 1980s, mitigating thriving hog populations has been difficult for landowners and the state's management authority, Texas Wildlife Service (TWS).

"We have more pigs than we have money," TWS Director Michael Bodenchuk said.

Bodenchuk said funding for management efforts comes from a variety of areas, including the state extension service and independent counties. These funds are now further supported through dedicated farm program funds in the latest farm bill.

"As we were visiting with legislators during the creation of the 2018 farm bill, we discussed all the needs and concerns of agriculturists — beyond the typical risk management and conservation programs that immediately come to mind." David Gibson, the ex-

Heading to check corn only to find ecutive vice president for Texas Corn Producers Association (TCPA), said. "A clear issue we see in Texas is crop destruction from feral hogs."

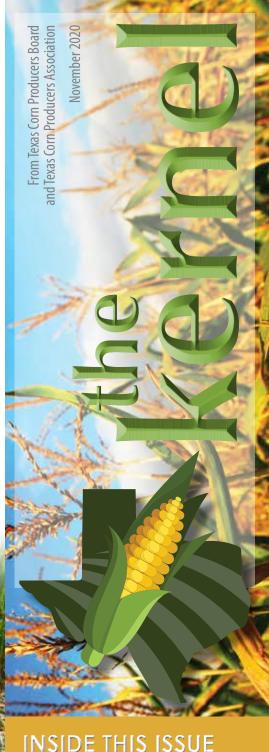
TCPA and other interested parties have been a part of the Texas Feral Hog Task Force through TWS for a number of years. While advances have been made in some areas, there is no inexpensive solution to eradicate feral hogs in the state.

"Knowing the effort needed more dollars in hand, TCPA worked with legislators and their staff to ensure there was an opportunity to provide funds for this dire need for farmers," Gibson said.

The 2018 farm bill created a \$75 million Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot Program (FSCP) to respond to the threat feral hogs pose to agriculture, native ecosystems, and human and animal health.

FSCP is jointly implemented at the national level by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Animal and Plant Health and Inspection Service (APHIS). In Texas, TWS through APHIS is working closely with NRCS on the first phase of the program.





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CORNer Comments



David Gibson TCPB Executive Director TCPA Exec. Vice President

It's been a very interesting market for corn since August 6 when Dec Corn was trading near \$3.20 per bushel in Chicago on Oct. 22, when we saw trade near \$4.20. An unusual harvest rally has certainly given producers a chance to be rewarded in the market, along with much stronger basis than normal. Prices near \$5 per bushel could be had by producers. This is counter to what normally happens in the market when we have harvest pressure pushing prices down and local basis usually also declines a bit at harvest.

This is much more than predictions that had been made earlier in the year and even up to just a few weeks ago. This, in my mind, is due to increased export demand, dry weather in South America, drought in portions of the Midwest, and the Derecho that went across Iowa. I am sure all of you reading this follow different analysts and read or listen to marketing experts from many different sources. Hopefully, many of you were still positioned to take advantage of this increased market for 2020.

As we look ahead to the 2021 crop, July futures have been near \$4.20, while Dec has neared the \$4 mark. I have heard some recommending doing some hedging at this level, and certainly, it is something for producers to consider. It is my understand-

ing that basis contracts for next year are hard to get, but something to discuss with your local buyers of corn. The prices for 2021 are certainly going to be impacted by world growing conditions, which are now currently being forecast. I encourage you to look at and analyze this data to help you make informed decisions, as production around the world will be a major impact against the demand for corn from our major U.S. corn buyers.

The other big impact I see is the effect of COVID-19 going forward. This is hard, if not impossible, for me personally to gauge. We are all hearing forecasts of increasing cases going into the fall and winter, this could certainly have a potential to impact the market.

All these factors and many more will certainly make 2021 an exciting year; hopefully less challenging than 2020, with many opportunities. Watch the weather, watch trade agreements, watch the effects of COVID, be prepared to take opportunities as they arise in the markets and have a great 2021.



Robert Gordon TCPB Chairman Dalhart, Texas

Overcoming challenges. This has been the overwhelming theme for 2020, it seems.

Here the last week of October, I'm writing while looking out on snow-covered fields. An early snow with at least a couple weeks of harvest work ahead is what we'd call a "normal" challenge for farmers. We're used to the ebb and flow of unpredictable Texas weather and what it may bring for our farms.

This year brought additional challenges with a global pandemic impacting many facets of life. From concerns for ensuring health and wellbeing as we planted, cared for and harvested crops to volatile markets when faced with uncertainty, there are certainly additional stresses facing agriculturists.

As the businesses we regularly work with have also been impacted by necessary COVID-19 protocol and procedures, the need for additional planning and lead time for regular farm business has been underscored. Pandemic measures have particularly impacted the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) workload and staffing abilities in this realm.

As farmers have worked with service agencies such as the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Natu-

ral Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for normal farm business, these agencies' workloads have been strained. In many offices there is limited staff that are able to work at a time, and providing contactless and appointment-only services have impacted normal efficiencies for their workflow. Texas Corn Producers Board has kept in communication with these agencies to ensure farmers' interests are known. This has been particularly important with additional programs such as the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program being administered through FSA in addition to typical farm programs.

For farmers, working further in advance on paperwork processing, scheduling appointments, etc. has been essential this year – along with a healthy dose of patience for the agency professionals facing a trying workload.

As always, please reach out to TCPB if you have any concerns or are running into difficulty with needs for your farm.

Texas corn farmers to take national appointments

Five Texas corn farmers are set to take on key advising positions for National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) in 2021. The NCGA Corn Board appointed farmer and staff leaders from across the nation to its action teams and committees.

"Having a voice at this level is vital to ensuring diverse perspectives as national efforts are driven by these action teams and committees," Texas Corn Producers Board Chairman Robert Gordon said. "Committing time away from the farm is never easy, and the dedication of these Texans will prove beneficial to the corn industry as a whole."

The NCGA Corn Board selected farmers for a variety of positions:

- Robert Gordon of Dalhart Corn Political Action Committee
- Kyla Hamilton of Shallowater Member and Consumer **Engagement Action Team**
- Aaron Martinka of Buckholts Risk Management and Transportation Action Team
- Charles Ring of Sinton Sustainability Ag Research Action Team



Chad Wetzel of Sherman Stewardship Action Team

"We look forward to seeing the leadership of these individuals alongside fellow corn farmers from across the nation grow the industry over the next year," Texas Corn Producers Association President Wesley Spurlock said. "It's important to have a Texan perspective brought into the conver-

sation of the teams that guide core programs for the organization's policies and priorities."

Texas Corn Producers appreciates all the leaders that applied for 2021 action teams, and hopes those not appointed this year will apply again in the future. Access the complete list of NCGA action team and committee appointments at TexasCorn.org.

Texan attends national leadership conference

In August, 12 growers across seven states gathered in Chesterfield, Mo., to attend the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) Leadership Academy. Attendees of the 3-day training dove deeper into media training, NCGA action teams and team building exercises.

Texas Corn Producers (TCP) was represented by association board member Kyla Hamilton of Shallowater, Texas. Hamilton talked about the structure of the conference and elaborated on the material covered.

"We worked heavily on accurately communicating agriculture through different forms of media," Hamilton said. "It is always a great idea to get a different set of eyes and ears to give you constructive feedback and teach you new ways to translate the work we are doing on the farm.

The attendees' time was also spent unpacking NCGA action teams and their purposes to help encourage their leadership on the national level. Hamilton said she was able to see the specifics on work being done in those groups that goes beyond reading the team descriptions.

"The NCGA action teams are a terrific chance for Texas farmers to get involved at the national level," Hamilton said. "Our needs and interests differ drastically from producers across the nation and deserve to be spoken for when making decisions to advance the corn industry nationally. There is a lot of progress being made in these teams and I hope Texas producers continue to jump in the mix!"

Aside from concrete skills, Hamilton said the best part of spending her time in Chesterfield was spent across a dinner table from producers whose operations lie outside of the Texas state line.

The network and relationships are what lasts," Hamilton said. "It is always great to check in with the greater farm community and find a feeling of normalcy especially in a time like this. Gaining the skills in the workshops is an added bonus!"

Hamilton has completed the first half of the leadership program. In March of 2021, the 12 producers will trek to Washington, D.C., to visit with lawmakers on Capitol Hill. There are many ways for producers to get involved and grow leadership skills through TCP and its partner organizations such as NCGA. Learn more about the NCGA Leadership Academy, and explore more local opportunities at TexasCorn.org.

THE VOICE: Association News

A note from the President...



Wesley Spurlock TCPA President Stratford, Texas

Texas farmers are used to the unpredictable nature of weather and what the growing season may bring. Looking back over this past year is it is the further volatility our markets faced due to the pandemic rocking the normal flow of goods across the globe.

Earlier this fall, farm income projections from USDA forecast this year's cash receipts to be at the lowest level in more than a decade. This is mounted on rising levels of farm debt and decreased working capital. While a more recent forecast has increased this cash flow some - the fluctuation is likely due to assistance payments due to the pandemic and trade disruptions.

Over the past several months, Texas Corn Producers Association (TCPA) has worked alongside fellow agricultural organizations to keep our legislators and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) informed of the pressures facing farmers this year.

This work has paid off, as the USDA recently announced a \$14 billion expansion of the Coronavirus

certainly no different – but adding to Food Assistance Program (CFAP 2). This program offers crucial financial support to keep the family farm in business.

> Additionally, the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus (WHIP+) offers the potential cover crop losses from 2018 and 2019 due to drought or excess moisture. The US-DA's Farm Service Agency has also indicated we should see a separate signup period for those seeing quality losses in these years.

> Details and resources for these programs are available on the TCPA website at TexasCorn.org.

TCPA is glad to see its efforts come to fruition through programs such as these to support Texas farm families in trying times. While we're in the heat of election season, we want to thank our current legislators for their willingness to listen to America's farmers. We look forward to continuing these efforts with the next congress in 2021.

Mark your calendar for December 17

Association meeting to be held virtually

(TCPA) will hold its annual membership meeting on Dec. 17 from 8:30-10 a.m.

The meeting will be held online with registration open to TCPA members at TexasCorn.org.

"We're hopeful holding this meeting in a virtual format will allow farmers across the state to easily attend, regardless of what they have going on at the farm," David Gibson, the TCPA executive vice president, said.

The complete agenda will be made available online, but is scheduled to include legislative speakers at the federal and state level, as well as an association update from TCPA President Wesley Spurlock.

Additionally, TCPA members will hold elections for five board seats with terms expiring this year. Nominees will be voted on for three At

Texas Corn Producers Association Large seats, as well as a seat in Region 2, which includes the Southern and Rolling Plains, and Region 3, which covers North and Central Texas. Current members with expiring

- Kyla Hamilton, Region 2 Lubbock County
- Larry Mason, At Large Dallam County
- Bart Thoreson, At Large Sherman County
- **Bruce Wetzel, Region 3** Grayson County
- Steven Yoder, At Large Dallam County

TCPA members will also elect officers to a 1-year term. Current offi-

Wesley Spurlock President Sherman County

- **Charles Ring** Vice President San Patricio County
- Jim Sugarek Secretary/Treasurer Bee County

In addition to speakers and regular business, there are opportunities for members to win virtual door prizes throughout the meeting! TCPA hopes all members will take the opportunity to tune into the meeting whether they are in the comfort of their home, at the farm office or in the tractor cab.

Visit TexasCorn.org to register and to get the latest details as they become available!



Feral hog eradication and management

continued from p. 1

"We are to combine forces to try to assess the damage, remove the pigs, help cooperators and restore the damage," Bodenchuk said. NRCS and APHIS established that

these funds and pilot program would be dedicated to states with high-density hog populations, which Texas has the most, according to Bodenchuk.

The program is being rolled out in three separate phases. Texas has three independent projects focused on priority watershed areas in the state through the initial phase of the program: Upper Leon Watershed, the Red River Watershed, and Canadian Watershed. These projects were started in late fiscal year 2019 and have continued through 2020.

This first phase includes a direct control component through TWS, a trap loan component funded by NRCS through the Soil and Water Conservation Districts, as well as community-level and one-on-one outreach is being done.

"Until now, we've just been stomping out fires," Bodenchuk said, "We're going to remove as many pigs as we can get in those watersheds in those county-level projects."

"In fiscal year 2020, the year we just ended Sept. 30, our program [eliminated] more than 36,000 pigs," Bodenchuk continued. "So, we [eliminated a lot of pigs to protect crops and protect natural resources - to keep E. coli out of water systems.

Bodenchuk said that while the state's efforts were very effective at protecting resources, last year's eradication was only about 1.5-2 percent of the hog population.

He continued that producers in these pilot project areas have the opportunity to borrow smart trap systems from NRCS that include cellular cameras and a remote dropping gate.

The second phase of the pilot program is launching soon and focused on crop production areas. The focused areas for this phase are:

- Dallam Co.
- Nueces, San Patricio & Bee Co.
- Williamson & Milam Co.

"We're going to focus on the crop production," Bodenchuk said. "We will be working year-round, but we're going to have a real heavy emphasis pre-planting and through the growing season in those counties.'

Notably, there is not currently a large feral hog population in Dallam County; however, Bodenchuk said the nearby Oklahoma Panhandle has in-

dicated a complete eradication of the pest. He said the goal in this county is complete eradication, and if it's successful to continue pushing that eradication further south.

This pilot project not only gives us more resources, but allows us to focus in on one area where we can make a big difference and then try to demonstrate how much of a difference that is," Bodenchuk said.

Bodenchuk emphasized that he's hopeful that proven success in the pilot project will be rewarded with Congress' renewal of its financial investment in the effort, as well as farmers will see that there is an opportunity to make a noticeable difference on the hog population in the state.

Advocating for farmers' needs such as feral hog mitigation is an integral part of TCPA's mission.

"It's hopeful and fulfilling to see TCPA's conversations in D.C. come back and have a direct return to farms in Texas," Gibson said.

Producers in any of the regions with ongoing FSCP pilot programs that are interested in a cooperative effort to manage feral hogs should contact their local NRCS or Soil and Water Conservation Board.

Successful succession: Estate planning workshops

business succession plan can alleviate worries for individuals currently running the business and lessen the burden on those faced with handling business matters following the loss of a loved one.

Knowing the first steps to take in making a succession plan can be daunting, if not overwhelming - especially for those that are not armed with a legal degree.

That is why Texas Corn Producers is teaming up with Tiffany Dowell Lashmet, an agricultural law specialist with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, to assist Texas farmers

Putting pen to paper for a farm in knowing where to start in gathering the information they need before they even step foot in a lawyer's office to draft a will.

This series of presentations will be held across the state over the next year. The first of this "Successful Succession" series will be held:

- November 23 El Campo, Texas
- November 24 Robstown, Texas

To RSVP and get complete details of these initial events, visit TexasCorn.org.

Future sessions are planned to be held in Central Texas. North Texas and the Panhandle.

Resources from the workshops will also be made available online following the events, including a resource guide and worksheets.

This effort is made possible in part by a grant from the Southern Extension Risk Management Education Center and with collaboration of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

In just a few steps, farmers can feel prepared in developing a succession plan that leaves a clear path of direction for the future of the legacy they've built over decades.

Proposed regulations could tighten Bt corn availability

With an aim to hedge off insect resistance, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently released a regulations proposal that would phase out a number of Bt corn hybrids, as well as some Bt cotton varieties, over the next three to five years. Additionally, it modifies refuge compliance measures.

Amidst growing concerns of insect resistance across the cotton belt, EPA propoed this overhaul of exist-

ing insect resistance management (IRM) in Bt crops. The multifaceted proposal aims to prevent resistance to Vip3a, the last effective toxin for corn earworm/ cotton bollworm.

Entomologist Pat Porter, Ph.D., with Texas

A&M AgriLife Extension, said there are many aspects of this proposal that corrects or improves from what's been done to protect Bt technology over the past 25 years. However, he has concerns about potential negative ramifications from the outlined changes on the farm business and its application in real life.

The structural things, like compli-

ance checking and how we monitor for resistance, that's all good," Porter said. "But I'm afraid of the impact it's going to have on the farmer - to take technology away from our growers."

The EPA proposal seeks input on:

Sales of Bt corn products requiring block refuges must be followed up with an on-farm visit by the seed industry for compliance monitoring during the growing season.

seed dealer fails to ensure that at least 95% of customers sign grower agreements, registrants will restrict the availability of Bt seed to that dealer.

The Industry must ensure the availability of non-Bt elite corn hybrids for refuge.

EPA is accepting comments from stakeholders, including farmers, on its proposal through Nov. 9 online through Docket EPA-HQ-

OPP-2019-0682

regulations.gov.

'Growers are the only group not talking to EPA, but they're the group the EPA wants to hear from the most," Porter said.

He goes on to reiterate that the EPA profes-

sionals working on this issue are eager to hear from the people this will impact the most - the farmers. While these professionals are very knowledgeable, they naturally do not have the hands-on experience to know the impact of how these regulations will play out beyond the theory on paper.

-Pat Porter

"The structural things, like compliance checking and how we monitor for resistance, that's all good. But I'm afraid of the impact it's going to have on the farmer to take technology away from our growers."

- For farmers out of compliance with block refuge standards in the cotton belt for one year, the registrant will withhold all the company's Bt corn products for two years.
- Registrants must ensure that seed dealers obtain signed grower agreements that set forth the terms of the IRM program. If a

Texas producers grow through NCGA's leadership training

National Corn Growers Association's (NCGA) latest work in aiding producers with tools to be better communicators took place on a virtual conference over two days at the end of July. The Corn Ambassador Leadership Training program was created for up-and-coming leaders who wanted to grow their skills in advocacy, leadership development and communication. Participants also learned more on how the association's efforts and resources are allocated.

John and Lydia Abney were two of 18 registrants across six states who attended the online program. The Hillsboro, Texas, farmers reflected on the event as educational, refreshing and useful.

"The conference was really focused on being a leader – It was about stepping up for the corn industry and agriculture as a whole," Lydia Abney said. "It was neat to meet people from across the country who do what we do, feel what we feel, and have them explain their thoughts and concerns in a different voice.

The Texas corn farmers had the opportunity to work with board members, ranchers and farmers from across the United States as the program was built for anyone interested in supporting American agriculture. Lydia explained the event was ideal for agriculturists looking to know more about the value of contributing and being a part of corn associations.

"My biggest take away was learning how important it is to continue to support associations though membership and activities," Abney said. "If you are unsure or curious about the process, or looking for more reasons to become a member, I highly suggest dedicating a couple days to learn more about an organization that works every day for farmers."

Opportunities like the one the Abneys participated happen often, and Texas Corn Producers (TCP) highly encourages its members to maintain involvement with its national partners at NCGA. For producers looking to get involved in association efforts, learn more at TexasCorn.org or NCGA.com.

ODDS and ENDS

Apply by Jan. 1 for TCPA student scholarships

With school in full swing, scholarships are on the radar for our high school seniors and college undergraduates! Investing in student Texas Corn Producers Association (TCPA) members is a high priority and the organization is proud to sponsor four student scholarships to student members for the 2021-2022 school year.

This year, TCPA will award four \$1,000 scholarships to students in two categories. Two \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded to students who are a high school senior as of January

1, 2021, and two \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded to students who are pursuing an undergraduate degree at a participating college or university as of January 1, 2021.

In order to be eligible to receive the scholarship, students must plan to attend a Texas college or university full time and must be a student member with TCPA.

Students who wish to apply must complete the online application and submit a maximum 500—word essay on a pertinent issue facing corn pro-

ducers today. TCPA encourages students to submit a recommendation letter with their application.

TCPA looks forward to awarding student members for their unmatchable leadership, hard work and service they exemplify through their high school career. Applications must be submitted electronically by 5 p.m. on January 1, 2021. Visit https://texascorn.org/education/scholarships/ to complete the online application, submit your written essay and view other eligibility requirements.



National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) is proud to announce its scholarships for the 2020-2021 year!

With a Texas Corn Producers Association student membership, students receive membership in NCGA and may be eligible for a variety of scholarships. NCGA awards:

• Five \$1,500 scholarships to

undergraduate students studying agriculture.

- **Five \$1,000 scholarships** to students that are enrolled in a community college or technical school.
- One \$2,500 scholarship for a graduate or Ph.D. student whose area of research will ben-

efit the corn industry.

Please visit https://ncga.com/scholarship-programs for the online application and more details about specific application requirements for each scholarship. Applications must be submitted electronically by 11:59 p.m. CST December 4, 2020.

TCPA recognizes Tarleton State AFNR scholarship winners

Texas Corn Producers Association (TCPA) awards two agriculture, food and natural resource (AFNR) education students from a Texas university with a \$500 scholarship during their student teaching period.

Congratulations to this year's

scholarship recipients at Tarleton State University: **Jordon Bien** of Whitehouse and **Cameron Price** of Stephenville

TCPA sees value in supporting our scholarship recipients, as this is also a pathway to integrate education on corn

production to high school students.

Interested AFNR education students can get complete details from the faculty in charge of the student teaching block at their university or email TCP Education Director Hannah Dast at education@texascorn.org.

Johnson joins as TCP intern

Sydney Johnson joins Texas Corn Producers as its new communications intern. She grew up in Northeastern New Mexico and graduated from Des Moines High School. Johnson is currently a sophomore pursuing a bachelor's degree in agricultural communications at Texas Tech University.

Johnson was heavily involved in FFA through high school and her freshman year of college, recently finishing her term as the state secretary for the New Mexico FFA Association. Johnson credits her educational foundation and career aspirations to her time in the FFA, as well as being in-

volved in the livestock industry that allowed her to show market lambs and steers. During her time at Texas Tech, she has been involved in many organizations on campus, including Agri-Techsans.

Johnson said her future plans are still not set in stone, but she knows it will involve working in the agricultural industry and is excited for the challenge and the skills she will learn at TCP. She looks forward to implementing her skills she is gaining through her higher education into a professional setting.



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Jarret Bowers, Hartley Co.

Colin Chopelas, Nueces Co.

Dustin Dickerson, Hidalgo Co.

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Upcoming Events

As the COVID-19 situation is still fluid, there are many events moving online or being postponed. Visit www.TexasCorn.org for the most up-to-date list of industry meetings and other upcoming events.

Dec. 2 | Research Committee Meeting | Lubbock Dec. 17 | TCPA Annual Meeting | Virtual Webinar Jan. 6-7 | TCP Board Meetings | Fort Worth

Support our Corporate Members

















Learn how you can become a corporate member at www.TexasCorn.org