

Drought causes shortage of hay; livestock in danger of starvation

By Jamie Conley
Reporter

It looks like it might be a long, cold and possibly hungry winter for some of the livestock in Texas, as almost 30 percent of the state is suffering from a shortage in hay supplies. According to a weekly forage report released by the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, the shortages are most pronounced in East Texas, Northeast Texas, South Texas and the Coastal Bend region. Dr. Chester Fehlis, the state leader for county extension programs, said that drought is the major factor behind the shortage. "The Panhandle and West Texas have received an unusually high percentage of rain," Fehlis said. "But

because East Texas, the state's primary hay producer, has been hit hard by the drought, the hay shortage is more severe than normal."

Fehlis said, however, the shortage will have little effect on the Bryan-College Station area. "The county is a little below normal in its hay supply," he said. "But since we (Bryan-College Station) are traditionally a big supplier, we will still have an adequate amount."

To cattle and horse raisers, the shortage will mean a cost increase in maintaining their livestock during the winter. Along with a 20-40 percent hike in hay prices, some will have to contend with the added ex-

pense of transporting the hay, he said. Because of its bulky nature, the hay is difficult to move, which adds to the transporting price, he said.

There are, however, hay producers in a number of counties with hay for sale, Fehlis said.

To help with the shortage problem, these producers are harvesting as much hay as possible before the end of the growing season this month, he said.

They are hoping to enter the winter season with a large forage to help the 'hay-poor' producers with their supplemental feeding period, he said.

This period begins with the first frost and lasts until the first spring growth.

The county Extension agents in those counties with hay for sale are keeping a current listing of individuals with a surplus of hay and the quantity that is available at this time, Fehlis said.

"To help solve the problem we need to match those people with hay shortages and those with hay surpluses," Fehlis said. "Anyone wanting to buy hay should contact his local county Extension office for assistance."

According to the most recent forage report, 1,012 producers are offering some 75,060 tons for sale.

Counties with the largest volume of hay for sale include Hamilton, Henderson, Leon, Limestone, Randall, Smith and Van Zandt.

Man tears garden apart after break-in

HOUSTON (AP) — Flowers and plants that surrounded a house in a poor neighborhood were uprooted by the man who rented the home after he was forced to move because burglars stole nearly everything he owned. "They (burglars) usually break in once a year, but they hit me two times last week and stole everything but my bedstead and clothes," said Cleveland Turner, 53, who worked five years on the yard and tore it down last week. His home and its bright surroundings had once been a bright spot in Houston's Third Ward. The yard was full of flowers and plants and was surrounded by scraps of lumber that were painted mostly red, blue and green. It also was full of adornments such as plastic swans, a picture of Jesus Christ and a wood cutout of Mickey Mouse. But Turner, frustrated over the two recent burglaries, tore down the bright surroundings and moved from the three-room house to another rental home about two miles away. "I just couldn't cut it anymore," he said.

Congress OK's appropriation to guard endangered species

WASHINGTON (AP) — Legislation is on its way to President Reagan's desk setting aside \$15.5 million to buy the last bit of privately held land on Matagorda Island, wintering grounds for the endangered whooping crane, and to expand a wildlife corridor along the Rio Grande.

The Interior Department appropriations bill authorizes \$10 million for the purchase of approximately 7,700 acres to be added to the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge, home of the bald eagle, peregrine falcon, jaguarundi and ocelot.

The measure, passed by Congress last week, also calls for spending \$5.5 million to purchase 5,017 acres at the southern tip of Matagorda Island, congressional officials say. The purchase will be the federal government's third and final acquisition from the Texas Nature Conservancy for the 11,502-acre Wynne family ranch on the Gulf Coast barrier island south of Victoria.

While ownership of the rest of the 55,396-acre island is split between the state and federal government, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department manages the entire parcel and had sought control of the Wynne ranch.

But officials say politics and personalities entered into the picture, with the prevailing sentiment that

the federal government should manage lands it has purchased under the Endangered Species Act.

State officials, however, say the fight isn't over.

"We're going to try next year to get control of the Wynne property," Mark Schnabel, natural resources coordinator for the Texas Office of State-Federal Relations, said.

The island has emerged as important wintering grounds for the world's only flock of cranes that breeds in the wild, as its population expands and outgrows the traditional winter home on nearby Aransas National Wildlife Refuge.

David Cottom, spokesman for the Texas Wildlife Department, said the agency's proposed plan for the Wynne ranch contended that unified management of all lands on Matagorda would be in the best interest of the habitat and the many species of animals, including 20 that are endangered or threatened.

"We have an excellent record and are recognized nationally for management of wetlands habitat and, in particular, that area where whooping cranes are on the island," Cottom said.

Bruce Thompson, in charge of the state's non-game and endangered species program, said as many as 150 whooping cranes are expected to make the journey this fall

from Northwest Territories, Canada, to Texas. Last year, 134 cranes wintered in Texas.

Another flock of about 20 winters in New Mexico and summers in Idaho, but Thompson said those cranes have not yet reproduced in the wild. A flock of about 40 is kept in captivity at the Patuxent Wildlife Refuge in Maryland.

The \$10 million appropriation for land along the Rio Grande is among the largest single acquisitions for wildlife in Texas approved by the federal government, congressional staffers said.

The land will augment a wildlife corridor between Falcon Dam and the mouth of the Rio Grande, one of the nation's richest areas for plants and animals.

The thorny brushland is home to 56 types of birds and animals facing extinction, says Sen. Lloyd Bentsen, D-Texas. It is the only remaining natural habitat with a subtropical climate in the United States, has the country's only remaining native palm grove, and nine species are on the endangered species list.

Since the establishment of the south Texas refuge, the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife has been able to protect 25,887 acres of land. The service has identified 107,500 acres it would like to see protected, Bentsen said.

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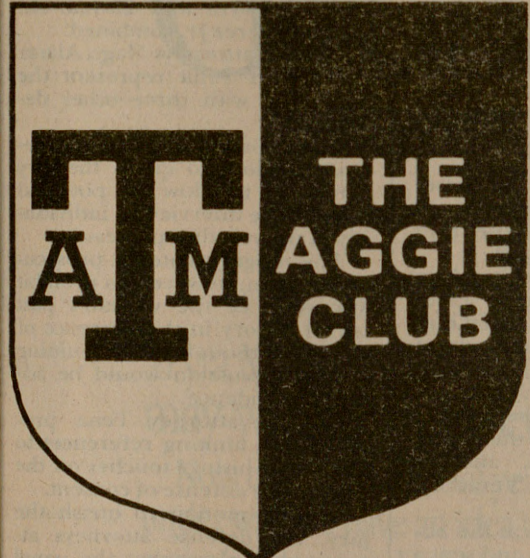
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