

Epidemic of poisoned dogs grips small town

FISHERMAN'S PARADISE, Texas (AP) — Among cedar- and oak-lined hills overlooking the Brazos River, dozens of crosses remind residents that there's trouble in Paradise.

By residents' count, 47 dogs are dead or missing. The poison, strychnine, is an increasingly popular weapon that also killed Texas rodeo horses and other animals this year.

Melissa Drinning recalled the horror of finding three dead dogs in her back yard Jan. 15. A cross in front of her house lists two of the victims, her 6-month-old beagle, Domino, and her mother's year-old Rottweiler, Gypsy.

"I walked down the back stairs and the neighbors' dog, the little white dog Tuffy they had, was dead, lying by the trash can," the teen-ager said. "I saw him and I just started crying, because I loved that dog just like he was my own."

"Then I went around the back of the house and I saw Gypsy by a tree. She was dead," said Ms. Drinning, 18. "I was screaming, hollering and crying. I turned around and saw Domino dead, lying about 15 feet away."

At least some of the dozens of animal poisonings around the state in 1997 are believed to be copycat crimes.

Eighteen horses died at the Van Zandt County Rodeo Arena less than a month after the poison-

ings at Fisherman's Paradise, an unincorporated development about 70 miles southwest of Dallas.

In Wichita Falls, four dogs were poisoned by strychnine-laced food last month.

Although thousands of dollars in rewards are posted in the unrelated attacks, there are no sus-

"Someone could be upset from dogs running around the place and just decided to take care of it themselves."

Pam Jetsel
Sheriff spokeswoman

pects, no leads and no firm motive.

Some residents reported seeing a suspicious truck before the dog poisonings. And 37-year-old Debbie Spears, Ms. Drinning's mother, chased two trespassers from her back yard afterward.

Neither lead has panned out.

"There have actually been dozens of different [poisoning] incidents," said Dr. John Reagor, a toxicologist at Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic

Lab in College Station, where two of the dogs from Fisherman's Paradise were autopsied.

"Some of it is the mimic business. Certainly, it is tailing off now," he said, blaming media coverage about the availability of strychnine-based poisons as a reason for the surge. "In just one day, a couple of weeks after Fisherman's, we had five different cases."

Johnson County Sheriff Bob Alford joined a task force with the county attorney and judge as well as commission members to solve the mystery.

Some residents acknowledge the community has a problem with numerous dogs running loose.

Although Johnson County does not have a leash law, the second spate of dog poisonings in three years at Fisherman's Paradise has prompted new restrictions. Commissioners have directed sheriff's officers to impound wandering dogs believed to be dangerous.

"They are beginning to suspect the culprit could be someone who lives right there," Pam Jetsel, a sheriff's spokeswoman, said of the residents. "Someone could be upset from dogs running around the place and just decided to take care of it themselves."

Tuffy's owner, 62-year-old Reba Horton, said her affectionate Pekingese didn't deserve to die from poisoning.

State

Dallas fails to attract Blockbuster workers

DALLAS (AP) — With most Blockbuster Entertainment Corp. workers opting against following their company from Florida to Texas, up to 600 jobs are up for grabs in the city where the \$3 billion chain started about 11 years ago.

About two-thirds of the 900 headquarters workers for the world's largest video rental company have rejected various relocation packages.

About 40 percent of Blockbuster's available jobs in Dallas pay hourly wages while the remainder are salaried, said Rosanna Durruthy, Blockbuster's vice president of staffing and relocation.

"It's a broad range" of jobs, she said. "From information systems to finance and accounting, retail merchandising and store planning, online technologies, corporate relations, human resources, the office of the general counsel — a bit of everything."

Many of those who chose to stay in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., said they had

family ties there, according to Jonathan Baskin, a Blockbuster vice president.

Others, he said, viewed Dallas as a long way to go for an hourly

Property taxes yield more state revenue

AUSTIN (AP) — Schools, cities and other local governments saw the state level nearly \$16 billion property taxes in 1995, a 3.4 percent increase over the previous year, state comptroller reported Monday.

Texas' property tax bills total \$15.98 billion, with 58.5 percent that going to local school districts. School taxes, which totaled \$8.6 billion, rose 3.5 percent over 1994, report said.

The school levy is the target of George W. Bush's push for a property tax overhaul.

Bush proposes replacing about \$1 billion in local school taxes with a billion state budget surplus, a half sales tax increase and a new business activity tax.

Legislative committees are looking at the school property tax and to see if alternatives can be found

This day in history

(AP) — Today is Tuesday, March 18, the 77th day of 1997. There are 288 days left in the year.

On this date:

In 1766, Britain repealed the Stamp Act.

In 1922, Mohandas K. Gandhi was sentenced in India to six years' imprisonment for civil disobedience. He was released after serving two years.

In 1931, Schick Inc. marketed the first electric razor.

In 1940, Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini held a meeting at the Brenner Pass across the Alps during which the Italian dictator agreed to join in Germany's war against France and Britain.

In 1959, President Eisenhower signed the Hawaii statehood bill.

In 1974, most of the Arab oil-producing nations ended their embargo against the United States.

Five years ago: South African President F.W. de Klerk claimed victory for his reforms a day after a whites-only

referendum on whether to end apartheid. National Football League owners voted to drop the use of instant videotape replays to settle disputed calls during games.

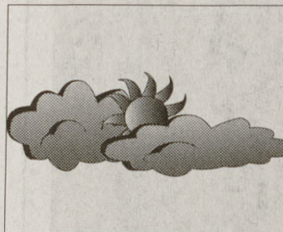
One year ago: Rejecting an insanity defense, a jury in Dedham, Mass., convicted John C. Salvi III of murdering two women in a pair of attacks at two Boston-area abortion clinics in December 1994. Last November, Salvi committed suicide in his cell.

Today's birthdays

Actor Peter Graves is 71. Author George Plimpton is 70. Author John Updike is 65. Former South African president F.W. de Klerk is 61. Country singer Charley Pride is 59. Singer Vanessa Williams is 34. Olympic gold medal speedskater Bonnie Blair is 33. Rock musician Jerry Cantrell (Alice in Chains) is 31. Rock singer-musician Miki Berenyi (Lush) is 30. Rapper-actress Queen Latifah is 27.

Weather

Today



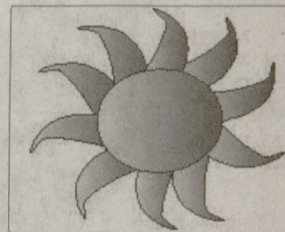
Clearing in the afternoon with a 30 percent chance of rain and NW winds of 20-25 mph.

Tonight



Fair skies and cool with NW winds of 10-15 mph.

Tomorrow



Clear with NW winds of 10-15 mph.

Highs & Lows

Today's Expected High 75°F

Tonight's Expected Low 44°F

Tomorrow's Expected High 68°F

Tomorrow Night's Expected Low 50°F

Information courtesy of TAMU

Class of '00
Room 111
Koldus Bldg.

Class of '99
Room 502
Rudder Twr.

General Class Meeting
Wednesday March 19, 1997
7:00 P.M.



All students are welcome to attend!!!!

Class of '98
Room 707
Rudder Twr.

Class of '97
Room 302
MSC

LOST & FOUND AUCTION

Come and bid on umbrellas, coats, clocks, basketballs, and much more.

Wednesday, March 19
MSC Flagroom
11:00-2:00

Sponsored by:
MSC Hospitality

Spring Swing
All Night! All Country!
featuring 6pm-2am
CHRIS LEDOUX
Cory Morrow Pat Green Highway 6
SATURDAY MARCH 22
The Aggie Wranglers

AGGIECON XXVIII

Presents on March 20-23:

Drew Hayes

Poison Elves

Bruce Sterling

Difference Engine

Dave Doorman

Artist - Star Wars

Arthur C. Clarke

Phone-In Interview

Brian Stelfreeze

Artist - Shadow of the Bat

Plus: Gaming, VLARP, Falkenstein LARP, Movies, Panels, Art Show, Dealers Room, Anime Room, Network Gaming, Masquerade Ball, and Charity Auction to benefit Scotty's House!

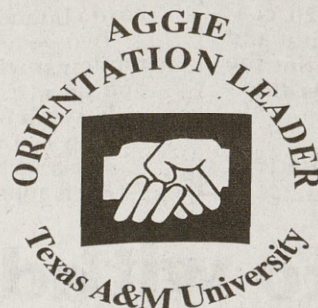
For More Information Contact
MSC Cepheid Variable at 845-1515

Persons with disabilities please call 845-1515 to inform us of your special needs. We request notification three (3) working days prior to the event to enable us to assist you to the best of our abilities.

Want to help New Students? Want to make new friends?

Become an O.L.!

Join the Aggie Orientation Leader Program



Information Sessions:
March 18 & 19, 8:30pm
Rudder 401

Applications:
Available at 314 YMCA
Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm

Applications Due March 21, 314 YMCA
For more information - Call 862-2746

"Headin' in the Right Direction...Aggieland, U.S.A."

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