"Working hand-in-hand with its Texas A&M System partners, the state legislature, and the communities it serves, the mission of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service to serve Texans through community-based education has remained unchanged for almost a century."
Family Consumer Science

Child Care Programs
Walk Across Texas
Mini-Society - Making a Job
Better Living for Texans Program
Mother & Daughter Programs
Child Care Programs

Child care providers nurture and care for our future, our children. These individuals are responsible for children's early care and learning. They play a vital and important role in children's development by caring for them and attending to their needs. The need for "trained child care providers is in demand in order to meet the growing volume of children needing childcare.

For the past 15 years Texas AgriLife Extension Service has been hosting conferences and programs that support care givers who directly influence children's well being. Extension is committed to strengthening the quality of child care and training these providers in areas that meets the needs of young children and enhances their development and readiness for school.

Extension partners with Headstart and Hillcountry Child Care Providers Association each year in hosting an annual conference. This year 215 child care providers earned valuable clock hours necessary to maintain their license that is required for licensed facilities and registered homes.

Walk Across Texas

Overweight and Obesity have reached epidemic proportions and have become one of the most critical health issues of our nation. Overweight is an issue of all age groups, all races, and all social-economic groups, approximately 60% of adults in the U.S. are overweight.

The causes are multifaceted. Both behavioral and environmental factors contribute to the rise in overweight children. Societal changes have reduced opportunities for physical activity.

The solution to the overweight crisis is: eat less and move more.

In response to this Extension had 2 schools that received pedometers and participated in the Walk Across Texas program. Classrooms reported they walked an average of 135 miles in 6 weeks. 90% of the students reported that walking made it easier for them to meet fitness goals. Over half of the children reported a more positive attitude towards fitness and walking.
Texas AgriLife Extension Service is partnering with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and Cooper Institute to host a Walk Across Texas friendly challenge that will motivate TEA and independent school district (ISD) employees, students, and their families to move more and have fun, too.

**Mini Society – Making a Job**

A total of 50 volunteers were trained on the Mini-Society/Making a Job curriculum. This curricula primarily teaches entrepreneurship, economics, citizenship, career exploration and targets students ages 8 – to high school.

Students with the guidance of trained volunteers resolved, various situations involving fundamental economic issues of scarcity and allocation of resources. The students learned to identify opportunities and completed ventures that provided goods and services to their community. A total of 7,288 participated in the program. They reported they

- Had fun learning
- Gained empowerment
- Recognized the importance of academic achievement
- Punctuality, how things done on time pay off
- Made flags and developed business cards
- Learned how to acquire resources
- Gained respect for money
- Importance of cooperation and teamwork
- Importance of setting goals and how to achieve them
- Learned about career opportunities

**Better Living for Texans Program**

The BLT program has been operating in Starr County for 14 years providing educational information programs to food stamp applicants and other approved audiences. The program objective is to improve the families’ ability to plan and prepare nutritious meals, stretch the food dollars, and prepare & store food safely! The program is delivered through a variety of teaching methods that reflect the audience needs. Most of the classes are conducted in Spanish. Teaching methods include, lesson series, single educational events one on one consultations, demonstrations and tours.
During 2009 an overwhelming majority of the clients reported that after participating in the programs:

They intended to plan their meals all the time
They will compare prices at the grocery store
They were now practicing safer food storing practices
They now perceived their ability to prepare nutritious meals as "good" or very good

A total of 1,303 youth also participated in nutrition programs.

Mother & Daughter Programs

A total of 5 educational programs were conducted for Mothers' & Daughters' centered around the purpose of building a stronger bond between one of the most important relationships in a family. This relationship helps determine many developmental aspects for the daughter because she looks to her mother as a role model.

Several steps on building stronger relationships were addressed such as listening to each other, avoiding stereotypes, working together on building self esteem, fostering relationships and circle of mutual friends and setting goals and ambitions and helping each other achieve them.

Do Well Be Well

Addressing Diabetes Among Starr County Residents

An increasing body of evidence suggests that diabetes constitutes a major health burden among the Mexican-American population. Comparison of the rate in Starr County to those of the general U.S. population indicate a two to five fold greater risk in Starr County. In terms of impact on this community, these results imply that over 50% of individuals older than 35 years of age are directly affected by diabetes by virtue of them having the disease or by being a first degree relative of a diabetic. Starr County had one of the highest prevalence rates of type 2 diabetes in the entire country, and the highest death rate due to diabetes in Texas.

Classes to address this major health concern have been conducted by Texas AgriLife Extension Service. Cooking Schools designed and tailored to local diabetics were held for several groups during the year.

In 2010 a Spanish curriculum will be pilot tested in Starr County. The program includes Spanish novellas filmed here in Starr County.
Agriculture & Natural Resource

4H Youth & Development Program
- Kids & Kows & More
- Hunters Education Program
- 1st Annual Vaquero 4H Kids Fish
- 4H Monthly Newsletter

Agriculture & Natural Resource
- Water Well Screening Program
- Drought Management
**4H YOUTH & DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

Enrollment Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4-H Enrollment 2007-2008</th>
<th>4-H Enrollment 2008-2009</th>
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<tr>
<td>Club Member</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>220</td>
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<tr>
<td>School Enrichment</td>
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<td>356</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Interests</td>
<td>9,355</td>
<td>1,303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10,171</td>
<td>1,879</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Kids & Kows & More**

Over 1,500 4th grade students from Rio Grande City, Roma, Immaculate Conception, and San Isidro along with their teachers have attended the Kids & Kows & More Agriculture Literacy Program for the last four years. During the event, students visit exhibits that represent important food & agriculture commodities that are important in our region. Students also learn how these commodities help farmers and ranchers establish a profitable income.

This educational program is sponsored by the local Farm Bureau and is assisted by all members in the Texas AgriLife Extension Service Office in Starr County.

**Hunters Education Program**

Texas law now requires licensed hunters born after September 2, 2009 to have undergone a mandatory two day ten hour hunter’s education program. Texas Parks & Wildlife Game Wardens issue numerous citations to hunters that do not comply with the law. Many of these hunters are not aware of the law and others do not have opportunities to attend a training due to schedule conflicts and availability of local trainings.

This year, the local 4H program teamed up with local game wardens and the Knights of Colum-
included educational presentations from five different instructors. These trainings are sure to increase firearm safety as well as interest in the outdoors.

**1st Annual Vaquero 4H Kids Fish**

Young people are far removed from outdoor recreational activities now than ever before. This is attributed to lack of opportunities, as well as time. Falcon Lake offers a wealth of opportunities for our local youth that is not taken advantage of. Many of these youth can take advantage of fishing opportunities at minimal cost.

Vaquero 4H teamed up with the Starr County 4H Program, Texas Parks & Wildlife, U.S. Fish & Wildlife and Falcon Lake Park to host a one day kids fishing day at Falcon Lake. The event brought together over 215 Starr County youth. The participating youth had the opportunity to learn about boat safety, ride on a boat with local game wardens, fish and spend time outdoors with friends and family. Over 20 businesses contributed to the success of this program.

*Kids are looking forward to next year’s Kids fish*

**AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Water Well Screening Program**

A large portion of Starr County Citizens rely on private wells as their main source of drinking water. Regular monitoring is not required for private groundwater wells, so many private wells are only tested once after being drilled. Thus, it is critical to periodically evaluate each well to make sure that the water is safe for consumption.

To easily and accurately ensure the quality of the drinking water, Texas AgriLife Extension rec-
ommends that private water wells be tested yearly. The water test takes approximately 15 minutes to perform, and the results are known within 48 hours.

The local Extension Agriculture and Natural Resource Committee offered a free water well screening program for Starr County landowners in the fall of 2008 and spring of 2009. Over 50 private wells were sampled for nitrates, coli form bacteria and salinity. Results of these tests were shared with each of the participants. Recommendations were also discussed to improve the quality of water. Of particular importance was the high amount of nitrates found in water wells in the northern part of the county. Over 80% of the samples that were submitted contained unacceptable levels of nitrates. Nitrates cause numerous amounts of health risks. These health risks were also discussed in length with the participants.

Drought Management

Much of Texas has suffered from drought in late 2008 and 2009, leading to a hay shortage as well as other drought-related problems. The situation is compounded by high supplemental feeding and fuel costs. Let us hope that additional rain will be abundant this fall, but the local agriculture and natural resource committee along with Starr county Extension Agents made numerous efforts this year to offer risk management alternatives to local agriculture producers.

Pasture insurance is new risk management alternative offered to local landowners that were only offered to crop producer in the past. Many of our local landowners are not aware of this alternative and are therefore not participating in a program that can offer monetary relief during times of drought. A local educational program was offered to local producers to provide them with the information about this risk management program.

Local agents also teamed up Southwest Texas Cattle Raisers Association to offer an educational event to discuss drought management strategies for livestock producers and wildlife managers. This program was very well attended with over sixty producers from Starr and surrounding counties.

Agents also worked with the Farm Service Agency local committee and director to assess the drought damage and compile a report to provide relief to Starr County agriculture producers. The relief, if approved by the governor's office, will come in the form of low interest loans designed to assist with operating costs.
2009 Starr County Youth Fair "Hats Off to Our Youth"

4H Community Service Projects

Pedro S. Saenz

4H Show Projects

This is to announce the district wide community projects are being planned for April 2009. There are a variety of projects that students can participate in.

4H Recordbook Training

This is to announce the 4H Recordbook Training for Tuesday, May 19th of 2009. The workshop will be from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM. The training will be held at the Starr County Extension Office. The training will cover the basics of recordkeeping.

4H Club Officer Elections

We are running the 4H club officer elections for the 2009-2010 term. The election will be held on May 26th, 2009. The election will be held at the Starr County Extension Office. The election will be open to all 4H members.

4H Gold Star Award

Smaller towns and counties are preparing for the Junior Gold Star Award. The award will be presented to the members who have shown outstanding performance.

4H Fashion Show

This is to announce the 4H Fashion Show will be held on May 19th, 2009. The Fashion Show will be held at the Starr County Extension Office. The Fashion Show will feature 4H members displaying their fashion skills.

4H Leadership Quest

This is to announce the 4H Leadership Quest will be held on May 19th, 2009. The Leadership Quest will be held at the Starr County Extension Office. The Leadership Quest will feature 4H members demonstrating their leadership skills.

District 12 4H Events

This is to announce the District 12 4H Events for the month of April 2009. The events will be held on April 14th, 2009.

4H Steel Rattle Raffle

George Strait Raffle

This is to announce the George Strait Raffle will be held on April 14th, 2009.

4H Club Sweethearts

This is to announce the 4H Club Sweethearts will be held on April 14th, 2009.

4H RV Show

This is to announce the 4H RV Show will be held on April 14th, 2009.

Youth Fair Queen's Pageant

This is to announce the Youth Fair Queen's Pageant will be held on April 14th, 2009.

4H Float Takes Top Prize

This is to announce the 4H Float Takes Top Prize will be held on April 14th, 2009.

4H Club Meetings This Month

This is to announce the 4H Club Meetings This Month will be held on April 14th, 2009.

County Agent's Corner

This is to announce the County Agent's Corner will be held on April 14th, 2009.
"Ag-News"
PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION PROGRAM
(STARR County)

Bull Gain Test & Heifer Development Field Day

EDINBURG -- Tender, juicy rib-eye steaks don't just happen; it's a science that requires dedication, hard work and pertinent herd information on the part of cattle ranchers.

To help ranchers develop data to improve the productivity of their herds, a field day was held on April 4 at the Rio Beef Feedyard in Linn, Texas.

For 11 years the Rio Grande Valley Beef Improvement Association has conducted a very successful program known as the Bull Grain Test and Heifer Development Program. It's designed to give ranchers the information they need to improve their herds.

Ranchers pay a membership fee to deliver bulls and heifers to a feedlot where they are monitored and evaluated for 112 days. The information gathered helps them select the higher-performing animals for their herds.

Among the data collected, ultrasound is one of the measures used to monitor the rib-eye area and back-fat thickness.

This year, 86 bulls and 102 heifers were delivered to the feedlot in November. At this field day, data was provided to those ranchers who participated and a demonstration and explanation of the program was provided to other ranchers who might be interested next year. The event also featured a private-treaty sale in which bulls in the gain test were available for purchase.
"Free Water Well Testing Program"

Wells should be tested annually. The presence of fecal coliform in water indicates that feces (bodily waste from humans or animals) may have contaminated the water. Water contaminated with feces have microorganisms present that can cause an number of "waterborne" diseases such as cholera, typhoid and dysentery.

Nitrate in ground water at levels of 10 milligrams per liter mg/L or parts per million is considered unsafe for human consumption. Nitrate levels above 10 mg/L can disrupt the blood's ability to carry oxygen throughout the body. Nitrate is converted to nitrite which combines with hemoglobin, the chemical that carries oxygen in the blood, to form methemoglobin. Oxygen can not bind with methemoglobin, therefore, oxygen is not carried throughout the body. As a result, oxygen starvation occurs. This condition is called methemoglobinemia. If left untreated, death may result. Infants less than 6 months in age and young livestock are most susceptible.

The Starr County office of Texas AgriLife Extension and the Cooperative Extension Program sponsored a water well screening day for area residents on Tuesday, April 7, 2009 at the Starr County Extension Office located at 500 N. Britton Rio Grande City, Texas.

This well screening day is designed to inform private water well owners and users on the condition of their well water of possible contamination from common contaminants. These contaminants are fecal coliform, salinity and nitrate.

You will need to pick up a sample bag and instructions from the Starr County AgriLife Extension office. You can contact the Starr County Extension office by calling (956) 487-2306 to receive an approved water sampling bag and instructions for taking your well water sample. It is very important that only sampling bags from the Starr County Extension office be used and all instructions for proper sampling followed to insure accurate results. This service will be free of charge on this day.

A meeting explaining screening results will be held on Thursday, April 9, 2009 at 6:00pm at San Isidro Parish Hall.

News & Notes:

Due to the poor moisture conditions we have had in Starr County, the 2009 Grain Sorghum Variety Trial will be moved to the Fall. We will keep you informed if there are any changes in this program. As of this result, we will be working on conducting a Bermuda Grass Variety Trial in and around the La Gloria, Texas area. Several replications will be provided in the dry land area.

TDA secures exemption to control sandburs in pastures

Texas

The Texas Department of Agriculture has been granted approval by the Environmental Protection Agency to issue a Section 18 specific exemption allowing the use of pendimethalin (Prowl H20) to control sandbur species in Bermuda grass pastures and hay fields.

At a time when drought has severely limited forage production, eliminating sandburs will assist in the recovery of pastures and improve grazing and hay opportunities in the event of rainfall.
Continuation from next page

Prowl may be used following all directions, restrictions and precautions on the product label, as well as restrictions within the exemption notice. The exemption expires June 30.

Applications can only be made by certified applicators, licensed applicators or persons under the direct supervision of licensed applicators.

For more information, contact your county Texas AgriLife Extension Service office or TDA at 512-463-7544 or 800-TELL-TDA. A copy of the approval notice is located on the TDA website at www.TexasAgriculture.gov.

Texas Bovine Trichomoniasis (Trich) Control Program

*Facts for Cattle Owners*
Bovine trichomoniasis (Trich) is a venereal disease caused by a protozoan, Tritrichomonas fetus. Because Trich is such an insidious disease, it is best to prevent exposure rather than controlling or attempting to eradicate the disease. The primary production and/or economic impact of the disease is on cows and results in infertility, abortions, and often an extended breeding/calving season. Bulls become infected by breeding infected cows. The protozoa resides in the crypts or microscopic folds on the surface of the bull’s penis and internal prepuce. Infected bulls show no symptoms. Laboratory tests are available to determine the presence of the infection in a bull. There is no effective treatment for an infected bull! Cows and heifers become infected when bred to infected bulls. The protozoa resides in the vagina, cervix, uterus, placenta, and fetus. Infected cows and heifers show few if any visible symptoms. With extended periods of sexual rest (120-150 days), most cows will rid themselves of the infection. For more information on prevention and management of Trich contact your Extension professional or veterinarian.

Small Farm Outreach Up-Dates

Low Interest Loans for 4-H Members
Livestock projects continue to be some of the largest areas of participation in Texas 4-H. This information may be valuable to many youth and families who need a little financial assistance to start and/or support those projects. You might be able to get local assistance from your county USDA-FSA office including applications and technical assistance in completing them.

USDA-Farm Service Agency makes loans to individual rural youth to establish and operate income-producing projects of modest size in connection with their participation in 4-H clubs. Each project must be part of an organized and supervised program of work. The project must be planned and operated with the help of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan, and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience.

You may link onto the web site listed below or contact Vidal H. Saenz at (956) 383-1026 or 1-800-638-8239 or Ronnie Zamora at (956)487-2306 to answer many common questions about the program which allows for a maximum loan amount of $5,000 based on the size and type of project being supported.

Calander/Events

Water Well Screening Deadline........April 7
Water Well Screening Program.........April 9
Forage/Prescribed Burn Program......April 29
CEP Goat Field Day ....................May 2
CEP Small Farm & Ranch Field Day .June 5
TAES Water Conference...............June 6

Prairie View A&M University

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION PROGRAM

STARR COUNTY

500 N. Britton
Rio Grande City, Texas
78582

Phone: (956) 487-2306
Fax: (956) 716-8197
E-mail: r-zamora@tamu.edu

MISSION

To deliver research based, informal education focused on identified issues and needs to Texans with primarily limited resource, diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Important Facts

- In 1915 the Texas State legislature assigned state Extension functions to Prairie View A&M College.
- Today, the Cooperative Extension Program (CEP) is the primary educational outreach arm of the university, disseminating research-based knowledge to benefit primarily limited resource audiences in rural and urban Texas.

"Taking the University to the People"

The Cooperative Extension Program serves people of all ages regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, disability, political beliefs, and marital or family status. (Not all classes are protected by legal statutes).

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, Act of September 29, 1977 in cooperation with the U. S. Department of Agriculture and Texas AgriLife Extension. Freddie L. Richards, Sr. Interim Administrator—Cooperative Extension Program, Prairie View A&M University.
Commercial Heifer Pen set for 2010 Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show

Cooperative Extension Program agent Ronnie Zamora and AgNR President Fausto Salinas Jr. serve on the Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show Commercial Heifer Pen Show Committee. They have been working on establishing a new cattle event that targets commercial cattle breeders in South Texas. The purpose and mission of this program is to provide cattle producers with an informative, highly visible cattle pen show that recognizes the connection between the commercial cattle producer and the purebred producer. It will also provide cattle producers with an event to promote consumer satisfaction and quality assurance through the use of technology, genetics, and good production practices. "We are very excited to be a part of this event," stated Mr. Salinas. "We would like to invite all South Texas commercial cattle producers to be part of this first annual show by exhibiting your cattle." "This year we will not be having a heifer sale, but you will have the opportunity to showcase your heifers and advertise," stated Zamora. As we expect this show to grow, we will be looking at a possible heifer sale in the future. For now, we are working on placing the rules and regulations in order and will try to have more information on this event. Once we have the guidelines in order, we will be advertising this event in the R.Y. Weekly Market Report. If you would like more information on this event please contact Ronnie Zamora at (956) 487-2306 at the Starr County Extension office.

Commercial Heifers at Starr Co. Youth Fair
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Bermuda Grass Variety Trial

On June 18 agent Zamora worked together with co-worker Vidal Saenz, extension loan advisor, Omar Montemayor, county Extension agent—AgNR and Cooperative Extension Program specialist—AgNR, Billy Lawton, on planting a variety Bermuda Grass trial provided by Prairie View A&M University Cooperative Extension Program. This trial will be conducted in Hidalgo County on Depot Road and Monte Christo Road. Three varieties were planted at Pedro Cantus Farm. The purpose of this trial is to compare side-by-side plots of seeded Bermuda-grass varieties (Cheyenne II, Ranchero Frio and Mohawk) in replicated plots of 1/3 acre each. Each variety will be replicated three times to ensure valid data.

Agent Zamora collecting soil sample

Fever Tick-Starr County

CEP Agent Ronnie Zamora working with local cattle rancher and Texas Animal Health Tick Inspectors by corralling and restraining cattle to scratch and check for fever ticks in Alto Bonito, Texas. At this time more work still needs to be done to control this fast growing problem in Starr, Zapata and Hidalgo counties. Temporary quarantines have been issued for portions of several counties outside the permanent quarantine zone along the Texas-Mexico border. We would like to invite everyone to attend a follow up program on this issue on August 12, 2009 at R.Y Livestock Sales, 10:00 a.m. Dr. Bob Hillman, Texas Animal Health State Veterinarian, will be the guest speaker.
4-H & Youth Development

Driscoll Children’s Hospital

Agent Ronnie Zamora was involved in several planning meetings with the Driscoll Children’s Hospital on the South Texas Cattlemen’s Roundup Program. Local volunteer coordinator Ronnie Alaniz-Garcia has worked with Maggie Rodriguez, Sam Rodriguez Fausto Salinas Jr. and long time sponsor Gerald Eckel. They have done an outstanding job in the planning and coordinating of this event. They have spent long hours by reaching contributors and donations from ranchers in support of the Driscoll Children’s Hospital. This event has been around for many years in Starr County raising funds to help children in need of medical services. Agent Zamora is involved in working with 4-H club managers and members by reaching out to the community agriculture clientele and families that could help in contributing donations that will be sold at a fundraising auction. In the past only a few 4-H clubs were involved in this activity, but this year all Starr County 4-H Clubs were involved.

Starr County Mini Society 2009

Cooperative Extension Program agent Ronnie Zamora worked with the Mini-Society project collaborating with co-worker Yolanda Morado. Children from the Las Lomas Community Center and the Rio Grande City ISD listened to presentations about various careers and what they will need to do to prepare for a profitable future. Approximately 375 students filled out job applications, looked at newspaper job ads and participated in various exercises that engaged them in thinking about career choices. The children also explored some summer job opportunities that are available and how to secure resources to get started. Some planned on working for themselves by setting up lemonade stands, washing cars, baby sitting, doing yard work, holding garage sales, and doing chores for neighbors, family and friends.

Low Interest Loans for 4-H Members

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http://www.fsa.usda.gov/dafl/youth%20loans.htm
News/Notes

• The TCEQ has established three water sites in Starr County. These sites will monitor water quality (pH), temperature, and levels every 15 minutes in the Rio Grande. View online at: http://starr-co.tamu.edu/, Look for Rio Grande Monitoring Station.

• Tractor sales in the U.S. are down 19 percent from a year ago and nearly 22 percent year-to-date, according to the Association of Equipment Manufacturers. Compared to June 2008, the sale of four-wheel drive tractors is down 4.4 percent while two-wheel drive sales are off 19 percent. However, combined sales are up 20 percent. Total retail sales reported are significantly lower than the five-year average.

• Relief from an almost two-year drought could arrive in Central Texas in the form of El Niño, according to a recent story in the Austin American Statesman—but probably not until November. Scientists with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration say that El Niño, the periodic warming of the Pacific Ocean, has arrived. For Central Texas, that weather typically means rain, and lots of it. For example, from November 1991 to January 1992, Austin saw just under 20 inches of rain, nearly triple the 7-inch average for those months.

Calendar/Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Starr County 4-H Camp</td>
<td>July 24</td>
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<tr>
<td>District 12 4-H Round-Up</td>
<td>July 25</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-H Fishing Tournament</td>
<td>Aug 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fever Tick &amp; Pasture Insurance Program</td>
<td>Aug 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beef Cattle Work Shop (Hidalgo)</td>
<td>Aug 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pesticide Applicators License Training</td>
<td>Aug 27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth Hunters Education</td>
<td>Aug 29/30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extension Crop Program/Interpretation Event</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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Freddie L. Richards, Sr., Administrator—Cooperative Extension Program, Prairie View A&M University.