



# AgReview



## Calendar Ag News

Sept. 15-19

**TEXAS PRODUCE** growers will hold the 2nd Annual Texas Produce Convention and Trade Show will be Sept. 15-19 in the South Padre Island Convention Centre.

Information is available from the Texas Vegetable Association, 210-687-7250.

Sept. 16-17

**SOUTHWEST BEEF** Efficiency Enhancement Forum will take place in Lubbock. The new program coincides with the Golden Spur weekend. Topics include enhancing beef quality, communicating value to the consumer and genetic management for quality. Contact is Dr. Ronnie Green at 806-742-2805.

Oct. 3

**EXCEL MEAT JUDGING** — The 13th Annual Excel High Plains Intercollegiate Meat Judging Contest will be held all day in state-of-the-art facilities in the Excel Plainview Division plant north of Plainview.

## Strong FFA program benefits the ag-inclined

■ **High school signs up 30 percent of student body in standout FFA chapter**

By GORDON ZEIGLER

AgReview Writer

**H**ALE CENTER — In a town like Hale Center, nestled in the heart of the South Plains ag region, you'd expect to see a strong interest in youth ag activities.

But finding 30 percent of the student body signed up in FFA, that's almost mind boggling. Out of approximately 140 in high school, a total of 42 are active in FFA.

Such a participation level may be seem surprising, yet the trend at Hale Center is similar to that in many other smaller ag-based towns in the region, believes Danny Ivy, Hale Center ag teacher and FFA chapter advisor for 18 years.

"What we are doing is drawing kids that are not all actively involved in agriculture," explained Ivy. "And, a big drawing card in our area, is our county stock show. When we moved our county show from March to January several years ago the quality of our stock show doubled. It is tougher now, and very competitive."

Parental participation — especially among some parents who are Ivy's own former students — also boosts Hale Center Programs, Ivy said.

For example, Brian Patterson, a former student of Ivy's, has two children in the program and is an active booster. Harold Needham went through Ivy's FFA program, and is a loyal chapter booster, though his own children are not old enough to take part.

Hale Center's strong participation



**FFA SCHOLARS** — Aaron Rambo (left), Heather Isbell, Andrea Ahrens and Jennifer Ahrens were able to win scholarships through high school FFA activities.

in FFA activities as well as academics in general has reaped some tangible benefits for some of its seniors of 1992. Their activities and academics helping them qualify for valuable keys to the future, in the form of ag scholarships.

Aaron Rambo won a Wix Foundation \$1,000 FFA scholarship and a \$10,000 Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Scholarship. He enters Texas A&M this fall to study landscaping management and horticulture.

Heather Isbell and Andrea Ahrens won \$1,000 Cargill Scholarships through the National FFA Foundation.

Jennifer, Heather and Andrea also won a \$250 Hale County Livestock Show scholarship and a \$500 scholarship went to Aaron Rambo, who won the county's lamb

showmanship honor in 1992.

Another indicator of success in FFA is the winning of the top national award — the American Farmer degree.

Last year that award went to Gregg Sherrod, a Hale Center ex studying ag communications.

This year, the Hale Center chapter has learned that the award will soon go to another ex, John Ivy, who an ag student at Clarendon College and member of the school's nationally-acclaimed livestock judging team.

Ivy knows of only two other Hale Center students ever to win the national honor — Ronald Groves, whose daughter is an FFA student now, and Tommy Louthan.

For the past two summers in a row at least five students have been

See FFA, Page 6

## Texans harvest rich life on the farm

### ■ Elite list wins the field

By WORTH WREN JR.

Fort Worth Star-Telegram

She didn't ask for accolades.

Nancy Koehl, 34, doesn't have much time to think about publicity. In the Columbus-Alleyton area of Southeast Texas, the wife of hog and cattle farmer Kenneth Koehl has plenty of chores.

Koehl, who is pregnant with their third child, is finishing her master's degree in library science at Sam Houston State University. She teaches English to 85 high school seniors. And she's the librarian at a nearby junior high school.

Koehl, mother of 8-year-old daughter Erin and 6-year-old son Jacob, is also the farm's bookkeeper. She's using the computer

for both schoolwork and the farm's financial data and plans soon to catalog the farm's extensive hog breeding records. And occasionally Koehl helps her husband and father-in-law, Leslie Koehl, with hog farming chores.

The Koehls are among 26 farm and ranch families recognized recently in the fourth annual *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* Farm and Ranch Awards. The honors go to farmers and ranchers who are rated by agricultural experts as being among the most productive, innovative, hard-working and efficient in the state.

Lifelong Texas farms and ranches routinely takes the fast lane. The historical image of rural isolation doesn't fit today's realities. Just ask the women.

Family life, civic life, recreation and business get intermingled at Kay and Jody Bezner's Panhandle

**'Women fill many roles: worker, wife, mother. Those who work the earth take on even more responsibility, and some do it very well. . . .**

farm home, 22 miles from the big town of Dalhart and 15 miles from the little town of Texline.

The Bezners are known for their cost-cutting and efforts to conserve water, soil, tillage and energy on irrigated fields. They raise feed corn for livestock, wheat and beef cattle on about 7,500 acres of owned and leased land.

"Jody has made his family the top priority, but he's also a workaholic farmer," says Kay Bezner, a former home economist for the Texas Agricultural Extension Service and a former schoolteacher. "It's intense

farming and family life, integrated, a full family partnership."

Kay Bezner, who is now a volunteer worker for a Dalhart latchkey-children's program, adds, "I haven't looked at being isolated as being a problem."

Having trekked the Texas stock show circuit with their three sons, Kay Bezner is also a volunteer to help 4-H youngsters showing livestock.

Ettie Ola "Boots" Bezner, Kay's mother-in-law, combines 4-H support with volunteer work at a Dalhart hospital, the Dalhart Chamber of Commerce and a loc-

al museum. She also works with her husband, A.J. "Doc" Bezner, 76, in his efforts to raise money for the Dalhart Senior Citizens Center.

Camille Bezner, Kay and Jody's daughter-in-law and wife of Michael Bezner, grew up helping her father and brother with farm and cattle chores and loves being on the farm. She's teaching 24 preschoolers, ages 3 and 4, at a Dalhart school.

She has joined in doing cattle chores with the Bezner men: Michael, 26; brothers Mitchel, 22, and Stephen, 18; and their father, Jody, 51. With her husband, she is restoring a classic old home in Dalhart.

Women have traditionally worked on and off the farm so the family could stay on the farm.

Glenda, Jeanne and Kelly Cobb, the wives of dairy farmers near Rio Vista in

Johnson County, are farm workers.

Glenda, wife of Jack Cobb, 60, handles bookkeeping and other family chores. Daughters-in-law Jeanne and Kelly often join their husbands, Byron and Craig Cobb, respectively, in feeding, hauling, milking and otherwise tending cows or driving tractors.

Marie Richardson, 61, one of Texas' best down-home cooks, also prefers to be working outside, particularly on horseback, in far West Texas.

She helps on the 55,000 leased and owned acres where her husband, Rod Richardson, and daughter and son-in-law, Mike and Mary Jo Jernigan, run about 4,500 Rambouillet ewes and 1,750 lambs in the Pecos River country.

Understandably, the work isn't always pleasant,

See AWARDS, Page 7

# Some TALL Texans

By GORDON ZEIGLER  
AgReview Writer

**AMARILLO** — What does it take to be a TALL Texan?"

Randy Darnell, a Randall County farmer, is one of a select group of farmers, ranchers, bankers, lawyers and ag professionals — a group of 24 Texans aged 27 to 40 — who are part of the Texas A&M TALL-III class.

He joined his classmates recently during an intensive three-day tour of agri-industries, farms and ranches recently in Amarillo.

TALL is an A&M Extension Service-sponsored program to teach leadership skills to the state's future ag leaders. The TALL acronym stands for Texas Agricultural

## About TALL:

The Texas Agricultural Lifetime Leadership program now has more than 100 applicants for its next class, according to John Sykes, TALL coordinator, who comments the acceptance process for the program, "is getting pretty competitive."

Stated purpose of TALL is to prepare young men and women, dedicated to agriculture, for leadership.

TALL includes seminars with experts, on-site tours, meetings with business and government leaders, interregional study and personal skills improvement.

It is funded by dedicated individuals and institutions through private gifts and grants. Participants pay a tuition and the Texas Agricultural Extension Service provides administrative support.

To date, 50 Texans have competed the extensive training program. These TALL alumnae often meet with current class members and serve as resource persons.

Information concerning the program is available by contacting John E. Sykes, TALL Coordinator, at 809 University Drive East, College Station, 77843-2473. Phone is 409-845-1554. Fax is 409-845-6495.

**Tall Chat:** Randy Darnell (left) of Canyon and Jeff Fairchild of Adrian compare notes during a recent gathering of the Texas A&M Extension Service-Sponsored gathering of the TALL program in the Texas Panhandle earlier this month.



## Lifetime Leadership.

Credentials of the members of this latest class (there have been two previous two-year classes), are varied.

Jay Messenger is a Muleshoe banker who deals with many ag clients.

Dena Jackson is a 4-H youth leader from Ranger who works in a sheep, goat and cattle production operation.

"TALL has given me more than I ever anticipated," she says. "I'm more confident with the media and general public," she says.

Jeff Fairchild of Adrian is an Oldham County dryland wheat, sorghum and cattle producer and a custom farmer and harvester.

Fairchild was especially impressed with what he saw when the TALL class visited Mexico earlier this year.

"To me, Mexico is going to mean vast opportunities for markets in the next 30 years," Fairchild said. "They are raising the minimum wage and trying to get a middle class. If they do (succeed), that is a lot of buying power. If they are going to buy somewhere, it might as well be in the U.S.A."

The list includes other Panhandle area members — Bill Bandy, a Potter County legislative staffer and grain farmer; David Moore, a Moore County wheat, corn, grain sorghum, popcorn and cattle producer; and Paul Strouhal, a loan officer at Sunray State Bank.

And the list goes on.

Darnell's background is typical of the others. He's a successful ag producer. He falls within an age in which he is as busy raising a young family as he is starting up his ag career.

He's had the chance to meet other highly successful agri-industry persons around the state — a feature that drew him to the program. Now, about half way through the

two-year class, Darnell says he has enjoyed the opportunity to rub shoulders with agri-industry leaders who are on the cutting edge of their specialties.

And, the potential for future networking among TALL's 24 classmates will, no doubt, prove rewarding, Darnell says.

Though he's spent more than a year in the program, Darnell says he is continually impressed with what he learns.

"It is amazing to me, the opportunities that exist in agriculture as we study and go around the state," he said. "I have thoroughly enjoyed meeting people who come from different areas of agriculture."

By sharing his own ag background with others, Darnell has had a chance to see agriculture from many new perspectives. His class is composed of some bankers, ranchers, agribusinessmen, state ag agency staffers and a speechwriter for Ag Commissioner Rick Perry.

"It brings a whole new perspective," Darnell says.

And, TALL is giving Darnell with an opportunity to learn innovative ways to make his own operation successful. In return, he says he is ready and willing to become involved in ag leadership roles in the future.

"We in the TALL class are getting ten years of experience wrapped up in two," explained Darnell.

In their bi-monthly meetings — which include visits to ag-intensive sections of the Lone Star State, will feature a tour of Brazil next year and gave them a look at the USDA in Washington earlier this year — Darnell is being equipped with knowledge and contacts that he believes are proving invaluable.

"The program, basically, has equipped me with tools to become involved, with leadership in our industry and our communities," Darnell says.

## U.S. beef herds expanding slowly

Slowly but surely the U.S. beef herd is expanding. Beef cow numbers were estimated at 35.4 million head in the recently released *July 1 Cattle Inventory* report. This was a 2 percent increase in beef cow numbers from a year ago and a 4 percent increase from Jan. 1, 1993.

Since 1988, the year that the July 1 inventory reached its low point for this cattle cycle, the total U.S. cattle herd has only grown 2 percent. That is *only* 2 percent in 5 years! The July 1 beef cow herd has increased from 34.05 million in 1988 to 35.4 million head in 1993. This is only a 4 percent increase during the 5-year period.

The past 5 years represent the slowest increase ever experienced since cattle numbers have been collected in the U.S. It is also the reason we have had relatively strong cattle prices since June 1987. Just think 6 years of good cattle prices. In the past we could kill a good market in only two years. Again, as mentioned in *Comments* previously, the 1986 Tax Reform Act left the beef cattle industry with only a *profit* incentive as it removed lucrative tax benefits that had driven the industry for years.

Another indication that the growth of the beef cow herd would continue at a more healthy, slower pace was the number of beef heifers being retained for herd replacements. These heifers numbered 5.8 million head, up 2 percent from 1992. After an expected higher cow slaughter this fall, the actual annual increase in 1993's beef cow herd could slip below the 2 percent level again. Not since 1981 has the mid-year beef cow herd increased over 2 percent from the previous year. Never-the-less, cattlemen should continue to be cautious about increasing the beef cow herd. Meat exports have kept our domestic markets relatively strong for red meats and poultry. Domestic demand for beef, however, is in delicate balance. Just 2 or 3 years of herd growth rates of 3 percent or more, could wreck the market we have enjoyed for 6 years.

The reason for the concern in the rate of growth in the beef herd is that "delicate balance" we currently have between the supply and demand for beef. By no means are we in a deficit supply situation for cattle, especially when you look at annual supplies and disappearances. For example in 1992 the annual calf crop was 39.34 million head. Now consider in 1992 steer and heifer slaughter was



## LIVESTOCK MARKET UPDATE

Dr. Ernie Davis

25.75 million head. Calf slaughter was 1.37 million head and calf death losses were 2.79 million head. Farm slaughter accounted for about 49 thousand last year. If you consider the total cow herd (beef and dairy cows) was 43.8 million head and that we keep back heifers for replacement and herd expansion at a rate of 20 percent of the cow herd, that will take another 8.76 million head of the annual calf crop. That is about all that can happen to the calf crop since we don't export many feeder cattle and calves and we still have; 180 thousand head left over. Well that just could be counting or statistical error! But add another 1.25 million head of feeder cattle imported each year from Mexico and Canada and we have a residual of about 1.4 million head with which we have to do something. If we expand our cow herd by 3 percent and calf crops by 2.7 percent, what are we going to do with the additional 1.1 million head next year?

Many people foreign to Texas have an image of our cattle ranches, as large, sprawling ranges with cattle galore. I wish we all had one, but in reality the average Texas beef cow herd is 40 head per operation. The USDA *Mid-Year Cattle Inventory* report just released the latest information on the number of beef cow operations by size groups. Those size groups included operations of ranches with 1-49 head of beef cows, 50-99 head, and 100 head or more.

(Dr. Ernie Davis, Livestock Marketing Specialist with the Texas A&M Extension Service, is an authority on the livestock markets.)

**South Plains**

**Ag  
News**

**Ethanol surge  
would benefit  
rural economy**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Increasing yearly ethanol production fivefold by the turn of the century could create over 100,000 farm and farm-related jobs, new Agriculture Department research shows.

When used as a gasoline supplement, ethanol — a corn derivative — reduces harmful pollutants released by automobiles. Ethanol has long been touted as a energy alternative to foreign oil.

Corn producers also welcome an increase in ethanol production as a way to use surplus crop yields.

The USDA's report found that if ethanol production rose to 5 billion gallons a year by the year 2000, more than five times the current level, U.S. farm income could go up \$1 billion.

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# TALL

From Page 3

become involved in ag leadership roles in the future.

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In their bi-monthly meetings — which include visits to ag-intensive sections of the Lone Star State, will feature a tour of Brazil next year and gave them a look at the USDA in Washington earlier this year — Darnell is being equipped with knowledge and contacts that he believes are proving invaluable.

"The program, basically, has equipped me with tools to become involved, with leadership in our industry and our communities," Darnell says.

TALL meets every other month for three days a week, over a two year period. They also make an out-of-country tour — they will spend 10 days in Brazil in early 1994.

For their out-of-state trip, Darnell's class chose

to take an eye-opening visit in January to Mexico. The tour south of the border left Darnell the impression that Mexico's growing middle class will be a prime future market for Texas ag products.

"I would say our class left Mexico optimistic," Darnell explained. "Optimistic that the North American Free Trade Agreement would be good for us."

A visit to Washington, D.C., earlier this year brought the group in contact with many USDA officials. They also met with Former San Antonio mayor and new HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros.

"TALL has far exceeded my expectations," explained Darnell. "Due to our sessions in Austin and Washington, I think our group understands the political process better. At least, we have been exposed to the channels."

Darnell, who was accepted for the TALL class in April, 1992, farms south of Canyon and near Bushland.

Interestingly enough, Darnell grew up not in a

rural, but in an urban setting. Thinking back, however, he remembers he always had a strong desire to be on the farm.

"I was raised in a normal urban setting in Amarillo. My parents both had 8 to 5 jobs — Mom was a school teacher and my dad, a leasing agent for Santa Fe," recalls Darnell.

But, he did have ag connections. An uncle farmed in Parmer County. One summer his farmer-uncle Wendell Christian encouraged him to try farm work.

"My uncle said that anyone who liked the idea of farming as much as I did should, at least, have a chance to try it," Darnell recalls.

Later, a farmer named Harold Erwin offered him sort of a farm apprentice-

ship job on land southeast of Amarillo. The job developed into more than just a working relationship, however. Erwin became his father-in-law after Darnell met and, seven years later, married the former Lisa Erwin.

"I married the farmers' daughter," laughs Erwin. "We met, dated through high school and college, and married our senior year at Tech."

By the time Darnell received his Ag Economics degree at Texas Tech, a sol-

id farming opportunity had opened up.

"Through the watch line of the Good Lord, a guy called and offered me a farm to rent," Darnell said. He carried the American dream even farther last year when he was able to purchase his farm — the same one he had rented to launch his career.

The Darnells have two children — Trey, 6; and Elizabeth, 4.

They are members of the First Baptist Church of Canyon. He is president of

the board of Consumer's Fuel of Canyon and serves on the Randall County Noxious Weed Control District board. He is actively involved in Randall County Extension activities and serves on the crops committee.

Darnell grows 350 acres of corn, 200 acres of sorghum and 700 of wheat. In addition, this is his first year to raise beets under contract with Holly Sugar.

His diversified operation also includes 35 cows and calves. He runs stockers on wheat pasture.

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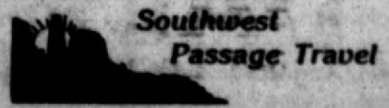
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Plainview Daily Herald  
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Photos/The Canyon News

### Farmers Market popular in Canyon

The Randall County Farmer's Market, open each Tuesday evening and Saturday morning in Canyon, is attracting lots of activity to the downtown Canyon square on a regular basis. Mary Reinhart of Umbarger (left) stands behind her tables of produce — left almost instantly bare after crowds of vegetable lovers converged on the scene. The farmer's market in Canyon and numerous others like it across the Texas Panhandle/South Plains region, will remain active until frost.

## AWARDS

From Page 2

Marie Richardson says. Last year the Richardsons and Jernigans saw more rain fall on their sheep in about six months than normally falls in two or three years.

That spawned the growth of parasitic worms on area vegetation, where their sheep, 300 Angora goats

and assorted horses grazed. The parasites thrive inside the livestock's stomachs, but the livestock fall ill if they are not medicated.

So, the Richardsons, Jernigans and their hired workers had to insert, using a small pressure gun, a drench into the mouth and down the throat of every animal.

Last summer's weather forced them to repeat the process four times, compared with the usual once-a-year medication.

In 1955, near Gorman, J.O. and Gay Nell Jackson took their savings from J.O.'s stint in the Navy, borrowed some more and started farming peanuts and cotton, without irrigation, in Eastland County. They had a new car and some cash.

Then the first year's crops withered to nearly

nothing in the '50s drought, taking car and cash, says Gay Nell Jackson. She and her husband now live in a nice home in Hobbs, N.M.

J.O., 62, Gay Nell and their son and daughter-in-law, Gary and Carla Jackson, farm peanuts, cotton and other crops on about 5,000 acres along the Texas-New Mexico line, primarily in Gaines County, Texas.

But back during the 1955 disaster on 320 acres much farther to the east in Eastland County, Gay Nell and J.O. were reduced to driving one klunker of an old pickup. Both worked off the farm to support his self-described bullheadedness to continue farming.

Some women become farmers when their husbands die young.

Debbie Pinkston, 36, took over managing the

farming assets after her husband, Garry Pinkston, died in 1991.

Her father, Stanley Bushong, 60, is helping out by providing the field labor and daily supervision while also working his own cotton- and grain-farming operation near Sinton on Texas' coastal plains.

Other farm widows take over with their own careers.

Judy Wadsworth's husband, Grady Wadsworth, died last year at age 47 after an intense career that made him one of Texas' best nursery farm operators. She had worked to help support him through college and graduate school. He returned the help, she says.

"He supported me in whatever I wanted to do," she says. He supported her while she finished college eight years ago and began

teaching seventh-grade language arts.

And women are still performing the more traditional farm roles for women.

Dorothy Borman, wife of Panhandle sugar bee grower Tony Borman, tends her garden and invites her daughters and other female relatives to share her canning chores for some time to socialize

and for some of the proceeds.

Last year she alone canned more than 250 pints of sweet corn, 150 pints of green beans and varying volumes of squash, tomatoes, broccoli, cauliflower, black-eyed peas, carrots, okra, cucumbers, cabbage, peaches, cherries, strawberries, apples, pears, apricots and other produce grown beside their home.

### Fat substitute wins award

WASHINGTON (AP) — Fake fat finishes first. Or among the first, anyway. Oatrim, a fat substitute created at an Agriculture Department laboratory, was named one of the 100 most significant technologies of 1993 in a science magazine survey.

Developed for health-conscious consumers, Oatrim is used in many foods already on the market, including cookies, muffins, no-fat cheese, extra-lean ground beef, bologna and franks.

A panel of 75 scientific experts and editors chose Oatrim as one of the recipients of Research and Development magazine's 31st annual R&D 100 Awards.

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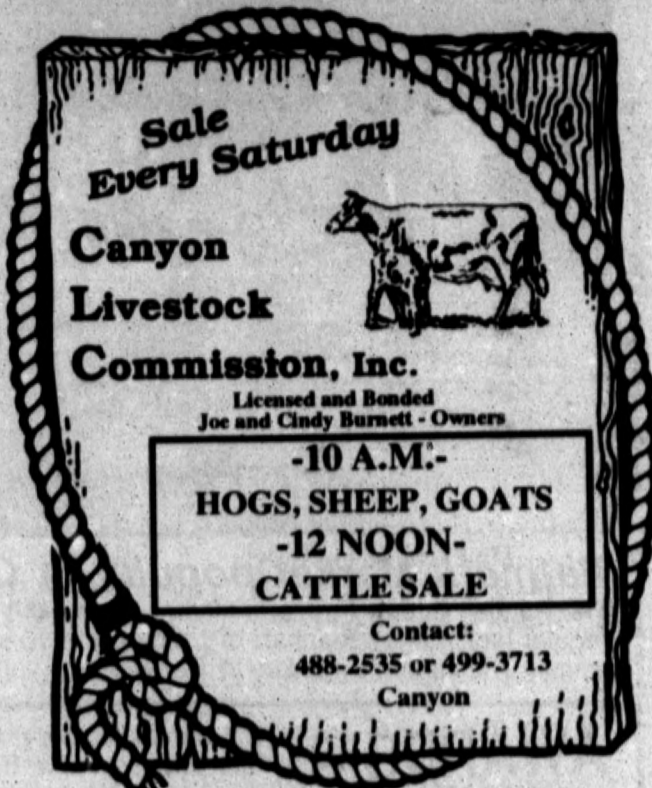
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