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Upcoming Dallas seminar to focus on wild quail restoration

by STEVE BYRNS

DALLAS – The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service will join a host of other entities to present the seminar “Quail Restoration in North Texas: An Active Approach,” from 9:30 a.m. until noon Jan. 4 in the Dallas Convention Center.

The seminar is part of the Dallas Safari Club’s annual convention. “It’s no surprise to anyone who spends much time outdoors to learn that wild bobwhite quail numbers are at an all-time low across most of Texas,” said Dr. Dale Rollins, AgriLife Extension wildlife specialist at San Angelo. “The demise of the iconic bobwhite from much of its historic range across North and West Texas is frustrating to all concerned. Habitat loss or land fragmentation is easy to blame east of I-35, but that argument doesn’t hold up over much of the Rolling Plains.

“No one can say for certain what’s caused the precipitous decline in quail numbers,” he said. “I can list 20 or more hypotheses and they all have some credibility, but none holds up across the board in my opinion. A combination of poor weather, namely record drought and heat, along with increasing numbers of feral hogs, fire ants and other predators are having some effect.

“The Rolling Plains Quail Research Ranch is midway through a three-year effort to assess diseases and parasites. All we can say right now is that millions

of acres of apparently suitable habitat have few if any, quail on them, hence the desire to try some active restoration approaches.”

Rollins said while good habitat is important, the seminar will focus on identifying active approaches to restoring quail populations.

“Our keynote speaker will be Dr. Bill Palmer from the Tall Timbers Research Station in Tallahassee, Fla.,” Rollins said. “The efforts there have restored not only quail, but also renewed hope among quail hunters and plantation owners in northern Florida and southern Georgia.”

Joe Crafton of Dallas, with Park Cities Quail, will serve as moderator, Rollins said. He will start the seminar with a summary of quail decline in Texas and end it with a question-and-answer panel at the program’s conclusion.

“We’ve enlisted regional experts from across north Texas to present their respective efforts,” Rollins said. “Jason Hardin, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department upland game bird specialist, will summarize recent research on ‘Surrogators’ which have been popular with some hunters over the past few years. Surrogators are self-contained brooding houses purported to increase survival of farm-reared bobwhites. Chicks are placed in them at two days of age and then released at five weeks.”

Rollins said in his role as director for the Rolling Plains Quail Research Ranch, he will present the ranch’s new initiative, Operation Transfusion,

which he said is their effort to actually transplant wild-trapped bobwhites to the historic stronghold of Stephens and Shackelford counties.

Charles Hodges of Dallas, chairman of the board for Texas Tech University’s Quail-Tech program, will summarize their efforts, and finally, Dr. Kelly Reyna of Denton, director of the University of North Texas’ UNT-Quail unit, will highlight their efforts in the eastern portion of the Rolling Plains.

Sponsors for the event, along with AgriLife Extension’s Quail Decline Initiative, include the Dallas Safari Club, Park Cities Quail, Quail Coalition, Quail-Tech, Rolling Plains Quail Research Ranch, Tall Timbers Research Station, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and UNT-Quail.

Two Texas Department of Agriculture continuing education units will be available for those with a private applicator’s license.

There is no charge for the seminar, but Rollins notes participants will likely want to attend the Dallas Safari Club convention which has a \$20 per person admission fee. Last year’s convention drew about 30,000 hunters and featured more than 1,000 exhibits, he said. This year’s event will feature a special section called Wingshooters’ World.

For more information contact Fred Burrell, AgriLife Extension agent in Dallas County, at 214-904-3050, f-burrell@tamu.edu or Rollins at 325-653-4576, d-rollins@tamu.edu.

Southwest Beef Symposium set for Jan. 15-16 in Lubbock

By STEVE BYRNS

LUBBOCK – As 2013 approaches, cattlemen should mark those brand new calendars for the Southwest Beef Symposium, set for Jan. 15-16 at the Overton Hotel and Conference Center in Lubbock.

“This is the eighth year the Texas and New Mexico Extension agencies have collaborated on the annual event that alternates yearly between locations in West Texas and eastern New Mexico,” said Dr. Manny Encinias, New Mexico State University Extension livestock specialist at Clayton, N.M.

Encinias said the symposium will center around three educational sessions and a trade show.

Dr. Bruce Carpenter, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service livestock specialist at Fort Stockton, said the first day’s initial presentations will deal with the cost of doing business, with a special focus on the cost of commodities. This will be followed by presentations on how best to manage those costs at the ranch level.

The first day’s program will end with a rancher panel tasked with sharing what they and their organizations are doing to address the commodity input issue. The panel will include representatives from New Mexico’s Silver Spur Ranches (Bell and T.O.), B&H Herefords, and the Clavel Ranch as well as Texas’ 6666’s Ranch.

Carpenter said the Jan.16 program will cover a wide range of topics.

“The morning session will center on beef and food safety, starting with the National Beef Quality Audit,” he said. “Next, the question of antimicrobial resistance will be addressed and what the science says and what some of the potential regulatory impacts may be. Following this will be a discussion on new pre-harvest technologies to improve beef safety. The session will conclude with retail store presentations.

“Texas Kroger stores are implementing a new educational pro-

gram for their meat market managers that’s aimed at helping them communicate factual information about beef production back to customers. United Texas LLC will also cover what they are seeing from the retail side in their stores.”

The afternoon’s final session will address rebuilding cattle herds following drought and will include discussions on replacement female options and management, biosecurity issues and new technologies in cattle reproduction.

For planning purposes, the individual preregistration fee of \$70 is requested by Jan. 11. The fee includes a prime rib steak dinner, lunch, refreshments and a printed proceedings.

For more information, call Carpenter at 432-336-8585 or Encinias at 575-374-2566.

A schedule of events, speaker information, registration materials and lodging information is available at <http://swbs.nmsu.edu/>.

High Plains Harvest Nears Completion

By MARY JANE BUERKLE

Very little cotton currently remains on the stalk on the High Plains, and gins are running continuously to ensure that the 2012 crop is processed in a timely fashion. Some gin managers expect to be finished by Christmas while others will continue on into the new year.

Although the latest figures from the National Agricultural Statistics Services will not be released for another couple of weeks, PCG estimates a crop of about 3.4 million bales, based on reports from area gins.

Area classing offices remain very busy, as Lubbock has surpassed the 1.7 million bale mark and Lamesa is approaching 500,000. Quality remains good, with more than 80 percent of cotton classed in the Lubbock office at color grade 11 or 21 for the week ending Thursday. Average leaf grade for the week was 2.49 and average staple was 35.43. Average strength was 29.97 g/tex and micronaire 3.78 for the week.

However, bark remains an issue at almost 30 percent. Typically, bark is in the 10 percent range, and last year’s average was 16.6 percent. This could be caused by a wide array of factors, but it primarily depends on the condition that cotton is in when it is harvested. The early freeze may have had an impact.

December cotton continues to hover around the 70 cent mark while March futures are slightly higher at just more than 73 cents.

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