

COVID-19 Update: March 16, 2020

Extension colleagues,

We have a few important updates to share this evening. As promised, we will continue to update you frequently. Also, please be on the lookout for our regular Director's Message, which will be out this week.

Emergency Management

The A&M System and AgriLife Extension continues to be actively involved in providing support as part of the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM). The State Medical Operations Center (SMOC) run by the Texas Department of State Health Services has been activated for several weeks now. It is anticipated that the State Operations Center led by TDEM will stand up later this week and AgriLife Extension Disaster Assessment Recovery agents may be deployed to provide assistance. This follows disaster declarations from President Trump and Gov. Abbott late last week.

Staffing

- A skeletal crew is working at administrative headquarters in College Station all week. All other TAMU campus faculty should follow the guidance of their department.
- Extension employees at Research and Extension Centers should receive direction and leadership from the District Extension Administrator. Centers should also observe a skeletal crew with only essential personnel on sight.
- Counties should follow the continuity of operations plan identified by their County Judge. If you do not have direction from your county, please contact your DEA.
- With the agency emergency management responsibilities, certain divisions of AgriLife may have exceptions to the above staffing guidelines.

Digital Program Delivery

As face to face meetings this week have been cancelled, many of you will be evaluating programming options to determine if curriculum can be offered online. The following digital resources are available to offer upcoming programs via at a distance:

- WebEx: AgriLife Extension encourages the use [WebEx for online program delivery in counties and regions.](#)

- Zoom: Campus-based delivery options are available through Zoom (for non-agents). Online training sessions will be this week on Wednesday at 11 a.m. and Friday at 11 a.m. To join: <https://agrilife.zoom.us/j/400857546>
- Teams: Teams can be accessed via the TEAMS application on your work laptop or via a web browser on your home computer by going to <https://teams.office.com> and logging in with your AgNet credentials (firstname.lastname@AGNET.tamu.edu). For how-to guides and overview on how to utilize features such as web conferencing, chat, file sharing and other features of TEAMS please go to: <https://firstcallhelp.tamu.edu/whats-new/teams/>. The following trainings have been set up, and links for participation will be sent very soon:
 - Tuesday, March 17th at 2:00 pm: Central Leadership Team
 - Wednesday, March 18th at 10:00 am: Southeast Region
 - Wednesday, March 18th at 2:00 pm: South Region
 - Thursday, March 19th at 10:00 am: West Region
 - Thursday, March 19th at 2:00 pm: East Region
 - Friday, March 20th at 10:00 am: North Region
 - Friday, March 20th at 2:00 pm: Central Region

Programming

The following are best practices in relation to educational programs:

- Use digital engagement when appropriate. Please feel free to reach out to your RPL and/or Specialists to explore ways to collaborate with other agents to offer programs online.
- Revisit your wish list of all those things you WISH you had time to do. Now may be the time to focus on some of those tasks.
- We encourage creative thinking. We know you already do this, but with many face-to-face programs being cancelled, go ahead and think about some plans for programs that may be held 4-6 months out.
- No food demonstration at any programs until further notice.
- Protect vulnerable populations over 65 with underlying health conditions.
- Communicate cancellations as soon as you know.
- While face to face meetings have been canceled, future programming will be re-evaluated on March 19. Refunds: Due to extenuating circumstances, refunds will be issued for all programs planned during March 16-20. All program coordinators will review programs scheduled beyond these dates for alternate hosting methods via digital delivery or teleconference.
- Monthly reports are still due. The TExAS system will be locked on Friday, March 20th.

Social Media

We have a content group coming together developing a plan and will have content distribution in place by Wednesday. To ensure our agency shares a concise, consistent message, we encourage you to share those messages via AgriLife Extension's social media accounts:

- Twitter: @txextension
- Facebook: @agrilifeextension

Our agency is very appreciative of the work you are doing, on behalf of our state, our clientele and our communities. Please, take care of yourself, your family and friends. If you feel sick, take actions to not spread the disease, especially among the elderly or those with underlying health challenges. Prepare, but don't panic! Additional resources are available at <http://texashelp.tamu.edu> and <https://dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/>

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