

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

Callahan County Extension Office

December Newsletter 2023



Chronic Wasting Disease Detected in Free-Range Coleman County Deer

Dec. 8, 2023

Media Contact: [TPWD News](#), Business Hours, 512-389-8030

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AUSTIN — Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) received confirmation of a case of chronic wasting disease (CWD) in Coleman County, marking the first detection in the county.

A two-year-old whitetail buck harvested by a hunter on a low-fenced property tested positive through sampling conducted voluntarily to assist with the state's CWD surveillance.

The sample was collected by a TPWD Wildlife Biologist as part of the statewide surveillance effort. Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory initially analyzed the samples, and the National Veterinary Services Laboratory in Iowa confirmed the CWD detection.

CWD has an incubation period that can span years, so the first indication of the disease in a herd is often found through surveillance testing rather than observed clinical signs. Early detection and proactive monitoring improve the state's response time to the detection of CWD and can greatly reduce the risk of further disease spread.



TPWD encourages hunters to voluntarily test hunter-harvested deer in the area between Coleman and Cross Plains. For more information about voluntary sampling contact your [local TPWD biologist](#). The Department will establish CWD containment and surveillance zones in the area but they may not be implemented until 2024.

CWD is a fatal neurological disease found in certain cervids including deer, elk, moose and other members of the deer family. This slow, progressive disease may not produce visible signs in susceptible species for several years after infection. As the disease process continues, animals with CWD may show changes in behavior and appearance. Clinical signs may include progressive weight loss, stumbling or tremors with a lack of coordination, loss of appetite, teeth grinding, abnormal head posture and/or drooping ears, and excessive thirst, salivation or urination.

In Texas, the disease was first discovered in 2012 in free-ranging mule deer along a remote area of the Hueco Mountains near the Texas-New Mexico border. CWD has since been detected in Texas captive and free-ranging cervids, including white-tailed deer, mule deer, red deer and elk.

For more information on previous detections in Texas and CWD best management practices for hunters and landowners, visit [TPWD's CWD page](#).

Ag/timber registrations expire Dec. 31, renew before end of year

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Farmers, ranchers and timber producers with a valid agricultural and timber registration number must renew those by Dec. 31.

The ag/timber registration numbers are required under Texas law to claim a sales tax exemption on products used in the course of agricultural or timber production.

“This renewal process is part of helping farmers and ranchers reduce their input costs,” Brant Wilbourn, Texas Farm Bureau associate director of Commodity and Regulatory Activities, said. “We want to make sure everyone is aware that it’s time for the ag/timber number renewal in order to keep claiming those valid exemptions.”

Legislation was passed in 2011 that required a uniform renewal date for all numbers regardless of when they were first registered. They must be renewed every four years.

Eligible persons must renew their registration with the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts by Dec. 31 in order to continue claiming sales tax exemptions.

Anyone producing agricultural or timber products for sale can complete an application for an ag/timber number. That includes farmers and ranchers who grow agricultural products to sell to others, timber producers, custom harvesters, and aquaculture and apiculture producers. Those engaged in agricultural aircraft operations and commercial

nurseries that grow stock from seed or cuttings, replant seedlings in larger containers and foster the growth of plants for sale are also eligible.

A registration number is not needed for seed, feed or livestock purchases, nor is it needed for veterinarian-prescribed items such as medication or topical products.

Items that may qualify for sales tax exemptions include fertilizers, pesticides, defoliants and desiccants used exclusively in agricultural production.

Machinery and equipment, irrigation systems, seedlings for timber, electricity and natural gas, some motor fuel and certain motor vehicle sales and use tax may also be claimed if used primarily for farming, ranching or timber production.

Retailers may accept and keep on file blanket exemption certificates, but those also need to be updated after Dec. 31 to include new expiration dates.

The Comptroller's office recently mailed renewal information to individuals who hold current registration numbers. There is a unique WebFile number located in that letter that can be used to renew the registration online.

Those who wish to renew by phone may do so by calling 1-844-247-3639.

More information regarding ag and timber sales tax exemptions can be found online at comptroller.texas.gov/taxes/ag-timber/.

Setting your poinsettias up for success

Texas A&M AgriLife horticulturists share tips and best practices

DECEMBER 1, 2023

Poinsettias and their classic red and white holiday color will soon be abundant in homes, grocery stores and nurseries. If you want your poinsettia plants to last throughout the holiday season, here are some pointers to help keep your plants happy.

Poinsettias have been bred to maximize colors and varieties.



Bill McKinley, an instructional professor and Benz Endowed Chair in Floral Design; and Navreet Kaur Mahal, Ph.D., instructional assistant professor, both in the [Department of Horticultural Sciences](#) in the [Texas A&M College of Agriculture and Life Sciences](#), explain how to care for your poinsettias and provide tips for consumers.

These gorgeous holiday plants, native to Mexico, are the No. 2 dollar-valued potted plant in the U.S. behind orchids. McKinley said poinsettias were introduced domestically by Joel Poinsett in the 1800s and have since been bred to maximize the colors and varieties of the plant.

How to pick your poinsettias

When it comes to picking a good poinsettia plant, the color of the petal you choose doesn't impact how long your plant lasts. You should be looking in the center of the plant to find the healthiest plant.

"The little center of the poinsettia plant, the true blossom, shouldn't be fuzzy," McKinley said. "They should be tight and yellow."

Making sure your plants last

If you want to keep your plant alive during the holiday season, you should keep a light hand when watering your poinsettias.

McKinley said one of the most common errors with the plant is overwatering. Poinsettias don't like when the roots are sitting in water, which can happen if they are left in the waterproof container that they are often sold in.

The best way to water is to take your plant out of the container so that the water can drain before you put it back in its container, he said.

"If you water your poinsettia and leave it in that container, the water will drain down and the plant will be sitting in water, causing root rot," McKinley said.

How to make your poinsettias thrive

Poinsettias are happiest when they are kept in bright but indirect sunlight. (Texas A&M AgriLife photo Rudy Ruedas)

Where you choose to display your poinsettias can impact your plants. McKinley said it is best to keep your plants in bright but indirect sunlight. It is also important to keep your plants away from heaters or air conditioners.

Mahal said poinsettias should be kept away from areas that fluctuate in temperature.

“The ideal room temperature for plants is between 65-70 degrees,” she said. “And avoid exposing them to temperatures below 50 degrees.”

Poinsettias and pets

Contrary to popular belief, poinsettias are not toxic to our furry friends. Mahal said that poinsettias are not a major point of concern with pets.

“The sticky white sap can irritate the mouth and cause mild gastrointestinal symptoms,” Mahal said. “But they are not a threat to animals.”

Keeping your plants year-round

Consumers should also know that they don't have to throw out their plants as soon as holiday décor is taken down. With proper care, poinsettias can last years and provide annual blooms each holiday season.

McKinley said to prune the plant halfway up the main stem soon after the holidays and replant them in a larger size pot. Put them in bright light indoors and a shady area outdoors once the temperatures are consistently above 60 degrees. Keep the plant watered.

“You might have to pinch the tips to keep it bushy,” McKinley says, “But in July, you'll have to stop pinching or you won't get any flowers.”

The plant should be protected from artificial light after the fall equinox to promote poinsettia blooms. So, bring them inside and place them in total darkness between sundown and sunrise.

“In late October and the first part of November, your plant will start to show color,” McKinley said. “And by Christmas it should be in full bloom.”

Forage Seminar 2024

TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION

5 Ceu
Pending

January 23, 2024

Location: First Baptist Church

301 N Main St

Cross Plains, TX 76443

Lunch Provided

Registration: 8:30 am

Start Time: 9:00 am

End Time: Around 3:45 pm

Cost \$40 before January 18, \$50 after, Fee due upon arrival

RSVP by calling Extension Offices;

Callahan County: 325-854-5835

Brown County: 325-646 0386

Coleman County: 325-625-4519

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