

# AgriLife NEWS

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## Texas crop, weather

### Wet weather continues to delay spring planting

By: **Robert Burns**, 903-834-6191



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COLLEGE STATION - - The considerably wetter-than-normal winter continued to be a double-edged sword for much of the state's agricultural producers, according to [Texas AgriLife Extension Service](#) personnel.

In many areas, the plentiful moisture was greening up winter pastures and, by raising soil moisture reserves, was improving the outlook for spring planting. But hanging over many farmers' heads was the specter of delayed planting, particularly that of corn, according to reports from AgriLife Extension county agents across the state.

However, the problems were by no means universal. In the Panhandle, though muddy conditions also made it difficult for cattle and cattle feeders there as throughout the state, the moisture was greening up winter wheat. In the San Antonio area, the rain was moderated by dry weather, giving producers the best of both worlds, according to Jerry Warren, AgriLife Extension agent for [Bexar County](#).

"Bexar County continues to receive good moisture, and land preparation is mostly complete for

spring planting," Warren said. "Livestock producers are still feeding. Winter wheat and oats are in pretty good shape and should see better grazing as average temperatures rise."

"More moisture is making things a little hard for some farmers to get into there fields and do any plowing," said Steve Sturtz, AgriLife Extension agent for **Tom Green County**, San Angelo. "But the winter wheat is really thriving in the area. Rangeland, pasture and wildlife are excellent."

"Rainfall in the early part of the week ranged from 0.01 inch to 0.43 inch, just enough to keep the topsoil moist and prevent good drying," said Jeffrey Stapper, AgriLife Extension agent for **Nueces County**, Corpus Christi. "Planting of corn, sorghum, and sunflowers continues to be delayed due to wet conditions. Soil temperatures remain very cool."

"Planting of crops is getting closer due to soils beginning to dry out," said Joe Janak, AgriLife Extension agent for Victoria County in the Coastal Bend area. "As of Friday (Feb. 26), no grain crop is known to have been planted in the county, but by Sunday some may be. Farmers are hopeful there will be no rain this weekend so planting can start."

"Fields were too wet to work," said Edward Schneider, AgriLife Extension agent for **Robertson County**, southeast of Waco. "We are already behind on corn. Could be at least a week to 10 days before we will be able to plant."

"We had snow and sleet, with temperatures into mid 20s and highs in the upper 40s," said John Toner, AgriLife Extension agent for **Sabine County**, east of Lufkin. "The ground is still saturated and winter pastures are slow to grow."

The following summaries were compiled by AgriLife Extension district reporters: **Central:** Producers were waiting for fields to get dry enough to plant and making fertilizer applications where possible. Cool-season forage growth was slowed by cold, wet weather. Most wheat fields needed dry, warm weather. Livestock producers continued supplying supplemental feed to beef cattle. **Coastal Bend:** In most of the region, farmers had not yet started planting corn because of the wet ground and cool weather. The normal planting date for corn has already passed. Winter grasses were doing well under current weather conditions. Producers continued to provide supplemental hay and protein to livestock.

**EAST:** As much as 3 inches of snow fell in some parts of the region, followed by rain. With all the moisture and cold weather, all pasture and fieldwork was all but impossible. Farmers wanted to start to plant cool-weather vegetables, but were unable to due to soggy soils. Hay supplies were nearly depleted. Cattle began to look a bit thin in some counties, but overall, livestock were in fair to good condition with producers providing supplemental feed. Frequent feral hog damage continued to be reported.

**FAR WEST:** The region received from 1 inch to 6 inches of snow. Fall-planted onions were at third-leaf stage. Alfalfa was coming out of dormancy but growing very slowly. All spring wheat was emerged and had good stands. Land preparation for chiles and cotton was in full swing. Pecan trees were being hedged with some yet to be harvested.

**NORTH:** Soil moisture ranged from adequate to surplus with continuing rain. Because of wet field conditions, corn planting was delayed. Farmers could not get into the fields at this time to prepare for planting. If the fields do not dry enough during the next few weeks, much of the corn acreage will have to be replaced by a later-spring crop such as grain sorghum. Wheat was in poor to fair condition but were worsening due to the excess rain. Also, farmers have not been able to get into the fields to fertilize. Livestock were in fair to good condition. Because of the wet conditions, winter pastures could not be counted on. Rangeland and pasture conditions were poor to fair. Producers were forced to feed more hay, and supplies were being depleted. They were buying hay out-of-region in order to finish the season.

**PANHANDLE:** Cold and wet conditions prevailed, with unpaved roads and fields still muddy when not frozen early in the day. Spring crop preparation remained on hold because of wet conditions. In some areas, wheat improved from recent moisture, but growth awaited warmer weather. Producers' hay supplies were becoming low, but cattle still needed supplemental feeding in order to maintain body weight. Cold weather combined with muddy conditions has been hard on cattle in pastures and feedlots.

**ROLLING PLAINS:** Abundant moisture from rain and snow helped raise soil moisture levels, stimulating growth of wheat and oats. However, winter wheat and pastures needed warmer, sunny weather to really get growing. Where fields were dry enough, producers began top-dressing wheat. Fieldwork was put on hold in many other areas due to the wet conditions. As pastures were short on grass, livestock producers were providing heavily supplemental feeding. Hay was in short supply, but most producers believe they can make it until the spring green-up. Producers still have tough decisions to make as to whether to graze out wheat or harvest it as they consider weather, cattle and wheat prices. Stock tanks were full, and cattle were in good shape as the spring calving season began. Muddy pastures and feeding areas were causing foot-rot problems in beef cattle. The mud also made it difficult to herd cattle for treatment.

**SOUTH:** Most of the region had adequate to surplus soil moisture. The northern part of the region reported cooler temperatures and some fieldwork. Additional rainfall in the eastern parts of the region further set back the 2010 planting season. Row-crop farmers were becoming concerned about not being able to start field work and were having to plant later than normal. Sorghum producers in the western part of the region prevent planting early due to another hard freeze. However, corn and sorghum producers in that area should begin planting soon as they have the choice to do so without pre-plant irrigation. Also in that area, cotton producers will begin planting

in a couple of weeks if soil conditions become more favorable. Cabbage and spinach growers were actively harvesting. In the southern part of the region, the sugarcane harvest was at a halt and citrus and vegetable harvests slowed because of wet field conditions. Rangeland and pastures were in poor to fair condition. Livestock remained in fair condition.

**SOUTH PLAINS:** From 1.5 inches to 4 inches of snow fell, followed a few days later by rain. Producers expected they would have to apply little if any pre-plant irrigation due to all the winter moisture. This will mean significant savings in 2010 input costs. Wheat was in fair to good condition. Pastures and rangeland were in good shape with cool season grasses improving. The potential for native rangeland grass growth is excellent, and only awaited warmer weather. Livestock were in good shape, with producers only having to provide supplemental feeding on the colder and wetter days.

**SOUTHEAST:** Extremely wet conditions prevented any pre-plant preparation by corn and cotton growers. The normal corn-planting date has already passed. Annual ryegrass greened up but did not show any growth. In some areas, clovers did start to show some growth. Calf mortality rates were 7 percent in some areas. Cattle producers were using a lot sack feed. Pastures were being torn up by cattle traffic because of wet conditions.

**SOUTHWEST:** February rainfall totals were nearly twice the long-term rate. Rains will minimize irrigation costs. Spinach, cabbage, potatoes, lettuce, wheat and oats made excellent progress. The region should have a good wheat and oat crop this spring, after nearly four seasons of drought losses due to drought. Corn planting was almost completed, and sorghum planting was gaining momentum. Growers continued harvesting spinach, cabbage, broccoli and carrots. Ranchers concentrated on the calving, lambing and kidding season.

**WEST CENTRAL:** Cold, wet conditions continued. From 2 inches to 6 inches of snow added to the already very wet conditions in many parts of the region. Soil moisture was very good. Producers still could not do field work because of the wet conditions. Winter wheat was in good shape, but growth was slowed due to cold, damp conditions. However, the outlook remained very good. Rangeland and pasture conditions continued to improve. Stock tanks and ponds were catching runoff. Livestock were in fair to very good condition. Livestock producers continued supplemental feeding due to cold, wet weather conditions.

# AgriLife Communications

1501 Texas Avenue South | 2112 TAMU | College Station, TX 77843 | [Map](#)  
Phone: (979) 845-2211 | Fax: (979) 845-2414 | Email: [AgriLifeWeb@tamu.edu](mailto:AgriLifeWeb@tamu.edu)

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