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Agricultural Newsletter of the LSU AgCenter's Iberia Cooperative Extension Service

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Introduction

Mother Nature “teased” us with a hint of fall in early September. The annual Sugarcane Festival is slated for the end of the month as is the start of the sugarcane harvest season here in Louisiana. We are at the “peak” of hurricane season and so far, our state has been spared from any tropical systems making landfall. With the good weather we received this summer, our area experienced a very good sugarcane planting, with straight cane and reports of very good planting ratios. With most sugarcane mills set to start grinding by September 25th we are very fortunate that over 95% of our farmers have finished planting their sugarcane for the year. Rice and soybean yields have been above average, but market prices for these commodities have been less than desirable. Cattle producers are getting to bale hay and though cattle prices have recently dropped; prices for beef remain strong. Hopefully, the remainder of 2025 brings continued good weather.

Sugarcane News & Updates

Local sugarcane farmers all just planting, spraying newly planted cane, spraying ripener for the harvest season and they are preparing for the busy making preparations for the upcoming harvest season.

Sugarcane farmers are reminded about the following:

A) 2025 Sugarcane Festival

The annual Sugarcane Festival is just around the corner. The 2025 Sugarcane Festival Sugarcane Exhibit Contest and the Sugarcane Judging Contest will be held on September 16th and 17th. Please see attached the rules/details.

All of the livestock events and sugar cookery events associated with the 2025 Sugarcane Festival will be conducted by the Iberia Extension Office. All questions regarding these events should be directed to our office. All other aspects of the festival are handled by the Sugarcane Festival and Fair Association. All questions regarding these and other events associated with the festival should be directed to the Sugarcane Festival & Fair Association.

B) Sugarcane Growth Measurements

Sugarcane growth measurements and sugarcane maturity tests are recorded weekly by officials at the USDA Sugar Research Station in Houma and emailed to producers. It appears that our state had very good growth this year. This should lead to extremely good sugarcane yields.

C) Smoke and Ash Management Guidelines

Smoke and ash generated by the burning of sugarcane fields during grinding is something that all producers must take seriously. Producers are reminded to follow recommended procedures.

Attached/Enclosed are the LSU AgCenter guidelines for Smoke and Ash Management. Please keep in mind that recertification can be done through the county agent's office. If you or anyone on your farm needs burn manager recertification, please contact our office as we will continue to conduct recertification meetings: we will possibly schedule one for late this fall. During the 2024 state legislative session a few changes were made to burning in Louisiana. Basically, going forward citizens must be a Prescribed Burn Manager in order to burn. If they are not certified, they must call LDAF and notify them of when and where they are going to burn.

Fall Safety Reminders (Highway, Pipeline, Railroad, and Power Lines)

Fall and the sugarcane harvest are a very busy time for producers and safety is something everyone should emphasize on their farming operations. Please keep the following in mind:

A. Highway Safety

1. Farmers should make sure that all farm machinery, especially lights, signals, and safety shields are working properly.
2. Farm equipment operators should try to give motorists an opportunity to pass when they can safely move their equipment to the shoulder, but it is the motorist's responsibility to make sure they can pass safely.
3. Farm equipment operators must follow all rules of the road, just as if they were driving a car, including such things as proper lighting, signals, and right of way.
4. State law requires that Slow Moving Vehicle emblems can be used both day and night on slow moving equipment using state roadways.
5. Sugarcane loading sites/areas are of major concern to motorists. Motorists should look for brightly colored road signs put out by farmers marking these areas. Sugarcane farmers should use equipment to clear road surfaces near loading sites to make them as safe as possible.
6. Make sure all drivers have been made aware of all the rules and regulations and that they all have their proper paperwork.
7. As of August 1, 2012, in order to utilize the maximum 100,000 weight limit, a third axle must be installed on all sugarcane hauling trailers. Also, the third axle must have four tires. If a third axle is not installed, then the maximum weight limit for sugarcane hauling trailers is 86,600 pounds.

B. Power Line Safety

Farmers should stay away from poles and power lines as sugarcane harvesting equipment is large and can hit/shove a pole. Also, power or cable lines can be pulled down by cane equipment.

If farmers are burning their fields, they should avoid wooden poles and they cannot burn under or near power lines. Also, smoke can envelop power lines and disrupt power. Producers must remember buffer zones.

Some general safety measures farmers should keep in mind are:

- B.** Maintain regular communication with the power company during any and all field work in which electrical poles and lines are of concern.
- C.** Field areas around wooden poles should be kept free of weeds and cane and should not be grown immediately adjacent to wooden poles.
- D.** Field areas around poles and under power lines should be cut green and these fields should be burned using safe buffer zones.
- E.** Farmers should make sure combine extractor fans do not blow green trash under or on power lines, or on electrical substations or around wooden poles. In fact, extractor fans should blow in the opposite direction of these things.

C. Pipeline Safety

Statistics indicate that damage from excavation-related activities is a leading cause of pipeline accidents. Keep the following in mind:

1. Call your state's One-Call Center at least two working days before excavation is scheduled to begin. Please contact your local One-Call Center by dialing 811.
2. Wait the required amount of time.
3. A trained technician will mark the location of the pipeline.
4. Respect the line markers.

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Office of Pipeline Safety has developed the national Pipeline Mapping System (NPMS) to provide information about gas transmission and liquid transmission operators and their pipelines. The NPMS website is searchable by zip code or by county and state and can display a county map that is printable. For a list of pipeline operators in our area and their contact information, go to <https://www.npms.phmsa.dot.gov/>.

D. Railroad Safety

Producers are reminded about safety near railroad crossings. Please remember the following safety tips:

- Always expect a train and look both ways before crossing railroad tracks.
- Wait for trains and do not attempt to beat approaching trains.
- Do not stop your vehicle on the railroad tracks.
- Avoid distractions such as loud music, texting, or talking on cell phones when crossing the railroad tracks.
- Pedestrians should only cross the tracks as designated railroad crossings

Cattle News & Updates

It is recommended that cattle producers in Louisiana grow cool season forages. LSU AgCenter planting dates and seeding rates, as well as estimated costs per acre, are available online at www.lsuagcenter.com/crops. In addition to planting winter forages, cattlemen should also keep the following in mind during the month of October: Continue weaning spring born calves, give booster vaccines, dehorn and castrate any earlier missed calves, consult a veterinarian to develop and conduct a herd vaccination program, sort out heifers for replacements, market older, open and unsound cows, or excess spring calves, and begin to recondition retained calves. Given the conditions of our cattle and pastures, good management practices are of extreme importance.

Armyworms and/or Fall Armyworms affect many pastures this time of year. If you plan to spray, you may want to use: Sevin, Tracer, Prevathon, Baythroid XL, Karate Z, or Declare at the labeled rate. Please keep in mind that if you are only grazing pastures and do not plan to bale hay, or if you have plenty of grass per cow per acre, it may not be necessary to spray.

A cattle pregnancy determination clinic will be held October 7th and 9th 2025 at the LSU AgCenter's Hill Farm Research Station in Homer LA. Also, a Fall Bull Soundness Exam Day for our area has been planned for October 23rd, 2025, in Opelousas. For more details, please contact County Agent Lanie Richard @ 337-291-7090.

Crawfish News & Updates

For those of you with crawfish ponds, it is time to start planning and preparing for the 2025 season. The latest edition of Crawfish News is available online at:

http://www.lsuagcenter.com/en/crops_livestock/aquaculture/crawfish. you can also refer to recent emails that were sent out from the LSU AgCenter from the State Crawfish Agent Mr. Todd Fontenot.

Horse News and Updates

For those of you who enjoy horses, please see the latest edition of the Talkin Horses newsletter made available by LSU AgCenter Horse specialist, Dr. Neely Heidorn. It is available online at:

http://www.lsuagcenter.com/en/crops_livestock/livestock/Horses/Newsletters/. Also if you are interested in the Master Horse Program please contact County Agent Lanie Richard at 337-291-7090 for further details.

Other

Farmers are encouraged to keep in contact with their local USDA/FSA/NRCS offices for reporting purposes as well as to obtain details related to the Farm Bill policies recently passed by Congress as part of the One Big Beautiful Bill (OB BB). We don't have any "major" local or state elections this fall, but we do have a few governmental issues/laws on the ballot. The local agriculture industry/community is reminded to become educated and remain involved in the election/voting process.

The Master Farmer Program continues to be offered through the LSU AgCenter. This is a voluntary program that encourages best management practices (BMPs) and environmental stewardship. If you are interested in the program please contact LSU AgCenter Master Farmer Coordinator Dr. Donna Gentry at masterfarmer@agcenter.lsu.edu for further details. Farmers are also encouraged to look into crop insurance by contacting a local agent to discuss details and a policy that would work best for their farming operations.

Farmers must also keep up with issues facing the agriculture industry such as the suspension agreement of loan prices, previously labor wages (specifically those associated with workers) as well as commodity prices and costs.

Closing

As this newsletter is being written and compiled, I am appreciative of the wonderful weather we are experiencing. By the end of the month the Sugarcane Festival and the sugarcane harvest season will be upon us. We have observed great rice, and soybean yields and a really good sugarcane planting. Despite this great news farming in the United States remains a stressful and takes laborious occupation. I am consistently amazed at how positive and up beat our local farming community remains through the good times and the bad. We started off the year with record cold and now we could end the year with one of the top production years in the last quarter century.

Please consider participating in the 2025 Sugarcane Festival events September 25th-27th in New Iberia as well as the activities scheduled on September 16th and 17th. (Sugarcane Exhibit and Judging)

I continue to pray for the hurricane season to come to an end with no damage to our region and for a bountiful harvest.

This newsletter once again contains several email references. If you have email and you are not receiving emails from me, please email your email address to me so that you can get this information via the internet. My email address is bhebert@agcenter.lsu.edu. If you do not have access to email and would like any of the referenced material in this newsletter mailed to you, please contact me at the Iberia Extension Office of the LSU AgCenter (337) 369-4440 so that this information can be sent to you.

I look forward to seeing all of you at the upcoming events planned for our area, and if you have any questions, or need further information, please feel free to contact me at the Iberia Extension office of the LSU AgCenter.

Sincerely,

Blair J. Hebert

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County Agent/Parish Chairman
Iberia Parish

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Enclosures