

LSU AgCenter

DeSoto Parish

AG UPDATE

June 2023



DeSoto Parish

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Grand Cane, LA 71032

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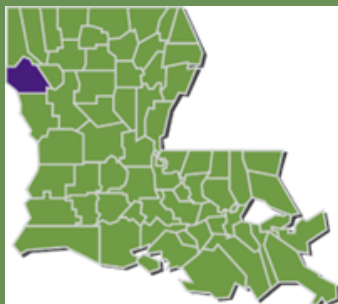
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Upcoming Events

July 2023

7th: DeSoto Parish Cattleman's
Association Beef Field Day

DeSoto Parish is made up of
547,840 acres of land with a
population of approximately 27,000
residents. Timber, beef cattle, and
forages are the major commodities.



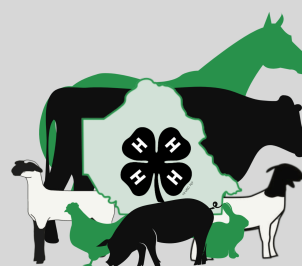
From the Agent's Desk

The days and nights are finally warming up and the grass is taking off. Our area hay producers are itching to get in the fields and a few have already completed their first cuttings. Everyone that I have spoken with are saying that their yields are down from where they were expecting them to be. This can be contributed to the cooler nights that we had back in May. For our summer grasses to take off and grow, soil temperatures need to be at least 65 degrees F. The optimal soil temperature for bermudagrass root growth is 80 degrees F.

I am planning a DeSoto Parish Cattleman's Association Beef Field Day for our Summer meeting. It will be held at the Branch Ranch on the morning of July 7th. This event is still in the planning stages and more information will be sent out soon. Also, be on the lookout in the coming months for information on a bull breeding soundness exam day. It will more than likely be held in early October or November before the Fall breeding season.

DeSoto Parish 4-H Jr. Livestock Club

Our Jr. Livestock is growing and we need YOUR help! If you or your farming operation would like to make a financial donation to the DeSoto 4-H Jr. Livestock program, contact our office!



DeSoto Parish Livestock

“Just a Little Off the Top”

Joshua L. Salley

Assistant Extension Agent-ANR

Have you ever heard of the expression, “Just take a little bit off of the top”? While this phrase is common in the local barbershop, it also holds true for proper lawn care. Most homeowners just think of mowing the yard as a chore and dread doing it because of the hot summer temperatures. When done properly, mowing helps to maintain a healthy lawn and will also help to suppress weed infestation.

Even though Summer officially begins on June 21, 2023, Louisianians usually must begin mowing around the end of March and most will mow all the way up to the first frost of the Fall. As you can see, we spend a great portion of the year mowing and tending to our lawns. There are two main topics to discuss when talking about mowing lawns: mowing height and mowing frequency.

I often see homeowners who like to lower their mower decks as low as they will go and scalp the lawns. I suppose they do this with the thought of “mow it short and mow it less often”. Mowing grasses too short can often cause damage to the turfgrass and encourage weed growth. Homeowners should follow the one-third rule which states that no more than one-third of the leaf blade height should be removed in a single mowing. For example, if the height of cut is 2 inches, it should be mowed whenever it reaches 3 inches in height.

On average, Louisianians mow their lawns once per week. During a wet spring or summer like we have been seeing, this mowing frequency may need to be increased. This will also depend on the type of grasses that your lawn contains. Faster-growing species such as Bermudagrass and Bahiagrass will need to be mowed more frequently than slower-growing species such as Zoysiagrass. If lawns are not mowed frequently enough, large volumes of grass clippings can be an issue. Large quantities of grass clippings that are not removed after mowing can block out sunlight penetration and in turn cause bare spots to form.



Fig. 1: Large volume of grass clippings due to mowing too short



"Chinch Bug Damage on Summer Lawns"

Joshua L. Salley

Assistant Extension Agent-ANR

As we begin the transition from Spring to Summer, many homeowners may start seeing brown spots in their St. Augustine lawns. This could be a result of the Southern Chinch Bug, which is a common insect pest of turf grass in Louisiana. Chinch bugs thrive in areas of lush thick thatch, full sun exposure, and hot weather. These pesky insects can complete three to four generations within a year. Depending on the temperature, an egg can mature into an adult within five to 13 weeks. Chinch bug nymphs, the adolescent stage, are black to orange in color and have a white band on the back of the body. Adults are about the size of an ant, or one-half of a centimeter. They have black bodies with white wings that form an X shape across the abdomen. Damage to the turf grass occurs when the chinch bugs feed on the grass stems by sucking sap. This will result in yellowing of the grasses and will eventually lead to the death of the turf grass. While most injury occurs in hot, dry conditions in mid-to-late summer, it is not uncommon for chinch bug damage to be seen in mid to late May. If you suspect that you have a chinch bug infestation, a simple flush test can be performed to verify their presence. Mix 1 tablespoon of lemon-scented soap per 1 gallon of water. Slowly pour the soapy water onto healthy grass surrounding the injured areas. In wet conditions, drench a 1-square-foot area with soapy water. In dry conditions, drench a 4-square-foot area. Then, for five to 10 minutes, closely watch the area to see if insects come to the surface. Repeat as desired in other areas to better determine insect presence. There are both cultural and chemical control options for chinch bugs. Maintaining a healthy lawn by properly fertilizing and watering along with regular mowing will help slow or prevent chinch bug damage. It is important to mow regularly but also make sure to keep your mower deck raised and never remove more than one-third of the leaf blade height at one mowing. Treat with insecticides if 25 to 30 chinch bugs per square foot are observed during the flush test. There are multiple insecticide options available at your local garden center.



Figure 1. Chinch bug nymph

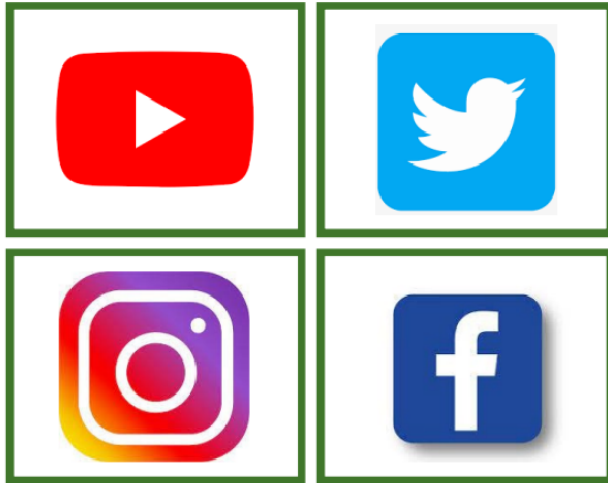


Figure 2. Chinch bug adult



Figure 3. Chinch bug turfgrass injury

Online Resources



■ **Website:** www.lsuagcenter.com/beefcattle

■ **Beef Brunch Educational Series:**

■ www.lsuagcenter.com/beefbrunch

■ **YouTube:** LSU AgCenter – Livestock

■ **Remind App System:**

■ Text @labeef to 81010

■ **Social Media:**

■ Facebook – @LSUAgCenterBeefCattle

■ Instagram – @lsu_agcenter_beef_cattle

■ Twitter – @BeefLsu



LSUAgCenter.com

DeSoto Extension has a Facebook Page!

Please go like our page so you can keep
informed on agricultural events!

[www.Facebook.com/
desotoparishextension](https://www.Facebook.com/desotoparishextension)

Membership and participation in activities and events are open to all citizens without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, veteran status or disability. If you have a disability that requires special accommodation for your participation in an activity, please contact us at 318-872-0533.

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