

"Don't hold back, time is not your friend"

Farming since his grandad put him on his International 866, Jonathan is a fourth-generation farmer in the Texas Panhandle and a third-generation farmer in Castro County. Jonathan began farming for his uncle in 1992, returned to the farm in 2008, and started farming for himself in 2016. He has known he wanted to be a farmer and has fond memories of working with his family members at plant and harvest, these same memories drive him to farm through the difficult times. Mother Nature on the Texas High Plains seems to be the biggest challenge for any producer. For Mr. Harris, untimely and extreme weather can make or break his hay operation. Although through all the challenges, Jonathan wants to encourage small farmers to pursue their dreams and not let the "bigger is better" mentalities discourage them from living their dreams. He urges young farmers to start with a plan and stick to it, pay for the necessities to operate, and work towards farming without debt or on a smaller scale which can be rewarding with less risk.

Jonathan currently farms 152 acres of Midland 99 Bermuda grass and beardless wheat for quality horse hay and is exploring other options for crops for their regenerative properties. Crops like winter peas could have the potential to provide additional income as a feed option and offset fertilizer costs by 25-50 percent. This fall, Jonathan is collaborating with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Castro/Hale/Lamb Agronomy program to put in a demonstration plot for winter peas. They will be using two varieties, both Austrian winter peas (stay tuned for more info on this trial). Jonathan's goal for the study is to have data to promote a multi-row crop that will provide alternative feedstock in the Texas Panhandle as well as soil regeneration and meet a portion of the fertilizer needs helping not only the crop and soil but the farmer's bottom line.

Jonathan's family is his greatest achievement. His kids (3 boys and 1 daughter) are accomplished individuals in their own way and behind all of that is his wife and their marriage. "Without his family, his net worth is zero." In Jonathan's free time, which isn't very often, he enjoys blacksmithing and woodworking.

Lastly, Jonathan encourages consumers if they have a question about agriculture to just ask it! Unfortunately in today's world, there is an unending supply of misinformation. Agriculture is such a diverse industry and he would recommend before having preconceived thoughts or assumptions, talk to those that are directly involved in it.

Contact Me!

Got an idea, question, or comment?



WELCOME TO THE NEW AGRILIFE YEAR! 2023-2024 PLANS





Happy New Year... AgriLife new year, that is! A new year brings new goals and plans, programs, and collaborations. But first, let's recap 2022-2023! From December 2022 - August 2023, the Agronomy program:

- soil sampled 1,600 acres
 - survey results indicated
 - 87.5% of people would be willing to soil sample at least 1 field
 - \$50 per field average fee for soil sampling was a fair price
- held 4 conferences with 155 attendees in total
 - participants increased their understanding of soil health at each conference
 - economic impact at the Lamb County Crops Conference totaled \$19,968.13
- sent monthly newsletters to 206 subscribers
- provided youth education to 593 participants
- trained 26 Private Pesticide Applicators
- gave 90 participants training on new Auxin requirements

It was an incredible year! Thank you to everyone who attended meetings, sponsored events, completed surveys, and provided feedback.

Plans for 2023-2024 include:

- new newsletter series on cover crops and soil water relations
- continued educational conferences in each county
- soil sampling program to continue
- youth and outreach programs
- new monthly programs (see Ag Masterminds)
- new collaboration with farmers and producers
- trainings in pesticide applicator and auxin

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COVER CROPS



Benefits of cover crops:

- slow erosion
- improve soil health
 - soil structure
 - increase organic matter
- enhance water availability
- smother weeds
- control pests and diseases
- increase biodiversity
- reduces compaction

Cover crops are grown for a specific duration in the offseason, terminated, and then left in the field to decompose and cycle nutrients in the soil.

Establishing a cover crop during the driest season can be a bit challenging. According to weatherspark.com, Lubbock's driest time period is 7.5 months from September 26 to May 10 with January being the month with the fewest wet days (see graphic below).

It is a major concern to producers that cover crops use the available water that is captured during the winter months and although that thought is not wrong, Dr. Joseph Burke has shown in a long-term study that following termination, water capture and storage is greater throughout the cotton growing season following the use of cover crops.

Now, October or November is a good time to begin planting cover crops. I'll be tracking a winter pea cover crop trial this season and I'm excited to share with you how that progresses over the next few months and what the findings are. I'll also be scouring my tri-county area looking for other cover crops to feature. Hopefully, over the next year, you and I will learn more about cover crops, their benefits, and the opportunities for funding through this series.



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SOIL WATER RELATIONS: WEATHER STATIONS

Water level measurements provided by the High Plains Water District show a decline in available water for irrigation. Due to this decline, the number of fully irrigated fields will begin to be reduced and producers will be forced to find new ways of growing the region's important crops with less water and still make a profit. My hope in this series is to educate producers on the soil-plant-water relationship is important to understand the movement, retention, and use of water. Understanding the water holding capacity of the soil, particularly in the root zone of the plant, crop water demands during the growing season, and general knowledge of the root systems of the various crops and irrigation systems will allow producers to make educated management practices on their fields to improve profit. In this series, I will break down new and "old" irrigation technologies and discuss the timing of irrigation for different crops. I'll also touch on water quality testing and managing water in a dryland system.



The West Texas Mesonet is a valuable resource to producers, homeowners, aerial applicators, and all those in between. The first station was established in May 2000 in Lubbock and now expanding to 150+ stations in 84 counties in Texas, New Mexico, and Colorado. These weather stations track wind speed and direction, temperature, social radiation, humidity, dewpoint, barometric pressure, and precipitation every minute and soil temperature and leaf wetness every fifteen minutes.

Abernathy Station from West Texas Mesonet Website

Having on-farm data is important and weather is something we all care about. If your farm isn't equipped with a Mesonet station, purchasing your own weather station to place in a central location in your operation to monitor weather conditions can be beneficial. This will allow you to collect important crop production data when you can't be at every location all day long. There are a variety of weather stations available online to purchase. It's important to select a station that gathers the data that is most important to you and your operation. Temperature and wind speed can tell you if it's conducive for a spray application, rainfall and soil moisture data might give you an idea to turn on or off the irrigation, and humidity reading to give you an indication of possible pests or disease outbreak.



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AG MASTERMINDS



RSVP not required but encouraged! Contact Kristie Keys at 325-665-8790.

If you joined me in September, you got to hear from Wes Burgett from West Texas Mesonet. Wes featured important available data for producers using the iPhone and Android mobile apps as well as the website. Attendees were treated to a delicious breakfast prepared by Old Mexico Restaurant in Plainview and sponsored by Purple Wave Auctions. This informal meeting will include a short 15-minute presentation then the floor will be open for questions. This learning opportunity also is a chance to come together as local producers and share what you are seeing, and new things you are trying, and get those burning questions answered. You never know where the discussion will go and I promise you won't want to miss it!

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October 24- Ag Mastermind @ Petersburg Coop Gin (Marketing) November 14- Ag Mastermind @ TBD (Soil Health Institute) November 28-30- Amarillo Farm Show December 5- Hale/Floyd BQA Training December 19- Lamb County Crops Conference December 21- Regional Crops Conference @ Castro County Extension Office (Virtual Program) January 9- Castro County Crops Conference January 18- Mid Plains Ag Expo (Hale/Swisher) March 20- Castro County Crops Conference **Stay tuned to social media and newsletters for more events** Now is the time to check your accumulated CEUs for the year and see how many and which ones you still need!



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