

# PECAN NEWS

## 100 Year Celebration Huge Success

On October 1, the Texas Pecan Board hosted a great celebration on the steps of the State Capitol to kick off Texas Pecan Month. The Governor signed a special proclamation honoring the anniversary of the pecan tree being the state tree of Texas and recognizing October as Texas Pecan Month. The Millican Family shared their history in the pecan business and what it means to be a Texas pecan grower, while Texas Pecan Board President Larry Don shared new survey results from a Texas consumer survey about pecans that the Board commissioned.

Following the kickoff with media at the Capitol, attendees, along with social media influencers, migrated to Olamaie, an acclaimed southern food restaurant in downtown Austin for a special pecan-centric lunch by Chef Michael Fojtasek. While Texas pecans were the star of the show with every course featuring pecans in various formats, Dr. George Ray McEachern talked Texas pecan history and more, giving attendees a deeper understanding of our native nut! Texas Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller attended the lunch and blessed the meal.

As a result of these efforts Texas pecans have been featured in major media in Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, Austin, other media around the state, and in numerous blogs and social media posts. The coverage has been priceless and beyond what could have been imagined.

## Pecan Influencer Tour held in October

On the heels of a successful anniversary celebration, TPB and Wild Hive hosted a Pecan Influencer tour in the Austin/Cedar Creek/Lockhart area. Attendees included top chefs and bakers, R&D experts at consumer packaged goods companies, food-focused media, and others who are influential in the food industry. The group's experience began at the Lost Pines Resort with a pecan-centric meal on the patio of their Sheller's Barrelhouse looking out toward beautiful pecan trees. The following morning the attendees toured the Berdoll Pecan Candy and Gift Co. where Jared and Jennifer Wammack talked about Texas pecan heritage and pecan

retailing. Their business has a long history in the Austin area and is growing.

After a true Texas barbeque lunch at Lockhart's Black's BBQ, the group stopped at Swift River Pecans along the San Marcos River where Troy Swift and his pecan family gave the media their first look at a native pecan bottom, upland improved orchards and how pecan lumber is produced. The tour participants had a fantastic meal under pecan trees to end the day.

The last day of the tour was spent at the Pecan Grove Farms near Cedar Creek. John Luzius, manager at that orchard, gave the group an in-depth tour of a pecan nursery and pecan harvest procedures. The morning tour ended with a pecan lunch prepared by Chef Sharon Hage under huge pecan trees at the orchard.

Attendees walked away with a deeper understanding of the Texas pecan industry and an appreciation for the hard work it takes to bring Texas pecans to tables around the country. With many of the attendees in positions to create new products or menus, the right wheels are in motion to create the right discussion about Texas pecans among the right influencers to increase interest in Texas pecans.



## Pecan Weevil Slows Pecan Movement!

It is amazing that a small pecan insect could nearly stop the pecan industry but pecan weevil is close to doing just that. A 1996 Texas law that put all but five Texas counties into a quarantine is drastically changing how pecans move in the state and raising pecan costs.

Over the last few years, more and more of the U.S. pecan shelling industry has relocated to the El Paso Valley or New Mexico. There are many reasons for this relocation, but the result is that pecans in quarantined counties that were moving east are now trying to move west into non-quarantined areas of Texas and New Mexico.

The 1996 Texas Agriculture Law established that all but the five (5) most western counties of Texas were quarantined counties for pecan weevil. **Inshell pecans from other areas of Texas are considered as having some history of pecan weevil and cannot move into**

## **non-quarantined areas without first being treated.**

As you know, inshell pecans may contain the pecan weevil grub at harvest and not be detected until they enter a non-quarantined area.

Working with the Texas Department of Agriculture, the Texas Pecan Board has helped to formulate rules that will soon **allow inshell pecans from quarantined areas to move into cold storage inside a non-quarantined area for pecan weevil treatment.** Many inshell pecans are typically moved into freezer storage close by shelling plants and this rule will allow inshell pecans from quarantined areas to now move into these cold storage facilities **if they follow treatment protocols.** This is welcome news for growers and accumulators who need to get pecans to shelling facilities but it does add a cost, approximately 2-6 cents a pound.

The Texas Pecan Board is also working with TDA to see if we can move more counties into the non-quarantined area. A lot of pecan weevil data is 30 or 40 years old and needs to be updated. Updated information may show that there is no longer a need for that county to be quarantined.

## **Shipping Pecans to Mexico**

SARGARPA is the Mexican Department of Agriculture and they are the group that monitors any agriculture shipments into Mexico. Unfortunately, they are now only allowing pecan imports that have been **treated** for pecan weevil and only from the 5 western most counties of Texas – which don't have pecan weevil!

TDA and the Texas Pecan Board are working with USDA to resolve this issue with SARGARPA and allow all treated pecans to be imported and to remove the requirement for treatment from the 5 Texas counties. This is an undue burden on Texas growers and could affect overseas sales of pecans that move into Mexican shelling plants before shipping to other countries.

## **Texas Pecan Shows – A Wealth of Information**

Do you know that Texas is the only state that has pecan shows? And we don't just have pecan shows we have county, regional and state pecan shows. Did you know that according to records from Monte Nesbitt the first shows were held in the early 50's? So, how do you know what the average nuts per pound or percent kernel of a pecan variety should be? Try looking at the pecan show handbook which has records of each variety and the statics compiled for many, many years. Also, we get

to look at and how well varieties perform in almost every growing region of Texas.

Make plans to enter your local show or this year just send in an at large entry to TPGA. Either way it's worth it! I am fortunate to be asked to judge pecan shows and this year I will be at Pecos, Ward, Andrews, Gillespie, and Williamson/Bell Counties and I love it!

## **Texas Pecan Board Business**

Finally, the 2018 pecan crop year is about over. I have been receiving pecan assessments over the last few weeks and still have growers that promise more is coming. Unfortunately, it is time to pay bills and growers are having to sell their crop at prices they never thought they would. **Remember – every grower must pay their assessment every year even if you want a refund. Growers who fail to pay, face a loss of licenses, severe penalties and even prosecution.**

So far, the Texas Pecan Board has received payments from 90 Texas pecan growers and probably have another 10 growers who are still processing sales – so about 100 growers reporting. These growers represent about **25 million pounds of pecans** which is not all the Texas crop but is still significant. This is \$112,500 in pecan assessments paid.

Lastly, the TPB will have an election this next August for **3 directors, out of a total of 9 directors.** Every two years, 3 directors come up for election based on a 6-year term. This is a chance for pecan growers to get involved and say how their money is spent on promotion, research and education in Texas.

## **Crop Update**

The pecan crop is looking larger than anticipated if we can just get it out. Out west, they got timely rains that helped fill pecans but overall their crop load is down. Across the state the quality is good and could mean higher prices. Pecan size may be smaller but with high yielding nuts, should not hurt price at all. Early freeze caught everybody off-guard. The leaves and shucks froze in most places, especially in North and Central Texas. It is too early to predict a problem but right now the shucks are not splitting open and hope is that they will, after drying some. I had to peel some simple because the shuck would not break open at sutures. There are reports of stick tights which would be a major problem. Some South Texas orchards have reported sprouting or vivipary problems. Late season drought and then rains promote stress helping cause this problem. **Bob Whitney • 979.571.2086**