

Texas Crop and Weather Report — Sept. 27

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Weather patterns likely mean warm, dry winter

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COLLEGE STATION – The Texas state climatologist said an expected La Niña winter weather pattern would probably not emerge and there likely will be warmer and drier conditions on average into 2017.

Dr. John Nielsen-Gammon, state climatologist, College Station, said the Climate Prediction Center is now calling for temperatures in the tropical Pacific to be about half a degree below normal through the first few months of 2017.

Producers are prepping for fall planting as winter weather conditions are expected to be warmer and dryer than average. (Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service photo by Robert Burns)

Forecasts earlier in the year called for the emergence of a La Niña pattern going into fall, he said. But tropical Pacific temperatures did not cool off enough to meet the official criteria for a La Niña event. That means that the tropical Pacific is classified as neutral, neither excessively warm, such as with El Niño, or excessively cool, such as with La Niña.

“Persistent El Niño conditions were responsible for above-average rainfall in Texas over the past year,” Nielsen-Gammon said. “La Niña events typically favor warm and dry winters in Texas. But the Pacific is close enough to La Niña temperatures that this winter will still lean toward the warm and dry side.”

The forecast doesn’t mean there won’t be severe temperature gauge swings in both directions, Nielsen-Gammon said.

“These conditions usually lead to a few days getting really cold,” he said. “But there could also be temperatures in the 70s and 80s in the middle of winter for College Station. It’s only likely to be warm and dry on average, not every single day.”

Nielsen-Gammon said the influence of tropical Pacific waters on weather patterns in Texas is stronger in the southern portion of the state. He said strong, dry cold fronts could make portions of the state more vulnerable to wildfires, especially in areas where grass growth fueled by rain dries out.

“Dry, warm and windy is not a good recipe,” he said.

AgriLife Extension district reporters compiled the following summaries:

CENTRAL: Producers and homeowners in the district were hit by armyworms. Recent rains may lead to population increases. Cotton bolls were starting to open up. Pecan orchards looked really good for the most part. Alfalfa fields were weedy and grassy due to recent heavy rains. Corn harvests neared the end. Rain slowed progress again. Some grain sorghum was still in the field and showed major sprout issues. Stock ponds remained at good levels. Cattle and livestock were in great shape. All counties reported good soil moisture. Most reported good rangeland



and pasture conditions, and crops were fair overall.

ROLLING PLAINS: Conditions were favorable for farmers with moisture and warmer weather. Cotton farmers in one county applied growth regulators due to the moisture and warmer weather. Pastures and rangeland benefited as grasses and forbs have taken off. Counties reported rainfall totals of 1-7 inches and some flooding. Winter wheat and triticale was planted. Several producers sprayed for armyworms. Forage and range conditions looked extremely favorable heading into fall. Livestock were in good condition.

COASTAL BEND: Scattered showers kept many fields too wet to plow or for final harvesting. Some producers worked steadily to finish harvesting cotton as weather permitted. Ginning was slower as they must allow lint to dry. Oat planting continued. Tillage and spraying continued to be a priority for most producers, and winter pasture planting began. Producers sprayed for armyworms where populations justified the need. Ranchers geared up for fall treatment of huisache. Hay inventories were at historic highs. Pastures were in good shape, and cattle were doing well. Livestock auctions received weaned calves. Calves were above average on sale weights in some areas, with other areas reporting disappointing prices.

EAST: Warmer-than-normal temperatures allowed pastures to dry out. Scattered rainfall fell across the district with only a few counties reporting rain. Pasture and range conditions were fair to good. Producers were getting another cutting of hay due to rains earlier in the month. Smith County reported high humidity, which affected required longer curing time for hay bales. In Trinity County, producers were still working on their second cutting. Some producers were purchasing out-of-county hay despite good regrowth. Some producers planted winter forages in Smith and Upshur counties. Armyworm damage continued to be reported. Livestock were doing fair to good. Fall calving was underway. The calf market was down in Houston County. Calves were ready for sale in Marion County. Feral hogs were active, and damages were reported. Flies were still numerous. Producers started to plant fall gardens. Subsoil and topsoil were reported as mostly adequate.

SOUTH PLAINS: August was one of the wettest months in many years. The weather pattern was very conducive for alternaria leaf spot in cotton and foliar disease in peanuts. Conditions were showing the potential for regrowth in cotton. A cold front pushed temperatures into the 50s, which could inhibit some cotton fields from finishing out. Late-planted corn and grain sorghum were doing very well. Some corn was harvested prior to the wet weather, and harvest should resume as conditions dry out. There could be lodging issues in some areas. Sugarcane aphids were found in some grain sorghum throughout the district. Maturing sorghum and wet, cooler weather may slow the pest's progress. Pasture and rangeland conditions were fair but should improve. Cattle were in good condition. Planted wheat looked good. Drier and warmer conditions allowed Floyd County producers to harvest corn fields. Bolls started to open on the majority of the cotton there. Lubbock County experienced warm weather that helped dry fields from wet conditions. Some non-irrigated cotton fields were expected to be defoliated soon in preparation for harvest. Weather in Scurry County was warm with no rainfall. Between 4,000-5,000 acres of cotton was hailed on with varying degrees of severity.

PANHANDLE: Temperatures were near average. Some moisture was received. Soil moisture levels were mostly adequate. Deaf Smith producers were back in fields. With combines starting to cut corn, silage cutters were running as fast as they could. Winter wheat was planted. Some earlier plantings were coming up to a stand. It was too early to tell yield estimates for corn. Grain sorghum was coming along, however many fields were still being treated for sugarcane aphids. Dryland and irrigated wheat production was going into the ground with great urgency due to the rainfall events that kept many producers out of fields. Cotton was slowing down as temperatures cooled. Manure and fertilizer applications were made to prepare for small-grain plantings. Warmer weather in Hansford County helped corn and cotton dry out. Silage was cut. Leaves were dropping on soybeans. Lipscomb County reported fall armyworms were doing damage to wheat and triticale. Rangeland and pastures were mostly fair to good. Cattle were in good condition.

NORTH: Topsoil and subsoil moisture levels varied from short to adequate. Small scattered showers fell around the

district. Temperatures dropped into the 70s. High 90-degree daytime temperatures dried the soil. Summer grass was suffering. Cotton farmers were beginning to defoliate fields. Hay was produced. Some soybean fields were harvested. It is still early in the harvest, but yield reports were average. Dry conditions slowed planting of winter forage for livestock. The cattle market was weaker. Armyworms were a problem for farmers and ranchers. Most farmers and ranchers delayed planting winter pastures because of the threat of armyworms. Wild hogs continued to cause damage

FAR WEST: Temperatures were in the low 90s but dropped drastically with a cold front. Rain showers occurred and included a few hail storms. Hail caused some damage to cotton fields. Rain amounts ranged up to 3 inches. Rangeland grasses were showing stress in drier areas. Cotton acres were defoliated and readied for harvest. Cotton gins were beginning to open for the season. Supplemental feeding of livestock and wildlife continued.

WEST CENTRAL: Temperatures and humidity were very high. Heavy thunderstorms brought significant rainfall in most areas. Temperature were expected to cool down. Tanks and creeks were full from runoff. Cotton fields need warm sunny days to finish maturing. Moisture was adversely affecting cotton. Sorghum harvests were complete. Wheat planting was underway in some areas. Many producers delayed planting due to armyworm infestations. Armyworms were attacking hay fields and small grain fields around the district. Some producers will not get the third cutting because of armyworm damage. Sugarcane aphid problems also increased. Spraying continued for aphids in late-planted sorghum fields. Rangeland and pasture conditions remained very good for this time of the season. Livestock remained in fair to good condition. Livestock markets were stable, but cattle prices declined. Pecan trees were loaded.

SOUTHEAST: In Chambers County, there was still rice in the field. In Fort Bend County, the cotton harvest resumed in areas that avoided rain. Yields were low and grades were not good due to weather conditions. Livestock were in good condition and pastures were growing. Hay producers in some areas could use a break from showers. Hay was on the ground in dry areas. Soil-moisture levels throughout the district ranged widely from adequate to surplus, with most ratings in the adequate range.

SOUTHWEST: Topsoil moisture levels decreased. Recent rains should produce good fall forage. Wet conditions were expected to continue in some areas. If rains materialize it will set rangeland conditions up for a very good winter. Some hay was still being made and wheat was planted. Temperatures were expected to drop. Farmers were picking cotton. Cotton outcomes were almost as expected. Livestock conditions remained good. Deer looked good too.

SOUTH: Conditions were fairly good as temperatures varied and rainfall occurred in different parts of the district. Rainfall mounts were good – measuring from 0.2-5 inches. In Jim Wells County, the previous two weeks were abnormally hot and dried soil moisture levels. Temperatures reached the triple digits in Webb County before good rains brought cooler temperatures. Crops continued in good condition in and around Atascosa County. Forage was being baled. The cotton harvest continued, and peanut fields were under irrigation with harvest about two to three weeks away. Range and pasture conditions remained in fair to good shape, but were slowly deteriorating in some areas. Some pastures were turning brown from lack of rain. Fall armyworm posed a potential problem in coastal Bermuda grass fields. Body condition scores on cattle remained good, and fall roundups were in progress with some calves being weaned. Soil moisture conditions ranged from adequate to very short. The lack of good grazing pastures was driving market speculation on live cattle prices. The market was doing well after a slow start.

Livestock producers were keeping an eye on cattle market conditions. Wildlife populations of deer, dove, quail and turkey remained in excellent condition. Conditions were great for dove hunters throughout the area. A small amount of cotton acreage remained, and it is becoming uncertain if it will be harvested because rain was in the forecast. Dry conditions in Zavala County kept the cotton harvest active. Native range and pastures remained mostly good to fair with a few pockets in Zavala County in excellent conditions. Pecans made good progress with very little insect pressure. Livestock producers reported no supplemental feeding. Livestock body conditions remained mostly good to excellent. Dryland oat producers were planting oats in hopes some forecast rainfall would materialize. Also in

Zavala County, seedbed preparations for spinach planting were also very active, and sesame fields were beginning to mature. In Hidalgo County, citrus harvesting plans were in process. Cotton stalks were being controlled and winter vegetables were being planted.

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