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# Texas Crop, Weather

Panhandle, South Texas, hammered by heavy rains  
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Writer(s):

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COLLEGE STATION – Nearly all of Texas received some rain, with some areas such as the Panhandle getting 6 to 10 inches, according to reports from [Texas AgriLife Extension Service](#) personnel.

For other parts of Texas, the rain came in more moderate amounts but was still welcome. But in South Texas, the rain added insult to injury to crops earlier damaged by Hurricane Dolly.

"I'd say that within the last 72 hours we got well over 3 inches nearly across the whole county," said Scott Strawn, AgriLife Extension agent in [Ochiltree County](#), which is in the northern Panhandle, adjoining the Oklahoma border.

Strawn said April, May and mid-July, months when the area usually gets most of its rain, were extremely dry.

"The temperatures were above average with below-average rainfall, so our wheat crop, to say the least, is not a very good one compared to the year before.

However, the county's corn crop will benefit from the rain, he said.

"It was kind of on the tail-end of our irrigation season for corn," Strawn said. "It will probably save an inch or two on irrigation on most fields."

Strawn noted that even 1 or 2 inches of water savings translates to a \$10 to \$20-an-acre savings in pumping costs for irrigators.

In [Stonewall County](#), midway between Lubbock and Fort Worth, the situation has not been as bad, but the rain was certainly welcome, said Jason Miller, AgriLife Extension agent.

"Over the past four days we've had anywhere from an inch and a half to two inches; not a lot," Miller said. "We've actually had enough of the scattered showers around that it's kept the range in decent conditions, but this should sure give us a boost going into the fall."

Rod Santa Ana, an AgriLife Communications specialist based in Weslaco, said most of the South Texas region's row crops were beyond being damaged more than they already have by storms in the last month. A loss of more than 90,000 acres of Rio Grande cotton was attributed to the hurricane.

This time, however, the heaviest rains came not to the cropland, but to the more urbanized Starr County area, he said.

"All those areas were hit very hard with unseasonably and unusually heavy rainfall that in some places flooded arroyos and creeks. It caused some evacuation and, for awhile, the closing of U.S. Highway 83," he said.

Though the rest of the region didn't get the flooding that Starr County saw, it did see substantial rain which wasn't needed, Santa Ana said.

"It's a crop area that is already in bad shape," he said.

In the Uvalde area, where wildlife have been suffering through the drought along with domestic animals, the rain was helpful. But in most cases, it was too little too late, said Jim Gallagher, AgriLife Extension wildlife specialist based in Uvalde.

"Forb (broad-leafed plants) production was next to nothing (in the spring). Nesting and fawning habitat, at least in the immediate [Uvalde](#) area, has been pretty grim," Gallagher said.

Most producers in the south Texas area depend at least some on income based on wildlife, either by hunting or tours. (See associated story at <http://agnews.tamu.edu/showstory.php?id=630> .) Many depend heavily on it, and the drought has meant limited grazing and cover for deer and quail, he said.

"It will definitely jump-start some forage to keep the deer going, so it will make life a little simpler," he said.

The following summaries were compiled by AgriLife Extension district reporters this week:

**[CENTRAL:](#)** The grain sorghum and corn harvests were wrapping up. Cattle and pastures were beginning to thin. Some producers were baling corn and milo stalks for winter feeding. The pecan crop was expected to be light.

**[COASTAL BEND:](#)** The cotton harvest was delayed in some locations due to rain. Late cotton and sorghum were maturing, and harvesting was winding down in most areas. Forages rebounded because of more soil moisture.

**[EAST:](#)** As much as 4 inches of rain were received throughout the reporting area, easing dry conditions. Moisture improved pasture conditions to the point that another cutting of hay may be possible. Some producers were spraying pastures for armyworms. Cattle were in good condition as weaning and selling market-ready calves and cull cows continued. Some producers prepared seed beds for winter pastures.

**[FAR WEST:](#)** Long green chiles were doing well. The spring onion harvest was completed. Producers were making the fifth cutting of alfalfa. Irrigated cotton was showing stress from high temperatures. Sorghum was doing poorly. The watermelon harvest continued. Pecan growers were fighting weevils in orchards. Wildfires remained a constant threat, with several occurring due to lightning.

**[NORTH:](#)** Milder temperatures and humid conditions prevailed. Rain revitalized the pastures and hay meadows. Hay producers were harvesting only what was needed and shredding or stockpiling the rest. Soil moisture ranged from short to adequate. However, the cooler temperatures and rain encouraged turf fungal problems. The corn harvest continued, with the crop in fair to good condition and 100 percent silked, doughing and dented. As the harvest completed, however, there were early reports of lower-than-average yields and higher levels of aflatoxin than expected. Rain slowed the sorghum harvest, but the crop is in fair to good condition. The later-planted soybeans were expected to fare better than early planted ones this year. The recent rains were beneficial for the late soybeans. The early soybeans did not filled out and were dropping leaves. Cotton was in fair to good condition with bolls about 25 percent to 50 percent open. Livestock were in good condition. There were several reports about oak trees dying from moisture stress.

**[PANHANDLE:](#)** Most of the region received some much needed moisture, with heavy rains in some counties. The rains improved range conditions and reduced the risk of wildfires. Soil moisture varied from adequate to very short with most areas reporting short. Most corn was in the dough stage and rated mostly fair. Cotton

varied from very poor to excellent with most areas reporting fair. Peanuts varied from very poor to good with most areas reporting fair. Sorghum was very poor to good with most areas reporting fair. Cattle were in good condition.

**ROLLING PLAINS:** Showers brought 0.5-2 inches of rain with more in the forecast. Irrigated cotton was doing well, but dryland production will be a disaster without more rain. The peach harvest was nearly completed.

**SOUTH:** Soil moisture was surplus to adequate except for the northern part of the region where it was very short. As fields dried out, the harvesting of the remains of the cotton and sorghum crops began again. Fall corn and sorghum were planted, and producers began preparing fields for other fall crops. Range and pastures benefitted from rain. Some hay baling operations continued, and most of the livestock in the region was in good condition.

**SOUTH PLAINS:** The region received widespread rain, which reduced irrigation costs. Soil moisture ranged from short to adequate in most counties with some counties reporting surpluses. Corn was in good condition. Grain sorghum neared maturity; early planted fields turned color, and later planted fields had just began to head out. Irrigated grain sorghum was in good condition, but dryland fields in most counties showed significant drought stress prior to the rain. Peanuts and cotton were in fair to good condition in most counties and were rapidly maturing. Wheat planting began and should shift into high gear in most counties because of the rain. Armyworm and bollworm infestations escalated in many sorghum and cotton fields across the central and northern counties. Overall, crops and pastures significantly benefitted from the rain, and livestock condition was good. However, producers found supplemental feeding of livestock was still necessary in most counties.

**SOUTHEAST:** Rains greened up some areas, but stock tank water levels were still low. Fertility levels are still low, but pastures were starting to recover. A few cases of army worms were reported. The three-cornered alfalfa leaf hopper was still causing trouble in soybeans. Mexican rice borers were still being caught in the traps. The hay harvest continued as the rain permitted.

**SOUTHWEST:** Rain came, but much of the region remained dry. The rain helped peanuts, cotton and fall forage production. Improved forage production helped sustain wildlife. Some ranchers continued to provide heavy supplemental nutrition and water for wildlife where there wasn't rain. Even with this supplementation and the recent rains, wildlife degradation was expected as the rain came too late for fall forage production. The corn and sorghum harvest was nearly completed. Cotton and peanuts continued to make good progress under heavy irrigation.

**WEST CENTRAL:** There was hay harvesting in some areas. Some field preparations for fall planting was under way. The corn harvest was completed. Most corn produced and harvested will be for silage only. Rangeland and pastures continued to decline. Grasses and forages were stressed. Livestock conditions were declining. Cattle were sold due to lack of grazing and available water. Stock tank water levels continued to drop with some completely dry.

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