Zebras, Watusi, and Zebu!

Webster Parish Farmers Are Hooked on Exotic Animals
Table of Contents

Notes from the State Conservationist ..................3
Kevin Norton shares his thoughts

Quote of the Month .........................3
“Strength lies in differences, not in similarities.”

Zebras, Watusi, and Zebu .............4
Webster Parish farmers are hooked on exotic animals

Around the State .........................6
Exciting things are happening around the state

Upcoming Events .......................7
January 2013 LACD Annual Meeting
January 2013 Ag Expo
January 2013 Prescribed Fire Council Meeting

Census of Agriculture ..................7
A lot depends on it

Contact Information ...................8
Call us with your questions

USDA’s Commitment to Equality
USDA believes every farmer and rancher should be treated equally and fairly, and we are committed to resolving all cases involving allegations of past discrimination by individuals.

Referral Guide for USDA Settlements and Claims Adjudication Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women and Hispanic Farmers and Ranchers Claims Adjudication Process</th>
<th>Native American Farmer and Rancher Class Action Settlement (Keepseagle v. Vilsack)</th>
<th>African American Farmer and Rancher Class Action Settlement (Pigford II)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>If you believe that USDA improperly denied farm loan benefits to you for certain time periods between 1981 and 2000 because you are a female or because you are Hispanic, you may be eligible to apply for compensation. To request a claims package by telephone, call 1-888-508-4429. To request a claims package online, please visit <a href="http://www.farmerclaims.gov">www.farmerclaims.gov</a>.</td>
<td>If you are a Native American who was denied a farm loan or loan servicing by the USDA between January 1, 1981, and November 24, 1999, you may be eligible for benefits from a Class Action Settlement. To request a claims package by telephone, call: 1-888-233-5506. To request a claims package online, or for more information, please visit: <a href="http://www.indianfarmclass.com">www.indianfarmclass.com</a></td>
<td>If you are an African American farmer (a) who submitted a request to file a late claim on or between October 13, 1999, and June 18, 2008, under the 1999 USDA settlement in the earlier class action known as Pigford v. Glickman (“Pigford”) and (b) who did not receive a merits determination on your discrimination claim, you may be eligible for benefits from a Class Action Settlement. To hear information by telephone, call 1-866-950-5547 or 1-866-472-7826. To find information online, please visit: <a href="http://www.blackfarmercase.com">www.blackfarmercase.com</a></td>
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Notes from the State Conservationist

This month’s issue of Conservation Update features a farm in Webster Parish that is home to horses, cattle, llamas, an emu, and zebras. This farm is not exactly the type of farm you are accustomed to reading about in our magazine, but then again, this farm shares a similar thread with other farms we have featured—conservation-minded producers.

While covering this story, we discovered an interesting fact about zebras . . . a zebra’s stripes are like fingerprints. Every zebra has a slightly different arrangement.

Like a zebra’s stripes, each farm and ranch in Louisiana is unique. Resources are different, crops are different, management styles are different, and goals are different. When the Natural Resources Conservation Service and soil and water conservation districts work with farmers and ranchers, we study these differences and make recommendations for conservation measures based on producer goals. We spend time with a producer collecting information on farm resources—land cover, land use, soil erosion, soil types, wetlands, habitat diversity, conservation practices, etc.; we analyze this information to develop alternatives that will work best for the producer; and once the producer decides on a course of action, we help them implement the conservation measures.

This conservation planning process makes it possible for our agency to effectively serve the individual conservation needs of cattle producers, row crop farmers, organic producers, and farmers with exotic animals. As a result, during 2012 the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Louisiana’s soil and water conservation districts helped Louisiana’s ag producers improve water quality, stop soil erosion, restore wetlands, enhance wildlife habitat, and improve farm sustainability and profitability.

As we move forward in 2013, I hope we will have an opportunity to work with you on your farm or ranch.

Kevin Norton
State Conservationist
Louisiana

Quote of the Month

“Strength lies in differences, not in similarities.”

Stephen R. Covey, 1932-2012, American educator, author, businessman, and keynote speaker.

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You never know what you might see while walking through the pastures of Rex and Trudy Cable’s Cross Creek farm. Horses, yes . . . cattle, yes . . . but wait . . . are those zebras?!

Zorro, Zahara, and Zydeco are zebras who live on Cross Creek in Webster Parish. These zebras are part of a family of exotic animals that includes llamas, an emu, and Watusi cattle.

“I got bitten by the exotic animal bug after seeing the movie “Racing Stripes,” said Trudy Cable. “Then, we stumbled upon an injured zebra at a local vet, found out there is a local breeder, and the rest is history.”

Both Rex and Trudy grew up around farms and farming. Trudy’s father had 80 acres of pine trees, and Rex’s father was a tobacco and timber farmer. When it was time to retire, they both agreed . . . it was time to go back to the farm. They moved to rural Webster Parish and began to raise horses for recreation.

“I love horses,” said Trudy. “But we found out really quickly that it costs a lot of money to raise horses; so, we started raising cattle to support our horse farm.”

But the Cables did not elect to raise just any breed of cattle, they selected Watusi, Zebu, and Dutch Belted Gallaways. This began their journey towards a pasture full of exotic animals, and meeting the injured zebra at the local vet’s office sealed their fate.

“When the zebras came to Cross Creek, we really got hooked on exotic animals,” said Trudy. “Now we have llamas, an emu named Esther, and a donkey named Gator!”

Rex and Trudy began working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in 1996. They had some erosion problems on Cross Creek, and after visiting with their local conservationist they elected to install a pond to help solve these problems. In the years since, they have installed fencing and accomplished site preparation, forest stand improvement, and tree and shrub establishment conservation practices with the help of NRCS.
recently, the Cables have worked with NRCS on well decommissioning, installation of heavy use area protection, installation of a structure for water control, and installation of a pipeline and watering facility.

The Cables are true conservationists. They understand that in order for their animals to flourish, they must take care of their land, and they share this with others. Working with the Dorcheat Soil and Water Conservation District and NRCS, they have hosted two pasture walks for women on their land.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service and Soil and Water Conservation Districts provide technical assistance to farmers and ranchers like Rex and Trudy Cable to help them be better stewards of their land’s natural resources.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program promotes agricultural productivity and environmental quality. Technical and financial assistance are available to help eligible participants install or implement structural and management practices on eligible farmland.

Cross Creek - Webster Parish

In 2011, Rex and Trudy were presented with the “Conservation Farmer of the Year” award by the Dorcheat Soil and Water Conservation District.

"Being presented this award meant the world to us," said Trudy. "We had no idea how to run a successful farm with conservation in mind, but NRCS and the District took time through the years to explain everything clearly—and it has totally improved our farm."

Rex and Trudy Cable
Conservationists
Nov 8, Dec 11
St. Mary Parish 4-H Club Presentations - The St. Mary Parish LSU AgCenter invited Sophe Kilchrist, St. Mary SWCD Coordinator, to present a lesson on coastal restoration to area 4-H Club members. Sophe covered the topic with 88 students at Raintree Elementary School on the Chitimacha Reservation and at the Chitimacha Tribal School. Since St. Mary is a coastal parish, this is a valuable topic to cover since many older 4-H Club members become Earth Team volunteers and assist St. Mary SWCD with coastal vegetative plantings each year.

Dec 5
America’s Heartland - Several months ago, the weekly television series, America’s Heartland filmed a story on the Blanchard family sugarcane farm in St. Mary Parish. The episode aired on December 5th on the Rural Free Delivery (RFD-TV) channel. The episode can be viewed online at http://www.americasheartland.org/episodes/episode_812/sugarcane_farming.htm. St. Mary Parish District Conservationist Patra Ghergich was interviewed for the episode. The Blanchard family farm was recently highlighted in the June 2012 issue of the Conservation Update.

Dec 7
Louisiana Forage and Grazing Council Meeting - The Louisiana Forage and Grazing Council held their annual meeting in Alexandria, Louisiana, on December 7, 2012. During the meeting, Calcasieu Parish livestock producer Jay Duhon received the Council’s Master Forage Producer Award.

Dec 10
USA Rice Outlook Conference - Vermillion Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Chairman Ernest Girouard received the Distinguished Conservation Achievement Award at the USA Rice Outlook Conference held in Coronado, California, on December 10, 2012. In addition to his work with the SWCD and Louisiana Association of Conservation Districts (LACD), Dr. Girouard is also the Louisiana Master Farmer Program Coordinator at the LSU AgCenter.

Dec 12
Louisiana Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society Meeting - The Louisiana Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) held its annual meeting on December 12, 2012, at the Dean Lee Research Station DeWitt Livestock Facility in Alexandria, Louisiana. Approximately 33 people attended the meeting from across the state. Topics covered at the meeting included Restoring Longleaf Pine in Louisiana, the Louisiana Black Bear Conservation Coalition, Mississippi River Trust, and the Lower Mississippi River Valley Joint Venture. During the meeting, Calcasieu Parish producer James Walton was presented with the 2012 Good Land Use Award.
**Upcoming Events**

**Jan 9-11**  
*Louisiana Association of Conservation Districts Annual Convention* - The Louisiana Association of Conservation Districts will host their annual convention in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, on January 9-11, 2013. To register to attend, contact: Mitzi Dohrman, Vermilion Soil and Water Conservation District, (337) 893-5664, extension 3, mitzi.dohrman@la.nacdnet.net.

**Jan 18-19**  
*Ag Expo 2013* - Visit the NRCS Exhibit at AgExpo 2013. This event is sponsored by the North Louisiana Agri-Business Council and will be held at the Ike Hamilton Expo Center in West Monroe on January 18 & 19, 2013.

**Jan 29**  
*Louisiana Prescribed Fire Council Annual Meeting* - The 6th Annual Meeting of the Louisiana Prescribed Fire Council will be on January 29, 2013, at the Tall Timbers Baptist Conference Center in Forest Hill, Louisiana. The deadline to pre-register is January 18, 2013. Registration for the meeting is $10.00 payable to the Louisiana Forestry Association (LFA), P.O. Box 5067, Alexandria, LA 71307-5067. Please mark PPFC Mtg. in memo of checks. For more information, contact Cody Cedotal at the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries at (225) 765-2354.

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**Census of Agriculture**

**Quick Facts**

- **Number of Farms in Louisiana**: 29,000
- **Land in Farms in Louisiana**: 7,950,000 Acres
- **Average Farm Size in Louisiana**: 274 Acres

From: USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service. Data as of 05/14/2012

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**Be Counted!**

*A Lot Depends on the Census of Agriculture*

The Census of Agriculture is conducted only once every five years across our nation’s farmland and agricultural communities. USDA, those involved in agriculture, and many others use the results of the Census to make important policy and business decisions that impact people across our nation. It is important that all of our nation’s farmers and farmland are accurately accounted for.

If you receive a Census of Agriculture form, please take a moment to complete the form and respond. If you need assistance completing the form or you would like to receive a form to complete, contact the National Agricultural Statistics Service at (888) 424-7828.

For more information about the Census of Agriculture, visit: [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov)
Visit our web site at: www.la.nrcs.usda.gov

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