

TEXAS FARM BUREAU 2025 COUNTY ACTIVITIES OF EXCELLENCE AWARD

The CAE awards recognize counties that have created unique, volunteer-driven programs at the local level. The CAE program categorizes county activities into the following areas: education and ag promotion, member services, public relations and information, leadership development and policy implementation.

Hale/Swisher County Farm Bureaus

Hale and Swisher County Farm Bureaus teamed up to host a series of leadership and networking events designed to connect young farmers and ranchers with other members across the counties, as well as promote Farm Bureau programs to strengthen engagement and involvement among the next generation of agricultural leaders and professionals.

Nearly 60 young farmers and ranchers attended the leadership development meetings that featured speakers and opportunities for peer-to-peer learning.

"Our goal was to help develop leadership among these young producers and also make them aware of the Farm Bureau resources out there for them," Barry Evans, Swisher County Farm Bureau president, said. "We hosted lunch and dinner options to help reach more people. Many young farmers and ranchers aren't aware of the assets that are available to them through Farm Bureau."

The events focused on leadership opportunities, agricultural advocacy and the value of local Farm Bureau involvement.

"The counties chose to work together as a team to drive more interest in Young Farmer & Rancher events and programming," Justin Stoerner, Hale County Farm Bureau board member, said. "When people see others getting involved, it becomes contagious. Sharing a meal at these meetings gave everyone a chance to network and learn about the opportunities Farm Bureau offers."

The collaboration expanded outreach in a sparsely populated region, drawing participation from neighboring Castro and Floyd counties.

"We're in a very rural part of the state, and the populations of the communities as a whole are declining," Stoerner said. "It's becoming more and more vital to work together and to encourage involvement from these young farmers and ranchers for Texas agriculture and Farm Bureau."

Evans agreed, noting that community connections are critical in agriculture.

"Farming is hard. Ranching is hard. But it helps to know there are others facing the same challenges," Evans said. "It builds a stronger community and makes stronger individuals knowing others are in their shoes."



Houston County Farm Bureau

Houston County Farm Bureau hosted a legal seminar designed to help landowners, farmers and ranchers better understand livestock laws and landowner rights.

Eighty county residents gained an understanding of legal issues surrounding land use, livestock, liability, property boundaries and water rights at the meeting hosted earlier this year. Many attendees said they appreciated having the ability to ask questions and hear clear explanations of complicated rules that often impact decisions on the farm or ranch.

The meeting, *The Legal Fence Line: Livestock Laws and Landowner Rights*, included a presentation from Tiffany Dowell Lashmet, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service professor and Extension specialist in agricultural law. Her presentation broke down common scenarios producers face and offered practical examples to help participants better navigate legal responsibilities on their operations.

"We covered different laws and legalities like if your livestock gets out of your property or if somebody else's livestock gets onto your property," Todd Stone, Houston County Farm Bureau president, said. "The presentation addressed real-world legal concerns faced by producers, providing expert insights on livestock law, property disputes and liability issues. It offered clarity on topics that many had previously navigated without formal guidance."

Stone noted local law enforcement professionals were invited, creating an opportunity to strengthen relationships within the community.

"Farm Bureau's job is to promote agriculture," Stone said. "The event drew a diverse group of local producers and gave us the opportunity to connect with farmers and ranchers who aren't currently Farm Bureau members and showcase what our organization can do for them."

The seminar not only addressed community concerns but also reinforced Houston County Farm Bureau's role as a proactive advocate and resource for farmers and ranchers.

"This event showed our organization is a trusted educational and advocacy resource within our agricultural community," Stone said.

Some participants who weren't previously members joined Farm Bureau after the seminar, recognizing the value of the information and support the organization provides to local agricultural families.



Madison/Waller County Farm Bureaus

Leaders from Madison and Waller County Farm Bureaus joined Texas A&M AgriLife Extension agents from 18 counties for the Agricultural Agent Retreat. The two-day event was designed to strengthen partnerships, share ideas and highlight how collaboration can better serve their communities.

Sessions focused on program planning, youth livestock validation and community engagement.

"We met with the county Extension agents over dinner where we talked about Texas Farm Bureau programs," Kevin Counsil, Madison County Farm Bureau president, said. "One of our high school students talked about her experience at TFB's Thrive Conference and how it impacted her. Another young lady, who was a scholarship winner at the local level, talked to them about scholarships at the county and state level."

County leaders also highlighted TFB's Ag in the Classroom efforts and other educational programs and resources that can benefit teachers and students, as well as advocacy efforts in Austin and Washington, D.C. that help Texas agricultural producers.

The Extension agents toured several agricultural operations, including a mushroom processing facility and two cattle operations.

The tours offered a broader view of the diversity of Texas agriculture, reinforcing that farming and ranching take many forms across the state.

"This activity was unique in the sense that county agents were able to come to our county—traditionally a smaller and more rural county compared to others—and see firsthand the strong relationship between the Extension service, Farm Bureau and the community," Counsil said.

Partnerships between county Farm Bureaus and AgriLife Extension agents help amplify agricultural education and producer outreach efforts at both the local and state levels.

"This retreat helped bridge that gap and show Extension agents the grassroots side of Farm Bureau and how both groups can collaborate to promote agriculture," Wesley Paben, Waller County Farm Bureau president, said.

Paben noted the joint effort also encouraged learning between counties.

"It's a way to be a united front and learn from each other," Paben said. "If one county has a program that is really working, then it can be picked up by other counties and help promote agriculture that way."

