



From the desk of Commissioner Robert S. Weinroth

County Leads State in Ag Production

Palm Beach County is Florida's top agricultural producing county and takes the title of largest agricultural producing county east of the Mississippi River! Some Palm Beach County farmers have been in business since the 1800s planting pineapples and tomatoes.

In 2017-18, Palm Beach County generated over \$1.4 billion in agricultural sales.

In western Palm Beach County billions of dollars are generated by farming industries from packing houses to sugar mills, harvesting equipment, and transportation systems. Major growers continue to produce in the Agricultural Reserve west of the turnpike in South County, a 21,000 acre area that was designated as a preservation (primarily for agriculture) by the Board of County Commissioners in 1980.

Palm Beach County currently leads the nation in the production of sugar cane, sweet corn and sweet bell peppers. It leads the state in the production of rice, lettuce, radishes, Chinese vegetables, specialty leaf and celery.

For seven months out of the year, fresh fruit and vegetables coming out of Florida feed over 80 million people worldwide. New technology and improved disease-resistant crop varieties have helped Florida's farms become more efficient and productive.

Hemp is a hot topic right now. After the most recent legislative session in Tallahassee, the Governor signed into law a bill establishing a state hemp program to be overseen by the Florida Department of Agriculture. Hemp is projected to become a multibillion-dollar industry over the next few years.

Hemp is used for hundreds of products including fiber, cattle feed, building materials, and food such as hemp seed oil, greens and medical Cannabidiol (CBD) extract. Hemp is not marijuana but they are cousins coming from the same species of plant.

Industrial hemp has less than 0.3 percent of the THC (the psychoactive chemical that at higher levels defines marijuana). For the near term, hemp production is limited to University of Florida facilities.

Infectious Disease Elimination Program

Palm Beach County recently became the first Florida county to adopt an Infectious Disease Elimination Program ordinance establishing a countywide Syringe Exchange Program. The Board of County Commissioners unanimously adopted the ordinance after recent state legislation was enacted.

The objective of the program is to reduce HIV transmission, hepatitis C, skin infections and other blood-borne diseases. It is also expected to provide a bridge to drug treatment and recovery support as well as other primary health and social services for intravenous drug users.

The program, which will not receive any state or county dollars, will rely on grants and private donations to operate.

In 2017, there were 647 opioid-related deaths in Palm Beach County. More than 8,400 county residents are currently living with HIV with nearly one new infection occurring every day. Recently, there was also a recent Hepatitis C scare making this program more important than ever to protect the public health of our community.

Ten Hot Weather Safety Tips

It's hot outside! We are currently experiencing record-breaking temperatures in South Florida this summer so it's important to take precautions to avoid heat-related disorders such as heat stroke and heat exhaustion.

Heat stroke occurs when the body no longer sweats, and body temperatures reach dangerous levels. Symptoms include dry, hot reddish skin and lack of perspiration, high body temperature, strong rapid pulse, chills, confusion and slurred speech.

Heat exhaustion is our body's response to the loss of water and salt, typically through sweating. Symptoms include excessive perspiration, weakness/fatigue, dizziness or confusion, clammy skin, muscle cramps and flushed complexion.

For anyone spending time outdoors working or playing, here are some helpful tips:

- **Stay hydrated.** Drink plenty of fluids; drink about 16 ounces before starting and 5 to 7 ounces every 15 or 20 minutes.
- **Avoid dehydrating liquids.** Alcohol, coffee, tea and caffeinated soft drinks do not hydrate the body and can hurt more than help.

- **Wear protective clothing.** Lightweight, light-colored and loose-fitting clothing helps protect against the heat. Change clothing if it becomes saturated.
- **Pace yourself.** Work at a slow, even pace. Know your limits and ability to work safely in heat.
- **Schedule frequent breaks.** Take time for rest periods and water breaks in a shaded or air conditioned area.
- **Use a damp rag.** Wipe your face or put it around your neck.
- **Avoid getting sunburn.** Use sunscreen and wear a hat if working outside.
- **Be alert to signs of heat-related illness.** Know the warning signs of heat stroke and heat exhaustion. Look for and check on other workers who might be at high risk.
- **Avoid direct sun.** Find shade or block out the sun if possible.
- **Eat smaller meals.** Eat fruits high in fiber and natural juice. Avoid high-protein foods.

Keep Your Pet Safe in the Heat

Don't forget your pets also are subject to the effects of the heat! Here are some tips to help keep your pets safe in the summer:

- Pets can get dehydrated quickly, offer them plenty of fresh, clean water. If outdoors, make sure they have a shady place, out of the sun and be careful not to over-exercise them.
- Symptoms of overheating in pets include excessive panting or difficulty breathing, increased heart and breathing rate, drooling, mild weakness, stupor or even collapse. Symptoms can also include seizures, bloody diarrhea and vomiting with an elevated body temperature.
- It's illegal to leave your pet alone in a parked vehicle which can lead to fatal heat stroke. It's ok to trim longer hair on a dog but don't shave your dog. Their layers of hair serve to protect them from overheating and sunburn.
- Brushing cats more often than usual can prevent problems caused by excessive heat.
- Apply sunscreen or insect repellent that is labeled safe for use on animals.
- Be careful of very hot asphalt which can cause burns on to your pet's paws.