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NEWS RELEASE FROM THE OFFICE OF:

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Beware of Hay Fraud

Producers should be aware of a hay fraud scam that is currently being attempted on producers in Texas and Arkansas...and maybe in other states. The scam is initiated by someone contacting a local producer from out of state claiming they are interested in purchasing an amount of hay, 15 round bales in Hempstead, Van Buren, and Washington counties, Arkansas and 60 round bales in Smith County, Texas. The person needing hay, supposedly from out east, sends the producer a 'cashiers' check for the purchase price. In the Texas case, the 'buyer' requested that the producer deposit the check and provide \$1500 to the 'hauler' and an additional \$1500 to a 'broker'. In each of the cases, the 'buyer' would have gotten a free load of hay and the 'hauler' and 'broker' would have received money from the producer. In each of the cases, producers asked banks to evaluate the checks and each case the checks were found to be fraudulent.

Before selling any hay to anyone that is not personally known, producers should ensure that the checks they are being paid with are legitimate, even with supposed 'cashier's checks'. If you suspect you are the potential victim of a scam, report the action to your local law enforcement authorities.

Rosemary for Texas Gardens

Many landscape plants suffer during the dry heat of August, but rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) thrives on it. Although usually cold-hardy in South Texas, some winter protection may be needed elsewhere in the state. Rosemary grows well even in poor, dry, rocky soil as long as drainage is good.

The evergreen character of the narrow foliage and many horticultural forms of the plant make it quite useful. Prostrate selections are good for ground cover or spilling over retaining walls. Mature height ranges from 18 inches to 4 feet, depending on the variety and growing conditions. Small lavender-blue flowers in spring and summer are attractive but not spectacular. A major attraction of rosemary is the strongly scented foliage which is popular, fresh or dried, for seasoning. The fresh tops are reported to be used to distill the aromatic oil used in perfumery and medicine.

Rosemary has been a popular plant for centuries in Europe, and was often planted close to the entrance of homes in the traditional cottage gardens of England. When people passed by and brushed against a rosemary plant, the scent was released and enjoyed.

Rosmarinus officinalis is a native of the Mediterranean region. Typical of many plants in that part of the world, old specimens may be thinned to expose the gnarled stems, which create a bonsai-like effect.

Few herbs can compete with this plant for landscape value. Propagation is by seed or cuttings. With the renewed interest in herbs, many garden centers now stock rosemary. One-gallon-size plants establish quickly. Full sun or partial shade are both good exposures. The key to successfully growing *R. officinalis* is well drained soil. If your soil is not well drained, try growing the plant in a clay pot or whiskey barrel half. Recently, interest in trimming rosemary into various topiary forms has increased. Tree standards are particularly nice. 'Arp' is probably the most cold-hardy selection of rosemary.

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