# MEDINA CENTRAL APPRAISAL DISTRICT

## AGRICULTURAL GUIDELINES

**Medina Central Appraisal District**
**1410 Avenue K**
**Hondo, Texas 78861**
**(830) 741-3035**

Updated January 2026

**Basic Agricultural Information**

Agricultural valuation is a special-use valuation that is devoted to property that is primarily used for the agricultural production of food or fiber. Agricultural or productivity value is based on the land's capacity to produce crops or livestock and not on the value of the real estate market. Although this lower value reduces the taxable value of the property, a "rollback" of the tax savings could be placed on the property if the land use changes to a non-qualifying use. While many people refer to such land as having an "ag exemption" it is not an exemption – it is just a different method of calculating the land's value for ad valorem tax purposes. Correctly speaking such land has an agricultural valuation.

**1-d-1 Rollback Tax Penalty**

The rollback tax is the difference between the taxes paid under the special use valuation and the total taxes that would have been paid on the market value for each of the three (3) years preceding the use change. Special use valuation is removed the year in which the change took place, and the property is assessed at its market value. It is the property owner's responsibility to notify the chief appraiser in writing if they:

1. Stop using the property for agriculture; or
2. Change the category, level, or nature of use; or
3. Begin using the land for something other than agriculture

**"Qualified open-space land" means land that is *currently* devoted *principally* to agricultural use to the degree of intensity generally accepted in the area *and* that has been devoted principally to agricultural use for five of the preceding seven years.**

There is no simple answer to "What do I have to do to get the agricultural valuation?" It all depends on your operation and the following:

1. How much acreage do you have? Is the tract of land of adequate size to support a typically prudent operation?
2. What is the agricultural product you are producing?
3. Are you utilizing all the available land to produce your product?
4. Is the land currently devoted to agricultural use?
5. Is there a history of agricultural usage? Agricultural production must be shown for five (5) of the preceding seven (7) years.
6. Is the primary use of the land agricultural? If the land is used for more than one purpose, the most important or primary use must be agricultural. Generally, small acreage tracts with a residence will be considered primarily residential.
7. Does the agricultural usage of the land meet the local degree of intensity standards? These standards define the required level of use and management practices that are typical for the area.
8. Is it being used as a typically prudent manager would use it?

**Property Owner Responsibilities**

1. The property owner must determine how the land is to be used.
2. The property owner must apply for agricultural use appraisal.
3. The property owner must meet the qualifications for agricultural valuation; specific qualifications will differ depending on the use of the property.

**Appraisal District Responsibilities**

1. Approve or deny the application based on whether the intensity standards have been met and the application has been filed correctly and timely.

**Application**

A new application must be filed when there is a:

- change of ownership
- recorded name change in the deed records
- change in size of the land from the original application
- change in use
- or when the chief appraiser requests a new application

When the above change or request occurs, a new application must be submitted with supporting documentation of use. A 5-year production plan for the agricultural operation and the *Ag Valuation Expense and Income Worksheet* may also be required to be submitted with the application. The fact that agricultural valuation was granted in the previous year is not a guarantee that the application will be approved. Changes in laws, minimum standards as determined by the agricultural advisory board and chief appraiser, and the property's actual use may affect the determination of the application.
The application must be submitted on an acceptable form after January 1st and by April 30th of the tax year for which the application for agricultural valuation is being sought. An application form may be obtained at the Medina Central Appraisal District office or on our website at www.medinacad.org. The application (with supporting documentation) must be completed and returned by April 30th.

Applications received after the deadline will be accepted if filed before approval of the appraisal records by the appraisal review board. If appraisal is approved when the application is filed late, the owner is liable for a penalty of 10 percent (10%) of the difference between the amount of tax imposed on the property and the amount that would be imposed if the property were taxed at market value, TPTC 23.541(b). **If a person fails to file a valid application on time, the land is ineligible for appraisal for that year,** TPTC 23.54(e)**.**

**Application Verification – Field Inspections**

MCAD performs routine on-site and/or aerial inspections and verification of all land receiving agricultural use appraisal. Any property or portion of property that is not in compliance with the requirements for the valuation will be dealt with in the appropriate manner. This action could range from a request for a new application, removal of the agricultural appraisal, or removal of the agricultural appraisal and the initiation of a rollback, if the requirement for rollback is met.

**Qualification of Land**

To qualify for 1-d-1 appraisal, the following criteria must be met:

1. The land must be currently devoted to agricultural use.
2. There must be a history of agricultural use. To build a history, agricultural production must be in place for five (5) of the preceding seven (7) years. If an owner shows the required 5-year history through previous applications and supporting documentation, the land could be eligible for agricultural valuation in the sixth ($6^{th}$) year.
3. The primary use of the land must be agricultural. If the land is used for more than one purpose, the most important or primary use must be agricultural. Generally, small acreage tracts with a residence are considered primarily residential.
4. The agricultural use of the land must meet the local degree of intensity standards. These standards define the required level of use, and management practices that are typical for the area.

To qualify land for agricultural appraisal, the property owner must show the chief appraiser that the land meets the standards. To do so, the property owner must apply and must give the chief appraiser all the information needed to determine whether the land qualifies. **The burden of proof is the responsibility of the property owner.**

Small tracts of land that have been developed and/or marketed for residential use and are of inadequate size to support an economically feasible agricultural activity will not qualify for agricultural valuation. Small acreage with a residential or commercial structure is considered primarily residential or commercial in nature, with agricultural use secondary. Open-space land must have agricultural use as its primary use to qualify. Adding small acreage to existing residential or commercial tracts is considered an extension of the site and is not considered primarily agricultural.

Land will not qualify simply because it is rural or has some connection with agriculture. Neither will it qualify because it is open land that has no other possible use. **The law does not guarantee a tax break for everyone who owns acreage.** Casual or "token" uses such as home vegetable gardens; keeping two or three pleasure horses for personal use; or raising a steer, goat, or sheep for FFA and 4-H projects do not constitute agricultural use for property tax purposes.

Agricultural appraisal applies only to the land. Improvements such as houses, barns, silos, sheds, and other farm outbuildings must be appraised separately at market value. Land (up to 20 acres) and structures used as a primary residence may qualify for a homestead exemption. Minerals such as oil and gas or coal must be appraised separately as well.

The minimum number of animal units required to qualify a property is three (3). The number of animal units must be supported by the forage available on the property without destroying forage resources. Different types of property have differing minimum stocking rates.

The suggested stocking rates to support minimum animal units are:

Improved pasture: 20-45 acres
Native pasture: 45-90 acres
Rangeland brush: 90-120+ acres

**Local Resources for Assistance**

The following agencies may be of assistance with information regarding land and livestock management.

**NRCS and MVSWCD:** 257 State Highway 173 N, Hondo, TX 78861, (830) 426-2521, ext. 3

**FSA:** 257 State Highway 173 N, Hondo, TX 78861, (830) 741-2013

**AgriLife Extension:** 1506 Ave M, Hondo, TX 78861, (830) 741-1754

**TXGLC:** PO Box 146, Victoria, TX 77902, (806) 679-8729, (830) 486-6872

**Wildlife Management:** Refer to MCAD Wildlife Management Guidelines for detailed information.

**Beekeeping:** Five (5) – twenty (20) acres devoted to beekeeping with six (6) – twelve (12) active hives of honeybees. Refer to MCAD Beekeeping Guidelines for detailed information.

**Ecological Laboratory**: Please contact MCAD for specific qualifications and requirements for Ecological Laboratory.

## GUIDELINES FOR DETERMINATION OF DEGREE OF INTENSITY STANDARDS

These standards reflect the practices that are typical for producing various kinds of crops or livestock commonly raised in Medina County. Exceptions to these guidelines will be handled on a case-by-case basis. All operations should be raising animals for wool, meat, or sold as livestock and not used strictly for show animals. This degree of intensity is subject to change from year to year.

| | |
|---|---|
| **CATTLE**<br>Native/Imp Pasture | 1. Land should be mostly native or improved pasture and have enough grasses to support at least three (3) head of reproducing cows or 5 (five) stocker calves<br>2. Must be fenced with a water source<br>3. Provide proof of sale of offspring |
| **HORSES**<br>Native/Imp Pasture | 1. Land should be mostly native or improved pasture and have enough grasses to support at least three (3) brood mares<br>2. Must be fenced with a water source<br>3. Provide proof of sale of offspring<br>4. Operations set up strictly for boarding, training, and showing of horses do not support an agricultural purpose |
| **GOATS**<br>Native/Imp Pasture<br>Rangeland Brush | 1. Land can be partially wooded but must have enough grasses and other food sources to support eighteen (18) nanny goats<br>2. Must be fenced with a water source<br>3. Proof of sale of offspring |
| **SHEEP**<br>Native/Imp Pasture<br>Rangeland Brush | 1. Land can be partially wooded but must have enough grasses and other food sources to support eighteen (15) ewes<br>2. Must be fenced with a water source<br>3. Proof of sale of offspring |
| **Hay Production** | 1. Typically, proof of two (2) cuttings in years of normal rainfall<br>2. Land should be fertilized, cut, and baled<br>3. Hay should be marketable or used for feed |
| **Orchard/Vineyards** | 1. A minimum of 14-100 trees/vines per acre is required depending on variety and age.<br>2. Approval on a case-by-case basis<br>3. Proof of nuts or fruit sold<br>4. Must be a wholesale operation |
| **Truck Farms** | 1. Small operations may qualify if managed intensively<br>2. Proof of produce sold wholesale to the public |
| **Exotic animals** | 1. Must be raising or keeping species not indigenous to state for production of food or other tangible products with commercial value and meet primary use test –see animal unit chart for equivalents<br>2. Proof of sale of offspring |
| **Dry or Irrigated Crop** | 1. Land must be free of brush<br>2. Apply fertilizer according to soil test or typical for area<br>3. Apply herbicide and pesticide as needed<br>4. Plant and cultivate<br>5. Must try to harvest average county yield |
| **Beekeeping** | 1. Land is not less than 5 acres or more than 20 acres – see Beekeeping Guidelines<br>2. Bees for pollination or production of human food or other tangible products with commercial value |
| **Wildlife** | 1. See Wildlife Management Guidelines |

Other factors considered are the following management practices:

- Adequate fencing- suitable to contain livestock, securable gate, and constant water source
- Fertilized and weed controlled (mechanical or chemical) prudent for geographic location, soil type, weather conditions, variety of grass/plant being managed
- Systematic marketing of livestock and/or crops
- Economic return generated - sale of livestock, fruit, nuts, vegetables, or hay produced
- The number of animal units must be supported by the forage available on the property without destroying the forage resources

## Animal Unit Equivalent Chart - Texas
## Domestic Livestock, Native Wildlife, and Exotic Wildlife

| Kind of Animal | Body Weight Pounds | Daily Ave Intake % of BW | Annual Forage Intake Pounds | AU per Head | Head per AU (Rounded) | MCAD Minimum # of Head |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Domestic Livestock** | | | | | | |
| Beef Cattle (Cow) * | 1000 | 2.6 | 9490 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Horse | 1100 | 3.0 | 12045 | 1.27 | 1 | 3 |
| Domestic Sheep (Ewe) | 130 | 3.5 | 1661 | 0.18 | 5 | 15 |
| Spanish Goat (Nanny) | 90 | 4.5 | 1478 | 0.16 | 6 | 18 |
| Boer x Spanish Goat (Nanny) | 125 | 4.0 | 1825 | 0.19 | 5 | |
| Angora Goat (Nanny) | 70 | 4.5 | 1150 | 0.12 | 8 | |
| **Native Wildlife** | | | | | | **WLM** |
| White-tailed Deer | 100 | 3.5 | 1278 | 0.13 | 7 | |
| Mule Deer | 135 | 3.5 | 1725 | 0.18 | 6 | |
| Pronghorn Antelope | 90 | 4.0 | 1314 | 0.14 | 7 | |
| **Exotic Wildlife** | | | | | | |
| Axis Deer | 150 | 3.5 | 1916 | 0.20 | 5 | 15 |
| Sika Deer | 145 | 3.5 | 1852 | 0.20 | 5 | 15 |
| Fallow Deer | 130 | 3.5 | 1661 | 0.18 | 6 | 18 |
| Elk | 800 | 3.0 | 8760 | 0.92 | 1 | 3 |
| Red Deer | 350 | 3.5 | 4471 | 0.47 | 2 | 6 |
| Barasinga Deer | 350 | 3.5 | 4471 | 0.47 | 2 | 6 |
| Sambar Deer | 400 | 3.5 | 5110 | 0.54 | 2 | 6 |
| Pere David's Deer | 400 | 3.5 | 5110 | 0.54 | 2 | 6 |
| Sable Antelope | 500 | 3.0 | 5475 | 0.58 | 2 | 6 |
| Blackbuck Antelope | 75 | 4.0 | 1095 | 0.12 | 9 | 27 |
| Nilgai Antelope | 350 | 3.5 | 4471 | 0.47 | 2 | 6 |
| Scimitar-horned Oryx | 400 | 3.5 | 5110 | 0.54 | 2 | 6 |
| Gemsbok Oryx | 400 | 3.5 | 5110 | 0.54 | 2 | 6 |
| Arabian Oryx | 150 | 3.5 | 1916 | 0.20 | 5 | 15 |
| Addax | 250 | 3.5 | 3194 | 0.34 | 3 | 9 |
| Ibex x Boer Goat | 125 | 4.5 | 1825 | 0.19 | 5 | 15 |
| Impala | 130 | 3.5 | 1661 | 0.18 | 6 | 18 |
| Common Eland | 1000 | 2.5 | 9125 | 0.96 | 1 | 3 |
| Greater Kudu | 450 | 3.5 | 5749 | 0.61 | 2 | 6 |
| Sitatunga | 200 | 3.5 | 2555 | 0.27 | 4 | 12 |
| Waterbuck | 500 | 3.0 | 5475 | 0.58 | 2 | 6 |
| Thompson's Gazelle | 85 | 4.0 | 1241 | 0.13 | 8 | 24 |
| Mouflon/Barbado Sheep | 120 | 3.5 | 1533 | 0.16 | 6 | 18 |
| Aoudad Sheep | 200 | 3.5 | 2555 | 0.27 | 4 | 12 |

This chart is based on the standard concept of an animal unit (AU) being one 1000-pound beef cow consuming an average of 2.6% of her body weight daily throughout her yearly production cycle. Actual daily consumption will vary considerably throughout the year.

Young of the year (calves, lambs, kids, fawns) are considered as part of the mother until weaning. After weaning, they are considered a separate animal and should be added.

* Other sizes and classes of cattle are usually calculated as 0.1 AU per 100 pounds of body weight. (700-pound steer = 0.7 AU; 1200-pound cow = 1.2 AU; 1500-pound bull = 1.5 AU; etc.)

For wildlife species, the AU Equivalent is based on a normal population consisting of females, males, and yearling animals. If a specific herd has an unusually high proportion of females, the average weight will be lower, and the AU Equivalent may need to be adjusted.

Chart developed by Steve Nelle and Stan Reinke, NRCS with input from literature and other specialists from TCE and TPWD.

Chart copied from http://onpasture.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Animal-Unit-Chart-for-Domestic-and-Wild-stock.pdf with MCAD column added.

# AG VALUATION EXPENSE AND INCOME WORKSHEET

**INCOME**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Selling of offspring, crops, etc. | _____ | | |
| Other Income | _____ | | |
| **Total Income** | | | _____ |

**EXPENSES**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cost of animals, seed, trees, etc. | | _____ | |
| Feed: milk, grain, hay, etc. | | | |
| Cost per hay bale | _____ | | |
| Number of bales purchased | _____ | | |
| **Total hay expense** | | _____ | |
| Cost per sack of cattle cubes | _____ | | |
| Number of sacks purchased | _____ | | |
| **Total cubes expense** | | _____ | |
| Cost per sack of grain | _____ | | |
| Number of sacks purchased | _____ | | |
| **Total grain expense** | | _____ | |
| **Minerals, salt, etc. total** | | _____ | |
| **Total cost of feed** | | | _____ |
| **Miscellaneous** | | | |
| Water | _____ | | |
| Vet/medical bills | _____ | | |
| Hauling | _____ | | |
| Fencing | _____ | | |
| Barns, sheds, trailer, machinery, etc. | _____ | | |
| Other equipment | _____ | | |
| Registration fees | _____ | | |
| Interest paid | _____ | | |
| Labor | | | |
| Self - number of hours per week x hourly wage spent maintaining ag operation (feeding, general care of animals, checking water, fencing, etc.) | _____ | | |
| Other - wages paid for baling, clearing, sprigging, etc. | _____ | | |
| Chemicals and Fertilizer | _____ | | |
| Other Expenses | _____ | | |
| Insurance | _____ | | |
| **Total Miscellaneous** | | | _____ |
| **Total expenses** | | | _____ |
| **Profit/Loss** (Income minus expenses) | | | _____ |
| **Property taxes without ag valuation** | | | _____ |

Use this worksheet to estimate or calculate your operation's income and expenses. At times property taxes at market value may be less than expenses to maintain an ag operation. This worksheet may be required for property owners submitting a 1-d-1 (Agricultural Use Appraisal) Application.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: The application says, "open-space" and isn't that what my land is "just open spaces"?**
A: If the land is not used – it does not qualify. Open-space is not a land use.

**Q: The application wants me to list the prior seven years of agricultural use. I just purchased the property and have no idea what the land was used for in the past. Do I just leave that part blank?**
A: By law, to qualify for the agricultural valuation, the land must have a history. It is your obligation to obtain that information if you want to qualify.

**Q: Can we get the history of agricultural use from the appraisal district?**
A: No. The appraisal district will only have a record on the land when the original application was submitted. The district will know if the agricultural valuation was granted, they may not know if the use changed after the application was approved. The property may have been receiving the agricultural valuation in error if the land was not being used.

**Q: What if the land was in agricultural use, but the prior owner did not apply for or receive the agricultural valuation?**
A: The appraisal district looks at the actual land use not the valuation. If the land was being used in a qualifying manner, then it could count toward the history of agricultural use.

**Q: When the appraiser came by my fences were down, and my cattle had been sold. The appraisal district asked me to resign my agricultural application. I was letting the land rest, but I cannot find any information on that.**
A: The land can rest (lay idle) for two of seven years. However, if the land is not being used, it does not qualify and will not receive the tax savings for those years. Remember it is the taxpayer's obligation to inform the appraisal district of any changes of use on the land.

**Q: I purchased my property in February and immediately came down and filed my agricultural valuation application. It was granted. Then the next year, I received a letter asking me to resign the application again. I thought that once it was filed, I did not have to file it again.**
A: Since you purchased the property in February, you were not the legal owner on January 1st of that tax year. It is the following year that you are required to apply. If the previous owner was receiving the agricultural use valuation, you would have received their benefit. If they had not applied for agricultural use, you could apply for them that first year – but you will be asked to apply the next year under your name.

**Q: I know I turned in my application for agricultural use, but it is not listed on my tax bill. How do I prove I turned in my application?**
A: We recommend keeping a copy of your application. The appraisal district will be happy to provide a copy with it date stamped showing we received your application.

Q: **Do you have any other suggestions on filling out my application?**
A: Yes, please do the following:

- Read the application
- Answer all the questions to the best of your ability
- Do not leave anything blank
- Applications not filled out completely will be sent back unapproved
- Turn in your application in a timely manner (by April 30th)

## Frequently Made Mistakes

**The property should be in "active use" at the time the application is submitted to the appraisal district** – do not expect the application to be approved when the property is not in current or active use – do not confuse **current use** with **I intend to.**

**Asking the appraisal district, the minimum requirement to obtain ag valuation** – the property owner chooses the land and should have some idea of the type of prudent farmer or rancher they were hoping to become prior to the purchase.

**Waiting until the application is due before utilizing the land** – the property owner can make it difficult for themselves (timewise) if they wait until the last minute to put the land into use.

**Working on other aspects of the property before utilizing the land** – every aspect of the land does not need to be perfected before utilizing the land. Examples: painting the fence, making the pond/tank bigger, brush-hogging. These items can be accomplished later while the land is being utilized – thus meeting the active use qualification.

**Only utilizing part of the property** – the land size is 50 acres, and the land use is hay production – if the hay meadow is only 20 acres of the property and there is no other use, only 20 acres of the 50 acres would qualify for the special valuation, be sure to look at the whole property utilization

**Incomplete application & lack of information** – this is one application form where it is necessary to fully explain the aspects of your agricultural operation to be approved for the special valuation.

**Not providing a contact phone number and email address** – the application may be denied if the appraisal district cannot clarify questions regarding the application.

## Definitions of Land Use Classifications

***Dry Cropland*** — Land that is dedicated to crop production (hay production or row crops) that is not irrigated.

**High Intensity** - Land that is used for intensive type agricultural operations such as beekeeping, swine/poultry production, vegetable truck farms, plant nurseries, etc.

***Irrigated Cropland*** — Land planted in row crops, broadcast crops, or improved grasses then watered on a regular basis.

***Improved Pasture*** — Land planted or sprigged with grasses (Bluestem, Kline, Bermuda) that are not native to Medina County. These grasses are used to grow forage that is typically baled and/or grazed by livestock.

***Native Pasture*** — Land that has been partially cleared of brush and trees with native grasses and is primarily for grazing livestock. Native pasture can be used to grow forage that is baled for later use by livestock.

**Non-Ag Use** – Land that is not being utilized for agriculture (providing food or fiber). An example is residential acreage for a house or cabin

***Orchard***— Trees that are planted in an orchard method setting for the specific purpose of producing fruit or nut crops for commercial sale.

***Rangeland Brush*** — Land that is used as a pasture for some type of livestock, but is heavy brush and trees, so grass production is minimal. The land will not support any type of crop.

***Vineyard*** – Grapevines planted for the specific purpose of producing grapes to produce wine.

***Wasteland*** — Land that the typical operator would not use. It is normally restricted to less than 20% of the total tract of land. It consists of creeks, draws, or other areas that are not financially feasible to utilize. This can also apply to small tracts that are split by roads. It is extremely poor quality due to erosion or soil type and is restricted in its ability to support domestic livestock. It must be an integral part of one or more of the listed land types.