

Hardee County Extension Service

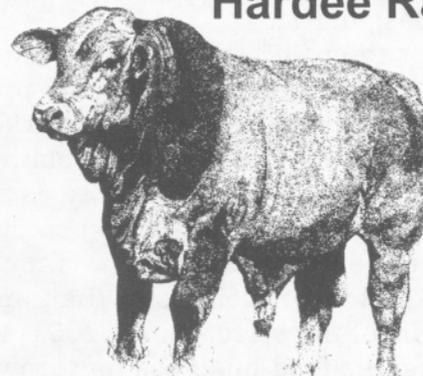
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NEWSLETTER**SUMMER 2008**

August
23 – Grazing Management 101 – Okeechobee, FL
September
4-5 – Advanced Grazing Management School, LaBelle, FL
9-10 – Florida Cattlemen’s Association Fall Quarterly, Sebring, FL
17-19 – Wildlife Field Days, Longino Ranch, Quail Creek Plantation
26 – FCA Replacement Heifer Sales – 1:00 pm, Arcadia Stockyards
October
15 – UF/IFAS Ona Range Cattle Research Center 2008 Weed Field Day
21-23 – Reproductive Management School, Arcadia, FL
24 – Hardee County Cattlemen’s Association 9 th Annual All Breed Bull Sale, Hardee Livestock Market, Wauchula, FL
31 – 1 st Annual All Purpose Heifer Sale – 1:00 pm, Arcadia Stockyard

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Organic Food Meets Economic Downturn

By: Suzanne B. Bopp (Sunday, June 15, 2008), Drivers

For the past few years, organic and natural foods have occupied the fastest growing aisle of the supermarket. While they may still be a relatively small segment – organic sales account for somewhere around 3 percent of food and beverage purchases – they’re expanding much faster than any other part of the store. Since 2001, the organic food business has grown 150 percent, and sales last year reached \$19 billion, according to a story in the May issue of Newsweek. But what will the lagging economy do to that trend? Some signs suggest it might cause consumers to cut back on their organic food purchases. Five years ago, when they were asked whether organic food and drinks were worth paying an extra 20 percent for, 17 percent of respondents agreed completely or somewhat, according to the Natural Marketing Institute. Two years ago, that number rose to 26 percent – a significant jump. But now a new survey from WSL Strategic Retail shows only 27 percent of shoppers think organics are worth the money – pretty much the same number as two years ago. (That survey also revealed that 42 percent of shoppers don’t trust that products labeled organic really are organic, which could be part of the problem). Whole Foods, which had been showing strong growth, now shows falling profits and a 20 percent drop in its stock price. Generally speaking, the price of organic food is 20 percent to 100 percent more expensive than its conventional counterparts; with that gap narrowing a bit as organic popularity has grown. Consumers may be less willing to pay the premium for organics when, in the past year, grocery prices have increased an average of 5 percent overall, and some staples went up much more than that: 30 percent for eggs, 13

percent for milk, and 16 percent for white bread, according to the Consumer Price Index. That index does not break out organics specifically, but certainly organic food prices are subject to the same upward pressures as conventional foods. Fuel costs are rising. Grain prices are also rising – both conventional and organic grains are bringing record prices – and are now about double what they were a year ago. A bushel or organic corn sells for about \$10 today. Organic wheat and soybeans are now in the \$20 to \$22 per bushel range. Organic grain prices are also rising because of the increasing demand and steady or even diminishing supplies, as the growth of new organic acreage slows down and even reverses, in some cases. With conventional crops bringing record prices, farmers aren’t as interested in growing organically, eschewing the three-year transition and extensive paperwork needed for organic certification. Like their conventional counterparts, organic grain farmers are doing well these days, but those who have to buy the organic grains – from bakers to poultry and livestock producers – are struggling to pay the rising costs. There are reports of dairy farmers giving up on organic farming practices and reverting to conventional means, and others asking retailers to raise milk prices to help producers cover their costs. Meanwhile, all eyes are on consumers. With all the current pressures on their spending dollars, will they still reach for the \$7 gallon of organic milk?

A Sticking Point

July 1, 2008, Alaina Burt Managing Editor, Beef Magazine

Imagine this. After 60 years of ranching, you’re ready to retire, living off the sale of your property, which will also fund your kids’ inheritance. Just as you’re about to close the deal, the buyer’s lawyer asks

if there's any environmental hazardous waste on the property. You stammer, thinking hard about what "environmental hazardous waste" your cattle operation could have generated in the course of a lifetime. But it's likely that you have. If, during an environmental assessment of a ranch (conducted before the sale), any evidence of inappropriate disposal of livestock veterinary waste is found, you've violated federal law and the probable sale of the ranch is null and void. That's the shuddering scenario Dee Griffin, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension veterinarian, depicts when it comes to improperly disposing scalpels and hypodermic needles, also known as "sharps". Inappropriate disposal in this case is anything found on the ranch not properly contained and documented. It's a serious topic; being irresponsible for the disposal of your sharps could potentially cost you the farm, and the inheritance you want to pass on", he says. He's witnessed a scenario where the cost of the environmental cleanup of the hazardous waste exceeded the value of the ranch – an avoidable situation had the producers simply kept good documentation of where the material was buried. The worst that could then happen is that the material would have to be dug up and moved. Spun another way, if the ranch stays within the family, what "treasures" will future generations find on the property? Danelle Bickett-Weddle, DVM and associate director of Iowa State University's Center for Food Security and Public Health, recalls many interesting finds while visiting her grandpa's farm. Keep in mind, today's landfill area might be a paddock or play area for future generations. These are just some of the concerns Griffin and Bickett-Weddle convey to producers when emphasizing the importance of proper disposal or veterinary medical waste. "People are more environmentally conscious than they used to be", Bickett-

Weddle says, "Before, we didn't think about the long-term effects on the environment if we dug a hole and buried things. But we've learned there's certain ways those things need to be disposed of so we don't contaminate groundwater or make it difficult for our grandkids someday to use the same land". Throughout the year, a livestock operation will inevitably use hypodermic needles and scalpels for anything from synchronizing cowherds to castrating bulls. It's important these tools be discarded in the right place – a container specifically designated for sharps. First, avoid dumping needles and scalpels along with everyday trash. Griffin uses a five gallon bucket and minimizes the volume by removing plastic caps from needles – only the metal parts need to be taken care of. "The most important thing producers must do is have a container that's puncture-proof", Bickett-Weddle says. Don't use milk jugs. Better yet, sharps containers are available through livestock supply retailers. Regardless of the source, the container needs to be sealable and labeled bio-hazardous with proper documentation kept in ranch files about the contents and how they were rendered non-hazardous. Selecting a container is the easy part. The hard part is making sense of local and state laws on proper disposal, which vary widely. Both Griffin and Bickett-Weddle hope producers will strike up a conversation with the local vet about properly disposing sharps material. "But digging a hole and burying them in the back 40 isn't the best option", Bickett-Weddle stresses. Instead, for a fee, private companies can dispose of the material by burning, encasing or grinding; some vet clinics collect the materials as part of their service.

Antibiotic and vaccine bottles

Empty, old or broken drug vials need proper disposal, as well. Interestingly, drug labels and literature yield very little

information on disposal. But Bickett-Weddle recommends producers deactivate any residue that's left inside bottles instead of just dumping it on the ground or down the drain. "We blow some disinfectant back into our vaccine bottles just as part of our commitment to say that we've rendered it non-hazardous", Griffin says. Bickett-Weddle says another method of rendering vaccine bottles non-hazardous is to pop the tops off containers and fill with a solution of 1:10 bleach, taking care of the bleach water afterwards (not dumping on the ground). From there, containers can be recycled, if available. But if it's an unused bottle; producers can sometimes take the product back to the clinic or manufacturer. Producers should look for an 800 number within product information to inquire about returning expired vaccines. "So instead of just chucking them, it would be worth looking into returning because sometimes you can get your money back, or at least a product exchange", Bickett-Weddle says.

Proper sharps disposal

Dee Griffin, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension veterinarian, recommends producers take these steps to properly contain their sharps:

1. **Minimize the volume**
Remove all the plastic cases around syringes and needle covers.
2. **Contain**
Sealable plastic buckets work well for this. "A five gallon bucket is more than most people are going to fill on feed yards in a whole year", Griffin says.

3. **Disinfect**
Render sharps non-infectious by covering sharps in a disinfectant solution before encasing.
4. **Encase**
In containers no more than half-full of sharps, add sufficient encasement compound such as concrete or cement to entrap all the sharps. By filling containers only half full, there's room to do mixing within the same container. Seal the container.
5. **Identify**
On the outside of the container, label it "biohazard". Separately, document the container's contents and how it was rendered non-hazardous, including the date; include this information with the ranch files to pass on to the next generation.
6. **Dispose**
Either deliver to an approved landfill or bury the container on the ranch. Griffin says landfill disposal of a five gallon bucket in Adams County, NE is \$100. If buried on the ranch, make sure to clearly document the location for possible retrieval (e.g., "buried 200 ft. south of main barn in a one-acre plot").