Dear Friends,

Since you will receive this issue as hurricane season is fast approaching, I would be remiss if I didn’t mention a few things. During the 2005 hurricane season livestock, including cattle, horses and poultry succumbed to floodwater, high winds, and other effects from the storms. In fact, the Department of Agriculture reported that an estimated 10,000 cattle died or were misplaced after Hurricane Katrina. As livestock owners, we don’t have many options in preparing for the storms, but making sure our animals are identified is critical. Our fencelines are often knocked down by trees or sustain other damage allowing livestock out of the pastures. Other than identifying your animals, here are a few other tips:

⇒ Take an inventory of your livestock-count your animals before the storm.
⇒ Move machinery, feed, grain, pesticides and herbicides to higher ground.
⇒ Construct mounds of soil for livestock, or open gates so livestock can escape high water.
⇒ Leave building doors and windows open at least 2 inches to equalize water pressure and help prevent buildings from shifting.
⇒ If possible, move motors and portable electric equipment to a dry location.
⇒ Disconnect electric power to all buildings which may be flooded.
⇒ Check with a veterinarian to be sure cattle are properly immunized before being exposed to flood waters.
⇒ To keep surface water out of your well, use materials such as heavy plastic and duct tape to seal the well cap and top of the well casing.
Upcoming Events

28th Annual Goat Production Workshop
Sat. & Sun., June 10-11
UF Vet School
Gainesville, FL

Florida Cattlemen’s Association Annual Convention & Trade Show
June 20-22
Marco Island, FL

1st Annual Deer & Turkey Short Course and Trade Show
August 18, 2006
Arcadia, FL

Grazing Management School & Tour
September 28-29, 2006
Wauchula, FL

2nd Annual Quail Management Short Course
October 5-6, 2006
Monticello, FL

Cattlemen’s Institute & Allied Trade Show
January 18, 2007
Kissimmee, FL

*Dates & Locations are subject to change
**USDA-FL, Florida Cattle Auctions Weekly Summary**

At the Florida Livestock Auctions (Fri April 28, 2006); Cattle receipts at 9 markets; Ocala, Wau-chula, Okeechobee, Lakeland, Webster, Ellsville, Arcadia, Madison and Lake City, receipts totaled 5,265 compared to 5,673 last week, and 8,030 last year. According to the Florida Federal-State Livestock Market News Service: Compared to one week ago, slaughter cows steady to 2.00 higher, bulls 1.00 to 3.00 higher, feeder steers and heifers 2.00 to 5.00 lower, replacement cows 2.00 to 3.00 higher. Flesh condition: thin and very thin.

**Feeder Steers & Bulls:** Medium and Large 1-2 200-245 lbs $165.00-195.00; 250-290 lbs &130.00-175.00; 300-345 lbs $128.00-147.50; 350-395 lbs $116.00-133.00; 400-445 lbs $114.00-129.00; 450-495 lbs $106.00-126.00; 500-545 lbs $100.00-115.00; 550-597 lbs $98.00-114.00; 610-645 lbs $93.00-110.00; 718-718 lbs $89.00-89.00 Medium and Large 2-3 200-245 lbs $125.00-170.00; 250-297 lbs $120.00-156.00; 300-345 lbs $116.00-141.00; 350-395 lbs $104.00-125.00; 400-445 lbs $100.00-122.00; 450-499 lbs $89.00-116.00; 500-545 lbs 90.00-107.00; 550-590 lbs $85.00-105.00; 615-640 lbs $84.00-99.00

**Feeder Heifers:** Medium and Large 1-2 200-245 lbs $140.00-170.00; 250-295 lbs $125.00-150.00; 300-345 lbs $119.00-136.00; 350-395 lbs $110.00-126.00; 400-445 lbs $104.00-119.00; 450-495 lbs 98.00-118.00; 500-546 lbs $96.00-115.00; 550-595 lbs $94.00-109.00; 625-630 lbs $90.00-90.00 Medium and Large 2-3 200-245 lbs $115.00-145.00; 250-295 lb $119.00-140.00; 300-349 lbs $108.00-129.00; 350-395 lbs $102.00-118.00; 400-440 lbs $92.00-116.00; 450-495 lbs $85.00-106.00; 500-545 $83.00-104.00; 555-595 lbs $75.00-91.00;

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**Beef Management Calendar**

### April
- Plant warm season annual pastures
- Check and fill mineral feeder
- Check dust bags or apply treated ear tags
- Check for external parasites and treat if necessary
- Observe cows for repeat breeders
- Deworm cows as needed if not done in March
- Vaccinate against blackleg and brucellosis between 3-12 months of age
- Give shipping shots to early born calves: IBR, BVD, PI3 plus Lepto, Blackleg, Deworm, weigh calves
- Market cull calves and bulls
- Update market information and refine market strategy for calves

### May
- Plant warm season perennial pastures
- Fertilize warm season pastures
- Check mineral feeder
- Check for spittlebugs & treat if necessary
- Apply spot-on agents for grub & louse control
- Check dust bags
- Vaccinate and implant with growth stimulant any later calves
- Remove bulls May 21st to end calving season March 1st
Mare Reproductive Loss Syndrome (MRLS)

We have experienced 2 confirmed cases of MRLS in Alachua County, Florida (Gainesville), and 1 in Marion County, FL. MRLS has been linked to the consumption of Eastern Tent caterpillars, ETC (→photo). They prefer wild cherry, apple and crabapple. The clinical syndromes include early pregnancy loss, late-term abortions, foals born weak and septic, pericarditis, uveitis, laminitis, and oral ulceration. During 2001 and 2002, Kentucky experienced a substantial loss in their foal crop, estimated at 30%, which is thought to be due at least partially to the mares’ consumption of the caterpillars. After the consumption of the ETC, spines of the caterpillar pierce the intestinal lining and introduce gastrointestinal bacteria (principally, *Streptococcus* spp) into the bloodstream. These bacteria are delivered to the placenta and the developing embryo or fetus. Abortion associated with MRLS has ranged from 45 gestation to full term.

Currently, the UF College of Veterinary Medicine recommends that all abortions and foal deaths receive a post-mortem evaluation. The only way to protect the pregnant mare is to remove her from contact with the caterpillars. For more information, please consult the university of Kentucky web page on MRLS at www.ca.uky.edu/gluck/mrls/index.htm or The Horse: Your Guide to Equine Health Care at www.thehorse.com

New Relevant EDIS Publications

EDIS is the Electronic Data Information Source of UF/IFAS Extension

*EDIS Homepage: http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu*

- **AN163**: Select the Sex of Your Next Calf Prior to Mating: Using Sexed Semen, [http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AN163](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AN163)
- **SP-51**: Insect Management Guide, Livestock Pests (vol.1, Ch. 3) [http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/TOPIC_GUIDE_IG_Livestock](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/TOPIC_GUIDE_IG_Livestock)
- **ENY255**: External Parasites Around Animal Facilities [http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/IG054](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/IG054) [rev.]
- **ENY270**: Cattle Grubs [http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/IG126](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/IG126) [rev.]
- **ENY273**: External Parasites of Sheep and Goats [http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/IG129](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/IG129) [rev.]
- **ENY278**: External Parasites of Sheep and Goats [http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/IG129](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/IG129) [rev.]
- **ENY286**: Northern Fowl Mite [http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/IG141](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/IG141) [rev.]
- **ENY287**: External Parasites on Swine [http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/IG138](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/IG138) [rev.]
- **ENY271**: Cattle Tail Lice [http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/IG127](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/IG127) [rev.]
- **ENY274**: External Parasites on Beef Cattle [http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/IG130](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/IG130) [rev.]

![Weanlings at the UF Horse Teaching Unit](image)
Not Just ‘Organic’ Beef

With increased costs of operating the ranch, decreased returns of commodity beef and the inability to compete with large scale producers, the additional scrutiny that faces land owners, and the pressures from many environmental groups, it’s a wonder what we raise cattle in Hillsborough County at all. It’s a continual effort to keep the beef industry viable for our smaller producers and ‘niche’ markets may be worth looking into.

As we emphasized at our Small Farms Conference back in March, no matter the size of your herd, every effort should be made to realize a private. Hard work and increasing production may no longer be enough to sustain a profitable operation. Tailoring production methods to meet the changing needs of consumers is one option in an effort to remain competitive. For example, while sound science agrees that the use of preservatives, pesticides, and hormones, when used in a judicious manner maintain wholesomeness of meat products, there is an increasing number of consumers who are willing to pay for products without them. A growing number of American consumers are demanding beef products that are produced under ‘natural’ conditions and even look for meat with labels reflecting humane treatment of animals during the production phase.

These specialty beef product lines are rapidly gaining market share and may become a viable marketing option for cattle producers in Florida. As a beef producer, being aware of your production goals and your values, and taking the time to weigh the benefits of increased market access and premium prices with the challenges of a possible loss of production efficiencies and a currently limited infrastructure in Florida to get the cattle to the end user, will be critical. For example, acknowledging that while Organic Beef production may sound like an exciting venture, it will require more government oversight and an organically certified slaughtering/processing facility, which does not yet exist in the state.

The following explanations of “Natural,” “Organic,” and other labels, such as, “Animal Production Claims,” will help you begin to investigate other production and marketing strategies.

Who Determines/Authorizes the Label?
- Ultimately, the USDA, through the Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS). This entity is responsible for upholding the food labeling integrity; in other words, they ensure that the claims are truthful and not misleading to the consumer.
- However, while the term “Natural” is managed and enforced by FSIS, the term “Organic” is managed and enforced through the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service through third party certifying agencies. One is example is Quality Certification Services, located in Gainesville, FL. Other agencies can be found at:

What does ‘Natural’ Mean?

- “Natural” is reserved for items that contain no artificial ingredients, coloring ingredients, or chemical preservatives; and are minimally processed.
- These criteria only apply to the physical meat product and in no way does it refer to how the animal was produced. Therefore, the use of hormones, pesticides, or antibiotics are not included in the USDA definition of “Natural.”

What does “Organic” Mean?

- The term ‘organic’ is restricted to those items that were produced under the National Organic Standards as set by the Agricultural Marketing Service under the National Organic program
Not Just ‘Organic’ Beef (Cont’d)

- Requirements for Organic livestock production are divided into subject-specific categories, including:
  - land use
  - soil fertility and crop nutrient management
  - origin of livestock
  - livestock feed
  - livestock health care
  - livestock living conditions

- Some requirements include, but are not limited to the following:
  - For a livestock producer to attain “Organic” status, his/her land must not be treated with herbicides, pesticides, commercial fertilizer, or other synthetic compounds for a period no less than 3 years.
  - Additionally, livestock must be handled as organic from the last 3rd of gestation (or hatching, in poultry).
  - All feed used for growing and finishing livestock must be organically grown and must not contain urea, mammalian or poultry by-products, hormones, or antibiotics (however, the producer may not withhold medical treatment to sick livestock to maintain organic status).
  - Vaccinations are okay.
  - Livestock must have access to outdoors and provided with shade, exercise areas, fresh air, and direct sunlight.

- It is the job of the Organic Certifying Agency to work with the producer to make sure that all requirements are met.

Information adapted from *Natural-Organic Grass Fed Beef Cattle Definitions and Regulations,* presented by Terry Houser at the 2006 FL Beef Cattle Shortcourse.

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Somewhere in the Middle

Here is something to consider. Most, if not all, Florida cow/calf producers are already producing ‘natural’ beef since this doesn’t become an issue until the animal is processed. It does have value, however, if the producer is finishing out his cattle on grass and supplying a local market. Many people are looking for local products to feed their family. The increase in food safety issues such as BSE (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy) or mad cow disease, and consumer interest in the increased health benefits (Omega 3 vs. Omega 6 Fatty Acids, and others) of grassfed beef may bring even more opportunities for small, local producers. While finishing an animal simply on Florida forage is a challenge in itself, a ‘Natural, Grassfed’ label should bring a premium without the producer having to meet the stricter standards of “Organic” beef.

Therefore, along with the relatively easy to attain “Natural” label, other animal production decisions may allow the beef to be eligible for multiple labeling that consumers are willing to pay a premium for. Some examples are “Raised Without Added Hormones,” “Grassfed,” “Free Range,” “Raised in an Open Pasture,” “Fed an All Vegetable Diet,” etc. These are called “Animal Production Claims” and are regulated and enforced by FSIS rather than certified by a third party (as they are for organic). Instead, a producer is required to sign a testimonial as to the production claim in question.

If you are considering dabbling in the local and/or grassfed market, know your customers. For example, the idea of grassfed beef may sound good, but make sure you and your potential customers have tasted it. Perhaps more importantly, make sure you cook it correctly because that makes all the difference with grassfed beef. Being small, you can educate your customers on how to cook different cuts. Cuts...another thing to consider. With planning, you can proportion customers to match how you cut up the carcass and not be forced to sell for a lower price just to get rid of all your beef. Along with any new enterprise comes risk, so the more research you do on the process of raising cows for a local market, including grazing systems, slaughtering, packaging, labeling, and advertising, the better off you’ll be.
What is the Bird Flu?

- Avian Influenza (AI)-or the “bird flu” is a disease caused by a virus that infects domestic poultry, wild birds (like quail, cranes, geese, and ducks) and pet birds like parrots.
- Each yr., there is a bird flu season just as there is with humans
- Strains are divided into low pathogenicity (LP) and high pathogenicity (HP). LP has existed in the US since the early 1900s and poses no serious threat to human health
- HP is often fatal in birds and is more easily transmitted. It is the type currently detected in parts of Asia and E. Europe, among people who had extensive, direct contact with infected birds.
- HP has been detected 3 times in the US: 1924, 1983, and 2004; no significant human illness resulted form these outbreaks
- In 2004, USDA confirmed an outbreak in chickens in the southern US. USDA, state and local industry leaders responded quickly with a quarantine and culling of birds, limiting the disease to this one flock
- HP can be spread from birds to people as a result of extensive direct contact with infected birds
- Broad concerns about public health relate to the potential for the virus to mutate into a form that could spread from person to person
- The US Dept. of Health and Human Services is aggressively working with a team of federal, state, and industry partners to ensure public health is protected

Practices for Poultry Producers

USDA recommends the following biosecurity practices for producers to follow in order to prevent the introduction of Avian Influenza into their flocks:
- Keep an “all-in, all-out” philosophy of flock management (In other words, don’t co-mingle)
- Process each lot of birds separately and clean and disinfect poultry houses between flocks
- Prevent poultry flocks from coming into contact with wild or migratory birds, including sharing same water source
- Permit only essential workers and vehicles to enter the farm & clean vehicles returning from other farms
- Change footwear and clothing before working with your own flock after visiting another farm or live-bird market
- Do not bring birds from slaughter channels, especially those from live-bird markets, back to the farm
- If AI is detected, farms must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. AI is inactivated by heat and drying and it is also very sensitive to most disinfectants and detergents

If you detect sick birds with the following symptoms, please report them to: 1-866-536-7593

- Sudden death, Diarrhea
- Decreased or complete loss of egg production, soft-shelled, misshapen eggs
- Sneezing, gasping for air, nasal discharge, coughing
- Lack of energy and appetite
- Swelling of tissues around eyes and in neck
- Purple discoloration of the wattles, combs and legs
- Depression, muscular tremors, drooping wings, twisting of head and neck, in coordination, complete paralysis
This is the prime time to get rid of those emerging summer annual weeds that you see popping up (pigweed, chamberbitter, ragweed, crabgrass, cocklebur, coffeeweed, etc.). They emerge in the spring and mature before winter, setting seed and dying within 12 months or less.

The entire purpose of an annual plant is to set seed as soon as possible to allow for propagation from germinating seeds the following year. The faster it goes to seed, the more likely that it will survive. If it never gets to the seed setting stage, it is 'extinct' so to speak, unlike a perennial whose underground root system sustains it through dormancy.

The trick to applying systemic (vs. contact) herbicides, such as 2,4D, is to apply when the plant is actively moving water and nutrients (process called translocation) to its roots. When you spray the herbicide, it is also translocated to the roots, where it needs to be in order to kill the weed. Obviously if there is a drought, the weed is not doing much translocation of anything (since there is no water) so the efficacy of the herbicide can greatly be reduced. The diagram shows that the effectiveness of the herbicide decreases from the emergence stage through to maturity, when it sets seed.
Multi-species Grazing for Weed Control, Profits

Looking for a way to increase your forage utilization, get more pounds of gain per acre, and control weeds? You might want to consider multi-species grazing. Check out the benefits of adding goats to cattle pastures:

1.) Improving Total Carrying Capacity – Adding one goat per cow to a pasture that contains some weeds/browse will control competition from weedy species, result in all types of plants being eaten (greater forage utilization), and extra animals/meat to sell. Cattle and goats only exhibit an 8% overlap in forage preference*, so they will hardly be in competition for the same plants and the pastures will benefit from more even grazing.

2.) Diversification of Species results in Diversification of Income Sources

3.) Weed Control – You know the photo of “Pig Weed” on the previous page? Well, goats would be happy to make that part of their diet. When that weed is in its vegetative stage, it’s been found to contain 24% Crude Protein*! Goats prefer browsing on brush and shrubs, followed by broadleaf weeds.

Remember that there are management issues specific to goats that do have to be considered. Some factors including fencing, parasites, and susceptibility to predators. Electric fence is often a good option and if cattle fencing is already in place, stringing off-set wires inside the fence about 8” and 12-14” above ground (with voltage maintained at 4,500 volts or better) has been effective. You may opt to use a guard animal, such as a Great Pyrenees or other s. Your county extension agent can provide you with more information on predator control.

*Figures provided by Dr. Will Getz, Small Ruminant Extension Specialist, Fort Valley State University
The Plant City Campus of the University of Florida/IFAS, partnering with Hillsborough County Community College (HCC) and the IF/IFAS Gulf Coast Research and Education Center (in Balm), is located on the HCC Plant City campus off Park Rd and offers the following Degrees:

**Agricultural Education** - prepares students to be certified agriscience instructors and educational specialists; Students gain broad knowledge about agriculture and agribusiness. Additionally, students are equipped with expertise in technical agriculture via courses in animal science, horticulture, crop and soil science, entomology, food science, agricultural mechanization and agribusiness.

**Natural Resource Conservation** - This major blends science, nature, environment, and economics and provides an opportunity for students to develop a personalized curriculum according to their specific interests within the field of natural resources.

"The Natural Resource Conservation program at the UF Plant City campus is an adventure. This program is designed to be hands-on, including a lot of field trips and field work. Through this adventure, you will learn your strengths and weaknesses. The professors will challenge you and push for great results in everything you will do.” -Student

This program is not just for the average college student. Many professionals, from the South Florida Water Management District and Florida Division of Forestry, for example, enroll in this program and bring their valuable information into the classroom to share with the rest of us. It's added knowledge that we would not have gained otherwise." -Student

**Environmental Horticulture** - This is a field of study concerned with the art and science of breeding, propagating, installing and maintaining plants that are used to enhance and improve the human environment. Graduates have a well-rounded background that prepares them for professional positions in a rapidly expanding and exciting industry.

"Having the opportunity to go to school here has been the best thing that could ever happen to me.” -Student

For more information, visit: http://gcrec.ifas.ufl.edu/pcc or call 813-707-7330.

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**Small Farms Alternative Enterprises**

- Small farms represent over 90% of all farms in FL and the number of small farms is increasing
- Input from counties throughout Florida identified the need for small farm educational programs
- Programs addressing the needs of small-scale farmers are particularly relevant in Hillsborough County, where over 75% of our farms and ranches are 50 acres or less in size and about 1/3 of them are smaller than 10 acres
- Along with the various ‘Alternative Agricultural Enterprise’ workshops being held in the region, please visit this website for current information for small farmers:

  Website:  http://smallfarms.ifas.ufl.edu/