

MANATEE LIVESTOCKER

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CALENDAR**March 13-23:** Sarasota County Fair**March 15:** Garden and Water College (Extension Office)**March 23:** Easter Sunday**March 29:** Small Farm Livestock Production Conference (Bartow)**March 29:** South Central Small Farms Conference (Extension Office)**April 7:** Small Farms Livestock Production Conference (LaBelle)**April 8:** Manatee County Cattlewomen's Meeting (Christa's Home)**April 24:** Pasture Management Seminar (Extension Office)**May 7-9:** Beef Cattle Short Course (Gainesville)

Celebrating the 57th Annual Florida Beef Cattle Short Course at the Hilton University of Florida Conference Center April 30 – May 2, 2008

Beef cattle producers continue to face challenges that affect the potential for profitability of their beef cattle enterprise. Increasing production costs coupled with unfavorable weather patterns continue to drive cattlemen to examine their bottom line. To that end, today's cattlemen continue to explore potential marketing options, means to improve the quality of the calves they market, and improved production practices as well. The 57th Annual Florida Beef Cattle Short Course continues the rich tradition of quality programs from the UF/IFAS Department of Animal Sciences that address the issues facing the beef cattle industry. The 2008 Florida Beef Cattle Short Course begins Wednesday afternoon with the annual market outlook. Looking at current market trends is important as the beef industry faces increasing production costs and expansion of the ethanol industry and the associated implications. The afternoon program continues with a pair of current topics that outline the implementation of instrument grading for beef carcasses followed by market-

ing and alternative production systems. The final installment of the program that afternoon is an economic comparison of alternative production systems for beef cattle producers. The afternoon program concludes with an opportunity for the participants to interact and exchange information during the evening reception and Allied Trade Show. Thursday's program is entirely dedicated to bulls. A wide spectrum of important topics related to bulls will be addressed throughout the day. Thursday starts with a discussion that addresses EPDs to select and evaluate bulls. The theme continues with a discussion of genetic markers that should help clarify fact from fiction in this emerging genetic selection tool. The program shifts from selection to production as we look at how to adapt bulls to the Gulf Coast region and bull management considerations for commercial producers. Finally, because buying a bull is a financial investment, it is ...continued page 2

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important to address how much a producer can pay for a bull. The afternoon program continues to address the bull component of the beef cattle enterprise through live animal demonstrations. Three different assessment and evaluation criteria will be applied to bull selection. Demonstrations and discussion of phenotypic live animal, ultrasound, and fertility and breeding potential evaluations, along with matching bull selection to the cow herd will give participants a comprehensive experience in bull selection and evaluation. The annual Cattlemen's Steakout on Thursday evening provides an event for all participants to enjoy a prime rib dinner and time for conversation and relaxation. On Friday, the program highlights the University of Florida's emphasis on production practices. The program will present some of the recent research and production methods that UF researchers are exploring to improve beef production in Florida. Topic areas will include backgrounding calves with co-products, replacement heifer management, factors affecting the value of calves from Florida, application of biosolids as fertilizer sources,

and utilization of limpgrass for grazing. The 2008 Florida Beef Cattle Short Course promises to continue the tradition of being the best educational event for beef cattle producers in the Southeast. The spectrum of topics related to beef production, marketing, and selection of bulls should provide something for every beef cattle producer regardless of size. Make plans to attend the Short Course and come away with new and innovative knowledge about the beef cattle industry. Complete information, schedules, and registration can be found online at <http://animal.ifas.ufl.edu/extension/beef/short.shtml>, or contact the University of Florida, Department of Animal Sciences at (352) 392- 1916.

SOURCE: Dr. Matt Hersom
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“So You Want to Be a Farmer” Small Farms Livestock Production Conference

The Small Farms Livestock Production Conference was designed for ranchette or small landowners who are considering the raising, management and production of livestock for pleasure or profit. This course, “So You Want to be a Farmer”, was designed more specifically for new or agriculturally inexperienced landowners, who are considering some field of livestock production on their small or limited acreage. This will help guide them and provide them information for making a more informed decision about what type of livestock producer they may want to be.

This course will provide basic information about all the different animal species as possibilities for a small farming operation. We will explore some economic and business basics of agricultural production; look at specialty production and markets as possibilities; give some basics of animal health, buying healthy animals and keeping them healthy; pasture and forage require-

ments before you ever get started, including understanding different forage species and their fertility and maintenance requirements will be presented; and what considerations you will need to make for fencing, housing, handling and holding equipment for all types of animal species.

This course will be offered on two dates, at two different locations, beginning with the first offering on Saturday, March 29, 2008 at the Polk County Extension Center in Bartow, FL. The second will be held on Saturday, April 5, 2008 at the Dallas Townsend Ag Center in LaBelle, FL.

The cost of the course is \$20 prior to March 14th or \$30 after March 14th or at the door. For more information contact Christa at, 941-722-4524.

South Central Small Farms Conference March 29th—Manatee County Extension Office

The South Central Florida Agricultural Extension Agents are organizing a Small Farms Conference on Saturday, March 29, 2008 from 9:00am until 3:30pm for the Polk, Hillsborough, Manatee, and Sarasota County area. The program was developed to assist individuals who are interested in starting farms and introduce them to areas that they may be interested in pursuing. The focus this year will be on sources that would assist the small farmer better manage their investments as well as predict profits or losses.

Throughout the day participants will hear speakers who are currently practicing the principles they are sharing with the participants. The morning session is focused on ways to help the small farmer begin or enhance their operation through financial planning, tax exemption opportunities as well as cost sharing

programs. The afternoon has been reserved to allow the participant time to learn about a variety of small farm production practices from both extension agents and producers. At the end of the day participants will have the opportunity to tour Geraldson Farm in western Manatee County.

The registration cost of this program is \$25 if post-marked by March 14th and \$35 if postmarked after March 14th or at the door. The registration fee will cover morning refreshments, lunch and written educational information.

Anyone wishing to have more information may contact, Christa L. Carlson-Kirby at the UF/UFAS Manatee County Extension Office, 941-722-4524.

Basic Pasture Management Seminar April 24th—Manatee County Extension Office

The winter weather is coming to an end. Soon spring will be in the air. Many farmers and ranchers are looking to improve or establish new pastures. Along with the improving and establishing of pastures come many questions.

To answer many of these questions and even some you may not know you have, Manatee County Department of Natural Resources and UF/IFAS Extension Services' Livestock Extension Agent Christa L. Kirby will be conducting a Basic Pasture Management Seminar. The program will be held on Thursday, April 24th at the Manatee County Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources Kendrick Auditorium, located at the Manatee County Fairgrounds, 1303 17th St W, Palmetto. The program will begin at 7:00pm.

During the course of the program we will discuss different varieties of grasses and other forage species. We will also address what varieties are best for different situations. While some grasses prefer wet soil others prefer dryer soil. We will also explain how to plant and prepare your pastures for planting by both seed and vegetative material. After we have finished discussing forage species we will talk about soil tests

and the importance of these tests to your forages. We will discuss how to properly obtain soil samples and options for testing. We will then move into a fertilizer discussion for your forages. The evening will conclude with a discussion about animal stocking rates and how it affects your pasture's production.

This course is available to you at no charge. We do ask that anyone wishing to participate please register so we can have adequate materials ready for everyone. You can register by calling 941-722-4524 and speaking with either Christa or Linda. If you have any questions regarding this seminar please contact us at the above number or by email at ccarlson@ufl.edu

More Seek the Small-Farm Dream, but Need Help From Friends, Experts Say

It wasn't long after longtime commercial writer Sandra "Sam" Williams and husband Jerry left their fulltime desk jobs to start a 200-acre farm in Starke that they realized they could use a little help.

"Sitting at a keyboard doesn't give you much insight into how to harvest chickens or ward off white-flies," she said. "And those are the easy problems. These aren't the smoothest of times for anyone, let alone small farmers."

Many are following their dream of starting their own small farm in Florida, but the economic climate makes maintaining those farms difficult. Unstable property values, skyrocketing oil prices and a weak economy have shaved away profits.

However, experts from the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences have literally gone out of their way to uncover the best advice for small farmers, and are beginning to spread the word.

Last May, IFAS personnel and other small farm experts toured some of the most successful small-scale agricultural businesses throughout South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia. They gleaned the most profitable aspects from booming produce markets, countless fields and greenhouses.

The most revealing truth was that successful small farmers help one another out, said Danielle Treadwell, an assistant professor in the UF Horticultural Sciences Department. So the team's first step was to organize local farmer meetings, such as one Williams attended along with 30 other farmers in Baker County Feb. 12. Several recent meetings in South Florida also drew crowds.

"I think there's a growing number of small farmers in Florida that need this kind of knowledge to make it work," Treadwell said. "It might be a retired couple who came here to raise blueberries. Or it might be idealistic young people who are just trying to scratch out enough to make a lease payment on an acre of land."

The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines a farm as any place used to generate at least \$1,000 worth of agricultural products annually—whether or not those products are actually sold at market. A "small farm" is one that generates agricultural products worth less than \$250,000. In the 2002 Agricultural Census, 93 percent of Florida's 44,000 farms were in this category.

The February 2009 release of the 2007 Agricul-

tural Census will be the definitive answer to whether small farming is on the rise in Florida, but early numbers and anecdotal evidence suggest significant growth.

For example, data from the Columbia County Appraiser's Office shows an increase in the number of farms in that North Florida county from 688 in 2002 to nearly 1,700 in 2007. Although, by the USDA's definition, these farms could be as little as two cows and a horse or a half-acre of nursery plants.

IFAS-led meetings of these small farmers are enabling them to begin to share resources, coordinate farmers markets, and swap how-to information.

In addition to face-to-face meetings, today's small farmers are Internet savvy, and have no trouble developing their own Web sites or providing information about their farming operation to consumers on farming Web sites such as <http://www.localharvest.org>.

"What may be even more important than their ability to talk among themselves is how effective they can suddenly become at talking to their community," said Robert Hochmuth, an IFAS extension agent based in Live Oak.

Additionally, the May 2007 tour found that successful small farms take advantage of the resources that local and state agencies provide. Local extension agents and nearby land grant universities can offer specialized information and cutting-edge expertise on levels that small farmers would otherwise be unable to afford. "Large commercial farms can pay private specialists to come out and do work for them, but many small farms are operating on a shoestring—a frayed one at that," Williams said. "But small farms are able to get services like affordable soil analysis. There's even a specialist just for livestock."

Another rule of thumb is to develop a broad knowledge base. For more information or to contact a local extension agent, please visit <http://smallfarms.ifas.ufl.edu>.

The IFAS site features information on farming topics as well as small local conferences attended by more than 1,700 people last year. The extension agents behind the effort hope to use it to organize a statewide conference in 2009.

SOURCE: Robert Hochmuth; Phone: (386) 362-1725

Beef Management Calendar

April

- Plant warm season annual pastures.
 - Plant corn for silage.
 - 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 after 3 months of age and before 12 months of age.
 - Market cull cows and bulls.
- Update market information and refine market strategy for calves.

May

- Remove bulls.
- Harvest hay from cool season crops.
- Plant warm season perennial pastures.
 - Fertilize warm season pastures.
 - Check mineral feeder(s).
- Check for spittlebugs and treat if necessary.
- Apply spot-on agents for grub and louse control.
 - Check dust bags.
- Vaccinate and implant with growth stimulant any later calves.
- Reimplant calves with growth stimulant at 90-120 days, when you have herd penned.
 - Dispose of dead animals properly.
- Update market information and refine marketing plans.
- Remove bulls May 21 to end calving season March 1.

June

- Last date for planting sorghum.
- Check mineral feeder, use at least 8% phosphorus in mineral and not over 2 ½ to 1 calcium to phosphorus ratio.
- Check pastures and hay field for spittlebugs, mole crickets, and army worms.
 - Treat if necessary; best month for mole cricket control.
 - Check dust bags.
 - Watch for evidence of pinkeye and treat.
- Utilize available veterinary services and diagnostic laboratories.
 - Get heifers vaccinated for brucellosis if not already done.
 - Pregnancy check cows.
 - Update market information and plans.
 - Make first cutting of hay.
 - Put bulls out June 1 for calves starting March 11.
- Reimplant calves at 90 to 120 days with growth stimulant.

The South Florida Beef Forage Producer Survey

Many beef cattle producers will receive the South Florida Beef Forage Program Producer Survey. This survey is used to advise and guide programs provided by the South Florida Beef Forage Program. I will also use this survey to develop and guide the Manatee County Livestock Program. The survey will be sent to approximately 60 individuals in Manatee County. If you receive a survey please fill it out and return the completed survey by using the self addressed stamped envelope provided. I would like to thank you advance for your assistance with this survey. Results of the 2003 survey can be found online at <http://sfbfp.ifas.ufl.edu>.

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Extension Agent II, Livestock