

Okeechobee Livestock Letter

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September/October 1998 / Volume 5 Number 3

UP COMING EVENTS

September		
25	FCA Quality Replacement Heifer Sale	Arcadia
October		
1	Bull Evaluation Program, Oak Knoll Ranch	Lake Wales
8	Range Cattle Research Station Field Day	Ona
13	Third, Florida Dairy Business Analysis Conference	Ocala
20 - 22	Sunbelt Agricultural Exposition	Moultrie, GA
29	South Florida Grazing Systems Management Tour	Highlands & Okeechobee Counties
November		
17	Fall Beef Forum	Okeechobee

- Florida Losses Brucellosis Class-Free Status -

Over the past couple of months, many of you have called asking about Florida's Brucellosis status. At that time, I knew that suspected herds had been found in Hardee County and Clay County. I have yet to get official word from FDACS. I did find a press release from USDA-APHIS (<http://doacs.state.fl.us/~ai./news.htm#>.) dated August 20 stating that USDA has reduced Florida's brucellosis class-free status to class-A status and imposed certain restrictions on the interstate movement of cattle from Florida. This rule became effective August 13 and appeared in the August 20 Federal Register. The press

release states that two herds were identified as infected with brucellosis. Since that time, I have received a quarantine list from FDACS and there are four herds listed (Charlotte, Clay, Hardee, Polk).

Changing the brucellosis status of Florida from class-free to class-A increases testing requirements governing interstate movement of cattle. However, testing requirements for cattle moved interstate for immediate slaughter or to quarantined feedlots are not affected by this change.

Brucellosis class-free classification is based on a state carrying out all requirements of the brucellosis program and finding no cases of brucellosis in cattle and bison in 12 months. All but eight states are brucellosis free. The target date for zero infected herds is the end of 1998.

I am trying to get someone from FDACS to give us an update at the Fall Beef Forum on November 17.

- Evaluating Bulls Using EPDs Program -

On October 1, a program, *Evaluating Bulls Using EPD's*, is scheduled at Oak Knoll Ranch, Lake Wales, from 3:00 to 6:00 PM. The purpose of this program is to demonstrate the value and effectiveness of using expected progeny differences (EPDs) to evaluate breeding bulls. Willard Lemaster, Animal Science Dept., UF/IFAS, will be on hand to give an overview of this evaluation method. Producers will also have an opportunity to hear a panel of ranch managers who have successfully used EPDs to improve the quality of both their replacement heifers and the calves they sell. A discussion will follow on using EPDs in a beef cattle artificial insemination program.

Following the discussions, there will be a live animal evaluation demonstration using herd sires and their offspring to show how this type of evaluation compares to the more traditional visual appraisal. Dinner is provided and sponsored by ABS Global. Please call the Extension office to make your reservations. For more information and directions, please see the enclosed brochure.

South Florida Grazing Systems - Management Tour -

Grazing systems management is the focus of a tour scheduled for October 29 in Highlands and Okeechobee counties. The tour will begin at 9:00 AM at the MacArthur Agro-Ecology Research Center (Buck Island Ranch), Lake Placid, continue to Larson Dairy #1 (Micco Rd), Basinger and end at Deer Run Ranch, Okeechobee. Lunch will be provided.

At Buck Island Ranch, we will view and discuss the water quality stocking rate densities research project along with some of the other projects that are being conducted on the ranch. Larson Dairy #1 has just converted to a modified grazing dairy. Cattle still receive some supplemental feed, but not to the extent of a conventional dairy. Grazing is the predominant feed source. Most everyone has heard about Deer Run Ranch's Management Intensive Grazing (MIG) system. Deer Run Ranch is a registered Braford breeder. Under MIG, they are able to run a cow/calf pair per acre year round without any winter supplementation. Deer Run Ranch has been operating under the MIG system for 12 years. MIG is a concept that has been prevalent in New Zealand for many years but is only in its infancy in the United States. Deer Run Ranch is truly an innovator of this concept in Florida.

Lunch will be provided. Reservations would be appreciated in order to help us figure on the number of meals to prepare.

- Fall Beef Forum -

The annual Fall Beef Forum will be held on November 17 at the Extension office. We have incorporated your suggestions for possible topics from last year's Forum evaluations into this year's program.

The main focus will be on marketing and factors that effect the marketing of Florida calves. Registration/Orange Juice, Coffee and Doughnuts will begin at 9:00 AM with the program starting at 9:30 AM. Lunch will be provided and registration is required.

The agenda is almost finalized. A program flyer will be mailed out separately. Please mark your calendars for this very informative program.

- Bull Selection Tips -

Fall is fast approaching and is the time most ranchers are preparing for the upcoming breeding season by purchasing new herd bulls. A large number of sales are held throughout October through January that will allow a rancher to purchase a bull that will most fit their breeding program. Careful bull selection contributes more to genetic improvement in a beef herd than any other practice. Lower production can result by continuing to use lower quality bulls in your herd. Bull breed selection should be based on a planned breeding program. Commercial cow/calf producers should have a planned crossbreeding program that will take advantage of the production increase due to hybrid vigor. Purebred breeders should choose herd sires that will help them achieve their herd production goals that will satisfy their customer's needs (i.e., low birth weights, heavy weaning weights, heavy yearling weights, cow maternal ability, average daily gain, frame size, carcass traits - ribeye area and quality grade). When selecting bulls, it is important to find an established, reputable breeder who manages his operation similar to yours. For example, if you do not creep feed, do not buy bulls that were raised on a creep feeder. The bulls which are more likely to produce superior offspring under your management system are those that are superior performers under a similar management system.

Visual appraisal (phenotype) is the way most ranchers select their herd bulls. However, production records and Expected Progeny Difference (EPD's) are also important tools to use for selection. Regardless of the breed, EPDs or performance records of various traits that can be readily and accurately measured (weighed), and are of economic importance to your herd should be emphasized. Examples of such traits are weaning weight and/or yearling weight. The cow/calf producer should be most concerned with fertility, birth weight (due to its relationship to calving difficulty), weaning weight, and feedlot performance as indicated by yearling weight. These traits, except for reproduction/fertility, are moderately to highly heritable, so that considerable progress can be made through selection. EPDs and production records contain a lot of information and may be very confusing to those who are not familiar with them. If your unsure about EPDs, concentrate on one trait at a time, eliminating unsatisfactory bulls from further consideration during selection. EPD values will vary among different breeds, so it is necessary to find out the current breed averages.

After ranking bulls on EPDs and/or performance records, evaluate them visually for conformation, structural soundness, and temperament. Eliminate those that are unsound and/or have other physical defects, such as small testicles, bad eyes, lack of masculinity, or small frame size. Final selection should be based on the bulls having a satisfactory breeding soundness examination (BSE) performed by a qualified technician. If the bulls score satisfactorily on the BSE, you can be assured that they are sexually mature, producing semen capable of settling cows, and that his calves will receive the superior genes needed to help improve your herd and meet your production goals.

- Calving Season Management -

We are fast approaching fall calving season. Most ranches begin calving during late September through early October. This is one of the most busy times of the year on the ranch. We will try to cover some of the high points to consider during this very important time of the year.

Death of calves at or near calving constitutes a major economic loss for ranchers. A newborn calf represents a chance for recovering the annual cost of maintaining a beef cow and hopefully, realizing a profit. However, death rates in excess of 5% are not uncommon at calving. These losses can generally be prevented by good calving season management. It is important to maintain a short calving season in order to be able to concentrate labor and resources during this important time. Good calving season management requires frequent observation and assistance calving when necessary. The following are some specific things you can do to increase calf survival rates:

1. **Separate First-Calf Heifers from Mature Cows.** Calving difficulty in 2-year old heifers can run as high as 30-40%, whereas 3% might be a normal percentage in mature cows. It is especially important to closely watch first-calf heifers. They should be placed in a small, accessible pasture that is near a set of pens where assistance can be provided, if necessary.
2. **Provide a Clean Area for Calving.** A well sodded pasture or clean, dry maternity pen should be used as the calving area; never a wet, muddy lot. Calving pasture should be large enough to permit adequate exercise and should provide some protection against prevailing winds.
3. **Be Familiar with the Signs of Calving.** The earliest noticeable sign is enlargement of the udder; however, this can occur several weeks before calving. Several days before calving, the ligaments around the tailhead and in the pelvic area relax. The vulva becomes swollen and may begin to sag, discharging strings of mucus. A few hours prior to calving, most cows become nervous and uneasy. A cow will usually wander away from the rest of the herd as her contractions increase.
4. **Check Cows Frequently.** Close observation is essential for providing assistance to cows that may have difficulty during calving. Cows should be checked 3 to 4 times per day, and providing assistance as needed will result in more live calves. However, cows should be disturbed as little as possible during labor.
5. **Know When Cows Need Assistance.** Intervention is justified when a cow continues to have active contractions, but makes no progress in having her calf. Research has shown that timely, appropriate intervention (for mature cows, 1 hour; first-calf heifers, up to 2 hours after the onset of abnormal contractions) increases the cow's chances of getting rebred, as opposed to non-intervention. In a normal

delivery, the calf's forelegs and head, encased in a membrane, are forced through the birth canal and emerge from the vulva. You should train yourself to recognize an abnormal delivery and know when to call a veterinarian. Using a disposable glove, feel the various parts of the calf to determine its presentation in the birth canal.

In normal presentation, the bottom of the calf's feet face downward and its head can be felt between its front legs. Some abnormalities - such as one or both of the forelegs back, or head turned back - can be corrected by pushing the calf back and manually repositioning the legs. Backward presentation with rear feet first is usually uncomplicated. Other abnormal positions would likely require veterinary assistance.

The following presentations require veterinary assistance:

1. Only the calf's tail is visible.
2. Only the calf's head is visible.
3. Front legs are visible past the knees, but the calf's nose cannot be located.
4. The head and only one foot are visible.
5. More than two feet are visible.

6. **Be Sure the Calf is Breathing Normally.** Once the calf is delivered, some stimulation might be required to start its breathing. Stimulate the calf by rubbing briskly, slapping it on the ribs, or tickling its nostrils with a straw. Mucus should be removed from the mouth and throat. Lifting a calf up by the hind legs will drain fluids from its respiratory system.

7. **Be Sure the Calf Consumes Colostrum.** Ideally, every calf should consume colostrum (first milk) within 15 to 30 minutes following birth. A newborn calf depends upon colostrum as a source of antibodies to protect it from diseases. The sooner the calf receives colostrum, the better its protection will be. Saving and freezing colostrum, or using a commercial colostrum supplement, will help protect calves that do not nurse within 1 to 2 hours after birth.

8. **Increase Feed after Calving.** The cow's energy intake should be increased to 14 to 16 lb TDN daily as soon as the calf appears to be taking all of her milk (10 to 14 days after calving). Extra energy helps the cow produce enough milk for her calf, maintain adequate body condition, and rebreed on schedule.

(From Florida Cow-Calf Management, SP197, University of Florida Cooperative Extension Service)

- Date Set For Third Extension Dairy Business Conference -

The Extension Agents of the Dairy Extension Program Team (D.E.P.T.) have begun planning the third Florida Dairy Business Conference. The conference will be held on the 13th of October in the Ocala area. Funding, staffing and scheduling restraints have negated the possibility of conferences in the northern and southern areas of the state as in the past.

The program will focus on the just completed Dairy Business Analysis Program (DBAP) effort for the

year and other financial subject matter. The program will include:

- **DBAP, Investing and Financing Activity on DBAP Dairies - *M. Hoekema, Dairy Science Dept., UF/IFAS***
- **DBAP, Growth and the Bottom Line - *R. Giesy, Dairy Extension Agent, UF/IFAS***
- **Using Futures to Hedge Against Volatile Milk and Feed Prices - *P.J. VanBlokland, FRED, UF/IFAS***
- **Getting Ready for New Environmental Regulations: Cost of Implementing and Operating Some Manure Management Systems - *J. VanHorn, Dairy Science Dept., UF/IFAS***
- **A Financial Officer's View of Reinvestment Options and Wise Use of Capital - *TBA***
- **An Accountant's view of Some Specific Tax Management Strategies - *W. Thomas, CPA***
- **Practical Ideas About Dairy Business Growth, Reinvesting Strategies and Tax Management Opportunities - *Producer Panel***

Mark your calendar now. Details will be sent to all dairies and others on the mailing list when they are finalized.

We will be taking the Extension Office van and will be happy to have as many interested participants as can fit. It should be an excellent and informative program. We hope you can attend.

- Labor Management On The Dairy -

Management is defined as the use of people and other resources to accomplish objectives. Labor management can be specifically defined as the planning, organizing, and directing of the operative functions of personnel. The purpose of the labor management program on a dairy is to get the job done right and on time. With large herds more time is needed for management per se, and less time is available to milk, feed, haul manure, and perform other routine tasks. The continued success of the operation depends not only on the dairy manager's ability to manage land, capital, cows, etc., but also on the ability to get the job done through others.

This involves proper planning of labor need, hiring the needed personnel and training them to do the job correctly and efficiently. A good manager motivates employees, provides them with a relatively safe and healthy working environment and maintains good employer-employee relations.

Incentives plans are a good place to start. Plans can be designed for problem areas, to increase production, or for a variety of reasons. Many dairies already have plans in place but perhaps its time to revisit and evaluate their effectiveness or additional plans that might help. Some incentive plan thoughts:

- **Incentives should be above and beyond a good salary, not a substitute. They should range 5 to 100% of base salary.**
- **The bonus should be large enough to make it worthwhile for the employee to want to participate.**
- **The plan should be based on performance that is in the control of the employee and attainable in a definite time period.**
- **Means for determining the bonus should be simple and understood by both parties. One time bonus plans such as year-end bonuses usually don't work. Employees may change jobs after the payment.**
- **Method of payment and how often payment is to be should be stated up-front.**
- **The measurement of performance should be made by objective criteria.**
- **The plan should be stated in writing to avoid any misunderstanding. It should include the purpose of the plan, what the employee's responsibility is, methods used to calculate the bonus, how and when payments are to be made, duration of the agreement and provisions for arbitration.**
- **Each area should have a separate plan. Milkers who are doing an excellent job may feel slighted if they have no bonus plan, when the heat detectors and breeders are doing a poor job and they get what is perceived as more money due to a bonus plan.**
- **The plan should not encourage practices which are unprofitable to the dairy. You should have control over practices that could increase costs over returns. Breeding every non-pregnant cow every day of the month may get more cows bred, but won't increase your profits. Major management decisions must remain in your hands.**
- **Incentive plans would be designed for a specific period of time and contain provisions for annual revision or update.**
- **A safety bonus for injury free quarters or periods of time is a good idea even on dairies with no other plans.**

- The 4-H Page -

We want to take a little space in the newsletter to make you aware of some of the outstanding accomplishments of our 4-H youth involved in some of the livestock activities over the past year. With so many kids involved, we can't possibly recognize everyone but we want you to be aware of how well they are representing Okeechobee County.

Dairy Quiz Bowl is a written and oral contest of dairy related material. At the State Quiz Bowl Contest in

Tampa, **Adam Spann** placed third in the Junior Written test, with **Jennifer Clements** first in the Advanced. As teams, **Adams** team was again first in Junior Division. **Emily and Jennifer Clements** teamed to finish first in the Senior Division. In the final competition, which includes oral questions and answers, again **Adam Spann's** team took first for Juniors and **Jennifer and Emily Clements** second in Seniors with **John Spann and Sarah Bishop** taking a fourth.

Quiz Bowls were also held at the World Guernsey Conference in Louisville. The Junior team of **Emily Clements and Sarah Bishop** and others won the contest with the Senior team including **John Spann and Jacob Larson** receiving honorable mention.

At the National Ayrshire Conference in Cedar Rapids, the Junior team with **Adam Spann** finished first. The first place Senior team included **John Spann and Sarah Bishop** and another honorable mention team included **Jennifer and Emily Clements**.

At the **State 4-H Dairy Judging Contest** in Orlando, Okeechobee kids again did very well. In the Junior Division as individuals, **Kristin Larson** placed first and **Will Butler** fourth. In intermediates, **Ginger Larson** finished fourth and **Brittany Conway** 10th. In seniors, **Jennifer Clements** first, **Jacob Larson** second, and **Charles Syfrett** sixth. As teams, **Will Butler, Hamilton Bishop, Kristin Larson and Adam Spann** teamed up to place first in the Junior division and **Jacob Larson, Jennifer Clements, Charles Syfrett and John Spann** did the same in seniors. Giving oral reasons, Okeechobee kids really shine. As teams they placed with two firsts and a second. As individuals, **Kristin Larson** and **Jacob Larson** placed first and **Will Butler** and **Jennifer Clements** placed second for the entire contest.

As a result of their efforts, the following will be participating in state wide judging programs: **Will Butler, Sarah Bishop, Ginger Larson, Brittany Conway, Emily Clements, Jacob Larson, Jennifer Clements, Charles Syfrett** and **John Spann**.

Jennifer Clements and Jacob Larson will represent us on the team going to the World Dairy Expo the end of September, and Jennifer Clements will participate in Harrisburg at the All American.

A special note of "thanks" is due to the local dairymen who contribute through the Dairy Checkoff Program. Without their support, these opportunities and experiences could not happen.

The **livestock judging** interests are well represented also. At the **Southeastern Hereford Contest**, the senior team of **Christina Coker, Bobby Joe Fulford, Jessie Fulford** and **Jennifer Yates** placed third in the competition. **Jonathan Gibbs, Kimberly Roth, Reed Hair** and **Jay Smith** made up the fourth place junior team. **Reed Hair** demonstrated his talent by finishing as second place individual.

At the **South Florida Fair**, the junior team of **Ashley Hair, Reed Hair** and **Glorybee Rodriquez** finished second with **Glorybee Rodriquez, Bobby Joe Fulford** and **Jennifer Yates** finishing first, second and third respectively as individuals.

At the **State contest in Tampa**, the senior team of **Christina Coker, Jennifer Yates, Brandon Cartwright** and **Bobby Joe Fulford** came in fourth in performance, seventh in cattle, eighth in swine, seventh in oral

reasons and seventh team overall. Tenth individual overall was **Christina Coker** and sixth individual in performance was **Jennifer Yates**.

The **Equine** enthusiasts have shined as well. At the State 4-H Horse Show, **Okeechobee County** won the Reserve Emerald Award. **Nicole DeLargy** won Reserve Timed Events and placed eighth in the "Top Ten Seniors". **Jennifer Cletzer** took the coveted Versatility Award. **Adam Burks** finished a very respectable 3rd Runner Up for "Horseman of the Year".

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