

# Okeechobee Livestock Letter

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## UP COMING EVENTS

<b>September</b>		
26	Florida Cow/Calf Seminar	Okeechobee Civic Center
<b>October</b>		
24	Quail Management Seminar	Desoto County Ag Center
<b>November</b>		
7	Ecotourism Management Seminar	Hardee County Extension Center
<b>January 2003</b>		
16	20th Annual Florida Cattlemen's Institute and Allied Trade Show	Kissimmee Valley Ag Center

Dear Producers,

In this issue of the Okeechobee County Livestock Newsletter, please find included information about the following:

1. What's In a Name - Growth Hormones
2. Tropical Soda Apple Making a Comeback
3. Comparing Marketing Alternatives
4. Florida Cow/Calf Seminars
5. Alternative Management Seminars

Hope you find something of importance to you in this issue.

Sincerely,

O. Patrick Miller, County Extension Director & Patrick J. Hogue, Extension Agent III - Livestock

## Whats In a Name? - Growth Hormones in Question

For several years now the European Countries have refused to allow imports of beef and meat products from the United States in particular, but other countries also, that has been treated with what they call growth enhancing hormones and their derivatives. In April 1998 and again in May 2000 the European Scientific Committee on Veterinary Measures relating to Public Health ( EU SCVPH) concluded that no acceptable daily intake of residuals from six hormones used for growth promoting could be established, and that they were in fact a danger to human health and possibly carcinogenic, mutagenic and genotoxic. Toward the end of April this year, the EU SCVPH again reviewed 17 studies and other scientific evidence and again confirmed their previous rulings.

The latest opinion follows a re-appraisal of the 17 scientific studies initiated by the European Commission to supposedly address certain research gaps they identified following a World Trade Organization ruling that a prohibition of the use of certain growth promoting hormones in Europe, and subsequent prohibitory importation of beef and meat products from countries using them, was not in line with the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures in 1997.

The six hormones in question are oestradiol 17-a, progesterone, testosterone, zeranol, trenbalone acetate and melengesterone acetate and their metabolites. It is interesting to note a couple of things about these various hormones. In searching the Internet and other sources for information about these compounds, the first thing that is discovered is that although synthetically produced, most of these are naturally occurring substances that may be produced in normal animal and human synthesis. This is similar to another product that has been controversial in recent years, BST (bovine somatotropin), used to enhance milk production in dairy cattle. Secondly, most of these are also used in one way or another in treating human conditions as enhancers or supplements. As an example, oestradiol 17-a is one of the conjugated estrogens and is used in the human synthetic generic of Premarin.

Table 1. Shows the six hormones of concern by the European Scientific Community and the associated animal use products, mostly implants, used in cattle in the United States and North America. It should be noted that at least one of these products used extensively in Canada does pose some concern to their scientific community because of it's widespread and extensive use.

**Table 1. Growth enhancing hormones and Corresponding Animal Use Products:**

<b>oestradiol 17-a</b>	<b>progesterone</b>	<b>testosterone</b>	<b>trenbalone acetate</b>	<b>melengestrol acetate</b>	<b>zeranol</b>
Compudose	Component E-C	Component E-H	Component T-H	MGA	Ralgro
Component E-C	Component E-S	Synovex H	Component T-S		
Component E-G	Synovex C		Component TE-G		
Component E-H	Synovex S		Component TE-S		

Component E-S	Finaplix H
Component TE-G	Revalor - G
Component TE-S	Revalor - H
Encore	Revalor - S
Revalor - G	Synovex Plus
Revalor - H	
Revalor - S	

It is not to say that potentially, these products do or do not pose any kind of health risk to humans, but in today's world, almost everything can be of concern to someone. In the United States we still have one of the most stringent approval processes that products must go through, including extensive scientific studies, before they are allowed to be used in the food production chain. It is what makes our food supply the safest in the world, and yet the use of technologies such as these also allow us to remain the most agriculturally productive country in the world. Not only do products have to undergo this stringent approval process, but must be continually tested and if found to be a human safety hazard, they are removed from the market place.

## **Tropical Soda Apple Making a Comeback**

The environmental conditions of the last couple of years has apparently helped not only give us less forage for our cattle to consume, but also enhanced the ability, once again, of Tropical Soda Apple (TSA), *solanum viarum*, to gain a strong foothold again. The first sighting of TSA in South Florida was in 1987, but it wasn't until the early 1990's that the population of this invasive weed really exploded following an extended period of drought much like the last couple of years.

We are once again seeing a dramatic increase in the TSA population in pastures, and again in locations where it had not been previously or was thought to be under control. Tropical Soda Apple is on the invasive species lists of both the State and Federal governments, and in Florida, as such, it is illegal to knowingly transport the plant or plant parts, including seeds, to other locations that it may become established. This could be limiting for selling of sod. Some Southern States already have or are considering cattle quarantine regulations for cattle coming from TSA infested areas. Because selling of sod from cattle operations in South Florida is predominant and the number of calves being shipped is going to be increasing, it is logical that we review the current control methods for TSA for your assistance.

Probably the most important statement that could be made in the control of Tropical Soda Apple is Do Not Allow Plants to Produce Fruit. TSA is one of the most prolific fruit and seed producers that we could face, producing fruit year round, but mostly from September through May. Each viable fruit may contain 200 - 400 seeds with a germination of 75% or more. At times a single plant may contain 40,000 to 50,000 viable seed for dispersal by cattle, deer, feral hogs, racoons and birds that may consume the fruit, as well as those dropped to the ground. One method to get a stand of TSA under reasonable control is to keep it mowed regularly, not allowing the plants to produce fruit. Mowing periodically to a stubble height of 3" and not allowing fruit production will deplete root reserves and eventually kill part of the stand and render the remaining plants more susceptible to control by herbicides. By not allowing fruit production you eventually limit seeds in the

soil for future germination and new plant development.

For dense or heavy infestations of TSA, where spot spraying is not feasible or economical viable, the stand should be mowed to a stubble height of 3" as soon as possible to prevent fruit production. Repeat mowing when plants reach the flowering stage in about 50 - 60 days through April. Within 50 -60 days after the last mowing, when plant growth does not go beyond the flowering stage, broadcast spray the stand in late May to June using Remedy® at 1 quart/A + 0.10% - 0.25% nonionic surfactant in 40 gallons of water per acre. Follow the broadcast spraying with spot treatments for Sparse stands to control live over and new plants that emerge. Do Not Allow Plants to Produce Fruit.

If you have Sparse infestations where individual plants are scattered in pastures, vegetable fields, sod fields, hammocks, ditch banks and road sides, that allow plants to be individually treated, you can follow one of the below recommendations. Although mowing may help get these under control also, it generally is not necessary or cost effective for sparse stands. These recommendations are for herbicides that currently prove to give 95% - 100% control in spot application.

- Remedy® @ 0.5% solution + 0.10% - 0.25% nonionic surfactant + color marker
- Cover the entire plant to insure maximum herbicide uptake and control. Allow 3-4 hours for herbicide to dry before expected rainfall. Monitor areas monthly and treat new plants. Do Not Allow Plants to Produce Fruit.
- To control TSA in pastures other than bahiagrass, where Remedy® may not be labeled, consider using Dicamba @ 2 qt/A + 0.10% - 0.25% nonionic surfactant in 20 - 30 gallons of water. Dicamba (Banvel, Clarity, Vanquish) is effective at controlling TSA, but the 2 qt. rate is more expensive than Remedy®.

To effectively control TSA, you must permanently stop seed production by controlling existing plants in pastures, ditch banks and hammocks. Otherwise, the plant will continue to spread and remain the nuisance and profit robber it has become.

## **Comparing Marketing Alternatives**

In today's agriculture, and for our discussion cattle production, we are competing in the global and at least national market place. Agriculture producers have generally always been price takers rather than price setters in the market place, and with the expansion towards more national and global markets where consumer demands have a high priority, it behooves us to consider all our possibilities when determining when, where and how we are going to market our cattle. With consumer demands becoming greater priority, it is fast becoming a necessity to decide what we are going to market also, however, it is an individual producer decision to decide if and what particular segment of the consumer wants and desires they want to target and probably should be saved for another discussion. For our purposes here, we will only consider the different alternatives we have for marketing cattle and a few advantages and disadvantages of each.

### **Livestock Auctions**

Localized livestock auction markets have been the major point of sale for cattle since the beginning of the cattle industry in the US and are still one of the major sources of sale cattle for buyers. This alternative is the price at delivery method and has the advantage of being simple and a very familiar outlet for producers to take. It has the advantage of flexibility of quantity sold at any one time, provides convenient sales times and locations, and is considered to be very price efficient. The ease and simplicity is what still lures particularly most small producer to this alternative, because you take your cattle to market, you pay a slight fee, and you

receive payment in very short order.

From a risk management standpoint, you increase your price risk, because in this price at delivery alternative, you only control when you take your cattle to market, you still take whatever price is offered. If you were to base your marketing in this method on this weeks prices and decide to take your cattle to market next week, the price may be down slightly to significantly from the previous week, and you may not be happy with your strategy. On the other hand, prices could be up slightly to significantly, in which case you probably would revel in your ability as a shrewd marketing strategist. However, marketing all your cattle at different times in this method can result in inconsistent and variable income to your operation, and thus undependably consistent for budgeting purposes.

One advantage that local livestock markets will always provide is their persistence of continuation. Even very large cattle operations use local markets as one of their marketing outlets, and as long as there is a cattle industry, there will probably be local livestock markets. Another advantage that is developing to local livestock markets is the expansion of marketing services they are offering other than just the direct delivery sales option. Most are beginning to offer video auctioning, forward contracting and other methods of advance sales to it's customers, and will probably make them a viable market alternative indefinitely. And, another advantage that local livestock auction markets have always had is a variety of buyers in one location to bid on your cattle.

### **Forward Contracting**

In forward contracting you generally take a certain price for all or significant portion of your expected calf production at certain weight averages or ranges. This is usually done early in the calving season with delivery set at some date significantly in the future, and has the advantage of you knowing exactly what you will receive for them well in advance, and minimizes your price risk. If your contract is fairly flexible in quantity and weight ranges, then they may be of definite advantage to you.

However, many contracts have definite performance requirements that have to be met in either weights, weight ranges and sex requirements. If a contract is written prior to the entire calf crop being born, the steer to heifer ratio may be off, or if bad weather effects their performance, penalties for non-performance may kick in. Selling off the farm on forward contract is generally done dealing with one buyer, so one of the other disadvantages is that you may not be able to capture higher prices that come along after the contract is written, so several sources should be checked for prices and market trends before a final contract is agreed upon. However, once a relationship has been established with a single buyer, in this case, usually the pricing relationship is beneficial to both parties.

### **Video Auctions**

Some of the advantages video marketing offers are that cattle are handled less, cattle remain on the ranch until shipped, and a variety of buyers bid on your cattle offering more competitive prices than may be obtained in forward contracting with a single buyer. The seller can determine a desired delivery date, and the forward price in video auctioning reduces price risk. Video auctioning usually provides valuable services unavailable when negotiating a forward contract with a single buyer also. For example, the auction guarantees buyer performance of the contract. The seller can also decide to no sale the cattle and faces less transportation costs than with the local auction and possibly a forward contract.

Like forward contracting, one of the disadvantages of video auctioning is that once the seller accepts the bid, they cannot take advantage of prices increases on the cattle committed to the video sale that may occur in the market place in the future, so a knowledge of trends is beneficial. Video auctioning generally have higher fees associated with them than regular auctions, but transportation costs are usually less. Discounts are usually

incurred for less than truckload lots, and the length of time between videotaping of the cattle and the actual sale sometimes is a disadvantage. The frequency of video sales is less than that for regular local auctions also.

Board sales or call in auctions are generally very similar to video sales in both their advantages and disadvantages but may require you to physically show the cattle to potential buyers that may want to bid on them. This is especially true if a potential buyer is unfamiliar with your cattle and their performance.

Very large producers may find some advantages in selling in the Futures Hedging markets or Options markets, but these require some in depth investigation and discussion beyond the space limits for this particular discussion, but may involve the need for brokers and insurance beyond the scope of most producers.

Smaller producers who generally do not have the advantage of selling in truck load lots may still be able to take advantage of some of these additional marketing alternatives beyond simply selling through the local livestock auction markets by working with other producers to put together groups of cattle similar in type, conformation and weight. However in looking in to these possibilities the local market should not be overlooked, because they may work with you to put together sales for this purpose also.

Whatever the size of your operation, and however you normally sell you cattle, with the changing trends and continually changing market cycle, it behooves every producer to investigate all their possibilities in alternatives to market your cattle. There is a fairly new resource available that can assist you in this effort. Recently a manual was developed by the Cooperative Extension Service with the cooperation of Florida Farm Bureau, The Florida Cattlemen's Association and Farm Credit of Florida entitled Beef Marketing Resources. Although not widely available yet, it was developed to be a tool for cattlemen to assist them in their marketing strategies and is available for viewing and use in most County Extension offices.

## **Florida Cow/Calf Seminars**

As a continuation of the Florida Cow/Calf Seminars started last year under the direction of Dr. John Arthington at the Range Cattle Research and Education Center at Ona, these education programs are set again this year to be held in September. On the morning of September 26, 2002 the traveling seminars will be presented in Okeechobee County at the Okeechobee County Civic Center beginning at 10:30 AM. Please find enclosed a brochure discussing topics to be discussed during this years seminars and the locations they will be presented. Please note that in addition to the topics and speakers listed at the front of the brochure, Dr. Jack Rechigl will also be delivering a topic on "Impact of Phosphorus on Stargrass Growth and Water Quality." Please also note that we would like advance notice if you plan to attend by calling the County Extension office here in Okeechobee and that there is \$ 5.00 registration fee to cover program costs and a copy of the proceedings.

## **Alternative Management Seminars**

In today's economic environment, and especially the ranching business, who couldn't use some alternative sources of income to help make their business more profitable? The South Florida Beef-Forage Program Agents will be offering a couple of educational programs in the near future to look at some of the opportunities available for ranchers to consider to assist them in making the most of their resources.

Ecotourism is one of the most popular alternatives available for ranchers to make some additional income for their operation, especially if they have native areas and animal species for tourists to view. On Thursday,

November 7, there will be an Ecotourism Management Seminar presented at the Hardee County Extension Center in Wauchula, from 2:00 PM to 5:30 PM. Program brochures will be available in the County Extension office as soon as the speaker list is finalized, and this will be an opportunity for producers to determine if this is a viable alternative for their operation.

Quail hunting has long been a favorite of most hunters, however, opportunities are generally limited, and often times the quail population may also be limited. On Thursday, October 24, a day long Quail Management Symposium will be presented at the newly opened Desoto County Ag Center in Arcadia. This program will not only look at the possibilities of providing hunting opportunities as an alternative income source, but also management of native populations, predators and other problems and raising quail to supply hunting opportunities. This program is scheduled to begin at 8:00 AM and run through 5:00 PM, and again program brochure will be available as soon as speaker and sponsorships are finalized.

Plan to attend both of these alternative management programs and see if some of the alternative's may be suitable for your operation.

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**For questions or comments regarding this publication contact**



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