Okeechobee Livestock Letter

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UP COMING EVENTS

January 2003		
16	20th Annual Florida Cattlemen's Institute and Allied Trade Show	Kissimmee Valley Ag Center
February 2003		
27	Conservation Easement Program for Landowners	
April 2003		
22-24	20th Annual Beef Cattle Reproductive Management School	
29-30	Dairy Production Conference	
30-May 2	Beef Cattle Short Course	

Dear Producers,
This year is rapidly drawing to a conclusion, and hope this finds that you have had decent rainfall after two years of drought and the market hasn't taken too much of a down turn for you yet. In this edition of the Okeechobee County Newsletter you will find information on the following:

1. Agro-Tourism Management Seminar - November 7, 2002 - Wauchula, FL
2. So You Want to Produce Organic Beef? - USDA Organic Seal Requirments
3. 20th Annual Florida Cattlemen's Institute and Allied Trade Show - January 16, 2003 - Kissimmee, Fl
4. Mineral Supplementation Basics
5. Florida Cattle Market Outlook - Website for Florida Cattlemen

Hope there is something of interest to you in this edition and that all is well with you, your family, and your business.

Sincerely,

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

Agro-Tourism Management Seminar

The South Florida Beef-Forage Program will be holding a Agro-Tourism program for landowners at the Hardee County Extension office in Wauchula from 2:00 - 5:30 PM, Thursday, November 7. This program will focus on what Agro, Agri, Eco tourism is, what people who go on these kinds of tours are looking for, what additional benefits could be realized by the landowners, and the legal and insurance implications these types of tours and programs may hold as well.

Please find included with this mailing a copy of the brochure for this program with agenda and speakers involved. If you have natural areas on your property, including wildlife, as most ranch and larger landowners do, this program could provide some insight to you as to whether this is something you may want to consider as part of your overall business. As per the brochure, please RSVP if you plan to attend to Lockie Gary in the Hardee County Extension office, and we hope to see you there.

So you want to be an Oganic Beef Producer?

Under the National Organic Program, as of October 21, consumers who relish organically produced products, including beef, can determine if what they purchase is in fact 100% organic, or if they contain at least 95% organic ingredients. There is a lot of interest among cattle producers lately to get in to the organic beef production business, but before you make the move toward trying to be a certified organic producer, you may want to take a serious look at the requirements for beef to actually be certified as organically produced and the feasibility of the process.

Livestock products that are sold, labeled or represented as organic, under the new guidelines, must be from livestock under continuous organic management from the last third of gestation, which if memory serves, means the last third of a cows pregnancy. So just to meet this requirement, a calf that ultimately is harvested for organic labeling at approximately 18 months of age, would have been under continuous organic management for in the neighborhood of 21 months including the last three months it was in the cows uterus.

Some of the management along the way to the ultimate harvest destination would incude the prohibitive use of animal drugs, including growth promoting implants, plastic pellets for roughage, feed formulas containing urea or manure and the feeding of mammalian byproducts. Organic livestock producers must establish and maintain preventative health care practices. These include the selection of species and types of livestock suited to living conditions, the provision of a feed ration sufficient to meet nutritional requirements, and the establishment of appropriate housing, pasture conditions, and sanitation practices to minimize the occurrence and spread of diseases and parasites. However, the use of most vaccines and other veterinary biologics is prohibited.

Maintenance of suitable living conditions is also covered, including access to outdoors, shade, shelter, exercise areas, fresh air, and direct sunlight suitable to the species, access to pasture, appropriate clean, dry bedding, and shelter with temperature level, ventilation, and air circulation also suitable to the species.

The rule, which is available for viewing completely on the web at http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop, also details the methods, practices and substances that can be used in producing and handling organic crops and livestock.

Products may not be labeled as organic if they were produced with the use of pesticides, irradiation, genetic engineering, growth hormones or sewage sludge. All agricultural products labeled organic must originate from farms or handling operations certified by state or private agencies accredited by USDA. Farms and handling facilities that sell less than $ 5000 worth of organic agricultural products per year, however, are exempt from certification.

So, you want to sell organic beef? Check the requirements on the web first and thoroughly investigate it, and become certified by a USDA accredited agency. Or if you're a very small producer, selling less than, say, ten head per year and looking for a niche, this may be for you. In your investigation, be sure you search thoroughly for those feeders and packers that are going to be your market outlet to insure what you produce reaches the organic designation.

20th Annual Florida Cattlemen's Institute and Allied Trade Show

January 16, 2003 will mark the 20th anniversary of the Florida Cattlemen's Institute and Allied Trade Show, and it is appropriate that it will be one of the first such activities held in the new facilities of the Kissimmee Valley Agricultural Center. By the time the Cattlemen's Institute is held in Kissimmee, the new building will be operational and the old center torn down.

For this special occasion, the FCI planning committee plan to have as the featured speaker for two presentations, Mr. Randy Blach, Executive Vice President of Cattle-Fax. Mr Blach was last on the program about five years ago, and for his presentation for the day he will pick up where he left off then by telling us "Where We Are Now" in the cattle cycle and market situation. Later in the day Mr. Blach will again prognosticate for us and give us his idea of "Where Are We Headed."

Other features of this years program, and certainly of equal importance and interest for cattlemen will be Dr. Todd Thrift discussing "How to Maintain production Quality, Chute Side Issues," "Environmental Assessments" presented by Lesa Call, OFAER Program Manager, "Risk Management" and USDA Risk Management programs presented by Dr. Michael Fanning, and a producer/specialist panel will be discussing "Bio-solids Application to Pasturelands".

Some special presentations for service to the Florida Cattlemen's Institute over the years will be made during the lunch hour with Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Charles Bronson doing the honors. Program brochures for this years Florida Cattlemen's Institute and Allied Trade Show will available and mailed out next month. This should be one of the best Institutes yet, and we hope you have your calendars marked and plan to attend.

Mineral Feeding Basics

This is the time of year that most producers are planning for, preparing for, or beginning their supplementation programs for the winter months, and one important consideration as part of these programs is the mineral supplements that will be used. Minerals are an essential part of the cow's nutritional requirement. Although forages provide adequate concentrations of some minerals, deficiencies in phosphorus, salt, copper, cobalt, and selenium have affected cattle throughout Florida. Such mineral deficiencies can be prevented by offering a good mineral supplement free choice to cattle at all times.

Mineral supplementation can be divided into two broad categories, macro-minerals and micro-minerals, based on the amount required in the cows diet. Generally, macro-minerals are those that are often required at levels

greater than 1 gram per head per day, and micro-minerals are those required in amounts less than 1 gram per head per day. Table 1. shows the mineral requirements for beef cows as taken from Nutrient Requirements of Beef Cattle,

published by the National Research Council. Table 2 shows some average mineral concentrations of South Florida bahiagrass from sample collected from 9 Counties in South Florida, collected monthly form March to December. Table 3 gives a suggested composition of a free choice mineral supplement.

Phosphorus (P) is a mineral commonly found deficient in Florida's grazing cattle. Basic phosphorus (P) requirements increase during lactation and growth. Generally, forages are low in P, and grains are high in P. Stored in the bone, P has various functions in the body. Deficiencies can cause reduced appetite, poor digestion of feedstuffs, poor growth rate and body condition, and low reproductive rates.

Calcium (Ca) deficiency is an unlikely problem because most forages, especially legumes, are high in Ca, and mineral supplements generally contain Ca in considerable amounts. The caution here is to prevent the Ca to P ratio of the total diet from becoming wide. A ratio of about 2 to 1 is ideal, and should not get wider than about 5 to1. Low Ca is most often seen in cattle fed high grain diets with little roughage.

Cattle may need supplemental magnesium under certain conditions. Grass tetany (low blood magnesium) can cause acute tetany and death in lactating brood cows grazing cool season pasture, such as ryegrass.

Salt (sodium and chlorine) intake is insufficient with a forage diet, so this mineral generally composes 20% to 30% of a mineral supplement. In selected situations where water supply contains significant concentrations of sodium, cattle may decline to consume a mineral supplement that contains salt. In such cases, feed a supplement containing little or no salt so cattle will consume the minerals.

Copper deficiency in Florida is common in grazing cattle that do not receive mineral supplementation. Signs of copper deficiency include dull hair coat, changes in hair color, low pregnancy rates caused by delayed estrus or embryo death, scouring, long bone fractures, lameness, reduced immunity to disease, poor body condition, and sudden death. Copper deficiency is particularly common in cattle grazing forages grown on organic soils. Such forages usually have a higher concentration of molybdenum, which reduces availability of copper to the animal.

Florida's forages are also low in cobalt. Cattle deficient in cobalt exhibit reduced appetite, and, in acute cases, they experience rapid weight loss (referred to as "wasting away disease"). Cobalt deficiency usually affects a few cattle at a time and can be treated by injecting cattle with vitamin B12.Deficiency can be prevented by providing cobalt in the mineral supplement.

Only in recent years has selenium deficiency been recognized in Florida's cattle. In most situations, signs are not very specific, but they may include buckling or weakness in the rear legs of excited calves; these calves may die if stressed. White muscle disease found at necropsy is characteristic of selenium deficiency. Other selenium-responsive conditions include Heinz-body anemia, retained placenta, and reduced immune function.

Recent research and experiences with cattle indicate that deficiencies in copper, selenium, or zinc can compromise the immune system. Marginally deficient cattle neither exhibit reduced growth rates, nor have other indications of a problem; but they can fail to develop immunity following vaccination, and can also suffer higher mortality rates when exposed to diseases. Often signs are not evident until after calves are sold. Once exposed to new diseases, deficient calves may exhibit high rates of sickness and mortality.

A complete mineral supplement containing salt, calcium, phosphorus, and trace minerals offered free choice is recommended to avoid mineral deficiencies. Mineral consumption varies across pastures, seasons, and

individual cattle. But for a supplement with the composition shown in Table 3 , average consumption of 2 oz per cow-calf per day has proved sufficient in most situations.

A mineral's availability varies with its different chemical forms (sulfate, oxide, etc.). Since a mineral can take several different forms, the cow's ability to absorb and use that mineral (i.e., the mineral's availability to the animal) is determined by whatever chemical form it takes. This affects the level of mineral needed in the supplement: higher concentrations are needed for chemical forms with lower availability. Usually, supplements contain minerals in chemical forms that are highly available to the animal. But because copper is one of the critical minerals in an animal's diet, copper sulfate (high availability) is recommended over copper oxide (low availability) in a mineral supplement.

Table 1. Mineral Requirements of Beef Cows

Macro-minerals, %		
	Gestation	Lactation
Potassium (K)	0.60	0.70
Magnesium (Mg)	0.12	0.20
Sodium (Na)	0.06 - 0.08	0.10
Sulfur (S)	0.15	0.15
Phosphorus (P)	16-33g/d	
Calcium (Ca)	13-24g/d	
Macro-minerals, ppm		
Copper (Cu)	10.00	
Iron (Fe)	50.00	
Manganese (Mn)	40.00	
Zinc (Zn)	30.00	
Cobalt (Co)	0.10	
Iodine (I)	0.50	
Selenium (Se)	0.10	

Dietary requirements of P and Ca vary by stage of production, with the highest requirement during the first 3 months post-calving Macro-mineral requirements listed as % of total diet on a dry matter basis. Micro-minerals listed as ppm, or mg per kg of diet on a dry matter bassis.

Table 2. Average mineral Concentration of South Florida Bahiagrass

Macro-minerals	Concentration, %	Macro-minerals	Concentration, ppm
Phosphorus	.27	Zinc	51.4
Potassium	.74	Copper	6.4
Calcium	.43	Manganese	54.8
Magnesium	.33	Iron	77.4

Samples collected from 9 Counties in South Florida. Samples collected monthly from March to December. Pastures fertilized in March (60 lb N/acre)

Table 3. Suggested Composition of Free Choice mineral

Mineral	Composition, %
Salt	20-30
Calcium	15-20
Phosphorus	8
Zinc	0.4
Iron	0.2
Manganese	0.2
Copper	0.15
Iodine	0.016
Cobalt	0.01
Selenium	0.002

Mineral has been adequate in most situations in Florida when fed free-choice and consumed at 2 oz. per cow/calf daily
Copper sulfate is recommended as a source of copper
Level of selenium in mineral suplements is restricted by FDA

[1] Information taken from Florida Cow-Calf Management Handbook, and Essential Trace Minerals for Grazing Cattle in Florida by John D. Arthington

Florida Cattle Market Outlook

An excellent tool for cattlemen to use who have access to the internet and use it regularly, has been

developed by Dr. Tom Anton, Extension Economist at the Range Cattle Research and Education Center in Ona. By going to the Ona REC website at http://RCREC-Ona.ifas.ufl.edu/, producers can click on Florida Cattle Market Outlook, and navigate to updates on weekly cattle prices, view periodic graphs of cow and calf prices, get market outlook information and even navigate to other sites related to cattle market information to assist them making marketing decisions. Most of the market information data is updated by Dr. Anton at the end of each week so that producers can get at least weekly updated information for there use.

A feature of this site that is currently in the development process, and soon to be available for use, is Enterprise budgets for forage systems and cow/calf operations that we haven't had available in South Florida in this writer remembrance. This feature will assist producers in developing cost and budget information to help make management decisions and get a better handle on profitability or potential profitability of their operation or a particular segment of it.

We feel that Dr. Anton's addition to the Ona Faculty and the work he has done on this site, and future additions and works are going to prove invaluable to beef cattle producers and hope you take advantage of his efforts.

Mark Your Calendar

Conservation Easements can be a method for a family or company to insure that their land remains in agricultural production and reap some financial benefit at the same time. Conservation Easements are available in agreement with various agencies, but generally are mis-understood or generally there is a lack of knowledge about them, and how they may play a role in estate planning. A Conservation Easement Program for Landowners is currently being planned for landowners in Central and South Florida to be held at the Kissimmee Valley Agricultural Center, in Kissimmee, February 27, 2003. Future program announcements and brochures will be available in the near future and available in this newsletter. This should be a valuable program for those landowners who may be looking to preserve the heritage of their property and future use of it. Mark your calendar and look for future announcements.

The 20th Annual Beef Cattle Reproductive Management School offered each year by the South Florida Beef-Forage Program Agents has been scheduled for April 22 - 24, 2003 in Wauchula. One of the finest and longest continuous running programs for beef producers in Florida about all aspects of reproduction, some exciting featured speakers are being brought in for special presentations. If you haven't attended before, mark your calendar and look for the program announcements in the future.
Two other programs that producer should insure they have marked on their calendars for the coming year are the Dairy Production Conference, and the Beef Cattle Short Course. Both of these again will be scheduled in Gainesville. The Florida Dairy Production Conference is scheduled for April 29 - 30, 2003 and the Beef Cattle Short Course for April 30 - May 2, 2003.

For questions or comments regarding this publication contact

Pat Hogue or Pat Miller

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