

Okeechobee Livestock Letter

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April - May / 2003

UP COMING EVENTS

April 2003		
22 - 24	Beef Cattle Reproductive Management School	Wauchula, FL
30 - May 2	52nd Beef Cattle Short Course	Gainesville, FL
May 2003		
14	Country of Origin Listening Session	Orlando, FL
15	Range Cattle REC Field Day	Ona, FL
27 - 30	Bio-Terrorism Disaster Preparedness Conference	Orlando, FL
June 2003		
18 - 20	FCA Convention and Allied Trade Show	Marco Island, FL

Dear Producers,

As we head in to a busy time of year, from the stand point that there are a lot of things happening this time of year, you will find in this edition of the Okeechobee Livestock Newsletter information on several events and activities that may be of interest to you. Below you find listed topics that information concerning each is included in this issue:

1. 20th Annual Beef Cattle Reproductive Management School - April 22 - 24
2. 52nd Annual Beef Cattle Short Course - April 30 - May 2, 2003
3. Range Cattle REC Field Day, Ona - May 15, 2003
4. Tropical Soda Apple - Good Neighbor Policy
5. Country of Origin Labeling - Voice Your Opinion
6. Beef Industry Vision Award Nominations
7. Dates to Remember

As we head in to the warmer months of the year, the recent moisture and normal rainfall last year have left us in good conditions for pasture and forage production. The drought out West and other parts of the country resulted in large sell-offs of cattle and have resulted in a favorable market outlook for the next couple of years. Hope this year turns out to be a profitable one for your operations, and hope you find something of use to you in this edition of the Okeechobee Livestock Newsletter. Sincerely,

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

20th Annual Beef Cattle Reproductive Management School

The South Florida Beef-Forage Program Agents will be conducting their 20th Annual Beef Cattle Reproductive Management School April 22 - 24, 2003 in Wauchula, FL. This year's Repro School will be in honor of Dr. Alvin C. Warnick, longtime Professor and Reproductive Physiologist in the Animal Science Department at the University of Florida. Dr. Warnick has been one of the featured speakers and instructors at the Repro School since its inception and is still actively involved today after his retirement.

This is an intense course in reproductive management of the cow herd designed to strengthen managerial capabilities of operators of beef cattle ranches. Significant time is devoted to pregnancy diagnosis, although it is not designed to make technicians of participants. This is a course covering all aspects of reproductive management designed to give producers a well rounded knowledge of all subject matter that goes into insuring good reproductive performance in the cow herd. You will find included a copy of the course agenda. Registration for the course is \$ 250.00 and covers the cost of all materials including meals while attending. Registration is limited to the first 30 signed up, and there are still spaces available for this year's school. To register, call the County Extension office or one of the other listed participating Extension Agents listed in the brochure to receive registration materials.

This year's school will also have a dinner on Wednesday night in honor of Dr. Warnick, and we are inviting all past participants to attend. Cost of this dinner is \$ 15.00, and if you would like to attend, please again contact the County Extension office or one of the other participating Extension Agents.

52nd Annual Beef Cattle Short Course

The 52nd Annual Beef Cattle Short Course will be held this year April 30 - May 2, 2003 at the Sheraton Hotel in Gainesville, FL. Instead of one overall theme this year, there is a different theme for each day and is designed to help producers identify practices that will improve the soundness and profitability of their businesses throughout the cattle cycle.

In the interest of time to insure you got the Short Course information and registration information in particular, a reproduced copy of the agenda from the Animal Science website is enclosed. Please note that to take advantage of early registration cost, you must register by April 18. Registration can be accomplished by either detaching the registration section of the brochure and mailing it in, or you can go to the Animal Science website and register online at <http://www.animal.ufl.edu/>, and click on 2003 Beef Cattle Short Course, then go to the online registration area.

Range Cattle REC Field Day at Ona

The Range Cattle Research and Education Center at Ona will be holding their annual Field Day this year on May 15, 2003. Please find enclosed a copy of the agenda with registration information included. Please note that registration for inclusion in lunch should be mailed or called in to the REC by May 9.

Tropical Soda Apple - A Good Neighbor Policy

If you have driven down the roads lately, you have probably noticed that Tropical Soda Apple has returned with great vigor. Tropical Soda Apple (TSA) first appeared in Florida in 1987 by, having arrived here by accident. During its first few years here, it didn't make much head way, or spread very rapidly, but we were in the midst of two or three years of drier than normal weather. When normal rainfall returned in 1989-1990 TSA began to spread, and like the plant itself, which was mis-identified for some time, it wasn't understood how it was spreading. By the early 1990's TSA had gained a tremendous foothold in South Florida and spread rapidly while research on how to control it was just beginning. Once we knew how it spread, and knew more about the plant and how to control it, producers began to do a reasonable job of controlling it and were making headway in at least eliminating dense stands. As luck would have it, mother nature gave us a hand, and sent us a couple of dry years again from 1999 to 2001 and coupled with some colder than normal weather during a couple of winters, TSA seemed to be getting under control.

And then came 2002 with normal type rainfall again, and once again the plant regained control, and in fields where producer had had the problem but thought it was under control, away it went again. Several frosts this winter gave us a brief respite from its spread again, but with the last month of reasonably warm weather and more rainfall, it is off and running again.

From this picture, you can see that TSA is a very distinctive plant that will grow to 3-6 feet tall with very hairy leaves that give them almost a gray color. The plant including the leaves are covered with thorn like prickles that make contact with it difficult at best. When blooming, the flowers have white petals with yellow stamens. The fruit are initially striped, bearing a resemblance to a small watermelon, are globular or round, when they mature are yellow. When the fruit are opened, they filled with seeds that are white when immature, and turn a reddish yellow when mature. Fruit that still have the stripping but are near normal mature size will contain mature fruit as will the yellow mature fruit, so seeds may be viable and germinate even before the fruit reaches the yellow mature color. Each fruit can contain 400 seeds that are covered in a sticky substance that make them adhere to anything that they touch including trucks, mowing equipment, tractors and anything else they may contact. When the plant is 90 or more days old and has set initial flowers and fruit, it may have flowers, immature fruit and mature fruit on it all at the same time, so the next generation of fruit is ready to produce seed. The plant does well in both shade and sunlight and the only factors that seems to restrict its growth is wet feet.

During its initial spread, we didn't understand how it spread, and reasoning told us it was by the production of seed, but how it spread from under the plant, we didn't understand. We now know that besides, the seeds sticking to equipment and vehicles by which it can be spread, that the fruit are consumed by many different species of animals and spread in this manner also. The fruit are consumed by cattle, deer, feral hogs, racoons, possum, horses, and several bird species, and the seed is then deposited in their feces in other locations. Fruit that is dropped on the ground by plants and then decompose on the ground make available seeds that can either stay in the soil for later germination, or germinate producing new plants quickly. These seeds deposited in the fields are known to be carried in sod when harvested and later germinate where the sod is laid. Seeds of TSA are also known to have been moved when seed harvest of bahiagrass has been done in fields, and whole plants as well as fruit and seeds are also known to have been transported to other locations in harvested hay. And so, if it is imaginable, TSA can be spread in that manner.

Because TSA is known to spread in so many different ways, comes the primary best management practice, Never let it form fruit. Control of Tropical Soda Apple by chemical methods can over the course of time be extremely expensive for producers, as those that have undertaken stringent control practices can attest. However, if you practice only one control, keep it mowed regularly to never let it from fruit, you can eliminate future outbreaks by eliminating a future seed source. Mowing on a regular basis, about every 60 days or earlier, will not only eliminate seed from being produced, but control to the point of having only a sparse stand can also be achieved. Every time the plants are mowed, some significant damage is done to it, in some cases killing it, but regular mowing helps reduce its root reserves for continued growth and development. In American agriculture, we have always practiced good neighbor policies of helping out our neighbors when and where we can. I believe we will never eradicate TSA, but if everyone practices a good neighbor policy of not allowing it to produce viable seed, at least we will be able to get it under control to manageable and levels we can live with it without it robbing us of pasture and forage production the way it does when it reaches dense stand proportions. When you see flowers forming on TSA plants on your property, help in the effort to get what has been dubbed "the plant from hell" under control by mowing it, and help your neighbors out by not being a source of seed to be spread by whatever may come across your property, consume fruit, and spread it to your neighbors.

Country of Origin Labeling

The 2002 Farm Bill amends the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 to require retailers to inform consumers of the country of origin of many commodities including beef. On the surface, this would seem to benefit American produced products by being labeled produced in the United States. The 2002 Act will require extensive record keeping to insure that beef and other products from the United States as well as that from other countries is properly labeled, and one current proposal would require third party verification and documentation of cattle sold to be sold as produced in the US. Country of Origin Labeling or COOL measures could end up costing, economic evaluations thus far, significant sums to insure all products, including beef are properly labeled. As is the case with any additional cost incurred at other levels of beef cattle production (retailer, packer, feeder, stocker, etc.), they are passed down in one way or another to the next lower level on so on down the line until it ultimately reaches the cow/calf producer. This could result in additional costs to you as a producer in either lowered prices received at marketing, additional costs passed along to you at marketing

USDA Secretary Veneman has required that several listening sessions across the country be scheduled to receive input from producers about their questions and concerns in regards to Country of Origin Labeling. One such session is scheduled from 1:00 to 4:00 PM, May 14, 2003 at the Orange County Administration Building, Commission Hearing Room in Orlando. It would benefit cattlemen if Florida and across the country if those of you that have concerns or doubts about the feasibility of the proposed Country of Origin Labeling were on hand to express those opinions.

Additional information about Country of Origin Labeling, the requirements and potential economics of this undertaking can be found on the USDA websites, www.usda.gov, and the Economic Research Service of USDA at <http://ers.usda.gov>.

Log on to one of these sites, learn more about the Country of Origin Labeling requirements, attend the listening session and voice your opinion about this issue.

Beef Industry Vision Award Nominations

Nominations for the 2004 Beef Industry Vision Award are now being sought and accepted by the National Cattlemen's Foundation. This award is presented by the National Cattlemen's Foundation(NCF) and sponsored by the Ford motor Company.

This award is given annually to an individual who has demonstrated innovation in their cattle operation or beef business and serves as an example to others to follow. Nominations can be from any segment of the beef cattle industry and up to seven regional winners will be named with the National winner to be announced at the 2004 Annual National Cattlemen's Beef Convention and Trade Show next January. " the Vision Award gives the industry an opportunity to take a closer look at individuals who have made a difference through innovative practices" says Bob Josserand, NCF chairman. Nominees will be evaluated on the basis of effective use of technology, impact on profitability, ingenuity of implementation, impact on the industry, and optimum resource management.

In the past, several Florida cattlemen have won some of these prestigious awards such as Environmental Stewardship and others, and amny of you may be doing some innovative pracitces that the rest of the industry would benefit from knowing about. Nominations are due May 1, 2003 and nomination from and additional information can be obtained by either calling NCF at (303) 694-0305 email them at ncf@beef.org.

For questions or comments regarding this publication contact



[Pat Hogue](#) or [Pat Miller](#)



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