

# *Polk Rancher*

## *Beef and Forage Newsletter*

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### **Exciting Extension Programs Get Underway in April**

The South Florida Beef - Forage Program, which is a working alliance of Extension agents, state specialists and researchers who work to provide educational programs for beef cattle and dairy producers, has a number of outstanding programs on the horizon. On April 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> in Arcadia, there will be a Land & Resource Management School held. April 28- 30 are the dates of the Wauchula Reproductive Management School with an A.I. school to follow on April 30 and May 1. Two Internet Seminars are going to be held. The first in Arcadia on May 21, the second in Kissimmee on May 28. The University of Florida's Animal Science Department will also be hosting another Beef Cattle Short Course May 6-8 in Gainesville.

### **Land & Resource Management School**

**The Land & Resource Management School will be held in Arcadia at the Family Center on April 7 & 8. The emphasis of this school is to help cattle ranchers utilize their natural resources for alternative incomes such as hunting, ecotourism and recreation. This unique program will feature several speakers from the University of Florida, a number of South Florida ranchers and tours of two operations near Arcadia. Topics for discussion will include economic opportunities for landowners, management of land resources for cattle and wildlife, building wildlife habitat corridors and limiting landowner liability. A number of cattle producers will be sharing problems they faced and successes on their individual operations which take advantage of their wildlife and land resources. The first day's session will close with tours of a quail operation and an elk ranch. After the tours participants will enjoy a wild game dinner and be able to visit individually with the day's speakers. The second day will feature non-hunting opportunities such as ecotourism, wildlife tours and recreational activities.**

**Cattle producers need alternative incomes to survive low cattle profit margins. This is an opportunity to learn from producers who have made their land resources help keep them in business. See the enclosed brochure for more detailed information. The registration fee is \$50 per person. Space is limited so please send in the registration form as soon as possible. This program is very soon, if you wish to attend, please call the Extension Office in addition to sending in the registration form so that space can be saved for you.**

## **Reproductive Management & A.I. Schools**

**The 15<sup>th</sup> annual Reproductive Management School will be held on April 28-30 in Wauchula at the Hardee County Cooperative Extension Office. This is without a doubt the best overall extension program available to cattle producers in South Florida. Participants will get hands on experience to learn the basic techniques of pregnancy testing and course instruction on each area of ranch management that effect reproduction. Topics for discussion include: bull selection and breeding soundness evaluation, herd nutrition and evaluation, breeding season management, heifer development, coping with calving problems and reproductive disease problems in Florida.**

**This year an Artificial Insemination (A.I.) School has been added. This will be a 1 ½ day course following the Reproductive School on Thursday afternoon and Friday May 1. This is an abbreviated course so participants must have taken the Reproductive School this year or in previous years to get the basic palpation techniques needed to learn to perform A.I. Space is limited for these schools so it is important to register early. The registration fee for the Reproductive School is \$200 and \$100 for the A.I. school.**

## **Beef Cattle Short Course**

**The University of Florida's Animal Science Department will be hosting the 47<sup>th</sup> annual Beef Cattle Short Course in Gainesville May 6-8. The theme of this year's program is *Managing Nutrition and Forages to Improve Productivity and Profitability*. The topics for discussion will include nutritional value of forages, pasture fertilization and grazing management, matching supplementation to forages and evaluating feed purchase options. The last half day session will address heifer development.**

**Other timely topics will also be included on areas of concern in the Beef Industry such as: BSE, Ecoli, meat irradiation, interviewing with the press and consumer concerns about beef. There will even be break out sessions on the second day on a variety of topics which you can pick and chose from. This year there will also be trade show following the first day's session.**

**If you are interested in attending, see the enclosed brochure. You will want to get your registrations in by April 15 to receive the early bird discount. This event is held at the Raddison Hotel on 441 So.**

## **Coming this Summer**

**This summer the South Florida Beef & Forage Program will also be sponsoring a Forage and Pasture**

## **Management School and another Reproductive Management School in Osceola County.**

The forage school is broken into three major sections, one in the middle of each month. The June session will cover soils and fertilization management. Forage variety selection and management will be the focus of the July session. The final session will be held in August and will focus on grazing management and the total ranch nutritional system.

The Reproductive Management School held in July will be similar to the one discussed above. The main difference will be the location, since this course will be hosted by Deseret Ranch, St. Cloud. There will not, however, be an A.I. School held in conjunction with this school.

## **Pre- and Post-Weaning Calf Management Seminar to Be Held**

Lakeland Cash Feed and the Polk County Cattlemen's Association are sponsoring a program for area cattlemen on managing calves before and after weaning. This program will get underway Thursday, May 21 at 7:00 PM and will feature a catered dinner at the Stuart Building of the Agriculture Center in Bartow.

Bob Simon, from Lakeland Cash Feed and Dr. Robert Gukich, of Lake Wales Animal Hospital will be the featured speakers. The major theme of this program will focus on what cattlemen can do prior to and after weaning to add value to the calves sold and the heifers kept. Simon will focus on the nutritional needs of calves and how that is effected by the forage quality of summer pastures. He will also suggest some programs for improving the weaning weights of sale calves, preconditioning calves to be shipped in load lots or managing weaned heifers kept for replacements. Dr. Gukich will give recommendations on what disease prevention and immunization programs Polk cattlemen need for their calves before and after weaning. This improve their health and performance both on the ranch after their sold.

If you, your family or employees wish to attend , please call the Extension Office at 533-0765 by May 15 so we can order the proper number of meals. The Cattlemen's Association is working hard to provide educational programs for cattlemen in Polk County. This program can help make our industry more profitable and efficient and improve the reputation of the calves we sell. Mark your calendar, contact other the cattlemen you know and invite them as well. This is an excellent opportunity to build the membership of our association.

## **Black Flies Swarm Thanks to El Nio**

Reports are coming in from Polk, Pasco and Hillsborough Counties of mean little gnats that leave whelps on people and leave animals bleeding and sore. Dr. Paul Ruppert and Dr. Jerry Butler of the University of Florida's Entomology (Insect) and Nematology Department have been flooded with calls recently by people asking about these new pests. They have identified them as black flies and also known as buffalo gnats.

Black Flies thrive in cool weather and fast running water. These pests are commonly found in the

**Appalachian Mountains and in New England. The recent El Niño weather pattern has helped create the perfect environment for these pests in our area. Black Flies feed on the flowing blood of mammals. They attack areas where blood flow is close to the skin, bite a hole and suck the blood that pours out. Animal owners have noticed dried blood around animal's ears, noses, eyes and other areas with tender skin and high blood flow. These mean little bugs also leave welts that can last up to two weeks. Dr. George O'Meara, of the Medical Entomology Lab in Vero Beach, explains that animals have developed resistance to the proteins that mosquitoes inject, but we have not been exposed to this new pest so our reactions are greater.**

**Dr. Butler feels that this is just a temporary problem. The warmer weather coming should greatly reduce this terrible infestation. He feels that once more normal weather returns the problems from these flies will be greatly reduced.**

**The only real way to deal with this pest is to use repellants with the compound permethrin. There are a number of permethrin fly control products available sold through feed and veterinary supply stores. These repellants can be applied in a variety of ways such as using dust bags, oil based back rubbers and traditional sprays.**

**For human protection there are a few repellants sold in sporting good shops. One such product made with permethrin is called Coulston's Durmon Tick Repellent. There are also some herbal repellants commercially available which use citronella and other natural compounds. Two such products are called Bug Away and Green Ban. Do not use Deet Repellants, which is the compound found in most mosquito repellants, because deet may even attract black flies and it certainly will not repel them. Repellants are only temporary, however and must be applied frequently.**

**One other insect problem we can thank El Niño for is a huge increase in mosquito population. In an article from Brooksville on the AP wire Joel Jacobson, manager of the Hillsborough County Mosquito Control, was quoted as saying "We have had some of the largest winter trap counts ever. During one week in January, the traps captured more mosquitos than were captured from November through March of last year.**

**The only good thing that may come from the El Niño effect is that populations of mole crickets should have been greatly reduced. We will be trapping again soon to find out, that is of course, if the ground dries out enough so that the traps are not full of water. One other positive effect is that fleas don't thrive in wet soil so maybe our dogs can get some relief from the fleas.**

## **[EQIP \\$\\$ Sign Up Deadline is April 10](#)**

**The sign-up period for USDA's program designed to assist agriculture operations improve the use of their natural resources ends April 10. EQIP or the Environmental Quality Incentive Program offers technical and financial assistance for operations that improve environmental benefits to the public while improving the quality of their operation. Agriculture operations can get as much as 75% of the cost covered for resource improvement through the EQIP program.**

**This might mean that a rancher could make an agreement to improve pastures and reduce overgrazing**

and weed problems with cross fencing or improve water quality by fencing off a creek. Other ideas might be to improve the wildlife population as well as pastures by planting legumes such as aeschynomene or Savanna Stylo. The program entails establishing a conservation plan and a 5 to 10 year agreement to make resource improvements. There is a fixed amount of money available, so each operation will be evaluated for the benefits provided to the public and the operations with the most resource improvement will be awarded the money.

Contact the Farm Service Agency in Bartow, if you are interested in more information at 533-2051. There is no commitment made by signing up, but you must come into the office in Bartow (1700 Hwy. 17 South) to apply by April 10 in order to be eligible. This is only the second year of this program so I would encourage producers to sign up and get more information. It may be possible to get the USDA to help pay for projects you have already planned for the next few years.

## **FEMA Disaster Assistance Available**

President Clinton has declared Polk County a disaster area due to the tornados and flooding we have experienced this winter and spring. This declaration means that the President has authorized the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to fund financial aid to county residents. The purpose of this program is to provide aid in the form of grants and low interest loans to home and business owners who have physical or financial loss due to the recent flooding and violent weather.

Ranchers who have losses due to flooding may be eligible for low interest loans. The Department of Agriculture makes emergency loans to producers (owners or tenants) who were operating or managing a farm or ranch at the time of the disaster. These loans are limited to the amount necessary to compensate for actual losses to essential property and/or production capacity. Producers may apply for cost sharing grants for emergency conservation programs, such as debris removal from crop/pasture lands, repairs to land/water conservation structures, and permanent fencing. In addition, the Small Business Administration (SBA) also offers loans to repair or replace facilities, inventory, machines or equipment.

Property losses not covered by insurance may also be deducted from income taxes. Taxpayers may even file an amended return and receive an immediate refund from last year's taxes.

For information on these and other financial assistance programs available to flood or tornado victims, contact Disaster Assistance at 1-800-462-9029.

## **FCA Heifer Sale Consignments Needed**

*Beverly Buckler, Editor  
The Florida Cattleman and Livestock Journal*

Some things just get better with age and the Florida Cattlemen's Association (FCA) Quality Replacement Heifer Sale is one of those things. The first FCA Quality Replacement Heifer Sale was in

**1995. The sale average on 513 head was \$437.98. The 1996 sale saw an increased average with 321 head of quality heifers averaging \$523.08. The 1997 sale topped them all with an average of \$574.24 on 525 head.**

**Now is your opportunity to make a great investment in the future of your cattle operation. The FCA Marketing Committee is now accepting consignments from FCA members in good standing for the Fourth Annual Quality Replacement Heifer Sale.**

**The sale is scheduled for 1 p.m. on September 25, 1998, at the Arcadia State Livestock Market in Arcadia. Consignments are being accepted through July 15 for inclusion in the sale catalog, and all consignments must be received prior to August 21.**

**To receive a brochure, including health requirements and a consignment form, please contact Beverly at the FCA office (407) 846-6221.**

## **1998 Beef Cattle Economic Outlook**

*John Holt, Univ. of Fla. FRE Dept.*

**Old-timers will tell you the cure for low prices is low prices. So it is, especially if those prices appear to be improving but then take another dive. That's the story of the last three years in beef prices.**

**It goes like this: Big liquidations in 1995 lowered cattle prices across the board. Low grain stocks in 1996 brought high grain prices, which dropped 1996 feeder calf prices more than \$30 per cwt. A drought in the Southwest had depopulated that area, so general rains in late 1996 and early 1997 brought big demands for feeder cattle to go on grass, which tacked about \$30 per cwt. back onto feeder calf prices early in 1997. But feedlot red ink during 1997 weakened feeder prices, and recently burned cattlemen sold heifer inventories to feedlots. Beef cattle heifer slaughter in the fall of 1997 was well above the 1996 levels.**

**Net sum? Beef cow slaughter rates have peaked in 1997. Low numbers of replacement heifers mean that the herd inventory buildup will be gradual. Supplies of feeder cattle outside feedlots are estimated to be about 7 percent less that last year. Total beef production should decline from 2 to 5 percent during the next few years.**

**So there should be some strength in feeder cattle markets because of smaller calf crops from the reduced breeding herd. That's the good news. The bad news is that increases in feed grain stocks that help the cattle industry also help the pork and poultry industries. Both of them are on renewed expansion paths as well.**

**So calf prices should strengthen in 1998. But the overall marketing environment will be no less volatile. Nowadays, a whole week's feedlot show list can be sold in 30 minutes. And feeder cattle markets provide the "slack" in the cattle marketing chain. Grain prices and weather patterns in the stocker cattle areas will continue to make pricing patterns unpredictable for Florida calves. The outlook has**

improved, but the marketing decisions of when to sell and what price offers to accept will never be easy.

## Weed Control Recommendations

*Mark Kistler, Extension Director  
Okeechobee County*

Spring is upon us and now is the time to be looking at your pasture for weed control. Thistles are common in the early spring and now is the time to treat them before they become unmanageable. Weedmaster (dicamba + 2,4-D) applied at 1.0-2.0 qts/acre should be applied in the early spring before flower stalks elongate. Dogfennel can also be treated with Weedmaster at 1.0-1.5 qts/acre when plants reach a height of 18-24 inches. Hemarthria species (limpgrass) may be temporarily injured by Weedmaster and should be treated with Banvel (dicamba only).

Tropical soda apple(TSA) will continue to be a weed of major concern. A regular mowing program has shown to be very effective in reducing plant populations. Plants should be mowed before fruit set at flowering. This will reduce the amount of seed available for germination. Remedy (triclopyr) can be applied at 1.0 qt/acre in late spring through early summer as a broadcast spray. Best results occur when plants are adequately covered with spray solution. Forty gallons/acre application will be more effective than 15-20 gallons/acre which is more common in pasture applications. The addition of a non-ionic surfactant at .25% v/v will increase control. Retreatment will be required as new seedlings emerge. Depending on how bad your infestation is you might be able to manage the TSA by mowing and spot treating with Remedy. Remember that the label is the law! Please follow the product label for grazing restrictions, personal protection equipment needed, etc.

## South Fla. Beef & Forage Program On the Internet

The South Florida Beef & Forage Web Page (<http://www.ifas.ufl.edu/~sfbfp/beef.html>) is dedicated to making timely and practical information available to cattle producers in South Florida via the Internet. The page features links which provide producers a calendar of upcoming events, county newsletters, information on educational programs available, custom service providers, cattle breed information such as sire summaries, agricultural publications available and agricultural links that may be of interest. There is also a link which provides the information needed to contact the Extension Faculty in each county. The web page even features a discussion group which allows producers to ask specific questions or discuss current problems and get Email responses from Extension agents as well as other producers. The intent is to give cattle producers a web site to use as a home page so information is easy to find concerning recommended production practices, local events and issues of importance to the South Florida cattle industry.

## Florida Automated Weather Network (FAWN) Established

The Florida Automated Weather Network(FAWN), a new agricultural weather data information Service developed and operated by the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, is now fully operational. Weather data will be available by telephone from Gainesville (352) 846-3100 or the following internet website: (<http://fawn.ifas.ufl.edu>). Growers will be able to access

real-time weather data from 15 sites in central and south Florida 24 hours daily. Each solar-powered weather station will measure temperatures at 2, 6 and 30 feet above ground, soil temperature, wind speed and direction, rainfall, relative humidity, barometric pressure, leaf wetness and solar radiation.

*(Source: UF/IFAS News Release)*

## Florida Cattle and Calf Inventory

All cattle and calves on Florida farms and ranches as of January 1, 1998 totaled 1,870,000 head, down 4 percent from last year and 6 percent below January 1, 1996. Beef cows totaled 1,010,000 head, down 4 percent from last year and 9 percent below 1996.

Calves born during 1997 totaled 980,000 head, 4 percent below last year and 6 percent below 1995.

Florida ranks 10<sup>th</sup> largest state in beef cattle inventory, 15<sup>th</sup> total cattle and calves and 13<sup>th</sup> in dairy cattle.

Sincerely,

Doug Mayo

Livestock Extension Agent I

# *Calendar Of Events*

## April

7-8	Land & Resource Management School, Arcadia
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16-18	NCBA Region II Meeting, Orlando
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25	Fla. Limousin Show & Sale, Tallahassee
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28-30	Reproductive Management School, Wauchula
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30-5/1	A.I. School, Wauchula
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## May

6-8	Beef Cattle Short Course, Gainesville
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21	Weaning Mgmt. Program, Bartow
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23	Sunshine Pinzgauer Sale, Lake City
<b>June</b>	
9-11	Forage and Pasture Mgmt. School, Sebring
24-26	FCA Convention, Marco Island
<b>July</b>	
6-9	Reproductive Mgmt. School, Deseret Ranch
14-16	Forage and Pasture Mgmt. School, Sebring
<b>August</b>	
11-13	Forage and Pasture Mgmt. School, Sebring



For questions or comments regarding this publication contact

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