

# *Polk Rancher*

## *Beef and Forage Newsletter*

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*September 1998 / Volume 3 Number 3*

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### **Excellent Programs, Activities and Sales in Store this Fall**

Ranchers have a number of excellent programs, sales and activities to choose from this fall. The fall activities get underway with the 4th annual FCA Replacement Heifer Sale on September 25 in Arcadia. A program dealing with bull evaluation using EPDs will be held at Oak Knoll Ranch, Lake Wales on October 1. The Ona Research and Education Center will host their annual field day October 8. U.S. Sugar Corporation and Merial makers of Ivomec will host a dinner program dealing with the use of their products to better manage winter feeding and herd health on October 12 at the Ag Center Stuart Building, Bartow. Five bull sales will be held at the Ag Center Arena beginning October 15 with the debut of a Braunvieh Bull Sale. The Sunbelt Agriculture Exposition will be held October 20-22 in Moultrie, Georgia. A forage tour relating to grazing management rounds out the month on October 29. The Polk County Cattlemen's Association's annual meeting will be held November 12 which will feature the Oak Knoll Ranch Brangus bull drawing.

### **Bull Evaluation**

"Getting the Most Bull for Your Buck. Using EPDs for Selecting Bulls" will be the topic for discussion at a program sponsored by the South Florida Beef-Forage Program and ABS Global, Inc. Activities will begin at 3:00 PM at Oak Knoll Brangus Ranch just outside of Lake Wales on Thursday, October 1.

The program will begin with a discussion of using EPDs or expected progeny differences to help producers evaluate the bulls they buy, and purchase bulls that will have most impact on the traits they want to improve in their herds. Following, there will be a panel of ranch managers who will share their experiences with using EPDs and the impact this tool for selection has made on their herds. Since this type of genetic improvement can be greatly accelerated by using an A.I. or artificial insemination program, the last discussion will focus on

the feasibility of A.I. in a commercial beef herd. The final activity will be an actual herdsire and offspring evaluation, which will give producers the opportunity to compare visual verses EPD evaluation. ABS will be providing a hamburger supper following the program. See the brochure that accompanies this newsletter for directions and more details.

## **Ona Field Day**

The Ona Research and Education Center (AKA Range Cattle Station) will be hosting their annual field day on October 8. The topics for discussion this year will include practical crossbreeding systems for high quality feeder calves, use of municipal sludge for pasture fertilizer, nutritional benefits of summer legumes, heifer development on Limpograss (hemarthria) pastures and research on controlling mole crickets and smutgrass. The discussions will be followed by a steak lunch and a field tour of the Research Center field trails. This is a free program, but registrations are required by phone 941-735-1314 or by mail or fax to the Ona REC by October 6<sup>th</sup>. See the enclosed brochure for more information.

## **Suga Lik and Ivomec Meeting**

U.S. Sugar Corporation makers of Suga Lik and Merial makers of Ivomec and other animal health products would like to invite area cattlemen to a bar-b-que dinner and program on October 12 at 7:00 PM at the Ag Center Stuart Building in Bartow. Terry Weaver, U.S. Sugar will be on hand to give cattlemen ideas for the key role molasses based products like Suga Lik can play in strategic herd supplementation. Tommy Martin, the area sales representative for Merial will also make a presentation on techniques for improving animal performance with the animal health products they produce. This is an excellent opportunity to ask questions about the widely used products these two companies produce and receive product specific advice. This program is open to all cattle producers, but they do ask that if you wish to attend, that you call in reservations to the Extension Office so that adequate food is available.

## **Polk Bull Sales**

The Polk County Cattlemen's Association and the Polk County Cooperative Extension Service will be hosting five bull sales this fall. The Braunvieh Association of the Southeast will be bringing 70 breeding age bulls to sell on Thursday, October 15 at 1:00 PM. For more information, contact Sid Sumner at 533-2192 who is the sale consultant. The Florida Santa Gertrudis Association will be having a breeding female and bull sale on Saturday, October 24. A free commercial cattle seminar will begin at 10:00 AM, the Junior Santa Gertrudis Association will be selling lunches and the sale will get underway at 1:00 PM. Sid Sumner is also the local contact for this sale. The 22<sup>nd</sup> annual Southeastern Horned Hereford Pen Bull Sale will be held at 12:30 PM on Thursday, November 5. For catalogues and more information, contact Sarah Childs at 941-465-5729. The Florida Angus Bull Sale will be held Thursday, November 12 and the Southern Source Charolais Sale will be held Thursday, November 19. Sid Sumner is the local contact for these last two sales as well.

## **Sunbelt Expo**

The Sunbelt Agriculture Exposition gets underway on Tuesday, October 20 through the 22<sup>nd</sup> in Moultrie Georgia. This year a group from Polk County will be driving up in a county van on Wednesday, October 23 at 8:00 AM and returning the late the next day. If you would like to join us call the Extension Office (533-0765). Space is limited on the van and we need to make hotel arrangements. Please call in reservations by October 2.

## Forage Tour

The South Florida Beef - Forage Program is sponsoring a forage tour on Thursday, October 29. The main focus of this tour will be grazing system management. The tour will begin at 9:00 AM at Buck Island Ranch, near Sebring where participants will look at research projects that are underway examining the effect cattle grazing has on water quality. The next stop will be a dairy that has used intensive grazing to greatly reduce production costs. The final stop will be at Deer Run Ranch, Okeechobee, where owner T.J. Canon has successfully designed an intensive grazing system on stargrass. For more information, see the enclosed flyer and call the Extension Office for reservations.

With so many activities and programs available, you need to mark your calendar now and plan your schedules accordingly. To make reservations, or to get further information call Doug Mayo at 533-0765.

## Service Directory has Grown to Cover South Florida

Three years ago I developed a list of names and contact information for companies who provide custom services for cattle industry in Polk County. This directory grew with the information you sent in and now has become an even more useful tool. The other agents in the South Florida Beef- Forage Program have been assembling this information as well and now have developed a directory of service providers from all across the state. This information is easily accessed through our web site at [www.ifas.ufl.edu/~sfbfp/beef.html](http://www.ifas.ufl.edu/~sfbfp/beef.html). There are numerous types of businesses which provide hay cutting, day workers, fence repairs, horse shoeing, grass planting materials, ag chemicals, feed wholesalers, citrus pulp, tractor work, seed dealers, hay, A.I. service, cattle hauling and many others. This is a tremendous resource for cattlemen and an excellent way to let people know what you can do. This is a free service so complete the enclosed form and return it to the address at the top of this newsletter. The Polk County directory will be revised and enclosed with the winter newsletter.

## Minimizing Hay Losses with Tarp Covers

If you leave your hay unprotected, chances are that you lose from 12-30% of dry matter to water damage. Producers who grow hay crops do not need to invest in a permanent structure such as a shed in order to store their hay. Hay can be stacked and tarped on the ranch without any damage until used.

Economically, tarps may be a better investment than sheds based on the following analysis. Big round bales can be stacked in a 3-2-1 pyramid fashion. A 25 ft by 36 ft tarp can cover 36 bales each 5 ft in diameter. Assuming each bale weighs 700 pounds, then the tarp covers 13 tons of hay. The tarp costs \$204, for a storage cost of \$16/ton of hay. Over a 4-year life of the tarp, the cost is \$4/ton. At a selling price of \$90/ton of hay, the 36 covered bales are worth \$1170. Assuming uncovered hay will lose 20% to spoilage in the top layer, the loss amounts to \$234. This means a savings of \$30 over the cost of the tarp in the first year and a savings of \$732 for the 4 years on every 36 bales stored. Also it is easier to remove bales from a stack than from a shed. Trucks can pull on either side of stack and load in less time than from a shed.

But tarps need to be in good condition to be effective. They are subjective to wind damage and a tarp with a hole or rip in it can be worse than no cover at all. Growers should buy heavy duty, ultraviolet-resistant, silver, heat-reflective, rot-resistant and waterproof tarps for longevity. Tarps can be used in conjunction with

anhydrous ammonia to really boost the value of your hay for an average of 6-8% protein to 15%. Information on sources of tarps and use of ammoniating hay can be obtained from your County Extension Office or the South Florida Beef and Forage website on the Internet.

**Source: Hay and Forage Grower, March 1998**

## **Producing High Quality Hay**

Crude protein and total digestible energy (TDN) are the two most important criteria used in determining hay quality. Stage of maturity at harvest is the most important factor influencing hay quality. As plants increase in age, crude protein and digestible energy concentration decrease. The improved hybrid bermudagrasses and stargrasses should be harvested at 15 to 18" for the first cutting and then cut every 4 to 5 weeks. During mid summer, some producers are harvesting stargrass for silage every three weeks to produce feed that has a protein concentration of 15% or greater and a relatively high TDN.

All hay equipment should be serviced and repaired before the hay season begins. A breakdown during harvest almost guarantees rain damage to the hay. Rain leaches soluble nutrients from the grass. It prevents from drying quickly and thus, increases respiration loss and the possibility of mold. Respiration is the breakdown of sugars etc. in the plant. This process occurs in all living plants, and it continues after the plants are cut. Respiration stops when the moisture content drops below 40%. In Florida's climate, rain damage is difficult to avoid. Frequent thunder showers in the summer will usually hit one or more hay harvests. During the summer if a suitable period of weather occurs for harvesting hay, and if the grass is long enough (15"), it may be wise to start harvesting even though the regrowth has not reached a 4 or 5 week schedule.

## **Poisonous Plant Toxicity May Occur this Fall**

Due to the spring and early summer drought, many pastures will soon be getting very short. Animals that are hungry may tend to eat plants that they would not normally eat. This is why it is so important to closely monitor thin or weak cattle in pastures with poisonous weeds.

In low wet areas around the edges and within somewhat open woodlands, the plant "bracken fern" can often be found growing. This plant is poisonous to cattle. Producers should be especially careful if they are moving cattle into new areas, such as into the woods. These areas should be checked for bracken fern and other poisonous plants. If bracken fern is found, do not put animals into those areas or at least observe the grazing habits of the cattle to see if they are eating the fern. Storms and accompanying wind gusts may blow down wild cherry trees that are growing in the fence rows. Cattle will tend to eat the leaves which are poisonous. A couple of other poisonous plants to watch for are lantana, and night shade.

## **Calf Prices Down, Land Values and Wages Up**

Cattle prices fell off sharply this summer and fall. The Florida Agriculture Statistic Service reported that calves averaged \$91.50/cwt last August but have dropped to \$71 in July and \$71.80 in August. Cow prices have dropped slightly from \$35.80 in August of 97 to \$34.00 in July and \$33.60 in August of 98.

U.S. Farm operators paid their hired workers an average wage of \$7.24 per hour during the July 1998 survey week, up 36 cents from a year earlier. Field workers received an average of \$6.78 per hour, up 34 cents from last July. Livestock workers earned \$6.91 per hour compared with \$6.54 a year earlier. The Field and Livestock worker combined wage rate was up 34 cents from last year. In Florida fielded and livestock workers were paid \$7.21 per hour which was up from \$6.69 in July of 97.

Land values for pastureland increased from 3 to 7 percent according to a University of Florida survey. The average value of improved pastureland was \$1944 and unimproved was \$1255. Citrus grove ranged from \$7002/acre for oranges and \$3322 for grapefruit. Pasture rent rates were \$17.20/acre for improved and unimproved \$9.50. These rates were 1% of the estimated value of unimproved pasture and 2.1% of improved. The average stocking rates for these pastures were 2.7 acres/cow on improved and 12 acres/cow on unimproved pastures.

## **Entrepreneurship Education for Polk County**

Have you had an idea for a business rolling around in your mind but haven't been able to proceed? Maybe it's a value added agricultural product. Is your present business just not growing the way you think it should? If you answer yes to one of the above question there's a new resource available. It's called Premier FastTrac®. Premier FastTrac is a tested program to help people either start a business or to grow their present business.

FastTrac I is a 9 session course designed to help people with an idea or invention to develop a business feasibility plan. FastTrac II is an 11 session course designed to help you grow your present business. The end product of the FastTrac II program is a completed business plan. People who have experienced the course say that a big plus is the interaction and support one gets from other entrepreneurs in the course. In addition, instructors are local entrepreneurs who understand what it takes to start and run a business.

Both FastTrac I and FastTrac II classes are scheduled to begin in November. Classes will meet one evening per week. If you would like more information call the Extension Office at 533-0765 and ask for Jim Stricker.

## **Computer and Internet Survey Results**

In just a few short years, vast amounts of information has become available through the Internet and World Wide Web (WWW). This information can be accessed with a personal computer connected to a telephone line. A great deal of information about agriculture, agricultural markets, and other agricultural information is readily available. Last fall, survey forms were sent with Polk County Beef, Citrus, and Commercial Ornamental newsletters. The survey asked about access to the Internet and information interests.

Almost 200 people responded by returning surveys. Thirty-six percent said they currently access the Internet. Of those not accessing the Internet, 36% said they didn't have a computer. They were closely followed by 34% who said they had a computer but didn't subscribe to an Internet service. Another 18% said they had a computer but no modem to connect to the telephone line.

Not surprising, 94% said they would be interested in free access and local information. Efforts are still being made to set up such a system in Polk County and progress is being made.

Source **Jim Stricker Polk Ext. Service**

## **Agriculture Crimes are on the Rise in Polk**

This excerpt from a recent article in Florida Farm Bureau's *Voice of Agriculture* noted that crimes against agricultural operations are steadily increasing. Lt. Bill Warnock, supervisor of the Agriculture Unit at the Polk County Sheriff's Office, can cite numbers to prove the point. His unit arrests from 800 to 1,100 persons annually for trespassing alone. "Polk County has a territory of about 2, 043 square miles," Warnock said. "Over half of that is agricultural property - phosphate, citrus and cattle. The county also has over half a million people.

Just the pressure of this amount of people looking for places to fish and hunt has put tremendous strain on the agricultural community." Another reason for the number of trespass violations is the popularity of off-the-road vehicles. Lacking other areas to drive these vehicles, many riders often intrude upon privately owned farm land. "Of course, trespass leads to other things," Warnock noted. "You have to trespass to steal, vandalize or whatever."

The explosive development of the eastern portions of Polk County, situated within the Orlando metropolitan area, has created the greatest pressure. "That area is just growing like crazy," Warnock said. "The agricultural community is suffering as a result because that's where most of our groves and ranches are located." Last year, theft of tires and equipment in citrus groves was the most common criminal activity in the eastern section of the county.

### **Crime Prevention Tips**

- Securely lock all storage buildings, barns, doors and gates.
- Never pen livestock near a road, a highway or any other accessible thoroughfare overnight.
- Do not build barns or pens near roads or highways.
- Apply your registered brands or marks to all livestock.
- Do not store freshly harvested produce in clearly visible locations.
- Do not leave idle machinery or equipment in fields or pastures.
- Mark all equipment and machinery with a label that cannot be erased or easily eradicated.
- Keep a record of your property in a secure place.
- Contact your local law enforcement agency to find out if it offers an agricultural property protection program.
- Be alert. Look out for your own property and help your neighbors keep tabs on their properties. Report any suspicious activity to law enforcement officials.

## Farm Animals Can Kill

Sometimes we overlook the danger of working with animals. A total of 144 animal-related fatalities in the workplace were identified from the U.S. Census for Fatal Occupational injuries 1992-1994 database. Of these, 15% of the cases were related to transportation.

Most of the 122 non-transportation-related fatalities occurred in **farm workers**. Most non-transportation animal-related fatalities were due to cattle. Fifty-four of the 68 (78%) cattle-associated fatalities occurred in farm-related occupations. Most deaths were due to attack or mauling, ramming, goring, trampling, and pinning the victim against an object. It was noted that while bulls account for only 2% of the cattle population in the U.S., they accounted for more than half of the fatalities.

Horses were the next animal most commonly associated with work-place fatalities. Twenty-seven (63%) of the 43 horse-related fatalities occurred in farm related occupations. Almost half of the deaths were due to head injuries. A hog caused one of the 13 other animal-related fatalities. A charging hog knocked a gate onto the victim causing a fatal injury.

Source: Agromedicine Program Update, The Newsletter of the Clemson University. Samuel T. Caldwell, Editor

### *From the Bull Pen*

#### *Basic Model with Options*

A farmer had been taken several times by the local car dealer. One day, the car dealer informed the farmer that he was coming over to purchase a cow. The farmer priced his unit as follows:

Basic Cow	\$ 499.95
Shipping and Handling	35.75
Extra Stomach	79.25
Two Tone Exterior	142.10
Produce Storage Compartment	126.50
Heavy Duty Straw Chopper	189.60
Four Spigot/High Output Drain System	149.20
Automatic Fly Swatter	88.50
Genuine Cowhide Upholstery	179.90
Deluxe Dual Horns	59.25

Automatic Fertilizer Attachment	339.30
4 x 4 Traction Drive Assembly	884.16
Pre-Delivery Wash and Comb	69.80
Farmer's Suggested List Price	\$2,843.36
Additional Dealer Adjustments	300.00
Total Price (Including Options)	\$3,143.36

### *Today's Stock Market Report*

Helium was up, feathers were down. Paper was stationary. Fluorescent tubing was dimmed in light trading. Knives were up sharply. Cows steered into a bull market. Pencils lost a few points. Hiking equipment was trailing. Elevators rose, while escalators continued their slow decline. Weights were up in heavy trading. Light switches were off. Mining equipment hit rock bottom. Diapers remain unchanged. Shipping lines stayed at an even keel. The market for raisins dried up. Coca Cola fizzled. Caterpillar stock inched up a bit. Sun peaked at midday. Balloon prices were inflated. Scott Tissue touched a new bottom. And batteries exploded in an attempt to recharge the market.

### **Polk Cattle Sale a Success**

The Polk County Cattlemen's Special Cattle Sale was a success again this year with 1645 head sold. Alec Fulford, President said that the sale, which is a major fund raiser for the organization, was such a success because of the support of cattlemen in Polk and surrounding counties and from the Tomkows who own the Cattlemen's Livestock Market in Lakeland. Congratulations are in order to E.A. Mcleod, Frostproof who won \$150 for bringing in the most cattle with 154 head, Mary Conway, De Leon Springs who won \$100 for hauling the farthest to the sale and to Mary Judy, Polk City who won \$50 for having the highest price per pound at \$1.03.

The cattlemen would also like to remind everyone to purchase tickets for the Oak Knoll Ranch Brangus Bull Drawing. Tickets can be purchased from any of the directors, Sid Sumner or Doug Mayo. This drawing will be held at the annual meeting on November 12.

**Sincerely,**

**Doug Mayo**  
**Livestock Extension Agent I**

# Calendar Of Events

## September

25	FCA Replacement Heifer Sale, Arcadia
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## October

1	<b>Bull Evaluation Program, Oak Knoll Ranch, Lake Wales</b>
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3	State Jr. Cattlemen Field Day, Baldwin Angus Ranch, Ocala
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5	Arcadia Brangus Bull Sale, Arcadia
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8	<b>Ona Field Day, Ona REC</b>
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10	Fla. Cattlewomen Beef Shortcourse, Bartow
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12	U.S. Sugar and Merial Program, Bartow
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15	Braunvieh Bull Sale, Bartow
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20-22	Sunbelt Ag. Expo, Moultrie, GA
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23	Replacement Heifer Sale, Cattlemen's Mkt., Lakeland
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24	Fla. Santa Gertrudis Female and Commercial Bull Sale, Bartow
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28	Padgett Livestock Judging Contest, Alturas
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29	<b><u><a href="#">Grazing Management Forage Tour, Buck Island Ranch, Sebring</a></u></b>
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## November

4	S.E. Pen Hereford Pen Bull Judging Contest, Bartow
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5	S.E. Pen Hereford Pen Bull Sale, Bartow
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12	Fla. Angus Bull Sale, Bartow
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19	Southern Source Charolais Bull Sale, Bartow
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## December

5	Market Steer Clinic & Jackpot Show, Bartow
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For questions or comments regarding this publication contact



[Doug Mayo](#)



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