

POLK COUNTY LIVESTOCK REPORT

Polk County Extension • University of Florida • IFAS • 1702 Highway 17 South • Bartow, FL

<http://polk.ifas.ufl.edu>

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If you would prefer to receive this newsletter by email or through both email and the U.S. mail, please email me at bccarlis@ufl.edu to let me know.

If you know fellow producers that are not receiving this newsletter, please share my contact information with them so that they may be added to the list.

If you have information that needs to be included in the newsletter, please let me know.

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Welcome to 2008! This New Year begins with both challenges that include an unrelenting drought and price increases on just about everything; but also opportunities that include substantial premiums to be paid for value-added calves. By now most of you have planned and are executing your winter supplementation program, turned out the bulls and are planning your spring herd health program.

I would like to take this opportunity to encourage you to attend two events that will be highly informative to cattle producers. The Polk County Cattlemen's Association is hosting their 3rd Annual Trade Show on Saturday, March 8th, in Bartow. This year the program will feature a competitive Ranch Rodeo. There will be plenty of exhibitors on hand to answer questions with products and services to benefit your.

Also, make plans to attend the Florida Beef Cattle Short Course April 30th through May 2nd, in Gainesville. There are several topics to be covered to help producers understand the economic impacts of value-added practices, not to mention many other pressing issues. Keep a positive perspective on the changes in the market and look for opportunities to maximize your profitability.

As always, I look forward to serving your livestock and forage production needs. Please feel free to call me at (863) 519-8677 Ext. 104 or email me at bccarlis@ufl.edu.

Bridget Carlisle, Livestock Extension Agent

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Are You Prepared for COOL?

It is with near certainty that a mandatory labeling law will come into effect as of September 30th, 2008. The 2007 Farm Bill modified the original 2002 Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) law to include legislative language that apparently ensures implementation of mandatory labeling by September. This means that calves that are already on the ground could potentially be affected by this law.

According to the Texas Cattle Feeders' Association, "It is uncertain that the 2007 Farm Bill will become law this year, but the COOL compromise language will possibly be adopted as part of other legislation. Therefore, producers should consider implementing the following steps to prepare:

- Identify calves, by group or individually, with brands, tags, etc. Producer affidavits or production records (i.e. calving records, vaccination, feed, im-

port records, etc.) may be used to establish country of origin. Records should be kept for at least two years.

- After January 1, 2008, obtain a signed affidavit from suppliers indicating an animal's country of origin. If calves are sold through an auction market, obtain an affidavit from the seller or market operator. Likewise, sellers should provide documentation to buyers.
- In the event of an audit, be prepared to have records reviewed by USDA.¹

Most of these records may already exist in cow-calf operations, but in some cases producers will have to make an extra effort to ensure that each sale of calves is linked to herd records that document origin. A consideration for the cow-calf producer is that COOL not only applies to calves, but to cows and bulls. Cattle that

cannot document origin after September, 2008 would only be eligible to enter food service markets such as restaurants, cafeterias, and food stands.²

While some details of COOL requirements may change, as it stands today, COOL will take effect on September 30, 2008. As producers begin to process their calves, it would be prudent for them to consider the requirements that may affect their current calf crop.

As the article states, the final rule has not been fully developed and implemented. I would encourage producers to retain as many records for your beef cattle operations. Until the final rule is provided the more records kept might circumvent problems later.

¹TCFA Staff. Memo to TCFA Members. 12 Oct. 2007.

²Boetel, Brenda L. "Mandatory Country of Origin Labeling and the 2007 Farm Bill." *Livestock Market Update* Vol. 3 Iss. 4: University of Wisconsin, River Falls, 22 August 2007.

Service Provider Directory

Cattle producers depend on various services and products in their ranching operation, but sometimes it is difficult to locate a service provider or product. The South Florida Beef Forage Group has developed an extensive "Service Provider Directory" to help ranchers find what they need while allowing service and product providers market themselves. The directory includes providers in various categories that include, but are not limited to: hay, grass planting material, day workers, custom tractor work, hauling/transport, welding, fencing, to name a few. Providers are listed by category then county. Visit the website at <http://sfbfp.ifas.ufl.edu/spdindex.html> or contact me at (863) 519-8677 Ext. 104.

If you have a service or product that you would like to list in the directory, please call me at the number above or email me at bccarlis@ufl.edu and I will be glad to have you added to the list.

Florida Beef Cattle Short Course

Make plans to attend the Florida Beef Cattle Short Course April 30th through May 2nd in Gainesville at the UF Hilton Conference Center. Those who have attended in the past recognize the quality programs from the UF/IFAS Department of Animal Sciences that address the issues facing the beef cattle industry. The spectrum of topics related to beef production, marketing, and selection of bulls should provide something for every beef cattle producer regardless of size. The 2008 Florida Beef Cattle Short Course promises to continue the tradition of being the best educational event for beef cattle producers in the Southeast. For more information and registration details, go to the website at <http://www.animal.ufl.edu/extension/beef/short.shtml> or contact Bridget at (863) 519-8677 Ext. 104.

Polk County Allied Trade Show & Ranch Rodeo

The Polk County Cattlemen's Association will be hosting their 3rd Annual Allied Trade Show and Ranch Rodeo on **Saturday, March 8th**, at the Stuart Center in Bartow. The Trade Show will begin at 9:00am followed by the Ranch Rodeo to at 1:00pm.

At the Trade Show there will be a host of exhibitors showing off the latest and greatest in the livestock industry. Both large and small cattle producers will benefit from participating in this event. Admission to the

Trade Show is free.

The Polk County Junior Cattlemen's Association will be selling hamburger lunches to help support their activities throughout the year. The Ranch Rodeo will have six events of calf branding, double mugging, stampede race, wild cow milking, colt riding, and the Old Timers' Roping. Entries are limited to Polk County Ranch teams. This will be an informative and entertaining event, so bring your family and support the local livestock industry. For rodeo admission information or if you are in-

terested in exhibiting your product, please contact Bridget at (863) 519-8677 Ext. 104 or visit the website at www.polkcountycattlemensassociation.com.



Surviving the Drought

South-central Florida has continued to suffer through the drought. Beef producers are looking for ways to manage their operations in the resulting shortage of forage resources. Producers might consider forage availability, feed supplementation, early weaning, and herd reduction.

Producers need to assess the availability of forages to the herd and then implement practices to maximize production, such as reduced stocking rates, rotational grazing, and weed management. Reduced stocking rates minimize damage to pasture resources and promotes earlier recovery. Reducing stocking rates does not necessarily mean selling cows. Some options include early weaning or dry-lotting cows. Rotational grazing, much

like reduced stocking rates, minimizes damages and enhances recovery by allowing adequate rest between grazing periods. Weeds compete with pasture forages for resources such as soil and space. Producers must also be mindful of poisonous plants and pests. A poisonous plant that a cow may normally ignore may appear appetizing when forage resources are short.

Feed supplementation will likely be necessary as forage quality and availability is reduced. Producers must minimize body condition reductions in the herd. Vitamin/mineral availability should be monitored closely to maximize forage utilization. The supplement is only as good as the least limiting factor in the diet!

Early weaning is an alternative as cow nutrition requirements are reduced. It may be more cost effective to feed the calf than to supplement the cow. Cows can be maintained on low quality hay or deferred pasture.

Producers might consider reducing the herd by culling open, older and non-productive cows. This makes the limited forage available to the producing cows and replacement heifers.

In these trying times of considering forage availability, feed supplementation, early weaning and possible herd reduction, it is also very important that the producer *not skimp* on health!

Replacement Heifer Economics

As the drought persists and feed costs continue to increase, producers need to evaluate the economics of heifer replacement in their operation. Is it more cost effective to raise replacements from the herd, purchase bred heifers, or reduce the herd? Because no two cow-calf operations are alike, there is not a simple answer. Producers must put pencil to paper to determine cost efficiency.

According to a Cattle-Fax article, "herd size is one deciding factor. Usually small producers find that buying replacements is more cost-efficient due to economies of

scale." The article also states that other factors must be considered when deciding to buy or sell heifers such as opportunity costs, feed costs, interest, labor, replacement costs and tax advantages.¹

According to Harlan Hughes, North Dakota State University professor emeritus, in the current market, developing heifers into replacement females will be quite costly based on three factors:

1. opportunity cost of not selling heifer calves at weaning
2. given the drought and high corn prices, the opportunity cost of feeds used in developing heifers

3. and the opportunity costs of pasture grazing²

However, Professor Hughes reminds producers, that, in general, heifer-development costs are ranch-dependent. Producers must consider all of the factors. The Cattle-Fax article offers an example of how to calculate heifer development costs that may be helpful. For a copy of the full articles mentioned, contact me at (863) 519-8677 Ext. 104

¹"'Make or Buy' Heifer Economics." *Trends*. August 2007, Englewood: Cattle-Fax.

²Hughes, Harlan. "Heifer Economics Part 3." *Beef Magazine*. 1 August 2007.

Upcoming Events

February

- 1 Bull Sale, Cattlemen's Livestock Market, 1pm
- 6-9 National Cattlemen's Beef Association Annual Convention
- 7-18 Florida State Fair
- 21 Polk County Jr. Cattlemen's Association Meeting, Ag Center Conf. Rm., 6:30pm
- 23-29 Polk County Youth Fair

March

- 8 Trade Show & Ranch Rodeo, Stuart Center, Bartow, 9am
- 11-13 FL Cattlemen's Association Legislative Quarterly Meeting, Tallahassee.
- 29 Small Farms Production Conference, Bartow

April

- 7-11 Agri-Fest, Ag Center
- 21-25 Agri-Fest, Ag Center
- 30-5/2 Florida Beef Cattle Short Course, Gainesville (see enclosed brochure)

Management Priorities for the Cow-Calf Producer

A nationwide survey, sponsored by the American Angus Association, of cow-calf producers was conducted by Dr. Tom Field to identify and rank management priorities in the cow-calf business. The results of this survey that was sponsored by the American Angus Association were recently published. The top 10 management categories identified were:

1. Herd Nutrition
2. Pasture & Range Management
3. Herd Health
4. Financial
5. Marketing
6. Production
7. Genetics
8. Labor
9. Information Management
10. Harvested Forages

For the full report contact Ty Groshans at (816) 383-5193 or e-mail tgroshans@angus.org.

Field, Tom, PhD. *Priorities First*. Fort Collins: CSU. December 2006