

# MANATEE LIVESTOCKER

Manatee County Extension Service  
1303 17th Street W  
Palmetto, Florida 34221  
(941) 722-4524  
Fax (941) 721-6608  
E-mail [teseawright@ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:teseawright@ifas.ufl.edu)  
<http://manatee.ifas.ufl.edu>

---

**March - April 2005**

---

## *Calendar Of Events*

### **March**

19 Small Farms Livestock Production Conference - Arcadia, FL

### **May**

4 - 6 54<sup>th</sup> Annual Beef Cattle Short Course - Hilton University of Florida Conference Center, Gainesville; More Info at <http://www.animal.ufl.edu/extension/beef/2005BCSC.shtml>.

21 Heart of Florida Club Calf Sale - Alachua FL

### **June**

14 - 17 FCA & FCW Annual Convention & Allied Trade Show, Marco Island, FL

## **Best Management Practices for Pastures**

On bahagrass pastures nitrogen is applied in relation to intensity of use, but generally 50 to 60 pounds of nitrogen/acre should be applied in late winter. This time correlates with a period of low to moderate rainfall and nitrogen fertilizer is least likely to be washed into surface waters. It is also the time ranches are most in need of forage. Other perennial grasses may need nitrogen in late winter and at other times through the year based on IFAS recommendations.

Timing of Nutrient Application: To avoid nutrient losses through runoff, apply fertilizers during times with the least potential for leaching or surface runoff. Refer to the water budget (provided by NRCS) for your county to determine the times when the lowest potential for nutrient losses from rainfall occur. Time nutrient applications so that they coincide as closely as possible with periods of plant growth and nutrient uptake.

Optimize Nutrient Uptake: Maintain proper soil pH for optimum utilization of applied nutrients, while preventing toxic effects from other accumulated elements, such as copper. The pH recommendations are published in Univ. of Florida, IFAS Fact Sheet # SL-129.

Prevent Nutrient movement off-site: Include erosion control practices to minimize soil loss and runoff that can carry dissolved and soil-borne nutrients to surface waters. Filter strips along streams are very effective in reducing the levels of suspended solids and nutrients.

Try to prevent spreading fertilizers in ditches, as this is a means of movement off-site. Also, plan fertilizer loading sites away from ditches and canals where spills can contaminate the water.

{Source: Water Quality Best Management Practices for Cow/Calf Operations in Florida; June 1999.}

## **Beef Management Calendar**

### **March**

- Fertilize pasture to stimulate early growth and get fertilizer incorporated in grass root while there is still good soil moisture.
- Prepare land for summer crops.
- Begin grazing warm season permanent pastures.
- Check and fill mineral feeder.
- Observe bulls for condition and success. Rotate and rest if needed
- Deworm cows as needed.
- Make sure calves are healthy and making good weight gains.
- Hang forced-use dust bags by April 1st for external parasite control or use insecticide impregnated ear tags.
- Identify, vaccinate, implant, and work late calves.
- Put bulls out March 1st for calving season to start December 9.
- Remove bulls March 22nd to end calving season January 1.

### **April**

- Plant warm season annual pastures.
- Plant corn for silage.
- Check and fill mineral feeder.
- Check dust bags or apply treated ear tags.
- Check for external parasites and treat if necessary.
- Observe cows for repeat breeders.
- Vaccinate against blackleg and brucellosis after 3 months of age and before 12 months of age.
- Market cull cows and bulls.
- Update market information and refine market strategy for calves.

## Forage Yield and Nutrient Value of Brachiaria Grasses in Central Florida

By Dr. Paul Mislevy, University of Florida/IFAS, Range Cattle REC

*Brachiaria* grasses are considered one of the most widely grown improved forage grasses in the tropical world. These are grown extensively throughout Central and South America. Land area currently in *Brachiaria* pastures is estimated to range between 75 and 170 million acres in Brazil alone.

To provide Florida forage producers with the best forage grasses there is a continued need for screening and testing new forage germplasm and to develop management practices under grazing.

A grazing study was conducted at the Range Cattle REC to determine productivity, nutrient value, and persistence of six tropical grasses consisting of four *Brachiarias*, and two *Andropogon*'s, comparing them with Florona stargrass and Pensacola bahiagrass. The *Brachiarias* consisted of Insurgente, Abundance (Mulato), *B. dictyoneura*, and creeping signalgrass (Chetumal). The *Andropogon* cultivars were Llanero and Tun Tun.

The year following establishment, grasses were grazed at 2, 4, 5 and 7 week frequencies. Grasses were fertilized in the spring of 2000 with 50-30-60 lb/A N-P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>-K<sub>2</sub>O + 1.5 lb/A Cu, Zn, Fe, Mn (sulfate form), 0.15 lb/A B and 6.0 lb/A S. A total of 150 lb/A N was applied annually in a split application. Harvesting all grasses at a 2-week frequency averaged lowest yield (2.0 tons/acre) and highest nutritive value (crude protein 20% and 68% digestibility), whereas at a 7-week frequency grasses produced highest yield (5.0 tons/acre) and lowest nutritive value (14% crude protein and 59% digestibility). Generally a harvest frequency of 4 to 5 weeks or grazing frequency of 4 weeks is recommended for tropical grasses. In this study grasses producing the highest total yield when harvested at a 5-week frequency were Florona

stargrass (4.8 tons/acre), *Brachiaria* Mulato (4.3 ton/acre), and *B. Insurgente* (4.1 tons/acre). Pensacola bahiagrass yielded 1.9 tons/acre when harvested at the same frequency.

Forage nutritive value of the three highest producing grasses was *B. Insurgente* 17% crude protein and 66% digestibility, *B. Mulato* 17% crude protein and 68% digestibility and Florona stargrass 22% crude protein and 60% digestibility. Pensacola bahiagrass also harvested at 5 weeks averaged 20% crude protein and 59% digestibility.

*Brachiaria* *Insurgente* and *Mulato* are excellent yielding and are very leafy bunch grasses with little or no winter production. They have good crude protein concentration and excellent digestibility. In fact digestibility will run 6 to 8 percentage units above Florona stargrass. The problem with *Brachiarias* at Ona was cold tolerance. The temperature during the fall of 2000 and spring of 2001 dropped below 32°F 11 times with a one time extreme low of 19°F at ground level and 23°F at 4.5 feet (US Weather Bureau height). This temperature regime killed 100% of the *Brachiaria* study. One commercial producer west of Okeechobee has been growing two *Brachiaria* cultivars for at least 3 years with no persistence problems. It appears that *Bracharia* may be a viable alternative for warmer areas of south Florida. If additional information is desired, or to reach Dr Paul Mislevy, please call 863-735-1314.

---

For questions or comments regarding this publication contact



[Travis Seawright](#)



[Back](#) Back to the Cooperative Extension Newsletters Page



[Back](#) Back to the South Florida Beef-Forage Program HomePage

