



Polk Rancher

Beef and Forage Newsletter

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USDA Makes \$ Available for Polk and Area Cattlemen

The USDA has appropriated \$200 million nationwide to assist livestock producers who suffered qualifying feed losses because of natural disasters in 1998. Part of this money is available through the Farm Service Agencies in Polk and surrounding counties to livestock producers who suffered losses due to the flooding which occurred because of El Niño January 1 through April 30, 1998. If you had 40% or more of your pasture flooded for 90 consecutive days in that time period you are eligible. It is that simple, but you have to apply by February 5, 1999.

So what's the catch? This is a true assistance program. You have to fill out an application that states how many animals were owned and also sold during this time period, how many acres were owned or leased, whether it was native or improved pasture and the location of where the cattle were during this time period. If you don't know the township, section and range of your pasture, the Farm Service Agency has a map and can assist producers with this information. If the pasture was leased, a copy of the lease is required for eligibility.



That is all that is involved. The Farm Service Agent will calculate the total dollars received based on the number of animals from the inventory of each herd and the type of pasture grazed. For more information contact the Polk County Farm Service Agency at 941-533-2051.

USDA makes dollars available to Polk Ranchers flooded by El Niño.

Don't miss this opportunity to get some financial aid. The bottom line is that USDA is trying to help cattle producers in flooded areas stay in business. Get your applications in ASAP to avoid the crowds.

February 5th is not that far away.



The Beef Checkoff: Is it Working for You?

Pat Hogue, Highlands County Livestock Extension Agent

Since 1987 cattle producers across the nation have participated in the \$1 per head Beef Promotion Checkoff as a means to promote their product and fund research projects beneficial to the beef cattle industry. As most of you may know, the Livestock Marketing Association is now asking for a new referendum to decide whether to continue the Beef Checkoff. Petitions are going to have to be signed by enough producers across the US including Florida in order for another referendum to be considered. As one who believes strongly that the Beef Checkoff is one of the best things the collective beef industry has done for itself, I would urge you to look at the issue carefully before considering signing a petition to put this to another vote. Consider whether the \$1 per head has had a beneficial effect, or whether you believe it is just one more dollar out of your pocket. It may be time to consider alternatives to the collection methods currently in place, but I submit that if \$1 per head contributes to unprofitability, it may be time to consider doing something else other than beef cattle production.

Several analysis of the Beef Checkoff have been done and have reached the conclusion that it is working for numerous reasons . A recent research project conducted by Dr. Ron Ward, University of Florida Professor of Food and Resource Economics, actually was able to reach monetary conclusions as to whether the Checkoff was working for the beef industry or not. The public relations and advertising campaigns funded by the checkoff have improved the image of the beef industry as a whole, and has increased the demand for beef by consumers when other influences on the market are eliminated. We have lost market share with consumers to chicken and pork, but without the checkoff and the ad campaign it funds, we would have lost more. The servings of beef per household member consumed has dropped by one serving since 1984. However, due to the increase in average carcass size, portion sizes have increased so each consumer is actually consuming ½ a pound more beef per year than in 1984. The bottom line is that the checkoff has not increased consumer demand, but it has prevented further decline.

Research and public relations efforts funded by the checkoff have dispelled the negative image portrayed about health problems created by consuming beef, and have dispelled myths about other health related issues and beef such as E. Coli and BSE. Foreign marketing efforts funded by the Beef Checkoff have resulted in increased sales and demand for US beef and beef products in numerous foreign countries.

In the final analysis, Dr. Ward's research shows that additional demand for beef produced in the US both at home and abroad resulting from efforts funded by the Beef Checkoff have ultimately resulted in higher prices for both live and fed cattle than would have been received without the checkoff efforts. The fed cattle prices have had a slightly greater benefit from the checkoff than the live markets based on the economical analysis done by Dr. Ward. However, the Checkoff has resulted in about \$6 per head additional income for 500 pound calves. Although \$6 doesn't seem like much, consider that it only took a \$1 investment to get that additional income. Is the \$1 investment worth getting \$6 back? You will each have to be the judge of that, but also consider all the advertisement you see about beef today

compared to before the Checkoff and all the positive impact it has made for the industry and your way of life. I can only believe that there has been nothing but positive effects for the beef industry, and if we do away with the checkoff where will the money come from to continue to compete with pork and chicken and the public relations efforts they have ongoing. We can't afford to lose more market share to them. We're the only ones who will tell the beef story but the funding has to be available to do it.

One final point. USDA estimates that if enough signatures are gathered to force a referendum, it would cost somewhere between \$3 and \$4 million in physical costs of registration, communication with producers, and voting to conduct the referendum. This does not include the cost of staff and volunteer time that will need to be spent dealing with the referendum, and the total cost will have to be paid by Checkoff dollars. The nearly \$4 million estimate is as much or more that was spent developing foreign markets in 1997.

Dr. Ward's as well as the other articles evaluating the checkoff are available for viewing on the National Cattlemen's Beef Association home page at <http://www.beef.org>.

Cattlemen's Institute Focuses on Controlling Production Costs

The 16th annual Florida Cattlemen's Institute and Allied Trade Show is set for Thursday, January 21 at the Kissimmee Valley Agriculture Center on Highway 192 East of Kissimmee. This annual event is sponsored by the Cooperative Extension Service and the exhibitors from the trade show whose companies provide products and services for Florida's Beef Cattle Industry. Admission is free along with a Bar-B-Q lunch provided by the exhibitors. The trade show opens at 8:00 AM with the program getting underway at 8:45.

The theme of this year's program is controlling production costs. Alan Nation, editor of *The Stockman Grass Farmer* will be the keynote speaker. His topic is Harvesting Sunshine to Lower Production Costs. Nation is a nationally recognized authority on grazing system management. He will address methods of reducing the total cost of producing calves by getting the most out of our forages. Willard Lemaster, the Integrated Resource Management Program Coordinator for the University of Florida, will examine average production costs from Florida Ranches who have participated in the Standardized Performance Analysis (SPA) Program. Sally Dolezall, Extension Beef Specialist from Oklahoma State University will address lowering production costs through genetic selection and also using computer programs. A panel of cattlemen will follow with a discussion on methods they have used for reducing production costs and reactions to prior speakers.

There will also be speakers which will address other topics of interest to Florida Cattlemen. Dr. Harlan Ritchie, professor of Animal Science at Michigan State University, will provide a discussion on emerging trends in the animal industry. He will give participants some insight into changes and trends that are and will be affecting the meat animal industry. Dr. John Crews, D.V.M at Lake Wales Animal Hospital will provide some preliminary observations from a survey of the reproductive disease trichomoniasis in Florida cattle herds. The final topic, timing for liver fluke control will be addressed by Dr. Charles Courtney, University of Florida School of Veterinary Science.

This top line up of speakers plus the opportunity to make excellent contacts with trade show exhibitors will make this year's institute one to remember. If you would like to come, we would appreciate

knowing in advance so we have plenty of food available. You can RSVP to Doug or Janice at 533-0765.

Artificial Insemination Course Offered

Accelerated Genetics is offering an artificial insemination course January 26-28 near Polk City. Participants will get hands-on training actually inseminating cattle. The course also includes class room training on bull selection, semen handling, heat detection and heat synchronization. For more information contact Bernon Rowe at 941-984-1323. Space is limited, so sign up as soon as possible.

Cattle Sales Report

There were 5 bull sales held at the Polk County Agriculture Center this year. These sales sponsored in part by the Polk County Cooperative Extension Service, the Polk County Cattlemen's Association and the breed associations involved with each sale. The Florida Cattlemen's Association also sponsored another replacement heifer sale in Arcadia.

The sale season opened with a Braunvieh Bull Sale held October 15. There were 81 head of bulls that sold for an average of \$638. The top selling lot was sold to Fred Green from Georgia for \$2700. The volume buyer was David C. Brown Ranch, Ft. Meyers.

The second sale featured Santa Gertrudis bulls and heifers. There were 39 total head sold and 10 were bulls. The bulls averaged approximately \$600 with the females averaging around \$300.

The third sale, the Florida Hereford Pen Bull Sale and was held November 5. There were 53 2-year-old bulls sold which averaged \$1470. The volume buyer was Hilliard Brothers Ranch, Clewiston taking home 14 bulls. A Chambliss Farms, Dawson Georgia, consignment brought the highest bid of the sale at \$2500 and was purchased by Nancy Phares (J.O. Pearce's Daughter), Ft. Pierce.

The Florida Angus Association followed a week later on November 12. This sale offered 79 Bulls that averaged \$1768. The volume buyer was John Smoak, Lake Placid who purchased 6 bulls. Escape ranch bought the high selling lot for \$3000 from Thompson Brothers Angus Farm, Marianna.

The final Bull sale was held on November 19 and featured Charolais Bulls. The average price was \$1512 on 88 head. The top selling bull was sold for \$2250 and was consigned by Bob Evan's Hidden Valley Ranch, Ohio.

One other sale of interest was the Florida Cattlemen's Association Quality Replacement heifer sale held on October 12 following the postponement due to Hurricane Georges. The heavy bred heifers (due to calve before January 1) sold for an average of \$673 on 101 head. Light bred heifers averaged \$618 on



Five bull sales were held at the Ag Center in 98.

148 head. There were only 36 open heifers which averaged \$358. High selling lots were consigned by Williamson Cattle Company, Okeechobee and Schroeder Manatee Ranch, Bradenton and sold for \$800.



Cut Fertilizer Costs with Sludge

Jack Rechigl, Ona Range Cattle Research and Education Center

Biosolids (processed sludge) are an alternative source of plant nutrients and are becoming increasingly popular for fertilization of pasture grasses. Not only are they good sources of nitrogen, but they contain other valuable nutrients such as sulfur, phosphorous, iron, etc. In addition, biosolids supply organic nitrogen making it a slow release fertilizer. Biosolids can also be applied to agricultural land to improve physical properties (water retention, infiltration, aggregate stability) and chemical characteristics of soils. In the past, there was concern over heavy metal (lead, nickel, cadmium, mercury) contamination from sludges and biosolids. Over the past 30 years, biosolids and sludges have become cleaner, and heavy metal contamination of the environment is of little concern. The concentrations of nutrients and heavy metals in biosolids should be provided.

Using biosolids as an organic, slow release fertilizer for grasses grown in Florida can be a beneficial source of nutrients compared to inorganic fertilizers which can leach more readily than slow release fertilizers in sandy soils. Four years of research at the Range Cattle Research and Education Center showed that biosolids are good alternate sources of fertilizer for forage grasses grown in Florida. This research also showed that yields and crude protein content of grasses increased with increasing rates of pelletized biosolids (0 to 8 tons per acre).

Generally 40 to 50 percent of the nitrogen in biosolids will be available to the plant the first year with the other 50 to 60 percent available the second year. Thus, biosolids provide needed nitrogen for protein production in the grass. Before using any fertilizer material it is important to consider the economics. It is most important to know the nitrogen content of the material. One can generally assume that applying 1 ton per acre of biosolids containing 5% nitrogen will supply 50 lb N/A the first year and an additional 50 lb N/A the second year. There are different forms of organic manure, some are granular while others are cake or liquid material. The nutrient analysis of biosolids, cake and liquid material are all different and analysis change from sewage plant to sewage plant. All have a place in fertilizing pasture grasses in Florida.

IFAS has Waste Fertilizer Testing

If you are using sludge or poultry waste for fertilizer and would like it analyzed for percent nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium and pH, contact the Extension office or Dr. Roger Nordstedt at 904-392-7786. The testing lab will also make application recommendations based on information included on the sample submission form.

Improved Grass Variety Grazing Management

Carol Chambliss, Extension Agronomist University of Florida

Most of our improved perennial pasture grasses need extra attention in late winter and early spring. When warm weather arrives, these grasses need time to grow new roots and rebuild energy reserves in the crown and roots. Allowing the plants to rebuild and attain a healthy condition permits them to better withstand any stress that might come along during the remainder of the growing season.

In some pastures, the stockpiled, frosted grass will have been grazed down to the ground by mid February or earlier. When warm weather arrives and the grass starts to regrow, cattle should be removed from these pastures and kept off until the grass has fully recovered.

Floralta and Bigalta Limpoglass (hemarthria) are susceptible to overgrazing, especially the Bigalta cultivar. Therefore, cattle should be removed from these pastures once they are grazed down during the winter. Cattle should not be put back in until the regrowth is 14 to 16" tall. Then rotational grazing can be started with cattle being removed when the grass has been grazed to an 8" stubble height.

If grazed close during the winter, Pangola and the other digitgrasses should also be allowed to regrow to a height of 10 to 12". Rotational grazing can then be started with cattle being removed from a pasture (rotated) when the grass has been grazed down to a height of 4 to 6". In mid-summer, these pastures need a minimum of one week rest between grazing periods. Two to three weeks of rest between grazing periods is needed before and after mid-summer.

Allow stargrass to regrow to a height of 10 to 14" and then graze back to a 5" stubble before rotating cattle. If grazing is needed before the desired height is reached, follow the old rule of thumb "take half, leave half."

In general, it is always desirable to have pasture size and cattle numbers adjusted so that a pasture can be grazed off in one week or less.

Managing Cool Season Annual Grasses

Carol Chambliss, Extension Agronomist University of Florida

Apply additional nitrogen to ryegrass and other cool season grasses to increase growth after planting and at least once during the grazing season. Extra nitrogen for cool season grasses seeded in a pasture sod is especially important since this type of seeding requires more nitrogen to get comparable growth to that of cool season grasses seeded alone.

Graze cool season grasses when they are 8-10" tall. Do not wait for additional growth to accumulate. Grazing at 8-10" will cause the grass to stool out, and will result in a more even distribution of growth through the season. Rotationally graze cool season grass pastures. Take animals off when forage is grazed down to a 3" height and rest the pasture for 3-4 weeks before grazing again. Other methods of grazing cool season annual grasses are limit grazing and creep grazing. Limit grazing is the practice of grazing high quality pastures a few hours each day with young beef animals or dairy cattle that need a high level of nutrition. This practice may be especially useful to small land owners or producers who own a few purebreds and want to provide them with some high quality forage. During the short grazing period, animals may obtain some or all of their protein and vitamin requirement. When not on the green pasture, animals can graze dry warm season grass or be fed hay.

Hay Testing Available

Carol Chambliss, Extension Agronomist University of Florida

Don't forget the University of Florida, IFAS, Extension Forage Testing Program. You can have your hay analyzed for its nutritional value for only \$8.00. The analysis includes percent moisture, protein, neutral detergent fiber, total digestible nutrients (TDN) and a quality index that indicates the relative feed value of a hay. Pick up a test kit at the Polk County Extension Office. The test kit contains information on how to take a sample and where to send it. Sample collection is critical and must be done correctly. If you do not have a hay sampler, contact Doug Mayo and make an appointment. He will come and sample hay using a forage drill.

Polk Junior Cattlemen Looking for New Members

Do you know any youth ages 8-20 interested in learning about the cattle industry? The Polk County Junior Cattlemen's Association is looking for new members. This year the group has a number of exciting activities planned including a ranch tour of FX Bar Ranch, Frostproof, on January 9. Two exciting contests will be held at the Youth Fair. A Beef Game Show and a Top Ranch Hand Contest will be held Wednesday March 10. Competition to go to the FCA convention in June and enter state contests will be held April 10. For more information and membership applications, contact the Extension Office 533-0765.



Are You Kidding Me?

Time for the Birds & Bees

A man was helping one of his cows give birth, when he noticed his 4-year-old son standing wide-eyed at the fence, soaking in the whole event. The man thought, "Great he's 4 and I'm gonna have to start explaining the birds and bees. No need to jump the gun - I'll just let him ask, and I'll answer."

After everything was over, the man walked over to his son and said, "Well son, do you have any questions?" "Just one." Rapped the still wide-eyed lad. "How fast was that calf going when he hit that cow?"

MOOving Along

A woman was complaining to her friend about her wayward boyfriend. She said, "When we first started dating, he said he'd love me till the cows came home. I didn't know he was a cattle rancher."

Team Effort

A city slicker was driving in the country when a deer ran in front of him. To avoid hitting it, he ran his car in a ditch. A farmer came along with a large horse and said, "My horse, Buddy, can get your car

out of that ditch. "The farmer hitched up the horse and started yelling, "Pull Nellie; pull Clyde; pull Buster; and Buddy, you pull, too."

The man was amazed when the horse pulled his car out of the ditch. He thanked the farmer and asked, "Why did you call your horse all those other names?" The farmer explained, "Well sir, Buddy is blind and if he thought he was the only one trying, he'd never do it."

Follow Along

Cowboy: "How much are your spurs?" Clerk: "They're \$40 a pair." Cowboy: "Here's \$20, give me one." Clerk: "What can you do with one spur?" Cowboy: "Well, I reckon if I can get one side of the horse going, the other side will keep up!"

Priorities

A young lady was enthusiastically describing her new boyfriend to her father. "He sounds very nice, dear," the father said, "but does he have any money?" "Oh, you men are all alike!" she huffed. "He asked me the same thing about you!"

Truth in Advertising

For Sale: Old Ford Tractor. Runs good, but it is missing the seat and steering wheel. Ideal for someone who has lost his backside in farming and doesn't know which way to turn.

It's the Real Thing

On their wedding anniversary, a couple was reminiscing about their dating days. The wife said, "You were so handsome and had such a beautiful head of hair." Looking at his bald head, she added, "I do think a man is more attractive when he's bald."

Her husband said, "I remember you had such a lovely Coke bottle figure." The wife waited for a further compliment, like she had given him, but he said nothing. She snapped back, "I still have a Coke bottle figure, only now it's a two-liter!"

Sincerely,

Doug Mayo
Livestock Extension Agent I

Calendar Of Events

January

7	Crooked Lake Ranch 4-H & FFA Livestock Judging Contest, Frostproof
12	43rd Annual Ocala All Breed Bull Sale, Ocala
9	FX Bar Ranch Junior Cattlemen's Ranch Tour, Frostproof
14-24	Florida Citrus Festival, Winter Haven
26-28	Accelerated Genetics' A.I. School, Polk
21	Florida Cattlemen's Institute & Allied Trade Show, Kissimmee

February

3	Economic and Ecological Value of Grazing Lands, USF Sarasota Campus (Sponsored by Manatee and Sarasota Cattlemen's Associations)
5	Deadline to Apply for USDA Program
5	Cattlemen's Livestock Market All Breed Bull Sale, Lakeland
4-15	Florida State Fair, Tampa
8-12	Agrifest Week 1, Bartow
10-14	NCBA National Convention, Charlotte, North Carolina
22-26	Agrifest Week 2, Bartow
25 - March 7	Central Florida Fair, Orlando
25 - March 7	Florida Strawberry Festival, Plant City

March

6-12	Polk County Youth Fair, Bartow 6th - Horse Show 8th - Hog & Dairy Shows 9th - Hog Sale, Commercial Heifer Show 10th - Jounior Cattlemen Contests, Whip Popping 11th - Beef Breeding & Steer Shows 12th - Citrus, Plant, Poultry & Steer Sales
10-11	FCA Spring Quarterly Meeting, Tallahassee

May

5-7	Beef Cattle Short Course, Gainesville
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11-13	Reproductive Management School, Wauchula
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For questions or comments regarding this publication contact

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