

Central Florida Ag Masters

A Monthly Newsletter for Stockmen, Hay Producers, and Equine Enthusiasts in Central Florida

NEWS YOU CAN USE: What to Expect from our New Administration and the 117th Congress

By Kalan Taylor, UF/IFAS Volusia County Extension

The American Farm Bureau Federation recently hosted their 102nd annual convention virtually this year. This was the first time in the convention's history that it was not held in person. The convention covered four days and brought together farmers, ranchers, and industry experts from across the country to discuss the top issues facing agriculture. While the industry information was very educational and brought to life a number of ideas for producers, I would say a number of people joined this convention eager to hear what information and insight the American Farm Bureau Federation had in regards to our new administration and the 117th Congress. Hopefully you were able to attend, if not here some key topics covered during the convention.

Increasing Markets Abroad. Three key take home messages - #1. Hold China to their commitment to the China Phase 1 trade agreement. #2. Look to Southeast Asia, the United Kingdom, and Africa for trade markets. #3. Increase trade deals such as the United States-Mexico-Canada (USMCA). Click to learn more about USMCA.

Responsible Agriculture Labor Reform. Farmers and ranchers need a dependable, skilled workforce. Farm work is not easy, work is often seasonal and temporary, and fewer Americans are often unwilling to work these types of jobs. To protect our agricultural labor work force, significant changes to immigration reform needs to be passed by Congress. This reform should address agriculture's current workforce and create a new flexible worker program.

Strengthening the 2023 Farm Bill. There are a number of important discussion items for the upcoming Farm Bill but the three major topics are rural infrastructure, strengthening the safety net for farmers and ranchers, and climate/conservation. Rural communities play a vital role in our nation's economy and a crumbling rural infrastructure threatens the ability for our farmers and ranchers to meet domestic demands and to compete globally. The deterioration of infrastructure jeopardizes jobs, health, education, and access. Every part of infrastructure will be discussed including roads, inland waterways, ports, railways, and broadband.

According to a Tri-State Livestock News article, the chief economist for American Farm Bureau wants Congress to strengthen the safety net in the next farm bill. "The 2018 farm bill does not expire until 2023, but hurricanes and the derecho as well as the trade problems show it has become immediately clear the current safety net in the farm bill is not adequate enough to help farmers and ranchers. Communicating that to the farm community is a high priority", Newton said. He also states that "conversations on the farm bill will start sooner rather than later."

The other topic for discussion is climate and finding a way to work with Congress and the administration to provide financial incentives to expand climate – smart practices and make carbon sequestration a revenue stream, Newton said.

Continued on page 5



Photo by Tyler Jones, UF/IFAS

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

News You Can Use.....	1,5
Perspectives on Pasture	2
Weed of the Month	2
Beef Cattle Corner	3
Equine Expertise.....	4
Small Ruminations	6

DID YOU KNOW?

- We often associate cowboy culture with the old west, but cattle were first brought to the new world by way of Florida!
- The American Quarter Horse is thus named for being the fastest horse in the world at the quarter mile sprint!
- It is widely believed that goats are one of the first species of livestock to have been domesticated.

PERSPECTIVES ON PASTURE

Read Before you Buy: Premade Seed Mixes

By J.K. Yarborough, UF/IFAS Orange and Seminole County Extension

This article is written for those completely new to the livestock production world. Or maybe to new landowners looking to establish a strong pasture for future use. Either way you are looking to make a pasture and of course you want it to be the best it can be. To do that you want to use the best forage and seed for your area. So when you go to your local rural store/seed store and you see a bag of seed that says something like “All-season pasture forage mix” you think you’ve found exactly what you were looking for. But take a closer look. After looking at what is in those mixes you might be surprised by what you find.

Often times these species specific, or all-season mixes are just sales gimmicks designed to get you to spend your hard earned dollar. But sometimes you can find a diamond in the rough. First you should be aware of what kind of forages do well in your area. There are species that just won’t grow in particular climates. When you see these pre-mixed seed bags look to see what species of forage are in them. Often there is a mix of species that will grow in the warm-season, or cool-season. This is not a good purchase. Mixes that contain both are just trying to get something quick and green to grow, and might not be a worthwhile investment.

Next check to see if the included species even grow in your area. For instance many “southeast” specific mixes contain a high percentage of tall fescue seed. Fescue is a staple forage in much of the southeast, but just does not proliferate in most of Florida. So check to make sure mixes contain viable species and preferred varieties.

Next check to see how well the included species grow together. For instance planting too much of an upright growing forage might shade out shorter varieties. Also check to see if the mix includes any legumes. Legumes are a terrific complement to our forages, provided they will grow in our area. Many times pre-mixes will contain white clover because it does well or at least comes up in most areas, during most planting seasons.

Finally check to see if the price fits your budget. If you find a good mix that works for your area make sure the pre-mixed bag is worth the price. It might be cheaper buying whole seed and mixing yourself. But if you are covering smaller acreage it just might be economical to buy the pre-mix.

“Life on a farm is a school of patience. You can’t hurry the crops or make an ox in two days” - Haneri Alain Liogier

WEED OF THE MONTH

By Joe Walter, UF/IFAS Brevard County

Rosary pea plant is an aggressive grower and can take over an area if not kept in check. One rosary pea vine can grow and climb more than 20 feet (6 meters) in a single season. The plant, which is native to Indonesia, has spread across the world, in tropic and sub-tropic climates. It can be found in bright sun or in shaded areas. The plant has long leaves with off-shooting leaflets and bright red seeds.

Abrin, the poison found in the rosary pea seed, is more deadly than ricin. Less than 3 micrograms of abrin in the body is enough to kill, which is less than the amount of poison in one pea. Don’t burn and inhale the smoke; Symptoms of rosary pea inhalation poisoning are: difficult breathing, fever, nausea and fluid in the lungs. If ingested -- and the seed coating is broken -- rosary pea seeds cause severe nausea and vomiting, which eventually leads to dehydration, and ends with the kidneys, liver and spleen shutting down. Death usually follows within three to four days.

Control of Rosary Pea can be achieved through foliar application of Aminopyriad containing products ie. Milestone, Grazonnext; or Glyphosate containing products ie. Roundup. Repeated applications or seedling pulling is generally required due to the seed bank built up in the soil.



Rosary Pea is shown here prior to fruit set (above) and with its distinctive red seeds (below). Photos by Joe Walter.



BEEF CATTLE CORNER

Understanding Expected Progeny Differences

By Tim Wilson, UF/IFAS St. Johns County Extension

When selecting herd sires, consideration is often given to color, soundness, structure, and genetics. Expected progeny difference (EPDs) is the genetic description of a bull derived from data not only from its calves, but also from its ancestors and full and half siblings. Although EPDs provide an excellent genetic description of a bull, many producers have difficulty understanding what they mean and how to use them.

Traits reported by a breed association may vary in number with new traits added periodically. In a typical EPD, growth traits such as birth weight (BW), weaning weight (WW), yearling weight (YW) and milk are often reported. Additional traits relating to carcass and ultrasound data may also be included in an EPD depending on breed.

Table 1. Example EPD

Trait	BW	WW	YW	Milk
EPD	2.1	55	69	13
Acc	0.98	0.98	0.97	0.88



Photo by Tim Wilson UF/IFAS

EPD values provide a description of how a bull has performed genetically for each trait. These values are compared to the breed average to determine if they are high or low compared to the average bull in that breed. Breed associations usually report updated breed averages in six-month intervals.

As additional calves are registered each year, EPD values for a bull are adjusted and the accuracy value increases. The breed average also adjusts as each bull in the breed is more accurately defined and values for each breed may differ from one another.

The accuracy value (Acc) is reported numerically between zero and one. These values can be viewed as a percentage. When a large number of progeny from a bull have been reported to a breed association, the accuracy values for that bull will move closer to one. For example, a value of 0.39 could be seen as 39% accurate while a 0.98 could be viewed as 98% accurate. A low accuracy value indicates that a sire may be young or that few calves have been reported to the breed association. As the EPD value is adjusted to more accurately define the capabilities of the bull, the accuracy values increase. When evaluating young bulls with low accuracy values, it is important to include EPD information from their sire, dam and grand sire in your decision-making process.

Simple mistakes using EPDs can disrupt overall production goals. Selecting for one trait without evaluating others is referred to as single trait selection and is not recommended. This type of selection may improve one area of production while negatively affecting another. For example, selecting a bull with a low BW EPD without considering EPD information on other traits could result in calves with reduced birth weights but also yield lower sale weights.

Multi-trait selection used in conjunction with visual appraisal can help prevent disasters before they occur. When using EPDs to select sires for a specific trait, buyers should consider all data that is available to help assist them in reaching market end points.

Producers often use crossbreeding to take advantage of heterosis, the increased vigor of offspring, otherwise known as "hybrid vigor." To do this, bulls of different breeds are evaluated and compared. In the past, it has not been possible to compare breeds based on EPDs. However; research, reported by the Meat Animal Research Center in Clay Center, Neb., reports adjustment factors for across-breed EPD comparisons. These adjustment factors may enable producers to more accurately compare bulls from different breeds in a cross-breeding program.

In summary, EPDs are an excellent means to evaluate the expected genetic potential of a sire. Producers who use EPDs must consider that they are designed to predict expected and not actual performance. Multiple trait selection helps prevent negative traits from impacting overall herd performance. To learn more about how to use EPDs in your sire selection strategy, the UF/IFAS has a detailed explanation at <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/AN/AN16400.pdf>.

Although structural soundness and breeding soundness has not been discussed in this article, they should not be excluded in the sire selection process. If you have questions about EPDs, contact your local UF/IFAS Extension Agent.

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EQUINE EXPERTISE The Skinny on Fat

By Meg Brew UF/IFAS Lake County Extension

Body fat is a reflection of a horse's energy balance. If a horse takes in more energy than he can use, the excess energy is stored as fat. Likewise, if the horse burns more energy than he takes in he will mobilize stored fat to meet his energy needs. Horses get energy from eating grain, hay, and/or from grazing. How much energy is just right? It depends on a lot of factors including breed type, metabolism, age, size, and reproductive status. Energy needs can vary quite a bit between similar individuals; some horses seem to stay fat on oxygen where others will eat you out of house and home and still stay lean! We measure equine energy balance using a 9-point system called the "Body Condition Score" or BCS. This system is based on the fact that fat is laid down, and removed, in a predictable

fashion. BCS allows horsemen to accurately assess a horse's energy balance and consistently compare between horses.

A number of BCS apps are available online and can be found at <https://horses.extension.org/body-condition-scoring-apps-for-horses/>

A horse with a BCS of 1-3 is considered too thin while a horse with a BCS of 7-9 is too fat. A healthy horse will have a BCS of 4-6, with 5 being ideal for most horses. Horses that fall outside of the 4-6 BCS range may not be healthy enough to ride or show.

If your horse falls outside the ideal range there are steps that you can take to help determine the source of his energy imbalance and improve his condition.

Below are a couple of things to consider when attempting to improve your horse's BCS. Remember to make all feeding changes slowly and in consultation with your veterinarian.

Help! My horse is too thin!

- Ask your vet to perform a thorough exam, to include bloodwork, to check for health issues that can cause weight loss.
- Have a fecal egg count run to check for the presence of internal parasites (worms).
- Have his teeth checked by your veterinarian or equine dentist.
- Scout your pastures for toxic weeds that may be causing him to lose condition.
- Seek input on your feeding program to see if you are meeting his caloric needs.
- Consider adding calories with a high fat supplement.
- Make sure your pastures are providing adequate forage and that you are providing hay that is when your pastures are dormant.
- If you are feeding in a group make sure that your horse is not being bullied away from his dinner.
- If your horse is of an advanced age it may be challenging for him to maintain his condition while being ridden regularly. Consider if it is time to lighten his workload or plan for retirement.

Help! My Horse is too fat!

- Ask your vet to perform a thorough exam, to include bloodwork, to check for health issues that can cause obesity.
- Seek input on your feeding program to see if you are exceeding his energy needs.
- Consider switching to a grass balancer (sometimes called a ration balancer) or cutting our concentrates entirely if his needs can be met with forages and access to mineral alone.
- Up his activity level (more exercise).

NEWS YOU CAN USE CON'T

Reauthorizing the Livestock Mandatory Price Reporting (LMR). This report was developed to facilitate open, transparent price discovery and provide all market participants (small and large) with comparable levels of market information for slaughter cattle, swine, sheep, boxed beef, lamb meat, and wholesale pork. LMR encourages competition in the marketplace by vastly improving price and supply data. The program gets its authority through the Livestock Mandatory Reporting Act of 1999, which must be authorized by Congress every five years. LMR is scheduled to expire on September 2021 and congress will work on reauthorizing.

Focus on Risk Management for Smaller Producers. This discussion will include access to risk management tools, such as market information and technical assistance, for small producers and aid for small packers in the form of subsidies. The American Farm Bureau Federation will also be keeping an eye on the Biden administration to see how they continue and handle the meat packing investigations which occurred under the Trump administration.

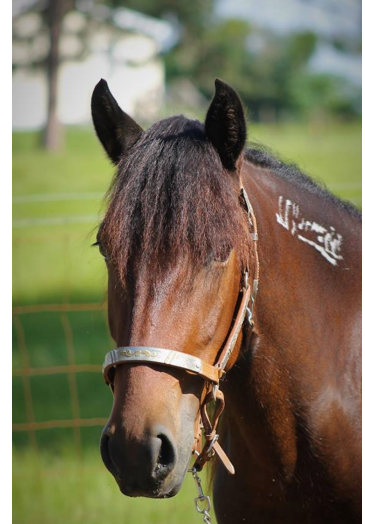


Photo by Meg Brew, UF/IFAS

“Agriculture is the most healthful, most useful, and most noble employment of man” - George Washington

Voice to Influence. As farmers and ranchers you have the voice to influence and educate both consumers and politicians. Make your story known and heard – don’t let someone else tell your story. There are a number of industry programs and organizations out there to help you share your story. Some popular hashtags being used by Florida producers include #beef4generations, #womeninag, #opengatesopenminds, and #strongertogether. Including images of your day to day work as a farmer or rancher helps give that first-hand experience to consumers. Including images of the time spent working with family members lets people know that agriculture is not only a family business and but also a family tradition.

One last item I would like to share with you. During Tuesday’s General session we welcomed actor, author, and former United States Navy SEALs commander Rorke Denver. He is also the founder of Ever Onward, a fresh new brand designed to use Navy Seal principles to call leaders to action, to be bold so they can perform at their highest levels. He is a very enthusiastic speaker and an amazing story teller. I thoroughly enjoyed what he had to say and wanted to share with you his three take home messages.

1. Constantly improve your Position – There’s always room for improvement. Do not become stagnant in the way you think or in what you do. Embrace the mindset of “Always a student”.

2. Calm is Contagious – People will mimic your behavior, especially those who look up to you and follow your leadership. Those that follow your guidance will probably amplify your behavior whether it is negative or positive behavior. “If you keep your head, they’ll keep their head. If you keep it together, they’ll keep it together. And if you lose it, they’ll lose it.” - Denver

3. Take Care of Each Other (including yourself) – Take time to check on your friends, family, and neighbors. Everyone is needing that friendly voice during this time and yours could be that voice that helps them through these tough times. Also, take time for yourself. Sometimes you need to get away and have time to silence your mind and take a breath.

No one knows what 2021 has in store for us and that’s okay. Farmers and ranchers are some of the most resilient and resourceful people and know how to adapt. Constantly improve your position – remember you are never too old to learn. It is important to understand and stay involved in the political processes, hopefully this article has given you a start. Calm is contagious – as we continue with COVID and the 2021 journey it is important to exhibit positive actions and remember don’t lose your head. Take care of each other (including yourself) – this cannot be stressed enough. In addition to the ongoing challenges and stressors of farm life we now have the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This has led to higher rates of stress, mental illness and suicide in farm and ranch families. Please do not hesitate to reach out for help for yourself, a neighbor or a loved one. Two resources available are the National Farmers Union’s Farm Crisis Center and the Farm Bureau’s Farm State of Mind resource.

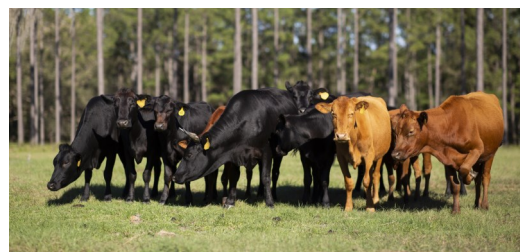


Photo by Tyler Jones, UF/IFAS



UF/IFAS File Photo

SMALL RUMINATIONS

Without Reproduction There is No Production

By Jonael Bosques, UF/IFAS Hardee County Extension

When it comes to the viability of a small ruminant operation, reproduction is the foundation of production and financial viability. Sheep and goats can produce twins and even triplets in one year. Such a trait makes them ideal for an agricultural enterprise in small scale. To have a financially viable agricultural operation, sheep and goat producers need a solid reproductive management plan that includes health monitoring, genetic selection, and knowledge of the reproductive physiology of our animals.

Sheep and goats are seasonally poly-estrous. Their reproductive cycle resumes when daylight hours reduce, typically after mid-September lasting from July to December. Their estrus cycle lasts 17 days for sheep and 21 for goats.

Producers can use natural breeding or artificial insemination techniques to sire their herds and flocks. In the case of sheep, artificial insemination is performed transabdominally, and typically performed by a veterinarian. In goats, the use of a speculum aids in the delivery of semen intravaginally. Gestation can last between 147 to 155 days.

To learn more about this topic, please visit our videos (in English and Spanish) linked below.

[Farming with Science Episode 1: Upgrading our sheep and goat reproductive management - YouTube](#)

[Produciendo con Ciencia: Mejorando el manejo reproductivo de su operación de cabras y ovejas - YouTube](#)

Remember that without reproduction there is no production on your sheep and goat farm. If you would like to learn more about this topic, please contact your local Central Florida Livestock Agents Group member or local UF/IFAS Extension office.

WHY SHOULD RANCHERS ENROLL IN THE FDACS BMP PROGRAM?

Adapted from the FDACS Cattle BMP Brochure

- BMPs may help improve production efficiency while reducing your costs and protecting the environment.
- Enrolled producers become eligible for cost share money, when available, that can help offset the expense of implementing some BMPs.
- Enrolled producers gain access to technical assistance from their field rep.
- Implementing BMPs is a less costly alternative to conducting water quality monitoring if you ranch in an area with an adopted basin management action plan or BMAP.
- BMP enrollment and participation demonstrates an ongoing commitment to natural resource protection.



ABOUT CFLAG

We are a professional organization of UF/IFAS Extension Agents who provide research based education on livestock and forage production to farmers and ranchers in Central Florida. Our goal is to help our clients make informed decisions which will improve both the environmental and economic sustainability of their operations by keeping them abreast of the latest agricultural research, providing access to the resources of the Land Grant University System, and by conducting community based classes and consultations.

To learn more about our programs, or to connect to your Extension Agent, please visit us online at

<https://extadmin.ifas.ufl.edu/cflag/>

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