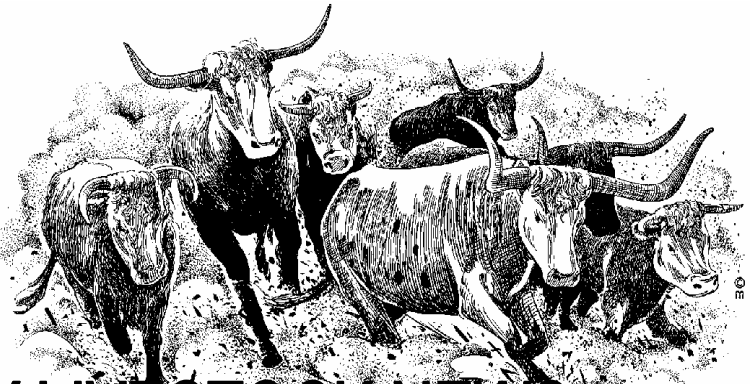


UNIVERSITY OF
FLORIDA

Cooperative Extension Service

Institute of Food and Agriculture Sciences

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MARION COUNTY LIVESTOCK NEWS

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MARCH 2003

Central Florida Beef/Forage Field Day



Tuesday, March 18, 2003

8:30 am – 3:30 pm

Baldwin Angus Ranch; Ocala, FL.

Use of Anhydrous Ammonia to Improve Forage Quality

Early Weed Control

New Herbicides Update

EPD's & Bull Selection

Ranch Tour

There is **no charge** for admission and the **Central Florida Agents Group** will sponsor lunch. For more information or to make your **reservation** for lunch, contact Helen at **352-620-3440**.

Fertilizing Pastures and Hay Fields

The six soil-supplied nutrients required by plants in the largest quantities are nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), potassium (K), calcium (Ca), magnesium (Mg), and sulfur (S). Micronutrients iron, copper, zinc, manganese, boron, molybdenum, and chlorine, are also essential but are used by the plant in very small amounts. The soil can supply the plant with most, if not all of these nutrients, but often the supply of one or more of the nutrients is insufficient for optimum growth.

Nitrogen is the most important fertilizer nutrient used on grass pastures and hay fields. It is the nutrient that is most likely to be deficient and therefore the one that most often results in increased forage production. Phosphorus may be deficient in some areas, but some Florida soils are high in native P. Also, some pasture grasses (such as bahiagrass) may extract sufficient P from the subsoil, even when the P level in the surface soil is low. Potassium may need to be added to some pastures, but in South Fl., bahiagrass pastures on flatwoods that receive 50 pounds of nitrogen or less per year have shown little if any response to potassium fertilization. Under intensive hay or silage production, where nutrients are removed from the land, annual applications of P and K are needed. Where nutrients are being removed in harvested forage (hay) potassium may reach critically low levels, where not only plant growth is reduced, but plants may die. This is usually indicated by a thinning stand in bermudagrass hay fields. Potassium can very quickly become deficient; also calcium, magnesium, sulfur, and some micronutrients may eventually become deficient after several years of cropping. Calcium, magnesium, sulfur, and the micronutrients are seldom a problem in pastures where considerable recycling of nutrients occurs. (Florida Forage Handbook, modified)

Overseeding Warm Season Legumes

Planning ahead, producers may want to think about overseeding *Aeschynomene americana* (joint vetch or deer vetch) onto their pastures this spring or early summer. This may be a good *aeschynomene* year. What is a good *aeschynomene* year? That is a year when we have above average winter and spring rainfall. This allows the *aeschynomene* to start early from natural reseeding, or decreases the chances of losing the young seedlings to drought when planted. In most years seed that germinate during the spring are lost due to drought and therefore producers delay planting until the summer rains start. This in turn delays the date when the annual legume will be ready to graze, thereby producing a shorter grazing season. *Aeschynomene* should only be planted on moist flatwoods.

Warm Season Annual Grasses and Pasture Renovation

The two most popular warm season annual grasses are pearl millet and sorghum x sudangrass. Both should be planted on sites that have good drainage, but sorghum x sudangrass will tolerate wet, saturated soil conditions better than pearl millet. Therefore, it may be the better choice on some flatwoods sites. These grasses should not be planted until the soil is warm. The earliest planting date is usually mid March to mid April.

When or where should these crops be used? These crops can be useful in a pasture renovation program. For instance, if you desire to convert an old rundown bahiagrass pasture to an improved more productive grass such as Tifton-9 bahiagrass, it might be desirable to till and plant the land to a summer annual grass or some other crop for one or more seasons before planting the Tifton-9. The summer annual grass can be followed in the fall with a cool season annual such as ryegrass or a small grain. The Tifton-9 would then be planted in June following the ryegrass. This process would involve soil tillage and seedbed preparation before each crop is planted. The multiple tillage operations should eliminate most of the old pasture grass and grass seed. This process involves considerable expense; therefore, the producer must make good use of the forage produced from the annuals.

The summer annuals will grow rapidly during hot weather and may be ready to graze in 35 to 40 days after planting. They are very productive if fertilized properly and can provide high quality grazing. The most efficient use of these pastures can be had by grazing young animals such as developing heifers or stockers that require a higher quality forage than that required by mature animals.

Also, be prepared to graze rotationally. Remember; do not graze sorghum x sudangrass until it is 24 inches tall or taller. This is due to the prussic acid (HCN) poisoning problem that can occur in very young plants. Prussic acid is not a problem in pearl millet.

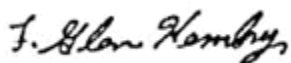
One complaint about summer annuals is that they can produce too much growth and will “get away from you.” They do require a high stocking rate. When excess growth occurs, move young animals to a fresh pasture and let the mature cow herd clean up behind them. Stems may need to be mowed after grazing.

Sorghum x sudangrass hybrids **CANNOT** be recommended for horse pastures because of prussic acid poisoning and problems with the urinary tract. Carroll G. Chambliss
University of Florida
Extension Agronomist

Fifty-second Annual Beef Cattle Short Course

Staying ahead of the cattle cycle is an important way to maximize the bottom line regardless of where the industry is in the cycle. Currently we are near the peak of the cycle; however, we can expect some downturn in two to three years. Identifying places where expenses can be reduced without permanent or long term damage to the business is important. Also, identifying production and marketing practices that may improve income can be valuable in dealing with economic down turns. It is important to focus intently on management practices that should maximize profits and result in long term improvements in our businesses. This year's Beef Cattle Short Course focuses on practices to help beef producers identify practices that will improve the soundness and profitability of their beef business throughout the cattle cycle. On Wednesday afternoon speakers will address some issues related to marketing by first looking at the beef market outlook and then discussing opportunities for marketing feeder cattle, retained ownership and negotiating grazing and feeding contracts. This program will be highlighted by a panel of beef producers discussing their experiences with retained ownership. Thursday morning's program gives a glimpse of a big feedyard's experience feeding Florida cattle with additional discussions on preparing Florida calves for the feedyard and having the most efficient cow for producing feeder calves. Thursday afternoon's program of discussions and demonstrations will be held at the Beef Research Unit after a lunch sponsored by Farm Credit Associations of Florida. Grazing management of forages, controlling Johne's disease and beef quality assurance, all topics that can improve profitability, will be addressed. Friday morning's program will focus on health programs for retained ownership and economic evaluations of terminal crossing and purchasing replacement females. Supplemental income options for the ranch will also be examined with experiences discussed by a panel of ranchers. Evening events will include the Allied Industry's Trade Show and Reception on Wednesday and the traditional "Steak-Out" on Thursday. This year's Beef Cattle Short Course is full of ideas for cost cutting and producing the right cattle for the right market. **Come join us for useful information and socializing beginning Wednesday, April 30th, 2003 at the Gainesville, Sheraton.**

Sincerely,



F. Glen Hembry, Chairman

Department of Animal Sciences

Beef Cattle Management Tips

MARCH

- 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 bulls as necessary.
- Deworm cows as needed.
- Observe calf health and provide adequate nutrition for "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 by March 1st for calving season to start December 9th.
- Remove bulls March 22nd to end calving season January 1st.

APRIL

- Plant warm season and perennial 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.
- Deworm cows as needed if not done in March.
- Vaccinate against blackleg and brucellosis after 3 months of age and prior to 12 months of age.
- Market cull cows and bulls.
- Update market information and refine market strategy for calves.

John Mark Shuffitt
Livestock Agent II
Marion County Extension Service

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THE LAST WORD

"Snow in the South is wonderful. It has a kind of magic and mystery that it has nowhere else. And the reason for this is that it comes to people in the South not as the grim, unyielding tenant of Winter's keep, but as a strange and wild visitor from the secret North." --Thomas Wolfe

"The South--where roots, place, family, and tradition are the essence of identity."

--Social historian Carl N. Degler

"Courage is contagious. When a brave man takes a stand, the spine of others are stiffened." --Billy Graham

"The South is America. The South is what we started out with in this bizarre, slightly troubling, basically wonderful country--fun, danger, friendliness, energy, enthusiasm, and brave, crazy, tough people."

---P.J. O'Rourke

"If more politicians were thinking about the next generation instead of the next election, it would be better for the United States and for the world.

---Florida congressman Claude Pepper

"In the South, the breeze blows softer...neighbors are friendlier, nosier, and more talkative. (By contrast with our Northern neighbors, the Southerner never uses one word when ten or twenty will do)...This is a different place. Our way of thinking is different, as are our ways of seeing, laughing, singing, eating, meeting and parting. Our walk is different, as the old song goes, our talk and our names. Nothing about us is quite the same as in the country to the north and west. What we carry in our memories is different too, and that may explain everything else."

--Charles Kuralt in "Southerners: Portrait of a People"

While fishing off the Florida coast, a Northern tourist capsized his boat. He could swim, but his fear of alligators kept him clinging to the overturned craft. Spotting an old man standing on the shore, the tourist shouted, "Are there any gators around here?!"

Naw," the man hollered back, "they ain't been around for years!" "Feeling safe, the tourist started swimming leisurely toward the shore. About halfway there he asked the man on the shore, "How'd you get rid of the gators?" "We didn't do nothin'," the old man said. "The sharks ate 'em."