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## MARION COUNTY LIVESTOCK NEWS

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# eXtension Launches FIRST Community of Practice - HORSEQUEST

eXtension is pleased to announce the launch of its first Community of Practice web site: HorseQuest. Available at <http://www.extension.org/horses>, this is the first of many communities of practice to go public in 2006 and throughout 2007.

"We are very excited to launch HorseQuest today and to demonstrate the capacity that eXtension brings to America's Cooperative Extension System," said Dan Cotton, eXtension Director.

HorseQuest provides Internet visitors with reliable and up-to-date horse information through a knowledge base of commonly asked questions that have science-based, peer-reviewed answers. In addition, online lessons use self-paced learning objects to help users learn more about specialized areas of equine science. The newest lesson being introduced is a module for new and prospective horse owners.

"eXtension has provided an exciting new method of delivering scientific data to horse owners. Its 24/7/365 availability and interactive capability puts the horseman in direct contact with experts," said Clint Depew, chair of the HorseQuest team and Louisiana State University extension horse specialist.

HorseQuest also features experts who work one on one with online users through live online chats. These one-hour chats feature three expert specialists covering various relevant topics.

"HorseQuest brings the strengths and backgrounds of many equine experts into one on-line tool. And, the accessibility of solid, research-based information is now available on a national (and international) platform," said

Betsy Greene, University of Vermont extension horse specialist and vice-chair of the HorseQuest team.

"The 37-member HorseQuest Community of Practice has brought greater expertise to each area of interest and reduced the workload on individual experts at the same time. The collaborative relationships with other experts is minimizing duplication of effort and maximizing utilization of good materials. The spin offs into other projects is phenomenal," noted Depew.

HorseQuest was developed through eXtension's innovative collaborative tools including a unique "wiki" environment where community of practice members create, enhance, edit, and publish the various components featured on the public web site.

"Since my work with the HorseQuest Community of Practice, I now have expert resources at the click of a mouse. I have already utilized some of our collaborative 'wiki-work' when consulting with my clientele," noted Greene. "The eXtension HorseQuest project has brought together the resources and opportunities for collaboration that no single state could afford."

HorseQuest is the first eXtension "Community of Practice" to come online. Eight more communities with topics ranging from financial security, fire ants, disaster response, parenting, rural entrepreneurship, horticulture, and wildlife damage management are set to come online in the next several months. All will feature similar attributes of Frequently Asked Questions, Ask the Experts, news, events, and learning modules.

# How To Use Beneficial Nematodes Against Pest Mole crickets in Pastures

Mole crickets can damage bahiagrass pastures and other grasses in Florida severely but long-term, effective and safe control can be achieved by applying beneficial nematodes.

Nematodes are tiny worms and one of them, *Steinernema scapterisci*, attacks only pest mole crickets. This nematode is patented by the University of Florida for use against mole crickets and licensed exclusively to Becker Underwood for production and distribution as a biopesticide. It only infects adult and large immature mole crickets (1 – 1½ inches long) that are most abundant in September through November and February through April in Florida. The nematodes cannot harm people, cattle, wildlife, or plants.

These beneficial nematodes can be purchased and kept chilled for a few weeks until they are used. They must be applied to wet soil and protected from sunlight. Once in the soil, they enter the mouth or breathing pores of a mole cricket, break into the body cavity, and release a highly specialized bacterium. Bacterial infection kills the mole cricket within a few days as the nematodes reproduce in large numbers. Offspring of the nematodes are spread by the dying mole cricket and ultimately released back into the soil to repeat the cycle again and again. The nematodes can survive, multiply and spread as long as some mole crickets are present.

## What you need to do:

### 1. Check your pasture to determine if it is infested with mole crickets.

Signs include patches of dead grass and tunnels visible on the soil surface. In a 2 sq. ft. area of grass where you suspect mole crickets are present, pour a solution made of 1 tablespoon of liquid dishwashing detergent in 1 gallon of water. Pest management action is justified if two to four mole crickets come to the surface within three minutes.

### 2. Purchase mole cricket nematodes.

The nematodes do not infect small mole crickets, so make sure that the insects are large (1 – 1½ inches long) before placing an order. In Florida, adult mole crickets are most abundant in September through November and February through April. The mole cricket nematode is supplied for use in pastures only by Becker Underwood, Inc. ([www.beckerunderwood.com](http://www.beckerunderwood.com), 1-800-232-5907). Each box contains four packets that combined treat one acre. The broadcast rate is one billion nematodes per acre. The nematodes should be stored at 41oF but for no more than a few weeks.

### 3. Apply the nematodes.

Apply the nematodes at dusk when the soil is 55o to 100oF and wet from rain or irrigation; use an entire packet. Thoroughly mix a packet of nematodes in 25 gallons of water in a clean spray tank, agitate continuously, and apply immediately over the area to be treated. The nematodes can be sprayed on the soil surface or injected by machinery one inch below the surface and covered with soil. Irrigate again to wash the nematodes into the soil (about ¼ inch of water).

**For more Mole Cricket control options see:**

<http://ipm.ifas.ufl.edu/success-stories/molecrickets.htm>

**For IPM information on different pests see:**

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

## “Beef Cattle Management Tips”

### NOVEMBER

- ⇒ Have soils tested.
- ⇒ Observe cows daily to detect calving difficulty
- ⇒ Use high magnesium mineral if grass tetany has been a problem in the past
- ⇒ Check for external parasites and treat if needed
- ⇒ Maintain adequate nutrient level for cow herd
- ⇒ Calve in well-drained pastures
- ⇒ Survey pastures for poisonous plants
- ⇒ Start summarizing your annual records, both production and financial - then you will have time to make adjustments for tax purposes
- ⇒ Re-evaluate winter feeding program and feed supplies.
- ⇒ Get breeding soundness exams on bull battery so you have time to find replacements if some fail.
- ⇒ Implement bull conditioning program.

### DECEMBER

- ⇒ Check mineral feeder
- ⇒ Begin grazing small grain pastures, if ready
- ⇒ Check for external parasites and treat if necessary
- ⇒ Deworm cows and heifers prior to winter feeding season
- ⇒ Check cows regularly for calving difficulties
- ⇒ Rotate calving pasture to prevent diseases
- ⇒ Observe calves for signs of scours
- ⇒ Investigate health of bulls **before** you buy
- ⇒ Check replacement heifers to be sure they will be ready to breed 3-4 weeks prior to the main cow herd
- ⇒ Complete review of management plan and update for next year.

John Mark Shuffitt  
Livestock Agent III  
Marion County Extension

## Marion County's Clean Farms Initiative Survey

Marion County's Clean Water Program seeks input from farm owners and managers.

Agriculture is the foundation of Marion County's heritage, and continues to be a significant part of the county's economic base. Marion County has an estimated 50,000 horses, 25,000 head of cattle in addition to other livestock and crops.

Marion County also is home to some of the most magnificent springs and beautiful lakes in Florida. In addition to serving as recreational and scenic assets for residents and tourists, the springs and lakes are important to the area's water supply.

Marion County's Clean Farms Initiative is designed to assist the agriculture community in using simple and effective management practices to protect and preserve Marion County's water resources. These management practices address proper handling and disposal of animal waste, pasture management and fertilizer use.

Through the Clean Farms Initiative, Marion County farm owners and managers are assisted with the use and implementation of these management practices and are recognized for their efforts

To help shape the direction of this initiative, Marion County's Clean Water Program is conducting an anonymous survey of Marion County farm owners and managers. Input from the farm owners and managers will be used to help determine the most effective methods for successful implementation of the Clean Farms Initiative.

Marion County farm owners and managers are invited to participate in the Clean Farms Initiative survey. The survey is anonymous. Copies have been mailed to agricultural owners of record. The survey may also be completed online at

[www.marioncountyfl.org/CleanFarms.htm](http://www.marioncountyfl.org/CleanFarms.htm)

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John Mark Shuffitt  
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Marion County Extension

## Vista Herbicide for Pastures

Vista is not a new product, but has been sold exclusively for vegetation management on rights-of-ways. Recently, this herbicide was approved for use in pastures through a supplemental label. Vista contains fluroxypyr, which is also a component of Pasturegard (triclopyr + fluroxypyr). We have been happy with the results of Pasturegard over the past couple of years. So, why has Vista been approved for use in Florida? At this point in time, I do not believe that Vista will be a stand-alone product for weed control in pastures. However, it can be a good option for tankmix partners for hard to control weeds.

The supplemental label for Vista was seen as an opportunity to increase the weed spectrum of Milestone and Forefront; two herbicides recently labeled for tropical soda apple control in pastures. Milestone is known to be weak on large dogfennel, but it was thought the addition of 2,4-D to aminopyralid (Forefront) would overcome this issue. However, recent complaints have shown that large dogfennel were not controlled with Forefront. Therefore, a test plot was established to examine potential tank-mix partners for Forefront to control dogfennel with one application. The dogfennel were approximately 40 inches tall at the time of application. It was found that the addition of as little as 8 fl oz/acre of Vista to 2 pints/acre of Forefront provided >90% dogfennel control 2 months after treatment (Figure 1). Control with Forefront alone at 2 and 2.6 pints per acre resulted in 61 and 66% control, respectively. The cost of Vista is approximately \$90/gallon. So, the tank-mix of Forefront at 2 pt/acre (\$16) plus Vista at 8 fl oz/acre (\$6) would cost approximately \$22/acre for excellent dogfennel and TSA control.

Similar to Milestone, there are no grazing restrictions for Vista for beef or dairy cows. However, hay and silage should not be harvested for 7 days and meat animals should be removed from treated pastures at least 2 days before slaughter.

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***24th Annual Cattlemen's Institute  
and Allied Trade Show***

**January 18th, 2007**

**Osceola Heritage Park**

**1921 Kissimmee Valley Lane off HWY 192**

# 2006 Fall Forage Update

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Cool-season forages can supply excellent grazing for livestock. They are usually higher in total digestible nutrients and protein than our summer perennial grasses. Planting and growing these forage crops can involve considerable expense and is somewhat risky because rainfall is often unpredictable during the fall months. Winter forages may be grazed to supplement frosted perennial grass pastures or low quality hay, or harvested as a high quality hay or silage crop. Some livestock producers reserve winter forages for young livestock that need higher quality forages. Winter forages cannot be grown everywhere in the state and on every soil type. Some areas and some soils are too dry during the cool season to successfully grow plants. Therefore, the type of winter forage and the site where it is grown should be carefully selected. We provide annual updated information on variety recommendations for forages

that have been adequately tested under Florida growing conditions.

**RYEGRASS** - Ryegrass is a valuable winter and spring grazing crop for use on flatwoods soils or the heavier sandy loam soils in northwest Florida. Ryegrass may be seeded alone or with a small grain on a prepared seedbed or overseeded onto permanent grass pastures. Seeding ryegrass with a small grain crop lengthens the grazing season. Recommended varieties are Jumbo, Florlina, Surrey, Surrey II, Jackson, Magnolia, Rio, Gulf, Southern Star, Big Daddy, TAM 90, Passeral Plus, Ed, Brigadier, Stampede, Fantastic, Graze-N-Gro, King, Prine, Beefbuilder III, Thunder, Bruiser, Striker, Attain, and Big Boss. (Other new varieties may be suitable but have not been adequately tested in Florida.)

For a complete copy of the 2006 Fall Forage Update call 352-671-8400 or visit the following website <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AA266>