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Gastrointestinal Parasite Management Decisions for Small Ruminant Herds

Gastrointestinal parasitism is the major problem facing small ruminant producers in Florida and the Southeastern United States. Due to the overuse of anthelmintics and its ability to acquire drug-resistance, *Haemonchus contortus* is the major pest in our humid climate severely affecting sheep, goat and camelid herds. A heavy load of *Haemonchus contortus* can result in the loss of up to half a cup of blood per day per animal. In order to effectively promote animal health in their small ruminant herds, producers need to adopt new parasite monitoring and decision-making tools which can help them reduce parasite problems in their flocks and herds. Research-based educated management decisions are essential to the success of small ruminant operations. The use of the FAMACHA® Chart as a tool to selectively treat and identify animals with a pre-disposition to parasitosis in Florida herds can help Florida ranchers in the decision making process of which animals to keep and which animals to cull. Also, other practices such as management-intensive grazing and managing their pastures can promote small ruminant health by adopting practices that can reduce the chance of re-infection by *Haemonchus contortus*. A holistic approach to parasite management incorporating these and other practices is essential to maximize profitability of the small ruminant industries in Florida.

