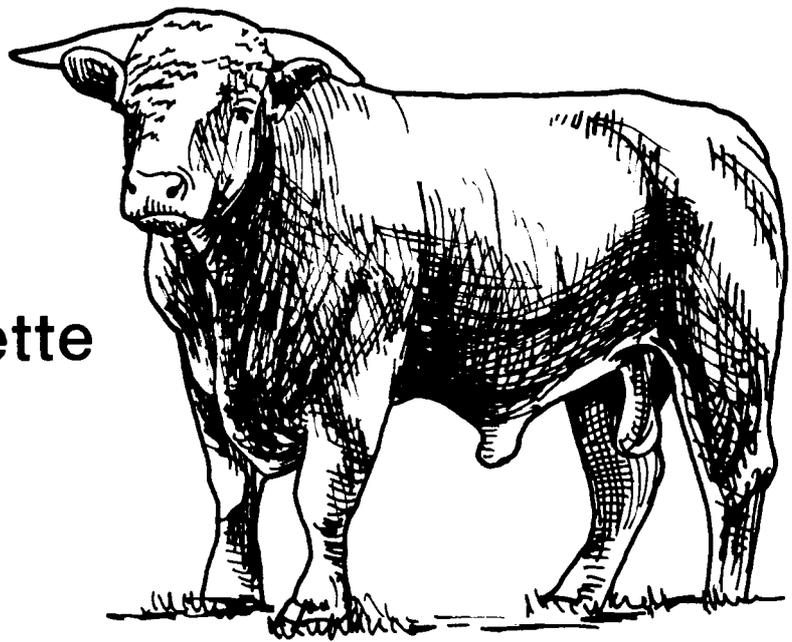


Management of The Beef Ranchette

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Introduction

Producing beef on a small ranch can be an excellent way of providing meat for your table and perhaps a few dollars for your pocket. A small beef herd is not for everyone. It requires several resources and a desire to do the necessary work. It may be a good idea for you, and this publication is designed first to help you decide if you should raise cattle, and second, to help you get started if you decide to. A great deal of supporting information is available and a list of other sources is included on the last page.

Types of Beef Production

Cow-Calf Production is the main beef industry in Florida and can be done on a small scale. This involves keeping breeding females (brood cows) on your land and raising calves born to them each year. When the calves are old enough (6-8 months) to be weaned from their mothers, they are sold to someone else who feeds them until they reach slaughter weight. Therefore, you are keeping cows to raise calves but are not feeding cattle for slaughter. Your weaned calves should weigh 400-600 pounds when sold.

This type of production requires pasture to keep the brood cows on but does not require you to pur-

chase very much feed with the possible exception of hay. It provides income for you but does not put beef on your table unless you decide to feed one of your weaned calves and then butcher it.

Finishing for Slaughter involves buying weaned calves and bringing them up to slaughter weight with feed and possibly pasture. No breeding stock is needed since you buy all of your young calves to feed. This could be done one calf at a time with the finished animal slaughtered and the meat kept for family consumption, or on a larger scale to generate a small income. You would be adding about 500 pounds to the calves over 6-8 months to get them to around 1000 pounds.

This production system requires more feed and less pasture than the cow-calf system and also requires more constant attention by the manager. Steers or heifers can be used in this system and you could combine the systems and raise your calves from birth to butcher.

Resources Needed to Start

If you are considering the purchase of some beef animals, you must first decide if it is something you can handle with your resources. There are several things you will need and without them you might be better off not trying to raise beef.

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