



December 2002

In This Issue...

Beef Management Calendar.....	2
Livestock Summary.....	3
USDA Issues New Scrapie Eradication Program Record Keeping Guidelines for Markets, Dealers.....	4
UF Research Provides Head Start for Controlling Fire Ants.....	4
New USDA Directive Mandates 'Aggressive' Approach to Listeria Testing.....	6
Bronson Announces Multi-Million Dollar Program to Improve Florida's Water Quality.....	7
4-H Clubs Celebrate "Make A Difference Day" by Helping Others.....	8

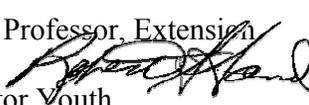


Dates to Remember

December 2002

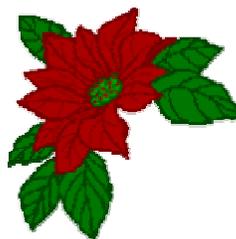
5-6	FCA Year End Quarterly Meeting - Sebring, FL
7	Salacoa Valley Farms Brangus Bull Sale - Calhoun, GA
11-12	FL Bull Test Ends
13	N. Florida Livestock Annual Bull Sale - Lake City, FL
13-14	Junior 4-H Congress - High Springs, FL
16	Brangus Bonanza, Heldon Ranch - Dunnellon, FL
24	Christmas Eve
25	Christmas Day (Holiday)
27	Arcadia Special Slaughter Cow and Bull Sale - Arcadia, FL

Prepared by Extension Specialists in Animal Sciences

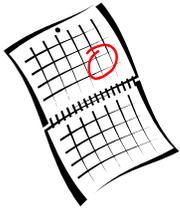
- ❖ F.G. Hembry, Professor, Department Chairman
- ❖ E.L. Johnson, Associate Professor, Extension Equine Specialist
- ❖ T.T. Marshall, Professor, Beef Cattle Management
- ❖ R.O. Myer, Professor, Animal Nutritionist, Marianna
- ❖ R.S. Sand, Associate Professor, Extension Livestock Specialist 
- ❖ W. Taylor, Coordinator Youth Education/Training
- ❖ S.H. TenBroeck, Associate Professor, Extension Youth Specialist
- ❖ T.A. Thrift, Assistant Professor, Beef Cattle Nutrition

January 2003

3	Hog & Ham Workshop - Palmetto, FL
14	Ocala Bull Sale - Ocala, FL
14-16	ECS Led Training Course - Gainesville, FL
15-16	Florida Cattlemen's Institute and Allied Trade Show - Kissimmee, FL
20	Hog & Ham Workshop - Gainesville, FL
21-23	ECS Led Training Course - Palmetto, FL
22-24	AI Management School - Okeechobee, FL
25	FL Bull Test Sale - Marianna, FL
31-Feb 2	American Youth Horse Council Youth Horse Leadership Symposium - St. Louis, MO



Season's Greetings



Beef Management Calendar

December

- ☑ Begin grazing small grain pastures (if ready).
- ☑ Check mineral feeder.
- ☑ Check for external parasites and treat if needed.
- ☑ Deworm cows and heifers prior to winter feeding season.
- ☑ Observe regularly for calving difficulties.
- ☑ Rotate calving pastures to prevent diseases.
- ☑ Watch for scours in calves.
- ☑ Investigate health of bulls before you buy.
- ☑ Have dead animals posted by a veterinarian or diagnostic laboratory.
- ☑ Complete review of management plan and update for next year. Check replacement heifers to be sure they will be ready to breed 3 - 4 weeks prior to the main cow herd.

January

- ☑ Apply lime for summer crops.
- ☑ Check for lice and treat if necessary.
- ☑ Control weeds in cool season pastures.
- ☑ Begin grazing winter clover pastures when approximately 6 inches high. Rye should be 12-8 inches high.
- ☑ Check mineral feeders.
- ☑ Put bulls out for October calving season.
- ☑ Make up breeding herd lists if using single sire herds.
- ☑ Watch for calf scours.
- ☑ Give bulls extra feed and care so they will be in condition for breeding season.
- ☑ Make sure cow herd has access to adequate fresh water.
- ☑ Buy only performance tested bulls with superior records.
- ☑ Get taxes filed.
- ☑ Discuss herd health with you veterinarian and outline a program for the year. Review herd health program with your veterinarian regularly.

- ☑ Carry a pocket notebook to record heat, breeding abnormalities, discharges, abortions, retained placentas, difficult calvings and other data.
- ☑ Observe cow herd for calving difficulties.
- ☑ Watch for grass tetany on winter pastures.
- ☑ Increase magnesium levels in mineral mixes if grass tetany has been previous problem (if you are not already using a high magnesium mineral).
- ☑ Examine bulls for breeding soundness and semen quality prior to the breeding season.
- ☑ Vaccinate cows and heifers against vibriosis and leptospirosis prior to the breeding season.

February

- ☑ Top dress winter forages, if needed.
- ☑ Check and fill mineral feeders.
- ☑ Put bulls out with breeding herd.
- ☑ Work calves (identify, implant with growth stimulant, vaccinate, etc.).
- ☑ Make sure lactating cows are receiving an adequate level of energy.
- ☑ Watch calves for signs of respiratory diseases.
- ☑ Cull cows that failed to calve while prices are seasonally up.
- ☑ Check for lice and treat if needed.





Livestock Summary

Pasture and range conditions have been reported as poor in a large portion of the country as late as early October. Florida was more fortunate than most in this area.

Not surprisingly, the USDA is reporting that cattle on-feed inventories continue to decline. Aggressive marketing this summer and reduced feedlot placements this spring and summer are the cause.

Also adding to the market push are the rising feed grain prices. Even so, slaughter weights remain well above the weather reduced levels of 2001. The weights are expected to continue upward until early November.

There is indication of forage improvement this fall. If this occurs, the higher grain prices will encourage increased weight gain from pasture with the hopes of moderating feed cost.

On-feed placements were down in the second half of 2001 and are expected to decline again this year. Forage development will heavily influence the trend.

Fed cattle marketings are expected to decline below a year earlier from Fall 2002 into 2003. The largest year-to-year declines are predicted to occur in the second half of 2003.

A modest year-over-year reduction in fourth quarter beef production is projected. The record high slaughter weights are the cause. Even the declining fed-cattle marketings can only marginally influence the trend.

For the year 2002, beef production is expected to surpass the 2000 record of 26.8 billion pounds. Sharply increased slaughter weights aided the trend.

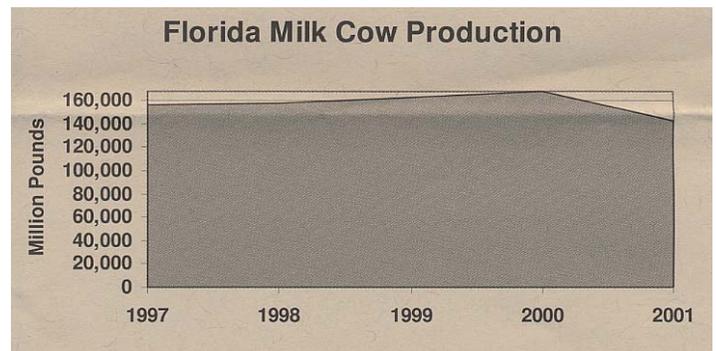
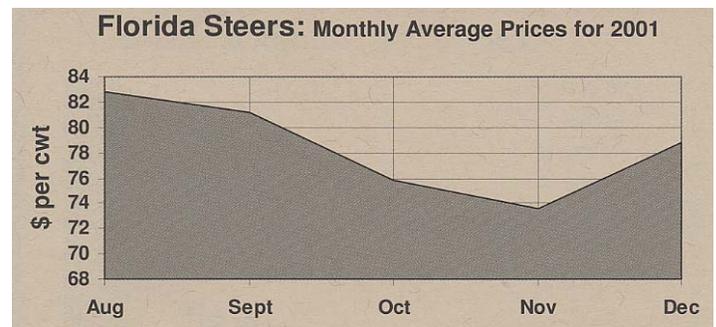
Slaughter weights are expected to set another record in 2003, but year-to-year increase is predicted to moderate. Strong demand for higher quality beef will encourage heavier weights.

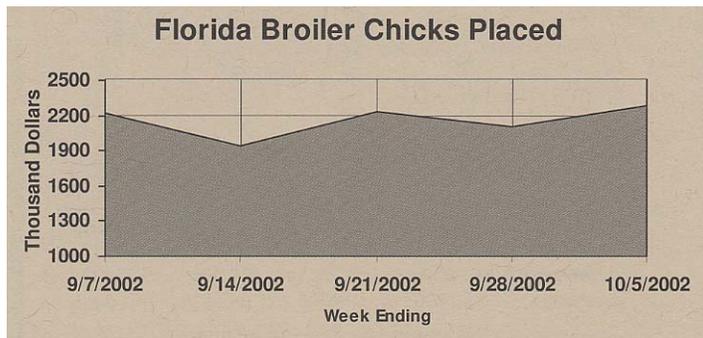
Additionally, few discounts are occurring for heavier carcasses as the industry moves toward marketing individual muscles rather than cuts. Demand is increasing for higher graded beef with consistent quality.

Retail prices are projected to gradually rise through winter as supplies begin to tighten. Large supplies of competing meats, especially pork, are expected to moderate the price trend.

Feeder calf prices should rise, but the best prospects are for the higher graded calves. Order buyers will continue to seek quality and consistency. The overall economy and weather can help or hurt the outlook, but prospects appear bright as beef demand has remained strong and fed-cattle numbers decrease.

Livestock Trends





SOURCE: The Florida Agri-Journal
Researched by Les Harrison
Development Rep. I
Division of Marketing
Release - November 5, 2002

-RSS-



USDA Issues New Scrapie Eradication Program Record Keeping Guidelines for Markets, Dealers

New compliance guidelines to simplify record-keeping for sheep and goat dealers and markets have been issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service-Veterinary Services (APHIS-VS) as part of the national scrapie eradication program.

The new record-keeping compliance guidelines require only standard business practices of record buyer, seller, the number of animals, date, species and breed or class of animal. No longer will dealers and/or market operators be expected to record individual identification information unless individual "IDs" are inserted or replaced by a dealer or market.

The record-keeping change is important to all segments of the sheep and goat industries, according to Dr. Cindy Wolf, Sheep Health Committee Chairperson for the National Institute of

animal Agriculture (NIAA) and small ruminant specialist with the University of Minnesota. "It allows market channels to operate normally and still be in compliance with the scrapie eradication program."

SOURCE: Gale Johnson
National Institute for Animal
Agriculture
gjohnson@animalagriculture.org
(270) 782-9798
Release - November 1, 2002

-RSS-



UF Research Provides Head Start for Controlling Fire Ants

Heads will roll as a U.S. Department of Agriculture plan to control imported fire ants is put into practice this month in Florida.

The plan, based on research by Sanford Porter, a University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences adjunct professor employed by the USDA, introduces tiny South American phorid flies to the United States to control the pesky ants, whose spread has been unaffected by poisons and other measures.

Phorid flies use the decapitated heads of imported fire ants to reproduce.

"This is the only way we're ever going to see a reduction in the number of fire ants in North America," said Fred Santana, the integrated pest management coordinator for the UF/IFAS Sarasota County Extension Service.

Santana will be the first under the USDA plan to release the flies to Florida. The USDA funds the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Division of Plant Industry to produce and distribute the flies.



Sanford Porter, a University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences adjunct professor, inspects imported fire ants at a USDA Division of Plant Industry rearing facility. A plan designed to control imported fire ants by infecting the pests with a parasitic fly is based on Porter's research. (University of Florida/IFAS/Eric Zamora)

"I had thought maybe you could just release the flies into the environment, but you have to go to great pains to make sure that the flies attack the ants," Santana said.

After the flies are incubated, Santana will remove selected fire ants from their nests and place them in a flat-bottomed "attack box" that is about 35 inches long and 17 inches wide. Agitating the ants to ensure they don't adopt defensive postures, he will release 40 to 60 flies into the box. After two hours, Santana will return the newly infected ants to their nests.

Santana said imported fire ants, which accidentally were introduced to Florida from South America 70 years ago and differ from a less-common native species, have a major impact in his area. The ants are capable of multiple stings and inject venom that raises white pustules.

"The ants cost millions in crop, equipment and livestock loss, and millions to control them," Santana said. "They're problems in playgrounds, parks, golf courses, pastures, lawns around houses, edges of sidewalks and just about any disturbed area."

Santana said previous efforts to control the ants have been unsuccessful.

"We've been trying to kill these ants for more than 50 years, but their range just keeps expanding," he said. "There are lots of poisons out there to kill them, but where you broadcast a poison which kills on contact or by ingestion, you also kill many nontarget ants and other beneficial insects."

Unlike poison, Porter said his research has shown the flies are safe to people, animals and crops.

"It's possible they might attack ants other than imported fire ants, but after extensive testing we've never been able to get them to do it," said Porter, an entomologist for the USDA's Agricultural Research Service.

Porter, who has been releasing phorid flies in north Florida for about four years, was the first to describe the fly's life cycle in 1994.

"The flies hover above the ants, dive in, latch on to the ant's body and inject their eggs," he said. "The egg hatches, and a maggot wiggles its way into the ant's head, where it grows for two to three weeks before secreting a chemical that dissolves the membranes holding the ant's body together. In a few hours the ant's head falls off. The maggot eats everything in it, then uses it as a pupae case -- kind of like a cocoon."

The density of imported fire ants in Florida is five to seven times that of its native South America, Porter said. He attributes this to changes in behavior the ants display in the presence of the phorid flies.

"The flies will hover above ants like little squadrons of Apache attack helicopters, dive in and hit ant after ant. Needless to say, the ants don't like it," Porter said. "They'll run and hide if they can, and if they can't hide they'll curl into a defensive, upside-down 'C' posture."

The ants have spread to many southern states, and a federal quarantine designed to limit their range regulates the distribution of agricultural products throughout the Southeast and in many parts of Texas. The USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service is releasing phorid flies in all of the areas under quarantine.

SOURCE: Fred Santana, (941) 316-1172
Sanford Porter, (352) 374-5914
By: Patrick Hughes
UF/IFAS, Gainesville, FL
pfhughes@mail.ifas.ufl.edu
(352) 392-1773
Release - November 14, 2002

-RSS-



New USDA Directive Mandates 'Aggressive' Approach to Listeria Testing

The Agriculture Department released a new directive aimed at controlling *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat meat and poultry products, an initiative that USDA Secretary Anne Veneman described as "an aggressive and targeted approach" to reduce the risk of food-borne outbreaks from listeria-contaminated foods.

The new rules prescribe an intensified testing program for plants that produce high- and medium-risk ready-to-eat products, such as hot dogs or deli meats. The new testing program will consist of three types of sampling:

- ❖ Finished products
- ❖ Product contact surfaces
- ❖ Environmental surfaces inside the plants

Some plants that have an evaluated environmental testing program designed to find and take necessary actions to eliminate listeria will be subject only to targeted testing of finished products. Those plants must share data from their evaluated environmental testing program with USDA.

Plants that have an environmental testing program in place but choose to keep the data private would be subject to the full USDA intensified testing program.

In practical terms, the directive means that USDA will have environmental listeria test data from every inspected facility producing high and

medium risk ready-to-eat products under USDA inspection. The data will either come from the facilities' own test data or from the intensified USDA sampling program.

Officials with the American Meat Institute issued a statement Monday (Nov. 18) noting that current intervention efforts -- not testing -- have already made a difference in reducing the incidence of listeria.

"The goal of any food-safety program should be to protect the public health," said Mark Dopp, AMI senior vice president for regulatory affairs and general counsel. "Data from the Food Safety and Inspection Service show that industry efforts have contributed to significant reductions in listeria in ready-to-eat meat and poultry products. Based on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data, illnesses associated with listeria are also decreasing. These are the kinds of results that are good for our customers and good for businesses."

Dopp noted that meat processors already use environmental testing -- "widely, aggressively and voluntarily" -- to target and destroy listeria in the plant environments where the pathogen can originate.

"Although it may seem counter-intuitive to some, good environmental testing programs must be designed to find listeria so that aggressive actions can be taken to remove it from the processing environment," Dopp said. "Environmental testing programs that only result in negative tests may not be working. The question is, will the government punish a company whose testing program works the way microbiologists say it should?"

Regulatory efforts should encourage industry to test the plant environment and should not punish those plants that work hard to find and eliminate listeria from the environment, Dopp said.

USDA's data on the incidence of listeria in processing plants will likely be available to the public through the Freedom of Information Act, department officials indicated.

Details of the new directive are available on the USDA Web site at www.fsis.usda.gov/oa/.

SOURCE: Robert White (MMT Editor Dan Murphy also contributed to this report)
<http://www.meatingplace.com>
Release - November 20, 2002

-RSS-



Bronson Announces Multi-Million Dollar Program to Improve Florida's Water Quality

Florida Agriculture and Consumer Services Commissioner Charles H. Bronson and U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman are announcing a new program for Florida that will provide more than \$150 million for water quality and habitat improvements on agricultural lands.

Florida's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), a U.S. Department of Agriculture program recently authorized in the 2002 Farm Bill, will restore up to 30,000 acres of environmentally sensitive agricultural land. Conservation practices include restoring wetlands to improve water quality and provide new habitat for migratory waterfowl and wading birds as well as planting trees and grassy areas along water bodies to act as a barrier to runoff and to prevent bank erosion. CREP will be coordinated with other ongoing environmental projects such as the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan and the Lake Okeechobee Protection Plan to achieve greater environmental benefits.

"This cooperative effort will enable Florida to make great strides in its objectives of restoring water quality and providing a natural habitat for many species," Bronson said. "Agricultural producers are serious about protecting the beauty and well being of our unique environmental treasures."

Under the voluntary program, farmers and ranchers will enroll in the CREP under 15-year conservation leases with the USDA. The State will then use its resources to offer incentives to the landowners to extend the conservation leases to a total of 30 years or to make them permanent. Funding for this effort totals \$153 million with the federal government contributing \$96 million of this total.

"This partnership is an example of federal and state resources coming together to enhance our natural resources," said Veneman. "This partnership means cleaner water and healthier wildlife habitat for an array of threatened and endangered species like the woodstork and indigo snake."

The CREP program targets a large geographical area of Florida, stretching from the mouth of the St. Johns River to Florida Bay. It focuses specifically on land in the St. Johns-Ocklawaha-Indian River Lagoon System and in the Everglades Watershed (Kissimmee River, Lake Okeechobee, Caloosahatchee River, and Everglades/Florida Bay).

Today, Bronson was joined by USDA Deputy Secretary James Moseley in Orlando to sign the CREP agreement. USDA's Farm Service Agency will now begin working with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the Soil and Water Conservation Districts on a public outreach program to educate and enroll landowners.

"This CREP will reduce sediment and pollutants and encourage farmers to plant vegetative cover," said Moseley. "Florida's natural resources and the communities around them will greatly benefit from this program."

SOURCE: Liz Compton and Leslie Palmer
FDACS
comptol@doacs.state.fl.us
(850) 509-4323
(850) 933-2134
Release - October 28, 2002

-RSS-



4-H Clubs Celebrate "Make A Difference Day" by Helping Others

Contrary to popular images of today's youth as apathetic, Make a Difference Day found 4-H members making elderly residents of a nursing home smile, helping children who are terminally ill ride horses and sewing quilts for newborns.

More than 200 people turned out for an Equine Fun Day with 12 terminally ill children from Dreams Come True in Jacksonville. Hosted by the Westside Wranglers 4-H Club, the benefit featured pony rides, horse activity games, a fall festival and a hayride. It was part of the annual national day of giving back to the community organized by USA Today.

They weren't the only 4-H'ers in Florida taking part in the annual day of service. The Silly Stitchers 4-H Club in Port Charlotte spent the day sewing bibs and baby quilts for new mothers.

National 4-H Council is a partner in USA Weekend Make a Difference Day, which is why so many 4-H clubs conduct service projects that day, said Marilyn Norman, state 4-H leader and assistant dean for 4-H at the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. "Young people are a vital part of our communities, and they can be an active force in making the world better, if adults will let them."

4-H clubs help the community throughout the year, said Norman. "Giving back to the community gives youth opportunities to take on new roles and responsibilities. These are part of essential out-of-school experiences shown to contribute to positive youth development."

Helping others can help you appreciate what you have, said 4-H members. "Watching the kids from Dreams Come True enjoy the day made us all thankful that we are healthy and it makes you

appreciate the things that you can do," said Kara Shoemaker, 17, of Jacksonville.

Thirty 4-H club members in Ft. Myers spent the day carving pumpkins, singing and doing crafts with elderly residents at Manorcare Health Services. For Kandi Zielinski, 14, whose grandmother lives in the nursing home, project "Make Them Smile" was personally rewarding. "Seeing how much she and the other residents enjoyed having all of the kids there with them really made me happy. Our goal for the day was to make them smile, and I think it was myself and the other 4-H members who were smiling."

Senior citizens have a lot of love to share, said Brooke Harvey, 11, of Alva. "I went to make a difference in someone's life and Sally, the resident I met, made a difference in mine," she said.

Founded in 1902 as an outreach to rural youth, 4-H has 60 million alumni and involves 28 percent of youth in America at some point in their K-12 years, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Florida 4-H is the youth development program of the Florida Cooperative Extension Service, which is part of the UF/IFAS. 4-H worked with more than 287,000 youth ages 5-18 last year in Florida and has programs active in all 67 counties. For more information about Florida 4-H, visit www.florida4h.org. Call toll-free 1-866-4HCLUBS to volunteer.

SOURCE: Marilyn Norman
4-H Youth Development
MNNorman@mail.ifas.ufl.edu
(352) 846-0996

By: Ami Neiberger-Miller
4-H Youth Development
aneiberger@mail.ifas.ufl.edu
(352) 846-0996

-TTM-