



May 2004

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Dates to Remember

May

- 4** Southeast DHIA Board Meeting - Hilton University of Florida Conference Center; Gainesville, FL.
- 5** 41st Annual Florida Dairy Production Conference - Hilton University of Florida Conference Center; Gainesville, FL
- 5-7** 53rd Annual Beef Cattle Short Course Conference - Hilton University of Florida Conference Center; Gainesville, FL
- 8** Area "C" 4-H Horse Show - Bartow Horse Arena, Bartow, FL
- 14-15** Area "B" 4-H Horse Show - Canterbury Showgrounds, Newberry, FL
- 15** FBBA 8th Annual Accent on Quality Sale - Kissimmee, FL
- 16-20** 34th Annual Florida International Agribusiness Trade Show and International Conference on Livestock in the Tropics - Kissimmee, FL
- 19** STARS Forage/Beef Field Day - Subtropical Agricultural Research Station; Brooksville, FL
- 20** 6th Annual Ocala Equine Shortcourse - Hilton Ocala, Ocala, FL
- 24-26** IFAS/NRCS Nutrient Management Module 7 - Florida Practicum - USDA Service Center; Okeechobee, FL
- 27** 2004 Corn Silage Field Day - Plant Science and Education Research Unit; Citra, FL

June

- 11-13** Horse Camp - English
- 14** Open Bids for Horse Teaching Unit Sealed Bid Sale - Gainesville, FL
- 16-18** FCA Annual Convention and Allied Trade Show - Marco Island, FL
- 17** FCA Bull Sale - Marco Island, FL
- 18-20** Horse Camp - Western/Speed
- 23** State 4-H Horse Public Speaking, Illustrated Talks/Demos, Horseman of the Year Interviews, 4-H Horse Quiz Bowl- Gainesville, FL
- 25-26** Hog & Ham - Gainesville, FL



Beef Management Calendar

May

- ✓ Remove bulls.
- ✓ Harvest hay from cool season crops.
- ✓ Plant warm season perennial pastures.
- ✓ Fertilize warm season pastures.
- ✓ Check mineral feeder.
- ✓ Check for spittlebugs and treat if necessary.
- ✓ Apply spot-on agents for grub and louse control.
- ✓ Check dust bags.
- ✓ Vaccinate and implant with growth stimulant any later calves.
- ✓ Reimplant calves with growth stimulant at 90-120 days, when you have herd penned.
- ✓ Dispose of dead animals properly.
- ✓ Update market information and refine marketing plans.
- ✓ Remove bulls May 21 to end calving season March 1.

June

- ✓ Last date for planting sorghum.
- ✓ Check mineral feeder, use at least 8% phosphorus in mineral and not over 2 ½ to 1 calcium to phosphorus ratio.
- ✓ Check pastures and hay field for spittlebugs, mole crickets, and army worms.
- ✓ Treat if necessary; best month for mole cricket control.
- ✓ Check dust bags.
- ✓ Watch for evidence of pinkeye and treat.
- ✓ Utilize available veterinary services and diagnostic laboratories.
- ✓ Get heifers vaccinated for brucellosis if not already done.
- ✓ Pregnancy check cows.
- ✓ Update market information and plans.
- ✓ Make first cutting of hay.
- ✓ Put bulls out June 1 for calves starting March 11.
- ✓ Reimplant calves at 90 to 120 days with growth stimulant.

July

- ✓ Cut corn silage.
- ✓ Control weeds in summer pastures.
- ✓ Apply nitrogen to warm season pastures, if needed.
- ✓ Check mineral feeder.
- ✓ Check for army worms and mole crickets, and treat if necessary.
- ✓ Wean calves and cull cow herd.
- ✓ Watch for evidence of footrot and treat.
- ✓ Consider preconditioning calves before sale including vaccination for shipping fever and IBR at least 3 weeks before sale.
- ✓ Check dust bags.
- ✓ Update market information and plans.
- ✓ Revaccinate calves at weaning for blackleg.



Livestock Summary

Strong beef demand and poor feedlot performance due to poor feeding conditions are helping to offset the negative impact of the export bans on U.S. beef and cattle since December 23. Additional help is on the way as the United States, Canada, and Mexico finalize protocols that will allow beef and cattle to move within the three NAFTA countries.

Safety certification issues were resolved with Mexico on March 9 and three U.S. plants were approved to begin shipping boneless beef from cattle under 30 months of age to Mexico. The three countries are also likely to resolve issues regarding beef processed on a supply line dedicated to cattle less than 30 months of age.

First quarter beef production is expected to decline about 6 percent as the supply of market-ready cattle slows due to poor feedlot performance. A return to favorable conditions this spring and at least normal conditions in the grain production areas are expected to result in female retention and further tightening of supplies for the next 2 to 3 years.

First quarter slaughter weights will likely be near 10 pounds below last year's low level and about 16 pounds below the 2002 record. Weights seasonally decline into late April-early May depending on weather conditions.

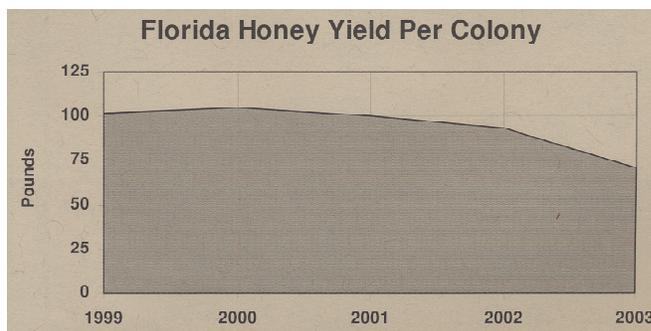
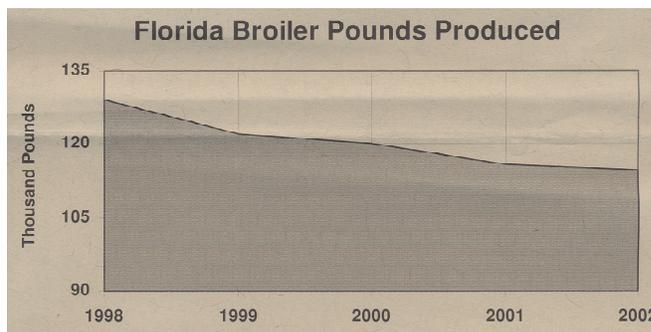
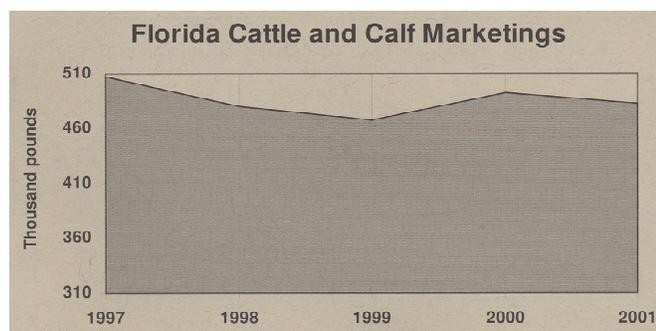
Fed cattle prices are expected to decline into the low \$70's this summer before rising to the upper \$70's this fall as supplies decline seasonally and cyclically. Prices averaged near \$80 per hundredweight in January and February and rose to the mid \$80's in March as regular slaughter weights declined.

Cow slaughter will likely remain well below the large recent levels for the next several years, but forage conditions remain an important determinant. Steer and heifer slaughter, while remaining below year-earlier levels this year, are expected to rise seasonally through summer.

U.S. beef exports for 2004 are forecast to total 430 million pounds, an increase of 210 million pounds from the 220 million pounds expected last month. Exports are expected to be limited because beef from U.S. cattle over 30 months of age (largely culled cows) remains banned, while Canada will be a strong competitor in the market for beef products from animals under 30 months of age.

U.S. beef exports to Mexico may also be limited by continued weakness of the Mexican peso and high relative U.S. prices. With fed cattle prices in the United States expected to average \$74-76 per hundredweight in 2004, beef prices are likely to remain relatively high in terms of pesos and limit Mexico's ability to import U.S. beef, unless the peso were to strengthen significantly.

Livestock Trends



SOURCE: The Florida Agri-Journal
 Researched by Sherilyn Burris
 Information Specialist I
 Division of Marketing
 Release - April 5, 2004

-RSS-



\$2.5 Million NIH Grant Boosts UF/IFAS Research On West Nile And Other Mosquito-Borne Diseases

To reduce the spread of West Nile encephalitis and other mosquito-borne diseases, University of Florida medical entomologists are ramping up their research on dangerous insects and viruses with the help of a \$2.5 million grant from the National Institutes of Health.

“West Nile virus poses a very real risk for the nation, especially Florida, and a large epidemic with

hundreds — or thousands — of cases is likely in the next five years” said Walter Tabachnick, director of UF’s Florida Medical Entomology Laboratory in Vero Beach.

“The virus took the lives of six Floridians last year, and the number of cases reported in the state during the past two years exceeded 150,” he said. “Nationwide, there were nearly 10,000 cases reported.”

Tabachnick said a key objective of the research will be to identify and track mosquitoes that transmit encephalitis, malaria and other diseases, and determine how environmental conditions can increase the likelihood of an epidemic.

Leading the research effort will be Cynthia Lord, an associate professor, who will work with professors Jonathan Day, George O’Meara and Tabachnick, and Assistant Professor Roxanne Rutledge. The grant, for “Modeling and Empirical Studies of Arboviruses in Florida,” will support a five-year research project on arthropod-borne viruses at the Vero Beach lab, which is part of UF’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS).

Lord said the research will help build an information base for the efficient dissemination of disease pathogen information to health organizations. County health units and mosquito control districts use information from the Vero Beach laboratory to inform and protect the public from mosquito-borne illnesses.

Tabachnick said the new model will enable scientists and health officials in each Florida county to better predict the presence of West Nile, St. Louis encephalitis, Eastern equine encephalitis, or other mosquito-borne pathogens in the environment. He said data gained from the information base will be vital to Florida public health and mosquito control agencies in their efforts to target high risk regions and reduce an outbreak before humans are infected.

“The grant brings needed resources to Florida for this important work,” Tabachnick said. “Recognized as one the leading research institutions of its kind in the world, the Florida Medical Entomology Laboratory is one of the very few

facilities capable of studying these pathogens in natural situations. Our faculty are recognized for multidisciplinary research on mosquitoes and mosquito-borne pathogens, employing state-of-the-art technology.”

He said the expanded research program will use theoretical, laboratory and field studies to provide information on Florida’s arboviruses to health organizations. The program will involve nearly 30 people, including 10 new employees.

“The fact that this NIH grant is being awarded to a research organization on the Treasure Coast is yet another example of the growing prominence of the scientific community in this part of the state,” Tabachnick said. “In fact, the growing role of research in our region of the state would not be possible without the support of the Florida Legislature, particularly Sen. Ken Pruitt.”

Tabachnick thanked Sen. Mike Haridopolos and Rep. Ralph Poppell for their support of a Community Budget Issue Request for nearly \$800,000 in state funds for renovations at the laboratory. Tabachnick said that the new state funds, if budgeted, represent a needed investment to obtain additional federal support for research at the Vero Beach laboratory on arthropod borne diseases to protect Florida and the United States.

He also cited additional support for research at the Vero Beach laboratory from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, which awarded previous grants for research on the West Nile virus and St. Louis encephalitis. Tabachnick said the partnership between the university and state agriculture department helped make the new NIH grant a reality.

SOURCE: Walter Tabachnick
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(772) 778-7200, ext. 124
By: Robin Koestoyo
UF/IFAS News
Release - April 23, 2004

-SHT-

Suburban Coyotes On The Rise, UF Professor Says

They've long been a symbol of the wild open spaces of the American West. Now coyotes are making themselves at home in Florida's suburbs.

But suburbanites need not fear the predators in their backyards as long as they use common sense, says Martin Main, a wildlife ecologist with UF's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.

"Coyotes have a negative image, but on the whole they're probably good for the ecosystem," Main said. "The coyote is just another poor guy trying to make a living, and in doing so he's killing smaller predators that feed on native birds and other wildlife. Of course, that's small comfort if the smaller predator happens to be your cat."

Main is one of the lead researchers in the South Florida Coyote Study, an annual survey that tracks populations of coyotes as they spread through Florida — the coyote's final frontier.

Once confined to the western states, the coyote has spread to virtually all of North America in the last century. The spread is due partly to human efforts to exterminate wolves, larger predators that kill coyotes. But it's also due to the coyote's famously clever nature: normally solitary predators that avoid humans and prey on small animals, coyotes can learn to live off garbage and may venture onto farms to prey on calves or other small livestock.

Though hunters released a few of them in Florida as early as the 1920s, coyotes didn't establish themselves in the Sunshine State until the 1960s, when populations from Alabama and Georgia moved into the Panhandle. Since then coyotes have spread to all but the southern tip of Florida, with researchers finding evidence of coyotes as far south as Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve in Collier County.

Until recently, the influx of coyotes has been of concern only to ranchers, who occasionally lose calves to the predators. But in the past two or three years, Main said, researchers have fielded a growing number of reports about coyotes living and hunting in the Florida suburbs.



Martin Main, a wildlife ecologist with the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, measures the teeth of a coyote to determine its age at the time of its death — April 9, 2004. Main, part of a team of researchers who conduct a yearly survey of coyote populations in Florida, says the versatile predators are showing up in suburban areas around the state. Main said that as long as people stay away from coyotes and do not feed them, they have little to fear from the animals. (AP photo by Marisol Amador/UF/IFAS)

Among other examples, Main cites increasing sightings of the predators at Panhandle airports, as well as a 2002 incident in which firefighters rescued a coyote from a canal in a Collier County subdivision under construction. But so far, suburban coyotes have created the biggest stir in Pinellas County, where residents blamed the wily predators for the disappearance of several housecats in 2003.

"We know we have coyotes because we've seen them," said Jeanne Murphy, park naturalist for UF's Pinellas County Extension Service at Florida Botanical Gardens in Largo. Murphy said the park is home to a group of at least three to five coyotes which

are spotted almost nightly by park rangers.

Those sightings are just a sign of things to come, Main said. In the five years since the coyote study began, researchers have found populations of coyotes steadily increasing. Though the survey currently counts coyotes only in wildlife preserves, Main said, higher populations will mean more coyotes venture into the suburbs in search of new places to hunt. And development is bringing humans into territory already claimed by coyotes, Main said.

“I think of the coyote as a case study for the future,” he said. “As development takes up more and more habitat, we’re going to see more and more encounters with urban wildlife of this sort.”

While the presence of coyotes in a suburban neighborhood can make people anxious, Main says, coyotes are not likely to cause problems as long as people exercise common sense. A small animal — the largest coyote collected by Main in Florida weighed just 39 pounds — coyotes have typically shied away from humans in the past.

In recent years, suburban residents in Western states have occasionally reported coyotes approaching or attacking small children or harassing people as they walk their pets. But Main says these attacks are rare and are probably due to coyotes losing their fear of humans — something that often happens when people feed coyotes.

“People may think it’s cute or an act of kindness to feed coyotes — until someone gets bitten,” he said. “Then everybody changes their tune and starts saying we should kill them all. We need to show all wild animals respect and recognize that if you really want to do these animals a favor, you’ll just stay away from them and let them go about their business in peace.”

The predators do pose a danger to housecats and small dogs, Main said, though people can lessen the risk by bringing in their pets at night. And Main believes coyotes could play an important role in the state’s ecosystem by controlling populations of feral cats.

“Anybody who has lived in Florida knows that the state hosts a wide variety of migrating birds,”

Main said. “Both feral and domestic cats — predators we’ve introduced to the state — kill those birds, including species that are endangered.”

Coyotes may also provide an ecological benefit by controlling populations of small predators, such as raccoons, that raid nests and eat eggs, he said.

Once they’re established in an area, Main said, coyotes are there to stay. He notes that farmers across the country have tried to wipe out coyotes using a number of methods, including shooting, trapping and even poisoning, but coyote populations have recovered and even grown despite those measures.

“You’ll never permanently exterminate the coyote by any means that has been tried yet,” Main said. “If you could, there wouldn’t be a single coyote in the entire state of Texas. Out west, they’ve tried every trick in the book.”

SOURCE: Martin Main
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By: Tim Lockette
UF/IFAS News
Release - April 9, 2004

-RSS-

Researcher Says Carcass Breaking Can Contaminate Beef With E. Coli

New research suggests that the beef carcass breaking process — not the carcass dressing process — is a major source of disease-causing bacteria, according to the Canada Alberta Beef Industry Development Fund, which helped fund the research.

The study conducted by Colin Gill, a meat research scientist at Agri-Food Canada's Lacombe Research Center, may indicate that redesigning carcass breaking equipment could significantly reduce the levels of *E. coli* O157:H7 contamination.

The carcass dressing stage is normally the target for *E. coli* intervention.

According to Gill, because beef is pasteurized after the carcass dressing process, very few *E. coli*-infected carcasses enter the breaking facilities, but the pathogen resurfaces during the breaking phase.

Gill studied two beef packing plants. At the first plant, where about 120 carcasses are broken per hour, samples were taken after carcass breaking to determine total aerobic counts, coliforms and *E. coli*, according to his research. For each group of bacteria, numbers were higher on trimmings than on carcasses entering the breaking process, Gill said.

Gill also sampled pooled water on cleaned carcass breaking equipment and steel mesh gloves used during carcass breaking. *E. coli* comprised less than 10 percent of the coliforms recovered from any glove or sample, but it was dominant in the coliforms recovered from meat. That meant the breaking process "may be sporadically contaminated at localized sites with *E. coli*, which are distributed over the carcass during the breaking process, in addition to the product being contaminated *de novo* from improperly cleaned equipment," Gill said in a news release.

At the second plant, where 240 carcasses were broken per hour, samples taken during the breaking stage generally did not show an increased number of *E. coli*.

But samples taken from cotton gloves worn by workers involved in the breaking of hanging carcasses showed a significant *E. coli* presence, Gill said.

"For the glove samples, *E. coli* was recovered in rather large numbers from the water in which gloves were rinsed and in small numbers from swabs of those same gloves," Gill said in the release. "This leads us to believe that the gloves must become contaminated with *E. coli* from surfaces within the

breaking facility, as the numbers are too high to be derived from the carcasses."

Samples taken from a table where part of a side of beef is placed and the belt used for conveying chucks had comparable counts with the sides and cuts, suggesting that the coliforms and *E. coli* recovered from the cuts didn't come from the carcass sides, but instead originated from the cut conveying equipment, Gill said.

Gill said he believes carcass breaking equipment should be redesigned so that it can be completely cleaned during the work day and that in the future microbiological sampling should be used on equipment to determine if it is clean.

SOURCE: Eric Hanson
ehanson@meatingplace.com
Meatingplace.com
Release - April 23, 2004

-TTM-

Calf With Three Eyes, Two Mouths Born In Texas

A newborn calf in Grand Saline, Texas, is doing well despite having three eyes and two mouths.

The 57-pound calf — named "Unique" — was born April 12 about 60 miles east of Dallas.

A local veterinarian said the animal is perfectly healthy, and each of its extra body parts functions normally.



According to owner Virginia Hale, the light red female calf is friendly, likes to drink milk from its mother and enjoys lapping up water using both tongues.

SOURCE: Brendan O'Neill
boneill@meatingplace.com
Meatingplace.com
Release - April 22, 2004

-RSS-



NCBA Executive Committee Opposes Litigation That Threatens Opening Of International Markets

R-Calf Tactic Ignores Science, Overall Industry Goals

Efforts to build a global market for U.S. beef based on science would be harmed by frivolous litigation against the U.S. Department of Agriculture to close the U.S. border to Canadian beef and cattle, according to the officers and executive committee of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA). R-Calf/United Stockgrowers of America has threatened to sue the USDA to keep the border closed until Canada is recognized internationally as "BSE-Free."

Passed in an NCBA Executive Committee teleconference last Friday was the following statement: "The NCBA Executive Committee, comprised of cattlemen from across the country, opposes this type of lawsuit that restricts the opportunity to reopen international markets that benefit U.S. cattle producers."

According to NCBA President Jan Lyons, a cattle and beef producer from Manhattan, Kan., efforts to recapture the \$13-15 per hundredweight lost to beef exports following the Dec. 23 incident in

Washington state would suffer as a result of R-Calf's action.

"We really can't expect our export partners to base their decisions on science if we're not willing to do the same thing with those who export products to us," Lyons says. "When it comes to Canada, we expect that border to be opened in such a way that it would not harm our domestic market, that Canadian heifers be permanently identified and not allowed to enter the U.S. breeding herd through feedlots, and that Canada abide by equivalency principles on cattle and beef so that we have unrestricted movement of cattle and beef to Canada.

"At the same time, we want to assure that Japan and other importing countries abide by internationally accepted science in their trade with the United States. We firmly believe the science provides assurances to all beef consumers, both here and abroad, that U.S. beef is safe. We simply cannot address international trade one country at a time."

Lyons says the best way to recapture losses due to trade sanctions against the U.S. is to show the world how to conduct trade based on science, not to work overtime to create new trade sanctions against countries.

"This lawsuit threat is consistent with other R-Calf isolationist actions that would ultimately prove detrimental to cattlemen," according to Lyons. "It appears to be a membership-generating effort that ignores the value of U.S. beef exports to cattlemen. It also ignores science that shows the border can be reopened safely, and done without harm to U.S. cattlemen if done properly.

"If we applied the R-Calf criteria of 'prohibiting imports of live cattle or beef from countries with BSE in their herds,' then other countries, like Japan, would apply the same standard to us – regardless of the animal's origin," Lyons says.

SOURCE: NCBA
Walt Barnhart
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Release - April 19, 2004

-RSS-