UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
IFAS EXTENSION

Animal Science Newsletter

December 2004

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Prepared by Extension Specialists in Animal Sciences

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Dates to Remember

December

1-3	FCA Quarterly Meeting - Sebring, FL
3-5	Florida Palomino Exhibitors Association Show - Newberry, FL
4	4-H Youth Livestock Evaluation School - Gainesville, FL
6	Salacoa Valley Farm Bull Sale - Fairmont, GA
11	4-H/FFA Horse Judging School - Gainesville, FL
11	Alachua County 4-H & Open Horse Show - Newberry, FL
11	Canterbury Schooling Dressage/Driving - Newberry, FL
17-19	Rush Hunter Jumper A Rated Show - Newberry, FL
20	Okeechobee Slaughter Cow Sale - Okeechobee, FL
25	Christmas

January

11	Ocala Bull Sale - Ocala, FL
17	Hog & Ham Workshop - Gainesville, FL
20	Cattlemen's Institute & Trade Show - Kissimmee, FL

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 12-18 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

Cattle sales in Florida this year to date are currently 55,367 head less than last year's sales, mostly due to damages caused by the recent hurricanes. Power outages and structural damages have temporarily closed many auction barns, and the task of clearing debris and repairing fences kept cattlemen from devoting time to selling their cattle. Out of forty-two scheduled auctions in September, only fifteen auctions took place.

The hurricanes hit just as Florida's cow-calf producers started shipping their calves to feedlots, a season that continues through October. Last year during the month of September 75,655 head were sold through the livestock markets. This year in

September, due to the hurricanes, 32,337 head were sold. Approximately sixty-five percent of Florida's cattle-producing areas have been affected by the storms, and the livestock industry has lost about $100 million.

Jim Handley, executive vice president of the Florida Cattlemen's Association, calls the situation in Florida "Tough. There's a world of water. In places, you can't even get a truck in to load calves." Agricultural damage was widespread and new storms hindered recovery efforts.

"The impact from these storms will be felt for months," says Jim McAdams, National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) president-elect. "Besides replacing the immediate losses of buildings, crops and livestock, producers will have to contend with pasture loss from thirty or more days of rain. That's going to lower shipping weights, body condition scores, and that's going to raise feed costs."

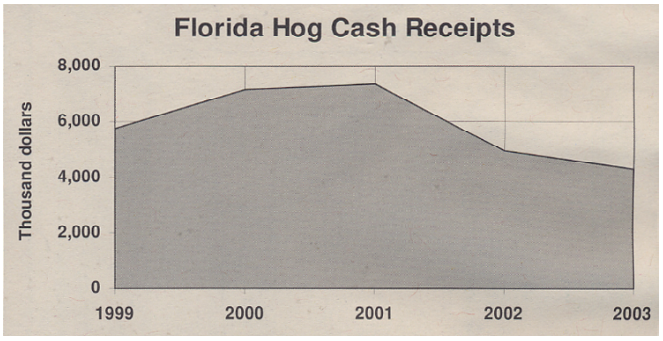
One of the first needs is to secure perimeter fencing to stop cattle from wandering across highways. The NCBA states in Region II – North Carolina, Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama and Louisiana – sent a load of fencing material, including 3,000 metal T-posts and 520 rolls of barbed wire.

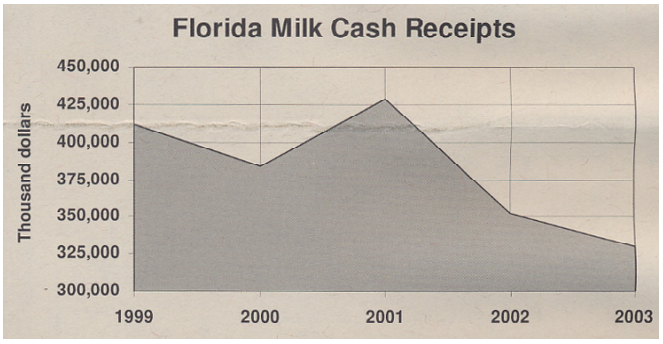
Dairy farmers have been forced to dump more than 300,000 gallons of milk because there were no tankers available to ship the milk out. Dairy and beef cattle will continue to be affected by storm-related problems such as stress.

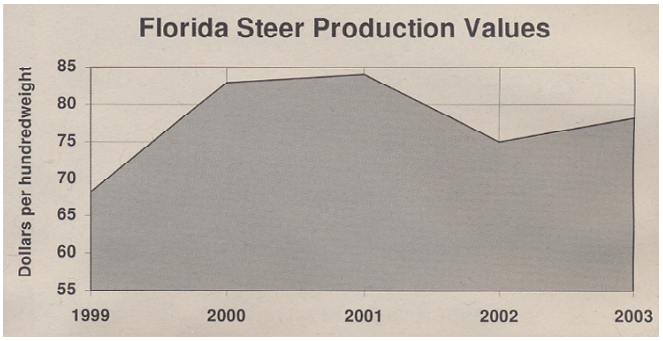
Florida Agriculture Commissioner Charles H. Bronson praised the Bush Administration for its immediate economic response to the widespread agricultural damage endured in Florida by the Hurricanes. On September 27th, President Bush presented a supplemental funding bill that included $400 million specifically for disaster relief for agriculture in Florida and Alabama.

Bronson gave particular appreciation to President George W. Bush, U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman, U.S. Representative Adam Putnam, and members of Florida's congressional delegation. Governor Jeb Bush was also instrumental in securing the federal assistance, visiting Washington D.C. and lobbying members of the delegation and the Administration, Bronson said.

Livestock Trends







SOURCE: The Florida Agri-Journal
Researched by Kurt Shiver
Marketing Specialist I
Division of Marketing
Release - October 8, 2004

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USDA BSE Announcement

Statement by Andrea Morgan Associate Deputy Administrator Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service U.S. Department of Agriculture

"Early this morning, we were notified that an inconclusive BSE test result was received on a rapid screening test used as part of our enhanced BSE surveillance program."

"The inconclusive result does not mean we have found another case of BSE in this country. Inconclusive results are a normal component of screening tests, which are designed to be extremely sensitive so they will detect any sample that could possibly be positive."

"Tissue samples are now being sent to USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratories-the national BSE reference lab-which will run confirmatory testing."

"Because this test is only an inconclusive test result, we are not disclosing details specific to this test at this time."

"APHIS has begun internal steps to begin initial tracebacks, if further testing were to return a positive result. However, it is important to note, that this animal did not enter the food or feed chain."

"Confirmatory results are expected back from NVSL within the next 4 to 7 days. If the test comes back positive for BSE, we will provide additional information about the animal and its origin."

"USDA remains confident in the safety of the U.S. beef supply. Our ban on specified risk materials from the human food chain provides the protection to public health, should another case of BSE ever be detected in the United States."

"Screening tests are often used in both human and animal health and inconclusives are not unexpected. These tests cast a very wide net and many end up negative during further testing."

"And some subset of these animals may even turn out to be positive for BSE. While none of us wants to see that happen, that is not unexpected either. Our surveillance program is designed to test as many animals as we can in the populations that are considered to be at high risk for BSE."

"Additional measures to strengthen public health safeguards include the longstanding ban on imports of live cattle, other ruminants, and most ruminant products from high-risk countries; FDA's 1997 prohibition on the use of most mammalian protein in cattle feed; an aggressive surveillance program that has been in place for more than a decade; the banning of non-ambulatory cattle from the human food chain; the process control requirement for establishments using advanced meat recovery (AMR) systems; prohibiting the air-injection stunning of cattle; and, if an animal presented for slaughter is sampled for BSE, holding the carcass until the test results have been confirmed negative."

SOURCE: United State Department of Agriculture
http://www.usda.gov
Release - November 18, 2004

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To learn more about the risks of BSE, information can found at the following websites:

- Centers for Disease Control Q&A:
http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/cjd/bse_cjd_qa.htm

- Food and Drug Administration Q&A:
http://www.fda.gov/cber/bse/bseqa.htm#a1

- U.S. Department of Agriculture Q&A:
http://www.aphis.usda.gov/lpa/issues/bse/bse_q&a.html

- Beef Industry Scientific Panel Information Resource:
http://www.BSEinfo.org

Industry, Stock Market React to Inconclusive BSE Test

The National Meat Association and the American Meat Institute quickly weighed in on the announcement Thursday that USDA may have detected a second case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Both associations rushed out statements supporting the statement by Dr. Andrea Morgan, associate deputy administrator of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, that results of the tests are still inconclusive, and that even if further testing confirms another case of BSE, it will indicate that American systems for detecting the disease are working.

The stock market, however, instantly signaled concern with the report, as restaurant and beef-supplier stocks dipped across the board. Tyson Foods fell nearly a percentage point to $16.63, while McDonald's Corp. dropped 1.5 percent to $29.95. ConAgra, Hormel, Smithfield and Wendy's were among the other meat-industry players who lost ground, although the reaction was more muted than it was after previous inconclusive test announcements.

In a statement, NMA said, "This is the third inconclusive test since a cluster last summer caused APHIS to make its screening procedures more rigorous. Such results show that the enhanced testing program that the USDA initiated on June 1, 2004, is working."

J. Patrick Boyle, president of the AMI, said, "U.S. beef is safe, and consumers needn't worry about news of a new 'inconclusive' test result for BSE."

Boyle added that even if further testing confirms the presence of BSE, "it must be treated as an animal health issue, not a public health concern." He noted that the infective agent, misshapen prions, has never been detected in beef, but only in parts of the animal such as the eyes, tonsils and brain that are removed from the food supply routinely.

SOURCE: Pete Hisey
phisey@meatingplace.com
http://www.meatingplace.com
Release - November 19, 2004

-RSS-

Bronson Announces Biocontrol Program to Fight Imported Fire Ants

Florida Agriculture Commissioner Charles H. Bronson announced today that a biological control program to control imported fire ants is being initiated in Immokalee and Sarasota .

"Imported fire ants can deliver painful bites, and we're pleased to be part of the team that is addressing their growing population in Florida," Bronson said. "The insect that is being reared in our Biological Control Rearing Facilities is a small fly that packs a powerful punch to these ants."

The program currently underway in Immokalee is a cooperative effort. It is being administered by Professor Phil Stansly of the University of Florida's Southwest Florida Research and Education Center. The U.S. Department of Agriculture funds the Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services' Division of Plant Industry in Gainesville to produce and distribute the flies. The Division of Plant Industry's Bureau of Methods Development and Biological Control serves a valuable function in applying biocontrol technology by working out mass rearing and release techniques. The Division has environmental specialists stationed throughout the state to monitor the effectiveness of biocontrol programs.

Phorid fly hovering around imported fire ants.

Phorid fly releases began in north central Florida in 1997. By fall 2002, the phorid fly population had expanded coast to coast in northern

Florida and southern Georgia . While it is likely that the population of imported fire ants has decreased in these areas, it will take three to four more years to accurately measure the impact. As flies become available through the rearing process, Bronson said he hopes to continue the release program throughout Florida , including another release tentatively scheduled for later this month in Sarasota .

The program, based on research by Sanford Porter, an entomologist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, introduces South American phorid flies, a natural enemy of the imported fire ant, to the United States . The flies inject their eggs into the fire ants. When an egg hatches, the maggot finds its way into the ant's head, where it grows for two to three weeks before secreting a chemical which causes the ant's head to fall off. The maggot eats everything in the head capsule, then uses it as a pupae case. The phorid flies eventually emerge from the decapitated ant heads to seek out their host species, the imported fire ant.

The phorid fly presents no threat to people, animals or plants.

The Immokalee program will last for approximately ten days with the flies being released daily over excavated ant mounds. In that time, a sufficient number of ants should be parasitized (meaning the flies' eggs have been deposited in the ants), so that establishment of the fly population is more likely.

Imported fire ants, which differ from a less common native species of fire ant, were accidentally introduced into the United States from South America 70 years ago and have had a major impact. The ants are capable of multiple stings which inject venom that raise white pustules on skin. The ants also cause crop and equipment damage, livestock losses and soil erosion problems, and are particularly dangerous on playgrounds, lawns, golf courses and pastures.

Efforts to eradicate these ants have been ongoing for more than 50 years. However, their range continues to expand and they have spread to most southern states. There are poisons available that kill them on contact or by ingestion, but these poisons also kill many non-target ants and other beneficial insects. Unlike poison, using the phorid fly is safe for people, animals and crops.

It will take a multi-pronged approach using biological control practices along with other tools and techniques to control the imported fire ant. Fortunately, there are twenty species of the phorid fly. The upcoming Sarasota release will involve another species of phorid fly that attacks smaller-size workers of the imported fire ants. The goal of the program is to get several more species of phorid flies approved for release so that an arsenal of phorid flies will attack all size workers of the imported fire ant population. Several additional species are currently being evaluated for future use.

"This is a program that appeals to everyone," Commissioner Bronson added, "environmentalists, the agricultural industry and the backyard gardener."

For more information visit the Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services Web site at http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/pi/methods/methods.html or call the toll-free helpline at (888)397-1517.

SOURCE: Denise Feiber
Phone: (352) 372-3505, Ext. 102
Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
http://www.doacs.state.fl.us
Release - November 15, 2004

-RSS-

Bronson Seeks Farming Families Who Have Owned Farms For 100 Years

Century Pioneer Family Farm program honors contributions to Florida's history

With less than 2 percent of Americans now living on farms, not many can trace their agricultural heritage back 100 years. Florida Agriculture Commissioner Charles H. Bronson wants to honor Floridians who have maintained at least 100 years

of continuous family farm ownership by certifying them as Century Pioneer Family Farms.

"These families are the true pioneers of Florida's proud agricultural tradition," Bronson said. "They have seen firsthand the developments in farming over the past century. They have been through good times and trying times; experienced freezes, droughts, deluges and pest invasions. They know about hard work and the satisfaction it brings."

Florida has 176 certified Century Pioneer Family Farms in the program, which was initiated in 1985 by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and is now administered by the department's Florida Agricultural Museum.

Bronson is asking families that have continuously owned a farm or ranch since 1905 to contact the department and request an application form. All families previously designated as Florida Century Pioneer Farm Families are also asked to contact the department to update their information.

"The Florida Century Pioneer Family Farm program honors those families who struggled and worked for generations to build their farms, better themselves, and develop Florida's modern agricultural industry," Bronson said. "The program venerates their perseverance and helps preserve an important part of our state's history for future generations."

Family members do not have to live in the state or on the property continuously, but title to at least part of the property must have remained in the family throughout the period for the family to be eligible for recognition. An abstract of title is the best evidence of continuous family ownership. The current title to the property must reside with a blood relative of the original owner or a legally adopted child of a descendant. In addition to receiving a certificate, Century Pioneer Family Farms also receive a sign that can be posted on the property denoting its significance. Only one certificate will be issued for each property, so relatives of families who have already been honored are not eligible for recognition for the same property.

European agriculture began in Florida with the founding of St. Augustine in 1565, 44 years before Jamestown was founded. The oldest farms and the oldest farm families in the United States are Floridians. Florida was first in agriculture but frequently overlooked in American history because it was a Spanish colony and not one of the 13 British colonies.

For information about the Century Pioneer Family Farm program or to request an application form, email famuseum@pcfl.net, or write to:

Charles H. Bronson
Commissioner of Agriculture
1850 Princess Place Road
Palm Coast, Florida 32137

SOURCE: Richard Gunnels
Phone: (850) 488-3022
Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
http://www.doacs.state.fl.us
Release - November 10, 2004

-RSS-

Relationship of Teat and Udder Scores with Cow Milk Production and Calf Growth Traits

Some beef breed associations provide a scoring system for the evaluation of teat size and udder suspension in cows. However, the relationship of teat and udder scores with milk production and calf growth is not clear. In this University of Georgia study, teat and udder data from 9,418 first-calf Gelbvieh cows and growth records on 19,119 calves born in their first three calf crops were used to determine the relationship of teat and udder scores with calf growth traits and maternal genetic growth effects. Teat size score (T) ranged from 0 (very large) to 50 (very small) and udder suspensory score (S) ranged from 0 (very pendulous) to 50 (very tight). Birth weights (BW), weaning weights, and yearling weights of the calves were used to calculate

preweaning gain (WG) and postweaning gain (YG).

Heritability estimates of T and S were moderate (0.27 and 0.22, respectively). The genetic correlation between teat and suspensory score was 0.95, suggesting that the same genes may control both traits. The genetic correlations of T and S with direct BW, WG, and YG and with maternal BW and WG suggested that cows with smaller teats and tighter udders produced less milk and raised calves that had higher genetic growth potential for preweaning gain. The data also indicated that cows with extremely large teats or pendulous udders may produce more milk, but that the calf may have trouble accessing it, resulting in reduced preweaning gain. Conversely, with extremely small teats or tight udders, lower amounts of milk would be produced and there may be a problem producing enough milk to meet the calf's genetic potential for preweaning gain. Consequently, the authors concluded that to obtain a balance between increased milk production and accessibility of the milk to the nursing calf to maximize his growth performance, it may be more beneficial for producers to select animals that have intermediate breeding values for teat and suspensory score (Sapp et al. 2004. J. Anim. Sci. 82:2277).

SOURCE: Beef Cattle Research Update
Harlan Ritchie, Steven Rust, and Daniel Buskirk
Beef Cattle Specialists
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI
Release - Fall 2004

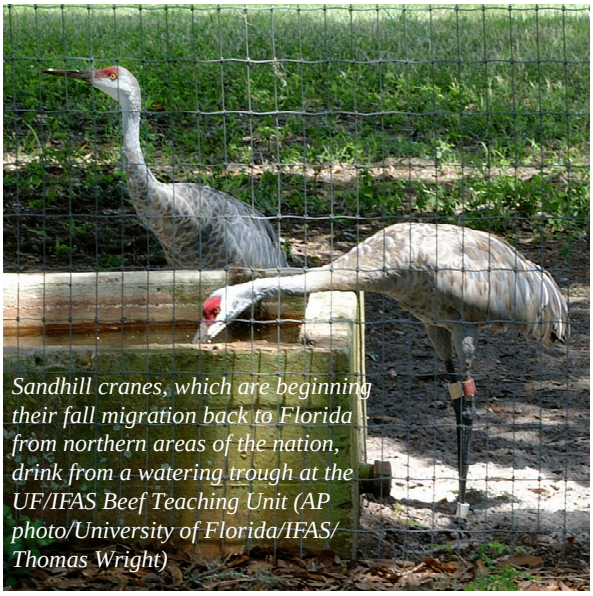
-RSS-

Dog Food Fed to Cattle

Recently concern has been expressed about the practice of feeding dog food to show cattle to increase the "shine or bloom" prior to showing. This practice is highly discouraged and likely illegal because of concerns surrounding transmission of BSE. Pet food of any sort can contain ingredients that have been banned by the USDA as feedstuffs for cattle. Dog food in many instances contains meat and bone meal, beef and bone meal, lamb meal, meat products, or meat by-products. Feed ingredients that contain these products from ruminants (cattle, sheep, goat, deer, etc.) are illegal to feed to cattle regardless of the form that they are fed in (i.e. dog food, pelleted feeds). Dog food labels indicate that the food is for dogs only; feeding the food to cattle is off-label use of the product. Ultimately all show cattle will enter the human food chain. By providing cattle illegal feed ingredients our food safety, health, and cattle industry can be put in danger. Better, cheaper, and safer sources of protein and fat are available for show cattle rations. Anyone that owns cattle that will enter the human food chain has a responsibility to ensure the safety and wholesomeness of the product. One question to ask FFA/4-H advisors, leaders, or exhibitors, would you be willing to eat the products from your show calf knowing what you have fed or done? If not, why should anyone else?

SOURCE: Matt Hersom, Assistant Professor
Phone: (352) 392-2390
Tim Marshall, Professor
Phone: (352) 392-1917
UF/IFAS, Department of Animal Sciences
Gainesville, FL

-MJH-



Sandhill cranes, which are beginning their fall migration back to Florida from northern areas of the nation, drink from a watering trough at the UF/IFAS Beef Teaching Unit (AP photo/University of Florida/IFAS/ Thomas Wright)