

# MANATEE LIVESTOCKER

December 2006

## **Poisonous Weeds in Pastures**

**Christa L. Carlson**

**Extension Agent II, Livestock**

Many farmers and ranchers are aware of the plants in their pastures. Most are familiar with the poisonous weeds that may appear from time to time. The truth is there may be poisonous weeds in your pasture right now that you are unaware of.

Traditionally livestock will not eat weeds that are harmful to them. The livestock begin to snack on these weeds when they are moved into a new area where there are plants present that they are unfamiliar with. Just like humans, cattle are curious creatures. When they see something they are unfamiliar with they are going to test it out. Other times that livestock will try poisonous weeds rather than the green grasses may be in the fall after a frost or in the spring when plants begin to green-up

Other situations where livestock will turn to a poisonous weed may be when animals are on range land and there is a shortage of range for the animals to survive so they will turn to weeds they normally would not eat.

Animals which are receiving rations that are not properly balanced for them may turn to harmful plants and weeds in search of the nutrients they are not receiving. Therefore, it is important to supplement minerals to animals where known deficiencies may occur.

Poisoning from plants or weeds often occurs when pastures are overgrazed or in times of a drought. Overgrazing occurs from having excessive animals grazing on a particular piece of land. During this time animals are looking for forages to meet their needs. When the grass isn't present they turn to other forms of roughage. Some of which tend to be poisonous weeds.

Unfortunately, livestock may inadvertently consume poisonous materials through infected hay. In most cases this occurs when the hay contains pieces of bracken fern or crotalaria. Other situations are when the animals decided to eat plant materials on the other side of the fence or through curiosity in a trash pile in the pasture.

Some of the more common weeds that livestock owners should be aware of are crotalaria, lantana, pokeweed, bracken fern, and nightshade,. Many of these weeds are also used as ornamental plants in landscaping or for butterfly gardening. Each is unique and has its own characteristics to make them easy to identify.



**Crotalaria** is also known as showy crotalaria. The weed is seldom found in very wet soils. Traditionally found in fencerows, around buildings, or in an abandoned field. Poisoning can occur in all classes of livestock. Some symptoms that may be observed would be bloody feces, loss of appetite, and yellowish discoloration of the visible mucosal membranes along with gastric hemorrhage in horses. Livestock may die two to nine months following ingestion of the plant material with symptoms not showing up until 7-14 days prior to death. Once symptoms have developed animals rarely recover regardless of treatment.



**Lantana** is one of the common butterfly plants that can be found in many garden sections of retail stores. Unfortunately, it is also an extremely toxic plant to cattle and sheep. Following ingestion of plant material animals may show lesions on their skin if exposed to the sunlight. Following exposure the skin will become hard, swollen, cracked and painful. Many have described this as the hide peeling off the animal. Other symptoms that may occur would be extreme weakness, bloody stool, loss of appetite, along with partial paralysis of the legs with death occurring within 3-4 days. Treatment for lantana poisoning would be to keep infected animals in darkness or out of sunlight with administration of soft laxatives. Affected skin areas should be cleaned and disinfected with antiseptics and healing ointments. There is traditionally not a large recovery rate once treatment begins.



**Pokeweed** can grow as tall as six feet in height. The stems are smooth and green and purple in color. Berries on this plant are purple-black in color. All parts of the plants are toxic to all livestock. However, the berries and root are the most poisonous portions of the plant. Symptoms of poisoning occur two hours following ingestion of the plant. The infected animal will exhibit gastric irritation with vomiting, purging, spasms and severe convulsions occurring. Death is the result of respiratory organ paralysis. The suggested treatment is administering bland oils and gelatinous foods.



**Bracken Fern** is most commonly found in open shady areas, pastures, hammocks, and open woods. Toxicity can occur in cattle, horses and chickens. Animals may inadvertently ingest bracken fern through hay or bedding materials. Symptoms will traditionally develop three to four weeks following material ingestion. Affected animals usually have a high temperature, bloody feces, fast and weak pulse, and labored respiration with death occurring within 48 hours of symptom onset. Treatment for bracken fern poisoning is to administer saline purgatives or linseed oil, while keeping affected animals in a quiet place. If treatment is administered early some animals will recover.



**Common Nightshade** is also known as black nightshade or deadly nightshade. The stalk and leaves are green with contains white flowers with five petals and a yellow center. Ripe berries are purple or black when ripe. Nightshade grows everywhere except close to salt water. The green leaves and unripe berries are poisonous to all livestock species. Some symptoms which may appear would be weakness with a staggering gait, extreme nervousness, and dilated pupils along with paralysis. Symptoms occur rapidly and with infected animals traditionally found dead, there is no known treatment.

As you can see there are many poisonous weeds that are found in pastures. The best prevention of poisoning is to pull any weed in your pastures that you are unsure of. It is better to be safe. Many people are unaware that most plants used in landscaping are harmful to animals. To protect your investment be proactive and take the time to scan your pastures for weeds and plants that do not belong there. You are the only one who can make a difference in your pastures.

Information obtained from *Plants that poison farm animals* by Erdman West and M.W. Emmel. IFAS Bulletin 510A.

### **Ethics and Livestock Shows**

**Christa L. Carlson**

**Extension Agent II, Livestock**

Many state and regional fairs are requiring that youth attend or become “certified” in livestock ethics. In many ways it is difficult to teach youth about livestock ethics. This is due to each individual person having his or her own set of ethics which were they developed as growing up.

Most people will say that you cannot teach ethics. In many ways this statement is true. If we are not teaching ethics, how are the youth of today developing their own standards of ethics? After teaching a portion of the Florida State Fair Ethics training it became evident to me that everyone a youth comes in contact with will shape one’s ethics. Of course, the people whom one comes in contact with as well as the culture and region of the world he or she is brought up in will also shape one’s ethics.

It is our hope that through the youth development programs and livestock shows, we are helping to shape positive ethics for the youth. Ethics can be defined as moral standards that tell us how to behave or as a code of values that guide our choices and actions. Basically, ethics are what help us decide what is right and wrong. General H. Norman Swartzkopf states that “the truth of the matter is that you always know the right thing to do. The hard part is doing it.”

During the livestock shows, it is important to remember that decisions made by both adults and youth are affecting the stakeholders of that show. Many will ask who the stakeholders are. They are the youth, parents, family members, sponsors, breeders, show committees, and consumers. Basically a stakeholder is anyone one comes in contact with while participating in a livestock project.

One of the easiest ways to decide if a decision is an ethical one is to ask four questions from Jeff Goodwin’s “Line in the Sand” video.

- 1) Does it violate Food and Drug Administration law?

- 2) Is it fraud?
- 3) Does it compromise the welfare of the animal?
- 4) Does it relate to real-world agriculture?

Another way to decide is to ask yourself if you would be doing what you are doing if your mother or grandmother were watching you, or if you would like your friends and family to read about your actions on the front page of the newspaper.

A few years back I came across an article in a newsletter entitled “The Ten Commandments for Showring Parents.” With the show season at our doorstep, I believe it is appropriate to share these “commandments” with you.

**1. Thou shall know the rules.**

There are written and unwritten rules regarding the showing of animals. Topping the list of unwritten rules is to be courteous at all times and never lose your temper.

**2. Thou shall allow your children to do their project themselves.**

Obviously, when a child is 8, 9, or 10 years old, a parent is going to do much of the work. However, there is a gradient in which the youngster starts doing more and accepting an increasing amount of the responsibility.

**3. Thou shall be supportive and involved.**

To the other extreme, some parents believe there should be no parental involvement or help. That is unrealistic. The breakdown of many American families can be directly related to the family having nothing in common, no family projects or goals. A 4-H Project can bring the entire family together with a common goal. Parents often find they have as much to learn as their children.

At home, parents can help with the training, feeding, and care—as the youngster learns, grows, and develops. At the show, parents can give advice if they see a judge is looking for something particular in the showring. They often see an area on the animal that needs more attention. Parents make great bucket-carriers, runners for something that was forgotten, animal holders, etc. Most importantly, they can give a word of encouragement and a smile when it is needed the most.

**4. Thou shall allow your child to participate in as many shows as possible.**

Experience is the best teacher. Nothing builds more confidence or takes the place of the actual feel of the show equipment in a child’s hand. Many 4-H and FFA clubs sponsor showmanship workshops and one-day shows throughout the year. These activities not only give your child an opportunity to gain experience and insight---they help you get an idea of the type of animal needed for a project.

**5. Thou shall provide the proper equipment.**

Although it is not fancy or expensive equipment that determines a winner, the appropriate equipment is a necessary part of showing.

**6. Thou shall keep your attitude in check on show day.**

Your attitude on show day can temper how your youngster performs. If they are worrying about their mother or father being upset, it is impossible for them to concentrate on what they ought to be doing.

**7. Thou shall not be a showring sideline director.**

Parents standing on the sidelines giving instructions to their children are distracting to other exhibitors and to the judge. Your child is better off doing it on his or her own and making his or her own mistakes. That is how they learn—and, after all, the education and growth of the youngster is the ultimate goal.

**8. Thou shall not complain about the judge.**

Complaining about the judge rarely, if ever, accomplishes anything positive. You do not have to agree with the judge's decision and opinion, but you should try to see his or her perspective on that day. Even if you cannot, don't complain. Remember, there is another show and another judge down the road. Regardless of the judge, you will win a few and lose a few.

**9. Thou shall not disparage the competition.**

There always seems to be a good deal of griping about how somebody got the job done. The only solution is to make sure you and your children are getting the job done in the right way. If others are cheating or not behaving in a suitable manner, they will cause their own demise.

**10. Thou shall honor your child.**

When parents ridicule their children for bad performances as they leave the showing, they are forgetting that the award—the trophy, the plaque, or the ribbon—is not as important as the things the children learn and the friends that they make while pursuing that goal. Since we are beginning another club year and show season, let us remember, as parents (and as Extension Educators, FFA Advisors, and as 4-H/FFA Leaders) that the showing is not just for prize animals; it is the show place for the finest young people in America.

I am looking forward to an exceptional show season with the youth of Manatee County. There are many things that occur behind the scenes that many never see. Many hours of work and preparation go into livestock shows. It is important to always remember that we are here for the youth and the final question on everyone's mind should be, "What is best for the youth in this program?"

**Cattlemen's Institute and Allied Trade Show  
"Get 'Em Bred Institute"**

The 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Florida Cattlemen's Institute and Allied Trade Show will take place on Thursday, January 18 in Kissimmee at the Kissimmee Valley Livestock Show Arena. The program will focus on nutrition, health and management for beef cattle production. The trade show opens at 8:00am and the program will begin at 8:45am with a welcome from Dr. Jimmy Cheek, UF/IFAS Vice President of Agriculture and Natural Resources and Dr. Hall Phillips, DVM, Florida Cattlemen's Association President. Some featured speakers will be Dr. Mark Spire, Dr. Bill Beal, Dr. Matt Hersom and Dr. Joe Vendramini. Please see the enclosed flyer for the complete program schedule.

**Manatee County Fair Youth Livestock  
Shows and Sales**

Every year many youth participate in the Manatee County Fair to compete for prizes, awards and most of all bragging rights. Many of these youth will be competing in many different areas during the fair. At this point we are looking at a very successful fair in the livestock area. To date we have 105 steers, 181 swine, dairy animals, beef breeding animals, goats registered. I encourage each of you to take some time to come out and support the youth of today who will become the leaders of tomorrow.

Tuesday, January 16 – Swine Weigh-In - 3-6:00pm

Wednesday, January 17 – Dairy Check-In – 5-8:00pm

Swine Showmanship – 7:00pm

Thursday, January 18 –	Swine Show – 7:00pm
Friday, January 19 –	Dairy Show – 6:00pm
Saturday, January 20 –	Dairy, Swine and Horse Judging – 7:30am
	Dairy Costume Contest – 10:00am
	Swine Sale – 2:00pm
	FNGLA Youth Plant Sale – 7:00pm
Monday, January 22	Goat Check-In – 5-7:00pm
Tuesday, January 23 –	Steer Weigh-In – 3-6:00pm
	Heifer Check-In – 3-6:00pm
	Goat Show – 7:00pm
Wednesday, January 24 –	Steer Showmanship – 7:00pm
Thursday, January 25 –	Steer Show – 7:00pm
Friday, January 26 –	Beef Breeding Show – 7:00pm
Saturday, January 27 –	Beef Breeding, Steer and Goat Judging – 8:30am
	Steer Sale – 2:00pm
	Youth Livestock Awards – 7:00pm
Sunday, January 28	Horse Show – 11:00am

As a reminder to all youth entering livestock in the Manatee County Fair, you are required to have a Certificate of Veterinary Health Inspection (health certificate) for your animals to be admitted to the fair. Without a certificate you will not be allowed to exhibit your animal. Check your fair livestock rules for any additional tests, bleedings, or any other procedures that must be followed prior to exhibition at the Manatee County Fair.

### **Small Farms Livestock Production Conference “So Ya Wanna Be a Farmer”**

The Small Farms Livestock Production Conference is presented by the South Florida Beef Forage Program and was designed for ranchette or small landowners who are considering the raising, management and production of livestock for pleasure or profit. This course, “So You Want to be a Farmer”, was designed more specifically for new or agriculturally inexperienced landowners who are considering some field of livestock production on their small or limited acreage to help guide them and provide them information for making a more informed decision about what type of livestock producer they may want to be.

This course will provide basic information about all the different animal species as possibilities for a small farming operation, explore some economic and business basics of agriculture production, look at specialty production and markets as possibilities, give some basics of animal health, buying healthy animals and keeping them healthy, your pasture and forage requirements before you ever get started, including understanding different forage species and their fertility and maintenance requirements, and what considerations you will need to make for fencing, housing handling and holding equipment for all types of animal species.

**This course will be offered on two dates, and at two different locations.** The first offering will be held Saturday, March 3, 2007 at the Highlands County Agri-Civic Center in Sebring, FL, and the second, **Saturday, March 17, 2007 at the Manatee County Extension Center in Palmetto, FL.**

Cost of the conference will be \$20 per person pre-paid registration to include lunch and any program materials. On site registration will be available for \$30 per person. If you are interested in participating you can pre-register with Christa Carlson, 941-722-4524.

### **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 your 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.

**Christa L. Carlson**  
**Extension Agent II, Livestock**

# Small Farms Livestock Production Conference

*“So You Want to be a Farmer”*

## AGENDA

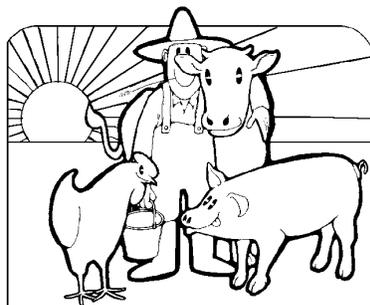
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|-------------|---|-------|--|
| 8:00 – 8:45 | Check-in and registration   | 11:30 | Animal Health Issues: Sources, Buying and Keeping them Healthy – Lockie Gary                                 |
| 8:45        | Welcome and Introductions   | 12:15 | Lunch  |
| 9:00        | Exploring the Possibilities: An overview of animal species for production consideration – Pat Hogue | 1:00  | Fencing for all types of Livestock – Dr. Ike Ezenwa  |
| 9:45        | 4R’s of Farming: Resources, Risks, Rules & Rewards – Steffany Dragon                                | 1:45  | Pastures: Species, Fertility and Maintenance – Christine Kelly-Begazo  |
| 10:30       | Break   | 2:30  | Break  |
| 10:45       | Overview of Specialty Markets to Explore – Robert Halman  | 2:45  | Equipment, Holding, Handling and Housing Needs and Wants for Livestock Production – Brantley Ivey, Jim Selph |

**Highlands County Agri-Civic Center  
Sebring, FL  
March 3, 2007**

**Manatee County Extension Office  
Palmetto, FL  
March 17, 2007**

Registration Costs: \$20 Pre-Paid Registration By February 17, 2006  
\$30 On Site Registration

**For More Information Contact:  
Christa L. Carlson  
941-722-4524**



**Sponsored by:  
The South Florida  
Beef-Forage Program**

**UF** UNIVERSITY of  
**FLORIDA**  
IFAS Extension

# 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Florida Cattlemen's Institute and Allied Trade Show

**Thursday, January 18, 2007**

**Osceola Heritage Park  
1921 Kissimmee Valley Lane  
Off Highway 192 East of Kissimmee**

## **“Get'em Bred Institute” Nutrition, Health and Management for Reproduction**

- 8:00am**      **Trade Show Opens**  
**8:45am**      **Welcome**  
                 **Jimmy Cheek**  
                 UF/IFAS Vice President for Agriculture and Natural Resources  
                 **Dr. Hal Phillips DVM**  
                 FCA President
- 9:00am**      **Animal Health Needs for Today's Cow Herd**  
                 **Dr. Mark Spire, DVM, MD**  
                 DACT Manager, Technical Services, Schering-Plough Animal  
                 Health
- 10:00am**      **Trade Show Break**  
**10:30am**      **Understanding the Estrous Cycle and Maintenance of Pregnancy**  
                 **Dr. Bill Beal**  
                 Professor – Animal & Poultry Science Department,  
                 Virginia Tech
- 11:30am**      **The State of the State**  
                 **Charlie Bronson**  
                 Florida Commissioner of Agriculture
- 12:00pm**      **Awards**  
**12:15pm**      **Lunch**  
**1:00pm**      **Reproduction Requires Adequate Nutrition**  
                 **Dr. Matt Hersom**  
                 Assistant Professor, Ph.D. UF Animal Sciences Department
- 1:45pm**      **Managing Pastures for Beef Cows**  
                 **Dr. Joe Vendramini**  
                 Forage Agronomist, UF Range Cattle Research & Education Center,  
                 Ona
- 2:30pm**      **Trade Show Break**  
**3:00pm**      **Wrap-Up**  
                 **Dr. Bill Beal**

**Sponsored By:  
UF/IFAS Extension Service  
Allied Trade Industry**