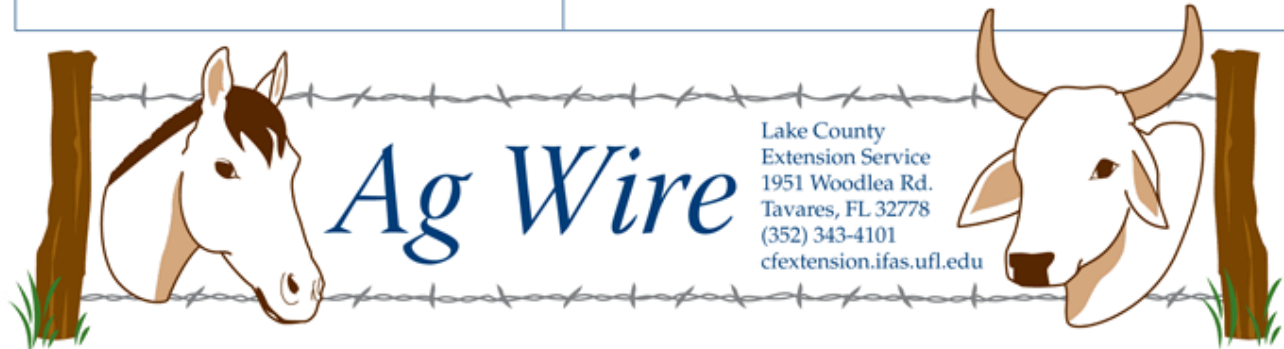




UNIVERSITY OF  
FLORIDA

IFAS EXTENSION



Volume 1, Issue 1

Jan – March 2009

## Upcoming Events

### January

13- 53<sup>rd</sup> Annual Ocala Bull Sale, Ocala Livestock Pavilion, 12:00 Noon Call Sam 352-427-5129 or Mark 352-671-8400 for more information.

15- Florida Cattlemen's Institute & Trade Show, Osceola Heritage Park 8:00 a.m.

17- Junior Cattlemen's Association Prospect Show, Check In 8:00 a.m.

Journey Circle M Ranch

24- AGRItunity & Trade Show, Hernando County Fair Grounds 8:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Registration form at:

<http://cfextension.ifas.ufl.edu/documents/agritunity2009brochure111108.pdf>

Kids wearing 4H or FFA members wearing their colors will be admitted free!

31- Lake County Cattlemen's Association Annual Dinner 5:30 p.m. Lake County Extension Office

### February

3- Maximizing Fertilizer and Hay Field Management 5:00 p.m. Lake County Extension Office call Martha or Maggie to R.S.V.P by January 26

6- All Breed Bull Sale – Cattlemen's Livestock Market, Lakeland 1:00 p.m. Call Mike 352-523-2081 or Dave 352-863-665-5088 for more information.

14- Polk County Trade Show & Ranch Rodeo, Agriculture Center Bartow

5-16- Florida State Fair

### March

7- Natural Horsemanship Program- More information to be announced by email.

## Are Your Calves Meeting Market Demands?

Cattle prices may be down but the breeding season is here! You now have the opportunity to make a change. This winter and spring there is going to be an abundance of good bulls for sale

so take advantage of this opportunity. You need quality bulls so buyers will take notice when your calves come through the sale ring.

When you go to the bull sale, look for bulls which have the genetics to produce a quality carcass. Cattle buyers must get the most for their money so they are only going to spend money on calves that they know will return a profit. If you do not know or care what is under the hide of your calf I can guarantee someone down the line will. The best way to compare bulls is to look at their Expected Progeny Differences (EPD's). EPD's are the differences in performance expected from the offspring of one individual compared to the offspring of another individual, within the same breed. Each breed has their own breed average and they refer to traits a little different so it is good to refresh yourself on the terminology that will be used. Some common EPD's to consider when buying a bull to produce terminal calves (BEEF) are:

- Weaning Weight (WW)
- Marbling (% Intra Muscular Fat)
- Ribeye Area (REA)

Below are some examples from the American Angus Association of indexes that they use to compare bulls within their breed.

## **\$VALUE INDEXES**

\$Value indexes are multi-trait selection indexes, expressed in dollars per head, to assist beef producers by adding simplicity to genetic selection decisions. The \$Value is an estimate of how future progeny of each sire are expected to perform, on average, compared to progeny of other sires in the database if the sires were randomly mated to cows and if calves were exposed to the same environment.

**Weaned Calf Value (\$W)**, an index value expressed in dollars per head, is the expected average difference in future progeny performance for preweaning merit. \$W includes both revenue and cost adjustments associated with differences in birth weight, weaning direct growth, maternal milk, and mature cow size.

**Feedlot Value (\$F)**, an index value expressed in dollars per head, is the expected average difference in future progeny performance for postweaning merit compared to progeny of other sires.

**Grid Value (\$G)**, an index value expressed in dollars per head, is the expected average difference in future progeny performance for carcass grid merit compared to progeny of other sires.

- **Quality Grade (\$QG)** \$QG represents the quality grade segment of the economic advantage found in \$G. \$QG is intended for the specialized user wanting to place more emphasis on improving quality grade. The carcass marbling (Marb) EPD contributes to \$QG.
- **Yield Grade (\$YG)** \$YG represents the yield grade segment of the economic advantage found in \$G. \$YG is intended for the specialized user wanting to place more emphasis on red meat yield. It provides a multi-trait approach to encompass ribeye, fat thickness and weight into an economic value for red meat yield.

**Beef Value (\$B)**, an index value expressed in dollars per head, is the expected average difference in future progeny performance for postweaning and carcass value compared to progeny of other sires.

Breeders spend hours collecting data to help producers in the selection of bulls so take advantage of the EPD's and Indexes that are provided so that you can make the best decision when selecting your next herd sire.

If you are having a hard time selecting a breed that will bring you the most money you need to determine what calf buyers are looking for. This can be done by going to the market or online video sales and watch what the calves are selling for and compare the prices relative to their weight, frame score, and breed.

## **When Should Cattle Be Retired?**

After 10 to 12 years cattle start to decline in production and have health issues such as arthritis, loss of teeth, decreased feed efficiency, bad eyes, and bad udders. These problems cause cattle not to rebreed on a yearly basis and/or have calves with poor weaning weights. It is a cattlemen's responsibility to market these cattle before these issues become severe and decrease the value of the cow's carcass. Marketing these older cattle early before these ailments are serious is critical to our industry's image.

The prices for cull cows are based on their expected USDA carcass grade. The most common grades, in order of the least amount of marbling and dressing percentage to the greatest, are:

- Canner (very thin body condition scores of 2 and 3)
- Cutter (thin body condition score of 4)
- Utility (moderate body condition score of 5)
- Commercial (fleshy body condition score 6 and above)

Both price per pound and dressing percentage significantly increases with the higher body condition score animals. This economically favors marketing these cows in a timely manner prior to them losing body condition and falling into a lower grade.

So a producer may say, "How do I know when to cull a cow?" This is why it is critical to have a controlled breeding season and individually identify our cattle. By doing these practices you will know how old she is. When she reaches that age (10-12) if she is open you need to ask yourself why. Is it because she is getting older and having a hard time managing her weight, because of loose of teeth and decreases feed efficiency. If this is the case she needs to be sold before she loses any more condition.

Cull cows and bulls do in fact have real value. If they are marketed in a timely manner it can be 15 percent to 20 percent of producer's revenue.

Some of the quality defects that decrease the price of cull cattle are:

- Cancer Eye- resulting in head or carcass condemnations.

- Horns- that cause bruising to other cattle, removal of horns at slaughter opens sinus cavities resulting in head condemnation.
- Brands- decrease hide value
- Arthritis- loss of product due to removing arthritic joints and meat around them.
- Emaciation- muscle loss due to poor body condition
- Injection Site Lesions- Trimming abscess in meat because of improper vaccination techniques.

So what is the best time of the year to market these cattle? Well, usually in the fall after selling calves producers can pregnancy check and sell open cows prior to worming and vaccination. This decreases the number of cows that you have to feed through the hard winter months and dry spring. After September prices tend to decline so avoid waiting too late in the year to market culls.

Please keep in mind that cull cattle that we send to the auction barn or slaughter facility are a reflection on the whole beef cattle industry.

## **Protecting Natural Area's from Non-Native Plants**

Private landowners should stay aware of non-native invasive plants which are considered weeds because they displace native plants and associated wildlife, including endangered species, and can alter natural processes such as fire and water flow. These non-native plants spread rapidly by wind, water, and wildlife; leaving it up to the landowner to control these undesirable plants.

In Lake County the major invasive species are cogon grass, tropical soda apple, and Brazilian pepper tree along with many others. Several of these species either possess the potential to, or have already begun impacting various forest product industries. An established example is that of Kudzu, which infests an estimated 7 million acres in the southeast, and costs approximately \$500 million dollars in lost farm and timber production annually. The most recent example of this is the impact the Japanese climbing fern infestations have begun to have on the pine straw production industry in Florida. Pine straw producers have had to abandon leased pine stands in some cases where the Japanese climbing fern infestation made harvest of a clean and legally saleable product impossible.

As a state, Florida is at a high risk for invasion for many reasons. Our subtropical climate, the number and importance of our shipping ports, the extent and importance of the plant-based industries in the state, and the highly transitional population, couple with other factors to facilitate introduction, escape and spread of these problem plants. In Florida, approximately \$30 million taxpayer dollars are spent annually on invasive plant management on natural areas and waterways

There are many reasons to start controlling these plants on your property. There are both economic and environmentally based benefits of controlling invasive plants, such as: reducing further spread on your property and expansion of your problem, maintaining the ability to

produce forest products on your property into the long-term future, restoring natural communities and/or forest health, and complying with state and federal laws.

## **Forest Stewardship Workshop: Use Prescribed Fire Safely and Effectively**

- Why Burn?
- How does weather impact the burn?
- Liability and Regulations?
- What are effects on plants, wildlife, soil, and air?

A burn demonstration will be conducted if conditions allow.  
Program is free, lunch provided Register Now: 3 dates and Locations

### **January 20**

***Forest Stewardship Workshop: Use Prescribed Fire Safely and Effectively, 8 am – 4 pm ET, Austin Cary Memorial Forest near Gainesville, FL. Contact Benjamin Koubek, [flboy275@ufl.edu](mailto:flboy275@ufl.edu), (352) 846-2374 to register.***

### **January 29**

***Forest Stewardship Workshop: Use Prescribed Fire Safely and Effectively, 8 am – 4 pm ET, Florida Center for Wildfire and Forest Resources Management Training near Brooksville, FL, Contact Shaun Stewart, (352) 754-6865 or [stewars@doacs.state.fl.us](mailto:stewars@doacs.state.fl.us) to register.***

### **February 17**

***Forest Stewardship Workshop: Use Prescribed Fire Safely and Effectively, 8 am – 4 pm CT, Black Water River State Forest. Contact the Santa Rosa County Extension Office at (850) 675-6654 to***



**Meeting the Needs of Farmers  
Large and Small- January 24, 2008 Hernando County  
Fair Grounds**

**AGRItunity 2009** is a conference and trade show with the latest in agricultural technology and business information and trends that will benefit agricultural operations large and small. A general session will focus on vital topics of importance to every segment of the agricultural community. A keynote speaker from the famous “Breakers Hotel” will highlight successes of the using local grown foods.

Breakout sessions will focus of a variety of topics such as:

#### **Livestock Session**

- Breeding Beef for Florida's Environment
- Poultry Flock Health Management
- Controlling Weeds on the Farm

#### **Crops Session**

- Extending the Growing Season by Protected Culture
- Organic Crop Production
- Let's Get Selling-Direct Marketing Options
- Blueberries and Other Small Fruit Crop Production

**\$10 for early registration**

**\$15 at the door**

**Free to 4H and FFA members wearing their respective colors!**

## **Beef Management Calendar**

### **January**

- Apply lime for summer crops.
- Check for lice and treat if necessary.
- Begin grazing winter clover pastures when approximately six 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.

### **March**

- Fertilize pasture to stimulate early growth and get fertilizer incorporated in grass roots while there is still good soil moisture.
- Prepare land for summer crops.
- Begin grazing warm season permanent pastures.
- Check and fill mineral feeder.
- Observe bulls for condition and success. Rotate and rest if needed.
- Deworm cows as needed.
- Make sure calves are healthy and making good weight gains.
- Hang forced-use dust bags by April 1st for external parasite control or use insecticide impregnated ear tags.
- Identify, vaccinate, implant, and work late calves.
- Put bulls out March 1st for calving season to start December 9.
- Remove bulls March 22nd to end calving season January 1.

If you have any questions or would like to set up a farm consultation please call at 352-343-4101 or email at [marthat@ufl.edu](mailto:marthat@ufl.edu).



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Lake County Livestock/Natural Resource Agent

