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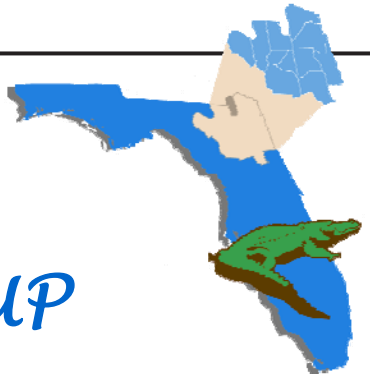
Northeast Florida Beef & Forage Group



June 4, 2010

Dear Producers,

The Northeast Florida Beef and Forage group is committed to providing the latest information on forage and livestock management. We have already hosted several programs this year including an update on alternative fertilizers and the opportunities and challenges associated with direct marketing beef.

In this issue of the newsletter, you will find information about marketing cattle, new forage varieties, cattle management and fertilization strategies. We hope to see you at our Hay Field Day this year on July 21 at the RDK Farm in Lake City Florida. This event provides information about some of the issues affecting your farm including weed and insect control, beef cattle management strategies, and establishment of hay fields. For more information see the attached flyer.

Sincerely,
Steve Gaul
North Florida Beef & Forage Group, Chair

UF UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA IFAS Extension

Inside This Issue:

Northeast Florida Beef & Forage Group Agents

Alachua County
Cindy Sanders
Barton Wilder

Baker County
Vacant

Bradford County
Tim Wilson

Clay County
David Nistler

Columbia County
Derek Barber

Duval County
Brad Burbaugh
Mike Sweat

Madison County
Dan Fenneman

Nassau County
Steven Gaul

Suwannee County
Elena Toro

Union County
Vacant

Perennial Peanut Establishment

Perennial peanut or rhizome peanut (Arachis glabrata) is a high quality tropical forage legume. Its potential uses include hay and other dehydrated products, pasture, creep grazing, silage, ornamental, conservation cover, and living mulch in association with other crops.

It can be produced commercially in Florida and the southern portions of Georgia and the Gulf Coast states. Perennial peanut is well adapted to dry, sandy soils.

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Strategy for Cull-Cattle Marketing

In most operations, income from cull cows and bulls can account for as much as 15 to 20 percent of revenue. However, most ranchers put little if any thought into the marketing of these animals. Most sell their cull cows in the fall.

Generally speaking, this is the worst time of year to sell cull cows (see below) Demand for cow-beef is typically lower at this time, and there is usually an excess supply of cows.

Producers who have access to resources like land, forage and feed have the potential to increase their income by feeding cows for 60 days to 120 days until prices improve.

Numerous published and unpublished studies from various universities have shown that cattlemen can usually recover $2 to $55 by placing otherwise healthy but thin, or Body Condition Score less than 4, cows in some type of forage-based growing program and carrying the cows to a body condition score of 5 to 6.

Cattlemen can make money in several ways by adjusting their timing when selling cull cows. First, the cow gains additional weight which will increase the price paid. Secondly, some cull cows will improve a quality grade due to better body condition and, therefore, sell for a higher price.

Also, unlike calves, thin cows actually bring a lower price than moderately fleshed (or BCS of 4 to 6) cows.

Lastly, I have compiled 2009 sale data from the Lake City Market and as you can see there is typically some price improvement from late winter through early spring.

Additionally, I have provided 2009 sale data for slaughter bull prices at the market. As you can see, selling slaughter bulls March-August will, typically, give you a larger return on investment.

Adapted from Lacy & Prevatt, 2009

Brad Burbaugh, Duval County Extension Agriculture Agent

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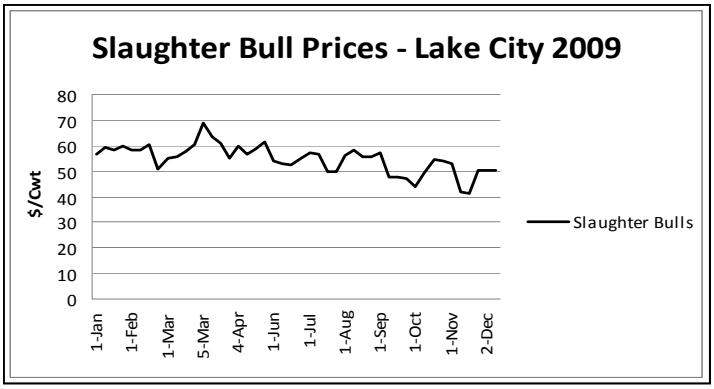

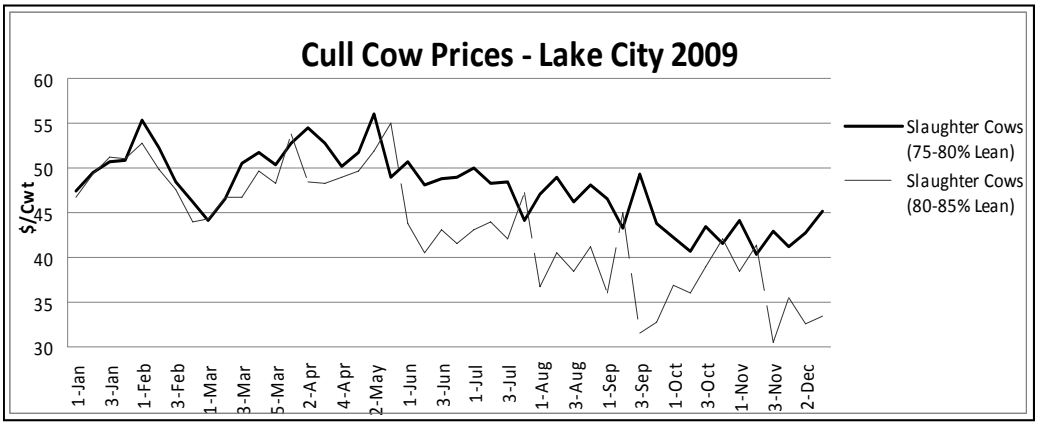

Northeast Florida Beef and Forage Group Presents

12th Regional Hay Field Day

Wednesday, July 21, 2010

9AM-3PM

RDK Farm – Lake City, Florida

Discussions/ Demonstrations & Table Displays

- Forage Establishment
- Poisonous Plants & Control
- Forage Insect Management
- Forage Weed Management
- Pesticide Management (CEU's)
- Beef Cattle Management
- Fertilizer Options
- CEU's and CCA's will be available

Meal Sponsored by :

FARM CREDIT

Directions to RDK Farm:
Press-Ruth Road, 1600 SE CR 245 (1mile south of State Road 100), Lake City, Florida

From Lake City: Take SR100 east going to ward Lake Butler and turn Right on CR 245. Farm is 1 mile on the right.

Registration 8:30 AM
$5.00 per person

To Register - Contact your local Extension agent by July 16th.

Derek Barber, Columbia Co.
(386) 752-5384

Baker Co.
(904) 387-8850

Cindy Sanders, Alachua Co.
(352) 955-2402

David Nistler, Clay Co.
(904) 284-6355

Dan Fenneman, Madison Co.
(850) 973-4138

Union Co.
(386) 496-2321

Steve Gaul, Nassau Co.
(904) 879-1019

Brad Burbaugh, Duval Co.
(904) 387-8850

Elena Toro, Suwannee Co.
(386) 362-2771

Tim Wilson, Bradford Co.
(904) 966-6224

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Hay yields in North Florida range from 3-5 tons per year for well established stands. Some have coined perennial peanut "Florida's alfalfa" because it fits so closely the quality characteristics of alfalfa as an animal feed. Crude protein of perennial peanut ranges from 13 to 20%, depending on the size and number of stems, leaf loss, and stage of maturity.

Perennial peanut is vegetatively propagated from rhizomes. Perennial peanut rhizomes are modified stems which concentrate in a 2 to 3" thick mat located just below the soil surface. A sprig harvester is used to remove the rhizomes. Individual rhizome pieces are then planted. Planting normally takes place during January to mid-March but planning, field preparation, location of rhizome sources, and planting equipment or contacts with individuals who plant should begin during the summer prior to winter planting. Spring and summer plantings through the middle of August in North Florida and the middle of September in South Florida are possible. Irrigation insures successful establishment.

Land preparation should begin during the summer prior to a winter planting to allow time for both chemical and mechanical weed control to be effective. If perennial broadleaf weeds or grasses persist, use of an herbicide should be considered to eradicate this problem prior to first frost. With only a few herbicides registered at this time for use on perennial peanut, it is necessary and more economical to achieve good preplant weed control. A firm, even seedbed facilitates precise machine planting of the rhizomes at a depth of 1 ½ to 2" for sandy soils and 1" for clay. Irrigation should be used when needed during establishment if available.

With satisfactory rainfall, a winter planting can provide complete ground coverage in 1 to 2 years, using a planting rate of 80 bu/a of rhizomes. Under high weed competition or drought conditions, a higher planting rate of 100 to120 bu/a of rhizomes may be desirable to achieve a full stand in a reasonable period of time. Rhizomes should be planted as soon after digging as possible. Rhizomes cannot be stored for more than 5 days without deterioration. Harvested rhizomes should be stored in a shady, cool location and covered with black plastic or a tarp to prevent drying while still allowing for aeration.

Winter planted rhizomes emerge during late March to early June which coincides with low rainfall over most of Florida. Normal spring rains are very important for proper root development. Availability of irrigation during this initial development period will provide insurance against plant loss or a complete stand failure. Once the root system has developed irrigation is not required.

Daniel (Dan) Fenneman, Madison County Extension

Fertilizing Pastures and Hay Fields

Fertilization Considerations:

The six soil-supplied nutrients required by plants in the largest quantities are nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), potassium (K), calcium (Ca), magnesium (Mg), and sulfur (S). Micronutrients, iron, copper, zinc, manganese, boron, molybdenum, and chlorine, are also essential but are used by the plant in very small amounts. The soil can supply the plant with most, if not all of these nutrients, but often the supply of one or more of the nutrients is insufficient for optimum growth.

Nitrogen is the most important fertilizer nutrient used on grass pastures and hay fields. It is the nutrient that is most likely to be deficient and therefore the one that most often results in increased forage production. Phosphorus may be deficient in some areas, but some Florida soils are high in native P. Also, some pasture grasses (such as Bahiagrass) may extract sufficient P from the subsoil, even when the P level in the surface soil is low.

Potassium may need to be added to some pastures, but in South Fl., Bahiagrass pastures on flatwoods that receive 50 pounds of nitrogen or less per year have shown little if any response to potassium fertilization.

Under intensive hay or silage production, where nutrients are removed from the land, annual applications of P and K are needed. Where nutrients are being removed in harvested forage (hay) potassium may reach critically low levels, where not only plant growth is reduced, but plants may die. This is usually indicated by a thinning stand in Bermudagrass hay fields.

Potassium can very quickly become deficient; also calcium, magnesium, sulfur, and some micronutrients may eventually become deficient after several years of cropping. Calcium, magnesium, sulfur, and the micronutrients are seldom a problem in pastures where considerable recycling of nutrients occurs.

If you haven't already fertilized now is the time! This year we have seen a drop in fertilizer prices compared to last year. (Source: Fl.Forage Handbook modified).

Cindy Sanders, Alachua County Extension

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New Bahiagrass: UF-Riata Update

UF-Riata will be available this year. UF-Riata is a novel diploid bahiagrass developed for fall and early spring forage production for the southeastern U.S. This bahiagrass exhibits lower photoperiod sensitivity, improved leaf tissue cold tolerance, and increased forage production during the cool season compared to the standard bahiagrass cultivars Argentine and Pensacola.

Multi-location variety trials show UF-Riata is similar in total season yield to Tifton 9, with an improvement in seedling vigor and leaf tissue cold tolerance that promotes late fall-season growth and early spring-season growth. UF-Riata seasonal forage yields have been greater than 25% compared with Argentine and Pensacola, and 5-10% compared with Tifton 9 in north Florida.

UF Riata is well adapted throughout the southern Coastal Plains and Peninsular Florida. Management of UF-Riata is similar to that of Tifton 9. While Argentine and Pensacola bahiagrass are tolerant to overgrazing, UF-Riata is not, and spot grazing will result in stand loss and subsequent weed encroachment. Rotational grazing is a good approach since it allows UF-Riata pastures to recover from livestock grazing, and producers should rest the pasture and allow for regrowth to a 6 inch stubble height between grazing events. Hay harvests of UF-Riata should be made several times throughout the growing season. Forage should not be allowed to grow rank. Digestibility decreases with plant age and fungal leaf diseases may harm the health of the stand. Should weather conditions prevent timely hay harvests, then options for grazing, mowing or ensiling the forage should be considered.

It is important to purchase seed of UF-Riata from a licensed seed source. This insures the purity of the cultivar, high percent germination and freedom from weed seed. UF-Riata will be sold by variety name and marketed by Ragan-Massey Seed (800-264-5281). The seed is in stock and ready to ship via UPS.

Dr. Ann Blount, North Florida Research and Education Center-Marianna

Reproductive Management of Your Cow Herd

Depending on whom you ask, summer has arrived, others would say it has been here for a long time. Fall and most spring calves have arrived, breeding has either been completed or is close to completion and many cattlemen are in the fields managing pastures. As we prepare for the next stage of the cow/calf cycle we should evaluate our calf crop and asses the overall condition of our cattle.

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There are a few management practices we should take into consideration that can help increase our net returns. Some of these practices include: body condition scoring, pregnancy checking, and selecting replacement heifers.

Body Condition Scoring

The use of body condition scoring of cattle has been common for quite some time. Using this management practice is useful in ensuring that the nutrition of the cowherd is being met. When thinking about reproduction, the condition of your cows and bulls become very important immediately after calving prior to breeding; however, this is the most difficult time of the production cycle to add condition. Most beef operations use a system of scoring cattle from 1 to 9 (1 = emaciated and 9 = obese) and a 5 being optimal. Research from the University of Florida (Rae et. al., 1993) has shown that a reduction in body condition score from a 5 to a 4 or from a 4 to a 3 can result in a reduction in pregnancy rates by approximately 29% for each score below 5. If the gestation of a cow is 283 days, there is only 82 days for her to recover from the stresses of parturition, start cycling and conceive to have a calf every 365 days. It is extremely difficult to add body condition during this 82-day widow.

The optimal time to add condition is from weaning to calving. At weaning evaluate the body condition score of your herd. By doing this, nutrition can be adjusted to reach condition scores of $\geq$ 5 at calving. This process should be performed gradually over several months to reach body condition goals.

Checking for Pregnancy

A veterinarian or qualified technician can determine pregnancy by palpation 45 – 60 days after the breeding season has ended. By checking exposed females for pregnancy, producers can increase their herd's reproductive efficiency by eliminating females that fail to conceive. Feeding an open female can be costly and by having identified these females producers can make informed decisions on culling practices.

Selecting Replacement Heifers

Selecting replacement females is one of the most important decisions producers make each year with regard to the future of their herd. It is suggested that replacement females be selected from calves born in the first half of the calving season. These females should be heavier, older and come from dams that have calved early in the year. Replacements should be at or near the breed average and should be sound. Twice as many replacements should be held back as are expected to remain in the herd. When the breeding season is completed and pregnancy checks are performed, producers can cull all open heifers without reducing the number of replacements entering the herd.

Timothy W. Wilson, Bradford County Extension

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Jacksonville, FL 32254

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We're on the web:
http://nfbfg.ifas.ufl.edu

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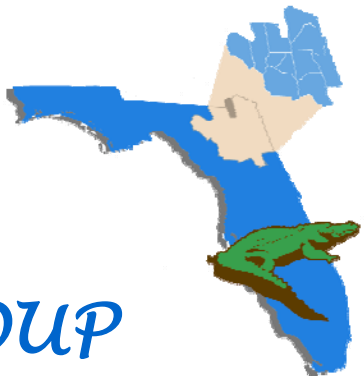

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