

Northeast Florida Livestock Agents Group



UF IFAS Extension Quarterly Newsletter

February 2014

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Dear Producers,

I would like to wish everyone a Happy New Year. My name is Barton Wilder, and I am the Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent for Alachua County. My background is in forages and pasture weed control. It is my pleasure to serve this year as the chairman of the North Florida Livestock Agents Group (NFLAG).

We would like to thank all our producers and sponsors for continuing to support IFAS Extension as your source for unbiased, science backed information. This year NFLAG has several timely and relevant extension programs for the livestock producers in the district. Our equine workshop will be held in May at the Clay County Fairgrounds. After feedback from our advisory committee, the equine workshop will have tracks for beginning and advanced horse owners. Due to the positive response, the 16th Annual Hay Field Day will be held again at Santa Fe River Ranch in Alachua County. Our Goat and Sheep workshop will be in October.

Finally, I would also like to encourage all our producers to attend one of our wildlife and cool season forages workshops. They will be on March 24th in Bradford County and Columbia County. I hope you will find these programs useful for your ranches and farms. If you have any questions or comments, feel free to contact us anytime.

Barton Wilder

Northeast Florida Livestock Agents Group (NFLAG)
Chair



Bull Selection

Cindy Sanders, County Extension Director/ Livestock Agent,
UF IFAS Alachua County Extension

Selection of your herd bull is a very important task as a cow-calf producer. It has been said that the herd bull is half of the herd, due to the fact that he supplies half of the genetic makeup of the entire calf crop.

Bull selection should be based on genotypic and phenotypic traits. If Expected Progeny Differences are available they should be a priority in selecting bulls. First, evaluate your herd's strengths and weaknesses, for example; weaning weights, milking ability, birth weights, etc. Select which traits need improvement, and make those a priority when looking at the data. Also, consider accuracy of the data, the more offspring a bull has in production, the greater the accuracy and more reliable the numbers.

Visual selection is important once the bull has met the previous criteria. Structural soundness is essential, muscling and conformation is extremely important. Remember that bigger is not always better! Lastly, consider disposition and attitude.

When buying bulls, make sure that the bull has passed a breeding soundness evaluation, and that the breeder is willing to guarantee that he is sound.



Since breeding season is just around the corner, now is the time to make sure those bulls are ready. Bulls need to be vaccinated before breeding season with annual vaccinations. In addition all bulls need to pass a breeding soundness evaluation from your veterinarian. If bulls are half the herd, you certainly want to make sure he is working properly for the next 90-150 days. With the price of cattle, you don't want to find out at pregnancy testing time that your pregnancy rate is low due to the bull.

In addition, make sure you transition your bulls before entering the breeding season. If you have been feeding those bulls to get them into breeding condition with a high-energy feed, they will need to be transitioned to a lower energy or forage based diet. Bulls should enter the breeding season with a body condition score of 5.5 -6.5. At this BCS the bulls will have adequate body reserves to draw upon during breeding season. Bulls can lose from 100-400 lbs. of bodyweight or 1-4 units of body condition score during breeding.

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In order to know how many bulls a beef producer will need for a breeding season, the service capacity of the bull needs to be considered. Service capacity is the number of cows a bull can adequately detect in estrus and potentially breed during the defined breeding season. The general service capacity or bull to cow ratio is based on the age of the bull. Table 1 provides guidelines for service capacity of bulls.



Table 1. Relationship of bull age to service capacity during the breeding season.

Bull Age	Bull to Cow Ratio
12- 18 months	1:15-20
2 years	1:30-35
3- Aged (7 plus years)	1:35-40

Source: Dr. Matt Hersom & Martha Thomas (EDIS publication #AN218)

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/an218>

2014 Farm Bill Passes House; Senate Expected: What Producers Can Expect

Amanda Burnett, Agriculture & Natural Resources Agent, UF IFAS Nassau County Extension

The House has passed and the Senate is expected to pass a new five-year farm bill, called the Agricultural Act of 2014. According to the House Committee on Agriculture, the new Agricultural Act of 2014 will contain major reforms, including the elimination of the direct payments program, cutting down on program misuse, greater support for farmers and ranchers affected by natural disasters and economic hardship, and strengthened efforts to protect natural resources.

The direct payment subsidies program has accounted for a significant portion of the farm bill budget since 2003. These direct payments were paid to farmers producing major agricultural crops

such as peanuts, wheat, and corn without regard to current production or market prices. By eliminating direct payment and other subsidies, the 2014 farm bill will reallocate billions of dollars to new risk management provisions such as crop insurance. Farmers who enroll in crop insurance will be given payment to cover the cost of some of their insurance premium. In the occurrence of nat-

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ural disasters or economic crisis, farmers with crop insurance will be provided financial assistance which makes for more stable food prices for consumers.

Approximately \$4 billion a year will be paid through the 2014 farm bill conservation programs, making it the largest federal source of conservation funding. Conservation requirements that were attached to direct payments will now be added back to crop insurance, a provision that will require farmers and ranchers to abide by basic conservation practices in exchange for crop insurance subsidies. The 2014 farm bill will also provide millions of dollars to renewable energy and biofuel initiatives over the next ten years, permanently extends forest stewardship contracts, and expands the good-neighbor authority so that federal and state foresters can partner on restoration projects, including bark beetle treatments. Those interested in becoming certified organic can also look for the organic certification cost-share program funded by the farm bill to provide farmers and organic processors with 75 %, or a maximum of \$750, toward the cost of their certification.

In a statement by Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Adam Putnam, "Most importantly, the farm bill provides more than \$125 million in funding for Florida to fight the spread of citrus greening The federal funding provided by the farm bill will not only support research to slow the spread of greening and find a cure, it's also a boost of confidence to a struggling citrus industry that needs all the support it can get."

The new farm bill is projected to cost about \$950 billion over a decade but will cut about \$23 billion from the federal deficit. Despite previous grumblings about eliminating the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the new farm bill will maintain food assistance for families while addressing fraud and misuse of the program. About \$8 billion will be cut from the food stamp program.

Stated in a press release by the U.S. House Committee on Agriculture, the 2014 farm bill will furthermore be beneficial to the agricultural economy by:

- Boosting export opportunities for farmers to participate in global markets

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- Increasing support for local farmers' markets and farm to school programs
- Increasing assistance for food banks
- Reducing regulatory barriers
- Investing in state pilot projects to encourage employment opportunities
- Creating initiatives to help veterans start agriculture businesses
- Growing American bio-based manufacturing using raw agricultural products
- Expanding bio-energy production
- Investing in research to promote productivity and new innovations
- Strengthening rural development initiatives

For more information about the Agricultural Act of 2014, go to the US House of Committee on Agriculture website at <http://agriculture.house.gov/farbill>.

Compliance Letters sent to Producers in the Lower St. Johns BMAP Area

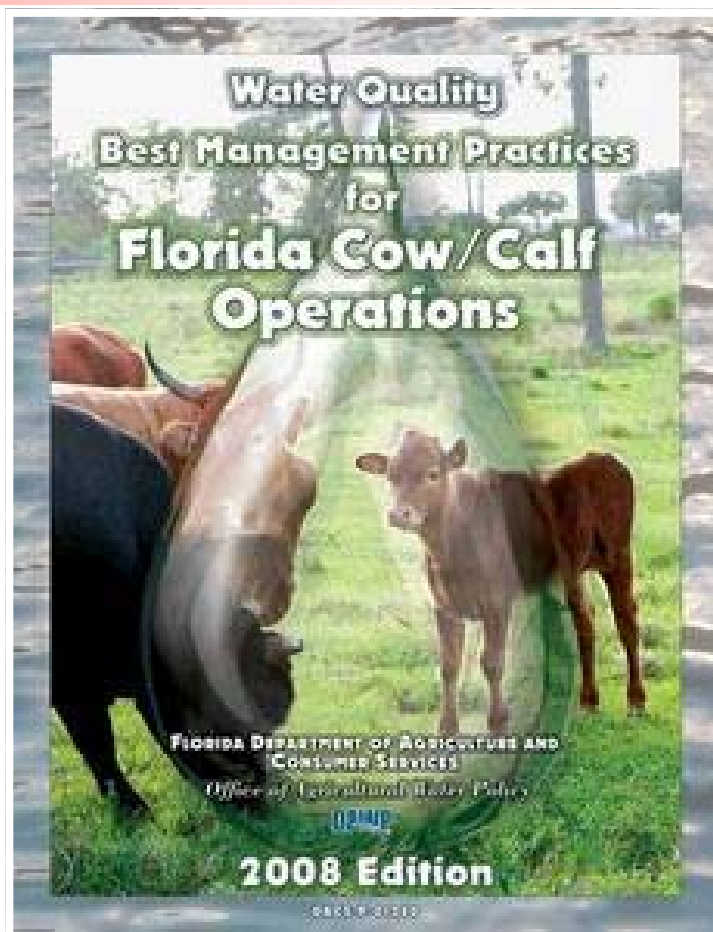
Amanda Burnett, Agriculture & Natural Resources Agent, UF IFAS Nassau County Extension

Producers in the Lower St. Johns River Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) Area should have received letters from the state that offer assistance to comply with agricultural best management practices (BMPs). The Lower St. Johns River BMAP area includes multiple counties in the St. Johns River Water Management District from Duval County south past Deland.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection has identified the Lower St. Johns River as an impaired water resource. Excess nutrient pollution from stormwater, wastewater, fertilizer and other sources has damaged the health of the river that people, communities, and wildlife depend on. As a result, the Lower St. Johns River BMAP was created in 2008 to reduce nutrient loading into the river. Commercial agriculture operations, those that run as a business, in BMAPs are required under Florida law to implement agricultural best management practices, or conduct water quality monitoring.

Agricultural best management practices (BMPs) are designed to primarily improve water quality while allowing agricultural operations to be produc-

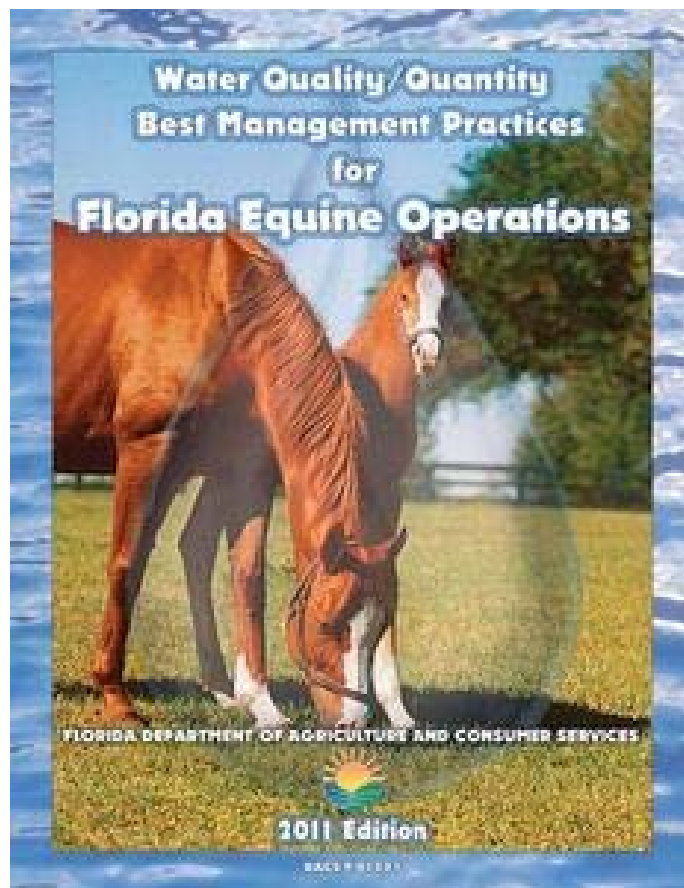
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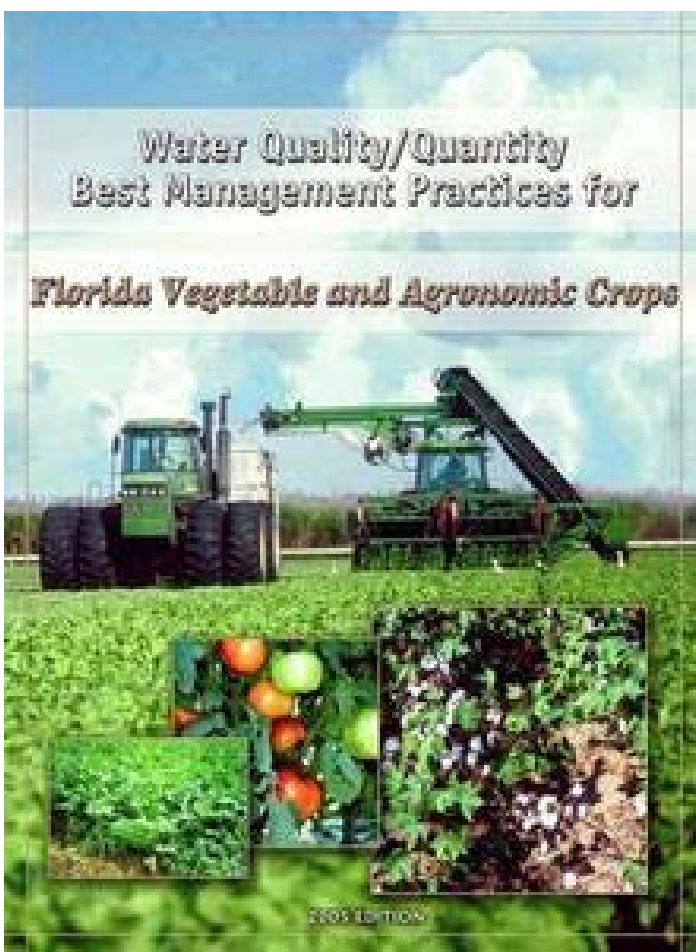
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tive. Citrus, vegetable and row crops, sod, cow/calf operations, equine operations, container nurseries and others all have state adopted BMPs. Many BMPs are simple and practical ways to protect environmental quality and even save producers money, according to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. For instance, BMPs that regulate the amounts and timing of fertilizer application reduce runoff and fertilizer costs for producers. Additionally, with some exceptions, the Florida Right to Farm Act prohibits local governments from regulating agricultural activities that are already addressed through adopted BMPs.

Whether you are a large or small agricultural operation, enrolling in agricultural BMPs is recommended. Those interested in learning more about BMPs



and in enrolling can contact the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services who have staff available to assist with on-site enrollment. They may be reached at 850-617-1727 or e-mail AgBMPhelp@FreshFromFlorida.com. If you have other questions you may also contact your local County Extension Agent.



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Sheep & Goat Scrapie Eradication Program

David Nistler, Agriculture/ Small Farm/ Natural Resources Agent, UF IFAS Clay County Extension

Scrapie is a chronic, fatal disease of the nervous system that is more common in sheep than in goats. A unique organism called a prion causes Scrapie, and it is in the group of diseases classified as Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSE), or degenerative diseases of the brain. It can take from 2 to 5 years for sheep and goats after infection for symptoms to appear.

Nationally, the mandatory SEP requires that sheep and goats over 18 months of age be officially identified with USDA approved ID (ear tags, tattoos, or in some circumstances, microchips) when moved interstate, exhibited, or upon change of ownership. USDA tags are provided free to producers. Microchips are acceptable if the producer is enrolled in the voluntary SFCP. For purebred animals, the breed registration tattoo is acceptable as identification.

The mandatory program requires official identification of sheep and goats that are being moved off their premises of origin over 18 months of age; no inspection required; ear tags are free (from USDA) to the producer; requires tamper-resistant identifica-



tion; may use white or blue tags, microchips, or registered tattoos.

The voluntary program officially identifies all sheep and goats over 1 year of age. After initial inspection and testing, the enrolled flock is inspected annually; SFCP-Enrolled herd owners must purchase their own approved identification; requires permanent, unique, tamper-evident identification; may use white or colored tags, microchips, or registered tattoos.

Florida is considered a Scrapie compliant state, adopting the National Scrapie Eradication Program guidelines. However, Florida rules 5C-3, Importation of Animals, 5C-4, Admission of Animals for Exhibition and 5C-29, Scrapie, differ from the national program identification requirements in that animals of any age moving off the farm must be officially identified.

To enroll in the Scrapie Eradication Program or Scrapie Free Certification Program and obtain official identification tags, contact the USDA office: USDA, APHIS, Veterinary Services, 8100 15th Place, Gainesville, Florida 32606, (352) 313-3060 http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_diseases/scrapie/

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