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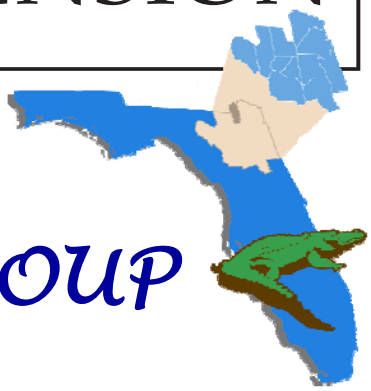
NORTHEAST FLORIDA LIVESTOCK AGENTS GROUP



February 2013

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Dear Producers,

As we begin 2013, I would like to thank you for your continued support of our programmatic efforts. We strive to provide up-to-date, unbiased, scientifically sound educational material on topics important to you. Over the past few months, we have transitioned from our old name 'Northeast Florida Beef and Forage Group (NFBFG)' to our new name 'Northeast Florida Livestock Agents Group (NFLAG)'. This change better reflects the expertise that many of our members can provide to our clientele.

As we planned for 2013, we have decided to implement three signature programs. Our first program will be an equine meeting at the Clay County Fairgrounds in May, followed by our Hay Field Day at the Santa Fe River Ranch in Alachua County in July and we will wrap up our year with a Small Ruminant workshop in September/October. I hope you will find these programs useful to your needs.

As your County Extension Agents, we are your direct link to the University of Florida. If you have questions, comments or would like to visit, please contact us at any time.

Tim Wilson, Northeast Florida Livestock Agents Group, Chair

Poultry Questions and Answers

Michael A. Davis, Ph.D. County Director/Agriculture Agent, UF IFAS Baker County Extension

When compared to other states in the southeast, Florida does not have a large poultry industry. However, there are many people who have 'backyard' poultry flocks in the region. The questions and answers below are some of the typical questions that I receive concerning poultry.

At what age do chickens begin to lay eggs?

Most species of chicken will begin to lay eggs between 18 and 20 weeks of age if conditions are right, such as correct day length and proper nutrition.

Why have my hens stopped laying?

Typically, the reason(s) why hens stop laying fall into one of three general categories which I will explain below:

- Decreasing or Incorrect Day Length

Like all birds, hens start and stop laying based on the length of the day. After the summer solstice in June,

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the length of the day gradually decreases until there are only about 10 hours of daylight in North Florida on the winter solstice. The day length then starts increasing until the next summer solstice. However, hens need at least 14 hours of continuous light to stay in egg production. Providing additional light to keep the birds at or over 14 hours will keep them in production. In general, a 40 watt light bulb is adequate for each 100 ft2 of coop floor space. The use of a timer will help regulate your electric bill and keep you from having to get up at 3:00am to turn on the lights.

- Incorrect Nutrition or Lack of Water

Laying hens require a complete and balanced diet to maximize their egg production. A constant source of fresh water is also necessary. Balanced layer rations with 16% to 18% protein can be purchased at your local feed store. Additional feeding of table scraps or whole grains such as corn will unbalance the hens' diet.

- Disease, Age and Stress

Disease in a flock can be very detrimental to egg production. Make sure to keep an eye on your birds for any signs of disease such as: watery eyes, coughing, dull or weak appearance and lameness. Keep your hens isolated from other farm animals and from wild animals which can carry disease. Hens also decrease their production over time. Hens will typically lay efficiently for two laying cycles of 50 to 60 weeks each, but they will decrease in efficiency after 2 to 3 years of age. Stressful conditions can cause a dramatic decline in egg production. Stressful situations include: extreme temperatures (cold or hot), handling or moving, fright from loud noises or movement, predators and parasites.

Do I need a rooster around for my hen to lay eggs?

No. Hens will naturally lay eggs whether there is a rooster present or not, given the correct conditions. However, if you want fertile eggs and baby chicks, you will need a rooster for fertilization.

Does incubation temperature affect the sex of hatching eggs?

No, incubation temperature has nothing to do with determining the sex of the baby chick. However, altering the temperature during incubation can result in a reduction in the number that hatch.

Is there a difference in nutrition between brown-shelled and white-shelled eggs?

No, there is no difference. The color of the shell is determined by the breed of hen that lays the eggs. Hans that have white earlobes will lay white-shelled eggs, while those with red earlobes will lay brown-shelled eggs. In general, brown-shelled eggs tend to be a bit larger than white-shelled eggs because the breeds that lay brown-shelled eggs tend to be larger. There is also a greater chance of having a meat spot or blood spot in a brown shelled egg.

Are hormones used in commercial poultry meat production?

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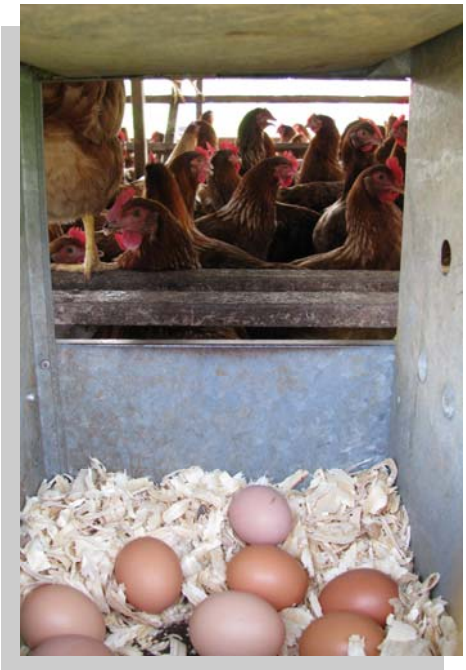

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No. Hormones are not fed to or administered to commercial poultry. The large size of the birds and their rapid growth rate are the result of traditional selective breeding (mating the biggest and best males with the biggest and best females).

Why does the skin of some chickens look yellow, while others look white?

This is due yellow and orange pigments in the feed of the birds. Birds that are given feed with higher amounts of these pigments will display more yellow color in their skin, fat and in the yolks of the eggs that they produce.

How much poultry is produced in the United States each year and what is it worth?[1]

Data reported to the USDA indicate that there were over 8.5 billion broilers produced for meat in the United States resulting in almost 50 billion pounds of meat in 2011. The value of this product was over $23 billion. In 2011, there were almost 250 million turkeys produced resulting in over 7.3 billion pounds of meat worth almost $5 billion. Finally, there were almost 92 billion eggs produced in 2011, worth almost $7.5 billion.

[1]USDA-Nass. Poultry Production an Value, 2011 Summary. ISSN 1949-1573; htttp://usda01library.cornell.edu/usda/current/PoulProdVa-04-26-2012.pdf

Coyote Management for Ranchers

Barton Wilder, Agriculture/ Natural Resources Agent, UF IFAS Alachua County Extension

Coyotes are quickly becoming a major problem to ranchers in north Florida. Coyotes are a serious predator of calves, goats, and sheep. Although native to the American west, coyotes have gradually migrated east into Florida for several reasons. First, the reduction of the grey wolf population has removed a significant competitor for coyote habitat. Next, coyotes are able to consume a wide variety of food sources, and finally, they are highly adaptable to human activity.

Coyotes range in size from 39-60 inches and typically weigh 25-37 pounds. Their color ranges from grey to rusty brown. Coyotes naturally live in forested areas. However, they are highly adapted to ranches, farms, and the suburban fringe. Coyotes have a diverse diet. The majority of it consists of rabbits, carrion, rodents, and livestock. Coyotes only breed once per year with an average litter of six pups. They like to build their dens in hollow logs, dense vegetation and brush covered slopes. Their reproduction rate is directly tied to the population of their prey. As the prey population decreases, the reproduction rate decreases.

Like most wildlife, coyotes have a natural fear of humans and are reclusive. Most of their activity takes place during dawn and dusk. They can be solitary or group in small packs of two to three. Coyotes often make loud vocalizations when encountering other packs. These vocalizations can give the illusion that many more are present than are actually there.

Coyotes can cause significant losses to calves, goats, and sheep operations. Coyotes typically do not go after adult cattle unless they are sick, infirm or in the process of giving birth. Livestock losses from coyotes are typically highest during their breeding

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season which starts in April and ends in June. Coyote attacks on livestock can be distinguished from other wildlife by several signs. Coyotes kill by suffocation, leaving bite marks, bruises and bleeding around the head and neck. They will also cause injury to the tail and hind legs. Coyotes will start feeding on the flank of the animal. In addition, they will often consume the animal's nose. Feral dogs that kill livestock, rarely feed on the prey. Often they will bite random areas of the body. The tracks made by feral dogs can be distinguished from those of coyotes by their size. Coyote tracks are narrower and longer.

Bobcat attacks differ in that these predators pounce on the back of their prey leaving puncture wounds on the animals' neck, back, sides and shoulder areas. Bobcats usually drag they prey into cover to protect it from scavengers. Black bears attacks on livestock can be distinguished by the crushing bite marks on the skull, spine or neck. Bears will usually eat everything but the livestock's intestine and hide. Like bobcats, black bears will often drag their prey into cover.

Guard animals can be effective at deterring coyotes. Great Pyrenees and Akbash are effective livestock guardian dogs. Research has shown that donkeys and llamas are not as effective as dogs, but still offer adequate protection from coyotes. It is recommended that only one donkey or llama be used per herd. Two or more often congregate by themselves and ignore the other livestock. Intact male donkeys are two aggressive to be used for protection.

Coyotes can be hunted year round on private property in Florida. There are no bag limits. A hunting license from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) is not required. In addition, night hunting for coyotes using a spotlight on private property is permitted.

References

The Coyote (Canis latrans): Florida's Newest Predator. http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/uw127. UF/IFAS Extension.
Interpreting the Physical evidence of predation on Domestic Livestock. http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/uw135. UF/IFAS Extension.
Visual Guide to Interpreting Physical Evidence of Coyote Pre-

Coccidiosis in Farm Animals

Derek Barber, Livestock/ Natural Resources Agent, UF IFAS Columbia County Extension

Coccidiosis affects nearly all farm animals and can be particularly devasting in young animals. However certain management practices will reduce the risk of this disease and help build natural immunity in your animals.

Disease

This disease is caused by microscopic parasites that infects the intestinal tract and most are host specific. One of the most common medicated feed for livestock is for the treatment of coccidiosis. The mild strength of the drug used in feed will kill most, but not all, of the parasites. This will allow gradual immunity to develop so the animal usually will not have problems with coccidiosis as adults.

Symptoms

Typical symptoms include diarrhea, dehydration, loss of condition, loss of appetite, and in extreme case death. Death is the result of diarrhea, which causes dehydration and loss of electrolytes. Scouring usually begins 1-2 weeks after infection, so by this time

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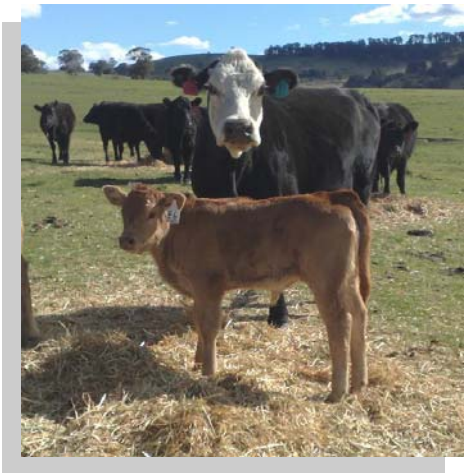

damage to the animal's intestine has already been done.

Prevention and Treatment

Coccidiosis is an opportunistic disease that will often develop when other stress factors are present. The control of coccidiosis relies on good management practices:

- Good hygiene of facilities, pastures, pens, feeders and water sources
- Moving feeders and shelter
- Minimize stress by inadequate nutrition, severe weather, or other infections
- Add coccidiostats to concentrate as a feed additive
- Isolate animals displaying clinical signs of coccidiosis
- Replace fluids as soon as possible
- Talk to your vet about use of sulfa drugs or amprolium

Contact your local IFAS Extension office for more information on a health management plan for your animals.

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Planting Pastures

Keith Wynn, Agriculture Agent, UF IFAS Hamilton County Extension

Bahiagrass is the most common grass grown in North Florida due to its lack of management needs and adaption to low soil fertility which is common for this area. Bahiagrass can be produced for pasture or hay production. This time of year is when most producers evaluate their pasture production areas to determine what production methods should be incorporated in order to improve their pastures performance. Some producers may decide to convert crop land into pasture or simply replant areas of existing pastures which have not produced well in recent years.

If considering to plant Bahiagrass the first thing that should be considered is the pastures soil fertility. If the soil pH is below 5.5, lime should be added before planting. One must also determine what would be the best time of the year to plant Bahiagrass in your area. March would be the optimum time to plant Bahiagrass in order to get a start on summer weeds, however this is normally the driest time of the planting season and if there is no way to irrigate you may want to wait until June in order to receive some summer showers.

Replacement heifers on pensacola bahiagrass pasture.

The next thing to consider would be which cultivar to plant. Available Bahiagrass cultivars to choose from include Pensacola, Argentine, Tifton 9, UF-Riata, and TifQuik. Pensacola is estimated to represent sixty percent of the Bahiagrass produced in Florida. Bahiagrass is planted by seed so the next step would be to determine whether to plant with a conventional drill, a no-till drill, a cultipacker planter, or with a broadcast spreader.

Whether planting with a no-till drill or broadcasting, plant twenty pounds of seed per acre. If using conventional planting methods with a conven-

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tional seed drill only fifteen pounds of seed would be appropriate. No matter the planting method the seed must be planted only ¼ to ½ of an inch deep. One to two weeks after the seed has germinated the first fertilizer application should be distributed. It should consist of 30 lb nitrogen, all of the recommended P2O5(phosphorus), and fifty percent of the K2O (potassium) per acre. The second fertilizer application should be applied 50 days after the first application and should consist of an additional 50 lbs of nitrogen per acre along with the remaining K2O (potassium).

Edited By:

Keith Wynn, Agricultural Agent, Hamilton County Extension

Source:

Newman, Y., Vendramini, J., & Blount A. (2011) *Bahiagrass (Paspalum notatum): Overview and Management*. EDIS Publication #SS-AGR-332. Retrieved from http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ag342

Can We Produce More Meat Goats?

Basil Bactawar , County Director/ Agriculture Agent, UF IFAS Union County Extension

The USA was a net exporter of goat meat before 1990. Export of this product stopped because of an increase in demand within the country. Consequently the US became a goat meat importing country. For example, The USA imported approximately 750,000 goat carcasses in 2006. More than ninety (90) percent of this import came from Australia. Although the US Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Services reported approximately three (3)million meat goats on farms, American producers were unable to meet the local demand for goat meat. The increase in demand for meat goat is driven by a growing ethnic population with preference for goat meat. They are Hispanics, Asian, Africans and people from the Middle East.

What does this mean for goat producers or potential goat producers in Northern Florida? The demand for goat meat is projected to remain strong because the ethnic population is expected to grow especially the Hispanics. This is a good opportunity for the goat business, but it is important that producers minimize their production costs without adversely affecting production so as to compete with the imported frozen product.

One of the advantages producers have is consumers' preference for fresh goat meat instead of the frozen product. Additionally, producers need to understand the market so as to add value to the goats they produced. Please see below a list of initiatives that can add value to the meat produced on your farm:

- Consider selling goats when there is an increase in demand e.g. during Easter and Ramadan (Muslim holidays).
- Use handling and harvesting procedures that meet the customers' needs e.g. Muslims prefer Halal and Jews prefer kosher techniques.
- Organic raised goats and/or goats produced under an on-farm food safety program can attract consumers who prefer organic and certified safe food.
- Direct marketing by arranging to have animals slaughter, cut, wrapped and delivered in accordance with consumers' request or preference.
- Build a list of clients who return to purchase your goats or goat meat based on customers' satisfaction and loyalty

Goat production presents a good opportunity for farms to diversify their products by adding value. Do not forget to keep an eye on your production costs, as they determine your bottom line.

BEEF CATTLE MANAGEMENT CALENDAR

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.

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