

# NORTHEAST FLORIDA BEEF & FORAGE GROUP



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**Nassau County**  
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**Suwannee County**  
Scott Kerr

**Union County**  
Dr. Jacque Breman

## January 2008

As we start 2008 we want to reiterate our commitment to serve you by offering the educational programs and resources that you need to make wise decisions during these difficult times. We have prepared a plan of work for 2008 based on the input we received from program evaluations and the guidance of the NFBFG Advisory Council.

In this newsletter you will find timely arti-

cles on practices that minimize hay losses from storage, de-stocking strategies as well as the results of herbicide control plots we had in Columbia County last year.

We will start this year with a series of programs on Basic Pasture Management at three different locations: Alachua Co. (March 4), Baker Co. (March 6), and Clay Co. (March 11) and a Field Day on Pasture Management that will be

held at the North Florida Research and Education Center-Suwannee Valley (Live Oak, FL) on April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2008. For program details see enclosed flyer.

Please feel free to contact us if we can be of further assistance. We are here to help you.

Sincerely,

*Elena M. Toro*

Elena M. Toro  
Chair, Northeast Florida  
Beef & Forage Group

## Reducing Hay Storage Losses

Brad Burbaugh, Duval County Extension

Farmers produce 150 million tons of hay valued at more than 12 billion dollars each year. Hay is the most widely grown mechanically-harvested agronomic crop in the United States. However, post harvest storage losses are often high particularly with round bales stored outside.

A ten percent loss is common among producers. This number does not seem unreasonably high, but it also means you are only feeding 9 out of every 10 bales. With the current cost of hay it is important to utilize every single bale that is cut or bought.

If storing bales outside here are five rec-

ommendations to reduce storage loss.

- 1) Rounded sides of bales not touching; at least 3 feet of space between rows.
- 2) Flat ends of bales butted tightly together.
- 3) Hay/Soil contact avoided by placing bales on rock, pallets or old tires.

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4) Do NOT store bales under a tree.

5) Protect the top and sides with any type of cover.

A shed provides the best protection from the weather, but it also requires a relatively large investment. Setting bales outside without any protection requires little investment, but dry matter and nutrient losses can be large. Recent research determined the range of dry matter loss in relationship to storage method.



*“Plots were designed to determine the efficacy of 7 herbicides applied during the winter season.”*

## Winter Weed Control Cleans First Hay Cutting

Elena Toro, Columbia County Livestock & Natural Resources Extension Agent

Winter weed control was shown to clean up the first cutting of a hay field in a farm trial I conducted in Columbia County in cooperation with Mr. Robert Rentz, beef cattle and hay producer, and Dr. Jason Ferrel, UF-IFAS Extension Agronomy Weed Specialist. Treatment benefits included:

- Clean hay at 1<sup>st</sup> cutting (increased marketability & feed value),
- Less weed competition for Bermudagrass as it starts Spring growth,

- Increased fertilizer and water available for the hay crop.

Plots were designed to determine the efficacy of 7 herbicides applied during the winter season. All the products used are labeled for use on pastures and hay fields. The field used was a hay field established during 2006 with 'Coastal' Bermuda grass, so Spring weed control was very important in this new field. Spraying was conducted February 8, 2007 after a killing frost to ensure the grass was fully dormant and would not be injured

by any of the products used. The treatments applied are outlined in **Table 1.**

Weeds present in the field included wild radish, mustard, geranium, red sorrel among others. Herbicide control was observed and recorded during weeks 1, 2, 4 and 6.

Simplification and summaries of the data collected:

- The best control of winter weeds (90%) was observed with Weedmaster and Gramoxone

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+ 2,4-D after the second week. This means that farmers should expect several weeks to pass after treatment to see even the best winter annual weed control results.

- By the fourth week we found large differences in winter annual weed control. Forefront controlled 90% and Glyphosate + 2,4-D controlled 70% of the weeds.
- Poor control was observed in plots sprayed with 2,4-D alone, glyphosate and Remedy. Each of these herbicides are highly effective on a number of weeds, but failed to control some of the particular weeds present in this field. This demonstrates the importance of proper weed identification. Since no herbicide is effective on all weeds, knowing which species are present and designing a specific herbicide program will be the most effective

option.

In conclusion, we found that we could clean up the first cutting of Bermudagrass hay with an investment cost of \$7, by applying a labeled herbicide (either Weedmaster or Gramoxone + 2,4-D). This information will increase the marketability as well as the feed value of the first hay cutting in the northeast Florida area.

[Products mentioned in this article

are for education/demonstration purposes only, and should not be construed as an endorsement, warranty, or guarantee, nor to exclude similarly labeled products]



**Table 1.** Herbicide products, rates and cost of application of products

Herbicide Applied	Rate	Cost to apply per acre
2,4-D Amine	2 pts	\$3
Weedmaster	2 pts	\$7
Remedy	1 pt	\$10
Forefront	1.5 pts	\$12
Glyphosate	1 pt	\$4
Glyphosate + 2,4-D	1 pt of each	\$5
Gramoxone (1.5pt) + 2,4-D amine 4L (1pt)		\$7

## De-Stocking Strategies in a Drought

Steve Gaul Adapted from article by Ron Gill

If the drought persists through this coming spring, there are several things you should consider in reducing your herd size. Supplemental feeding is expensive. Hard decisions need to be made.

Consider: 1. The sooner the problem is recognized the sooner action can be taken. 2. Quick action results in less severe herd reductions. 3. Minimize long term negative impacts on the forage resource. 4. Utilize precipitation by having residual forage to capture it.

### Common Mistakes:

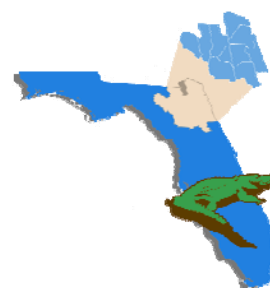
1. Do nothing now and hope it rains, lease land.
2. Early wean calves and avoid

selling cows.

3. Retaining young cows at the expense of more productive cows.

When determining which animals to cull consider the following: The first culls should be any spring or summer calving cow that does not have a calf at side. If a cow calved last fall or winter and lost the calf sell regardless of age. Cull replacement heifers that have been purchased but are not in production. First calf heifers will wean the lightest calves and have the lowest rebreeding potential. Removing replacement heifers (15% replacement rate) will re-

sult in a 10% reduction in forage demand and stocking rate. This will also reduce your forage and supplemental feed costs significantly.



Next, cull late bred cows. Identify which cows are pregnant and which stage they are at. This

*“There has been little research performed to determine control methods and materials.”*

can reduce the herd size by 5-15%. Cull cows based on production records. If none are available, visually assess cows and cull any short or broken mouth cows. Decide whether to sell open cow-calf pairs before weaning depending on calf weight. Calves over 400 lbs can be weaned and sold separately. As conditions deteriorate culling should be based on eliminating the genetic bottom of the herd based on cow characteristics and calf quality. If calves are to be

retained, ensure that there is enough forage available or that it is economical to feed them to heavier weights.

Cows with lower re-breeding potential should be culled next. These include middle aged BCS 3 and under and first calf cows BCS 4 and under reducing herd size another 10%. Avoid eliminating animals based solely on age. Often times older cows are more productive and have better genetics.

Another criteria to cull with is to maintain

the uniformity of the herd. Have a plan in place before forage availability becomes critical. Base decisions on the long term economic sustainability of your farm and not short term emotions.



## Fireweed (Heartleaf Nettle)

Scott Kerr, Suwannee County Extension

Heartleaf nettle, commonly referred to as fireweed, is a native winter annual weed that has only recently become a problem in Florida.

Fireweed possesses tiny stinging hairs which contains a toxin. These hairs easily embed in the skin and cause severe irritation that can last for hours. Usually, cattle avoid fireweed, but horses are more likely to graze it and develop symptoms of stress. Difficulty breathing and swallowing can occur for many days after consumption, along with weight loss, and in extreme cases, young horses have died.

Fireweed leaves look similar to the leaf of a strawberry plant, but no other similarities. The plant has square stems and stinging hairs found on the leaves, stems, and petiole. The hairs contain an irritant that is

known to cause respiratory stress and allergic reactions.

There has been little research performed to determine control methods and materials. Tests were conducted in March

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2006 on different pasture herbicides.

Results: 2-4-D and Telar were ineffective on fireweed. Glyphosate, applied at a time when grasses were dormant, provided as much as 80% control. But Glyphosate was inconsistent in other tests and achieved only a 30% control level. Due to the inconsistency and the ability for

Glyphosate to damage perennial grasses, it is not recommended for use against fireweed.

Weedmaster at 1.5 quarts/acre did not provide acceptable levels of control, but Remedy, Milestone, and Pasturegard were all found to be highly effective. These materials provided a 90% kill within two weeks of application. By six weeks, no fireweed could be found.

The University of Florida recommends the use of the above materials for effective control of fireweed. These materials can be applied at any time of the year to warm-season forage grasses, and there are no grazing restrictions for beef cattle. Lactating dairy animals must be removed for 0 and 14 days with Milestone and Remedy, respectively, and one season for Pasturegard.

## **FORAGE MANAGEMENT BASICS WORKSHOPS & FIELD DAY**

The Northeast Florida Beef and Forage Group (NFBFG) will offer a workshop on Forage Management Basics at three different locations this spring (Alachua, Baker and Clay Counties). In addition, there will be a Pasture Management Field Day at the North Florida Research and Education Center– Suwannee Valley in Live Oak, FL to demonstrate techniques, products and equipment used during pasture establishment and management.

### **TOPICS**

Overview of warm season and cool season forages, proper soil preparation, pasture establishment, understanding plant growth, stocking rates, liming and fertilization, equipment needed, weed control (weed ID, demonstration plots), setting up a rotational grazing system and maximizing forage quality.

### **WORKSHOP LOCATIONS & DATES**

Time: 5:30 to 8 pm.

Fee: \$10.00 (Meal and hand-outs will be provided).

- March 4th, 2008. Alachua County Extension Office, 2800 NE 39th Ave Gainesville, FL;  
To register contact Cindy Sanders at 352-955-2402.
- March 6th, 2008. Baker County Extension Office, 1025 W MacClenny Ave. MacClenny, FL;  
To register contact Mike Sweat at 904-259-3520.
- March 11th, 2008. Clay County Extension Office, 2463 SR 16 W Green Cove Springs, FL;  
To register contact David Nistler at 904-284-6355.

### **FIELD DAY LOCATION & DATE**

Time: 9:00 am to 12:30 pm

Fee: \$10.00 (Refreshments, lunch and handouts will be provided)

April 5th, 2008, North Florida Research & Education Center-Suwannee Valley,  
7580 CR 136 Live Oak, FL

To register call (386) 362-1725 ext. 101 or (386) 752-5384

**NFBFG**  
1025 West Macclenny Avenue  
Macclenny, FL 32063

Non-Profit Org.  
US Postage  
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Permit No. 17  
Macclenny, FL 32063

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

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

Extension programs are open to all people regardless of race, color, age, sex, handicap, or national origin. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, any person needing a special accommodation to participate in any activity, should contact the Baker County Cooperative Extension Service at 1025 West Macclenny Avenue, Macclenny, FL 32063 or telephone (904) 259-3520 no later than seven (7) days prior to the event. Hearing impaired persons can access the foregoing telephone by contacting the Florida Relay Service at 1-800-955-8770 (voice) or 1-800-955-8771 (TDD).



Be sure to visit our  
**Northeast Florida Beef & Forage Group**  
website at: **<http://nfbfg.ifas.ufl.edu/>**  
for additional information and  
upcoming workshops.