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 articles 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 5th, 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
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 recommendations 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.

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**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 1st 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

*Con’t on page 3*
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 result 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
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.

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**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
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).