Brent Sellers is a professor and the associate center director at the University of Florida/IFAS Range Cattle Research and Education Center. Brent specializes in dealing with troublesome weeds, specifically pasture and rangeland weed management. In a recent interview I asked Brent about his early years growing up in Indiana, his education, and professional career.

When asked about his early years, Brent said, “I grew up in Bourbon, a small town in northern Indiana and am the youngest of four. My family grew corn on approximately 500 acres to feed a farrow to finish swine operation. At peak production we had approximately 3,000 feeder pigs. We lived approximately ¼ mile from my paternal grandparents, who had a small dairy farm when I was young, and I barely remember the dairy in operation, but I do remember asking my dad why we couldn’t have retained the cattle and sold the pigs. We also had 8,500 laying hens. When I was young, I spent quite a bit of time helping my mom gather eggs and sort them into 30 dozen cases in the cooler until they were picked up by a semi. At age 9 or 10, I started driving small tractors and eventually some of our larger tractors by the time I was 11. I helped prepare ground for planting every spring, and began applying anhydrous ammonia when I was 13, and sometimes planted corn when I was in my upper teens. I spent many summers cultivating corn (which hardly anyone does anymore as we have gone to more reduced tillage operations). When we were not working on the crops, we were working in the pig barns, which entailed castration, clipping teeth and tails, ear notching, giving shots, and, of course, feeding. I attended a small high school where I was involved in several activities including marching band, choir, musicals (I was the Lion in the Wizard of Oz during my senior year), basketball, and tennis. I graduated with a class of 62. I mowed a lot of yards during the summer as well. I remember most of my summers involved getting up, eating, working, eating dinner, and then eating supper sometime after the sun went down. Every once in a while we would venture off on family excursions, but we were never gone for long as my dad didn’t like to “work harder to leave and work even
harder to catch back up” when we returned.”

After high school, Brent obtained his BS in Biological Sciences and MS in Weed Science at Purdue University (1995, 1999) and his PhD in Weed Science from the University of Missouri (2003). After college and prior to Ona, Brent worked as a post-doctoral associate at the University of Missouri for his PhD advisor. “I essentially ran the weed science field program from April, 2003 through December, 2004.” Brent said, “Our research trials were conducted in corn and soybean, and was at the forefront of some of the glyphosate resistance that was beginning to be observed in row crops in the Midwest.”

Brent’s program began at Ona in December 2004. When he first visited the Center, for his interview, it had been just 10 days since the passing of Hurricane Charley (8/13/04) – the Center was still operating on generator power. Brent said, “The mess here was amazing. I wish I could have seen the Center prior to the hurricane.” Since being hired as an assistant professor, Brent has been promoted to associate professor in 2011, then associate professor and associate center director in 2014, followed by professor in July of this year. When asked what his role as associate center director entails, Brent said, “I assist Dr. Arthington in leadership of faculty and staff. I have enjoyed this role as it has required me to work more closely with some of the staff than I otherwise would have while solely working on my program objectives. I also provide feedback to Dr. Arthington on working relationships at the center and how they could possibly be improved.”

A member of several professional societies, Brent has served in numerous leadership roles. Presently, he is a member of the Weed Science Society of America serving on the Extension Committee, the Federal Noxious, and Invasive Weed Committee, and the Standardized Plant Names Subcommittee. As a member of the Southern Weed Science Society Brent is on the Foundation Board of Trustees. He is also an active member of the Florida Weed Science Society, Florida Cattlemen’s Association, and the American Society of Agronomy.

During his 13 years with UF, Brent has received many awards, including: 2014 Sadler Distinguished Extension Professional and Enhancement Award 2012 Outstanding Weed Scientist, Florida Weed Science Society 2011 Florida Association of County Agricultural Agents Best Publication Award (Team) 2011 Florida Association of County Agricultural Agents Best Newsletter Award, Team Category 2010 Florida Cattlemen’s Association Researcher of the Year Award 2010 Florida Association of County Agricultural Agents Extension Specialist of the Year Award. 2010 UF/IFAS Extension Dallas Townsend Extension Professional Enhancement Award. 2009 Communicator Award for Education Package – Team 2009 USDA SARE/NACAA Excellence in Livestock Production Award (Team) 2009 USDA SARE/NACAA Excellence in 4-H & Youth Programming Award (Team).

Research

When asked about current research, Brent said, “We continue to work on broomedge and smutgrass management through two grants funded through the Florida Cattlemen Enhancement Board. Broomedge management is turning out to be much more difficult than I originally anticipated, but I believe we have some data that indicates increasing fertility does help to some extent, but I don’t think it will solve the problem. We have shown that wiping broomedge in opposite directions using a 10% v/v glyphosate solution is effective, but needs to be done at least two years in a row. As for smutgrass management, we continue to learn a lot about the use of Velpar (hexazinone), including how rainfall impacts activity and long-term control. We are also currently looking at various rates of glyphosate and Velpar applied through the wiper.

Other projects that we are working on include bermudagrass tolerance to glyphosate to help control grass weeds like vaseygrass, guineagrass, and bahiagrass. Bermudagrass is fairly tolerant to 16 and 32 oz/acre of glyphosate as long as it is applied within 14 days after cutting.

Recent completed work includes rhizoma and pintoi perennial peanut tolerance to herbicides. We have found that established rhizoma peanut is quite tolerant to glyphosate, and this has resulted in a supplemental label for GlyStar Plus to be used as a broadcast treatment for weed control in rhizoma peanut. Rhizoma peanut is also fairly tolerant to triclopyr, and we are still working on getting a supplemental label for this herbicide to help control weeds like blackberry briars and juvenile tropical soda apple.”

Extension

Extension is the application of scientific research and new knowledge to agricultural practices through education. The Center has an extension asset in the onsite forage and weed demonstration area which is also known as the forage and weed nursery. It was established in 2006. When I asked Brent about the area he said, “The forage and weed nursery contains 205 species. Of these 205 species, there are 50 forages, and 155 weed species, with 7 of the 155 weeds being commonly found aquatic weeds. This nursery represents forage species that are utilized on both improved pastures and native rangeland. The purpose of the area is to increase the awareness of ranchers on particular topics including forage quality, pest susceptibility, fertility, livestock stocking rates, plant poisoning, and other important factors related to grazing management. The weed component of the nursery serves as an identifica-
tion resource for ranchers and ranchette owners. Ranchers and ranchette owners who attend educational events or simply stop in at the forage and weed nursery will be able to learn various forage and weed species. Upon further examination, they will be able to learn which forage is best suited for their given situation and what weeds can be expected in their pasture. After learning which forage is best suited for their situation, they can find additional information at the Range Cattle REC concerning proper management and fertility, which can increase the competitiveness of the forage against many of the weed species in Florida. Cultural inputs, such as these, may help growers avoid herbicide applications, which will help them reduce production costs and potentially decrease potential environmental risks associated with herbicides. The poisonous plants located in the forage and weed nursery also give growers an idea of how plant pests can reduce both human and animal welfare."

“We are currently working on revamping the weed garden. We have had a lot of cross-plot contamination, and have lost several species during the past couple of years. We hope to have everything replaced by 2018.”

In regards to other extension endeavors, Brent said, “I am working with two colleagues on collecting plant images for a pasture weed identification reference book. We expect this will take at least 12 more months before it is completed. I also plan to work one on one with a few county extension agents to help solve local county issues as well as state-wide issues related to weed management.”

When asked about attending meetings (local, state, national, and international), Brent said, “We attend the Southern Weed Science Society annual meetings that are located at various locations throughout the Southeast to give presentations to our peers in weed science. I was scheduled to go to Prague last year for the International Weed Science Congress, but I got sick prior to the meeting and couldn’t go. My poster made it for the meeting, however, and it was displayed. I also have been to Tennessee to give presentations on pasture weed management to herbicide distributors from across the southeast. We also attend the Florida Weed Science Society Annual meetings in Haines City every year at the FFA leadership center. I also support our local FFA chapter by providing weed identification lectures for various crop judging activities.”

**International Activities**
In February, 2018, Brent and Jose Luiz Dias, one of his graduate students, will travel to Australia to meet with several researchers and cattlemen to talk about issues with smutgrass management. This is part of an internal grant funded through the Dean of Research to foster international relationships and activities.

**Students**
Student mentoring is an important part of Brent’s program. He said, “I really enjoy my work with graduate students. Not only do they learn basic weed science skills from me, but I also learn from them. I think the most rewarding thing for me, as an advisor, is seeing them excel in graduate school, but most importantly, after they leave my program.” Brent has advised 2 PhD students (one current) and 6 MS students (one current). Those presently under his guidance are PhD student, José Luiz Carvalho de Souza Dias and MS student, Courtney Darling. José’s dissertation topic is Implementation of Integrated management practices to manage smutgrass (Sporobulus indicus) populations in pastures, while Courtney’s thesis topic is Tolerance of Bermudagrass and weedy grasses to herbicides in bermudagrass hayfields.

**Construction Update**
A lot has happened since the July demolish of the old lab building. The new labs, student work room, and collaboration room are coming along nicely.
Brent feels the exchange visitor program has been a real asset to his research and extension programs. Over his 13 years, he has hosted 14 interns and exchange visitors. Brent said, “They have allowed me to perform small projects that may not get done as they are typically lower on the scale of importance than others. However, it has been through these smaller projects where bigger ideas have come from for some of our more recent experiments. Also, it provides a way to get to know these students and understand their potential capabilities for graduate work. So far, I have been able to attract two of these individuals back to my program for graduate studies, and will hopefully have a 3rd return next summer.”

In Closing
Brent’s final remarks, “To be honest, I didn’t see myself staying at Ona when I first arrived in 2004 as I saw it as a stepping stone for “bigger” things. Once I got to know several of our clientele as well as people in Hardee County, I realized that I was happy here. Over the years my acquaintances have turned into friendships that will last way beyond my career. Lastly, I would like to thank all of my colleagues and clientele that have been part of my research and extension programs through research trials and field days over the past 13 years. It has certainly been the backbone of my success."

Program Support
The Weed Science program is supported by Ag Assistant, Joseph Noel. Joseph began working at the Center while still in high school working after class in the fall of 2006 and spring of 2007, and as full time OPS employee beginning in the summer of 2007. He came on full-time in 2011. When asked about his role and the value his efforts add to the program, Brent said, “He assists me by maintaining equipment, establishing research trials, and supervising students. He has built many things in my program that I would have had to hire out to get done, including fabricating a sprayer, and various accessories to perform certain research tasks. Since he is also good at running equipment, he has helped my program become more self-supportive, which helps reduce assistance from the farm crew for my program activities.”

Learn More
Visit Brent’s page on the RCREC website at http://rcrec-ona.ifas.ufl.edu/ to learn more about his work. Contact him at sellersb@ufl.edu or 863-735-1314 ext. 207.

Faculty News
John Arthington is taking on a new role at UF in addition to his responsibilities as Center Director at Ona. Senior Vice President, Jack Payne has asked John to serve as an industry relations liaison between IFAS and our stakeholders involved in production agriculture. It is not an exit from the Range Cattle REC. John will still run Ona, but over the coming year, Brent Sellers, Maria Silveira, and Joao Vendramini will oversee most of Ona’s day-to-day operations. During this time, John will reside in Gainesville with his wife, Victoria, who is completing her law degree at UF’s Levin College of Law. You are welcome to reach out to him anytime at 941-661-8034 or jarth@ufl.edu.

Staff News
In October, Tom Fussell was chosen for this year’s UF/IFAS Range Cattle REC Superior Accomplishment Award. He was selected for his outstanding work ethic, positivity, and for his innovative fencing techniques which have improved corner brace construction - increasing the spike size of crosssupports in corner braces to extend fence life. Tom has now been nominated by the Center for the UF/IFAS division level award in the support services category. Winners will be announced around Christmas - we wish him the best. Tom is an Agricultural Assistant II who supports the Center’s land and cattle operations assisting herdsman, Austin Bateman and farm manager, Dennis Kalich. Tom’s day to day tasks vary, but could include building/repairing fence or cowpens, working cattle, tagging calves, making hay, etc. Tom began his career at the Center in an OPS role with the farm crew in 2010 and transitioned to his present position in 2014.
Student News

Ona faculty, grad students and visiting scholars attended the ASA-CSSA-SSSA annual meeting in Tampa Oct. 22-25. Those attending made several oral and poster presentations. The theme of this meeting was focused on “Managing global resources for a secure future.” Those attending: Jhone Sousa, Joao Sanchez, Dr. Maria Silveira, Dr. Joao Vendramini, Dr. Makoto Kaneko, Dr. Hiran da Silva and Dr. Susana Mello.

University of Florida Graduate Student Gleise Medeiros da Silva was selected as the Masters Student candidate from the Department of Animal Science and nominated for the 2017 IFAS Awards of Excellence for Graduate Research. During her master’s studies she was advised by Philippe Moriel. Her research evaluated the effects of reducing the frequency of supplementation and timing of vaccination on growth and immune response of preconditioning beef calves. Gleise is continuing her studies at the University of Florida as a PhD student and graduate research assistant with Nicolas DiLorenzo at the North Florida Research and Education Center. A Ph.D. student was also selected and both will represent the Animal Sciences Department and be nominated for the best thesis and dissertation in IFAS for 2017.

At the 18th Annual Soil and Water Sciences Research Forum in Gainesville on Nov. 13, Yan Yan Lu presented a poster reporting the results from the Florida Cattlemens Association funded project “Agronomic and environmental impacts of land application of biosolids on bahiagrass pastures in Florida” for which she received the poster award. Those attending with Soil and Water Scientist Dr. Maira Silveira were Ph.D. student Yan Yan Lu and exchange visitors intern Bianca Sekiya and Dr. Susana Mello.
Connect with us

Listen or download the latest Joe What? Podcasts:
- Erik Jacobsen, Vice President and General Manager of Deseret Cattle & Citrus with Deseret Ranches of Florida.
- Todd Clemons, the President of Okeechobee Livestock Market which has been owned and operated by the Clemons family for over 50 years.

- Jim Handley, the Executive Vice President of the Florida Cattlemen’s Association (FCA). Listen in as Jim shares about the FCA’s establishment, structure, and purpose, and the efforts of quarterly meetings and committees.

These monthly podcast can be found at: http://uffasrcrec.podbean.com.

Florida Cattle Enhancement Program
In-Service Training - Videos (recorded 9/26/17)

View these recordings and a PDF of the slides at:
http://rcrec-onas.ifas.ufl.edu/vclassroom/video/vcmedia.shtml

Identification of Superior Limpograss Under Low-Input Systems – Joao Vendramini

Broomsedge and Smutgrass Management in Bahiagrass Pastures – Brent Sellers

Agronomic and Environmental Impacts of Biosolids Application to Bahiagrass Pastures – Maria Silveira

Tracking and Identifying Causes of Calf Loss on Florida Ranches – Raoul Boughton

BCS Management and Supplementation Strategies – Philippe Moriel

Upcoming Presentations

Register now for the December Ona Program Highlight featuring the Rangeland Wildlife and Ecosystem Program with Raoul Boughton presenting. The presentation will begin at 11:00 a.m. and last about 30 minutes. You may attend in person (call to register: 863-735-1314) or by webinar: https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/76523091011556867

Past webinars (recordings and slides) are available on the RCREC website, go to: http://rcrec-onas.ifas.ufl.edu/ look under Extension in the left navigation panel and then visit the “Virtual Classroom.”
University of Florida Nationally Ranked
No. 9 among public schools & No. 42 overall

“University of Florida is a public institution that was founded in 1853. It has a total undergraduate enrollment of 34,554, its setting is suburban, and the campus size is 2,000 acres. It utilizes a semester-based academic calendar. University of Florida’s ranking in the 2018 edition of Best Colleges is National Universities, 42.”

Read the full article at U.S. News: https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/university-of-florida-1535

“Now the state’s highest-ranked university, UF last year was ranked No. 14 among publics and No. 50 overall.”

Read the full article at UF News: UF first in Florida to crack U.S. News list of top 10 best public universities

Recent Publications


NUTRITION FOR BEEF FEMALES

Thursday, January 11, 2018, 6PM
Okeechobee Livestock Market, 1055 US 98, Okeechobee, FL
RSVP Contact: UF/IFAS Okeechobee County Ext. Office
Lauren Butler at (863) 801-5518 or lbutler@ufl.edu

Tuesday, January 23, 2018, 6PM
1085 Pratl Blvs., LaBelle, FL
RSVP Contact: UF/IFAS Hendry County Extension Office
Lindsey Wiggins (863) 674-4092 or horse1@ufl.edu

Thursday, February 22, 2018, 6PM
1702 S Holland Pkwy., Bartow, FL
RSVP Contact: UF/IFAS Polk County Extension Office
Bridget Stice at (863) 588-2697 or bccarls@ufl.edu

Dinner Included
Be Sure to RSVP no later than one week before each event