The Range Cattle REC and South Florida Beef/Forage Program conducted a very extensive research/demonstration study on the fertilizer needs of bahiagrass pasture. The results of this work showed that including phosphate (P) and potash (K) in the fertilizer formula did not produce an economic response relative to bahiagrass yield. The UF/IFAS fertilizer recommendation for south Florida was revised to currently recommend that bahiagrass pastures receive one application of 60 pounds of nitrogen (N) in late winter or early spring.

Without a recommendation for P and K, soil testing for these two plant nutrients became unnecessary. However, UF/IFAS still recommends that soil pH for bahiagrass pasture be maintained at 5.0 or higher. Soil pH can only be determined by soil testing, thus soil testing continues to be necessary to maintain a healthy root system and maximize bahiagrass growth.

The good thing about testing for soil pH is that it only needs to be done about once every three years in conjunction with a good liming program. Soil samples can still be submitted through county agricultural extension offices to the UF/IFAS soil testing laboratory in Gainesville or sent to a private laboratory. The UF/IFAS soil testing laboratory will only conduct the soil pH test unless other analyses are requested. The pH test results will allow the laboratory to provide a liming recommendation with the quantity to apply if lime is needed.

Dr. Jack Rechcigl conducted a number of research trials at the Range Cattle REC which compared the use of either dolomitic or calcitic lime on bahiagrass.
The results of these trials showed that dolomite, which contains magnesium, is the material of choice if prices of the two lime sources are similar.

For questions or comments regarding this publication contact Findlay Pate