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Aeschynomene Evenia

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Aeschynomene evenia is a short-lived perennial legume that will live through a mild winter in south Florida. It tolerates water logged soil and is very competitive with bahiagrass. Unlike common *aeschynomene* (*A. americana* or joint vetch), *evenia* will flower and make seed from late June until frost. The nutritive value of *evenia* leaves is similar to *americana*, but *evenia* is less palatable to cattle than *americana*. It is also more "woody" than *americana*.

At the Range Cattle REC, two bahiagrass pastures were burned and over-seeded with 20 Ib/A of *evenia* in February 1996. Pastures were not disked or fertilized. On July 3, these two bahiagrass pastures containing *evenia* were set-stocked (not rotated) with 1.2 yearling steers/A. At 28-day intervals over a 112 day period (July 3-Oct. 23), average daily gain (ADO) of the steers and yield of available forage was measured on the bahiagrass + *evenia* pastures and compared to ADG and available forage on unfertilized bahiagrass pastures stocked at 1.2 yearlings, but without *evenia*.

Evenia forage that was available to grazing steers ranged from 390 Ib/A at the start on July 3 to 1,800 Ib/A at the end of the trial on Oct. 23. When steers began grazing in July, *evenia* was about 12 inches tall with an average 3.5 plants/sq. ft. and it made up about 14 percent of available forage in the bahiagrass + *evenia* pasture. Steers readily grazed *evenia* and kept the plant from becoming too aggressive by maintaining the plant under 24 to 30 inches tall. *Evenia* was flowering and setting seed during the 112-day trial, and it is expected that these pastures will not need to be reseeded in 1997. When *evenia* yields were at their greatest (Sep. 25), *evenia* made up about 75 percent of the available forage in the bahiagrass & *evenia* pasture. Available forage in the bahiagrass pasture without *evenia* ranged from 2,100 to 2,600 Ib/A and averaged 2,370 Ib/ A.

Average daily gain of steers over the 112-day period was not different between bahiagrass + evenia (1.5 Ib/ head/day) vs. bahiagrass alone (1.2 Ib/head/day). These steer gains were unusually good and reflect a dry summer for the Range Cattle REC. It is expected that weight gains of cattle would be improved by the presence of evenia in August and September during a typical rainy summer which leads to a decline in nutritive value of bahiagrass. This idea will be tested when the study is repeated in 1997 and 1998.

When seeded in February in a burned bahiagrass pasture, evenia established before the dry April-May season and provided grazing from June to October. It was competitive with bahiagrass, and did not dominate the bahiagrass because steers began grazing when evenia was 12 inches tall. Evenia can be a desirable legume on flatwoods pastures with little fertilizer input.