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## **Can The World Wide Web Help Florida Cattle Producers?**

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The "Information Age" and the "Internet," are upon us with full force, but how can these tools be used to enhance productivity of the Florida cattle industry? The internet gives us very rapid access to a tremendous amount of useful information, and allows us to communicate with each other in a way that we have not experienced before.

Many Universities and private companies in the United States, and around the world have established internet sites which provide various services. The University of Florida has several internet sites (see table) which can be used by Florida cattle producers to obtain information on topics related to cattle production, and other areas of agriculture. For example, research and extension circulars concerning tropical grasses, supplementation programs for cattle in Florida, and herd health can be found at the Range Cattle Research and Education Center (REC) Web Site. A "Calendar of Events," summarizing meeting dates, cattle sales, and other events is also available. Proceedings from the last nine years of the Beef Cattle Short Course can be found in the "Extension Section" of the Animal Science Department Web Site. These publications can be read and printed directly from the internet at your home or office.

The Range Cattle REC Web Site has a "Links Section" which summarizes World Wide Web Sites of interest to Florida cattle producers. For example, cattle related organizations and associations such as the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, and various Farm Bureaus have Web Sites. Marketing services such as the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, Chicago and Kansas City Board's of Trade, various Florida marketing organizations, and cattle marketing companies are establishing Web Sites. Sites which provide reference material (virtual libraries), agricultural publications, cattle breed associations, and state and federal government information also exist. Many television stations have Web Sites which provide weather forecasting and radar images.

The South Florida Beef Forage Program Web Site offers a "Discussion Group" which allows a forum for producers, University personnel, and industry representatives to discuss (through electronic mail) topics of concern to Florida cattle and agricultural production. Any individual can join the discussion group, and pose a question, comment, or perhaps a problem they are having. This electronic message is sent to all members of the group. Any member of the discussion group can respond to the question or comment, and this message is also sent to all members of the group. The potential for this type of communication allows a unicycle situation for individuals interested in cattle production in Florida to link together and share information.

For example, a producer in South Florida may pose a question, and receive responses from 10 or 15 (or maybe more) producers from all across Florida, or perhaps from across the country.

The South Florida Beef Forage Program will be presenting workshops on the use of the World Wide Web for Florida cattle producers. They will cover practical aspects such as purchasing a computer, how to obtain access to the World Wide Web, and how to navigate the Web once you get there. Check your county newsletters for times and more information.

<b>World Wide Web Site</b>	<b>Internet Address</b>
University of Florida	<a href="http://www.ufl.edu">http://www.ufl.edu</a>
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences	<a href="http://www.ifas.ufl.edu">http://www.ifas.ufl.edu</a>
FL Ag Information Retrieval System	<a href="http://hammock.ifas.ufl.edu">http://hammock.ifas.ufl.edu</a>
Range Cattle Research & Ed Center	<a href="http://www.ifas.ufl.edu/~ona/onahp.html">http://www.ifas.ufl.edu/~ona/onahp.html</a>
S. FL Beef Forage Program	<a href="http://sfbfp.ifas.ufl.edu/">http://sfbfp.ifas.ufl.edu/</a>
Animal Science Department	<a href="http://animal.ufl.edu/">http://animal.ufl.edu/</a>
Florida Dairy Extension	<a href="http://dairy.ifas.ufl.edu/">http://dairy.ifas.ufl.edu/</a>
Agronomy Department	<a href="http://agronomy.ifas.ufl.edu/">http://agronomy.ifas.ufl.edu/</a>