

# ***ONA REPORTS***

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**Second Annual Youth Field Day  
Range Cattle Research & Education Center  
South Florida Beef Forage Program**

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On June 30, 2009 approximately 350 kids, parents, and youth leaders braved intermittent rain showers and made their way to Ona for the second annual Youth Field Day. To start the day, Center Director Dr John Arthington welcomed attendees and introduced invited speaker, Sharon Spann. Sharon is the current legislative assistant to State Representative Chris Dorworth and is an active 4-H and FFA volunteer. She asked kids to consider how their clothing reflects their role in the community, and suggested everyone have a closet filled with judging, 4-H, and FFA jackets and t-shirts from industry events.

Wagons shuttled attendees to the morning presentations. Dr Arthington explained the basics of animal nutrition and the six nutrients that are required by all animals. A rumen cannulated steer was presented by REC biologist, Carly Althoff, who explained that these animals help us determine the digestibility of various forages and feeds. Dr Arthington expanded on the use of cannulated steers, and explained that we use cattle for research to evaluate novel management and health techniques to continuously improve the safety, efficiency, and profitability of beef production.

In the weed garden, Dr Brent Sellers described how some plants use "chemical warfare" to protect themselves. Humans and livestock can suffer plant poisoning through ingestion, contact, absorption, or inhalation. Toxin levels within a plant can vary under different growing conditions, as well as with age and season. As Dr Joao Vendramini explained, one of the best ways to prevent livestock from ingesting poisonous plants is by maintaining a healthy pasture and providing adequate supplement to meet your animals' needs. Testing your forage tells you what nutrients your livestock are getting from the pasture, so you can provide the right level of supplementation. A soil test can be conducted to determine the nutrients in the soil that are available for the forages to use. Dr Maria Silveira demonstrated how to obtain a soil sample and explained that the results

of a soil test can help producers determine how much lime and fertilizer to apply. In addition to the cost savings associated with applying only what is needed, soil testing reduces the leaching of excess nutrients into ground water. Detailed instructions for forage and soil sampling and submitting a sample can be found at <http://rrec-ona.ifas.ufl.edu> or from your county livestock agent.

Pastures are not just for providing forage for our livestock; they provide a habitat for many wildlife species. Jim Selph (Desoto County Extension) and Mitch Blake (University of Florida) teamed with Brian Zielinski of the National Wild Turkey Federation to demonstrate how to track and trap the Florida turkey. The Turkey Federation's JAKES program promotes outdoor sports, natural resource stewardship, and conservation for kids 17 and under. Two FWC Regional Biologists, Brian Scoffield and Matt Singer also participated and talked about how the FWC can help landowners with improving wildlife species and habitat.

Lunch was provided by the South Florida Beef Forage Program and prepared by extension agents Pat Hogue, Pat Miller, and Les Baucum. The second half of the day provided kids with the option of attending either an all-afternoon weather workshop presented by the Florida Automated Weather Network and Southeast Climate Consortium, or any combination of three short sessions: Ultrasound Clinic, Is This Cow Pregnant, Farm and Horse Safety, Cattle Tour, and Career Exploration.

Kids attending the FAWN and AgroClimate workshop worked with Melissa Griffin (FSU), Georgene Bender (UF) to learn some meteorology basics, including the difference between weather and climate, and how to obtain and use weather data.

Kids wanting to learn more about carcass traits and body composition analysis attended Amy Perryman's ultrasound clinic. She demonstrated the use of ultrasound to determine ribeye area, fat thickness, and marbling in the live animal.

Because a cow-calf producer's profitability is tied to getting cows pregnant, attendees had the option to attend a reproductive anatomy session. Livestock Agent, Lindsey Wiggins and Extension Scientist, Reyna Speckmann displayed and dissected pregnant and non-pregnant cow reproductive tracts to give kids a closer look at what happens during the nine months following bull exposure.

Horses, ATV's, tractors, and various chemicals are all readily found on most farms and ranches. They are also all associated with accidental farm injuries and fatalities. Extension Agents Sonja Crawford, Courtney Davis, Bridget Carlisle and Patricia Gonzalez took some time to talk to kids about how to safely work and play on the farm.

The range cattle station currently runs 682 mature cows, 81 yearling heifers, 24 yearling steers, 600 calves, and 34 bulls on 2,840 acres. Field day attendees interested in seeing the station's land and cattle accompanied Herdsman Austin Bateman and Livestock Agents Christa Kirby and Randy Gornto on a wagon tour.

The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at the University of Florida has majors ranging from production agriculture to dentistry and many options in between. CALS ambassadors Crystal Hale and Amy Iler shared the educational and employment opportunities in the agriculture and life sciences fields. Also on hand were representatives from University of Florida Animal Sciences, Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College, Hillsborough Community College, Polk County Community College, and the FDACS Division of Forestry.

Despite the rain, the Field Day was deemed a success. The Range Cattle Research & Education Center and South Florida Beef Forage Program would like to extended sincere thanks to Andrea Dunlap for organizing the event, the REC staff for making it all happen, and our sponsors and supporters: Wal-Mart, Farm Credit of Southwest Florida, and Peace River Electric Cooperative.