



**Annual “State of Ona” Address
An UF/IFAS Range Cattle Research and Education Center Update**

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The end of 2023 and the start of 2024 gives us a chance to reflect on the previous year at the center. Thankfully, no major tropical systems impacted the center in 2023, which gave us a chance to almost fully recover from Hurricane Ian. Most of our faculty and staff were able to move back into their permanent offices and labs by last May. We are grateful for everyone who assisted in helping us get back to normal. During the rebuild process, we were able to receive a much-needed upgrade of our old phone system. While you can still call the center using our traditional number (863-735-1314), most of us now have direct lines to our offices. Additionally, our long-awaited high-speed internet system came online increasing our connection speeds from 25 Mbps to 1Gbps. This greatly improved working conditions for faculty, staff, and students, as so much of what we do these days involves the internet including business and farm operations, communications, Zoom meetings, UF classes, videography, etc.

Student education continues to be a top priority. We hosted 6 short-term scholars and advised 3 PhD and 7 MS students in 2023. Two of our graduate students completed their degrees: Leandro Vieira-Filho completed his Soil and Water Science PhD program in August under the direction of Dr. Maria Silveira, and Brier Ryver completed a MS degree under the direction of Dr. Hance Ellington in December. Awards were received by animal science PhD student, Vinicius Izquierdo and agronomy MS student Joao Lazarin. Vinicius received two awards including the American Society of Animal Science Southern Section Joseph P. Fontenot Award and the UF Animal Science Graduate Student Top-up Award. Joao received a \$250 travel scholarship assisting him with travel to the American Society of Animal Science national meeting in Albuquerque, NM in July. Almost all our students presented their research at their respective regional and/or national professional meetings, allowing them to share their research amongst peers. If you attended our field day last April, you also had a chance to interact with our students, as most of them had poster displays highlighting their research efforts at the center. Two Center improvements in 2023 benefited our onsite students, including the opening of an exercise room at the Center and a Tyto Care home telehealth system to ease student access the healthcare through video appointments.

Our faculty had another successful year, and we are excited about the hiring of our newest faculty member, Hannah Baker. Hannah began her position as the UF/IFAS State Specialized Agent in Beef Cattle and Forage Economics in June and has already made

contributions to the center and our clientele through attending meetings, speaking at educational events, and providing an assortment of helpful online resources including calculators, fact sheets, links to presentations, as well as providing a monthly cattle market update in the Florida Cattleman and Livestock Journal. Faculty continue to receive recognition for their current and past achievements. Dr. Joao Vendramini was selected as Fellow of the American Society of Agronomy, which is the highest recognition bestowed by the society for professional achievements and meritorious service. Dr. Philippe Moriel was the recipient of the Extension Award from the American Society of Animal Science Southern Section. In addition to these honors, all faculty have been able to obtain external funding from various sources to continue to fund various projects, including seven proposals that were selected for funding by the Florida Cattle Enhancement Board:

- Evaluating the effectiveness and economic viability of pasture management strategies to increase soil carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas mitigation – Dr. Maria Silveira, \$45,592
- Evaluating the agronomic performance of bahiagrass under different biosolids and inorganic fertilizer phosphorus fertilization regimens – Dr. Maria Silveira, \$48,263
- What is the feed value of fall fertilized forage in Florida? – Dr. Joao Vendramini, \$11,594
- Evaluation of new warm-season perennial grass cultivars adapted to poorly drained soils and propagated by seed in Florida – Dr. Joao Vendramini, \$31,631
- A new supplementation strategy for beef heifers in Florida – Dr. Philippe Moriel, \$72,531
- Heat stress during gestation improves or decreases feedlot performance of *Bos indicus* influenced beef steers? – Dr. Philippe Moriel, \$65,229
- Utility of Liquid Nitrogen Fertilizer and Soil Surfactants for Smutgrass Control with Hexazinone – Dr. Brent Sellers, \$34,419

Dr. Hance Ellington and collaborators were awarded a 3-year, \$1.4 million grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation -America the Beautiful Challenge Program that will begin in March 2024. The goal of their grant funded project is to increase the long-term climate resiliency in the Avon Park Air Force Range sentinel landscape by improving land management on private property to keep rangelands as rangelands and maximize the ecosystem services provided by those lands. Our faculty's refereed research and extension publication numbers for 2023 were strong, and I expect that the center will remain near the top of all UF/IFAS departments and research centers with regards to research publications per research appointment.

Rest assured, in 2024 we continue our dedication to meet your beef cattle and grazingland challenges with science-based solutions. If we can be of assistance, contact us at ona@ifas.ufl.edu or 863-735-1314.

Mark your calendar and plan to join us this year for our 15th Annual Youth Field Day on June 27, and our next Field Day (held every 18-months) on October 10.

Upcoming Event

February 13, 11:00 to 11:45 a.m. EST – Ona Highlight webinar with guest presenter Lauren Butler, Extension Director/Livestock Agent, UF/IFAS Extension Okeechobee Co. and Bridget Stice, Livestock Agent, UF/IFAS Extension Polk Co. - ‘Bridging Research to Ranch: Strengthening the Cattle Industry through the Educational Outreach of the South Florida Beef Forage Program.’ Visit the calendar on our website below for the link to register for this Zoom broadcast, or call (863) 735-1001 to attend in person at the Center.

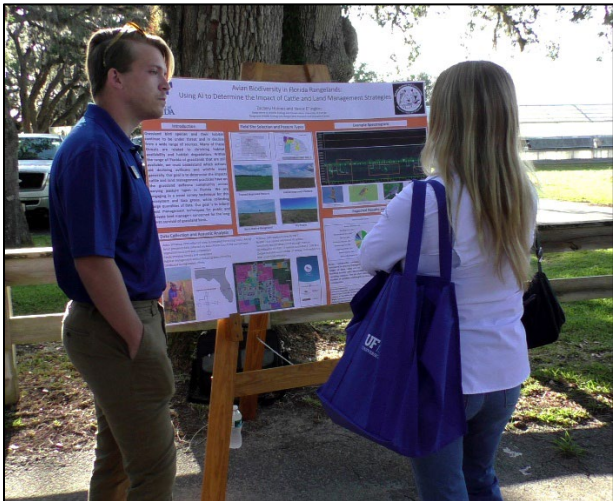
UF/IFAS Range Cattle REC - 3401 Experiment Station Rd., Ona - <http://rcrec-ona.ifas.ufl.edu/>



Dr. Maria Silveira with PhD graduate, Dr. Leandro Vieira-Filho.



Dr. Hance Ellington with MS graduate, Brier Ryver.



Zach Holmes shares his MS research with field day guest in April 2023.



Resident students in the new UF/IFAS RCREC gym, expressing thanks.

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