



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

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Published in *The Florida Cattleman and Livestock Journal*, February 2025

The end of 2024 and the start of 2025 gives us a chance to reflect on the previous year at the center. While many of our clientele were impacted by Hurricanes Helene and Milton in 2024, the center thankfully escaped major damage from either hurricane. I would like to thank all of the students and staff who helped clean up the tree debris at the center following hurricane Milton. We have several piles to burn and some minor cosmetic damage to buildings, but it could have been much worse.

Faculty here at the center are supported by an amazing staff. We said goodbye in August to Dennis Kalich, our former farm manager, as he entered retirement. We wish Dennis all the best in retirement and hope he continues to be involved in the Manatee County Cattleman’s Association. His successor is Clay Newman. We were fortunate to get Clay back a couple of years ago after he left us for the private sector for a few years. We are excited about Clay’s potential and the faculty look forward to continuing to work with him to help their programs achieve their goals.

Student education continues to be a top priority. We hosted 1 Veterans Florida Agriculture Program intern, 2 undergraduate students, 7 short-term scholars and advised 5 PhD and 9 MS students in 2024. Four of our graduate students completed their degrees: Zach Holmes and Alex Furst completed their MS degrees in Wildlife Ecology and Conservation under the direction of Dr. Hance Ellington. Caetano Sales and Sudip Regmi completed their Weed Science programs in Agronomy under my direction. Awards were received by animal science PhD student, Vinicius Izquierdo, agronomy MS students Sudip Regmi and Joao Lazarin, and soil, water and ecosystem sciences MS student Julian Bernal. Vinicius received two awards including a travel award to attend the American Society of Animal Science in Alberta, Canada in July, and 2nd place for his presentation at the 10th annual UF/IFAS Animal Sciences Graduate Symposium in St. Augustine. Sudip received 1st place for his poster presentation at the joint Weed Science Society of America – Southern Weed Science Society meeting in San Antonio. Julian was the recipient of a UF/IFAS graduate student travel grant to attend the American Society of Agronomy/Crop Science Society of America/Soil Science Society of America joint annual meeting. A publication co-authored by Vinicius and Joao (along with their advisors Drs. Philippe Moriel and Joao Vendramini) was recognized as a High Impact Publication by the Dean of Research/Florida Agricultural Experiment Station. 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 attend our field on April 17, you will have a chance to interact with our students.

Our faculty had another successful year and continue to receive recognition for their current and past achievements. Drs. Vendramini and Silveira were in the first group of faculty at the University of Florida to go through the “post-tenure” review process, and it should not surprise anyone that they exceeded expectations. Dr. Silveira was also recognized by her peers and was selected as Fellow of the Soil Science Society of America, which is the highest recognition bestowed by the society for professional achievements and meritorious service. In addition to these honors, all faculty have been able to obtain external funding from various sources to continue to fund various projects, including six proposals that were selected for funding by the Florida Cattle Enhancement Board. 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 2025. 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 2024 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.

As many of you have probably already heard, Drs. Vendramini and Silveira will be leaving us in 2025 for administrative positions at other institutions. We all know how impactful their research and extension programs have been for our industry over the past 19 years, and they will be greatly missed both professionally and personally. I will be working with Drs. Jay Ferrell and Chris Wilson in the Agronomy and Soil, Water and Ecosystem Sciences departments as well as the entire Forage Team to obtain approval from IFAS Leadership to refill these positions as soon as possible. Rest assured, we will 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 next field day on April 17 (register at <https://rcrec-2025-fd.eventbrite.com>) and on June 5 for our 16th Annual Youth Field Day (registration will open in April; <https://rcrec-2025-yfd.eventbrite.com>).

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