

ONA REPORTS

published in

THE FLORIDA CATTLEMAN AND LIVESTOCK JOURNAL

October-1991

Ona Center to Celebrate 50th Anniversary

by F.M. PATE *IFAS, AREC-Ona*



For questions or comments regarding this publication contact [Findlay Pate](#)

The Ona Agricultural Research and Education Center began in the late 1930s through the efforts of the Hardee County Cattlemen's Association. Cattlemen obtained 2840 acres of land in western Hardee County and deeded it to the State of Florida.

The Ona Research Center was officially started as a unit of the University of Florida, Agricultural Experiment Station under the title of "Range Cattle Station" in January 1941, with the arrival of Dr. Gordon Kirk who served as its director for 25 years. Dr. Elver Hodges, a forage agronomist for 40 years at the Research Center, came in 1942. These two individuals deserve credit for developing out of palmetto, wax myrtle, wiregrass and pine woods a research unit that has served Florida cattlemen with distinction for 50 years. This Research Center is a tribute to their pioneering spirit, dedication to beef cattle and forage production, and a love for the land and people of south-central Florida.

The Ona Research Center has pioneered research to solve problems facing Florida cattlemen and other Florida agricultural industries. Starting in 1942, it conducted the first studies in Florida to evaluate the use of Brahman cattle in a crossbreeding program. It was involved in studies that developed citrus pulp, a waste product, into an important cattle feed now shipped around the world. The "Ona Station Mineral" was developed in the 1940s and is still fed to grazing cattle throughout south Florida today.

The first research to show the benefits of using a combination of native range and improved pasture and the value of control burning of range to improve beef production was conducted at Ona. A number of molasses-based supplements including the recently developed molasses slurries evolved from research conducted at Ona.

The research center was involved in the development of every grass and legume used as pasture to graze cattle in south Florida. Some of the more popular ones are the stargrasses, hemarthrias, pangolagrass, bahiagrass, white clovers, aeschynomene, hairy indigo, carpon desmodium, and many varieties of ryegrass, corn and sorghum. Recently, the research center developed procedures for determining the nutritive value of these forages, within 48 hours after being received, using infrared analysis.

The research center developed efficient programs for fertilizing south Florida pastures resulting in tremendous savings to cattlemen, and greatly benefiting the quality of our lakes, streams and ground water. Practices for using proper amounts of herbicides to control pasture weeds and brush were also developed at the center.

The Ona Research Center will celebrate its 50th anniversary on October 10 with a Field Day from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The program will include presentations and demonstrations of past and present research. Cattlemen and individuals interested in cattle and forage production are invited to attend. Please call the Ona Research Center at (941) 735 - 1314 to let us know that you will attend and to reserve a free steak lunch.