

## **SPRING 2008**

<b>CALENDAR OF EVENTS</b>
<b>April 5</b> – Small Farms Livestock Conference “So You Want to Be a Farmer” – 8:00 AM-3:30 PM – Hendry County Extension Office, LaBelle
<b>April 30 – May 2</b> – Beef Cattle Short Course, Gainesville
<b>May 1</b> – Hardee County Cattlemen’s Association General Membership Meeting – 7:00 PM, Hardee County Agri-Civic Center
<b>May 3</b> – Nature Fest – 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM, Hardee Lakes Park

### **Small Farms Livestock Conference III “So you want to be a Farmer”**

The South Florida Beef Forage Program Extension Agents will be holding the annual Small Farms Livestock Production Conference at the Polk County Agriculture Center in Bartow, Saturday, **March 29, 2008** and at the Hendry County Extension Office in LaBelle on **April 5, 2008**. The Small Farms Livestock Production Conference is designed for ranchettes or small landowners who are considering the raising, management and production of livestock for pleasure or profit. This course, “So You Want to be a Farmer”, was designed more specifically for new or agriculturally inexperienced landowners who are considering some field of livestock production on their small or limited acreage to help guide them and provide them information for making a more informed decision about what type of livestock producer they may want to become. This course will provide basic information about all the different animal species as possibilities for small farming operation. We will explore some economic and business basics of agricultural production; look at specialty production and markets as possibilities; give some basics of animal health, buying healthy animals and keeping them healthy; pasture and forage requirements before you ever get started, including understanding different forage species and their fertility and maintenance requirements will be presented; and what considerations you will need to make for fencing, housing, handling and holding equipment for all types of animal species.

### **Challenges for Grass-Fed Beef Producers**

By: Lochrane A. Gary, County  
Extension Director

Research over the last decade indicates that pasture based beef production systems can be profitable. Implementing these systems can be challenging for several reasons. What feeding regimes will maintain good BCS (Body Condition Score)? What is the best mix of grasses and legumes in terms of a cow’s nutrition and the potential to produce the highest possible levels of beneficial fatty acids and CLA (Conjugated linoleic acid). What kind of gain can I expect from grass alone from weaning to finish weight? Probably the most serious question facing cattle producers is what to feed in the winter when cows are kept on pasture and can graze but the pasture is much poorer in quality. Our office continues to receive frequent questions about Grass-Fed Beef. We don’t have all the answers but we are keeping an open mind and investigating the subject seriously. I will be presenting information on this subject at our next Hardee Cattlemen’s General Membership Meeting to be held at the Agri-Civic Center in Wauchula at 7:00 PM on Thursday, May 1<sup>st</sup>.

### **FSIS Issues Notices on Animal Handling**

The USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service issued two new notices this week regarding handling practices in slaughter facilities. One of the notices instructs inspectors to immediately take action to prevent inhumane handling.

The other instructs inspection personnel to significantly increase the time spent verifying and documenting humane animal-handling practices in the plants. FCIS also announced the formation of a new Office of Outreach, Employee Education and Training to provide training, resources and technical support for small and very small plants and to assure that all FSIS personnel have the necessary training to effectively carry out their assigned duties. **Drovers Alert**

### **Cattlemen React to JBS Acquisitions**

Cattlemen are getting used to a rapidly changing industry, one where concentration and integration are the norm. But last week's announcement that Brazilian beef processor JBS was significantly expanding its U.S. holdings was a stunning development. JBS acquired Smithfield Foods Inc.'s beef unit and National Beef Packing Co., to go along with last year's acquisition of Swift and Company. JBS also acquired Tasman Group in Australia and Five Rivers Ranch, the world's largest cattle-feeding company. Responses to the announcement were swift. R-CALF USA Region II Director/Vice President Randy Stevenson said additional concentration "among packers likely will reduce even more the number of cattle operations in the United States". Stevenson said his organization would ask Congress "to immediately amend the Packers and Stockyards Act to prohibit the anti-competitive practice of packer ownership of livestock by the largest meatpackers". Andy Groseta, president of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, said he expected JBS's acquisitions to receive regulatory

scrutiny but noted that statutory procedures and requirements for this review are already in place. "Some are already calling for Congress to further inject itself into this situation by banning packer ownership of cattle. But that would not be productive, nor would it make any sense. Banning packer ownership more than 14 days before slaughter actually limits the marketing options of cattle producers and reduces the field of potential buyers. It does nothing to enhance competition", Groseta said. The arguments for banning packer ownership of cattle have been floated for decades, and they don't seem strengthened by JBS's huge play into the American beef industry. Indeed, with feed yard capacity of 811,000 head in the 10 Five Rivers Ranch feed yards, eliminating JBS as a potential bidder on feeder cattle would seem more likely to have a negative impact on the market. It's hard to imagine how shackling the nation's packers – our immediate customers – will put more dollars in producers' pockets. **Drovers Alert**

