



# Newsletter

June 2006



## Dates to Remember

### June

- 1 ServSafe™ - Gainesville, FL
- 1 Horse Management Workshop - Gainesville, FL
- 3 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Tri-State Farm Field Day - Jasper, FL
- 4 Horsemanship School - Welaka, FL
- 11 Horsemanship School - Welaka, FL
- 18 Horsemanship School - Welaka, FL
- 19-20 Florida Cattlemen's College - Marco Island, FL
- 20 Heart of Florida Annual Club Calf Sale - Alachua, FL
- 20-22 FCA Annual Convention & Allied Trade Show - Marco Island, FL
- 23 State 4-H Horse Events - Gainesville, FL
- 25 Horsemanship School - Welaka, FL
- 27-29 4-H Hog & Ham - Gainesville, FL

### July

- 4 Independence Day
- 6-8 State 4-H Horse Show - Tampa, FL
- 11 Horse Council Meeting - Jacksonville, FL
- 26-30 Southern Regional 4-H Horse Championships - North Carolina



*Feeder-Finish Calf Evaluation at the UF/IFAS Beef Teaching Unit during the Thursday afternoon session at the 2006 Beef Cattle Short Course.*

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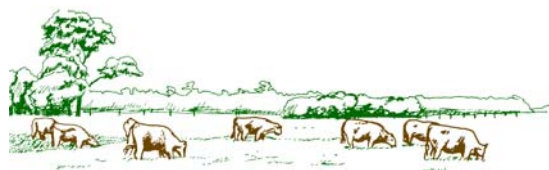
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## 2006 Beef Cattle Short Course Success!

The 55<sup>th</sup> Annual Florida Beef Cattle Short Course at the University of Florida was again a premier educational program for people associated with the beef cattle industry. “Meeting the Challenges of Preserving Our Land, Managing Our Cattle, and Feeding Our Consumers” was the theme of the Short Course this year. Approximately 350 participants were provided a beef market analysis and outlook to start the program. The remaining segment of the afternoon program was dedicated to discussions concerning property use rights,

urban encroachment on agricultural property, and the value of farm/ranch land in community planning. A record number of allied industry participants made for a successful and enjoyable Trade Show and Reception to cap the evening. Thursday morning’s program included topics dedicated to cattle production including nutrition, management, product supply and coordination, and end product markets. In the afternoon the large crowd enjoyed practical demonstrations of feeder and

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## 2006 Beef Cattle Short Course

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finished cattle evaluation, calf processing techniques, and hay preservation methods. On Thursday evening the annual Cattlemen's Steak-Out provided the participants to enjoy good food and an opportunity to talk about cattle. On Friday, the participants had the opportunity to choose to hear about current research efforts in the areas of beef cattle production, forage agronomy for cattle production, or attend a Florida Beef Quality Producer program.

The Florida Beef Cattle Short Course target audience consists of beef cattle producers and managers who are interested in increasing net profits and a producing quality beef products and willing to make management changes to do so. Profitable production, processing, and utilization of cattle without endangering the resources at their disposal is paramount to the Florida Beef Cattle Short Course participant.

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### What Makes For Good Horse Hay

Horse owners and hay producers don't always agree on how to identify safe, good-quality horse hay. Here is a list of seven key characteristics buyers should consider when evaluating horse hay. Krishona Martinson and Paul Peterson, University of Minnesota extension agronomists, spoke about these characteristics at recent Minnesota Horse Expo seminars.

**1) Mold/Moisture** — Buy hay baled between

15-17% moisture and it should be free of mold. "With small square bales, you can sometimes get away with baling at 18-20% moisture without spoilage," notes Peterson. More-dense big square bales should be put up below 16% moisture for safe storage. Hay baled above 25% moisture poses the threat of severe heat damage or spoilage, mold growth, and/or hay fires. Hay put up at 20-25% moisture and properly treated with organic acid preservatives can be fed safely to horses. Horses, however, may require a short adaptation period to readily consume this hay.

**2) Maturity** — Don't equate seed heads with "good" hay. Seed heads just indicate that the plants are mature, with thick stems, more fiber, less protein and decreasing levels of digestible energy. Horses that aren't working hard or lactating may be able to get by with a "stemmier" hay containing more seed heads, Martinson and Peterson say. But hay with more leaves and softer, smaller stems is better quality.

Consider grass hays that have been harvested when seed heads have just begun to form. They have good fiber digestibility and more available energy than more mature hay. Legume hay harvested at about the 10% flower stage is usually a leafy hay with extra protein that horses will convert into ammonia. Mature legumes make hay that does not exceed a horse's protein level in most cases, but also tends to be very coarse, according to Martinson and Peterson. Softer hay will be consumed more readily, they explain. "If it feels rough to you, it will feel rough to the horse," Peterson says.

**3) Cut Or Crop** — Don't base nutritional value on when hay is cut, the agronomists say. Maturity, followed by hay curing and storage, determine what nutrients a hay holds. Because plants that grow under cooler temperatures build more digestible fiber, first-crop hay may have more digestible fiber than later cuttings — but it is not a guarantee. First cutting can often produce more coarse hay than later cuttings. But good and bad horse hay can be produced in any cutting.

**4) Grass Hay Vs Alfalfa** — Know how much digestible fiber and energy your horses will need —

then find hay that will provide it. Alfalfa and clover generally have higher protein content than grasses. So alfalfa hay is a good protein source for young developing horses. But it may have more protein than what other horses need. Fiber from grasses is more digestible than from alfalfa and other legumes at the same maturity stage, say Martinson and Peterson.

**5) Smell** — Not all sweet-smelling hay is good, caution the experts. Sometimes hay smells sweet because sugars within it caramelize, which indicates mold presence. Horse owners should look closely at the hay to make sure they aren't dealing with mold issues.

**6) Color** — A green color is only a fair indicator of hay quality, Peterson says. "Bleached color indicates exposure to sunlight or rain, and can mean vitamin A has oxidized. But other essential nutrients are usually present in bleached hay." When only bleached hay is available, horse owners should have it tested.

**7) Storage Considerations/Spoilage** — Once you've bought it, keep stored hay away from water and wild animals, which can contaminate it. Studies have shown that up to 50% of a hay bale can be ruined when stored where moisture can be wicked up into it from the ground. Round bales should be dense and well-formed with twine or net wrap, and less than 18% moisture to minimize storage loss potential.

Martinson and Peterson recommend that horse owners take representative samples of every hay lot to a forage testing lab for an equine nutritional analysis. Information about sampling and forage testing can be found at <http://www.foragetesting.org>.

Contact Martinson at [bjork026@umn.edu](mailto:bjork026@umn.edu) and Peterson at [peter072@umn.edu](mailto:peter072@umn.edu).

**SOURCE:** eHay Weekly  
Hay & Forage Grower  
<http://hayandforage.com/>  
Release - May 9, 2006



## U.S. Cow Costs Increased By \$36/Head In 2005

Cattle-Fax(R) says its 2005 cow-calf survey revealed cash costs/cow averaged \$351 in 2005 - \$36/head more than the 2004 average of \$315/head. In the past decade, annual cow costs have ranged from \$292 to \$351/head, with a 10-year average of \$307/head.

Cattle-Fax analysts attribute the increase largely to higher energy and fuel costs. The costs cited above don't include depreciation, opportunity cost or returns to management.

Overall, 96% of producers selling weaned calves were profitable in 2005, a record-high percentage, Cattle-Fax says. Of producers selling calves at weaning, 80% made a profit of \$100/head or more, 44% made \$150/head or more, and only 4% were not profitable.

The results show a strong correlation between high-return producers and lower costs and higher production performance. Average cow cost for those profiting \$100/head or more was \$347. Those who profited less than \$100/head had an average cow cost of \$377/head.

The average cow cost for the low 1/2 (least cost) of producers was \$267/head compared to the high 1/2 (highest cost) of producers was \$445, a \$178/head difference. The results also show a positive correlation between weaning percentage and profitability. Producers who made more than \$150/head, weaned 4% more calves than those who broke even or lost money.

The survey also found 79% of producers use the Internet, 53% have registered a premise ID, 84% precondition their calves, and 78% felt the market rewarded them for preconditioning. — Tod Kalous, Cattle-Fax(R) Update, taken from the Michigan State University Beef Cattle Research Update

**SOURCE:** BEEF  
<http://beef-mag.com/>  
Release - May 15, 2006

## No Betting On The Come... For Now

“The last few years, time has usually saved you if you’re a margin operator (feeder or stocker), now it will be against you,” says Derrell Peel, Oklahoma State University Extension livestock marketing specialist. “There’s no more betting on the come.”

That’s the quintessential summary of cattle-industry economics now compared to last year. The market is running away from margin operators because supplies are increasing significantly relative to demand.

“The biggest difference today than at this time last year is we have about 10% more cattle on feed heading into the summer, which is record large for this time of year,” explains Mike Miller, Cattle-Fax director of research and education.

Not only is a wall of increased supply set to hit the market during what are historically the softest market months of the year, it’s coming at a time when high breakevens already have feeders losing around \$100/head (more on yearlings, less on calf-feds, Miller says).

However, Peel believes the record April 1 cattle-on-feed numbers make reality appear darker than it actually is. Though numbers are up, he says it’s not because the cattle inventory is 9%-10% larger than predicted but because more calves were forced into the feedlot earlier than anticipated by drought and a lack of stocker pasture.

“We started the year with a cattle inventory 1.7% larger than in 2005. We’ll add maybe another 1-1.5% to those numbers with feeder calves from Canada. So, we have the capability for feeder cattle supplies to be 4-4.5% larger this year, but not 9%,” Peel says.

Either way, Miller adds, “We’re still in really good shape from a demand perspective, but probably not good enough to offset the supplies we see coming toward us.”

In fact, retail beef demand is down 4.5% through the first quarter, according to preliminary Beef Demand Index figures. Consumption is actually up

slightly, but a sharp decline in inflation-adjusted prices means demand is down, but still well ahead of 1998 when it finally turned the corner. Analysts like Nevil Speer at Western Kentucky University wouldn’t be surprised to see beef demand suffer more under the collective weight of record and near-record supplies of poultry and pork. That’s on top of high fuel prices that increase the price of all consumer products, while making consumer wallets lighter to start with.

For anyone who thinks the outlook would be at least twice as bright if politics and ineptitude hadn’t conspired to keep international beef trade in limbo, both Peel and Miller say having the international markets fully engaged would undoubtedly provide a psychological lift. However, it probably wouldn’t have changed the industry’s current position from a fundamental standpoint.

**SOURCE:** BEEF  
<http://beef-mag.com/>  
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## Watch For Toxic Effects of Stressed Pasture

As if running out of feed wasn’t challenging enough, drought grows plant toxicity and its potential for poisoning livestock.

“Stressed pastures bring out toxic plant problems in several ways,” says Dave Sparks, DVM, Oklahoma State University Extension food animal quality and health specialist. “At these times, toxic plants become more prevalent. Many toxic plants are able to withstand the stress of overgrazing better than more palatable forage plants. As the stress on the pasture continues, decreased competition means greater populations of toxic plants. Many of the toxic plants become more toxic under stress conditions such as drought or overgrazing.”

Go to <http://farwest.tamu.edu/rangemgt/pdfs/Drought5.pdf>, for more details in a fact sheet by Hart and Carpenter.

**SOURCE:** BEEF  
<http://beef-mag.com/>  
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