

Newsletter

October 2006



Dates to Remember

October

- 6** Oak Knoll Ranch & Mo Brangus Bull Sale - Arcadia, FL
- 6** Okeechobee Bred Heifer Sale - Okeechobee, FL
- 11** Pasture Weed Day - Ona, FL
- 12** National 4-H Meat Judging Contest - Manhattan, KS
- 13-14** Cow Creek Ranch - Aliceville, AL
- 14** Florida Junior Cattlemen "Fall Field Day" - Lightsey Cattle Company - Lake Wales, FL
- 17-19** Sunbelt Expo - Moultrie, GA
- 19-20** UF/IFAS Basic Meat & Poultry HACCP Training Course - Davie, FL
- 20** Graham Angus Bull Sale - Okeechobee, FL
- 21** Walden Bull Sale - Brantley, AL
- 24** Range Cattle REC Field Day - Ona, FL
- 26** Little Creek Ranch / Callaway / Kempfer - Kissimmee, FL
- 26** Meadows Creek / Callaway / Kempfer - Kissimmee, FL
- 26** Oak Knoll Ranch - Arcadia, FL
- 27** Lemmon Angus Ranch - Okeechobee, FL
- 28** Debter Hereford / Fleming Angus - Horton, AL

November

- 2** Southern Cattle Angus & Charolais Bull Sale - Marianna, FL
- 3** Southern Cattle 2006 Fall Angus Female Sale - Marianna, FL
- 3-5** Eastern National 4-H Horse Roundup - Louisville, KY
- 9** Adams Ranch 28th Annual Bull Sale - Ft. Pierce, FL
- 11** Gibbs Farms 1st Annual Bull & Replacement Heifer Sale - Ranburne, AL
- 14** Ag Lands, Development and the Future of Florida - Palm Beach County Convention Center - West Palm Beach, FL
- 14** National 4-H Livestock Judging Contest - Louisville, KY
- 29-12/01** FCA Quarterly Meeting; Ocala Hilton - Ocala, FL



In this issue...

- Demand For Age- And Source-Verified Calves Creates Opportunity For Florida Producers 2
- “Cracker Cowhunters” To Hit The Trail Again 3
- Cattlemen Outline Priorities for 2007 Farm Bill 4



Basic Meat & Poultry HACCP Training Course

October 19 & 20, 2006

**Broward County Extension Office
Davie, FL**

Sponsored by:
**University of Florida
 Department of Animal Sciences
 Gainesville, FL**



For information, please visit
<http://www.animal.ufl.edu/extension/meat/HACCPbrochure.pdf> or call
 (352) 392-1916.



Demand For Age- And Source-Verified Calves Creates Opportunity For Florida Producers

Public concern over food safety has spawned a new niche market for cattle producers: age- and source-verified cattle. Florida cattle producers can earn substantial premiums by age- and source-verifying their calves, which qualifies beef from their animals for sale to Japan and other export markets.

One company helping ranchers take advantage of this opportunity is Okeechobee Livestock Market. Florida's largest livestock market is selling truckload lots of age- and source-verified cattle over the Internet through Producers Cattle Auction LLC, an online cattle auction company based in Mobile, Alabama.

“Retailers are paying premiums for age- and source-verified cattle, and there’s no need for the feedlots and the packers to be the only ones in the production chain that are getting them,” said Todd Clemons, president of Okeechobee Livestock Market. “Our aim is to help ranchers take care of age and source verification on their end so they can keep more of the money in their own pockets. The cow/calf producer is the only person who can verify the age and source of feeder calves.”

In December 2003, a single cow in Washington state tested positive for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), also known as mad cow disease. As a result, U.S. beef was banned by over 40 countries, including Japan, the United States’ most lucrative beef export market. Most of the markets that were closed have since reopened, but with restrictions on U.S. imports. Since most cases of BSE occur in cattle over 30 months of age, many countries now require that cattle be less than 30 months old at time of slaughter. Japan, which ended its ban in July, accepts only beef from cattle 20 months old or younger.

“At this time, only the export markets require age and source verification,” said Jim Austin, president and general manager of Producers Cattle Auction. “But

once consumers find out what Japan is requiring, it is likely that the domestic beef trade will also demand more verification. Producers who are proactive and get involved in the verification process early should be positioning themselves well for the future.”

Since April, Okeechobee Livestock Market has sold 25,000 head of cattle through online auctions, and 80 percent of those were age and source verified. The premiums paid for age- and source-verified calves are determined by supply and demand.

“If age and source verification becomes required by the government, then it will be the norm and there won’t be extra money to be made,” Clemons explained. “Of course, that hasn’t happened yet. Right now, buyers are willing to pay a premium for these cattle because there are so few of them available.”

Producers Cattle Auction makes verification easy and inexpensive with a simple, low-tech ear tag that costs about a dollar. The tag lists the birth date of the oldest calf in the sale lot, the premises identification number assigned to the ranch where the calves were born, and a contact phone number. The rancher creates a paper trail by documenting when he turned his bulls out and when the first and last calves in the group were born. He records the total number of calves born in the herd, the number of brood cows in the herd, and the number of acres he ran the cattle on.

“We have educated ourselves about exactly what is required by Japan and other export markets,” Austin said. “There is a lot of misinformation out there. Ranchers don’t need to use expensive electronic ID tags, and they don’t need to pay to have their data stored in a commercial database. The requirements are really pretty simple, and ranchers don’t have to spend a lot to meet them.”

The premises identification number is assigned by the U.S. Department of Agriculture under the National Animal Identification System.

Rancher Woody Larson of Dixie Ranch in Okeechobee has been selling cattle through Producers Cattle Auction since 1993. He said he’s pleased with the relative ease of the verification process.

“As long as we plan ahead and have tags, there’s not much extra work,” he said. “We do have to plan and keep records. But putting tags in the cattle is not that bad. We just do it along with our regular work.”

Larson said he started age- and source-verifying his calves “to get ahead of the curve.” “I try to do what I think the customer will want,” he said. “I think people want to know where their cattle come from, not just in Japan, but here at home too.”

Perry Smith, owner of Perry Smith and Sons Ranch in Highlands County, has also begun age and source verifying. He’s been selling cattle online for years. “I appreciate the research that has been done to make the verification process as simple as possible for producers,” Smith said. “It’s another job, but it’s doable, and if we want to market our product, we’ve got to get with the program.”

“Verification isn’t mandatory yet,” Larson added. “But if it gets to be, we’ll be accustomed to it.”

SOURCE: Kurt Shiver
Email: shiverk@doacs.state.fl.us
<http://www.florida-agriculture.com>
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“Cracker Cowhunters” To Hit The Trail Again

The Florida Agricultural Museum will present the “Great Florida Cattle Drive of Ought 6” December 5-9, 2006. Registration is now under way for the event, which will begin just south of Kissimmee and end at the new Silver Spurs Arena in Kenansville.

In 1995 — to celebrate 150 years of Florida statehood — a group of 600 cattlemen, historians, horse lovers and hearty adventurers drove 1,000 head of native Cracker Cattle across the state. The group also included wagon drivers, walkers, artists and local, state and national media.

Over the last four centuries, cattle production has been one of Florida’s most influential industries. In the 1995 Cattle Drive, participants used the

sesquicentennial celebration to educate this state’s citizens and people around the globe to the fact that the first American cowboys were Floridians — the cattle business in the United States began right here in Florida.

“Even though Florida has been a major force in the cattle business for hundreds of years, very few of our own citizens are aware of this rich heritage,” said Florida Agriculture Commissioner Charles H. Bronson, who is also a rancher.

To salute the importance of Florida’s “cow culture,” organizers will once again be driving cattle, riding the trail, sleeping on the ground and living the life of our ancestors for a few days. The Seminole Tribe of Florida has provided about 400 head of cattle, and every participant who wishes to will be able to spend some time as a “cowhunter” helping to drive the cattle. Camps will be primitive and dress should be late-1800s (there will be no T-shirts, tennis shoes or ball caps allowed). There will be historic encampments each night along the trail depicting some important era in Florida’s history (Timucuan, Spanish Colonial, Civil War, Seminole, etc.), making the event even a ride through Florida’s past.

On December 9, participants and the public will continue the celebration at trails end with an old fashioned “frolic,” which will include authors, singers, poets, storytellers, historians, re-enactors and an art auction featuring CAAF (Cowboy Artists Association of Florida). There will also be several prominent authors of Floridiana and Florida history on hand for those who wish to learn more about the rich heritage of the Sunshine State.

Dancers, singers and historians from the Seminole Tribe of Florida will be there to make the event more colorful and to remind folks that the Seminoles were an important factor in this state’s development as a cattle power, and remain so to this day. This part of the celebration will become an annual gathering to have fun and preserve the traditions of Florida’s cow culture. The group is also considering presenting the first Florida Working Cow Dog Championship. Proceeds will be used to benefit the Florida Agricultural Museum in Flagler County.

Organizers of the drive are anxious to give thanks to The Seminole Tribe of Florida, the Florida Cracker Cattle Association, the Florida Agricultural Museum, Seminole Feeds of Ocala, and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services for sponsorships and support. Anyone wishing to participate or learn more about the event can call (352) 429-0100 or visit www.floridacattledrive.com.

SOURCE: Doyle Conner Jr.
Phone: (850) 410-0956
<http://www.floridacattledrive.com>
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Cattlemen Outline Priorities for 2007 Farm Bill

NCBA President Mike John Testifies at House Agriculture Committee Hearing

The 2007 Farm Bill must include policies that promote a competitive and free market system, according to the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA). Mike John, Missouri cattle producer and NCBA president, testified today before the U.S. House Agriculture Committee at a hearing on future agriculture policy and the 2007 Farm Bill.

"It is not in the nation's farmers' or ranchers' best interest for the government to implement policy that sets prices, underwrites inefficient production, or manipulates domestic supply, demand, cost, or price," said John.

A producer-driven organization, NCBA relies on the directives of its membership of over 25,000 cattle producers and 64 affiliate organizations to establish how to proceed in setting Farm Bill policy. NCBA members have identified "guiding principles" for the 2007 Farm Bill. Under these principles, NCBA's priorities are to:

1. Support a reduction of the federal deficit while assuring funding for Farm Bill priorities, without agriculture bearing a disproportionate share of the reductions,
2. Minimize direct federal involvement in agricultural production methods,

3. Preserve the individual's right to manage land, water, and other resources,
4. Provide an opportunity to compete in foreign markets, and
5. Support equitable farm policy.

Areas where government and industry can work together to achieve mutual goals include conservation and environmental stewardship. "Programs such as EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program) are extremely popular with cattlemen, and we hope to see this type of cost share program expand to include more producers," said John. "Cost share and working land programs serve to protect both the environment and the taxpayers' money."

John also thanked the committee for its support on many recent and current trade issues. "To grow our business, we have to look outside of the U.S. borders to find 96 percent of the world's consumers. We encourage the Committee's continued strong and vigilant oversight of the enforcement of any trade pact to which American agriculture is a party." Furthermore, John said, cattlemen strongly support the Market Access Program and the Foreign Market Development Program, which help expand opportunities for U.S. beef.

As Congress looks at reauthorizing the Farm Bill, many programs important to cattlemen – such as those in the areas of conservation, trade, marketing, research, energy production, property rights, tax policy and animal identification - are all being evaluated.

"America's cattlemen are proud and independent, and we just want the opportunity to run our ranches the best we can to provide a high quality product to the American consumer," said John. "Even more importantly, we want to provide for our families and preserve our way of life."

SOURCE: Karen Batra
Email: kbatra@beef.org
Tanya Augustson Camarra
Email: tacamarra@beef.org
<http://www.beefusa.org/>
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