Timely Topics

PREPARE PASTURES FOR SPRING by learning how to interpret soil sample results, calculate fertilization rates, and control spring weed populations on March 9th at 6:00 pm. The class will be held at 1010 N McDuff Avenue. Please RSVP to Brad 387-8850 by March 8th.

If you suffered crop damage or loss due to the recent freeze it should be reported to Hugh Hunter at the Baldwin office of the Farm Service Agency. 904.266.0088 x 2

I have recently been contacted by several individuals in the county who would like to pay someone to artificially inseminate their beef cows. If this is something you would be interested in, please let me know so I can coordinate an effort.

From the Agent’s Desk

It is with optimism that I write my first quarterly newsletter of the decade. Looking forward, prices for livestock, as well as, input prices are expected to improve as the economy hopefully begins to recover and the full impacts of continued herd sell-off become more pronounced.

On another note, I met in November with my advisory council which is made up of a wide range of farmers, volunteers, and industry partners who help guide my educational efforts & provide advice and counsel.

In 2007, the advisory council recommended that I focus on three program areas. After much discussion and data analysis here is an abbreviated version of the goals for 2010.

The goals for the livestock and forage program will be to help producers improve profits through production efficiencies and cost-cutting practices. Additionally, I plan to work with 4-H youth who have an interest in production agriculture in order to increase the number of young people involved in farming.

The natural resources program will continue to focus on recruiting and train volunteers who will provide environmental education. Since 2008 these trained volunteers have volunteered over 3,700 hours in local schools, parks and community groups.

Lastly, the goals for the local food production program will be to continue to train new farmers to produce and sell locally in order to meet the demand and sustain rural life. I will continue to foster a better understanding of Duval Agriculture through farm tours, exhibits, the media, schools, community events and presentations. I am looking forward to another great year in Jacksonville!

Your Agent,
Brad Bubbaugh
Agriculture & Natural Resources
In most operations, income from cull cows and bulls can account for as much as 15 to 20 percent of revenue. However, most ranchers put little if any thought into the marketing of these animals. Most sell their cull cows in the fall.

Generally speaking, this is the worst time of year to sell cull cows (see below) Demand for cow-beef is typically lower at this time, and there is usually an excess supply of cows.

Producers who have access to resources like land, forage and feed have the potential to increase their income by feeding cows for 60 days to 120 days until prices improve. Numerous published and unpublished studies from various universities have shown that cattlemen can usually recover $2 to $55 by placing otherwise healthy but thin, or Body Condition Score less than 4, cows in some type of forage-based growing program and carrying the cows to a body condition score of 5 to 6.

Cattlemen can make money in several ways by adjusting their timing when selling cull cows. First, the cow gains additional weight which will increase the price paid. Secondly, some cull cows will improve a quality grade due to better body condition and, therefore, sell for a higher price.

Also, unlike calves, thin cows actually bring a lower price than moderately fleshed (or BCS of 4 to 6) cows.

Lastly, I have compiled 2009 sale data from the Lake City Market and as you can see there is typically some price improvement from late winter through early spring.

Additionally, I have provided 2009 sale data for slaughter bull prices at the market. As you can see, selling slaughter bulls March-August will, typically, give you a larger return on investment.
Cost–Effective Fertilization Strategies for the Spring
Brad Burbaugh

Well the bubble has finally burst! Fertilizer prices have been rising steadily since 2002 and in 2008 the annual average prices paid for fertilizers rose 264%. But from September of 2008 to September 2009 prices paid for fertilizers fell 57%. And the good news is they will probably continue to fall for the next couple of months. One reason that fertilizer prices have fallen is that the annual average cost of natural gas, the primary source for nitrogen fertilizers, was forecasted to fall 54% in 2009. (Energy Info Administration).

Although the price of fertilizer has decreased drastically we should work on making our fertilizer investments less risky and more efficient because we all know the prices will not stay low for long. Now is the time to start thinking about our spring fertilization program. Here are some important steps to increase efficiency and hopefully save you some of your hard earned $5.

1) Soil test and follow fertility recommendations: You do not know what nutrients your soil requires until you submit a soil sample and in some cases you may not need to add any nutrients. Now is the time to submit samples that will help you determine your fertilization program in the spring. I have enclosed soil analysis forms which should be sent to Gainesville along with $7.00.

2) Adjust pH, if necessary: This practice, more than any other, affects the level and economic efficiency of forage production. Research from Georgia indicates a difference of a soil pH of 5.8 versus 6.2 can decrease nitrogen utilization of grasses by 20%, phosphorous utilization by 25% and potassium utilization by 10%.

3) Avoid the use of standard blends: Standard blends such 17-17-17 are good blends only if you need all of those nutrients. By using soil test to determine target fertilizer rates you can buy custom mixed fertilizers—this in turn will save you money! Custom mixed fertilizers are available at Mayo Fertilizer in Lake City (386) 752-3155 and Lake Butler Farm Center (386)496-3921 in Union County.

4) Split nitrogen applications: Long term, this practice can increase yields by 5-10% and nitrogen efficiency by 25-30%. This practice will also help reduce the risk of nitrate toxicity. Nitrogen is the most limiting nutrient in pastures, therefore N fertilization results in an increase in forage yield and crude protein. Fertilizer should be applied in early spring to maximize growth and decrease feed costs. A second application will also increase yield, but more nitrogen means more phosphorous and more potassium will be needed by the grass. Apply potassium and phosphorus only if required by the soil sample results.

5) Split potassium applications: K is responsible for stand persistence and grasses are luxury consumers of potassium. They eat as much as they can at one time. By splitting the application to 40-50% in the spring and 50-60% in mid-late season. Potassium deficiencies will induce decreased stress tolerance and poor cold hardiness.

6) Use your county agent as a resource: If you need any assistance interpreting soil results or calculating blends call me. I plan on having a class on March 9th at 6 pm. I will cover how to interpret soil test results, calculate fertilizer and liming rates, as well as, go over spring weeds and their control. Once again, my number is 387-8850 and my email is Burbaugh@coj.net
### Calendar of Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 9</td>
<td>6:00 pm</td>
<td>Fertilization Program</td>
<td>1010 N. McDuff</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 6</td>
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<td>A Day of Gardening</td>
<td>1010 N. McDuff</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 11-13</td>
<td>8:00 am - 5:00 pm</td>
<td>UF Bee College</td>
<td>Marineland</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 15-26</td>
<td>9:00 am - 4:00 pm</td>
<td>UF Master Naturalist Program</td>
<td>MOSH</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 15-16</td>
<td>5:00 pm - 8:00 pm</td>
<td>Farm Bureau Day at the Capitol</td>
<td>Tallahassee</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 23</td>
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<td>Agriculture Literacy Day</td>
<td>Statewide</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 12</td>
<td>9:00 am - 4:00 pm</td>
<td>Private Applicator Study Session &amp; Exam</td>
<td>Starke</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 17</td>
<td>9:00 am - 3:00 pm</td>
<td>Become a Hobby Beekeeper Shortcourse</td>
<td>1010 N. McDuff</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 20</td>
<td>6:00 pm - 8:30 pm</td>
<td>Pond Management for Homeowners ($5.00)</td>
<td>1010 N. McDuff</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 30</td>
<td>9:00 am - 1:00 pm</td>
<td>Small Farms Grazing School</td>
<td>Live Oak</td>
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