Florida Cattle Inventory Summary

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The National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS) branch of the USDA released its latest cattle inventory numbers and estimates on February 1st. They show that cattle inventories have continued the downward trend they have been taking since 1996. That trend puts the cattle industry into the 13th year of the cattle cycle and there are no clear indications of a herd expansion.

Florida’s cattle inventory numbers were in line with the national trend. Overall 2002 Florida cattle and calves inventory is estimated to be down one percent to 1.78 million head from 1.8 million head in 2001. All cows that had calved are estimated to be down 20,000 head to 1.11 million. Beef cows that had calved totaled 958,000 and milk cows that had calved totaled 152,000 both are down two percent from 2001. Calf crop numbers show a one-percent decline from 950,000 head in 2000 to 940,000 head in 2001.

Adapting Florida Production to the Evolving Beef Industry Markets

The focus of this year’s program will center on “preparing for the changing beef cattle market while maintaining productive cattle in Florida’s environment”. The combination of Florida’s environment and emerging specification marketing challenge Florida’s beef producers more than any other beef producers in the country. Florida beef producers must become more knowledgeable in the areas of genetics, environmental factors and marketing opportunities than their counterparts in other areas of the country. Topics for this year include market outlook, effect of alliances on the beef cattle market and the market situation for Brahman influenced fed cattle. Using genetics to produce cattle for targeted markets while optimizing production in Florida’s environment will be a major emphasis during Thursday morning’s program. There will be demonstrations on bull selection, beef quality assurance health procedures to maximize carcass value and determination of cull cow value on Thursday afternoon. Managing for efficient use of forages and supplements to maintain high beef productivity will be the focus of the Friday morning program. As usual, there will be a Wednesday evening trade show and the traditional Cattleman’s steak-out on Thursday evening.

The number of cattle operations in Florida fell slightly over 2000 – 2001. There were 19,500 cattle operations in Florida in 2001 down 500 operations from 2000. Beef cow replacements in Florida are down from 145,000 to 140,000 head Milk cow replacements held steady at 40,000 head. This may be an indication that the current cycle may last into 2003 or beyond and can potentially translate to continued strong cattle prices through 2004 or 2005.

The reduced early registration fee is $85.00 if received by April 16th, 2002. After April 16th, 2002, regular registration will be $110.00. This includes refreshment breaks, exhibitor’s reception, Thursday’s lunch, 1 Steak-out ticket and a proceeding. Extra Steak-out tickets are available at $10.00 each. To see the full program and/or to register on-line, take a look at the following website: http://conference.ifas.ufl.edu/beef/
WASHINGTON, Feb. 26, 2002

The U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health and Human Services today reported the status of action steps designed to further prevent bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in U.S. cattle, including doubling the number of BSE tests it will conduct this fiscal year compared to the previous year. The USDA, HHS, as well as other federal and state agencies, are working together to continue strengthening protection systems to prevent BSE from entering the country.

USDA and HHS are reporting the status of the action steps first outlined Nov. 30, 2001 following the release of the landmark risk analysis on BSE conducted by Harvard University. The report showed that the risk of BSE occurring in the United States is extremely low. The report showed that early protection systems put into place by the USDA and HHS have been largely responsible for keeping BSE out of the U.S. and would prevent it from spreading if it ever did enter the country.

Even so, USDA Secretary Ann M. Veneman and HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson last year outlined a series of actions to continue strengthening programs to reduce the risk even further.

"We will remain vigilant and are committed to taking the appropriate steps to keep BSE out of the United States," said Veneman. "In addition to being on track to double our testing this year, we are moving forward on a series of action items to strengthen our prevention programs."

HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson added, "We continue to take strong actions and keep our vigilance high to prevent this disease from entering this country. If we ever did face a situation, we want to ensure that strong systems are in place to prevent its potential spread to the animal or human food chain."

The three-year Harvard study is the most comprehensive study of BSE and its potential risk factors done in the United States. It is the second comprehensive independent analysis conducted in recent years examining prevention measures being taken in the U.S. related to BSE.

The series of recent actions by federal agencies include:

- A peer review of the Harvard study by outside experts is underway by a team of independent scientists to determine the accuracy of the approaches and assumptions of the model.
- As stated above, USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is on track to double testing for BSE in cattle this year. The target for FY 2002 is 12,500 compared to approximately 5,200 sampled in FY 2001. The increase includes testing deceased cattle from farms.
- The FY 2003 USDA budget includes record-level funding for pest and disease prevention and food safety programs, including $8 million for increased BSE surveillance and laboratory activities by APHIS, with $3 million going directly to the states to help collect an increased number of samples. An additional $2 million is requested for USDA's Agricultural Research Service to further study BSE.
- USDA is on track to increase the number of inspectors at ports of entry with its FY 2003 budget, proposing to bring staffing levels to more than 4000, up from 2500 personnel at the beginning of FY 2001.
- The Defense Appropriations Supplemental Act, approved by the President in January, provides $328 million for increased homeland security protections. These resources will strengthen the coordination and planning of federal programs by increasing overseas inspection capabilities, provide funding to integrate computer technologies among federal agencies, fund critical laboratory renovations to improve testing capabilities and invest in new detection systems, such as x-ray equipment, among other priorities.
- USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) published for comment a current thinking paper in the Jan. 17, 2002 Federal Register outlining additional regulatory actions it may take to further reduce the potential risk of BSE and to ensure that potentially infectious materials does not enter the U.S. food supply.
USDA is currently drafting a proposed rule to prohibit the use of certain stunning devices used to immobilize cattle during slaughter. As well, USDA is currently drafting an advance notice of proposed rulemaking, which will consider additional regulatory options for the disposal of dead stock from farms and ranches.

Last year, HHS outlined new steps to improve the scientific understanding of BSE in a detailed action plan that incorporates a comprehensive approach to further strengthen prevention, increase research resources and expand existing inspection efforts.

The HHS Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has significantly improved the database it uses to track inspection reports and monitor compliance with the animal feed rule that helps protect the U.S. against BSE. This improved database, expected to be fully operational in April, will allow FDA to record inspection results and track compliance more effectively.

FDA has been appropriated an additional $15 million for BSE efforts in the current fiscal year, bringing the total to $19 million. This year, FDA is hiring an additional 115 people to help protect the U.S. against BSE.

FDA's inspections show a continued high rate of compliance with the feed rule. As of mid-December, initial inspections of all renderers, protein blenders and commercial feed mills had been completed. All but four percent of these entities were in compliance with feed rules, though the status of six percent of these firms is unknown because of incomplete inspection results.

BSE has never been detected in U.S. cattle, nor has there been a case of the human form of the disease, variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease, detected in the United States. Since 1989, USDA has taken a series of preventive actions to protect against this animal disease. This includes banning the import of live ruminants, such as cattle, sheep and goats, and most ruminant products from the United Kingdom and other countries having BSE. The ban was extended to Europe in 1997. To stop the way the disease is thought to spread, in 1997, FDA prohibited the use of most mammalian protein in the manufacture of animal feed intended for cows and other ruminants.

BSE is a chronic, degenerative neurological disorder of cattle. It belongs to a family of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies. Also included in that family of illnesses is vCJD, which is believed to be caused by eating neural tissue, such as brain and spinal cord, from BSE affected cattle.


**Beef Cattle Management Tips**

**MARCH**

- Prepare land for summer crops.
- Begin grazing warm season permanent pastures.
- Check and fill mineral feeder.
- Observe bulls for condition and success.
- Rotate and rest bulls as necessary.
- Deworm cows as needed.
- Observe calf health and provide adequate nutrition for “good” weight gains.
- Hang forced-use dust bags by April 1st for external parasite control or use insecticide impregnated ear tags.
- Identify, vaccinate, implant and work late calves.
- Put bulls out by March 1st for calving season to start December 9th.
- Remove bulls March 22nd to end calving season January 1st.

**APRIL**

- Plant warm season and perennial pastures.
- Plant corn for silage.
- Check and fill mineral feeder.
- Check dust bags or apply treated ear tags.
- Check for external parasites and treat if necessary.
- Observe cows for repeat breeders.
- Deworm cows as needed if not done in March.
- Vaccinate against blackleg and brucellosis after 3 months of age and prior to 12 months of age.
- Market culls cows and bulls.
- Update market information and refine market strategy for calves.

John Mark Shuffitt  
Livestock Agent II
“The Last Word”

The real difference between men is energy. A strong will, a settled purpose, an invincible determination, can accomplish almost anything; and in this lies the distinction between great men and little men.
Fuller

A man’s ledger (checkbook) does not tell what he is, or what he is worth. Count what is in man, not what is on him, if you would know what he is worth — whether rich or poor.
H.W. Beecher

A farmer (rancher) is a person who gets up at 5:00 a.m. and hurries through his/her work by 9:30 p.m. so he/she can read a trade publication about how to make money by farming (ranching) more intensively.
Anonymous

Some animals can understand but can’t talk, whereas it’s just the other way with some human beings.
Anonymous

A good wife makes the cares of the world sit easy, and adds a sweetness to its pleasures: she is a man’s best companion in prosperity, and his best if not only friend in adversity; the most careful preserver of his health, and the kindest attendant on his sickness; a faithful adviser in distress, a comforter in affliction and a discreet manager of all his domestic affairs.
L.M. Stretch

It is easy for men to write and talk like philosophers, but to act with wisdom, there is the rub!
Rivarol

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