Supplying adequate soil fertility and the correct pH to your forages is one of the keys to a successful forage production. If your are a hay producer, plant annual forage crops every year, or overseed in winter time, then you need to soil test every year. If your operation is based on perennial forages, you could do so less frequently. One of the first action to get ready for the upcoming season in terms of fertilizer needs should be to have your soil tested. Now more than ever, a soil test will save you money because it will indicate those nutrients that are in your soil in sufficient amounts. Soil testing followed by the proper fertilization, is one of the practices that will possibly have the most long-term effect on your forage production per acre. There is no other way to find out the status of your soil nutrients but to soil test. Keep in mind that the recommendations coming back from the soil test report are based on efficient fertilizer use and environmentally sound nutrient management without losses of yield or crop quality. Use these months prior to spring time to test your soil and correct soil pH if necessary; acidic soil condition is a tendency for many Florida soils. If lime is needed it will be indicated on your soil report.

By: Yoana Newman
Extension Forage Specialist
Manatee County Fair Youth Livestock Schedule of Events

Every year many youth participate in the Manatee County Fair to compete for prizes, awards and most of all bragging rights. Many of these youth will be competing in many different areas during the fair. At this point we are looking at a very successful fair in the livestock area. I encourage each of you to take some time to come out and support the youth of today who will become the leaders of tomorrow.

Tuesday, January 13 – Swine Weigh-In - 2-6:00pm
Wednesday, January 14 – Dairy Check-In – 4-7:00pm
Swine Showmanship – 6:00pm
Thursday, January 15 – Swine Show – 6:00pm
Friday, January 16 – Dairy Show – 6:00pm
Saturday, January 17 – Dairy, Swine and Horse Judging – 7:30am
Dairy Costume Contest – 10:00am
Swine Sale – 2:00pm
FNGLA Youth Plant Sale – 6:00pm
Swine Released—10:00pm
Sunday, January 18 - Dairy Released—6:00pm
Monday, January 19- Goat Check-In – 5-7:00pm
Tuesday, January 20 – Steer Weigh-In – 2-6:00pm
Beef Breeding Check-In – 2-6:00pm
Goat Show – 7:00pm
Wednesday, January 21 – Steer Showmanship – 6:00pm
Thursday, January 22 – Steer Show – 6:00pm
Friday, January 23 – Beef Breeding Show – 6:00pm
Saturday, January 24 – Beef Breeding, Steer and Goat Judging – 8:30am
Steer Sale – 2:00pm
Youth Livestock Awards – 7:00pm
Goats, Beef Breeding and Steers Released—10:00pm
Sunday, January 25 Horse Show – 11:00am

As a reminder to all youth entering livestock in the Manatee County Fair, you are required to have a Certificate of Veterinary Health Inspection (health certificate) for your animals to be admitted to the fair. Without a certificate you will not be allowed to exhibit your animal. Check your fair livestock rules for any additional tests, bleedings, or any other procedures that must be followed prior to exhibition at the Manatee County Fair.
Beef Management Calendar

December
• Begin grazing small grain pastures (if ready).
• Check mineral feeder.
• Check for external parasites and treat if needed.
• Deworm cows and heifers prior to winter feeding season.
• Observe regularly for calving difficulties.
• Rotate calving pastures to prevent diseases.
• Watch for scours in calves.
• Investigate health of bulls before you buy.
• Have dead animals posted by a veterinarian or diagnostic laboratory.
• Complete review of management plan and update for next year. Check replacement heifers to be sure they will be ready to breed 3 - 4 weeks prior to the main cow herd.

January
• Apply lime for summer crops.
• Check for lice and treat if necessary.
• Control weeds in cool season pastures.
• Begin grazing winter clover pastures when approximately 6 inches high. Rye should be 12-18 inches high.
• Check mineral feeders.
• Put bulls out for October calving season.
• Make up breeding herd lists if using single sire herds.
• Watch for calf scours.
• Give bulls extra feed and care so they will be in condition for breeding season.
• Make sure cow herd has access to adequate fresh water.
• Buy only performance tested bulls with superior records.
• Get taxes filed.
• Discuss herd health with your veterinarian and outline a program for the year.
• Review herd health program with your veterinarian regularly.
• Carry a pocket notebook to record heat, breeding abnormalities, discharges, abortions, retained placentas, difficult calvings and other data.
• Observe cow herd for calving difficulties.
• Watch for grass tetany on winter pastures.
• Increase magnesium levels in mineral mixes if grass tetany has been previous problem (if you are not already using a high magnesium mineral).
• Examine bulls for breeding soundness and semen quality prior to the breeding season.
• Vaccinate cows and heifers against vibriosis and leptospirosis prior to the breeding season.

February
• Top dress winter forages, if needed.
• Check and fill mineral feeders.
• Put bulls out with breeding herd.
• Work calves (identify, implant with growth stimulant, vaccinate, etc.).
• Make sure lactating cows are receiving an adequate level of energy.
• Watch calves for signs of respiratory diseases.
• Cull cows that failed to calve while prices are seasonally up.
• Check for lice and treat if needed.
Up-Coming Events

January
   6   Manatee County Cattlemen’s Meeting, 7pm
15-25  Manatee County Fair
   15  Cattlemen’s Institute & Allied Trade Show, Kissimmee

February
   5-16  Florida State Fair
   17  Manatee County Cattlewomen’s Meeting, 6:30pm

April
   16  Range Cattle REC Field Day, Ona
   29-5/1  Beef Cattle Short Course, Gainesville

June
   30  Range Cattle REC Youth Field Day, Ona

Christa L. Carlson-Kirby
Extension Agent II, Livestock