



Florida's Cattle Industry

Though unnoticed today in the midst of so many tourist attractions and rapidly growing communities, Florida's landscape was once a vast area of grazing lands. For almost 500 years, the cattle industry has contributed significantly to Florida's economy and natural resources. Multi-generational family ranches have cared for the land, provided employment for many residents and contributed greatly to the local tax base.

Florida cattle producers are good "stewards of the land" as owners and caretakers of thousands of acres of pristine native range and pasture land. In recognition of their conservation efforts, Florida has had several regional winners and one national winner of the National Cattlemen's Environmental Stewardship Award. Lands used for cattle production are also important "green space" for wildlife and native plant habitat, aquifer recharge and carbon recovery. Grass and forages used for cattle production are renewable resources occurring in a great variety of landscapes typically found on



cattle ranches, including improved pastures, wetlands and marsh, woodlands and prairie. Biologists conclude that bird and wildlife populations thrive

on lands used for cattle production. Florida's cattle industry was a leader in the formulation and adoption of agricultural industry Water Quality Best Management Practices and other standards.

Florida is a cow-calf state. The primary cattle "crop" is calves which are shipped to other states to be finished and processed into beef. Florida beef producers own over a million cows, heifers and bulls. Total breeding herd values exceed \$847 million. Calves would be valued at an additional \$200-350 million.

Florida's annual beef cattle sales and sales of breeding stock easily push annual farm gate sales over a half-billion dollars. Florida seedstock



producers supply the "building blocks" for commercial cattle herds. Utilization of the best genetics in the industry allows Florida producers to compete effectively in national and global markets. Florida's dairy industry supplies milk and dairy products, mostly consumed within the state. Florida dairy producers own 180,000 cows, heifers and bulls valued over \$236 million. The annual farm gate value of fresh milk and other dairy products exceeds \$400 million.



Interesting Facts

- Cattle were first introduced to North America in Florida in 1521 by Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de Leon.
- One Florida ranch owns the largest brood cow herd in the United States.
- Florida is home to four of the United States' 10 largest cow-calf operations.
- Florida ranks 12th in the nation in number of beef cows.
- Nearly one-half of all Florida Agricultural land is involved in cattle production. Florida has 4 million acres of pastureland and 1 million acres of grazed woodland.
- Much of "Natural Florida" remains in the working landscape of Florida's cattle industry.
- Wildlife and plant systems are well-balanced and thriving on Florida's ranchlands.

Photo credits:
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• Williamson Cattle Company



Quality Assurance

Florida's cattle producers continue to work diligently to provide the public with safe, healthy products from a wholesome, natural environment. Beef Quality Assurance is a daily component of livestock management programs. Animal identification leads to better health records, tracking, and monitoring for effective disease detection and eradication. Ranchers are working cooperatively with the USDA, Animal Plant Health Inspection Service, and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to protect animal health and public safety.



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To Learn More Contact:

Florida Cattlemen's Association

800 Shakerag Road
Kissimmee, Florida 34744
407-846-6221
www.floridacattlemen.org



For general information or to have a local cattle producer to speak to your organization.

Florida Association of Livestock Markets

P.O. Box 421929
Kissimmee, Florida 34742
407-846-4557



To find a market in your area.

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Animal Industry

407 South Calhoun Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399
850-410-0900, www.doacs.state.fl.us/ai



For assistance with animal health programs or the National Animal Identification System.



www.doacs.state.fl.us

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