

Florida Forage Handbook: Preface¹

Yoana Newman (editor) and C. G. Chambliss (deceased)²

Both native range and planted forage crops are important to Florida's economy and environment. The grassland resources in Florida are marketed through livestock — beef cattle use 85 percent and other grazing animals use 15 percent. The beef-cattle industry accounts for more than 300 million dollars of income yearly, and the dairy, horse, and small ruminant industries, which also rely on forages, are extremely important to the state's economy.

Environmentally, land covered with grass absorbs much water from rainfall, helping to replenish Florida's water supply. The grass sod acts as a filter for sediments and decreases water runoff and soil erosion. Organic matter accumulates in the soil under grasslands, increasing soil fertility and storing carbon that otherwise might contribute to climate change and global warming. Grasslands also provide habitat for wildlife and recreational areas.

This handbook was written for livestock producers, forage managers, professional workers in the livestock/forage industry, and anyone seeking information about forage crops grown in Florida. Originally commissioned by C.G. Chambliss and assisted by M.B. Adjei, both experts in forage extension, this handbook has become the go-to-guide for every Florida forage enthusiast, new or seasoned. This new edition contains updated and expanded information

most relevant to today's livestock producer and forage manager. A new team of authors has updated selected topics based on the latest forage research. While this handbook does not cover every forage crop that could be grown in Florida or every forage-related topic, an attempt has been made to expand and update its scope to cover those forages and topics that are most important for the region.

Fact sheet SS-AGR-105, "Managing South Florida Range for Cattle" (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ag173>), presents a summation of the principles and practices of native-range management. Native range contains many different kinds of grasses and forbs, and it is not within the scope of this publication to cover them all. The remaining fact sheets deal with planted forages. There are fact sheets on the UF/IFAS EDIS website that deal with individual forage crops as well as ones on management topics such as fertilization and grazing management. Fact sheets on individual forage crops contain some information on various management issues related to the particular forage crop being discussed, but the reader can also find additional information in the fact sheets that deal with specific management topics. For a complete list of fact sheets in the Florida Forage Handbook, see SS-AGR-97 Table of Contents (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ag170>).

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Livestock producers and forage managers can use this book to improve the forage programs on their farms and ranches — and to make decisions about the management and utilization of Florida's forage resources.

For more information about resources from the University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, contact your local county Extension office or visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

Finally, you are invited to visit the Forages of Florida website for additional information on forage plants and forage resources at <http://agronomy.ifas.ufl.edu/ForagesofFlorida/index.php>.