

Feeding the Cow Herd during the Cool Season in Florida on Adams Ranch

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At Adams Ranch, our goal has been to save enough standing grass to carry the cattle through winter with little or no supplementation. We are located in southern Osceola, Okeechobee and St. Lucie Counties, so our winters are not as severe as in a large portion of the state. The backbone to our improved pasture program has been white dutch (or Osceola) clover. Emergence of this forage has been a sign of the end of winter, from mid-March to mid-April.

The cow herd receives a 7% protein–mineral supplement year-round. Yearling cattle on pasture may receive a supplement of 12% mixed feed to allow them to grow or maintain through the winter. Some hay is put up for more security to cope with unusual occurrences.

We are currently working with round-bale silage. I believe that this will allow us to put up a quality product, which has been a problem with hay in our area. Consumption is very good, and the silage has good digestibility. This may be the base around which to build an economical winter feeding program.

This past year, we experimented with using citrus pellets and whole cottonseed. Our cattle were on straight bahiagrass pastures with few legumes. The cattle did eat it well, and it was of value to them. I believe that, with a strong base of home-raised silage or bulk feed, these by-product materials could be used to augment a supplementation program.

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