

A Sixty-Year History of the University of Florida's Beef Cattle Short Course

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My objective is to mention some early beef cattle events and give proper credit to some of the early original people who had much foresight and vision. Thus, I will mention something about time, people and important events in the early days of the department.

First, the people who started the early programs.

1. Dr. Tony J. Cunha, he became chairman of Animal Husbandry and Nutrition in 1950, after coming here in 1948 from Washington State College, Pullman WA. He was chairman until 1974 when he went to California State Polytechnic University, Pomona as Dean of Agriculture.
2. Professor James E. Pace, Extension Beef Cattle Specialist, who came from Clemson in the early 1940s until retirement in 1980.
3. Dr. Marvin Koger, Geneticist, came to Florida in 1951 from New Mexico. He managed the breeding projects at the Beef Research Unit and breeding project at the Branch Experiment Stations. He retired in 1988.
4. Dr. Albert M. Pearson, Meats Scientist and livestock judging coach, came from Cornell University, Ithica, NY in the late 1940s until 1955, when he went to Michigan State at East Lansing.
5. Dr. James F. Hentges, originally from Oklahoma, an Animal Nutritionist from the University of Wisconsin came in 1952 and was in charge of production at the Beef Research Unit until his retirement in 1986.

Early Florida beef cattle producers and managers who aided in the early short course programs were:

1. Mr. Max Hammond, W.H. Stuart Brahman Ranch, Bartow, FL.
2. Mr. Louis Gilbreath, Camp Ranch, Ocala, FL.
3. Mr. Dan Childs, Lake Placid, FL.
4. Mr. Leroy Baldwin, Baldwin Angus Ranch, Ocala, FL.
5. Mr. Jeannette Chitty, Stardust Ranch, Micanopy, FL

The presidents of the Florida purebred beef groups. The editors and the publishers, the Cody Family, with the Florida Cattlemen's magazine in Kissimmee made a good contribution.

Lastly, and very important are the officers, members and advisors to the department's undergraduate Block and Bridle Club. They did so much in preparing meals, helping provide facilities and in doing much work during the three-day event.

The first beef cattle program was held December 4 and 5, 1952 called the Beef Cattle Breeders and Herdsmen Short Course. Many of the topics centered around preparing, feeding and showing beef cattle for the show ring. The first program had 29 speakers from out of state. It was held in the new Cecil M. Webb Livestock Pavilion built in 1951 with funds from Mr. Webb of Dixie Lily Company in Williston, FL. This structure was a great asset to the department for teaching livestock classes, holding conferences, short

courses, and it had dormitory rooms for students and was used for University functions with the marching band. The new meats laboratory and Webb Livestock Pavilion were dedicated in 1952.

Also in 1952, it was the first department student livestock judging team that competed at the Chicago International Livestock Exposition, coached by Dr. Albert M. Pearson with such luminaries as Ken Durrance, then an undergraduate student. Later, the team was coached by Professor Don Wakeman, who also was advisor to the Block and Bridle Club.

In May 1953, the livestock field day was held in the pavilion. My first participation was April 8-10, 1954 when I gave a live demonstration of pregnancy diagnosis in a beef cow. The same name of Beef Cattle Breeders and Herdsmen Short Course was used through the 4th event in 1955.

At each year's short course, the program focused on current beef cattle problems with local faculty, national and international leaders, along with successful beef commercial and purebred ranch managers. The short course programs of 1961, 1965, 1971, and 2001 provided material for the publication of four important and timely books on beef cattle breeding materials. The 1961 course entitled *Crossbreeding Beef Cattle* was published in 1963 with 25 speakers from several states, including such notables as Prof. John Knox, New Mexico, Drs. Ralph W. Phillips and Everett J. Warwick, USDA, Washington, DC. The course in 1964 featured factors affecting calf crop with four international leaders and several specialists from the USA and our faculty. This resulted in the book *Factors Affecting Calf Crop* published in 1967 by University of Florida Press. The second course on crossbreeding in 1971 resulted in the classic book, *Crossbreeding Beef Cattle Series 2*, published in 1973 by University Press. These three volumes were all edited by Drs. T.J. Cunha, Marvin Koger and Alvin C. Warnick. The last book published in 2004, *Factors Affecting Calf Crop* was edited by Drs. M. J. Fields and R. S. Sand was published by CRC

Press, Inc. which resulted from the 2001 short course.

Dr. Cunha always made short course assignments well in advance to the faculty. One job was to destroy all of the sparrow bird nests from the livestock pavilion. This job was assigned to Professor Phillip Loggins. The use of the cow bell was well used by Dr. Cunha to keep everyone on time following the refreshment breaks. One year Dr. Don Hargrove tried to provide facilities for visual aids during daylight. It was a valiant effort but not very successful. Special thanks should go to the Block and Bridle students, advisors and workers at the meats lab for providing meals during the three-day event. Drs. Pete Carpenter, Roger West, and Zane Palmer deserve much credit. Sometimes we had 1,000 people attend, coming from Florida, the southeastern states, and Central and South America. The 1985 three-day course moved from the livestock pavilion to the Hilton Hotel on S.W. 13th Street. It moved, in 2004, to the U.F. Conference Center when it was built on S.W. 34th Street across the street from the Phillips Center

The Latin Beef Cattle short course in Spanish grew from the original course with Drs. Joe Conrad and Lee McDowell. Feeders from the west and cattle breeders from the USA recognized the quality and goodness of the past annual short course programs. The future looks bright for the quality and goodness of the material presented by our faculty and invited speakers. Much credit should go to the faculty, staff and guest speakers during the past 60 years.