

The Week in Florida Agriculture

February 25 - March 2, 2008

Pasture conditions are mostly poor to fair in the Panhandle and northern areas. Winter forage for grazing is rapidly being depleted and hay is in very short supply.

Cold temperatures negatively affected bloom for some early blueberry cultivars.

Cold temperatures did little damage to the potato crop as planting continues.

Freezing temperatures damaged potatoes, which are 100 percent planted. Damage reports were widespread and ranged from minimal to significant depending on location and stage of growth. Cabbage crop, which is about 50 percent harvested, also shows signs of damage, but extent is yet to be determined.

Strawberry growers continue to harvest strawberries in the Plant City area.

Livestock and Pastures: Statewide, cattle condition is mostly fair. Freezing temperatures in the Panhandle and northern areas at mid-week caused no apparent damage on winter grazing small grains, ryegrass or clover. Despite frost, pastures are pushing new growth.

Vegetables: Producers are marketing snap beans, cabbage, celery, sweet corn, eggplant, endive, escarole, peppers, potatoes, radishes, squash, strawberries, and tomatoes.

Drought Update: Hillsborough County reported over one inch of rain for the week. Alachua County reported three-quarters of an inch of rain; and Levy, Dade, Polk, Orange, Baker, Putnam, and Volusia counties with about a half-inch of precipitation. However, other areas of the Peninsula received very little measurable rain. Lake Okeechobee level is at 10.05 feet.

Citrus: Growers, caretakers, and field personnel are reporting more new growth flush and bloom with young trees in some southern locations in full bloom. Other areas are showing spotty bloom with evidence of heavier bloom yet to occur. Early fertilizer applications continue with irrigation to prepare for the upcoming bloom. Systemic pesticide applications continue to promote healthier trees for better crop set. Hedging and topping activities also continuing. Varieties being harvested include early, midseason, Navel, Temple, and increasing amounts of Valencia oranges; grapefruit; Sunburst and Honey tangerines; and tangelos. The harvest of grapefruit for processing is increasing.

Sugarcane harvesting continues in the Lake Okeechobee area.

Sweet corn is being harvested.