

ing season. At the same time the producer experienced a 70% calf crop. The previous lessee of this unit had never experienced better than 40%. In examining why this lease operated better than any other it appeared that nutritionally the native marsh and the tame pasture met the cow/calf requirements and that the rapid rotation grazing system prevented forage quality deterioration. The question became how to apply this success to the rest of Avon Park. The grazing rotation period was easily resolved—the nutritional deficiencies have yet to be completely rectified. There are indications that Florida's upland grasses simply do not meet the nutritional requirements of a lactating cow. Fertilizing native grasses is not economically feasible. In the winter, dry cattle (cows without calves by their sides) condition can be maintained with a supplement of molasses. The list of options available to solve the nutritional problems is limited: you could utilize a marsh if you had one, plant tame pasture for summer grazing, or try another grazing system. At Avon Park some leases have rich freshwater marshes and some have limited tame pastureland but some unfortunately have very limited summer pasture for cow-calf pairs. The two biggest leases have large marshes which were just recently divided into two pastures. These pastures are grazed during the summer months to maximize the benefits of tremendous forage quantity and quality. Range condition has improved from poor to good and animal condition and calf crop percentages under these situations have also increased.

Three leases have no marsh and very little tame pasture to accommodate the cow-calf operation. On one lease with this situation a six pasture grazing method started in June 1983. On this lease, much has been learned in the last two years about rapid rotation on Florida's native uplands. First, because of constraints due to research being conducted by

the University of Florida on this lease, grazing periods were set at three-week grazing intervals followed by 15-week rest periods. Before the cattle had been through one grazing cycle it became obvious that a different schedule would be necessary. The schedule was kept until June 1984, when the University finished its research. Then grazing periods were adjusted to the growth of the key plants. Using this method when the cattle have grazed the pasture down to a certain average height, they are moved to the next pasture. If objectives can't be met in a short period of time, then cattle numbers are increased; conversely, if objective heights are met early, stock numbers will be reduced. A comparison of the S.C.S. range inventory conducted in 1983 and again in 1985 reveals a condition class improvement on all transects in every pasture on this lease. The question still remains whether or not this method will improve animal condition and calf crops.

**It was found that the managerial ability of the lessee must be recognized.** The successes and failures at Avon Park can be traced to the support or lack of interest of the individual producer or lessee. One producer was heard to say that growing grass was great but growing calves was his business and all this grass standing on the ground wasn't growing cattle. These types of producers are still content with a 40% calf crop and begrudgingly move their cattle only to avoid losing their lease.

The grazing program at Avon Park was born out of necessity to improve the range resource and increase the revenues to the Government. The success of the program is visible—where once stood stands of brush and unpalatable plants now a variety of grasses that cattle prefer live as a testament to the potential of all Florida's grassland resources. ●

## Remington in Florida

Lewis Yarlett

Frederic Remington is well known as an early American artist and author of the West. At the age of 19 in 1880 he began traveling throughout the West, where he was inspired to record the events of that era.

It is not generally known, however, that Remington visited Florida for a short time following fifteen years in the West. Florida had recovered strongly from the economic ravages of the Civil War and a depleted cattle population. Large ranches were common in the state, and Cuban demand for beef was good. Many reports indicate that individual shipments of cattle were as much as 8,000-12,000 head annually with payment in gold.

It was in that setting in 1895 that Remington visited Florida; the exact reason is uncertain. He described the cattle ranges as:

... flat and sandy with mile on mile of straight pine timber, each tree an exact duplicate of its neighbor tree, and underneath the scrub palmettoes, the twisted brakes, and hammocks, and the gnarled water oaks . . . the land gives only a tough wiregrass, and the poor little cattle, no bigger than a donkey, wander half starved and horribly emaciated in search of it.\*

Remington was no doubt describing the present-day flatwoods with occasional cypress communities and hammocks

composed of live oaks or cabbage palms or both. He probably witnessed the poorest of cattle during drought conditions, as there are records of large 1,000-pound steers being sold during that period.



Remington pictured these Florida cowmen fighting for range rights or unmarked cattle. The setting is a typical flat palmetto prairie with a cypress forest in the far distance.



Remington painted this unflattering picture of a "Cracker Cowboy," his horse, and dog in 1895.

Likewise, Remington portrayed the cracker cowboy and his dog as:

... picturesque in their unkempt almost unearthly wildness. A strange effect is added by their use of large, fierce cur-dogs, one of which accompanies each cattle hunter, and is taught to pursue cattle, and even to take them by the nose . . . as they only have a couple of horses apiece it saves them much extra running.

In still another way, Remington described the cowhunter of that time:

Two emaciated Texas ponies pattered down the street bearing wild looking individuals whose hanging hair, drooping hats, and generally bedraggled appearance would remind you at once of the Spanish moss which hangs so quietly and helplessly to the limbs of the oaks out in the swamps . . . They had about four dollars' worth of clothes between them, rode McClellan saddles with saddlebags, and guns tied on before. He relates that cowboys did not use ropes but worked their cattle into strong corrals about a day's march apart, assisted by large fierce curs trained to pursue cattle and "even take them by the nose."

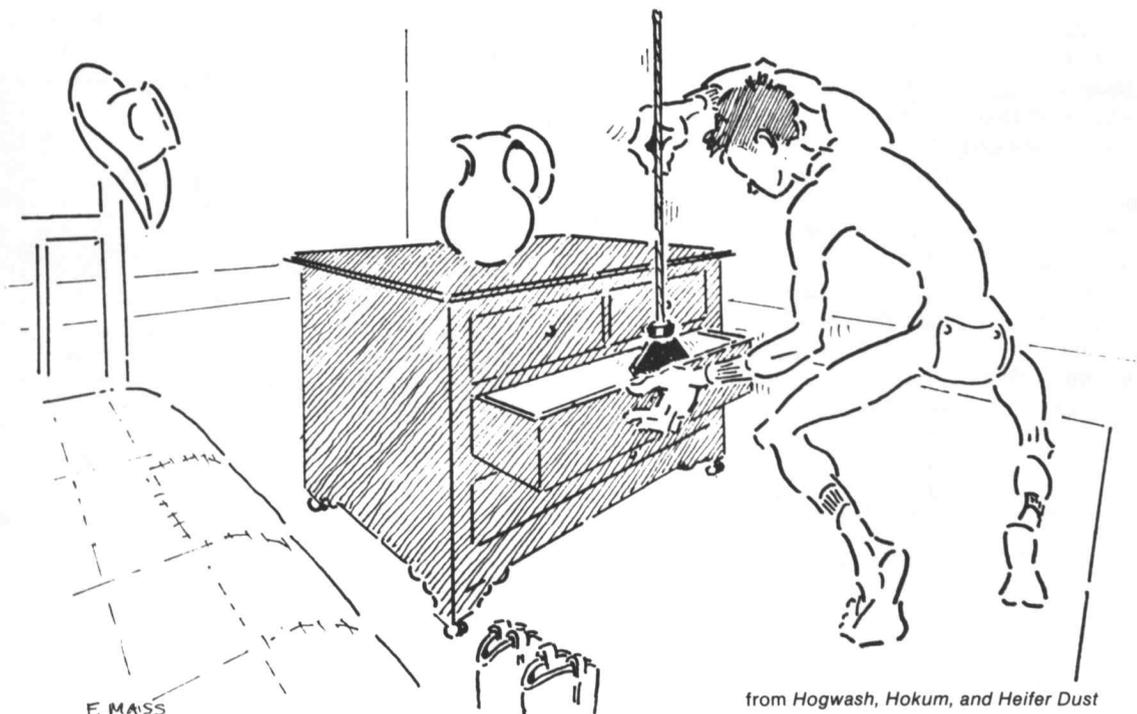
As in the West, cattle rustling was common and Remington recalls that cowboys shot and stabbed each other over "scrawny creatures not fit for a pointer dog to mess on."

Certainly, the noted artist was not entirely complimentary of the early Florida cowboys, cattle, horses, or dogs. However, much is recorded by early day ranchers and authors that such was not always the case. When he recorded in 1895 that Florida scrub cattle were "no bigger than donkeys with bones sticking out far enough to hang a hat on," he obviously had not visited the rich ranges such as Paynes Prairie near Gainesville and the marsh ranges of the St. Johns and Kissimmee rivers.

Remington died in 1909 at the age of 49. Had he lived to a ripe old age he would have witnessed the beginning of a Florida cattle industry which developed to present day greatness. ●

\*All quotations from the *Tampa Tribune* 1962 by the late Baynard Kendrick, *Tampa Tribune* historical writer.

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