

Cattle and Timber in South Florida

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In the range cattle-producing area of South Florida, it is typical to use both timbered and non-timbered lands for grazing. In recent years, cattlemen have come to realize the income-producing value of timberlands and

are now following better practices for timber production on lands capable of producing timber. This realization—plus a changing taxation picture—has brought about the general practice of establishing a land-use

study in which lands are classified according to primary capabilities, and each acre is utilized as fully as possible for the purpose best suited.

The Alico Land Development

¹*Alico Land Development Company is a newly formed Florida corporation, whose properties were formerly the non-railroad properties of The Atlantic Land and Improvement Company, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company.*

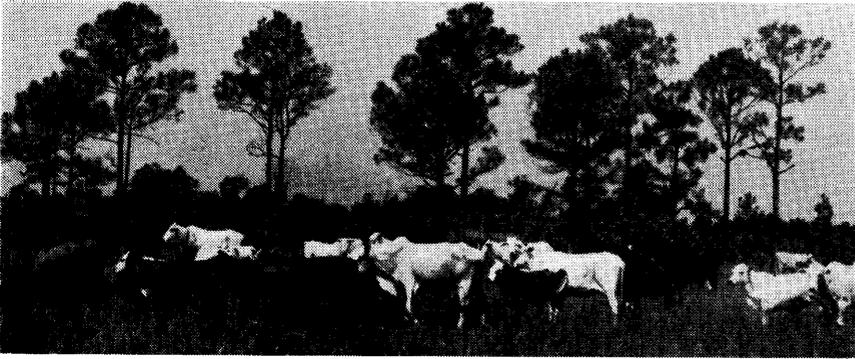


FIGURE 1. Brahman cows and crossbred Angus calves on Pangola pasture in the Devil's Garden area.

Company owns 236,512 acres in Polk, Lee, Hendry and Collier Counties, Florida. The forests are largely of South Florida slash pine interspersed with stands of cypress and mixed hardwoods. Lands classified as timberlands are managed primarily for that purpose, and grazing on these lands is of secondary importance. However, the timberlands are an important source of range when used in combination with non-timbered native range and improved pasture. Further, by following a system of rotational grazing between native range and improved pastures, the grazing pressure or stocking rate on timberlands does not interfere with forest management practices, but rather is of actual benefit by reducing fire hazard and competition.

The company's cattle program is being developed primarily on the Devil's Garden tract in Hendry County. This area includes 36,000 acres of native range and 7,788 acres of improved Pangola and Bahia grass pastures. Native ranges are primarily abandoned old fields which have reverted to native grasses, wet prairies, and flatwoods rangeland with strands of pine interspersed with ponds and oak-cabbage palm hammocks.

The Company's cattle herd totals 7,400 head of all classes, and future plans call for a gradual expansion to a total of 10,000, which we believe to be the most economical unit for Alico properties. In developing its cattle pro-

gram, Alico has followed the latest developments and recommendations of Agricultural Experiment Stations to provide proper breeding, feeding and management practices. The breeding program crosses Brahman with English breeds (Angus and Hereford) to produce animals of desirable beef type and adaptability to range conditions of the area.

Cattle are grazed on a combination of native range and improved pastures. One acre of improved pasture and eight to ten acres of unimproved range—which includes both timbered and non-timbered areas—are allowed per cow and calf. By rotating grazing between unimproved range and improved pastures, this acreage supplies year-round grazing.

The management of cattle and land under this system is predicted on the seasonal requirements of the cow. For example, in the late summer or fall when the calf is weaned, the roughage requirement of the cow is at the lowest point of the year because she has only her own maintenance and that of a small embryo for which to provide. During this period the cow is placed on native or unimproved range, which is sufficient to meet the low requirements. Also, during the winter and early spring, a protein supplement is usually provided, and a portion of the native range is control burned to improve quality of roughage. It is during this period that the calf

is born.

Following the birth of the calf in the spring, the cow's requirements increase so that additional roughage is needed. This is the period when improved pastures are fertilized and the cow and calf moved onto them. Both quantity and quality of roughage are sufficient to meet her increasing requirements.

During the spring and summer as the calf continues to grow, bulls are placed with the breeding herd and the cows are rebred. There is a steady and continual increase in roughage requirements, which reach the highest point of the year in late summer and early fall just prior to weaning. This coincides with the period when grass pastures make their greatest growth. It has been determined that some 70 percent of the annual production occurs during the period of April through July.

As the calves reach weaning age in late summer and early fall, they are weaned, and the cows are returned to the native range, which has had a period of rest and considerable growth has accumulated to furnish the cow sufficient roughage since her requirements are at a low ebb following weaning.

In following the management system outlined above, the cow spends approximately half of the year on native, unimproved range, and half of the year on improved, fertilized pasture as determined by her requirements. The goal of providing an adequate plane of nutrition on a year-around basis is accomplished.

The economic advantage of this system is obvious in that it permits a fairly high stocking rate and satisfactory production in pounds of beef per acre, and at the same time, timber production is maintained on the native and unimproved areas. This is the ultimate goal of a well-planned and executed land-use program.