

January/February 2015

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Understand Your Land: Testing Your Soil Jessica Sullivan

Why test my soil?

Your soils determine what crops and livestock your land can support. By testing your soils, you learn what nutrients or soil amendments are needed to have high-yielding crops and healthy pastures. Soil testing will help you make critical management decisions and save on production costs.

What tests are available?

An Extension Agriculture Agent can help you determine which soil tests will give you the information you want, and which lab offers the most appropriate tests. Agents can also provide you with the forms, soil bags, and mailing boxes you'll need to submit samples. For commercial agricultural producers, an Extension Agriculture Agent can do a pH test on site in the field. You can choose to test your soils for characteristics including: pH, lime requirement, plant nutrients, or salts. Extension Agents can help you determine if there are additional tests that would be beneficial to you, such as nematode tests, plant tissue tests, or irrigation water tests. There are some things that typical soil testing *cannot* detect, for example, whether there are pesticides or plant diseases in the soil.

Where should I sample soil on my property?

Any piece of land can have drastically different types of soil on it that may require different treatments to alter pH or give crops needed nutrients. A Soil Resource Report is a valuable tool that can help you determine the best locations to take soil samples. Osceola County Extension Agriculture Agents or USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Conservationists can print you free soil reports. The areas you sample from are determined by soil type, crop being grown, and how the land will be managed.

How do I collect soil samples?

Collect samples when soil isn't saturated. Here's what you'll need:

- A bucket
- A shovel or soil probe
- A writing instrument

Soil test bags

For each soil sample being submitted: Dig six inches deep and put a small shovelful of soil in the bucket. Repeat throughout each area being tested. Mix the soil samples in the bucket thoroughly, breaking up any clumps and removing any large pieces of plant matter. Fill the soil sample bag to the line on the bag. Label the bag with a "sample ID" so you will know the origin of the sample.



Where do I submit my soil samples?

Fill out the Soil Test Form that your Extension Agent provides you, and mail it with your soil samples and payment directly to the soil testing lab listed on the form.

Then what?

You'll usually receive your soil analysis results within two weeks. An Extension Agent can help you interpret the results if desired, and assist you with crop selection, determine lime applications, or create fertilizer plans.

More information on soil testing: University of Florida publication-Soil and Plant Tissue Testing, Maria L. Silveira, June 2014 <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/SS/SS62500.pdf>

Understanding Today's Beef Options

Ashley Fluke

American consumers have more options than ever when it comes to meat selection. While the majority of beef purchased and consumed today is that from conventional production, producers are providing beef finished by other methods to meet the preferences of some consumers for specialty products. Conventional grain-finished beef cattle are raised the majority of their life on grass pasture and then finished the last 120-200 days on a grain and roughage based diet. The American meat industry is undoubtedly the safest in the world and is very efficient at feeding mass numbers of people. For the smaller percentage of consumers preferring specialty meat options, the industry has provided several choices but they often come with a higher price tag. The elevated price is typically due to the greater input costs the producer incurs in order to raise and finish the animal to specific standards. The consumers demanding this product are usually willing to pay the additional cost. With fewer agricultural resources and yet a growing population this niche market currently is not economically efficient in feeding the masses but remains a viable market for a small percentage of consumers.



The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has set standards for certain methods of finishing beef. In 2007, an official standard for grass-finished beef was implemented. This is the beef commonly referred to as “grass-fed” however all beef is grass-fed during some portion of its life. Grass-finished beef is fed only pasture or harvested grass once it has been weaned (discontinuation of nursing). The animal is to be provided continuous access to pasture during the growing season and any grain intake (which may become necessary in times of natural stresses or disasters) must be documented. Naturally Raised beef (animal receives no antibiotics and no growth promoting hormones) and Certified Organic beef (and feed intake is 100% organic and animal receives no antibiotics and no growth promoting hormones) are the other USDA certified beef options.

Many consumers feel there are added health benefits to eating grass-fed beef rather than conventional beef. Health related topics of concern to the specialty beef consumer include hormone and antibiotic residue, omega-3 fatty acid profile, and conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) content. Grass-finished cattle may be given FDA approved antibiotics and growth promoting hormones. As with all American beef, the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) vigorously inspects and must approve all antimicrobials and hormones that may be necessary in finishing the animal. Antimicrobials are utilized in cattle as they are in people, to prevent or address any sickness the animal may incur. A healthy animal will eat better and perform more efficiently. Growth promoting hormones are used to simulate the natural growth hormone in cattle that supports muscle development. The castrated (not intact) male is lacking much of this naturally occurring hormone. This allows for a higher yielding, lean carcass that will convert feed into energy more efficiently. Despite many claims, extensive research has been done on antimicrobial and hormone residues in conventional grain-finished beef as well as all types of beef. “Results of the most recent NRP (FSIS-USDA, 2005) revealed that the incidence of violative chemical residues in all kinds of beef is very low, but specifically, no concerning residues of the synthetic hormones used in growth promoting products were identified” (*Cattlemen's Beef Board*). Further, “concentrations of androgens, estrogens or progestins (natural or artificial) in beef (from cattle that were or were not implanted) are so low that there is no effect on human health associated with consuming

any type of beef.” As for the omega-3 FA’s and CLA, studies show that grass-finished beef has higher concentrations of both than does conventional grain-finished beef. However, these elements are found in the fat content of the beef which is significantly lower in grass-finished carcasses. The amount of omega-3 FA’s and CLA is too small to have an impact on human health. Composition of these two elements along with certain vitamins is similar throughout all types of beef. It’s important to note that the low marbling content (intramuscular fat) of grass-finished beef typically yields a less juicy, less tender product and thus requires certain cooking techniques to make the meat enjoyable. It will also have a stronger flavor the consumer may not be accustomed to due to the diet and older age at processing necessary to finish the animal.

Beef is an excellent source of protein and has its place in a well-balanced diet. The American consumer now has more options than ever before in the grocery store’s meat department. There are leaner, inexpensive cuts of meat that have been created for today’s health conscious working family. There are also choices like grass-finished and organic certified beef that appeal to many local food supporters and consumers who may enjoy the stronger flavors. Any USDA certified piece of beef the consumer may purchase in the United States today goes through a stringent food safety process that provides assurance of a safe, healthy, quality product. American beef producers follow best management practices and quality assurance programs that ensure environmentally beneficial operations, humane handling of animals, healthy management practices, and efficient agricultural production. Now that you have a better understanding of the choices you encounter as you peruse through the meat section, it’s up to you to decide just what type of beef you’d like on your plate. Bon appétit!

Common Health Myths – Fact or Fiction?

Gabriela Murza

There is so much health information available to us via the internet, that it’s hard to know what’s true and what is not. To make it more confusing, “experts” go back and forth on various health claims as on-going research finds new answers. Remember when eggs were unhealthy? Then they became healthy.... Then they became unhealthy again. Now they are finally healthy!



If I were to write about every single health claim, this article would be more of a book, so instead, I will touch on five of the most common health claims and explain what makes each a myth.

1. I can eat anything I want as long as I stay active.

Do you remember when you were a teenager? What were your eating habits like? Some of us remember being able to eat anything we wanted and not having gained a pound. Now it seems that we gain 10 pounds just by thinking about food. Why was it so much easier back then? The simple answer (but not the whole answer) is Metabolism. Our metabolism helps process the food we take in. Metabolism tends to be more efficient at a younger age, and slows down as we get older, which makes it harder for us to burn calories. Since our metabolism is slower as we age and it gets harder to burn calories, we need to watch the amount we take in, even if we are active.

2. Eating healthy is expensive.

Before you respond to this, think – what does “healthy eating” mean to you? It’s true that food prices have increased over the years, especially dairy and meat products. Fresh produce can be expensive if it’s bought “out of season”. But think of the other sources of these delicious foods. Whether produce is canned, frozen, or dried, it still counts in your daily diet and is still considered healthy. Of course, watch out for the salt in

Extension Services Calendar of Events

Registration for any class is required ! You can register at www.tinyurl.com/ufclass

JANUARY 2015		
Mon., Jan. 12	6:00 pm - 8:00 pm	Fashion Revue Judging @ UF/IFAS Extension in Osceola County
Wed., Jan. 14	5:30 pm - 8:30 pm	Take Control of Your Money - UF/IFAS Extension in Osceola County - register at www.ocfcs.eventbrite.com
Mon., Jan. 19	ALL DAY	Office Closed (Monday) - Martin Luther King Day
Sat., Jan. 24	9:30 am - 11:30 am	Central Florida Air Potato Mega-Raid - Osceola County and various other locations - volunteers needed register at https://2015airpotato.eventbrite.com
Tues. Jan. 27	10:00 am - 3:00 pm	Home and Community Education District Meeting - St. Augustine
FEBRUARY 2015		
Tues., Feb. 3	6:00 pm - 8:00 pm	Turfgrass Academy - Turfgrass Selection, Establishment, and Maintenance - fee applies - UF/IFAS Extension in Osceola County http://occeu.eventbrite.com
Wed., Feb. 4	12:30 - 2:00 pm	Home & Community Education County Council Meeting and Leader Training - UF/IFAS Extension in Osceola County
Wed., Feb. 4	2:00 pm - 5:00 pm	Take Control of Your Money - UF/IFAS Extension in Osceola County - register at www.ocfcs.eventbrite.com
Tues., Feb. 10	6:00 pm - 8:00 pm	Turfgrass Academy - Developing a Weed Control Program for Turf - fee applies - UF/IFAS Extension in Osceola County http://occeu.eventbrite.com
Thurs., Feb. 12	8:00 am - 1:00 pm	Pruning and Tree Safety - fee applies - UF/IFAS Extension in Osceola County
Thurs., Feb. 12	4:00 pm - 7:00 pm	4-H Baked Goods Judging - UF/IFAS Extension in Osceola County
Fri. - Sun. 13th. - 22nd.		Osceola County Fair Week, (Friday - Sunday)
Tues., Feb. 17	6:00 pm - 8:00 pm	Turfgrass Academy - Identification and Control of Turf Insects - fee applies - UF/IFAS Extension in Osceola County http://occeu.eventbrite.com
Tues., Feb. 24	6:00 pm - 8:00 pm	Turfgrass Academy - Foliar Turf Disease ID and Management - fee applies - UF/IFAS Extension in Osceola County http://occeu.eventbrite.com
Wed., Feb. 25	Noon - 5:00 pm	New Technology for Commercial Vegetable and Fruit Production - fee applies - UF/IFAS Extension in Osceola County http://occeu.eventbrite.com
Wed., Feb. 25	5:30 pm - 8:30 pm	Take Control of Your Money - UF/IFAS Extension in Osceola County - register at www.ocfcs.eventbrite.com
Wed., Feb. 25	7:00 pm - 8:30 pm	Vegetable Gardening - West Osceola Library, 305 Campus St, Celebration http://ocagriculture.eventbrite.com

canned vegetables and sugar in dried and canned fruit! As for meat, choose alternative meat sources such as beans, nuts, and soy products. A newer movement has centered around organic products; that they are healthier than non-organic foods. However, the science does not back up that claim; organic products are not healthier or sometimes safer than non-organic. In fact, some organically grown meats and produce tend to have a higher rate of foodborne pathogens than non-organically grown products.

3. Carbohydrates (aka sugars) are bad for my health.

Carbs are our main source of energy. The sugar helps our muscles and cells function effectively. They are mainly found in fruit, dairy, and grains, but are also in some starchy vegetables such as corn and white potatoes. When we cut out or decrease carbs, our body starts using fat for fuel, then turns to protein when it needs another fuel source. This is why some people on low carb diets lose weight. However, maintaining the lifestyle is difficult; low carbs (aka low sugar) can lead to irritability and lethargy. In addition, our bodies start to store any source of fuel it can to be able to sustain itself (such as fat). Returning to normal eating habits when our body is still “storing” food is what can lead to rapid weight gain. It’s best to choose healthier sources of carbs that include fiber, which helps keep us full longer and stabilizes blood sugar. Also, eating about two servings per meal (about six servings/day) helps the body metabolize what it needs without having too much left over to become stored as fat.

4. I don’t have time to exercise on a regular basis, so why even try?

Exercise involves more than lifting weights and running. It includes any activity that gets and keeps you moving for an extended period of time. This includes dancing, aerobics, gardening, walking, doing chores, playing with kids/grandkids/pets, and much more! Making activity part of your day for any amount of time is beneficial to your overall health. The minimum recommendation is 30 minutes/day on most days of the week (150 minutes/week). Studies show that activity is equally beneficial whether you do it as one 30 minute session or break it up into several 10 minute sessions. Some examples include: parking farther away from the store, walking in place during commercials, walking around the house while on the phone, and dancing while doing chores.

5. Eating a lot of protein causes bulky muscles.

Protein is another energy source. Pairing a protein and carbohydrate together in a meal is a healthy way to stabilize blood sugar and keep us full for a longer period of time because protein is metabolized slowly. Some examples or pairings are peanut butter with apples; low fat cheese stick with oatmeal; and eggs with whole grain toast. However, just like carbs, protein that isn’t metabolized and burned through activity gets stored as fat. Protein also helps to build and repair muscle, so it is essential for pre and post workouts, but is also important for bodies in general. However, it does not cause bulky muscles. The male hormone, testosterone, assists with that component. While females have the hormone, they don’t have enough to cause large muscle development as is seen in some males.

If you would like to know more about health and nutrition, or have questions about the information shared in the article, you can contact University of Florida/IFAS Extension in Osceola County at 321-697-3000 or email us at gmurza@ufl.edu.

Wildlife Encounters

Eleanor Foerste

Wildlife watching is a growing activity among adults and youth. University of Florida has a lot of information to help residents learn about local creatures, both wanted and unwanted.



Florida wildlife faces many challenges, but the greatest impact is from habitat loss and fragmentation. As we build our houses in areas that are also homes for wildlife, we find more wildlife encounters at this wildland/urban interface (WUI). News of bear encounters has become more frequent in Central Florida, but there are many other species that are also being impacted by our growth patterns. Habitat loss occurs when trees and shrubs are removed through growth and development. New roads and highways change the topography and travel pathways for large and small wildlife. Permanent walls also fragment or separate areas that wildlife may have traditionally had access to for foraging for food or for finding a mate. Soil disturbance in the development process changes water flow, soil characteristics and plant communities that provide food and shelter for wildlife, including resting and nesting areas. In addition, urban development contributes to the spread of invasive exotic species as landscape plants escape from backyard gardens by seeds and runners and pets either roam wild or are released into the wild. Native animals now have more competition for food and space because of the spread of invasive species. Urban development usually includes fire suppression in woodlands to protect our human dwellings, but this may also hinder the natural processes of forest regeneration that some native plant and animal species depend on. As you can tell, there are many issues that impact wildlife habitat and diversity in our area.

We need homes and so do our wild neighbors, so what can you do to help? Ranchers, farmers and forest landowners can manage property to increase wildlife habitat and encourage natural species diversity. This can provide wildlife viewing opportunities for fun and profit! You may be interested in the University of Florida book, [Your Backyard Woods and Wildlife, a Handbook for Florida Landowners](#), by edited by Demers, et al. The book is available for sale from the UF IFAS Bookstore at <http://ifasbooks.ifas.ufl.edu/> or call toll free 800-226-1764.

Land planners, developers and building contractors can develop new communities with wildlife and wildfire in mind. It takes planning and an understanding of wildlife needs as well as human needs. University of Florida's Program for Resource Efficient Communities (PREC) offers continuing education programs for professionals (planners, architects, engineers, landscape architects, and contractors) to help them understand solutions to minimize environmental impacts in the construction process. Contact me for more information on this or other professional continuing education programs.

Homeowners can increase wildlife habitat in individual yards and in neighborhoods and create corridors to connect development to nearby natural communities. A good reference, "Landscaping Backyards for Wildlife: Top Ten Tips for Success", is available online at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FILES/UW/UW17500.pdf> or contact me for a print copy. [Landscaping for Florida's Wildlife](#) is a softcover book available for sale from the UF IFAS Bookstore.

Some wildlife such as squirrels are fun to watch, but may become a nuisance at bird feeders. Armadillos may dig up lawns, raccoons turn over garbage cans and coyotes are known to feed on outdoor cats. If you are having nuisance wildlife issues, first identify the animal causing the concern. Learn about their natural behaviors. Changing your patterns may reduce some of the problem encounters. For example, stop feeding wild birds for a week or so. Don't leave pet food outside. Secure garbage cans. Keep cats and small dogs indoors or walk them on a leash. Contact the Master Gardeners in the Plant Clinic at the UF IFAS Extension Office for more hints on dealing with problem animals in your yard. If you want to learn more about our native animals and natural plant communities, Cindy Rutherford (crut@ufl.edu) in our office to sign up for a Woods Walk or for upcoming Florida Master Naturalist classes. Get involved in helping wildlife by removing invasive air potatoes in our natural areas along Shingle Creek. Youth and adult volunteers are needed at the upcoming 2015 Air Potato Mega-Raid, January 24, 2015. Call or register online <https://2015airpotato.eventbrite.com>.

FRESH FROM FLORIDA RECIPES

Sautéed Shrimp and Green Beans

1 ½ pounds shrimp, peeled and deveined
3 tablespoons olive oil
2 cups green beans, cleaned
2 cups mushrooms, sliced
1/2 cup almonds, sliced
2 tablespoons soy sauce
Cook shrimp in half the olive oil, set aside. Heat remaining oil and sauté beans and mushrooms until beans are tender. Add almonds and soy sauce .

Zucchini Chips

1/4 cup dry breadcrumbs
1/4 cup grated fresh Parmesan cheese
1/4 teaspoon seasoned salt
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
2 tablespoons fat-free milk
2 ½ cups Florida zucchini sliced 1/4-inch thick
Cooking spray
Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Whisk together first 5 ingredients in a medium bowl. Pour milk into a shallow bowl. Place an ovenproof wire rack coated with cooking spray on a baking sheet. Dip zucchini slices in milk, and dredge in breadcrumb mixture. Put coated slices

directly onto the prepared wire rack. Bake for 30 minutes or until browned and crisp.

Serve immediately with Feta and Dill Dip.

Feta and Dill Dip

1 cup plain low-fat yogurt
1 tablespoon fresh Florida dill, chopped
1 tablespoon crumbled feta cheese
Mix all ingredients and serve.

Oven-Fried Potatoes

2 large Florida potatoes (regular or sweet), cut into wedges
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
Salt and pepper to taste
Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil and spray with vegetable cooking spray. Place cut potatoes in bowl. Add salt, pepper and oil. Toss to coat. Bake in preheated oven for 35 minutes. It is recommended that you turn wedges over halfway through the cooking process .

For more Fresh From Florida recipes go to:

<http://www.freshfromflorida.com/Recipes>

UF/IFAS Extension Osceola County

Osceola County Master Gardeners' Spring Plant Sale



Friday, April 17, 2015 9:00 am - 2:00 pm

Saturday, April 18, 2015 9:00 am - 2:00 pm

Located at Osceola Heritage Park, KVLS Building

Master Gardeners available to answer questions

All proceeds used to support the Master Gardener Horticulture scholarship and other Master Gardener programs in Osceola County

For additional information please call 321-697-3000.



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