

CENTER PIVOT

UF/IFAS EXTENSION SUWANNEE COUNTY
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Canines & Clovers: Building Skills, Confidence, and Connections

Did you know that AKC local affiliate clubs are tasked with providing educational opportunities to the communities that they serve? This can often be difficult for smaller clubs with limited facilities to accomplish, however by partnering with UF/IFAS Extension and Suwannee County's 4-H program, the Suwannee Valley Kennel Club is providing their knowledge and expertise to help guide dog related 4-H programming in Suwannee County.

The partnership kicked off with our Dogs 101 Day Camp. This four-day camp experience provided youth with hands on experience and learning about responsible dog ownership. Over the course of the week, youth visited two different dog rescue organizations, learned how to teach their own dog new tricks, and explored canine careers. They also learned about dog safety, canine anatomy, basic care, grooming, and first aid for dogs. The week wrapped up with youth participants bringing their own dog in to show off what they learned.



Summer camp group with one of the dogs and trainer at "Dogs Playing for Life".

Pictured are campers who were able to bring in their own dogs and work with them with the instructors present. They saw a difference in their dogs behavior by the end of only one day!



After an overwhelmingly positive response, we are excited to announce that our partnership with the Suwannee Valley Kennel Club is continuing as we offer our Canines & Clovers Special Interest (SPIN) club this fall. Over this 12-week project, our 4-H members and their canine companions will learn the different skills necessary to pass the AKC Canine Good Certification at the conclusion of this 12-week spin club. The participants will also have the opportunity to experience the Suwannee Valley Kennel Club show that will be held in December with the club as a field trip and prepare for the opportunity to participate in said show next year with all they learned in the SPIN club!

WHAT'S BLOOMING NOW?

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“Summer Farewell” is my current sentiment as I, like many people, have had enough of the summer heat and humidity. It is also the name of a plant with showy white flowers that bloom in late summer and early fall. It is a short-lived perennial ranging from 1.5’-3’ tall that goes dormant in the winter. This plant is the larval host for the Southern Dogface butterfly and attracts bees; you may find it in dry flat woods, sandhill, or scrub habitats.



Forked Blue Curls, Photo by: Bob P, Florida Wildflower Foundation

You may also see some of these native plants along the roadside or on the forest edges: Asters, Blanket flowers, Firebush, Forked blue curls, Goldenrod, Liatris, Mistflower, Partridge pea, and Scarlet sage. Many of these plants bloom through the summer until the first frost. In our learning lab/nursery area we watch hummingbirds vie for the Firebush nectar. Ragweed is in bloom—and it's packing a punch. Though its flowers are small and easy to overlook, Ragweed is a major culprit behind seasonal sneezing fits. Goldenrod often gets the blame, but it's ragweed's pollen—carried by the wind—that's usually responsible. Goldenrod, on the other hand, relies on native bees for pollination, meaning its pollen stays put. Unless you're nose-to-petal with a goldenrod, it's unlikely to trigger your allergies.

Native grasses like Lovegrass, Muhly, and Bluestems are also blooming, creating plumes of color with interesting textures. Seed produced by these fall bloomers provide a food source for songbirds and other wildlife.

Meanwhile, many summer blooms such as Ironweed, Tickseed, and Spotted beebalm are dropping their seeds. Beautyberry shrubs are done blooming, but their fuchsia-colored berries will add color and a food source for wildlife in the fall.



Hummingbird feeding on Firespike nectar. Photo by: Sheila Dunning

Other Florida-Friendly plants you might see blooming are Camelias, Cassia, Cosmos, Firespike, Marigolds, Pentas, Snapdragons and Zinnias. Camelias will continue to bloom through January and February, and Cassia plants are an important host plant for sulfur butterflies. Much like the Firebush, Firespike is a favorite nectar source of hummingbirds. Marigolds are easy to grow and are great for fall color. Pentas cannot be beat as their blooming season runs from spring until frost. The butterflies and bees are attracted to their flat, clustered flowers. Enjoy the cooler weather and beautiful fall flowers!

READY TO WORK

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BEYOND READY TO WORK

With minimum wages steadily increasing, employers are looking for employees who bring more than just a warm body to the table. Employers want employees who have a combination of both technical and social skills that make them successful in the workplace and 4-H provides those opportunities.

READY WITH TECHNICAL SKILLS

The experiential learning model that 4-H is based around has always focused on youth “learning by doing”. Today, 4-H offers a wide range of STEM and Work Ready programs geared towards helping youth develop the technical skills needed to enter the work force. In addition, through statewide participation in clubs like the Work Ready Florida virtual club for youth ages 13 to 18, 4-H members can earn industry certifications that prove they’re ready to go to work. And because 4-H is affiliated with the University of Florida, a land-grant university, members receive access to college and career guidance before they graduate from high school.

READY WITH SOCIAL SKILLS

Additionally, 4-H is preparing youth to communicate effectively across multiple media sources. From public speaking to digital design, 4-H offers project areas that help youth to explore and develop communication skills that they will carry into their future careers. 4-H also provides youth with adult mentors who are passionate about helping youth develop into their best selves.

READY FOR LIFE

Through their project work, 4-H members demonstrate the decision making and critical thinking skills they’ll need to be successful adults. Community service projects teach planning skills and promote citizenship and empathy for others.

READY TO PARTICIPATE?

No matter what the goal is for the youth in your life, 4-H is beyond ready to help them achieve their goals. Suwannee County has a wide range of clubs and projects ready to help them discover their own interests and develop a plan to help them learn and grow towards their future!

PREVENT “SAL” FROM CRASHING YOUR HOLIDAY PARTY

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Salmonella is a type of bacteria that can contaminate food products and can cause diarrheal illness in humans. They are microscopic living creatures that live in the intestinal tracts of infected animals and humans and can pass from the feces of people or animals to other people or animals. There are strains that cause no symptoms in animals but cause people to get sick (and vice versa).

When the contaminated food item is eaten, a person contracts the illness. Salmonella is one of the most frequently reported causes of foodborne illness. It can be fatal for young children, elderly people, and others with weakened immune systems. Healthy persons often experience fever, diarrhea (which may be bloody), nausea, vomiting, and abdominal pain. Since no one wants to get sick during the holiday season, please remind family and friends about the steps they can take to keep their food safe.

One difficulty is that when the Salmonella bacteria is present in food, it does not usually affect the taste, smell, or appearance of the food. So, the food looks and smells perfectly fine. Even though our technology has improved, Salmonella has been causing illness for over 100 years. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that Salmonella causes an estimated 1.4 million cases of foodborne illness and more than 500 deaths annually in the U.S.

Poultry (including turkey, chicken, duck, Cornish game hens, dove, quail, etc.) for example, needs to be cooked to a minimum internal temperature of 165°F. Contact Katherine at the Suwannee Co. Extension office at 386-362-2771 or your local county Extension office for more information on proper internal cooking temperatures. The only way to determine the internal temperature (and thus the safety of the food), is by using a food thermometer. You can also check out the USDA website <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/search?keywords=thermometer>

Although Salmonella has historically been associated with poultry and eggs, any raw food of animal origin such as meat, poultry, milk/dairy products, eggs, seafood, and some fruits and vegetables can carry the Salmonella bacteria. May your holidays be cheery rather than dreary!

Salmonella Prevention Tips

- Ensure that hands and utensils are clean.
- Purchase produce that is not bruised or damaged. Cut away damaged or bruised areas on fresh fruits and vegetables before preparing or eating. Rotten produce should be discarded.
- Separate raw meat, poultry, and seafood from other foods in your grocery shopping cart and in your refrigerator.
- All produce that is purchased pre-cut or peeled should be refrigerated within two hours to maintain both quality and safety.
- Keep your refrigerator set at 38-40° F or below. Use a refrigerator thermometer to check!
- All fruits and vegetables should be washed before eating. This includes produce grown conventionally or organically at home, purchased from a grocery store or bought at a farmer's market. Wash fruits and vegetables under running water just before eating, cutting or cooking. (Even if you plan to peel the produce before eating, it is still important to wash it first.)
- Sanitize sinks, counters and cutting boards periodically. Use a solution of one teaspoon of chlorine bleach to one quart of water.
- Plastic or other non-porous cutting boards, run them through the dishwasher after use.
- Food should not be set out at room temperature for more than two hours (including thawing and after dinner).
- Reheat other leftovers thoroughly to at least 165 °F.

MOVEMENT MATTERS: THE IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AT EVERY AGE

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Staying active is important at every age because regular movement supports health, independence, and overall quality of life. For children, physical activity builds strong bones and muscles, sharpens focus, and establishes healthy habits early. For adults, it helps manage stress, prevents chronic disease, and maintains energy for work and family life. For older adults, staying active preserves balance, flexibility, and brain health. Fall is the perfect time to get moving, with cooler weather and beautiful scenery creating opportunities for outdoor walks, bike rides, and family activities. No matter your age, finding enjoyable ways to move helps keep both body and mind strong.

Kids and Teens

For kids and teens, physical activity is essential for growth and development. Regular movement strengthens bones and muscles, supports brain function, and boosts mood, focus, and sleep. Experts recommend at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day. Fun options to keep kids engaged include dance, martial arts, rock climbing, family hikes, and active games.

Adults

Adults should aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity each week, along with muscle-strengthening exercises on two or more days. Regular physical activity helps manage weight, lowers the risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease, and reduces stress. Great options to stay active include yoga, kayaking, line dancing, hiking with friends, and taking movement breaks throughout the day.

Aging

When many people think about aging, they picture stiff joints, loss of balance, and low energy. However, research shows that much of what we attribute to aging is often the result of years of inactivity—not aging itself. Older adults should aim for 150 minutes of moderate activity each week, with added attention to balance and flexibility. Staying active helps maintain independence, reduce the risk of falls, and support brain health. Activities such as Tai Chi, gardening, shadow dancing, balloon volleyball, and chair yoga are all excellent ways to move more.

Movement Matters

Being active doesn't have to mean spending hours at the gym. What matters most is movement, consistency, and enjoyment. Whether it's playing tag with kids, going for a family bike ride, practicing yoga, or learning a new dance style, movement keeps the body strong and the mind sharp. Keep moving, and you'll be investing in your health, independence, and joy for years to come.

USING COOL-SEASON FORAGES IN NORTH FLORIDA

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Livestock producers located here in North Florida often face a forage shortage during the cooler months. Warm-season grasses such as bahiagrass and bermudagrass, the backbone of most pastures, go dormant from late fall through early spring. During this time, producers are left relying heavily on hay or supplements, which can be costly and variable in quality. One way to fill this “winter gap” is by incorporating cool-season forages into grazing systems.



Why Plant Cool-Season Forages?

Cool-season forages provide livestock with high-quality grazing from November through April, if managed correctly, helping reduce feed costs and maintain consistent nutrition for livestock. They are generally higher in protein and digestibility compared to warm-season forages, which can boost animal performance.

Best Options for North Florida

Annual Ryegrass

Annual ryegrass is one of the most reliable cool-season forages in this region. It establishes easily, provides excellent forage quality, and extends grazing into the spring. With good management, it can produce from January through April.

Small Grains

Rye: Cold-hardy and quick-growing, rye is often the first forage available for grazing.

Oats: Very palatable and productive, but more sensitive to cold weather.

Triticale and Wheat: Good alternatives that provide steady growth and grazing through the winter.

Clovers

Clovers such as crimson, red, and arrowleaf add protein-rich forage and reduce the need for nitrogen fertilizer. They thrive when mixed with ryegrass or small grains. Proper inoculation at planting is critical for good establishment.



Blends of the seed types listed above are generally the best option for livestock producers, blending to make a mix gives a variety of growth options and helps in minimizing the risk of one variety not producing forage. Also, the seed types have various growing days, so blends help with extending grazing resources.

USING COOL-SEASON FORAGES IN NORTH FLORIDA

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Establishment and Management

Planting Window: October through November. Earlier planting favors small grains, while ryegrass can be planted later in November.

Soil Fertility: A soil test is essential. Cool-season forages perform best at a pH of 5.5–6.5 with adequate phosphorus and potassium.

Seeding Method: Producers can drill into a prepared seedbed for best results, or overseed into dormant bahiagrass or bermudagrass pastures. Light disking or close grazing before overseeding helps with seed-to-soil contact.

Grazing Readiness: Delay grazing until plants reach 6–8 inches in height. Avoid overgrazing by maintaining at least a 3–4-inch stubble to encourage regrowth.

Benefits for Livestock Producers

Reduced winter feed costs by decreasing reliance on hay.

Improved animal performance due to higher protein and digestibility.

Enhanced soil fertility when legumes are included.

Extended grazing season that bridges the gap until warm-season grasses return in late spring.



Final Thoughts

Incorporating cool-season forages into North Florida pastures can be a cost-effective strategy to improve herd nutrition, reduce feeding expenses, and enhance soil health. If you would like to develop a winter grazing plan and need help determining what may work best for you, reach out to Erin Dasher the UF/IFAS Suwannee Extension Agent at (386) 362-2771 for assistance.

Upcoming Events

- October 2 - Hamilton County Hog Show
- October 10-11 - Small Ruminant Short Course
- October 22 - Livestock and Forage Field Day

WHAT DO SMALL FARMS HAVE TO OFFER TO RURAL COMMUNITIES?

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According to the USDA's National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS), a farm is considered "small" if it has a value of sales of under \$250,000 per year. Size-wise, there is no federal criteria for what a small farm is. However, many would agree that a farm that is small enough to require crop diversity and direct-to-consumer sales for sustainable profit, is a small farm for practical purposes. In Florida, 90% of farms are small farms. These little production systems play a vital role in Florida's economy, especially in rural communities where agriculture is a cornerstone of daily life. While large-scale operations dominate acreage and policy decisions regarding farming, small farms still make up a significant portion of Florida's agricultural landscape. Small farms supply fresh vegetables, fruits, livestock, and specialty products to local markets, directly connecting producers with consumers. Their produce helps diversify the state's economy, which can reduce reliance on imports and keep food dollars circulating within the community.

The economic impact of small farms can go beyond direct crop and livestock sales. They create local jobs, both on the farm and in related businesses such as feed and chemical suppliers, equipment services, and farmers' markets. Agritourism ventures like farm tours, U-pick operations, and seasonal events also attract visitors, bringing additional revenue into rural areas. By participating in local and regional markets, small farms strengthen Florida's food system's resilience and ensure consumers have access to fresh, seasonal produce that large distribution networks sometimes overlook. Furthermore, local produce will most likely have higher nutritional content because these fruits and vegetables tend to be harvested when ripe and are only kept in storage for short periods. In contrast, produce grown in other states or other countries is often harvested green and made to mature through exposure to synthetic chemicals after a long storage period.

Beyond economics, small farms enrich the social fabric of rural Florida. They foster stronger community ties by encouraging collaboration among neighbors, whether through shared labor, cooperative marketing, or resource exchanges. Farmers' markets and community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs build trust between producers and consumers, creating a sense of connection to the land and the people who steward it. In many rural counties, small farms also help preserve cultural traditions tied to food and farming, ensuring that knowledge is passed down through generations. Some examples of this is the production of this include the production of sugarcane syrup and small-scale honey production. Together, these contributions highlight how small farms do more than grow crops—they grow resilient, vibrant rural communities.

JOIN US FOR THESE UPCOMING EVENTS

Contact 386-362-2771 for details and registration links.

October 2025

MGV @ Live Oak Library Q&A Seed Library - Wednesdays 1pm - 3pm

Peanut Butter Challenge - all month

Oct 1: Cold-Hardy Field Day @ Quincy

Oct 10 & 11: 4th Annual Small Ruminant Short Course @ Gainesville

Oct 16 & 23: Homebuyer's Class
Oct 21: Livestock & Forages Field Day @ Alachua

Oct 23: Homesteading & Homeschooling Lunch and Learn @ Live Oak Library

Oct 23: Agriculture Judging @ Virtual

Oct 29: ServSafe

November 2025

MGV @ Live Oak Library Q&A Seed Library - Wednesdays 1pm - 3pm

Nov 6 & 13: Homebuyer's Class

Nov 7: Agriculture Judging @ Mayo

Nov 11: Closed for Veterans' Day

Nov 13: Master Irrigator Workshop @ Gilchrist County

Nov 15: Agriculture Judging @ North Florida Fair

Nov 20: Mix & Mingle

Nov 27 & 28: Closed for Thanksgiving

December 2025

MGV @ Live Oak Library Q&A Seed Library - Wednesdays 1pm - 3pm

Dec 4: Watermelon Institute @ Fanning Springs

Dec 4 - 6: Christmas on the Square

Dec 5 & 12: Homebuyer's Class

Dec 24 & 25: Closed for Christmas



Peanut Butter

Challenge

**SPREAD THE WORD...
PEANUT BUTTER
Fights Hunger!**



Donate unopened, unexpired jars of peanut butter from September 29 - October 31.

All peanut butter donations go to local food pantries for people in our community.

We thank the Florida Peanut Producers Association and Florida Peanut Federation for their continued support and contributions.

DROP-OFF LOCATIONS:

UF/IFAS Extension Office
1302 11th St SW
Live Oak, FL 32064

Live Oak Library
1848 Ohio Ave S
Live Oak, FL 32064

Department of Health
915 Nobles Ferry Rd
Live Oak, FL 32064

Chamber of Commerce
212 Ohio Ave N
Live Oak, FL 32064

Wellborn Co-Op
Wellborn Baptist Church
4146 Low Lake Rd,
Wellborn, FL 32094

Branford Library
703 Suwannee Ave NW
Branford, FL 32008

Jo Kennon Public Library
10655 Dowling Park Dr
Dowling Park, FL 32064

go.ufl.edu/PBC | #PBCChallenge





Hellos & Goodbyes

Introducing Taylor Boyd

Taylor Boyd joined the office as our 4-H & Ag Staff Assistant on April 1st of this year and has already made a wonderful impact! Originally from Wimauma, FL, Taylor has a long history with 4-H. This year she won Reserve Supreme Jr Champion at the 2025 Florida State Fair with a second-generation homebred heifer. Some of her favorite things include steak and ranchy potatoes, sea turtles, the movie Flicka, and her favorite book is Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets. When she isn't working, she enjoys crocheting, boating, fishing, photography, and showing cows. We are so happy to have Taylor on our team and we could not have had such successful summer camps without her!

Celebrating Bonnie Box

Our incredible Bonnie Box is leaving the office after 18 years of life-changing service through the Family Nutrition Program (FNP), also known as SNAP-Ed. A familiar and friendly face in schools, Bonnie inspired hundreds of students by teaching them the importance of good nutrition. She was instrumental in creating lasting policy, systems, and environmental changes through one of her greatest passions—the school garden. There, she brought lessons to life, showing children where their food comes from and sparking excitement as they tasted fresh produce they had grown themselves. Bonnie was especially known for her gentle encouragement, often urging hesitant students to take at least one “no thank you bite” when trying something new—an approach that left many pleasantly surprised.

Bonnie's impact will continue to live on for years to come—not only through the students she taught, but also in the healthier schools and stronger communities she helped shape. She planted more than seeds in the soil; she planted curiosity, confidence, and healthier habits in the hearts of countless children and families. Her warmth, dedication, and tireless energy made her a beloved colleague and community champion whose presence will be deeply missed. As Bonnie turns the page to her next chapter, we celebrate her remarkable legacy and wish her nothing but joy, adventure, and fulfillment in the years ahead.

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Carolyn Saft- County Extension Director, Environmental Horticulture Agent and Master Gardener Volunteer Coordinator

Katherine Allen- Family and Consumer Sciences Agent (FCS)

Kim Griffin- Family and Consumer Sciences Agent (FCS)

Erin Jones Dasher- Livestock, Forages and 4-H Agent

Katie Jones- 4-H Youth Development Agent

Raymond Balaguer - Commercial Horticulture, Small Farms and Natural Resources Agent

Michelle Drummond- Staff Assistant, Horticulture and Agriculture

Sandra Wainwright- Staff Assistant, Bookkeeper

Chelsea Wenz - Staff Assistant, Family & Consumer Sciences (FCS)

Taylor Boyd - Staff Assistant, 4-H and Agriculture

