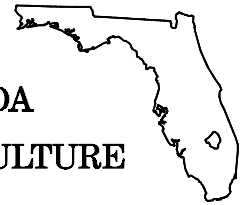




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# WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending March 24, 2002

Released 4:00 P.M.

March 25, 2002

**WEATHER SUMMARY:** Showers near the end of the week barely settled the dust in most localities during the week of March 17 through 23 with several areas reporting no measurable rain for the week. The danger of wildfires remains high in most central Peninsula localities. Rainfall totaled two-tenths inch or less at most stations except for Homestead which recorded about an inch, Tallahassee with about three-quarters inch, and Jacksonville with nearly two-thirds inch. Temperatures averaged two to five degrees above normal for the week although thermometers plunged at the end of the week bringing lows in the 40s to many central Peninsula areas on Saturday, March 23. Tallahassee and Pensacola reported at least one low in the 30s for the week. Daytime highs were in the 70s and 80s while most lows were in the 50s and 60s. Umatilla recorded at least one high in the 90s on Tuesday, March 19.

**FIELD CROPS:** Topsoil and subsoil moisture supplies are mostly short to adequate with nearly all areas reporting some short supplies. Northern producers are currently assessing damage from the cold to small grains and other field crops planted. Most growers have not started planting spring field crops. Tobacco transplanting is getting underway. Sugarcane harvesting is slowing in the Everglades region with some mills closed.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
Percent				
Very short	6	13	2	0
Short	49	29	56	47
Adequate	45	58	42	53
Surplus	0	0	0	0

**LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES:** In the Panhandle and north, good growing conditions brought on growth in Bahia grass in many locations. Small grain forage is generally in good condition. However, grass growth in much of the area is limited by dry conditions. In the central counties, pastures remain green, however there is little grass growth due to very dry and windy conditions. Statewide, the condition of cattle ranges from poor to good, with most in fair condition.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
Percent				
Very poor	10	5	0	5
Poor	15	15	10	5
Fair	55	65	50	40
Good	20	15	40	50
Excellent	0	0	0	0

**CITRUS:** This was a very normal spring weather week in Florida's citrus belt. There were very few scattered showers, lots of wind and warm temperatures. Growers in all areas are irrigating to keep their trees in good condition during the current final stages of this year's bloom period. Most groves have had petal drop with tiny new fruit showing all over the trees. The majority of well-cared-for citrus continues to be in good condition following a wetter than average winter. Harvest of early and midseason oranges is in the final stages as very few crops remain. Picking of Valencias is increasing with the largest portion of these oranges going to the processors. Grapefruit movement is very active for both fresh and processing. Temple and Honey tangerine harvests are slowing as supplies are running low.

Caretakers are very busy mowing, chopping and discing cover crops to help generate new spring growth. Growers are removing and burning dead trees. Some burning permits are being limited in the drier areas. Hedging and topping continues in the harvested groves. Resetting is very active where new trees are available.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Mar 10	Mar 17	Mar 24
Navel oranges	4,000	1,000	0
Early & Mid oranges	2,373,000	1,362,000	193,000
Valencia oranges	2,351,000	3,435,000	6,642,000
All grapefruit	2,980,000	2,887,000	2,684,000
Early tangerines	7,000	3,000	1,000
Honey tangerines	159,000	180,000	165,000
Temples	130,000	90,000	51,000
Tangelos	15,000	8,000	1,000

**VEGETABLES:** The cold caused no significant damage to tomatoes around Quincy. Northern watermelon growers are currently assessing effects of the cold temperatures on recent sets. The temperatures were not low enough to cause major damage to acreage in the central and southern Peninsula. Vegetables available include tomatoes, peppers, cabbage, Chinese cabbage, celery, cucumbers, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, parsley, potatoes, radishes, snap beans, squash, sweet corn and strawberries.

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In cooperation with the Florida Cooperative Extension Service whose county directors participate in supplying field information.