

# The Beef Bulletin

## A Florida Agricultural Literacy Activity Book

### K—2nd Grade

- Native Florida cattle are often called cracker cattle. The term "cracker" comes from the old cowboys who used whips to make a "cracking" sound to herd their cattle.
- Florida is mostly a cow-calf (mother cows and baby calves) state.
- Today, there are more than 900,000 head of cattle and 15,000 beef producers in Florida.
- Florida has about 4,000,000 acres of pastureland.
- Florida is home to four of the United States' largest cow-calf operations.
- One Florida ranch owns the largest brood cattle (mother cows) herd in the United



Nestled deep in our state's roots are a group of people that are extremely important to the foundation of the beef industry. The Seminole Indian tribe owns one of the largest cattle herds east of the Mississippi River. If it weren't for the hard work and perseverance of this tribe our states cattle industry might have a much different look/past. Cattle were brought to our state by Spanish settlers in 1521. That, in itself, was an amazing feat, but what the Seminole tribe did next was even more challenging.

Once the settlers moved on to explore other parts of the world, they left the horses and cattle behind. The Indian tribe collected the livestock and started taking care of and working the cattle.

That is challenging enough today in our state, but can you imagine the hurdles they had to overcome in the 1500s. There was no technology, no vaccines or veterinarians, no cattle chutes, and no specially designed nutritious cattle feed. There wasn't even fencing around our state. They battled predators, disease, heat, moisture and even a steep learning curve of meeting the cattle's needs. They rose to the challenge and because of that there are still Florida Cracker Cattle in our state today! We tip our hats to the Seminole Tribe of Florida and will forever be thankful for a job well done!

# Reading a Brand

Livestock branding has been going on for thousands of years, and probably longer. According to historians, an ancient Egyptian tomb painting depicting a cattle roundup and branding from 2700 BC is the earliest record of livestock branding that has been found. When cattle came across the Atlantic to our state so did cattle branding and it is a tool the Seminole Tribe continued.

So before fences weaved across the fields in Florida, ranchers continued to use brands to tell their cattle apart. Cattle roamed free and grazed big areas of land. Ranchers used letters, shapes, or pictures to mark ownership of their cattle. Today, brands are still used, but there are different ways to form a brand, hot branding, cold branding and tattoos.

Brands have their own language.

Information Courtesy of the FL State Fair Authority

## Your Turn To Practice

There are a few different ways to read the name of a brand:

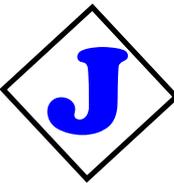
Left to right: —BQ is read as Bar B Q

Top to Bottom: \_\_\_\_\_  
ROAD read as Rail Road

Outside to inside: ER is read as Box ER

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| 1.  _____   | 4.  _____   | 7.  _____   |
| 2.  _____ | 5.  _____ | 8.  _____ |
| 3.  _____ | 6.  _____ | 9.  _____ |

## Some Parts of Brands

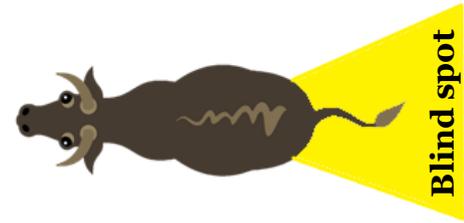
|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
|  "J"        |  Quarter Circle |  Circle J  |
|  Tumbling J |  Half Diamond   |  Box J     |
|  Lazy J     |  Bar J          |  Diamond J |

## Create Your Own Brand

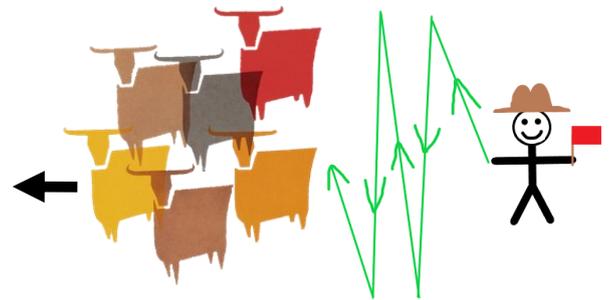
# Safe Cattle Handling

**It is very important to know how to safely approach, lead, and herd cattle!**

- Cattle like to stay together; they hate being separated from their friends!
- It is best to move cattle in large groups! The best way is seen in Picture 1. Moving in a zigzag pattern behind the herd is the easiest and safest way to move them!
- Do not stand right behind cattle! They have a blind spot, which makes it so they cannot see directly behind them, just like us! (see Picture 2).
- When leading a single animal with a halter, always stand to the left of the animal's head!



Picture 2



Picture 1

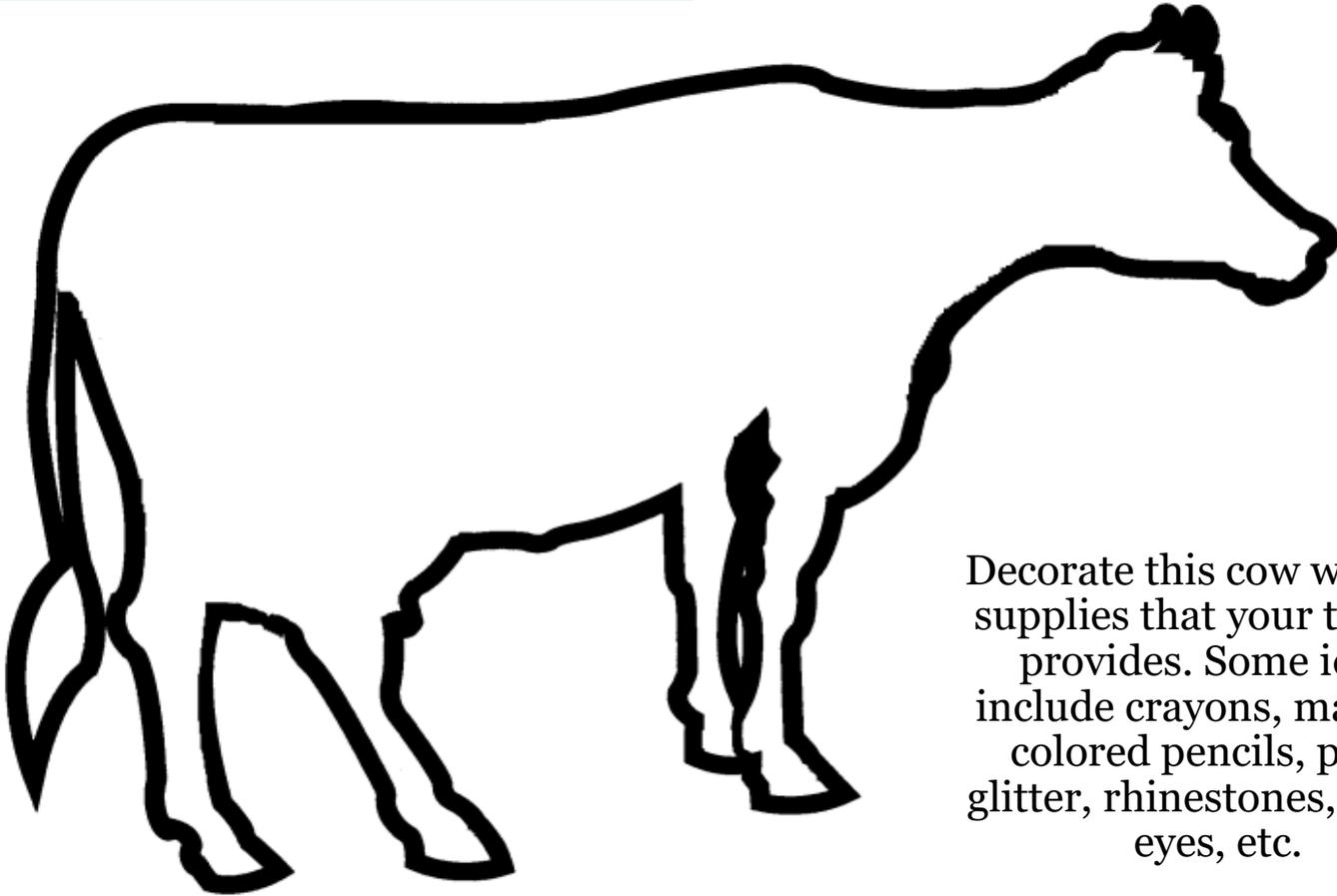
## Cattle Handling Game

**Draw arrows or lines to show how the cowhand should move to get the cattle herd to go in the direction of the arrow!**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| A herd of colorful cow icons is moving towards the top-right, indicated by a black arrow. A silhouette of a cowhand on a horse is positioned to the left of the herd. | A herd of colorful cow icons is moving towards the bottom-left, indicated by a black arrow. A silhouette of a cowhand on a horse is positioned to the right of the herd. |
| A herd of colorful cow icons is moving to the right, indicated by a black arrow. A silhouette of a cowhand on a horse is positioned to the left of the herd.          | A herd of colorful cow icons is moving towards the top-right, indicated by a black arrow. A silhouette of a cowhand on a horse is positioned to the left of the herd.    |

## All Shapes and Sizes

Just like most animals, cattle come in all shapes and sizes. Use your imagination and creativity, and create your own cattle breed.



Decorate this cow with any supplies that your teacher provides. Some ideas include crayons, markers, colored pencils, paint, glitter, rhinestones, googly eyes, etc.

## Cattle Herding Game

1. Provide each student with 3 to 5 white balloons. These represent the student's "cattle herd."
2. Students will blow up the balloons. Balloons that pop will be considered a loss to the cattle rancher.
3. Students will use markers to draw their "brands" on their "cattle" (balloons).
4. When all the cattle are branded, they must be "trucked" to the range. Students will decide how many cattle will fit comfortably in each truck (large plastic garbage bags). Then students must figure out how many "trucks" they will need to transport all the cattle. Explain that overcrowding will cause distress and the possible death of an animal. Too few animals could allow too much movement, which could result in an animal slipping and hurting itself.
5. After all the cattle are turned out on the "range" (playground, cafeteria, gym, etc.) and allowed to graze for awhile (Move the balloons around to mix them up, similar to what they would do on an open range.) the ranchers must gather their cattle. The first cattleman to successfully gather all his/her cattle wins. Remember that a popped balloon at any time is a loss to the rancher.

Activity created by Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom

**Florida Agriculture in the Classroom is funded by the sale of the specialty license plate, the AgTag.**



**Visit Florida Agriculture in the Classroom's website [AgTag.org](http://AgTag.org) for the answer key and more information about the resources and grant money Florida Agriculture in the Classroom offers teachers.**