

Handbook of Florida Agricultural Laws: Animal Husbandry¹

Michael T. Olexa and Connor Brock²

Preface

This handbook is designed to provide an accurate, current, and authoritative summary of the principal Florida laws that directly or indirectly relate to agriculture. It provides a basic overview of the many rights and responsibilities that farmers and farm land owners have under Florida laws. Many readers may value this handbook because it informs them about these rights and responsibilities, and it provides them with good contacts for more detailed information. However, the reader should be aware that because the laws, administrative rulings, and court decisions on which this handbook is based are subject to constant revision, portions of this handbook could become outdated at any time. Many details of cited laws are also left out due to space limitations.

This handbook is distributed with the understanding that the authors are not engaged in rendering legal or other professional advice. It is not all-inclusive in providing information to achieve compliance with laws and regulations governing the practice of agriculture. For these reasons, the use of these materials by any person constitutes an agreement to hold harmless the authors, UF/IFAS, the Center for Agricultural and Natural Resource Law, and the University of Florida for any liability claims, damages, or expenses that may be incurred by any person as a result of reference to or reliance on the information contained in this handbook.

A Brief Note on Florida Laws and Rulemaking

The Florida laws described in this handbook were passed by the state legislature and have become valid state laws. The appropriate state agency then wrote specific rules based on each law. These rules are what the state agencies use to enforce the law. For most laws in this handbook, that agency is the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACCS). Florida legislated laws, also called *statutes*, are organized into chapters. A chapter is divided even further into specific statutes. For example, Chapter 601 (Florida Citrus Code) contains dozens of sections covering topics ranging from marketing, inspection standards, and processing to prohibitions on the use of certain chemicals for citrus fruit. Other chapters may deal with a narrower subject and have far fewer sections. As noted above, the specific rules for each of these sections are written by a designated state agency, and generally go into greater detail. You can view the Florida Statutes online at <http://www.flsenate.gov/Laws/Statutes/>.

Introduction

This handbook can be used to learn which Florida laws apply to a particular agricultural project or subject, and to find the name, address, and telephone number of a state office that can provide more specific information or services.

1. This document is FE115, one of a series of the Food and Resource Economics Department, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date November 1999. Revised April 2004, December 2007, June 2014, August 2018, and May 2022. Visit the EDIS website at <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu> for the currently supported version of this publication.
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Created for readers with no prior experience in the law, the handbook is designed as a necessary first step in recognizing which agricultural activities merit special attention because of their implications to agriculture. The handbook also provides an introduction to the crucial agencies and statutes which govern agricultural law.

The online handbook is divided into a Table of Contents, Index, and six fact sheets. The Table of Contents gives general and specific areas of Florida laws related to agriculture and the number of the fact sheet where that topic can be found. The six fact sheets are as follows: [FE114](#), *General Agriculture-Related Laws*; [FE115](#), *Animal Husbandry*; [FE116](#), *Crops and Products*; [FE117](#), *Related Non-Crop or Product Agricultural Topics*; [FE118](#), *Environmental and Conservation Regulations*; and [FE119](#), *Taxation and Property Rights Related to Agricultural Land*. The user can find the specific laws by using either the *Table of Contents* ([FE113](#)) or the *Index* ([FE122](#)).

Below is an example of using the handbook if your area of interest is farming exotic animals such as ostriches.

To use the Table of Contents to find the topic:

1. Find “Animal Husbandry” in the Table of Contents ([FE113](#)).
2. Within the Animal Husbandry area locate “Livestock—Exotic Animals” and follow the link to [FE115](#) (Animal Husbandry).
3. In [FE115](#), read the “General Descriptions” and “Related References, Details, and Exceptions” columns for both laws under “Livestock—Exotic Animals” to determine if the information answers the questions or if more information is needed.
4. If the user wants more information regarding the general farming or inspection and slaughter of an exotic animal (e.g., ostriches), locate the appropriate state office telephone number and address. The primary contact agency information is listed at the end of the fact sheet, along with abbreviation information.

To use the Index to find the topic:

1. Look up “ostriches” in the Index ([FE122](#)). The index leads the reader to the location for information about the culture and inspection/slaughter of ostriches.
2. Follow steps 3 and 4 above to find the contact information.

Division of the Tables

The table in each fact sheet has five columns of information. The first column, “Statute / Law (description),” either provides the law’s name or a general description when no name is available. The second column, “Florida Statute Number,” lists either a chapter number (when an entire chapter relates to a particular topic), a range of sections, or a single specific section. At times, a single chapter number may have many more laws than a range. For example, sections 593.101 to 593.117 cover a narrower field, the control of cotton boll weevil, than does the larger Chapter 601 on citrus fruit. The chapter and section number in all columns are presented without the typical abbreviations or symbols.

Columns 3 and 4 provide brief descriptions and related references, details, and exceptions. This information is highly condensed. As such, not all information is provided. The authors have attempted to include the most relevant aspects of each listed law. Additional information can be obtained by contacting the offices noted in the final column, “Primary Contact Agencies.” As noted above, the primary contact information is listed at the end of the fact sheet. The reader will find that the state and federal agencies are unquestionably the best targets for specific questions, as they are in close touch with both the formal and practical considerations of the areas that they regulate.

This publication can be improved with your ideas and suggestions. Comments regarding any areas which may have been omitted, but deserve inclusion, are particularly valuable. Reader feedback is a necessary ingredient to complete any successful future editions. Please send your comments or suggestions to:

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Table 1. Florida agricultural laws: Animal husbandry.

II. Florida Agricultural Laws: Animal Husbandry				
Statute / Law (description)	Florida Statute Number	General Description	Related References, Details, and Exceptions	Primary Contact Agencies
A. Livestock—Cattle (also see laws on dairy industry, disease, inspection, and foodstuffs)				
Laws regarding marking and branding livestock, and stamping beef	534	Gives DACS responsibility to be exclusive recorder of livestock marks or brands, and provides for inspections of cattle, beef, and beef byproducts to confirm lawful possession. Any livestock owner who uses a mark or brand to identify her or his livestock must register the mark or brand, for a fee of \$10 for each mark or brand, by applying to the department (534.021).	Provides for damages, interest, and attorney fees when processors do not promptly pay livestock sellers for livestock, and provides for sellers to have liens on such sold animal and its carcass (534.54). "Livestock market" is where livestock is sold at public auction or sold regularly at "special sales" on commission (534.47(4)). Every livestock market must be licensed (534.48). Violation of 534 may result in a second degree misdemeanor (534.101).	DACS FMI
Definition of Livestock, Cattle, Beef Cattle, Dairy Cattle	585.01(13), 585.01(6), 585.01(2), 585.01(7)	Livestock includes "grazing animals, such as cattle... other hoofed animals." The term "Cattle" incorporates bovine animals. "Beef Cattle" means animals of the genus "Bos" of various breeds raised primarily for the production of meat. Dairy Cattle are those Bos breeds raised primarily for the production of milk or milk products.		
Law criminalizing the killing or aggravated abuse of horses or cattle	828.125	Provides that any person who willfully and unlawfully kills, maims, mutilates, or causes great bodily harm or permanent breeding disability to any horse or registered breed or hybrid of cattle is guilty of second degree felony.	Conspiracy to commit such acts is also a second degree felony (828.125(2)), and threatening to commit such acts resulting in fear by owner of animal is a third degree felony (828.125(3)).	ANL DACs
Law prohibiting killing of calves less than four weeks old, unless at a meat packing plant	877.05	Provides that killing calves less than 4 weeks old for purpose of sale of veal meat is prohibited and is a second degree misdemeanor.	Does not apply to meat packing or slaughtering establishments under state or federal inspection programs.	ANL DACs
B. Livestock—Dairy Industry (also see laws on disease, inspection, and foodstuffs)				
Laws regulating milk, milk products, and frozen desserts to ensure uniform, safe, sanitary supplies	502	Provides for permitting, inspection, labeling standards, and testing to provide for safe and sanitary milk, milk products, and frozen desserts.	"Milk" includes that of "one or more healthy cows, goats, sheep, water buffalo, or other hoofed mammals. (502.012) Sets minimum standards for new or extensive alteration of dairy farm and milk plant facilities (502.121), and sets penalties and injunctions for prohibited acts (502.181 and 502.231). See Chapter 2005-210, House Bill No. 1717, DACS may not issue temporary marketing permits for nonconforming milk and milk products.	DACS DAR

II. Florida Agricultural Laws: Animal Husbandry				
Statute / Law (description)	Florida Statute Number	General Description	Related References, Details, and Exceptions	Primary Contact Agencies
C. Livestock—Exotic Animals				
Definition of “Livestock”	585.01(13)	Grazing animals such as cattle, horses, sheep, swine, goats, other hooved animals, ostriches, emus, and rheas which are raised for private use or commercial purposes.		
Laws regarding commercial farming of bison, ostriches, emus, and rheas	379.3761(5)	Permit is required for sale, exhibition, and possession of wildlife animals. No permit is required for care, control, possession, or maintenance of bison, ostriches, emus, and rheas used for commercial farming purposes.	Permit is required where bison, ostriches, emus, and rheas are maintained on hunting preserves, game farms, zoos, carnivals, or other establishments where the animals are primarily on display to the public.	ANL DACS
D. Animals and Livestock—General Humane Treatment				
Laws regarding cruelty to animals, sales of animals, and permitted means of killing animals	828	Establishes policy for humane methods of slaughtering of livestock (828.22), and deals with other aspects of killing and cruelty to animals. Also, deals with the permitted killing of injured or diseased domestic animals (828.05); the permitted removal, taking into custody, and disposition of animals found neglected or in distress (828.073); and the handling, transport, vaccination, and consumer guarantee requirements for dogs, cats, and ferrets offered for sale (828.29–828.30).	Contains religious freedom protection regarding ritual slaughter to be performed in accordance with humane slaughter provisions (828.22-23). Other laws regarding humane treatment are described in specific livestock categories, such as “Livestock, Cattle.” Selling or otherwise disposing of an animal that has been exposed to a contagious disease to people or animals, without revealing such a fact, is guilty of a second degree misdemeanor (828.16).	ANL DACS
Law prohibiting cruelty to animals	828.12	Prohibits both unnecessary and intentional acts that result in harm to or death of animals.	Unnecessary acts are first degree misdemeanors (828.12(1)), and intentional acts are third degree felonies (828.12(2)). See Chapter 828 for the humane killing and slaughtering of animals. It requires persons committing intentional acts undergo psychological counseling or complete an anger management treatment program (828.12(2)(a)). Baiting, breeding, training, transporting, selling, owning, or possessing an animal or equipment for the purpose of animal fighting, or attending or betting on animal fights are third degree felonies. Other acts or services that facilitate animal fighting are prohibited (828.122). Search warrants based upon violation of this statute can be issued without restrictions (933.02(5); 933.18(10)).	ANL DACS
E. Livestock—Swine				
Definition of “Livestock”	585.01(13)	Swine included in the definition of livestock.		

II. Florida Agricultural Laws: Animal Husbandry				
Statute / Law (description)	Florida Statute Number	General Description	Related References, Details, and Exceptions	Primary Contact Agencies
F. Livestock—Disease Inspection, Control, and Eradication				
Laws regarding animal disease inspection, control, and eradication	585.01–585.68	Deals with vaccinations, inspections, condemnations, and destruction in the event of a declared emergency of diseased stocks. Specifies limitations on payments to owners, concerns and duties regarding handling of animals with transmissible diseases, and quarantine.	Section 570.36(4) gives authority to enforce Chapter 585 to Division of Animal Industry. 585.61 provides for diagnostic services by state laboratories, and also sets maximum fees of \$300 for any one diagnostic service. See “Livestock – Swine” regarding laws on use of “garbage to feed swine” (585.48–585.59).	ANL DACs
Laws regulating use of garbage to feed to animals	585.48 – 585.59	Requires permit to use garbage to feed to animals, requires sterilization of garbage before feeding, and requires record keeping for and sanitation of vehicles used for hauling garbage.	These requirements do not apply to one who feeds her or his own animals only the garbage from her or his own household(585.50).	ANL DACs
G. Livestock—Proper Transportation				
Laws regulating proper transportation of livestock	828.14	Requires livestock transporters to provide the necessary food, water, and care for livestock being transported over 28 hours. Prohibits overcrowding transported livestock so that they do not overlie, crush, wound, or kill each other.	Violation is a second degree misdemeanor (775.082–775.083). See “Cruelty to Animals” (828.12), and prohibitions against killing or aggravated abuse of registered breed horses or cattle (828.125).	ANL DACs
H. Poultry				
1. Poultry, General				
Law authorizing powers to inspect and condemn eggs, egg products, and poultry	583.05	Allows DACs (and its divisions), on good and sufficient cause, to have free access at reasonable hours to inspect production facilities, restaurants, or transport vehicle for compliance of eggs and poultry products. Allows DACs to issue stop sale orders and to condemn or destroy unsound or unsafe eggs or poultry.	Division of Food Safety (DFS), under a cooperative agreement with USDA, grades and inspects for sanitation shell eggs, egg products, and poultry production. Division of Animal Industry (ANL) inspects shipments of live eggs for hatching and live poultry brought into or exported from Florida. (See FAC Ch. 5C-16.001(10), in re. F.S. 585.001 and 585.01.	ANL DACs DFS USDA
2. Poultry, Eggs				
Laws regulating egg handling, refrigeration, labeling, advertising, grades and standards, and shipping	583.01–583.11; 583.20	Specifies allowed means of handling, refrigerating, labeling, grading, and advertising eggs, and provides penalties for violations. Prohibits sale unless properly labeled (583.02).	See “Poultry, General”, and the sections on disease, inspection, and foodstuffs.	DACS
3. Poultry, Meat				
Laws regulating poultry carcass handling, labeling, advertising, grades and standards, and shipping	583.01; 583.04– 583.20	Specifies allowed means of holding, labeling, grading, and advertising poultry. Prohibits sale unless the part and grade are clearly shown, (583.13) and provides penalties for violations (583.20).	See “Poultry, General” F.S. Ch. 583, “Classification and Sale of Eggs and Poultry.” Sale of poultry unfit for human consumption is prohibited (583.19) and poultry producers are required to dispose of dead poultry in a sanitary manner (583.181).	DACS USDA

II. Florida Agricultural Laws: Animal Husbandry				
Statute / Law (description)	Florida Statute Number	General Description	Related References, Details, and Exceptions	Primary Contact Agencies
4. Poultry, Disease Control				
Laws regarding animal disease inspection, control, and eradication	585.01–585.68	Deals with vaccinations, inspections, condemnations, and destruction of diseased stock in declared emergencies; limits on payments to owners; duties regarding handling of animals with transmissible diseases; and quarantines.	585.61 provides for diagnostic services by a state laboratory established in Osceola County, and sets a maximum fee of \$300 for any of the services requested.	ANL BDL DACS
I. Sports Animals—Horses				
Laws regarding controlled substances and awards for race horses	550.2415–550.2625	Regulates controlled substance use in race horses, testing, and penalties, and fund distributions to horsemen’s associations, breeder’s awards, minimum purse requirements, and owner’s awards.		DACS
Law regarding limitation of liability for engaging in equine activities	773.01–773.05	Apart from certain exceptions, an equine activity sponsor or professional, or any other person will not be liable for a death or injury that results from inherent risks of equine activities. “Equine activity” is broadly defined in 773.01(3). Requires posting/notification of signs indicating limitation of liability (773.04).	Exceptions to liability limitations apply to activities in horse racing industry (773.03). Persons will be liable for injuries where they knew or should have known about faulty equipment; fail to properly determine participants’ abilities; have dangerous latent conditions on land; commit acts or omissions in willful or wanton disregard for safety; or intentionally injure participants (773.03).	DACS
Law regarding horse sales, shows, and exhibitions	535.01 – 535.16	Requires licensing for public sales of thoroughbred horses, prohibits use of drugs in horses prior to sales, and provides for inspection/testing of animals by DACS representatives.	A person who violates these rules may be (1) guilty of a second degree misdemeanor and (2) restricted from selling or showing horses for up to two years (535.12).	DACS
Law criminalizing the killing or aggravated abuse of any horse or registered breed or hybrid of cattle	828.125	Provides that any person who willfully and unlawfully kills, maims, mutilates, or causes great bodily harm or permanent breeding disability to a horse or registered breed or hybrid of cattle is guilty of a second degree felony.	Conspiracy to commit such acts is a second degree felony (828.125(2)). Threatening to commit such acts resulting in fear by owner of animal is a third degree felony (828.125(3)).	DACS

Table 2. Contact agencies.

Contact Agencies	
ANL BDL DACS DAR DFS FMI USDA	Division of Animal Industry (DACs) Bureau of Diagnostic Laboratories Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Division of Dairy Industry (DACs) Division of Food Safety (DACs) Bureau of Food and Meat Inspection, in Division of Food Safety (DACs) United States Department of Agriculture
Division of Animal Industry (ANL) 407 South Calhoun Street Mail Stop M7 Tallahassee, FL 32399-0800 (850) 410-0900 [voice] (850) 410-0957 [fax] http://www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Animal-Industry	
	State Veterinarian (850) 410-099 [voice] (850) 410-0957 [fax]
	Bureau of Animal Disease Control (ANL) http://freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Animal-Industry/Consumer-Services/Consumer-Protection/Animal-Disease-Control
Bureau of Diagnostic Laboratories (BDL) —For diagnostic services contact one of these:	
	Bronson Animal Diagnostic Lab (BDL) 2700 North John Young Parkway Kissimmee, FL 34741 (321) 697-1499 [voice] (321) 697-1467 [fax] http://www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Animal-Industry/Consumer-Services/Consumer-Protection/Diagnostic-Laboratory-Testing-Services
	PO Box 458006 Kissimmee, FL 34745
Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACs) Office of the Commissioner Plaza Level 10, The Capitol 400 South Monroe Street Tallahassee, FL 32399-0800 (800) 435-7352 [voice, toll-free, Florida residents only] (850) 410-3800 [Non-Florida residents] http://www.freshfromflorida.com	
Bureau of Dairy Industry (DAR) 3125 Conner Boulevard Tallahassee, FL 32399-1650 (850) 245-5410 [voice] (850) 922-9444 [fax] Dairy.Plants@freshfromflorida.com https://www.fdacs.gov/Business-Services/Food/Dairy-Industry-Inspections	
Division of Food Safety (DFS) 3125 Conner Boulevard, Suite D Tallahassee, FL 32399-1650 (850) 245-5520 [voice] (850) 245-5553 [fax] http://www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Food-Safety	

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