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A Brief History of Archbold's Buck Island Ranch 2S cattle-holding brand

Archbold Biological Station

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The Buck Island Ranch 2S branding iron.

MARY MARGARET HARDEE PHOTO

There have been many stories over the years regarding the meaning behind the Buck Island Ranch 2S brand. Some say it had no significance at all. However, those in the cattle business know there is always some meaning behind a ranch's holding brand.

In 1938 the Durrance family bought Buck Island Ranch from Fertile Valley Farms, and with it came the 2S brand. According to Dan Durrance, “Prior to 1938, the significance of the brand is a mystery. The Durrance family adopted the 2S brand and gave it a new meaning — 2S for the two sons JC and Ralph Durrance.”

In 1968 Mr. Dan B. Childs arranged the purchase of Buck Island Ranch from JC and Ralph Durrance for John D. MacArthur, insurance magnate and investor in Florida real estate, and with the purchase came the 2S brand.

Archbold Biological Station assumed management of Buck Island Ranch from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation in 1988, and again the 2S brand came with that agreement. The ground-breaking research that Archbold has conducted over the last 30 years on the full-scale cattle operation at Buck Island Ranch has helped Florida producers, conservationists, residents and elected officials understand the coexistence of agricultural operations and environmental values, and appreciate the role ranchlands play in sustaining Florida’s natural green and open spaces.

In 2018 Archbold purchased Buck Island Ranch from the MacArthur Foundation. With this purchase a new chapter began for the 2S brand. Archbold’s research, education, and conservation programs at Buck Island Ranch will continue to push into the future, building on the extensive long-term work begun 30 years ago. Nowadays Buck Island Ranch does not brand young animals (steers and heifers) that are sold to market because the brand reduces the value of the hide. Only cows who live on the Ranch for many years are branded ‘2S.’ The brand shares in the Ranch’s exciting future: and the newly adopted meaning of Archbold’s 2S brand is Science for Sustainability.

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