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## Cowboys and scientists as fashion models?

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The Dickies crew interviews Buck Island Ranch Manager/Model Gene Hollis.  
COURTESY/MARY MARGARET HARDEE

VENUS — Last month, Archbold’s Buck Island Ranch looked like a scene from New York’s “fashion week.” Famed photographer and videographer Hollis Bennett turned the Ranch into a working set for a spring marketing campaign photo shoot. Texas-based Dickies Apparel reached out to Archbold’s director of philanthropy, Deborah Pollard, in search of an authentic work-life situation, and Buck Island Ranch was the perfect fit to feature their spring clothing line. —

Pollard explained, “Dickies wanted to highlight a real life working sustainable ranch in their upcoming spring marketing campaign, so we were delighted to partner together. Archbold is always up for new and exciting concepts, especially when it comes to showcasing the ranch and our work, so when tasked with asking the ranch and science staff to become fashion models, we stepped up to the challenge.”

Professional photographer Hollis Bennett spent a week on Archbold’s Buck Island Ranch, and operations staff and scientists took a brief break from their typical workdays to model. Donning clothing from Dickies’ soon to be released spring line, Archbold staff and collaborators modeled the fashions while conducting their authentic daily tasks. From working cattle, to shoeing horses, to fixing fences, the Dickies photographers were immersed in ranch life.

Mary Margaret Hardee, Archbold ranch operations data assistant, said, “It was an exciting experience to try out the clothing and give our input on whether they fit comfortably and were functional for everyday wear on the ranch.”

“We are very proud that a ranch from Highlands County will be featured in national ads throughout the U.S. and in major retailers. This is a great way to highlight the importance of working lands, like ranches, in protecting wildlife as integral pieces to wildlife corridors, like the Florida Wildlife Corridor – a network of connected public and private lands in Florida,” Pollard said.

“We are also very grateful for a generous donation Dickies made to the Ranch, which will help us continue our mission and our important scientific research to make ranching and agriculture more sustainable,” she continued.

Archbold’s Buck Island Ranch is a full-scale cow-calf operation with approximately 2,800 cows on 10,500 acres and serves as a real-world laboratory for agroecology research. Research focuses on water management, understanding how grazing and fire affect grassland and wetland forage production and species diversity, as well as the ranchland ecosystem carbon cycle. Archbold’s Buck Island has also been featured in two documentaries.

Follow the links to learn more about the visionary marriage of Florida ranching and science as cowboys and scientists work together to advance scientific discovery on a 10,000-acre working cattle ranch. Bridging this cultural divide has resulted in a series of transformative discoveries that have begun to reshape our misconceptions about agriculture, sustainability, and

conservation in the 21st century.

'Cowboys and Scientists' by Grizzly Creek Films <https://vimeo.com/284845287> and 'The Science of a Florida Ranch' <https://vimeo.com/329180054> by Into Nature Films.