

2008 Wisconsin Grazing Conference

Planning a profit, planning a future.

Thursday, February 14th

9:00-12:00

An alternative fertility program: can it help you create healthy soils and healthy forage?

Part 1: What it's all about.

Doug Gunnink, *Minnesota pasture consultant, owner and operator of Dutch Mill Farms, an organic grassfed beef farm.*

It seems that when pasture fertility is discussed it usually is centered on nitrogen, and to a lesser extent on phosphorous, potassium, and pH. Are we missing something? Could nutrients such as sulfur, boron, and other micronutrients limit yield and forage quality? What role does soil microbiology play in producing good forage yields and quality? Can we enhance the soil biology to boost yields, quality and drought resistance, or is good pasture management enough?

Part 2: On-farm research: how to find if it works on your farm:

Wayne Craig, Don Struxness, Dan Olson, Jim Leverich

Do you ever want to answer those burning questions of whether or not a product or practice works as well as some claim? You can put them to the test to find out if they work on your farm using basic scientific design and statistical analysis. Sound intimidating? It's not if you follow guidelines that are readily available. Before you spend thousands of dollars on any product or program, or practice invest a little time and money into finding out if it will work on your farm.

- *Wayne Craig, Don Struxness, and Dan Olson are all graziers who are interested in the value of foliar fertility programs and who have put them to the test on their farms. Find out how they did it, what their results are so far, and how you can set up a similar trial on your farm.*
- *Jim Leverich is the UW On-farm research coordinator.*

1:00-2:00

Pay Yourself First

Andy Hager

Paying yourself first involves deciding right up front that the business or enterprise you are considering must first pay you a set amount of "Planned Profit", and then also pay all the other expenses involved in carrying on the business. This means expecting your expenses to "live within what's available", rather than allowing them to rise to whatever level they rise to.

- *Andy Hager is a Holistic Management Certified Educator. He provides private consulting dealing with grazing and farm management. He also served for 20 years as a County Agent in Taylor County, the last 11 to 12 years of which were spent doing quite a bit of work in areas of grazing-based livestock production.*

1:00-2:00

Discovery Farms Research: What are the environmental management concerns of grazing farms and how do we deal with them?

Karl Klessig, Bob Brenneman, Dennis Frame

Many of us graze, in part, because we want to farm in a way that is both profitable and environmentally beneficial. Managed grazing can certainly help us accomplish both objectives. However, every farming system has environmental management concerns, even managed grazing farms. We need to be aware of what those are and how to address them. Discovery Farms director, Dennis Frame will provide an overview of their research and what they've found on grazing farms. Dairy graziers, Karl Klessig, and Bob Brenneman, whose farms are used for

Discovery Farms research, will discuss what they've learned from the research and how it can benefit all of us.

- *Karl Klessig is an active partner in the family owned Saxon Homestead Dairy, near Cleveland, WI. They milk 450 cows, and raise all replacements, as well as 250 steers on 1050 acres of pasture and cropland. They have been part of Discovery farms since 2005.*
- *Bob Brenneman, and his wife Karen own and operate a dairy farm near Columbus, WI and milk 80 cows grazing on 200 acres of pasture. They have been a member of Discovery Farms since 2002.*
- *Dennis Frame is the Director of the University of Wisconsin Discovery Farms Program*

2:00-5:00

Grazing Research Updates:

Pasture Monitoring: Is it worth the effort? *Jim Munsch, Vernon County Grazing Specialist and beef grazier & Dr. Jeff Lehmkuhler, UW-extension beef specialist*

For the past two years a group of graziers in Southwest Wisconsin has worked with a local grazing specialist and extension specialist to learn to monitor their pasture yields and quality. As they found out, pasture monitoring takes time and effort. Was it worthwhile, especially in an era of high stored feed prices?

Are new pasture varieties better than what you've got? *Jim Munsch, Dr. Jeff Lehmkuhler, Dr. Randy Jackson UW-Madison Agronomy*

There are plenty of new pasture species hitting the market. Are they truly better than what we are already growing? Research done on farms across Wisconsin gives some answers.

Economics of Grazing High Value Land with Stockers: *Tom Cox UW-Madison*

The new *Beef Builder* Spreadsheet by UW is a helpful tool for producers to evaluate returns from raising stocker cattle compared to raising corn, beans or alfalfa.

What Color should those Stockers be? *Dr. Jeff Lehmkuhler*

New research shows that there is little difference in performance when grazing Holsteins stockers compared to beef stockers.

Mind your P & K's for better pasture yield, and quality: *Nick Schneider UW-Clark County Extension*

We know that nitrogen influences yield, but how much do phosphorous and potassium influence pasture yields & quality, especially in high legume situations?

Phosphorus in Groundwater below Overwintering Areas and Seasonally Used Paddocks: *Nancy Turyk - University of Wisconsin- Stevens Point*

Warm Season Annual Forages that can Get you through a Drought: *Keith Vandervelde, UW-*

Marquette County extension. Which summer annuals produce the best yield and quality? Forage test plots conducted in Wisconsin's Central Sands area, address this question.

Are grazed pastures good or bad for global climate change? *Dr. Randy Jackson*

Managed pastures are often considered to be good carbon sinks, but are they?

2:00-5:00

Grazing Basics: Getting it right from the start.

Bob Brandt and Haly Schulz

1. How to manage your pastures intensively for optimum production
2. Designing the grazing system for optimum pasture management

This two part presentation will cover the basics of managing pastures and how to set up the system correctly to efficiently allow for good management. If you are new to grazing or just want a refresher course in how the basics don't miss this session.

- *Bob Brandt dairy farmed for over 30 years, grazing since 1994. Now that his son is renting and operating the farm, Bob has become a grazing specialist in North Central Wisconsin for Pri-Ru-Ta RC&D.*
- *Haly Schulz serves as a grazing specialist in South East Wisconsin for Town & Country RC&D. She has degrees in animal science and range science and has worked on several ranches and farms, both large in small in Wisconsin and in the western U.S.*

5:00-5:45

Get to the Point: GrassWorks Inc. Annual Meeting

How can GrassWorks advance profitable, sustainable grazing systems to more farms in our region? Come find out, weigh in your suggestions, and enjoy a little refreshment from Point Brewery.

7:15-8:30

Saving farm land: How one township in Wisconsin developed a practical way to do it and what we can learn from them.

- *Dan Pearson* is an organic dairy grazier from the Town of Troy in Western Wisconsin. He served in a leadership role to help the township develop some practical methods to address saving farmland. He even volunteered his farm to become the first farm in the state to sell its development rights.
- *Alicia Acken Cosgrove* is Land use specialist with UW extension. She has a strong interest in rural communities and farmland preservation. Her presentation will build on Dan's to add more tools that rural communities can use to preserve farmland.

Friday, February 15th

8:30-10:00

Do Pasture Irrigation Pods Pay? Irrigating Pasture with K-line pod irrigation system.

Steve Guell, Wayne Craig, Bob Scriven

With high grain prices also increasing the cost of hay, plus several years of drought, pasture irrigation is starting to look like a good investment. Irrigation can help keep pastures productive during this time, but the cost has always been an obstacle. However, the relatively new K-line pod system is a much lower cost system to set up than center pivots, and it's relatively easy to operate. The big question is, does it pay? Two Wisconsin Dairy Graziers, Wayne Craig, and Steve Guell, share their experiences with K-line systems. Pasture consultant, Bob Scriven, from Nebraska, has worked with many farmers there to evaluate the effectiveness of these systems.

- *Steve Guell is a dairy grazier near Waupun, WI. He installed a K-line pod system in 2006 and has seen a benefit in both a drought year (2007) and a year with good rains (2006).*
- *Wayne Craig is an organic dairy producer near Cleveland, WI. He installed a K-line pod system in 2007, just as the summer slump hit. Though the system was not in place early enough to get them through the drought, they did see a big difference in fall pasture growth.*
- *Bob Scriven serves as a grazing consultant in Nebraska and has helped many farmers install irrigation systems, including K-line.*

8:30-9:15

Farm Transfers: Making a smooth(er) transition from one generation to the next

Lyle Gurski, Tom Cadwallader

The question isn't if, but when, we will leave the farm, because no matter how ambitious we are, someday it will happen. So, when it happens, do you want to see your farm stay intact, and operated by someone who shares your values? Legally transferring an operating farm business is no easy matter. UW extension agent Tom Cadwallader has worked with several farms in Marathon County to develop a written step by step process that makes the transition easier to negotiate. Learn what you can from their experiences.

- *Tom Cadwallader is UW-agricultural development agent for Marathon and Lincoln Counties*
- *Lyle Guralski is a dairy grazier near Athens, WI. He recently transferred ownership of one of his two farms to a young dairy farmer.*

9:15-10:00

Archive-Analyze-Advance: records that can help your herd perform better

Maria Bendixen

While grazing can lower your cost of production, it doesn't mean that you can take your eye off production. It's still important to optimize production for your herd. Maintaining good records, for production, reproduction and health, and knowing how to use them, can help you pinpoint the factors that can lead you to the most profitable and sustainable levels of production. This session includes an analysis of a grazing based dairy farm, and the financial implications of management decisions made from using this information.

- *Maria Bendixen serves as UW dairy agent for Clark County.*

8:30-10:00

The Low Cost Cow/Calf Program: Calving with Nature, why it makes economic sense

Dr. Dick Diven

The land always reflects the seasons of the year. Does your calving time? Early calving may give you heavier weaning weights, but at what cost? SPA data from IL and IA farms shows that feed costs explains the largest variation in the cost of production on farms. Calving in sync with nature can dramatically reduce feed costs and make your life more pleasant. By sequencing the cow's physiological requirements to the land you can achieve high conception rates, with low inputs.

- *Dr. Dick Diven, who has developed the Low Cost Cow/Calf Program, is considered one of the leading beef cattle nutritionists on the cutting edge of the dynamic field of animal nutrition. Dick works with progressive ranchers who recognize the value of working in concert with nature to enhance their profitability.*

10:30-11:45

Setting up a profitable grazing based stocker farm

Steve Flanagan

Ideally you'd like your farm to perform well enough that your financial advisor tells your wife to let you invest even more money into the farm. Steve has set up his stocker operation well enough for that to actually happen. Steve will discuss some of the key elements to making his stocker farm successful.

- *Steve Flanagan farms 186 acres in East Central Minnesota. In 2007 he raised 192 stockers, 3 would be lead heifers, 2 tender freezer beeves, and 1 confused Border collie, with zero tractors and a pickup truck.*

10:30-12:00

Discussion group: Live Real Farm Analysis

Michael, Dave & Marilyn Mayenschien, Tom Cadwallader, Maria Bendixen, and Larry Tranel

Here's your chance to see how farm analysis in a discussion group setting can work to improve your farm. The Mayenschien farm, in Thorp, Wisconsin is undergoing some changes, including transferring ownership to their son. Current owners, Dave and Marilyn have done a good job managing pasture and keeping debt loads down while making improvements to the farm. However, the farm needs to boost income levels to make the transition work. Join our discussion group along with some consultants will provide real-time advice on how to make those changes successfully.

- *The Mayenschien's own and operate a 250 acre, 75 cow, grass-based dairy farm near Thorp, WI.*
- *Tom Cadwallader serves as UW agricultural development agent for Lincoln and Taylor counties.*
- *Maria Bendixen serves as UW dairy agent for Clark County.*
- *Larry Tranel serves as a dairy and livestock agent for Northeast Iowa.*

10:30-12:00

Grassfed Production: Scaling up, dealing with winter, making a living.

Kevin Fulton, Don Struxness

Larger scale grass-fed, grass-finishing systems are going to have their own production challenges that will not be easy to overcome, especially when producers are trying to finish large numbers year round on forage alone. Nebraska grass-finisher and custom raiser, Kevin Fulton discuss what he's learned raising and finishing livestock on forage alone, on his 2800 acres. Minnesota grassfed producer Don Struxness talks about how he's keeping gains high, even in winter, by producing quality forage. He and several other Minnesota producers have cooperated to generate real on-farm data of weight gains. Find out what they've learned.

- *Kevin Fulton owns and operates a 2800 acre farm in Central Nebraska. He raises and sells his own grassfed beef, and has done custom raising for 6 different branded grassfed beef programs.*
- *Don Struxness farms 400 acres near West Central Minnesota along with his son. They are scaling up their farm and learning to produce high gains on growing and finishing cattle year round, with forage alone.*

11:15-12:00

Why they eat what they eat: How you can improve intake and performance knowing livestock behavioral principles. Kathy Voth

Livestock can be particularly selective in what they eat, whether it is in the pasture or the feed bunk. While nutrition has something to do with it, so does their past experiences, including eating experiences that go all the way back to the womb. We can create experiences that will help them improve intake and performance. In this session Kathy Voth will describe how this works, and what strategies you can use to increase forage utilization in pasture based on livestock behavior.

Kathy Voth: see following description

"Animals that learn about foods from mom or herd mates are more productive than animals that learn about foods by trial and error."

1:00-1:30

Using third-party certification to validate grass-based claims

Jill McLaughlin, Assistant Program Manager, Food Alliance Midwest

Third-party certification provides an avenue to legitimize grass-based production practices. Third party certification means an independent inspector has verified your farm's compliance to a set of standards. The most well-recognized third-party certification is 'Organic', but other options exist. This session will describe the benefits of certification and discuss several programs that appeal to grass-based brands.

1:30-2:30

We'd eat it: Turning your cows, goats, or sheep into four legged weed eaters.

Kathy Voth

What if you could turn those pesky weeds into forage, even high quality forage? Presenter Kathy Voth has developed a method to train your cows how to eat those pernicious weeds, even thistle. Your cows won't suffer from it. In fact, thistles harvested in the right stage are highly nutritious. So, this year, forget about herbicides and let your cows put another dollar in your pocket instead of the chemical companies' coffers.

- *Kathy is based out of Loveland, Colorado. Her background includes 7 years of research and development on the use of goats to reduce fire danger for homes in wild land areas. Since 2004 she has been working on developing steps that anyone can use to train their livestock as weed managers. She has worked with Dr. Fred Provenza's BEHAVE Consortium to develop materials that help others understand and apply animal behavior principles. Products include an on-line course "Using Livestock Behavior to Improve Landscapes, Productivity and Profitability."*

2:45-3:45

Who Wants to Be a Millionaire? Dairy Farmer, that is.

Larry Tranel

Whether you are just starting a dairy farm, or are farming already, there are proven models, on real farms, that show you how you can make a good living, a reasonable profit, and a reasonable return on your investment. These grazing based dairy farms are earning \$40-50/hour, and \$1000/cow in good milk price years. Learn what these dairy farms have done to build a sustainable, profitable business that provides their family with a good lifestyle, and that is enticing for the next generation. If you are not familiar with or have not incorporated these ideas into your dairy farm, now is the time. Do it now, for your farm, your family, and for future generations.

- *Larry Tranel is a dairy and livestock agent in Northeast Iowa. He also has proven example of his model right outside his front door, on the dairy farm that he owns and rents to a young dairy farmer.*

2:45-3:45

Developing The Grassfed Money Map: Finding the pathway to profitability

Jim Munsch, Paul Nehring

No doubt about it, the future seems bright for grass-fed beef. Yet, how does that translate into reasonable profits and returns for you, the producer? Developing good financial projections for a grassfed beef operation can be a challenge, because they are often quite complex. We sell our products, dead or alive, to many different venues at different prices, such as the sale barn, wholesale, direct market, branded programs, and direct market quarters, or boxes or single cuts all at different prices. Short term decisions, such as selling calves for cash flow, can seriously impact long term profits. Branded programs are nice in that they do all the marketing work, but what scale will you need to be to make a living at their pay price? Direct marketing allows you to set a higher price, but it also means a lot of work, especially if you want to do this full time. Building the market can take years, before you can make a profit, let alone a full-time income. How big do you have to be, and what should your prices be? In this session the presenters will provide a financial picture of what it will take to make a direct market and/or branded grass-fed beef farm enterprise provide a profit, and maybe even a full-time income.

- *Jim Munsch has owned and operated his own pasture-based, organic beef farm for over 20 years near Coon Valley, WI. He direct markets his products to his own customers and through a neighboring CSA.*
- *Paul Nehring has owned and operated his own grassfed beef operation, near Wausau, WI for six years. He has been developing a spreadsheet to help producers answer some of the questions listed above.*

4:15-5:15

Crucial Conversations: "Tools for talking when the stakes are high. Learn to handle life's most difficult and important conversations"

David Maxfield

We all face situations that seem difficult to discuss, especially when there are strong emotions and opinions involved. Farms are especially prone to these, because families not only live together, they work together. Home is also the place of business. The way issues are handled dramatically affects quality of life at the dinner table and at work. Add employees into the mix, and life becomes even more complex. Fortunately there are proven techniques that can help you learn to safely discuss and positively address difficult issues.

- *David Maxfield: see description for Keynote presentation*

4:15-5:15

Some Critical Moments in the Life of a Growing Animal: How can management enhance the growth process?

Dr. Dick Diven will describe the important times and management factors, especially nutrition, to improve gains in growing livestock on pasture.

4:15-5:15

Custom Raising: How to work with livestock owners to build your business.

Greg Judy and Kevin Fulton

Custom grazing is a good way to expand your income potential without expanding your debt. This can provide a gateway for younger farmers, who have some skills, but who have little equity to get a solid start in farming or ranching. It can also be a benefit to the livestock owner, who likely doesn't have the nearby resources to manage the herd. Learn what it takes to make custom grazing situation a benefit to both the owner and grazer.

- *Kevin Fulton: see description above.*
- *Greg Judy and his wife Jan of Clark, Missouri run a custom grazing operation on 1400 acres of leased land that is made up from 10 farms. Greg and Jan went from near bankruptcy in 1999 to paying off a 200 acre farm and house in 3 years with custom grazing on leased land. Holistic High Density Planned Grazing is used to custom graze cows, cow/calf pairs, bred heifers, horses, and stockers. They also own a 250 head grass genetic cow herd, 300 head hair sheep flock, goat herd, and graze Tamworth pigs. They have also started direct marketing grass-fed beef, lamb and pork. Greg is absolutely convinced that there is no better way to get into the grazing business then to lease some fallow land, employ high density grazing and use other people's livestock to do it.*

7:15-8:45

Keynote Presentation

Influencer: The Power to Change Anything

Presenter: David Maxfield

We have some big challenges ahead in agriculture and in our communities. Will we shy away from these challenges, or will we tackle them head on skillfully and courageously? The evening keynote presentation describes how ordinary people have taken on and solved extraordinary problems:

What do a high-powered Fortune 500 executive, a tribal leader in sub-Saharan Africa, and the founder of a San Francisco-based conglomerate run exclusively by ex-cons have in common? They've all helped themselves and others change behavior. In other words, they're all influencers.

The Fortune 500 executive brought a new product to market in a third the time of her predecessors—saving a struggling company. The tribal leader eliminated a deadly disease. The founder of the San Francisco conglomerate transforms hookers, thieves, and drug dealers into productive citizens. Each of these influencers has solved some of the world's most profound problems.

We all want to be influencers. Hardly a day passes that we don't try to influence ourselves or others to do something new and different. Whether you are looking to improve your relationships or motivate others, you are continually working on ways to exert influence.

And yet, in spite of the fact that we are routinely trying to help ourselves and others alter their behavior, few of us can articulate a model of what it takes to do so. It's time this changed. What influencers have discovered is that when it comes to changing the world, what most of us lack is not the courage to change things, but the skill to do so.

In this fast-paced and inspiring presentation based on the *New York Times* bestseller, *Influencer: The Power to Change Anything*, you will learn what others have done to create rapid and sustainable change. You will journey from San Francisco to Thailand and meet influence masters who have made change not only achievable and sustainable, but inevitable. You'll find out why some managers have increased productivity repeatedly and significantly—while others have failed miserably. In short, you'll discover how to:

- Motivate yourself and others to do things you don't feel like doing

- Rapidly master new skills to achieve greater results
- Harness the power of peer pressure to accelerate change
- Quickly amass the social influence to change the behavior of hundreds or thousands of people
- Use the invisible and constant power of the environment to make change the path of least resistance

The most important capacity you can hold is the capacity to influence behavior, your own and others. Once you tap into the power of influence, you can begin to solve the problems you care about most—from the simplest to the most persistent, resistant, and profound challenges you can imagine.

David Maxfield:

For more than twenty years, David Maxfield has helped organizations and individuals by leading research projects involving dialogue skills, performance improvement, and conflict management.

Drawing from extensive academic and real world experience, David delivers topics that are grounded in solid research and application. With an unrivaled ability to connect to his audience through engaging stories and captivating examples, David brings concepts to life—motivating listeners to put their newly found skills and knowledge to immediate use.

David is the vice president of research at VitalSmarts, an innovative training company that teaches skills which deliver significant improvements to the results companies care about most. In the past thirty years, the VitalSmarts team has helped thousands of organizations, and individuals realize widespread and lasting results through its award-winning training programs.

www.davidmaxfield.com www.vitalsmarts.com www.influencerbook.com

Saturday, February, 16th

8:30-10:00

Landscaping with livestock: “They’re not just for dinner anymore.”

Kathy Voth

You can hire out your livestock to generate income and reduce pesticide use in your community. In many parts of the country entrepreneurial livestock owners are finding ways to help municipalities and private land owners control weeds and brush with the use of livestock instead of chemicals or machinery. Learn how you can utilize these all-terrain, all-weather, weed eaters to work for you and your community.

- *Kathy Voth: see previous description.*

Developing a Forage Chain: how annuals can complement perennial pastures and lower feed costs.

Tom German, Bob Scriven

Annuals such as corn, brassicas, Italian ryegrass, and small grains can lower production costs by providing high yielding, high quality forage during flat spots in growth of your permanent pastures. These grazing forages can extend your grazing season in the spring and fall, as well. While they may be not as cheap to grow as permanent pasture, they can cost much less than stored feed alternatives. Learn how to use these tools of production efficiently in your grazing system.

- *Tom German and his wife own and operate a 3rd generation organic grass-based farm near Holstein, IA. They raise and direct market grass-fed beef, hogs, poultry and vegetables. Tom also serves as a consultant to farmers interested in successfully setting up an organic farm.*
- *Bob Scriven: see description from previous session.*

10:30-12:00

Mob grazing: What is high stock density grazing and how it can make a big impact on your farm.

Greg Judy

Missouri Grazer Greg Judy made a simple pasture management switch a couple of years ago that he says has profoundly improved his pastures. He had been using management intensive grazing and was seeing some benefits. However when South African rancher and Holistic Management educator, Ian Mitchell-Inness, suggested he quadruple his stock density to duplicate what really happened on the Great Plains hundreds of years ago, Greg was intrigued. He combined herds of cattle with his sheep, goats, and even pigs. They apply the equivalent of a million pounds per acre, in 2-3 rotations/year. The results have been nothing short of amazing, according to Greg. Find out what Greg is so excited about, and how it can help you can make a big impact on your farm.

- *Greg Judy: see previous description*

Using farm analysis to help you achieve your goals

Rick Adamski, Peter Arnold, Paul Onan

What are sensible investments to make on a dairy grazing farm? The answers may surprise you. Using good farm analysis can help you decide where to invest your time, energy, and money. Whatever you do, don't blindly adopt any model, practice, or plan without first running the numbers and reviewing the pros and cons. Every decision you make as consequences that you will have to live with, including positive and negative implications. Make sure your major decisions are helping you accomplish your goals, and make sure your goals are realistic.

- *Rick Adamski and his wife Valerie own and operate Full Circle Farm, an organic dairy farm, near Seymour, WI. They milk 75 cows and raise replacements on 240 acres of pasture and cropland.*
- *Peter Arnold, and his wife, Suzie own and operate a grazing based farm near Edgar, WI, milking 140 cows, and raising their own replacements on 250 acres.*
- *Paul Onan, and his wife Pat, replacements with 200 acres of pasture and cropland.*