

MARYLAND GRAZERS' NETWORK NEWS & NOTABLES

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS:



MD Grazers' Network Holds June Field Days

Come Learn about the FREE Grazing Resources Network Offered to Farmers

The Maryland Grazers' Network is coordinating with two outstanding grazing operations to offer on-farm learning opportunities for grazers, support agency personnel, and anyone interested in learning more about developing a pasture-based production system. Learn how the Network can provide experienced beef, dairy, or sheep grazers as mentors to farmers wanting to start or improve a grazing system on their farm.

The farm tours are scheduled to begin at 10:30 AM and continue until 1:30 PM, with lots of time for questions and networking. There is no charge for either session and a complimentary lunch will be provided. In addition to learning more about grazing, short presentations will be given throughout the tour on marketing opportunities, simplifying farm economic recordkeeping, and cost sharing opportunities specifically for grazing practices. There



Ron Holter, Holterholm Farm
Photo by: Dale Johnson

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Mentors Give More Than Advice - They Invest Time

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Ginger S. Myers
Regional Marketing Specialist
University of Maryland Extension

The Maryland Grazers' Network mentors are not only experienced, successful producers, but also good teachers. As mentors, their goals include:

1. Providing their farmer-partners with one-on-one, in-depth teaching and real-time experiences.
2. Improving their farmer-partners' land and profitability through a managed grazing system.
3. Accelerating their farmer-partners' learning curve about managed grazing and to help prevent costly mistakes in establishing pastures and breeding stock.

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Mentors' Time

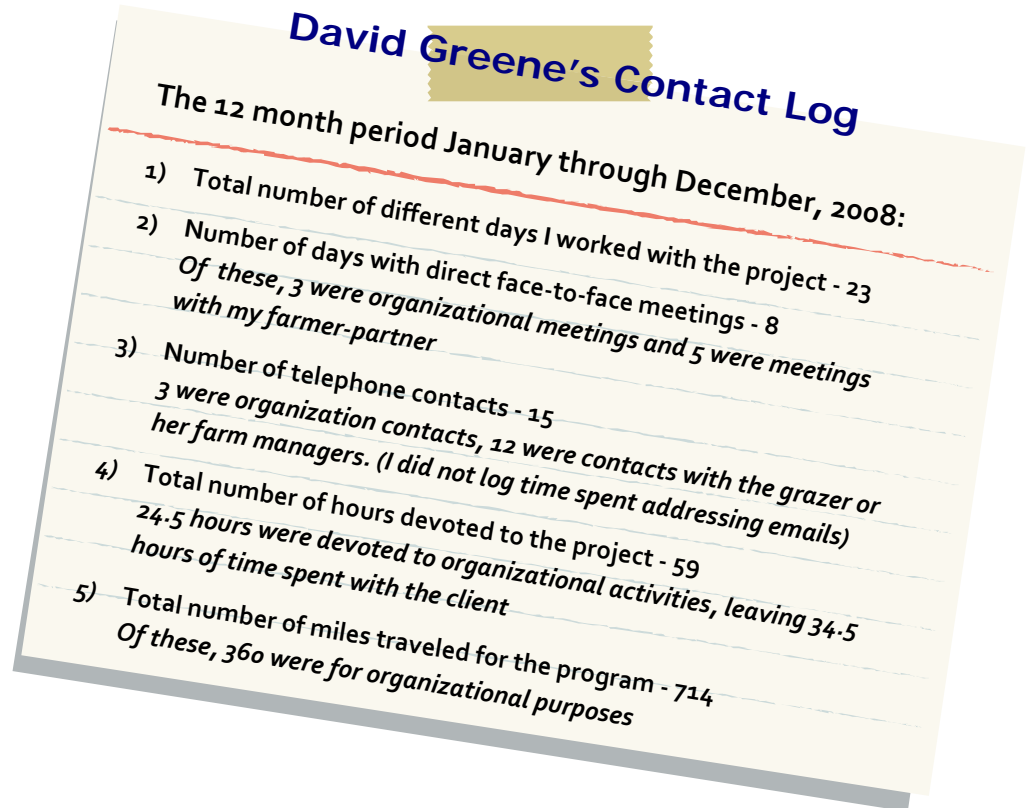
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But the project's mentors see their work as a learning experience for themselves as well, since they must thoroughly review their own management practices, learn to look at other potential grazing operations with both a critical and a constructive eye, and be able to evaluate each individual farmer-partner's specific needs and learning style.

Here is the contact log for project mentor David Greene, a sheep producer in Baltimore County with a farmer-partner Martha Clark, Howard County, who has both sheep and beef cattle.

Like most things, when done well, effective mentoring is

both a science and an art. As the contact log above shows, it requires investing a substantial amount of time in developing a trusting and respectful mentor/farmer-partner relationship. The Maryland Grazers' Network project has been successful in promoting these types of relationships as evidence by the 100% renewal rate of mentor/farmer partner pairs for the 2009 season. Well done, mentors! Well done, farmer-partners!



UPCOMING MEETINGS IN 2009

June 23

Grazers' Network Field Day (Western Shore)

Ron Holter, Holterholm Farm
 5903 Holter Road
 Jefferson, MD 21755-8508

To register contact:

Michael Heller
 Chesapeake Bay Foundation
 mheller@cbf.org
 301-627-4393

Elmer Dengler
 NRCS
 elmer.dengler@md.usda.gov
 1-800-384-8770 x333

June 29

Grazers' Network Field Day (Eastern Shore)

Wye Research and Angus Herd Farm
 Eddie Draper
 2016 Carmichael Road
 Queenstown, MD 21658

To register contact:

Michael Heller
 Chesapeake Bay Foundation
 mheller@cbf.org
 301-627-4393

Elmer Dengler
 NRCS
 elmer.dengler@md.usda.gov
 1-800-384-8770 x333

September 5

Hay & Pasture Day

Maryland State Fair, Timonium, MD.
 For more information contact:
 Les Vough at vough@umd.edu

Field Days

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is both a Western shore and Eastern Shore farm day.

Tuesday, June 23: Host - Ron Holter, Holterholm Farms, 5903 Holter Road, Jefferson, MD 21755-8508 (Western Shore)

Monday, June 29: Host - Eddie Draper, Wye Research Farm and Angus Herd, 2016 Carmichael Road, Queenstown, MD 21658 (Eastern Shore)

For more information, or to register to attend either farm day (so we can provide your lunch!), contact:

Michael Heller, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, mheller@cbf.org (email) or 301-627-4393

Elmer Dengler, NRCS, elmer.dengler@md.usda.gov (email) or 800-384-8770 x333

Who's Coming to Dinner?

Video Examines Livestock Eating Habits and Their Effects On Grazing Management

Healthy animals, productive pastures and responsible land use are the goals of a video recently released by the Oregon State University Extension Service.

"Who's Coming to Dinner" examines the eating habits of cows, sheep, horses, and goats and explores how forage selection, pugging, trampling and fencing contribute to a pasture's health and sustainability.

"Properly-maintained pastures can provide a wonderful buffet for all kinds of animals, but proper care requires an understanding of who's coming to dinner," said David Hannaway, OSU Extension forage specialist. "The structure of an animal's mouth helps determine how and what it will eat. Since most animals are built differently, they eat differently."

The 15-minute video is designed for farmers, livestock managers, veterinarians, and 4-H students, says



Kimberly Hannaway, an educational consultant who co-wrote the production. "Anyone who feeds livestock can benefit from viewing this program," she said.

"Who's Coming to Dinner" (VTP 028) costs \$19.95 (including shipping). An order form is available online at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/orderform.pdf>

Mail orders should be sent to: Publication Orders, Extension and Experiment Station Communications, Oregon State University, 422 Kerr Administrative Services Building, Corvallis, OR 97331-2119. For additional information about "Who's Coming to Dinner?" and related videos available through EESC, visit our web site at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/details.php?search=who%27s+coming+to+dinner%3F>

Great Opportunity for Grazers Interested in Organic!!

USDA provides up to \$20,000/year up to a maximum of \$80,000/farm over 6 years for grazing and other conservation practices for organic farmers or farmers converting to organic.

USDA has just announced a special 2009 Organic Initiative for organic farmers or farmers in the process of converting to organic farming. **Grazing** is one of the practices targeted to receive support. The Initiative provides funds for technical and financial assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). This Initiative is in its pilot year, and to apply for funds this year under this special \$50 million pool allotted for organic conversion, **farmers must sign up between May 11 and May 29, 2009.**

The program is administered by USDA's (NRCS) and will be available in all states and all counties through Conservation District offices. To find your local office, go to: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/about/organization/regions.html>

For more information go to: http://sustainableagriculture.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/eqip_organic_initiative_memo09may5.pdf

Fiscal Management on the Curvin Eby Farm

Dale Johnson
Farm Business Management Specialist
University of Maryland Extension

In 2008, Curvin Eby of Washington County, Maryland, did something no one would have thought possible a few years ago. He started a dairy farm from scratch. He rented a farm and took out a loan to buy a herd of cows. But instead of using high priced equipment to plant and harvest feed, he decided to establish pastures and let the cows do the work for themselves through intensive grazing.

To improve his pasture management, he got involved in the Maryland Grazers' Network (MGN). Through this project, he was paired with Myron Martin, an experienced Washington County grazer. Through this mentorship, Curvin has gleaned skills from Myron and other pasture-based dairy farmers they have visited. Fortunately, the high milk prices of 2008 were on Curvin's side and by keeping his costs down he was able to turn a profit the first year.

But in 2009, Curvin was wondering if his fledgling farm would survive plummeting milk prices. Rather than take a "wait and see attitude," Curvin took the proactive step of projecting his profits and cash flow for the coming year. In February he invited Dale Johnson, a Farm Management Specialist with the University of Maryland Extension, to help him do financial projections. Dale is also involved with MGN in helping farmers do financial analysis of their farms. Using Curvin's 2008 numbers as a baseline, the two of them estimated profit and cash flow for 2009.

The big question to be answered was "What will the average price of milk have to be in order to break even for the year." Table 1 (on page 5) is a summary of this analysis. Both farm income and farm expenses are based on Curvin's experience in 2008 and take into account the changes that he plans for 2009. Curvin and Dale estimated the price of milk (line D) would need to be about \$16 per cwt in order to break even on cash flow (line L). This would also generate a small profit (line 21).

Some people would find this outlook gloomy considering that the price of milk is below \$16 per cwt right now. But Curvin is hopeful the price will rebound before the year is over. He believes that, until this happens, he can cut costs even further without sacrificing milk production. He is also working closely with his banker to make the scheduled loan payments on his herd.

Being part of the Maryland Grazers' Network has helped Curvin understand his financial situation better and has given him access to the skills of others to help him make better management decisions during this stressful time of low milk prices.



Curvin, his wife Glennis, and their two sons Collin and Garrett with the nurse cow/calf herd. Curvin uses nurse cows to reduce calf feed costs, increase rate of weight gain, and improve calf health. This eliminates the cost of both milk replacer and starter grain. It also reduces the labor involved in feeding calves. It emphasizes the philosophy of a system where cows do what they naturally do. Curvin selection of nurse cows is based on their "mothering" characteristics.

Fiscal Management

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A. Average number of cows	55
B. Annual cwt milk sold per cow	116
C. Total annual cwt milk sold (line A x B)	6,378
D. Annual average price per cwt	16.00
Farm income	
1. Milk sales (line C x D)	102,051
2. Crop sales	2,000
3. Cattle sales	3,000
4. Other income	4,500
5. Gross Income (line 1 to 4)	111,551
Farm expenses	
6. Car and truck expenses	4,000
7. Feed purchased	3,000
8. Seed, fertilizer, and chemicals	5,000
9. Gasoline, Fuel, and oil	6,000
10. Freight and trucking	7,600
11. Custom hire	4,500
12. Interest	7,500
13. Rent or lease	9,000
14. Repairs and maintenance	14,000
15. Supplies	12,000
16. Utilities	4,000
17. Vet., breeding and medicine	4,000
18. Other expenses	7,000
19. Depreciation	21,500
20. Total (lines 6 to 19)	109,100
21. Net farm profit (line 5-line 20.)	2,451
E. Add depreciation (line 19)	21,500
F. Add interest (line 12)	7,500
G. Add other inflows	10,000
H. Cash Available (lines 21+E to G)	41,451
I. Family living	15,000
J. Loan payments including interest	20,000
K. Purchasing additional cows	5,600
L. Cash flow balance (line H-I-J-K)	851

Did You Know?

- Nearly half of consumers (44%) are confused by the term "sustainability"
- Close to three-quarters of consumers do not know which products (75%) or companies (71%) are truly sustainable
- About one-third of consumers (34%) are willing to pay a premium for sustainable goods despite the economic downturn
- About one in five core consumers (21%) are actually buying more sustainably produced products.

Source: Sustainability: The Rise of Consumer Responsibility, The Hartman Group, Inc., January 2009.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT OUR MARYLAND GRAZERS' NETWORK PARTNERS:

Chesapeake Bay Funders Network

<http://www.chesbayfunders.org>

University of Maryland Cooperative Extension

<http://extension.umd.edu>

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/>

Future Harvest

<http://www.futureharvestcasa.org/>

Chesapeake Bay Foundation

<http://www.cbf.org>



EARLY BOVINE HEALTH CLASSES

London's Times -- by Rick London Illustrated by Richard Larson
www.londonstimes.us/toons/index_cows.html

Warm-Season Annuals Provide Supplemental Summer Forage



Sorghum X Sudangrass

Photo by Walter Moss Seed Company LTD (www.mosseeds.com)

Les Vough
Forage Crops Extension Specialist Emeritus
University of Maryland

Cool-season grasses such as orchardgrass, timothy, and tall fescue, which are the primary hay and pasture grasses in the Mid-Atlantic Region, become semi-dormant during the summer months and produce limited growth. Warm-season annual grasses like sudangrass, sorghum-sudangrass hybrids and millets can fill this slump in production with relatively high quality forage if properly managed. They grow best at temperatures of 80° F and higher and are much more productive under limited moisture conditions than cool-season grasses. Most warm-season annual grasses are best suited for grazing, silage, or green chopping, but some can be used for hay.

One-third to one-half acre can often provide adequate grazing for one mature animal during the hot summer months. They can also be used in double cropping systems with winter annuals such as small grains and annual ryegrass, and they are good smother crops effective in suppressing weeds in preparation for perennial forage seedings.

Each of the summer annual grasses have unique characteristics that make them more or less suitable for particular uses. Let's briefly highlight some of the characteristics of the more common ones.

Sorghum-sudangrass hybrids, sometimes referred to as 'Sudax', are more vigorous, taller, have larger stems and leaves, and are higher yielding than **sudangrass**. They are also more likely to contain higher levels of prussic acid and more difficult to cure as hay than sudangrass. The term 'sudangrass' is sometimes used loosely to refer to sorghum-sudangrass hybrids, but the hybrids are really intermediates developed from crossing true sudangrass and **forage sorghum**. The hybrids usually have coarser stems than true sudangrass. Popularity of sudangrass declined after the development of sorghum-sudangrass hybrids. Both sudangrass and the hybrids will regrow after grazing or cutting if growth is not limited by cool temperatures or lack of moisture.

Forage sorghum is taller than the sorghum-sudangrass hybrids (6 to 15 feet) and is best suited for use as single cut silage harvest since it generally has poor regrowth potential except in the deep South. Forage sorghum is planted and managed much like corn for silage. Sorghum varieties are classified by maturity, similar to the way corn varieties are classified. Late maturing varieties generally yield more than early maturing varieties but may not reach maturity before frost.

Millets have smaller stems and are leafier than sudangrass, sorghum-sudangrass hybrids and forage sorghum. They are slower growing and lower yielding but do not have the prussic acid problem associated with sudangrass and sorghum types. There are several types of millets, but **pearl** and **foxtail** (sometimes also referred to as German) are most commonly used for forage purposes. Pearl millet is usually preferred over foxtail millet since it is higher yielding and will regrow after cutting or grazing if at least a 6-inch stubble is left. It is better adapted to more acid soils (pH 5.5 to 6.5) and soils with lower water holding capacity than sudangrass or sorghum-sudangrass hybrids. Dwarf varieties are leafier and better suited for grazing. Pearl millet may cause butterfat depression in milk production. Therefore, recommendations for use of pearl



Photo by USDA Forage and Turf Grass Research, Tifton, GA (<http://www.tifton.uga.edu/fat/pearlmillet.htm>)

millet with lactating dairy cows are either to limit feed the millet and monitor butterfat levels or simply avoid its use with lactating dairy cows. Foxtail millet is shorter and finer stemmed, making it more suitable for harvesting as hay than pearl millet, sudangrass, or the sorghum-sudangrass hybrids. However, it is the lowest yielding of the summer annual grasses and does not regrow after cutting. It is a good smother crop to be used before no-till seeding of late summer hay and pasture seedings.

Establishment and Management.

Summer annuals are best adapted to well-drained, fertile soils. A pH of 6.0 to 6.5 is required for maximum production. They should be seeded from 2 weeks after corn planting (when soil temperature has reached at least 65° F) until about the end of June. Later seedings will obviously have reduced yields. When using these crops for grazing, making

two or three seedings 2.5 to 3 weeks apart will stagger maturity so that the entire crop is not ready for grazing at one time.

Apply 60 to 80 lb/acre of N at planting and another 40 to 60 lb after each cutting or grazing. Forage sorghum must be at least 30 inches tall, sorghum-sudangrass hybrids 24 to 30 inches tall, and sudangrass 20 to 24 inches tall before cutting or grazing to reduce the risk of prussic acid poisoning. Grazing of pearl millet can begin at 12 to 18 inches of growth and hay or silage harvest at 2 to 4 feet. Sudangrass and sorghum-sudangrass hybrids should not be cut or grazed closer than 6 to 8 inches and pearl millet closer than 8 to 12 inches. These crops are sensitive to close cutting or grazing and doing so can result in reduced production of regrowth or even cause the plants to die.

THE GRAZERS' NETWORK PROJECT TEAM

Michael Heller	Project Coordinator, Clagett Farm	301-627-4393
Elmer Dengler	Assistant Project Coordinator, USDA-NRCS	443-482-2922
Ned Sayre	Beef Grazer, Deer Creek Beef	410-808-7615
Rob Schnabel	Chesapeake Bay Foundation	443-482-2175
Dale Johnson	University of Maryland Cooperative Extension	301-432-2767 ext. 325
Ginger Myers	University of Maryland Cooperative Extension	301-432-2767 ext. 338
Les Vough	Forage Crops Specialist Emeritus	301-405-1322

RESOURCES ON THE WEB

Purdue University web site helps farmers transition to organic livestock

<http://www.ansc.purdue.edu/poa/>

Livestock producers who find organic production an entirely different animal than what they're used to can now turn to a Purdue University resource for help.

The Organic and Alternative Livestock Production Systems web site provides a wealth of management and production tips for transitioning into the growing industry segment.

The Forage Information System

<http://forages.oregonstate.edu/index.cfm>

Based at Oregon State University, "The Forage Information System" is a comprehensive resource for forage-related topics, including Extension, research, and teaching information. The site has over 5,000 pages of images and resources.

MEET THE GRAZERS' NETWORK MENTORS

Ron Holter - Dairy	301-371-4255
Bobby Prigel - Dairy	410-592-6014
David Greene - Sheep	410-329-6241
Bill Poffenberger - Beef	301-432-8783
Ryan Bapst - Beef	301-874-0258
Myron Martin - Dairy	301-432-2974
Ned Sayre - Beef	410-808-7615
Glenn Shirley - Dairy	410-346-6604

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