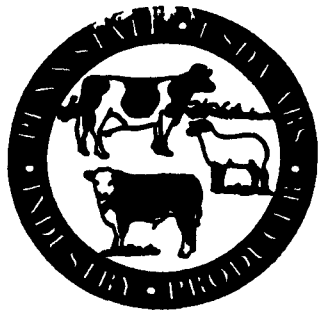


Grazing Gazette

PENN STATE

College of Agricultural Sciences
in cooperation with USDA/ARS



LARRY MULLER

**Penn State University
UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.)** — I recently returned from attending the first part of the 18th International Congress held in Western Canada (I needed to be home in Pa. during week 2). I am sitting among many people at O'hare Airport in Chicago and reflecting back on the last 5 days in Manitoba. Several people have curiously looked at the notebook and book bag with the words "18th International Grassland Congress (IGC)". This is probably not the best setting to be attempting to educate people about forages and animals.

What is the IGC? Why would I and several others from Pennsylvania, including some producers, attend the meeting? What did I learn, and in particular, what may be useful to Pennsylvania producers and industry? Was it worth my time and your tax money? (My trip was partially funded by a travel grant from the American Forage and Grassland Council). I will try to answer these questions from my perspectives and perhaps dedicate a future column to more detail of specific areas of interest.

What is the IGC?

The first IGC meeting was held nearly 75 years ago, and a meeting has been held every four years since. This year's 18th Congress was hosted in Canada at two locations, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Four years ago the meeting was at New Zealand, and in the year 2001, it will be held in Brazil. The fact that one of the world's land is used for grassland is an interesting fact. This suggests that future IGC's may be even more important.

This year's Congress was entitled "Grasslands 2000." About 1200 people from 90 countries attended to present and exchange up-to-date information on World's Grasslands. A large trade show displayed products and information to help achieve successful forage production in the coming century. This statement alone articulates the basic purpose of the IGC. The most important aspect of the IGC is networking with grassland scientists and researchers from around the world. The Congress provides an important opportunity to meet others who may be working on similar types of research, or who may have similar problems and challenges.

Why would we attend?

The program was broad and included talks and discussions on some of the following topics: 1) Future world food production and implications for the environment and grasslands, 2) Animal intake and grazing systems, 3) Alternative uses of forages, 4) Novel methods of plant improvement, 5) Constraints on forages and grassland production, and 6) Post harvest management. Over 1000 individual papers were presented along with the 60 invited papers. There were specific topics such as forage preservation, forage production, genetic engineering of plants, nutrition, among many others. We had two poster presentations of some of our grazing work. Whereas the meeting had a focus on research, there were many extension educators, agribusiness representatives, and producers in attendance. It is the diversity of people with different backgrounds and from many countries that is the real benefit of the Congress. We are forced to look outside "the black box" to see a more holistic or global view of animal and forage production systems and their impact on food production and the environment.

For me personally, the most valuable part of the Congress was the interaction and networking with people from other countries who work with forages and dairy cattle. There were several informal discussions with scientists and producers from Ireland, England,

France, Netherlands, New Zealand, Australia, Japan, Columbia, Argentina, Brazil, and South Africa. Researchers and producers in these countries are all interested in improving grazing management, forage production and utilization, and profitability. None of us have adequate resources to effectively study all aspects and we need to avoid duplication of efforts. A group of eight of us discussed the future sharing of information, problems, and questions on a regular basis. Using the computer to exchange information will be used to communicate on a frequent basis.

Dairy Producers

Some of the most enjoyable and informative discussions were with a dairy production from Great Britain. He milks 400 cows and is currently president of the British Grassland Society. We also had tours to three dairy farms in Manitoba. The three may be typical of many Canadian dairy farms: high milk production, good type, high quality forage (stored and/or pasture), high sales of breeding stock, and commercial hay production for the United States market. Herd size ranged from 45 to 100 registered milk cows with herd averages from 22,000 to 28,500 (3x) pounds of milk. The highest pro-

ducing cow in Western Canada (42,000 lb. milk) was owned by Clear Farms.

I wonder about the future of these farm businesses without a quota system in the future and with less income from the sale of breeding stock. Their ability to grow and harvest high quality alfalfa hay for the United States market appears to be an important income source.

What did I learn?

With a conference so large and diverse, it is difficult to identify specific information that can be immediately applied. I have a better understanding and overview of the issues and challenges facing all of us in the world involved with animal agriculture. As I sit in O'Hare Airport, the pollution around Chicago and the thousands of people who have walked by the last hour have reinforced our need to improve the environment, and to produce more food. Clearly, the grasslands and the forage production in the United States and world will play a key role in both.

Some specific points that stick

in my mind after a week of "information overload" are:

- Forage maceration at mowing shows great promise to enhance field wilting rate and improve animal performance.

- Pure ryegrass may be better than any combination of ryegrass and alfalfa when fed to beef cattle.

- A new cellulase product improved the fermentation and nutritive value of alfalfa/grass silages.

- Grasses may absorb more CO₂ than produced during a day (improves the environment).

Time to end. My airplane is ready to leave. Yes, the trip was worth my time and hopefully will be a payback to your tax dollar.

Grazing Calendar

July 8: Roman Stoltzfoos, Springwood Farm, 1143 Gap Rd., Kinzers, 10 a.m. (contact Glenn Shirk, 717-394-6851)

July 24: Pat Shea, Shartlesville, 10 a.m.-noon (contact Penn State Coop. Ext.-Berks Co., 610-378-1327).

Please let us know of grazing-related field days (contact Sue Eisenhauer, 814-865-6541).



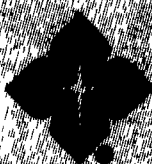
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