

Grazing Conference Shows How Gold Is In Grass

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Lancaster Farming Staff
QUARRYVILLE (Lancaster Co.) — 165 producers recently attended the seventh annual Southeast Grazing Conference at the Solanco Fairgrounds in Quarryville. The theme for this year's conference was "Gold Is In The Grass."

Out of the 165 producers attending the conference, about 30 farmers were new to the grazing arena. Debra Young of West Grove was one of them. Young farms with her husband Charles on Pure-Ayr Farms, where they milk 70 Ayrshires and Brown Swiss.

"I wanted to learn more about maintaining pastures," said Young. "We have 32 acres of pasture that needs replanted, and I wanted to find out how to plant them for the most efficiency."

Young got a lot of information from the speakers about the different grasses to plant and what works on different farms.

"The speakers discussed planting plots on your farm to see what grows best before you plant the whole pasture," said Young.

Speakers during the two-day conference covered everything in grazing from planting different grass species for maximum efficiency to breeding cows to be the most profitable grazers. Jeff Wolfe and Dale Neufeld also reported on their personal experiences as dairy farmers who graze their cattle.

"I learned a lot from listening to the dairy farmers, especially Jeff Wolfe," said Dan Delp of Whiteford, Md. "I've known Jeff since he got started in dairying, and I really respected his advice. He has learned a lot and could offer good advice from his experiences."

Delp owns Deep Creek Farm, where they have milked anywhere from 65 to 70 cows. Right now Delp is pasturing both beef cows and dairy replacements.

"I've been grazing for a good while, and I came not only to learn from the speakers, but also from the people attending the conference," said Delp. "It's good to talk to other people who are grazing. It makes you feel less like the lone ranger."

Bonnie Wentworth of Wentworth Farms in Quarryville agreed. She and her husband milk 65 Ayrshires.

"Mastering a grazing operation is a learning process," said Wentworth. "You should always be sharing ideas with each other."

Wentworth's husband attended Monday's sessions, while Wentworth attended Tuesday's conference. She said that Monday's session was just what her husband needed to gear up for this spring.

"There is just something so natural about grazing your cows," said Wentworth. "It's a much more relaxed way of dairying."

"Once you don't worry about achieving the high production numbers, the other things really fall into place. Herd health, breeding ratios, and other performance factors improve. And your bottom line stays solid."

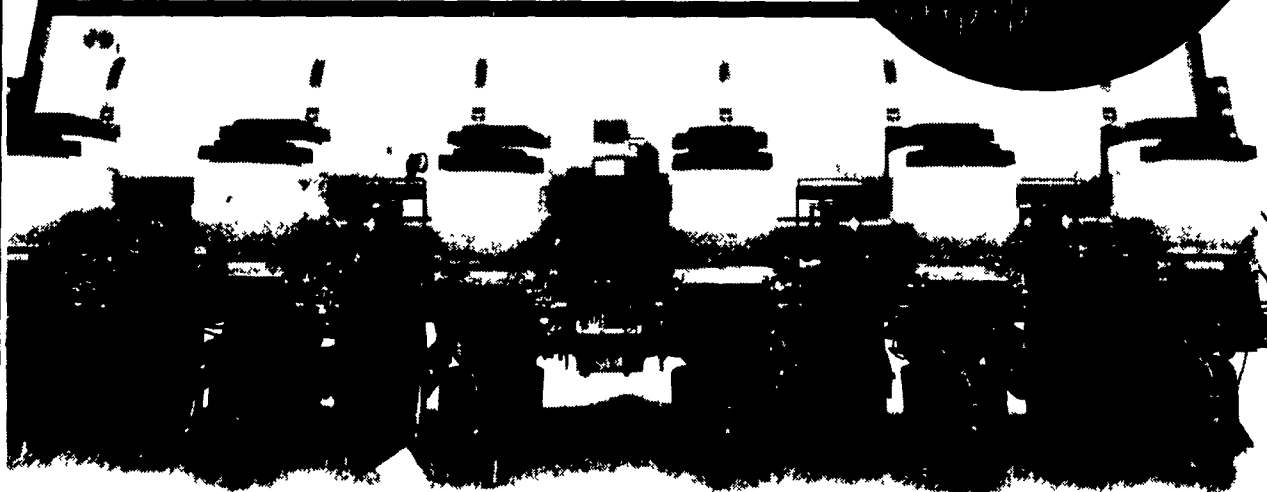
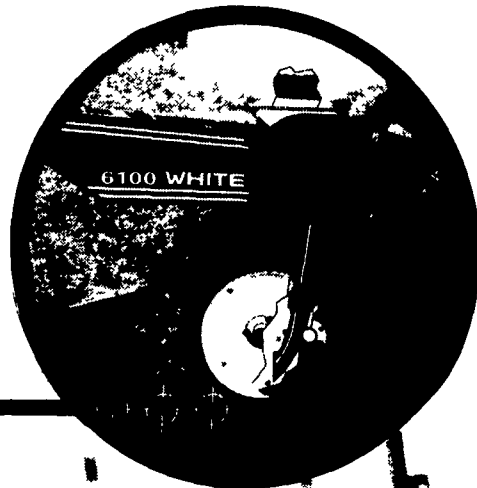
In between the speaker sessions, participants had the opportunity to visit the seven companies who exhibited at the conference. The exhibitors featured the latest in grass species, technology, and feed supplements for grazers.

The conference was sponsored by the Lancaster County Grazers Association.



Speakers at the Southeast Grazing Conference were from left Jeff Wolfe, Adams County farmer; Dr. Gerald Fry, reproduction specialist from Arkansas; John Thyssen, representing Barenbrug Seed in Oregon; John Cockrell, Wisconsin extension agent; Dale Neufeld, Bradford County farmer; and Jonathan Rupert, from Ampack Seeds.

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