

Northwest PA Grazing Conference Set

SHIPPENVILLE (Clarion Co.)—Registration for the Third Northwest Pennsylvania Grazing Conference has been extended to February 23, 2000. This year's conference will be held on February 28, 2000 at the Gemmel Center at Clarion University. Registration begins at 9:30 a.m. and the conference will start at 10:00 a.m.

The featured speaker this year is Jim Gerrish from the University of Missouri. Recently, Mr. Gerrish's research has focused on quantifying fac-

tors that affect grazing distribution across the landscape, how the length of grazing periods affect harvest efficiency, and the impact of different grazing systems on animal performance and economic return. According to Gary Swope from the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) DuBois Field Office, Jim Gerrish practices what he preaches. "In addition to his research, Jim operates a 260 acre commercial cow-calf and stocker operation where he applies the concepts he's devel-

oped in his research," said Swope. Swope, along with representatives of Penn State's Cooperative Extension Service, the Jefferson Conservation District and Headwaters Resource Conservation and Development serve on the planning committee that has put together the conference over the past three years. Approximately 70 people attended the first conference in 1998. Last year's attendance of 126 forced the committee to move to larger facilities at Clarion University's Gemmel Con-

ference Center.

According to Nelson Smith, Cooperative Extension Agent from Clarion, it's important for consumers to realize that a very small portion of each dollar they pay for milk goes to the farmer. "Today's dairy farmer receives approximately the same price for his milk as he did in 1978, while his costs for feed, equipment and fuel have increased significantly," said Smith. According to Swope milk producers don't have many options. They can try to produce more

milk, they can lower their cost of production, or they can quit farming. Throughout the Northwest many have chosen the latter, to quit farming.

According to J.B. Harrold, grazing specialist with the NRCS and located in Somerset, the purpose of starting this annual conference was to bring first hand, up to date research and expertise directly to dairy and livestock producers.

"Hopefully what they are exposed to at the conference will show them that they use forage and pasture systems to significantly reduce their cost of production and increase their profit margin," said Harrold. Susan Alexander, Cooperative Extension Service in Jefferson County, pointed out that reducing the cost of production is just as important in beef and other livestock operations. "Every penny that can be cut out of the cost of production goes right into the producers profit margin," according to Alexander.

To make your reservation for the Northwest Pennsylvania Grazing Conference call 814-375-1372 extension 4.

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