



## Graziers Learn 'Maximum Management' Techniques At Conference

**MICHELLE RANCK**  
Lancaster Farming Staff

**QUARRYVILLE** (Lancaster Co.) — Careful management, agreed speakers at the Southeast Pennsylvania Grazing Conference, is the key to a successful, profitable grassland operation.

The conference brought together producers and speakers to exchange ideas during the two-day event at the Solanco fairgrounds.

In its eighth year, the conference attracted approximately 200 people for the educational event sponsored by the Lancaster County Graziers.

### Cove Mountain Farm

Glen Moyer, Cove Mountain Farm, Mercersburg, Franklin County chose to try operating a grass-based farm because of financial reasons. In 1996 Moyer took up the challenge to develop a seasonal dairy farm from the ground up on a farm willed to American Farmland Trust. Of the farm's 300 acres, 200 of the acres are in grass.

Last year Moyer and his family milked 118 cows.

Having begun with registered Holsteins, Moyer was introduced to the Jersey breed by a neighbor and over time has added Jerseys to his crossbreeding program. "We're definitely into color. It's not all black and white."

To make a lane for the cows, he topped an old diversion terrace with loose gravel. Moyer feeds his herd round bales with an unroller.

Cove Mountain Farm weathered a tough lesson and was introduced to its "number one challenge" with an endophyte fescue problem. Irrigating the pasture too late, said Moyer, allowed the fescue to grow while leaving other plants dormant. The endophyte problem, estimates Moyer, has affected production, body condition, and even reproductive efficiency.

The seasonal setup means that the Moyer family milks from approximately early

March to early or middle January.

Additional information, on grass-based farming systems and Cove Mountain Farm is available at Grassfarmer.com.

### The Strite Family

Pastoring a church and raising four homeschooled boys helped to put Harry Strite, Williamsport, Md., on a mission for a lower-stress, less time-intensive way to farm.

Besides the Ayrshires, Strite's crossbreeding program includes Holsteins, Normandes and Dutch Belt cattle. The "rainbow herd" also includes New Zealand genetics and even Guernsey and Jersey cattle, besides recently-purchased Linebacks.

Once the calves are big enough to go out on a pasture, they are introduced to the "calf-mobile."

Inspired by the "chicken-mobile," this setup, 50 feet square, is constructed of two-by-

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Calvin Ernst plants about 2,000 acres, which are divided among five townships and spread throughout a 15-mile radius. All of the plots are in Crawford County. Ernst spends his time cultivating what most farmers try to destroy in their fields — what most of us label as common weeds. With more than 2,000 acres in production, Ernst Conservation Seeds markets the seeds and cuttings of about 200 different native perennials, which he sells to anyone who wants to return land to its natural state.

Photo by Sandy Bradley

## They're Not Weeds, But 'Conservation Seeds'

**SANDY BRADLEY**

**Crawford Co. Correspondent**  
**MEADVILLE** (Crawford Co.) — Although Calvin Ernst is a farmer, he doesn't raise livestock or animal feed. Although his clients are people, he doesn't raise produce for human consumption.

And, while Ernst can be called progressive, his success isn't based on new technology.

To many people's surprise, Ernst spends his time cultivating what most farmers try to destroy in their fields — what most of us label as common weeds.

With more than 2,000 acres in production, Ernst Conservation Seeds markets the seeds and cuttings of about 200 different native perennials, which he sells to anyone who wants to return land to its natural state.

"We're a telephone-based industry," he said of his mail-order business. "We have five lines and three girls answering phones. We try to service from Indiana to North Carolina and up into the Maritime provinces. That's where our seeds are adapted to. Kentucky and Tennessee are pretty good — all the way up to Maine and Canada.

We sell to seed companies or individuals. We have a network of distributors and direct sales.

"This product never goes to the retail sales," he said. "We sell more to the restoration range of people like the contractors that want to restore really bad strip mines and wetlands and stuff like that. Nothing that a Wal-Mart would sell. (As far as) the Wal-Mart stuff — people want to see something bloom right away. Ours is perennial and takes several years to establish. Our stuff is a native ecotype and will be there for 50 years if established and maintained right.

"But we do sell to a lot of golf courses that want out-of-play areas like with the native grasses, asters, goldenrods, and things like that. If they want to have butterfly or bluebird habitats — and want to quit mowing — that's the kind of thing that we do well."

Ernst earned an agronomy degree in 1963 from Penn State, and he planted his first commercial crop in 1962, a five-acre plot on his parents' farm consisting mostly of crowned vetch.

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Duane Hertzler, Loysville; Glen Moyer, Mercersburg; Dave Forgey, Logansport, Ind.; Kenneth King, Hutchinson, Kan.; Harry Strite, Williamsport, Md.; and Tim Fritz, farm management extension agent, Chester County, each shared their grazing experiences and expertise during the recent two-day conference at Solanco fairgrounds. Photo by Michelle Ranck



The Pennsylvania Junior Holstein Association recently conducted its 2001 state convention at the Radisson Hotel, West Middlesex. Distinguished junior member contest winners include, from left to right, Christopher Vanco, Sarah Day, Scott Walton, Megan Schantz, Jason Troutman, and Melissa Schuler. See photo essay on page A28.