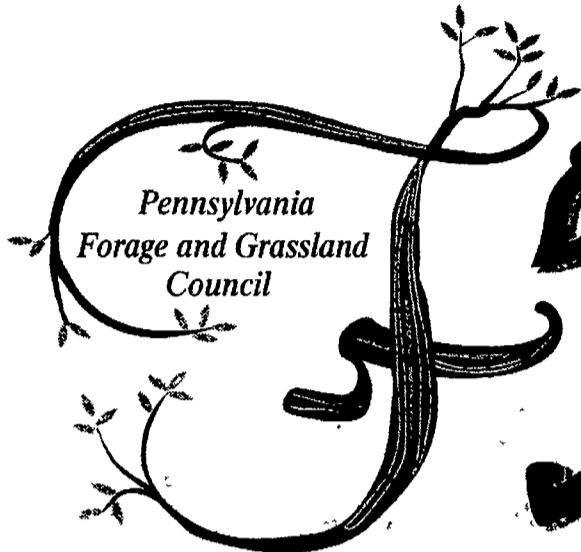


SPECIAL

SATURDAY, APRIL 19 ISSUE

'Industry, Farmer, Scientist - Working Together Toward A Sounder Grassland Program'

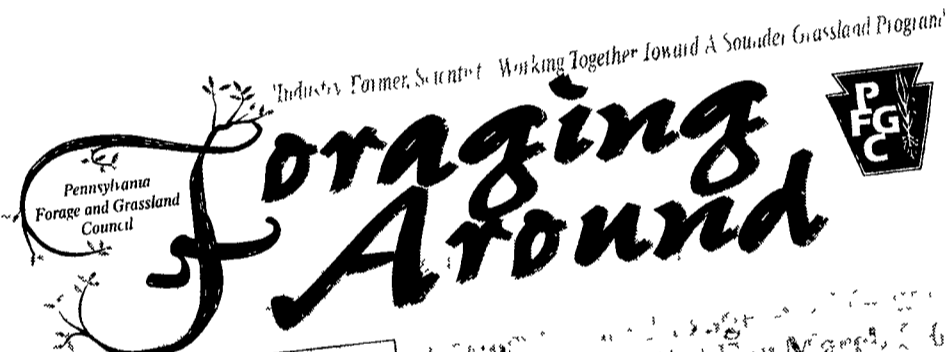


Pennsylvania
Forage and Grassland
Council

Foraging Around



2003 PFGC SPRING NEWSLETTER



John Roche is one of two Irish brothers who will share views on untapped grazing potential at the PFGC Grazing Conference March 5 and 6.

Irish Brothers, Genetic Researcher On Slate

GRANTVILLE (Dauphin Co.) — This year's Pennsylvania Forage and Grazing Conference will take place March 5 and 6 at the Holiday Inn in Grantville.

This conference has something for forage producers and graziers at all levels of experience. The conference is sponsored jointly by the PFGC, the Pennsylvania Grazing Research and Education Center, Pennsylvania's Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, and Penn State Extension.

The first day of the conference kicks off with brothers John and Tom Roche. John works as a grazing researcher/consultant in New Zealand, and Tom manages the home dairy farm in Ireland. These brothers have recently been exploring the possibilities of starting a grazing dairy here in the U.S. Over the course of the conference they will discuss hands on experiences as well as differences and similarities and opportunities of grass farming in the U.S. and around the world.

Other talks on the first day will include topics such as animal genetics for grazing (sure to stimulate discussion), effectiveness of equipment to speed hay drying keeping and using accurate farm records, large rectangular bale storage and marketing, and health concerns of animals on pasture.

Dr. Steve Washburn from North Carolina State University will be leading the discussion on animal genetics for grazing. The evening of the first day will include discussion sessions between attendees and speakers.

The second day of the conference starts with a look at grazing and family life, impact of the Farm Bill and new regulations on forage and grazing farms and pasture maintenance. Presentations include recognizing the challenges of grassed beef, farmer health concerns and farm liability. The day continues with a presentation by the Roche brothers on grazing opportunities in the Northeast. The rules in the Northeast conference will conclude with a brief 'wrap up' session and awarding of door prizes.

Producers will give many of the presentations during the two day conference.

The PFGC will conduct its annual reception and awards program Wednesday evening, followed by informal discussions with the day's presenters.

The conference will also include a trade show with complimentary admission.

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Nevin Mast discusses his crossbreeding program during a pasture walk on his Berks County dairy farm last September. Dr. Steve Washburn, one of the presenters set to speak at the upcoming PFGC conference, joined the group of graziers on Mast's farm.

DAVE LEEFEVER
Lancaster Farming Staff

OLEY (Berks Co.) — Nevin Mast has been crossbreeding Holsteins and Jerseys for about 10 years.

"I just like the cross so well," the dairyman said during a pasture walk on his organically certified farm last September.

Mast hived about a dozen farmers who were interested in seeing his grazing operation. Joining the group was Mena Hatuta, Berks County extension agent and Dr. Steve Washburn, a dairy researcher from North Carolina State University.

Grass and hay are the main source of feed for the 50 cows on Mast's 110 acre farm. He supplements milking cows with 12 1/2 pounds of grain per day. Heifers between the age of four months and their first calving receive no grain.

Advantages of the Holstein/Jersey cross include easier breeding and calving

hybrid vigor, and greater survivability, according to Mast and Washburn.

The biggest gains are in the survivability traits said Washburn who studies the benefits of crossbreeding in dairy herds. He predicted that crossbreeds will have an increasing impact on commercial dairy production in the future.

Washburn is one of the speakers slated for the upcoming Pennsylvania Forage and Grazing Conference scheduled for March 5 and 6 in Grantville.

A typical average first-conception rate for purebred Holsteins when using artificial insemination is between 30 and 40 percent. In crossbreeds, that number can reach nearly 50 percent, according to Washburn.

Washburn said dairy farmers need to have a plan when it comes to crossbreeding. The plan should include researching the fertility of the daughters of bulls used in the crossbreeding program and knowing the bulls' production data. While hardiness and reproductive traits are important, production must be a primary goal.

As Washburn put it, "Milk still pays the bills."

In crossbred cows production levels tend toward the higher-producing breed, he noted.

While Jersey and Holstein genetics make up the main part of the gene pool on Mast's farm, he also enjoys experimenting with different types of crossbreeding. For example, Mast said he recently purchased a White Park bull to breed to some of his heifers.

(Turn to Page E7)

Graziers Can Apply For Cost-Share Funds

DAVE LEEFEVER
Lancaster Farming Staff

STATE COLLEGE (Centre Co.) — Project Grass is on the move.

Last year, the grassroots grassland management group expanded to include every region of Pennsylvania, and has

been at work developing new programs to foster grass based farming and conservation practices in the state.

Last November marked the first-ever Project Grass Conference. More than 100 people attended the two day event at State College.

The conference included presentations on the history of Project Grass — first formed in Southwest Pennsylvania in 1980 — research findings on the economic and environmental benefits of livestock grazing.

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- Highlights of the Pennsylvania Forage and Grassland Council's annual conference, including award presentations
- Conference news
- PFGC, AFGC news and information

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