

GLCI News

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Editor's Note: Until printing of the regular GLCI Newsletter resumes, please enjoy this text-only e-mail version of the GLCI News.

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National Environmental Stewardship Award Program

The 18th Annual Environmental Stewardship Award Program (ESAP) has officially opened its nomination season for 2008. The program has recognized the outstanding stewardship practices and conservation achievements of U.S. cattle producers for almost two decades. Regional and national award winners are honored for their commitment to protecting the environment and improving fish and wildlife habitat while operating profitable cattle operations.

“America’s cattle operations are dedicated to doing what is right for the environment and it is evident in the 114 operations the ESAP program has recognized since its inception,” says Jonathan Beitia, program director for the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA). “This year, we are expecting another great pool of applicants and encourage your participation in the process.”

Nominations can be submitted by any organization, group, or individual on behalf of a U.S. cattle producer. In the past, nominations have been submitted by a diverse mix of organizations. A partial list includes the Nature Conservancy, the Society for Range Management, state government services, universities, wildlife organizations and livestock groups.

ESAP was established in 1991 by NCBA and is made possible by the support of Dow AgroSciences, LLC, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Seven regional winners and one national winner are selected annually by a committee of representatives from universities, conservation organizations, and federal and state agencies. The nominees compete for regional awards based on their state of residency, and these seven regional winners then compete for the national award.

The deadline for 2008 ESAP nomination packet is March 14, 2008. Go to www.beefusa.org/esap or contact NCBA's Washington, D.C., office to request a copy of the application at 202-347-0228.

Grass-Fed Meat Standards Announced

USDA has issued a voluntary standard for grass-fed meat marketing claims. The grass-fed standard states that grass and/or forage must be the sole components of the grass-fed animal's diet during its lifetime, with the exception of milk consumed prior to weaning. Animals cannot be fed grain or grain byproducts and must have continuous access to pasture during the growing season. The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) will complete an audit of the production process to verify the 100%-grass-fed designation. The producer must be able to verify for AMS that the requirements are being met through a detailed, documented quality management system. Learn more at www.ams.usda.gov/.

New Secretary of Agriculture Sworn In

Ed Schafer was sworn in as the 29th Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Jan. 28. Secretary Schafer brings a record as an innovative two-term governor of North Dakota to USDA along with extensive private sector experience as both an entrepreneur and a business executive.

Schafer served as North Dakota's governor from 1992 to 2000 expanding North Dakota's economy, reducing the cost of government and advancing agriculture as his top priorities in office. He worked to normalize trading relations with China and develop that nation as an export market for North Dakota farm products. He also led efforts to upgrade North Dakota's communications infrastructure and make high-speed voice and data networks available to farmers, ranchers and rural businesses. To expand the state's job base, he encouraged the growth of value-added agricultural industries such as pasta and corn sweetener manufacturing.

He has had a lifelong interest in conservation and helped arrange the U.S. Forest Service's May 2007 purchase of the 5,200-acre Elkhorn Ranch in North Dakota. The site was where Theodore Roosevelt had his home and operated a cattle ranch in the 1880s. It is near the preserved town of Medora — the state's leading tourist attraction.

— Release provided by USDA.

Stewardship for Horse Farms

Source: Elizabeth Marks, USDA NRCS

Equestrian Land Conservation Resource (ELCR) and Hudson Mohawk Resource Conservation & Development Council (HMRC&D) of New York are offering "Keeping It Green: Pasture and Environmental Farm Management for the Horse Owner" at ELCR's web site, <http://www.elcr.org>

The collaboration between ELCR and the HMRC&D is intended to raise awareness and improve knowledge amongst horse owners across the nation about how to improve pastures and minimize their horse's impact on the environment. With open space disappearing at the rate of 250 acres per hour, it is important for horse people to recognize the crisis of loss of land for horses and the importance of caring for the land we have.

Degraded pastures and improper manure management can have a serious, detrimental impact on the environment. This video is useful for the management of horse properties and pastures. The video is offered in 8 segments with titles such as "Water Quality and Manure Management," "Rotational Grazing - Weed & Forage Control," and "Drainage Improvements in High Traffic Areas." Funding for the segments was provided by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative.

For more information visit and to view the segments, please visit <http://www.elcr.org>

Extension Offering Online Courses For Small-Acreage Landowners

Owners of small farms and ranches will soon have access to Web-based help for managing their land. Three online courses designed for agricultural novices will be offered by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, said Rebecca Parker, AgriLife Extension's Dallas-based regional director of programs in agriculture and natural science.

The courses were organized to meet the demand for information from the growing group of small-acreage landowners, said Parker, who cited the U.S. Department of Agriculture's 2002 census of agriculture.

The number of Texas farms with 10 to 49 acres grew by 13 percent between 1997 and 2002, according to the census. By comparison, the number of farms with 2,000 acres or more remained about the same.

The new landowners are often city dwellers who buy rural property for retirement, an alternative source of income or a lifestyle change, Parker said. Unlike traditional farmers and ranchers, the landowners typically have jobs that provide primary sources of income.

"They don't have an ag background, and they don't know how to decide what to do with their land," Parker said. "There's a whole group that we're not getting to because they don't have time for face-to-face educational programs."

The course subjects were chosen based on the demand from landowners for information about those particular topics, Parker said. The courses cost \$50 each. They are offered on the following dates:

Resource Inventory Jan. 22 – Feb. 22; March 3 – March 31; April 21 – May 19; June 2 – June 30

Beef Cattle Management January 28 – March 7; March 24 – May 2

Pasture Management January 30 – February 29; March 12 – April 18

Landowners should take the Resource Inventory course first, Parker said. "It answers the question, 'I've got this land, now what do I do with it?'" she said. "We consider that the most important course."

For more information, visit the Small Acreage Landowner Webcourse Web site at <http://grovesite.com/TAMU/RI>. AgriLife Extension plans to expand the course offerings to include horse production and rainwater harvesting, Parker said.

Graze or Die

By Karen Hoffman Sullivan, NY Natural Resources Conservation Service

Over a year ago, a friend of mine who is interested in health and nutrition gave me an article entitled "Change or Die." Originally published in the May 2005 issue of *Fast Company* magazine, it was authored by Alan Deutschman,

who has since written a book with the same title. The article was focused on how difficult it is for people to change their behavior, especially in terms of diet and exercise. For many reasons, I saw a direct parallel to animal agriculture. Let me explain.

Research in health care has shown that when people are suffering from chronic and serious diseases, such as diabetes and heart disease, they are quite often told that they can improve their health or save their lives by changing their lifestyle choices. Eat better, exercise more, stop smoking or drinking alcohol – and the reasons given for making those changes are quite often presented based on the facts that doing those things can make a difference.

Yet most people do not change their lifestyle choices and behaviors when presented with the facts – facts are fairly uninspiring. The article states that 90% of coronary-artery bypass patients do not change their lifestyle behaviors after surgery, even though doing so would prevent them from dying. Even though they will end up dead, they don't change. They only change their behavior when they are presented with the emotional reasons to change – live to see your grandchildren grow, be able to do things you really enjoy like more “romantic interludes” or sports with less or no pain, or be able to dance at your daughter's wedding. It is the things that reach people at the emotional level that motivates them to change their lifestyle choices, not the facts.

Behavior change is also an issue for businesses, large or small. For any business to stay competitive, make a profit, or keep good employees, change needs to happen. The way businesses usually try to change is through encouraging behavior change, from the people in management all the way down through to entry-level positions. They spend money on training, team-building activities such as retreats, transition strategies, and so forth, all in an attempt to “force” people to change the way they behave. However, as the article points out, behavior change is extremely difficult, even for the best of us. We need emotional reasons to do so, yet we are constantly presented with the factual reasons instead.

So, how does this relate to animal agriculture? It's fairly easy when you look across the landscape and see how many farms have died over the last few decades because they were unwilling to change how they farmed.

Those of us in the roles of “agency advisors” to farmers have been guilty of presenting our clientele with “the facts” for far too long. When we talk to a dairy farmer about switching from confinement feeding year-round to grazing their cows for 6 months of the year, we tell them about how their feed costs will drop, cow health will improve, and equipment will require less maintenance and repair. We show them the results of studies – tables of economic data, charts of pasture protein levels compared to stored forage, and diagrams of grass growth rates – but rarely do we talk about things that have emotional appeal.

Sales people have always been quite good at making emotional appeals to both farm and non-farm consumers when they are trying to make a sale. That is why we buy new cars and trucks with all the safety options (for the kids), the big screen television (for the kids and to make your friends jealous), and the tractors with comfort cabs, GPS-computer units, and lots of horsepower (for the kids...no

wait, to make your tractor-time more enjoyable, as well as to make friends and farming neighbors jealous). Regardless of who you are, or what you do for a living, the emotional sales pitch almost always works.

Emotional Qualities

Is there any emotional appeal of grazing? Of course there is! However, as pointed out above, we agency staff do our best to present our “unbiased”, and fairly unemotional, opinions. Those who have been grazing on their farms are the best advocates for grazing, because they experience the emotional benefits on a daily basis. They point out things like more time to spend with kids, and doing things with kids on the farm that are safer and more enjoyable, as well as the prospect that the kids may want to come back to the farm when they are older.

Quality time with a spouse is another emotionally appealing aspect of grazing, because you’re not going to be stuck on a tractor from dawn till dusk during the spring and summer as much – the animals do much of the harvest.

Being able to sleep at night because the bank and the feed company aren’t watching you like a hawk to make sure you make your payments – you become a customer they can count on to be on time. Grazing provides more money to take a family vacation, and the ability to hire a relief milker who doesn’t have to do much other than milk and open a gate. There are many other examples of how grazing can improve the quality of a farm family’s life – just ask any grazier!

If you’re reading this, you probably have an interest in grazing, so this may be preaching to the choir. If you don’t have an interest in grazing, and you’ve read this far, I applaud you and hope you can now consider grazing as an option for your family and your farm that has many other qualitative benefits.

We need more grass-based, thriving farms and farm families, not more dead farms that are the result of not being willing to change. Regardless of where you are at with grazing, I hope you will pass this article on to people you know who need to “Graze or Die.”

Karen Hoffman Sullivan, is an animal scientist with the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service in Norwich, NY. This article originally appeared in the Cornell Small Farms Quarterly publication.

Time for a drought?

It could be a dry year for growing forages and crops in the Midwest, says Elwynn Taylor, Iowa State University extension climatologist. He says La Niña weather patterns and more than a 19-year lapse since the last major drought, in 1988, suggest a drought is likely this year.

History shows the average time span between major droughts in the Midwest is about 19 years, Taylor notes. The dry conditions in the Southeast could also be an indicator of what’s to come. Of the 17 major droughts in the Midwestern U.S. the past 100 years, 16 were preceded by a major drought in the Southeast, says Taylor.

New Book Highlights Harmful Plants For Horses

A new book provides research-based information about 18 plants or groups of plants that may be poisonous to horses. Written by University of Minnesota experts, the 44-page book, *Plants Poisonous or Harmful to Horses in the North Central United States*, includes almost 70 color photos. Information is included on the plants' life cycles, identification, distribution and control. The book can be viewed as a PDF file at

<http://www.extension.umn.edu/horse/components/pdfs/PlantsPoisonousHorses.pdf>. Order it online from the University of Minnesota Extension Service for \$10 at <http://shop.extension.umn.edu/PublicationDetail.aspx?ID=1923>.

12 Goals to set for 2008

By Troy Marshall, courtesy of BEEF *Cow-Calf Weekly*

Have you ever reached the end of a day, month or year, and set back and asked where all the time went? I'm guessing you started out with a definite "to-do" list and despite the fact you were busy and productive all day, your list was essentially the same size at day's end. You spent your time, you just didn't spend it on accomplishing your projects.

Life has many distractions. While some are unavoidable, a good number can be reduced. Experts say that identifying the most frequent sources of distractions in your day is the start of lowering their impact on your daily life. Here's a list you might find helpful in focusing your attention and accomplishing your resolutions in 2008.

1. Do the important things first.
2. Don't start a job without a plan on how to accomplish it. Planning pays.
3. Don't move to another job before completing the last one.
4. Embrace delegation.
5. Delegate things to technology. Doing things the way they've always been done is almost a religion to most folks. And while we've all heard it preached to avoid steel, avoid expenses, etc., time is our most precious commodity and using it properly is by far the number-one way to both reduce costs and increase revenue. If you're getting the return on management that you should be, then things that save you time usually make you money, lots of it!
6. Avoid things that aren't part of your job. Delegate and focus.
7. Collect the necessary records in a usable form. Having records that overlap or are too complicated to use is inefficient to a waste of time.
8. There is a limit to what you can do well. Tom Peters talks about outsourcing everything that is non-essential or that you aren't good enough at.
9. Don't allow interruptions during critical projects. Even better is building barriers to interruptions. Do you always answer the phone, immediately respond to all e-mail, or set aside everything every time someone drives into your yard?

10. Don't allow conversations to wander. This is a tricky one, because people and relationships are an essential part of anyone's success, but it must be monitored.

11. You don't need all the information. The main facts are usually the key. While the more trivial info can be useful, the time chasing it down usually can't be justified.

12. Stay cool. Getting worked up by distractions to the point that you're stressed and fixated on the problems rather than the solutions is counterproductive.

Everyone probably can pinpoint another 3-5 items that hinder their effective time utilization. The key is to identify and address them. Good luck in achieving your 2008 goals.

Calendar: Upcoming Grazing Events

Feb. 4-6 -- 2008 National Alfalfa Symposium And Mid-America Alfalfa Expo, Kearney, NE, sponsored by *Hay & Forage Grower* and the Nebraska Alfalfa Marketing Association. Visit www.alfalfasyposium.com and alfalfaexpo.com.

Feb. 6-7 -- Saskatchewan Beef & Forage Symposium, Saskatoon Inn Hotel & Conference Center, 2002 Airport Drive, Saskatoon. Contact Murray Feist at 306-694-3492 or mfeist@agr.gov.sk.ca, or John McKinnon at 306-966-4137 or john.mckinnon@usask.ca. Visit www.saskforage.ca/.

Feb. 6-9 -- Cattle Industry Annual Convention And Trade Show, Reno, NV. Learn more at www.beefusa.org, or call 303-694-0305.

Feb. 8 -- Ohio Forage & Grassland Council Meeting, Ohio Department of Agriculture Bromfield Building, Reynoldsburg, OH. Contact Leah Miller, 740-545-6349 or leah@smallfarminstitute.org.

Feb. 15-17 -- Idaho Horse Affairs, Expo Idaho, Boise. Learn more at www.horseaffairs.com/.

Feb. 15-16 -- Indiana Forage Council Meeting/Indiana Cattle & Forage Symposium, Indianapolis Marriott East Hotel. Contact Keith Johnson at johnsonk@purdue.edu.

Feb. 21 -- Kentucky Alfalfa Conference, Cave City. Contact Garry Lacefield at 270-365-7541, ext. 202, or visit www.uky.edu/Aq/Forage/.

Feb. 26 -- Southwest Missouri Spring Forage Conference, University Plaza Hotel, Springfield. Call 417-862-8085.

Feb. 25-26 -- National GLCI Steering Committee Spring Meeting, Washington, DC.

Feb. 26-27 -- Idaho Hay And Forage Conference, Burley Inn, Burley. Call Glenn

Shewmaker at 208-736-3608.

March 19-20 -- 2008 Central Plains Dairy Expo, Sioux Falls Convention Center, Sioux Falls, SD. Visit www.centralplainsdairyexpo.com or call 218-236-8420.

March 28-29 -- Northeast Grasstravaganza 2008, Holiday Inn Arena, Binghamton, NY. Call 607-334-3231, ext. 4, or visit the Central New York Resource Conservation and Development Project Web site at www.cnyrcd.org.

April 10-13 -- Ohio Equine Affaire, Ohio Expo Center, Columbus. Visit www.equineaffaire.com.

April 18-20 -- Midwest Horse Fair, Alliant Energy Center, Madison, WI. Visit midwesthorsefair.com.

April 25-27 -- Minnesota Horse Expo, Minnesota State Fairgrounds, St. Paul. Visit www.mnhorseexpo.org.

June 6-8 -- Western States Horse Expo, Cal Expo Fairgrounds, Sacramento, CA. Call 800-352-2411 or visit www.horseexpo.com.

July 11-13 -- North Carolina Equine Extravaganza, North Carolina State Fairgrounds, Raleigh. Learn more at www.equineextravaganza.com.

Sept. 17-20 -- National Hay Association Convention, Oak Brook Hills Marriott, Oak Brook, IL. Contact Don Kieffer at 800-707-0014, or visit www.nationalhay.org.

Sept. 30-Oct. 4 -- World Dairy Expo, Alliant Energy Center, Madison, WI. Learn more at www.worlddairyexpo.com.

Oct. 31-Nov. 2 -- Virginia Equine Extravaganza, Richmond Raceway, Richmond. Learn more at www.equineextravaganza.com.

June 21-23, 2009 -- American Forage & Grassland Council Annual Conference, Amway Grand Plaza Hotel, Grand Rapids, MI. Call 800-944-2342 or email info@afgc.org.

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