

# Kentucky Alfalfa Conference Celebrates 30 Years

LEXINGTON, KY.

**W**arren Thompson and Clayton Geraldts are passionate about alfalfa, and the Kentucky Alfalfa Conference has held a special place on their calendars for the majority of its 30 years of existence.

As a retired industry professional and forage extension specialist for the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, Thompson worked to increase the state's alfalfa acreage and yields. He has since attended nearly every conference, speaking on many occasions about the benefits of the crop.

"Alfalfa is a most desirable forage crop to feed livestock in Kentucky and grow on farms, especially on land that will not support continuous row crops," he said.

That was a message Geraldts, a Hart County farmer took to heart when he attended the third conference in 1983. Little did the then-dairy producer know the information he received from the conference would completely change his farming operation.

Within seven years, he had completely sold his herd and was exclusively growing alfalfa and other quality forages for horses.

"Before the conference, I never thought of hay as a cash crop," he said. "I started growing it to make some extra money, but I began making more money growing hay than any of my other farm enterprises. Without that spark of interest, I may not be farming full time now."

This year, as the 2009 Kentucky Forage Spokesman and runner-up of the national spokesman contest, Geraldts will share his knowledge with the attendees of the 30th Kentucky Alfalfa Conference.

The daylong conference is scheduled for 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. CST Feb. 25 at the Cave City Convention Center. It is sponsored by the UK College of Agriculture, UK Cooperative Extension Service, Kentucky Forage and Grassland Council and the Kentucky Department of Agriculture.

"Our emphasis on alfalfa has helped it become a more versatile crop for the state's farmers," said Garry Lacefield, UK forage extension specialist. "As a result, interest has grown in using alfalfa in summer grazing programs and as a cash crop."

UK specialists and nationally and internationally renowned alfalfa experts will join Geraldts as speakers. They will discuss growing and managing alfalfa as well as the latest research and industry news. Topics include advances in alfalfa seed, the value of crop rotations, alfalfa hay for horses, alfalfa baleage, grazing alfalfa, varieties for the future, alfalfa for wildlife, and production and marketing.

In addition, the conference will have its largest-ever silent auction. An awards program is also on the agenda.

Preregistration is not necessary. The cost to attend is \$15 for adults and \$5 for students. Certified Crop Advisor credits are available.

The Cave City Convention Center is located off exit 53 on Interstate 65. Southbound travelers should turn left, and northbound travelers should turn right off the exit. Turn left at the first stoplight (Highway 70). After one-half mile, the convention center is on the left.

For the program agenda and a complete list of speakers visit <http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage>.

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