

MU Sets Beginners Grazing School, Sept. 24-26 In Linneus, Mo.

LINNEUS, MO.

Instructors at the management-intensive grazing school at the University of Missouri Forage Systems Research Center (FSRC) must remain flexible in their teaching, says Craig Roberts, MU forage agronomist.

"This year we will talk a lot about dealing with an excess of forage growth in a rotational grazing system," Roberts said. "Last year, we talked a lot about grazing in a drought year."

The school, Sept. 24-26, at the MU research farm in Linn County will cover basics of rotational grazing. Instructors are MU Extension specialists from Columbia and rangeland conservationists from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

They will be joined by panels of producers who use management-intensive grazing in their livestock operations.

The school includes both classroom sessions and pasture exercises at FSRC and a nearby farm, said David Davis, superintendent at FSRC.

The schools are coordinated by Roberts for MU Extension and Mark Kennedy of NRCS with funding from the Missouri Forage and Grasslands Council and the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative.

In an opening exercise, participants will learn how much pasture to allocate for a set of steers. Then they will be given portable fencing, posts and rolls of poly tape to build electric fencing around a day's grazing.

"The school is very practical, hands-on work," Roberts said.

On the first day, the topics covered by Extension specialists include grazing economics, nutrient cycling, forage selection, livestock and weed control. The field exercise includes soil sampling and estimating forage quality and yield.

The next day, participants check how well they allocated forages for their steers the first

day – and then try again.

On the second day, NRCS conservations will teach "graziers arithmetic" and tell how to develop a grazing plan for a farm. The specialists will discuss how to match forage supply to animal needs. A grazing system can be adjusted for drought or wet years.

The last part of the school is devoted to developing a real plan for a real farm. Participants will divide into teams to draw paddock arrangements on field maps of a farm.

The heart of a grazing system is dividing large pastures into smaller paddocks, then rotating the livestock through the paddocks, Roberts said.

Research at FSRC has shown that carrying capacity on a pasture can be doubled with managed grazing.

"The main lesson is intensive management, not intensive grazing," Roberts said.

Participants are encouraged to bring aerial maps of their own farms for discussion.

Fee for the three-day session is \$250 per person or \$375 per couple. That includes the updated Missouri Grazing Manual and other handouts, plus three lunches and two suppers.

Reservations are taken first-come and limited to 50 people.

To enroll, contact Joetta Roberts at mfgc@mchsi.com or 573-499-0886.

The grazing school in Linneus is the only state-level school this year. It will train new instructors for the regional schools held across the state.

"It's called our beginners school," Roberts said, "but some graziers who have attended a regional school come here for the latest updates in grazing research."

To reach FSRC, go west from Brookfield, Mo., on U.S. Highway 36, then north six miles on Highway FF to Genoa Road. Go west 1.5 miles to the headquarters. Signs are at the intersections. △