

Missouri Dairy Grazing Conference Set For Oct. 23-25, Springfield

Biennial conference attracts national interest.

COLUMBIA, MO.

Missouri dairy grazing systems are resilient, repeatable and robust, says Joe Horner, dairy economist at the University of Missouri.

Grazing-dairy producers and MU Extension specialists will tell why at the Missouri Dairy Grazing Conference, Oct. 23-25, in Springfield, Mo.

The conference, held every other year, attracts national attention, Horner says. "Missouri grazing dairies are different than they were 15 years ago."

Conference headquarters will be the Howard Johnson Inn, 333 S. Glenstone Ave.

Dairy graziers will share their stories. "Our producers have dealt with drought, heat stress and high feed costs," Horner says. "They survived and evolved to be stronger over time. We've grown robust systems. All became hybrids of some kind."

Most of Wednesday and Thursday feature a variety of speakers, telling of progress. On Friday, optional tours will go to dairy farms.

In the past, the MU grazing dairy at Mount Vernon was an optional tour. "We have so much to show, we will spend a half day there this year," says Stacey Hamilton, MU Extension state dairy specialist. He will give background on the feeding studies. That includes residual feed intake and dry matter intake.

The dairy research and extension are part of the MU College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, Columbia.

Other topics at Southwest Center include "Novel Endophyte Fescue Plots," "On-Farm Pasture-Measuring Tools," "Reproductive Trials" and "New Zealand and U.S. Genetics."

A trade show and reception will be at the hotel after the MU farm tour.

Charles Fletcher of Edgewood Dairy, Purdy,

Mo., will give the conference welcome and closing remarks. Fletcher pioneered grass-based dairying.

Much of the conference will be about building strong systems, both cows and pastures, Horner says.

"We have forage-growing and cow-breeding systems that synchronize calving and peak milk production with the grass-growing season," he says.

Scott Poock, MU Extension veterinarian, uses fixed-time artificial insemination. This reduces breeding time. Even better, it starts the milking season earlier for most cows.

Many of grazing dairy farms are seasonal. They stop milking before Christmas and resume at calving time, about Feb. 1.

Seasonal milking gives a break from the 365-day milking year on most dairy farms.

Several speakers will tell about risk management, ranging from forage in drought to erratic milk prices.

Breakout sessions the second afternoon give a hint of range of topics, Horner says.

They include "Partial TMRs" (total mixed rations), "Attracting and Retaining Employees," "Heifer Development from Birth to Calving," "Ammoniating Tube Wrapped Baleage," "Economics of Pasture Irrigation" and "Benefits of Dung Beetles in Pastures."

Maps will be given at the conference to those taking optional tours on their way home.

Registration fees cover program and several meals. Early registration ends Sept. 30, with a late fee after that. For registration and other information, contact the MU Conference Office at 573-882-9558 or go to the conference website at dairy.missouri.edu/grazing/conference.

Special room rates are available. Call the Howard Johnson Inn at 417-883-6550. Δ