

# Revamped Master Grazer Program Has Successful Year

LEXINGTON, KY.

**W**ith the launch of a new program and the return of an old favorite, specialists with the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture were able to educate more Kentucky forage and livestock producers this year through the Master Grazer educational program.

The Kentucky Agricultural Development Board partially funded the program in which producers learned how to improve and extend their current grazing operations and increase their bottom lines.

"2010 was a successful year for the Master Grazer Program in that the producers we reached through the grazing schools, field days and county programs have been able to graze their pastures longer through drought than before due to increased grazing management," said Adam Probst, UK Master Grazer Program coordinator. "They have been able to reduce their stored feed needs and increase their profitability."

The Applied Master Grazer Program, which began this year, differs from the traditional Master Grazer program in that producers get hands-on field experience as well as classroom instruction. UK specialists will offer 11 programs and impact an estimated 400 producers in 42 counties in 2010. During the program, participants tour area farms where county agents with the UK Cooperative Extension Service and farm managers discuss what does and does not work in their operations, ways to improve problem areas, and new strategies and techniques to increase grazing efficiency.

After a several year hiatus, the Kentucky Grazing School returned in fall 2009. Interest among forage and livestock producers was so high that program organizers offered two programs in 2010 in Central and Western Kentucky.

Both two-day schools reached maximum capacity with a waiting list for 2011. Participants represented 44 counties and six other states and collectively had an estimated 22,000 acres and 8,800 livestock.

During the schools, producers received hands-on training on the practical management of grazing systems for ruminant livestock, including beef and dairy cattle, goats and sheep. Along with field exercises, participants received

classroom training and toured UK forage demonstration plots. While both schools covered many of the same topics, some were region specific. By the end of the school, participants designed a grazing system based on their own property.

At the end of the class, participants indicated some of the most common grazing practices they would incorporate into their own operations included developing a rotational grazing system, decrease hay feeding by extending the grazing season, renovate pastures with legumes, and soil test and apply lime and fertilizer to pastures. These improved practices have an estimated direct economic impact of more than \$1.5 million.

"With our grazing schools, two-thirds of the producers that attended have been able to increase forage utilization by using temporary fencing and are able to harvest more of the pasture that they produce," Probst said. "Over 60 percent of the producers that have graduated from one of our grazing schools have also increased pasture quality by incorporating legumes, such as clover, and they have extended their grazing season by stockpiling the tall fescue that they already have."

The next grazing school will be April 13 and 14 at the UK Research and Education Center in Princeton. Preregistration is required. Those interested can preregister by contacting Probst at 859-257-0597 or at adam.probst@uky.edu or their county extension agent for agriculture and natural resources.

The Master Grazer Program also established 42 demonstration farms across the state. Demonstration farm owners receive cost-share dollars to make grazing improvements like installing watering systems and growing different forage varieties. Through this program, participating producers have been able to either maintain their herd size and decrease the amount of days they feed hay, feed a larger herd on the same amount of stored feed, or maintain their herd size and the amount of stored feed but stocker farm-raised calves and sell heavier. These improved grazing practices have an estimated economic impact of \$234,000. In return, these farms host field days for local extension and Master Grazer programs where they highlight their grazing efficiencies. △



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