Agriculture News from In and Around Garrett County, Maryland

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Mountain Top Ag News

Veterinary Scholarship Established

Many livestock farms of our area are suffering from a deficit of large-animal or production-animal veterinary services in our region.

In order to address the long term needs for veterinary services, the Joyce Colbert Veterinary Scholarship Fund has been established to provide scholarships for students who plan to follow a career in rural large animal veterinary medicine.

Scholarships will be awarded to students in animal sciences and veterinary majors from Garrett County, MD, and Preston and Tucker Counties, WV. Any student can apply each year during the scholarship cycle as financial need arises. Scholarship applications are accepted February – April each year.

The Joyce Colbert Veterinary Scholarship Fund is administered by the Tucker Community Foundation. "We have raised over $20,000 for the fund this year," says Robert Burns, Executive Director of the Foundation. Students may download application forms from the Foundation Website, http://www.tuckerfoundation.net

The fund was established in the memory of Dr. Joyce Colbert, DVM, long-time resident of Deer Park, MD. Joyce Colbert established her practice, Deer Park Veterinary Services, in Garrett County in the 1980's. Dr. Colbert died on November 7, 2007.

Dr. Colbert was a dedicated livestock veterinarian for many farmers and ranchers in Garrett, Preston and Tucker counties. The Joyce Colbert Scholarship Fund is established in her honor and is directed to building rural veterinary resources through promotion of production-animal veterinary education.

"Two scholarships of $1,000 each were awarded to students in 2008," noted Mr. Burns. "A successful scholarship program needs the continued support and contributions of all of us in the area."

Please address tax-deductible contributions to:

Joyce Colbert Scholarship
Tucker Community Foundation
PO Box 491
Parsons, WV 26287

or call the Tucker Community Foundation at 304-478-2930.

Livestock Feeding Workshops

Why can cows eat hay and silage but pigs do not? Am I feeding my goat enough feed? Answers to these and many more similar questions will be answered by a four-part workshop series on Livestock Feeding being offered this February at the Garrett College Northern Outreach Center in Grantsville near Hill Top Fruit Market.

The workshops will cover digestive system anatomy, livestock feeding needs, composition of feed stuffs, and the economics of feeding livestock. The series will be informative and very practical.

The workshops will be held each Monday evening in February starting with February 2nd from 6:30 – 8:30pm.

For more information or to sign up for the workshops call the Extension Office at 301-334-6960. The cost to attend all four workshops is just $10. Space is limited so call to RSVP soon.

Fruit & Vegetable Growers Workshop

It seems like winter is just getting a good start and we are already thinking about the vegetable season ahead. Mark your calendar for Friday, March 20th from 10 am to 3:30 pm for the 2009 Mt. Top Fruit and Vegetable Workshop. The workshop will be held at Garrett College. The focus of the workshop will be on small fruit production of blueberries, strawberries, raspberries and blackberries as well as vegetable production both inside and outside of a high tunnel.

The featured speaker for the day will be Steve Bogash. Steve is currently the Commercial Horticulture Agent serving Adams, Cumberland and Franklin Counties in Pennsylvania. His primary areas of responsibility include vegetable, small fruit, cut flower, pond management, greenhouse vegetables, and marketing. The marketing of high-value agricultural products and services is an area that Steve considers integral to any production session.

Until joining Penn State in 1997, Steve was the Non-Traditional Crops Consultant and Western Maryland Sea Grant area agent for University of Maryland Cooperative Extension. Steve operated a commercial landscape, nursery and greenhouse business for 12 years. During that same period he also operated a small commercial wine grape vineyard and produced sweet corn and strawberries for fresh market. Steve and his wife Roberta have one son, Joe, and live in Newville, PA.

Steve will be presenting a number of sessions including: "Softer Chemistries for Tomato Disease Management", "Transplanting Sweet Corn for Early High-Value Production", "Fresh Market Tomato Trial: Commercial and Consumer Tasting and Yellow Shoulder Evaluation" and "Selecting Greenhouse and High Tunnel Tomato Varieties". Fruit topics will be covered by other speakers.

A registration fee of $5.00 will be collected at the workshop. Lunch will be available for purchase in the cafeteria at the College. To register for the meeting please call the

Restaurant/Grower Meeting Scheduled

Anyone interested in selling agriculture products directly to restaurants is encouraged to attend a Garrett County Restaurant/Grower meeting, to be held Tuesday, February 17, 2009 at Will O' the Wisp starting at 1:30 pm.

Representatives from restaurants interested in purchasing locally-produced foods will be invited to the meeting. At least two restaurants have already expressed interest in attending.

Tip sheets on selling to restaurants will be available, and a guided discussion between restaurants and farmers will take place. Time will be allotted for farmers to meet one-on-one with restaurants. Light refreshments will be provided.

Cheryl DeBerry, Natural Resources Business Specialist for Garrett Co. Economic Development, is available to provide one-on-one assistance to farmers throughout this process, such as marketing and business planning, market research, contacting potential customers, etc.

Contact Cheryl DeBerry at 301-334-6968 or email cdeberry@garrettcounty.org to RSVP for the meeting or to schedule an appointment for farm business assistance.

WV Small Farms Conference & Winter Farmers Market

Three conferences in one, a farmers market, and local foods feasting!

Marketing local foods to our neighbors is more complicated than most realize. To provide ways to help make that easier for area farmers, the West Virginia Small Farms Conference will be held Tuesday through Thursday, February 24, 25, & 26, 2009 at the Ramada Inn, Morgantown.

In its fifth year, the conference addresses the challenges and opportunities all small farm families face as they strive to: manage their farm energy use, grow more profitable crops and animals, and better market what they produce direct to the consumer.

As part of this conference's dedication to the local food movement, food from over 25 area farmers will be served during meals and snacks throughout the three day conference.

Continuing with the local food lesson, a pre-conference kick-off event, the ***Winter Blues Farmers Market***, will be held Monday, February 23, 4:00 to 7:00 pm, in the lobby of the Ramada Inn. The event will feature farmers across the state who have brought their homegrown products to sell directly to the Morgantown area public and conference attendees.

Tuesday's workshop focus will be aimed partly at "**Farming with Fewer Fossil Fuels**" including sessions on conservation, alternative fuel sources, and farm applications for small solar and wind projects. Potential grant opportunities and energy tax credits that could make adopting these new technologies easier will be reviewed. A workshop on bio-fuels made from recycled cooking oils is planned. An alternative energy exhibit featuring wind, solar, geo thermal, and the other alternative fuel sources will be open all three days of the conference.

Also beginning Tuesday and continuing throughout the conference program will be **marketing workshops**, many dealing directly with improving the operation of existing farmers markets. A WV Department of Agriculture **agri-tourism workshop** will feature veteran farmers sharing their agri-tourism experiences. Workshops titled "Tracking Market Performance," "Real-Life Pricing," and "Understanding the Roles of Market Officers" will help market managers and vendors improve **farmers markets.**

Horticulture workshops, coordinated by Dr. Lewis Jett, Horticulture Extension Specialist with the WVU Extension Service, will include many sessions for those who raise animals as part of that all important goal, soil improvement. Additional topics will include "On-Farm Composting As Revenue Generation," "Ask the Butcher," and a workshop on pastured poultry. Steve Groff, NE SARE Farmer/Educator and cover crop guru, will share the many lessons he has learned on his Cedar Meadow Farm during "Soil Health through Cover Crop Management."

The keynote speaker during Wednesday's local food luncheon is scheduled to be Brian Snyder, Executive Director of Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture, an organization that is in its 18th year of "promoting profitable farms that produce healthy food for all people while respecting the natural environment."

Linda Whaley, Program Manager for the Food Sanitation Program and Training Program for the Public Health Sanitation Division at the WV Department of Health and Human Resources, will provide an update on **safe food handling** regulations, acidified food challenges, and to answer questions from the audience.

The West Virginia Farmers Market Association will host their second annual membership meeting at the conference and will unveil the new 'Buy Fresh Buy Local' West Virginia chapter logo.

For more information, contact Tom McConnell at 304-293-6131 X4237 or TRMcConnell@mail.wvu.edu or visit the conference website at: www.wvu.edu/~agexten/sustanag/events/SF2009_home.html

Connect Locally: Food, Farms and Community Conference

The **Connect Locally: Food, Farms and Community Conference** will be held January 16-17, 2009 in Frederick, Maryland at the Frederick Holiday Inn and Conference Center.

The keynote speaker will be Nina Planck, author of Real Food and the leading American expert on farmers' markets and local food. She will explore best practices in farmers' markets and innovative ideas for developing markets for local and traditional food.

Choose from in-depth pre-conference workshops that will tell you everything you need to know about soil health from the experts at the Rodale Institute or how to incorporate agritourism into your farming operation.

Conference sessions, led by the area's best researchers, Extension experts and experienced farmers, are guaranteed to stimulate your imagination for what's possible on and off your farm. Among them:

- Marketing
- Farming economics
- Grass based systems
- Sustainable production of hay, grain, fruit, vegetables and flowers
- and much, much more!

Contact:

Future Harvest-CASA
phone: 410-549-7878
futureharvestcasa@gmail.com
www.futureharvestcasa.org

Maryland Forage Conference

For the first time ever, the Maryland Cattlemen's Association and Beef Council will be hosting the Maryland Forage Conference in conjunction with the 2009 Maryland Cattle Industry Convention in Hagerstown March 6-7.

The conference will continue to host the Youth Skill-A-Thon and an outstanding speaker will entertain during the Friday evening banquet, Dr. Rick Rigsby from Rick Rigsby Communications. Considered among America's finest speakers, Rick Rigsby challenges audiences with a compelling message that engages the mind, energizes the will, and encourages the spirit.

The Mission of the Maryland Cattlemen's Association is to foster profitability, sustainability and stewardship across the Maryland Beef industry through producer education, beef promotion and political action.

Conference registration materials will be available in January through the Maryland Cattlemen's Association and Beef Council www.marylandcattle.org or call Dr. Scott Barao at 410-795-5309.

Greenhouse Workshop

On April 3rd, Maryland Cooperative Extension will offer a one-day workshop on Greenhouse Management. The workshop location has not been finalized but it will be held in Garrett County.

Stanton Gill will be the lead instructor for the workshop and will cover IPM and insect management. Stanton is the Principal Regional Nursery and Greenhouse Specialist for the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension stationed at the Central Maryland Research and Education Center in Ellicott City.

Other topics at the workshop will include greenhouse fertility and soluble salt management, disease control, and fertilizer applicators.

Mark the date on your calendar and watch the next newsletter for registration information.

2009 Appalachian Grazing Conference

With so many informative presentations about management strategies to increase profits, the 2009 Appalachian Grazing Conference is an opportunity that no Appalachian livestock producer should miss!

There will be presentations of interest to those with cattle, goats and sheep.

With a reasonable early registration fee of only $75 (if paid before 2/18/09) and discounted room rates of $76 (not including taxes) at the Lakeview Golf Resort and Spa in Morgantown, this Conference is an excellent value.

Because of the importance of the information being presented to grazing producers, many West Virginia Conservation Districts are offering scholarships to cover the conference fee! You may call your local conservation district for more information.

Topics for the 2009 Conference include animal health, alternative soil amendments, weed control, drought management, weaning calves on pasture, energy conservation on the farm and other grassland management related topics. There also will be vendor displays featuring a no till drill, post driver and lime spreader.

Conference registration opens 7:30 a.m. on Friday March 6 with the program beginning later at 9:30 a.m. The event adjourns at 4:00 p.m. on Saturday March 7.

Kicking off the conference is presenter, Joel McNair who is the editor and publisher of "Graze," a magazine with a common sense philosophy of letting those who do the grazing do the talking. His presentation topic is "The Future is Ours." McNair grazes dairy heifers and sheep on a small farm in southern Wisconsin.

Presenting on the subject of grass utilization is Gerald Fry, owner of Bovine Engineering and Consulting, an Arkansas business focused on beef cattle education and cattle reproduction. Fry also will be discussing cows as 'grass harvesting equipment' in a breakout session.

There will be a farm visit and cookout on Friday evening with transportation provided. While you eat, Jason Evans, Ph.D. will deliver a presentation on pasture-based beef production in a changing economy.

Room reservations must be made directly with the Lakeview Golf Resort and Spa by calling 1.800.624.8300 or 1.800.CALL.WVA. A block of rooms is on hold until February 2, 2009. Room prices are $76.00 for singles or doubles per night plus 12% tax. When making room reservations, be sure to mention the Appalachian Grazing Conference 2009.

Cancellations must be received on or before March 1, 2009.

If you have registration questions or would like to be a conference sponsor or vendor, you may contact Becky Casteel at 304.293.6131 ext. 4231 or Becky.Casteel@mail.wvu.edu

Brochures for the conference are available from the Garrett County Extension Office 301-334-6960.

Livestock Reproduction Workshop Series

A three-part workshop will be held on Livestock Reproduction on Thursday evenings starting on February 19th and ending on March 5th.

The workshops will cover basic livestock reproductive anatomy, the breeding cycle and reproduction management. The main focus will be on cattle and sheep.

The workshops will be held at the Garrett County Extension office in Mountain Lake Park from 7:00 to 9:00 pm. A registration fee of $10 will be collected for all three sessions. 4-H members will be exempt from paying the registration fee.

Please call the Extension Office at 301-334-6960 to register for the workshops.

Western Maryland Rural Leadership Academy Underway

Western Maryland has twelve individuals that have taken the step to better their leadership skills and get more involved with the field of agriculture and natural resources. The Western Maryland Rural Leadership Academy (WMRLA) held its first session on Saturday, November 1st at the Western Maryland 4-H Center near Bittinger. The group members learned about each other and team building through a series of activities lead by Maryland Cooperative Extension.

Dr. Roger Hanshaw, Assistant Director for Resources for West Virginia Cooperative Extension Service, spoke to the group about the importance of being a leader. Dr. Hanshaw helped the group understand that there are many types people but leaders are needed to get them moving in the right direction. Dr. Hanshaw also led the group in a discussion of critical issues facing farmers in western Maryland.

Ann Sherrard, Garrett County 4-H Educator, led the group in an interactive session . The group was asked questions about agriculture facts and attitudes about the future of agriculture.

The final event for the day was a panel discussion on local rural leadership. Joyce Bishoff, dairy farmer and Chair of the Board for the Garrett County Chamber of Commerce and Delmar Yoder, and past president of the Garrett County Farm Bureau, shared their experiences with the group regarding their personal leadership activities.

The second session of the WMRLA was held on December 6th at the Frostburg Public Library.

Participants first learned the importance of creating an "elevator speech," or a short and quick description of their job and/or passion to give potential customers or business associates.

The main program for the day was led by Dr. Kerry Odell, Provost of Potomac State College. The topic for the day was "Group Organization and Leadership". Dr. Odell explained the qualities of good (and less than stellar) leaders, the dynamics of groups, and ways leaders influence other people.

Participants then broke into groups to start planning future WMRLA sessions based around themes the group generated.

The January meeting of the WMRLA will feature Senator George Edwards discussing the legislative process and upcoming legislation affecting agriculture and natural resources.

The Western Maryland Rural Leadership Academy is a monthly program aimed at improving the leadership skills and community involvement of rural citizens in Garrett and Allegany Counties. The year-long academy is jointly sponsored by Maryland Cooperative Extension, University of Maryland and local business and organization sponsors.

For more information contact the Cooperative Extension office in either Garrett County at 301-334-6960 or Allegany County at 301-724-3320.

Nutrient Applicator Voucher Training

If your nutrient applicator voucher expires in March of 2009 or has already expired, you will need to attend a two-hour Maryland Department of Agriculture approved training session to receive a new voucher card. There will be a couple of opportunities in the local area to receive training.

First will be at the Tri-State Hay and Pasture conference being held on January 8th in Salisbury, PA (information on the conference can be found in this newsletter).

The other opportunity will be at Garrett College on March 26 from 7-9:00 pm in Room 224. The session at Garrett College will be a general crop fertility workshop. To register for the Garrett College workshop call the Extension Office at 301-334-6960.

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FF-5-W

Managing Tough Times

Income Enhancement Strategies for Farmers

EXPERT REVIEWED

Ken Foster
Mike Boehlje
Agricultural Economics

Purdue University

As farmers, you know that cost reduction is clearly the place to begin when developing survival strategies if you are facing serious financial difficulties. But many of you have adopted intensive production systems and have already reduced costs to the bare minimum over the last several years while prices of inputs continue to rise rapidly. This leaves little room for advice on how to weather financial stress through cost reduction.

However, another effective survival strategy is enhancing your income. You may have ways to generate additional income for debt service, family living expenses, or next year's operating capital. This publication discusses some strategies you might be able to use to enhance revenue.

Because only you, your family, employees, and consultants can know the specific situations on your farms, the advice below is general. Every point will not apply to each individual case. We hope that in some way you and your consultant will find useful information in this publication to help you make some of the decisions necessary to deal with financial stress.

Increase Throughput

Increasing throughput means increasing the revenue generated by a specific asset. For example, equipment purchases tend to be "lumpy"-- you can't buy one-half of a tractor or a feed handling system. You must purchase the whole thing. This means that most farmers have more of some asset than they can fully employ with their farm enterprises. One of the fundamental challenges of farming is increasing throughput. Some examples of opportunities to increase throughput include but are not limited to the following:

- using your machinery to provide custom services,
- renting your storage space,
- using existing feed mixing equipment to mix any specialized rations that you were previously purchasing,
- increasing the capacity utilization of existing feed mixing equipment by mixing for others, and
- custom manure spreading if you have sufficient equipment. (Check on state permitting requirements.)

Notice that all of these examples involve using equipment that you already own or are paying for anyway. The key is to identify existing assets that are not generating as much revenue as they might. However, remember to make sure that the added revenue from these activities exceeds any additional costs incurred.

Consider Off-Farm Income

Many farm families already have at least one family member earning supplemental income away from the farm. If you are not one of these farm families, then this could be the year when it becomes a necessity. An off-farm income source may not only generate a steady source of income for family expenses but also valuable health, retirement, and other benefits. However, making time for family activities is especially important in times of business stress. Beware of sacrificing the well-being of your family for a few more dollars from a low-paying off-farm job.

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Evaluate Home-Based Business Opportunities

In some cases you or a family member may have a business or professional skill that provides the basis for a home-based business. Maybe you have accounting or bookkeeping skills that you can use to provide a record keeping service to locally based farm and non-farm businesses. Some farmers have carpentry or craft skills that can generate cash income from making furniture or being part of a building or construction crew. Is there a need for childcare or a preschool business in your community that you have the skills to fulfill? What about a home repair business or using the farm shop to even do machinery and equipment repairs or truck and auto repairs. In many cases, farmers and their family members have unique skills and capacities that might be a source of supplemental income.

However, the key here is to evaluate before you decide to pursue a home-based business opportunity. Contact your local Extension office for information on the pros and cons of home-based businesses that will help you decide if that strategy is right for you and your family.

Liquidate Assets

Inventory your more liquid assets, and consider which ones might be most appropriate for relieving short-term financial stress. This is an area where caution is advised. Selling these assets is an irreversible decision that may not be wise even if it is to pay off debt. Consider the long-term earning potential of these liquid assets before selling, and compare this to the cost of other sources of cash.

For example, if a timber stand is in a stage of profitable growth and the growth rate in value exceeds the cost of refinancing debt, then it is better to leave the trees to grow until a future date. However, if the timber stand is nearing harvest stage, it may be more economical to harvest it this year rather than enter into additional debt. Have your local Extension educator and district forester help you evaluate your timber stand and develop marketing and timber stand improvement plans.

Other examples of potentially liquid assets include developable real estate, grain inventories, financial investments, etc. Again, use extreme caution when deciding whether to liquidate such assets, and compare the longer term costs of earnings losses to the short-term benefits of reduced financial stress.

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2009 Master Gardener Training

The University of Maryland Cooperative Extension will offer Master Gardener Training Classes in the spring of 2009 for both Garrett and Allegany Counties. Master Gardeners are volunteer educators for the University of Maryland that help to educate the public about safe, effective and sustainable horticultural practices that build healthy gardens, landscapes, and communities.

To become a Master Gardener, you must complete the training course, pass the final exam with a score of 75% or better, and volunteer 40 hours during the first year to become a certified Master Gardener. In following years, you must volunteer 20 hours per year and have 10 hours per year in advanced training. Master Gardener course topics will include: botany, ecology, integrated pest management, composting, soils, fertilizers and plant nutrition.

In **Garrett County**, the class will held at Garrett College on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm, April 7, 2009 through May 21, 2009. The cost will be $130. Please register for the class through the office of Continuing Education at Garrett College at 301-387-3069 by March 27, 2009. If you have any questions, please call Sherry Frick at the Garrett County Cooperative Extension Office at 301-334-6960.

In **Allegany County**, the class will be held at Allegany College on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm, April 7, 2009 through May 21, 2009. The cost will be $150. Please register for the class through the office of Continuing Education at Allegany College at 301-784-5341 by March 27, 2009. If you have any questions, please call Derrick Bender at the Allegany County Cooperative Extension Office at 301-724-3320.

To learn more about the Maryland Master Gardener Program, please visit *www.mastergardener.umd.edu*

Tri State Hay & Pasture Conference

What You Don't Know About Forage Production Will Hurt You

Hay growers, dairy and livestock producers, and those who work with these producers can get the latest information on forage management and costs of production at the **Tri-State Hay and Pasture Conference** to be held on January 8th at the Salisbury Fire Hall in Salisbury, PA.

"What You Don't Know About the Growth of Forage Plants Will Hurt You" and "What Does That Bale of Hay Really Cost?" are just two of the topics to be covered by featured speakers Marvin Hall, Professor of Forage Management at Penn State University and Gordon Groover, Extension Economist - Farm Management at Virginia Tech. With the premature loss of many hay and pasture stands in recent years and the increased cost of fertilizer and other inputs, these topics should be timely and of a great deal of interest, according to Dr. Les Vough, forage crops Extension Specialist Emeritus at the University of Maryland College of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Volatile prices and uncertain markets lead farm business managers to ask lots of questions. 'Is nitrogen too expensive to use? Should I just use clover? What's the value of that bale of hay or that paddock of fescue? Should I cross-fence that field? Should I buy a new baler,...?' According to Groover, the answer to each of these questions is, "It depends." Understanding what it depends on will help farmers and livestock produces make informed decisions in response to marketplace uncertainties.

Hall and Groover will each give two presentations at the conference. Hall's second presentation will be entitled "Selecting the Best Forage Variety When Seed Prices Are High" and Groover's will be "To Hay or Not to Hay?" (an economic analysis of the cost of making hay vs. extending the grazing season). Both are very popular speakers in the mid-Atlantic region, bringing not only a common-sense approach to hay and pasture management and reducing costs of production, but also new and innovative ideas for improving forage production and economics.

In addition to the presentations by Hall and Groover, Dr. Ed Rayburn, Extension Forage Agronomist at West Virginia University will present "Nutrient Management for Low Cost Hay Production and Tom Basden, Extension Specialist in Nutrient Management at West Virginia University will present "On-Farm Nutrient Cycling". Both of these speakers have years of experience with cattle pasture systems and practical nutrient management.

The conference includes a trade show and lunch will be provided. The conference also offers Maryland producers nutrient applicator voucher credits and counts toward two (2) hours of recertification credits for Certified Nutrient Management Consultants.

Pre-registration by January 2 for the Tri-State conference will cost $16 per person and at-the-door registration will cost $20 per person. Checks for the Tri-State conference should be made payable to **Garrett EAC** and sent to Willie Lantz, Garrett County Extension Office, 1916 Maryland Highway, Suite A, Mtn. Lake Park, MD 21550 (phone: 301-334-6960).

Maryland Dairy Convention Set

A line-up of top-notch, nationally recognized speakers at the Maryland Dairy Convention will equip dairy farmers and the industry with facts they need to educate the public and the tools they need to help them share their story. The event is set for 8:30 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 28, at the Lynfield Event Complex, Building 5, in Frederick, Md. The theme is "New Dairy Challenges in the 2000s".

Dr. Jude Capper, a post-doctoral research associate working with Dr. Dale Bauman in the Department of Animal Science at Cornell University, will share groundbreaking research. Their study, published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, shows the reduction on the dairy industry's carbon footprint achieved by using technology to improve dairy cow productive efficiency.

Liz Doornink, Wisconsin dairy farmer and co-leader of American Farmers for the Advancement and Conservation of Technology, will provide tips on how dairy farmers and industry supporters can share agriculture's message with the public.

Farmers will also learn about feeding strategies in today's economic environment, presented by Mike Hutjens of the University of Illinois. They will hear updates on dairy promotions from the Mid-Atlantic Dairy Association and dairy crop insurance from the University of Maryland. This year, a special drawing will be held for the first 25 people in the door before the meeting begins.

In addition, a full day of junior activities is planned, including the popular annual junior dairyman contest and a program by Liz Doornink on how youth can address questions from the public at fairs and other events.

An afternoon tour to the Hoff family's Coldsprings Farm will feature a livestock composting demonstration, another important tool for dairy farmers.

An evening dinner and program will highlight Maryland Dairy Shrine industry honorees. Live and silent auctions will benefit industry and youth efforts. Meeting sponsorship opportunities are available.

For more information or to sponsor the event, contact Laurie Savage at 301-349-0750 or e-mail *secretary@ marylanddairyindustry.org*

What's Happening?

January 8
Tri-State Hay & Pasture Conference
Counts for nutrient applicator voucher credits.
Salisbury Fire Hall in Salisbury, PA. See article.

January 12
Private Applicator Exam Review
6:00-8:00 pm, Grantsville Public Library. See article.

January 16 & 17, 2009
Connect Locally: Food, Farms & Community Conference
Frederick Holiday Inn & Conference Center, Frederick, MD. See article.

January 26
Private Applicator Pesticide Certification Test
4:00 pm, Grantsville Public Library. See article.

February 2
Livestock Feeding Workshop
6:30 to 8:30 pm on Mondays in February at Garrett College Northern Outreach Center. See Article.

February 9
Livestock Feeding Workshop
6:30 to 8:30 pm on Mondays in February at Garrett College Northern Outreach Center. See Article.

February 16
Livestock Feeding Workshop
6:30 to 8:30 pm on Mondays in February at Garrett College Northern Outreach Center. See article.

February 17
Restaurant/Grower Meeting
1:30 pm at Will O' the Wisp's meeting room. See article.

February 19
Livestock Reproduction Workshop Series
7 to 9:00 pm, Garrett Co. Extension Office. See article

February 23
Livestock Feeding Workshop
6:30 to 8:30 pm on Mondays in February at Garrett College Northern Outreach Center. See Article.

February 24-26, 2009
WV Small Farms Conference
Ramada Inn, Morgantown. See article.

February 26
Livestock Reproduction Workshop Series
7 to 9:00 pm, Garrett Co. Extension Office. See article.

February 27—March 1, 2009
Maryland Farm Bureau Young Farmer Leadership Retreat
Wisp Resort, McHenry

February 28
Maryland Dairy Convention
Lynfield Event Complex Building #5 near Frederick. See article.

March 5
Livestock Reproduction Workshop Series
7 to 9:00 pm, Garrett Co. Extension Office. See article

March 6-7, 2009
Appalachian Grazing Conference
7:30 am March 6—4:00 pm March 7 at Lakeview Golf Resort & Spa in Morgantown.

March 20
Mt. Top Fruit and Vegetable Workshop
Garrett College, 10 am to 3:30 pm. See article.

March 26
Crop Fertility Workshop
Counts for nutrient applicator voucher credits.
7 to 9:00 pm, Garrett College room 224. See article.

April 3, 2009
Greenhouse Management Workshop
Time and location to be determined. See article.

Spring Semester of the General Forestry Course

The University of Maryland Cooperative Extension is announcing the opening for the spring 2009 semester of the General Forestry Course. The course begins February 1 and runs until May 20, 2009. Registration opens January 2.

There are no formal classes and you work from the comfort of your home using your own woodlot, a friend's or a public forest. The course is available as both a paper version and a web-based version. You will learn how to protect your trees from insects and diseases; step-by-step procedures walk you through a forest inventory and stand analysis; details of the forestry business are presented, and much more. Ultimately, the course exercises help you develop the framework for a forest management plan.

The course has changed enrollees' perspectives towards forests and forest management, encouraged family discussions, and even saved some folks thousands of dollars.

The course cost is $300.00. Included are supplemental readings (*A Sand County Almanac*, *The Woodland Steward*, *American Forests: A History of Resiliency and Recovery*, and a small pamphlet entitled *What Tree Is That?*). A certificate of completion is awarded when all assignments are completed.

To register, go to our website at http://www.mdforest.umd.edu There you can read a lesson from the text, view an interactive exercise, and find detailed course information.

For more information, contact Nancy Stewart by phone at 410/827-8056, ext. 112; or email nstewar1@umd.edu. Remember, registration opens January 2. Check for details on the website today and mark the date for open enrollment on your calendar!

Private Pesticide Applicator Training and Test

The Garrett County office of Maryland Cooperative Extension will offer a two-hour training for anyone interested in preparing for the Maryland Private Pesticide Applicator exam.

The Maryland Private Applicator License allows individuals to purchase restricted use pesticides for use on property that they operate for farming purposes. The exam covers safe handling and application of pesticides as well as topics on integrated pest management, pesticide laws, environmental aspects of pesticide use, etc.

The training session will be held on January 12th from 6-8pm at the Grantsville Public Library (***note: this is a change in location and time***). There is no fee for the meeting but we do ask you to call and register for the training session.

Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) does provide a free training manual to anyone who plans to take the exam. Those manuals are available at the Garrett Co. Extension Office in Mountain Lake Park.

MDA will give the exam on January 26th starting at 4:00 pm at the Grantsville Library (***note: this is a change in location and time***). There is no cost to take the Private Applicator exam. If you pass the exam, MDA will send you an application for the license, which costs $7.00. Once you are licensed, you will need to attend one, two-hour recertification training during the three years the license is valid in order to renew your license.

If you have any questions or to register for the class or test, please call the Extension Office at 301-334-6960.

Summer Strawberries—Sweet Success

The cold weather in October brought to an end the third year of work by local producers and the Extension Service on the Northeast SARE grant entitled "An Integrated Approach to Developing a Day-Neutral Strawberry Production Industry". The grant has assisted local producers with various aspects of production and marketing.

In 2008, the major focus of the grant work was to evaluate the various day-neutral strawberry varieties. A variety trial was conducted in Garrett County at the farm of Dr. Harry Swartz and at the Penn State horticulture farm which is part of The Russell E. Larson Agricultural Research farm at Rock Springs, PA. The purpose of the variety trial was to compare available varieties under equal growing conditions to be able to evaluate fruit production. The trial in Garrett County included 13 different varieties. The plug type strawberry plants were planted in early May in a typical plasticulture system. Three repetitions of each variety were planted. Starting in June and continuing into October, fruit was harvested three times a week. The fruit from each plot was weighed and the berries were counted to determine the average size. We also evaluated the sweetness of each variety by measuring the sugar level with a refactometer. The varieties which topped the trial for yield and size were 'Seascape' which produced 10,800 lbs per acre with an average berry size of 12.5 grams, 'Evie 2' which produced 10,500 pounds per acre with an average berry size of 14.5 grams, and 'Everest' which produced 8,100 pounds per acre with and average berry size of 10.3 grams. A complete analysis of the variety trial will be available in spring of 2009.

In 2008, fifteen growers in the area produced day-neutral strawberries, marketing the fruit at farmers markets. "Opportunities exist for producing and marketing greater amounts of fruits. Garrett County has cool summer weather which is ideal for producing summer strawberries," says University of Maryland Associate Professor of Horticulture, Dr. Harry Swartz. If anyone is interested in producing day neutral strawberries in 2009, contact the Garrett County Extension Office at 301-334-6960. The Extension office will be coordinating an order for day-neutral plug plants.

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