Registration Opens for 2017 SFA Annual Conference; Vote Now to Determine Conference Session Topics

Registration is now open for the 2017 SFA Annual Conference, set for Feb. 11 at the College of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph, Minn.

Through Nov. 30, SFA members may register for the Super Early Bird price of just $35, while nonmembers may register for $45.

To ensure we’re providing timely, cutting-edge education, voting has also begun on Conference session topics. Vote on your preferences and even submit your own topic ideas; we’ll create the schedule around the wishes of our farmer community.

Sign up now, get the best price, put the SFA Conference on your calendar, and start voting on the session topics you want addressed! The more votes we get, the better the sessions can be tailored.

Nearly 300 people filled the Gorecki Center at the 2016 SFA Annual Conference. Don’t miss the 2017 version.

And watch soon for registration for the 2017 Midwest Soil Health Summit, which will be Feb. 15-16 at an all-new venue: Bigwood Event Center in Fergus Falls.
SFA Grazing Workshop With Dr. Allen Williams is May 26-27

SFA is co-sponsoring a grazing workshop with two-time Midwest Soil Health Summit speaker Dr. Allen Williams (above) on May 26-27 in Wolf Lake and Menagha, Minn.

The workshop will begin May 26 at the Lions Hall in downtown Wolf Lake. Registration begins at 9 a.m. and program at 9:30 both days. The May 27 programming includes a field day at Al Lake’s farm, 16168 560th Ave, Menagha. Both days will wrap up around 3:30 p.m.

Registration, which includes lunch, is $50 for both days and $20 for students or children under 18. Preregistration is strongly recommended – click here to register.

Info: Kent Solberg at 844.922.5573 Ext. 701 or kent@sfa-mn.org.

Executive Director’s Note

Basic cattle handling is not rocket science.

However, I’ve seen it made much more difficult than it need be. Moving cattle from one part of the farm to another simply by walking among them, without a horse, or a four-wheeler or a dozen helpers requires patience, and observation.

I’ll confess that it does seem like a second nature to me to think through moving an animal across the farm, but then I remember my youth was different from most people my age. Some of my earliest memories are of walking in the pasture to bring in the cows for milking. Along with my older brother, I got the lead cow going, chased the stragglers, and mastered the art of patiently handling large animals in an open field by the time I was 6 years old.

So, I’ll admit it does seem odd to me when I back up to the livestock processing facility we use to process our beef, and just as I’m opening the door of the trailer, the USDA inspector on staff, dressed in a white coat, rattles open the garage door at the back of the facility and stands directly in the line of sight of the animal I’m trying to coax of...
the trailer – the animal I’m trying to keep calm for the last few minutes of its life. But I digress.

If I could, I’d require all farm workers, meat inspectors, sale barn employees and truckers to undergo basic livestock handling classes, like what we cover in Deep Roots Farm Skills 101. It’s not hard, but it does require observing animal behavior and helping them do what they want to do – not forcing them to do what you want them to do.

When I try to give people a crash course on cattle handling, I tell them to remember four things:

1. They cannot see you if you are directly behind them.
2. If you are to the side of an animal, closer to the head than to the tail, they will turn around and go the other way.
3. Once you get them all moving, they will tend to keep moving.
4. Don’t yell, or make loud noises, this isn’t the “OK Corral.”

There are more components to cattle handling, and I’ve looked for a succinct training manual on this for a long time. Thank you Meranda Small and Progressive Cattleman for putting this out. I’ll be referring to it often!

Space Remains for May 1 Homestead Dairy Class

Our next Deep Roots Farmer Development Program course is Introduction to Homestead Dairy on May 1, 2016. Anyone wondering about adding a dairy component to their farm enterprise or who would like more information to guide their current dairy practices should consider this class. Registration options include two milking labs – although space in the labs is nearly full. Don’t delay – click here to register.

DEEP ROOTS NOTE: Our Farm Skills 101 is now sold out for the Spring 2016 semester. Fall 2016 classes will be announced as their details are available; keep watching SFA Connect and the Deep Roots homepage for details.

East Central Visioning Meeting is May 5 in Isanti

SFA East Central Chapter is officially up and running, and to mark the occasion the chapter is hosting its first event at 7 p.m. May 5 at Wintergreens Golf and Grill, 306 Credit Union Dr NE, Isanti.

The evening will include an informal networking meeting as well as a discussion of vision, goals, and possible events and activities for the nascent chapter. Get in on the ground floor and help guide the direction of this new SFA chapter!

The event is free and open to the public. To register, visit the East Central homepage.

Central Chapter Keyline Design Workshop is May 6

Come learn from a Central Minnesota farmer about using keyline design principles on his farm to manage water during an upcoming SFA Central Chapter workshop, “Restoration Agriculture & Keyline Design for Improving Hydrology.” This demonstration project explores how we can utilize excess water as an asset to increase productivity and resilience by capturing and storing it high on the landscape.

The workshop is 4 p.m. Fri., May 6, at Island Lake Farm, 23111 State Hwy 18, Deerwood. Farmer Jim Chamberlin has been researching and installing berm and swale terraces for over a decade. This free field day will include hands-on demonstration of surveying and installing a keyline terrace, as well as
touring other established systems.

This workshop is free but advance registration is recommended. Click here to register.

For more information, visit the SFA Central Chapter homepage.

### Slow Money Gathering with Woody Tasch is May 3

Slow Money Minnesota and Renewing the Countryside are hosting special guest speaker Woody Tasch, founder of the Slow Money movement, from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. May 3 at Como Dockside Pavilion in St. Paul.

Woody is widely renowned as a thought leader in patient capital, mission-related investing and community development venture capital. He is former Chairman and CEO of Investor’s Circle (IC), one of the oldest angel networks in the country and the only one dedicated to sustainability. After Woody’s remarks, we will unveil and launch a new Slow Money-style revolving loan fund.

Registration is $35 and includes local food. A cash bar will be available. To learn more and register, click here.

### Check This Out

- From the Star Tribune, here's a recap on Gov. Dayton venturing into “farm country” to talk about water quality – the story features 2015 Midwest Soil Health Summit presenter and Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts President Ian Cunningham.

### Annual Conference Photo Feature

Photographer extraordinaire Crystal Liepa once again documented our 2016 Annual Conference, held Feb. 13, 2016, at the College of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph, Minn. To learn more about Crystal, visit her website.
SFA Connect is your bi-weekly link to the Sustainable Farming Association

The Sustainable Farming Association is a chapter-based, statewide non-profit organization that supports the development and enhancement of sustainable farming systems through innovation, demonstration, education, and farmer-to-farmer networking. If you, your farm or organization has any upcoming events that you would like posted on the SFA Community Calendar, email info@sfa-mn.org.

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