Advanced Grazing Workshop Draws Crowd for Hands-On Soil Health Demos with Dr. Allen Williams

By Kent Solberg • SFA Livestock & Grazing Specialist

Thirty-five producers and two agency personnel attended SFA’s two-day Advanced Grazing Workshop last week with Dr. Allen Williams in Wolf Lake, Minn. Participants learned about how grazing influences soil health, the advantages of well-managed ruminant livestock on soil health, and adaptive high-stock-density grazing. The workshop consisted of classroom instruction coupled with field demonstrations on how to apply the knowledge to their farm operations.

Dr. Williams, a two-time speaker at our Midwest Soil Health Summit, is a champion of the grass-fed beef industry as well as a leader in cutting edge grazing methodology.

Keep watching SFA Connect for more soil health and grazing event announcements.

May 31, 2016
Executive Director's Note

I'm passing on a fantastic opportunity today, which I hope many of you will consider and learn from. SFA has been about the business of developing two key components of sustainability and sustainable agriculture for many years. Our work in the areas of developing and promoting soil health-focused farming practices as well as developing beginning farmers are ways in which SFA adds value to the agricultural community.

I met Ivan Arenson at a recent Slow Money Fundraising event. After learning about SFA and our work, he approached me for feedback and ideas about his Fish Family Farms Request for Proposal.

In the normal course of my work, I run into people who have a farming opportunity or land available and are just seeking the right person to develop the opportunity. I also run into many aspiring farmers who are looking for an opportunity to get into farming. The challenge is matching the aspiring farmer with the farming opportunity in a way which results in a strong chance of sustainable success.

After reviewing the Fish Family Farms RFP, I've not found an opportunity with an equal level of thoughtfulness, flexibility and long-range potential. I would love to see other landowners and retiring farmers put as much thought and planning into their opportunities as Ivan has with this one. Not only is there ample land available now – with more possible in the future – the spirit of the RFP includes a broader perspective on community and regional branding.

If you are really serious about farming and are ready to commit your life to building a farm business and enhancing rural community, I would heartily endorse reviewing and thinking through the Fish Family Farms RFP. I believe the process outlined therein, and the interactions with Ivan and his family, would be beneficial to those who apply. And the farmer or group of farmers selected to develop this business will benefit from Ivan’s personal business knowledge and commitment to sharing value fairly. It could make for a great long-term farm business.

Soil Health Network Event: June 1 in Clinton

Big Stone SWCD is hosting an SFA Soil Health Network event to inform the public about the upcoming buffer law and soil health from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. June 1 – tomorrow – at the Clinton Memorial Building on Main St in Clinton. The event is free and lunch is provided – click here to RSVP and learn more.

The program will include a buffer map presentation, a meeting to discuss soil health possibilities and alternatives, and will include presentations from the DNR and Farmers Union. This event is co-sponsored by the Upper Minnesota River Watershed District, Big Stone SWCD and Big Stone County.

More info: 320.839.6149 Ext. 3.

Cannon River Farmer Exchange is June 11 in Faribault

Tiffany Tripp and Andy Olson of Graise Farm are hosting the first 2016 Cannon River Farmer to Farmer Exchange from 5 to 9 p.m. Sat., June 11 at their farm, 16914 Dixon Trail, Faribault.

Tiffany and Andy will host a farm tour and share different electric fencing that is used for chickens and pastured-pig paddocks as well as their DIY chicken tractor and pig and chicken waterers that help lower overhead costs. A bonfire and barbecue will follow the tour; please bring your own meat to grill and a dish to share.

This event is free and open to all. Click here to RSVP. Info: tatrippmn@gmail.com or
Garlic Growers Field Day is July 9

A free SFA field day for current and prospective garlic growers will be 10:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sat., July 9 at two farms: Living Song Farm, 7616 25th St SW, Howard Lake, MN, with a tour of Jerry Ford's garlic operation; and Chris and Joanne Kudrna's farm, Plum Creek Garlic, 2547 195th St E, Clearwater.

[Click here to RSVP.]

Joining the farmer presenters will be Dr. Carl Rosen, a soil scientist who has done extensive research on growing garlic in northern climates and is head of the Department of Soil Water and Climate at the University of Minnesota.

The event begins with a tour of Living Song Farm followed by a potluck lunch. Then, the group will travel to Plum Creek Garlic for a tour and end-of-day snacks and beverages.

The event, part of SFA's Festival of Farms series, is produced by SFA's Upper Midwest Garlic Growers Group and the Crow River Chapter. Info: jerry@sfa-mn.org or 1.844.922.5573 Ext. 700.

Forage Council Summer Tour is July 14 in Wadena

Crow Wing River Basin Forage Council, an SFA networking group, is hosting its summer tour from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. July 14 at Ivan and Dayle Reinke's Cloverleaf Grass Farm, 62619 285th St SW, Wadena.

Attend an evening workshop covering the results of several years of bale grazing on pasture productivity, an overview of the Cloverleaf Farm grazing systems, grazing warm season natives and cover crops to address the summer slump and extend the grazing season, and an opportunity to try a variety of portable energized fence materials in the field. Whether you are new to grazing or a seasoned vet, interested in bale grazing or looking to extend the grazing season, you will find something of interest.

Presenters include the Reinkes, SFA Livestock & Grazing Specialist Kent Solberg, and NRCS Grazing Specialist Jeff Duchene.

The event is free and dinner is included; a freewill donation will be accepted at the door to cover the meal. Please preregister for planning purposes by clicking here.

2017 Annual Conference Voting Now Open

Once again, we are using this online voting system to select programming for the SFA Annual Conference, which is set for Feb. 11, 2017, at the College of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph, Minn. Vote on the topics YOU want addressed at the 2017 SFA Annual Conference and enter your topic ideas!

[Click here to vote and enter your ideas. Here are the current Top Ten ideas:

- Time to Call the Butcher: What to Expect, Terminology, and How to Help Customers Navigate the Process of Custom-Ordering
- Farming is Great, But I Need a BREAK!: Strategies and Tools for Dealing with Livestock When You Need to Get Away
- Year-Round Income Streams on 15 Acres or Fewer
- Deep Winter Greenhouse Producton: Mastering the Three Winter Seasons]
A New, Easy Way to Share Your SFA Event

By Jason Walker • SFA Communications & Membership Coordinator

When an SFA Chapter, Networking Group, or approved member is hosting an SFA event, we have built the infrastructure to facilitate the following.

Upon submission of basic event information through our SFA Event Entry Form, which is available both on the Chapter Resource Portal and Networking Group Resource Portal, the SFA Communications Team will build an event registration page and a homepage on www.sfa-mn.org; add the event to the SFA Events Calendar, which qualifies the event for coverage under SFA's event insurance policy; advertise the event in the SFA Connect newsletter, which is sent every two weeks to over 3,000 sustainable ag supporters in the Upper Midwest; and via other means.

A similar process is already in place for SFA’s Soil Health Network; Network members should input their events and view the calendar on our Soil Health Portal.

For more information, contact jason@sfa-mn.org.

Check This Out

- The "new and improved" NRCS Web Soil Survey is now available. Check it out here.
- SFA members Lucas and Alise Sjostrom and their Jer-Lindy Farms recently won a U.S. Dairy Sustainability Award. Read the Midwest Dairy Association’s recap here.

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.
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.