

# Dairy Grazing

## The First “Greened” Trade for North Central Wisconsin

*By: Diane Weiler, NCWWDB Sustainability Coordinator*



On July 20, 2011, a new apprenticeship program was kicked-off at the Nate Weisenfeld farm in Marathon County. The Dairy Grazing apprenticeship program is sponsored by GrassWorks, Department of Workforce Development and Northcentral Technical College (NTC).

The celebration included a welcoming from Wendy Galbraith from the Grassworks Board of Directors. Speakers included Nate Weisenfeld, one of the new Dairy Grazing Apprentices; Joe Tomandl III, Program Director of the Grassworks Apprenticeship; Richard Cates, Director of UW School for Beginning Dairy Farmers; Jane Pawasarat, Division Administrator of Employment and Training, Department of Workforce Development; and Karen Morgan, Director of Wisconsin Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards.

During the celebration, four apprentices signed their apprenticeship contracts launching the new program. Participants were able to enjoy a pasture walk, as well as sample a variety of grass-fed, dairy refreshments.

### **What is Managed Grazing?**

Managed grazing (dairy grazing) is an efficient, sustainable and profitable farming method in which livestock are rotated through paddocks of nutritious grasses and legumes that are allowed to rest and re-grow. Farmers who utilize managed grazing improve animal health; build soil and water resources; create habitat; produce high quality food; and contribute to local economies.

### **Who is GrassWorks?**

GrassWorks is a 20-year old, statewide, non-profit membership organization that is directed by and for producers. The organization conducts education and outreach on “managed grazing”

in partnership with many other institutions, agencies and organizations. It is best known for the Annual GrassWorks Grazing Conference, which brings together farmers, grazing specialists, researchers, educators and other stakeholders for a premiere educational and community-building event. GrassWorks is an industry sponsor of the new Dairy Grazier Apprenticeship.

### **What is Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship?**

- In this new apprenticeship program, apprentices work on-farm under a Master Dairy Grazier (an established “managed grazing” dairy farmer) who has had training in mentoring three opportunities through NTC and UW School for Beginning Dairy Farmers.
- The Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship is a two-year program. Apprentices receive compensation on a progressive scale. Apprentices “earn while they learn”, then upon completion of the program, their status as a skilled worker is recognized nationally.
- This program will help the dairy industry transition to the next generation by training new farmers in “Managed Grazing,” an economically and environmentally sustainable farming method.
- A graduate of the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship program will be capable of becoming an independent owner-operator of a grazing dairy farm, a milk-share partner, or a farm manager.
- The Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship program is open to anyone – from the complete novice to the seasoned farmhand – who wants to become a dairy farmer. Individuals can receive program credit for previous work experience and education.

### **What is NCWWDB’s role in the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship?**

Through the Sector Alliance for the Green Economy (SAGE) grant, eligible apprentices will be given financial assistance supporting their study in the new trade, as well as needed support services. The North Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board (NCWWDB) is proud to be the only Workforce Development Area in the state to provide the Dairy Grazier Apprenticeship program to the initial apprentices who reside in and near Marathon County.

Diane Weiler, who is the Program Coordinator for the SAGE grant with NCWWDB states, “It is an exciting opportunity for us (NCWWDB) to support the new apprentices in a new apprenticeship program, while supporting growth in the dairy industry with managed grazing. Recently, Wisconsin Apprenticeship celebrated 100 years of preparation of skilled trades in the construction, manufacturing and service industries and now with the addition of the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship, further training will occur for certified skilled workers in managed grazing ensuring a high standard of training. We are pleased to be a part of the growth in this industry.”

NCWWDB will continue to encourage participation in the Dairy Grazing apprenticeship program for interested new apprentices. For more information on the apprenticeship program contact Diane Weiler at 715-422-4714 or by email at [dweiler@ncwwdb.org](mailto:dweiler@ncwwdb.org).

# Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship Program Open House Photos

## Nate Weisenfeld Farm in Marathon County 7-20-11



Wendy Galbraith, GrassWorks Board of Directors, addresses audience



Nate Weisenfeld, Dairy Grazing Apprentice/farm owner



Joe Tomandl III, Program Director, Grassworks Apprenticeship



Jane Pawasarat, Division Administrator, Employment & Training - DWD



Karen Morgan, Director, WI Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards



Apprentices signing contracts



Pasture Walk

