



Sustainable Agriculture for Alaska



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July

23...Delta Farm Tour, Sawmill Creek Road area, Delta Junction, 803-4752.

25–27...Deltana Fair and Music Festival, Delta Junction, 895-3247, www.deltanafair.com.

27...Fairbanks Farm Tour, noon–5 p.m., Fairbanks Experiment Farm area, Fairbanks Economic Development Corp., 452-2185

31-Aug. 3...Southeast Alaska State Fair, Haines, 766-2476, www.seakfair.org.

1–9...Tanana Valley State Fair, Fairbanks, 452-3750, www.tananavalleystatefair.com.

15–17...Kenai Peninsula State Fair, Ninilchik, 567-3670, www.kenaipeninsulafair.org

21–Sept. 1...Alaska State Fair, Palmer, 745-4827, www.alaskastatefair.org.

October

28–29...Alaska Invasive Species Conference, Anchorage Marriot. Check www.cnipm.org for coming details.

'Tis the Season for Farmers Markets!
Visit dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ for a listing of markets throughout Alaska and hours of operation.

UAF Veterinarian Shares a World of Agricultural Knowledge

By Nancy Tarnai, UAF School of Natural Resources and Extension

New University of Alaska Fairbanks veterinarian Lisa Lunn sees her role as a bridge between farmers and veterinarians. “It’s daunting to be the first person in this role,” she said.

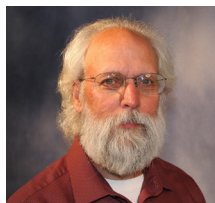
Lunn is an associate professor in the UAF Department of Veterinary Medicine and the food animal veterinarian for the UAF Cooperative Extension Service.

She and her husband, Kevin Krugle, arrived in Alaska a couple of months ago from Grenada, an island in the southeastern Caribbean Sea. “I hope I can help educate the producers who don’t have veterinarians close by,” Lunn said. “I’ll work with veterinarians and state veterinarians to fill the gaps in knowledge.”

Raised until the age of 12 in Massachusetts, Lunn’s life changed radically when her mother married a dairy farmer and the family moved to Cobleskill, New York, to live on one of the area’s last working dairy farms.

(Continued on page 2)

**COORDINATOR'S
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Steven Seefeldt, Alaska SARE PDP Coordinator

Here it is the beginning of July; the fair season is starting, plants in our farms and gardens have some size to them and we have an idea of what autumn harvest will be like. There is so much to do this summer and yet I find myself between farm and ranch visits thinking about the next sustainable agriculture conference.

In my conversations with growers over the last few summers, I find that most of us started farming or ranching because we thought it would be profitable/fulfilling/fun. But, of course, the reality is that raising plants and animals is hard work and there are an amazing number of things that can go wrong. There are always too many things to think about, too many things to balance and too

(Continued on page 2)



Lisa Lunn, a new veterinarian at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, cozies up to a jersey cow at Northern Lights Dairy in Delta Junction during a field trip May 12 for UAF School of Natural Resources students. Photo by Nancy Tarnai



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Editors: Steven Seefeldt, Agriculture and Horticulture Agent, and Darcy Etcheverry, IPM/Ag Program Assistant

Layout & Design: Ronda L. Boswell

(Continued from page 1)

“That started my life in farming,” Lunn said. “I absolutely fell in love with cows. On our small farm we treated animals with respect. It was a lot of work but I loved it.”

Lunn always knew she wanted to be a veterinarian and she joined FFA to continue her interests. Meeting young farmers from huge operations was an eye opener for Lunn because she realized that small family farms are not that different from corporate farms. “Whether it’s 20 cows or 2,000 it’s the same management,” she said. “Some cows have names and some have numbers.”

Back then the FFA conventions were held in Kansas City. “On a whim I applied to Kansas State University,” Lunn said. She earned a degree in animal science, then a doctorate of veterinary medicine. “That was the greatest decision I ever made,” she said. “I learned large animal and small animal medicine. It’s so well rounded.” She did her residency at Michigan State University then became a faculty member there.

For the past five years she has been teaching at St. George’s University in Grenada. “I was exposed to Third World small ruminants, a very different form of agriculture,” Lunn said. “They were happy for the knowledge.”

It was in Grenada that Lunn became captivated by the One Health Initiative, a movement to unite human and veterinary medicine. “We owe it to the world to share our knowledge,” she said. “This could be important in rural Alaska.”

While Lunn admits it’s going to be a challenge to

serve the entire state, she plans to survey producers to see what their needs are and then tailor online webinars to meet those needs as best she can. She wants to have an easily accessible question and answer tool on the Extension website.

Lunn wants to encourage Alaska youth to get involved in 4-H and FFA and will work closely with the state veterinarian to try to keep everyone informed on how to be productive and have a safe food supply.

“We’ve got a big challenge,” she said. “My to-do list gets bigger and bigger.”

In the veterinary medicine classroom, she has big plans also. She’s thrilled about the life-size simulated cow and horse the department will get. This way students will be able to examine the internal organs without using real animals. “The modern way is to train on simulators until students gain good skills,” she said.

Offering Alaska students the opportunity to study veterinary medicine in Fairbanks is a win-win situation in Lunn’s opinion. “To go in the Lower 48 is expensive and they may not give the education needed for Alaska,” she said. “We’ll put an Alaska spin on it. Raising cattle in Alabama is very different from Alaska. And there are also sled dogs, reindeer and bison.”

Lunn believes the state doesn’t have enough large animal veterinarians to cover the farms dotted all over. “I hope to be a resource and work with veterinarians to get information out about herd health and offer continuing education for veterinarians,” she said.

Lunn is so fascinated with Jersey cows she’d have one for a pet if she had the room. Meanwhile, she has three very spoiled cats. ■

(Coordinator's Corner, continued from page 1)

many demands on our time. There can be too many decisions to make and, at times, I have wondered if we are even asking the correct questions.

Sustainable agriculture is more than how you raise plants and animals or your profit margins. At its core, the question is about your goals and how to get there while maintaining economic, environmental and personal health along the way. At this point in the growth of agriculture in Alaska, this may be the time to address those questions: "What is your goal?" and "How are you going to get there?"

In my life I have had the opportunity to get to know Allan Savory and learn about holistic management and holistic decision making. To that end, I have contacted Holistic Management International and we have decided that Phillip Metzger will lead a preconference workshop that will be focused on farming goals and decision making. He will present to us the importance of setting goals and using holistic planning to help with decision making. He has years of experience and will be able to give examples of successes and failures. Most importantly, he will be working with you through a variety of exercises that I hope will have a positive influence on your lives and agricultural enterprises.

There will be some other changes to the conference. It is at a new venue — Westmark Fairbanks Hotel and Conference Center. The dates will be March 3–5 with the 3rd being the preconference workshop. Instead of picking people to speak, we are asking for people to contact us if they would like to speak. And we will be running some concurrent sessions, which means more people will be able to speak and the talks will be longer. Of course, concurrent sessions mean that you will have to choose between two or more talks, so bring someone who can take good notes and make them go the talks you had to miss because there was another that was more interesting. ■ ~ Cheers!

Alan Metzger

Save the Date & Call for Presentations: 2015 Alaska Sustainable Agriculture Conference



Plans are underway for the 2015 Alaska Sustainable Agriculture Conference to be held March 3–5 at the Westmark Fairbanks Hotel and Conference Center. Take a look at the tentative agenda:

March 3 — Preconference Workshop: "Holistic Management and Improved Decision Making" presented by Phil Metzger for Holistic Management International. What are the questions you need answers to when making farming decisions and who should be involved in the discussion? Learn to manage towards profitability, land health and social well being.

March 4–5 — Alaska Sustainable Agriculture Conference Presentations: "Defining Our Goals." We are inviting you to volunteer! Do you have something to

say? Would you like to give a talk? Send us an idea or thought for us to consider. We have the following sessions: Meat and Fiber Production, Marketing, Starting a Farm, Plant Breeding and Variety Selection, Fruit Growing, Vegetable Growing, Policy/Regulations, Hydroponics and Sustainable Practices.

For more information or to volunteer a presentation, please contact Darcy Etcheverry at the UAF Cooperative Extension Service Tanana District Office. She can be reached at ddecheverry@alaska.edu 474-2422. ■

USDA United States Department of Agriculture

NEW TO FARMING?
Check out this new website!

www.usda.gov/newfarmers

A one-stop shop
for new and beginning farmers.

This website is a practical, workable tool that will help Alaskan farmers of tomorrow tap into the range of USDA resources today.

Learn about holistic grazing on

You Tube

with Ben Bartlett
*Michigan State Extension
Livestock Agent (retired)*



Ben Bartlett describes holistic livestock grazing management and low-stress livestock handling applications for Alaska and other high-latitude settings for sustainable agriculture practices.

See Bartlett's presentation on YouTube at:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=J0IKGfrRe7I

Or access his presentation through the
UAF Cooperative Extension Service website at:
www.uaf.edu/ces

SARE GRANT UPDATE

Title: Interior Alaska Hay Field Renovation Project

Grant Type: Professional + Producer Grant

Awardee: Jessica Guritz, Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District, jlguritz@gmail.com

Synopsis: This project will test the effectiveness of three different treatments to improve soil health and consequently hay production on overly compacted hay fields in Interior Alaska.

In Alaska, the high cost of renovating pastures and hay fields and the short production season result in hay fields that remain in continuous grass hay indefinitely. Some fields have been in production without renovation for more than 30 years. Fields are severely compacted causing environmental concerns, rooting depths are shallow and surface-applied fertilizer is often lost to volatilization and runoff. Nitrogen that infiltrates below the shallow root system can be easily leached into ground water in areas where water tables are shallow. Yields and profitability are negatively impacted, soil health is extremely low and biologic activity is reduced.

This project is unique in comparing three options to renovate fields without resorting to a complete three-year renovation that can be prohibitively expensive due to the high costs of seed, fertilizer, fuel, labor and indirect costs from loss of income. Seasons are very short and standard field renovation including disking, plowing and planting could take up to three years.

This SARE project proposes to use mechanical overseeding to slightly disk and then seed new grass in older hay fields and a cover crop (forage radishes) to break up soil compaction and improve soil health. Field radishes



Example of a forage radish similar to those being used in this experiment. Photo courtesy dailyharvestfarm.blogspot.com



An employee with the Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District establishes test plots in June 2014. FSWCD photo

are commonly used to break up compacted soils; however, this practice is less common in Alaska. The three options to be tested are:

1. Using an overseeder to seed brome grass
2. Using the overseeder to seed radish seeds
3. Broadcasting radish seeds

Six Interior hay farmers will be involved with testing the different methods in their fields and all Interior hay farmers will be queried about their present practices and their interest in new methods. They will also receive fact sheets and newsletter articles about the process. Brochures will be developed, printed and distributed that provide information about soil quality, compaction and methods of improvement.

A picnic field day will be held during the summer and local hay producers will be invited to participate in a workshop to demonstrate the equipment, field plots and preliminary results. ■

Visit a SARE Topic Room

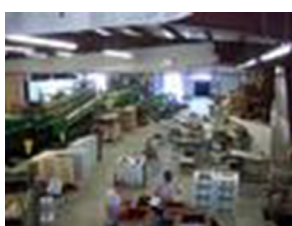
A SARE Topic Room is an organized collection of mostly SARE-based, multimedia information on important topics in sustainable agriculture. Visit www.sare.org/Learning-Center/Topic-Rooms and click on any of the topics to start learning!



Cover Crops

Cover crops are one of the best ways to improve soil health, reduce off-farm inputs and protect natural resources. Find a wealth of educational materials

developed out of decades of SARE-funded cover crop research.



Farm to Table: Building Local and Regional Food Systems

More and more, farmers, ranchers, agriculture professionals, community organizers and others are striving to

reconfigure the nation's food system so more value stays in food-producing communities.



High Tunnels and Other Season Extension Techniques

From low covers to high tunnels, from hoop houses to greenhouses — producers are finding ever more innovative

ways to extend the growing season and their income stream.



The Small Ruminant Toolbox

This Small Ruminant Toolbox is a large collection of publications, presentations and other resources that will be helpful

to small ruminant producers and educators. ■

CALL FOR PROPOSALS! How to Apply for a SARE Grant

Western SARE has announced this year's call for proposals. Alaska producers may be interested in applying for two of the five listed grant opportunities. There are several grant categories with varying application deadlines.

Steven Seefeldt, the Western SARE professional development coordinator for Alaska, is eager to help people with their ideas and to review their proposals. In fact, you may even want to include Steven as part of your proposal. Seefeldt can be reached at 474-2423 or ssseefeldt@alaska.edu.

To review detailed descriptions of each type of grant and find links to the specific call, visit westernsare.org/Grants/Types-of-Grants.

1. Farmer/Rancher Grants

One- to three-year grants are awarded to agricultural producers with support and guidance from a technical advisor. Individual farmers or ranchers may apply for up to \$15,000, and a group of three or more producers may apply for up to \$25,000. Grants are for on-site experiments that can improve operations and the environment and can be shared with other producers. Grant recipients may also focus on marketing and organic production. **Deadline: Dec. 3, 2014**

2. Professional + Producer Grants

These one- to three-year grants are similar in concept to the Farmer/Rancher Grants with a few key differences. Instead of a producer serving as the project coordinator, an agricultural professional — Cooperative Extension educator or Natural Resources Conservation Service

professional, for example — coordinates the project. A farmer or rancher serves as the project advisor. Applicants can seek up to \$50,000 and must have at least five producers involved. **Deadline: Dec. 3, 2014**

3. Research & Education Grants

Specifically for conducting research through a university or other institution.

4. Professional Development Grants

Specifically for training Cooperative Extension agents and other government agencies that work with farmers.

5. Graduate Student Grants

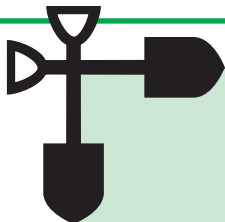
Specifically for graduate level work at a university or other research institution. ■



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SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE FOR ALASKA

■ ■ ■ Farmer's Toolbox ■ ■ ■

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education: SARE is a program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture that functions through competitive grants managed cooperatively by farmers, ranchers, researchers and ag professionals to advance farm and ranch systems that are profitable, environmentally sound and good for communities. Western Region SARE includes Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, California, Colorado, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Micronesia, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Northern Mariana Islands, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

Information: Visit the Western Region SARE website at www.westernsare.org/ for information on news and events, grants, projects, publications, professional development training and conferences. The host institution, Utah State University, can be reached at 435-797-2257 (phone) or 435-797-3344 (fax); or write to USU Ag Science 305, Logan, Utah, 84322.

Sustainable Agriculture for Alaska Newsletter:

The newsletter is published quarterly – January, April, July and October. To receive it electronically, subscribe to the SARE listserv at <https://lists.uaf.edu:8025/mailman/listinfo/ak-sare-l> and follow directions.

