

THE NORTHEAST PASTURE CONSORTIUM

Agricultural land in the Northeast is well suited for grazing cattle, sheep, goats, and horses on pasture. Pasture-based farms provide desirable products, such as organic milk and grass-fed beef and lamb, for consumers. Poor pasture management can result in high costs and losses for farmers and threaten animal, environmental, and human health. To make sound management decisions, farmers need up-to-date information about grazing practices, animal husbandry, and forage varieties.

Since 1996, land-grant universities have worked together to lead the Northeast Pasture Consortium. Researchers and Extension specialists work with farmers, agribusiness suppliers, nongovernmental organizations, and USDA partners to conduct pasture research and share information and technology.

COORDINATING PASTURE RESEARCH & OUTREACH

Over the past five years, the Northeast Pasture Consortium has coordinated research and improved communication about pasture-based animal production systems by hosting annual conferences, producing fact sheets and newsletters, and maintaining the *grazingguide.net* website.

The Consortium has also influenced policy. Consortium members sent a memo of support for restoring funding for National Resources Inventory sampling on pasture conditions and trends, which has since been reinstated and taken nationwide for the first time. Survey data help the Natural Resources Conservation Service develop and implement timely and relevant agricultural and environmental policy.

The Consortium also influenced a policy change that enables the Natural Resources Conservation Service to provide financial assistance for perimeter fencing when cropland is converted to pasture and prescribed grazing is implemented.

The Consortium's research, education, and technical assistance over the past 20 years have played a role in the continued growth of the grass-fed livestock industry and organic dairy industry. Their efforts are helping to maintain competitive, profitable, and environmentally friendly pasture-based farms that promote a stable future for agriculture in the Northeast.



IMPROVING LIVESTOCK DIETS

Pasturing dairy cows improves the fatty acid profile of milk. Researchers are identifying supplements and feeding strategies to maintain higher levels of beneficial fatty acids during the non-grazing season.



IMPROVING LIVESTOCK HEALTH

Researchers are helping sheep and goat farmers find new ways, such as botanicals and legumes like birdsfoot trefoil, to control internal parasites that have become resistant to pharmaceuticals.



IMPROVING PASTURES & BEDDING

Research on ryegrass varieties that may survive in Northeast climatic conditions could help milk producers improve their pastures.



Researchers are identifying crops that can augment grazing during the summer slump or extend the grazing season earlier in the spring and later in the fall.



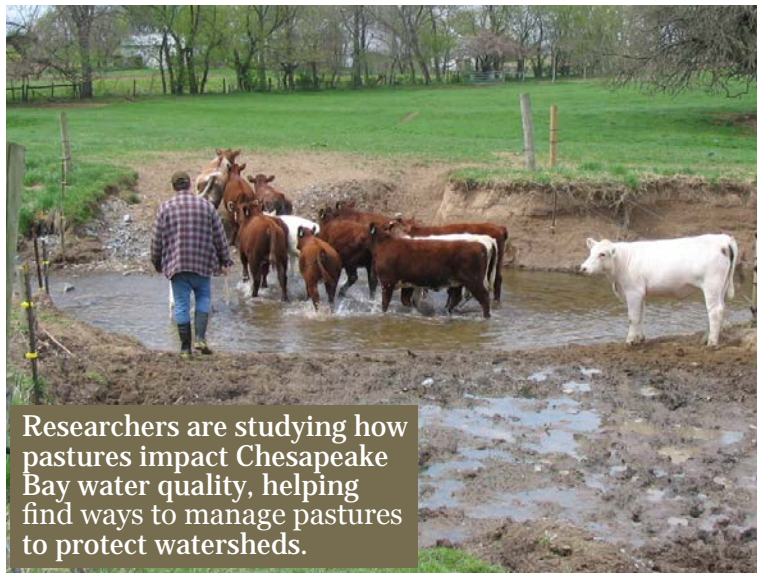
Researchers are identifying sustainable sources of bedding material (like wood chips) for organic milk cows in the Northeast. Conventional bedding like straw can be expensive and is not plentiful in the Northeast.



To improve resistance to internal parasites, researchers are crossbreeding susceptible sheep breeds with more resistant ones and selecting more resistant sheep within breeds.



MINIMIZING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS



Researchers are studying how pastures impact Chesapeake Bay water quality, helping find ways to manage pastures to protect watersheds.

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