Using underutilized grasslands to improve the economic viability of the Southern Tier while providing viable careers for beginning farmers

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Michael J. Baker, PhD
Cornell University
Beef Extension Specialist

Audia Denton
Southern Tier Stocker Initiative
Project Manager

Livestock Market Reporters. Livestock Market reporters continue to report livestock prices at Empire Cherry Creek, Empire Bath, Empire Gouverneur, Cambridge Valley, Maple Hurst and Finger Lakes Livestock Exchange. Reports can be found at https://www.ams.usda.gov/market-news/livestock-poultry-and-grain-list-reports. Advertising and promotion continues to increase the awareness of this report. Country Folks is now printing and crediting these reports to the project. That’s a big step.

Prices collected through this project will be used to populate models to identify profit opportunities presented by speakers in the Stocker Short Course. While national prices are a good guide, having local data will be much more useful.

Stocker Short Course. Forty-two people over 7 counties enrolled in the Stocker Short Course, with approximately 35 participating. All 4 sessions were recorded and will be available before the start of the next series which will begin in March/April.

The first session commenced on September 30 with a range of guest speakers from NYS Beef Industry Council, editor of BEEF magazine and a market analysis of the industry. The second session on October 28th, focused on financial-budgeting-tax aspects, as well as, land-facilities-equipment. Health and receiving protocols were presented during the 2nd half. The third session on November 11th dealt with grazing management, land leasing/renting, maximizing pasture intake/gain. The second half of this session concluded with a business plan writing workshop where participants where given the opportunity to utilize all the information presented to date. The final session was held on December 16th, with opening remarks from NYS Commissioner of Agriculture, Richard Ball. Presentation coalesced around economical tools to reduce risk, and identifying profitability opportunities. BEEF Magazine 2016 Stocker-of-the-Year from Paris Kentucky shared her expertise; we ended with a panel discussion of some of our very own local NYS Stocker operators.
Two surveys, one after the first class and one at the end of the course, were utilized to get feedback from participants. The second series which will be more hands-on is scheduled to begin March/April.

Additional information can be found at: http://blogs.cornell.edu/beefcattle/eventsprograms/southern-tier-stocker-initiative/.

**Graduate student.** Advertising for a MS candidate has yielded several potential students. We will probably not meet our goal of having a student on board for the 2018 Spring semester. However, we will strongly push for starting Summer 2018.

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