DGA: First in the Nation

National Standards for Training in Managed Grazing Dairy Production

- Guided work experience
- Related instruction
- Facilitated peer group
- Industry networking
- Pathway to farm ownership
Employee Development

A Proven Educational Model

Formal Apprenticeship: 4000 hours over 2 years

- 3718 hours of on-farm employment and training, guided by “Job Book”
- 288 hours of related instruction
  - Herd Health
  - Milk Quality
  - Dairy Nutrition
  - Pasture Management
  - Holistic Management
  - Peer Discussion Groups
- Financial planning services
Options for Farm Transfer / Investment

Average age of dairy farmers in U.S. is 60 years old. What are their options for farm transfer?

What are options for mid-career farmers seeking opportunities to expand and/or invest?

- Milk-share Partnership
- Spin-off Farm
- Transition of Ownership
Outcomes: Apprentice

- Acquired skills, knowledge, and experience to own and operate a managed-grazing dairy
- Networked with dairy industry and local professionals
- Access to opportunities to:
  - Earn equity in cattle
  - Enter into a business partnership
  - Purchase a start-up farm
  - Transition into ownership
  - Manage a grazing-based dairy

* DGA is an FSA educational provider
Outcomes: Master

- Employees who are highly skilled, competent, and trustworthy
- Managers for current dairy grazing operation and/or investment farm

- Financial models and support to help meet career goals, including retirement or exiting industry
Skilled People

- Better employees
- Opportunities to expand
- Opportunities to transfer
- Solution to farm loss
- Strengthen our dairy infrastructure
- Strengthen our communities
- Protect our environment
Current Status of DGA

- Operating in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Missouri.
- 55 approved farm sites; 17 current Master-Apprentice pairs; 8 graduates who now own start-ups, are earning equity, or manage a farm; 80+ are awaiting placement.
- Training manual, guidebooks, outreach materials.
- Website with online applications and searchable database to facilitate Master-Apprentice matches.
- Relationships with private investors.
- Approved vendor for Farm Services Agency’s Financial Management Training Program.
- 501(c)3 Non-Profit Status.
How to Get Involved

For beginning farmers, Apprenticeship answers the question, "How do I get the skills I need to run a dairy farm? How can I support myself while I learn? What are the steps to ownership?"

For established farmers, Apprenticeship is an opportunity to share knowledge and connect with the next generation, model, and support their efforts.

For farmers transitioning to a career in dairying, Apprenticeship provides a structured way to gain experience and knowledge.

For educators and extension agents, Apprenticeship offers a curriculum and resources to support learning and development.

For rural communities, Apprenticeship can help attract and retain young people, contribute to economic growth, and preserve agricultural heritage.

For the environment, Apprenticeship promotes sustainable farming practices that benefit soil health, water quality, and biodiversity.

Frequently asked questions:

1. What are the benefits of an apprenticeship?
   - Apprenticeship offers a structured learning environment, providing hands-on experience and mentorship from experienced farmers.
   - It helps develop the skills and knowledge needed to become a successful dairy farmer.
   - Apprenticeship can lead to job opportunities and career advancement.
   - It promotes sustainable and regenerative farming practices.

2. How does Apprenticeship differ from a traditional farming education?
   - Apprenticeship is hands-on and provides real-world experience, whereas traditional education focuses on theory and classroom learning.
   - Apprenticeship is flexible and allows for personalized learning, while traditional education follows a set curriculum.
   - Apprenticeship is community-based and fosters networking and support among farmers, whereas traditional education may be more isolated.

3. What qualifications are needed to become an apprentice?
   - Typically, a high school diploma or equivalent is required, although some programs may accept students with other qualifications.
   - Experience in agriculture or related fields is beneficial.
   - A strong work ethic, willingness to learn, and adaptability are essential.

4. How long does it take to complete an apprenticeship?
   - Apprenticeship programs can vary in length, but they generally range from 1 to 3 years.
   - The duration depends on the specific program and the apprentice’s progress.

5. How do I get started?
   - Visit the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship website to explore programs and find opportunities.
   - Contact local farmers or extension agents for more information.
   - Attend workshops or seminars to learn more about apprenticeship and dairy farming.

6. What is the cost of apprenticeship?
   - Apprenticeship programs are often funded through a combination of grants, scholarships, and private funding.
   - Some programs may require a modest tuition fee or a stipend.

7. How do I find an apprenticeship program?
   - Visit the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship website to browse available programs.
   - Contact local farmers or extension agents to learn about opportunities in your area.
   - Attend networking events and conferences to meet potential mentors and program providers.

8. What are the career prospects for apprentices?
   - Upon completing apprenticeship, apprentices are well-prepared to become successful farmers.
   - Many apprentices go on to own their own farms or join existing operations.
   - Apprenticeship provides a strong foundation for further education and career advancement.

9. How can I support Apprenticeship?
   - Support Apprenticeship by volunteering your time or resources.
   - Donate to the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship Fund to help fund programs.
   - Advocate for Apprenticeship programs in your community and at the national level.

10. How can I find out more about Apprenticeship?
    - Visit the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship website for more information.
    - Follow us on social media for updates and news.
    - Reach out to local farmers or extension agents for more information.

For more information, visit the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship website.
Grant Funding Support

- USDA-NIFA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program
- NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant
- The McKnight Foundation
- The Otto Bremer Foundation
- The Brookby Foundation
- WI Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection
- Wisconsin Farmers Union
2015 Industry Sponsors

Nicolet National Bank
Midwestern Bioag
Graze
Spalding Laboratories
CRV Better Cows, Better Life
ABS and GENO Global
BestYet Sires
Organic Valley/CROPP
Skilled People Are The Key