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Contact:  
Robert Bauer  
608-732-1202  
robert.bauer@swbadger.org

## **FARMERS PAID TO GET PEOPLE STARTED RAISING LIVESTOCK ON PASTURE**

Mentorship program helps beginning farmers rent land for managed grazing

DODGEVILLE, WI – Experienced livestock farmers in Southwest Wisconsin are invited to participate in a program that pays farmers for getting other people into raising livestock on pasture. “Getting into farming can be an enormous challenge for people without family ties to land. Finding a good land tenure situation, navigating markets, and gaining experience are challenges that beginning farmers can address with the guidance of experienced farmer-mentors. People also have to decide if farming is right for them.” says Robert Bauer, Grazing Broker for the Southwest Badger Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council.

The program is called the Mentorship Program for Future Livestock Farmers. The program builds on existing resources like the Wisconsin School for Beginning Dairy and Livestock Farmers at the University of Wisconsin and the Southwest Wisconsin Grazing Broker Project to help recent graduates start farming independently.

According to Wendy Warren, Executive Director, Southwest Badger RC&D, “Over the past two years of the program we established ten successful farmer-to-farmer mentorships for beginning farmers, 11 beginning farmers rented 578 acres of pasture, and net farm income increased by \$2,480 per participant per year, according to exit surveys. However, in this last year of the program we want to increase the number of participants who enter farming by raising livestock for other people through contract grazing, which is a low-input way to get started.”

Experienced farmers who apply to the mentorship program will be eligible to receive lump sum payments of \$1000 upon successful completion of each of up to three of the following outcomes by August 15, 2018: (1) beginner starts farming or starts working on someone else’s farm (2) beginner rents cropland or former Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres from mentor for grazing, and (3) beginner uses at least part of the rented land for contract grazing. Experienced farmers can receive up to \$3000 for helping beginners raise livestock at any scale of production.

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) funds the mentorship program through the National Institute of Food and Agriculture’s Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program. For more information contact Robert Bauer at 608-732-1202, robert.bauer@swbadger.org, or visit [www.swbadger.org/beginning-farmers](http://www.swbadger.org/beginning-farmers).

Southwest Badger Resource Conservation & Development Council, Inc. is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization working in the Southwest Wisconsin region. The organization’s mission is to implement natural resource conservation and rural economic development in the area through education and best practices relating to agriculture, grassland, forests, and surface waters.

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