

## PRESS RELEASE [3/12/04]: AGA 1ST CONFERENCE A BIG SUCCESS

### **AGA 1st Conference a Big Success**

#### **100 Gather in Auburn, Kan.**

AUBURN, KAN.—The American Grassfed Association's (AGA) first conference, held here March 5-6, was attended by more than 60 members and guests. The group heard from nationally-recognized grassfed experts, elected a new board of directors and networked over the two-day event. Tall Grass Bison Ranch, Auburn, Kan., a multi-species, all grassfed operation owned by Wayne and Julie Copp, hosted the conference.

Dr. Tilak Dhiman, associate professor, Utah State University, Animal Nutrition Department, shared his extensive research on conjugated linoelic acid (CLA) in grassfed versus traditionally-fed animals. Higher levels of CLA in the human body are believed to lower body fat, reduce heart disease and lessen the probability of contracting diabetes.

"Milk and meat from animals raised only on forage have the highest levels of CLA," Dhiman told conference goers. "Research shows the level of CLA in grassfed products is 4-5 times that of regular supermarket products."

Jo Robinson, author of *Why Grassfed is Best* and *Pasture Perfect*, also spoke to the group about the benefits of grassfed products and about a recent taste test she conducted. Of the 10 steaks tested by professional chefs, eight were ranked above a premium grain fed steak. Chefs rated the meat on flavor, tenderness and juiciness.

"In conclusion, I would say that grassfed beef can be extremely tasty, meeting or exceeding grain fed beef in flavor, tenderness and juiciness," Robinson said. "These very limited results also seem to indicate the tastiest beef is aged at least 21 days and comes from cattle that are around 20 months old."

"We can be extremely pleased with the leadership, enthusiasm and ingenuity of AGA members," said Marlene Groves, Kiowa, Colo., who was re-elected AGA president by those attending the conference. "I am confident we have all the resources necessary to grow our organization and establish AGA as the nation's grassfed voice."

During the conference, members also had the opportunity to discuss in-depth details of proposed U.S. Department of Agriculture national grassfed standards. Members unanimously adopted the definition of "grassfed" as meat from ruminants and milk that are 100 percent grassfed. The board and standards committee will also work on standards for poultry and swine in the near future.

In addition to Groves, others elected to the 2004 AGA Board of Directors included: Tom Gamble, St. Helena, Calif., vice president; Carrie Balkcom, Denver, Colo., secretary; Dale Lasater, Matheson, Colo.; treasurer; Nathan Nelson, Dodd City, Tex., beef director; Wayne Copp, Auburn, Kan.; bison director; Alan Yegerlehnder, Clay City, Ind., dairy director; Julie Becker, Mitchell, Neb., goat director; Meagan Phillips, Mesa, Colo., poultry director, Virginia Goeke, Viroqua, Wisc., sheep director; and Patricia Whisnant, DVM, Doniphan, Mo., director at large.

Among other things, board members will research non-grain energy supplements, such as alfalfa cubes, that are acceptable for grassfed producers; and explore relationships and joint membership opportunities with other agricultural and professional groups; and finish their AGA consumer focused grassfed facts pamphlet.

The conference was partially sponsored by Mother Earth News and Kansas Farm Bureau. Those donating food, drink and services for the AGA conference included: Lasater Grassland's Beef, Napa Free Range Beef, Buffalo Groves, Inc., Tall Grass Bison, New Grass Bison, Pefect 10 Ranch, The Swiss Connection, Jako, Inc., Chef's Collaborative, and Blue Bird Bistro.

The AGA was established in September 2003. It is comprised of producers, food industry personnel, health care professionals and private consumers. For more information on the AGA, visit [www.americangrassfed.org](http://www.americangrassfed.org) or call 1-877-77GRASS.

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