



For Release: August 3, 2017

Contacts:

Russ Wischover | Windswept Acres | (712) 438-0126

Tamsyn Jones | Outreach & Publications Coordinator | Practical Farmers of Iowa | (515) 232-5661 | tamsyn@practicalfarmers.org

Field day will explore grazing heritage cattle, sheep on converted crop ground and prairie – Aug. 21, Bedford

BEDFORD, Iowa — For grazier Russ Wischover, rotationally grazing his mixed-species herd and using minimal inputs has helped him to save money while simultaneously improving his converted row-crop land.

“We’ve got cows, sheep and ponies,” says Russ, who operates Windswept Acres on 120 acres near Bedford. “For the most part during the growing season, they’re all together grazing as one mob. I like the impact that has on the ground. The sheep turn weeds into money. Instead of spraying, I think the best thing to do with weeds is take them to the sale barn and sell them for \$2 a pound.”

Russ rotationally grazes heritage-breed Murray Gray cattle and St. Croix sheep together with draft ponies on a mix of former row-crop ground and prairie he’s been working to restore for the last five years. He will share his experiences at a Practical Farmers of Iowa field day he is hosting on **Monday, Aug. 21, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. near Bedford** (2326 322nd St., about 8 miles south of town).

The event – “Grazing Heritage Cattle & Sheep on Converted Crop Ground and Prairie” – is free to attend and will feature a “garbage-can” lunch of vegetables and smoked sausages slow-cooked in a clean garbage can. **Please RSVP for the meal** to Debra Boekholder, debra@practicalfarmers.org or (515) 232-5661, by Wednesday, Aug. 16. The field day is sponsored by Premier 1, Taylor County Soil and Water Conservation District and Welter Seed & Honey Co.

The event also falls on the same day as a total solar eclipse, and PFI staff will supply solar viewing glasses to those who do not have their own so guests can get a good view of it. After the field day, attendees are invited to stay into the evening to continue the discussion, as well as to camp overnight.

Attendees will learn about the process of seeding former crop fields to pasture species and how grazing former Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land has helped bring native prairie species back. Russ’ local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) conservationist will discuss the fence and water system that was installed in 2013 with cost-share assistance. The day will also feature a pasture walk with Mary Damm, a plant ecologist, to identify prairie plants and learn about their value to both the soil and to livestock.

Russ’ land restoration efforts have been guided by principles of Holistic Management, which he says have helped him take a systems-level approach to improving his land, rather than “trying to fix this problem here or that symptom there.”

“Holistic Management encourages you to look to biological solutions rather than technological, and that’s what I’ve really embraced here,” Russ says. “I don’t like all the chemicals, all the machinery, all the fuel that goes into most farms and I try to keep it close to nature.”

From the intersection of IA Hwy 148 and Main Street (at the Casey’s) in Bedford: Follow Main Street east. At the stop sign on State Street, turn right (south) onto Linwood Avenue / State Street. In 0.5 mile, you’ll see the fairgrounds; 5 miles south of the fairgrounds, turn left (east) on 322nd Street and go 1 mile. At the T-intersection,

turn right (south) onto Montana Avenue and go 0.25 mile. Turn left (east) when you see the field day sign, staying on 322nd Street. Russ' farm is located 0.75 mile down a dead-end gravel road.

Practical Farmers' 2017 field days are supported by several sustaining and major sponsors, including: Ag Ventures Alliance; Albert Lea Seed; Center for Rural Affairs; Fertrell; Gandy Cover Crop Seeders; Grain Millers, Inc.; Iowa Beef Center; Iowa Environmental Council; Iowa State University Department of Agronomy; Iowa Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE); ISU Extension and Outreach; La Crosse Forage and Turf Seed; Lemken; Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture; MOSA Organic Certification; Natural Resources Defense Council; Organic Valley / Organic Prairie; Riverside Feeds, LLC; The Scoular Company; Trees Forever; Unilever; University of Iowa College of Public Health (I-CASH); Upper Iowa Audubon Society; USDA: Natural Resources Conservation Service; Wallace Chair for Sustainable Agriculture; and Welter Seed & Honey Co.

###

Practical Farmers of Iowa strengthens farms and communities through farmer-led investigation and information-sharing. Our values include: welcoming everyone; creativity, collaboration and community; viable farms now and for future generations; and stewardship and ecology. Founded in 1985, farmers in our network raise corn, soybeans, livestock, hay, fruits and vegetables, and more. To learn more, visit <http://practicalfarmers.org>.