

Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship - In Brief

The Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship of GrassWorks, Inc., is dedicated to providing a guided pathway to independent dairy farm ownership, developing grazing careers, and strengthening the economic and environmental well-being of rural communities and the dairy industry.

We accomplish this mission by:

- *Linking current and aspiring graziers in the transfer of farms and graziers skills and knowledge.*
- *Developing alliances with agricultural, environmental, and consumer groups.*
- *Providing opportunities for farmers and their customers to invest in the next generation of grazing farmers.*

Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship

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Wisconsin is losing 500 dairy farms every year. Currently, the state has about 12,000 dairy farms. These farms support the infrastructure that the agricultural economy and rural communities depend on. But new farmers are not entering the profession at rates that offset the loss of retiring producers. Because the average age of farmers is 57 and many do not have an identified successor, the rate of farm loss is likely to continue or even accelerate in the next decade.

Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship (DGA) is working to reverse this trend by matching current and aspiring dairy farmers, providing comprehensive training and support, and developing models of equity building, investment, farm start-up, and farm transfer.

DGA was established in 2010 through a partnership between GrassWorks, Inc., and the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development-Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards with support from USDA-National Institute for Food and Agriculture's Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program.

DGA addresses barriers to dairy farm entry by utilizing an educational model that has trained people in skilled professions for more than 100 years in Wisconsin.

- DGA is the first Apprenticeship for farming in the United States to be recognized by the United States Department of Labor.
- DGA consists of 4000 hours over 2 years, combining on-farm employment and mentorship under an approved Master Dairy Grazier (3,712 hours) with paid related instruction (288 hours).
- Apprentices earn while they learn. They gain skills, knowledge, experience, relationships, and confidence during the program and graduate capable of owning and operating or managing a grazing dairy farm.
- DGA provides financial consulting services to program participants through Cadwallader Consulting, LLC, and has successfully implemented equity building, farm start-up, and farm transfer models.
- DGA is an approved vendor for the Farm Service's Agency Financial Management Training Program.
- DGA has 28 approved farm sites, 12 Apprentices, including 4 Journey Dairy Graziers, and more than 60 Apprentice Candidates awaiting placement.

Visit www.dairygrazingapprenticeship.org for updates, additional information, and opportunities to support the program.