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Preface

It is a pleasure to bring you these summaries of recent research at the U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center. The Center's mission is to build a knowledge and technology base for the dairy industry to fully exploit the use of forages in the production of milk. The Center was established in 1980 on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus in Madison, WI, but is a federal unit of the Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). We employ agricultural engineers, plant and soil scientists, microbiologists, ruminant nutritionists and a chemist, all-working together to increase the efficiency of forage production and utilization by dairy farmers. At present, there are fourteen scientists: eleven at Madison, two cluster scientists at the University of Minnesota, and one cluster scientist at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY. Scientists hold faculty appointments in university departments and provide supervision for approximately 6-10 graduate students and 3-6 postdoctoral fellows. We function in close cooperation with the agricultural experiment stations of several states.

The Center's 63-acre research farm is located in Prairie du Sac, WI and has facilities for 300 milking cows. An additional 1,200 acres of adjacent land is utilized by the Center in agreement with the U.S. Department of the Army. In 1999, the U.S. Defense Department declared that the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant, adjacent to our research farm, is excess property. The General Services Administration has a Congressional mandate to either transfer custody of excess property with Congressional approval to other federal agencies or to dispose of the property. The USDA has requested a no-cost transfer of custody of 1,718 acres of this excess federal land so that we can continue our research efforts. This development is both a threat and an opportunity. It is a threat in that we could lose part or all of the land area that we currently use for research on forage genetics, grazing, and forage and nutrient management. We also rely on this land for feed production and recycling of manure nutrients. It is an opportunity for USDA to become the custodian of land sufficient for our research farm operation. It also creates an opportunity for USDA to cooperate with environmental concerns, demonstrating that agricultural activities can co-exist with prime wildlife habitat and maintenance of clean water resources, and possibly facilitating even more research of environmental issues.

Regarding staff updates, we hired John H. Grabber as our agronomist in April 1999. John earned degrees from the University of Connecticut and Pennsylvania State University. He brings research experience with Monsanto and is anxious to co-lead our Integrated Farming Systems research effort.

After 33 years of stellar research to improve yield, persistence and disease resistance of red clover and other legumes, Richard R. Smith retired in December 1999. Dick remains in a collaborative status with the Center to complete releases of new improved varieties and germplasm of red clover, birdsfoot trefoil, and kura clover. Recruitment is underway to find a research geneticist with molecular genetics skills to develop new perennial legume germplasm for dairy utilization, conservation uses, and value-added traits.

I am extremely happy to be Center Director. I want to thank scientists, support staff, students, visiting scientists, and customers for making this new professional endeavor exciting. I am anxious to work with stakeholders, partners, scientists, and administrators to develop a national agenda for dairy forage research.

I am proud of the way Center scientists from diverse disciplines interact and bring their collective insights to bear on the problems of forage production and utilization. This collection of research summaries illustrates the progress that these individuals are making in developing information to help dairy farmers utilize their resources more effectively. The research is intended to benefit producers of forage crops, dairy farmers, and the consumers of dairy products.

Sincerely,

Neal P. Martin, Director
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