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## What's New

### Evening on the Farm

By Abby Wucherer

Wednesday night, as the breezes blow through the 3-foot-high grasses that cover Fountain Prairie Inn and Farms, almost 200 local farmers and community members will get a chance to ride through parts of the 280 acres during An Evening on the Farm.

The event is from 6 to 8:30 p.m. at the farm on state Highway 16 near Fall River, but because of the huge response already, no further reservations are being accepted for the event.

Dorothy Priske, who together with her husband John has owned the farm for the last 21 years, said they are overwhelmed by the number of attendees.

"We're pleased, but we didn't expect quite this huge of a response," she said.

"We were shooting for between 50 and 80 people," said Haly Schultz, a grazing specialist with Town and Country Resource Conservation and Development Inc., which helped sponsor the event.

Organizers were not sure why there was such an overwhelming response to the event. The evening is an extension of what farmers call "pasture walks," Schultz said.

Priske said that on pasture walks, groups of farmers get together at a farm, tour the facilities, see how the grass is growing, and give each other suggestions on what they can do to increase productivity.

For Wednesday's event, however, the public was invited as a way to educate them about farming practices, local growers, sustainable agriculture and land use.

Schultz said she hopes that the night will be an eye-opening experience for both farmers and the public.

"Not only can the farmers learn new things, but we can also have the public on the farm to see where their food comes from."

"We're going to talk about how consumers when they make their food choices, vote with their dollars so to speak," Priske said. "They'll be able to see that they're buying more than the meat that we sell, they're buying the landscape that we've created on our farm as well."

Fountain Prairie Inn and Farms, as the name suggests, is a combination bed-and-breakfast and fully operational farm. The Priskes raise grass-fed Highland cattle. According to Dorothy Priske, the couple began converting their farm to an almost entirely grass-fed operation in 2000.

"It's taken us probably five years to get our property totally planted to grass," she said. "We planted 20 acres here, 40 acres there. Eventually we phased out the corn and soybean crops on our property." She added that the couple still grows some corn and soybeans on a rented property to feed to their animals.

Visitors to Fountain Prairie will learn about sustainable farming and the Priskes' own land-managing practices, said Priske. She paraphrased Aldo Leopold, an ecologist and environmentalist who lived and worked in Wisconsin. "The farm is a portrait of the farmer, and we can change our portrait," she said. "John and I really believe that."

She said the couple thinks of themselves as restorers. Not only have they created a wetland on

their property where before there were cornfields, but they restored a tallgrass prairie, remnants of which are all over their property, said Priske. They have also been restoring their home, a 1899 Queen Anne Victorian and the site of their bed-and-breakfast, to its original state.

In addition to touring the farm, visitors will have the chance to enjoy some locally sourced snacks, said Schultz. The public will also get the chance to learn more about where their food came from through displays put up by groups like the University of Wisconsin Extension, according to Priske.

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