Improving Forage Production Practices of Cattle Producers Dyer,* S.F.¹

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Why?

In fall of 2019 I was selected to be a part of the grant "Unless You Test, It's Just a Guess" led by state specialists. This opened the door for me as a first-year agent to "cold-call" cattle producers in my community that I had not yet reached in my role. I visited their operation and conducted a free hay sample. While conducting these hay tests I learned that nearly all of my farmers were not properly managing their pastures and hay fields (soil testing, fertilizing accordingly, appropriately spraying herbicide, and hay testing to develop feeding plans for the winter). It became evident to me that my folks in Dade need more focused forage information catering to the Dade environment, their level of current forage knowledge, and to-the-point-how-to information.





Methods /



I developed a 12-month forage management series to meet these specific needs of my Dade farmers. This concept evolved into the D.A.D.E. Grass Class. The point of the series is to walk through, month by month, an entire year of forage management for pastures and hayfields. Timely, how-to information is taught to farmers in advance to when they need to act on their pastures and hay fields. This is accomplished through monthly face-to-face formal presentations by myself or fellow colleagues, and through to-the-point "cheat sheets" reflecting the main points of each presentation in which participants collect in a binder throughout the series.

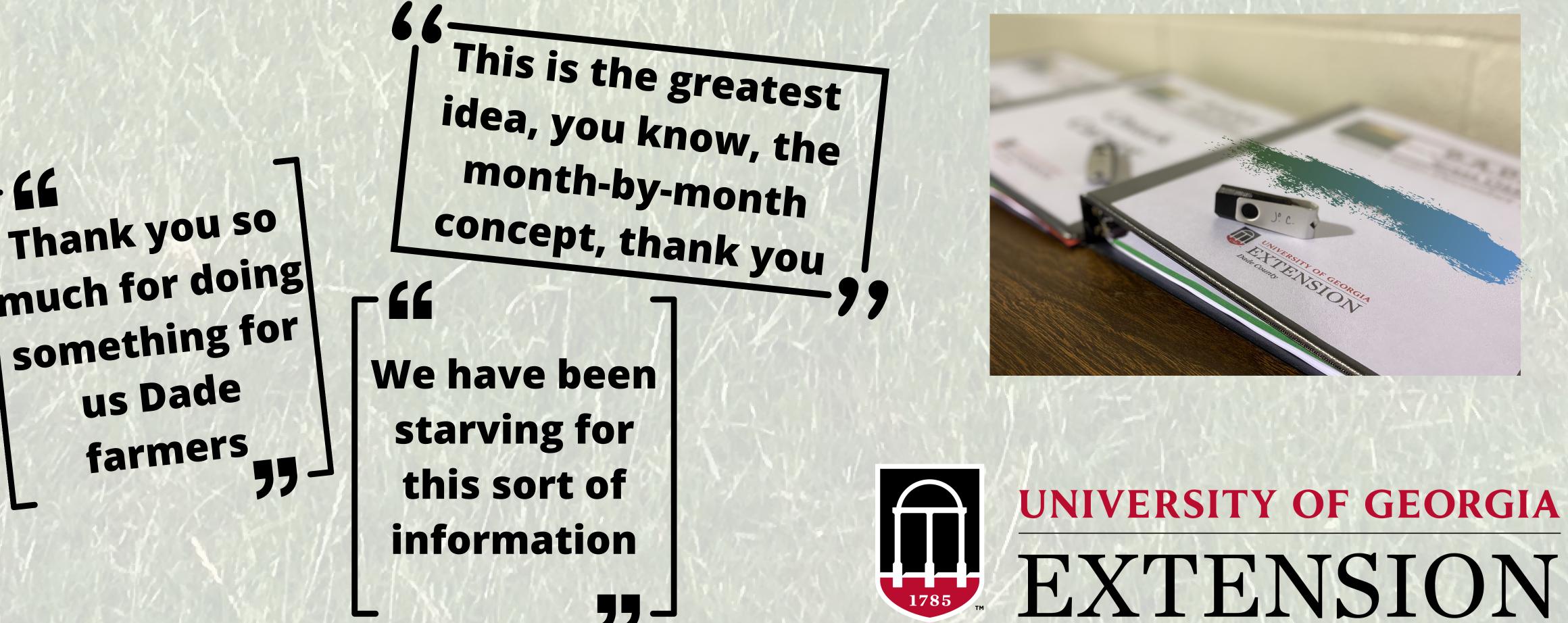


When COVID-19 brought face-to-face programming to a halt, I quickly began to think of a way to continue to provide for registrants in a way that did not demand great internet, since internet can be sparse in Dade county. I decided to purchase and provide a USB drive for each registrant. I worked with invited speakers of the program to turn all planned presentations into a pre-recorded version that is downloaded onto each USB drive. Each month, registrants stop by, pick up their binder and USB drive, watch the presentation videos, read the cheat sheets, then return their binder and USB drive for the next set of material to be added once available.

Impact

In total, 43 registrants are enrolled in the 12-month program. Although the series is designed to specifically cater to Dade county farmers, registrants are from two neighboring counties as well. The series began in January





2020, and currently remains in a virtual format due to

COVID-19. Feedback received from producers in the

series includes, "Thank you so much for doing something

for us Dade farmers," "We have been starving for this

sort of information," and "This is the greatest idea, you

know, the month-by-month concept, thank you."