

Changing Russian veterinarians perception of what quality is



Professor and dairy scientist Mark Varner, speaking at a conference in Stavropol, Russia

History was made April 24, 2006, from a small gray room in Symons Hall. A specialist in postpartum health problems in dairy cattle presented a videoconference seminar to a group of Russian Federation (R.F.) practicing veterinarians from 20 regions. Some vets traveled 16 hours roundtrip to attend the presentation, translated for them, "sometimes phrase by phrase" as the speaker paused. That professional development and continuing education is new to R.F. animal doctors appeared to vastly outweigh any inconveniences.

"Russia lacks the infrastructure to maintain and increase expertise," says [Raymond Miller](#), director of the college's [International Programs in Agriculture and Natural Resources](#), "it's difficult to learn new techniques." [Mark Varner](#), professor of [Animal and Avian Sciences](#) and dairy scientist for [University of Maryland Cooperative Extension](#), created the opportunity, an inaugural event. Varner facilitated the session from **Stavropol** State Agrarian University, located in the country's agriculturally rich southwest region.

Advances in videoconferencing technology and its effective use made the event possible. Post-conference, an official for the Ministry of Agriculture summoned Varner to brainstorm future topics. Gratifying to Miller was the free exchange of ideas he witnessed from Symons Hall during questions and answers. Speaking freely and asking questions, he said, "isn't part of Russian culture. But they asked questions because confidence and trust were built."