



Great Lakes Grazing Newsletter

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY Extension

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Great Lakes Graziers – Finish Strong this Fall!

From a grazing perspective you have ran a good race all season. You upped your intensity of grazing management, Mother Nature chipped in with adequate rainfall, so now it is time to finish the season strong and put your pastures to rest in good shape for next year! Fall is no time to falter as you near the finish line.

In the fall it is so easy to over-graze pasture growth and take all you can get before the snow sets in. And since the fall pasture re-growth is so slow it also seems reasonable to take down the interior fences and let the animals graze larger areas to find all they can.

If you are an intensive grazier these tactics are taking your foot off the pedal and slowing down, which is not a good way to finish the race. Fall is the most critical period of the entire growing season for pasture forages when it comes to their winter survivability and next spring's growth. In this September through October period energy reserves are being increased in the plant crowns and buds are forming in the leaf stems that will be next year's growing points. Over graze now and next year's growth will be decreased.

Pasture plants take their cue from the changing environmental conditions. These conditions are rapidly changing in September and October. Total sunlight hours are declining, air and soil temperatures are decreasing, and often paddocks go from being too dry to being muddy in a very short period of time.

Forage growth will slow dramatically as cooler temperatures and frosty nights set in. The common perennial pasture plants like orchard grass and clovers are preparing to go dormant for the winter. To do this they slow their growth which is very temperature related. Once air temperatures start averaging below 65⁰ F cool season grasses decrease their growth. These growth rates fall more dramatically when the temps fall below 50⁰ F. But the plants continue their photosynthesis process at a near normal pace attempting to build plant root and crown carbohydrate reserves to survive the winter season. Photosynthesis is not impacted as much by the cooler temperatures, but it is greatly reduced if plant leaf area is depleted. If the grazing animal has eaten the plant down below the 4 inch residual level and only a stem remains, the plant's solar collecting panel is greatly reduced and less effective. This impact of over-grazing in the fall has a compounding negative affect as the leaves are consumed, slowing photosynthesis, and then the cooler temps slow the re-growth of the leaves, making it almost impossible to re-build the root reserves before snow blankets the landscape.

Inside this issue:

Grazing Beef Cattle on Fall Cover Crop Mixes	3
Osceola Soil Health Series Twilight Pasture Walk to be Held	
Beef pricing worksheet for producers considering direct marketing	4
As Michigan hay supplies grow, the Michigan Hay Sellers List stands ready	5
EPA Regional Water Division director to speak in Michigan on waters of the U.S.	6
Body Condition Scores are a great tool for the beef cow herd	7
Fall Cattle Sale Schedule	8
Extending the Grazing Season Field Day	9

Continued on page 2...

Continued from page 1...

So the goal in the fall is to stay on your grazing management plan. Don't turn animals into a paddock until there are 3 – 6 leaves on the majority of each plant. This usually will be realized at a paddock forage height of 8" – 10". Graze each paddock no longer than 5 days in the fall. Try to leave an average residual height in the forage stand of no shorter than 4" when the animals exit the paddock.

Look ahead and project if you have enough pasture forage to last until pasture growth will normally end (approximately November 1 in the U.P. and Northern MI. and November 15 in Southern MI.). If you believe you will run out before these dates consider starting to supplement a hay or silage feed on pasture to slow pasture consumption down. This can help to prevent over-grazing and will keep the animals on pasture as long as possible keeping the manure nutrients where they belong.

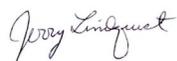
But once all your pasture forage heights fall below the 8" residual level and you have no new paddocks to graze it is best to stop grazing, pull the animals to a sacrifice lot or winter feeding lot and start them on winter diets.

Some exceptions to this stop grazing guideline might be: 1.) if you plan to frost seed (clay or loam soils) and no-till drill (sandy soils) clover or other improved varieties into the pastures next spring the fall period is the time to over-graze the targeted pasture to purposely hurt the present forage stand so the new added seedlings will have a better chance of survival next spring; 2.) if you are short on winter feed and long on livestock, once the pasture forage has went dormant in early to mid Nov. you can graze down the remaining stockpiled forage with less detrimental impact on next spring's growth; 3.) if you plan to bale graze portion of the pasture (setting bales in rows in the field to be fed a few at a time) the addition of manure and wasted feed nutrients has been found to be more beneficial than the negative impact of the animals over-grazing the remaining pasture.

Also remember, the advantage of planting a multi-specie cover crop mix for fall grazing (see the announcement in this newsletter on an upcoming pasture walk to demonstrate this) is you do not have to over-graze your permanent pastures in the fall. You can start grazing these planted cover crop mixes in October strengthen your pastures for next spring's season.

But no matter how you do it, just make sure after doing your best all summer that you finish your pasture grazing management strong this fall !

Jerry Lindquist



MSU Extension State-wide Grazing Educator

Grazing Beef Cattle on Fall Cover Crop Mixes Osceola Soil Health Series Twilight Pasture Walk to be Held

- When:** October 9, Thursday
6:00 – 8:00 P.M.
- Where:** Michele & Chad Nicklas Farm
16134 Schofield Rd., Hersey, MI. 49639
- Cost:** No charge, a grant from Michigan Farm Bureau covered the cost of this event.

An evening pasture walk will be held to show the benefits of grazing multi-species annual cover crops in the fall. In early August the Nicklas Family no tilled a seven species cover crop grazing mix into wheat stubble. With the great growing conditions they have received, they plan to start grazing the sixteen acre field with beef cows in Oct. and will continue into early winter as long as Mother Nature will allow. With four of the seven species being winter hardy bi-annuals or perennials, they hope to continue grazing the mix in April next spring before planting the field to a grain crop in May. For each month that they can graze this cover crop with their beef herd, [Michigan State University Extension](#) Educators estimate that they will save \$30 per cow per month in feed costs alone.

The total financial benefit of this practice will be even greater as the cow herd will be recycling the forage into a truly green manure, adding nutrients and organic matter to the soil. The remaining grazed cover crop stubble and re-growing plants will provide winter protection on the soil by reducing soil erosion. After spring grazing, the plant stems and roots will add more organic matter to the soil as well as provide a source of nitrogen for next year's grain crop. This compounding benefit of adding plant materials into the soil, and the animal manure on top of the soil, is a great method of soil improvement. It will increase soil organic matter which will increase soil fertility, and improve the water holding capacity of the soil. It also provides stimulus for soil organisms like earth worms and other microscopic organism that improve soil quality even more.



Nicklas field growth in September

University research has estimated that a practice like this can easily increase the soil organic matter, and thus fertility of the soil, by \$60 – 80 per acre per year. This fertility improvement easily covers the cost of seed and the no till drilling operation. Thus the feed savings for the cow herd of an estimated \$30 per cow per month grazed is pure savings. The major risks of the system is a dry fall leading to poor growth, or an early winter that could reduce the grazing days.

An evening pasture walk will be held on Thursday, Oct. 9 from 6 - 8 p.m. to showcase the great advantage of grazing multi-species cover crop mixes in the fall and spring season. The event will take place at the Michelle and Chad Nicklas Farm at 16134 Schofield Rd., Hersey, MI in Osceola County. The walk is sponsored [MAEAP](#), MSU Extension and NRCS Offices of Lake and Osceola Counties. It is part of a Soil Health Summer Series of Meetings that these organizations sponsored and Michigan Farm Bureau supported with a financial grant. USDA programs are open to all people. For more information contact me at the MSU Extension Office at 231-832-6139 or Greg White at the NRCS Office at 231-832-5341. Anyone needing special accommodations to attend the walk should notify any of these agencies before the day of the event.



Grazed oat & turnip mix at Lindquist's in December

Beef pricing worksheet for producers considering direct marketing

A new tool is available to beef producers when pricing beef carcasses for consumers.

Jeannine Schwehofer, Michigan State University Extension

Have you ever been asked by one of your customers how much a freezer full of beef will cost? Do you struggle to convert the live animal value to a carcass based price? [Michigan State University Extension](#) and the [University of Wisconsin Extension](#) have teamed up to develop a new worksheet to answer these questions. Beef prices are record high but consumers have maintained demand for beef.

The [Freezer Beef Pricing Worksheet](#) is available to assist beef producers in determining the price of direct marketed beef. This tool also has a [video](#) available to give producers additional information in using the worksheet. Although examples are given for current market conditions in September 2014, producers are encouraged to enter actual costs and information based off of their own operation into the worksheet.

Example pricing uses the August, 2014 overall retail Choice beef price of \$6.24 per pound. If a carcass price of \$2.80 per pound is used, this would create a 23 percent savings for consumers compared to purchasing the beef at retail stores. [Monthly average price values reported by the USDA Economic Research Service](#) can be used to create figures to share with customers for overall savings value when purchasing beef by the whole, half or quarter.

Important considerations when using the worksheet include understanding the type of beef animal being processed (steer vs. heifer and beef breed or dairy breed). These differences influence the dressing percentage and estimated yield grade of the animal. Accurate figures or estimates entered into the worksheet result in more accurate results for overall yield and cost per pound of beef in the freezer. If producers have any historical data from their own animals and previous sales or processing, use those values to customize the worksheet for your own operation.

Additional [resources in direct marketing beef](#) are available from [Michigan State University Extension beef](#) program.

This article was published by [Michigan State University Extension](#). For more information, visit <http://www.msue.msu.edu>. To have a digest of information delivered straight to your email inbox, visit <http://bit.ly/MSUENews>. To contact an expert in your area, visit <http://expert.msue.msu.edu>, or call 888-MSUE4MI (888-678-3464).

As Michigan hay supplies grow, the Michigan Hay Sellers List stands ready

Whether buying or selling hay, the Michigan Hay Sellers List makes the task easier

Jerry Lindquist, Michigan State University Extension

For over 21 years, the Michigan Hay Sellers List has been bringing buyers and sellers of hay together. Much of Michigan received ample rainfall in the growing season of 2014 and hay yields rebounded substantially from the previous two dry summers. As the hay harvest season comes to a close, it does appear there will be surplus supplies of some types of hay. Hay marketing will become more challenging than it has been over the last few years as a result.

The high quality alfalfa hays that did not get rained on will be one of the few hay types that will still be in short supply this year. The summer harvest season was plagued with not enough sunny hay drying days in 2014. For much of Michigan, first cutting in June was delayed by wet weather, followed by overcast days in much of July and August. A lot of hay that was intended for dry hay in mid-summer was rained on and eventually harvested as haylage, balage or made into a low-quality, weathered baled hay. High quality dry alfalfa hays that were successfully harvested without rain or delay are still running \$180 - \$250 per ton when they can be found. Also, horse hays in small square bales that are mold and dust free are still hard to find and are bringing from \$175 - \$310 per ton depending upon location in Michigan.

According to [Michigan State University Extension](#) forage team members, there seems to be good supplies of most other types of hays and prices have fallen dramatically from the past few years. We again are seeing large price spreads between low quality and high quality hays. During the dry years any type of hay, regardless of quality, was bringing a premium price, whereas now only quality hay is bringing that higher price.

First cutting hays that have some grass in them, are late harvested/over mature, and maybe got rained on are in abundance this year. These hays are often testing below 10 percent crude protein in many instances and are priced below \$100 per ton, with some selling as low as \$65 - \$80 per ton in round bale form. The large harvest of these types of hay along with the falling grain prices is putting downward pressure on these low quality hays. Each year over \$1 million of hay is listed for sale on the [Michigan Hay Seller's List](#). To find alfalfa and or timothy small squared baled hay that is dust free within fifty miles of home, or that premium quality alfalfa second cutting in big square bales for under \$240 per ton, the list makes the hunt much easier.

Anyone seeking hay to buy can go to [The Michigan Hay Sellers List](#) and search for the specific hay they desire whether it be high quality alfalfa, mixed hay, horse quality timothy or even birdsfoot trefoil. They can simultaneously search for bale type such as small squares, big squares or round bales. They can also select which cutting is desired, be it first, second, third or maybe others. The search will generate the list of producers that have hay of these specific parameters for sale, the location of the hay and the asking price for the hay.



Anyone seeking hay to buy can go to [The Michigan Hay Sellers List](#) and search for the specific hay and bale type they desire.

Anyone wishing to list hay for sale can go to the same [website](#). Just follow the directions and go to the “help” icon at the top of the entry page if more clarification is needed.

All asking prices are listed on a per ton basis. This is done to be sure that transactions are made on a fair, standard basis. There is no charge for buyers or sellers. To keep the listings current, each listing is posted for only four months. For more information contact me at 231-832-6139 lindquis@anr.msu.edu or Phil Kaatz, at (810) 667-0341 or at kaatz@anr.msu.edu. The Hay Sellers List is sponsored by MSU Extension with support from the Michigan Forage Council, the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, and Michigan Farm Bureau.

EPA Regional Water Division director to speak in Michigan on waters of the U.S.

Forum on the EPA's Proposed Waters of the U.S. to be held in Osceola County.

Jerry Lindquist, Michigan State University Extension

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) are publishing for public comment a proposed rule defining what waters are protected under the Clean Water Act (CWA). This is being done in light of recent U.S. Supreme Court rulings.

According to the EPA, this proposal is intended to enhance protection for the nation's public health and aquatic resources, and increase CWA program predictability and consistency by increasing clarity as to the scope of "waters of the United States" protected under the Act. The comment period ends on October 20, 2014.

A forum will be held to inform rural landowners and farmers on the EPA's "Waters of the U.S." Proposed Rules on **Tuesday, October 14, 2014 at 7 p.m.** The EPA's Region Five Water Division Director Tinka Hyde will speak on the "Waters of the U.S." proposal at the Osceola County Sheriff's Posse Headquarters. Hyde will focus on how this proposed ruling would affect farmers and rural landowners in Michigan. Also speaking at the meeting will be Laura Campbell, Michigan Farm Bureau's Agricultural Ecology Specialist. Campbell will highlight Agriculture's Concerns with the "Water of the U.S." ruling.

The meeting is sponsored by the Osceola County Farm Bureau and Michigan State University Extension. There is no charge to attend the meeting. The Sheriff's Posse Grounds are located at 21940 Six Mile Road, Reed City, MI, 49677. From highway U.S. 10, just east of the U.S. 131 exit, travel north one mile on 220th Ave. to Six Mile Rd. and turn right onto Six Mile Rd. which is the entrance to the Sheriff's Posse grounds.

For more information contact me at the Osceola County Michigan State University Extension office at 231-832-6139.

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Body Condition Scores are a great tool for the beef cow herd

Body Condition Score is a term used often in beef cattle discussions, however, some producers may not know what it means and how it can be used as a management tool for the herd.

Kable Thurlow, Michigan State University Extension

For many years, astute cattle producers have been visually appraising their livestock. Body Condition Score (BCS) needs to be a visual appraisal tool that all beef cow-calf producers know how to use. Most producers do not weigh the cows on a regular basis, so being able to look at them and evaluate them is a must. The BCS 9-point scoring system is the tool for that job. There are many reasons to know how to conduct a BCS on your beef cows that will be discussed later in this article, as well as links to several great resources available to the beef cow producer.

The BCS is linked to the amount of fat cover a beef cow has as shown in Table 1. The visual assessment of a cow can be done anytime that the producer is with the herd. The amount of fat a cow has is directly related to her animal performance, specifically to her reproductive performance. Reproduction, is the most important economically important trait since an open female is a costly female. It can be a great tool for identifying nutritional deficiencies in the herd. A thinner cow may have a harder time breeding back, and may come up open, and need to be culled for that reason.

Research has indicated that beef cows are most efficient and fertile as a BCS of 5-6. One BCS point is equivalent to approximately 75-80 pounds of body weight. So a cow that is a BCS of 6 weighing 1,300 pounds, will weigh approximately 1,260 pounds at a BCS of 5.5. Post weaning is the most economical time to add weight to the cows; their nutrient requirements are lowest at this time, so if weight needs to be added, that would be the time to do it. Preferably this feed and extra weight gain would come from grazed feed, as mechanically harvested feed comes at a considerably higher cost. BCS scoring the cows just prior to, or directly after weaning is a good time to complete that task. Prior to the breeding season starting would be another beneficial time to score the herd.

There are several key points to remember when scoring the beef cow herd:

- Work to be consistent in the scoring, seek help if needed
- Utilize the tools available to help with the scoring process
An example would be the [BCS App from the University of Nebraska](#)
- Score the cows several time throughout the production cycle
- ID those cow families that fall short of meeting the goals of the operation

There are many places to get information on Body Condition Scoring, the important message is that producers that are not using this tool, begin to use it, and perfect the eye as time progresses. For those producers that have a smart phone or tablet, [Rick Rasby, Beef Extension Specialist at the University of Nebraska Lincoln](#), has developed an App that can be used to help with scoring the herd. The App allows you to take a picture and score animals as well as record that information for later use. There is also a BCS bulletin that Rasby has developed entitled "[Body Condition Scoring Beef Cows: A tool for managing the Nutrition Program for Beef Herds.](#)"

The BCS system can be a powerful tool for the beef cow-calf producer. The BCS of the herd influences the productivity of that herd, thin cows will breed back at a slower rate than those cows with a higher BCS. A cow that has too much condition, a BCS of 8 or 9, may have mobility challenges, and also may have problems re-breeding and calving. Animals on either extreme may not be economical. It's important that a beef cow has a calf every 365 days, and in order to get that done, she must rebreed within 83 days (282 day gestation + 83 day post partum interval = 365 days) after calving. For more information, or for help with scoring your cow herd, view the links above, and contact me at: thurlowk@msu.edu or one of the [Michigan State University Extension beef educators](#) in your area.

Table 1. Percent Body Fat Associated With Each Body Condition Score

BCS	% Body Fat
1	3.77
2	7.54
3	11.30
4	15.07
5	18.89
6	22.61
7	26.38
8	30.15
9	33.91

Source: *Nutrient Requirements of Beef Cattle, 7th Revised Edition, 2000. National Academy Press, Washington, D.C.*

Fall Cattle Sale Schedule

Date	Time	Sale Name	Phone	Location
October 11	5:00 pm	The Angus Connection Sale	(269) 208-6470	Niles
October 12	12:00 pm	Ridgeview Farm Definite Difference XI Sale	(616) 868-0319	Alto
November 1	12:00 pm	Michigan Simmental Association Fall Harvest Sale	(517) 425-9396	St. Louis
November 1	2:00 pm	Farmers Livestock Graded & Preconditioned Feeder Sale	(269) 962-7591	Battle Creek
November 2	1:00 pm	Great Lakes Hereford Roundup	(517) 719-0768	Williamston
November 8	1:00 pm	Michigan Shorthorn Breeders Association	(517) 202-3628	Charlotte
November 29	2:00 pm	Farmers Livestock Special Brood Cow & Feeder Calf Sale	(269) 962-7591	Battle Creek
February 7	2:00 pm	Farmers Livestock Bred Heifer ad Feeder Calf Sale	(269) 962-7591	Battle Creek

Feeder Cattle Sales

October 9	3:00 pm	Lake Odessa Livestock	(616) 437-2807	Lake Odessa
October 13	6:00 pm	Ravenna Auction	(231) 853-5738	Ravenna
October 17	1:00 pm	United Producers Feeder Cattle Sale	(989) 872-2138	Cass City
October 21	Noon	West Branch Feeder Calf Sale	(989) 370-6200	West Branch
October 27	6:00 pm	Ravenna Auction	(231) 853-5738	Ravenna
November 1	2:00 pm	Farmers Livestock Preconditioned Feeder Calf Sale	(269) 962-7591	Battle Creek
November 3	6:00 pm	Hardwood Cattle Company Bred Cow Sale	(616) 902-1022	Carthage, Illinois
November 6	1:00 pm	Clare County Livestock Feeder Calf Sale	(810) 441-6191	Clare
November 7	1:00 pm	United Producers Feeder Cattle Sale	(989) 681-2191	St. Louis
November 10	6:00 pm	Ravenna Auction	(231) 853-5738	Ravenna
November 13	3:00 pm	Lake Odessa Livestock	(616) 437-2807	Lake Odessa
November 20	1:00 pm	MSU Lake City Bred Females Online Auction	(231) 839-4608	www.sheridanauctionservice.com
November 28	3:00 pm	Lake Odessa Livestock	(616) 437-2807	Lake Odessa
November 29	2:00 pm	Farmers Livestock Feeder Calf Sale	(269) 962-7591	Battle Creek
December 4	1:00 pm	Clare County Livestock Feeder Calf Sale	(810) 441-6191	Clare
December 5	1:00 pm	United Producers Feeder Cattle Sale	(989) 681-2191	St. Louis
December 8	6:00 pm	Ravenna Auction	(231) 853-5738	Ravenna
December 11	3:00 pm	Lake Odessa Livestock	(616) 437-2807	Lake Odessa
February 7	2:00 pm	Farmers Livestock Feeder Calf Sale	(269) 962-7591	Battle Creek

Private Treaty Sale Offerings

Burek Enterprises	Bob Burek	(800) 258-2328	Petoskey
Middle Branch Ranch	Bruce Hill	(989) 426-0736	Gladwin

Compiled by the Michigan Cattlemen's Association

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | W.K. Kellogg Biological Station
Kellogg Farm

Extending the Grazing Season Field Day

W.K. Kellogg Biological Station, Kellogg Farm, 10461 N. 40th St., Hickory Corners, MI 49060

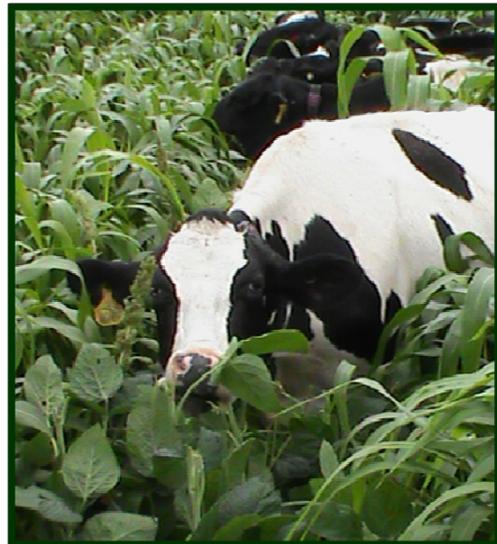
Friday, November 7, 2014

1:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Join MSU educators regional farmers, and consultants to discuss extending the grazing season. We will be observing examples of cover crop mixtures and forages for pasture-based farms and talking about efficient planning and management strategies. This field day is a free event and will be held outside so please dress for the weather.

Topics Include:

- The economics of extending the grazing season
- The opportunities and challenges for high yielding forage rape varieties
- Managing and grazing multi-species cover crop mixes
- Advantages of winter bale grazing



Registration:

Pre-registration is required by Wednesday, November 5th, 2014:

To Register: Email: klotzmis@msu.edu or Phone: 269-671-2402

There is no fee to attend.

Partners and Sponsors:

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