Dear Great Lakes Grazer,

If there is anything that is predictable about Michigan weather, it is how un-predictable it is. Temps last week in the 50s with spring like run-offs and flooding in January – who would have predicted that? Last year we saw 70 degree days in March and because of the tight feed supply this year many farms in the State are hoping that the groundhog is right and we will have an early spring again to get animals out on pasture sooner.

It is now early February and for most of us there is less than 100 days to get to green grass. Now is a great time to re-calculate winter feed supplies and make sure you have enough feed to get your herd or flock to grass. Because of low hay yields last summer and hay prices above $200/ton this winter many are carrying just enough feed to make it through to spring. But farms this year especially need to be realistic about how much feed they have and when grazing can begin.

Even last year if you remember it was greening up at the end of March with those warm temps, but then April arrived and we had over 14 nights with freezing temperatures and most forage growth in the fields and pastures was frosted back. Across much of Michigan forage growth in a normal spring is not available to graze until after May 5 – 15 in the Lower Peninsula and after May 20 in much of the Upper Peninsula.

If a farm this year is hoping that they can stretch their winter feed supply and maybe when feed runs out, as a last resort, just turn their stock out and forage what they can find on pasture, they need to think again and understand the ramification of such a plan. More than likely last fall the pasture was grazed aggressively utilizing everything that was available. Thus the pasture plants went to bed a little stressed. Grazing grass too early in the spring can stress it even more and can lead to lower productivity for much of the summer.

Grass and legumes coming out of winter have low carbohydrate root reserves and need some growing time to re-charge their root food reserves. As they begin growth in the spring they actually take out more root reserves to create cells for stem and leaf growth.

...Continued on next page
Thus the plant is actually getting weaker the first few inches of growth. Then as it grows to the point of starting to maximize leaves on the plant, it begins to re-charge these root food reserves as the leaves act as solar panels collecting energy from the sun and storing it in the roots.

If we have hungry grazing animals that are out of winter feed and they are grubbing down the first couple inches of new growth on a plant for ten days or longer those plants may become weakened and stunted. This will lower their productivity for the next few months, which are the most productive pasture months of the summer. Worse yet the plants may wither and die leaving an opening for weed seeds to germinate and grow.

What can you do as manager to avoid this? First do not graze new pasture growth until it is at least six inches on average in height in the spring. Normal grazing turn-in for the rest of the summer should be at least eight inches tall, but for spring time we can hit it sooner if we graze it quickly and then rotate them off of it, but let it get to at least six before beginning.

Controlled grazing with paddock fencing division and very rapid rotation of the herd from paddock to paddock is essential for spring-time early grazing. If they only a graze a short grass stand for a day it is better than grazing it constantly for five days. Especially if we can then give that stand a rest and not graze it again for 15 days or longer and hopefully not before it reaches at least eight inches tall, the short pasture grazing may not be as harmful.

Other options if you determine you will be tight on winter feed without an early spring include:

- cull a few animals now as the longer you wait the more you may have to cull later
- try to find some other economical feed/supplement now and feed it soon to stretch your supply, again the sooner you start the more feed you will save for the end
- if you have plans to renovate a pasture or hayfield this summer anyway, then early grazing on it will not matter so use it as one of the first sites to graze this spring
- attend one of the upcoming “Feeding the Beef Herd – “ winter Extension meetings (see info on following pages) to learn more about methods to estimate if you have enough feed and on alternative feed sources.

Bottom-line, take action now to make sure you have enough feed and make changes if necessary. The rewards could be great next fall when it comes time to sell, but an un-expected shortage of feed or stunted pasture could be costly this spring or summer especially if you turn your head and don’t see it coming! Livestock Extension Educators Kevin Gould gouldk@anr.msu.edu 616-527-8014 and Kable Thurlow thurlowk@anr.msu.edu 989-426-7741 stand ready to help you estimate your feed resources with an un-biased eye. Feel free to contact them.

Jerry Lindquist

MSU Extension Grazing & Crop Management Educator
Grass Finishing Fall Born Calves

Beef cattle finished on grass as opposed to high grain rations is growing in popularity. Utilizing cattle from fall calving operations offers some advantages to spring born calves.

Frank Wardynski, Michigan State University Extension

Many grass finish beef operations utilize a spring calving season and market the finished animals coming off of grass at 18-21 months of age. This system requires forages that are of excellent quality to obtain weight gain through the winter feeding period and the subsequent grazing season. Finishing beef cattle on grass that are born during the fall months allows cattle to grow slower, yield higher dressing percentages, achieve higher quality grades and receive a high percentage of total feed coming from grazing forages, as opposed to the mechanically harvested winter feed supply.

Feeding cattle to USDA choice quality grade has been a standard of acceptability in the cattle feeding business. Increasing the age of cattle from 18 to 24 months of age at harvest, increases the chance of cattle grading choice if fed to the same fat endpoint. As cattle are fed to older ages, muscle accretion decreases and fat deposition increases. Feeding fall born calves to 24 months of age has the potential of resulting in cattle reaching a higher fat endpoint and is positively correlated with cattle yielding higher dressing percentages.

Feeding cattle to 24 months on grass allows producers to grow them at a slower growth rate (1.75 pounds/day) on a slightly lower plane of nutrition as opposed to cattle harvested at 18 months (2.2 pounds/day). Feeding cattle for a longer time period does result in a longer term investment on money and will add interest cost. Also, the winter feeding period of fall born calves as yearlings will require about 10-15 percent more stored feed than that of the spring born calves. Feeding cattle to 24 months of age will require more total forage to be consumed as opposed to feeding cattle for 18 months; however a higher percentage of the forage will come from grazing, rather than harvested feed for winter.

Utilizing a fall calving season to produce grass finished beef offers an opportunity to produce heavier cattle of higher quality than spring born calves with a slightly lower quality forage. Cost of production will be higher using the fall born system, but the potential for higher income may increase profits. For more information about feeding fall born beef calves to finish on grass contact Frank Wardynski, Ruminant Educator with Michigan State University Extension at

This article was published by Michigan State University Extension. For more information, visit http://www.msue.msu.edu. To contact an expert in your area, visit http://expert.msue.msu.edu, or call 888-MSUE4MI (888-678-3464).
Birth Management Clinic for Small Ruminants

- Are you interested in learning how to improve birth management during the challenging winter season?
- If so, sign up now for this fun and highly informative clinic.

Participants will learn how to improve their management skills through discussions and hands-on activities during this program taught by Dr. Richard Ehrhardt, MSU small ruminant specialist.

**February 9 or February 16, 2013**

**Location:**
- 10a.m. to 1 p.m. Onondaga Town Hall, 4756 Baldwin Road, Onondaga, MI 48281;
- 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. 6280 Kinneville Rd., Eaton Rapids, MI 48827 (these locations are located approx. 3 miles apart)

Program will repeat on Feb 16 – sign up for one day only

Enrollment is limited to 25 persons per session date. Please complete your registration by February 5. $45.00/person
(Additional members of the same family may attend for $20 each. Only one proceeding will be provided to each family.)
Registration includes birth management manual, treatment posters, boxed lunch and light refreshments.

On line registration may be completed at: https://commerce.cashnet.com/msu_3645
Choose the MSU Extension tab.

Contact Carla McLachlan at 517-432-5402 or email at MCLACHL2@msu.edu for additional details.

Complete the form below and return to: Carla McLachlan, 474 S. Shaw Lane, Room 1237, East Lansing, MI 48824. Make checks payable to Michigan State University.

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**Michigan State University Extension**
Michigan Beef Herds at a Crossroads

The strong competition for farm land and the greater profitability of raising corn, soybeans, and other crops is causing many beef cow/calf herd owners in Michigan to ponder their future. “When a grain farmer will offer you $100 per acre or more to rent the land to raise corn or soybeans, it is hard for a cow/calf producer to ignore the offer” says Jerry Lindquist, MSU Extension Grazing and Crop Management Educator. “There is less risk for the landowner, the return is almost the same, and they are not tied to the farm daily to keep a management eye on the animals. Because of this plows are turning under pasture land and hayfields across Michigan this fall with the intent of chasing $7 corn next spring,” he adds.

But still this MSU Extension Beef Team member, along with his other colleagues, believes there is a bright future for Michigan beef herds. These feeder calf producers will have to make changes in their operations to gain more profitability, but the future looks very promising over the next few years for those that do. “First we must realize” offers Lindquist “some of that pasture and hay land is not suited for tillage. Some of it is sloped and highly erodible and some of it is on very wet, untiled soils.” Those acres are best kept in sod.

According to Dr. Dan Buskirk, MSU Beef Cattle Specialist, now may be exactly the wrong time to leave the cattle industry. “We have the smallest beef cow herd in 60 years and we have corn acres that appear next year to be climbing even higher across the country. Feeder calf prices are already good, if we benefit from a good growing season next summer in the corn belt and corn prices fall, calf prices will rally to some very profitable levels” Buskirk feels.

But staying the course and doing the same old thing is not what Buskirk believes most Michigan beef herd managers should do. Times have changed and the cow/calf industry must change with them. “Feeding hay as the predominate winter feed source has gotten too costly because of the high cost of machinery, fuel and fertilizer along with this competition for land” he adds. “We must use more of our other lower cost winter feed sources in Michigan to remain competitive” he concludes.

According to Kevin Wernette, President of the Michigan Cattlemen’s Association, “the use of more economical feed sources is the recommendation that Michigan cattle producers must stop ignoring. There are too many beef farms that like to bale hay and believe that is the only way to feed a beef cow in the winter time. They are blowing the extra income they are receiving from their cattle by feeding expensive hay this winter.”

“The next three years may be some very profitable years for cow/calf producers” says Kevin Gould, MSU Extension Beef Educator, “especially if they control their feed costs.” Gould feels the increase in corn acres, and higher corn plant populations of today help make corn stalks a valuable winter feed source for the gestating beef cow. “We can bale corn stalks and bring them to the cow, or even better if we have fence and a water source we can let the cows graze corn stalks in the fields after grain harvest” he adds. Rather than selling the cows, Gould feels more feeder calf producers should consider adding some corn acres to their operation, harvest the shelled corn for a profit, and then feed the corn stalks as a portion of the winter feed supply. “This scenario makes so much economic sense, the market is there, take advantage of the situation” he concludes.

To address this market opportunity the MSU Beef Team will offer a two part Extension series at three locations in Michigan. The series will address various feed alternatives for beef cow/calf herds and look at the economics of each. See the following for meeting details.

**Feeding Michigan’s Beef Cow Herd in 2013 and Beyond**

A two part series offered by MSU Extension from 7:00 – 9:00 P.M.

- February 11 & 18, Kettunen Center, Tustin, MI.
- February 12 & 19, Gratiot/Isabella RESD Administrative Bldg., Ithaca, MI.
- February 13 & 20, MDARD Center, Atlanta, MI.
- An internet webinar live feed will also be available to producers across the State.

For complete registration information go [http://events.anr.msu.edu/beefseries2013](http://events.anr.msu.edu/beefseries2013) or see the brochure that is enclosed.
The Michigan beef industry has entered some volatile times. Profit potentials abound for feeder calf producers but those profits can quickly be fed away if farmers do not adapt to the changing times. Join the MSU Extension Beef Team and Industry Leaders for a two-night series on strategies to feed the beef cow herd for more profit in 2013 and beyond.

**Program on Night 1  6:30 – 9:00 P.M. EST**

- **The Changing Face of the Michigan Cow Calf Industry**—Dr. Jim Hilker, MSU Ag Economics Department. Low cattle numbers have brought profitability back to the Michigan cow/calf industry. However, strong cash grain prices combined with drought have increased land competition and shot feed prices up to profit-robbing levels. What can Michigan producers do to make these the best of times?

- **Industry Perspective**—Kevin Wernette, President of Michigan Cattlemen’s Association. Are these the worst of times or the best of times? Time to sell out or expand?

- **Simple Methods to Estimate Winter Beef Cow Feed Needs**—Phil Durst, MSU Extension Beef Team. Learn how to use a simple take home tool to determine if you have enough feed to get to green grass.

- **Keeping the Beef Cow Feed Budget under Control with Alternative Feeds**—Dr. Dan Buskirk, MSU Beef Cattle Specialist & Kevin Gould, MSU Extension Beef Educator. If dry weather continues and/or corn squeezes more hay acres out of production do you have the plan in place to feed your herd economically in the future? Side by side comparison of alternative beef cattle feeds to determine which meet the cow’s nutritional needs and which are the most economical.

**Program on Night 2  6:30 – 9:00 P.M. EST**

- **Agronomic Considerations for Raising and Storing Alternative Beef Cattle Feeds**—Jerry Lindquist, MSU Extension Grazing & Crop Management Educator. Which of these alternative feeds can we raise on the farm? Which ones work well for grazing and which ones for stored feeds? What are the expected yields? What are the risks?

- **Utilizing Grazing Management to Keep Feed Costs under Control**—Kable Thurlow, MSU Extension Beef Educator. How to maximize grazing to control feed cost.

- **How to Adjust and Analyze Your Beef Operation to Keep It Profitable**—Dennis Stein, MSU Extension Farm Management Educator & Frank Wardynski, MSU Extension Beef Educator. Considerations and tactics for improving and measuring the profitability of your beef herd.

**Locations** (Content will be the same at each location, register only for one location)

- **Kettunen Center**, 14901 4-H Drive, Tustin, MI 49688
  Mondays, February 11 & 18, 6:30-9:00 P.M.

- **Gratiot-Isabella RESD Administration Building**, 1131 E. Center St., PO Box 310 Ithaca, MI 48847.
  Tuesdays, February 12 & 19, 6:30-9:00 P.M.

- **Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development Center**, 16860 M-32 East Atlanta, MI 49709
  Wednesdays, February 13 & 20, 6:30-9:00 P.M.

**Internet webinar connection** is also available on February 12 & 19, 6:30-9:00 P.M. for anyone not able to attend in person. High speed internet access is required. Contact Kable Thurlow at thurlowk@anr.msu.edu for complete details.

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### “Feeding The Beef Herd in 2013 & Beyond” Seminar Registration

| Name: | __________________________________________ |
| Address: | __________________________________________ |
| City, State, Zip: | __________________________________________ |
| Phone: | __________________________________________ |
| Email Address: | __________________________________________ |

**Registration Fee (please check)**

- Registration for 1 night $25
- Registration for night 1 & night 2 $40
  only registrations received by Feb. 7 will be guaranteed handout tools and equipment

**Attending**

- Kettunen Center, Tustin, MI
- RESD, Ithaca, MI
- MDARD Center, Atlanta, MI
- Webinar participation on February 12 & 19 (email address required above)

**Total number attending _________**

**Total Registration Fee: __________**

Register and pay on-line at [http://events.anr.msu.edu/beefseries2013](http://events.anr.msu.edu/beefseries2013) -or-

Complete and return this form with payment in the form of a check made payable to:

MSU Extension
301 W. Upton Ave
Reed City, MI 49677
Michigan Forage Technology Conference

When: March 7, 2013

Time: 10:00 A.M.—4:00 P.M. (Registration begins at 9:00 A.M.)

Location: Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center, Big Ten Room B
219 South Harrison Rd, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824

Theme: The Changing Forage Industry

Join us for an information-packed day. Here are just a few of our planned topics: The Future of the Forage Industry, Cover Crops as Forage, Corn Shredlage, Growing Alfalfa-Grass Mixtures, Hay Supplies and Demand, What NRCS Can Do for You, MSU Forage Research Updates, Shupe Grazing Dairy, Fencing and Water for Temporary Pastures, Michigan Forage Council Annual Meeting, Vendors, and more!

For more information, see complete conference schedule at [http://fis.msue.msu.edu/events.htm/](http://fis.msue.msu.edu/events.htm/) or contact Dr. Kim Cassida (cassida@msu.edu) or Jodie Schonfelder (schonfel@msu.edu, 517-355-0271)

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Day of conference registration (9:00-10:00 AM) $40 $45
(lunch not guaranteed)

Your Name ________________________________________________________________

Address ___________________________________________________________________

Telephone number __________________________________________________________

E-mail ________________________________________________________________

Return this form and payment to: Jodie Schonfelder, Plant and Soil Science Building, 1066 Bogue St. Rm A286, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824
EHD Die Off in Deer – Can Cattle Contact the Disease?

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Michigan State University Diagnostic Center for Population and Animal Health announced that epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD) has been confirmed in 29 Michigan counties. For a list of all 29 counties, visit www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases and click on EHD, which is located in the center of the page under Spotlight.

The disease is caused by a virus that is transmitted by a type of biting fly or midge. A constant characteristic of EHD is its sudden onset. Deer can suffer extensive internal bleeding, lose their appetite and fear of humans, grow progressively weaker, salivate excessively and finally become unconscious and die. Due to a high fever, infected deer often are found sick or dead along or in bodies of water as they go there to cool off and to drink.

This is a disease that has been found in Southern States deer populations for many years but had never hit Michigan’s deer herd as hard as it did this summer. According to the DNR website over 14,900 deer have been reported by landowners and hunters to be found dead this year with symptoms that appear to be the result of EHD. Hardest hit area in Michigan was the Ionia area with 2,500 dead deer reported. It is believed the impact was so great this year because of the dry weather. The midge breeds in pond and stream bottom soils where the water dried up and exposed the soil to the flying insect.

Humans cannot contact the disease and the venison from a deer that was bitten by the midge but survived the disease is safe to eat. Complete answers to these and many more questions can be found at the web site listed above.

Questions have also been raised about the possibility of this disease infecting domestic livestock. The answer is yes, it can inflicted cattle but at a much milder level and death loss is rare. The disease has been reported in cattle in Nebraska, South Dakota and Ohio in past years. Telltale symptoms in cattle include: excessive salivation, stiffness or lameness, a crusty peeling muzzle, crusty skin on the teats, fever and a reluctance to eat caused the sores in the muzzle or mouth. There is no vaccine for cattle to prevent the disease but affected cattle can be treated.

So bottom line, do not panic, if we get more rainfall next summer even the deer may not be affected again. It is not considered to be a significant problem in cattle however you should be aware of what the symptoms are so that you can distinguish between it and possible other diseases that cause similar symptoms. Contact your veterinarian if have concerns or if you see symptoms like these in your herd.
Growers, consultants and agribusiness professionals are invited to attend two online programs addressing key grain and forage production points for 2013. Participants will learn how to enhance their corn, small grain and forage systems in the coming season, and have an opportunity to ask questions of MSU agriculture experts. The programs can be viewed independently online at no cost or at one of several group viewing sites throughout the state for $10 per person. MEAP Phase I and two MDARD Pesticide Recertification Credits will be available through each event for application to one of the following categories: Private Core, Commercial Core, or Field Crops.

**Corn & Small Grains**  
**March 14th, 7pm-9pm EST**
- Corn Production  
  Dr. Bob Nielsen, Purdue  
- Small Grain Production  
  Martin Nagelkirk & Jim Isleib, MSUE  
- Weed Management  
  Dr. Christy Sprague, MSUE  
- Insect Pest Update  
  Bruce Mackellar, MSUE

**Forage Systems**  
**March 21st, 7pm-9pm EST**
- Corn Silage Production  
  Dr. Bob Nielsen, Purdue  
- Drought Recovery Management  
  Dr. Kim Cassida, MSUE  
- Cost of Production  
  Phil Kaatz, MSUE  
- MAEAP for Forage and Livestock  
  Allen Krizek, MAEAP

**Viewing Sites**
- Bellaire  
- Benton Harbor  
- Escanaba  
- Grand Rapids  
- Monroe  
- Ontonagon  
- Rogers City  
- Sault Ste. Marie  
- St. Johns  
- Tustin  
- West Branch

Visit [events.anr.msu.edu/GrainAndForageWebinarSeries](http://events.anr.msu.edu/GrainAndForageWebinarSeries) to register and access connection information.

Contact James DeDecker (989-734-2168 or dedecke5@msu.edu) for more information, or by March 7th, 2013 to request accommodations for persons with disabilities.

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BULL SALE - March 16, 2013, 12:30 pm

The MCA/MSU Bull Evaluation Program is a cooperative effort between the Michigan Cattlemen's Association, Michigan State University, and Plank Farm. The objectives of the program are to:

- Promote performance-evaluated beef cattle and serve as an educational tool to acquaint producers with its overall value.
- Provide a common environment for evaluating young bulls for rate of gain, soundness, and body composition.
- Aid beef producers in obtaining superior bulls that have been evaluated for growth, breeding and structural soundness, and carcass merit.

Enrolled in the 2012-13 bull evaluation program are 61 Angus, 30 Simmental & SimAngus, 6 Red Angus, 6 Charolais, and 5 Polled Hereford bulls.

Saturday, March 2, 2013, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. at the Station, 325 Mt. Hope Rd, Crystal, MI
2013 Michigan Bull Breeding Soundness Exam Clinics

The MSU Beef Extension Team will once again be organizing regional Bull Breeding Soundness Exam Clinics. Last year, the program tested over 300 bulls for 108 different operations. By identifying these potential male fertility problems, producers were able to reduce the risk of a less than optimum breeding season. The MSUE Beef Team encourages you to have BSE conducted on your breeding bulls every year. Contact your veterinarian or take advantage of the following Breeding Soundness Exam Clinics organized by MSUE. Cost is $55 per bull when done at one of the MSUE clinics. To schedule an appointment at one of these BSE clinics, please call the appropriate contact person as soon as possible. In addition, the MSU College of Veterinary Medicine regularly schedules in house appointments for BSE’s. To schedule an appointment contact the MSU CVM Large Animal Clinic at 517-353-2964.

Location: Gary Voogt Farm, Marne MI
Date: March 15th, 2013
Contact: Kevin Gould @ 616-527-5357 or Gary Voogt @ 616-677-3680

Location: Derry Breault Beef Farm, Gladwin, MI
Date: Friday April 12th, 2013
Contact: Kable Thurlow @ 989-426-7741

Location: MSU Lake City Experiment Station, Lake City MI
Date: Friday, April 19, 2013
Contact: Kable Thurlow @ 989-426-7741 or Doug Carmichael @ 231-839-4608

Location: Kevin Wernnette, Remus, MI
Date: Saturday April 20th, 2013
Contact: Kevin Gould @ 616-527-5357 or Todd Miller @ 231-832-3680

Location: Upper Peninsula of Michigan
Date: April 22-26th, 2013
Contact: Frank Wardynski @ 906-884-4386

Location: Chuck Preston Farm, Prescott MI
Date: Saturday April 27th, 2013
Contact: Phil Durst @ 989-387-5346 or Chuck Preston @ 989-873-4164