

wisconsin grass-fed beef cooperative

WISCONSIN
MEADOWS™

10th ANNIVERSARY 2018

Meadow View

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Tenth Anniversary Edition!

If you are getting this in the mail but do have an e-mail address, please let us know. We'll save on printing costs, and you will get better and more frequent communications from WGBC.

We welcome your feedback or questions, as well as contributions of articles or photos, upcoming grazing events or news from your part of the state. Send to: more.info@wisconsgrassfed.coop or to our mailing address:

P.O. Box 269, Viroqua, WI 54665

Phone: 1-800-745-9093 (Rod)

www.wisconsgrassfed.coop

www.wisconsinmeadows.com

**GrassWorks and WGBC
Picnic in Marshfield July 19th**

*More info inside –
RSVP for lunch by July 12th*

Business Update

Our tenth anniversary is an excellent time for reflection. I was with the co-op for its first sale, but it is still hard to fathom how far we've come in only a decade. Through our initial very lean years, where we talked more about how to close the operation than grow it, to our mid years, where producer payment times were the main topic of every meeting, our membership and leadership team have stood by our mission. We can now reflect on our recent number of profitable and strong growth years including 2018. I would like to thank everyone who stood by our ideal and made it a success. Anyone can support a cause when conditions are good, but those producers who helped out in our very bleak times and helped us turn the corner are the true heroes of our business.

We continue to face large and challenging dilemmas. As we grow, competition gets stronger. New business is often decided on pennies, so we need to continue to

President's Message

It's finally time to enjoy the warm weather after a long cold spring which was one of the more challenging calving seasons I have ever had! As a co-op we are fairing much better than the calving season, our sales are up and for the first time Rod and Pete reported shipping over 100 head in one month!

Rod is working to maintain customers and add new with Nesvigs (*a distributor*) by doing ride alongs with the sales folks there. This takes time, however the customers really appreciate the time and effort and it builds relationships which is important as we aren't the only provider of grass-fed beef.

With the new website we continue to get orders for 30# boxed beef as well as halves. Recently we have expanded into the Chicago market after lots of work and trips to the Chicago area by Rod and Pete. We are doing a very limited pork trial to see if that is something we should be getting into as a co-op.

At our annual meeting this winter our panel of graziers was very well received. Now you can plan to attend our Summer Picnic hosted by Jason Cavadini who joined our board in 2017 and will be hosting with his family. The unofficial line up of fellow co-op and GrassWorks members will again provide a wealth of experience and knowledge about grazing cattle. I always come away from these events with new ideas and new friends and am sure you will too. Look forward to seeing you there on July 19th!

Russ Endres – WGBC Board President

focus on quality, become a better value for money and always strive to be more efficient.

In order for us to be alive in another ten years, we will need to tackle difficult questions such as ownership in a processing plant, adding additional product lines (pasture pork or lamb) and transition of our consultant management team to dedicated employees. All of these topics bring their own set of risks and opportunities.

I have faith that the strength of our cooperative business model, its producer members who own the business, will put their trust and resources behind the best solution in order to allow us to celebrate our second decade in business ten years from now.

Thank you all for your efforts of blood, sweat and our share of tears to make our cooperative successful.

Rod Ofte – WGBC General Manager

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The Brand Not Chosen

Back in 2008, one of the early decisions the new board had to make was whether to sell strictly wholesale (to groceries, meat markets and restaurants) or sell retail. Basics Co-op in Janesville asked to have individual roasts and packs of ground beef, so to sell retail we needed to come up with a label... and a brand name!

Some early contenders were: Northern Meadows (which was available after another farmer start-up went out of business); Pasture Traditions of Wisconsin;

Vibrant Pastures (or Meadows); Pasture Perfect; Pristine Pastures; Provanance Farms; and of course Wisconsin Meadows (for some reason they rejected my favorite... *Pasture Dinnertime*™!)

As part of choosing our brand identity, Laura Paine enlisted the help of Andrea Neue, who helped us with marketing strategy. She did a lot of research on what our key sales points and target demographics should be. Through her work with another client who was holding a consumer focus group, we were able to “tag-along” our options at a greatly reduced rate and be a part of their focus group.

We narrowed the test names down to three, and showed a few logos for each, to see which name and look consumers preferred. I got to drive to Madison and watch with Andrea and the other client through the two-way mirror! Unfortunately, it was a snowy night in December and we only got 6 or 7 participants who showed up, hardly the sample size we’d hoped for. Ultimately, our current name and a fairly similar logo were chosen by the board.

I thought you might like to see what we almost were! Do you think we made the right choice?!

Here are the logos that were tested in 2008. Can you spot the difference in our current logo at the top of the page? If anyone asks you, yes – that image in our logo is indeed a real WGBC member farm in southwest Wisconsin and our real cattle.





Pasture Inventory

I would hazard a guess that most farmers “know” how much feed they need to get through the year for their livestock. Bales, tons, silo’s, bags, etc. rough estimates based upon number of head how much was used or left over last season. It’s a feed inventory.

How many producers have a feed or forage inventory of their pastures? How much available dry matter does each paddock have? Ideally we’d walk or drive through weekly to check grass growth. Each paddock would have an available dry matter and the summary of all paddocks represents the total available forage. For some, actually physically clipping the field in several locations at harvest height and weighing the sample gives an accurate value, or using a rising plate meter. Most often we need something fast and close to right.

The folks at Iowa State University came up with some rough approximations for typical upper Midwest cool season forages in the following table based upon height for forage and condition.

Table 1. Estimated dry matter yield lbs./A per inch of height for various forages.

Forage Type	Pasture Condition		
	Fair	Good	Excellent
Tall Fescue + N	250-350	350-450	450-550
Tall Fescue + Legumes	200-300	300-400	400-500
Smooth Brome + Legumes	150-250	250-350	350-450
Orchardgrass + Alfalfa	100-200	200-300	300-400
Bluegrass + White clover	150-250	300-400	400-550
Mixed Pasture	150-250	250-350	350-450

Pasture condition of Fair, Good or Excellent is in reference to stand density, the denser the stand the more forage/inch, the sparser the stand the less available forage.

For example – Paddock 12 is a dense 10" tall stand of orchardgrass and red clover. Estimated Total Dry Matter is 3500 lbs, but from a best management standpoint, we only want to utilize 50% or graze down to 5" which works out to 1750 lbs of dry matter/acre. We’d do this for each paddock, paddocks that had just been grazed would should have 0 lbs available dry matter. The total of all paddocks is total available pasture dry matter.

Knowing how much forage we need to feed the livestock per period enable us to know how much grass and how many days of feed we potentially have at any given point in time.

Example – 50 cows consuming 32 lb Dry matter/day moved every 2 days. 50 hd x 32 lbs x 2 days = 3200 lbs Dry Matter per move. 3200lbs / 1750 lbs/acre= 1.8 acres every 2 days.

If paddock 12 is 4 acres, this would support the herd for 2, 2 day moves, or 4 days of total feed. Knowing how the forage growth rate changes over time allows us to make better planning decision. If grass is growing FASTER than livestock are grazing, we have the potential to drop a paddock out of the grazing rotation and take a harvest of hay. If the forage is growing at a rate SLOWER than what the livestock are consuming we need to figure out a way to slow down the rotation. We can add paddocks back into the grazing rotation, or supplement with more feed. What we DON’T want is to get to the last paddock and then realize ... *we’re out of grass.*

University of Missouri has developed an online resource to help producers learn and manage their pasture feed inventory – <https://grazingwedge.missouri.edu/default.aspx>. There are also cloud-based grazing apps for smart phones (with a fee) such as PastureMap <https://pasturemap.com/> or Maia Graze <http://maiatechnology.com.au/product/>

Gene Schriefer – WGBC Board Member



This little calf (a Devon-Angus cross) would later become the first steer sold as Wisconsin Meadows Grass-fed Beef!

Production – Defined

Farm Production = Grazing cows, harvesting and storing forage, setting and fixing fence, working cattle and weighing them so you can call WGBC to inform us when you plan to ship finished cattle!!!

Co-op Production = Determining weekly cattle orders, confirming farm plans, hauling logistics, providing information and documentation to make sure shipments go smoothly and payments to the correct farm.

Short and simple definitions, yet obviously not the same. But for our purpose here – closely related. In other words, we need to work together. After all we are a cooperative – and will rise and fall together.

Production, for WGBC is essentially cattle supply. Quality finished cattle are the raw materials we purchase, then arrange processing and packaging for beef products to be sold at a profitable price – every week! Our processing and customer partners rely on us being reliable. The blunt truth is – we can only purchase animals when we can utilize them as fresh product to be sold. Consequently, demand for finished cattle is not always when most convenient for our farms/members.

As a cooperative with a quality and source protocol, WGBC can not go to the “open” and/or best market for price and quantity when purchasing cattle. Conversely, WGBC farms/members have no restrictions around marketing decisions – where their beef is sold – or who they might partner with to market their production. If members would not have cattle ready to ship when needed by WGBC, our co-op could be out of business tomorrow!

Member share buy-back – In order to encourage active producers to join, if you no longer farm, or wish to cancel your membership, the co-op will buy back your share certificate for the \$200 par value. Shares can only be bought from, or sold to, the cooperative. Contact the co-op secretary Greg Nowicki. (715-257-7146 or e-mail: eatgrasfed@gmail.com)

Strange bedfellows!! But it's the business model we've created in a world where many collective efforts are often viewed skeptically. And, cooperation is what our different “sides” accuse the other of not doing!!

As WGBC continues through our 10th year of successful business operations we can celebrate – and perhaps reflect at the same time. The profits for the WGBC business are modest and hard-earned. When the margin is more robust the revenue is returned to members through pay price and patronage dividends. Sound familiar? Of course it does – that is how most farming and small businesses continue to exist by reinvesting in their business operations and relationships. Whatever your personal motives are for belonging to WGBC, when shipping cattle to your cooperative it becomes a partnership. Here's to continuing our partnership!!

WGBC Pricing Effective July 1, 2018

Carcass Grade	Marbling Score (points)	Tier Number	Price / Lb. (hanging wt.)
Choice	0 – 90	T 1	\$2.35
Select	50 – 90	T 2	\$2.25
Select	30 – 40	T 3	\$2.15
Select	0 – 20	T 4	\$2.05
Select	0 pts/Standard/Cull*	T 5	\$1.20

(all per pound, carcass weight)

*Call if you have cull cows to send, we will advise if/when needed.

The following producer incentives remain unchanged:

- Transport cost assistance stays @ \$0 for first 50 miles and \$10 every 50 miles after – per head.
- Patron Bonus – After individual member farms ship 12 head, subsequent (starting with #13) animals shipped receive an additional \$0.10 / lb – all price tiers – for the remainder of the same calendar year.

Upcoming Events *(blue text indicates events the co-op is sponsoring or attending)*

Pasture Walks, SW Wisc.

For more info, contact: Cynthia Olmstead, info@kickapoograzinginitiative.com | 608-606-6022

Aug. 14, 10:30 am – 12041 Severson Rd., Ferryville
Converting woods to silvopasture, designing a forage chain, & adding chickens for fly control.

Aug. 21 10:30 am – Studnicka Cattle Co.

1435 Blue River Rd., Muscoda.
Development of his 40 pair cow/calf operation and marketing – both on-farm and working with the WGBC. *Guest Speaker:* Robert Bauer of SWBadger RC&D on grazing planning with special considerations for streams/rivers.



July 19th,
Cavern Point Farm
near Marshfield

WGBC 10th Anniversary Picnic

M431 Drake Ave. Marshfield, WI 54449
Tie-in with GrassWorks summer picnic – bring your whole family and join us on Thursday, July 19 from 10 am to 4 pm (*lunch provided by WGBC*)

RSVP to Jason Cavadini by July 12th.

715-650-7451 or: jason.cavadini@wisc.edu

This year's event also features an optional early-bird tour of the Marshfield Agricultural Research Station.