

wisconsin grass-fed beef cooperative

WISCONSIN  
MEADOWS™

10<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY 2018

# Meadow View

Volume 9, Issue 4 • October, 2018

## Autumn 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](mailto: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](http://www.wisconsgrassfed.coop)  
[www.wisconsinmeadows.com](http://www.wisconsinmeadows.com)

**Annual meeting –  
save the date: Feb. 9, 2019**

*Watch for more info next issue!*

## Co-op President's Message

Dear Members,

Your co-op is shipping more cattle than ever before. We have had strong sales growth in an environment of declining pricing. This was one of the bigger takeaways from our midyear strategy meeting held on September 15th. Your board and management team met to review the current year and make plans/changes for 2019. Our board members are located all over the state, and our monthly meetings are via conference calls, so the annual planning day is a terrific opportunity to meet face to face.

In addition to sales, we also reviewed:

- membership and cattle in the pipeline
- our projected year-end financials
- evaluation of existing pay price programs for producers as well as proposed additions and changes for 2019

- marketing and website
- discussion of adding pork, considering what that plan could look like for the co-op.
- and lastly, planning our annual meeting for February.

So speaking of our annual meeting, we as a board and Management team are still working on many of the items mentioned above from our strategic planning. We plan to update you and look forward to feedback from our membership. Comments from last year's meeting were very positive and we plan to build on each year's experience .

I look forward to our get-together in February – mark your calendars and plan to attend!

**Russ Endres –  
WGBC Board President**

## Pastured Pork Update

Wisconsin Meadows, with some of our key customers will be conducting a trial of offering "Pastured Pork" over the coming months. Our pork products will be nitrate-free, MSG and gluten-free

There are number of things to be finalized, but in a nutshell, our expectations and standard are as follows. The program would simply mirror our Wisconsin Meadows beef offering with the key traits of:

- heritage and traditional breeds
- 100% born, raised and processed in Wisconsin
- no GMO feeds
- no antibiotics
- open farrowing
- humane treatment (no notching ears or cutting tails)
- access to the outdoors and fresh water 24/7

Pay price will be determined monthly and is currently \$1.50 per lb hanging weight (a \$0.75/lb premium over conventional).

Desired hanging weights are 220–250. Any weights above or below that will be paid a \$0.65 premium.

If you are a current WGBC member, and would like to market pork through our cooperative, please call Rod @ 608-451-2861

Best regards, **Rod Ofte –  
WGBC General Manager**





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## Grazing Collaborators Wanted

Marbling is one of the most important factors influencing consumer preference in beef and can be measured in live animals using digital ultrasound. Scan information can be used to aid in selecting breeding stock with improved marbling potential as well as to sort growing cattle into uniform feedlot groups. To date very little work has been completed evaluating digital ultrasound as a management tool for grass-based systems. UW-Platteville has recently acquired a digital ultrasound machine and assistant professors Krista Eiseman and Pete Lammers are looking for farmer-collaborators to help determine if this technology is a useful tool for graziers in the Upper Midwest.

Project details remain to be determined in collaboration with farmer partners, but we envision scanning young heifers and growing cattle for marbling, fat depth, and ribeye area at the start and end of grazing in two seasons (likely starting 2020). We will then combine this data with body weight and hip height data to begin to develop prediction equations that will help producers to objectively rank prospective heifers and growing cattle for suitability to a grass finishing system. Prefer farms within 100 miles of Platteville.

If you would like to discuss this project please contact Dr. Lammers as soon as possible. He can be reached at:

lammersp@uwplatt.edu | 608-342-7650  
Dr. Pete Lammers, School of Agriculture  
1 University Plaza, Platteville, WI 53818

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## WGBC 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary / GrassWorks Summer Picnic

Some scenes from the July picnic hosted by board member Jason Cavadini and family near Marshfield.



People enjoy the ShadeHaven too!



WGBC board member Judy Lang serves up some anniversary cake





## Production Records Aid Decisions

Business financial records are essential to us as farm/business owners, and especially to our accountants and bankers. Tracking farm production records can be equally important in terms of profit and/or loss over time. For example, standard accounting practices may not be that helpful to you when determining how many animals you decide to “winter” this year.

The business and operational decisions WGBC makes can be similar. Your management group and board of directors review financial statements each meeting to evaluate our past business activity. However, the “production outlook” – how many animals WGBC can schedule, process and sell as products – is steadily a work in progress with many subjective decisions along the way. The history of this production activity, when recorded, should be a useful resource for critical decisions determining profitability.

For example, this year through September WGBC has purchased 795 beef animals from member farms – a pace likely putting us over 1000+ head for 2018. In order to purchase these animals, 150+ individual farm shipment plans were necessary. Each week’s plans are different but need to establish an accurate number and type (fat v cull) of appropriately finished animals (adjusted for product orders), how will they be hauled to the right place, at the appropriate times for processing. Using statistical averages – that’s at least 4 farms with less than 6 animals per farm – each week!!

If nothing more, this fragmented process of procuring animals is a good example of cooperation among co-op members. It also illustrates how the WGBC members’ efforts and flexibility in the past 10 years have enabled a profitable business (nearly \$2 million in annual sales.) Your efforts and willingness to work together are greatly appreciated – *thank you.*

It also begs to ask is this format cost-efficient? Do we accurately monetize the time and effort to make it happen? We may want to evaluate it more going forward. Similar to predicting your winter stored feed requirements – if you come up short on feed resources in March it may cost you a profitable outcome. Production records can assist good decisions.

Our member farms vary significantly in terms of production and livestock marketing activity. The majority of WGBC farms can be classified as part-time or supplemental income endeavors, in many cases more a product of land tenure than business pursuit. Additionally, a significant number of member farms utilize WGBC only when

they have excess production above farm direct-marketing efforts. Approximately 35% of all animals (488 of 1380 total) shipped to WGBC from January 2017 thru August 2018 (20 months) came from 65 farms that shipped animals – on 1 to 3 separate occasions. WGBC was not established to replace or compete with direct-marketing efforts but remains available for farms to choose the convenience of letting the co-op market their animals.

As our cooperative continues to pursue product sales growth, more purchased beef animals will steadily be required to keep and build on our customer relationships. If WGBC hopes to continue providing member farm’s easy access to a ready market for their finished beef animals at premium prices, your cooperative must remain an efficient operating business. It is a unique dilemma as we are challenged to compete for beef product sales in the wholesale food industry, while employing a haphazard non-secured beef cattle procurement format.

In a culture of plentiful, convenient and relatively inexpensive food availability, profit margins will always be tight. Regardless how righteous local healthy food sources might anticipate and expect consumers to support premium prices, as producers of farm direct marketed product, such leverage is very fickle when competing in broader markets. In short, If we want to maintain and grow our established beef marketing opportunities, your cooperative will continue seeking creative efficiencies in business operations. Tracking production records should help us make good decisions.

### WGBC Pricing Effective October 1, 2018

(all per pound, carcass weight)

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

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

#### The following producer incentives remain in effect for 2018:

- 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.

**Member share buy-back** – when WGBC was formed in 2008, it was set up with 200 member shares available for purchase. With just over 185 members 10 years later, in order to encourage active producers to join, 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. If you no longer farm, or wish to cancel your membership, contact the co-op secretary Greg Nowicki.

## October is Co-op Month!



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