

wisconsin grass-fed beef cooperative

WISCONSIN
MEADOWS™

100% Grass-fed Beef

Meadow View

Volume 10, Issue 2 • April 2019

Member participation in our cooperative is vital!

Share with the membership – contributions of recipes or farm photos, upcoming grazing events or news from your part of the state is welcome for the newsletter, web site or our Facebook page. Don't forget the cattle and equipment buy & sell on the members' page of the web site can be posted by any member, or send to the address below and we will get it up there for you.

To contact someone at the Co-op, our e-mail address is: more.info@wisconsingrassfed.coop or mail to: WGBC, Box 269 Viroqua, WI 54665.

We welcome your feedback or questions and will be sure to direct it to the appropriate staff or board member.

Note from the Vice President

Rod and I were both bug-eyed after a week of store demos and the National Restaurant Association show. We served meatballs, strip loin, smoked ribeye and jerky. All were a hit. We met with many chefs and the positive interactions make the trip worth it. We believe that we will receive new business ventures as a result and it was probably the most productive show that have we ever had.

Especially, thanks to Rod who really killed himself to make this trip a success. Much of this business was done for little or no compensation. Besides staff and board help, we should all thank members Brian and Rebecca Poppy, as well as Roman Miller (and daughter!) for doing store demos during this critical week for the sales team!

Chefs were very impressed with our offerings – customers also embraced our product and we sold out of product a few times. The farmer/consumer meetings in stores highlight our connection to loyal customers. This makes what we do on the farm worth it.

**Jon Lee –
WGBC Board Vice President**



Following the elections at the annual meeting in February, your fellow producers who make up the 2019 board are:

Back row:

*Jason Cavadini, Marshfield;
Gene Schriefer, Dodgeville.*

Front row:

*Jon Lee, Coon Valley;
Charlotte Doherty, Darlington;
Russ Endres, Middleton;
Judy Lang, Medford;
Brett Danke, Wausau*

Be sure to thank them for their time and service, as we extend our thanks to outgoing board member Bob Pesz for his time serving the co-op!

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Time to Assess our Pasture and Forage Stands

In a few weeks we will be able to assess our pasture and forage stands following winter. Until mid-January here in SW Wisconsin, winter was open and relatively mild, that all changed in January. Fortunately we received great snow cover insulating the ground before the temperature plummeted to -30°F for several nights. Without the snow cover this would have been tough on plants (let alone cattle!). Being Wisconsin, this was followed up with some rain, creating excessive ice sheeting until our recent thaw here in March. This length of time may be of some concern for both alfalfa and grass stands.

Alfalfa will naturally thin with age. Plant counts are not an accurate predictor of yield. A healthy alfalfa plant crown will get larger with thinning stand and produce more stems/crown, an unhealthy plant will have a smaller crown and produce fewer stems.

Once the alfalfa is 6-10" tall we can count stems over 2 inches in height. If we're over 55 stems/sq foot, good news! Your alfalfa should be fine. If we're counting 39 stems or less, we would expect significantly less yield and should consider some alternative with the stand. In situations where we have or want grass, the grass component can make up some of this yield difference if the grass survived winter. The 39-55 stem/sq ft range is where we need to make a closer examination and possible decision about the future of the stand. Dig a few plants and split the crown and tap root, healthy roots should be totally white/light cream color, the amount of discoloration and the extent of this over the crown and root allows us to score the health of the plant and predict future yield. Roots are scored on a 1-5 scale with 1 being healthy and 5 being dead roots (really low yield...).

Grasses, as hardy as they are, can succumb to excessive ice sheeting, they are also susceptible to snow molds especially if we left a lot of residual in Fall. Pasture scoring which is more typically grass dominated, uses a percent ground cover method, rather than a stem method. A good pasture should have more than 85% ground cover (the less soil you can see the better), at least 3 desirable species and 3 or more species diversity (think grasses, legumes, forbs). Legumes are essential in a quality paddock. If percent drops below 25% we should probably be considering frost seeding or inter-seeding to keep the legume density strong.

Given current hay costs and likely costs throughout 2019 into 2020, growing more of your own pasture and forage is an important contributor to farm profit. Keeping a poor producing stand may cost you more in the longer term. Assessing your pasture and forage stands early this season will provide you time to make decisions on alternative forages, if necessary. If everything's looking good, great, go forth and graze. If less than ideal, can we thicken up the stand? If dead, we need to think about what else we can plant/renovate to meet our forage needs.

For more information check out the following resources or contact me at gene.schriefer@wisc.edu or 608-930-9850 or local Extension Ag Educator

Pasture Condition Scoring

<http://learningstore.uwex.edu/Assets/pdfs/A3667.pdf>

Alfalfa Stand Assessment

<https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/forage/alfalfa-stand-assessment-is-this-stand-good-enough-to-keep/>

Guide for Estimating Legume Percent in Pasture

<https://extension.wvu.edu/files/d/d89ae6c5-6d29-45b4-8fac-be80150f8616/visual-ref-guide-legume-content.pdf>

Gene Schriefer
WGBC Board Member

Rod and Pete presented member awards at the annual meeting this year to Producer of the Year Casey Kerstiens from Lancaster (at right) and Member of the Year Roman Miller from Rock Springs (below).





The Impact of Over-shipping Cattle on Our Cooperative

Nothing ever seems to happen as planned in farming and ranching. There is always equipment that doesn't work, an unplanned breakdown, time delays, poor weather, etc.

From time to time in the past, we have had producers vary on the amount of cattle that they shipped vs what the co-op has requested. Most of these variances were not intentional, i.e., one animal escaped so the load was short one, or an extra one got on and they didn't have time to resort and reload. As we are a cooperative of producers, we all understand those situations and have tried to work with the outcomes as best we can.

Recently, we have seen an increasing variance in the number of cattle showing up for slaughter vs what we have requested. We can only sell, what our customers order. We are a "fresh meat" business. Any inbound variances that lead to overproduction require us to either put the product into frozen stock, which decreases its value and hurts our cash flow or we have to sell it on the conventional market

and take a major beating financially. I can understand if a producer thinks that they could add an extra head or two to a load in order to reduce their own transport expenses per head if there is room on the trailer. However, that seemingly harmless decision can lead to major overproduction and could cost our cooperative thousands of dollars in one transaction.

The board of directors will review a written policy to deal with over-shipment and adopt a proposal in the coming months which we will share with the membership. In the meantime, if we ask you to ship cattle, please ONLY ship what is requested. I would like to believe none of us would attempt to achieve a small personal financial gain if we knew it would result in a significant loss to our cooperative as a whole.

Feel free to give me a call with any questions. Best regards,

Rod Ofte,
WGBC General Manager

2019 Cattle Needs Outlook Summary

- 61 members likely to ship beef animals > 2 hd this year
- 125 member farms not likely to ship beef animals in 2019
- 81 of these 125 member farms will not ship beef animals in the foreseeable future – without significant farm enterprise "renewal"
- If 1000 head of cattle (fats) is a reasonable projection for 2019, the estimated challenge is **100–150 hd to add on** during 2019 (300-350 hd if assuming 1200 hd/yr)

Pete Prochnow

2019 Member Farm Production Estimates & Distribution by Region

Color Key Index /
Zip Code Regions

10+	Consistent history 10+ average fat animals shipped / year
< 10	Very likely to ship <10 fat animals due to capacity or DM residual
< ? >	Not likely any fat animals to be shipped or high uncertainty for various reasons
NA	No animal shipments expected in 2019+ without renewed member farm mgmt

WI Region / Zip Code	10+	< 10	< ? >	NA	Member Farms	
					Actual	%/Region
Milwaukee						
SE WI / 530 531 & 532	1	0	4	9	14	7.37%
Madison - South						
SC WI South / 535 & 537	3	7	7	13	30	15.79%
Madison - North						
SC WI North / 539	1	10	6	6	23	12.11%
Fox River Valley - FDL to Green Bay						
NE WI / 549 & 542	1	4	7	8	20	10.53%
Wausau						
NC WI / 544 & 545	6	2	6	17	31	16.32%
LaCrosse						
WC WI / 546	2	15	12	14	43	22.63%
Eau Claire - Rice Lake						
NW WI / 540 547 & 548	2	5	6	9	22	11.58%
Platteville						
SW WI / 538	1	1	3	2	7	3.68%
# of Farms / Scale of SHIPPED CATTLE PRODUCTION --->	17	44	51	78	190	190
Member Farm Totals						
Percent of Total	8.95%	23.16%	26.84%	41.05%		

Your source for healthy, local grass-fed beef and pastured pork raised by our farmer-owned co-op of member farms throughout Wisconsin

**WISCONSIN
MEADOWS™**

100% Grass-fed Beef

Visit our website to find a nearby store or restaurant, or for larger quantity orders delivered within Wisconsin.

www.wisconsinmeadows.com
800-745-9093

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Did you see our new ad in the latest issue of "Our Wisconsin"?!

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CHEF and BREWER'S BEEF DINNER

Join us for an evening of beef & beer pairings.
Serving three beef courses and dessert.

**SUNDAY
APRIL 28TH
RED EYE
BREWING CO.**

5:30 bar opens
6:00 dinner

\$65

PER TICKET
tax and gratuity
inclusive

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

Chef & Brewer's Beef Dinner

Sun. April 28th, Redeye Brewing Co., Wausau

R.E.A.P. Burgers & Brew

Sat. June 1, 2019 at Capital Brewery, Middleton

Pasture Walks, SW Wisc. *For more info, please contact*

Cynthia Olmstead: info@kickapoograzinginitiative.com 608-606-6022

June 11, 10:30 am – 21602 Berres Ln., Richland Center.

Solar pump and water storage systems.

June 25, 10:30 am – 18732 Hwy 27 Gays Mills

Guest Speaker: Nick Baker, UW-Ext., on meadow fescue and other perennial forage species.

P.O. Box 269
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