

wisconsin grass-fed beef cooperative

WISCONSIN  
MEADOWS™

100% Grass-fed Beef

# Meadow View

Volume 11, Issue 2 • April, 2020

*Here's the springtime edition of our Meadow View newsletter!*

Look inside for updates from the WGBC management team and our new social media specialist, plus introductions of our newly elected board members.

We always welcome your feedback or questions, as well as contributions of articles, recipes or photos, upcoming grazing events or news from your part of the state. Member participation in a co-op is so important! Now that we have a more active social media presence we really need photos or short notes about life on your farms, putting faces and places in the minds of our customers to build brand loyalty.

I know we are all looking forward to the warmer weather and hoping we'll still be able to have a few pasture walks later this year. So let us know if you hear of any events that might benefit our members, including webinars and such, as conferences and meetings move online and we'll spread the word.

To contact someone at the co-op, our e-mail address is: [more.info@wisconsingrassfed.coop](mailto:more.info@wisconsingrassfed.coop) or mail to: **Box 269 Viroqua, WI 54665.**

We'll be sure to direct it to the appropriate staff or board member.

### **Reminder if you direct market**

Although you *can* state that you are a member of the Wisconsin Grass-fed Beef Cooperative, you *cannot* represent your product as Wisconsin Meadows™ brand or use the logo.

## General Manager's Message

As I enjoyed a peaceful spring walk on the farm and do things that I haven't had time to do in a long time, it is hard to imagine the turmoil going on nearly everywhere else in the world.

Not that any of us want to see another corona-virus "update" but I have had a few questions on how things are going and potential impact to our business so I thought I should share recent information to keep you all in the know.

*The Good News:* The majority of our business is in the retail sector, and if any of you have been shopping recently, bare shelves are the new rage. This will mean a small positive spike in business for us in the short term, but we don't know how long that will last, and if there will be a hangover from that party. We plan to ship record fat cattle again this week and our processors have been doing their best to keep production on track. Last cycle was the first cycle in the history of the co-op that every available primal was taken as is, with zero bulk trim. The margin upside to that will be interesting to see.

"Hoarding fever" seems to have hit our direct-to-consumer business as well. With the addition of our social media presence, a very positive recent article about Wisconsin Meadows in the Milwaukee Sentinel and the virus fervor, all sent our recent online orders through the roof. In all of 2019, we had around 40 orders for 30# mixed packs. We had nearly half that many orders LAST WEEK alone! I think Bill and Pete will shoot me if I send over another 5-10 orders in one day for processing. Fulfilling that need may sound simple, but working out the logistics of payment, box build, multiple individual address deliveries, etc., is a ton of work. Special thanks to the Bill and Pete who make all that happen behind the scenes.

Because we are linked to both ag and the food industry, we are not limited by any government movement restrictions, though we are attempting to practice safe interaction during deliveries as best we can.

As us farmers like to say... we will continue to "Make hay while the sun shines."

*The Bad News:* Our week of investment in time earlier this month at the Midwest Food Service show now feels like it was years ago. Our restaurant partners are reporting 50-90% revenue losses since mandatory shut down. This has resulted in our business in that sector grinding nearly to a halt. Some restaurants are minimizing losses with curb side delivery or Uber-eats. Others have simply closed until further notice. The long-term impact of the virus on the food service industry could be devastating. My bigger concern is the shift consumers may make toward cheaper protein alternatives if they are pressed for cash.

Anyone with a crystal ball, feel free to make suggestions...

Stay safe everyone.

**Rod Ofte – WGBC General Manager**

\* link to the article: <https://www.google.com/amp/s/amp.jsonline.com/amp/5062351002>

# wisconsin grass-fed beef cooperative

## Pricing and Production Notes

Dear WGBC Members,

*Uncertainty* – is a word on our minds. We are adjusting to circumstances not experienced before. The pandemic we are battling may impact us longer than we might imagine. Stay healthy.

WGBC business activity has been impacted. Our partner outlets are experiencing volatility in food purchasing activity. Generally, product volume has gone up and we've tried to back fill shortages occurring outside our usual product flow. Next week may be a different story.

Customer direct sales increased significantly, and not entirely from the shelter at home directives. WGBC recently improved our website on-line purchase options, that along with a recent Milwaukee newspaper article\* featuring the WGBC story – created a surge of sales and operational activity.

*Pricing:* Early in March, as done every month, the board considers WGBC livestock purchase prices for the next month. Several indicators are considered – the decision was to lower prices \$0.05/lb hwt for cattle. Hog prices down \$0.10/lb hwt. Items noted above illustrate the need to make adjustments, so stay tuned as the ebb and flow of supply / demand determine our cooperatives business responses

Anyone observing commodity prices recently will have noticed large price movements. In the case of live and feeder cattle – saw lower prices – while carcass wholesale prices were jumping higher. More market swings will likely occur. WGBC will also need to adjust – however by comparison your co-op's current price adjustments of 2% down (cattle) and 6% down (hogs) – pale by comparison.

*Outlook:* Currently our product demand appears sound going forward. Short term, food shortfalls seem a result of our “just enough/just in time” culture, with limited inventory to quickly fill disruptions. However, there is possibility of deeper supply channel disruptions – i.e. uncertainty.

This past week in-store deliveries found staff robustly embracing distancing behavior, extra stocking/cleaning hours, reducing “open” hours – and a few stores restricting customer traffic flows. Direct customer product delivery was a “leave on porch” affair. Texting is now a public health tool !!

*For now:* WGBC's objective will be taking care of our retail/wholesale partner customers – and stay the course. There is some comfort and cautious reward to be noted in our cooperative approach. Stable livestock pay prices to date and avoiding commodity market volatility, while serving a broad customer base needing stability and healthy food with a supported – but rational distribution approach.

*Next:* WGBC's finished cattle supply remains “scattered”. If the spring “grill season” develops as in the past, beef sales activity will increase. Please contact us about your farm's marketing plans to discuss current options and schedules and support your cooperative's focus of maintaining a reliable livestock marketing option for member farms.

**Pete Prochnow – Production Manager**

### WGBC Pricing Effective April 1, 2020

(all per pound, carcass weight)

#### BEEF

Carcass Grade	Marbling Score (points)	Tier Number	Price / Lb. (hanging wt.)
Choice	0 – 90	T 1	\$2.30
Select	50 – 90	T 2	\$2.20
Select	30 – 40	T 3	\$2.10
Select	0 – 20	T 4	\$2.00
Select	0 pts/Standard	T 5	\$1.70
Cull*			\$1.20

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

#### The following beef producer incentives remain in effect for 2020:

- Transport cost assistance stays @ \$0 for first 50 miles and \$10 every 50 miles after – per head.
- Patron Bonus – after individual member farms ship 20 head, subsequent (starting with #21) animals shipped receive an additional \$0.10 / lb – all fat animal price tiers – for the remainder of the same calendar year.

#### PORK

Hot Carcass Weight	Tier	Price / Lb.
210 – 250	T 1	\$1.50
under 210	T 2	\$1.40
250 – 270	T3	\$1.40
over 270	T4	\$1.20

- Patron Bonus – If you are a producer who dedicates 16 or more head of pastured hogs per calendar year for sale to the WGBC, any additional shipments will be eligible for an additional \$0.05/lb HCW payment.

**NOTE:** Since this newsletter only comes out quarterly and prices are reviewed by the board monthly, when in doubt, call for the latest pricing.





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## Meet the New Board Members Elected in February

Hello, I'm Darren Yanke. I live in central Sauk County Wisconsin with my wife Shannon and one of the best cattle dogs, Laila. I am a 4th generation farmer of Echo-Y Farms. I farm with my grandma, dad, mom and brother. Currently we custom raise 200 head of Holstein dairy heifers for a farmer in Dane County plus we have 30 head of Aberdeen Angus cows of our own. Someday we hope that we will have about 100 head of Aberdeen running around our farm. My favorite part of the day is moving our cattle and keeping them happy! We farm around 1300 acres and within that we rotationally graze about 300 acres. We also plant cover crops onto our row crop acres to pro-long our grazing season. Echo-Y Farms joined the co-op back in 2016 and we finished our first steers for the co-op in 2019.

I really enjoy being involved with the conservation community, whether it is attending educational meetings, conferences or pasture walks. I always enjoy learning new things and at our farm we are not scared to try different ideas, even if we fail we still learn something. I am currently a board member on our local watershed group, SSWIG. We are also proud to have been named Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Farm Family of the year back in 2018.

I am excited to be on the board and see where my time on the board takes me!



My name is Dan Wiederholt and I am from southern Grant County near Louisburg, (with a Cuba City address.) I rent and live on my parents' 120-acre former dairy farm with my wife Erica and our 2 kids, Oliver (3.5 yrs. old) and Lily (2 yrs. old). My dad quit milking cows in 2010 and I moved back to the farm in 2015 after having lived and worked in Indiana from 2006 to 2015.



Erica and I attended the Grassworks conference in 2016 and joined the co-op then, without even having any cattle yet! About a month later our first 7 British White cows arrived at the farm and since then we have added more British Whites, some Galloway, a couple Red Devon, and a Murray Grey bull. Our herd has grown to its current 28 cows plus the cattle that are being finished. So far, we have shipped 12 head of cattle to WGBC and ultimately plan to finish 20 to 25 a year for the co-op.

I like to research and experiment with different things on the farm. Examples include: winter bale grazing, planting summer annuals on those 'bale grazing pastures' during the summer, mixing various clovers and grasses in our pastures and hay fields, and building a "Bud Box" for easy handling of cattle for chute work or loading. Luckily, there are always more things to learn and try out.

I look forward to serving on the board and hopefully help the co-op continue to grow and provide benefits to both its producers and customers.

### ***Our thanks to Judy Lang***

Judy served 8 years as a board member in addition to attending many of the early farmer meetings that would eventually lead to the development of our co-op.

We appreciate the many hours she and her husband Bud spent attending meetings and board calls, hosting pasture walks and other co-op events on their farm.

## WGBC Social Media Takes Off in 2020

We are committed to sharing our story and connecting to producers and consumers via social media. Our objective is to create a positive and reliable way to communicate new products and be an educational outlet for grass-fed producers. Currently we have two social media outlets: Facebook and Instagram.

Within Facebook, we have created the “Wisconsin Meadows” branded platform that shares posts about our products and the producers that make our products great. This is open to the public. We have also created a ‘group’ by Wisconsin Meadows called “Wisconsin Grass-fed Beef Cooperative”. This is a private group designed to connect producers and discuss production and genetic topics. While we have to follow Facebook’s policy to not sell animals directly on it’s platform, our goal is to connect producers so they can access genetic offerings.

The second social media platform is Instagram which allows us to share our story visually along with creative context.



We’d like to invite all our members, consumers and those interested in our business to join and share our stories. By connecting and sharing our posts, this will help spread our stories, mission and values of the Wisconsin Grass-fed Cooperative and it’s great products.

For more information on our website or social media, or help making a post to market your cattle to other members, reach out to our online media specialist Angie Lindloff.

angielindloff@gmail.com | 608-469-3371

*(or mail to the co-op’s PO box and we will get it to Angie for you!)*

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## Buy/Sell Cattle



**Registered Aberdeen bull for sale:** 25% Angus, 75% Aberdeen (Lowline). Halter trained, easy to sort/load. Proven breeder, 100% in 2019. Born 4-1-14. \$2,500. *Dale Gasser* 608-370-2001

**20 calves recently weaned available for sale** to fill your pastures. A mixture of Red & Black Angus, some White Park steers and heifers available.

16 are steers, knife-cut at 90 days. Calves were born May 1st – June 30th 2019 and weigh about 450–600 lbs. All raised to WGBC’s production protocol, vaccinated last fall and recently fence-line weaned at 10 months. You can pick and choose – do not need to take all of them. Located in the White-water/Fort Atkinson area. Call/text/email us for more details and price. *Cody Brueggen* 262-527-0224 / littleredfarmswi@gmail.com  
Web page with pictures: <https://littleredfarms.com/pictures-from-the-farm-copy>



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