

wisconsin grass-fed beef cooperative

WISCONSIN
MEADOWS™

100% Grass-fed Beef

Meadow View

Volume 12, Issue 1 • January, 2021

Annual Meeting of the Wisconsin Grass-fed Beef Co-op: Saturday, February 20th, 2021

*Unfortunately, our annual meeting will not be in person this year,
see page two for info on how to participate by phone or Zoom.*

See page 6 for info on nominations/candidates for the board of directors

Those for whom we have e-mail addresses will also get the link sent to them closer to the meeting day.

The January edition of our Meadow View newsletter...

The first issue of the year is mailed to all co-op members so everyone gets the info on the annual meeting. Then you should receive a shorter electronic version by e-mail quarterly, as well as monthly messages from the management team. Let us know if you are not receiving those communications!

Also in this mailing is our shipping form/bill of lading. *See pages 4 & 5 for our rules on animal ID for those sending in cattle or hogs.*

Member participation in a co-op is so important! If you would like to run for the board of directors, see page 6.

Page 7 contains a reminder of our grading and pricing tiers and how that is determined.

As always, we 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.

To contact someone at the co-op, our e-mail address is:
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.

Message from the President

What a year 2020 has been! When we met last year and made our plans we had no idea what lie ahead. Shortly after our annual meeting last year many things changed dramatically!

You may recall we added Angie Lindloff to invigorate our website and social media. Turned out, this was a better decision than we had thought as more and more people wanted to order online. Things were clunky at first, however the team all pitched in to make the large number of orders work. This also helped us with better utilization and offset some of the decline in restaurant sales. While the big increase has tapered off, we are more automated with online payments and ordering going into 2021.

The management team faced other scheduling challenges with Lorentz Meats going to an every-other-week schedule versus weekly. This was a shock to the system however the management team persevered!

We took advantage of government purchasing large quantities of burger at a good price which gave our sales a good boost. This was a one-time opportunity and our team was up to the task .

Our team met in September in Coon Valley and it was a very productive day well spent. At that time we figured we would not be able to have an in-person annual meeting. We will do our best with our virtual meeting this year and look forward again to in-person annual meetings in the future.

So, 2020 was a good year for the Co-op in many respects. We will be back to more of the normal challenges in 2021, however we will be in a better position with no debt going forward. Our patronage dividend is also the best we have had!

We will do our best to keep you informed and wish everyone the best for 2021!

Russ Endres – WGBC Board President

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Wisconsin Grass-fed Beef Cooperative – 2021 ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA

February 20th, 2021 – Virtual Meeting only due to Covid-19 Safety Protocols

BY COMPUTER: Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/4184734714?pwd=ajROQ1ppM0drdzY4T1BtMGt1OHMzZz09>

Meeting ID: 418 473 4714

Passcode: WGBC

BY PHONE:

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

If not in the Central time zone,

contact us for alternate number to call

Meeting ID: 418 473 4714

Passcode: 834871

2020 Financial Statements

WGBC members wishing to get the 2020 Profit and Loss Statement, can email: accounting@wisconsingrassfed.coop to request it. We will also go over it on the annual meeting Zoom call. To request by mail, please send a note to:

Tim Mathison WGBC Accountant

P.O. Box 269, Viroqua, WI 54665

608-634-2862 | Accounting@wisconsingrassfed.coop

Agenda:

10:00 AM	WGBC Annual Meeting Registration	Angie/Rod
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Log on, check in, communications check – Meeting Outline	
10:15 AM	Call to order – Welcome – Member Introductions	Russ Endres
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Additions / Corrections to the agenda	
10:30 AM	Reading and Approval of 2020 Annual Meeting Minutes	Russ Endres
10:45 AM	2020 Business Summary and 2021 Outlook	Rod Ofte
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cattle ID Policy Update Review• Social Media / Website Update	Angie Lindloff
11:15	Q&A	
11:30	Board Member Nominations, Introductions and Vote	Greg Nowicki
Noon	Adjournment	
12:45	Close, new board meeting, election of officers	Russ



Wisconsin Grass-fed Beef Cooperative – 2020 Annual Business Meeting Minutes

Held at the Wintergreen Resort, Wisconsin Dells on Sat. Feb. 8, 2020; submitted by Tim Mathison

Introduction – Jon Lee, Vice President called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

V.P. Lee introduced the members of the Board of Directors and the Management Team. Angie Lindloff is the newest member of the Management Team and will be doing the social media and website. There were over 75 people in attendance, with 38 member farms represented. The members introduced themselves and gave a brief highlight of their operation.

Approve 2019 Annual Meeting Minutes – Greg Nowicki, Secretary provided the minutes from the 2019 Annual Meeting in a written newsletter sent to all members in January. Motion by Brett Danke to approve the minutes, second by Bill Moran. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report – Tim Mathison, the Co-op's accountant gave an overview of the 2019 financials. The cash flow position improved as the year moved along, so producer payments were once again going out as soon as the info was received. The breakdown of the pay stubs was shown again for any new members in attendance.

2019 Overview – Rod Ofte – General Manager, presented a summary and highlights of 2019. He began by thanking the sponsors of our Annual Meeting. They are Lorentz Meats, Compeer Financial, WI Farmers Union, and QLF. There were some new and updated policies that were implemented by the BOD, so handouts were included in the member packets.

2019 had a 5% increase in sales over 2018. 2019 sales were \$2.28 million. Key growth drivers the new Pastured Pork Program, getting the 80/20 1 lb. grind listing at Woodman's, and adding Fulton Market Co-op in Chicago as a distributor.

Outlook – Rod Ofte, General Manager, gave a brief outlook of the Co-op going into 2020. The focus will be on continuing to improve the quality and stability of our live animal pipeline, grow our farm to table business, geographic expansion in Chicago and the Twin Cities, firmly establish our Pastured Pork Program, increasing exposure and sales of our 8 new retail ready cuts, and the launch of our shelf stable Summer Sausage and Landjaeger Snack Sticks. He also gave an overview of our brand messaging, co-branding events, sponsorships, and a competitive update. An overview of the management team and their duties was presented so members get to know them, and where to go if they have questions or concerns on a topic.

2020 Business Approach – For 2020, the Co-op is looking for an 8% growth in sales to \$2.46 million.

Pastured Pork Program – Rod presented an overview of the Pastured Pork program. It was launched in January 2019. We are now processing 5 hogs every other week at Johnson's, who make excellent value-added pork products. 2019 sales were \$86,802, which is more than the beef sold by the Co-op in it's first year.

Educational Session – Ron Russell from UW-Madison had a presentation on "*Tips to Proper Finishing Beef on Grass in Wisconsin*". Rod had also gotten some steak samples showing the various degrees of finish, so they were passed around for the attendees to see.

Board Member Nominations and Election Results – Three seats were open for election. President Russ Endres and Judy Lang agreed to run again, and Jason Cavidini elected not to run again. Dan Wiederholt was nominated prior to the meeting and Bill Wimmer and Darren Yanke were nominated from the floor. Motion and second to close nominations. MC. Russ was re-elected, Dan and Darren were elected as new members on the BOD.

WGBC 2025 Review – Tera Johnson from UW-Extension in Madison gave a presentation on the work she has been doing with the BOD. They had two half day sessions together to discuss market research, do a strategic audit of the business environment, and then identify action items and growth goals, and how to get there. One of the main goals identified was the need to pay our farmers more competitively so the Co-op is the preferred outlet for their cattle. This will require growth since the cost of doing business goes up every year and we are only marginally profitable. Improving carcass utilization is critical. Our model of using independent contractors instead of internal full-time staff is reaching the point where the contractors are maxed out on what they can provide. We need a growth plan to take a step up since our very slow growth won't get staff or economies of scale fast enough.

The strategic objectives for 2020 are to improve carcass utilization, build sales and marketing capacity, and build organizational capacity for growth. Rod is working on a value-added producer grant to help finance these. The ultimate target that was set is to get the Co-op to \$5 million in sales in 5 years.

Marketing Update – Angie Lindloff gave a presentation on the goals she has set since she took over the web marketing duties for the Co-op as of this year. She is currently doing data gathering from the visitor to the website and is planning on having the website upgraded and more user-friendly in the next few months. She is also increasing the Co-op's presence on all the social media platforms to drive users to the website, which will increase brand awareness and increase our consumer sales.

Awards – Pete Prochnow presented the Producer of the Year Award to Casey Kersteins for the second year in a row, and the Member of the Year Award to Brett Danke.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m. It was followed by happy hour and food prepared by Wintergreen Resort. Members were presented with a case of WI Meadows hot dogs in exchange for turning in their completed surveys.

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General Manager's 2020 Summary

Rarely in life, can a mature person or business say “*That was our best year ever!!*” However, in the case of 2020, that clearly was the case for the Wisconsin Grass-fed Beef Cooperative. We saw record value and volume growth, and record profit largely driven by the trends driven by COVID 19 fears.

Despite having nearly 200+ sustainable family farm members, our biggest challenge to growth in the mid term is getting enough cattle to supply our expanding customer base. If you have friends that are looking for a secure market for their 100% grass-fed fat cattle, please send them our way. Despite turbulent times in the cattle business, fluctuating hay markets and agriculture in general, our cooperative is still offering a 20% premium to conventional beef and actively seeking more members with fat cattle for sale.

Changes in shopping trends and out of home dining linked to the COVID lockdown required significant efforts from our management team to shift our business model and adapt. For much of 2020, our restaurant business slowed to nearly zero. Our new Pastured Pork program, which was largely food service based, slowed to a crawl from April onward. Pork was our only segment that did not grow this year. Our online ordering of our mixed 30-lb beef boxes grew over 500% vs 2019. Had we not had an internet ordering platform, and delivery capability already in place, we would not have been able to capture those opportunities.

The unique year made our September strategy meeting with the board and management team very interesting as we faced opportunities and decisions that we had never dreamed of. The Board of Directors took action to make bold moves in 2021 to help strengthen our market position and invest resources to secure long term growth and profit.

In 2021, we plan to hire our first full-time employee. This person will take over and grow animal procurement and build our new “business to consumer” division. More to come on that at the annual meeting. Our 2021 annual meeting will be virtual for the first time ever. It will be disappointing to not be able to gather and visit like normal meetings, however online participation will hopefully allow more folks to take part and get informed.

Best regards,
Rod Ofte – WGBC General Manager
608-451-2861

The Importance of Animal ID for Farm Traceability

Any cattle shipped for processing, must have some sort of ear tag or back tag that allows haulers and processors to easily trace ownership and connect to your shipping form in order to maintain our 100% grass-fed claims .

We are asking all farms shipping cattle to start using hip tags ASAP on all cattle shipped if they lack ear tags. The importance of animal identification and documentation during shipments ***cannot be overstated*** for several very important reasons:

- It helps WGBC pay our member farms who are shipping and marketing cattle through the co-op, the for the appropriate animals without unnecessary delays.
- USDA *and* WI regulations require meat plants to document individual animals, the source of those animals, and signed grass-fed production affidavits from farms shipping them to be slaughtered in their facilities. Technically, meat plants can be shut down if found *not able to produce required documentation!*
- Plants like Lorentz Meats (which processes about 95% of WGBC cattle) ***can reject shipments if our signed shipping form is not available at receiving*** – to avoid violations and fines against them.
- Respect for our processing partners. The facilities and labor inputs involved in slaughtering animals are significant. The work is hazardous, difficult and challenging. Further, our *Wisconsin Meadows product quality* is directly impacted – dependent on an environment with a smooth animal handling procedure.

When animals are *not* easily identified, the process and workflow can be slowed or even interrupted. Workers spend wasted time and are stressed when tasked with extra record-keeping. Remember, this information enables the necessary administrative challenges of recording weights, grade inspection information, and finally the fiduciary responsibility of financial payments. *We know you don't want to have to clear up doubts, suspicions, and questions when you are waiting for your payment to be issued!*

This has always been a challenge for WGBC in general. The majority of times farms do a very good job of making sure ear tags are intact. It is well understood how challenging and difficult it might be for farms to re-tag or attach an ear tag for animals being shipped. However, it greatly complicates matters when animal ear tags are missing, can't be read, or don't exist. We've fallen back on livestock paint applied at loading – and



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this certainly helps – but is not a solution. *We've been asked politely to do better.*

Contact info is listed here for NASCO (based in Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin) and other sources to order affordable paste-on cattle hip tags and tag cement in various quantities. Using these number tags (along with possibly marker penned initials as well) and ear tags – should allow for more certain animal tracking.

As always – along with identifying the animal with ear and hip tags – it is **mandatory** to complete our Affidavit/Bill of Lading shipping form using both formats of ID. This completed form, as we should all know is essential to verify:

- 1) Owner/Entity for legal payment
- 2) Animal ID and source verification
- 3) Production Protocol is understood and *you've signed to confirm it has been met.*

Additional information on the form (age, sex, breed etc.) is helpful in the event a tag comes off in transit.

Again, WGBC and our processors may reject a shipment if these procedures are not followed. Please be **prepared in advance** with tags and glue to not risk loss of ownership or potential fine.”

Please contact Pete at (920) 210-9177 if any of this is not clear – before you ship your livestock!

NASCO: 800-558-9595 or online:
<https://www.enasco.com/p/C04754>

National Auction Supply House: 1-800-326-7484
<https://nash.cc/product/55-super-sticky-numbered-tags/>

Ketchum Manufacturing: 1-800-222-0460
<https://www.ketchumfmg.com/weatherproof-hip-tags>

2020 Production Summary by the Numbers

Purchased Livestock Volume – For the third consecutive year (2018–2020) WGBC marketed between 1,070 and 1,090 animals for member farms. Approximately 100 hogs were also marketed in '20.

Sales Dollar Volume / 3 yrs –

2018 Beef sales \$2.1M / Hog sales \$19K
2019 Beef sales \$2.2M / Hog sales \$86K
2020 Beef sales \$2.5M (est) / Hog sales \$85K (est)

Prices Paid (hwt) – Fat cattle only – Average prices (all fats – all tiers) in 2018, 2019 and 2020 are close to the same: \$2.32/lb. (including transport assistance and patron volume bonus) \$2.21/lb. – without.

Quality – Percentages of cattle grading Tiers 1, 2 & 3 were the same in 2020 as 2019 – after improving from 2018. Approximately 70% of fat cattle shipped graded above mid-Select and/or Choice (Tier 1 (35%) and Tier 2 (35%) in 2019 and 2020. A significant difference in 2020 is that nearly all farms had fewer animals grade Choice (<15%) – except one or two farms where their cattle graded Choice (70–80%) more often.

Members Shipping Animals – Fewer farms shipped cattle this year – 73 vs. 90 in 2019. Over 90% (65) of all farm shipments in 2020 were 3 to 4 head on average per shipment. These same farms represented 40% of WGBC's total cattle supply for the year. Five more farms supplied close to 14% of all cattle shipped – averaging 11 head per shipment. Two farms shipped the remaining 45% of cattle supplied.

Four member farms reached the Volume Patron Bonus threshold of >20 fats shipped in 2020 – earning an additional \$36,000 (\$0.10/lb hanging carcass weight) for those qualifying 571 head shipped.

Your cooperative paid members just under \$35,000 in 2020 to mitigate transportation expenses based on the distance from their farms to the processing plant as needed.

Dividend Payments – Your cooperative, despite all the challenges of 2020, had a remarkable year. For too many reasons and results to outline here, it was a financially successful year. As such, your BOD decided to reward patron members with a dividend payment. This payment is determined by a total established dividend amount divided by a member's shipment payments total for the year – for 2020 approximately \$.012/dollar. Interestingly, of the 73 checks issued – 39 were sent to member farms who did not receive a dividend check the last time your cooperative issued dividend payments.

Membership – WGBC added 8 member farms in 2020, significantly down from a 20+ new member average / year from 2016 through 2019. The exact total number of members is a moving target as farms change production status as life happens – but our current active count is very close to 220 members.

**Pete Prochnow –
Production Manager**

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Get Involved in the Operation of Your Co-op!

There are two seats up for election on the board of directors in 2021. Any other members interested in running for a three-year term *notify secretary Greg Nowicki by February 10th to be included on the ballot.* (715-257-7146 or e-mail: eatgrasfed@gmail.com)

Nominations (yourself or others) will also be accepted from the floor at the meeting.

2021 Board Nominations/Candidates

Judy Fossen, Sauk City

WGBC members since 2017, Judy and her husband, Dale Gasser, rotationally graze an Aberdeen-Angus-Murray Grey herd on their 4th generation Sauk County farm. They sell finished cattle exclusively through the co-op, and plan to expand and diversify production after retiring from their off-farm jobs within a few years.



Judy is a marketing communications and advertising writer and strategist, with 20-plus years in animal ag, manufacturing, healthcare and non-profit sectors. She also has served on statewide and regional boards, strategic planning and membership committees, and as an identity/brand development consultant. Judy's skill set will help WGBC continue its stable growth, expand consumer education and conversion, and refine member benefits.

Brett Danke, Wausau

Brett is Director of Manufacturing for Kolbe Windows & Doors in Wausau. The company maintains a corporate farm on the homestead of the business' founders, Herb and Irvin Kolbe, where the window company first began in 1946. The farm operations are under Brett's responsibilities and currently has 42 head of cattle, rotationally grazes 80 acres of fenced pasture, and harvests hay on another 60 acres. Kolbe became a member of the WGBC in July of 2013.

Brett is also a co-owner of Red Eye Brewing Company, a brewpub in Wausau, which prides itself on offering locally-sourced foods. Red Eye offers grass-fed beef burgers and sources Wisconsin Meadows beef through Neesvig's (one of our distributors.)

Brett was the 2019 Member of the Year and currently serves on the board as vice president. He feels his contributions on the board of directors will continue to be valuable from both the producer's and consumer's perspective, and is excited to assist with the cooperative's continued positive growth.



Upcoming Events

Zoom Graze Sessions

January 21, 2021 – 1 pm **Allan Savory**

Feb 11, 2021 – 7:00 pm **Curt Pate**

Register through GrassWorks at:

<https://grassworks.org/events/grazing-conference/>

Feb. 22-27, 2021 – Growing Stronger: Collaborative Conference on Organic and Sustainable Agriculture

5-in-1 grazing and organic conferences combined this year and presented online. <https://web.cvent.com/event/b1fcc89f-d903-4e65-9a18-c63297078800/summary>

Beginning Farmer Seeks Labor Exchange

18-yr.-old from Illinois would like to spend the summer in Wisconsin with any sort of labor (shoveling manure, cutting grass etc.) on grass-fed farms in exchange for raw milk or meat, or simply just to learn how to be a farmer. Any part of Wisconsin is fine.

Contact Alexander to discuss at: ac441084@gmail.com

Member Looking for Cattle to Finish

I would be interested in buying a few cattle that would work for ground beef, or steers / heifers that would work for steaks, roasts etc. *Mark Moelter:* cell 715-821-1975 or markmoelter@dishupus

More classifieds/ cattle for sale ads on last page



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WGBC Livestock Price / Payment / Shipment Reference Sheet

Setting Pay Price Protocol for Cattle

- **Pay Price** to be reviewed monthly by the Board of Directors. In times of extreme price volatility, more frequent review may be warranted at the discretion of the BOD.
- **Timing** – the BOD will review and make changes, as necessary, to the pay price during the monthly BOD meeting, typically the second Monday of the month. Price changes are normally effective the 1st of the following month.
- **Marketing Index** – the BOD will use as a basis for their review, the USDA Weekly National Carlot Meat Report, Weekly Average Carcass Price Equivalent Index Value (Page 3) for Choice 600-900lb carcasses. http://www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/nw_ls410.txt
- **Variance** – price changes are often recommended when there is a significant difference in the posted USDA Average Carcass price from the month before. These reported prices are running average prices from midwestern U.S. livestock markets
- **Premium** – Our goal is to maintain a 20% premium over the index price for our final payout price.

WGBC Cattle Transport Support Program

WGBC will support the cost for cattle to be shipped with reimbursement included in your payment for cattle. The amount of support will be determined by the mileage from your farm to the processor. The distance will be determined using a Rand McNally mileage calculator website using your membership address on file and the processor's location. Number of head will be counted when hanging weights are received from the processor and the support rate will be assigned as follows:

Distance:

0-49 miles	=	\$0/head
50-99 miles	=	\$10/head
100-149 miles	=	\$20/head
150+ miles	=	\$30/head
200+ miles	=	\$40/head
250+ miles	=	\$50/head

PLEASE NOTE: Members are responsible for payment to livestock haulers hired to transport cattle – as requested by that livestock hauler. The transaction for transporting livestock is between the member and the livestock hauler.

Compensation from WGBC will be paid later – included in the payment for your animals – and assigned per animal.

Beef Cattle Prices by Tier

Effective January 1, 2021 – applied to carcass hanging weights

\$2.40/lb. for Tier 1/Choice+	(0-90 marbling scores)
\$2.30/lb. for Tier 2/Select	(50-90 marbling score)
\$2.20/lb. for Tier 3/Select	(30-40 marbling score)
\$2.10/lb. for Tier 4/Select	(0-20 marbling score)
\$1.80/lb. for Tier 5/Standard	(80-90 marbling score)
\$1.20/lb. for Tier 5+/Standard	(>80 marbling score)
\$1.20/lb. for Tier 5	(<80) Cull cow – Cattle 30+ months age
Veal calves \$3.00/lb.	(limited offers)

Volume Patron Bonus (after more than 20 head shipped in calendar year 2021) +\$0.10/lb/hwt added – fats only

Hog – Tiers / Prices

Effective January 1, 2021 – carcass hanging weights

\$1.50/lb. Tier 1	(210-250 lbs)
\$1.40/lb. Tier 2	(<210 lbs)
\$1.40/lb. Tier 3	(250-270 lbs)
\$1.20/lb. Tier 4	(> 270 lbs) -
less again Tier 5	(>300 lbs)

\$0.05/lb. Volume Patron Bonus applies to hog shipments after more than 20 hogs shipped in calendar year 2021



REMINDER: You can download a copy of our beef and pork protocols here: <https://www.wisconsingrassfed.coop/our-co-op/protocols/> It's a good idea to refresh your knowledge of our allowed practices.



Angus Bull for Sale

Purebred Angus bull that has only been on forage and hay. This is what he looks like after breeding season. Two years old. Very calm. \$3,000. *Bill Weber*: 608-219-8903 or weberhomes@gmail.com



Cattle for Sale



Devon Bulls For Sale

Hillside Pastures is offering a genetically diverse group of Red Devon bulls, ranging in age from one to three years. All purebred, polled, and docile. Prices from \$2000 to \$5000. *Contact Daniel*: 608-588-5367 or danielfmarquardt@gmail.com



Belted Galloways, Purebred Heifers and Bulls

Hickory Springs Farms, Hillpoint WI; *Verna Gallas or Mike Burbach* 608-986-2173 or VGallas@live.com



Bred Cows for Sale

Bred to red Devon bull for May calving: 10 older cows at \$1050; 10 second calf \$1200 *Roman Miller* 608-516-3685 | crmiller1993@gmail.com

To have a buy/sell ad included in the spring issue, please send information by March 25th (see page 1 for contact info)

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