

wisconsin grass-fed beef cooperative

WISCONSIN
MEADOWS™

100% Grass-fed Beef

Meadow View

Volume 12, Issue 2 • April, 2021

The April edition of our quarterly newsletter...

Happy Spring! How's the grass coming along in your part of the state?

Welcome Anders Unseth, the Co-op's first full-time employee, who started March 1st and will take over the livestock scheduling tasks from Pete, as well as work to grow the consumer-direct side of the business. See page 4 for his article with new information on the updated pay-price tiers the board recently approved

All WGBC members should receive our newsletter quarterly, as well as monthly messages e-mailed from the management team. Let us know if you are not receiving these communications!

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.

Speaking of board members...

We all owe a big "thank-you" to member Gene Schriefer who served on our board for six years! Gene brought a great wealth of grazing knowledge along with a healthy dose of common sense. His experience in grazing networks as well as government and university work made him the go-to guy for everything from event speakers and grazing research to agency contacts for grant programs. We are lucky to have him as a member, see his educational article on keeping pasture grasses healthy on page 2 while you are here!

1st Quarter 2021 – WGBC General Manger's Update

It is a great time to be a member of the Wisconsin Grass-fed Beef Cooperative. 2021 has us growing 5% above this time period last year and profitable. We achieved this growth primarily through improved utilization and our launch of new value added products described below. Volume in pounds sold is actually down 3% vs Q1 2020. In a nutshell, we have been able to deliver more value with less cattle.

Despite having nearly 230+ 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. We are currently at a record high price of \$2.40/lb hot carcass weight in addition to other attractive bonus pay opportunities.

In Q1 we launched our new shelf-stable sausage line.

This feature consists of two products, a 2 oz Landjaeger and an 8 oz Summer Sausage stick. Shelf-stable products are excellent additions for our business as they convert excess trim into high value products that are placed outside

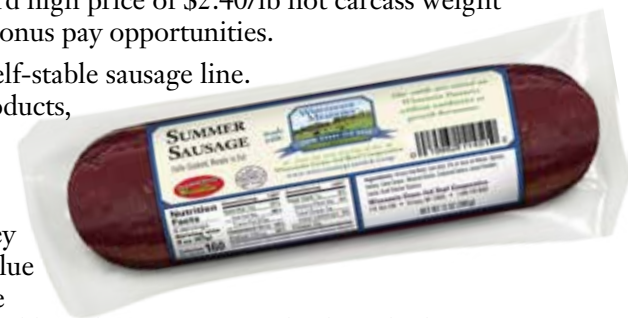
the meat case expanding our total brand presence. We also launched a grass-fed beef smoked dog bone line with two items. Likewise, these products are a great addition as they expand brand presence and allow us to capture value in something that may have otherwise thrown away.

In April 2021, we will submit a proposal to be awarded a Value Added Producer Grant (VAPG). This is our first grant submission since our inception as an organization nearly 13 years ago. The VAPG will focus on accelerating the expansion of our direct to consumer business as well as expanding the distribution of our retail ready lines. We are working with Jim Gage Consulting, who has a 100% success rate on projects submitted.

Due to COVID, the trade shows, product sampling events and promotions that we have conducted in the past have been cancelled. This will help our profitability short term, but will challenge us to educate and reach consumers in new ways.

I hope you are all enjoying the coming of spring and the fun things that come along with it. Get out the grease gun and make sure the haybine is ready to go.

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



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It Takes Grass to Grow Grass

I've been working on this grazing stuff for many years. One of the expressions often stated was – “it takes grass to grow grass,” we'd all nod our heads in agreement. In hindsight, perhaps I was too embarrassed to admit I did not understand what that truly meant. It was years of learning and gaining experience and understanding about how grazing research supports that exact notion.

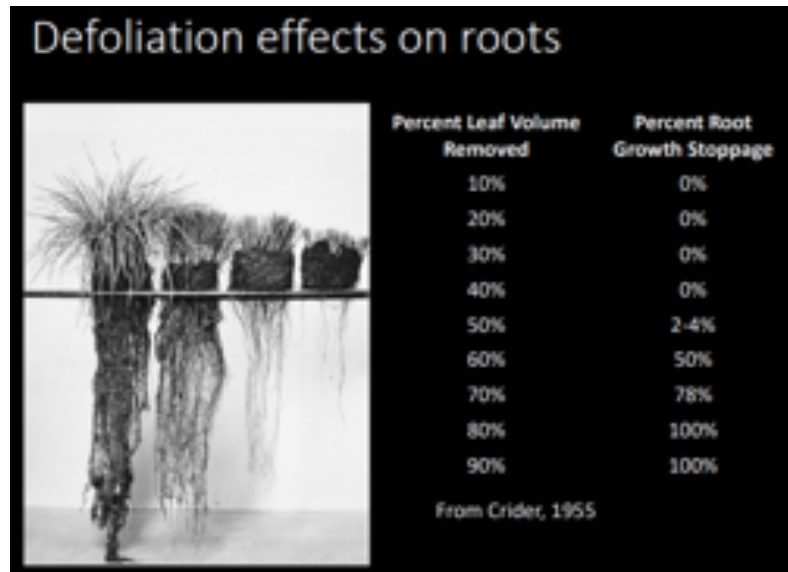
The researcher, F.J. Crider, worked for the Soil Conservation Service and conducted a series of experiments on plant defoliation on both cool and warm season grasses.

In one experiment, with a single harvest, he clipped plants at 10% increments, so clipped 10% and left 90%, clipped 20% left 80% and so on. The results were stunning. Up to 40% defoliation (leaving 60% behind) resulted in 0% of the roots stopping growth. As soon as more than 50% of the plant material was removed, this level and higher dramatically increased the percentage of roots which stopped growing. When 80% of the forage was removed, 100% of the roots stopped growing. Note this is also the source of the notion “graze half, leave half”.

It took anywhere from 6–18 days with an average of 11 days, for the roots to begin re-growing and new top growth (leaves) to appear. If we return to a paddock before the plant begins to re-grow (or maybe we have never left the paddock), this implies that the plant never has that opportunity to regrow, nor recharged its' stored carbohydrates (energy) in the crown. It will become weaker, diminished and less productive. Note that it is 11 days *before* the roots *start* to recover, the plant still has not recovered yet.

In a second similar experiment, he repeatedly defoliated the plants at the same levels to simulate the effect of rotational grazing throughout the season. In this trial, repeated 70% or more defoliation, caused roots to stop growing for an average of 33 days.

We need roots to supply the leaves with the building materials for growth and to support the plant and leaves to capture energy from sunlight and produce the energy in sugars and starches to feed the roots and soil. One is in balance with another.



When we have bare ground, it represents a missed opportunity to capture free sunlight and convert it into something ruminant livestock can utilize, forage.

The leaf is the factory for the plant, a solar panel, if too much of the leaf is harvested, the water and nutrients back up, there's no place to process them, the plant needs to build a new factory (leaves) before it can process what the roots supply, and the roots are not being supplied with sugar (energy) to work.

When our pasture plants continue to grow vigorously, recovery time is quicker, more forage is grown throughout the season, supporting our livestock and our livelihoods. Additionally, as plants are actively growing they are also feeding a portion of the sugars they produce to support soil life. How well would we all work, if we didn't have a good meal for 33 days? When we manage pasture well over time, soil health improves, soil organic matter increases, water infiltration and storage also increase enabling the soil to grow even more forage supporting more grazing, improving profits.

If you would not cut your alfalfa before it has recovered, why would you graze your pasture before it too was recovered?

Always remember – *It Takes Grass to Grow Grass!*

**Gene Schriefer – WGBC Member
and UW Extension Ag Educator**



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Welcome Anders Unseth to the Team!



I'm Anders Unseth – the new Animal Procurement and Business-to-Consumer Channel Manager here at Wisconsin Grass-fed Beef Cooperative. I am incredibly excited to be working for the cooperative.

I currently reside in Readstown, Wisconsin with my wife Tonia and my son Henning. Tonia works at Organic Valley as an Accounting Inventory Analyst. I am on the village board here in Readstown. We are lucky to reside in the Driftless area.

My background – born and raised in Southwest Wisconsin. After college I went to work with the Marketing Team at Kwik Trip; after eight years at Kwik Trip I decided I wanted to get closer to home. I worked at Organic Valley/Organic Prairie for another eight years and ended my tenure as the Meat Operations Manager with Organic Prairie.

I'm excited to be back in the meat industry; this is a great passion for me. I am also really looking forward to being part of a cooperative again. My favorite parts of a cooperative are working for farmers, hearing a collection of diverse ideas and striving for the greater good. It's a real team effort and I really appreciate that.

Thank you all for this opportunity!

Anders Unseth – Animal Procurement and Business-to-Consumer Channel Manager

Meet Our Newest Board Member

I'm Judy Fossen—marketing writer, co-farmer with husband Dale Gasser, mom to three sons and stepmom to three more. We rotationally graze an Aberdeen-Angus-Murray Grey herd on 100 acres of our 350-acre Six Sons Farm in Sauk County. We will be expanding our pasture acreage again this year, to align with our goal of 100% regenerative ag practices.

After attending a couple grazing-related annual conferences and field days in 2015, we got serious about managed rotational grazing. Learning more about soil health, and the animal health and financial benefits of 100% grass-fed systems, quickly led to our “aha!” moment. We stopped supplementing with grain products, started calving later and on pasture, and began breeding for smaller-frame animals. No more calf scours, and overall herd health improved. It was exciting to see improvements in so little time.

We give a lot of the credit for our success to Serge Koenig, a Conservation Technician for Sauk County. He helped us figure out pasture/paddock configurations, stocking rate/density calculations, profitability models, and financial assistance for investing in our growing pasture system. His ongoing check-ins have made our transition a very positive one.

In my “day job” I am a marketing writer, working predominantly in animal ag and manufacturing for more than 20 years. I've also served on statewide and regional boards, strategic planning and membership program committees, and as a brand/identity consultant.



As the newest WGBC board member, I look forward to contributing my expertise to help our co-op and its member benefits grow.

Judy Fossen – WGBC Board Member

2020 Financial Statements

WGBC members wishing to get the 2020 Profit and Loss Statement, can email: accounting@wisconsingrassfed.coop to request it. To request by phone or mail, please contact:

Tim Mathison WGBC Accountant
P.O. Box 269, Viroqua, WI 54665
608-634-2862 | accounting@wisconsingrassfed.coop

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WGBC Livestock Price / Payment / Shipment Reference Sheet

Beef Cattle Prices by Tier

Effective April 1, 2021 – carcass hanging weights

\$2.40/lb. for Tier 1	Select	40-90 marbling score
\$2.30/lb. for Tier 2	Select	10-30 marbling score
\$2.10/lb. for Tier 3	Standard	over 70 marbling score
\$1.20/lb. for Tier 4	Standard	under 70 marbling score

includes all cattle over 30 months old, culls and bulls (when approved to ship)

\$3.00/lb. Veal calves (limited prearranged offers)

Choice Grade Bonus (an extra 10¢/lb.)

Volume Patron Bonus (tier 3 and better) add 5¢/lb for over 10 fats or 10¢/lb for over 30 shipped in a calendar year)

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)
\$.50/lb Tier 5	(>300 lbs)

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

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 farm 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		Reimbursement Rate
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.

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





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Wisconsin Meadows Carcass Pricing Tiers and Volume Bonus 2021 Updates

Pay Price is reviewed monthly by the Board of Directors (BOD). 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 each 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 600–900 lb. 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.

Our goal is to maintain a 20% premium over the index price for our final payout price to Members.

Tier 1 (Base Price): Cattle grading mid-select and up (40-90 marbling score on the select scale), will receive a 20%+ premium vs select grade conventional pricing. This price is reviewed monthly by the WGBC board of directors. Call if in doubt of the latest pricing.

Tier 2: Cattle grading low- to mid-select (10 to 30 marbling score on the select scale) will receive Tier 1 base price minus \$0.10/lb. hanging weight.

Tier 3: Cattle grading a 70 marbling score on the standard scale up to 0 select will receive Tier 1 base price minus \$0.30/lb. hanging weight.

Tier 4: (including culls and bulls) Cattle grading 70 or lower on the standard scale, including cattle over 30 mo. of age will be paid the current WGBC cull cow price.

The WGBC board of directors may also price any cattle at Tier 3 and 4 at their discretion due to other circumstances that may limit their marketability.

Bonus Payments Available:

Choice Grade Bonus: Any cattle grading at 10 on the choice scale or higher will receive an extra \$0.10/lb HCW (hot carcass weight/hanging weight) per animal.

Volume Commitment Bonus: We want to thank producers who commit volume to the WGBC.

- **10-30 Head:** A producer who ships over 10 head per calendar year for sale to the WGBC, is eligible for an additional \$0.05/lb. HCW payment per head after the first 10 head.

- **30+ Head:** Producers are eligible for a total incremental payment of \$0.10/lb HCW per head after 30 head are shipped in a calendar year.

Contact me with any questions,

Anders Unseth
WGBC Animal Procurement Manager
608-632-3985 | aunseth@wisconsingrassfed.coop



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30# Boxed Beef and Pork Web Ordering Update

We have exciting news to share with our members! As of the middle of March, our website has the capability to ship all over the state of Wisconsin! We have upgraded our website capabilities and partnered with a reliable shipping company to help ship our products within 48 hours to anywhere in Wisconsin. We can now reach more consumers directly who want the nutritious benefits of Wisconsin Meadows 100% Grass-fed Beef and Pastured Pork products.

Not only are we shipping our products statewide, but we are doing it with an environmentally friendly, insulated box that keeps our products safe, frozen and delivered right to consumers' doorsteps. Our 30 pound box of beef or pork can be

ordered directly on our website at www.wisconsinmeadows.com and right now – we are offering free shipping! Be sure to tell your friends and family how they can fill their freezers for all those spring and summer grilling sessions!



Upcoming Events

April 10, 10am – 12pm No-till drill demo

Zachary and Sandra Sawall farm,
224700 County Road B, Marathon, WI 54448

Directions: From Wausau head west on County Road N about 10 mi to County road B. Go north about 1/2 mi on County Road B. The farm is on the west side of the road.

The Sawall Family has a start-up cow/calf operation unique in that they plan to use nurse cows to raise up to 4 calves per cow...Now that's getting your money out of a cow! They also plan to be diversified using boer goats to graze behind the beef.

They purchased their farm in 2019 and began transitioning the cropland to pasture in fall of 2020. Their plan is to ramp up the beef operation across a three year period, over which they intend to incorporate the use of cover crops into their fall and winter feeding strategy.

Marathon County has three no-till drills available for rent that can be used for both practices. If you plan on renting one of the drills, please come to receive training on the use of each drill and the new multi-county rental policy.

April 7, 2021 – Grassfed Alliance Webinar

Join Grassfed Alliance, Wed. April 7th from 1–3 PM, as they present the results of their consumer insight study. This study, spearheaded by the GFA and supported by 11 other brands and organizations, identified friction points and messaging opportunities in grassfed marketing. A selection of other grassfed market research will be presented in addition to this new study.

This free webinar is intended for producers, brands, and other stakeholders interested in better reaching consumers. Attendees will receive Zoom information upon registering. Questions can be directed to James O'Donnell at james@grassfedalliance.org.

This event is hosted by the Grassfed Alliance, an organization dedicated to promoting grassfed meat and dairy products that meet Authentic Grassfed Principles.

USDA will reopen sign-up for CFAP 2 for at least 60 days beginning on April 5, 2021.

Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP2) will be refined to better address the needs of producers after a review of previous COVID-19 farmer assistance programs identified a number of gaps and disparities in how assistance was distributed as well as inadequate outreach to underserved producers and smaller and medium operations. Here's the link for more information on what is eligible: <https://www.farmers.gov/pandemic-assistance/cfap> Or contact your local FSA for more info.