



WISCONSIN GRASS-FED BEEF COOPERATIVE MEADOW VIEW NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 17, ISSUE 1 • JANUARY 2026

WISCONSIN GRASS-FED BEEF COOPERATIVE ANNUAL MEETING*

***New Date, Time and Location!**

WHEN: February 21, 2026 • **WHERE:** The Wisconsin Hotel and Conference Center
(60 Gasser Rd., Lake Delton, WI 53940 - formerly known as the Wintergreen)

TIME: 1:00 - 1:30 pm Registration (See page 3 for the full agenda.)



MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT, BRETT DANKE

As we prepare for our annual membership meeting this February, I want to take a moment to reflect on a theme that speaks to both our cooperative and the broader world: adversity. In American football—whether at the college level or in the NFL—you often hear coaches and players talk about overcoming adversity. It's about facing challenges head-on, adapting when the game plan changes, and finding strength in teamwork. That same spirit is alive and well among grass-fed beef producers.

So, what is adversity? At its core, adversity is the test of resilience when circumstances push against you. For football teams, it might be injuries, tough opponents, or unpredictable weather. For us, it's been high demand paired with low supply, rising input costs, soaring borrowing rates, and the ever-present pressure of operating

in a volatile market. These challenges aren't just numbers on a balance sheet—they impact families, livelihoods, and the future of sustainable farming.

Yet, just like a team that refuses to quit in the fourth quarter, our cooperative has shown remarkable perseverance. We've adapted to changing conditions, found creative solutions, and continued to deliver high-quality, grass-fed beef to customers who value what we do. That resilience is what sets us apart. It's what makes this cooperative strong.

As we look ahead, let's carry that same mindset forward.

Adversity isn't something to fear—it's an opportunity to grow stronger together. By supporting one another, sharing knowledge, and staying committed to our mission, we can turn challenges into victories. Thank you for your hard work, your dedication,

and your belief in the power of collaboration.

I look forward to seeing you at the annual meeting and continuing this journey with all of you. Together, we'll keep moving forward—one step at a time.



*A group of grass-fed beef enjoy summer pastures.
Taken by Brett Danke, Wisconsin Grass-fed Beef Member and Board of Director.*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION

During the annual meeting, we will be conducting an election for the 2026 Board of Directors. There are three seats up for election, with two current board member re-running. If you have considered running in the past, 2026 may be the year for you! The board meets via Zoom typically on the third Monday of the month starting at 7:00 pm. They also conduct a strategic planning session if needed once a year. It is a rewarding experience and a great opportunity to learn more about the cooperative!

Nominations from members are now being accepted and will also be accepted from the floor on the day of the meeting. For more information or if interested in becoming a board member, please contact Brett Danke at bdanke@yahoo.com or 715-370-4354.



MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER, ROD OFTE

With beef prices at historic highs, it's a good time to be a rancher with quality cattle. However, those same record prices have created significant challenges for our cooperative. High live-cattle prices translate directly to higher costs for consumers, and to remain competitive with conventional beef while continuing to supply our customers, WGBC raised producer pay prices seven times in 2025. Today, we are paying approximately \$4.00 per pound HCW when potential grade premiums, logistical support, and patronage bonuses are included. For perspective, our starting pay price when the cooperative was founded was \$1.80 per pound HCW. While beef demand remains strong overall, consumers are clearly feeling the strain on their household budgets and have pulled back on purchases. As a result, we are harvesting 40–50% fewer animals than we were just two years ago. As sales values have increased but sales volume has declined, WGBC has taken what we call a tactical retreat—carefully and gradually increasing customer prices to offset reduced supply. Operating a

smaller business has required disciplined cost cutting. With limited beef available, we have paused new sales investments and reduced labor and advertising expenses. These actions have allowed us to remain profitable and reverse the sales-value decline experienced in 2024. Year to date, WGBC is up 10% in sales value compared to 2024 and is on track to finish the year with approximately \$20,000 in profit. In 2025, another global cooperative meat company, Organic Prairie, exited the meat business after finding it difficult to achieve consistent profitability. While unfortunate, this highlights the importance of being small, nimble, and responsive. By closely monitoring our financials each month through board and management meetings, WGBC has been able to adapt quickly and stay in the black. As beef prices have surged, our WGBC Pastured Pork program has helped fill critical gaps. Pork sales are up 96% compared to 2024, driven in part by new institutional partnerships, including volume deals with EPIC in Verona, WI. Unlike beef, pork production does not face long reproduction timelines, allowing us to scale more efficiently to meet demand. Notably, our pork pay price has remained

LIVESTOCK BEEF CATTLE PRICES EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 1, 2025

Please review the prices and tier system noted below.

PRICE	TIER	USDA GRADE	MARBLING SCORE	
\$3.70/lb.	Choice Bonus	Choice	> 0	\$0.20/lb. Quality Bonus for Choice carcass grades
\$3.50/lb.	Tier 1	Select	40 - 90	
\$3.40/lb.	Tier 2	Select	0 -30	
\$2.50/lb.	Cull	Standard	< 90	AND Culls & Bulls when requested to be shipped

Veal Calves \$3.75/lb. (limited offers)

Volume Commitment Bonus I (After 10 head beef fat animals are shipped / farm - \$0.10/lb. HWT will be added to producer pay price for Tiers 1 & 2 and Choice Grade animals.)

Volume Commitment Bonus II (After 20 head beef fat animals are shipped / farm - \$0.20/lb. HWT will be added to producer pay price for Tiers 1 & 2 and Choice Grade animals.)

All animals are required to have proper identification and listed individually on the affidavit when shipping

Any questions, please contact the Wisconsin Grass-fed Beef Cooperative at 1-800-745-9093 or email rofte@wisconsingrassfed.coop.

ANNUAL MEETING RSVP

RSVP REQUIRED

DEADLINE: JANUARY 30, 2026

VISIT:

wisconsingrassfed.coop/wgbc-annual-meeting

SCAN QR CODE:



CALL OR TEXT:

608-469-3371

unchanged for the past four years.

Looking ahead, WGBC will continue as a main sponsor of the GrassWorks Conference in 2026, now to be held in La Crosse, WI. We will have a booth promoting cooperative membership, and several WGBC producers will be presenting throughout the conference.

Please also mark your calendar for the 2026 WGBC Annual Membership Meeting, scheduled for February 21, 2026, in Wisconsin Dells. These meetings consistently provide valuable networking opportunities—and, of course, the chance to enjoy our protein products alone makes the trip worthwhile. Registration is required, so please plan ahead.

Finally, a sincere thank-you to all the producers who delivered finished cattle and hogs to WGBC this year. Your commitment and dedication are the foundation of our cooperative's success.



*A group of grass-fed beef enjoy new pastures.
Taken by Russ Endres, Wisconsin Grass-fed Beef
Member and Board of Director.*

WISCONSIN GRASS-FED BEEF COOPERATIVE ANNUAL MEETING*

***New Date, Time and Location!**

WHEN: February 21, 2026 • **WHERE:** The Wisconsin Hotel and Conference Center
(60 Gasser Rd., Lake Delton, WI 53940 - formerly known as the Wintergreen)

TIME: 1:00 - 1:30 pm Registration

- 1:00 - 1:30 pm **WGBC Annual Meeting Registration**
- 1:30 pm **Call to Order and Welcome**
- Member, Guests and Sponsor Introductions
- Additions or Corrections to the Agenda and Minutes
- 1:45 pm **2025 Business Summary and 2026 Outlook**
- 2:00 pm **Guest Speaker: WGBC Member, Darren Yanke**
- Extending the Grazing Season
- 2:45 pm **2025 B2C Results and Trends**
- 3:15 pm **Board Member Introductions**
- 3:30 pm **Break and Networking**
- 3:45 pm **Board Member Election**
- Nominations and Vote
- 4:00 pm **2024 Social Media Review and 2025 Marketing Plan**
- 4:15 pm **WGBC Producer Panel**
- Key Decisions When Choosing Breeding Stock
- 4:45 pm **Final Q & A
Adjournment**
- 5:00 pm **Protein Buffet**
Following the annual meeting,
all are welcome to a social
with a complimentary protein
buffet and beverages.

GET FREE WISCONSIN MEADOWS PRODUCTS

Turn in your meeting survey at the annual meeting registration desk and we'll send you a mixed box of goodies in return for your feedback.

RSVP REQUIRED

DEADLINE TO RSVP:

January 30, 2026

VISIT:

wisconsingrassfed.coop/wgbc-annual-meeting

Scan QR Code:

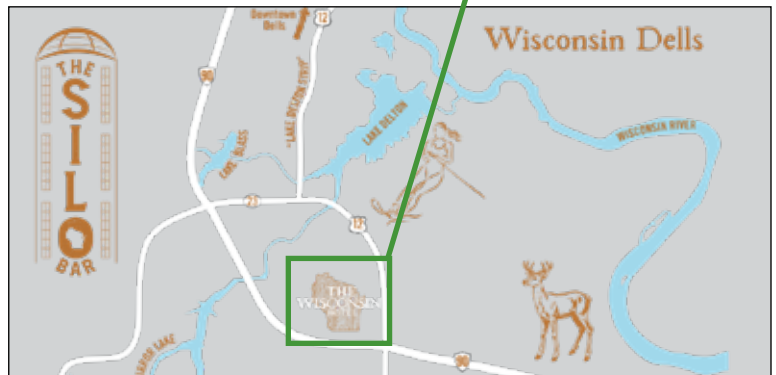


CALL OR TEXT:

608-469-3371

New Location!

The Wisconsin Hotel and Conference Center
(Formerly known as the Wintergreen)



Hotel Reservations: The Wisconsin Hotel, \$189/Room + Tax

Hotel Room Rate Deadline: January 20, 2026

Call 608-254-2285 to book your room to get the discounted room rate.

WISCONSIN GRASS-FED BEEF COOPERATIVE 2024 ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES

Held at Water Canyon Clubhouse on January 23rd, 2025

Introduction: Josh Miner introduced himself to the members and introduced the sponsors for this year's meeting at 2:05 PM. President Brett Danke called meeting to order at 2:08 PM. Started with member introductions. 17 farms were represented by attendance at the meeting. A member of each farm gave a brief introduction of themselves.

Approve 2024 Annual Meeting Minutes: Dan Wiederholt, Secretary provided the minutes from the 2024 Annual Meeting in the newsletter sent to all members earlier. Motion by Bob Pesz to approve the minutes, second by Russ Endres. Motion passed.

2024 Summary: Rod Ofte, General Manager, presented a summary and highlights of 2024. Shared structure of organization and introduced the employees and contractors that make up the team. Challenges of 2024 included: Sky rocketing cattle prices, 10 price increases to customers, loss of some customers with price increases, food service business still struggling, much reduced food bank business versus 2023, and increased processing costs. Shrank business (as intended) in 2024 versus 2023 by about 7% in total sales (\$) and a 12% decrease in volume of product sold. Gross

profit about the same as last year even 7% decrease in sales. Exceeded \$3 million in sales versus a planned \$2.8 million in sales for 2024. Net profit of \$47,800. However, had \$50,000 in grant money in 2024 that helped contribute to income.

2025 Business Approach: Get back to growth. Food bank orders, increased pork sales, and continued price increases are expected to help with 2025. Cattle supply is still tight and expected to still be a struggle.

New Product Update: Beef Bone Broth. Requested by customers and made at Nordik with bones from custom animals. Selling very well; currently cannot keep in stock.

Board of Directors Introduction and Board Member Nominations: Brett gave introduction to Board of Directors and the responsibilities of being a director. Each member of the board introduced themselves. Two seats were open for election this year. Greg Nowicki has decided not to run again. Christine Wright ran for re-election. Pete nominated Jason Gough, who accepted the nomination and gave an additional introduction. Brett had received a call from Joe Mantoan who could not make meeting but wanted to run for the board. Election was conducted.

Social Media and Marketing Updates: Angie Lindloff gave an update on the websites and social media. With grant money available for marketing in 2024, Taste Profit (now Good Roots) was hired to work with Angie to improve the website, messaging, and branding. Trends on website traffic and sales were shared as well as status of subscriptions. Custom sales (whole/half beef and whole pigs) have been especially strong last couple months. Angie explained Google ads spending, how it works, and how effective it has been. Ad campaigns for 2024 were summarized.

Direct-to-Consumer and Procurement: Josh Miner reported on 42% in box/bundle sales from 2023 to 2024. Whole beef sales increased 97% and half beef sales almost doubled versus 2023. Expect continued growth in customs for 2025. Josh answered numerous questions about



2025 Board Members:
(Back, L to R) Russ Endres, Daniel Wiederholt, Joesph Stevens, (Front, L to R) Brett Danke, Christine Wright, Jason Gough, (Inset photo) Kerry Barnett

custom orders (such as delivery or pick up process, ordering process, types of customers, etc). Josh gave updates on sales campaigns from 2024 and upcoming sales. 766 finished cattle were delivered to Lorentz in 2024, and around 50 to Nordik. 37 producers shipped cattle in 2024. 81% of cattle processed at Lorentz graded Choice. Almost \$1.6 million paid to producers for cattle in 2024. Hog business remained flat in 2024, which was a feat without the food bank pork purchases of 2023. There are food bank pork purchases in 2025. Growth in the pork business is expected for 2025.

Board Member Election Results: Brett shared election results. Christine Wright and Jason Gough were elected to a 3 year term.

Awards Presentation: Brett presented the "Jon Lee Award"-WGBC Service Award to Greg Nowicki

Adjournment: Josh explained the process of filling out and turning in the survey of the meeting in exchange for a future shipment of box of Wisconsin Meadows products. Greg Nowicki made motion to adjourn the meeting, with a second by Tom Cofton. Motion passed. Meeting was adjourned at 4:19 PM. A social hour was held in bar area of the clubhouse with complimentary food and drinks.

Sponsors of the meeting this year: Lorentz Meats, Byron Seeds, Nordik Meats, Compeer Financial, and WI Farmers Union.

LIVESTOCK PROCUREMENT

When shipping animals, PLEASE remember to make sure your animals are clearly identified with either an ear or back/hip tag that is legible and securely attached. Also note ALL ID tags on the shipping affidavit. With multiple members shipping upwards of 45+ head, it becomes impossible to sort out whose animals are whose if more than 1 has a missing or illegible tag, or if the tags are not noted on the affidavit.

To book your next processing date, please contact:
Rod Ofte
rofte@wisconsingrassfed.coop
608-451-2861

THE AUDUBON CONSERVATION RANCHING PROGRAM: RECOGNIZING STEWARDSHIP ON WORKING LANDS



A BETTER AGRICULTURAL STANDARD

TRACEABILITY TRANSPARENCY TRUST

The Audubon Conservation Ranching Program is designed to support and recognize ranchers and farmers who manage grasslands in ways that protect wildlife habitat while maintaining productive, profitable operations. Developed by Audubon, the program focuses on improving grassland ecosystems through science-based grazing practices that benefit birds, soil health, and livestock alike.

Grassland birds are among the fastest-declining bird groups in North America, largely due to habitat loss and changes in land management. The Conservation Ranching Program addresses this challenge by encouraging grazing strategies that create diverse grassland structure—varying plant heights and densities that provide critical nesting, foraging, and shelter habitat. These same practices often lead to healthier pastures and more resilient grazing systems.

For participating producers, the program offers a practical pathway to conservation that fits into day-to-day ranching operations. Ranchers work with Audubon specialists to

assess current grazing practices and identify opportunities for improvement, such as adaptive rotational grazing, rest periods, and pasture monitoring. Many producers find that these approaches enhance forage utilization, improve soil function, and support long-term land productivity.

Certification through the Audubon Conservation Ranching Program provides third-party recognition for conservation outcomes on working lands. Certified producers may be eligible to market beef as Audubon Certified, adding value and transparency for consumers who care about wildlife, land stewardship, and sustainable food systems. This recognition can help strengthen market access and reinforce consumer trust.

Beyond market opportunities, the program delivers ecological and operational benefits. Improved pasture health can reduce input costs, increase drought resilience, and support consistent livestock performance. At the same time, enhanced grassland habitat helps protect native bird species



*Cattle munch on a variety of high-quality pastures.
Photo from Wisconsin Grass-fed Beef Member, Jim Munch.*

and other wildlife that depend on these landscapes.

The Audubon Conservation Ranching Program demonstrates that conservation and agriculture can work hand in hand. By rewarding good grazing management and ecological outcomes, the program supports farmers and ranchers who are committed to caring for the land while producing high-quality beef for future generations.

For more information about the Audubon Conservation Ranching Program certification of compliance process, visit: www.foodalliance.org

BUSINESS TO CONSUMER 2025 SALES HIGHLIGHTS

Join us at the annual meeting to hear about the business to consumer operations for the cooperative.

- WHOLE & HALF BEEF CUSTOM ORDERS*: ▲ 50% vs. 2024
- WHOLE & HALF BEEF CUSTOM ORDERS*: ▲ 200% vs. 2023
- BUSINESS 2 CONSUMER ORDERS*: ▲ 40% vs. 2024
- BUSINESS 2 CONSUMER ORDERS*: ▲ 140% vs. 2023

Elevated beef prices throughout 2025 created headwinds for the direct-to-consumer box sales category, as an increasing number of Wisconsin Meadows customers shifted toward half and whole beef custom orders to capture greater value.

**December 2025 Orders Not Included*

PASTURED PORK PRICES EFFECTIVE FEBRUARY 24, 2025

Please review the prices and tier system noted below.

<u>Hanging Carcass Weight (HCW)</u>	<u>PRICE</u>
Hogs weighing under 210 lbs.	\$1.40/lbs. HCW
Hogs weighing 211 – 250 lbs.	\$1.50/lbs. HCW
Hogs weighing 251 – 270 lbs.	\$1.40/lbs. HCW
Hogs weighing 271 – 300 lbs.	\$1.10/lbs. HCW
Hogs weighing 301 – 350 lbs.	\$.75/lbs. HCW
Hogs weighing over 351 lbs.	\$.50/lbs. HCW

Any questions, please contact the Wisconsin Grass-fed Beef Cooperative at 1-800-745-9093 or email rofte@wisconsingrassfed.coop on the pastured pork program.

GRAZING PROFESSIONALS READY TO SUPPORT LAND IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES



Are you looking to improve your grazing operations? New to grazing and need an experienced guide to get you going? Valley Stewardship Network (VSN) has received grant funding from the USDA's Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) to connect farmers with experienced grazing professionals. Services covered include:

- Writing a grazing plan for your farm
- Whole Farm Assessments
- Grazing mentorship services

VSN will match you up with a consultant, and they will bill us for the services. As a producer you do not need to sign a contract or pay anything out of pocket. Must reside in SW Wisconsin.

Contact Evan Dvorsak, Conservation Outreach Specialist at evan@valleystewardshipnetwork.org or call/text 608.632.6166.

THANK YOU TO OUR VALUED SPONSORS OF THE WGBC ANNUAL MEETING

The Wisconsin Grass-fed Beef Cooperative sincerely appreciates the generous support of these valued partners, each of whom plays an important role in delivering benefits to farmers across the state, especially to our members.



SAVE THE DATE: WGBC ANNUAL MEETING

Saturday, February 21, 2026 • 1:00 pm • The Wisconsin Hotel