

Agricultural Newsletter

UW-Madison College of Ag & Life Science
University of Wisconsin-Extension



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Regional Cow-Calf Meeting Features Diversified Beef Operation

Stone Lake, Wednesday, April 3, 5:00-9:00 PM

*Otto Wiegand
Area Agricultural Agent
Burnett, Sawyer & Washburn Counties*

Be sure to attend this year's regional cow-calf meeting on Weds, April 3, from 5-9 PM, in rural Stone Lake sponsored by the UW-Extension Livestock Team. The meeting will be held at the Terri & Paul Loree Farm, N5437 Dawn Road, just west of Stone Lake in Washburn County. From Stone Lake, go about two miles west on Hwy. 70 to Strabel Road, turn right or north, go one mile, then turn right on Dawn Road. Watch for the signs.

The Lorees are transplanted city farmers. Terri, who runs the farm, has a Masters in food science and nutrition and does consulting. Paul is a human resource director for a large company and works much of the time by computer from home. Terri rotationally grazes 20 beef cattle of various breeds, including Pinzgauer (Austrian), Charolais, Hereford, Angus and Simmental on 30 acres following a grazing plan developed by the NW Graziers Network.

There are three horses, including a Quarter Horse and Thoroughbred, and a Great Pyrenees predator-control dog. The farm features both restored and new buildings including a horse arena. The Lorees employ organic practices. There is also a University of Chicago seismic monitor on the farm.

The program begins at 5:00 PM with a farm tour followed by a beef supper and program at 6:00 at the Stone Lake Fire Station. Catering will be provided by Marie's Hideaway of Stone Lake. Topics will include: Cow-Calf Industry Outlook, Comparison of Natural Service with Synchronized A.I. in Cow-Calf Herds, Ear-Tagging and Basic ID Record-Keeping in Cow-Calf, and an Update on Wolves and Other Predators.

Speakers will include Dr. Brenda Boetel, Extension Ag. Economist from UW-River Falls, Dr. John Rodgers, DVM, from Pfizer, Inc. in Minnesota, and David Ruid, USDA/APHIS Wildlife Biologist from Rhinelander.

The cost of the program is \$12 for the meal. Please register in advance by Thursday, March 28. For registration or information, contact Otto Wiegand or Kevin Schoessow at UWEX-Spooner, 800-528-1914 or 715-635-3506.

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Sheep Colostrum Feeding and Management

Michel Baldin
Sheep Researcher
Spooner Ag Research Station

Successfully raising lambs is a great management challenge facing sheep producers. After birth, you want more than just keeping newborn lambs alive, you want them to be healthy so they can perform their best during their entire life. There is significant data to support that the health, survival, and performance of newborn lambs, or other livestock for that matter, is highly related to adequate intake of colostrum during the first hours of life.



Colostrum is the “first milk” that all female mammals produce after birth. It has a high level of several nutrients that are important for the newborn health and performance and contains a high concentration of antibodies against a variety of infectious agents. Colostrum is the lamb’s first source of Vitamin E. The iron content of colostrum is 10-17 times higher than normal milk. Because its laxative properties, colostrum helps to eliminate fecal matter in the newborn’s digestive tract.

At lambing, it is a good idea to check ewes (by stripping the teats) for the quantity and quality of colostrum. Lambs should nurse as soon after birth as possible in order to receive adequate colostrum. In cases where the ewe does not have enough colostrum or lambs are incapable of nursing, you should use other resources to make sure lambs will acquire adequate colostrum to keep going. Colostrum from other females in the flock, from dairy cows or dairy goats and commercially-available colostrum substitute products may be used. However, colostrum from females in your own flock kept in similar environment is preferable because it will have “custom-made” antibodies. Producers who are attempting to develop an ovine progressive pneumonia (OPP) free flock must be alert, since OPP can be transmitted via colostrum. When using colostrum from another flock, try to choose a flock with a similar disease status. The bacteria that causes Johne’s disease can also be transmitted through colostrums. Although Johne’s disease is not as common in sheep as it is in cattle, it is advisable to get cow colostrum from a herd that has tested negative for Johne’s. Finally, the feeding of colostrum substitute is okay in emergencies, but should not be relied upon to entirely replace natural colostrum.

It is critical that lambs receive colostrum during the first 24 hours of life in order to ensure adequate absorption of colostrum antibodies. Lambs that will not nurse can be fed colostrum by hand using a nipples bottle or a syringe with a stomach tube attached. The common recommendation is that lambs receive 10% of their weight in colostrum by 24 hours after birth, and 2 to 4 ounces of colostrum

should be given at 3- to 4-hour intervals. However, there is some indication that increasing the amount of colostrum fed during the first few hours after birth improves passive immunity (antibodies transferred via colostrum). One method used widely to estimate the degree of passive transfer is the refractometer. This simple equipment measures the total serum protein, which is thought to closely reflect immunoglobulin (IgG) in the blood. A short survey conducted at the Spooner ARS showed that by feeding 10% of lamb's body weight in colostrum (5% right the away and another 5% 4 hours after birth) increased by 15% the serum total protein when compared to 10% of lamb's body weight in colostrum fed during the first 24 hours (2.5% every 4 hours). However, care must be taken since this result comes from a survey in which data were not statistically analyzed.

Another advice to improve the level of management in your lamb raising enterprise is to build a colostrum bank. Colostrum can be refrigerated for one week and frozen colostrum can be stored for up to 12 months before quality declines. It is recommended to measure colostrum quality before storing. Colostrum evaluation can be done on farm and at a relatively low cost by using the equipment called colostrometer. Colostrometers are simple to use and give you an instant estimation of IgG levels present in colostrum. In "good" colostrum, the colostrometer floats higher in the colostrum sample than it does in "poor" colostrum. High-quality colostrum contains 50 mg or more of IgG. It is best to freeze colostrum in small quantities, because once frozen colostrum is thawed, it cannot be refrozen. Moreover, frozen

colostrum should be thawed slowly in a warm water bath (feeding temperature: 102-103°F, 39-40°C) because the direct heat destroys the antibodies.

In conclusion, the viability, survival and performance of lambs (growth, intake, disease resistance) are profoundly affected by their immune status achieved in the first 24 hours. Thus, the importance of providing lambs with high quality colostrum and in adequate amount cannot be overemphasized.

Exciting New Opportunities for Evaluating Forages for High-Producing Dairy Cows

*Dr. Dave Combs
Professor, Department of Dairy Science
University of Wisconsin-Madison*

Plant breeders have made tremendous strides in developing forages that meet the needs of high producing dairy cows. New tools have been developed to help producers and nutritionists to get the most out of these forages. A new test recently developed at the University of Wisconsin-Madison is designed to predict how the process of forage fiber digestion is expected to occur in high producing dairy cows.

Plant fiber is a complex material that varies due to forage species, forage variety, plant maturity and growing environment. Neutral detergent fiber (NDF) is a forage test that measures the total amount of fiber in a feed. We've known for a long time that NDF represents a 'bulky', slow to digest feed component, which can restrict feed intake. While this is a critical measure of feed quality, it only reveals part of the story about fiber. We also need to know how digestible the NDF is and how fast the NDF digests because these factors also vary between forages and can profoundly affect feed intake and milk production.

A major accomplishment has been the development of better approaches to testing forages for fiber digestibility. UW-Madison dairy scientists have developed a new test called TTNDFD[®] (Total Tract NDF Digestibility). The TTNDFD[®] test estimates how much of the feed fiber is digestible and how fast the fiber complex digests. The higher the TTNDFD[®] value, the better the fiber is utilized. The TTNDFD[®] value is benchmarked to fiber digestibility values that have been obtained from feeding studies where NDF digestion has been directly measured in dairy cattle. The weakness of current in-vitro NDF digestibility values is that they are measures of fiber digestion at a single point in time. At best, these values give a crude estimate of the relative amount of fiber degradation between feeds but they have little quantitative value.

References

- Morrill, D., N. R. Hartwing, and C. Youngs. 1995. Colostrum and Health of Newborn Lambs. Iowa State University/University Extension: fact sheet no. 12.
- Quigley, J. 2001. Using a refractometer. Calf Notes.com: Calf Note #39.
- Schoenian, S. 2011. Colostrum: "Liquid Gold". University of Maryland Extension: Small Ruminant Info Sheet.

Typical TTNDFD[®] values for corn silage, alfalfa and grasses are summarized below. The values are from forage samples submitted to a commercial testing lab in 2011 and 2012 including over 7000 samples each of corn silage or alfalfa and over 1200 grass forage samples. The means, standard deviations (SD) and ranges in TTNDFD[®] values coincide with directly measured values that have been reported in dozens of controlled feeding studies published in scientific journals such as the Journal of Dairy Science. The TTNDFD[®] values can be used to predict how cows will perform when fed forages that differ in fiber digestion. For example, note in the table that an average corn silage will have a TTNDFD[®] value of 42%. A corn silage sample with a TTNDFD[®] value one standard deviation below average (less than 36%), would be among the bottom 15% of the corn silages tested. A corn silage sample with low TTNDFD[®] likely will not be utilized as well as ‘typical’ corn silage. Experiences in the field indicate that cows fed low TTNDFD[®] forages produce less milk and have lower feed intake than cows fed diets with that contain forages with more digestible fiber. Likewise, a corn silage with a TTNDFD[®] value greater than 48% is in the top 15% of the corn silage population tested and would be expected to feed better than a ‘typical’ corn silage. Recent research suggests that feeding higher TTNDFD[®] forages to cows can improve milk production and increase fat test in early and mid-lactation dairy cows.

BMR-corn silages are known to have higher amounts of digestible fiber than conventional corn silages. On average, BMR corn silages are 3 to 5 units higher in TTNDFD[®] than conventional corn silages. The TTNDFD[®] test also reveals that there is considerable overlap in fiber digestibility between conventional and BMR corn silages, suggesting that growing conditions, time of harvest and other environmental factors also affect plant fiber digestibility. These observations are consistent with what has been directly measured in controlled feeding trials.

UW-researchers have recently shown that TTNDFD[®] values can also be used to fine-tune diets of high-producing dairy cows. In one study, fiber digestibility of TMR fed to high producing cows was increased by replacing some of the corn silage and alfalfa with high TTNDFD[®] fescue silages. The fiber digestibility of the diet containing corn silage and alfalfa was 26%. The NDF digestibility was increased to over 40% by replacing about a third of the corn silage and alfalfa either tall fescue silage or meadow fescue silage. Adding this much grass actually increased total NDF in the diets, but the fiber was more digestible. The result was that feed intake was not depressed and fat content of the milk was improved. These results suggest that TTNDFD[®] can be a valuable tool for optimizing forage utilization.

Typical TTNDFD[®] values of corn silage, alfalfa or grass:

	Mean	SD	Mean – 1SD	Mean + 1 SD	Range
	TTNDFD [®] , % of NDF				
Corn Silage	42	± 6	36	48	20-60
Alfalfa	43	± 7	36	50	25-80
Grass	47	± 8	39	55	6-80

Samples submitted to Rock River Laboratories, Watertown, WI.

Cover Crops for Forage, Crop Insurance Rules Change

*Paul D. Mitchell
Agricultural and Applied Economics
University of Wisconsin-Madison*

For the 2013 crop year, the USDA has changed crop insurance rules pertaining to the insurability of crops planted after cover crops. Wisconsin farmers may want to take advantage of these changes to satisfy their forage needs or to earn some extra income. In short, farmers can now harvest and/or graze cover crops before May 10 or planting the following crop (whichever comes first) and still insure the following crop, as long as the cover crop is terminated before planting or before it reaches the headed or budded stage. Many Wisconsin growers would like to use cover crops for forage, but previous and current crop insurance rules restrict some practices if the following crop is to be insured.

In previous years and under the new rules, a grower can still harvest or graze the cover crop in the fall without affecting the insurability of the crop planted the next spring. Also, in previous years and under the new rules, a grower must still terminate the cover crop before it reaches the headed or budded stage. The new rules clarify that the cover crop must be terminated before planting the following crop, which was never explicitly stated in the previous rules. The key change is that the new rules allow a grower to harvest and/or graze the cover crop in the spring before May 10 or planting the follow crop, whichever comes first. Previous

rules did not allow harvesting of a cover crop in the spring if the following crop was to be insured. Also, the new rules clarify that a cover crop must be planted within the 12 months prior to planting the insured crop, which may impact those who frost seeded clover into winter wheat in early spring of 2012. Just as under previous rules, this 12-month rule also does not allow insuring a crop planted into an existing alfalfa stand after harvesting a first crop of hay or haylage.

Growers with cover crops currently in their fields may want to take advantage of these rule changes, but there are other factors to consider as well. Cover crops use soil moisture and so can reduce yields for the following crop if adequate rainfall does not occur. With many areas of Wisconsin still under drought conditions, growers will have to assess their soil moisture and rainfall expectations next spring before deciding whether they want to harvest a cover crop. They will have to balance their forage needs and forage prices against soil moisture conditions and expected grain prices.

Additionally, herbicide labels can restrict the use of cover crops for forage. Some common corn and soybean herbicide labels do not allow rotating to a food or feed crop, which includes cover crops used for forage, for several months after application on a crop. See the article by Vince Davis for more details: <http://ipcm.wisc.edu/download/pubsPM/9-19-12-Cover-Crops-used-for-forages.pdf>. For more general information, including specific cover cropping practices and options under previous crop insurance rules, see the fact sheet Cover Crops and Crop Insurance: <http://www.aae.wisc.edu/pdmitchell/>

[CropInsurance/CoverCrops.pdf](#).

Finally, farmers should always communicate with their crop insurance agent, who should know these rules and can tell a farmer whether or not a specific practice will affect insurability.

Organic Dairy Pasture Walk

**Barron County, Thursday,
May 23, 10 AM - Noon**

*Otto Wiegand
Area Agricultural Agent
Burnett, Sawyer & Washburn Counties*

The NW Wisconsin Graziers Network cordially invites you to an organic dairy cow pasture walk at the Mervin, Diana, and Philip Johnson Farm south of Poskin in Barron County on Thursday, May 23, from 10 AM to Noon. In addition to organic milk and rotational grazing, the Johnsons employ a unique barley sprout system to supply energy to their herd instead of using conventional grain.

The Johnsons graze 75 cows of mixed breeds including Holstein, Brown Swiss, Jersey, Normande and Fleckvieh on 130 acres. They ship their milk to Organic Valley and have been organic farming for 10 years. Since the beginning of 2013, the Johnsons have been growing barley sprouts in a converted garage in trays, producing 1500 lbs. of sprouts per day for the dairy herd. About two lbs. of sprouts will provide the same amount energy as 1 lb. of grain. The Johnsons use a movable-pen system to graze calves that is very effective in preventing pasture-borne parasites. They add a kefir fermentation product to milk to treat sick calves and cows, and this has also been very effective.

The farm is located at 952 10 1/2 Ave, Barron. From Barron, go west about 5 miles on Hwy 8 past Poskin, go left or south for 3 1/2 miles on Cty F, then go left or east 1/2 mile. Watch for the signs. For more information, contact UW-Extension Ag Agent Tim Jergenson at Barron 715-537-6250, or Lynn Johnson 715-268-8778 or Randy Gilbertson 715-5202112 at NW Graziers.

What's on Your Seed?

*Kevin Schoessow
Area Agricultural Development Agent
Burnett, Sawyer & Washburn Counties*

Seed treatments have been used for a number of years, mostly for protection against seedling diseases. However, there are a number of new seed treatments marketed for protection against a range of pests--including seedling diseases, insects and nematodes--and even improving plant health.

To help farmers, consultants and agronomist better understand what seed treatments are being marketed by seed companies, the Nutrient and Pest Management Program (NPM) has developed a publication that takes some of the confusion of seed treatments away.

The seed treatments are grouped by the number of active ingredients (1-4), treatment type (fungicide, insecticide, nematicide or plant growth regulator) and then alphabetically by the product trade name. The list is not based on efficacy of the seed treatments and is not an endorsement or criticism of one product over another.

This publication is available from NPM website: <http://ipcm.wisc.edu>.

What is Enterprise Budgeting?

Adapted from Colorado State Extension, Rod Sharp and Dennis Kaan

One of the most basic and important production decisions is choosing the combination of products or enterprises to produce. An enterprise is defined as a single crop or livestock commodity that actually produces a marketable product. Some examples of different enterprises are: cow/calf, feeder cattle, sheep, corn for grain, corn for silage, and alfalfa hay.

What you produce determines the profitability of the business. Enterprises are the basic building blocks for a farm plan. By analyzing revenues and expenses associated with individual enterprises, you can determine which enterprises might be expanded and those that should be cut back or eliminated. A manager may also want to compare profitability of one production technique with another technique (e.g. minimum till and conventional tillage practices). Choose enterprises which meet the goals and objectives of the farm family.

An enterprise budget is a listing of all estimated income and expenses associated with a specific enterprise to provide an estimate of its profitability. Each budget should be developed on the basis of a small common unit such as one acre of corn, wheat, hay, etc. or one head of livestock. This permits comparison of the profit for alternative and competing enterprises. Great care should be taken when preparing the budgets. The assumptions require much information, thought, and analysis. Enterprise budgets can be organized and presented in several different formats, but they typically contain three sections: 1) income/receipts, 2) variable or operating expenses, and 3) fixed expenses.

How To Develop An Enterprise Budget - 1) Estimate total production (output or yield) and expected output price. The estimated yields and prices should be what you expect under normal conditions. Be as realistic as possible. 2) Estimate variable costs. These are the out-of-pocket costs that must be incurred if the enterprise is produced or grown. Some examples of variable costs are: hired labor; repairs; feed; supplies; vet. medicine; fuel; seed; etc. 3) Assess fixed costs. Fixed costs will occur and will stay about the same no matter how much you produce, or, in most cases whether or not you produce at all. Some examples of fixed costs are: depreciation; taxes; insurance; etc. Land charges are generally based on one of three acceptable methods: a) interest opportunity based on current value of land; b) owner rental income; or c) typical cash rent charge (market rent). The last step is calculating net receipts. Net receipts represent that income which is left for the farmer/rancher and family to live on, pay debt, invest, or save.

Break-Even Analysis - Break-even analysis is a useful tool in enterprise analysis. The break-even point occurs when total receipts equal total costs and can help you answer questions like: “What are the break-even prices at various yields?” and, similarly, “What are break-even yields at given prices?” The break-even formulas are:

$$\text{Break-even Yield} = \text{Total Costs divided by Total Production (Yield)}$$

$$\text{Break-even Sale Price} = \text{Total Costs divided by Sale Price}$$

Through a study of combinations of breakeven prices, the farm/ranch manager can form reasonable expectations of changes necessary to obtain a price and yield combination that will cover projected total costs. The biggest limitation to enterprise budgeting is a lack of information. These budgets deal with future actions and it is difficult to make accurate estimates regarding future markets, input prices, yields, etc. Historical data provides a primary estimate to establish initial levels of budget input data. Utilize the most accurate information obtainable to complete an enterprise budget. Estimates of prices, costs, yields, etc. will be imperfect; however, decisions must be made on the best estimates available. Failure to budget due to insufficient or imperfect data accomplishes nothing.

Enterprise Budgets and Cost of Production Calculator Now Available - The UW-Extension Farm and Risk Management team has both the crop budget cost of production calculator and field crop enterprise budgets for 2013 posted to their website. These decision making tools allows users to construct enterprise budgets for corn after corn, corn after soybeans, corn silage after alfalfa, corn silage after corn, high moisture rolled ear corn, high moisture shelled corn, seeding alfalfa and established alfalfa for hay and haylage, soybeans, barley, oats, rye, spring wheat, and winter wheat. These decision making tools are free to download at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/farmteam/budgets/fieldcrop.cfm>. You can also contact your local UW-Extension office for example budgets.

Manure Run-Off and Snow Melt: A Conservation Tip

Kevin Schoessow
Area Agricultural Development Agent
Burnett, Sawyer & Washburn Counties

With the late arrival of spring and likely snow cover well into March or early April, the potential for manure runoff and contamination of surface waters from manure applied this time of year is very high. While no farmer in his or her right mind would intentionally pollute area lakes, rivers or stream, the risk for such unwanted attention is there, especially this time of year.

Many farms have built manure storage sufficient for six months of containment to avoid spreading in winter, yet most livestock producers will need to spread at least a little in winter. UW Discovery Farms, along with many years of research from others, has plenty of data to track the time of the year most susceptible to manure runoff. The data supports common sense. **Late winter/early spring during periods of rapid snowmelt (late February to early April) are most susceptible to manure runoff.** Manure particles and even some soluble nutrients get caught up in the melt water and begin to flow toward waterways and streams. Manure running off fields creates non-compliance situations AND VERY NOISY NEIGHBORS.

Here are some fundamentals you should know. By the way, these are part of the nutrient management regulations, which makes them enforceable. 1) Manure cannot runoff fields. 2) Manure should not be spread through waterways and buffers. If manure gets into your grass waterway, it could flow from the field. In winter: 3) You should not spread within 300 feet of a stream or river or 1,000 feet of a pond or lake. 4) Don't spread on fields over 9% slope or 12% if contoured. 5) Don't spread within 200 feet of wells, drain tile inlets, sinkholes or other groundwater conduits unless it can be incorporated into the soil within three days...pretty challenging in winter. 6) The rate should be reduced. From a nutrient loading perspective, winter spread manure should be limited to 7,000 gallons liquid or about 17 tons solid. This is thin and often means adding more fertilizer later in spring. 7) Stack and wait for drier conditions or until incorporation will work.

Simply put...it makes sense to spread winter manure on the flattest field furthest from any potential surface water sources that you have.

This Quarter's Events

Contacts: UW-Extension Ag Agents Otto Wiegand or Kevin Schoessow, Spooner Station, 715-635-3506/800-528-1914, Jane Anklam Douglas Co, 715-395-1363, or Jason Fischbach, Ashland & Bayfield Counties, 715-373-6104 x5 for more information.

April 3, Weds, 5:00-9:00 PM, Stone Lake – Cow-Calf Beef Seminar (see article)

April 8, Mon – Protecting The St. Croix Annual Conference, UW-River Falls – University Center, contact John Haack 715-635-7406

April 13, Sat, 3-5 PM – Grape Pruning Workshop, Spooner Ag Research Station - \$5, contact Kevin Schoessow 715-636-3506

April 25, Thurs – Sustainable Living Fair, LCO College, Hayward – contact Amber Marlow, 715-634-4790

April - Spring Tree and Shrub Sales - for windbreaks and wildlife habitat improvement, must pre-order, pickup dates end of April, contact your county Land & Water Conservation Depts

May 18, Sat – Lilac Fest, Siren – Various community events and locations

May 23, Thurs, 10-Noon – Organic Dairy Pasture Walk, Barron (see article)

June (day TBA) – N. Wis Beef Producers Picnic, contact & registration Lori Lyons, 715-237-2746

June 6, Thurs, 9 AM – 3 PM - Soil Quality Train the Trainer Workshop, Spooner Ag Research Station – pre-registration required, contact Kevin Schoessow, 715-636-3506

June 8, Sat AM – Washburn County Dairy Breakfast, Spooner – Fairgrounds

June 15, Sat AM – Burnett County Dairy Breakfast – location to be determined

June 17, 18, 20, Mon, Tues & Thurs – Spooner, Washburn County, Tractor Safety Training – Spooner Ag Research Station – for youth 12-17, contact Lorraine, Otto or Kevin at UWEX-Spooner, 715-635-3506

June 22, Sat AM – Sawyer County Dairy Breakfast, Hayward – Fairgrounds

July 9-11, Tues-Thurs – Farm Technology Days, Dallas, WI – Alex and Mary Olson, Breezy Hill Dairy, Barron County



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Kevin Schoessow
UWEX Area Agricultural Agent