

# Agricultural Newsletter

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



July-August-September  
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## Diversified Beef Pasture Walk to be Held in Shell Lake

*Saturday, August 24, 2013*

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

The NW Wisconsin Graziers Network and UW-Extension invite you to a unique multi-enterprise Beef Pasture Walk at the Bashaw Valley Farm owned by Steve, Linda and Alyssa Degner farm on Saturday, August 24, from 10 AM - Noon. The Degners are quite diversified and also own the Bashaw Valley Greenhouse which is located to the front of the farm seen from Hwy 63. The pasture walk will feature rotational grazing of beef cattle, chicken and pig grazing as well as a discussion of the various other enterprises on this former dairy farm.

The farm contains 400 acres of gently rolling grassy fields and woods. The Degners rotationally graze 35 mostly Black Angus beef cows and 45+ youngstock on about 100 acres divided into 10 paddocks.

Beef are grass-fed and organically-raised. Almost all of the meat is sold through the farm store. The Degners are trying to reduce animal carcass size by incorporating Lowline beef genetics. Pasture forages include mostly native grasses with some orchardgrass, clover, and alfalfa. The system has largely been natural with little additional seeding or tillage, but the intention is to include winter rye for spring and fall grazing. Alyssa grazes 50 laying hens on alfalfa and grass, and a half-dozen pigs on radishes and other forbs.

In addition to the greenhouse and store, the Degners run about four acres of organically-certified blueberries, raspberries, strawberries and asparagus. There are four greenhouse structures. The Degners own a rental storage company on the property with 90+ units and a number of billboards along the highway. The operation hires an additional 6-7 seasonal employees in the summer. The greenhouse and berries generate about 50% of the total income and the farm about 25%. The Degners plan to address the challenges of direct marketing.

The address is W7402 Fox Trail Road, Shell Lake, 1.5 miles north of Shell Lake and 4 miles south of Spooner off Hwy 63. Watch for the sign on Hwy 63. For more information, contact UW-Extension Ag Agents Otto Wiegand or Kevin Schoessow at Spooner 715-635-3506, or Randy Gilbertson 715-520-2112 at NW Graziers.

**UW**  
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Learning for life

**UWEX Area Agricultural Agents  
Spooner Ag Research Station  
W6646 Highway 70  
Spooner, WI 54801  
715-635-3506 or 800-528-1914  
[www.cals.wisc.edu/ars/spooner](http://www.cals.wisc.edu/ars/spooner)**

# Agricultural NEWSLETTER

produced by  
University of Wisconsin-Extension  
and  
UW-Madison College of Ag & Life  
Sciences

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## **Representing Burnett, Sawyer, and Washburn Counties:**

Kevin Schoessow  
Area Ag Development Agent  
715-635-3506 or 800-528-1914

Richard Otto Wiegand  
Area Ag Agent  
715-635-3506 or 800-528-1914

Phil Holman  
Spooner Ag Research Station  
Superintendent  
715-635-3735

Michel Baldin  
Spooner Ag Research Station  
Sheep Researcher  
715-635-3735

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## **Representing Ashland, Bayfield, and Douglas Counties:**

Jason Fischbach  
Area Agricultural Agent  
715-373-6104

Jane Anklam  
Horticulture & Agricultural Agent  
715-395-1515

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UWEX Area Agricultural Agent, Spooner Ag  
Research Station, W6646 Highway 70,  
Spooner, WI 54801 or UWEX Area  
Agricultural Agent, Ashland Ag Research  
Station, 68760 State Farm Road, Ashland, WI  
54806.

## What Can You Expect From a Dairy Sheep Flock?

*Michel Baldin  
Sheep Researcher  
Spooner Ag Research Station*

Dairy sheep appear to have interesting opportunities, especially due to the growing popularity of artisan cheeses. However, most people are not aware how a dairy sheep operation works. The objective of this article is to provide information for sheep dairying based on the 2012/2013 performance of sheep at Spooner Agricultural Research Station.

The flock at Spooner is composed of East Friesian, Lacaune and East Friesian/Lacaune cross-bred sheep. Last year, 285 ewes were included in the breeding program. Because most of the sheep are seasonally polyestrous and short-day breeders, the research station can get satisfactory results using natural breeding. In August 2012, the flock was split in three similar groups and the breeding season started at 8/23, 9/25 and 10/29 for group 1, 2 and 3, respectively. Reasons not to breed all groups at one time include easier management at lambing time and a longer milking season. Rams were kept with ewes during a period of 34 days, covering two estrous cycles. Based on previous experience at the research station, it is believed that about 50% of a dairy flock could be crossed with a meat breed and still produce enough replacements and hardier and faster growing lambs.

The lambing started on 1/16 and ended on 5/7/13. Gestation length averages 147 days. Over the 111-day lambing season, 260 ewes lambed and 494 lambs were delivered

(480 born alive). This resulted in a reproductive rate of 1.7 live lambs born per ewe exposed for breeding, a satisfactory number for this type of system. The station does not employ any practices to increase the proportion of births during the day. In fact, almost 50% of births occurred at night. During the lambing season random problems do occur, fortunately most can be prevented by proper feeding and management. Most ewes will lamb without any trouble or need for assistance, however in some cases it may be necessary to lend a hand. Dystocia (difficult births) is one of the leading causes of newborn lamb death. There can be many causes of dystocia in a flock including abortion, disproportionate size of the ewe and lamb, malpresentation of the fetus, failure of the cervix to dilate, vaginal prolapse and deformed lamb.

Out of 480 lambs born alive, 455 were weaned at an average of 32 days of age and 32 lbs for body weight. A total of 435 lambs were alive at the age of 60 days, which meant a death loss at 60 days of 12.29% of lambs alive at birth. Pneumonia and bloating are major factors causing lamb mortality after day 1. Death losses from abomasal bloat associated with artificial rearing (milk replacer) can occur if mixing and feeding are not done in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Pneumonia may occur in all ages of sheep, but causes the most losses in lambs. A bacterial organism called *Pasteurellahemolytica* is the primary cause of pneumonia, and improper ventilation of tightly-confined barns and buildings is the most important factor.

The current practice at the Spooner during lambing consists of removing the lambs from the ewe immediately after birth. The ewe that has just given birth will be milked in the parlor at the next milking. Fresh ewes are the last group in the milking parlor so that colostrum can be easily saved and the ewe condition can be monitored. The main goal of this system is to increase marketable milk. Milking the ewe in the parlor helps to maintain maximal milk synthesis.

Currently there are 253 ewes that are milked twice a day and maintained in a feeding program that consists of rotational grazing with corn supplemented in the milking parlor (1 lb/head/milking). The total daily milk production has stayed around 1300 lbs. with an average of 5.5 lbs per ewe per day. These numbers are acceptable considering that the flock is already at 109 days in milk and production tends to decrease when the ewe approaches late lactation (>100 days). The milking parlor at Spooner is a double-twelve, which means that 24 ewes can get in at one time, but only one set of 12 (one side) are milked simultaneously. With this facility it takes about three and a half hours to get all the labor done, including the time to bring the sheep from pasture, milking time, after-milking cleaning and taking sheep back to pasture. The research station has a crew of five milkers and they rotate into a schedule in which two will work every milking.

The majority of sheep milk is used for cheese and a smaller amount is used for yogurt or butter. Currently the research station sells fluid milk through the Wisconsin Sheep Dairy Cooperative. The price is \$65/cwt. with additional premiums for milk

components. Minimum requirements are 5% butterfat, 4.5% protein, SCC <600,000 and plate count (bacteria) <50,000. It is also possible to sell frozen sheep milk, but that adds \$20/cwt. to cover the additional costs of freezing.

In summary, the main management goals would include developing a good dairy breeding program, being prepared with supplies and hand labor for the lambing season, reducing lamb mortality, and developing a nutrition program suitable for milk production.

Greetings everyone! The GrassWorks Board of Directors would like to invite you our Annual Member Summer Picnic.

This is a great time to visit a member farm for an informative pasture walk and have time to meet & talk with other GrassWorks members during a light lunch.

**Here's the picnic details: Friday, July 19 from 11:00 a.m. -2:00 p.m. - GrassWorks Summer Picnic and Pasture Walk at Cheyenne & Katy Christianson Family Dairy in Chetek.**

## *Focus on Soybean and Beyond the Bean Websites are Great Resources*

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



Attention soybean growers! Are you looking for science-based resources to help you make informed decisions about soybean production and marketing?

Check out the *Focus on Soybean* ([www.plantmanagementnetwork.org/infocenter/topic/focusonsoybean/](http://www.plantmanagementnetwork.org/infocenter/topic/focusonsoybean/)) website to listen to a wide variety of educational webcast related to soybean health, management and production.

These short (5-15 minute) presentations provide updates on a variety of soybean topics. They are free and can be found by doing an internet search on "Focus on Soybean".

Examples of the latest webcasts include: Soybean Aphids: Do Higher Crop Values Mean a Lower Threshold?, Value of Residual Herbicide in Reduced Soybean Stands, and Slug Management on Soybean.

*Beyond the Bean* ([www.unitedsoybean.org](http://www.unitedsoybean.org)) is the official website of the United Soybean Board, and contains information on research and marketing development. It is supported by soybean checkoff dollars.

# University Of Wisconsin-Extension Announces Launch of Educational Video Channel

*Pam DeVore*

*UW-Extension Administrative Program Specialist*

University of Wisconsin-Extension announced the launch of a new online educational video channel (<http://uwexvideochannel.org>) to extend its mission of providing access to university resources and allow Wisconsin's citizens to engage in lifelong learning. The site provides more than 70 videos produced by educators on topics such as community and economic development, agriculture, conservation, gardening, and health.

"This UW-Extension Video Channel is another way we are using technology to fulfill the Wisconsin Idea, sharing the University's expertise and research with all state residents," said Rick Klemme, Dean of UW-Extension, Cooperative Extension. The UW-Extension Video Channel also includes related content from UW-Extension, Cooperative Extension and its partners such as print materials and Web resources.

"If visitors are interested in a topic after watching a video, they can immediately link to additional resources to learn more about it," said Bret Shaw, UW-Extension Environmental Communication Specialist and UW-Madison Associate Professor, who helped develop the site. Expanding access to educational video content is essential as research indicates most Internet users watch online videos every week. "Online videos are particularly watched a lot by younger people, so the video channel helps assure Extension and its partners are reaching this important demographic group," said Shaw.

The channel also includes videos from partners such as the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and University of Wisconsin Sea Grant. New content will constantly be added to the Extension Video Channel, and videos undergo a rigorous review process to assure they are scientifically accurate and contain up-to-date information. To submit a video to be included in the video channel, contact Pam DeVore at [pam.devore@ces.uwex.edu](mailto:pam.devore@ces.uwex.edu) or (608) 262-3172.

## 61st Spooner Sheep Day to be held August 15

*Dr. David Thomas*

*Sheep Specialist*

The 61st Spooner Sheep Day will be held at the Spooner Agricultural Research Station on Saturday, August 17, 2013. The Spooner Sheep Day has a long tradition of providing useful information to the state's sheep producers and is the longest-running agricultural field day of the many held each year by the University of Wisconsin-Madison, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences.

Registration will begin at the station headquarters at 9:00 a.m. with the program ending at approximately 2:30 p.m. This year's program will present some exciting new information on a commercial genetic test for susceptibility to the disease of Ovine Progressive Pneumonia and the results of the value of this test in one of the university's research flocks. A new breed of sheep, Awassi, has been introduced into the U.S. by Larry Meisegeier on his farm near Bruce, WI, and he will talk about his experiences regarding this importation. In addition, short presentations of other current research projects from the UW-Madison sheep research program will be presented. The complete program can be viewed at the UW-Madison Small Ruminant web site: <http://fyi.uwex.edu/wisheepandgoat/>.

A delicious lamb lunch will be served at noon at a cost of \$8.00 per adult, \$5.00 for children ages 5 to 11, and free for children under 5. Advanced reservations are not required. For more information, contact Lorraine Toman at the Spooner Agricultural Research Station (715-635-3735, [lltoman@wisc.edu](mailto:lltoman@wisc.edu)) or Dave Thomas on the UW-Madison campus (608-263-4306, [dlthomas@wisc.edu](mailto:dlthomas@wisc.edu)).

The Spooner Sheep Day is sponsored by the Department of Animal Sciences and the Agricultural Research Stations of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, and Cooperative Extension of the University of Wisconsin-Extension.

# Teff Grass as an Alternative Forage

Adapted from Dan Undersander  
UW-Madison Forage Specialist

Teff grass (*Eragrostis tef*) is a warm season annual grass, native to Ethiopia where it was utilized mainly as a grain crop. It thrives in warm climates. It is extremely drought and heat tolerant and requires ample rain or irrigation for maximum production. Teff is extremely sensitive to frost and requires a frost-free growing season.



Teff grows as a fine-stemmed, bunch grass and produces a large crown with numerous tillers. It has a shallow, fibrous root system. It produces high quality forage when cut before grain maturity. It is high yielding forage in summer months when cool-season grasses lose productivity with nutritive values compared to timothy. With adequate precipitation and temperatures, improved varieties can yield 4 to 6 tons/acre in a 2- or 3-cut system in a 90-day growing season.

It does best on well drained soils pH 5.5 or above. The seeds are extremely tiny, about 1.25 million seeds per pound. It should be planted in spring when soil temperature reaches 60 degrees. Planting depth should be no deeper than 1/8 - 1/4 inch into a firm seedbed. Seed 3 to 5 lbs/acre. Apply 50-70 lbs/a of nitrogen after each cutting for good production by later cuttings.

Teff grass primary uses include high quality hay for horses and livestock, green manure, and cover crop.

## Summary

- Low input annual grass
- Teff Grass is a warm season annual grass
- Teff is a great interim hay crop between alfalfa stands.
- A profitable rotational crop for alfalfa growers.
- High quality hay for horse owners with excellent palatability and animal acceptance.
- Good hay or pasture crop when late season plantings are required due to a crop failure.
- Very few disease or pest problems have been observed.

Teff has been established this year locally in Burnett County on 10 acres on the Dave Fogerty farm west of Spooner. Given this year's weather, it seems to be doing well.

# A Horseweed Population in Wisconsin is Confirmed Resistant to Glyphosate

Ross Recker (Graduate Research Assistant), Dave Stoltenberg (Professor)  
Vince Davis (Assistant Professor) Department of Agronomy, UW-Madison

Research has now confirmed that a horseweed population collected in Jefferson County, Wisconsin in the fall of 2012 is resistant to glyphosate.

Horseweed (*Conyza canadensis* L.), also known as marestail, is a broadleaf weed species native to North America. Increased adoption of no-till cropping systems in past decades has allowed horseweed to become a major weed problem in agricultural fields.

In 2000, a biotype of horseweed in the state of Delaware became the first confirmed glyphosate-resistant broadleaf weed in the United States. Since then, glyphosate-resistant horseweed has been confirmed in 21 other states including the nearby states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, and Michigan. There are currently 24 different glyphosate-resistant weed species worldwide, 14 of which are in the United States. In 2012, a population of giant ragweed (*Ambrosia trifida* L.), collected from Rock county in 2010, was the first confirmed case of glyphosate resistance documented in Wisconsin.

This horseweed population was identified through the *Late-Season Weed Escape Survey in Wisconsin Corn and Soybean Fields*, which is primarily funded by the Wisconsin Corn Promotion Board. In this particular no-till soybean field where the population was found, two small patches of horseweed plants showed common phenotypic response symptoms often noticeable on glyphosate-resistant horseweed plants following exposure to glyphosate.

The survey which identified this glyphosate-resistant horseweed population will be conducted again in 2013. If you are interested in participating in this survey, please see the survey announcement at <http://ipcm.wisc.edu/blog/2013/06/corn-and-soybean-herbicide-use-survey-participation/>. Moreover, if you have horseweed, or other weeds that survive postemergence applications and you have concern about glyphosate resistance, contact your local county Ag Extension Agent which can help you further evaluate the situation.

## Greenhousing a New Concept for Housing Dairy Cattle

David Kammel  
Wisconsin Extension Engineer

Greenhouses aren't just for plants anymore! Now you can find calves, heifers, dry cows, milk cows, sheep, hogs, and chickens under them, too. With a goal of cutting capital costs for facilities, some farmers are turning to greenhouse suppliers to provide housing for their livestock. More and more farmers are trying this novel idea in their operations. Even under a greenhouse, there still needs to be good design for space use and animal comfort. Greenhouses for young calves can provide a much nicer environment for the operator, but that environment must also be beneficial to the calves. Free stall barns with outside feeding and bedded packs for dry cows are also being designed using greenhouses.

When comparing cost of greenhouse frames to post frames for housing, make sure you are comparing the same type of system and are including all the costs. The shell of a greenhouse may seem cheap, but that's not the total cost for housing. Additional site preparation, concrete, plumbing, and electrical work should also be considered in the price. For example, you can't compare the cost of plastic and steel materials for a greenhouse with costs for a constructed free stall barn-you are comparing apples and oranges. There are many ways to reduce capital cost for facilities, and greenhouses might be one of them. Just be a good consumer and shop around before making a decision to buy.

For more information and a cost analysis comparing several layouts for post frames and greenhouse frames, contact the Biological Systems Engineering Department at (608) 262-3310, or at email Dave at: [dwkammel@facstaff.wisc.edu](mailto:dwkammel@facstaff.wisc.edu).

# Horse Pasture Walk to be Held in Turtle Lake

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

The NW Wisconsin Graziers Network and the UW-Extension invite you to a unique multi-enterprise Horse Pasture Walk at the Erin and Steve Osero farm on Saturday morning, July 13, from 10 AM - Noon. Happy Hollow Stables and farm are located at 1614 Co Rd D, north of Hwy 8, about 10 miles west of Turtle Lake. The pasture walk will feature rotational grazing of horses, round-bale feeding with hay nets, pastured poultry, grass-fed beef, an organic garden for family use, boarding stable and a riding instruction facility with trails.

The farm contains 50 acres of gently rolling lighter soils including grassy fields, woods, wetlands and a small lake. Riding trails meander throughout the farm and present training opportunities for both horse and rider. Since droughty soils present challenges in summer months, Erin has been building organic matter by rotating bale feeding areas.

Erin rotationally grazes 15 horses of various breeds, including Quarter horse, Paint, Ponies of The Americas for children (POA breed) and a mule on about 25 acres consisting of 15 paddocks with lanes and electric fences. Water is provided in a common sacrifice paddock where groups can be held off of grass. Pastures are rotated about five times during grazing season and clipped with rotary mower. A recent addition to the winter feeding strategy has been hay nets that reduce waste to less than 5% and seem to also “entertain” the horses.

Other enterprises include organic pastured broiler production during summer months along with hatching of chicks, ducks and geese for local markets. A large organic garden and orchard contain the pastured poultry area and provide vegetables for family use. A new enterprise this year is grass-fed beef production with two Angus steers being rotationally grazed separate from the horse pastures. Erin also provides riding instruction for a wide range of riders and basic training for young horses or fine tuning for older horses.

Travel 7 miles west of Turtle Lake on Hwy 8 to Range. Take County D north 3 miles. Watch for the signs. For more information, contact Erin at 715-268-6330, Jennifer Blazek, the Polk County UW-Extension Ag Agent, at 715-485-8600, or Lynn Johnson 715-268-8778 or Randy Gilbertson 715-520-2112 at NW Graziers.

## 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.

**July 9-11, Tues-Thurs – Farm Technology Days, Barron Co – Dallas** (see article)

**July 13, Sat, 10-12 – Horse Pasture Walk, Polk Co – Erin Osero, Turtle Lake** (see article)

**July 16, Tues, 6 PM – Garden Walk – Spooner Ag Research Station** - handy tools and adaptive techniques that make gardening easier

**July 18, Thurs - Dairy Sheep and Cattle Pasture Walk** - David & Rebecca Troyer Farm, N2282 Marshall Road, Sheldon, WI, contact Rich Toebe, UWEX, 715-532-2151

**July 25-28, Thurs-Sun – Washburn County Fair – Spooner, Fairgrounds**

**July 27, Sat, 7-11 AM – Community Agriculture Association Breakfast – Siren, Gandy Dancer EAA Fly-In, Airport** (in place of dairy breakfast)

**Aug 1, Thurs – Healthy Soils Course, Spooner Ag Research Station** - \$200, professional development level, open to the public, call Kevin or Lorraine at 715-635-3506 for info / registration

**Aug 1-3, Thurs-Sat – Central Burnett County Fair – Webster, Fairgrounds**

**Aug 15-18, Thurs-Sun – Sawyer County Fair – Hayward, Fairgrounds**

**Aug 17, Sat, 9-3 – Spooner Sheep Day** - Spooner Ag Research Station (see article)

**Aug 24, Sat, 10-12 – Beef Pasture Walk, Washburn Co – Shell Lake, Bashaw Valley Farm** (see article)

**Aug 23-25, Thurs-Sun – Burnett Agricultural Society Fair – Grantsburg, Fairgrounds**

**Aug 20, Tues, 4-8 – Twilight Garden Tour – Spooner Ag Research Station**

**Sept 17, Tues, 6 PM – Garden Walk, Spooner Ag Research Station** - tips for getting more plants for no money through dividing and overwintering perennials

**Oct 1-5, Tues-Sat – World Dairy Expo – Madison**

**Oct 10, Thurs, 4-6 – Start-Up Beef Pasture Walk – Shell Lake, Kent Wabrowetz**

**Nov 2013 – Mar 2014 – Beginning Farmer Course – Burnett County area**

# Be Sure to Visit Farm Technology Days!



## July 9-11

Tues. & Wed. 9 AM - 5 PM • Thurs. 9 AM - 4 PM

This 3-day outdoor event showcases the latest improvements in production agriculture... many practical applications of recent research findings & technological developments.

### HOST FARM

*Alex and Mary Olson of Breezy Hill Dairy will host WFTD 2013. Their farm is located near Dallas in southern Barron County.*

### EXHIBITS

- UW-Extension's Applied Technology Center – Ideal maternity pen; smartphone apps; farm safety
- Family Living Tent – Farm values; family health and leisure; technology in the home
- Progress Pavilion – Innovations in Agribusiness; Master Gardeners; UW "doctors" on call
- Youth Tent – Family Farm Adventure Area; hands-on experiences; fun through agriculture
- Arts & Crafts – Vendors; a unique selection of items in the Country Mercantile
- Field Demonstrations – Morning & afternoon demonstrations, weather permitting
- Commercial exhibitors – More than 500 commercial exhibitors

[www.wifarmtechnologydays.com](http://www.wifarmtechnologydays.com)

Visit the website for more information on exhibitors, demonstrations & directions to the show.

# Inside

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Agricultural  
Newsletter

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# 2013

Upcoming pasture walks focus on horses, dairy sheep, cattle and diversified beef

What can you expect from a dairy sheep flock?

Consider teff grass as an alternative forage

Kevin Schoessow  
UWEX Area Agricultural Agent