



Gladwin County, MSU Extension
555 W. Cedar Ave.
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Volume 8, Issue 2

Dear Great Lakes Grazier,

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May 2019

The grass is definitely greener on the other side of the fence, at least it is in my neck of the woods, it won't be long before we are able to turn the animals out to pasture. There are many schools of thought as to when one should begin the grazing season. In this issue, we will provide two articles that will help you in determining the correct date for your farm. As many of you that are seasoned graziers, there is no one size fits all answer for this question.

You are invited to attend a monthly grazing conference call. It will be informal and will allow us to communicate more regularly and help each other out with problems or just answer questions that we may have. The call will be held using a program called Zoom, which is a web-based system, users can call in our join over their computers. To join over the computer, copy this link into your web browsers (e.g. Internet Explorer, Safari, Google Chrome etc.) address bar: <https://msu.zoom.us/j/4859751389> If you would prefer to call in, the number is: 1 (646) 876 9923, and the meeting ID is: 485 975 1389. The link and number will be the same each month.

Sincerely,

Kable Thurlow

MSU Extension Beef & Grazing Educator

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Help! When do I send the cows out to pasture?

Brook Wilke

4/25/19

One question that I get asked quite a bit, and often ask myself, is; when do I turn the cows out to pasture? I think this is a common question that all graziers wrestle with, and even if we have some hard and fast rules about how to approach the topic, there always seems to be some uncertainty. “Jumping the gun” can get you off to a really bad start to the year, yet waiting too long just makes managing the spring flush that much more challenging.

The first thought that comes to my mind is that I can let the cows out whenever I can finally get around to getting all of the fence fixed up. This is even a challenge for us at the MSU Pasture Dairy Center every year. As we pass the spring equinox, our focus turns to calving, hauling manure, prepping fields for planting, and everything else that comes with spring. Fencing sometimes becomes an afterthought until it’s an absolute necessity because the cows are leaving the barn tomorrow.

This topic reminds me of my youth in Nebraska. Each spring, my dad would load up the truck with wood posts, barbed wire, tools and the boys to go out and fix the four-strand barbed wire fence well in advance of sending the cows to pasture. It’s wise for graziers to prepare well in advance, and make sure the fence is in good shape so the focus can turn to letting the cows out when the grasses, legumes and forbs are ready for the cows.

Speaking of the grasses, we want to consider two important factors when deciding when to let the cows out; the amount of forage available, and the expected growth rate over the next two weeks. It’s okay to transition the cows to pasture a bit early if you use rotational grazing, and the 10 day forecast is warm. We know that the spring flush of growth is coming, and the lightly grazed pastures that are first in the rotation will respond very rapidly. Plus, we will be well on our way to building a grazing wedge so that we always have pastures ready to be grazed in the rotation. However, if one of those cold periods is on the horizon, you are best to hold the cows for a few more days rather than make one full rotation around the pastures before the growth really gets started.

Sometimes it’s really hard to wait for the right time – especially as those cows look longingly out at the pasture from the barn or the winter grounds. They watch us carefully, all lined up along the fence or gates, as we are out in the pastures working on fencing, lanes and water, hoping that today is the day that we are going to open the gate. Watching the old cows jump around in the pasture the first day they are let out is good for the soul. Yet, it’s worth the wait to make sure the pasture is ready, and the fence is intact.

Integrating Annuals into a Perennial Grazing System

Brook Wilke – Farm Manager, MSU W.K. Kellogg Biological Station

3/22/19



Diverse mixtures of perennial plants are the backbone of our grazing systems in the Midwest. Pastures planted (or occurring naturally) with these mixtures offer many benefits, including deep roots to maximize nutrient and water uptake, no need for replanting, tolerance, or even benefit from, grazing the biomass, weed suppression, etc. I could go on and on regarding the benefits of these perennial plants, but there are times when annual crops might provide some unique benefits for graziers.

Planting annual crops for grazing adds cost to the system. Existing vegetation needs to be terminated, seed needs to be purchased and planted, and there's a time period where grazing cannot occur while the new plants are getting established. But, these costs can be recovered because annual forages offer three key benefits over perennials. These include: 1) Potential for increased total biomass production, 2) Forage production during the periods of poor perennial plant growth (summer, late fall), and 3) Potential for higher quality forage for high performance animals such as dairy or finish period of lambs or steers.

For these reasons above, it's worthwhile to consider integrating some annuals into the grazing system to improve your overall profitability. But, it's important to take notice of the following tips to help you manage these crops to make the most out of your investment.

- 1) Plant annual forages in pastures or fields where you want to establish new perennial pastures in the long run. Crop rotations with perennials and annuals over time work very well. We've found that seven years of perennials followed by three years of annuals, and then back to perennials is a good rotation. Cultivating annual crops for three years helps to eliminate problem weeds in perennial pastures, making establishing perennial species easier.
- 2) Wait until June to terminate perennial pastures and plant annuals. Nearly half of the growth from perennial pastures occurs during the spring months of April May and early June, so we want to take advantage of that growth, and then establish the annual crops after the peak growth period for the perennials has passed. Herbicides and tillage both work to terminate perennial pastures; sometimes two passes are needed to get good control.
- 3) Double cropping annual forages is key to profitability. For example, plant a full season crop of sudex in June, grazing up to three times across the summer, and then follow that with a winter cereal such as triticale in the fall, which will be grazed once or twice in the spring. Similarly, spring planted cereals such as oats can be grazed in June, and then followed with brassica crops (kale, rapeseed, radishes, etc.) for late fall / winter grazing. Mixtures can be used also, but make sure the species grow well together, rather than one species out-competing the others. The key is to have crops growing all year round in order to grow more total forage compared to the perennial mixtures elsewhere on the farm, which is essential to recover the extra cost of planting annuals.
- 4) Often times, relay cropping (planting the next crop into the previous standing crop) can be used to avoid the need to till or use herbicides to kill the previous crop. A great example is planting a winter cereal (e.g. triticale) immediately after grazing sudex in September. The sudex will die with the first frost in October, but will compete with weeds until then while the triticale is getting established.
- 5) Graze annual crops by utilizing strip or mob grazing techniques. This is important to limit trampling and increase utilization of the crops, and also to encourage regrowth of those crops that will regrow after grazing.

There's so much fun to be had with growing annual crops for grazing. Explore these options and how they might fit on your farm, but be sure to manage them well to take full advantage of the investment.

Updated from an original article written by Jerry Lindquist.

Let the grazing Begin! Grass is green and across this Great State of Michigan grazing animals are or will shortly be turned out to pasture. Much is written about when to officially turn the herd or flock out on pasture for example “when the Growing Degree Days base 32 F accumulation as of March 1 reaches 500 units” or “when the cool season grass plants produce 3 leaves” or “when dandelion blossoms start appearing in pastures”. These and many other guidelines can be used as predictors for when to start but of course should not be considered absolutes.

But there is so much more to be considered before you swing the gate open. The veteran graziers will know these guidelines but let me bore them for the sake of the beginners that may be reading this:

1. Is the soil moisture dry enough to not cause excessive hoof damage – hopefully you have the low, wet paddocks fenced out for later grazing in drier weather but there is little sense to destroy sod even on the drier paddocks by starting too soon. The temptation may be greater this year, due to a lack of stored feeds. The wet weather that we are currently experiencing could prolong the beginning of this year’s grazing season.
2. Is the average pasture plant ready for grazing, have the leaves grown enough to convert solar energy into plant root reserves (carbohydrates) and replenished those lower winter levels? North Dakota research suggests that beginning to graze a pasture too early in the spring can reduce plant vigor and thus may reduce total pasture production for the year. Normally we recommend that average pasture height be in the 8-10-inch range in the summer before it is grazed. For the first turnout of the spring we strategize that turning in a little sooner than this is justified because of the explosive growth period in May 15 – June 15. If you do not start grazing a little early on good highly productive pastures, the grazing herd will have a hard time keeping up and over mature pasture will result.
3. Does your schedule over the next 2-3 days provide you a little more time to shepherd the flock or herd? If animals are going to get out, bloat, or do something else to demand your immediate attention, usually it will be happening within the first 2-3 days of turn out to a new pasture. Time your turnout accordingly so your schedule allows you to be around.
4. If any paddock or fields were stockpiled or rested longer last fall, try to graze them first as the plants should have more vigor and root reserves than ones grazed last in the fall. Try to avoid always grazing the same field first in the spring. Topography and wet conditions described in #1 may make this impossible but doing so will weaken that first stand from the annual early season pressure, and it may lead to more weed production in the fields that are always grazed later. A “rule-of-thumb” is never graze the same pasture at the same time of the year, two years in a row.

5. To keep grazing livestock safe and healthy fill them up on hay or other fibrous feeds in the morning and turn them out during the early afternoon. Hungry animals will over consume pasture on the first day which can lead to bloat and or other problems. And letting the dew burn off the pasture by not turning out till the afternoon makes the forage slightly drier causing the ruminant animal to produce more saliva which naturally buffers the rumen acids reducing the risks of bloat and acidosis.

Spring pasture turn out timing is not rocket science. Get the fences in good repair, the watering system in tip top shape and the livestock's belly full of feed before you open the gate for the first time, and you will be off to a good start.

Lake City Research Center

BULLS FOR SALE PRIVATE TREATY



REGISTERED RED ANGUS

CALVING EASE

MODERATE FRAMED

GREAT DISPOSITION

LOW MAINTENANCE

GRASSFED GENETICS

SEMEN TESTED



**MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY**

Ty Hughston: (231) 468-7131 hughsto1@msu.edu

LEARN FROM EXPERTS

This exceptional MSU Extension education program features outstanding topics based on feedback from early career peers. Learn about the latest research trends, participate in group discussions and skill-building activities in:

- Crop and soil science systems and pest management
- Animal science systems
- Finance and banking
- New and innovative technologies
- Networking and communicating for success

Why is this program a game changer for agribusiness professionals early in their career?

As the current agribusiness workforce retires, land-grant universities have fewer graduates with hands-on farm training or experience to replace them.

One farmer said, *"We need to have people stopping at our farm who have some practical experience."*

This program provides a platform for professionals to gain experience, network with their peers and ask questions from knowledgeable instructors and educators, without fear of rejection or criticism.



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MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension

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MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension

BRIDGING THE EXPERIENCE GAP



An educational event for early career personnel working in agribusiness who want to gain knowledge, sharpen their skills and better understand agricultural production people and systems.

BRIDGING THE EXPERIENCE GAP



This four-part series is designed to help new agribusiness professionals, especially those with limited or no farm experience, gain a better understanding of the broad scope and depth associated with today's agricultural systems.

Dates

August 20 and 21
September 17 and 18
Participants are expected to attend all sessions.

Location

Saginaw Valley Research and Extension Center
3775 S. Reese Road
Frankenmuth, MI 48734

Lodging

Overnight accommodations are available at the Frankenmuth Motel, Frankenmuth, MI. Contact them at 989-652-6171 or email at: information@frankenmuthmotel.com. Block rates will be listed under "Bridging Gaps."

Cost

\$350/person (one price for all sessions)
(All training supplies and lunches are included.)

Space is limited, so don't wait to register for this excellent opportunity.

Based at the Saginaw Valley Research and Extension Center, this program will feature hands-on learning activities, some classroom-based instruction, and industry tours to enhance your experience and knowledge. Here's what to expect:

Session 1—Cropping systems, soils and ag equipment (August 20)

Hands-on opportunity to test drive commercial agriculture equipment.

Session 2—Communication strategies and precision technologies (August 21)

Learn how to have effective conversations and make interactions meaningful with farmers and others in agriculture related fields. See and learn about the latest technology and the future trends for agriculture production systems.

Session 3—Fruit, value-added agriculture, food safety, and food processing (September 17)

Group tour: learn how multi-generational businesses generate added-value when products go through the food system. This full-day tour will be a highlight for all participants.

Session 4—Michigan Sugar factory, organic production, and farm financial management (September 18)

Group tour: learn how the Michigan sugar beet industry impacts the agriculture economy, plus the increasing value of organic farming enterprises. Participants will also learn about farm financial management strategies and challenges.

BRIDGING THE EXPERIENCE GAP

Registration Deadline - August 9, 2019

Register on-line at:

[events.anr.msu.edu/
2019BridgingTheGap/](https://events.anr.msu.edu/2019BridgingTheGap/)

Program details will be sent by email upon completion of registration.

Accommodations for persons with disabilities may be requested by contacting Lapeer MSU Extension Office at (810) 667-0341 by August 7, 2019, to make arrangements. Requests received after this date will be fulfilled when possible.



Here's what some past participants had to say!

"This program is very valuable to young professionals just starting in the ag industry, especially those outside of production ag."

"Great networking opportunity."

"Fantastic learning opportunity. Very beneficial for anyone interested in furthering their knowledge of agriculture/food processing."

SUMMER ROUND-UP

JUNE 20-22, 2019 • CLARE, MICHIGAN



Lodging: Doherty Hotel • 604 N. McEwan Street • Clare, MI 48717
Room Block: Michigan Cattlemen

THURSDAY, JUNE 20

Young Cattlemen Planning Meeting 6:00 pm

- YCC Alumni Panel
- Discussion about Tour Destinations
- Meal provided

Welcome Reception 8:00 pm

- Informal reception in Leprechaun Lounge, Doherty Hotel

FRIDAY, JUNE 21

CATTLEMEN'S EDUCATION SERIES I

Field Demonstrations at Nevill Supply 8:30 am

- Fencing Technologies & Techniques
- Cattle Handling Equipment
- Rotational Grazing Strategies
- Fence Post Peeler
- Refreshments provided

Lunch: Pizza at Jay's Sporting Goods 12:00 pm

Education Sessions

- Setting a Course for Michigan's Cattle Industry 1:00 pm
Barb Wilkinson, NCBA
- Predator Control for Farm & Ranch 3:00 pm

Alternate Program

- Herb Seminar, Elm Creek Garden Center 10:00 am
- Your choice of local attractions: Brewery; Cops & Donuts; Lunch at Herrick House, Lunch at Ruckles; Shopping at Jay's Sporting Goods; or Shopping at other local shops

Awards Banquet, Entertainment & Auction

- Social Hour (Cash Bar) 5:00 pm
- Dinner 6:00 pm
- Awards Program 7:00 pm
- Entertainment: Comedian Dwayne Gill 7:30 pm
- Raffle & Auction 8:45 pm

SATURDAY, JUNE 22

CATTLEMEN'S EDUCATION SERIES II

- Leave Clare 8:00 am

Gloryland Ranch 9:00 am

- Profitable Forage Management Strategies & Grazing Irrigated Pastures

Wernette Cattle Company 10:30 am

- Pasture Soil Health Management to Optimize Grazing & Sustainability

Lunch at Wernette Cattle Company

- Catered by Ebels Family Center

REGISTRATION FORM

Register online at micattlemen.org

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Email Address _____

Additional Attendees _____

PACKAGES

Includes Friday Lunch, Education Series I & II, Banquet & Saturday Ag Tours & Lunch

☐ Adult Package, Current MCA Member \$100 X _____ \$ _____

☐ Adult Package, Non MCA Member \$130 X _____ \$ _____

☐ Youth Package (under 15) \$75 X _____ \$ _____

Individual Events

☐ Friday Education Series I & Lunch \$30 X _____ \$ _____

☐ Friday Alternate Program & Lunch \$30 X _____ \$ _____

☐ Friday Reception, Banquet & Comedy Show \$65 X _____ \$ _____

☐ Saturday Education Series II & Lunch \$30 X _____ \$ _____

Total Attending _____ **TOTAL DUE \$** _____

PAYMENT METHOD

☐ Check payable to MCA ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ Discover ☐ AMEX

Card # _____

Expiration Date _____ CVV (3 digits on back of card) _____

Name on Card _____

Billing Address _____

Signature _____

Send registration form & payment to: Michigan Cattlemen's Association

2145 University Park Drive, Suite 300 • Okemos, MI 48864 • Fax: (517) 347-0919 • Email: info@micattlemen.org



Grazing Conference Calls

June 7, 2019

Guest speaker will be, Brook Wilke, Farm Manager at the Kellogg Farm & Pasture Dairy. Brook will share his thoughts on “Integrating annuals into a perennial grazing system.”

Time:

9:00am –10:00am

Location:

<https://msu.zoom.us/j/4859751389>

We want you to stay informed, and we do that by sending emails through an email program called MailChimp. You can sign up for the emails by visiting:

<http://eepurl.com/gq-j8b>

CONTACT:

Kable Thurlow

call: 989-426-7741 or

Email: thurlowk@msu.edu

Anyone with or without grazing experience is invited to attend these calls. The goal is to connect producers and allow them to network. The online format will allow you to attend from home, and on travel.

- It's a good way to stay connected.
- There is no obligation to attend all of the calls, join when you can.
- Share what you can to make all of us better graziers
- Enjoy being around fellow graziers.
- Learn something new or be reminded of something you've forgotten.

The format will be very flexible in order to allow changes to be made easily. Initially, the goal is to set the calls up with the following format.



MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity employer, committed to achieving excellence through a diverse workforce and inclusive culture that encourages all people to reach their full potential. Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status. Persons with disabilities have the right to request and receive reasonable accommodations.



Mid Michigan Livestock Network

Connecting with Information, Experience, Ideas and Opportunities.

The Network gathers on the 3rd Thursday of every month. You are welcome to join us anytime.

Programs are presented in an informal, relaxed, Q/A discussion format.

Summer Programs are held “In the Field” in the Mid Michigan Region

Connect with other cattle producers for this continuing series of informative programs, tours and round table discussions.

CONTACT:

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Email: thurlowk@anr.msu.edu



Tour of McKimmy Ag Services

(formerly Krompetz Elevator)

1925 Nickless Rd. Gladwin, MI 48624

Thursday June 20, 2019 at 6:00pm

Join Matt and Kristen McKimmy as they give us a tour of McKimmy Ag Services and cover their vision for the future of the Elevator in Gladwin.

Also meet with Spencer Smith a representative from Kalmbach Feeds.

You are asked to please RSVP, as McKimmy Ag Services will be hosting a dinner with door prizes.

RSVP by calling: (989) 426-1816 or email

mckimmyag@att.net

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