



U.P. Ag Connections Newsletter

May 2021

Agricultural News from MSU Extension and AgBioResearch

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MSU Extension and Michigan 4-H Millage Renewal

On May 4, 2021, Alger County residents will have the opportunity to renew the MSU Extension Alger County millage. The 2022-2026 inclusive, 0.25-mill renewal request will provide continued funding for MSU Extension educational programs such as:

- 4-H Youth Development
- Agriculture and Agribusiness
- Child and Family Development
- Health and Nutrition
- Master Gardener Volunteer Program
- Natural Resources

FAQs

How much will the millage cost me?

The millage will cost a home owner \$0.25 for every \$1,000 of taxable home value. For example, if you own a \$100,000 home (\$50,000 taxable value or SEV), you'll invest \$12.50 a year in taxes to support MSU Extension's educational programs for you, your family and your community.

What does a "yes" vote mean and what does a "no" vote mean?

A **YES** vote means that homeowners will experience about a \$12.50 per year tax for every \$100,000 of home value to continue to fund MSU Extension programs.

A **NO** vote means that there will not be county funding to match and secure the university's investment in the 100+ year partnership serving Alger County.

What can MSU Extension do for me?

We can empower your everyday goals, such as helping you grow your lawn or garden, try out meal ideas that are nutritious and budget friendly, learn how to manage stress, find educational and fun programs for your kids and more. We care about making your life and your community better.

Get started by exploring our [upcoming events](#) or by visiting the [MSU Extension homepage](#) to explore all the areas of our programming.

How does MSU Extension Alger County funding work?

MSU Extension is funded by a unique partnership with federal, state, and local governments in order to successfully meet the needs of Michigan communities. Alger County government has asked their constituents to fund the county portion of the partnership through a millage on the May 4, 2020 ballot.

What does the ballot language say?

"This proposal will authorize the County of Alger to levy 0.25 mill for the purpose of funding MSU Extension services. Of the 0.25 mill, 0.2496 represents a renewal of the 0.25 mill authorization approved by the electors in 2016, which will expire with the 2021 tax levy and 0.0004 mill represents a restoration of that portion of the same authority which was reduced by application of the Headlee Amendment.

For the purpose of providing funding for MSU Extension services, shall the limitation on the amount of taxes which may be imposed on taxable property in the County Alger, Michigan, be increased by 0.25 mill (\$0.25 per thousand dollars of taxable value) for a period of five (5) years, 2022 to 2026, inclusive, as a renewal of the 0.2496 mill previously authorized by the electors which expires with the 2021 levy plus new additional millage in the amount of 0.0004 mill? It is estimated that 0.25 mill would raise approximately \$101,100 when first levied in 2022."

Michigan State University

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Spring turn-out sets the tone for the entire grazing season

Kim Cassida and Kable Thurlow, MSU Extension

When the grass starts greening, the urge to get cattle on pasture is strong. However, patience and a little planning will pay off because management of the spring flush of forage availability is key to setting the tone for the entire grazing season. Rotational stocking systems are the most important tool producers have to manage forage growth and supply throughout the season, but these require some forethought for effective use.

First, a little plant physiology is in order. Most perennial pasture species in Michigan are in the cool-season functional group which typically breaks dormancy in late March through April, depending on location in Michigan. In most species, the first growth comes from reproductive buds that were formed the previous fall and is fueled by sugars, nitrogen, and minerals stored from the previous growing season. Legumes mostly store their reserves in below ground structures like crowns or rhizomes, while grasses store reserves in the lower part of stems. Grasses only store reserves below ground if rhizomes are present in species such as smooth brome grass, tall fescue, reed canarygrass, and Kentucky bluegrass. Consequently, grazing grasses too early can reduce productivity because cattle will tend to graze the lower stem when nothing else is available.

Grasses exhibit explosive growth in spring due to the dominance of reproductive tillers. This is what causes the “spring flush” of growth (Figure 1). This uneven growth over the season can have several negative consequences. Spring forage production often exceeds the ability of available cattle to consume it. As seed heads develop, forage availability per acre increases but nutritional value decreases because of the high proportion of less digestible stem tissue relative to highly digestible leaves. Shading from heavy spring growth can reduce establishment of frost-seeded legumes. Lastly, shading and the presence of reproductive tillers in many grasses also suppresses development of new buds and reduces the ability of the paddock to recover quickly after grazing.

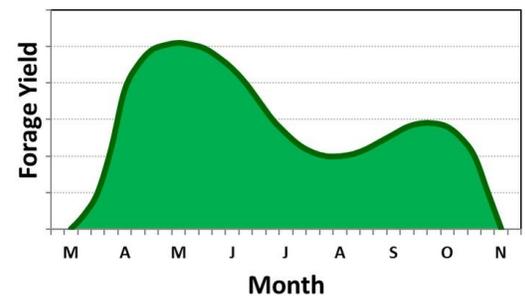


Figure 1. Forage growth over the growing season.

It is easy to find recommendations to delay grazing spring pastures until grass is 8 to 10 inches tall. Under continuous stocking systems this may help protect grass from overgrazing. In rotational stocking systems, waiting this long will almost certainly guarantee that grasses are in the exponential growth phase and most paddocks will be too mature by the time cattle get to them. A better strategy is to begin grazing before you think the paddocks are ready, perhaps when grass averages only 4 to 6 inches tall. At this stage of growth, cattle should be rotated rapidly through the paddocks (no longer than 24 hours per paddock, perhaps as short as 8 to 12 hours), taking only the tops. As grass growth accelerates, this will help keep grass vegetative and stage regrowth over time for subsequent grazing cycles. Rapid rotation also helps reduce pugging damage in the event of the wet spring soils that are so common in Michigan.

Paddock grazing sequence should be planned so that paddocks that were grazed last in the fall are given extra spring rest, and not grazed early in spring. A different paddock should be grazed first each year.

Temporarily increasing stocking rate by adding extra cattle, such as stockers, to pastures can help utilize the extra growth expected in spring. If this is not practical for the operation, then plan to set aside some paddocks to accumulate forage once the cattle can no longer keep up. It is better to allow a few paddocks to get over-mature than to fall behind on all of them. The set-aside paddocks can be harvested as hay or baleage or used as a standing forage stockpile for summer grazing by animals with low nutritional needs. Over-mature paddocks can also be machine-clipped to induce regrowth and improve forage quality if the extra cost is justified by the animals being grazed.

Ideally, all soil testing with subsequent recommended lime, P, or K applications was done last fall. If not, this can be also done in the spring as early as you can drive on the pasture or after any grazing cycle if spring soil is too wet. Nitrogen, however, should not be applied to pastures before the first grazing in spring. Applying spring nitrogen is a strong driver of plant growth and simply pours gas on the problem of more forage than cattle can eat during the spring flush. Instead, apply split rates of 25 to 50 pounds per acre N after the first, second, and third grazing cycles to help drive forage growth through the summer and even out the forage supply. Applying nitrogen to pastures with more than 30% legume content (clovers, alfalfa, and birdsfoot trefoil) is often not cost effective because the legumes provide enough nitrogen for the grass.

Spring pasture turn-out is something to look forward to and does not have to be overcomplicated. The hardest part of any job is getting started. 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.

For more information on grazing, contact [Michigan State University Extension](https://www.maes.msu.edu/) forage specialist Kim Cassida at cassida@msu.edu or beef and grazing educator Kable Thurlow at thurlowk@msu.edu.

Coronavirus Food Assistance Program

Has your operation been directly impacted by the coronavirus pandemic? USDA is implementing updates to the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program for producers of agricultural commodities marketed in 2020 who faced market disruptions due to COVID-19. This is part of a larger initiative to improve USDA pandemic assistance to producers.

USDA's Farm Service Agency is currently accepting new and modified CFAP 2 applications.

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced an expansion of the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) on March 24, 2021. This is part of a larger effort to reach a greater share of farming operations and improve USDA pandemic assistance. FSA has committed at least \$2 million to establish partnerships and direct outreach efforts intended to improve outreach for FSA programs, including CFAP 2, and will cooperate with grassroots organizations with strong connections to socially disadvantaged communities to ensure they are informed and aware of the application process. CFAP updates include reopening of Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2 (CFAP 2), additional payments for eligible cattle and row crop producers, and the processing of payments for certain applications filed as part of CFAP Additional Assistance.

Eligible Commodities

Commodities eligible for the current Coronavirus Food Assistance Program signup period include those that were originally eligible for CFAP 2 and commodities included in CFAP Additional Assistance. Cattle producers who applied for CFAP 1 will automatically receive additional payments.

You can access a full list of all eligible and ineligible commodities outlined by payment category at farmers.gov/cfap/commodities.

Apply for Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2

USDA's Farm Service Agency offers multiple options for producers to apply for CFAP 2. Additional forms needed to complete your CFAP 2 application may already be on file with your local USDA Service Center. You can find those forms and more information about applying for CFAP 2 at farmers.gov/cfap/apply.

To complete the CFAP 2 application, producers will need to reference their sales, inventory, and other records. However, since CFAP 2 is a self-certification program, this documentation will not need to be submitted with the application. Because applications are subject to County Committee review and spot check, some producers will be required to provide documentation. Producers should retain the records and documentation they use to complete the application.

Assistance with Applying

We are committed to delivering USDA services to America's farmers and ranchers while taking safety measures in response to the pandemic. Some USDA offices are beginning to reopen to limited visitors by appointment only. Service Center staff also continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, email, and other digital tools. Please call the FSA office at your [local USDA Service Center](#) if you'd like assistance or have questions about applying for CFAP 2. A call center is available for producers who would like additional one-on-one support with the CFAP 2 application process. Please call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer assistance. The call center can provide service to non-English speaking customers. Customers will select 1 for English and 2 for Spanish. For other languages, customers will select 1 and indicate their language to the call center staff.

USDA Pandemic Assistance for Producers

USDA is committed to delivering financial assistance to farmers, ranchers, and agricultural producers who have been impacted by COVID-19 market disruptions. Through our new initiative – USDA Pandemic Assistance for Producers – USDA is dedicating at least \$6 billion towards new programs to reach a broad set of producers. Visit farmers.gov/pandemic-assistance for the latest updates on this new initiative and information on programs and services for your agricultural operation.

Staying connected and finding support during the pandemic

Eric Karbowski, Paul Gross, Corey Clark and Kable Thurlow, Michigan State University Extension

Staying connected can be one of the most valuable time investments a person can make to support their overall health. Relationships with others positively affect mental well-being and ward off feelings of isolation and loneliness. During these times of social distancing and the avoidance of in-person gatherings, new doors are opening to farmers to stay connected online. Recently, a team of educators with Michigan State University Extension created [“Lunch Break”](#) sessions via [Facebook Live](#) to provide updates, tools, and resources and keep the farming community connected.

During these weekly [“Lunch Break”](#) meetings, the team of educators discuss important topics of interest. In their segments, each educator provides updates in their area of expertise. Topics include **Field Crops**, “Beef Tips,” a farm financial segment titled “Financial Fondue” and a farm stress segment called “Mental Health Minute.” Learn more about these topics:

Field Crops: The Central Michigan Field Crops report includes weekly updates on important issues facing farmers. Topics include insect, disease, weed, weather, tillage, harvest and crop fertility as well as the resources necessary to assist farmers in managing these issues. In addition, timely farm safety tips are shared to keep farm families safe and health throughout the year.

“Staying connected, learning new skills, and having the opportunity to connect with peers is an important part of farming. During our “Lunch Break” meetings our team works to keep farmers connected and informed through a fun and inviting platform.”-

PAUL GROSS, FIELD CROPS EDUCATOR

Beef Tips: This portion of the Lunch Break gives producers a quick introduction into topics that are current and meaningful. The most recent topic was on fecal egg count testing. The topic was well received and provided MSU Extension educator Kable Thurlow a chance to interact with a producer from another state, as well as several from Michigan.

“I find the podcast very informative. From what is available for farm programs to frost seeding for the first time to keeping my sanity in these trying times.”- ED NOGASKI, FARMER/AGRICULTURAL PRODUCER

Financial Fondue: This portion of the Lunch Break brings a business perspective to the table. This segment provides farms with up-to-date information on market issues, government programs and financial planning.

“Our team approach provides a unique perspective that connects to a broad audience. It has been especially encouraging to see the support from women.”- COREY CLARK, FARM BUSINESS MANAGEMENT EDUCATOR

Mental Health Minute: The number of uncontrollable risk factors involved in farming inherently causes stress for farmers, farm families, farm workers and the agribusiness community. In the Mental Health Minute, tools and resources are shared to help the farming community create self-awareness, improve their fundamental knowledge of mental health and learn coping strategies centered around supporting good mental health.

“The heralding truth behind behavioral health, is that often the effectiveness of the supports we are providing will not likely be publicized. Every connection and outreach made to someone that is struggling can have a lifelong impact. As friends, neighbors, and supporters of MSU Extension, you are supporting the continued development of resources and tools further reducing the impact of stress, mental illness, and the potential loss of life by suicide through our farm stress efforts.”- ERIC KARBOWSKI, BEHAVIORAL HEALTH EDUCATOR

When thinking about social networks and staying socially connected, if one door closes, open a new door of opportunity to find others. By learning new ideas, staying up to date with trending areas of interest and connecting with peers, you might just find that investing 15 minutes per week, can add value beyond your checkbook.

Opportunities to Connect

[Michigan State University Extension’s](#) many resources and information on farm stress can be found at the [Managing Farm Stress](#) website, such as access to the teletherapy pilot project [MSU Extension Teletherapy](#) and free online farm stress training [Rural Resilience: Farm Stress Training](#). There you will find descriptions of programs such as Communicating with Farmers Under Stress and Weathering the Storm, as well as other articles, projects, and resources. Learning self-awareness as well as signs and symptoms of stress, mental illness and suicide can better enable the farming community to support each other during trialing times.

Field Crops Virtual Breakfast Series

Philip Kaatz, Michigan State University Extension

This free weekly series for farmers and agribusinesses focuses on field crop pest and crop management topics during the growing season.



Each year, farmers have a sense of anticipation, excitement, joy, anxiety and relief as they prepare for the new growing season. Farming is a profession that requires a certain amount of faith concerning things beyond their control such as weather, potential pests and crop prices. To address potential issues and concerns during the growing season, Michigan State University Extension will host the free Field Crops Virtual Breakfast Series beginning Thursday, April 1, through Sept. 23, 2021, from 7-7:30 a.m. via Zoom. This weekly webinar meeting will be the fourth year that farmers, agribusiness personnel and others interested in agriculture can interact with MSU Extension specialists and educators to get answers for their questions.

Topic areas are loosely established at the beginning of the series based on historical trends; however, the Virtual Breakfast Series is flexible, fluid and able to adapt to changes that might occur due to unforeseen growing conditions. Each week will feature an MSU specialist and topic followed by a weather summary and forecast by Jeff Andresen, MSU Extension climatologist. Following the scheduled talks, discussions between farmers, educators and specialists will continue until 8 a.m.

Each weekly session will have one restricted use pesticide (RUP) credit (1A, 1B, Comm and Private Core) and Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) continuing education units (CEU). Those that want to receive their RUP and CCA credits can leave after the more formal presentation time, however, everyone is welcome to stay for the discussion period that lasts until 8 a.m.

Sign up online here: [MSU Extension \(list-manage.com\)](https://www.maizecrops.com/list-manage.com) or call Lapeer County MSU Extension office at 810-667-0341.

Classifieds

FOR SALE: Simmental Bulls, mature and young, registered and non-registered. Call Duane Kolpack (906) 362-6862.

FOR SALE: 2nd and 3rd crop alfalfa, small square bales. Marenger Potato Farm, Flat Rock. (906)384-6587.

FOR SALE: Alfalfa Balage, 2nd and 3rd crop alfalfa. \$60/bale. (906) 630-4945.

FOR SALE: Registered Dexter cattle, all ages and models. Call Tolfree Farms (906) 884-2351 or email countryj@jamadots.com.

FOR SALE: Hay, large square bales 3x3x7.75 Timothy grass, 4,000 to sell. Former dairy farm doing all big square bales hay. Call Dave Bell in the EUP 906-440-6455 or email Bellsdairy@yahoo.com. Also a realtor in the UP so contact me for real estate here. Dave@smith-company.com

Beautiful property in the Upper Michigan, 130 acres In Perkins for sale or pasture for rent for livestock for the 2021 season. Beautiful river running through it. Great for hunting, building or developing, or simple grazing livestock. Land is divided into 9 paddocks with high tensile electric fence and 5 stock watering ponds. Call (906) 359-4825.

FARM FOR SALE: Upper Peninsula Farm with over 1,100 acres, water access, maple syrup production, and much more!
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hjdegroot@alphacomm.net

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FOR SALE: 30 Angus Cows bred to Red and Black Angus bulls. Calving late April through May. Jon and Donna Ahlberg, Iron River. Call (906) 265-9333 or email jahlberg@fast-air.net.

FOR SALE: Reh-Morr Farm, Eben Jct. MI, N5057 Benson Rd. Rock River Twp. Alger Co.

Acreage includes field, maple forest, loamy, sand soil, high ground, conifer wind breaks. Zoned agriculture.

Blackberries, raspberries, cherry trees (sour), asparagus, rhubarb, currants.

High tunnel hoop houses. 3-30 X 72, 1-20 X 27

Barn with lean-to. 30 X 55

Sauna-outdoor, wood heat.

Garage new-30 X 40 2 story, lower level 2 car garage, large workshop, upper level partially finished and storage.

House 3 BR, 1 Bath, 2000 sq. ft., wood heat, electric baseboard, small walk-out basement.

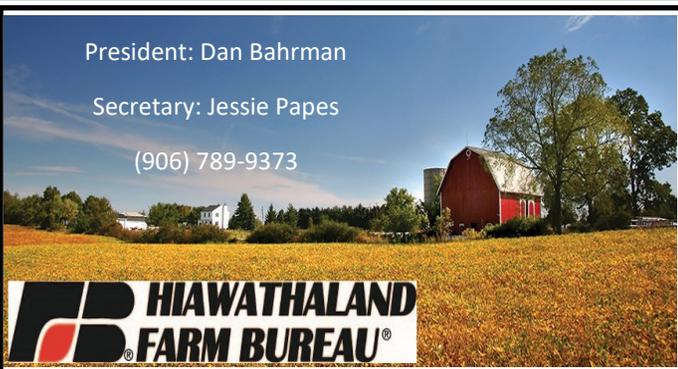
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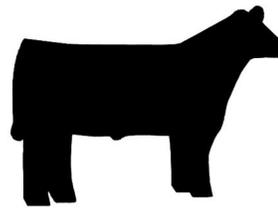
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Market Report

| | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Choice Steers | \$105-\$126 per 100 lbs. |
| Holstein Steers | \$90-\$108 per 100 lbs. |
| Hogs | \$84-\$88 per 100 lbs. |
| Lambs | \$200-\$250 per 100 lbs. |
| Cull cows | \$50-\$65 per 100 lbs. |
| Calves | \$125-\$195 per 100 lbs. |
| Goats | \$200-\$300 per 100 lbs. |

Breeding and Feeder Animals

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| Grade Holstein cows | \$800-\$1450/head |
| Grade Holstein bred heifers | \$1200-\$1750/head |

Feed Prices across the U.P.

| | Avg. \$/cwt | Avg. \$/ton | Price Range |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Corn | \$15.00 | \$300.00 | \$210-426 |
| Soymeal | \$26.64 | \$532.75 | \$472-624 |
| Oats | \$13.50 | \$270.00 | \$240-340 |
| Barley | \$12.16 | \$243.25 | \$200-314 |
| Average price/100 wt. for 1 ton lots | | | |

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Michigan Sustainable Farm Mentors

Calling all beginning and aspiring farmers! [Sign up here](#) to be **paid for your time to connect with an experienced farmer mentor** from June through December. Beginning farmers will have five one-on-one discussions about people, planet & profit with one of the experienced farmers listed below. Aspiring farmers will discuss land/credit access and opportunities to gain production/entrepreneurial skills. The farmer mentors are experienced, successful Michigan farmers who have a diversity of backgrounds, farms and skills to give you real-life insights and positive feedback on your farm. All meetings will be online or by zoom for COVID-safe networking :)

- Jill Johnson (Grazed livestock, Animal Welfare Approved certification and farmers' markets)
- Jeremy Grey Cloud Sparks (Grazed livestock, novel fruits and tribal food sovereignty)
- Jim Koan (Organic orchards, livestock management, transitioning to organic, value-added products and on-farm stores)
- Lance Kraai (Urban vegetable farming, youth employment and on-farm cafés)
- Joannée DeBruhl (Vegetable farming, CSA, business/non-profit and infrastructure development)
- Rachel Cross (Cut flower and intensive vegetable farming, creative land and credit access strategies, hoophouse design and farm-to-school)
- Alex Cacciari (Cut flower & tractor-scale vegetable farming, marketing cooperatives, incubator farms)

Email brandtk7@msu.edu for more info or [sign up HERE!](#)