

Basin Buzz

Lower Fox River
Summer 2020

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LOWER FOX DEMONSTRATION FARMS NETWORK



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www.foxdemofarms.org

COVID 19 RESOURCES FOR FARMERS

The coronavirus has changed things dramatically in 2020 and we may not know, or see, the full effects for some time. However, farmers may have a better perspective than most on the immediate effects. The federal government has created new laws and has made changes to prior laws regarding agricultural recovery and the economy due to COVID-19.

A number of resources have been made available to farmers to help navigate these uncharted waters. The University of Wisconsin has published *Navigating Farm Support Programs During COVID-19* which offers a comprehensive table of the resources available.

The Lower Fox River Demo Farm Network has also compiled COVID-19 resources regarding financials, managing employees, managing dairy, livestock, and crops, and minimizing the transmission of the virus.

Links to all of these resources can be found on <https://fwwa.org/2020/06/24/covid-19-ag-resources/>

We understand that this has been and continues to be an overwhelming and frustrating time for many farmers so we hope these resources can provide some peace of mind as we continue forward in uncertain time.



Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

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CONSERVATION FUNDS & ASSISTANCE

Do you have soil or water conservation projects in need of financial or technical help? If so, there are several different opportunities for obtaining cost-share for conservation projects in Brown, Calumet, Outagamie and Winnebago counties.

Funding can assist to install a variety of practices including:

- Cropland practices such as grassed waterways, water and sediment control basins, filter strips, cover crops
- Nutrient management planning with soil testing
- Barnyard work, manure storage and other farmstead practices

Contact your Land Conservation Department to determine if funding is available for your project.

Brown County LWCD: (920) 391-4621

Calumet County LWCD: (920) 849-1442

Outagamie County LCD: (920) 832-5073

Winnebago County LWCD: (920) 232-1950

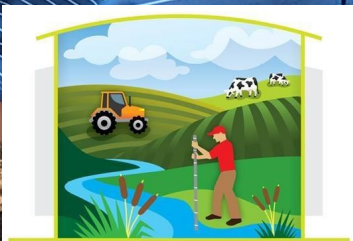
Outagamie County NRCS: (920) 733-1575

Brown County NRCS: (920) 884-9210

Winnebago County NRCS: (920) 424-0329

Calumet County NRCS: (920) 849-1444

Riparian buffers reduce erosion and protect from runoff



LOWER FOX
Demonstration Farms Network

Neighborhood Dairy

Building partnerships to adopt conservation efforts

As its name suggests, Neighborhood Dairy is a partnership built around a shared vision among friends, family, and yes...neighbors. In 1995, brothers Mark and Joe Van Asten, along with Jerry Evers and Vernon Newhouse came together to found Neighborhood Dairy. Over the last two decades, the operation has grown and evolved, bringing in new ideas and new faces. Today, Vernon and Jerry have stepped down as owners, and Mark and Joe have all had sons who have worked in some capacity on the farm. As they look to the future of their operation, they are excited to introduce new conservation practices into their system.

Over the past few years, Neighborhood Dairy has begun to adopt conservation practices. They started small in al-

falfa fields, where instead of spraying the fields in the fall, they allowed the alfalfa to overwinter to absorb snow-melt and spring rains. Once the fields dried, they sprayed the alfalfa off and no-till planted into the residue.

The team recognized that these practices have worked on farms throughout the watershed and have provided similar, if not better, yields. Through their personal experience, they have seen financial savings as a result of reduced inputs. Fewer passes leads to less wear and tear on their machines, less fuel costs, and less man-power to run the operation. For Neighborhood Dairy, they're working to reduce their input, while maintain, if not exceed, their current yields.



Neighborhood Dairy: No-till planted field.





Cover Crop Field Day at Neighborhood Dairy showcased a variety of cover crops and highlighted the benefits that can be gained from keeping the soil protected and under cover.

As one of the newest additions to the Fox Demo Farms program, Neighborhood Dairy has watched others in the project adopt these practices and have seen their success with cover crops and no-till planting. While they recognize that conservation agriculture is a new approach, they've seen how it can positively impact others and are eager to take steps towards implementing more of these practices on their own farm.

The heavy rains have made it difficult for Neighborhood Dairy to implement the plan they had set out; however, they continue to work with their agronomist and the Fox Demo Farms staff to plant as many cover crops as possible. Having a plan was important, but not getting discouraged when things didn't go accordingly was equally as important.

Despite getting fewer acres planted than they had hoped, Neighborhood Dairy used two low-disturbance manure injectors to apply manure on their land. Having a manure hauler, who is committed to low-disturbance applications and utilizing equipment available through Outagamie County Land Conservation Department made this possible.

If you're new to these practices, Mark and Joe recommend working with your agronomist and reaching out to your local county and NRCS staff. This is a new system and it's important to use the resources available to you and to make sure that everyone is on the same page. Additionally, they recommend starting small and building your way up. They recognize that they're in the early stages of adopting cover crops and no-till practices, but they see a bright future with these practices.

Article written by Whitney Prestby, UW-Extension.

For these brothers, coming to a job where each day presents a new set of challenges is what makes farming so exciting. They are continuously looking for ways to improve their operation and they feel strongly that using cover crops and no-till planting will help them build a strong farm for future generations.



Bazooka Low-Disturbance Manure Injector available to rent from Outagamie County.

Have you heard about the new

S.H.E.D?

SOIL HEALTH EQUIPMENT & DEMONSTRATION FACILITY

Outagamie County with support from Oneida Nation, NEW Water and Brown County, has established a Soil Health Equipment and Demonstration Facility (S.H.E.D). This 25 acre facility will showcase innovative equipment and cropping practices as well as serve as a hub for storing soil health equipment

and hosting grower meetings. The hands on facility will allow growers to see how soil health practices can work in this area and what strategies may work on their farm.

This year, conservation staff started by no-tilling corn into oat stubble.

The corn fields are set up for a variety of trials in 60 foot stretches.



If you are interested in learning more or have suggestions/ideas for improvements or future trials contact:

Andy Kiefer (Andy.Kiefer@outagamie.org) or Alex Krepline (Alex.Krepline@outagamie.org).

Fox Demo Farms held a live Facebook event from the S.H.E.D. on Aug 5.

You can check it out here:

go.wisc.edu/k89h59

ROTATIONAL GRAZING

Rotational grazing is growing in popularity, but what exactly is it, how does it differ from continuous grazing, and what kind of farms are suitable for this practice?

Unlike continuous grazing, where animals are on the same pasture throughout the entire season, rotational grazing involves moving livestock to a new paddock on a regular basis.

The benefits to moving the animals regularly ensures that the pasture has time to rest and recover, which improves the health of the land and maximizes the nutrient value of the feed.

Rotational Grazing Benefits

- **Economic benefits:** Reduce cost of equipment, fuel, chemicals, labor, and manure hauling.
- **Environmental benefits:** Reduce soil erosion and nutrient loss to local waters.
- **Time savings:** Cuts down on the time needed to harvest, haul, feed and manage manure.
- **Livestock health:** Reduced veterinary and hoof trimming costs. Improved birthing outcomes.



Planning Tips

- **Consider the number of livestock and forage needed. Will the existing pasture meet livestock needs or will seeding be needed?**
- **Is there adequate, good quality water distributed throughout the pasture?**
- **Soil erosion control practices may be needed on stream banks.**
- **Move livestock according to forage availability, not calendar.**

Thinking about incorporating rotational grazing into your operation?

Reach out to your County Land Conservation Department or your local NRCS office. They can help you apply for financial assistance available to farmers looking to begin or expand their rotational grazing system. Additionally, they can provide

guidance on how to design your operation for success, by selecting fields that are the appropriate size for the number of animals on pasture, have adequate access to clean water, and have necessary soil erosion structures in place.

ROTATIONAL GRAZING IN NORTHEAST WISCONSIN

In northeast Wisconsin, there has been a surge in farms, both large and small, beginning to incorporate rotational grazing into their operations.

Why are they making the switch?

We've checked in with a few rotational grazers who are utilizing the practice to varying degrees based on their size and their operation, to hear why they made the transition, and the benefits they see from the practice.

SEEING SUCCESS WITH ROTATIONAL GRAZING IN THE LOWER FOX DEMO FARM NETWORK

New Horizons Dairy

Over the past few years, New Horizons Dairy has made some big changes to their 1,800 head dairy operation. At the heart of it all is their motivation to be good stewards of the land and water, to be good neighbors, and to be profitable farmers. For Dave and Derek Van De Hey, implementing no-till and cover crops on 100 percent of their land was the way to achieve all three goals.

This year, they will be adding rotational grazing to their conservation plan and will begin grazing 80 heifers on land furthest from their farm. Historically, this land has always been the most expensive to operate. The distance required to haul equipment

for planting, harvest, and hauling manure has driven up the price tag.

To help alleviate some of the financial burden of operating this land, Derek and Dave have decided to graze roughly 80 of their bred heifers on this land. Grazing not only helps cut costs on hauling feed and manure, but they're looking to improve cow health and productivity.

In the past, New Horizons Dairy has sent heifers to rotational grazing operations and have been impressed with their quality and productivity, so they are looking forward to implementing this system on their own land.



Vande Wattering Farm

Since 2016, Tom and Bill Vande Wattering have been participating in the Fox Demo Farms project. Over the past few years, they, along with Tom's two adult sons Luke and Tyler, have been rotationally grazing heifers on their 350-cow dairy farm.

According to the brothers, having their heifers out on pasture, is a “time saver and money saver.”

Rather than bringing the feed to their heifers, they are able to utilize their pastures, as well as their interseeded cover crops as feed during the growing season. Incorporating animals into their field operations, has not only been financially beneficial, but “it makes farming fun again” for Tom and Bill. Getting out on the land, trying new practices, and working with nature has been a recipe for success.

This year, Vande Wattering Farm is looking to expand their fencing so they're able to graze all of their cover cropped land at the farmstead. Grazing cover crops has allowed them to increase the number of animals they have out on pasture, which they see as a win-win for their farm and the environment.



Brandenburg Acres

Scott Brandenburg and his wife, Renee, love farming, but with three children they were looking for opportunities to improve their farm's efficiency, so they could spend more time with their young family.

Transitioning their beef herd to 100 percent rotational grazing allowed them to move toward a more family



friendly operation. Not only is rotational grazing a time saver, but their kids love to be out in the fields helping move the cattle daily. In their household, tending to the animals is no longer viewed as typical “chores,” now it has become a fun family activity.

When they're out in the fields, they love to see the wildlife that now call Brandenburg Acres home. Their pastures are filled with life and home to many, from the pollinators and beneficial insects buzzing around, to the leopard frogs chirping, to the nesting cranes and their young, and the songs of grassland birds whose populations have drastically declined due to loss of habitat. Seeing a rebound in the life around them has made each day exciting for the Brandenburg family.

Not only has the wildlife flourished under this new system, **Scott says they have seen a drastic decrease in vet bills, due largely to the fact that their cattle are healthier and happier being out on the land.**

Farming with nature and helping to create habitat for wildlife has made their rotationally grazed beef operation a way of life, rather than a job for Scott and his family.



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Lower Fox Watershed

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