



# U.P. Ag Connections Newsletter

August 2021

Agricultural News from MSU Extension and AgBioResearch

Volume 25 Issue 8

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## Growing UP Agricultural Association, Service to Ag Recipient

John Talsma and his wife Pat moved their family to Bruce Crossing, MI in August of 1981 to start a Veterinarian Clinic. John was an old school, old style vet that specialized in large animals and worked on cats and dogs to help pay the bills. John worked in a vet clinic in the lower peninsula for 20 years before moving north and retired near the end of 1999. John moved to the U.P. to slow down a little, but his workload never slowed down.

In addition to his vet service, John was active in the agriculture community. He was president of the Settler's Union Co-op for 20 of the 21 years he served on the board. He also served on the Copper Country Farm Bureau board for 39 years. He volunteered as auctioneer at the Ontonagon County 4-H livestock auction for several years. John was on the school board for eight years and church council for 30 years.

The Growing U.P. Agricultural Association was established in 1978 to help find answers to the many concerns, problems and opportunities of U.P agriculture and agricultural research. In addition to selecting the annual Service to Ag award, they establish a list of priorities for agricultural research and education as guidance for the Upper Peninsula Research and Extension Center and MSU Extension. Membership dues are \$10 annually and anyone wishing to join is encouraged to do so and should call 906-439-5114 to obtain more information.



## Managing perennial pastures to withstand drought—Plan ahead to ensure grazing lasts as long as possible

*By Kim Cassida and Kable Thurlow, MSUE*

Effective graziers constantly assess and monitor their pastures forage inventory, and this is never more important than when rain is scarce. Pastures that are already vigorous, well fed, and managed to promote root and plant health will remain productive longer than neglected pastures going into a drought period.

Pastures that include a diverse mixture of grasses, legumes, and forbs (broadleaf plants that are not legumes) can often withstand drought better than monocultures if some deep-rooted and drought-tolerant species are included. Species with good drought tolerance for the Great Lakes region include alfalfa, smooth brome grass, tall fescue, reed canarygrass, and chicory. A dense plant canopy and root system also improves soil water-holding capacity by providing organic matter to absorb water and keep it in the root profile, and by improving infiltration of any scarce rain that occurs. The plant canopy also shades the soil, keeping it cooler, and this helps cool-season plants last longer before the combination of hot soil and lack of water shifts them into dormant survival mode.

To help maintain soil fertility, [Michigan State University Extension](#) recommends that pastures be soil tested at least every three years, with lime, nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium applied as needed. Potassium is an especially important nutrient for helping plants withstand stress like drought and winterkill. Keep in mind that moisture is needed to dissolve top-dressed fertilizers before they can move into the soil and then into the plant. This is one reason why it is so important to keep up with soil fertility. Deficits can be difficult to address in the middle of a drought crisis.

Managed grazing is essential to getting the most out of a pasture during drought. A well-managed pasture uses rotational stocking to build soil and plant health and vigor while maintaining good animal productivity. There are many variations of rotational stocking, but they all involve moving animals around the pasture within smaller paddocks, thus controlling animal access to plants and allowing plants to rest and recover from grazing. Rest is essential to pasture plant survival. When plants are stressed by lack of water, it is more important than ever to make sure regrowth is not grazed until enough new leaves have formed to support the root system.

As a general rule of thumb, this means animals should not be kept on a paddock for longer than four days and they should not be put back into the paddock until at least three new leaves have appeared on grass tillers or new flowers have appeared on legumes. This may only take three weeks during the fast growth of spring with adequate rain, or it may take months if grasses go dormant in drought. Shorter paddock occupations of one day or even less can also help encourage livestock to eat the available forage uniformly if enough stocking density is applied. Uniform grazing means that more of the available forage gets into the livestock. It also means that recycled [nutrients in the form of urine and manure](#) are distributed more evenly across the pasture.

Pasture utilization is a grazing term that refers to the percentage of grass production that is eaten by the grazing animal. In a forage shortage, it is tempting to leave livestock on the pasture until every scrap of green is eaten. This will slow down recovery of your pastures when the rains return. A normal utilization target is 50% (take half, leave half) of available forage, but this may range from 30-70% based on time of year, forage type, and grazing goals. In a drought, it is better to err conservatively and aim for utilization rates in the 30-50% range leaving at least four inches of stubble behind, when the animals are moved. This leaves more residual forage behind in the pasture to help the plants survive and will pay off in the long run because live plants can grow back.

To learn more about pasture growth, refer to [this article on spring turnout](#). When pastures have not grown back enough to support viable grazing, it is best to confine animals in a small sacrifice paddock and feed hay or supplements. This will likely destroy the plants in that sacrifice paddock, but it will be less costly to renovate the small area than the whole pasture after the drought breaks. When choosing the sacrifice area, pick one that is already in poor condition instead of the best paddock.

During the spring growth flush, cool-season perennial pastures that contain more than 2500 pounds of forage dry matter (DM) per acre are not optimal for high-quality grazing because they are likely to be heading out or flowering. At flowering, nutritive value of forages declines sharply which means animals need to eat more bulk to get the same nutrients. It is also difficult to graze tall, overmature pastures without getting considerable levels of trampling. Trampled forage is not truly wasted because its nutrients and carbon recycle into the soil, but it does not help to keep the livestock fed in times of forage shortage. A thick layer of trampled mulch will also slow down regrowth and reduce tillering because light needs to

reach plant crowns to trigger new growth. Therefore, paddocks that “get away” in the spring are best removed from the regular grazing rotation. These can be set aside for hay or baleage and returned to grazing later. Alternatively, they can be set aside for stockpiling and deliberately grazed later as mature “standing hay.” If there is adequate rain, new regrowth will come up through the old dead stems and provide green herbage for animals to select. This mature hay stockpiled in place will be relatively low in nutritional value but can be suitable for livestock with modest nutritional needs. Paddocks that are grazed through the end of June and then set aside for stockpiling will likely remain vegetative and can provide very high-quality grazing in the fall provided there is some rain to drive regrowth.

Another tip for extending perennial pasture life in drought is to reduce the stocking rate. If the forage budget is calculated out into the future and shortage looms, consider [reducing herd](#) or flock numbers early. A drought is not the time to carry unproductive animals. You may be able to get a better price if you are selling before necessity forces everyone to flood the sale barns with livestock they cannot feed.

Another way to reduce grazing pressure on stressed perennial pasture is to move stock elsewhere onto temporary annual pastures planted on idle cropland. Think about grazing drought tolerant annual forages like sorghum, sudangrass, millets, or cover crops. Graziers do not need to own the land—it can often be leased for grazing and fenced using portable electric wire or net. This can become a win-win for the livestock owner who gets extra forage and the landowner who gets the benefits of cover crops plus the grazing fee. Be aware that annual forage seed supplies may rapidly become limiting in a widespread drought.



## **Weed issues caused by spring 2021 drought**

*Jim Isleib, MSU Extension UP Crop Production Educator*

Hay farmers in the eastern U.P. are reporting unusual weed problems this year. Without doubt, these were brought on by the very dry conditions in May and June. The 1<sup>st</sup> cutting hay crop is down about 50%, leaving lots of room for drought-tolerant weeds to thrive. Wild carrot (or ‘Queen Anne’s Lace), *Daucus carota*, is of special concern. Purple vetch, leafy spurge and wild parsnip are also more prevalent than usual. Strategic clipping of wild carrot plants to reduce seed set should be considered. If all that wild carrot seed goes on the field, it can really increase the problem in future years. Wild carrot isn’t toxic, but livestock don’t like it much, especially horses. Purple vetch isn’t toxic either, and is fair feed actually. But horse hay customers, and others buying your hay probably won’t like it much. The wild parsnip contains a compound that can cause a photo-sensitive reaction if grazed or eaten in ensiled or dry hay. Affected livestock can develop severe sunburn symptoms when exposed to sunlight. Clipping wild parsnip seed heads is also a good idea, as well as spot spraying to control patches. A selective broadleaf herbicide or a glyphosate product should be effective.



Wild Carrot

## Soil Health & Cover Crop Field Day



**Wednesday**  
**August 11th, 2021**  
**11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. CT**

**Twin Island Farm**  
**Co Rd 338 and River Dr.**  
**Wallace, MI 49893**

Join fellow farmers to view plots of alfalfa and cover crops in corn. Learn about intercropping and soil health assessment.

11:00 am - Welcome

11:05 am - Alfalfa-Corn Intercropping

11:20 am - Cover Crop Interseeding

11:35 am - Soil Health Assessment

11:50 am - MAEAP Phase I

12:00 pm - Lunch on us

1:00 pm - Adjourn

Call (906) 439-5114 Ext 1 to register

Approved for MAEAP Phase I credit



MPIC and MSU

## U.P. Potato Field Day

Monday, August 30th

4:00p.m.—7:00 p.m.

Vandamme Farms

2371 St Nicholas Rd.  
Rock, MI 49880

- 4:00 pm **Welcome**  
James DeDecker, MSU U.P.R.E.C.
  - 4:15 pm **Michigan Potato Industry Update**  
Kelly Turner, Executive Director,  
Michigan Potato Industry Commission
  - 4:30 pm **Seed Industry Update**  
Jeff Axford, Executive Director,  
Michigan Seed Potato Association
  - 4:45 pm **Variety Trial & Climate Research Report**  
Chris Long, Potato Specialist, MSU
  - 5:15 pm **White Mold & Crane Repellant Research Report**  
James DeDecker, MSU U.P.R.E.C.
  - 5:30 pm **Nematode Management Research Report**  
Marisol Quintanilla, Nematologist  
MSU Dept. of Entomology
  - 6:00 pm **Dinner**  
Sponsored by: 
  - 7:00 pm **Adjourn**
- To register call (906)439-5114 Ext. 1



## 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: Registered Dexter cattle**, all ages and models. Call Tolfree Farms (906) 884-2351 or email [countryj@jamadots.com](mailto: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](mailto:Bellsdairy@yahoo.com). Also a realtor in the UP so contact me for real estate here. [Dave@smith-company.com](mailto: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](mailto:hjdegroot@alphacomm.net)

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**FOR SALE: International 5000**, Self-propelled 14 foot windrower cab-hydro-diesel, has detachable hay conditioner. Stored inside, field ready. \$5000 (906) 988-2397.

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(906) 988-2397

**FOR SALE: Simm Angus Bulls**-Genomic Tested, Balanced EPD's, Great Disposition, born Fall of 2020. (906)281-0808 or (815)614-0163.

## Market Report

Choice Steers	\$115-\$128 per 100 lbs.
Holstein Steers	\$100-\$115 per 100 lbs.
Hogs	\$70-\$73 per 100 lbs.
Lambs	\$220-\$275 per 100 lbs.
Cull cows	\$60-\$74 per 100 lbs.
Calves	\$60-\$100 per 100 lbs.
Goats	\$200-\$350 per 100 lbs.

### Breeding and Feeder Animals

Grade Holstein cows	\$1000-\$1275/head
Grade Holstein bred heifers	\$1200-\$1350/head

### Feed Prices across the U.P.

	Avg. \$/cwt	Avg. \$/ton	Price Range
Corn	\$16.14	\$322.75	\$285-426
Soymeal	\$26.31	\$526.25	\$459-624
Oats	\$13.50	\$270.00	\$240-340
Barley	\$12.18	\$243.50	\$200-314
Average price/100 wt. for 1 ton lots			

## Sweeten Farm Pasture Walk

**Monday August 30, 2021, 6-8pm EST**

**Sweeten Farm, 12248 S. Bound Road, Dafter, MI 49724**

Sweeten Farm is a cow-calf operation owned and operated by Jeremy and Michelle Sweeten and family. The Sweetens utilize rotational grazing and fall calve their herd. They sell yearling cattle in October for grass-finishing. Sweeten Farm also sells cash crop hay. One of their main goals is to improve their farm through the practice of bale grazing in winter. Jeremy is employed full-time off farm as a forage agronomist. Michelle is also an ag professional.

### TOPICS BEING COVERED

- Long term effect of bale grazing
- Rotational grazing
- Fall calving
- Soil health studies
- Soil water monitoring

If you plan to attend, please register by calling one of these MSU Extension offices:

- Gladwin County MSUE - 989-426-7741  
Or contact Kable Thurlow, cell number 989-802-3384
- Alger County MSUE – 906-387-2530  
Or contact Jim Isleib, cell number 906-250-9609
- Ontonagon County MSUE – 906-884-4386  
Or contact Frank Wardynski, cell number 906-281-0918

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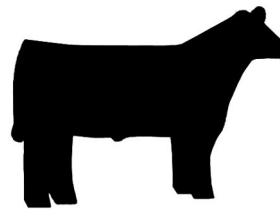
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***If you do not wish to receive this publication, please contact Michelle at [colema98@msu.edu](mailto:colema98@msu.edu) or (906) 439-5114***

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## **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

August 11—Soil Health & Cover Crop Field Day—Twin Island Farm, Wallace, MI 11:00 am-1:00 pm CT

August 12-14 — Marquette County Fair, Gwinn, MI

August 16-22 — UP State Fair, Escanaba, MI

August 26-29—Houghton County Fair, Hancock, MI

August 30—UP Potato Field Day—VanDamme Farms, Rock, MI 4:00 pm-7:00 pm

August 30—Sweeten Farm Pasture Walk—Sweeten Farm, Dafter 6:00 pm-8:00 pm

August 30-September 6—Chippewa County Fair, Kinross, MI

September 1-6—Dickinson County Fair, Norway, MI

September 9-11—Chippewa County Stalwart Agricultural Fair, Stalwart