MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension

Great Lakes Grazing Newsletter

June 2024, Volume 13, Issue 1

Things are heating up!

Dear Great Lakes Grazier,
The temperatures have warmed up here in Central Michigan as I write this newsletter. It's almost a 20-degree increase in daytime temps from just one week ago. The first cutting hay crop is coming off rapidly and talk on the street is that yields are pretty good. The grazing season has been in full swing for a while now, and this month we kick off the summer pasture walk season with a walk at the Rebel Pastures in Kent County. For more information on this and other events, see the list of events below.

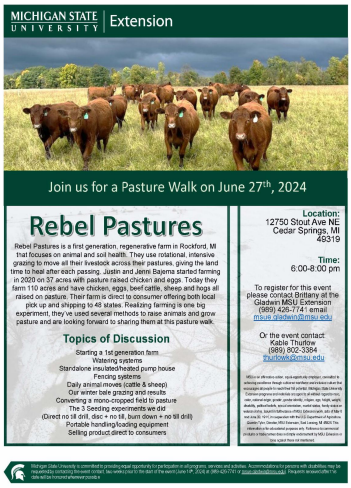
I hope you have a great summer,

Kable Thurlow
MSU Extension Grazing Educator

Rebel Pastures

Start your summer with a Pasture Walk at Rebel Pastures in Cedar Springs on June 27, 2024, 6:00PM - 8:00PM. Located at 12750 Stout Ave NE, Cedar Springs, MI 49319.

To register for this event please contact **Brittany** at the Gladwin MSU Extension Office (989) 426-7741 or email **msue.gladwin@msu.edu**



Planning for the Unexpected

By, Michelle Sweeten, MSU Extension Forage & Livestock Educator

Knowing your context is important on your farm. But what happens when your context changes unexpectedly? No matter how well you plan, make goals, or manage your farm you will experience unexpected weather events. In the summer of 2023, many areas of Michigan had mild to severe drought followed by a wetter fall. Now, our winter has been

very mild with low precipitation. Currently, many areas of the state are abnormally dry with several areas in northern Michigan and the upper peninsula experiencing moderate-severe drought conditions. How can we manage our crops and animals to reduce the side effects of these and future events?
Focusing on resilience and soil health mitigates the difficulties caused by drought, rain deluges, floods, or other catastrophic weather events. How can we determine if our fields or pastures have the resilience to hold up to disastrous weather events? Start with observations and consider the following:

Click here to read the rest of this article.

Michigan farms host Soil Health Academies

Soil health and regenerative agriculture are hot buzzwords in farming. This past summer, JNelson Farms in Hope, Michigan, hosted a Soil Health Academy to train farmers, researchers, food advocates and educators on soil health and regenerative agriculture principles focusing on adaptive grazing. According to the **Midland Daily News**, "Students came from eight states, including Michigan, as well as Canada, the United Kingdom and Armenia." The training was useful as farmers explored how the principles could be applied to their farm operations.
Black Swamp Cattle Co. posted on Facebook after attending the 2023 Michigan academy, "The Understanding Ag team did an excellent job working to help us better understand the observations we need to make at our farm in order to truly graze in adaptive way. I am excited to take some of the new practices and ideas home to try on our operation. If you ever get the chance to attend a Soil Health Academy, I cannot recommend it enough. It was a great balance of in-class education as well as real world application in the field. This crew of folks is nothing short of a wealth of knowledge!"
Michigan State University Center for Regenerative Agriculture in conjunction with **Michigan State University Extension** supports hosting of Soil Health Academies in Michigan. While the academies focus on training farmers and ranchers, many researchers, Extension educators and other farm advisors find the training to be eye-opening and beneficial.
Photo by Soil Health Academy
Each year, the Soil Health Academy team works with 10 farms in the U.S. and Canada to host the three-day training. The schools highlight the host's progress towards regenerative agriculture in their context. This includes not only their location context but also their type of operation. Many producers are predominantly grazers, but others raise row crops, vegetables, or orchards.
This fall in the eastern Upper Peninsula of Michigan, the Soil Health Academy will be exploring advanced grazing skills, which will build on those developed at the 2023 Soil Health Academy at JNelson Farm. Sweeten Farms will host the 2024 academy on Sept. 10-12 on their farm near Dafter, Michigan. This Soil Health Academy will focus on the following:

- The power of observation
- How to restore vibrant ecosystems through adaptive grazing
- Selecting cattle to fit their environment and be low-maintenance
- Develop cattle to perform and finish on forage
- Added pasture diversity, yield, and quality through adaptive grazing
- Use of bale grazing to regenerate soils
- Reduce inputs to improve profitability

- Build a more resilient ecosystem on your farm

The Soil Health Academy does limit attendance to 50 and **registration is currently open**. Instructors will include experienced regenerative ranchers and farmers. This includes **Understanding Ag** and **Soil Health Academy** founders Allen Williams and Gabe Brown, Understanding Ag consultant Luke Jones, and host and Understanding Ag consultant, Jeremy Sweeten. Find out how to register here: **Upcoming Soil Health Academy Schools**.

Upcoming Pasture Walks

Quarter Mile Good Farm & Orchard
July 16, 2024, 6:00PM - 8:00PM
6142 Willis Rd North Branch, MI 48641

Grieser Farms
July 18, 2024, 6:00PM - 8:00PM
6607 Howard City Edmore Rd, Six Lakes, MI 48886

Bowser Family Farms
August 22, 2024, 6:00PM - 8:00PM
23325 West M-60, Homer, MI 49245

Bluemer Farm
September 12, 2024, 5:00PM - 7:00PM
4753 W Blanchard Rd, Blanchard MI 49310

Kersten Farm
October 10, 2024, 5:00PM - 7:00PM
4174 W M18 Gladwin, MI 48624

To Register for any of these events please contact Brittany, at the Gladwin County Extension Office at (989) 426-7741 or by email at **msue.gladwin@msu.edu**

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