

Managed Grazing, and sustainable farming – Why they matter



What is GrassWorks?

A 20 year old non-profit organization

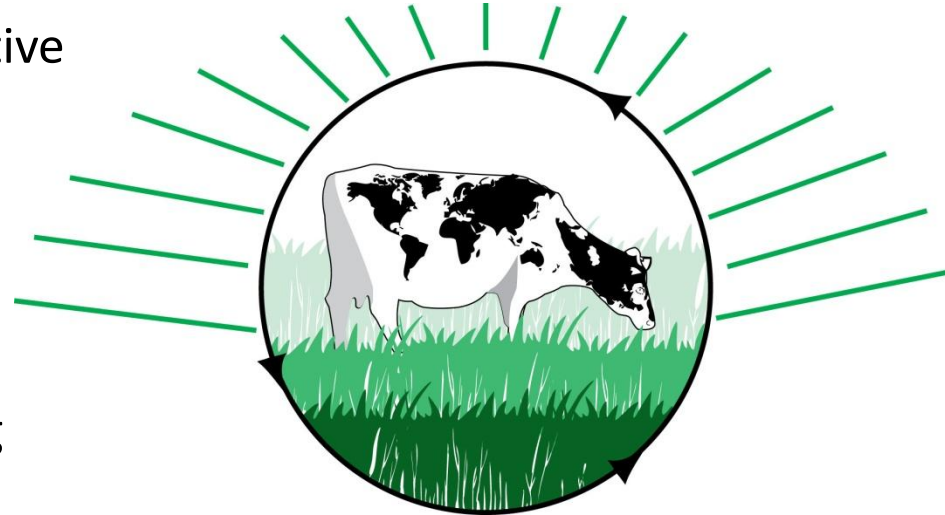
A board of directors who are all active farmers.

We pioneered farmer-to-farmer grazing networks.

GrassWorks is a coalition of grazing networks from all across the state.

We do education and outreach on behalf of the grazing community.

We reach & teach all kinds of farmers, professionals, and the general public

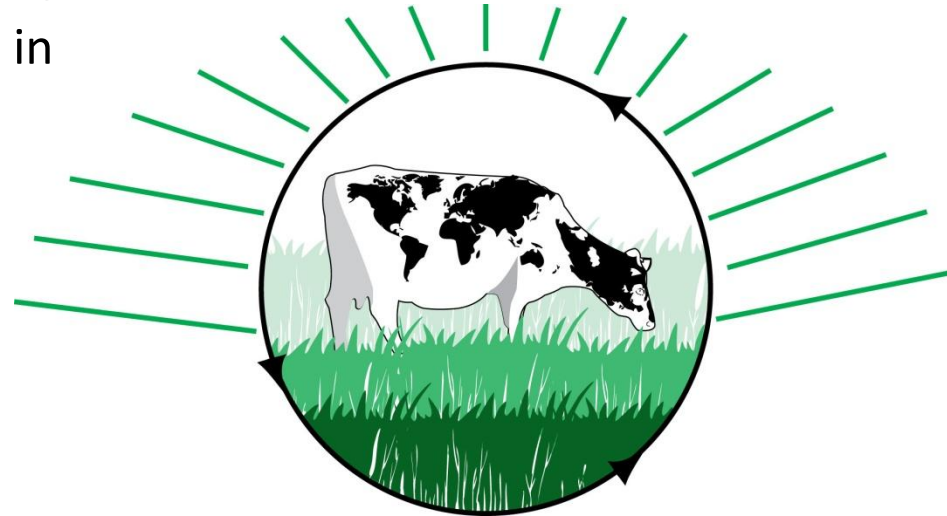


Why is managed grazing our passion?

Managed grazing has benefits for the environment because the soil stays in place and is actually rebuilt.

Managed grazing is profitable. It benefits farmers and their local communities

Managed grazing is easy on the animals. Food produced by this farming method is more nutrient dense.



www.grassworks.org

Dairy farming
is evolving into two main types of
management systems.

Traditional family farms

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graph TD; A[Traditional family farms] --> B[sustainable]; A --> C["Confinement<br/>< 660 cows"]; B --> D[Managed grazing]; B --> E[organic]; C --> F["Confinement<br/>>660 cows"];
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sustainable

Confinement
< 660 cows

Managed
grazing

organic

Confinement
>660 cows

Dairy farm management systems

Traditional & confinement



Managed grazing & organic



We've lost a lot of dairy farms

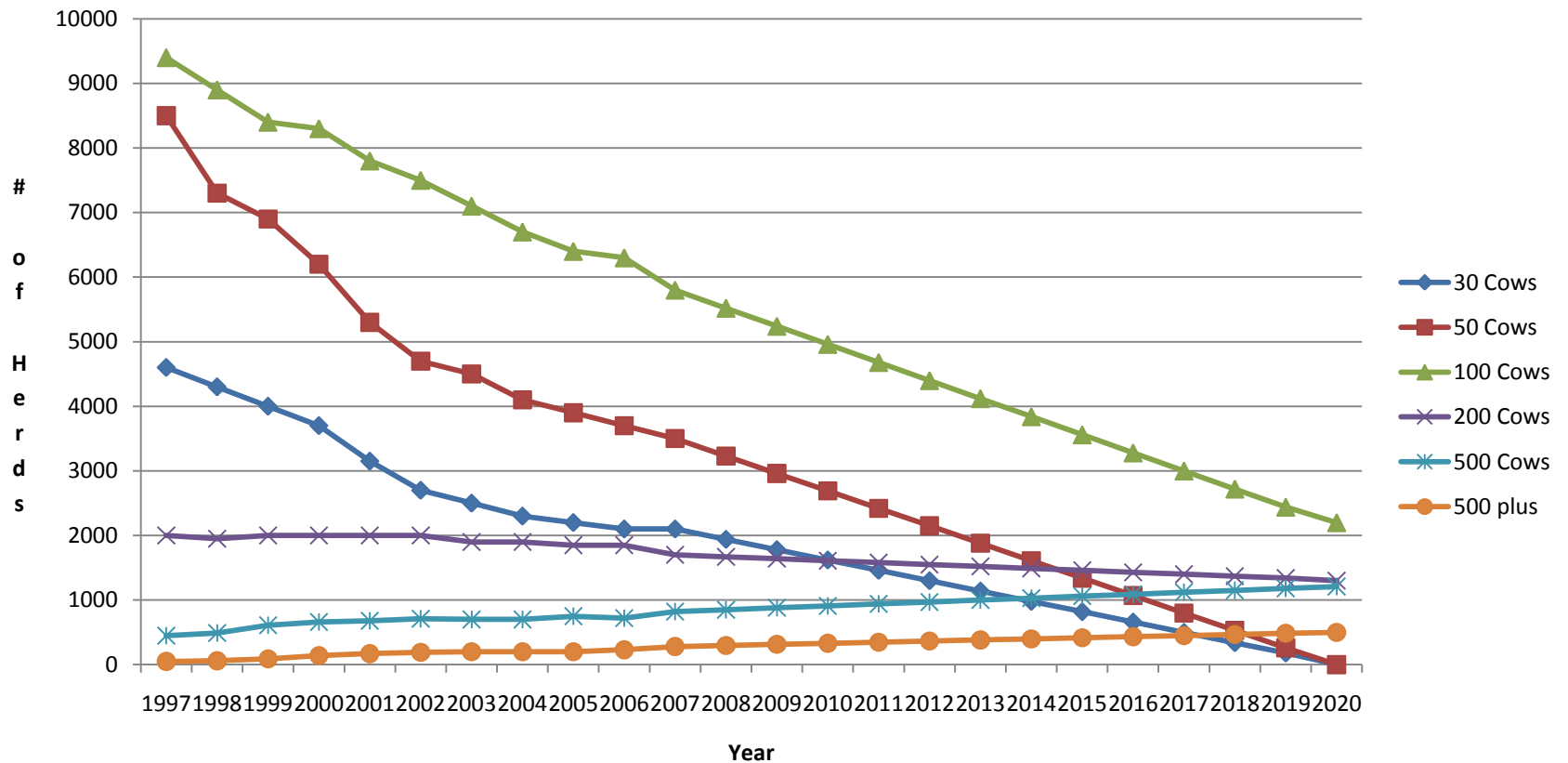
Year	Number of farms	Number of cows (million)
1967	76,000	1.9
1977	49,000	1.8
1987	37,000	1.8
1997	25,000	1.4
2007	14,200	1.25
Total lost	61,800 owner/operators	
2020 (projected)	5,000	1.2

What kind of farms are left?

- In 2007 we had about 14,000 dairy farms left
- About 1/3 practice managed grazing/organic
- About 2/3 are traditional/confinement

Farm size in Wis.

Herd Size Trends 1997 - 2007; Projected Herd Size Trends 2008 - 2020



Farm size is increasing

- Brown County has 15 CAFOs (Confined Animal Feeding Operations)
- And 15 just-under CAFO sized farms.
- A CAFO has 600 animal units.

What is our vision of the future?



Cow sheds, Manure pits, digesters

Liquid manure



Monoculture



If 50 of Wisconsin's 72 counties had:

- SIX farms with 4,000 cows (22,000 lbs/cow)
- We would have 1.2 million cows and the same amount of milk available for our processors.





Alternatively

- 20,000 grazing or organic farms
- With 65 cows each (16,000 lbs milk/cow)
- Would result in the same amount of milk



What is managed grazing?



Cows are rotated into a new paddock
after each milking



Managed Paddocks are:

- About half the size of a football field
- Very high quality legumes and grasses
- Cows are excluded after two or three days
- Paddocks re-grow for 3-4 weeks
- A 200 acre grazing farm can support 75 cows producing 16,000 lbs of milk per year

A 200 acre farm

With 100 cows will have about:

30 acres in corn silage for
winter feed,

70 acres managed for haylage
for winter feed

And 30 acres in corn for grain.

The remaining 70 acres is
divided into 35 paddocks and
rotationally grazed from May
15th until Nov 15th



Benefits of managed grazing

- Grazing farms are the most profitable
- According to UW professor Tom Kriegel on the average:

Farm management system	NFIFO per \$1.00 earned
Grazing	\$0.25
Organic	\$0.20
Confinement	\$0.14

Some savings are small, like less wear and tear on machine parts



Energy costs of harvesting and storing feed are higher in confinement systems



Park the tractors and let the cows do the work harvesting this pasture mix.





**Why feed this? (higher cost,
less feed value)**



**Grazing farm's fuel costs are typically less than half of confinement farms.
Note the small gas tank.**

Benefits of grazing

- Farmers are happier

According to the UW Center for Integrated Ag Systems:

Grazing farmers have a greater “lifestyle satisfaction” than any other type of management system



Benefits of grazing

- Better Environmental performance:
- According to many studies (see GrassWorks handout) :

Grazing farms provide significant environmental services



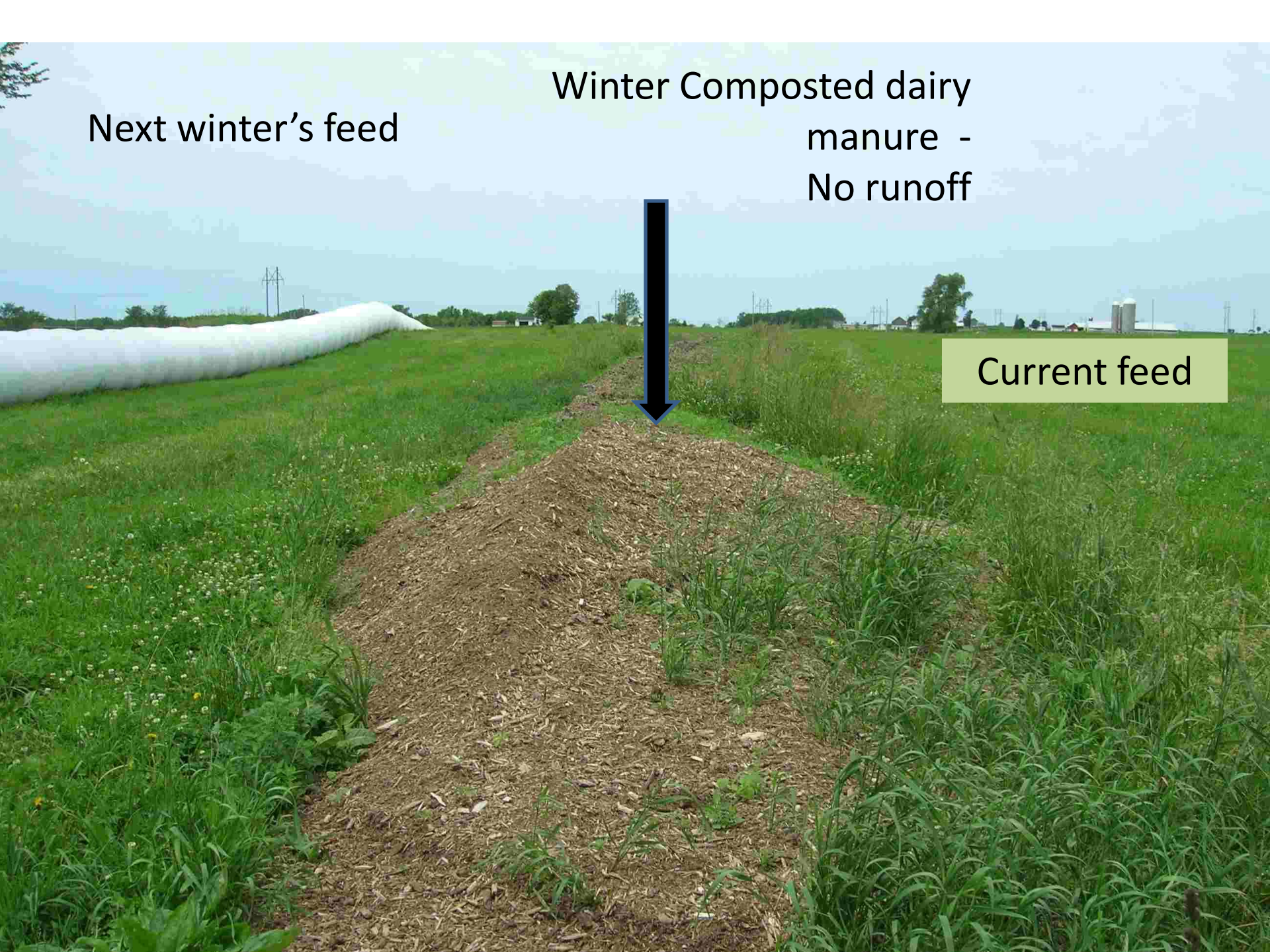
Managed grazing keeps the soil covered, almost zero runoff

Next winter's feed

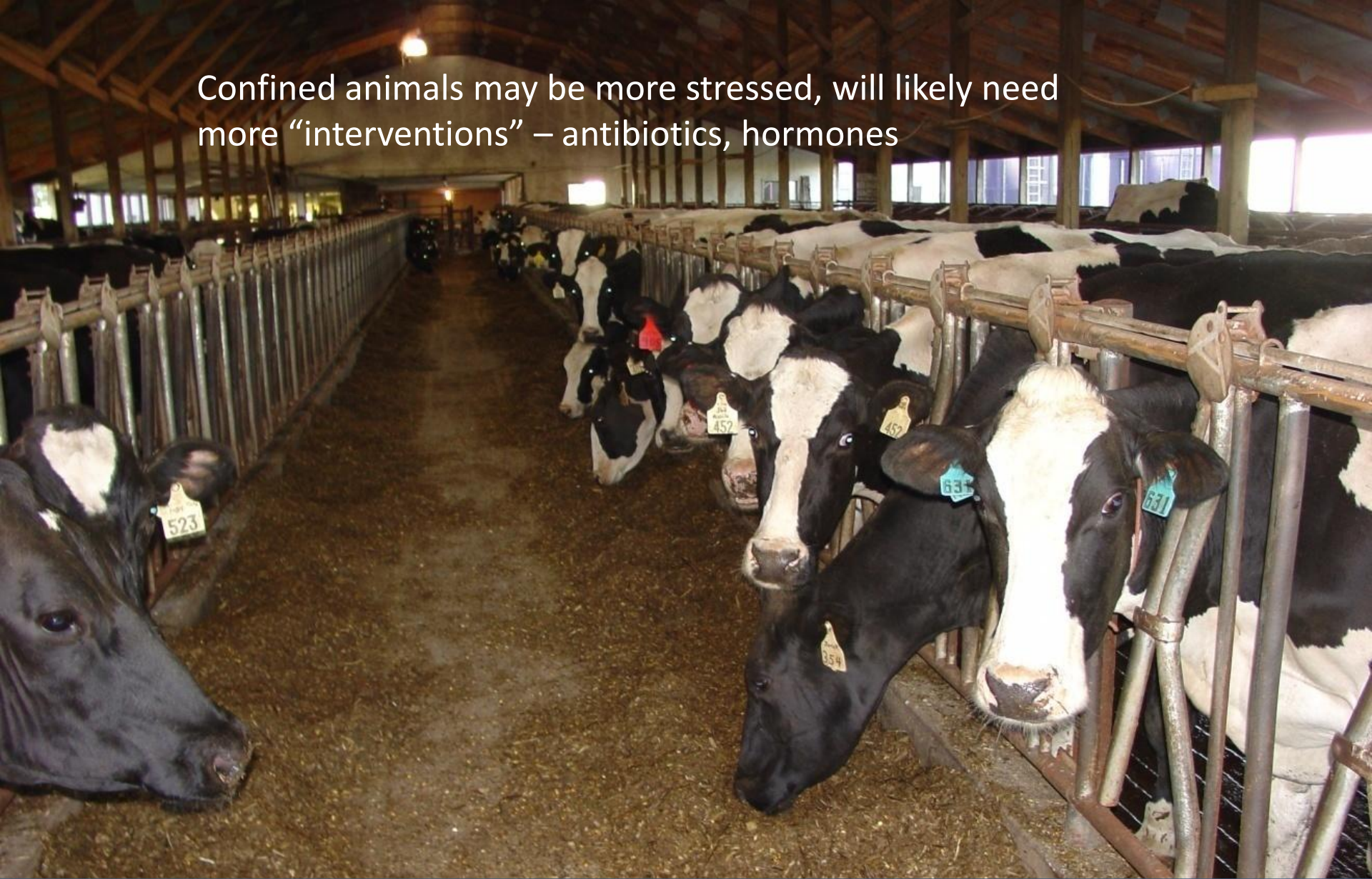
Winter Composted dairy
manure -
No runoff



Current feed



Confined animals may be more stressed, will likely need more “interventions” – antibiotics, hormones



Grazing cows have less stress, lower
vet bills, longer lives cows, more profit



Smaller farms spend more money in their home towns. Small farms mean many land owners. Local voting helps democracy thrive



Andy graduated from
UW-Milwaukee with a
degree in finance.

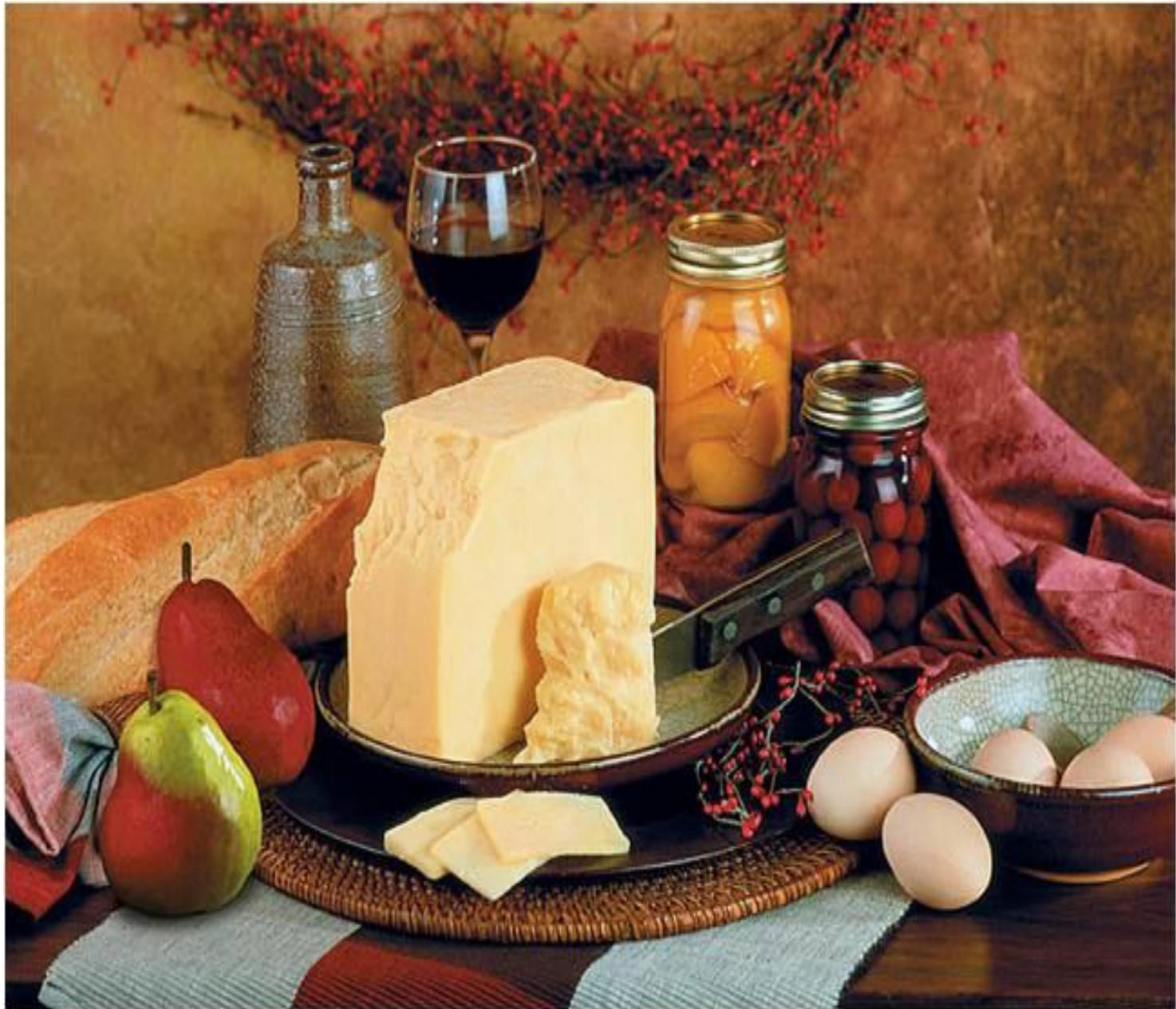
Now he aspires to own
his own farm! He
can afford to start
farming by use of
managed grazing



Grazing farms can generate renewable energy too!



How we farm, determines our food quality



Confinement egg

grass-diet egg



Grazing farms usually
raise more heifers than
they need



In confined housing, calf mortality is higher



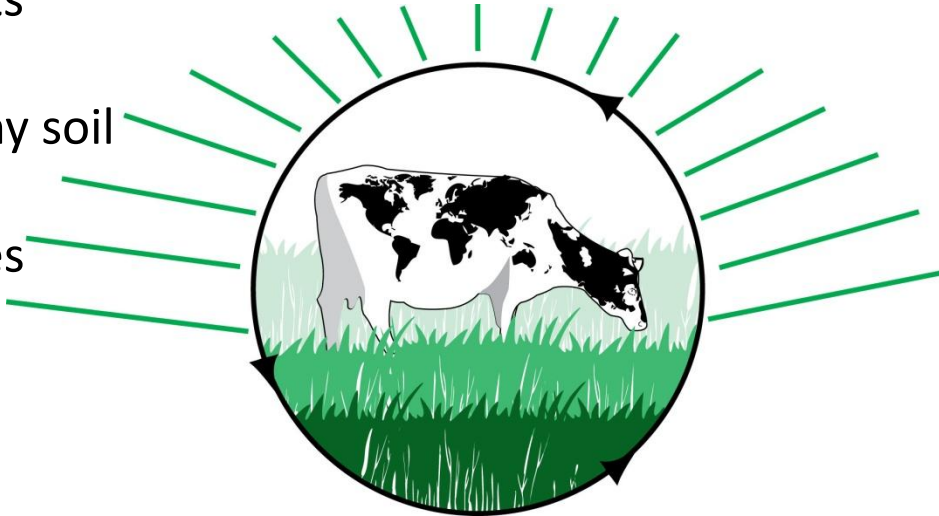
There are many benefits of
managed grazing.

There are many reasons to
support it.

Now you know why managed grazing is our passion

Managed grazing has many benefits

- Environmental, clean water, healthy soil
- Profitability
- Farmer and their local communities
- Animal health & welfare
- Great food.



www.grassworks.org

NRCS grazing specialists help
farmer's learn about grazing.

They help farmers transition to
grazing by writing grazing farm
plans.

There were over 100 pasture walks in
Wisconsin last summer

NRCS –EQIP supports grazing with
the 528 managed grazing
practice.

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NRCS continued support of
managed grazing in Wisconsin is
critically important for our future.

THANK YOU

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