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

- Managed grazing
- sustainable

Confinement: < 660 cows

Confinement: > 660 cows

- organic
Dairy farm management systems

Traditional & confinement

Managed grazing & organic
We’ve lost a lot of dairy farms

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm management system</th>
<th>NFIFO per $1.00 earned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grazing</td>
<td>$0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic</td>
<td>$0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confinement</td>
<td>$0.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.
NRCS continued support of managed grazing in Wisconsin is critically important for our future.

THANK YOU