

# GRASSWORKS GRAZING CONFERENCE 2026

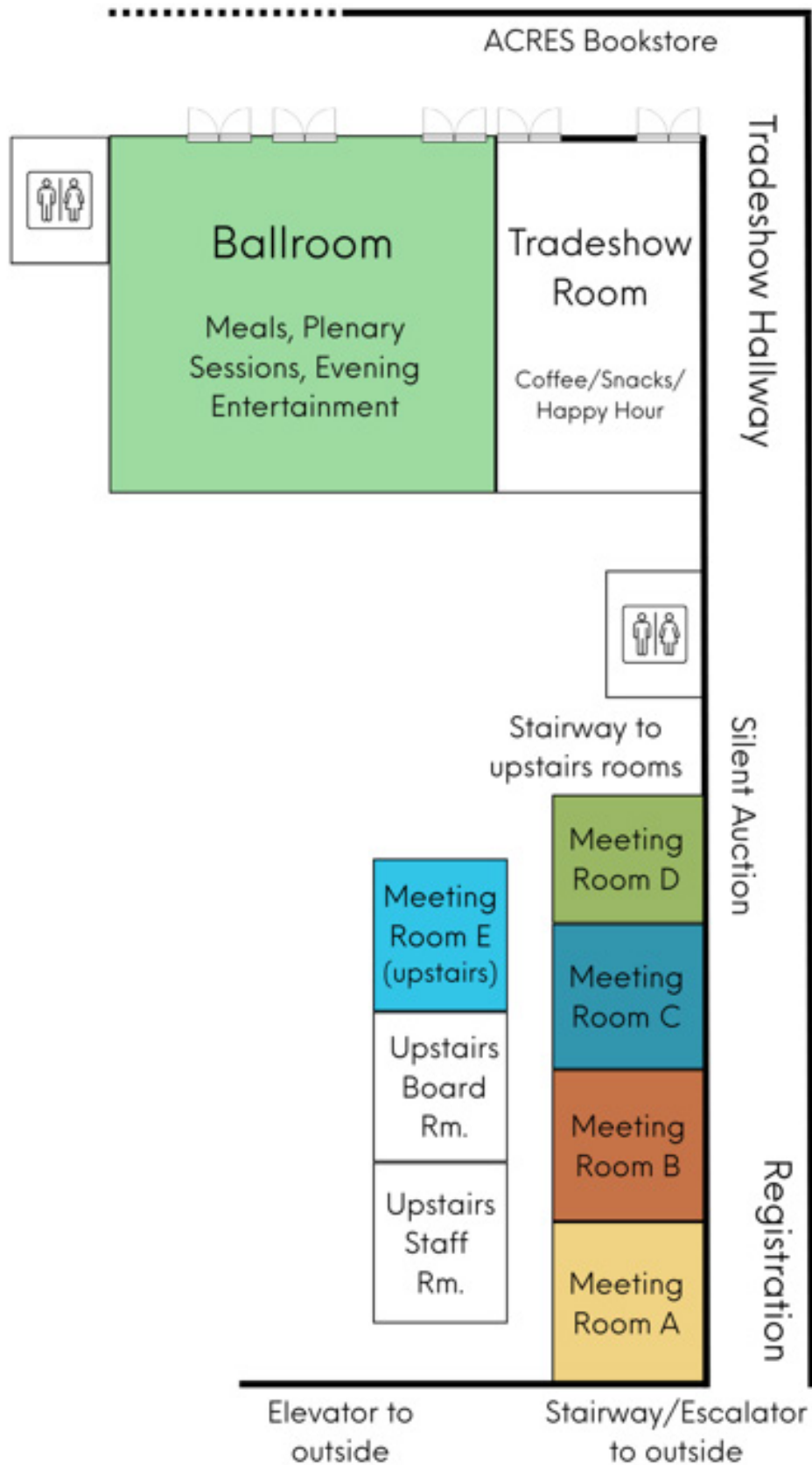
January 22-24, 2026 | La Crosse Center, La Crosse, WI

*Pastures to Prosperity: Building Financially Smart  
Grazing Systems for Today's Land Stewards*

## CONFERENCE PROGRAM



# FACILITY MAP

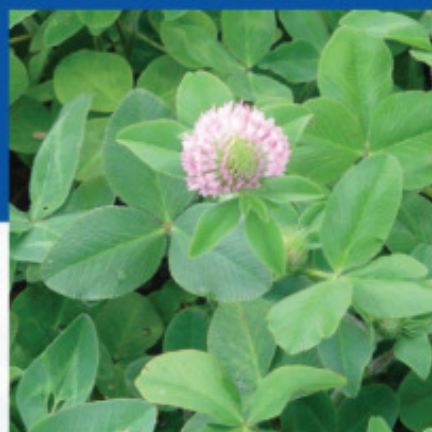






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## HAVE AN AWESOME CONFERENCE!

### Registration Table Hours

**Thursday, January 22nd:** 11:00am - 5:00pm  
**Friday, January 23rd:** 7:30am - 5:00pm  
**Saturday, January 24th:** 7:30am - 12:00pm

### GrassWorks Swag Available

Speckled ceramic campfire mugs, t-shirts, grazing sticks, grazing guides and more are available for purchase at the GrassWorks Registration Table!

### Silent Auction

Visit the Tradeshow lobby to bid on Silent Auction items you want to win! The auction closes after the entertainment on Friday evening. Winners will be notified on Saturday.

### Breakfast on Your Own

Reminder: breakfast is on your own! There will be coffee and light snacks in the morning and throughout the day in the Tradeshow, but there will be no formal breakfast offered at the Conference.

### Tradeshow Hours

**Thursday, January 22:** 2:00 pm - 6:00 pm  
**Friday, January 23:** 8:00 am - 6:00 pm  
**Saturday, January 24:** 7:30 am - 11:30 am

### Exhibitors

ACRES Bookstore  
Albert Lea Seed Co.  
Alliant Energy  
Audubon Great Lakes  
Ash Supplies  
Byron Seeds Inc.  
Cashton Farm Supply  
Clean Wisconsin  
Compeer Financial  
Cutler Fence  
Dairy Star  
Dairy Grazing Alliance/Graze Magazine  
Drinking Post Waterer  
Ducks Unlimited  
Farm Country Butchery  
Farm-To- Power  
Frommelt Ag Service  
Glacierland RC&D  
Golden Sands RC&D  
Green Lands Blue Water  
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Mosa Certified Organic  
NATGLC  
No Fence  
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Organic Valley  
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RUTE SunTracker  
Sand County Foundation  
Sauk Soil & Water Improvement Group  
Savanna Institute  
Terra Transitional Solutions  
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Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association  
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# FEATURED SPEAKERS



## **Melinda Sims Sims Cattle Company & Ranching For Profit**

Melinda Sims graduated from the University of Wyoming in 2000 with a degree in Animal Science, with an emphasis on production. While at UW, she met and married her husband, Shanon. Following graduation, they returned to work in the family business, Sims Cattle Company, in McFadden, Wyoming. Together they are raising two children, a son, Kagan, and a daughter, Jentry, the fifth generation on the ranch.

Over the past 25 years, Melinda has been deeply involved in all aspects of the ranching operation, from daily livestock and land management to long-term planning and business strategy. She attended Ranching for Profit in 2020 and 2021 and participated as an Executive Link member for two years. In 2022, she became a Ranching for Profit instructor and values the opportunity to support other ranchers as they build profitable, resilient businesses. Melinda is committed to understanding holism and applying it at Sims Cattle Company, working closely with Shanon and his family to breed profitable cattle that thrive in their environment using Ranching for Profit principles.



## **Dwayne Estes, PhD Southeastern Grasslands Institute, Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, TN**

Dwayne Estes is the executive director of the Southeastern Grasslands Institute, a full professor of biology, director of the APSU Herbarium, and Principal Investigator for the Center of Excellence for Field Biology. He co-founded SGI in January 2017 with Theo Witsell. Under his leadership, SGI has raised \$45 million and expanded from two to nearly 50 members.

Dwayne actively supports grasslands conservation in the Southeastern U.S. and is known as the "Prairie Preacher." PBS Appalachia, Virginia, won an Emmy for Best Documentary titled "The Prairie Preacher," highlighting SGI's work. His research focuses on the region's biodiversity, ecology, history, and biogeography, particularly grasslands and open woodlands.





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- Principles of Managed Grazing
- Soil health and pasture productivity
- Paddock sizing and placement
- Animal genetics and herd health
- Establishing and Renovating pastures
- Planning your own system
- And More!

*These schools are focused on large ruminant grazing but the concepts learned are useful for all species*

## Learn More Here

[grassworks.org/programs/wisconsin-schools-of-grazing/](https://grassworks.org/programs/wisconsin-schools-of-grazing/)



Registration includes instruction, meals, grazing guides, and pasture sticks

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Sep. 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup>



Marshfield Ag Research Station  
208356 Drake Ave N,  
Stratford, WI 54484

# JEROLD BERG GRAZING ADVOCATE AWARD

***The 2026 recipient is Vance Haugen!***



Vance Haugen has been a pioneering leader in the managed grazing movement for more than 30 years. Through his decades of service with the University of Wisconsin Extension, he educated and supported farmers across Wisconsin and the Midwest, pushing the envelope to help make managed grazing practical, profitable, and accessible. Known for his strong communication skills and approachable nature, Vance served for many years as University liaison to GrassWorks, strengthening connections between research, farmers, and grazing organizations.

Vance grew up on a flat Northern Minnesota farm of dairy, hay, wheat, oats, and flax. After earning a Master's Degree in Agricultural Mechanization from North Dakota State University, Vance worked in agricultural engineering before moving to UW Extension. In 1985, as Crops and Soils Agent in Shawano County, Vance learned about rotational dairy grazing and low cost parlors from John Cockrell and Charlie Opitz. He was excited!

From 1992-2018 he served as Agricultural Agent in Crawford County, where he helped introduce New Zealand-style swing-over milking parlors, and consulted on hundreds of parlor projects. He founded the Great River Graziers peer-to-peer pasturewalk group in 1992, which he continues to facilitate with his hallmark wisdoms including “is the juice worth the squeeze,” “disagree agreeably,” and “keep an open mind, but not so open that your brain rolls off the edge.”

In 1993, Vance and his wife Bonnie purchased a 230-acre farm in SE Minnesota and transformed it from marginal row-crop ground into a productive grass-based operation. They established permanent pasture and built a successful grazing dairy of 225+ head with Bonnie managing the day-to-day. Springside Farm benefited from Vance learning from farmers he worked with, and the farmers benefited from Vance's experience on Springside Farm. Vance and Bonnie recently transitioned to beef grazing with their son Olaf.

Vance contributed to GrassWorks and managed grazing in every way possible - as a producer, agency person, conference speaker, technical specialist, columnist, network coordinator, farm host, dedicated member and attendee, welcomer, board member, advisor, regional participant, and national and international consultant. He is the whole package, and a nice guy to boot!



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- Heifer Grazing Compass
- Beef Grazing Compass



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# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

## THURSDAY, JANUARY 22

|          |   |                              |
|----------|---|------------------------------|
| 11:00 AM | <b>Registration Opens: the 34th Annual GrassWorks Grazing Conference has begun!</b>   | Riverside Lobby              |
| 1:00 PM  | <b>34th Annual Conference Kick Off</b><br><b>Welcome</b> by Deb Jakubek, GrassWorks Board President <b>Weekend Conference preview</b> by Rachel Bouressa.   | Riverside Ballroom           |
| 2:00 PM  | <i>Transit time: Find your breakout room!</i>   |                              |
| 2:15 PM  | <b>Virtual Fencing: Beyond Containment</b> presented by Stephanie Bowers  | Meeting Room A               |
|          | <b>We're All Solar Graziers: Managing to maximize photosynthesis</b> presented by Laura Paine →1 CEU CM   | Meeting Room B               |
|          | <b>Mindset Tactics for Better Farm Mental Health</b> presented by Dr. Larry Tranel  | Meeting Room C               |
|          | <b>Establishing and Maintaining Silvopasture with Small Ruminants</b> presented by Margaret Chamas →1 CEU CM  | Meeting Room D               |
|          | <b>Creating a Win Win: Grazing Heifers for Economic and Ecological Returns</b> presented by Sarah Lloyd, Bob & Penny Leder, Chris Baird, Jeff & Linda Wepner, Kelsey Vance                                | Meeting Room E (Fifth Floor) |
| 3:15 PM  | <i>Break in the Tradeshow area - Come say hello to our exhibitors!</i>  | Tradeshow                    |
| 3:45 PM  | <b>Bridging Preservation and Working Lands: A New Path for Grassland Preservation-</b> An inspirational keynote with Dwayne Estes   | Riverside Ballroom           |
| 4:45 PM  | <b>Happy Hour</b> Enjoy some drinks and snacks. Meet the GrassWorks Board! GW Board Meet & Greet in the Tradeshow. Pearl Street Brewery Beer sponsored by Nordik Meats. Cheers!                           | Tradeshow                    |
| 6:00 PM  | <b>Dinner is served! Mama Mia Italian Buffet. (Must have a ticket to get served. )</b><br>Presentation: "The History of GrassWorks and Managed Grazing in the Midwest" with Otto Wiegand and Vance Haugen | Riverside Ballroom           |
| 7:30 PM  | <b>Evening Entertainment</b><br>GrassWorks Karaoke and cash bar, led by Drew Carlson  | Riverside Ballroom           |

## Get CEUs!

Look for this notation → 1 CEU in the schedule to see which sessions qualify for Continuing Education Units.

Here is a key for the codes:

- ☐ Crop Management (CM)
- ☐ Integrated Pest Management (IPM)
- ☐ Nutrient Management (NM)
- ☐ Precision Ag (PA)
- ☐ Professional Development (PD)
- ☐ Soil & Water Management (SW)
- ☐ Sustainability (SUS)



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## FRIDAY, JANUARY 23

|                 |   |                           |
|-----------------|---|---------------------------|
| <b>7:00 AM</b>  | <i>Registration Opens- Coffee and snacks in the Tradeshow</i>   | <b>Riverside Lobby</b>    |
| <b>8:30 AM</b>  | <i>Welcome and What to Expect Today.. Beth Heinze and Drew Carlson</i>  | <b>Riverside Ballroom</b> |
| <b>9:00 AM</b>  | <b>BREAKOUTS</b><br><b>Grazing 101: Prosperity from the Pasture Up!</b> presented by Brooke Bembeneck →1 CEU CM   | <b>Meeting Room A</b>     |
|                 | <b>Grazing the Prairies: A Wisconsin Tradition Reborn</b> presented by Bo Hendrickson→1 CEU CM  | <b>Meeting Room B</b>     |
|                 | <b>From Fields to Fortune: How to Run your Farm Like a Start-Up</b> presented by Chad Beier & Jeff Bubolz   | <b>Meeting Room C</b>     |
|                 | <b>Livestock Logic: Integrating Stockmanship into Managed Grazing</b> presented by Jason Cavadini   | <b>Meeting Room D</b>     |
|                 | <b>Organic Dairy Roundtable: Real Talk, Challenges and Opportunities</b> presented by Ari Abbrescia, Tom Moos, Melissa Weyland, Bert Paris, Joe Klein and Kristen Adams                                   | <b>Meeting Room E</b>     |
| <b>10:00 AM</b> | <i>Transit Time &amp; Bathroom Breaks</i>   | <b>Tradeshow</b>          |
| <b>10:15 AM</b> | <b>BREAKOUTS</b><br><b>Northern Bobwhite Quail: Can they be Saved?</b> presented by Dwayne Estes & Ashly Steinke  | <b>Meeting Room A</b>     |
|                 | <b>Foxtails, Fescues, Quacks and Orchards: My Journey Photographing and studying Wisconsin's Common Pasture Grasses</b> presented by Gregory Galbraith →1 CEU CM  | <b>Meeting Room B</b>     |
|                 | <b>E-Commerce That Works: Proven Strategies for D2C Farms</b> presented by Katie Olthoff  | <b>Meeting Room C</b>     |
|                 | <b>Lightning Round Session #1</b> moderated by Adam Abel  | <b>Meeting Room D</b>     |
|                 | <b>Discussing &amp; Understanding Raw Milk Standards for Human Consumption*</b> presented by Jerome Chateau, Mark McAfee and Arnaud Sperat-Czar   | <b>Meeting Room E</b>     |
| <b>11:15 AM</b> | <i>Transit Time &amp; Bathroom Breaks</i>   | <b>Tradeshow</b>          |
| <b>11:30 AM</b> | <b>Come and Get it!</b> Lunch in the Riverside Ballroom<br><b>Menu:</b> GrassWorks Picnic! Burgers, Brats and Grilled Chicken   | <b>Riverside Ballroom</b> |
| <b>12:00 PM</b> | <b>GrassWorks Annual Meeting (11:45am)</b><br>Catch up on what our nonprofit membership organization is up to. Members will vote on the board elections. Join the movement and get involved! We need you! | <b>Riverside Ballroom</b> |
| <b>1:00 PM</b>  | <b>Keynote: Melinda Sims</b> "Profit and Legacy - Ensuring Ranch Viability for Successors"  | <b>Riverside Ballroom</b> |
| <b>2:00 PM</b>  | <i>Break! Visit the Tradeshow and mingle with the Exhibitors!</i>   | <b>Tradeshow</b>          |

\*GrassWorks is committed to education. As part of our mission to educate farmers and consumers, we believe it's important to provide balanced information on all relevant topics, including raw milk. While GrassWorks takes no position on the legality of raw milk sales, we recognize the value of offering educational resources that allow our community to make informed decisions.

**Afternoon Schedule Continues on the next page.**

## FRIDAY, JANUARY 23-Continued

|         |           |   |                    |
|---------|-----------|---|--------------------|
| 2:30 PM | BREAKOUTS | Roundtable Session in the Riverside Ballroom  | RIVERSIDE BALLROOM |
|         |           | Grassland Bird ID and Phenology Tom Prestby and Ashly Steinke →1 CEU SUS  | Meeting Room B     |
|         |           | The \$12 Egg: Understanding Your Costs and How To Price Your Products presented by Rod Ofte   | Meeting Room C     |
|         |           | Healthy Land, Healthy Livestock presented by Pat Guptill →1 CEU IPM   | Meeting Room D     |
|         |           | Utilizing NRCS Support to Transition your Dairy presented by Tom Manley   | Meeting Room E     |
| 3:30 PM |           | Break! Visit the Tradeshow and mingle with Exhibitors!  | Tradeshow          |
| 4:00 PM | BREAKOUTS | Lightning Round Session #2 moderated by Brooke Bembeneck  | Meeting Room A     |
|         |           | Stack your Farm: Using Trees in Pasture to Increase Short Term and Long Term Sustainability presented by Josh Payne →1 CEU IPM                          | Meeting Room B     |
|         |           | Animal Health Challenges During the Grazing Season presented by Greg Brickner   | Meeting Room C     |
|         |           | Reducing Heat Stress in Dairy Cattle with Solar Shade and Portable Solar Shade Systems presented by Brad Heins  | Meeting Room D     |
|         |           | Producing Low-Risk Raw Milk presented by Mark McAfee  | Meeting Room E     |
| 5:00 PM |           | Happy Hour Beer and snacks in the Tradeshow. Pearl Street Brew sponsored by Nordik Meats. GrassWorks Mentorship Meet & Greet: 5p-5:30pm- Meeting Room A | Tradeshow          |
| 6:00 PM |           | Grazing Advocate Award + Dinner is served! Smokehouse Buffet, featuring WI Meadows brisket. You must have a ticket to get a meal.                       | Riverside Ballroom |
| 7:30 PM |           | GrassWorks Trivia! Led by Drew Carlson  | Riverside Ballroom |



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## SATURDAY, JANUARY 24

|          |  |                    |
|----------|--|--------------------|
| 7:00 AM  | Registration Opens- Happy Saturday!  | Riverside Lobby    |
| 7:00 AM  | Coffee and snacks in the Tradeshow   | Tradeshow          |
| 8:30 AM  | <b>Profitable, Adapted Livestock: The Art of Grazing at 7200 '</b> presented by Melinda Sims   | Meeting Room A     |
|          | <b>Intentional Grazing: Enterprise Selection &amp; Budgeting to Fit Your Farm &amp; Life</b> presented by Jason Cavadini                 | Meeting Room B     |
|          | <b>Plant Personalities: Who's in your Pasture and How Well Do They Get Along?</b> presented by Laura Paine →1 CEU CM                     | Meeting Room C     |
|          | <b>From Social Media to Inbox: Stronger Marketing for Direct- Market Farms</b> presented by Leslie Svacina                               | Meeting Room D     |
|          | <b>Using Pasture Ecology, Grazing Behavior and New Technologies to Solve Dairy Grazing Dilemmas</b> presented by Greg Brickner →1 CEU PA | Meeting Room E     |
| 9:30 AM  | Break - Visit the Tradeshow and meet 45+ exhibitors! Enjoy some morning snacks!  | Tradeshow          |
| 10:00 AM | <b>Connecting at the Capitol and Advocating for Ag</b> presented by Derek Orth and Joseph Childs →1 CEU PD                               | Meeting Room A     |
|          | <b>NRCS Farmers Resources and Grazing Infrastructure</b> presented by Adam Abel →1 CEU SUS   | Meeting Room B     |
|          | <b>Resiliency in the Midst of Change</b> presented by Laura Daniels →1 CEU PD  | Meeting Room C     |
|          | <b>Developing Landscape-Adapted Small Ruminants</b> presented by Cherrie Nolden  | Meeting Room D     |
|          | <b>Passing the Torch: Grazing-Based Dairy Farm Transitions</b> panel includes John Richmond, Don Boland, Melissa Weyland                 | Meeting Room E     |
| 11:00 AM | Break - Visit the Tradeshow and meet 45+ exhibitors! Enjoy some morning snacks!  | Tradeshow          |
| 11:30 AM | <b>Economics of Custom Grazing Dairy Heifers or Dairy/Beef X Stockers</b> presented by Dr. Larry Tranel                                  | Meeting Room A     |
|          | <b>Forage Chains That Make Sense: The Role of Annual Forages &amp; Cover Crops on your Farm</b> presented by Jason Cavadini →1 CEU SW    | Meeting Room B     |
|          | <b>Bale Grazing for Small Ruminants</b> presented by Leslie Svacina  | Meeting Room C     |
|          | <b>Crafting Healthy Soils in a Dairy Managed Grazing System</b> presented by Bert Paris & Randy Zogbaum →1 CEU SW                        | Meeting Room D     |
|          | <b>Grazing Dairy with Robotic Milkers</b> presented by Melissa Weyland   | Meeting Room E     |
| 12:30 PM | <b>Lunch + Closing Remarks</b> with Deb Jakubek<br><i>South of the Border Taco &amp; Nacho Bar</i>                                       | Riverside Ballroom |
| 1:30 PM  | <b>Ice Cream Social- Sponsored By Dairy Grazing Alliance</b>   | Riverside Ballroom |

## CONFERENCE SESSION ICONS (Found on Session Descriptions)



# SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

Thursday, January 22

## VIRTUAL FENCING: BEYOND CONTAINMENT



Early adoption of virtual fencing has focused on its ability to contain livestock, and in-field trials show it can successfully do so. This workshop will explore whether virtual fencing is economically justifiable, drawing on real-world farmer experiences across multiple brands and livestock species. Attendees will engage in a presentation and open discussion to consider the impacts on herd management, lifestyle, labor, time, efficiency, and overall economic viability. The goal is to provide practical insights to help determine if virtual fencing fits each farm's unique situation.

**Presented by:** Stephanie Bowers

**Time:** 2:15-3:15pm | **Room:** Meeting Room A

## WE'RE ALL SOLAR GRAZERS: MANAGING TO MAXIMIZE PHOTOSYNTHESIS



Photosynthesis, the conversion of the sun's energy into usable carbohydrates, is what makes life possible on Earth. How efficient are we at capturing the sun's energy on our farms? And can we do a better job of it in grazing systems? This session will share research-based information on how photosynthesis works and how to make the most of the sun's energy during Wisconsin's short growing season.

**Presented by:** Laura Paine

**Time:** 2:15-3:15 pm | **Room:** Meeting Room B

## MINDSET TACTICS FOR BETTER FARM MENTAL HEALTH



This session will focus on simple mindset tactics that farmers can use to improve their mental health. The presenter has 36 years experience working with farmers and is also a psychologist working in Farmer mental health.

**Presented by:** Larry Tranel

**Time:** 2:15-3:15pm | **Room:** Meeting Room C

## ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING SILVOPASTURE WITH SMALL RUMINANTS



Small ruminants are ideal partners for long-term silvopasture, with goats in particular effective for brush mitigation on challenging terrain. They also offer economic opportunities, fetching higher prices than cattle, costing less to acquire, and reproducing faster. We will explore the benefits and challenges of using small ruminants in landscape management, drawing on our own experiences and insights from networks of targeted graziers, small ruminant farmers, and silvopasture enthusiasts.

**Presented by:** Margaret Chamas

**Time:** 2:15-3:15pm | **Room:** Meeting Room D

## CREATING A WIN-WIN: GRAZING HEIFERS FOR ECONOMIC AND ECOLOGICAL RETURNS



Raising replacement heifers on managed grazing systems can improve herd health, reduce costs, and benefit farm and watershed ecosystems. This panel will feature farmers who raise their own heifers on pasture or participate in custom grazing agreements, sharing lessons learned and challenges overcome. Participants will hear from grazing experts about the economic and ecological impacts of heifer grazing, as well as tools and technologies to support management decisions. Whether you're exploring on-farm heifer grazing or considering custom arrangements, this session provides practical insights to improve profitability and sustainability.

**Presented by:** Sarah Lloyd, Kelsey Vance, Chris Baird, Bob Leder and Jeff Wepner

**Time:** 2:15- 3:15pm | **Room:** Meeting Room E (Fifth floor)

## KEYNOTE: BRIDGING PRESERVATION AND WORKING LANDS: A NEW PATH FOR GRASSLAND PRESERVATION

Dr. Dwayne Estes invites you on a journey from his roots on a beef cattle farm in central Tennessee into his evolution as a leading voice for grassland conservation. His path, which began with a preservation-first conservation lens, took a transformative turn after co-founding the Southeastern Grasslands Institute in 2017. Through this work, he developed a "chocolate chip chunk cookie" model that blends wild and working landscapes, showing that the future of grassland conservation bridges cultural and regional gaps. In doing so, he redefines what it means to be a conservationist, connecting farms, forests, grasslands, wetlands, and streams to conserve both our natural and cultural heritage.

**Presented by:** Dr. Dwayne Estes

**Time:** 3:45-4:45pm | **Room:** Riverside Ballroom

Friday, January 23

## GRAZING 101: PROSPERITY FROM THE PASTURE UP!



Healthy, productive pastures are the foundation of every successful grazing system. This introductory session will walk participants through the core principles of pasture management, focusing on how to grow more grass, improve forage quality, and make better use of every acre. Attendees will learn simple tools for monitoring pasture condition, planning rotations, and aligning forage supply with livestock demand. Whether you're new to grazing or looking to strengthen your foundation, this session will give you practical, profitable strategies to build stronger pastures from the ground up.

**Presented by:** Brooke Bembeneck

**Time:** 9:00-10:00am | **Room:** Meeting Room A

## GRAZING THE PRAIRIES: A WISCONSIN TRADITION REBORN



Presentation will focus on grazing warm season prairies in the lull months of the summer when grazing cool season grasses are not as productive. Part of the discussion will consist of turning unproductive areas in a farm field to native habitat to be more cost-effective and increase yields. Other discussion points will revolve around when grazing should occur, what that looks like from a production standpoint of the herd and benefits to the farmer and the wildlife. Takeaway goals are to educate landowners on different grazing options, how to implement these practices, and what organizations and/or agencies can be a beneficial resource to farmers.

**Presented by:** Bo Hendrickson

**Time:** 9-10am | **Room:** Meeting Room B

## FROM FIELDS TO FORTUNE: HOW TO RUN YOUR FARM LIKE A START UP



Running a farm is running a business, with constant uncertainty from weather, markets, and costs. Modern frameworks like Agile, Scrum, and Lean offer practical ways to do more with less, respond faster, and focus on what adds value. This talk shows how to apply short feedback loops, continuous improvement, and smart prioritization to farm operations. The goal: simple tools to adapt, optimize, and stay profitable year after year.

**Presented by:** Chad Beier and Jeff Bobolz

**Time:** 9-10am | **Room:** Meeting Room C

## LIVESTOCK LOGIC: INTEGRATING STOCKMANSHIP INTO MANAGED GRAZING SYSTEMS



Grazing aligns with livestock's natural behaviors, but it isn't always stress-free for animals or farmers. Handling livestock on our terms can challenge their comfort zones and impact the success of a grazing operation. This presentation covers animal behavior and stockmanship basics, and how to apply these skills for effective, successful grazing.

**Presented by:** Jason Cavadini

**Time:** 9-10am | **Room:** Meeting Room D

## ORGANIC DAIRY ROUNDTABLE: REAL TALK, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES



Would organic certification work on my dairy farm? What's the process? Is the juice worth the squeeze? We heard your questions, and we're bringing together the experts to talk about it. Join experienced dairy farmers and folks from Organic Valley and a organic certification agency for a chance to ask questions, share your perspectives, or just listen in.

**Panelists:** Tom Moos, Melissa Weyland, Bert Paris, Joe Klein, Kristen Adams, Ariana Abbrescia

**Time:** 9-10am | **Room:** Meeting Room E (Fifth Floor)

## NORTHERN BOBWHITE QUAIL: CAN THEY BE SAVED?



Once abundant in Wisconsin's Driftless Area, northern bobwhite quail populations are now nearly undetectable. This session explores quail conservation across the U.S., highlighting successful restoration practices. We will also discuss how managed grazing farms in Wisconsin could play a key role in bringing this species back.

**Presented by:** Dwayne Estes and Ashly Steinke

**Time:** 10:15-11:15am | **Room:** Meeting Room A

## FOXTAILS, FESCUES, QUACKS AND ORCHARDS: MY JOURNEY PHOTOGRAPHING AND STUDYING WI'S COMMON PASTURE GRASSES



As the photographer for an updated UW Extension pasture grass ID booklet, I'll share a visually rich presentation highlighting the unique traits of Wisconsin's pasture grasses. My work led to the discovery of a grass species not previously reported in the state, with potential impact for graziers. Drawing on 30 years running a grass-based dairy and seven years as a grazing columnist for Agri-View, I'll combine science, personal observations, and management insights in this session.

**Presented by:** Gregory Gilbraith

**Time:** 10:15-11:15am | **Room:** Meeting Room B

## E-COMMERCE THAT WORKS: PROVEN STRATEGIES FOR D2C FARMS



For over five years, ChopLocal has helped direct-to-consumer farmers grow online meat sales. Supported by a USDA AMS FMPP grant, they provided training, resources, and nationwide surveys to uncover trends and challenges in the D2C meat market. This session shares data-driven insights on customer behavior, ecommerce, marketing, and strategies to boost online sales. While focused on livestock, the tools and tactics apply to all direct-to-consumer farms and small food businesses.

**Presented by:** Katie Olthoff

**Time:** 10:15-11:15am | **Room:** Meeting Room C

## LIGHTNING ROUND SESSION #1

Folks in the grazing community have much to share! To honor the spirit of sharing that is so often prevalent at pasture walks and grazing programs throughout the year, we are dedicating a session solely to that. Come hear your fellow grazing enthusiasts share fast-paced presentations about everything from research results to a unique solution or a new trick of the trade!

**Moderated by:** Adam Abel

**Time:** 10:15-11:15am | **Room:** Meeting Room D



## DISCUSSING & UNDERSTANDING RAW MILK STANDARDS FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION



This session offers an educational discussion on raw milk standards for human consumption at the international and national levels. A panel of experts, including Mark McAfee from the Raw Milk Institute and France's robust raw milk sector, will share factual information and insights about regulations, safety practices, and market realities. The conversation will be carefully guided to focus on education rather than controversy, providing attendees with a clear understanding of raw milk standards.

**Presented by:** Jerome Chateau, Mark McAfee, Arnaud Sperat-Czar

**Time:** 10:15-11:15am | **Room:** Meeting Room E (Fifth Floor)

## KEYNOTE: PROFIT AND LEGACY: ENSURING RANCH VIABILITY FOR SUCCESSORS

In this inspiring keynote, Melinda Sims, CFO of Sims Cattle Company and a member of the Ranching for Profit team, explores why profitability is the foundation of every successful ranch transition. Drawing on her family's experience managing succession across five generations, Melinda will highlight the practical principles that keep operations financially strong and positioned for long-term success. She will also share Ranching for Profit strategies that help families navigate leadership transitions with clarity and confidence.

**Presented by:** Melinda Sims

**Time:** 1-2pm | **Room:** Riverside Ballroom

## ROUNDTABLE SESSION

Join this interactive roundtable to engage directly with GrassWorks weekend speakers and ask your specific questions. Don't miss this opportunity to dive deeper into the topics that matter most to you!

**Time:** 2:30-3:30pm | **Room:** Riverside Ballroom

## GRASSLAND BIRD ID AND PHENOLOGY



This session will provide attendees with the information to develop skills to identify common grassland birds found on managed, rotational grazed pastures.

**Presented by:** Tom Prestby and Ashly Steinke

**Time:** 2:30-3:30pm | **Room:** Meeting Room B

## THE \$12 EGG: UNDERSTANDING COSTS AND HOW TO PRICE YOUR PRODUCTS



It is absolutely critical that you understand your costs of production to stay a viable business. Too many producers do not think through pricing, and end up failing or losing money in their operation as a result. This session will give examples on how to completely capture true costs of production, and give examples on how to best set pricing to have a thriving business.

**Presented by:** Rod Ofte

**Time:** 2:30-3:30pm | **Room:** Meeting Room C

## HEALTHY LAND: HEALTHY LIVESTOCK



Our family has changed the way we graze our land, which has made our land healthier and in turn makes our cattle healthier. We use a holistic approach to take care of our cattle preferably before they get sick. We use natural remedies for pest control and we have made our own recipe for minerals. We have changed our grazing goals to a more efficient and simple method, and a more holistic approach to our land and animal health.

**Presented by:** Pat Guptill

**Time:** 2:30-3:30p | **Room:** Meeting Room D

## UTILIZING NRCS SUPPORT TO TRANSITION YOUR DAIRY



Considering transitioning your dairy operation to certified organic operation production? Curious about how you can access direct technical assistance and possibly financial assistance to make that transition easier? Join Tom Manley, an Organic Conservation Specialist with Marbleseed and WI NRCS to explore the benefits of integrating conservation planning into your transition and bring your questions specific to your operation

**Presented by:** Tom Manley

**Time:** 2:30-3:30pm **Room:** Meeting Room E (Fifth Floor)

## LIGHTNING ROUND SESSION #2

Folks in the grazing community have much to share! To honor the spirit of sharing that is so often prevalent at pasture walks and grazing programs throughout the year, we are dedicating a session solely to that. Come hear your fellow grazing enthusiasts share fast-paced presentations about everything from research results to a unique solution or a new trick of the trade!

**Moderated by:** Brooke Bembeneck

**Time:** 4-5p **Room:** Meeting Room A

## STACK YOUR FARM: USING TREES IN PASTURE TO INCREASE SHORT TERM PROFITS AND LONG TERM SUSTAINABILITY



Looking to create income for the next generation or add shade and shelter to your pastures? Trees may be the solution. Join sheep, cattle, and pastured pig farmer Josh Payne to learn how to “Stack Your Farm” with grazing-friendly tree systems. Josh has planted 120 acres—with plans for 500 more—of chestnut and mixed-species silvopasture that supports grazing profitability while adding high-value tree crops. Attendees will learn how to plant trees in pasture without losing grass, explore tree mixtures that maximize grazing and long-term profit, and discover equipment that makes tree planting easier.

**Presented by:** Josh Payne  
**Time:** 4p-5p | **Room:** Meeting Room B

## ANIMAL HEALTH CHALLENGES DURING THE GRAZING SEASON



Learn practical, common-sense approaches to the most frequent health issues faced by grazing livestock. This session covers straightforward strategies producers can use throughout the grazing season to keep animals healthy and productive. Ample time will be provided for questions and discussion.

**Presented by:** Greg Brickner  
**Time:** 4-5p | **Room:** Meeting Room C

## REDUCING HEAT STRESS IN DAIRY CATTLE WITH SOLAR SHADE AND PORTABLE SOLAR SHADE SYSTEMS



We’ve developed our own solar-powered portable shade system that we move through the pastures with our cows. This summer, we’re conducting extensive research on reducing heat stress by using internal body sensors and tracking weekly grazing behaviors. We’re also testing a horn fly vaccine for grazing dairy cattle to evaluate its effectiveness in reducing horn fly populations.

**Presented by:** Brad Heins  
**Time:** 4-5p | **Room:** Meeting Room D

## PRODUCING LOW-RISK RAW MILK



Farmers who produce low-risk raw milk must carefully manage the cleanliness and hygiene of the farm as a whole from grass-to-glass. From the health of the herd, to cleanliness of the milking parlor, to the specific cleaning processes for the milk line, to ensuring rapid milk chilling, to regularly testing their milk, and everything in between, raw milk farmers have to be dedicated to taking their farm management to the next level in order to ensure that their raw milk is safe to consume. This session will be an overview of the Raw Milk standards for dairy farmers who are considering the switch to raw milk production.

**Presented by:** Mark McAfee  
**Time:** 4-5p | **Room:** Meeting Room E (Fifth Floor)

*Saturday, January 24*

## PROFITABLE, ADAPTED LIVESTOCK: THE ART OF GRAZING AT 7200'



This session explores how adapting livestock to specific environments can drive profitability. Melinda Sims will share her experiences raising cattle at 7200 feet, covering strategies from calf development to raising successful breeding cows and bulls. Attendees will gain practical insights on matching livestock to their environment for healthier animals and stronger financial results

**Presented by:** Melinda Sims  
**Time:** 8:30- 9:30am **Room:** Meeting Room A

## INTENTIONAL GRAZING: ENTERPRISE SELECTION & BUDGETING TO FIT YOUR FARM & LIFE



There are many ways for grazing operations to generate income, but not every enterprise makes sense for every farm. The allure of diversification causes many farms to stack enterprises without intentionality, and they become unprofitable and spread thin. This presentation will walk through the process of identifying enterprises matched to your farm and life, and the basics of enterprise budgeting to support them.



**Presented by:** Jason Cavadini  
**Time:** 8:30a-9:30am | **Room:** Meeting Room B

## PLANT PERSONALITIES: WHO'S IN YOUR PASTURE AND HOW WELL DO THEY GET ALONG?



Every neighborhood has its share of friends, antagonists, and loners. The pasture plant community is no different! How well do the plants in your pasture get along? Join us for an interactive session that helps you get to know the species that inhabit your pastures and gain an understanding of different species' unique strengths and weaknesses.

**Presented by:** Laura Paine  
**Time:** 8:30-9:30am | **Room:** Meeting Room C

## FROM SOCIAL MEDIA TO INBOX: STRONGER MARKETING FOR DIRECT-MARKET FARMS



Many farmers rely on Facebook and Instagram, but those platforms are “rented ground” because algorithms change, reach drops, and accounts can vanish. Email, however, consistently outperforms social media for sales and customer loyalty, making it a far more dependable tool for direct-to-consumer farms. This workshop covers why email should be a priority, how to get started, and simple, practical ways to keep it going. We’ll walk through building a list, creating content that connects, and setting up an easy system you can manage while still farming.

**Moderated by:** Leslie Svacina  
**Time:** 8:30-9:30am | **Room:** Meeting Room D

## USING PASTURE ECOLOGY, GRAZING BEHAVIOR, AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES TO SOLVE DAIRY GRAZING DILEMMAS



Dairy grazing impacts long-term pasture soil fertility and productivity far differently than beef grazing. Conventional dairy grazing recommendations adapted from NZ, Ireland, etc fail to address realities on US dairy farms due in part to lower fertilizer inputs and differences in climate. Grazing behavior with typical once or twice daily moves is another hurdle. New technologies in pasture biomass measurement and virtual fence collars could be the key to grazing strategies that merge forage quality, sustainable soil fertility, and improved pasture yield in a low input system.

**Presented by:** Greg Brickner

**Time:** 8:30-9:30am | **Room:** Meeting Room E (Fifth Floor)

## CONNECTING AT THE CAPITOL AND ADVOCATING FOR AG



Effective advocacy starts with authentic storytelling. In this session, Derek Orth and Joseph Childs will share practical tips and real-world insights to help you become a stronger advocate for agriculture, including how to effectively convey the story of why you are advocating for agriculture. Learn how to build trust with consumers, prepare for interviews, communicate confidently, and make the most of your conversations with government officials. This approachable, experience-based guidance will equip you with skills you can start using immediately whether you are speaking at the Capitol, engaging with policymakers, or connecting with your community about the importance of agriculture.

**Presented by:** Joseph Childs and Derek Orth

**Time:** 10-11am | **Room:** Meeting Room A

## NRCS FARMER RESOURCES AND GRAZING INFRASTRUCTURE



This workshop will introduce the general process for applying for federal assistance and provide an overview of key grazing practices commonly supported in Wisconsin. Topics include fencing, pipeline installation, pasture and hayland planting, and other essential components of a well-designed grazing system. Participants will gain a clear understanding of how to access NRCS programs and which practices can help improve the efficiency and resilience of their grazing operations.

**Presented by:** Adam Abel

**Time:** 10-11am | **Room:** Meeting Room B

## RESILIENCY IN THE MIDST OF CHANGE



"The times they are a-changin'" has never been more true. Laura will share practical tips from decades of experience helping farm families have better conversations and navigate change. You'll leave this session with tools to strengthen connections, stay balanced, and keep your farm nimble.

**Presented by:** Laura Daniels

**Time:** 10-11am | **Room:** Meeting Room C

## DEVELOPING LANDSCAPE-ADAPTED SMALL RUMINANTS



Small ruminants are much more challenging than cattle to raise successfully in the hot humid summers and bitterly cold winters of the Upper Midwest. For over 2 decades, Cherrie has been selecting for sheep and goats that are naturally productive and low-maintenance under these conditions with naturally-occurring forages. She will share her selection approach and current research related to both reducing costs and increasing income from landscape-adapted small ruminants.

**Presented by:** Cherrie Nolden

**Time:** 10-11am | **Room:** Meeting Room D

## PASSING THE TORCH: GRAZING-BASED DAIRY FARM TRANSITIONS



Smooth transfer is essential to keeping grazing dairies thriving. This session highlights 3 different farm's practical strategies for transitioning a dairy farm—from communication and planning to finances and shared decision-making. Whether you're preparing to retire, take on more responsibility, or plan ahead, this session offers real examples to guide a successful transition.

**Presented by:** Don Boland, John Richmond, Melissa Weyland

**Time:** 10-11am | **Room:** Meeting Room E (Fifth Floor)

## ECONOMICS OF CUSTOM GRAZING DAIRY HEIFERS OR DAIRY/BEEF X STOCK



This session covers the economics of dairy heifer rearing, including feed costs and how to set custom grazing rates per head per day or per pound of gain. Growth rates based on forage quality and necessary supplements will be discussed, with tools applicable to stocker graziers and beef operations. A heifer cost slide rule will help producers compare costs for each 100 pounds of body weight gained.

**Presented by:** Larry Tranel

**Time:** 11:30-12:30pm | **Room:** Meeting Room A

## FORAGE CHAINS THAT MAKE SENSE: THE ROLE OF ANNUAL FORAGES & COVER CROPS ON YOUR FARM



Cover crops and annual forages seem to be a no-brainer for grazing. Yet, knowing exactly how to implement them on your farm can be downright confusing. This session will walk through the process of selecting the right species and planting methods based on your farm goals, so you can develop a forage chain that just makes sense.

**Moderated by:** Jason Cavadini

**Time:** 11:30-12:30pm | **Room:** Meeting Room B



**BALE GRAZING FOR SMALL RUMINANTS**



Bale grazing isn't a new concept for cattle producers, but adapting it to small ruminants comes with its own set of challenges. Leslie will share lessons learned from implementing bale grazing on her own farm. Topics also covered will include benefits of bale grazing, fencing approaches, hay feeders, placement strategies and general concerns to be aware of with goats and sheep. She will also touch on how using technology like virtual fencing can be used with this practice.

**Presented by:** Leslie Svacina  
**Time:** 11:30-12:30pm | **Room:** Meeting Room C

**GRAZING DAIRY WITH ROBOTIC MILKERS**



Join an experienced dairy farmer as she shares real-world lessons on grazing with robotic milkers. This session covers cow traffic models, including free-flow and guided systems, and how to design lanes, pastures, and infrastructure to support your farm's goals. Learn practical strategies for pasture management, stocking density, water placement, and gated systems, along with feeding approaches that balance pasture, robot pellets, and bunk to optimize production and cow visits throughout the grazing season.

**Presented by:** Melissa Weyland  
**Time:** 11:30-12:30pm | **Room:** Meeting Room E (Fifth Floor)

**CREATING HEALTHY SOILS IN A DAIRY MANAGED GRAZING SYSTEM**



Managed grazing is the ultimate soil health farming system. Join Bert Paris and Randy Zogbaum as they explore the journey to implement soil health principles in a managed grazing system. Randy will talk about the soil health principles and Bert will show and talk about what he has done differently on his farm this year to apply those principles in a dairy managed grazing system.

**Presented by:** Bert Paris and Randy Zogbaum  
**Time:** 11:30-12:30pm | **Room:** Meeting Room D

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# JOIN THE GRASSWORKS LIVESTOCK GRAZIER



## *Mentorship Program*

The GrassWorks Livestock Grazier Mentorship Program is a one-year program that helps beginning graziers develop essential skills through one-on-one mentoring with experienced graziers. Applications are open year-round for both mentors and mentees. To participate, mentees must have access to land and livestock and mentors must have at least 5 years of managed grazing experience.

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# SPEAKER BIOS

## ARIANA ABBRESCIA

Ari Abbrescia works with UW–Madison Extension to support organic and sustainable farming across Wisconsin. With experience in organic specialty crop research, production, and outreach, Ari works with farmers and researchers to tackle tough production challenges while promoting agroecosystem health. She shares best practices through technical assistance, web-based resources, field days, and storytelling to strengthen connections and practical knowledge across the state.

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## ADAM ABEL

Adam Abel is the State Grazing Specialist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), with over 20 years of experience helping producers transition to grazing. Growing up on a family farm, he witnessed the economic, livestock, and soil health benefits of rotational grazing, a message he is passionate about sharing. Adam holds a bachelor's degree in Soil and Land Management from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. He lives in Kimberly, WI, with his wife and three children and enjoys boating, camping, and exploring Wisconsin's outdoors with his family.

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## KRISTEN ADAMS

Kristen Adams uses her hands-on dairy farming experience in her current role as a Certification Specialist/Inspector for Minnesota Crop Improvement Association. Kristen grew up on a diversified dairy farm in Southwestern Wisconsin and managed a 45-cow dairy farm for 15 years before moving into work in the organic regulations in 2015. Kristen is passionate about supporting farmers, taking a practical approach to recordkeeping system and practices that support the health and wellness of land and livestock.

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## MARY C. ANDERSON

Mary C. Anderson has a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire and an Associate of Science from Chippewa Valley Technical College. She has been working in soil conservation, soil health and managed grazing for 30+ years and is an experienced grazer of 100 percent organic grass finished beef (retired organic dairy). Mary C. is the Land and Habitat section Grassland Specialist for the Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources helping to guide grassland management and grazing on DNR owned and managed properties for the benefit of soil health, habitat restoration, assisting habitat managers with grazing implementation and building partnerships with livestock owners that have the capacity to manage and graze these properties. Mary C. has been writing grazing plans since before the 528 Grazing Standard was created. She is active in the River Country Grazing Network, serves as an advisor to the GrassWorks Board of Directors and Grasslands 2.0 Policy Team.

## BEN BABCOCK

Ben Babcock and his family operate Top-Ayr Herefords near Wisconsin Dells, focusing on functional Hereford cattle and managed grazing. The farm includes 85 acres of owned pasture and 15 acres of rented hay ground, with warm-season annuals used to extend the grazing season. Ben also works as a Soil Conservationist for Golden Sands RC&D, helping producers with grazing planning and Farm Bill programs.

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## CHRIS BAIRD

Chris Baird operates a 60-cow Jersey dairy herd near Ferryville, Wisconsin. In 2025, he partnered with Kelsey Vance to have a group of his replacement heifers custom grazed, allowing him to better manage forage resources and focus labor on his milking herd while the young stock benefited from managed pasture-based growth.

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## PRABIN BAJGAIN

Dr. Prabin Bajgain is a perennial grass breeder with the USDA-ARS' Dairy Forage Research Center in Madison, WI. Dr. Bajgain holds B.S. and M.S. degrees in Plant Genetics and Biotechnology, and a Ph.D. in Plant Breeding and Molecular Genetics. An expert in breeding and domestication of perennial crops, his research program utilizes applied genetic and genomic tools to expedite the breeding progress of perennial forage grass species. Dr. Bajgain believes in strong interdisciplinary collaborations among researchers and stakeholders, especially with farmers and industry partners, and encourages anyone who wants to talk about anything grass to reach out to him.

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## ROBERT BAUER

Robert Bauer is a Grazing Specialist and Resource Conservationist for Golden Sands RC&D in Viroqua, Wisconsin. For the last five years he has worked in Crawford, Vernon, Monroe, and surrounding counties in the Driftless Region of Wisconsin to assist NRCS customers with grazing planning and implementation, train agency staff on grazing planning, and do grazing outreach to farmers and landowners.

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## CHAD BEIER

Chad is an Organizational Agility Advisor, Professional Scrum Trainer (PST) with Scrum.org, podcast host, and professional speaker. His experience as a programmer, project manager, scrum master, product owner, and business owner helps him connect with people at every level of an organization and build adaptability and drive meaningful change.



## BROOKE BEMBENECK

Brooke Bembeneck is the Conservation Grazing Analyst for the Marathon County Conservation, Planning, and Zoning Department, where she promotes grass-based agriculture through pasture walks, landowner education, and the Heart of Wisconsin Grazing Conference. She works directly with landowners to develop and implement grazing plans across the county. Brooke earned her M.S. in Agroecology from UW–Madison, studying how grazing intensity affects soil and water quality in Western Marathon County, and gained hands-on experience managing dairy heifers at the Marshfield Agricultural Research Station. She hopes to one day to have her own grazing operation.

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## DON BOLAND

Don Boland and along with his cousin Sean and his son Ryan operate a 170 cow seasonal grass based dairy at Gays Mills Wisconsin. They have been working with reduced milking schedules for 20+ years and are finishing up our first full season milking once a day. Sean and I have had a share milking agreement to distribute income and expenses since 2020. Ryan is our 6th apprentice through the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship program.

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## STEPHANIE BOWERS

Stephanie was born and raised on a dairy farm in Upstate New York and earned her Master's Degree in Ruminant Nutrition from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She is a Regional Dairy Educator with the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension, serving Outagamie, Shawano, Oconto, and Winnebago Counties, focusing on dairy grazing and emerging grazing technologies. Stephanie and her husband, Jeff, live on a small ruminant farm with their two boys, where they operate a targeted grazing program using virtually collared goats and sheep to manage invasive species. The family is also actively involved with 4-H, combining hands-on agriculture with family adventure.

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## GREG BRICKNER, DVM

Greg has been practicing managed grazing since 1987. He and his family live and farm in Wonewoc, WI where they graze a sheep flock. He currently works for Dairy Grazing Alliance helping to manage research projects and promote better on-farm management.

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## JEFF BUBOLZ

Jeff Bubolz is a business owner, Organizational Agility Advisor, Professional Scrum Trainer with Scrum.org, podcast host, and professional speaker. He has worked with organizations ranging from startups to Fortune 500 companies, helping them improve value delivery in product development and elevate organizational health.

## JASON CAVADINI

Jason Cavadini is the Grazing Outreach Specialist with the UW–Madison Division of Extension, where he leads research, outreach, and education focused on perennial forages, managed grazing, and livestock-integrated cropping systems. Raised in Wisconsin's Driftless Area, he brings a strong conservation ethic to his work. Jason holds a bachelor's degree in Crop and Soil Science from UW–River Falls and a master's degree in Agronomy from Purdue University. He is a Certified Professional Agronomist, an advisor to GrassWorks Inc., and operates a cow-calf to finish grazing operation with his family near Stratford, Wisconsin.

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## MARGARET CHAMAS

After a successful 4-H dairy goat career, Margaret earned degrees in animal science from Cornell University and Iowa State, specializing in ruminant nutrition and grazing research. She owns and operates Storm Dancer Farm in Smithville, MO, where she raises dairy goats for show, crossbred meat goats for targeted grazing, and various equines and poultry for agritourism. Margaret began targeted grazing as a Goats On The Go affiliate in 2018 and now works with GOTG in recruitment, outreach, and affiliate support.

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## JEROME CHATEAU

Born and raised in France, Jerome Chateau trained as a veterinarian in his home country and as an epidemiologist in the United States, and also holds a graduate degree in social studies. In 1997, he founded Normande/French Genetics to introduce Normande and other French genetics to the U.S. market. Throughout his career, his focus has been on providing high-quality, high-added-value grass-based genetics for grazing and organic operations.

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## JOSEPH CHILDS

Joseph Childs, Working Lands Coordinator for Crawford Stewardship Project and custom grazer in SW Wisconsin, grew up on a small dairy farm near Ferryville, where his family grazed and milked 60 dairy cattle. After leaving the farm, he returned to farming in 2021, launching a custom grazing business. Joseph is active in advocacy, serving on the local boards of both the Wisconsin Farmers Union and Wisconsin Farm Bureau. His advocacy work has taken him to Madison, Washington D.C., the Netherlands, and the 2024 World Food Forum in Rome as part of the World Farmers Organization.

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## LAURA DANIELS

As a family business advisor Laura Daniels guides fellow farmers in the areas of team building, conflict management and strategic planning with Hitch Pin LLC. Laura is a proven organizational leader with executive-level experience and a background in dairy nutrition and on-farm management. She also serves as the Owner and General Manager of Heartwood Farm a beef cow/calf operation using Gallagher virtual fence to rotational graze 65 pairs in addition to growing corn, beans and hay. Her farm was previously a 300 cow Jersey grazing dairy. Laura founded Dairy Girl Network in 2013 to help fellow dairywomen across the United States connect and succeed.

## VALERIE DANTOIN

Valerie Dantoin has been grazing alongside her husband, Rick Adamski, for over 30 years. She previously worked in the DNR's wildlife damage program and recently retired from teaching at the Technical College in Green Bay. Valerie now focuses on helping graziers navigate interactions with the state's whitetail deer and wolves.

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## GREGORY GILBRAITH

Gregory Galbait, a 1981 Dairy Science graduate from the University of Illinois, managed two dairy operations before purchasing his family farm in Aniwa, Wisconsin, where his ancestors began farming in 1890. He and his wife Wendy grew their herd from 40 cows in a tie-stall barn to 120 cows on an organic, seasonal, grass-based dairy farm. Gregory chronicled his farming experiences as a weekly columnist for Agri-View, focusing on grazing, and remains active in Wisconsin's grazing community through his interest in grass identification. He currently works as a paraprofessional assisting special needs students in Edgar, Wisconsin.

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## SARAH GLOVER

As the Land Stewardship and Community Engagement Manager for OneEnergy Renewables, Sarah Glover coordinates seeding and vegetation management across the company's 10- to 30-acre solar projects in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa. Based in Madison, she works closely with farmers who graze sheep, grow specialty crops, and keep bees on project sites, with sheep proving to be an especially effective and sustainable alternative to lawnmowers. Sarah looks forward to expanding these agricultural partnerships as OneEnergy continues to develop solar projects throughout the Midwest.

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## PAT GUPTILL

Pat and Mary Lou Guptill have managed Guptill Ranch in western South Dakota for 30 years with their five children. They focus on grass-finished cattle, low-stress stockmanship, and intensive grazing, earning the 2013 South Dakota Leopold Award. Pat served 10 years on the South Dakota Grasslands Coalition and helped lead the state's grazing school for over 12 years.

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## BRAD HEINS

Brad Heins is a Professor of Organic Dairy Management at the University of Minnesota's West Central Research Center in Morris, Minnesota. Currently, Dr. Heins conducts his research at the University of Minnesota's West Central Research and Outreach Center. The Center has a 130-head herd in a certified organic system, and a 160-head herd in a conventional grazing system. His research and extension program focuses on best management practices for dairy production, crossbreeding of dairy cattle, group rearing of calves, and renewable energy for dairy production systems.

## BO HENDRICKSON

Bo Hendrickson, a Habitat Restoration Biologist from southwest Wisconsin, grew up on three family-run dairy and beef farms, fostering a lifelong passion for land stewardship. He holds a degree in Forestry and Wildlife from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. Bo's work blends historic land management with modern conservation science, emphasizing natural grazing to enhance biodiversity and wildlife habitat. He enjoys sharing his knowledge and the ecological benefits of grazing systems.

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## JOHN HENDRICKSON

John Hendrickson is a farm viability specialist at the Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems at UW-Madison. He manages the Compass Tool program—a suite of decision support tools that help producers calculate cost of production and manage enterprise profitability. In the past, John operated his own certified organic vegetable farm.

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## CHRISTOPHER KEISER

Chris has worked in the wildlife damage and mitigation field for over ten years. He has worked for multiple state agencies across the eastern half and southern portions of the United States. In these rolls he worked with landowners and farmers to help address issues with crop damage to a variety of crops by multiple types of wildlife species. In addition, in many of his rolls, he also handled non-agricultural related, nuisance wildlife conflict issues that arise.

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## JOE KLEIN

Joe Klein is currently employed for the past 15 years at CROPP Cooperative / Organic Valley as the dairy pool manager for members in Wisconsin and Minnesota. His main duties are supporting members with organic dairy herd management, agronomy, equipment, facilities, and other technical support. Joe's previous experiences include five years employed as staff inspector for MOSA, conducting organic crop, livestock, and processing inspections in the Midwest area, and twenty years of owning/managing his family's 240 acre certified organic dairy and crop farm near Cuba City, WI.

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## BOB & PENNY LEDER

Bob Leder is a retired veterinarian and custom heifer grazer from Bear Creek, Wisconsin. An experienced grazer, he spent many years raising sheep with his wife, Penny. In 2025, Bob began custom grazing dairy heifers for neighbors, the Wepners, and he also grazes beef cattle.

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## SARAH LLOYD

Sarah Lloyd, Supply Chain Specialist, Grassland 2.0, UW-Madison, Sarah is working to scope out the ecological and economic opportunities and challenges of expanded dairy heifer grazing in the region.

## ASHER MALIEPAARD

Asher Maliepaard is a Regenerative Agriculture Specialist at Golden Sands Resource Conservation and Development Council, where he develops managed grazing plans, provides technical assistance, and coordinates events for the grazing community in Central Wisconsin. He also raises beef cattle and operates a community compost business. Asher's background spans natural resource conservation, ecological restoration, small-scale agriculture, and renewable energy.

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## TOM MANLEY

Tom Manley is the Climate and Conservation Director at Marbleseed and an Organic Conservation Specialist with NRCS. He works to help NRCS staff and producers implement conservation planning and NRCS practices to enhance well managed organic production. He also operates a small, diversified grass-centered farm in Western Wisconsin with his wife Becky.

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## MARK MCAFEE

Mark McAfee is the Founder and CEO of Raw Farm, the world's largest raw dairy producer, and the Founder and Chairman of the Raw Milk Institute. Raw Farm products including raw milk, butter, cream, kefir, and truly raw cheese are sold in more than 500 retail stores across California, with cheeses available in over 1,200 stores nationwide. A retired EMS paramedic with pre-medical training, Mark is deeply committed to the concept of food as medicine. For the past 14 years, he has been a member of the International Milk Genomics Consortium at UC Davis, contributing to research and dialogue on milk, microbiology, and human health. He is a sought-after university speaker, writer, podcaster, and media guest and is widely recognized for his expertise in raw milk production, safety, and policy. Mark also operates the only on-farm dairy pathogen laboratory in the world, implementing batch-by-batch testing and clearance prior to sale.

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## TOM MOOS

Tom Moos is an Organic dairy farmer from Chippewa county WI. In the fall of 2001 Tom brought dairy cows back to the family farm that had sat empty for the previous year. He began transitioning to organic the following spring and was able to begin shipping organic milk in October of 2005 and in 2016 added grassfed certification to the farm as well.

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## CHERRIE NOLDEN

Cherrie Nolden has over two decades of experience raising grain free meat sheep and livestock guardian dogs, forage fed meat goats, and pastured draft horses, along with a variety of other livestock. She and her husband manage 250 acres in southwest Wisconsin, supporting approximately 150 ewes, 75 does, 30 rams and bucks, and 53 draft horses. Cherrie holds an MS in Agroecology, a BS in Wildlife Ecology, and certificates in small ruminant production and grazing management, with doctoral level research in animal science topics including parasitology, nutrition, restoration ecology, grazing management, and predator prey dynamics.

## ROD OFTE

Rod Ofte, a fourth-generation rancher, owns Willow Creek Ranch, a 400-acre rotational grazing operation near Coon Valley, WI, where he raises 100 cow-calf pairs, grass-finishes 200 head annually, and produces pastured pork and free-range eggs. A graduate of West Point and Boston University, he has over 25 years of global food industry experience. He is President of Norse Group Consulting, President of Nordik Meats Inc., and has led the Wisconsin Grass-fed Beef Cooperative as General Manager since 2008.

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## KATIE OLTHOFF

Katie is an Iowa farm wife and mom with over 10 years of experience in agricultural communications and marketing. A former teacher and small business owner, she enjoys hosting webinars and coaching farmers to grow their businesses. Katie co-founded ChopLocal in 2020 and was named one of Cattle Business Weekly's Top 10 Industry Leaders under 40 in 2021. A lifelong believer that life is better with cows out your kitchen window, she was also voted most likely to appear on Who Wants to Be a Millionaire in her senior class.

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## DEREK ORTH

At Orthridge Farms in Fennimore, Wisconsin, Derek Orth and his family raise a diverse mix of animals and crops, with dairy as their primary focus. In 2025, they added an on-farm retail store to market pasture-raised beef, pork, lamb, chicken, and eggs, and implemented virtual fencing to expand rotational grazing. Derek is active in youth, community, and agricultural organizations, including Farm Bureau. He and his wife, Charisse, have four children: Zeeva, Jaylee, Callum, and Rhea.

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## LAURA PAINE

Laura Paine is a Grazing Outreach Program Coordinator with the University of Wisconsin Extension. She has bachelor's and master's degrees in plant science. Her 30+ years of work experience includes research, education and market development work for grass-fed and organic farmers through multiple agencies and organizations. Laura and her husband live on their 89-acre farm near Columbus, WI where they raised grass-fed beef for nearly 20 years. Their farm now supports an early career grazer raising cow-calf pairs.

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## BERT PARIS

Bert Paris began dairy farming in 1983 and adopted managed grazing for his milk cows in 1993 after attending the first GrassWorks Grazing Conference. Today, he works alongside his daughter Meagan, who is transitioning into farm ownership. Together, they seasonally milk 80 crossbred cows and manage 200 acres of pasture and hay, achieving organic certification in 2019. Since discovering the importance of soil health in 2022, Bert has continually refined his grazing practices to prioritize and improve soil quality.



## JOSH PAYNE

Josh Payne has been in the regenerative ag scene for close to a decade, and his experience pretty much covers the spectrum. He started using cover crops in a conventional row crop operation. When he found out herbicides cause an anaphylactic reaction in his throat, Josh and his sister Jordan switched to a 1000 ewe adaptive grazing sheep flock, and have begun to stack their grazing land with chestnut orchards and a 60 sow farrow to finish hog operation designed to help cash-flow orchard establishment. Josh is the co-founder of Stacked Agroforestry, a company founded to help farmers and landowners grow their land vertically by reintroducing trees in landscapes to balance long-term profitability and environmental regeneration while maintaining current farming operations.

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## THOMAS PRESTBY

Tom Prestby is the Wisconsin Conservation Manager at Audubon Great Lakes. He leads Audubon's wetland restoration, bird monitoring, and working lands conservation initiatives in Wisconsin including Audubon Conservation Ranching and grassland bird monitoring. He has a B.S. degree from University of Wisconsin-Madison and a M.S. degree from University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. Tom has researched and monitored birds across Wisconsin for about 20 years, including grassland birds in southwestern and central Wisconsin.

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## JOHN RICHMOND

John Richmond II is a farmer who was supported by the DGA in finding and buying into the farm he now calls home. He married his wife, Chelsea, in 2017, just two days before the farm paperwork was finalized. Together they are raising three children, a six-year-old daughter and four-year-old boy-girl twins.

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## ARNAUD SPERAT-CZAR

Arnaud Sperat-Czar is the founder and editor-in-chief of Profession Fromager, launched in 2002 with the National Federation of Cheesemakers of France and the International Guild of Cheesemakers. He is also president of the Foundation for Cheese Biodiversity, which he founded in 2021 to support the long-term preservation of historic raw milk cheeses as cultural heritage and drivers of biodiversity and human health. He is the author of several books, including Cheeses of the World and A Guide to Cheese Aging.

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## ASHLY STEINKE

A grass-based beef farmer based in Cornell, Wisconsin, Ashly implements the Audubon Conservation Ranching (ACR) program in Wisconsin, developing habitat management plans, certifying farms and ranches, and cultivating relationships with bird conservation partners. Ashly implements ACR protocols at his farm and has over 15 years of experience as an ecologist restoring wetland and grassland habitat

## LESLIE SVACINA

Leslie Svacina owns Cylon Rolling Acres in Deer Park, Wisconsin, where she raises meat goats and sheep rotational grazing practices. She sells all of their market stock as meat direct to consumers, as well as some regional wholesale buyers.

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## LARRY TRANEL

Dr. Tranel is a graduate of UW-Platteville with BS degrees in Agricultural Economics and International Studies, an MS in Agricultural Industries, and a Doctorate in Pastoral Psychology. He grew up on a Wisconsin dairy farm and is a former dairy and dairy goat producer. Dr. Tranel served 10 years as a UW Extension Dairy Farm Management Agent in Iowa County, Wisconsin, and is now in his 27th year as a Dairy Field Specialist with Iowa State University Extension. He specializes in dairy farm mental health, personalities, finances, facilities, milking systems, organic dairying, and grass milk, and is a sought-after speaker and consultant.

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## PABLO DE CASO UDAVE

Pablo is a first-year M.S. student in Animal & Dairy Sciences at the UW-Madison and earned his B.S. in Agronomy in Mexico. His research focuses on identifying key risk factors for mastitis in organic dairies, aiming to improve farm profitability and herd health. His broader interests include regenerative farming, animal welfare and data-driven management.

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## KELSEY VANCE

Kelsey Vance, Custom Heifer Grazier, Kelsey is a dairy grazing mentor for Dairy Grazing Alliance, and has worked as a Farmland Access Navigator with Renewing the Countryside. She has her own sheep, goats, and small herd of grazed dairy cows. In 2025 she custom grazed dairy heifers for dairy farmer Chris Baird.

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## JAMES VANDERPOL

James VanDerPol is a senior partner at Pastures A Plenty, where he has guided his family farm's transition to grass-based, direct-marketed livestock production. Since the 1990s, he and his family have focused on pork, beef, eggs, and other livestock, with a strong commitment to sustainable farming and expanding local processing opportunities. A University of Minnesota graduate, James combines decades of hands-on farming experience with a lifelong dedication to learning and advancing imaginative, generational agriculture. He continues to explore new directions for his farm while mentoring the next generation in livestock-based farming.

**JEFF & LINDA WEPNER**

Jeff and Linda Wepner of Wepner Dairy Farms in Manawa, Wisconsin, manages a dairy herd of over 350 cows in a confinement TMR system and also operates a beef enterprise. In 2025, the Wepners partnered with Bob Leder to custom graze their dairy heifers, expanding their herd management options. The farm continues to focus on high-quality dairy production while integrating innovative approaches to animal care and grazing.

**MELISSA WEYLAND**

Melissa is an organic dairy farmer operating two Lely A5 robotic milkers in a managed grazing system. Her work focuses on integrating this technology with pasture based dairying, and she shares her lessons learned from daily experience on her Northeast Wisconsin farm.

**RANDY ZOGBAUM**

Randy Zogbaum is a soil and education scientist and the DATCP Soil Health Program Manager. For 30 years, including nearly two decades in adult education, his work has focused on the connection between soil health and water quality. He has held multiple roles supporting managed grazing in Wisconsin, including education coordinator for the Columbia/Dodge Grazing Network, NRCS Technical Service Provider, and lead instructor for Madison Area Technical College's Institute for Sustainable Agriculture. Across these roles, Randy has consistently highlighted managed grazing as a leading soil health farming system.



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