

Agricultural Newsletter

UW-Madison College of Ag & Life Science
University of Wisconsin-Extension



Wild Weather

Phil Holman
Superintendent
Spooner Ag Research Station

I had one farmer tell me that “AVERAGE is the middle of the abnormal years.” I am beginning to believe that more and more. This year is marking the fifth straight year of abnormally dry conditions.

Table 1 lists the rainfall for the past 4 years and 2009 through June 30th as officially measured at the Spooner Ag Research Station.

Table 1.

Year	Precipitation	Departure
30 year Average	30.6”	—————
2009 (so far)	7.0”	-5.0”
2008	24.4”	-6.2”
2007	28.7”	-1.9”
2006	21.2”	-9.4”
2005	28.9”	-1.7”
Total Departure 2005- 2009		-24.2”

A point to make about 2005 and 2007 was that both years were very dry in the summer and had large fall rainfall events to make the year total look more average. When will the years come that are above average? The Southern and Southeastern part of the state are experiencing wet years in 2008 and so far in 2009.

The dry weather has already impacted forage yields with low first crop harvest totals and second crop looks short as well. Corn and soybeans have fared well so far but will need timely rains as we get more hot days.

Speaking of heat. This spring has been rather cool and windy. So far 737.5 Growing Degree Units have been accumulated. Average through June is normally 898 GDUs. Thus, we are 160.5 GDUs behind normal or approximately 9 days. GDUs will be important for crops like corn to reach full maturity and proper test weights.

Table of Contents

- 1 Wild Weather
- 2 Two pasture walks to be held on July 11
- 3 Irrigation uniformity calibration test kit available
- 3 Wisconsin Grazing School offered in Cable
- 4 Organic dairy cow pasture walk
- 4 4th Biennial Spooner Dairy Sheep Day
- 5 Wolf update for Wisconsin
- 5 SBA loans available to farmers
- 6 Profitable practices for tough times
- 7 This Quarter's Events

July-August-September
2009
Volume 15 Issue 3

Agricultural NEWSLETTER

produced by
University of Wisconsin-Extension
and
UW-Madison College of Ag & Life
Sciences

Representing Burnett, Sawyer, & Washburn Counties:

Kevin Schoessow
Area Ag Development Agent
715-635-3506 or 800-528-1914

Richard Otto Wiegand
Area Ag Agent
715-635-3506 or 800-528-1914

Phil Holman
Spooner Ag Research Station
Superintendent
715-635-3735

Yves Berger
Spooner Ag Research Station
Sheep Researcher
715-635-3735

Representing Ashland, Bayfield, and Douglas Counties:

Jason Fischbach
Area Agricultural Agent
715-373-6104

University of Wisconsin, United States
Department of Agriculture and Wisconsin
Counties Cooperating. UW-Extension
provides equal opportunity in employment
and programming. Including Title IX and ADA
requirements.

If you have any special needs or require
special accommodations, please write to
UWEX Area Agricultural Agent, Spooner Ag
Research Station, W6646 Highway 70,
Spooner, WI 54801 or UWEX Area
Agricultural Agent, Ashland Ag Research
Station, 68760 State Farm Road, Ashland, WI
54806.

Two pasture walks to be held on July 11

Otto Wiegand
Area Agricultural Agent
Burnett, Sawyer, & Washburn Counties

Horse Pasture Walk, Burnett County, 10 a.m.

A horse pasture walk has been scheduled on Saturday, July 11, from 10-noon at the Wild Wind Farm Equestrian Center at Grantsburg, WI. Topics will include rotational paddock grazing, horsemanship, horse breed differences and marketing unique riding experiences.

The Center specializes in beginner riding and driving lessons, wellness that can be derived from being around and working with horses, and unique parent-child experiences. Please join us for this special event!

Directions: From the Burnett Dairy Cooperative on Hwy 70 in Alpha, take County Road Y two miles south to Hanson Point Rd. and turn left. The address number is 22735. Watch for Pasture Walk signs.

The walk is sponsored by the Northwest Wisconsin Graziers Network in cooperation with UW-Extension. Contact UWEX Ag Agents Otto Wiegand or Kevin Schoessow at Spooner, 715-635-3506, Tim Jergenson at Barron Co., 715-537-6250, Ryan Sterry at Polk Co., 715-485-8600, or Lynn Johnson at NW Graziers, 715-268-8778.

Beef Pasture Walk, Ladysmith, 10 a.m.

A beef pasture walk featuring a solar watering facility will be held at the Ron & Lori Becker Farm #2, 730 Hwy 27, Ladysmith, on Saturday, July 11 from 10 AM – Noon. The event is co-sponsored by Northcentral Graziers, NW Graziers, Pri-Ru-Ta and UW-Extension. The Beckers live on and operate another farm in Sawyer County.

The Ladysmith farm received a rotational grazing plan in 2008. The Beckers worked with the local NRCS office to receive cost sharing that was available to help cover part of the costs associated with transitioning the farm to a MIRC system. Grazing related items that have been cost-sharable through the NRCS include fencing, raised lanes, waterlines & tanks, pasture planting along with a drilled well used for livestock only. The Beckers drilled a well and installed a solar-powered pump with gravity flow and a 1,500 gallon tank.

The beef herd consists of 40 head of crossbred cattle. Cattle are moved to a new paddock every three days. The 50 acres of pastures are established with diverse species of forage including clover, timothy, birdsfoot trefoil, alfalfa and smooth brome.

From Ojibwe at the intersection of Hwys 70 & 27, take Hwy 27 south 17.7 miles to the farm on the left (east) side of the road. From Ladysmith, take Hwy 27 north 5.3 miles from the Hwy 8 & 27 intersection. Watch for pasture walk signs.

For more information contact: Robert Brandt at NC Graziers, 715-748-2008, Lynn Johnson at NW Graziers, 715-268-8778, Otto Wiegand or Kevin Schoessow at UWEX-Spooner, 715-635-3506, or Tim Jergenson at UWEX-Barron, 715-537-6250.

Irrigation uniformity calibration test kit available

*Phil Holman
Superintendent
Spooner Ag Research Station*

The University of Wisconsin Extension Biological Systems Engineering Department has developed an irrigation uniformity test kit. There are a couple kits in the central sands area and one in Northwestern Wisconsin.

I used a kit last fall and determined that new sprinklers were needed for one of our two 40-acre irrigation systems. The other irrigation system was new and was also checked to see if the irrigation ratings were what the system was actually applying. The new system was very uniform but slightly higher than the book values which is good for me to know when making my irrigation schedule.

If someone with a field irrigation system is interested to check their irrigation uniformity and calibration, we could arrange that the kit be available for producers in the Burnett, Washburn, and Sawyer County area. Call 715-635-3506 or 800-528-1914 for more information.

Wisconsin Grazing School offered in Cable, July 28-29

*Otto Wiegand
Area Agricultural Agent
Burnett, Sawyer, & Washburn Counties*

A management-intensive grazing school will be held on Tuesday and Wednesday, July 28-29, at the Telemark Resort in Cable. The school is designed to teach producers, educators and agency staff the basics of management intensive grazing with a hands-on approach. The two-day, intensive workshop will provide opportunities for in-depth discussions, field exercises, and reference materials that cover both livestock and agronomic topics related to grazing.

Presenters at the school include UW-Extension agronomists, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) grazing specialists, UW dairy and beef nutritionists, fencing and water systems experts, agricultural economists and veterinarians. In addition, several Wisconsin grazing producers will provide a “real world” perspective through visits to actual grazing farms and a panel discussion featuring experienced grazers.

Management intensive grazing is based on four key factors:

- meeting the nutrient requirements of the grazing animal;
- optimizing forage yield, quality, and persistence;
- environmental stewardship; and
- integrating knowledge and technology into a practical and profitable management system.

Cost for the school is \$75 per person (\$110 for two people from the same farm). The fee includes materials and meals. Registration deadline is Friday, July 24.

The school is organized by UW-River Falls, UW-Extension and NRCS, and co-hosted by NW Graziers, ABDI Graziers, NCentral Graziers and Pri-Ru-Ta RC&D. For information or to register, contact Dennis Cosgrove, UW-Rivers Falls 715-425-3345 or by email: dennis.r.cosgrove@uwrf.edu. If you have additional questions, contact UW-Extension Ag Agents Otto Wiegand or Kevin Schoessow at Spooner, 715-635-3506, Lynn Jonson at NW Graziers, 715-268-877, Bob Mika at ABDI Graziers, 715-965-5698, or Bob Brandt / Lanice Szomi at NC Graziers / Pri-Ru-Ta, 715-748-2008.

Organic dairy cow pasture walk

**Wednesday, August 12
10 AM-Noon, Luck, WI**

*Otto Wiegand
Area Agricultural Agent
Burnett, Sawyer, & Washburn Counties*

The Northwest Wisconsin Graziers Network is hosting an organic dairy pasture walk at the Oakhill Grassland Farm, owned by Mark & Kristin Johnson, located at 1998 275th Ave. or County Road B, Luck, WI, in Polk County. The event will take place on Wednesday, August 12, 2009 from 10 AM to Noon. Topics will include managing pastures under drought conditions, growing summer annuals to extend the grazing season, low-cost milking parlors, no-grain feeding to milking cows, dairy grazing strategies and transitioning to organic dairy production.

Mark and Kristin have been certified organic in 2009. They have a herd of 35 crossbred dairy cows including Jersey, Ayrshire, Shorthorn and Holstein breeding, plus an additional 40 head of youngstock. The Johnson's have implemented management-intensive rotational grazing for over twenty years and have been out-wintering their herd for several years on their 150 acre farm. They built a low-cost, flat-barn milking parlor in 2004.

To reach the farm from Luck, take Highway 48 north 2 miles, turn left onto County Road B, go west 4½ miles to the farm, located on the left side. You can also follow Hwy 48 from Frederic south about 4 miles until you reach County B going

west. From Grantsburg, go about 10 miles south on Highways 48 and 87 until you come to County B, turn left and then go east about 7 miles to the farm on the right or south side of road. Watch for pasture walk signs.

For more information contact Ryan Sterry at UWEX-Polk, 715-485-8600, Lynn Johnson at NW Graziers Network, 715-268-8778, Otto Wiegand or Kevin Schoessow at UWEX-Spooner, 715-635-3506.

4th Biennial Spooner Dairy Sheep Day

*David L. Thomas
UW-Madison Sheep Specialist*

The 4th Biennial Spooner Dairy Sheep Day will be held on Saturday, August 22, 2009 at the Headquarters Building, Spooner Agricultural Research Station of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Spooner, WI. The program will present information and research results relevant to dairy sheep producers or those considering entry into this new industry.

Wisconsin leads the nation in sheep milk production, and the Spooner Agricultural Research Station has the only dairy sheep research program in North America. The Wisconsin Sheep Dairy Cooperative markets most of the sheep milk produced in Wisconsin. Members of the cooperative receive \$0.70 per pound for sheep milk, and the cooperative is actively seeking new producers since demand for sheep milk is greater than their current supply.

Yves Berger, sheep researcher at the Spooner Station, will discuss the economics of sheep milk production and introduce a new spreadsheet that producers can use to estimate their

economic returns. Sid Cook, is a Wisconsin Master Cheesemaker and owner of Carr Valley Cheese with plants in Mauston, LaValle, and Fennimore, WI. Sid is the largest processor of sheep milk in Wisconsin, and he has won more top awards for his specialty cheeses from the American Cheese Society than any other cheesemaker in the U.S. Sid will discuss the bright future he sees for sheep milk cheese.

Results from dairy sheep research trials conducted at the Spooner Station will be presented in three presentations: protein utilization in lactating ewes by Claire Mikolayunas, Graduate Research Assistant, Department of Animal Sciences, UW-Madison; effect of level of nutrition of ewe lambs on their subsequent milk production by Dave Thomas, Professor of Animal Sciences, UW-Madison; and performance of hair sheep-dairy sheep crosses by Yves Berger, Researcher, Agricultural Research Stations, UW-Madison.

Registration begins at 9:00 a.m., and the formal program is scheduled to end at 2:45 p.m. Participants are invited to visit the sheep facilities and observe the sheep, pastures, and facilities from 2:45 – 4:00 p.m. Attendance at the educational sessions of the Spooner Dairy Sheep Day is free, but there is a charge for the lamb barbecue lunch served at noon.

The Spooner Agricultural Research Station is located on Highway 70 just west of Highway 53 and just east of the town of Spooner. For more information, contact Lorraine Toman (715-635-3735, lltoman@wisc.edu). The complete program can be viewed at [<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/animalscience/sheep/index.cfm>].

Wolf update for Wisconsin

*Otto Wiegand
Area Agricultural Agent
Burnett, Sawyer & Washburn Counties*

*Adrian Wydeven
Wis. DNR Mammalian Ecologist and
Wildlife Biologist*

Adapted from Wisconsin Agriculturalist

As of May 4, 2009, gray wolves had been removed from the federal endangered species list in Wisconsin and classified as a Protected Wild Animal with the state in charge of management.

However, due to another pending lawsuit, wolves are again listed as Endangered and Threatened and all lethal control must cease.

The gray wolf (*Canis lupus*), also known as the timber wolf, was listed as Endangered by the federal government in 1974 and by the State of Wisconsin in 1975. Wisconsin reclassified gray wolves as Threatened in 1999 and as Protected in 2004. The US Fish & Wildlife Service reclassified gray wolves as Threatened in Wisconsin in 2003, but a district court decision in Oregon caused wolves to be relisted as Endangered in 2005. Wolves were removed from both federal Endangered and Threatened species lists in 2007, were relisted in September 29, 2008, delisted in May, and now relisted again.

The 1999 Wisconsin Wolf Management Plan prescribes management in the state following federal and state delisting. The goal of wolf management is to maintain a healthy and viable population, while responding quickly to wolf attacks on

domestic animals and allowing livestock owners the flexible tools to deal with wolf problems. Wolves prey heavily on deer in Wisconsin, killing an estimated twenty deer per wolf each year. Beaver and rabbits are among other wildlife preferred by wolves. There are an estimated 600 wolves in Wisconsin, mostly in the northern one-third of the state with some in the west-central forests.

Wolves can be “taken” under two types of authorization from the DNR. (1) Landowners or lessees of private land can shoot wolves in the act of attacking domestic animals on their private or leased land. (2) Or landowners can shoot wolves on their private land with permits from the DNR. Permits can be issued for property: a) having verified wolf predation in the past two years, b) having neighboring farms within one mile that had verified predation, c) for livestock owners within a designated DNR Pro-Active Wolf Control Area, d) where harassment of livestock exists, and e) if a human safety concern exists.

The USDA-Wildlife Services (WS) will continue to assist farmers with wolf problems. The WS investigates possible predation cases and verifies predation so that farmers can be reimbursed by the DNR for losses. The WS also provides advice to reduce risk of predation, helps with abatement practices, and traps and kills problem wolves or bears. Farmers will be eligible for compensation for verified wolf predation and may be eligible for additional payments for missing calves where cattle are tagged. Compensation covers killed or injured livestock, hunting dogs or pets. Risk of depredation can be reduced by maintaining healthy, well-fed livestock

that are less vulnerable to attack, removal of any dead or sick livestock, calving in or near buildings, frequent checks on livestock, use of wolf-proof fencing for small enclosures, and use of guard animals.

If you suspect wolf depredation with dead, injured or missing animals, contact the WS immediately at 1-800-228-1368, or 1-715-369-5221 if calling from out-of-state. Take steps to preserve any evidence of predation. Secure the area from livestock or other animals. Look for tracks or scat (droppings). Cover a livestock carcass or remains with a tarp weighted securely. Photograph or videotape evidence. Do not disturb evidence until the WS specialist has investigated the site.

SBA loans available to farmers

*Otto Wiegand
Area Agricultural Agent
Burnett, Sawyer, & Washburn Counties*

Farmers and small business owners may be eligible for short-term loans for financial hardship due to the slow economy from the federal Small Business Administration. Guaranteed loans up to \$35,000 are available for established, viable, for-profit small businesses to help cover existing debts, including mortgages, term and revolving lines of capital leases, credit cards, and notes payable to vendors, suppliers and utilities. Loans are interest free. There is a grace period of twelve months and then repayment over five years. Contact SBA at www.sba.gov/rocover/arcloanprogram/index, or call your local lender.

Profitable practices for tough times

Tom Kriegl
UW Center for Dairy Profitability

When times are tough -- when commodity prices are low, when there is drought or a shortage of feed, for example -- farmers often ask: "What are the most profitable practices under these conditions? The answer usually disappoints those who ask it because practices that maximize profitability when "times are good" are the same practices that help maximize profits (or in many cases minimize losses) when "times are tough." I think this surprises people because, when times are good, one can achieve a satisfactory profit level without using all of the profit maximizing practices.

When times are good and profit margins are generous, people may become complacent and adopt practices that seem convenient or appealing even though the practices reduce profitability. When these practices become routine, it is easy to think of these less profitable practices as essential.

It's also important to recognize that the components of a practice that contributes to profitability can change. For example, feeding the least cost-balanced ration (compared with feeding an unbalanced ration and without regard to cost) is a practice that helps maximize profits or minimize losses under all conditions except one -- when revenue fails to equal or exceed variable cost. However, the components of the least cost-balanced ration can vary radically as prices of the ingredients and the product change.

We must also recognize that tools that maximize profit can be underused. For example, feed testing, milk testing, soil testing, and record keeping and analysis are all tools that can help maximize profits. Yet, some managers pay for these tools but ignore the information these tools provide. Misusing or not using such tools will actually detract from profitability.

In summary, the practices and tools that contribute to profitability are similar in both good economic times and bad. However, the way managers implement these practices and tools may change. To maximize profitability, managers must pay attention to details and make adjustments to these practices to fit their circumstances. Following are more specific comments about adjustments.

1. Analyze, measure, test and monitor. You can't manage what you can't measure.
2. Review all of your practices - including financial and production.
3. Return to the basics - the practices that serve best in most conditions.
4. Focus on input-output relationships.
5. Pay attention to details.
6. Eliminate wastage wherever you can whether it is reducing feed spoilage or the avoidance of spilling manure on the road where it does no good.
7. Use decision making tools such as those provided by UW-Extension.
8. Monitor your cost of production on a regular basis. On many farms it should be done monthly.
9. Focus on the controllable larger expense items first. Even among dairy farms that raise much of their feed, purchased feed is usually the largest cost item. Other cost items that rank high for most dairy systems in most years include depreciation, labor, repairs and interest. When costs are categorized in a different way, the cost of raising or buying replacements is also a very large cost. The same is true for all the costs associated with raising feed. Don't get over focused on the smaller costs without having these larger costs under control.
10. Defer or pass up capital investments unless they are really needed now. However, if your debt is low, you intend to farm for several years, and you have cash reserves or a good credit rating, you might find bargains for capital items and interest rates. Even then, limit capital purchases to items that really are needed in the long run. An item like a low cost labor efficient milking parlor could fit into the need category even now.

11. It is appropriate to time capital investments for tax management purposes, but few if any capital investments can be justified on tax benefits alone.
12. Make sure your debt is productive debt--debt that supports investments that will pay for themselves in a reasonable time frame.
13. Check opportunities to refinance for lower interest rates but make sure that refinancing costs don't nullify the reduced interest rate. If refinancing converts your interest rate from fixed to variable, be aware of what that could mean.
14. Take advantage of government programs such as MILC.
15. While one needs to survive the short run to have a long run, don't lose sight of the long run.
16. While many farm families routinely minimize family living costs, that isn't the case for everyone. Consequently 2009 would be a good year to reduce or defer large discretionary family living expenses such as new cars or houses.
17. Maintain adequate two-way communication with your farm staff (whether paid or unpaid) to ensure proper training and functioning and to minimize turnover of the labor force.

To access more information and/or tools to help analyze your situation, link to the Extension Responds web page at: www.uwex.edu/ces/ag/farmingindifficulttimes.html. For assistance in making these tough decisions, contact your UW-Extension Agricultural Agent.

This Quarter's Events

Contacts: Ag Agents Otto Wiegand or Kevin Schoessow, UW-Extension, Spooner Station, 715-635-3506, or Jason Fischbach, UW-Extension, Ashland & Bayfield Co., 715-682-8393 for more information, brochures or how to register.

July 1-4, Weds-Sat – Central Burnett County Fair – Webster

July 11, Sat, 10 - Noon – NW Graziers Horse Pasture Walk – Wild Wind Farm Equestrian Center, Grantsburg (see article)

July 11, Sat, 10-Noon – NW Graziers Beef Pasture Walk – Ron & Lori Becker, Ladysmith (see article)

July 21-23, Tues-Thurs – Farm Technology Days – Crave Brothers Farm, Waterloo, WI

July 21-24, Tues-Fri - Youth Tractor Safety - Bayfield County

July 22-26, Weds-Sun - Head of the Lakes Fair - Superior

July 23-26, Thurs-Sun – Washburn County Fair – Spooner

July 25-26, Sat-Sun - Northwest Wisconsin Sustainable Living Fair - Ladysmith

July 28-29, Tues-Weds – Grazing School – Cable (see article)

August 12, Weds, 10-Noon – NW Graziers Organic Dairy Cattle Pasture Walk – Mark Johnson Farm, Luck (see article)

August 20-23, Thurs-Sun – Sawyer County Fair – Hayward

August 22, Sat – Spooner Sheep Dairy Day – Spooner Ag Research Station (see article)

August 24, Mon - Berry Field Day, Highland Valley Farm - Bayfield

August 26, Weds – Twilight Garden Tour - Spooner Ag Research Station

August 26, Weds - Grape IPM Workshop - St. Croix Falls

August 27-30, Thurs-Sun – Burnett Agricultural Society Fair - Grantsburg

August 27-30, Thurs-Sun - Bayfield County Fair - Iron River

September 3-7, Thurs-Mon - Ashland County Fair - Marengo

September 25, Fri – LCO Sustainability Fair – LCO Convention Center, Hayward

September 29-Oct 3, Tues-Sat – World Dairy Expo – Madison

November 2009 – March 2010 – Beginning Farmer Course – LCO, Sawyer Co.



UWEX Area Agricultural Agents
Burnett, Sawyer, & Washburn Counties
Spooner Agricultural Research Station
W6646 Highway 70
Spooner, WI 54801

PRST SORT STD
US POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 44
SPOONER, WI 54801

Return Service Requested

Inside

**This
Issue**

**Agricultural
Newsletter**

**July
August
September**

2009

Develop profitable practices in these difficult economic times

Attend an upcoming pasture walk

Consider grazing school or attend the 4th Biennial Sheep Dairy Day

What is the impact of wolves in Wisconsin?

Kevin Schoessow
UWEX Area Agricultural Agent