



U.P. Ag Connections Newsletter

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Agricultural News from MSU Extension and AgBioResearch

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by James DeDecker

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Sometimes the notable parts of our work at MSU-UPREC have less to do with agriculture and more to do with people, or birds...Let me explain! The central UP is a hot spot for birds. The diversity of habitat available in this neighborhood between forest, wetlands, grasslands and farm fields is unique, not to mention the way our Great Lakes seem to funnel or hem-in migratory species. Bird watchers frequently visit UPREC to view the great diversity of feathered friends that make their way through and utilize the farm. Birds also have direct impacts on our work that can be negative, as in damaging crops through feeding, or positive in the case of predator birds eating insects or other birds capable of injuring crops or livestock.

When Munising High School Senior, Josh Curtis, contacted us last November about focusing his Eagle Scout project on addressing needs at UPREC, we jumped at the opportunity. Josh is a lifelong member of Chatham's Troop 364, which holds their meetings at the farm. Eagle Scout is the highest rank attainable in the Scouts BSA program by the Boy Scouts of America (BSA). Requirements include earning at least 21 merit badges, 14 of which are mandatory for the award. The Eagle Scout must demonstrate Scout Spirit by completing an extensive service project that the Scout plans, organizes, leads, and manages.

After considering an initial project idea that didn't pan out, Josh, his scouting mentors, and our team at UPREC agreed that installing a network of birdhouses to create the foundation of a birding trail at UPREC would make a great Eagle project! Josh brought together a team of experts and stakeholders to plan the project. He sought guidance from Jeff Towner of Laughing Whitefish Bird Alliance and Elliot Nelson with MSU Extension regarding which bird species are likely present or beneficial to the farm and might also use bird houses. Josh secured donations of materials and tools from 41 Lumber and others. He worked with his farm employer, Jeff Millan, to design and build fourteen birdhouses to accommodate kestrels/screech owls and bluebirds/tree swallows with attractive finishes (brown, to the birds' liking) and doors that open for easy clean-out.

On Sunday, Oct 6th, a crew of stakeholders and supporters met to install the birdhouses that Josh and his crew had constructed. The houses were thoughtfully placed in areas around the farm that could use more nesting spots and are also visible to observers hoping to catch a glimpse from our public roads. We cannot wait to see who takes up residence come next spring, both the birds and their dedicated fans. In the meantime, this project will position us to become a part of the Wild Farm Alliance Farmland Flyways Trail and a future UP birding trail planned by the Laughing Whitefish Bird Alliance and partners. Going forward, it will create opportunities for us to interact with other farmers interested in supporting birds on their farms and members of the public wondering what farmers are doing to facilitate wildlife conservation. Our team is very thankful to Josh Curtis, Chatham Troop 364, and all the mentors and partners who made this exciting project possible!

U.P. Farm hosts Successful Soil Health Academy

By: Michelle Sweeten

September 10-12, 2024, forty-four farmers converged with soil health and grazing experts, Gabe Brown, Allen Williams, and Jeremy Sweeten on Sweeten Farms near Dafter, MI. Spending much of the 3 days outside in the beautiful fall U.P. weather, participants learned and participated in adaptive grazing techniques. Lunches were provided by local farmer and caterer Dan Jere of Jere Farms and showcased both local and regeneratively raised vegetables and proteins.

The first day began with introductions and a discussion on what the students wanted to learn. Learning Understanding Ag's 6-3-4 principles in the field took place next. Students refined their observation skills as they learned the importance of context, minimizing disturbance, armor on the soil, diversity, living roots, and the role livestock play in the landscape. This discussion set the tone and foundation for the rest of the academy.

Soil Health Academy organizers built in time every day for questions and answers. The time in the fields explored restoring the ecosystem through adaptive grazing, selecting cattle to fit the local environment that can finish on forage, as well as bale grazing impacts in casual conversational presentations. Students learned to hone their observation skills in looking for diversity not only in plant species, but also in soil health indicators, insects, and wildlife.



Photo Credit: Michelle Sweeten

The wide variety of participants came from academia, a variety of states, beginner and advanced farmers who had experience both with and without livestock. Andy Novak from UP Mother Farm participated in the soil health academy and commented, “It was such an incredible experience to learn from some of the greatest minds in regenerative agriculture and we’re so inspired to bring these concepts to our farm.” Rebel Pastures posted on Facebook after the academy, “We are heading home after a week full of learning so many new things and solidifying our beliefs about farming regeneratively. I feel more concern for the many people that have no idea that the degradation of soil is causing a ridiculous amount of problems. But I am extremely hopeful with the many young and old farmers at these Soil Health Academics that are choosing a better way to farm. I remain fully convinced that change is only going to happen from the ground up. Each and every time you decide to support a regenerative farm is a vote for a healthier future.”

The academy’s overall theme was how to reduce inputs to improve profitability as well as building more resilient ecosystems on their farms. The organizers were successful as over 90% of participants were confident that the principles they learned at the Soil Health Academy would result in a more profitable operation for their families and themselves.



Photo Credit: Michelle Sweeten

If you are not familiar with regenerative agriculture principles I would encourage you to connect with the Michigan State University Center for Regenerative Agriculture, Understanding Ag, and the Soil Health Academy.

Capturing the most value in a record beef market

Frank Wardynski

While the beef industry is experiencing the highest cattle prices ever, healthy calves is the top priority for buyers.



Beef feeder cattle prices have been at record highs this summer and are expected to stay high into the fall sales. One of the key reasons for these high prices is the low supply of feeder calves. The low supply of calves has been the [sale of beef cows](#) over the past several years, mostly due to drought conditions in various locations across the United States. If cow-calf producers begin retaining heifers to expand their cow operations, available feeder calves will be further minimized and could result in even higher prices.

With cattle prices at these levels, buying cattle that come in and stay healthy is the top priority. Cattle buyers are willing to pay more for cattle that are fully preconditioned. Most preconditioning programs specify that cattle are vaccinated for specified pathogens and weaned. Vaccinations usually include a viral vaccine against Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis (IBR), Bovine Viral Diarrhea (BVD), Types I and II, Parainfluenza (PI3), and Bovine Respiratory Syncytial Virus (BRSV), a seven-way Clostridial vaccine and Mannheimia haemolytica. Higher value programs require that calves receive [booster vaccines](#) and weaned at least 45 days or stockers that have been held for sale for at least 60 days. Many preconditioning programs also recommend or require a dewormer.

Producers should maintain a good level of nutrition adequate protein, energy, vitamins and minerals. Protein and energy are frequently provided with abundant pasture. However, fall weaned calves frequently are fed stored feeds after weaning. These feeds need to be fed as part of a balanced ration to provide proper ratios of protein and energy. Feeding stored feed to weaned calves is an excellent method of training calves to eat out of a bunk like they will likely be required to after the sale. Vitamins and minerals as set forth with [Upper Midwest Beef Cow Mineral-Vitamin Nutrition](#) should be provided to ensure the immune system can be full activated.

Finally, specialists and educators at [Michigan State University Extension](#) recommend that producers utilize some method of price risk protection. The [Livestock Risk Protection Program](#) is a RMA-USDA price insurance program to help protect producers from falling cattle prices.

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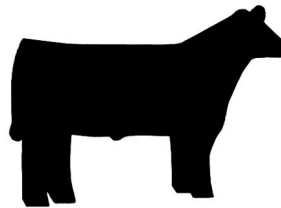
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6381 Euclid St., Marlette, MI 48453

Robert Filhart, Owner (989)330-6005

Haley Filhart, Owner (989)430-2055

Classifieds

For Sale: Red Angus Bull , 1 1/2 year old, Great bloodline,
good disposition, 1832#. Call Don Nault 906-786-3951 Or Cell
906-398-9865

Wanted: Pasture for 25-35 cow calf pairs for the summer of
2024 in the Eastern UP. Will consider a custom grazing
arrangement as well. Call Ben (989) 370-3570.

Straw for Sale: Small squares or 4x5 Large round bales. Call
Paul at MSU 906-439-5114 Ext. 2

FOR SALE: Hay, mixed round bales, 700# stored inside. Also
small square bales of straw. Call Jim Myers (906)399-1649 or
(906) 466-2672.

FOR SALE: small square bales of straw and small squares of
first crop hay. Call Marenger's Farm (906)384-6587.

FOR SALE: Mixed Hay round bales, 700#, \$20. Call Alan or
Karen Raynard @ (906) 647-6697, Pickford.

Market Report

Choice Steers	\$165-\$190 per 100 lbs.
Holstein Steers	\$155-\$180 per 100 lbs.
Hogs	\$50-\$56 per 100 lbs.
Lambs	\$100-\$170 per 100 lbs.
Cull cows	\$115-\$130 per 100 lbs.
Calves	\$250-\$490 per 100 lbs.
Goats	\$250-\$325 per 100 lbs.

Breeding and Feeder Animals

Grade Holstein cows top \$2750/head

Grade Holstein bred heifers top \$2750/head

Feed Prices across the U.P.

	Avg. \$/cwt	Avg. \$/ton	Price Range
Corn	\$15.19	\$303.75	\$220-510
Soymeal	\$27.99	\$559.75	\$440-655
Oats	\$18.20	\$364.00	\$319-416
Barley	\$15.08	\$301.50	\$240-386
Average price/100 wt. for 1 ton lots			

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