



U.P. Ag Connections Newsletter

August 2025

Agricultural News from MSU Extension and AgBioResearch

Volume 29 Issue 8

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News and Views

By Frank Wardynski

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Differences between Observation and Research

Over the past couple of years I have focused my professional development on understanding soil health improvement. As part of that, I've attended two soil health academies over the past two years that have been very useful in understanding the importance of soil health and how to improve it. We learned concepts of how important it is not to overgraze, how important diversity is, water cycles, mineral cycles, the importance of trampling forage, altering stock density, disrupting patterns, avoiding disturbance and that list continues.

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I really became a believer in the importance of improving soils when I saw the difference in water infiltration rates on high quality soils versus soils that were compacted, lacked soil aggregation, and were clearly lower in organic matter. When it comes to complaining about the weather, I am as bad as anybody. But we as farmers are always worried and complaining about the weather. I commented about the weather in every newsletter, probably since April. First it was too dry, and I was worried that we would not have enough forage available to feed. Then it got too wet, and we couldn't make good quality, dry hay when we should have been making hay. I have seen firsthand farmers that have developed healthy soils with deep roots and excellent soil aggregation and how little they worry about drought.

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During the Soil Health Academy, they preached observation, observation, observation. They spend a lot of time beating us up that talk about research. They criticize our university research as being biased and conflicting. They may be right to criticize research as simple as establishing nutrient requirements for crops. They indicate that healthy soils don't require outside fertilizer nutrients and that all our research is done on unhealthy, poorly aggregated soils. And that may be true, but most of our crops are grown here in the United States in tilled soils so it makes sense to me that that's how we would do our research. We just need to be careful not to extrapolate any given research out too far. And I would argue that we need more research conducted on healthy soils.

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In part of this new area of focus, I have spent a lot of time studying and reading about the new buzzword: regenerative agriculture. One grazing system that I've been paying attention to is referred to as total graze. It's a grazing method that takes off at least 75% of the available forage. That is in direct conflict with most other taught grazing practices. I watched a video in which they did side by side comparisons of total graze versus adaptive multi paddock grazing. Their observations were that recovery was more rapid, and species diversity was improved.

I've been using the principles of adaptive multi paddock grazing for almost two years now. The key rules that I try to follow are to move animals daily, never take more than 50% of the forage, and below full recovery defined by four fully developed pointed leaves on the grasses and then a rest period at least equal to the recovery. I have observed improve soil aggregation, less soil compaction, increased populations of birds, insects, and rodents, and improved water infiltration. I have described two different systems with conflicting observations. How should we answer that? Answer: good, thoughtful research.

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Chill out, calves: comfort during times of stress

Phil Durst

Michigan State University Extension

Sr. Educator – Dairy & Beef Cattle Health and Production

Stress negatively impacts cattle as well as people, but it is not always avoidable. Cattle producers can and should practice low-stress handling, but natural conditions as well as management practices will stress cattle. Some individual animals will be stressed more than others and multiple stressors near the same time compound stress. The impacts may include behavioral changes such as vocalization and activity, as well as physiological changes such as greater production of chemicals in the body that impact feed efficiency and immune protection. The greater the stress, the more potential impact.

Just like a human child, when calves are stressed, it is Mom they seek. But Mom is not always available, especially with the stress of weaning. There is a chemical reason that calves seek stress relief from their mothers. Cows produce appeasing pheromones that are secreted by mammary sebaceous glands shortly after giving birth. The receptor in calves is apparently in the head or neck of the calf, that when received by the animal, triggers the production of neuroendocrines that ultimately result in calming effects on the animal.

Synthetic analogs of the pheromones have been developed from various fatty acids and called maternal bovine appeasing substance (mBAS) that produce a similar result when applied to the animal's head and/or back of neck. Two of those products are now commercialized and approved for use in the U.S.: FerAppease (FERA Diagnostics & Biologicals) and SecureCattle (Bimeda Biologicals).

Because mBAS has been approved in other countries, there have been studies that indicate the effect of application. In general, the effect may be limited to around 15 days, although some studies report longer impacts. Within 15 days, studies that involve weaned calves show fewer negative behaviors, greater average daily gain, lower production of stress indicators such as cortisol and plasma concentration of haptoglobins and increased immune response to vaccination. Differences seem to be reduced with time.

The negative impacts of stress have been studied for years. Some stresses, such as heat stress on the unborn calf carried by a pregnant dairy cow in the last trimester are measurable in milk production of that animal more than 2 years later and even on the offspring of that animal, a generation later. So, while we are coming to understand that transient stress has a long reach, improvements in stress relief are not insignificant. At this point we know that reducing weaning time stress frequently yields marginal increases in cattle performance, increased animal comfort/welfare and greater effectiveness of vaccines that will protect the animal for a longer period.



If you have questions about improving comfort of cattle, managing for greater productivity or evaluating the science of bovines, contact any member of the Michigan State University Extension Beef Team, <https://www.canr.msu.edu/beef/>.



MPIC and MSU
**U.P. Potato
Field Day**

Thursday, August 28th
4:00p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Vandamme Farms
2371 St Nicholas Rd.
Rock, MI 49880

MICHIGAN
POTATOES

- 4:00 pm **Welcome**
James DeDecker, MSU-UPREC
- 4:15 pm **Michigan Potato Industry Update**
Kelly Turner, Executive Director,
Michigan Potato Industry Commission
- 4:30 pm **Seed Industry Update**
Damen Kurzer, Executive Director,
Michigan Seed Potato Association
- 4:45 pm **Variety Trial Update**
Chris Long, Potato Specialist, MSU
- 5:15 pm **Local Research Update**
James DeDecker, MSU-UPREC
- 5:30 pm **MSU Potato Research Updates**
Aphid Mgmt in Seed Potatoes
Abigail Cohen, MSU Entomology Dept.
- 6:00 pm **Dinner**
Sponsored by: **Nutrien**
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- 7:00 pm **Adjourn**

To register, or for more information,
contact MSU UPREC at (906) 439-5114

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MSU Extension offers two Emergency Response to Accidents Involving Livestock (ERAIL) trainings in the UP

BY Thomas Guthrie and Michael Metzger

Equipment for safely extricating livestock from trucks/trailers and containing animals after transport accidents will be shown in the first in-person training. Euthanasia training will cover identifying compromised animals and humane euthanasia.

Responding to accidents is never an easy task. Responding to an accident that involves large trucks, people and



animals can quickly turn into a chaotic event if the local response team is not prepared or trained to handle such an occurrence. Following several livestock truck rollovers over the last few years in Michigan and adjacent states, Michigan State University Extension along with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Michigan Pork Producers Association recognized the need to have a network of trained people across the state to respond to these situations. To help local sheriff/police, fire crews, ambulances, veterinarians and other officials prepare for rollovers of semis pulling livestock trailers, MSU Extension is coordinating specialized hands-on Emergency Response to Accidents Involving Livestock program training for livestock accident responders.

[Opportunity 1 - Captive Bolt Device Euthanasia Training](#)

This workshop is designed to teach first responders how to perform humane livestock euthanasia with a captive bolt device. Workshop topics include identifying compromised animals, animal anatomy and target location, rules of animal ownership as well as animal restraint and animal safety.

When: September 30, 2025

Time: 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Where: Upper Peninsula State Fair Grounds, 2401 12th Ave. N, Escanaba, Mich. 49829

Cost: \$25 per person

Participants must be at least 18 years of age.

Registration information can be found by visiting the MSU Extension [events calendar](#).



Opportunity 2 - Comprehensive ERAIL training in the Upper Peninsula

This program is designed to assist response teams in responding to rollover accidents involving livestock. This one-day training focuses on managing the scene of an accident, organizing volunteers and working to ensure public safety and animal welfare. Participants will learn about extrication of trapped animals from trucks/trailers, management of a rollover accident incident, chain of command, safe handling of large animals and animal behavior, and humane euthanasia techniques for severely injured animals. The program will consist of both in-class and hands-on training with several species of livestock available for the hands-on portion of the training. Please be aware that there may be a contained beehive at the training.



When: October 1, 2025

Time: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Where: Upper Peninsula State Fair Grounds, 2401 12th Ave. N, Escanaba, Mich. 49829

Cost: \$75 per person or \$60 per person for groups of two or more, including lunch. Participants must be at least 18 years of age. No refunds within two weeks of each program. Substitutions may be made.

Registration information can be found by visiting the MSU Extension [events calendar](#).

Questions about the training can be directed to

Beth Ferry at 269-876-2745 or franzeli@msu.edu

Mike Metzger at 517-788-4292 or metzgerm@msu.edu

Tom Guthrie at 517-788-4292 or guthri19@msu.edu

Pasture Walk in Eastern UP

We are conducting a pasture walk split into two sessions at Jeremy and Michelle Sweeten's farm on September 11, 2025, with afternoon session starting at 2:00 ET with a light meal before starting an evening session at 6:00. Jeremy and Michelle have focused their grazing and feeding practices towards improving soil health. The farm address is 12248 S Bound Rd, Dafter, MI. Feel free to attend either both sessions or just one. **Both sessions for the pasture walk at the Sweeten's have been approved for MAEAP phase 1 credit! Please RSVP by calling Ontonagon County Extension office at 906-884-4386 so that we have a count for dinner.**

Afternoon Session (2:00-5:00pm ET): **A Deeper Dive into Adaptive Grazing**

- A look at 7 years of bale grazing and its effect
- Understanding soil function and aggregation
- A look at plant brix content
- Grass finishing grazing methods

Light meal of hamburgers (5:00 - 6:00pm ET)

Evening Session (6:00 - 8:00pm ET): **Cost of Production in a Pasture Based System**

- A look at farm stocking rate
- Stockpiled forage vs feeding hay
- Epigenetic selection of cattle to fit your farm



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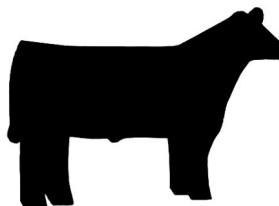
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Robert Filhart, Owner (989)330-6005

Haley Filhart, Owner (989)430-2055

Classifieds

Wanted: Pasture for 25-35 cow calf pairs for the summer of 2025 in the Eastern UP. Will consider a custom grazing arrangement as well. Call Ben (989) 370-3570.

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# & 2nd cut small square bales, Call Alan or Karen Raynard @ (906) 647-6697, Pickford.

FOR SALE: Cattle Handling tub and Heavy duty corral panels- Misc Gates Call 906-644-2107

Market Report

Choice Steers	\$210-\$240 per 100 lbs.
Holstein Steers	\$175-\$225 per 100 lbs.
Hogs	\$77-\$88 per 100 lbs.
Lambs	\$200-\$250 per 100 lbs.
Cull cows	\$120-\$175 per 100 lbs.
Calves	\$600-\$900 per 100 lbs.
Goats	\$250-\$375 per 100 lbs.

Breeding and Feeder Animals

Grade Holstein cows top \$3300/head

Grade Holstein bred heifers top \$3800/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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