



This newsletter is a joint effort from the following organizations:



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Cattle Feeder Days is Coming in December

Jerrold Tesmer, University of Minnesota Extension

Each December, the University of Minnesota Beef Team hosts **Minnesota Cattle Feeder Days**; a program designed to address the specific challenges and opportunities of the cattle feeding industry in the state of Minnesota. The following topics and speakers will be included in this year's program.

- Incorporating forages into preconditioning programs
- Eric Mousel, U of M Extension
- Considerations for drylot preconditioning programs
- Nicole Kenney, U of M Extension
- Value of manure as fertilizer: Feedlot design and management considerations
- Alfredo DiCostanzo, Department of Animal Science, U of M
- Advantages and disadvantages of various feedlot design layouts
- Sam Odom, Summit Buildings

2013 Minnesota Cattle Feeder Days will be held on:
December 17 in Morris
December 18 in Luverne, and
December 19 in Tracy and in Rochester.

Registration in Morris, Luverne, and Rochester will begin at 5:30 p.m. and registration will begin at 9:00 a.m. in Tracy.

The registration fee is only \$30 and \$15 for each additional person from the same farm or family. Registration includes a meal and all educational materials.

For more information, visit the U of M Beef Team website or contact Nicole Kenney at 320-235-0726 ext 2009 or nmkenney@umn.edu.

Soil Health Provides Drought Insurance in Burleigh County

John Zinn, USDA/NRCS Grazing Specialist

Burleigh County North Dakota near Bismarck gets around half the rain that we get in Southeast Minnesota and managing soil moisture is a high priority for leading farmers and ranchers there. Recently a group from Minnesota visited Burleigh County producers to discover how they capture more rainfall, retain more soil moisture and reduce purchased fertilizer. We were amazed to find out that they were able to grow 100 bushel corn on 15" of rainfall with minimal or no fertilizer. Reducing crop inputs is possible when the soil is functioning well and healthy soil is able to provide for the needs of crops even under drought or excessive soil moisture. Minnesota isn't immune to droughts and we also can experience excessive rainfall which can lead to damaging floods.

Healthy soil is able to store nutrients, rapidly infiltrate water, hold water for future use, resist erosion, and release nutrients to plants when they are needed. In Burleigh County, producers minimize soil disturbance, plant cover crops, have livestock graze cover crops and crop residues, and grow a variety of crops in crop rotation. All the producers we visited emphasized the importance of keeping living plant roots in the ground at all times. Living plant canopies shade the ground and keep soil temperatures cool reducing evaporation and increasing the activity of soil organisms. We measured the air temperature in one field at 95 degrees but at the surface of the soil under the cover crop canopy, the temperature was 25 degrees cooler!

Having a diverse mix of plants in cover crops has proved to be most successful. One cover crop mix we observed consisted of sorghum sudangrass, sweetclover, soybeans, tillage radishes, millet, red clover, and perennial ryegrass. Burleigh County producers and others have learned that higher crop yields following cover crops are possible when there are more species in the cover crop mix.



Over time, the effects of reduced tillage, crop rotation, cover crops, and livestock grazing produce increases in soil organic matter, improve soil structure, and ultimately leads to dramatic increases in infiltration rates. Several farmers in Burleigh County have measured their infiltration rates over time and have observed gradual and sometimes dramatic improvements. Some producers are reporting infiltration rates as high as 30 inches per hour! Imagine how much damage would have been reduced during the 2008 floods if we had healthier soils in the watersheds of Southeast Minnesota.

If you would like to learn more about improving your soil health for better profitability, please contact your local Soil and Water Conservation District or your local Natural Resources Conservation Service office. Technical and Financial Assistance is available.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

December, 2013

- 2-4 Midwest Dairy Expo, River's Edge, St. Cloud, MN.
Contact: MMPA, 877-577-0751 (toll free); 763-355-9697 (local), mmpa@mnmilk.org.
- 5 GLCA 3rd Annual Grazing & Soil Quality Videoconference:
"Keep it Growing, Keep it Green: Soil Health and Water Protection Are the Answers."
Attend one of the seven sites: Rochester, Lamberton, Morris, Staples, Crookston, Pine City, St. Paul. Online registration begins in late October. Watch www.sfa-mn.org for updates and schedule details. Farmers of all types; beginning or experienced, row crop or livestock, should attend to learn about:
- ◆ Research on the importance of healthy soil biology for profitable pastures and crops
 - ◆ Grazing opportunities on both public and private conservation lands
 - ◆ The always-popular farmer panel will discuss grazing cattle and sheep, growing grazing cover crops for both extending the grazing season and building soil, and utilizing hog manure on pastures
 - ◆ Updates on a new project called "Keeping Cattle in Minnesota," a project by Sustainable Farming Association in partnership with GLCA
- 12-14 Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association Annual Convention,
Arrowwood Resort, Alexandria, MN.
- 17 Minnesota Cattle Feeder Days, Morris, MN.
Contact: Nicole Kenney, 320-235-0726 ext 2009 or nmkenney@umn.edu.
- 18 Minnesota Cattle Feeder Days, Luverne, MN.
Contact: Nicole Kenney, 320-235-0726 ext 2009 or nmkenney@umn.edu.
- 19 Minnesota Cattle Feeder Days, Tracy (a.m.) and Rochester (p.m.), MN.
Contact: Nicole Kenney, 320-235-0726 ext 2009 or nmkenney@umn.edu.
- 23-25 University of Minnesota Campus Closed for Christmas Holiday.

January, 2014

- 10-11 Minnesota Organic Conference, River's Edge, St. Cloud, MN.
- 17-18 Northern States Beef Conference, SDSU Extension Regional Center, Watertown, SD.
- 30-31 Driftless Region Beef Conference Update, Grand River Convention Center, Dubuque, IA.
<http://www.aep.iastate.edu/beef/>

February, 2014

- 10 Minnesota Cow/Calf Days, Mora, MN.
- 11 Minnesota Cow/Calf Days, Willmar, MN.
- 13 Minnesota Cow/Calf Days, Pipestone, MN.
- 14 Minnesota Cow/Calf Days, Rochester, MN.
- 15 Minnesota Cow/Calf Days, Montgomery, MN.
- 18 Minnesota Cow/Calf Days, Staples, MN.
- 18 Minnesota Cow/Calf Days, Bagley, MN.
- 19 Minnesota Cow/Calf Days, Lancaster, MN.
- 20 Minnesota Cow/Calf Days, Warroad, MN.
- 21 Minnesota Cow/Calf Days, Grand Rapids, MN.
- Contact: Eric Mousel, 218-327-5958 or enmousel@umn.edu for registration and more details about any of Minnesota Cow/Calf Days events.**





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