



# Grazing Gazette

Volume 5, Issue 6

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This newsletter is a joint effort from the following organizations:



John Zinn, Grazing Specialist  
john.zinn@mn.usda.gov  
507-289-7454 ext. 115



Lance Klessig, Resource Specialist  
Lance.Klessig@winonaswcd.com  
Winona County SWCD  
(507) 523-2171 ext 108  
www.winonaswcd.org



Dean Thomas, Grazing Specialist and Area 6 Soil Health Technician  
dean.thomas@fillmoreswcd.org  
dean.thomas@mn.nacdnet.net  
507-765-3878, ext #3



Fillmore & Houston Counties  
Michael Cruse, Educator  
mjcruse@umn.edu  
Fillmore: 507-765-3896  
Houston: 507-725-5807

Winona County Extension  
Jake Overgaard, Educator  
over0128@umn.edu  
507-457-6440



Minnesota  
Grazing Lands  
Conservation  
Association



If you would like to receive this newsletter by email please send a request to: [ruesi001@umn.edu](mailto:ruesi001@umn.edu)

## Cattle Feeder Days

Cattle Feeder Days will be featuring a number of exciting presenters this year, including Dr. Sheri Bundy of Corn Belt Livestock discussing the impact of feedlot environment on cattle performance and an overview of Beef Quality Assurance Feedlot Assessments by BQA Coordinator Ashley Kohls.

### Dates and Locations:

12/15/16 - 6:00 pm  
Rochester Eagles Club  
917 15<sup>th</sup> Ave SE  
Rochester, MN

12/13/16 - 6 pm  
The Hub Supper Club  
30905 CR 13  
Burtrum, MN 56318



12/14/16 - 6 pm  
Blue Mound Banquet Center  
401 W Hatting St  
Luverne, MN 56156

**Registration:** Pre-registration available online at [z.umn.edu/CFD2016](http://z.umn.edu/CFD2016).  
Cost: \$25/person; \$15 for each additional person from the same family or farm.  
On-site registration: \$30/person and \$15 for each additional person.  
Registration includes dinner and educational materials.

## Forage Value Includes Crop Nutrients

John Zinn, Grazing Specialist

All too soon we will be feeding hay, silage, baleage and other stored feeds. This year hay prices dropped steeply with good growing conditions and abundant yields. Looking at online auction sites, classified ads and bulletin boards, some hay is offered for as little as \$50 per ton. When hay moves off the farm, fertilizer nutrients, N,P, and K are also going with it.

What is the nutrient content of forages? The answer of course is "It depends". Let's assume we're looking to sell some of our lower quality feed which is 8% Crude Protein grass hay. Using average values this hay contains per ton: Nitrogen - 45 Units, Phosphorous(P2O5) - 12 Units, Potassium (K2O) - 50 Units

Assuming urea costs \$270/ton, DAP cost 430/ton and Potash costs \$275/ton, this means that the fertility contained within a ton of poor quality grass hay may be as high as \$28.75 per ton. Something to think about when selling hay. Other nutrients such as sulfur and the organic matter content are not considered but do have value especially when fed to livestock in an overwintering system.

On a personal note, this will likely be the last article from me in the Grazing Gazette. I am putting myself out to pasture at home in WI working part time as a consultant for the Pasture Project and going back home to farm with a heavy emphasis on grazing (of course). I spent 12 years in MN working for NRCS, visited with many of you on your farms, and have a lot of good memories.

# Extension Surveys: Land Rent and Veterinary Feed Directive

By Michael Cruse, Extension Educator for Fillmore and Houston Counties

Fillmore and Houston County Extension Offices currently have two active surveys for public comment: one on the Veterinary Feed Directive the other is our annual Land Rent Values. To date there has been limited response to both of these surveys. If you live or work in Fillmore or Houston County and either of these surveys apply to you, the Extension office ask that you please consider taking some time to fill them out. If you are interested in completing the two surveys currently in circulation you can find them by entering the following web address into your web browser.

<http://www3.extension.umn.edu/county/houston/>

This will take you to the Houston County Extension home page. In the center column of this page is a link labeled *Local Extension Surveys*. Click there. This will take you to an article that contains links to the two surveys. Click on either of these and fill out the survey. These links will work for both Fillmore and Houston County.



With all of the surveys that people get, why do I feel it is so important for people to respond to surveys from local University of Minnesota Extension offices?

University of Minnesota Extension is tasked with providing unbiased, research based education to Greater Minnesota. To keep Extension educational programming in line with the needs of the people we serve, Extension and local populations must maintain a continuous and open dialog. Local Extension surveys are one means of keeping those lines of communication open. These surveys allow local offices to provide timely educational information as well as more effectively allocate limited resources to better cover the needs of our areas.

But for this line of communication to function properly, there needs to be consistent levels of response from our local populations. The level of response we get on our surveys directly relates to the educational programming we can hold in our counties. A low response rate indicates low interest in a topic area. We cannot justify bringing in outside educators when there is little or no interest on a topic area.

University of Minnesota Extension and local educators understand your desire for privacy and along those lines I guarantee you that:

- University of Minnesota Extension is not trying to sell you anything
- All of your information is kept confidential
- Individual responses are never sold or shown to outside organizations
- Only composite information is used in our educational programming

We have made an effort to move our surveys online so that there is increased anonymity for those who choose to respond. And be assured, that if an office does not receive a sufficient number of responses to a survey, findings will not be released as to protect the individuals who have participated. No one is in anyway obligated to participate in the surveys put out by the Extension office, but your responses play a critical role in the quality of education that our office can provide.

Thank you for considering using this important line of communication between the Extension office and the public.

## Managing Cull Cows Following Preg-Check

Eric Mousel, University of Minnesota Beef Team

Cull cows are often considered a nuisance. The misconception is that ranchers should not keep cull cows around because they are not producing a calf and therefore they are a cost to the outfit and should be unloaded quickly. This class of cattle however represents a tremendous opportunity to add value to many operations. Studies from the U of M and SDSU have shown that the top 20% of most profitable ranchers receive 15 to 30% more for their marketed cull cows than the other 80% of ranches. The question is how do they do this?

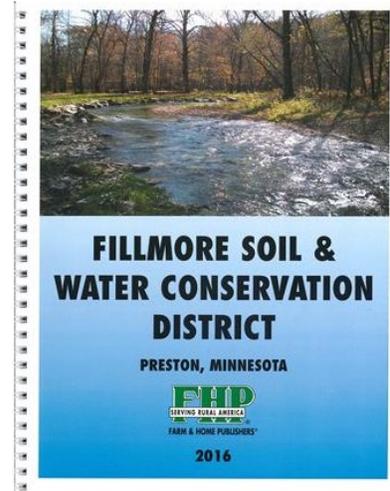
Due to common misconceptions, most ranches will market cull cows immediately after they are preg-checked in the fall. Unfortunately, fall cull cow prices are the lowest seasonal prices for that class of cattle because the market is completely saturated. Research has shown that opportunities do exist for operators to add fleshiness and weight to cull cows before marketing them to increase both the weight sold and the fat cover on the animal at sale time. Successful management of cull cows going to market requires at least a fundamental understanding of how cows are priced at the sale barn or at the packing house. Aged cows being sold for slaughter are scored based on live weight which determines the base price. Premiums or discounts then are assessed based on fleshiness and fat cover. For example, a big framed cow that is just skin and bones may weigh quite a bit due to her frame size, however, her lack of flesh and fat cover will probably be frowned upon by buyers compared to a cow that has more cover. Additionally, overly fat cows may or may not be desirable for cow buyers, depending on what the market needs. Therefore, to be successful in marketing culls the rancher must be able to assess the value of flesh and fat cover in the market compared to the cost to feed flesh and fat cover on if she needs more of it. Of course the market relationships change constantly so sometimes it does pay to feed some fleshiness on a cull cow and sometimes it does not. Fortunately, cull cows have the potential to gain a tremendous amount of weight in a relatively short amount of time and can convert feed very efficiently; giving ranchers the option of exercising upon a favorable market quickly (30 to 45 days). However, in an unfavorable market a rancher may be best off to just sell her as-is or they could be held over the first of the year on a lower quality diet in anticipation of seasonal market highs through spring. This gives ranchers opportunities to assess the market structure and add weight and fat cover to cows at a rate that matches the most profitable market prices.

As a result, managing cull cows and feed costs can make the difference between adding value and just trading dollars at the market. The most impactful management issue generally is the best way to feed cull cows; which of course depends on what you're trying to do with them. The most common management strategy with cull cows is to turn them back out on spent pasture to get them out of the way until they can be taken to town. Generally speaking, this is probably not the best way to add value to those cattle unless there is an economic reason for them to not gain any weight (sometimes there is). A cheap way to add some weight and cover to cull cows is to graze them on a forage crop or cover crop. Forage crops such as summer annuals like millet or sorghum can be direct seeded to provide significant tonnage for late-summer and early fall grazing. Foxtail millet or Japanese millet are generally good options for one-time grazing events. Short-season forage sorghums also can work well for dry or sandy soils. Operators also can consider planting a short-season corn on heavier soils to generate some late-season grazing. Cover crops such as brassicas, ryegrass, and cereal grains can be seeded following cereal cash crops or over-seeded into standing corn to be chopped for silage for minimal cost. The type of forage crop only needs to fit the production system and provide some reasonably good quality roughage. Some ranchers will clean up hay field regrowth and/or frosted out alfalfa with cull cows. The real advantage to those scenarios is that the feed is relatively cheap and cost of gain is usually kept under \$0.50/lb. The drawback from this scenario is that it can take 60 days or more to add any significant weight and cover. This generally rolls them over the first of the year where a decision will have to be made to market them or put them on a hotter diet and push for an early March sale. Economics and feed supply will dictate the course of action. The other option is to bring cull cows into the yard and feed them a diet that will put on weight fast and efficiently. Again, economics and feed supply will determine the best approach but if reasonably high quality grazing is not available, this is about the only option remaining to keep cost of gain under \$0.70/lb.

More information about managing and marketing cull cows and ranchers interested in assessing signals in the cow market can download the cull cow value calculator at [www.extension.umn.edu/beef](http://www.extension.umn.edu/beef).

**New!!**  
**2016 Fillmore County**  
**Land Atlas & Plat Book**

- ◆ Great reference tool.
- ◆ Great features.
- ◆ Available at the Fillmore SWCD office.



The Fillmore SWCD also offers...

State Cost Share Dollars for Conservation Practices – Grazing Management Plans – Soil Health Technical Assistance - Nutrient Management Plans – Manure Spreader Calibration – Bacteria Testing – Survey Flag Sales – Tree Sales – Tree Planter & Gopher Machine Rental – Tree Bar Rental/Sales



Fillmore Soil and Water Conservation District  
900 Washington Street NW – Preston, MN 55965  
Telephone (507) 765-3878 ext. 3

Address service requested

University of Minnesota Extension  
Fillmore County  
902 Houston Street NW, #3  
Preston MN 55965

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