



This newsletter is a joint effort from the following organizations:



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

Cover Crop Champion Field Day

Wednesday, September 16th 1:00 pm-3:00 pm

Bruce & Jackie Barnum farm, 26856 595th Avenue Brownsdale

Bruce & Jackie Barnum

Family Farm Operations & Cover Crop Plots

Albert Lea SeYX Representative

Cover Crop SeeX Mixes

Paul Trcka (Agronomist CHS)

Cover Crop Weed Management

Steve Lawler (Mower SWC8) & Dan Nath (NRCS Soil Scientist)

Soil Health Data SummUfm Haney Test, Slake Test

Cover Crop Test Plots Tour

Opportunity to see different cover crop mixes in the same location.

SFA Field Day: Fencing Innovations for Livestock and Cover Crops

Friday, September 18 10:00 am - 3:30 pm

Allen Deutz farm, 2866 Co. Rd. 35, Marshall.

Fencing innovations have made the integration of livestock into cover cropping systems easier than ever, and the Sustainable Farming Association is hosting a free field day to show how these strategies can result in improved soil health and enhanced profitability.

Join Kent Solberg, SFA Livestock & Grazing Specialist, as he installs a semipermanent fence. Solberg has 20 years personal and professional fence design and installation experience, he will also lead a discussion of the cover crops planted and how Deutz intends to use them to build soil health and improve his farm profitability.

The event is free, lunch is included. Please RSVP at www.sfa-mn.org/fencinginnovations or by contacting Solberg at kent@sfa-mn.org or 1.844.922.5573, Ext. 701. Leather gloves, work boots and safety glasses are highly recommended.

This field day, part of our ongoing Keep Cattle in Minnesota series, is made possible with the generous support of The Pasture Project.

Fall Soil Health Field Day

Wednesday, September 23

8:30 am to 1:00 pm

29825 County Rd 45, Clarks Grove, MN

Agenda:

8:30-9:00 **Registration & Refreshments**

9:00-9:45 **Rainfall Simulator Demonstration**

How farm management affects water infiltration

9:45-11:45 **Field Day Stations**

Station 1: Below the Surface

A root pit in annual rye that was planted into corn at V6

Station 2: Properties of a Healthy Soil

A hands-on look at soil structure in a drilled cereal rye cover crop

Station 3: What's the Catch?

A look at aerial seeded cover crops growth above & below

11:45 **Lunch Served**

12:00-12:15 **Update from RMA**

Changes made to RMA guidelines on cover crops

12:15-1:00 **Farmer Panel**

Q&A with a diverse group of farmers who have successfully incorporated soil health into their operations

No charge!

Please RSVP for meal count:

507-373-5607 ext. 3

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Brought to you by the Freeborn County Soil Health Team & their sponsors.

2015 Fall Cover Crop Update

Dean Thomas Area 6 Soil Health Tech.

September is just around the corner and fall harvest will be starting soon. With that in mind if you are planning on doing cover crops after corn silage, soybeans, or corn for grain you should be getting your seed purchased and a plan together to get the cover crops planted as soon as you can after harvest.

If corn is chopped for silage in late August or early September you have more time to plant annual cover crops such as a two or three species mix that will winter kill. If the season gets later than September 15 your options become more limited with such species as winter rye, winter wheat and winter triticale. These species can be seeded up to November 1st but planting sooner is better than later for growth establishment and soil health benefits.

For example, winter rye can be seeded with a no-till drill at 55 lbs./acre for just a cover crop and around a 100 lbs/acre if you plan on using it for forage in the spring. For more information on seeding rates and species selection contact Dean Thomas at 507 765 3878 ext. 128 or email at dean.thomas@mn.nacdnet.net

UPCOMING EVENT:



September 16 Cover Crop Field Day
Brownsdale, MN

September 18 SFA Field Day
Marshall, MN

September 23 Fall Soil Health Field Day
Clarks Grove, MN

A visit to Prime Pastures Organic Dairy

Jake Overgaard, Extension Educator, Winona County

The Midwest Forage Association, Southeast MN Forage Council, and UMN Extension along with about 120 guests visited Prime Pastures Organic Dairy the afternoon of August 18th. The weather was just rainy enough to keep farmers out of the field so they could attend, but not so rainy to ruin the field day.

The dairy is multigenerational, parents Dale and Carmen farm with their daughter Kim and her husband Andy at their farm near Lewiston. They employ rotational grazing on this pasture based organic dairy. Dale related that he and Carmen chose to use rotational grazing to save time, reduce stress, and increase their income.

They find the system works well for them and shared that when they switched to rotational grazing, their milk production dropped, but their costs dropped more than enough to cover the production loss, increasing their profit. One drawback Dale noted is dealing with mud seems to be a greater challenge in a pasture based system (it was a muddy day, so it was definitely on his mind), and there is less consistency in milk production, which he attributes to variation in weather and consequently forage quality. Their milk production and quality will vary as weather moves from cool and cloudy to warm and sunny days.

To transition to a grazing based system, cropland was converted to pastures. A few decades ago, prior to the conversion, organic matter levels were two percent, these days their levels are around five percent. Their pasture consists of red and white clover, alfalfa, and nearly twenty species of grass. They've recently started seeding brown mid-rib sorghum sudangrass in selected areas

once soil temperatures reach 60 degrees. These areas then get grazed twice in the season. This gives them a good forage source at a time when paddocks of cool-season grasses are not growing as vigorously.

One of the challenges that organic dairies face is fly management. There are organic approved sprays and oils that can be used, though they need to be applied often in order to be effective. The Pangrac's are working with University of Minnesota to test out a fly vacuum called the Cow Vac, mostly aimed at controlling horn flies. When cows come from the pasture to be milked, they go through a gate where the vacuum surrounds the sides and the back of the animal, sucking flies off them. A UMN grad student is assessing the vacuum's effectiveness on this farm as well as in other locations across MN.

Prime Pastures installed robotic milkers several years ago and are happy with the change. I had visited several dairies with robotic milkers previously, but not a farm that uses rotational grazing. After a milking, cows are sorted and moved to a fresh paddock, so they come in to be milked because they want fresh forage.

It was a good day at Prime Pastures Organic Dairy and we thank them for hosting such a large group.





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