



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:*  
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## 2014 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 100lbs/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 dean.thomas@fillmoreswcd.org

## Upcoming Events

**Cover Crop & Soil Health Workshop** ~ Thursday, September 11 9:30-3:00, Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park Pavilion, New Prague FREE. Please register by Monday, 9/8/14. call 952.492.5425 or register online [www.scottswcd.org/workshops](http://www.scottswcd.org/workshops).

**UMN Extension Farmland Rental Workshops** ~ *Attend to learn about lease & rental agreements, land value, and rental rate trends.*

Monday, November 17, 9:30-11:30 am

Winona County Office Building, 202 W 3rd St, Winona

Monday, November 17th, 2:00-4:00 pm

Fillmore County Office Building, 902 Houston St NW, Preston

Monday, November 24th, 9:30-11:30 am

Criminal Justice Center, 306 S Marshall Street, Caledonia

Monday, November 24th, 2:00-4:00 pm

St. Charles City Hall, 830 Whitewater Ave, St. Charles

*Contact Winona, Fillmore, or Houston County Extension for more information.*

## A "Short" story about Electric Fencing

John Zinn, USDA/NRCS Grazing Specialist

Ok it was a poor idea for a title but you'll have to admit it caught your attention.

August seems to be a month for livestock to break out of electric fences. At least that is how I remember it. Today's low impedance fence energizers allow for short, intense bursts of energy to be transmitted to the fence which reduces electrical short circuits, however, even these newer models can be defeated by heavy weed pressure, poor connections, or poor grounding.

One way to reduce the current delivered to the animal is to have poor connections to the electric fence. I have seen people purchase a \$1000, state of the art, fence energizer and connect it to the electric fence by twisting a wire around it. Although this will transfer current to the fence, it also creates a lot of electric resistance, which robs the fence of shocking power. A much better connection can be had by crimping the wire from the energizer to the fence with a sleeve. Another way to reduce the shocking power of a fence is to connect sections of the fence with an electric gate handle. You can sometimes hear and see fence gates snapping and arcing. This also creates resistance. A better way to connect one side of the gate to the other is to bury insulated galvanized wire underneath the gate and connect either side of the fence with crimped sleeve connections. The gate is energized on as a separate circuit. This also allows for keeping the fence energized while the gate is open.

The electric fence works by completing a circuit between the fence, the animal that contacts it and a ground. The ground must be complete and sized according to the fence energizer manufacturer's directions in order to deliver maximum shocking power. One ground rod per joule is the common thumb

rule, so if you have a five joule energizer, you'll need to have five ground rods spaced ten feet apart. Dry soil can cause ground rods to be ineffective, so many put their ground rods under the drip line of a roof or in some other moist area. In dry weather some may irrigate the area around the ground rods to insure good connections. Speaking of good connections, corrosion where the ground rods are connected to the fencer can cause resistance. Corrosion accelerates when there are dissimilar metals used in the grounding system. Copper grounding wire connected to a galvanized ground rod can set up a thick layer of corrosion which reduces the effectiveness of the grounding system.

If you have not seen the electric fence testers that can find the direction of a short circuit, these are real time savers and can soon pay for themselves. Hopefully these ideas can help you get through the summer without any breakouts and you can avoid the time consuming and annoying task of getting your livestock back where they belong.

### Electric Fence Safety

The newer low impedance fencers have created some safety concerns, especially toward small children and pets. Barbed wire should never be electrified. One shock from an electric fence will usually not kill, but animals and children entangled in electric fences have died. Please also consider putting safety warning signs on your electric fences, especially if you are in a more densely populated place.



## Cover crop research plot

Jake Overgaard, Winona County Extension Educator

After the extensive winterkilled alfalfa and prevented plant acreage of 2013, a lot of questions came up about what to do in the situation. For some, the best option was to plant a cover crop on those acres. Some farmers were looking for emergency forage, others were looking to forage they could harvest late in the year due to crop insurance rules. Others were looking to cover crops for weed control, to build the soil, prevent erosion, scavenge for nitrogen, or prevent fallow syndrome. Cover crops can meet these needs, but understanding the benefits and best use of each is important.

This year in southeast Minnesota, spring treated us a little better, but in other parts of the state, they were in the boat we were in last year. The weather patterns of the last few years have produced serious problems. We need more information to better respond. Farmers, and particularly cattle producers, are looking for options that not only have benefits to the land and soil, but also provide an opportunity to graze or harvest as forage.

To respond, Jim Paulson, UMN Dairy Extension Educator, developed a research plot north of Lanesboro to investigate above ground growth, root development, and forage value. In the plot, there are a few of the usual suspects that have seen use in our area or were planted widely in 2013; rye, oats, sorghum-sudan grass, and tillage radish to name a few.

In addition to these better known cover crops, the planting also has phacelia, forage corn, forage beets, buckwheat, forage turnip, cowpea, proso millet, kale, hairy vetch, as well as several mixes. The species were chosen based on past research as well as by listening to what farmers were trying.



We hope to share the results and any conclusions drawn from this plot with our readers. In the meantime, if you're looking for more information on cover crops there are a few places to go. The Midwest Cover Crop Decision Tool is online, <http://www.mccc.msu.edu/>, and can help you choose a cover crop based on your location, soils, the window in which you have to plant, and your goals. Another good resource is the book "Managing Cover Crops Profitably", produced by the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program. The book discusses the different aspects of a selection of crops and how farmers use them in their rotation and is also available online, <http://z.umn.edu/ccprofitably>. Finally, get in touch with any of us listed on the front page of the Grazing Gazette and we'll be happy to discuss your options.

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# Hammell Equipment

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