



JUNE 2009

Pasture News

LAGRANGE COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
910 S DETROIT STREET, LAGRANGE, IN 46761
PHONE (260)463-3471 EXT. 3
WWW.LAGRANGESWCD.ORG

“Tall Grazing”

June 9th, 2009 ~ 1:00p.m.

HOST: Vernon Hochstetler

3735 S 00 EW

LaGrange, IN 46761

Please Contact the office to make transportation arrangements (260)463-3471 ext.3

May 2009 Pasture Walk at Ray Eash Farm

The second Pasture Walk for 2009 was held at the Ray Eash Farm several miles southeast of LaGrange. The weather was as good for this event as it was poor for the April Walk, with sunny clear skies, a light east wind, and a temperature of about 70°. Dennis Wollheter started things off by welcoming the group of around 30 farm producers. John Belork from Hamlet, Indiana, drove the farthest to attend, coming from Starke County and travelling over 100 miles. Dan Chupp came in second, driving from north of Jones, Michigan. Jerry Miller of Syracuse was the only first-time attendee at this Pasture Walk.

After the welcome, Dennis gave a brief update on plans for the upcoming Northern Indiana Grazing Conference, to be held February 5, 2010. Jenny Holcomb and Martin Franke, both representing LaGrange County SWCD, made announcements concerning grazing related publications and the District's rental fence post pounder.

Ray Eash then welcomed the group to his farm. The Eash family, including Ray, his wife Barbara and their 8 children, moved to this farm in 1991. All 80 acres were enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) at that time. In 1995, Ray was able to opt out of the program a year early, and began utilizing his acreage as pasture and for hay production. He briefly tried milking goats from 2001 to 2002, but discontinued that when the co-op purchasing the goat milk closed. He began milking again in 2003, and has continued that on to the present time. Currently he is milking 35 Jersey and Dutch Belts on a modified seasonal schedule.

With this introduction, the group walked out into the bright May sunshine. We began our Walk in Field #1. This field is presently planted to alfalfa, fescue and orchard grass. Some clover was also apparent, scattered through the field. Ray explained that it is a practice of his to watch his grazing paddocks for “thin spots”, and to frost seed clover into such areas to augment forage value. This helps to prolong the time between total reseeding intervals and maximize forage efficiency. On the day of the Pasture Walk, Field #1 contained a lush growth of forage 18”-24” in height, with only a few of “God’s golden drops of sunshine” (dandelions!) present. Ray was grazing this field, using break wires both in front of and behind the grazing herd to define his paddocks.

Ray was asked about his fertility program as we left Field #1. Ray operated a finishing hog house until 2008, and therefore had a ready supply of cattle, hog and horse manure to spread on his fields. He also mentioned that he periodically uses a liquid foliar feed during the growing season. Now that he is no longer using his hog house, he is not sure how he is going to replace the nutrient value of the liquid hog manure that he once spread on a regular basis.

Field #2 is planted to brome grass and Kingfisher. The Pasture Walk group asked Ray here again about his practice of frost seeding clover. Pete Lehman asked why he didn't just plant clover when he seeded the field in the first place. Ray's response was that he wants to watch the field, and use clover to fill in spots where the regular forage is not doing well. Glen Lambright commented that his own success with broadcast frost seeding has been limited, but that Ray's results with this practice are pretty impressive. Larry Yoder commented that frost seeding on top of a light snow cover is a good practice, as it allows for an easy visual check on seed density. Ray did comment that with clover planted heavily in some spots in his grazing fields, he has to monitor the cattle carefully for bloat. The forage in Field #2 was at about the same stage of development as Field #1. Ray hopes to graze this field off shortly, but commented that he may have to make hay from it if he can't move the cattle into it shortly.



As we moved out of Field #2, Ray was asked about his watering system. He has a black plastic water line on top of the ground running straight back from the farm buildings to the paddocks to the west. He has a quick coupler placed in this water line at 100' intervals for easy placement of tanks in which ever paddock he is grazing at any given time. The water line runs right along a fence row, so grass grows over the line every summer, which prevents the sun from making the water too warm. Another physical feature was quite apparent as well. Ray uses step in steel posts to support his temporary electric fence. To make the posts easier to locate, he has painted them fluorescent orange.

The three fields on the northwest part of the farm are rented from a neighbor. Up until a few years ago, this area was overgrown with multiflora rose, and was not farmed at all. At one point, this invasive plant was removed, unfortunately along with the topsoil, by bulldozer. William Nissley had harvested corn silage off this area in the past, and said that at that time, the place ‘...looked like a gravel pit.’ The forage growth on these fields was not as good as the rest of the farm, but after two years of hog manure and care, looked remarkably improved and certainly not like a gravel pit anymore.



In rented Field "W", Larry Yoder asked Ray about his success in getting his cattle to eat the "Lowland Pasture Mix" he had planted there. Larry's comment was that that particular mix contained a good bit of fescue, which sparked a discussion. Although modern fescues do not have the endophyte problem exhibited by the older "tall fescue" or "Kentucky 31", still, palatability is a problem in some dairy herds. As with any group of graziers, it became quickly apparent that this one had both fescue advocates and opponents as well.

Ray called Field #3 his "Milk Maker Field". The north half of this field was seeded to Dairy Plus; the south half to BG 34 and white clover back in 2004. Both halves of the field were seeded very shallow with a Brillion seeder. Ray has already grazed this field off once this spring. He said he usually grazes this field fairly short before moving on. The day of the Pasture Walk, Field #3 exhibited low but dense forage growth 3"-6" in height. There was very little visible difference between the

two plantings. Pete Lehman commented on the clumpy, uneven appearance of the forage in some areas of this field. Pete and Steve Hooley agreed that this could indicate some refusal during grazing, which they said could be caused by a number of different factors. Steve asked how many times Ray had moved his herd across this field last year, to which Ray answered that he had grazed Field #3 off 6 times. Steve suggested using tighter break wires and more frequent moves, saying that in a year with adequate moisture, he thought that a pasture such as this one could be grazed off as many as 7 or 8 times. Pete mentioned that a good stand of ryegrass usually lasts around 6 years, and then begins to decline in quality.

Glen Lambright asked why some ryegrass goes to seed, and when it does, is this hard on the forage? Or, on the other hand, does this help the grass to reseed itself and maintain a better stand the following year? Ray runs his temporary paddock fences in this field from north to south, so the cattle have access to the Dairy Plus and the BG 34 plantings simultaneously. The graziers liked the looks of the BG 34 better, but upon close inspection, it could be seen that the Dairy Plus was grazed shorter; indicating perhaps that the cattle preferred it.

The group walked to the edge of Field #4, where Ray has planted corn continuously since 2003. According to his soil tests, this field is still the best one he has in terms of measurable fertility. Every year, Ray has applied hog manure to this field, and plants a cereal rye cover crop after harvesting the silage corn.

The south half of the farm is lower ground where Ray pastures horses, dry cows and heifers. On the way back to the farm building, Ray explained that his hog house is in poor shape and that he is no longer using it for housing hogs or other livestock. The group took a good look at Ray's unique freestall barn. This 58' X 100' structure is of pole barn type construction, but has one interesting feature in that it is sided entirely with a black plastic shade material. This creates shade in summer, acts as a wind break in winter, provides for adequate ventilation, and is considerably cheaper than steel barn siding.

Some of the group peeked inside Ray's milking parlor on the way back to the buildings for a snack. The milking parlor is set up in a herringbone arrangement, with accommodations for 4 cows on each side-eight in all at a time. The program was concluded with some time for informal discussion, coffee, pop, cookies and delicious homemade donuts. Thanks again to the Ray Eash Family for hosting our May Pasture Walk this year.



Conservation Showcase Field Day Planned

- ☐ Tour Adam Scharf's farm in Goshen, IN
- ☐ Newly installed rotational grazing system for sheep, chickens, and other livestock
- ☐ Watering system where rain water is collected from the barn roof into cisterns and then directed to vegetable plots and the pasture
- ☐ Restored wetland established in 2009
- ☐ Two identical tours will be offered for your convenience. Adam and NRCS grazing specialist, Jerry Perkins, will speak.
- ☐ Adam's farm is the agriculture demonstration site for the ERA Ag Cost-share program. At this eight acre farm, Adam is growing vegetables and raising livestock sustainably in partnership with other community members.

June 6, 2009

2:00-3:00 p.m. and 3:00-4:00 p.m.

303 W. Waverly Ave.

Goshen, IN 46526

For more information contact: Lynette Black, Agriculture Conservationist, Elkhart Co. SWCD. 574-533-3630 ext. 3



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Dairy Field Day Scheduled

June 27, 9-3:30 @ Alan Kozak's Farm (10061 TR 301, Millersburg)

Alan is hosting the American Jersey's Association's World Tour and SFI and Ohio Forage and Grasslands Council are working with them. The title of the day's program is "***Improving the Bottom Line***". It will be a full day of activities on Alan and Sharon's farm. There will be an international dairy producer panel of farmers from Australia, New Zealand and other countries as well as other international dairy producers in attendance. American and Ohio Jersey producers will be part of the day participants. Several times during the afternoon, there will be guided pasture walks with Bob Hendershot and Jeff McCutcheon. The four farm stops with presentations will be going on simultaneously with pasture walks. The four areas are raising calves and heifers, feeding program for milking cows, reproductive management for seasonal production; and improvements for water quality management (bedded pack barn, nutrient management plan for farm and EQIP projects). Plus, Alan has redesigned his milking parlor. The registration will be \$5.00 per person. Lunch will be by donation. We will be serving Jersey beef and the local dairy graziers will help with the rest of food. Alan and Sharon's 4-H club will be serving lunch as part of a fundraiser and community service project. Please register by June 19, 2009 so we have a lunch count. If you have questions, call OFGC at 740.545.6349. The registration form can be downloaded from the www.smallfarminstitute.org website. (or contact the SWCD office 260-463-3471 ext 3)

Family Farm Field Day 2009

July 18 @ David & Emily Hershberger's Farm (5119 TR 613 Fredricksburg, Ohio)

- ~ Joel Salatin will be the speaker for the Keynote tent, Farmstead tent & Homestead tent
- ~ Wayne Miller and others herding sheep with dogs
- ~ Altfrid Krusenbaum and Gerald Fry will join the dairy track activities
- ~ local dairy farmer panel " Personal Farming Experience in Holmes County"
- ~ Yoder Custom Meat " Dressing a Pig: Butchering the Half Two Ways"
- ~ Raymond Yoder " Getting Started in Growing Produce: The Basics"
- ~ Rob Schlabach " Raising Produce on a Dairy Farm"
- ~ Sheep Producer Panel
- ~ Charlene Stoller " Changing My Family to More Healthy Eating"
- ~ "Late Summer & Fall Gardening"
- ~ Hochstetler Wood " Learning to Identify Trees", " Beginner Woodlot Knowledge"
- ~ Children's Tent will have bird walks, botany walk, ladybug program, microscopes and insect display, farm and animal safety programs

Questions call Lloyd Miller @ 330.674.4267 or Jerry Miller @ 330.893.1470 or Leah @ 740.545.6349

LaGrange County Soil Surveys

The LaGrange County SWCD office recommends you are familiar with the soil types on your land. Your soil type can and will directly impact the production of your crops and pastures. Soil types will also tell you where you can expect excess moisture or extreme drought. The SWCD has copies of the LaGrange County Soil Survey. It is an informative publication that may answer many questions you may have. Please feel free to contact the office to receive your copy of the LaGrange County Soil Survey.

Manure Management Field Day—July 2009

Mark your calendar for July 29, 2009 and plan on attending a manure management field day hosted by Whiteshire Hamroc Farm in Noble County. The day will begin at 10:00 a.m. with an overview of the Whiteshire Hamroc operation focusing on the economics of manure, historical manure application compared to current application methods, and fertility management. Lunch will be provided free of charge to the first 100 who register. This field day will focus on the “challenge” of manure management with no-till/reduced tillage systems. In the afternoon field demonstrations will be held on the Dudley Parker property. The field day is sponsored by the Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D – Kosciusko, LaGrange, Noble, Steuben, St. Joseph and Whitley County SWCDs. Watch for more information in future newsletters and newspapers.



Cost Share Available for BMP Installation

If you live in the Little Elkhart River Watershed, you may be eligible to receive 50 – 75% cost share funding to improve the surface water quality in the St. Joseph River Watershed (Lake Michigan). Under the 319 Grant for Non point Source Pollution the LaGrange Co. SWCD has developed a cost share criteria that was approved by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management who administer the grant funds. Best Management Practices (BMPs) eligible for cost share include:

- Fencing – to exclude livestock from water bodies, with a grassed filter strip between the fence and the ditch.
- Filter Strips – to filter nutrients and slow runoff from feed lots and along water bodies from crop fields receiving manure.
- Pasture Planting and Improvement – Must have a current soil test.
- Alternative Watering Systems – Could include spring development, temporary or permanent watering stations, pipe, pasture pumps, wells, wells with auto systems, and others as identified necessary to the watering system to keep livestock out of the water bodies.
- Stream Crossings – To eliminate livestock from having total access to a ditch of water body and to provide streambank stabilization.



Manure Application & Nutrient Management – Includes all fertility testing.

For more information and to find out if you live in the Little Elkhart River Watershed, contact the SWCD office at 260-463-3471 ext 3.

John Roche to Visit LaGrange County

A group of graziers in the area have arranged for John Roche, a forage specialist from New Zealand to visit LaGrange County. A few of John’s areas of interest include: Ruminant Nutrition, Dairy Farm Management, and Transition Cow Nutrition and Management.

Where? Vernon Hochstetler’s Farm

3735 S 00 EW, LaGrange, IN 46761

When? June 9th, 2009 (Same day as the Pasture Walk)

Time? 10:00 a.m.

Lunch will be provided by Center Feeds LLC

RSVP’s would be appreciated

Questions and Reservations may be directed to David Miller @ 260.768.8106

The Pasture Walk will go on as scheduled @ 1:00



SUMMER ANNUAL FORAGES - Rory Lewandowski, Extension Educator, Athens County

Late May into early June is a good time for livestock producers to consider planting warm season annuals to supplement cool season pastures. The warm season annuals most commonly used to provide summer grazing include: sudangrass, sorghum x sudangrass hybrids, corn and millet. All of these crops have the potential to produce up to 3 tons of dry matter (DM) per acre within 50-60 days of being planted. Sudangrass, sorghum x sudangrass hybrids and millet can all provide several grazing passes.

Basic soil fertility levels needed for summer annuals are: soil pH between 6.0 and 6.5, soil phosphorus of 15 ppm, and soil potassium of 100-110 ppm. All of the summer annual crops will respond well to nitrogen and produce more tonnage when nitrogen is applied. If the summer annual is planted into a former grass sod, apply 50-60 lbs of actual nitrogen/acre for a 3-4 ton DM/acre yield. Soil temperatures should be at least 60 degrees F and preferably 65 degrees F at planting. Plant seed about one-half inch deep and use a seeding rate of 30 to 35 lbs/acre for sudangrass and sorghum x sudangrass hybrids, 20-25 lbs/acre for millet. Corn should be planted 1.5 to 2 inches deep at a plant population of 26,000 to 30,000 plants per acre. No-till seeding can be used to plant summer annuals.

Summer annuals can be used as a "safe" pasture paddock for sheep and goats. If the summer annual is being planted into a pasture paddock that was grazed earlier in the spring, then tillage is a preferred method to prepare the seedbed as compared to no-till because the tillage operation will break the lifecycle of the *Haemonchus contortus* parasite.

Summer annuals grow fast and good grazing management is needed to take advantage of the quality forage they can provide. Grazing must begin before plants get too tall and mature. The Ohio Agronomy guide recommends grazing beginning at 24 to 30 inches in height and to leave six to eight inches of stubble to promote fast re-growth. Based on some forage sampling I have done when sudangrass is at this stage of growth, it is not unreasonable to expect crude protein levels (CP) of 15-18 % and TDN values of 68-72%. However quality drops off quickly as the plant matures and if it gets above 48 inches or seed heads begin to emerge, then single digit CP values coupled with 50% TDN levels are not uncommon. If the summer annual can be managed to begin grazing at 30 inches and leave 6-8 inches of stubble, then re-growth should allow another grazing pass in about 3 weeks. This is best managed by strip grazing, providing livestock with 1 to 3 days of grazing and then moving them to another strip. Remember to leave a 6-8 inch residual. Corn can be grazed in a similar fashion, or left to accumulate more tonnage before it is grazed. For more information about grazing corn, click on the following link to an OSU Extension fact sheet on this topic: <http://ohioline.osu.edu/anr-fact/0011.html>. For those without Internet access, contact your county Extension Office and they can provide you with a copy of the fact sheet.

The advantage of summer annuals is that they produce a lot of tonnage during the hot summer months when cool season pastures are growing very slowly. In addition to high tonnage values, they can produce high quality forage when properly managed. The disadvantage is that they are annuals. There is a seed cost and seeding cost associated with them. The best yields are achieved by providing supplemental nitrogen fertilizer. If the weather does not cooperate, the seeding could fail or yield poorly. They probably are not the right plant on steep, hilly paddocks; you must have some relatively level or slightly sloped land to use them. Finally, you must have a plan to follow up with something after they are finished at the end of September.

PASTURE SOIL QUALITY, ASSESSING THE EVIDENCE - Clif Little, Extension Educator, Guernsey County

Plants and organisms are part of a biological community and their presence or absence can indicate the health of a pasture relative to its potential. The soil and plant community is sensitive to agriculture management practices and natural environmental changes. Pastureland indicators help us evaluate productivity and opportunities for improvement.

Soil has physical, biological and chemical properties. Not all soils are created equal. Our management may improve or degrade a soil's potential. The chemical properties of a soil are often measured by a soil test. These chemical properties include plant nutrients, organic matter, cation-exchange, base saturation, and pH. These factors can directly affect pasture productivity.

Soil organisms, such as earthworms, bacteria and nematodes are also part of a soil's properties. These organisms can be beneficial or harmful.

The land surface can provide clues related to pasture soil quality. Bare soil, gullies, erosion, stones, shale, compaction, and plant residue are all indicators.

Plant community health is related to the amount of cover, desired plant species, and plant diversity. Management impacts pasture soil quality. Bare patches, excessively trampled areas, grazing height, and manure distribution are all evidence related to pasture soil quality.

A pasture assessment begins with evaluating a baseline of production and comparing that to the desired production for specific soils. A good starting point is the soil survey. The web soil survey is a useful tool for determining forage suitability and yield potential, available at <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app>. Comparing farm yield potential using the soil survey and assigning a utilization rate will enable landowners to see how rotational grazing can reduce the need for supplemental feed and increase carrying capacity.

Improving pasture management has a positive influence on soil quality. Some potential benefits include; increased yield, organic matter content increase, erosion reduction, increased water holding capacity and ultimately more profit per acre.

A pasture assessment is a snapshot reflecting and indicating the status of pasture production. Changes in management may improve or reduce pasture soil quality. Conducting a pasture assessment can help in documenting areas for improvement and changes over time. What does your pasture evidence say?

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Upcoming Walks

July 14—Ernest Stutzman, 10720 CR 28, Middlebury

August 11—Bob Eash, 11325 E 550 S, Hudson

September 8—Floyd Miller, 9690 W 200 S, Shipshewana

October 13—John Belork, 4435 E 500 N, Hamlet, IN

November 10—Forrest Keefer, 3829 W 800 N, Wawaka

FUNDING FOR NEW ORGANICS INITIATIVE ANNOUNCED

INDIANAPOLIS, May 6, 2009— State Conservationist Jane Hardisty of the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announced \$862,564 is available in Indiana for a new initiative to encourage more organic agriculture production. Funding for the initiative is being made available as part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

"Assisting organic producers is one of the priorities of the 2008 Farm Bill," said Hardisty. "The objective of this initiative is to make organic food producers eligible to compete for EQIP financial assistance."

The 2009 Organic Initiative is a nationwide special initiative to provide financial assistance to National Organic Program (NOP) certified organic producers as well as producers in the process of transitioning to organic production. Organic producers may also apply for assistance under general EQIP.

Under the Organic Initiative minimum core conservation practices will be required based on specific resource concerns. The practices are: Conservation Crop Rotation; Cover Crop; Nutrient Management; Pest Management; Prescribed Grazing; and Forage Harvest Management. Indiana will consider using any appropriate practice that meets the natural resource concerns on a particular farm.

Applications received from organic producers or producers in transition to organic farming will be accepted under this initiative between May 11 and May 29, 2009. (*This deadline has been extended!*)

Ranking criteria has been established based on resource concerns that link to the National Organic Program (NOP) objectives and the core conservation practices. Find more information about NOP on the USDA Web site at <http://www.usda.gov/> by choosing the subject 'Agriculture' then clicking on 'Organic Certification' under Related Topics.

In addition to the 2009 Organic Initiative, the Indiana State Department of Agriculture also offers the Indiana Organic Certification Program, which will reimburse 75 percent of the cost of certification fees up to \$750 for new certifications or renewals. Producers can apply for this program until September 30, 2009 and can find applications at <http://www.in.gov/isda/2399.htm>.

The 2009 Organic Initiative will be administered by NRCS. Interested producers should contact their NRCS district conservationist at a USDA Service Center to determine eligibility. LaGrange County: Dave Hague (260)463-3471 ext 3, Elkhart County: Bev Stevenson (574)533-4383 ext 3, Steuben County: Richard Neff (260)665-3211 ext. 3, Noble County: Russell Baker (260) 636-7682 ext. 3, Dekalb County: Bill Lambert (260) 925-3710 ext 3. Additional information on the 2009 EQIP Organic Initiative is available at: www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/.