



2021 Dane County Farmland Cash Rent Survey

The Dane County Extension office receives many questions every year from landlords and farmers about the “going rate” for cash farmland rent. The [National Agricultural Statistic Service](#) annually reports the average rent per county but this does not include township level data or the range in rents, in 2020 the average rent for non-irrigated land in Dane Co was \$182/ac. In early 2021, Dane County Extension conducted a survey of farmers and landowners, here are the results.

Township	Avg. Rent (\$/Ac)	Median Rent (\$/Ac)	Number of Parcels Reported	Range of Rents (\$/Ac)	Total Acres Reported	Avg. Corn Yield (Bu/Ac)
Berry	133	140	10	100-200	587	175
Black Earth/Vermont*	143	135	6	120-175	400	177
Blue Mounds	145	145	14	35-225	573	159
Bristol	196	213	10	80-290	1219	174
Burke	214	220	7	92-300	474	200
Christiana	147	150	11	100-200	975	182
Cottage Grove	135	150	7	50-175	204	168
Cross Plains	185	190	5	80-270	370	198
Dane	170	160	15	25-300	928	190
Deerfield	147	150	17	35-200	1042	186
Dunkirk/Albion	147	150	7	110-180	292	180
Dunn	160	155	10	127-190	635	182
Fitchburg/Middleton/Verona*	149	155	9	60-200	306	174
Mazomanie	113	120	8	35-180	500	142
Medina	177	190	13	130-225	617	189
Montrose	165	165	23	100-250	1816	171
Oregon	142	150	19	80-200	482	164
Perry	139	140	10	90-200	739	163
Pleasant Springs	182	175	8	157-225	430	202
Primrose	138	140	15	80-200	1017	182
Roxbury	157	125	16	75-300	831	175
Rutland	145	133	6	125-180	196	166
Springdale	139	140	11	85-225	929	165
Springfield	228	200	11	175-401	1016	191
Sun Prairie	201	185	5	175-250	267	200
Vienna	239	263	8	130-300	758	211
Windsor	259	265	12	160-350	1406	207
York	200	195	26	75-275	1638	176
No township indicated	163	163	6	100-225	174	140
All Dane Co 2021	167	160	330	25-401	20910	178

*Townships are combined when there was insufficient data in a single township.

Dane County Pasture Rental Rate Values

- 18 parcels of pasture, totaling 509 acres, were reported.
- There were not enough parcels reported from any one township to allow a township-level analysis.
- 6 landlords and 7 renters responded.
- 4 parcels were reported as being paid on a monthly basis, while the majority are on a per acre basis.
- The average rental rate for pasture reported in Dane County was \$72 per acre.
- The cash rent reported here is only a small portion of the pastureland rented. Many parcels are not paid cash rents, but are share-cropped or have a barter arrangement for meat or services.
- The average rent for 100% grass pasture was \$45 per acre (7 parcels).
- The average rent per acre for a grass-legume mix pasture was \$89 (7 parcels).
- USDA NASS reported an average rent for pastureland in Dane County at \$52/ac in 2020.

Survey methods

- 1300 landlords and renters were mailed the land rent survey
- 348 parcels were reported
- Averages were not reported for townships with fewer than 5 survey responses, they were instead combined with the results of a neighboring township with similar topography and soil types.
- The values for average rent noted above were based on actual cash rent exchanged and did not include values for crop-shares, barter agreements, or any other non-cash based transaction.

The importance of leases

It is important to have a written lease for all rental agreements. Verbal and handshake agreements are difficult to enforce and can result in misunderstandings between landlords and tenants. A written lease provides the opportunity for landlords and tenants to have a meeting of the minds on the terms of the lease, including cropping practices, and to discuss the course of action in the case of the unexpected. Most importantly, having a written lease protects both parties and helps both the landlord and tenant remember the details of the agreement. The Dane County Extension office has many resources available for landlords and tenants on renting farm assets and developing rental lease agreements. These can also be obtained from the Dane County Extension office either in person or [online](#).

Factors to consider when setting cash rental rates

The data reported in this survey indicates trends but is not meant to establish, determine, or set rental rates. These survey results should only be used as a guideline when discussing land rental rates. The following factors all come into play when setting cash rents:

1. Ownership/ Production Costs- Landlords should be minimally covering the costs of owning the land with land rent and farmers should make sure the rental price they agree to will allow them to remain profitable by knowing their cost of production.
2. Land quality and Soil Fertility- Soil types and the potential productivity of the land are important factors in determining land rent but the current fertility and liming requirements of the field are also important. Land that is low in fertility or needs lime will not be as valuable as ground that has been maintained.
3. Conservation practices- Fields that continuously lose top soil become less valuable over time. Farmers using appropriate production practices can help conserve the soil, which is a farm's most valuable natural resource. Working with a farmer that is willing to use production practices that conserve soil is valuable to the land owner and can be an important factor to determine rent.
4. Size of field and field access - Larger and more accessible fields are generally preferable and worth more to farmers.
5. Location, location, location - Competition for land may drive land rent prices beyond what other factors might suggest the land is worth. Dairy farms often need a minimum amount of acres to spread manure and may decide to pay more rent to secure those acres.
6. Relationships- The working relationship, previous experiences and trust between landlord and tenant are important factors for both parties to consider. Many rental agreements include side benefits for the land owner like snow removal or field edge maintenance. Also, it is important for the landlord to trust that they will receive their rental payment in a timely fashion.
7. The "Going Rate"- The average cash rental rates can be used as starting point when discussing land rental but other factors will ultimately help the land owner and farmer come to a final number.

Additional Resources

[Aglease 101's Document Library \(Example Leases\)](#)

[Farmland Information Center- Information for Landowners](#)

[University of Minnesota Extension's Landowner's Cash Rent Worksheet](#)

[University of Minnesota Extension's Operator's Cash Rent Worksheet](#)

[University of Wisconsin Extension's Pricing and Contracts](#)

The 2021 Dane County Farmland Cash Rent Survey was conducted by Chelsea Zegler, Crops & Soils Educator, & María José Fuenzalida, Dairy & Livestock Educator.

Thank you to the landowners and renters who responded to this survey, and to Claudia Wiederholt, Dane County Support Staff, for compiling the data.