

October 2019



Photo Credit: Aerica Bjurstrom

Extension Fond du Lac County

227 Admin/Extension Building
400 University Drive
Fond du Lac, WI 54935
920.929.3173
<http://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/fdlag>

Fond du Lac County Educators:

Diana Hammer
Community Resource Development
Educator

Ron Jakubisin
Area Positive Youth Development
Educator

Tracy Keifenheim
4-H Program Coordinator

Tina Kohlman
Dairy & Livestock Agent

Amanda Miller
FoodWise Coordinator &
Health & Well-Being Educator

Pamela Nelson
FoodWise Nutrition Educator

Patty Percy
Community Garden Coordinator

Melanie Phillips
FoodWise Nutrition Educator

Shelley Tidemann
Human Development &
Relationships Educator

Cindy Sarkady
Area Extension Director

Joe Zimbric
Area Crops & Soils Agent

Program Assistants:

Pam Bartoli **Tina Engelhardt**
Katie Gindt **Cassi Worster**

Requests for reasonable accommodations for disabilities or limitations should be made prior to the date of the program or activity for which it is needed. Please do so as early as possible prior to the program or activity so that proper arrangements can be made.

Introducing Joe Zimbric!



My name is Joe Zimbric and I will be serving as the Crops and Soils Agricultural Educator for Fond du Lac and Dodge counties. I'm very excited to be joining the excellent team of farmers and agriculturalists in the area who are working hard to find solutions to the many challenges that are facing our agricultural producers and our rural communities.

In the summer of 2019, I completed my master's degree in agronomy at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where my research was focused on optimizing a dual-use perennial grain crop for maximum grain and forage production. I'm particularly interested in cropping system diversification, forage management and utilization, soil health and water quality, on-farm research, data analysis and modeling, and agricultural policy. However, I look forward to working through the wide range of issues that may arise in this diverse agricultural area.

Prior to starting my graduate studies, I spent time working with cattle ranchers and dryland wheat farmers in western Montana on improving soil health, irrigation efficiency, resilience to changing temperature and precipitation trends, and water quality. Through that experience I developed a deep appreciation and respect for producers who are trying to make decisions and manage risk in these highly volatile and unpredictable times.

Going forward my hope is to develop forward-thinking educational programming that addresses both our immediate and long term challenges in order to build greater economic and environmental sustainability into our farms and our communities. I'm very eager to meet all of you and hear your stories. Please don't hesitate to contact me by phone (920.296.6583) or email (jwzimbric@wisc.edu) with any comments or questions that you have, and I hope you all are having a great start to the fall! 🌾

Tina Kohlman
Dairy & Livestock Agent
Email: tina.kohlman@wisc.edu
Phone: 920.929.3180 🐮

Joe Zimbric
Crops & Soils Educator
Email: jwzimbric@wisc.edu
Phone: 920.296.6583 🌾

Visit us on the web at <https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/fdlag/>

Harvesting and Managing Late-Planted Corn Silage

This year has been a very challenging year for forage production in Wisconsin and across the upper Midwest. A wetter than average spring led to delayed planting in many areas of the state, and as a result we anticipate seeing high levels of variability in the quantity and quality of this year's forage crops. With several consecutive years of low commodity prices, many producers are ready to turn the page on 2019 after what is being called an 'unprecedented' growing season.

With over 20 million acres of ground put into the USDA's prevented planting program this growing season, and with hay stocks at a 5-year low, there is an anticipated high demand for high quality forage throughout the 2020 growing season. In particular, much emphasis should be placed on how producers should deal with this year's upcoming corn silage harvest. Due to the delayed corn maturity in many areas across the state, producers are concerned about the possibility of an early killing frost. Troy Brown's, Form-a-Feed Forage Specialist, outlook on this issue was optimistic, and he predicts most growers will be okay for this season. However in the event of an early killing frost, the proper path forward can be a major management challenge.

If the plants are killed by a frost and are still immature in the field, they will likely contain too much moisture for immediate ensiling. Plants will dry slowly and dry matter losses will increase as the dead plants lose leaves in the field after a frost. One strategy is to leave the crop in the field to dry down to an acceptable level unless dry matter losses become excessively high. An alternative approach is to chop higher on the plant. As a rule of thumb, chopping 12 inches higher than the normal 4 inch height will reduce the whole plant moisture by 3-4 points. Chopping 18 inches higher than normal will reduce whole plant moisture by about 5 points. Of course, chopping higher will reduce total dry matter yields. Brown recommends a chop length of approximately 19 mm.

Additionally Brown recommends discussing diversity of alternative forage options that are available, including small grain cocktail blends, sorghum sudangrass, and alfalfa. Adding diversity into your crop rotations will build resiliency into your farming operation, particularly in difficult growing seasons like 2019.

Given the high levels of variability in crop maturity this year, Extension Outagamie County Crops & Soils Agent Kevin Jarek made a strong case for forage quality testing. "If there was ever a time to get your forages tested, it would be this year," Jarek said.

As corn completes its reproductive cycle and advances towards dry down, it shows relatively large changes in forage quality (Figure 1).

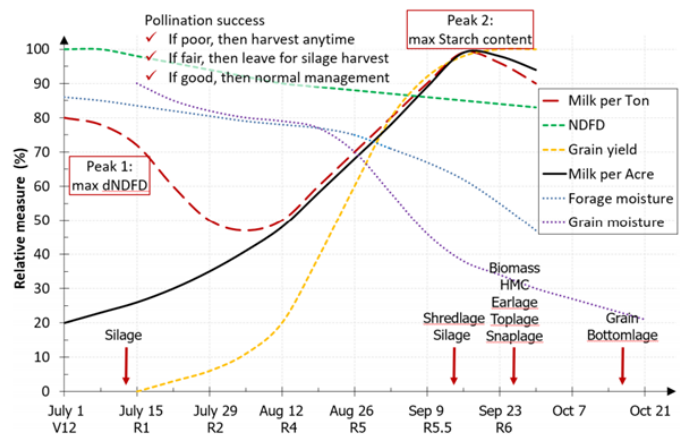



Figure 1. Normal Pattern of Corn Forage and Grain Development in Wisconsin.

Forage samples can be evaluated at the UW Soil and Forage Lab, Dairyland Laboratories, or Rock River Laboratories.

We also anticipate that standing corn silage pricing is going to raise questions with many buyers and sellers this fall. Several tools are available to help folks make pricing determinations on the value of their forages, including the Corn Silage Pricing App that was developed by UW-Madison Extension staff and is freely available to download from the Google Play Store. 

Source: Joe Zimbric, Extension Crops & Soils Agent

Dairy Business Tactics for Success

After four years of operating in survival mode, now might be a good time to review your business strategies. Here are areas to address for enhancing business success.

1. Reassess your risk management strategy

When it comes to risk management, the goal is all about protecting the business against downside risk, not just about maximizing prices. The new farm bill contains better dairy risk management options than any previous bills.

The dairy margin coverage program (DMC)

With the improved hay price formula and the \$9.50 maximum margin over feed cost for the first 5 million pounds, DMC is much better than the old margin protection program.

The indemnity for the first five months of 2019 is more than \$1.00 cwt at the \$9.50 coverage level. This year's payment will cover the premium for the length of the program.

The dairy revenue protection program

This is another new insurance program allowing farmers to place a floor under their milk price for a very reasonable cost. An improved dairy livestock gross margin (LGM) program is also still available for farmers to use.

Another positive change is farmers can participate in both programs, simultaneously. The programs are not designed to guarantee a large profit, but will help stabilize income during low prices.

2. Review your financial position

Many farmers have borrowed their operating lines of credit to the limit and have been paying interest only on some loans. Farmers also have refinanced accounts payable such as feed and veterinarian bills into longer-term debt.

Now is a good time to meet with financial advisers and lenders to review financial position and develop a plan to get finances back on track.

3. Evaluate where to best invest profits

- Catch up on equipment, facility maintenance first.
- Review list of potential new investments.
- Focus on investments to have a rapid return.
- Avoid purchasing equipment just to avoid taxes.
- Work with tax consultant on ways to minimize taxes without jeopardizing long-term financial position.

4. Review operational efficiencies

For a farm to be successful over a long period, it must control costs and focus on keeping a higher percent of each dollar of income. One of the biggest drivers for high profit farms is higher profit margins.

Continue to focus on operational efficiencies. This includes practicing good cost control and focusing on all the little details that, when added together, make a big difference in profitability.

5. Develop and use a trusted team of advisers

A good relationship with trusted advisers can be a major component in your business success. Having regular management meetings will help them understand your business to better meet your needs.

6. Take time to smell the roses

It has been a long run of low prices. Many farms have minimized time off and worked overtime to try to keep the business afloat. If there is some extra money, don't be afraid to reward yourself with enjoyable activities.

We all need time off for our mental health and will come back refreshed and better able to deal with challenges as they come along. 🐄

Source: Jim Salfer, University of Minnesota Extension regional dairy educator, St. Cloud, MN.

SilageSnap - Kernel Processing Score App

SilageSnap – is now available for free download on the Apple App Store and Google Play Store. More information is available at <https://go.wisc.edu/silagesnap>.


Excellent cracked corn can boost milk production by up to two pounds (about a quart) per cow per day.

Harvest machinery cracks corn by passing pieces of plant material between two grinding roller-wheels. Wear and tear on the machine can make it less effective, and some fields of corn resist cracking more than others.

Farmers can fine-tune their harvests to a certain extent by controlling the width of the gap between the wheels: Narrower spaces squeeze kernels more strongly, but also slow down the equipment and thus, the harvest; wider gaps allow the machines to move faster, but risk leaving too many kernels intact.

If 70 percent of the cracked corn fits through a hole the width of a standard drinking straw, then the corn receives an excellent score—fit for a dairy cow's feast. Unfortunately for many farmers, the lab results yield merely adequate, or even poor, scores, meaning they must feed their cows much more grain every day to meet nutritional requirements.

The SilageSnap app is a convenient and accurate in-the-field alternative to after-the-fact processing scores. To use the app, farmers merely spread out a small sample of corn, set down a coin to calibrate for pixel size, and snap a photo with their phones. Image-processing algorithms then calculate kernel-processing scores right there in the field, instead of weeks after the harvest at an external lab.


Based on kernel processing scores and summary statistics from the app, farmers can fine-tune their machinery on the spot – rather than develop contingency plans after the harvest is well over. Initial results suggest that the scores returned from the app align very closely with official results from commercial corn silage processing score evaluations. 



Corn Silage Pricing App




It will soon be that time of year when Fond du Lac County dairy and beef producers and corn growers explore their options of buying and selling standing corn silage.

To help farmers better evaluate their options, UW Madison-Extension has developed a Smartphone app to provide a simple way to help estimate the market value of corn silage. The app includes links to current corn and hay market prices, and allows buyers and sellers to enter their own yield estimates and harvest costs. The difference in values of soil nutrients removed when harvesting silage versus corn for grain is also calculated helping sellers fine tune their standing value per acre. Available by searching Google Play Store for “Corn Silage Pricing.” 

Hay Market Report—9.23.19

Hay prices are steady with limited activity at the auctions. There is demand for top quality hay with a limited supply. Delayed killing frost in northern areas will allow more growth into fall and a later harvest than in a normal year. In Wisconsin, prices remain strong for quality hay. Quality hay supplies remain tight with a good supply of lower quality hay.

Straw prices are for oat, barley, or wheat straw. Prices are steady this week. Small square bales averaged \$3.70 a bale (range of \$1.00 to \$6.00). Large square bale straw averaged \$55.00 per bale (a wide range of \$28.00 to \$97.00). Large round bale straw averaged \$50.00 per bale (a range of \$30.00 - \$70.00). 

Hay Grade	Bale type	----- Price (\$/ton) -----		
		Average	Minimum	Maximum
Prime (> 151 RFV/RFQ)	Small Square	\$247.00	\$200.00	\$340.00
	Large Square	\$219.00	\$135.00	\$285.00
	Large Round	\$185.00	\$170.00	\$200.00
Grade 1 (125 to 150 RFV/RFQ)	Small Square	\$196.00	\$160.00	\$224.00
	Large Square	\$174.00	\$95.00	\$290.00
	Large Round	\$139.00	\$100.00	\$170.00
Grade 2 (103 to 124 RFV/RFQ)	Small Square	No Sales Reported		
	Large Square	\$135.00	\$85.00	\$200.00
	Large Round	\$102.00	\$75.00	\$170.00
Grade 3 (87 to 102 RFV/RFQ)	Small Square	No Reported Sales		
	Large Square	\$90.00	\$50.00	\$130.00
	Large Round	\$90.00	\$53.00	\$130.00


Bimonthly Extension Hay Market Demand & Price Report Available On-Line

<https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/forage/h-m-r/>

Farmer to Farmer-Forage & Corn List

The Farmer to Farmer Hay, Forage and Corn List puts Wisconsin farmers in touch with one another for the purpose of buying and/or selling corn silage, high moisture corn, haylage, straw and other forages. Search just one county or several counties at the same time. Extension assumes no responsibility in the transaction of buying or selling the items listed on the website. All transactions and negotiations are handled directly between buyers and sellers.

- Add a listing
- Search listings
- Browse listings
- Remove my listing

Listings remain active for 60 days or until a request to remove is made. 



Farmer to Farmer
Hay, Forage & Corn List 

<http://farmertofarmer.uwex.edu>



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
FOND DU LAC COUNTY

227 Administration/Extension Building
400 University Drive
Fond du Lac, WI 54935

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
US POSTAGE PAID
FOND DU LAC WI 54935
PERMIT 110

Mark Your Calendars for Upcoming Agricultural Events

October 2019

- 8 Fond du Lac County Forage Council Corn Silage Dry Down Day**
10:00 am to 12:00 noon | Country Visions Cooperative | 457 W 11th Street, Fond du Lac
- 26 Jr Holstein Dairy Quiz Bowl Workshop**
10:00 am to 12:00 pm | Fond du Lac County Extension Office | Room AE 205

November 2019

- 7 Pest Management Update Meeting**
9:00 am to 12:00 noon | Fond du Lac Campus, UW-Oshkosh | 400 University Drive | Room UC-113/114

December 2019

- 9 Soil, Water, and Nutrient Management Meeting**
10:00 am to 3:00 pm | Dodge County Administration Building | 127 E Oak Street, Juneau
- 10 Soil, Water, and Nutrient Management Meeting**
TBD | Milhome Supper Club | 16524 Lax Chapel Rd, Kiel
- 11 Snap + Training**
10:00 am to 3:00 pm | Fond du Lac Campus, UW-Oshkosh | 400 University Drive | Room AE-205/206
- TBD Dairy Forage Day**
Fond du Lac Campus, UW-Oshkosh | 400 University Drive | Room AE-205/206