



U.P. Ag Connections Newsletter

October 2018

Agricultural News from MSU Extension and AgBioResearch

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Farewell from Collin....

I wanted to take this opportunity to share that I will be leaving my position with MSUE at the end of September. While this was a very difficult decision to make, I am so grateful for the opportunity to have spent the last five seasons building The North Farm, embedding myself within the UP agriculture community, and working alongside such talented, dedicated, and hardworking people. I have accepted a position that will take me to northern Virginia, where I will manage a 300-acre diversified farming operation focused on vegetables, fruits, eggs, and meat.

I continue to believe in the mission of UPREC and the work that is taking place at The North Farm. As I reflect on the last five years of development, I see the progress we have made, as well as the tremendous potential for continued work. What has inspired me most is the synergy across the two farms that make up UPREC – one focusing on organic vegetable production, the other on nonorganic field crops, forages, and livestock. The efforts across the two farm sites complement each other beautifully, providing distinct perspectives on valuable UP agricultural systems. Furthermore, despite differences in management strategies, we have found ways to work together, learning from each other and developing better systems by sharing information and resources. I think this will be the core of the work at UPREC moving forward – supporting growers through critical research across a variety of production systems.

I have been inspired and humbled during my time in the Upper Peninsula. I will be the first to say that I came into my role with limited familiarity and understanding of UP agriculture but was fortunate enough to receive a tremendous amount of support from talented growers, partners, and coworkers. I am proud of the work that I have done but am fully aware that I could not have done any of it alone. I am forever grateful for the relationships I have developed, the opportunities I have received, and the knowledge I have gained during my time with MSU.

I am honored to be part of this community and hope to maintain ties after my departure. Thank you for the last five years, and I look forward to the next time I find myself in the beautiful Upper Peninsula.

Collin Thompson
Small Farm Educator/Farm Manager

Assessing your alfalfa stand

A simple stem counting technique can give you a good idea about your alfalfa stand's yield potential

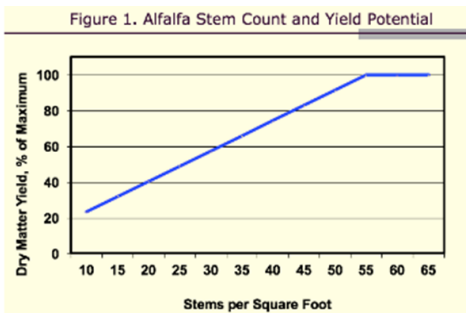
Jim Isleib, MSU Extension Educator

Thin alfalfa stands result in mediocre yields and hay quality. Reasons for a thin stand include problems at seeding time, pH, fertility or weather problems, and die out due to stand age and disease. With experience, farmers develop the skills needed to visually evaluate the alfalfa stand. In many cases, good alfalfa stands are terminated on a strict rotation schedule. On other farms, alfalfa stands are kept in place as long as they perform adequately. With good soil fertility and management, alfalfa stands can be productive for several years.

The most dependable measurement of yield from an alfalfa stand is direct measurement, including number and weight of bales from a field of known acreage. [Determine the percent of moisture](#) in the hay or haylage with a feed analysis from a reputable lab, Koster moisture tester, microwave, electronic probe, or convection oven and a calculation of dry matter per acre is a simple matter. More information on forage sampling, moisture and feed quality analysis is available from your local Michigan State University Extension educator or office.

However, a quick [estimate of your alfalfa stand's current yield potential](#) can be made early in the season using a simple technique. Counting alfalfa stems (not crowns or plants) provides a reasonable estimate of the field's current (not future) yield potential. Judging the field's future yield potential involves checking the crown and root health of individual plants. For now, let's concentrate on the stem count technique. The idea is to count alfalfa stems over 2" tall in a small area, using a ½" PVC square with a 17" X 17" open area, or a metal ring 19" in diameter. Either of these tools will give you a 2 square foot area. Or you can simply use a yardstick and measure off the area. Here's the process:

- Count the number of alfalfa stems over 2" tall in a 2-square foot area
- Repeat this 3 or 4 times in representative areas of your alfalfa field
- Calculate an average number of stems per square foot (divide your 2-square foot average in half)
- Check on the chart below to see how your stand checks out. Approximately 55 stems per square foot indicates full yield potential



From University of Wisconsin Extension "Alfalfa stand assessment: Is this stand good enough to keep?"

An alfalfa nurse crop trial conducted at the MSU Upper Peninsula Research and Extension Center in 2018 and 2019 includes alfalfa stand evaluation using this stem count technique. Stem counts were taken on September 11 and 12, 2018 from alfalfa plots after nurse crop removal and some alfalfa regrowth. Following emergence, the alfalfa stand appeared thin, due to very dry conditions for several weeks after seeding on May 14 and 15. The stem counts confirmed this:

The average alfalfa stem count for the 76 plots checked was 33 stems per square foot, about 60-65% of full yield potential. Stem counts ranged from 9 – 53 stems per square foot. The three small grains seeded alone as nurse crops at 3 seeding rates resulted in an average of 30 alfalfa stems per square foot. When forage peas were included, the resulting alfalfa stem count averaged 35 stems per square foot. Additional yield and stand data will be collected in spring, 2019 and a full report completed.





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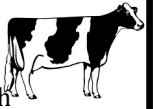
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Market Report

Choice Steers	\$95—\$111 per 100 lbs.
Holstein Steers	\$70—\$100 per 100 lbs.
Hogs	\$55—\$63 per 100 lbs.
Lambs	\$110—\$135 per 100 lbs.
Cull cows	\$45—\$55 per 100 lbs.
Calves	\$40—\$75 per 100 lbs.
Goats	\$150—\$240 per 100 lbs.

Breeding and Feeder Animals

Grade Holstein cows \$850—\$1350/head

Grade Holstein bred heifers \$850—\$1200/head

Feed Prices across the U.P.

	Avg. \$/cwt	Avg. \$/ton	Price Range
Corn	\$9.69	\$193.75	\$146-254
Soymeal	\$20.61	\$412.25	\$372-450
Oats	\$11.94	\$238.75	\$195-300
Barley	\$9.78	\$195.50	\$160-240

Average price/100 wt. for 1 ton lots

How to Measure Produce Safety Risk

Regulating produce safety risks is not a new concept in the United States, with private options such as PRIMUS or GAPs available to evaluate a farm's level of produce safety. Beginning in 2019, however, the first federally mandated produce safety inspections will begin on produce farms. The inspections are a result of the 2011 FDA adoption of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), which includes the Produce Safety Rule (PSR). This PSR addresses on-farm practices which have been federally determined to pose potential microbial contamination of fresh fruits and vegetables and provides guidance to reduce those risks. Produce farms that are covered under the PSR will need to comply with all sections of the rule. The on-farm practices addressed in the PSR are described below:

1. Worker health, hygiene, and training.
2. Soil Amendments and their uses (including biological soil amendments of animal origin, i.e. manure)
3. Domesticated and wild animals, and their exclusion from production and post-harvest handling areas.
4. Agricultural water: use of production water.
 - a. **"Agricultural water,"** as defined by FSMA, is: "Water used in covered activities on covered produce where water is intended to, or is likely to, contact covered produce or food contact surfaces, including water used in growing activities (including irrigation water applied using direct water application methods, water used for preparing crop sprays, and water used for growing sprouts) and in harvesting, packing, and holding activities (including water used for washing or cooling harvested produce and water used for preventing dehydration of covered produce)." – FSMA PSR 112.41
 - b. **"Production Water,"** as defined by FSMA, is: "Water that meets the definition of agricultural water and is used during growing activities for covered produce (other than sprouts) for the purposes of the FSMA Produce Safety Rule." – FSMA PSR 112.44(b)
5. Agricultural water: use of postharvest water.
 - a. **"Postharvest Water,"** as defined by FSMA, is: "Water that meets the definition of agricultural water and is used during and after harvest of covered produce, or during postharvest handling of covered produce; this can include agricultural water used during harvest activities in the field as well as during packing or holding activities, such as water used in a packinghouse." FSMA PSR 112.44(b)
6. Postharvest handling and sanitation of all food contact surfaces.

To learn more about how the Produce Safety Rule effects your farm, and to receive a confidential assessment of your farm's produce safety risk, please contact your nearest Produce Safety Technician.

Landen Tetil
Produce Safety Technician, Marquette County Conservation District

Calf Care Educational Program

Frank Wardynski

Members of the Michigan State University Beef and Dairy teams will be present to demonstrate baby calf care. In particular live calves will be present to demonstrate various dehorning and castration practices. Also, we'll demonstrate practices of implanting, injection of vaccines and antibiotics, intravenous administration for dehydrated calves, and blood collection procedures. Practices will be hands-on, so dress accordingly. We may also have a veterinarian present to discuss pain mitigation options.

The date is set for November 10, 2018 at 10:00 until 2:00 ET at the MSU Research and Extension Center in Chatham, MI. We'll probably have pizza brought in, so please bring some money to chip in if you want some. Or feel free to bring a bag lunch. If interested in attending the program, please contact Frank Wardynski at 906-884-4386.

Michigan State University Extension and AgBioResearch name new director of the Upper Peninsula Research and Extension Center

EAST LANSING, Mich. – Michigan State University (MSU) Extension and MSU AgBioResearch have named James DeDecker as the director for the Upper Peninsula Research and Extension Center (UPREC) located in Chatham, Michigan, effective Jan., 2019.

UPREC serves as the hub for integrated crop and livestock research and outreach for Michigan's Upper Peninsula. As director, DeDecker will provide leadership to expand and manage the center's diverse research portfolio, provide expertise in community food systems, and foster the connection between MSU's campus and statewide staff.

"We have unique research and outreach opportunities in the U.P. and believe that James will continue the momentum of expanding the activities and programs of the center," said Jeff Dwyer, director of MSU Extension and senior associate dean of outreach and engagement for the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

DeDecker has worked with MSU Extension since 2012 as a field crops educator and point of contact for 11 counties in northeastern Michigan. In his role, he has conducted collaborative on-farm research projects, secured significant funding through partnerships, and delivered and evaluated educational programming.

"James has a history of working alongside farmers, MSU colleagues, public agencies and private industries to conduct research studies with practical applications," said Dave Ivan, director of MSU Extension's Greening Michigan Institute, who will provide leadership for DeDecker's position. "His ability to bring people together to improve Michigan farms makes him a perfect fit for the important research and outreach happening at UPREC."

Before joining MSU Extension, DeDecker worked as a research and teaching assistant at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He received his B.S. from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh and his M.S. from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign where he is also a Ph.D. candidate.

"I want to help UPREC become a world-class research facility that serves the needs of farmers in Michigan's Upper Peninsula and throughout the North Central Region," DeDecker said. "I believe that the history of UPREC as a hub for innovation and community engagement, the current momentum created by my predecessor and the entire UPREC team, and the U.P.'s special identity will be key elements to continued success and growth."

DeDecker replaces Ashley McFarland who provided leadership at UPREC since 2013. During her tenure, UPREC expanded and diversified its research portfolio and educational programs in the Upper Peninsula.

UPREC was established in 1899 and is one of 13 centers across the state responsible for applied research and outreach. Michigan residents reap the benefits of this work in the form of new or improved foods and plants, new production methods and enriched lifestyles. Collectively, MSU AgBioResearch and MSU Extension represent research and programs that serve hundreds of thousands of Michigan residents and have more than a billion dollar impact on the state each year.

HARVEST FEST

Saturday, October 6

10:00-2:00

MSU UP Research and Extension
Center, Chatham, MI

- ◆ Pizza for purchase
- ◆ Make and Take crafts
- ◆ Petting Zoo
- ◆ Pumpkin Patch
- ◆ Hayrides
- ◆ Cider Press
- ◆ Kid's play area
- ◆ Demonstrations

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MSUE 4-H

Beef Quality Assurance Certification Requirements for U.P. Producers

Coming soon: BQA certification in the UP

Frank Wardynski
Extension Educator

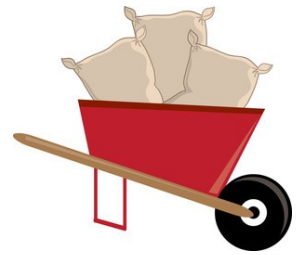
Last month I wrote an article regarding Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) certification requirements for sale destined for packing plants owned by Cargill and Tyson. National should also be added to that list and JBS will be soon. That article probably caused some confusion amongst UP producers as to the need for them to be certified. The article was intended to let producers know of scheduled BQA meetings in Lower Michigan that will allow producers to be ready to sell cattle going to Cargill and Tyson on January 1, 2019.

The situation is constantly changing and dynamic as more packers make their future intentions to require BQA certification. To the best of my knowledge, no UP producers are being affected yet. All packers with certification requirements are only directed towards feedlot producers currently. However, they have indicated cull cows and bulls will require the owners be certified in the near future. And, JBS has indicated they will be requiring the same. JBS owns Packerland in Green Bay and that will be critical to U.P. producers.

Beef Quality Assurance has not been a popular educational topic. I had those meetings in the past with poor attendance. Packer requirements will change this in the future. When the time comes, I'll be conducting certification programs across the U.P. So stay tuned as I'll be advertising those programs here in the newsletter. In the meantime, producers that would rather use on-line training and certification can do so at bqa.org.

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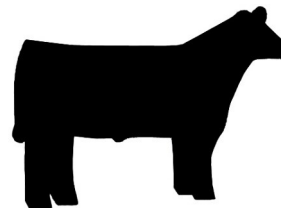
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Calendar of Events

Harvest Fest—October 6—MSU UP Research and Extension Center, Chatham, 10:00 a.m.

Fall Classic Cattle Sale —October 13—UP State Fairgrounds, Escanaba, 1:00 p.m.

Calf Care Educational Program —November 10 —MSU UP Research and Extension Center, Chatham, 10:00 a.m.

Remember to connect to virtual learning breakfasts every Thursday 6:30—7 am!

http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/new_msu_extension_field_crops_virtual_breakfast_meetings_start_april_26

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