



U.P. Ag Connections Newsletter

December 2024

Agricultural News from MSU Extension and AgBioResearch

Volume 28 Issue 12

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News and Views

By Frank Wardynski

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Do you wonder if we will ever know what is true again? With the internet, social media, artificial intelligence (AI), will we ever know what is fact or fiction again? I remember, about 20 years ago, having a discussion with our school superintendent about how lucky our kids are with the internet and how easy information could be accessed. My concern back then was that most of us would find information on the internet and obviously it must be fact. Of course, we know it does not need to be true to be on the internet. The challenge is being wise enough to know what fact is and what is speculated.

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A simple example from 20 years ago were claims that were driven in research vs those in speculation. Example, Black Angus are the highest marbling breed. This claim came before Wagyu were considered here in the US, but that was a known fact. The research was conducted at the Meat Animal Research Center in Clay Center Nebraska. The Angus breed took that information and ran with it. And one time the owner of a less popular breed claimed their breed was the most efficient forage and browse converter into meat and milk. Not that I know every research project ever done, but beef feed efficiency is kind of in my wheelhouse, so I asked what research indicated that. Well the breed's website said so, not research based.

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By today's standards, that claim is pretty tame. I do not think it is true, but it is all different now. FAKE NEWS! It seems to be everywhere now. and quite honestly, when they talk about fact checking, it does not seem like the fact checkers are above the fray of including their bias. So now the challenge is not as much about the source of the information as much as did the fake news say what we wanted it to say. Too often I find we are willing to share fake news like idle gossip if states a narrative that we agree with.

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- Save the Date Ag for Tomorrow

AI is compounding the situation. It is incredible what we can do with technology. I recently saw a retired college football coach making statements about the poor coaching since he left. I thought to myself, how could he be that unprofessional. Well, to my understanding, if they have enough audio of you, they can make it look like you said anything they want you to say with computer technology. So, I sat and watched a clip of this coach saying things I could not believe. Yet, I saw it and I heard it, how can it not be true. That is what they can do with AI.

Do not get me wrong, I have seen AI do great and incredible things. Good Things! Help make the world a better place for all kinds of things. I rely on AI to help me write articles such as this one. But somehow, we need to learn how to be smarter and less gullible to believe the lies. It no longer is about knowing the information is research based and unbiased, but now we need to be able to see who is intentionally trying to deceive us. I do not have that answer. I am still working on it. So, if you have any suggestions on how to help me figure this out, I am all ears. And if you do, please be honest about it.



Beef Cow/Calf Meeting – Squeeze that Budget or Smart Investments

Michigan State University Extension Educators Frank Wardynski and Phil Durst will debate the economics of squeezing the budget vs making smart investments to boost income.

Do you argue with family members, business partners, or even yourself about how and where to spend your dollars on the beef operation. Come and pick a side and join in on the Educator Beef Brawl as we discuss how and where we should be spending or saving money on your beef cow/calf budget. **Please Call 906-884-4386 to RSVP so that we can contact everyone in case the meeting needs to be canceled or rescheduled.**

Meeting Location Date and Time

Bay College – Heirman Center January 29, 2024 at 6:00pm Eastern Time

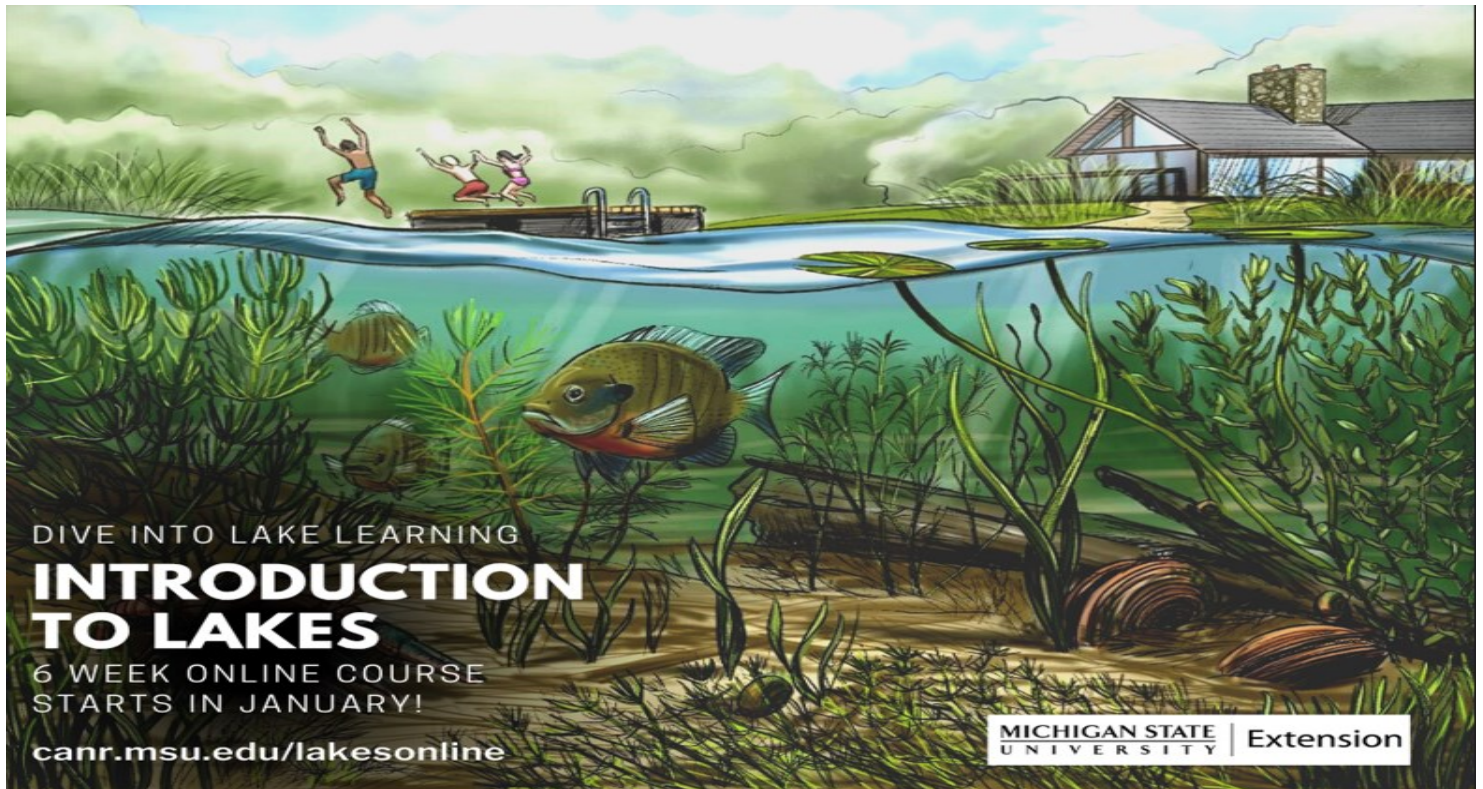
Rudyard Township Hall January 30, 2024 at 6:00pm Eastern Time

Chute Side Management Procedures

Jon Ahlberg will host at his farm a chute side management practices demonstration. Frank Wardynski from MSU Extension will demonstrate IM, SubQ, and IV injection techniques, drawing blood for pregnancy testing, Pain mitigation for dehorning and other practices commonly performed at the chute in processing beef cattle. **Please Call 906-884-4386 to RSVP so that we can contact everyone in case the meeting needs to be canceled or rescheduled.**

Meeting location, date, and time –

1272 St Hwy M73, Iron River, MI, 49935 on January 18, 2024 at 10:00am Central Time



Learn about Michigan's inland lakes online from MSU Extension

Registration for the award-winning Michigan State University Extension [Introduction to Lakes Online](#) course is open! This introductory six-week online class is designed for anyone interested in gaining a greater appreciation for inland lakes including concerned residents, decision makers, local leaders, and lakefront property owners. Course instructors include faculty from MSU Extension and state agency personnel.

The course covers a variety of topics including lake ecology, watershed management, shoreline protection, aquatic plants, Michigan water law, and community engagement. These topics are explored online through video lectures, interactive activities, and discussion forums. Additional resources are also provided for those looking to dive deeper. Participants communicate with each other and instructors through lively discussion forums and biweekly Ask-an-Expert webinars which include guests from organizations such as the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy.

Registration is open now through January 28, 2025. The cost of the course is \$115 per person. Register by January 6 for an early bird price of \$95 per person. Scholarships are available. Current individual members of the Michigan Lakes and Streams Association are eligible to receive a \$95 reimbursement upon successful completion of the course.

A certificate of completion is awarded to those who complete the class. Participants also can receive continuing education credits including 16 Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Pesticide Applicator Re-Certification credits (8 commercial core and 8 aquatic) and educational hours in the MSU Extension Master Gardener, Master Citizen Planner, and Michigan Naturalist programs. Learn more and register at www.canr.msu.edu/lakesonline.

Beyond the land: How regenerative grazing improves farmer wellbeing

Jonathan Vivas, [Michigan State University Extension](#), MSU Department of Community Sustainability - December 06, 2024

In recent years, the concept of human wellbeing has expanded to include multiple factors like health, relationships, purpose, and positive emotions. As [Alejandro Adler](#) and Martin [Seligman](#) suggest, it's about more than just feeling happy—it's also about finding meaning, managing stress, and maintaining physical health. But what does this have to do with farming, livestock production and the stresses of farmers' everyday life?

When it comes to regenerative grazing, often farmer wellbeing is an integrated goal alongside soil health and is therefore an emerging area of interest. This management approach prioritizes adaptive livestock management principles to support soil health and build on the relationship between livestock and grassland. Studies suggest that adopting regenerative grazing practices can positively influence farmers' confidence in handling difficult situations, such as droughts, as noted by [Barton and colleagues](#) in a 2020 study. It can also strengthen social networks and learning among farmers, according to research by [Carlen De Villiers](#), and reshape the way ranchers interact with their land, enhancing their overall relationship with it, as highlighted by rangeland specialist [Justin Derner](#).

Despite these findings, there's still a lot we don't know about how regenerative grazing affects farmers' wellbeing, especially in the Midwest. To bridge this gap, [our study](#) focused on pasture-based beef producers in Michigan, exploring their wellbeing across different grazing practices. We used a comprehensive framework that considers five key aspects of wellbeing: life satisfaction, hedonic (emotional) wellbeing, eudaimonic wellbeing (accomplishment, purpose and meaning), relational wellbeing (social connections) and physical wellbeing (health and financial conditions).

What we found: The state of farmers' wellbeing in Michigan

In our study, Michigan farmers scored highest in relational wellbeing, followed by eudaimonic (accomplishment, purpose and meaning) and physical wellbeing. This indicates that most farmers are satisfied with their social support, sense of accomplishment, health and finances. Interestingly, when asked which aspects of wellbeing mattered most to them, farmers consistently ranked relationships and purpose as their top priorities.

Overall, we found high levels of wellbeing across all groups of beef producers in Michigan. However, non-adaptive farmers—those sticking with traditional, more continuous practices—generally scored higher in all dimensions compared to those who are adapting or adopting new regenerative grazing techniques. The biggest differences were in life satisfaction, relational wellbeing.

Why these differences matter

You might wonder why these differences are worth exploring. Research suggests that individuals have a set point around which their wellbeing varies. Previous studies indicate that farmers' wellbeing typically ranges between 70–80% on wellbeing scales, which aligns with our findings for adaptive and adopting groups but not for the non-adaptive ones.

This discrepancy could be due to two possible scenarios. First, non-adaptive farmers' higher scores might reflect a high state of control—they have adapted to their traditional practices and found a way to maintain their wellbeing over time. On the other hand, adaptive and adopting farmers could be in a transitional phase. Although we categorized farmers as adaptive if they had used such practices for at least five years, this period is relatively short in agriculture, and they may still be adjusting to the changes.

What does this mean for Michigan's beef sector?

The key takeaway is that all groups of farmers in our study fall within a range typically associated with a healthy state of social wellbeing. While adopting new practices may influence social wellbeing, it does not significantly diminish it. This is encouraging news for the continued scaling-up of regenerative grazing practices in Michigan's beef sector. By embracing these methods, farmers not only contribute to ecological health but also maintain, and potentially enhance, their own wellbeing.

The bottom line? Regenerative grazing has the potential to support both the land and the people managing it. More research is needed, but our findings offer a positive outlook for farmers considering this path.

Further information and resources to support farmers' wellbeing are available at Michigan State University Extension [Healthy Relationships](#) and [Farm Stress Resources](#).

2025 MSU Custom Work Rates Report

Many farm operations reach out to other farms to help fulfill production activities. These custom operators can fill a gap that would otherwise make it difficult to meet farm goals. The MSU Custom Work Rates Report offers a base to determine a fair exchange value for both the provider and recipient of custom work.

The 2025 [MSU Custom Work Rates Report](#) covers a wide number of basic field machine operations. It provides a summary of the estimated costs of these operations based on the University of Minnesota's [machinery cost estimator spreadsheet](#). The [MSU Custom Work Rates Report](#) provides Michigan-based estimates of the costs of operating machinery in these different production tasks. This publication divides the costs into some of their component parts. The [2025 MSU Custom Work Rates Report Summary](#) provides a list of totals, also dividing them between labor and equipment costs.

Custom operators may want to adjust these amounts to reflect economic conditions or other local factors. Rates can be different in areas of Michigan depending upon several factors. These can include field size and shape; ease of access; amount of non-farm traffic to get to the field; machine size and road or bridge widths; trash in the field; weed history; trees or brush hindering work; depth and amount of field drainage tile; payment arrangements; and other factors.

Individual operators may also need to consider their actual costs and adjust their custom rate charge accordingly. For example, they may need to adjust for the local price of fuel and differences in size or efficiency of the machine work done. It is common for small custom jobs to have a 20% to 30% higher cost of operation than a larger job. The [MSU Custom Rates Calculator](#) spreadsheet is available for more in-depth evaluation of individual costs for custom operation. The [MSU Custom Rates Worksheet](#) is a pdf version of this calculator. This worksheet is also included in the 2025 [MSU Custom Work Rates Report](#) publication.

Greetings Gardeners,

Are you interested in the next MSU Extension Foundations of Gardening (FOG) course? FOG is the horticulture course for both those wishing to apply to our MSU Extension Master Gardener Program® and those seeking horticultural training for personal reasons.

Registration for the FOG Winter 2025 session begins **December 4, 2024, and runs through January 29, 2025.**

Classes begin February 13, 2025, with a practice session. Register and more information at this site <https://www.canr.msu.edu/courses/foundations-of-gardening>.

Extension

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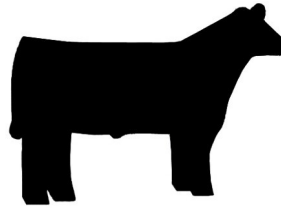
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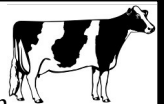
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Haley Filhart, Owner (989)430-2055

Classifieds

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good disposition, 1832#. Call Don Nault 906-786-3951 Or Cell
906-398-9865

Wanted: Pasture for 25-35 cow calf pairs for the summer of
2024 in the Eastern UP. Will consider a custom grazing
arrangement as well. Call Ben (989) 370-3570.

Straw for Sale: Small squares or 4x5 Large round bales. Call
Paul at MSU 906-439-5114 Ext. 2

FOR SALE: Hay, mixed round bales, 700# stored inside. Also
small square bales of straw. Call Jim Myers (906)399-1649 or
(906) 466-2672.

FOR SALE: small square bales of straw and small squares of
first crop hay. Call Marenger's Farm (906)384-6587.

FOR SALE: Mixed Hay round bales, 700#, \$20. Call Alan or
Karen Raynard @ (906) 647-6697, Pickford.

Market Report

Choice Steers	\$170-\$195 per 100 lbs.
Holstein Steers	\$155-\$177 per 100 lbs.
Hogs	\$61-\$66 per 100 lbs.
Lambs	\$120-\$210 per 100 lbs.
Cull cows	\$100-\$120 per 100 lbs.
Calves	\$250-\$620 per 100 lbs.
Goats	\$200-\$350 per 100 lbs.

Breeding and Feeder Animals

Grade Holstein cows top \$3050/head

Grade Holstein bred heifers top \$3050/head

Feed Prices across the U.P.

	Avg. \$/cwt	Avg. \$/ton	Price Range
Corn	\$15.19	\$303.75	\$220-510
Soymeal	\$27.99	\$559.75	\$440-655
Oats	\$18.20	\$364.00	\$319-416
Barley	\$15.08	\$301.50	\$240-386
Average price/100 wt. for 1 ton lots			

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A large banner for the "Agriculture for Tomorrow Conference" is set against a background of a plowed field with a line of trees in the distance. The text is centered and reads: "Agriculture for Tomorrow Conference" in a large, bold, black font, with "Agriculture for Tomorrow" underlined. Below it, "Conference" is also underlined. The date and location are listed as "Tue, March 11, 2025" and "Bay College in Escanaba, MI".

Agriculture for Tomorrow Conference

Tue, March 11, 2025
Bay College in Escanaba, MI

UP-focused talks:

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<https://events.anr.msu.edu/2025Ag4Tomorrow/>