

Cornell Cooperative Extension Delaware County



Cattle being transitioned to early spring pasture

Pasture Plant Growth in the Spring and Its Impact on Grazing Decisions

Watershed Agricultural Council
nycwatershed.org



Written by Rich Toebe, CCE Delaware County

We seem to be getting an early spring this year. As I write this in mid-April, my average grass height in my pasture is almost 7". The fences have all been checked and the water system is up and running. In fact, I have had my sheep out on pasture for about two weeks already (but not just pasture).

April/Early May Plant Growth and Grazing Decisions

Let's take a moment to think about the forage from the perspective of the grass plant. Our grasses have come out of dormancy. They have been using whatever carbohydrate stores they went into winter with to survive. So, at the very first green-up, they are at their lowest level of carbohydrate reserves. The rate at which they start their leaf growth is a function of how well they came through winter in terms of their carbohydrate stores. It is these stored carbs that the plant draws upon for energy until there is enough leaf surface or 'solar panel' that active photosynthesis takes over as being the energy source. If you start grazing before the plants have developed a large enough 'solar panel', you will weaken the plant and most likely will reduce the total amount of dry matter production on those specific paddocks for the current year.

However, one of the greatest challenges of waiting until the grass is 8"-10" tall before starting grazing is that all of your pasture is then at the same stage of production and setting up a rotational system is more challenging. So, by starting 'early' in a specific area of the pasture helps to develop what is called the grazing wedge. A grazing wedge refers to having your pasture subdivisions or paddocks at varying stages of re-growth. Just make sure that you don't come back to these 'first grazed' paddocks until the plants have fully recovered. Also, switch up where you start your spring grazing every year to avoid permanently setting back the productivity of that paddock.

Pasture Plant Growth Cont.

A few other things that the grass plants are doing at this time include creating a few new tillers and growing roots. If the plants came through winter with good reserves; and you leave adequate residual (think adequate 'solar panel'), the rate of growth can accelerate very quickly. In these cases, there is a period of time where it may only be a couple of weeks before the plant can be re-grazed.

May Plant Growth and Grazing Decisions

By early May, most of the cool season grasses start their annual reproductive phase. During the previous weeks of growth, all of the growing points on the grass were very close to the soil surface. But as they enter the reproductive phase, about half of the growing points start to elevate and become seed stems. At this point, the plant 'commits' to producing seeds. Energy is diverted into these stems to produce seeds, and leaf growth and new leaf initiation is reduced. These stems are less digestible and less palatable. In some cases, the stems can irritate the faces or eyes of the animals as they graze. The grass sward can become very tall. We all seem to face this struggle every year. The quality of the forage rapidly decreases, intakes by the animals become reduced, and a lot of forage is simply trampled.

A certain amount of this is going to happen to even the best grazing managers. But, if we remove the active growing points, the plant will go back to tillering and starting new leaf or plant growth from dormant basal buds. One way to achieve this is to graze with high stocking densities where everything is trampled. You will need to move the animals frequently using this method to ensure that they have adequate forage intake. The second is to give them a larger area. This will result in a lot of seed stalks still standing, which you then can back in and clip to reset the plant to tillering and new leaf/plant growth. The result of these strategies is that you will be jump starting regrowth and will likely be able to return a little earlier for the second grazing of that paddock.



As you transition from stored winter feeds to fresh pasture, the ruminants need time to adjust to the change in feed type. They are transitioning from a stored feed that may be relatively dry and is likely high in effective fiber to a lush young grass shoot that is as high as 85% water, very high in protein, and is very highly digestible with little effective fiber. If the transition is made too quickly, your animals will have very watery manure and will likely lose weight as their rumens struggle to make the change. So, the key is to make the transition slowly over the course of a couple of weeks. One way to achieve this is to provide supplemental hay (consider a mid-summer 2nd cut or a third cut hay) on pasture within a very limited pasture area. With each passing day, provide a slightly larger area of pasture. This allows the animals to adjust to the change in diet while you start to set up your grazing wedge for the coming year. Another possibility is to find a way to limit time on the pasture and increasing the time allowed to graze each day.

In summary, understanding the rapid growth changes taking place in early season pastures, you can make better management decisions to optimize this year's total pasture production while maintaining a very healthy robust plant sward; and make appropriate ration changes for the animals that are going out to pasture.

FRUIT & VEG CORNER

Reminder: New Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Water Requirements in Effect for Small Farms

Revised by Lila Shafer. BT Horticulturist. Adapted from New Produce safety rule requirement now in effect for small operations - Morning AgClips



The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets is reminding growers that an updated requirement under the FDA’s FSMA Produce Safety Rule took effect for small farms on April 6, 2026.

Farms covered by the rule must now complete a pre-harvest agricultural water assessment. This assessment helps identify potential contamination risks and supports decisions to improve water management on the farm. Key factors include the water source, distribution system, protection from contamination, application method, and the time between water use and harvest.

The Produce Safety Rule applies to farms that grow, harvest, pack, or hold produce typically consumed raw, such as fruits and vegetables. Covered farms must ensure agricultural water is safe, meets FSMA’s sanitation standards, and maintain records documenting their compliance.

To help growers meet these requirements, the Produce Safety Alliance at Cornell University offers free, on-demand training, along with additional workshops across New York State.

Large and small farms are now required to comply unless exempt. Very **small farms** (grossing \$25,000–\$250,000 in produce sales) have until April 5, 2027.

Energy Corner

Farmers across New York’s Southern Tier can access free, expert support to improve energy efficiency and reduce costs through the Regional Clean Energy Hub. Community Energy Advisors provide unbiased guidance by helping farms to explore energy assessments, weatherization, renewable energy options (such as solar), and available funding programs. These upgrades can boost productivity, lower long-term expenses, and create safer, more comfortable working environments.

Whether you’re just starting to explore options or ready to take action, resources and assistance are available to help your farm become more energy-efficient and sustainable. Reach out to Delaware County Community Energy Advisor, Sam Edel for more information (607).366.0833 EXT 3.



◆ Updates:

MAY/JUNE 2026

Your Ag Team, Working for You!

The Ag team has had a busy, exciting spring. We've been thrilled to see so many of you at our winter/spring programs, delighted to launch equine programming as a component of our Farmer Education plan, bring youth tractor safety education back to the county, and continue to enhance the supports and offerings we bring to the county! We love working with each and every one of you to bolster agriculture of all types and want to remind you we are also available for 1 on 1 consultations to bring all things extension to your farms!

As this growing season gears up, we are here to serve you with soil temp monitoring and assistance with soil sampling and analysis, helping make harvest decisions with scissor cuts and for your home gardening needs launching a Master Gardener hotline help line! Check the website for all of these great offerings or call the office if you need assistance!

We continue to see Ag in the Classroom and Farm to School program interests grow within the county, which is exciting as we cultivate the next generation of ag enthusiasts, workforce and consumers! We are excited to grow both programs and offer supports ranging from technical support for producers looking to sell to schools to classroom presentations and activities!

We LOVE offering unique and engaging programming! One project we are very pleased to bring to life is a multifaceted Demonstration Garden which will be sited at 4-H Camp Shankitunk. This garden will grow all things edible, a space for Master Gardener Volunteers to showcase their talents, a living classroom and foodshed for campers, with harvest being prepared and served on the camp menu. Ultimate goals for the garden additionally include enrolling it as a Cornell seed trial site, and tying our School Garden, Farm to School and Ag in the Classroom programs as a demonstration space for each of these programs as well!

Our goal is to keep programming relevant and real for you, by highlighting the great things happening on your farms. One difference you might notice as we schedule things on your farms is a mutual insurance exchange to protect your farm and our organization as guests enter your premises. We are happy to answer any questions and help facilitate this. Learn more about risk management by checking out our recent insurance series on our website.

CCE Delaware Agriculture Program Staff

- *Desiree Keever, JD Ag Issues Leader*
- *Paul Cerosaletti, MS, CCA Agricultural Program Team Leader*
- *Lila Shafer, BT Horticulture*
- *Autumn Madugno, Ag in the Classroom Educator*
- *Jessica Ladd, Ag/HE Administrative Assistant*

NYC Watershed Agricultural Program Staff.

- *Dale Dewing, MS CCA Watershed Program Leader*
- *Meghan Potter, Precision Feed Management Team Leader*
- *Rich Toebe, PAS Watershed Livestock Educator*
- *April Wright Lucas, PAS CCA Precision Feed Management Specialist*
- *James Romack, MS Precision Feed Management Specialist*
- *Kim Holden, Sr. Administrative Assistant*

Upcoming Programs offered at our Hamden Office:

 **NYS Grown & Certified -Get Certified**
May 14, 2026 5:30 PM-6:30 PM
CCE Hamden Office 34570
State Hwy 10 Hamden, NY

Interested in **learning about the program** and becoming **eligible for grants**? Come with questions, leave with answers and be prepared to enroll if you choose to **get certified!**

Register:
https://reg.cce.cornell.edu/NYGrownCertified_212

SCAN ME 



PFM Corner

Matching forage quality to the nutrient needs of cattle.



Written by Shy Taylor PFM
Specialist- Watershed Ag Program

When the Shephard Farm in Delhi started working with the Precision Feed Management program, their baleage was stored in two long tubes running through one of their hay fields. Due to this layout, they were only able to feed from the ends of the tubes without regard to baleage quality or animal nutritional needs. Also, bales were not marked to indicate fields or cuttings. As a result, the farm was unsure of the quality and quantity of forage coming from each field. The storage limitations combined with a lack of information about the feeds produced compromised animal performance. To solve these problems, the PFM team executed a "Feeds to Needs" project.

"Feeds to Needs" is a two-part process. Part one involves laboratory testing to analyze hay samples from different cuttings and fields for their nutritional content. Step two allocates bales based upon the match between forage quality available and the needs of the animal groups for the best possible fit. After reviewing the results of the "Feeds to Needs" project, the Shephard's changed their baleage storage locations and used shorter rows. They also began labeling groups of bales clearly with each field and cutting. When feeding out bales, this new arrangement allowed them to grab bales from multiple rows at the same time, based on the quality of forage needed for each group of cattle. Furthermore, the Shephard farm used the information provided by the nutritional analysis of the feeds to compare it with the soil tests from the corresponding fields to improve their manure management, crop planning, and fertilizer decisions. These changes improved field productivity right away and subsequently improved forage quality and quantity. Ultimately, the Shephard farm observed a notable improvement in the growth and overall health of the cattle because the proper quality feed was fed to the appropriate group of cattle based on the needs of the cattle.

2026 Ag Program Sponsors

Platinum Sponsor:

- Albano's Precision Application
- Albano's Custom Harvesting

Gold Sponsor:

- Delaware Co. Farm Bureau
- Lutz Feed Company

Silver Sponsor:

- Robertsons Seed
- Stamford Farmers Cooperative
- Del-Rose Farm The Hanselman's

This support of our programming is very much appreciated by us & the farms we serve.

An Extended Thank You to our Ag program supporters and program grant donors

- O'Connor Foundation
- DelCo EcoDev
- NY Beef Industry Council
- Delaware County Rural Healthcare Alliance

Stay Connected:

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- Follow us on Facebook: Cornell Cooperative Extension of Delaware County: Agriculture
- Email: delaware@cornell.edu
- Phone 607.865.6531



Artificial Insemination Training for Cattle Producers *Del. Co. Region*

June 26th 1PM- 5PM- Walton Agricultural Conservation Center 44 West St. Conference Room B Walton NY
June 27th 9AM-2PM- Southtown Dairy 868 Co Rd 18, South New Berlin NY * Lunch Provided*

- Hands-on training with Select Sires specialists
- \$250 per participant
- Two-day Format: Friday classroom + Saturday on-farm live animal practice
- BQA grant for BQA certified producers
- Additional discount for WAP farmers in the West of the Hudson NYC Watershed

Registration is 1st come, 1st served! Space is limited!



THIS EVENT IS ORGANIZED IN COOPERATION WITH THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS

Scissor Cuts

When Will First Cutting Be Ready?

Watershed Agricultural Council
nycwatershed.org

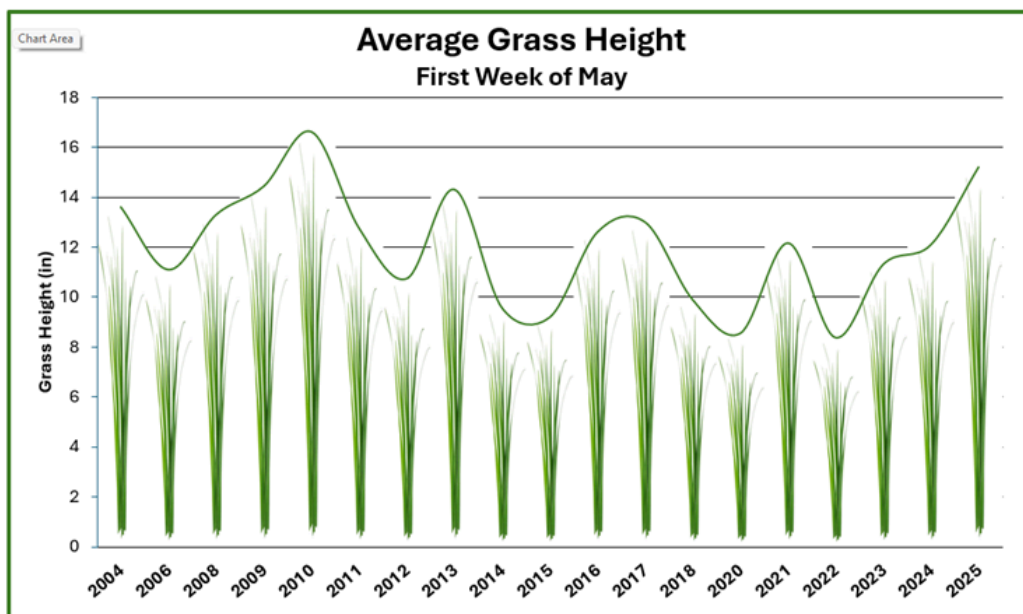


Written by Dale Dewing, CCE Delaware County

Nutritional quality of the hay crop makes a big difference in animal performance, farm productivity and profitability. Every year presents a different set of conditions that affect the early spring growth of hay. Each spring we travel across the county sampling fields to help farmers make this critical harvest decision.

Over the years, our measurements of grass height on the first week of May have ranged from 8 in to over 16 in (Figure 1). So, how can a farm make a good decision on timing their hay harvest?

Figure 1 Grass height early May



Hay digestibility determines how much energy a cow gets from each bite of hay. Higher digestibility means more energy and better productivity. As fiber content increases fiber digestibility decreases, compounding the impact of crop maturity on animal performance (Figure 2).

To determine hay fiber content, neutral detergent fiber (NDF) is the metric used to judge optimum crop maturity and quality.

NDF determines how much hay a cow can eat in a day. The lower the fiber, the more they will eat, the more milk they produce or faster they will grow. Since lactating dairy cattle and growing cattle have the highest quality requirements, these charts focus on targets for "dairy quality". Other animal types have different requirements and different targets, but the same principles apply.

The longer you wait to harvest, the more yield you get, but quality goes down each day. Harvesting in the target range between 50% and 55% NDF Fiber content helps balance yield, fiber content, and fiber digestibility for "dairy quality".

Figure 2 Fiber content & Fiber digestibility

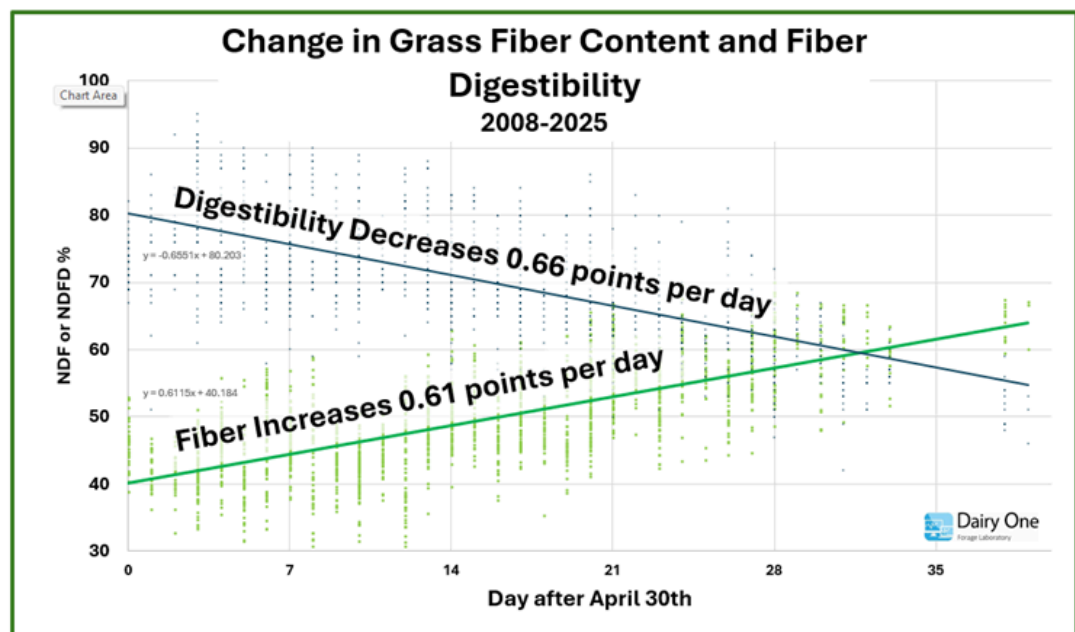
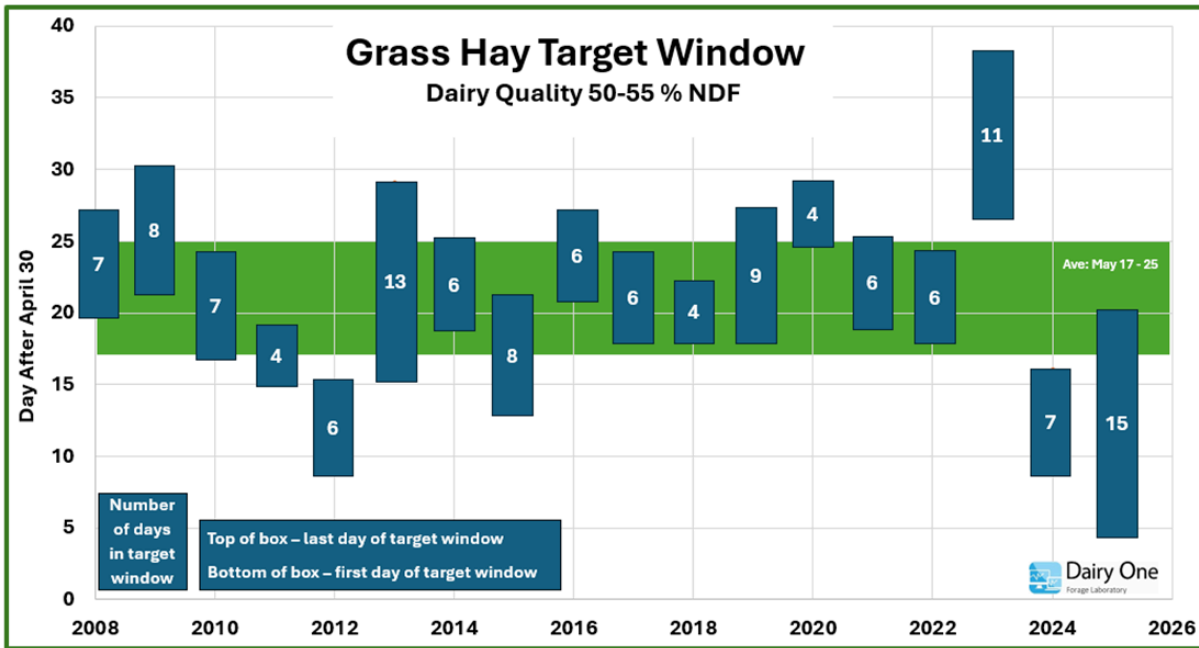


Figure 3 shows the dates when grass samples were in the target dairy quality range for the years 2008 – 2025. The green bar is the average over all years, May 17 – May 25, an 8-day window. The individual blue bars show the date grass was in target range for each year. 2025 was the earliest year, and 2023 was the latest. 2025 also had the widest window (15 days) while 2018 and 2011 were the narrowest (4 days).

Special Thanks to the Dairy One forage lab for their generous support by providing the forage analysis for the scissors cut project.



In general, farms looking to harvest dairy quality feed need to be prepared to begin first cutting in grass fields around May 15 and harvest their core acres in about 8 days. We will continue our Scissors Cut sampling in 2026, starting the first week of May. Sampling happens on Tuesdays and we are usually able to report results on Thursdays. Watch your email (and our website) for Scissors Cut reports through the month of May.

Have an Employee?

Changes to I-9 enforcement could mean penalties!



For any employee on your farm, part time or full time, you must have an Employment Eligibility Verification (I-9 Form) on file. Recently, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) updated its guidance on penalty enforcement for errors in completing the verification; things once considered “technical” and afforded a 10-day grace period for correction are now considered “substantive” and may result in immediate fines.

Learn more about these changes in a webinar hosted by Cornell Ag Workforce Development, Wednesday, May 13th at noon. Register at https://cornell.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_gkERoBlbQ5WV-h3p5elJMQ#/registration.

Can't attend, have more questions, or want a mock I-9 audit? Call our farm business management educator, Desiree, at 607.865.6531

CORNELL CONNECTIONS

Sowing Success for the 2026 Planting Seasons

Written by Dr. Robert Milligan



Nearly all farm workforce members are impacted by planting season. Some are directly impacted due to their involvement in field work, and others are indirectly impacted because the business is focused on cropping. Below we discuss five reminders to help relieve stress and burnout and hopefully reduce the possibility of employee turnover.

Clear Expectations and Directions

It is important for those managing the planting operations not to discount the importance of the people side of the working managers' responsibilities. It is critical to take the time to establish and communicate clear expectations and specific plans.

Although it is difficult to divert time from planting operations, you will ultimately save time, reduce stress, and minimize mistakes. Unclear expectations and incomplete plans result in many calls/texts to you and increased employee stress. I am reminded of the oft repeated adage: **"If an employee has a bad day, a day of work is lost; if a manager has a bad day, a week is lost"**.

I often hear that managers fear sharing detailed plans knowing that there may be changes due to changing weather and soil conditions. I find that fear unfounded. Crop employees know that plans change; clarity is always paramount.

Appreciation and Positive Feedback

In critical times like planting, the focus is on getting the seed in the ground. That is crucial! Unlike tractors, planters, and seeds, people get tired and have feelings. Providing high quality positive feedback and showing appreciation will maintain motivation and reduce stress.

Additional time is not required. What is needed is a change in mind set and priorities. We have been trained to look for problems and correct them. Research is clear that when we are busy and especially during a crisis, we become more of who we are. That means it is more challenging to remember to provide positive feedback and show appreciation when it is needed most. Managers must provide specific positive feedback while looking for items needing attention. Reiterating, this will not take additional time but will have important impacts.

Flexibility and Realism

Timeliness is critical in planting. Research that I did years ago concluded that an additional hour of labor could be worth as much as hundreds of dollars at planting time. Everyone is expected and typically willing to work long hours and often seven days a week. During planting time, you and your employees are, however, still human beings who have families and get worn out. Two points:

- Check with your employees and your family for important family events – birthday, child award, etc. Knowing this in advance will allow you to schedule so the person will not miss the event. You will gain goodwill, and the person will come back with even more energy and commitment.
- Be alert for signs of fatigue. Having fatigue is not good for the person's health, can be a safety issue, and is very demotivating. Also, be certain no one becomes dehydrated by providing liquids. Consider providing meals during extended work periods as well.

Opportunities to Participate

We have often talked about the key motivators of “Choice”, “Connection”, and “Competency”. Choice means that we believe we are in control of our actions and our behaviors, meaning that increases in choice increase motivation and reductions in choice reduce motivation. You can increase choice by asking your employees for input and advice. Often, they are the ones that are in the fields and thus have important insights to contribute. When extra hours are required, instead of telling employees to stay or come in early, ask if it is OK. They will likely say “yes” and be more motivated. If they say “no,” there is likely a good reason.

Update Progress

Think about how much less interesting watching sporting events would be if you did not know the score. If you are not keeping your employees up to date on progress, they are working without knowing the score. Even when progress is slow or disappointing, updates should be provided. Research shows that people respond better to bad news than to no news.

A Final Comment

Each of these 5 reminders support the initial one that even in busy times managing people is still part of your responsibilities as a working manager. Being mindful of that is crucial to the motivation and productivity of your employees who help drive the success of the business.

FARM SAFETY OUTLOOK

Stay Safe on the Road

Important safety information for machinery operators and motorists



Machinery Operators:	Motorists: Passing	Motorists: Driving
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check that your lights and signals work before driving Label equipment with slow moving vehicle emblems When possible, pull to the right side of the road to help motorists pass safely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only pass when legal and safe Check to make sure machinery is not preparing to turn - sometimes machinery swings right to make a wide left turn. Turn on your signal in advance to give machinery operator time to prepare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pay attention and stay off your phone Keep your distance, at least a 3 second gap Slow down, machinery is often slower than 25 mph Look out for flashing amber lights on machinery, use caution

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PHOSPHORUS PERSPECTIVES

Free Choice Feeding of Phosphorous Containing Minerals

Article written by Dr. Virginia Ishler, Penn State University

Introduction

Environmental concerns with phosphorus (P) have forced the animal industry to re-evaluate the levels formulated in diets. It has been demonstrated in numerous research trials that excess P intake equates to excess P out in the manure.

The ideal way of controlling P intake is developing diets that closely match the animal's requirement and implementing feeding management practices to ensure those levels are being consumed. In today's industry since most dairy cattle are fed balanced amounts of forages, concentrates, and mineral-vitamin mixtures, free choice mineral feeding is unwarranted.

This article will illustrate the problems producers can face with feeding minerals free choice. Conclusions from research and field trial results will be presented to demonstrate the limitations associated with this management practice.



Historical Perspective

The misconception that animals have an innate sense for a particular mineral began with reports published by South African researchers. In the early 1920s researchers described P-deficient cattle with depraved appetites chewing on bones. Bones contain significant levels of P, and the association was made that animals were able to select feeds to compensate for mineral deficiencies in the diet.

This was followed by additional research in the 1930s that indicated cows and lambs fed P-deficient diets may consume sufficient free choice P to meet their requirements. It was further demonstrated that when intake of P from feed sources increased, less free choice P sources were consumed.

In the early 1950s, a paper appearing in the British Journal of Animal Behavior measured the preference of P-deficient cattle and sheep for supplemental calcium carbonate alone or combined with an equal part of dicalcium phosphate. Animals did not consume adequate levels of mineral to prevent P deficiency.

The 2001 NRC presents 2 studies conducted in the 1970s that demonstrate no benefit of feeding P free choice. The first study was with dairy heifers fed low or marginally deficient calcium or P. There was little relationship between the animals' requirement for the mineral elements and free choice consumption of dicalcium phosphate or defluorinated phosphate. In the second study lactating cows were fed calcium and phosphorus below requirements for 9 and 12 weeks. There was no evidence that animals consumed free choice minerals to correct the deficiency. Researchers concluded there was no association between appetite for P or calcium supplements and the animals' nutrient requirement.



Limitations of Free Choice Minerals

Offering minerals free choice is appropriate when grazing livestock are not receiving any concentrates or supplemental feeds. However, this is not a typical scenario for the modern dairy operation.

The greatest limitation of feeding minerals free choice is the variation in consumption. The individual consumption of dicalcium phosphate by lactating dairy cattle was measured in a 1972 study. The variation was huge, and mineral consumption ranged from zero to two pounds per day.

This same trend was demonstrated with beef cattle in Alberta, Canada. Not only was there a substantial range of intake (minimal to 1.7 pounds per day), but also the number of visits to the mineral feeders varied greatly. The days between visits to the mineral feeder ranged from 1.5 to 4.5 days. The researchers concluded that free choice feeding via a mineral feeder is not an acceptable method of providing minerals on a daily basis.

The approach of a cafeteria-style mineral feeder has been used for dairy cattle, especially animals being intensively grazed. These systems offer a range of 2 to 10 mineral choices. The primary disadvantage of this system is high feeding loss and increased expense. Cows typically do not consume sufficient amounts of minerals to meet their requirements. Animals are more likely to be influenced by taste or acceptability versus a craving for a particular element.

Controlling the level of P consumed is very important in light of the nutrient regulations being executed. A field trial conducted in Okeechobee, Florida during 1986-87 examined the effect of feeding free choice minerals on P excretion. Rations were formulated so cows would receive 0.52% P. In addition to dietary P, a free choice mineral mix with a minimum of 8.0% P was offered. Cows allowed access to the free choice mineral had a greater concentration of P in the feces. This field trial agrees with the numerous research studies cited in the 2001 NRC, which state that once the cow's requirement for P is met, the excess will be excreted in the feces.

There have not been an overwhelming number of studies addressing free choice feeding of minerals. However, there is enough evidence with various ruminant trials (sheep, beef and dairy) to conclude that free choice feeding has many limitations and in today's environment, there is little to no benefit to this practice for dairy producers.



UPCOMING GRANT OPPORTUNITY

Administered by the New York Farm Viability Institute, the NYS Grown & Certified ITRD Grant Program second round, is set to open late this spring. This round is centered on Research and Development to assist NY Grown & Certified farmers, food processors and distributors cover the research and development costs needed to launch new NYS Grown & Certified food products or increase the production and/or distribution of existing NYS Grown & Certified food products.

Eligible project types include: consulting services, technical service providers, market research, product development, food lab testing and pilot runs, GAP and USDA certification training expenses, farm-to-institution specialists, and other services tied to R&D. A total of \$1.36 million has been allocated to the program this round to make grants ranging between \$10,000-\$50,000 with a 10% matching funds requirement.

For NYS Grown & Certified eligibility and applications visit <https://certified.ny.gov/get-certified>. Please be mindful certification is by commodity, and grant project eligibility must be in the commodity the producer has a NYS Grown & Certified endorsement.

Changed for this round, applicants must be NY Grown & Certified at time of application! If you are still on the fence, there may still be time! Come to our info session Thursday, May 14th 5:30pm at the CCE Hamden office to learn more and start the certification process. See page 4 to register.

Feeding & Grouping Considerations for Weaned Beef Calves

Written by April Wright Lucas,
WAP PFM Planner & the PFM
Team

Watershed Agricultural Council
nycwatershed.org



Grouping beef calves and planning your feeds for your feeder calves' diet is often a hugely missed opportunity for profitability on beef farms. Whether you are raising all your calves for a retail market, raising replacements, or marketing excellent quality feeder calves, now is the time to strategize! There are several factors and management considerations to achieve the greatest success for your farm.

To begin the process, think about your calves and set some goals. What are your herd dynamics? Do you generally calve in the spring and wean calves in the fall? Do you sell a group of backgrounded feeders in the fall, or do you plan on raising them over the winter? Do you have late summer/fall calves that will be weaned this spring and sold as feeders or raised over the summer? Having goals for your herd is key to grouping and planning. If you're looking to raise weaned calves on farm, questions which you may want to ask yourself are:

How many calves will I have?

- Think back to when your cows were exposed to the bulls. A beef cows' gestation can range from 279 to 286 days in length. If the bulls ran with the cows from 7/1/25 through 10/1/25, you can roughly expect calves to be born from 4/10/26 through 7/11/26.
- With good condition and nutrition, you want over 90% of your mature cows to wean a healthy calf in the fall. A 30 cow spring calving herd should produce 27-28 calves in the fall at a minimum.

Where will my calves be housed?

- Housing weaned calves separately from their dams is key for both calf and cow success! Calves will grow faster and be healthier without having to compete with animals 3-4 times their size.
- Grouped calves can also be monitored and treated with ease. Most importantly, they can be fed the highest quality diets to promote growth, while the cows can be fed a lower energy diets to maintain body condition and save money.
- Consider what pen or pasture your weaned feeder calves will be in. Be sure fences are strong and all animals have enough space to eat, drink and rest.

What is my harvest and storage plan?

- Watch for our scissor cut data which will help you harvest at the right date to obtain the quality needed. The time to harvest high-quality forage begins with starting 1st cutting, around May 20th or earlier.
- Plan ahead by selecting fields that will be accessible for an early harvest. Then mark your calendar to take subsequent cuttings at 30-day intervals to gain enough high-quality forage for this group.
- Harvest tracking ideas- Start a Journal in tractor, use notes in phone, feed storage area overhead map with the bales identified, painting bales with dates and cuttings.
- Sampling forages and obtaining a laboratory analysis is essential for gaining the awareness of where you might be able to improve from year to year.
- Make a forage allocation plan using the table below and hay analyses from the lab.



Beef Cattle Group	with ADG	DMI % of BWT	Crude Protein %	TDN %	BCS
Growing Calf weaned at 6-9 months for 375 - 900 lbs.	2-3.5	2.5	15 to 17	65-70	NA
Finishers 9- 12 months for 700- 1200+ lbs.	2-3.5	2.5	11 to 12	68-72	NA
Preg Yearling Heifer (in last 1/3 pregnancy)	1.0-2.0	2.2	10	60-35	6 to 7
Early Lactating Cow at 900 -1400 lbs. making 20 lbs. milk/d for growing calf	n/a	2.5	10	59	5
Mid Gestating Cow at 900 -1400 lbs.	n/a	1.7	7	50	5 to 6
Late Gestating (last 1/3 trimester) Cow 900 - 1400 lbs.	n/a	2	8	54	5 to 6

Table adapted from the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service Bulletin E-974 and the 2016 Nutrient Requirements of Beef Cattle.

What will I feed my calves?

- Growing calves have some of the highest nutrient needs of any class of cattle. Therefore, the highest quality forage available on the farm should be reserved for feeding them. Depending on the available forages, these calves may also benefit from supplementation of one form or another. Target ADG's, dry matter intakes, and the TDN levels required to support them are shown in the table below.

Body weight (lbs.)	ADG (Lbs.)	DM intake (lbs/day)	TDN (%DM)	Crude Protein (%DM)
600 to 1200 (finished)	.5	13.2	54	8.2
	1.0	14.0	59	9.4
	1.5	14.4	64	10.6
	2.0	14.6	69	11.9
	2.5	14.4	75	13.6
	3.0	13.8	83	15.7
780 to 1300 (finished)	.8	19.8	50	7.5
	2.1	20.9	60	9.6
	3.2	20.4	70	12.1
	4.0	19.3	80	14.5
	4.5	17.8	90	16.9

Information adapted from 2016 eighth revised edition of Nutrient Requirements of Beef Cattle by Oklahoma State University helps to show potential feeder calf gains on forage diets (without grain supplementation)



How to calculate how many pounds of feed needed:
 600 Lbs. calf consuming 14Lbs of DM
 Forage 45% DM
 $14 / .45 = 31.1$ lbs as fed.

- Knowing that we need the highest quality hay crop forages to feed our weaned calves, we can plan how to harvest and store this feed. Ideally, this high-quality forage should be stored in a separate location that is easily accessible at all times of the year, especially winter! When using a baleage tuber, find a way to have the highest quality hay accessible even if it is a shorter tube in a separate location.
- Quality and quantity are key! Think about how many bales are needed? Always keep in mind that higher quality forages have lower gut fill capacity because they are more digestible. It may take a couple years of harvest experience to produce a larger quantity of this higher quality forage for these growing calves.

Summary

If beef calves are grouped separately from older animals, they will excel in growth and health. Though every farm is different, planning can be done now to achieve your herd goals. Strategize now to harvest the best forage possible and store it in an accessible location to be fed to weaned calves. To aid this, the CCE/WAP Ag Team will be starting their annual scissor cutting exercise to measure growth and nutrient composition of growing hay. Several locations around Delaware County will have samples collected every Tuesday. The lab results will be shared the following Thursday giving insight as to when to begin harvest. You can look for that information at www.ccedelaware.org.

The Agritourism Brief

U-Pick Ins & Outs

Agritourism Project Work Team

1 Permitting & Compliance

Ensure your operation complies with all relevant regulations and obtains necessary permits. These could include:

- zoning
- parking & accessibility
- signage & handwashing
- safety & employee training

2 Insurance

- Check with your insurance company to assure your activities are covered.
- NYS Safety & Agriculture Tourism Act: Make sure to have adequate signage required to help reduce liability

3 Farm Layout

- Consider the flow of customers, including arrival, parking, check in, entering & leaving the u-pick area, check out & exiting the farm.
- Is the farm accessible to all customers & if not, how can you accommodate everyone?
- Where are restrooms & wash stations located?

4 Successful Attributes

- Adequate parking
- Directional signage
- Open Weekends & Summer Holidays
- Accommodate children
- Courteous & knowledgeable employees
- Lots of shade (or tents to provide shade)
- Clean restrooms
- Current pricing, clearly posted
- Containers for Picking
- Wide rows, clean rows
- Weed-free fields

5 Marketing/Promotion

Develop a robust marketing strategy to attract visitors. Utilize online platforms, social media, and local partnerships to promote your agritourism offerings. Consider joining local directories & tourism listings to widen your reach.

Remember to cover the 4P's of marketing:

- Product- is it unique & plentiful?
- Price- is it price competitively, remembering you are offering product & an experience? Is it profitable for you?
- Promotion: are you getting it in front of the right audience?
- Place: can people easily find the farm or do you need to consider signage to help people find the farm?

Crop Planning, Succession Planting & Season Extension

All can help extend your u-pick season. If you are a u-pick strawberry farm and want a longer season, consider planting some additional crops such as sunflowers, flowers, pumpkins, etc.

6 Food Safety & Pet Policy

- Food safety is very important. This leads to the importance of having places for customers to wash hands.
- Encourage keeping pets out of farm fields to reduce food safety risk.
- If your farm has a pet policy in place, it is important to share it on the website, social media, and signage around the farm.

U-Pick operations can create an increased revenue stream, reduce harvest labor, allow for diversification of the farm, and increase public visibility. Customers are looking for an experience.

Delaware Bounty Gearing Up for Second Season!

This wildly successful project connecting consumers to our local farms offering meats, produce and fiber produced on their farms for direct to consumer sales is ready to take on new farms!

We are preparing for a second printing and want to include ALL of our farms offering sales via farmers' markets, roadside stands, u-pick, and order/farm pick-up venues. A listing on the print map is available at NO CHARGE for all producers, simply fill out the enrollment questionnaire at: https://cornell.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0jjJ6lVMQVviA74.

Please answer questions EXACTLY as you wish info to appear on your listing, we cannot edit.

New this year, we will be launching a searchable companion website! Each participating farm will be listed there as well, with the option of purchasing advertisement space to further highlight your business.

Stay connected and continue learning with the **Agritourism Monthly Webinar Series**



USDA Opens Enrollment for Grasslands Conservation Reserve Program

Producers and private landowners can enroll in the Grassland Conservation Reserve Program (Grassland CRP) starting May 4, 2026, through May 29, 2026. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) administers Grassland CRP, a voluntary working lands conservation program that enables participants to conserve grasslands while also continuing most grazing and haying practices. FSA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. The contract duration is 10 to 15 years.



Grassland CRP helps landowners and operators protect grassland, rangeland, pastureland, and certain other lands, while maintaining the areas for grazing, forage or seed harvest, or wildlife habitat. Payment rates vary by location and program factors and are capped at \$50,000 per year.

Landowners must maintain vegetative cover to keep land free of noxious or invasive weeds and follow an approved management plan developed with NRCS. The management plan ensures grazing and forage harvesting are conducted to support environmental benefits, including carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat and erosion control. Learn more at <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/resources/programs/conservation-programs/crp-grasslands>



Planning the Season Ahead: Turning Ideas into Informed Decisions

Written by Desiree Keever, CCE Delaware County

The start of a cropping season is an ideal time to take a fresh look at your operation. Whether you're considering new crops, equipment investments, or diversification opportunities, one of the most effective tools to guide these decisions is a partial or enterprise budget. This simple exercise helps pencil out anticipated costs and revenues, giving you a clearer picture of how proposed changes may perform, allows you to explore alternatives prior to making investments, and most importantly saving you from making investments in endeavors that detract from your bottom line.

Working through a budget does more than estimate profitability, it aligns management decisions with your farm's financial reality. Evaluating a proposed change with a partial budget helps forecast cash flow. In turn, this ensures you're prepared with adequate capital. In instances when operating lines or loans must be secured to bring a project to fruition having completed this exercise strengthens communication with lenders, increasing their confidence in your ability to successfully execute the proposed change. Just as importantly, it brings focus to your most valuable (and often most costly) input: labor. Understanding whether the necessary workforce is available—and how it will impact your bottom line—is critical to successful execution.

Taking time to evaluate these factors sharpens your view of market opportunities. Whether you're introducing new products or working with a commodity, knowing your breakeven point allows you to better align production and marketing strategies. And as the season unfolds, this groundwork makes it easier to adjust course when pivots are needed. Thoughtful planning now sets the stage for more confident, informed decisions throughout the growing season.

Iowa State University Extension offers an on-line tool to help you easily complete the process and can be accessed at <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/wholefarm/html/c1-50.html>.



Have farm photos? We want to tell the story of Del Co Agriculture!

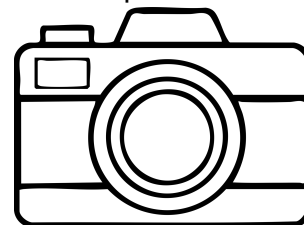
CCEDC is looking for farm photos and the stories of all of our farms to feature as we tell the story of this county's rich history of agriculture while educating the public on what ag means to our communities!

Photos can include farm animals, barns, crops, tractors, and more—anything that helps showcase the beauty and fun of life on the farm. We would love to hear the history of your farm, how it has changed over generations or your hopes for the future, your biggest challenges and what you find most rewarding!

Help us create beautiful, authentic, and engaging storytelling of agriculture and share your farm with the community! Come have fun with us! Prizes will be awarded to the top 3 submissions.

Submit photos via>>>>>
Deadline June 30, 2026

https://cornell.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_by_nn9w5zbCFR9JA



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