

Monthly Highlights August 2025

Agriculture - Crops

Educator: Will Fulwider

A presentation at a field day for the Dodge County Healthy Soils Healthy Waters group focused on termination timing of cover crops. The goal of the presentation was to synthesize differing recommendations for when to terminate cover crops to achieve goals in a farmers cropping system and provide concrete recommendations along with some tools therein.

Farmers can have multiple, and potentially overlapping, reasons for planting a cover crop, including reducing soil erosion and nutrient loss, suppressing weeds, providing an environment for beneficial insects, improving soil health, among others. However, the threshold of cover crop growth to meet those objectives varies and can muddy the waters for farmers trying to juggle multiple field activities in the early spring and get their crop planted on time. While cereal rye, which is far and away the most commonly planted cover crop in Wisconsin, does have these growth benchmarks, legumes and multi species covers, especially those planted after wheat do not, and a common thought is the longer you let it grow in the spring, the more nitrogen that can be provided to the following crop. Diving into the science and local climate averages, shows that unless those crops are terminated towards the end of May, extra nitrogen is unlikely, however the

If it happens on a farm or in a field, the Extension Institute of Agriculture works with you to achieve better results. Our innovative dairy management programs range from genetics to farm and business management. Extension researchers work hand-in-hand with row crop, forage and fresh produce growers to provide best practices for every aspect of the growing phase. We also advise communities on using sustainable practices to create inviting spaces free from invasive species.



timing of nitrogen release might be more synched to crop uptake.

These aspects are not widely touched on in the literature and the conversation provided farmers with some information to chew on in making those decisions. Finally, winter camelina as a new cover crop in Wisconsin was introduced. The goal is to reduce the nitrogen tie up and potential allelopathy and seedling disease possible with rye before corn by using this non-grass, very winter hardy cover crop. Research has been conducted for the past several years in southern Wisconsin to work out the agronomic kinks of using camelina as a cover crop and evaluate the yield effect vis a vis rye.

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Agriculture - Dairy

Educator: Manuel Peña

An article for the "Field Fodder" column in the monthly Wisconsin Agriculturist publication for crop growers, livestock producers, agency staff and agribusiness consultants. The article focused on how to interpret important nutrient metrics on forage laboratory analysis reports to better manage forage inventories and meet livestock production goals which improves overall farm profitability.

Although forage makes up over 50% of the diet for beef, dairy, sheep, goats and horses, very few of these producers make forage laboratory testing part of their feeding management routine. One of the major challenges with laboratory testing is garnering a working understanding of the nutritional metrics that are reported on these test results. As a result, I reached out to the editor of the WI Agriculturist to see if this topic would be of interest to their readers. As this topic was identified as beneficial to the readership of the Wisconsin Agriculturist monthly publication, I researched and wrote the article connecting the importance of forage testing to livestock nutritional programs, and identified some of the key metrics on a forage laboratory analysis report, briefly summarizing what each means and how a producer can use it to evaluate the fit for that forage in the diet.

A survey for farmers, employers and employees who have different mother languages (Spanish

The Dairy Program offers education by holding in-person meetings and live webinars, as well as developing resources such as articles, factsheets, and videos.

Our program is made up of University Specialists and Regional Educators. Specialists perform scientific research based on dairy industry demands and develop practical resources for Wisconsin farm families. Regional Dairy Educators deliver research and resources to farms like yours and connect trusted, unbiased, university-based research to assist the dairy industry in making the livelihood of farming viable in the future.



and English) and do not speak each other's, where they provide information that helps us understand the strategies they use to bridge the language barrier and how that affects the activities at the farm. Total Reach: The Latino workforce represents more than 80% of the dairy workers in Wisconsin. The goal is to reach as many farms as possible. We have set at least 20 farms through the state for the first month and keep moving up.



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Community Development

Educator: Pat Malone

Community Development provides educational programming to assist leaders, communities, and organizations realize their fullest potential. We work with communities to build the vitality that enhances their quality of life and enriches the lives of their residents. We educate in leadership development, organizational development, food systems, community economic development, local government education and much more. In short, the Community Development Institute plants and cultivates the seeds for thriving communities and organizations

Facilitated a 2-day planning and design workshop to help the community of Waupun, Wisconsin make improvements to their downtown. Members from 5 local organizations as well as citizens at-large worked together to develop a shared vision for future development and enhancements to the downtown. The 2-day workshop provided a forum to collect information to inform community placemaking planning and design alternatives that the community could use to make Waupun more vibrant.

The First Impressions exchange planned between Dodgeville and Columbus was conducted in June. The summary report is currently being written, and the reports between communities will be exchanged.

Housing survey completed and reviewed. The goal is to develop a better understanding of how local officials view housing issues in their communities to provide more effective housing education. After verifying the email addresses of the local officials, the survey will be sent out.

A series of Community Economic Development Conversations were conducted in June. These conversations targeted elected and appointed officials to gather information on economic development issues faced in Dodge County. Five meetings were scheduled. Sixty-two invitations were sent directly to individuals as well as social media promotion. Twenty-seven people participated. The priority issues identified included workforce challenges and opportunities; housing challenges and opportunities; infrastructure issues; and downtown development.

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Food Security, Healthy Eating, and Healthy Living

Educator: Kimberly Lafler

FoodWise advances healthy eating habits, active lifestyles and healthy community environments for families with limited incomes through nutrition education at the individual, community and systems levels. FoodWise reaches individuals and families through local community partners by providing nutrition classes in-person and virtually, indirect education (newsletters, etc.), and social media/marketing. FoodWise is a obesity prevention program that addresses policy, system and environmental changes through local and state public health efforts. FoodWise is federally funded by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP).

There are not many no cost/low cost exercise opportunities for residents in Dodge County. FoodWise partnered with different agencies in Dodge County to be able to provide an eight week series for older adults where participants engage in regular Tai Chi and nutrition education to improve their physical and mental health, reduce the risk of falls, and enhance social connectedness. Through this effort, older adults improve physical fitness and stamina as well as social connections which can lead to overall improved health.

Nutrition based articles were provided for patrons at The Gathering Source, a food pantry and resource hub as well as the Beaver Dam Food Pantry. By providing articles with relevant science based information patrons can learn while they are utilizing services to aid in healthy choices. This knowledge can help create small changes in behavior while choosing foods, which can lead to bigger, lasting changes moving patrons toward better overall health and well being.

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Human Development & Relationships

Educator: Pattie Carroll

Many individuals and families in Dodge County are experiencing increased financial stress due to rising costs of living, including food, fuel, and housing. These challenges have made it difficult for some households to meet basic needs, manage debt, or plan for the future. In response to this growing concern, I developed and offered a budgeting workshop designed to provide practical, accessible financial education. The goal was to equip participants with tools and strategies to better understand their spending, reduce expenses, and build financial stability. This effort was driven by the need to support economic resilience and empower community members to take control of their financial well-being. In response to the financial challenges identified in the community, Carroll provided a budgeting workshop designed to meet the needs of individuals and families seeking greater financial control and stability. The workshop offered practical guidance on tracking expenses, identifying areas to save money, managing debt, and creating a realistic budget. Carroll engaged participants through interactive discussions, real-life examples, and hands-on tools that made financial concepts accessible and actionable. By creating a supportive learning environment, Carroll helped participants build confidence in their ability to make informed financial decisions and take meaningful steps toward improving their economic well-being. As a result of the budgeting workshop, participants gained practical tools and strategies to better manage their

Human Development and Relationship programs in Dodge County focus on parenting, family relationships, aging, and financial education. We support resilient individuals and families from cradle to grave. Our programs offer research-based classes and resources for parents, caregivers, and professionals to promote child and family development. We also help families achieve financial well-being and build capacity among family-serving practitioners. Additionally, we support aging individuals with end-of-life planning and local partnerships. Responding to local needs our programs also promote mental health and well-being through evidence-based initiatives.



finances and reduce unnecessary spending. One participant, for example, identified a simple yet effective way to save money by packing snacks for her children instead of making frequent convenience store purchases. This small change reflects a broader shift in mindset—participants began to recognize everyday opportunities to make financially healthier choices. These outcomes contribute to increased financial literacy and empowerment, which are critical in addressing larger societal issues such as economic insecurity and household stress. By equipping individuals with the knowledge and confidence to take control of their finances, this program supports long-term financial stability and resilience within the broader community.

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Positive Youth Development

Educator: Marie Witzell

Over 75 youth in Dodge County attended a state 4-H shooting sports event for youth where youth learn about and compete against others in archery, air rifle and air pistol to compete in a state competition. Youth are developing their sparks in shooting sports, and Dodge County is hosting a state contest. Youth who master their shooting sports skills have the opportunity to compete at the National level. Dodge County had Brooke Keskimaki attend the National Championships, June 22 – 27, 2025 at Grand Island, Nebraska. Brooke shared the following information with me to share with others:

“It’s an honor to be a part of Dodge County Shooting Sports where they strive to teach and make every person better day by day. Shooting sports has a big impact on my life from little on from starting with a bare bow to getting my own bow that I would shoot nationals with. Never in my life would I have thought I would move on to nationals and compete with the best in the country. The amount of hours spent in my back yard just shooting at the target preparing myself for what was to come. The thoughts of am I going to let my team down, but in reality all you can do is have fun and try your best, and that’s what I did. Many people know shooting sports as the classic archery and air rifle but there is so much more than that such as trap, hunting skills, air pistol etc. Overall I encourage every person to try shooting sports and you never know you could end up with a very good outcome by competing at nationals”

--2024 Air rifle National Competitor, 2025 Compound National Competitor, Brooke Keskimaki.

Positive Youth Development prepares the youth of today to become the effective, empathetic adults of tomorrow. Our research-based youth enrichment programs like teens in governance build youth and adult capacity and partnerships that help both sides grow. 4-H clubs, camps and after-school programs give young people the hands-on experiences they need to develop an understanding of themselves and the world.



The third annual Family Fest was developed in response to the ongoing need for accessible, community-based support for families in our area. Many families face challenges related to parenting, child development, and accessing local services, and there is a growing demand for opportunities that connect them with trusted resources in a welcoming, celebratory environment. This event brought together a variety of service agencies to provide information, hands-on activities, and educational materials that promote family and child well-being. Carroll and the Ameri Corps engaged in this effort to ensure that families had direct access to Extension resources that support positive parenting, healthy development, and overall family resilience. By participating in Family Fest, Carroll aimed to strengthen community connections and empower families with tools and knowledge to thrive. As a result of participating in the third annual Family Fest, over 300 individuals engaged with local service providers and accessed valuable resources that support family and child well-being.