

NPFA UPDATE

SUMMER '25

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM THE
NORTHERN PLAINS FORAGE ASSOCIATION

WHO ARE WE?

NPFA is a grassroots association open to forage growers, buyers, industry partners, and anyone with an interest in forages. We are creating a networking and education group focused on annual forages/cover crops, alfalfa, silage, grazing systems, and more!

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WHERE TO FIND US



npforage.com



@npforage

Email: npforage@gmail.com

GRAZING THROUGH THE SUMMER SLUMP

By: Justin Fruechte, Renovo Seed Director of Sales

The mid-Summer heat is upon us. The cows are enjoying stock dams and standing at corner posts swatting flies while we enjoy grilled burgers, fireworks, and A/C. Much of the country is short on rain and the thoughts of how to graze the cows next keep lingering.



Managing your pasture correctly now can make it or break it for the future. Most big range areas in arid environments have set stocking rates that are figured for little moisture. In areas in the Midwest that have creek pastures or paddocks in amongst farm ground, the rotational grazing scheme should change. These areas are generally dominated by cool-season grasses. They came on strong this spring, but as temperatures increase and moisture decreases, they begin to go dormant. When the grasses are dormant, re-growth won't happen until cooler temps and more rain arrives. Our rotational grazing plans through May and June are centered around keeping the grass vegetative. At that stage the grass is palatable, highest quality, and re-growing rapidly.

Now, we need to increase our rest time and slow down our moves. This strategy helps to minimize the damage we do to our entire pasture and limits it to a few paddocks. When we continue to grub down our stressed pasture grasses, we decrease root depth which leads to long-term negative effects. Supplemental feeding on one paddock is an option to minimize damage to other areas of your pasture. This will permanently damage your grass where you are feeding, but your other paddocks will be rested to wait until cooler wetter conditions prevail.



ADDRESS CHANGE!

If you are trying to pay dues or reach us via snail mail, please use our new address!

Northern Plains Forage Assn.

c/o Sara Bauder

29881 421st. Ave.

Tyndall, SD 57066

“GRAZING THROUGH THE SUMMER SLUMP” CONT'D

If this time of year is consistently a time of poor grazing for you, think about a warm season pasture. A perennial pasture of warm season grasses is much more drought and heat tolerant than many of our brome or fescue pastures. An established pasture containing native grasses such as Big Bluestem, Indiangrass, Sideoats Grama, Blue Grama and Buffalograss will begin their growth about a month after a cool season pasture and actively grow through extreme heat. Big Bluestem has proven to grow roots 8 feet down, making it very resilient in low moisture years. It takes planning to get this type of pasture into your system as they'll require a full year of establishment. Once established and if properly managed, they'll last forever. There are many variables that factor in your decision on when to stop grazing or when to start feeding. Cost of feed is high, and hay in areas is limited. Fortunately, the value of a growing calf is high and rises with every pound it gains. From your pasture's perspective it would be advantageous to do less long-term damage in drought conditions. So, as the summer slump settles in, keep walking your pastures to maintain adequate cover, and next year add a warm season pasture to your rotation.

OFFICER SPOTLIGHT AARON SWANSON

I grew up in Hamlin County, SD and attended SDSU in the previous century. My family had a small farm where I spent many rainy summers mowing and raking and raking and raking hay followed by winters helping feed it to a herd of hungry shorthorn cattle with mixed results, so I did not originally see forage production as an opportunity.

Upon having my own chance at farming the land, I initially raised row crops and small grains employing continuous no-till methods to manage equipment costs.

Managing harvest in a time and cost-effective manner still proved to be challenging until a chance meeting with a friendly neighboring dairy farmer that concluded with the dairyman saying, "if you ever need any help, you let us know." At that point, raising a crop for someone who was willing to purchase it and remove it from the field, plus send it back after the cows were done with it (manure 😊), just seemed like a no-brainer. I was unsure about raising continuous corn silage which was most common, but it turned out that there's a lot of crops dairy cows can eat. Initially I did and still do raise corn silage, then also baled up oat straw, harvested grass hay from our meadow and ditches, planted late summer alfalfa after oats and are this year raising a double crop of winter forage rye followed by a mixed crop of sorghum sudan, legumes and annual rye grass.

The crop is still being evaluated but it looks promising and it's nice to have another crop that utilizes the whole growing season, breaks pest cycles and has zero herbicide expense for a year. The features combine to leave potential for a higher yielding, lower cost corn crop in the field the following year.

I became involved in NPFA because I personally have experienced benefit from raising forage crops so I can say to others it's been a good thing, especially if you're a small farmer facing equipment challenges. Raising different types of forages is exciting but there's a need to get practical information to be more widely disseminated, tested and shared by others. So far, my favorite forage has been alfalfa. It's fun to watch the field go from a drab color right after harvest to emerald green in a matter of days.

I live on the farm with my wife, Mari, a nurse and my parents live nearby. We enjoy road trips together to various locales across North and South Dakota, Minnesota and are hoping to expand our travel horizons in the future.





2025 FORAGE FIELD DAY

July 31, 2025 at 9 AM - 3 PM | Western Research Farm, Castana, IA

Highlights from the day will include:

- Field demonstrations of forage sorghum for silage, interseeding summer annuals into alfalfa and grazing systems
- Live nitrate and prussic acid testing demos to enhance in-season decision-making
- Interactive forage and weed ID competition with prizes

Featured speakers:

- Jeff Jackson – CROPLAN Sorghum Product Lead
- Dr. Maria Salas – Prof., ISU Dept. of Agronomy
- Dr. Shelby Gruss – ISU Forage Extension Specialist
- Larry Tranel – ISU Dairy Extension Specialist

Register by July 21, 2025

- \$20/person
- \$50/farm or family group of up to 5 people
- NPFA members register at no cost!

For more information:

Dr. Shelby Gruss | sgruss@iastate.edu | 515-294-3832
Sara Bauder | sara.bauder@sdstate.edu | 605-995-7378

REGISTER HERE:

[HTTPS://GO.IASTATE.EDU/
2025FORAGEFIELD DAY](https://go.iastate.edu/2025FORAGEFIELD DAY)



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MAXIMIZED EFFICIENCY: ABOVE-GROUND WATERING SYSTEMS FOR LIVESTOCK

By Colin Geppert, Forage Producer/ Sales Account Manager, Hubbard Feeds

Water is essential for grazing livestock, and above-ground watering systems provide an efficient alternative to traditional underground piping. Here are some key advantages of these above-ground systems:

- **Easy Installation:** Hundreds of feet of pipe can be quickly laid and connected to a tank in a matter of hours.
- **Cost-Effective:** Above-ground installation is less expensive because it requires less labor and fewer resources than trenching.
- **Leak Detection and Repair:** Leaks are easy to spot, allowing for quick repairs and reducing wasted resources.
- **Flexibility & Grazing Efficiency:** Movable watering systems allow you to reposition the water source throughout the pasture. This improves grazing efficiency and utilization while preventing overgrazing in areas where water sources are more permanent. It also promotes better manure distribution.
- **Herd Health:** Access to clean, fresh water helps keep livestock healthy and can improve the weaning weights of young animals.
- **Improved Water Quality:** By keeping livestock away from surface water sources like streams and ponds, above-ground systems help protect riparian areas and reduce water contamination.

In the Upper Midwest, above-ground piping is typically used during the frost-free months. Many types of pipe are available, but my preferred choice is one-inch black high-density polyethylene pipe, rated at 200 psi. This pipe can be laid down and connected using Banjo, Agri Fit, or Quick Coupler fittings.

One producer commented, "Putting together above-ground pipe is as easy as putting Tinker Toys together!"

In some pastures, water tanks are located in a corner, where the surrounding perennial grasses are shorter. In other parts of the field, the grass may be untouched. By incorporating an above-ground water system, you can connect your pipe to a water hydrant and bring water farther into the pasture. This allows livestock to access taller forage in areas that were previously too far from the water source. As a result, you can keep your herd in the pasture longer, reducing the need to bring supplemental feed. This not only reduces costs but also keeps more dollars in your pocket.



WEBSITE LAUNCHED!

After many drafts and edits, we now have a live website to host information, recordings, events, ideas, membership sign-up and more! Please check it out! It will continue to evolve and be updated as needs and suggestions arise! Kudos to Novel Designs (<https://www.thenoveldesigns.com/>) for getting this set up for us!



NPFORAGE.COM



FORAGE INVENTORY AND DEMAND CALCULATOR AVAILABLE ONLINE

By: Heather Gessner, SDSU Extension Livestock Business Management Field Specialist

The Forage Inventory and Demand Calculator is an Excel-based calculator that compares the quantity (tons) of forage available and the quantity of forage needed to meet feed requirements on a livestock operation. Forage inventory is a detailed description of the forage on hand, including bale count and weight or tonnage for bulk feeds. Two types of forage are identified in the calculator: baled and bulk. Examples of baled forages: first cutting alfalfa, grass hay, corn stalk bales and straw (intended for feed); bulk forages: corn silage and ground hay.

The demand tab is where livestock inventory by class is completed to determine forage needs. The more detailed the livestock inventory, the more accurate the results. Example: If 120 feeder steers are fed for 5 months, they weigh 600 pounds and are sold at 1,000 pounds. These steers could be entered as a one-line entry, Steers, 120 head, 850#, 5 months. This entry yields a demand of 176 tons. To be more accurate, if the anticipated gain is 3 pounds per day, this could be a five-line entry based on 100# weight increases 600 pounds to 1,000 pounds. Through this entry method, the forage needed is 166 tons.

Steps

1. Count and weigh (if possible) all available baled and bulk forages on hand. Utilize a separate line for each quality/type of feed.
2. Determine a value for the forages. Value can be production cost, purchase price or market value.
3. Determine the class and weight of livestock. Remember that increased detail improves the accuracy of the output.
4. Include all animals utilizing forage resources: horses, 4-H and FFA project animals, other pets.
5. Evaluate feeding methods, i.e., bunks, hay feeder type, feed on the ground.

Interpretation

The Results tab compares the total inventory of baled and bulk forages against the forages required for the livestock inventory. Further, the calculator determines the tons of forages required, including waste. As all feeding systems incur some waste, this is essential in determining how much feed is needed for the livestock. Utilize the waste amount that best matches your feeding system. For example, bales placed in round bale feeders with a lower quality of feed will likely result in 20% waste, but higher quality ground hay fed in a bunk may be closer to 5% waste. Evaluate your feeding system to determine the waste that most closely matches your system.

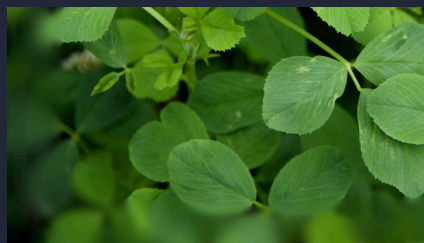
The Results tab also provides an estimated value of the forage excess or deficit, including wasted forages. This number can assist with cash flow planning for future feed purchases or enterprise changes.

Find the calculator at: <https://extension.sdstate.edu/forage-inventory-and-demand-calculator>



CURRENT NPFA BOARD MEMBERS

- President: David Elliot, Drumgoon Dairy, Lake Norden, SD
- Vice President: Jeff Jackson, Croplan Alfalfa and Forage Specialist/ Forage Producer
- Treasurer: Mark Rogen, Boadwine Farms, Baltic, SD
- Mike Bettel, Dellait Forage Consultant & Dairy Nutritionist
- Justin Fruechte, Renovo Seed, Director of Sales/ Forage Producer
- Paul Hahn, Simplot Sales Representative
- Eric Tieszen, producer, Canistota, SD
- Al Lenhart, KWS Cereals Regional Sales Rep/ Forage Producer
- David Skaggs, Agrovive Biologicals, Dairy Product Manager
- Aaron Swanson, Forage Producer, Lake Norden, SD
- Colin Geppert, Forage Producer/ Sales Account Manager, Hubbard Feeds



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MEET OUR ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Being a new, grassroots organization, we have relied heavily on sponsorships, goodwill, volunteers, and associate members. We would like to specifically recognize our associate members who have gone above and beyond to support the Northern Plains Forage Association in its infancy! If you would like to see your business or operation listed here- contact us!



UPCOMING REGIONAL FORAGE-RELATED EVENTS

- Pasture Walk in Sioux County Iowa; July 10 @ Hospers, IA
- SD Grasslands Coalition Grazing School; Sept. 9-11 @ Chamberlain, SD
- Summer Grazing School; June 25-27 @ Gordon, NE
- West River SD Soil Health School; June 25-26 @ Caputa, SD
- Dakota Lakes Research Farm Summer Field Day; June 28 @ Pierre, SD
- Southeast Research Farm Summer Field Day; July 8; @ Beresford, SD
- Forage Field Day (hosted by SDSU, UNL, NPFA, and I-29 Moo-U) ; July 31 @ Western IA Research and Demonstration farm at Castana, IA
- Haskell Ag Lab Family Field Day; August 13 @ Concord, NE

*This is the best list available at time of publication- if you would like a forage-related event listed here, please contact Sara Bauder at sara.bauder@sdstate.edu.