



Spring 2020



## EXTENSION CENTRAL NEWS

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## Are You Truly Prepped for Spring Planting?

Alana Voss

Juneau/Sauk Counties, Agriculture Educator

You have taken the time to create your game plan for the spring planting by lining up all of the seed to be planted, prepared the equipment to be ready to work in the fields, locked in your fertilizer to give your crops the nutrients they need, and determined the best actions to help deter pests in your fields.

You're all set to roll this spring once we get that chance to head out to the fields, right? Or maybe you forgot one important component for this Spring planting? What have you done to prepare yourself for the



Spring planting? Your health and safety are important all year long, but during this time of year you are working long hours. There are simple tasks you can look at doing to help keep you at the top of your game while working on the farm.

The first area to take a look at when you are preparing for the long days ahead of you is your meals, snacks, and drinks that you are taking with you in the tractor. Or for some maybe the lack of nutrition in the tractor cab with you. Either way your body is a machine just like the tractor you are driving. You need good fuel to keep you moving. Try to meal prep prior to the planting season by having healthy snacks and options already

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in your pantry at home. This way you can easily pack a healthy meal to go with you in the tractor. As you view the list below just know that by implementing healthy options and limiting the junk food options you can have a good balance to help keep you healthier this year.

- Sandwich Options

- ◊ Whole grains in breads and wraps
- ◊ Lean cuts of meat (Chicken and Turkey)
  - ◆ Avoid lunch meats that are high in fat and sodium.
- ◊ PB & J
- ◊ Fresh veggies too!
- ◊ Keep condiments to limited amount on sandwiches

- Snacks/Sides

- ◊ Whole grain crackers
- ◊ Pretzels, nuts,
- ◊ Whole grain cereal
- ◊ Popcorn
- ◊ Fresh fruits or dried fruits- perfect for that sweet treat pick me up
- ◊ Slices of cheese or cheese sticks
- ◊ Pre-cut veggies and dip already packaged to go
- ◊ Granola bars



- Drinks

- ◊ Water - goal of eight glasses a day
  - ◆ Utilize mix in packets that are low in sugar content
- ◊ Milk
- ◊ 100% juice
- ◊ Unsweetened coffee and tea

Along with eating healthy, taking time to keep your muscles loose and relaxed while working on the farm. These exercises are taken from University of Minnesota Extension's "Healthy and Fit On the Go: Exercises You Can Do In the Car" publication. If you would like more examples follow this link: <https://extension.umn.edu/physical-activity/healthy-and-fit-go-exercise-you-can-do-car>.

- Good posture in the tractor

- ◊ Sit with your back tall, your shoulders down, head up, neck straight, and thighs parallel to the floor
  - ◆ If it doesn't feel comfortable adjust your seat.

- While keeping your eyes on the field:

- ◊ Neck:

- ◆ Lower your chin to your chest as far as you can and hold 5 seconds and release. Repeat this process by raising your chin up, and then tilt it to the right and left shoulders. When you take a pause in the field, complete all of these moves in one solid motion.



- ◊ Shoulders:

- ◆ While your hands are on the steering wheel at 9 and 3. For each of these movements hold this position for a few seconds then release.
  - Press your shoulders up to your ears
  - Lower your shoulders towards your elbows
  - Pull your shoulders forward
  - Pull your shoulders back
- ◆ Lastly, roll your shoulders forward five times, and then backward for five

- Relax and Release:

- ◊ Take a break:

- ◆ Try to take a break every hour while you are working in the fields. Get out of the tractor and take a few laps around the machinery to make sure things are working properly, it only takes two minutes.

- ◊ Stretch tall:

- ◆ Clasp your hands together, then reach/look towards the sky. Stretch everything as you try to make yourself as tall as possible, stretch back for a bit as well, hold for a bit and then release and stand straight.



Hopefully, these few ideas can help you take care of yourself this spring and become healthy habits for you all year long while on the farm. Please stay healthy and safe this year and take time to prepare yourself for the spring planting too!

Resources:

- <https://extension.umn.edu/physical-activity/healthy-and-fit-go-planning-meals-go>
- <https://extension.umn.edu/physical-activity/healthy-and-fit-go-exercise-you-can-do-car>.

## **Hay Needs Affected by Storage Methods and Feeding Methods**

Ken Williams  
Waushara County, Agriculture Agent

In Waushara County there are around 10,300 acres used in the production of hay. According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture farms in Waushara County produce \$29,765,000 worth of milk and cow products and \$6,656,000 worth of cattle and calves. One of the largest costs incurred in feeding these animals is the cost of hay. The use of large round bales (LRB) is one of the preferred ways to store and feed hay to cattle and horses. Studies have shown that moving hay from the field using LRB requires one-half the machinery time and one-tenth of the labor when compared to using small square bales. Most producers using LRB store this hay outside on the ground. Studies have shown that LRB stored outside on the ground may have up to a 25% loss in the first year and if stored from 12-18 months may have as much as a 50% loss. As storage losses increase, hay feeding losses increase. Weathered hay is lower in quality and less palatable, resulting in a greater amount of refusal or wasted feed. Hay loss occurs on the bale surface due to rainfall and the resultant mold and microbial growth as well as on the bottom of the bale due to moisture migration into the bale from the soil. Hay loss can be reduced by as much as 38% by placing the bales on wooden pallets, tires, crushed rock or some other material to break the contact between the bale and the wet soil. Some bulletins refer to the use of plastic or tarps to cover the hay as a way to reduce the effect of rainfall on the hay. Personal experience has shown that this is not as effective as it may be thought. When hay stacks are covered with plastic the air will heat under the plastic, at night this air cools and the moisture in the air condenses on the plastic and wets the hay contacting the plastic. The next day this wet hay begins to mold and the wetting process continues each day. In a ton of hay baled at 18% moisture there is 180 pounds of water in each ton of hay. The second major cause of wasted feed is the feeding method used. Hay that is fed on the ground may have hay waste as high as 45%. Studies show that cone feeders have the lowest waste at 3.3%, ring feeders at 5.9%, trailer feeders at 11.1% and cradle

feeders at 14.2%. If hay is provided so cattle can consume at will they will consume more than what they actually need. Cattle fed a one-day supply waste 11% compared to losses for two-day feeding of 25% and for four-day feeding of 31%. Feeding losses include trampling, leaf shatter, chemical and physical deterioration, fecal contamination, and refusal. Cattle behavior affects the amount of hay loss during feeding. If cattle are offered hay in a feeder that provides sufficient head space the cow will stand at the feeder and eat with her head continually in the feeder. Cattle feed by taking a bite of hay and then chewing that hay into a cud which is swallowed. A portion of that original bite of hay is dropped from their mouth during the chewing process. If the cow has insufficient room for her head inside of the feeder she will back out of the feeder after taking a bite of hay and what drops from her mouth then falls on the ground. When she is done chewing that mouthful she reaches back into the feeder for another bite, what she dropped on the ground outside of the feeder is stepped on, soiled and lost.

With the current price of Grade 1 hay ranging from \$150 to \$200 per ton a reduction in hay needs of 30 to 40% can justify the cost of a permanent hay storage building with an estimated pay-back time of around five years.

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## **Post-Harvest Storage of Grain**

Ben Jenkins  
Green Lake County, Agriculture Agent

Years of low margins in grain production, though hard to swallow, should be a time to re-evaluate the way you are currently doing things and try to change and adapt in a way that will hopefully mean that you won't just survive but may also thrive. One place that you the producer can gain some traction in the marketplace is by adding post-harvest storage to your farm. If you produce grain this will mean putting up bins or possibly retrofitting existing structures like silos to store grain. Adding storage space to your farm will give you more control over the sale of your product.

Often what happens in the cash grain markets is the

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grain is taken off the field in the fall and sent to be stored at the nearest elevator. You decide when to sell your grain in the coming months, but in the meantime your grain is subjected to storage fees



imposed by the storing entity. Not only that but you are now beholden to the facility where you are storing your grain. Meaning, that by hauling to an elevator for storage you've already chosen who you will sell to, they (the entity storing your grain) are only waiting for you to say when. After connecting the dots you suddenly realize that you might not be getting the best price for your grain after all.

For instance, you take your grain to elevator A and put it into storage at elevator A. By March you need to sell 1,000 bushels and find out that elevator B is

paying 10 cents more/bu. By not having that grain in your own bin on your own farm you have now lost an opportunity cost of \$100. "Big deal" you say, "it's only \$100". It was only \$100 on that one load. If it were 10,000 bushels you'd have missed out on \$1000. Now think about the potential to compound those lost opportunities over the course of a payment plan on a bin. Add that to the storage fees you're going to pay to your local elevator over the course of that time as well and suddenly the cost of putting up a bin doesn't look so out of reach.

Still not convinced? Did you know that your local FSA office has low interest loans for farmers looking to put up storage facilities? Let me guess, you don't want a bin because thinking about marketing your own grain is an overwhelming prospect. Not to worry, there are service providers out there that can help you market your grain. For a few pennies a bushel an independent broker can help you find the markets where you will get the most value for your product. A good broker will not just find you the highest price but will also help you weigh out the decision to sell based upon other factors such as cost of trucking. By using an independent broker you will have access to not just elevators A and B, but also C, D, and E. But none of this can be done without on farm storage.

## National Cover Crop Survey being sent to Grain Farmers

Many of you have seen past results from previous National Farmer Cover Crop Surveys funded by the USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program and carried out by the Conservation Technology Information Center (CTIC). American Seed Trade Association has also provided financial support of the survey in the last few iterations.

**After taking a break from doing the survey the last two years,  
we are now once again sending out a**

### **National Cover Crop Survey to farmers.**

The survey questions are primarily geared to grain farmers but there are some questions specific to horticulture producers and a fair number of questions that any type of crop producer would find relevant. Most questions are for farmers already using cover crops, but there are a few for farmers not yet using cover crops.

**We are asking farmers to complete the online survey by April 12<sup>th</sup>**

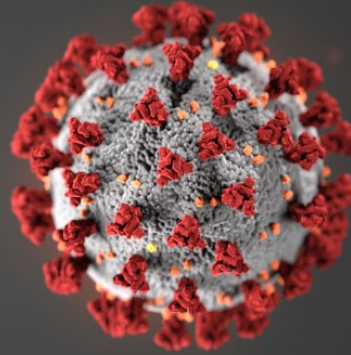
**CTIC is providing some VISA gift cards on a random basis to farmers who complete the survey.**

**Any help you can provide in sharing the survey link with farmers will be very welcome!**

The survey link is <https://bit.ly/CCSurvey2020>



# COVID-19 Guidance for Farm Employers



Trisha Wagner  
Extension Farm  
Management Outreach  
Program Manager

Farms have unique challenges with the rapidly spreading COVID-19. Make sure your employees understand that your primary concern is their health and the health of their families, and measures are in place to ensure long and productive careers at your farm.

Organize your communication to keep employees informed on local developments, staffing shortages, shipments and deliveries. Provide information at set times and (or) a central location to ease anxiety and ensure employee questions are answered. Keep your message simple and inform employees of what is happening, what the farm is doing and what employees need to do. **Take these steps now to minimize the impact COVID-19 has on your farm and minimize risk to family and friends.**

- **Require that [sick](#) employees to stay home, emphasize respiratory etiquette, and hand hygiene by all employees and provide special attention to workers at high risk (older workers and underlying health conditions):**
  - Farm workers who arrive at work feeling ill or become sick while at work should be isolated from other employees and sent home immediately.
  - Place posters that encourage [staying home when sick](#), [cough and sneeze etiquette](#), and [hand hygiene](#) at entrances and within your workplace where they are likely to be seen.
- **Perform routine cleaning:**
  - Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, and visit the detailed [cleaning and sanitizing recommendations](#).
  - Take extra sanitation precautions in employee breakrooms, rest rooms, and other areas where your team meets. Wipe down surfaces like countertops, light switches, food preparation areas, commonly used equipment, time clocks, tool handles, steering wheels, and doorknobs.
  - Encourage employees to wash their hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds and provide *hand sanitizer* that contains a minimum of 60% alcohol.
- **Provide accurate information and instructions from trusted sources:**
  - [Wisconsin-specific information about COVID-19](#) including [fact sheets](#) in English, Chinese, Spanish, Hmong (WI Department Health Services)
  - Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and refer to CDC guidance for [how to conduct a risk assessment](#) of their health.
  - If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain health record confidentiality and refer to CDC guidance for [how to conduct a risk assessment](#) of their health.
  - Information on medical attention and health insurance including telemedicine (a doctor's visit on a computer, smart phone or tablet) [fact sheets](#) in English and Spanish (UW-Madison)
- COVID19 is caused by a *novel* coronavirus (unique to other coronavirus) and there is no approved vaccine for COVID-19. This pandemic disease has caused a global crisis. Discourage all travel at this time and encourage "[social distancing](#)" as the best way to show concern for family and friends here or in a different country.

## FSA Makes Changes to Farm Loan, Disaster, Conservation and Safety Net Programs to Make it Easier for Customers to Conduct Business

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) county offices are open in Wisconsin by phone appointment only until further notice, and FSA staff are available to continue helping agricultural producers with program signups, loan servicing and other important actions. Additionally, FSA is relaxing the loan-making process and adding flexibilities for servicing direct and guaranteed loans to provide credit to producers in need.

FSA Service Centers are open for business by phone appointment only. While our program delivery staff will continue to come into the office, they will be working with our agricultural producers by phone and using email and online tools whenever possible.

FSA is delivering programs and services, including:

- Farm loans;
- Commodity loans;
- Farm Storage Facility Loan program;
- Disaster assistance programs, including signup for the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus (this includes producers now eligible because of losses due to drought and excess moisture in 2018 and 2019);
- Safety net programs, including 2020 signup for the Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage programs;
- Conservation programs; and
- Acreage reports.



### Contacting FSA

FSA will be accepting additional forms and applications by facsimile or electronic signature. Some services are also available online to customers with an eAuth account, which provides access to the [farmers.gov](https://farmers.gov) portal where producers can view USDA farm loan information and payments and view and track certain USDA program applications and payments. Customers can track payments, report completed practices, request conservation assistance and electronically sign documents. Customers who do not already have an eAuth account can enroll at [farmers.gov/sign-in](https://farmers.gov/sign-in).

FSA encourages producers to contact their county office to discuss these programs and temporary changes to farm loan deadlines and the loan servicing options available. For Service Center contact information, visit [farmers.gov/coronavirus](https://farmers.gov/coronavirus).

**Questions?** Please contact your local FSA Office.

## Paycheck Protection Program: Farmer Eligibility and Sign Up Began April 3, 2020

Joy Kirkpatrick, Outreach Specialist at University of Wisconsin Center for Dairy Profitability

The Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) provides forgivable loans to small businesses to pay their employees during the COVID-19 crisis. Farmers are eligible for PPP loans through the Small Business Administration (SBA). Farmers must have fewer than 500 employees and less than \$1 million in net revenue. If farmers already have a relationship with the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), the SBA is encouraging those farmers to work with FSA first. Applications opened April 3, 2020 for small businesses.

What costs are covered?

- Payroll costs, including benefits;
- Interest on mortgage obligations, incurred before February 15, 2020;
- Rent, under lease agreements in force before February 15, 2020; and
- Utilities, for which service began before February 15, 2020

Loans will be forgiven as long as:

- The loan proceeds are used to cover payroll costs, and most mortgage interest, rent, and utility costs over the 8 week period after the loan is made; and
- Employee and compensation levels are maintained.

Loans can be up to two months of your average monthly payroll costs from the last year plus an additional 25% of that amount, capped at \$10 million.

The PPP loan cannot cover pay for those employees whose principal address is not within the United States, nor can it cover their costs of paying independent contractors (those who get 1099s instead of W2s). Independent contractors and other self-employed individuals can apply for their own PPP loans starting on April 10, 2020.

Applicants for these loans must already have a lender relationship with a bank or institution that have a relationship with SBA. Therefore, the first recommendation is for farmers to call their current lender(s) to see if they have that SBA relationship and ask if they are ready to accept PPP applications. Make that call today if possible.

You will need to provide your lender with payroll documentation such as payroll processor records or payroll tax filings. Independent contractors will have to provide their 1099-MISC forms. Self-employed individuals will have to provide their income and expenses from their sole proprietorship.

Here are links for more information from the U.S. Treasury: [General Information about the Paycheck Protection Program](#) [Paycheck Protection Program Borrowers Information Sheet](#) [Paycheck Protection Program Borrower Application Form](#)

# What We Can Learn

## About Grasses

Matt Lippert

Wood County, Agriculture Agent

Many new varieties are developed and introduced, including BMR versions of many cereal grasses, as forage supplies are tight, as establishing a new seeding was a challenge last year- there is a lot of interest in alternative forages, including grasses. If you have lots of experience with corn and alfalfa, the differences in raising and feeding grasses and grass mixes are real, not only academic detail.

Here is a list of short reminders about feeding grasses, if you haven't done so much in the past.

**There are many kinds of grass-** cool season, C4 (warm season), annuals, perennials, weeds, even cereal grains and corn is a grass.

**Grasses may mature quickly** - Grasses can be higher in neutral fiber digestibility (NDFd) than alfalfa, but they will transition from vegetative quality to straw-like reproductive stages quickly.

Grasses respond to nitrogen applications, both with improved yield and quality. Grasses tend to be lower in protein than legumes, maturity and nitrogen additions will improve nitrogen levels, however if 50 pounds of nitrogen are good to apply after each cutting, significantly higher rates may not improve yield further, cost you more money and nitrogen may be lost to the atmosphere, plus ground and surface water.

**Grasses should be cut taller than alfalfa-** grasses have a much smaller crown and fibrous roots instead of a taproot. Grass plants regrow from basal shoot tillers and will recover more quickly after cutting, but require a little bit more of the plant be left in the field. This rule is general as grasses range in natural height from ryegrass to reed canary grass. The taller the mature plant the more it will need not be overgrazed or cut too short.

**Grasses will luxury uptake potassium-** fibrous root systems found on grasses will extract potassium very efficiently from the soil; potassium will be used in a lactating cow ration, but can be a problem in transition cow ration, where high potassium feeds can cause milk fever.

There is a wide variation in the forage feeding quality within a grass species - grasses are native, some are developed for lawns, some for conservation purposes, and some from the Deep South require a milder climate compared to Wisconsin. Tall fescue for example, can be very low quality and infected with endophytes that are bad for animal performance or they can be bred for high digestibility, if you are feeding dairy cows you should be interested in quality (newer cultivars are endophyte free).

**In a mix, legumes will provide nitrogen to grass, but they don't always play well together-** grasses are often mixed with other species, since different species

have different needs, depending on the weather one species may dominate the other. It can be unpredictable. For example, when grass is mixed with alfalfa, a field low in pH, poor drainage, and a field low in soil potassium may cause the grass to dominate the alfalfa.

**Cereal rye, Italian ryegrass, annual rye and perennial ryegrass are similar in name only-**

A bit about each:

**Rye or cereal rye-** is a very hardy winter annual, it can be planted late into the fall and survive the best of any of our common crops. Cereal rye can be used as a cover crop, but also for forage harvested early in the spring. You must watch cereal rye closely in the spring, as it will



elongate, get coarse or mature, resulting in low quality forage.

**Perennial ryegrass-** by contrast is very fine stemmed, short, waxy leaved, nearly impossible to dry for hay, excellent for grazing and not reliably winter hardy, nearly the opposite of cereal rye.

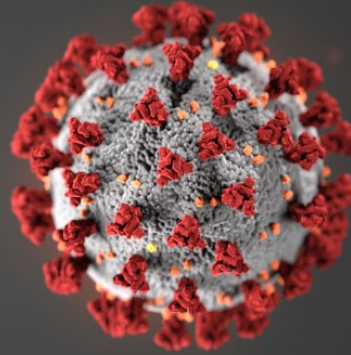
**Italian ryegrass-** is quick to start, providing ground cover, working as a nurse crop or being successful at being no-tilled into an aging hay field; it will stay of high quality and can produce a lot of feed. It may persist over winter, and after it is vernalized, will behave very differently, aggressively going to seed head stage and lower quality. Some varieties will react to cool weather and are more prone to going to reproductive stage and lower quality than others. Tetraploid Italian ryegrass is preferred over diploid ryegrass, as it generally will result in greater consumption from livestock.

**Annual ryegrass-** is vigorous and quick to start like Italian ryegrass. Italian ryegrass and annual ryegrass are closely related to each other, but annual ryegrass will rush to reproductive stages and poor quality in the seeding year.

There are big differences in characteristics of these "rye" plants. It is important to understand what type of seed you are purchasing.



# In Response to COVID-19, Extension Staff Moves to Remote Options



Matthew Call  
Director of  
Communications  
UW-Madison  
Division of Extension

As a Division of UW-Madison, Extension is following the lead of UW-Madison leadership in responding to the COVID-19 virus outbreak. We are also attuned to public health officials and leadership in our county on closures and further restrictions. The latest health guidance on responding to the COVID-19 is “flattening the curve” or limiting the spread of the virus via protective measures. We want to make sure we’re following best practice and promoting health and safety.

For Extension, this guidance has prompted our staff to transition to telecommuting and remote delivery of our programming. This follows guidance from UW-Madison to work remotely as possible through at least April 10, to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus and to protect the health and safety of our communities.

This move to remote work and program delivery is consistent with public health guidance to limit exposure. Our staff who are able to work remotely will begin doing so. We are also working with staff who cannot work remotely to accommodate their situations. We want to make sure our staff are in safe and comfortable positions, and we are planning policies and recommendations for all of our workers. Social distancing and preventing potential infections is a key area we can help with to hopefully curtail the impacts of this outbreak.

To continue to be a resource for our counties and state, Extension is transitioning our programming to online delivery. Staff are working on innovative methods to serve our audience. With limited or restricted access to public spaces such as schools, colleges, and government buildings, Extension staff are responding to give our stakeholders resources via the internet.

## **Please contact your local Extension Office for the following:**

- ⇒ To receive this as an eNewsletter emailed to you
- ⇒ Any changes to your email address or physical address (if mailing)
- ⇒ To unsubscribe to this newsletter completely

## **EXTENSION CENTRAL NEWS**

A cooperative effort of multiple  
Central Wisconsin Counties and  
Wisconsin Extension.



**Extension**  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

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*To be the primary source of  
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