

Don't Farm Naked: Integration of Ruminant Livestock and Cover Crops

Objective: To increase the number of ruminant livestock producers using cover crops as a feed course while improving water quality.



Farmer-cooperators will:

- Become PFI members. [Join here.](#)
- Sign up for cover crop cost-share at your local NRCS office.
- Summer 2015, participate in PFI training. We will be organizing an in-person meeting in NW IA to discuss project details and data collection.
- June - September 2015, 2016 & 2017, plant cover crop(s) of choice. PFI staff is available to discuss recommendations as requested. Record what cover crop(s) were seeded on which fields, the date, rate, and method of seeding (aerial, broadcast, drilled); as well as the field size.
- Fall 2015, 2016 & 2017, graze or harvest cover crop if biomass growth and weather allow.
- Spring 2016, 2017 & 2018, graze or harvest cover crop if biomass growth and weather allow. Terminate cover crop with preferred method. If needed, discuss termination recommendations with PFI staff.
- If grazing, keep track of animal moves and what forage/crops/residue is present. Record grazing days (the date animals moved into and out of the field) and paddock size.
- If harvesting, document method, equipment used, labor needed, plant stage and date at harvest and paddock size.
- Take forage biomass samples in each paddock before grazing to estimate amount of forage grazed or harvested by cattle.



Livestock Research Protocols

- Estimate amount of feed that is offset by grazing or harvesting cover crop forage in order to calculate money saved.
- Keep labor estimates involved with grazing cover crops.
- Keep records using the spreadsheets provided.
- Document plots with photographs before and throughout the entire trial.
- If you are interested in setting up control and treatment plots, PFI staff will assist in trial design.
- Host at least one field day during the three year project.
- Turn in photos and data to PFI twice per year; fall and spring.
- Permit the project team to share data about your experience.
- Be willing to discuss your experience with other farmers through various forms of outreach.

Practical Farmers of Iowa will:

- Summer 2015, PFI will hold a local training session for cooperators.
- Monitor progress of project and provide recommendations and support when needed.
- Analyze data, discuss results with farmers and publish in a PFI research report.
- Disseminate data through various outreach methods.
- Provide \$1,000 per year to help cover seed and application costs.
- Provide \$1,000 to farmers hosting field days.
- Provide a cooperator's fee of \$550 per year after data is turned in.