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PRACTICAL FARMERS
of Iowa

The Practical
**COVER
CROPPER**

Equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.



Cows and calves grazing a lush field is an idyllic springtime scene, but for **Wesley Degner** of Lytton, Iowa, getting cow/calf pairs out on cover crops in the spring is more than just a pretty picture - it saves him feed expenses and improves herd health

Fall seeding and grazing: In 2020 after chopping corn silage, Wesley and his father Dennis mixed cereal rye into their fall fertilizer, then broadcasted and did some light disking. By early seeding, they had enough growth to graze up until Christmas.

Double trouble: This spring Wesley will get additional value from that same cover crop. After calving in March, the cow/calf pairs will graze on the cover crop for about 10 days in April. Wesley is careful to take them off the field if it ever gets too wet.

Healthier cows: Wesley thinks that the cows and calves are healthier grazing on the cover crop than they would be if they were in their pens. "They clean up nicely and look healthier. And it's good for the cows to get out and walk a little," he says.



Careful about the next crop: Wesley takes the cattle off three days before terminating the cover crop, explaining, "The cover crop seems to terminate better when it has gotten a break from grazing and is growing again when it is sprayed."

PROGRAM UPDATES

Cattle also love oats; have you considered growing them?



Practical Farmers offers cost share for people in Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Nebraska, Ohio and Wisconsin raising small grains.

You can earn \$15/ac on up to 200 acres for planting a small grain with a legume cover crop. [Apply for small grain cost share today!](#)

Pop into our weekly field crop farmer virtual meet-ups on Thursdays

Discussion topics will vary from week to week, but may include: cover crops, small grains, herbicide or tillage termination, organic cover crops, grazing cover crops, summer silage, nitrogen placement, manure application and how these aspects affect corn or soybean production.

Farmers, bring your questions and areas of contemplation; we'll work together to address as many as we can. For those with cows that are calving, wear your headset in the barn and dial in to join us – no need to be in front of the computer!

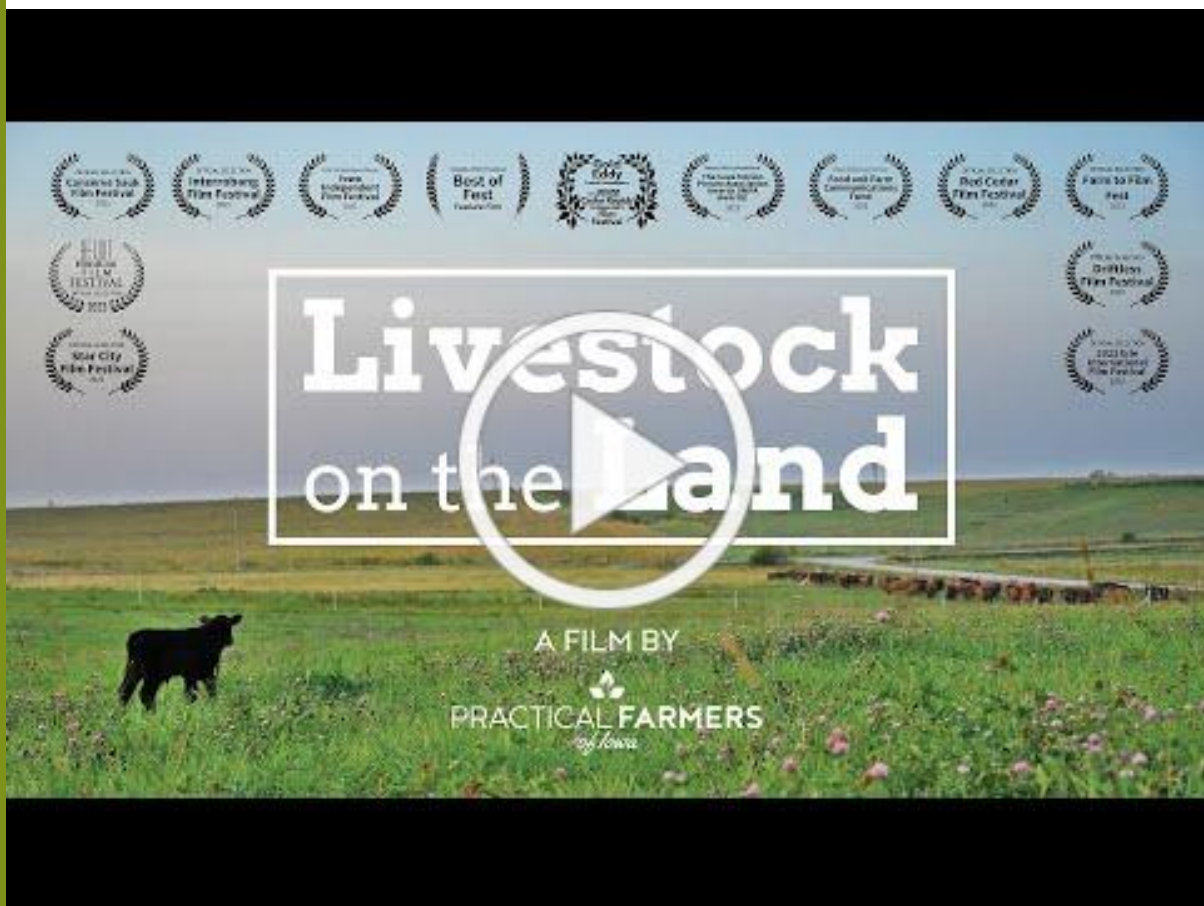
These calls will be each Thursday 6:30-8 p.m. CST from now through April 8.



[Join or register here!](#)

IN THE FIELD

Have you seen *Livestock on the Land* yet?



In January, PFI released its first full-length feature film "*Livestock on the Land*." The film—which includes examples of cover crops being grazed—explores how livestock is important to our rural communities and help us to protect and enhance natural resources.

While the days are still short, [make yourself some popcorn and watch "*Livestock on the Land*."](#)

Research report: "Economic Impact of Grazing Cover Crops in Cow-Calf Operations"

Learn how grazing cover crops affected cash flow for cow-calf operations for **Wesley Degner**, **Bill Frederick**, and **Mark Schleisman** by reading [this report](#). With cost share, each of these farmers had a positive cover crop ROI!

Farminar: "Contract Grazing Cover Crops for Winter Feed"



Father and son, **Jon and Jared Luhman**, operate Dry Creek Red Angus in Goodhue, Minnesota. Each winter they contract graze their cattle on cover crops and crop residue – whether it's on their neighbors' fields or hauling cattle to Nebraska to overwinter.

In this farminar, the Luhmans discussed their winter grazing arrangements and how they work out the finances to benefit both the landowner and themselves.

Got cover crop but need livestock? Check out the Midwest Grazing Exchange



Are you a grazier looking for more forage? **Or perhaps you're a row crop farmer with cover crops begging to be consumed by some livestock?**

[This new matchmaking site](#) connects graziers, farmers and landowners throughout the upper Midwest. List what you have to offer and find your perfect match!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Midwest Cover Crops Council Conference

Hosted by: OMAFRA, Ridgetown BDC & Soils at Guelph

Feb. 23 – 25 | Online

Profitability Strategies: How the new administration will impact the carbon market

Hosted by: Indigo Ag

Feb. 25 | 2:30 p.m. CST | Online

Field Crop Virtual Meet-Up

Hosted by: Practical Farmers

Feb. 25 | 6:30 – 8 p.m. CST | Online

Webinar: Virtual Shop Visit - Plan A (B, C, and D) for Planting Green

Hosted by: Carter Morgan and CCSI

March 2 | 7:30 a.m. CST | Online

Webinar: Topic TBA

Hosted by: Matt Helmers and Iowa Learning Farms

March 3 | 12 p.m. | Online

Webinar: What's the Return on Investing in Soil Health?

Hosted by: Rick Clark and Ohio State University

March 4 | 7 a.m. CST | Online

Field Crop Virtual Meet-Up

Hosted by: Practical Farmers

March 4 | 6:30 – 8 p.m. CST | Online

Southeast Kansas Soil Health Conference

Hosted by: Green Cover Seed

March 5 -6 | Iola, Kansas

Webinar: Topic TBA

Hosted by: Matt Liebman and Iowa Learning Farms

March 10 | 12 p.m. | Online

Field Crop Virtual Meet-Up

Hosted by: Practical Farmers

March 11 | 6:30 – 8 p.m. CST | Online

National Cover Crop Summit

Hosted by: Cover Crop Strategies

March 17-18 | Online

Want to host a virtual cover crop happy hour? We'll help you with the tech, and how to virtually invite your neighbors to the discussion. Contact Sarah if interested sarah@practicalfarmers.org

Are you planning or hosting a cover crop event—virtual or in person? Send the details to rebecca@practicalfarmers.org, and we'll include it in our next newsletter.

COVER CROP POLL

Send us your cover crop poll ideas! We want to know what YOU want to know, reply to this email with your ideas for the next poll.

Going into spring after a dry year, how will your spring management be different?

I'll terminate the cover crop earlier

Select

I'll change my planter/drill settings to conserve moisture

Select

I'll reduce tillage to conserve moisture

Select

I'll use my typical management practices

Select

What is a "typical" year anyhow?

Select

Previous poll results:

Are you applying for carbon credit payments for your 2021 crop?

- **I am considering applying - 57.8%**
- I am not interested in carbon credit payments this year - **21%**
- I have applied or plan to apply - **21%**

CONTACT OUR COVER CROPS TEAM

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