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PRACTICAL FARMERS
of Iowa

Small
Grains
NEWS
June 2023

Equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.



Ross Kurash, a 5th generation farmer, farms in northeast Iowa with his wife **Cassie Kurash** and their two kids. Ross emphasizes the importance of including diverse crop rotations, year-round cover, no-till and animal integration for building water-retentive and nutrient-dense soil.

Keep it covered: Ross rotationally grazes 25 beef cows, 15 yearling calves and 15 finishers on his farm. He seeds forage crops twice in the summer: once in



early June after cows have grazed the fall-seeded rye and again following rye harvest in late July.

The June-seeded mix includes oats, buckwheat, cowpeas, Sunn hemp, Japanese millet, sorghum-sudangrass, rapeseed and sunflower. His later summer mix contains an even more diverse array which includes chickling and common vetch, berseem clover, lentil and Daikon radish in addition

to oats, buckwheat, cowpeas and Sunn hemp. For both mixes, Ross no-till drills about 45 pounds per acre at 7.5-inch spacings.

Happy cows, healthy soil: Last year, Ross was able to strip graze 40,000 pounds of cattle on his 15 acres of summer cover and 30 acres of corn residue for the month of December without supplementing with any additional feed. Between the constant cover, diversity of plants and addition of manure, his most recent microscopic soil analysis found beneficial life and micro-organisms not typically found in agricultural fields.

PROGRAM UPDATES

Last call: Enroll in Small Grains Cost-Share by July 1!



The July 1 deadline for small grains cost-share is nearly here.

If you farm in Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Minnesota or Wisconsin and you are raising a small grain with a cover crop containing a legume, you are likely eligible to receive \$20/acre.

[View program requirements.](#)

[Enroll today](#)

Examining soil health and climate resiliency in extended rotations

Catch up with **Marshall McDaniel**, associate professor in soil-plant interactions at Iowa State University, and **Matt Liebman**, ISU professor emeritus and PFI board member, in our most recent blog post about ongoing projects at Marsden Research Farm.



“Marsden Farm is a long-term investigation of how cropping system diversification and crop-livestock integration affects sustainability,” Matt said. [Learn more.](#)

Corn farmers, enroll in our next on-farm research trial



Put your soil's health to the test with a nitrogen rate trial!

PFI is seeking **corn farmers with at least a 5-year history of soil health practices** to participate in a trial to compare N-fertilizer rates.

[Learn more](#) and then enroll by emailing PFI's senior research manager, [Stefan Gailans](#).

IN THE FIELD

Blog post: “Maximizing Forage Production with Summer Annuals in an Extended Rotation”



“Small grains provide great opportunities to build soil health and grow some amazing forage at the same time,” says dairy farmer and forage consultant **Daniel Olson**.

He walks through the benefits of millet and teff, as well as various grasses for optimal summer forage in [this 2020 blog](#).

Research Report: “Summer Annual Forage Established after Cereal Rye and Hairy Vetch Cover Crop”



How does early spring grazing of a cereal rye and hairy vetch cover crop affect biomass accumulation of the summer forage mix?

This is one question **Dave and Meg Schmidt** set out to answer in their 2015-2016 research trial.

[Read this research report](#) to learn how they conducted the trial and view their key findings.

Additional resources:

- PFI blog: [“Using Small Grains to Increase Dairy Feed Tonnage and Quality”](#)
- From the PFI Rotationally Raised video series: [“Livestock II: Grazing Summer-seeded Cover Crop Mixes”](#)
- PFI blog: [“Selecting a Summer Cover Crop: Five Goals and Five Challenges”](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

All times listed are central daylight time

Field day: Drilling Down on Oat Varieties



Friday, July 7 | 10 a.m.-Noon | Fonda, IA

Neil Peterson raises corn, soybeans, small grains and cattle at Clover Lane Farm with his wife, Elizabeth, and sons Paul and Timothy.

Neil plants no-till oats with red clover and, at harvest, he uses both a combine and a swather.

He also rotationally grazes 50 cows on 20 acres of former row crop ground converted to pasture. [Please RSVP here.](#)

Field day: Relay Cropping, Permanent Clover and Irrigation Systems



**Wednesday, July 19 | 10 a.m.-Noon
| Spencer, IA**

Patrick White and his father, **Chuck White** will share the soil health benefits of cover crops and what incentives are available to landowners to help implement cover crops and conservation practices.

They farm corn, soy and cereal rye on 1,200 acres and have practiced no-till since 2004 and used cover crops since 2013. [Please RSVP here.](#)

Shared Learning Call: Soil Health Institute's Soil Health Assessment and Targets Project in Iowa



July 14 | Noon-1 p.m. | Zoom

In our July shared learning call, hear from soil health educator, Shannon Moeller, CCA, about ongoing work from the Soil Health Institute's Soil Health Targets project.

Shannon will give an overview of the work they are doing in Iowa, how to collect data on soil health and how to make sense of soil health indicators.

[Register here](#)

More upcoming events

July 10: Field Day - [Equipment Showcase with UW-Madison Arlington Agricultural Research Station](#)

Hosted by: Organic Grain Resource and Information Network (OGRAIN)
10 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. | Arlington, WI

July 12: Webinar - [Reviving a Regional Grain Chain](#)

Hosted by: Northern Crops Institute
9 - 10 a.m. | Online

July 20: Field Day - [Keith Speltz Farm Field Day with Albert Lea Seed](#)

Hosted by: Organic Grain Resource and Information Network (OGRAIN)
11 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. | Altura, MN

July 25: Conference - [Ancient Grains Conference](#)

Hosted by: Northern Crops Institute
8 a.m. - 5 p.m. | Elk River, MN

July 15: Field Day - Grain Place Foundation Field Day 2023

Hosted by: Grain Place Foundation
8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m. | Marquette, NE

July 28: PFI Field Day - Converting Row Crops to Perennial Pasture

Hosted by: Zach Knutson & Brooke Calaway
3 - 5 p.m. | Zumbrota, MN

[View our events calendar](#)

STRAW POLL

Have you tried growing warm-season annuals for forage following a small grain crop?

Answer the poll question below:

Yes, this is a regular part of my rotations

Select

I have in the past but am not currently doing so

Select

I have not tried yet, but hope to in the future

Select

I do not plan on growing warm season annuals for forage

Select

I don't have livestock, so I don't need summer forage

Select

Previous poll results:

How do you terminate clover?

- **Chemically in the spring - 60%**
- Mechanically in the fall - 20%
- Mechanically in the spring - 10%
- Chemically in the fall - 10%
- N/A - 0%

Send us your straw poll ideas! We want to know what YOU want to know. Reply to this email with your ideas for the next poll.

STAY CONNECTED



Looking for more? Contact us today!

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Chat with any of us by calling the PFI office at (515)232-5661.

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