IDENTIFY AND SET GOALS

If businesses are to be successful, they must have direction. Written goals help provide businesses with an identifiable direction over both the long and short term. Goal setting is as important on a farm as it is in other businesses. Written goals are a tool which farm operators can use to ensure that the business continues to move in the desired direction. Goals should be **SMART**:

1. Goals should be **Specific**.
2. Goals should be **Measurable**.
3. Goals should be **Achievable** but challenging.
4. Goals should be **Rewarding**.
5. Goals should be **Timed** with a designated date by which the goal will be achieved.

Goal setting on a farm should be a process for writing down and agreeing on goals that you have already given some thought to. It is also important to remember that once you write out your goals they are not cast in concrete. If a change takes place which has a major impact on the farm business, the goals should be reworked to accommodate that change. Refer to your goals as often as necessary to keep the farm business progressing.

It is important to identify both objectives (long-range) and goals (short-range) when looking at the future of your farm business.

A suggested format for writing out your goals is as follows:

a. Begin with a mission statement which describes why the business exists based on the preferences and values of the owners.

b. Identify 4-6 objectives.

c. Identify SMART goals.
A First of its Kind in Indiana; The Indiana Cattle and Forage Symposium
Uniting the Beef, Dairy, and Forage Industries in the Hoosier State

Have we got an opportunity for you! Would you like the chance to hear from some of the best agricultural spokespersons in the country, learn from researchers nationwide and meet fellow producers from across Indiana – from the beef, dairy and forage industries?

Please join us at the first-ever “Indiana Cattle and Forage Symposium.” A combined effort from the Indiana Beef Cattle Association, Indiana Professional Dairy Producers Association, Milk Promotion Services of Indiana, Inc., and the Indiana Forage Council. This symposium will take place on Friday and Saturday, February 15 and 16, 2008, at the Indianapolis Marriott East. All beef and dairy cattle producers, as well as forage producers and providers, are invited and encouraged to attend this inaugural meeting.

According to Julia A. Wickard, Executive Vice-President, Indiana Beef Cattle Association (IBCA), and symposium organizer, “the meeting will be highlighted by national and regional speakers and will also encompass a Hoosier flare with the traditional annual business meetings and awards celebrations from each of the groups.

The commodity groups have developed a program that will allow producers to come together collectively in one setting for the first time to share their common interests and concerns. The new partnership allows each organization to share not only the costs of the annual event but to expand areas such as program offerings, speakers and the trade show.

The representatives of beef, dairy and forage that comprise the convention committee have worked hard to develop a program that will be informative and beneficial to all attendees. The educational meetings and workshops, as well as time for food, fun, and fellowship will benefit all producers and allied industry members in attendance.

Speakers for the symposium are:

Charlie Arnot  Bret D. Marsh, DVM  Dr. Wes Jamison  David A. Petzer
Andy Miller  Dr. Chuck Hibbert  Dr. Ray Nebel  Dr. Tom Overton
Dr. Terry Etherton  Dr. Joe Bouton  Ms. Anne Hazlett  Dr. Dennis Buckmaster
Governor Mitch Daniels

The symposium registration fees are $90.00 for the first person and $70.00 for each additional person by Jan. 15. After that the fees are $110.00 and $90.00. The fee for one day is $70.00 by Jan. 15 and $90.00 after that date. Further formation on registration, deadlines, hotel registration and much more is available at www.indianabeef.org. For more information call the IBCA office at 317-872-2333, or Keith Johnson, 765 494-4800, or Dave Forgey 574 652-2461.
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Timely Tips to help Growers Rejuvenate Pastures

After this year's stress on perennial forage pastures, forage stands need to be evaluated.

The April freeze, in addition to the dry summer, left some Indiana pastures in less than ideal condition. However, this creates an opportunity for growers to make improvements, according to Keith Johnson, Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service forage expert.

Johnson recommends:
* Having a soil test done, if one hasn't been done recently
* Walking the pastures
* Evaluating the fields
* Checking for winter-annual weeds in alfalfa fields
* Implementing a rotational grazing management system
* Testing forage to be fed this winter

"Having a soil test done could mean the possible application of limestone and fertilizer," Johnson said. "Increasing soil pH with lime is time dependent. "It's much better to have the lime applied in the fall rather than doing it a week before seeding in the early spring."

Johnson recommends while walking the pasture to look at the composition of the field. "Ask yourself, is the stand thick or are there bare areas? Is there a less than ideal amount of legume left in the stand?" Johnson said.

Two plants per square foot of legume in a grass/legume pasture or hayfield should be used as the baseline, he added.

"If the baseline is not met, that's an indication that growers need to think about over-seeding an adapted legume in the late winter," Johnson said. "While walking the fields, it's important for growers to check for the presence of winter-annual weeds, like downy bromegrass or chickweed.

"Many herbicides labeled for the control of winter-annual weeds are to be used when the alfalfa stand is dormant. We are at the point where dormancy has been initiated. If growers wait, there are not near as many choices to control these weeds in the springtime when there has been a break in dormancy."

Johnson also advises using a rotational grazing management system. Rotational grazing is when a pasture is divided up into subunits of the pasture called paddocks.

"This allows the plants to rest," Johnson said. "Just like people and livestock, plants need rest to be most vigorous.

"Rotational grazing helps keep plants in better vigor and allows for more uniform quality throughout the season. Rotational grazing also allows us to begin grazing earlier in the spring and later into the fall."

Growers can also take a portion of their pasture acres in the spring and harvest it as hay, Johnson added.

Livestock owners who will be feeding forages (hay, silage and crop residues) this winter should have them tested for nutrient composition.

"We have a lot of different things that are going to be fed this year that are less
nutritious than usual," Johnson explained. "A lot of corn residue has been baled, and I know that some soybean stubble has been baled, too. Some Conservation Reserve Program vegetation was harvested as hay, and its quality is probably not going to be very high.

"It is important in any year to take hay samples or silage samples, submit them to a forage testing laboratory, get the results back and have a nutritionist formulate a ration to meet the needs of the livestock type being fed. The goal is to make sure that the ration is going to keep the livestock in good condition throughout the winter." Many questions about forage testing can be answered by reviewing information at www.foragetesting.org.

With the help of many people, Managing the Forage Shortage Web site is available at http://www.forageshortage.com/.

Source: Purdue-Ohio State Ag Answers -- November 20, 2007
Wintertime often seems to create unique challenges with livestock and mud being one of the worst to deal with!

For most people, it quickly comes at a time when there is no longer any quality or quantity of forages left to graze, and it is time to start feeding hay. When you start supplemental feeding will depend on your soils, your forage base, and animal numbers.

I really like to keep animals grazing as long as possible. Grazing livestock on stockpiled forages is a great way to extend the grazing season plus keeping the tractor out of the field a little while longer. It is this time of year where a lower animal/forage base ratio is very beneficial.

On most moderately-well to well drained soils, the stockpiled forages provide a pretty good base and will “hold up” well until grazed off. This is especially true if the time period that the animals are allowed to graze is limited, such as through strip grazing. Strip grazing is the allocation of planned amounts of forage for the cows to eat, and once eaten, they are moved to the next allotment. This increases efficiency of the harvest and shortens the time period the cows are actually on the site. Don’t overgraze it though, since you still need to leave some forage base behind. The earlier you want to graze it in the spring, the more important this becomes, and the earlier you graze it hard in the fall, the fewer carbohydrates stored in the roots for spring growth.

If you have to keep the livestock on pasture during extremely wet conditions, what can you do to minimize the damage?

If you are lucky enough to have some “sand” ground, then you are a step ahead of many. Sand or sandy soils are better drained and don’t get muddy as quickly as loams and heavier soils. If you have some sandy cropland that is available to be grazed in the fall, that is even better, since you can rest your pasture longer adding even more growth and durability. If that crop ground is also highly erodible land (HEL), don’t overgraze it to the point of removing too much residue which is needed to stay in compliance with USDA programs. So remove livestock as necessary to stay in compliance.

Next best, is utilizing a sacrifice area. This is ideally an area that can be renovated easily. Once you are able to start grazing again in the spring and are off this site, and if time, conditions, and weather permit, reseed these areas, either with a temporary seeding (annual) or a perennial seeding.
I have seen many poorly chosen sites utilized for this sacrifice purpose and left in the disturbed condition. When areas such as creek bottoms, woods, and erodible sloping ground are utilized for a sacrifice area, water quality is almost always adversely affected. Try and choose a stable, suitable site for these areas and rotate them if possible. Sometimes, these sacrifice areas can be paddock(s) that you plan to renovate anyway.

Mud is certainly worse around feeding, watering, and other concentrated areas. One of the best solutions for these concentrated areas is to install a “heavy use protection area”, i.e. feed and watering pads. These are fairly simple to construct, and better yet, very economical.

Start by leveling the area. Then remove excess organic matter and manure, and also topsoil, if necessary, to get a firm foundation to build on. Geo-textile fabric is laid down and then crushed limestone, usually #53’s, is applied 6-8 inches deep depending on the site and conditions. Follow by topping with a couple inches of lime. The lime makes it easier to scrape and/or clean later, and a little lime spread out on the field or pasture certainly won’t hurt anything.

These pads supply a firm, well-drained area for feeding hay in rings, feeding silage in bunkers and for areas around watering tanks. Similar designs can also be used for concentrated walking areas and lanes.

If you happen to be on softer or wetter soils, then a layer of #2 limestone could be laid underneath for a firmer base.

Why go to all this trouble? Mud increases stress for both us and the livestock. Mud increases energy requirements and at the same time can decrease intake. Mud will also tend to increase disease problems. The bottom line is -- mud can cost you big bucks!

Rock and geo-textile fabric are cheaper than concrete and require less maintenance than rock alone. These feed pads can also be placed right along the outside fence line, adjacent to a road or drive. In this way, the silage, grain, or hay can easily be fed without entering the field with the tractor.

Heavy use protection areas are cost-sharable through several USDA programs. Contact your local Soil and Water Conservation office for more information.
Grazing Management Guide Offers a Lot to Chew on

There’s more to grazing livestock than just turning animals loose on acres of grass. Successful graziers carefully plan where, when and how long their livestock feed themselves, and a Purdue University Extension publication shows the way.

"Management-Intensive Grazing in Indiana" (Purdue Extension publication AY-328) covers the decision-making processes and physical components of grazing systems, as well as providing firsthand experiences from livestock producers.

The publication is $7.50 plus tax and shipping, and can be ordered by calling (888) EXT-INFO (398-4636) or visiting the Purdue Extension Education Store at http://www.ces.purdue.edu/extension. A downloadable PDF version is available at http://www.ces.purdue.edu/extmedia/AY/AY-328.pdf.

Although the term implies more attention to details, there are many benefits to management-intensive grazing, said Keith Johnson, Purdue Extension forage specialist and one of the publication’s authors.

“Management-intensive grazing is taking a pasture and subdividing it into smaller units that we call paddocks,” Johnson said. "It offers an opportunity to provide rest for the forages in the pasture. Just like livestock and people, rest is important for forage to be healthy. So if we can graze these plants for a few days and provide several weeks of rest to allow them to regrow, we have healthier, more vigorous plants.

"If we rotate livestock through properly stocked paddocks, plants are going to be vegetative, which means they have the potential to be of higher quality. It also allows us to graze later into the season compared to what we might in a continuous grazing program, where the plants, frankly, are worn out."

The 60-page publication addresses a wide variety of grazing issues, ranging from planning paddocks to identifying grazing-related animal disorders to streamside grazing.

“The publication looks at how to lay out paddocks, how to use modern fencing and how to utilize the great improvements in providing water to animals,” Johnson said.

"It also gets into what types of forage should be sown and, if we’re starting from the beginning and have fertility issues, how much fertilizer should be applied. Then there’s a section on multi-species grazing. Animals graze in different ways because of how their mouths are configured, so we can combine different species of livestock and make better utilization of the forage."

The publication’s final five chapters are devoted to the experiences of Indiana graziers. One producer’s story focuses on providing forage for goats on one acre of pasture. Another explains how low inputs helped a sheep farm do more than survive. Still another recounts a dairy producer’s perspective.

"This publication is great for both novices looking to learn about pasture systems and individuals who’ve been grazing in a continuous fashion for 20 or 30 years,” Johnson said.

Other publication contributors include Ed Heckman, retired Purdue Extension educator; and Susannah Hinds, Jerry Perkins, Victor Shelton and Robert Zupancic, Indiana grazing land specialists with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA NRCS).

The publication was produced with support from the USDA NRCS Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative. The program is a nationwide collaboration of organizations and individuals working together to maintain and improve the management, productivity and health of the nation’s privately owned grazing land.

For additional information on grazing and forage, visit the Purdue Forage Information Web site at http://www.agry.purdue.edu/ext/forages/index.html.
All programs and services of the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, marital status or disability.

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If there are inaccuracies in your address label or if your circumstances have changed and you no longer want to receive this newsletter, please notify Ed Heckman by using one of these methods: 765 557-0401; btrefoil@yahoo.com, or 29183 N. Duck Creek Ave., Atlanta, IN 46031 - 9732. In addition, if you would like to receive this newsletter electronically or if you want to add someone to the mailing list, use the same methods to contact Ed.

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This newsletter is financially supported by CISCO Companies, Grazing Systems Supply and the Indiana Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI). The mission of GLCI is to provide high quality technical assistance on privately owned grazing lands on a voluntary basis and to increase the awareness of the importance of grazing land resources. A coalition of individuals, livestock organizations' representatives and agency personnel carry out the activities of this volunteer organization.

Many thanks go out to this organization and agribusinesses for their interest and support of this educational grazing activity.

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Well, a farmer has a good life if he’ll just look an’ smell an’ taste of all the blessings around him -- not fret too much or overspend, either. We live in a bountiful land an’ tho’ the cycle of life takes its toll, ever’thing is just wonderful! In fact, it’s genteel!
John Turnipseed  Prairie Farmer  June 1998

No arsenal, no weapon in the arsenals of the world, is so formidable as the will and moral courage of free men and women. Ronald Reagan

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Targeted Grazing Resource Online For Sheep Producers
The American Sheep Industry Association offers an interactive online resource to help answer producer questions about grazing. The Targeted Grazing Handbook and a course of the same name systematically walk participants through grazing information. Users can quickly access information about specific plants, setting land management goals or assessing the effects of targeted grazing on animal health.

This information is available at www.sheepusa.org.
Forage Tips for January

Prepare for pasture renovation by determining species and varieties and getting equipment ready.

Allocate hay feeding based on animal needs and hay quality.

Plan pasture utilization strategy (fencing, water, shade).

Overseed legumes in grass pastures that contain less than 30 percent legumes in southern Indiana.

February

Attend Symposium in Indianapolis.

Re-new your membership or become a member of the Indiana Forage Council.

Overseed legumes in grass pastures.

Apply herbicides for control of winter-annual grass and broadleaf weeds in alfalfa.

March

Smooth and re-seed hay feeding areas and heavy traffic areas.

Renovate pastures.

Scout alfalfa fields for heaving and winter damage.

Soil test fields for late-summer legume seedings and apply lime as soil conditions allow.

Seed new pastures or hay land to recommended forages when soil conditions allow.

In grass tetany problem areas be sure all cows get at least 1 ounce of magnesium oxide per head daily in a mineral mix or protein supplement.
PREVENT GRASS TETANY
Mark Landefeld, Extension Educator, Monroe County, Ohio

When the spring weather begins to warm and pastures grow, farm managers should be aware of the term hypomagnesemia or “grass tetany”. Turning cows or sheep out to new, lush pastures can cause the lowering of blood levels of magnesium and an imbalance of electrolytes. This dangerous and unwanted condition is increased in pastures if nitrogen is applied in spring, if soils contain high levels of potassium, or low soil pH conditions exist.

There is a relationship between soil phosphorus content and magnesium uptake in forages too. If phosphorus is low, even if soil magnesium is adequate, the plant may not take up magnesium in adequate amounts to meet the cow’s needs.

Grass tetany is more common on grass pasture than legume pastures. Legumes tend to have higher magnesium levels in their leaves. Grass tetany is associated with cool weather in spring and fall because the metabolism of the plant is slower and its mineral uptake from the soil is lower, leading to lower magnesium in the forage that the cow is eating.

Early symptoms of grass tetany are muscular weakness, followed by uncoordination that progresses until the animal can no longer get up. Animals do not store magnesium in their bones as they do other minerals.

Magnesium is stored in soft tissue and must be ingested on a daily basis. Cattle most likely affected by grass tetany are the older cows and high producing animals after they have calved. Grass tetany can generally be avoided by feeding minerals with high magnesium content or supplemental magnesium. Commercial mineral mixes that are effective in preventing grass tetany are available, commonly called high-mag mixes; these minerals contain 12 to 14 percent magnesium.

Magnesium oxide is an inexpensive source of magnesium if you want to formulate your own mix. However, mag-ox is not well liked by animals so it needs to be incorporated with something readily accepted such as dried molasses, minerals, concentrated feeds or salt supplements.

Magnesium oxide is about 60 percent magnesium, so the cow should consume approximately 1-2 ounces of mag-ox per day to maintain acceptable levels of magnesium in their diet during spring and fall. Intake of supplemental magnesium should be monitored regularly to be sure that lactating cows are consuming proper amounts during the high-risk periods.
The Northern Indiana Grazing Conference is scheduled for February 1, 2008, at the Antique Auction Barn in Shipshewana, Indiana. The Conference will begin with registration at 7:00 a.m. and will end at 8:30 p.m. after the evening session. The actual conference will begin at 8:00 a.m. Lunch and breaks will be provided as part of the registration fee with dinner provided on-site between 4:00 and 5:30 p.m. at an additional cost.

Registration fee for this year’s conference is $30 per person with $20 for each additional family member. On-site or late registration received after January 18 will be $35 per person and $25 for each additional family member. Call the LaGrange Co. SWCD office at 260-463-3471 ext 3 for a registration flyer.

Sessions for this year’s conference include:

- Best Management Practices for Dairy – Derek Klopfenstein, DVMS
- Farmer Panel – Year-Round Grazing – Neil McDonald, Albert Miller & Weldon Yoder
- Whole Farm Grazing – Roger Rose
- Conventional Grass Based Dairy in Ohio – Eric Grim
- Grass Based Dairy in Wisconsin – Alfrid Krusenbaum
- Evening Session – “Transition the Family Farm” - Dave Forgey with Darla & Scott Foerg, Logansport, plus Rob Schlabach, Millersburg, Ohio

The Grazing Conference Planning Committee is looking forward to another successful year with a big trade show of around 50 exhibitors. If you have any questions about the conference, please contact the LaGrange Co. SWCD office. This conference is being hosted by the LaGrange Co. Soil & Water Conservation District, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Purdue Cooperative Extension Service.