

JANUARY

NEWSLETTER

Driftless Ag Update

Ag news for La Crosse, Vernon, and Crawford Counties from UW-Madison Extension



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Please contact your local extension office for the print version of any article included in this newsletter.



Here's your January Driftless Ag Update!

Hello and congratulations on receiving our January Driftless Ag Update! This newsletter is co-written by your local UW-Madison Extension Ag Educators, Beth McIlquham (livestock) and Sam Bibby (crops).

Notes from your Regional Crops Educator- Sam Bibby

- Pesticide Applicator Training (PAT) is getting started as we move into winter. Check the expiration date on your pesticide applicator license and sign up for a training if your license expires in 2026. Learn more: fyi.extension.wisc.edu/pat/ or if you have questions give me a call.

-Country Tree Sales are in full swing. Reach out to your local county land conservation office to order trees for planting in spring of 2026. Crawford's Sale ends on January 31st. Vernon's 10% discount ends January 15th, and sales continue until they sell out.

-Using a drone in your ag business? The UW-Madison Division of Extension Crops and Soils Program is looking for feedback from farmers, agronomists, and custom applicators regarding the use of drone technology on farms across the state. Please provide your insight on drone technology through this brief survey: https://uwmadison.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cFKaPugEpXprLnM. Survey should take less than 5 minutes to complete.

Notes from your Regional Livestock Educator- Beth McIlquham

-Happy New Year!: The beginning of 2026 is rich with educational opportunities for beef producers: School for Beginning Beef Producers, Beef Roundup Webinar Series, Driftless Region Beef Conference, and a Beef Quality Assurance training.

-Cost of Raising Dairy Heifer Survey: UW-Madison Extension wants to find out how much it costs you to raise dairy heifers! The first step is simple. Just submit your contact information and a dairy educator will reach out to you. You have valuable feedback and we want it! Your insights will help us tailor our services to better meet the needs of Wisconsin dairy farmers. Sign up: <https://signup.e2ma.net/signup/2019375/1954380/>

-Disease Digest: A dairy herd in Dodge County tested positive for HPAI in December. To see HPAI updates in dairy herds in Wisconsin, check out the Extension Dairy webpage. To see HPAI updates in poultry flocks, visit the Extension Livestock webpage. There have been no cases of New World Screwworm in the U.S. in livestock, but more information can be found [here](#). For information on Asian Longhorned Ticks, tune in to the Beef Roundup Webinar Series. For animal owners of all kinds, please evaluate your biosecurity protocols, including pest management.



WABA Classic Jan 12-13

The program is held each January and boasts an attendance of nearly 1,000 attendees. The conference and tradeshow is a collaborative effort between the Wisconsin Agri-Business Association and the University of Wisconsin.

<https://www.wiagribusiness.org/2026-ag-classic>



Wisconsin Agricultural Outlook Forum- Jan 27th, Madison or Virtual

The Wisconsin Agricultural Outlook Forum is the state's premier event for understanding the trends, challenges, and opportunities shaping Wisconsin agriculture and agribusiness.

Hosted annually by the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Renk Agribusiness Institute. The Forum brings together agribusiness leaders, policymakers, researchers, and producer-supporting organizations to explore timely issues, share insights, and shape the future of Wisconsin agriculture.

Register

<https://uwmadison.eventsair.com/waof26/reg/Site/Register>



School for Beginning Beef Production

Maybe you are new to beef production or perhaps you are a dairy producer thinking about adding or transitioning to beef production. If so, join the School for Beginning Beef Production.

- Jan 27: Business of beef: what are your options?
- Jan 29: Setting goals and marketing
- Feb 3: Perennial forage management and cow-calf nutrition
- Feb 5: Veterinary, biosecurity, and recordkeeping skills
- Feb 10: Herd reproduction to build your future
- Feb 12: Annual forage management and intro to stocker, backgrounder, finishing enterprises

Each session will be held online via ZOOM from 7 – 8.30 pm (Central).

Don't miss out on this opportunity to learn about beef production at no cost! Participants will receive additional resources. Course registration closes on Jan 26!

Register: <https://go.wisc.edu/iyk21f>



Visual Lambing Guide Series

The Visual Lambing Guide Series is perfect for sheep producers, shepherds, and livestock educators looking to improve lambing success and animal welfare.

Watch:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLWYkTfJ_LDjY7cLErsJ_xjI3B1AT-LOnQ

New Series!

Agritourism Business Development Training

Learn about how agritourism can help diversify your farm's revenue.

Winter 2026 | Hybrid | FREE!
6 modules available between Jan. 31 – Feb. 25, 2026.

Enroll in the entire cohort or attend single sessions.

For more information
go.wisc.edu/agritourism
Or contact Sara Tedeschi at 608-326-1134 or sara.tedeschi@wisc.edu

Photo courtesy of Driftless Wisconsin

Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
CRAWFORD COUNTY

Agritourism Business Development Training- Hybrid and Free, 6 Sessions, Jan 31-Feb 25

Learn how agritourism can help diversify your farm's income through UW-Extension's new training series. This free series assists farmers to explore ideas and start or expand an agritourism business. Visit the Agritourism Business Training Series website for more information and to register, or contact Sara Tedeschi (stedeschi@wisc.edu) for more info.

Register:

<https://economicdevelopment.extension.wisc.edu/agritourism/>



Extreme Weather and Climate Services Roadshow

The Wisconsin State Climatology Office is collaborating with the Rural Partnerships Institute and Wisconet to organize meetings in rural Wisconsin communities to better understand weather and climate information needs and learn the local impacts of extreme weather events.

Register:

<https://eventreg.wisc.edu/en/5f4YRxR7/g/extension/extreme-weather-and-climate-services-roadshow-driftless-region-5a2TQr1BQkz/overview>

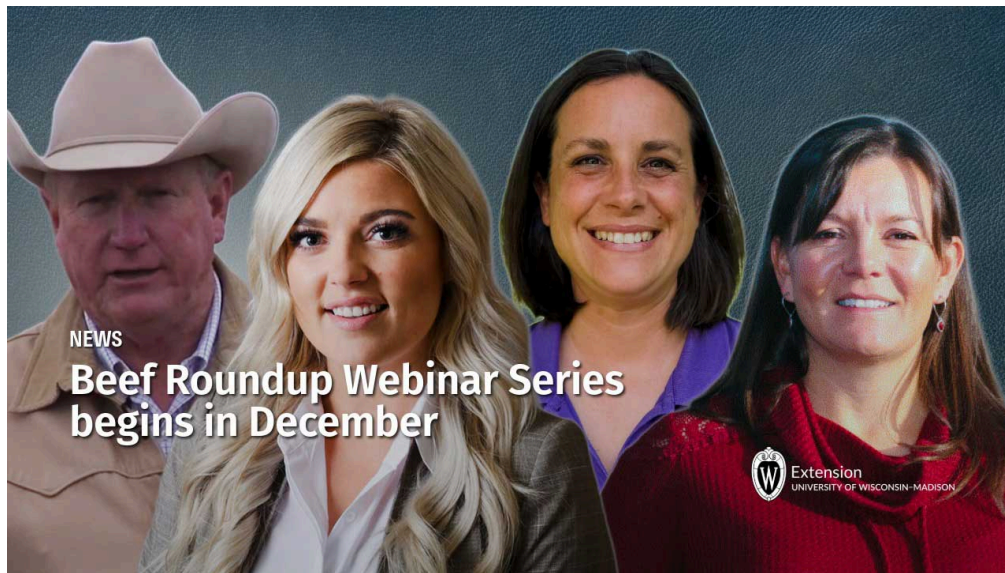


Driftless Region Beef Conference

The fourteenth annual event will be held Jan. 22-23, 2026, at the Grand River Convention Center in Dubuque, Iowa. Past participants in this conference have said the program would increase their economic return by more than \$10 per animal managed, testifying to the value of attending the conference.

<https://www.regcytes.extension.iastate.edu/beef/register/>

Beef Roundup Webinar Series begins in December



Beef producers are invited to attend a series of free educational webinars this winter. The Beef Roundup Webinar Series will be hosted by the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension featuring Extension specialists and industry experts from across the country covering timely topics relevant to today's beef producers.

- December 11th, 2025: Handling Facilities with Dr. Ron Gill, Texas A&M Extension Livestock Specialist
- January 15th, 2026: Unlocking the Full Potential of Growth-Enhancing Technologies with Dr. Jessica Sperber, University of Nebraska- Lincoln Extension Feedlot Specialist
- February 19th, 2026: Asian Longhorned Tick, Dr. Cassandra Olds, Kansas State, Extension Entomologist
- March 19th, 2026: Key Considerations for Rebuilding Your Cow Herd with Dr. Randie Culbertson, Iowa State, Extension Cow-calf Specialist

All webinars will be held from 7-8pm CST.

Don't miss out on this opportunity to connect with other producers and professionals in the beef industry.

Free Registration

To register for this free webinar series, please visit this link:

https://go.wisc.edu/BeefReg_

Locations & Dates

Engineering Technical Sessions:

9-11:30 am

Tues Jan 27 | Green Bay | Tundra Lodge
Wed Feb 11 | Mauston | Outdoors Forever Clubhouse

Farm/Key Staff/Consultant Sessions

Tuesday, Jan 27 | Noon-4pm | Green Bay
Tundra Lodge

865 Lombardi Ave, Green Bay

Wednesday, Jan 28 | Noon-4pm | Fond du Lac

Korneli's on the Avenue

605 Fond du Lac Ave, Fond du Lac

Thursday, Jan 29 | 8am-Noon | Manitowoc

Farm Discovery Center
7001 Gass Lake Rd, Manitowoc

Wednesday, Feb 4 | Noon-4pm | Darlington

Lafayette County Multipurpose Building
11974 Ames Rd, Darlington

Thursday, Feb 5 | 8am-Noon | Jefferson

Jefferson County Highway Dept
1425 S. Wisconsin Drive, Jefferson

Wednesday, Feb 11 | Noon-4pm | Mauston

Outdoors Forever Clubhouse
W4890 Cty Rd N, Mauston

Thursday, Feb 12 | 8am-Noon | Chippewa Falls

Market on the River
128 W River St, Chippewa Falls

Thursday, Feb 19 | 8am-Noon | Virtual

The University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming in compliance with state and federal law. You may request an interpreter, materials in an alternative language or format, or other services to make this event more accessible, by contacting Kevin Erb at kevin.erb@wisc.edu by 1/2/2026 to ensure adequate time is available. There's no added cost to you for these services.

Register Online

<https://go.wisc.edu/CAFO2026>

1. Fill out online registration form.
2. Choose location and session.
 - Each in-person event registration includes the session and meal.
 - 8am sessions will include breakfast.
 - Noon sessions will include lunch.
3. Select payment type.
4. Click: "Submit."
5. Proceed to payment by card or check.

You **MUST** promptly complete payment to confirm your registration.

A confirmation email will be sent to you within 5 business days.

Complete registration and payment one week prior to intended session to avoid the late fee!



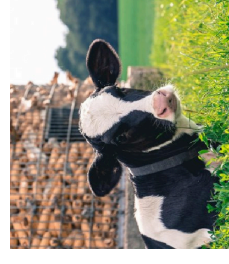
For more information about this program:
Contact Kevin Erb at 920-391-4652 or Kevin.Erb@wisc.edu
For questions on registration or payment:
Email: Extension@browncountywi.gov
Phone: 920-391-4610

2026 Annual CAFO Update

Hosted by UW-Madison Division of
Extension in collaboration with the
Wisconsin DNR



UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
Extension



Jan 27
Green Bay

Jan 28
Fond du Lac

Jan 29

Manitowoc

Feb 4

Darlington

Feb 5

Jefferson

Feb 11

Mauston

Feb 12

Chippewa Falls

Feb 19

Virtual





2026 Annual CAFO Update

How To Stay In Compliance With Your Permit

An update meeting for WPDES-permitted CAFO owners/managers/key staff, nutrient management plan writers, engineers, agency staff, and consultants.



Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

NEW for 2026:

- Virtual option Thursday Feb 19.
- Bonus Extension session for the CAFO audience: "Supporting economic and water quality opportunities through expanded dairy heifer grazing" featuring Sarah Lloyd, Jordan Mathews (Rosy-Lane Dairy) and Ron Schoepp - Feb 3, 12-1pm.

Agenda

Time has been set aside before, during, and after the sessions for informal discussions with DNR staff.

- Nutrient Management Policy
 - Update Reviews Summary
 - 5-Year NMP Reviews
 - Policy Updates
- Step One to Reduce N Loss: Build a Nitrogen Budget
 - Expansions/Permit Modifications
 - Root Causes of Manure Spills
 - Farmer/Consultant Panel: Manure Hauling and Record Keeping
- Common Issues for Permit Issuance Applications
- Lightning Rounds: Short presentations on key issues
 - Manure Sampling Reminders
 - Temporary Feed Storage Approvals
 - Permanent Markers 101
 - Silurian Bedrock Reminders (only Green Bay, Fond du Lac, Manitowoc)
 - Groundwater Parameters
 - Engineering Grab Bag



Engineering Session Agenda

- CAFO Program Updates / Plan Review
- Feed Storage Clean Water Diversions
- Manure Storage Design Update
- State-Adopted IBC and Codes

Registration Information

<https://go.wisc.edu/CAFO2026>

Register 1 Week Prior: \$46

- Register Online
- Pay by Card or Check
- Meal Included

Late Registration: \$56

Register Online

Pay by Card or Check
Meal Not Guaranteed

Walk-In Registration: \$56

Pay by Check Only
Meal Not Guaranteed

No price adjustments for meal or partial attendance.

No refunds.

*Cash will not be accepted.
Same cost in-person or virtual.*

Payment Information

Card Payment - Online Only

- After registering online and instructions with link for online payment will be provided.

Check Payment

- Register online and instructions will be provided.
- Make check payable to

Brown County Treasurer

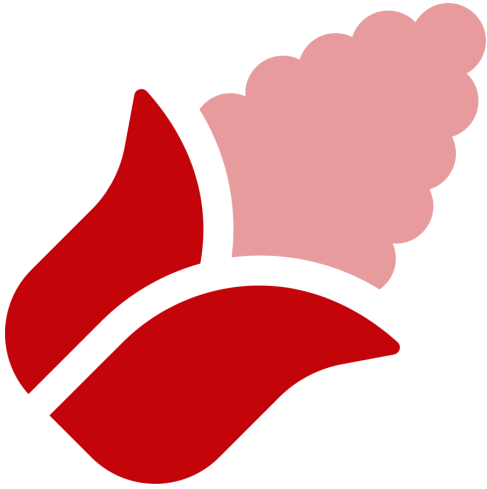
- Mail to:

Extension Brown County

Attn: CAFO

2019 Technology Way, Rm 113

Green Bay, WI



Corn Hybrid Performance Trial Results 2025

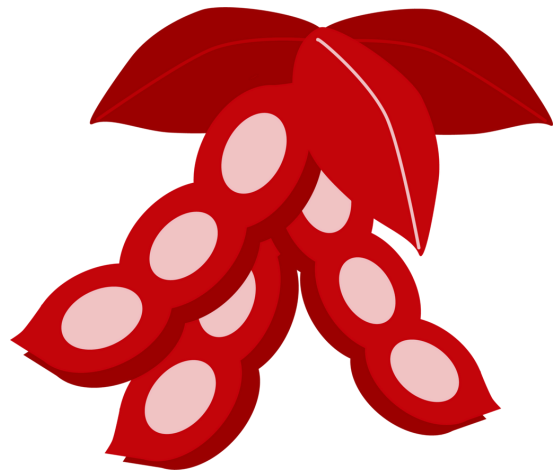
A comprehensive yet non-exhaustive hybrid performance comparisons for corn grain and silage are now available. To access information before deciding on the hybrids for 2026, please see the trial data [here](https://badgercropnetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/A3653-CP2025.pdf)!

Results

<https://badgercropnetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/A3653-CP2025.pdf>

Soybean Performance Trial Results 2025

The Wisconsin Soybean Performance Trials are conducted each year with the producer's needs in mind. Our objective is to give producers the information to select varieties that will satisfy their specific goals and are most likely to perform best under their management practices.



Results:

<https://badgercropnetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/WI-soybean-booklet-25-Web.pdf>

Take Precautions to Minimize the Risk of Mycotoxins in Feeds This Fall and Winter

Introduction

The later part of the growing season saw a significant increase in foliar and stalk disease in corn plants in many parts of the state. Diseases observed include tar spot, various Fusarium-induced diseases, northern corn leaf blight, anthracnose stalk rot, and gray leaf spot to name a few. With the high levels of disease observed in many corn fields comes questions on potential problems with toxins in the feed including corn silage, grain, and utilization of the corn stalks after grain harvest for beef cattle.

The following information helps address these concerns and how to reduce risk from possible mycotoxins. It is important to remember that just because feedstuffs have visible molds does not automatically mean that toxins are present, but it does indicate that there could be risk for toxins. It is also important to remember that feeds not showing visible mold and spoilage could have toxins present, even at high levels.

Tar Spot

To date, tar spot has not been directly linked to any toxin production (Telenko et al., 2021). Tar spot does cause added plant stress that can predispose those plants to other problems, such as infection by toxin-producing fungi. For example, one strain of Fusarium causes Gibberella ear and stalk rot in corn and can produce deoxynivalenol (DON). Fusarium does not necessarily infect the ears and stalks to the same degree, and can vary from year to year or field to field, so there could be high levels of Fusarium in the ears and not in the stalks and vice versa (Reed et al., 2021). Based on this information, we are strongly encouraging producers to test any suspect feeds this year for mycotoxins to know what the status of the feed is, in order to manage accordingly.

Other Considerations

Another consideration for using corn stalks as feed this year is that the high disease pressure caused plants to die early in several fields. Stressed plants and plants that died early likely reallocated (cannibalized) carbohydrates from their stalks to the kernels to try to produce viable grain. This results in weak stalks and lower nutritional value in the stover. The poor quality stover with higher presence of fungal growth on the leaves may also be less palatable to cattle as well. To address these potential problems, it may be necessary to provide some supplemental feed to cattle that are grazing corn stalks, or reduce grazing time on poor quality stalks. Let them find the better-quality material out there, as they tend to do first, and then move them to other fields.

If baling corn stalks to use as feed it would be good to take samples and have them tested for mycotoxins. Sampling and testing again is also recommended for corn silage and grain that could be at risk. The cost of sampling and testing is inexpensive compared to the cost of sick and or dead animals. The only way to really know what toxins are present is to test!

If your feeds have elevated levels of toxins, options include diluting with clean feeds to get the toxin level of the total ration to safe levels, use of research-backed binders, or just not using feeds with high levels of toxins. Work with your nutritionist to determine the best solution for your situation.

The Third Trimester- Getting ready for successful calving

Management of the cow herd during the third trimester has implications for both the cow and the calf. When done correctly, it sets cows and calves up for success. On the other hand, there are consequences for poor management. Let's start by taking a look at some of the challenges, potential negative outcomes, and importance of good management during this time.

During the third trimester, energy and protein needs increase as 75 percent of calf growth occurs during this time with about 60 percent occurring the last 60 days before birth. Final development of organs and tissue is also taking place. Failure to meet nutritional needs during this time has been shown to negatively impact weaning weights, steer offspring feedlot and carcass performance, and negatively impact heifer offspring reproductive performance. Cows will utilize fat reserves and atrophy muscle tissue to try to meet needs at the expense of their body condition during the third trimester if nutritional requirements are not met.

Colostrum production begins during the third trimester. Both quality and quantity of colostrum can be negatively affected by poor management. This in turn negatively impacts passive transfer of immunity and getting the calf off to a good start. Odde reported increased calf blood serum IgG levels as body condition increased, topping out at cow body condition score (BCS) of 5.

The third trimester is the last chance to add body condition before calving if cows are thin. Cows should have a (BCS) of 5, and heifers should have a BCS of 6 at calving. Houghton et.al reported longer post partem interval, and Kunkle et.al. reported longer calving intervals returning to lower pregnancy rates, lower rates of gain and weaning weights for cows with BCS of less than 5.

Let's look at best management practices to help cows successfully navigate the third trimester and be set up for successful calving and re-breeding:

- **Body condition score** the herd at the beginning of the third trimester to determine the overall herd status. Identify underconditioned and over conditioned cows and consider separating them from the rest of the herd. Score the first and second calf cows separately as they are still growing themselves and have greater needs. Ideally, they are in their own group already to allow them to get what they need nutritionally while keeping costs low. Continue to monitor body condition score of the herd during third trimester to head off problems early.
- **Test forages**, if you have not already done so, to match forage and feed resources to the herd's needs. Some of the forage inventory may meet cow needs without additional protein or energy supplementation. Don't overlook vitamins (A and E in particular) and minerals. Use a reputable product, monitor consumption, and adjust as necessary to ensure sufficiency. Whether you formulate your own rations or work with a nutritionist, knowing what you have is necessary to meet cow needs and control costs.
- **Make sure there is enough bunk space**, so all cows can get to the feed. This is especially important if limit feeding supplemental protein or energy. If bunk space is lacking, cows that need it the most are most likely the ones being shorted.
- **Pay attention to adverse weather conditions** and adjust energy as necessary. Third trimester and cold wet conditions coincide for spring calving herds. An occasional day of adverse weather poses relatively low risk, but extended periods of adverse weather will take a toll. Shelter from the wind will also be beneficial.

Quantifying Nitrate Leaching from Agricultural Soils

Minimizing nitrogen (N) loss to groundwater is important for human health, the environment, and long-term farm profitability. Quantifying nitrate leaching – a primary pathway of nitrogen loss from agricultural fields – can help you understand the influence of different management practices on water quality, and identify options for reducing nitrate leaching.

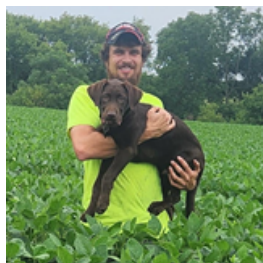
Read More:

<https://agwater.extension.wisc.edu/articles/quantifying-nitrate-leaching-from-agricultural-soils/>

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

United States Department of Agriculture
University of Wisconsin-Extension
La Crosse County Offices
212 North 6th Street
La Crosse, WI 54601

100.200.1000



Sam Bibby
Regional Crop Educator
Email: sam.bibby@wisc.edu
Phone: (608)219-2055



Beth McIlquham
Regional Livestock Educator
Email: beth.mcilquham@wisc.edu
Phone: (608)632-0599

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