

- November 8, 2017 -

# Journey to Grassmilk 100% Grass-fed Dairy Production



**Presented by:**

**Kevin Mahalko**

Grassmilk Dairy Grazier Organic Valley  
Board member River Country RC&D  
Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship Educator  
Grassworks Inc. Advisor/Member

**Hosted by:**

**Food Animal Concerns Trust  
(FACT)**

# Introductions



**Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT)** is a national nonprofit organization that advocates for the safe and humane production of meat, milk, and eggs.



**Larissa McKenna**

Humane Farming Program Director

Email: [lmckenna@foodanimalconcerns.org](mailto:lmckenna@foodanimalconcerns.org)

Website: [foodanimalconcernstrust.org/farmer/](http://foodanimalconcernstrust.org/farmer/)

FACT's services for livestock and poultry farmers include:

- **Fund-a-Farmer Grants** – deadline is December 4!
- **Conference scholarships**
- **Free webinars**
- **Networking and learning opportunities**

# Our Presenter



## Kevin Mahalko

- Grassmilk Dairy Grazer with Organic Valley
- Board member River Country RC&D
- Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship Educator
- Grassworks Inc. Advisor/Member



# ~Journey to Grassmilk~

**Kevin Mahalko: Gilman, Wisconsin**

**Grassmilk Dairy Grazier Organic Valley, Boardmember  
River Country RC&D, Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship  
Educator, Grassworks Inc. Advisor/Member**







CROPP COOPERATIVE

ORGANIC VALLEY



FARMER-OWNED

Mahalko Dairy  
Organic Grazing Farm

MAHALKO DAIRY









Secure your Farming Future





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**DAIRY**  **GRAZING**  
**A P P R E N T I C E S H I P**

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DGA-NATIONAL.ORG





# DGA: First In The Nation

## NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR TRAINING IN MANAGED GRAZING DAIRY PRODUCTION

- Guided work experience
- Related instruction
- Facilitated peer group
- Industry networking
- Pathway to farm ownership





## GRASSWORKS, INC.



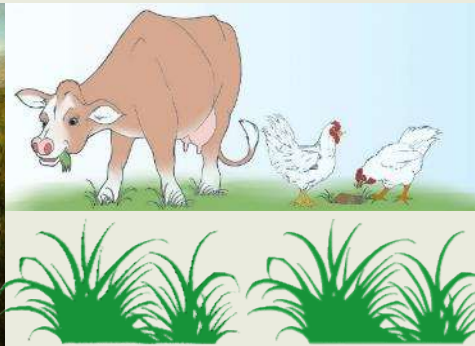
[www.grassworks.org](http://www.grassworks.org)

- Led by and for active graziers
- Host of annual state-wide Grazing Conference since 1992.
- Pioneers in farmer-to-farmer grazing networks throughout Wisconsin; 23 in total
- Partnerships with the NRCS and the WI DATCP
- Established in 1994

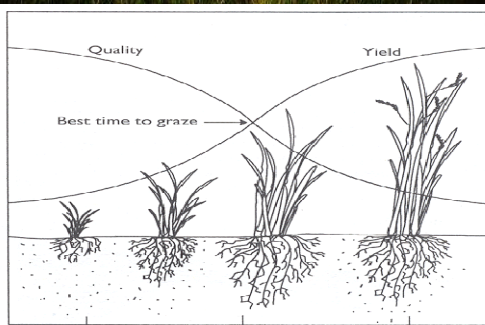
Through its state-wide coalition of grazing networks, GrassWorks provides leadership and education to farmers and consumers for the advancement of managed grass-based agriculture to benefit present and future generations.



# Managed Grazing: Linking Food, People, Animals and the Environment



Gene Schriefer



**Freshly grazed**  
 -photosynthesis low  
 -depletion of energy reserves  
 -slow growth

**Lush vegetative growth**  
 -photosynthesis high  
 -renewal of energy reserves  
 -rapid growth

**Flowering and seeding**  
 -photosynthesis reduced due to shading  
 -energy diverted to flower and seed production  
 -slow growth



Gene Schriefer











## What is Grassmilk<sup>®</sup>?

Organic Valley's Grassmilk family of products is an artisanal, 100% grass-fed product line produced by cows that eat only fresh grasses and dried forages, like hay.

### Watch Out!

No grass-fed standard exists and many products are positioned as "grass-fed", but are **not** 100% grass-fed.

***ALL Organic Valley dairy products come from pasture-raised cows, but only Grassmilk products are from a 100% grass-fed diet.***







## What are the Benefits?

### Did you know?



Organic Valley whole milk contains 18% higher CLA than conventional whole milk and a better Omega 6 to Omega 3 ratio?

### Health

Our cows graze on lush and diverse pasture and dried forages (not grain) resulting in simply delicious milk with naturally occurring omega-3, omega-6, conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) and calcium.

*"I just tried your organic Grassmilk® for the first time and I must say this is seriously the best store bought milk I've ever tasted." - OV Consumer*

### Taste

Light herbal top notes with a hint of flower petal. Deep base note of mineral earth. The taste will vary subtly from season to season based on what the cows are eating throughout the year. A wide assortment of grasses and forages means lots of flavor!

*"I tried your Grassmilk for the first time- why is it so much better tasting than other milks?" - OV Consumer*

### Mission

Since 1988 we've been on a mission to bring you the best nature can muster, while supporting organic farm families who nurture us, their animals and the planet. Our farmers know how to use the land responsibly while giving their cows the best grass possible.



# 100% Grass-fed Dairy Standard

## Five Fundamentals

- **No grain.** Cows eat a diet of high quality forages (pasture and hay) along with needed supplements like essential vitamins and minerals.
- **Pasture is a priority.** Cows must get the majority of their feed from good quality and well managed pastures during the grazing season.
- **Animal health is first.** Wellness checks or veterinarian oversight are required, these are not voluntary options – cows and calves must be healthy.
- **NO antibiotics, NO growth hormones, NO GMOs.**
- **Yearly farm inspections.** A 100% grass-fed farm receives a yearly on-farm review.









# Transitioning to Grassmilk

- 60 day initial transition period on no grain
- Purchased organic animals must also meet 60 day transition requirement
- Must maintain adequate body condition on COWS
- Adequate pasture and high forage quality is essential









# CROPP Cooperative Grassmilk Facts

- 139 farms
- Four regions of the country
  - Midwest
  - California
  - East (Virginia to Vermont)
  - Mideast (Ohio)
- Organic Pay Price with a Grassmilk premium
  - \$4/cwt premium for Grassmilk production
  - \$1/cwt soil amendment reimbursement program (only able to be used for soil amendments)



# CROPP Grassmilk Standards

- Includes mandatory feeding standards
- Target goals in soil and forage quality
- Requirements for active grazing and animal health/body condition
- Producers work to continuously improve soil, forage and animal health
- Results oriented approach monitored by testing regime





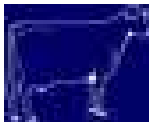


# CHALLENGES

1. FORAGE INVENTORY: MUST know DMI
2. FORAGE QUALITY: Improve something every year! Start with soil, use your \$! Must have high energy grasses
3. GENETICS OF THE HERD
4. HOW AVAILABLE IS LOCAL HIGH RFQ FORAGES -if case you need them?
5. ARE YOU ABLE/WILLING TO PROVIDE TIMELY ENERGY SUPPLEMENTATION?
6. MINERAL SUPPLEMENTATION







## Summary: energy requirements (NRC, 2001)

- 
- **Maintenance** **9.7 Mcal/d**
    - **Body weight (1320 lb cow)**
  - **Lactation** **12 Mcal/d**
    - **4% Milk fat percent (0.75 Mcal/ kg milk)**
    - **Volume of milk 50 LBS**
  - **Grazing related activities** **0 to 5 Mcal/d**
    - **Distance walking and topography**
  - **Pregnancy** **0 to 4 Mcal/d**
    - **If days pregnant > 190**
  - **Tissue loss** **-5 to 0 Mcal/d**
    - **Daily body weight losses**
  - **Tissue gain** **0 to 2 Mcal/d**
- 



Total Requirements = sum of all items that apply







# YEARLY HERD AVERAGES

DHI-207



Test Date: 11-08-2016

Processed: 11-09-2016

35-09-1351

MAHALKO DAIRY

Year Ending		Breed	Cow Years	% DIM	Milk Lbs	Fat		Protein		Inc. Over Feed Cost	Feed Cost CWT	Blend Price of Milk	Calving Interval	Avg Days			% Heats Observed	Breeding per Conc.	Service Sire Merit \$	1st Lact				2nd & Later Lact				% Cows Left Herd	Avg SCC Score	Cow Merit \$	Avg Peak Milk		% Culls Voluntary
Mo	Yr					%	Lbs	%	Lbs					Dry	Open	1st Bred				Num	Avg Age	% Sire ID	Sire Merit \$	Num	Avg Age	% Sire ID	Sire Merit \$				% Cows Left Herd	Avg SCC Score	
9	16	HO	290	89	26586	3.7	989	3.1	815	1998	4.70	15.82	13.6	57	133	76	59	3.0	+481	117	24	90	+343	179	49	89	+211	37.7	2.4	+112	88	115	11.0
9	16	HO	41	87	12197	3.7	449	2.9	356			27.10	13.3	67	125	76	50	2.9	+587	13	32	92	+422	34	56	94	+304	42.2	1.3	-39	42	54	32.2
9	15	HO	40	87	12183	3.6	434	2.9	356			18.62	14.0	65	144	91	49	3.4	+495	13	32	92	+294	33	54	97	+248	32.8	1.1	-43	41	53	12.6
9	14	HO	40	85	11812	3.6	429	3.0	351			20.57	12.8	71	110	88	52	2.4	+669	16	33	100	+445	27	58	96	+425	33.0	1.3	+144	41	55	17.8
9	13	HO	40	84	13505	3.7	503	2.9	388			18.48	13.3	71	126	78	60	4.2	+558	17	31	94	+522	22	60	95	+314	48.1	1.3	+163	51	66	30.4
9	12	HO	42	84	13981	3.8	532	2.9	410			17.27	13.7	74	137	82	51	3.3	+424	13	31	100	+407	29	55	90	+309	29.1	1.1	+165	53	67	12.1
9	11	HO	38	88	15345	3.7	575	2.9	451			17.90	14.0	60	145	76	63	7.3	+638	12	30	83	+368	27	54	93	+289	40.2	0.8	+152	58	72	34.8
9	10	HO	37	87	17554	3.8	675	3.0	520			13.58	13.3	68	123	85	61	2.8	+514	20	28	85	+343	22	53	91	+233	43.7	1.0	+145	60	83	35.6
10	09	HO	38	85	15638	3.9	610	3.0	474			12.12	12.8	69	108	82	55	2.0	+628	15	27	93	+367	25	52	96	+329	29.7	1.5	+253	57	72	13.5
9	08	HO	37	87	16413	4.0	650	3.0	489			18.93	12.7	69	108	76	61	2.6	+430	18	28	89	+411	18	49	100	+292	69.5	1.2	+251	55	70	52.8
9	07	HO	37	86	17308	4.0	684	3.0	524			15.14	13.1	69	119	81	56	2.6	+448	17	27	94	+255	22	52	100	+313	54.4	1.3	+57	60	86	46.2
9	06	HO	34	89	16978	3.9	660	2.9	500			12.35	13.1	62	119	92	53	2.3	+450	21	26	95	+298	20	61	100	+282	44.4	1.3	+64	57	80	29.6
9	05	HO	35	86	17068	3.8	654	3.0	509			14.45	13.1	64	118	90	53	2.6	+424	8	26	88	+321	25	56	100	+249	55.7	1.4	+29	58	83	44.0
10	04	HO	35	89	17746	3.7	654	2.9	521			8.52	12.9	59	112	97	50	1.8	+545	19	25	100	+432	24	51	100	+362	25.8	2.1	+192	60	78	5.7

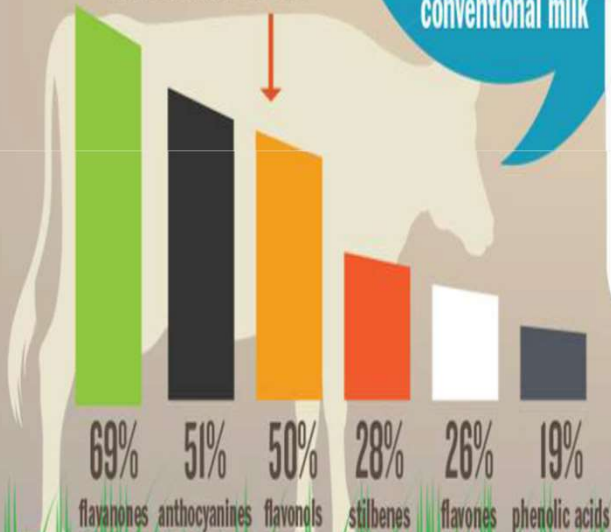


# ORGANIC FOOD

Science confirms it's healthier!

## NUTRIENTS

Organic crops have higher cancer-fighting antioxidant levels:



Organic milk has

**62%**

higher healthy omega-3 fatty acids than conventional milk



## TOXIC METALS

Organic crops have

**48%**

lower levels of the toxic metal cadmium than conventional crops

## PESTICIDES

Organic crops have

**4X**

lower pesticide residues than conventional crops

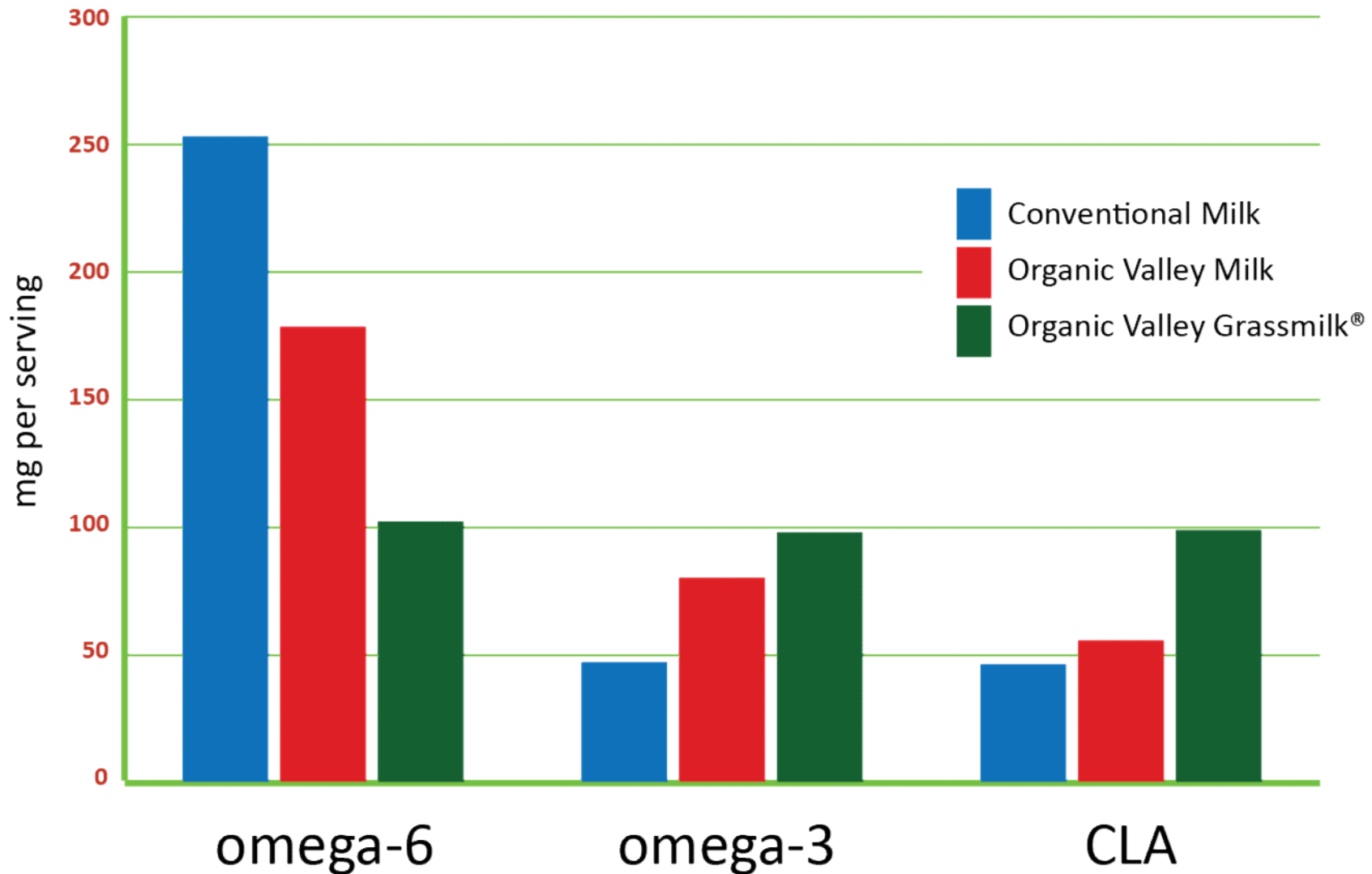
#grassup





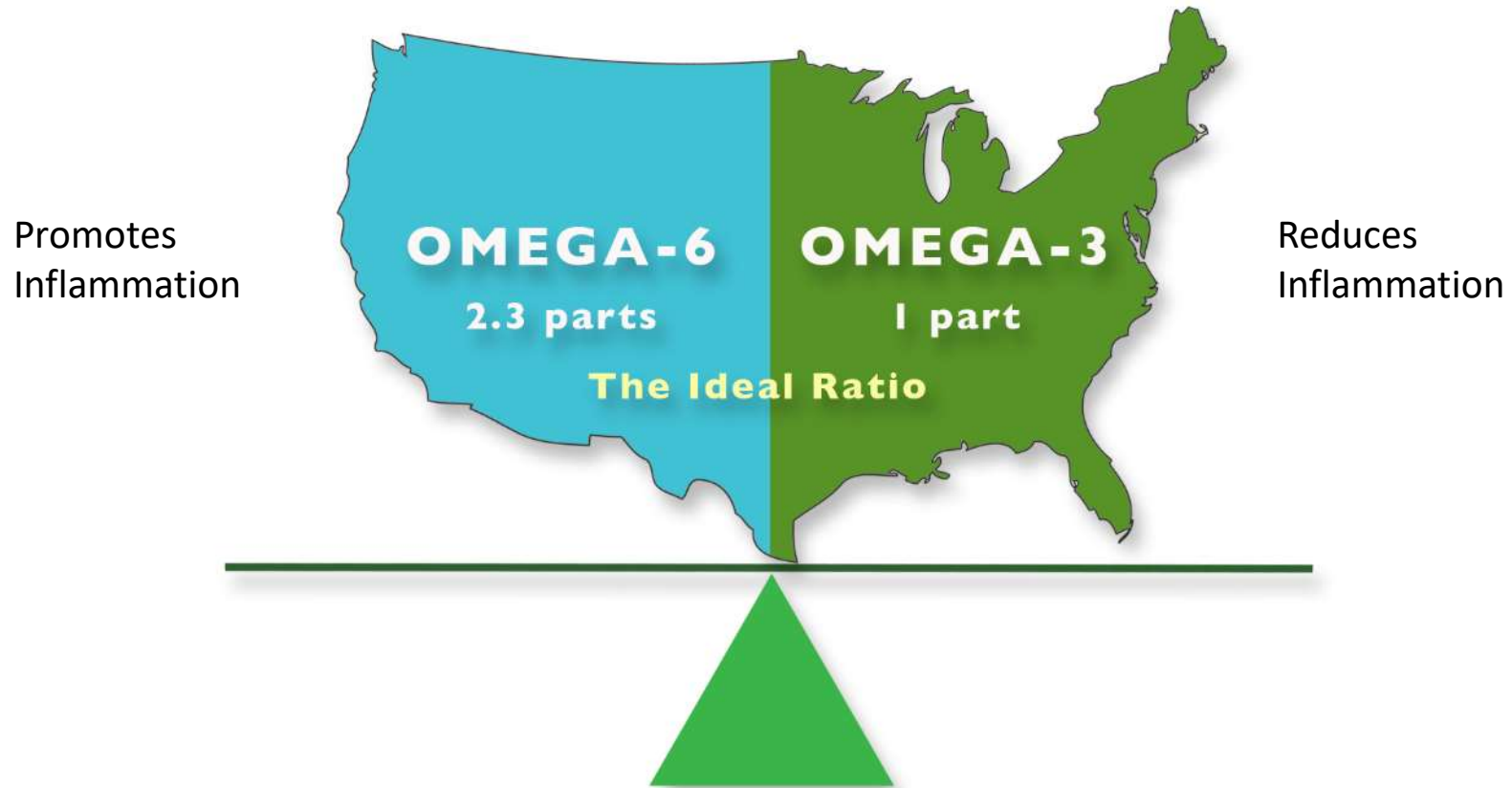
2011-12

# Fatty Acid Comparison, Organic Valley vs. Conventional Milk



# Science tells us

Good health = exercise, stress reduction, balanced **nutrition**



**The American diet is very imbalanced.  
Studies show as high as 20:1, omega-6 : omega-3**



Balanced Omega-3 intake supports:

- ✓ Prevention of atherosclerosis, heart attack, depression and cancer
- ✓ Memory maintenance
- ✓ Normal brain development
- ✓ Cell membrane permeability
- ✓ Anti-inflammation

Dietary Ratio	Omega 6	Omega 3
Ideal	3	1
Estimated American Intake	11-30	1
Fat of grain-fed cow	7.65	1
Fat of grass-fed cow	1.53	1

**Nutritional content of food impacts blood serum levels of omega fatty acids in humans.**

# Mahalko Dairy



Holistic  
Management  
leads you toward  
the life you want  
to live



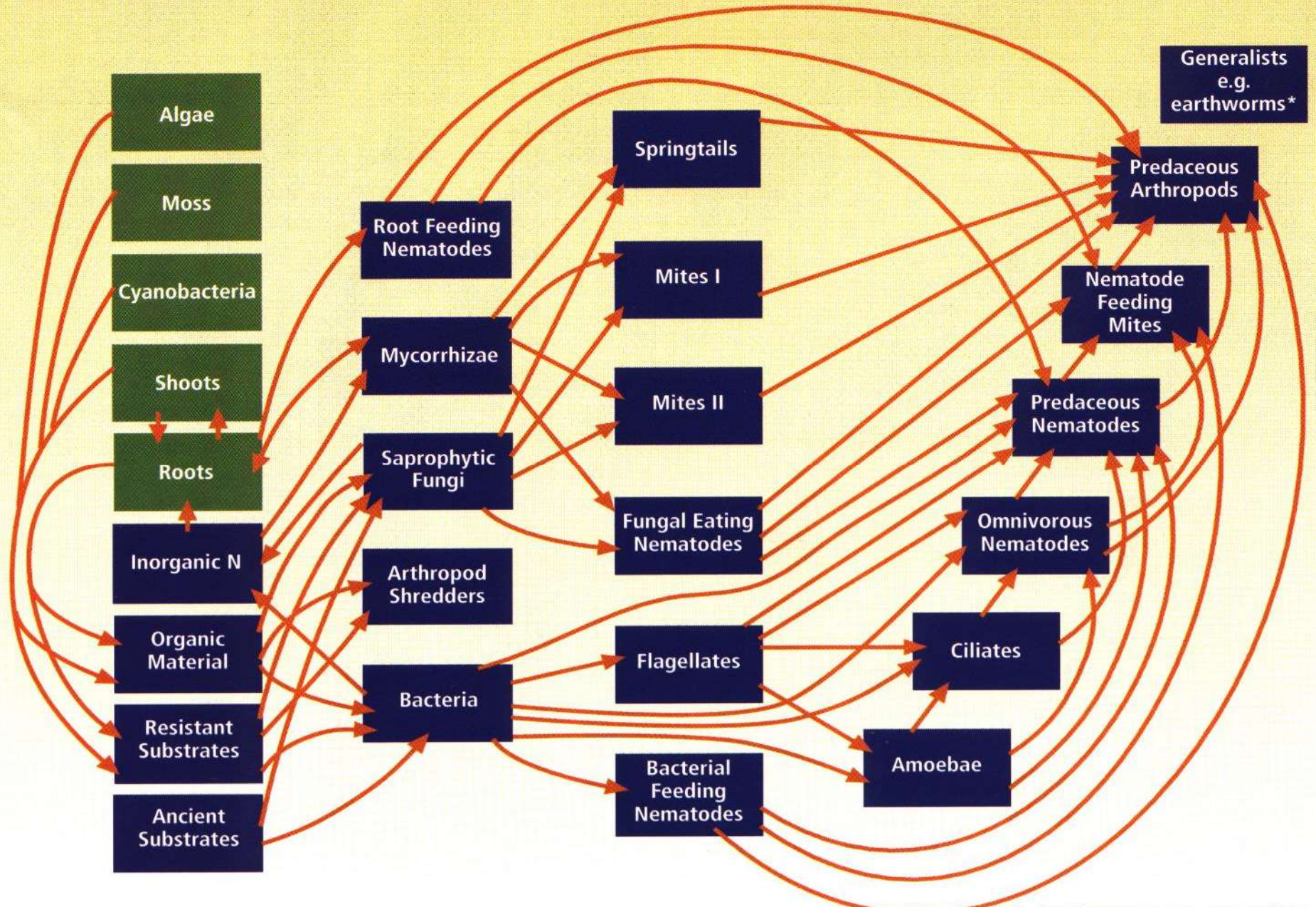
# Why Graze?



**Animal Health Benefits; improved cow comfort, lower stress, and better longevity.**



# A Complex Food Web



\* Earthworms are generalists that feed on many smaller soil organisms.



# Top of the Food Chain Grazer of North America in Recent Past



# The Future Impact of Grazing



True  
Management  
Intensive  
Grazing is a  
relatively new  
practice

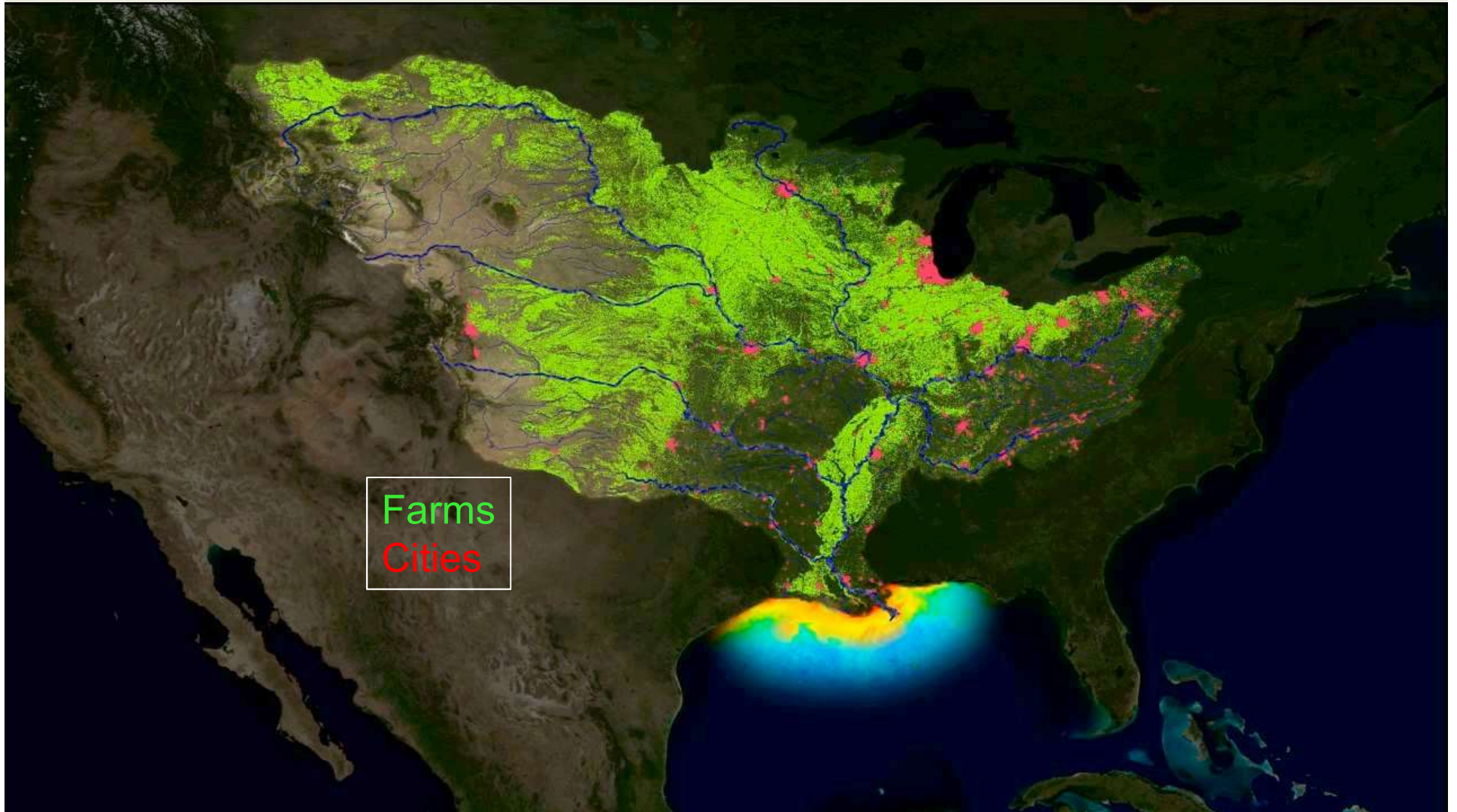
Managed  
Grazing has the  
potential to bring  
about positive  
revolutionary



# Agricultural impacts in the midwest are not new....



....and are far reaching





# SeaWiFS image of sediments reaching the Gulf of Mexico from Mississippi River Delta



<https://oceancolor.gsfc.nasa.gov/outreach/ocsciencefocus/CreepingDeadZones2.pdf>

# Sediment carried from rivers running into ocean waters

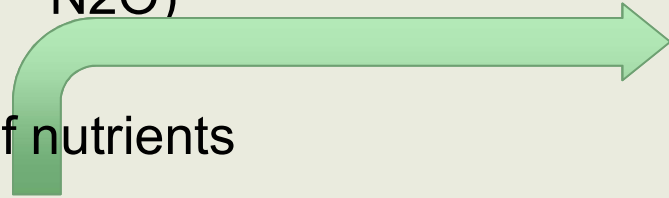


<https://oceancolor.gsfc.nasa.gov/outreach/ocsciencefocus/CreepingDeadZones2.pdf>



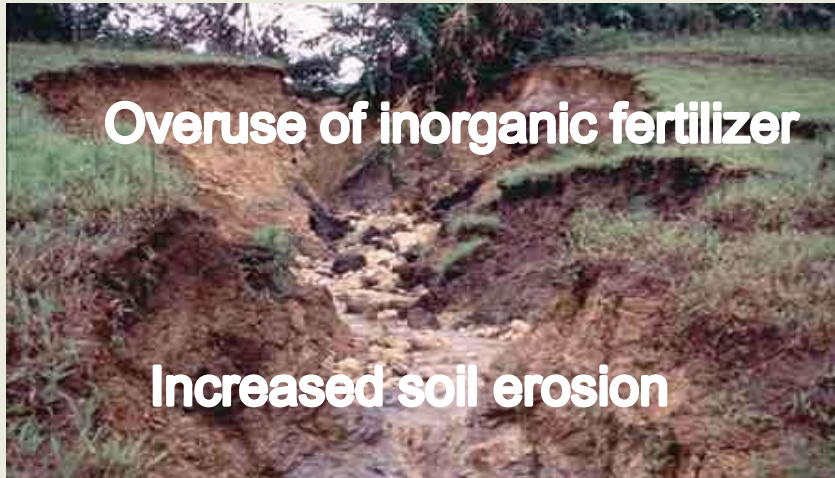
Increased greenhouse gas production (CO<sub>2</sub>, N<sub>2</sub>O)

Loss of nutrients

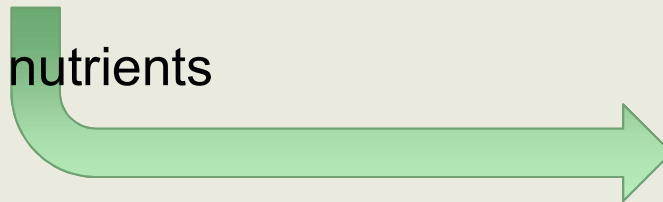


Overuse of inorganic fertilizer

Increased soil erosion



Loss of nutrients



Degradation of ground waters





## **Net Ecosystem Carbon Balance of Subhumid Pasture**

MIRG lost significantly less carbon in year 1 than all other treatments, and in year 2, MIRG was the only treatment that had a positive NECB.

*Oates & Jackson, 2014*





# Organic dairying...

- combines the requirement to graze – which reduces net emissions,
- prohibits the use of fossil fuel based applications to land, and
- promotes atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration.









# Building Soil

How did nature make all that soil in the first place?



































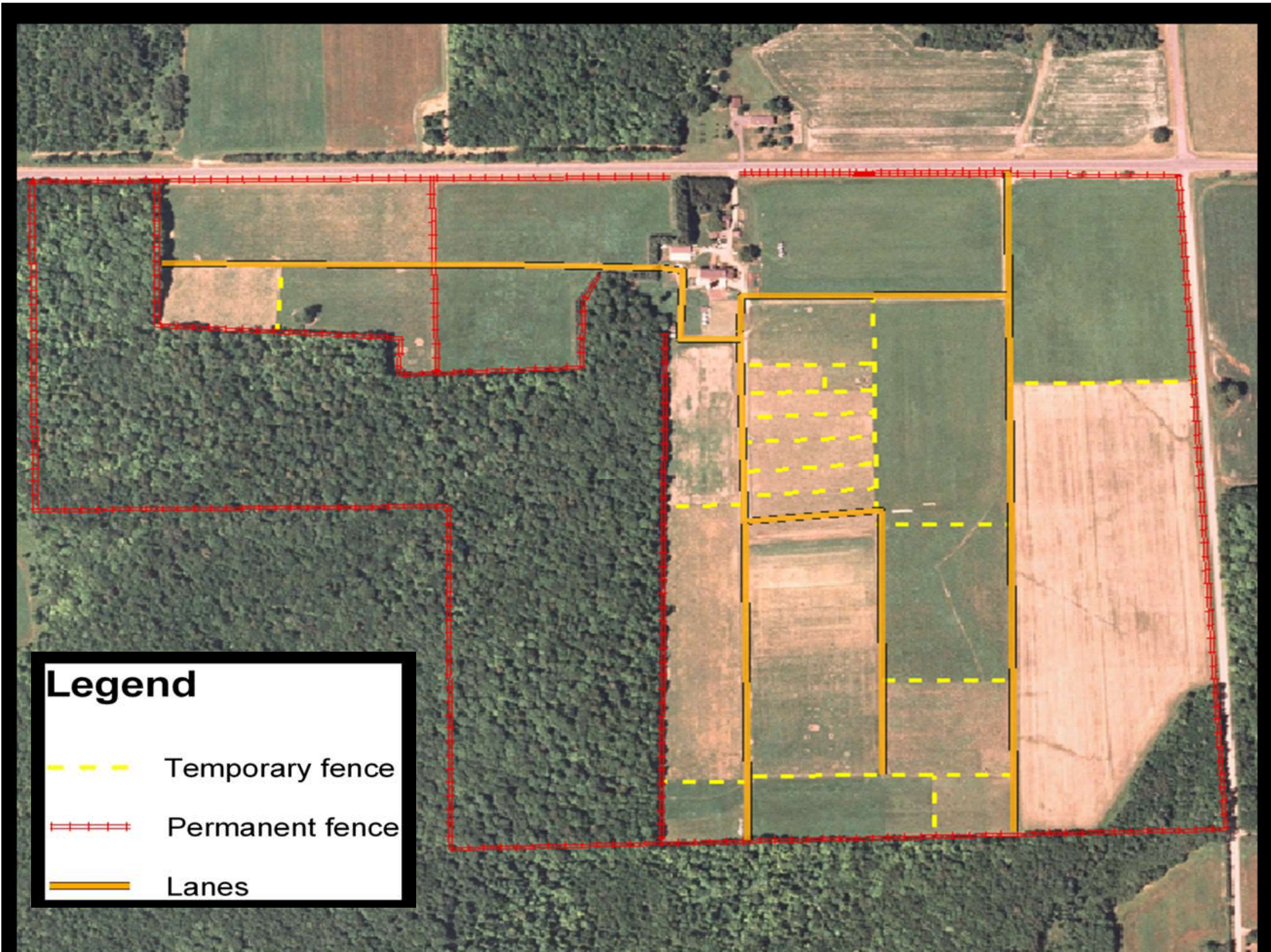
# Grazing Plans and Education for the Beginning Grazier



1. Plan Must be Workable
2. Must Contribute to Good Grass Management
3. Must Include Realistic Production Expectations
4. Must be Adaptable to Changing Conditions

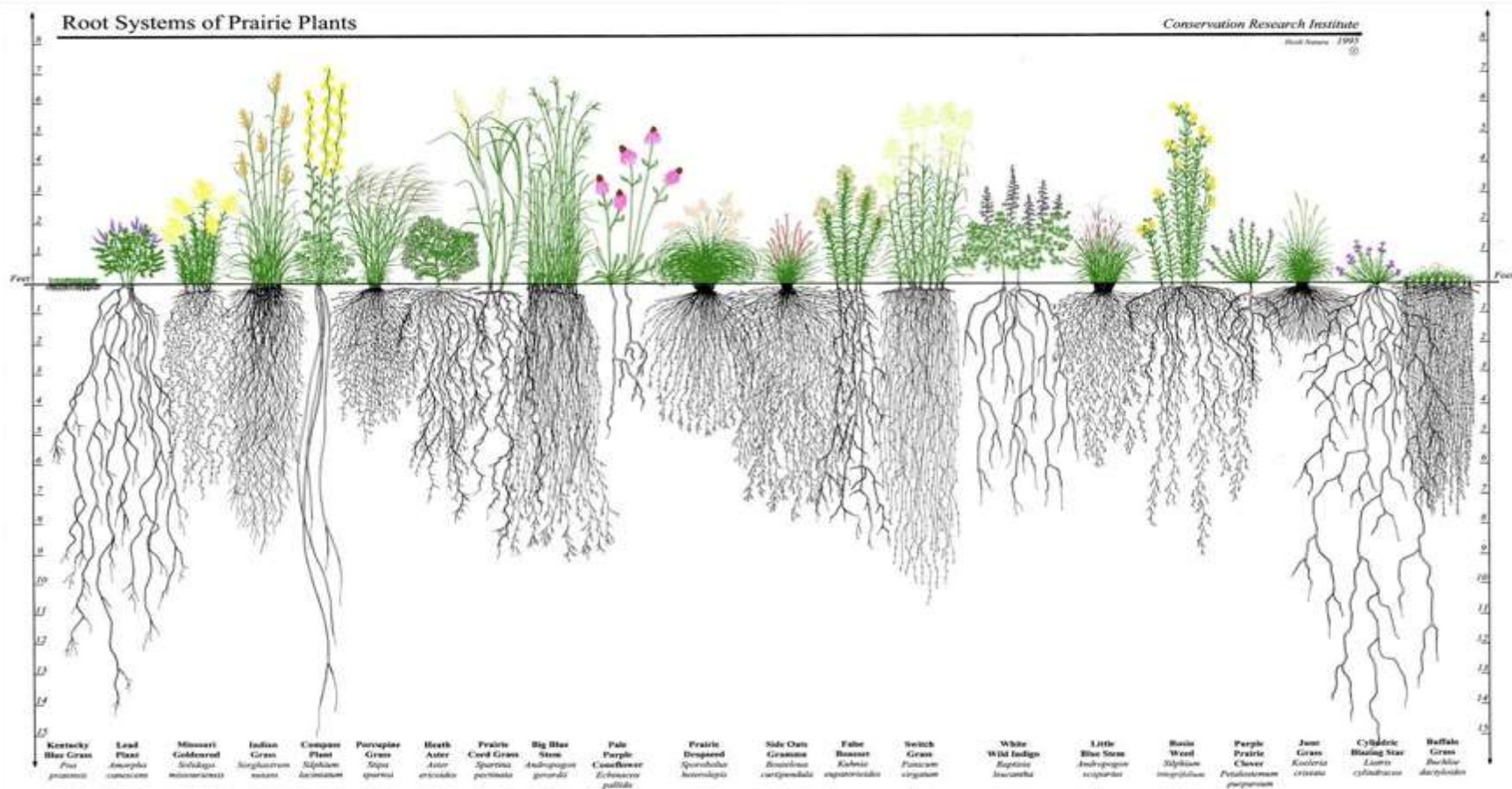
5. The “Grazing Community” can help keep you on track!







# Approximately 2/3 Of Your OM Increase Will Come From Roots!



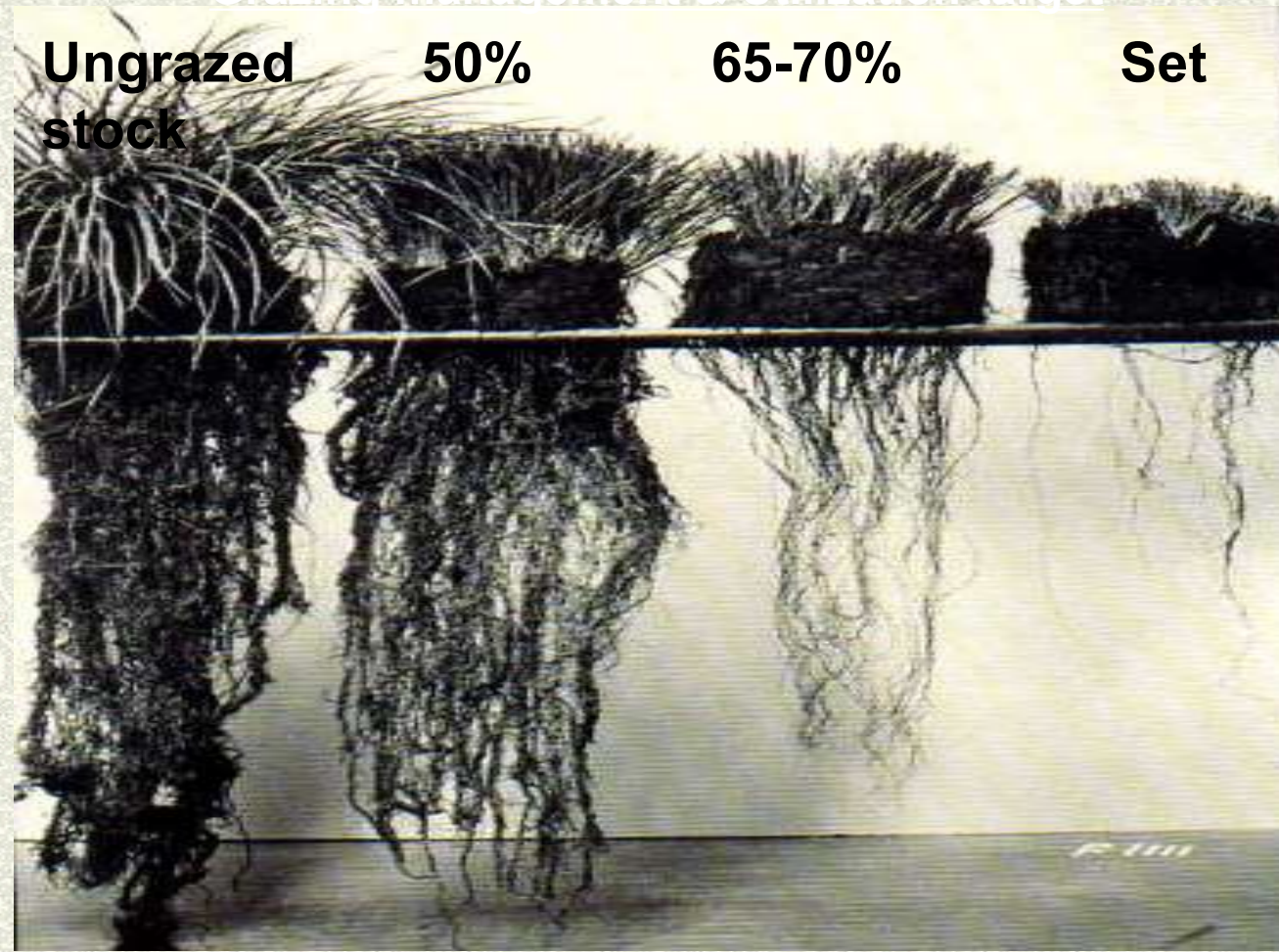


# Plant Vigor-Leaves and Roots

*Caring for the Green Zone, Riparian Areas and Grazing Management*

Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Project, "Cows and Fish Project"

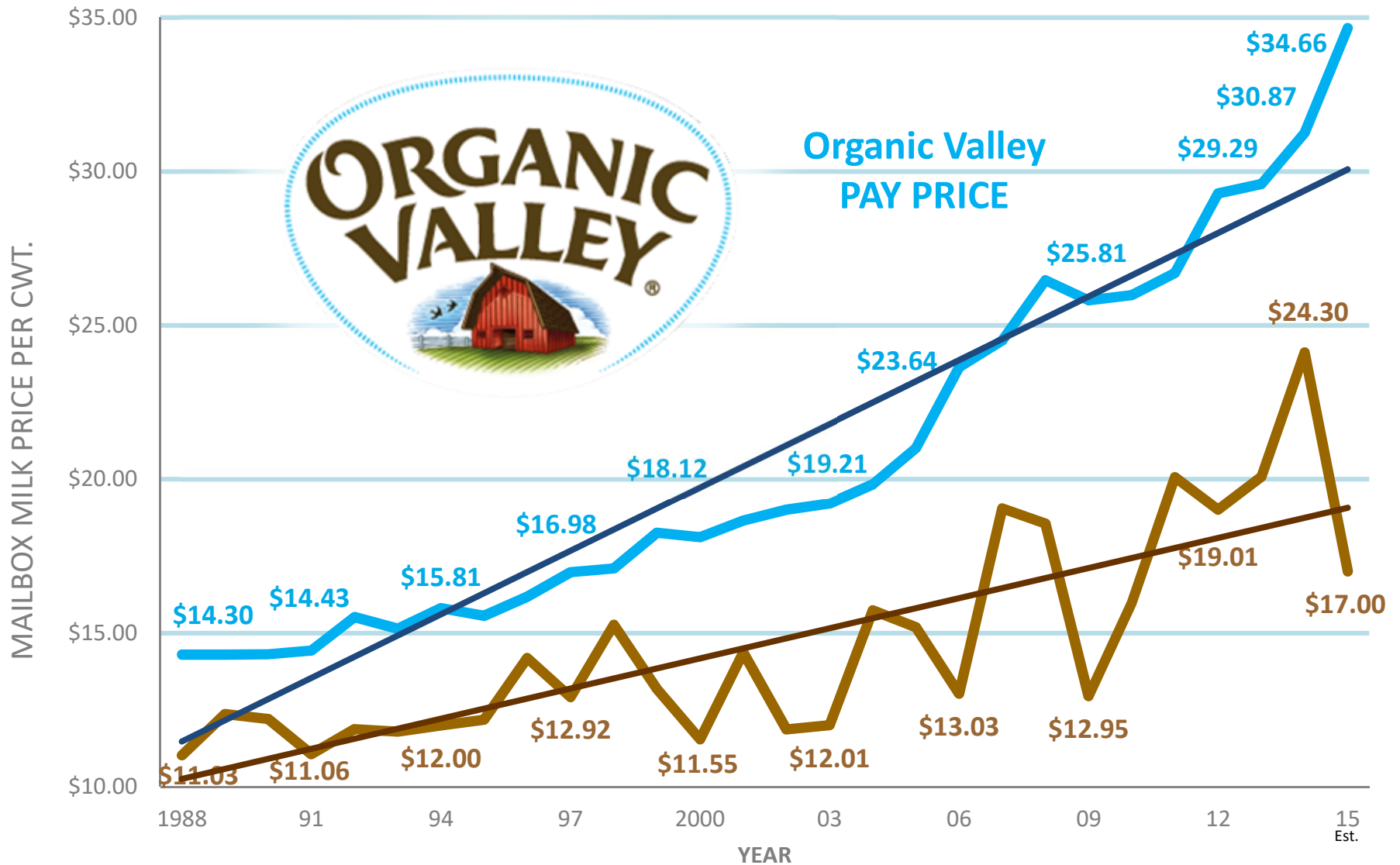
Grazing management & Utilization target





# Over 25 Years of Sustainable Farmer Pay

## MIDWEST MAILBOX DAIRY PAY PRICE



# Milk Cows Eating Grass with Snow













# Outwintering at Mahalko Dairy











# Corralling Dairy Cows on Cropland to Enhance Manure Management

J. Mark Powell and Michael P. Russelle, USDA-Agricultural Research Service, Dairy Forage Research Center, Madison WI and St. Paul MN

(jpowell2@wisn.edu; 608-264-5044)



INTRODUCTION

Recent measurements on fifty-four Wisconsin dairy farms show:

- Cows and heifers spend considerable time in outside areas, such as pastures, 'dirt lots' (PHOTO above), feed bunk areas and barnyards.
- Average annual deposition rates (kg/ha) in outside areas range from 340 to 5470 for manure nitrogen (N) and 80 to 1170 for manure phosphorus (P).
- Some farmers rotate these outside areas with pasture and/or crops

## OBJECTIVE

Determine impact on soil compaction, crop yields and N uptake of corralling dairy heifers on cropland.

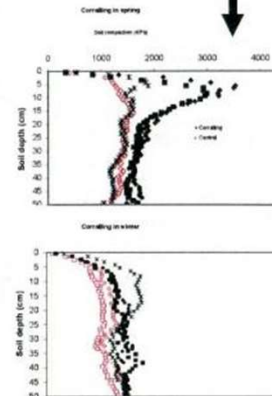
## HYPOTHESIS

Substantial gains in manure N recycling through crops can accrue by corralling dairy cows & heifers on cropland

- Experimental units of four dairy heifers in 20x20' portable corrals during the summer (PHOTO 1) and the winter (PHOTO 2).
- In addition to crop yields and N uptake, measurements are made of ammonia (via micro-met., masts as in photos), nitrate (via drainage lysimeters to 1.5 m soil depth) and soil inorganic and total N.



- Just prior to first crop planting after corralling, we measured soil compaction with a cone penetrometer in all plots.
- Corraling during the spring caused soil compaction.
- Corraling during the winter did not cause soil compaction.



## METHODS

A two-year field trial evaluates a factorial arrangement of two manure application methods, (1) corralling heifers on cropland to apply feces plus urine, and (2) land-applied manure from the barn; two manure application rates (1) manure deposited during 2 days of corralling or 2 days in the barn, and (2) manure deposited during 4 days of corralling or 4 days in the barn; two periods of manure application (1) spring-summer corresponding to April to September, and (2) fall-winter corresponding to October to March; two cropping patterns (1) wheat-sorghum-rye-corn silage-rye for plots manured during April to September; (2) corn silage-rye-corn silage-rye for plots manured during October to March.

## PRELIMINARY RESULTS

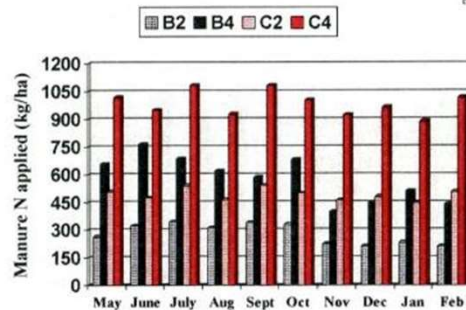
From 50 to 150% more N is applied via corralling (due to urine) than via barn manure

Difference between manure N applications via corralling (C2 and C4) and barn manure (B2 and B4) reflect in-barn manure N losses

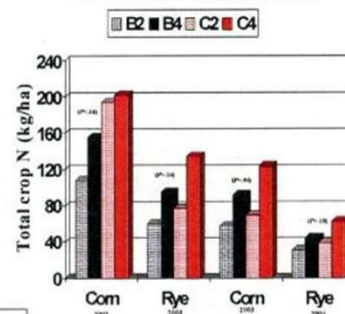
In-barn manure N losses appear to be lower during cooler months (Nov to Feb)

Although manure N applications via B4 and C4 are higher than agronomic recommendations, they are well within range of on-farm deposition rates in outside areas.

Nitrogen applications via corralling and barn manure applications



First year and residual crop N uptake after November manure applications



Lack of response by wheat to corralling may have been due to high manure N application and subsequent crop lodging

The four crops after wheat each had higher crop N uptake in plots where heifers were corralled than in plots that received barn manure

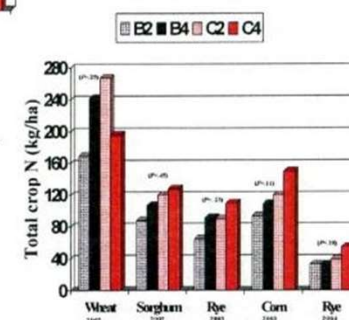
Positive effects of summer corralling on crop N uptake may last for more than two years

Crop N uptake in plots where heifers were corralled were higher than where barn manure was applied

Greater crop N uptake in corralled plots continued for two complete corn silage-rye rotations

Positive effects of winter corralling on crop N uptake may last for more than two years

First year and residual crop N uptake after August manure applications



Next steps: Corn silage yields and N uptake for 2004 will complete crop data component of experiment;

Larger-scale on-farm trials and economic analysis of manure management practices will be initiated







# Out-wintering Area: one month regrowth



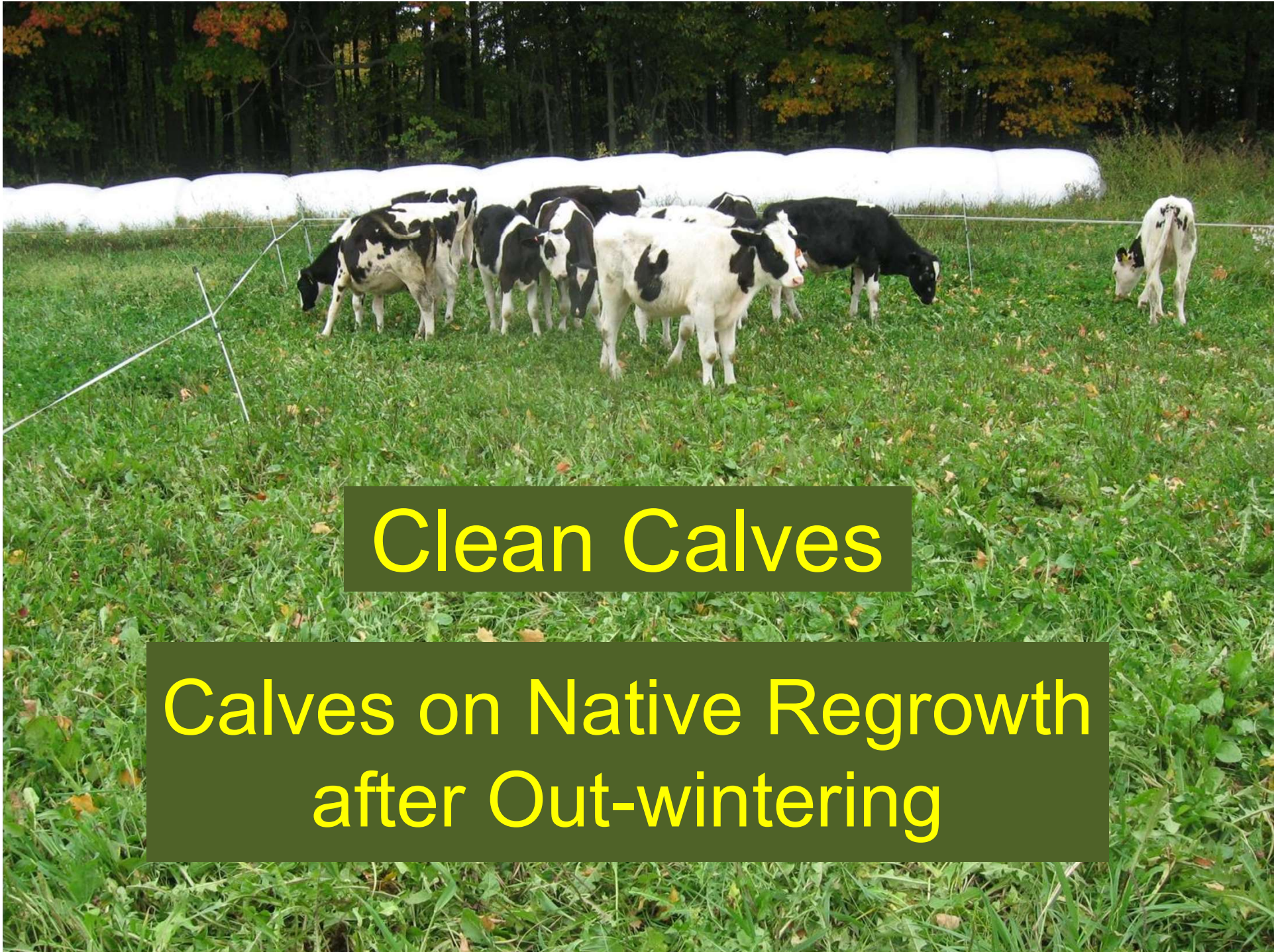










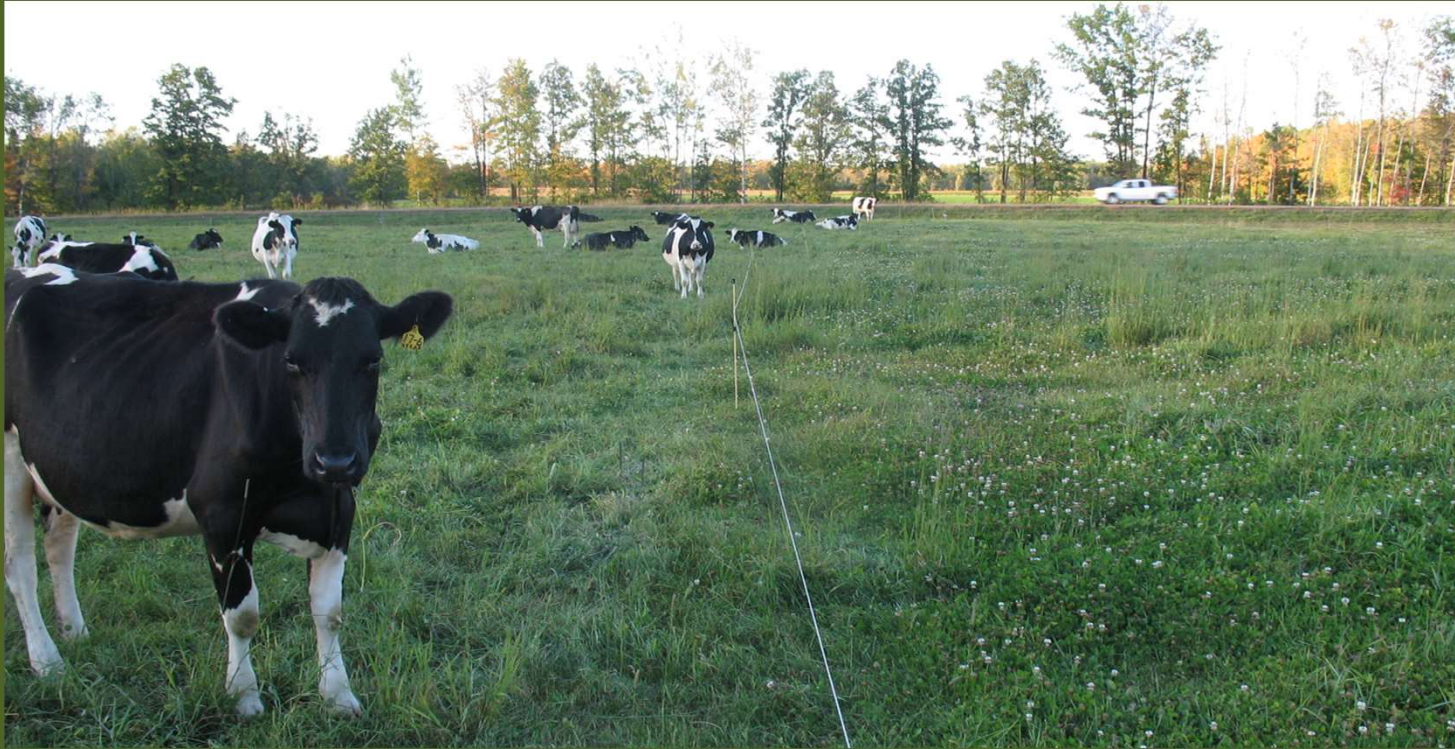


# Clean Calves

Calves on Native Regrowth  
after Out-wintering



# Holistic Management

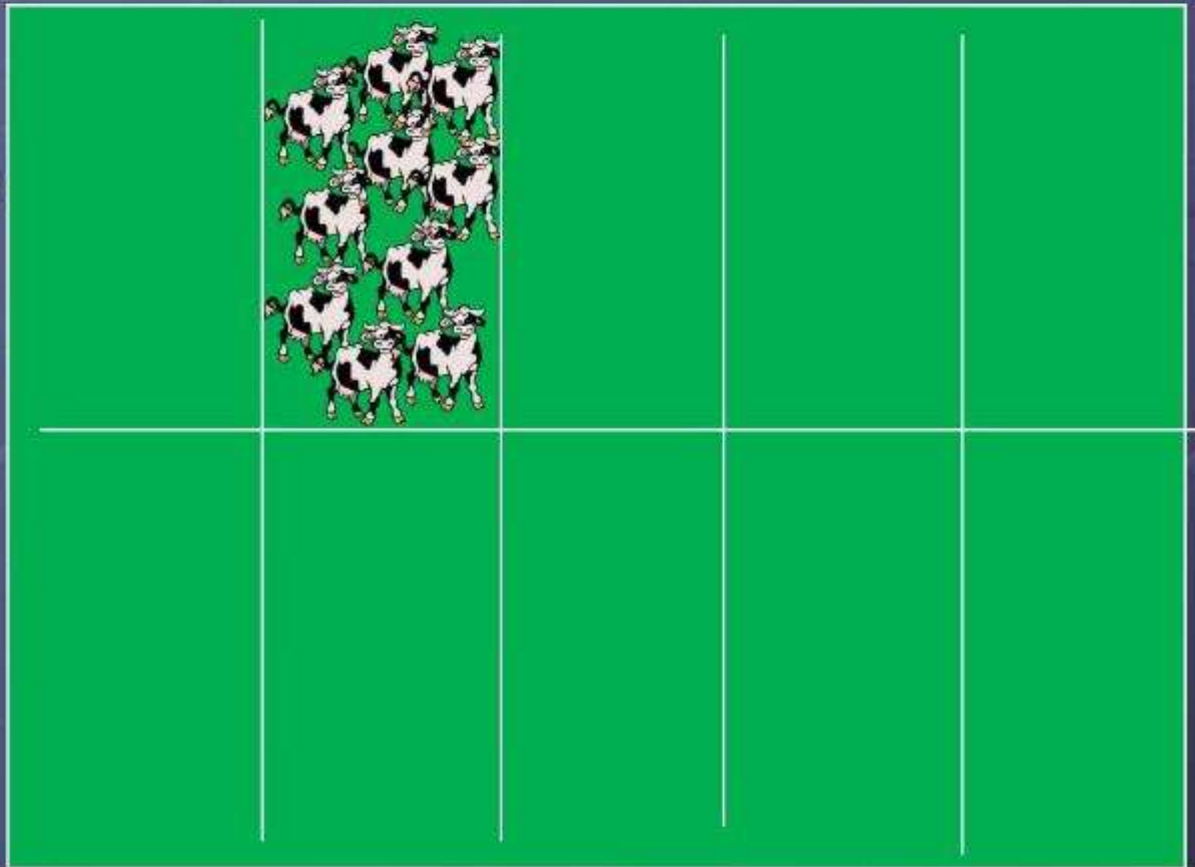


- Takes a Big Picture Approach
- Grazing is a Fundamental Tool
- Helps you Monitor Results
- Allows Flexibility to Change

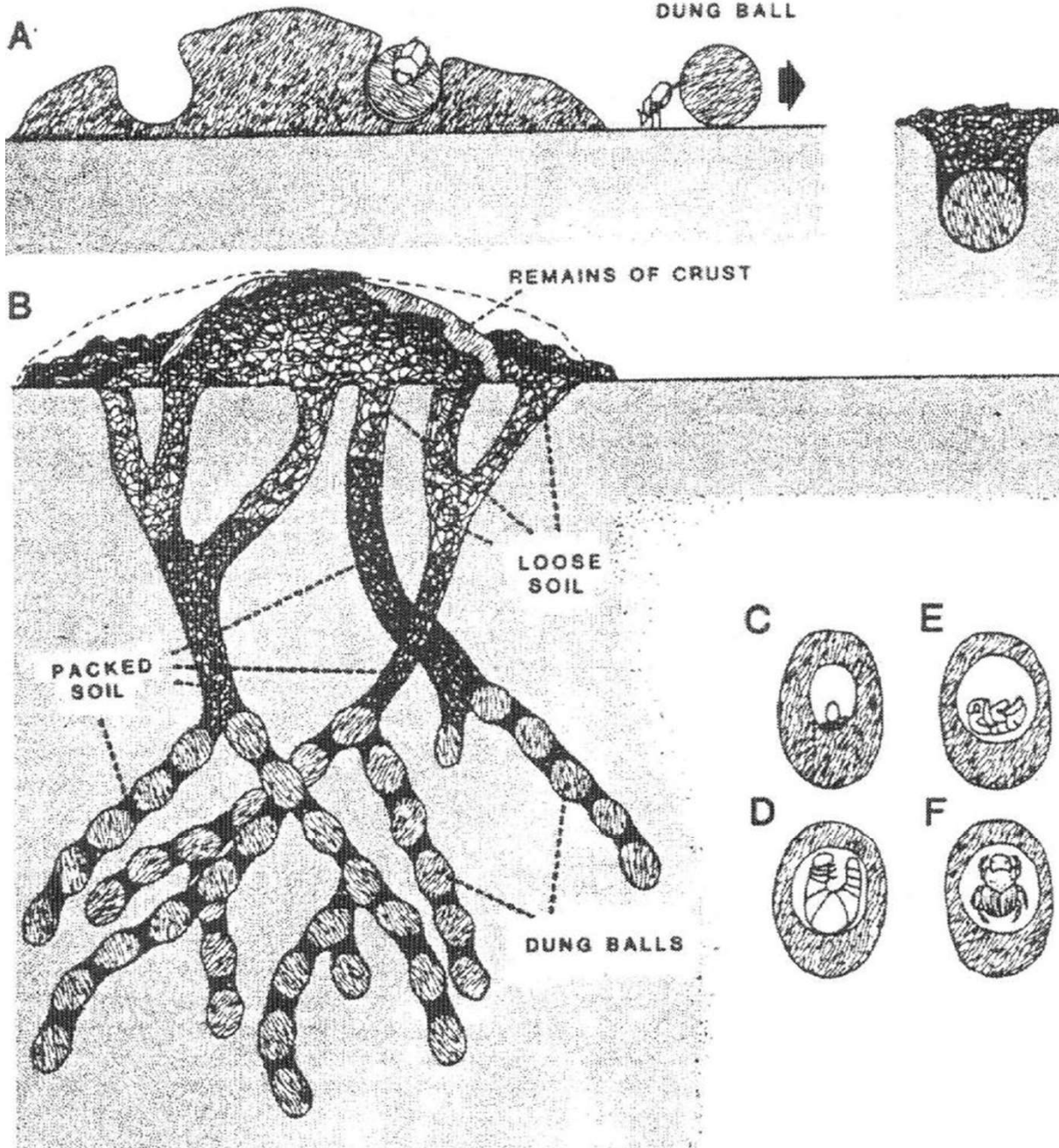


# Pasture subdivision and stock density

- ✗ Each level of subdivision results in higher stock density
- ✗ Stock density is now 12,000 lb/acre



'Classical Biological Control in the Southern United States



Bruce Marlin 2004





# Organic nitrogen sources

(60 lb N/acre application rate)

.Manure: 3 to 5 lb N per ton (dairy/beef)

\_Need ~12 to 20 tons/acre

.Compost:

\_12 lb per ton (dairy) = 5 t/a

\_17 lb/ton (poultry) = 3.5 t/a

.Fish based fertilizers: 5-0-0

\_Need ~1200 lb per acre

*.These are all slow release nitrogen sources—  
results may differ.*



















Gary Larson / Andrews McMeel Publishing / AP





# Organic Pasture Rule



- No less than 30% of dry matter intake from pasture during the grazing season
- Grazing season up to 365 days, but no less than 120 days per year
- Year-round access for all animals to the outdoors, shade, shelter, exercise areas, fresh air, clean water for drinking, and direct sunlight, suitable to the species, its stage of life, the climate, and the environment.







**You can graze even if it sometimes feels like you're herding cats.**





## WI Grazing and Organic Contact Organizations

- RIVER COUNTRY RC&D  
[www.rivercountryrcd.org](http://www.rivercountryrcd.org)
- GRASSWORKS INC.  
[www.grassworks.org](http://www.grassworks.org)
- ORGANIC VALLEY CROPP COOP  
[www.organicvalley.coop](http://www.organicvalley.coop)
- DAIRY GRAZING  
APPRENTICESHIP  
[www.dga-national.org](http://www.dga-national.org)

# Questions & Answers

Please type your Q's!





# Connect with



## Upcoming webinars

**January 10:** How to Plan, Promote & Host a Pasture Walk

**February 14:** Farm Bill for Livestock Farmers & Ranchers

**February 20:** Managed Grazing for Healthy Soils

Register at [foodanimalconcernstrust.org/webinars/](http://foodanimalconcernstrust.org/webinars/)

## Fund-a-Farmer Grants

Pasture & Certification Grants of up to \$2,500 for farmers who raise pigs, broiler chickens, laying hens, turkeys, sheep, dairy cows, or beef cattle.

Apply online at [foodanimalconcernstrust.org/grants/](http://foodanimalconcernstrust.org/grants/)

***Applications due by December 4, 2017!***