



Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
MARINETTE AND OCONTO COUNTIES

Resource Center
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If you will need any type of accommodation or assistance as you attend any Extension sponsored event, please contact the host county or Scott at the Marinette County office at least two days prior to the event. All requests will be confidential.

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February, 2026 Ag Newsletter

As I write this, it is well into the 40's temperature wise. Not the kind of weather I enjoy seeing in mid-February. Granted, it gives a reprieve from water pipe concerns, makes manure movement simpler (usually), and the sun is always a welcome thing. But, the warmth decreases or eliminates our snow cover and that bothers me as we head toward the last half of the month and March. Our overwintering plants would definitely prefer to stay fully covered for another 4-6 weeks.

I hope to see most of you at one or more of the events detailed herein
Stay safe, Scott Reuss, Crops & Soils Educator

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Calendar of Events—doesn't include any webinars on pages 5 & 6

Feb. 26	DMC signup deadline (page 2) Final Focus on Forage webinar for 2026 (pg. 6)
Feb. 26/27	Oconto/Marinette Cties. NM Workshops –Lena TH (pg. 7)
March 2	Green Bay West Shores' Demo Network mtg, Suring (pg. 8)
March 2	N Management/NOPP Day—Oshkosh area
March 3	Beef Feeders Workshop—Cecil (page 3)
March 4	Cecil—Crop Insurance & Grain Mktg workshop (page 7)
March 6	VITAL workshop—Manitowoc (page 5)
March 9	Ag Tiling Workshop—Stevens Point (page 4)
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March 12	Spanish language Manure Applicator Training @ Pagel's Ponderosa—Kewaunee (pg. 4)
March 12	Ag for Tomorrow Conf., Escanaba (page 5)
March 12	Fruit Crop Pest Management—Antigo (pg. 7)
March 17	@ Shawano Courthouse, Private Pesticide Applicator Training-pg. 6
March 18	Manure Applicator Training @ Matsche Farms (pg. 4)
March 19	Manure Applicator Training @ Gaertig Farms (pg. 4)
March 25/26	Lang. Cty. NM Workshops—pg 7
March 26	Fruit Tree Pruning Workshop—Antigo (pg. 7)
March 27	Lambing Basics Workshop—Wausau (pg. 3)
April 10	Antigo—Farmland Owner's Workshop. Will include various topics from Farmland Preservation to conservation programs and nutrient management planning. Hold the date, full details to come soon.

Dairy Margin Coverage – Sign up and Establish New Production History

I don't believe it is unrealistic to say that most people who have talked to me about, or attended one of the workshops I've done on the topic, the Dairy Margin Coverage(DMC) program would say that I am generally a proponent of it. The new iteration of the DMC has a signup deadline of February 26 and I am hereby clearly stating that the math strongly indicates farms should enroll their Tier I production at the maximum \$9.50 margin coverage level. Further, based on the math below, I think it is pretty clear to say that there is exceptionally minimal economic risk in signing up for the available 6 year lock-in, as FSA will discount your premium fees by 25%.

First, make sure you get to the FSA office before February 26 with your farm's milk production data for 2021, '22, and '23. All milk producing farms have the opportunity to revise their production history to the greatest of those three years. The new production history is what will dictate your milk production coverage level. It is very important that you maximize how much milk production you can cover under the Tier I premium structure. For any dairies under 175-200 cows, you will likely be able to increase your covered production, as the Tier I coverage has been raised from the previous 5 million up to 6 million pounds of milk. If you are significantly below that, you will be able to increase to the greater production level from within those three years of production. The three points below are straight from the Farm Service Agency:

- Existing dairy operations that started marketing milk on or before January 1, 2023, will use the higher of milk marketings for the years of 2021, 2022, or 2023.
- New dairy operations starting after January 1, 2023, will use their first year of monthly milk marketings, even for a partial year.
- Milk marketing statements or production evidence are required to establish a production history.

Okay, let's do the math.

Tier I premium @ \$9.50 margin coverage is \$0.15 per cwt annually. IF you use the Lock-in provision, this becomes \$0.1125 per cwt annually.

January, 2026 expected DMC payment at the \$9.50 coverage level is \$1.41 per covered cwt, which is equal to $1/12^{\text{th}}$ of your annual production. Another way to look at that is to divide the anticipated payment by 12 and that is your payment for each covered cwt for the year. For January, that would be $\$1.41/12 = \underline{\$0.1175}$. That means the January payment will pay the entire 2026 premium. February, 2026 forecasted DMC payment is (as of Feb. 16) \$1.43, which would pay the entire 2027 premium.

In other words, you're going to get free DMC coverage for your Tier I production for the rest of 2026 and 2027. Realistically, based on past performance, there will be other DMC program payments made out during the life of the program such that you will be money ahead from paying the premiums and there is certainly the very high risk of a poor margin year being within the 6 years of the program. We don't want to see \$5 margins again, but the DMC is the most cost-effective (for first 6 million pounds) risk management tool we have to help us get through a bad margin year.

Dairy Educator Position Now Vacant

Stephanie Bowers resigned from Extension as of February 6 to take a position with Gallagher's eShepherd virtual fence team. Oconto and Shawano Counties will be part of the decision-making process that occurs within the next month or so (hopefully) as to if/when the position is reposted and if it continues as it was, including those two as well as Outagamie and Winnebago Counties.

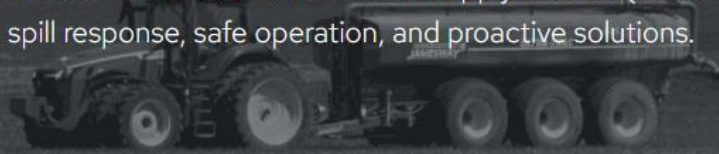
In the meantime, if you have any dairy management information needs or questions, reach out to me and I will either get you the needed information or get you in touch with the correct person within our system.

Regional Program Opportunities

Manure 101

Hands-On Training for Safer Manure Application

The Manure Applicator training is an interactive session for those who apply manure (to their own farm or for hire) focused on spill response, safe operation, and proactive solutions.



The Manure Applicator Training program helps keep manure applicators, other farm employees, and the general public safer during manure application processes. Another goal of the training is to help manure applicators follow manure application maps/plans that meet a farm's nutrient management plan – thus helping keep the environment in better shape. Add to those wins the fact that some farms/custom application businesses can have their liability insurance premiums decreased (not all ins. Companies are involved). Also, we will often have local topics of discussion and/or county-specific aspects at a given site. For example, at Gaertig's on March 19, there will be a discussion of Oconto County's manure spill response system. The following training options are available this year, register at go.wisc.edu/2026manure101/ Fee is \$10 per person.

- + Feb. 23 & 25 @ 1 p.m.; Luxemburg Fairgrounds
 - + March 2 @ 1 p.m.; Manitowoc – Farm Discovery Center
 - + March 3 @ 9 a.m. – Chilton Courthouse (offered in English and Spanish)
- + March 12 @ 9 a.m.; Kewaunee – Pagel's Ponderosa (Spanish only)
 - + March 12 @ 2 p.m. & 6 p.m.; Chilton Couthouse
 - + March 18 @ 1 p.m.; Birnamwood – Matsche Farms
- + March 19 @ 1 p.m.: Oconto Falls – Gaertig Farms
 - + March 23 @ 12:30 p.m.; Abbottsford City Hall

Wisconsin Ag Drainage Update 2026: Solar/Conventional Lift Stations, regulatory update

A registration confirmation will be e-mailed to you when your registration is received.

Workshop Information

Workshop Name	Wisconsin Ag Drainage Update 2026: Solar/Conventional Lift Stations, regulatory update
Date	March 9, 2026. 9 am - 4 pm
Location	UW-Stevens Point Marshfield Campus, 2000 W 5th, Marshfield WI, Room 131
Deadline	March 2, 2026
Price	\$46.00

A one day event for drainage contractors, agency staff and farmers installing their own ag drainage systems focused on the essentials of lift stations and drainage regulations.

Register at: <http://go.wisc.edu/drainage26>

Agriculture for Tomorrow Conference

Thursday, March 12th, 2026 - Bay College, Escanaba, MI

9:00-9:45 (EST)	Registration & Educational Exhibits—Joseph Heirman University Center (JHUC) Atrium			
9:45-10:30 JHUC 952	Welcome: Dr. James DeDecker, Director, Upper Peninsula Research & Extension Center Keynote Address: “Northern Michigan University’s Controlled Environment and Indoor Agriculture Programs: Preparing Students for the Future of Food Production” —Lehren Olk-Szost, NMU Assistant Professor			
	<u>CROPS (FIELD & VEG) TRACK—JHUC 901</u>	<u>LOCAL MARKETING TRACK—JHUC 903</u>	<u>HOMESTEAD TRACK—JHUC 911</u>	<u>LIVESTOCK TRACK—JHUC 909</u>
10:45-11:40	A-1 The Newest Technology in Tractor Tires	A-2 Farm to Family Listening Session	A-3 (RUP credits) Intro to Permaculture and the Soil Food Web	A-4 How Technology is Helping Dairy Producers
11:40-12:10	Visit Tradeshow Exhibitors & Sponsors in JHUC 952 Conference Room			
12:10-1:00	Lunch in Cafeteria (Student Center Room 533)			
1:00-1:55	B-5 (RUP credits) Biocontrol Options for Vegetable Insect Pests	B-6 Farmer Stories from the Field: Selling to Institutions	B-7 Cold Storage for Season Extension	B-8 (RUP credits) PFAS in Agriculture
2:05-3:00	C-9 Understanding Year-end Financial Analysis	C-10 Bringing the Farm to School	C-11 (RUP credits) Small Scale Pastured Broilers & Turkeys	C-12 Farrowing Two Litters of Pigs per Year
3:10-4:05	D-13 (RUP credits) Cultural and Biological Disease Management for Small Growers	D-14 Fundraising, Funding Models, and New Farm to Institution Grants	D-15 Michigan Cottage Food Law Overview	D-16 Grass, Grain on Grass, or Grain-Fed Beef?

The annual MSU-Extension sponsored Agriculture for Tomorrow conference program is pasted above. This is a great opportunity for those focused on particular production styles or that are considering doing more in the way of direct marketing production practices. Register and see the full program at: <https://events.anr.msu.edu/2026Ag4Tomorrow/> Full day is \$30 if registered by March 1, \$40 if after.



The VITAL workshop offers enhanced topics and ag networking.

Friday, March 6th from 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. @ the Farm WI Discovery Center in Manitowoc
Topics: “Consistency at Scale: One Standard of Calf Care”; “Welfare from the Animal’s Perspective”;
 Following lunch, a producer panel will bring real-world experience to the forefront with “Practical Innovation: Real-World Calf Management Strategies,” and the final presentation is: “Reclaiming Balance After Burnout”.

Registration information

The registration fee is \$30 per person if received by March 5, \$35 thereafter.

Registration includes a farm-to-table meal, breaks, and all meeting materials.

To register, contact Extension Manitowoc County at 920-683-4183; or visit <https://go.wisc.edu/VITALmtg>

Ewe Got This – Lambing Basics Workshop (see Jan. nl)

March 27 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.; 164475 Granite Road, Wausau – Register by March 13 at <https://go.wisc.edu/lambing> or contact Heather Schlessler at 715-261-1239 or email to heather.schlessler@wisc.edu

Beef Direct Marketing Workshop

A workshop for any WI farm direct marketing beef or considering it. Offered by the WI Beef Council in conjunction with the WI Assoc. of Meat Processors, UW-Madison Div. of Extension, and WI Dept. of Ag. This will be an opportunity to network, as well as learn. The workshop will begin with a classroom session and then move to a local processor for a carcass cutting demonstration.

- March 11 – Kaukauna. Morning session – Grand Stay Hotel, 1541 Arbor Way, Kaukauna, WI. Afternoon session – Haen Meats, 600 County Hwy KK, Kaukauna.

9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. with lunch at morning location.

There is a \$25 registration fee and space will be limited at each location to 30 participants. You can register by calling the Wisconsin Beef Council at 1-800-728-2333 or at <https://www.beeftips.com/directmarketing>

Topics to be covered during the workshops include

- Easy to Use Marketing Tools
- Licensing & Labeling Requirements
- Meating Consumer Expectations
- Farmer-Processor-Customer Relations
- Bull session (Group discussion covering topics like online sales, insurance, and collecting payments)
- Carcass fabrication – watch a meat processor breakdown a half carcass.

Private Pesticide Applicator Training, March 17 – Register in advance!

Please make sure you give yourself time to get the book ordered and sent to you ahead of the training dates, as we cannot take walk-in's, nor do we have the PAT books anymore.

You must order the PAT training book from the PAT store website, <https://patstore.wisc.edu/>

Start by clicking on the Private Applicator button, then click on the appropriate category on the left hand side of the page. For most, it will be the '100/101 General Farming', but some may want to do Fruit Crops or Greenhouse/Nursery. Click 'Add to Cart'. Before you pay for the manual (\$43), think about how you want to take the test and if you want to attend a training session. If you want to attend a training class (March 17 at the Shawano Courthouse), you will need to click 'Continue Shopping', then click "Training Classes" tab on the left. Scroll through the list of counties to find Shawano, then put in the number of attendees and click add to cart (\$10).

You will then be able to checkout and pay via credit card. If you do not have a computer or a credit card, request a paper order form from either the Shawano, Marinette, or Langlade Extension offices, but make sure you do so at least a couple weeks ahead of when you want to attend training/testing. NOTE: If you either do not want to attend a local training or cannot make one of the two dates available, you can choose to Self-study or do training via the on-line platform. On-line training is free and allows you to pass the exam with 50% correct just as with the live training, but there are time limits. Via self-study, you go through the materials, then schedule a time to take the test at the Shawano, Marinette, or Langlade Extension offices (or Green Bay DATCP center). With self-study, you need 70% correct to pass.

2026 Focus on Forage Webinars

The annual Focus on Forage webinars finish on February 26 @ 12:30 p.m. Focus on Forage Cover Crops: Dr. Lisa Kissing-Kucek from Dairy Forage Research Center, Dan Marzu with Extension, and Bill Powel-Smith with LandCares will discuss cover crop species and varieties for forage and grain systems; WI cover crop forage quality data; and using forage cover crops in dairy cow diets. Register free or view the other 3 events' recorded versions at: <https://cropsandsoils.extension.wisc.edu/focus-on-forage/>

Topics of the other three in the series were Alfalfa & Corn Silage; Forage Research; and Managed Grazing.

Local Programs

Nutrient Management Plan Workshops- Understanding and/or Writing a Plan

Marinette & Oconto Counties' – Feb. 26 & 27 @ Lena Town Hall (see Jan. newsl.)
Langlade County – March 25 & 26 @ Lang. Cty. Resource Center

The first day focuses on understanding nutrients and soils and how we can meet crop nutrient needs most efficiently and effectively. The second day focuses on helping farms write their actual plans in SNAP+. Free to attend for anyone. Farms from within the respective counties that attend both days and complete a valid NM plan qualify for grant-funded stipend and possibly other cost-share funds for soil sampling. Register or get more information by contacting Langlade County Land Conservation at 715-627-6385 or email to agossett@co.langlade.wi.us for the Langlade Cty version. If you have any questions about the Marinette/Oconto version contact Scott Reuss (front page), or call/text to 715-923-3081 to register.

Fruit Management Workshop Series Free series continuing on March 12 & March 26, starting

at 5:30 p.m. March 12 will be in the Eau Claire River Room of the Langlade County Resource Center (837 Clermont St., Antigo). The March 26 workshop is being hosted by Ron Pregler @ N1915 Cty. Rd. X, Antigo. Wear weather-appropriate gear for the outdoor March 26 session.

Thursday, March 12: Pest Management in Backyard Fruit Crops. All of our hardy fruit crops face pressure from various insects and diseases. This session will help you identify the pests that may impact your fruits and help you form management plans/practices that will minimize their impacts.

Thursday, March 26: Pruning of Fruit Crops (Trees focus). Proper pruning and training of fruit trees, shrubs, and vines is one of the most important management practices of raising fruit crops. This hands-on workshop will allow you to better understand tree/shrub morphology, proper pruning cuts and decision-making, and see the different approaches when working in young, bearing, and older trees.

Grain Marketing and Crop Insurance Workshop

Cecil Community Center – 111 E Hofman St., Cecil

Wednesday, March 4, 2026 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

**\$10 Registration includes lunch, Pre-register by
calling/texting Scott R. at 715-701-0966**

There are a lot of questions on most minds as we think about 2026 crop production economics. What types of grain marketing practices should we consider when looking at a sideways and relatively unprofitable market? How can we integrate crop insurance programs with our marketing decision-making, or should they be completely separate? What should our farm be doing for crop insurance coverage as we look toward the March 16 deadline?

Crop insurance and grain marketing play big roles in most farms' risk management plans – whether those plans are formal or informal. Understanding crop insurance and knowing about changes to crop insurance options & opportunities is a critical part of making sound decisions for your farm's insurance plans. Thinking about the potential grain marketing tools that you can use and how/when to consider using them in the 2026 pricing climate can also help you approach those decisions properly. The discussion and exercises at this workshop will help you choose your crop insurance plan with better confidence and give you goals & tactics to consider for your marketing plan.

GREEN BAY WEST SHORE WINTER MEETING

March 2, 2026 | 10 AM - 3 PM

Mahoney Farms
8641 WIS-32, Suring, WI 54174



AGENDA

Maximizing the Potential of Soil Health

Tom Cotter
Cotter Farm, Austin, MN

20"/40" Corn Trials

Jim Mahoney
Mahoney Farms, Suring, WI

Lesson Learned from Interseeding Panel

Grazing Update

Matt Bjelland
Brown Star Farms, Gillett, WI

Local Research Updates

Scott Reuss - UW Division of Extension

REGISTER BY FEBRUARY 27TH

Online:



By Phone:

Call Jodie at (920) 253-9197

By Email:

jodie@tilthag.com

**\$5 REGISTRATION
(LUNCH PROVIDED)**

**PAY AT THE DOOR,
CASH OR CHECK
ONLY. CHECKS CAN
BE MADE OUT TO:
OCONTO LWCD**



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