
Practical News - Learn from bale grazing research + Enroll in our N Rate Risk Protection Program

From Practical Farmers of Iowa <info@practicalfarmers.org>

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To Anna Pesek <anna.pesek@practicalfarmers.org>



March 17, 2025

Equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.



Farmers consider third crops and livestock integration at the Midwest Covers and Grains Conference

Despite a March snowstorm, around 70 people gathered in Baraboo, Wisconsin, on March 5 for the third annual Midwest Covers and Grains Conference.

Farmers from across the Midwest spent time networking, attending farmer-led sessions and swapping knowledge. Taking a break from their winter chores, many livestock farmers came to explore incorporating small grains and cover crops for animal feed.

Keep growing your knowledge of small grains with our next shared learning call in April.

NEWS

Research: "Bale Grazing Effects on Soil and Pasture Plant Communities"



Bale grazing is a way of feeding livestock in the winter by providing hay to animals out on the land, instead of indoors.

Adam Ledvina bale-grazes goats on pasture and was curious to learn how animal traffic near the unspooled bales affected the soil and plant community.

Bale grazing offers advantages like introducing nutrients back to the pasture and potentially improving plant diversity by rolling out hay, allowing for reseeding. **[See the full trial results.](#)**

Blog: "How Precision Conservation Transformed a Farm's Marginal Land into Valuable Habitat"



Seeking to put highly erodible areas of the farm into conservation, a PFI farmer (who wished to remain anonymous) used precision conservation to convert hilly areas into habitat and to filter soil runoff from the areas of the farm still in production.

Using satellite imagery, **Stephanie Nelson** of Pheasants Forever identified areas that could be restored to habitat, practically down to the square meter, following the landowner's goals to leave as much land in row crop as possible. **[Read the blog post.](#)**

Welcome our new finance director, Jim Kain



Jim Kain joined Practical Farmers of Iowa in February 2025 as the finance director. In this role, he provides leadership and direction to PFI's finance team and helps support all areas of PFI.

Prior to joining PFI, Jim was the finance director at Disability Rights Iowa, a nonprofit that advocates for Iowans with disabilities. Jim has an MBA from the University of Iowa and a bachelor's degree in accounting from Iowa State University. [Read Jim's full bio.](#)

Would you cut nitrogen if your yield was protected?



Nitrogen fertilizer is a major cost for farmers. But using less is risky. It could mean lower yields and less income.

But what if you could cut costs, not profits? PFI's [**N Rate Risk Protection Program**](#) offers a risk protection payment of \$35 per acre if your yield drops after reducing your typical nitrogen rate.

Enrolled farmers also receive field-specific consultation from a PFI agronomist on what reductions might be feasible. [Enroll today.](#)

Explore [more resources](#) on deciding an economical nitrogen rate:

- Research Report: ["Can We Reduce N Rates to Corn and Improve ROI?"](#)
- Video: ["Reducing N Rates to Corn"](#)
- Video: ["Saving Money on P & K Application in a Soil Health System"](#)

Meet a Labor4Learning trainer: Humble Hands Harvest



Hannah Breckbill and Emily Fagan of Humble Hands Harvest in Decorah, Iowa, are looking for a vegetable farmer to join them this growing season through PFI's Labor4Learning program.

Humble Hands Harvest grows no-till organic vegetables for market, wholesale and seed; rotationally grazes sheep for meat; and is establishing a number of woody perennial crops.

[Learn more about this position and other Labor4Learning opportunities.](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Webinar: "Watering Systems for Graziers"



Tuesday, April 1 | Noon-1 p.m. | [Online](#)

Based on his popular session at PFI's 2022 Annual Conference, **Dave Schmidt** is reprising his talk for a new and broader audience.

Access to water can be a barrier to grazing – but installing watering systems can seem daunting. In this webinar, Dave will share his experiences with different types of watering systems. Learn what might work for your grazing system during this webinar. **[Register today.](#)**

More upcoming events

All events listed are in Central time.

March 18: Webinar – [Building and Maintaining Fair Lease Agreements](#)

Hosted by: Rachel Armstrong
Noon-1 p.m. | **[Online](#)**

March 25: Webinar – [The Advantages of Cover Crops](#)

Hosted by: Kristin and Pat Duncanson
Noon-1 p.m. | **[Online](#)**

[View our events calendar](#)

IN THE NEWS

Members in the News

Showcasing member voices and their diverse, independent viewpoints.

Beth Hoffman of Lovilia, IA, was a guest columnist in [Des Moines Register: Better Iowa school lunches? Try funding, not new guidelines](#), which featured **Jason Grimm** of Williamsburg, IA

Chris Henning of Cooper, IA, wrote a letter to the editor in [Greene County News Online: Letter to the editor, C. Henning, loss of local food funding](#), which featured the following members:

- **Ryan Marquardt** of Van Meter, IA
- **Jordan Scheibel** of Grinnell, IA
- **Mari Hunt Wassink** of Cedar Rapids, IA
- **Ron Rosmann** of Harlan, IA
- **Jeff Hafner** of Panora, IA
- **Aaron Lehman** of Polk City, IA

Emma Johnson of Central City, IA, was featured on [KCRG: USDA chooses not to renew deal with Iowa farmers](#)

Emma Johnson of Central City, IA, and **Anna Pesek** of Coggon, IA, were featured on [KWWL: USDA cuts 'devastating' for local farmers](#)

Emma Johnson of Central City, IA, and **Mari Hunt Wassink** of Cedar Rapids, IA, were featured in [The Gazette: Small and new farmers brace for impact of abrupt federal cuts to USDA programs that provide food to Iowa school children and pantries](#)

James Hepp of Rockwell City, IA, was featured on the [Iowa Farm Bureau webpage: Growing greener](#)

Jordan Scheibel of Grinnell, IA, was featured in [Des Moines Register: USDA yanks \\$11.3M to buy Iowa meat, dairy, fruits, veggies for schools, day cares, more](#)

Justin Jackson of Hartford, IA, and **Leah and Curtis Maeder** of Indianola, IA, were featured in [Indianola Independent Advocate: Warren County farmers accepted into Savings Incentive Program](#)

Martha McFarland, PFI's senior farmland viability coordinator, was featured in [No-Till Farmer: Practical Farmers of Iowa Unveils Mentor Program](#), along with the following PFI members:

- **Stephen Riggins** of Cambridge, IA
- **Eric Franzenburg** of Keystone, IA
- **Mike Salama** of Boone, IA
- **David Royer** of Coon Rapids, IA
- **Andrew Phelps** of Guttenberg, IA
- **John Rafkin and Wendy Johnson** of Charles City, IA
- **Elana Gingerich** of Parnell, IA
- **Emma and Marcus Johnson** of Central City, IA
- **Shae Pesek** of Coggon, IA
- **Emma Barber** of Mount Vernon, IA
- **Kathy Dice and Tom Wahl** of Wapello, IA
- **Alice McGary** of Ames, IA
- **Hannah Breckbill and Emily Fagan** of Decorah, IA
- **Mike Levine** of Douglas, NE

Ryan Marquardt of Van Meter, IA, **Mari Hunt Wassink** of Cedar Rapids, IA, **Peter Kraus** of Decorah, IA, and **Aaron Lehman** of Polk City, IA, were featured on [KCRG: USDA cuts programs bringing local food into schools, food banks](#)

Have you been featured in the media? If you're a PFI member, tell us when and where to find a link to the article, and we'll feature you in a future issue of Practical News.

Contact: elizabeth.wilhelm@practicalfarmers.org

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