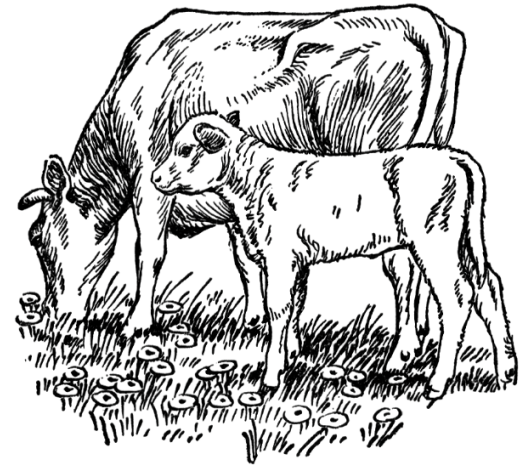


Pasture News

LaGrange County Soil & Water Conservation District
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LaGrange, IN 46761
(260) 463-3166 ext. 3
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The 2025 August Pasture Walk will be on August 14.
We will be touring the Phil Whetstone Farm at 63586 CR
35 Goshen, IN 46528. Topic will be organic dairying.
Hours 1:00pm to 3:00pm.

Whew!!! Has it been hot this summer! We were pretty lucky last summer with some warm days, but usually last year it cooled off pretty nicely at night. Not this year! According to Jeff Burbrink with Purdue Extension, the last 30 days in LaGrange County have averaged 3°-6° above average and normal nighttime “cool offs” have not been occurring. I love the Fall and Winter, endure the Spring, and grumble through the Summer. My “comfort zone” ranges from 25° up to about 70°.



It was a hot day once again touring Alvin Lambright’s farm for the July Pasture Walk on Thursday the 10th. The sun was intense, but boy did the shade under that maple tree out front of the house feel good! We had probably a record turnout for July with around 58 showing up for the program, and that didn’t include all the children. The weather was (once again) quite warm with highs in the upper 80’s, hazy and humid. Oh, well, they say the corn likes that kind of weather, even if we don’t.

Everyone hiding in the shade introduced themselves to start off the program. We had people from a large area of northern Indiana, ranging from several surrounding counties. Amy Renkenberger from the LaGrange County SWCD reminded the crowd of the upcoming Northern Indiana Grazing Conference, to be held February 6 & 7 in 2026. I hope it’s a little cooler by then! Having worn glasses since 4th grade back in 1974, I have often been called “4-eyes”. Well, Amy I guess can now be called “4-legs” since she took a little spill off her horse a couple of weeks ago and is now getting around on crutches. Wish her well the next time you see her! Martin Franke related to the group an opportunity that LaGrange County residents have that wish to build an exclusion fence to keep livestock away from surface water body shorelines for the sake of improving water quality. If you are interested, please contact the SWCD office at 260-463-3166 extension 3.

Alvin, our July host, has lived almost his entire life on this, his home farm. Alvin represents the 3rd generation of the Lambright family to own and operate this property. He took the farm management over with his wife Miriam in 2016 (Alvin’s grandpa originally bought the farm back in 1949). The farm consists of 110 acres altogether, with 20 acres of that in woods. The entire farm is very flat-someone in the group asked Alvin where his children sled in the wintertime.

The Lambright family have operated this as a dairy farm as long as they have been here. Alvin achieved organic certification in 2018, and has been an “All-Grass” operation since 2020. Alvin and Miriam have 6 children aged 3 up to 13: 4 boys and 3 girls.

They are currently milking 44 cows, all Jerseys. Alvin mentioned that he started out with Holsteins, but has gone with Jersey cattle because he prefers them. The soil on his farm tends to be of a heavy, dark loam, good for retaining moisture. It is tile drained, but still tends to wetness at times. Since going all grass in 2020, the Lambright family does not do much tillage, but they do employ some summer annuals from time to time, raising crops like Sudan grass and turnips for grazing. Alvin prefers forage species like meadow and even tall fescue, ryegrass, alfalfa and red and white clover. He tries to make enough hay on the farm to be self-sustaining without having to purchase any, and in most years that works out OK. Most hay is made as baleage, with some made dry when the weather cooperates.



We started the Pasture Walk in Field 8. This is a 10-acre piece of ground, seeded in 2019. Alvin commented that he has seen a considerable improvement in the soil health and productivity over the last three generations of his family on this farm. Before the Lambright family had the farm, it was farmed for grain. As we walked this field, Alvin talked about the water system he installed just this spring. He has water lines running to all his grazing land now except for the two fields behind the woods. He installed a riser about every 150' to allow for the use of moveable water tanks.

From Field 8 we walked through the woods to Field 7 at the far east end of the farm. The only way to access Fields 6 and 7 is either through the woods or by going north to the old railroad line, which can be used as a farm lane. This railroad line is supposed to be developed as a bicycle trail at some time in the next couple of years, in which case the lane through the woods will have to be developed to allow for livestock and farm traffic to be passed through it. Erica Wyss, LaGrange County NRCS District Conservationist, mentioned that USDA farm bill programs exist that would help cost share on access lanes such as this.



Alvin has been working on developing Field 7 to be more useful. Originally just a horse pasture, this field had a lot of brush and invasives such as multiflora rose. The soil on this part of the farm is heavy with more clay content than the rest of the property. It is mostly now cleared of brush and invasives. Alvin has grazed it this year; it is currently in alfalfa and ryegrass. Alvin wants to continue to clear the fence row between this field and the next and eventually make this area into one thirteen-acre field that would only be used for hay production.

Field 6 was seeded in 2019. This field is ready for 3rd cutting hay; Alvin is waiting to see if rain

forecast for this weekend actually materializes before mowing because he might need it for grazing if it stays dry. It has been 26 days since grazed; the field has been hayed once and grazed once so far this year.

Field 5 is subdivided into 4 paddocks, but it managed as one field. It is 15 acres altogether. This particular field had never been plowed in Alvin's lifetime up to 2024, when it was plowed for the first time since 1949. The field tests 6% organic matter, but the soil feels hard underfoot. Alvin thinks that the soil type here is susceptible to hoof compaction. It was suggested from the group that it may benefit from a subsoiler to help break up the surface pan structure. The group asked Alvin what his formula for new hay seeding is. He responded that he normally seeds 25 pounds of alfalfa mixed with 2 pounds of grass to get a new hay land started. He would like to renovate all four paddocks in Field 5. There is a lot of buckhorn coming up in the field, with the western part of this area an old grass planting. Alvin plans to amend the fertility here with an application of hog manure.

The group eagerly headed back to the farm buildings to enjoy the shade of the maple trees and to get some relief from the hot sun. On the way there, we discussed Alvin's rotational operation. He usually moves the cattle at least twice a day. Field 4 is a 10-acre field that struggles to grow grass. It tests low in organic matter. It has been grazed twice this year so far. On the day of the Pasture Walk, it had been grazed 12 days previous. Fields 1-4 are all 10-acre fields that are long and narrow in shape. Alvin prefers this arrangement as it saves time when mowing hay. He started rearranging these field to achieve this field shape in 2020.



Field 3 was baled for the cows in the first cutting; the second will be made for the horses. This is a new seedling, having been planted April 23, 2025. There is alfalfa, oats (as a nurse crop/forage) and grass growing here now. Wishing to see a heavier grass component, Alvin raised his grass seeding on this field to 5 pounds/acre from his normal 2 pounds. He noticed a rust problem in the oats in this second cutting which was not evident in the first. Alvin thinks the southern half of this field tends to be more productive than the northern half.

Field 2 is another 10-acre field that was seeded in 2021. It was made for hay 2 days before the Pasture Walk on July 8. Previously, that second cutting was made 23 days prior. He was planning to delay making third

cutting, but it started to bloom, so he mowed it earlier than he had originally planned.

We finished our tour of the farm in Field 1. This again is a new seeding and again, the north half of this field is less productive than the south end, the north half showing a lot more buckhorn. This field is 116 rods long; Fields 1 and 2 are the first two fields that Alvin changed direction on and removed the former fence rows. Field 1 is ready for 3rd cutting hay. It was seeded in the Spring of 2024. Red clover and grass were carry-overs from the previous seeding.

The group walked through the two-acre calf pasture on the way back to the farm buildings. We enjoyed some snacks and cold pop and water before heading home to do chores. Our thanks to the Lambricht family for hosting July's Pasture Walk this year! We look forward to touring Phil Whetstone's farm near Goshen on August 14.

