



Monthly Newsletter - August 2026



Growing the dairy grazing sector, together

Your monthly update from the Dairy Grazing Alliance

Welcome to the DGA Newsletter

Happy August from all of us at DGA!

As summer rolls on, there's plenty happening across the dairy grazing community. In this issue, Executive Director Joe Tomandl reflects on his recent keynote at the American Cheese Society conference and the opportunity grass-fed dairy presents for mid-sized U.S. farms, along with why a clear, credible standard matters for the future of the sector.

We're also sharing important details about MGIC fall semester classes, instructors and registration, the latest from *Graze* magazine, and a research summary from Greg Brickner on grazing behavior, dry matter intake and forage quality in taller versus shorter swards. You'll also find plenty of industry news, helpful resources and upcoming events to keep on your radar.

Thanks, as always, for being part of the DGA community.

Happy grazing!



MANAGED GRAZING

INNOVATION CENTER

Registration closes on September 21st!

Semester	Registration Ends	Semester Starts	Semester Ends
Fall 2026	September 21st	September 21st	December 11th

Class	Instructor	Time
Farm Business Management	Samantha Gehrett	Mondays at 11:30 AM CT / 12:30 PM ET
Dairy Cattle Health and Wellness	Natalia Hincapie	Tuesdays at 12 PM CT / 1 PM ET
Managed Grazing Systems for Dairy Cattle	Linda Pechin-Long	Tuesdays at 5 PM CT / 6 PM ET
Soil & Water Resource Management	Amanda Shine	Wednesdays at 11 AM CT / 12 PM ET
Milk Quality	Natalia Hincapie	Wednesdays at 12 PM CT / 1 PM ET
Dairy Cattle Nutrition, Feeds and Feeding	Ben Gotschall	Wednesdays at 1 PM CT / 2 PM ET
Holistic Farming and Systems Approach	Natalia Hincapie	Wednesdays at 5 PM CT / 6 PM ET

Register for MGIC's Fall 2026 Semester

Don't forget to follow MGIC on social media to get the latest news!

Building a Stronger Future for U.S. Grass-Fed Dairy

By Joe Tomandl

I recently had the opportunity to speak at the American Cheese Society conference about something that matters deeply to all of us at Dairy Grazing Alliance: the future of grass-fed dairy in the United States. I shared some of my own family's farming story and how managed grazing has helped us stay in dairy while protecting soil, water, wildlife habitat, and permanent ground cover.

The challenge facing many mid-sized farms today is that dairy is increasingly splitting into two ends: farms large enough to compete in the commodity market and farms small enough to sell directly to consumers. Grass-fed dairy gives us a real opportunity to strengthen farms in the middle, while responding to increasing consumer demand for grass-fed dairy products produced by cows raised on pasture, which many consumers view as more sustainable and nutritious. It also gives us an opportunity to meet more of this value-added demand with U.S. dairy rather than relying so heavily on imports.

To fully realize this opportunity, we need a clear and credible U.S. grass-fed dairy standard. Right now, grass-fed claims vary widely, making it difficult for the supply chain and consumers to know what the term actually means. We need a standard with meaningful grazing and forage requirements that protects the integrity of the claim and works economically for farmers and the marketplace.

Dairy Grazing Alliance is well positioned to lead this effort. Through Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship, MGIC, research, partnerships, and market development, we work



alongside the people and organizations helping to grow this sector. Our goal is to create a standard that works first on the farm: for the land, the animals, the people doing the work, and the milk check that keeps the system viable. From there, it can become a trusted foundation for a stronger grass-fed dairy market within the broader dairy sector, including credible claims, regional processing, and long-term opportunity for mid-sized U.S. dairy farmers.

We will be sharing more updates about this work soon. In the meantime, please feel free to send an email to feedback@dga-national.org with your questions, thoughts, or ideas.



Finding His Own Grazing Groove

Checking in with John
Richmond

By Martha Hoffman Kerestes

Colfax, Wisconsin — It's been over eight years since John Richmond, 32, took the reins at Charles Flodquist's dairy, allowing Charles and his wife Karen to move toward retirement and giving John the chance to be a dairy farmer (*Graze* August-September 2019 and October 2016).



Since then, he's learned a lot and made his own mark on the management of the farm that Charles established a quarter century ago. This includes calf feeding changes, pasture management shifts, and preparations to move from the conventional milk market to an organic one.

Being at the helm of the farm has had its ups and downs, and he's found it's important to discern whether an issue is something he can do something about or one outside his control.

"It really comes in waves," John says. "You'll feel like things are going well and you're progressing and things are green and growing and the animals look good, but then another week maybe the animals aren't looking so good for whatever reason or you lost a calf or the weather isn't panning out, maybe too cold or too dry. So it's been really important to constructively look at things continually and ask yourself, 'is there anything I should be doing to help out? Was there a lesson to be learned? Or is it just a situation where sometimes stuff happens and there's nothing you can do?'"

To see this article in full, order the specific [back issue](#) you are interested in or [subscribe here](#). This article appeared in the August-September 2026 issue of *Graze*.

What's inside the August-September issue of Graze?

- Checking in with DGA graduate John Richmond
- Advisors: growing more grass
- Rolling with the punches this grazing season
- The state of silvopasture
- Pre-weaning lamb health protocol
- Lessons from starting a clay farm
- Building community today

[Learn More & Subscribe](#)

Comparing Grazing Behavior, Dry Matter Intake and Forage Quality in Taller vs. Shorter Swards

By Greg Brickner, Senior Director of Precision Grazing

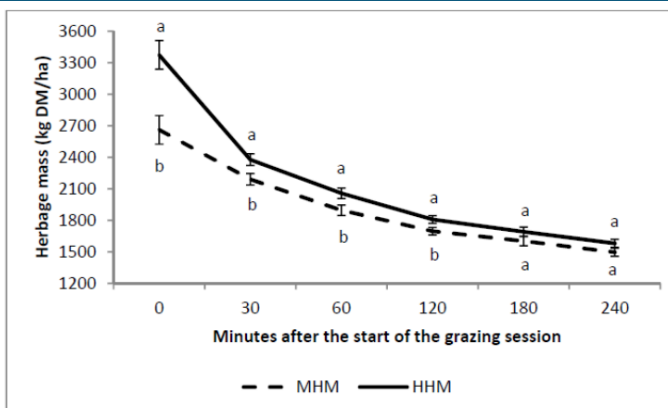


Figure 1. Herbage mass during the grazing-down process in the first grazing session in a medium (MHM) and high (HHM) pre-grazing herbage mass pasture. Different superscript letters at the same time point imply significant differences between treatments ($p < 0.05$).

This is a summary of a grazing research paper from Chile that compared the results of grazing dairy cows on pastures with two different turn-in pasture rest periods/dry matter amounts. The shorter rest period was about 8" tall and the longer rest period was about 12" tall. That doesn't sound like a big difference but that extra rest period has a big effect on the plant. The plant develops more stem and overall neutral detergent fiber (NDF), but also deeper and larger root systems.

The research focused on differences in pasture intake and forage quality over the course of a grazing session between the different rest periods lengths. One of the main findings is represented in the graph below. Over the first 30-60 minutes of a new grazing session cows in taller swards ate significantly more pasture. The difference was due to each mouthful being larger. This may seem obvious, but it is good to know that the effect only exists for the first 30-60 minutes. Importantly, they also looked at what happens to forage quality between the two rest periods and forage quality over the course of a single grazing session.

Forage quality was similar between the two groups in the first hour of grazing. After the first hour, forage quality declined for the longer rest period group, because they were then grazing more stem and less leaf. The paper did not provide much detail about milk production but did state that cows grazing the shorter swards produced more pounds of milk and the cows grazing the taller swards produced milk with a higher fat percentage. That is exactly what one would expect given the higher NDF of the taller sward. I am curious what the difference was in fat corrected milk production, but the paper did not provide that information.

I think this article is worth sharing, because it looks at the compromises and areas for advantage when grazing taller swards. As off-farm inputs become more expensive or unavailable, how do we incorporate the practice of longer rest periods to maintain or regenerate soil fertility without compromising milk production too much? Grazing dairy cows on short rotations does produce more milk, but those pastures must be supported with off-farm fertilizer or manure from purchased feed.

This paper suggests that using multiple breaks could capture more bursts of high pasture intake on taller swards throughout the day while having more control over utilization/residual. This can obviously be done with polywire but virtual collars provide an opportunity to more easily achieve these results. Labor savings alone are not enough to pay for virtual collars. They pay by changing grazing behavior to increase pasture dry matter intake (DMI) and pasture utilization. This beneficial effect is more pronounced in taller swards with longer rest periods than in shorter swards.

[Read Full Paper Here](#)

Industry News and Resources

[WODPA 2026 Legacy Scholarship](#)

The Western Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (WODPA) is proud to announce the creation of the **WODPA Legacy Scholarship**, established to honor the dedication and vision of our past board members who have selflessly served the organic dairy industry. This scholarship aims to carry their impactful legacy forward by supporting the next generation of agricultural leaders. High school seniors, undergraduate, and graduate students pursuing a career in agriculture—with a special preference given to those emphasizing organic agriculture and dairy—are encouraged to apply.

Application Deadline: September 1, 2026

[The CalfHealth AI System Could Detect BRD Days Before Calves Look Sick](#)

Researchers at Penn State are developing the CalfHealth System, an AI-powered platform that combines behavior monitoring, precision livestock technologies and veterinary diagnostics to identify calves at risk for bovine respiratory disease before obvious clinical signs appear.

[What Milk Can Tell Us About Heat Stress](#)

Routine milk spectra could help identify dairy cows with greater heat resilience while revealing the biology behind how cattle cope with heat stress.

[Cows' Diets Influence Omega-3s and Other Fatty Acids, Study Shows](#)

A new study is putting hard data behind something dairy grazers have long known: a cow's diet directly shapes the omega-3 and fatty acid profile of her milk — and pasture-based feeding comes out looking pretty impressive.

Upcoming Events

- [UVM Dairy Extension Dairy Team for the Future-Ready Dairy Farm Tour Series](#), including Recycling Water for Pasture Irrigation; Robotic Weeding on Dairy Farms & Herd Health Monitoring Systems; Funding, Automation and Innovation Strategies; Grazing, Agritourism and Value-Added Innovation; and more. June 24 – September 3 | Vermont

- [Pasture Walks with PennState Extension](#) — July 30 – September 3 | Pennsylvania
- [GrassWorks Summer Picnic & Pasture Walk](#) — August 22 @ 10:00 am – 3:00 pm | Belleville, WI (\$15)
- [Soil Health in Organic Field Crops](#) — August 27 @ 9:30 am – 3:30 pm | Cazenovia, NY (Free)
- [Golden Sands Managed Grazing Workshop with Aaron Pape](#) — August 28 @ 8:30 am – 3:45 pm | Dodgeville, WI (\$10)
- [Pasture Project and Indiana NRCS Free Technical Service Provider Training](#) — September 1-2 | Dubois, IN
- [WI School of Grazing](#) — September 16 – 17 | Stratford, WI (\$175)
- [Pasture to Woodland: Diversified Grazing Systems Field Day](#) — September 18 | University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry
- [26th Annual NODPA Field Days](#) — September 24 – 25 | Leesport, PA Theme: "Hope for the Future: Strategies for Success"
- [World Dairy Expo](#) — September 29 – October 2 | Madison, WI

Share Your Story with the DGA Community

We want to hear from you! Do you have a success story, upcoming event, research findings, or innovative practice you'd like to share with fellow dairy graziers? We're always looking for content that can benefit our community.

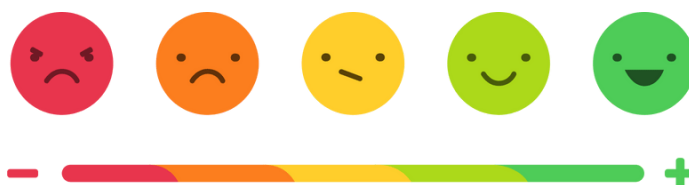
We'd love to feature:

- Farm success stories and lessons learned
- Upcoming conferences, field days, or educational events
- New research or publications relevant to dairy grazing
- Innovative grazing practices or technologies
- Questions you'd like us to address in future newsletters

Submit your suggestions, stories, or events to info@dga-national.org.

Your contributions help make this newsletter a valuable resource for the entire dairy grazing community!

Help us make the DGA Newsletter even better! Your feedback is invaluable in helping us create content that truly serves the dairy grazing community. This survey takes about 3-5 minutes to complete. [Survey](#)



Support DGA

Help strengthen the future of managed grazing dairy in the U.S. Your support advances farmers, education, innovation, and market opportunities that help dairy thrive.



Thank you for being part of the Dairy Grazing Alliance community. Together, we're advancing managed grazing and helping build a thriving, resilient future for dairy farmers, rural communities, and the land.



This newsletter was compiled in August 2026. For the most current information, please visit our website or contact us directly.

www.dga-national.org

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