



January 2026 Newsletter

Note from the editor

Happy New Year! We hope 2026 brings you healthy pastures, thriving herds, and continued success on your farms.

At DGA, we remain committed to our mission of catalyzing the development of and support for a vibrant US dairy grazing sector. Our team continues to grow, and so does the scope of our work. We kicked off the year with our Board of Directors Meeting, where we set ambitious goals for the months ahead.

This month, we're excited to launch a series of webinars on Farm Succession Planning, a critical topic for ensuring the future of family farms. Additionally, mark your calendars for February when we'll be offering the Fundamentals of Bovine Reproduction course through MGIC.

We have so much to look forward to this year! Thank you for being part of our community.

Please send us your news and comments. We would love to highlight awards, successes, grants, activities, media coverage, classes you would like MGIC to develop, etc. Please send your news to Jessica Duran. (jessica@dga-national.org) and if you want to share this Newsletter with someone use [this link!](#)

Jessica Duran, MGIC Director

Industry Headlines

- **Three Families Still Standing Where 18 Dairies Fell.** A powerful story from Washington's Enumclaw Plateau highlights the resilience and courage of dairy families facing impossible odds. When 18 of 22 dairy farms in the area ceased operations over the past decade, three families found different paths forward. One family is transitioning from conventional to organic with Organic Valley, expecting roughly triple the pay price. Another opened a creamery and market to connect directly with their community. These stories remind us that survival in today's dairy industry isn't always about finding better math, it's about finding different kinds of courage and being willing to adapt. [Learn more](#)
- **USDA Expands Dairy Margin Coverage for 2026.** At the American Farm Bureau Convention, Agriculture Secretary Rollins announced an expanded enrollment for the 2026 Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) program. This provides an important safety net for dairy producers, and the enrollment period is open until February 26, 2026. [Read more](#)

Preparing for winter resources

- **Planning for the 2026 Grazing Season.** Now is the perfect time to reflect on the 2025 grazing season and begin planning for the year ahead. Resources from university extensions emphasize the importance of developing a forage plan, reviewing weed pressures, and setting clear goals for pasture and herd management. [Read more on planning](#)
- **Winter Grazing Strategies for Pasture Health.** Experts are highlighting the importance of strategic winter grazing to reduce pasture damage and optimize forage utilization. Techniques like strip grazing stockpiled forage and rotating feeding areas can minimize trampling and protect stand vigor for the spring. [Learn more about winter grazing](#)
- **Salt Watch: Protect Your Local Waterways This Winter.** Road salt runoff can harm fish and aquatic life, and since many communities depend on local streams for drinking water, excess salt can end up in tap water. [Learn more](#)

An Update on DGA

A New Year for Grazing Reflections

As we start a new year, it's a good opportunity to look back and forward. For me that means thinking back on the growing season and what I want to do similarly and differently for my grazing and herd management. And looking ahead at what I might try new this coming year.

I'm working on a similar process as I draft out what we'll cover in Graze in the coming year — I'm putting together a variety of ideas and writers to cover a broad swath of grazing-related topics. I've gotten a lot of inspiration from the survey responses last year, and the door is always open for ideas and comments from you all!

There's a lot to look forward in the coming year, and it's an honor to be sitting here in the editor's chair bringing together a variety of farmer writers and other experts in the field. Happy New Year!

Martha Hoffman-Kerestes
Graze Managing Editor

Graze

The magazine that is by graziers, for graziers

Building a diversified grassfed farm

A niche of beef, lamb, and pizza

By Martha Hoffman Kerestes

Decorah, Iowa — Tom and Maren Beard are building community around their grazing farm in the rolling Driftless hills of northeastern Iowa.

That includes direct marketing grassfed lamb and beef raised on the farm, and it includes welcoming hundreds of folks onto their farm each weekend during warm weather for wood-fired pizza made with local and regional ingredients.



The Beards manage around 250 acres of land, about half of it rented. Tom does about 50 acres of organic row crops, and the rest is permanent pasture and hay ground. Only half of the land is tillable, given the slope and tree cover of some parts of the acreage.

Managing both species

Tom and Maren keep about 150 hair sheep ewes and 20 cow-calf pairs and finish 6-10 head of beef a year slaughtered at 20-30 months (the rest of the calves are kept as replacement heifers).

Both species are moved once a day with 30-day rest periods for pastures when the grass is growing fast, and lengthening when growth slows.

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

January 2026 Graze - summary of articles in the issue:

- Building a diversified farm with beef, lamb, and pizza

- Selecting for higher dairy components
- Advisors: improving pastures
- An alternative option for finishing lambs

Grants - Opportunities for you

- **CIG:** Looking for dairies in MN, WI, PA, and VT interested in improving their grazing infrastructure and management. For more information, complete this [interest form](#) or contact Ashley at ashley@dga-national.org.
- **GLPF:** Looking for farms in the Great Lakes Basin interested in adding grazing to or expanding their current operation. For more information, [click here](#).
- **NRCS-WI:** Looking for grazing farms with current EQIP or CSP contracts in Southern WI to utilize PaddockTrac and get real time pasture growth data. Contact greg@dga-national.org

Jobs and Careers

- Many of our Mentors are looking for Interns and Apprentices! Don't miss your chance to connect and learn—apply today!
- **Herd & Creamery Assistant at North Country Creamery.** North Country Creamery is seeking a motivated, detail-oriented individual for a full-time Herd & Creamery Assistant position. This role combines hands-on work with the milking herd and farmstead creamery, supporting operations from pasture to finished dairy products. [Job posting here](#).
- [Other opportunities here](#).

Upcoming Industry Events

- GrassWorks Grazing Conference January 22-24, 2026 | La Crosse, Wisconsin
- IDFA Dairy Forum 2026 January 25-28, 2026 | Palm Desert, California
- Great Lakes Regional Dairy Conference February 5-6, 2026 | Mount Pleasant, Michigan
- Northeast Dairy Innovation Summit March 10 -11, 2026 | Albany, NY
- High Plains Dairy Conference 2026. March 3-4, 2026 | Amarillo, Texas



MANAGED GRAZING

INNOVATION CENTER



Fundamentals on Bovine Reproduction Course

Join Natalia Hincapie and gain a foundational understanding of bovine reproduction and endocrinology. This course covers everything from anatomy and hormonal control to fertility, disorders, and the latest precision technologies.

From February 11 to March 25, 2026
6:00 PM EST/ 5:00 PM CST
1 hour a week live online sessions

[Register Now](#)



Upcoming Webinars



Speaker: Tracy Garofalo
Date: Tuesday, January 20, 2026
Time: 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM ET

Pathways to Ownership: Exploring Leases, Gifting, and Sale Strategies

This session will demystify the various methods of transferring farm ownership. Tracy Garofalo will return to discuss the best pathway for ownership like lease, gifts, etc for your unique situation.

[Register here](#)



**Speakers: A panel of Mentors
and Apprentices**

Real Stories, Real Solutions: Farmers Share Their Transition Journeys

Learn from those who have been there. In this panel discussion, you will hear firsthand accounts of farm transition journeys. Mentors and apprentices will share their experiences, challenges, and successes, offering practical advice and inspiration.

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.

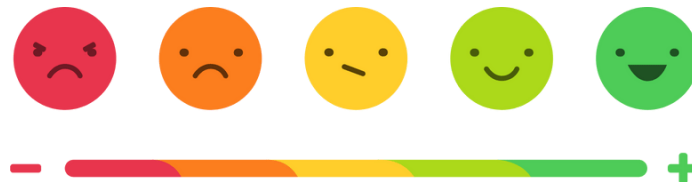
We'd love to feature:

- 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 Jessica Duran at jessica@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

Get involved!! Dairy Grazing Alliance is training a new generation of dairy farmers who utilize regenerative practices to revitalize rural communities, protect the environment, and produce nutrient-dense dairy products.



more sustainable and profitable future for dairy grazing.



This newsletter was compiled in December 2025. For the most current information, please visit our website or contact us directly.

www.dga-national.org

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