



September 2025 Newsletter

As we step into September, we find ourselves in one of the most beautiful and transitional times of the year. The intense heat of summer is beginning to give way to cooler mornings and longer nights, signaling the approach of fall. For dairy graziers, this is a season of both reflection and preparation—a time to assess how our pastures and herds have performed through the summer months and to begin planning for the challenges and opportunities that autumn will bring. It's a time to evaluate our grazing management decisions, plan for fall forage needs, and ensure our animals are in optimal condition as we head into the final months of the grazing season.

This month, we're honored to share a beautiful poem from Ben Gotschall, our instructor and NATC board member, that captures the essence of what it means to be a herdsman. We'll also update you on exciting developments at DGA, share the latest industry headlines, and highlight upcoming events that can help you continue learning and connecting with fellow graziers.

Thank you for your continued dedication to sustainable dairy grazing. Your work is making a difference, one pasture at a time.

Spotlight

HERDSMAN by Ben Gotschall

Ben Gotschall, one of our MGIC instructors and NATC Board member, beautifully embodies the intersection of agricultural practice and thoughtful reflection. With roots in Nebraska ranching, an MFA in poetry, and decades of experience in dairy farming and regenerative agriculture, Ben brings both

practical wisdom and poetic insight to our educational community.

To learn more about Ben's classes or explore our other MGIC courses that are open to the public, [[click here to visit our course catalog](#)].



HERDSMAN

–“the best fertilizer is the farmer’s footsteps”

I do not own this land, these hills you see sloping
away in all directions, rising distant, the trees
in the valley with their songbird symphonies. Nor
is the pond mine, its frequent green, often blue,
sometimes silver mirror rippled by wind, the heron
standing sentinel in the shallows, kingfishers
diving like bombers toward their dreams
of bream. I hold no title

to the cattle—this small band of mother Jerseys, machines
of hoof and udder, fueled by water and sun, making milk
from clover, their calves nesting along the fenceline,
the bull resting in the shade of an elm. No, I am the herdsman—which,
divided, makes me the *herd’s man*, and in so separating places me
in their possession, like any good shepherd belongs
to the flock, a pastor tending the congregation’s
needs. Not merely Sundays but each morning begins

with a gathering in the barn for milking, afternoons a steady
unwinding of wire to portion the paddocks so that every day is also
a moving on, their tongues touching only the lush
leaves of grass, returning only after regrowth
restores. Evenings, I walk among them until the last one
makes her bed on the cool earth, then navigate darkness
back to my cabin, my feet my guide, my mind
merely follower along this ground they know so well.

Thank you, Ben, for sharing this beautiful reflection on the sacred relationship between herdsman and herd.

Industry Headlines

- **The USDA has announced the Emergency Livestock Relief Program** to assist producers affected by floods and wildfires. Dairy farmers in disaster-declared counties can receive up to 60% of one month of calculated feed costs. Applications are due by October 31, 2025. [Read more](#)
- **Dairy Heifer Supply Continues to Shrink Through 2027** CoBank analysts report that dairy heifer inventories may not rebound until 2027, based on semen sales data. As heifer supply dwindles and values climb, dairy farmers are culling fewer cows and shifting breeding strategies, with increased use of beef semen on dairy cows. [Read more](#)
- **Organic Dairy Market Shows Continued Growth.** The US organic dairy sector continues experiencing steady growth, driven by evolving consumer preferences and expanding production. The organic dairy market is expected to reach over \$45 billion by 2033, with a compound annual growth rate of nearly 6%. [Read more](#)

Recent Research

- **Grazing Infrastructure Critical for Herd Performance.** New research emphasizes the importance of proper grazing infrastructure. While European studies highlight this, the principle applies universally. Effective roadway networks and well-designed paddock systems are vital for ensuring continuous access to pasture throughout the grazing season. [Read more](#)

Resources

- **Weed Control Guide.** Michigan State University's 2025 Weed Control Guide offers updated strategies, tables, and factsheets for effective weed management and herbicide use across major field crops. [More here.](#)
- **US Drought Monitor.** [Click here.](#)
- **UMASH.** Farm safety resources. [More here.](#)
- **OFRF.** Transitioning to organic resources. [More here](#)

An Update on DGA

As summer winds down, we are looking forward to the cooler temperatures and all the excitement that the change of the seasons brings with it. It also gives us a chance to reflect on the great work that the team has accomplished alongside our incredible producer network. DGA is proud to offer technical assistance to graziers of all experience levels, which is one of the primary pillars upon which the Alliance is focused.

Introducing producers to emerging ag technology such as PaddockTrac and Pasture.io has been an important step in gaining a better understanding of grazing management. Our producers across the Midwest and Northeast continue to utilize this technology. These tools allow users to more accurately assess the biomass of their pastures, leading them to make more informed, proactive grazing management decisions. We have always known that dairy graziers are great stewards of the land and seeing their willingness to adopt new technologies to improve overall management is a real testament to that.

Through our Conservation Innovation Grant On-Farm Trials project, DGA is providing boots-on-the-ground technical assistance to participating producers as well. Our TA providers have been working hard to develop grazing plans to meet the needs and goals of each of the enrolled farms. These grazing plans will outline the improvements that will be implemented over the course of the 5 year project and the TA providers will work with the producers every step of the way to offer support and guidance as they make the transition to managed grazing. There are a limited number of spots still available in this project for dairy graziers (and dairy heifer graziers!) in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Vermont and we encourage anyone who may be interested in this project to reach out.

We have also had the opportunity to collaborate with the Wallace Center on their Great Lakes Protection Fund project. This work focuses on improving the health of the Great Lakes through low overhead dairy grazing. As a partner on this project, DGA has helped facilitate getting the necessary technical assistance providers out to farms in the Great Lakes Basin. Developing a network of technical assistance providers who understand the true value of grazing and are willing to provide support in this region and beyond has been a valuable step toward bridging the gap between assistance available to conventional dairies compared to grazing dairies.

Looking ahead, DGA remains committed to supporting the dairy grazing community through innovative tools, hands-on technical assistance, and strong partnerships. From utilizing grazing technology to fostering regional collaborations, we hope to empower producers and enhance the sustainability of managed grazing. We're proud of the progress made and excited about the opportunities ahead. Whether you're a seasoned grazer or just getting started, there's never been a better time to get involved and help shape the future of dairy grazing.

Ashley Hughes
Producer Services Manager



**MANAGED
GRAZING**

INNOVATION CENTER

MGIC Platform Launch and Fall Semester Registration

We're excited to announce that our newly redesigned website and upgraded Managed Grazing Innovation Center (MGIC) platform are now live! The new platform features enhanced user experience and includes a vibrant community space where students, mentors, and apprentices can connect, share insights, and support one another throughout their learning journey.

Fall Semester is Here! Registration for our Fall Semester opened on September 8th, and classes began on September 22nd. The semester runs through December 12th, offering courses in managed grazing principles and practices. Our new community feature allows participants to engage with fellow learners, creating a supportive network that extends beyond the classroom.

Graze

The magazine that is by graziers, for graziers

A GROWING HERDSHARE BUSINESS

Nurse cows and tall grazing help make the system work smoothly for the Bairs

By Martha Hoffman Kerestes

Troy, Ohio — Two dozen years after first turning their conventional herd out to pasture, David and Annette Bair are bringing on the next generation, milking 48 cows for one of the largest herdshare programs in Ohio, and eyeing more growth as demand continues to expand.



It's a long way down the road from where things were at when David got fed up harvesting feed for the confinement dairy around the turn of the century. He was moving from 3rd and 4th cut hay straight into corn silage and then directly into high moisture ear corn, and it was a lot of time to spend on the tractor.

"I was spending every day for 90 days that the weather was fit in the tractor chopping, and it was costing a lot of money to do that," David says. "I just thought we could do better if we could just send the cows out and harvest their own feed."

When he pitched the idea of letting the cows out to graze, his dad was hesitant but willing to try.

"My dad's biggest fear was 'what if it turns dry?'," David explains. "He was worried pasture wouldn't be able to keep supplying forage if it turned dry."

David seeded 25 acres and grazed the herd in 2001 for part of their ration. And one part of his father's fear came true as the season turned dry, but the pasture didn't fail them.

To see this article in full, order the specific [back issue](#) you are interested in or [subscribe here](#). This article appeared in the June-July 2025 issue of Graze.

June-July 2025 Graze - summary of articles in the issue:

- Raising triplet lambs on pasture
- Testing virtual fencing on the grazing dairy
- Creating and using a drought plan
- Advisors: raising calves

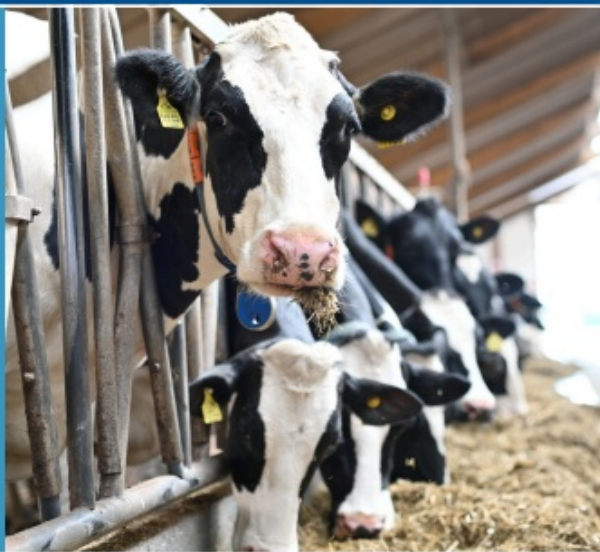
Grants - Opportunities for you

- **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

UNIFORM-AGRI: Looking for an all-in-one solution to manage your pasture and animal records? Check this out!**If you are part of DGA you will get a few months for free!** For more information contact Lauren Silver at l.silver@uniform-agri.com



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Upcoming Industry Events

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Innovative Grazing Record Keeping

- **World Dairy Expo** September 30 - October 3, 2025 | Madison, Wisconsin

Grazing records in the same system as herd records

Track field use, grazing groups, inputs, rotations and more

Don't miss visiting DGA at Booth TC 104 and 105 to learn about our programs and projects!

- **Dairy Cattle Reproduction Council** November 11-13, 2025 | Location TBA
- **PDPW Carbon, Crops + Cows Conference** October 14-15, 2025 | Wisconsin
- **PDPW Calf Care Connection** October 22-23, 2025 | Arlington and Green Bay, Wisconsin
- **New York Cornell Events** here

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Swede Heir Acres, WI



Field Days in New England:

- September 29 – **Brooks Edge Farm**, Rock Stream, NY
- **October 1** – **Harrison's Homegrown Dairy**, Addison, VT
- **October 3** – **Milkhouse Dairy Farm & Creamery**, Monmouth, ME

Workshop is FREE and registration can be found here.

For more details, contact Jon Winsten at winsten.vt@gmail.com.

This series is supported by the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center.

Jobs and Careers

- Many of our Mentors are looking for Interns and Apprentices! Don't miss your chance to connect and learn—apply today!

- [Other opportunities here.](#)

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.

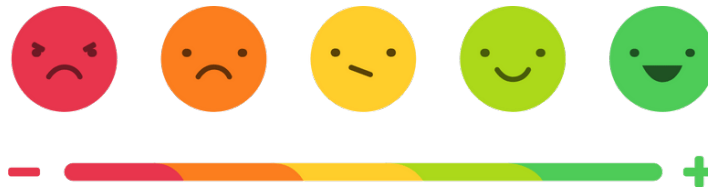
We'd love to feature:

- 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.





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

www.dga-national.org

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