We have learned a lot about using cover crops after corn silage in the last two years of cover crop test plots at Berryridge Farms. Grasses are really the best options for cover crops at this time of year. Cover crops like Tillage Radish, peas and other legumes work well after wheat but the planting dates after corn silage are too late to see much benefit from them. Among the grass cover crop options, there are those that winter-kill, such as barley, oats and annual ryegrass and there are those that survive the winter and continue growing in the spring, like winter rye and winter wheat.

Using the winter-killed cover crops is ideal because there is no need to manage them in the spring with herbicides or tillage, thereby reducing your input costs and time. However, our test plots suggest that ideally they should be planted before September 15th or they don’t put on enough growth to cover the soil with residue in the spring. Planting cover crops this early is a challenge in a silage field, especially when manure needs to be applied. To save time, we recommend seeding cover crops just after silage harvest and applying manure after planting the cover crops. Just be sure that you apply the manure before the cover crop has sprouted or after the cover crop is 3 or 4 inches tall to reduce negative impacts on the cover crop seedlings.

We would generally recommend against using annual ryegrass as a cover crop due to its capability to survive mild winters (as it did in one year of our test plots), requiring a spring herbicide application to kill it. Annual ryegrass also doesn’t always die easily with glyphosate in the spring of 2014, requiring multiple applications. Barley and oats, on the other hand, grow vigorously in the fall, leaving an excellent mat of spring residue and die out reliably over the winter, making them better cover crop choices than annual ryegrass.

Winter rye and winter wheat are both cover crops that survive the winter but they differ in their ability to grow under cold temperatures. Winter rye grows more vigorously in cool temperatures so it can be planted much later than any other cover crop. Winter wheat does better if it can be planted slightly earlier in the fall, generally between September 10th and September 20th. Rye is really your best and only option after September 20.

The potential downside to rye is that we have found that corn planted after rye is slower growing early in the season than corn planted after other cover crops. In last year’s trial, the corn in the rye plots eventually caught up to corn in the other cover crop plots, and there wasn’t a significant reduction in yield. Spraying off rye early in the spring will help to minimize this slow growth or if spraying is delayed, minimal tillage may also help alleviate this impact.

Continued on the next page
We are still trying to determine why this happens and if there is any way to reduce the impact the rye has on the growing corn.

A potential added benefit of winter rye is that it also provides an option for producers that want to take a spring forage cut before planting corn. Letting rye grow long enough into the spring to take a forage cut will inevitably push back your corn planting date thus reducing your subsequent corn silage yield. In the test plots, we did not take rye off a spring forage but sprayed it just prior to planting corn.

In this past year’s cover crop plots, we also looked at the seeding rates for both rye and winter wheat to see if we could reduce seed cost while maintaining enough ground cover to protect the soil. We planted both cover crops at 50, 75 and 100 lbs./acre. The lowest seeding rate of rye (50 lbs.) still provided adequate ground cover in both the fall and the spring. The lowest seeding rate in the wheat plots did not provide adequate ground cover but this was possibly due to how late it was planted (October 1st). As mentioned above, an earlier planting date for wheat is recommended.

We will continue to evaluate cover crops and share results as they become available. If you have additional questions or thoughts, please feel free to email me or call me at Johnson.heidi@countyofdane.com or 608-224-3716.
Tell us about your company.
The Dairy Business Association was formed 16 years ago at a time when Wisconsin’s dairy industry was at a crossroads. California had overtaken the Dairy State in milk production and our dairy herd was declining in number. DBA was created with the intent of reversing those trends and ensuring the Wisconsin dairy could continue to thrive. There is still work to be done, but herd numbers have stabilized and our producers and processors have invested millions in new technology in recent years.

DBA’s model is somewhat unique as a statewide organization of dairy producers, vendors, allied industry partners and affiliated professionals. The partnership between industry and producers has been very effective. DBA is dedicated to proactively helping to create and protect consistent water, environmental and waste management regulations.

What are your services and products?
In order to promote the growth and modernization of Wisconsin dairy farms, we work to educate the public and elected officials about the value dairy farming brings to our state. We are a voice for the industry in Madison and Washington. Our public policy efforts focus on maintaining and promoting a regulatory environment that allows dairy to stay competitive and to grow when possible. In addition to our public relations and public policy efforts, we also provide farmer members with other benefits including insurance and vehicle discounts, as well as educational seminars, tours and workshops. Finally, the association is dedicated to member engagement through a social component including our Dairy Classic Golf Outing and Packer Tailgate Party. These events allow dairy producers and dairy business representatives to come together, learn from one another and collaborate for the benefit of the industry.

Why did your company decide to partner with Yahara Pride Farms?
Partnering with Yahara Pride Farms was a natural fit for us. Several of the dairy farms that participate in YPF programming are already DBA members. DBA was impressed with the work YPF had been doing and the positive results they were getting. We also appreciated the organization’s approach. We firmly believe that farmers want to do what is right for the environment. We also know from experience that a farmer is the best teacher other farmers can have and positive change is easiest when producers and allied industry are working together. We have used both of these approaches and were excited to work with another group that was putting them to good use.

How do your services assist with the implementation of conservation practices?
DBA has always been interested in promoting new and emerging technologies for the benefit of farmers and the broader community. We also recognize that conservation practices need to be science-based. This is why we’ve supported research into the effectiveness of various conservation practices. DBA members have been at the forefront of these efforts, which include volunteering to participate in studies by Discovery Farms, state Department of Natural Resources and other groups. We are also committed to working with elected leaders to get these efforts the funding they need. In fact, DBA was one of the groups that worked to secure funding for more projects like YPF in other parts of the state.

Dairy Business Association
www.widba.com
Mission Statement: To promote the growth and success of all dairy farms in Wisconsin by fostering a positive business and political environment.
2015 Farm and Digester Tour Recap

On Tuesday, June 9th Yahara Pride Farms, with help from our partners at Clean Lakes Alliance, put on the 3rd annual Farm and Digester Tour hosted by Gundersen Health Systems and Ziegler Dairy. The purpose of the Farm Tours is to get urban people out to see what it is farmers do and how we provide for our communities. As the Ag tourism industry starts to grow and people are starting to care more where their food comes from, events like the farm tour can promote farming in a good way as well as provide a learning experience for all. This year’s tour brought in around 65 attendees, including 18 who came all the way from New Zealand.

We started the tour at the Middleton-area digester, where we were all split into smaller groups and were led around the digester site by Gundersen Health employees. Having the ability to see the large and complex machinery that runs the digester made it easier to better understand the complex process of turning manure into energy.

With the smell of the digester fresh in our noses, we headed to the over Ziegler Dairy Farm where three Ziegler boys each led a small group of us around the farm. Highlights of the tour included the rotary parlor, calf barn and an explanation of how their manure is transported underground to the manure digester a half a mile away.

Overall, the attendees were impressed with the farm and digester tour, including our friends from New Zealand who were amazed at the size of Ziegler dairy operation. “It’s amazing what they’ve got out there,” Tom Smith remarked about the digester and farm, “and it was nice to meet a variety of people who are interested in the same thing-keeping our lakes clean.”

Breakfast on The Farm

Yahara Pride Farms and Clean Lakes Alliance attended the 37th annual Breakfast on the Farm hosted by Kick a Boo Farms in Waunakee on Saturday, June 13th. At our table, guests had the opportunity to learn about phosphorus runoff and current conservation practices. For our ‘little’ guests, we had a “create a cow” craft project that everyone enjoyed.
We interviewed board member Chuck Ripp to learn more about his experiences with the usage of Low Disturbance Manure Injection (LDMI).

1. How is low disturbance different than your previous manure application practices?
With low disturbance you’re injecting the manure into the soil vs. hauling the manure over the top. When you spread manure over the top, the chances of runoff increases significantly compared to when you inject the manure into the ground. Chuck’s operation practices low disturbance manure injection on about 30-40% of their land and they are working on getting a hose line and a bigger holding tank to be able to apply more of their manure with the low disturbance injector. Low disturbance manure injection gets more manure into the soil, allowing for more nitrogen to be absorbed by the plants.

2. Have you seen differences in soil quality, yields, etc. since using low disturbance?
Chuck has not observed a big difference in soil quality but he has seen better yields on the fields where he uses the low disturbance method compared to the ones he doesn’t. Using low disturbance saves more nitrogen content compared to spreading on top of the soil because the nitrogen actually gets trapped in the soil and will get used up by the plants. Chuck says he yields about a ton to a ton and a half more corn silage on fields he injects versus fields he spreads.

3. What are some pros of low disturbance?
Chuck says he has better yields when using low disturbance manure injection, there’s less soil compaction using a tanker trailer instead of truck tankers. Low disturbance leaves a cleaner look. Manure from his dairy cows tends to be higher in water concentration compared to other operations since the manure goes through a digester, most of the solids are pressed out of the manure. It can be difficult spreading over the top of the soil, which could increase the chance of runoff. If there is a rainstorm before Chuck is able to work the manure into the soil with a tillage machine. This method disturbs the soil much less compared to other spreading practices as well as reducing the likelihood of soil erosion. Another thing Chuck does is plant cover crops as soon as he can after the harvest of corn silage. With the LDMI he can still apply manure into the planted cover crop as long as the weather permits. Chuck has seen a good stand in the cover crop after applying manure with low disturbance.

4. What are some cons of low disturbance?
Chuck claims the biggest con to using low disturbance manure injection is the time it takes to haul manure to the application sites. The further away they’re hauling, the longer it takes to get the manure there and unload into the tanker. Another con is the overall cost of the low disturbance equipment, but he says in the long run the equipment is worth it because there is a return in higher crop yields. When using low disturbance equipment you do need to have a tractor with a little more horsepower (300+) to effectively inject the manure. Chuck also claims that he is able to inject more manure than he is able to spread, ensuring that the plants will soak up as much nitrogen as possible.

5. Do you have any advice for farmers who are considering starting low disturbance methods?
Have a plan to make sure they know how and when to use the practice. LDMI work best on the higher percentage slopes, and a good time to use it is in the fall, so they’re not hauling on fields with higher percentage slopes in the winter. It’s going to cost money, but in the long run it makes money in higher yields and less soil compaction—plus it’s environmentally friendly.

To learn more about how you can start using LDMI visit our website at yaharapridefarms.org
News in Agriculture

Drought In California

As the four year long drought in California continues with little hope of ending soon, the agriculture industry is taking a big hit. It's projected that farmers in the dry parts of California will lose $3 billion in 2015 due to the water shortage. These farmers produce nearly half of the fruits, vegetables, and nuts grown in the United States; along with dairy being an immense part of the Ag Industry California’s milk revenue will likely decrease by $250 million. To remedy this issue, some farmers in the central valley have agreed to cut their water use by 25%. Since California plays a pivotal role in producing food, both in our country and internationally, the results of the drought will have detrimental impacts around the world. With a decrease in California’s agriculture industry, it’s now a necessity for other states to step up to the plate to continue producing dairy, fruit, and vegetables for the rest of the globe.

Chicken Flu

The highly infectious and contagious H5N2 virus continues to sweep through bird farms across the nation, leaving in its trail a catastrophic path. Already, the virus has killed nearly 47 million birds either from the virus itself or farmers euthanizing those infected. So far, the virus has had the biggest impact in Iowa egg production and Minnesota turkey production. For us in Wisconsin, this means higher egg and poultry prices, and could take up to two years for prices to return to normal. Scientists are working to create a vaccine and farmers are reorganizing their barn set-ups, but in the meantime consumers are likely to substitute their meat consumption, driving up the demand for beef and pork.

Upcoming Events in 2015

**Wisconsin State Fair:** Thursday August 6th - Sunday August 16th. Wisconsin State Fair Park, 640 S. 84th Street, West Allis, WI 53214

**Wisconsin Farm Technology Days at the Statz Brothers Farm:** Tuesday August 25- Thursday August 27. 5375 County Road W, Marshall (near Sun Prarie) $6 admission - Visit the YPF booth! danecofarmtech.com

**Ag Innovation Days:** October, date to be determined. Keep in touch for details!

Yahara Pride Farms along with Yahara WINS will continue the cost-share program they have been running in the past three years into 2015. Yahara Pride Farms will be sending out sign-up sheets in August so farmers can register acres of interest.
Yahara Pride Farms

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Contact us to renew or add your partnership to the list for 2015.

Clean Lakes Alliance proudly contributes administrative, financial, and marketing support to Yahara Pride Farms.
www.cleanlakesalliance.com

Visit ces.landsend.com/CleanLakes to order YPF apparel.

To get a Yahara Pride Farms member sign after participating in cost-share of completing the certification program, please contact us at: 608-824-3250