Many Wisconsin farmers are following corn silage harvest with a winter cereal grain, such as rye or triticale, planted for a fall-to-spring cover crop intended to prevent soil erosion and nutrient loss from runoff or leaching.

The fall-planted cover crop, with proper management, can also be harvested as a forage crop in mid-to-late May, leaving enough time for a full-season crop to follow. The “double cropped” cereal grain forage, if harvested timely at the ‘boot’ to ‘early heading’ stage of growth, can provide a forage option desirable for feeding to dairy heifers and, often, for a portion of the lactating cow ration. One challenge to the economics of this practice, however, is the relatively low forage yield (1-2 tons dry matter (TDM) per-acre) when harvested at this fairly early growth stage. This makes for a relatively high feed cost per-TDM when considering seed, planting, and harvesting costs.

Jeff and Luke Meffert, of Meffert’s Homestead Dairy, near Waunakee, like what fall-planted rye helps them accomplish by way of soil conservation and nutrient management. They and their dairy nutritionist, Mike Limmex (Furst-McNess Company), also value it as an additional source of forage for both cows and heifers. Jeff and Luke recognize, however, the yield challenge, especially in years when fall and/or spring conditions lead to lower yields. Interested to find something better, the Mefferts took an interest in a new hybrid forage rye commercially available.

Continued on page 2
Rye forage comparison study *(continued from page 1)*

from KWS Cereals of Einbeck, Germany and Champaign, Ill. Most winter cereal ryes typically grown as a cover or forage crop are open-pollinated ryes and have been developed for grain production.

Last year, the Mefferts were able to secure a donation from KWS of Pro-gas hybrid forage rye seed for a five-acre demonstration on their farm. On Sept. 30, 2018, a 20-acre field where corn silage had been harvested was planted with a five-acre section of Progas rye, surrounded by a conventional, non-varietal (VNS) brand rye. This trial design allowed for two side-by side comparisons of the hybrid and VNS ryes. Average results and observations are presented below.

**Observations:**
At cutting, the hybrid rye appeared slightly darker green in color and slightly taller. Although the VNS rye was at, or slightly passed, the desired boot stage, the Progas hybrid rye was still a few days from boot. Thus, assumedly, more forage biomass would have accumulated by boot stage with the Progas. However, both the calendar (planting date goal for the subsequent corn crop) and the weather forecast influenced the decision to cut the rye at this time.

Although the hybrid rye did exhibit heavy tillering, most occurred in the spring. Over-winter soil cover was much higher for the conventional VNS rye, causing some concern that the hybrid rye would be less effective in achieving the associated soil conservation and water quality protection goals. For this reason, as well as the apparent later maturity associated with the Progas, Jeff and Luke believe their normal program of planting non-hybrid, VNS rye is probably better adapted to optimizing the economic and conservation goals they have for their farm. They will continue with that in 2019, and continue seeking new options for the future.

### Average results and observations:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manure application:</strong></td>
<td>8,000 gallons per-acre liquid dairy, 9-10-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Planting date and method:</strong></td>
<td>9-23-18, No-till</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Seeding rate:</strong></td>
<td>VNS rye = 100 lbs per-acre (cost = $18/ac.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hybrid rye = 44 lbs per-acre (normal retail cost = $50/ac)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The hybrid rye is characterized to have very heavy tillering, and thus, a lower required seeding rate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cutting date:</strong></td>
<td>5-22-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Growth stage:</strong></td>
<td>Progas hybrid rye = Pre-boot, heads about 2” below top of stem. Height = 24”-28”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chopping date:</strong></td>
<td>5-26-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There was one 3” rain between cutting and chopping.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2019 comparison averages (2-reps)</th>
<th>Forage Yield (TDM/ac)</th>
<th>Crude Protein % DM</th>
<th>NDF</th>
<th>NDFD (48 hour)</th>
<th>TDN</th>
<th>RFQ</th>
<th>Milk/ TDM</th>
<th>Milk/ Acre</th>
<th>K</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conventional VNS ryelage</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>2495</td>
<td>3073</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progas hybrid ryelage</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>2550</td>
<td>3948</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Leadership Message
By Jeff Endres, YPF chairman

Every year has its own set of challenges and we do our best to turn them into successes and be the best stewards to our land that we can be.

Our in-field water conveyance systems have been challenged this year with the excess run-off. Some of them will need maintenance or even to be redesigned. The Dane County conservation department is a resource in this area as you weigh your options. Our team of YPF consultants are also available to come out and take a look to offer suggestions.

As you make plans for your pen pack manure, consider signing up for winter cost-share programs such as headland stacking and composting. We’ve had very successful composting trials and can help diverse farming systems implement composting.

New this year to the cost-share program, you can receive $60/acre for up to 50 acres of over-wintering crops. Even though it is a late fall, don’t rule out the option of planting cover crops – especially rye. Even if the plant does not grow prior to winter, it is likely to survive and could be harvested in spring for forage.

I encourage you to take advantage of our cost-share program. It’s a great opportunity to test new practices while managing your risk. The deadline is Nov. 15 to sign up.

Finally, you may have noticed several media mentions this fall for YPF. One of our goals as a group is to help educate the public about what farmers are doing to improve water quality. One of the ways we can accomplish this is to serve as a resource when media outlets want to talk to farmers who are implementing conservation practices.

Best wishes to all of you as you finish up this harvest season!

Forward Farmer | Fall 2019
YPF releases 2018 Phosphorus Report

Yahara Pride Farms released our annual Phosphorus Report this summer. The report documents information and research on the reductions in phosphorus delivered to nearby surface waters by farmers in the Yahara watershed in 2018. YPF has measured on-farm results for six years, and this is the third year that an annual report has been compiled to share program outcomes with the public. In 2018, Yahara Pride Farms documented an impressive 22,000 pounds of phosphorus delivery reduction.

The 2018 phosphorus reduction represents a 20 percent increase over 2017. Aided in part by cost-share dollars, farmers have made changes to their farming practices in order to help make a difference in the watershed.

“Farmers in the Yahara watershed continue to support Yahara Pride Farms and seek alternative farming systems and conservation practices that reduce phosphorus and sediment loss,” said Jeff Endres. “Despite a down ag economy, farmers are still striving to try new things.”

Highlights of the report include:

» A commitment by farmers to reduce soil loss and phosphorus to the Madison chain of lakes

» Documentation about how specific farming practices are reducing phosphorus

» The data set is made up of farms in the Yahara watershed, all numbers are from the Yahara watershed

» Data shows that farms are reducing phosphorus loses from their fields

» Long-term, this report provides hope and assurance that agriculture nutrient losses are being addressed

» More than 22,000 pounds of documented phosphorus reduction in 2018

There are barriers to water quality in Dane County, such as legacy phosphorus, that are beyond farmer’s control, but are being addressed with the help of public-private partnerships.

In 2018, five practices were promoted by YPF: Strip tillage, low-disturbance manure injection, low-disturbance deep tillage with cover crops, cover crops and headland stacking of manure. Additional data was collected for combining practices, continuing a practice for multiple years and combined practices over time.

The report breaks down phosphorus delivery reduction achieved, along with the number of acres and the cost per pound of phosphorus for each practice. It is important to note that conservation techniques endorsed by YPF have been adopted as best-management practices for farmers in the program. For each practice, the number of acres without cost-share far exceeds the number of acres with cost-share.

As farmers, we are taking a look at the water quality concerns within our unique area and working to address them. This comes at a cost, of course, and farmers are making the investment.

Since 2012, farmers in YPF programs have documented nearly 68,000 pounds of phosphorus that have remained on farm fields and out of rivers and streams by embracing farming practices promoted by our group.

Seventy-five percent of Wisconsin’s population growth is in Dane County, and we will continue to search for environmental stewardship solutions that balance the area’s rich agriculture heritage with an ever-growing population.

The 2018 Phosphorus Report is available for free download at yaharapridefarms.org.
Cost-share enrollment due Nov. 15
New programs added to encourage additional farmer participation

Sign-up is now open for the Yahara Pride Farms cost-share program. The deadline to enroll is Nov. 15 and the program is open to farmers in the Yahara Watershed, which includes southern Columbia, Dane and northern Rock counties.

The program is designed to help minimize the risk associated with trying new conservation practices on the farm. One of the program goals is to provide farmers with value in hopes they continue or combine endorsed practices for an even greater environmental impact. In particular, cover crops and low-disturbance manure injection have proven extremely effective in reducing phosphorus loss from farm fields while increasing soil health and crop yields.

“The cost-share program has been effective in encouraging farmers in the watershed to try new things to benefit water quality,” said Jeff Endres, YPF chairman. “These techniques have become best-management practices for the farmers who have tried them. We would love to see additional farmers participate for the first time.”

To enroll, visit yaharapridefarms.org and complete the 2019 cost-share program form, then return by mail. YPF will follow up when forms are received to determine if any changes or adjustments are needed. A nutrient management plan must be submitted for any acres enrolled in the program and cost-share checks are distributed at the YPF March Watershed-Wide Conference, scheduled for March 5, 2020.

YPF is committed to collecting and analyzing data from the cost-share program. Results from the 2018 cost-share program can be found on the previous page.

The 2019 YPF Cost-share program includes:

» **Strip tillage** – $15/acre for up to 100 acres (max. payment of $1,500/farm)

» **Low disturbance manure injection** – $20 per acre up to 100 acres (max. payment $2,000/farm)

» **Cover crops** – $60 per acre for up to 50 acres of over-wintering crops and/or $40 per acre for up to 50 acres of non-wintering crops

» **Low disturbance deep tillage and cover crop planting** – $55 per acre up to 50 acres

» **Headland stacking and/or composting manure** – for winter application only – $4/yd

» **Stacking of multiple cost-share practices** – TBD

Top: Cover crops - both over-wintering and non-wintering, are a cornerstone of the cost-share program. Headland stacking and composting are gaining interest. Photos by YPF.
Feature Story: YPF composting initiative
By Pat Murphy, YPF conservation planner

Yahara Pride Farms has initiated a long-term study of bedpack manure composting to document the environmental and agronomic performance of the practice.

The projected benefits of composting manure include:

- Prevent the land application of bedpack manure on frozen and/or snow covered ground where runoff is more likely to occur.
- Reduce the volume of manure that is handled decreasing the time/cost of land application.
- Increase the nutrient density of the compost encouraging the distribution of nutrients further from the livestock production facility.

Outcomes
During the winter of 2017/2018, 4066 cu. yds. of bedpack manure was diverted from land application to composting. During the winter of 2018/2019 an additional 2258 cu. yds. of bedpack manure was windrowed for composting. This action prevented an estimated 55 acres of winter manure spreading. Modeling done for the YPF Phosphorus Report estimates a reduction of up to 2 lbs. of phosphorus per acre, per year when winter spreading of bedpack manure is eliminated.

The volume reduction achieved by composting bedpack manure is highly dependent on the amount of carbon present in the material. Bedpack manure with high carbon levels (straw highly visible in the manure) can be expected to achieve a 50 – 70 percent reduction in volume. Dense manure is significantly less efficient achieving a 30 – 40 percent reduction in volume. The reduction in manure volume and weight correlates directly to the reduced cost of transporting composted manure.

Additional unanticipated benefits
Soil sampling for the nitrate form of nitrogen below a temporary composting stack documented a minimal increase in soil nitrate levels (3 ppm. at 6-inch depth, 1 ppm at 12-inch depth) vs. 9 ppm in the adjoining cropland planted to corn (6-inch depth).

Minimal leachate runoff occurs from composting stacks that are being aerated (turned). Aerating the stack causes heating and a reduction in moisture and allows the stack to absorb precipitation that falls on them while being turned.

Farmers have learned that additional manure can be added to a compost stack that is being turned without disrupting the process. This alternative offers an additional manure management option when fields are wet or inaccessible. A heating compost pile also reduces fly problems that are typically associated with unmanaged manure stacks.

Overcoming resistance to widespread adoption
Farmers are conditioned to complete field work when operating conditions permit. If you wait, you may not get another chance to complete the field operation in a timely manner. Late winter field application of manure offers the benefits of frozen soil conditions (limits compaction risk) and a relatively low demand for labor/equipment.

Yahara Pride Farms estimates that the cost to build and turn a manure compost stack is slightly greater than the savings achieved by volume reduction and nutrient concentration. To achieve widespread adoption of manure composting, a combination of incentive payments and timely access to compost turning equipment will need to be provided.

The in-field composting of bedpack manure poses a significantly lower environmental risk when compared to field stacking of raw manure with low carbon content. Current temporary and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2019 Farms</th>
<th>Nitrogen</th>
<th>Phosphorus</th>
<th>Potassium</th>
<th>Moisture</th>
<th>C:N Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A: Before</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A: After</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>49.90%</td>
<td>17:1(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: Before</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: After</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>53.70%</td>
<td>22:01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: Typical change in nutrient “Total” nutrient content of bedpack manure before vs. after composting. A C/N ratio of 20:1 or less is assumed to be “finished” compost ready for land application.
permanent compost facility siting guidance is over-designed relative to the risk. The increased costs and limitations of the current policies reduce the viability of manure composting as an alternative best management practice.

Other thoughts
The first turning of compost stacks this spring was delayed until the soil near and under the stacks thawed and firmed up. This delay increased turning efficiently, reduced rutting of the work area and did not significantly reduce the efficiency of the composting process.

The manure began heating immediately upon being stacked. The stacks continued to compost at a slow rate until the first turn which significantly raised temperatures and decomposition activity.

When composted bedpack manure is applied following the harvest of a hay crop, the plants respond immediately with vigorous regrowth. Topdressing hay with compost significantly reduces the amount of pathogens applied and will not burn the newly emerging shoots/leaves of the hay regrowth.

The microorganisms and stable carbon in the compost improves soil condition and provides less of a shock to the soil nutrient/organism equilibrium.

Yahara Pride Farms is considering augmenting finished compost with composted sewage sludge to increase the nutrient content of the mixture to more closely approximate commercial fertilizer.

It is hoped that the increase fertilizer value will justify hauling the material greater distances from the farmstead, encouraging greater distribution of nutrients within and outside of the watershed.

An additional benefit is that all the nutrient sources contained in this material are generated within the watershed reducing the importation of commercial fertilizer sourced nutrients.

Pat Murphy is has been a member of AgriEnvironmental Advisors LLC since 2015, providing conservation planning and environmental assessment services to farmers and agribusiness. He provided statewide leadership on conservation planning, resource assessment and development of non-engineering conservation practice standards as the NRCS State Resource Conservationist from 2001-2015.

Pat consults with YPF on composting and other conservation initiatives for the group. Contact Pat at (608) 772-2602 or murphpa58@gmail.com

A long-term YPF research study examines the environmental and agronomic performance of composted bedpack manure. Data thus far confirms a reduction of up to 2 pounds of phosphorus per acre, per year when eliminating bedpack manure spreading. Photos by YPF.
YPF has an extensive list of sponsors and supporters. Without their assistance, YPF could not offer the level of programming available to farmers and the public. We sat down with Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative to talk about what drew them to YPF.

**YPF:** As an organization, what attracted you to the Yahara Pride Farms group?

**Edge:** Edge is a dairy farmer cooperative and has led the way in thinking differently as a co-op and pushing for innovation over regulation. Yahara Pride Farms is another farmer-led initiative working to make a difference by empowering farmers to do what they do best — solve problems. Edge is proud to support our members and other farmers who are engaged in YPF and similar organizations to protect and improve water quality.

**YPF:** What services do you provide the ag/dairy community?

**Edge:** Edge provides dairy farmers throughout the Midwest with a powerful voice — the voice of milk — in Congress, with customers and within their communities. Edge is a direct link to federal representation on dairy-related issues through our in-house policy team and lobbyists in Washington, D.C.

We also provide verification of milk and milk components in accordance with the Federal Milk Marketing Orders, bulk tank calibrations and supply our members with market information. Additionally, our cooperative goes above and beyond in serving our members by providing them with news affecting the dairy community, promotion of our members through news and social media, and scholarships for future dairy leaders. Our team of experts supports members with questions on issues such as public relations and farm promotions as well as questions about local, county and state regulations.

**YPF:** What is a service that you provide that you wish every farmer knew about?

**Edge:** Now, more than ever, dairy farmers need to be heard. We represent the
interests of our dairy farmer members at the national level. As a cooperative, we represent our members equally and offer the opportunity for them to be engaged where decisions are made. All dairy farmers deserve to have a strong voice on dairy community issues and policies. Edge serves as a junction for members — hearing needs and concerns and expressing them effectively to those who influence change.

**YPF: What advice do you have for farmers in a down agricultural economy? Is there anything that Edge is doing to assist farmers during this challenging time?**

**Edge:** Make your voice heard! Contact your lawmakers so they understand what you are facing, and talk to them about how they can help. Edge also serves as a resource to help make the connection between farmers and their elected officials. Edge ensures the voices of farmers are heard in Washington, D.C., and is advocating for policies that will ensure the success of the dairy community.

**YPF: Please give a brief history of Edge.**

**Edge:** Founded in 2010, Edge was built upon a foundation of added value the co-op could offer farmer members. We continue to lead the way in policy representation and collaboration with other agricultural stakeholders to secure the success of dairy.

**YPF: What are some of the most positive outcomes of Edge in the recent past (i.e. some of your “wins”).**

**Edge:** Edge has ramped up advocacy efforts on behalf of our farmers. Our policy team works on the issues that affect our members’ ability to run their businesses and our customers’ ability to consume our delicious, healthy dairy products. Collaborated with other dairy groups to commission national research that showed customers are confused about whether imitation cheese products are indeed cheese and whether they carry the same nutritional value. These results were included in comments to the Food and Drug Administration arguing labeling rules should be enforced against imitation dairy products.

» Celebrated the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s decision to allow for flexible cover crop harvest dates for this growing season after advocating for the move and supporting bipartisan legislation. This was an issue our members told us they needed action on.

» Continually work with the national Agricultural Workforce Coalition to present practical and effective agricultural workforce solutions to Congress.

» Help members communicate to their elected officials about why free trade agreements and foreign markets are important for dairy, especially the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement.

» Helping members navigate government agencies and connect with officials to resolve specific concerns on their farms.

Edge has advanced to one of the top cooperatives in the country in terms of milk volume represented. In 2018, the co-op was No. 4 on the Hoard’s Dairyman Top 100 Cooperatives list.

**YPF: How can people contact Edge?**

**Edge:** Visit our website at voiceofmilk.com to learn more. To find additional contact information, click on “About” on the menu and “Staff” to connect with anyone on our team. Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube.

Facing page: This past Spring, Edge sponsored a group of farmers to attend the annual “Dairy Speaks in D.C.” member fly-in. Above: Edge board member Jerry Meissner and USDA Sec. Sonny Perdue.
2018 phosphorus savings up 17 percent, challenges ahead

By Martin Griffin, Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District

Yahara WINS’ collaborative approach offers the best way to address our water quality challenges through adaptive solutions that require a combination of local government policy changes, private landowner participation and implementation of new practices by communities and individuals. We thank Yahara Pride Farms for playing a critical role in our progress toward meeting our regional water quality goals.

A great illustration of the important role YPF plays is your leadership around promoting manure composting in the region. For two years, Yahara WINS has partnered with YPF on the winter composting initiative (see p. 6).

Winter composting is aimed at helping farmers avoid spreading manure during times of year that are prone to increased runoff. This allows manure that would have been winter spread to be turned into compost during the summer.

This project is unique in that it aims to look at the feasibility of composting for all farming systems. During 2018, the efforts generated valuable data about compost consistency, leaching and siting that will be valuable to other farmers considering composting. Continued study in 2019 will complete the project’s data set by providing insight into composting during every season.

So what have Yahara WINS’ results been like with our phosphorus reduction efforts this year? During 2018, work by Yahara Pride Farms and the rest of the Yahara WINS partners kept some 47,223 pounds of phosphorus from reaching area surface waters. This is up 17 percent from the 40,069 reported in 2017. This includes 22,097 pounds that were held out of area surface waters by members of Yahara Pride Farms.

As much as this important work contributed to progress on the 20-year water quality goals for the project, the continued above-average precipitation is expected to produce negative effects on water quality. Meanwhile, regional growth continues to extend the network of roads, housing and other impermeable surfaces that generate runoff. It is for these reasons that the Yahara WINS project focuses on long-term improvements at the watershed level and encourages further innovation to help sustain momentum to support success in the years ahead.

The Yahara WINS partnership relies on hard work by farmers to keep soil and nutrients in the fields, and in turn strives to provide recognition to the farmers and organizations that are delivering great results. We would also like to hear about your challenges and how we can work together to better assist your efforts. For more information on Yahara WINS, visit madsewer.org/yaharawins.

Martin Griffin is president of the Yahara WINS executive committee and director of ecosystem services for Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District. He can be reached at marting@madsewer.org.

Clean Lakes grants support phosphorus reduction and education

By Clean Lakes Alliance

Since 2011, Clean Lakes Alliance has given out more than $1,000,000 in project support and grants. This landmark achievement fulfills our mission of building capacity among our partner organizations and supporting on-the-ground practices for clean, healthy lakes. The Yahara River Watershed is a large and complex system and will require a community from urban residents, government entities, businesses and farmers to improve our lakes.

Funding began with a $50,000 grant to the City of Middleton in 2011 for a stormwater retention pond. Soon thereafter, Yahara Pride Farms was founded. Clean Lakes Alliance has made significant investments in Yahara Pride Farms to help expand the group’s reach and impact. Clean Lakes Alliance continues to support those doing great work for the lakes, including farmers.

Clean Lakes Alliance values our strong partnership with farmers and farmer-led groups like Yahara Pride Farms. Together, we have accomplished a great deal in the Yahara River Watershed. In 2013, we brought innovative aerial seeding techniques to the watershed for the first time. In 2016, we contributed more than $60,000 to purchase conservation buffer strip easements in Dane County. Along with Yahara WINS, we have supported 3.4 streambank miles (or 15.9 acres) of buffer strips. In 2017, we co-funded a vertical manure injector to be rented to farmers in the watershed.

We have not done this alone. Clean Lakes Grants have leveraged an additional $400,000 contributed by partner organizations since 2011. This effort is the culmination of dedicated individuals, environmentally conscious businesses and organizations, innovative farmers, receptive government entities, and tremendous community support. These are our lakes after all, and it’s our job to protect them.
"Farmers for water quality tent" a success at Breakfast on the Farm

By YPF communications

Yahara Pride Farms, in collaboration with the Farmers for the Upper Sugar River, Dane County Land & Water Resources Department, The Nature Conservancy, UW-Madison Extension and Yahara WINs provided an educational exhibit at the Dane County Breakfast on the Farm held June 8 at Klondike Farms in Brooklyn.

The “farmers for water quality tent” was an opportunity for farmers and other conservation experts to explain the agricultural practices that benefit water quality currently taking place in Dane County and answer questions from the public.

One of Yahara Pride Farms’ goals is to build relationships with members of the community and help them understand how conservation practices impact water quality in the Yahara watershed. Since Breakfast on the Farm is a big event with large public attendance, Yahara Pride Farms created a fun activity for kids and families to make connections between farming and gardening.

For the second year, Yahara Pride Farms coordinated a seed planting activity where attendees could plant their own seed to take home. Volunteers from the collaborating organizations sprinkled composted manure on top of the freshly planted seed and explained the benefits of fertilizing a plant with compost. The activity was a huge success again this year with more than 500 plants taken home to families across Dane county and the surrounding areas.

“The compost we used in our plant activity is the direct result of a community partnership that turns cow manure and biosolids into valuable fertilizer,” said Martye Griffin, director of ecosystem services for Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District and a Yahara Pride Farms board member.

“We want the public to know that we are in this together. We live here too – and want to share the message that we can have clean water, thriving farms and desirable communities,” said Jeff Endres, chairman of Yahara Pride Farms.

The “farmers for water quality tent” will be back again June 13, 2020 at Hinchley Dairy Farm in Cambridge.
Yahara Pride Farms received a grant from Dane County, Yahara WINs and the Clean Lakes Alliance to purchase a manure tanker and low-disturbance manure injection toolbar. We also leased a tractor to minimize down time. This equipment is available to farmers in the Yahara Watershed. To rent this equipment, contact us at info@yaharapridefarms.org or (608) 824-3250

Our challenge
Surface applications of manure have been shown to increase nitrogen and phosphorus runoff to rivers and streams. Injection places manure below the surface where it doesn’t interact with runoff water during storms. However, on steep slopes, injection of manure can make the soil more susceptible to erosion.

A solution
Low-disturbance manure injection (LDMI) is a farming system that incorporates manure into the soil with minimal soil disturbance. This equipment also works well with no-till farming systems and allows farmers to experiment with new methods of preserving nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium to save on fertilizer costs.

Equipment rental
In addition to providing cost-share of $20 per acre for up to 50 acres to farmers who implement LDMI on their farms, Yahara Pride Farms has a Case IH MX 240 CVT tractor, with a 5,300 gallon Houle manure tanker and Bazooka toolbar available for rent to farmers in the watershed. The fee to rent this equipment is $500/day for a short haul or $600/day for a long haul.