

Onto Greener Pastures with Rotational Grazing and Cover Crops



Meet Ron Schoepp

Ron Schoepp believes in using livestock grazing, no-till and cover crops to achieve good soil management and economic stability.

“We switched to rotational grazing in 1999, and began using mob grazing in 2008 to gain higher stocking rates,” he said of the approach some have called “Schoepp Style.”

The Demonstration Details

Schoepp Farms will rotationally graze cover crops and corn stalks following the harvest of corn and winter wheat crops. Parts of the fields will be excluded from the grazed area, with both areas sampled for soil health parameters to quantify the difference caused by grazing.

Ron has used rye as a cover crops after corn and soybeans for years. To extend the grazing



season, livestock graze the corn stalks after grain harvest. He wants to demonstrate how corn stalks and cover crops can add more feed while enhancing the health of his livestock and soil. The integration of livestock grazing onto crop fields is a principle of soil health.

Ron plans to interseed a cover crop mix between corn rows. This should result in producing more biomass for grazing after the corn is harvested.



“We rotational graze because it works and is good for the soil.”

- RON SCHOEPP

He is also adding barley to his cover crop mix after growing winter wheat. Barley should add feed volume and value for his cattle. He’ll also determine if barley builds resilience for a longer feeding schedule during the cooler fall temperatures.

The Bottom Line

While Ron has long believed in what he is doing, he looks forward to having data that shows the positive effects of grazing cattle on cover crops. He also hopes the demonstration and data will convince other farmers to do the same.



PROJECT OVERVIEW

While cover crop acreage is increasing, grazing them is not a common practice. Combining these management options can improve soil health, increase cost efficiency, and reduce nutrient runoff. By providing conservation guidance and motivation to graziers, this education and outreach project led by Sand County Foundation, will demonstrate the value of rotational grazing with cover crops. The goal is to expand cover crop acreage with rotational grazing across the Midwest for a more resilient agricultural system.



DEMONSTRATION APPROACH

Four experienced graziers will demonstrate new methods, share their experiences, and communicate the outcomes, with assistance from Sand County Foundation and the University of Wisconsin. The primary goals are to build awareness and confidence among livestock farmers to rotationally graze cover crops.



FARMER LEADERSHIP

The project's participating graziers are members of the Sauk Soil and Water Improvement Group. SSWIG is amongst the growing number of farmer-led groups to receive grant support from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.



Schoepp Farms

of Columbia County, WI



HISTORY:

The Schoepps have farmed near Lake Wisconsin since 1949. Ron joined the farm management in 1984.

FAMILY:

Ron farms with his parents, Dave and Nancy, with assistance from his son, Noah.

CROPS:

They grow corn, soybeans, wheat and alfalfa on about 500 acres.

CATTLE:

They rotational graze about 200 heifers, 50 dry cows and 20 grass-fed beef cattle on 120 acres in Columbia and Sauk Counties.

MANAGEMENT:

Ron believes in using livestock grazing, no-till and cover crops to achieve good soil management and economic stability.

FOR MORE PROJECT INFORMATION VISIT:

Sand County Foundation

www.sandcountyfoundation.org/RotationalGrazing