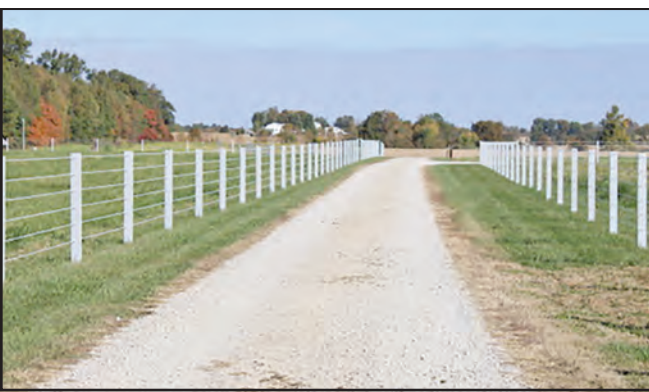


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The Studinger's geese flock is comprised of four different species and a few crossbreeds. Two of the four species—Emdens and Toulouses—are regarded as meat breeds, while the other two, Pomeranians and African geese, are more known for their foraging and weed-eating abilities. *Contributed photo.* **SEE STORY INSIDE ON PAGE 2.**



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Quality in Mind

Hillsboro couple focus on regenerative agriculture

By **NICOLETTE NAUMAN**
Sentry-Enterprise Editor

Just shy of two years ago, Josh and Catherine Studinger purchased a piece of property roughly six miles outside of Hillsboro. The couple had been looking for a place of their own, renting for a few months as they looked through potential properties. Their goal for their new home was to try regenerative agriculture.

Regenerative agriculture is a school of agricultural thought which puts a larger focus on soil health than more traditional farming methods. The practices common in regenerative agriculture focus on conservation and rehabilitation, particularly in terms of regenerating topsoil, increasing biodiversity, improving the local water cycle, and strengthening the overall health and fertility of the soil.

This approach is not a specific practice unto itself, instead built from a variety of techniques aimed at building more sustainable agriculture. While the term itself has not been in common use until recently, the concepts behind it have been utilized by humans for thousands of years.

Commercial farming as we know it is resource-intensive, requiring significant amounts of water, land, and pesticides to operate efficiently—though organic farmers largely cut pesticides from their routine operations.

According to data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the U.S. agriculture industry accounted for more than 10% of the country's total emissions in 2018. While agriculture is by no means the worse offender in this—industry and transportation accounted for more than 57% combined in 2018—shifts toward regenerative agricultural practices will help to reduce overall agricultural emissions.

For the Studingers, engaging in regenerative agriculture struck them as something of an adventure. Josh had grown up by Stoddard, and his family had engaged in gardening and raising cattle. Catherine, who had grown up on a farm near Caledonia, Minnesota, had already been raising a flock of geese before they relocated to the Hillsboro area.

She began her flock with Pomeranian geese, a good docile breed with a penchant for eating weeds. Over the past five years, she's grown her flock to include Emden and Toulouse geese, both good meat breeds. She has also introduced African geese, known for their foraging abilities, and now her flock includes several crossbreeds.

Along with geese, the Studingers also raise a flock of chickens, three horses, four Dexter cows, and three goats.

'REGENERATIVE'
cont. to page 7



Josh (left) and Catherine (right) Studinger pose with their dog, a blue heeler named Constance, on their farm just outside of Hillsboro. Photo taken by Nicolette Nauman, HSE Editor.

Spring 2023: Farmers vs. Weather

BY KYLE EVANS

Staff Writer

Local farmers every year deal with the battle of the weather. They depend on rain and depend on sunshine. As far as getting crops in the ground though, the moisture and ground temperature are the biggest challenges, according to local crop farmer, Mike Wegner, from Sparta.

This year is no exception, with a large snowfall earlier this month keeping the soil moist up until now.

"The biggest problem with moist soil when you're trying to plant crops is when the ground temperatures get too high then the ground will crust and it's very hard to push your planters through crusted ground." He said, "the soil however needs some moisture so that crops can take off faster when they do get planted."

Wegner said, "the ideal planting weather for beans and corn is when the ground temperature is at least 50 degrees and no snow on it." Earlier this Spring before the large snowfall, ground temperatures were up to 60 degrees for a couple days, but since the snowfall, the ground temperatures have cooled down.



A crop field holding water near Hwy 21 in Sparta. Herald photo by Kyle Evans.

"The warmer the ground, the better," said Wegner. "Last year was a very unusual Summer but it ended up turning out well with rain at the right time providing high yields, and so far, this year it has been unusual with ten plus inches of snow in mid-April."

Wegner said, "we are hoping to start getting crops in the ground in the next week or so and

hope for another "bumper crop" year." the term *bumper crop* is used to describe a high yield of harvest in an agricultural endeavor.

Some farmers spread lime before planting to help balance the pH by reducing acidity levels.

When starting out the year, Wegner starts with planting the darker soils first as he said,

"the darker soils warm up quicker."

Wegner mentioned that rain at the right times and getting your crops out of the ground at the right time and quick is key to maximizing yields.

Wegner farms 2,200 acres around the Sparta area with half of the field being corn and half beans.

Monroe County Dairy Breakfast to be held near Cashton

BY KYLE EVANS

Staff Writer

The Monroe County Dairy Breakfast committee announced in March that Mapltwin Dairy near Cashton will be hosting this years Dairy Breakfast. The farm is located at 28521 Navajo Rd. in Cashton.

Breakfast on the farm will consist of ham & cheese omelet, pancakes, toast, milk, cookies, cheese, and Culver's sundaes.

The average Monroe County Dairy Breakfast will serve approximately 2,800

people. This year however, there could be more people as La Crosse County is not hosting a Dairy Breakfast this year.

Families are encouraged to attend as there are many family activities including a petting zoo, horse drawn wagon rides, fire trucks, exhibits, a great breakfast, and more.

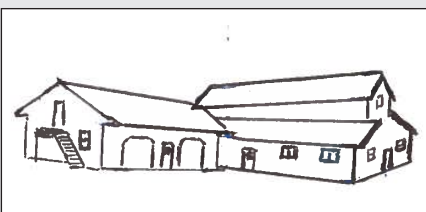
The Breakfast is only \$5 per person. The committee's goal is to educate people on where their food comes from and how important the dairy industry is.

Hope to see you at the Monroe County Dairy Breakfast June 3.

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Richland area vet holds Day With A Vet workshop

By **NICOLETTE NAUMAN**
Sentry-Enterprise Editor

While Wisconsin is best known for our dairy industry, we've often excelled and led in other sectors of the agriculture industry.

As far back as the 1800s, sheep have been a significant feature on Wisconsin farms. At one point, Wisconsin was second in the nation in terms of sheep. As recently as 2015, Wisconsin existed in the top 10 states for raising sheep. As of January 1, 2023, Wisconsin was home to 80,000 sheep and lambs. Sheep have been a significant enough aspect of Wisconsin agriculture that we even have an annual Sheep and Wool Festival in Jefferson—set to return in September of this year.

While we most commonly associate sheep with wool production, it turns out that wool is actually the least valuable product a sheep can produce. In keeping with our Dairyland title, Wisconsin sheep are focused more

on milk production than wool production, and even more on meat production.

Kristin and Josh Joseph own and operate a sheep farm in Richland County, near Ithaca. Their flock numbers roughly 375 head, with their annual lamb crop at approximately 1.5 per sheep. Ewes in their flock tend to produce twins and singles at higher rates than triplets, which they've described as "pretty normal" for their flock.

In addition to managing their own flock, Kristin Joseph has been working as a veterinarian for the past five years. She studied first at Ohio State before working for four and a half years at River Valley in Plain. Recently, she's purchased a practice of her own from a retiring veterinarian and now operates on her own.

Joseph recently held a "Day on the Farm with a Vet" event for youth interested in raising sheep



As a vet, Kristin Joseph (left) is often called to check if bred livestock have indeed become pregnant. She accomplishes these "preg-checks" by using a portable ultrasound, which she is pictured holding. Joseph also took those in attendance through a few options they could use to ensure their livestock remain healthy during pregnancy. Photo taken by Nicolette Nauman, HSE Editor.

'VET'
cont. to page 8



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Steve and Linda Meyer stand among their cows March 20 at their farm near Westby, Wisconsin. The Meyers are retiring from milking cows after 42 years of farming together. Photo by Abby Wiedmeyer.

For better or worse

Meyers retire from dairying after 42 years

BY ABBY WIEDMEYER
Dairy Star

WESTBY, Wis. — When 3 p.m. rolls around, Steve and Linda Meyer take a break for their afternoon coffee, like they have been doing throughout their 42 years of marriage and farming career. The team has seen good times in raising their children and grandchildren on the farm coupled with bad times bringing low milk prices and health issues.

Now, the couple is retiring from dairying. Their herd of 70 cows was sold March 29 at Premier Livestock and Auctions in Withee. “It will be kind of nice to slow down,” Steve said.

Linda is looking forward to spending more time with her husband and their grandchildren. The couple plans to eventually move to the Appleton area to be closer to their youngest grandchildren. Linda plans to run an in-home day care as well.

“She followed my dreams and helped me all these years, and now, it’s my turn to let her have her dream,” Steve said. “I’d love to do that for her, but I am going to miss doing this.”

When they were first married, Steve and Linda farmed at a few different places, working for shares. In 2004, they bought their current farm from Steve’s dad.

“I was always asking my dad when he

was going to quit, and he would never give me an answer because he still had kids at home,” Steve said. “Then one day he called me out of the blue and asked if I would buy the farm.”

Although they waited a year before taking his dad up on the offer, Steve and Linda eventually bought the farm and moved their cows in. They also bought a lot of the machinery, which was not in great condition but still was a place to start.

“I feel lucky that we did it the way we did,” Steve said. “It got us through the first year.”

They milked 70 cows in a tiestall barn. When they first moved to the property, they used a Harvestore silo and baled hay. One of the first things they upgraded was adding a stationary mixer to the operation. Steve said the cows responded nicely.

“I had it mapped out in my head before I moved here because I knew how I was going to set it up,” Steve said. “The total mixed ration has made a huge difference.”

Steve said that before moving to his dad’s farm, they never averaged much more than 60 pounds of milk per cow. Since managing the feeding system differently, however, they have stayed around 80 pounds per cow. They also quit using the Harvestore and switched to bag storage.

The farm has about 140 acres total, with 90 of them tillable. With the cows gone, the couple will not need to plant a crop this year. They are trying to decide how to manage the land.

‘RETIRE’
cont. to page 9



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No kidding around at goat workshop

Wonewoc resident hosts informative session

By NICOLETTE NAUMAN
Sentry-Enterprise Editor

For practically the entirety of our history, Wisconsin has been known for its dairy industry. We're often referred to as America's Dairyland—a moniker we stamp on just about anything we can get our hands on, from state license plates to our state quarter. Dairy contributes \$45.6 billion annually to the state economy. We're number one in the U.S. for cheese production, supplying 25% of the nation's cheese.

While Wisconsin isn't liable to lose this Dairyland designation any time soon, it is arguable that the demographics of the industry are experiencing a shift. When most of us think 'dairy,' what comes to mind is more than likely the Holstein dairy cow. Massive, black-and-white bovines practically synonymous with dairy farms. But trends show a growing interest in a different breed of dairy animal: the goat.

In 2017, the U.S. Department of Agriculture counted a Wisconsin dairy goat population of more than 83,000 head. This number easily took first in the nation, making Wisconsin a leader in the dairy goat field. The next highest population was California, with barely half as many at roughly 43,000 dairy goats.

Wisconsin continues to lead the nation in dairy goats, with 72,000 head reported throughout the state at the start of this year.

Wonewoc area resident Tessa Gehri has been working with goats since 2014, raising and showing them through her participation in ag-focused organizations such as FFA. It started with a pair of pet goats her parents located in Ontario, and took off from there.

'GOAT'

cont. to page 11



ABOVE Mariah Schwartz demonstrates different fitting and grooming techniques to those in attendance during the April 8 goat workshop at the Gehri farm just outside of Wonewoc. **BELOW RIGHT** Tessa Gehri demonstrates how her MagnaWave equipment works. Gehri gave those in attendance an overview of what MagnaWave is and how the therapeutic technology is designed to improve the health and overall wellbeing of the animals she works with. Photos taken by Nicolette Nauman, HSE Editor.



Ana Roehling (left) takes a group of 4-H and FFA members and their families through the different types of equipment they will use if they chose to show goats at fairs and shows. Photo taken by Nicolette Nauman, HSE Editor.



'REGENERATIVE'

continued from page 2

They had originally started off with more livestock when they'd first relocated, but have downsized over the past two years as they adjust to their new home.

They also maintain a small orchard, which came with the property. The orchard is currently set up to produce apples, peaches, and pears.

The Studingers take inspiration from others engaging in homesteading and regenerative agriculture practices, particularly Joel Salatin, a Virginia-based farmer and author who has emphasized the importance of rotational grazing to ensure healthy grass for pastured animals to consume.

"We need more regenerative farmers," says Josh Studinger.

The property the Studingers currently own is largely off-grid, and they produce the majority of their power from a set of solar panels Josh has set up. Their water is procured from a well, which was originally a hand-pump well before they opted to reconfigure it with a pump jack. While the change has been a bit of a shock, both Josh and Catherine consider it an overall positive one.

"You got the opportunity to do the things you want because it's your own place," says Josh.



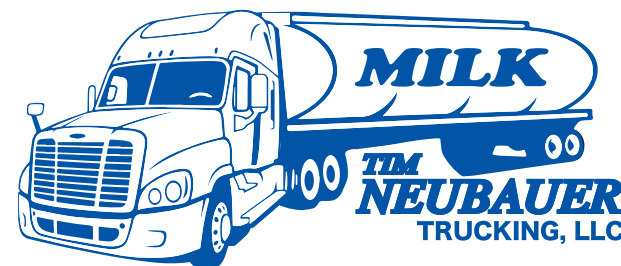
The Studingers raise pastured poultry, which they are offering for sale this year, along with pastured geese. Contributed photo.

Moving forward, the Studingers plan to continue developing their property and focus on improving the soil quality. In just the twenty or so months that they have owned the property, they have already seen the soil improve.

The Studingers are offering pastured poultry and geese for sale this year, and those interested in purchasing from them can contact them by email at jc.regenerative.family.farm@gmail.com, or by phone at (608) 304-4520. You can find them on Facebook at J&C Regenerative Family Farm.

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'VET'

continued from page 4



Josh Joseph (center left) shows the kids in attendance what an ultrasound looks like. The image Kristin Joseph (bottom center) sees through the machine's goggles is transposed onto her phone screen through a connected app. Kids and their families could see what Kristin was seeing as she checked over one of the ewes in her flock. Photo taken by Nicolette Nauman, HSE Editor.

or in veterinary science—or both! Despite the chilly start to the Saturday, April 22, workshop, a good-sized group showed up at the Josephs' farm.

She took those in attendance through various aspects of her work, commenting not only on sheep but also on her experiences with other livestock breeds, from dairy cattle to pigs. Joseph focused on her work with reproduction in farm animals, from collecting and examining semen to determine a male's suitability for breeding to conducting ultrasounds on potentially pregnant animals and ensuring their well-being through the pregnancy and birth.

Much of the focus was indeed on sheep, as they are the livestock breed the Josephs' focus on. Joseph explained how lambing season typically transpires on her farm. The Josephs tend to see their livestock lamb in

rounds, usually in three waves. They send most of their market lambs to Fennimore for sale and processing, and spoke a bit on the logistics of raising sheep for meat.

Josh Joseph commented that he "collects breeds of sheep," indicating the flock's overall makeup. Among the breeds represented in the Josephs' flock are Katahdins, Border Leicesters, and Suffolk crosses. According to Josh, most of the lambs this year were sired by Pollypay rams, another common breed. He did comment on breeds to avoid—for example, Dorpers tend not to fair well in a climate like ours.

In total, 26 families signed up for the event, and there were more who registered the day-of. This event was sponsored by the Richland County 4-H and in partnership with the Richland County Extension Office.

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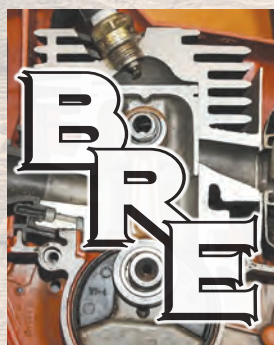
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'RETIRE'

continued from page 5

"We wanted to be able to rent it out to a younger person to get started and go on shares, but it isn't really viable to bring somebody else into it," Steve said. "We've learned a lot about budgeting over the years."

Steve's health has been a challenge for the couple as he has battled diverticulitis which turned into multiple hernias and surgeries. Linda said Steve's ill health placed him in the hospital often.

"In the 42 years we've been married, he's had seven surgeries," Linda said. "I kept the place going."

All of the illness and surgeries have left Steve with congestive heart failure and problems with his lungs. While Linda helps when she is not working off the farm, Steve does a majority of the chores with the help of his hired hand.

"It's put a lot of pressure on her (Linda)," Steve said. "Mike Satona has been here a few years now and turned out to be very good help. He's done very well for us."

Satona's wife, Holly, and the Meyers' children showed cows together when they were young. They usually placed high with cows from the Meyer herd and one cow in particular won a couple times.

"She followed my dreams and helped me all these years, and now, it's my turn to let her have her dream. I'd love to do that for her, but I am going to miss doing this."

— Steve Meyer, retired dairy farmer

"When I started here, I started using the best of the best bulls," Steve said. "I was spending a lot of money breeding the cows, and it made a heck of a difference. It really showed. And now, boy it's hard to give up that cow and not know what's going to become of her. She's still everything she was."

While they are anticipating life without cows, Linda agreed it will be an adjustment.

"We have a lot of good cows out there," Linda said. "He missed out on a lot of things so to be able to enjoy our grandchildren will be nice."



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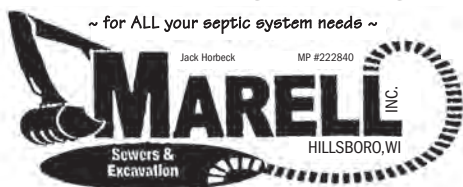
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'GOAT'

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In 2017, Gehri decided to switch over to Boer goats, a meat breed originating from South Africa. While in high school, Gehri set to work building a business of her own with her goat herd as a focus. Last year, Gehri put her experience with goats to another use by taking over the Monroe County Goat Project.

The project, formerly headed by Denise Murray, focuses on teaching Monroe County youth about goats and training them on how to properly care for goats and the ins and outs of goat showmanship. Under Gehri's leadership, the Monroe County Goat Project is looking to expand the program at the annual Monroe County Fair, with a goal of adding 50 head to the turnout.

Gehri has also made several updates to the fairbook's goat section, to bring it more in line with today's goat industry. Changes to the awards showers will be angling for at the fair have also been made, with banners planned for this year. Goats will also now be eligible for the livestock sale.

As part of her efforts to promote goats, Gehri hosted a workshop and clinic focused on goats for those participating in programs such as FFA and 4-H. The clinic was broken down into three stations, each focusing on a particular area of goat ownership, and attendees rotated through each station.

The first station, led by Mariah Schwartz, taught attendees how to properly groom and fit a goat for the showring. Schwartz went over how to clip a goat's coat to highlight its breed features, how to clean and trim the goat's hooves, as well as a few tips and tricks she's used over the years to ensure her goats look their best before a judge.

Next was Ana Roehling, a fellow Wonewoc graduate, who took groups

through what showing goats entailed. Roehling demonstrated how to lead a goat through a showring, went through the various pieces of equipment those showing goats used in the showring, and offered her advice on how to put your goat's best hoof forward.

The last station focused on the overall health and wellbeing of the animal. Gehri took each group through how to ensure a goat was healthy—and what to do if illness or injury occurred. She also took some time to explain a new aspect of her business: MagnaWave.

MagnaWave is based on a pulsed electromagnetic field (PEMF) and is designed to help regenerate tissue that has been damaged, either by injury or disease. This therapy technique is meant to help relieve conditions such as travel fatigue, reduce inflammation, increase the animal's appetite, and help improve the animal's range of motion. As a certified MagnaWave practitioner, Gehri is able to conduct sessions on a wide range of patients—from livestock to pets to even humans!

As superintendent for the Monroe County Goat Project, Gehri is in charge of putting on clinics such as these, and is willing to work one-on-one with kids and their goats. She hopes to one day redirect her efforts to the Juneau County Fair, but for now is focused on fulfilling her current role in Monroe County's Goat Project.

Those looking to contact Gehri for her services as a certified MagnaWave practitioner, please contact her at (608) 415-9837. You can also find her on Facebook under T Gehri's Livestock & Equine Solutions. Similar methods can be used to contact her with regards to the goat project.

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