

FALL FARM & Harvest

A Special Section Insert for the Monroe County Herald,
Hillsboro Sentry-Enterprise, and Cashton Record

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October 16th & 17th, 2024
Special Section | 12 pages



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Agritourism: Helping farms diversify



As family farms continue to disappear across North America, diversification has never been more crucial to keep these small-scale operations afloat. One innovative avenue farmers are exploring to boost their income is agritourism. Here's a look at how tourism is changing the agricultural landscape.

WHAT'S AGRITOURISM?

Agritourism is a commercial enterprise offering visits to rural environments or settings where visitors can partake in activities, events or attractions not readily available in urban areas. For instance, visitors can engage in farm activities like fruit picking, feeding animals, wine tasting and tree planting.

HOW DOES IT HELP SMALL FARMS?

By integrating recreational or educational components into their operations, farms can diversify their income

streams, offsetting the challenges of traditional farming and unpredictable crop yields.

Guided tours of a working farm can also generate revenue while helping consumers understand where their food comes from. Additionally, self-pick fruit gathering experiences provide fresh produce to visitors, while reducing harvesting costs and labour for the farm.

Furthermore, agritourism can breathe new life into rural economies, attracting visitors from near and far and injecting much-needed capital into local communities. Farms can also share their stories, traditions and the history of their land with visitors, creating a sense of continuity and cultural significance.

Look for agritourism experiences to try out in your area to support your local farmers.

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Monroe County 4-H Educator continues legacy of esteemed organization

By **BENNY MAILMAN**
Editor

4-H is a youth organization that dates to 1902 and has a strong network across the United States. Wisconsin's first 4-H Club was Linn 4-H club, and started on October 30th, 1914, under the guidance of Thomas L. Bewick, in Walworth County. It was estimated that there were around 10,000 4-H members within the first year alone. With their focus on the idea of practical and hands-on learning, the original hope was to make public education more connected to rural life. A heavy concentration, in its early years, was on farming and farm-homemaking practices.

In 1970, 4-H started broadening its parameters, including a full range of young people, and included minorities. There are currently 6.5 million 4-H members, ranging in age from 5 to 21, with an impressive alumni list of over 25 million. The parent organization for 4-H is the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

'4-H'

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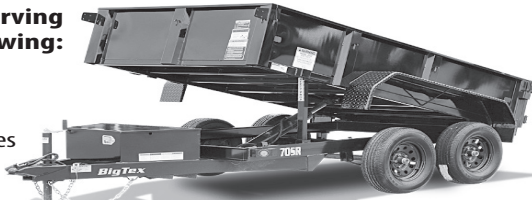
Summer Camp at Upham Woods in Wisconsin Dells One of the big fun events the Monroe County 4-H Junior Leaders took this year was to Wisconsin Dells. The Junior Leaders Association is a group within 4-H, of 7th graders through 13th graders. **Front Left to Right: Alivia Paulson, Sage Koltermann, Hannah Chambers, Mia Anderson, Katie Powell, Azaria Carpenter, and Aletta Brandau. Back Left to Right: Jason Hornickel, Bonita Hanley, Carley Kloehn, Brooke Bally, Alexis York, Dustin Powell, Zachiah Carpenter, Lane Bally, and Zaida Carpenter.**

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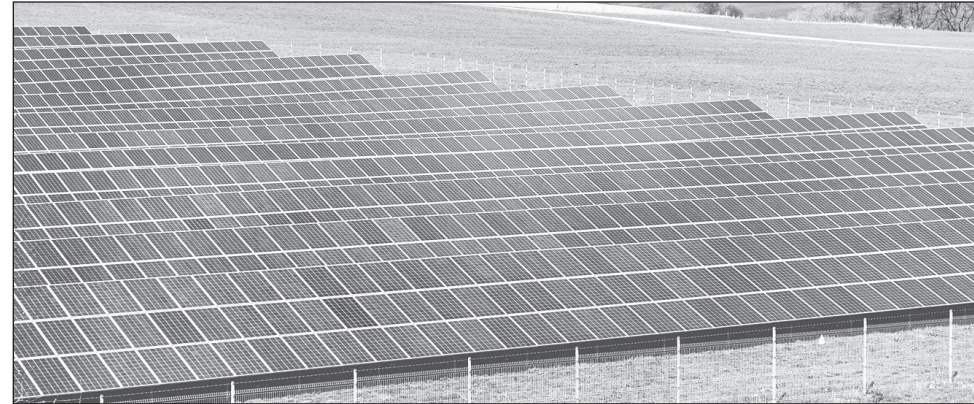
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Agrivoltaic farming: growing food and energy



Agrivoltaic farming is an innovative solution that's gaining popularity for good reason. Instead of choosing between farming or solar energy, farmers can now use the same land for both purposes, maximizing the use of their valuable land.

increasingly turning to agrivoltaics to mitigate the impacts of climate change while securing additional revenue streams. They can sell the excess power generated from the solar panels back to the grid, thus creating an extra source of income.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Agrivoltaic farming involves installing solar panels above crops to provide shade and help them stay cool and hydrated. The panels also act as a shield, protecting the plants from harsh weather conditions like scorching heat or heavy rains. This shade also extends the growing season of certain crops, which helps boost yields.

However, agrivoltaics isn't just about growing food. It's also about generating clean, renewable energy. Farmers are

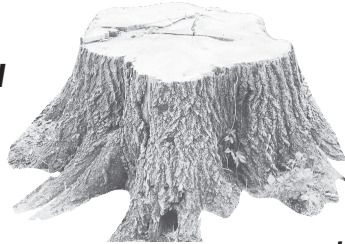
GROWING POPULARITY

Agrivoltaic farming is becoming popular around the world. In Japan, for example, the government is promoting agrivoltaics to increase the country's renewable energy capacity. Agrivoltaic farming is also gaining interest in areas like Africa, where it can help provide power to rural communities without access to the electricity grid.

Agrivoltaics is a shining example of how agriculture and renewable energy can work together to create a brighter, greener world.

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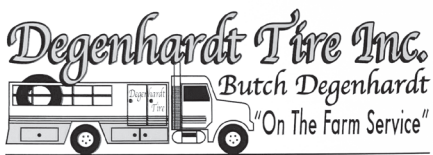
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The life of a dairy cow at MDS

By **KYLE EVANS**
Herald Staff

When a calf is born, it can be difficult to make sure they are getting enough nutrients and not too many nutrients. In the feeder calf barn at MDS Dairy, near Leon, that is not an issue. The calf walks up the feeding station, that scans their tag to know if it's already been fed and if it is due for a feeding it will put together a malt mix with the perfect measurement of nutrients that each calf needs.

In the feeder calf barn and all the barns at MDS they use and reuse sand. Phil Mlsna, owner of MDS Dairy said, "we put in a separating system a couple years ago. It came from Belgium and takes the used sand filled with manure and such and separates it and spits out perfectly clean sand. It's like beach sand, after it comes out of there."

After leaving the feeder calf barn, they move to another barn before getting ready to become milk cows. Around the age of 2 a calf turns into a milk cow. They will give over 24,000 pounds of milk each year while also giving birth to another calf each year.

While a cow is a milk cow, it also gets fed perfect proportions and at MDS Dairy, the cows are living the high life. There are robotic scrubbers to keep the cows clean, an incredible amount of ventilation to keep the

cows cool in the summer and warm in the winter, water, and room to roam free in the barns.

From that milk comes products like cheese, creams, butters, and more.

Not only is that cow producing milk, but its producing manure also that fertilizes the soil to grow their own food. Mlsna said, "we have made this process almost as efficient as it can be. The manure goes into the pit and hoses run from the pit to all of our surrounding crop land to keep the soil the best it can be."

Another project starting at MDS will be a new digester. This will take the manure and extract the methane gas and convert it to natural gas at a temperature of 111 degrees, which is the natural temperature of the cow's manure.

Mlsna said, "with the amount of cattle we have, this will create enough natural gas to heat the whole city of Sparta all year round."

After the cow's lifespan is complete, around age 9, when the milk production slows and it's simply getting old. The cow then is put on the butcher block, where it's turned into ground beef, steaks, roasts, and more.

Deep down a cow's life cycle and dairy farms are essential to the wholistic look at humanity.



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4 things to consider when buying a UTV for your farm



clearance, for instance, so don't ignore these factors.

4. NEW OR USED

You'll need to decide whether you want to buy a new vehicle or settle for a pre-owned one. Used is often cheaper, but make sure to check the oil and air filters, as their state is often indicative of the overall condition of the UTV.

Consider your needs and pick a model accordingly. Speak to a dealer in your region to find out more about specific models for sale.

Utility vehicles, more commonly referred to as UTVs, offer an easy way to transport materials and personnel around your farm. Here's what you need to think about when purchasing one.

1. LOAD CAPACITY

Start by figuring out what you'll want to do with your UTV. If you plan on using it to carry heavy tools and material, then make sure the model you choose is rated to handle that. While some models can handle up to 545 kilograms (1,200 pounds), most can only handle half of that.

2. TOWING CAPACITY AND POWER

Towing capacity isn't the same as load capacity. Make sure that you correctly identify your towing needs and choose a model that can handle them. Note that handling rough terrain and slopes is a matter of power, not towing capacity, so take the geography of your farm into consideration.

3. OVERALL DESIGN

You'll want to think about three things: ground clearance, turning radius and seat space. Rough terrain requires more ground

Dairy cows benefit from playing sports, too!

Did you know exercise isn't only good for human health? It's good for all creatures, even farm animals! Dairy cows are no exception, and there's plenty of research to prove it.

BENEFITS

Physical activity has many positive effects on cows regardless of how they're raised. A key benefit of exercise is that it improves leg strength. Physical activity also improves hoof condition, minimizes the likelihood of lameness and reduces teat injuries. Regular activity also helps increase rumination, promoting good metabolic and digestive health.

Active cows live longer, which increases profitability for the farmer. Moreover, cows grow more accustomed to human contact as they're moved to and from the exercise areas, which improves human-animal relations.

CHALLENGES

Farmers wishing to provide their cows with more freedom of movement face several challenges, including poor weather

conditions, inadequate space and a lack of time to move the animals. Additionally, farmers may be concerned for the comfort and udder health of the cows.

Nevertheless, several solutions can ensure cows have quality time in the pasture. Creating a setup where cows can move freely from inside to outdoors can cut down on human labour. Cows that are free to roam outdoors can feed themselves and spread their manure, reducing fodder harvesting costs.

Do you want to see more farmers adopt measures to help their cows get enough exercise? Support producers who have introduced such a system and encourage others to do the same.



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Sustainable agriculture: the rise of no-till direct seeding



Farmland yields have traditionally influenced how farmers work, but new challenges have led many to change their approach. Climate change and rising fuel costs have prompted the adoption of no-till seeding techniques. Here's a brief overview of this process, which aims to promote soil sustainability and the long-term viability of farms.

HOW IT WORKS

No-till direct seeding requires no preliminary plowing of the soil. It involves using a seed drill that passes over the field to simultaneously spread seed and fertilizer directly into the plant residues of the previous season's crop.

ADVANTAGES

The no-till direct seeding method significantly reduces the use of machinery and fuel consumption, resulting in significant savings for farmers. With no need for repeated tractor passes and

fieldwork, the soil is less compacted and better able to support drainage. Additionally, the carbon produced by decomposing plants remains trapped in the soil. The carbon, therefore, doesn't convert into carbon dioxide as it would when exposed to the air.

CHALLENGES

Transitioning to no-till direct seeding can seem like a considerable undertaking. The farmer must invest in a new type of adapted machinery and rethink their general approach to farming. Although initial attempts may result in variable success, crop yields generally improve after a few years.

By adopting sustainable farming methods, local producers are making every effort to stay in business longer and produce crops more conscientiously. Consumers have every reason to support them in these efforts.



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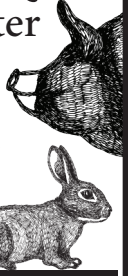


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The top 3 dog breeds for farms

Dogs make a great addition to any farm. They can help with herding cattle, guarding livestock and chasing away pesky rodents. If you're thinking about adding a new member to your family, consider one of these three breeds.

have a thick coat, which makes it easy for them to live outdoors in all types of weather. The great Pyrenees is an extremely friendly and laid-back dog that can be a great companion for the entire family.

1. GREAT PYRENEES

Great Pyrenees are guard dogs through and through. Since they were bred to watch over livestock and live with them year-round, these canines are incredibly loyal yet independent protectors. They also

2. BORDER COLLIE

Border collies are one of the dogs most suited for farms because they're extremely smart, hard-working and aim to please. They're energetic and need daily activity and exercise, making them well-suited to the physical demands of working on a farm. Border collies are also notoriously easy to train and great around children.

3. AUSTRALIAN CATTLE DOG

Because of their small and compact size, Australian cattle dogs make great herding dogs or ratters. They have boundless energy and thrive in an environment where they have a job. They're eager to be involved in just about any farm activity and form a deep bond with their owners.

Besides being great companions, dogs can make your daily tasks and chores on the farm easier and more enjoyable.



Thank You, Farmers!

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'4-H'

continued from page 3

A Great Motto to Model and Pledge to Perfect

The 4-H motto is, "To make the best better." Usually 4-Hers will stand, shortly after their meeting has been called to order, and recite their pledge, using hand gestures along with the recitation, "I pledge my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service, and my health to better living, for my club, my community, my country, and my world." Some clubs will also include "Family" in the last line.

Monroe County 4-H Running Strong

On Tuesday, October 1st, the Herald had a chance to sit down with Monroe County's Extension 4-H Program Educator, Jason Hornickel, to discuss 4-H Week and the many facets of 4-H that are enjoyed among its leaders, members, and alumni. There are eleven 4-H clubs with the boundaries of Monroe County.

"Really, 4-H Week is an opportunity to put a spotlight on all the great things that our clubs do, here in Monroe County," Hornickel started out. "For me, it does not entail that much because our clubs speak for themselves. It is such a busy time for our club leaders, with school starting back up and 4-H starting up as well, that I hate to ask more from them, but I explain to them that they do so many great things during the year and this is a great opportunity for them to showcase all these wonderful events and what is available within the 4-H organization, as well as what our club leaders do for the kids, families, and communities."

As an educator, Hornickel states that his love for 4-H stems not only from the incredible education that 4-Hers attain through the many experiences and lessons

they receive while in 4-H, but how they learn as well. "They are learning life skills through project-based learning. They learn and practice all sorts of life-skill activities that they may never have the opportunity or chance to do at any other time in their lives ... 4-H has endless amounts of these opportunities."

Leadership Positions Build Confidence Levels

Those familiar with the 4-H structure know that opportunities for leadership roles within a club serve as remarkable opportunities for members to build and maintain skills, as well as learning the importance of, and responsibility of, being in an authoritative position and maintaining reliability.

"The officer positions help develop their leadership skills, helping them to comfortably speak in front of a crowd," Hornickel stated. "As an educator, I know that the opportunity for kids to practice speaking in front of a crowd in school is becoming less and less."

Jason Hornickel mentioned that club leaders do a great job of setting the precedent that if someone is a member of the club, they are expected to participate. The atmosphere for the meetings is member-interaction friendly and is set up specifically for every member to feel comfortable, inviting participation and an ease with communication in public. "It is a space where all of the kids know that they are in the same boat and that brings a high level of trust, which creates a pleasant environment that surrounds the meetings and activities," Hornickel remarked. He mentioned that all of these strong points, which 4-H offers to all of its members, serve as a catalyst for future endeavors for

their members, strengthening presentation and speaking skills, as well as confidence levels.

"They can share the skills that they learn with other people," Hornickel explained. "So many of our members start when they are in kindergarten, so those values that 4-H instills in them, it is like giving back to your community. They are solid, good Samaritan endeavors, like helping people out, teaching people, and passing on what they have learned ... those things are embedded in our members."

Hornickel further stated, "It is a seed that is planted at a young age, and it is great to see them grow and practice these skills within their communities, from age five, all the way through high school."

Another advantage is that all members learn from each other, and with younger members mingling and being mentored by older members, the confidence rubs off, as they witness and surround themselves with like-minded individuals, who are experienced in the very arena that they themselves will be participating in. "They see the older members and want to emulate them, seeking advice and direction from them," Hornickel explained. "The older members are more than happy to assist them in their quest of knowledge on projects and leadership."

Leadership Meetings and Junior Leaders

On Friday, October 11th, the Herald met up with Jason Hornickel and a few of the 4-H leaders and their parents at the Barney Center, in Sparta. The Herald spoke on leadership and the traits that a leader encompasses, as well as the benefits of being a 4-H leader.

"We have our Junior Leaders Association,

which is our 7th graders through 13th grade," Hornickel added. "They work the ice cream stand at the fair [Monroe County] every year. The couple of shifts that they volunteer for is a "giving back" to the Junior Leaders Association, and in return they get to attend a lot of fun events."

Jason then informed the Herald that all of the Junior Leaders enjoyed a trip to Wisconsin Dells this past summer, as well as attending the Vernon County Fair, where they were able to have fun as a separate group within 4-H. "They also do the Sparta Holiday Lights every year. They help with the concessions and the lights."

If you have any questions about 4-H, or want to find out which Monroe County 4-H club is best for your child to join, you can contact Jason by email, at jason.hornickel@wisc.edu

Editor's Note

When my family moved to Cataract from Milwaukee, my mother, Bernie Arena, started up a 4-H club in Cataract, called the Cataract Ridge Runners. The Monroe County Fair was the yearly high-light, where we would show animals, such as goats and rabbits, and enter projects, such as photography, plants, and even wood projects, like the famous breadbox many of us made in junior high school.

To this day, I have 4-H alumni that speak my mother's praise. "It was the best when we baked with your mom! We learned how to bake bread, pies, and even cookies," said Becky Mahan, who was a few years behind me in school. 4-H is a blast and such a great opportunity to learn leadership skills and social skills. The 4-H food stand was also a blast, and every time I pass by it, I still smile

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Farmers' market fun

Beyond simply shopping for fresh produce and artisanal goods, farmers' markets offer a treasure trove of activities to delight visitors of all ages, including:

1. Tastings. Many vendors offer free samples, from freshly picked fruits to homemade jams and cheeses. Sampling these tasty treats can inspire you for your own kitchen creations and can also be a fun way to try new things.
2. Live music and entertainment. Some markets feature live music performances by local musicians. You can soak up the vibrant atmosphere while tapping your feet to great tunes. You might even find a new musician or band to follow and enjoy!
3. Animal encounters. Outdoor markets often have petting zoos and animal encounters where kids can meet goats, chickens, rabbits and other animals. This is a great way to teach children about where their food comes from and to give them a hands-on experience with nature.
4. Classes, workshops and demos. Some markets host workshops, demos and classes on composting, beekeeping and organic gardening. You'll not only gain new knowledge and skills, but you'll also have the opportunity to connect with others who share your passion for sustainability.



Farmers' markets are a great place to strike up a conversation with local merchants and producers. They're passionate about their products and can offer insights into the farming process and tips on preparing and using their goods. In the end, you'll feel more connected to your food.

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Spotlight on the importance of drainage in farm fields

It goes without saying that water is essential for agriculture, as it helps plants grow. However, precision is also critical: grain, fruit and vegetable plants all have differing needs for sufficient water, so farmers must also take care not to oversaturate the soil. This is where land drainage plays a critical role. Learn more about this important aspect of farming.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF POOR DRAINAGE

Depending on the slope of a field, water may seep in one place and then re-emerge in another. The foot of a small slope, for example, often has water accumulation. The weight of excess moisture can cause soil compaction, depriving plants of oxygen and impacting crop yields. Standing water can also hinder plant maturation during the growing season and delay sowing time.

DIFFERENT METHODS

Did you know the ditches you see when driving through the countryside serve a valuable purpose? They carry away extra water from the fields quickly after a rainfall. In addition to ditches, farmers can level the soil and install underground drainage pipes.

A well-drained field is less prone to erosion and is, therefore, more durable. When the soil has appropriate density, it supports higher crop yields and higher-quality produce for consumers.



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**Based on EDA/UCC Data from 01/01/2019 - 12/31/2023 for sales of new tractors 0-200 Hp in the USA. © Kubota Tractor Corporation, 2024. 0% A.P.R. financing for up to 48 months on purchases of new Kubota Kubota MX Series equipment from participating dealers' in-stock inventory is available to qualified purchasers through Kubota Credit Corporation, U.S.A.; subject to credit approval. Example: 48 monthly payments of \$20.83 per \$1,000 financed. Each dealer sets their own price. Customer instant rebates up to \$300 are available with promotional rate financing. Customer instant rebates include Orange Plus Attachment Instant Rebate of \$100 with purchase of the second qualifying new implement and \$200 for the third new qualifying implement. Some exceptions apply. There is no rebate on the first implement purchased. Offers expire 12/31/24. Terms subject to change. Your Kubota Limited warranty gives you specific legal rights. You may have other rights which vary from state to state. 6 years limited powertrain warranty, Kubota Tractor Corporation does not authorize any person to create for KTC any obligation or liability other than that stated in the limited warranty. This material is for descriptive purposes only. Kubota disclaims all representations and warranties, express or implied, or any liability from the use of this material. For complete warranty, disclaimer, safety and product and incentive offer information, consult your local Kubota dealer and the Owner's Warranty Information Guide for the Kubota limited warranty on all products. Visit KubotaUSA.com/disclaimers for more information.

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