

Cornell Cooperative Extension

Central New York Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops

*Serving Chenango, Fulton, Herkimer, Madison, Montgomery,
Otsego, Saratoga and Schoharie Counties*

Fall 2019

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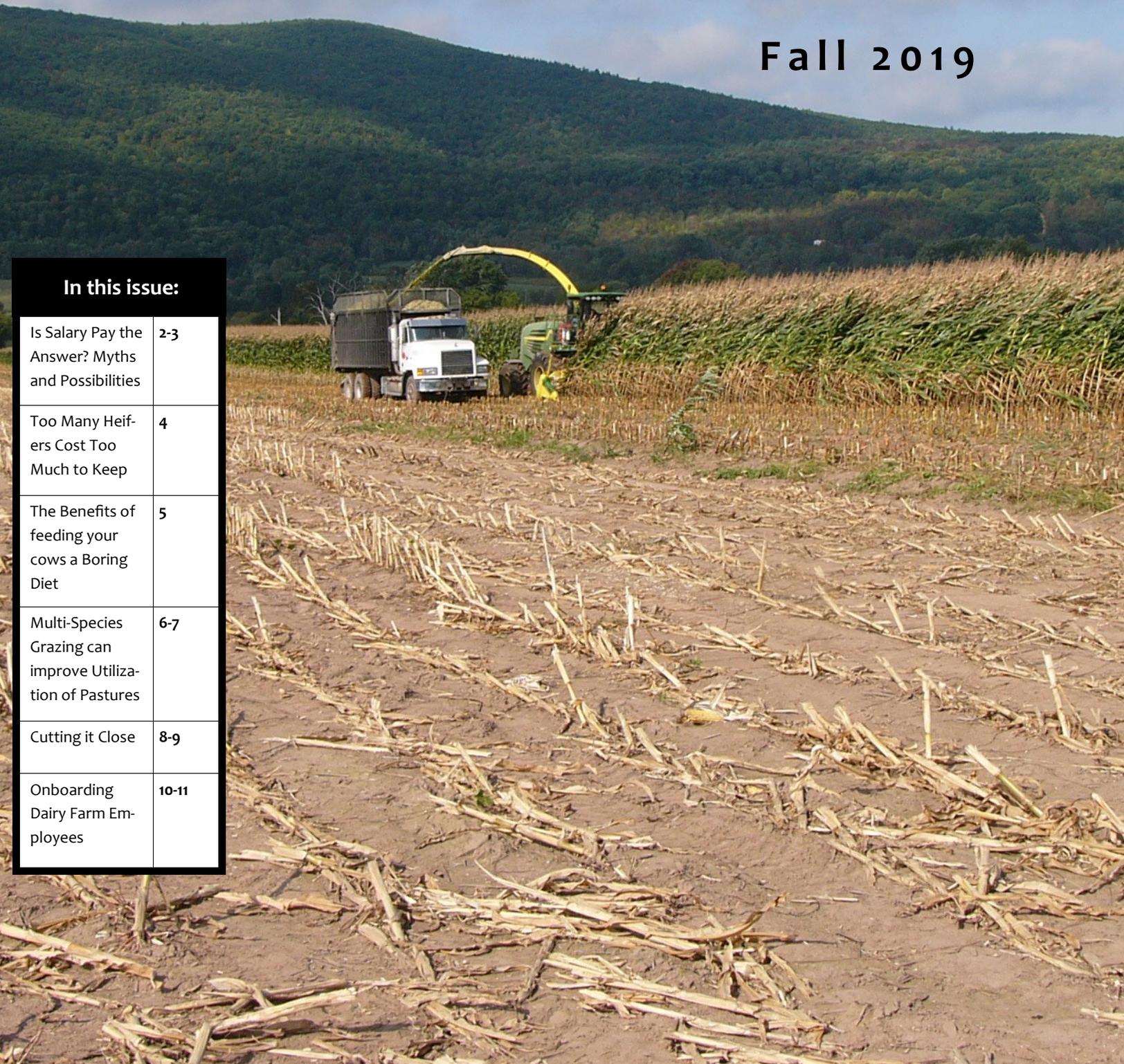
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Is Salary Pay the Answer? Myth and Possibilities

By Dr. Richard Stup, Cornell University

Beginning on January 1, 2020, farm employees in New York will no longer be exempt from overtime pay. A new law passed by the state will require that farm employers pay overtime (1.5 times the regular rate of pay) to eligible farm employees for hours worked over 60 in a week (except for immediate family members). This requirement will encourage employers to adopt strategies that minimize paying overtime. One strategy that employers are considering is moving employees to salary pay, but the answer is not quite that simple...

Myth: “Employees paid on salary don’t have to be paid for overtime, they can work until the job is done.” This is a popular myth but it’s just not true. An employer can choose to pay a farm employee by salary (which means a regular, pre-determined amount of pay not directly based on hours), but the employer may still be required to pay at least the minimum wage, to pay weekly, to keep track of hours worked, and to pay overtime above 60 hours/week. Simply paying by salary has little to do with whether or not overtime pay is required. The need to pay overtime depends on whether or not an employee is “**exempt**” or “**not exempt**” from the overtime law provisions.

Farm employees will no longer be exempt as an entirety, but both New York and federal law identifies several other types of employees who may be employed on farms and may be “exempt” from overtime. The federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) provides these exemptions for specific types of employees and the federal guidelines are generally followed by New York. The types of exempt employees who might possibly be employed on a farm include: executive, administrative, professional and outside sales employees. For a farm employee to be classified into one of these overtime “exempt” positions, they **must meet all** of a number of “tests” about the nature of the job.

Executive

Some farm managers may fit into this description, especially if they are truly supervising two or more other employees.

- The Employee’s primary duty consists of the management of the enterprise.
- The Employee customarily and regularly directs the work of two or more other employees.
- The Employee has the authority to hire or fire other employees.
- The Employee’s suggestions and recommendations as to the hiring, firing, advancement, promotion, or any other change of status of other employees have particular weight.
- The Employee customarily and regularly exercises discretionary powers.
- The Employee is paid on a salary basis, inclusive of board, lodging, and allowances.

Administrative

Some farm office employees may meet all of these tests, especially if they have specialized training or knowledge and exercise their own discretion.

- The Employee’s primary duty consists of the performance of office or non-manual field work directly related to management policies or general operations.
- The Employee customarily and regularly exercises discretion and independent judgment.
- The Employee regularly and directly assists an employer, or an employee employed in a bona fide executive or administrative capacity or who performs under general supervision, work along specialized or technical lines requiring special training, experience or knowledge.
- The Employee is paid for their services on a salary basis, inclusive of board, lodging, and allowances.

Continued, next page...

Is Salary Pay the Answer? continued...

Professional

This possible category might include highly educated professionals such as a veterinarian who is employed by a farm. For the professional exemption to apply, the job must meet both a primary duty and a nature of the work test.

First, the employee's **primary duty** consists of the performance of work that:

- Requires knowledge of an advanced type in a field of science or learning customarily acquired by a prolonged course of specialized intellectual instruction and study, as distinguished from: a general academic education, an apprenticeship, or training in the performance of routine mental, manual, or physical processes.
- or-
- Is original and creative in a recognized field of artistic endeavor, and produces a result that depends primarily on the invention, imagination, or talent of the employee.

Second, the **employee's work**:

- Requires the consistent exercise of discretion and judgment in its performance.
- Is predominantly intellectual and varied in character (as opposed to routine mental, manual, mechanical or physical work).
- Is of such a character that the output produced or the result accomplished cannot be standardized in relation to a given period of time.

Outside Salesperson

Some large or specialized farm businesses may employ an outside salesperson, this position is exempt from overtime if it meets the following definition. "The term outside salesperson means an individual who is customarily and predominantly engaged away from the premises of the employer and not at any fixed site and location for the purpose of: making sales; selling and delivering articles or goods; or obtaining orders or contracts for service or for the use of facilities."

Salary Minimum Wage

In addition to the tests required to qualify a job as overtime exempt, salaried positions must also meet New York's minimum wage requirements (<https://www.labor.ny.gov/formsdocs/wp/Part142.pdf> see page 3 weekly salary for executive and administrative positions). Weekly salary minimums for upcoming years are:

- For most of upstate: \$885.00 per week on and after December 31, 2019; \$937.50 per week on and after December 31, 2020.
- For Nassau, Suffolk and Westchester counties: \$975.00 per week on and after December 31, 2019; \$1,050.00 per week on and after December 31, 2020; \$1,125.00 per week on and after December 31, 2021;

The New York State Dept of Labor provides an FAQ document that defines these types of employees in more detail. Find this at: <https://www.labor.ny.gov/legal/counsel/pdf/overtime-frequently-asked-questions.pdf> Farms should make sure that employees they want to classify as "exempt" from overtime have an updated job description and real duties that meet one of the categories above.

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Too Many Heifers Cost Too Much To Keep

By: Margaret Quaassdorff—NWN Dairy Specialist
Original Printing October 2018 Issue of Ag Focus

As I have been visiting dairies, and meeting with producers around the region, a common discussion topic seems to be circulating. That is, “We seem to have too many heifers”, or “I’m running out of space for calves and heifers”, or “When milk price comes back, we’ll need to put up another heifer barn.” Those comments go along with, “I’d hate to sell her, as market price is so poor, we don’t even recoup the cost of raising her.” With improved calf and heifer care management practices, and the increased usage of sexed semen selecting for heifer calves and calving ease, dairy producers who do not plan to expand their operations are facing the challenge of raising too many replacements. This is not only problematic square footage-wise, but also economically in the face of low values of calves and heifers at the sale barn. Cost factors such as feed type and intake, labor, wet calf value, age, size, and rates of morbidity and mortality all contribute to the variable cost per day to raise a replacement heifer.



Photo Credit: Libby Eiholzer

Dr. Matt Akins, University of Wisconsin Extension dairy specialist, shares that even though heifers are currently only fetching \$400-1,200 at the sale barn depending on age and quality of the animal, the longer you keep excess heifers in your system, the more feed and variable costs add up. “The sooner you can cull heifers you don’t need, the better, because of the cost of raising them and the low return for springers,” Akins says. Akins recommends culling extra heifers sooner to save more money due to the feed and variable costs rising as heifers grow older. Heifers consume an increasing amount of dry matter as they grow larger, so even though they might be consuming a lower cost ration, feed and variable costs might increase from under \$2/head/day at six months of age to nearly \$3/head/day as heifers get closer to freshening. Akins recommends culling heifers between the ages of 10 and 12 months. In this age range, the animals have not yet entered the reproduction program, but there has been sufficient time to evaluate calves for their quality and ability to become profitable members of the herd.

Heifer Age	Heifer Value	Variable cost/day
6 months	\$400	\$1.90
12 months	\$600	\$2.50
18 months	\$800	\$2.60
22 months	\$1,000	\$2.90
Source: Dr. Matt Akins and Dr. Victor Cabrera, UW Extension		

Overall, a farm that does not need every heifer calf born on the dairy, given the current markets, should know that it is in their best interest to limit the number of heifers they raise to the number of replacements heifers they actually need plus a few extra for cushion. If you feel as though excess heifers may be eating you out of house and home (or farm and barn), please reach out to extension and your current consultants for resources to determine the best mode of action to make your heifer inventory work for you.

Tools from UW Extension to help you calculate the number of replacement heifers you need on an annual basis can be found here: <http://dairymgt.info/tools.php>

Visit our Pro-Dairy site for resources to help you further explore the economics of different heifer replacement decision outcomes here: <https://prodairy.cals.cornell.edu/business-management/resources/>

The Benefits of Feeding Your Cows a Boring Diet

By David R. Balbian, Area Dairy Management Specialist

When most people think of the word “boring” they typically view it as negative, something that is not exciting or interesting. However, when you think about feeding your dairy herd you should think about “boring” as a good thing. When you feed cows you’re actually feeding Rumen Bugs or Rumen Microbes, not the cows. The Rumen Microbes are flushed out of the rumen and digested in the lower tract. Think of the rumen as a large fermentation vat. The microbial population in the rumen consists of bacteria, protozoa, and fungi. The majority are bacteria. They are classified according to their shapes, sizes, and different structures. They are also categorized into eight different groups, based on the substrate they ferment. It’s a very complex system, with various bacteria becoming more or less dominate, depending on the feedstuffs that enter the rumen.

Every time there is a major change in the diet these microbes will regroup, with some declining in numbers while others increase in numbers. During this transition period efficiency declines and daily milk production typically suffers. The stabilization of the population of microbes can be as short as a few days up to a few weeks. When herds are suffering from butterfat depression we often say to give the dietary changes up to two weeks or more to evaluate the results. Stabilization of the rumen microbes is the reason.

At this time of year (I am writing this on September 23rd) I often see major and abrupt changes to diets as corn silage supply is exhausted, as new corn silage comes in, as old feed is buried under new, and the last cutting of haycrop is brought in off the fields. These abrupt feeding changes typically result in lost production that is never fully recovered.

High performing herds typically avoid these kinds of abrupt dietary changes. They manage their corn silage inventory so new crop corn silage does not have to be fed until Christmas or New Years. They have feed storage options that allows them to avoid feeding “green feed” and they can consistently access high quality forage for the lactating herd. Dietary changes seldom need to be made. When they are made the change is small or made gradually. They monitor dry matter changes and the number of cows being fed and make the appropriate feeding rate adjustments to keep the TMR that the cows receive exactly the same every day.

Our objective in feeding dairy cattle is to provide the rumen environment with the nutrients that maximizes microbial production and growth while maintaining a rumen pH throughout the day of between 5.8 and 6.4.

Here’s a feeding riddle for you!:

You have 85 cows in a group. They are fed the following ration:

52.00 lbs. C.S. @ 35% D.M.

30.30 lbs. Haylage @ 39% D.M.

16.43 lbs. HMSC @ 70% D.M.

9.44 lbs. Protein Mix @ 90% D.M.

They are fed 50% of the day’s total ration two times a day. You allow for a 2% overage that is cleaned out daily.

Today’s haylage is fed at 1,313.5 lbs. per feeding. You add 3 more cows to the group. In addition, the haylage is now 35% D.M. How much haylage do you feed at the next feeding?

Find the ANSWER on Page 12!

Multi-species Grazing can Improve Utilization of Pastures

By: Jodie Pennington, Small Ruminant Educator, Lincoln University, and Newton County Extension Center

Multi-species grazing is the practice of using two or more livestock species together or separately on the same pasture-land in a specific growing season. With an understanding of the different grazing behaviors of each species, various combinations of animals can be used to more efficiently utilize the forages in a pasture. Different species of livestock prefer different forages and graze them to different heights. Cattle tend to be intermediate grazers. They graze grasses and legumes and bite with their mouth and tongue. Sheep and horses graze closer to the ground than cattle. Sheep and goats eat forbs (brushy plants with a fleshy stem) and leaves better than cattle or horses. Many weeds in a grass pasture are forbs. Cattle and horses tend to graze grasses better than small ruminants such as sheep and goats. Goats are browsers and prefer to graze/browse with their heads up. "Browse" are the tender shoots, twigs, and leaves of trees or shrubs that are acceptable for grazing. Goats browse like deer if given the opportunity. They will eat higher growing plants such as forbs and shrubs as well as high-growing grasses. With their mobile upper lip, goats can select individual leaves and strip bark off of woody plants. Their unique lip allows them to eat the parts of a plant that are highly nutritious while leaving behind the less digestible parts such as the thorns and branches of blackberries and multi-flora rose. Both goats and sheep will eat weeds although goats prefer browse more than sheep.

Brush and weed management is the most noticeable benefit that producers see from multi-species grazing with cattle and small ruminants. Although research indicates that multi-species grazing can contribute to more efficient and uniform use of pastures, the results will vary with the type of pasture. Land that includes grasses, forbs, and browse are best utilized with multi-species grazing. Land that is uniformly in grass may best be utilized for cattle or horse production. Multi-species grazing can improve utilization of forages by less than 5% to more than 20%, depending primarily on the type of vegetation on the land and the mix of animals used.

In past times, cattle and sheep have usually been the combination used for multi-species grazing. This practice, in part, was due to greater multi-species grazing in western states where there is greater diversity of plant species and elevation of land than in eastern states. However, with the increase in popularity of goats, they now are often used with multi-species grazing. Horses also may work well with goats in a multi-species grazing scheme.

Varying terrain also lends itself to multi-species grazing. If the terrain is steep and rough, goats and sheep are superior to cattle for handling the terrain. They also eat more forbs and browse than cattle as sheep and goats are well adapted to grazing rough borders around an otherwise relatively level pasture. Cattle prefer to graze grass and prefer more gently sloping land. It is the combination of grasses, forbs, and browse that provides for the more efficient use of multiple species for grazing, sometimes increasing meat production per acre by over 20%.

Although there are individual preferences, data do not define if forages are utilized more efficiently if small ruminants graze before or after cattle. Some prefer to graze small ruminants before cattle so that the sheep and goats are less likely to be exposed to larvae from internal parasites on taller-growing plants. Cattle and small ruminants also may be grazed at the same time. Usually small ruminants are used to eat weeds and browse that cattle do not eat in a multi-species regime. Concerns with multi-species grazing involving cattle and small ruminants include predator control and fencing for the goats or sheep. Labor also can be an issue since the species may be grazing at different times. In such cases, additional labor is needed to move the livestock from field-to-field. Depending on the environment, small ruminants may require a more extensive program to control internal parasites than cattle which adds to labor demands.

Multi-species Grazing can Improve Utilization of Pastures, continued

Some type of predator control program is essential with sheep and goats as they are more susceptible to feral or local dogs and coyotes than cattle. Cattle may serve as a deterrent to the roaming canines, but extra precautions are usually needed. Livestock guardian animals are most commonly used to protect the small ruminants from predators. Dogs such as the Great Pyrenees or the Anatolian Shepherd are most used as guardians, but donkeys, mules, mustangs, and llamas are also used. If a guardian animal does not protect the herd, it should be replaced.

Usually more exterior fencing is needed to keep unwanted canines away from small ruminants as well as to keep the small ruminants in the field compared to cattle. Goats require a little more extensive fencing than sheep to keep them confined but even more extensive fencing is required to keep the coyotes out of the field where the sheep and goats are grazing. Reinforcing existing fencing with electric fencing is usually the most economical method.



As with all livestock, there may be personality conflicts with mixed species of animals. If this occurs, the least desirable animals involved in the conflict are best culled from the herd. Another problem with grazing of multiple species is the feeding of minerals. Usually goats and cattle can use the same mineral unless there appears to be a health concern. However, sheep do not tolerate as high a level of cooper as do goats and cattle if the animals are being co-mingled. Multi-species grazing can have additional benefits other than greater pounds of meat per acre. Because gastrointestinal parasites from goats or sheep cannot survive in the stomach of cattle and vice versa, multi-species grazing may decrease internal parasite loads. The decreased level of parasites should result in fewer treatments for worms which could slow resistance of parasites to conventional dewormers, an increasing problem with small ruminants. In a field infected with a high load of larvae from sheep and goat parasites, cattle should be grazed first to pick up the larvae of parasites, and then goats or sheep could graze with less danger of parasite infestation. In other situations, producers may prefer to have small ruminants graze before cattle as most of the larvae of internal parasites are located on plants within 4 inches of the ground.

In summary, producers with cattle can obtain greater pounds of meat per acre and can reduce weeds and brush in a pasture when adding small ruminants for multi-species grazing. These benefits need to be compared to the additional labor and fencing requirements for the small ruminants as well as the costs of predator control for sheep and/or goats.



Central New York Feeder Calf Sale
2019 Tele-Auction

Sale Date: December 6th 2019

*Growing
and
Improving*

Cutting it Close

Ohio BEEF Cattle Letter

A publication of the Ohio State University Extension Beef Team. July 31 2019

Christine Gelley, Agriculture and Natural Resources Educator, Noble County OSU Extension (originally published in the Ohio Farmer on-line)

<https://u.osu.edu/beef/2019/07/31/cutting-it-close/#more-7185>

All of us have a bad habit here or there that we have developed over time. Bad habits are often questionable actions that can cause some stress, but rarely have direct negative consequences immediately after. Usually the negative consequences are compounded over time into large problems and that is when realize we have gone wrong.

A bad habit that many grass managers have in lawn and hay systems is cutting it too close. By “it,” I mean the grass. There are some misconceptions about what the best height is to cut grass. It can also be confusing, because ideal cutting height varies with type of grass. The common denominator is that many homeowners and haymakers are cutting the grass too low and inducing stress responses on the plants that cause us issues down the road.

Depending on grass species, variety, and environmental conditions mowing height and frequency can vary greatly. The turf grasses that grow on a professional golf course are drastically different from the turf on a children’s soccer field. The most common plants in tall grass warm-season pastures or short grass cool-season pastures are drastically different. In all cases, we want to be aware of where new growth occurs on the grass stem and how deep the root system goes.

The region on the stem where new growth emerges is called the “apical meristem”. Grasses will grow back best after a cutting if the apical meristem is not damaged. If the apical meristem is mowed off, the plant must produce a new shoot, called a “tiller”, in order to regrow. This draws additional nutrients from the root system. This is true in lawns, hay, and grazed pasture.

If grasses are regularly mowed or grazed too short, it can easily deplete root energy reserves, causing nutrient deficiencies and low stand persistence. Low persistence makes your grass stand look patchy. Weeds soon fill in those patches. Often people get into a cycle of cutting it too close and then fertilizing, irrigating, and or applying herbicides to try to remedy the damage. In those cases, the problem is not soil fertility or water in the soil or that new weeds are suddenly invading. More like-

ly, it is reduced ability of the plant the draw the nutrients and water from the soil. Together regular soil tests and stand evaluations can help you troubleshoot problems that arise.

A general rule for lawns is that when you mow, you should only be removing one third of the total leaf area. That means if the grass is six inches tall, mowing it to four inches, or from three inches to two inches, depending on your grass. In hay production in cool-season pastures (ex: orchardgrass, tall fescue, etc.) mow or graze before seed heads develop, down to three to five inches. In warm-season pastures (ex: switchgrass, sorghum-sudangrass, etc.) mow or graze down to 8-10 inches if you expect regrowth. (See Table 1 for species suggestions.)

The idea that the lower you mow the more grass you get is misguided. The lower you go the more stems you remove than leaves and the more soil material and rocks you kick up as you mow. That is not good for your grass, soil, or equipment. Mowing or grazing grass too low is called “scalping”. Don’t scalp anything you expect to live afterwards.

Table 1

Established Grass Species in Lawns and Pastures	Minimum Recommended Removal Height (in.)
Kentucky bluegrass	1
Clovers (in general)	2
Perennial/Annual ryegrass	3
Smooth brome grass	3
Timothy	3
Tall fescue	4
Orchardgrass	4
Reed canarygrass	4
Native warm-season grasses	8
Annual warm-season grasses	8

Continued, next page...

Cutting it Close, continued

Setting your mower deck/cutterbar high enough for the grass you are managing can be a challenge for some machinery. If you cannot adjust it as high as you need, consult an implement dealer to investigate if additional components can be installed to raise the height.

Collars for cutterbar lift cylinders or high clearance skid shoes may do the job. Sometimes adjusting the cutterbar angle can increase cutting height. Getting this situated will take some trial and error. Be cautious as you mow and watch for side drift or improper trailing of the implement. When making adjustments with collars or shoes, always power off the machine, park on a level surface, and engage safety locks.

Over time, mowing at a higher height in the canopy will improve the health of your grass stand, reduce the presence of weeds, and improve the quality of your soil, giving you thicker stands of desirable grasses.

A few other grass cutting height thoughts...

Kevin Ganoë

The above article and its content hit home after a call where someone described their lawn growing back faster than their grass hay fields. I have included other references on the subject of grass cutting, or grazing height as it is an important one.

- This isn't just about cutting it is also about grazing grasses too short. Too often we think of a need for an appropriate rest period when grazing but at times that misses the point about the real issue which is animals have been allowed to graze grass too short and the rest period although helpful doesn't make up for the damage that is done. This is most critical in the fall where there can be the tendency to turn paddocks into exercise lots and not monitoring grass height. Overgrazing can be ok if you intend to weaken what is there for renovation otherwise not.
- Don't cut new seedlings too short either. Although you may be trying to cut weeds as short as possible scalping grasses and not allowing 4 inches can take seedling grasses out. Allow those grasses to get established.
- Hot weather and dry soil conditions slow cool sea-

son grass growth but add cutting too short and the effect on the plant health is not good as the plant finds it even harder to create new growth.

- Alfalfa should be taken at 2 inches. Although 1 inch cutting height may actually lead to more yield at that height you are picking up more dirt and stones and increasing the ash content of your forage.
- The dilemma is what to do if you have an alfalfa grass mix. While some references suggest 2.5 inches as a compromise and let the forages and environment sort it out for you as what will dominate in the stand I suggest making a conscious decision. If you want to favor grasses make sure you keep cut your grasses 3-4 inches and if you want to favor alfalfa and make sure the grasses are not competitive then mow at 2 inches.

There are two equally important cutting management decisions you make, one being cutting for quality. But right with that is cutting and grazing to the right height.

Other cutting height references:

How Low Are You Mowing?

Dr. Gary Bates Director, UT Beef and Forage Center
<http://utbfc.utk.edu/Articles-Forage-Gary%20Bates.html>

Cutting forages: How low should you go?

Stephen Foster, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension
 Published on Progressive Forage, August 14, 2013
<https://www.progressiveforage.com/forage-production/management/cutting-forages-how-low-should-you-go>

Cutting Height in Hay Fields: How Low Can You Go?

Dwane Miller, Extension Educator Agronomy, PennState Extension
<https://extension.psu.edu/cutting-height-in-hay-fields-how-low-can-you-go>

Grass and Alfalfa Stubble Height Issues

Jerry Cherney, David Parsons, Debbie J.R. Cherney
 Grass Information Sheet Series, Information Sheet 23, Cornell University
http://www.forages.org/files/gis/GIS23_Grass_and_Alfalfa_Stubble_Height_Issues.pdf

Onboarding Dairy Farm Employees Safe Productive and Engaged from Day One

Have you noticed that some farms have had the same employees for years, while others struggle to keep employees? Employee retention can be a challenge in agriculture. Recent research on large dairy farms indicates annual employee turnover rates range from 20 to 80 percent. The first days and weeks on the job set the course for a new farm employee. Given the tight labor market, a successful onboarding program can be an essential tool to help reduce employee turnover, increase employee safety and productivity, and contribute to a farm's success.

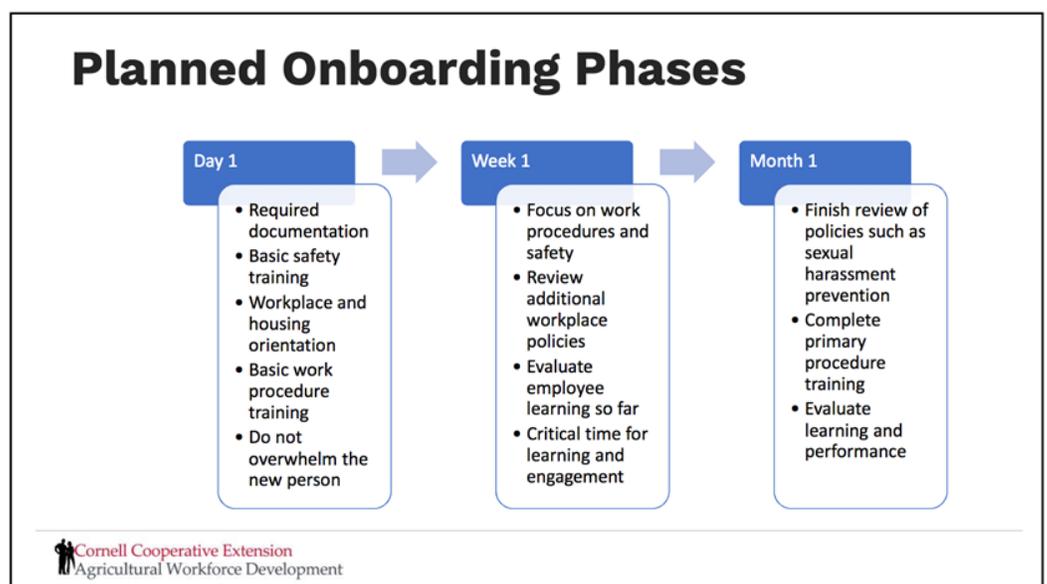
New employee onboarding is a management process to bring new employees into the farm business, complete necessary paperwork, equip them with safety and performance knowledge and skills, and make them feel connected to a worthwhile team. Onboarding should focus on the new employee as a person, not just as a worker, and not just on the business.

If an employee has a positive onboarding experience, their likelihood of staying at the place of employment for more than three years is about 69 percent, according to the Society for Human Resources Management. In addition to less turnover, employees are approximately 50 percent more productive and 54 percent more engaged.

Conversely, if an employee is poorly onboarded, this sets employees up for failure. The first impression can be the make or break of whether that employee returns tomorrow or leaves as soon as they can find another job. The onboarding process can help eliminate that experience and serve as a positive experience for the new hire. From the employer perspective, much is gained.

“A successful onboarding process begins with a well-planned orientation, training and compliance, and leads to improvements that benefit both the manager and employees throughout the relationship,” said Dr. Richard Stup, Cornell Agricultural Workforce Specialist.

Identified as a priority by New York's Ag Workforce Development Council, Cornell Ag Workforce Development is developing a new onboarding project that was funded in 2019 by the New York Farm Viability Institute. The project “Safe, Productive and Engaged from Day One” focuses on developing tools, trainings and templates to help navigate employment requirements and improve human resource management practices.





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A program and funding partnership between Cornell University,
Cornell Cooperative Extension and the
Cornell Cooperative Extension Associations of Chenango,
Fulton, Herkimer, Madison, Montgomery, Otsego, Saratoga
and Schoharie Counties

Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities
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Answer to Dave's Question:

What is 1515.30 lbs