

# Outagamie County Success from the Field

## A New Beginning for Grandpa's Dairy Farm

### Background

Hunter Strebig knew he wanted to farm when he graduated from high school. Not afraid of long hours or hard work, he worked in construction right out of high school and raised a few beef cattle on his grandpa's farm while attending Fox Valley Technical College (FVTC) in Appleton, WI. He knew he wanted to expand his beef operation and hoped his grandpa's farm was the place for that to happen. His grandpa had his doubts and wasn't very encouraging at first, but Hunter was up for the challenge. The farm, in the family since the 1900s, was a successful dairy farm up until 1998. Since Hunter's grandpa wanted to keep the farm in the family, Hunter was able to buy 80 acres, and began converting the family farm into a profitable, sustainable beef operation. The farm is close to the Fox Cities, just outside the small Village of Hortonville, in northeast Wisconsin—it was a perfect location for the business he had in mind.

### Highlights

While Hunter attended FVTC, a guest speaker from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Appleton service center presented during one of his agriculture classes. This initial exposure to NRCS prompted Hunter to visit his local service center and apply for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to help make his plan for his grandpa's farm a reality. He was already raising a few beef cattle, but wanted to create a more sustainable farming operation. As a beginning farmer, he knew the technical and financial assistance were going to be a great benefit.

There were several challenges Hunter had mapped out on the property that he aimed to improve. He gave the farm a new name—Morning Breeze Farm LLC and made many improvements to the buildings on his own. EQIP funding through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative helped Hunter convert row-cropped land into managed rotational grazing, achieving water quality benefits from reduced erosion and nutrient losses. Managed grazing can provide a healthier plant community, decrease erosion and runoff, better livestock health and performance, and reduce costs to the landowner.



In a managed grazing system, livestock are moved frequently among pasture divisions or paddocks based on forage quality and livestock nutrition needs.



Angus and Murray Gray cattle chosen by Morning Breeze Farm LLC for their calm disposition and efficient growth on pasture.

With assistance through EQIP, Hunter planted the pastures, built fences and installed seasonal waterlines. A culvert crossing and grass buffer were installed to keep cattle out of the ditch that needed to be crossed to access the new pastures. Hunter wanted to have the cattle on pasture in the winter to bale graze because he understood the value of having the manure on the pastures instead of in the barn. But for that to happen, he needed to install a waterer in the new pasture, which was now further from the barn and main waterline.

While EQIP could not assist with this extra cost of running electric wire, he opted to install a Cobett waterer, which requires no electricity and no concrete pad. Mounted on a 10' deep, 24" diameter polyethylene tube, the Cobett waterer is heated entirely through the conduction of geothermal heat from the earth.



Winter feeding on Morning Breeze Farm.

Currently at Morning Breeze Farm, 20 cow/calf pairs and 20+ young stock are raised on intensively managed pastures and rotated to a new paddock daily during the growing season. “Rotational grazing benefits both our cows and the land. Carefully managing the pastures helps us ensure the cattle are eating quality forage, which leads to high quality meat,” said Hunter. His beef is sold as Certified Grass-fed, which requires livestock be raised entirely on an outdoor pasture and fed a 100% grass and forage diet. Hunter recognizes the benefits of managing his pastures according to his NRCS approved grazing plan, the forage balance requirements and how managing the land in this sustainable way is valuable to his business.

## Future Plans

Along with farm co-manager, Maggie Elliott, Hunter has plans to improve and expand the farm. Plans include continuing to update their online sales of beef, pork, chicken, and seasonal garden produce, possible expansion of their pasture and a new venture to partner with a Wisconsin restaurant to supply grass-fed beef.

Morning Breeze Farm has maintained a connection with FVTC and offers their time to promote grazing through online videos. Hunter continues to work closely with the NRCS staff at the Appleton Service Center. His next goal is to improve the pollinator habitat on his farm by applying for the Conservation Stewardship Program.

