Introduction

Designed to assist the beginning grazier in implementing a grazing system, this handbook is a starting place to quickly and easily find pertinent information.

This handbook starts with technical assistance – a list of “go-to” people who can provide advice to help you achieve a successful grazing system.

The next section provides information on training, educational opportunities, mentors, networks, and organizations to help you gain knowledge of grazing and grazing systems.

The third section lists production resources that provide you with reading materials on grazing systems.

The fourth section helps you understand the business side of grazing from record keeping, business planning, marketing opportunities of your products.

The final section describes where to go in Minnesota for loans and grants to help with financing the infrastructure needed for a grazing system.

In the appendices are lists of businesses that supplies for grazing systems, as well as contractors for fence and water system installation. Use this list to find suppliers and negotiate the best value when purchasing. The goal of the handbook is to provide information: listing does not mean we endorse any of these suppliers.

This handbook was updated in 2020 by the Sustainable Farming Association (SFA) as part of tour overall soil health program (https://www.sfa-mn.org/soil/) with support from Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR). Original support came from the Minnesota Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Pasture Project.

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Training and Technical Assistance

Contact any of these Minnesota experts for technical assistance when planning a grazing system.

**Sustainable Farming Association** ([https://www.sfa-mn.org](https://www.sfa-mn.org))

A Minnesota nonprofit organization that focuses on sustainable agriculture education, networking, demonstration and research, SFA has had a strong focus on soil health and good grazing practices for over 20 years.

**Staff** ([https://www.sfa-mn.org/staff/](https://www.sfa-mn.org/staff/)):
- Kent Solberg, Grazing and Livestock Specialist, kent@sfa-mn.org
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- Wayne Monsen, Special Projects Coordinator, wayne@sfa-mn.org
- Angie Walter, Dairy Grazing Education Coordinator, angie@sfa-mn.org
- Jerry Ford, Network Coordinator, jerry@sfa-mn.org

**Programs**
- Soil Health ([https://www.sfa-mn.org/soil/](https://www.sfa-mn.org/soil/))
- Silvopasture and Agroforestry ([https://www.sfa-mn.org/silvopasture-agroforestry/](https://www.sfa-mn.org/silvopasture-agroforestry/))

**Events**
- Midwest Soil Health Summit, annually in March ([https://www.sfa-mn.org/midwest-soil-health-summit/](https://www.sfa-mn.org/midwest-soil-health-summit/))
- SFA Annual Conference, annually in February ([https://www.sfa-mn.org/conference/](https://www.sfa-mn.org/conference/))
- Field Days, Cafe Chats and Workshops

**Resources**
- There are numerous print and video resources on the SFA website ([https://www.sfa-mn.org](https://www.sfa-mn.org)) and YouTube Channel ([https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCK70hZXrsgPH2prphLhaYew])

**Natural Resources Conservation Service**

NRCS is a division of the US Department of Agriculture with regional offices in Minnesota that provides funding and technical assistance to farmers who want to improve the conservation practices. One of their focus areas is permanent pasture with rotational grazing.

**Service Centers**

Each state in the Upper Midwest has a state NRCS office, though individual graziers will find most of their interactions are with their local Service Centers, and these are a good place to start.

**Minnesota Local Service Centers**
Technical Support and Grazing Specialists

NRCS offers technical support, advice, and resources in on numerous topics related to conservation and water quality (https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/mn/technical/), with a particular emphasis on grazing (https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/mn/technical/grazing/)

NRCS has staff and contractor Grazing Specials to advise beginning and experienced graziers. Contact your local Service Center (above) to connect with a Grazing Specialist in your area.

Programs for Graziers

NRCS offers voluntary programs to eligible landowners and agricultural producers to provide financial and technical assistance to help manage natural resources in a sustainable manner.

Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)

EQIP “promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible goals” is the most commonly utilized NRCS program to help graziers with establishing new permanent pasture.

More information specific to Minnesota here:

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

CSP is a “conservation program that encourages producers to address resource concerns in a comprehensive manner by undertaking additional conservation activities; and improving, maintaining, and managing existing conservation activities.” Whereas CSP is more focused on items as improving wildlife habitat, controlling soil erosion and water quality, many of these "enhancements" can be beneficial to grazing operations.

More information specific to Minnesota here:

Again, the place to start is with your local Service Center - listed above.
Land Stewardship Project (LSP) Farm Beginnings®

landstewardshipproject.org/morefarmers/farm

The Farm Beginnings® Program works to get more successful farmers on the land and organize for a system in which family farmers can flourish. Farm Beginnings provides wide range of trainings, including Farm Dreams, Farm Beginnings, and the Journeyperson Course.

Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship (DGA)

www.dairygrazingapprenticeship.org

Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship links experienced dairy graziers with those who want to farm and provides a guided pathway to independent farm ownership. Sustainable Farming Association manages a DGA program specific to Minnesota:

www.sfa-mn.org/dairy-grazing-apprenticeship

South Dakota Grasslands Coalition

Mentoring Network: www.sdgrass.org/mentoring-network
Grazing School: www.sdgrass.org/grazing-schools

SD Grasslands Coalition serves and enhances grasslands by educating grassland managers to adopt sustainable and profitable management.

North Dakota Grazing Lands Coalition

www.ndglc.com/mentors.html

The North Dakota Grazing Lands Coalition has established a grassroots based guidance and council to interested ranchers on grassland management. The advice the mentors provide is based upon knowledge and experience gained on their operations and the interaction they have with other ranchers across the region.

GrassWorks

grassworks.org/?110380

GrassWorks is a grassroots membership organization that provides leadership and education to farmers and consumers for the advancement of managed grass-based agriculture to benefit present and future generations.

Practical Farmers of Iowa

practicalfarmers.org

Practical Farmers of Iowa is an open, supportive and diverse organization of farmers and friends of farmers, advancing profitable, ecologically sound and community-enhancing approaches to agriculture through farmer-to-farmer networking, farmer-led investigation and information sharing.

Pasture Project

www.wallacecenter.org/pastureproject

The Pasture Project works in the Upper Mississippi River Basin to increase the number of acres of farmland that are sustainably managed. Long-term commitment to sustainable management requires an alignment of economic and environmental interests. We accomplish this by expanding grass-based systems of livestock production and introducing cover-crops and periodic livestock grazing into row crop farming, all of which both increase profits and rebuild soils and water cycles.
Production Resources

SFA Publications
Silvopasture Handbook: designed to assist land managers and technical support staff on designing and implementing a Silvopasture system in woodlands.

Online Version
Print/PDF Version

Cover Crop Fact Sheet
This Cover Crop Fact Sheet is a concise resource for new and experienced farmers.

Soil Health Videos
Bale Grazing, outwintering, grazing cover crops, fencing and more.

Soil Health Resources
Savanna restoration for pasture, grassfed beef, bison and more.

Videos:
Intro to Small Ruminant Pasture Management
Basic Stockmanship & Livestock Handling
Winter Bale Grazing at Cloverleaf Grass Farm

Minnesota Department of Agriculture
www.mda.state.mn.us/search.aspx?q=grazing
Website with links to numerous publications on grazing. Including:
- The Cropland Grazing Exchange (CGE) matches livestock farmers with crop farmers who have forage (crop residues, cover crops, etc.) to harvest.
- and more.

MN Natural Resources Conservation Service Publications
Grazing and forage management publications, including:
- Guide to Pasture Condition Scoring
- Maximizing Cool Season Forage Production on Pastures
- Managing Grasslands for Profit
- Working Trees for Livestock
- and more.

University of Minnesota Extension
https://extension.umn.edu
Numerous articles and videos on grazing-related topics, including:
- Grazing and pasture management for cattle
• Research: Cover crops for grazing systems
• Farmbytes: watering system design for rotational grazing
• and more

Green Lands, Blue Waters
greenlandsbluewaters.net
There are a number of good resources on contract grazing on the Green Lands Blue Waters website.

Soil Health Academy
https://soilhealthacademy.org
The mission of the non-profit Soil Health Academy is to teach and assist farmers and ranchers in applying time-tested, ecological principles and biomimicry to regenerate our living and life-giving soil. In restoring the health of our soil’s ecosystem, we will restore the health of our bodies, our farms, our communities, and our planet.

Renewing the Countryside
Farmland Access Hub
The Farmland Access Hub is a consortium of partners including non-profits, government agencies, local companies, and private citizens dedicated to assisting beginning farmers with their quest for land tenure.

Pasture Project
Resources  https://pastureproject.org/resources/
Fence Building Tutorial (video)  https://pastureproject.org/video-tutorials/fencing-video-tutorials/

Premiere One
https://www.premier1supplies.com/pages/instructions.php
This is a commercial fencing supply company that has some excellent fact sheets for beginning graziers. SFA does not endorse their products.
This page on their website includes instructions and charts on fencing systems and equipment for multiple types of livestock.

Pasture Pro
Another commercial fencing supply company that has some excellent articles for beginning graziers. SFA does not endorse their products.
http://www.pasturepro.com/blog/category/fencing-tips/
http://www.pasturepro.com/blog/category/grazing/
Periodicals

Graze “The magazine that’s by graziers, for graziers”
Graze is a print magazine devoted to promoting management-intensive rotational grazing and family-scale livestock farms. If you want to start a livestock farm or ranch, if you are looking to reduce costs and labor, if you’re organic-certified or thinking of transitioning to organic, then Graze is for you.

The Stockman Grass Farmer – The Grazier’s Edge
The Stockman Grass Farmer has been a grazing publication since 1947 devoted solely to the art and science of making profit from grassland agriculture. Each month it brings its readers the latest information on high profit grassland ideas from all over the world.

On Pasture
On Pasture is a subscriber and sponsor supported weekly, online magazine for graziers. Each week we publish 5 to 7 articles, translating research and experience into practices farmers and ranchers can use right away.

Hay & Forage Grower
Farm Business Planning

Sustainable Farming Association
Sustainable Farming Association Adjust 2015: New Farm Reality Check
SFA’s Adjust 2015 project reviewed the key difficulties experienced farmers faced early in their farming careers. The New Farm Reality Check curriculum gives farmers tools to help avoid the most common of those pitfalls, which will strengthen business plans and ultimately improve chances of long-term success — financial benchmarks you should be incorporating into your plan, considerations for business plan assumptions, dealing with and planning for changes in family structure and function, and tools for building a team of experts to help you launch your business.

Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture
Beginning Farmers
The purpose of The Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA) is to bring together the diverse interests of the agricultural community with interests from across the University community in a cooperative effort to develop and promote sustainable agriculture in Minnesota and beyond. Their Beginning Farmers webpage has the Whole Farm Planning book & the Goal-Setting Handbook and the Building a Sustainable Business book.

Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service
Fearless Farm Finances
This resource is packed with instructions, tips and tools for setting up and managing a farm’s financial system, and includes real-life examples from successful farmers, with sample data to show how forms and records should look.

Cornell University Small Farms Program
The Cornell Small Farms Program offers a suite of more than 20 online courses, primarily taught by Cornell Cooperative Extension educators, to help farmers improve their technical and business skills.
Additional Education Resources

**Pasture Water Systems**
University of Minnesota Extension - watering system design for rotational grazing.
The Cattle Site - Alberta Agriculture and Food and Agriculture Stewardship Division.
Grass Fed Solutions - How to Build a Mobile Cattle Water System for your Pasture Rotation.

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)**
This website provides information on the effects of grazing on natural resources. The USFWS has Waterfowl Production Areas and National Wildlife Refuges that are available for grazing.

**Greg Judy from Green Pastures Farm**
Greg Judy is from Rucker, Missouri and rotationally grazes livestock on rented lands. Greg has written how-to books as well as gives on-farm tours and presentations.

**Joel Salatin, Polyface Farm**
Books, videos and more from this icon of multi-species grazing.

**Neil Dennis on Mob Grazing**
Neal Dennis was an experienced mob grazier from Saskatchewan. He was a well-known presenter and loved to share his experiences with mob grazing.

**Brown’s Ranch, Bismarck, N.D.**
Gabe Brown is one of the pioneers of the current soil health movement that focuses on regenerating our resources.
**Funding: Loans and Grants**

**NRCS Programs** *(see above)*
- Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

**Livestock Investment Grants (MDA)**
This grant encourages long-term industry development for Minnesota livestock farmers and ranchers by helping them improve, update, and modernize their livestock operation’s infrastructure and equipment.

**AGRI Livestock Investment Grant (MDA)**
This grant encourages long-term industry development for Minnesota livestock farmers and ranchers by helping them improve, update, and modernize their livestock operation infrastructure and equipment.

**Beginning Farmer Loan Program (MDA)**
This program was established to help people who want to farm in Minnesota, and offers affordable financing, a reasonable down payment and built-in safeguards, such as farm management training and financial planning to help minimize the risk all farmers face.

**Agricultural Improvement Loan Program (MDA)**
A loan participation program to assist eligible farmers to finance capital improvements to their farming operation.

**USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) Microloan Program**
These loans focus on the financing needs of small, beginning farmers, niche and non-traditional farm operations, such as truck farms, farms participating in direct marketing and sales such as farmers’ markets, CSA’s (Community Supported Agriculture), restaurants and grocery stores, or those using hydroponic, aquaponic, organic and vertical growing methods.

**USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) Financial Assistance For Family Farmers (PDF):**
The Farm Service Agency (FSA) has loans for farmers and ranchers that are unable to obtain credit elsewhere. Contact your local FSA office for information.

**Dairy Business Planning Grant (MDA)**
This program covers 50 percent of the cost of completing a business plan for a dairy operation. Producers who have applied for this grant are exploring the feasibility of expansion, environmental upgrades, stray voltage testing or transferring the operation to the next generation producer. Applications are funded on a first come first serve basis.

**Dairy Profitability and Enhancement Teams Grant and Minnesota Dairy Initiative:**
These grants encourage business planning and modernization activities and other improvements on Minnesota dairy farms.

**North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NCR-SARE) Grants**
NCR-SARE’s Farmer Rancher Grant Program is a competitive grants program for farmers and ranchers who want to explore sustainable solutions to problems through on-farm research, demonstration, and education projects.

**Lakewinds Organic Field Fund**
A grant program dedicated to making an impact on local farming and organic food by furthering the development and sustainability of farms in the region.
Appendices

This list of resources is not intended to be all inclusive and does not constitute an endorsement. It is simply offered as a service to aid the producer in finding available resources; there may be other sources out there for some of these products and services.

FENCE CONTRACTORS/INSTALLERS/DESIGNERS

Southwest Minnesota K Fence
Daniel and Therese Hall
Butterfield, MN
507-956-2657
tereseh77@gmail.com

Grassland Solutions
Terry Schafer
Matt Schafer
Cokato, MN
320-286-2196
www.grasslandsolutions.com

Dana Melius
Ashton, SD
C-605-216-4410

Grant Breitkreutz
Redwood Falls, MN
507-430-0607
gdbreitkreutz@hotmail.com

Mohr’s Fencing
Aberdeen, SD
(605) 225-9633

Rausch Fencing
Onaka, SD
605-380-5311

Ludemann Fencing
Shane Ludemann
Fort Pierre, SD
(877) 472-0776

Olson Fencing LLC
507-421-6934
mike@olsonfencingllc.com
Mike Olson
Winona, MN
olsonfencingllc.com

Deutschlander Fencing
Brian Deutschlander
Pine City, MN
320-629-1288
Website

Seven Pines Farm & Fence
Kent and Linda Solberg
Verndale, MN
218-445-7580
sevenpinesfarmandfence@gmail.com

K-Fence
(507) 753-2706
info@kfence.com
Zumbro Falls, MN
(507) 753-2943
www kfence.com

Horsman Fence Co.
507-281-4420
Kevin Horsman
Utica, MN
507-259-6312

FENCING SUPPLIES

Many local feed/farm and big-box “fleet farm” stores carry fencing supplies.

Premier1Supplies
Washington, Iowa 52353
www.premier1supplies.com

Seven Pines Farm & Fence
Kent and Linda Solberg
Verndale, MN
218-445-7580
sevenpinesfarmandfence@gmail.com

Cammack Ranch Supply
Union Center, SD 57787
605-985-5591
cammackranchsupply.com

Common Sense Fence
Geotek, Inc
Stewartville, MN
800-533-1680
geotekinc.com

Gallagher Catalog
800-531-5908
gallagherusa.com

Jeffers Livestock
800-533-3377
jefferslivestock.com

Kencove Catalog
800-536-2683
www.kencove.com

Grassland Solutions
Cokato, MN
320-286-2196
www.grasslandsolutions.com

Kiwi Fence Products
Blairsville PA
800-536-2683
kiwifence.com

Southwest K Fence
Daniel and Teresa Hall
Butterfield, MN
507-956-2657

Hutchison Incorporated
Grinnell, IA
(800) 588-6155
hutchison-inc.com
PASTURE SEED AND NATIVE GRASS SEED

Albert Lea Seed House
Albert Lea, MN
(800) 352-5247
www.alseed.com

Agassiz Seed and Supply
Locations in ND, SD and MN
www.agassizseed.com

Paul Hamann
Fountain, MN
507-268-4980

Sharp Bros Seed Co.
Healy, KS
(620) 398-2231
https://sharpseed.com

Minnesota Native Landscapes
Otsego, MN
763-295-0010
mnnativelandscapes.com

Behm Seed Company
Atwater, MN
320-974-3003

Millborn Seeds
Brookings, SD
888-498-7333
www.millbornseeds.com

Central Lakes Co-op
Willmar, MN
320-235-3024

Prairie Restorations, Inc.
Several Locations in MN
1-800-837-5986
www.prairieresto.com

K-Fence
(507) 753-2706
info@kfence.com
Zumbro Falls, MN
(507) 753-2943
www.kfence.com

Southwest Minnesota K Fence
Daniel & Terese Hall
Butterfield, MN
507-956-2657

Grassland Solutions
Cokato, MN
320-286-2196
www.grasslandsolutions.com

Cammack Ranch Supply
Union Center, SD
605-985-5591
cammackranchsupply.com

Jobe Valves
jobevalues.com

Jacobsen, Inc.
Adair, IA
800-243-7473
jacobseninc.com

Hutchison Incorporated
Grinnell, IA
(800) 588-6155
hutchison-inc.com

K-Fence
Zumbro Falls, MN
(507) 753-2943
www.kfence.com

Agri Supply
www.agrisupply.com/
tanks-tubs-stock-tank/c/
2800028/

Frost Free Nose Pumps
www.frostfreenosepumps.com

JUG Livestock Waterer
800-584-6675
thejugwaterer.com

Gallagher Catalog
800-531-5908
www.gallaghrusa.com

Cobett Company
E. Peru, IA
888-699-4722
cobett.com

Cobbett Wholesale, Inc.
Rochester, MN
877-700-2694
carlsonwholesale.net

Rural Mfg. Co., Inc.
Freeman, SD
800-477-7135
ruralmfg.com

WATERING SYSTEM CONTRACTORS

Many local feed/farm and big-box “fleet farm” stores carry watering system supplies.