



Strategic Farming: Field Notes session talks forages and pastures updates and precision drainage

St. Paul, MN. (6/09/2026)— On June 3, Dr. Beatriz Bizzuti, University of Minnesota Extension forage specialist, Troy Salzer, University of Minnesota Extension educator, and Tim Gieseke, University of Minnesota Extension educator – Agricultural Water Management, joined Extension Educator Eric Yu for a discussion on alfalfa management, pasture productivity, and precision drainage during the University of Minnesota Extension Strategic Farming: Field Notes webinar.

The Strategic Farming: Field Notes webinar series provides timely, research-based information on current crop production issues throughout the growing season. The series is held Wednesday mornings from 8 to 8:30 a.m. and is supported by the farm families of the Minnesota Soybean Research & Promotion Council and the Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council.

As first-cut alfalfa harvest begins across Minnesota, Bizzuti emphasized the importance of evaluating stands for winter injury and considering stand age, stem density, and pest pressure when making harvest decisions. Healthy stands should generally contain more than 40 stems per square foot or at least five plants per square foot. She also encouraged producers to scout for alfalfa weevil, which has been reported in several areas of the state.

“Spring first-cut decisions should take into consideration stand age, winter injury, pest pressure, and farm goals,” said Bizzuti. “Everything involves tradeoffs between forage quality, production, and stand persistence.”

Salzer discussed current pasture conditions and management strategies to maintain forage productivity throughout the grazing season. He noted that winter injury has reduced forage production in some areas and encouraged producers to evaluate damaged stands and consider alternative forage options where needed. He also highlighted the benefits of rotational grazing and adequate rest periods to help pastures recover and maintain productivity.

“Rest is a very important component,” Salzer explained. “Giving plants the opportunity to regrow helps rebuild root reserves and improves overall pasture health and productivity.”

The second half of the webinar focused on precision drainage, an emerging approach that uses soil characteristics and topography to create more site-specific drainage designs. Gieseke discussed how precision drainage can improve drainage uniformity across fields while also creating opportunities for drainage water management through control structures and monitoring technologies.

“The goal of precision drainage is to optimize drainage based on soil type and landscape position while creating more uniform growing conditions across the field,” said Gieseke.

While the session only lasted 30 minutes, it was full of good and actionable information. For those that missed this session, it is now available to listen to on your favorite podcasting platform or online at: <https://strategicfarming.transistor.fm/#>.



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