



NEWS FROM EXTENSION

UW-MADISON DIVISION OF EXTENSION WOOD COUNTY



Youth Development in the Great Outdoors

by Laura Huber, 4-H Program Educator

Sunshine (and rain), fresh air, trees, lakes, and wildlife together create a GREAT environment for youth to explore, discover, learn, and grow. Programs like these are crucial for helping youth develop social skills, test developing independence, and teamwork. In summer 2023, Wood County 4-H proudly offered these experiences with strong connections to nature:

Overnight Summer Camp *for youth in grades 3-8, counselors in grades 9+*

Wood County joined Marathon and Lincoln County 4-H's for summer camp from 12-14 June. We sent 24 youth campers and 3 teen counselors to Rhinelander's Northern Lakes Impact Center. While there they enjoyed camp activities like paddling, arts & crafts, rock climbing, and large group games. Campfire, s'mores, songs, and skits were all included, too!

Discover Wisconsin *for youth in grades 5-8*

What better way to learn about our great state than to hop on a bus and hit the road? From 6-8 July, we explored southeastern Wisconsin. We learned about dairy at Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese in Waterloo, and explored history at Old World Wisconsin, the East Troy Railroad Museum, and at Kenosha's Civil War Museum. Many youth got the opportunity to catch their very first fish at Bong Recreational Area! Eleven Wood County youth participated with 20 others from Marathon, Lincoln, and Langlade Counties.

Cloverbud & Explorer Day Camps *for youth in grades K-3*

Our youngest 4-H members enjoyed going "behind the scenes" at two day camps this summer. The first allowed them to meet our local heroes on July 20th. We toured Wisconsin Rapids Fire Department Station 1, Wood County Dispatch, and the Wood County Sheriff Department. At the end, youth created their own first aid kits and practiced basic first aid. They learned that even kids can be important helpers in the community!

Then, on August 8th, we visited Wildwood Zoo for a tour focusing on animal enrichment for the second camp. Campers were excited to not only create scent toys for the bobcat, lynx, and bears, but also to hide the toys in the animal exhibits! This was a connection to nature that surprised all of our campers! Learning that animals need to learn and play to avoid boredom was an important takeaway lesson.

Outdoor Adventure Camp *for youth in grades 4+*

Our final camp experience of summer was Outdoor Adventure Camp at Dexter County Park. This new opportunity was offered to youth in grades 4 and up. Surprisingly, we were joined by youth from Marathon, Lincoln, and Shawano counties on August 14th. That was a sign that it filled an important niche for youth who were excited to not only go canoeing and fishing, but to also learn how to build a campfire and cook a meal over that fire. Many youth saw pelicans for their first time when a flock flew overhead. Nearly all of the campers enjoyed their very first banana boat, too.

We evaluate every camp program. It's important to hear what the kids learned, what they think of their experiences, and what changes they feel would improve the experience. All of these camp experiences received very high ratings. The highest scores were for questions like "I made a new friend" and "I felt valued and respected by adults."

We thank the Incurage Community Foundation and their funders for helping to keep youth camp programs affordable for local families this summer. They provided financial support for summer camp transportation and camperships. Without their financial support, fewer youth would have been able to participate in these amazing opportunities.

Alternative Forages

by Matt Lippert, Agriculture Educator

Recent years have shown extreme moisture and drought. Having more crops available for farmers grow increases their potential to produce a crop no matter what the conditions. Alternative forages may use parts of the season that have been missed in the past. There is greater interest in forages and cover crops planted in the fall to be harvested the following spring. The fall planted crops may open the window for a summer crop that utilizes extreme heat and is miserly with water. These crops open new harvest and planting windows that allow farmers to have more options in managing manure so that all the nutrients are managed and there is less loss of nutrient to ground and surface waters.

Possibly the largest benefit of these alternative forages are maintaining a growing crop for a larger portion of the year. Having continuous growing crops is beneficial for soil bacteria and fungi and therefore improves soil health. Crop mixtures of several crops instead of monocultures also sustains diverse soil microbes and leads to more resilient cropping results

Education about alternative forages is accomplished in demonstration plots, articles in farm magazines, Extension newsletters and Extension Topic Hub fact sheets and articles.



Sorghum-Sudangrass hybrids, look like corn but tolerate heat and dry conditions better than corn. New traits improve the digestibility of this crop.



This sorghum-sudangrass was planted as a forage cocktail also including Italian ryegrass and Berseem clover.

However, in this year's dry conditions the sorghum hybrid prevailed and thrived. This resilience and flexibility is a plus of some alternative forages.



On the other end of the season growing conditions, triticale or rye can provide cover and recycle nutrients through the winter. This triticale is resuming spring growth over a month before many spring planted crops were planted. Although 2023 was an extreme drought, crops growing and harvested early in the spring escaped the dry conditions.

Upcoming Extension Programs

- **Science by the River** | Wisconsin Rapids | September 30 - 11am-2pm
- **National 4-H Week** | October 1-7
- **4-H: Teen Leaders Cornhole Tournament** | North Wood Co. Park | Oct. 8
- **4-H: Juntos** | Marshfield | Thursdays - October 12 - December 7
- **4-H: VIP Training** | Marshfield Public Library | October 19 5:30-7:30pm
- **4-H: Art Gallery Opening Reception** | New Visions | October 20th - 4-6pm
- **Money Matters Live: Credit and Debt Series** | Oct. 3, 10, 17 & 24 - 7-8pm
- **Planning AHEAD** | McMillan Library | Sept. 18, 25, Oct. 2, 9, 16, 23, 30
- **Rent Smart** | McMillan Library | October 6 - 9:30am-12:30pm
- **Rent Smart** | Marshfield Public Library | October 13 - 9:30am-12:30pm
- **Sowing Success** | McMillan Library | 12 Sessions September - November

- **StrongBodies** | Nekoosa Community Center | Tues & Thurs. Oct. 3-Dec 21

wood.extension.wisc.edu - 715-421-8440

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