



Photo Credit: Haubein Farms, Inc

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Match Made in Heaven Case Study #4

Haubein Farms, Inc.

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The Match Made in Heaven project seeks to understand the state of the art of livestock and crop integration on farms in the Upper Mississippi River Basin. This is one of six profiles of farmers who have honed their craft and successfully built livestock and crop integration systems on their farms. We hope you enjoy getting to know them!

Key Points:

- Diversification, integration, irrigation, rotation and size characterize the David and Tanya Haubein cropping and livestock operation.
- Cover crops and grazing are part of the regenerative plan with a goal of grazing on all of the corn land as well as the improved pastures.
- “Soil health is real and attainable with the techniques we now have,” says Dave.



The Haubein farm is a multi-generation farm that has been in business for sixty years. Dave is now the senior operator with a daughter and son-in-law working with him closely in the cattle operation. The farming operation has also had various side businesses over the years, including a fertilizer company and food manufacturing. These companies have been sold and the future focus is on developing a regenerative cropping and grazing beef operation.

The farm is a mature operation with no debt, which allows investment in practices to improve productivity and conservation. Dave takes a holistic approach to the farm. Irrigation, drainage, improving pastures as well as wildlife and bird habitat are part of a larger plan to make the farm more productive than it was, and the world a better place. Dave’s ranch was the first in the nation to be designated as an Audubon-Certified Bird Friendly ecosystem.

Dave has worked with a team of professional advisors for many years in accounting, management, and estate and property advice. Experience has been a valuable teacher as well. Diversification of the farm and off-farm investments provide risk management and additional revenue. The farm supports four people, provides abundant vegetables and meat, and recreation in addition to the main farming enterprises. Much of the farmland, pastures and some CRP are conducive to hunting. Hunting rentals are an additional revenue stream, with up to ten families a year hunting deer and some waterfowl hunting as well. One of Dave’s pet projects is a non-profit hunting operation for veterans, KAMO Adventures.

Row crops are the primary enterprise. The farm has been increasing in acreage in recent years, and is now close to 5,000 acres owned and 400 acres rented. About 3,000 acres are in corn and soybeans. Another 230 acres are in hay and other harvested forage, and 1,875 acres are in perennial pasture. The corn and soybean acres are rented out on a crop share basis to two different operators. Corn sold as grain and soybeans sold for seed generate cash income.



Having others handle crop production allows the family to focus on the beef grazing operation. As of 2024 the herd consists of 60 cow/calf pairs, 40 heifers retained for breeding, 45 feeder animals, and 20 steers that are finished as grass fed beef and sold directly to value-added markets. All of the beef animals are grazed all year.

Continual improvement of the land is a Haubein goal. The Haubeins are working to increase the productivity of the pasture ground. Annual weed and brush control is important to maintaining and increasing the productivity of every acre.



Dave's grazing management is not very intense. The ratio of animals to acres is small. Stocking rate is one animal unit per acre. Stocking density is 1,000 lbs. of cattle weight per acre per day, with a once-a-week rotation. The light grazing intensity fits the goal of managing the pasture ground for wildlife, and particularly grassland birds. Extra pasture ground that is not needed is rented to other grazing farmers, which adds over \$35,000 in additional annual income.

Installing and maintaining fences and water systems are an ongoing expense and effort. Special emphasis is placed on secure fencing for land close to roads. Inside of the perimeter, cross-fencing is done with temporary electric fencing. Additional investment in lanes and gates makes cattle handling more efficient. Assistance from NRCS has been valuable in developing these improvements to the grazing system.

Cover crops are flown on all field corn acres most years. Eight wells for irrigation of cropped acres have enhanced cover crop establishment, enabling grazing of cover crops on about 800 acres. Manure distributed by grazing cattle on these acres is worth an estimated \$25,000 per year. Grazing cover crops is a great path for regenerative agriculture. Acres to be grazed are seeded with cover crops that are palatable to livestock and fit the objectives for the soil. Tillage is minimized or not used at all for the row crops.

An important investment has been improving the drainage of the poorly drained soils. Improved drainage has allowed grazing of acres that were not usable before and added days of grazing in a season. An unexpected benefit of tile drainage has been the ability to use the tile outlet as a water source for grazing livestock. Dave says, "We have learned that drainage water from our tile fields makes great cattle water right where we need it. We make pot hole cattle waterers at our tile outlets."

Dave hopes his farm can become a model, showing others what is possible to achieve with cover crops and grazing.



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