

Summary & Resources - Cedar Creek Farm September 2025 OAK Farmer Field Day



Rotational Grazing, Silvopasture and Farming with Native Ecosystems

Event Summary

On a bright September afternoon, participants toured Cedar Creek Farm in Pulaski County to learn about farmer Micah Wiles' 25-head, grass-finished cattle operation. Joined by master grazier Greg Brann, Micah shared about the farm's rotational grazing, watering and fencing systems, and showcased the visible benefits of conservation measures incorporated on the 100-acre farm over two decades. Field Day participants explored the integration of conservation farming and sustainable livestock practices through intentional plant and forage management, including silvopasture, and how every farm can develop rotational grazing that supports their lifestyle, equipment and production goals.

Get to Know Cedar Creek

Micah Wiles' family started [Cedar Creek Farm](#) in Pulaski County more than 20 years ago, planting a vineyard that would later be home to a winery and tasting room, and grazing horses on the farm's rolling pastures. They worked with the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to restore the native forest strips (riparian buffers) along Cedar Creek and the native grasslands in their pastures through intentional plantings and fire management. After graduating from Warren Wilson College with a degree in Sustainable Agriculture and Forestry, Micah returned home to implement his passions for agriculture and forestry on the family farm.

On the 100-acre farm, Micah introduced a herd of 30 Dexter cows that are fed a 100% grass and forage diet. He sells steers as beef halves and heifers for breeding stock. Micah continued his family's relationship with NRCS, improving fencing to establish pasture blocks and facilitate rotational grazing with movable electric fencing. He also installed water tanks to supplement gravity-fed spring water sources with easy access to fresh water through quick-connect irrigation lines. Additionally, Micah and his family maintain hundreds of varieties of fruit and nut trees in the farm's orchards, which expand food and product offerings, add greater biodiversity on the farm and provide shade for the cattle.

Greg Brann has long been a friend and mentor to Micah and Cedar Creek Farm, advising on the influence and evolution of plant communities for improved pasture system management. Greg joined the Field Day to share insights into grazing native plants, rotational practices, soil health and related forage management and silvopasture tree selection.

Rotational Grazing

Micah raises Dexter cattle, which are generally docile, easy to work with and have a small frame (~800lbs). Every three days, Micah rotates the herd to fresh pasture, providing shade and a water source in each new paddock. During the tour, the herd was grazing on the warm-season grasses to minimize seed heads on undesirable plants and to expose the tall fescue (a cool-season grass) to more light, allowing it to grow more vigorously and, ideally, to be stockpiled for the winter grazing season. (TIP: Consider Greg Brann's [top-third grazing](#) recommendations.)

Water and Fencing

Stressing a general rule that cattle will travel no more than 800 feet to water and consume approximately 30 gallons per day (more if they are eating hay), water sources are essential in every paddock in rotational grazing. Additionally, supplemental water can be used to draw cattle to a new area for more uniform grazing. Working with NRCS, Micah installed a waterline and frost-free waterer through the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program \(EQIP\)](#) cost-share. To make use of rainwater stored in six IBC totes, Micah installed a quick-connect fitting into a buried 6-inch pipe. Greg and Micah agreed that 8 inches is preferable for maintenance and ease of access.

The pipeline is fairly inexpensive to install, and temporary or permanent lines can be added off the main pipeline. [Livestock Pipeline](#) is an NRCS cost-share practice through EQIP. Heath Miner, NRCS Soil Conservationist, shared that farmers can talk with NRCS Field Staff about their farm plan and vision. **The more producers communicate their goals and plan design, the better NRCS can align the practice requirements to achieve farm goals.** The NRCS does not cost-share for poly wire or often cost-share across multiple paddocks, but they are willing to work with farms to meet producer needs.

Cedar Creek Farm uses electric internal fencing for paddocks. Micah has a single strand running off one line on the eastern perimeter of the pasture and a five-strand perimeter fence on the other side. He ties the poly wire he uses for temporary paddocks (with a slipknot) to a Zammr handle, which hooks onto the hot, high-tensile line to make temporary paddocks. The Zammr has a metal hook on one end to electrify the poly wire and a plastic hook for a neutral connection.

Micah demonstrated several wire reels for the temporary fencing. He modified a saw bit so that he could use a drill to reel in poly wire more efficiently (especially useful for the smaller reels that require more cranking). He has un-gearred reels as well as three-to-one geared reels with a guide and jumper clip, which can serve to connect temporary lines. Micah prefers polybraid wire. Greg prefers mixed metal strand wire and a geared reel. Micah and Greg highlighted different fence posts, such as the O'Brien post, and using fiberglass poles in the corners with clips - although harder to get in the ground, they do not warp.

Greg spoke about his interest in virtual fencing and estimates that the collars pay for themselves in one year if the product saves 15 minutes a day on labor while moving fencing. The NRCS is currently considering a cost-share payment for this technology in Kentucky.

Silvopasture

Silvopasture at Cedar Creek Farm provides livestock with access to shade and nutrients, while supporting natural habitat and nut and berry harvests. Silvopasture can be practiced at any scale. While many small to mid-sized operations use hand tools or chainsaws for pruning, larger operations can utilize machine equipment. Micah and Greg advise growers to plant trees adapted to the region, and Greg recommended this Virginia Tech publication, [Tree Selection Guide for Mid-Atlantic Silvopastures](#).

Micah points out a Mulberry as an example of a beneficial silvopasture tree: vigorous and palatable to cattle, with the (non-native white variety being preferred over the red. Micah pollards the trees in the pasture and drops the cut branches for the cattle to clean up. Micah prunes one to two years of growth at the collar, but does not prune limbs over two inches thick. Native varieties recommended for silvopasture include fast-growing tulip poplar, locust (thornless honey and black varieties), willow, chestnut, persimmon, walnut, hickory and pecan trees. In silvopasture systems, Greg recommends allowing 35% light to reach grass species, with cool-season native grasses needing 50% and warm-season grasses requiring 40%.

Conservation Legacy

Cedar Creek Farm includes 40 acres of cool-season grasses, divided into two sections of the farm and around 100 paddocks, each generally ranging from half to one acre. Micah has planted hedgerows to help divide the paddocks and offer shade while diversifying the native habitat. The farm's lower pastures also receive shade and diversity from a 20-year-old riparian buffer, installed by Micah's father with NRCS support. The buffer now houses a diverse multistory ecosystem under mature trees, providing wildlife habitat, erosion protection and shade to Cedar Creek, a tributary to Buck Creek home to 77 species of fish and 30 species of mussels, nine of which are considered rare. With the riparian buffer allowing for better water quality along the creek, biologists have now located the Buck Darter fish in the waters of Cedar Creek Farm. Endemic to Buck Creek in Pulaski County, the Buck Darter is one of the most imperiled fishes in the state.

Twenty acres of warm-season grasses that Micah's father planted twenty years ago with NRCS support are managed with controlled burns every other year. These warm-season grasses reach their peak when the cool-season grasses are slowing down. Micah may graze cattle in the warm-season grasses for three to four weeks, and sometimes a second grazing, depending on the weather/season. Warm-season grass grazing must be managed carefully, as these native species have lower tolerance to overgrazing.

Gratitude

OAK extends gratitude to Micah Wiles and his family for hosting this event and contributing to all of the preparation that went into planning it. OAK is also grateful for the partnership of Greg Brann, who shared his experience, expertise and support, and to the many graziers and participants who engaged in the conversation to offer their lessons and perspectives.

This event was supported by a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Related Resource Links:

OAK Resources:

- [Annual Organic Farming Conference](#) - Save the date for OAK's 15th Annual Organic Farming Conference, *Cultivation Connections: Growing Organic Together for 15 Years*, January 30-31, 2026, at Kentucky State University's Harold R. Benson Research and Demonstration Farm in Frankfort, Kentucky.
- [Upcoming OAK Farmer Field Days](#) - Hosted on working farms, these events highlight organic practices used in crop and livestock systems and best practices in production, marketing, business and resilience on Kentucky farms. Register today to learn from and with other farmers!
- [Organic Production Assistance Program](#) - Organic production consultation services provide dedicated technical assistance to Kentucky farmers who are currently using or interested in adopting or expanding organic practices.
- [OAK Transition Program](#) - Organic Transition specialists assist farmers who are interested in transitioning to USDA-certified organic production. Organic Specialists are available for one-on-one consultations, providing a personal level of service and technical assistance on-site, at the farmer's convenience.
- [Join OAK today!](#) The sustainable food and farming network in Kentucky is growing, and together, we can create a thriving local food system. Your support and participation helps OAK deliver educational programming, provide community outreach and enhance market opportunities for growers across Kentucky. Receive discounts on OAK events and other member benefits!
- [Sign up for OAK newsletters](#) - For farmers and consumers, OAK offers a variety of regular communications to stay connected to Kentucky food and farming news, research and events.
- [OAK YouTube](#) - View recordings, snapshots and lessons learned from host farmers in past conference and field day playlists.
- [Suppliers and Farm Resources](#) on OAK's Find-A-Farm Directory.

Forage and Grazing Resources

- Greg Brann:
 - [Greg Brann's Pasture Walk](#) - October 16, 2025, 10 am - 4 pm CT at Big Spring Farm, Adolphus, KY
 - [Louisiana GLCI - David Daigle, Grazing Native Grasses](#)
- Livestock Management / Nutrient Cycling in Pastures:
 - [Managed Grazing Tutorial](#) - National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT)'s Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas (ATTRA)
 - [Nutrient Cycling in Pastures](#) - NCAT ATTRA
 - [Building Healthy Pasture Soils](#) - NCAT ATTRA
 - [Forage Production for Pasture-Based Livestock Production](#) - Cooperative Extension
 - [The Accrued Benefits of Adaptive Grazing](#) - Soil Health Academy
 - [Pasture Feeding, Streamside Grazing, and the Kentucky Agriculture Water Quality Plan](#) - UK Cooperative Extension
 - [NRCS: Pasture Condition Scoresheet Card](#)
- Forage
 - [AGR-175: Forage Identification and Use Guide](#) - University of Kentucky
 - [Grain and Forage Crop Guide for Kentucky](#) - University of Kentucky

- [David Mathis, Shelby Insurance Agency](#). recommends that graziers always work with their FSA office to get a farm number and to file crop acreage (including hay) reports: [FSA: Crop Acreage Reporting \(farmers.gov\)](#). Necessary for crop insurance and good to have if the need arises to apply for disaster assistance.
- Suppliers / Products Referenced in the Field Day:
 - Redmond [Cattlemans Blend with garlic](#)
 - [Gallagher nine-strand wire](#)
 - [O'Brien post](#)
 - [Zammar handle](#)
 - Virtual fencing: [E-shepherd](#) and [No Fence](#)
 - [Tubular Valves from Kenco](#)

Conservation Resources

- Natural Resources Conservation Service, Cost-Share Practices
 - [Prescribed Grazing](#), [Pasture and Hay Planting](#), [Fence](#) (interior only), [Watering Facility](#), [Livestock Pipeline](#), [Grazing Management](#), [Prescribed Burn](#), [Irrigation Pipe Line](#), [Invasive Species Removal \(Brush Management\)](#), [Hedgerow Planting](#), [Riparian Forest Buffer](#), [Riparian Herbaceous Cover](#), [Tree-Shrub Establishment](#), [Tree Shrub Site Preparation](#), [Conservation Cover](#)
- [Kentucky Prescribed Fire Council](#)

Funding /Technical Assistance Resources and Service Providers

- Kentucky Center for Agriculture and Rural Development ([KCARD](#))
 - Free [business planning](#) for Kentucky farms and agribusinesses
 - [Funding assistance and grant information](#) (Kentucky and beyond)
 - Sign up under "GET UPDATES" on [KCARD's website](#) to receive e-newsletters
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
 - Read this first! [A Guide to USDA Resources for Historically Underserved Farmers](#)
 - USDA [Farm Service Agency \(FSA\)-Kentucky](#)
 - [How to Start a Farm: Beginning Farmers and Ranchers](#)
 - Find your county's office in [West Kentucky](#) or [East Kentucky](#)
 - [USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service \(NRCS\)-Kentucky](#)
- Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA)
 - [Organic Marketing Program](#)
 - [Grants and Funding Opportunities](#)
- University of Kentucky:
 - [Extension Publications](#)
 - [Food Connection](#) - Value Chain Coordinators' [contact information](#)
 - [Center for Crop Diversification](#)
- Grants:
 - [SOAR loan](#) - southern and eastern KY
 - [KSU Small-Scale Farm Grant](#)
 - [County Ag Investment Program \(CAIP\)](#) grant: county-specific! Ask your County Cooperative Extension Agent.