

# Onto Greener Pastures with Rotational Grazing and Cover Crops



## Meet Roger Bindl

Roger Bindl is a passionate advocate of no-till farming. It was instilled in him at an early age by working with his father, who bought their first no-till corn planter over 40 years ago. Roger began experimenting with cover crops almost 10 years ago as a way to combat compaction, provide weed-control, and help retain nutrients from manure application. He is thoughtful about the species in his cover crop mix, keeping in mind the goals he is trying to achieve.



Roger is “excited to receive data showing how grazing cattle benefits soil health.” Fields planted with the cover crop mix will be grazed in the fall and monitored closely to assess the effect of the cover crop and grazing treatment. A portion of the field will be fenced off from grazing cattle to serve as a control for the study.

**“Being a rookie grazer, I am looking forward to learning how to successfully graze cover crops.”**

**-ROGER BINDL**

## The Demonstration Details

The fields are currently planted in a corn/soybean/winter wheat rotation, with the demonstration starting in a winter wheat year. Once the wheat is harvested in August, a diverse mix of cover crop species will be planted, with the intent to graze cattle in the fall once fully established.

## The Bottom Line

Roger’s primary reason for rotating his livestock is pasture integrity. “I wanted to run more cattle” Roger says, “but didn’t have the yard space to do it”. With limited space available, Roger realized that his most efficient way to graze cattle was managed intensive grazing (MIG). He recently began to utilize cover crops as added forage for his cattle and sees the demonstration “as a chance to learn if the cover crop mix is one that will work.”



## PROJECT OVERVIEW

While cover crop acreage is increasing, grazing them is not a common practice. Combining these management options can improve soil health, increase cost efficiency, and reduce nutrient runoff. By providing conservation guidance and motivation to graziers, this education and outreach project led by Sand County Foundation, will demonstrate the value of rotational grazing with cover crops. The goal is to expand cover crop acreage with rotational grazing across the Midwest for a more resilient agricultural system.



PHOTO CREDIT: JAN SHEPEL

## DEMONSTRATION APPROACH

Four experienced graziers will demonstrate new methods, share their experiences, and communicate the outcomes, with assistance from Sand County Foundation and the University of Wisconsin. The primary goals are to build awareness and confidence among livestock farmers to rotationally graze cover crops.



## FARMER LEADERSHIP

The project's participating graziers are members of the Sauk Soil and Water Improvement Group. SSWIG is amongst the growing number of farmer-led groups to receive grant support from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.



PHOTO CREDIT: JAN SHEPEL

# Bindl's Farm

of Sauk County, Wisconsin

## HISTORY:

In 2010, Roger began farming 230-acres in the rolling hills of Wisconsin's Sauk County, just outside the community of Spring Green.

## CROPS:

Roger manages about 200 acres in a no-till rotation with corn, soybean, winter wheat, and alfalfa (forage). He incorporated winter wheat into his rotation to allow for cover crops. This breaks the weed cycle and provides an area for manure spreading. His fields are blanketed with a custom cover crop blend. In the spring he plants right into the green, and burns off the cover crop with herbicide.

## LIVESTOCK:

Roger recently began grazing his 25-30 dairy heifers and beef cattle on approximately 30 acres. The cattle are moved daily, allowing up to a month before returning them to the same paddock to prevent overgrazing. During the winter the cattle yard and bale graze, otherwise they are fed baleage.

## FOR MORE PROJECT INFORMATION VISIT:

**Sand County Foundation**

[www.sandcountyfoundation.org/RotationalGrazing](http://www.sandcountyfoundation.org/RotationalGrazing)