

## Opportunities for Growing and Grazing Cover Crops

### Speaker Bios

**Jacob Ness** - Jacob Ness is the Western Iowa Field Manager for the Soil Health Partnership, covering western Iowa and Nebraska. Jacob is a graduate of South Dakota State University, majoring in plant science with an emphasis in soil science and geographic information science. A Certified Crop Advisor, Jacob has been one of the first CCAs to complete both the 4R Nutrient Management Specialty and Sustainability Specialty certifications.

Jacob has a strong agronomic background, most recently working as a Certified Crop Specialist and Nutrient Management Specialist at AgVantage FS in southeast Iowa. Jacob has also worked in agronomy and precision agriculture for Cargill and Monsanto. Originally from Brookings, SD, he now lives in Marengo, IA with his wife, Krystle and their three children.

**Mike Buis** – Mike is a third generation cattle rancher from Chatham Ontario. The family raises cattle to supply their on farm retail store and several specialty markets with farm raised local beef. Their cropland produces specialty crops of sweetcorn, seed corn and seed beans as well as a number of commercial cash crops. Farm tours, demonstration sites and speaking engagements allow Mike to share his strategic use of cover crops following intensive field crop production that make cattle farming sustainable on premium valued farmland.

**Chad Dane** – Chad lives and farms in Clay County, NE and has an operation of about 3500 acres of primarily irrigated and some dryland crops. Crops grown on his farm are field corn, seed corn and soybeans. He has been grazing cover crops in his seed cornfields for 6 years. Turnips and radishes are flown on with an airplane and then grazed after harvest.

He tried flying on cover crops in his irrigated field cornfields, but this was unsuccessful. The dense foliage limited light to the soil surface and germination and growth of the turnips and radishes was poor. The past couple of years Chad has been planting some cereal rye as a cover crop following field corn and soybeans.

In regard to grazing his cover crops, Chad works with an outside contractor (middle man) who works with him and cattlemen from western Nebraska. The contractor handles all the logistics of securing and managing the cattle while they are grazing the cover crops. Generally 500 pound calves graze the turnips and radishes along with a few cows to help keep the calves calm. He also has some fall calving cow/calf pairs that graze on some fields. Chad then receives a check for the grazing of his cover crops.

**Rodney Wiese** – Rodney is a farmer near Dewitt NE that has been no till farming for 30 years and today farms 1000 Acres of dryland and irrigated corn and soybeans (240 acres irrigated). In the past 3 years Rodney drills cereal rye cover crop in October to enhance soil health and provide spring grazing opportunities for his cattle herd. He owns routinely 220 cows with only 170 acres of perennial pasture and custom feeds swine in two 500 head finishing barns. Rodney utilizes cereal rye for silage, for early spring grazing on land planted to corn or soybeans and cereal rye

harvested for seed or silages provides a window for cover crops or double cropping. A planting “green” strategy has been implemented successfully with corn and soybeans into cereal rye.

**Gary Bader** – Gary farms near Gresham NE and has been no till farming for 30 years and sometimes uses a vertical machine as lightly as you can to level. Today Gary farms 1800 acres of seed corn, field corn and soybeans and owns 250 head of cows. He has networked with ranchers in Nebraska to provide them grazing opportunity in the winter on cover crops he managed. This last year, He and two partners managed 1000 head of cattle for 120 days in the winter for additional income. Two new winter jobs were created for young farmers and a neighbor started a new enterprise raising cereal ryegrass providing new income opportunity for the area. Gary is willing to share challenges he faced and how he solved it and how to add economic value to your area.

**Burdette Piening** – Burdette and his son farm southwest of Lincoln near Emerald. He is primarily a corn and soybean farmer with some irrigated and non-irrigated fields. He is new to growing cover crops and has been growing them for two years, primarily to prevent wind and water erosion; however, the potential for increasing organic matter is another goal. He has rented out some of his cornstalks and cover crop (planted into soybean stubble) acres to a local producer for grazing.