

**Fritsch Equipment** And Services LLC  
**(920) 532-6292**  
 For Videos & More, Visit  
[www.fritschequipment.com](http://www.fritschequipment.com)

Fritsch Products That Will Improve Your Dairy Operation! Watch Our Videos & Believe!

### FRITSCH FORAGE FACER

Protects the face of the bunker better than any other facer.

With the high feed prices it is more important than ever to use the Fritsch Forage Facer to preserve the face of the bunker



### FRITSCH POWER BEDDING GROOMER

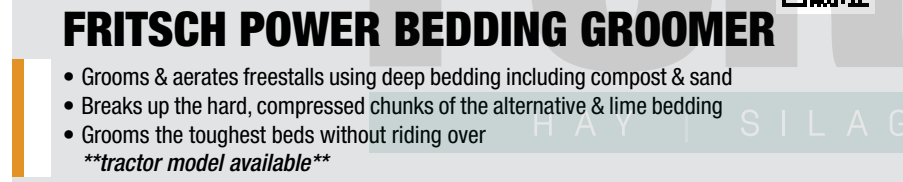
- Grooms & aerates freestalls using deep bedding including compost & sand
- Breaks up the hard, compressed chunks of the alternative & lime bedding
- Grooms the toughest beds without riding over

**\*\*tractor model available\*\***



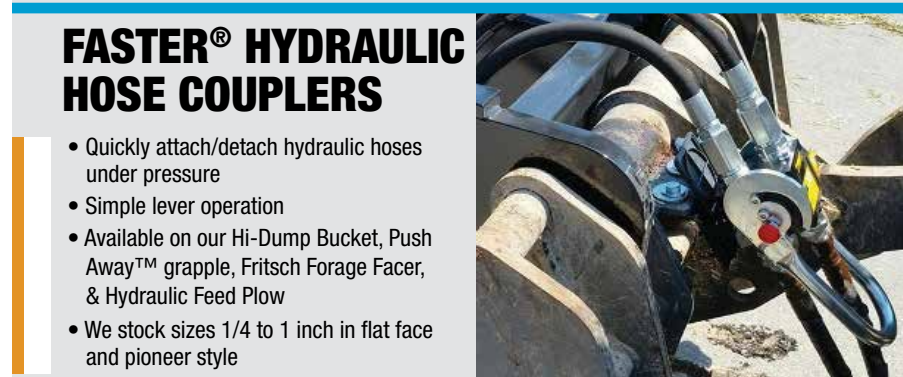
### FASTER® HYDRAULIC HOSE COUPLERS

- Quickly attach/detach hydraulic hoses under pressure
- Simple lever operation
- Available on our Hi-Dump Bucket, Push Away™ grapple, Fritsch Forage Facer, & Hydraulic Feed Plow
- We stock sizes 1/4 to 1 inch in flat face and pioneer style



### POLY CALF STALLS

Many styles available



### MAYO MATTRESS

The only mattress that rivals sand bedding!

- About 1 3/4" of air cushioning
- 100% waterproof
- #1 for hygiene
- No need for a top cover

*Fritsch Equipment is THE North American distributor of Mayo Mattress Dealerships Available*



### FRITSCH EQUIPMENT

EQUIPMENT FOR FARMERS DESIGNED BY FARMERS

**CALL US AT (920) 532-6292**

**Ron Fritsch**  
President



# The buffet of sustainability

Scott Fleming for *Progressive Forage*

## AT A GLANCE

Consider operational profits and environmental stewardship and try to incorporate both as you develop the sustainability of your operation.



**Scott Fleming**  
 Sampling Director  
 Rock River Laboratory Inc.  
[scott\\_fleming@rockriverlab.com](mailto:scott_fleming@rockriverlab.com)

Everybody understands the concept of the term “food,” but without further context it’s kind of meaningless. We never say, “Hey! Do you want to go eat at that new food restaurant?” How often do we hear a restaurant advertise its amazing “food buffet?” Never. Instead, it’s “Come down and check out our amazing fried chicken buffet!” or “Hey, do you want to eat at that new all-pancake restaurant?”

As a concept, sustainability is like food. It’s a word that simultaneously has meaning and is meaningless. Sustainability can go in so many directions, but there’s a sense that all the directions eventually lead to the same destination. As we ring in yet another new year, it seems like an appropriate time to map out the buffet of sustainability. So grab a fresh plate and get in line as we review the options.

Sustainability of the operation must always be top of mind when looking to implement practices that work toward environmental stewardship. Even the most environmentally conscious operation will cease to operate if it isn’t profitable. As we begin to assess the buffet, think of “sustainability” in terms of two buckets: operational sustainability and environmental sustainability. Any measure that does not fit into both buckets should stay off the plate. Much like an ideal world where the only food that makes it on your plate tastes good and is good for you. Like food, there is no perfect practice that fits solidly into both buckets.

### ‘Good for you’ food

Operational profits are the “good for you” food of the farming buffet. The key ingredients to operational profits are some of the tried-and-true favorites in agriculture. First and foremost is fertility management. A sustainable operation is constantly tracking fertility. Fertility tracking starts on the input side through agronomic analysis. Soil sampling and manure sampling are the most basic types of analysis. Soil sampling is a measure of a soil’s likelihood of response to added fertilizer. Without any soil analysis, how could a rate of fertilizer be determined? And applying manure without analysis is a lot like applying fertilizer without a soil analysis. Sure, book values exist for basic manure types, but each farm is different. The animals, diets, supplements, age, bedding, manure

handling and many more items influence the manure analysis. The only sustainable and profitable way to apply manure is through knowing exactly what you are applying.

There are new ingredients in the “good for you” category that will help your dollars go even further. Many are the technology tools that arose in the 21st century. On the input side, items like grid soil sampling and variable-rate nutrient application have moved the needle. Other technologies such as affordable real-time kinematic (RTK) options, nitrogen modeling software, high-quality and frequent crop imagery, and plant tissue analysis all help fine-tune the nutrient program to gain maximum efficiency. On the harvest side, the go-to tools are generally yield-related. Nutrient budgeting, especially in forage production, is difficult if not impossible without good yield estimates.

Feeding the soil properly is only part of the equation. Maintaining the soil for the future is the other key ingredient – done by keeping it in place. Generally, this comes in the form of reduced tillage, contour farming and, more recently, cover crops. Forage producers have always had an edge on sustainable farming due to the perennial nature of many forage crops. Soil may be tilled at times in the rotation for row-crop production, but when it is forage’s turn in the rotation, the soil is covered and protected for several years. Without any change in practice, there is increased sustainability in forage production.

The low-hanging sustainability fruit in forage production comes from cover crops and nurse crops. Keeping something growing on the soil year-round is the best way to reduce erosion. When corn silage is harvested in the Upper Midwest, the soil is unprotected from the erosive power of rainfall for several months – until freezing weather and snow reduce the erosion risk. By planting a cover crop after or even before corn silage harvest, the soil will be covered by a growing plant for months





Image by Mike Dixon.

to come. Nurse crops planted with alfalfa seeding also reduce erosion. It is all about getting something up and growing as often as possible.

Luckily, there is one tool that will bring all these good for you practices together on one plate. That is a nutrient management plan (NMP). An NMP looks at everything going into the system by tracking manure and fertilizer applications. It reviews the output of the system by tracking yields and calculating nutrient removal rates. An NMP also takes into consideration the crop rotation, tillage and nutrient placement to calculate a field's soil loss and risk of nitrogen and phosphorus loss to the environment. It is one of the best ways to maintain a balanced diet of fertility for your crops and your future.


### 'Tastes good' food

Environmental stewardship should be a part of every farming operation. But much like a prime rib buffet, at times a farm can't justify implementing a full plate of sustainability practices. Everything in farming has a cost. Some things are easy to put a pencil to – such as the price of fertilizer or the cost of seed. Cover crops are a great example. It is easy to say that oat seed has a price of \$12 per bushel and it will cost \$15 per acre to seed it. All that sustainability adds up to \$27 per acre in the expense column. But it doesn't always have to be an expense. If the oats are swapped out for rye, then a sustainable alternative forage crop could possibly be harvested. This small swap takes a net loss and converts it into a valuable gain.

Other sustainability areas such as water-use efficiency can be more difficult to place a value on. While the initial investment cost can be high, the long-term

rewards can be enormous. Water efficiency can come in many forms. A low purchase price but sustainable opportunity could include switching away from crops with a high water-use requirement, such as alfalfa. Unfortunately, this could hurt the operation with lower yields or by forcing the farm to learn how to utilize different forages. Other water-use efficiency opportunities can come with a big upfront price tag but will reap yearly rewards. These generally fall into the hardware category of water efficiency improvements. Lined irrigation ditches or drop nozzles on center-pivot irrigators are some such improvements. The farm has the high initial expense of implementing the practice but saves water for years to come.

The final sustainability item on the menu is carbon. After all, sequestering carbon is the end goal of most modern sustainability programs. This carbon sequestration can come in a myriad of forms ranging from converting fields to perennial cover of cover crops and no-till to magic potions sprayed on the soil which will capture additional carbon and store it in the soil. The carbon sector seems to be a 24-hour, all-you-can-eat buffet. The hardest part appears to be knowing when to fill your plate to maximize your benefit.

Going to the buffet often challenges one's willpower. The choices are endless and your eyes may be bigger than your stomach. There is room for operations to incorporate modern sustainability choices like carbon and cover crops, but make sure you save room for the meat and potatoes of tried-and-true agronomy practices. With careful planning, you can have your cake and eat it too. 

## We Now Offer Brown Mid-Rib Forage Corn



- When planted in narrow rows at 90,000 to 100,000 seeds per acre, our extremely digestible Brown Mid-Rib forage corn can produce up to 7 tons of dry matter in as little as 80 days
- Plant with a 15" corn planter or grain drill with press wheels
- Harvest similar to sorghum-sudan by grazing, greenchop, haylage or baleage
- Free freight nationwide on 1 or more pallets

**\$79 per bag**

**Ray Brothers**  
Seed Farms

CALL or TEXT  
Chris Ray  
208.880.6344



**H&S** **EFFICIENT.**

**ENGINEERED FOR PERFORMANCE**



**H&S WIDE BODY**

**PROUDLY BUILT IN MARSHFIELD, WI** **HSMFGCO.COM**