

KERPAN FARMS NEWSLETTER



Fall 2023

HUMAN CAPITAL

People make the world go around and it takes all kinds. From day one we have been blessed with great people making the farm click.

It's easy to take the people for granted, they are always there, they never break down, the don't (usually!) squeal, whine or holler like a failing machine or animal.

I just want to express my gratitude to all, past, present and future who help make the farm successful!



THE DROUGHT CONTINUES.....

It's been 7 years of drought here to varying degrees. This year felt a little different, we didn't have the extended periods of extreme heat as bad as the past number of years and I thought we may grow a bit of a crop until we got the combines going, it was disappointing to say the least. We did almost get all of the bins full which are designed to hold about 35% of a normal crop, but I don't know what normal is anymore!

After year 4 of the drought I got to thinking that it might last 30 years, which I think is a real possibility but I sure hope I'm wrong!

There is good in everything and the drought is teaching us some things about soil and how to build resiliency in it. Modern agriculture has developed some amazing tools to deal with a variety of problems. It's been well said that without our modern farming practices we would be growing next to nothing and I think that is true, but I think we can keep finding new and innovative ways to get better as an industry.

“Change before you have to” - Jack Welch

FOCUS BELOW THE SURFACE

We have seen some tremendous results from our grass management program. The pastures are strong and producing well given the lack of moisture. This has led us to really focus on what is happening beneath the ground surface across the rest of the farm. Modern agriculture has such a focus on plant health and what is happening above ground, but plant health is a by product of soil health. There is a beautiful symbiotic relationship between the plant and the soil and as humans we have interfered in unnatural ways which has been necessary to feed a growing population within our current technological capabilities. We are trying to gain a better understanding of how the soil functions naturally so that we can allow it to function optimally and grow more with less help from us. We know it's possible, it's just a matter of finding out what that looks like on this farm and we are excited for the journey!



THE ANSWER IS ALWAYS MORE COWS!

I love cows....and horses.....and everything involving both cows and horses, it's a terrible affliction but we all have our cross to bear! I love tweaking the genetics of the herd and I appreciate the patience that cattle instill in me, it can take years to see if an experiment will fail or succeed (many of them fail!). I read countless books and listened to countless podcasts that claimed you should see yourself as a grass farmer not a cattleman, focus on the grass first and don't worry so much about the cows. I didn't care for that much.....I just want to be a cowboy!

I have come to realize that the books and podcasts were right. Focus on the soil first, it will take care of the grass which will take care of the cows.....soooooo I guess the answer is more cows?! Well it turns out...yes....sort of.

We are really excited about a project we are doing with some cover crops and grazing practices to help supercharge our soil regeneration. We have had all sorts of researchers out this summer and fall measuring things from soil structure to biomass production to the variety of bird species and wildlife! It's fun to be part of this project which will help quantify the benefits of some different farming practices. To harvest the cover crops and create revenue we need to feed it to the cows, so I guess the answer is in fact more cows!

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“Don't be afraid to give up the good to go for the great” - John D Rockefeller

CHANGE.....A LITTLE AT A TIME

I love the quote above.....I am not one to be content despite all of the blessings my life has provided me, which is a blessing and a curse. Change is uncomfortable but you can't grow unless you change. I think modern agriculture has done a really good job of producing food to feed a growing population and modern practices are a huge leap from the way things were done long ago. But every generation has done the best with the knowledge and technology that they had. How do we manage extended droughts, rising interest rates, political instability? I can't help but look to the horizon and wonder what is next? Where will the next quantum leap come from? I certainly don't have all the answers, but I have growing confidence that it will require great faith, a new generation of soil management strategies and also probably more cows.....yes definitely more cows!

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