

Founding Member of NEFGC, an MFA Local Council

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Lonnie and Joyce Ross own and manage a small beef backgrounding operation in Northern Minnesota. They are very involved in learning more about agriculture to improve production and performance of their animals and help to extend this information to others.

In 1983, Lonnie heard about a meeting to help farmers learn about forage and alfalfa production. He soon became one of the founding members of the Northeast Minnesota Forage and Grassland Council (NEFGC) which was a Minnesota Forage & Grassland Council affiliate and is now affiliated with the Midwest Forage Association. Since then, he has been involved with nearly every field day, winter program, pasture walk, and bus tour the NEFGC has organized. One thing everyone knows about Lonnie is that he always manages to bring a car full of people to attend an event.



As the Minnesota Forage Council changed to the Midwest Forage Association (MFA) in 2004, Lonnie said, “he was cautious about the change” but has found it to be very helpful to see things occur on a broader scale. He also has received benefits from participating in the MFA research summits. “The great people I meet are just wonderful and we always learn something new!”

The forage quality information has helped him tremendously in his operation as he has learned more about management of forages through the NEFGC and MFA programs. “The cattle just do better with better feed,” Lonnie says. He feeds the calves corn silage, haylage, and hay as well as grain, if needed.

In addition to cattle, Lonnie also markets hay annually and attributes the NEFGC and MFA for the marketing tips he has learned over the years. Corn and hay are his primary crops but he also uses oats as a cover crop for his alfalfa seeding. He has found the cover crop reduces weed pressure and allows for a harvest the first year.

Overall, Lonnie said the topic he has learned the most about has been pasture management. He has his farm set up with four paddocks and tries to leave at least 6” of stubble when determining when to move his yearlings. He also has an interest in things like “mob” grazing but has yet to try it; he hopes to learn from those who have.

In addition to farming and driving the school bus, Lonnie is very involved with several organizations such as St. Louis Valley Cattlemen’s Association, Farm Bureau, Tractor Club, and has recently taken up teaching farm equipment driver’s safety.