

Trempealeau County Agricultural News



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Stressed? Take Stock and Gain Control

Dairy Team: Lack of control during changing times in the dairy industry can compound the feeling of uncertainty.

Jan 31, 2019 Wisconsin Agriculturist

By Trisha Wagner and John Shutske

Stress is common in dairy farming. The long hours can sometimes lead to fatigue, especially if there is not enough help. A feeling of a lack of control during changing times and conditions can compound the feeling of uncertainty. Other things that can cause stress are issues related to your kids, relationships, markets, the weather, and situations you are not able to control.

Stress can negatively affect our health, our sleep, our relationships, and our communication with others. When we are stressed or distracted, it also increases risk for a farm injury or making some type of other mistake. Sometimes, we are experiencing things that are causing stress and may not even realize it, though others might see that we seem unhappy, grouchy, tired, or just “different” than we once were.

Because of these effects, it is important to recognize and work to positively address, not avoid, the causes of stress. Experts recommend farmers take stock of their farm business to make informed decisions about the future. To “take stock” of something is to think carefully about a situation and clearly understand it, so you can decide what to do. Farmers may lament doing this because they feel the outcome will be negative; however, it is a first step to addressing the stress caused by uncertainty, and it puts you on the path to take control of decisions. It may also reveal options you may not have considered.

To take stock of your current operation, use important resources such as a calculation of your cost of production and your farm balance sheet. You can contact your Extension office for help with calculating cost of production and creating your balance sheet. If you have a loan, you can also access your balance sheet from your lender.

- An accurate calculation of your cost of production may reveal expenses that may be high relative to your peers. A plan to address such issues should be presented to your lender.
- From your balance sheet, it is possible to determine your debt relative to your assets. Depending on your debt-to-asset ratio, you may determine that an operating loan is feasible, or perhaps undesirable.
- Re-evaluating your current enterprise may reveal opportunities to enhance cash flow, or alternatives to maintain the farm assets that are most important to you and your family. This may mean selling or renting some assets and keeping the farm in the family.

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Recognize Stress

When stress becomes overwhelming, it is important to recognize the harmful effects and to take action. For resources on recognizing signs and symptoms of chronic or severe stress visit agsafety.info

Sometimes people cannot recognize signs of stress in themselves, and others might sense something is wrong but may not know how to bring it up. Start the conversation by talking with your family and friends about stress and the changes that might need to happen at home. Resilient families view crisis as a shared challenge, instead of having each person be a “tough, rugged individual,” getting through hard times. They believe that by joining with family members and others who are important to the family, they can strengthen their ability to meet challenges. For more information on family communication to work together on managing stressful times and family finances, visit this University of Wisconsin-Extension webpage.

If any person on your farm expresses the signs and symptoms of extreme stress and talks about harming themselves or ending their life, it is important to provide help and support. The most important resource for support anywhere in the U.S. is the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, accessible for English-speaking people at 800-273-8255 or in Spanish at 888-628-9454. See suicidepreventionlifeline.org for more information.

Wagner is the Extension Farm Management Program Coordinator. Shutske is a UW-Extension Ag Safety Specialist. Steve Okonek, Trempealeau County Extension Ag Agent, contributed to this column. This column is provided by the UW-Extension Dairy Team.

Electronic Communication

Do you have an email address you check regularly? If yes, please share it with us so we can send this newsletter and other communications to you electronically. If you do not have email or you do not check your email regularly, no worries we will continue to mail the newsletter and other communications to you.

By receiving electronic communications, the links to other sources that are imbedded in communications will be live and will provide more information. Also, we will make better use of your tax dollars by being more efficient in sending information.

I will not clog your inbox or increase items sent more than what you receive already. If you feel you are receiving too many emails from our office please let us know by emailing michelle.rose@wisc.edu and she will remove you from the email list and add you back on the mailing list.

Please send your email address to michelle.rose@wisc.edu

Thank you.

A Little Fertilizer Can Result in More Forage in Pastures

June 4, 2020 |

By Bill Halfman, Carrie Laboski, Josh Kamps

Recently, the USDA NASS reported that Wisconsin's forage inventory is the lowest it has been in 70 years. Low forage inventory is a result of several seasons with excessive rainfall and winter weather that resulted not only in forage winterkill, but also higher need for cattle feed. These conditions have led farmers to investigate emergency and non-routine forage crops to help supply enough forage for cattle needs.

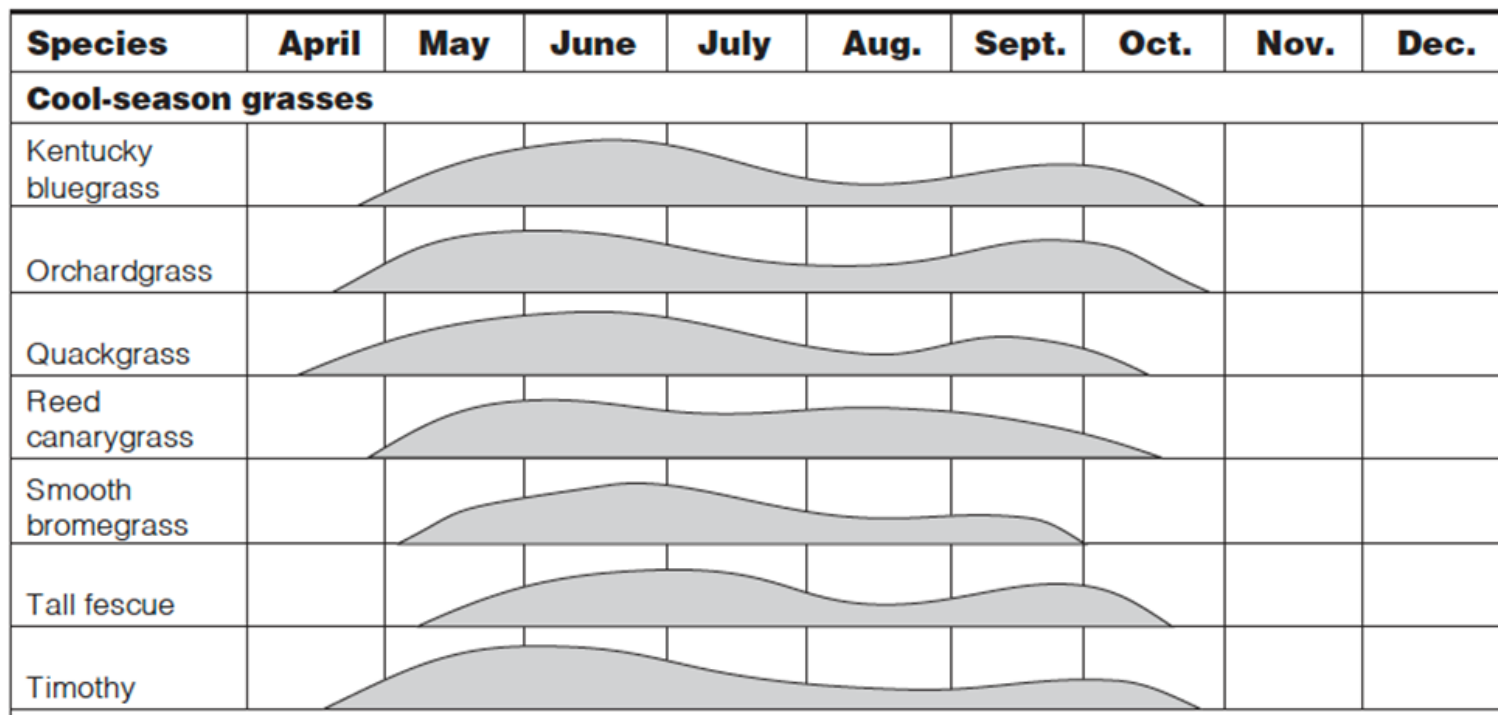
In the quest for additional forage production options, sometimes the lowest cost and potentially easiest options may be overlooked. A good question to ask is, "Am I managing my pasture resource to optimize forage production?" While grazing cattle will deposit some nutrients in manure and urine, the amount deposited is less than the amount removed in milk production, animal growth and maintenance. In addition, animals do not deposit nutrients evenly across a pasture and some nutrients may be lost. Nitrogen is very mobile in the environment and can be lost through leaching, denitrification, or ammonia volatilization. Low levels of soil available phosphorus or potassium or low soil pH can limit grass pasture yield and response to nitrogen fertilizer.

Whether a pasture has improved (bromegrass, orchardgrass, fescue, ryegrass, timothy) or unimproved (primarily Kentucky bluegrass) forage species, there is an opportunity to produce additional forage at a very low cost by utilizing a fertilization plan. Consult soil test results to guide applications of phosphorus, potassium, and lime. If soil test results are more than four years old, it is important to take new soil samples ahead of fertilizer application to ensure a sound investment in fertilizer and lime. When soil sampling a pasture, avoid, or sample separately, areas where cattle frequently congregate (under trees, near water tanks, etc.). Focus on sampling and applying fertilizer on the areas of the pasture where forage production potential is the highest.

Not all grass pastures are necessarily good candidates for fertilizer application. Use extreme caution when applying fertilizer to areas that are steep or wet due to multiple safety risks during application. These areas of a pasture will rarely give a return on investment worth the risk!

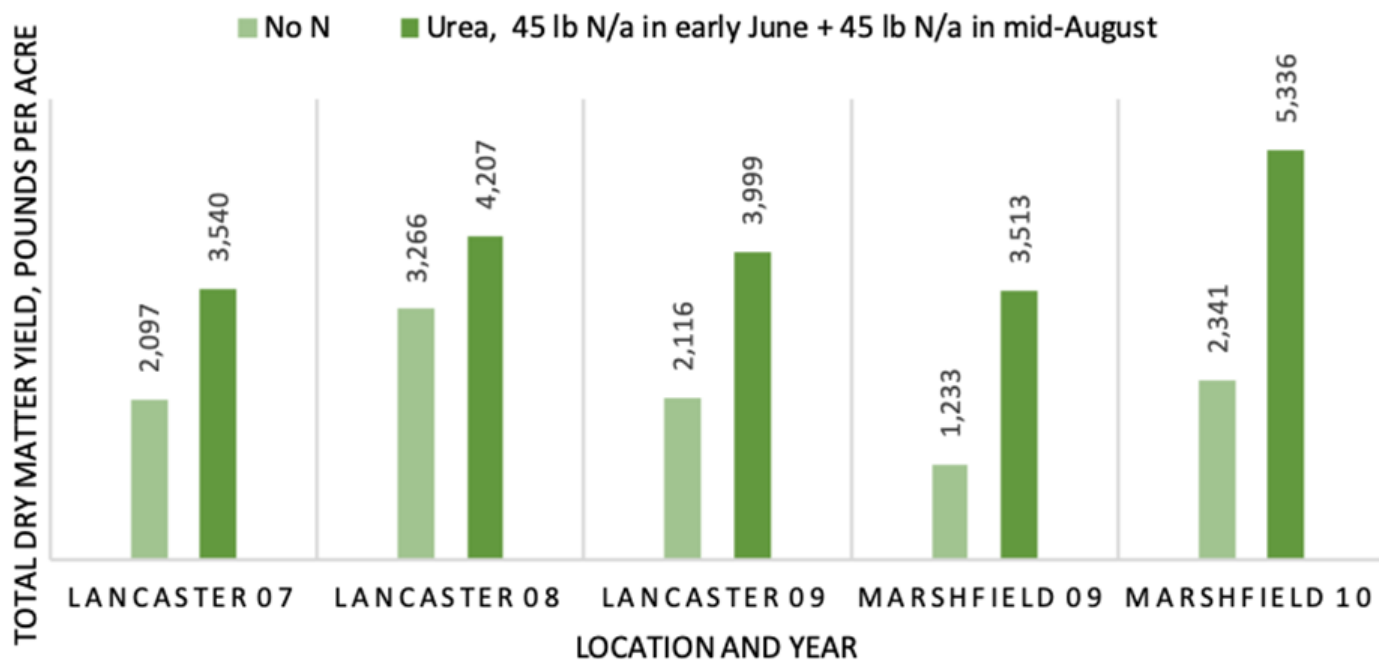
On soils with 2.0 to 9.9% soil organic matter, 100 or 130 pounds of nitrogen per acre is recommended on unimproved and improved grass pastures, respectively. The amount of nitrogen deposited by cattle should be subtracted from these amounts to determine the amount of nitrogen fertilizer to apply. Refer to UW Extension publication A4034 Soil Fertility Guidelines for Pastures in Wisconsin for details on manure nutrient credits. Research in Wisconsin has demonstrated that it is best to split apply nitrogen fertilizer with half applied in early June and the other half applied in mid-August. This application timing helps extend the early spring growth period and helps boost the accelerating late summer growth curve common to cool season grasses (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. Seasonal growth pattern of cool-season grasses. From UW Extension publication A3529 Pastures for Profit: A guide to rotational grazing



How much additional forage production can we expect? University of Wisconsin-Madison research conducted at Marshfield and Lancaster Ag Research Stations evaluated the efficacy of 45 pounds per acre of actual N, applied as urea, in early June and again in mid-August to increase dry matter yield of orchardgrass. Yield increased approximately 0.75 tons of dry matter per acre at Lancaster on a well-drained soil and 1.3 tons of dry matter per acre at Marshfield on a somewhat poorly drained soil (See Figure 2). Cattle were not grazed in this study; however, orchardgrass was clipped five times to simulate cattle grazing. In a similar trial conducted by University of Minnesota at Grand Rapids, a 1.5 ton per acre increase in yield was observed with two applications of 50 pounds of nitrogen per acre. Pasture yield response to fertilizer nitrogen will vary based on stand density and composition, soil properties, and weather. A reasonable expectation is one ton of dry matter per acre increase through an investment in fertilizer. At current prices, an investment of \$60 in nitrogen fertilizer and application can yield around \$120 worth of additional forage.

FIGURE 2. EFFECT OF SPLIT APPLICATIONS OF NITROGEN ON ORCHARDGRASS YIELD IN WISCONSIN



Established pastures that are a grass-legume mix, do not require any nitrogen beyond what is deposited by grazing animals. Applying nitrogen to a grass-legume mix pasture can result in the grass crowding out the legumes.

Once a decision has been made to fertilize a pasture, it is important to implement a grazing plan to use as much of the additional forage produced as possible. Grazing plans are customized for each farm's unique situation. Most plans will likely involve some level of moving cattle around from pasture area to pasture area, to improve utilization of the extra growth. Plans may also include harvesting some of the pasture areas for hay and/or using drift fences in the fall to help extend the grazing season.

Fertilizer application to grass pasture may be a cost effective and easy option to increase the amount of forage available on a farm. For additional information about fertilizing pastures, collecting soil samples, and crediting deposited nutrients consult UW Extension publication [A4034 Soil Fertility Guidelines for Pastures in Wisconsin](#).

UW Resources & Helpful Tools to Accurately Complete CFAP Payment Applications

June 5, 2020

Kevin Jarek, UW-Madison, Division of Extension, Crops and Soils Agent, Outagamie County

The Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) authorizes direct payments to farmers in response to market disruptions from the coronavirus pandemic. Crop production in 2019 and unpriced crop inventories for corn, soybeans, oats, and sorghum on January 15, 2020 are eligible. Corn, soybean, and oat crops harvested as silage are also eligible for payments after they have been converted to grain crop equivalents. Sorghum is also eligible but must have been sorghum intended for grain that was harvested as forage. Forage sorghum or sorghum Sudan grass hybrids planted for forage production are not eligible. Alfalfa, mixed hay, haylage, and other forages are excluded, including wheatlage and barlage.

Farmers can follow these steps to document the necessary estimates for their CFAP applications

1. Determine which crops you grew in 2019 that are eligible for payments.
2. Calculate 2019 production and eligible inventories on January 15, 2020.
3. Convert each eligible grain/forage crop to its dry grain equivalent.
4. Report dry grain equivalents to your local **Farm Service Agency (FSA)** office **by August 28, 2020**.

Converting Silage Crops to Dry Grain Equivalents for CFAP Payments

Corn silage, oatlage, soybean silage, and grain sorghum harvested as forage stored in upright silos, drive over piles, bunker silos, and silo bags (or other storage) must be converted to dry grain equivalents. UW-Madison, Division of Extension spreadsheets, calculators, and videos to assist farmers with CFAP calculations and conversions are at: <https://aae.wisc.edu/pdmitchell/extension/cfap-resources-for-wi/>

Corn silage is converted to **7.94 bushels of dry grain** per ton of silage at 65% moisture

Oatlage is converted to **4.08 bushels of dry grain** per ton of silage at 65% moisture.

Soybean silage is converted to **5.00 bushels of dry grain** per ton of silage at 65% moisture

Grain Sorghum harvested as silage converts to **5.56 bushels of dry grain** per ton of silage at 65% moisture

Silos: <https://aae.wisc.edu/pdmitchell/2020/06/02/determining-the-tons-of-silage-in-upright-silos-for-cfap/>

Drive Over Piles: <https://aae.wisc.edu/pdmitchell/2020/06/02/determining-the-tons-of-silage-in-piles-for-cfap/>

Bunkers: <https://aae.wisc.edu/pdmitchell/2020/06/02/determining-the-tons-of-silage-in-bunker-silos-for-cfap/>

Silo Bags: <https://aae.wisc.edu/pdmitchell/2020/06/02/determining-the-tons-of-silage-in-silo-bags-for-cfap/>

Converting High Moisture Grain Crops to Dry Grain Equivalents for CFAP Payments

High moisture shell corn, high moisture ear corn, snaplage/earlage can be converted to dry grain equivalents using spreadsheets at: <https://aae.wisc.edu/pdmitchell/extension/cfap-resources-for-wi/>

Direct Marketing of Farm Products

One good thing that may come out of the Covid-19 shut down is a renewed interest in direct farm marketing and purchasing. Whether this interest lasts or is a result of the altered eating and purchasing habits of consumers triggered by Covid-19 will remain to be seen. There are some steps farmers can take to ensure any efforts they put into direct marketing activities are lasting and profitable.

First and foremost is to understand your cost to produce and market your product. People involved in production agriculture often look at the difference between farm gate prices and grocery store prices and see the middleman getting rich off our work. While that is probably true, there are many steps and costs involved with processing, packaging, and marketing a product. Knowing what your costs are for each step in the process will help you to earn a profit and determine if you want to do the extra work involved with direct marketing. Be sure to pay yourself for your time. If you do not add in your time for marketing, you will end up working for free like many in commodity agriculture. Avoid working for free!

You will need to have an on-line presence. Facebook and other platforms are useful to reach a larger market than you can reach normally with a roadside stand and farmers market. Keeping your public facing online pages current takes time and some skill. Updating your online pages needs to be done by Wednesday evening. People start planning their weekend activities by Wednesday or Thursday so get your information out to them, so the products are in front of them as they are planning their weekend activities. Add time in your week to maintain and respond to Facebook and other social media pages.

Be ready to change. If what you are doing does not seem to be working as well as it did a few years ago, try something different or expand into another platform. Track individual products for cost and sales activity and add or drop products that do not sell well or sell at profitable prices. Again, do not work for free!

Tell your story. People want to buy from people rather than a faceless corporation. We can buy from a faceless corporation at Wal Mart, why spend time and effort to shop off the beaten path? People want to know about how you started farming and why you farm. Tell people about your mission and values statement. If you do not have a mission and values statement for your farm, working through the process will help you tell your farm's story. Work with other people in your farm business to form your mission and values statements. Ask other businesses you work with and neighbors how they see your vision and values. Hopefully, how you see your vision and values will be how you conduct your business every day.

The following link will help you get started writing your vision, values, and mission statements. <https://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/EC/EC-720.pdf>

Wisconsin beef information center, freezer beef cost calculator <https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/wbic/direct-marketing-information/>

Resources for direct marketers <https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0145/8808/4272/files/A3811-12.pdf>

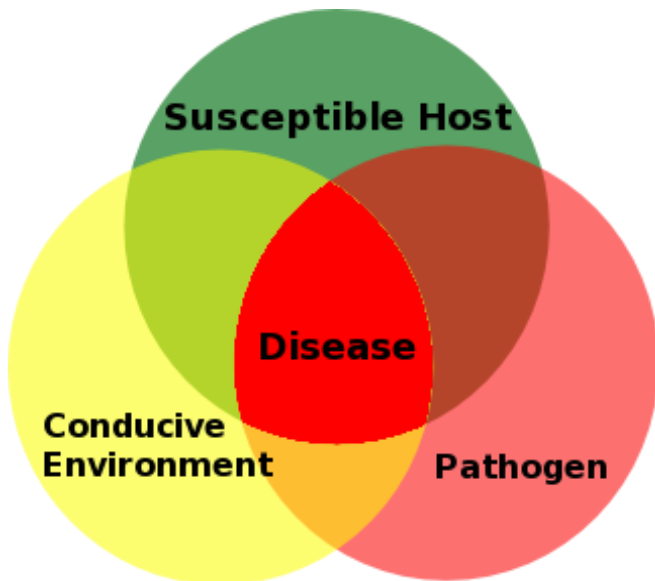
This publication has links to multiple resources including Wisconsin Department of Agriculture and many other sources of information.

Soybeans, White Mold, and Proper Fungicide Applications

White mold, also known as Sclerotinia, is caused by the fungus *Sclerotinia sclerotiorum*. White mold can reduce yields of soybean drastically in fields where the disease is present. Because of the risk of yield loss, fungicides are applied to some fields every year regardless of a need or not. Timing of the fungicide is important and applying too early or too late will not yield positive results.

Sclerotinia sclerotiorum lives in the soil and infects soybeans through the first few sets of flowers when the flowers are senescing. The fungus colonizes the stem of the plants, killing the plant above the infection. Sclerotinia produces sclerotia in the stem that look like rat droppings. Sclerotia need wet soil conditions and air temperatures between 59- and 75-degrees Fahrenheit to produce infection. Too hot or too cold will not yield an infection. The sclerotia can drop on the field surface during harvest and many can be found in the grain at harvest. The sclerotia that fall on the soil surface can cause infection in susceptible plants in following years. Sclerotia can be buried several inches deep in the soil and still produce apothecia that look like miniature mushrooms. Apothecia can produce thousands of ascospores that infect plants. A thin water film is needed on the plant surface. Dew or fog is more than adequate to produce the water film needed for white mold to infect plants. White mold is one of the few plant diseases that can be reduced by no-till planting as the sclerotia are killed by sunlight and dry conditions.

Plant diseases need three things to survive. The three things plant diseases need are a susceptible host, proper environment, and the disease-causing organism to be present. If we eliminate or reduce any one of the three, then we reduce or eliminate the severity of disease. Think of the three conditions needed to cause plant diseases like the legs of a three-leg stool. Cut one of the legs off and the stool falls over. Planting soybeans in wider rows, reduce plant populations, planting a less susceptible variety, or planting in fields that do not have a history of white mold can reduce the incidence of disease.



So, are we going to have a good year for white mold? Fortunately, there is an app for that. Go to Google play or the app store and download Sporecaster. Enter your location, and field information and Sporecaster will give a prediction of risk. Sporecaster only works if flowers are present on the soybean plants. Sporecaster will access local weather data bases and the latitude and longitude of the field you are standing in to make the prediction. Results will be given in a percentage chance of infection and a rating of high, medium, or low. Fungicide applications can be made off that prediction. Using this app may not guarantee results of applying fungicide or not, but you will have an informed decision. Always read and follow label direction

COME JOIN US.....

COVID-19 and SOCIAL DISTANCING

During this period of social distancing the Extension Office is currently closed to the public. This does not mean we are not working for you.

In the meantime please call 715-538-2311 ext. 208 or my direct line at 715-538-1963. Both lines are checked daily and I will get the message.

OR

For faster response use my email at steven.okonek@wisc.edu with any questions you have.

Hopefully, we will be back to hosting and attending in-person meetings soon.

THANK YOU!

This Extension Trempealeau County Newsletter is sponsored by these Trempealeau County Community Agricultural Banks:



Alliance Bank: 715-597-2626

Bluff View Bank: 608-582-2233

Independence State Bank: 715-985-3197

Oakwood Bank: 715-983-2295

State Bank of Arcadia: 608-323-3331

Union Bank of Blair: 608-989-2541

United Bank: 715-597-3136

Waumandee State Bank: 608-323-3555

Please be advised that due to the COVID-19 pandemic and based on recommendations for safe practices, such as social distancing, by various agencies, this meeting may be conducted as a virtual meeting. To ensure public access to government functions, to the greatest extent possible under the circumstances, the public is welcome to "attend" this meeting by viewing the meeting as it is being live streamed on the Trempealeau County website (www.co.trempealeau.wi.us) and on TCCTV as able. A recording of the meeting will also be on the County's website after the meeting has concluded. These emergency procedures are in compliance with recommendations from the Wisconsin Department of Justice/Attorney General's office and will remain in effect until further notice during this pandemic.

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