

## Strong Family Support Key to Goplin's Success

**S**hane Goplin's journey in agriculture has had its share of ups and downs. From family adversity and crop failures to expanding his operation to 3,200 acres with the help of two full-time employees and several seasonal helpers, including his brother, farming has been a constant in Goplin's life. As the owner and operator of HV Acres in Osseo, WI, Goplin grows alfalfa, soybeans, and corn for cash crops and sells forages and corn to his family's former dairy. He also does manure application.



"I am fortunate to have had very open and honest parents who taught me about both the positives and the negatives involved with farming," said Goplin. "They were not going to force me to take over the family farm, but rather support whatever decision I decided to make." Goplin started his career in agriculture working for his parents on the farm, then slowly started to buy machinery and cattle to start building equity himself. He started farming full time in the spring of 1995.

"Our family milked ~200 cows on two different farms. Then, when my father was diagnosed with cancer, they sold the farm to focus solely on beating cancer. Afterward, my parents purchased a farm and started milking 35 cows and doing custom work. When both my brother and I decided to come home to help them, the farm started growing," Goplin shared. "Our family grew the dairy to ~900 cattle. But when my father started to think about slowing down in life, we chose to focus on the cropping end of the operation." Soon thereafter, tragedy struck. Goplin's father, Nolan, suffered a severe heart attack and died a few days later. "After his passing, we sold our dairy to a family from California and currently sell them haylage, corn silage, and dry corn." In honor of his dad, Goplin's slogan for the farm business is "His dreams, our goals."

Goplin credits much of his success to the exceptional people around him – primarily his wife Melinda and daughters Kendra, Vaida, and Brinna. He met Melinda when she moved to the area when she was 12 years old. Even while they showed cows against each other and knew each other in high school and college, they never dated until later. Melinda currently teaches in the local school district and his daughters stay busy with FFA, 4-H, sports, and showing animals at shows around the state. "Currently, the only livestock we have on our farm is from March until October. We house 4-6 dairy heifers and 4-6 pigs for the girls to show."

In terms of cropping, Goplin typically grows ~2,000 acres of corn of which ~550 acres are harvested for silage with the rest sold to his former dairy operation or to an elevator. He typically raises ~350 acres of soybeans that are all sold for cash grain.

In 2021, Goplin will have ~800 acres of alfalfa with what they plan to seed in the spring. Historically, he runs a seeding year of alfalfa plus an additional three years of production for his typical rotation. But Goplin adds, "If we see that a field is not profitable, we will terminate early."

"We have always planted our alfalfa in the spring. After the previous crop is harvested, we spread lime based on soil test recommendations and then spread manure," says Goplin of his typical alfalfa seeding method. "This next year we are going to apply some commercial fertilizer in addition to manure to make sure there is available fertilizer for seed to establish. In our experience, the manure is not always available right away, so we're going to change our fertilizer schedule. We then do a vertical tillage pass and use a drill to seed. We seed our alfalfa at 16.6 lbs/ac."

They interseed oats when they seed alfalfa to establish a stand quickly. "With our slopes and the increased amount of weather events, we want to try and prevent erosion. Once the alfalfa is established we terminate the oats."

This year will be Goplin's fourth year of seeding CROPLAN HarvXtra Megatron. "We get good regrowth and our quality has steadily improved. In fact, the dairy we sell our forages to requested more alfalfa due to the fact they are able to produce more milk with our HarvXtra Megatron haylage compared to purchased dry hay."

His rotation is field specific, depending on the slope and the distance from the farm. The majority of his fields have significant slopes, so finding enough acres for corn silage is a struggle. Typically, he tries to plant a year of soybeans

before seeding alfalfa to create a better seed bed. Farming in the driftless area of Wisconsin provides Goplin with a wide variety of soil types. “On any given field, we can have two or three different soils. Across our farm we have everything from sand to clay to muck.”

Goplin harvests his new seedlings of alfalfa three times a year, while established alfalfa is on a 4-cut system. The latest cutting is no later than September 5, allowing ample time for regrowth prior to the first killing frost. All of his alfalfa is cut with a triple mower, then merged and chopped the following day.

He treats 100% of his forages with inoculant which is mounted on his forage harvester. “Currently, we are averaging ~4.9 tons/ac. The amount of tons has been increasing as we increase acres. This coming year our goal is to harvest ~8,500 tons of haylage.”

His biggest management challenge is getting new seeding stands established. “A few years ago we had a 5" rain event less than a week after seeding that caused us to replant 75% of our acres. After we replanted we had another rain event that caused more damage. There seems to be a fine line between a smooth seed bed and doing as little tillage as possible to create it,” says Goplin.

He foregoes using conditioners when cutting alfalfa. “Once we started to cut our alfalfa without conditioners we noticed a significant increase in leaf retention and consistency in our harvest moisture. Our alfalfa dries down to chopping moisture and seems to hold its moisture far longer than if it is conditioned.”

Goplin also values his long-time membership in the Midwest Forage Association, saying, “Anytime I have a chance to be in contact with like-minded farmers and professionals that MFA brings together gives me the opportunity to better our business and have a better chance of making sound management decisions.”

