

## MFA President Tom Braun Speaks on TMRs

*Bryce Larson, Lake Shore Technical College, Wisconsin; President, Manitowoc Forage Council*

Tom Braun is chairman of the recently formed Midwest Forage Association. Prior to discussing his farming operation and TMRs, he wants to be sure producers are aware of the advantages of uniting together to form the Midwest Forage Association. First, he wants to assure local council members that the MFA board is aware of their concerns of merging the state associations into the larger, regional association and how that may impact their local programs and membership. "Local councils are critical to the success of our new association, providing grassroots input from the producer level and local extension educators," Braun says. "The new association offers a wider range of forage related research and information [one of which is *Forage Focus*, which you are reading right now], while heightening the visibility of our forage industry at the regional and national level."



*Tom Braun, Hamp Haven Farms*

Braun served as President of the Wisconsin Forage Council and said they had been discussing the need to have a louder voice in Washington for some time now (MFGC had been having similar discussions). "The farm bill has little to nothing to offer hay and forage producers and we need to change that," Braun says. He was part of the MFA delegation that visited Washington and believes by uniting together we can have a positive impact on directing the future of our forage industry. "I hope producers and local councils will stay the course, support MFA and help forages to further our industry's importance in public policy and research," Braun says.

Braun is a partner and daily operations manager of Hamp Haven Farms, Reedsville, WI, established 34 years ago. Hamp Haven produces 6500 acres of crops annually; rotation has averaged 2400 corn (1000 utilized as silage), 1300 hay, 1100 vegetable crops, 750 soybeans, 800 wheat and 150 barley. About 2500 acres are harvested as forage for dairy cows, dairy heifers and Holstein steers. Hamp Haven runs custom operations in tillage, planting, and manure application for another 4500-6000 ac/yr, raises 700 heifers for dairy operations in the surrounding area and provides forages, grains and TMRs to about 10 producers with 1200 head of milk cows and dairy replacements.

Wolfgang Dairy LLC is a subsidiary company of Hamp Haven Farms, milking 650 Holstein cows three times/day with an RHA of 28,500 lb. Wolfgang has 450 head of dairy replacements. Hamp Haven supplies forage, energy and protein for the dairy animals and feed for the 350 head of steers that are finished. Together they currently employ 35 full and part-time employees.

Hamp Haven Farms installed their first stationary TMR in 1990 for 75-80 head of milking cattle and saw dramatic and fast increases in milk production and herd health. Being able to use more variety of feed types from a wider range of storage facilities offered a significant advantage to utilizing TMRs in the feeding program. They've provided forage and feeding services for the last 10 years with the first full TMR mixed and delivered around 1998. They currently provide feed and commodities in a wide variety of methods, preferring to provide a fully mixed, balanced and blended TMR - the same mixes they feed to their 650 cow milking herd that milks in the 90 lb/day range. Hamp Haven also provides individual forage and commodity deliveries and will custom harvest and fill storage units and work on monthly feed and commodity budgets/payment plans. "Hamp Haven Farms serves our customers' needs in the manner most suited to their operations," Braun says.

Hamp Haven Farms uses the FEED VAL program (originated by Dr. Terry Howard, UW) in pricing most of their forages which compares the feed value of forages and other commodities to #2 dry shell corn and soybean oil meal. "This is a fair way to value our feed. Adjustments are made for dry matter and other factors as needed," Braun says. "We consult with local grain merchandisers to set prices for commodities such as HMSC, dry corn and other commodities. Custom and manure hauling rates are established by reviewing custom rate data and information - adjustments are made as warranted."

Hamp Haven Farm's office manager, Erica Stelzer, takes initial customer calls. Rations, forage quality and moisture changes are referred to the appropriate people. "We work with Dr. Steve Woodford of Nutrition Professionals if a customer requires a review of the total ration or quality changes to ensure we are providing the best nutritional requirements for our customers," Braun says. "The fact that our Wolfgang herd receives the same ration and is at a high level of production is the strength of our service. We want our cows to milk well, be healthy and bred back - we want the same for our customers. With our large herd being fed similar feeds, we're quickly aware of even minor changes in the daily rations."

Braun's advice to potential TMR providers and users ... "Feeding the same ingredients and rations in your own operation is a major plus when providing TMR service. Having staff or access to persons with experience and scientific knowledge of feeding high producing dairy cattle is essential. Providers must be willing to communicate with their customers as often as necessary and be able to determine the source of any problems that may occur. TMR providers must understand that they have a significant impact on their customers' profit potential. Customers must realize that they need to relay concerns and work with their providers to solve issues as quickly as possible."