

Meet the Koepkes

Overview

Koepke Farms is a partnership between brothers Alan, Jim, and David, and Jim's son John. The 800 acre dairy farm is located near Oconomowoc, WI. The farm has always been a family affair, as Alan, Jim, and David's parents, Harvey and Ruth Koepke, established the original farm in 1936. Each partner has his own duties. Alan is in charge of finances and equipment. Jim takes care of crops, nutrition management, and irrigation. David works with breeding, cattle marketing, and herd health. John is responsible for feed purchasing, rations, hiring, and milk marketing. In addition to the 4 partners, the farm employs 8 full time and 10 part time employees.

Family

Alan and his wife Mary both graduated from UW-Madison and have three daughters, Ann, Laura, and Jane, and two grandsons, Jason and Matthew. Jim and his wife Mary also graduated from UW-Madison. They have one son, John, a business partner at Koepke Farms, a daughter, Ruth, and two grandsons, August and Colton. David and Linda have three daughters, Katie, Kayla, and Karissa, and one son, Kody. John and his wife Kim both graduated from Cornell University and have two sons, August and Colton. The Koepkes pride themselves on keeping the operation in the family all of these years, and work together to manage their farm. The Koepkes are active in organizations such as PDPW, UW Madison College of Ag and Life Sciences, Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems, and Dodge County Dairy Herd Improvement Association.

Farming System

The Koepkes milk 320 registered Holstein cows three times each day. The confinement operation has 285 dairy heifers and 25 Holstein bulls and steers in addition to the 320 cows. The farm boasts a rolling herd average of over 30,000 lbs. Sand bedding is used for the free stall cow and heifer areas. Solid

manure bedding pack is used in the housing unit for dairy bulls. Manure is stored in a small concrete above-ground basin whenever daily hauling is not feasible. Koepke Farms uses a no-till cropping system on all of their 800 acres. In an average year, Koepkes have 340 acres in corn, 200 in hay, and 140 in soybeans, and 100 acres in new seeding.

Environmental Management and Challenges

Koepke Farms is very involved with soil conservation and nutrient management. All four partners have attended Farmer Training and are qualified to develop their own Nutrient Management Plan. The farm has a current Soil Conservation Plan. The soil conservation practices used on the Koepke Farm include a 100% no-till system, low rate surface application of manure, all land soil sampled at 5 acres or less per sample, and a six year crop rotation that consists of H₃CSbC.

Koepke Farms is participating in the UW-Discovery Farms Program because of their interest in how to manage certain environmental challenges facing their farm. Approaching urban sprawl is also an issue the Koepkes are concerned about just like many other farmers in Wisconsin. The Koepkes use tile lines to artificially drain poorly drained soils and are concerned about nitrogen and phosphorus nutrient losses to the stream and tributaries flowing into the Rock River Basin.

Research Plan

Research on the Koepke Farm is not only being conducted by UW-Discovery Farms. The research on the Koepke Farm is a joint project between UW-Discovery Farms and Sand County Foundation, as well as UW-Discovery Farms and the Wisconsin Buffer Initiative. More information on these special projects can be found on the back page of this brochure.

The goal for Discovery Farms' research on Koepke Farms is to determine how much nitrogen, phosphorus, other nutrients, and sediment are

entering the stream system through surface water runoff and tile systems. Monitoring equipment will evaluate losses of sediment through surface water runoff at one station on the farm. The other two stations are installed on tile drainage systems. Potential questions that this operation could help answer include: nutrient losses through drainage management system, identification of BMPs to reduce nutrient losses from tile lines, the establishment of cover crops to reduce nutrient and sediment losses, the establishment and effectiveness of buffers, nutrient losses from surface applied manure, and the effectiveness and methods of adopting sound nutrient management planning.

**Find out more about Koepke Farms and the research on the farm by visiting our website at www.uwdiscoveryfarms.org



**Clockwise from top right:
John, Al, Jim, and David**

Special Projects Research at Koepke Farms

Wisconsin Buffer Initiative

The Objective of the Wisconsin Buffer initiative is to create tools to use as guides for designing effective buffers on typical ag landscapes. The Initiative also looks to establish field sites and measurement protocols to quantify losses of sediment and phosphorus losses from typical ag sites. The challenge we face in Wisconsin is to determine how to design, locate, and maintain buffers so that desired and specified environmental and possibly economic benefits can be gained while still protecting the interests of private landowners and public revenues. Wisconsin Buffer Initiative conducts research on two in-field test sites at the Koepke Farm.

Sand County Foundation

The Sand County Foundation is a non-profit organization committed to advancing the use of ethical and scientifically sound land management practices and partnerships for the benefit of people and the ecological landscape. The Sand County Foundation has undertaken a long-term commitment to develop a model for reducing non-point source pollution through the use of market based targeted incentives. This initiative focuses specifically on reducing nitrogen runoff into our waterways but has the potential for adaptation for other environmental amenities. UW-Discovery Farms is working with Sand County Foundation to evaluate nutrient and sediment losses through tile line systems. This research will also stem into experimentation with different cover crops on top of tile line systems to reduce nutrient runoff.



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Discovery Farms is a program from the University of Wisconsin. Discovery Farms is part of UW-Extension and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at UW-Madison, and has a relationship with WASI, as does UW-Platteville's Pioneer Farm. Discovery Farms receives funding through UW-Extension, UW-Madison, UW-Stevens Point, and UW-River Falls; with help from DATCP, DNR, NRCS, USGS, county Land Conservation Departments and County Extension offices; as well as ag industry organizations, such as WMMB, PDPW, DBA, and WPPA.



Koepke Farms, Inc.

Alan, Jim, David, John, and Families

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