• How can we maintain carbon in the soil with sources from our own farms? We’ve been telling farmers for years to just pile on the black gold, but at the same time they’re tilling the daylights out of the soil.

If you’re improving your soil, you will see the difference in soil structure (in terms of water-stable aggregates) long before they will show up in lab tests.

• The full-year fallow is really valuable, especially when using legumes with a tap root.

The long block of time with a cover crop improves all physical characteristics of soil. The Nordell’s use skim-tillage, tilling only the top 4” of the soil with their horses – still, they worried that they were destroying their soil at the expense of getting rid of weeds. As their weed seed bank diminishes, they’re tending toward longer periods of cover cropping like the Colson’s.

• If you cut a perennial forage and leave it on the field, does it add much to soil organic matter?

Marianne says she has the sense (but no research yet) that you’d actually do better NOT to cut, b/c you usually cut when plant is at a high nitrogen level, and it will break down quickly. Also, N-fixers will stop fixing N while they’re regrowing and getting their own N back.