By Andrea Hilderman

The adult fly or a larva, the damage caused by swede midge was never severe enough or widespread enough to warrant a great deal of research and monitoring on the Prairies, and indeed, I stopped my own sampling in 2011. As it turned out, 2012 was the first year there was noticeable damage in Saskatchewan and by 2013 it was clear swede midge was going to be an issue of some significance that farmers were not prepared for. By 2011, the damage swede midge was causing was very easy to see and it was likely at economic levels in some fields, says Soroka. “More concerning to me was to see how far it had spread from the epicentre — over 200 km.”

**Swede Midge Damage**

While the swede midge itself is a very difficult to spot, either as an adult fly or larva, the damage telegraphs itself very clearly. Depending on when the eggs are laid during the plant life cycle, the damage varies.

The adult flies lay eggs into the growing points of the plant where there are high levels of nitrogen and other nutrients. If the eggs are laid shortly after seedling emergence, the plant might even cease growing if the growing tip is destroyed by larva. Twisted growth and premature bolting are also symptomatic. If the eggs are laid later, fused flowers shaped like bottles and swollen or closed buds are very common. “The most easily recognizable symptom is the fused flowers,” says Soroka. “We saw a lot of that in 2013 in the infected areas.”

In the earlier years of study of this pest, it was thought that earlier-seeded crops were less likely to suffer damage, however, the level of damage depends on the emergence of the fly from its pupa in the soil, where it overwinters. If emergence is early, whether the crop was seeded early or late is immaterial, swede midge can infest the crop.

There are registered insecticidal controls for swede midge, but control with insecticide is difficult. “This is the problem,” says Soroka. “Multiple generations per season with overlapping development stages in the life cycle in the crop coupled with these larvae that live and eat cryptically, or hidden away, in large groups or hidden away, in large groups or hidden away, in large groups or hidden away, in large groups. The adults fly during the day, even if there were an insecticide available, pollinators would be impacted negatively.

“The best way to combat swede midge is by rotating out of a cruciferous crop for at least two years,” says Soroka. “However, cruciferous weeds and volunteers should be well controlled.” Rotation won’t stop the spread of swede midge entirely. The adult fly is a weak flyer and is easily blown downwind. Population build-up can be gradual but is generally more noticeable at the edges of fields abutting canola fields and where they can accumulate in windbreaks.

Swede midge do not toler...
Rural Schools Prepare Farm Youths for the Future

“What happened at school today?” I asked our seven-year-old as he came home on the bus today? “What happened at school and it got into the library?”

“Oh. What was it?”

“Someone brought a calf to school and it got into the library and it pooped in there and then Victor stepped in it.”

“Does your school need that rule? Can they have a library?”

“Oh, no. It was wearing a diaper.”

“I guess it’s a good rule. Here’s what I think.”

“Really?”

“Yeah. If you bring livestock to school, it has to be wearing a diaper.”

Or maybe this kind of thing is going on every day in all Prairie schools. I suppose experience with handling livestock in a library will come in handy for those kids who go on to study agriculture or engineering in university.

Yesterday, my son said it was Nolan’s turn to bring something for Grade 1 show and tell.

“What did Nolan bring?” I asked.

“His new baby sister. And before you ask, yes. She was wearing a diaper.”

Dowwny Brome Control Correction

Chris Neiser is a weed research scientist with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development. When he saw Page 11 of the April 8 issue of Grainews, he was very concerned about an article where he was quoted.

While the article says that florasulam controls downy brome, Chris says that is not correct. The truth, Chris says, is that glyphosate controls downy brome quite well, and so do other pre-seed burn-down tank mixes that contain glyphosate and florasulam.

Thanks for getting in touch, Chris!
Wheat & Chaff

FARM SAFETY

Dress for success to apply pesticides

With the planting season upon us, pesticides will be part of the arsenal of tools used to prepare for and maintain the impressive patchwork of golden wheat, creamy oats, mustard canola and azalea flax across the Prairies. Keeping pests at bay often requires handling chemicals, so the right mix of safe handling practices and personal protective equipment (PPE) is needed to get the task done.

All pesticides are not equal. Different pesticides require different PPE depending on the formulation and type of potential exposure. Read the label. Do you require a chemically resistant apron or suit, impervious footwear, gloves, headgear, eye protection, or respirator? What about those clothes such as a long-sleeved shirt or pants? While chemical exposure most commonly occurs on the hands and forearms, pesticides can enter the body through the skin, mouth, eyes and nose. Moist areas of the body including the eyes, groin, armpits and ear canals — are particularly absorptive. PPE must protect all body parts from exposure.

What PPE is required will also differ depending on the task being performed. Will you be mixing pesticides, loading, applying, performing cleanup operations or entering a treated area? If you are applying a pesticide, what is the method of application? Will you be using a hand-held or mechanized sprayer? Is the formula in liquid or dry form? The pesticide label will address all of these factors.

When reading a pesticide label, look for one of three signal words to help you understand the exposure risks associated with the product: Caution, Warning and Danger. Caution indicates that the product is slightly toxic when exposed to the skin, lungs, eyes, or mouth. Warning indicates that contact with at least one of these areas is moderately toxic, while Danger indicates that the product is highly toxic when exposed occurs via the skin, lungs, eyes, or mouth. If you aren’t sure you have the right PPE for the pesticide, contact your provincial government or the manufacturer of either the pesticide or PPE. If you are unsure, don’t apply it.

Once you have selected your PPE, it is important that it is worn and used properly. Special goggles are often required to prevent eye exposure. When clothing meets protective foot- wear or gloves, it’s important to ensure appropriate overlap of PPE to prevent chemicals from coming into contact with your legs, arms or feet. Respirators must be fit tested before they are used for the first time, and checked annually unless your weight or other facial features change between fit tests.

A seal check must be performed every time you don a respirator to ensure a good seal. Discomfort, particularly from heat, is never a reason to remove PPE. Instead, work when it is cool, take breaks, drink lots of water, or find other alternatives to reduce discomfort. If all else fails, quit for the day.

Removing your PPE before the job is done is not worth the risk. PPE is susceptible to wear and tear. Check all PPE on a regular basis, discarding anything that may compromise your protection. Replace and dispose of any PPE or PPE components according to product instructions.

Don’t linger in your PPE. Remove it as soon as you have completed your task. Wash disposable or reusable gloves with soap and water, remove other PPE with your gloves still on, and then wash your gloves again before removing them. Wash PPE separately from other laundry using detergent and hot water. Store your PPE according to instructions. This often includes protecting PPE from chemicals, sunlight, extreme temperatures, high humidity and moisture. Never store PPE with other personal clothing or near pesticides.

Employers are required to follow the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS), the Pest Control Products Act, as well as any applicable provincial occupational health and safety laws. If you employ workers, you are responsible for providing them with information about the pesticides they are using, the required PPE for the task at hand, appropriate training in the use of that PPE, and immediate transportation to a medical facility in the event of pesticide exposure. You are required to ensure their PPE fits properly, and that it is correctly cleaned, maintained, replaced and stored.

For more information on safe PPE use, download the “Dress for Success” brochure or watch the video, presented as part of a partnership between Syngenta and the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association. These materials can be found online at casa-acca.ca/dressforsuccess or www.syngenta.ca/safetytools.

AGRONOMY TIPS...

Protect the most valuable leaf

Over the last five years, farmers in northern Alberta have been learning how a flag leaf application of a foliar fungicide can boost their yield potential. In 61 on-farm, field-scale trials between 2009 and 2013, growers netted an average of 9.5 bu./ac. more in areas where they sprayed their wheat at flag leaf than where they saw fit. The yield difference by area was as high as 23 bu./ac.

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PHOTO CONTEST

GIVE US YOUR BEST SHOT

The winner for this issue is a picture of Caleb Tschetter, getting a ride from his grandfather, Mike Tschetter near Clayton, Alta.

Joel Tschetter sent us this picture. He says, “I had some time off from irrigating. It was nice to spend it with the family.”

Joel, we'll send you a cheque for $25. Maybe you can spend it on the family the next time you have a break.

Send your best shot to leeann.minogue@fbcpublishing.com. Please send only one or two photos at a time and include your name and address, the names of anyone in the photo, where the photo was taken and a bit about what was going on that day. A little write-up about your farm is welcome, too. Please ensure that images are of high resolution (1 MB is preferred), and if the image includes a person, we need to be able to see their face clearly.

Leeann

WEATHER LORE

New moon, and weather

If the new moon holds the old moon in her lap, fair weather. 

When the new moon holds the old moon in her lap, fair weather. But, when the air is stable, turbulence is minimized and we can see everything in the sky more clearly. Thus, if we can get the rest of the moon, an old proverb says that the new moon is holding the old moon in her lap.

The old moon is dark because the sun is not shining on it. Furthermore, any unstable air aloft creates turbulence that obscures it even more.

But, when the air is stable, turbulence is minimized and we can see everything in the sky more clearly. Thus, if we can see the new moon with the old moon in her lap, it means the air is stable and we will likely stay away and fair weather is indicated.


This agronomy tip is brought to you by Christine Spallaro. Agronomic Services Representative for Syngenta Canada Inc. Christine holds a Bachelors of Science in Agriculture from the University of Saskatchewan. She’s worked in the crop protection industry for 25 years, including 10 years with Syngenta.

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Leeann
This page features an article titled "Swede midge life cycle" by Andrea Hilderman. The article discusses the life cycle of the swede midge, including the feeding habits, damage caused, and management strategies. There are several images illustrating the midge's life stages and damage to plants. The text is accompanied by a photograph showing typical damage to a canola flower. The article also mentions the need for further research to understand the insect's preferences and control strategies. The text is structured with paragraphs and subheadings for clarity. The layout includes a photo credit at the bottom of the page. The article appears to be part of a larger publication, possibly a magazine or journal, given the presence of a cover page and a subscription section at the bottom. The article is written in a formal, scientific tone, typical of scientific articles in the field of entomology.
How to find lygus bugs

Lygus bugs can cause extensive crop damage. Scouting for them in your canola crops

BY MELANIE EPP

In recent years, high populations of lygus bugs have been reported in a large portion of Alberta, as well as in some fields in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. While lygus bugs are always present in canola fields, outbreaks of high populations can cause extensive crop damage.

For the most part, canola can compensate for much of the damage caused, but sometimes it cannot. In 1997, crop damage to canola in Alberta exceeded $10 million. More than 1.4 million acres were sprayed to control lygus bugs. Outbreaks were fairly isolated until about 2012, when high populations were reported across the Prairies.

Lygus bugs are small, oval-shaped insects that feed on a variety of crops, including canola, alfalfa, lentils, flax and hemp. They also feed on many weeds, including mustards, lamb’s quarters, stick-weed and hoary cress.

Depending on their geographical location, lygus bugs have up to three generations per year. Should a late fall or early spring occur, an additional generation is possible. Species vary from province to province, too. In Alberta, for instance, growers see more Lygus kelmini, whereas Manitoba growers see more Lygus lineolaris.

Lygus bugs are about three mm wide and six mm long. They have a fairly long antennae and their coloration ranges from pale green to reddish brown to black. Identification is made easy by a very distinctive V-shaped marking, located in the upper centre of their backs. Adult lygus bugs are very active and will fly away when approached.

Overwintering in places where they can find shelter under plant litter, lygus bugs emerge in late spring and begin to reproduce on early season hosts, like alfalfa.

MANAGING FOR LYGUS BUGS

There have never really been any serious outbreaks in Manitoba — not like the ones in Alberta — but they still require management, says John Gavloski, entomologist with Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. “But we certainly have had years where lygus bug has been an economic problem in canola.”

The first step in managing the pest is regular scouting. Moratorium fields closely, especially in areas where overwintering populations may be high. Since the oldest bugs are responsible for the most damage, it’s important to not only count numbers, but also to determine what part of the life cycle the majority are in. Lygus bugs go through several life stages, and eventually molt into the adult, says Gavloski.

“As they get bigger, they’re progressively taking more of the sap per individual. They do move around when they’re young. They’re very mobile insects to begin with. But as they get bigger, they ingest more.”

The best method for scouting is sweep net sampling. Because they move so quickly, counting lygus bugs in a sweep net can be difficult. Be sure to sweep in several locations. To obtain more accurate counts, slowly invert the net allowing one bug to escape at a time. Either that, or invert the net into a Ziploc bag and carefully count each insect through the plastic.

Some of the newer canola varieties grow exceptionally tall. They can be denser and harder to walk through, which makes sweep netting a challenge. In these types of crops, it is perfectly acceptable to sweep along the crop’s edges, says Gavloski, but only if the crop is at the same growth stage as the rest of the field.

To determine if populations are in excess of economic thresholds, use the charts below, taking into consideration application costs, canola prices and plant development stage.

Recently, high lygus bug populations have been reported in some fields.
I t was mid-August when I got a call from Jim, a grain and cattle producer near Warner, Alta. Jim, who rotates cereal, oilseeds and pulse crops on his 3,000 acres of farm-land, was having trouble with his canola crop.

Swathing in canola needs to occur at the optimum stage of ripening in order to reduce seed problems or loss due to shattering, but Jim wasn’t sure when to swath his crop because there was very uneven ripening occurring throughout the field. There had been a bad hailstorm at the beginning of the month, and Jim thought that might have something to do with what was going on with his canola. He asked me to come out to have a look for myself.

When I arrived at Jim’s farm, I could see obvious signs of hail damage on the north end of the canola field, such as broken branches and plant stems. However, something didn’t add up. Why, for example, did some plants appear to be completely damaged, while right next to them were plants which looked to be far from ripe? Hail damage alone could not explain the extremes in this field.

I knew it was unusual for hail damage to cause complete early ripening of plants, although it can cause parts of plants to ripen prematurely. Depending on the timing of the hailstorm, you would tend to see more branch- ing in an affected canola crop, which makes it a little more difficult to stage for swathing. However, the fact that uneven ripening within the crop was even more evident in the south end of the field, where there had been less hail damage, made another explanation more likely.

“I assumed that I was just looking at the results of the hail we had seen a couple weeks earlier,” Jim said, adding that he hadn’t considered there might be another factor at play.

What, then, was to blame for the uneven ripening? All of the canola plants appeared to have relatively healthy, devel- oped root systems, and I couldn’t see any size differences between affected and non-affected plants. However, a closer inspection of individual plants yielded some critical clues.

If you think you know what’s behind Jim’s canola problem, send your diagnosis to Grainews, Box 9800, Winnipeg, Man., R3C 3K7; email leeann.minogue@fbcpublishing.com or fax 204-944-5416 c/o Crop Advisor’s Casebook. Best suggestions will be pooled and one winner will be chosen for the chance to win a Grainews cap and a one-year subscription to the magazine. The answer, along with reasoning that solved the mystery, will appear in the next Crop Advisor’s Solution File.

BY AMY HEATHER

UNEVEN CANOLA RIPENING

There were obvious signs of hail damage such as broken branches and plant stems.

BY ANGIE BERNER

CROP ADVISOR’S CASEBOOK

I was a little confused by this problem in years past, but it had always been right before harvest, and too late in the season for me to take plant samples or draw any type of conclusion about what was going on. This time, though, it was an ideal oppor-

CROP ADVISOR’S SOLUTION

ROOT ROT THE CAUSE OF DYING LENTILS AND PEAS

There were obvious signs of hail damage such as broken branches and plant stems.

CASEBOOK WINNER

T he Casebook winner for this issue is Roger Cey, who farms with his wife Margaret in the Wilkie, Sask., area. Roger knew right away that the problem was root rot. Unfortunately, he knew from experience. Since he started farm- ing in 1983, Roger has never seen excess moisture like they’ve had in the last three years.

“The pulse crops and canola have been showing us where the excess moisture is,” Roger says. “Just like your picture, it’s some- times in places you don’t expect, like hillside. The wheat seems to handle it much better. Hoping for an average year of moisture as we are quite soggy again this spring.”

We will be sending Roger a Grainews hat and renewing his subscription for one year. Thanks for entering, Roger. Let’s hope you need the hat to keep a lot of spring sunshine out of your eyes.

LeeAnn Minogue

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weatherfarm.com
Grasshoppers and El Niño

A

n April press release from the World Meteorological Organization indicates "a fairly large potential for an El Niño event, which could influence global temperatures and precipitation. Should El Niño cause hot and dry conditions across the Prairies this summer, the number of grasshoppers could be affected," says Dan Johnson, a professor of environmental science at the University of Lethbridge and a grasshopper expert.

"The grasshoppers that survive spring need warm weather to go through their stages, and then clear, warm weather during breeding season...if it's hot and sunny they can basically realize their full reproductive potential," he says.

Hot and dry conditions from July through September mean females will mature rapidly, find mates and lay eggs, which could result in large egg numbers the following spring.

Warm soil in the fall allows the embryos to grow up to the point of hibernation (known as diapause in insects), leaving them poised to hatch during a narrow window in spring, if soil is warm again. Weather conditions favourable for egg hatch and juvenile survival, followed by a second sunny and warm summer, could result in a grasshopper outbreak.

"Two years that are good for them and they're on their summer," says Johnson. "That's what always causes these outbreaks." However, cool, wet conditions can delay egg hatching as well as decrease grasshopper populations as hatching rates and immaturity rates succumb to disease.

A super El Niño is not beyond the realm of possibility in the future. Climate records, lake-bottom sediments and tree rings provide evidence of 10-year, 20-year, even century-long periods of hot and dry conditions, says Johnson. "Some climatologists, for example at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in the United States, say a large-scale El Niño could be coming. The super El Niño could go on and on, or regular El Niño could be more frequent, and who knows what it could do. It would certainly affect these insects. Weather related to El Niño did in previous years."

It is useful to identify pest species, such as the two-striped grasshopper above, to determine if the species in your field are beneficial or damaging.

Grasshoppers and El Niño

Most areas won't have grasshopper problems in 2014. But there are some places where farmers should hone their identification skills

Features

INSECT MANAGEMENT

Getting those grasshoppers

Most areas won't have grasshopper problems in 2014. But there are some places where farmers should hone their identification skills

F

or the most part, SaskatchewANS farmers are unlikely to be fighting waves of grasshoppers this year, according to Saskatchewan Agriculture's 2014 hopper forecast. But Saskatchewan's 2014 forecast will show one bull's eye of severe risk.

"In the middle of that bull's eye is Meadow Lake," Peter Walsh told farmers at Cavalier Agrow's farm forum in North Battleford this April. Walsh teaches courses in insect, weed and disease management, along with crop cropping, at Lakehead College in Vermilion.

A count of at least 12 hopper per square metre, when added up to a severe risk forecast the following year. Most surveyed farmers aren't the only Prairie producers likely to suffer hopper plagued this year. Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development's forecast shows very severe risk (more than 24 hoppers found per square metre) near Grande Prairie, along with areas in the northeast and west-central regions.

Alberta also has severe risk areas elsewhere in the province. The northwest, between Calgary and Lethbridge, and in the east-central parts of the province.

Most surveyed areas in Manitoba last year were rated very low risk. But hoppers numbered 18 per square metre at a site near Crystal City and 22 per square metre near Wawanesa.

Farmers in zones not rated as high risk aren't going to get off entirely free, though. Forecasts partly depend on weather and natural enemies, Dr. John Gavloski, entomologist with Manitoba Agriculture and Rural Development, said in an interview. And local populations can vary.

"We try to do our best to make sure that the counts are representative, but that's not always the case," said Gavloski.

IDENTIFYING PESTS

Not all grasshoppers are crop killers and it's well worth knowing which are friend and which are foe.

Mantobans walking the ditches may see bright green insects resembling grasshoppers. They are katydids, Gavloski said.

"They'll never move in and damage the crop." Both Gavloski and Walsh cited the Russian Thistle Grasshopper as a species that only eats weeds. But farmers don't have to be able to name the specific specie to know if a hopper will gorge itself on your crops. Any grasshopper that makes a clacking noise while flying, has colourful wings (yellow, orange, brown), or is flying in April or May is not a pest, Walsh told farmers.

"All of the pest species overwinter as eggs. That's why in June they're just hatching out," said Gavloski. Pest species usually aren't adults until July.

"But some non-pest species overwinter, said Gavloski. "So they're nearly mature early in the season." Females that are common pests will lay eggs in the fall "until the frost shuts her down," says Walsh.

"Nymphs, when they hatches, begins feeding immediately. Walsh added. "The grasshopper doesn't have a feeding stage. There is no stage in the hopper like a cocoon.""A super El Niño is not beyond the realm of possibility in the future. Climate records, lake-bottom sediments and tree rings provide evidence of 10-year, 20-year, even century-long periods of hot and dry conditions, says Johnson. "Some climatologists, for example at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in the United States, say a large-scale El Niño could be coming. The super El Niño could go on and on, or regular El Niño could be more frequent, and who knows what it could do. It would certainly affect these insects. Weather related to El Niño did in previous years."

It is useful to identify pest species, such as the two-striped grasshopper above, to determine if the species in your field are beneficial or damaging.

SCOURING AND THRESHOLDS

Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development's website recommends checking field edges, fence lines and ditches for grasshoppers. Egg beds generally line field edges so instars will be found there first.

To count a hopper, Manitoba Agriculture's site suggests starting in one field corner, walking diagonally past the centre, and then walking straight out one side of the field. While walking, note any nymphs jump from a square foot area.

The ministry suggests taking at least 20 of these counts per survey. Dividing the total by two will give an approximate number of hoppers per square metre.

The economic threshold for grasshoppers is eight to 12 hoppers per square metre, according to Manitoba Ag's site. Gavloski said this threshold is nominal, meaning there isn't quantitative data correlating insect damage to yield loss.

"It's basically a best guess of what people think is likely economic," he said.

Farmers with lower-value crops should err on the high end of the economic threshold, Gavloski said. But for high-value crops, action is needed when grasshoppers breach the lower end of the spectrum, he added.

And crops such as lentils and flax likely require action before the grasshoppers hit the low end of the threshold. In fact, lentils at the flowering and podding stage have a recommended threshold of two hoppers per square metre.

Soybeans and canola aren't preferred snacks for most hoppers, but there are species that will eat them since their preferred soybean and canola experts.

"Cereal crops are favoured by some of our pest species, so they're certainly more vulnerable," said Gavloski.

CONTROL TIMING

Gavloski suggested controlling hoppers at roughly the third or fourth instar stage, before they get too numerous. "Adult grasshoppers are much harder to control than juveniles," said Gavloski. "And the juveniles are often concentrated along field edges and borders." Walsh added also recommended farmers delay spraying until nymphs hit the third instar. At that stage they'll have small wing pads.

"What you're waiting for is the correct pest window. If you jump the gun the first time you see those little nymphs out there, you may have to spray a second time," said Walsh.

But farmers will need to weigh this advice against how much damage is already being done to the crop and the crop type, said Walsh. Grasses, such as wheat, will outgrow some of the early damage, Walsh added.

"And if I'm still waiting for the rest of the hatch, I probably don't have pea or canola into bud or any kind of stage like that," Walsh said.

It ultimately comes down to individual farmers' risk tolerance, Walsh said. "Where's your line? Everybody's got their line. And just some caution that if you can hold off a bit, you may only have to spray once." Common wisdom says that a wet spring is hard on newly-hatched hoppers, but spring rains don't always drown grasshoppers. Instead "breathe through their abdomens. And they can't lift their abdomens out of the mud and the mud and the water," Walsh explained.

But wet weather doesn't affect the eggs, so whether or not spring rains kill instars comes down to timing.

"Heavy rains in June could potentially kill lots of grasshoppers. Heavy rains in April will go on and on to next to nothing," said Gavloski.

And a cold spring will delay the hatch, and so if the wet weather passes, the eggs will still be viable, said Walsh.

Lisa Guenther is a field editor with Grainews at Listowel, Ont. Contact her at Lisa.Guenther@fbcpublishing.com.
Taking the count

The first part of deciding whether or not you need to spray your field is getting an accurate pest count.

BY LEEANN MINOGUE

Most recommendations about pesticides include an economic threshold — if you have more than the specified number of pests per square metre, spraying could be an effective option for you. So before you can make your decision, you’re going to need to take a census.

At Saskatchewan Agriculture’s Crop Diagnostic School at Indian Head in July, Saskatchewan Agriculture’s provincial insect/vertebrate pest management specialist, Scott Hartley was on hand to give farmers and agrologists a live demonstration of taking an accurate insect count.

THREE STEPS TO COUNTING HOPPERS

Hartley demonstrated a simple way to count grasshoppers.

Step 1: Step off a distance. If you use a yard stick at home to check how long a step you need to measure off one metre, you can easily step off a close-enough distance out in the field. A good distance to use is 25 metres (long enough for a representative sample, not so long you need to carry a compass and water bottle.)

Step 2: Once you’ve stepped out the distance, walk the length of the distance, counting every grasshopper you see in a one-metre strip right in front of you. Make sure you’re shuffling your feet, to scare up everything your path.

Until you’ve done this a few times and you’ve got the hang of the distance, you could carry a metre stick out into the field to make sure you’re counting in an accurate range.

Step 3: Divide the number you counted by the distance in metres (25 in this case) to get a count per square metre. This method is fast and easy. It might not be scientifically accurate down to the last decimal point, but Hartley says, “It gives a pretty good indication.”

SIX SWEEPNET TIPS

While you can spot grasshoppers visually, other insects are easier to count if you catch them in a net. Using a sweepnet to count the number of bugs in a certain area seems pretty straightforward. But here are some tips to help you get a closer count.

Tip 1: When you walk through the field, be sure to sweep the area 180 degrees in front of you.

Tip 2: Be strong. Hartley says you should use “a good firm sweep with a little flick at the end to shake everything down.”

Tip 3: Keep your net level, at about waist height. “You do not just want to go just over the top,” Hartley says. “You might want to work out before scouting season, as pushing and pulling that net through at that height can be a lot of a test. It’s not always easy to keep it exactly at that level.”

Tip 4: Hang on. “You need a good, firm sweep,” Hartley says. “Or you’ll flip the net over.”

Tip 5: “Take it out of the field to bag it,” Hartley advises. Turn the inside-out to put the contents directly into a plastic bag.

Tip 6: Having trouble getting a count on the bugs in the bag when they’re all moving around? Hartley has a solution for this. “Throw it in the freezer overnight. They become a lot more cooperative.”

Changing grasshopper species

While the most important action farmers can take to protect their crops is to be aware of the most current insect monitoring information from provincial ag departments, says Dan Johnson, an environmental science professor at the University of Lethbridge, the best in-field tip remains the same year after year: know the difference between grasshoppers that damage crops and those that do not, and check for them at the right times.

As many as 25 grasshopper species can be found in a single field, and only a few of those species are pests; however, in some years, the pest species are the most numerous ones. As a rule of thumb, Johnson says it’s not a pest if the grasshopper:

• has coloured wings;
• makes any kind of noise, such as clicking when it flies, screeching when it’s sitting, or singing in the ditch;
• flies before the first of June; or,
• sits in a crop and does not damage it. Many grasshoppers will not eat particular species of crops or plants. They’ll live in a field but not eat some kinds of plants, and in some cases certain species will avoid crops.

Consulting a comprehensive guide for grasshopper identification and control such as Grasshopper Identification and Control Methods to Protect Crops and the Environment (find it on numerous websites) will help farmers sort pests, such as the two-striped, Packard’s, lesser migratory and clew-wing grasshoppers, from harmless or beneficial species.

Grasshopper identification by growers is vital for monitoring species shifts, says Johnson, which can change over the course of a year, or from year to year. For example, Alberta producers scouting their fields near Coronation, Consort and Youngstown may have noticed a shift in grasshopper species prior to the devastating outbreak in 2002.

“For two years before it happened, I could see that a species called the clear-winged grasshopper, which had been extremely uncommon for years, was coming back with a vengeance because of the dry conditions,” says Johnson. “The forecast gave the warning, and it turned out to be right. It was a wipeout. The grasshoppers were so heavy and so hungry a lot of the fields looked like the barest summerfallow ever, yet they weren’t summerfallow — they were crops. The level at which young grasshoppers begin to seriously threaten cereal crops is around 10 to 15 per square metre, but during the drought years they were hatching at hundreds per square metre in some fields.”

Small shifts in populations and the species that dominate are natural, but it’s a whole different ballgame, says Johnson, when a population swings dramatically, especially if growers are used to dealing with certain species and then must adapt quickly to new ones showing up in their fields. “We need to anticipate those shifts and be ready,” he says.

It’s also important for younger generations to become familiar with identifying grasshopper species. “The farmer generations are turning over now. The young farmers are educated, ready to go and hard-working. But they might lack experience because maybe they haven’t lived through outbreaks, or they’ve only seen one and it’s a particular kind of grasshopper,” says Johnson.

Leeann Minogue is the editor of Grainews.
Investors head for stocks and junk

With interest rates in the doldrums, investors head for dividend paying stocks and global junk

BY ANDREW ALLENTUCK

Stagnation is the new normal," quipped American blogger Taegan Goddard, following the view of Nobel laureate and economist Paul Krugman that low interest rates alone have been insufficient to lift the U.S. and other economies out of the doldrums.

The key indicators of stagnation are range-bound bond markets in the U.S. and Canada. The Fed’s Janet Yellen and the Bank of Canada’s Stephen Poloz have affirmed that interest rates will be suppressed until at least 2015. Money has headed to dividend paying stocks. Canadian large cap companies such as banks and some utilities offer dividends of four to five per cent and there are strong prospects that dividends will rise.

The bellwether U.S. Treasury 10-year bond currently yields 2.70 per cent to maturity. The Government of Canada 10-year bond pays 2.44 per cent to maturity. These interest rates pay almost nothing after inflation. It is possible to trade these bonds, but when limits of rising interest rates create a little bond sell-off as new bonds with higher rates make exist. 

The price of gold has been trending higher since the November elections. Even though the very robust interest rate environment of the 1980s has ended, the world has come to accept the idea that central banks have an obligation to maintain low rates and thus protect asset prices. Clearly, the bond market is telling us that interest rates are not going to rise significantly.

Growth versus yields

Investors are loading up on dividend stocks. A major insurance company’s global bond fund has attracted almost $1 billion with respectable returns. Investors are seeking yields and the ability of mutual fund managers to gang up on these relatively small companies. 

If and when their earnings falter or decline, investors can take a pass. Chances are that late arriving small investors will be left with losses and tears.

The soundest bets on the TSX right now are strong prospects for growing earnings, higher payouts for investors and the ability of mutual fund managers to gang up on these relatively small companies, buying shares and thus justifying what other managers are doing. If and when their earnings falter or decline, there will be a mass rush for the dollars and prices will tumble. Chances are that late arriving small investors will be left with losses and tears.

It takes a few hours, a couple of days, and a good brew to make beer. And you’ll have brewed a beverage that most seasoned Budweiser fan would acknowledge as if even their tempered praise was shredded. We’ve been handed many reasons to quit, and have rejected all but one.

The support has been rolling in. The craft beer industry is on an upward trajectory that seems far from ebbing, especially in the Prairies. It is a stage where hops are added to contribute bitterness, flavour, and aroma. After boiling, the Wort is transferred through a heat exchanger, cooling the liquid down to fermentation temperature. The Wort is then pumped into the primary fermenter where yeast is added. 

After one week of fermentation, the beer is transferred to a cold conditioning tank where it is clarified and carbonated for a second week. Now the beer is bottled or put into kegs.

We don’t have a brewery operating on the farm. Yet. But the business has legs of its own.

We’ve got a business plan meaty enough for investors to chew on. We’ve got a business plan that is attractive to venture capitalists. It’s the second half of beer that has our attention and we are going to have such a list). The first version of our business plan was torn to shreds. We’ve been handed many reasons to quit, and have rejected each one.

“We don’t have a brewery operating on the farm. Yet. But the business has legs of its own.” This chapter is about startups. Specifically, how tricky they are, and how rewarding they can be.

We chat out game plans, convincing ourselves we’re on something. We send posters over stats and talking to others in the industry. But, essentially, we had nothing. But we also had everything. If you are willing to pay quality, logical attention to nurturing an idea, it will be realized. It will become something more. But it takes a fight.

Many gave us half-hearted praise for the idea. The rest were quick to highlight all the work ahead of us. Some partners dropped out. And others wanted to be added to the taste-tester list (we don’t have such a list). The first version of our business plan was torn to shreds. We’ve been handed many reasons to quit, and have rejected each one.

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Three ways to get your business in gear

For successful succession, follow the best habits of effective business managers

ANDREW DERUYCK

MARK SLOANE

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his is part four of our series on succession. After looking back at the successful operators we have worked with over our last 10 years, we’ve made lists of what went right and what went wrong. From these experiences, we’ve come to liken a successful business transition to an operating planetary gear. All of the parts need to work together.

In this column, the gear we want to examine closely for any signs of wear is the business plan.

The business is extremely integral to the succession process. The business ensures the existing assets can provide a living for the next generation while still providing capital to the retiring generation.

Clearly understanding the business is essential for ensuring that growth plans remain within the risk appetite of those involved. Attention to the business goes beyond just the longer-term strategy. It takes diligent daily management to ensure efficient execution of the plans.

It has been said that the first generation builds the business, the second generation keeps the business and the third generation will lose the business if this is the case if management grows complacent and takes the business for granted. The great news is that numbers never lie — one plus one always equals two and there is very little emotion or soft issues involved in effective business planning. The other good news is that when we looked back over the countless farms and agribusinesses that we have worked with, the traits or habits of successful business managers were very, very similar. Here are three that we see as very important.

1. PLAN FOR SUCCESS

Farms with the business gear operating trouble-free engage intuitively and not discussing their plans or committing to them in a written plan, it can be like having three or four drivers on the same bus, speeding out of control. Successes are common when planning is done as a group, involving all who are integral to the final decision. An environment where individuals can be challenged is very common in highly achieving businesses because it results in more thorough analysis. Regardless of how much discussion and questioning goes on in the planning process, when the rubber hits the road, everyone in that successful business understands and is committed to a final plan. This results in your team proactively managing towards the plan.

In the meses we have witnessed, everyone reacts to events instead of being proactive. If you aren't following these habits, there is a good chance you will be pushed into crisis management frequently. Once your emotions begin to rise, wave rational thought goodbye.

2. ASSEMBLE A PROFESSIONAL TEAM

Another key feature we see in successful transitions is the effort made to assemble a professional team that fills gaps in the skill set of owners and managers. This may include accountants, lawyers, consultants and agronomists, and the list goes on and on. Good business managers work hard to find out what they don’t know, then make an effort to involve someone who does.

When we come across a mess, it has often started with a gap that management wasn’t aware of and didn’t think to fill. Good managers know what they don’t know and poor managers don’t know what they don’t know. We worked with a client once who said, “I don’t do my own dental work nor do I check my own prostate and that is why I am working with you guys.” (Now that we think about it, all we did for him was a comprehensive succession plan. We hope he wasn’t expecting something else.)

3. ANALYZE THE RESULTS

The final common trait we identified is the analysis of end results. Successful farms revisit the results they achieved, analyze them and communicate this back to integral members of their team.

The key message is that there are some common and effective habits among farms and agribusinesses that are doing an exceptional job of managing the business component that has proved to be integral to successful transition. Compare your habits to the ones we identified above and maybe you will know something you didn’t know when you were done. Good luck.

Andrew Deruyck and Mark Sloane manage farm planning operations in southern Manitoba and are partners in Right Choice Management Consulting. With over 25 years of cumulative experience, they offer support in farm management, financial management, strategic planning and mediation services. They can be reached at andrew@rightcons.ca and sloanefarms@hotmail.com or 204-625-7302 and 204-625-8443.
Speculators in commodity futures markets have increased price volatility at the farm gate. As the pendulum swings, the U.S. winter wheat crop is threatened by a hard cold winter, which has threatened the U.S. winter wheat crop with snow and frost all the way down into the southern Texas growing regions. Predictions of an El Niño weather system building and forecasts of continued hot, dry weather throughout the U.S. Midwest growing regions threaten to extend the drought this coming summer.

Political unrest in Ukraine seems to be escalating and continues to keep markets on edge with concerns that new crop production could be reduced because of the unrest and export shipments could be impacted if the situation continues or escalates. Weather and harvest delays in South America have impacted quality and quantity of their bumper crop. Old-crop U.S. soybeans are in tight supply and demand is steady so prices have pushed higher. Livestock prices are near all-time highs adding demand and support to the feed grain complex.

All of these factors have added momentum to the markets. This has attracted speculative funds back to the grain markets looking for an opportunity to make money from uncertainty. Like sharks to blood, the funds step into the markets they can have a real influence on how high and then how low (or visa versa) the markets go (volatility). The question now is how long will the feeding frenzy last? How long will these sharks stay in the pool and play the game before they cut and run, heading for a new pool of opportunity and sending the pendulum back the other direction?

As long as the elements mentioned above remain relevant, speculative funds will remain active in commodity markets and squeeze out every last bit of profit opportunity. If or when any of these elements change or if another segment of the futures markets looks more profitable, you will see the speculative funds shift their market positions or pull their money out very quickly.

**SPECULATIVE FUNDS**

For speculative fund managers, investment decisions are all about where they think they can make the fastest dollar with the least risk. The reality of futures markets is that they are no longer just there for the buyers and sellers of products to trade among themselves as they were when futures were first created. The futures trading floors such as Chicago, Kansas, Minneapolis and Winnipeg are now “for prof” companies. To make futures trading markets viable and profitable, they need to increase trading volumes. The way to do that was to allow speculative trading within these markets, to encourage those with money and a sense of adventure to gamble to participate. To encourage the adventurous to participate, some companies have allowed speculative funds were changed, allowing markets to fluctuate within greater limits. Increased volatility provided the markets and participants an opportunity to make more money when markets moved; this opportunity is the same for the market speculator as it is for the producer of the product.

Over the years as markets have evolved and speculative funds have become larger, we have seen markets become more volatile because of the amount of money these speculative funds bring to the markets. They can enter and exit the markets in a very big way, which can drive prices up or down very aggressively.

This is another example of how our world and the ag industry have progressed. Interest in playing the markets has grown exponentially over the years. World trading floors have responded accordingly, offering a wide variety of products and contracts for trading to encourage the entrepreneurial spirit.

So we must adjust our ways of doing business on our farms. We need to better understand the futures markets and how to use them to protect and grow our businesses. We need to see volatility as an opportunity and know how to take advantage of it.

Many producers don’t like the added complexity speculative funds bring to the marketplace. Because it makes it very hard to try to determine what is actually going on and what is a true market price.

If you are willing to play the markets and learn to use the volatility as a pricing strategy, then you will tend towards selling your grain using forward and futures value contracts. If you don’t like trying to deal with the volatility and want to know you are getting a fair price for your grain you will be more comfortable selling into the CBOT pool programs.

Either way the volatility is still there — you can manage it yourself using futures contracts or you can let the CBOT manage it for you.

This is the way of the future for marketing grain in a global marketplace. Learn about the markets, understand how they work, know your numbers and use the markets to your advantage to ensure profitability whenever possible.
Artesian wells are not always good

Artesian wells are amazing phenomena. But they can cause salinity in the soil.
Andy Sirski has added two “new” stocks to his portfolio. Find out why he chose Alcoa and Microsoft

ANDY SIRSKI

This past month I added Alcoa (AA) and Microsoft (MSFT) to my list of favorite stocks. Here’s my thinking on both stocks.

ALCOA (AA)

Alcoa is one of the biggest aluminum producers in North America, with production facilities in six other countries. I think the company faces two new challenges: a plant in Russia that might face extra hardships and the rising price of natural gas.

Still, it looks like the worst is behind for Alcoa. The price of aluminum was beaten up a few years ago partly due to the recession and I suspect partly due to many plants around the world trying to keep up volumes.

Alcoa has shuttered several plants around the world. The latest was two of its more expensive producers, the company claimed a loss in Q1 to cover those costs. That didn’t reduce the amount of aluminum being produced in the world.

It is developing its added value business. Two things stand out. First, the company has a high strength aluminum alloy and now it is building rims for semi trailers that weigh 40 pounds less than regular rims.

Second, Alcoa also builds airplane parts. Plans call for thousands of new planes to be built in the next 10 years. This business will be around for years to come.

Value added is a big term in many circles of business and Alcoa has developed lines that will use the aluminum they produce and add to profits.

Shares dropped to a low of about $5 but it seemed too risky to buy them at the time. Then the price was flat lined around $8. Lately, Alcoa shares crept up to $12.50. When earnings came out in early April it seemed like the worst was behind Alcoa. I resisted the temptation to buy ahead of the earnings report. I gave the stock a couple of days to let emotions run out of steam and as the shares went above $13 I bought 1,000 shares.

Recently I bought another 1,000 shares, bringing my average cost to $13.27, and I can see myself owning up to 5,000 shares over time. The shares pay a dividend of 50 cents per share.

I have not sold covered calls on those shares and may not for while. When I do, I will likely sell above the price of the day to give the shares some room to run up while I still collect a little extra income from selling calls. If the calls are exercised I can always buy shares back.

As part of my strategy with AA, by the time you read this I will own some AA call options. I will likely buy the January 2015 call with a strike price of $12 per share. The premium is not large but option value should go up too.

This is a strategy outlined in the 2nd book of my series Four Strategies from the Exchange Floor by Lee Lowell. Buying calls is not for everybody.

MICROSOFT (MSFT)

I owned 1,000 shares of MSFT years ago and sold them as they started to drop at somewhere around $96 per share. The shares split two for one sometime later and dropped to the low $20s. The company started to pay a dividend and the shares edged up the past few years.

Here’s why I recently bought 1,000 shares at around $40 and I’m selling covered calls on them. First, the shares have weekly options.

Second, the shares appear to have support at $38, the break out price. The company has something like $55 billion of cash and short-term assets but a lot of that money is overseas.

While the shares have some support, they also move around in price just enough to give me a nice premium from selling covered calls. I think I can milk this one, collect some dividends and capture some capital gain.

Alcoa’s management is developing the company’s capacity to buy lots of cash month after month and so it can support a dividend and likely raise the share price. Over the past couple of years earnings have not gone up significantly but the market has raised the price earnings ratio from around 10 to 14.

With a P/E of 14 and earnings of $2.70 the shares were trading at $27. At a P/E of 14.8 and earnings of $2.50 the shares trade at $38 or better.

NATURAL GAS

Between a cold cold winter and shrinking supplies from shale gas wells, the amount of natural gas in storage has dropped below its five year average. So the price is rising and it looks like the industry will not be able to boost supplies much over the summer.

I own 1,780 shares of Bonavista (BNP), which has oil, natural gas and other enterprises. I paid $13.45 for those shares and they now trade over $17. The 30 shares are the ones we collected when the monthly dividends were paid to us as a sort of retirement.

Another natural gas stock I like is Delphi (FPE). This one has land in a pocket in the middle of natural gas country in Western Canada.

Andy is nearly retired. He plays with his grandchildren, gardens, and messes his family’s investments. Andy also writes an electronic newsletter titled Stocks Talk if you want to read it free for a month send an email to Andy at stocks@talk.net. If you like what you read you can subscribe.

Monsanto Weed ID app

Monsanto’s new app helps you identify a new weed in your field, and also show it on a map

APP QUEST

Aill day, every day we are bombarded with information, much of which is not relevant to our operations. Many days it’s difficult to absorb all of these tidbits of gold, let alone recall them on demand.

Monsanto has released a weed ID app that can ease your mental strain. Not only is it a weed identifier but it can also help you map your weed intensities by species and population pressure. Having this information available at your fingertips gives you one more resource to do the research you need.

The app also has a “map it” function to help you mark weed outbreaks of different pressure over your fields and over the years. A very helpful tool when coupled with spray records in assessing the weed control and pressure.

When you use this part of the app, you can bring up your current location on the map, using an animated map, a satellite map, or a hybrid of both maps. By pressing a weed icon, you can drop a pin in your map to denote a weed outbreak. There is a menu for weed selection and a slider bar under you can use to select the infestation level. There is also a comment box for each pin, making it easier to remember what caused this problem or if you have been trapped by salesmanship.

This app also includes a feature that allows you to use your postal code to find contact information for your local Monsanto agronomist or an option to switch between French and English.

I really think this is going to become an app we all use every day. It’s simple to use with easy navigation and helpful magnified pictures for identifying weeds. The developers seemed to think about what we need for this app and the steps you’ve taken to get the situation under control.

Each pin is numbered. When you select a particular pin, it shows the name of the weed as well as a number corresponding to the severity of the pressure. You can email your marked map in e-mail format — a very handy feature for agronomists tracking infestations in a given area.

Monsanto’s new app helps you identify a new weed in your field, and also show it on a map

This page includes photos and images. For more information about these photos and images, please contact the following:

Monsanto Company is a member of a network of Excellence through Stewardship (ETS). Monsanto products are commercialized in accordance with ETS Product Launch Stewardship Guidance, and in compliance with Monsanto’s Policy for Communication of Biotechnology Related Products to Consumers. This product has been approved for import into the key export markets with fluctuating regulatory systems, any unapproved material produced this way will not be exported to, or sold,pesan it is sold in countries where any regulatory approval has been granted. It is a violation of individual and international law to promote materials that have been approved for importation to countries where they are not registered. Growers should talk to their grain handler or purchase package to confirm that the product is legal for the grain.

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APP QUEST

Monsanto’s new app helps you identify a new weed in your field, and also show it on a map
**Let’s talk basis**

While this explanation of basis is clear and simple, Kim Althouse explains that it’s also irrelevant

By Kim Althouse

By definition, basis is the difference between the a buyer's bid and the futures price. Farmers will not believe this but there can at times be a positive basis, where the cash price exceeds the futures prices. This is the norm in export shipments, particularly canola where the “delivery” area is deemed to be an area close to Saskatoon known as the “par” area. Canola shipped to West Coast ports from west of Saskatoon should have a value above par to replace the lower freight costs. Canola east of Saskatoon is below par to reflect increased freight costs. Export shipments will be bid by buyers at a value above the “par” or “option price” to reflect one component of basis which is freight.

**Basis in a normal market**

Let’s calculate what a basis for canola at Saskatoon would look like in a normal market.

An export buyer would bid something like $45 over the option or futures price. He’s not necessarily locking in the price, only the basis. He may offset his position by going short of futures the amount of his purchase. This is a classic hedge position. Long cash grain — short futures. He does not care what the market does from that time until he sells his cash grain to an end user, at which time he will liquidate his short position by replacing them with long positions. One cancels the other.

A grain company reviews his bid and may or may not negotiate a better basis, but let’s say they accept his bid at $45 over.

The grain company then calculates its hard costs. These are estimated in Table 1, at $68.25 per tonne. In our example, we’ll say the buyer is paying all costs to get it from the terminal and loaded on the boat. He bought it “track”.

Let’s say our grain handler expects to recover $2 per tonne on screening sales and $4 per tonne on freight incentive. His costs are now $62.25 ($68.25 less $6 recovered).

In a market where there is some volatility the elevator company may decide to take some protection in case the futures market falls before hedges can be put in place. But remember the buyer was bidding $45 over the futures, so the true basis should calculate to $62.25 less $45 or $17.25 under. That will be adjusted to account for freight charges from individual elevators whose freight rates are in demand. A very wide basis tells you that they are at capacity and cannot accept any more deliveries unless it pays them very well to fill their turning bins, cleaner bins and dryer. Don’t get mad. It’s just business.

If you have profited you need to know your unit cost of production. Where basis is important is when companies offer a comparatively lower basis to attract deliveries either in nearby or deferred futures months. When the basis reflects the hard costs we talked about above or close to it, it is a relatively narrow basis. When the basis is much wider and is not reflecting true cost then ignore it, get on with life. If everyone does this, basis will come back to reflect costs and a reasonable margin.

**This year’s basis**

We have all heard the moaning and groaning over this winter’s exceptionally wide basis levels. As much fun as it was to explain it, it is irrelevant. You should not be concerned about a wide or narrow basis except in comparison of one company’s basis to another. The cash price is what counts, what you take home. Only you can decide when the price offered equals a reasonable profit. To know what a “basis” means, what constitutes the value in a basis, what is an attractive basis that one should “sell” or wait for it to “narrow.”

One other basis. Bases is used by elevator companies to regulate demand for their services. A wide basis tells you their services are in demand. A very wide basis tells you that they are at capacity and cannot accept any more deliveries unless it pays them very well to fill their turning bins, cleaner bins and dryer. Don’t get mad. It’s just business.

Kim Althouse is a market coach with Agri-Trend at Tisdale, Saskatchewan. He is also the president of www.eGrainCanada.com.

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**Table 1: Sample costs per one tonne of canola**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freight: Saskatchewan to Vancouver</td>
<td>$40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country elevation</td>
<td>$15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning to export standards</td>
<td>$5.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighing and inspection fees</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margin, carry, trading fees, etc.</td>
<td>$5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total costs track Vancouver</td>
<td>$68.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To feed a hungry world, you need to grow more each year while caring for and protecting your land. And to sustain your farming operation, you need to grow these crops more efficiently. But where do you go to find out the latest information on sustainable practices that increase yields?

The 6th World Congress on Conservation Agriculture in Winnipeg, Manitoba will present new ideas on how you can grow more, more efficiently. Innovative growers, cutting edge researchers, and technology leaders will share their success stories and tips. Be there June 22-25, 2014 for practical solutions to the challenges facing today’s agriculture.
SeedMaster introduces Auto Calibration

Drill controller analyzes your actual seeding rates and corrects as necessary for more seed accurate delivery

By Scott Garvey

How many times have you found yourself close to the end of your seeding operations and wasting time trying to scrounge a few extra bushels of seed or running for more fertilizer, even though you initially purchased enough for your intended acreage? Often the reason for that is your drill is putting down a little more product than you wanted it to.

To make sure its customers won’t end up with this problem any longer, SeedMaster has just released its Auto Calibration software, which is designed to help make verifying seeding accuracy faster and easier.

“For the last three years we’ve had our tanks equipped with load cells,” explains Owen Kinch, SeedMaster’s field research manager. “This allows us to display the actual tank weight on the in-cab monitor. What we’ve done now is we’re using that same technology. We’re comparing the indicated rate on the monitor with the actual product usage based on the load cell information. We’re (automatically) adjusting the calibration so they match.”

“In the past, growers that had access to that load cell information were doing the calibration adjustment with a pen, paper and calculator and doing the math themselves. Guys were happy to have that information, but this is just automating the process. It’s making it (recalibrating) much quicker and easier.”

Using the Product

All operators have to do to double check the actual seeding and application rate on their drill is manually initiate the Auto Calibration process on the in-cab monitor then seed a few acres. At the end of the initial run, the software calculates the amount of product taken out of the bulk tanks and compares that to the number of acres covered. If the drill is operating outside of the intended seeding rate, it will automatically correct itself. All operators need to do is accept the recalibrated meter setting with the press of a button and continue on.

“For example if I start a new field, I initiate the auto calibration, so I seed my 10 acres or as many as I want and look at my auto calibration screen,” explains Kinch. “It says the monitor wants to change my calibration by a given percentage. It’s up to the operator to accept or decline it. You never leave the cab of your tractor.”

“It knows if I’ve done 10 acres at 100 pounds per acre I should have put down 1,000 pounds of product. It compares what it should have put out to what it actually put out based on the load cell information. If the numbers are different, it will adjust it by whatever percentage is needed to bring it into line.”

The Auto Calibration feature will now be standard on drills purchased with load cells under individual compartments. “On any of our bulk delivery tanks on our Nova (cart), it’s a standard feature,” he adds.

For farmers who already own a SeedMaster drill with the necessary hardware to provide load cell information to the Raven Viper-Pro monitor the brand uses, SeedMaster will provide them with an Auto Calibration software update free of charge.

“It’s just a simple software update for any of our previous customers who have load cells,” says Kinch. “We’re giving it to them for free. We made a commitment that we’re never going to charge anyone for software updates. As long as you have the hardware, there are no costs involved.”

For those looking to upgrade their seeding equipment, Kinch thinks the Auto Calibration feature has the potential to save growers a lot of time and money. In some seasons, especially when the weather puts farmers in a time crunch, there is a strong temptation to do an initial calibration and keep going. But over- or under-applying product can significantly affect a farm’s bottom line.

“It doesn’t matter what seeding system you have, if you do an initial calibration and you’re within eight or 10 per cent accuracy, most people would never notice it,” he says. “You’d just assume you’re close until you get to the bottom of that seed or fertilizer bin, then you make drastic changes as necessary. Whereas with this we’re going to be able to easily maintain one to three percent accuracy at all times.”

“We’re really excited about this,” he says.

Scout Garvey

Correction

We created some confusion with an article that appeared in the Machinery and Shop section of the March 18 issue of Grainews. The article, “One brand, one system,” which was meant to talk about the brand telematics system used by Kambeitz Farms with its fleet of New Holland equipment, mistakenly included references to the cost savings arising from using overlap control on the farm’s SeedMaster air drills. Those cost savings aren’t associated with the farm’s use of the NH telematics system.

We apologize for the error.

Scott Garvey

Bourgault Tillage Tools announces new opener tips

Three new, narrow replacement tips added to the company’s product line

By Scott Garvey

In a recent press release, Bourgault Tillage Tools announced the introduction of three new, narrow opener tips, which will be available for the 2014 seeding season. There are two new three-quarter inch-wide versions. One of them, the 200-TIP-0811, uses the same vertical angle as our 200-TIP-1011 but is narrower, offering lower draft requirements.

“This is on the same vertical angle as our 200-TIP-1011 but narrower,” reads the company’s press release. “This will help producers that are looking for a longer wearing tip that won’t pull rocks and will reduce plugging. Long-time fans of the vertical tip will love the ability to go a little narrower but still receive the benefits of a vertical approach.”

Also on offer this year is the 200-TIP-0511 from Bourgault Tillage Tools is only one half inch wide with an extended piece of carbide on the nose for longer life. The company claims this model is the narrowest replacement opener currently on the market.

“We are happy to provide other tip options to those farmers where our current three-quarter inch and VRT tips do not quite fit their needs,” says Dean Bigelow, R&D Manager for Bourgault Tillage Tools. “Our product line is about 85 per cent farmer driven and these new tips are a result of this process.”

For more information look at the company’s website, www.tillagetools.com.

REPLACEMENT PARTS

The 200-TIP-0511 from Bourgault Tillage Tools is only one half inch wide, making it the narrowest seeding tip on the market, according to the company.

The 200-TIP-0511 from Bourgault Tillage Tools is only one half inch wide, making it the narrowest seeding tip on the market, according to the company.
BY SCOTT GARVEY

One Grainews reader contacted us and asked if we could help provide some insight onto what, if any, real advantages synthetic engine oils offer over the regular, mineral-based types that have been on the market for over a century. In particular, he wanted to know if they really perform better in cold winter weather and why.

To get an answer to that question we contacted Suncor, a major Canadian synthetic lubricants producer. Their media representative put the query to the members of Suncor’s Lubricants Team, and here’s how they responded in an email.

“Synthetic base oils tend to have an overall better low temperature performance (lower pour point, lower cold cranking, and better low temperature pumpability), which is largely enabled by the higher purity of the base oil, especially with respect to lower (or virtually no) wax content. With minimal wax content, there is a significant reduction in the occurrence of gelation in the oil, which can hinder all of the low temperature properties. Better oil flow translates to quicker and better engine protection.

“Synthetic oils are also beneficial for high temperature performance since they naturally have better resistance to oxidation and nitration, which occurs more frequently when the oil is exposed to high temperature conditions.

“Synthetic oils will often better resist oxidation, which can help to extend drain intervals, provided they are combined with high quality additives.

“In some cases, synthetic base oils may translate to higher quality engine oils due to better synergy of the base oils with the additives (e.g. improved soot handling).”

We followed that up with a look at what Shell Oil’s web information page had to say about synthetics:

“Thanks to the oil’s high viscosity index, the viscosity is affected less by temperature changes than with normal mineral oils. In high temperatures, viscosity and shear resistance are retained. This means better engine protection at high speeds or when heavily loaded.

“In low temperatures, oils do not thicken unduly. This means easier starting with less strain on the battery. Oil circulates quickly around the engine, giving protection from the outset. The engine warms up faster and reaches optimum performance sooner, which improves fuel economy.”

There you have it, straight from the horses’ mouths.

Do you have an equipment or workshop question you’ve been trying to find an answer to? Maybe we can help you solve the mystery. Email your question to me at the address below, and we’ll try to find an expert that can give us the straight goods. We’ll pass their answers back to you in the pages of Grainews.

Scott Garvey is Grainews machinery editor. Contact him at Scott.Garvey@fbcpublishing.com.

YOU ASKED US...

Synthetic engine oils in cold weather

Do synthetic engine oils perform better in cold weather? We passed that reader question on to Suncor’s lubricants team.
What’s in your DEF tank?

Like any fluid or lubricant used in ag machines, diesel exhaust fluid needs to meet manufacturer standards, or you may be in for trouble

BY SCOTT GARVEY

A first blush it seems like diesel exhaust fluid, commonly known as DEF, isn’t a thing that warrants much thought. After all, it’s just a blend of distilled water and 32.5 per cent automotive grade urea. And all that happens is it gets injected into a chamber in the engine’s exhaust system to react with nitrogen oxides. What could really go wrong?

As it turns out, quite a lot.

Recently, we at Grainews, have heard credible reports that at least one brand of DEF may have caused engine problems for a customer. That prompted us to do a little digging into the topic. We found out that just as you wouldn’t try and save a few dollars pouring cheap oil into the crankcase of a brand new, very expensive, diesel engine, you shouldn’t scrimp with DEF either. There are dangers.

“With the variety of manufacturers out there, if DEF can be produced in a variety of different ways,” explains Brian Schmidt, product engineer for DEF at John Deere. “There is certainly a plethora of things that could be out of spec. Anything from dust and dirt-type contamination, to the product not being on concentration, to random types of urea quality used to blend the product that could lead to contamination.”

“You could get filter plugging. You could get nozzle plugging on the injector of the SCR system. You could get deposits that form inside the catalyst that reduce its effectiveness. You could also get different PH levels, or different elements that cause corrosion within the system. Most on-highway SCR systems use a DEF quality sensor in the tank. Those look primarily for (urea) concentration levels, which could change if water has evaporated off or the fluid has been watered down. They could send a (trouble) code that way. So far, off-highway hasn’t been mandated to use those sensors.”

Urea concentrations higher than 32.5 per cent in DEF could lead to early SCR system component failures.

“If a manufacturer uses non-auto motive grade urea in the production process, that could be a major problem, too, even if it is blended with good quality water. Ordinary fertilizer-grade urea granules have a coating that contains contaminants that could react negatively with SCR system components when dissolved in the solution during manufacture, and it is usually handled and transported in a way that easily allows for other types of contamination. All of that can cause serious engine problems.

“At this time, API is the only organization regulating the quality of DEF in the U.S. and Canada,” adds Smith. DEF that meets the ISO standard and is certified by API will display the organization’s logo.

“It won’t look like the API ‘doughnut’ (found on engine oil containers),” adds Schmidt. “It’s a black square and it will say ‘American Petroleum Institute certified diesel exhaust fluid’. At this time, the off-road and on-road (engines) are using the same product.”

If you’re in doubt whether or not fluid on the shelf in your farm shop is certified, you can do a product search on API’s website. dielexhaust.api.org/Directory/ Diebsearch, or call their help desk at (877) 562-5187.

When buying DEF for ag equipment, Deere recommends farmers not get ahead of themselves by stockpiling with excessive amounts just to cash in on an occasional sale. “We recommend purchasing DEF in quantities that can be used within a year to avoid any long-term storage issues,” says Smith. “Certainly try to use up any remaining DEF within 18 months. You want to make sure you keep the containers sealed between use to prevent any contamination or evaporation. And keep the containers out of direct sunlight. We recommend not covering the tank. Those look prima rily at -11 C when the 32.5 per cent concentration is maintained.”

“One thing to note is DEF quality is unaffected by freezing,” he continues. “Upon thawing, it may be used without issue. DEF will freeze at -11 C when the 32.5 per cent concentration is maintained.”

If the fluid is diluted with water or concentrated due to evaporation, that freeze point will fluctuate.

So if you’ve cut corners by deliberately purchasing non-certified DEF or you’ve unwisely been burned by poor quality fluid and run into engine problems, what happens to your engine warranty?

“Each one (at John Deere) is handled on a case-by-case basis,” says Schmidt. “It will be up to the deal er to manage that. The primary recommendation is to not cover those (claims). But certainly there are things that can occur (that need to be considered).”

Other engine manufacturers are taking similar approaches on warranty issues caused by faulty DEF.

A key message engine manufacturers have been repeating for years is using non-certified fluid in your equipment to save a few bucks is false economy. Now, that includes DEF as well. “It’s just not worth the risk,” says Schmidt.

Scott Garvey is machinery editor for Grainews. Contact him at Scott.Garvey@HGKPublishing.com.
Left: John Deere also offers portable tanks designed especially for DEF that are made with fittings and materials that won’t react with the fluid or contaminate it. Pumps and tanks originally designed for diesel fuel storage won’t likely be suitable for DEF.

Below: Manufacturers, like John Deere, recommend using diesel exhaust fluid that meets ISO standards and carries an API certification mark. Deere now offers its own branded DEF, which is available through its dealers.
Revised BIXS goes live

Two simple rules for records

BY LEE HART

A lberta rancher Ted Ford didn’t have any real idea how to track the calves in his herd before the new version of BIXS, but he is looking forward to working with the updated version of the marketing tool he says has potential to improve the profitability of his cow-calf operation.

Ford, who ranches near Westlock, just north of Edmonton says BIXS (which stands for Beef InfoXchange System) is providing the mechanism for him to better let the industry know about the quality of cattle he produces, and in return he will get feedback about how his breeding program is working.

“I can’t predict the system yet, but the potential is there,” says Ford, who has been using BIXS for the past couple years and feels there are many people can use it. We’re just starting with this, so we need to have people using the system and all sectors need to use the information BIXS provides to help in their decision making. We all have real potential for the cow-calf guys as we develop our markets here at home, and also as we get into more of these niche or specialty markets around the world."

Ford typically markets his calves as yearlings off pasture in late May/June and most calves are sold as yearlings, although he may sell some of the heavier ones a bit earlier.

So far his input in the BIXS program has been basic, but if people start applying RFID tags until calves are yearlings and then enters those RFID tag numbers in BIXS. Each animal is age verified and he lists them under the tag number.

“That’s all I have done so far, but I know there is more information that could be used in terms of production practices — birth weights, vaccination programs, and entering information on each animal,” he says. “But that’s where I started.”

Once the animal is on BIXS, information is entered through the rest of the production chain, from slaughter. Farmers enter the basic information into BIXS and then get information back from the packer. Those can be used to grade and yielded, says Ford. “That gives me useful information on how my breeding program is working. I do need to be making some changes.”

One limitation he sees is that he has no control of yearlings once they leave his farm. They may end up in a feedlot that feeds to the genetic potential of his breeding program, or they could be in a feedyard that follows a more basic all-in, all-out feeding program. “So you might get a report back and see this group of calves are all AA and I don’t need to be working them to be AAA grade,” says Ford. “So then I have to ask are those calves AA because of my breeding program or was it the feeding program?”

He sees opportunity with BIXS in that if a producer wants to seek out feeders with a feeding program that better matches the genetic potential of his calves. “But as we go along it is all about developing relationships,” he says.

“People get to know my cattle and the quality I produce and I can make connections with people — buyers and feeders — who can do the best job of bringing those calves to the packer,” he says. “I believe as the program develops it has potential to put more money in my pocket.”

REVISED BIXS

After widespread consultation across the industry and a few months of redesign, the new BIXS 2.0 has just been launched. It is simpler, leaner, and is more flexible, says Ford. It is also a more robust and other ranch record-keeping system on the market. And with nearly three million head of cattle in the database, it is starting to generate more useful information across all sectors of the beef industry can use. BIXS can be found on-line at www.bixs.cattle.ca.

ALL ABOUT INFORMATION EXCHANGE

The original BIXS was launched a few years ago as a high-value add of the Canadian beef industry, organized through the Canadian Cattlemen’s Association, the intent of BIXS is to provide an information exchange about cattle produced by Canadian beef producers.

At the cow-calf end, producers can learn how their calves fed and ultimately receive carcass data and grading information. For feeders, packers and even retailers they can use the service to help source cattle that fit specific market needs. It is an information exchange system. It is all voluntary, free, and all year round.

To get started all the producer needs is their phone number and the BIXS ID. It starts with the individual cow-calf producer who enters information about calves produced in his cow-calf operation.

The bull sales and might be a key selection criteria. A commercial producer is less concerned with actual carcass yield and more concerned with calving ease. Weaning weights might also be an important example, however these become less important if calves are not sold at weaning.

Veterinary records are also a key area that impacts profitability. Tracking treatments can provide marketing opportunities and help to define end product quality. For example, some guaranteed antibiotic free programs may offer a premium for calves that have been treated with some verification of production practices.

Pasture/grazing records also could probably be grouped with inver- tory. However, they can provide key insights into management and productivity of a piece of land.

Tracking the number of animals and the days a pasture is used can provide information on “Grazing Days” per acre which is an indicator of yield and productivity. For those who want to take it a step further, monitoring species composition, time of grazing and changes in the landscape over time may also be useful tools.

That’s it. Two simple rules.

1. The data you measure on your operation is for you.

2. Focus on measuring profit points (things that impact profit — production/cost).

The Easiest Way to FM: 2 simple rules for records by sean mcgrath

FARM MANAGEMENT

Two simple rules for records by sean mcgrath

ONE OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN THE BEEF INDUSTRY in the last 20 years has been the need for record-keeping. This is driven by a few different things, but slim margins and the move towards corporate structures (even in the small) land and even auction markets can all be very blinding through BIXS looking for specific types of the cattle, or certain production prac- tices. Individual producer ident- ity is protected. However, if an inquiry is made, administrators of the BIXS program can alert pro- ducers who may have cattle that meet those specs, and then it is up to the producer to decide if he or she wants to connect with the buyer who made the inquiry. Sean McGrath is a rancher and consultant from Vermilion, Alta. He can be reached at sean@ranchingsystems.com or (780)853-9673. For additional information visit www.ranch- ingsystems.com.

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Branded beef pros and cons

ROY LEWIS

With all the terms we are hearing in the beef industry — such as organic, natural, hormone-free, and sustainable — there is no doubt confusion even for producers trying to raise cattle to fit these programs.

Most of these branded or niche programs are trying to differentiate themselves from traditional beef production practices. If as a producer you are interested, get the actual details of the specific branded program and find out the necessary extra work involved, including record-keeping. Finally with the extra record-keeping and potential production losses inherent with some production methods, determine the premium you need to stay in that market. These programs definitely create extra input costs and there can be higher returns, but what is the net profit at the end of the day for you?

There can be good and bad aspects in these programs from a veterinary perspective. You as the producer have the final decision as to whether marketing into the branded program will benefit your herd and its bottom-line.

ANTIBiotic FREE

Some of the more rigid programs call for antibiotic-free cattle and that means just that. If antibiotics are used for some treatment during the calf’s life then that calf is out of the program. All medical treatments whether prophylactic, metaprophylactic or for actual medical cases are usually considered the same. This eliminates all antibiotics in the feed as well as prophylactic treatments. Meat withdrawal periods have been established for all these products which producers adhere to so the product is still safe.

The antibiotic-free programs cater to the public perception that antibiotic usage is undesirable. Technically all raised beef is free of antibiotics if proper withdrawal times are recognized. The authorities in Canada place products such as rumensin, an ionophore, in the same category as antibiotics even though there are no meat withdrawal limitations.

Not being able to use a product such as rumensin in a feed program worries me as we could see decreases in conditions like coccidiosis in cattle and of course, feed efficiency is decreased as well.

The good thing about this program is that without reliance on antibiotics it instills the maximum use of good quality vaccines to prevent disease and a soft or fenced-leaning program done at home to reduce mainly bovine respiratory disease in recently weaned calves.

The antibiotic-free requirement follows through to the packer so if any medication is given in the production chain where necessary the calf again drops out of the program.

Animal welfare needs are often addressed in these programs calling for use of treatments such as painkillers given at castration and other procedures. These also have a withdrawal period that must be adhered to. My one worry is about delay in treatment. If antibiotics get held off for a day or two extra to see if the calf gets over the problem, it could lead to more deaths or chronic cases. Only the individual producer would know if that has happened. When a calf drops out of an antibiotic-free program they are marketed as a normal calf.

PRECONDITIONING

Some programs insist on a true preconditioning program that means a minimum period between weaning day andmarketing day 30 to 60 days is common. This of course has great benefits in the feedlot as calves on a good vaccination program and weaned for that length of time are much less likely to get sick. Also by waiting the 60 days or longer, calves are gaining very well so this results in more pounds to sell. Shrink is minimized then on transport.

Speaking of transport that can be a big win as with these branded programs calves are most often shipped directly to their final destination also minimizing extra transport costs and stress of going through an auction market. Both of these are great management wins.

In the old days, the best returns for the cow-calf operator were generally to wean right off the cow with no vaccines or input costs incurred by the cow-caller operator. From a health, stress and shrink aspect, this is the worse thing you could do to this young calf. These calves were considered by most veterinarian standards high risk to ultra high risk depending on their weight and distance transported.

NO ADDEd HORMONES

“No added hormones” primarily refers to no implanting. This decision must be looked at from an economic standpoint. Every time a male calf is implanted after castration or a heifer calf implanted there are extra gains created without a doubt.

All implants have a zero withdrawal for slaughter so are very safe. Calves can receive implants up to three to four times until slaughter. This depends on how young calves are implanted and target weight at marketing. Every time an implant is not given, pounds of gain are lost. This is fine as long as these HF (hormone-free or no added hormones) programs the selling
Beef demand strong, but will it last?

Plains to protect the welfare of 138 birds in southern Alberta and Saskatchewan is not only raising the hackles of ranchers, landowners and municipal officials in a designated area, but could have a far reaching impact on all agricultural activity in the country, say producers at the centre of the controversy.

The concern is that if the federal government can slap a protection order over a designated area with some other wildlife protection actions on land use activities in a bid to save the declining Greater Sage Grouse population, then it won't be a foot in the door using these protection orders to protect any number of ecosystems or species critical to the Alberta foothills or burrowing owls in Saskatchewan or badgers in Ontario. It's a question: It could be a who's next scenario.

The Greater Sage Grouse Emergency Protection Order, the first of its kind in Canada, was created by the federal Minister of Environment in December 2013 and went into effect in February. It is one of the tools that can be used under the federal Species at Risk Act (SARA). Along with the protection order, came a more detailed Recovery Strategy.

The very southeast corner of Alberta and southwest corner of Saskatchewan are within the range of the Greater Sage Grouse. There are plenty of birds in the core of their native habitat in Montana, for example. There is still a hunting season there. But in this part of Canada, bird numbers have declined steadily over the past 30 years. It is estimated there were about 2,500 birds in the 1980s and now the head count is about 138.

RANCHERS WORRIED

For long-time ranching families like Keith and Rhonda Reese of Irma, Alta. and Randy and Teresa Stokke of Consul, Sask, part of the concern is about what the protection order and recovery strategy says, as well as about what it doesn't say. And of course there is general concern about how it came about in the first place — the need to minimize noise, minimal disturbance of habitat, and specific fencing requirements. Reese says farmers could be out with a post-pounder and be guilty of so much noise. He says for years they have practiced a 50/50 grazing system — leaving 50 per cent of the forage behind. The recovery strategy refers to 25 per cent of grazing removal, which in essence reduces the amount of grazing allowed by 50 per cent of the normal practice. “If we have to cut back cattle numbers by 50 per cent that definitely affects our ability to make an income,” says Reese.

Rhonda Reese says it appears ranchers and industrial activity is being targeted for declining bird numbers, but it points to bigger factors such as the weather — cold winters and wet springs, an increase in predators such as the reintroduced swift fox, an increase in predatory birds such as ravens, and even West Nile Virus carried by mosquitoes to which the sage grouse is susceptible.

Very similar views are expressed by Randy Stokke whose family has ranched for three generations in the Consul area, south of the Cypress Hills and just north of the U.S. border. “Old timers say in the early 1900s there were none of these birds here and then they started to move in later,” says Stokke. “When I was a young boy I remember seeing them around, but then we have seen any for the past 20 years or more. With this order they seem to be blaming the ranchers, and imposing a stewardship practice, we are not pushing the solution. Rather than making demands farmers are just looking to sit down and talk and trying to work with us. Other than getting a registered cattle, we are looking for no group has ever tried talking to me.”

APPEAL PLANNED

The whole issue is spawning a very collective management in both provinces seeking to have the protection order rescinded, followed by a full review of the Species at Risk Act. Ranchers, farmers, other landowners, municipalities, provincial and national livestock organizations, industry and utility companies are all organizing to form an appeal against the emergency protection order.

“The isn’t just an issue that affects our isolated corner of the province,” says Reese. “If this is imposed here it could be imposed in any other part of the country. And it has potential to seriously impact the federal government and then we have always been interested in protecting wildlife. But imposing this order without any consultation or without co-operation isn’t the way to go about it.”

Lee Hart is editor of Cattleman’s Corner based in Alberta. Contact him at 403-552-1764 or by email at lee@fbcpublishing.com.

Sage grouse issue heats up

Lee Hart

THE MARKETS

U.S. WHOLESALE BEEF PRICES

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Total: 26.19

Source: USDA

BEef demand strong but will it last?

an all beef product lines are expected as wholesale slaughter pace continues to run 6.4 percent behind last year's pace while year-to-date beef production is also down by six percent. At the same time, year-to-date pork production is down 1.3 percent compared to 2013. The USDA recently lowered its total 2014 pork production estimate by nearly 600 million pounds. Hog inventories have been sharply trimmed due to the Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea virus, which has killed approximately six percent of the U.S. hog herd. Canadian cattle production is running two per cent ahead of last year while the overall slaughter is slightly lower.

Canadian exports have been a main factor sustaining Alberta fed cattle prices with exports of fresh/chilled beef cuts to the U.S. up nearly 20 per cent last year.

The April USDA cattle-on-feed report showed total inventories down one percent from last year while placements were down five percent compared to April 2013. Given current feedlot inventories, I'm expecting an upward revision to second-quarter feedlot production estimates. Adverse conditions have also delayed feedlot commitments. In late-April, cattle prices in the U.S. southern plains were trading at $145/cwt, down from the highs of $150/cwt earlier in spring. Alberta fed cattle prices near $146/cwt also down from the March highs of $150/cwt. The market has come under some pressure due to the quarterly over-quarter increase in beef supplies while the volatile wholesale beef market is also loosing steam at the higher levels.

RESTAURANTS REDUCE PORTIONS

It is important to note that consumer restaurant spending generally stays fairly flat into the summer period. Restaurants have trimmed portion sizes to keep prices in check, while government policies have also provided smaller packaging for food. Consumers have seen the spend.

Obesity is a huge problem in North America so the higher prices may be a good thing for the population, but that is another story. The main point is that demand is not moving higher with current livestock levels. Therefore, a small increase in supply can have a larger effect on the fed cattle price structure when market is near historical balance. It is important to note that the wholesale beef price chart with the recent volatility.

The feeder cattle market continues to percolate higher due to strong fed cattle prices and reasonably fed feed grains. It is important to realize the fed cattle market is expected to grind lower into the summer, while feed barley prices are expected to stay firm to higher. These two factors will take the momentum out of the feeder market. Fed cattle pen closeouts are about $10/cwt above breakeven so there is some breathing room for the feeder market to absorb the softer fed cattle economics. On the flip side, cow-calf producers need to watch the corn and barley markets. If adverse growing conditions materialize, feeder prices will also come under pressure. I'm somewhat bullish about barley prices for new crop. I doubt the market can sustain quality 250 pound steers at $240/cwt. Problems with high moisture levels and potential hard freeze in the southern U.S. are up in the air. Feedlot operators are also concerned about the potential of a bad crop or speaking engagements, he can be reached at grgulen@fbcpublishing.com or at 403-552-1764.
When you grow up on a busy cow-calf operation like Coy Schellenberg did, you learn that attention to detail matters, especially when things get hectic.

One of the busiest times of year for producers is heading into spring and early summer. Calving season, often with round-the-clock herd checks. Yearlings and replacements moving to grass.

All of that, Schellenberg knows, means animal health processes need to be managed particularly closely. He has a unique perspective. He is a producer himself and also provincial co-ordinator for the Verified Beef Production (VBP) program, Canada’s beef on-farm food safety program.

The recommended approach and the rationale for those recommendations are clear to Schellenberg. But he also knows the mental barriers that can tempt producers to take shortcuts.

His advice? Keep it simple.

Know the core issues. To him the key parts of the animal health Standard Operating Procedure under VBP are threefold. Health product withdrawal times, to make sure there are no chemical residues in meat. Managing needle use to prevent physical contamination of meat. And keeping proper records, to prove what you’re doing.

Beat the “busy” excuse. It’s hectic managing calving and processing cattle onto grass. Slow down during processing to ensure products are administered correctly and take time to write down what you’ve done.

Value record-keeping. Schellenberg believes most cattlemen are already doing things well enough to pass a VBP audit. That, he believes, is kudos to the Canadian Cattlemen’s Association for the effort put into building the VBP program to help demonstrate responsible production.

The difference is today not all producers value records enough to keep them up to date. “It’s the most overlooked area in animal health management,” he says. “They may feel they have a good memory and can recall which animals were treated with what. But at the end of the day it’s a busy world. To reduce error and to protect themselves and their industry, they need to clearly know what is going on.”

Manage needles. It may be tempting when you are busy, but don’t bend a needle back. It is likely to break where it was bent. And use detectable needles.

Use your vet. There’s real added value in having a veterinarian come out to your operation, says Schellenberg. There are times like preg checking where they will be at your operation anyway. But building a herd health program just makes sense, to have a clear vaccination program, for example, or improve reproduction rates.

There is no denying this is a cash expense, he says. But once you develop a reputation with your vet so they know your operation and your objectives, it creates efficiency and effectiveness. It can be so convenient to get them on the phone, and they are comfortable enough to give you advice without having to come out to do it.
Proper mineral supplement can prevent grass tetany

M any parts of western Canada suffered through one of its longest and coldest winters in decades. It’s anybody’s guess that arctic temperatures and belly-high snows predispose beef cows to grass tetany when green lush grass begins to appear parasitically. However, proper nutrient supplementation to the cows’ early spring diet eliminates risk of this highly preventable magnesium-deficiency disease.

Reported causes of grass tetan- ny or hypomagnesaemia often affect mature cattle grazing rapidly growing, magnesium-deficient pastures. Symptoms of grass tetany may start with extreme nervousness, and then progress to a lack of muscle coordination and spasms, staggering, and finally failure to stand. If not immediately untreated, most animals suffering from tetany symptoms die. The risk of grass tetany in beef cattle seems to be higher in a number of cool-season pastures, namely: fescue, timothy, orchard grasses, brome-grass, and vernal wheatgrass. It rarely appears in legume pastures containing clovers or alfalfa. Magnesium is stored in the skeleton, with deficiency symptoms, quickly. Regardless of the “tetany ratio,” the predictability of grass tetany has remained unclear. Some newer field trials have shown that cattle can be affected in some magnesium-deficient pastures, while not affected in others. It appears cattle fed low-salt (sodium chloride) on a free-choice basis are rarely affected by grass tetany. However, cattle provided with magnesium supplements on pasture with low sodium or salt intake may come down with grass tetany.

Speculation is that high pastures that cause grass tetany are very high in potassium. This high concentration of potassium may interfere with magnesium absorption in the rumen. But when salt is fed on the same pasture it counteracts this excessive dietary potassium, while restoring any metabolic electrolyte imbalance in the cause in the potassium in the first place. As a result, there is more magnesium absorption and the threat of grass tetany is decreased. A beef cow that receives inadequate magnesium or potassium in its body from grass teta- 

cry pastures usually comes down with deficiency symptoms, quickly. Although, 30 per cent of magnesium is stored in the skeleton, with the remainder in the soft tissues and fluids, this macro-mineral is poorly retained compared to other minerais stored in the body. Luckily, there are several methods to prevent grass tetany on pastures each spring.

MANAGEMENT TIPS

Sound grass tetany preventative measures include:

• Feed a “high magnesium” brand (with vitamins) that con-
tains at least 15 - 20 grams of magnesium oxide in every 100 grams of mineral mix. Provide this mineral mix to cattle about two to three weeks before cattle are released to pasture. Continue to feed a high Mg mineral for the first part of the pasture season, when grasses are lush and growing.

• Ensure all cattle are consuming sufficient grass tetany. For example, the rate at 15 - 30 grams per head per day, preferably in loose form.

This salt might also be mixed with the high magnesium mineral. All these programs rely on the predictability of grass tetany. There are pros and cons in all “branded beef” type programs, but they all help to increase the producer’s reputation in the industry and expand mar-

kets. The future will tell how sustainable they are in the long term, and whether there is the need to change requirements to reflect the best needs of the cat-
tle and still get the producer the returns they deserve.

Peter Vitti is an independent livestock nutritionist and consultant based in Winnipeg. To reach him call 204-294-3907 or by email at vitti@mts.net.
A month of tragic losses

HEATHER SMITH THOMAS

MARCH 25
A week ago Andrea took Emily to the doctor to have the stitches taken out of her leg, and a cast put on. Over the weekend Andrea’s kids enjoyed helping us feed cows. Several are ready to calve. Andrea cleaned out the old bedding and managed from the calving barn.

On Sunday we brought the cows down from the fields and sorted Michael and Carolyn’s cows. Carolyn and young Heather came with their stock trailer to get their two pairs below the barn (the calves born during the cold weather in February) to haul to the upper place. They also hauled their horses down and trailed the rest of their cows to the upper place. Hopefully the weather will warm up before they start calving.

APRIL 10
Andrea has been staying here at nights to watch the cows so I can sleep, then I get up at 4 a.m. to watch them (checking on them as I type articles) and Andrea sleeps. Emily is able to drive now even though she’s still on crutches, so she gets the kids up and takes them to the school bus in the mornings.

Our friends Pete and Bev Wiebe from Canada arrived last week to stay a couple days on their way home. They spent part of the winter with the Mennonite Disaster Service building houses in Texas for families that lost their homes.

The second day they were here, Pete helped Lynn haul more big bales around to the heifers and load the feed truck. Bev helped me cook dinner for everyone that evening here at our house. We’d just finished eating when Lynn’s sister Jenelle called, from the hospital, to tell us that their brother Will had suffered a massive heart attack. Lynn, Andrea and Emily drove to the hospital, but Will passed away before they got there. The next morning we visited with Pete and Bev before they had to leave for the last part of their journey home to British Columbia. They were good support for us in this time of loss and grief.

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The weather finally warmed up. Andrea and I rode Breezy and Ed for the first time this year, to start getting those old mares ready for the little girls to ride. It was the first time we’ve ridden Breezy since her eye was removed in December. It healed nicely, and she is adapting to being sightless on that side. We rode several times during the next few days. Breezy handles herself very well on the trails and hillsides. On our third ride we found a newly shed elk horn (six point) and Andrea carried it home on Breezy.

Michael came home from North Dakota for two weeks and was able to be here for his Uncle Will’s funeral Tuesday. Lynn and
Magpie trap may close the door on bird problems

There have always been a lot of magpies in our area, but we didn’t really pay much attention ‘til they decided to attack our livestock. Apparently, like their relatives in the crow family, they enjoy shiny things. This has been a large issue since we started using the metal Ketchum Kurl Lock tags on our replacement females.

At first, it was a mystery as to how these poor lambs were getting such awful wounds on the tops of their heads. Then we caught magpies pecking the heads of lambs, leaving them bleeding. This behaviour moved on to magpies attempting to eat the sheep with shearing wounds. Then they went after cattle with any type of scratch. These birds are relentless, which causes a lot of stress for the animals.

When considering how to deal with the over population of magpies it is important to consider how smart these birds are. A study (available at http://www.phoenix-veterinaire.com/download/file1508_article4.pdf) looked into magpies attempting to build one of their own, these plans work and allow for a mirror to be installed. This cage can be covered in poultry wire.

THE CAGE

Cut to length: 4 pieces 800 mm (31.5 inches) long 12 pieces 400 mm (15.7 inches) long
Mark the four side pieces (A) to uprights (C) and notch them out. (Notching makes assembly easier and more rigid.)
Nail top and bottom side pieces (A) to uprights (B) to complete two side frames.

Place and nail cross rails (C) into notches to complete the frame of the cage.

Fix poultry wire (D) across the central partition. This central area is where a mirror can be hung to entice birds into the cage negating the need for a decoy bird.

Place and nail cross rails (C) into notches to complete the frame of the cage.

THE DOORS

Make either a ‘top trap door’ or ‘end trap door’ (you only need one). Allow a minimum clearance of 12 mm (about half an inch) between the trap door and the cage frame. This stops the door from catching the edge of the cage.

TOP TRAP DOOR

A ‘top trap door’ should be about two-thirds of the length of the opening. If the trap door is too long, the bird itself may stop it from springing shut. The trap door may even force the bird out of the trap.

Hinge the door to one end of the cage with two butt hinges. Use freely operating hinges, such as 65 mm (2.5 inch) galvanised butt hinges, or use a short strip of leather or similar material on each side. The door should be able to freely spring shut. If you’ve used rigid netting for your trap door, secure it using small fencing staples (partially driven).

Set the trigger as low as possible on the door rail to make it as sensitive as possible. Entice birds onto the trigger using a piece of bread or meat. The trap is sprung when a bird jumps down onto the trigger.

END TRAP DOOR

Make an ‘end trap door’ as light as possible. The lighter it is, the lighter the trigger can be set and the less weight will be required to trigger it. Hardware cloth is ideal for making ‘end trap doors.’

Hang the door as for the top trap door (above). Use partially driven staples for hinges. Make sure your door can swing freely.

Bend a piece of six to eight mm (about one quarter inch diameter) steel rod (H), such as an old electric fence standard, at a right angle and fix to both door rails with small staples. Ensure your trap door will work effectively by making sure the bottom end of the rod is well clear of the cage bottom rail, and the door clears the central netting as it closes.

Make two wire hooks, crimp them onto a piece of stretch cord (J) and hook them onto the door netting and the cage netting as illustrated.

When a bird stands on the rod, it triggers the trap and the door slams shut.

These instructions are part of a fact sheet from New Zealand. The farm where we saw this trap in action found that the best bait was meat. Magpies are omnivores but seem to prefer meat.

My theory is they can smell rotting meat from a greater distance than a piece of bread. We have found other methods of bird control to be ineffective, so we are willing to make one of these traps for ourselves. Hopefully this will end our magpie troubles.

Debbie Chikousky farms with her family at Narcisse, Manitoba. Visitors are always welcome. Contact Debbie at debbie@chikouskyfarms.com.

CHIKOUSKY

We had several cold days of wind and rain. This brought on a few cases of scours in the calves. We had to catch Buffalo Baby’s calf a couple days ago, and Buffalo Girl’s calf today, to treat with neomycin sulphate solution (oral antibiotic). Andrea small Magpies are omni-

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What is working for you Mom? And what is not?

O
c over the next few months I am excited to share with you some of the practical tools Dr. Megan McKenzie and I have developed in the process of writing our new book Farming’s In-Law Factor. In May we celebrate Mother’s Day, but I think we should be celebrating the many roles of farm women every day of the year. We can do this by “checking in” to see what is still a good role for Mom and what she would like to let go of. I’m still putting in a garden this month because the act of digging, pulling weeds and planning a flower garden give me a sense of groundedness. Gardening also is a space where I feel close to the memories of my own mom, and I seem to enjoy her legacy to me when I am planting new plants.

For some farm women who are following the rules of “you should do this, we always have done that.” there is a burden of expectation that she would like to shed. The reality is that on many family farms, traditional western gender roles still play out. Mothers-in-law (MILs) and daughters-in-law (DILs) often find themselves working closely together with each other, sisters-in-law, grandmothers, and other women in the family. The harmony in the family team unit will likely increase if folks are honest with each other about which roles are still ones they want to embrace, and which tasks they would rather not do.

For this exercise, brainstorm a list of roles taken on by the MIL, DIL, or other women in the family. Beside each, record who does this task and whether this is working for each person involved. If any of the tasks that have been assigned, delegated, or dropped on lap are not working for one or more party, discuss possible solutions to the problem. Maybe there is someone else on the farm team who would be better suited to that role. Perhaps the duties could be shared. Is it possible that she needs acknowledgment for the work that she is doing? Balancing out the workload may mean reducing the number of tasks, hiring or recruiting extra help, or agreeing to reduce expectations around tasks. Sometimes these trade-offs make a world of difference for those involved, even though they can sometimes be hard to swallow.

Some examples include: when the women are helping to combine, the men also help make meals; hire a part-time bookkeeper; reduce the size of the garden; put young children in daycare; or seek out government homecare to help care for aging relatives.

During the month of May when things are stressful with the push to get the crop in, I hope you will treat everyone with an extra measure of grace and kindness. If you want to order a copy of Farming’s In-Law Factor, go to www.elainefroese.com/store. The book deals with conflict tools, the culture of agriculture, and practical tips to understanding what family members and in-laws need to work well together. It also deals with what to do when things don’t work out.

Happy Seeding!

Elaine Froese

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Grande Prairie
74.2 mms

Jasper 49.9 mms

Medicine Hat 77.5 mms

Swift Current 68.8 mms

Estevan 67.8 mms

Portage 70.9 mms

Winnipeg 83.8 mms

7 / 21

9 / 22

10 / 23

63.0 mms

62.8 mms

67.0 mms

66.9 mms

68.2 mms

69.9 mms

71.8 mms

72.9 mms

8 / 20

9 / 23

10 / 24

11 / 23

Grainews.ca

October 2014

Feedback or comments gratefully received at feedback@grainews.ca

For June

Precipitation Outlook For June

Temperatures are normals for June 15th averaged over 30 years.
Precipitation (water equivalent) normals for June in mms.

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Solving the labour shortage
Southeast Saskatchewan farmer using connections in former home country

BY CHRISTALEE FROESE

It was simple economics that brought German farmer Ole Michaelsen to Canada. But it is his connection with his homeland that has kept his Saskatchewan grain farm thriving.

The former German dairy farmer has used his connections in his home country to attract workers to help him deal with a labour shortage that is plaguing southeast Saskatchewan.

 Michaelsen, and his parents Otto and Christiane, have been using their ties in Germany to find immigrant labourers for their grain farm and the farms of many neighbours in the Lampman area.

“Our first worker was a friend of mine who had a farm with his parents in Germany and he offered to come over and help for a season just for the experience,” said Ole.

That first immigrant worker application in 2008 has led to 20 or 30 similar applications each year, as Ole has become an expert at securing student and summer labourers for several farm operations in the area.

The workers usually come to Canada in two groups — one from April to October and a second group of university students comes during the school break, from July to mid-October.

The Michaelsens agree that they could not have grown their grain operation to its current size of 9,000 acres without the help of international workers who come from Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

The state of the labour market when Ole immigrated in 2007 (followed by his parents in 2008) was such that farm workers were nearly impossible to find.

“The oilfield in this area draws people away because the money is better and the work schedule is better,” said Ole.

Many European university students and farmhands are eager to come to Canada to work as the jobs here pay up to three times the hourly rate of that in their homelands and working in Canada offers a unique agricultural experience.

The Michaelsens pay their employees $2,200 a month, in addition to supplying room and board, a cellphone, use of a vehicle and often they’ll pay for flights as well.

Ole does all of the immigration paperwork, providing his services for free. In exchange, his neighbours will share work with the Michaelsens.

Christiane said the give-and-take atmosphere in Canada is something the family had to get used to.

“In Germany, you would never do that. In Canada we find people more welcoming and friendly and neighbours are happy to work together and help each other out,” said Christiane.

The Michaelsens came to Canada because of a land shortage in Germany that resulted in them not being able to expand their dairy herd beyond 300 cattle. After intensively shopping for land here and considering 68 farms, they decided that the Lampman area offered the best opportunity for farm expansion.

“In 2007 we bought 3,000 acres. The package included the build-ings and the equipment,” said Ole, adding that the farmer he purchased from provided advice and the original hired man agreed to stay on for one year to help with the transition.

Now that immigrant workers are integral part of the operation, the Michaelsens have moved a double apartment trailer onto their yard. It consists of living space for four workers, complete with four bedrooms, two bathrooms and two living rooms.

The students are easy to find because word of mouth creates more than enough applications for the 20 to 30 positions filled in the area each season. A number of them need to complete a six-month practicum on a working farm, and since Ole has his master in agriculture from the University of Berlin, he can grant the students their practicum certificates.

The only problem is that provincial legislation has made it more difficult to bring immigrant workers into Saskatchewan.

“Three years ago the visa application was one page and now it’s a 30-page application and you have to go through a lot of stages, so it makes it really difficult,” said Ole.

The Michaelsens intend to continue to use foreign workers and Ole believes the demand in the area will only increase.

Lampman mixed farmer Mark Walter hopes they will be able to continue to obtain working visas, as he currently employs two German workers and regularly employs one or two more students during seeding and harvest.

He said he hates to even think about what it would be like without the work the Michaelsens do to attract European labourers.

“It would be a struggle, that’s for sure. We’d have to try to get older farmers, I guess, because it’s really hard down here in the southeast as the oilfield draws away so many young people,” said Walter.

The Michaelsens love their new farming life in Canada, but they can’t imagine being successful without their ability to attract workers from their home country.

Photo: Christalee Froese
No time for retirement

BY EDNA MANNING

With over 50 years’ experience as a businesswoman, farmer, and entrepreneur, Peter Rhodes wasn’t ready to retire when he emigrated from England to Canada in 2002 at the age of 70. Instead, he launched into another venture.

“My partner Lisa and I lived in Saskatchewan for a short time, but I’m not a city boy. We started looking around and purchased 80 acres close to the city, I hauled the land and industrial structures into Saskatoon and she didn’t want to commute long distances,” he says.

The location was ideal for a U-pick fruit orchard. Rhodes cultivated 12 acres of land and planted 10,000 raspberry canes and 3,000 black currant bushes. “When I first came, I thought, there’s no point in planting Saskatoons I might be gone before the bushes started to produce,” he said. However, he had demanded for them almost immediately and has since planted about five acres.

Rhodes didn’t realize at the time that black currants weren’t commonly grown in Canada, and there was minimal interest in the berries at first. “But the goodness of black currants started to spread. Each year they’ve become more and more popular,” he says.

Now demand for the fruit usually exceeds Rhodes’ supply. Cypress Hills Vineyard and Winery alone purchases over 3,000 pounds of the fruit annually.

Black currants are highly regarded not only for their intense, delicious flavour, but also for their nutritional benefits. They are rich in phytonutrients and antioxidants, and high in vitamin C. They also contain minerals such as iron, phosphorus, calcium, copper, magnesium, manganese, potassium and zinc.

“During the Second World War, England encouraged people to grow black currants because oranges were difficult to obtain. The berries are excellent for preventing colds, flu and fighting diseases like cancer, arthritis and skin conditions. They’re also good for eyesight and the seeds are rich in essential fatty acids,” he said.

Black currants are delicious fresh, or processed in jams, jellies and sauces, and can also be used in ice creams, cordial, liqueur and wine. Rhodes sells the berries fresh or frozen, and also has jam, gelato and sorbet for sale.

Black currant bushes are extremely winter hardy and Rhodes says he hasn’t had any serious problems with disease or insect infestations, partly because there are very few growers in the area. However, several insects are common to the fruit. One is the fruit fly that lays its egg in the developing berry, which usually falls off before the fruit is ripe. Another — the currant borer — affects only the stems and canes, which have to be pruned in early spring.

The majority of his black currants are a hardy, disease-resistant Polish variety. He also grows “Whistler,” a few Scottish varieties, and some of the European “Ben” series, which are mildew resistant. Raspberries are another popular fruit, although more labour intensive as they require annual pruning and thinning. Rhodes has approximately 30 acres of raspberries, with about 14 different varieties.

Last summer Rhodes started a spinoff venture. He’d read of the health benefits of dried raspberry and black currant leaves and purchased the equipment to grind the dried leaves for making tea. Managing a U-pick operation means long hours in the summer for him, his wife Lisa and their 10-year-old daughter, Hanna. During the winter Rhodes Catches up on the paper work and services all the equipment so it is in good working order for the spring.

Rhodes says he enjoys work and the solitude of country life. “A lot of people at 70 have packed up and are waiting to die. I prefer to keep busy. It’s just pleasant out here in the summer — no noise, just the birds.”

For more information visit www.rhodesraspberries.ca, phone 306-954-6748 or 306-612-2561, or email peterrhodes2@sasktel.net. The orchard is open from early July to late September. Call ahead for availability.

BY EDNA MANNING

One of the many benefits of any group or club is the opportunity for its members to share common interests. They learn from one another, share ideas and suggestions, and cultivate new friendships. The Sask Valley Riding Club was formed in 1996 with these goals in mind.

“A lot of people have horses out on farms and are pretty much riding by themselves. When you want to get more specialized, such as rein ing, cutting or barrel racing, or you just want to have more fun with it, you need to get out and about with others,” says Giselle Malyk, current president of the club.

“For us, there’s also a strong interest in contributing to the community by supporting causes or charities that are of special interest to our members. These include the United Healthy Children’s Telethon Foundation, the Equine Health Research Fund, the Children’s Hospital and Breast Cancer Research. One of our members, Ray Kneeland, who owns the OK Corral near Martensville,

Our trail rides are mostly one-day adventures. We look for interesting places to ride and have found there are many fun areas around the city that you can go to and return in a day. The farthest out we’ve been recently is the Prince Albert area. Some of the smaller groups might head off a bit farther to places such as the Cypress Hills, but mostly we tend to do day excursions,” says Malyk.

The rides are sanctioned so everyone is insured through the Saskatchewan Horse Federation in case of injuries, and the club has guidelines that encourage younger people to wear helmets.

The gymkhana, often held at the OK Corral north of Saskatoon, are organized with fun in mind. “From barrel racing, to pole bending to reining, they’re just games and everybody laughs at themselves trying to get their horses to cooperate,” says Malyk.

As well as monthly meetings, the club co-ordinates riding clinics for members. “We bring in trainers from different disciplines. The club pays for some of the cost with the membership fees and the fundraising events we do. This gives our members the opportunity to get the expertise they otherwise wouldn’t be able to afford,” she says.

Members of the club enjoy spending time with and looking out for each other, and providing advice and tips about horse health and care. Also, an extensive library with videos and books is available to members.

“We also have a Facebook page where people can share ideas. It’s really a community of information at your fingertips,” Malyk says. Maloy grew up on a farm and has been riding since the age of 10, participating in English and Western riding events. “Now I just ride for pleasure. When you have it in your blood, it’s just something you’ve got to do. It feeds the soul.”

The goals of the Sask Valley Riding Club are simple: “We want to help each other, help our horses and benefit the community. In short, promote riding in a family atmosphere. I feel ours is an important organization to keep going. People love it,” Malyk says.

For more information go to www.saskvalleyridingclub.com.

Home Quarter Farm Life

Sask Valley Riding Club

Giselle Malyk is the current president of the club.

There are many reasons to rinse.

#1 Only rinsed containers can be recycled

#2 Helps keep collection sites clean

#3 Use all the chemicals you purchase

#4 Keeps collection sites safe for workers

#5 Maintain your farm’s good reputation

No excuse not to!

For more information or to find a collection site near you visit cleanfarms.ca

Now, take your empty fertilizer containers along for the ride!


**Emails, phone calls, letters!**

Ted Meseyton

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Fraser” was Kerry’s first hit song around Vancouver while working guitar in hand, performed in and during his early teens, Kerry with B.C. in 1923 (10 km southeast of McKague, in NE Sask., south of Tisdale. Enjoy your page in Graunews. To keep potato bugs away, cut a sprig of garlic and place it on the potato hill. Leave only one or two plants to grow as they might otherwise crowd each other out and I haven’t had any potato bugs since I sowed flax in the potato patch. When I plant tomatoes I put shredded newspaper in the hole, cover with a bit of soil, and put in the potato plant. If the plant is tall make a trench and lay the stem, cover with soil and just let some of the top stick out of the dirt. I also put tomato plants in the refrigerator overnight. Do this before the plants are really tall and don’t put them too close to the sides of the fridge or they may be damaged. I got this hint from a fellow at the Research Centre at Brooks, Alberta. It must trick the plants into thinking it is fall and they have to produce their seed. I also use shredded newspaper to mulch around the plants, when they get bigger. Another hint... I cut the paper towels from the toilet paper into – I used to enjoy growing tomatoes in the refrigerator overnight. Do this before the plants are really tall and don’t put them too close to the sides of the fridge or they may be damaged. I got this hint from a fellow at the Research Centre at Brooks, Alberta. It must trick the plants into thinking it is fall and they have to produce their seed. I also use shredded newspaper to mulch around the plants, when they get bigger. Another hint... I cut the paper towels from the toilet paper into two-inch lengths and then split them to wrap around a stem of bedding plants to thwart the cutworms.

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Indeterminate tomato plants need to be staked or trellised to provide strong support and also trained and pruned to a single stem. This applies to any heritage, heirloom and hybrid varieties that are vining in nature. Shown are a pair of tomatoes that need to be pruned out. It’s located in the crotch between the main central stem and side leaves. All side shoots up to just below a cluster of tomato flowers need to be removed at least twice weekly. Remember to mist tomato blossoms once with 100 per cent pure unsweetened apple juice such as SunRype brand if your plants are slow to set fruit and to prevent blossom drop. Topp can be clipped off and new blossoms pinched out toward the end of August and into September to direct plant energy into existing fruits.

The current supply of onions growing in fields this year is down... way down... and it’s likely to remain that way. It meant onion prices are likely to rise up — perhaps way up. If you’re not growing your own from seed in the home garden, it’s not too late to do so. Started onion transplants should still be available at greenhouses and garden centres. I’m encouraging my fellow Canadians to practise self-sufficiency and do as much as we can to provide for ourselves, and our families on as many fronts as possible. That includes growing our own storage onions for next winter. Don’t depend totally on someone else to feed you. How we use those text-carrying chemicals that are released by onions on the chopping board to consider. Prior to coming, chill onions in the deep freeze for two days. Since a small amount of water on the stove into which is stirred a teaspoonful of dry mustard and a fellow at the Research Centre at Brooks, Alberta. It must trick the plants into thinking it is fall and they have to produce their seed. I also use shredded newspaper to mulch around the plants, when they get bigger. Another hint... I cut the paper towels from the toilet paper into two-inch lengths and then split them to wrap around a stem of bedding plants to thwart the cutworms.

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**A WORD ABOUT ONIONS!**

Onions! Oh how Canadians love ‘em! Word is out from the weather forecasters that extreme weather conditions across North America have upset planting schedules at many sites where onions are grown. What does it mean?

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**aña you believe it? Here we are well into May and still talking about the weather and now we’ll have our longest period of daylight hours. Many still wonder if the weather and growing conditions will be like on farms and gardens during 2014. Although I’m optimis- tic, I wonder if Mother Nature will send us overdue statements via the weather as a reminder we owe her. Meantime get comfortable and many thanks for joining me. Here’s a “tip of my hat” to all...”

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**LOVE HEARING FROM YOU**

Do you have a story about a farm or home-based business? How about some household management tips? Does someone in the family have a special diet need? Share some of your experiences with us.

Send them to FarmLife, 1666 Dublin Ave., Winnipeg, Man. R3H 0L1. Phone: 1-800-665-0652 or email susan@fbpublishing.com. Please remember we can no longer return photos or material. 

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**A BIT MORE ABOUT KERRY REGAN**

He was born at Peace Coupe, B.C. in 1923 (10 km southeast of Dawson View). His birth name was Oscar Meiehle. In 1934 he later changed his name to Kerry Regan. He graduated early, Kerry with guitar in hand, performed in and around Vancouver while working on fishing boats. “My Home by the Fraser” was Kerry’s first hit song if I recall correctly on the Aragon label and reached No. 1 in the late 1940s. During the ‘50s Kerry performed with Lucille Starr, another Canadian entertainer who became internationally famous for her rendition of “The French Song.” It sold six million copies. When Kerry Regan decided to retire to farm life in 1961, he continued to dabble off and on in music and wrote more songs including his famous classic tune “Poor, Poor Farmer.” We owe a debt of gratitude to legendary country singer-songwriters.

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**NEXT A TYPEWRITTEN LETTER**

That I, Ted, received in mid-February.

Hi Ted, Firstly let me say how much I enjoy reading your interesting page in Graunews. Secondly, let me introduce myself. I am Larry Fumakami a retired meteorologist living in Winnipeg but with roots in Riverton, Man., my hometown. I was at the weather forecasts in Graunews and hope your readers find them useful too. One of my favorite out and on in music and wrote more songs especially gardening and farming. But I have a confession to make. When I was a young musician I page first page before going on to check the accuracy (or inaccuracy) of my forecasts. When I do a verification of my forecasts, I come up with an accuracy of about 75 per cent. I’d be happy to share my forecasts with your readers as to the “perceived” weather conditions over that area, possibly on a scale of zero to 100 per cent correct.

Lastly, as an aside, when my wife and I visited Vancouver in 1999, we brought back some tomato seeds. These tomatoes are large, low acid and very tasty. Several people have now been growing these tomatoes for more than a year and they are growing tomatoes from the Arbog, Man. area was praising these same tomatoes a few months ago. So I am enclosing a few of the seeds for you to try out. So need a fairly long maturing period. Please let me know of any great job!”

Sue Armstrong

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**Grainews**

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**THE CURRENT SUPPLY OF ONIONS GROWING IN FIELDS THIS YEAR IS DOWN... WAY DOWN... AND IT’S LIKELY TO REMAIN THAT WAY. IT MEANT ONION PRICES ARE LIKELY TO RISE UP — PERHAPS WAY UP. IF YOU’RE NOT GROWING YOUR OWN FROM SEED IN THE HOME GARDEN, IT’S NOT TOO LATE TO DO SO. STARTED ONION TRANSPANTS SHOULD STILL BE AVAILABLE AT GREENHOUSES AND GARDEN CENTRES. I’M ENCOURAGING MY FELLOW CANADIANS TO PRACTICE SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND DO AS MUCH AS WE CAN TO PROVIDE FOR OURSELVES, AND OUR FAMILIES ON AS MANY FRONTS AS POSSIBLE. THAT INCLUDES GROWING OUR OWN STORAGE ONIONS FOR NEXT WINTER. DON’T DEPEND TOTALY ON SOMEONE ELSE TO FEED YOU.

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**A WORD ABOUT ONIONS!**

Onions! Oh how Canadians love ‘em! Word is out from the weather forecasters that extreme weather conditions across North America have upset planting schedules at many sites where onions are grown. What does it mean?

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**Indeterminate tomato plants need to be staked or trellised to provide strong support and also trained and pruned to a single stem. This applies to any heritage, heirloom and hybrid varieties that are vining in nature. Shown are a pair of tomatoes that need to be pruned out. It’s located in the crotch between the main central stem and side leaves. All side shoots up to just below a cluster of tomato flowers need to be removed at least twice weekly. Remember to mist tomato blossoms once with 100 per cent pure unsweetened apple juice such as SunRype brand if your plants are slow to set fruit and to prevent blossom drop. Topp can be clipped off and new blossoms pinched out toward the end of August and into September to direct plant energy into existing fruits.**
Crank up the rate all you want, glyphosate alone still misses a number of hard-to-kill weeds like narrow-leaved hawk’s-beard, fitzweed, stinkweed, dandelion and volunteer canola. With hotter-than-hot systemic activity, DuPont™ Express® herbicides don’t just control weeds, they smoke them from the inside out, getting right to the root of your toughest weed challenges with performance that glyphosate alone can’t match. It’s no wonder Express® goes down with glyphosate more than any other brand in Western Canada!

Visit expressvideo.dupont.ca to see Express® in action – torching tough weeds like dandelion and volunteer canola right down to the roots, so they can’t grow back.

**Express® brand herbicides. This is going to be hot.**

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Bon Voyage Sclerotinia!

For countless ages, sclerotinia “The Pirate of the Prairies” has ravaged the countryside, butchering canola fields and plundering grower profits. But now, thanks to Proline® fungicide, sclerotinia is in over its head.

A single application of Proline can reduce sclerotinia infection rates by up to 80%.

Say goodbye to sclerotinia and enter for a chance to WIN* 1 of 3 - $5,000 travel vouchers.

For more information visit BayerCropScience.ca/EndOfPirates

Forwards, arrière, il est temps de se séparer de la sclérotopnie et d’entrer pour une chance de gagner un voyage de 5 000 $.

Pour plus d’informations, visitez BayerCropScience.ca/EndOfPirates

* Conditions d’éligibilité applicables. Voir online pour plus de détails. Fin du concours le 27 juin 2014.