The meat of the matter in making sausage

Workshop at Food Development Centre helps both professionals and amateurs learn the craft of sausage making

By Lorraine Stevenson

Otto Von Bismarck famously once said, “Laws are like sausages; it is better not to see them being made.” But the Prussian statesman wasn’t in the sausage-making business.

Those who are, or simply experimenting at home with new methods, ingredients or recipes, need to know — and seeing is believing.

That’s what drew 15 participants from across Manitoba to a full-day workshop at the Food Development Centre here earlier this month.

They came to hear MAFRD meat microbiologist and food systems risk-mitigation specialist Gary Graumann talk about protein binders, smoking, piston stuffers, cooking temperatures and other things sausage makers need to know, such as the kinds of cracks and holes listeria likes to hide in and why.

That underlines why these are serious subjects for secondary meat processors who need an in-depth understanding of best practices for recipe formulation, production materials, processing equipment and techniques.

Sausage making is an age-old tradition with many prized family and cultural recipes. But there are also many critically important considerations for safe handling of processed meat.

They emphasize that point.

Graumann noted that the word botulism is derived from the Latin word botulus, meaning “sausage.” That’s not a coincidence.

“I hope I’ve educated people on the safety aspect of it, and the functionality of all the ingredients, from what you’re adding and why, and provided a rationale,” he said.

Hands-on training

Graumann didn’t just stuff the meat of the matter, making sausage. That underlines why these are serious subjects for secondary meat processors who need an in-depth understanding of best practices for recipe formulation, production materials, processing equipment and techniques.

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They emphasize that point.
DID YOU KNOW?

Small farms maintain crop diversity

Rather than preserving ‘heirloom’ varieties, they participate in an ongoing process of outcrossing

Jan R Zimmerman and his colleagues looked at new census data from 11 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. According to a Penn State release, the data shows that small farmers, in many cases women, are the ones preserving landraces of food crops.

A landrace is a locally adapted, traditional variety. Depending on the crop, farmers may plant anywhere from one to 15 different landraces.

“For maize, farmers plant one to three varieties because this crop readily outcrosses to form new varieties, producing too many new hybrids for the farmers to evaluate,” Zimmerman said in a release.

“But the next farm over would probably plant different landraces, so for some more diversity is available.”

He said that while these farmers are often portrayed as protecting vestiges of ‘heirloom crops,’ in fact they are participating in ‘emergent agro-biodiversity systems.’

Zimmerman spoke to the American Association for Advancement of Science annual meeting Feb. 13. He said that ‘peri-urban’ farms — small farms close to cities — are important in maintaining this ongoing outcrossing and diversity. They have good access to urban markets where restaurants prefer local foodstuffs, like maize and quinoa varieties in Peru. But in marginal locations with declining populations in remote rural areas, there are not enough growers and during drought or other disasters, there may not be sufficient seeds to replenish the base of diversity.

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PHOTO: SUSAN RICHARDS

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Manitoba Co-Operator
Ritz announces $3.4 million for Ontario pasta plant

Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz has announced $3.4 million for a Brampton, Ont. company to purchase equipment to make macaroni and cheese and other pasta products.

In a release, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada said the grant to Italpasta Ltd. under the Growing Forward 2 (GF2) framework will enable the company to become a leading producer of macaroni and cheese products and provide more retailers with locally produced in-Canada pasta products.

It is also expected to create eight full-time jobs and increase the demand for locally produced semolina (durum flour) and cheese.

Italpasta was founded in 1989, and has more than 220 employees.

Croplife America joins climate alliance

Croplife America (CLA) has joined the North American Climate-Smart Agriculture Alliance (NACSA).

The alliance says it aims to educate agricultural and forestry leaders, help producers make informed decisions and manage new risks, mobilize leaders to advocate for beneficial changes in land-use practices and inspire action from all sectors in the broader climate change discussion.

"We look forward to joining the diverse representation in NACSA and being part of a meaningful discussion on climate change. The contributions of our crop protection sector already enable farmers practising conservation tillage using modern herbicides to sequester significant carbon in soil — and the tillage reduction saves 558 million gallons of fuel per year," CLA CEO Jay Vroom said in a release.

The North American alliance is led by Solutions from the Land (SfL), a non-profit entity focused on land-based solutions to global challenges. Ernie Shee, president of SfL, and former CEO of the National Association of Conservation Districts, said that "climate change is a real issue for U.S. agriculture and one which we must address."

Other members of the alliance include the American Farm Bureau Federation, the American Soybean Association, the National Corn Growers Association, Western Growers Association, American Farmland Trust, and the Soil and Water Conservation Society.

True North on the verge of official federal certification

At full capacity the plant will be able to kill 1,000 cattle per week

By Jennifer Paige

Manitoba is within weeks of having a modern, federally certified livestock slaughter plant, says Calvin Vaags, owner and operator of True North Foods near Carman.

"We are currently operating right now as a provincial plant but we are actively working towards our federal certification and it shouldn’t be that far away. I am estimating a month to six weeks," Vaags told the recent annual meeting of Manitoba Beef Producers.

"We are currently just waiting on completion of the paperwork. Achieving federal certification is certainly not a small job but by the time we are all said and done we should have a facility with the capabilities of shipping beef anywhere in the world."

Vaags said the facility has been designed to meet all criteria for Canadian, European, Chinese and American markets.

The 35,000-square-foot plant has been designed to accommodate multiple species with the capacity to kill approximately 210 cattle per day or 1,000 head per week.

"We have created a facility that is large enough to be efficient but small enough to effectively manage risk," said Vaags. "The new plant has been open since August and we are currently killing about 75 to 125 cattle or 500 mature head per week but that is nowhere close to capacity."

The facility currently employs approximately 25 staff but at full capacity is expected to employ 80.

The facility will manage cattle, bison, elk, sheep and goats, as well as offer heavy carcass capability, accommodating even the largest bulls.

Vaags said the facility boasts enhanced traceability.

"At our plant we have everything traced to the CCIA tag and it goes right through the entire plant. What means on an individual basis is you can get your carcass data — carcass quality data, not just on load lots but on each individual animal."

Plains Processors expansion

Vaags' path to opening a commercial plant but we are working towards our federal certification and it shouldn’t be that far away. I am estimating a month to six weeks," Vaags told the recent annual meeting of Manitoba Beef Producers.

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True North Foods has 13 shareholders who are all Manitoba residents," said Vaags. "It is privately owned, but of course we do have owners who look to us to buy all types of shipping beef anywhere in the world."

"We are going to kill and process whatever animals make us the most viable and the most successful. We do plan getting involved in a significant amount of work for the bison and elk communities, as well as some of the niche markets — natural beef, organic beef, grass-fed beef.

Vaags said pricing for the True North Foods facility will follow the pricing from Western Canada, with a basis off cattle prices and Albertas markets.

Jennifer.paige@fbcpublishing.com
John Morriss
Editorial Director

Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz's announcement seems to be at full speed recently. Of Monday there had been 21 so far this year. Several have been for projects where government support is entirely appropriate — research into pulses, soybeans, sustainable beef production and others. On the other hand it should be noted that such announcements mask the reality of federal support for agriculture. A few hundred thousand one day and a couple of million the next may sound impressive, but in fact they are already budgeted or tied to matching industry support. In total, federal support of agri-

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our history: February 1898

Our History:  February 1898

accurate results are not a substitute for rigorous research into the potential benefits of the policy.

Transport review rep willing to look at the revenue cap

By Laura Rance

The Manitoba Co-operator • February 19, 2015

He’s been called Saskatchewan’s prince of the pulse crops, but Murad Al-Katib was putting on no royal airs when he spoke to farmers attending an annual meeting of the Canadian Grain Traders Inc., one of this country’s global success stories, was a guy from Edmonton, Sask. who is as interested as anyone in agri-
culture these days in making sure Canada can deliver the goods.

Al-Katib has a special vantage point through, as he is appointed grain adviser serving on the committee reviewing the Canadian Transporta-
tion Act. A comprehensive review of the act was part of the federal government's response to last year's grain transportation fiasco.

During his dialogue with delegates, he offered a few glimpses of where he’s coming from for getting the system back on track.

For starters, he reminded delegates that the focus of the review extends far beyond grain — and that’s a good thing. “It’s the economic agenda for the country,” he said. “I like that focus more than a focus on grain.”

That means the whole country has a stake in the outcome. He also pointed out that Canada’s reputation as a reliable supplier is jeopardized and that the ability to get grain to market is an essential ingredient in the country’s growth as an exporter.

Those were comforting words to farmers who fear their interests are getting lost in the shuffle. But he also pointed out the grain sector stands out among other exporting sectors as being somewhat disparate and prone to finer

pointing, rather than pulling together. In other words, blaming the railways alone for last year’s problems doesn’t cut it. “We have people on this advisory committee who are shocked at how grain is organized,” Al-Katib said. “We are famous as the ones who don’t know how to act together.

And he made some in the room downright nervous when talk turned to the Maximum Revenue Entritlement, a.k.a. revenue cap.

Al-Katib said it comes down to three options: leave it alone, eliminate it, or moderate it. “My gut says it is probably not the right answer to leave it alone,” he said.

But he said nothing can be decided without undertaking a full review of what is costing the railways to provide service to the grain sector, which hasn’t been done since 1992. “I want to know the truth,” Al-Katib said. “Once I know the truth, I’m willing to pay more if it means getting better service.

He noted one of the “unintended conse-
quences” of the federal government’s deci-
sion last year to require the railways to move a certain volume of grain per week or face fines as that grain only moved east and west on cor-

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Rob Roy of Campbellville, Man. wrote on the necessity of stock raising in Manitoba agriculture, warning against the practice of smallfellow and how it exhausts the soil. “Picture to yourself what it will be like say, 10 or 15 years hence with your last patch of virgin prairie bro-

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**Letters**

**Cloudless Texas skies stifle herd expansion**

High cattle prices and low grain prices mean little without grass to graze

By Tom Polansek

Tea rancher Jim Rackley would like to add more cattle to his herd of about 20 to take advantage of sizzling beef prices and growing demand from health-conscious consumers for his grass-fed beef. But the prospect of cloudless skies keeps him cautious.

Rackley’s worries over a lack of rain are typical of many U.S. beef cattle producers trying to restock after a year-long drought, which peaked in 2011, decimated ranches built up over generations and shrunk the nation’s herd to its smallest in more than 60 years.

Now a combination of record-high cattle prices and cheap grain has prompted ranchers to start adding back cattle earlier than expected. But the rebuilding will be still and slow.

Producers like Rackley worry the drought will return, shriveling scant pastures and regional grain costs soaring again. At the same time, there is no guarantee Americans will continue to consume beef at the current rate, given high prices.

“Every time we think we’re coming out of the drought, we get hit again,” said Rackley, a former high school football coach in Texas, where the sport and politics are state passions.

Feeder cattle futures trading about 20 per cent higher than a year ago at 199.45 cents a pound, and corn futures trading 13 per cent lower near $3.85 a bushel, are providing obvious incentives for ranchers to rebuild their herds.

Still, the decision to expand is proving complicated for many, with the price for buying new cattle at nearly $3,000 a head and pasture still patchy in places. The topic was a focus at a recent cattle conference in San Antonio, Texas.

The nation’s herd edged up one per cent to 98.8 million head by Jan. 1, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), stunning analysts who had predicted a decline and prompting some to bring forward to late 2016 their expectations of when beef supplies will increase. The nation’s cattle population was larger than in 2013 and 2014, but still the third smallest since 1952, said University of Missouri livestock economist Ron Plain.

“Herd rebuilding is on the way, but putting a calf into the herd today will take at least a year and a half before you get anything out of it,” said Jack Deleau, owner of Iowa-based bro- kerage firm JRS Consulting, referring to the time required to bring a calf to maturity to be processed.

**Drought déjà vu**

In Oklahoma, Joe Smith wants to rebuild his cattle herd after selling three-fourths of his animals in 2011.

Smith said he was being “very cautious” in his attempt to expand production, holding back 10 cows of his 100-head herd to bred, instead of sending them to slaughter. His ranch in Duncan, Oklahoma, still needs more rain to grow grazing grass.

About 33 per cent of the southern United States, including the big cattle states of Texas and Oklahoma, was in some form of drought as of Feb. 5, down from about 37 per cent a year earlier, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor.

However, 8.7 per cent of Texas was considered to be in extreme or exceptional drought, the two worst categories, up three percentage points from a year ago.

It may be 2018 or 2019 before increased supplies start to significantly push down beef prices, said Derrell Peel, an agricultural economist at Oklahoma State University, adding there are “a lot of places that are vulnerable to go back- ward in a hurry” if conditions turn dry.

In the meantime, beef prices are likely to stay high, squeezing consumers in grocery stores and restaurants and prompting some Americans to eat less beef.

Per capita consumption fell to an estimated 54.3 lbs. (24.6 kg) in 2014 from 56.1 lbs. (25.5 kg) a year earlier and is forecast to slip to 52.7 lbs. (23.9 kg) in 2015, according to the USDA, even though overall consumption still outstrips domestic production.

Beef processors like Cargill Inc and National Beef Packing Co. are desperate to see production rise. They have shuttered beef-processing plants in recent years and may still need to close more facilities, said Pete Anderson, director of research for cattle nutrition company Midwest PMS.

One of the few processors investing in expansion is JBS USA LLC, which is spending $75 million into a Utah beef plant. But the company is looking to include dairy cows to raise its output there.

Meanwhile, in drought-hit California, rancher Kevin Kester plans to reduce his 300-head herd further after cutting it from as many as 500 head he had back in 2010.

“Everybody wants to expand,” he said. “We’re looking for Mother Nature to co-operate.”

**Forget everything you ever heard about eating fat**

Historic U.S. and U.K. dietary advice on fats ‘should not have been introduced’

N ational U.S. and British dietary advice for citizens to cut fat consumption to reduce heart disease once lacked any solid trial evidence to back it up, and “should not have been introduced,” concludes research in a journal published in conjunction with the British Medical Journal and the U.K. National Cardiovascular Society.

Dietary guidelines issued in 1977 and 1983 recommended reducing overall dietary fat consumption to 30 per cent of total energy intake, and saturated fat to 10 per cent of total energy intake.

Writing in the online journal *Open Heart*, researchers said they carried out a systematic review and meta-analysis of the randomized control trial data that would have been available to the U.S. and U.K. regulatory committees at the time.

They found six relevant trials, covering seven different dietary interventions, spanning an average of five years, and involving 2,467 men. All the trials had been published before 1983 and had looked at the relationship between dietary fat, serum cholesterol, and the development of coronary heart disease.

A British Medical Journal release said the pooled data revealed a total of 740 deaths from all causes, and 423 from coronary heart disease.

“The researchers highlighted severe caveats in the evidence available at the time: no women were included, no trial tested the dietary recommendations and no trial concluded that dietary guidelines should be drawn up.”

“It seems incomprehensible that dietary advice was introduced for 220 million Americans and 56 million U.K. citizens, given the contrary results from a small number of unhealthy men,” the researchers wrote.

They concluded: “Dietary advice not merely needs review; it should not have been introduced.”

But in a linked editorial, Rahul Bahl of the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust, sounded a note of caution and said that while the data was limited, there is some evidence suggesting a link between dietary fat and heart disease.

“There is certainly a strong argu- ment that an overreliance in public health on saturated fat as the main dietary villain for cardiovascular disease has distracted from the risks posed by other nutrients, such as carbohydrates,” Bahl wrote.
ing any recipe isn’t so simple. But developing or reformulating something new always be tweaked to make tried-and-true recipes that can virtually no limit to what these processors’ products. There’s quickly become loyal to local Manitobans love them, and made-in-Manitoba sausages. Manitoba.

Water,” added Byron, a commercial fisherman on Lake Manitoba. There’s always room for more made-in-Manitoba sausages. Manitobans love them, and quickly become loyal to local processors’ products. There’s virtually no limit to what these small companies can create, with plentiful ingredients and tried-and-true recipes that can always be tweaked to make something new.

Nitrite concern

But developing or reformulating any recipe isn’t so simple. Safe sausage making is more than a matter of simply knowing the recipe and which ingredients to use, but why those ingredients are used, says Graumann.

Use of nitrites is a case in point. Some consumers limit consumption of processed meat altogether out of health concerns that nitrites contained in them may contribute to cancer. The dilemma for a sausage maker, however, is that nitrites stop the growth of potentially harmful bacteria, enhance meat flavour and give it the characteristic pink colour that consumers expect.

“Processors sometimes want to remove nitrites from their recipes but aren’t sure why they’re adding them in the first place,” said Graumann. “You’re not adding them just for the sake of adding them.”

The Food Development Centre workshop also provided participants with an overview of all the services it can offer small-scale meat processors, as well as funding sources for those who want to make use of them.

This was a way to help a few more people familiarize themselves with the FDC and what it and the food commercialization branch of MAFRD can offer those wanting to start up a small-scale processing business, said Jayne Kjaalgaard, business development specialist in food commercialization and marketing with Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (MAFRD).

This is the first time hosting this kind of workshop, and there was so much interest, they hope to do it again, Kjaalgaard said.

“I really think there’s a place,” said Graumann. “You’re adding them in the first place.”

So were workshop participants. They ate their hotdogs later in the day.
Recent numbers prepared by University of Saskatchewan agricultural economist Richard Gray show that even though wheat prices f.o.b. Vancouver are unchanged to slightly higher than in October 2014, country elevator prices have dropped $20 a tonne.

The excess basis cost for producers, relative to the posted costs for rail freight and primary and terminal elevator charges, is now more than $62 a tonne compared to $40 in October, the SWDC release says.

Gray says grain companies want to export almost all Western Canada’s wheat from the West Coast because that’s where prices are highest. He hypothesizes that so long as there’s more wheat than can be exported through the West Coast in a crop year, prices will continue to be discounted at country elevators.

“As long as there’s this idea that there’s going to be grain left over at the end of the year, nobody is bidding for it very hard,” Gray said in an interview.

Still, Gray said he was surprised the basis has widened given grain has been moving to export relatively well this crop year. He said that could be due to farmers expecting that not all grain will move by the end of the year, so they are taking every chance they can to deliver.

Grain buyers use basis to signal to farmers how badly they want to make a purchase. The basis last crop year widened when many elevators were too plugged to take deliveries.

More capacity needed
Gray says Western Canada needs more West Coast export capacity to reduce the difference between country and port wheat prices. But there are huge barriers to entry. Not only is it expensive to build terminals, there isn’t much room along Vancouver’s waterfront, he said. Prince Rupert has space and is a couple of days closer to a number of Asian markets, but is only served by CN. Grain shippers don’t want to rely on just one railway. However, that could be countered if the federal government allowed other railways to use CN’s line for a compensatory fee.

The SWDC wants more farmer participation and planning in grain movement, Gehl said.

“What we really need, and what we asked for in our CTA (review) submission, is that farmers be there so we can make sure that we have a good system that has the capacity and the co-ordination to make sure it’s not just the railroads and grain companies that are making all the money,” he said.

Last year the SWDC formed a coalition with the Saskatchewan Pulse Growers, the Saskatchewan Barley Development Commission and Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan to fund Gray’s research on basis levels.

“EXPORT WHEAT Continued from page 1

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The SWDC wants more farmer participation and planning in grain movement, Gehl said.

“What we really need, and what we asked for in our CTA (review) submission, is that farmers be there so we can make sure that we have a good system that has the capacity and the co-ordination to make sure it’s not just the railroads and grain companies that are making all the money,” he said.

Last year the SWDC formed a coalition with the Saskatchewan Pulse Growers, the Saskatchewan Barley Development Commission and Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan to fund Gray’s research on basis levels.

“EXPORT WHEAT Continued from page 1

Grain buyers use basis to signal to farmers how badly they want to make a purchase. The basis last crop year widened when many elevators were too plugged to take deliveries.

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Cattle Prices

**February 13, 2015 in U.S.**

**Hog Prices**

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New BSE case’s impact on markets still to be seen

**Phil Franz-Warkentin**

CNC

"We had a lot of positive things happen during the week, but I don’t imagine (the BSE case) will be great for our marketplace."

**Robin Hill**

Some producers are marketing their cattle a little earlier this year, which is partially due to the strong market but also due to tight feed supplies in some areas, said Hill. However, he added, the mild winter has been helping conserve feed supplies.

"We had a lot of positive things happen during the week, but I don’t imagine (the BSE discovery) will be great for our marketplace."

While he wasn’t expecting the BSE development to seriously disrupt the market, it could lead to some uncertainty and increased volatility, at least in the short term.

In 2011, there wasn’t much of a ripple effect beyond a few days, he said. Winnipeg Livestock Sales holds its weekly sale Friday, making it the only facility to see some movement following the BSE announcement. Both the feeder and butcher markets were fully steady to higher during the week, with demand continuing to come from all directions.

**Phil Franz-Warkentin writes for Commodity News Service Canada, a Winnipeg company specializing in grain and commodity market reporting.**

BSE case sets back ‘negligible risk’ designation

AgCanada.com

Anyone hoping Canada had shut the book on BSE in its cattle herd and could some- day soon regain “negligible risk” status has been dealt a new setback.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) confirmed late last week that BSE cow in Alberta is Canada’s 11th homegrown case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, the coun- try’s first such case since 2011.

Not much else is yet known about the animal, including its age, its history or how or where it may have acquired the disease, but CFIA empha- sized that no part of the ani- mal’s carcass entered any food or feed system.

CFIA said it’s already launched an investigation to confirm the cow’s age and travelogue, focusing mainly on the feed supplied to the cow in its first year of life.

As has been the case in previous findings of BSE, CFIA will also trace out any animals of “equivalent risk” to the BSE cow. Equivalent- risk animals will be ordered destroyed and tested for BSE.

In the eyes of the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), Canada remains a “controlled risk” country for BSE. The new case thus could affect exports of Canadian cattle or beef to any country recognizing OIE cri- teria.

"Any hope for Canada to regain ‘negligible risk’ status has been dealt a new setback," Hill said.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) confirmed late last week that a BSE cow in Alberta is Canada’s 11th homegrown case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, the country’s first such case since 2011. Sporadic discoveries are to be expected, and should be seen as a sign that the system is working. However, perceptions in the marketplace often hold more sway than facts and the impact on prices remains to be seen.

The BSE discovery “spooked our morning, but we had a wonderful sale this week with the highest prices of the new year,” said Robin Hill of Heartland Livestock Services in Virden on Thursday.

“There doesn’t seem to be much traction,” he said, noting the weaker Canadian dollar was contributing to demand from U.S. buyers, while eastern and western feedlots were also in the Manitoba market.

Hill said U.S. futures were showing some volatility, but local prices were outpacing the U.S. market and showing some inde- pendent strength.

On the butcher front, “we saw our highest cow and bull averages ever,” he said. Volumes were solid as well, although adverse weather did slow some movement. He expected there would be at least three more weeks of good activity before volumes slow down for the spring.

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BRIEFS

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Canola beats resistance as traders seen going long
A ceasefire in Ukraine is seen as bearish for wheat

Terry Shields
CNBC

CE Futures Canada canola futures broke above key resistance levels and made new seven-month highs during the week ended Feb. 13. The March contract climbed to the $467.60-per-tonne level, a point not reached since July 2014 — though focus is shifting over to the May contract, which has higher open interest than March and generally saw larger traded volumes during the week.

Reports of fresh export demand for Canadian canola from China and Pakistan were helping to push the market higher. Traders were also said to be going long canola and short soybeans, with the spread benefitting the Canadian finances.

The weak Canadian dollar remains a factor underpinning canola futures, thought it had a volatile week. Traders expect the loonie to remain on the soft side in the intermediate term, which should keep canola fairly well supported.

Supplies are still very large in both the U.S. and Canada, and are large in South America. Chicago soybeans moved higher despite weather conditions favouring an expected record-large soybean crop in South America.

Continued good demand for U.S. soybeans, with generally positive weekly export sales data and news of a fresh sale to China for 2015-16, was behind the advances at this time. Buyers generally turn to South America’s supplies as the continent’s supplies are generally less expensive than those of the U.S.

Smaller-than-expected U.S. ending stocks for 2014-15 in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s monthly supply-and-demand report, released Feb. 10, were bullish. Supplies are still very large in both the U.S. and the world, however, which should continue to overhang the market going forward.

There is an expectation of a smaller canola harvest this year compared to last year’s large crop. But the harvest was completed without many issues this year, and the large crop will take time to consume.

Canola supplied the world with generally positive weekly export sales data during the week, with volumes during the week.

Worries about unfavourable weather damaging the U.S. winter wheat crop were also supportive, and will be watched going forward.

Corn futures in Chicago ended moderately higher, going along for the ride with soybeans as traders expect the loonie to remain on the soft side in the intermediate term, which should keep corn relatively strong.

For three-times-daily market reports from Commodity News Service Canada, visit “Today in Markets” at www.manoitacoooperator.ca.

Mild EU winter raises hopes for good harvest
Conditions rated good in EU’s top four producing countries

Mild EU winter raises hopes for good harvest
Conditions rated good in EU’s top four producing countries

HAMBURG/REUTERS

The mild winter so far in the European Union’s main wheat-producing countries is raising hopes for a large harvest in summer 2015, observers said Feb. 17. “2015 is looking good with the warm weather, meaning frost damage is hardly a problem in many EU regions,” one German analyst said. “Frost damage can still occur for about four to six weeks so the danger is not over yet, but optimism is considerably higher this year.”

In the EU’s largest wheat producer, France, farm agency Agreste said 92 per cent of soft wheat crops were in good or excellent condition as of Feb. 9 against 74 per cent last year. Crop development continued to run ahead of its usual pace. After a mild autumn and early winter, French temperatures dropped several degrees Celsius below the seasonal norm earlier this month.

“This fall should largely be beneficial for the crops and (reduce) concern around high parasite incidence in the spring,” analysts Strategie Grains said in a report. Analysts Strategie Grains said in a report. “While the weather in the middle of the month had not been especially severe to threaten frost damage in Grain Belts and temperatures have risen since the past week.

In Germany, the EU’s second-largest wheat producer, the warm winter also means wheat is developing well. “Frost damage or winterkill is hardly a theme so far this season,” one German analyst said. “The preconditions have been laid for a large harvest this summer, but frost damage is possible until well into March so the picture could still change suddenly.”

The crop in third-largest producer Britain appears in good condition. “We’ve had a relatively mild winter, a few frosts which didn’t hurt but no really deep cold and the crops are looking pretty good,” said Guy Gagen, chief arable adviser to the National Farmers’ Union.

He added: “The potential exists and it is all a matter of what happens in the spring and summer that will define what the quality and yield will be.”

In the fourth-largest wheat producer, Poland, the mild winter also means winter wheat is in satisfactory condition, said Wojtek Sabaranski of analysts Sparks Polska.

High temperatures for mid-February caused protective snow cover in Poland to melt rapidly, he said. “Due to freezings at nights, winter crops are to some extent exposed to thermal stress,” Sabaranski said. “However, it seems that the recent night temperatures were not low enough to cause serious winterkill.”

GRAIN MARKETS

Export and International Prices

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ICE Futures Canada prices at close of business February 13, 2015

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Recognize a teacher of agriculture
Ag in the Classroom seeks nominations for agriculture literacy

A
g in the Classroom—Manitoba is asking for nominations for an award to teachers who show leadership in agriculture education. The Teacher Driver Award is given out annually in April at the ATIC-M annual general meeting to a teacher who has initiated a unique agriculture literacy project.

Last year’s winner was Dave Leochko, a teacher at Robert H. Smith School in Winnipeg. His class examined many communities across the province and how farming and agriculture formed the backbone of these areas. He has also started indoor and outdoor gardening projects at the school.

More information and a nomination form are available at http://aitc.mb.ca.

Tough broadleaves andflushing grassy weeds have met their match. No burndown product is more ruthless when it comes to killing weeds like dandelion, hawk’s beard, foxtail barley and Roundup Ready® canola, while giving you longer-lasting residual control of grassy weeds like green foxtail and up to two weeks for wild oats. INFERNO DUO. It takes burndown to the next level.

INFERNO DUO is now eligible for AIR MILES® reward miles through the Arysta LifeScience Rewards Program in Western Canada.

Go to www.arystalifescience.com/rewards.ca for program details and learn how you can earn 100 bonus AIR MILES® reward miles.

WHAT’S UP

Please forward your agricultural events to daveb@fbcpublishing.com or call 204-944-5762.


Feb. 24-25: Canadian Federation of Agriculture annual meeting, Delta Ottawa City Centre, 101 Lyon St., Ottawa. For more info call 613-236-3633 or visit www.cfa-fca.ca.

Feb. 25-26: Manitoba Young Farmers Conference, Victoria Inn, 3550 Victoria Ave., Brandon. For more info visit www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/business-and-economics/events-and-deadlines/young-farmers-conference.html or call 204-266-2930 or 204-697-1140.

Feb. 26: Farm Credit Canada (FCC) Forum, 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Keystone Centre, 1175-18th St., Brandon. For more info visit https://www.fcc-fac.ca/en/events.html.


March 5: Deerwood Soil and Water Management Association annual meeting, 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Community Hall, Deerwood. For more info call Les McEwan at 204-744-2344 or email mcewan_les@hotmail.com.

March 6-7: Manitoba Direct Farm Marketing Conference, John R. Brodie Science Centre, Brandon University (13th Street and Louise Avenue), Brandon. For more info visit www.directfarmmarketing.com.

March 10-12: Canadian Cattlemen’s Association annual general meeting, Delta Hotel, 101 Lyon St. N., Ottawa. For more info visit www.cattle.ca.

Staff

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Farmers key in effort to win hearts and minds of consumers

American expert says the public tunes out scientists, so it's up to producers to convince consumers

By Glenn Cheater

L
ike it or not, it’s up to you, farmers.

Producers must lead the battle to convince consumers that GM crops, pesticides, and other agricultural technologies are good things, said Julie Borlaug, an agricultural technology specialist, at a FarmTech meeting last month.

“We in the ag sector have made a big mistake in not getting in front of this,” said Julie Borlaug, associate director of external relations for the Borlaug Institute for International Agriculture at Texas A&M University.

“We thought scientists could do the talking for us and they would help push the cause forward, and unfortunately that’s not what happened.”

But it’s not enough. Critics say the public tunes out scientists, so it’s up to producers to convince consumers.

“The best response is to reach out to consumers,” said Borlaug.

At a symposium in Washington last year, said Borlaug, farmers need to reach out to consumers.

Bringing high-yielding varieties to developing nations and promoting modern production practices earned Norman Borlaug the title of “Father of the Green Revolution.” (Garett Fisbeck)

Borlaug told them and everything that’s going on, they are open, honest, and genuine, she said.

However, they also have to be savvy and meet consumers where they are, said Borlaug.

“We really have to ask farmers to step up and join social media and start conveying the message about what they do. We have to say that farming is not easy and it is a business, but we have to have farmers talking about the role of technology. Scientists just can’t do it — their messaging just doesn’t come across.”

When Borlaug talks to people about the efforts of the Borlaug Institute to combat hunger in impoverished countries, she focuses on how modern varieties coupled with synthetic fertilizers and farm chemicals could radically improve the lives of women, who do most of the farming.

“I ask, ‘How can you be for women without being in favour of bringing innovation and technology to developing countries?’”

She takes the same approach when talking about agriculture in North America. For example, she points to the threat of citrus greening. The bacteriological disease has infested much of Florida’s citrus groves and her university is working on a genetically modified orange that could be that industry’s only hope.

“I ask farmers how many give orange juice to their children every morning and then ask, ‘Are you ready not to have orange juice or are you ready to pay triple the price?’” she said.

“I talk about tangible things that are important to them.”

Borlaug offered several suggestions on how farmers can reach out to consumers (see sidebar) but her main plea was not to get angry and refuse to engage.

“You have to take this ridiculousness seriously,” she said.

Tips on reaching out to consumers

Here are some of Julie Borlaug’s tips for reaching out to consumers.

Watch your language

Some words commonly used on farms have hugely negative connotations for urbanites, she said.

“The moment we talk about how GM0s will lessen the amount of inputs such as pesticides or herbicides, you have shut the conversation down. I know that is inane, but for most people, the word pesticide or herbicide means cancer or something that’s going to kill you. Can’t we use the words weed killer or insect repellent?”

Be patient

Many companies boast their environmental credentials as a way to make inroads with consumers, she said.

“Typically, they would put up a website and just sit on it,” she said. “We have to say that farming is needed to feed the world.”

Borlaug offered several suggestions on how farmers can reach out to consumers.

Invest the time

In the last couple of years, farmers have gotten better at using social media, such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, to reach out to consumers.

But it’s not enough. Critics of modern agriculture were early adopters of social media and “we’ve got 10 years to make up,” said Borlaug.

And every farmer needs to be present in the online world, she added.

“I’ve heard farmers say, ‘If I’m on Twitter, then I’m not making a living.’”

Response: “You can do it at night, you can even do all your messages on Sunday and then slowly put them out over the week.”

You have to have time for it because it’s your customer base. And if you can’t make time for it, then get a son or daughter or someone else to do it for you.

Hone your message

Think about your core messages and work on them, just as a salesman would for an elevator pitch.

“Be hopeful

Don’t worry that your voice will be drowned out in a sea of misinformation, said Borlaug.

“Be open, being honest, and willing to engage is a powerful way to challenge the picture painted by the critics of modern agriculture — namely, that corporate farms are either depths of big chemical and seed companies or willing to sacrifice healthy, wholesome food for a quick buck.

“We need to take every opportunity to spread your message,” she said. “I think we will slowly win the day.”

glenn.cheater@fbcpublishing.com

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We’re giving away 15 grand prize tips for two inspired by the fastest, most complete burnout of next HeatLQ herbicides.

The trip includes admission to the Richard Petty Driving Experience and three nights at the Mirage Hotel, Las Vegas. To qualify for the contest watch the video at agsolutions.ca/HeatLQ/Offer. enter the PIN and complete the contest form.

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Enter to win the Heat LQ Speed Experience.

BASF

Satisfy your need for speed.

Enter to win the Heat LQ Speed Experience.

BASF
PEDv is now a ‘new normal’ for hog producers

Swine seminar participants told that despite its virulence, the disease can be managed

By Ron Friesen

For Dr. Sue Burlsatschenko, the most striking thing about porcine epidemic diarrhea virus in swine is the eerie silence when you enter infected nursery barns, because the baby pigs are either sick or dead and the sows are too ill to rise.

“You walk into a barn at feeding time and you won’t hear a sound,” she said.

Burlsatschenko was the first veterinarian in Canada to diagnose this silent killer called porcine epidemic diarrhea when it was detected on an Ontario farm a year ago. Since then, she and the pork industry have worked to contain the virus which kills nearly all infected piglets under seven days of age.

But it’s an uphill battle because PEDv is a “stinky” virus which is difficult to work with immunologically. As a result, scientists have yet to develop a vaccine for it, Burlsatschenko said.

For now, the best producers can do to prevent its spread is to practise strict biosecurity, emphasize sanitation and control anything going in and out of their barns, she said.

Burlsatschenko, who operates a swine veterinary service in Tillsonburg, Ontario, updated producers on PEDv during a presentation at the recent Manitoba Swine Seminar in Winnipeg.

PEDv is a coronavirus producing severe diarrhea in pigs. It has a very high mortality rate of up to 100 per cent in suckling piglets. The PED virus is present in parts of Europe and in many Asian countries.

Originated in China

The first North American case of PEDv was detected in the United States in May 2013. According to genetic tests, the strain originated in China but no one knows how it crossed the ocean. Since its arrival, PEDv has carved a deadly swath through the U.S., killing millions of baby pigs and inflicting huge losses on producers. As of last month, 33 states had at least one confirmed case of PEDv.

The disease has inevitably crossed the border into Canada. According to the Canadian Pork Council, Canada has had nearly 100 cases of PEDv since its discovery in Middlesex County, Ontario, in January 2014. Most are in Ontario, with others reported in Manitoba, Quebec and PEI.

Interviewed after her presentation at the swine seminar, Burlsatschenko said Canadian producers received a heads up from the situation in the U.S. They realized the disease was coming and were able to “batten down the hatches” in preparation.

When PEDv finally did arrive in Canada, the industry had biosecurity measures in place to limit its spread, she said.

“I think we have just been amazingly successful because we haven’t had the big explosion like the U.S. had to endure.”

The PED virus is primarily spread through manure. It is highly concentrated and virulent. Scientists believe one thimble-full of feces could contain enough virus to infect all the pigs in the U.S.

Provincial hog-marketing boards and the Canadian Swine Health Board stress the importance of sanitation and limiting access to farms in order to control the spread of the disease.

There’s also some suggestion PEDv can spread through infected feed. Burlsatschenko said one surge of cases involving 17 Ontario herds may have originated from a batch of creep feed containing dried blood plasma protein infected with PEDv.

The PED virus survives and spreads well in cold weather. Burlsatschenko said producers had hoped the worst was over when the number of cases dropped last summer. But they spiked again in recent weeks, especially in Quebec and Ontario which are experiencing a cold winter.

Burlsatschenko said pork producers need to get used to the idea that they have yet another virus to deal with, along with TGE, PRRS and circovirus. She expressed confidence PEDv can be managed because the industry has developed techniques to handle it.

“It’s become our new normal,” Burlsatschenko said. “It’s not one I like. But as with circovirus, PRRS or anything else, we learn to adapt to the virus, work with it and deal with it.”

“By Ron Friesen

LIVESTOCK

HUSBANDRY — THE SCIENCE, SKILL OR ART OF FARMING

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PEDv has a mortality rate of up to 200 per cent in suckling piglets. (Friesen)
BRIEFS

Two Manitoba finalists for CYL program

STAFF / Bresanna Anderson of Souris River and Wilco van Meijl of Brandon are among the 24 semi-finalists vying for 16 membership positions in the 2015 Cattlemen’s Young Leaders (CYL) program. The program is a national youth initiative of the Canadian Cattlemen’s Association (CCA). It provides industry-specific training and mentorship opportunities to young producers. Participants can explore a potential career choice or involvement with a provincial/national producer organization, while gaining the expertise and business acumen necessary to sustain the cattle industry into the future.

The semi-finalists were selected from a pool of nearly 70 who submitted online applications which were evaluated by a panel of judges. The finalists will be selected at the CYL Spring Forum March 26-28 in Saskatoon. Visit www.cattlenews.com for more information.

By Jennifer Paige

A look at international opportunities for beef

Shipping beef to the EU requires adherence to strict protocols, but the premium may make it worthwhile

By Jennifer Paige

Breakout sessions and informal discussion at the 36th annual general meeting of Manitoba Beef Producers in Brandon earlier this month focused on the possibilities of capitalizing on the European Union and Asian markets.

“The markets are changing and as producers we need to adapt. Whether you want to go to the EU, China, or your sourcing out different markets with different plants, you need to do your homework,” said Tod Wallace, a farm production extension specialist with Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between Canada and the EU has sparked quite a bit of interest.

“The EU market has been in the limelight for the past few months and I think it does support some tremendous opportunity for us,” Wallace said.

However, while the CETA final text was signed last September, the agreement still needs to be reviewed by lawyers and ratified by the European Parliament as well as the 28 member states. Wallace warns that these markets may not become a reality until 2017.

“It’s estimated that when implemented, CETA will provide Canada with duty-free access for 35,000 tonnes of fresh and 15,000 tonnes of frozen beef for a value of about $600 million by 2022. “The Canadian Cattlemen’s Association is estimating that this will require adding 500,000 head of cattle from Canada, but they will have to be raised according to European standards — no hormone implants or beta agonists (ionophores such as rumensin),” Wallace said.

Animals must also be slaughtered and processed in a Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) federally registered establishment to be eligible for export to the EU.

“CFIA will inspect your farm, go through the protocol and will give you a certificate but it is only good for one year. The first year will be most difficult but after that it should be a matter of renewing paperwork,” Wallace said.

“Cattle for the EU also need to be managed separately from your conventional or domestic-raised cattle.” The CCA website offers interested producers a detailed summary of the EU protocol requirements.

“To be EU certified as a producer it is going to cost on average 20 to 25 per cent more to raise that animal from calf to slaughter. But then, there is said to be a 20 per cent higher premium. At the end of the day profitability is key so watch the bottom line and try to source the premium wherever you can get it,” Wallace said.

Asian opportunities

There is also more interest in selling beef to the Far East following the federal government’s announcement last November of creating four new Canadian trade offices in China.

“The Chinese market is poised for vigorous growth and will only become more important for Canadian beef and veal exporters going forward. With the Chinese market you’ve got a huge population base and rising per capita beef consumption,” Wallace said.

Canadian beef exports to China have grown rapidly since 2012. Exports to mainland China from January to September 2014 are up 60 per cent in volume to 5,850 tonnes, just under the annual volume for 2013 of 6,000 tonnes.

“The protocol for Asian markets is much more lenient than the EU. There are currently no official protocols and no ban on hormones or antibiotics,” Wallace said.

Currently stipulations for the Chinese markets include animals under 30 months of age and restricted use of sac- topamine.

Jennifer Paige FBcPublishing.com

Western Livestock Price Insurance Program

The Western Livestock Price Insurance Program (WLPIP) is a way for producers to hedge the price of their livestock. WLPIP provides market volatility insurance for live cattle, feeder cattle, and calves.

For more information on WLPIP, visit www.WLPIP.ca.
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**FIELDING LIFE’S NEEDS.**

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**LIVESTOCK AUCTION RESULTS**

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| **Includes slaughter market** | (Note all prices in CDN$ per cwt. These prices also generally represent the top one-third of sales reported by the auction yard!)
SEPIA TONE

These brown cattle against a background of frost and snow remind of an old-style sepia tone photo. PHOTO: SIMPSONS MEANS

Public funding needed for animal welfare research

Specialist says the industry has to better articulate that animal welfare is a high-priority area

By Alex Binkley
Correspondent

The federal government has essentially withdrawn from funding animal welfare research even as controversy rages on several related topics, says David Fraser, an animal welfare professor at the University of British Columbia.

The result is that industry is left trying to pay for research, which is often dictated by government policy or public concerns and provides little direct benefit to farmers, Fraser said in an interview.

“The federal government cut back animal welfare research funding severely in the 1990s and abandoned it since then from being the main provider of research funding to relatively a non-player,” said Fraser, a member of the board of the National Farmed Animal Health and Welfare Council (NFAHWC).

Unlike the National Farm Animal Care Council, which is developing codes of conduct to guide the humane raising of farm livestock, the NFAHWC is focused on the science and research needed to ensure livestock are properly treated, Fraser said.

“Animal welfare is a high-priority area for the public and governments need to contribute to the research that’s going on,” he said.

The council is hoping to come up with a plan for later this year on how to bring Ottawa and the provinces back into animal welfare research.

“Right now there’s nothing to cover the public good and government policy demands being placed on farmers,” he said. “At the same time, the industry has to better articulate that animal welfare is a high-priority area.”

The NFAHWC also wants Ottawa to improve administration of the limited research funding so its administrative rules stop forcing scientists to spend more time on paperwork for bureaucrats than studying animal behaviour, Fraser said.

“They couldn’t have made it more difficult for scientists to get important work done if they’d tried,” he said. “We need to standardize the application and reporting process instead of having every program under completely different rules. The scientists spend far too much time applying for and administering grants.”

Include commodity groups

Another priority for the NFAHWC during 2015 is to convince commodity groups to make sure their research projects include the social and economic aspects of farm animal welfare issues and not just the biology and technology of livestock production systems.

“Hopefully we’ll have something for 2016,” Fraser said.

Action is needed because the livestock industry suffers “from blind spots. For example, the public is opposed to the use of confinement systems for livestock.” But the industry responds too slowly to their concerns and doesn’t explain why they were adopted.

There were good economic reasons for their introduction decades ago, Fraser said. “Now we have to look for other systems that would work for farmers. We need more economic analysis of alternate methods. Often they’re not more expensive in operation than what producers now use. However, the cost of converting to them discourages many farmers. This is an area we hope to address.”

The Animal Care Council has agreed to take charge of developing better co-ordination among existing animal research initiatives, getting all livestock groups involved and connecting them with government policy proposal, Fraser said.

Responding to growing concerns about antimicrobial resistance in humans that could be linked to the use of the same medicines in humans and animals is one area where the livestock industry has to make its record clearer, he said.

Cattle prices seen continuing strong

Modest herd expansion has begun, causing prices to trend lower

SEDA RELEASE

CattleFax outlook presentation at the recent 2015 U.S. National Cattlemen’s Beef Association said fed cattle prices were averaging in the mid-$150s, slightly higher than last year. Prices will trade in a range from near $140 at the lows to near $170 at the highs in the year ahead (all figures U.S.), while early-year highs for 250-pound steers will range from near $285 to lows near $225.

Analysts cited the improved forage situation, lower grain prices and record margins in 2014 for feeders and stockers as the primary reason cow-calf producers will remain in the driver’s seat for the year ahead.

Despite exceptional prices in 2014, CattleFax CEO Randy Black said he expects the market peak is behind the cattle industry now.

“We put the top in the market in the past year and the signal for expansion has been transmitted,” he said. “We will begin to see some modest expansion in herd numbers now and that will cause prices to trend lower in the years ahead than what we saw in 2014.”

He explained that growing supplies of cattle and beef over the next several years will rebalance the normal price and margin environment among industry segments.

“Prices will then retreat back to the lower end of the new trading range,” said Black.

Despite the adjustment, he explained that cow-calf producers will continue to see relatively strong returns over the next four to five years, aided by a $4.36 per bushel in 2015 and an improved forage production picture.

A University of B.C. animal welfare professor says the original cost of non-confinement systems may not be higher than conventional, but the cost of conversion discourages producers.

DARWIN CREIGHTON

“A University of B.C. animal welfare professor says the original cost of non-confinement systems may not be higher than conventional, but the cost of conversion discourages producers.”

MARK HOLLOWAYCHUK

A University of B.C. animal welfare professor says the original cost of non-confinement systems may not be higher than conventional, but the cost of conversion discourages producers.

DARWIN CREIGHTON

“Animal welfare is a high-priority area for the public and governments need to contribute to the research that’s going on.”

DAVID FRASER

A University of B.C. animal welfare professor says the original cost of non-confinement systems may not be higher than conventional, but the cost of conversion discourages producers.

DARWIN CREIGHTON
Arctic high pressure continues to dominate

Issued: Tuesday, February 17 · Covering: February 18 – February 25, 2015

Daniel Bezte
Co-operator contributor

Our weather over the last week was dominated by arctic high pressure as predicted, but those highs didn’t track quite the way the weather models indicated they would, resulting in only a mediocre forecast. This issue’s forecast begins where last week’s left off — with cold arctic high pressure dominating.

The first and strongest of what looks to be a series of three arctic highs will slide across the Prairies Wednesday and Thursday, bringing sunny skies and cold temperatures. Temperature will definitely run at or even slightly below the bottom end of the usual temperature range. Once this high slides off to the south-east Friday, we should see a little milder air work its way as in our winds become southerly on the backside of the high.

A second and slightly weaker arctic high is then forecast to drop southeast over the weekend. This will keep our skies mostly clear, but even with the strengthening late-winter sunshine, daytime highs will still be near the low end of the usual temperature range. This high, like all the others, is a cold front to slide to the southeast. This should result in a westerly flow developing across the Prairies late Sunday, lasting into the early part of next week. Temperatures under this westerly flow should moderate toward the middle of the usual temperature range, and we could see a few more clouds.

A third and hopefully final arctic high is then forecast to work southward around the middle to latter half of next week, bringing with it another shot of cold air. Looking beyond this period, there are some hints that the cold pattern we’ve been in over the last couple of weeks will start to change toward a warmer but stormier pattern. After all, we are heading toward March, which can be the snowiest month of the winter!

Usual temperature range for this period: Highs, -16 to -1 C; lows, -29 to -10 C.

Daniel Bezte is a teacher by profession specializing in climatology. In his free time he operates a computerized weather station near Birds Hill Park. Contact him with your questions and comments at dbel@bezte.ca.

Understanding troughs and ridges

Systems coming off the Pacific weaken against a high-pressure ridge before reaching us

By Daniel Bezte
Co-operating contributor

In the last issue I talked about atmospheric rivers and finished off by saying why they seem to have just about disappeared. The West Coast has been so warm and dry, while the East Coast has been digging itself out of record-breaking snow and freezing bouts in the process.

If you’ve followed the weather across North America this winter, you’ve probably heard about the persistent ridge of high pressure over the West Coast and the trough of low pressure that has stubbornly refused to move from the East Coast. While troughs and ridges are all a part of what makes up our weather, these two features have been a little unusual for two reasons. First of all, they have been very persistent, especially the West Coast ridge. Typically, these types of features will only last two to six weeks before they move on. The West Coast ridge has been in place, for the most part, for well over a year now. The second unusual aspect of these features has been the amplitude they sometimes develop, this means that the trough and ridge have been stretching much farther north and south than what we typically see. There have been more and more weather articles coming out discussing how the wave pattern across the Northern Hemisphere appears to be becoming more amplified. I know I have looked at this in the past and may revisit this topic soon.

To begin to understand what’s going on, I figured the best place to start would be with an image of just what’s happening. I pulled this image from Jeff Masters’ weather blog and it nicely shows the strong ridge of high pressure over the West and a deep trough of low pressure over the East. The color coding is the wind speed at the 300-mb level, roughly where the jet stream is. Areas to the south of the jet air seeing warmer-than-average weather, while those north are colder than average. On this particular date the western ridge was a little farther east compared to where it is right now, which is why we saw warm weather during the second half of January. To understand our basic weather so far this winter, you just have to picture a see-saw battle between these two features. The western ridge gains and weakens in strength and drifts back and forth, and the same thing happens with the trough to our east. How each behaves will determine which side of the warm/cold dividing line we’ll be on.

Most of you reading this article are probably already aware high pressure is associated with sinking air, and that usually results in clear skies with little or no precipitation. Troughs, on the other hand, have rising air, which usually gives way to clouds and precipitation. It makes sense that it has been warm and dry along the West Coast (California in particular) and wet and cool to our east. That said, this partly explains what’s going on. To really understand, we need to look at how the atmosphere, particularly the jet stream, behaves as it travels over the ridge and dives down and around the trough.

Picture a storm system traveling along the jet stream coming in off the Pacific. From the position of the jet, most of the energy is being deflected to the north. More importantly, the jet is curving up and over the ridge. As it does so the air starts to bunch up (think of a highway filled with cars coming to a fairly sharp bend; the cars will start to slow down and bunch up). The bunched-up air has to go somewhere and one of the places it goes is downward, causing sinking air, which, as we know, doesn’t promote the formation of precipitation.

What it does is weaken the storm system. This weakened storm then sticks down to the trough, where again the air bunches up, preventing the storm from intensifying, but once this air rounds the bottom of the trough it can speed up and spread out very rapidly. This helps to pull air upward, allowing the storm system to intensify. Combine this with the cyclonic spin imparted on the system from the trough and warm, moist air off the East Coast, and you get rapid intensification of the storm system. Add the cold air flowing southward in the trough and you get big snowstorms.

In our region the systems coming in off the Pacific have lost a lot of their energy due to the ridge. Some intensification occurs as the systems round the top of the ridge, and we have seen evidence of this farther west over Alberta and Saskatchewan. As these systems move into our region they start to run out of their limited moisture and begin moving into the hostile environment ahead of the trough, then the systems just seem to fizzle out or bring light snows than anticipated.

Hopefully, this has helped to shed some light on our weather situation so far this winter.
Ergot is a rising threat on the Prairies, and plant researchers are trying to figure out the best way to combat the disease.

"Everyone is concerned with fusarium head blight, but ergot is right up there in terms of danger," said Jamie Larsen, a research scientist with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada in Lethbridge.

Ergot is a fungal disease that infects the grain and that includes fungicides. "What they have found in some trials is that you can get a slight reduction in ergot, but for the most part, fungicide trials have not been effective in reducing ergot levels in grain and economically, it's just not worth it," said Jim Menzies, a scientist at AAFC's Morden Research Centre in Alberta.

"There are a number of different pieces and that includes fungicides. "There's no silver bullet for combating ergot, but mowing grasses resistant to ergot, but they aren't available yet. Research scientist Kelly Turkington likens the disease to a "puzzle."

"If you're planning to go into a field, and you're worried about ergot, you need to be thinking a year ahead," added Larsen. "Once those sclerotia are there, you can't control them."

Spotting an infestation
Ergot can be found in the grasses around fields and in ditches. As the plant matures, ergot will become resistant to infection by ergot, so producers should mow grasses in the ditches the year before planting a cereal crop, as well as the year they grow a cereal crop. Mowing is most effective just before flowering. If the crop is infected, the outside edges of the field — which typically see the heaviest infestation — can be harvested separately. A rotation that is three years or longer also helps to break down the disease inoculum.

A strong nutrition program and doing what you can to encourage uniform emergence (late tillers are most at risk of being infected) are also recommended. "The sooner the seed gets fertilized, the sooner it becomes resistant to infection by ergot," said Menzies.

Eight days after fertilization, the plant can no longer become infected. It's also important to take care with herbicide and pesticide application to prevent flowers from becoming sterile, as they are more susceptible to ergot.

Over the last couple of years, copper has been touted as a cure-all, which is not the case. Livestock producers also need to be aware of the threat — especially if they are harvesting silage, swath grazing or standing grazing wheat or triticale — because cattle can get quite sick from eating ergot.

Plant breeders are trying to create cultivars resistant to ergot, but they aren't available yet.
MASC adding pedigreed seed field inspections to its service in 2015

Manitoba pedigreed seed growers will have six field inspection service providers to pick from

By Allan Dawson
Co-Operator

M anitoba pedigreed seed growers have another option for getting their seed crops inspected this year.

The Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation (MASC), which administers Manitoba’s crop insurance program, is offering the service privatized last year by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA).

“We have this great group of around 150 (crop insurance) adjusters around Manitoba and they have lots of ability to do different things so we’re slowly trying to build the things where we can use those guys,” David Van Deynze, MASC’s manager of claim services said in an interview Feb. 6. “Ultimately the goal is to help the producers of Manitoba in any way we can so if we see a need somewhere where there is an inspection we can help out with our try to get into that.”

In 2014 five companies offered pedigreed seed field inspections in Manitoba and adding MASC this year will make six, said Dale Adolph, executive director of the Canadian Seed Growers’ Association.

Last year there were 24 companies providing the service in various parts of Canada and this year it’s expected there will be 27. Besides MASC getting into the business in Manitoba, new providers are coming to Saskatchewan, Quebec and southern Alberta and British Columbia, Adolph said.

MASC had three pedigreed seed inspectors trained last year and expects to add three to five more this year, Van Deynze said.

MASC will charge competitive prices for its service, he added.

“We’re not going to be under-cutting anybody,” he said. “That’s not the idea here at all. It’s really to make sure there are enough people in the game... in all areas of the province. Perhaps some of the private guys won’t have people in all areas of the province like we do. We might end up being cheaper in some cases, not because our rates are cheaper but because we have a guy closer by. We’ve tried to pick the guys doing this in every corner of the province so hopefully we’re not too far away from any farmer.”

Crop insurance adjusting, like inspecting fields of pedigreed seed, is seasonal work.

There will be times when both are a high priority, but MASC expects to be able to handle it, Van Deynze said.

MASC is sending farmers details about its pedigreed seed inspection service in crop insurance confirmation notices this month. Seed growers can get more details from their local MASC office.

Until last year CFIA inspected fields of pedigreed seed crops. The switch to private inspectors was prompted by cuts in the federal government’s 2012 budget.

CFIA remains responsible for training, certifying and auditing private seed inspectors.

Both CFIA and other seed industry officials said in interviews last fall the switch occurred more smoothly than expected.

The goal was getting private company inspectors to inspect 75 to 80 per cent of Canada’s pedigreed seed acres in 2014. They did 89.5 per cent, plus 42 per cent of Canada’s seed plots.

“We exceeded our expectations in the first year,” Mike Scheffel, CFIA’s national seed section manager, said in an interview Oct. 29.

Most seed growers were pleased with the transition too, Adolph said.

The main complaint was inspection fees doubled in cost, but the increases were anticipated, he probably because of competition.

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BRIEFS

Hot, dry conditions to affect S. Africa’s maize crop

JOHANNESBURG / REUTERS / A quarter of South Africa’s maize (corn) crop could be ruined, as extreme heat and dry conditions sweep through its producing regions, industry experts said Feb. 12.

Africa’s biggest grain producer planted 2.856 million hectares for the 2015 season, according to January estimates, and shortages may result in reduced exports to some of its southern African neighbours.

The price of white maize, which is a staple among 90 per cent of South Africa’s population, has spiked to 2.638 rand ($0.24) a tonne, its highest level in a year.

“Prices have skyrocketed, they have gone up by 33 per cent in two weeks,” said Pierre Fauvre, a soft commodities analyst at CJS Securities.

Soaring temperatures in the North West and Free State province have caused maize and other grains such as sunflower and soybeans to deteriorate, head of the producer group GrainSA said.

“We have seen large areas where the damage is already irreversible,” said Janine de Villiers, GrainSA chief executive reported.

The rolling power cuts that have gripped Africa’s most advanced economy are also affecting the crops as irrigation systems stop when the power is turned off.
Exploring the transition to organic farming

By Jennifer Paige

Organic is becoming mainstream, and current premiums make it worthwhile, said two speakers at Ag Days

“Organic foods used to be a niche thing that you would have to go to a specialty store for but now your average grocery store has entire aisles dedicated to organic products,” said McCombe.

She said her company has been working in organics since 1985 and has recently begun to offer transitional contracts to producers as well.

“In organics there is no futures market, there is no basis. Historically organics were related to the conventional market and in the past they have been 50 to 100 per cent premium over the conventional market, but now the price is completely related to supply and demand.” She said her advice when diversifying into organics would be to manage your risks, grow what you know how to grow and plan your rotation based on agronomics and marketing.

“Make sure there is a market for the crop you are growing and know who you can sell it to and that the logistics make sense.”

Jennifer McCombe, agronomist with Growers International Organic Sales Inc., said 58 per cent of Canadian organic wheat in 2015 will be organic.

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“Organic is becoming mainstream, and current premiums make it worthwhile, said two speakers at Ag Days.”

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CTA review yields early findings

By Shannon VanRaes
CO-OPERATOR STAFF

The Canada Transportation Act (CTA) review is still 10 months away from completion, but already some things are becoming apparent. Speaking at Keystone Agricultural Producers annual meeting in Winnipeg, Murad Al-Katib said that it’s clear that the federal government’s attempt to ensure smooth rail transportation has resulted in some new complications.

“The words ‘unintended consequences’ are in everybody’s vocabulary in Ottawa today, and the unintended consequence of the order-in-council is that the north-south movement has shut down,” said Al-Katib, who is the grain industry adviser for the CTA review.

Al-Katib is president and CEO of Saskatchewan-based Alliance Grain Traders, the world’s largest pulse-processing and trading organization. He said he’s been shocked to see vessels coming through the St. Lawrence Seaway to bring European oats to U.S. customers, as processors there struggle to import Canadian oats.

The minimum grain shipments mandated by the federal government have also caused some regional problems. Measuring success by the amount of grain delivered — or by velocity turns — means rail companies have less incentive to provide cars to locations farthest from ports. Al-Katib said Saskatchewan has been most affected by this issue.

“The question is, how do you balance it?” he told producers. “If there are going to be targets there has to be a debit and credit system.”

Reviews of the Transportation Act are mandated by law, but after the problems experienced during the 2013-14 winter, the federal government chose to begin this review one year ahead of schedule.

Lisa Raitt, minister of transportation and rail systems function in Canada, also how those systems interact with systems in the United States and across North America, said Al-Katib.

Use producer cars, but…

“Connectivity between Canada and the U.S., and you know, north-south shipments are a part of our future, they need to be reliable, because that market will be every year, year after year,” he said.

Producers also need to do their part to make sure producer cars can be maintained as a viable part of the system.

“I heard it loud and clear… producer car loading is a fundamental right that all of you want maintained, you want it reliable and my response to you is, ‘OK, but don’t abuse it,’” said Al-Katib. “Don’t let the grain companies in the U.S. that don’t have assets use producer cars in a way to circumvent the system then, because that’s not fair… if producers aren’t vigilant in the way they use producer cars, then that window is likely not going to be as open.”

But the review isn’t about laying blame, he stressed. “It’s about finding solutions and improving the way commodities are transported in Canada. “I want accountability on all sides, I want collaboration, I want to stop the finger pointing and I really want to invent the railways to truly deploy capital into capacity that is delivered to the users, and I want them to make money for it. I’m a free enterpriser, that’s the way I was born,” said Al-Katib.

That doesn’t however, mean that producers and processors should stop their lobbying efforts. He noted that all the time and money farm groups like Keystone Agricultural Producers have spent developing transportation policy have been invaluable to the process and the review, helping to ensure they have good ideas on the table.

“It is paying off,” he said.
Agriculture Canada bullish on farm income prospects

By Alex Binkley
CO-OPERATOR CONTRIBUTOR / OTTAWA

Agriculture Canada says there is enough strength in the livestock and crop markets and stability in input costs to predict solid national farm income this year, although not as high as 2014. In an outlook released Feb. 13, department economists said total net farm income for 2014 should reach the $14.6 billion range and slip back to $13 billion this year, mainly because of lower world grain prices.

“Growing strength in the cattle and hog industry, strong crop sales resulting from higher carry-in stocks despite softening grain prices, and relatively stable input costs produced a record farm income in 2014 and will continue to sustain the agricultural economy in 2015,” they told a briefing for reporters.

On an individual farm basis, average Canadian net operating income was forecast to be an all-time high of $78,139 for 2014, they said. They didn’t predict a 2015 figure but said it should be lower, in line with the forecast.

In Manitoba in 2014, net income dropped to $437.2 million from $1.4 billion in 2013 as higher commodity prices were offset by increased operating expenses and lower support program payments. It is expected to reach $336.7 million this year.

However, the average net operating income per farm in Manitoba rose to $95,677 in 2014 from $75,942 in 2013. It’s forecast to fall to $86,111 for this year.

Lower world prices

The drop in 2015 income will be led by lower grain and oilseed prices due to the U.S. bumper crop in 2014, the forecast said. High world stocks will also be a drag on prices.

“However, a weakening of the Canadian dollar makes our products more competitive and will temper some of the declines in crop prices,” the government released said.

“While costs for gasoline, diesel and natural gas have dropped in recent months, “the recent volatility in crude oil markets makes it difficult to estimate the full impact on fuel costs. Similarly for the exchange rate, a weaker dollar improves revenues of producers, but the recent volatility in the exchange rate makes estimating the full impact uncertain.”

The income prospects for Canadian farmers during the next few years are positive, the forecast noted. “Rising global economic growth and increasing incomes in large emerging countries will continue to spur demand side growth and Canada will continue to be an important supplier in many of these markets.

Cattle producers, who normally operate on relatively low margins, will see record profits as live animal prices remain at high levels and feed grain prices continue to be soft.”

Hog farmers have lived with volatile prices for the last decade. “Increased availability of slaughter hogs in North America in 2015, and its effect on prices, will lead incomes to return to long-term average levels following the income surge in 2014.”

North Dakota drone tests get go-ahead

Initial tests focus on soil and crop quality

The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration said Feb. 10 it has expanded the area in North Dakota where research flights of small drones are permitted as the drone industry eagerly awaits rules an commercial use of the unmanned aircraft.

Flights under the auspices of the Northern Plains UAS Test Site, a research facility based in Grand Forks, will now be allowed in most of northeastern North Dakota, FAA said in a statement, adding that it soon expects to authorize flights in about two-thirds of the state.

Flight operations at the Northern Plains site, one of six FAA-authorized test sites in the country, began in May and were limited to a small area of several square miles.

The North Dakota flights have initially focused on aiding agricultural research, including checking soil quality and the status of crops.

The six sites have given companies, universities and others a place to test small drones, defined as less than 55 pounds (25 kg), for a variety of uses, including package delivery and aerial surveying.

The FAA is months late in developing small drone regulations. A draft FAA rule, under review by the White House Office of Management and Budget, is expected to be published soon, kicking off a year or two of comment and revisions before it takes effect.

The FAA rules will cover commercial drone uses, which are now mostly banned. They will not apply to hobbyists operating model aircraft. Congress granted these users an exemption from rules in 2012.
Canola council offers tips for better establishment

New video offers tips for seeding rate and depth, and other factors which produce an optimum stand

The Canola Council of Canada has a new video that describes key stand establishment steps using animated video and a question-and-answer format with growers.

The video describes how uniform stands of seven to 10 plants per square foot act as insurance, preserving yield potential in the face of early-season threats from frost, insects and seedling disease. “Achieving this target stand often requires seeding rate adjustment based on seed size and soil conditions,” says Justine Cornelsen, agronomy specialist for the canola council.

Seed with higher thousand seed weights will have fewer seeds per pound, so heavier seed may have to be planted at higher pounds per acre to achieve the target stand. And if soil moisture conditions are favourable and seed survival is 80 per cent, canola will only need nine to 13 seeds per square foot to reach the target. However, if survival is 50 per cent, a minimum of 14 seeds per square foot are required.

The video also describes how seeding too fast for the drill or soil conditions can lead to uneven seed placement row to row. Drills tend to sacrifice precision placement when operated too fast, and back rows of openers will throw more soil over the front rows, creating uneven soil cover for each seed row. Uneven seed depth results in uneven emergence.

The video can be found by going to www.youtube.com and typing ‘canola stand establishment’ in the search box.

Other factors in stand establishment include straw and chaff management to create an even layer; seed depth of one-half to one inch for more rapid emergence; and more seedling vigour, and safe rates of seed placed fertilizer. The definition of “safe” varies based on soil moisture and seedbed utilization, but the general recommendation is to apply no more than 20 pounds per acre of phosphate in the seed row and place all other fertilizer in a band away from the seed, said Cornelsen.

Plant establishment is one of the key components to boosting yields in the canola council’s strategic plan, which targets an average yield of 52 bushels per acre by 2025, up from the three-year average of around 34 bushels per acre.

Improved plant establishment agronomy could add three bushels per acre. Improved fertility management is forecast to add another three bushels; with two bushels per acre each coming from advances in integrated pest management and harvest management; and eight from genetic improvement.
Canola and barley markets offer opportunities in a time of low crop prices

By Alexis Kienlen

In a time of flat or falling prices, canola and barley offer a little ray of hope, according to Moe Agostino, chief commodity strategist with Farms.com Risk Management.

High carry-out and stocks are expected to double, which is bearish for prices. Stocks are expected to jump dramatically, said Agostino, who foresees prices to stay above $200 and to potentially hit the $240-a-tonne mark by summer. But his outlook isn’t as bright for other crops.

Out prices will remain weak and the global supply of wheat is high and that will continue to weigh on prices unless there is extensive winterkill in the U.S. or a weather wreck in a major wheat-producing area, he said. Agostino is also bearish on soybeans. There will be more acres of pulses planted and ending stocks are expected to double, which is bearish for prices. The carry-out and stock-to-use ratio for dry peas is expected to jump dramatically, he said.

Hedging diesel

Lower diesel prices are coming, but unlike producers in Ontario, Prairie farmers don’t have the ability to book diesel forward. So Agostino recommends hedging diesel or using futures, but since using futures can be risky, it’s important to use a consultant or broker for guidance.

“You have to always ask yourself what’s the risk or reward,” he said, adding a call option should minimize the risk of margin calls.

He predicted fertilizer prices to be stable as strong supply is being matched by strong demand.

And while the low loonie pumps up the price Canadian farmers receive for exported grain, it has the opposite effect when buying anything imported from the U.S. Demand for American goods in Canada is “just going to fall off the cliff,” he said.

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Moe Agostino

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What’s the BIG HAIRY DEAL?
The recipe has to be just right when fertilizing your crops

By Jennifer Blair

Nitrogen may be the first thing producers think of when they want to bump up their yield — but don’t neglect the other nutrients.

“In order to get the maximum benefit out of all of our fertilizer nutrients, we need to have a balanced supply,” University of Saskatchewan soil scientist Jeff Schoenau told the FarmTech meeting here last month.

“That’s where phosphorus, sulphur, and potassium come in.”

Every year, Schoenau drives home the point about balanced nutrition to his soil fertility students by conducting a little experiment. Working with brown and grey soils, the students look at how canola responds to nitrogen alone, nitrogen plus phosphorus, and nitrogen plus phosphorus and sulphur.

In the brown soil, the “main limitation” in crop yield is usually phosphorus.

“Nitrogen alone didn’t give us much of a yield response, but with phosphorus present, we got a big yield gain, and a little bit of sulphur added on top of that gave us the highest yield,” said Schoenau.

Phosphorus “wasn’t really an issue” in the grey soil, but sulphur was.

“When we added nitrogen, we got a little bit of a yield gain, and nitrogen plus phosphorus wasn’t much higher than just nitrogen,” he said.

“But where we had the nitrogen, the phosphorus, and the sulphur together, that’s where we got the highest yield. That’s the importance of balanced nutrition for fertility.”

Placement is tricky

So where’s the best place to put that fertilizer? That depends, said Schoenau.

“Optimum placement of these nutrients is very much related to the mobility of the nutrient,” he said.

Phosphorus and potassium are immobile nutrients, while nitrogen and sulphur move about.

“Phosphorus and potassium will only move a few millimetres or centimetres in the soil from where they’re placed,” he said. “Placement, especially of immobile nutrients, means you need to have it close to where that root is in order for it to be available.”

Jeff Schoenau

“Placement, especially of immobile nutrients, means you need to have it close to where that root is in order for it to be available.”

Phosphorus and potassium work well when placed in the seed row — but nitrogen and sulphur are mobile

“Placement, especially of immobile nutrients, means you need to have it close to where that root is in order for it to be available.”

“I don’t need all the sulphate there available for uptake right away,” said Schoenau.

“Producers also need to consider “how much nutrient fertilizer can we safely place in that seed row before we run into injury issues?”

“Nearly all fertilizers are salt, so one of the negative impacts of too much fertilizer in the seed row is that, because of the salt, it holds back water from the germinating seed and seedling,” said Schoenau.

Tolerance varies

Using a controlled environment with “typical Prairie soil,” Schoenau tested the effects of seed row-added phosphorus, potassium, and sulphur on cereals, oilseeds, and pulses.

Cereals were the most tolerant to the added nutrition in the seed row.

“Cereals, like wheat and barley, can tolerate upwards of 40 pounds of P2O5 (phosphorus) per acre,” he said. “Above that, you start to see some significant drops in emergence. You throw some potash in there, there’s something of a negative effect, but it’s not huge.”

Oilseeds such as canola had moderate tolerance to seed row-placed fertilizer.

“For canola, around 25 pounds of P2O5 per acre seems to be about the maximum safe rate,” he said. “And when you throw some potash in there, you have to reduce the amount of phosphorus accordingly in order to avoid burn.”

And while some pulses, including pinto beans and chickpeas, were quite tolerant to the added nutrition, peas weren’t.

“If the crops that we evaluated, pea was one of the most sensitive to high rates of phosphorus placed in the seed row,” said Schoenau.

“When you put some potash in there, it significantly reduced the germination and the emergence.”

Test for sulphur

High rates of sulphur can also cause reductions in emergence, he said, so producers should test their soils for residual sulphur before adding any more.

And even then, there’s really no advantage to placing sulphur in the seed row, said Schoenau.

“Putting it away from the seed row would be my preference to avoid that potential for injury. If you’re forced to choose between phosphorus or sulphur in the seed row, I’d go with the phosphorus.”

Jennifer.blair@fbcpublishing.com
Farmers urged to take lead on resistance

Weed scientist says producers need to extend rotations, not overuse glyphosate, and employ the most effective tank mixes

By Alexis Kienlen

The Manitoba Co-operator  |  February 19, 2015

Weed scientist says producers need to extend rotations, not overuse glyphosate, and employ the most effective tank mixes

Farmers urged to take lead on resistance

There are approximately 7.7 million hectares of resistant weeds across Western Canada, said Hall. And since there haven’t been any new herbicides developed since the 1990s, researchers are going back into the vault to see if any older chemical compounds could be mixed with glyphosate to slow resistance.

H

erbicide resistance is like a forest fire — only you can prevent it.

That was the message from weed scientist Linda Hall, who said producers need to step up to prevent a situation like that in the U.S. where glyphosate-resistant weeds are now endemic in corn, soybeans and cotton crops.

“It’s easy to say that Roundup Ready crops cause Roundup Ready weeds, but in fact that’s not what happens,” the University of Alberta professor told the FarmTech meeting here last month.

The problem is overuse of the herbicide as well as not using an appropriate tank-mix partner or full rates of application.

“You need to do everything to control those weeds, including spraying when those weeds are young,” she said.

Studies in the United States have shown that mixing herbicides in the tank is better than using them in sequence.

Weedy resistant weeds often survive in the perimeters of fields because they receive lower doses of spray because end nozzles aren’t delivering a full rate. Field perimeters don’t get the overlap from the double nozzle, and receive one-third of the rate of the rest of the field.

Best practices:

Hall also told producers to lengthen their rotations, scout early, and get on top of weed patches in their fields before they become well-established.

Researchers are currently looking for more herbicides to mix with glyphosate as glyphosate-resistant resistance continues to rise.

“What we’re really thinking about is a tank mix or multiple applications and that has to include soil-applied herbicides,” said Hall.

Finding a tank mix is not easy, especially in crops like canola. Both components of a tank mix have to be effective, as wild oats, green foxtail and cleavers have already developed resistance to Group 1 and Group 2 herbicides.

“I’m really keeping an eye on our annual sow thistle, which has just been identified as glyphosate-resistant in the U.S.,” said Hall. “If we have that one blowing around, it’s already resistant to Group 25 in Alberta.”

Back to the future?

There are approximately 7.7 million hectares of resistant weeds across Western Canada, said Hall. And since there haven’t been any new herbicides developed since the 1990s, researchers are going back into the vault to see if any older chemical compounds could be mixed with glyphosate to slow resistance.

Hall and other Alberta researchers have started to look at Group 14 and Group 15 herbicides. These can be applied in fall or as pro-emptengers in the spring, and fit well into direct-seeding systems.

Because these herbicides are soil applied, they are affected by organic matter, soil moisture and soil texture. They are also residual herbicides, so producers need to watch their recropping restrictions. Group 14s and 15s can be used in a variety of crops, including wheat, peas and sunflower, to combat cleavers and wild oats.

We get a dry spring, these things get held up in the soil and they’re not effective,” said Hall.

In order to make the herbicides work in a tilled field with deep-seeding conditions, an enhanced rate of application may be necessary.

Researchers are currently investigating non-herbicide-based weed management strategies, such as inter-row tillage and weed seed harvesting.

photo: Iain Leach / FCPC

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MARCH BEFORE AND SAVE

BULK AND SAVE BEFORE MARCH 20th

TOUGHER

EASIER

UPOV ‘91 isn’t just good for plant breeders

Commissioner of plant breeders’ rights says farmers will see better varieties and more choice

By Jennifer Blair

It’s a mistake to think that enhanced plant breeders’ rights only benefit seed companies, says the commissioner of plant breeders’ rights with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

“The net benefit, at the end of the day, is really going to be for farmers,” said Anthony Parker at the FarmTech meeting here in January.

The federal government is proposing to pass new plant breeders’ rights legislation that will bring Canada in line with UPOV ‘91 (an acronym for the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties).

“It will bring increased investment, new sources of varieties coming into the marketplace, and increased choice for farmers in sourcing the varieties they need to be competitive,” said Parker.

With the legislation expected to come into effect in April, a “number of interesting things will occur because of the improved intellectual property protection that will come with the shift,” he said.

“We are not even past the goal line yet, but we have seen applications coming in from other countries that we have not seen before,” he said. “We have seen new investments in Canada already as these companies are trying to position themselves under a better intellectual property framework.”

That will bring greater competition into Canada’s breeding programs — another boon for producers, he said.

“Breeders have an incentive to develop better varieties, be it for yield, for disease resistance, for stress tolerance, or for end-use characteristics,” said Parker.

“You get an increased number and diversity of crops, as well as varieties. This equates to more choice for farmers.”

And as long as farmers aren’t selling — or buying — brown-bag seed, there are no drawbacks to moving to UPOV ‘91, he said.

“Under the current framework, it’s an infringement to sell brown-bag seed. With this new provision, it’s both an infringement to sell as well as to purchase,” said Parker, adding a breeder will also be able to collect royalties off any grain harvested from brown-bag seed.

“When the infringement happens, the breeder is not just going to be seeking compensation on lost royalties. They’re going to be seeking damages, like court costs and investigation costs. That can increase costs quite significantly.”

The take-home message is “don’t engage in brown-bag seed transactions.”

“It’s a bad idea — not just because it’s breaking the law, but because it’s denying the breeder an ability to collect and reinvest in breeding programs,” he said.

“There are no negative impacts on farmers who obtain seed legitimately, so long as you made that initial qualifying purchase of certified seed and paid into the system, you’re fine. Use it as long as you like on your farm.”

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jennifer.blair@fbcpublishing.com
Heritage Co-op purchases Westman Aerial Spraying site

Heritage Co-op has purchased a retail ag site from Westman Aerial Spraying Limited, which supplies for aerial spraying services, crop supplies and farm equipment near Brandon.

In its announcement, Heritage Co-op said all of the same services offered by Westman Aerial Spraying will continue to be offered at the Heritage Co-op Agro Centre, with the exception of aerial spraying, which will continue to be operated at the site by Bonnie and Jon Bagley.

All employees from Westman Aerial Spraying have been offered similar employment and will continue to be employed with Heritage Co-op at this site.

Heritage Co-op serves more than 22,000 members with approximately 300 employees in Manitoba, Brandon, Wawanesa, Erickson and Sandy Lake.
Move huts off mitigation areas

Without a heavy blanket of snow to insulate it from the cold, ice on Manitoba’s rivers and lakes is actually thicker than it was last year.

By Shannon VanRaes

While it might be warmer this winter than last, higher average temperatures haven’t resulted in less ice on Manitoba waterways.

Darrell Kupchik, director of operations for North Red River Way Maintenance, said areas that only had 14 inches of ice in 2014 now have 24 inches.

“Last year is kind of the year that sticks in everyone’s memory, being so cold with so much snow. With the extreme cold we thought that it would be a factor that would give us heavy ice last year, but surprisingly with that heavy snow blanket, we actually saw thinner ice conditions,” said Kupchik.

In addition to providing an insulating layer, last winter’s heavier snowpack also pushed ice downwards, fracturing the surface while also reducing the ice’s thickness.

Not so this winter, Kupchik said.

“We just haven’t had the snowfall we had last year, so we didn’t get that insulating blanket. Ice thickness has increased because of that,” he said.

Ice cutting began on the Red River in early February, and Amphibexes began breaking ice this week between Netley Creek and Netley Lake in an effort to reduce the risk of ice jamming and flooding during the spring melt.

Cutting and breaking equipment will then begin to move towards the City of Selkirk. Once that community is reached, the equipment will be deployed to other areas of the province.

“We’re done on the Red River we’ll pull the equipment out and go to other areas in Manitoba that are at risk of ice-jam flooding, or locations where ice can be an issue, such as the Portage Diversion,” said Kupchik. “Then we’ll do some cutting and breaking of the 48-inch-thick ice on Lake Manitoba, right at the outlet.”

The Whitemud and Assiniboine rivers are usually next in line. In previous years the director of operations said ice has been cut and broken on the Brokenhead, Fisher, Carrot and Icelandic rivers, as well.

“We go wherever there is a need for us,” he said, reminding people to heed any warning messages, or emergency.

Whether or not there is a rapid melt will also affect the situation.

“It’s still awfully early for us to make any predictions on how things are going to play out for us this spring,” Kupchik said.

Provincial officials also remind any ice fishers to remove huts from areas covered by the ice-mitigation program.

As for whether or not thicker ice will mean a greater risk of ice jamming and related flooding this spring, Kupchik said it is too early to tell. He noted that a lot can happen over the next couple of months, and that one storm could change everything.

Whether or not there is a rapid melt will also affect the situation.

“It’s still awfully early for us to make any predictions on how things are going to play out for us this spring, so we’ll just do what we have to do and get that ice broken,” he said.

shannon.vanraes@rcpjournals.ca

Amphibexes began breaking ice this week. (RCPr)
Rare and ‘last copy’ history books donated to Legislative Library

The books are now a protected resource for those researching their family or community history

By Lorraine Stevenson

February 19, 2015

Those who may be researching their family's roots or just love reading about rural Manitoba's diverse and vibrant past now have a few more resources to guide their search at the Manitoba Legislative Library.

Twenty-seven rare and last copy local history books from the Manitoba Historical Society (MHS) have been donated to the Manitoba Legislative Library for public research. The books, published anywhere between 1910 and 2005, include histories of communities such as Winnipegosis, Minto, Oakburn, and Riverside, as well as Winnipeg communities such as St. Norbert and East Kildonan-Transcona.

The donated books include such titles as Minto Memories, Tales of Sporting, Bridging Brenda: the History of Brenda Municipality and Area, The Fox's Tale: The History of Foxwarren and the Consolidated School District #525, and Crocus Country: A History of Mather and Surrounding Districts.

In an interview Duckworth said it's estimated about 1,000 local histories in total have been published across Manitoba and they are found in a variety of libraries around Manitoba.

However, many times these books were never widely marketed, and although still in the hands of those who still live the communities they were written for, can be much harder to find elsewhere, Duckworth said.

It's important to ensure a copy is in an accessible public place so those in future can continue to research and trace their roots.

“Everyone has their own reason for being interested in history and it usually has to do with their own family,” he said. “These books are a very good account of each of a large number of families and there are often photographs. For someone trying to do genealogical research they are a gold mine.”

HARRY DUCKWORTH
President, Manitoba Historical Society

“The Manitoba Historical Society has a proud tradition of collecting historically significant objects and we are pleased to entrust these books to the care of the province,” said MHS president Harry Duckworth in a news release.

“I encourage all Manitobans to explore their heritage and the unique stories that shaped Manitoba in the rich collection of the Legislative Library,” said Minister Lemieux.

To help increase accessibility to more local histories in 2009 the MHS together with the Manitoba Legislative Library undertook an ambitious project to digitize and make local history books available worldwide through the website www.manitoba.ca.

“Although these books are little-known, they have a wealth of information for genealogists and historians,” said Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport and Consumer Protection Minister Ron Lemieux.

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Last week Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport and Consumer Protection Minister Ron Lemieux welcomed these 27 donated local history books to the Legislative Library.
Save some bread with these tips

Julie Garden-Robinson
FOOD AND NUTRITION SPECIALIST
NEW EXTENSION SERVICE

Does the bread have seeds in it?" my 11-year-old daughter asked. The bread has no seeds," I responded as I flipped the slices of french toast on the griddle. I am well aware that my youngest child does not like bread with added ingredients such as seeds and nuts. Usually she picks out all the non-bread material and sets it by her plate, much to my chagrin. I thought she might be OK with the cinnamon and nutmeg in the french toast egg mixture, though.

"Is this going to be mushy like the chocolate bread pudding?" she asked in a small, shrill voice. She had a definite idea of what the texture of pudding should be: smooth and creamy.

"No, the french toast won't be mushy. The chocolate bread pudding was supposed to be kind of mushy, by the way. Everyone else liked it," I responded a bit defensively. My daughter brings out my "inner sixth grader" sometimes.

I was testing some bread recipes for a publication about using "stale" bread, which local food pantries have requested. My home kitchen experiments reminded me of my days as a cereal chemistry graduate student, but I have no lab equipment in my kitchen.

Stale bread usually is firmer and may crumble readily, so people might opt to toss it instead of using it in novel ways.

Bread is a good source of complex carbohydrates, B vitamins and iron. Using day-old bread can help you stretch your food dollars. If you choose whole grain bread, you have the added nutritional benefit of fibre and phytochemicals (beneficial "plant chemicals") because the germ and bran are present.

Have you ever had a loaf of bread become mouldy or stale on your countertop? At some point in our lives, most of us have found a colourful, fuzzy surprise when we opened a bread bag.

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Chocolate Bread Pudding

Four out of five Robinsons and our neighbour enjoyed this bread pudding recipe. I served it with whipped topping, strawberries and blueberries. Add a drizzle of chocolate syrup if you want it to be extra fancy.

1 c. fat-free milk, divided
1 c. semi-sweet chocolate chips
1 c. sugar
2 tbsp. margarine or butter
8 slices white or whole wheat bread
1 tsp. vanilla
1 tsp. ground cinnamon (optional)
3 eggs, lightly beaten
Fresh fruit such as strawberries or raspberries, whipped topping (optional)

"Be sure to follow the recipe directions for addition of milk.

Preheat the oven to 350 F. Grease a 1-1/2-quart baking dish and set aside. In a large saucepan, combine 2 cups milk, chocolate, sugar and margarine. Stir over medium heat until chocolate and margarine (or butter) are melted. Remove from heat and stir in cubed bread, vanilla, cinnamon (if desired) and remaining 1 cup of milk. Add eggs and mix. Bake for 45 to 55 minutes or until a knife inserted in the centre comes out clean. Serve warm with a dollop of whipped topping and berries.

Makes 12 servings (about 1/2 cup per serving). Each serving has 229 calories, 9 grams (g) of fat, 31 g of carbohydrate, 7 g of protein and 150 milligrams of sodium.

Storing bread in the refrigerator will slow down the rate at which bread will grow mould. However, refrigerating bread actually speeds staling. Refrigerated bread becomes stale six times faster than bread at room temperature. Freezing bread, on the other hand, delays staling.

If your bread becomes mouldy, you need to throw it away. However, stale bread can be "revived" by toasting or otherwise heating it.

The staling of bread originally was studied in the early 1850s. Staling is not merely the loss of moisture. The early food scientists sealed the bread in containers and measured the moisture content. They noted no change in moisture content, so the water was still present in the stale bread.

During staling, the bread becomes firmer as the tiny starch granules in the crust change their alignment in the bread. The starch granules squeeze out the water into other areas of the crust. That was the chemistry lesson of the day. Here are some practical tips to save some bread:

• Freeze the bread. Seal it in an airtight bag, then label the package with the date you froze it. Usually, bread will remain at high quality for about three months in your freezer.

• Make croutons or bread crumbs. Simply cut the bread in cubes or tear into small pieces, and bake at 350 F until it is dry and brittle. To make crumbs, use a rolling pin to crush the bread to the desired size. You can add your favourite salt-free seasonings, such as garlic powder, if you like.

• Use bread as a meat extender. Some recipes call for soft bread crumbs and others call for toasted cubes. Add the bread crumbs to ground beef to make meat loaf or meatballs. Top casseroles with toasted bread crumbs for a little crunch or in place of crackers.

• Try making recipes with day-old bread such as french toast, egg bake, bread pudding, stuffing/dressing, grilled cheese sandwiches, egg salad on toast or garlic toast.

Made in Manitoba

Early spring is harvest time for Glenda and Ron Hart.

That’s when the Grand Marais couple heads to the woods and begins tapping anywhere from 2,000 to 2,500 birch trees on their property to start annual production of their company’s three signature birch syrups.

The Canadian Birch Company started up in 2012.

The sap harvest period lasts between three to four weeks and usually falls between late March to mid-May, depending on spring weather.

The first sap of the season becomes their Amber Gold syrup, a sweeter and distinctly golden syrup with notes of honey and apricot. Mid-season sap is used for their full-bodied, subtly fruit-flavoured Amber Birch syrup while the last sap of the year goes into their richer-flavoured Dark Birch syrup.

Amber Gold is an excellent topping for ice cream, cheese-cake and other desserts, while the two mid- and late-season syrups work very well in glazes for meats and vegetables.

Running a syrup-making company is a lot of work, but all worth it, say the Harts who love the lifestyle that’s accompanied with building a business around a combination of love of nature, innovation, and intimate knowledge of their trees and processing techniques used in a sustainable sap harvest.


--- Co-operator staff
Reena answers questions

Plus, a tip to make a Chocolate Floral Bouquet

Dear Reena,
Your column is great and covers so many topics. I have been trying to clean out some excess items in my house and have some old (dead) Christmas lights that I would like to recycle. I know that the copper wire is valuable, but if there isn’t a place that will pay for them, I would just like to find a place that will recycle them as I don’t want to just put them in the garbage. Thanks for your help.
— Barb

Dear Barb,
You have a couple of options: Depending on the lights that you own, you can take a small work knife or an old paring knife and carefully strip the plastic from the wire. Check out a variety of places that buy and sell copper online or in your area. Another option is to donate your Christmas lights that you own, or you could contact a place that will recycle them. Thanks for your patience.

Dear Reena,
I have burnt a pot very badly. It had red cabbage in it and I cannot remove the black from the bottom. Can you give me a solution for this? Thank you...
— Jean

Dear Jean,
Snack the pan with dish-washer detergent and hot water for a couple of hours; scrub with a steel wool pad. Or (and this is what I like to do) into your pot pour baking soda, dish soap and enough water to cover the bottom. Boil the contents for five minutes. Let sit just until cool enough to handle and scrub with an S.O.S. pad. Some people use oven cleaner for this purpose and leave it overnight, but I prefer baking soda.

Dear Reena,
Would you be able to tell me how I can get mould off of the white rubber seal around our fridge door?
This is on a bar fridge that was stored in a basement where the humidity was very high. I am not sure if someone tried to remove the mould before, so I don't know if any cleaning products have been used. Any help you would be able to give me would be much appreciated.
— Donna

Dear Donna,
I sounds like you need to begin by checking to see if the seal needs replacing. You should not be able to slide a piece of paper between the rubber seal and the wall of the refrigerator (or freezer). If the piece of paper slips between the seal and the wall, the seal is not tight enough and the gasket requires replacement. To clean the seal, combine five drops tea tree oil, and white vinegar. Spray and scrub.

Dear Reena,
I tossed them as craft supplies. It beats might want to use them just as you would donate your Christmas lights don’t work, someone old clothes. Even if the lights just as you would work knife or an old par-tially tape and attach artificial leaves to stems. Tie all of the “roses” together with a bow. Tip: Coloured cellophane will look even better.


Cherry tip of the week:
To make a Chocolate Floral Bouquet: Glue two Chocolate Kisses together (bottom to bottom). Insert a piece of six-inch (15-cm) wire into one of the pointed ends of the double kiss. The wire tip may need to be heated using the flame of a candle. Wrap a four-inch (10-cm) square of cellophane around the Chocolate Kisses “roses.” Cover the stems with floral tape and attach artificial leaves to stems. Tie all of the “roses” together with a bow.

By Cindy Murray

Rolling River 4-H’ers

New group started up last fall and is perfect fit for community

By Cindy Murray

Rolling River First Nation youth are learning to do by doing, thanks to volunteers who have organized the community’s first 4-H club. Known as the Rolling River 4-H’ers, the group started up last fall after representatives from Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives Aboriginal Programs met with both adults and children in the community to see if there would be interest in a 4-H program. It was a perfect fit for community members who were searching for activities that the children could learn from and engage in.

A total of 12 children came to the first meeting in October, and that number quickly grew to about 30 members who meet twice a month, under the guidance of leaders Victoria Blackbird, Karen Huntinghawk, Roseanne Gaywish, Lana Gaywish and other parent vol-unteers. Meetings always end with a discussion about what 4-H stands for and its motto, “Learn to do by doing.”

“The group has generated quite a bit of excitement and lots of support in the communi-unity,” said Blackbird, explaining that the program is all run on donations and volunteer help, with support from the chief and council who let the group use the South Quill Hall rent free.

Cindy Murray writes from the Erickson, Manitoba area

The 4-H group made Christmas crafts last December then divided into groups for a sleigh ride. —Photo: Cindy Murray

Reader’s Photo

Careful out there! —Slide: Lillian Deedman

Feedback letter:
HI Reena,
With regards to cleaning ‘Kitchen Craft’ cabinets: ‘For clarification we do not re-recommend anything except as you noted mild soap and water (just a damp clean cloth and not excess water, drying immediately). The Murphy’s Oil, Cabinet Magic, detergents and abrasive cleaners can have a dete-riorating effect on the finish over time and is not recom-mended and will void warranty.

Over time waxing and polishing compounds may build up on the surface and cause a hazy streaking appearance.”
—Submitted by Kitchen Craft Cabinetry Marcus (bike store owner)
Removal of plant debris, spent flowers and dead leaves is an ongoing task, but good hygiene in any garden will help to prevent insect problems.

Whenever I bring such a plant in from the sunroom I always check it over carefully, make sure the soil surface has been powdered, and I might even give the plant a quick spray with insecticidal soap if I am worried that it harbours insects. Although I only do this if I have had a problem in the sunroom, which doesn’t happen often. I take the same precautions when I buy a new plant or a gift plant arrives.

In the sunroom, I again ensure that every potted plant has had some dust sprinkled onto its soil — including the many plants that I bring indoors and put up in the fall. When I bring these many plants in from the outdoor garden I examine them carefully for signs of insects. Most of them, such as geraniums, are cut back severely when they are brought in so there is little foliage to hide or lay eggs. Another precautionary action I take is that about every six weeks I spray the sunroom with an aerosol insecticide. I do not like to use chemicals but in the enclosed space of the sunroom, I can spray it and then leave and not enter the room for a day or so.

I use my light garden as a germination chamber and a place to raise bedding plants in the spring. I am careful to keep it clean and I use sterile soilless mix and don’t bring any mature plants into the light garden so there is little chance of insect infestation. I check plants regularly and take suitable action if a problem occurs. As you can see, my strategy for deterring insects in my indoor garden is based mainly on good preventive measures with a solid backup plan in place if a problem occurs. This approach seems to work for me; perhaps you will use some of these techniques in your indoor garden. After all, we do have to succeed in our battle against the bugs!

Albert Parsons writes from Minnedosa, Manitoba

They don’t come much bigger or more handsome than this turn-of-the-century L-shaped barn that straddles the Canada-U.S. border near Snowflake. George Motheral left Plattsville, Ontario for Manitou in 1880. His son Isaac continued to Snowflake and began farming there in 1897. Three years later this large 80x80-foot barn was put up by friends and neighbours under the supervision of a master carpenter. The 12-inch square beams had been cut and milled near Attatarm and then skidded across nearly 25 miles of snow-covered fields and roads. This massive system of beams was mortised and pegged, with the enormous cupolas that have not required paint since being installed nearly 80 years ago. As part of the “King Ventilating System” these enormous cupolas were at one time attached to ventilating shafts that served more than 14,000 square feet of floor space. They were later disconnected because of interference with the hay mows. In 1923, Isaac’s son Ralph and Lloyd took over the Motheral farm and in 1968, Wayne took over from his uncle and father Ralph.

Albert Parsons writes from Minnedosa, Manitoba
You can’t change the weather.
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Weatherfarm gives you the tools to stay constantly informed about the weather on your farm – and in your region.

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info@weatherfarm.ca

weatherfarm.com
Giving farmers a role in variety development

Should farmers just provide a little assistance, or form their own breeding company?

By Allan Dawson
CO-OPERATOR STAFF

What role should farmers play in developing new wheat and barley varieties?

It’s a question Western Canada’s cereal groups are tackling together, says Brent VanKoughnet, a consultant working with the Manitoba Wheat and Barley Growers Association (MWBGA), one of the groups involved in the project.

Directors and staff from eight organizations, with some funding and support from the Western Grains Research Foundation, have formed a working group to frame a study, which will then be handed off to a consulting firm to flesh out the reasonable options for producer involvement.

“That whole spectrum needs to be explored so we understand the risk and benefits of any of those choices,” VanKoughnet said in an interview.

“In some cases it might be a little more assistance to a public breeding program, to being much more aggressive and saying: ‘Would we actually take some ownership position in a program, to being much more aggressive and saying: ‘Would we actually take some ownership position in a breeding company?’

The future of western Canadian wheat and barley variety development is uncertain, David Rouke, an MWBGA director and farmer from Minot, Man., told the Manitoba Seed Growers Association’s annual meeting in Brandon in December.

“Agriculture Minister (Gerry) Ritz has made many changes and we’re not entirely sure what the implications of all those changes are, but we’re trying to figure it out,” Rouke said. “I think eventually we’ll try to come up with a strategy where we are in a position to lead in that area, so we have to look at the evolution of public research — how it will be funded, is it sustainable?”

Federal role already reduced

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada has already said it plans to hand off new varieties at an earlier stage rather than taking them to registration.

Meanwhile, federal legislation to advance PIP, an international agreement giving plant breeders more protection over their varieties, is before the Senate and is expected to soon become law.

“The more, applauded by private plant-breeding companies and many farm groups, has given rise to speculation the government will further reduce its wheat variety research anticipating the gap will be filled by private firms that currently dominate in corn, soybeans and canola.

“Wheat is quite different from corn or soybeans or canola in terms of genetic potential and some of the things that might be able to be done,” Rouke said.

“So I want to make sure we don’t just get out of the road of private industry and pay more for seed and not get that much more value. We need to be really careful there.”

David Rouke

Larger provincial role

The new provincial wheat and barley associations have the potential to see farmers more engaged and have more influence than ever, VanKoughnet said.

The new associations were created in part to fill some of the gaps created when the Canadian Wheat Board’s sales monopoly ended and its mandate changed, Rouke said.

“It’s a little bit like Humpty Dumpty,” he said. “Somebody pushed Humpty Dumpty off the wall and it’s up to us to try and find the pieces and put them all back together. That’s what we’re trying to do.”

Western wheat and barley grower associations used to fund research through voluntary checkoff on final wheat board payments. The money went to the farmer-run Western Grains Research Foundation, which then decided how it was spent. A temporary checkoff continues to fund the WGRF and the Canadian International Grains Institute but ends Aug. 1, 2017. The wheat and barley associations are working towards a seamless transition, Rouke said.

“Because we’re (MWBGA) kind of the small players on the Prairies, particularly compared to Saskatchewan, we need to collaborate as much as possible to leverage our dollars the best we can.”

Rouke said 70 to 80 per cent of the Manitoba research budget would be spent on joint projects with other provinces.

About 10 per cent of the total budget will be on market development, mostly through Cereals Canada.

Rouke, who took part in a trade mission to promote Canadian wheat in South America in November, said Canadian grain needs to be promoted.

“If we’re not in front of our customers somehow else will be,” he said. “The U.S. Wheat Associates, which is kind of the marketing arm (for American wheat) has a head office staff of 19 and...17 permanent offices around the world. And we have a bunch of volunteers that go around once a year. I think we’re pretty effective but not be there really is not a good option at all if we want to maintain relationships with those customers."

By Allan Dawson
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“The more, applauded by private plant-breeding companies and many farm groups, has given rise to speculation the government will further reduce its wheat variety research anticipating the gap will be filled by private firms that currently dominate in corn, soybeans and canola.

“Wheat is quite different from corn or soybeans or canola in terms of genetic potential and some of the things that might be able to be done,” Rouke said.

“So I want to make sure we don’t just get out of the road of private industry and pay more for seed and not get that much more value. We need to be really careful there.”

David Rouke

Larger provincial role

The new provincial wheat and barley associations have the potential to see farmers more engaged and have more influence than ever, VanKoughnet said.

The new associations were created in part to fill some of the gaps created when the Canadian Wheat Board’s sales monopoly ended and its mandate changed, Rouke said.

“It’s a little bit like Humpty Dumpty,” he said. “Somebody pushed Humpty Dumpty off the wall and it’s up to us to try and find the pieces and put them all back together. That’s what we’re trying to do.”

Western wheat and barley grower associations used to fund research through voluntary checkoff on final wheat board payments. The money went to the farmer-run Western Grains Research Foundation, which then decided how it was spent. A temporary checkoff continues to fund the WGRF and the Canadian International Grains Institute but ends Aug. 1, 2017. The wheat and barley associations are working towards a seamless transition, Rouke said.

“Because we’re (MWBGA) kind of the small players on the Prairies, particularly compared to Saskatchewan, we need to collaborate as much as possible to leverage our dollars the best we can.”

Rouke said 70 to 80 per cent of the Manitoba research budget would be spent on joint projects with other provinces.

About 10 per cent of the total budget will be on market development, mostly through Cereals Canada.

Rouke, who took part in a trade mission to promote Canadian wheat in South America in November, said Canadian grain needs to be promoted.

“If we’re not in front of our customers somehow else will be,” he said. “The U.S. Wheat Associates, which is kind of the marketing arm (for American wheat) has a head office staff of 19 and...17 permanent offices around the world. And we have a bunch of volunteers that go around once a year. I think we’re pretty effective but not be there really is not a good option at all if we want to maintain relationships with those customers.”
French wheat sector adopts new grades
French traders are alarmed by poor falling numbers

French wheat producers, traders and processors have adopted a new classification for soft wheat to be used on the cash market in a bid to boost quality in European Union’s top wheat exporter, grain sector group Intercereales said.

Intercereales had already pushed for protein content, which has become a weakness for French wheat on international markets, to be included in commercial contracts.

“To progress on the various quality criteria is a necessity to meet all markets’ requirements, both in France and abroad,” Intercereales chairman Philippe Pinta said in a statement. After a steady decline in protein content over the last decade, French traders were alarmed by poor readings for Hagberg falling numbers, another measure of wheat’s suitability for bread making, in a rain-affected 2014 harvest.

Average protein content in the 2014 French harvest was 11.1 per cent, the lowest since at least 2009 and scarcely meeting the minimum requirement of major export clients.

“Protein content in the 2014 French harvest was 11.1 per cent, the lowest since at least 2009 and scarcely meeting the minimum requirement of major export clients.”

French wheat may be fine for baguettes, but overseas buyers want a bit more loaf volume.

Russia to have 20 million to 30 million tonnes of grain for export in 2015-16
Poor winter grain conditions could cut production

Russia, one of the world’s largest wheat exporters, may export between 28 million and 30 million tonnes of grain in 2015-16 marketing year which starts on July 1, the Agriculture Ministry said Feb. 4, having narrowed its 2015 crop forecast.

Prospects for the 2015 crop look weak compared to a near-record crop of 104 million tonnes in 2014, due to poor winter grain conditions, import costs and higher interest rates caused by a slump in the ruble, analysts said.

Russia imposed a wheat export tax from Feb. 1 that lasts to June 30. The tax amounts to 15 per cent of the customs price plus 7.5 euros and will be no less than 35 euros per tonne.

The ministry expects a 2015 crop in a range of 85 million to 100 million tonnes, Pyotr Chekmaryov, head of the planting-growing department, said in comments sent to Reuters.

His comments follow a report by Interfax that quoted Chekmaryov as saying that Russia could harvest 68 million to 100 million tonnes of grain in 2015.

The low end of the range, 68 million tonnes, is based on a pessimistic scenario for winter grains, which usually account for about 40 per cent of Russia’s annual crop, Interfax said.

The high end, at 100 million tonnes, is an optimistic scenario targeted by the state development program for the agriculture sector.

The ministry declined to comment on the pessimistic scenario to Reuters.

A 68-million-tonne crop would be insufficient to cover Russia’s domestic demand of more than 70 million tonnes a year but several analysts said the estimate was too gloomy.

SovEcon agriculture consultancy will not change its 2015 crop forecast of 86 million tonnes until the condition of winter grains becomes clear in the spring, Andrey Sizov, the head of SovEcon, said.

Russia’s winter grains were sown on an area of 16.8 million hectares last autumn and about 21 per cent were in bad condition at the start of the winter, Chekmaryov told Reuters.

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Australia sharply tightens foreign farmland purchases

Foreign buying has been a controversial issue, and Prime Minister Abbott seeks to fend off more attacks

By Colin Packham
SYDNEY/REUTERS

Australia has tightened rules over foreign ownership of its agricultural land amid concerns that it is losing control of its own food security, slashing the amount beyond which land purchases would require regulatory approval.

From March 1, foreign purchases of agricultural land over A$15 million (C$14.5 million) will be subject to regulatory approval from Australia’s Foreign Investment Review Board, Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott said.

Previously, Australia had only required regulatory approval on foreign purchases of agricultural land of more than A$240 million.

“This is not saying that we don’t want foreign investment,” he told reporters.

“We do want foreign investment but it’s got to be the right investment, the right investment that serves our purposes. It needs to be transparent,” Abbott said.

The tighter rules will also prevent multiple purchases below the threshold, with regulatory approval being required as soon as total transactions by one purchaser pass A$15 million.

Australia’s Bureau of Statistics said last June 90 per cent of agricultural land is fully owned by Australians, although Abbott promised greater scrutiny after the rural sector expressed skepticism about those findings.

Foreign ownership of Australian land has been a controversial issue. By announcing the tighter rules, the embattled Abbott will win favour from some. He is looking to tighten his grip on power after narrowly surviving an internal party challenge to his leadership.

If you want to buy some emu pasture worth more than $15 million, you’ll have to check with the government.

BRIEFS

IGC raises forecast for 2014-15 world corn output to record

LONDON/REUTERS

The International Grains Council (IGC) has raised its forecast for the 2014-15 world corn (maize) crop, mainly reflecting bigger than previously forecast crops in Argentina, Brazil, the EU and Ukraine, but a reduced figure for the United States.

Global corn production was forecast to total a record 992 million tons, up from a previous forecast of 982 million and above the previous season’s 991 million, it said Jan. 22.

The IGC, in a monthly report, left unchanged its estimate for the 2014-15 global wheat crop at a record 717 million tons.

If you want to buy some emu pasture worth more than $15 million, you’ll have to check with the government.
Farmers face an additional challenge due to plunging world dairy prices

New Zealand declares partial drought, offers farm assistance

Russia wants to help Egypt build enough storage for a year’s production

New Zealand declares partial drought, offers farm assistance

Time to go into the concrete business in Egypt?

Photograph: \[Image\]

New Zealand declares partial drought, offers farm assistance

News

Midwest flooding is more frequent

The Manitoba Co-operator  |  February 19, 2015

**News**

**Midwest flooding is more frequent**

STAFF / Floods have become increasingly frequent in the U.S. Midwest and surrounding states including North and South Dakota over the past half-century, according to a study from the University of Iowa.

Researchers based their findings on daily records collected by the U.S. Geological Survey at 774 stream gauges in 14 states from 1962–2011.

They found that 264 (34 per cent) of the stations had more floods, while only 66 stations (nine per cent) showed a decrease.

Their study was published Feb. 9 in the advance online edition of the journal *Nature Climate Change*.

“The observation that floods are getting bigger, but that we are not experiencing a larger number of big floods,” said Kathrin Hiller, an assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering at the University of Iowa.

The researchers said analysis revealed that most of the flood peaks in the upper Midwest occur in the spring and summer primarily from snowmelt, rain falling on frozen ground and rain-on-snow events.

“Spring— in addition to being a season with increasing frequency of heavy rainfall— also has the strongest increase in temperature over most of the northern part of the region studied,” Hiller said.

The release said the findings jibe well with current thinking among climate scientists that the hydrological cycle is being affected by global warming.

“In general, as the atmosphere becomes warmer, it can hold more moisture. One consequence of higher water vapour concentrations is more frequent, intense precipitation,” Hiller said.

However, the current study did not attempt to link the increase in the number of episodes to climate change.

**Global corn output sets new record**

LONDON / REUTERS / The International Grains Council (IGC) has raised its forecast for 2014-15 world corn (maize) crop, mainly reflecting bigger than previously forecasted corn crops in Argentina, Brazil, the EU and Ukraine, but a reduced figure for the United States.

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The IGC, in a monthly report, left unchanged its estimate for the 2014-15 global wheat crop at a record 717 million tons.
China expected to boost imports of protein-rich wheat
But overall, 2014-15 wheat imports seen down 60 per cent due to ample supply

By Niu Shuping and Naveen Thukral
BEIJING-SINGAPORE-REUTERS

Chinese wheat buyers are likely to step up imports of higher-quality grains to meet a domestic shortfall even though total overseas purchases are forecast to tumble this year due to bumper production at home, analysts and traders said.

China, the world’s biggest wheat producer and consumer, has seen output climb to record levels in recent years, but it faces a shortage of the high-protein wheat it needs to meet growing appetite for noodles, bread and other baked products as incomes rise.

“Hard red spring wheat is in extremely short supply here in the domestic market because China’s own production of high-quality wheat was not satisfactory despite higher output,” said an analyst with an official think-tank who declined to be identified.

More demand for high-protein wheat could bolster prices for spring wheat traded on the Minneapolis Grains Exchange.

China has bought about 120,000 tonnes of hard wheat in the past few days, European traders said Jan. 4. The origin is unclear but may include some Australian and U.S. wheat.

“We are seeing more business being done to China in containers and bulk than we have seen in a long time,” said one grains trader in Sydney.

The Australian dollar has weakened and it is attracting business,” he added. The Aussie hit its lowest in over five years Jan. 3.

China, the world’s biggest wheat producer and consumer, has seen output climb to record levels in recent years, but it faces a shortage of the high-protein wheat it needs to meet growing appetite for noodles, bread and other baked products as incomes rise.

China’s overall wheat imports are forecast to fall around 60 per cent to about three million tonnes in 2014-15 from a year ago, China National Grain and Oils Information Centre has estimated, thanks to all-time-high production.

In addition to higher output, China’s overall appetite for wheat is likely to take a hit as authorities suspend buying for state reserves after a bumper harvest refilled stocks.

China’s wheat imports more than doubled to 6.77 million tonnes in 2013-14 from a year after adverse weather damaged crops in key producing regions.

But the country is expected to churn out a record 126 million tonnes in 2014-15, up from 122 million tonnes a year ago, the National Bureau of Statistics has said.

Beijing will offer two million tonnes of domestic wheat from state reserves this week.

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“There is plenty of feed wheat of average quality around, but if you are looking for high-protein wheat you will have to pay a premium,” said a Singapore-based trader.

Keeping control
China exerts control over import volumes by issuing quotas that limit how much wheat buyers can take from overseas. In the coming weeks, it is expected to issue a 2015 quota level unchanged from last year’s 9.6 million tonnes.

Private mills are likely to bid keenly for the 10 per cent they are expected to be allocated.

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These cats are on the lookout for other critters in the Bennie Barn near Waskada.

PHOTO SHARLENE BENNIE
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Sudoku

A Discouraging Word?

ACROSS
1. Thorpean Bernhardt
6. Will, biblically
11. Hula hoops were one
14. Cooper of rock
15. The big brass?
16. You and me, once
17. What a 1910 John A. Lomax song classic demands
19. Terris great Emerson
20. What shapes do
21. Sparta’s nail
23. Predetermined
24. Tiny part of an archipelago
27. York
28. 1910 Lomax song classic
30. Action film sequence
35. Word heard in a herd
36. Apple for one
37. Dishqualifies oneself
40. Go-between
42. Thole mates?
43. One of the Worcestershire sauce partners
45. Consulate
46. It’s never an Environment Canada forecast in the 1910
48. “What?”
49. Ups and downs of fashion
52. Grade sch. advisory gp.
55. Slow on-line connection
58. Wedding reception hiree
60. Boiling

DOWN
1.  Wheat ____________
2.  Registered Beef ____________
3. Oats ____________
4.  Registered Beef ____________
5. Flax ____________
6.  Mustard  ____________
7. Rye ____________
8. Peas ____________
9. Chick Peas ____________
10. Lentils ____________
11. Dry Beans ____________
12. Hay ____________
13. Pasture ____________
14. Summerfallow ____________
15. Affalfa ____________
16. Forage Seed ____________
17. Mustard ____________
18. Other (specify) ____________

ACROSS
1. Wheat ____________
2. Barley ____________
3. Oats ____________
4. Canada ____________
5. Flax ____________
6. Durum ____________
7. Pea ____________
8. Peas ____________
9. Chick Peas ____________

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