

AN ANNUAL CHECKUP FOR NATIVE PASTURES • KEEP VISITORS SAFE

Canadian Cattlemen

THE BEEF MAGAZINE



June 2015 \$3.00
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GETTING STARTED


Lance and Shari Leachman,
Maidstone, Sask.

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Congratulations!

To our June survey winner,
Neil Erickson of Stony Plain, Alta.
This month's survey is on page 39.

Cover Photo: Supplied by the Leachman family.

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NewsMakers



Ryder Lee



Christina Patterson

The Canadian Cattlemen's Association manager of federal/provincial relations for the past nine years, Ryder Lee, will be moving to Regina in early July as the new executive director of the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association (SCA). His first order of business will be organizing a new office and new staff. None of the four staff from the Saskatoon office opted to move to Regina. The association

has already rented office space in the city and contracted with Christina Patterson to serve as their new policy analyst. Patterson is a consultant with New West Public Affairs Inc. and a former director of policy for the federal ministers of agriculture and Indian and northern affairs and agriculture specialist with USDA working out of the U.S. Embassy in Ottawa.



Leanna Rousell

Leanna Rousell is the next executive director of the Saskatchewan Forage Association replacing Leanne Thompson who is now the executive director of the Saskatchewan Cattle Feeders

Association. Leanna brings to the new job experience gained through working with the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency, the West Hawk Livestock Zone project and Saskatoon Livestock Sales. She will run the office from her home in Asquith, Sask.



Oneil Carlier

A former technician with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Whitecourt-St. Anne MLA Oneil Carlier, has been named as the Alberta New Democrats' first minister of agriculture, forestry and rural development. Carlier is only one of 11 ministers named to Premier Rachel Notley's trimmed-down new cabinet, so his portfolio has been

expanded to take over responsibility for forestry from the department of environment and sustainable resource development.



Lary Fossum



Brian McKersie

Lary Fossum of Dawson Creek has been re-elected president of the British Columbia Cattlemen's Association board of directors. He is joined on the executive by vice-president Brian McKersie of Canal Flats and past president David Haywood-Farmer. The other zone directors are: Rene Ardill, Fort St. John; Mike McConnell, Dawson Creek; Larry Garrett, Vanderhoof; Martin Rossmann, Quesnel; Bob

Storey, Smithers; Grant Huffman, Riske Creek; Duncan Barnett, 100 Mile House; John Anderson, Merritt; Leroy Peters, Hefley Creek; Linda Allison, Princeton and Werner Stump, Malakwa.



Pat Burrage

Pat Burrage representing the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association was re-elected chair of the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency at its recent annual meeting. Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association representative Mark Elford was re-elected as vice-chair as was finance chair John Tilley from the Maritime Beef Council and directors at large, Pat Hayes representing the Canadian Cattlemen's Association and Rick Wright from the Livestock Markets Association of Canada.

After five years and 17,000 steaks the final Steaks for Soldiers event was held last month at CFB Shilo in Manitoba. It was the 11th such event where steaks were served to Canadian troops and their families in appreciation of their service to the nation. The Canadian Cattlemen's Association initiated the first event in 2007 after the first troop rotation returned from Afghanistan. At that point Harvey Dann and his daughter Jackie of Alert

Agri Distributors Inc. of West St. Paul, Man., sponsored a Steak for a Returning Soldier campaign to keep the idea rolling with donations from producers and industry organizations. A total of \$27,073 of leftover funds from the event was donated to the Military Families Fund and the Soldier On Funds.

Joe Reda was elected president and chair of the board of the Canadian Meat Council at the meat industry association's annual meeting last month. Mr. Reda is the co-chief executive officer and co-owner of Viau Food Products Inc. Founded in 1977, Viau operates two establishments, one in Montreal and a modern, new facility in Laval, Quebec. It is the country's largest independent producer of pepperoni. 🍖

Letters

BULLIES: NO MORE

The World Trade Organization (WTO) has just ruled for the fourth time that the United States is in contravention of its trade obligations with respect to its country-of-origin (COOL) labelling laws. That is the polite and diplomatic way to say it is still bullying Canada and Mexico. Hard to believe that we have a North American Free Trade Agreement between our three countries but our big brother still beats up on us whenever he gets the opportunity. Now Canada and Mexico can retaliate legally by imposing punitive tariffs on American exports. Gerry Ritz, our federal minister of agriculture, has already prepared a hit list of imported products to tax. Hopefully when the tariffs are applied, they will recoup some of the millions of dollars spent by the Canadian federal government and the Canadian Cattlemen's Association to challenge the COOL laws. The only recourse to a bully is to stand up and defend yourself. Remember David and Goliath: our slingshot this time was the WTO.

*Gib Drury
Rupert, Que.*



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Crop and livestock farmers know how closely they're tied to what happens around the world. Their products are exported to more than 100 countries, and demand and price for them depend on everything from weather and crop conditions to domestic and international politics. At Canadian Cattlemen, we're proud of the work that our publication does in connecting our farm readers to world news, but also proud of our work to help connect Canadian farmers to each other through our features on what's happening on farms and in rural communities around the province and across the country. We're pleased to be a Founding Member of Ag for Life and their work in promoting a strong, progressive, safe and sustainable agricultural community in Western Canada.

To learn more about Ag for Life, go to agricultureforlife.ca.

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Cattlemen

Ag for Life

FEEDLOT MANURE HELPS FUEL \$7.1-MILLION BIOENERGY PLANT

Southern Alberta farmers, Chris and Harold Perry, take the power of science and sustainable farm practices very seriously.

Their 2020 vision is to reduce farm inputs such as water, fuel, electricity and synthetic fertilizer by 20 per cent, while increasing net yields by 20 per cent. They began to implement that vision in 2011 and the recent commissioning of their new anaerobic digesters for the production of biogas as fuel to drive an engine connected to a power turbine is a major piece of the puzzle.

In November, they commissioned a \$7.1-million anaerobic digester installation on their farm near Chin, Alta. that will continuously generate biogas as fuel to produce about 630 kilowatts (kW) of green power. The two digesters will process about 25,000 tonnes of organic waste annually, which will include at least 13,000 tonnes of open-pen feedlot manure.

KCL Cattle, located near Coaldale is a major supplier of raw manure to the installation. Les Wall, KCL Cattle Company owner is cautiously optimistic about the chances of the renewable power installation working as advertised but strongly supports the overall concept.

"I think it's a win-win for both parties," he says. "It makes you feel good to promote some green energy, they are making good use of our manure, and they are generating energy which helps to run their farms while they sell the excess. I'm pretty happy to be a partner with them. They are good people, and I am pretty excited to see where it will all grow."

As part of the Perrys' licence to operate with the Alberta government, at least 50 per cent of the raw feedstock fed into the digester must be feedlot manure. At the present time, it is much higher than that.

The production of renewable power from biogas and diverting manure from the nearby KCL Cattle Company and Kasko Cattle Company feedlots will reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by over 10,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year.

The anaerobic digester system and renewable power facility is owned by a company called GrowTEC Ltd., which is a division of Perry Produce Ltd. Chris Perry

is the company's co-founder, president and chief executive officer (CEO). The name GrowTEC is an acronym for "Grow the Energy Circle Ltd."

Chris Perry says that the goal is for the anaerobic digestion system to produce enough income from the sale of renewable power so that the farm operation is essentially, "off the grid."

Seth Clark, GrowTEC's Biogas Facility production manager, says the location of the biogas energy system is ideal.

"Here in southern Alberta, we have a number of feedlots that are manure rich and land poor," he says. "There's lots of manure out there, and in some cases, there is more manure than the producers can actually apply to their land base."

The Perry family has a history of innovation and stewardship that spans four generations. Today, they operate a diverse farm comprising 4,000 acres of irrigated land producing potatoes, sunflowers, green peas, seed canola and a range of cereals for clients such as Frito Lay, McCain Foods, Lucerne Foods, Hytech Production, and Spitz.

In addition to the production of renewable power from biogas, the Perry operation also generates 105 kW of geothermal power for use in both cooling and heating of their potato storage operation, and 20 kW of solar power.

"The Perrys are very progressive farmers," says Clark. "They really see themselves as stewards of their land. For instance, they were composting manure for quite some time prior to even considering the anaerobic digester just as a way to reduce the amount of synthetic fertilizers they needed for their land."

The manure used in the composting program will not be disrupted by redirecting that manure to the anaerobic digesters. That operation will continue as before. In recent years, the Perrys have been manufacturing about 7,500 tonnes of compost from raw manure gathered from area feedlots.

"We wanted to try compost because that is the natural way that things work," says Harold Perry. "When the buffalo were here, they ate and manured the grass at

the same time, and that's how the natural cycle worked. Fertilizer prices have also helped because compost makes sense if you strictly go by dollars. The cost of putting the amount of nutrients you put on your soil using compost is less than if you were to purchase that at a fertilizer dealership."

The food companies that the Perrys supply have very high-quality standards and previously, all potatoes that didn't make the grade were sent to area feedlots for animal feed or spread back on the land, which involved a fair amount of trucking and transportation. Now they are diverted as feedstock to the digesters.

"Potatoes are a very good feedstock for an anaerobic digester, so it got the Perry family thinking about how they could utilize this waste material and add some value to it," says Clark.

Originally, the plan was to only use potatoes as the digester feedstock, but it was necessary to include manure for the active microbes present in it. Capturing the biogas from digesting these two waste streams will reduce transportation costs and create value-added products — biogas for fuel to produce renewable power and high-nutrient organic fertilizer in both liquid and solid form as byproducts from the digesters.

A major supporter of the GrowTEC renewable energy project was Alberta's Climate Change and Emissions Management Corporation (CCEMC), which provided over \$3.5 million toward the project. Clark says the project would not have been economically feasible without CCEMC's support. CCEMC is an independent organization created by the Alberta government to channel funds collected from large greenhouse gas emitters toward projects that will help the province reach its GHG emission reduction targets.

"With current energy prices and market the way it is for electricity in this province, it is very difficult to justify putting a project like this together, purely on the economics," says Clark.

Construction began in August 2013, with completion about one year later. The facility was fully operational in late November 2014. 🍁

COW CHIPS

Cow Chips was a column that ran in the early issues of *Canadian Cattlemen* offering snippets of current news on the cattle industry. This edition was taken from the June 1949 issue of the magazine.



Charles Jones of Balzac, Alta., recently imported at a high figure a new Hereford herd bull, DAN DOMINO LHTO 1st (born Sept. 1947). The purchase was made at the Crawford (Nebraska) Show and Sale in May 1949. DAN DOMINO 1st was bred by C.H. LaRiviere of Ardmore, South Dakota and was Champion of the show.

Alberta Agriculture Minister David Ure, has announced that W.H.T. Mead formerly Supervisor of Livestock Breeding Associations at Olds, has been made Livestock Commissioner for the Province succeeding A. "Archie" Campbell who is now District Agriculturist for the Edmonton district. Good luck to you Bill Mead in your new position.

H.R. McGrogan of the National Railway Department at Ottawa recently travelled through the foothill ranching area in order to see first hand the size and nature of western cattle-ranching operations. His job is to see that there is uniformity of interpretation and procedure on Basic Herd Directive No. 263 in all tax offices. He was accompanied by Alan Patterson and Alex Morice of the Calgary Tax Office, K.J. Morrison F.C.A. and Ken Coppock.

"Slim" Marsdon, one-time cowpuncher and occasionally a contributor to CC, now located at Vulcan, Alta., has taken up oil painting as a hobby. Slim says, "One thing about oils is, if you make a mistake you can correct it easily — by removing the paint with your palette knife and starting over."

Dr. E.E. Ballantyne, Alberta's Director of Veterinary Services, reports that in 1948 over 13,500 blood tests for Bang's disease were taken at the Provincial Laboratory. In 1948, over 10,000 heifer calves from four to eight months of age were vaccinated for Strain 19, with the province supplying the vaccine free to veterinarians doing this work.

Clarence S. McKee who has been associated with the Royal Winter Fair at Toronto for the past 18 years has been appointed general manager of the Royal to succeed W.A. Dryden who because of ill health has resigned the post he held since 1936.

Kerry Wood of Red Deer, Alta., one of CC's writers, has authored a booklet (40 pages) on magpie control. He discusses the habits of this menacing bird and illustrates the booklet with plans for magpie traps.

Harry Jacques recently went to the U.S. and returned with a palomino gelding, "Amigo Pedro," the three-year-old son of "El Pedro," the outstanding palomino stallion owned by Victor Watson of Airdrie, Alta.; also with a grey half-Arab registered mare sired by FA RABDEN and a full sister to the long-distance horse, "Don Juan." Cliff Tebb of Airdrie brought back a two-year-old palomino stallion, a son of "El Pedro," also "Sunny Boy," a five-year-old quarter-horse type and a yearling quarter-horse stud colt.

At a meeting of the Northern Alberta Shorthorn Club held in Edmonton on March 22 a silver trophy was presented to William Melynk of Chipman for the Champion Shorthorn steer shown at the Edmonton Spring Show.

It is pointed out by Dr. E.E. Ballantyne, Alberta's Provincial Veterinarian, that the combined bacterin used for prevention of blackleg and blackleg edema does not also offer protection against hemorrhagic septicaemia or shipping fever. The bacterin, which is good for blackleg and blackleg edema contains bacteria with the names "clostridium chauvei" and "clostridium septicus." The bacteria for hemorrhagic septicaemia contains killed bacteria belonging to the pasteurella group. For blackleg and hemorrhagic septicaemia two different bacterins therefore must be used.

The Camrose Shorthorn Club met in Camrose, Alta., for supper on March 25, to hear, E.R. Henderson, H. Fredeen and Dr. P. Talbot speak on goals to be observed in the improvement of Shorthorns with particular emphasis on the Shorthorn in Calf Clubs and junior activities in the development of Canadian agriculture.

The Agricultural Institute of Canada will hold its 1949 Convention at the University of British Columbia at Vancouver on June

20-24. The institute was formed in 1920 to bring together men who devote their time to agricultural teaching and research.

The audited statement of the Community Auction Sales Association for 1948 shows total sales of \$3,601,098.68 for 21,842 head of cattle. Selling expenses without including depreciation on sales yards were \$52,159.23 or about \$2.39 per head or approximately 1.45 per cent of sales.

J.P. Sackville, secretary of the Canadian Aberdeen Angus Association, 3707-5th St. S.W., Calgary, has recently published and mailed a meritorious 40-page booklet entitled, *On the March with — Aberdeen Angus — the Breed of the Future*. Mr. Sackville presents the history of the breed and discusses its place in any beef-raising program. This is an excellent booklet — the best we can say to all cattlemen is, "get a copy of it from Percy Sackville."

As of Dec. 1, 1948, there were 8,251,000 head of cattle on farms in Canada compared to 8,994,000 head on the same date in 1947. The decline in the Prairie provinces was 14 per cent compared to eight per cent for all provinces.

G. Douglas of Lafleche, Sask. writes to say that it was incorrectly stated on page 203 of the March issue that "practically the whole 1,200 American soldiers were killed" at the Custer massacre. He notes that "in the final fight only 216 were killed." There has been considerable variance on the details of the Custer massacre but the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* states "Custer and 264 men were killed."

Dr. G.S. Barton has been appointed Special Assistant to the Federal Minister of Agriculture. The post of Deputy Minister of Agriculture from which he has retired after 17 years as been taken by J. Gordon Taggart who has broad experience in Canadian agriculture and who until recently was Director in Chief of Agricultural Services for the Dominion. 🍁

For more of the past from the pages of our magazine see the History section at www.canadiancattlemen.ca.

KEEP VISITORS SAFE

Strike a balance between enjoyable and safe



If you operate a farm store, market garden, agri-tourism venue or host a family celebration summer brings a lot of visitors to the farm, providing a unique opportunity to promote agriculture right where it happens. But along with the fun comes a responsibility to make it a safe experience for everyone.

"You can't assume that visitors know the risks or are even thinking about the risks involved," cautions Laurel Aitken, farm safety co-ordinator with Alberta Agriculture. They assume you've thought of the risks and addressed them.

The idea is to direct your on-farm visitors to lower-risk areas that still enhance their experience. When high-risk areas can't be avoided take steps to secure the area with locks, warning signs or a good fence.

A designated uncluttered parking area away from farm vehicles and road traffic is another good precaution. Extra thought is needed with roadside stands to avoid a lineup of hastily parked vehicles along the road. Clearly marked entrance and exit signs also help with traffic flow.

If the event is inside be sure your build-

ing complies with fire safety codes for maximum numbers and all exits and fire extinguishers are easy to find. Lock cabinets holding chemicals or livestock drugs and even cleaning supplies in public washrooms.

Appropriate lighting is a simple yet effective safety measure.

Handwashing stations are a must, especially when food or picnic facilities are provided.

For scheduled activities such as hayrides, trail rides, or lessons, write safety precautions into your operating procedures.

Aitken's recommendations are drawn from a new Alberta Farm Safe Plan (ready to roll out soon in workshops around the province). To secure a safe environment for visitors it advises:

COMMIT TO FARM SAFETY

Discuss the farm's safety policy with your family and employees. Set objectives and follow through on them. Start with basic rules such as the need for handwashing, no climbing on equipment, supervision of children at all times, no feeding of the animals, no smoking. Then post the rules for all to see.

IDENTIFY AND ASSESS HAZARDS

A walkabout with family or employees is a good way to gain some fresh eyes when looking for hazards. Try to take an inexperienced urbanite's point of view.

Assess risk associated with each hazard to prioritize your list of what needs to be done. Risk is the probability of loss, so consider the likelihood something will happen, how often it could happen, and how severe the impact would be in deciding whether you need to find a way to reduce the danger.

For example, instead of allowing kids the freedom to climb a stationary piece of equipment unattended you might station staff to help them get up and down the ladder one at a time. You could also fence off the equipment (and post information on the fence to explain the working parts) but restrict access to just the cab to give them a sense of what it feels like to be in the driver's seat.

HAZARD CONTROL

The trick is to control the risk without spoiling the fun. A hazard control standard starts by eliminating the danger wherever possible. If that goes too far, try substituting a safer

activity. A step down from there is to use barriers and locks along with signage and posted rules to safeguard the most hazardous areas. At the bottom of the hazard control pyramid if you allow visitors to say, ride horses or drive ATVs, is to provide appropriate personal safety equipment.

ONGOING INSPECTION

Things change. So ongoing inspections are needed to check for items that need repair or existing controls that need to be re-enforced before visitors arrive.

ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

Don't allow your safety plan to become just another binder on the shelf. Your employees need to be trained in the oper-

ating procedures for each job they will be doing, and prepare them for handling emergencies if and when they occur.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Brainstorm and decide in advance how you will deal with emergencies such as a fire, medical emergencies, missing persons or violent ones, extreme weather, biohazards such as a chemical spill, or a power failure.

Write them down and be sure your staff knows your emergency plan. Post up-to-date emergency numbers and directions to the farm in several prominent locations.

Make sure you have at least two people trained in first aid and a stocked first aid kit available to them.

INVESTIGATE INCIDENTS

If there's a near miss, assess what happened, how it happened and how you will prevent it from ever happening again. It may not seem like a big deal if a campfire jumps the pit and gets squelched without causing any damage, but the next time it could cause a grass fire that wipes out valuable property, when an extinguisher or a bucket of water nearby would have been all that was needed to prevent it.

For more information call Aitken at 780-980-4230, or visit www.agriculture.alberta.ca/farmsafety for fact sheets, decals, signage, activities, displays for kids, and more. Other resources are the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association at www.casa-acsa.ca and www.safeagritourism.com. 🍁



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THE BASICS OF SUSTAINABILITY

The heart of sustainability for three Saskatchewan ranch families is the deep desire to make a living from the land. While many have chosen to move on to other careers with a steady income, these families have found ways to stay in farming.

For Arlette and Allen Seib of Watrous, the journey toward sustainability meant trading the family's capital-intense grain-growing business for the natural rhythm of ranching with sheep.

Sue and Richard DeBruijn of Stump Lake found the courage to sell prime farmland in Alberta and make a fresh start custom grazing cattle on an affordable land base in Saskatchewan.

Janeen and Sam Covlin established a butcher shop on their farm near Endeavour to sell their grass-fed beef, pork and poultry products to consumers.

Arlette Seib set the tone for a panel discussion on this topic at the Western Holistic

Management conference earlier this year at Manitou Beach, Sask. "Sustainable farming or ranching is not one definable way to operate and this is precisely what makes it appealing for shaping an agricultural revolution."

THE SEIBS

Arlette recalls how angry they felt after only a couple of years of hard work and amassing debt to start grain farming. When things fell apart, they had to dig deep to envision a future in agriculture. Extensive reading directed their interest to ranching and her love of dogs led them to sheep.

They sowed their cropland to grass, pared equipment down to a small 1970s tractor and an off-road side by side, and with the purchase of five sheep, Dog Tale Ranch was up and running.

As their flock grew, they selected for hardy ewes that thrive in a year-round grazing system with the aim of making the ranch work for them rather than the other way round.

"We are in a good position today because we followed some of these principles," says Arlette. "What's been fascinating about the journey is that it is not just a matter of the cost of everything or if we save money or make money — there has to be a sense of purpose behind what you are doing. All the choices on our farm have to boil down to that. We enjoy what we are doing today land-wise, management-wise and relationship wise. If you like the way things are going you are going to find a way to keep doing it."

Their greatest challenge was blocking out what farmers with the traditional farming mentality thought of their new strategy.

An unexpected bonus was the development of a website (www.ranching-with-sheep.com) and newsletter to share what they have learned after she realized that there wasn't much information available on managing sheep on grass year round.

Continued on page 12



(l-r) Sue and Richard DeBruijn, Sam and Janeen Covlin, Arlette Seib.

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Continued from page 10

THE DEBRUIJNS

Richard and Sue DeBruijn are thankful for the opportunity to raise their three boys as the third generation in his family to ranch using holistic management. Richard was introduced to HM as a kid following his mom, Ulla, around the farm and on tours in the early years of holistic management in Alberta. Later on it was on one of those tours that he met Sue.

Economic viability was the greatest threat to their Ponoka operation after they took over from his mom. Both held down full-time off-farm jobs, which wasn't an option after their first child came along. Expanding sufficiently to generate a full-time income wasn't feasible with four dairies nearby competing for any land that came up for sale.

They did have some advantages as a custom grazing operation, however. For one they had their seasonal grazing routine down pat and a steady customer only five miles away so one truck could deliver all of the cattle in three hours.

Using a leader-follower grazing system they ran 240 yearlings followed by 68 pairs through 70 pastures of two to 13 acres on three quarter sections. They also had a wealth of records on every aspect of the operation accumulated by Ulla over the years and they were centrally located along the Hwy. 2 corridor for easy access to any and all supplies and cattle.

"It was easy," recalls Richard. "We didn't realize how easy and how lucky we were."

Not until they started setting up their new 1,000-head custom grazing operation in Saskatchewan, 25 miles off pavement and 45 miles from anywhere along the boreal forest fringe near Prince Albert National Park.

They had to build infrastructure from scratch, find new customers, and learn the agronomics of northern moist dark-grey soils to develop a seasonal routine to suit their new situation.

On the plus side the Saskatchewan location has the size combined with the opportunity to rent nearby pasture from Sue's parents, making it possible to run enough cattle to earn a living from ranching.

The move would have been much more difficult without the support of Ulla, Sue's parents who moved to the area seven years earlier, and fellow members of the local holistic management group. As members of the Ponoka holistic management group, Richard and Sue had learned about goal setting and five-year planning, which ultimately enabled

them to recognize the opportunity and quickly move on it when it came their way.

"Holistic management also created a way we can have a professional discussion to solve problems instead of just arguing about two opinions to make decisions," adds Sue.

The first year was heads-down work, building a house, 25 miles of electric fence, and setting up two complete off-site watering systems. The three-inch-diameter lines rolled out on top of the ground gradually disappeared under grass residue. Investing in two auto-start generators triggered by pressure switches has been a huge time saver when it comes to keeping cattle watered on hot summer days.

They made do with barbed wire to build their first corral. Their concern about building a permanent handling system off the bat was that they'd get it wrong and cattle wouldn't move through freely. Now they use portable free-standing panels so adjustments can be made as needed.

The "Bud box" works well and they can weigh 250 head in an hour to meet their goal of having trucks in and out in 15 minutes.

One aspect that hasn't been as difficult as first anticipated was running big groups of yearlings together to cover big acres. A group of 600 yearlings will unselectively graze through 40 acres quite easily compared to the Ponoka operation where they would sometimes have to push 250 yearlings to clean up five acres. They now adjust their stocking rate by the number of truckloads, not 10, 20 or 30 head.

Gains have been all over the map from 1.0 to 1.8 pounds per day. Their goal is 2.0 pounds per day or better. Approximately 75 per cent of the pastures are old hayfields and they've been converting cropland to pasture as they learn how to optimize their resource.

"There have been more challenges than we thought, mainly because the game is bigger with bigger numbers," Sue says. "There are a lot more variables to work with, so we have more things to consider to get it right. Now we are fine tuning and looking for answers for consistent gains to get better at what we are doing and exploring options, maybe adding another enterprise."

Future plans call for more fencing and pipelines to add flexibility. Richard would like to do more with ultra-high stock density and has tried it a couple of times, but thinks a piece of the puzzle is missing because the results weren't what they should have been.

Aspen encroachment is a problem on 500 acres of pasture. They saw better control grazing pairs there last summer than with yearlings in the past.

The work-life balance has been the big reward. Their five-year plan calls for involving the children in everyday ranching activities, and while at this young age the boys delight in being toted along whenever possible, it has been invaluable to have Sue's parents nearby to keep them safe and sound on busy days.

Five-year planning has proven to be a great way to stay on track. "Even as newlyweds, our goals were almost the same and five years later, even with children and the move, we know for a fact that we are connected in where we want to be," Sue says. "We did it. We met 90 per cent of our goals just because we wrote them down. So, even if you aren't as disciplined as you should be, if you write things down you will achieve them."

THE COVLINS

Sam and Janeen Covlin's venture into direct marketing and diversified livestock production arose from Janeen's interest in farming as Joel Salatin described in his books, topped off by the crash in cattle prices after BSE. At the time, they had just nicely started ranching on a farm they had purchased near her parents and holistic management had given them the understanding and tools to manage their animals, landscape, financials, and people as a whole.

It turned out that not being in close proximity to a large urban population wasn't the hindrance to direct marketing that her reading indicated it would be. The bigger challenge was getting animals booked into the abattoir an hour away so they could have product on hand as needed.

The takeoff point for Cool Springs Ranch and Butchery was August 2010 with the opening of their small butcher shop in partnership with her parents, Lyle and Grace Olson, followed by the creation of their online store.

After the Olsons sold their farm in 2009, Lyle took a five-month meat-cutting course and became their chief butcher while Grace does the books. Sam's time is mainly taken up on the production side while Janeen focuses on marketing, and their five young children.

"We struggle with the amount of beef we can keep in stock since the business has grown drastically in the last three years and are looking for others who can supply what we are looking for," Sam says. "It's taking up to four years to finish animals, which doesn't seem viable, but we are getting the quality we want with 750-pound carcasses."

Alliances with hog and chicken producers are working well for their other product

lines. For the most part, they now buy weanling pigs and have an arrangement with another couple to supply 4,000 pastured broilers a year, alongside their own permit from the supply management board to raise another 4,000 a year. Turkey production is still capped at 99 birds a year.

The marketing program continues to roll along with monthly delivery routes to Regina and Saskatoon and stops at a few towns along the way. They skipped the farmers market approach because of the time commitment needed to sell a relatively small amount of product compared to ordering a month's supply for delivery.

"We can have 278 people in two hours, so it's a whirlwind, but it works," Janeen says. "As for branding, we haven't gone to great lengths to do more than what's on the website. Customers seem to prefer we stay unbranded. It's more like we are their farmers and they would rather us be a farm than a big business. It seems more personal."

People are welcome to drop by the farm any time and they usually host a farm-to-fork dinner and tour day when chefs from

Calories restaurant in Saskatoon come out to roast a pig.

"So it feels like success, going from not known to kind of known, but on the inside, it's not as all together. On the people side we have a lot of work to do," she says. Management involving two generations has its ups and downs as family dynamic changes through the years and she can see the value of bringing in a consultant to lead them through the process of developing farm business relationships.

External challenges have been mostly aimed at the butcher shop. An occupational health and safety investigation last summer arising from a complaint about children working in the butchery came as a surprise because of their own upbringing working alongside their parents.

They have the same vision for their children so they start learning skills at a young age, rather than waiting until they are 16. In the end, thanks to lots of support from customers and other butchers, their shop was recognized as an extension of the family farm and, as such, the Covlins' children are allowed to work there. Other children still have to be 16 to be employed at the shop. 🍁

► PRODUCER IDEAS

Tips for sustainable start

Richard DeBruijn:

Be clear on why you want to farm, find someone who is doing what you want to do to be your mentor, and start as risk free as possible so you can change if you don't like what you are doing.

Janeen Covlin:

If you are starting with nothing, without any financial backing, don't buy a farm. Look for deals with people who have land and want to see something amazing happen on it. Shoot for partnerships.

Arlette Seib:

Don't follow the bandwagon. There are many ways to approach it so put your heads together and do what you feel comfortable taking on.

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PIONEER



LANCE AND SHARI LEACHMAN

The number of young people entering the cattle business may be limited, but there is nothing limited about their passion for the industry and their drive

Getting started in the cattle industry can present a daunting challenge for even the most determined young adults. High input costs, traditionally volatile markets with no guarantee of return on investment, and the physically and mentally demanding nature of spending 365-day a year raising cattle are just a few of the major hurdles that a young person faces.

The 2011 Census of Agriculture says only 9.9 per cent of farms in Canada are operated by someone less than 40 years of age. Although the sheer lack of young producers in the cattle industry is worrisome, the individuals who are getting involved make up for their lack of numbers with their passion and drive for success.

One such couple is Lance and Shari Leachman, of Maidstone, Sask. who are putting their respective backgrounds and education

to work on their purebred Hereford operation, Big Gully Farm.

Lance attended Dodge City Community College and Kansas State University and competed on the livestock judging teams at both institutions before moving on to Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia where he completed a masters of science degree in animal breeding and genetics and coached the livestock judging team for three years. He returned to the farm in May 2010 to assume the management and daily operation of Big Gully Farm from his parents, Buddy and Frances Leachman.

Shari grew up on a mixed farm near Hamiota, Man. where she was involved in 4-H and a member of the Canadian Junior Angus Association. She attended Lakeland College in Vermilion, Alta., to obtain an agriculture business diploma. While attending Lakeland, Shari was introduced

to the carcass ultrasound through a beginner's course offered at the college. She was intrigued by the business opportunity and decided to complete the advanced training and CUP Lab certifications through visits to Athens, Georgia and Ames, Iowa. Simultaneously she purchased her own equipment and founded Ultrabeef Ultrasound Services.

"Starting your own business can be intimidating based on the investment, market circumstances or negative feedback you may receive, but if you believe in the venture, see the benefit it can offer and work hard to satisfy your customers, you will likely enjoy success," she says.

Besides operating Ultrabeef Shari also broadcasts cattle sales online as a western Canadian sales representative for LiveAuctions.tv and sells Mary Kay Cosmetics as a senior sales director with the company.

The couple met in the spring of 2011 when the Leachmans' regular ultrasound technician was unable to visit their farm and instead recommended Shari as a replacement. You could say the rest is history. They married on July 5, 2014 at Big Gully Farm and have been operating the 3,000-acre farm and purebred Hereford cattle herd, as well as a small Angus herd ever since.

Typically, 165 females are turned out at breeding with 125 of those kept to calve each year. They synchronize and artificially inseminate all of their heifers. All cows that cycle within the first 21 days of the breeding season are artificially inseminated on natural heats. Pregnancy testing is done

via ultrasound and each year they implant around 10-12 embryos. The Leachmans' merchandise yearling and coming two-year-old bulls along with a select group of heifer calves and bred heifers at a December online and on-farm sale.

They are strong proponents of performance testing through the utilization of expected progeny differences (EPD) and more recently genomically enhanced-expected progeny differences (GE-EPD). All of their bulls will sell with GE-EPDs this fall, which gives them, and their customers, greater confidence in the true genetic merit of the livestock at a younger age. They ultrasound all of their yearling bulls and heifers for carcass merit and are working to moderate frame, improve udder quality, enhance muscle, add centre body dimension and transmit pigment in their Hereford cattle while maintaining structural integrity and a quality appearance. For a number of years now they have dehorned all of their bulls so they are easier to handle and easier on the facilities which keeps them competitive with bulls of other breeds.

To promote their breeding stock Lance and Shari called on some talented friends to come up with a new logo and advertising scheme for the operation as well as a website. To back up their advertising, they believe they have to service their customers beyond simply delivering animals, which includes farm visits to see how their bulls are performing.

Both Lance and Shari have participated in the Cattlemen's Young Leaders program, Lance in 2013 and Shari in 2014. Lance

was mentored by David Bolduc of Cudlobe Angus and Shari by Denise Lafrentz of Wheatland Cattle Company.

Their commitment to the Hereford breed is clearly evident from their involvement with the breed. Lance is currently a director of the Saskatchewan Hereford Association and sits on the breed improvement committee of the Canadian Hereford Association. He also enjoys judging cattle and has adjudicated numerous shows in seven provinces, 10 states, Denmark and Australia.

In 2010, he and Shari established a Youth Breeding Cattle Judging Clinic and Contest that is held annually on the first Saturday of October at the farm. This clinic and contest allows Lance to pass on his passion for judging by teaching young people about anatomy, terminology, performance data, selection criteria and presenting oral reasons for your rankings.

Their plans for the future include enhancing the average quality of their herd, selling a slightly higher number of bulls each year and expanding their list of satisfied customers. Certainly the additional cash being generated from the current market provides a real opportunity to upgrade a herd's genetics through the purchase of quality breeding stock.

It's a good time to get started, says Lance.

"Any opportunity young people seek will present itself in the cattle industry — if they are willing to work hard, listen more than they talk, be honest and tirelessly try to improve themselves, no different from any other profession." 🌻

"If it weren't for the messages from some of the leaders I connected with, I wouldn't have this clear vision nor the motivation to go after it. I can't thank you enough for that."

— Jen C., Ontario, 2014 AWC Delegate

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John McKinnon
is a beef cattle
nutritionist at
the University
of Saskatchewan

There is a great deal of newsprint these days about the relative merits of a “Colorado High,” a subject I will leave readers to explore on their own. Last month, however, Manitoba residents were introduced to a “Colorado Low,” an intense weather system that moved up from North Dakota and Montana over the May long weekend. This system turned a beautiful spring Saturday into a raging wind- and rainstorm that overnight turned to ice pellets and snow, bringing much of southern Manitoba to a standstill. I write on this topic, as I was over visiting that particular weekend and as I watched this storm unfold it got me thinking about how the environment affects cattle particularly those extensively managed and what adaptations they make to survive and be productive in this crazy country of ours!

In Canada, when we think of environmental stress, we generally think of those mid-winter days where below-zero temperatures and/or wind combine to increase the maintenance energy requirements of cattle. In other parts of North America, particularly the southern U.S. and Mexico, heat stress is an equally serious threat to productivity. To understand how extremes in environmental conditions impact the animal and how it adapts to such stress, it is necessary to explore how an animal regulates its body temperature. Normal body temperature in cattle is 38.5 C and must be maintained within relatively tight limits for normal physiological function. One of the challenges to maintaining a constant body temperature is the need to dissipate heat generated from normal metabolism and digestion, particularly rumen fermentation. The ability of cattle to dissipate such heat is influenced by a number of internal and external factors. Heat is lost from the body via radiation (loss to atmosphere), evaporation (respiration, sweating) or by convection and conduction (air/water movement across or in contact with skin). Under “normal” environmental conditions, dissipating this body heat is not a large issue and the energy required to do so is considered a part of normal maintenance requirements. However, when environmental temperatures rise to a point where the animal has difficulty dissipating body heat, steps must be taken to actively lose that heat (i.e. seek shade, increase water intake, decrease feed intake, increase respiration rate). Conversely, when the environmental temperature falls, at some point the body heat produced by the animal is no longer sufficient to maintain its core body temperature and steps are taken to generate heat (i.e. shivering, increase feed intake, seek shelter). The range of environmental temperatures where cattle do not have to expend energy to maintain normal body

temperature is known as the thermal neutral zone. The points where cattle must actively lose or generate heat are referred to as the upper and lower critical temperatures, respectively.

It is not possible to precisely define the temperatures that define the thermal neutral zone for any group of cattle, as both the upper and lower critical temperatures are a result of complex interactions between environmental (i.e. ambient temperature, wind speed, humidity), animal (i.e. hide thickness, summer versus winter hair coat) and management (i.e. windbreaks; muddy pens, bedding) factors. To understand how these factors interact, let’s look at heat stress. If we use 25 C as a starting point, as the ambient temperature rises and approaches/exceeds 30 C, the animal will experience greater difficulty in dissipating heat. When these high temperatures are combined with humid conditions, the animal’s ability to shed body heat is greatly reduced and the result is heat stress. The higher the humidity and/or ambient temperature, the greater the impact! Heat-stressed cattle show a range of symptoms. In mild cases, cattle will seek shade, or water sources to cool themselves, change or reduce eating/grazing patterns and alter their herd behaviour. Physiologically they will increase their respiration rate. In more severe cases cattle will exhibit very rapid rates of respiration to the point where they are actively panting in order to increase heat loss.

For many Canadian producers, heat stress is not high on their radar, however, it has obvious implications on production, animal welfare and ultimately on economic return. In the feedlot, it will lead to reduced dry matter intakes, lower gains and extended days on feed. In breeding cattle, milk production drops off with implications on weaning weights and breeding programs can be extended, particularly if your bulls are overconditioned. In severe cases, death can result. Alberta Agriculture has an excellent fact sheet ([http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/beef5157](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/beef5157)) that provides practical advice on minimizing heat stress in cattle. As we move into the dog days of summer, it is worth reading.

Cold stress is a much more familiar concept to Canadian producers. Like heat stress, the point where cattle actively take steps to increase heat production to maintain core body temperature is influenced by a number of interacting environmental, animal and management factors. However, since it is only June, it does not seem appropriate to be writing on winter feeding and management strategies. As such, I will save this discussion for a future article. In the meantime, keep your eye on the horizon (or the weather channel) as you never know what system is moving in next. ❄️

Who's Coming? Ag in Motion Exhibitor Profile

Ag in Motion, Western Canada's only outdoor farm expo, is proud to offer farmers interactive exhibits, field demonstrations and crop plots from a wide diversity of exhibitors. A sample of Ag in Motion exhibitors will be featured in our "Exhibitor Profile" series, to inform you about some of the companies you can expect to see at this summer's expo, July 21-23.



Ag in Motion Welcomes LEON Mfg. Company Inc.

L EON MANUFACTURING COMPANY INC. is a global leader in material handling equipment. Headquartered in Saskatchewan, LEON is a founding exhibitor for the first ever Ag in Motion, and will be showcasing a range of equipment through displays and demonstrations.

LEON will be bringing their complete 2015 product line of material handling equipment to Ag in Motion. This includes LEON Bale Handlers, LEON Dozer Blades, LEON Land Scrapers, LEON Manure Spreaders, LEON Pull Scrapers and LEON Rear Blades. LEON will also be displaying RAMROD Mini Skid Loaders and several attachments.

LEON is excited for the opportunity to demonstrate some of their equipment. Attendees will have a chance to see the 2015 line of Pull Scrapers and RAMROD Mini Skid Loaders and attachments in action, on-site at the Expo.

"LEON is looking forward to this exciting new Saskatchewan trade show that offers valuable demonstration and display space, allowing LEON to properly showcase its material handling equipment," says John Malinowski, president of LEON Mfg. Company Inc. "Demonstrating the product is not only beneficial to the company but also to potential customers who would normally have to rely on videos and brochures. This way they can see the equipment operating first-hand."



LEON's knowledgeable staff will be available at their exhibit to answer any questions and concerns attendees may have. Malinowski adds, "It's a perfect opportunity to display equipment and talk with farmers right in our own backyard."

ABOUT LEON MFG. COMPANY INC.

LEON Mfg. Company Inc. was created in 1952 and since then has been a pioneer for manufacturing quality material handling equipment. LEON was inspired by Stanley Malinowski, and founded by his son Leon Malinowski. Joined in 1967 by his brother and partner Ray, LEON has built high quality material handling equipment that has earned

the company a worldwide reputation for award winning technical innovation, reliability, and outstanding performance.

The helm has now been passed to a third generation. Lead by John, Linda and David, the next generation personifies the founders' values that have made LEON a worldwide leader in materials handling equipment.

LEON has continued its constant evolution and its products are now available on all seven continents. This is what you can expect from every piece of equipment that bears the name LEON.

Visit LEON at Ag in Motion this summer! For more information on LEON visit their website at www.leonsmfg.com.

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MENTORSHIP TIPS AND TRICKS

Years ago I was a young producer very interested in grazing. I was very eager to learn and went to every conference and seminar that I could find. I attended private industry agricultural schools and gained a lot of knowledge from books and magazines that I read. I had a passion. I now realize that if you can find something you are passionate about, figure out how to make it your business and you will never have to work a day in your life.

During my quest for education, I had a lot of mentors close by who helped me along the way. Names like Don Campbell, Dennis Wobeser, and Kelly Sidoryk come to mind, to name a few. These and many other mentors had a big influence on my education. I was the annoying young producer always pestering them with questions at seminars.

Back in 2001, I met up with the manager of the Alberta Forage Council, in the lounge, after a grazing conference and found out they were introducing the “Sustainable Grazing Mentorship Program.” Next thing I know, I was a mentor. Wow, really. I can help others learn about what I love doing? It was great. I enjoyed being a mentor. It was kind of a payback for all the mentoring I had received.

I recall that at the time it had been debated whether we should be called mentors or consultants. One mentor at the meeting presented the argument that a consultant is like a person who knows 101 ways to make love, but is still a virgin! So it was unanimous and I was proud to be called a mentor!

It is a shame that program shut down a few years ago. It was a great opportunity for young producers to gain some valuable real-life education. I have never stopped mentoring though. Recently I was asked to mentor a young producer through the Cattlemen’s Young Leaders program (CYL). I spent a year mentoring a very eager young fellow from Manitoba. He is a grazing geek just like I was, very passionate about what he is learning. I am honoured to be considered a mentor by young producers like him and very happy to help out in any way that I can. I have also helped many other producers with little tricks and tips that I have picked up or discovered along the way.

In a recent conversation with another young grazing geek, I thought a few of these little tips and tricks I was sharing with him might be good to share on paper in an article. I hope you can use something here to help fulfil your passion.

1. MY GUARDIAN PIG

This is a trick at calving/kidding/lambing time to help protect your livestock from predators such as coyotes or wolves. You need to have an electric fence of some kind around the perimeter of your calving/kidding/lambing area. Turn off your fencer. Walk around the perimeter and wrap individual pieces of bacon around the hot wire. I place mine every 100 yards. Turn your fencer back on. The existing predators soon learn that this area is not a desirable place to be even though it smells good. I like at least 7 Kv. This trains them to stay away. If we just remove the predator, this opens up a vacancy allowing new predators to arrive, thus only addressing a symptom that will return. The guardian pig addresses a problem by training existing predators, which keeps other predators out of the area. Problem solved.

2. MY ELECTRIC BALE TRUCK

In our world of sustainable agriculture, I think it is important that every cattleman has an electric pickup. No I don’t have to plug it in every night. I am referring to the sustainability of the pickup. There is nothing more frustrating than jumping



out to check a calf or a fence, and coming back to find the cattle using your pickup as a scratching post. I have had my share of broken signal lights and busted mirrors. So here is a simple trick.

Whenever you park your pickup in the pasture with cattle around, back it into an electric fence. As your truck sits on rubber tires, it has no effect. Only when your livestock (or yourself) touches the truck will it give a shock. This trains my cows not to rub on my truck no matter where it is. Soon, it won't matter if it's electric or not, they won't rub on it. I just have to be careful getting in or out. Plastic door handles are great but if you don't have them, simply leave your door open and enter and exit with a bounce in your step.

3. THE HAMMER TRICK

I use a simple claw hammer to splice a piece of wire into a barbed wire fence to repair or tighten it. It is an easy fix if you know how, but does take some practice to get the hang of it. Splice in the wire by hand by creating four loops. Make sure the loops are all made just past a barb. This allows you to tighten on all four loops if need be. On the last loop, attach the hammer to the wire and spin it underneath the opposite loop. As you spin the wire around the hammer head, the wire pulls through the loop and tightens. When the wire is as tight as you want, with some back pressure, unwrap the wire from the hammer head without allow-

ing the wire to slip. My favourite wire to splice with is single-strand barbed wire as it allows the barbs to slide as you tighten. A video of this is on my Facebook page if you like this idea.

4. THE OFFSET

Here is a cheap and very reliable fencing trick for putting an offset electric wire on an existing fence. Use an old three-quarter-inch waterline or black poly pipe. Cut it into 1-1/2-foot sections and bend it in the middle. I always flatten and start the staples on a solid surface to make it easier. Staple the bottom of the pipe to the post, place the offset wire in the elbow and bend the hose to the post and staple the top. The bend should pinch the wire but a nail run through the elbow will make sure the wire does not slip back towards the post. Very cheap and lasts for years.

5. THE CALF SLED

This is a bottom-heavy sled with a rubber sling in place to hold the calf in an upright position. I calve on pasture in May and I like to sort off the pairs from the bred cows as they calve to take them to pasture. The calf sled is the easiest way I have found to sort without stressing the whole herd. I try to tag as soon as I know the calf has received its colostrum and the pair has mothered up. Preferably within the first 12 to 24 hours. I'll catch, tag the calf and then place it in the calf sled, which is towed behind my quad with about 30 feet

of rope. A cow will lose sight of its calf if you pick it up and try to move it with a quad. The cow won't follow just the quad. In the calf sled, the calf still looks like it is standing and walking. I allow a minute or two so that the cow knows where her calf is, and then I slowly tow the calf into another pasture. Ninety-five per cent of the time the cow will follow along behind. You might need a small pen in between the pastures as well to prevent other cows from following. Bred cows can be curious.

6. THE RAPTOR PERCH

This is a tool to naturally control gophers. It is simply a post pounded into the ground in a gopher-infested field. Attach a long 2x4 to it with a short 2x2 "T" at the top. This gives the predatory birds a place to sit and wait with a quick easy swoop down for a meal. It has been very effective on my ranch. The bigger the gopher patch the more raptor perches you might need.

I hope you have enjoyed a few of my tips and tricks around the farm. These are just a few ideas I could share. Your farm is different than mine. My suggestion is to take an idea and adapt it to your area, on your farm, in your situation.

Best wishes and God Bless! 🍁

Steve Kenyon runs Greener Pastures Ranching Ltd. in Busby, Alta., www.greenerpasturesranching.com, 780-307-6500, email skenyon@greenerpasturesranching.com or find them on Facebook.





AN ANNUAL CHECKUP FOR NATIVE PASTURE

It's simple, and inexpensive

The grazing response index (GRI) is a simple do-it-yourself way to evaluate the impact of grazing pastures, and it doesn't cost anything but your time.

"The GRI gives quick feedback each year, but doesn't replace comprehensive assessments every five years or so to gather the full set of information for monitoring long-term trends," explains Dr. Wendy Gardner, assistant professor of Natural Resource Sciences, Thompson Rivers University, Kamloops, B.C. She has been instrumental in introducing the GRI in British Columbia, where ranchers give it great reviews for its simplicity and user-friendly approach.

Her confidence in the GRI traces to a three-year study she worked on with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) rangeland specialists Kerry LaForge at Swift Current and Mae Elsinger at Brandon to examine 33 years of historic grazing information to confirm that the index developed by Dr. Roy Roath, Floyd Reed and David

Bradford of Colorado State University would work in Western Canada.

"We wanted to know if there is a good basis for the relationship between range condition, comprehensive assessments and GRI scores and there is. If the comprehensive assessments showed that the range had improved over 20 years, we generally saw the GRI improve as well," Gardner says.

AAFC has facilitated workshops to prepare rangeland and forage specialists to introduce the GRI to producers across the Prairies and partnered with Ducks Unlimited, Saskatchewan Agriculture and the Saskatchewan Forage Association in a three-year demonstration project to evaluate the potential of the index in assessing the impact of grazing on tame-forage pastures.

GRI SCORING

As a first step Elsinger says it's important to establish your goals for pasture improvement before you select sites to score. Sites should be representative in terms of forages

and grazing activity and need to be evaluated for a full season from green-up to freeze-up with grazing periods determined by when cattle move in and out of a cell or pasture.

1. Frequency

Frequency is scored on the number of times plants could have been nipped during a grazing period.

Research tells us native forages need seven to 10 days to regrow after grazing but that doesn't leave the plant time to replenish the energy lost through photosynthesis. So plants bitten every week eventually become less vigorous as root reserves are drawn down.

To score frequency, divide the total number of days in the grazing period by seven or 10 days of rest during the grazing period. Seven would be appropriate early in the grazing season with favourable weather for quick regrowth. If not, use 10 days.

An answer of 1.0 or less gives a frequency score of +1 because grazing plants only once has a positive effect on plant vigour.

Between 1.0 and 2.0 score 0 for frequency because double nipping in itself has little effect on plant vigour.

When the answer is greater than 2.0, the frequency score slips to -1 because plants grazed three or more times in succession start to lose vigour.

For example, if a grazing period is 21 days and the rest period is 10 days, cattle could potentially choose to graze the same plants three times (days one, 10 and 21). Dividing 21 by 10 gives you 2.1, therefore, the frequency score would be -1.

When there is more than one grazing period on the same pasture during the growing season, think about whether the plants had full opportunity to recover between grazing periods. If not, add the grazing days together to score all grazing periods as one.

2. Intensity

Intensity is scored on the percentage of utilization at the end of a grazing period.

Research shows leaving at least half the leaf intact ensures native plants will regenerate by photosynthesis without dipping too far into root reserves.

What you're after is an assessment of the volume removed by grazing, that reflects the energy cost to the plant. Grazing exclusion cages provide a helpful idea of what the forage would look like without grazing.

Grazing intensity is rated as light (score +1) if utilization is less than 40 per cent; moderate (score 0) if utilization is 41 to 55 per cent; and heavy (score -1) if greater than 56 per cent.

SAMPLE OVERALL SCORESHEET

Pasture ID	Dates in/out	Grazing days	Frequency	Intensity	Opportunity	GRI total
Home	June 28-July 17	20	-1	-1	+1	-1
SE30 #4	July 18-Aug. 11	25	-1	+1	+2	+2

1. FREQUENCY INDEX

Number of times grazed	Index value
1	1
2	0
3 or more	-1

2. INTENSITY INDEX

Grazing intensity	% utilization	Index value
Light	<40	1
Moderate	41-55	0
Heavy	>56	-1

3. Opportunity

This factor holds the most weight in the GRI score because of the strong correlation between recovery period and long-term plant health.

Opportunity is evaluated at the end of the grazing season to account for the impact of grazing. It should honestly reflect the opportunity plants had to grow from before turnout, during rest intervals, and after the cattle were removed to the end of the growing season.

Regrowth depends on soil moisture, air temperature and leaf area but even if your rotation allows enough time for those fac-

tors, it also has to account for actions beyond your control like grasshoppers, wildlife grazing, drought or summer semi-dormancy.

Score +2 if the plants had a full season to regrow, or didn't appear to be grazed. Score -2 for a continuously grazed pasture since the plants had no opportunity to fully regrow. Between those two score +1 if plants had most of the season to regrow, 0 if they had some chance to regrow, and -1 if there was little chance to regrow.

4. Overall Score

The overall score is the sum of the frequency, intensity and opportunity for each

3. OPPORTUNITY INDEX

Opportunity to grow or regrow	Index value
Full season	2
Most of the season	1
Some chance	0
Little chance	-1
No chance	-2

site. A positive score means your management practices are benefiting plant health. Zero is neutral and a negative score suggests you will harm the plants in the long term if you don't change anything.

For more detail read the AAFC fact sheet at: http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2014/aac-aafc/A59-22-2014-eng.pdf or contact Wendy Gardner in B.C. at 250-371-5570 (wgardner@tru.ca), Kerry LaForge in Saskatchewan at 306-770-4495 (kerry.laforge@agr.gc.ca) or Mae Elsinger in Manitoba at 204-578-6634 (mae.elsinger@agr.gc.ca). 🇨🇦



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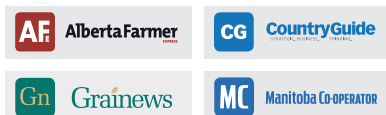
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Canadian **Cattlemen** THE BEEF MAGAZINE

THINKING ABOUT PRICE INSURANCE



We are now in the second year of the price insurance program in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and B.C. Alberta producers have had price insurance for the last six years.

It is an interesting program. It certainly has the potential to reduce the risk of price fluctuation. Since it has been available we have experienced steadily rising prices in the cattle business so we have some idea of how price insurance works in the current market but we really have no idea how it will function in a steady or declining market.

I can see three different approaches to price insurance:

1. As an insurance program.
2. As a program to increase profit.
3. As a program I choose not to use.

1. If we view it as price insurance we would determine the price required to make a small profit in our business. In difficult times we might even determine a break-even price. This price will be different for each operation. In this example I'll use a price of \$2 for an 850-lb. steer as our small profit number. I anticipate marketing our yearlings in September. For those of us with home-raised yearlings I think this is a realistic price. Under this scenario we would purchase price insurance as soon as the sale date and price fit our requirements. On January 13 price insurance was available for September. You could purchase a policy with a support price of \$2.26 with a premium of \$8.01 per cwt. On the same day we could purchase a policy with a support price of \$2 at a premium of \$4.65. If the \$2 price would allow us to be profitable we would purchase that policy. We now have a price that will allow us to be profitable and we have protection for 36 weeks.

If we are marketing calves or if we want to have long-term protection we might use the same approach. Calf insurance was available on February 1. At that time you could purchase a policy with a price of \$2.50 and a premium of \$9.06 per cwt. On the same day you could also purchase a policy with a price of \$2.26 and a premium of \$2.47 per cwt. The calf program is based on a 600-lb. calf. Using a slide and knowing our costs what price do we need to

make a small profit? If the \$2.26 price would allow us to be profitable we purchase the policy and have 36 weeks of protection.

2. If we view price insurance as a way to increase profits we will monitor the support price three times a week and attempt to purchase at or near the highest price available. The downside to this approach is that we may have no coverage for an extended period of time.

3. Choosing not to use price insurance is clearly an option that is available to all of us. If we are not concerned about challenges like BSE or a border closure this may be our best choice.

The following table shows the support price and premium for the feeder cattle program for September under the Sask./Man. program. The first price for Sept. was available on Jan. 13. The price was \$2.26. The premium was \$8.01. A price of \$2 or higher has been available each week. The highest price available to date was \$2.46 on March 31. The premium was \$6.13. The lowest price available to date has been \$2.22 that was available on February 5, 24 and 25. The premiums were \$7.23, \$5.89 and \$5.81, respectively. The support price has varied \$22 per cwt or about \$200 per head so far. The September price will be available three times a week until about the middle of June.

My personal opinion about price insurance has shifted. Last year we purchased a policy trying to be on the high end of the program. This year we have decided that price insurance is insurance. With this in mind we purchased a policy that would make us profitable and cover our risk. We also purchased a policy on our calves at a relatively low price as soon as it was available. We will use price insurance as a floor price in case of some unforeseen disaster. We want to be insured as long as possible. The best outcome would be to never collect on price insurance. We will use our marketing skills and knowledge to generate our profit. How do you plan to use price insurance? I invite you to give this topic some serious consideration.

Happy trails. 🐾

Don Campbell ranches with his family at Meadow Lake, Sask., and teaches Holistic Management courses. He can be reached at 306-236-6088 or doncampbell@sasktel.net.

DATE	PRICE	PREM.	DATE	PRICE	PREM.	DATE	PRICE	PREM.	DATE	PRICE	PREM.
Jan. 13	\$2.26	\$8.01	Feb. 10	\$2.30	\$6.68	March 10	\$2.34	\$5.54	April 7	\$2.38	\$5.77
14	\$2.26	\$8.05	11	\$2.28	\$7.06	11	\$2.40	\$5.67	8	\$2.38	\$5.32
15	\$2.20	\$8.26	12	\$2.26	\$6.49	12	\$2.40	\$5.67	9	\$2.40	\$5.30
20	\$2.24	\$7.91	17	\$2.26	\$5.96	17	\$2.38	\$5.02	14	\$2.38	\$4.54
21	\$2.32	\$7.94	18	\$2.28	\$6.03	18	\$2.40	\$4.66	15	\$2.36	\$4.40
22	\$2.32	\$7.57	19	\$2.28	\$5.75	19	\$2.44	\$4.66	16	\$2.34	\$4.19
27	\$2.30	\$7.96	24	\$2.22	\$5.89	24	\$2.42	\$5.02	21	\$2.30	\$4.44
28	\$2.30	\$7.67	25	\$2.22	\$5.81	25	\$2.42	\$5.50	22	\$2.28	\$4.06
29	\$2.32	\$7.61	26	\$2.28	\$5.78	26	\$2.40	\$5.52	23	\$2.32	\$4.04
Feb. 3	\$2.26	\$7.53	March 3	\$2.24	\$5.61	31	\$2.46	\$6.13	28	\$2.32	\$4.24
4	\$2.24	\$7.20	4	\$2.28	\$5.40	April 1	\$2.44	\$6.05	29	\$2.32	\$3.99
5	\$2.22	\$7.23	5	\$2.32	\$5.73	2	\$2.44	\$5.83	30	\$2.34	\$3.96



ARE IONOPHORES A RISK FOR ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE?

Last month's column talked about Health Canada's initiative to phase out growth promotion claims for medically important antibiotics by December 2016. This will impact three antibiotics (tetracycline, sulfamethazine and neomycin) that have growth promotion claims in beef cattle in Canada. It will not affect ionophore antibiotics like Rumensin, Bovatec, or Posistac. Ionophores are used widely in beef production because they reduce methane production, allow the rumen to use feed energy and protein more efficiently, reduce the risk of bloat, acidosis and liver abscesses, and help prevent coccidiosis. Ionophores are not used in human medicine, so they are not considered to be medically important. They are also not a concern from an antimicrobial-resistance perspective. Here's why.

Ionophores have a very unique way of killing bacteria. The rumen has a high concentration of sodium and a lower concentration of potassium. Bacteria are the opposite; they have a high concentration of potassium and a lower concentration of sodium. Rumensin inserts itself into the cell membrane of sensitive bacteria and acts like a turnstile that continuously swaps potassium ions from the inside of the cell for sodium ions from the surrounding rumen fluid. This alters the chemistry in the bacterial cell. To get the sodium:potassium balance back to normal, the bacterium starts a pump that shifts the sodium ions back out to the rumen fluid and the potassium ions back into the cell. This ion pump requires energy. Eventually, the pump drains all of the cell's energy and the bacterium dies. Bovatec and Posistac operate similarly.

Some bacteria can become temporarily resistant to ionophores. Some bacteria can remove the ionophore from the cell membrane. Others can coat themselves with a protein-carbohydrate armour that prevents the ionophore from inserting itself into the cell membrane. The bacteria digests the carbohydrate from the inside out to feed itself, while the carbohydrate layer rebuilds itself from the outside. But unlike other forms of antibiotic resistance, ionophore resistance seems to go away when ionophores are removed from the diet. Ionophore resistance does not seem to be passed on to subsequent generations of bacteria. This suggests that ionophore resistance is due to a physiological adaptation rather than a genetic adaptation.

Multi-drug resistance is a common concern in human and livestock health. Bacteria that are resistant to one antibiotic may also become resistant to other antibiotics. Cross-resistance occurs when resistance to one antibiotic also provides resistance to a closely related antibiotic. For example, macrolides such as Micotil, Zuprevo, Zactran and Draxxin all share the same basic molecular structure, with slight modifications from one product to the next that may affect their activity. Bacteria that become

resistant to one macrolide are much more likely to develop resistance to other macrolides, because they are partway there already. A calf that has been treated with Draxxin or Micotil before leaving home is less likely to be successfully treated using those drugs, or other macrolides, when they reach the feedlot. Ionophores are different. Resistance to one ionophore does not appear to lead to resistance to other ionophores.

Co-resistance occurs when resistance to one antibiotic increases the risk of resistance to a completely unrelated antibiotic. This happens because different antibiotic-resistance genes are often grouped together in the bacterial DNA. These antibiotic-resistance genes then travel together when bacteria reproduce or share their DNA. For example, bacterial genes for tetracycline resistance and cephalosporin (e.g. Excenel) resistance are often linked and travel together. Using one antibiotic can increase resistance to both. This has happened experimentally, although Canadian Integrated Program for Antimicrobial Resistance surveillance suggests that this hasn't been happening to any detectable extent in samples from Canadian cattle or beef. Although tetracycline resistance is not unusual, cephalosporin resistance is very rare. Ionophores also seem to be virtually immune to co-resistance. One experiment showed that bacteria developed resistance to bacitracin when ionophores were used. Those researchers suspected the bacitracin resistance was related to the same protein-carbohydrate armour described above. Bacitracin is not licensed for use in beef cattle, but it is an ingredient in Polysporin, a commonly used over-the-counter ointment for cuts and scrapes.

What it means: Ionophores provide significant and widespread economic and environmental benefits for the beef industry. They are not important in human medicine, and there is no evidence that ionophore use in livestock increases resistance to other antibiotics that are important in cattle or human medicine. Ionophore resistance also doesn't appear to pass from one generation of bacteria to another. This probably explains why ionophores are still effective after being heavily used in beef production for at least 35 years. Health Canada's decision to allow ionophores to retain their label claims for growth and feed efficiency was grounded in sound science.

The Beef Research Cluster is funded by the National Checkoff and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada with additional contributions from provincial beef industry groups and governments to advance research and technology transfer supporting the Canadian beef industry's vision to be recognized as a preferred supplier of healthy, high-quality beef, cattle and genetics. 🍁

Dr. Reynold Bergen is the science director of the Beef Cattle Research Council.

SCOTLAND'S BEEF 2020 PROGRAM IS GEARED TO BOOST OUTPUT AND EXPORTS

Beef output in Scotland stands on the threshold of a major advance with the industry being driven forward by a newly devised production efficiency scheme called Beef 2020, backed by £45 million of Scottish government money and designed to secure a membership base involving 70 per cent of the country's beef herds.

An ambitious project, to which all of Scotland's production, processing and marketing bodies have contributed, Beef 2020 is aimed at reversing a worrying decline in Scottish beef production which has seen beef cow numbers fall by 50,000 head since 2005, resulting in a 15 per cent decline in finished beef output over the same period.

With high-quality Scottish beef commanding a global trade, whenever supplies allow, and with new EU trade agreements with Canada and the U.S. promising fresh export opportunities in the future, the industry focus in Scotland is firmly set on expansion.

In a bid to establish the strongest possible technical program for growth, the Scottish government launched its Beef 2020 initiative at the end of 2013, appointing a 15-member team of government and industry representatives to develop an achievable set of growth targets and procedures.



Minister Richard Lochhead (l) and Jim McLaren of Quality Meat Scotland at the launch of the Beef 2020 report.

Led by Quality Meat Scotland (QMS) chairman, Jim McLaren, at the request of Scotland's farm minister, Richard Lochhead, the review team took the best part of a year to consider the industry's options, finally publishing their conclusions in August 2014. This included proposals for a 23-point action plan aimed at revitalizing Scotland's beef sector.

"Our beef industry is characterized by opportunity," said McLaren, speaking after his report was released. "I am under no doubt that a strong home market coupled with the growing global demand for red meat and premium products points to future success."

The 23-point plan is all about equipping the country's farmers to improve the efficiency, sustainability and quality of their beef herds, with implementation due to be secured ahead of next year's calving season.

Plan highlights include the setting up of a national livestock database with support being given to farmers to help them identify necessary on-farm actions. This will almost certainly involve measures to improve cow fertility, reduce disease, optimize nutrition through feed analysis, and maximize grass and soil management.

The plan, endorsed by Minister Lochhead in March this year, following six months' careful consideration, now carries the financial backing of the Scottish government with £40m earmarked to enable beef farmers to collect genetic and herd management information to "better inform future breeding decisions." Much of the remaining £5m of promised funding will be spent on expanding the Scottish Electronic Identification database system, with links being established between farmers and other cattle data sources, such as auction markets and abattoirs.

The vision of Beef 2020 is to secure a market-led growth in production and sales of Scottish beef, increasing annual output from the 166,000 tonnes which existed when the talking began in 2013 to 185,000 tonnes by 2020. Achieving this target will be partly based on improving on-farm productivity while also securing a growth in beef cow numbers of five per cent within five years, with the "over-time" goal of raising beef cow numbers by 10 per cent in total by 2025.

"We're certainly at the stage where we need to look at our technical efficiency," commented Scottish Beef Association chairman, Scott Henderson, reflecting on the reduced support now being given to the European beef sector, following the latest review of the European Commission's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

"That will mean seeking to improve the industry's output without necessarily making any increase to inputs. At a practical level, producers in Scotland need to tighten their calving patterns, improve conception rates and reduce calf mortality figures, through improved health and management.

"The kneejerk reaction to the latest cut in CAP support would be for some producers to fall out at the bottom end of the industry. While we may well see a further fall-off in producer numbers, the challenge for those who stay is to improve technical efficiency, joining those who are already producing beef profitably."

Henderson, a member of the original Beef 2020 review team, is also part of the industry/government implementation group, tasked with converting the 23-point plan into something that ensures this initiative delivers in a way that so many good ideas and initiatives of the past simply haven't. The big difference this time is that the Scottish government has bought into the industry's revival program and is backing the venture with hard cash.

The often-quoted example is that the nation's Scotland Food & Drink organization has boosted exports massively in recent years,

now being close to hitting its next industry value target of £16.5 billion, to be achieved by 2017. Although much of that success is based on the rising global sale of whisky, the message to all other Scottish producers, including beef farmers, is that they can also be much more successful in the future, if they get their production and marketing systems right. That's what Beef 2020 is driving to achieve.

As for what this might mean in terms of future Scottish beef sales into Canada, the view from QMS head of marketing, Laurent Vernet, is that the Canadian market certainly "could be of interest" going forward.

He identified the placing of prime cuts of Scottish beef into Canada's food service and deli-retail as a key target, supported by a focus on offering beef that is grass fed, artificial hormone free and subject to high animal welfare standards. He also sees Canadian market opportunities for Scottish ground VL beef.

"However," he added, "if and when we offer beef to the Canadian market we will not be physically able to 'flog the market' in a way which would influence prices. In fact, we will be looking much more at playing the 'romantic card' based on our Scottish origins."

Henderson also added a note of 2015 caution, commenting that Beef 2020 was always going to be a long-game process.

"We're already thinking of this as a three-year program," he said. "What we do in year one won't impact on the market until two or three years later, when finished stock start coming through. It's not a quick fix, certainly, but definitely no less valuable for that. After all, we've finally started to turn Scottish beef production around, with every intention of delivering an extremely strong final result." 🍁

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Weigh the alternatives using ROI

Twelve years without a raise in pay from the marketplace spawned a lot of cost-cutting measures on cow-calf operations.

Now, it's time to put those ideas to use to catch up, and maybe even get ahead.

"We are in a new era," notes Ray Bittner, a livestock specialist with Manitoba Agriculture in Ashern. "Today's calf prices mean you can, and should, be doing things to enhance productivity. We should push to get more. After all, farms survive hard times by equity buildup in good times."

Bittner has some tips on ways to improve productivity that may not be obvious until you look at their potential return on investment (ROI).

ROI is calculated by dividing the additional value an improvement is expected to bring by how much extra you'd have to spend to get it. The higher the ratio the better.

Naturally ROI fluctuates with market prices and input costs. The following examples are based on a 500-pound (lb.) calf sold for \$2.70/lb. or a gross revenue of \$1,350 per cow.

Bittner's calculations show that the biggest bang for your buck in today's market will come from investing in nutrition, specifically in three areas: ensuring a cow body condition score (BCS) of 2.5 to 3.0 at calving, renting pasture, and creep feeding calves.

If you implement all three, the additional expense as Bittner recently calculated it, amounted to \$67 per pair. The benefit was about 90 extra pounds on each calf by weaning, bringing an additional \$243 per calf. The overall ROI is 3.63:1 (\$243/\$67).

Bittner walks us through the math.

BCS

For BCS, he refers to the Beef Cattle Research Council's new interactive productivity and profitability calculator that quantifies income losses as BCS slides outside the optimum 2.5 to 3.0 (<http://www.beefresearch.ca/research/body-condition-scoring.cfm>).

When cows aren't carrying adequate body condition it paid to provide extra energy. The cost for 5.0 lbs. of barley and two ounces of a premium mineral mix per head per day for 60 days was \$27.90 per cow with barley is 7.5 cents/pound and mineral 4.5 cents/ounce.

In return you could expect calf and cow



Ray Bittner

survival rates to improve by 3.0 per cent and 0.25 per cent respectively. The total 3.25 per cent boost in productivity spread across the herd represents an additional 16.25 lbs. (3.25x500) of weaning weight per cow. Add to that 3.0 per cent more income from improved milk production and another 15 lbs. per calf. The totals are 31.25 lbs. of additional weaning weight per calf, and a 6.25 per cent increase in gross revenue or \$84 per cow (\$1,350x6.25=\$84.37 or 31x2.70=\$83.70).

The ROI is 3:1 (\$84/\$27.90). On top of that, a 3.0 per cent improvement in pregnancy rates will increase productivity next year.

RENTED PASTURE

Bittner suggests renting pasture instead of pushing the limit on your own pastures if you are expanding, or had to push them hard in the past to stretch your budget.

If it costs \$85 per cow (forage cost only) to pasture a cow and you rent 15 per cent more pasture, the added expense is \$12.75 per cow.

Given a modest increase in the rate of gain on the calves of two ounces a day, it's not unlikely they will be at least 20 pounds heavier at weaning. That's a benefit of \$54 per calf.

The ROI on renting 15 per cent more pasture is 4.24:1 (\$54/\$12.75) and you may be able to keep the cattle on pasture a little longer.

CREEP FEED

When feed grain prices are low and calf prices are high Bittner says creep feeding can pay.

If calves consume 4.0 pounds of supplement per day for 60 days toward the end of the

grazing season and the supplement costs \$250 per tonne, the cost would be \$26.40 per calf.

Using a typical 6:1 feed-to-gain ratio, the additional gain would be 0.66 pounds per day or around 40 pounds, for a benefit of \$108 per calf.

The ROI on creep feeding was 4.1:1 (\$108/\$26.40).

VACCINATIONS

"Don't miss out on a good vaccination program. There's always a strong ROI and the return is two weeks to two years," he adds.

Putting a blackleg vaccine in calves is the most basic and inexpensive program.

Vaccinating cows for IBR/BVD reduces the chance of abortions, stillbirths, weak calves, late calves and persistently infected calves.

Adding an IBR/BVD vaccine for calves will prime their immune systems to better withstand stresses.

FERTILIZING

Fertilizing forages and spreading manure properly also offer positive ROIs as shown in a phosphorus ramp trial at five sites across Manitoba's Interlake region. Soil tests were taken after the sites were selected so as not to bias the results by selecting only low-phosphorus fields.

Bittner headed up the study that started in fall 2008 with application of commercial phosphorus at zero, 20, 40, 60, 80 and 100 pounds per acre or cattle manure at 15 and 30 tonnes per acre. Forage yields and phosphorus content in the plants were recorded for the next three years.

With forage valued at two cents per pound and commercial fertilizer at \$800 per tonne, the 40-pound rate provided the best ROI at 1.8:1. He suggests that in the long run 60, 80 or 100 pounds (ROI of 1.4:1, 1.5:1, 1.2:1 respectively) could potentially be the best investment in terms of healthier pastures better able to withstand winterkill.

At the three highest rates the phosphorus content in the plants was 0.17 per cent. This meets the daily dietary requirement for lactating cows and growing calves, though dry cows require 0.19 per cent. Phosphorus content averaged 0.16 per cent for the 40-pound sites and 0.14 per cent for the 20-pound and unfertilized sites.

Applying manure evenly and thinly

USING ROI TO EVALUATE THE USE OF FERTILIZER ON ALFALFA/GRASS PASTURES

Treatment	Phos Ramp Trials Interlake 2009-12 Alfalfa/grass yield first three years in metric tonnes						Value of forage /lbs.	Add value	Cost of fert /tonne	Return on investment
Phos #	Ashern	Grahamdale	Eriksdale	Arborg	Hilbre	Average	\$ 0.02		\$ 800	
0	2.12	5.03	2.33	2.79	5.52	3.56	\$ 156.87	\$ -	\$ -	0:1
20	2.86	5.68	3.56	3.59	4.5	4.04	\$ 178.08	\$ 21.21	\$ 14.23	1.5:1
40	3.75	6.4	4.17	4.45	4.96	4.75	\$ 209.30	\$ 52.43	\$ 28.46	1.8:1
60	4.73	6.16	3.67	4.57	5.22	4.87	\$ 214.77	\$ 57.90	\$ 42.68	1.4:1
80	4.6	6.15	5.37	5.5	5.81	5.49	\$ 241.93	\$ 85.07	\$ 56.91	1.5:1
100	4.57	6.06	3.9	5.94	6.96	5.49	\$ 241.93	\$ 85.07	\$ 71.14	1.2:1
15t	4.37	5.99	5.15			5.17	\$ 228.00	\$ 71.13	\$ 30.00	2.4:1
30t	4.57	5.89	5.86			5.44	\$ 239.90	\$ 83.04	\$ 60.00	1.4:1
ppm	3.6	22.8	6.2	5	3.6	8.24				*2014 Bittner et al

returned more value for the dollars spent hauling and spreading than heavy applications or dumping it and then pushing it around. Spreading 15 tonnes per acre across strips 16.5 feet wide by a half-mile long, cost of \$30 per acre, and gave an ROI of 2.4:1. Doubling the rate to 30 tonnes per acre doubled the cost, but didn't do much for yield resulting in an ROI of 1.4:1. When they applied more the ROI dipped into the negative range because of lodging, disease and hard-to-cure hay.

REDUCE WASTE

Extended grazing is definitely a cost saver, but it's not a production maximizer, Bittner says. Two questions to ask yourself are whether the savings amount to more than the value of production lost and what your time is worth in winter.

The advantages are that it's the most efficient way to retain nitrogen and provides better nutrient distribution compared to spreading manure hauled from pens.

Some industry-average values for savings per cow with extended grazing are that it reduces fuel costs (\$15), eliminates manure removal cost (\$6.77, hauling only), reduces machinery cost (\$20) and lowers investment cost in machinery (\$3), rounding up to \$45 per cow over the winter. Lower labour costs bump it to \$85 per cow.

The big drawbacks are the risk of nutrient loss and reduced palatability due to weather damage, mould, wildlife and heavy snowfall that makes access difficult. A loss of 150 pounds of feed per bale at 4.5 cents per pound totals \$6.75 per bale.

The bottom line is that productivity losses near or greater than 6.2 per cent of gross cow revenue (6.2x\$1,350) in an extended grazing program pretty much cancels out the \$85-per-cow savings. A 3.2 per cent loss of productivity nears the \$44-per-cow saving.

BUYING FEED VERSUS LAND

Buying feed is a quick way to increase feedstocks without committing to a long-term

investment and it offers flexibility to choose the type and quality of feed you need. Some years, as was the case in 2014, grain was cheaper than hay and a lot more nutrients can be packed onto a truckload of grain than a truckload of hay.

The cost of transporting hay is the main drawback so plan ahead and be on the lookout for local suppliers, Bittner advises. Even if they want a premium, the total cost may be less than importing cheaper hay from farther away.

Sticker shock can be an issue in high-price feed years when hay prices climb to five, six and seven cents a pound, but high calf prices trump high feed costs, he says. Remember, too, that some of the nutrients will accrue to the soil, especially with in-field feeding systems.

Some years it may be cheaper to buy extra hay than tying up your land, time and equipment to grow and harvest it. Couple that with the expense deduction for tax purposes and you may be that much farther ahead by buying feed. ★

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Dave Solverson
is president
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Association

A COOL VICTORY

On May 18, in a historic and decisive victory for Canada's cattle industry, the Appellate Body of the World Trade Organization (WTO) issued a fourth and final ruling confirming that U.S. mandatory country-of-origin labelling (COOL) discriminates against U.S. imports of Canadian cattle and hogs. The ruling effectively ends the eight-year legal battle initiated by the Canadian Cattlemen's Association (CCA) in 2007 challenging the U.S. labelling law for violating the U.S.'s international trade obligations.

On May 19, the Government of Canada announced it will move immediately to request authority from the WTO to impose retaliatory tariffs on U.S. exports, as per the WTO process. In a show of support for the Government of Canada's request to the WTO to authorize retaliation, I was pleased to stand alongside Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Minister Gerry Ritz and International Trade Minister Ed Fast in Ottawa as Minister Ritz cited a retaliation figure of between \$2.5 billion and \$3 billion.

Nearly two years earlier, I stood next to Minister Ritz in Vancouver when he announced the Government of Canada's list of commodities being targeted for potential retaliation in the amount of \$1.1 billion. That figure was based on the annual impairment suffered to that point under the 2009 final COOL rule. The new, larger amount cited by Minister Ritz is due to the additional damage following the May 23, 2013 COOL amendment that actually increased the discrimination.

The U.S. will almost certainly request that an arbitration panel review Canada's retaliation number. As soon as that arbitration is complete and the arbitrator's report is issued — likely later this summer — Canada will be in a position to implement retaliatory tariffs on key U.S. exports. The CCA urges the U.S. Congress to repeal COOL on red meat and avoid billions of dollars in retaliation.

The WTO final ruling prompted a swift response from the U.S. House Agriculture Committee. On May 20, the House Agriculture Committee approved legislation that would repeal COOL by a bipartisan vote of 38 to 6. The CCA is hopeful that the full House will pass the legislation upon return from the Memorial Day (May 25) holiday. After House passage the legislation would be referred to the U.S. Senate, which has historically been the more difficult chamber for those seeking COOL reform.

The CCA will continue working with the Government of Canada through the arbitration process in Geneva and to encourage the U.S. to adopt a genuine resolution. If the U.S. attempts a further amendment that does not eliminate the segregation of imported livestock, the CCA will strongly urge the Government of Canada to proceed swiftly and exercise Canada's right to retaliate.

I'd like to thank my fellow cattle producers across Canada for supporting this fight over the long haul. I know it hasn't been easy and at times a few of you questioned the very significant costs and energy required by this file.

But I think you'll agree that the cost to fight COOL — \$3.25 million in legal costs since 2007 — is minor in comparison to the cost COOL has inflicted in the over-all industry. With this historic and decisive victory supporting the Canadian beef industry's right to fair market access, I am confident that it has been a battle worth fighting and we will finish it through to the end.

The CCA will continue its efforts in Washington, D.C., to advocate for a resolution that genuinely resolves the problem of COOL by eliminating the need for U.S. livestock buyers to segregate imported animals from U.S.-born animals.

Time is of the essence for Canada regarding the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). The CCA's view is that Canada must ensure that it is a founding member of a 12-country deal.

At present the U.S. Congress is moving towards granting President Obama Trade Promotion Authority, an authority he needs to sign an agreement. Many TPP countries view this step as necessary for the final pieces of the agreement to come together.

The recently implemented Australia-Japan FTA has now twice cut the Japanese tariff on Australian beef and is already paying dividends in the form of increased Australian beef exports to Japan. By contrast, Canadian beef remains subject to a 38.5 per cent tariff and it will be difficult to maintain position in the Japanese market.

The National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) and Beef & Lamb New Zealand are pressing their respective governments to complete a TPP agreement so that lost ground in Japan can be regained. The CCA believes it is absolutely critical that Canada adopt the same sense of urgency as its beef trade competitors in shaping the conditions of access in Asia for the coming decades. There should be no excuse for Canada to miss this opportunity.

Also in May, I attended a trilateral meeting with NCBA and Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Ganaderas in Mexico. There was great interaction between leadership at this meeting and it was an excellent opportunity to strengthen ties.

Not all industry issues are national in impact and the CCA understands the importance of assisting with significant regional issues. I attended the B.C. Cattlemen's Association annual meeting in May and look forward to attending the Alberta Beef Producers semi-annual meeting in June. I've had the opportunity to speak with Alberta's new Agriculture Minister Oneil Carlier and Deputy Minister Jason Krips and appreciate their reaching out so quickly following the minister's appointment. 🌟



MOBILE TECH REVOLUTIONIZING VET-PRODUCER RELATIONS

Smart technology for cow-calf production

Cody Creelman is the face of a new beef generation. The young veterinarian is a partner in Veterinary Agri-Health Services Ltd., a thriving beef practice at Airdrie, Alta. He is also a passionate believer in the use of mobile technology in his work.

Already a fixture in the feedlot industry, high tech is set to revolutionize the cow-calf industry next, says Creelman. That's not speculation. It's what he lives every day. The clinic does roughly a third of its work in each of cow-calf, feedlot and research activities.

SPEEDY COMMUNICATIONS

The biggest change comes simply from the speed and sophistication of communications, says Creelman. There's been a huge growth in the beef industry use of smartphones and related devices such as tablets.

High-quality photo and video options allow a client to send a visual of a problem to their vet. "It gives us the jump on diagnosis, allows us to dispatch help if needed, or better prepare for assistance at a clinic," says Creelman.

NEW WORLD OF METRICS

Perhaps the biggest new tech potential is the world of metrics management. Creelman's practice developed feedlot management software. Now it has developed software for the commercial cow-calf industry.

"When we realized how many of our cli-

ents were using smartphones and mobile devices, we made the decision to build our latest software on a mobile platform to give them true in-the-field management."

The software is in its second year of use and meeting solid reviews by clients and other veterinarians.

The system allows producers to input data at the speed at which cattle are processed. Most use a tablet or Android smartphone. Data is entered at the same time animals are being preg tested or vaccinated. When the work at chuteside is done, records are instantly updated and usable with no need to download and manipulate later.

MORE FROM YOUR VET

There are many benefits to this new system, but one of the biggest is that it allows a much higher-quality relationship with your vet, says Creelman. You are working with actual numbers, not estimates. You can do it instantaneously and with complete mobility.

A first benefit producers discover is it shows exactly how many animals are in the herd, and other relevant data such as age distribution and calf inventory.

One of many examples is a treatment screen. "If a person enters the ID for a calf weighing 700 pounds with a joint infection, they get a suggested treatment," says Creelman. "It gives the dose, the injection route and the withdrawal times, all proper treatment protocols set out by their vet."



Smartphone technology can help efforts in animal health and improve ability to diagnose, says Dr. Cody Creelman (I) of Airdrie, Alta.

There are many customizable reports such as calving intervals — how many born in the first, second or third cycle. "We can show the economics of that and suggest pre-breeding nutrition management changes to fine tune the program."

Another example is body condition scoring. Estimating that is tough, but actually measuring animals and entering that data tells producers exactly what their herd is doing. The same applies to herd mortality and morbidity.

PROGRAM SUPPORT

On an industry level, new technology has the potential to strengthen industry programs such as the Verified Beef Production program with sophisticated options to meet sustainability standards.

New technology also allows a fresh approach for the beef industry to reach out to the world and tell our story, says Creelman.

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LESSONS FROM A PET FOOD STAR



Mankind has long claimed the sharing of food is an international activity that crosses all borders and beliefs. Ancient history depicts food in love and war and those recordings in stone, paper, parchment, canvas and thread always included other under-the-table guests. For 10,000 years these revered companions, dog or cat, have occupied our historical pages.

Fast-forward to today and we have for the first time in history elevated the companion animal to almost human status. Nearly 40 per cent of all households have a dog and 40 per cent do have a cat. Canadians now spend 2.0 per cent of their disposable income on pet food compared to eight per cent of their disposable income on feeding themselves. The revenue from dog and cat food sales alone grows over four per cent per year and recently rivalled the value of the entire Canadian beef industry at nearly \$2 billion.

The pet food industry is also host to massive growth in organic product and in fact is the sales leader in this category. As dogs and cats age, the need for specialized diets is growing and just as we supply the best for our working dogs, so too do people want diets for their aging dogs. Breaking into any pet market is not easy especially if you are trying to source ingredients locally for a variety of diets, but one Canadian company out of Alberta has done this and keeps gathering awards internationally.

Champion Petfoods now sells a carnivore-based selection of pet foods into 72 countries. I have long followed its story not only because of its success, but because I like the strategy behind the business. The client of course is the dog or cat and the science behind feeding them is in understanding the digestive system of each. And while research can deliver the technical details, it cannot hand you a 72-country client base that generates 66 per cent of your revenue internationally.

When recently interviewed by Alberta Venture, CEO Frank Burdzy said something that caught my eye when he referred to manufacturing by declaring that regardless of the destination of the product, it was manufactured to the highest standard. In the case of dog and cat food, that is to EU standard. When I read this I thought of the beef industry and our past reluctance to set the bar at a standard that was uncomfortable and unfamiliar. These shifts don't come easily and Champion had to get everyone on board from ingredients to delivery to make the company an international success.

The result was regenerative, meaning that by going beyond the standard of excellence we employ here in Canada to an even higher standard, it continued to generate sales in new countries and for new product. I liken it to the recent experience on our farm shipping semen to Australia. Finding the partners took extra time but once

we met the hardest and highest standard for that product we now can ship worldwide. Our domestic semen comes from the same tank, ensuring the client the highest standard available.

In the interview, Burdzy also referred to the importance of image — something the beef industry clearly understands. The idea of our mountains and waterfalls under those ever blue skies tends to bring a breath of freshness to the image of food produced in Canada. Yes it is an Alberta image but that is what buyers relate to when it comes to food and food products, pet foods and health food from their international perspective. It seems to not be oversold and customers have never tired of it so it remains in the industry's best interest to continue to sell that image.

The term "local" is becoming a stronger selling point for all food and food products including dog and cat food. Champion took its plant to the food source when it simply could not get enough fish in landlocked Alberta. Its new Kentucky plant works with fishermen and catfish farms to supply the needs of the plant. The idea of taking the plant closer to the source has long been a sore spot for Canadians in the food-processing business but there are gaps in specialized production and processing. We have to ask: is it wise to have interdependence in an industry on three large kill floors or should we be also looking at the marketplace, the source of product and moving manufacturing around to make it all work?

Like the little engine that could, this small family-owned company continues to grow and will build new kitchen and lab space in Alberta with a price tag of \$5.9 million and add a new kitchen to the plant in Kentucky.

Our investment in the \$3.8-million Canadian Beef Centre of Excellence is a great start in the right direction if we first take the time and effort to fully understand our customer so the recommendations for new products and product testing meet their needs.

As for regulatory frustration and the demands of other countries, perhaps we can take a page out of the Champion playbook of getting around all of that with value-added product(s) that use ingredients that are not outsourced and produced to the highest-known international standard. History is made by bringing people together to share food, ideas, debate and innovation at the same table. One under which a beloved cat or dog most certainly and contentedly sleeps. 🍖

Brenda Schoepp is an inspiring speaker, consultant and mentor who works with young entrepreneurs across Canada and around the world. She can be contacted through her website www.brendaschoepp.com. All rights reserved. Brenda Schoepp 2015



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WE USED TO HANG HORSE THIEVES AND RUSTLERS

Expectation and foresight is integral to progress. Indifference to small matters today yields tomorrow's issues, the need for hot-iron branding among them.

Although progress in the cattle industry is slow, progress is constant — typically a case of hesitancy and caution unnerved by pressure brought to bear by those who buy the food we produce and those who ultimately bring it to the marketplace either as groceries on a store shelf or hamburgers at a drive-through. The catalysts for change often start as outlier issues like antimicrobial resistance, animal welfare, and food safety — the incidental things whipped into first-order importance by the public, then championed by Corporate America.

Animal care has been recast a trump card. The corporate world that markets what comes from grass and grain understands how animal production systems work. When change is needed, change is ordered. Be it the use of antibiotics, hormones, layer cages, or gestation stalls, the public likes what they hear and spends food dollars accordingly. The people most affected are often producers, especially those girdled by tradition, reluctant to change because it's easier to "just keep doing what we always have."

The debate around hot-iron branding will surface again as the spring ritual of "branding" unfolds in corrals across Western Canada. The love affair cowboys have with the smell of wood fires, horses and the acrid smoke of hot irons against hide is historical, some say romantic. Many outside ranching simply don't understand why ranchers burn symbols onto the struggling, bellowing chattels of spring calving grounds. Using hot irons to brand and dehorn (debud) young calves is viewed as derelict and inhumane.

WHY WE BRAND

Through history, brands were a proof of title. For about 25 to 30 per cent of cattle producers, branding is still accepted as the most practical way to permanently identify livestock. Old habits die hard!

The western cowboy did not invent hot-iron branding. Scenes of oxen being branded on hieroglyphics are depicted on Egyptian tombs as early as 2700 BC. On the darker side of history, hot-iron branding became a right of passage from freedom to enslavement during Roman times, a practice perpetuated by the slave trade until the late 19th century.

The Spanish are credited with bringing the first branding irons to the Americas in 1541. Branding became common in the U.S. after the Civil War. Eventually, in Canada, the second session of the Northwest Territories government on August 1, 1878 established a law requiring all livestock to be branded.

Unfortunately, there has always been the unscrupulous who steal or "rustle" livestock. Approximately 600 cattle and 100 horses are reported stolen every year in Alberta.

Today's thieves are sophisticated compared to the horseback bandits of the Old West: they pull livestock trailers, work at night and know how to coax animals inside; then a quick trip across provincial boundaries to sell animals at auction barns or processing plants. Provinces with no brand inspection system are favoured destinations. Modern rustlers are slick, and they're bold.

WELFARE CONCERNS

In 2011, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) published a literature review examining welfare concerns associated with hot-iron branding. Their conclusion: hot-iron branding is painful.

Aside from our obligation to animals, there is a responsibility to address welfare concerns of the public.

The current codes of practice were an important step. Written to ensure everyone in the industry understands that we must meet the basic physiological and behavioural needs of livestock. Controversy arises when the non-agricultural community's views differ from those of producers. Industry self-regulation is of paramount importance.

The National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC) of Canada in developing the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals: Beef Cattle addresses hot-iron branding in a rather oblique manner. The code recognizes that permanent identification, as legal proof of ownership, is essential. The code also encourages development of "least painful" means of identification. In its present form, the code recognizes that under some circumstances, hot-iron or freeze branding are necessary and when required it be done quickly, expertly, and in accordance with accepted standards. The code goes on to suggest in consideration of animal welfare, cattle should not be rebranded — particularly as bills of sale or record of ownership. Governments and industry are encouraged to eliminate any current regulations requiring rebranding. Wattling, ear splitting, and other unnecessary surgical alterations of cattle for identification or cosmetic purposes are strongly discouraged.

Consequences for our industry through inattention to animal welfare are wide ranging, including future preservation and expansion of export markets. As an example, perspectives related to animal welfare between Europe and North America differ significantly. Hot-iron branding is banned in Europe. Unfortunately, in North America hot-iron branding is not only promoted, but necessary as a part of disease control programs and import (U.S. state regulations), a part of normal business practices in many custom feedlots, and a requirement by lending institutions.

Suspension of hot-iron branding cannot be argued from a production perspective because no differences have been observed in average daily gains or morbidity rates between branded and unbranded calves, the only exception being in very young calves that are castrated, debudded, and branded at the same time.

It's difficult to predict what pressure will be applied to stop hot-iron branding. Many predict the tradition and romantic slur associated with the practice will fade as better forms of permanent and individual ID become affordable. Things like DNA fingerprinting and retinal imaging whereby every animal can be positively identified at birth is just around the corner.

Hopefully the tacit memory of cattle rustlers, horse thieves and hot-iron branding will be relegated to grist for pens of western historians. 🌟

Dr. Ron Clarke prepares this column on behalf of the Western Canadian Association of Bovine Practitioners. Suggestions for future articles can be sent to Canadian Cattlemen (gren@fbcpublishing.com) or WCABP (info@wcabp.com).



COOL ISN'T OVER YET

COOOL's ultimate demise is finally at hand. But it might not come as quickly as one might hope for. That's because COOL's fate now lies in the hands of American lawmakers. While the U.S. House of Representatives has already acted with commendable speed, the U.S. Senate is likely to drag its feet until the day that retaliatory tariffs are put in place.

The House Agriculture Committee acted just two days after the World Trade Organization released its fourth and final ruling on COOL. The committee immediately passed legislation 38-6 to repeal COOL for beef, pork and poultry. Chair Mike Conaway (R-Texas) says he hopes for a full House vote in early June. But there are currently not enough votes in the U.S. Senate to support repeal. So resolution might be several months away.

It will take at least two months before the level of tariffs is decided. The WTO's Dispute Settlement Body will adopt the latest ruling at its June 19 meeting. Canada and Mexico at that meeting will request permission to retaliate with tariffs commensurate to the COOL damage to the two countries. The U.S. will then request an arbitration hearing (over at least a 60-day period) to agree on the amount. If the parties cannot agree, the WTO will make its own determinations on the tariff levels. So tariffs might not start being applied until September at the earliest. Only then might the Senate move to repeal part of COOL.

A fall resolution would mean the end of the COOL saga only after nearly seven years from the time the WTO process began. Canada on December 1, 2008 requested consultations with the U.S. concerning certain mandatory COOL provisions in the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 as amended by the 2008 Farm Bill and as implemented through an interim final rule.

Implementation of COOL began March 16, 2009. It immediately began to add costs at the feedlot and packing plant levels due to the need to segregate Canadian- and Mexican-born cattle and hogs. Canada and Mexico subsequently claimed this segregation amounted to discrimination and cost their livestock industries many hundreds of millions of dollars in lower prices. The WTO in its four rulings agreed with this view.

Cattle and red meat top Canada's list of products that would be subject to retaliatory tariffs. That's another reason why the U.S. meat and livestock industry will be urging Congress to act before tariffs are put in place. The list includes: live bovine animals; live swine; meat of bovine animals, fresh or chilled; meat of bovine animals, frozen; meat of swine, fresh, chilled, or frozen; cuts of offal, fresh or chilled of spent fowl.

COOL opponents in the U.S. all agree that repealing part of the COOL law is the best step forward. COOL supporters disagree but have come up with no solution that would satisfy either Canada and Mexico or the WTO. Canada has consistently said it wants red meat taken out of COOL and won't accept a "Product of North America" label. Besides, such a label would not provide U.S. consumers with useful information.

COOL opponents will have to reiterate to members of Congress over and over that COOL provides only cost and no benefit to either the industry or American consumers. They will also have to convince them of the economic impact of Canadian and Mexican retaliatory tariffs on dozens of industries and hundreds of companies. Canada's list of tariffs targets products and goods in all 50 U.S. states and threatens to disrupt a bilateral trade worth \$658 billion in 2014. Let's hope this prospect gets U.S. senators to act. 🍁

A North American view of the meat industry. Steve Kay is publisher and editor of *Cattle Buyers Weekly*.

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NewsRoundup

PESTS

Alberta's alfalfa bug survey yields mixed results in first year

Year one of a three-year benchmark insect survey across Alberta yielded mostly good news and a few surprises, even for Alberta Agriculture entomologist Scott Meers of Brooks who is heading up the project.

The biggest surprise was the sheer abundance of life in alfalfa fields. Sweep net samples of 100 sweeps each captured several thousand insects. The highest count was over 10,000 in one sample.

AVAILABLE BACHELOTTES

Name: Carrie
Age: 44

Carrie a down-to-earth, natural beauty who is very genuine about finding a real, serious, loving relationship. She is divorced, and has a 12 year old daughter. Sweet, kind hearted and loving, Carrie is generous and charitable person. She is a farm girl, born and raised and she still works on the farm, which she owns with her 2 brothers. She loves the country life, country music, and would prefer to stay in and meet someone in the country. She was in a very bad marriage for 8 years where she was hurt. She has been divorced for 4 years, and has been hesitant to put herself back out there in fear of being hurt again. However, she is tired of being alone and wants a good man in her life, a positive male role model for her daughter, is a hopeless romantic and not given up on love. She is very happy in her life now, and wants someone to share that with. Carrie is soft spoken, a bit shy at first, has a great sense of humor, loves the outdoors, riding her horses, spending time with her daughter, going on picnics and making home cooked meals. She is the type of person that wants to bring happiness to all those in her life. She is looking for a very kind, loving, honest country guy with a big heart, who is affectionate, compassionate, likes animals, and is preferably a Christian such as herself. She hopes to finally find true love, someone she can spend her days with, and perhaps her life with.



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As alarming as that number may sound, most of the insects were neutral or beneficial to the alfalfa. They found lots of little moths, thrips, mites, ladybird beetles, and even a weevil that attacks dandelion seed that has been sent away to the Agriculture Canada's National Identification Services in Ottawa for identification.

No new problem insects were detected in the 150 mixed-alfalfa fields sampled across the province last year.

One concern was the change in intensity and range of the alfalfa weevil. A lot of these pests were found in southern Alberta where the insect traditionally has been an issue, however, they also found fields facing serious weevil pressure around Stettler and the foothills around Calgary.

Generally, the first phone calls Meers gets about weevils come in after the first cut when worried producers notice significant leaf loss or poor regrowth.

The weevil isn't much of a problem for dairy producers because they cut alfalfa early ahead of the buildup in weevil numbers.

The Alberta survey mirrors the alfalfa insect surveys done in Saskatchewan from 2010 to 2012 so the findings will be comparable. In Saskatchewan they found alfalfa weevils went from an occasional forage pest in 2010 to a major one spread right across the province by 2012.

The western strain of the weevil was first discovered in southwestern Saskatchewan and southeastern Alberta in 1954 where it remained for 40 years before starting to advance eastward into Manitoba. (See

Canadian Cattlemen, April 2013, for more on the Saskatchewan survey and weevil control measures.)

Another pest of interest is the alfalfa blotch leafminer. This small black fly slowly migrated from Eastern Canada, where it's been well established since the 1970s, into Manitoba by the mid-1990s. Its spread westward since then has been more like a jump with it detected both in Regina and Brooks, Alberta in 2005.

The adult fly produces three generations in a growing season. Meers says two, possibly three, species of leafminer can be found in Alberta. Up to now, he says, a local parasitic wasp has kept populations below the economic threshold. The three-year survey will show how it has spread and the location of the different species.

There weren't any surprises in terms of lygus and alfalfa plant bugs.

Part of this year's field work will follow lygus in alfalfa and canola to determine whether there is a connection. For instance, if a canola field is cut, will the bugs move into alfalfa? Previous studies say no, but there may be other connections.

The alfalfa-canola lygus project is separate from the benchmarking of 100 as-pure-as-possible alfalfa fields this summer and another 100 in 2016. That averages out to one field per county and two in counties with the most alfalfa and alfalfa insect pressure.

"You never know what you'll find until you really look," says Meers.

As far back as records go, there has never been a comprehensive survey of alfalfa insects



One concern is the increasing spread of the alfalfa weevil. PHOTO: LARRY GRENKOW, AAFC SASKATOON

in Alberta. The project is being funded by the Western Grains Foundation and the Alberta Crop Industry Development Fund.

DISEASE

The potential of probiotics By Michael Flood

Last year Health Canada changed its regulations on antibiotics to prevent them being used as growth promoters in livestock. Drug makers like Bayer, Merck, and Novartis had already begun the change, removing labels on their products that advertised them as suitable for non-medicinal purposes. Antibiotics are still available to Canadian ranchers and feedlot operators but they will now require a veterinarian's prescription and producers will no longer be authorized to feed their animal continuous low doses to promote growth.

The primary concern with regard to antibiotics is that they may be contributing to the growth of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. This is not only a public health hazard; it's also a serious image problem for the beef industry. Environmental and consumer health advocacy groups have been drawing attention to

this problem for years, and it is becoming a serious sticking point for claiming that beef is an environmentally sustainable food.

As a result of this, many cattle producers have begun transitioning to probiotics, which are also known as direct feed microbials (DFM). Unlike antibiotics, which are drugs which kill bacteria (both harmful and health-promoting ones) probiotics are live cultures of beneficial bacteria. By introducing them into an animal's diet a cattle producer can, in theory at least, promote greater animal health and resistance to infection by replenishing the healthful bacteria in their cow's gut.

Animal product manufacturers have been swift to provide a range of probiotics to ranchers and feedlot operators, claiming that they can be used to replace antibiotics. Companies like SCD Probiotics, Life Products Inc., and others offer a range of live culture products and make strong claims for their efficacy in promoting animal health and growth. The probiotics have three main claimed potentials: promoting cattle health, reducing food-

Continued on page 36



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Consumer Benefits from Genomics

Rob Eirich talking with Tom Lynch-Staunton of Livestock Gentec, and Colin Coros of Delta Genomics, about the benefits of animal genomics for consumers.

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News Roundup

Continued from page 35

borne illness occurrences, and improving the public perception of the cattle industry.

It's important to distinguish probiotics from "prebiotics," which are digestible sugars that promote the growth of healthy bacteria. These substances, like chicory root fibre (inulin) and turmeric have been shown in recent studies to produce noticeable (i.e. greater than expected by random chance) positive effects on nutrient digestion and immune system responses in a broad range of animals. Their results in ruminants are less certain and remains an area for investigation.

Given that they are just additional supplements of the healthy bacteria that already naturally live in cow stomachs and intestines, probiotics are unlikely to be harmful. But will they be beneficial enough to justify the cost to cattle producers?

This is still an uncertain issue. There have

been a number of promising independent studies conducted but not enough that there can be said to be a scientific consensus about their effectiveness. Part of the problem is the complexity of the ruminant digestive tract, which makes the effects of probiotics harder to trace than in monogastrics like pigs, sheep, and chickens.

French researchers, publishing in the journal *Beneficial Microbes*, analyzed data from studies in Europe and North America and found probiotics, in particular live yeast, showed a strong ability to reduce acidosis in cattle, a common digestive disorder that is linked to bloating, laminitis, and liver abscesses. It is believed that the probiotics contribute to animal health by outcompeting harmful bacteria in the cow's gut. They also showed a notable ability to reduce methane gas emissions, an important factor for reducing cattle's contributions to climate change.

In research published by the University of Guelph probiotics had a notable effect on preventing the shedding of *E. coli* O157 bacteria in feedlot cattle. This would be a notable advance because that strain of *E. coli* is one of the primary contributors to a foodborne illness in humans. Similar effects have been

shown in chickens as well, leading scientists to believe that the effects are general across different animal populations.

Through the Beef Science Cluster, the Beef Cattle Research Council is funding a major Canadian research study into these and other potential benefits of probiotics. Under Dr. Wade Abbot of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada the scientists are working to develop the passage of probiotics and prebiotics through the digestive tracts of cattle, enabling them to isolate the effects of them from other environmental and nutritional conditions. They expect to publish their research next year.

Once the data is in from that trial and others we will still need to wait to find out how much economic impact the probiotics can have. Assuming their effects and costs are similar to the currently used antibiotics then there is a case to be made for substitutions. Agricultural economists will need to study just how much benefit they produce to determine whether they make sense to a rancher's bottom line.

Regardless of just how much benefit the probiotics produce they will give ranchers and feedlot operators a new

Peace of mind.
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The advertisement displays four main product lines: **speedrite** (red energizers), **PATRIOT** (black energizers), **STAFIX** (green energizers), and **TRU-TEST** (blue electronic ID readers). Below the product names are images of the respective devices. The background shows silhouettes of cattle grazing in a field at sunset.

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talking point with consumers. They are naturally occurring, are not a product of genetic engineering, and contain no synthetic chemicals, and thus fit all definitions of an organic product. If they are shown to be beneficial in an economically justifiable way they will have an added benefit in improving public perception as an “all-natural” product.

ENVIRONMENT

Facilities for Ontario beef cattle

By Barry Potter, agriculture development adviser, OMAFRA

The phone rings and the question is, “I want to build a new barn for my beef cows, are there any new designs? The Canada Plan Ser-

vice plans date back 30+ years.” (<http://www.cps.gov.on.ca/english/frameindex.htm>)

The observation that beef barn design has not changed much is somewhat true. There are new fabric barns, and new flooring discussions, but the basic principles remain the same.

A better question to start with might be, “if I am starting a beef operation, what facilities do I need to look after my animals?” Sorting out the type of farm you want, and the production system you will employ, will determine what you need for facilities.

Beef Farmers of Ontario conducted an extensive study last year as it looked at what a startup beef operation would require for land, machinery and facilities. Long discus-

sions with farmers, advisory staff, and economists considered a wide range of options.

With a beef cow-calf operation, three critical care points are easily identifiable: calving, health treatments and weaning. In Ontario, our weather determines how elaborate our calving facility needs to be. Traditional calving during the winter months requires some type of barn to protect the newborn calves from the elements, and typically include a heat source of some kind. The BFO model looks at working with nature and the seasons, with calving on grass during the summer months. This eliminates the need for a heat source, and a specific calving barn.

Continued on page 38

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News Roundup

Continued from page 37

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Treating animals for health reasons requires an excellent handling system. Under the Beef Code of Practice it is critical to handle cattle safely and humanely. The BFO model builds in a facility for handling livestock in a safe manner.

At weaning time, calves experience stress as they are separated from their mothers. This stress can be reduced using the Fence line and Two-Step weaning methods as outlined in previous Virtual Beef articles on the OMAFRA website.

The BFO model found that the optimum number of cows was around 250, and would need about 2,500 acres of land. What did the BFO model indicate as an absolute requirement for facilities to look after these animals?

The first building is a simple open-fronted pole shed, 30 x 100 feet or in that size range, that would serve primarily as storage for high-quality hay. Wastage from dry hay stored outside without cover can be exten-

sive. Storing some high-quality dry hay under cover would retain quality, plus allow for hay that could be accessed in the middle of winter if it is stormy. The secondary purpose of this facility would be for sick pens and a weaning area as the hay is fed out.

The second building would be a covered handling facility, approximately 30 x 30 feet. This would house the crowd tub, working chute and squeeze for restraining livestock for treatment purposes.

Where do the cows spend the winter if there is no barn for them? The BFO model uses windbreaks and bedded pack dry lots for housing the cows. Cows need shelter from wind, more than from rain or snow. By using tree lines and groves for cover, cows can get out of the wind. If they are out of the wind, cold can be managed by the animal's internal metabolism.

Continued on page 40

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We have a goal to be the best beef cattle magazine in the business. But we need your help. If you could just fill in this survey and return it to me, you would be helping us set the future editorial direction for CANADIAN CATTLEMEN. All you have to do is tell me what you like about the magazine, and what you

don't like. There's also some space for you to tell us what you would like to see in future issues. **CLIP AND ENCLOSE YOUR MAILING LABEL.** Each month, we will draw one name from all the surveys sent in and send that person a CATTLEMEN cap. It could be you!

We'd appreciate it if you could tell us a little about yourself. It makes it easier for us to keep your main interests in focus

☐ I'm ranching or farming

Enterprise	# of head
Total beef cattle	
Yearlings on feed/pasture	
Registered cows	
Fed cattle (sold yearly)	
Commercial cows	
Horses	
Calves on feed/pasture	
Other livestock	

☐ I no longer take an active part in farming

If not an owner/operator of a farm, are you:

☐ In agribusiness (bank, elevator, ag supplies, etc.)

☐ Other (please specify) _____

My approximate age is:

☐ a) Under 35 ☐ b) 36 to 44 ☐ c) 45 to 54

☐ d) 55 to 64 ☐ e) 65 or over

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News Roundup					
Purely Purebred					
The Markets					
Market Talk					
Sales and Events					

Special features	5	4	3	2	1
Nutrition					
Research					
Calving Issue (Jan.)					
Custom Feedlot Guide (Sep.)					
Stock Buyers' Guide (Aug.)					
Animal Health Special (Sep.)					
Beef Watch (May & Nov.)					

Canadian Cattlemen THE BEEF MAGAZINE

1666 Dublin Avenue
 Winnipeg, Man. R3H 0H1

News Roundup

Continued from page 38

Using existing trees or planting trees for windbreaks is the cheapest option for keeping cows sheltered from the elements. By bale grazing and feeding out on pasture, manure can be spread as the cows eat, supplying soil with nutrients and organic matter. In the absence of trees, portable windbreaks could be used.

For more traditional dry lots, both Western Canada and northwest Quebec ranches use wooden windbreaks to block their wintering sites from the wind.

Things to consider in locating a dry lot include:

- Raised area for bedded pack;
- Sufficient slope to direct run-off to proper location;
- Windbreak for shelter;
- Feeding area (preferably with paved surface);
- Adjacent alleyways (for sorting livestock

BEEF ANIMAL SPACE REQUIREMENTS ^{1,2}			
Type of housing	Area per animal (square ft./hd.)		
	Cows and bred heifers	Feeders 750 lbs.	Calves (500 lbs.)
Earth lot without mound	600	500	400
Earth lot with bedded mound (bedded mound area)	300 (35)	250 (30)	150 (25)
Paved lot	80	50	40

¹ Dry bedded mounds inside the windbreaks allow the cows a place to stay dry as well as out of the wind. Keep the bedded mounds away from feeding and watering areas. Rectangular-shaped mounds are easier to manage. Have good drainage around the mounds. A well-compacted soil base material is essential. The top should be rounded with a minimum height of 5 ft. (1.5 m) at the centre. Side slopes must be flat enough that cattle can easily walk to the top of the mound. Maximum side slopes of 1:4 are recommended.

² Wood chips and straw can be used for bedding.

Wood chips or shavings: 12.5 lbs./1,000-lb. animal weight (1.25 kg/100 kg), applied once a week. Do not use wood products for bedding if the wood has been treated with preservatives.

Straw: 25 lbs./1,000-lb. animal weight (2.5 kg/100 kg), applied at least three times a week (preferably daily).

into different areas, feed and manure-handling equipment, etc.);

- Sufficient distance from surface water, wells, neighbours, etc.

Proper site preparation so water from the roofs of adjacent buildings and overland flow of field run-off does not enter livestock yard area.

Machine sheds were identified as important under the BFO model to keep equipment out of the elements... the cattle actually keep better outside than the tractor does.

The facilities discussed in this article suit extensive beef production using summer calving and employ minimalist facilities. 🍁


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Karen Schiml

■ Karen Schiml is the new programs and media coordinator of the Canadian Hereford Association. She was raised on a straight bred Hereford commercial cattle ranch in southern Saskatchewan and was a member of both the Canadian Junior Association and 4-H beef club growing up. She received her B.S.A. in animal science from the University of Saskatchewan and spent several years in the feed industry, most recently in a regulatory and nutrition position with a small premix manufacturer. In her new role with the CHA she will support the Hereford breed improvement and show committees, working on research projects and assisting with the design of the *Hereford Digest*, the breed publication.



Marty Seymour

■ Canadian Western Agribition (CWA) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Beef Australia last month to co-operate on international marketing, promotion, and exchange of best practices in the areas of livestock management and event planning. "This partnership is intended to build on the success of both show's international reputations," said Marty Seymour, CEO of CWA. Beef Australia features 4,500 cattle, seminars, and a trade fair showcasing more than 500 businesses. Seymour travelled to the Queensland show to sign the MOU along with eight Saskatchewan cattle producers looking to promote their own purebred beef interests as part of a Canadian trade mission partly funded through Growing Forward 2.

■ Larry Corah who oversees producer outreach in Canada for Certified Angus Beef (CAB) told a feedlot audience in Lethbridge last month that more of the Canadian market for Certified Angus Beef should be filled by local production. In the past three years alone, he says, Canadians have increased the AAA gradings by eight per cent. The number grading Prime is still small, about 2.3 per cent of all carcasses at the end of May, but that represents an

increase over the one per cent that graded Prime to the same point in 2012. This mirrors trends in the U.S., where Choice-grading beef jumped from 62.7 to 69.2 per cent of U.S. carcasses between 2009 and 2014.

In 2014, Canadians bought 40.5 million pounds of CAB beef, but less than two-thirds of it was produced in Canada. To qualify a carcass must grade in the upper 2/3 of AAA and meet nine additional carcass quality specifications. "Easily, this could be a 50-million-pound market, and it could all be produced in Canada," Corah said.

■ The Canadian Angus Association (CAA) long-serving director of technical services, Cheryl Hazenberg is moving back to Ontario on a trial basis as the Eastern Canada manager for the association. In practice she will be performing many of her past duties from Oakwood, Ont. instead of the Calgary head office as well as attending breed events in the eastern provinces. She will even retain her old Calgary phone number.



Keltey Whelan



Matt Bates

■ The CAA welcomed back Keltey Whelan and Matt Bates as summer interns. Keltey recently graduated with a diploma in communication arts, advertising and public relations from Lethbridge College and will be helping with many design projects and the collection of stories for AC-TV for the association based in the Angus Central office. Matt is based out of Ontario where he will be collecting stories for Meet the Producer items and general stories for AC-TV. He will also be travelling as the outgoing ambassador for the CAA to the Maritimes in June and Argentina in July.

■ Ottawa is giving the Canadian Animal Health Coalition (CAHC) \$183,929 to develop an online driver training and driver verification system, based on the existing Canadian Livestock Transport (CLT) Certification program. The goal is to give truckers, shippers and receivers easier access to

the training necessary to improve handling practices. This money is coming from Agri-culture and Agri-Food Canada's five-year AgriMarketing Program. The CAHC is a non-profit organization serving Canada's farmed animal industry.

■ The Canadian Food Inspection Agency and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada have been consulting with stakeholders on proposed amendments to the Health of Animals Regulations. The proposed amendments will enhance existing livestock traceability requirements in Canada. Comments can be posted until June 26. For a copy of the consultation document, email trace@inspection.gc.ca. Web presentations were given by CFIA staff to the cattle industry on May 21 and the abattoirs, deadstock centres and auction markets on May 25.

■ Late last month Dr. Brian Wickham, the former CEO of the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation was in Canada as a guest of the Canadian Beef Breeds Council (CBBC) to talk about the Canadian Breeding Goal with various groups within the industry.

Prior to the meetings CBBC research director John Crowley explained that while genetic improvement is being made in the Canadian herd, there are many structural and policy issues that need to be addressed to accelerate these gains. "A lot of the pieces of the puzzle already exist in their own entity but some sort of centralized structure may be needed," he said.

If genetic improvement was fully realized through the entire beef chain Crowley says it could boost industry profits by another 1.5 per cent or \$500 million per year. 🍁

Sales results

Northern Alliance Bull Sale

March 28, 2015, Vanderhoof, B.C.

- 2 Bulls, Blast Angus, av. \$6,375
- 3 Bulls, Poplar Meadows Angus, av. \$10,083
- 2 Bulls, Red Moon Angus, av. \$7,500
- 2 Bulls, Marberly Angus, av. \$5,625
- 1 Bull, Poplar Meadows Angus, av. \$4,250
- 103 Yearling bulls, gross \$533,436, av. \$5,200

TheMarkets



FED CATTLE

Tight front end supply and good local and North American demand have given sellers the leverage needed to hold prices near record levels. The fed cattle cash market has traded between \$201/cwt and \$202.54/cwt for the past six weeks. At the end of May the average fed steer was \$202.54/cwt which is more than \$50/cwt higher than a year ago, and over \$83/cwt higher than the same week two years ago. Records have been achieved through 2015 in the cash basis and particularly in the cash-to-futures basis. The spot basis strengthened to a positive level in the second quarter ranging between 4.71/cwt and 9.12/cwt. Last year the cash basis ranged from -10.63/cwt to -19.30/cwt through the same time frame.

Cattle on feed on May 1, was down 12 per cent to 844,157 head. The lighter placement trend continued in April with placements down 20 per cent showing a reduction in all classes. Only, 101,968 head of feeders were placed through April. Fed cattle slaughter in Canada is smaller in 2015. Fed steers to mid-May totalled 459,950 head, which is eight per cent under a year ago. Heifer slaughter was down six per cent to a total of 339,050 head. Live cattle exports to the U.S. are down 47 per cent with just 91,929 head exported to date. The smaller exports with the lower Canadian dollar shows that local packers need to keep cattle in Canada to fill domestic requirements.

FEEDER CATTLE

The feeder market this time of year is light on volume and premiums are always given based on quality, type and size of packages. Good-quality replacement-type heifers have been fetching top dollar as many producers are anticipating herd expansion. The increased interest in expansion

through heifer retention leaves fewer feeders available for feedlot replacement which has kept demand strong. At the end of May 550-lb. feeder steers averaged \$326.90/cwt, which is 41 per cent higher than a year ago. At the same time 850-lb. feeder prices remain strong on limited numbers. At the end of May 850-lb. steers averaged \$253.13/cwt, which is an improvement of 34 per cent when compared with the same week in 2014. The 850-lb. feeder basis widened at month's end to -26.52/cwt compared to a five-year average just wider than \$15/cwt. Feeder exports are down 47 per cent when compared to a year ago, Canadian feedlots have been determined to keep feeders in Canada even while the lower dollar makes exports attractive.

NON-FED CATTLE

Cull cattle availability has been limited both in Canada and the U.S. however, demand has remained strong and buyers are eager to secure inventory. The D1,2 cow price climbed to a high of \$151.01/cwt six weeks ago and has traded in a range from \$146 to \$148 since then. That's an improvement of 34 per cent compared to 2014 and 83 per cent above the five-year average. While prices hover near historical highs cow slaughter numbers continue in the opposite direction, down 15 per cent to date at 144,051 head. Exports of cows are also down 31 per cent so far in 2015 at 74,445 head. Bull prices remain solid at \$169.89/cwt to the end of May. Most herdsires are working at this time of year leaving few to add to the slaughter mix. Domestic bull slaughter to date is up 110 per cent on a relatively small volume of 2,477 head. Most mature bulls head to U.S. but even exports are down five per cent on the year at 25,116 head. 🍷

Debbie McMillin is a market analyst who ranches at Hanna, Alta.

▶ DEB'S OUTLOOK

FED CATTLE

Fed cattle have held on to record-high prices over the past weeks however, we need to be mindful of consumer buying trend as we move into the summer. Ample competitive meats priced under the record-high retail beef prices may drive some buying decisions. The yearling run is all but over and the bulk of the calves will be ready for market in the coming months. The increased volume coupled with the typically sluggish summer beef sales are expected to cause the seasonal downtrend in fed cattle prices through the next few months. The lower Canadian dollar and the lighter on-feed number should put a floor on the seasonal slide in the fed cattle summer market.

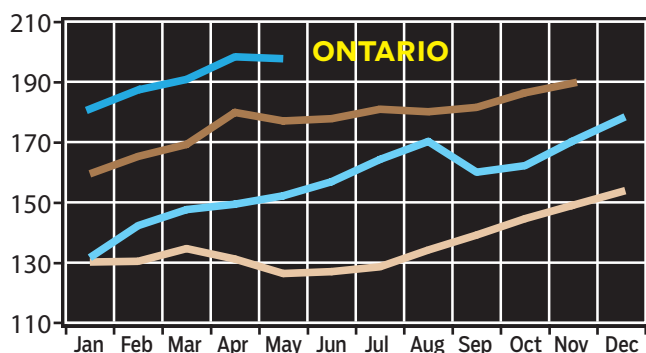
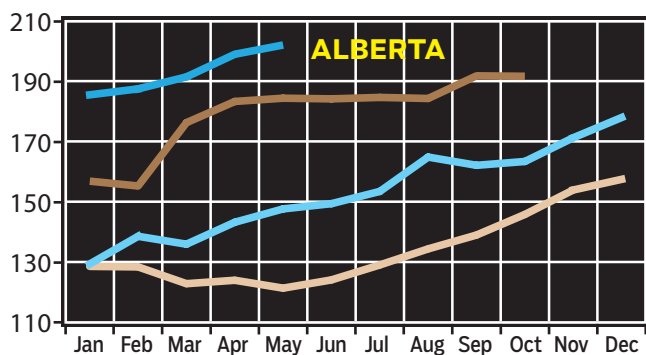
FEEDER CATTLE

The typically small packages of feeders that trade through the summer should net strong prices as the market moves towards fall and anticipates the upcoming yearling run. The largest wild card as we move into the summer months is the lack of precipitation across much of Western Canada. A large portion of cattle country is dry and as pastures deteriorate producers may need to start evaluating their grass inventory. If the dry conditions continue expect grass cattle to come to town early as well as some mature cattle as producers are forced to downsize the herd to stretch their summer feed. This would pressure the market lower. Keep an eye on crop conditions as unfavourable weather will also weigh heavy on the cost of feed heading into the fall run. However, much of the previously drought-stricken areas in the U.S. have been reporting better moisture conditions and that should put a solid floor under our market as the Americans will be looking for feeder cattle. The lower Canadian dollar will encourage buyer competition for any additional summer volume.

NON-FED CATTLE

Cow slaughter volumes will remain small through the summer as the reduced North American cow supply is now out on pasture with calves at side. That said, dry pasture conditions may start to force the sale of pairs. Further into the summer early weaning could occur. The demand for non-fed beef remains strong and any additional volume will likely continue to be sought after by Canadian and U.S. buyers. Typically cow prices remain strong until the fall run and that should be the case this year. However, volumes may increase sooner rather than later.

Break-even Prices on A-Grade Steers



Canfax weighted average price on A-Grade steers

2015 ■
2014 ■

Break-even price for steers on date sold

2015 ■
2014 ■

May 2015 prices*

Alberta

Yearling steers (850 lb.)	\$245.90/cwt
Barley	4.68/bu.
Barley silage	58.50/ton
Cost of gain (feed)	71.59/cwt
Cost of gain (all costs)	107.69/cwt
Fed steers	201.98/cwt
Break-even (October 2015)	191.60/cwt

Ontario

Yearling steers (850 lb.)	\$251.42/cwt
Corn silage	38.80/ton
Grain corn	4.60/bu.
Cost of gain (feed)	72.45/cwt
Cost of gain (all costs)	101.95/cwt
Fed steers	197.65/cwt
Break-even (November 2015)	189.57/cwt

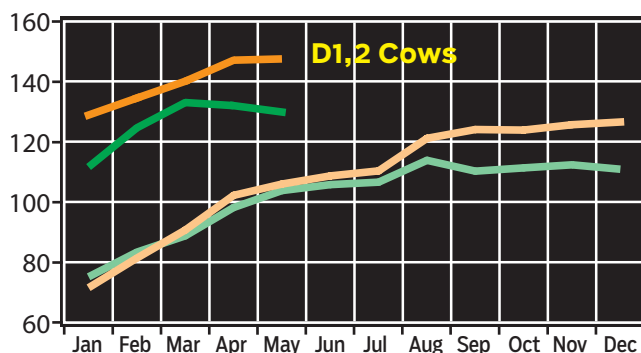
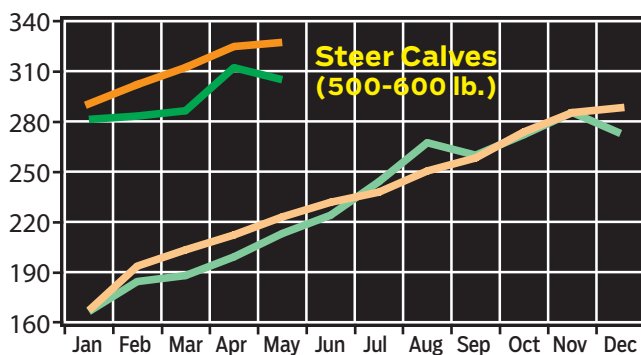
*Mid-month to mid-month prices

Breakevens

East: end wt 1,450, 183 days

West end wt 1,325 lb., 125 days

Market Prices



Ontario

2015 ■
2014 ■

Alberta

2015 ■
2014 ■

Ontario prices based on a 50/50 east/west mix

Market Summary (to May 9, 2015)

	2015	2014
Total Canadian federally inspected slaughter	861,059	927,338
Average steer carcass weight	877 lb.	853 lb.
Total U.S. slaughter	10,448,000	11,254,000

TRADE SUMMARY

	2015	2014
EXPORTS		
Fed cattle to U.S. (to May 2)	85,487	160,098
Feeder cattle and calves to U.S. (to May 2)	194,017	188,196
Dressed beef to U.S. (to March)	127.22 mil.lbs	119.61 mil.lbs
Total dressed beef (to March)	169.01 mil.lbs	157.24 mil.lbs

IMPORTS

	2015	2014
Slaughter cattle from U.S. (to March)	0	0
*Dressed beef from U.S. (to March)	61.29 mil.lbs	65.85 mil.lbs
*Dressed beef from Australia (to March)	13.45 mil.lbs	12.17 mil.lbs
*Dressed beef from New Zealand (to March)	7.17 mil.lbs	5.32 mil.lbs
*Dressed beef from Uruguay (to March)	12.87 mil.lbs	3.34 mil.lbs

Canadian Grades (to May 23, 2015)

% of A grades	+59%	54-58%	Yield -53%	Total
AAA	21.1	24.4	16.6	62.1
AA	21.2	8.7	2.8	32.7
A	1.3	0.2	0.0	1.5
Prime	0.3	0.7	1.4	2.4
Total	43.9	34.0	20.8	
				Total A grade 98.7%

	Total graded	Total ungraded	% carcass basis
EAST	213,323	8,275	81.4%
WEST	721,252	2,678	87.7%

Only federally inspected plants

FEED GRAIN MARKETS SENSITIVE TO YIELD



Barley and feed wheat markets have been under pressure throughout the spring as seeding progresses under favourable conditions. Abundant feed wheat supplies along with lower milling wheat prices in general, have set a negative tone for the feed grains complex. Many farmers have been selling low-protein milling wheat into feed channels due to the lacklustre demand on the world market. Despite the historical tight stocks of Canadian barley, prices have failed to edge higher due to the substitution effect of wheat. The market dynamics have potential to change in the upcoming crop year and the feed grains complex has potential to be quite volatile if adverse dry conditions develop in a major producing region of North America. Therefore, I thought to discuss the market risks moving forward.

The world was awash with feed wheat during the current crop year. Last summer, Europe experienced excessive rains during harvest and Western Canada also received snow and rain in September. These adverse conditions came on top of record world wheat and corn production. Therefore, the function of the cereal grain markets was to encourage demand through lower prices. For 2015-16 the world will experience marginal year-over-year decreases for wheat and corn. The main point being that the markets are not getting more bearish but rather neutralizing.

Statistics Canada estimated barley acres at 6.5 million acres; using a traditional abandonment rate and average yield, production has

potential to reach 7.9 million mt, up from 7.1 million mt last year but still sharply below the 10-year average of 9.5 million mt. The ending stocks for the 2015-16 crop year will be historically tight for the second year in a row. I mentioned earlier that feed wheat has displaced barley in many feedlots this year. However, given the timely seeding pace, Canada is expected to have a normal-quality crop where 80 per cent of the wheat is in the top two milling categories. Feed wheat supplies may be burdensome into new crop but will slowly decrease causing feedlots to switch back over to barley. Therefore, we may see some pressure on the barley and feed wheat prices during harvest, but during the spring of 2016, I'm expecting average barley prices in Lethbridge to trade in the range of \$230/mt to \$250/mt delivered, which is up from current levels of \$202/mt delivered.

The weaker Canadian dollar has hindered imports of U.S. corn and U.S. DDGs. However, producers should be aware of the U.S. corn situation due to the impact on feeder cattle prices and exports. Given the current prices of U.S. feeder cattle, feedlot margins south of the border are at risk of moving into red ink if fed cattle prices soften.

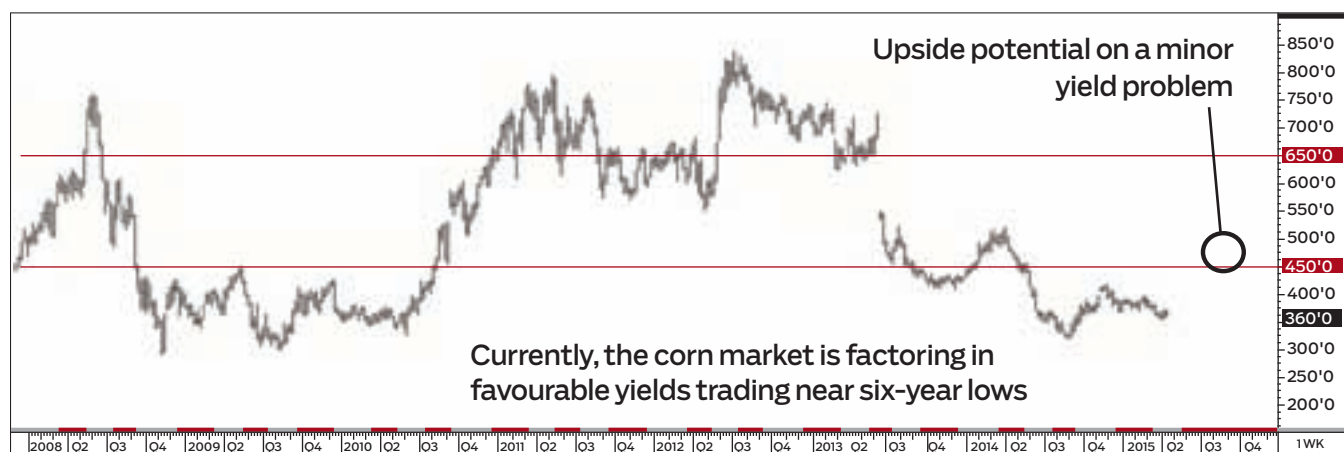
The USDA estimated corn acres at 89.2 million, down from the 2014 acres of 90.6 million. It is important to note that many analytical firms forecast corn acres to shrink further in favour of soybeans. At this time, the USDA is using a trend yield of 166.8 bushels per acre in its forecast resulting in a crop size of 13.6 billion bushels, down from the 2014 crop size of 14.2 billion bushels.

Without going into the details of demand, the ending stocks for 2015-16 have potential to finish at 1.7 billion bushels, down from the 2014-15 carry-out of 1.9 billion bushels. At the time of writing this article, the U.S. Midwest had received timely rains after the bulk of the crop was seeded. However, with the lower acres, the market will be extremely sensitive to weather during summer. If average yields drops under trend by a mere 10 bushels per acre to 156 bushels per acre, production will finish at 12.7 billion bushels and the carry-out would have potential to dip under one billion bushels. A carry-out this small would cause corn prices to increase by \$2 to \$3 per bushel and set a negative tone for feeder cattle prices in North America.

In conclusion, you can see how sensitive the market will be to yield developments, not only for corn but also for barley. North America cannot afford a crop problem and given this environment, it is not uncommon for new crop prices to incorporate a risk premium due to the uncertainty in production if longer-term forecasts are on the dry side. Don't be overly negative on feed grain prices until yields are more certain. In any case, the barley market has potential to increase next year if Canada has a normal-quality wheat crop and the Canadian dollar remains near the current levels. 🍁

Gerald Klassen analyzes markets in Winnipeg and also maintains an interest in the family feedlot in southern Alberta. He can be reached at gklassen7@hotmail.com.

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- 20 Canadian Speckle Park Association AGM, Saskatoon, Sask.
- 22-30 World Charolais Technical Conference, starts in Regina, Sask.
- 23-24 T Bar International, Dakota Dunes, Saskatoon, Sask.
- 24 Western Beef Development Centre's Annual Field Day, Termuende Research Ranch, Lanigan, Sask.
- 24-25 Beef Value Chain Roundtable Meeting, Calgary, Alta.
- 27-28 Salers Association of Canada AGM, Nisku, Alta.

JULY

- 2-5 Quebec All Breeds Junior Show, Brome, Que.
- 3-12 Calgary Stampede, Calgary, Alta.
- 6-12 Summer Synergy, Olds, Alta.
- 12-17 20th International Farm Management Congress, Quebec City, Que.
- 16-18 Showdown 2015 — Canadian Junior Angus Association Annual Show, Olds, Alta.
- 21-23 Ag in Motion — Western Canada's Outdoor Farm Show, Langham, Sask.
- 28-Aug. 1 Canadian Hereford Association AGM and Bonanza, Fredrickton, N.B.
- 30-Aug. 2 Canadian Simmental Association Annual Convention, Lindsay, Ont.

- 30-Aug. 2 Young Canadian Simmental Association National Classic, Lindsay, Ont.
- 31-Aug. 2 Manitoba Youth Beef Round-up, Neepawa, Man.

AUGUST

- 8 Canadian Limousin Association Annual Meeting, Stratford, Ont.
- 12-15 Canadian Cattlemen's Association Semi-Annual Meeting, Winnipeg, Man.

OCTOBER

- 5-6 Advancing Women in Agriculture — Life Skills for Leadership, Westin Harbour Castle, Toronto, Ont.
- 9 Expo Boeuf, Victoriaville, Que.
- 28-29 AFAC Crisis Communication Forum, Calgary, Alta.

NOVEMBER

- 6-15 Royal Winter Fair, Toronto, Ont.
- 10-15 Farmfair International, Edmonton, Alta.
- 17-19 Canadian Forage & Grassland Association Convention, Saskatoon, Sask.
- 23-28 Canadian Western Agribition, Regina, Sask.

MARCH 2016

- 22-23 AFAC Livestock Care Conference, Olds, Alta.

AUGUST 2016

- 21-28 International Limousin Congress, Ireland 🇮🇪

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