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Canadian Cattlemen

THE BEEF MAGAZINE

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Jason and Karmen McNabb,
Eastend, Sask.

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Cover photo: Karmen McNabb, Eastend, Sask.

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DEPARTMENTS

By Gren Winslow

LET US SLASH SOME RED TAPE

With Donald Trump pledging to take a knife to government regulations to stoke the entrepreneurial spirit of Americans, Canadians can only hope some of this zeal rubs off on Canadian bureaucrats.

Of course, this is a faint hope.

Canadian cattlemen, for example, are already preparing to adjust their own business plans to account for more regulations in the coming year. Transportation and traceability are two current areas where the regulatory engine is picking up steam.

Neither come as a surprise to cattle producers. Both have been on the back burner for years, and the beef industry has spent a good deal of coin doing what it can to inject as much common sense as possible into the discussions by funding research projects, developing certification programs and educational programming for producers and bureaucrats.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency's regulatory amendments on the humane transport of animals are now known and people have until February 15 to comment on them.

Under the new rules the maximum time animals can go without food, water and rest has been reduced to 12 hours from 18 for young animals not exclusively on hay and grain and from 52 to 36 hours for ruminants that only eat hay and grain.

Beyond those times the cattle need to be off-loaded for food and water and eight hours of rest. The same exception also applies to any animal that becomes dehydrated or shows signs of exhaustion or nutritional deficiencies while on the transport.

The details are found on the CFIA website, if you haven't seen them already.

What's of more interest, I think, is the reasons given for introducing new stiffer regulations. To introduce consistency with OIE animal welfare standards for the transport of animals and the animal welfare standards of other countries, as well as increase compliance, improve animal welfare, reduce death loss/suffering and increase consumer confidence in animal food products.

Sounds good, yet most of the research shows that the vast majority of transported cattle in this country arrives just fine. Studies by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada researchers found that 99.95 per cent of animals on truck over four hours reached their destination free of injury (99.98 per cent on trips under four hours). The average long haul was 16 hours and 95 per cent of them were under 30 hours. These results are well within the new guidelines, and with excellent outcomes. So what's the problem?

It makes one wonder if the cattle industry has got caught up in some itch that CFIA needed to scratch to placate a political concern versus a real one, but no matter, there is no stopping it now.

The Canadian Cattlemen's Association was still preparing its comment on the new regulations as this issue went to press but there were a couple of items we learned that will be in its document.

One is the requirement for someone to be physically present at a slaughter yard, auction market, assembly yard or feedlot to sign for and receive the cattle. There are many situations where that would be an unrealistic expectation and would impose unnecessary costs, particularly on smaller operations.

CCA will also be suggesting CFIA inject some clearly defined flexibility into the time limits for trips to account for unforeseen circumstances. Forcing a trucker to offload cattle in an unknown area and load them up eight hours later because his trip clock ran down, may well be a lot harder on the cattle than another few hours on the truck. The science is still unclear about which is best for the welfare of the animals, so the regulations should reflect that ambiguity

Cattlemen are also seeking less subjective definitions for terms that go into determining an animal is compromised or unfit. Terms like "slightly lame" are in the eye of the beholder.

The other regulation in the offing will create a more robust traceability program that will require mandatory premises identification and animal movement reporting. It too has been the subject of intense debate by government and industry almost from the time mandatory animal identification was introduced in July 2001.

Again, after much research and lobbying the industry believed it had hammered out agreement with CFIA on a Cattle Implementation Plan that took account of the practicalities of raising and moving large bovines from one place to another. That was 2011.

The plan was updated as research results came in and technology improved. But somewhere along the line the goals changed inside the Ottawa offices of CFIA. The bureaucrats started asking for more control, more reading sites in situations that were totally impractical in today's cattle business, and the industry started to balk.

In December discussions opened up again and it appears a compromise has been struck to put traceability back on the rails.

The upshot is, someday later this year or early next, you could again be asked to comment on a new set of regulations for mandatory traceability of cattle.

Whether it will radically shorten the time it takes to run down TB reactors, or other diseased animals has yet to be known, but it is coming nonetheless.

I hate to envy Americans anything, but when it comes to cutting red tape, Trump has a better idea.

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STALLED, OR STUCK?

Looking back, Charlie Gracey's article (Beef industry seems to be stalled, September *Canadian Cattlemen*) made a case that the beef industry is stalled, using several supporting points to that effect. It may be worse… is it stalled or actually stuck?

The Canadian beef industry is operating at a fraction of what it could be. Huge sums of money are invested each and every year in partial infrastructure that is to date returning little of any value (traceability, ear tags). Critical data (actual carcass yield and marbling) sits uselessly in computers, far away from those who could make important supply chain decisions for the betterment of all. Where there is industry consensus on doing something better (changes to the grading system), progress is mired in a swamp of bureaucracy. Industry initiatives (Beef Info Exchange System, Canadian Beef Improvement Network) struggle to generate a critical mass of involvement to ensure survival. Industry groups remain aplenty and are often at loggerheads, often based on history, philosophy, geography and even personalities.

Efforts to implement full traceability in Canada have been underway for about 20 years. Total cost to date, including tags, various programs and organization startups and closures (e.g. CanTrace) is approaching a billion dollars. The direct annual cost to beef producers sits at about $13 million. And what do we have to show for it? Few RFID tags are used as management tools while traceback, critical in the event of foreign animal disease, is limited by lack of movement reporting. We have yet to unlock the value-added potential that traceability offers.

Many years ago, Canada was well positioned to benefit from camera technology that determined carcass lean meat yield of individual carcasses more accurately than the present method. This is invaluable information that could be used in breeding programs. Despite several millions of dollars and years of effort, there is not a willingness to recognize the potential to improve the industry (and all businesses within) by sharing that data.

Grading of beef carcasses uses a system developed in the early 1990s. Consider the current yield grade for carcasses as a target with the vast majority of the cattle hitting the "bullseye" of yield grade one. There is significant value differential amongst those cattle and we should be identifying the better cattle (including the highly refined marbling score available from the camera), as well as their lineage to feed a genetic improvement system. Rather than full industry support for a highly refined system with data being shared, we are moving at glacial speed to the U.S. system of yield classification. This is like trading in 20-year-old computer for one that is 15 years old.

Industry initiatives such as Beef Info Exchange System (BIXS) and Canadian Beef Improvement Network (CBIN) continue to struggle to get whole industry support. Both are supply chain focused while logic still dictates to individual businesses in the beef supply chain to look out for No. 1… at the expense of numbers two and three.

So, considering the massive potential for the beef industry, how do we get out of the mud?

- Leaders (industry and government) need to get traceability implemented in a way that adds value or move, within 12 months, to a more affordable system that focuses strictly on foreign animal disease.
- Producers must support initiatives such as BIXS and CBIN. Failure to do so indicates contentment with the status quo with tens of thousands of disconnected businesses in a sector acting little like an actual industry.
- Stop funding research and development initiatives that do not meet the test of providing critical data and information to those who can use it in the supply chain.

The first step to solving problems is recognizing that there is a problem. After that, success is all derived from social science: people. Stalled or stuck, we need to agree on what ails the sector and set about making changes.

Mike McMorris,
general manager of BIO

CRISIS CAUSED BY PACKER/RETAILER CONTROL

I was most disappointed to read the article "An industry in crisis" in your December edition. While it is pleasant to speculate about better rancher/feedlot relationships I find it incomprehensible that an industry analyst like Mr. Gracey can't see that the real cause of the crisis lies beyond the farm gate.

The reason there is a shrinking cattle sector lies in the systematic value theft from cattle producers by the packing and retailing sector over the last 20 years. This is clearly demonstrated by Statistics Canada data showing that the difference between live slaughter cattle prices and retail beef prices (the spread) has more than doubled during this time period. Even at the recent peak of slaughter cattle prices, the spread was still twice what it was back in 1995. As producers we should not labour under the illusion that cattle prices were "too high" and we didn't deserve them — consumers were still buying the beef and packers and retailers were still making money.

Some cattle groups in the United States have started to ask hard questions following the cattle price rise and its more rapid collapse over the last couple of years. Their suspicion is that the cattle futures market is being manipulated by the packers as the wild volatility does not reflect market fundamentals and is often totally disconnected from the cash market.

They further speculate that the purpose of this manipulation is to influence lender's willingness to extend credit for feedlot cattle purchases. Is it a coincidence that earlier this fall rumours abounded that some Canadian feedlots couldn't bid on calves as their lenders wouldn't extend credit without slaughter contracts being in place and packers weren't forthcoming with said contracts?

It has often been said that vertical integration wouldn't take place in the cattle sector because the packers couldn't afford to buy the cow-calf land base. If, however, they can control the financing of cattle going into the feedlot, perhaps they see a way to gain the same level of control over the industry at essentially no cost?

While it may serve the interests of packers and retailers to perpetuate the myth that it's "just the cattle cycle," I find it disingenuous for cattle industry leaders to do the same. With their recent self-awarded increases in checkoff funding you'd think the Canadian Cattlemen's Association and its provincial affiliates would come out fighting on these issues on behalf of their members — unfortunately their silence is deafening.

Iain Aitken
Belmont, Man.

NewsMakers


Marty Carpenter

Marty Carpenter, the director of the Canadian Beef Centre of Excellence at Canada Beef in Calgary is set to retire March 1. He received his Certified Chefs de Cuisine designation in 1991 but for the past 23 years his career has focused totally on marketing Canadian beef with the Alberta Beef Producers, the Beef Information Centre and later Canada Beef. He's held a few marketing positions at Canada Beef but was named director of the $3.8 million world class food demonstration and training facility in Calgary when it was opened in March 2015.

The national checkoff agency has a new name. To clear up any confusion the legal name Canadian Beef Cattle Research Market Development and Promotion Agency, has been officially shortened to the Canadian Beef Check-Off agency (CBCA).


Dr. Jock Buchanan-Smith

Dr. Jock Buchanan-Smith has recently retired from his second job as technical administrator of the Beef Cattle Research Council. He joined the council in 2001, the same year he retired from a distinguished research career at the University of Guelph department of animal and poultry science where he authored hundreds of peer-reviewed journal articles and publications on beef cattle nutrition and management. He chaired the National Academy of Science committee that revised the nutritionists' bible Nutrient Requirements of Beef Cattle in 2000 and ran his own herd of cattle until 2006. He received the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012 for his commitment to the beef industry, his community and his country.

Willie Van Solkema, the former president of JBS Canada and Canadian business manager of Cargill Foods, recently resigned as chairman of the Canadian Beef Grading Agency. He is a former board member of the industry-run agency and took the chairman's post in June last year to replace **Graeme Hedley** who retired for health reasons after serving as chairman for 16 years. **Dennis Laycraft**, the executive vice-president of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, is serving as acting chairman until elections can be held at the agency's next annual meeting.

Former Georgia governor **Sonny Perdue** is the new agriculture secretary of the United States. He grew up on a row-crop farm, has a veterinary degree and an extensive background in agriculture business. As governor he opened Georgia's international trade office in China. His most recent venture, Perdue Partners, is involved in exports of American goods and services.

COMPENSATION FOR T.B. REACTORS FOUND IN RESTRICTED AREA TESTING

SINCE 1938

By Dr. E.E. Ballantyne, director of Veterinary Services, Edmonton, Alta.
Reprinted from the May 1950 *Canadian Cattlemen*

Because it is compulsory to dispose of reactors to the test for tuberculosis, the Dominion Government pays compensation for such animals so that the owner will be helped to build his herd with healthy cattle.

Compensation on purebred cattle is up to $100 and grades up to $40. No compensation is paid for scrub bulls or cattle with lump-jaw which are reactors to the tuberculin test. Many people have the false impression that the above mentioned compensation is all the money received for T.B. reactors. That isn't the case though. These reactors have to go to an abattoir where they will be slaughtered under inspection by the veterinary inspectors of the Dominion Health of Animal's Branch. Some reactors will only have T.B. in the glands of the head and none in the rest of the body. With such an animal, the head will be condemned and the rest of the carcass approved as meat fit for human consumption. The owner is paid by the packing house for the edible meat. Therefore, if the animal was a purebred, he could receive $100 compensation plus the value of the edible part of the carcass.

But sometimes tuberculosis is so bad in the animal — in the lungs, liver, head, kidneys, spleen, etc. — that the whole animal is condemned and has to go to the "tank" where it is cooked for several hours by steam under pressure to kill all the T.B. bacteria. After that it is made into fertilizer. Mounted specimens showing tuberculosis in the lungs and liver from condemned animals were shown at the meetings around Calgary. For condemned animals, the Dominion Government pays an extra condemnation compensation which equals the amount that a condemned animal would have been worth for beef, had the meat been fit for human consumption. This means that an owner of a purebred that is condemned could receive $100 plus the carcass value, the same as if the animal had been healthy.

This special condemnation compensation is a great help to the owner of the herd badly infected with tuberculosis and it enables him to finance the rebuilding of the herd with healthy animals.

Probably the compensation doesn't seem high with present day prices, but it must be remembered that reactors to the T.B. test are known diseased animals that no one would buy at all.

Dr. E.E. Ballantyne, director of Veterinary Services, Edmonton, Alta.

Livestockmen are becoming very conscious of having disease-free herds as well as raising cattle of high quality. Buyers are looking for disease-free stock and are willing to pay extra for such animals. That little extra is one of the best investments in the world, whether it is to make sure tuberculosis or Bang's disease will not be bought with the animals. Breeders holding sales should sell only cattle free from such diseases. The expense of having the necessary tests will come back many times at the sale. One has only to look at the various breed journals to see the aggressive attitude of many breeders in advertising their cattle as free of tuberculosis and Bang's disease. Many also have their herds built up with cattle that were vaccinated as calves against Bang's disease and advertise this fact. For several years now, American buyers have been going into Ontario for dairy cattle and demanding those that were vaccinated as calves against Bang's disease. They have been paying an extra $10-$25 for these vaccinates. Albertans are looking for such animals too, as they know a resistance against Bang's disease is worth a lot to them. These animals are hard to buy in Alberta and one dairyman is going to Ontario for his additions. We get more inquires all the time. "Where can I buy calves vaccinated against Bang's disease?" Albertans are also paying extra for these animals. In March 1950, one dairyman paid $50 extra each for five Jersey heifers because they had resistance to Bang's disease through calfhood vaccination. So calfhood vaccination is paying dividends other than reducing the abortion rate in Alberta herds.

It is planned to have meetings south of Calgary to lay the groundwork for extending the T.B. Restricted Areas as soon as the roads are better and seeding is fairly completed. Cattle from High River and Turner Valley pasture up in the forest reserves west of Calgary, so it would be impossible to keep them separated from T.B. tested cattle that may be in the reserves from M.D. 45 and I.D. 46. Cattle from around Calgary are also pastured in areas to the east so a large block of municipalities around Calgary will be dealt with as a unit to make the working of the T.B. Restricted Area plan as practical as possible to avoid a lot of inconvenience to the cattlemen.

The remaining areas in southern Alberta will also be dealt with as large groups of municipalities and improvement districts as possible to make practical units.

The question of cost frequently comes up. There is no cost for the T.B. test to the cattle owner. The travelling expenses of the inspectors on area testing is defrayed by the provincial government and the salaries paid for by the Dominion government.

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

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CASE IH AGRICULTURE

RETHINK PRODUCTIVITY

By Debbie Furber

WHICH BULL SIRED THAT CALF?

Parentage testing in multi-sire pastures goes under the microscope

Stacey Domolewski says there are more bulls doing less on the job than you might think, according to an ongoing multi-sire breeding study on six ranches.

Collecting DNA samples for parentage testing from bulls and the resulting calves from multi-sire breeding pastures is the only way to find out each bull's value to your operation. A bull might come with a great package of traits you want to see passed to your calves, but the bull's value is questionable if the calves fall short of expectations. A bull that breeds only a few cows clearly isn't worth much at all.

"Our big findings so far are that a lot more bulls out there are doing less on the job than we think and we can't blame it all on known traits like age," says Stacey Domolewski, a University of Saskatchewan masters candidate who has been working with six Saskatchewan ranchers to evaluate whether sire verification is practical and economically feasible for large commercial herds.

She and the ranchers knew going into the study that performance would vary among individual bulls; however, the degree of differences was unexpected considering that all of the bulls had passed their breeding soundness evaluations.

"If producers had thought that a bull would only sire a few calves, they would have culled the bull before breeding season. None of the bulls were questionable, yet we see that as long as a bull passed the semen

As long as a bull passed the semen test, a higher score didn't necessarily result in more calves sired

test, a higher score didn't necessarily result in more calves sired," Domolewski says.

The surprise was that some of the young (yearling) bulls sired as many or more calves than the mature (three years and older) bulls.

"We expected the younger bulls to sire fewer calves, and overall, young bulls are siring fewer calves, yes, but there is a lot more variance among mature bulls. Some sired three times more than expected and others sired only a couple of calves," she explains.

A sample set of one year's data from one herd shows that there were four mature bulls, one two-year-old bull and one yearling bull with 147 cows in one of the breeding groups. One of the mature bulls sired 53 of the 128 calves sampled, while another sired only 10. The other two sired 20 and 28 calves. The two-year-old had the poorest showing with only five offspring and the yearling sired 11 calves.

In another breeding group with two mature bulls and two yearlings with 83 cows, one mature bull sired 24 of the 70 calves sampled. The yearlings sired 15 and 19 to outdo the other mature bull with 12 calves to its credit.

Domolewski calculates a breeding proficiency index (BPI) for each bull to compare its performance across all breeding groups in the six participating herds. The BPI is based on the bull-to-cow ratio in each breeding group. If, for example, the ratio was 1:25, then 25 calves would be expected. If a bull sired more calves than expected, the BPI is higher on the index. Those that sired fewer than expected ranked lower with zero being the baseline.

The challenge for her study and producers alike is the long interval between breeding and having calves on the ground to sample.

Calves were sampled for the most part during routine spring processing, making it nip and tuck to have the large set of results back in time to make culling decisions before the start of the immediate breeding season.

Sampling calves at weaning might be an option for those who handle calves before or at weaning. In the meantime, however, the bulls would have already sired another set of calves without producers knowing how well each is performing, Domolewski explains.

Producers now have two years of their own test results in hand and Domolewski is working on the overall compilation to wrap up her thesis in the first part of 2017. Others will carry on with the study for at least one more test year under the guidance of her supervisor Dr. Bart Lardner.

ON THE RANCH

Two ranchers participating in the study, Karmen McNabb of Eastend, and Leanne Thompson of Ceylon, have shared their insights with producers at events during the year.

McNabb and her husband, Jason, run 450 cows in the Cypress Hills of southwestern Saskatchewan. Thompson and her husband, Ryan, have 800 cows and 500 to 600 calves in their feedlot in the far south of central Saskatchewan.

They agree that collecting the samples is actually the easiest part of parentage testing. Tail-hair samples from bulls need only be collected once in the animal's lifetime and this can be done whenever they are handed for other procedures. Likewise, the labour and time requirement for taking ear-tissue samples from the calves is minimal when done during routine handling.

The time lag between breeding and being able to use the results, along with merging the results with herd management records to be

Continued on page 12

Continued from page 11

able to make the best use of the information are the larger challenges.

McNabb says it has been a real eye-opener to find out that some bulls are working really hard and some aren't doing much of anything even though all of the bulls passed their breeding soundness evaluations. For instance, one yearling produced 54 calves while in a pasture with five other bulls. In another group, the four-year-old bull they figured would be king of the mountain sired four.

"So, in theory, parentage testing is a really good idea. Practically, it's tricky to manage," she says. The downside is that it's slow just because of the natural breeding cycle topped off with timing the sampling to have test results back ahead of breeding season. If the decision is made to cull any of the bulls, even a week or two in advance of turnout isn't enough time to find quality replacements because most bull sales have come and gone by then.

She's thinking that staging their brandings to collect and submit samples for testing in smaller groups as calving season progresses might be an option for their ranch because they manage spring processing on their own with the use of a handling system and tipping table. Although they wouldn't have the big picture until all calves had been tested, this strategy should at least give them enough information to identify trends well ahead of breeding season.

Whether parentage testing will be economically viable based on bull-culling decisions alone remains to be seen. The McNabbs typically buy yearling bulls and keep them for three to four years on average. They have culled one bull because of the low number of calves it sired both years of the project; however, the practicality of waiting for two years of results to make culling decisions is questionable when most bulls have only a year left by then anyway.

They are leery of culling a young bull due to one poor year when other factors such as pecking order may have been at play and the bull could very well have at least two good years ahead.

Use of one sample to test for parentage plus other traits of importance to their ranch might be the best way to get the most value from genetic testing, she adds.

Overall, she feels that the effort put into sire verification has been worthwhile because it has provided enough information to spot big differences and trends. It has been interesting to find out whose calf is whose, and more so now that they've introduced bulls of a second breed to find out what each breed is contributing to their operation as far as calf weaning weight goes.

Ear tissue samples are recommended for calves because the tail hairs are so fine it's difficult to get enough skin cells for testing

STEVEN JAMES
QUANTUM GENETIX

There again, weaning weights have to be considered in the big-picture context because there can be significant year-to-year differences due to factors other than the bull's genetics, such as weather conditions, time of calving, and to a lesser degree, cow-calf mixups.

McNabb is confident that her records are as accurate and complete as can be for a large commercial herd. As she puts it, "real life happens" when the cows are calving on pasture and sometimes newborns end up with the wrong dam.

CHECKING UP ON HEIFER BULLS

The Thompsons had already been considering parentage testing as a potential management tool when the opportunity came along to participate in the study.

Leanne Thomson says the main use so far has been to solve calving issues with the heifers. Even though they select calving-ease bulls for use on heifers, the genetics don't always hold true and the year before the study was a prime example with lots of trouble due to big calves.

The first year of the study, she started collecting samples as the heifers calved from any calves that were weak, lazy, got sick or if the heifer had trouble calving to get an early indication as to whether certain bulls were the cause of the problems.

"It has proven useful already. Just solving the calving trouble issue alone has been well worth it," Thompson says. "The next step, if we continue to sample all of the calves, I think, will have to be to use the information in more ways by developing a performance metric to identify certain bulls for use as terminal sires for feeder cattle and certain bulls that turn out the nicest heifer calves for replacements."

Since parentage-test results aren't in report form useable for this kind of purpose right off the bat, she suggests that it's important to have someone who is comfortable with using computers and herd management programs who can clear the time to dedicate to record keeping in order to be able to use the information to its full advantage.

Unfortunately, she was left searching for a new herd management program after receiving notice toward the end of summer that the software they had been using was about to be discontinued. With that came the onerous task of transferring nearly three years of records into a new program and making sure everything was working as it should. The light at the end of the tunnel now is the flexibility and features of the new program in that it is a web-based product that doesn't require installing updates and information can be accessed from anywhere including by smartphone out in the field.

It does track sire and dam parentage with reporting options to analyze the data.

She adds that the quality of the samples does make a difference as to how quickly the results come back and the completeness of the results, although there will always be non-matches for reasons other than poor samples, such as a cow that jumps in with a neighbouring herd or the neighbour's bull visiting your herd.

For future reference, it's wise to note

known incidents such as these as they happen along with reasons for pulling any bulls during the breeding season so that the details won't slip your mind later on. It's also important whenever possible to collect tissue samples from calves that die to have a complete picture of each bull's value as a sire and be able to detect issues over the longer term.

COLLECTING SAMPLES

Quantum Genetix at Saskatoon, Sask., is running the analyses for the study. Research director Steven James explains that pulling approximately 25 hairs from the tail switch of each animal is an easy and efficient way to sample bulls and cows. Keeping in mind that it's the skin cells attached to the root end of the tail hairs that are needed to run the test, use needle-nose pliers to give a sharp tug upward against the lay of the hair pulling five to 10 strands at a time and checking to make sure the bulb of skin on the root remains intact.

Clip off wet or soiled hair that could spoil the sample and seal each animal's sample in its own paper envelope or bag, label it with the animal's identification number from your records (dangle tag management number, Canadian Cattle Identification Agency electronic identification tag number, tattoo), and store the samples in a cool, dry place until sending them to the lab.

Ear tissue samples are recommended for calves because the tail hairs are so fine that it's difficult to get enough skin cells with them for testing. The tissue samples are collected with tagging pliers that place a small punch of skin directly into a barcoded and numbered Quantum collection tag. Samples must be accompanied by a list of corresponding animal identification numbers. These samples need to be put in the freezer as soon as possible, kept frozen until shipping, and sent or delivered to the lab the quickest way possible, preferably in an insulated container with freezer packs so that they remain cool during transport.

Instructions for taking hair and tissue samples are available on Quantum's website under the submission-forms tab, where prices for various tests can also be found. In addition to parentage testing, Quantum offers testing for genes associated with performance traits (leptin, tenderness, fat deposition, ribeye area, stress response and appetite), inheritance of red and black coat colour, polled and horned traits, and genetic defects. Package pricing can be discussed if more than one type of test is required for each sample, James adds.

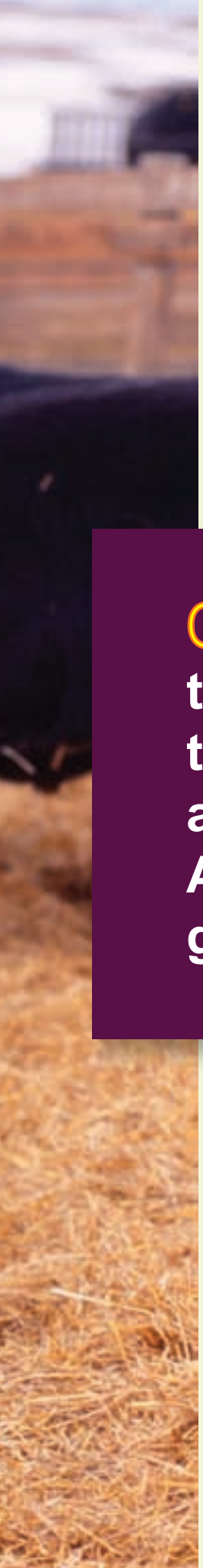
The cost of the Quantum tissue collection tags is included in the price of the test, currently at $12 per animal. Skin-tissue tagging pliers can be purchased for $75.

For record-keeping convenience, Quantum tags and CCIA electronic identification tags with matching numbers can be ordered together from the CCIA for roughly $4 per set. The Quantum tag with the CCIA number stays with the sample and the CCIA tag is applied with the appropriate tagger in another spot on the ear.

James says turnaround time for parentage testing depends on the number of samples submitted and the number of work orders ahead of yours. As a general guideline, allow about a week for up to 100 samples and four weeks for up to 500 samples.

For more information, visit www.quantumgenetix.com, or call 306-956-2071.

Canadian
Cattle Identification Agency



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By Debbie Furber

Stephen Miller is the new director of genetic research at Angus Genetics Inc. PHOTO ANGUS GENETICS INC

STEPHEN MILLER CLOSES THE LOOP

Dr. Stephen Miller jumps from the frying pan into the fire, so to speak, with a recent career change from the leading edge of fundamental research in beef cattle genomics to the cutting edge of its implementation.

"It's exciting to be involved in the decisions on how to put the research into practice," says Miller of his new position as director of genetic research with Angus Genetics Inc. (AGI), St. Joseph, Missouri.

"Genomics is a transformative technology because it greatly accelerates the rate of genetic change by evaluating more animals for more traits at younger ages."

Miller became well-known within Canada's beef industry for genomic research during his 20 years at the University of Guelph, obtaining his doctorate in animal breeding and genetics specializing in beef cattle, and continuing his career in that area with the department of animal and poultry science. Recent projects included the Canadian Cattle Genome Project and the related international 1000 Bull Genomes Project as well as genomic innovations projects investigating prediction tools to improve fertility, feed efficiency and carcass and meat quality led by the Canadian Simmental Association. Most recently, he spent nearly three years with New Zealand's AgResearch animal genomics team.

Miller joined AGI in September as two major projects were starting to unfold. Both have implications for Canadian Black Angus genetics as well because AGI, a subsidiary of the American Angus Association, runs genomic evaluations for Black Angus cattle in both countries and also provides this service for the American and Canadian Charolais associations. Genomic evaluations for Canadian Red Angus cattle are run with those for the Red Angus Association of America by the American Simmental Association, which also handles Canadian Simmental genomic evaluations.

SINGLE-STEP GENOMIC EVALUATION

One project involves rolling over from the current two-step method of generating genomic evaluations to the single-step (creep) method, described in a recent journal article by a University of Georgia research team, and already in use for Holstein cattle, pigs and poultry.

As Miller explains, the single-step method eliminates the need for the periodic calibrations required for the two-step method. Calibrations correlate the genomic information for all genotyped animals in the database with the phenotypic information (pedigree, performance and progeny records) for all animals in the database to determine how well the two relate and adjust the prediction equation for each trait accordingly. Next, the genetic information for every genotyped animal needs to be run through the new prediction equation to establish each animal's molecular breeding values for each trait and to merge with its phenotypic information for the genomic-enhanced expected progeny differences (EPDs).

The first calibration in 2010 included genotypes for 2,253 animals leading to the breed's first set of genomic-enhanced EPDs. Including genomic information improves the accuracy of EPDs particularly for young sires because it adds the equivalent of seven to 24 performance records, depending on the trait, even before the bull sires any offspring at all. Calving ease direct, heifer pregnancy rate, weaning weight and yearling weight are among the traits with the highest number of progeny equivalencies, whereas, carcass weight and marbling are at the lower end.

The bottom line is that the progeny equivalencies as well as the correlations for the prediction equations change with each calibration. Through the years since 2010, genotypes have been added by leaps and bounds as DNA testing became more affordable and mainstream among breeders. Calibration five in July 2016 added genomic information for 108,000 animals to total 256,000 genotypes altogether in the database.

"So, our EPDs are getting more accurate and breeders see that as progress, but adding genotypes in big jumps of 50,000 or more all at once causes some abrupt EPD changes and re-ranking of sires," Miller explains.

Re-ranking is most apparent among younger animals, but not so much the older ones because the genetic information is overwhelmed by the sheer number of progeny records that go into the calculation.

These abrupt changes are also evident when genetic evaluations are run only twice a year. Since 2010, Angus evaluations have been run weekly.

The single-step method handles genomic, phenotypic and pedigree information simultaneously so that new genetic information can be added as it comes in instead of having to wait for a calibration to update the prediction equation. The correlations and progeny equivalencies still change, but the changes are gradual.

Since last May, the single-step method has been in use for some traits to evaluate its ability to process information from a database

as large as AGI's. Starting in November, the one-step and two-step (based on calibration five) methods were running side by side every week to detect any significant issues. The plan is for a complete switch over to the one-step method by this spring for Angus cattle and then for AGI's other clients.

STRUCTURED SIRE EVALUATION

Before genomics — not all that long ago considering the first complete bovine genome was sequenced in 2009 — pedigrees and actual performance data of an animal and its offspring were the only tools available to establish its genetic merit. The only way to prove carcass traits for EPDs was to organize trials to follow progeny through to harvest to get the actual carcass data, Miller explains, giving the Charolais breed's "conception to consumer" program as one example.

Progeny trials have limitations in that the cost restricts the number of sires that can be evaluated each year and, because of the time frame from conception to harvest, some of the test sires may have been culled before the results are in hand.

DNA testing is much more timely and cost-effective than progeny trials now that it is becoming more the norm, Miller says. As a point in fact, genomic test results were submitted with more than one-quarter of the Angus cattle registered with the American association in 2015 alone. As of early November 2016, there were 272,000 genotypes in AGI's database, up 16,000 from the July calibration.

To use a genomic prediction of carcass traits or any trait with confidence, there has to be a bulk of phenotypic information (reference population) for comparison to underpin the prediction equation.

Although there are 1.8 million yearling ultrasound records in AGI's database, those only tell part of the story when it comes to actual carcass performance, Miller explains. Ultrasound is a useful predictor of genetic merit because the correlations between ultrasound and carcass measurements are high, for example, over 0.7 in the Angus database between ultrasound per cent intramuscular fat in yearling bulls and marbling in finished steers. Adding actual carcass data strengthens the genomic predictions.

Since AGI's database holds only 112,000 actual measurements for carcass weight, ribeye, back fat and marbling collected over many years, AGI's board of directors has decided to be proactive about getting measured carcass data by implementing a structured sire evaluation project.

Participating herds are large commercial operations that have the resources to do artificial insemination, record keeping and finish the calves or retain ownership to get carcass data from packers.

The reference population is being seeded with high-use Angus sires so far including AAR Ten X 7008 SA, Connealy Impression, Connealy Right Answer 746, GAR Prophet, and S Chisum 6175. The 24 test sires are some of their high-use progeny with a lot of ultrasound records on progeny, but lacking carcass data.

The first year, 1,850 cows were AI'd to the test sires from December 2015 through spring 2016. Another 2,000 cows will be AI'd this year with the hope that the program will be ongoing to test additional sires.

Miller says tenderness scoring isn't part

Continued on page 18

Continued from page 17

of this project because it is expensive and intensive requiring meat samples from each carcass to be collected at the plant and transported to a lab for testing.

An interesting add-on will involve collecting information on feedlot health traits, primarily the ability of test progeny to resist bovine respiratory disease during the feeding period. A scoring system developed by university and government researchers is being considered for use to record disease characteristics in live animals including the severity of temperature, eye and nasal discharge, cough, and depression. The analysis could tell whether there are sire differences and genomic relationships that might make it possible to get a genomic prediction.

MORE DATA FROM COMMERCIAL HERDS

While research and technology have added new traits and increased the accuracy of selection tools, most of the phenotypic information has been collected from seedstock herds. To move ahead, emphasis needs to shift to collecting phenotypes from commercial herds. Those phenotypes, combined with genomics, can contribute to the selection of breeding stock beyond seedstock herds, in turn closing the loop from genetic research to seedstock to commercial producers.

"At the end of the day, all the best science is for naught if it does not show up in an improvement in cattle on the ranch, in the feedlot and the beef on consumers' plates," Miller says.

By Reynold Bergen

DECIDING WHAT RESEARCH AND INNOVATION TO FUND

This column usually features Beef Cattle Research Council (BCRC) projects supported by Canada's national checkoff, mainly through Canada's Beef Science Cluster. The current Beef Cluster involves the BCRC, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Alberta Beef Producers, the Alberta Cattle Feeders Association, Manitoba Beef Producers, Beef Farmers of Ontario, the Quebec Beef Producers Federation, DuPont Pioneer, the Grey Wooded Forage Association, and provincial government funds from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario. By pooling resources and co-ordinating funding decisions, funders can avoid duplication and increase the odds that more good projects will go ahead. The Beef Cluster allows Canada's beef industry to support much more and better research than we could in the past with limited national checkoff dollars alone. The BCRC is now deciding which new projects to fund through the next Beef Cluster (2018-23), so this month I explain how the BCRC decides what research to fund.

The first step is to decide what questions the beef industry needs researchers to tackle. This started with our online beef research survey in Spring 2016, where we asked participants to rate various research topics as extremely, very, moderately, slightly or not important. Over half of the 500 survey responses came from producers across Canada. We also survey other funders on an ongoing basis to track the forage, cattle and beef research they are funding. We asked those funders whether recently completed projects solved the target problem, or whether more work is needed.

We presented this information to over 100 producers, researchers and industry experts at two national workshops hosted by the BCRC in 2016. Workshop participants went on to identify specific research targets in eight priority areas: beef quality, food safety, animal health and welfare, antimicrobial resistance, forage and grassland productivity, feed efficiency, environmental sustainability and technology transfer. The targets identified in these workshops were reviewed and refined through additional consultation with other experts, and ultimately approved by the 12 producers on the BCRC.

The next step is to find project ideas to achieve these research targets. We start by asking researchers to submit a "letter of intent" (LOI), which is a brief summary of what they'd like to research, how their idea is aligned with our research targets, and a rough budget. Each LOI is sent to the BCRC producer members, and is also reviewed by BCRC staff and independent specialists. The BCRC members will meet in early February to discuss each LOI, consider the specialist and staff perspectives and recommendations, and decide which LOIs to pursue in more detail. At least half of the LOIs usually drop out of the running at this stage.

Researchers who submitted successful LOIs are then invited to submit a full proposal containing a much more comprehensive and detailed research plan, timeline and budget. Sometimes we'll have similar LOIs from different researchers. When that happens we'll often ask the different teams to collaborate and submit a joint proposal. We send each proposal to two other researchers who are currently active in that field of research, usually elsewhere in North America. Each "peer reviewer" anonymously scrutinizes the proposal to ensure that the research being proposed is new, properly designed, scientifically sound, uses appropriate and current techniques and analyses, and that the research team has the skills and track record to do the work properly. Each full proposal and its two peer reviews are sent to the BCRC producer members, and they will meet again in June 2017 to discuss the proposals and peer reviews, and decide which ones to fund. Again, the BCRC's independent specialists and staff will help summarize and explain the highly technical proposals and peer reviews, and make suggestions or recommendations pertaining to the science aspects and alignment with industry research targets and strategic goals.

As with the LOIs, the BCRC producer members decide which full proposals the BCRC will support. In some cases, the research team is asked to make minor modifications to their proposal based on concerns identified by the peer reviewers, or suggestions from the BCRC members that will make the results more practical and relevant to industry. Usually about half of the full proposals drop out because they aren't scientifically adequate or suited to practical adoption, or because there just aren't enough funds available. The successful proposals will form the basis of the BCRC's submission to the federal government for funding under the next Beef Science Cluster.

Hopefully this explanation gives you a better understanding of how the BCRC decides what research to fund, and of the tremendous amount of work and time volunteered by the producers that serve on the BCRC to ensure that we identify and support research that will have the most benefit for Canada's beef industry.

The Beef Research Cluster is funded by the Canadian Beef Cattle 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.

By Dr. Susan Markusa

YOU JUDGE THE HEIFERS!

Can you spot the genomics at work?

As cattlemen, we take pride in our ability to visually judge, select and breed cattle that work in our ranch environment.

Often a good group of cattle is judged by its similarities and not its differences, so that's one visual criteria for selection.

With good reason, we also tend to focus on traits that are measurable such as growth (birth, weaning and yearling weights), performance (average daily gain), reproduction and conformation. We have learned these are economically important traits that we have a lot of control over.

But there are other traits of economic importance that aren't so easily judged as they are difficult or expensive to measure, and less within our control. These include input traits such as feed intake with resulting feed efficiency, and carcass traits like marbling and ribeye area which require a different method of evaluation, preferably one that is reliable, quick, easy and cheap.

This is where genetic evaluation enters the picture. It has enabled us to take a look under the hide of our cattle so that we might better predict their performance and that of their offspring. Using genomic technology in crossbred cattle is relatively new, but has the potential to provide producers with more information earlier in the life of an animal where genetic merit scores (EPDs) would otherwise not be available (www.beefgenomicprediction.ca).

The gains from improved selections through genetic evaluation also have the potential to benefit more than just your own bottom line. For example, research has established feed-efficient cattle emit less methane and produce less manure than inefficient cattle and ultimately cost

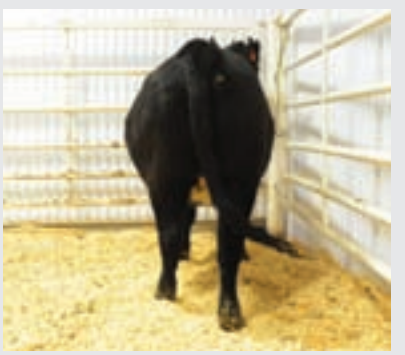
Continued on page 22

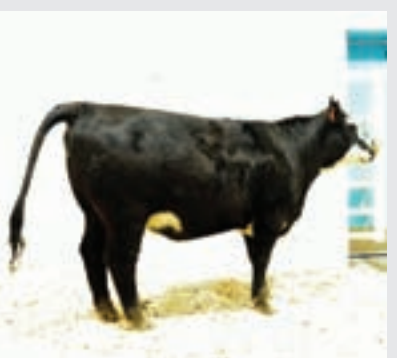
TAG #447

Tag #447
Sept. 30, 2016, wt. 1,030 lbs.
Birthdate: Apr. 28, 2015
190-d weaning weight: 515 lbs.
Start test weight: 781 lbs.
End test weight: 875 lbs.
ADG on test: 1.65 lbs./d (0.75 kg/d)

Notes:

TAG #412





Tag #412
Sept. 30, 2016, wt. 995 lbs.
Birthdate: Apr. 28, 2015
190-d weaning weight: 510 lbs.
Start test weight: 759 lbs.
End test weight: 864 lbs.
ADG on test: 1.85 lbs./d (0.84 kg/d)

Notes:

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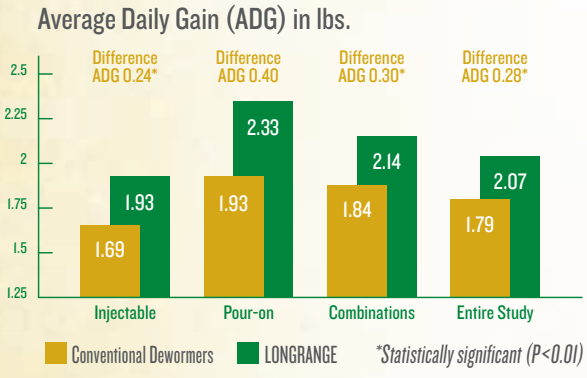

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[1] Based on the Canadian LONGRANGE label.
[2] Data on file at Merial.
[†] 28 lbs. = 12.72 kg.

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Continued from page 20

less to feed. So the overall benefit of a widespread shift to genomic-aided selection might well be a greener and more competitive beef industry.

Genomics can also be used to optimize heterosis by accurately predicting breed composition to influence mating decisions. Using this approach of genomic mate selection also adds value by avoiding both inbreeding and recessive genetic defects in the herd.

In order to demonstrate the impact of genomics the Alberta Beef & Forage Grazing Centre and Lakeland College turned to the new Student Managed Farm (powered by New Holland) livestock unit at the college in Vermilion, Alta., to conduct a long-term study on a herd of 50 Angus crossbred females that had been selected on traditional visual appraisal, herd reputation and performance records.

The students will manage the study with the assistance of instructor Geoff Brown and myself.

The heifers had DNA samples taken and analyzed by Delta Genomics and those results were translated into molecular breeding values with economic weights assigned for each trait under the direction of Dr. John Crowley, a geneticist at the University of Alberta and research director of the Canadian Beef Breeds Council.

The heifers were then put on a 75-day feed efficiency test using GrowSafe feeders to determine their residual feed intake (RFI) and then ranked on all this information (visual, performance data, molecular breeding values and resulting economic value).

Does all that extra data and information help us select better cattle? That is what the students plan to find out. But we, and *Canadian Cattlemen* magazine, thought you might like to try your hand at judging the results for yourself.

We have selected four heifers to follow over the length of this trial. So let's get started: step one is for you to rank these heifers from top to bottom based on visual and basic performance data.

In the next issue we'll have some additional data to further refine your rankings.

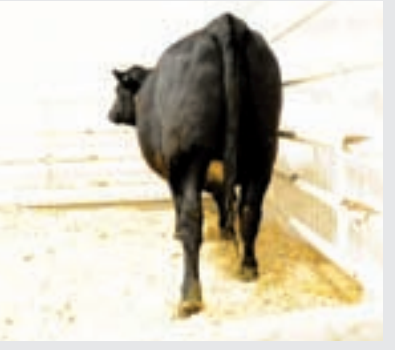
Dr. Susan Markus is a livestock research scientist with Alberta Agriculture and Forestry in Stettler, Alta.

TAG #134

Tag #134
Sept. 30, 2016, wt. 1,060 lbs.
Birthdate Apr. 28, 2015
190-d weaning weight: 561 lbs.
Start test weight: 857 lbs.
End test weight: 949 lbs.
ADG on test: 1.63 lbs./d (0.74 kg/d)

Notes:

TAG #109



Tag #109
Sept 30, 2016, wt. 1,095 lbs.
Birthdate: Apr. 28, 2015
190-d weaning weight: 504 lbs.
Start test weight: 839 lbs.
End test weight: 932 lbs.
ADG on test: 1.63 lbs./d (0.74 kg/d)

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By Lee Hart

A SAMPLER OF RANCHERS' VIEWS ON 2017

As might be expected, their plans range from expansion to standing pat and retirement

Rebuilding and expanding herds, or staying about the same — that seems to be what western Canadian ranchers have in mind as they head into 2017. Despite a sharp downturn in the cattle markets in 2016, only one member of this Ranchers' Panel was talking about downsizing, with retirement in mind.

The 2016 fall market was a tough pill to swallow for everyone. While most of our panel were prepared for a market correction after 2015, they were all caught off guard when prices fell faster and sharper than expected.

As for 2017, here's what they had to say about their plans for this year and some thoughts about what the future holds.

Kelcy Elford
Caronport, Sask.

Moving from a cow-calf operation to a summer grazing program in the past couple of years gave Kelcy Elford the opportunity to redevelop his family's southern Saskatchewan ranch infrastructure to carry them through lower beef markets with reduced risk.

Elford, who ranches at Caronport, west of Moose Jaw, says the low cattle market in 2016 will probably make "it more appealing" as they look to buy yearlings this spring for the grazing operation. They do custom grazing of cow-calf pairs and run their own yearlings on both tame and native pasture.

"We have diversified into the summer grazing program," he says. "But we also have a five-year plan to work over the infrastructure of the ranch and eventually buy back into cows."

From a risk management point of view, the grazing program has helped him reduce operating costs considerably. "We don't have to bank on selling a $1,500 calf and can pencil out a more realistic budget at $800 or $900 per head. And I think this year it will be essential to take advantage of price stability insurance programs."

While southern Saskatchewan can be fairly dry, the 2016 season delivered about 30 inches of rain, and produced all kinds of grass. However, he says he determines his pasture stocking rate based on the carrying capacity of a dry year. On some of their land, for example, cow-calf pairs are stocked at a rate of 12 AUMs per quarter section, while the yearlings are more in the 20 to 22 AUMs per quarter section range. A good moisture season allows grass to recover and improves range health. "Maintaining good range health is critical for our operation," he says.

The custom-grazed cow-calf pairs run on both tame and native pasture from June until about November. Elford brings in backgrounded yearlings at 11 to 12 months of age ranging from 675 to 800 pounds in May and then, depending on weights and markets, they'll be sold sometime in mid- to late September ranging from 850 to 900 and even some 1,000-pound yearlings.

Paula Larson
D'Arcy, Sask.

Paula Larson says they plan to hold cow herd numbers steady for 2017, particularly until they see what happens with the nearby quarantine zone related to the case of TB found in a southeast Alberta herd in the fall of 2016.

At the time of the Rancher Panel interview, Larson says their ranch at D'Arcy, Sask., (about halfway between Rosetown and Kindersley) was outside the CFIA-declared quarantine zone and she was hoping it didn't expand any farther. About 50 ranches in total, mostly in Alberta with a few in western Saskatchewan were affected by the quarantine. "We're just outside that imaginary boundary and there's always a chance it could be expanded," she says.

"And I hate to say it too but we're not getting any younger, either, so our plans for the coming year is just to hold steady with our herd numbers, and see what happens," says Larson. They run just under 300 head of cows that begin calving out in March.

Sean McGrath
Vermilion, Alta.

Sean McGrath says 2017 will be a year to get a handle on managing a young and increasing cow herd on their northeast Alberta ranch at Vermilion.

McGrath, who runs Round Rock Ranching with family members, will be breeding about 300 head of females this July, including about 120 head of first-calf heifers. It's a big jump as they've doubled their beef herd in the last couple of years.

"We have a longer term expansion plan in place," says McGrath. "And while we have a system that works pretty good, this will be a year just to see how everything is running and get used to it."

With a lot of fairly young animals in the herd now — about 70 per cent of the mature cow herd is under three years old and 120 heifers were bred this past summer — McGrath's plan is to have a good mature herd established in time for a market rebound in 2019. He believes markets could still be down through 2018. "But we want to be in a position with a mature cow herd in time for the next turn," he says.

To achieve all these heifer numbers he has been breeding the cow herd to sexed (heifer) semen over the past couple of years. That's increased the number of farm-raised replacements. Along with building the commercial cow herd, he is also working to develop a purebred Angus herd as well. And he has other marketing strategies in the works.

With ranch headquarters at Vermilion, they also have a second ranch farther east in Saskatchewan. They have the land base and can produce the forage for an expanded herd. "And it is an economy of scale," he says. When you have one tractor, for example, you need it whether you have 25 head or 100 head, so expanding herd numbers just makes better use of equipment assets.

Duncan Barnett
Horsefly Road, B.C.

In B.C.'s north Cariboo region, Duncan Barnett says he is trying to hold onto some optimism, as a small family ranching operation, but it's challenging after a triple-whammy year for his diversified farm business.

Barnett and family operate a 100-head cow-calf and yearling operation east of Williams Lake "in the Miocene area, on Horsefly Road." They also do custom haying and sell hay, and do some logging on their private timberland. All three of those markets took a dive in 2016, leaving Barnett concerned about the future of small family-run businesses.

"I'm optimistic because the Canadian beef industry produces an awesome high-quality, high-value food product and people do have to eat," he says. "And we produce a good-quality product on our ranch. But when the market turns down, I have to wonder about the future of smaller operations."

Barnett says after a reasonably strong beef market in 2015, he had planned for a correction in 2016, but he didn't expect it to be as severe as it was. He had planned on a market averaging about $1,000 per head and it turned out to be $900 per head.

He had developed a fairly solid market for direct farm sales of beef, as well, but then the two local abattoirs closed, so he doesn't have that option any more.

It was an extremely wet growing season — that made haying a challenge — but there is plenty of somewhat poorer hay in the country, so that market is down. And because of the ongoing softwood lumber dispute with the U.S., the market for timber is down as well.

"So you get all this happening at once and it can get pretty discouraging," he says. "As a smaller rancher you can handle it if you got one poor market year in five, but when you get two decent market years and eight that are poor, it makes it pretty tough."

Barnett sold his steer calves in what is usually the "top of the market" week at the local auction market, but in 2016 it turned out to be "the worst week to sell calves." He kept his heifer calves for the winter and plans to breed those in 2017. Aside from keeping replacements, he's also hoping there might

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be a better market for cow-calf pairs in 2017, but he'll wait to see what the market brings.

Bill Murray
Makinak, Man.

While Bill Murray believes there's still money in the cattle industry, he won't be worrying about prices for the 2017 calf crop as he has already sold the farm.

A life-long rancher at Makinak, in east-central Manitoba, southeast of Dauphin, Murray downsized his herd over the past year in a move that reflects he is getting close to retirement, and "maybe it is a good time to try something new."

Murray still had about 110 head of cows at the end of 2016, but was just waiting to complete the farm sale transfer to new owners. He had sold 70 head in January 2016 and overall the operation was down about half from its more typical 230-head size.

"A year ago I could see the downside coming so decided I might as well sell some and get what cash I could," says Murray. "There is still money in the cattle business, at least for my operation. If we had the 2016 prices in 2004 (a year after BSE) we would have been laughing. Margins are tight, but you can still make money. The key in this business is learning to control your expenses. I know I wouldn't have made any money if I had a lot of new equipment sitting around."

Murray says retirement is due to the fact he's been at it a long time, none of his family was interested in farming, and if there is another cattle cycle coming he wasn't interested in dealing with the ups and downs of that for another 10 years.

"I'm not that old to retire completely, but I'll try something else," he says. "I don't mind chasing cattle around, but I don't need the management headaches, I'll leave that to someone else." He says the new owners are looking to restock the farm to about 250 head and would eventually like to grow it to about 400 head.

Larry Wegner
Virden, Man.

After two years of downsizing the herd, Larry Wegner says he plans to start rebuilding cow numbers in 2017.

Wegner, who farms with his family at Virden in the southwest corner of Manitoba, has about 70 head he'll be calving out on pasture this May. That's down from a high of about 130 head. Those May calves are backgrounded over the winter and sold as yearlings the following September.

"We saw that the market was changing so we decided to downsize and we're going to start rebuilding this year," he says, noting his sons have shown an interest in joining the farming operation. "We knew prices were going to fall, but we didn't expect them to fall as fast or as hard as they did."

Wegner has developed a low-cost beef operation, with cattle out on pasture year-round. "There haven't been any cattle in the yard for three years," he says. Along with summer grazing he mostly stockpiles forage to carry the cattle over winter. Although he can lay in hay supplies to feed the herd during a tough winter, so far it's been sufficient to supplement stockpiled forage with about two round bales of hay per cow over the winter. Cattle are back on green grass by early April, before calving in May.

Penny Patton
Westlock, Alta.

After an extremely dry growing season, that forced them to sell part of their herd in 2015, Penny Patton says they started rebuilding herd numbers last year and plan to continue through 2017.

Patton, along with partner Kyle Miller, were running about 150 head of cow-calf pairs in 2015, on their farm in Westlock County north of Edmonton, but had to sell about half of them that July because it was just so dry. But it was a reversal of fortunes in 2016, she says.

"We ended 2016 with enough silage to feed 200 head and we also have about 400 silage bales," says Patton. "We have feed, feed and more feed."

Patton says they did buy about 45 head of cows in 2016 and will be looking to increase numbers in 2017, as they work to get back to about 150 head.

Calves were weaned in mid-November 2016. They had thought about selling in the fall, but due to circumstances decided to background everything for at least 60 days and perhaps sell steers in early 2017. They'll feed heifers a bit longer and then select their replacements.

"I don't know if we will get back to 150 head in 2017, it depends on the market," she says. "It is probably a good time to expand, but we also have to keep in mind that we only have so much land, so we don't want to take on more than we can handle, especially when growing conditions can be variable."

Lee Hart is a long-time agricultural writer based in Calgary and a contributor to Canadian Cattleman Magazine.

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By Steve Kenyon

HAVE YOU HERD? YOU HAVE TO MOVE IT

HERD — DEFINITION

Noun — a large group of animals that live, feed, or migrate together or are kept together.

Verb — (with reference to a group of people or animals) move in a particular direction.

When you read the above definitions, you may think of a herd of livestock grazing out on a hillside. It is a romantic notion of wide-open spaces and beautiful countryside. We have all seen the movies, but in both these definitions the key term is "moving."

You have to move them.

Did you know that Joseph Glidden's invention of barbed wire was actually a detriment to our industry? Prior to barbed wire, we managed our animals by herding. We had cowboys out on the range keeping the animals together and moving them to new grass every day. Prior to that, nature did the same thing by using predators to keep the herd together and moving. We took over, brought in barbed wire, put up perimeter fences and allowed the animals to spread out and continuously overgraze the land. We stopped moving the herd. Curses to you Joseph Glidden!

At Greener Pastures we try to mimic what nature did. However, in our modern times, it is costly to hire those cowboys to do the herding so instead, we use electric fencing to manage the herd in an intensive cell grazing system.

I have worked with a few ranches where herding is still the most economical way to manage, but on most operations, electric fencing is our best option.

The idea behind our grazing management is to manage for the four grazing concepts: graze period, rest period, stock density and animal impact and we need to be able to herd the animals around on our pastures to manage these concepts.

Our graze period needs to be short enough to stop the "second bite." The animals need to be removed from the paddock before the plants are able to put up new leaf after the first bite.

Depending on your environment, this second bite could occur after only a few days in the fast growing season. If the plants are using stored energy to put up that new leaf, the energy reserves will be empty when the second bite occurs and the plant will then be set back.

Rest period also has to be managed to prevent the second bite. Adequate rest has to be given to ensure the energy reserves have been replenished before the plants are grazed for a second time. Again, depending on your environment and season, this could be anywhere from about 25 to 365 days. We all face different conditions on our ranches but we still need to make sure the rest period allows for the energy stores to be replenished.

Stock density is the number of animal units on a piece of land at a specific point in time. It is measured in animal days per acre. This is not to be confused with stocking rate, which is the number of animals you have on a pasture for the entire season. There are two benefits to a higher stock density: improved plant utilization and better manure distribution.

With good plant utilization, every plant is either bitten or stepped on, creating an even playing field for every plant when it comes time to regrow. With better manure distribution you have better nutrient recycling.

Animal impact is the physical stimulation of the land caused by the animal's hooves. It can improve new seedling development, nutrient recycling and aid in the breaking up of capped soil.

Positive animal impact also works a lot of litter into the ground. Many people see this as a waste of good grass but it can be surprising what this "waste" can do to improve the water holding capacity and the fertility of the land.

I am feeding three things when I graze the livestock: the land and the soil organisms. So this "waste" is not really waste.

These four grazing concepts explain why we move our herds, but not how we do it. That depends on your environment.

Under normal conditions I would not graze the same here in Alberta as I would in Texas or Australia or Brazil.

In every environment, however, the goal is to avoid overgrazing, which is really only a measurement of time. No matter how many head, or how many acres we manage, we have to time our grazing to what the environment allows. We never want to graze a plant when it is weak; it's as simple as that.

And we manage the same, even in the dormant season. During the winter here in Alberta we may not be as concerned about hurting the energy stores of plants as they are dormant, but we still use electric fencing to keep the herd moving the herd as one. With any of our winter grazing practices, (bale grazing, swath grazing, residue grazing), we still want to plan for a good stock density and manage the manure to improve the fertility of the land.

I guess the point I am trying to make is that if you manage a herd, you should be herding.

Herding — Definition: the act of bringing individual animals together into a group (herd), maintaining the group, and moving the group from place to place.

Intensive cell grazing is not a new idea. It's actually a very old method of management that most of our industry has forgotten about. It's good for the land, the environment and your bottom line; in other words, a win/win/win. Happy herding!

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.

By Heather Smith Thomas

PRE-BREEDING VACCINATIONS FOR COWS AND BULLS

Some diseases affect reproduction, interfering with the cow's ability to carry a calf to term. It's best to try to prevent these diseases by making sure cows and bulls have adequate immunity before breeding season. These vaccinations will vary, depending on specific risks in a certain herd, and timing will vary, depending on the calving/breeding season for that particular herd.

Nathan Erickson, assistant professor of large animal clinical sciences at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine in Saskatoon says it pays to discuss this with your veterinarian. "Recommendations regarding which vaccines to use and when will depend on what type of vaccination program the producer has already been on, or if the cows have been vaccinated before. Usually producers vaccinate pre-breeding or at preg-check or, less commonly, pre-calving. We are trying to develop a program that will protect the fetus that results from the upcoming breeding season," he says.

"Mainly we are interested in protecting the fetus from diseases that cause abortion but there are also some diseases that can cause malformation of the fetus or persistent infection. The BVD virus, for instance, can affect the fetus in several ways," he says.

BVD AND IBR

These two viral diseases commonly cause abortion. "We want to make sure cows have some immunity against these diseases before they are bred, to protect the fetus during the highest risk period — the first three to four months of gestation. With BVD we are trying to avoid early term abortion, fetal malformation, and development of persistently infected (PI) calves," explains Erickson. Those PI calves may look normal, but they carry BVD virus — shedding it continually throughout their lives — and thus present a serious health risk to other cattle.

"PI calves are the result of the cow being exposed to the virus in early pregnancy, prior to development of the immune system in the fetus or while it is being developed. The immune system is self-identifying. In other words it must be able to differentiate what belongs to its own body and what is foreign (such as disease pathogens)," he explains. The immune system's job is to recognize invaders and attack them — and only attack the foreign cells, and not their own body. There are a few auto-immune diseases in which the immune system attacks cells within its own body. A normal immune system, however, just protects the body from outside invaders.

If the BVD virus is present and circulating within the cow and her fetus during the crucial period when the fetal immune system is forming but not yet mature and functioning, it thinks this virus is part of the normal components of its body. "Because the body thinks it's normal, it never mounts an effective attack against that virus, so the calf is persistently infected and becomes a super-shedder of BVD virus. This can cause major problems in the cow herd, and also in the feedlot if that calf goes to the feedlot, spreading the disease to other animals," says Erickson.

"BVD causes severe immune suppression (which leaves these animals vulnerable to other diseases). In the cow-calf herd, PI calves can appear normal while shedding large numbers of virus particles — which may infect many other animals in the herd. This can cause disease in those animals and development of more PI calves when cows are in early gestation."

Infectious bovine bhinotracheitis (IBR) is another serious disease in the cow herd, and a major cause of abortion. "It can cause abortion storms with high numbers of abortions," says Erickson. "Typically the IBR abortions are later in gestation, such as four or five months, but occasionally we see early abortions from IBR as well as BVD. These are the two most important viral causes of abortions that we can vaccinate for," he says. Your herd can be at risk for IBR or BVD if they have fence-line contact with other cattle that might be infected.

BACTERIAL DISEASES

There are several bacterial pathogens that can cause abortion. "There are vaccines for several species of leptospirosis, for instance. We can also vaccinate against campylobacter (vibrio)," says Erickson. Vibrio is spread by breeding, so it's wise to vaccinate cows before going to a community pasture where they

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might be exposed to other cattle potentially carrying the disease.

"With vibrio, the bulls usually become shedders of that bacteria and spread it to the cows they breed. The cows become pregnant but the embryo dies early, so the cow comes back into heat. The cows eventually clear it and are able to carry a pregnancy, but that first season they come up open or calve very late. This can really destroy your calf crop for that year," Erickson says. You want to protect your cows by vaccinating ahead of the breeding season so they will have immunity before they are bred.

"This is especially important if you are using community pastures, buying cows that may have been exposed, or buying non-virgin bulls," says Erickson. Your herd may also be at risk if you have a neighbour who brings in cattle that might carry this disease, if any of those cattle get through the fence or your bull goes through the fence to breed one of the neighbour's cows — and brings home the disease to your cows.

Dr. Steve Hendrick of Coaldale Veterinary Clinic, Coaldale, Alta., says vibrio and lepto are the most common bacterial diseases producers vaccinate cows for. "But we don't recommend these vaccines to everyone. We base this on herd history, and what they have experienced with pregnancy loss, if we've been able to confirm this with diagnostics," he says.

"When I was at the veterinary college in Saskatoon we developed a PCR test for vibrio. If there was a herd issue, we generally found more than one bull infected, and in those cases vaccinating the cows made good sense. If cattle are going to communal pastures for summer grazing/breeding, it also pays to vaccinate the cows."

In a normal herd that has a 95 per cent or greater pregnancy rate year after year in a 60-day breeding season, chances of that herd having vibrio are very low. "If they are not having abortion issues with leptospirosis, and there's not much risk for vibrio, these herds may not need to be vaccinated for these diseases," Hendrik says.

"The combination vaccines that contain vibrio and lepto are not as protective for the vibrio portion as we'd like. The oil-adjuvanted vibrio vaccines, and even some of the killed IBR-BVD vaccines that are available with vibrio and lepto fractions, are probably more protective than modified-live vaccines with these added. Part of the reason is they have to be water-soluble, to mix up the modified-live vaccines, so they are not adjuvanted with oil. The oil acts as a carrier to create more of a depo for that vaccine (with longer-lasting effect), but they can't do this with a modified-live product," he says.

A person would be better off to use the separate vaccines, if they want optimum protection. "The lepto vaccine specific for Lepto hardjo might be best if a herd has an issue with chronic carriers of lepto. But you need proper diagnosis to know this." You should be working with your veterinarian to figure out the issues and then utilize the vaccine that would provide the most protection in your herd. Even if it's more expensive, the loss of one or two calves would more than pay for vaccine for the entire herd.

PI calves are the result of the cow being exposed to the virus in early pregnancy, prior to development of the immune system in the fetus

"Lepto tends to cause mid- to late-term abortions, and if you are really concerned about lepto you might consider vaccinating twice a year and not just pre-breeding. In some herds it would pay to give another vaccination at preg-check time or to check the titers of those cows. In our studies we looked at titers of cows going out in the spring and coming back in the fall. We were surprised by a number of herds that vaccinated cows in the spring and then when we measured their titers when they came off pasture in the fall they were low. The vaccine may not trigger as much of an antibody response as we would like," Hendrick says.

Protection is short-lived, so you need to booster annually, and it may help to booster semi-annually if it's a concern in a certain herd. With all vaccines, cattle need a primary series of injections at the proper timing, to start the immunity (usually when they are heifers) and then the annual or semi-annual vaccinations act as a booster.

TIMING

Some people vaccinate cows just before they turn the bull out, or before they load the cows up to take them to pasture. "This is not ideal, but in some cases it's most practical for the ranchers — the only time they have a chance to have cows in the corral for vaccination. This is better than not vaccinating them at all, and may be fine if it's not their first vaccination," says Hendrick.

"The biggest reason for vaccinating cows pre-breeding rather than at preg-check time is that we are trying to prevent disease like BVD that can cause issues all the way through pregnancy," says Hendrick. "If this is the disease you are most concerned about, you need to make sure cows have optimal immunity before breeding so they have immunity all the way through the pregnancy," he explains.

"IBR, on the other hand, typically causes late-term abortions. In this case, preg-check vaccination may be adequate, but we advise producers to work with their veterinarians to figure out which diseases pose the biggest risk for their own herd. Then they can determine the opportune time to vaccinate. My preference is to vaccinate pre-breeding, but I realize this doesn't work for everyone," says Hendrick.

"If vaccinating cows pre-breeding, we generally use modified-live vaccines that combine protection against IBR and BVD," says Erickson. "These vaccines can be given to cows after calving and before breeding. Several different vaccine companies provide vaccines with FP (fetal protection) claims. This label claim means that if you vaccinate according to label directions, they guarantee protection against development of PI calves, and protection from IBR abortion," says Erickson.

"These vaccines are given as an annual booster, if the cow herd has already been on a program to establish immunity. If cows have never been vaccinated, work with your veterinarian to get the herd onto an appropriate vaccination schedule (with proper boosters). The best situation is to start the immunity in heifers," he says. They can be given their vaccinations after weaning, and a booster before they are bred the first time — with annual boosters before breeding from that point on.

Hendrick says replacement heifers should be vaccinated with modified-live vaccines at least twice, and preferably three times before their first breeding season. They can be vaccinated as calves, and again post-weaning, and the last dose about a month before breeding. This will give them a strong immunity before they become pregnant, protecting them from the viral diseases (IBR and BVD) that could result in abortion.

"If you purchase replacement heifers and don't know what they've had for vaccination, you should vaccinate them several weeks before breeding, since giving them a modified-live vaccine just before breeding could be detrimental. The IBR fraction of the vaccine has been shown to cause swelling of the ovaries, which could interfere with cyclic-

ity — and they wouldn't be able to become pregnant until after that problem resolves. Even cows can have this problem, so we recommend giving these vaccines at least a month before breeding," Hendrick explains.

"Cows are a bit more difficult to get onto a modified-live program if they haven't been vaccinated before, because you need a bit more time — between calving and pre-breeding," says Erickson. "There are some different types of vaccine that can be used, to get them onto a program (such as killed vaccines that are safer to give during pregnancy), and your veterinarian can advise you on what to use, and when," he says. Every herd is different with regard to when it's most feasible to vaccinate.

It's important to give vaccines far enough ahead of breeding to build immunity before cows are bred, yet some people don't have hands on cows until they are branding and vaccinating the calves, or the day they turn out the bulls. Some modified-live viruses may have effects on the animal which could temporarily interfere with fertility.

"It's always best to vaccinate three or four weeks before you turn bulls out," Erickson says. "The cows (and bulls) need time for the immune system to respond and build protection. There is some evidence that modified-live vaccines can cause temporary interruption of cyclicity in cattle in some cases. This study was done on naïve animals (that had never been vaccinated), however, and may not apply in all situations. It's always best to vaccinate cattle several weeks before breeding, to avoid this type of problem, and also to give them more chance to respond," he says.

"Immune response may also hinge on the condition of the cows," says Hendrick. "If they've had a tough winter or spring (short on feed, or a severely cold winter), you can expect poor immunity. It's important to focus on nutrition because this goes hand in hand with immunity. One can't function without the other." A cow can't mount a very good immune response to vaccine if she's thin and in poor condition. If a person is going to the expense and effort to vaccinate cows pre-breeding, make sure the cattle have optimum conditions to develop good immunity.

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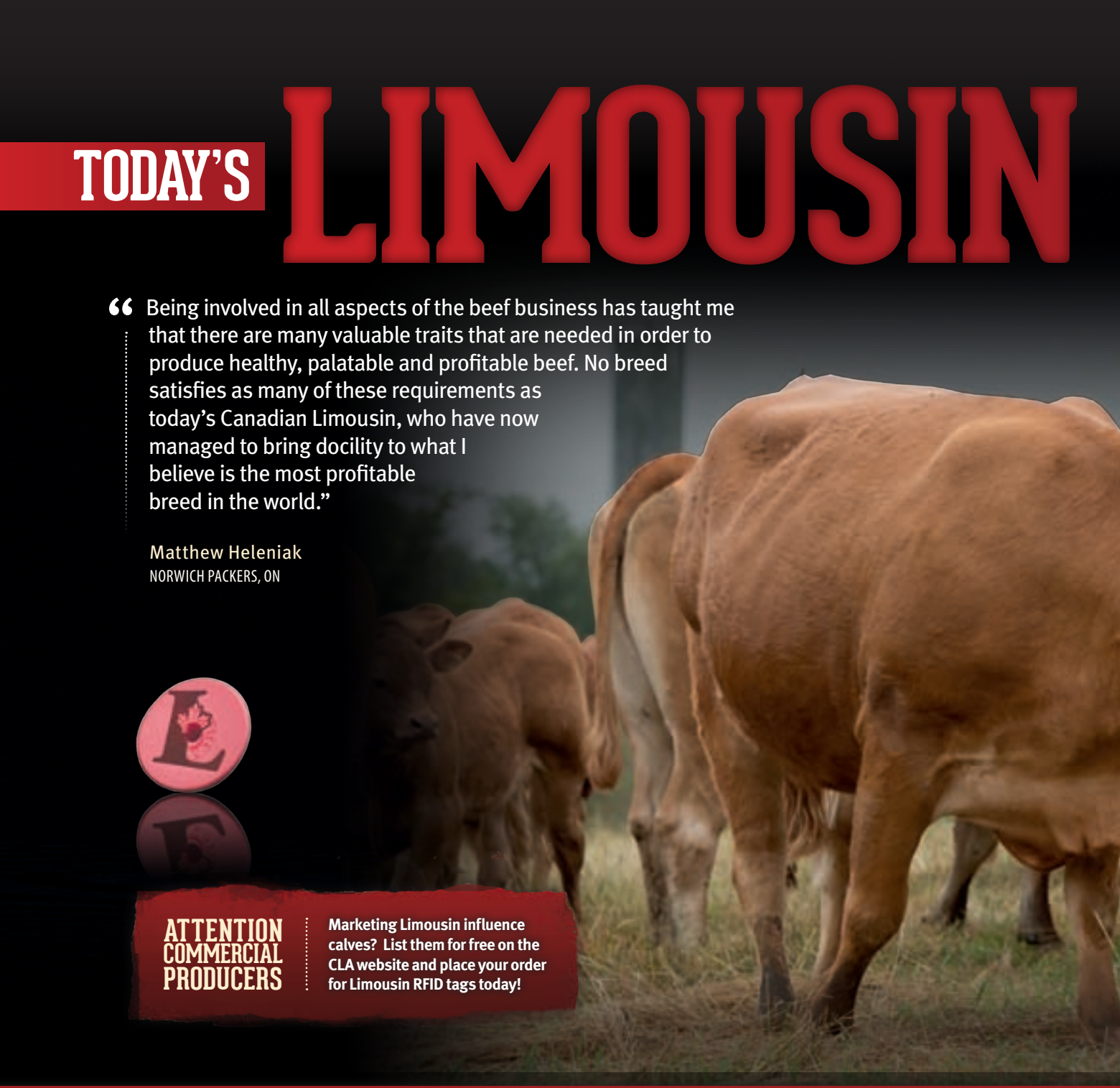

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By Roy Lewis, DMV

IMPROPER CERVICAL DILATION AT CALVING

One of the hardest calving dilemmas you or your veterinarian face, is improper cervical dilation. Before expulsion of the fetus the cervix normally relaxes, softens and opens up essentially as wide as the vagina to allow the fetus to enter the vaginal vault. When this does not happen normally, or is delayed, the health of the fetus and dam may be in jeopardy.

Close to term, the cervix is to the front of the vagina and the opening is normally about one to two fingers wide. It would be like sticking your finger in a doughnut. So when a cow is straining somewhat and you do a vaginal exam and find this condition, what is your next step?

What I do, when I think a cow is calving and find a closed cervix, is wait and re-examine her a couple hours later. If I find the cervical opening has increased, that tells me calving is progressing. If there is no change you now have to decide if this is a false alarm or an early indication that there is a problem.

At this juncture some vets may have you give the cow more time and some may opt to perform a caesarian section. Each case is different.

Another issue involves a cervix that will only open wide enough to get the front two legs through. This is not common but does require different interventions depending on how it is progressing.

In a normal birth the cervix is right out of the way when we get to the expulsion of the fetus. When it isn't, the veterinarian will first try to dilate the cervix manually to facilitate delivery.

If the nose and head can be partially delivered a slight amount of traction may help dilate the cervix fully. This is where one has to be really careful as too much traction is both stressful on the calf and may rip the cervix causing excessive bleeding and possibly be fatal to the cow. If no progress is made, a caesarian section is performed to get a live calf, and save the cow but she should be marked for shipping the next year.

Some of these cows with a partially opened cervix may have had a difficult calving the year before which caused some damage to the cervix.

Even though there is a lot of room in the pelvis and vaginal opening, C-sections are the only solution for a cervix that won't dilate. As mentioned, a forced extraction through a partially open cervix puts both the cow and calf's lives in jeopardy so a C-section is a win-win solution most times.

You can usually tell if the cervix will open with some manual dilation. It is soft and supple and you make progress in 10 or 15 minutes. If the cervix has a hard fibrous feel, no amount of time will get it to open so jumping to a C-section hopefully will provide a good result for cow and calf.

There are a couple of other instances where a partially closed cervix can be encountered.

After correcting a torsed uterus your veterinarian will usually encounter a partially closed cervix . Because of the twist the cervix cannot fully dilate, but upon correction it can generally be dilated by hand. There is a tendency to let it dilate on its own but I have done that and ran out of time resulting in a stillborn calf. Now I proceed to dilate the cervix manually to facilitate extraction. Generally these cervixes are soft and supple and in my experience easy to dilate.

The other condition is a delayed calving that results in death of the fetus. This could be because of a malpresentation such as a breech birth where the cervix is opened, but straining does not ensue, time runs out and the calf dies, bloats up and straining ensues. Often the cervix can start to close up, much as it would after a normal calving. These cases may require a fetotomy or partial fetotomy, in order to salvage the cow.

Although infrequent, partial cervical dilation does require serious intervention by a veterinarian or yourself, depending on your level of experience. Recognizing them is the first step. If you think a cow is in labour and no progress is being made, do a vaginal exam to see if an improper cervical dilation is the cause. By recognizing it early you have the time to intervene, and provide a favourable outcome. Have a great calving season.

Roy Lewis is an Alberta-based veterinarian specializing in large-animal practice. He is also a part-time technical services vet for Merck Animal Health.

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By John McKinnon

THE MAKINGS OF A PERFECT STORM

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

The winter of 2016-17 is shaping up to be a challenge for cow-calf operators across Canada. While much of October and November were relatively stress free in terms of winter's wrath, as we moved into the new year, extreme cold and snow has gripped much of the country. Coupled with hay shortages in Eastern Canada and a lot of poor-quality hay harvested in Western Canada, we have the makings of a perfect storm that has serious implications for the cow herd, particularly with respect to calving and subsequent reproductive performance. Since the calving season is approaching for most of you, it is an ideal time to remind oneself of the impact that cold weather has on the nutritional needs of the pregnant beef cow, particularly as she enters the last trimester of pregnancy.

Consider a group of 635-kg (1,400-pound) cows, five to six months in calf fed 12.5 kg of an average quality grass hay that tested 55 per cent total digestible nutrients (TDN) and nine per cent crude protein (CP; DM basis). If these cows (condition score 2.5 to 3.0) are adapted to a relatively normal winter (i.e. -15 C to -20 C with minimal wind), their energy and protein requirements would be approximately six kg of TDN (or 12.3 Mcal of net energy for maintenance) and 730 grams of crude protein, requirements which would be met by their current intake. However, exposing these cattle to -25 C and a wind speed of 15 kilometres per hour will increase daily TDN requirements to 7.4 kg (an increase of 22 per cent). Prolonged exposure to this type of weather without accounting for this increase in energy requirements would result in significant weight loss (up to 50 pounds over 36 days according to Alberta Agriculture's Cowbytes program). While most producers feel they know their cows and would be able to recognize if they are losing weight at this rate, it is surprising how a full winter hair coat can mask this type of weight loss and lead to unexpected nasty surprises (i.e. thin cows at calving). To combat this from happening, these cows would need to be supplemented with 1.5 to two kgs of barley grain or its equivalent.

As these animals move into the last trimester of pregnancy, their energy and protein requirements increase to 6.8 to 7.5 kg of TDN and 830 to 930 grams of crude protein, depending on whether they are in the eighth or ninth month of pregnancy (assuming no cold stress). Energy requirements are 17 per cent higher than in the sixth month of pregnancy. In this case, in addition to the 12.5 kgs of grass hay, these cows require 1.0 to 1.75 kg of barley, depending on stage of pregnancy to meet their needs. As in the example above, a two- or three-week stretch of cold weather would increase the energy requirements of these cows in the eighth month of pregnancy by 18 per cent and require 2.5 to three kg of supplemental barley in order to meet requirements for maintenance and pregnancy and to prevent significant weight loss.

When you look at the conditions I have described, there are several issues at play that should concern you as a cow-calf producer. First, from an animal welfare perspective, we do not want to see cows losing excessive weight over a short period due to our failure to provide sufficient energy to combat cold stress. Not only is it difficult to visually identify cows with a heavy winter hair coat that are losing weight, but you can also get fooled by assuming that the forage you are feeding is better quality than it actually is! This situation can easily arise due to the variable nature of last year's hay crop. The only way to accurately identify the nutritional quality of your hay is to have it feed tested. There are several laboratories in Canada that will run a near infrared analysis on your forage for a reasonable price and have results back within a couple of days! If you have not done so, it would be worth the effort to have your forage tested so you can more precisely decide on what to feed your cows as they move through the remainder of pregnancy.

Cows losing excess weight in the third trimester of pregnancy will exhibit delayed estrus following calving

Equally critical is the impact of late gestation weight loss on the subsequent reproductive performance of the cow herd. Cows losing excess weight in the third trimester of pregnancy will exhibit delayed estrus following calving, particularly if postpartum nutrition is not adequate. This delay in breeding status can have several consequences including an increase in the length of the breeding season or, if the length of the breeding season is fixed, an increase in the number of open cows. As well, more cows will be bred late in the breeding season, a factor which negatively impacts next years' weaning weights.

As I indicated at the start of this article, as we move towards this year's calving season, a number of factors, some within and some outside of our control are converging that can have an impact on the reproductive success of your herd. Ensuring a balanced nutrition program that accounts for the changing needs of pregnancy, as well as for the effects of the environment, is your best bet to ride out this storm.

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By Steve Kay

GENETIC IMPROVEMENT LAYS FOUNDATION

Ask any winemaker how he or she produces a great drinking experience and all reply "It starts in the vineyard." The same is true of the beef industry. A great beef eating experience starts on the ranch or farm. And just like constantly improving the quality of the grape, it should include upgrading the genetic quality of one's herd.

Cow-calf producers on both sides of the border have done an outstanding job in the past 20 years in improving the genetics of their herds. Most importantly, they have focused on the genetics that produce the best carcass and therefore the best beef. This is the exact opposite of what occurred for many years. Producers in the 1960s and 1970s experimented with just about every breed that originated in Europe. The result was a mish-mash of crossbred cattle, some of which could be called the "Heinz 57" variety.

Producers finally realized this genetic free-for-all was damaging beef demand because it was producing beef of wildly inconsistent quality. While others wrung their hands, the American Angus Association (AAA) was the first breed association to act. It began its Certified Angus Beef (CAB) branded beef program in 1978, with a series of strict protocols to give the brand integrity. The program aimed to produce higher-quality beef than was on the market. It also aimed to help Angus producers by growing demand for Angus cattle at the seedstock and cow-calf levels.

AAA accomplished both goals beyond its wildest dreams and in the process encouraged other breed associations and producers to follow a similar path. Angus genetics are now in nearly 70 per cent of the U.S. beef cow herd and in about 40 per cent of the Canadian herd. That's a big reason why fed cattle in the U.S. now grade 77 per cent USDA Prime or Choice. Only 10 years ago, cattle graded less than 50 per cent Choice and less than three per cent Prime. Marbling has become producers' mantra.

CAB's success is all the more remarkable as the program struggled for its first 19 years. But it persevered and last year reached a remarkable milestone. Global sales surpassed one billion pounds for the first time in its fiscal year ended September 30. This was up 119 million pounds or 13.3 per cent on the previous year. The record sales were fueled largely by U.S. retail sales, proving that consumers will pay more for beef of high quality and consistency.

As the AAA notes, cattle producers are answering the call from consumers for high-quality beef. Registrations for Angus cattle in fiscal 2016 grew by 4.5 per cent and totalled 334,607 head. This was the 15th largest number of registrations in the association's 133-year history. Sales of registered Angus bulls in 2016 averaged US$5,605 per head and registered females averaged US$5,036 per head. Sales of Angus genetics remained highly valued despite almost 10,000 more animals marketed by members versus the prior year, says the AAA.

The association has also been in the forefront of adopting key technologies involved in cattle breeding. Of the nearly 335,000 calves registered with the association in 2016, more than 53 per cent were produced by artificial insemination, while embryo transfer calves represented 11 per cent of total registrations. Total females enrolled in the association's MaternalPlus program were up more than 56 per cent at 37,895 head. This inventory-based reporting system is designed to capture reproductive trait data. In addition, genomic testing now accounts for one-third of all Angus registrations.

Whether you have an Angus-based herd or one based on another breed, the message is clear. Invest in quality genetics and you will be rewarded all the way to the retail meat case or the restaurant menu.

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

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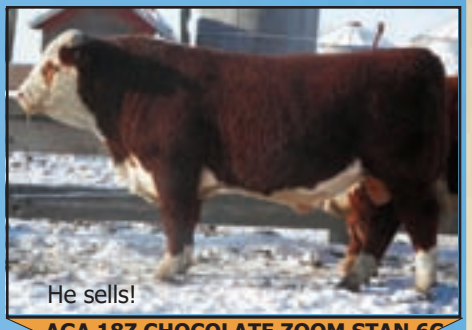

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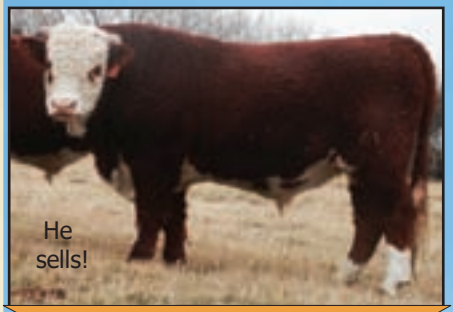

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By Steve Dittmer

TRUMP'S CABINET AND TRADE

Candidate Donald Trump was not an unquestioned free trader. While he harped on China frequently, and Mexico and NAFTA considerably, he claimed he wasn't against free trade as long as it was fair trade. I have hoped that he would fulfill his promises to recover manufacturing job losses in America's midwestern Rust Belt with major tax reform and removing regulations. Cutting corporate taxes from 35 to 15 per cent, cutting capital gains taxes and immediate expensing rather than long-term depreciation would do a lot to make U.S. businesses competitive and profitable. But several of the cabinet choices Trump has made are concerning for free traders.

His selection of Robert Lighthizer as U.S. Trade Representative is a case in point. While he was a deputy trade representative for Reagan, he is quick to point out that Reagan used voluntary trade restraint agreements and temporary tariffs several times during his administration, especially regarding autos and steel.

On the other hand, I would point out that one factor that favours free trade is competition to keep domestic producers innovating. In the '80s, Detroit automakers were still trying to catch up to the German and Japanese quality standards revealed by the gasoline crisis of 1973. U.S. automakers had fallen decades behind while protected from foreign competition.

Writing in both 2008 and 2011, Lighthizer spent considerable time holding the position that being an American conservative does not mean that one had to be a free trader. He points out that the Republican party was the party of protective tariffs for many decades. However, he doesn't touch on the rest of the history — that the southern farmers and planters resented the northern bankers, traders and merchants from colonial days because they needed export markets and had to trade for manufactured goods imported through New England's traders. That divide continued through to the Reagan years, with the "solid South" Democrat and needing agricultural trade.

The U.S. federal government was funded primarily for the first 130 years by excise taxes on imports, before the income tax was invented. I doubt the U.S. wants to go back to those days, even though we hate income tax.

Much of Lighthizer's beef with free trade has to do with China's non-compliance with trade rules, management of their currency and theft of intellectual property. Yet he mentioned the House of Representatives passage of a bill in 2010 to expand the president's ability to impose tariffs. In 2016, Congress passed a customs enforcement bill further expanding the president's ability to impose temporary tariffs to bolster rule enforcement.

If China has been abusing rules for years, my question is, why has neither Republican nor Democrat presidents used the tools they have to do something about it? Why bash all trade because of one trading partner that brings both good and bad to the relationship? Why bash NAFTA if the U.S.'s taxes and regulations make it difficult for American manufacturers to make a profit and Mexico has FTAs with twice the countries the U.S. has?

By some chance, Peter Navarro was the first economist with whom I disagreed viscerally, and it was on the subject of free trade. I bought some of his CDs expecting educational information. Instead what I got was a dose of protectionist theory. Trump nominated Navarro to head his National Trade Council, a new position.

When Trump was proposing 45 per cent tariffs on Chinese goods last July, Navarro wrote that the 45 figure was about right. Navarro's research shows China's cheaper labour advantage accounts for about 39 per cent of China's price advantage. But surprisingly, five other factors Navarro examined — illegal export subsidies, currency manipulation, intellectual property theft, and lax worker safety and environmental regulations add only 4.5 more points to China's advantage. So Navarro said Trump's 45 per cent was very close to his 43.5 per cent.

Treasury Secretary nominee and Goldman Sachs alumni Steven Mnuchin has broad experience as a financier but not much history regarding trade. He did say trade pact reform would be a priority but I'm guessing tax reform, removing Wall Street regulation and jump-starting the general economy would command more of his attention.

Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross could be a moderating factor in cabinet trade debates. Many years ago he used a protective tariff against Chinese steel to make a fortune. But he is a great admirer of Chinese culture and art. He has been a partner in joint ventures with state-owned Chinese companies. He characterized China bashing as "overblown" in 2012. He supported the TPP in 2015. Then he joined Trump's camp and changed his tone. He co-authored a white paper recently with Peter Navarro.

Gary Huffbauer, noted economist with the Peterson Institute for International Economics, said it is hard to "find a consistent pattern on trade among Trump's economic team." Those contradictory stances and past history provide some optimism for trade proponents. Also, there are informal free trade advisers in Trump's camp plus other appointments with trade influence yet to be made as of our deadline.

Steve Dittmer is the CEO of Agribusiness Freedom Foundation, a non-profit group promoting free market principles throughout the food chain. He can be reached at steve@agfreedom.ag.

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Canadian Cattlemen THE BEEF MAGAZINE

HANDY ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST FOR VBP+

Producer commitments enhance confidence in Canadian beef

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) have become the anchor of industrial and food production process. They clearly establish expectations and outcomes of a production unit and are a simple way for all involved to understand both.

SOPs are important to the Verified Beef Production (VBP) program. Started as on-farm food safety, the SOPs identified industry-sanctioned practices which are outcome-based. That included proper withdrawal times for medications and proper injection methods.

In 2016 VBP expanded to become VBP+, with modules for biosecurity, animal care and environment. SOPs are now established for all four modules of VBP+. These will be a key part of a new generation of Canadian beef sustainability programming.

PRODUCER COMMITMENTS

As a simple reference, VBP+ has established a checklist with a section for each SOP. Some of the most important to building consumer trust are related to the environment. The checklist is a statement of commitment of each producer in simple language to explain management of their own operation or their industry. Here's a sample:

Grassland, riparian areas and watersheds will be protected. Land will be managed to maintain or improve soil health, protect watersheds and riparian areas. Beneficial practices for wildlife habitat will be scored. As practices evolve that enhance carbon sequestration and mitigate greenhouse gas, the program will capture what is done. Many existing practices will contribute in this area and will be noted as some of the positive and proactive practices.

VBP+ captures positive conservation practices, including reduce, reuse and recycle principles.

Deadstock management. Deadstock will be disposed of in a way that avoids leaching into water bodies.

EFPs provide awareness. An Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) provides awareness for stewardship and conservation practices. While not required, having one is a simple way to capture details and give easy information about practices that conserve energy, adapt innovation or enhance stewardship.

Manage manure and soil nutrients. Manure will be stored and used in a controlled manner that benefits the soil and protects against leaching of nutrients into water bodies and groundwater.

Chemical storage and use. Herbicides, pesticides, solvents and treated seed will be stored to avoid contamination of cattle feed or water. Products will be used according to label instructions. People know what to do in the case of accidental spills.

Expert help available. If an accidental breach affects water, soil or air, consideration is given on contacting an outside expert if needed.

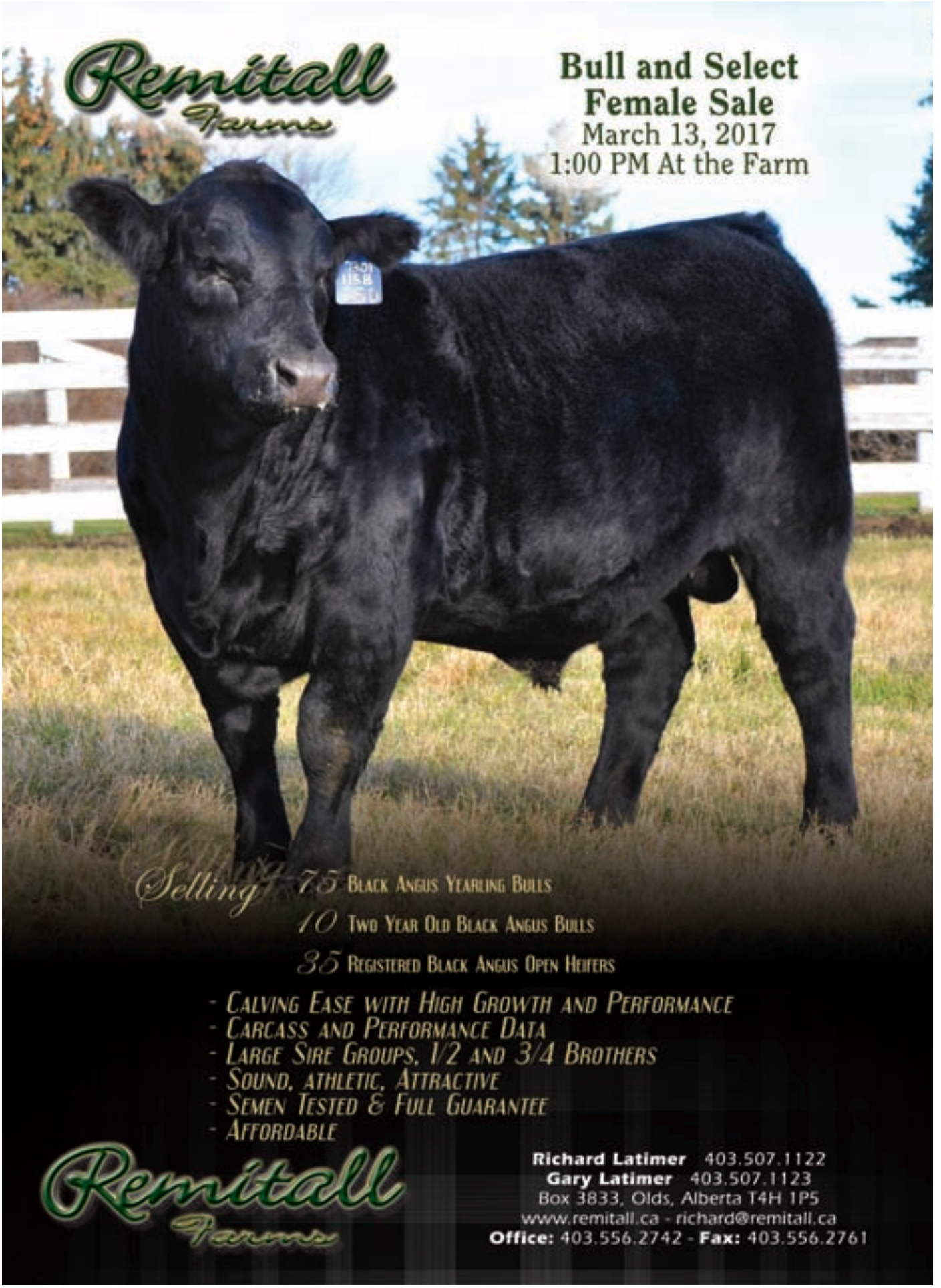
Team communications. Family and staff understand the tasks related to responsible land management practices.

Biosecurity is important. Managers know what to do in a disease emergency or who to call. Cleaning precautions are taken with anyone who has travelled internationally. And cattle will not be exposed to raw human sewage.

SOP CHECKLIST ONLINE

The complete checklist for SOPs in all four VBP+ modules is available online. It is a good overview of expectations for a sustainable beef industry. Ask for a copy from your regional VBP+ co-ordinator.

The most value from these checklists comes from participating in VBP+. Producers want to do the right thing. Identifying practices that contribute to a healthy and wholesome product is a cornerstone.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Q FEVER

Q fever is a potential zoonosis every stock person should keep in mind through calving, lambing and kidding season. The disease, Q fever, and the organism, Coxiella burnetii, when present represent a serious threat to human health. Every gram of afterbirth or fluid from an infected animal contains millions of infectious particles and only a few organisms are required to induce infection in humans. Infected animals also release the microbe in milk and manure. People acquire the infection by inhaling infectious aerosols and contaminated dust generated by animals or animal products.

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety recently produced a downloadable app called OSH Answers. The app, available through iTunes, is structured in an easy-to-read question and answer format. It's easily downloadable on an iPhone or tablet. OSH Answers covers an extensive range of topic areas in workplace health and safety, including a number of animal diseases transmissible between animals and humans. An excellent Q fever summary appears under the biologic section.

Another recent Q fever story comes to us out of Australia where a spike in Q fever cases has caused concerns amongst medical professionals. Every year, hundreds of Australians are diagnosed with Q fever, a disease so serious it's considered a class B biological warfare threat. Those most at risk are abattoir workers and people who work with farm animals, particularly during calving and lambing season and during times of drought when C. burnetii is spread in dust blowing off infected premises. A significant rise in potentially fatal Q fever has sparked health alerts and officials have urged people who work with animals to consider vaccination, or at least discuss vaccination with physicians.

Between 2007 and 2009, a Q fever epidemic became a major public health concern in the Netherlands with approximately 3,500 human cases reported. Six people died. Research confirmed that abortion episodes on dairy goat farms were the primary source of infection for humans. People living up to five kilometres from affected farms acquired Q fever.

C. burnetii are resistant to heat, drying, and many common disinfectants and as a result survive for long periods in the environment. Inhalation of airborne barnyard dust contaminated by C. burnetii in dried placental material, birth fluids, and excreta of infected animals is a common mode of transmission. Bloodsucking ticks have been associated with the spread of Q fever among animals. Pets, especially cats, can be involved in the transmission of C. burnetii.

While many human infections are inapparent, about half of all people infected with C. burnetii show some signs of clinical illness. Most acute cases of Q fever begin with the sudden onset of "flu-like" symptoms including: high fevers (up to 104-105 F/40-40.6 C), severe headache, general malaise, fatigue, muscle pain, sore throat, chills, sweats, non-productive cough, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, and chest pain. In more serious cases, Q fever can progress to pneumonia, hepatitis, brain infections and heart complications. Q fever has been reported as an important cause of atypical pneumonia. During a 1983 outbreak of Q fever in Nova Scotia, 20 per cent of all pneumonia cases admitted to regional hospitals were caused by Coxiella burnetii. Most symptoms disappear after seven to 10 days. However, afflicted people can feel generally ill with loss of appetite for several weeks. A small percentage of patients develop hepatitis or liver disease and jaundice. Some patients require long-term treatment with antibiotics. Up to 65 per cent of patients diagnosed with "chronic" symptoms of Q fever eventually develop fatal complications. Endocarditis (inflammation of heart valves and lining of the heart) is the main clinical presentation of chronic Q fever, usually occurring in patients with pre-existing cardiac disease including valve defects, rheumatic heart disease, and prosthetic valves.

There may be regional differences in the way the disease presents itself. It is not clear why but animal studies suggest different strains may be a factor.

Because the signs and symptoms of Q fever are not specific, an accurate diagnosis requires appropriate laboratory testing. It is important for people exhibiting flu-like symptoms through calving season to discuss their illness with a medical doctor and their veterinarian. Coxiella organisms can be detected microscopically in tissue samples from aborted fetuses. Confirming a diagnosis of Q fever requires serologic tests to detect the presence of antibodies to Coxiella burnetii or the presence of organisms in tissues by using immunohistochemistry (IHC).

Q fever is potentially an occupational concern for all people who have contact with animals, animal products, or animal waste. Workers with heart valve problems or suppressed immune systems are at higher risk. Q fever is a special concern with pregnant animals, especially around the time they give birth or abort because of the disease. In pregnant animals, the Q fever microbe builds up to enormous numbers in certain tissues and fluids. Studies show that one gram of placenta from an infected sheep can contain over one billion Q fever microbes.

It's not uncommon for animals to eat their placenta and other tissues of afterbirth. When this happens, C. burnetii survive digestion and become widely spread in the environment through manure. This allows Q fever to spread widely throughout the environment. C. burnetii easily become airborne in dust from animals, bedding, or manure. Contaminated clothes are another source of transmission.

Farms and ranches with a blend of cattle, sheep and goats are becoming more common. Q fever presents more of a risk in these operations and people need to be aware of the risk. A few basic precautions will help:

- Abortions, especially those from sheep and goats, should routinely be reported to a veterinarian and submitted for diagnosis.
- Appropriately dispose of placenta, birth products, fetal membranes, and aborted fetuses at facilities housing sheep and goats.
- Restrict access to barns during calving/lambing/kidding season and exercise basic biosecurity measures (protective gloves, hand wash stations, clean outerwear).
- Avoid unpasteurized milk and milk products.

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).

Sixth Annual

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By Brenda Schoepp

FIRE AND ICE

The imagery of fire and ice is indicative of the current political status of our nation when it comes to trade. Between the blistering outbursts and cold responses there is imbedded a little dance with the dragon that may ultimately determine our economic well-being.

Trump's fire and brimstone proclamations will collapse with the mountain on which he stands at some future point but in the meantime he is flamboyantly reading Canada, China and Mexico the *Ten Commandments*. His protectionist appointments will ensure that Canadians go by the letter of the law when it comes to trade. The cold shoulder he gives China is a little concerning — as the States is indebted around US$19.8 trillion with five per cent of that just to the Chinese. Perhaps his pearly white vision is clouded by America's US$336 billion trade deficit with China but he may have overlooked that unless he suddenly and uncharacteristically goes green — his energy needs will come from China in one form or another.

China is the fifth-largest producer of oil in the world but Petro China is the world's largest energy company. And the Chinese are the dominant owners of resource extraction in Canada and that includes the oil sands. As the U.S. imports a good percentage of their energy needs, it might be prudent to consider that Canada holds an all important role in American energy security that has not been as critical until this point in history.

As of 2013 more than 75 per cent of the mining companies found on earth were headquartered in Canada. There are incentives for them to be here but the point is they are in this nation. Canada can plague Trump with trouble if we exercise our diplomacy in the multitude of foreign lands we operate in ensuring access at times when Trump faces a time out in the corner. When we look at trade agreements through a wide lens it is important to remember that there are layers of products and services and that broad sweeping statements do not do justice to the complexities of the details. And just as I cannot offer solutions in this column — neither can Trump by trampling on the foundations of economic diversity.

The best personal lesson in this was a visit with Hassad Food, the largest food company in Qatar. We were discussing investment and trade with their senior management team when I asked a question about trade negotiations and was reminded ever so eloquently that "we have 38 generations of trade, you have five and we will rule (paraphrased) at the trade table." There are nations where bully tactics will simply never work and many of these have heavy ownership in North American banks and business.

Meanwhile, Trudeau is dancing with the dragon and carefully navigating with China and again, there is a solid economic reason to do so. Canada's trade deficit with China runs near C$33 billion largely due to our importation of electrical machinery and equipment, boilers and mechanical appliances. They, in turn, need our natural resources and our food. Our nation sends pulp and paper (C$3 B) and raw foods, grains and oil seeds (C$3.3 B) and other goods and services to China. One cannot downplay agriculture's role in the overall economic health of our nation. Agriculture and agri-food is a much larger business than oil and gas in Canada, employing over 2.2 million persons in comparison to the total in oil and gas at 400,000, and contributing 6.7 per cent to GDP compared to oil and gas at 2.9 per cent. Canada owns 3.5 per cent of the total value of agri-food and agricultural exports in the world.

Building the agri-food profile will further enhance our trading position and reduce the trade deficit. What Trump cannot afford to do is mess with his northern neighbours in terms of agricultural trade and we can't afford to impede it. The U.S. exported US$337 billion in total goods to Canada in 2015 of which US$24 billion was food and food products. In turn, the Americans import from Canada US$325 billion in total of which US$22 billion was food and food products.

I am not naive — money buys loyalty and the American's will wave it in front of those they hope to impress, but there are other rich nations who don't have as many mouths to feed as the U.S. Trump's lean towards sovereignty to reindustrialize the States is folly. We have seen these attempts fail in other nations with the result of rapid inflation and shortage of product, unrest and related health crises.

It is critical at this point that Canada be in a position to be the investment and trading partner of choice with China, the U.S. and a multitude of other respected partners. It will mean ethical transparency in our resource and mining industries, an enabling environment by government for growth particularly in the agri-food and technology sectors, and willingness from industry leaders to seek opportunity in the most unusual corners of the earth. At such a critical time in history on which so much of our economic future depends, we can ill afford regulations that repel investment. The issuance of the carbon tax is a prime example of misguided policy that will unravel our economic sweater — a must-have in the land of ice.

Just as many Americans may have only themselves to blame for Trump, Canadians must take on responsibility as citizens and businesses to lead for a full retraction on or block regulations that impede our potential prosperity. We can dance with the dragon or the devil himself, but what will nurture economic growth when we put potential business investment on ice?

Contact Brenda through her website: www.brendaschoepp.com.

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By Dan Darling

CULTIVATING RELATIONSHIPS

The volatility of the cattle market in 2016, punctuated by very large and rapid market changes over the past three years, has left many cattle producers on edge as 2017 gets underway. At present, it is somewhat unfortunate that the extreme volatility has overshadowed the positive market situation. The start of 2017 saw calf prices back over $200/cwt and, in some cases, feedlots making over $200/head. Traditionally, this would be considered very strong market conditions, but uncertainty and recent extremely high prices has made keeping perspective difficult.

There's another source of uncertainty around what the year will bring with our largest trading partner. At time of writing, the inauguration of President Donald Trump on January 20 had yet to occur. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau shuffled his cabinet, signaling that he is preparing for the incoming Trump administration. Former International Trade Minister Chrystia Freeland was appointed Canada's new minister of foreign affairs. François-Philippe Champagne was named the new minister of international trade. Prior to this appointment, he served as the parliamentary secretary to the minister of finance, and has a professional background as a lawyer and international trade specialist. The Canadian Cattlemen's Association (CCA) will work to maintain existing relationships and establish strong working relationships with new ministers of importance to the beef industry as the spring session approaches. The CCA will ensure that the interests of Canadian beef producers are advanced regardless of any action on trade agreements President Trump may make now and into the future.

The CCA places a high priority on relationship building with governments, and industry stakeholders and counterparts domestically and internationally. We continue to grow the Canada-U.S. relationship at every opportunity. In January, CCA was part of the Canadian delegation attending the State Agriculture and Rural Leaders (SARL) conference in Baton Rouge. The SARL conference is one of several vehicles CCA has utilized over the years for U.S. agriculture policy discussion and debate. The trip was among a handful of Canada-U.S. relationship-building events CCA attended last month, with meetings at the American Farm Bureau in Phoenix, a Canada/U.S. roundtable in Denver and the National Cattlemen's Beef Association convention in Nashville.

These meetings are an opportunity for CCA to advance its objectives with Americans who have influence. Last month, I wrote about the value of having and maintaining these long-established relationships, in terms of reports that the Trump transition team had included reinstatement of country-of-origin labelling (COOL) as an objective. The CCA was able to leverage relationships with allies who effectively explained to the Trump transition team why COOL is bad policy for the U.S., resulting in its deletion from the Trump trade policy plan. As we continue to monitor the situation, the CCA is taking every opportunity to reinforce the importance of Canada retaining its right to impose retaliatory tariffs if the U.S. reintroduces COOL in a manner that causes renewed discrimination against imported livestock.

The CCA sees an opportunity to work with the new administration on regulatory co-operation as they have signaled their intention to eliminate two regulations for every new one created. This could be an avenue to address some outdated requirements on Canadian live cattle shipments into the U.S.

At the bigger picture level, the movement of Minister Freeland to foreign affairs, and taking with her the responsibility for North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) trade policy, is the Government of Canada's first move toward ensuring the overall Canada-U.S. relationship is poised to maintain the preferred relationship that NAFTA currently provides, and to identify possibilities to further improve trade opportunities. The CCA also expects the government to encourage industry groups and individual companies to reach out to U.S. counterparts to ensure that all fully appreciate the value of maintaining our close relationship. The CCA is fortunate to already be well advanced at such efforts, but understand that we must never take these relationships for granted.

Another benefit of excellent relations became evident late last year when CCA was asked to participate in the CFIA's Western Area Emergency Operations Centre regarding the bovine tuberculosis investigation. This is a first from an industry-government collaboration and CCA shared these duties with Alberta Beef Producers. Overall government and industry collaboration is excellent and appreciated.

Of course, relationships with producers here at home are also a priority. Producer meeting season got underway in January. CCA representatives were happy to attend and present a report at several Beef Farmers of Ontario county meetings and the Ontario Cattle Feeders Association meeting. A variety of annual meetings of provincial members and industry stakeholders will also provide CCA with welcome opportunities to touch base with producers. We are also very grateful when the provincial organizations send producers to Ottawa to participate in coordinated CCA lobby days with MPs, that we call "fly-ins."

The CCA's annual general meeting will be in Ottawa from March 8-10, 2017. The CCA AGM is typically well attended and includes representation from our U.S. industry counterparts and allies. One of the hallmark events of the AGM is the CCA VIP reception, scheduled for the evening of March 8. The CCA reception is always well-received and the guest list includes senators, members of parliament and their staff and other key influencers in Ottawa.

From my perspective, both as a producer and as president of the CCA, there are plenty of reasons for producers to maintain a positive outlook in the months ahead as we navigate through uncertainty together.

Dan Darling is president of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association

NewsRoundup

IDENTIFICATION

Full Traceability... we have a plan for that!

By Debbie Furber

Full traceability for cattle is once again set to move full-steam ahead as the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) renews its push to develop regulations that require mandatory premises identification and animal movement reporting. These two components, together with mandatory animal identification, in place for cattle since July 1, 2001, constitute an internationally recognized traceability system for animal health and food safety purposes.

The impetus for this renewed enthusiasm is the result of several positive meetings with key Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) and CFIA officials late last year where long-serving industry representatives on the Cattle Implementation Plan (CIP) committee became convinced that CFIA is now prepared to align its regulations with recommendations detailed in the CIP.

"Industry is 100 per cent behind the CIP, it always has been," says longtime committee chair Steve Primrose, a cattle buyer and feedlot and cow-calf operator from Lethbridge, Alta., who has represented the Canadian Livestock Dealers Association and the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA) on the CIP committee since its inception.

"Government is 100 per cent moving forward in tandem with industry. It's looking like the regulations will align with the CIP but interpretation of some of the points from industry's perspective and the government's perspective might end up being different. The wording will be important. We know we have our points made to the CFIA and Minister MacAulay is aware of the plan.

"This is one situation where all of industry, and the provincial and federal governments have to buy in with everyone working toward the same goal or it won't work."

Volumes could be written about what went on behind the scenes to get the Cattle Implementation Plan to this point since 2011 when then agriculture minister Gerry Ritz called the cattle industry and government to a summit in Saskatoon to agree on a plan to turn full traceability into a reality.

The result was a step-by-step plan to create a voluntary, phased-in approach for premises identification (PID) and movement reporting.

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Seventeen major industry groups finalized the details with government consultation and presented what they believed was a final plan to CFIA in 2012 to begin preparing the regulations.

The plan mapped the transition from a proven traceback system, based on cattle identification tags, to a full movement reporting system which appreciates the realities of how cattle are handled and shipped and the limitations of the current technology.

Obviously there have been some delays since then. One big hurdle, says Primrose, occurred when AAFC pushed the implementation of premises ID onto the provinces. It has taken until now to get every province on board, and none have 100 per cent of their producers signed up.

Another setback occurred in 2014, when CFIA went off the Plan and proposed introducing a requirement to read tags in and out of every site with a different PID. The industry balked. This wasn't in the CIP all had agreed to.

"The beef cattle industry has so many moving parts and since the applied research project to test reading equipment at sales ven-

ues across the country showed there isn't a system that can get 100 per cent (of RFID numbers), the thinking is we can get a big chunk and that's better than nothing," Primrose says.

Delegations were sent to other countries to examine different tag reading technologies, but the consensus always came back to the agreed upon CIP as being the best way forward for Canada.

"The CIP has always been about working together to get an understanding of what's needed and what we can do, and it has always been about the money. Especially now with government cutbacks, there is only a small pool of money, so we have to make sure traceability is affordable. There's no sense having an elaborate scheme (if) nobody can afford it."

LOOKING AHEAD

The CIP is updated every couple of years as circumstances and technology change, so it has always been a work in progress, but it's now at the point where not much more can be done until the regulations lay out what will be required.

Once the regs are written, Primrose says the industry focus will shift to one of making producers aware of their responsibilities under the new rules. Industry associations can spearhead this effort and Primrose views the mobile field representative program in Aberta as a good example to follow. The CIP recommends a similar nationwide approach for movement reporting.

Defining the cost-sharing principles for implementation and the ongoing cost of traceability as well as negotiating an accord to ensure future governments honour the principles of the CIP are a few issues currently being looked at by industry representatives.

"Our understanding is that when legislation for movement reporting is introduced it will be as agreed in the CIP," says Saskatchewan rancher Pat Hayes, another CIP committee member.

"What we have to do now as an industry is to make sure we can meet it. It's important that industry is doing its part by using PID numbers and movement documents

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to prove CIP works over the next three to five years, or we might end up with an elaborate version," he says.

While there is general agreement on using the current CIP to craft the regulations, there are still federal-provincial jurisdictional issues to do with premises ID and movement reporting to be resolved, plus a few grey areas surrounding when RFID tags need to be read.

Hays says a substantial investment will also be needed to develop an electronic manifest that ties in with CCIA's Canadian Livestock Tracking System database and employee training at locations required to read and report RFID numbers to the CLTS database.

A manifest, or movement document, in paper or electronic form, will need to accompany cattle transported from the farm of origin, linked premises or linked commingling premises (private and public community pastures, Crown grazing lands). Producers may choose to link their primary premises to other owned, leased or commingling premises to identify one animal health unit in a PID database.

At a minimum the proposed manifest would require the shipper's PID, species, head count, loading or unloading date, and license plate of the transport. Each province may include addi-

tional information as needed to facilitate commerce.

It wouldn't be mandatory to report this information to the CLTS database when shipping cattle because all of it will be reported along with the receiver's PID when the RFID numbers are read at the next farm, feedlot or other intermediate site.

Federally and provincially registered packing plants, dead-stock operators, renderers and exporters, are already required by regulation to read and report RFID numbers to retire them from the CLTS database.

"The CFIA suggests a review three years after the regulations come into force, but industry has asked for five years to get PID databases populated and movement documents in place to create a baseline," says Saskatchewan rancher and current CCIA chair Mark Elford.

All are in agreement that the first move from the farm of origin or its linked premises will be caught on the movement document. The first reading of RFID numbers to be reported to the CLTS database would be after the cattle are read at the receiving premises, the exception being for sales venues.

Manifests are already in use in Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia, administered by inspection agencies. It will be a much bigger change for producers, marketers and transporters operating from Manitoba, Ontario and the Maritimes. Quebec already has its own system.

One issue Elford says CFIA is working on, is the tag-reading requirement for cattle crossing provincial borders. Many ranches operate on both sides of a border and in some places cattle graze freely in pastures that span borders. In Saskatchewan, almost all cattle cross the Alberta border to feedlots or packing plants, so there should be no need to handle them when the tags will be read by the receiver.

Simply put, mandatory use of a movement document is a tradeoff for not having to read RFID tags again at sales venues when shipping cattle, says Rick Wright of Virden who represents the Livestock Mar-

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kets Association of Canada (LMAC) and the CCIA on the CIP committee.

Reading tags at locations where cattle are normally handled in large groups not only slows down trade, but creates bottlenecks that contribute to stress and shrink. Even one per cent additional shrink amounts to a significant loss on each animal for every producer. The losses become staggering when multiplied across a couple of thousand animals per sale at every sale across the country during the busy fall run.

Another important project will test the ability of the CLTS database to accept information from scanned movement documents. Vendors at a November symposium gave assurances that they could create software to scan and automatically upload the required information.

The CFIA has also indicated intermediate sites would not be held responsible for manifests not filled in correctly by producers.

"As an industry, we have to work together to get this done in three years and we might be able to string it out to five. If we don't, we won't have a choice," Wright says. "From Manitoba east, it will take

time and a lot of education to get producers and everyone up the line on board with movement documents. It won't happen without a lot of effort."

Larry Witzel, of the Ontario Livestock Exchange, who also represents LMAC on the CIP committee, says some preliminary work on manifests is already being done in Ontario. In the past, Ontario markets, dealers and truckers relied on their own documents to collect the basic information they needed to transact business. About two years ago, Beef Farmers of Ontario, and the provincial cattle feeders, markets, dealers and trucker associations along with Ontario Agriculture got together to create one common manifest for deliveries of cattle, bison, sheep and goats to markets, dealers and assembly yards, and another for the delivery of those species to farms, feedlots and packing plants. These manifests ask for the same key information that will be required when movement reporting becomes mandatory.

Currently Ontario manifests are voluntary but uptake by the producers has been progressing, albeit slowly.

More than 50 per cent of Ontario producers have voluntarily registered their PID already.

"The CIP is designed so that we aren't duplicating what others down the line are doing because it all comes down to cost," says Witzel.

"I'm hopeful that the regulations will follow the CIP because we need to get to that sweet spot for traceability where we can efficiently get what the CFIA needs to do the job of traceback, but not

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at a high, high cost for producers, industry or government, regardless of how the cost-sharing works out. If it can be low cost and efficient, it will be a win-win for everyone. It is difficult to do, but hopefully we are getting there because whatever we end up with will be in place for future generations because these things can't be changed easily after they are in regulation."

The CIP roadmap was vetted through the CCIA board, which represents all industry sectors, but it is not a lobby group, and last summer the CIP committee felt it needed to provide a more consistent message on traceability in Ottawa, so the Canadian Cattlemen's Association (CCA), the producers' chief lobbyist, and well-known on Parliament Hill, took on this role.

CCA executive vice-president Dennis Laycraft and president Dan Darling, led the industry delegation at the meetings with the CFIA last fall that appeared to put full traceability back on the rails.

"We do feel there is an effort to try to get the regulations moving, but making regulations is a long process," cautions Laycraft. "It could be spring, summer or into fall before we see them."

He views the Cattle Implementation Plan as a good foundation that gives the industry the capability to handle situations and yet allows people to operate in a practical way. The CCA will be working with LMAC and all associations representing the other sectors on the CIP committee to focus on the most practical method possible to capture RFID numbers. Electronic manifests will become an important tool to capture the rest of the information needed to follow the cattle because it is the best way to create fast data.

Now that the ball is rolling again, the CCA will focus its lobbying efforts on moving the CIP along and making sure the regulations align with it, while keeping provincial cattle organizations informed and engaged. Meanwhile, officials must be reminded of the limitations to today's technology when it comes to tag retention amd reading individual tags under varying conditions without compromising the industry's concern for animal welfare and meat quality.

"We can't apply perfect solutions to imperfect problems," says Laycraft. "The CIP is a work in progress. If we get the right process moving forward, industry will be strong and competitive and we will strengthen the traceback system."

A copy of the Cattle Implementation Plan is found on www.canadaid.ca.

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☐ I'm ranching or farming

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Total beef cattle	
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Registered cows	
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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:

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☐ d) 55 to 64 ☐ e) 65 or over

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MARKETPLACE

By Mike Millar

PurelyPurebred

Suggestions are always welcome. My phone number is **306-251-0011**
Email: **mike.millar@fbcpublishing.com**

■ 2016 was a record-setting year for the Canadian Angus Association with members registering 62,414 calves. The previous high was 61,578 calves in 2008. Sales of Canadian Angus Rancher Endorsed tags was the second-highest amount on record at 278,010.

■ Congratulations to Glen and Darlene Glessman of Glesbar Cattle Co. Ltd. for winning the Canadian Angus Foundation's first early bird draw for a copy of the foundation's history book. The foundation continues to seek histories and encourages everyone to submit their story no matter how big or small their operation, and whether their story starts last month or 100 years ago. Throughout 2017, the foundation will draw one name per month from all of those who have submitted their family histories. Once you submit your history, your name remains in the draw. The sooner you submit your story, the more chances you will have to win.

■ Mary Elmhirst of Elmlodge Polled Herefords in Ontario was presented with the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario (FWIO) Woman of Excellence in Agriculture Award. The award recognizes the significant contributions made by women in agriculture at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair.

■ The Canadian Simmental Association's Hall of Fame inductees for 2016 are Stan Church of Bearspaw, Alta., and Jim McMillen of Carievale, Sask. Stan Church is a well-known Calgary lawyer and rancher who began importing Simmentals from Europe in 1971. Over the years he served the breed as president of the Canadian Simmental Association twice and represented the breed on the Canadian Beef Breeds Council. Jim McMillen has been in love with Simmentals for nearly half a century, going back to when he and his brother imported their first half-blood calves in 1971, to the point where today the family-run McMillen Ranching Ltd. markets upwards of 175 bulls annually.

■ Congratulations are also in order for Jim Hines and family who were named the Northern Alberta Hereford Club Commercial Producer of the Year at Farmfair.

■ Canadian exhibitors did well in the Red Angus division of the 2017 National Western Stock Show in Denver.

Grand Champion bull honours went to Damar Trump C512 a powerful Power eye son owned by Blairs.Ag, Rust Mountain View ranch, Thomas Ranch and Yackley Ranches.

Northline Angus with partners Goad Family Angus and Collier Diamond C Ranch took home the Reserve Grand Champion Red Angus bull banner with their bull Red Northline GFA Crush.

Congratulations also go out to Blairs.Ag Cattle on being named Premier Exhibitor at the 2017 National Western Red Angus show.

■ The 2017 Canadian Simmental Association's annual convention will be taking place August 10-13, in Fredericton, N.B. It features CSA's annual meeting, the Friends of Canadian Simmental Foundation's AGM and auction, as well as the Young Canadian Simmental Association's National Simmental Show. Watch Simmental.com for updates or contact the CSA office.

■ I am a bit late in recognizing Brad Dubeau's many contributions to the Canadian Hereford Association during his time as the CHA director of communications. In late December he moved on to fill a similar role with the Alberta Beef Producers.

■ Speaking of Herefords, here's a list of the 2016 National Hereford Show Champions as judged at Agribition:

Horned Herefords:

- Grand Champion Bull, TRIPLE A 2059 BAM BAM ET 11B, exhibited by Triple A Herefords. Reserve Grand Champion Bull, BIG-GULLY 102 HURLEY 271C, exhibited by Big Gully Farm.
- Grand Champion Female, GH KILO DOMINETTE 64D, exhibited by Hirsche Herefords & Angus Ltd. Reserve Grand Champion Female, BCD 323S KENZIE 217Z, exhibited by Brad Dallas.

Polled Herefords:

- Grand Champion Bull, BNC 201A DIAMOND JIM 102C, exhibited by Glenlees Farms, Ron Schmidt and Micheal Caley Sr. Reserve Grand Champion Bull, REMITALL W GD WATERLOO ET 12B, exhibited by Remitall-West and Glenrose Polled Herefords.
- Grand Champion Female, RVP 51X ABLAZE 7A, exhibited by Harvie Ranching and RSK Farms. Reserve Grand Champion Female, REMITALL WEST BELLE 36B, exhibited by Remitall-West.

■ The 2016 recipient of the prestigious World Simmental Fleckvieh Federation's Golden Book Award is Bob Gordon of Souris, Man. who passed away last summer. The award is given to individuals and or ranches that have contributed to the Simmental breed both domestically and abroad.

■ The Canadian Limousin Association board of directors has decided to allow its provincial associations to bid on hosting the 50th Anniversary Show & Sale for the breed in Canada in 2019. Bids will be accepted up until March 1, 2017, after which the CLA membership will be able to participate in an online poll to vote on the location.

■ The Canadian Gelbvieh Association elected a new board of directors at its annual meeting during Canadian Western Agribition in November. Back row (l-r): Kert Ness, Ryan Sommerfeld, James Jasper, Neal Overby. Front row (l-r): Lon Carlson (vice-president), Aaron Birch, Lee Wirgau (president).

■ The Young Canadian Simmental Association Leadership Conference is taking place February 23-25, 2017, in Calgary, Alta. For further information contact YCSA programs co-ordinator Kelsey Dust at kdust@simmental.com or 306-291-7086.

■ Updated EPDs and indexes are now available on the Canadian Simmental Association website. This evaluation ushers in some new traits including the first multi-breed stayability, where EPDs are calculated on animals of all breeds and breed combinations. The new stayability analysis achieves multiple firsts for the Canadian Simmental Association and International Genetic Solutions (IGS). Their STAY EPD is the first "Single Step" EPD ever produced in the beef industry on a large database. Single Step refers to the analysis being performed by incorporating DNA markers directly into the genetic evaluation. This approach leverages DNA in the most effective way possible, yielding the most accurate EPDs possible. The STAY EPD is also the first ever published via the industry's most advanced genetic evaluation software, BOLT (Biometric Open Language Tools). Over time, CSA's full array of EPDs will be transitioned to BOLT, which will ensure that our members and their customers will have the most accurate EPDs available when making selection decisions. Detailed statistics and evaluation reports are available online at: www.simmental.com/resource.html.

■ The Canadian Hereford Association is once again holding RFI trials at Olds College and Cattleland Feedyards Ltd. An additional 250 yearling bulls are anticipated to complete the test this year and receive a genomically enhanced residual feed intake EPD.

■ Cattlemen's Young Leaders:

Luke Marshall

Luke Marshall
Mentor: Leighton Kolk, Kolk Farms Ltd., Iron Springs, Alta.
Marshall grew up and is now working as a part of his family's farm, Future Farms, west of Innisfail. The farm consists of a purebred Charolais herd, commercial herd, and a backgrounding operation. Marshall was an active member of his local 4-H club as well as being involved with the Canadian Charolais Youth Association. Having now re-established himself in his hometown area he looks forward to giving back to these and other organizations that he was involved in and benefited so much from growing up. Marshall received a bachelor of science in agribusiness degree from the

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University of Saskatchewan. He wants to be able to utilize his degree at the production end of things and sees streamlining beef production practices as a way to make it more efficient, sustainable, and profitable. He is looking forward to a great year ahead.

Jason Hurst

Jason Hurst
Mentor: Mathew Heleniak, president, Norwich Packers

Jason grew up outside of Elora, and now farms in Durham, Ont. His interest in the beef industry began with his first 4-H Gelbvieh calf. His family was passionate about growing and promoting the Gelbvieh breed in Ontario, after seeing the breed's success in Western Canada. As he grew up, the herd continued to expand and his family focused on growing the breed in Ontario. In 2010 the Hurst family moved their operation farther north to Durham, Ont., where today, Jason, along with his wife Andrea and his parents Paul and Laurie, operate Carroll Creek Cattle Company. Today the operation consists of about 50 purebred Gelbvieh, Angus and Simmental cows.

Off the farm, Hurst attended the University of Guelph where he received a bachelor of science in agriculture. He pursued a career in the feed business following graduation, and currently works for Masterfeeds as an account manager focused on beef customers across Ontario. He works daily with feedlots, as well as commercial and purebred cow-calf operations. He has served as a director of the Canadian Gelbvieh Association and the Beef Farmers of Grey County. He also helps lead his local beef 4-H club, where he got his start in the beef industry.

Maddy Knodel

Maddy Knodel
Mentor: Ryan Copithorne, rancher

Having been raised on her family's commercial cow-calf ranch located in southern Alberta, Knodel has had a lifelong involvement in agriculture. In addition to helping her parents with their ranch, Knodel operates her own cattle enterprise. She purchases yearlings in the spring, grazes them over the summer and sells them in the fall. Off the ranch, she has been involved in several agriculture-oriented programs such as pasture management camps, 4-H, Green Certificate, and rodeo. She is currently a tester for the Green Certificate program and has volunteered as a judge for 4-H and for the Medicine Hat Exhibition and Stampede Rodeo Royalty Competition. In 2012 Knodel had the unique experience of serving as the MHE&S Rodeo Queen.

Her passion for agriculture led her to pursue a degree in agricultural biotechnology at the University of Lethbridge where she is currently in her final year of studies. She is a member and past president of the university's agriculture club, and received the Agriculture Studies Award for two consecutive years. This year she was also the recipient of the Bayer CropScience Award. Upon graduation she hopes to be accepted into veterinary college with the goal of becoming a large animal vet. It is also her ambition to assume management of her family's ranch.

By Debbie McMillin

TheMarkets

FED CATTLE

The combination of a rising U.S. market, a weaker Canadian dollar, a historically strong basis in Western Canada and tight front-end supplies sparked a strong start to the 2017 fed cattle market. Western Canadian fed steers climbed 24.5 per cent since the fall low of $128.31 to $160.31/cwt the second week of January. Better prices have encouraged timely marketing which, in turn, brought carcass weights down across the country. 2017 opened with average steer carcasses 24 pounds lighter than a year ago.

We also opened the year with a historically strong cash-to-cash basis of $4.15/cwt over the U.S. market compared to -$13.34 last January, a difference of $17.

The December cattle-on-feed report for Alberta and Saskatchewan was down by 10 per cent at 870,569 head, the fifth decline in a row confirming the tight supply situation in the Canadian market. November placements, however, were up 19 per cent at 268,984 head due to the delayed fall run and the addition of some of those heifers people were holding, in hopes of better prices at the end of the fall run. Fed cattle sales were up in 2016 with a six per cent increase in steers at 1,465,996, and heifers at 777,629 head. Fed cattle exports finished 2016 a whopping 46 per cent ahead of 2015 at 315,399 head.

FEEDER CATTLE

The stronger tone in the fed and technical markets contributed to a strong rally in the feeder cattle market over the past couple of months. Up nearly 22 per cent from the October low, 550-lb. feeder steers averaged $204.80/cwt the second week of January. Feeder cattle volumes at auction were larger through December as producers decided to move more cattle into the stronger market. Also noted were an increased number of heifers sold in the last month of 2016 as many producers who had moved their steer calves earlier in the run but held the heifers in hopes of higher prices. Heavier-weight feeder cattle trade has been more mixed, bouncing from the fall low in October of $157.77/cwt to December when most of the trade was averaging between $172-177/cwt. At the start of 2017, 850-lb. feeder steers averaged $172.75/cwt, which is $57/cwt under the same week last year. The 850-lb. feeder basis is also positive as we start 2017, +$1.76 in the second week compared to -$7.16/cwt at the same week last year. Feeder cattle exports finished 2016 down 38 per cent year-to-year at 179,045 head.

NON-FED CATTLE

D1,2 cow prices followed a typical seasonal trend at the end of 2016 and start of 2017. Prices picked up from the fall lows with the current D1,2 price in Western Canada at $97.75/cwt, which is just $9/cwt back from last year but nearly a $20/cwt premium over the current U.S. utility cow market. Looking back at the close-out numbers for 2016, the number of cows exported to the U.S. was down five per cent at 202,883 head and bull exports were off by 33 per cent at 54,570 head. As a result, domestic cow and bull slaughter totals were up markedly. Cow slaughter was up 13 per cent at 391,840 head and bull slaughter jumped 31 per cent to 13,556.

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

More markets

DEB'S OUTLOOK

FED CATTLE

Profitable feeding margins over the past month encouraged timely marketing which is keeping front-end supplies current. Recent cattle-on-feed reports suggest a very manageable supply of cattle for the first quarter, which should support the cash market. The Canadian dollar continues to trade below its five-year average and near-term feed costs should remain low.

One factor to keep an eye on will be the fed basis. It's uncommon to trade over the U.S. market at this time of year. History would suggest the basis will weaken moving forward, sparked either by a U.S. market rally, or our market moving lower. Then there's the four per cent increase in the U.S. hog supply. While the relationship between cattle and hog prices has moved back within the historical norm, growing pork supplies remain a concern. Overall, we can expect support for fed cattle prices in the near term with a lower Canadian dollar and tighter first-quarter supplies being the main driving factors.

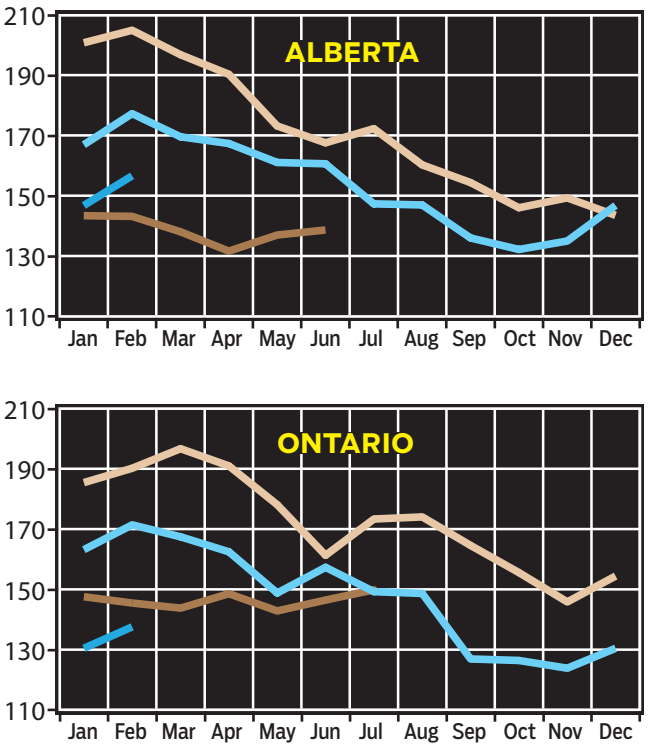
FEEDER CATTLE

Continued strength in the technical markets will be crucial to maintaining a strong feeder market, already buoyed up by ample supplies of cheaper feed grains and the weaker dollar. Moderate volumes of feeder calves on offer will support this trend as will the increased interest from buyers after feedlot spot margins moved back into profitable territory. Expect seasonal strength in the calf market; however, the volatility seen in recent months urges a cautiously optimistic attitude.

NON-FED CATTLE

Smaller volumes are expected which should support seasonal strength in cow prices through the first quarter. The dollar and tighter fed cattle supplies are other positives, but remember we usually look to the U.S. market as our floor and cows and bulls are currently trading above the U.S. That will limit exports and the upside potential for this market.

Break-even Prices on A-Grade Steers



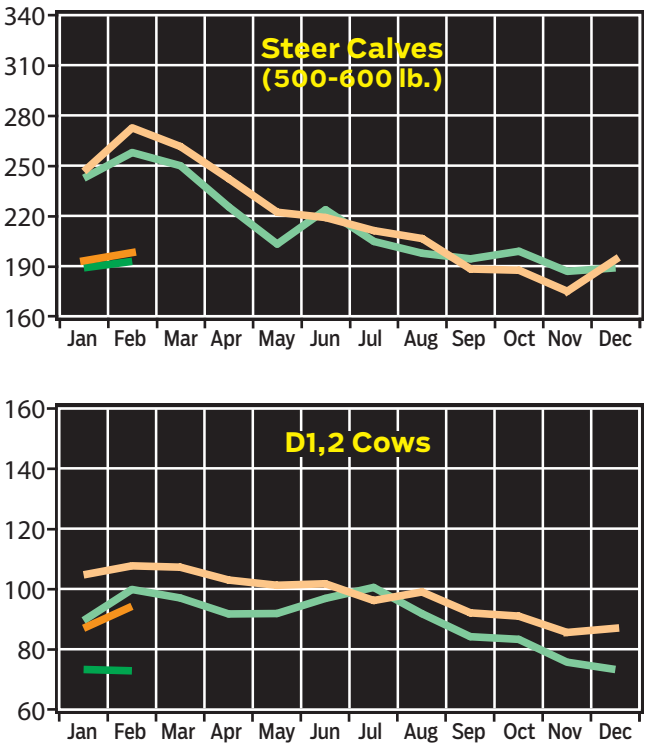
Canfax weighted average price on A-Grade steers

2017
2016

Break-even price for steers on date sold

2017
2016

Market Prices



Ontario

2017
2016

Alberta

2016
2015

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

January 2017 prices*

Alberta

Yearling steers (850 lb.)	$171.23/cwt
Barley	3.78/bu.
Barley silage	47.25/ton
Cost of gain (feed)	58.21/cwt
Cost of gain (all costs)	88.24/cwt
Fed steers	156.59/cwt
Break-even (June 2017)	138.63/cwt

Ontario

Yearling steers (850 lb.)	$178.97/cwt
Corn silage	38.32/ton
Grain corn	4.54/bu.
Cost of gain (feed)	72.39/cwt
Cost of gain (all costs)	106.14/cwt
Fed steers	137.56/cwt
Break-even (July 2017)	149.84/cwt

*Mid-month to mid-month prices
Breakevens
East: end wt 1,450, 183 days
West end wt 1,325 lb., 125 days

Market Summary (toJanuary 7, 2017)

	2017	2016
Total Canadian federally inspected slaughter	39,757	46,086
Average steer carcass weight	918 lb.	942 lb.
Total U.S. slaughter	1,146,000	1,173,000

TRADE SUMMARY

EXPORTS	2016	2015
Fed cattle to U.S. (to December 31)	315,115	215,801
Feeder cattle and calves to U.S. (to December 31)	179,045	287,608
Dressed beef to U.S. (to November)	551.49 mil.lbs	470.39 mil.lbs
Total dressed beef (to November)	728.87 mil.lbs	650.45 mil.lbs

IMPORTS	2016	2015
Slaughter cattle from U.S. (to November)	0	0
*Dressed beef from U.S. (to November)	225.12 mil.lbs	240.63 mil.lbs
*Dressed beef from Australia (to November)	59.37 mil.lbs	88.09 mil.lbs
*Dressed beef from New Zealand (to November)	42.70 mil.lbs	51.29 mil.lbs
*Dressed beef from Uruguay (to November)	33.30 mil.lbs	28.45 mil.lbs

Canadian Grades (to January 14, 2017)

% of A grades	Yield +59%	54-58%	−53%	Total
AAA	0.1	0.4	1.8	2.3
AA	14.8	21.9	24.2	60.9
A	18.7	9.9	4.9	33.5
Prime	1.2	0.2	0.1	1.5
Total	34.8	32.4	31.0	

Total A grade 98.2%

	Total graded	Total ungraded	% carcass basis
EAST	19,085	1,040	84.3%
WEST	65,062	1,050	86.1%

Only federally inspected plants

By Jerry Klassen

PREPARE FOR SPRING RALLY ON BARLEY AND FEED GRAINS

Southern Alberta feedlots were buying feed barley in the range of $160/mt to $165/mt delivered over the past month; central Alberta operations were showing bids from $155/mt to $160/mt. Southern Manitoba feed mills have been buying barley with low vomitoxin levels from $155/mt to $165/mt but overall barley usage is limited in this region. Feed wheat prices have been quite variable depending on the quality, and by this I'm referring to the level of fusarium or vomitoxin. Feed durum has traded from $150/mt to $160/mt delivered in Alberta feedlot regions while hard red spring and Canada prairie spring wheat prices are at slight premium.

Statistics Canada estimated the 2016 barley crop at 8.9 million mt, which was up from the 2015 production of 8.2 million mt. Accounting for carry-in stocks and imports, the total supplies for the 2016-17 crop year are estimated at 10.3 million mt, up from year-ago levels of 9.6 million mt.

Barley exports will be mostly malt quality because Canadian feed barley is uncompetitive on the world market compared to Black Sea and Australian origin. Domestic processing demand is relatively inelastic each year but feed consumption will be down from year-ago levels due to the substitution of feed wheat and durum. The Canadian barley carry-out for 2016-17 is estimated at 2.4 million mt, which is up from the 2015-16 ending stocks of 1.5 million mt, and up from the 10-year average carryout of 1.9 million mt. Barley supplies are rather burdensome which will limit any strength in the market.

Approximately 40 per cent of the hard red spring wheat crop was feed grade and up to 55 per cent of the durum crop graded in the non-milling category. So far, there has been limited offshore movement of feed wheat and feed durum. Europe experienced adverse weather similar to Canada resulting in larger feed wheat production. European along with Russian, Ukrainian and Australian feed wheat supplies make the world awash with feed wheat. Therefore, Canadian farmers and merchants with lower-quality wheat and durum have to sell it into domestic feed channels. Keep in mind the Canadian all-wheat crop was the second largest on record reaching nearly 32 million mt.

So far, feedlots have not had difficulty buying sufficient supplies of barley with low vomitoxin levels. Each feedlot can have different tolerances and standards with various discount schedules. Fusarium can be visually seen in the kernel but vomitoxin needs to be tested in a lab. Some studies have shown that heavier beef cattle can use barley and wheat with 10 to 12 ppm (parts per million) vomitoxin without significant changes in weight gain or consumption levels; however, calves and lighter feeder cattle can have problems. Background and feedlot managers will not use higher vomitoxin/fusarium barley for calves and lighter weight feeder cattle. Studies have shown, as a rule of thumb, one per cent fusarium equates to about one ppm vomitoxin but the variance for one per cent fusarium can be from 0.5 ppm to as high as 4.0 ppm vomitoxin. Certain feedlots don't want barley with fusarium damage over three per cent for this reason. Feedlot margins improved in December and remain rather strong but they still can't afford any slippage in feed per gain efficiencies. Farmers are encouraged to have their barley and feed wheat tested for vomitoxin.

Looking forward, there is usually a seasonal rally in late March and early April when the road bans come into effect

Canadian barley and feed wheat prices will have limited upside potential until these burdensome supplies are absorbed, largely in the domestic market. Looking forward, there is usually a seasonal rally in late March and early April when road bans come into effect. Farmer selling tends to slow down during this time and limited supplies come on the market during spring seeding. Over the past years, we've seen a $10/mt to $15/mt rally in the feed grain prices during this time so feedlots will want to be aware of this potential and take forward coverage in late February or early March. At the time of writing this article, 2017 barley acres are expected to be down five to 10 per cent. Should this year-over-year decline materialize, the market will be very sensitive to growing conditions in June and July. The barley and corn markets tend to incorporate a risk premium due until the upcoming crop is more certain. This may spark a rally in the summer months if adverse growing conditions prevail. Strength in new crop values will pull up old crop prices because the fundamental structure for 2017-18 will be tighter with lower supplies.

Jerry Klassen manages the Canadian office of Swiss-based grain trader GAP SA Grains and Produits Ltd., and is president and founder of Resilient Capital specializing in proprietary commodity futures trading and market analysis. He owns farmland in Manitoba and Saskatchewan but grew up on a mixed farm feedlot operation in southern Alberta. He can be reached at 204-504-8339.

Sales&Events

EVENTS

FEBRUARY

7 BIO annual meeting, Elora, Ont.
7-9 Western Canada Feedlot Management School, Moose Jaw, Sask.
9 Stauffer Ranches 2-yr.-old Black Angus Bull Sale, Fort MacLeod Auction, Fort Macleod, Alta.
15-16 Lloydminster Exhibition Agri-Visions
15-17 Alberta Beef Industry Conference, Sheraton Red Deer Hotel, Red Deer, Alta.
20 Ole Farms 12th Annual Family Day Sale, at the farm, Athabasca, Alta.
21 Cattlemen's College, International Plaza Hotel, Toronto, Ont.
22-23 Beef Farmers of Ontario annual meeting, International Plaza Hotel, Toronto, Ont.
24-26 Canadian Young Farmers Conference, Westin Ottawa, Ottawa, Ont.

MARCH

17-18 Maritime Beef Conference, Best Western Glengarry Hotel, Truro, N.S.
18 Nova Scotia Cattle Producer's Association annual meeting, Best Western Glengarry Hotel, Truro, N.S.
21-22 Livestock Care Conference, Best Western Plus Denham Inn, Leduc, Alta.

SALES

FEBRUARY

10 Anchor D Ranch Simmentals "Genetic Edge" Bull Sale, at the ranch, Rimbey, Alta.
11 Denbie Ranch & Guests, Ste. Rose Auction Mart, Ste. Rose du Lac, Man.
12 Diamond M Ranch 6th Annual Bull and Female Sale, at the ranch, Estevan, Sask.
15 Outlaw Cattle Co. Bull and Female Sale, at the ranch, Hussar, Alta.
16 Nordal Limousin & Angus, at Saskatoon Livestock Sales, Saskatoon, Sask.
16 M&J Farms Annual Bull Sale, at the ranch, Russell, Man.
17 Mader Ranches 28th Annual Bull Power Sale, at the ranch, Carstairs, Alta.
19 Bonchuk Farms, Heartland Livestock, Virden, Man.
21 Rawes Ranch 34th Annual Bull Sale, at the ranch, Strome, Alta.
22 Saddleridge Charolais Bull Sale, Bow Slope Shipping Assoc., Brooks Alta.
23 Chapman Cattle Co. 11th Annual "Forage Developed" Angus Bull Sale, Stettler Auction Mart, Stettler, Alta.
23 Benlock Farms Bull Sale, at the farm, Grandora, Sask.
23 Stewart Cattle Co. Annual Black Angus Bull Sale, at Neepawa Ag-Plex, Neepawa, Man.
24 Maple Leaf French Charolais and Guests Bull Sale, Calnash Ag Event Centre, Ponoka, Alta.
25 Sandan Charolais/Springside Farms 20th Annual Bull Sale, at the farm, Erskine, Alta.
25 Lewis Farms 32nd Annual Bull Sale, at the farm, Spruce Grove, Alta.

MARCH

2 Calgary Bull Sale, at Century Downs, Calgary, Alta.
4 Davidson Gelbvieh & Lonesome Dove Ranch 28th Annual Bull Sale, at the ranch, Ponteix, Sask.
4 High Country Bull Sale, at the ag grounds, Pincher Creek, Alta.
4 McMillan Ranching 23rd Annual Bull Sale, at the ranch, Carievale, Sask.
4 Chomiak Charolais 13th Annual Home of "John" Bulls, Bull & Female Sale, Viking Auction Market, Viking, Alta.
5 R Plus Simmentals 17th Annual Bull Sale, at the ranch, Estevan Sask.
5-6 Pride of the Prairies Bull Show and Sale, Exhibition Grounds, Lloydminster, Alta.
6 Coyote Flats Charolais Bull Sale, at the farm, Coaldale, Alta.
7 WJ Simmentals – Built Right Bull Sale, 1p.m. at Provost Livestock Exchange, Provost, Alta.
7 Belvin Angus 5th Annual Bull Sale, at the farm, Innisfail, Alta.
10 A. Sparrow Farms Annual Bull Sale, at the farm, Vanscoy, Sask.
11 LLB Angus – 31st Annual Bull and Female Sale, at the farm, Erskine, Alta.
11 Edie Creek Angus, Ashern, Man.
12 Steppler Farms Charolais Bull Sale, at the farm, Miami, Man.
12 Black Pearl and Female Sale, Edwards Livestock Center, Tisdale, Sask.
13 Palmer/Nielsen 6th Annual Charolais and Black and Red Angus Bull Sale, at Palmer Charolais, Bladworth, Sask.
14 Harvie Ranching Bull Sale, at the ranch, Olds, Alta.
14 McTavish Farms and Guests Charolais and Red Angus Bull Sale, at the farm, Moosomin, Sask.
14 Prairie Partners Bull and Female Sale, Killarney Auction Mart, Killarney, Man.
14 Dayspring Cattle, Bulls private treaty sale, Sylvan Lake, Alta.
16 Johnson Livestock Annual Angus Bull Sale, at the farm, Peebles, Sask.
16 Bar 3R Limousin 22nd Annual Bull Sale, Crossroads Centre, Oyen, Alta.
17 Reese Cattle Co. Charolais Bull Sale, Innisfail Auction Market, Innisfail, Alta.

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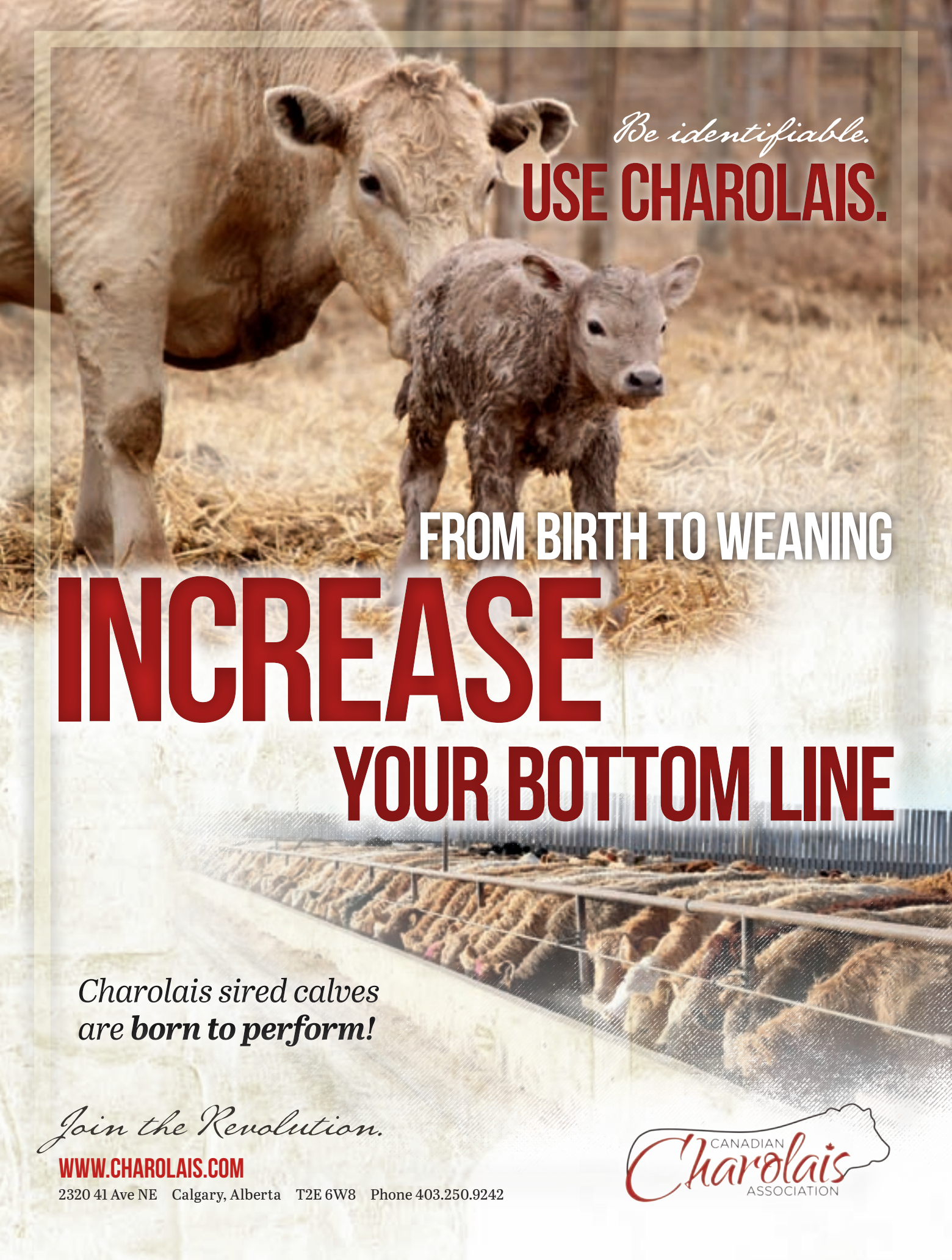
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