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Tips & Strategies Inside

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FEATURES

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Autonomous drill ready to seed Saskatchewan fields next season

By Scott Garvey

What were most farmers thinking as they watched DOT, the autonomous implement platform, perform for seemingly never-ending crowds during the Ag in Motion farm show in July? It’s hard to say if it was amazement, excitement that field robots are finally here, or some combination of the two.

Whichever it was, DOT, the brainchild of SeedMaster president Norbert Beaujot, made its unexpected debut at that show. The autonomous implement platform had been a well-kept secret that was in development for three years, and seeing this machine come from a short-line manufacturer rather than a major brand was arguably even more unexpected.

“I call it my retirement project,” said Beaujot when speaking to Grainews. “It’s my hobby. It’s my passion.”

It’s still too early to draw conclusions, but that hobbyhorse—or 163 horses of Cummins diesel power—might be the machine that spearheads the next major shift in dry-land farming.

Built on a scale designed to fit into the current equipment fleets of commercial farmers, DOT will be the first fully autonomous machine to work Saskatchewan fields in a really meaningful way—as part of normal farming operations. Six “hand-picked” producers who the company feels they can work with will get a chance to incorporate a DOT into their seeding operations next season as part of the initial rollout ahead of a full commercial release.

See AUTONOMOUS on Page 5

Emotional agility during harvest

Elaine Froese says, with emotional agility, you can get past those busy-season blues 39
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A new solution for safety

Leeann Minogue
leeann@fbcpublishing.com

Harvest is underway. So far, we’ve only combined our peas, which have run about average. That’s pretty relieving after this dry summer. We’re a little worried about the canola—a nearby farmer told us his harvested canola is smaller than fine-ground pepper. That’s not a good sign.

Safety is important all year, but it comes to mind even more during harvest when more machines are in motion and more people are out working. On our farm, we’ve made sure our 10-year-old can easily call 911 for help in an emergency. We keep our land location on a bulletin board in a convenient place so he or any guests can tell an operator where we are. But, of course, I worry that maybe that won’t be enough.

Now that our emergency services are co-ordinated by central dispatchers, you can’t phone in and say, “the fire is in the yard south of Glen Richards’ barn.” A 911 operator in Prince Albert probably doesn’t know the back roads near Swift Current well enough to understand if you tell her to get the ambulance driver to turn left where the Peterson’s house used to be.

Theoretically, this isn’t a problem. I’ve talked to spokespersons from the R.C., Alberta and Saskatchewan 911 agencies. Representatives from all three organizations told me that, if you don’t have a typical street address, all you need is your land location and the dispatcher will get help to you. If you’re still using a landlord, location information is usually automatically sent to the 911 operator. Andrew Renfree, 911 program manager for the Alberta Emergency Management Agency, emailed to tell me that, in the future, they’ll even be able to get that location information from your cell phone.

This is all great. Except, occasionally, when it isn’t.

Anecdotally, I’ve heard a few stories from various places about problems getting emergency services to the right remote rural location.

Typically, the people telling the stories seem to believe the problem is a miscommunication between the centralized 911 operator and the local volunteer who answers the phone for the volunteer fire department. I can’t be the only one hearing these stories.

THE SOLUTION IS IN THE STARS

STARS, the non-profit helicopter air ambulance organization is coming to our rescue with a new app that just might solve these problems.

SOLUS, the new STARS smartphone app, uses your smartphone’s GPS system to track your location (iPhone or Android). If you have a wreck, the app puts you in touch with a live person in the STARS Emergency Link Centre. (They won’t necessarily send a STARS helicopter, unless that’s what you need.)

They already know exactly where you are. And there’s more. While you’re telling them what happened, the SOLUS app is already alerting the emergency contacts you’ve pre-loaded into the app. Your wife and your son can be on their way to the field while you’re still explaining why you need an ambulance.

To make it even better, SOLUS also includes a “Neighbour Helping Neighbour” safety network. People living near you who have volunteered to be part of this network will also get the alert, so they can show up to lend a hand while you wait for professional help. Of course, like any network, it’s only as good as the number of people in it. If more people use the SOLUS app, more of your neighbours will be part of your local network.

The only catch: it’s not free. SOLUS costs $9.99 per month, per person. On a family farm with a working husband, wife, child and farm employee, this would run $4.80 per year. Compared to the average annual combine payment, this is a pretty minor fee. And, revenues go to STARS—many of us are already making regular donations to this cause.

Want to try it before you buy? Dow AgriSciences has you covered. They’ll pay for your subscription for the first three months. Text “SOLUS” to 1-204-817-1984. Dow AgriSciences’ automated service will get back to you right away with a promo code and more information about how to use it.

I tested the number. It works just fine. This is not a scam. Read more about the service at www.solus.ca.

Have a safe harvest.
Keep safety top of mind when cleaning out grain bins

A key reason people become entrapped in grain is that grain stored in bins is out of condition. A farmer enters the bin to break down the crusted grain and tragedy strikes, grain comes tumbling down and the person is engulfed. If grain is kept in good condition, no one has to enter the bin, reducing the risk of entrapment.

Cleaning out grain bins isn’t difficult, but it should be done to maintain the quality of grain. It is also a good time to inspect mechanical components and clean up around the bin.

First, check the area outside the bins. Garbage or clutter should be cleaned up and properly disposed of. Garbage and other debris not only increase the profitability as well as reduces the risk of spoilage and angerments and urine. Try to keep the area free of spilled grain as much as possible. If your bin has any mechanical components (eration systems), inspect any wiring or other components for fraying, corrosion or cracks. It’s also a good idea to check for signs of rodents in these areas. These critters can damage wiring quickly. If you do find signs of rodents, wear appropriate personal protective equipment when cleaning any droppings or urine and take appropriate steps to rid the area of these animals.

It’s essential to remember that entering a grain bin should never be done alone. A trained watch person with a means of communication (two-way radio, cellphone etc.) needs to be present outside the bin. This support person needs to have constant visual or voice contact with the person entering the grain bin.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) and the proper equipment should be available and organized before the task is started. A safety harness and lifeline, eye and respiratory personal protective equipment are all essential pieces of equipment. Make sure all your PPE is in good condition and fits well. This equipment isn’t just a “nice to have,” it’s essential.

A component of safely entering bins is performing a lock out. If the bin is equipped with a bin sweep or other moving components, the controls need to be locked out in the off position. This involves locking the controls with either a third-party lock or the one associated with the machinery. Another good idea is to write a note indicating the bin is being cleaned — that way anyone that comes by knows why the controls have been locked out.

Simple operating procedures can help make tasks like bin cleaning safer and more efficient. Visit a/safetyweek.ca and check out the resources including toolbox talks on topics like preparing bins, operating portable augers, transporting oversized loads and more.

AGRONOMY TIPS... FROM THE FIELD

DRIY DOWN BEFORE YOU STRAIGHT CUT

Straight-cutting your shatter-resistant canola variety this season? Timing is of the essence, and you need your field to be ready for harvest.

That’s why you may want to consider using a true desiccant for more precise control over your harvest timing.

However, if controlling perennial weeds is a big concern — or you have a highly variable field — you may want to consider glyphosate or glyphosate plus a harvest aid.

On the other hand, if you got a good plant stand that provided uniform maturity — along with low weed populations, minimal disease or insect damage — then a true desiccant will provide fast dry down to ensure you get that crop harvested as quickly as possible.

Once you’ve chosen between a true desiccant and glyphosate, make sure you’re keeping up good spray practices. Coverage and maximum crop canopy penetration are key.

Here are a few tips to keep in mind:

• Maintain a slow, steady speed.
• Don’t spray in direct sunlight and heat.
• Optimize your spray nozzle pattern and height for good coverage.
• Remember that high water volumes provide the best coverage.

If you have any questions or concerns about drying down your straight-cut canola crop, get in touch with your local service rep before you spray.

Chadrick Carley, agronomic services manager, Syngenta Canada.
Norbert Beaujot, president of SeedMaster is the creator behind DOT.

“They’ll be people we know we can work with on the evolution of the product through the first year,” said Beaujot. “It’s exciting. It was hard to not talk about it, because I’ve kept this confidential for a lot of years. Finally, a few weeks ago we could say, ‘OK, this is what we’re coming out with.’”

DOT uses a U-shaped chassis that is designed to quickly connect to any compatible implement.

“It gives us the ability to load very quickly, having the centre of gravity or weight loaded directly on the platform,” he added. “Compared to a tractor we gain large efficiencies, because you have to weight the tractor up so that it has traction, whereas here it utilizes the implement or the grain in the harvest cart as part of its traction power.”

SeedMaster engineers designed a new, single-row tool bar seeder to mate with DOT. But DOT is not a one-trick pony; it can perform multiple functions. The company showed not only the drill, but sprayer and tank bodies as well, which means the robot can work throughout the growing season at a variety of tasks.

In fact, Beaujot says so far he has envisioned 104 different implement bodies that DOT could be equipped with.

When determining the best the size for DOT, Beaujot said he designed it to fit well with existing farm equipment. The seed drill body has a 30-foot working width, and he says that proved to be the most efficient working width. The brand has also created a sprayer attachment that uses a 60-foot boom.

“This is a 30-foot seeder and a 60-foot sprayer,” he said. “Both with a 30-foot seeder we tram line for the sprayer.”

For easy on-road transport, DOT’s wheels pivot allowing it to travel sideways, reducing its transport width to just under 12 feet (3.61 metres).

“It has a 165-horsepower Cummins diesel engine with hydrostatic drive and auxiliary pumps,” explained Greg Vennard, engineering manager at SeedMaster, adding that it can work at speeds from creeping to nine or 10 m.p.h.

“It’s controlled through software that we’re developing and that does all of the autonomy,” he explained. “So you have an app on your laptop and that’s where you’re controlling your machine. The laptop can be in the cab or in the field you didn’t plan for, like if Dad parked his half ton in the way, ” he said with a chuckle. “It communicates back to the laptop to say I’m stuck, there’s a mechanical failure of some kind, I’ve lost communication, or my sensors have seen an obstruction we didn’t account for. It will stop and send a signal back to the operator, and it’s up to the operator to come and diagnose the problem.”

Lidar sensors look up to 300 feet ahead to sense hazards, and emergency “kill” switches are located on the machine body.

“Since the lidar sensors on it for detecting obstacles that come into the field you didn’t plan for, like if Dad parked his half ton in the way,” he said with a chuckle. “It communicates back to the laptop to say I’m stuck, there’s a mechanical failure of some kind, I’ve lost communication, or my sensors have seen an obstruction we didn’t account for. It will stop and send a signal back to the operator, and it’s up to the operator to come and diagnose the problem.”

Implement bodies like this newly designed, single-row seed drill can be quickly connected.

Wheels are driven hydrostatically and can turn sideways to allow for narrow-width road transport.

Although a final decision has not yet been made on what type of sensors, or combinations of them, future versions will use.

Going forward, SeedMaster has created an independent company, DOT Technologies, that will further develop and manufacture DOT machines.

“Seed Master has a good name and its focus is on no till, metering and seed and fertilizer placement,” said Beaujot. “But there are so many broader applications for the Prime Mover that we thought we’d create a new company and open it up to all manufacturers to develop DOT-ready implementations.”

Scott Garvey is machinery editor for Grainews. Contact him at Scott.Garvey@tbcpublishing.com.
Crop advisor casebook

Why isn’t this canola coming up?

By Nathan Zilinski

John owns a mixed grain and cattle operation near Pincher Creek, Alta. On May 2, 2016, he approached me about one of his canola fields, which he thought wasn’t germinating properly.

“There are areas with no canola at all, just volunteer grain,” he said. “I think I have cutworm issues.”

I drove out to John’s farm to have a look for myself. Right away, I noticed a few things in the field that were of concern. As John suggested, the canola crop looked patchy. Some areas were coming up well, whereas others had only volunteer barley from the previous year — and no canola. In addition, there was substantial crop residue, which was unevenly distributed, throughout the field.

Upon closer examination, I found some of the canola plants looked unhealthy. The leaves of these plants, especially the younger ones, were chlorotic. These injured plants were distributed throughout the field. Specifically, the plants found in lower spots and areas in the field with heavy plant residue were chlorotic, whereas those located at higher elevations and areas with less plant residue were doing well. John’s other canola fields did not appear to be affected.

As a post-harvest burn-off the previous fall, John applied both glyphosate (Group 0) and a tank mix of glyphosate and florasulam (Groups 0 and 2) to his fields. He assured me only glyphosate was applied to the field in question, so I thought it unlikely herbicide carryover was a factor. However, there remained the possibility the sprayer tank wasn’t completely emptied or properly cleaned out before entering this field, resulting in residue contamination.

For two weeks after the crop was seeded, weather conditions were cool and dry, with temperatures dropping to a low of -2°C, briefly, one night at the end of April. John’s canola fields didn’t appear to be affected by the cool weather, still, knowing every field is different, I wasn’t about to rule out weather issues just yet.

Other than the odd flea beetle bite, I didn’t find any signs of insect damage. In addition, no cutworms were present, and evidence of cutworms, such as cut stalks and freshly clipped leaves, was also absent. Thus, we ruled out pest pressure as the source of damage.

I had a strong hunch the heavy crop residue had something to do with the poor germination in this field. The areas with the heaviest crop residue also corresponded to the patches with no plants. Areas in which we found leaf yellowing also coincided with those of heavy crop residue. From this, I determined what had hindered germination and caused the plant damage.

What is causing the uneven germination and leaf yellowing in John’s canola crop? If you think you know, send your diagnosis to Grainews, Box 9800, Winnipeg, Man., R3C 3Y5; email leann@fcpcpublishing.com or fax 204-944-0540 Or email to Nathan@fbcpublishing.com.

The best suggestions will be pooled and one winner will be drawn for a chance to win a Grainews cap and a one-year subscription to the magazine. The answer, along with reasoning that solved the mystery, will appear in the next Crop Advisor’s Solution File.

Injured lentils: disease or environment?

By Angie Berner

After 15 years of growing lentils, Vaughn, a southern Saskatchewan producer, had never seen anything like it. Across all of his lentil fields, plants were yellowing and looking unhealthy. His wasn’t the first call we received the week of June 23, 2016. Several Assiniboia-area growers reported similar symptoms.

In Vaughn’s lentil crop, plant leaf tips were yellowing/whitening and the leaves were wilting and rolling. However, all other plant parts, including the roots, appeared to be healthy. There was no obvious pattern to the distribution of affected plants. Some plants had more affected leaves than others, and the location of yellowing and wilting leaves on the plants was also random. Furthermore, symptom occurrence was widespread, affecting several neighbouring fields.

After eliminating a few factors that could have caused similar symptoms, such as sprayer tank residue, contamination, residual chemistries in the soil, pest pressure, and a nutrient imbalance or deficiency, we focused on disease pressure and environmental stress.

Several severe rainstorms had passed through the area ten days earlier, bringing high amounts of moisture. These storms may have increased the crop’s susceptibility to disease, or the adverse environmental conditions could have put stress on the plants. Also, both disease pressure and environmental stress would injure lentil crops across a large area. We needed to sort out which factor was causing the leaf damage.

Symptoms exhibited in Vaughn’s lentil crop were found on stemphylium blight infected plants. Stemphylium blight is common in lentils in this area, and can happen at any plant stage.

Lentils infected with the fungal pathogen that causes stemphylium blight present white- to cream-coloured lesions, which spread across the entire leaf from the leaf tip in an angular direction. Alternatively, plants affected by environmental stress, such as strong winds and heavy rain, turn yellow or white at the leaf tips and wilting. However, in order to prove the injury was caused by environmental stress, stemphylium blight had to be ruled out.

I sent plant samples from Vaughn’s and several other lentil fields in the area to the Crop Protection Laboratory in Regina, Sask., which determined the samples were negative for the disease.

That left one likely source of plant damage — environmental stress caused by wind and excess moisture. Laboratory test results confirmed the damage was characteristic of wind and rain damage, although the symptoms look similar to those stemphylium blight presents. In addition, the majority of affected fields in the Assiniboia area were located where the winds were most severe.

Wind damage can occur to crops at any plant stage, and the symptoms may appear similar to those caused by disease. It is important to test samples for confirmation of the symptoms’ cause, as a fungicide is not applied when it is not required.

In Vaughn’s case, the lentil plants grew out of the leaf damage and the yield at harvest was not affected.
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Herbicide-resistant weeds: don’t be in denial

Herbicide resistance is a growing problem that all Prairie farmers need to address.

By Lisa Guenther

Dealing with resistant weeds is a little like dealing with alcoholism, according to a Nufarm executive. The first step is to acknowledge that you’ve got a problem.

Lachie McKinnon heads North American business development for Nufarm, and is also the Canadian manager. McKinnon shared thoughts on managing herbicide resistance based on his experience working in the ag industry in Australia during a plot tour at Ag-Quest, west of Saskatoon.

Herbicide resistance was confirmed in Australia in the ’80s, McKinnon said, but herbicide-resistant weeds were probably present before that. But, he added, “the denial from growers, from industry, even from chemical companies, dare I say, was quite remarkable.”

That denial led to bigger problems than if they’d accepted and addressed herbicide resistance earlier, McKinnon added. It’s a mistake many hope to avoid in Western Canada.

McKinnon acknowledged that Nufarm doesn’t have all the solutions. In fact, “if any one particular group in the industry thinks they do have all the solutions, they’re misguided,” he said.

In an effort to delay resistance, Nufarm is working with other companies to offer more herbicide solutions to farmers. For example, Nufarm and Monsanto offer a rewards program, dubbed Real Farm Rewards, to encourage canola growers to use multiple modes of action.

Nufarm and Grow can also team up to share information on slowing resistance.

“If the information and training our companies are sharing with growers and agronomists are similar, it will help to cut down some of the confusing and sometimes conflicting messages in the industry,” said Graham Collier, technical services manager for Nufarm.

Weed resistance isn’t rocket science

Hugh Beckie, research scientist with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada in Saskatoon, was also on-hand to talk resistance. The latest herbicide-resistant weed survey in Saskatchewan, conducted by Beckie, Scott Shirriff, and Julie Leeson, found that 57 per cent of 400 surveyed fields had weeds resistant to one or more herbicide groups. The previous weed survey, in 2009, found 31 per cent of surveyed fields in Saskatchewan had resistant weeds.

Beckie wasn’t entirely surprised by the Saskatchewan weed survey, as 56 per cent of surveyed fields in Manitoba had resistance. Beckie and his colleagues will be surveying Alberta fields in 2017, and he expects to find resistance in over 30 per cent of surveyed fields.

Beckie told reporters there are several factors behind herbicide resistance. Historically, farmers sprayed in mid-June each year. Often farmers used the same mode of action in the same field year after year, until they ran into problems. Farmers inadvertently selected weeds that adapted to those herbicides and routines.

But despite the growing number of resistant weeds, Beckie is optimistic.

“By and large, growers are still managing their resistance fairly well because if you look at the weed population densities in the summer and fall, they really haven’t dramatically increased over that last 20 years or so.”

Those low population densities mean farmers are doing something right, he added.

“They may have to apply another herbicide to control that resistant population, but they’re doing the best they can, I think, to keep the weed population under control so that it doesn’t negatively impact either yield or quality.”

The weed survey also questioned 250 Saskatchewan farmers on how they manage weeds. Farmers have already adapted many of the recommended management practices, Beckie said. For example, farmers with confirmed or suspected resistance favoured crop rotation, tank mixes, herbicide group rotation, and pre-emergent herbicides to manage the problem.

They were also more likely to scout before applying in-crop herbicide, increase seeding rates, and grow more competitive crops.

“So they actually are listening to people like us who have been talking about this for 10 years,” said Beckie.

Managing resistance is for everyone

Beckie sported a NASA cap, which he picked up at Cape Kennedy. But the NASA hat’s purpose went beyond fashionable sun-protection.

“Herbicide resistance isn’t rocket science,” said Beckie. “It’s within the grasp of everyone in this industry to manage it and manage it well.”

For a time, farmers were advised to rotate their chemical groups each year. Beckie says research now shows that using multiple modes of action simultaneously is more effective.

Collier said tank mixes also help protect each mode of action before resistance appears. However, Collier said it’s important to make sure weeds aren’t already resistant to any of the modes of action when using tank mixes.

Farmers who suspect resistant weeds can send samples to labs for screening. If farmers suspect Group 4 or Group 9 resistance, they should report the weeds as soon as possible, Collier said.

Farmers can also apply herbicides during different windows: pre-seed burndown, in-crop, pre-harvest, and post-harvest. Varying other agronomic practices, such as seeding date, can also make it harder for weeds to adapt.

“Diversity is always the buzz word in terms of weed resistance management,” said Beckie. “That applies to both herbicides and other agronomic practices.”

Beckie said there is no silver bullet, “I tell growers that they have to keep using the tools that they have, but use them as wisely as they can. And just keep the good ones in reserve whenever you can.”

Lisa Guenther is field editor for Grainews based at Livelong, Sask.

Follow her on Twitter @LtoG.
Growing crops in saline soil

Sometimes dividing up the field is the best solution to salinity

By Leeann Minogue

The Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture’s Crop Diagnostic School is a great opportunity for farmers and agronomists to get outside for a hands-on, up-close look at plots, plants, insects and weeds. This summer, the School was held in Indian Head over two days in July. One of the many speakers, Gary Krueger, Saskatchewan Agriculture irrigation agrologist was on hand to talk about salinity.

“Soil salinity has been a problem in Saskatchewan since before I was born,” Krueger said. “We have a strong heritage of researchers who have really tried to get to the bottom of soil salinity and find solutions.

To demonstrate the impact of salinity on yields, Krueger and other staff had taken time to grow samples of common crops in soils with three levels of salinity: low, medium and high.

“As you can see,” Krueger said as we looked at the potted plants, “the impact on crop growth is quite significant.” The leaves were much healthier and taller in the soil with less salinity.

Referring to the soil with high salinity, Krueger pointed out that there was very little growth and low germination. And, he said, “the water we’ve put on this set is evaporating at the surface and you can see the salts collecting on top of the soil.” This can be seen in saline fields across the Prairies. “As you drive across Saskatchewan it’s nearly impossible to miss.”

Some crops are more tolerant to salinity than others. If you’re dealing with salinity Krueger suggests planting a more tolerant crop or, he says, “you might need to segregate your field and put a different crop on a certain portion because it’s saline.”

Leeann Minogue is the editor of Grainews.
I will wake the rooster and be the one who decides when it’s time to quit. I will succeed by working with whatever Mother Nature provides, adapting and innovating to reach my maximum potential. I will actively pursue perfection.
Putting pulses to work in your crop rotations

A good pulse crop can do more than fill your bank account. It also benefits the soil level of available nitrogen in soil, and this is especially true for pea. This soil fertility building effect is attributed to good nitrogen fixation.

By Dilia Narduzzi

Along with more pulse crops in Prairie farmers’ rotations, there has also been more research into the impact these crops have on our soil. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada researchers have recently published several research papers on this issue.

This work has led one of these researchers, Dr. Chantal Hamel, to conclude that there are several good reasons to plant pulses.

First, she says, “it is a good replacement for summerfallow, especially when using pea and lentil due to their short growing seasons.” That short growing season is good because “it leaves a lot of water in the soil for the next crop.” Residual nitrogen is also left in the soil after a pulse crop, so your fields will get a free shot of nitrogen, says Hamel.

In terms of improving next year’s soil, researchers judged yellow peas to be the “best” crop for your rotation. Yellow peas were “better” than chickpeas and often similar to lentils. This was partially for microbial reasons, but also for water conservation and nitrogen input into the soil. Chickpeas suck a lot of water out of the soil, whereas peas and lentils stop growing earlier and therefore leave more water behind for the next crop, says Hamel.

It’s difficult for researchers to measure exactly how much nitrogen pulses leave behind in the soil, says Hamel, but “what we find is that pulses increase the

What we know about pulses

Through ongoing research we are learning more and more about how pulses operate. Agriculture and Agri-Food researcher Dr. Chantal Hamel says:

- Chickpea “is a tricky plant. It is often sick. If you repeat chickpea, you won’t be lucky with disease.” It also doesn’t help with water conservation. If moisture is limited, peas or even lentils would be better choices.
- “Pea is a little more sensitive to disease. Lentils appear to be more resilient,” Hamel said.
- “Nitrogen accumulates more with pea,” Hamel said. She would like to see more work done with nitrogen recommendations after peas, as she believes rates could probably be reduced from current recommendations.

Canola contrasts with legumes in rotations; putting a pulse before wheat is also good, says Hamel, and planting wheat is good for long-term soil quality as it has lots of roots and nourishes the soil. The root systems of pulses “are smaller, more limited.”

And maybe the key point for all rotations and long-term planning: “There are no bad plants for the soil, they just need to be used appropriately.”

Dilia Narduzzi

Dilia Narduzzi is a freelance writer in Dundas, Ont.

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By Angela Lovell

According to new data from Statistics Canada’s 2016 Census of Agriculture, Prairie farmers are renting more and more land. In Manitoba, farmers rent or lease 33 per cent of the farmland, in Saskatchewan 28 per cent and in Alberta 42 per cent. Needless to say, they are not all paying the same rental rates and they don’t all have the same rental agreements.

Some factors affecting land rental rates are fairly obvious, like proximity to an urban centre, or the quality of the land. In some cases, land that is highly productive and can earn the renter a better return will fetch a better rental price than land that isn’t as productive. In other cases it’s simply a supply and demand scenario. Competition can inflate rental prices, just as it does purchase values.

But in addition to these economic factors, what part do human relationships play in rental agreements and rents? If the landlord comes from a farming background or is still actively farming is he or she likely to charge more rent? Does having a long-term relationship with a landlord get the tenant a better deal?

Studies out of the University of Guelph have looked at some of the factors — including human interactions — that may affect land rent agreements and rents in southern Ontario. Researchers James Bryan, Brady Deaton, Alfons Weersink and Karl Meikle of the University of Guelph have conducted two studies that looked at landlord-tenant relationships and farmland ownership patterns among farmers in southern Ontario to try and assess what factors contribute to land rental prices.

A survey of 540 farmers conducted between June and September, 2010 formed the basis of the research. Their 2013 study, published in Land Economics, found that farmers who rented land tended to be younger and have larger farms, and most had been renting the same land for an average of 12 to 13 years.

This survey did not include farmers from Alberta, Manitoba or Saskatchewan. Economic or demographic differences may mean that rental markets behave differently in these areas.

**How factors impact rates**

1. Being related doesn’t matter. The key finding of their research was that relationships between tenants and landlords do not have a significant impact upon cash rental rates (or crop share agreements). It appears renting from family members does not get the tenant a better rental rate. If landlord and tenant share social capital because of family ties, there is no more of a reason to assume that the landlord will consistently transfer funds to the tenant (i.e. by charging a lower rental rate), than the tenant will consistently transfer funds to the landlord (i.e. offer more rent). “In other words, social capital is reciprocal,” say the study authors.

2. Term length doesn’t matter. The study also found that the number of years a tenant and landlord have had a rental agreement on a property does not influence rental rates.

3. Landlord type might matter. The type of landlord — retired farmers, widows, non-farmers, investors, etc. — did not appear to have a significant impact on land rental rates, except in the case of non-farm investors who appear to charge, on average, 20 per cent less. A different research paper from 2011, using information from the same farmer survey, suggests there may be a correlation between how informed a landlord is about current land rental rates and what he or she charges. Active and retired farmers, who are better informed about current rates, charge more than widowers, non-farm investors and governments.

**Relationships between tenants and landlords do not impact cash rental rates**

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Land productivity matters. Generally, the productivity of the land has more of an influence on land rental rates than land itself. When it comes to land quality, yield appears to be the most important measure in determining rental rates. Areas on southern Ontario that consistently yield higher corn yields were more expensive to rent than areas where there was greater variability in yields, suggesting that there is something of a risk premium cost associated with that land.

**CONTRACT TYPES**

Oral, cash contracts (80 per cent) were the most prevalent type of rental agreement among the survey participants, with the remainder being a mix of crop share and other arrangements.

It’s not clear why so many farm rental agreements are still based simply on a handshake, or why more farmers and landowners don’t have written contracts. “It doesn’t mean that those verbal agreements are unchecked or unbeneficial but there’s probably a reason for them,” Deaton said in an interview. “Given how broad and important the rental market is, there is still more that isn’t known than is known about it. Maybe farmers ought to move towards more long-term contracts, but to move in that direction, we need to know a lot more about the factors and reasons why the preponderance of agreements in the agriculture sector are handshake agreements.”

**STARTING THE CONVERSATION**

How do landowners and renters come to an agreement that provides security for the tenant, gives the landowner the return he or she needs, and encourages good stewardship of the land? Most rental agreements are cash based.

Farm & Food Care Ontario recently completed a project aimed at providing resources (including a website: farmlandagreements.ca) to help farmers and landowners have a dialogue that results in a mutually beneficial agreement.

“We wanted to provide resources so that farmers can make a better pitch about why they would make a good tenant,” says Bruce Kelly, program manager at Farm & Food Care Ontario. “On the other side, there are resources for landowners to get informed about what agricultural terms mean, for example what does no-till or crop rotation actually mean.”

Kelly says he has heard of farmers making a PowerPoint presentation, and sitting at the landlord’s kitchen table to explain their personal farm philosophy and agronomic practices. “That opens the opportunity to say, ‘if we had a multi-year deal, this is what we would grow on your farm over the next few years and why,’” says Kelly. “They talk about nutrients, drainage, and other aspects of the farm, so if the land needs a capital improvement to make it better, they can discuss how that could be paid for in a fair and transparent manner.”

The website has videos of real farmers’ rental stories, sample rental agreements and a few exam-
Farm it like you’re ‘just’ renting it?
Do farmers look after rented farmland differently than land they own? Should they?

By Angela Lovell

“Drive it like a rental” is a term we’ve all heard. But could it also apply to farmland? Is a farmer more likely to use conservation practices like no-till or variable rate technology, or apply more fertilizer and/or manure to improve the fertility on land he or she owns than on rented land?

In April 2013, Dr. Brady Deaton, Karthik Nadella, and Alfons Weersink of the University of Guelph, together with Chad Lawley of the University of Manitoba surveyed a random sample of 810 farmers in southwestern Ontario and Manitoba to try and understand whether tenure status, production practices, technology and other factors influence the way farmers treat rented and owned land.

Survey participants were asked questions about their type of land rental agreement, crop rotation, tillage practices, use of cover crops, manure applications and use of variable rate input applicators on land they own and rent.

Fixed cash contracts are the most prevalent form of rental agreements among farmers surveyed, although most in southwest Ontario are oral contracts, while in Manitoba, 47 per cent had written contracts. Only a very small number of contracts had any stipulations from the landlord about specific management practices expected of the tenant. Of those that did, type of tillage practice a renter could use was the most common.

Fifty-three per cent of these farmers perceived that some farmers take better care of the land they own than comparable land they rent. A majority agreed that farmers would use more manure or fertilizer and complex crop rotations on land they own rather than land they rent.

What stood out from the study data is the significant difference in manure applications, with 31 per cent of farmers applying manure on rented land compared to 53 per cent on owned land. Farmers were also more likely to use cover crops on owned than rented land (18 per cent to 26 per cent).

“Research shows that most leases are one year in length, they’re handshake agreements, and they’re ‘what will you pay me?’” says Bruce Kelly, program manager with Farm & Food Care Ontario. “Everything else in agriculture is long term. In Ontario we have a lot of livestock, and the application of manure is considered a multi-year investment in nutrients. But why would a farmer put any more fertilizer on than he needs to when another farmer down the road might outbid him next year?”

The study also showed that there were not significant differences in farmers using minimum or no-till and precision agriculture on rented and owned land. This makes sense given the fact that farmers who have already this equipment are going to use it on all the land they farm. It also makes their investment in no-till, precision seeding or variable rate technology more economical by spreading the capital cost over more acres.

But, Deaton cautioned in a recent interview, the reasons that farmers use certain management practices are highly nuanced, and there are a number of other complex factors that are not brought out in this study, and which require further research to understand.

“Our results wouldn’t justify a broad sweeping generalization like ‘farmers treat owned land better than rented land’ because it’s more nuanced than that,” Deaton says. “We found some differences that depend on the type of conservation action that you’re looking at. There are a lot of reasons and situations where they would or they wouldn’t do that. It could depend on the length and return associated with the investment.”

It’s important to note that 39 per cent of farmers disagreed with the notion that farmers treat rented and owned land differently, and cited maintaining their reputation in the community, taking care of the environment and meeting the requirements of the rental contract as reasons why.
SECURITY IS AN ISSUE
So, if some farmers are more inclined to treat their own land better than rented land, what are the reasons? No. 1 seems to be lack of security. Seventy-three per cent of the farmers surveyed said having a secure rental contract for the following year was the biggest factor in how they would treat rented land.

“Many farmers don’t have any stability when they rent because landowners are not willing to rent for more than one year at a time in case someone comes along and offers them more rent,” says Larry Davis, who grows soybeans, corn, wheat and hay near Burford, Ontario and speaks from experience. He lost land he had been renting to a vegetable farmer who offered the landowner three or four times the rent he was able to pay. The kicker is, the landowner came back to Davis a few years later asking him to rent the badly abused land again, when he couldn’t find another renter. “There were washouts 15 feet wide and six feet deep through that farm,” he says. Davis finally agreed to repair the washouts and farm the land rent-free until he brought back the soil health and productivity, which took several years. “This happens quite often,” says Davis. “I like to maintain good soil structure, so after a farm has been destroyed a bit, the landowners call me.”

Farmers have little incentive to use expensive inputs or fertilizers on land they can only rent year by year, adds Davis. “If I grow a crop, I’ll try to get the landowner to take 25 per cent of the value of the crop when I harvest it, or 30 per cent if I can put on things like manure and biosolids,” he says. “That means they also share some of the risk, and it teaches them a responsibility to watch the land and make sure that I farm it right. It’s beneficial for both parties to make sure that land stays productive for the long term.”

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES
Davis, at 66, has seen just about every situation when it comes to renting land, but says helping to educate landowners about the value of having a renter who is taking good care of the land pays off in the long run. In one case, Davis began renting land from a retired farmer, who was so impressed with the way he managed the land and his commitment to building better soil health, that he turned down higher rental offers to keep Davis doing what he is doing.

Some vegetable growers are partnering with corn and soybean growers so that they can rotate their crops

Sharing the crop is another approach that Davis likes to use, and which, he says, benefits everyone in the end. “If I grow a crop, I’ll try to get the landowner to take 25 per cent of the value of the crop when I harvest it, or 30 per cent if I can put on things like manure and biosolids,” he says. “That means they also share some of the risk, and it teaches them a responsibility to watch the land and make sure that I farm it right. It’s beneficial for both parties to make sure that land stays productive for the long term.”

The concern over maintaining soil health is prompting other innovative and collaborative approaches too, especially in Ontario, which is losing 175 acres of farmland a day to development. Some vegetable growers are partnering with corn and soybean growers so that they can rotate their crops. “You have the landowner, and you have the person renting it, but every other year he’s renting it to somebody else, but that maintains a healthy crop rotation,” says Davis. “The corn or soybean crop can make use of the nutrients that have been put down for the vegetable crops because they sometimes aren’t all used, and no nutrients are wasted.”

Angela Lovell is a freelance writer, editor and communications specialist living and working in Manitoba. Find her online at www.angelalovell.ca.
Controlling traffic to improve your soil

A new test offers another way to test soil quality improvements

By Julienne Isaacs

It can be called “fractal hierarchi-cal aggregation” or just “fractal aggregation.” Whatever the moniker, the new method of soil health testing promises to offer an important way to assess soil quality and land stewardship, says Guillermo Hernandez, an assistant professor at the University of Alberta.

Hernandez is the lead researcher on a suite of projects measuring aspects of soil quality across different land use types in Alberta.

This spring, Hernandez published a research paper demonstrating that fractal aggregation is a promising way to assess assessing soil quality. Fractal aggregation puts a number on soil quality, Hernandez says, “and with that number we can assess how far along we are in a trajectory and whether we can recover.”

“There are different characteristics of the soil, and this specific method has the advantage of integrating several aspects of soil quality,” he says. “It’s very consistent and robust, and can separate good management from less beneficial management.”

Over the past three years, Hernandez’ graduate students have led four projects looking at soil quality across Alberta. The main focus of their work was the impact of converting native grassland into annual cropland on soil quality. They found that native grassland has superior soil quality.

“Recurring compaction from equipment is a common factor in reducing soil health,” says Hernandez. Using the fractal aggregation soil test and other measurements, Guenette was able to demonstrate a significant difference between compacted soils in control fields and soils in CTF fields.

The tests showed improved porosity and hydroconductivity in the latter, says Hernandez.

BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

Steve Larocque, a private agronomist and owner of a small grain farm near Calgary, was the first producer to sign on to CTF Alberta more than seven years ago. His interest in the program was piqued, he says, after he did a Nuffield scholarship tour in England, New Zealand and Australia focusing on controlled traffic fields.

“The tests showed improved porosity and hydroconductivity in the latter, says Hernandez.

In side-by-side trials looking at how quickly rainfall washes down in CTF versus non-CTF fields, Larocque notes that his CTF fields can handle about six inches of rain in under two minutes; one inch of rain can absorb in six seconds.

“It takes time for your soil to repair and to figure out what benefits you can achieve. For us the biggest one is timeliness,” he says. “How do you put a number on timeliness, getting onto the field when you want to? It could mean an application of fungicide for fusarium when you need it.”

Larocque believes more data is needed on CTF in Western Canada before more producers will sign on. CTF Alberta’s final report (the project wrapped in early 2017) and Hernandez’ research on fractal aggregation soil testing are a start.

“Essentially we’re trying to come up with a metric to measure sustainability, and this is important for people trying to meet sustainability and productivity goals, and also for customers,” says Hernandez. “We need a solid, robust matrix for measuring the sustainability of our production systems.”

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Turning city waste into good fertilizer

Lystek International’s CFIA-registered fertilizer takes waste from sewage to nutrition

By Lisa Guenther

One man’s trash is another’s treasure. It’s a familiar idiom at the heart of a Canadian company’s process for turning municipal sewage into fertilizer.

Faced with the challenge of dealing with sludge, Canadian municipalities have done everything from dumping it in landfills to letting it flow into the ocean.

Lystek International, based in Cambridge, Ontario, has a different solution. The company’s facilities transform a municipality’s waste into a pathogen-free, CFIA-registered fertilizer.

The final product, LysteGro, contains a whole suite of macro- and micronutrients, says Mike Dougherty, an agrologist and fertilizer sales manager for Lystek.

“The majority of the nitrogen is in inorganic form, so it will be released slowly over the year through mineralization,” says Dougherty. That late-season nitrogen availability is a strong selling feature for high-nutrient crops such as canola.

LysteGro is sold as a liquid. Per 1,000 gallons, it contains the following nutrients:

- 42 lbs. of nitrogen
- 40 P O (phosphorus)
- 60 lbs. K O (potassium)
- 7 lbs. sulphur
- 16 lbs. calcium

Dougherty says it also contains magnesium, zinc, copper, iron and other micronutrients. The organic matter concentration is approximately 10 per cent on a wet weight basis, or about 85 per cent of the product on a dry weight basis.

Lloyd Brubacher works for Highland Custom Farming at Grand Valley, Ontario, north of Toronto. Highland Custom Farming has been applying LysteGro on its own land, and also for other farmers, for four years.

Brubacher says his boss had another company custom-apply LysteGro to his farm the first year. After seeing the results, “we couldn’t say no to it. The boss went out and bought his own equipment after he’d seen the final results.”

LysteGro has been a great help to farmers in his area, Brubacher says. “This stuff really brings the yields back in a hurry.”

Brubacher says LysteGro is a “very universal” fertilizer that they apply to a range of annual crops. “We’re starting to go into the grass fields as well, after first cut.” Brubacher adds they’re now seeing more yield from the second cut than the first.

Dougherty puts the price at $30 per 1,000 gallons applied. At agronomic rates of application, no commercial fertilizer is required, although starter is sometimes used.

Farmers are mainly interested in the nutrient concentrations, organic matter, and other micronutrients, says Dougherty. “Soil health is becoming a bigger and bigger factor so a lot of guys are looking at any kind of organic amendment they can get, whether it’s LysteGro or compost or manure or other materials."

LysteGro needs to be injected below the soil’s surface. That requires higher-end liquid manure injection equipment, says Dougherty.

The last few years of applying LysteGro have taught Brubacher a few things. One point is that the product will dry out if exposed to open air. If weather prevents application, and you don’t want to unload the tank, you’ll need to keep it covered.

But LysteGro does expand, so the tank needs to be vented, Brubacher says. Otherwise, “if you have everything closed-off, air-tight, it will find the weakest spot and blow out.”

Dougherty says application frequency will depend on soil sample results and cropping plan. They often apply LysteGro to a field for two years, and skip the third year.

How much fertilizer a plant produces varies between locations, Dougherty says. Lystek’s main processing facility in Ontario produces roughly 20 million gallons a year. The North Battleford plant, which opened in December 2014, produces nearly a million gallons of LysteGro.

Before installing the Lystek system, North Battleford sent its waste to a landfill. In 2015, the City received an environmental award from the Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators for its Lystek system.

Brubacher says options like Lystek’s system will continue to grow. “It just takes time for people to wrap their heads around everything.”

Lisa Guenther is field editor for Grainews based at Livelong, Sask.
Special edition machines in 2016

Our look at a few of the unique offerings brought to the machinery market last year

By Scott Garvey

You may have noticed an apparent contradiction on this page. Up top we’ve put this article under the “Classic Machinery” heading, yet this feature is all about models that appeared in 2016. No. It isn’t a mistake. So, why did we do it?

We’re taking a quick look over our shoulder at what “special,” “limited” production machines were made available to farmers in 2016. Yes, we’re only a few weeks into 2017, but those machines now represent what might best be described as modern classics. Hence, the classic machinery heading.

Eventually, the unique paint jobs and features on these limited production machines will make them rare and possibly highly sought after — at least for those with a big enough bank roll to consider something like a very-high horsepower tractor a collectable item. (Those of us with just a bookshelf to display collectibles will have to settle for scale models of them.)

Every year there are at least a couple of “special edition,” limited-production machines made available to buyers, and 2016 was no exception. Here’s a quick round up of what farmers could have parked in their garages if they wanted a really unique machine.

**Case IH**

Case IH celebrated 25 years of Patriot sprayer production with the fall release of limited-edition 4430 and 3340 models. In keeping with the silver anniversary theme, these sprayers get a unique red and silver livery. They come equipped with Michelin rubber, Raven Industries technology and Wilger COMBO-RATE nozzle bodies as standard equipment.

The red brand also marked another anniversary in 2016: 20 years of Quadtrac tractor production. The company’s display at the U.S. Farm Progress Show included a blinged-up Quadtrac special anniversary edition tractor parked beside a pristine, 20-year old example of one of the first models ever to head out to a dealership. Case IH is building only 30 of the anniversary machines.

**JCB**

U.K.-based JCB celebrated an anniversary in 2016 as well. It was 25 years since the first Fastrac ag tractor rolled off a production line in Great Britain in 1991. Before that the brand was only known for building light construction-related equipment. According to JCB executives, the limited production 4600 Series silver ag tractors were sold out very quickly after being made available to customers.

**Versatile**

We’ve shown you the Legendary Limited Edition Versatiles in the pages of Grainews before, but they’re worth another look. With a stop-you-in-your-tracks paint scheme, the original announcement was made very late in 2015 and orders were still being taken into early 2016. The keys for all 50 machines were presented to their owners at a special event just outside Winnipeg late last summer.
Winning the talent wars to attract the best team
Here’s some tips from Donald Cooper on creating a better culture on the farm

Elaine Froese  
www.elainefroese.com

Eight essential steps to attracting, engaging and leading a top-performing team was presented by my speaking colleague Donald Cooper at the FarmTech 2017 conference in Edmonton. I appreciate Donald, who at age 75 has decades of business life experience for how he translates creating a better culture on our farms.

Much of this article is his tips, with my edits. Download many useful tips at www.donald-cooper.com/tbkt.

We hate to lose money as farmers, but do we understand the costs of losing a valuable employee who works well on our farm and is part of the team? Cooper wants us to understand the costs of retraining, of losing a valuable employee who works well on our farm and is part of the team.

What is the job description? What are the qualities and experience required. How are you playing the deck? Where do we find the people? Do you know who you are looking for? Where have you looked successfully in the past? They feel entitled.

They know they have career opportunities; they feel special; they know they have career status. They can be proud of, and recognition of work/life balance is important to them. They know they have career choices. Collaboration is the key word for young people. They learn why. They feel entitled. Determine the specific skills, qualities and experience required. We become what we hire. You can’t build an extraordinary business by hiring ordinary people! Do you know who you are looking for? We become what we hire.

Determine the specific skills, qualities and experience required. Fit with our culture, values and standards. How are you playing the deck you got? Where do we find the people with the qualities we need? Where have you looked successfully in the past? They feel entitled. They know they have career opportunities; they feel special; they know they have career status. They can be proud of, and recognition of work/life balance is important to them. They know they have career choices.

Communication and then involve. Do you honour them. You want people to be more than informed, you want them to be committed. Create regular idea fests three times a year. Do you capture great ideas from your team? Challenge them to operate more efficiently, safely. Reward them with cash, e.g., $50.

Do you give opportunity for your team to challenge and empower themselves? Create a sense of urgency. Say, “By when can we agree that this will be completed?” Turn procrastination into insubordination. Create a culture of accountability. Every person on your team is part of your value or part of your problem! Are people able to be rescued or not?

Create a culture of celebration. Acknowledge, reward and celebrate success.

Cooper believes that we have four currencies in our lives:

- money, time, feeling safe, and feeling special.

A recommended good read is 1501 Ways to Reward your Employees, by Bob Nelson. Give a thank you every day to your employees. Believe that you make a difference.

Elaine Froese, CSP, CAFA, CHCoach empowers families to communicate better and resolve conflict. Visit www.elainefroese.com/store to find more resources. Like her on Facebook at “Farm family coach” or follow @elainefroese. Send mail to Box 957, Boissevain, Man. R0K 0E0.

The Right Choice for Every Job.

The Right Choice for Every Job.

Good people want opportunity to grow, clear honest, consistent communication, a positive uplifting environment with values they can be proud of, and recognition of work/life balance.

Make jobs more engaging and make people more productive. How can you enrich jobs so that people are not bored?

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Cooper suggests giving your farm business card to people who reference you. Test your candidates. Check references by leaving a voicemail: “You called me back if they were great!” It doesn’t rhyme, get over it.

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Beware of grain bloat in self-fed cattle

Feed roughage and avoid very fine grain particles

Peter Vitti

Self-feeders are both a blessing and a curse. A handful of self-feeders makes life a lot easier by augering in tonnes of creep or grower ration into each one for growing beef cattle. They can also be a curse when a few cattle become victims of grain bloat.

Since nobody wants to lose animals to grain bloat, those who raise cattle on high-grain diets and feed them in this way learn to take necessary precautions. These measures pay for themselves almost immediately — it’s a low-cost way of feeding cattle, which in turn helps generate optimum revenue.

However, I know of two extreme cases of grain bloat where cattle in Saskatchewan were fed high-grain diets in self-feeders and a few bloated animals died.

In the first case, the producer backgrounded a couple of hundred five-cwt steers to 900 lbs. using a series of old wooden self-feeders. The regular diet was hammered 50:50 oats-barley, a medium-level protein supplement and a bit of chopped straw. Rales of free-choice alfalfa-grass hay were provided in addition to the concentrate ration in the self-feeder.

The small hammer mill to his own admission was old and created a lot of grain fines, which he had planned to replace. Unfortunately, it should have been replaced a long time ago, because this year, it literally was a “dust-” making machine. After a few days of feeding this diet to a group of cattle, this producer drove down to his small feedlot one morning and found a half-dozen animals bloated and a couple that had died overnight.

In the second case, the producer was feeding a group of 50 replacement heifers by using a mobile hammer mill. For weeks this winter, the producer was cleaning out grain bins and wanted to use up its last bushels. I understand that this grain had a lot of chaff and was musty, but the producer thought it was still viable to feed it to cattle.

On the unfortunate day, the hired man made the heifer ration as usual: rolled barley, a few 25-kg bags of protein supplement, plus some chopped grass (bales of the same grass hay were provided separately).

However, he ran out of chopped hay about half-way through, so that week’s diet was almost all grain. As a result of this major diet change, low-forage diet and questionable grain quality, within a day or so three animals had distended left sides and one animal died. Other animals looked like they had a hard time breathing.

Hard Lesson Learned

Both producers chalked up their sick and dead cattle as a lesson learned. However, the first producer had his veterinarian examine some of the survivors and it was confirmed to be frothy grain- or feedlot bloat.

Profothy bloat in cattle is often caused by a sudden increase in the consumption and subsequent digestion of large amounts of readily available grain starch by the rumen microbes. This starch digestion is so rapid that fermentation gases get unnaturally mixed with rumen fluid into a mass of slimy green foam (slime produced by specific types of rumen bacteria).

Prevention

Awareness and prevention are the real keys to avoiding sometimes-fatal grain bloat in self-fed beef cattle. Here are some precautions:

1. Provide at least 10-15 percent forage in your self-fed beef diets. I realize mixing chopped forage with grain ration isn’t particularly practical, and separation is a big problem. However, it is warranted.
2. Feed palatable free-choice forage. Self-fed grain is usually the preferred choice versus free-choice forage by cattle.
3. Avoid significant diet changes. Keep a good inventory of forages, grain and other feeds.

Whether cattle are self- or bunk-fed, it’s never a good idea to make forced feed changes in a short period.

4. Avoid feeding “too fine” grain, one of the biggest culprits in grain bloat in self-fed cattle. If grain particle size is too fine, it creates a readily available surface area for starch digestion. I recommend that barley kernels are hammered into quarters for optimum rumen digestion.

5. Manage your self-feeders. I advocate grain self-feeders with adjustable panels to limit grain filling the trough. The opening can be narrowed or widen depending on how much grain ration that cattle should be eating.

6. Avoid adding feed additives to control bloat. Adding monensin sodium to reduce bloat in cattle is not recognized by the Canadian Food Inspection agency.

Peter Vitti is an independent livestock nutritionist and consultant based in Winnipeg. To reach him call 204-254-7497 or by email at vitti@mts.net.

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Glacier FarmMedia is Canada’s largest agricultural publisher, producing more than 20 print and digital titles that include many of the most trusted names in Canadian agriculture. Members benefit from decades of industry insight and experience.
Seven ways to deal with falling stocks

A falling stock price is no joke for an investor. Here are seven things you can do.

**Picture this:** an investor buys a popular stock, eager to start making his or her fortune. All goes well for two weeks but then the stock rolls over and drops and drops and drops.
The reaction sooner than later is, “Well it’s only down a bit, 12 per cent. The price will come back up.” Then the price is down 18 per cent. Then down 25 per cent. “Well I’m in for the long term, the price will come back up.”

But you run out of patience and sell at a big loss. “That will teach you for buying stocks,” becomes the common attitude. “Do you know what I could have bought for that money?” And the bad feelings go on.

Then sometimes, just as you expected, the stock does go back up in price and you kick yourself again, “I sold too soon.”

Both of these are risks. Just as sometimes a crop loses money or a picture this: an investor buys a popular stock, eager to start making his or her fortune. All goes well for two weeks but then the stock rolls over and drops and drops and drops.
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Both of these are risks. Just as sometimes a crop loses money or a
call dies.

Stocks go up and stocks go down. Here are seven ways to deal with falling stocks.

1. **Use a Price-Based Selling Rule**
   I often sell when the daily price of the share drops through the 10-day moving average. This has been a long-time favourite of mine. The combination moves quite slowly so even a slowpoke like me has time to keep up with it. When I have compared this sell signal with others it’s maybe only a day or two later than some other sell signals.

2. **Use a Faster Selling Rule**
   If I want a faster rule I will sell when the eight-day exponential moving average drops through the 10-day simple moving average. This signal does react sooner than the first signal does because of the makeup of the eight-day exponential moving average.

3. **Use a Cost-Based Selling Rule**
   Finance writer William O’Neil suggests in his books that we sell when the price is eight per cent below our cost. O’Neil also says sell when the price drops 12 per cent from its high. This one will help an investor preserve profits.

4. **Buy Puts to Cover Your Shares**
   I tested this idea some months ago and it certainly preserves the value of a portfolio in a falling market. Puts increase in value when the underlying stock prices fall. However, as with all insurance, buying puts on stocks costs money.

   The combination of using a put to preserve value and selling weekly calls at or close to the money is a very powerful. I like to own shares where I can sell weekly calls at ever lower and lower strike prices while the puts keep going up in price.

5. **Buy Puts Based on Rules**
   During the bear market of 2007-08 some promoted this idea: When the 10-day moving average dropped through the 200-day moving average, buy a put. I didn’t do that but I did follow some of the stocks and the idea did pay off.

6. **Sell the Shares Short**
   I have never done this, but selling a stock short can bring in cash while a stock is falling. I can only imagine how much money a speculator made if he or she sold Vailant shares short at $280 and bought them back at $40 or $50.

7. **Just Buy Puts**
   I haven’t had occasion to just buy puts. Options trade like stocks but they cost a lot less and can expire with no value. If a stock is heading in a fairly obvious down-trend, buying a put can make money — the value of the put will go up in price as the stock drops in price.

The best time to buy puts near a top as the stock rolls over. But this is not a long-term hold. When the stock stops dropping, sell the put.

Andy Sirski
sirski@mts.net

Andy is mostly retired. He travels a bit and plays with his grandchildren. Andy also runs a small income tax business and publishes an electronic newsletter where he tells all. If you want to read StocksTalk free for a month send an email to sirski@mts.net.
Summer fun in volatile grain markets

With markets making moves, it’s a good time to understand “basis only” contracts

Confirm this with the company you’re dealing with, but most, if not all, will let you roll your basis contract forward to give yourself more time to price your contract. They may charge you an administration fee of $1 to $5/t to roll your contract.

For example

Here is an example of rolling a basis contract:

You lock in a -$10/t canola basis contract for November delivery off of the November futures. You will have until the end of the second or third week of October to lock in the November futures value on this contract, or you can roll it forward to the January or March futures.

Let’s assume the futures didn’t move much, so you want to roll the basis contract forward against the January futures. This would give you another 30 days to price the futures component of your basis contract.

When you decide to roll the basis contract, the grain company will take the futures spread between the November and January futures and add that to your basis contract value. So, if the November futures are at $500 and the January futures are at $514, then your new basis contract against the January futures will now be at -$14/t. You do not gain anything from the futures spread but you now have an additional 30 days to see if the futures will improve.

Basis contracts can make or save you big dollars if you understand how and when to use them as part of your marketing plan.

Basis contracts can make or save you big dollars if you understand how and when to use them as part of your marketing plan.

Brian Wittall has 30 years of grain industry experience, and currently offers market planning and marketing advice to farmers through his company Pro Com Marketing Ltd. (www.procommarketingltd.com).

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Grain Storage and Handling

Experience + Expertise = Excellence

At Meridian, we pride ourselves on a diverse manufacturing background built on excellence and commitment to the highest quality. With over 65 years in the industry, we have the knowledge and expertise to deliver a superior product and service. We are dedicated to providing exceptional customer service and quality products to farmers through our comprehensive range of products and services. Our team of experienced industry professionals is always available to answer any questions or concerns you may have.

With our wide range of products, including grain storage bins, augers, conveyors, and other handling equipment, we are committed to helping farmers manage their grain storage and handling needs effectively. Our products are designed to be durable and reliable, ensuring that they are suitable for a variety of farming applications.

Our team of experienced professionals is dedicated to providing exceptional customer service and quality products to farmers. We are always available to answer any questions or concerns you may have, and we pride ourselves on providing top-notch customer service.

At Meridian, we are dedicated to providing farmers with the highest quality products and services. Our team of experienced professionals is always available to answer any questions or concerns you may have, and we are committed to helping farmers manage their storage and handling needs effectively.
Lessening the sting of the AMT after land sales

With planning, retiring farmers can reduce the burden of the Alternative Minimum Tax

By Andrew Allentuck

A couple we’ll call Herb, who is 67, and his wife, Mary, 60, farm 600 acres of grain and hay and another 500 acres of pasture in central Manitoba. They have put much of their effort into a 100 head cow-calf operation.

Their two children, Sunny, 32, and Astrid, 29, are married and have no wish to return to the farm. They want to keep the farm in the family. It looks like a stalemate, for the parents want to retire. Making a retirement plan is a challenge, but it’s eased by the parents’ net worth, $2.6 million, of which only $1.8 million is directly tied up in land. Financial assets include $472,000 in RRSPs and $85,000 in Tax-Free Savings Accounts.

Don Forbes and Erik Forbes of Forbes Wealth Management Ltd. in Carberry, Manitoba, met with Herb and Mary to advise on making the generational transfer work. In the planners’ view, the goals of winding down the farm over a five-year period and perhaps selling three quarters of land and leaving two quarters each to their daughters would be a good strategy.

Sales of farmland above the price paid will generate taxable capital gains, but the Farm Land Capital Gains Tax Exemption of $1 million each for Herb and Mary will allow $2 million of gains to be received without tax. That’s more money than the farm sale can raise, so the couple can literally take every cent to the bank.

Qualification for the Farm Land Tax exemption is straightforward. Anyone who has filed two years of farming profit and loss statements can qualify. There is, however, a catch. The Alternative Minimum Tax, AMT, will hit the couple in years of high income such as when farm assets are sold at a hefty profit. The Canada Revenue Agency will calculate and charge ordinary income tax, even though the farmland value gain will be sheltered by the $1 million per person farmland exemption.

There is, however, a catch. The Alternative Minimum Tax, AMT, will hit the couple in years of high income such as when farm assets are sold at a hefty profit. The Canada Revenue Agency will calculate and charge ordinary income tax, even though the farmland value gain will be sheltered by the $1 million per person farmland exemption.

An AMT credit carried forward, Don Forbes says.

Some of the money realized from the land sale can be used to buy a home in town. The rest can go to the couple’s Tax-Free Savings Accounts and then to non-sheltered accounts to generate investment income. The remainder of the pasture land can be kept as a family legacy and transferred to the two children over time.

The object is to use up the remaining Farm Land Capital Gains Tax Exemption. It can be done conservatively by transferring one quarter each year after the cattle have been sold. One quarter would go to Sunny in Year 1, then another quarter to Astrid in Year 2. Slow transfer can avoid sufficient gains to trigger the AMT.

Each daughter, who would presumably rent the land to an active farmer, can use her own rent-to-own plan. With title transferred, the daughters would oversee the land and pay all taxes, then pass net income on to the parents as part of their retirement income. It is vital that a zero percent interest payable promissory note for the full transferred market value be executed, forgivable on the last death of the parents. That note should be included in the terms of the transfer of title. This measure protects the parents’ rental income in the event of either daughter’s marital breakdown personal bankruptcy.

KEEPING IT ALL STRAIGHT

There is a good deal of bookkeeping needed to keep these transactions clear. All land transactions should be in separate accounts. Commingling of funds from different activities has the effect of clouding the concept of separating assets in the event of either child’s personal financial or marital difficulties, Don Forbes cautions.

In this plan, each spouse would be entitled to any gain in value of the original transfer price, but the promissory note would constitute a debt against the original value and would have to be honoured ahead of other obligations. In the absence of the promissory note or other means of avoiding commingling of common property of the marriage, the spouse would be entitled to half of the land or its value, putting Mary and Herb’s stream of rental income at risk of loss.

Food guide isn’t keen on red meat

Boy, I can’t wait for the revised version of the Canada Food Guide to hit the store shelves so I can start eating properly.

Health Canada is proposing changes to the food guide steering people away from red meat and more towards “alternative” proteins such as plant-based proteins – your peas, beans, lentils, chickpeas, or peanuts. The changes are also leaning toward non-cow related “daily” products made from avocados, nuts and seeds. Yippee...

It’s for your own good people. Down the road when you are heading to the customer appreciation day at the local farm supply store you won’t be subjected to the artery-clogging, cancer-causing, ozone-depleting beef on a bun. Hopefully you will get a healthier food choice like a peanut butter and honey sandwich, or guacamole on rice crackers.

I had hoped a nice pulled pork sandwich, might be favoured by the Food Guide, but it has been pointed out that although pork has been at times marketed as “the other white meat,” it is in fact a red meat. It is not in the safe food zone with white meats such as chicken, fish, and most reptiles.

Once the new guidelines are published it will mean a major shift in food choices at the lunch-time buffet at agriculture conferences. The vegetable wraps that are usually at the end of the buffet, just past all the sandwiches made with animal-based protein – those vegan sandwiches will suddenly become a hot commodity.

I can see these new guidelines leading to a protein war on the prairies. Ranchers will be assembling and pushing large herds of cattle to trample pea, bean and lentil fields. Mysterious and apparently threatening packages will be found at the gates of meat processing plants, forcing plant closure until it is investigated. The packages are harmless, but still cause disruption in the meat supply chain. Security cameras catch a blurry image of a vehicle leaving the scene displaying what appears to be a Pulse Canada logo.

Unfortunately one individual who perhaps could have brought balance and helped stave off protein conflicts is no longer with us. Roy Phillips, also known as Ralgro Roy, died a couple years ago. I didn’t know Roy that well, but his reputation preceded him. Actually I think on an extended family tree he was the uncle of a cousin fourth removed... something like that.

Roy had several careers during his lifetime, but was for many years a product representative for Ralgro beef implants. And he was also a great cook, ran a catering business for a while, loved beef and beans.

One of the legends surrounding Roy involved his steak-eating achievements. For many years Roy attended the Canadian Western Agribition in Regina and was known to visit a downtown restaurant called Bartleby’s where he reportedly on occasion put away something like a 24- or 32- or 64-ounce steak. He had both capacity and stamina.

He enjoyed eating beef. And on the catering side, he made a great pot of beans. I have the bean recipe if anyone would like it. Roy’s recipe wasn’t for traditional baked beans, but actually it just dressed up canned pork and beans – loads of bacon and seasonings, simmered for a few hours. Great stuff. The full recipe feeds about 75 people (or in my house that’s six generous servings).

I doubt there are too many adults who strictly live by the Canada Food Guide recommendations, but as Tom Lynch-Staunton, issues manager with the Canadian Cattlemen’s Assoc. pointed out, it’s not great news for the beef industry if Health Canada is educating kids that beef is poor protein choice, when really there is a great deal of nutritional evidence claiming just the opposite. As Lynch-Staunton noted, don’t blame moderate or reasonable amounts of red meat consumption for human health problems. Too many sweets (sugars) and other processed foods do much more to contribute to obesity than, for example, a burger.

If I am reading between the lines of his message, he might be saying that eating pie and/or chips in front of the TV may not be the best food choices for a healthy lifestyle. I figured as long as I ate those chips with a diet pop I was okay, but perhaps not.

Who knows what the final wording of the Canada Food Guide will recommend, but I know I won’t be giving up red meat, or meat protein of any kind in my diet. I don’t know about the rest of consumers, but it’s not that I don’t know the “proper” way to eat. I do. Eat meats and protein in moderation, plenty of fruits and vegetables, stay away from too many breads and sweets and get out an exercise. I know what I have to do, but here’s the hard part: I just have to do it. It’s just that procrastination feels and tastes so good.

Lee Hart is a field editor with Grainews based in Calgary. Contact him at 403-592-1964 or by email at lee@fbcpublishing.com.
I'm strange to think of cities, towns or villages as having an identity, but they do all do. And every community, growing or stagnant or declining will at many points throughout its run be faced with the existential and difficult question: Who are we?

This is especially relevant for the large swath of rural Canadian communities that have their roots in agriculture, and for those same communities that are in the throes of flux.

Farmers believe we’re the roots, feeding the towns and cities near us. And maybe we are. But growth puts pressure on these communities to react to a more diverse, often non-farming demographic. Lawyers and doctors and businesspeople may not want tractors driving down Main Street. They may want other things: spaces they can relate to.

Identity is paramount to every town, village, city. Planning accordingly is important. History is important. And so is change.

“The identity of a city bears on the identity of its citizens, and vice versa,” wrote planning expert Harry Verhaar in his article “Urban Identity: Citizens and their cities.” The urban environment that makes up cities reflects human needs and values, he says. And every city is different. “When we choose to live in cities, it is not for their resources or urban ‘buzz,’ it is because we fundamentally identify with them.”

WHEN TOWNS BECOME CITIES

I am sitting on a picnic table beside a Wonder Shows carnival game where people are challenged to break empty glass bottles with a ball. If they miss, the ball smacks against a protective layer of tin. It’s very loud. It’s our community’s annual festival.

There are a lot more people here than when I was a child. The town has become a city and that city is still in the middle of significant growth spurt.

Amid this change and amid the pressure put on cities to accommodate a shifting residence base, the farmers who remember when their cities were villages don’t want to be forgotten.

I have found farmers to be relatively quiet about this, talking about these kinds of things in coffee shops and only when they’re asked, as if resigning to leaving these decisions entirely in the hands of the people who went to school for such things: urban planners and politicians. While in some cases, the loss of loyalty to the agricultural sector is a casualty of growth, this isn’t the case across the board.

There are examples of towns and cities in Manitoba that have seamlessly dealt with the changes that come with growth while simultaneously ensuring their farmer base is not only accommodated but allowed to flourish.

Farmers don’t live inside perimeter towns. Our taxes go to our rural municipalities, but we interact with the communities around us. We spend money in them. We need them. And, in many cases, they need us.

Whether a town or city is an ag-focused city must be an explicit decision made at every level, and it must be made often.

The farming world in Canada is increasingly becoming decentralized, relying less and less on the ma-and-pa service industry. Cities and towns may interpret this as us not needing them like we used to, but this is not the case. I still want the small shop in town to carry tractor parts. I want our local welding outfit to understand the time-sensitive nature of a fix in the middle of harvest. I can’t do it myself.

But, that said, we want our communities to be ag-focused because if they lose that identity, by choice or by accident, the risk is a loss of appreciation for agriculture and a loss of agricultural education.

And, as we are all aware, public trust and social license are real issues that affect our farms. We need agriculture to be front and centre in our communities. We need our communities to identify as agricultural.

The city I am near still does all of these things. But it’s growing fast and the farmers around it are watching. It won’t be long until it will have to face challenges that will call into question its identity, its roots, its history.

The festival is winding down. The game next to me hasn’t had a customer in a while. The fireworks were spectacular. I’m going home to my farm, where the soybeans are thirsty for a slow two inches of rain and our new batch of 10 chickens are starting to lay eggs.

—Toban Dyck is a freelance writer and a new farmer on an old farm. Follow him on Twitter @tobandyck.

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CAN’T TAKE THE FARM FROM THE BOY

Keeping the rural identity in prairie towns

When Prairie towns grow and change, some may shed their farming roots

Toban Dyck

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COLUMNS 25

Grain producers: Changes to wheat variety designations

These varieties will move to the Canada Northern Hard Red wheat class. They will remain in their current classes for the 2017 harvest.

As of August 1, 2018

From Canada Western Red Spring:

| AC Abbey          | Alikat       | Katepwa | Pembina    |
| AC Cora           | CDC Makwa    | Leader  | Thatcher   |
| AC Eatonia        | CDC Osler    | Lillian | Unity      |
| AC Majestic       | Columbus     | McKenzie|           |
| AC Michael        | Conway       | Neepawa |           |
| AC Minto          | Harvest      | Park    |           |
| Alvena            | Kane         | Pasqua  |           |

From Canada Prairie Spring Red:

| AC Foremost       | AC Taber     | Conquer | Oslo       |

As of August 1, 2019

From Canada Prairie Spring Red:

| AC Crystal        |                         |         |            |

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**Water, salt and cows in pastures**

Let’s use disaster as a chance to learn more about measuring the salt content in water.

The recent loss of 200 head of stock due to bad water brings the subject of water and cows into sharp focus. The loss occurred at a pasture near Shamrock, Sask. about 75 km southwest of Moose Jaw. Let me first offer condolences to the producers who lost cattle. In my experience cows are more than just money to stock growers.

This piece is not about placing blame on anyone, but hopefully will lead to some very simple procedures that will prevent such loss in the future.

**MEASURING SALT CONTENT OF WATER IN THE FIELD**

The salt content of water can be very easily measured in the field with sufficient accuracy to be very useful to solve many problems.

Salts carry an electric charge. The more salts in a body of water the more electric current it will carry. We measure that as the EC (Electrical Conductivity). The higher the EC, the higher the salt content of the water. For more details see the work in 1982 and now have several notebooks full of data from all over the prairies, and even the mountains (not much salt there). Chapters 8 and 9 of Henry’s Handbook of Soil and Water includes a selection of that data.

To keep my meter honest I use the Monsanto technical support line at 1-800-667-4944 for recommended Roundup® Ready® Xtend Crop System weed control programs. Field EC meters will set you back a grand or two depending on bells and whistles. One person should be trained and be responsible for the measurements and the records which will be passed on at farm changes. Some lab measurements will be needed but only to keep the field program honest.

Let us hope that such losses can be relegated to history.

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**SOILS AND CROPS**

*Liberty Link*

**NEAR MY DUNDURF FARM, 2001**

The turn of the century was near the end of a long dry cycle that led to very low surface water levels. In general, as water levels decline the salt level rises.

On a quarter section very near me a neighbour noticed cows in distress, alerted the owner, and the cows were immediately moved off. Veterinary assistance established that very high sulphate levels were the culprit. I measured the water at that location on October 2, 2001 and found the EC = 14,750 µS/cm. I keep EC Meter and probe in a small briefcase along with notebook for an ongoing record.

In 2001, my good neighbours, the Janzens, were digging backhoe tests to find a site for a trackhoe dugout. Used my trusty EC meter to help. A shallow clean sand produced very clean looking water but the salt level was nearly as high as that where the neighbour’s cows were in trouble. Another location was chosen with water not as clean but with lower salt.

In 2015 Janzens acquired SE 27 Tp 32 R3 W3, after 10 wet years and was hayed by a neighbour for a few years. The dry cycle lowered the water level has 5,000 µS/cm, you should be looking for a better water source.

The Janzens dugout. I used my trusty EC meter to help. A shallow clean sand produced very clean looking water but the salt level was nearly as high as that where the neighbour’s cows were in trouble. Another location was chosen with water not as clean but with lower salt.

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*Lea Henry*
Our 2017 review

This year we put materials-handling equipment to the test

By Scott Garvey

Last year we put UTVs to the test in our first-ever Grainews Machinery Challenge. This time, in our second annual event, we turned our focus to equipment suited for on-farm materials handling, but we weren’t just thinking of the typical ag tractor and front-end loader combo. We wanted to look at machines designed primarily to lift and load. The reason why is simple. These days farmers are doing more of that work than ever, and many are finding heavier loads need to be raised higher and placed more precisely.

Four machines made it into the 2017 Challenge this time, two telehandlers, an articulated loader and a skid steer. We chose them because they represent the current choices farmers have when looking beyond the ag tractor.

As usual we assembled a team of judges to put the machines through their paces, but this year we invited some of you, our readers, to participate. Here’s a machine-by-machine look at our judges’ evaluations.

Scott Garvey is machinery editor for Grainews. Contact him at Scott.Garvey@bcnpublishing.com.
The Merlo Multifarmer 40.9

The most sophisticated and highly-optioned machine tested in the Grainews Machinery Challenge

By Scott Garvey

Of the two telehandlers tested in the Grainews Machinery Challenge, the Merlo Multifarmer 40.9 stood out as the most capable and highly optioned. And with that honour, as you’d expect, it had the highest MSRP of any machine in the group, $241,800 as equipped with the grapple and over $60,000 of other included options.

The Merlo can lift a 4,000-kilogram load and extend its boom up to nine metres, although maximum load is diminished at full boom extension. No other machine in the group could match that. And Dynamic load control monitors lift capacity limits for safety to prevent tipping.

In practical terms, that means this machine could pick up a large round bale, extend the boom over a corral fence and place it in a pen feeder without actually having to open a gate. That could be a major time saver for some large cattle producers and feedlot operators.

The Merlo can also get those bales — or any other type of load — to a feedlot pen or wherever it’s needed fast, because it has both boom and cab suspension allowing for faster travel speeds over rough surfaces. But the boom suspension can be locked out to allow it to dig or for use in cleaning manure out of those corrals.

At the back end of the 40.9 are features that rival any utility-class ag tractor on the market at the moment. There’s a Category III three-point hitch with 7,000-kilogram lift capacity, a 540 and 1,000 r.p.m. PTO and four hydraulic SCVs. So the four-wheel drive 40.9 can replace that ag tractor in many field operations and completely put it to shame in the lifting and loading department.

Power comes from a side-mounted, turbocharged 156 horsepower (135 PTO) Deutz diesel mated to Merlo’s in-house hydrostatic transmission that will move the Multifarmer down the road at up to 40 km/h. A shuttle shift makes back-and-forth work easy. And a multi-functional joystick controls the boom functions. The Merlo offers three steering options, front wheel, four-wheel and crab steer.

Judges had the opportunity to talk to a local farmer who has owned a Multifarmer for a few years, replacing an ag tractor and skid steer loader with it. He uses it in the field for haying operations and likes it so much he’s planning to upgrade to the model under test.

The most sophisticated and highly-optioned machine tested in the Grainews Machinery Challenge

### THE POSITIVES

Every judge who operated this machine liked it — a lot. Farmers will find the cab control layout familiar. It has a standard shuttle shift lever on the left side of the steering column and a multi-function joystick mounted on a right-hand, padded armrest. One judge didn’t like the position of hydraulic remote switches, just rear of the joystick, which meant the padded armrest couldn’t extend all the way forward. Most judges, though, were pretty happy with it.

The cab door could be swung 180 degrees and pinned open so talking to coworkers outside or getting in and out repeatedly would be easier.

Boom and cab suspension made a noticeable difference both when carrying loads and when empty, allowing much faster travel over rough surfaces than any other of the test machines. And it felt very stable when lifting or extending loads.

The four-wheel steering option made the Merlo very manoeuvrable for its size. And the crab steer option could get you away from a wet spot in the field pretty quickly and easily.

Servicing this machine would be pretty nice, with all filters immediately accessible in the front of the engine compartment.

### THE NEGATIVES

Inherent with telehandler design across all brands, vision to the right is restricted when the boom is raised, and because of the low-slung cab, round bales had to be lifted high to see under them when driving forward. That exaggerated the side vision restriction from the boom.

Drivers couldn’t see the rear hitch to back up and connect to an implement without a rear camera system, but Merlo offers one that shows its image on the standard 8.5-inch, in-cab monitor (it’s included in the options list).

Although it was pretty nimble for its size, none of the judges could get the Merlo to turn through a nine-foot by nine-foot 90 degree turn meant to simulate turning in tight quarters like a barn alleyway, which was one of the standard tests judges used.

All the other tested machines could do it.

Access to the cab didn’t seem all that comfortable, with both grab handles not exactly where you’d expect them. Steps rather than ladder-style footholds would have been much nicer and made cab access easier.

Scott Garvey is machinery editor for Grainews. Contact him at Scott.Garvey@fbcpublishing.com.
Tires That Last, Discounts That Don’t

By Scott Garvey

Most farmers are no strangers to a skid steer loader. There are several makes and models popular with farmers on the market now, so we included Kubota’s largest model, the SSV 75, in our test group. We wanted to see how it stacks up not only to other skids steers but where it lands in the full range of materials-handling options farmers have.

Typical of general skid steer design, it doesn’t offer the kind of versatility the hybrid telehandlers do. But we found that what this model does, it does well. That also means the SSV 75 comes in with a much lower as-equipped MSRP of $68,140. Our test model had the enclosed cab, high-flow hydraulics option and was equipped with a standard bucket.

The SSV 75 gets a 75 horsepower Kubota diesel and routes power through a two-speed transmission that offers a maximum travel speed of just under 12 m.p.h.

The SSV 75 had the optional multi-function control lever layout, one for movement control and one for loader and bucket functions. It took some time to get used to that rather than the more common dual lever and foot controls. But judges found once they were onto it, it made operation simple.

The cab was comfortable with lots of legroom and the lock-up windshield feature was nice, especially when getting in and out frequently. The multi-function control lever arrangement was nice, but did take some getting used to.

It felt stable when lifting and loading. But it did have the lowest load rating of all the test machines at 1,220 kilograms (2,690 pounds). Breakout force was 2,669 kilograms (5,894 pounds). Judges liked the easy service access behind the lockable engine compartment, and it had a lockable fuel filler door.

The test machine had dual multi-function control levers, which took a little getting used to. But judges grew to like that feature.

The windshield on this model could be locked up and out of the way when getting in and out.

The SSV 75 Kubota was a capable machine and judges appreciated its overall design and operator comfort.

The SSV 75 had the optional multi-function control lever layout, which took a little getting used to. But judges grew to like that feature.

There wasn’t anything to complain about with the SSV 75, other than the basic design of a skid steer isn’t as versatile as some of the other machines we tested. But that’s what you expect with a skid steer.

Scott Garvey is machinery editor for Grainews.

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**THE POSITIVES**
- The cab was comfortable with lots of legroom and the lock-up windshield feature was nice, especially when getting in and out frequently.
- The multi-function control lever arrangement was nice, but did take some getting used to.
- It felt stable when lifting and loading.
- Judges liked the easy service access behind the lockable engine compartment, and it had a lockable fuel filler door.

**THE NEGATIVES**
- There wasn’t anything to complain about with the SSV 75, other than the basic design of a skid steer isn’t as versatile as some of the other machines we tested. But that’s what you expect with a skid steer.

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Telehandlers: Our farmer panel

Reader opinions: two contest-winning farmers joined the Grainews judges to evaluate our test machines

By Scott Garvey and Leean Minogue

The “official” judging team for this year’s Grainews Machinery Challenge included active farmers. But we wondered how our group of test machines might fit into our readers’ farming operations. The best way to answer that, we thought, was to put a few of them in the drivers’ seats. So, Grainews held a contest in the run-up to Ag In Motion. To win a chance to be a guest judge, we asked our readers, to send in photos of the loader you’re using on your farm. Once we had the entries, we made random selections. The winners were invited to join our judging panel and evaluate the machines. (We chose three judges, but judge No. 3 was unable to come.)

The two farmer judges who joined in the testing were Jim Latrace and Dave Smith. Our random selections worked well. These two farmers run very different farm operations and are at very different points in their careers. Latrace and his family operate a seed farm near Lumsden, Saskatchewan. He is a relatively young farmer with school-age children. Dave Smith and his wife, Susan, have a cattle operation near Lumsden, Saskatchewan. Although they’ve downsized in recent years, the Smiths are still running a cattle herd. Dave is 77, and the Smiths are getting ready to retire.

Not surprisingly, we ended up with two very different points of view.

KUBOTA SSV 75

Of course, skill steers aren’t new to these farmers. Dave Smith said he didn’t really have a lot of use for one on his farm. “I feed the cows out in the field,” he said, so he doesn’t often need a machine for chores like clearing manure out of a barn.

But after some seat time, he warmed up to this Kubota, finding it easy to operate and having no trouble scrambling over the front of it to get into the cab. He ended up thinking of a lot of chores this machine could do on his farm — with the exception of spreading manure.

Latrice was no stranger to skid steers either, so he took time to notice some features specific to this model. He really appreciated that the front window could be locked open. Without this feature, he’s found it difficult to communicate with people outside while operating similar machines on his farm. “To be able to lock it open is awesome,” he said.

Latrice also noticed the access hole in the floor of the cab that makes it easy for the operator to sweep mud out. “I love that idea,” Latrace said. “That was a cool option that I’ve never seen in another skid steer.”

GIANT V761T TELE

As a seed grower, Latrace felt that the Giant “had the most use in my kind of world because it was small.” While he could always find uses for the longer booms on the Dieci or the Merlo, the Giant’s boom could do everything Latrace actually needs to do.

He liked the Giant’s centre-mounted boom configuration. “When you’re sitting in the center, you didn’t feel like you had blind spots,” he said. Although he did point out that over time, he could probably get used to any of the machines.

Latrice thought of a lot of different jobs around the yard where he could put the Giant to work, including mowing, blowing snow and rototilling.

Initially, Smith was a little uncomfortable with the different control layout in the cab. However, he admitted that might not be a problem if he actually owned the machine. “After you got used to it, it would be really good,” he said.

He found the steering response a little slow when the machine was standing still. The Giant’s active braking system took a little getting used to for both Latrace and Smith. “When you let the throttle off, the hydrostatic stopped you,” Latrace said. The machine would come to a quick stop, while most tractors coast to a stop. However, Latrace said, “You get used to it pretty quick.”

THE DIECI AGRI TECH 35.7 VS

Smith thought the longer booms on both the Dieci and the Merlo might make it easier to see while you’re loading pallets. He could see a lot of uses for that extra reach, especially when leveling ground. “You could talk yourself into buying one,” he said, looking a little wistful. Although, he did admit that for most of his on-farm work extended reach wasn’t too important.

While some of the testers found the Dieci a little difficult to get in and out of, Smith had no trouble at all. He felt the grab handles were in exactly the right place. “Even 77-year old cowboys can get into it,” he said.

Smith also noticed that there was no way to hold the cab door open in the wind while working. But he found this machine to be really nice to drive. And, he pointed out, despite the lower price tag, “It did most of what the Merlo did.”

Latrice agreed with that sentiment, and said that if he was buying one of these machines, price would be a major factor.

THE MERLO MF 40.9

“This is the one with the cool factor,” Latrace said. Both Smith and Latrace were very impressed with this machine, but they also thought the higher MSRP would be a hurdle. They liked the Merlo’s host of features, ranging from the long boom to a well-placed grease gun holder.

Latrice found exiting the Merlo’s cab a little awkward. “I need a step to come out, because I always get out of the cab facing out.” (This wouldn’t be a problem if he bought the machine. After a few seconds examining the step, in true farmer style, Latrace had figured out exactly how he’d “fix” the step so it worked for him.)

However, Smith took the opposite view. “The steps have to be where they are because you want them inside the truck,” he said. He liked the low-slung cab, and the fact that there were only two steps up instead of three.

Both thought the price of the Merlo might lead them to buy a cheaper machine, but both talked a lot about the impressive capabilities it could bring to their farms. For example, Latrace said if he had a boom as long as the Merlo’s boom, he’d use it as a scaffold. If he owned it, he said, he’d find things to do with it. “You’d use it everyday,” he said. He especially liked the idea of having remote control from the operator for work-alone jobs. “That would be pretty sweet.”

“I want one of these just because it’s cool,” Latrace said when he climbed out of the machine after his test drive. However, later on, with a little time to reflect on the options, Latrace thought that for the $200,000-plus sticker price, he also had the option of buying a couple of specialized machines that did exactly what he needed to do.

OVERALL

We asked the farmer judges if this experience would change their minds the next time they buy machinery on their farms.

Smith isn’t in a place in his career where he’s planning a big machinery purchase right now. “If you’ve got cows, everything’s economy,” Smith told us. “That’s why I don’t have much machinery.”

Latrice, however, is actively looking for new machinery solutions for his farm. “I hadn’t run four-wheel steers before,” he told us, and that feature on the telehandlers impressed him. “As a seed operation, I almost need more forklift than loader tractor.”

While he enjoyed trying them out, Latrace believes the telehandlers are a little too big (and expensive) for what he actually needs to do on his farm. “In the construction world, the first question that everybody asks is ‘how soon can you do this?’ In the ag world, the first question that everybody asks is ‘how much does it cost?’”

In the end, one discussion seemed to exemplify the range of views different farmers have on machines, and that really came through with our farmer panel reviews. Latrace was a little disappointed that none of the four machines we had available had good radios. On his farm, the radio is “always on” in their machines. Smith laughed. In his cabs, the radio is “always off.”
The Dieci Agri Tech 35.7 VS
A smaller but versatile telehandler design

By Scott Garvey

One of the two telehandlers Grainews put to the test this year was the Dieci Agri Tech 35.7 VS. It’s a hybrid design meant to appeal to farmers, with a rear PTO, hydraulic remotes (two on our test machine) and a three-point hitch. It comes in at a price point lower than the Merlo, with an as-equipped MSRP of $156,000. But that includes the $8,300 grapple attachment. The base model comes supplied with pallet forks, so at this price buyers get both.

Without the high-end features of the Merlo, judges considered the Dieci to be a more basic telehandler alternative. Maximum lift capacity is a pretty respectable 3,500 kilograms (7,710 pounds) and maximum lift height is seven metres (22.96 feet). And it also gets down the road at 40 km/h. There is a rear PTO as well. So with all that, this machine can get to work in the field for livestock or forage growers.

Power comes from a 141 horsepower FPT diesel that gets routed through a hydrostatic transmission (Fiat Powertrain, the brand behind Case IH and New Holland power plants). That also gives it the ability to power reasonably large grain augers.

At just 2.39 metres (94 inches) wide and 2.49 metres (98 inches) tall, combined with its multiple steering options that includes four-wheel steer, this loader easily made it through the tight turn test on our course, able to make a 90-degree turn through a nine-foot by nine-foot square box. So maneuvering through a tight corral or through a barn with the Dieci should be a breeze.

Tallying up the features and comparing that to the price point, judges thought this machine offered a reasonably economical way to get a basic telehandler into the farm fleet, and it offers some serious lifting ability well beyond the scope of a conventional utility ag tractor with a loader.

Its size and steering modes make the Dieci a nimble machine capable of navigating some pretty tight spaces.

Continued on page 32
**The Negatives**

Just like the Merlo, judges thought it would be much nicer to have a step arrangement to get into the cab rather than ladder-style foot grips.

Driving across rough ground or at higher speeds, the Dieci pitched noticeably back and forth with just the weight of the empty grapple up front.

The side door would not pivot 180 degrees and could not be locked open. It was also very large so opening it on a windy day (which one of our test days was) required keeping a firm grasp on it.

The door also had a power window feature, which was nice. But at its lowest point the window was still about six inches higher than the door frame, and there was no other armrest, so an operator couldn’t rest a left elbow on anything.

Servicing would be a little more awkward than necessary, with none of the filters accessible without removing panels.

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

Farmers will find the control arrangement familiar.

At the rear, the Dieci has all the functional equipment of a utility ag tractor.

The Dieci was easily able to maneuver through a tight turn test on the judging course.

Unlike all the other test machines, the filters are not immediately accessible in the engine compartment, which would make servicing unnecessarily time consuming.

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Certainly not yet a household name here, the Dutch company Giant is looking to expand its presence in the western Canadian market, and it wants farmers to consider its machines for use.

The machine we tested was the V761T Tele. It’s window sticker MSRP was $168,000, but was offered at a show special of just $132,000—a significant discount.

Operating this articulated machine was similar to being in a four-wheel drive tractor, but in this model, as with similar machines, the operator sits behind the articulation point, and it has a limited boom extension to make high lifts easier. The centre pivot design gives farmers another choice in machinery type compared to skid steers and telehandlers.

Maximum lift capacity is 4,350 kilograms (9,590 pounds). But our test machine boom had been converted to use a skid steer-style quick attach system. That’s something the company will provide if a buyer really wants it, but the skid steer quick attach load rating reduces the effective load capacity of the machine by nearly half.

Underneath the Giant is a pair of 16-ton axles with differential lock on both the front and rear to maximize four-wheel drive traction. The hydrostatic drive pump is capable of 150 litres per minute. And the loader has a ride suspension system to improve stability and operator comfort.

Hydraulic fittings on the boom allow the V671T Tele to operate front-mounted attachments.

We didn’t know until after the test that the company no longer plans to import this model into Canada. Instead, a similar-sized and updated model will replace it. The first of which will arrive this fall to undergo cold weather testing to ensure it stands up to a Canadian winter. The affect of cold weather on the electronic system of the V671T Tele is a concern according to a company rep. If the test of the new model goes well, expect to see it available next season.

The Giant V761T Tele

A look at what an articulated loader can offer

By Scott Garvey

The view ahead from the Giant cab.

The cab door can be pinned open for quick entry and exit.

Filters are easily accessible under the rear hood.

All filters are visible and easily accessible when the hood is opened.

The controls were difficult to understand at first, but the joystick control arrangement proved to be handy once judges got onto it.

The boom extension is fairly short on the Giant, but judges thought it would likely be enough to meet the needs of most farmers.

As part of our testing, we measured blind spots from the cab of each machine.

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**THE POSITIVES**

- Cab access was really nice. It is very manoeuvrable in tight quarters. The articulated design made accurately positioning loads very easy.
- It’s a nice machine to operate (once you get onto the control arrangement). Some controls are programmable to suit an operator’s preference.
- Very good visibility around the machine, and the cab door pins open, flat against the machine side.
- All filters are visible and easily accessible when the hood is opened.

**THE NEGATIVES**

- The controls were initially difficult to figure out and took a couple of phone calls to the rep to understand them. Joystick buttons are unmarked.
- When extending and retracting the boom, there is no flow reduction near the end of the cylinder limit, so it hits the ends hard.
- The hood must be opened to fill the fuel tank.

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Scott Garvey is machinery editor for Grainews. Contact him at Scott.Garvey@fbcpublishing.com
Big U.S. calf crop will hit the market in November and December

**MARKET UPDATE**

Jerry Klassen

Alberta fed cattle prices were hovering in the range of $143 to $145 in mid-August. The market has been trending lower since the first week of May when the fed market reached up to $197. Despite the softer selling prices, feeding margins remain in positive territory. Break-even pen closest values are near $135 for August; therefore, margins are hovering around $100 per head. Feeder cattle markets have held value despite the narrowing feeding margins. There haven’t been many yearlings come on the market throughout the summer but larger frame medium flesh steer calves averaging around 700 pounds have been trading from $213 to as high as $220.

The cattle complex is digesting the sharp year-over-year beef production increase during the third and fourth quarters. Beef demand moves through a seasonal low during September and October so the nearby fundamentals are bearish. Feedlots have been quite profitable for the first half of the year but we could see margins move into negative territory later in September. This could weigh on the feeder market later in the fall period.

Looking forward, the U.S. cattle herd continues to expand so 2018 beef production will exceed 2017 and the market will function to encourage demand through lower prices.

The USDA released their semi-annual cattle inventory report on July 21 and the 2017 calf crop was estimated 36.5 million head, up 3.5 per cent from the 2016 calf crop of 35 million head. The last time the U.S. calf crop was this large was back in 2007 when it reached 36.8 million head. We haven’t seen a sharp increase in the cow slaughter and the feeder prices during the first half of the year have sustained the profitable period in the cow-calf sector. The 2017 Canadian calf crop is expected to come in at 4.4 million head, up about 50,000 head from 2016. U.S. cattle on feed inventories have been running four to five per cent above year ago levels; the weekly slaughter pace is exceeding last year by about 30,000 head per week. Carcass weights have been percolating higher but remain under year-ago levels. Beef production during the third and fourth quarters will be sharply above last year. However, production tends to ease in the first quarter of 2018. I’m expecting the fed cattle market to follow a very similar seasonal tendency based on the production estimates above.

Stronger beef demand has been the main factor sustaining the current price structure. U.S. and Canadian unemployment levels continue to decline while GDP data comes in stronger than expected. Disposable income for the average North American income has been rising as consumer confidence hovers near historical highs. Therefore, rising consumer spending continues to drive demand.

**MARKETS TO WEAKEN LATER**

Feeder cattle prices are expected to remain firm through September and October but then soften later in fall and winter. The yearling market will diverge from fed cattle prices because feedlots have experienced a prolonged period of profitable margins. Yearling numbers will be similar to year-ago levels so the market will be rather hot in September. Cow-calf producers with yearlings will want to sell into this demand. Once the feeding margins move into negative territory in November and December, the feeder market is expected to soften.

Producers marketing calves this fall will also want to sell earlier, rather than later. If you were planning to sell in November and December, the economics suggest it will probably be better to background the lighter calves and sell them as yearlings in March or April of 2018. You’ll want to avoid selling calves when the bulk of the U.S. calf crop comes on the market in November and December. The pre-

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**U.S. QUARTERLY BEEF PRODUCTION (MILLION POUNDS)**

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**Continued on Page 35**
Managing wildlife/agriculture conflicts
Proper compensation part of the solution

Everyone enjoys seeing wildlife, but they can have a negative impact on farming and ranching operations. For example, whether it is too many elk coming out of the Saffield military base in southeast Alberta or national parks being overgrazed, the issue usually comes down to population control. Harvesting is the all-encompassing answer to many of the problems.

Harvesting can mean extra hunting is allowed and producers get compensation for their land, or harvesting of animals happens by roundup. There are some areas where populations should be managed by trained/biologists who have the power to make the right call. In the interim, compensation losses for lost standing forage, hay, or grain will help but if populations are high the losses will continue year after year. Moving a herd of elk or deer for instance off a ranch could just push the problem onto a neighbor’s property.

In many instances with the large ungulate herds the predators follow so often in detail that the same producer has two problems. Feed loss, damage to fences by ungulates, coupled by predation on calves, fawns and lambs by wolves, coyotes and cougars are the many losses producers experience.

In reading one article I learned there can be “good” and “bad” coyotes. Some stick to small prey like gophers and mice so don’t bother cat. And being very territorial you want to keep a “good” family of coyotes on your farm.

Some provinces such as Saskatchewan have fairly comprehensive compensation programs that even covers losses due to coyotes. Agriculture loss from wildlife varies greatly across the provinces. In Ontario we could get into talks about raccoons or rats so wildlife losses can be very different between the provinces that’s why each province should develop compensation programs individually but Saskatchewan would make a good template.

As a veterinarian, the wildlife interactions I frequently hear about are the predation (deaths or injuries) from cattle being attacked. In these cases we need to verify the cause of death. In the past there was compensation for deaths but nothing for treatment of injured livestock. These are specific things that need to be looked at in developing compensation packages going forward. It serves no one if vigilant warfare takes place as frustrated producers feel they have nowhere to turn. While disease transmission is quite low because wildlife and cattle are different species, we do need to be vigilant about diseases such as brucellosis, tuberculosis and chronic wasting disease in elk as well as specific parasitic diseases. For example, brucellosis infected elk keep reinfesting a large bison herd in Montana.

PROPER COMPENSATION

I know many urban dwellers want all wildlife preserved. But if their dog or cat was picked off by a cougars or their garden destroyed by a bunch of deer they’d have some idea of how farmers feel — the farm livelihood can be severely diminished in some cases. Compensation programs must be easy to administer, have black and white answers, and offer timely payments to producers.

Governments need to look at sustainable programs which provide producers with sufficient compensation for some losses and/or population reduction where warranted, yet also still meet the needs of conservationists and general public interested in catching a glimpse of wildlife.

Management options such as catching or relocating a problem bear is much different than catching and relocating a large herd of elk. Perhaps harvesting for the food bank should be looked at. It seems that relocating large groups may just move the problem and potentially upset the ecosystem somewhere else.

Striking the right balance is what we are after. I haven’t even talked about damages caused by migratory birds but generally there is compensation available with some restrictions. The Mistakis Institute survey indicated damage by birds was a distant third on the list to ungulates and predators.

The rules for all wildlife management programs need to be fine-tuned, kept current, reflect the main issues in each province and provide compensation where warranted. This will keep agriculture in harmony with wildlife and protect wildlife for future generations to experience. National parks and diversified livestock farms are still great places to get fairly close to “wildlife.” Be careful though as wildlife are just that “wild” and we don’t want any human injuries.

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.
Great weather for haying and weddings

Pastures are drying out, smoke drifts in from distant forest fires

JULY 1, 2017
We had hot, windy weather in late June but didn’t get started haying as soon as we’d hoped. It took awhile to get the machinery ready. Lynn cut heifer hill and the field below it Saturday.

Michael and Carolyn hauled us the yearling bull we bought from them and hauled their two-year-old bull home (that we wintered here in the corral with our two-year-old bull). We turned bulls out the next day — the older bull with the cows, and the yearling in the horse pasture with the heifers.

Robbie and Lynn worked on the little John Deere tractor (the one we turn hay with, that’s 30 years old). Andrea and kids helped me move the rest of my hay out of the hay shed so we can put new hay in.

Monday Dottie wasn’t feeling well — a little dull and not eating much hay. I took her temperature but it was normal. I put her in the front yard to eat grass but she only nibbled — not her usual greedy self. She wasn’t passing much manure, and it was firm and dry. I had our vet check her because I was afraid she was impacted. She still had good gut sounds, however. The vet thought she had ulcers.

Andrea baled heifer hill that evening, just ahead of a rainstorm, and Robbie took the stackwagon up to the field below heifer hill, and piled hay against the fence. Some of the bales we hauled from heifer hill were damp so we didn’t stack them. We opened them up so they could dry out rather than heat and mold. I’ll feed those first.

I gave Dottie the ulcer medication for four days. We weren’t sure if that was the problem, but by the third day she was eating better and passing normal manure.

JULY 13
Last week we baled and hauled the rest of our hay, filling my hay shed and stacking the rest in the stack yard across the creek. Robbie and Michael put a new weir in one of our ditches and cemented it in so it will work properly and not wash out or shift (and read wrong!) like it has in the past.

With the hot weather our creek is steadily dropping, but we’re trying to juggle and adjust the water so the first right (the ranch at the mouth of the creek) doesn’t get short and call for water. Michael and Carolyn moved their cows down from the 320 mountain pasture to green fields on the upper place. There’s still grass on the mountain, but it’s drying out. The calves will gain more and the cows milk better on green feed. This year the fields are still green because we haven’t had to shut off the irrigation water yet.

JULY 22
My cousin Ned and his wife arrived from Texas on Thursday, to stay a few days while they are here for Emily’s wedding. That evening Charlie went up to Michael and Carolyn’s to get instructions for feeding their dogs and house sitting at night while they and Nick are gone to Canada. They left early yesterday morning to visit Heather and Gregory who are celebrating their first wedding anniversary.

Yesterday Andrea helped us move the heifers and bull to a new pasture. Pam and Ned helped Andrea and Sam make lasagna, salads and desserts for Emily’s wedding dinner. Lynn and I made a huge potato salad. Robbie, Charlie and Jim hauled 22 bales of hay from our stack to create benches (with boards over them) for the outdoor wedding.

Today was Emily and Robert’s wedding and we were grateful for good weather. Even though it was hot, it was not windy (and no lightning storm). Decorations were lovely and Emily was dazzling in her beautiful dress.

JULY 31
Michael, Carolyn and Nick had a good visit with Heather and Gregory and Little Joseph (who is now almost three months old). They started home Monday, but had a car problem; several lug bolts broke and a wheel almost came off. They called Gregory who came with a trailer and hauled their car back to his farm. They were able to fix it and started out again on Tuesday.

That afternoon we had a horrific rainstorm for 30 minutes that washed rocks and gravel down all the gullies and made deep ruts down our driveway. So much gravel came down from our hill pasture that it nearly buried the fence, and washed a big pile down onto the road. Gravel came through the culvert under the road, filled our ditch and spewed across the field, Robbie had to dig out the ditch before we could get water through it again.

Saturday we brought the cows down from the swamp pasture, sorted off the bull to put in the back corral, brought the heifers up from the post pile pasture and sorted off the yearling bull to put with him, then took the cows and heifers to heifer hill.

Andrea and I rode on up through the range to our 320-acre pasture, checked the fence and made sure there were no range cows in there, then made a loop through the high range. Coming through the timber at High Camp we saw a mama bear with two small cubs.

We’re getting Willow (Dani’s young mare) back into training. We started riding her two years ago when she was three but didn’t have time last year to work with her at all. The past few days Andrea rode Breezy and led Willow out over the low range. We’re going through the basics briefly to get her back into the habit of regular handling so she’ll transition smoothly into being ridden again.

Today we rode with Alfonso to show him where his crippled, sick calf is (that we discovered yesterday riding through the middle range), and helped him get the call home.

AUGUST 8
Weather continues hot and there’s a lot of smoke drifting into our valley from multiple fires in Montana, Idaho, Oregon and Canada.

Fifteen riders went out to move cattle to the high range but we didn’t go with them, not wanting to be part of that chaos (many people out there just for the fun of a roundup, not knowing the range, nor how to move cattle). Instead, Andrea, Dani and I rode for six hours that day, to help move range cows while Alfonso packed salt to the high range. The Amish wanted to move all the cattle on Saturday instead of taking several days in small groups, so Alfonso asked us to help by moving some of the low cows up higher — so they wouldn’t have so far to go on Saturday (2,000 feet of elevation difference and several miles to climb). Some of his cows have young calves, born out on the range, and can’t travel that far in hot weather.

Fifteen riders went out to move cattle to the high range but we didn’t go with them, not wanting to be part of that chaos (many people out there just for the fun of a roundup, not knowing the range, nor how to move cattle). Instead, Andrea, Dani and I rode for six hours on Sunday to help Alfonso find cows that got missed. We gathered up 11 more cows (and calves) and a bull.

Yesterday and today Andrea rode Willow out over the low range; we’re launched again on her training program.
Start with good stock — stay healthy

Some diseases are hard to fix — the best approach is to avoid them

Debbie Chikousky

Raising livestock for a living means that they have to be productive. They must reproduce, be healthy, and not be labour-intensive. Nobody makes a profit raising sick animals.

The University of Guelph and Semex have been moving forward studying this from a genetic standpoint. This is exciting because with the increase in prevalence of Johne’s, producing healthy animals with a strong immune system is a must. Johne’s disease is a contagious chronic progressive bacterial infection of the digestive tracts of cattle, sheep, goats, deer, bison, llamas and alpacas.

The infection occurs in the layer of cells of the digestive tract that are responsible for absorption. This area becomes thickened as the body’s immune system attempts to control the infection. The thickening prevents the digestive tract from absorbing nutrients, which creates a chronic diarrhea that does not respond to treatment and subsequently leads to a loss of body condition in spite of a normal appetite. There is no cure for Johne’s.

Animals that develop clinical signs will eventually die from the disease. Clinical signs usually do not develop before two years of age. However, the range is six months to 12 years with five years as the average. The long incubation period of this disease makes it a herd problem as well as an individual animal problem. Many animals can become infected before any in the herd show clinical signs. The primary way any herd becomes infected with Johne’s is through the purchase of infected animals.

COMMON DISEASES
When we started with small ruminants, the major economic health concerns of producers were Caseous lymphaditis, Caprine arthritis anecephalitis virus (CAE) (goats), Maedi-Visna virus (MVV) (sheep), Johne’s, CAE and MVV all fall under the umbrella of small ruminant lentiviruses (SRLV).

Nancy Stonos, a PhD candidate from the University of Guelph, researched the prevalence of SRLVs in Ontario and the number of goats infected with both diseases. Research results showed the prevalence of SRLVs is 80 per cent and Johne’s-causing bacteria (Myco-

selective breeding programs for animals with enhanced immunity/disease resistance are being promoted in the cattle dairy industry already. Research is being done to test genes so that breeders will be able to select animals resistant to a specific disease, or select animals that have an improved immune system, or that may help combat many diseases at once. This is a long way off for small ruminant farmers.

Clinical signs usually do not develop before two years of age

Clinical signs usually do not develop before two years of age. November 21

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Keep bulls in breeding condition

While bulls usually have about 10 months of life after the year off, they shouldn’t be ignored.

Peter Vitti

The reality is that a good feed and management program is essential for beef bulls in the post-breeding season. It helps keep them healthy, in good shape and fertile, so they can get the cow herd in calf during the next breeding season. Whether they remain on pasture or put into drylot, I suggest all post-breeding bulls be segregated into three different groups — yearlings, two-year-olds and older bulls. Next, producers should conduct a walk-through and give a gross-inspection of the bull. Then they can expect most beef producers will likely observe a modest loss of body condition/bodyweight on all their working bulls. It’s usually in the ballpark of about 100-150 kg by the end of the breeding season.

RECOVER BODY CONDITION

First action in post-breeding season management should be to either maintain or recover optimum BCS in time for the next breeding season, despite it being three-quarters of a year away. That’s because beef bulls are the most sexually active and fertile (highest sperm count and viability) when they have a body condition score of 3.0 to 3.5 (on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 = emaciated and 5 = obese) at the start of the breeding season. In contrast, skinny bulls with a BCS lower than 2.5 often have low libido and sperm production. Second, we should also keep in mind yearling bulls returning as two-year-olds need to achieve about 75 per cent of their mature bodyweight at the same date.

Most of the post-breeding bull feeding and management programs I set up parallel these twin goals and are quite simple. They are first based upon the specific energy and protein nutrient requirements of returning yearlings (as two-year-olds): 55-65 per cent TDN and 13-14 per cent protein and older bulls: 55-60 per cent TDN and 11-12 per cent protein, which encompass three upcoming time periods of late-summer to fall, overwintering and 60-day pre-breeding phase.

A diet for post-breeding yearlings may consist mostly of mixed-quality pasture or free-choice forages supplemented with a few kilos of grain or molasses blocks (pature) for growth. More mature bulls (three years old and older) that come out of the breeding season in fairly good shape can be maintained on an all roughage diet of medium-to-good-quality pasture or hay. Thin bulls should be fed some grain in order to achieve an optimum 3.0 to 3.5 BCS by the next breeding season. Some more grain in addition to meet recovery BCS needs will likely need to be fed during the coldest months of the winter. Producers should also buy a well-balanced commercial mineral-vitamin product fed at 70-100 g (three to four per head) daily, which are often called, “breeder minerals.” It should contain adequate levels of macro-minerals such as calcium and phosphorus that complement the rest of the diet; namely the above forages and grains fed to bulls. Furthermore, trace minerals such as copper and zinc, both of which have long been known to be essential for superior bull fertility (involved in sperm production and livability) and immunity against disease should be formulated into a bull mineral at relative high levels and be assured of a high degree of bioavailability. Selenium should also be provided at three mg/bd/day as well as recommended levels of vitamins A, D, and high vitamin E (i.e.: +1000 IU/bd/day). Finally, salt and a good source of fresh clean water should round out the bull diet.

Aside from a proper post-breeding bull feeding program other bull management is important. For example, treat any bulls showing signs of lice and mange with proper insecticides. Vaccination programs should be implemented, usually when the rest of the cow herd is routinely processed. Deworming programs can also be carried out as well. Talk to a local beef veterinarian for recommendations on the best timing and options, respectively.

With this care given to good fertility during the long post-breeding season, we need to give them, the necessary time to recover from one successful breeding season and prepare for another one next year. While it’s a shame some people (like my 300-cow herd friend) fail to realize its importance, they might change their mind once they see their neighbours following a post-breeding bull program, have a cow herd with higher conception rates, more saleable calves and finally a higher revenue compared to their own.

Peter Vitti is an independent livestock nutritionist and consultant based in Winnipeg. To reach him call 204-204-7497 or by email at vitti@mts.net.
Emotional agility during harvest

This means if you have troubling thoughts or emotions you can still act in a way that serves how you most want to live.

Elaine Froese, www.elainefroese.com

I love harvest. The golden glow of waving wheat, the meals in the fields, and the joy of everyone on the farm team working hard to “get ‘er done!” 2017 is a stressful harvest for the folks suffering from drought, the after-effects of the 2016 delayed harvest, and a myriad of other issues.

Regardless of what state your crop is in this year, I encourage you to reflect on the wisdom of Dr. Susan David who wrote Emotional Agility.

David defines emotional agility as “the absence of pretence and performance, which gives your actions greater power because they emanate from your core values and core strength with something solid, genuine, and real.”

She encourages us to articulate (talk clearly about) your full emotional truth. Align more of what you do with your deepest values.

“Acceptance is a prerequisite for change,” she says. The 2017 harvest is stressful for many. Can you accept that this situation exists but not obsess about it? David defines “brooding as the ability to stew in your misery, endlessly stirring the pot around and around.” Brooding is not helpful as a “short-term emotional aspirin,” because it is not dealing with the source.

David also describes “bottling” where you push emotions aside to get on with things. Farmers who bottle are the ones I call “time bombs” because you are never sure when the next emotional explosion is coming.

Stressed out is not “who you are.” David writes: “Don’t say I am stressed, step out and say, “I am feeling stressed.” Evaluate what the function of the stress is... what is it teaching you? Farmers who are under huge stress this harvest need to reach out to themselves to practise self-acceptance and self-compassion. The drought, hail, excessive moisture, are not your fault. Are you talking with your family about your financial risks? Have you communicated a new payment plan with your creditors? Are you taking good care of your physical needs for sleep and nourishing food? Why are you farming? Is it your passion and your business. You’ve seen tough times before. Can you acknowledge the emotions you are feeling this harvest and yet distance yourself from your emotions and connect with your “why”? David says, “to acknowledg- ing yet distancing yourself from your emotions and connect- ing with your why, you learn to unhook and keep going despite your fears. Courage is fear walk- ing.”

Getting hooked happens when your internal chatterbox links with memories, visuals or thoughts that blend to deliver an emotional punch (i.e. negative self-talk). Farmers who beat themselves up for not buying any or more hail insurance, yelling that continues when machines break down, or cursing the weather, are all examples of negative thinking that doesn’t create solutions.

Emotional agility means having any number of troubling thoughts or emotions and still managing to act in a way that serves how you most want to live. That’s what it means to step out and off the hook. When you have the ability to step out you can notice feelings with curiosity and courage, and create space between your internal feelings and your external options, and then let go. For farmers this might mean being able to talk about your sadness of the crop disaster, write about the losses you are experiencing in order to process the financial failure, and then let go. You step out from the emotions of a tough year, and into meaningful action as you develop insight for what to do next.

Yelling, shutting down, and avoiding the courageous conver- sations you need to have with family and financiers is not the solution. I served with Farm Debt Mediation Services as a mediator for a decade. The common-sense approach to managing financial stress is to talk to your lenders; do not avoid them. Work out a new payment solution together. Con- sult a farm management specialist who can help design a new cash flow path. See a doctor if depres- sive thinking won’t leave you.

“Thoughts and emotions contain information, not directions,” says David. People who are run by their negative thinking and high-drama emotions are hard to deal with in family business.

Here are David’s techniques for stepping out of your emotional hooks:

1. Think process. You want a path of continuous growth over the long haul. This harvest is not your “first rodeo.” Draw on the wisdom of farmers who have seen this before.

2. Embrace and accept contra- dictions that increase your tolerance for uncertainty. What are you doing wisely to manage risk?

3. Laugh. This forces you to see new possibilities. Creating solutions is a very positive con- flict behaviour.

4. Change your point of view. Consider your problems from the perspective of someone else. A bad harvest is a “First World problem,” not a Third World one where people are starving. The ability to see issues from another pers- pective is a great skill to hone.

5. Call it out. Identify your thoughts and emotions. Say, “I am having a thought that is...” I am having an emotion or feeling that is...” David says, “You have no obligation to accept your thoughts’ or emo- tions’ opinions, much less act on their advice.

6. Talk to yourself in the third person. “Elaine, you are able to choose your actions.” You value your family. Share your feelings and thoughts openly so they can help you.

Can you acknowledge the emotions you are feeling this harvest and yet distance yourself from your emotions and connect with your “why?”

You are not what you do. Yes you farm and harvest crops. When the crop fails that does not make you a failure. The act of liv- ing aligned to your values is what David calls “walking your why.” Your values are the cherished beliefs and behaviours that give you meaning and satisfaction.

Why are you farming? What do you truly value?

2017 may be a defining year for you to assess if you still want to accept the inherent complexity of decision-making in agricul- ture. “Making choices, deci- sions, and negotiating relation- ships without a clear set of governing values at the front of your mind is taxing labour,” says David.

Be emotionally agile. Unhook from negative thinking. Step out to create new solutions.

Safe harvest to all.

Elaine Froese, CSP, CAFA, delivers meals to the field at Boissevain, Manitoba. She is a spare combine driver. Connect with her at www.elainefroese.com. Contact elainefroese or Farm Family Coach on Facebook and YouTube. Her new book is, Build Your Farm Legacy... tools to empower family communication.

If it weren’t for the messages from some of the leaders I connected with, I wouldn’t have this clear vision nor the motivation to go after it. I can’t thank you enough for that...” – Jocelyn Ure, AWG Delegate

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Come early and join the AWC Wine Tour on October 29!
Here’s some things that people found helpful and not so helpful after being diagnosed with cancer. 

**DO:**
- Interact. David tells of a friend who moved out of his way in a grocery store so she wouldn’t have to greet him. It’s hurtful. A simple sentence such as: “I’m sorry to hear about your illness,” will do and the person can react as they feel. At least you’ve made contact.
- Write a letter. Angie found letters the most helpful. Whereas David worked out his pain and frustration in discussions with people, she withdrew, needing time alone to come to grips with the new reality. “A letter can be read and reread, or put aside if it doesn’t feel right,” Angie says.
- Be authentic in what you write,” David adds. It’s OK to show your pain. He doesn’t like pat answers and empty phrases. Often your letters will remain unanswered. That doesn’t mean they aren’t appreciated — there just isn’t time and strength to write.
- Send a short email if you often corresponded with the person that way. David found email easier to respond to than letters.
- Call, but keep it short. Angie would ask David to answer the phone, telling him to say she was in the garden. She often just wasn’t up to talking. A sensitive person will know if their friend wants to talk more or not.
- Call before going for a visit. Even if your friend is usually very communicative, they might not be up to a conversation that day.
- Use open-ended questions such as, “Are you managing OK?” They give the person the option to evade the question, says Eschbach, and give a short answer or to talk about how they feel. If they don’t want to discuss their illness, carry on an ordinary conversation such as you would have before the cancer. Most often the person is happy to be diverted, and to carry on normal relationships.
- Ask if there is something you can help with, such as driving the cancer patient to radiation or chemo treatments, or to appointments. Maybe they could use help with housecleaning. A casserole or some baking for when company comes can be very welcome.
- Give a hug if you know the person well enough, and let them cry if they want to.

**DON’T:**
- Never tell all the cancer stories you’ve heard about or experienced yourself, unless asked. Especially leave out those stories of Sam who insisted on making that last trip to Mexico and came home in a casket.
- Never avoid the person. Never try to persuade the person to try that natural remedy you’ve read about that is so amazing, says Eschbach. Cancer patients are usually bombarded with alternative treatments and it becomes overwhelming. If you feel you have something good to share, ask politely if they would like to hear about it. Give them the option of saying “no” and stop if they do.
- Never force yourself on your friend. Be sensitive. If they are curt on the phone or at the door, tell them you’ll call another time and wish them a good day. This is no time to take offence.
- Never forget the partner or close family members. Angie found David’s cancer diagnoses almost harder to bear than he did. She couldn’t imagine a life without him, and the thought of what his last days could be like filled her with despair. Although she hated the question, “How are you doing?” (she always started crying), knowing people were thinking about her meant a good deal.
- Never use phrases such as, “You’ll be just fine,” “You’ll outlive the rest of us,” or, “You will be healed if you believe,” says Eschbach. Alternatively phrases such as, “Don’t hope too much, it will probably come back,” (while the patient is having a good phase) are equally unwelcome.
- Never act as if you know how they are feeling, unless you yourself were in the same situation. And even then, every person reacts differently.
- “The fear of making mistakes shouldn’t stop people from doing something. Knowing people care makes all the difference,” Angie says. There’s no general answer to what is right or wrong. People are different in what they need or how they react. For Eschbach and his wife the best times were with friends who didn’t feel they knew the answers. They were just there for them. To walk a part of the journey with a cancer patient takes the ability to endure tears, sorrow and fear; to bear the withdrawal of your friend, sometimes guftiness or a curt answer.

*Names changed to protect identity.*
Following Canada’s Food Guide
Try this recipe that will fit all four categories of the current guide

Amy Jo Ehman

The federal government is updating Canada’s Food Guide and I say it’s about time. I have a few bones to pick with the last one. For instance, take the recommendation to eat six to seven grain products per day. That’s the recommended amount for an adult woman; for men it’s eight. I grew up on a grain farm so I’m all for grain products, but that seems excessive.

I usually start my day with a bowl of oats (in the form of porridge or muesli) or a slice of toast with peanut butter, each of which constitutes one serving of grain. At that rate, I’m already behind and the day has just begun. (This particular morning, I had chocolate for breakfast, which I don’t see anywhere on the food guide. Imagine that?)

The first Canada’s Official Food Rules, published in 1942, recommended four to six slices of bread per day, but that was based on wartime food shortages and, no doubt, a lot of good homemade bread. The current food guide expands the list of grains to include pasta, couscous, bulgur, rice and quinoa.

But seriously, if I worked six servings of any one (or a combination of) into my diet, I’d have little room left over for the required number of fruits and vegetables—seven to eight servings per day. That’s a category I don’t want to shortchange. A serving is identified as one fruit or one-half cup. So, blueberries in my oatmeal, an apple for lunch, a few carrots for snacking and a Greek salad for supper. That adds up to six in a stretch. If I fall short, I can always end the day with a bowl of ice cream and raspberries. Oh, but no leafy greens. Maybe tomorrow.

This brings me to the next category in Canada’s Food Guide: milk and milk alternatives. The guide recommends two to three servings per day, including two glasses of milk. The listed alternatives are “fortified” beverages. Now, I have nothing against milk but I rarely drink it. I put a little in my coffee but otherwise I prefer my dairy in the form of yogurt and cheese. It seems to me this category is better called “Dairy” than “Milk.”

However, if the goal is to ingest more calcium, why not call it that and include other non-dairy sources of calcium such as broccoli, okra, rhubarb, tofu, almonds, beans and chickpeas (according to the website of the International Osteoporosis Foundation). This would be a kindness to all those folks who are lactose intolerant, just as listing quinoa, rice, buckwheat and oats is helpful to those who are gluten free.

The fourth and final category in Canada’s Food Guide is meat and meat alternatives. However, if the goal is to eat a certain amount of protein (two servings a day for women, three for men), why give top billing to meat? Almonds, eggs and lentils are not an alternative to meat, they’re great in their own right. Right?

A new version of Canada’s Food Guide is coming out next year. According to a list of guiding principles, released last month, the new guide will promote a plant-based diet, give greater consideration to food restrictions (such as gluten intolerance and veganism) and encourage us to cook at home and eat together.

This recipe fits all four categories of the current food guide and, the way I see it, not an “alternative” in sight.

2 tbsp. vegetable oil
1 large onion, finely chopped
3-4 cloves garlic, minced
4 c. finely chopped spinach
1/2 c. finely chopped canned leeks
2 c. cooked chickpeas
2 c. stewed tomatoes and their juice
Salt and pepper

Heat oil in a deep skillet. Cook onion and garlic until soft. Stir in spinach and cook for a few minutes to wilt. Add remaining ingredients, seasoning with salt and pepper to taste. Simmer on low heat for 20 minutes. Serve on its own or with couscous or rice.

Amy Jo Ehman is the author of Prairie Feast: A Writer’s Journey Home for Dinner, and, Out of Old Saskatchewan Kitchens. She hails from Craik, Saskatchewan.

Canadian Young Speakers for Agriculture Competition

Join the young Canadians who are speaking up for agriculture!

Are you passionate about agriculture? Do you enjoy sharing your views with others?

Join the upcoming Canadian Young Speakers for Agriculture competition!

As part of this unique competition, contestants prepare a five-to seven-minute speech on one of five agriculture-related topics and present it in public. Cash prizes are available for two age groups: Junior (11 to 15) and Senior (16 to 24).

The 33rd annual Canadian Young Speakers for Agriculture competition takes place on Saturday, November 4, 2017 at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto, Ontario.

For competition rules, a list of speaking topics and accommodation assistance please visit www.cysa-joca.ca.

The application deadline is Sept. 30, 2017.

Inspired Voices Driving Change
A reader looks for a solution to garden soil problem

Plus, info and benefits of lecithin

Ted Meseyton
singgangarden@mts.net

H ave you ever heard of lecithin? I’ve been taking it on and off for a long time and am sharing some info of what I’ve discovered about lecithin.

We’re all aware of bonkout, but have you ever heard of lecithin? More later.

Now the curtain rises on my make-believe stage. With mike in hand and a full house of Grainews readers to boot – I’m a happy guy. Yes – you the readers are my audience. Thanks so much for joining Ted’s tourney of words tonight. My tip of hat signals it’s time to get proceedings underway starting with an email from Ituna, Sask.

From the email inbox
Dear Ted,

Read your column in Grainews faithfully. Hoping you can help us solve our problem. A portion of our garden (in raised beds) has had cones and needles from a row of larch/tamarack trees dropped on it. The wood garden beds are about 18-24 inches deep. Each year one has noticed that the soil in this area has been becoming less and less fertile. This year when we planted our garden (cabbage, lettuce, beets, peas, spinach) in this area none of the seeds germinated. Planting was done on the May long weekend. Could it be that the needles and cones have sterilized or acidified the soil too much? The weeds and twist grass on the ground around the beds have not been affected, but none of these grow in the beds either.

Our options are few. Removal of the trees would be very costly and difficult due to their position in the middle of the yard that has no access for vehicles into it. There is limited or no space to move the garden to. The trees are on the north side of the garden so do not block sunlight. If the soil has become sterilized or too acidic from the needles and cones would removing the top six inches of old soil and replacing it with good black soil help? Would this overcome the sterilization problem? Would lime be a product we could add? Steer manure and nitrogen fertilizer were added before planting this spring. We are located west of Yorkton in the Ituna area. The soil in the beds is heavier due to soil from near breaking of bushland two years ago that had steer manure (commercial) added in the spring of ’16 and 40-0-0 dry fertilizer added this spring and watered in well prior to seeding it. All of the garden is in raised beds. Grass, turf, various woods between the beds, lilies between the larches and grass under them are growing fine as are the perennial in a ground bed and annuals in a raised bed on the other side of the larches. – Duane Martin

Ted’s reply: It would be nice to be an all-purpose guy who can resolve every challenge faced by gardeners. In other words, I’ve only human and always learning, just like anyone else. By the way, as a side note, “I’m Only Human” is the name of an original song written by my accordion-playing son. I’ve heard him sing and play it numerous times.

Now down to business. Hopefully, the following suggestions will help resolve the problem expressed. Depth indicated for larch wood garden beds is OK. You may have sterilized the soil and cooked the seeds with the sun/o-o dry fertilizer this spring. Commercial steer fertilizer added the previous year to newly broken bushland possibly aggravated the situation. I suggest you remove the top three inches or more of soil from the raised beds, replace it with good fresh soil, then mix in well rooting soil in the raised beds. Avoid adding any fertilizer. In other words, slow down and eliminate fertilizer use totally for a couple of years. I got the impression your raised beds are filled with virgin bush soil and it should be plenty rich without adding any fertilizer. Vegetables do not like excess nitrogen (first number indicated on fertilizer you used). For example, potatoes may produce tuber top growth but no potatoes or very few spuds in the hill. This is usually about late October, I suggest covering the raised beds with tarp so there are no larch/tamarack needles and cones are caught on the tarp surface to be removed and disposed later. Such catch-all and disposal eliminates any possibility of the needles and cones with soil in raised beds. Avoid laying down the tarp before late fall as soil can bake hard resulting in destruction of beneficial organisms and bacteria. You don’t want that to happen.

Time to lay off the fertilizer, replace the top three inches or more of raised bed soil with fresh brought in soil, then mix it in well. Tarp the soil in late fall to catch any needles and cones to be later removed. Any gardeners out there with similar problems, or identical experiences, are invited to write and share their experience.

GENERAL INFORMATION
Have you considered consulting your local area ag rep? Also, you may wish to check for pH acid/alkaline levels are available at garden centres and via seed catalogues. Knowing the correct pH of your soil is ideal before making any amendments. The pH scale of measurement runs between 1 (very acidic) to 14 (very alkaline) with 7 as neutral and suited to most vegetables. Beets, lettuce, spinach, Swiss chard, most other greens and even peas and potatoes prefer a slightly acidic soil with a pH in the range of 6.0 to 6.5. Sulphur and iron supplements help make soil more acidic as well as peat moss, while limestone sweetens soil. If soil needs sweetening by ground dolomitic limestone (calcium and magnesium). Aforesaid products are available at many garden centres. Wood ashes may be substituted to help sweeten soil but make sure it’s derived from untreated burned wood. Work the ashes into the top three or four inches of soil during spring tillage.

LECITHIN – A LUNG PROTECTOR FROM THE WOMB TO THE TOMB

Remember, I am not a doctor, do not diagnose nor prescribe and these opinions are from my own personal research. From early on to advancing age I’ve come to understand that an adequate supply of lecithin is one of the first protectors of human health. The front label on my bottle of lecithin capitalizes on this by saying “source of choline – liver protection.” Choline is one of several elements essential for cholesterol metabolism, liver and gall-bladder functions and helping with high blood pressure issues. Choline is also an aid to hair and skin beauty and has a beneficial influence on normal function of glands. The health food movement has long known that lecithin emulsifies cholesterol, keeps it from clumping and protects arteries from clogging with solid cholesterol.

Lecithin has been identified as the one to fight lung cancer, the number one cancer killer of babies. His astonishing findings revealed that total lipid (fat) content and particularly lecithin was seven times less in smokers compared to lungs of non-smokers. He determined that, regardless of how much lecithin a smoker consumes, it will continue to be destroyed in lungs as long as he/she continues smoking. On the other hand, taking lecithin may help the situation somewhat, but certainly not to the degree that giving up cigarettes would.

To conclude, this short note of the following. Various improvements to some skin disorders from lecithin therapy were noticed by several other researchers during their study of hundreds of patients. Changes ranged from varying degrees of improved skin disorders to complete cures. Lecithin capsule and lecithin granules are sold at health food stores and some pharmacies. Consult with your physician, dietician, naturopath, chiropractor or other health-care provider for their input.

Larix liricina

Larix liricina, commonly known as the tamarack, hackmatack, eastern larch, black larch and North American larch is a species of larch native to Canada, from eastern Yukon and Inuvik, Northwest Territories then east to Newfoundland. This small to medium-size boreal coniferous and deciduous tree matures to 10 metres or taller. Its bark is dark and furrowed. The bark can appear reddish. The light blue-green leaves are short and needle-like, turning bright yellow before they fall in autumn. Larix liricina needles are produced spirally on long shoots and in dense clusters, its cones are the smallest of any larch with 12-25 seed scales. Cones are bright red, turning brown and opening to release the seeds when mature. The wood tamarack is the Algonquin name for the species and means “wood used for snowshoes.”

This is Ted Meseyton the Singing Gardener and Grow-It-Yourself Poet from Portage la Prairie, Man. Besides lecithin from soybeans, lecithin is also derived from fresh egg yolks and is becoming popular. Egg-sourced lecithin may hold promise for those suffering from immune disorders associated with aging.

GRAINEWS.CA  /  AUGUST 29, 2017

SINGING GARDENER

1/3 cup lard or butter
1/4 cup flour
1 cup milk
1/2 tsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. salt
1 egg

Campfire bannock

Some folks like to camp and barbecue year round, not just seasonally. This recipe appears on Parks Can-
ad Heritage Gourmet App and dates back to the 19th century era of west Alberta. It was tested by Chef David Fairbanks, Algonquin College School of Hospitality and Tourism and appears in the cook-
book Come’s Get It, by Beulah Barson who found it in Charlie LeMoore’s notebook at the High River Alberta Museum. It’s described as delicious when cooked over hot coals during a camping trip.

Ingredients and method follow:

• 2 cups flour
• 2 tablespoons baking powder
• 1 teaspoon salt
• 1/2 cup lard or butter
• 1 1/3 cup water or a bit more if needed
• Lard for frying

Mix flour, baking powder, salt, and water to make a soft dough. Let rest for 20 minutes. Melt a chunk of lard in a large cast iron frying pan or other appropriate cooking utensil. Once hot, spread the bannock in the pan. Cook on one side until well browned and crusty, then turn over and cook the other side. Serve with butter and wild blueberry jam, honey or what have you.

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