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Stephanie, Blair
and Seth McIntosh
of Maymont, Sask.

Publications Mail Agreement Number 40069240



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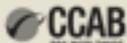
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Congratulations!

To our January survey winner, Harry Loonen, Wainwright, Alta.

Cover photo: Our photo by Debbie Furber



CHINA OPENS SOME MORE

Prime Minister Trudeau's five-day visit to China last month had a sense of déjà vu about it for cattle producers.

The PM was there to keep alive the hope of a free trade agreement with the second-largest economy in the world, but came away with little more than his promise that Canada would continue to discuss an FTA with China. As he told Reuters, "It's an opportunity that makes sense for Canadian business."

"Canada is and always has been a trading nation. But the landscape of trade is shifting and we need to adjust to it."

While sharing the spotlight with Premier Li Keqiang, Trudeau said he was pleased to announce Canadian beef and pork will have greater access to the Chinese market.

It was somewhat reminiscent of the decision by China to lift its 13-year ban on U.S. beef after a two-day meeting between President Trump and China's President Xi Jinping.

In Canada's case negotiations have been going on since 2016 to add frozen bone-in beef to the frozen boneless beef that has been the only Canadian product China would take up until now.

As a bonus they agreed to a pilot project for the export of Canadian chilled/fresh beef and pork to China from approved Canadian plants.

Both moves were welcome news to the beef and pork sectors. The only thing that wasn't clear was when China will open its doors wider to Canadian product.

This will be a big deal when we gain access to fresh and bone-in markets.

In 2016 we sold \$61 million worth of frozen boneless beef to China and \$161 million to Hong Kong. To December 2 of this year, sales were down a bit in Hong Kong and up a bit in China.

Access explains some of the difference in these two markets. Hong Kong imports boneless and bone-in beef including offal from animals of all ages with no production restrictions.

China up to now has taken only frozen boneless beef from cattle under 30 months, bred and fed in Canada, certified free of Beta Agonists and with a raft of requirements designed to segregate the meat until it lands in China.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency has posted a similar protocol for bone-in beef to China, but we were unable to confirm this was the final version.

As a first step, plants currently cleared to ship boneless beef will need to be certified to handle the bone-in product.

Adding frozen bone-in cuts would increase the potential value of this market considerably, and chilled/fresh cuts would put us into the premium end of the market now dominated by our competitors. When Canadian Cattlemen's Association (CCA) vice-president David Haywood-Farmer joined Agriculture Minister Lawrence MacAulay's trade mission to China in November he saw a single 12-ounce Australian ribeye selling for the equivalent of \$130 CDN.

This is not the bulk of the business in China, however. Australian Meat and Livestock 2016 sales to China broke down to \$656 million (AU) in frozen beef and \$80.9 chilled fresh beef.

By volume Australia sold a little over 94,000 tonnes to China in 2016; brisket accounted for 23 per cent, shin/shank 14 per cent, manufacturing beef 14 per cent, blade seven per cent and rest a collection of other products. Much of it was grass-fed beef, as well.

Offal added another 4,400 tonnes, but we are still banned from selling offal to China.

To the end of October we sold China 6,100 tonnes of frozen boneless. Mind you that's 55 per cent more than we sold them last year by this time. But it's fair to say we've got a long way to go in a very competitive market dominated by Australia, Brazil, Uruguay and now the U.S.

Canada is never going to be a big player in China but it can certainly be a lucrative market for us. One industry estimate says it may be a \$175-million-a-year market for Canada within the next five years, assuming we've gained regular access to the chilled/fresh trade.

It won't be easy getting there. Your biggest competitor will be the Chinese themselves. China has 100 million cattle putting it on a par with the U.S. in terms of numbers. Local beef production has been trending up for a few years now while imports levelled off about five years ago, and currently supply about one-fourth of China's needs. But demand for beef is growing apace with the growing wealth in the country, and Ontario market analyst Kevin Grier says imports are expected to rise until 2022. That's about the time a new class of professional large-scale farmers are expected to take over the domestic industry.

The Canadian Cattlemen's Association says its goals for China are to obtain access for offal, gain full approval of our federal meat inspection system and press Ottawa to negotiate a free trade agreement to eliminate the current 12 per cent duty on Canadian beef.

That last one might be tricky given Mr. Trudeau's current passion for mixing social and trade policies in international negotiations. ✨

OUR COWS CAN'T READ... ...BUT THEY BOUGHT THE RANCH



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We sell and deliver for free, hundreds of bulls all across Canada. Here's what our customers say...

Very happy with the service. Bulls did well on pasture. Worked hard. Kept their condition.
— S. Dycks, AB

One bull got hurt before being sent but Mac sent a replacement right away. We used him until the other bull healed. Great customer service. All bulls bred well.
— J. DeSpiegelerae, MB

Just sold our "silver" calves. All by "Mac" Charolais bulls. They topped the market by 12 cents/lb. We had compliments from buyers and the auction mart owner about how good our "silvers" were. Since we started using "Mac" Charolais on our black cows, calves greatly improved.
— D. Buchholz, AB

I'm not a big cow operation, have bought all my bulls Sight Unseen and were put on Bull Development and grow like weeds. Only 1 problem... I drive my wife crazy replaying the Sale DVD!
— K. Kosheluk, SK

There were five bulls that came off the trailer. I picked the one I liked best in my head. Not knowing which one was mine. Once they sorted them the one I picked ended up in my trailer. Thanks a lot. You guys got me the bull I would have picked myself and you did it sight unseen.
— C. Tonneson, AB

Mac & the video reassured me that I was making a good decision buying sight unseen. When I finally received my bull I never knew

that kind of quality was around for a reasonable cost. Perhaps the best bull I've bought. Look forward to doing business again.
— K. Victor, AB

Bulls look good, they worked good, very happy with them.
— J. Waldner, AB

The calves all come out looking the same and easy calving from the Red Angus. Customer service is good. The bulls came off pasture looking the best of any we've purchased and only 3 open cows out of 125.
— A. Dueck, MB

"We bought 2 hereford bulls sight unseen. The whole process of getting such good quality bulls was absolutely painless, right from the first conversation to delivery. The bulls were everything we expected and more. Easy fleshing they maintained their weight through breeding."
— G.S. Clark, AB

"Your service has always been great. The bulls stay in shape out on the range and the calves are darn good."
— W. Mulvihill, BC

"Bend over backwards service" bulls hold their shape and don't need a lot of extra attention.
— Salmon Farms, MB

"Good quality, easy doing bulls, stand up well in pasture, hard working ranch bulls."
— T. Hoberg, SK

"We have bought over 100 bulls from Mac and Family - every year the bulls get better. We see the results in our calf sales. You can trust Mac, these bulls have put us on the map."
— Norwest Cattle, N. Campbell and Sons, AB

"We had problems with one of our bulls. We called Mac and he took it back and made an adjustment. We had had the bull one year. Very pleased with your service and prompt reply. I have been very satisfied. You take a professional approach to your business. Something that is often neglected in agriculture."
— L & R Cooper, SK

"Bull behavior is excellent, trust in your sight unseen program is excellent."
— B. Hawken, AB

"We look for your catalogue every year, been buying sight unseen and very satisfied. We now go south to Arizona and buy sight unseen."
— J. Naylen, MB

"Nice quiet bulls, easy to handle, nice birth weights. They always get the job done."
— B. Fletcher, AB

"Customer service was very good, bull delivered in excellent shape, worked well, very quiet and easy to handle."
— J. Duerken, MB

"Excellent service, the only place we buy our bulls. Small birth weight calves, excellent growth. Our calves are weaning steadily heavier in the last 5 years, better replacement heifers, better genetics."
— D & G Lyons, AB

"Just got home with my bull, great head, real good feet and legs, clean in the shoulder and thick bull. I was nervous about this Sight Unseen Purchase thing, never done it before. I was impressed with the bull and the way you do business."
— R. Mattison, MB

"Very satisfied with the bulls on arrival, bulls worked well, all the first calf heifers are in calf, very satisfied with the sight unseen program."
— A. Funk, MB

"Been buying M.C. Quantock bulls for 20 years, fun to watch our herd grow."
— L. Crowley, SK

"Brought sight unseen. I was surprised at how good he looked when Mac delivered him. Stayed in good shape through breeding, travelled great."
— D. Rutz, BC

"Sight unseen was smooth buying experience, good contact and clear expectations."
— J.&E. Peters, SK

"We bought three H2 bulls, we had problems with one. Mac gave us another bull to get through breeding season. We were well satisfied."
— R. Noble, AB

"More than satisfied. Hybrid Black Bulls work well on our Angus cows."
— Barrington Ranch, BC

"We used your Super Baldie bull for 11 years, he was the best bull we ever had. We keep daughters and really improved our herd. When we sold him he was still going strong and in great shape. I think you run a wonderful operation and I want to thank you so much for that bull."
— B. Hogg, MB

"The Sight Unseen Purchase Program you offer, coupled with a rock solid reputation, unquestioned convenience and a large battery of quality, affordable sale bulls has again made bull buying from your ranch a pleasure."
— J. Comrie, MB

"Nothing but a positive experience. Even being a small producer, you have treated me like I was important to you."
— S. Goldie, SK

"I'm 100% satisfied with the quality of bulls I've bought with your Sight Unseen system. When taking delivery I've always felt I've gotten more value than I paid for. Your integrity is appreciated."
— M. Carr, ON

"Being able to buy a bull over the phone is great peace of mind, and Mac was very easy to talk to and is very knowledgeable about his bulls. The bulls I got were perfect. It was as if I was at the sale. I am 100% satisfied and will buy again from M.C. Quantock."
— M. Arnold, SK

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NewsMakers

There has been a wholesale change in the executive of the Alberta Beef Producers with the election of **Charlie Christie** as chair, succeeding **Bob Lowe** of Nanton, who remains on the board as past chair for the next year, **Kelly Fraser** as vice-chair and **Melanie Wovk** as finance chair.



Charlie Christie

Christie, whose family operates a cow-calf, backgrounding and finishing operation at Trochu has spent four years on the board of directors, one year as finance chair.



Kelly Fraser

Fraser and her family own and operate NuHaven Cattle Co. in Red Deer County where they raise purebred Maine-Anjou. She holds a bachelor's degree in marketing from Texas Tech University.



Melanie Wovk

Wovk and her family run a 275-head commercial cow-calf operation near Beauvallon. She is also a veterinarian. This is her second term as a delegate with the ABP. In her first term she also served on the board of Beef Cattle Research Council.



Carman and Ian Murray

Ian and Carman Murray of Shoe-string Ranch near Acme were named the 2018 recipients of Alberta's Environmental Stewardship Award

during the annual meeting of the Alberta Beef Producers last month. They operate a cow-calf and cropping operation that runs 180 pairs and retains calves for a natural beef program.

A fifth-generation rancher, **Ian** says the shifting of their environmental focus began through an emphasis on improving the soil through pasture management. Dugouts are fenced off with several solar powered watering systems to provide better-quality water for the cattle and support healthy riparian areas. Shelterbelts are maintained to protect from wind erosion and provide wildlife habitat.

Ian has also served as a director with

the Foothills Forage and Grazing Association and the Agricultural Research and Extension Council of Alberta and was an early adoptor of the Verified Beef Production program and Environmental Farm Plan. A video of the operation is available at vimeo.com/245440607.



Belinda Wagner

Belinda Wagner of Edenvold, Sask., is the recipient of the inaugural Celebrating Women in Agriculture award created by Canadian Western Agribition and BMO to recognize Canadian

women for outstanding contributions to agriculture. **Wagner**, who has been a builder and mentor for more than 25 years with the Saskatchewan Livestock Association, Saskatchewan Angus Association, Saskatchewan and Canadian Junior Angus Associations, and Canadian Angus Foundation, views her career more as a lifestyle where colleagues and clients become friends topped off with the rewards of working with and mentoring upcoming generations.



Agnes, a bovine calving simulator manufactured by Veterinary Simulator Industries of Calgary, made an impressive debut in Saskatchewan at Canadian Western Agribition where hourly calving demonstrations by Western College of Veterinary Medicine veterinarians and technicians, assisted by primary-grade students from the audience, piqued the interest of people of all ages visiting the Family Ag Pavilion. The life-sized cow with its 50-pound silicone-rubber calf was recently purchased by Agribition and the college as an interactive demonstration to tie agriculture with education. Between

times, the pair will be housed in the college's new simulation unit where veterinary students gain confidence before assisting with calvings on live animals.

The 2017 recipients of the \$2,500 Canadian Western Agribition Scholarships for students involved with Agribition are **Evan Sebastian** of Montmartre, Sask., **Sadie Anwender** of Radville, Sask., and **Grayson Berting** of Middle Lake, Sask. The Barry Andrew Family Scholarship and the William M. Farley Memorial Scholarship of \$1,500 each toward post-secondary studies in agriculture were awarded to **Shelby Evans** of Kenaston, Sask., and **Macy Leibreich**, Radville, Sask., respectively.



Jean Szkotnicki



Patty Jones

Jean Szkotnicki and Patty Jones were inducted into the Canadian Agriculture Hall of Fame at an awards banquet last month in Calgary. **Szkotnicki** has served the livestock industry for the past 25 years as president of the Canadian Animal Health Institute. She's also served on the board of the Canadian Centre for Food Integrity and the Centre for the Study of Animal Welfare at the University of Guelph.

Jones is the owner-operator of the largest livestock photography business in Canada, Canadian Livestock Photography Inc. Over the past 44 years she has taken 65,000 images used to market the top dairy breeding animals in Canada and around the world.



Chris Lane

Canadian Western Agribition CEO **Chris Lane** reports total livestock sales at the 2017 show in late November reached \$3.5 million, a number unequaled since 1997 and the second highest in the history of the event. Purebred cattle sales supplied \$2 million of the total, and that's a record. The 2017 show attracted 1,250 international guests, including 365 foreign buyers from 86 countries, another record. 🍁

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RAILWAYS AND IRRIGATION



Extracted from Ottawa Letter, *Canadian Cattlemen*, December 1950

By Senator F.W. Gershaw

In return for building a railway through the great lone land the C.P.R. was allowed to select some twenty-five million acres of land that was described as being “fairly fit for settlement.” In 1903, having disposed of most of the land in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, the Company took over a large area closed to their main line between Calgary and Medicine Hat.

The officers could have chosen land in the north, where there was more moisture, but there was something appealing to them in promoting an irrigation scheme that would reclaim an area of fertile land in sunny Southern Alberta, where water only was required for intensive farming.

Irrigation was not new in Southern Alberta. In the late eighties the Mormons at Cardston, long accustomed to irrigation, had made use of the mountain streams in a small way.

After building the Narrow Gauge railway from Medicine Hat to Lethbridge, the Alberta Railway and Irrigation Company (A.R.&I.) had a million acres of land as a subsidy. The work of diverting water from the St. Mary’s River started in 1897. Most of the labor was done by Mormon farmers, who were paid half in cash and half in land grants. The C.P.R. realizing that traffic for their lines would be increased as the scheme developed, gave a grant of \$5,000 every six months and the Town of Lethbridge contributed \$30,000. Water reached the Lethbridge area in 1900 and Magrath and Sterling the following year.

With the completion of the project there remained the difficult problem of settling the land. The President and High Council of the Latter-Day Saints took up large areas from the Mormon farmers, but aside from this there was at that time little demand for irrigated land. The Company even offered free use of the land for two years with the option then to purchase without much success. The elements were against the Company because throughout the whole period of construction the rainfall had been abnormally heavy. Possible purchasers thought drainage instead of irrigation was needed. A dry cycle later dispelled all doubts as to the need of irrigation. The Company worked faithfully and between

1902 and 1912 much in the way of settlement was accomplished. The area was taken over from the A.R.&I. by the C.P.R. in 1912.

At the turn of the century while the A.R.&I. were settling their land in the south the C.P.R. started on a project that was to dwarf all similar undertakings. The Company had a block of three million acres between Calgary and Medicine Hat and they hoped that half of it could be irrigated. It was up to that time a great cattle kingdom with no settlement, except around the village of Gleichen.

Mr. J.S. Dennis was in charge and the area was divided in three sections — Eastern, Central and Western.

The aim was to have half of each farm irrigated. For a time three-quarters of a million acres within the block was leased to ranchers, but as the ditches were extended it looked as if ranching was becoming a vanishing industry. An unfortunate feature was the fact that wholesalers secured blocks of dry land and retailed the farms out at prices that were exorbitant.

It was impossible to secure experienced irrigation farmers as history does not record any mass migration from successfully irrigated areas. In the end Mr. Dennis had to colonize the area with men inexperienced in irrigation and to provide instructions for them in irrigation methods.

A private organization, known as the C.P. Irrigation Company had undertaken to sell the land. They put on a furious campaign and by May 1906 they had ninety general sales agents in the U.S.A. and Canada. In fifteen months \$220,000 had been spent for salaries, travelling expenses, cars and advertising, while only 23,000 acres had been sold. There was friction between Mr. Dennis and the Sales Company and much juggling of land prices. The C.P.R. persistently refused to sell large blocks of irrigated land for speculative purposes. It was found that land sold for \$25 per acre netted the C.P.R. only \$11. The records show that there were many disappointments in the settlement of this area. An effort was made to have non-English groups settle in blocks, but the price seemed to be too high for such settlers. Most of the land had to go to individuals who had come from the U.S.A. In 1908 one district was visited by a ruinous hail storm. Mr. Den-

nis expressed his personal sympathy to each of the farmers, cancelled the interest for that year and extended the time of payment. Seed grain was also provided. In 1908 and 1909 about 400,000 acres were sold, but as the years went by the Company decided to discontinue the effort, and they turned the whole project over to the settlers.

In many respects the enterprise has been a success. There are now about two thousand settlers in the Eastern District. There are about 280,000 acres receiving the needed moisture and prosperous towns and villages have grown up. The project is well managed, there is good demand for the land, and a good community spirit is everywhere in evidence.

When a beet sugar factory and other processing plants are constructed the great vision of the C.P.R. officers will have been realized.

In 1911 the Southern Alberta Land Company was formed for the purpose of bringing under irrigation about 200,000 acres of a 530,000 acre block. Much of this land was in a triangle formed by the confluence of Bow and Old Man Rivers.

The capital of this company was about thirteen and a half million dollars. This, and indeed other sums, was expended in buying land and constructing irrigation works. The water intake is on the Bow River at Carseland about 30 miles east of Calgary. The main canal from there runs southeasterly to Lake McGregor. From this large reservoir the canal runs to the Little Bow Reservoir and from there to a point a few miles northwest of Medicine Hat.

The scheme is feasible and an adequate supply of water is available but until recently little progress was made on account of difficulties in getting an agreement among the three parties concerned, the two world wars and the Depression.

The Dominion government has purchased the assets of the private land company and unless something unexpected happens an agreement will soon be completed between the Dominion and the province for completion of this work. ❁

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

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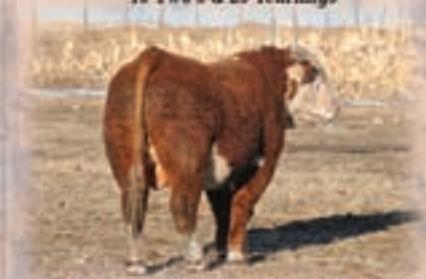
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10 Two's & 25 Yearlings*



95 Red Angus- 65 Two's & 30 Yearling



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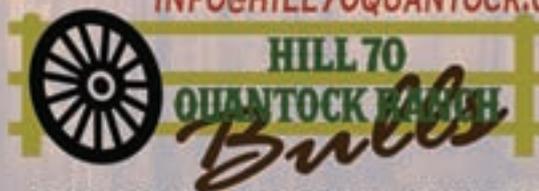
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FACTORS THAT HINDER CALF IMMUNITY

Illness occurs when an animal's body is overwhelmed by infection. A healthy animal with strong immunity is less likely to become sick than an animal with poor immunity. Immunity refers to the body's ability to fight off pathogens, and this ability is developed in a complex process in which the body creates specific weapons for fighting specific invaders.

One type of weapon involves production of antibodies. When pathogens such as viruses or bacteria enter the body, they start invading tissues and causing damage by multiplying and creating toxic products. This damage stimulates the body to create an antibody (a serum protein called an immunoglobulin) to react with the invading agent and neutralize it. These antibodies are carried throughout the body in the bloodstream. The main role of one type of lymphocyte (white blood cell) is to produce antibodies — the proteins that can neutralize certain infectious agents.

If an animal already has antibodies against a specific disease organism, then any time that particular organism invades the body again an army of white blood cells (as well as antibodies) converge on the site to kill the invader. Exposure to one strain of an organism may result in immunity to that specific strain, but might not protect against other strains of the same organism.

Antibody immunity depends on the level of exposure, stresses on the animal, general nutrition status and current health. A severe outbreak of disease in a herd may eventually break down a healthy animal's immunity, and will overwhelm a severely stressed animal's defenses even sooner.

Vaccination can stimulate production of antibodies, since the vaccine serves as the antigen (like an invading pathogen). The body builds protective antibodies to fight the perceived invader. Then when the animal comes into contact later with the actual infectious agent, the antibody is present in the bloodstream and can inactivate the pathogen. If enough antibodies are present to inactivate the agents that invade the body, the animal will not get sick, and the invasion stimulates rapid production of more antibodies for future protection.

A cow in a natural environment may not become exposed to very many disease-causing organisms, but many cattle are confined some parts of the year (in corrals, small pens or pastures that have been contaminated by heavy cattle use) and come in contact with other cattle — with much more chance of disease spread. But with vaccination and natural exposure to various pathogens, the cow develops many antibodies and strong immunity. During the last part of pregnancy the cow puts these antibodies

into the colostrum she produces, so that the calf can have some instant immunity right after it suckles. Thus the first things that might hinder calf immunity are poor-quality colostrum from the dam, an inadequate amount of colostrum, or not getting colostrum in a timely manner.

PASSIVE IMMUNITY FROM COLOSTRUM

Dr. Andy Acton of Deep South Animal Clinic in Ogema, Sask., reminds us baby calves are not born with their own antibodies. "They have to absorb antibodies from their mother's colostrum because they don't get any from her while they are in the uterus. This passive immunity from colostrum is very important," he says.

"There are more factors gained from the colostrum than the antibodies absorbed when calves suckle the first time. There is also some absorption of white blood cells of different kinds in that colostrum — from their mother. These, and some of the immune modulators are not present in a colostrum replacer you'd buy."

Newborns have a limited window of time to absorb antibodies from their mother's colostrum. "Optimal time is during the first six hours of life, but it can be less in certain conditions, perhaps just the first two hours in cold weather. There are factors that shorten this window, and also some things that lengthen it," says Acton.

As soon as the calf suckles, the "open gut" starts to close, to prevent absorption of pathogens. Suckling stimulates the gut to close up, because it's a race between the antibodies from colostrum and pathogens the calf might ingest. If the calf manages to suck a little, or if you feed him a little, the gut closes up quicker than if the calf has had nothing. "The time window for the gut to absorb something in this situation is longer than if the calf gets a small amount of colostrum," he explains.

WHAT'S THE RISK FOR DISEASE AND WHAT DOES THE CALF NEED?

Dr. Eugene Janzen, professor, produc-



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Continued from page 10

tion animal health, faculty of veterinary medicine, University of Calgary, says the biggest difficulty for many producers, their veterinarians, and even some university faculty is sorting out the various recommendations. “When talking about what we have to do in order to help a calf develop adequate immunity, we have to realize that one size does not fit all. When I started out as a veterinarian in north-eastern Alberta, calving began the end of January — because those people were farmers.” They calved early, when they weren’t busy in the fields.

“That’s a completely different situation than ranchers, who usually calve in the spring. Anyone making a living with cattle will usually calve later, if they can, when the weather is better. Then, you don’t have to use barns and have cows confined, exposing them to possible dirty conditions. This is a huge change now, in Western Canada, with more ranchers moving to later calving — except for some purebred producers who feel they need calves born early so their young bulls will be old enough to sell as yearlings. They still fight the winter weather, or they do a complete about-face and have a group of cows that calves in the fall,” he explains.

So the first thing to consider when looking at the importance of calf immunity is the level of disease risk.

“The second thing is that research coming out of many different places is showing that we can vaccinate a baby calf and the immune system remembers — even though the calf already has passive immunity from mama’s colostrum. You can do early vaccination two ways — intra-nasally to create a local immunity (which in some cases will actually stimulate humoral immunity) or systemically,” says Janzen.

“When calves are very young, antibodies received from colostrum will interfere with the calf producing antibodies,” says Acton. “Earlier thinking was that vaccinating a very young calf didn’t do any good because of the maternal antibodies, but recently we’ve found that early vaccination does produce a cell-mediated immunity and also a memory. Then when you revaccinate that calf later, the second vaccination acts as a booster,” he says.

“The calf won’t get as much antibody production when vaccinated young — after he’s had colostrum — but he’ll get some cell-mediated response. Thus we can vaccinate young calves quite a bit earlier than



we did in the past. We like to see all calves get a blackleg vaccine (generally in combination, like a 7- or 8-way vaccine) by about two months of age,” Acton says.

“At about the same time we are also using respiratory vaccines on these calves, such as modified live viral vaccines (IBR-BVD-PI3) in combination with bacterial pneumonia vaccine (pasteurella, hystophilus). This provides some protection against summer pneumonia, and gives an excellent base for fall boosters at weaning time. When producers give vaccines at or before weaning, the immune response is much higher and much better and more protective.” This really pays off in less sickness at weaning time, especially if the calves are weaned with minimal stress.

In some situations the calf will need local immunity, especially for things like intestinal tract disease. Most gut infections remain local (staying in the gastrointestinal tract) unless the infection goes systemic, with bacteria and toxins that leave the gut and get into the bloodstream to create acute toxemia. Some researchers have looked at the question of how to get a local immunity in the gut, to protect against scours. There are a number of problems that tend to be local, and systemic vaccines don’t give protection.

“Vaccinating is a challenge for some diseases, but the main principals are that if you vaccinate a baby calf — even at day one, in the face of passive immunity — when you revaccinate at weaning, the body remembers,” says Janzen. Vaccination at weaning time acts as a booster.

“Some producers ask about this because they’ve decided to not brand anymore, and if they are not going to brand, when should they vaccinate? They wonder if they could vaccinate soon after birth, at the same time they are tagging calves and putting bands on the little bulls. So I ask them what they are going to vaccinate for, and what time of year they calve. Many of these folks are calving later, during good weather. They don’t

use corrals or calve behind the barn. Their risk of intestinal diseases (scours) in young calves is considerably lower,” says Janzen.

“Probably the only thing those calves are truly at risk for is clostridial diseases like blackleg, malignant edema, redwater, perfringens, etc. They all cause acute and highly fatal diseases. The risk for clostridial infections is always there. For most calves, this is still the most important thing we need to vaccinate for,” he says.

In community pastures, however, calves may be at risk for respiratory diseases (summer pneumonia). “When I was in Saskatchewan, in our community pasture system I noticed the calves were at risk for respiratory disease after they’d been presented to the pasture on ‘take in’ days. If those days were dusty, for the next month stock attendants would notice and treat calves with respiratory disease,” he says. The dust and stress made the calves more likely to become sick because dust irritates the respiratory passages, clogs the lining and covers up the natural defense mechanisms in the airways.

“I looked at that problem, based on 10,000 pairs placed in community pastures, and those were probably the only years those calves were at risk for respiratory disease if the ranchers were calving later. It was recommended that these calves be vaccinated for respiratory diseases, and the pharmaceutical companies pushed this recommendation without differentiating between the different types of operations,” says Janzen.

Most ranchers still think in terms of traditional branding-time vaccinations, even though many calves may not need to be vaccinated at that stage of their life, if they are no longer born during the stress of winter (cold weather, confinement in barns and corrals). The two things that stress calves the most and create the most risk for disease challenges are early calving, and commingling of calves at auction yards when they are sold.

“We’ve had a graduate student looking at auction markets in Alberta. In some areas, especially southern Alberta, she estimated that between 15 and 18 per cent of calves avoid auction barns completely. Those calves are sold in video auctions on the internet, for later delivery, and pre-vaccinated before shipping. The ranchers take the trouble to round them up and vaccinate ahead of weaning, according to their veterinarians’ instructions. If the calves were vaccinated in the spring when they were born, this vaccination at weaning time acts as a booster and is very protective,” Janzen explains.

Having calves preconditioned (vaccinated, weaned) before they leave the ranch has become a good marketing tool and strategy for these ranchers.

“Often these calves are referred to as winter-placed calves and are considered to be at lower risk than calves abruptly weaned and sold. They have some immunity already and haven’t commingled with other cattle at an auction yard.” They go directly from their home environment (where they were weaned with very little stress) to the feedlot, and stay healthier.

“Some of the animal welfare groups, looking at what’s best for calves in our livestock industry, are actually more concerned about commingling of different sources (including auction yards) than about various procedures like dehorning and castrating. I remember looking at pens of bawling calves at a feedyard where there were 300 calves in a pen. Looking at the sales tickets, those calves may have come from as many as 100 different original owners. It’s common to have health problems in put-together pens of cattle. Anything we can do as an industry to circumvent commingling of calves will be helpful.” This goes back to how they are managed and vaccinated initially.

“Cattle producers might use different vaccines under certain conditions, taking the principals of risk into consideration regarding when to vaccinate. If you vaccinate a baby calf you may not get a strong titer, but you’ll get enough response to provoke the immune system into remembering that in the fall when you vaccinate that calf again,” says Janzen.

When calving in cold weather, cows are confined where they have windbreaks and bedding, and calves must be protected from freezing so they are put into the barn. In this situation, you increase the risk of neonatal diseases, and have to become more intense and careful in your management

— including vaccination — to make sure calves don’t get sick during the first days and weeks of life.

“There are a couple of intranasal respiratory vaccines that can be used, depending on the area and the individual operation,” says Acton. “For herds that are winter calving, or purebred herds with higher-value calves, or a commercial herd with a history of baby calf pneumonia (getting sick at about six weeks of age), these intrana-

sal vaccines have been very helpful. They are easy on the calf, and because they are given intranasally they are producing an IgA response right where it is needed — locally, in the respiratory tract. We are using those in some of the winter-calving herds that might be more confined and show a history of risk for early respiratory disease in young calves. We give these intranasal vaccines when the calves are a day or two old,” he explains. 🌟



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Building a seedstock business from scratch

Anyone who raises cattle knows the work is never done, it just changes with the seasons. Raising breeding stock takes that commitment to another level with registrations, shows, and sale preparations often colliding with the start of a new calving season.

Despite all of the extras involved, Blair and Stephanie McIntosh knew from the get-go that they wanted to be in the seedstock business. The breed was a bit in question, though.

Stephanie's parents have always had a commercial herd as part of their mixed farming operation near Maymont, Sask., and her experience in the show ring grew from her 4-H days and helping her grandparents, aunts and uncles show their Charolais cattle.

Blair grew up on a dairy farm in Ontario and made his first trip west in 1999 to help some Angus breeders show at Agribition, where a chance meeting with Stephanie set the course for the future. Destiny may have been on their side, too, because she had enrolled to start classes at the University of Guelph in Ontario that fall.

After spending some time in Saskatchewan, it wasn't long before six Simmental cows and a bull followed Blair when he made the permanent move west in 2003 to start their lives together and establish their own herd, McIntosh Livestock, on the farm at Maymont.

Stephanie recalls having saved enough to buy her first Simmental that year. Not knowing a whole lot about the breed's bloodlines at the time, she went with her instincts and knowledge of phenotype to choose a heifer, IPU Pochahontas 139M, offered at the Labatte Simmentals bull sale. As it turned out, her decision that day influenced their new herd's genetics in a big way because Pochahontas went on to have 48 calves to her credit thanks to very successful embryo flushing.

Extensive use of artificial insemination (AI) and embryo flushing, along with strict culling of cows not bred back within the April 1 to May 20 window, has underpinned their breeding program's success and herd expansion. Nowadays, they will AI about 50 purebreds each year and transplant 30 to 40 embryos into their commercial cows.

That's a lot of trips through the chute, made much more efficient with an upgrade to their handling system. They chose a model with headgate controls at the rear of the chute, which has proven to be convenient for the handler and improves cattle flow because people don't have to be working in the animal's flight zone as it approaches the headgate.

Blair says they were fairly picky as to what they wanted and took time to study all of their options because the handling system also had to be set up so, if need be, one person working alone could easily and safely move cattle through.

Oftentimes through the baby years and now the busy years with their boys, Seth, 11, and Carter, 8, there is only one person tending to the cattle. On pasture, too, they are set up with handling systems so that one person, one horse and one dog can gather or treat cattle.

The focus when deciding on improvements of any kind has always been on making the work safer and less labour intensive, he adds. They are happy with their choice of handling system on both accounts because it works very well for all jobs from AI work to clipping bulls to vaccinating and for the boys' work with their 4-H animals.

Two CowCams, one inside the calving barn and the other outside, have been another very worthwhile and time-saving investment for monitoring calving and for heat detection without interrupting the cows' natural behaviours. The control box beside a television in the house lets

them pan a full 360 degrees with both cameras to keep a hidden eye on cattle in the barn and adjoining corral.

Installing a camera system can be a do-it-yourself project if you have lots of patience, he says. The company that sells CowCams doesn't offer installation and it did take a lot of calls to the support people to solve frequency issues between the transmitters in the cameras and the receiver in the house. Electronic devices in the house, yard, or even at a neighbour's place can cause interference if they are operating on the same frequency as the camera transmitters. The trick is to hit on the right frequency and there have been times through the years when it has had to be adjusted because of new devices and installations nearby. Other than that, both of their CowCams have withstood the elements and test of time.

Most nights they never have to make the trip to the barn and if they do it's most likely to be to pen a new pair if another cow is starting to calve or trying to steal the other cow's newborn.

Within a day of calving, the new pairs are moved to the uninsulated barn for one or two nights, then out to the open area with large calf shelters and windbreak fences.

Having confirmed calving dates has made planning for calving season that much easier. Ultrasound testing in July to determine the success of the embryo transplants gives them time to put a bull with any open recipient cows for one cycle to be sold as bred cows to later-calving herds.

Ultrasonounds also confirm whether the purebred cows were bred to the AI sire or on a later cycle to the cleanup bull, and identify cows carrying twins so that they can keep a close watch on them as their calving dates near.

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Stephanie's parents' commercial cows start calving approximately six weeks after the purebred herd, which allows most of the AI and embryo transfer work to be completed before the bulk of the commercial babies start to arrive.

May 1 is branding, well ahead of the move to summer pasture later that month. Cows with purebred bull calves are sorted into one group and cows with top-end heifer calves are sorted into another group to go to separate pastures close to home where they are handy to show potential customers who drop by the farm. The rest of the cattle summer at a provincial community pasture.

Weaning starts in early- to mid-September with the purebred calves, when bull calves that don't make the cut for their March bull sale go to market before the fall calf run picks up steam.

Halter breaking the purebred calves starts as soon as they calm down after weaning. They get their Bovishield Gold and Ultrabac7 booster shots at this time



Blair and Stephanie McIntosh started their Simmental herd in 2003 with six cows, one heifer and a bull.

and a dose of intranasal vaccine against respiratory disease reinforces immunity before heading out to a show.

The actual showing is something of a reward in itself after all the preparations, halter breaking and working with the

calves through the washing and grooming routine numerous times on the farm.

The commercial calves are weaned in mid-October when they come out of the community pasture. All of the heifers and steer calves are backgrounded through to February when

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the McIntoshes will make the final call on heifers for their breeding herd.

BUILDING THE BUSINESS

While the breeding program revolves around raising sound working bulls for commercial herds, the McIntoshes agree that showing has played a big part in getting their name out there.

The show cattle have to be ready to hit the road by the first weekend of November for the Lloydminster Stockade Roundup Simmental show and all-breeds Fall Fusion female sale. Two weeks later, it's off to Regina for Agribition, where they participate in the Simmental show and sale. On the commercial side, they have been consistent exhibitors in bull pen alley show and The Yards, where producers have the opportunity to showcase any or all parts of their programs. The Friday Night Lights select Simmental sale at Olds, Alta., in December was their first event outside of their home province.

They are pleased to have been able to offer two or three of their very top-end heifers for sale at these events for the past several years, but most of their top heifer calves have been

retained through the years of building their own herd. Likewise, it takes time and commitment to develop a breeding program that produces quality bulls year after year and the McIntoshes are proud to now be able to offer approximately 20 red and black yearling bulls at their annual bull sales.

In 2006, they joined the long-running Kuntz Simmental Farm and Stoughton Farms sale held in the middle of March each year at the Lloydminster exhibition grounds. SAJ Simmentals has been the new breeder on the block for the past three years leading up to the Stoughton family's dispersal last fall.

The Kuntz-McIntosh-SAJ catalogue published by sale manager, T Bar C Cattle Co. of Saskatoon, remains a cornerstone of the marketing program. They still mail out copies and the capacity of today's internet has expanded their reach with the catalogue available online, live broadcasts of the sale by DLMS with online and phone-in bidding, and their own Facebook page.

They've considered setting up their own website, but Facebook has served their purposes well because it's simple to post and

update information, keep in touch with what's going on, and they really appreciate the instant feedback from comments, likes, and tags.

Marketing is time and money well-spent when starting out in the seedstock sector, but the best part of all in their view is having the opportunity to show potential buyers around their farm because customers get to see the bulls with their dams and half-sib females right there as well.

Next best is having good photos of individual cows to post on Facebook and email to customers not able to make a trip to the farm. One of this past summer's projects was to have a professional photographer out to capture shots of the cows in the pasture setting.

Their herd has grown to the point where they have a selection of bloodlines to be able to recommend bulls with specific traits of interest to customers, such as calving ease, growth and maternal. For the most part, though, they find that today's commercial cow-calf producers value the same traits as they do — sound feet, leg and udder structure, great hair coat, fertility and easy-going disposition. Simply put, they want everything wrapped up in a balanced package. 🌟

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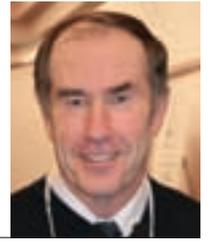
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SLEEPING WITH THE DEVIL OR A NEW BEGINNING — YOU CHOOSE!



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

Many of you may be aware of a recent donation of \$5 million by A&W to the University of Saskatchewan's Livestock and Forage Centre of Excellence. I am sure this donation took many in the ranching and feeding community by surprise and there are likely a few of you who are wondering about the sanity of those in charge of this great institution. I must admit that when I first heard of this partnership I had the same thoughts; however, after meeting with A&W corporate personnel and learning about their intent, and more importantly, their commitment to enhancing the Canadian beef industry, I really believe that this partnership has the potential to mark a new beginning for our industry. Let me give you the background and you can decide which part of this article's title applies.

The Livestock and Forage Centre of Excellence (LFCE) is a partnership between cattle producers, the Province of Saskatchewan, the federal government and the University of Saskatchewan that is designed to foster innovative research, training and outreach. The centre is currently being constructed in three phases on land near Clavet, Sask. Phase 1 involves construction of the Beef Cattle Research and Teaching Unit (BCRTU) which includes a 1,500 head intensive feeding facility and a 24 head metabolism facility. Phase 2 involves moving the 350 beef cows from the Western Beef Development Centre at Lanigan, Sask., to land and facilities adjacent to the BCRTU. Construction on Phase 1 and 2 is scheduled to be completed in the spring of 2018. Phase 3 involves renovations to the Western College of Veterinary Medicine's Goodale Research Facility, which focuses on reproductive studies in beef cattle as well as equine and native hoof stock research. The LFCE will be a laboratory for Canadian and international scientists that will allow them to focus on emerging issues related to health, nutrition, genetics, public safety and plant breeding as well as on environmental issues facing the industry. Most importantly, it is designed to break down barriers between academics and beef producers, and between colleges and academic units in order to bring scientists from across disciplines together to promote an integrated approach to solving industry issues.

So where does A&W fit? First, let's state the obvious — many beef producers in this country are, to say the least, furious with A&W's beef commercials. I would count myself in this group. However, as I indicate above, when you talk with A&W corporate personnel, you very quickly get an appreciation that first and foremost they are committed to their customers, and second, they are committed to serving great Canadian-sourced food whether that is beef, pork or poultry. Through

discussions leading to this donation, it was very evident that this company wants to facilitate the growth of the entire Canadian beef sector, and more importantly, to promote this growth by ensuring consumer confidence in Canadian beef. Their message was clear — a healthy Canadian beef industry is good for business for producers and retailers alike! It was also evident that this company knows its customers and does a great deal of research to keep abreast of consumer attitudes, an area of research that unfortunately has not seen a lot of industry funding.

Evidence of A&W's commitment to all-Canadian beef is evident when you look closely at the terms of their donation; \$3 million will be directed towards construction of the Livestock and Food Research Building which houses the metabolism wing. This building will be at the heart of basic and applied digestive physiology, nutrition and health-related research. Our concept when designing this facility was that basic research conducted in this facility will transfer to small- and large-pen studies involving industry partners that, in turn, will provide proof of concept as well as commercial viability of the research. Further, \$1 million will go to creation of a visiting scholarship in "one health" research. This research bridges human, animal and ecosystem health and could include holistic approaches (human and veterinary medicine) to antibiotic resistance, vaccine development, food safety, beef quality and environmental stewardship, all critical issues to the Canadian public. Finally, \$1 million will be directed to outreach — development of innovative methods to transfer research results and novel technology to beef and forage producers in a manner that will enhance uptake.

In addition to their funding, A&W will also bring one other critical piece of the puzzle to this multifaceted approach to beef and forage research: that being the fact that they have direct consumer contact and knowledge of purchasing decisions. It is great to have producer and government input into research programs at publically funded institutions; however, if we don't consider and react to consumer demand, then we will always be one step away from achieving industry's goal of having Canadian beef globally recognized for its superior quality and trusted for its wholesomeness. With A&W and other industry partners, we will have this input at the LFCE.

So, you decide — sleeping with the devil or a new beginning? Personally, I am looking at this as a new beginning that enhances and focuses our research to the betterment of the Canadian beef industry and who knows, perhaps we will even see new commercials as this partnership unfolds! 🍀



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“Dear Dr. Bergen... My name is Emma. I am in 6th grade at Rime Street Elementary. My class found out on vegsource.com that it takes 2,500 litres of water to produce one kilogram of beef. Another site said 25,000 litres... all these different answers are confusing. My social teacher also showed us a video named Cowspiracy, but it didn't help. Do you have a dependable answer?”

Eleven-year-olds aren't the only ones asking these questions. So are consumers, retailers, and others. When the facts aren't available, exaggerated opinions often fill the gap. A Canadian research team is providing the facts to help us answer these questions, and to help us know how to do better.

A Beef Cluster study led by the University of Manitoba's Getahun Legesse is measuring how the environmental footprint of Canada's beef industry is changing. They've already reported that each kilogram of Canadian beef generated 15 per cent less greenhouse gas in 2011 than in 1981. A new paper from this team entitled “Water use intensity of Canadian beef production in 1981 as compared to 2011” was just published in *Science of the Total Environment*.

What they did: They calculated the amount of “blue” and “green” water required to maintain Canada's beef breeding herd, grow feed, background and finish cattle (including Holstein steers), and process beef in Canada in 1981 and 2011. Blue water (surface or groundwater deliberately used for a specific purpose) mainly includes cattle drinking water, water used by processing plants, and irrigation. Drinking water was easily calculated; the amount of water cattle drink depends on their age, body weight, weather, and whether they're lactating. Blue water used to wash carcasses, beef, equipment and laundry in packing plants came from published research, World Bank statistics, and information from packers. Blue water for irrigation came from census information, expert opinion (e.g. types of irrigation systems used for different crops in B.C., Alberta and Saskatchewan), irrigation districts, and provincial government records.

Green water (rainfall) used for dryland feed production was much more challenging to estimate. They first determined which pasture types, forages, feed grains and protein crops were most commonly used in Eastern and Western Canada in 1981 and 2011. For example, using annual crops for extended grazing was unusual in 1981 but quite common by 2011. The amount of water required by each crop at different stages of production was determined from published reports. The same crop may have different water requirements depending on when and where it's grown. For example, barley seeded in July for swath-grazing experiences different growing conditions and has different water requirements than barley seeded earlier for silage or grain. Yield records for each crop came from 82 census agricultural regions across Canada. Rain-

fall (green water), temperature, and soil moisture records came from 679 weather stations located within agricultural regions of Canada. Animal and crop data were combined into 49 different feeding scenarios.

What they learned: In 2011, producing a kilogram of boneless beef in Canada required 459 litres of blue water and 15,485 litres of green water. Over three-quarters of the blue water was used to produce forage and feed crops. Less than a quarter of the blue water used was consumed by animals, and well below five per cent was used to process beef. When green water (rainfall) used by feed and forage crops was included, feed and forage production accounted for over 99 per cent of total water use; drinking water was less than one per cent, and water used for beef processing was negligible.

Overall, it took 17 per cent less water to produce a kilogram of Canadian beef in 2011 than in 1981. This was mainly due to increased reproductive performance, growth rates, slaughter weights and improved crop yields.

What it means: Because beef's water footprint is mainly due to crop production, shrinking it further will require improved water use efficiency by feed crops and forages through breeding, management, and improved irrigation practices. These steps will reduce the water footprint of agriculture overall, not just for beef production. Further improvements in feed efficiency will also improve the water footprint as well as the greenhouse gas footprint and overall competitiveness of Canada's beef industry.

Including blue water in the calculations makes obvious sense, because we're choosing to use that water for a specific purpose. Including rainfall (green water) may seem strange because we can't choose where it falls. But we are choosing what the land is being used for. Most of the land and water used for feed production is used by forage crops, which also help support ecosystem services like carbon sequestration, biodiversity and healthy watersheds. In many cases, keeping grass and cattle on the land is an environmentally responsible choice. Also remember that water cycles; it isn't used up.

This research is helping the beef industry answer important questions from the public, and is another example of how improving our production efficiency helps shrink our environmental hoofprint.

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

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

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CALF HEALTH CLOSELY TIED TO COW NUTRITION



Many cows came home in 2017 from pastures parched by drought for much of the grazing season. Without proper supplementation of brood cows through the rest of their gestation, vitamin and mineral deficiencies will show up as health issues next spring with economic consequences that often persist for several more.

It is well established that proper cow nutrition affects calf performance, health and survivability more than any other management factor. When cows are not properly supplemented, problems are magnified in heifers. Now is the time to test forages and grain for nutrient content and work with your veterinarian and other animal health professionals in designing rations for winter.

The interrelationship of vitamin and mineral metabolism by cattle is complicated and subject to year-to-year variations in weather, forage quality, water quality and body condition. Certain nutrients are required by beef cattle in the daily ration, whereas others can be stored in the body. When body stores of a nutrient are high, an example being vitamin A, dietary supplementation is unnecessary until stores are depleted. However, it's difficult to determine when body stores approach critical levels until signs of deficiency start to appear, which not uncommonly shows up at calving.

At least 17 minerals and five vitamins are required by beef cattle. Minerals are divided into two groups: macro-minerals (calcium, phosphorus, potassium, magnesium and salt or sodium chloride), and trace minerals (copper, selenium, iodine, zinc, cobalt, iron, molybdenum). In a nutrient requirement table, macro-mineral requirements are expressed as per cent in a ration on a dry matter (DM) basis, while trace or micro-mineral needs are expressed in parts per million (ppm) or mg/kg. Trace minerals are often in short supply within the base diet and only small amounts are transferred to nursing calves. Calves rely on liver stores present at birth. Liver stores are replenished when calves begin to ingest forage and supplements. Calf liver stores at birth are linked to liver concentrations in the dam.

Vitamins, like minerals, are essential nutrients for cattle. As a group, they are involved in all aspects of the animal's metabolism including growth, reproduction and health. There are two general classes of vitamins: water-soluble and fat-soluble. The water-soluble vitamins include vitamin B and vitamin C; fat-soluble vitamins include A, D, E and K.

While all vitamins are essential, vitamins A, D, and E are most relevant from a ration management perspective. In most situations, rumen bacteria supply adequate levels of B vitamins and vitamin K. Exceptions include thiamine deficiencies

(polio) and sweet clover poisoning caused by dicoumarol, a vitamin K antagonist.

Vitamin A is essential in the diet of cattle. Cattle convert carotene from leaves of plants to vitamin A in the wall of the small intestine. Vitamin A is necessary for vision, maintenance of epithelial tissue and mucous membranes, bone development, and immune function. Vitamin A is fat-soluble and stored in the liver when daily intake is three to five times greater than requirements. Mature cows can store up to four months of vitamin A. Under ideal conditions, cattle fed good-quality hay during the winter will have adequate vitamin A levels from carotene in hay and accumulated liver stores.

When conditions are less than ideal, vitamin A supplementation is required to maintain proper health and reproductive performance of the cow and normal development and health of calves. Drought conditions decrease the amount of carotene in plants limiting the ability of cows to accumulate liver stores while grazing. Forage harvested during drought also contains low carotene levels, decreasing the ability of cows to consume enough vitamin A during winter feeding. Another complicating factor is drought-stressed forages with elevated nitrate levels, thought to destroy carotene and vitamin A in the digestive tract and increasing requirements for vitamin A by depressing thyroid function.

Some of the problems encountered when nutrition is compromised during grazing season and not corrected during the last half of gestation are:

1. INCREASED RATE OF

DYSTOCIA (calving difficulty)

Underfeeding late-gestation cows leads to more weak calves and stillbirths, often due to prolonged labour. Weak calves are more likely to get sick and die, and have decreased performance out to weaning and beyond. Cows in body condition 2.5 or 3 deliver more live calves compared to cows in body condition 2 or less.

2. WEAK CALVES AND

HYPOTHERMIA (inability to maintain body temperature)

Birth weights of calves will decrease, as does the storage of brown fat used to generate warmth. Both are important factors in calf vigour and survivability short term and reducing sickness and death rates longer term. Inclimate weather, poor housing, and the inability or desire of cows to seek shelter during calving all contribute to cases of hypothermia.

3. SICK CALVES

Low birth weights and reduced vigour increase the chances of calves not getting colostrum in time. A compounding factor: cows that are nutritionally deprived cannot produce quality colostrum in sufficient quantities. Both problems lead to the failure of passive transfer of protective antibodies. Without antibodies, calves are more likely to get sick and die. Even if calves survive an illness, performance is affected out to weaning and beyond.

4. DECREASED RESPONSE TO VACCINES

Response to vaccines administered during pregnancy (e.g. scours) is negatively affected in undernourished cows. Vaccinating cows to protect calves through colostrum will only work when cows are on a proper plane of nutrition. Without adequate colostrum, calves fail to respond to vaccines administered after calving. The result: fewer and lighter calves at weaning.

5. INFERTILITY

Females in poor body condition don't breed back readily. A drop in body condi-

tion below 2.5 can reduce conception rates by 15 per cent. Dystocia rates also increase as body condition drops.

6. REPLACEMENT HEIFERS

Calves that receive poor or inadequate colostrum, whether or not they get sick, do not grow as well as calves that get high levels of immunity through colostrum. The difference in growth extends into the feeding period for stocker calves and translates to increased time to breeding and time to mature weight in replacement heifers. Research suggests that cow nutrition during gestation has a long-term impact on growth and fertility of female offspring, an important consideration when retaining replacement heifers.

BOTTOM LINE

Feeding costs are a major expense in cow-calf herds. Selecting cost-efficient winter rations becomes imperative, but making sure nutrient requirements are met is critical to future profitability. An investment in rations that are right today pays dividends for years to come. 🍷

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UNDERSTANDING THE NEW DRUG REGULATIONS

New regulations governing the purchase and use of antimicrobials (antibiotics) necessitate time spent between veterinarians and producers. Everyone has an opinion. Phrases like “prudent use,” “veterinary-client-patient-relationships,” “veterinary-pharmaceutical stewardship,” “veterinary oversight,” and “documented evidence” pepper the pages of government, academic and veterinary documents issued around antimicrobial use. There is a new vocabulary to be learned, the implications of which many producers and service providers in food-animal agriculture, including veterinarians, either misconstrue or interpret incorrectly.

If the industry is going to be seen as doing the right thing, a common language is needed. There should be no question why antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is an issue and why agriculture needs to be part of answering questions when they use 80 per cent of the antimicrobials produced. It's frightening when people die following surgery or after injury because bacterial infections resist any and all treatment. Questions do remain about the degree agriculture plays versus the role played by humans and the medical community. There are burning questions about environmental interaction when antimicrobials are used indiscriminately.

There is no point in thinking that change will come slowly because significant change is around the corner even though new regulations address issues that have been on federal government dockets for nearly two decades. The learning curve will be steep. Situations and circumstances exist for which answers are still missing — things like prevention of disease in feedlots and swine operations based on proper management of the immune system, and use of vaccines versus treatment using broad-spectrum antimicrobials. These and other important questions beg resolution. Almost assuredly, quick answers to important questions err on the side of safety and may need to be rethought.

2018 will be a grace period of sorts. Veterinarians and their clients must figure out how these new regulations fit with individual operations. There is no reason not to believe that revamping how we buy, sell and use antimicrobials will involve an additional financial burden, and be construed as an operational inconvenience based on old habits. Bitterness will work its way into the system as the freedom to use drugs in treating and preventing disease becomes more restrictive than we have come to know. Veterinarians, on one hand, will be targeted with petitioning control yet remain under the gun to issue prescriptions appropriately and maintain accurate records showing that clients have been properly instructed on antibiotic use and withdrawal times. In the event mistakes are made, veterinarians will be obligated to be front and centre in engineering solutions and developing protocols to prevent potential problems in the future. The legality of how business is conducted on a day-to-day basis is about to become more acute.

Understanding all aspects of change requires consideration of individual pieces first, then fitting them together. A critical aspect of compliance with new regulations is understanding the concept of a veterinarian-client-patient-relationship. A valid veterinarian-client-patient-relationship (VCPR) must exist before a veterinarian can prescribe or dispense medication. Two additional issues in Canada need to be discussed with a veterinarian: the import and use of active pharmaceutical ingredients (AIP) and the import of drugs for use by individual producers (OUI).

The following are excerpts from documents published by the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association and several provincial veterinary associations.

A legitimate VCPR is considered to exist only if medical records of the practice contain sufficient evidence of relevant and timely interaction between the veterinarian, animal owner and animal patients.

Interactions include, but are not limited to: farm or home visits, clinic appointments, consultations, direct animal examinations (individual or herd/flock), laboratory reports, production record reviews, etc.

The VCPR is supported by **documented evidence** that the veterinarian has undertaken steps necessary to establish medical needs, and consequently prescribes and subsequently dispenses pharmaceuticals.

The VCPR is not a signed contractual agreement but rather a **working connection and interaction** between veterinarian, client and specific animal patient or group of animals. The VCPR is not in and of itself an entitlement to prescribe and subsequently dispense.

Each provincial and territorial veterinary statutory body has its own definition of VCPR in provincial legislation. Veterinarians with clients in more than one province need to be aware of the differences and ensure clients are aware of them.

The CVMA's *Antimicrobial Prudent Use Guidelines* (2008) states that a VCPR exists when the following conditions have been met:

1. The veterinarian has assumed the responsibility for making clinical judgments regarding the health of the animal(s) and the need for medical treatment, and the client has agreed to follow the veterinarian's instructions.
2. The veterinarian has sufficient knowledge of the animal(s) to initiate at least a general or preliminary diagnosis of the medical condition of the animal(s). This means that the veterinarian has recently seen and is personally acquainted with the keeping and care of the animal(s) by virtue of an examination of the animal(s) or by medically appropriate and timely visits to the premises where the animal(s) are kept.
3. The veterinarian is readily available for followup evaluation, or has arranged for emergency coverage, in the event of adverse reactions or failure of the treatment regimen.

Changes to federal policies and regulations in 2016 resulted in the removal of all production claims for antimicrobials in animal feed and water. The shift led to mandatory veterinary oversight of antimicrobial use in food-producing animals.

The website on Veterinary Oversight of Antimicrobial Use produced by the CVMA and provincial associations is mandatory reading for veterinarians and their clients (www.canadianveterinarians.net/documents/pan-canadian-framework).

The document outlines standards of antimicrobial use covering: active pharmaceutical ingredients (AIP), own use imports (OUI), veterinary stewardship, classification of medically important antimicrobials, prescription preparation and documentation, extra-label use of antimicrobials, information related to labelling and dispensing of antimicrobials, compounding, medical records, surveillance 🌟

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

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SOME THOUGHTS ON CALVING SHELTER

In cold climates calving barns are necessary for early calving — as some ranchers must do, to calve and breed before going to summer pastures. Some ranchers prefer to have the calves big enough to utilize summer grass. Others calve early so they can have their cows all bred at home before they go to community pastures with a variety of bulls. On some summer pastures when cattle are widely spread out in rugged terrain, it's also harder to get timely breed-up when bulls have to travel long distances between groups of cows. Some producers want their cattle bred at home to their own bulls in a selective breeding program, especially for the heifers, so they can use low-birth weight bulls. Purebred breeders often calve early so the bull calves will be old enough and big enough to sell in a spring bull sale the next year. Calving early necessitates good facilities, and shelter for the calving cows and young calves.

Regardless of your season of calving, some kind of calving facility is essential in case you do have to work with a cow for some reason. Dr. Steve Hendrick of

the Coaldale Veterinary Clinic in Coaldale, Alta., says facilities should be practical and affordable. “Calving facilities need to be set up so you can handle cattle quietly and easily as a single person, because often the rancher is working alone,” he says.

A chute for restraining a cow at calving should be designed so that if she lies down the headcatch won't put a bind on her head and neck. One or both sides should also swing away if needed for working with a cow that lies down. “I also like the chutes with split sides that give access to the top or the bottom — for doing a C-section, or taking the bottom panel away for suckling a calf,” he says.

Ideally you want a floor that provides traction for the cow so she won't slip and slide around, but is also easy to clean. “Roughened concrete often works very well. It provides traction but can also be washed between cows. It's not too slippery but is easy to clean.”

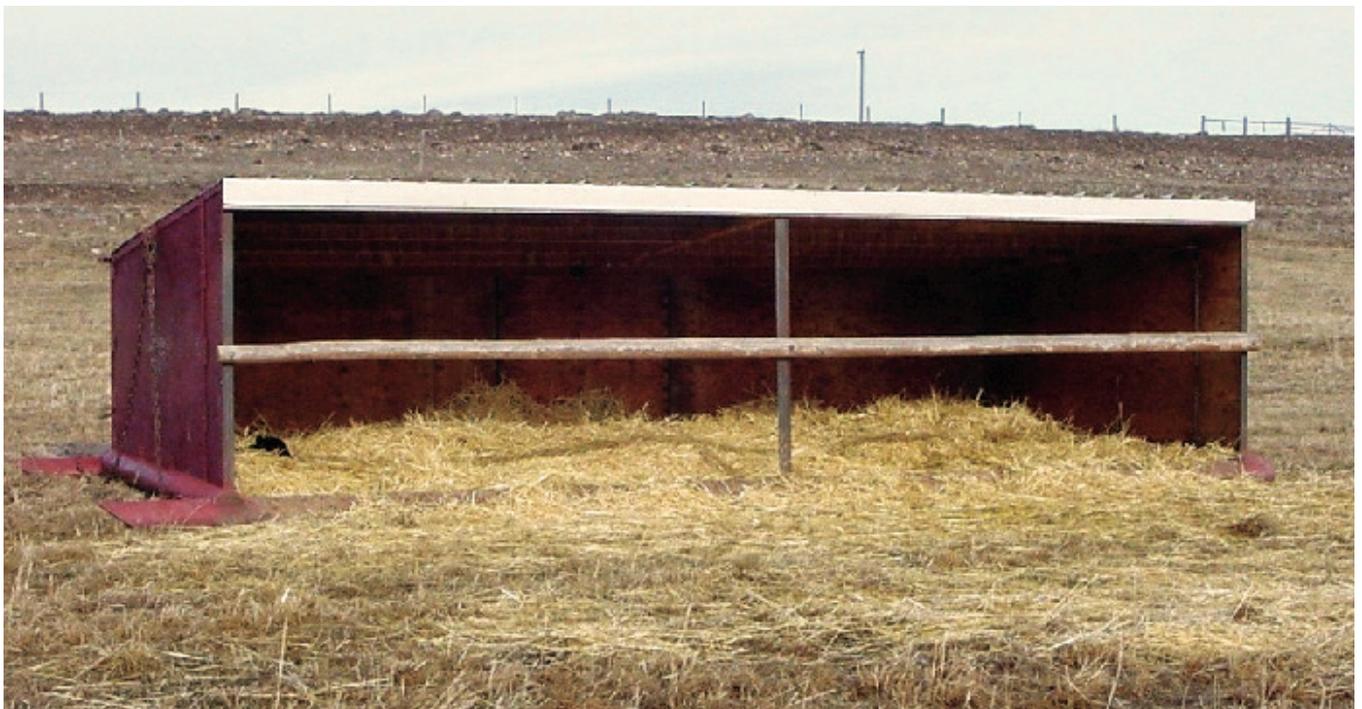
Part of designing a calving setup is just knowing what your expectations are for that facility, and what you need it for. “If it's just for the odd calving problem, that's

a little different than if you are calving in the dead of winter and need enough shelter and facilities to warm calves or pair calves up with their mothers. You'd need more extensive facilities than if you were calving in May,” he explains.

The ideal calving season is different for each operation, and a person needs to figure out and create facilities that will work for that particular operation. “We have some producers we work with who send their cattle to grazing pastures and they like to have their calves a certain age and size by the time they send them — so that dictates when they calve,” he says.

Facilities must fit your program and terrain. “The location may be important, in terms of convenience, such as close to your house if you'll need to be checking the cattle often, but this isn't always practical in every situation.” Calving facilities must be high and dry, and not in an area that might be flooded during a winter thaw or spring runoff, or by irrigation water. A protected area out of the wind may also be important.

Continued on page 28



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Dr. Steve Hendrick

Continued from page 26

“The facilities will also vary depending on whether you are continually assisting and managing calving, versus a calving pasture where cows are more on their own. If cows are calving out on pasture it needs to be high and dry, situated on a south-facing hill or a slope for good drainage, with some windbreaks. These can be natural, with trees, or man-made,” says Hendrick.

“Some ranchers here utilize a calving system similar to the Sand Hills program in Nebraska. They move the pairs out to clean areas as they calve. This doesn’t work here in February, but works if a producer is calving a bit later,” he says.

Calf shelter is also important if a person is calving in winter or early spring when there may be stormy weather. “Keeping those shelters high and dry is crucial. They

▶ HEALTH

Keeping the barn clean

Any calving shed or barn should be designed for easy cleaning. Doorways, alleys, pens, gates should all be large enough to get a tractor through, so you won’t be stuck with having to clean with a fork and wheelbarrow. Unless a barn is easy to clean, there will be times it will NOT be cleaned, and this can lead to problems.

Keeping stalls clean may mean putting new bedding in for each calving cow. Straw, sawdust, wood chips or shavings can work, depending on what’s available. A purebred breeder in Montana who calves early says the best way to use chips or shavings is to put them in first, and straw on top. The moisture goes down through the straw and into the chips and this keeps the top layer dry. Then all you have to do is pitch the manure out, without having to clean out the whole stall.

In a barn with a dirt floor or concrete, stalls need to be cleaned after every cow because everything is wet. But if you put chips down first, and straw on top, the straw stays drier and cleaner and you can use it eight to 10 times before you have to take all the straw out again, if you just throw the cow pies out between cows. In his barn he puts five inches of chips on the floor and then adds a layer of five or six inches of straw. Even with a cow in there, the next morning it will be dry on top and he can throw out the manure and use it again. This saves time, and straw.

“We just throw the cow pies into the alleyway and go through there every few days with the tractor and loader and push or drag it out. It doesn’t take me very long to clean the barn,” he says.

Sometimes after it’s been cold and everything is frozen, the bedding stays dry because the moisture and manure freeze. If you have a lot of cows in the barn, the stalls get wet very swiftly when the weather warms up.

“Usually, with the layer of chips, it’s only the centre of the stall that gets wet; sometimes I only change those chips a couple times during calving season. Usually the moisture is in the centre and I can clean that part and leaving the bedding around the edges; those chips are still dry. Most days I just take the cow pies off the top with a barn fork, and when I do clean it out it’s easy to clean because there’s not very much straw and it’s not heavy or wet. When it starts getting wet in the middle, you just pitch out or drag out the centre with a tractor.”

are often situated south-facing for morning sunshine. There’s often not a lot of direct sunlight in the winter and the days are shorter, but with the sun coming into those shelters it gives some chance for them to dry out a bit. They need to be well bedded, to keep calves up off the cold or wet ground,” he says.

“Some people think calf shelters are simply to stop drafts (getting calves out of the wind) but even more important is a roof to keep those calves dry. Cold weather is not as hard on calves as wet weather. Calves can handle very cold weather, if they are dry.

Continued on page 30



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CALVING FACILITIES



Continued from page 28

When we get weather that hovers around freezing, any snow or rain will take a toll on certain groups of animals, especially calves,” says Hendrick.

When cattle are wet they lose the insulating effect of a good hair coat. The hair normally stands up nice and fluffy with tiny air spaces between the hairs — providing excellent insulation against the cold. When hair is wet, however, it lies down flatter and loses its insulating quality. A wet calf will chill much quicker than a dry calf; the dry calf can handle much colder temperatures. If calves can get out of the rain or snow and stay dry, they are more comfortable, and stay healthier.

“Calf shelters should be well bedded, with adequate space for the number of calves using the shelter. We always say that dilution is the solution to pollution,” says Hendrick. A three-sided structure or a half-quonset hut works nicely if it’s on skids. Moving these sheds around is a good strategy if it starts to get too wet or dirty in or around the shed. You can move them to a clean location and re-bed them.

“It also makes good sense to frequently move your feeding location to a clean area in the pasture, to have the cattle on clean ground,” says Hendrick. Then the calves have a clean place if they are lying in the hay, and the cows don’t get dirty flanks and udders if they are lying down.

For any facility figuring out the proper size and space is important. “You don’t want the animals too crowded, whether it’s a barn or your calving pasture, or the

pasture where the pairs go after they are sorted out,” he says.

“We’ve had some clients using a number of different camera systems in their barn or calving area. Not that you can calve from your La-Z-Boy in the house, but the camera might save you some trips outside. Also it’s nice to be able to monitor and check on the cows from a distance rather than being out there all the time disturbing the whole group. I don’t think we always realize what our presence does to some of the younger or more flighty cows that are nervous when people are around,” says Hendrick.

In a calving barn it always helps if there’s a way you can check on the progress of a calving cow without having to be very close to her. If you can see the cows from a distance and not disrupt and disturb them, they may not get as nervous or put off calving. A lot depends on how you handle your cattle and what they are accustomed to. Some herds are very used to people and have always been handled quietly and the cows don’t get very upset, while other herds may not see people that often and the presence of a human is very disturbing to those cows. It also depends on whether the cattle know you.

“We have an elderly client who walks through his cows and handles them at calving time and they are quiet as can be, but if a stranger goes through them they get very upset. It’s interesting how different the cattle can be, with different people.” Cattle feel secure and at ease with someone they trust, but may be very suspicious of strangers. 🌿

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TIPS ON WHEN AND HOW TO CHECK THAT VERY PREGNANT COW



Dr. Cody Creelman encourages his clients to be familiar with the stages of labour.

Most cows and heifers progress normally through the three stages of labour (early labour, active labour with abdominal straining, expulsion of the placenta after delivery of the calf). Uterine contractions in early labour get the calf aimed toward the birth canal, the cervix dilates and the calf starts through. The water sac and then the calf entering the birth canal stimulates abdominal straining and second stage labour begins — to push the calf on out. Sometimes, however, the calf does not start into the birth canal and the cow does not begin hard straining. You may think the cow is still in first stage labour. If you don't check her and intervene, you've lost the calf (and perhaps the cow, if you don't get the dead calf out of her). Knowing when to check a cow is crucial — and you have to be watching her to know how long she's been in early labour.

Dr. Cody Creelman with Veterinary Agri-Health Services in Airdrie, Alta., says the first thing he tells producers is to be familiar with the stages of labour so they know what should happen with a normal birth.

"In stage one, the cow or heifer is restless, and we may see softening of the pelvic ligament (the tail-head drops and the cow's back end is loose and jiggle). She usually separates herself from the herd and goes

into nesting mode, circling, seeking a good place to lie down and calve," he says.

She may pace the fence if she's confined. She may get up and down a lot, or just seem more alert than usual. "Another clue that an old cowboy taught me is to look for the tail kink. The tail usually drops straight down, but when the cow is in early labour the tail is out a little and kinked off to the side," says Creelman.

"Early labour usually lasts about one to four hours, but it's still normal for it to last up to 24 hours," and often longer in first calvers. "Stockmen who are in tune with their cattle will see the onset of labour," he says.

"Stage two is when the calf is entering the cow's pelvis. She's had some uterine contractions and weak abdominal cramping up to that point, but once the calf starts into the pelvis, this stimulates strong abdominal contractions and you'll usually see the water bag emerging from the vulva or the water rushing out as it breaks. By now she will be obviously straining," says Creelman.

"Active labour usually lasts between 30 minutes and two hours, depending on the cow, and whether she is upset by your moving her into a calving pen or into the barn," which may delay things a bit.

"Stage two ends with expulsion of the calf," he says.

"The rule of thumb when monitoring the calving cow is to look for progression

every hour. If a heifer or cow is actively straining for more than one hour with no progress, you need to check her," he says.

If it's an older cow that usually calves quickly, and nothing is happening, you definitely should check her. This is also true if she's taking more time than usual in early labour as this can be an indication that something is wrong.

"On the other hand, the cow may be taking her full two hours, but if you are seeing progress, the water bag, then the feet, then the nose, you can give her a little more time. But if you see just the water bag (or perhaps the feet) and then she stalls and makes no more progress, it's time to check," he says. On rare occasions you may see placental tissue coming out (and no feet), which means the calf is detaching and can't live much longer. This is an emergency and you need to restrain the cow and check to see what's happening, and help deliver the calf.

"There are some other odd things that might happen, such as the calf coming breech — just a tail in the birth canal — or we see the calf's intestines, or abnormal hemorrhaging from the cow. If we see something unusual we need to check her immediately," says Creelman.

It's important to be very clean. "Scrub her perineal area, and your arms, then go in clean using the long plastic gloves/sleeves, and apply sterile lube. Then you can reach in and take a feel to see what's going on," he says.

"If you decide you need to manipulate the calf to correct a problem, the rule of thumb is to take no longer than 30 minutes. If you've attempted a correction for more than 30 minutes, it's time to call your veterinarian or your neighbour for assistance or load up the cow and take her to town, while you still have a chance for a live calf."

If nothing enters the birth canal, as is the case when the calf is breech, or there's a uterine torsion — with the uterus flipped over, creating a twist the calf cannot come through, the cow may not begin abdominal straining. You might think she is still in early labour and keep waiting for something to happen. If this goes on very long you need to check. If the cow goes too long,

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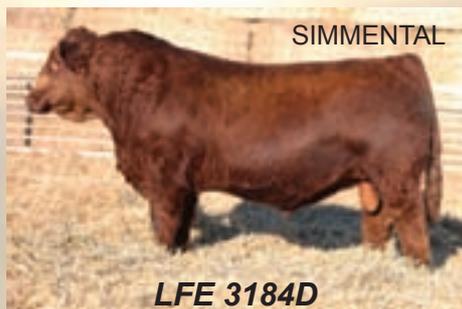
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the placenta will detach from the uterus and the calf will die.

In many cases the producer knows the cow's history and knows that she's taking an abnormally long time. It's better to check too soon, and find that everything is normal and she just needs more time, than to wait too long and have a dead calf.

"There is no harm in checking, as long

as we handle the cow appropriately, with good facilities to restrain her, and going in clean. There is no harm to the calf by doing a vaginal exam," says Creelman, yet sometimes a producer is afraid to do anything until it's too late. Gentle handling, good restraint, and cleanliness are the key.

If the producer has never experienced a breech calf or a uterine torsion, and feels inside the cow and there are no feet, more assistance may be needed. "With a torsion,

you can't find the cervix. You can only feel a soft, fleshy mass between the calf's head and the birth canal," he explains.

If you find an unusual situation, call for assistance — the earlier the better.

"My best outcomes are with clients who checked the cow early and call me early. It never turns out very well if the producer has been trying for four hours and now I get the phone call," he says. "Worst case scenario is when the cow was restless all day yesterday but the producer doesn't call for help until today.

"If you've waited too long, the cow is tired. If you've tried for too long to correct a problem, my help is tired, and there's more vaginal swelling. This narrows the birth canal, which makes everything more difficult. The chance of having a live calf decreases for every hour we don't make the proper intervention."

"The sac around the calf has been broken for too long, and the calf gets dry; there's no lubrication left because all the fluids have now been expelled and the uterus starts contracting down around that calf. It becomes more difficult to manipulate the calf to correct a problem. I have to make a decision whether to pump the uterus full of lubrication and try to extract the calf vaginally, or go ahead with a C-section. I don't want to put fluid in there if I have to do a C-section. Filling the uterus with lube — especially J-Lube — can cause a lot of problems if I have to do surgery," says Creelman. If any of that lube leaks out into the abdomen during the surgery, it can be fatal to the cow.

Sometimes the calf isn't progressing through the birth canal because it's too large. In this situation, when you check the cow you need to determine whether the calf is too large to be pulled and you need to call your veterinarian in case you need a C-section.

"There are two things I go by, to determine if the calf is too large for vaginal delivery. One clue is the feet crossing. If it's a normal presentation where the calf is in diving position, if those legs are crossing over each other, it's usually because the shoulders and elbows are too large coming through the pelvis. When I see those legs crossed, very rarely will I be able to do a forced extraction through the birth canal," he says.

"My other rule of thumb, when I reach in to assess the situation, is to make sure there's room over the top of the calf's head. If you put your hand over the head and can't get your fingers between the calf's forehead and the cow's pelvis, he's too large to come



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through. If I can't get my hand into that space, I usually need to do a C-section.

"When the producer checks a cow that's taking too long and nothing is showing at the vulva, the first thing to do is see if you can find two feet and a head or two feet and a tail.

"The other thing to know is if these are front feet or hind feet is a flexion test. In the front leg, the fetlock and the knee both flex the same direction; both joints bend down. In the hind leg, the fetlock flexes one direction and the hock flexes the opposite direction," he says.

Sometimes when there are twins, there may be extra legs trying to come into the birth canal, or possibly a leg from each calf. "Even if we have two front legs, we want to make sure they belong to the same calf before we attach chains and start pulling. It's important to know exactly what you are pulling on," Creelman says.

With a breech calf, you have to push it back enough to have space to manipulate each hind leg very carefully into the birth canal.

"We cup a hand over the top of the foot to make sure it doesn't tear the cow's uterus

as we flex the hock and bring it around. It's crucial to position the limb at a diagonal, to come through the widest space in the pelvis," he explains. It takes a long arm to reach the feet of a breech calf if it's a long-legged calf and the feet are positioned toward the front of the calf.

"As long as you know which legs you have, you can make the decision on what to do and whether you can assist the birth. If you have two front legs but no head, you have to find that head and get it coming into the birth canal. If you know you have two back legs and it's not breech, you can pull that calf out backward, as long as you think there is enough space for the calf's hips to come through. Reach into the birth canal and try to place your hand over the hips, and also make sure the tail is not pointing forward," says Creelman. If the tail is up over the calf's back, it makes the space just that much smaller, and may also injure the cow as you pull the calf out.

"As long as you have a hand's thickness width between the cow's pelvis and the calf's hips, you should be able to pull that calf out." It will usually require the effort of two peo-

ple or a calf puller to pull a backward calf out quickly enough so it can start breathing, since the umbilical cord will be pinched off or pulled apart as the calf comes out. You don't want the calf's front end still inside the cow for very long, or it will suffocate.

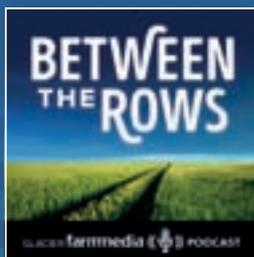
"Sometimes we see calves with fused joints that won't bend or straighten, and are completely immobile — and you can't get the legs into the birth canal. There are other abnormalities like two-headed calves, or an inside-out calf (schistosoma reflexus) with intestines on the outside. Sometimes those are extremely difficult to remove vaginally. In many cases we have to do a fetotomy (bringing the calf out in pieces) or a C-section because the calf's spine is fused backward and there is limited room to move it around," says Creelman.

"With these abnormalities, the veterinarian will have tricks for manipulating or extracting them. If the producer comes across something uncommon, it's usually best to have some help." When in doubt, get professional help; your veterinarian probably has some experience on handling these unusual situations. 🍁

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CERTIFIED SUSTAINABLE BEEF

THE FRAMEWORK THAT PUTS OOMPH BEHIND THE WORDS

The Certified Sustainable Beef Framework released December 7 by the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (CRSB) is the set of documents that Canadian beef producers and primary processors will be able to follow to prove their operations are sustainable, chart improvement through the years, and help consumers sort out questions about sustainability.

Backing up a relatively short step to November 2014, members of the Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, including the Canadian Cattlemen's Association (CCA), approved a set of global principles and criteria that would serve as a common platform for defining sustainable beef as a socially responsible, environmentally sound and economically viable product that prioritizes planet, people, animals and progress.

The CRSB's Framework gives Canadian context to those principles and criteria by laying out the Canadian sustainable beef production standard and sustainable beef processing standard. The standards encompass all of the sustainability indicators (what will be measured) and the scoring system to address the five global principles: natural resources, people and community, animal health and welfare, food, and efficiency and innovation. While economic sustainability isn't addressed directly, partly due to privacy concerns related to the audits, it is assumed that striving to balance the indicators outlined under each of the five principles will support economic viability.

Also included in the Framework are the assurance protocols (audit cycle) and chain-

of-custody requirements for tracking cattle and beef from certified operations through the supply chain. Sustainability claims will be available for certified production and processing operations, beef supply chain partners, and on-product and off-product marketing claims for beef sourced from certified operations.

CRSB community engagement manager Andrea White says the communications and marketing committee is fine tuning the claims and labelling guidelines before they can be added to the website to complete the Framework. The committee continues its work on branding the standards and developing a marketing strategy for the CRSB as well as on other ways to help producers, processors, retailers and food service companies market beef cattle and products from certified operations.

"For now, the important step is getting the Framework out to producers so that they can start building the volume of beef from certified operations and those farther down the value chain can work on how they will source sustainable beef," White explains.

The program is voluntary and there is no need to register to get started. White suggests checking out the standards to determine where your operation stands within the three-level scoring system: achievement, innovation and excellence. Entry into the program starts at the achievement level.

The next step is to get certified by arranging and paying for an audit. Now that the Framework has been launched, the CRSB will be considering applications from independent certification bodies. Successful applicants will be listed on the website as they are approved.

The audit cycle is based on a risk assessment for each operation. Generally, an audit will be necessary every five years with self-assessments or risk assessments between times.

The CRSB has contracted an external third party to oversee the certification program as added assurance for consumers.

White explains that development of the Framework has followed a transparent process from the very beginning in July 2013 when the CCA brought together stakeholders from across the beef value chain and others to gauge interest in creating a Canadian roundtable. Membership is wide open to any organization interested in advancing sustainability efforts and currently includes representatives from provincial and national beef industry associations, dairy and barley producer groups, conservation agencies, and businesses in the packing, retail, food service, animal health and financial sectors. The standards were developed in consultation with scientific experts and each draft underwent two public consultations with revisions agreed upon accordingly before the Framework was published.

The look of the standards is quite similar to that of the McDonald's Verified Sustainable Beef (VSB) Pilot carried out on the ground with cow-calf and feedlot producers in 2015 by McDonald's Canada in co-operation with the CRSB. This was a valuable part of the work to establish realistic requirements for producers and processors that wouldn't disrupt the normal flow of business and at the same time be credible to consumers (*Canadian Cattlemen*, November 2015).

White says the CRSB took what was learned from the pilot and its other projects and dug deeper to ensure the indicators and measures were broad enough to allow for regional differences within Canada, develop a process for establishing equivalencies with existing industry programs, set out the chain-of-custody requirements and create the sustainability claims.

Each indicator states the outcome and goal along with expectations for each of the three achievement levels. Ultimately, it's up to producers and processors to decide on the most appropriate approach for their operations.

The actual scoring for the audit is straight



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SUSTAINABILITY

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forward — score 1 for achievement, score 2 for innovation and score 3 for excellence.

Generally speaking, the achievement level requires basic knowledge of the indicator or having data as evidence of measuring. The innovation level builds on that with evidence of plans, protocols, practices or other measures for the indicator, anecdotal examples of improvement, training for those carrying out the indicator and some documented information. The excellence level requires established policies, plans, practices, protocols, processes, procedures, control measures, programs or systems for the indicator, documented results of measuring or monitoring, and evidence of continual improvement.

The chain-of-custody record is also subject to audit. The Framework provides three chain-of-custody models — identity preservation, segregation and mass balance — each of which links to specific claims that can be made about sustainable sourcing.

“The launch of the Framework is really just the beginning,” White says. “Now it’s up to the supply chain to use the Framework to put processes in place for sourcing sustainable beef and the necessary data management. The CRSB will be there in a supporting role to help the value chain make connections.”

The Cargill Canadian Beef Sustainability Acceleration Pilot is one such initiative already underway in co-operation with Verified Beef Production Plus as auditor, BIXS Co. (Beef Info Exchange System) holding the chain-of-custody records submitted by producers, and several of Cargill’s retail and food service customers.

“The accelerator pilot isn’t about creating a niche program. It is open to all producers because we are not asking for a direct supply. It’s about helping build the volume of sustainable beef and making sustainability work within the supply chain as it is,” explains Cargill general manager for McDonald’s Beef Emily Murray, who also co-chairs the CRSB’s verification committee.

This pilot will use the mass-balance chain of custody model. To guard producers’ privacy, Cargill will only see the aggregated report from BIXS showing the total number of cattle from certified sustainable sources processed each day. From this, the company will be able to calculate the percentage of beef sourced from sustainable operations.

TALK ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY

Most beef producers know their operations are sustainable otherwise their families would not have been able to carry on through multiple generations. Progress is made by each generation building on knowledge passed down through the years as research continues to bring new insights.

Now that there is a way to prove your beef operation is sustainable, the bigger challenge could be explaining this complex concept to consumers in today’s marketplace where the word has been tossed around so lightly that people have been forming their own ideas on what sustainability should mean.

“The CRSB itself has a great story to tell about how producers and a truly multi-stakeholder group with diverse perspectives came together to build the Framework. The claims will provide the conduit to help get messages across,” White says. “Individual producers can also talk from their personal perspectives on what sustainability means to them. The highlights may be a bit different for each producer, but it’s the combined economic, environmental and social pillars that define sustainable beef.

The Framework is available from a link on www.crsb.ca, or go directly to it on www.crsbcertifiedsustainablebeef.ca. Questions are welcome at info@crsbcertifiedsustainablebeef.ca. 🍁

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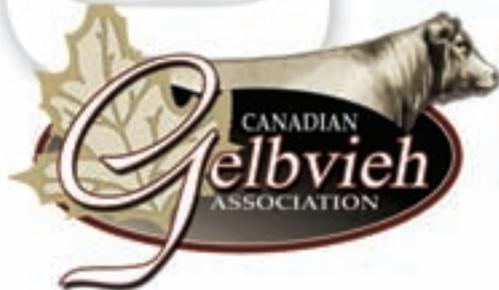
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NAFTA NOTES AND A WARNING



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

January 2018. The global economy is improving. The U.S. economy, drawing on Trump optimism, anticipated tax reform and more competitive American businesses seeing some profits, which should benefit Canadian businesses. U.S. beef demand is holding up decently in the face of increased supply.

The 800-pound gorilla in the room is the NAFTA renegotiation. The process has stalled so badly that the top dogs just sent in the troops to battle it out in the fifth round because they didn't want to be associated with a stalemate. The U.S. complains that Mexico and Canada did not provide counterproposals to its proposals. In response, Mexico and Canada say they are not going to counter proposals that are non-starters.

The latest rumours are dismal. Any country that intends to pull out of NAFTA is required to give six months notice. Some speculate that President Trump will give notice and start the clock ticking to put more pressure on Mexico and Canada to capitulate. Meanwhile, most of the U.S. economy, including agriculture, is pleading with President Trump to not wreck something that needs little fixing. Some help could come from the confirmation of a free market agricultural negotiator.

On another front, some of you may be aware of the big beef check-off fight going on in the U.S. You'd think we'd have enough challenges without starting trouble within the beef industry. But that would require rational players on all sides and rationality doesn't extend to all corners of our industry. I will give you some highlights to warn you: Don't allow this to happen in Canada.

I'm not sure how Canadians select their beef promotion board members but here, members of state beef councils are appointed by state cattlemen's and cattlemen's groups or elected in statewide elections. For a time, some state groups were careless with their responsibilities. They didn't carefully vet appointees or bother to recruit qualified candidates with association experience or a solid interest in promotion, research and consumer education to run for council elections. As a result, people with little experience or ties to cattle associations or industry promotion but with definite political agendas began permeating some state beef councils. The same thing happened at the national level, with the Cattlemen's Beef Board (CBB). As a result board members with ties to radical political interests who were opposed to beef exports nearly completed a coup of the CBB.

Once the coup was thwarted, two groups, R-CALF and the Organization for Competitive Markets (OCM) changed tactics.

If you're unfamiliar with OCM, don't be fooled by the name. Its idea of achieving competitive markets is to use government power and anti-trust law to break up anything big — packers, feeders, retailers, fast food chains

— and return the production chain to the mom-and-pop era of the 1940s.

One thing these two groups do agree on is their wish to destroy the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) because it is a free market organization. It believes the industry should focus on satisfying consumer demand, that all sectors of the industry should be free to co-operate where possible to accomplish that goal and that free markets allow for the import and export of beef as dictated by consumer demand.

All that is heresy to R-CALF and OCM. When they failed to change the NCBA platform from within, they decided to fix things by destroying it from the outside by attempting to eliminate the check-off.

Since the merger of the National Cattlemen's Association (cattle producers) and the Beef Industry Council (beef check-off promotion), the new NCBA has had two divisions: a policy division funded by dues and a promotion division that contracts with the check-off board, the CBB, to carry out the bulk of the check-off-funded promotion activities. There is an accounting firewall between the two divisions, because, by U.S. law, check-off money cannot be used to lobby or influence government policy.

Despite having cattlemen and cattlemen on the NCBA board, independent audits and supervisory government audits, OCM and R-CALF contend the NCBA policy division illegally uses check-off funds for lobbying efforts. OCM has sued the government, using Freedom of Information Act powers, seeking documents to prove its claims. R-CALF has brought a suit against the government and the Montana Beef Council, claiming check-off funds should not be collected by "private" organizations like beef councils.

Both groups are particularly incensed that the beef check-off promotes beef rather than American beef or U.S. beef, fearing that Canadian-fed beef or Mexican feeder cattle might be gaining some benefit from the U.S. check-off. In the past, R-CALF has even been willing to raise questions about the safety of America's beef supply in order to highlight what they claimed were safety problems with Canadian beef, especially during the BSE crisis.

Now, both groups are partnering with avowed enemies of animal production to get legal and financial backing for their attacks against NCBA and the beef check-off. The Humane Society of the U.S. (HSUS) has pretty much taken over OCM, and R-CALF is working with Public Justice, an activist legal group opposing mainstream agriculture and legally representing both R-CALF and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA).

Beware. Industry feuds are ugly and damaging to both sides. 🌟

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NAFTA TALKS CLOUD OUTLOOK



2017 turned out to be much better than expected for the U.S. red meat industry, and likely the Canadian industry as well. The U.S. industry last January faced a blockbuster protein year. Several equities and other analysts forecast doom and gloom for livestock prices and for profits for publicly traded companies.

However, the exact opposite occurred, because demand at home and abroad for beef and pork was far stronger than forecast. This turned out to be the industry story of the decade, as there has never been a year when consumers drove profits for processors to new record levels. This allowed the prices of both live and feeder cattle to be stronger than expected, especially last fall. This means that their average prices for the year were slightly higher than in 2016. But prices might be several dollars lower this year because of increased cattle numbers.

Beef demand is likely to remain strong this year, as the macro-economic indicators are positive. U.S. gross domestic product is growing steadily year-over-year. U.S. GDP in last year's third quarter grew 3.3 per cent on an annualized basis, which put it above its maximum sustainability level for the first time in 10 years. The New York Fed last November raised its fourth quarter GDP growth estimate to 3.8 per cent and four per cent might have been achievable. An annual growth of four per cent this year would add approximately US\$800 billion to total U.S. GDP. This is a big positive as consumer spending accounts for approximately 65 per cent of GDP.

Another key factor is that the U.S. unemployment rate is the lowest in nearly 17 years. In addition, Americans who earn the lowest wages are finally seeing larger percentage increases in their wages than those above them. This will enable those who can only afford to buy beef infrequently to buy it more often, and more pork as well.

U.S. production of beef, pork and broilers 2014-16 inclusive saw beef production decline to a multi-year low in 2015. This was because

extreme drought conditions in 2010-12 forced significant beef cow herd liquidation. Production has since recovered as beef producers started aggressively rebuilding their cow herds in 2014. Pork production exceeded beef production in 2015 but then slipped back. Broiler production increased slightly over the three-year period and will continue to do so.

Another positive factor last year was the record profits enjoyed by red meat processors. These profits allowed packers to pay more for livestock than had they made their usual modest margins. Can such a banner year be repeated? The cautious answer is yes, but it will take even stronger fundamentals than last year. The key ingredients will be demand at home and abroad, an increased supply of livestock and an even stronger U.S. economy.

The only shadow currently hanging over the industry is the contentious talks between the U.S., Canadian and Mexican governments to renegotiate terms of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The entire agricultural sector, including the meat industry, has lobbied anyone who will listen as to the vital importance of NAFTA to U.S. agriculture and how NAFTA's agricultural provisions must be maintained.

They will surely have pointed out the value of NAFTA in boosting exports. The U.S. meat and poultry industry contributed \$16.22 billion to the estimated \$135 billion in agricultural exports in 2016. Industry analysts say the future strength and growth of the U.S. meat and poultry industry depends upon the expansion of trade into foreign markets, particularly as domestic per capita consumption of meat and poultry remains fairly stable and production increases, as it will do again next year in all three proteins. 🍁

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

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USING SCIENCE TO BOOST HYBRID VIGOUR

DNA testing can now be used to determine parentage to help assign a sire its offspring and identify the most prolific breeders



Cattle producers know the value of using proper genetic selection to boost profits. But what if in the process of using genetic technology to improve herd efficiency and health, we could also address consumer worries about sustainably raised beef?

That's where the latest genetic technology is leading, according to John Basarab, beef research scientist at the Agriculture and Agri-food Canada research centre in Lacombe, Alta.

"Many of these genetic, genomic improvement technologies; not only do they improve things like feed efficiency and growth rate and fertility, but in doing that, you reduce the carbon footprint of your product," he said.

Consumers today want to know that animals are raised in an environmentally friendly and animal-friendly way.

But for producers, it also has to be profitable.

"If you put thought into it, and you bring some technology to the table, then you can do both," said Basarab.

He cited an example: If a producer spends 1½ years producing a replacement heifer and goes through all the work of raising it, breeding it and then carries out pregnancy checks and finds it's open, the animal has produced 1½ years of manure, methane, CO₂ for nothing.

He said when producers formulate their breeding programs, they should keep fertility traits at the top of the list of desirable genetics.

He encouraged producers to stick to the tried-and-true 10-2-1 rule, with fertility rated at 10, growth traits at 2 and carcass traits as 1.

That means fertility should be considered 10 times more important than carcass traits and five times more important than growth traits, said Basarab.

"If you're a cow-calf producer, you don't want to start over-selecting for marbling, for example."

START WITH SIRE SELECTION

Producers looking to improve their herds must start with sire selection because that determines 80 per cent of the genetic improvement to any herd due to the sheer number of calves produced per year.

Basarab said producers must look for bulls that suit the environment, the management strategies and the overall herd objectives.

A sire matched to breed with a replacement heifer, for example, requires different traits than a bull mated to an older cow. Producers working with replacement heifers should look for smaller bulls, while a bull bred to cows to produce feeder calves should be passing along fast growth rates and feed efficiency traits.

Finding those traits has been made easier and more accurate today with the introduction of DNA technology.

DNA testing supplements the traditional breeding value data, which was based on animal performance and pedigrees.

These genomically enhanced Expected Progeny Differences, or EPDs, have made the data more accurate and provide producers with more information when selecting for desirable traits in their herds.

DNA testing can be used to determine parentage to help assign a sire its offspring and identify the most prolific breeders.

"Of course, that has a large amount of value because there are some sires that produce 40 progenies, and then there are some sires in the same group that produce one or two or none," said Basarab.

DNA testing can also help better identify sought-after growth rates, carcass traits or fertility characteristics.

Genomic services, such as InvigorHX, offer another tool for producers.

"It's like Ancestry.com for cattle," said Basarab

KNOWING PRECISE BREED COMPETITION

Invigor measures the breed composition and through that, measures the degree of hybrid vigour of an animal.

The exact breed composition of the herd in Canada is largely unknown, said Basarab because of extensive cross-breeding over the years. Producers who know the precise breed composition of their animals can select a better mate to achieve more hybrid vigour, along with

other traits that match what they want to accomplish in their herds.

"There are choices there and that's one of the reasons I like to talk in terms of biological types rather than breeds because breed politics can sometimes be the main point of the discussion rather than the breeding objective that you're trying to achieve."

Hybrid vigour is critical because it has major impacts on fertility. Herds with low hybrid vigour are likely to have low fertility and productivity.

Producers can manage their herds more rigorously and spend more time on feed rations, nutrition and vaccination programs to counter low hybrid vigour, or they can introduce new genetics and get animals with greater hybrid vigour, said Basarab.

"They're just more resilient. They're just more fit," he said.

Those fitter, more robust animals are also better for the environment and are more likely to be better for animal welfare, said Jennifer Stewart-Smith, chief executive officer of Beefbooster.

She said hybrid vigour is "the big thing" in the beef industry and Beefbooster will eventually have hybrid vigour or heterosis scores on all of its bulls.

Beefbooster has been building its DNA data bank since 2000.

"It (breeding) will go on the score rather than on the breed. So, you look for not necessarily Angus, you look for the bull with the most hybrid vigour," she said.

She said at the same time, a successful breeding program will help ensure producers are in line with socially acceptable practices.

Beefbooster's genetic programs are designed to produce animals that perform well in their intended environments. That includes genetics for easy birthing, fast growing and efficient feed use, as well as traits that reduce the need for rancher intervention. These traits address many animal welfare and sustainability issues raised by consumers.

"We want a cow herd that doesn't require a lot of labour, that's able to take advantage of the natural resources that the rancher has, and to maximize the resource," said Stewart-Smith. ✨

By Terry Fries





A PLAN FOR NON-AMBULATORY ANIMALS CAN SAVE YOUR NECK

Two ways a written plan pays off

Dan Ferguson remembers it well. Some of his cattle got out on the highway near his Ontario farm in the middle of the night. One was hit by a car. Ferguson was alerted and rushed to the scene. Police and firefighters were already there and together they eventually sorted out dealing with cattle and people.

Cattle were moved back into the pasture, but the police on the scene asked about how the injured animal would be dealt with. Ferguson had an opportunity to practice what he preaches.

Besides being a producer, he works as a producer liaison representative with Beef Farmers of Ontario on the Verified Beef Production Plus (VBP+) program. One thing he emphasizes as part of that program is for producers to know how to deal with non-ambulatory animals.

“I was able to explain to the police that I had a plan. We would call our veterinarian first thing in the morning and deal with the animal and, if needed, arrange for euthanasia and dead stock pickup.

“It was clear that I was able to put the policeman’s mind at ease with the fact I had a plan and knew specifically what I would do,” says Ferguson.

MAY NEED A QUICK DECISION

Many producers are not clear on the role and value of a plan for non-ambulatory animals, says Ferguson. “It is important. It is one of the must dos for feedlots in the VBP+ program and one of the things reviewed in an audit. It’s just good management.”

Often a lot of decisions must be made quickly and a plan helps. VBP+ has a decision tree to help understand whether an animal can be salvaged or must be euthanized, and how euthanizing should be done.

Sometimes, such as cases where an animal has lost body condition, there is more time to work with. But often, such as with an injured animal, immediate action is required.

There are practical things such as knowing if there is a plant that can do an emergency slaughter, when it is open and able to handle the job.



VBP+ can help feedlots with a written plan for non-ambulatory animals.

Then there is the emotional side. Stock producers spend their life trying to keep these animals healthy and all of a sudden it has to go the opposite way. Many farmers aren’t prepared for that. So they also have to know in advance who they can call.

PROTECT PRODUCER, INDUSTRY

Located next to several million people in the greater Toronto area, Ferguson sees more than his share of consumers face to face. Many drive by on weekends to cottage and recreational properties. Others he meets with at beef industry booths at consumer events.

“When you are dealing with consumers as a producer or as an industry, it is best to be able to explain that our management is a set of organized processes,” he says.

“My cellphone number is on my biosecurity gate sign so someone may call with a question about an animal they’ve seen on my place. It helps when I am able to say I have a written plan to ensure proper animal care.” 🍁

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GLOBALIZATION AND RURAL COMMUNITIES



The globalization of trade was to bring people the world and the good of the world to the people. Open and advanced trade agreements were to allow for a variety of products to flow in and out of countries, jobs were to be created and the poor to be lifted from poverty.

What happened? Today, commodity prices do not reflect a global demand and in fact, many prices are victim to downward global pricing based on the excessive availability of product outside of our borders. Active conflict continues and this limits the reach of food and other goods to those who are in need. The \$53 trillion estimated to fix the infrastructure to ensure the delivery of food and technology to the most marginalized has not been spent and the centralization of processing has evaporated much promised jobs. It's a tough stage on which to start the new year.

The World Trade Organization (WTO) was established in 1995, following the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) to govern the trade of goods and services between member countries of which there are 164. It is a platform to ensure equal trade opportunities for developed, developing and least developed countries. Trade, however, has not been equally distributed and although developing and least developed countries hold the majority of the memberships, they experience only a portion of the action.

It is Canada, the United States, Japan, China and the EU that control 68 per cent of trade in the WTO. In saying this one would expect robust economies in all of these countries and a reciprocal effect in their minor trading partners. Instead, food price on the farm has been victim to volume, jobs have been centralized or eliminated and there is little measurable value to the external trading partners which are still developing.

The rapid and aggressive deals that are the norm of the day are now largely regional or bilateral. The free trade discussions between China and Canada are an example of a bilateral trade agreement.

When there is dispute on a trade agreement, the WTO does not monitor or mitigate risk for the trading partners but receives and rules on complaints. The price tag of \$500,000 to bring forward a complaint has not dissuaded the U.S. who is listed in 2017 as bringing forward 114 cases as complainant, is named in 130 cases and is third party in 171 cases — all while failing to pay their membership fees. This constricts equal attention to members.

Another tactic is to impose non-tariff trade barriers called sanitary or phytosanitary measures (SPS) such as the EU's application of SPS on Canadian beef. Although the WTO ruled with Canada, the WTO cannot impose their ruling on a member country. That means that sovereignty is always protected and it is up to individual countries to implement the rulings if they desire. More than 50,000 of these non-tariff barriers have been put in place since 1995.

Globalization is more than just tactical trade and includes

intellectual property, e-information and technology, an area in which the WTO is stumbling as it struggles to keep up with the pace of sophisticated systems and legally answer the question of "who owns what." Unfortunately the swift changes have also opened the door for global crime, particularly the trade of persons. Farm families in destitution are often victims of both food price devaluation and human trafficking; and no country is immune to this reality.

It appears that the very core of globalized crime is member countries have focused on the reaction to the crime rather than collectively blocking or suppressing it. As countries are sovereign, everything from illegal food additives to tainted medicine, the suppression of farm income, illegal mining, human trafficking through to the extensive increase in the drug trade has grown.

Centralization for the purpose of export logistics has ripped apart rural communities and the pressure to produce more to fill these international orders has pushed farmers to use every available tool to keep in the game. Input costs and debt rise while companies such as Agrium Inc. mine phosphate in the disputed Western Sahara, while paying for the spoils to Morocco and shipping to Canada. Mining in disputed territory has been deemed as illegal by several countries and is most certainly marginalizing of the Western Saharans.

Despite Canada's dominance on the world trade scene, many rural communities are torn between supporting the farm or working at the factory, feel vulnerable and lament that they are far removed from centralized decision processes.

Now that consumers are addicted to a variety of goods at a low cost, it is admittedly going to be difficult to change patterns of behaviour. Fortunately, technology is our friend in rural Canada allowing for access to information, inputs and markets. New approaches to farming and value adding to commodities will continue to grow and these sparks in the countryside will capture further investment. Consumers will feel closer to their food source.

Creating solutions at the community level will be important. One must recognize that globalization is not all to our advantage or in our immediate control and that the economy of choice is regional and often rural. A regenerative model includes creating a culture where great ideas are encouraged and met with community support, and local governments focus on nurturing the human capital, that being the health, safety and other social needs of their constituency.

The measure of a robust economy is found in the strength of its middle class. Protecting this through rural community growth will enhance our lives even as we look through the window of the world. ✨

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MORE ACCESS TO CHINA



Dan Darling is president of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association.

It took two trips to Beijing for Canadian Cattlemen's Association (CCA) vice-president David Haywood-Farmer in late 2017, but it paid off with Prime Minister Trudeau and Chinese Premier Li Keqiang announcing expanded access for Canadian beef on December 4.

On the first trip, the CCA participated in the Beijing portion of Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Lawrence MacAulay's 10-day agricultural trade mission to China. Efforts to expand access to include Canadian fresh-chilled beef, and to formalize the documentation to enable bone-in beef trade were the focus of the discussions. Specifically, the CCA took part in a series of meetings to provide input into the protocols for bone-in beef from cattle under 30 months of age (UTM) and for chilled beef as part of the staged access process we are engaged in with China.

The minister's mission generated much activity on the Chinese side. Followup work continued in the period between the two missions enabling the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and Chinese counterparts to proceed with the December announcement of access for fresh-chilled beef in a pilot project, and establishment of the documentation for bone-in access. Previously Canadian beef exports had been limited to frozen boneless beef, with bone-in access approved in principle last year, subject to establishing the documentation requirements. Canada and China also said they are committed to fully implementing the 2016 agreement to expand market access for Canadian frozen bone-in beef.

Even with beef exports limited until now to frozen boneless beef, China has grown in importance as a market for Canadian beef since trade was first authorized in 2012.

China closed to Canadian beef in May 2003 when Canada discovered its first domestic case of BSE. During former Premier Hu's visit to Canada in 2010, he announced that China would fully reopen to Canadian beef in stages. The first stage was boneless beef from UTM cattle. In 2013, China approved additional Canadian beef export facilities to increase our capacity to serve Chinese beef importers.

As Canadian beef access to China has expanded, so has Canada's export performance. In 2012, Canada exported \$4.7 million. In 2016, \$61 million of Canadian beef was exported to China, and the value is on track to approach \$100 million in 2017.

Clearly the potential for Canadian beef in China is immense. The Chinese middle class is several times larger than the entire Canadian population and growing, and their demand for beef is growing with it. At a Chinese supermarket, Haywood-Farmer saw packages of single 12-ounce frozen Australian rib-eye steaks selling for approximately C\$130.

The work by CCA to prioritize the opening of the Chinese market complements progress in securing the

groundwork for improved market access in the Asia Pacific region, notably through the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). Strategies to capitalize on opportunities in the EU through the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement are being pursued and of course we continue to be closely involved in the North American Free Trade renegotiations.

The next priority for CCA in China will be to obtain access for offals, gain full system approval of Canada's federal meat inspection system and negotiate a free trade agreement to eliminate the current 12 per cent duty on Canadian beef. We will continue to work with government to achieve these goals.

Of course, improved access to labour will be a key component for the Canadian beef cattle sector, indeed the entire agriculture value chain, in meeting these goals for agri-food exports as identified in the Barton report which advised the government that the agri-food sector could be one of the greatest job creators in the Canadian economy. Currently, a chronic shortage of workers both at the farm and beef processing level remains a challenge for the beef industry in Canada.

The CCA, along with numerous primary agriculture and processing organizations under the Agriculture and Agri-Food Labour Task Force, have again responded to the Government of Canada's latest call upon the agriculture sector to submit research that outlines the labour challenges faced by industry with the intention of improving the Temporary Foreign Worker Program. We will be submitting research and recommendations from the Agriculture and Agri-Food Workforce Action Plan into this consultation.

It is crucial that the labour issue is addressed. Opportunities for growth are already being missed at the farm and feedlot level. According to the Conference Board of Canada, \$141 million in annual farm cash receipts are lost due to job vacancies at the primary production level of the cattle industry. Workforce shortages are also causing Canadian meat processors to reduce the production of value-added items in Canadian plants and forfeiting lucrative export opportunities. This reduction in competitiveness ultimately affects cattle producers' bottom line and is a threat to future operations.

Finally, other important groundwork for beef sector sustainability is now coming to fruition. The Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef launched its Certified Sustainable Beef Framework in early December. The Canadian beef industry is again stepping up to do its part to stem antimicrobial resistance through adjusting to new use and access regulations. These changes will ultimately improve industry's already stellar record of prudent and judicious use of antimicrobials while ensuring animal welfare remains paramount.

The CCA looks forward to continuing the momentum in 2018. 🍷

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NewsRoundup

POLICY

\$2.50 national check-off on track for 2018

Most Canadian beef producers will be kicking in another \$1.50 per marketed head to the Canadian Beef Cattle Check-Off starting at some point in 2018, with the long overdue increase in funds being used to further marketing and research efforts for the industry.

The national check-off, which hasn't changed in about 20 years, will increase from \$1 per head to \$2.50 per head, says Melinda German, general manager of the check-off agency. Most of the agreements with provincial beef industry associations, approving the increase are in place, she says, with three yet to be finalized.

German says while the national check-off generates about \$7.5 million annually now, in real terms the "buying power" of the initial \$1 levy created in the late 1990s provides a 70 cent dollar.

Alberta beef producers, for example, in 2017 paid a total \$3 per head check-off with two of those dollars going to the provincial Alberta Beef Producers, and \$1 going to the national check-off. Starting in April 2018, Alberta ranchers will be paying a total of \$4.50 per head, with \$2 still going to ABP and the new \$2.50 amount going to the national check-off.

The Alberta national check-off collected about \$3.8 million in 2017, Saskatchewan just under \$1 million, Ontario \$896,000, Quebec about \$887,000, B.C.

about \$235,000. In Atlantic Canada, New Brunswick \$17,000, P.E.I. about \$15,000 and Nova Scotia \$8,200.

Six of nine provinces have all agreements in place for a 2018 start, German told delegates attending the recent Alberta Beef Producers annual general meeting in Calgary. In fact, Nova Scotia and P.E.I. producers are already paying the increased check-off. Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta producers will start in April 2018, with B.C. to follow in July, 2018.

Ontario beef producers are close to finalizing their agreement. Quebec is committed to have their agreement in place at some point in 2018. And after a legal delay, New Brunswick is working on its agreement.

The need to increase the check-off was approved collectively by all provincial beef industry associations about four years ago. It was all part of developing a Canadian National Beef Strategy needed to improve marketing and research efforts to keep the industry moving forward, German says.

Producing and marketing beef in the world is a competitive business with some big players. Canada's national check-off collects between \$7.5 and \$8 million annually, compared to Australia which collects about \$106 million, New Zealand collects about \$10.5 million and the U.S. about \$40.5 million.

Canada's national check-off is spent in three key areas — market development, research and promotion. There's also an option to direct money to provincial initia-

tives. Money for marketing and promotions goes to Canada Beef, while the research dollars go to the Beef Cattle Research Council. German emphasized that it is provincial beef associations that directs the agency on where they want their national check-off money used.

For example, B.C. wants 90 per cent of its national levy spent on market development with 10 per cent to research, Alberta directs 80 per cent to market development and 20 per cent to research. Saskatchewan goes for a 70/30 split, while Manitoba wants 85.5 per cent spent on marketing, seven per cent on research and 7.5 per cent on provincial initiatives.

Eastern provinces lean the other way. Ontario wants 32.6 per cent spent on marketing, 17.4 per cent on research and 50 per cent on provincial initiatives. Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and P.E.I. have all earmarked anywhere from 88 per cent to 98 per cent of the national check-off to provincial initiatives.

As the new \$2.50 check-off comes into effect with each province, the provincial associations have a one-time chance to reallocate how they want the national levy used.

HEALTH

TB mystery may never be solved

While there is no doubt several ranching operations in Alberta and Saskatchewan

Continued on page 54

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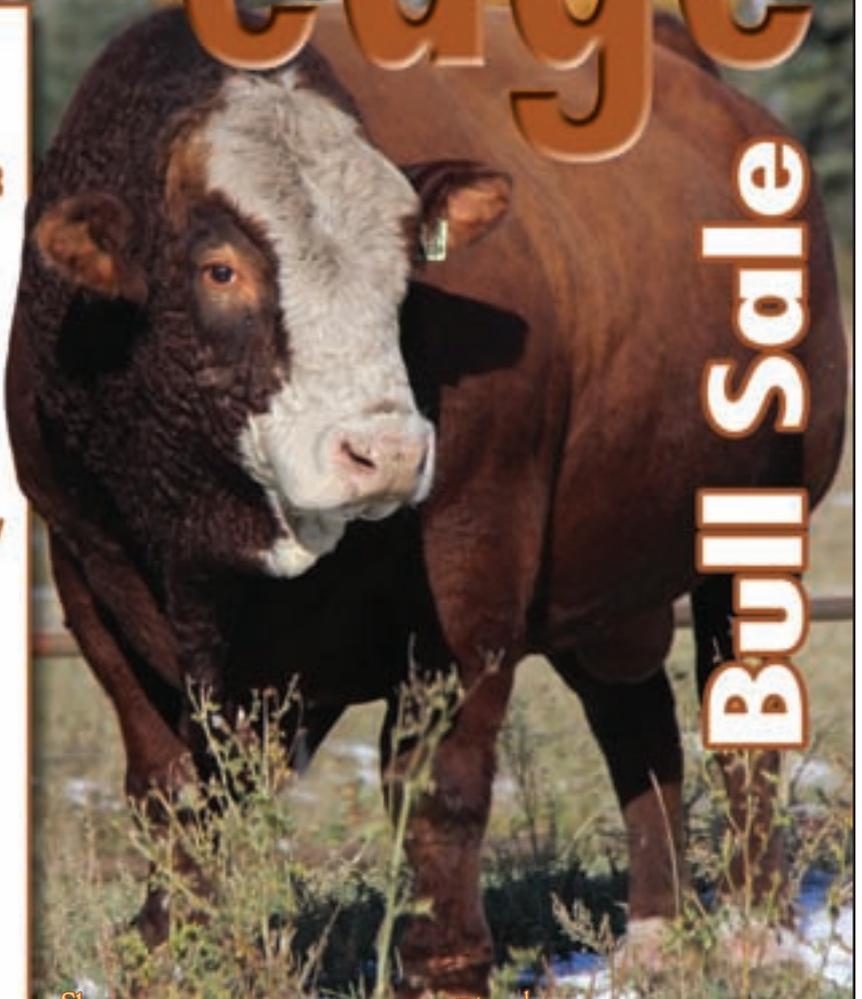
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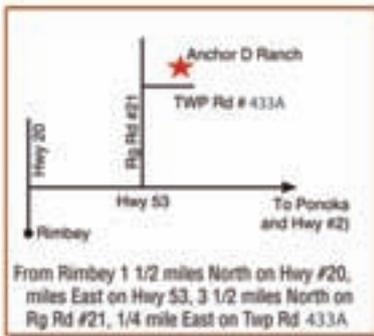
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News Roundup

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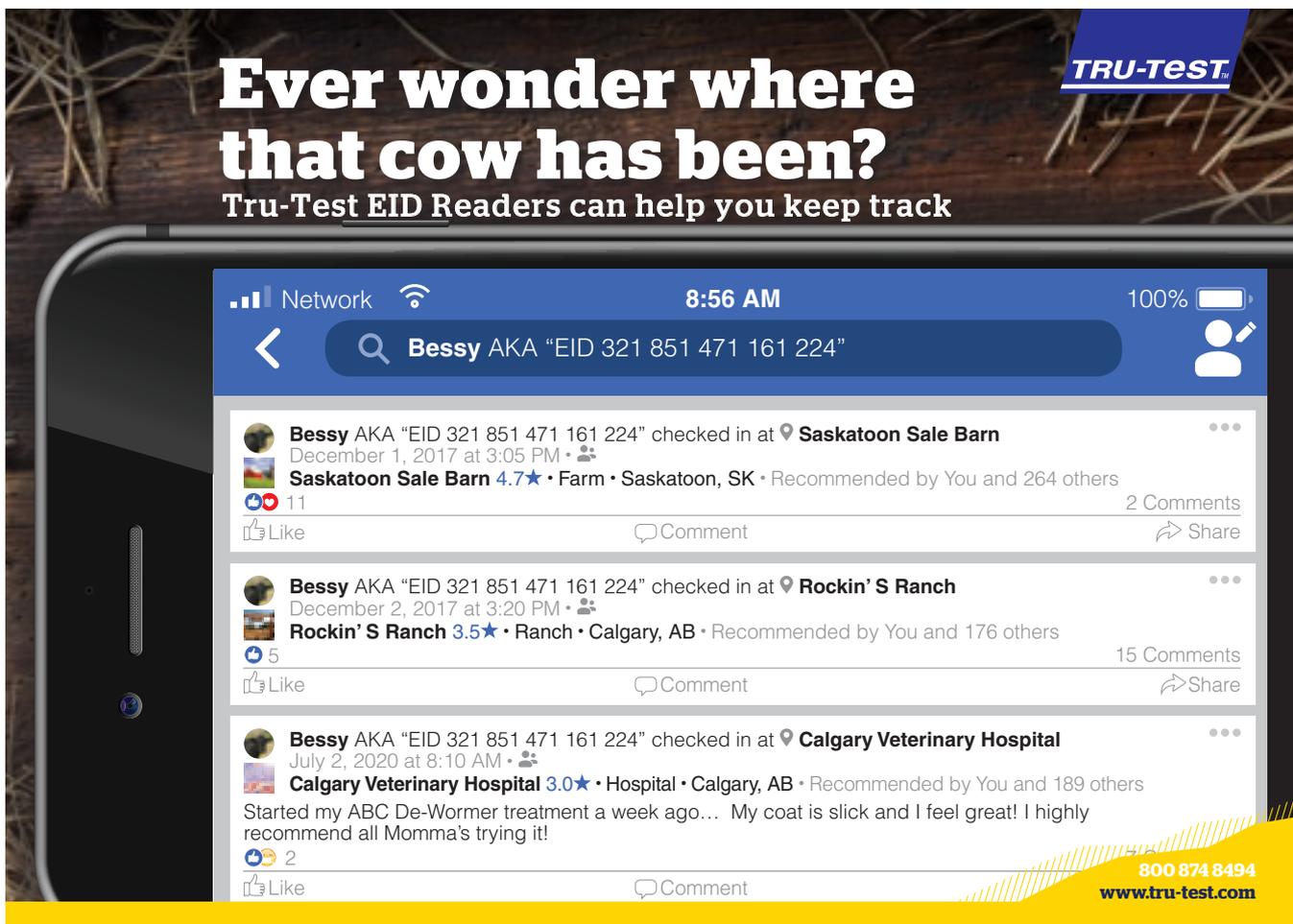
took it on the chin, Canada has come through the discovery of a single TB case in 2016 still with a “TB Free” country status and no significant market disruption, says an official with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)

While there was only one infected animal from a southern Alberta ranch found in the supply chain, and then a total of six confirmed cases in that one herd of origin, the CFIA cast a broad net to assure the Canadian industry and world markets the disease had gone no further, Rick James-Davies, area chief inspector with CFIA told delegates attending the Alberta Beef Producers recent annual general meeting.

It was a time-, labour- and money-consuming effort to nip the TB issue in the bud, James-Davies said, but it was necessary to protect the reputation and health status of the Canadian beef industry.

Overall, they found six confirmed cases of TB in one herd. The investigation resulted in 11,500 animals on 23 farms being destroyed, with so far \$39 million in compensation being paid out through the Health of Animals Act. A further \$16.7 million has

Continued on page 56



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News Roundup

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been allocated to assist affected Alberta producers under a separate Canada-Alberta Tuberculosis Assistance Initiative. The entire investigation involved 150 farms across Canada with a total of about 150,000 head tested.

In the final Phase 3 of bovine TB investigation, James-Davies says the last of about 15,000 head of cattle are being tested with all results expected by the end of 2017.

“The big question on everyone’s mind is where did this disease come from,” says James-Davies. “And the fact is we may never really know how it showed up in this one Alberta herd.” This particular strain of bovine tuberculosis has been found in Mexico and there have been isolated reports of it in the U.S., but how it ended up in a herd of cattle near Jenner, Alta., east of Brooks is so far a mystery.

While this single case of TB triggered an extensive investigation, overall the system worked says James-Davies. Phase 1 largely concentrated on shutting down animal movement and launching of the emergency investigation. Phase 2 involved looking five years back to determine where cattle from this particular ranch might have gone (the trace-out). That involved checking 79 premises. And Phase 3 involved looking for the source of the disease by investigating all premises that in some way supplied cattle to the ranch (the trace-in).

James-Davies says one of the trace-out premises is still under quarantine but otherwise there has been no evidence the disease spread from the infected Alberta ranch.

Along with cattle testing, investigators also tested some 1,258 head of elk harvested from the nearby Suffield Military Base with no evidence of TB in those animals.

While the ear tagging system developed by the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency was certainly a help in tracing the movement of cattle in any way associated with this TB outbreak, it wasn’t the only tracking tool used. James-Davies says they also had to rely on farm-applied ear tags, brands, brand

inspection reports, shipping manifests, auction and producer records — it was a very time- and labour-intensive process.

He says improving traceability will be a benefit in the event of future disease investigations. He also noted that communications to and among all parties is crucial during these investigations and he credited the ABP with its role as an industry liaison providing effective communication to and from the CFIA.

TRANSPORT

Are your cattle fit to travel?

When it comes to culling and marketing cattle, are your animals fit to travel? The beef industry isn’t doing too bad but the dairy industry needs to pull up its socks.

Overall there is room for improvement in all sectors of the cattle industry, says Melissa Moggy, a veterinarian and researcher with Alberta Farm Animal Care. She organized a study looking at the condition of cattle being shipped to Alberta auction marts and packing plants.

The results weren’t a horror story, she told delegates attending the Alberta Beef



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Producers annual general meeting in Calgary, but at the same time it wasn't perfect either. With ever increasing public awareness of animal welfare issues (and the fact you never know who is out there with a cell-phone camera), the industry needs to pay close attention to the health and fitness of animals being shipped.

Moggy's study looked at the condition of 4,561 head of cattle trucked to auction marts, 1,069 head sent to provincial abattoirs, and 4,013 head sent to federally inspected plants.

Overall, 96.8 per cent of cattle sent to auctions were fit, 79.2 per cent going to provincial abattoirs were fit and 98.15 per cent shipped to federal plants were fit. Overall the figures aren't too bad, but it still leaves about two to three per cent of animals that shouldn't have been on a truck at all.

Moggy rated cattle in two categories. Compromised cattle are those that have reduced capacity to withstand transportation. Under animal health and transport regulations compromised cattle can be transported locally to receive treatment or to be humanely euthanized or slaughtered.

Conditions that constitute "compromised" is an animal that is still ambulatory but may be blind, has laboured breathing, is wounded, or is lame but reasonably mobile. Even an animal that is in heavy lactation and requires milking at least every 12 hours is considered compromised.

The other rating is unfit. An unfit animal is one that has reduced capacity to withstand transportation, where trucking will lead to undue suffering. Unfit cattle include those that can't walk, can't get up, severe lameness, broken limbs, emaciated body condition, severe dehydration and other dire health conditions. An unfit animal can only be transported for veterinary treatment.

Based on the definitions, Moggy says no compromised animal and certainly no unfit animal should be trucked to an auction mart. With that in mind, looking at the 4,500 head observed at auction marts, on the beef side she found 90 per cent were fit, 9.3 per cent were compromised and 0.58 per cent were unfit.

Looking at mature dairy cattle, only 55 per cent were fit, while 41 per cent were compromised and just over four per cent were unfit. Among feeder beef cattle, 99.5 per cent were fit to go to auction and among feeder dairy animals, 97 were fit and three per cent were compromised.

In shipments to provincial abattoirs, among mature beef cattle she found 75 per

cent were fit, nearly 22 per cent were compromised and about three per cent were unfit. (Again, compromised cattle can be shipped for slaughter.) With mature dairy cattle about 42 per cent were fit, about 42 per cent were compromised and about 17 per cent were unfit. Among feeder beef cattle going to provincial abattoirs, about 17 per cent were compromised and two per cent were unfit. She found similar numbers for feeder dairy cattle.

At a federal abattoir she found very

good numbers among mature beef, fed beef and fed dairy cattle with 97 to 98 per cent of those being fit and one to three per cent being compromised or unfit. She saw no mature dairy cattle going to the federal packing plant in this study.

Moggy told ABP delegates the take-home message is that there is room for improvement in deciding the health status of cattle before they are being trucked.

Continued on page 58



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News Roundup

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SEEDSTOCK

Simmental breeders celebrate 50th anniversary

A week of events during Canadian Western Agribition wrapped up the Canadian Simmental Association's (CSA) milestone year of activities in co-operation with provincial Simmental associations to mark 50 years since the first Simmental set foot on Canadian soil.

Parisien, a 1966 red-and-white spotted Simmental bull calf bred and born in France, was the lone Simmental in a shipment of 200-plus Charolais cattle that left the quarantine station at Brest, France, on October 29, 1966, for the eight-day journey to the Canada Department of Agriculture (CDA) quarantine station at Grosse-Ile, Que. The quarantine period there was prolonged due to transportation issues on the icy St. Lawrence Seaway making it April 7, 1967, before Parisien arrived at the B. Tavers Smith ranch near Mountain View in the Cardston area of southwestern Alberta.

Semen collection began immediately because breeding season would be all but over by the time the final 90-day on-farm quarantine ended and Smith and partners in Cardston-based SBL (Simmental Breeders Ltd.) couldn't wait the additional year to realize returns on their investment.

SBL had paid \$3,620 for Parisien, CDA charges of \$1,050 related to quarantine, feed and care in both countries, insurance, transport by ship and rail for a grand total of \$5,588, according to Smith's daughter, S.M. Smith, in her blog *Early Years of Simmental in North America*.

Smith's entries include letters sent home from her father as he was awed by the Simmental breed and its potential in Canadian herds during his travels through Switzerland and France to select SBL's first import. Smith's dream of importing Simmental cattle from their native home in the Simme Valley of Switzerland had to be put on hold because Canada had not yet opened to imports from Switzerland due to lingering foot-and-mouth outbreaks.

Complications arose when France joined Switzerland in mandating vaccinations against the disease as a control measure; however, Smith was able to find Parisien and two alternative unvaccinated bull calves that would not test positive for the disease because of an antibody response to the vaccine.

SBL did receive a CDA permit in 1967 to import additional Simmental cattle from France or Switzerland and the rest is history. Parisien is No. 1 in the CSA and the American Simmental Association (ASA) registries. Fifty years later, the CSA registry holds 1.4 million pedigrees.

The appeal of the Simmental breed in a cross-breeding program is much the same today as it was 50 years ago — to add hybrid vigor for growth on feeder cattle and/or maternal strengths on the cow side — only with a much wider selection.

"Canadian Simmental breeders have done a good job to supply what fits well in commercial herds here. It's a diverse breed, now with red, black, purebred and fullblood genetics, that crosses well

Continued on page 60



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News Roundup

Continued from page 58

with British and continental breeds,” says CSA president Lee McMillen of McMillen Ranching at Carievale, Sask.

He has the privilege of hearing first-hand accounts from his father, Jim, about those exciting first years as Simmental genetics began to make a profound mark on Canada’s beef industry, which was predominantly influenced by British breeds at the time.

In 1969, Jim and his brother, Mike, decided to AI half of their Angus cows to Parisien and

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were hooked on the breed after seeing those crosses excel in their cow-calf and feedlot operation, McMillen recounts. They went on to import three fullblood heifer calves from France in the early 1970s and continued to use AI sires on their best heifers to upgrade the herd to purebred status.

McMillen couldn’t be more pleased that several Canadian pioneers of the breed were able to join youngsters just getting into the business and everyone in between, including approximately 30 international guests at the 50th celebration banquet following the Simmental Innovations Workshop.

The workshop was part of the annual Simmental Federation of Americas Conference hosted this year by the CSA during Agribition week. It also included a tour to Grenfell, Sask., to see Double Bar D Farm, home of the largest registered Simmental herd in Canada, a visit to the legislative building where the international guests were introduced at the morning sitting, and a stop at the RCMP Heritage Centre, all topped off with the 2017 National Simmental Show and Sale at Agribition.

Genetics past, present and future was the topic of the day at the workshop attended by international guests, Canadian Simmental breeders and representatives of other Canadian beef breed associations.

Wade Shafer, executive vice-president of the ASA, led off by telling how 14 Canadian and American breed associations, including the CSA and ASA, have made history by collaborating to create International Genetic Solutions (IGS) to support the development and implementation of cutting-edge software called BOLT to run single-step genetic evaluations.

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As of November 2017, IGS held records on 17 million animals, collects 375,000 new records per year, and has 85,000 genotypes on file, many of which are for Simmental cattle, and many of those are Canadian Simmental cattle.

IGS continues to receive new DNA test results weekly and Shafer says the way to leverage them to their full advantage is to run single-step genetic evaluations each week. This will become a reality once the transition to BOLT is fully completed sometime this winter. 🍁

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■ Speckle Park breeders and exhibitors enjoyed a supremely successful national show and national sale at Canadian Western Agribition this year. With 75 head entered, this was the largest national show to date with exhibitors from five Canadian provinces. Ontario was represented by six farms. The Premier Exhibitor and Premier Breeder banners both went to Jason Goodfellow of Notta Ranch, Neilburg, Sask., for the second year in a row.

The national sale demonstrated the continually increasing worldwide interest in Canadian Speckle Park genetics. The 13 heifer calves averaged \$11,634.50 and went to buyers from Oklahoma, New York, New Jersey, Australia and British Columbia. The high-selling heifer calf sold for \$20,000 to a buyer from Saskatchewan. The single bred heifer sold for \$14,500 to a buyer from Australia. The 33 embryos averaged \$1,704.29. The 14 live lots grossed \$222,000 and averaged \$11,839.26. The sale was attended by international buyers from Australia, New Zealand, the United States, England, Scotland and Norway.

■ The Canadian Hereford Association will have 400 bulls RFI tested this year, some utilizing the GrowSafe beef watering systems. These waterers take partial weights on the bulls every time they drink or stand at the waterer. This means that producers are able to collect RFI data in a shorter testing period of 50 days. The testing done by the Canadian Hereford breeders has made it possible to produce the first Canadian RFI EPD in cattle.



■ The Limousin bull GREENWOOD CANADIAN IMPACT ET, owned by Greenwood Limousin and Angus, Lloydminster, Sask., and Nordal Limousin and Angus, Simpson, Sask., (Australian semen rights owned by LaValla Limousin and



Norwegians at Wilgenbusch Charolais.

■ By Livestock hosted two international groups at Canadian Western Agribition. A group of 42 from Norway and 27 from Finland attended the event to seek Canadian genetics from multiple breeds. Both groups had meetings with the Canadian Beef Breeds Council and their various breed organizations. Their individual tours of over a week each included multiple visits at homes of breeders as well as the Western Beef Development Centre at Lanigan.

McAlpin Livestock) won Supreme Champion Bull over all breeds in the RBC Beef Supreme Challenge at Canadian Western Agribition in November.



■ The RBC Supreme Champion Female for all breeds at CWA was the Charolais PZC LILY 5013ET with MISS PRAIRIECOVE 716E at side, exhibited by Prairie Cove Charolais; additional owner, Wrangler Charolais.

■ The Canadian Simmental Association established the Award of Excellence program in early 2017 to promote and recognize the top registered Simmental bulls and females that are exhibited at shows across Canada each year. The Award of Excellence (AOE) program encourages Simmental breeders to attend multiple shows in different locations and provinces that qualify for this program. Each provincial Simmental

Association is encouraged to select two or three shows that will qualify for the Award of Excellence points program. Points are allocated based on the number of Simmental cattle entered in each show that qualified and the animal's placings. Following the final show, Canadian Western Agribition, the Canadian Simmental Association tabulated points for the Award of Excellence Show Female and Bull of the year.

The top five AOE show Females of 2017 were:

- 5: Academy Hill Azula 5A, owned by Alliance Simmental Farm, North Gower Ont. Total: 77 points.
- 4: Boss Lake Ms Elle 638D, owned by Boss Lake Genetics and Ty-D livestock, Parkland County, Alta. Total: 100 points.
- 3: CMS Soda Pop 425B, owned by Blackgold Simmentals, Lloydminster, Sask. Total: 103 points.
- 2: New Trend Karizma 5C, owned by New Trend Cattle Co, Strathmore, Alta. Total: 119 points.
- 1: Barlee Lexi Lou 1C, owned by Barlee Simmentals, Clarendon, Que. Total: 165 points.

The top five AOE show Bulls of 2017 were:

- 5: RJY Chip 18E, owned by High Country Simmentals, Breton, Alta. Total: 76 points.
- 4: VCL Dagger 605D, owned by Double Bar D Farms, Grenfell, Sask. Total: 90 points.
- 3: RJY Casino 11C, owned by High Country Cattle Services, Breton Alta. Total: 101 points.
- 2: BGS/BM Captain Scream 63D, owned by Blackgold Simmentals/Canadian Sires, Lloydminster, Sask. Total: 109 points.
- 1: KDL Dunraven Dude 14D, owned by Dunraven Simmentals, Calumet Island, Que. Total: 131 points.

The winners were announced before the 50 for 50 Simmental Sale at Agribition on November 22 where CSA president Lee McMillen acknowledged the top five AOE Show females and bulls and made a presentation. Congratulations to all those that exhibited Simmental cattle this year!

■ The Canadian Angus Association is pleased to announce the winners of the 2017 national Gold Show Program. CAA representatives presented the awards at Agribition in Regina, surprising the winners with the awards in their stalls the day following the final Angus show of the year.

The 2017 Black Angus Show Bull of the Year receiving champion aggregate status is DMM INTERNATIONAL 54D, owned by Lee and Dawn Wilson (Miller Wilson Angus) of Bashaw, Alta., and Glen Gabel of Regina, Sask.

The reserve aggregate champion for Black Angus Show Bull of the Year was awarded to GREENWOOD ENVY JJP 53E, owned by Jayden and Jaxon Payne of Lloydminster, Sask.

Runner-up aggregate champion for Black Angus Show Bull of the Year went to EF COLOSSAL 520, owned by Sean Enright and Barry Enright of Renfrew, Ont., and David and Lynne Longshore of Stettler, Alta.

The 2017 Black Angus Show Female of the Year receiving champion aggregate status is DMM BLACKBIRD 105A and her 2017-born bull calf, DMM HAMMER 53E, owned by Lee and Dawn Wilson (Miller Wilson Angus) of Bashaw, Alta. This animal was the 2016 reserve aggregate champion for Black Angus Show Female of the Year.

The reserve aggregate champion for Black Angus Show Female of the Year went to JEM ARIEL 10C and her JEM ARIEL 3E heifer calf, owned by Ernest Mutch of Vernon Bridge, P.E.I.

Runner-up aggregate champion for Black Angus Show Female of the Year went

to RUNNING STEADY GYPSY 30C and her heifer calf, JUSTAMERE 5063 GYPSY 336E, owned by Running Steady Ranch and Justamere Farms Ltd., respectively, both of Lloydminster, Alta.

The 2017 Red Angus Show Bull of the Year receiving champion aggregate status is RED LAZY MC TRADITION 111C, owned by Robbie J. Garner of Simpson, Sask., and Clinton Blair Morasch of Basano, Alta. This animal was the 2016 run-

ner-up aggregate champion for Red Angus Show Bull of the Year.

The 2017 reserve aggregate champion for Red Angus Show Bull of the Year went to RED COMBEST JUGGERNAUT 1613D, owned by Terry Adams of Forestburg, Alta.; Leonard Tufty of Onoway, Alta.; Lynn Combest of Erskine, Alta.; and Rob Adams of Forestburg, Alta.

Continued on page 64

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Continued from page 63

Runner-up aggregate champion for Red Angus Show Bull of the Year went to RED TRIPLE L JAGGER 18C, owned by Randy Tetzlaff of Viscount, Sask.; Jay Spence of Outlook, Sask.; and Rock Point Angus of Birsay, Sask.

The 2017 Red Angus Show Female of the Year receiving champion aggregate status is RED TER-RON DIAMOND MIST 26C and her 2017-born heifer calf, RED TER-RON 6 MILE MISTY 7E, owned by Rob Adams and Kasey Adams of Forestburg, Alta., and Coy Gibson of Fir Mountain, Sask. This animal was last year's reserve aggregate champion for Red Angus Show Female of the Year.

The reserve aggregate champion for Red Angus Show Female of the Year went to RED TER-RON AMBER 25D, owned by Halley Adams of Forestburg, Alta.

Runner-up aggregate champion for Red Angus Show Female of the Year went to RED RAINBOW LARKABA 9D, owned by Brooke Bablitz of Cherhill, Alta.

■ The Canadian Simmental Association had a busy year of activities across the country celebrating 50 years of Simmental cattle in Canada. Canadian Western Agribition played host to the grand finale starting with the Simmental Federation of Americas conference. Delegates from Mexico, Argentina, United States, United Kingdom, Czech Republic and Colombia attended. This day-long symposium discussed the advantage of Canadian beef genetics on the world stage along with research being done in the Canadian beef sector. The discussion on the importance of genetic improvement was a hot topic along

with getting a handle on genomics and their role in the Simmental breed. The next annual meeting is planned for the World Simmental Fleckvieh Congress to be held Sept. 24-28, 2018 in Fort Worth, Texas.



■ The Gelbvieh Association of Alberta/B.C. held its annual meeting on December 2 in Red Deer, Alta. The new board is back row (l to r): Jason Muhlback (president), Larry Fecho, Joe Ness, and Nicole Hollman. Front row (l to r): Lorna Okell (secretary), Jessica Pearson, and Wanda Marsman.

■ The Canadian Simmental Association recognized two innovators as part of the 50th anniversary celebrations at Canadian Western Agribition. Inducted into the Canadian Simmental Hall of Fame were Brian McCarthy of Spring Creek Simmentals, Moosomin, Sask., and Jim and Agnes Asher of Bar A Simmentals, Grandora, Sask. McCarthy was instrumental in helping build the breed in Saskatchewan and Canada through his role as president and director in the early years. Jim Asher looked after Parisien and other Simmental bulls first imported into Canada as herdsman at the Lacombe Research Station. Seeing the opportunity Asher did his

own import of Simmental cattle. Fifty years later both herds are still doing what they do best, promoting Simmental genetics in Canada and around the world. The Ashers were awarded posthumously with both families present to accept their awards. Accepting on behalf of the Jim and Agnes Asher was their daughter Donna Marie Asher. Congratulations to these and all previous Simmental breeders already recognised in the Canadian Simmental Hall of Fame for their role in Simmental coming to Canada.

■ Simmental was in the spotlight both in the purebred show ring and commercial barns. Winners at the 2017 Agribition National Simmental Show, judged by Ken and Kyle Lewis were: Grand Champion Female – CMS Soda Pop 425B, exhibited by Black Gold Simmentals, Lloydminster, Sask.; Grand Champion Bull – BGS/BM Captain Scream 63D, exhibited by Black Gold Simmentals and Bohrsen Marketing, Lloydminster, Sask. Supreme Champion Pen of Bulls and People's Choice went to McIntosh Livestock, Maymont, Sask.

In the Commercial Cattle Show, judged by Jim Pulyk: Grand Champion Pen of Bred Replacement Heifers went to Blairswest Land and Cattle, Drake, Sask.; Reserve Grand Champion Pen of Bred Replacement Heifers went to Westman Farms, Vermilion, Alta. Both pens of heifers were Simmental Influenced!

■ SFI Miss Seein Purple owned by Wheatland Cattle Co., Michelson Land and Cattle Co., and Schaake Farms was the Champion Simmental in the First Lady Classic at Agribition who went on to be Supreme All Breeds! 🍁



■ The Canadian Gelbvieh Association is pleased to announce the winner of the 2017 People's Choice Bull Futurity held at Agribition. The bull was owned by Prairie Hills Gelbvieh of Gladstone, North Dakota. Pictured with the bull are the People's Choice Futurity members. The bull, PHG Enigma E32, is a homo polled son of RWG Yikes Y512 and his dam is PHG Alanis A65. Prairie Hills Gelbvieh won the People's Choice Futurity jackpot of \$15,000 and the lucky draw winner of the bull is Jen-ty Gelbvieh of Duchess, Alta. Futurity members who purchased the Tier 2 membership will receive 10 staws of semen from this young herd sire.

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The Markets



FED CATTLE

Good demand and good beef exports kept cattle moving through the system as we neared the end of 2017. Prices saw seasonal strength while inventories tightened and holiday buying took place through late November and December. Second half highs were set again in early December with a fed steer price of \$151.99/cwt which is \$20/cwt stronger than the fall low seen just 10 weeks ago and \$1.50 higher than the average at the same time last year. The U.S. market has come under some pressure in the last week while the Canadian prices moved stronger which led to basis moving back to a positive level. The press-time fed cash-to-cash basis was +0.44/cwt.

Even with a strong basis, fed cattle exports are up five per cent over 2016 at 293,924 head, and domestic slaughter is also ahead of a year ago. Packers have been aggressively buying cattle and cattle feeders have been marketing in a timely manner which kept carcass weights down. To date 1,410,118 head of steers and 794,625 heifers have been slaughtered in Canada which is up two per cent and 10 per cent, respectively from last year. Current steer carcass weights are 925 lbs., down 10 lbs. from 2016. The year-to-date average is 893 lbs., which is 26 lbs. under a year ago.

FEEDER CATTLE

A very active fall run saw more cattle sold and placed locally than in recent years while price trends were contra-seasonal, gaining strength through October which continued into late November. The calf market at the start of December was down slightly, resulting from a combination of large early fall-run volumes and fewer exports leading to reduced pen space as well as pressure in the technical markets as this issue was going to press. Regular feeder sale volumes were winding down for the year leaving smaller packages of cattle moving in the coming weeks as we neared the Christmas holiday break. At press time steer calves at auction were trading at an average \$229.25/cwt for the 550-lb. weight category which is nearly \$24/cwt higher when compared

to mid-September and \$32/cwt stronger when looking at the average at the start of December 2016. Heavier feeder cattle prices have been under pressure since the start of November when prices reached \$204/cwt. In early December prices slipped to an average \$192.50/cwt. Still, light volumes of the heavier-weight feeder cattle continue to trade \$25/cwt higher than the same period last year. Although the feeder market has come under some pressure in recent weeks the 850-lb. basis remains strong and is currently positive to the U.S. market at +4.31/cwt. Feeder exports have been small through the fall run with a year-to-date total exports of feeder cattle of 111,117 head, down 37 per cent from last year.

NON-FED CATTLE

The non-fed market through the past two months followed a typically normal seasonal pattern with fall cow sales bringing higher volumes to the market, causing prices to decline. In the past few weeks D1,2 cows have traded in a relatively flat range. Most weeks the average ranged between \$86-88/cwt. Auction reports indicate feeder-type cows were fetching premiums and well-conditioned cull cows reached higher price levels as well. The average D1,2 cow price at the start of December was \$86.60/cwt which is \$2/cwt higher than the fall low but more than \$3/cwt lower than last year. Cow volumes at auction markets at the start of December were smaller; however, weekly slaughter rates were up. Year-to-date the cow slaughter in Canada is 401,599 head which is 13 per cent above the same time last year. Cow exports, however, are down 33 per cent from a year ago at 122,243 head. Bull exports are down four per cent at 47,725 head and Canadian bull slaughter is up 42 per cent from a year ago at 17,522 head. Slaughter bulls are currently selling for an average \$95/cwt. 🌟

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

More markets ▶

▶ DEB'S OUTLOOK

FED CATTLE

Higher replacement cattle costs, higher feed grain costs and more cattle-on-feed at the end of 2017 would suggest we approach 2018 with caution in terms of risk management and timely marketing. Beef exports were strong in 2017, which supported the fed cattle market, and will bear watching, as will the outcome from global trade talks, as changes in policies have an impact on the local market. That said, beef demand has been strong, profits good and optimism exceptional as we end 2017. Packer buyers are actively looking to buy more inventory with short lift times which will lead to a good start to the 2018 market. Tightened market-ready supplies near term should continue to support the fed market as the yearling cattle-on-feed come to town early in the new year.

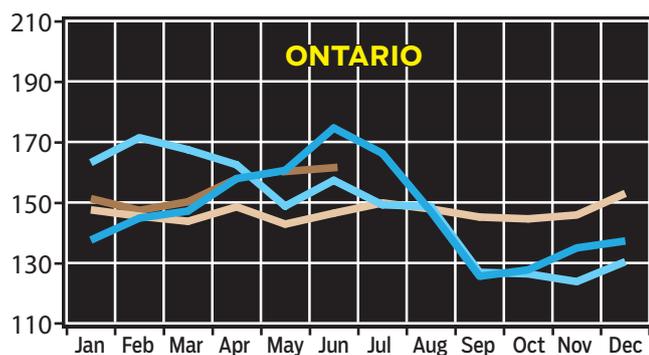
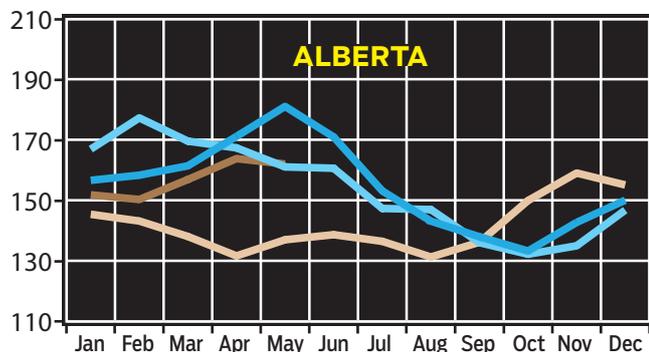
FEEDER CATTLE

Overall, feedlot and packing plants were profitable in 2017, which in turn was positive to the calf run this fall. The feeder cattle market is well supported as fundamentally the industry seems solid. However, factors to watch are the higher feed costs and higher fall-run averages which have led to higher break-even levels. Risk management will be important as markets can change quickly. A higher Canadian dollar, higher feed grain costs and a shift to feeder imports may limit upside potential in the feeder market as we start into 2018. Cow-calf producers and background operations should be cautiously optimistic as we start 2018. Current market trends suggest a strong start to 2018; however, we should not take this as an invitation for complacency.

NON-FED CATTLE

Tightened supplies will help support this market moving forward. In general, the seasonal trend for non-fed prices is to improve through the first quarter of the year. Expect good support for cull cattle prices to strengthen moving into 2018; however, improvement may not be as significant as historical data might suggest.

Break-even Prices on A-Grade Steers



Canfax weighted average price on A-Grade steers

2017 █
2016 █

Break-even price for steers on date sold

2018 █
2016 █

December 2017 prices*

Alberta

Yearling steers (850 lb.)	\$197.51/cwt
Barley	4.81/bu.
Barley silage	60.13/ton
Cost of gain (feed)	74.30/cwt
Cost of gain (all costs)	107.02/cwt
Fed steers	150.03/cwt
Break-even (May 2018)	161.96/cwt

Ontario

Yearling steers (850 lb.)	\$197.80/cwt
Grain corn	4.48/bu.
Corn silage	37.84/ton
Cost of gain (feed)	71.57/cwt
Cost of gain (all costs)	107.04/cwt
Fed steers	137.28/cwt
Break-even (June 2018)	161.49/cwt

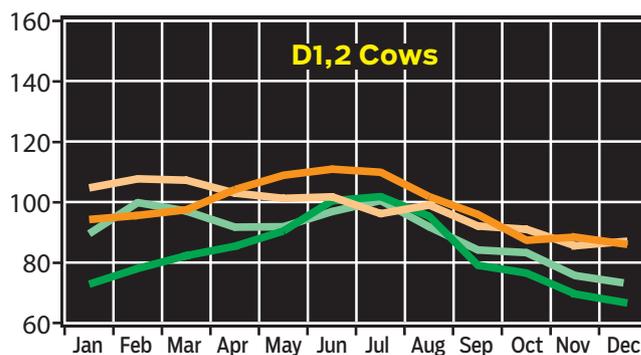
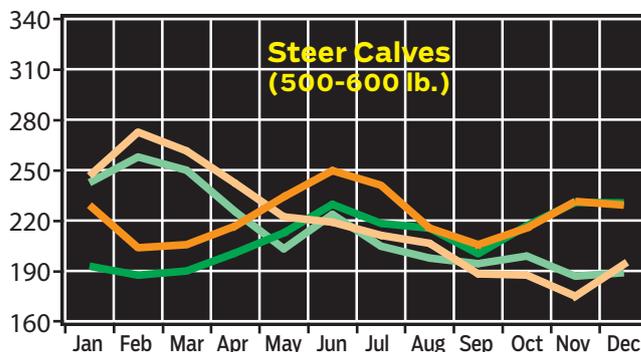
*Mid-month to mid-month prices

Breakevens

East: end wt 1,450, 183 days

West end wt 1,325 lb., 125 days

Market Prices



Ontario

2017 █
2016 █
Ontario prices based on a 50/50 east/west mix

Alberta

2017 █
2016 █

Market Summary (to December 2, 2017)

	2017	2016
Total Canadian federally inspected slaughter	2,623,864	2,467,728
Average steer carcass weight	893 lb.	919 lb.
Total U.S. slaughter	29,959,000	28,418,000

TRADE SUMMARY

	2017	2016
EXPORTS		
Fed cattle to U.S. (to November 25)	299,950	286,223
Feeder cattle and calves to U.S. (to November 25)	113,127	176,538
Dressed beef to U.S. (to October)	517.92 mil.lbs	506.51 mil.lbs
Total dressed beef (to October)	698.09 mil.lbs	664.73 mil.lbs
IMPORTS		
Slaughter cattle from U.S. (to October)	0	0
*Dressed beef from U.S. (to October)	204.34 mil.lbs	199.21 mil.lbs
*Dressed beef from Australia (to October)	33.09 mil.lbs	57.51 mil.lbs
*Dressed beef from New Zealand (to October)	35.02 mil.lbs	40.72 mil.lbs
*Dressed beef from Uruguay (to October)	22.29 mil.lbs	28.27 mil.lbs

Canadian Grades (to December 9, 2017)

% of A grades	+59%	54-58%	-53%	Yield	Total
Prime	0.1	0.4	1.3		1.8
AAA	14.1	21.3	23.2		58.6
AA	19.7	10.8	5.1		35.6
A	1.6	0.3	0.1		2.0
Total	35.5	32.8	29.7		
				Total A grade	98.0%
				Total graded	
				Total ungraded	
				% carcass basis	
EAST	573,259		24,729	81.6%	
WEST	2,070,290		14,838	86.2%	

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UNDERSTANDING THE FORWARD CURVE IN THE FUTURES MARKET

I've received many calls from backgrounding operators and feedlot managers in regard to the feeder cattle market. Prices have strengthened throughout the fall period and it now appears that potential margins will be quite snug for all weight categories. The futures market for live and feeder cattle is reflecting two distinct price structures. Discerning the variation between the two is vital to determining your marketing or hedging strategy. Ask these two helpful questions when conducting your analysis: What is the market trying to tell us and what is it trying to accomplish? In this issue I will discuss the forward curve in the futures market which will provide an idea for price direction over the next six to eight months.

First, I want readers to consider the closing prices on the live and feeder cattle futures as of December 1, 2017. Remember that the feeder cattle futures are actually the live cattle five to seven months forward, depending on the weight. The feeder cattle purchased in March will be sold in August through October for slaughter. Notice the March and September feeder cattle are relatively the same price; however, the October live cattle futures are trading at \$10.525 discount to the April contract. Notice the sharp inverse between the April and October live cattle futures but the feeder cattle futures are relatively flat. The March corn futures are at \$3.58 and the December corn futures are at \$3.90 so the feeder cattle prices seem out of line relative to the live cattle futures.

MONTH	LIVE CATTLE	MONTH	FEEDER CATTLE
Feb	121.975	Jan	150.325
April	123.025	Mar	148.025
June	115.775	May	147.425
Aug	112.650	Aug	149.300
Oct	112.500	Sept	148.525
Dec	113.850	Nov	147.150
April 2019	114.250		

Feedlots in Canada and the U.S. have experienced a prolonged period of healthy margins from February through September of 2017. To simplify the situation, consider this analogy. If there are three cattle feeders feeding 100 head each and margins are \$200, each cattle feeder will want to feed 125 cattle on the next round. Therefore, in Canada we have stronger demand but relatively the same amount of feeder cattle which causes prices to strengthen. To a lesser extent, we've seen the same situation in the U.S., although the 2016 calf crop was 1.3 million head above 2015. A similar year-over-year increase is expected in 2017. In any case, the nearby

feeder cattle market is quite strong because of the recent period of healthy margins for backgrounding and finishing operations.

Given the current live cattle futures market, feedlots will experience profitable margins during the first quarter of 2018. This will keep the nearby feeder cattle market quite strong for the reason mentioned in the previous paragraph. This bodes well for backgrounding operators. Given the price of calves in Western Canada during November 2017 and the March feeder cattle futures, it appears that backgrounding operators should have a margin of \$50 to \$80 per head. In the spring of 2018, if backgrounding operators buy grassers or calves, they'll want to be very aggressive on their hedges or when buying their price insurance.

Finishing operators are facing a different story. Feeding margins will be profitable in the first quarter of 2018 but fed cattle prices will start to drop in the second quarter so that feeding margins move into negative territory. Feedlot margins in the latter half of 2018 will be in negative territory by \$150 to \$200 per head based on the current cash market for feeder cattle and the August and October live cattle futures.

In October of 2018, finishing feedlots will have experienced about six months of negative margins. At the same time, the U.S. will be contending with a sizeable year-over-year increase in the calf crop. This will result in sharp drop in feeder cattle prices for the fall period. In the final quarter of 2018, the price of a 600-pound calf could be about \$30 below current levels.

Notice the April 2019 cattle futures are only at \$114.250 while the November feeder cattle are at \$147.15. The November feeder cattle are too high priced. One has to consider after a prolonged period of negative margins, a sizable year-over-year increase in the calf crop and finally a flat live cattle futures market from October 2018 through April 2019.

In conclusion, the feeder cattle futures appear to be overvalued relative to the October 2018 through April 2019 live cattle futures market. This is an opportunity for backgrounding operators, or those buying grass cattle in the spring, to take price insurance on their fall 2018 yearling marketings. Finishing feedlots need to be aware of the risks because it appears there will be a prolonged period of negative margins from May 2018 through December 2018. 🌟

Jerry Klassen manages the Canadian office of Swiss-based grain trader GAP SA Grains and Produits Ltd., and is president and founder of Resilient Capital specializing in proprietary commodity futures trading and market analysis. Jerry consults with feedlots on risk management and writes a weekly cattle market commentary.

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EVENTS

JANUARY

- 11-13 20th Ontario Beef Industry Convention, Best Western Lamplighter Inn, London, Ont.
- 16-18 AgDays, Keystone Centre, Brandon, Man.
- 18-20 Western Canadian Bovine Practitioners annual conference, Sheraton Cavalier Hotel, Calgary, Alta.
- 24-25 Saskatchewan Beef Industry Conference 2018, Saskatoon Inn, Saskatoon, Sask.

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- 26-27 Canadian Bull Congress, Camrose Regional Exhibition, Camrose, Alta.
- 31- National Cattlemen's Beef Association Feb. 2 annual convention, Phoenix, Arizona

FEBRUARY

- 8-9 Manitoba Beef Producers annual meeting, Victoria Inn Hotel and Convention Centre, Brandon, Man.
- 10 Advance Agricultural Leadership Program Dream Auction gala, Delta Guelph Hotel and Conference Centre, Guelph, Ont.
- 11-25 Foothills Forage and Grazing Association, Spain and Portugal Ag Tour
- 14-15 Agri-Visions, Lloydminster Exhibition Grounds, Lloydminster, Sask.
- 20-22 Cattlemen's College and Beef Farmers of Ontario annual meeting, Delta Hotel by Marriott, Toronto, Ont.
- 21-23 15th Annual Alberta Beef Industry Conference, Sheraton Hotel, Red Deer, Alta.
- 22-24 2nd Annual Young Canadian Simmental Association Leadership Conference, Calgary, Alta.

MARCH

- 16-17 Maritime Beef Conference, Hotel Beausejour, Moncton, N.B.
- 17-18 Cody Sibbald Legacy Classic, at Exhibition Grounds, Medicine Hat, Alta.
- 21-23 Canadian Cattlemen's Association annual meeting, Ottawa Marriott Hotel, Ottawa, Ont.
- 26-27 Advancing Women in Agriculture Conference, Hyatt Regency, Calgary, Alta.

MAY

- 31- B.C. Cattlemen's Association annual June 2 meeting, Smithers, B.C.

SALES

JANUARY

- 26 Dayspring Cattle Private Treaty Sale, Sylvan Lake, Alta.
- 26 Lazy S Ranch Bull Power Sale, at the ranch, Mayerthorpe, Alta.
- 27 M.C. Quantock "Canada's Bulls" Bull Sale, Lloydminster Exhibition Grounds, Lloydminster, Alta.
- 31 Moose Creek Red Angus 2-Year-Old Bull Sale, at the ranch, Kisbey, Sask.

FEBRUARY

- 3 Hill 70 Quantock Ranch, Barn Burnin' Bull Sale, at the ranch, Lloydminster, Sask.
- 9 Anchor D Ranch 19th Annual Simmental Bull Sale, Rimbey, Alta.

- 11 Diamond M Ranch 7th Annual Bull Sale, at the ranch, Estevan, Sask.
- 19 Ole Farms Family Day Bull Sale, Athabasca, Alta.
- 20 Rawes Ranches 35th Bull Sale, at the ranch, Strome, Alta.
- 22 Benlock Farms Bull Sale, at the farm, Grandora, Sask.
- 22 Chapman Cattle Co. 12th Annual "Forage-Developed" Angus Bull Sale, Stettler Auction Mart, Stettler, Alta.
- 28- Calgary Bull Sale, Century Downs, Mar. 1 Calgary, Alta.

MARCH

- 1 JP Cattle Co./Stewart Cattle Co. Annual Simmental and Angus Bull Sale, McAuley, Man.
- 3 McMillan Ranching Ltd. 24th Annual Bull Sale, at the ranch, Carievale, Sask.
- 3 Davidson Gelbvieh & Lonesome Dove Ranch 29th Annual Bull Sale, at our bull yards, Ponteix, Sask.
- 4 R Plus Simmentals 18th Annual Bull and Female Sale, at the farm, Estevan, Sask.
- 5 Pride of the Prairies Bull Sale, Lloydminster Exhibition Grounds, Lloydminster, Sask.
- 6 Belvin Angus 5th Annual Bull Sale, at the ranch, Innisfail, Alta.
- 9 A. Sparrow Farms Annual Bull Sale, at the farm, Vanscoy, Sask.
- 12 Remittal Farms Bull Sale, at the farm, Olds, Alta.
- 13 9th Annual Harvie Ranching Bull Sale, at the ranch, Olds, Alta.
- 27 Anderson Cattle Company Annual Bull and Female Sale, at the farm, Swan River, Man.
- 29 Rivercrest Angus Ranch, at the Rivercrest Ranch, Alliance, Alta.
- 29 Tannas Ranches 2nd Annual Bull Sale, at the ranch, Water Valley, Alta.

APRIL

- 7 Crescent Creek Angus 20th Annual Bull and Female Sale, on the farm, Goodeve, Sask.
- 10 Rodgers Red 45th Annual Performance Bull Sale, at Perlich Bros. Auction Mart, Lethbridge, Alta.
- 12 South View Ranch Red and Black Angus Bull Sale, at the ranch, Ceylon, Sask. 🌟

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