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Canadian Cattlemen

THE BEEF MAGAZINE

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Jason, Janique, Adelina and Gabrielle Desrochers *Val Gagné, Ontario*

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Congratulations!

To our February survey winner,
Jesse Motz of Taber, Alta.
This month's survey is on page 66.

Cover photo: Supplied by the Derochers family

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DEPARTMENTS

NewsMakers


Piper Whelan


Debbie Furber

Piper Whelan of Airdrie, Alta., is the new field editor for *Canadian Cattlemen*. Raised on a purebred Maine-Anjou ranch at Irricana, **Whelan** studied English and history at the University of Alberta and journalism at the University of King's College. She previously worked in publishing and as a registry assistant for the Canadian Charolais Association, and has written for *Top Stock*, *Western Horse Review* and various beef breed publications. She replaces **Debbie Furber** who retired from the magazine on December 31, 2017, and who plans to continue farming with her husband Gerry in Tisdale, Sask.


Jason Lenz

Alberta Barley's board of directors re-elected **Jason Lenz** as chair and **Dave Bishop** as vice-chair last month. **Lenz** farms 2,500 acres of canola, wheat, barley and fababeans and operates a small cow/calf commercial herd outside Bentley. His re-election marks his second year as chair. He has been an Alberta Barley delegate since 2009 and was the Alberta Barley representative to the Barley Council of Canada for two years. **Bishop**, hailing from Barons has been a director since 2014 and is on the executive of the Grain Growers of Canada board.


Adrienne Ivey

Ituna, Sask., rancher **Adrienne Ivey**, author of the blog, "View From the Ranch Porch," was named Farm and Food Care Saskatchewan's 2017 Food and Farming Champion last month for her commitment to promoting agriculture to producers and consumers. **Ivey** supports industry initiatives, is vocal about responsible production practices, and seeks out opportunities to educate non-farmers. She supports consumer outreach organizations like Agriculture in the Classroom, Agriculture More than Ever and Farm & Food Care Saskatchewan and, along with her husband **Aaron**, was recognized as Saskatchewan's Outstanding Young Farmers in 2014. **Ivey**'s willingness to lend her voice to key issues, correct misinformation and stand up for our food system is what makes her a true food and farming champion.

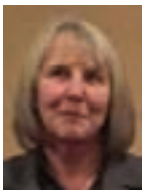

Victor Oulton

Victor Oulton of Martock, Hants County, has been elected president of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture. The Oulton family which includes **Victor** and his brother **Wayne**, their families and their parents operate a four-generation farm. In addition to their Hereford cattle, they raise sheep, deer, elk, free range poultry, wild boar and operate a provincially inspected abattoir and poultry processing plant along with an orchard and woodlot. He has served as the N.S. director on the Canadian Federation of Agriculture board, and is a past president of the Canadian Hereford Association and Maritime Hereford Association.


Nicole Johnson-Hoffman


Dennis Laycraft

The Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (GRSB) has elected **Nicole Johnson-Hoffman**, chief sustainability officer and senior vice-president for OSI Group, as its president. She replaces **Dennis Laycraft** of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association who after serving a two-year term moves to past president. **Dr. Leon Mol**, director of product safety and social compliance for Ahold Delhaize is vice-president, and **Cameron Bruett**, head of corporate affairs for JBS, has been re-elected executive committee member-at-large. **Carlos Saviani** of World Wildlife Fund, is the secretary treasurer, and executive committee-member at-large, **Dr. Ignacio Blanco-Traba** of McDonald's Global completes the 2018 GRSB executive.


Pat Ward


Larry Ward

Pat and **Larry Ward** from Willow Pond Farm received the Environmental Farm Plan Stewardship Award from the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture late last year. Willow Pond Farm, owned and operated by the Wards, is a scenic beef farm located in Higginsville, Halifax County. The Wards run 33 Hereford cows on 25 acres of pasture, 100 acres of hayfields, 100 acres of woodlot and three wetland areas. One major contribution is the farm's impact on wildlife habitat. Over 35 years ago, the Wards co-operated with Ducks Unlimited (DU) to create a very large wetland at the back of their property that provides habitat for numerous waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors, fish, amphibians, turtles and small mammals. The farm has a Nutrient Management Plan (NMP), which includes soil and manure testing every three years.

Alberta Veterinary Laboratories (AVL), the owner of Solvet, has agreed to produce Bovimectin pour-on for Vetoquinol Canada to provide parasite control in cattle. Solvet's Bovimectin was researched and produced under Canadian conditions.

The Cattlemen's Young Leaders Program is seeking applications for its 2018-19 class from individuals 18 to 35 with an interest in a career in the cattle industry. The successful applicants are offered mentoring by industry leaders and participation in events and meetings in Canada and abroad. Applications are available online at www.cattlemensyoungleaders.com until March 31.

Jacques Lefebvre is the new chief executive officer (CEO) of Dairy Farmers of Canada. He was formerly the president and CEO of Dairy Processors Association of Canada (DPAC).

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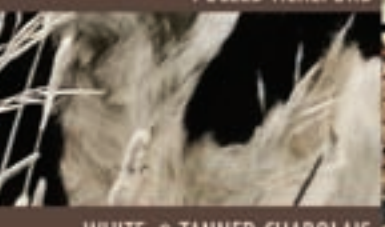

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HONOURING A FARMER-POET

By Kerry Wood, Red Deer, Alta.
Abridged from the January 1951 *Canadian Cattlemen*

Four hundred farmers and their families met on Labor Day to stage one of the most unique ceremonies ever held in Western Canada, when the pioneer Icelandic community of Markerville in Central Alberta unveiled a monument honoring the famous farmer-poet, Stephan G. Stephansson. Dominion, provincial, and municipal governments combined to sponsor the new Memorial Park, but chiefly it was a gathering of farm folk who came to pay their respects to the memory of a world-famous man who had once been their beloved neighbor and friend.

Stephan Gudmundsson Stephansson was born in Iceland in 1853, migrating first to the Dakota States and finally to Alberta soil in the 1890s, to the Icelandic settlement around Markerville. He homesteaded on land two and a half miles from the village, building a log cabin in a picturesque setting on the banks of the Medicine River. For over thirty years Mr. Stephansson was an active farmer there, raising a family of eight children and taking a prominent part in community affairs. But in the quiet hours of the night, this talented man toiled by the beams of a coal oil lamp to pour forth songs and sonnets, lyrics and epics that made him the greatest Icelandic literary genius of his period. At his death in 1927, Mr. Stephansson had published six large volumes of poems and was famous throughout the world of letters.

On Labor Day in 1950, surviving members of the Stephansson family and their many friends throughout the district gathered to honor the poet's memory once again. The Dominion Government's part in the day featured the unveiling of a grey granite cairn erected by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, in tribute to the great Icelandic-Canadian. The Alberta Government was represented by the Provincial Parks Board, sponsoring a recreational park for the Markerville community in the broad meadow below the knoll on which the imposing cairn now stands. And the Markerville people intend to make the new park a two-fold memorial, honoring not only their distinguished man of letters, but planning, in time, to erect a memorial arch-entrance to honor their war dead.

The Chairman of the Provincial Parks Board, Mr. J. H. Holloway, pleasantly performed the duty of officially naming the new park, to be known as the Markerville Memorial Park. He stressed that this was the first of the 40 provincial parks in Alberta to combine three features in one: commemorative of a great Canadian, a memorial to a rural district's war heroes, and a recreational playground for young and old of the community.

The presentation of the memorial was made by Professor M.H. Long, Alberta member of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. Professor Long, historian at the University of Alberta, told of the Board's work in preserving historic features of Alberta, with monuments located on old fur trading post sites, honouring early explorers such as David Thompson and the pioneer missionaries, John McDougall and Father Lacombe, plus the famous Indian Chief, Crowfoot. But this Markerville cairn was the first Alberta monument to a poet. When studying the merits of the suggestion that this monument be erected to honor Stephansson, Professor Long wrote to outstanding authorities on Scandinavian literature in all parts of the world, and was most gratified to learn that Stephan G. Stephansson was hailed by every authority as the greatest Icelandic bard of his time.

Jacob M. Stephansson, last surviving son of the poet, then unveiled the beautiful monument while the Markerville choir sang the Icelandic National Anthem.

A most interesting feature of the program that followed was a talk by Mr. O. Sigurdson, who had been instrumental in having a suitable memorial built on Stephansson's grave some years ago, and who was one of the leaders in the recent movement to have the Historic Sites Board dedicate a monument to Stephansson's memory. Mr. Sigurdson related his personal memories of his great friend and fellow-countryman, who, in addition to being a hard-working farmer, had found time to write over 2,000 poems. After Stephansson's death, Mr. Sigurdson had appealed to Icelanders in all parts of Canada and the United States to contribute to a memorial fund, and in 1937, ten years after the poet died, a beautiful natural-stone monument had been erected on the private Stephansson cemetery on the banks of the Medicine River.

The main speaker of the day was Professor Skull Johnson, Knight of the Royal Order of the Falcon (Iceland), professor of literature at the University of Manitoba. Professor Johnson stressed that Stephansson regarded himself as primarily a farmer, his poetry being a product of his sleepless nights. The first of his poems had been published in Canada just prior to 1900, by a Winnipeg Icelandic press. Later on, a set of three volumes was published in Iceland in 1909 and these established the reputation of the poet throughout the Scandinavian world. Professor Johnson, who had known the poet personally, felt that Stephansson had two great loves that shone throughout his poetry: his beloved "Maid of the Mountain" that symbolized Iceland, and his boundless affection for the fertile fields of Western Canada and its glorious scenic beauties. Probably the poet's deepest loyalty was to Canada, his adopted homeland and the cradle of his children, and his poetry abounds in glowing descriptions of Canadian life. Professor Johnson quoted liberally from the poet's works, one of his translations being a charming poem describing a summer evening in Alberta. The speaker sincerely hopes that the Canadian people, unable to appreciate Stephansson because his poems had been written in Icelandic, might soon come to know and love the great man's Canadian writings when these were translated into English, a project which students of Scandinavian literature hoped to accomplish in the near future.

After the program many paid a visit to the former home of the poet. The poet's study has been preserved as a family memorial, with his writing desk and favorite chair, his library and pictures, and gifts from the Government of Iceland and fellow-writers. After this pilgrimage, the crowd went on to visit the family cemetery, where the remains of Stephan G. Stephansson lie beside the Medicine River he loved so well.

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

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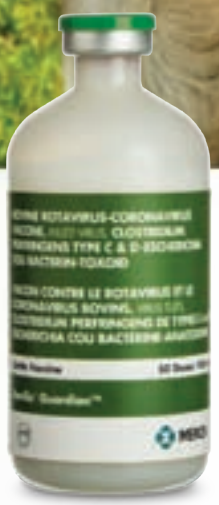

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MERCK Animal Health

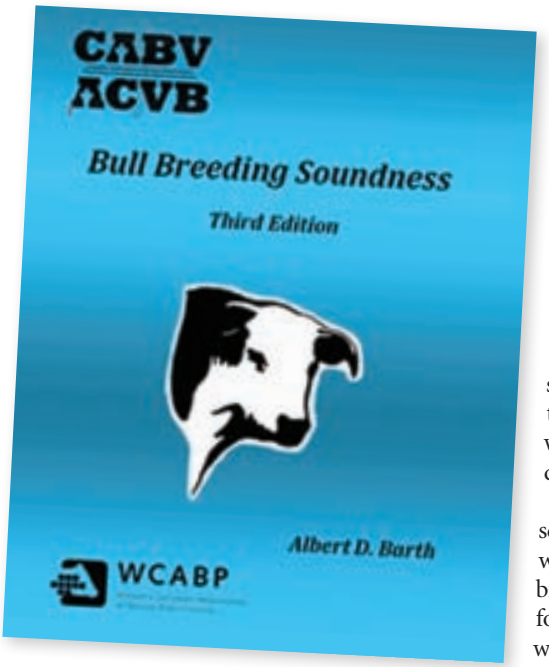
By Roy Lewis, DVM

WELL-TIMED UPDATES ON SCROTAL CIRCUMFERENCE

The Western Canadian Association of Bovine Practitioners (WCABP) has published a third edition of the *Bull Breeding Soundness* manual written by Dr. Albert D. Barth, which contains some changes to the accepted minimal scrotal circumference for the different breeds at different ages. The old standard was a few years old so this new version is a well-timed update. The WCABP also puts out the standard Breeding Soundness Evaluation (BSE) forms used across Western Canada and perhaps most of Canada.

I have also seen forms from the society of theriogenology in the U.S. as well as one used in Australia and they all have some similarities.

Since the standard was last updated in 2000 I would say the average scrotal circumference for all the breeds has increased, and since scrotal circumference is moderately to highly heritable it makes sense to try and select for it.



These changes were made based on the compilation of thousands of scrotal circumference submissions made from veterinarians across Western Canada from 2001 to 2006 so the measurements were current, covered a large geographic area and were age and breed specific.

Most of the veterinarians would have been graduates from Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVM) in Saskatoon and would have been trained by the key researcher on this project, Dr. Barth. He is also the inventor of the ReliaBull scrotal tape that is the only one I am aware of which operates on a spring type mechanism so measurements between practitioners have the greatest consistency. The tape even has a plunger on it that shows red when it is time to "stop" and take the measurement. A couple of other younger researchers helped on this project including Dr. Steve Hendrick so the information from this research and subsequent recommendations were derived locally from Western Canadian purebred cattle.

In my opinion, producers have done a great job of selecting for increased scrotal size and this has been reflected in what the numbers show. You may be glad to hear there were very few changes but keep in mind the values are minimum acceptable standards based on age.

Semen production and early maturity correlate to larger testicles at an earlier age in both bulls and their female offspring.

The WCABP added a new category specifically for 15 months, as this is generally the end of the rapid growth spurt in testicle size. Veterinarians generally would not start testing until a bull calf is at least a full year of age, which is why minimum requirements are shown for each breed in monthly intervals up to 15 months of age.

We as veterinarians and you as producers need to keep this in mind when purchasing purebred bulls. Comparing a 15-month bull to a 12-month bull evaluated on the same day may have differences in scrotal size and morphology of sperm even though they may end up being equivalent bulls when mature. Always be cognizant of birth dates when bulls are evaluated at a younger age.

Time of year also plays into this with increased riding and sexual activity in the spring. I have always said testing a May-born calf in May the next year on average will be better than doing February-born calves in February the next year simply because of the lack of activity during a cold winter and the fact cycling females are nowhere to be had that early in the year.

Other changes saw the Charolais and Angus breeds move up one cm to where the Simmental and Gelbvieh breeds were. This makes sense to those of us that semen test large groups of purebred bulls, as these breeds are all very similar in average size. The Hereford and Shorthorn bulls also move up one cm in all their categories.

As veterinarians we know once the scrotal measurement is getting close to or on the minimum standard, this is when the majority of failures in semen quality occur.

Some breeds appear to have a bit lower scrotal size and yet mature size is up there with the other breeds. Remember: all breeds do not need the same scrotal size so for instance, we can't compare Limousin with Gelbvieh as scrotal size will be different and Limousin will need less scrotal size than many other breeds to do the job.

Watch those semen forms when purchasing bulls and remember the U.S. has a different system. With their system, scrotal sizes appear larger than with bulls done on our system. It is simply the way they measure and it can make anywhere from a two to five cm difference.

Keep the new minimum standards the WCABP have put forward in mind at the bull sales this year.

I commend the association for taking this approach to keep up with the improving quality of all the cattle breeds, and I'm sure the purebred producers do as well.

Purebred producers want to sell a quality, well examined, fertility-tested product. It is in their best interest to do so and even though we as veterinarians cannot identify all the problem bulls that are turned out to breeding pasture, we do go a long way toward identifying the vast majority that have or will have sperm fertility problems. A scrotal circumference evaluation is still a large part of that equation.

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

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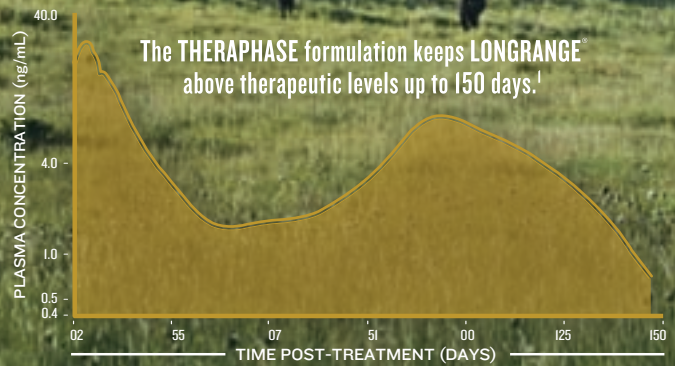

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By Heather Smith Thomas

KEEP A SHARP EYE ON FERTILITY

There are several factors that play a role in cow fertility and some of them are interrelated. Whether or not a heifer will breed quickly (reaching puberty at a young age) or a cow will breed back in a timely fashion after calving and become pregnant will depend on a combination of genetics, nutrition, health, etc. In cows, fertility may also be affected by reproductive disease.

Cow-calf producers who make a living from their cows know that fertility is by far the most important economic trait. Yet fertility is usually not at the top of the list when they are selecting replacement heifers.

Studies have shown that reproductive traits are twice as important as growth traits, which are twice as important as carcass traits. Yet most beef producers have been selecting almost exclusively for growth and carcass traits for the past 50 years, at the expense of reproduction. Academia has told us heritability of fertility is very low. Perhaps if you were able to isolate fertility from everything else, that assumption could appear to be true. In the real world, however, nothing is isolated.

"Inherent fertility is extremely important but there are other factors that obviously come into play, such as nutrition," says Dr. Steve Hendrick of the Coaldale Veterinary Clinic in Coaldale, Alta. "If cows or heifers are too thin, they won't breed. Any female less than 2.5 on the 5-point scale is less likely to breed. There is higher risk for cows to be in anestrus (not cycling) when they are thin," he says.

Part of the problem in many beef herds today is that stockmen have selected for more growth and less back fat, inadvertently selecting for lower levels of fertility. Their cows may wean off big calves, but they've created hard-keeping, high-maintenance cows that struggle to reproduce under what was once considered normal ranch conditions. The all too common "solution" to this problem has been to reduce stocking rates and/or increase supplemental feeding. Instead of producing cows that fit their environment, these producers have artificially changed the environment to fit their cows. Nutrition is important, but you also want to start with a fertile type of cow.

Hendrick says it's always interesting to hear people discuss the question of proper age and size of heifers at breeding, as the two most determining factors on pregnancy rates. "I agree with age as a criteria, but size is a tricky topic. It's all too easy when selecting heifers to choose the bigger animals, but they may be slower to mature." The big heifers are often still growing when the smaller ones have already reached puberty.

"In my current job, I work with feedlot clients as well as cow-calf producers, and we get carcass data back on these animals. We've been estimating what their mature body weight would be. You can do that after slaughter, when you have carcass data. When I look at different breeds and cattle types, I am amazed at the wide variation in mature body weight. A lot of people think

Continued on page 12

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Continued from page 10

their cows are 1,200 pounds, but most cows today are much bigger. Many are actually 1,400 pounds or bigger," he says.

The average cows in most breeds today are much larger than they used to be. "This makes it hard to judge a heifer and determine whether she will mature to be 1,300 pounds or 1,500 pounds. When estimating whether a heifer is between 55 to 65 per cent of her mature body weight at breeding time, you don't really know. You could look at the dam and maybe have an idea based on her size, but that's only half the equation. We don't always know what genes for size the heifer got from her sire," he explains.

There are frame score charts that can help a person estimate mature frame size, if you know the age of the heifer and can get her weight and hip height. "These might help you guess what the mature size and body weight might be — at least in terms of whether the heifer will be a large frame or smaller frame," says Hendrick.

"It's also important to put selection pressure on your replacement heifers with a short breeding season — just one or two cycles. The ones that don't breed early are not as fertile," he explains. As some ranchers have discovered, it is easy to select for fertility by giving heifers a very short time with a bull, keeping only the ones that get pregnant — and keeping heifers from older dependable cows that have stayed in the herd a long time. Over time this creates a more fertile cow herd.

You may notice a subtle change in body type and size. Fertility is more a function of fleshing ability than anything else, and fleshing ability is a function of low maintenance requirements. Reproduction is a luxury; it can't happen until maintenance requirements have been met and cows are storing energy reserves in the form of fat. Since fleshing ability and maintenance requirements are heritable, fertility is also heritable.

Cows that are easy-fleshing and easy-keeping tend to be more fertile than cows you have to pour a lot of feed into to get them bred. "Measuring individual animal intakes and feed efficiency is something we don't give a lot of thought to in the cow herd," says Hendrick, but there are always some cattle that hold their flesh better than others under the same conditions. Some may fall out of your program if they have to work for a living rather than being fed supplemental feeds. Cows need to be able to maintain themselves and still wean enough pounds of calf, and become pregnant again. If a cow holds her weight but doesn't produce enough milk for her calf, she's also not what you want. It's often best to select heifers from the good old cows that stay in the herd, raise a good calf every year, and never missed a calf.

Heifers and cows that breed quickly and calve early in the breeding season have more chance to rebreed, and tend to stay in the herd longer, but they also need adequate nutrition to do this. "When you realize that gestation is roughly 285 days and you only have 365 days in a year — and you want them calving every 12 months — this only leaves 80 days to breed back," says Hendrick.

"If cows are not in good body condition when they calve, however, it's difficult for

Continued on page 14

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* Leblanc MM. 1986. Passive transfer of immunity in calves. In: Morrow DA, ed. Current Therapy in Theriogenology. 2nd ed. Philadelphia; WB Saunders; 224-26.

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zoetis

Continued from page 12

them to rebreed in 80 days. It may stretch to 100 days or longer." If you have a short breeding season they end up open. They need adequate nutrition to return to heat soon.

"Body condition score is often an indicator of energy and protein levels in the diet but we also can't forget minerals. Some of the work I was involved with at the vet school in Saskatoon was looking at mineral feeding. Most people think in terms of minerals being important for cows cleaning, and having vigorous calves, and minerals do play a role in those things, but also are important for fertility," he says.

"Certain pastures and certain areas of the country with different soils seem to affect this. We see different minerals in the feed, and ultimately in the cows, and in how they perform reproductively. We see some differences in requirements in some cattle and even in different breeds. One mineral mix or product might work great for one producer but might not work for everyone. It's best to work with your own vet and nutritionist to find the right feeding and mineral program for your herd."

Producers may need to check their feeds, and sometimes their soils. "If I had to do one or the other, I would start with the feed. If feeds are short on certain minerals then I would check the soils those feeds were grown on," says Hendrick. In some regions soil is short on copper, selenium, or some other important trace mineral. You may still need to check your soils because they can vary from place to place or from one pasture area to another.

"Some of the work we did was looking at different plant species in a pasture, and different types of tame pasture — whether grasses or legumes. The mineral profiles in some of these plants will be totally different even when grown in the same soils," he says.

Cattle are adaptable, and will seek out and select plants that help balance their diet, but if there is a serious deficiency it will show up — often in fertility and breedback/pregnancy rate. "This is often the place it will show up, because cattle try to maintain themselves or grow, and this takes priority over pregnancy. If we shortchange them, this is where it will show," he says.

Traits like birth weight (for calving ease) and growth (bigger calves to sell) are important. A small calf may be a disappointment, and a dead calf doesn't gain, but if you never have that calf in the first place — because the cow was not fertile — you are completely out of luck. That's the most important starting point: you need cows to be fertile enough to breed.

"Another factor we can't forget is the bull. We often correlate the bull's scrotal circumference with fertility of his daughters. There's been a push to select for larger scrotal size, and I think some emphasis on this is good, at least meeting the minimum for the age of the bull. Also the bull needs an acceptable number of normal sperm, and good libido." A bull that is borderline in fertility may sire daughters that are less fertile than they should be.

"Fertililty and performance don't have to be completely antagonistic and we can try to come up with a happy medium ..."

DR. STEVE HENDRICK
COALDALE, ALTA.

Disease can also be a factor in cow fertility. Reproductive diseases like vibrio or trichomoniasis may adversely affect pregnancy rates. Diseases like IBR, BVD, lepto, etc., may cause abortion. "These are problems we may not see until after the breeding season, when cows come up open, or lose their calves during pregnancy. Some of these diseases are real sleepers because you see the cows being bred and think everything is fine, but with early embryonic loss the cows may cycle back again," says Hendrick.

It is important to work with your local veterinarian to come up with a vaccination program or testing program that makes sense for your own herd. "There's not a vaccine available for trich, so it's important to keep this disease out of your herd in the first place or do some testing and culling to get rid of it," he says.

Other factors that may adversely affect fertility are dystocia or injury/infection in the cow's reproductive tract.

"If you had to assist a cow or heifer at calving, or deliver the calf by C-section, some of these females will be at higher risk for complications afterward. If you are getting very many calves that are way too big, it might be necessary to try to select for lower birth weights. We do whatever we can to minimize calving problems. The less we have to intervene at calving, the less risk for causing infections in the cow or heifer afterward." A cow with a uterine infection may or may not clear the infection in time to rebreed on schedule.

The ability to remain in the herd having a calf on time year after year is what we hope for in a cow.

"There's been a lot of genetic work trying to predict these kinds of traits. Genetics is a big factor, but management also plays a big role. We can't totally blame it on genetics, but some cows just aren't as fertile," he says.

It helps if you can select for genetics that produce lower birth weight and still have good growth after birth. "Fertility and performance don't have to be completely antagonistic and we can try to come up with a happy medium rather than saying some traits are maternal and some are terminal. With conscientious selection, the herd can do a good job of both." There are some cattle that are doing this. Short gestation (which translates into lower birth weight) also gives the cow more time to rebreed. If the calf has good growth after birth, you can get the best of both traits. There's a happy medium, and that can help us in our quest for more fertile cows.

"There are some new tools now available that can help us identify some of these animals that do the best job. Some of the traditional tools are also useful, such as getting your herd preg-checked so you know what the herd fertility is like, and the percent that calve in the first and second cycle of the breeding season, rather than calving late. This can help you know if you are going in the right direction," says Hendrick.

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By Debbie Furber

FIRST EPDS FOR UDDER AND TEAT CONFORMATION IN THE WORKS

Kajal Devani

That first feeding of colostrum invariably charts the course for a calf's future success and profitability. Knowing that the dam's udder and teat structure is important to a successful first feeding Kajal Devani, is aiming to improve the genetic selection for improved mammary conformation in Canadian Angus cattle.

Devani, who is the Canadian Angus Association's (CAA) member service team leader, chose this research project while in pursuit of a doctorate in production animal health under the supervision of Dr. Karin Orsel at the University of Calgary faculty of veterinary medicine with support from the University of Alberta.

Her research earned first place in this year's poster session at the faculty's beef cattle conference.

To begin, 10 Canadian Angus herds were randomly selected from seedstock producers who volunteered their herds for the project. This formed a representative population of 2,051 active registered Angus cows that provided the discovery genotype samples and phenotypic references.

Teat size and udder suspension were scored according to the Beef Improvement Federation's scoring guidelines ranging from one to nine for each trait. For udder suspension, a score of one is very pendulous and nine is very tight. For teat size, a score of one is very large, balloon-shaped teats and nine is very small.

Devani and an intern independently scored each trait and the intern's scores were used as the phenotypic reference. Hers and the intern's scores were very similar when compared after the scoring, but having parallel scores ensured repeatability and objectivity, she explains.

Devani collected DNA samples from each cow scored and the CAA provided pedigree and performance information for each cow and its calves.

Preliminary results so far show that the sample set was representative of the Canadian Angus population. Of the approximately 60,000 calves registered in 2015, 67 per cent were Black Angus and 33 per cent were Red Angus. Of the 2,051 cows sample and scored, 585 were red, 1,299 were black and 146 were red-black crosses.

The number of calvings for each scored cow ranged from one to 13. The average parity was 3.26 for the red cows, 2.86 for the black cows and 1.72 for the crosses.

Average scores for the red cows were 5.80 for udders and 5.78 for teats. The black cows averaged 6.26 for udders and 6.50 for teats. The crosses averaged 6.87 for udders and 6.57 for teats.

The purpose of this research isn't to determine which combination of udder and teat

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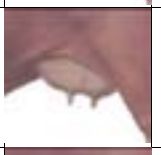
Udder Suspension			Teat Size		
Score	**Description**	**Example**	**Score**	**Description**	**Example**
9	Very Tight		9	Very small	
7	Tight		7	Small	
5	Intermediate/moderate		5	Intermediate/moderate	
3	Pendulous		3	Large	
1	Very pendulous, broken floor		1	Very large, balloon-Shaped	

UDDER SUSPENSION			TEAT SIZE		
Score	Description	Example	Score	Description	Example
9	Very tight		9	Very small	
7	Tight		7	Small	
5	Intermediate/moderate		5	Intermediate/moderate	
3	Pendulous		3	Large	
1	Very pendulous, broken floor		1	Very large, balloon-shaped	

Figure 1: Beef Improvement Federation recommended guidelines for scoring of teat and udder structure in beef cattle

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size is most desirable. Devani says that decision is up to individual producers and will depend on the goals for their operation and their environment.

"The goal is to give Canadian Angus breeders access to genetic selection tools that can help maintain the most functional, healthy and profitable Angus cow herd possible.

Angus is known as a maternal breed and for structural soundness. This is a way to maintain those qualities and make sure they are a focus for new breeders, she says.

EPDs for Angus cow teat and udder structure will be generated using pedigree, performance and progeny information. The DNA samples have been genotyped by Delta Genomics and part of the project involves looking for SNP markers that describe the phenotypic variation seen in these traits. These markers will help make the resulting EPDs more accurate.

"We know that the two traits (udder and teat conformation) are highly correlated but for now we will have an EPD for each trait. In the long term we hope to have a female sustainability and longevity index that includes both," Devani says, adding that indexes are handy because producers have one number that represents all the traits included in the index instead of having to work with several EPDs.

Devani's study is part of a larger project exploring female longevity because it has such an impact on producer profits. Poor udder and teat conformation alone has negative consequences for profitability, calf nutrition and health, influencing the cow's susceptibility to mastitis, the use of antibiotics to treat cow and calves, and the demands on a producer's time treating animals and assisting calves with the first feedings of colostrum.

Improving market access is an overarching goal, she adds, because breeds known for superior genetics are in demand from bull buyers and seedstock producers domestically and internationally.

Although her research is specific to Canadian Angus cattle, other breeds could do similar work to establish genomic tools for these traits. She is aware that both the Red and Black Angus groups and the Hereford association in the U.S. are working toward this goal.

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MERCK

By Ron Clarke, DVM

FUELLING UP FOR COLD AND CALVING

PHOTO: JEANNETTE GREAVES

It takes a North American prairie cold snap, those first two to three weeks of real winter when outside temperatures plummet where Fahrenheit and Centigrade meet below zero, for beef specialists to dust off and publish articles on managing cows through cold — the -40 C kind. They all make valid points; gentle reminders for beef producers that cold can be inhumane and a serious impediment to production.

Monitoring body condition of cows through gestation is closely linked to calving success and profit in beef herds. Body condition of cows and heifers, beginning in early gestation, has an impact on future reproductive performance, calf health, weaning weights, and overall herd productivity. Thin cows (BCS 2 or less) are only half as productive as cows in optimum condition (BCS 2.5–3).

Feeding beef cattle during western Canadian winters can be a challenge. Frame size, body condition, feed quality, types of feed and temperatures all have an impact on feed consumption and rate of gain. Overfeeding is costly and wastes feed; underfeeding affects body condition and influences both short- and long-term performance of the breeding herd.

A FEW REMINDERS

Make needed adjustments to dietary protein and energy no later than 60 days before calving (90 days is better).

Putting weight on through the last trimester and during lactation is difficult and expensive. To improve one BCS in 90 days requires 20 per cent more energy; to do it in 60 days requires 30 per cent more.

Know body condition scores 90 days pre-calving.

Nutrient requirements increase 35-40 per cent at calving.

Feed test! Know what you have.

Inadequate nutrition during the last trimester is associated with lighter birthweights, poor-quality colostrum, lower calf immunity, reduced calf survival, decreased milk production, and reduced weight gain in calves that lasts out to weaning and beyond.

Winter feed and forage grazing costs account for 60-65 per cent of total cow-calf production costs in Western Canada. Sixty nine to 79 per cent of producers use some form of extended grazing. Well-managed extended grazing is an excellent way to lower winter feed costs, provided the cow's dietary requirements are met. Forage quality and body condition scores need to be monitored closely.

Only 38 per cent of swathed-grazed forage samples meet the energy needs of a cow through the last third of pregnancy (at -25 C).

A cow that calves at BCS 2 (thin) will have a difficult time gaining the 100 pounds necessary needed to reach BCS 2.5, rebreed in 83 days and maintain a 365-day calving interval.

Eighty-two days after calving is the most crucial period in the beef cow's year. To calve at the same time next year, she must rebreed within 80 to 85 days while nursing a calf.

Group cattle by age and nutritional need.

Consumption of free-choice minerals is "hit and miss." It is better to mix minerals into a small amount of grain or pellets (three to four pounds per head per day), or feed fortified pellets containing a balance of minerals, vitamins and supplements.

Feed an additional one pound of grain or pellets per head per day for every five degrees that the temperature is below -20 C at midday.

Sixty days prior to calving: decrease the amount of roughage fed by approximately 15 per cent and increase the amount of grain or pellets fed by 15 per cent.

Reduce or eliminate forced feeding of straw after calving. Most straw rations do not provide adequate levels of energy during the lactation period. If cattle are fed a straw-grain ration, provide a good-quality protein supplement such as canola meal, alfalfa pellets or a commercial beef protein supplement after calving. Adding any type of hay, even slough hay, to a straw ration will improve nutrient content.

Feed an additional one to two pounds of grain per head per day for every 10 degree drop in temperature below -20 C to meet higher energy demand. An additional 0.5 to 1.0 pounds of protein supplement may also be needed.

To be safe, supply 100 per cent of the vitamin requirements in feed. Beef cows require 40,000 to 60,000 IU of vitamin A daily prior to calving. After calving, the requirements increase to 60,000 to 70,000 IU of vitamin A daily. As milk production increases, vitamin A requirements increase as well. Vitamin D requirements are 10 per cent of the vitamin A level. Most vitamin products and supplements typically supply the vitamin A and D in appropriate ratios.

Vitamin E is required for proper immune system function and reproduction, and it helps maintain efficient animal growth. Feed 200 to 300 IU per day pre-calving and 300 to 500 IU per day post-calving to beef cows and first-calf heifers.

As a risk management strategy going into the winter, reduce the number of BCS 2 cows and increase the number of BCS 2.5 cows in your herd.

Provide cattle with an area that gives wind

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HEALTH

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protection. The lower critical temperature of a beef cow is the lowest temperature a cow can be exposed to before she needs to have changes metabolically to cope with cold stress.

Maintain moderate body condition scores (BCS 2.5 to 3) post-weaning so cows don't have to play catch-up in late January and February. This helps the cow herd weather the cold winter months and adds up to huge savings in input costs.

Develop protocols for the strategic control of internal and external parasites. Depending on location and grazing management practices, targets vary. Consult a veterinarian.

Provide cattle with protection from wind. The lower critical temperature for a beef cow is the lowest temperature a cow can be exposed to before she needs help to cope with cold stress. Shelterbelts help.

If severe weather conditions are extended, be prepared to increase dietary energy to cows to avoid losing weight.

Cattle should have adequate amounts of clean, fresh water available at all times.

Additional concerns are the bigger challenges of developing an appropriate wintering site with access for feed delivery, and the ability to bring cattle into handling facilities for care.

Bedding is important to help mitigate cold by keeping cattle clean and providing insulation from snow or frozen ground.

Replacement heifers fed primarily forage for modest gains are susceptible to the physical stress of cold, which reduces thriftiness and gain.

By John McKinnon

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE VITAMIN SUPPLY?

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

Many of you are likely aware that the feed industry is facing a critical shortage of vitamins A and E. This shortage is the result of a fire in October at a processing plant in Germany owned by BASF, one of the global leaders in the provision of vitamins for humans and livestock. The damaged plant produces a compound called "Citral" which is a critical intermediate in the process used by BASF to produce both vitamin A and E. At the time of writing, this plant was out of production and according to industry sources, not expected to open anytime in the near future.

As a result, vitamin prices have risen sharply and many feed companies have advised their clients that levels of vitamin A and E in mineral and protein supplements need to be reduced. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency has in fact implemented an interim compliance policy for registered feeds containing vitamins A and E that allows feed companies to temporarily reduce their concentration in such feeds, as long as they fall within the requirements of the federal feed regulations. In addition to feed sources, injectable ADE products, as well as that of selenium and vitamin E, are in extremely short supply.

This "crisis" has several implications for producers. Obviously, rising vitamin prices will lead to increased feed costs. As an example, under current pricing, a large feedlot could spend an extra $2,500 to $3,500 a month on these vitamins, depending on inclusion levels. More importantly, without careful attention to ration formulation, situations could arise where a deficiency develops in one or more of these vitamins, with resulting impacts on productivity, reproduction and health.

I have written in past columns (March 2014 and January 2017) on the function of these vitamins and will not go into detail here. However, it is important to realize that both vitamin A and E are essential nutrients for cattle and must be supplied to the animal. Briefly, vitamin A is important for vision, reproduction and immune function, while vitamin E is an antioxidant that interacts with selenium to provide protection to tissues and is also involved with immune function. Both vitamin A and E along with D, are soluble in fats and oils. This characteristic is important as the animal can store these vitamins in adipose tissue and the liver. This leads to flexibility in how we supply these vitamins. For example we can feed appropriate amounts daily, weekly or evenly monthly, or inject a two- to three-month supply and the animal will store excess levels and draw on these stores as required.

Keeping this storage ability in mind, let's look at how concerned we should be with respect to this issue. The first point I would make is that if you have been feeding/injecting these vitamins on a regular basis, it is highly likely your cattle have a reserve of both vitamins stored in liver/fat tissue. If necessary, this reserve can be used by the animal to supplement reduced levels in the feed. So in the short term, if you have been diligent up to this point, you should not see any deficiency issues if your feed company has to temporarily reduce levels of these vitamins in your mineral or supplement. In the longer term, issues may develop. However, remember we are only 90 days or so away from green grass which is nature's vitamin factory. Lush, spring forage is a good source of vitamins A and E, particularly as the growing season progresses.

My biggest concern will be with cow-calf producers who, due to the particulars of their operation (i.e. soils deficient in selenium), rely on injections of vitamin E and selenium to prevent white muscle disease and/or retained placentas. If supply of these products remains an issue, producers who use this method of providing vitamin E may be out of luck. If this sounds familiar to you, now would be a good time to evaluate your mineral feeding program and ensure that you are providing sufficient selenium and vitamin E to meet requirements, even if you have to pay more for that mineral. The consequences of a deficiency are just too great to do otherwise.

We are only 90 days or so away from green grass which is nature's vitamin factory. Lush spring grass is a good source of vitamins A and E

The biggest issue facing cattle feeding operations is likely the shortage and pricing of vitamin E. Its role in immune function is important for newly weaned and/or stressed calves. I like to see such calves get 500 IU per head per day during periods of stress. With today's pricing, this has significant cost implications as I discussed above. Fortunately, the 2017 fall calf run is well behind us and hopefully the situation is resolved by the time we see 2018 calves.

With respect to vitamin A, the requirement for growing/finishing cattle as laid out in the Nutrient Requirement for Beef Cattle Publication is 2,200 International Units (IU) per kilogram of DM. If there is a continuing supply issue, feeding reduced levels is not a major issue, as there is a considerable body of research with feedlot cattle, particularly those later in the feeding period, that shows that lower levels of vitamin A can be fed without any negative consequences on health or performance. How low you can go, is a good question for your nutritionist!

By Heather Smith Thomas

GRASS LURES BEEF PRODUCTION TO NORTHERN ONTARIO

Andrew Gordanier his wife Janet and children Keith and Emily operate a 200-cow herd and a meat store on the farm near Kapuskasing.

Ontario cattlemen and the province have begun several programs to encourage more farmers to start raising beef in northern Ontario — where it is colder and the land is more suited to bush and cattle than corn and soybeans. Interest from producers considering a move north has been gaining momentum, and in mid-August 2017, the Beef Farmers of Ontario (BFO) hosted a group of 18 people who wanted to explore this opportunity by visiting northern farmers, some who were born there, and others who were newer to the north.

THE DESROCHERS FARM

Jason Desrochers runs 230 cows, 30 replacement heifers and 200-plus backgrounding calves at Val Gagné, an hour south of Cochrane and an hour east of Timmins. He's the third generation in his family to farm land originally bought by his grandfather in 1928.

His father introduced Herefords, Shorthorns and a few Angus but since the 1990s the herd has been pretty much Simmental and Charolais with a bit of Limousin for a three-way cross, especially for calving the heifers. Today they are again introducing Angus and keeping some of those three-way cross heifers.

"We sell our cattle at Brussels and they do well. People know our cattle and what they will do."

He crops with his brother and they sell all the grain they grow while his herd is wintered on hay and haylage. He says the Simmental-Charolais crosses frame out nicely with a decent weight under this regime.

Even though the climate is wet, it's not severely cold. And, as he puts it, the seasons are well defined, but the winters are not bad.

"The weather is actually not very hard on livestock."

As long as cattle have windbreaks they do fine overwintering in the bush.

And there's no shortage of bush. Desrochers clears a little every year with some support from the Northern Ontario Farm Innovation Alliance (NOFIA) that administers a land-clearing research project.

"We've been doing this for about 10 years. Every year you do 10 acres, so after 10 years you have 100 acres of pasture carved out of

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Continued from page 24

the bush," he says. The forage production increases with each year of cattle use.

They don't bale graze fearing there might be too much mud on their clay soils, or too much snow for the cattle to nose through to get at the hay or haylage bales.

"So we feed every day, using a bale shear on the front of our tractor and spread each bale out on the snow. In the fall when the ground is mud, we spread the hay on higher ground," he says.

They grow all their own hay made up of trefoil, timothy, red clover and mixed grasses. Last year they took off about 1,700 bales wrapped for haylage and about 4,000 total hay bales.

He and his brother grew 230 acres in barley for cash grain and 450 bales of straw. "All of those acres are under-seeded, which will benefit the beef operation," he says.

They had another 115 acres in canola which got seeded late because of the wet spring and was frozen by an early fall frost.

"Our cows (were) grazing the canola for fall pasture and it extended our feed — not that we really need it because we have lots of hay, but they are eating less hay and have a lot of bedding. They eat what they want and trample the rest, so we can plow it under next year and put barley in — and underseed it as well. We had the canola plants tested to make sure the nitrate levels weren't too high. The tests came back safe so we put the cows in there to graze."

Jason Desrochers and family.

The heifers calve in late March and April when Desrochers has more time for them. Four barn cameras stream to his phone making it easy for him to monitor them at all times. The cows calve in May/June on pasture. Usually the weather is good enough by then that they calve on their own with minimal assistance.

"Last year was wet, however, and we worked quite hard during calving. It was the wettest spring my dad can ever remember."

The calves get a farm tag and an RFID tag. "We also castrate the bull calves," he adds.

Other producers are growing corn for silage but Desrochers feels it is still a risky crop for his area.

"Even barley can be hard to get harvested. The one thing that consistently grows is grass. We never get short on grass; we rarely have a drought. We always have lots of hay and pasture. I am 38 and have been farming alongside my dad my whole life, and I can remember only two dry years in all that time," he says.

"Southern Ontario and out west has a lot more drought than we have. I think drought can be more devastating than anything else when you have cattle. This area has lots of grass, greenfeed, and windbreaks. You don't have to fight the weather. You can just let

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Here's to the **RANCHER**

"My grandpa had this place. I remember as a kid helping with his cows and mowing his grass. Now I'm here and my kids are helping me on their great-grandpa's land. I'll be honest, it's a dream come true for me. My name is Kent Barritt and I raise Red Angus cross cows."

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the cattle be out there doing what they do best," he says.

"It's fine to grow crops in southern Ontario, or out west on the prairies. They do a great job. But in the northern areas that are similar to us, they grow cattle — which is what they should be growing," he explains.

"Northern Ontario is a great place to raise cattle because you can put a lot of land together to do it. In southern Ontario I am amazed at how many roads there are, and the traffic. Farms are small and many farmers have little places here and there. Our farm has close to 3,000 acres in one place (3,500 acres in all), with no neighbours, no traffic," he says.

THE GORDANIER FARM

Andrew Gordanier and his wife Janet moved to this area a couple of years ago from Dufferin County in southern Ontario, to lease what had been the Agriculture Canada research farm near Kapuskasing.

"This farm closed in the spring of 2013; no one was on it for a couple of years. We got here in the fall of 2014 as part of the Ontario Cattleman's Association's Northern Beef Expansion initiative," he says. (The association has since changed its name to Beef Farmers of Ontario.)

"I learned about that initiative because my father was president of the association at that time. I didn't even know where Kapuskasing was before that, just that it was up north somewhere. It's about 800 kilometres north of the farm where I grew up. It's a totally different world up here, with different soil, different climate, different growing season and community. It was like immigrating to another country!"

It took some getting used to, but some of the projects Andrew has been working on include beef production, lead-follow grazing with sheep and cattle, bale grazing, and experimenting with different varieties of fruits and vegetables to see which ones work best in this climate. Andrew is a partner in Kapuskasing Meats and raises pork, chicken and beef sold through this local company.

Janet is most interested in the sheep and Andrew takes care of the cattle. "This enables us to work together and still have our own thing — we are each an expert in our own area," he says.

"The thing I like best about this northern area is that it is so well situated for ruminant livestock production — sheep and cattle. Grass grows very well. We are north of the 49th parallel so the days in the summer are very long. It stays fairly cool so it's not unusual to have single-digit temperatures at night all summer, with daytime temperatures in the low 20s. The grass stays vegetative for a very long time, with many good cool season species," he explains.

"It's a little wetter here than what I was used to, but the moisture is welcomed, for our grass.

"The clay soils are a bit of a challenge, but it's more just a learning curve for me because it's good ground to work with. It holds moisture longer, but if we do get into some dry weather it also takes longer to get wet again," he says.

The other challenge was being a long way from most of their suppliers.

"Our closest suppliers — equipment dealerships, grain, fertilizer, etc. — are four hours away. We were used to going to grab parts and supplies just an hour away. But the dealerships here are well versed in accommodating us, whether sending parts on the bus or some other way to get them to us as soon as they can," he says. It just takes more planning.

"Kapuskasing, the community near us, has 10,000 people and is well serviced for a community of that size. There's a lot of mining and forestry here and we use a lot of the same service providers for basic parts. I don't use John Deere filters in my John Deere tractors; we buy filters through the local supplier and adapt them to work. If it's something we know is not available locally we make sure we order it ahead of time."

His cow-calf herd consists of 200 cows, mostly Angus and Angus cross. The herd is mostly Black Angus with a few Reds and some mixed breeds. About half the calves are backgrounded and sold as yearling stockers.

"We finish the other half and direct sell them as beef here at the farm through Kapaskusing Meats, which is a company we started here a year ago." It's been very well received by the community and surrounding region. This area is underserviced in terms of food products, so this was an opportunity to supply locally raised meat.

"We also raise sheep and milk them for the cheese plant here in town. Our flock produces milk, lamb and wool. We milk seasonally. We also have a few Berkshire sows and raise pork for our own store. We do chickens in the summer, and market those through our meat company as well," he says.

"We've been referred to as pioneers, but we're not the only people who are farming here. People have tried to farm this region for a long time. It's one of the largest agriculturally farmable areas in North America that is not yet being farmed."

There are some drawbacks when it comes to raising crops, however.

There are fewer than 100 frost-free days annually which puts severe limitations on what can be grown.

"Our primary focus is ruminant livestock and forage production," says Gordanier. "I do grow some oats and barley for silage. It doesn't matter if it freezes too early to harvest as grain. We had hard frost this year on the 13th of August, which would put the kibosh on most crops."

He sees a real opportunity for livestock in this region largely because of the amount of land that is available combined with a climate that is well suited to producing beef on plentiful grass.

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By Reynold Bergen

PASTURE BLENDS

Most forage seed companies offer a pasture blend. Some customize their blend to the customer's situation, but others use a least-cost formulation to produce a more attractively priced blend. Ideally, the blend should contain grasses and legumes that grow well together, are well adapted to the environment and soil type they will be seeded in, will tolerate grazing, and produce good animal performance. Seed companies often don't have all the information they need to formulate these ideal blends. As one example, forage breeding plots are typically far too small to graze, so forage yield is evaluated using a plot harvester. This means that forage varieties are being selected for their ability to produce and recover from mechanical harvesting rather than grazing. Forage improvement programs that integrate the breeding, agronomics, and grazing management research programs to gather the data needed to develop effective pasture blends take a long time and are very costly.

To help address this issue, the Beef Science Cluster has been supporting research led by Dr. Yousef Papadopoulos at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Experimental Farm in Nappan, N.S. Part of this research program is examining long-term trends in forage yields, nutritional value, animal performance and species composition of complex grass-legume blends.

What they did: Four different combinations of timothy, meadow fescue, reed canarygrass, Kentucky bluegrass, tall fescue, meadow brome, and orchardgrass were seeded with either birdsfoot trefoil or alfalfa in the spring of 2010.

The grass-legume paddocks were rotationally grazed from May through October starting in 2011 through 2016. Grazing began when forage was at least 25 cm high, and allowed to recover until it was 25 cm tall again. Depending on rainfall and temperature, cattle were cycled through each paddock two to seven times per grazing season. Small sections were clipped before each grazing cycle began to estimate forage yield and quality (e.g. total digestible nutrients, fibre, crude protein, sugars). The proportion of grasses and legumes was also determined at least twice per grazing cycle.

What they learned: Five full grazing seasons at Nappan have been completed. Generally speaking, the legume that was included in the blend had a much greater impact on forage yields, forage quality and animal performance than the specific grasses in the blend.

Average forage yields between 2011 and 2016 averaged 10 to 20 per cent higher for the seed blends that included alfalfa as the legume than for those that included birdsfoot trefoil. In terms of forage quality, crude protein averaged 18 to 25 per cent higher and total digestible nutrients averaged three to four per cent higher for the blends that contained alfalfa than for those that included birdsfoot trefoil. The ratio of sugars to crude protein averaged 50 to 78 per cent higher for blends that contained birdsfoot trefoil than for those that contained alfalfa.

In contrast, average animal performance between 2011 and 2016 was better on the blends that contained birdsfoot trefoil than for those that contained alfalfa. Daily gains on the birdsfoot trefoil stands averaged two to six per cent higher, adding up to 30 to 44 per cent greater total animal gains per acre over the grazing season. The researchers attributed this to the higher sugar:protein ratio on the birdsfoot trefoil blends, suspecting that rumen bacteria may digest and synthesize protein more efficiently when a readily digestible sugar is available. Birdsfoot trefoil also contains condensed tannins, which may reduce protein digestion in the rumen. Having that protein digested in the small intestine instead of by the rumen bacteria may contribute to more efficient animal growth.

Legume persistence: Initially, all of the forage stands contained 25 to 30 per cent legume, but the alfalfa and birdsfoot trefoil had virtually disappeared from all of the stands by the fifth year of grazing. Not surprisingly, forage yields fell by 20 to 30 per cent as the legumes dwindled. Because the legume component of the forage blends appeared to explain most of the differences in forage yield and animal performance outlined above, it's not surprising that differences in forage yields and animal performance between the blends that contained alfalfa and birdsfoot trefoil were also much smaller by year five.

What it means: If you're in Nappan and want a seed blend for grazing, consider one that contains birdsfoot trefoil. If you're growing hay to sell by the ton, a blend containing alfalfa may be a better choice. But some of the growing season length, soil pH, moisture, and temperature conditions that are common in Nappan don't represent conditions elsewhere in Canada. In fact, this trial originally had additional AAFC sites in Kapuskasing Ont., and Brandon Man., until those sites were shuttered in 2012 and 2013. That's unfortunate, because the legume and grass blends used in this study at Nappan would probably rank differently in other locations. That emphasizes the importance of having regionally appropriate research and extension activities throughout Canada to develop forage establishment, management, and grazing strategies that will optimize beef production per acre while finding ways to maintain or re-establish legumes in older mixed grass stands.

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 the research director of the Beef Cattle Research Council.

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By Lois Harris

IMPROVING TRACEABILITY KEY TO HIGHER PROFITS

More feedback needed to build better herds

Dave Milliner thinks the upcoming changes to federal regulations on livestock traceability are good but don't go far enough.

He contends that much more could be done in the beef industry to improve the quality of the meat, the productivity of the animals, returns for farmers and choices for consumers.

"There's no feedback loop — sure there's a connection between the feedlot and the harvest plant, but there's no connection back to the backgrounder or cow-calf operator," he says.

Milliner is one of those cow-calf operators, raising purebred Simmentals in the Dundalk area of Grey County, Ont. He's also on the board of directors of the Ontario Simmental Association and president of BIO, a producer organization that makes and sells a web-based livestock management system that provides genetic evaluations and performance reporting on individual animals and across breeds. He's also the chief administrative officer for the Township of Southgate.

"We need a circle of improvement," he says. "If we could make a circle, I think, in the end, the consumer would be better served, the feedlots would get better cattle and there'd be more money in it for everyone."

In essence, Milliner thinks that the system could be used to increase the competitiveness of the Canadian beef industry, as well as protect animal health, public health and food safety, which is what the current regulations are designed to do.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has proposed changes to the Health of Animals Act regulations that include mandatory animal identification and movement reporting requirements for cattle, bison, sheep, pigs, goats and cervids (deer and elk). There have already been two rounds of consultations on these amendments in 2013 and 2015 with commodity groups, the provinces and other interested organizations. They will be pre-published for public comment for 75 days in spring 2018.

Dave Milliner

Milliner is convinced more could be done with the traceability system.

"A disruptive decision has to be made," he says, noting that it would be an easy change because the information is already being collected — it's just a matter of facilitating it and allowing it to flow through the system.

One barrier, as he sees it, is around information privacy, to which he says data on marbling in a cow, for example, shouldn't be deemed private. A second problem is that people are afraid to pay more for good cattle. But, he reiterates, producing better cattle that command better prices throughout the system will mean more money for all.

Milliner is the third generation on his farm, which he took over from his father in 1992. He owns 200 acres and rents another 200.

His father switched from Herefords to Simmentals while Milliner was in college because of the better breed performance. Depending on the time of year, he has between 80 and 120 animals, usually around 90 cows and 15 to 20 bulls. He keeps the heifers and sells them when they're bred. In late November, he had just sold 20 head of heifers and three bulls at the Marywood Classic sale in Listowel.

Most of his land is in hay, with 30 to 40 acres in mixed grains to feed the bred heifers.

Milliner sells into the commercial market and keeps comprehensive records on how each animal is performing. He scans all his cattle and gets ultrasound results so he knows what's under the hide.

"We've always focused on meat quality," he says, adding that he selects for the rib-eye area and marbling.

Over the years, the size of his cattle has definitely come down. In 2002, he had the Grand Champion female at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. But attitudes change, and while he says it's nice to have pretty pictures of fat cattle at the fair, "pretty pictures don't work on the farm."

Milliner got involved in BIO because of his longstanding interest in genetic improvement. BIO, a not-for-profit producer cooperative, has grown from focusing strictly on beef genetic improvement in Ontario to providing a web-based livestock management system called bioTRACK that's marketed around the world.

He pulls out the bioTRACK genetic score card of one heifer he recently bought out west and rattles off a whole range of numbers: she's in the top 45 per cent of the breed for calving ease, top 40 per cent for birth weight, top 15 per cent for weaning gain and the top 15 per cent for yearling gain. She's in the top 20 per cent for carcass weight and top 45 per cent for the rib-eye area and top 50 per cent for fat and top 75 per cent for marbling.

"What that tells me is how she's doing inside the breed," he says. "Then we also get cross-breed comparisons."

The same heifer has a BIO dollar value of $4,182 and, across breeds, is in the top 12 per cent for genetic improvement, top two per cent for post-weaning gain and top five per cent for yearling gain. There are also scores for rib-eye, marbling, rib fat and rump fat.

He says that while he knows farmers are hard workers, not many like record-keeping, and bioTRACK makes that part of the job easier. In fact, with the introduction of blue-tooth technology in the new year, he says, keeping track will be easier than ever, and can be done right in the field.

Continued on page 34

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Continued from page 32

In terms of how traceability should work for the beef industry, Milliner feels that the best place to make improvements is at the cow-calf level, since that's where the conception decisions are made. His idea is to get into feed trials and genetic evaluations.

"If you can remove a half-pound of feed per pound of gain, that's a lot of savings," he says. "Feed efficiency is a huge thing that we could benefit from as an industry."

He knows there would be logistical challenges. The beef cycle is 18 months to two years, versus six weeks for poultry, for example. There's a lot more animal movement in the beef industry, a lot more people involved in raising the animals, and a lot more commingling of herds.

But Milliner argues that given the millions of dollars that farmers are already spending every year on RFID ear tags, there ought to be a way to leverage more information from the system for genetic improvement.

"It's like a friend of mine says, when you buy a car, you don't just look at the outside, you have to look under the hood," he says. "With ultrasound results, we should be able to look under the hide of a cow we're buying."

He wants to know how the cattle he buys perform in terms of fat versus marbling, and points out that "we're selling meat, not fat."

Milliner says that, ultimately, improving beef quality would make the meat more attractive as a protein choice for consumers both in Canada and around the world.

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By Dr. Ron Clarke

LAPSES IN BIOSECURITY CREATE LONG-STANDING RISKS

Salmonella bacteria have been isolated from nearly all vertebrates, and infections have been associated with both animal and human disease. Not uncommonly, foods of animal origin have been implicated as the source of human illness caused by salmonella. Typical signs of salmonella infection in cattle and humans include fever and diarrhea. Severe cases can result in death.

Shedding of salmonella bacteria in both beef and dairy cattle often occurs in the absence of clinical signs — sometimes for extended periods. Once infections are established, treatment and elimination of infection is often difficult. Latent (subclinical) infections often become evident during periods of stress, like calving season.

Salmonellosis in humans is typically self-limiting and most people recover within one week, but they too can become asymptomatic carriers, excreting large numbers of bacteria in their feces and contaminating food and water sources. What first appears as a simple, perhaps unusual event in the calving barn, may be the precursor to a major disease outbreak affecting both humans and animals.

Salmonella organisms spread directly from contaminated surfaces and instruments, from an infected animal or human, or through food. Food contamination is not limited to products of animal origin. For example, fruits and vegetables irrigated with contaminated water are important sources of salmonella, if not washed properly or cooked prior to consumption.

Salmonella resistance to antimicrobials is a serious concern in severe infections when they are called for. Multi-drug resistance complicates and narrows treatment options.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) conducted the Beef 2007-08 study, capturing information on beef cow-calf health and management practices in 24 states representing nearly 90 per cent of U.S. beef cows. The 2007-08 study paralleled a similar survey from 1997. Approximately, 10 per cent of the herds had at least one positive cow. Nearly one per cent of animals tested were shedding salmonella. The results suggest that salmonella, though not very common in beef cow-calf operations, exist undetected on a significant number of farms.

Biosecurity remains the single most important tool in reducing the risk of salmonella and other important calving shed zoonoses from gaining a foothold.

In September 2012, nearly 50 people in nine states became ill from eating ground beef tainted with salmonella enteritidis, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In 2013, salmonella typhimurium in ground beef was linked to more than 20 human illnesses in six states.

DRUG-RESISTANT STRAINS

Through 2016 and 2017, CDC, state governments, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS) investigated a multi-state outbreak of multi-drug-resistant salmonella Heidelberg infections. A total of 54 people infected with outbreak strains of Salmonella Heidelberg were reported from 15 states. Thirty-five per cent of those infected required hospitalization. Thirty-three per cent of people involved were children under the age of five. No deaths were reported.

Epidemiologic and laboratory investigations linked ill people in this outbreak to contact with calves, including dairy calves. Ongoing surveillance in veterinary diagnostic laboratories showed that calves in several states continue to get sick with the outbreak strains of multi-drug resistant salmonella.

Information collected earlier in the outbreak indicated that a majority of calves came from Wisconsin. Investigation on new cases continues. Antibiotic resistance testing conducted by CDC on clinical isolates from ill people show that isolates were highly resistant to a broad spectrum of antimicrobials.

Through the years, salmonella outbreaks in Canadian beef and dairy herds have been reported. A 2003 Alberta study in dairy herds found the prevalence of salmonella similar to that found in the U.S.

Raw or undercooked poultry account for a large percentage of salmonella outbreaks in Canada.

Salmonella bacteria are found naturally in the intestines of domestic animals, reptiles and birds. The bacteria are most-often transmitted to people through contaminated foods or by handling animals shedding the organism. Contaminated foods often come from animal sources, like poultry, beef, milk or eggs, but also include fruits, vegetables, and herbs.

"It was always our working assumption that E. coli interventions [for cattle] should be controlling salmonella," said James Marsden, a professor of animal science at Kansas State University. "E. coli is transferred from the beef hide to the carcass and works its way through the system. We thought this is what salmonella did as well. The incidences of E. coli have dropped sharply over the past 10 years, but salmonella isn't dropping, which is perplexing," Marsden added. "And some strains of salmonella that have been observed in beef are drug-resistant strains, so they pose a public health problem."

Researchers at Texas Tech University now believe that, unlike E. coli, salmonella resides in the lymphatic system of cattle. "In 2010, the industry was in a position to start asking questions," said Guy Loneragan, professor of animal science and lead researcher at Texas Tech University. "We started looking at the lymph nodes, which are internal and exempt from current prevention techniques."

An August 2013 article published by the *Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting* by Sam Robinson, as part of a series titled "Cracks in the System," called salmonella-tainted ground beef a major challenge facing the industry. Scientists have realized they may have misidentified the source of salmonella in beef cattle.

They now realize it may be in the lymphatic system of cattle, making it harder to prevent than E. coli.

Basic biosecurity precautions when working with livestock involve:

- Washing your hands thoroughly with soap and water after touching or treating livestock, handling equipment, or leaving

areas where animals are housed. Adults should supervise handwashing for young children. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.
- Do not eat or drink in the areas where livestock are handled.
- Do not allow toys, pacifiers, spill-proof cups, baby bottles, strollers, or similar items in livestock areas.
- Use dedicated clothes, shoes, and work gloves when working with livestock.
- Keep and store these items in a separate area.

Biosecurity precautions are especially important in households with children under age five and around people with compromised immune systems.

Work with your veterinarian to develop animal health and biosecurity protocols.

Suspect salmonella cases involving adult cattle, or beef and dairy calves, especially those associated with human illness, should be reported to provincial government animal health or public health agencies. Salmonellosis is a notifiable/reportable disease in many provinces.

In the case of suspect salmonella infection, fecal samples are typically collected and submitted to a provincial or university veterinary diagnostic laboratory for culturing and pulsed-field gel electrophoresis (PFGE) testing.

Clients should talk to their veterinarian about reducing the risk of transmission of salmonella and other zoonotic diseases from livestock to their family.

Follow good food-handling practices (keep raw food away from other food while shopping, storing, preparing and serving foods; wash fresh fruits and vegetables before eating them, clean counters and cutting boards and wash hands regularly).

Keep pets away from food storage and preparation areas. Wash your hands well with soap and water after handling pet treats, pet food and pet toys, or after playing with or cleaning up after your pet.

Dr. Ron Clarke is a consulting veterinarian living in Alberta.

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THE OFF-FARM JOB

When I came out of high school, many years ago, I was under the impression that if I wanted to farm, I would need to have an off-farm job.

I am not sure how that message was instilled in me as my father did not have one when he farmed. I guess I was told enough that it was just the new norm that a farm needed a good paying job to make it viable. It was not until years later that I took the Ranching for Profit school, that I realized that this is not true.

I remember quite clearly the statement from Dave Pratt, "You never hear of someone having an off-mini-mart job." So why is it that we are expected to have an off-farm job?

I also remember how Dave explained the four ways that farms are subsidized. Off-farm work is one. Unpaid labour, government subsidy and appreciating land value are the other three.

I would highly recommend to anyone to attend the Ranching for Profit school to learn more about those.

Why is it that we need to subsidize our farms? I think it is because we do not understand our margins.

In my father's days of farming, bankers were happier if you only worked on farm. Having an off-farm job was a risk factor. Then that switched to bankers wanting to make sure you had another job to finance anything you purchase. I have also been through a time more recently when our smaller sector of sustainable agriculture producers would criticize you for having an off-farm job or even your wife having a job in town. Even some of the more positive-minded producers in our sector would get critical.

First let me clarify my opinion of the off-farm job. I am not for or against them. It doesn't matter what it is but if you have an off-farm job, I would just like to make sure that it is not subsidizing your farm. And don't take this too literally. I understand from experience that to get any business up and running, you might need to put in some blood, sweat and tears, and maybe some money from another source.

Every year is different, too. We have good years and bad years but in the end, our farms are businesses and they need to be treated like one.

The late Allan Nation had a great way to look at building a business. It is like raising a child. They start out as infants that require constant supervision and care. You change a lot of dirty diapers to begin with. Then the business matures into a child where you can back off and let them play but you need to be there to correct them when they go off track. Then your business becomes a teenager. You need to give them some responsibility to see if they can grow on their own. They might need to go through some hard times but you are still there to help out if needed. Finally, they become an adult and your business should be able to survive without you.

If you have instilled the proper morals, values and life skills, you should have a viable business with little supervision. Farm businesses are no different, but why then do they need an off-farm job?

As an example, let us assume that your household requires $60,000 of income. Either one person could have a job that pays $60,000 or two people could work to get a combined income of $60,000 to support the household.

Now let's look at this on a farm. If the farm can only generate $40,000 in wages to be paid out, then there is a shortfall of $20,000 that will be needed to support one household. If you cannot expand or develop another viable profit centre, someone will need to work off-farm to bring in the $20,000. As long as there is no "unpaid labour" planned in this scenario, I am perfectly okay with this. Maybe there are two households that need to be supported on the farm but the farm can only generate enough to pay wages for one. Somehow, the shortfall will need to be made up by one or more of the parties involved to survive. There is nothing wrong with having another source of income.

Where I have a problem is when the farm loses $10,000 each year and my off-farm income now needs to bring in $70,000 for my household to receive the needed $60,000. My off-farm job is now subsidizing my farm.

I also don't want to have my farm paying me $60,000 worth of wages but I am putting in $80,000 worth of labour. Unpaid labour is another subsidy.

I despise the term "unpaid labour," but I will be the first to admit that I have done it. I just don't want to plan for it.

I have described the gross margin analysis numerous times before but I will emphasize again the importance of understanding your numbers. When you know the margins of all of your profit centres, you can make good decisions. One of those might be to have an off-farm job, or not. Don't let anyone else tell you what you should or should not do on your farm. They don't know your business. Knowing your business is your "on-farm job."

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

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By Roy Lewis DVM

TREAT INDIVIDUAL COWS TO RAISE THE REPRODUCTIVE RATE

As herds get bigger and electronic ID tags get used more for record-keeping, more attention can be given to individual cow medicine. We can learn lots from our colleagues in dairy production about looking after individual cows. Health and fertility go hand in hand. If by paying attention and potentially treating cows with everything from inappetance to mild uterine infection, you increase the chances of them conceiving when they are supposed to in the breeding season.

As we all know, lots of things need to be in order to get cows through calving to breeding again within 60-90 days. By utilizing good observational skills, record-keeping and a plan to examine and potentially treat or supplement these cows the results could be higher conception rates overall. A list of cows to closely examine after calving and at least a couple of weeks before breeding needs to be made and the time set aside to work on these cows. The list of cows should include but not be limited to cows that twinned, had an assisted calving, prolapsed uterus, fetotomy, retained placenta or uterine discharge. It should also include any that are low in body condition score, were treated for metabolic diseases such as milk fever, have bloody urine, a swollen udder or generally appear off. If their calf is doing poorly from possibly not enough milk an examination is in order. Lameness is caused by pain so any painful condition needs to be treated, as body condition will be run down. Pain also leads to high cortisol levels that have a negative effect on fertility.

As you can see this may become a large list, but if a clinical examination leads to a more specific diagnosis, the treatment your veterinarian prescribes may be the answer to improved performance. Not only could milk production go up and the calf do better, a cow on a rising plane of nutrition is much more likely to conceive when bred.

The calving-related issues and retained placentas that cause your veterinarian to palpate the cow may determine whether an endometritis or endometriosis is present. From there treatment could run from intrautuerine infusion to antibiotics systemically to short cycling the cow and bringing her into heat to cleanse the uterus. These variables depend on the veterinarian's choice and the severity of the infection.

I once followed a herd that experienced a high twinning rate. The conception rate was good in the herd overall but only 50

per cent in the cows which had twins. In today's beef herds with good nutrition, twinning (because the calves are born early or a bit premature) often result in a retained placenta. It is a fact of life but managing these highly fertile cows will hopefully keep more of them in your herd. Hard dystocias or premature births also increase the retained placenta rate. These cows should *all* be recorded and examined at a later date.

The first sign of many conditions that is most obvious to many people is weight loss. If a large number of cows are experiencing this then nutrition or parasites may be the culprit. Individual cows may have individual ailments.

Ones such as kidney infection, peritonitis or wooden tongue may be treatable and can be cured. If the cow recovers body condition in time they may conceive. Early intervention and the correct diagnosis and treatment in these cases can retain these cows.

With others such as severe mastitis, Johne's disease or chronic pneumonia, early diagnosis may allow you to ship them early enough to gain the salvage value.

By knowing your herd, your veterinarian will know the expected prognosis, recovery rate and whether reoccurrence is a possibility.

Keep in mind older cows start losing teeth and dentition could be the cause of the weight loss. It might be better if they are not rebred. Even if they conceive, the condition could significantly worsen by the following year.

With later-calving cows, retained placenta or hard pulls, palpation before breeding season can assess the potential of bringing them into heat with prostaglandins. With palpation your veterinarian can determine if cycling is starting to occur and if there is any rudimentary infection present in the uterus. From there the cow may be infused with appropriate approved antibiotics directly into the uterus. There may be a need for systemic antibiotics in some cases and the prostaglandin should bring the cow into heat. Cycling is a cleansing process so we are simply upping the odds this cow or heifer will conceive.

Many producers want to increase their herds. Raising replacements is one way but it is costly. Another is to drive up the pregnancy in your herd by attending to the health of the uterus.

Breeding for twins is another but we all know twins, if both are sucking, pull down the body condition of the cow so putting some effort into cross adopting these cows may also lead to higher pregnancy rates.

There are a lot of things to consider but some attention paid to this group of cows after calving and a couple weeks before breeding may yield real benefits. Some uterine infusions can even be given hours after breeding so that by the time the fertilized egg gets back to the uterus at day seven the infection is cleared up. If some attention is paid to examining and treating problems or weight loss before breeding, the result could be more pregnancies. Cases not worth pursuing will also be identified.

Here's to another successful calving season.

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

By Steve Kay

LOWER CATTLE PRICES ARE COMING

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

Cattle feeders in Canada and the U.S. enjoyed a much more profitable 2017 than expected, in large part due to strong beef demand in North America and globally. They will again rely on strong demand and no disruption to the NAFTA provisions for beef and cattle trade because U.S. slaughter levels and beef production will increase again this year over last.

That's why U.S. analysts I canvassed at the start of January all forecast fed steer and heifer prices several dollars lower than average in 2017. In fact, prices for all classes of beef cattle will ease this year as the ongoing increase in the U.S. calf crop continues to put more cattle into the market channels.

Price forecasts that I gathered from five industry analysts and from USDA are for fed cattle prices this year to average close to US$116 per cwt live. Prices will be highest in the first half of the year and be at their lowest in the third quarter.

A US$116 average would go against an average price (five-area steer) of US$121.74 live in 2017 or US$190.79 dressed. This was well above early forecasts of US$110-$113 per cwt and was even above 2016's average price of US$119.58. Remarkably, the price strength came despite steer and heifer slaughter being up just over five per cent from 2016.

Steer and heifer slaughter this year is expected to increase by 2.5 per cent over last year. One forecast of a kill of 26.1 million head would make it the largest such kill since 2011. Thus it seems more likely that live cattle prices will be lower than last year. Possibly the only way they might match last year's averages is for beef demand to be as strong as it was in 2017 or even stronger. As in other years of increases in cattle supplies, demand will again determine cattle prices.

Competing meats will also be a factor. This year will see U.S. beef production up nearly five per cent from 2017, versus a 3.8 per cent increase in 2017 from 2016. The extra beef will add to a total red meat and poultry supply of 103.5 billion pounds, with pork production up 5.3 per cent over 2017 and broiler production up 1.8 per cent. If realized, the total would be up 3.4 per cent from 2017's total, which was up 2.6 per cent from 2016's. Americans will each consume an estimated 222.2 pounds of red meat and poultry this year, versus 216.9 pounds in 2017, according to latest USDA forecasts. The per capita figure will surpass a 2004 record.

The biggest challenge on the supply side of the U.S. market this year will be for cattle feeders to keep selling cattle aggressively to minimize the larger supply coming from now into the summer. December's Cattle on Feed Report was bearish in terms of numbers and reinforced the fact that marketings must accelerate. The December 1 COF total was eight per cent higher than a year ago and was the largest December 1 total since 2011. Moreover, the January 1 COF total was likely up nearly nine per cent over the prior year.

Steer and heifer carcass weights remain a big concern. The best-ever feeding conditions last summer and fall meant cattle performed at record levels. Steer and heifer carcass weights thus advanced late year contra-seasonally for five weeks in a row to be at record levels for that time of year. Carcass weights are now declining. But analysts say the later seasonal top means they will likely decline at a slower rate than normal into the spring. So the first quarter might produce more beef than expected.

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COLD AND ABOMASAL IMPACTION

Beef cattle on the Canadian Prairies are subject to considerable environmental stress during winter. Starting with the early days of ranching and arrival of U.S. cattle onto the eastern slopes of the Rockies through the mid-1800s, survival of the beef cow meant adaptation to prolonged cold temperatures. Cold and the groundless belief that cattle could survive on low energy forage salvaged from beneath snow banks ultimately brought many of the "great" ranches to their knees. Up to half the herds died through tough winters and reproductive rates were abysmal. Though most beef breeds adapted to our climate, survival of the modern cow through blizzards and extreme cold without adequate feed remains tentative. Animals in good body condition with access to shelter or windbreaks can withstand acute and prolonged cold stress. Paying attention to lower critical threshold temperature (LCT) and the digestible energy of feedstuffs prevents one of the pregnant beef cow's greatest enemies: abomasal impaction.

Impaction of the abomasum develops in pregnant beef cows during cold winter months when cattle have decreased water intake and are fed poor-quality roughage. Impaction with sand can occur if cattle are fed hay or silage on sandy soils, or root crops that are sandy or dirty.

Without wind, the low critical threshold (LCT) temperature for most beef cattle on the Prairies is -20 C. During cold, windy or wet weather when temperatures fall below -20 C, heat production of the animal must increase immediately to prevent a drop in body temperature. This means eating more or eating forage/grain with higher energy content. Rain, melting snow, or wind significantly increases environmental coldness For example, a -5 C temperature with 40 km/hour winds is equivalent to -20 C with no wind.

Weight, condition and energy intake change the LCT. Dairy cows and feedlot cattle on high grain rations have a very low LCT (-30 C to -45 C) because of their high feed intake and metabolic rate. The LCT for pregnant beef cows, dry dairy cows and growing calves, in good body condition, is between -10 C and -25 C. Young calves, from birth to three weeks of age, have a LCT of +13 C. Dairy calves from three weeks old to weaning have a LCT of +1 C.

Animals in good body condition are better able to tolerate extreme cold. For example, thin cows with a BCS of 1-2 have a LCT of -17 C while cows in good condition with a BCS of 3 have a LCT of close to -25 C. This is another good reason for feeding thin cows separately from the rest of the herd. Providing a wind break and/or shelter, ensuring cattle have good body fat stores and feeding additional energy (i.e. grain) will help all cattle survive acute cold stress with a minimum of suffering and long-term effects.

The major effect of cold on nutrient requirements of cows is increased need for energy. During periods of extreme cold, the pregnant cow is under considerable stress. She eats to satisfy energy needs. While access to shelter and water play a role, the critical factor of enduring winter extremes is high-quality forage and grain. Consumption of excess roughage low in digestible protein and energy leads to impaction of the abomasum or fourth stomach. Abomasal impaction develops slowly. By the time clinical signs are noticed, cows are often beyond help. Outbreaks may affect 15 per cent of pregnant cattle on individual farms.

Cows with abomasal impaction stop eating, pass little or no feces, lose weight, become dehydrated and appear weak. Often, the abdomen of affected cattle when observed from behind appears full, but the distension caused by either the accumulation of dry contents or fluid in the rumen (main stomach) is deceptive. Typically, animals die over a period of three to six days. Sudden death due to rupture of the stomach wall and overwhelming infection is not uncommon. Moderate to severe dehydration develops, because fluids do not move beyond the abomasum into the small intestine where they are normally absorbed.

A general rule: for every 10 degrees below -20 C at midday, beef cows require an additional four to six Mcals of digestible energy (DE). Barley contains 1.5 Mcals DE per pound, so adding three to four pounds of barley to the cow's ration during cold stress would meet the additional needs.

When the temperature drops and remains below the thermoneutral, or comfort, zone (15 C to 20 C), other adaptive changes occur. Hair coat becomes thicker and longer. The metabolic rate increases. Feed intake can increase by up to 30 per cent. Digestibility of forages is reduced in cold weather (cattle are getting less energy from a given amount of feed). Energy requirements increase approximately 10 per cent for every 10 degree drop in effective temperature below the comfort zone. In meeting increased energy requirements cows in good condition can increase daily consumption of good-quality hay by about 10 pounds maximum. Beyond this, additional energy must be supplied as grain.

Clinical diagnosis of dietary abomasal impaction is based on the nutritional history, clinical evidence of impaction, and laboratory results. Individual cases of abomasal impaction in late pregnancy sometimes appear as a complication of hardware disease.

The challenge is to recognize the cases of dietary abomasal impaction that will respond to treatment and those that will not. Animals may be salvageable; many are not. Treatment is seldom successful and requires intravenous fluids, laxatives and often abdominal surgery. Induction of calving may be warranted if parturition is within two weeks.

The nutrient requirements of beef cattle (see *Nutritional Requirements of Beef Cattle*) are guidelines for use under average conditions. Higher nutrient levels than those indicated may be necessary, particularly during periods of severe cold stress. Adequate fresh drinking water should be supplied at all times; the practice of forcing wintering cows to obtain their water requirements by eating snow while on low-quality roughage is hazardous.

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

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Canadian Cattlemen THE BEEF MAGAZINE

LEADERSHIP REQUIRED FOR NON-AMBULATORY ANIMALS

These factors drive producer decisions on critical animal care

The world often judges a community by the way that community treats its most vulnerable. It's that way with people and it's that way with animals.

In today's media-driven world most people have seen examples of injured or incapacitated animals showcased to make a point or promote a cause. Starving polar bears, rescued puppies, injured wildlife, and yes, farm animals. It is an image that needs to be in the back of every beef producer's mind as they go about their work.

Non-ambulatory is not terminology that crops up often in everyday life. But it is a word that the public can quickly get to know. How non-ambulatory animals are handled is absolutely critical to the beef industry's image. It also can affect Canada's sustainable beef brand.

KNOW THE DEFINITION

The starting point for any action or discussion is the definition of the term. The Verified Beef Production Plus (VBP+) program considers an animal non-ambulatory or seriously injured if it is unable to stand up, to remain standing or walk without assistance.

Animals in this condition require immediate care, or they must be euthanized.

Non-ambulatory animals fall into three categories: conscious and alert, depressed and/or not struggling, or animals under treatment or identified as having poor performance that can become non-ambulatory.

FOLLOW THE TREE

VBP+ has developed a "decision tree," suggested guidelines for each of those situations that producers can easily follow.

The first situation is perhaps the most obvious: animals in distress. But the tree also gives clear instructions and timelines for producers to methodically work their way through what they are seeing and decide on appropriate action for each of the three handling categories.

Two other key areas are also explained. One is how to move non-ambulatory animals; the second is accepted methods of euthanasia.

On handling, never drag a non-ambulatory animal by any body part except in the rare situations where the animal's life is threatened. On euthanasia three options are laid out, which should be done in a timely manner by competent personnel.

UNDERSTAND LAMENESS

One situation cattle producers face frequently is some sort of lameness in animals. Some of these conditions are sudden and short-lived, some are chronic. Some are solved relatively easily, others will require veterinarian assistance. Some may require euthanasia.

The beef industry is very aware of the need to manage lameness in animals. And VBP+ has developed resources to help producers identify and manage the most common causes of lameness.

HELP IS AVAILABLE

Each beef producer in Canada is a critical link in the care chain for managing non-ambulatory animals. Often, smaller operations like small feedlots face the toughest challenges, for they must deal with many of the same handling issues as larger operations do with fewer resources to manage them.

A huge part of generating public trust and confidence in all beef production is to be able to clearly show that beef producers and their industry have a plan to handle difficult animal care cases.

The VBP+ program can help producers build that plan. Ask a VBP+ co-ordinator in your province for further resources.

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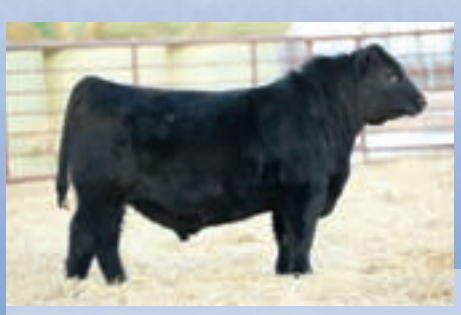

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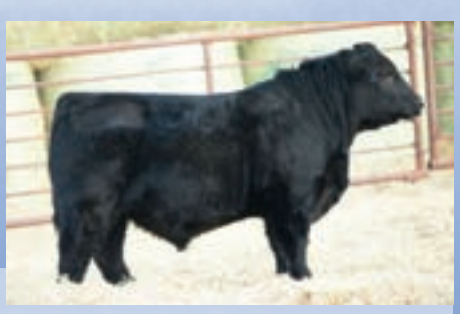

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By Steve Dittmer

BETTER SIGNS FOR NAFTA

In early January some hope for a new and improved NAFTA agreement was buried in the political and media bombast in Washington, D.C. At first glance, the release of the book, *Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House*, had little to do with trade and NAFTA. We were fooled, however, because we knew only some things about Steve Bannon but hadn't really studied the man.

Bannon, a former naval officer, investment banker, political operative and important driving force in conservative/populist media site Breitbart.com, in the words of national economics and politics radio commentator Larry Kudlow, chose the book with which to commit "political suicide." Bannon had served as campaign director, counselor to the president and White House chief strategist. He had claimed to understand and represent the conservative and populist voters disgusted with Democrats and established Republicans. Both Democrats and Republicans tended to exaggerate his power and influence in the campaign and the White House, for opposing reasons. Bannon did not humbly correct either.

While Bannon was fired from the administration in August of 2017, many believed he still unofficially had President Trump's ear. That is until the book came out and Trump was forced to thoroughly repudiate Bannon. Both David French, veteran writer and political observer for *National Review* and Ed Klein, author and avid chronicler of the Clintons, agreed cutting ties with Bannon was the best thing the President could do.

Bannon savaged Trump's family in the book, a sure way to get Trump's everlasting enmity.

Why is all this relevant to us? Because much of the punch behind President Trump's protectionist tendencies came from two people: Bannon and economist Robert Navarro, currently White House director of trade and industrial policy. I've mentioned Navarro before. When a columnist recently asked Navarro to name another economist with his drastic protectionist views, neither Navarro nor the columnist could find one.

While we've had a hard time reconciling Trump's great supply side instincts on growth — cutting tax rates and regulations to boost the economy — with his protectionist and anti-growth trade positions, Bannon's positions were even more puzzling. While he professed to want to help the middle class, he favoured higher taxes and more and higher tariffs, which would hurt the very people he professed he wanted to help. These disparate positions were well known in Washington political circles and on Wall Street. Klein said Bannon's departure was read by many as a return to more rational policies.

Which is why Kudlow credited Bannon's demise to a large degree with the 577 point rise in the Dow the week of the book's leaking and publication. While Kudlow has known Bannon for years and liked him personally, he admits he had lots of friendly disagreements with Bannon over his economic and "fierce" trade protectionist views. He said Bannon was okay with exports — he just didn't want to import anything. He was actually in favour of the Border Adjustment Tax.

Kudlow, by the way, along with free market and pointedly free trade economists Stephen Moore and President Reagan's economic advisor Art Laffer, were the three chief architects of Trump's campaign tax reform plan. Kudlow was repeatedly consulted by the administration and congressional leaders during the legislative efforts to pass the bill.

So President Trump's most influential proponent of trade protectionism is no longer in the White House. Other pressure on Trump continues to ratchet up. Senate Finance Committee members expressed their displeasure with the administration's lack of direction and progress on trade to U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer. They also complained that the administration is not listening to Congress nor updating them on NAFTA negotiations, a legal requirement.

Sen. John Cornyn (R.-Tx.), the number two Republican, from a huge agricultural state, pointed out that NAFTA is a treaty and a renegotiated treaty will need to be ratified by Congress, a key fact the administration seems to be ignoring, ("GOP Frustration Rises with Trump on Trade," *The Hill*, 12/26/17). The leadership is worried that "altering trade relations with Canada and Mexico too drastically could rattle the economy and wipe out the stimulative punch of the tax-cut package."

They are also peeved that the promised quickly negotiated list of bilateral trade deals to replace the TPP and NAFTA has not materialized.

Agriculture is not alone in its interdependence among the three countries. A recent editorial in the *Wall Street Journal* notes the U.S. consumes about six million more barrels of crude oil and related products per day than it produces. Canada and Mexico need the U.S. to buy their excess crude: about three million barrels per day from Canada and 688,000 from Mexico. Canada needs American refineries that specialize in processing its heavy crude, as Mexico needs American refinery capacity ("Free Trade Has Been a Boon for Energy Independence," 1/2/18).

Trump told the American Farm Bureau convention: "We need to export more renewable resources to other countries." I hope that attitude is reflected in the January NAFTA talks in Montreal.

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

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By Brenda Schoepp

DO WE NEED A FRENCH REVOLUTION?

The question of who land belongs to continues to haunt discussions around the world. In my international travels it most certainly was common to discuss not only land ownership but land access. For Canadians, ownership appears to be a given but the reality of land accessibility and ownership is a conversation we need to have.

From a global perspective cattle usage of land and forestry usage of land are nearly equal, each occupying approximately 26.5 per cent of the earths' surface. A review of the top 100 of the world's largest landowner's, supports that their interests are primarily in agriculture and forestry. Barren land accounts for 18 per cent of the land mass, glaciers for 10 per cent, scrub bush accounts for eight per cent, arable acres for seven per cent of the surface, and built-up lands, such as in the Netherlands, account for one per cent. Only one per cent of the global land surface is home to fresh water. From these facts gathered by the World Bank and the FAO, I would offer that when it comes to accessible agricultural land and fresh water to maintain human growth, we have a very small planet.

As mankind is approaching the issue from a linear set of solutions and as arable acres shrink due to development, the added pressure will cause a tipping point. That point may prove to be unsalvageable by science or technology. Regardless of how you want to look at the future, we owe our current and future existence to a beautiful medium called soil and to the rainwater that refreshes it. The loss of biodiversity allowing plants to sequester, regenerate and communicate will likely prove to be extraordinarily underappreciated.

With fewer than five per cent arable acres in Canada, we must carefully consider the reality of Canadian agriculture and its relationship with other industries. And, we must ask ourselves, how we will rejuvenate, own and access this precious resource.

Land ownership is a vague descriptive under Canadian law. In 1763 the Crown Land Patent Act allowed for the ownership of settled land in perpetuity. This was, however, under common law so in reality landowners have the right to tenure. There have been no acts introduced in Canada to amend for the allowance of land ownership. The Municipal Act of 1973 gave regional governments power to control their own land development, which was powerful and needed, but all of these acts are void under common and martial law. In 1987 the Charter of Rights promised the right to enjoyment of property without any mention of actual ownership, despite Canada's commitment to the 1948 Universal Charter of Human Rights which allows for property ownership. Being a federal statute, the Canadian Charter can be overridden by federal acts at any time. Do we or do we not have land ownership? And if so, is that land still in Canadian hands?

Canada remains a colony of the British and the Crown is the official owner of Canadian land. Although there is provision for foreign ownership of land in Canada, much of the investment is from region to region. As an example, multiple provincial individuals, companies and investment groups invested in Saskatchewan farmland to the tune of over 837,000 acres between 2013 and 2014. And although the discussion of heavy investment in farmland from places like Asia and the Middle East have been inspired, there is little evidence to support this. Foreign investment funnelled through Canadian companies with large land holdings, forest blocks, residential development or mining interests is however, alive and well.

With the Queen owning one sixth of the earth's surface, followed by King Abdulla and the Catholic Church, private land ownership by church and state remains an issue of the day. If we, as first Canadians or settled Canadians do not have the right to land ownership, how is it that we can control access, appropriation or successional value? The future political platforms must include actual ownership within Canadian law and protect that ownership under human rights.

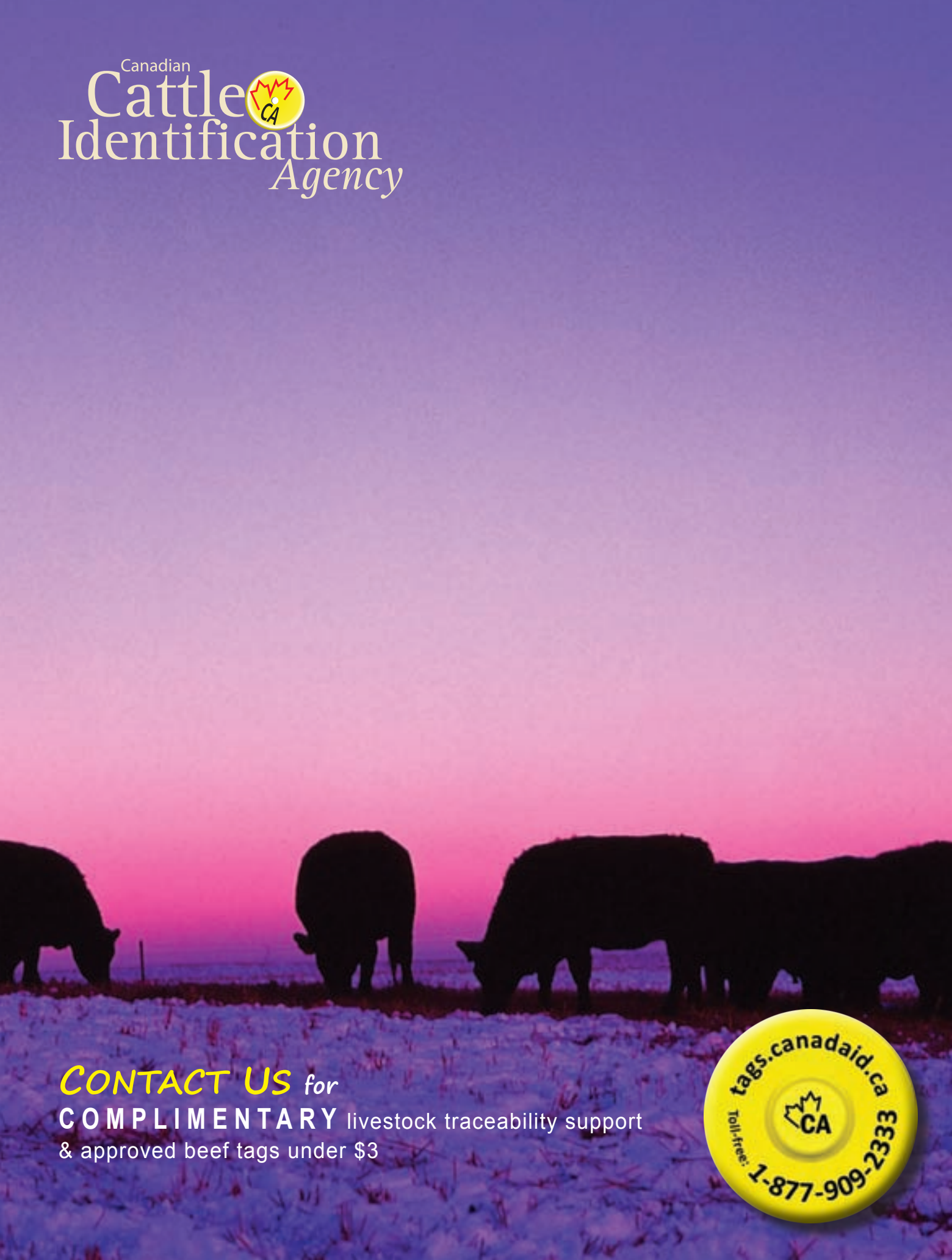
The French Revolution was started by peasants who wanted freedom from tenure held by church and state. We may not need a revolution — or do we? Having a voice on land ownership allows for a concrete discussion of use both on the surface and below it. Unnoticed acts, such as Alberta's Carbon Capture and Storage Statutes Amendment Act passed in 2010, which gives the Crown ownership of all subsoil pore space and everything within it including water, clearly diminishes property rights. There is no provision for compensation.

Access to land surface is in itself a universal challenge. Many farmers around the globe face a reduction in tenure time and 40 per cent of Canadian agricultural leases are short term. Many countries limit land ownership, such as India, which prohibits individuals from owning more than approximately seven acres, thus keeping farmers poor. In other areas of the world, government has redistributed land such as was the case in Argentina. Culture often keeps land in male hands even though it is women who wish to farm and corporate interests worry about land access as it relates to food and mineral supply.

There is so little soil.

Like the French revolutionists, we must take a serious view of land ownership, particularly arable and pastoral lands, as it relates to our future prosperity. More importantly, the rush to trade lumber, minerals, cereal crops and other globalized commodities has pressured this precious land base in an exhaustive manner that is not regenerative. Not only do we need protected rights on land ownership and clarity on access but we also must have a deep appreciation for an ecologically depreciating land base.

Contact Brenda through her website: www.brendaschoepp.com.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By Dan Darling

SPEAKING UP FOR NAFTA

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

Canadian Cattlemen's Association (CCA) leadership travelled to two major agriculture policy conventions in the United States in early January to promote common interests in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and urge progress on regulatory modernization to improve the flow of trade between the two countries.

The advocacy efforts are part of an increasingly vocal effort amongst agricultural producers and rural sectors on both sides of the border to speak up about the myriad benefits of NAFTA. Calls are to renegotiate NAFTA rather than terminate it, which U.S. President Donald Trump has threatened to do.

The meetings occurred weeks ahead of the resumption of the NAFTA modernization and renegotiation process, with the sixth round of formal talks set for Montreal from January 21 to 27, 2018.

CCA vice-president David Haywood-Farmer and staff member John Masswohl attended the American Farm Bureau Federation 2018 convention in Nashville. They attended discussions on the benefits of NAFTA along with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Minister Lawrence MacAulay. The minister had the honour to be the first Canadian agriculture minister to address the American Farm Bureau Federation Convention. His address, to a packed room of U.S. farmers, focused on the interdependence of Canada and the U.S. and a commitment to continue working together.

CCA's executive vice-president Dennis Laycraft attended the State Agriculture and Rural Leaders (SARL) 2018 Legislative Agriculture Chairs Summit in Kansas City. The ag chairs summit brings together senior U.S. state agriculture legislators, provincial ministers, and elected officials representing agricultural and rural issues to collaborate on shared priorities, discuss agriculture policy challenges and to exchange best practices.

The SARL meeting passed a resolution to "support making targeted improvements to NAFTA that build on the enormously successful North American partnership."

The CCA's participation at all rounds of the NAFTA modernization and renegotiation process will continue in 2018.

While it remains unclear whether or when the U.S. might commence procedures to withdraw from NAFTA, CCA's presence, to provide Government of Canada negotiators with expertise and to ensure that the interests of beef producers are advanced in the ongoing talks, will be as necessary as ever.

The negotiations resume following significant progress in 2017 to modernize a range of non-controversial technical issues. However, this positive progress towards modernization has largely been overshadowed by several regressive proposals tabled by the U.S. and subsequently rejected as unacceptable by Canada and Mexico.

Canadian beef producers strongly support retaining the existing NAFTA provisions affecting the beef and cattle trade. The CCA and its U.S. and Mexican beef cattle producer organization counterparts are united in their position that the terms of trade remain unchanged in the renegotiations.

Our united priorities for the beef sector include: continued duty-free and quota-free access for beef and live cattle trade with the NAFTA tariff preference for beef based on the current rule of origin; opposing the return of a trade disrupting mandatory country-of-origin labelling regime; and maintaining dispute settlement mechanisms, both within NAFTA (Chapters 19 and 20) and external dispute settlement tools at the World Trade Organization. Furthermore, we believe it is possible to improve bilateral cattle and beef trade through greater regulatory co-operation and elimination of some obsolete regulatory border requirements.

The CCA is also focused on strategies to manage the risk of U.S. withdrawal from NAFTA. These include ongoing efforts to expand on our trade and market access priorities, including liberalizing trade in the Asia-Pacific through the new Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (aka TPP11), progress in market access expansion and a potential free trade agreement in China, and ensuring the necessary conditions for beef trade to increase in the EU through the Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). We will also work to ensure that if the U.S. does withdraw from NAFTA, that a viable agreement will continue to exist between Canada and Mexico and that our two countries may continue to enjoy duty-free cattle and beef trade, while recognizing the disruptive consequences caused by higher tariffs on our countries' two-way trade in beef and cattle with the U.S.

Cattlemen's Young Leaders (CYL) participants helped share CCA's perspectives on NAFTA at the National Western Stock Show in Denver, Colorado. The CYL program, CCA's flagship youth mentorship program, celebrated its fifth graduating class of young leaders in 2017. CYL is a standout program matching future leaders with industry leaders who serve as their mentors. I am constantly impressed with the calibre of people who enter and compete to be part of the program. Already we are seeing graduates getting actively involved in the provincial associations as delegates and directors. Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association chair Ryan Beierbach is the first of our graduates to be elected chair of one of our member organizations.

The CYL program is accepting applications for 2018 online until March 31, 2018. I encourage you to visit the CYL website to find out more information about how to apply for this valued program experience.

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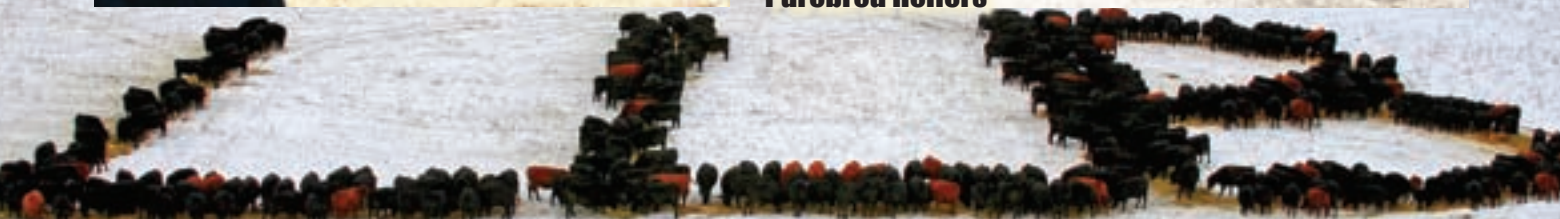

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NewsRoundup

NUTRITION

From calf to calf: Minerals help you get there

By Kristin Thompson and Kathleen Shore

Minerals are an essential part of a nutritionally balanced diet for beef cows. Unfortunately they are also a part of the diet that is overlooked due to the small inclusion rate. Those small inclusions are necessary to keep a cow running efficiently, making her capable of producing healthy, lively calves.

The economics

Minerals, such as calcium, phosphorus, selenium and manganese all play a key role in maintaining herd fertility. When herd reproduction is compromised, the economic losses can be huge. A missed conception causes a loss of 52.5 lbs. per calf for every 21-day heat cycle missed (2.5 lbs. gain/day x 21 days). At a calf selling price of $1.80/lb., that is a loss of $94.50/calf when sold at weaning ($1.80/lb. x 52.5 lbs.). Multiply that by 150 calves and that equals a $14,175 loss. An on-farm mineral program ensures that the cow has everything she needs to stay healthy, digest her nutrition and cycle regularly.

Similarly, if a calf is born in the first

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TABLE 1. MINERALS AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

Macro-minerals	Description	
Calcium	Function · Bone formation and maintenance. · Mobilized in the circulatory system when intakes are adequate.	Deficiency · Poor reproductive performance, reduced milk yield and slow weight gains.
Phosphorus	Function · Formation of bone and a major storage depot of readily available energy.	Deficiency · Reduced animal performance, decreased reproductive performance, low milk production and reduced weight gains.
Magnesium	Function · Enzyme activation and multiple cellular processes.	Deficiency · Grass Tetany — observed in cattle grazing lush forages which are low in Mg. · Anorexia, convulsions, increased blood flow and excessive salivation.
Potassium	Function · Osmotic pressure regulator and essential in normal organ function.	Deficiency · Poor appetite, reduced performance and joint stiffness.
Sulfur	Function · Detoxification agent and an essential component for rumen microbial growth.	Deficiency · Depressed growth, anorexia, emaciation, profuse salivation, and death.
Micro-minerals	**Description**	
Copper	Function · Integrity of the central nervous system and normal red blood cell formation. · Bone structure through collagen and elastin formation.	Deficiency · Anemia, poor performance, heart failure, poor co-ordination, ataxia, and poor hair coat. · Reduced immune response and lameness are often observed in calves.
Zinc	Function · Plays a role in protein and carbohydrate metabolism. · Required for proper immune system function.	Deficiency · Unthriftiness, reduced fertility, excessive salivation, dermatitis, loss of hair and increased susceptibility to infection.
Manganese	Function · Reproductive performance, growth and skeletal development.	Deficiency · Reduced reproductive performance, skeletal malformations, enlarged joints and reduced birth weight of calves.
Selenium	Function · Passes from cow to calf through placenta. Prevention of white muscle disease and weak calves.	Deficiency · Retained placenta, increased disease susceptibility and weak calves.
Iodine	Function · Component of thyroid hormone, which is involved in regulation of energy metabolism.	Deficiency · Classic symptom is an enlarged thyroid gland. · Impaired fertility, retained placenta, weak or stillborn calves and hairlessness in calves.

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21-day cycle, but with low vitality due to inadequate supply of minerals to the dam, that calf will struggle to grow, develop and finish. Extra medication and poor rates of gain means more feed goes into the calf for the same gain as a healthy calf.

Mineral considerations

When it comes to choosing the "right" mineral for your herd there is no one-size-fits-all supplementation program. Macro-minerals are required in large amounts by the animal and have various functions within the body (see Table 1). Micro-minerals or trace minerals, although essential, are required in smaller portions. Every mineral has a role in making an animal more productive, healthier and ultimately more profitable. Minerals work together to create nutritional balance so over or underfeeding one mineral may cause an imbalance in another. If calcium is overfed (limestone) it can actually bind other minerals and make them unavailable — more is not always better. Calcium is also linked to phosphorus so that ratio is very important. The optimal ratio is 1:1 to 4:1. Commercial mineral products are often named according to that ratio (eg. a 2:1 is two parts calciums for every one part phosphorus). Another example is when copper or selenium are overfed — zinc can become deficient. As you can see in Table 1 (page 56) zinc is involved in metabolism, making sure that feed is digested and used by the animal. It also helps support the immune system. A deficiency can lead to having to feed more to the cow to get the same performance and if deficiency is prolonged will just tire her out and make her more likely to fall ill.

Testing your feed

Knowledge of mineral function as well as availability within on-farm feedstuffs, including pasture, is important when choosing a commercial mineral. Forages are often a good source of calcium for beef

cattle. In cereal grains, phosphorus levels are higher. Consult your nutritionist for proper stored forage and grain sampling techniques and recommended analysis.

The grazing season means cattle have the opportunity to consume large quantities of lush pasture, which can be low in magnesium (remember grass tetany). Copper availability tends to be low in Saskatchewan pastures and is hugely impacted by water quality, particularly iron and/or sulphate levels. Forage type will also have an impact on mineral levels depending on whether it is tame versus native pasture that is being grazed. Despite forage type, mineral concentrations decline from spring to fall (Saskatchewan Forage Council, 2014). Therefore, forage testing conducted in the spring will not be representative for the year. Forage testing should be done several times during the grazing season as well as through the winter on stored forages. When sampling pasture grasses, ensure you cut the grass stem off at grazing height. It is also important to avoid collecting samples of plants that cattle are not likely to be consuming. The idea is to collect a representative sample of the standing forages that the cattle are grazing.

Points to remember

- A mineral supplementation program is an essential part of beef cattle production!
- A year-round mineral supplementation program is essential for optimal herd health.
- Test your on-farm feed.
- Select a mineral that complements what is already on the farm.

Kristin Thompson, M.Sc. Ruminant Nutrition Associate and Kathleen Shore, M.Sc. Ruminant Nutritionist New-Life Mills, A division of Parrish & Heimbecker, Limited.

FORAGE

Grass guys developing a forage carbon offset protocol

By Duncan Morrison

Cedric MacLeod considers carbon sequestration through forages and grasslands and the

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soils they grow in as a long overdue, up-until-now-grossly-underplayed chit that Canada's grass and forage producers can finally throw down and claim proper ownership on.

"Our members grow forage, many run livestock and most plant annual crops too," says MacLeod, executive director of the Canadian Forage and Grasslands Association (CFGA). "Mostly, our producers choose to farm the way they do and are providing much more to Canada than simply cow bellies full of forages."

If it seems to you like MacLeod is a tad sparky, you'd be correct. The 40-year-old New Brunswicker has been at the helm of the CFGA for three years now and he knows the timing has never been better for forages and grasslands to burst through the Canadian ag hierarchy champagne tower once and for all as the largest agriculture land use sector in the nation. Add to that sense of timing and urgency with the fact that if the Tasmanian Devil of Warner Brothers cartoon fame was a person, it could be Cedric MacLeod, a whirlwind of old-fashioned spit and energy with a distinguished resumé of consultation and leadership on hay export, maritime beef and young farmer files that have all benefited from his master's degree in soil sciences from University of Manitoba. On top of the hectic work days, MacLeod juggles his own farm operations while enjoying family life with wife Alanda and toddler son Kalen.

"Healthy soil, that's our future," says MacLeod. "If we don't find ways to conserve, benefit from and enhance our soil resources across this great country, we are headed for a heap of trouble. It all starts with soil… healthy soil."

Few would argue that point. The next visible step, though, is the now what—the how, where and what's next in forage research that proves the value of healthy systems and the role of forages and grasslands in the mix, over and over and over again. And that's why MacLeod is so enthused that the CFGA was able to secure

funding for the CFGA's High Performance Forage Management Systems project through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Agricultural Greenhouse Gases Program (AGGP).

The official purpose of the AGGP project is to develop a Forage Management Carbon Offset Protocol, and associated Best Management Practice Implementation Manual to support Canadian forage and grassland manager efforts to enhance soil carbon sequestration. Indeed, a welcome, lofty and ambitious end product that will certainly serve the managers immensely on their farms while booming positive societal benefits to their home municipality, province and, in fact, Canada as a whole when it comes to the provision of cleaner air, water and increased biodiversity among other values.

"The long-term intent for this initiative is to create momentum towards increased collaboration and information sharing across Canada in support of forage industry growth," says MacLeod. "Our shorter-term goals are to strengthen forage industry leadership as we move into program discussions around the next Canadian Agricultural Partnership."

That's a fairly administrative-leaning soapbox, almost cautionary approach. For a guy with a forage-stoked grassland fire burning at his core, what's the real play and benefit here for Canada's forage and grassland producers?

"Simply put… it's dollars in producers' jeans," says MacLeod. "I don't care if you raise dairy, sheep, goats or beef, if you run out west, in central or Atlantic Canada, run a tame or native stand, produce

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annual or perennial crops, forages are the green ribbon that connect every farmer every day coast to coast."

Karen Haugen-Kozyra has over 25 years of experience in agricultural greenhouse gas measurement and modeling and climate change/environmental policy development — spanning her tenure at the provincial Department of Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, Climate Change Central and now in the private sector where she currently operates as president of Viresco Solutions, a sustainability-focused consultancy out of Calgary. Haugen-Kozyra has been working with her team and with McLeod and his team on the CFGA AAGP project.

"There remains a lot of confusion everywhere around greenhouse gas offsets and accounting," says Haugen-Kozyra. "That's because of the different types of standards, provincial systems and national emission inventories and global protocols that everyone has to consider when developing these programs. What's most interesting about the CFGA AGGP is the opportunity to draw the project around what is controlled by the farm or ranch and go forward from there. It is inventory-based and builds up from that."

MacLeod concurs. The five-year AGGP will encompass all of

Canada's grasslands, and pilot projects will be active on the ground starting in 2019.

"Productive grasslands create healthy soils, store millions of tonnes of carbon, and directly support Canada's multi-billion-dollar ruminant livestock industries," says MacLeod. "This is an exceptionally big deal."

MANAGEMENT

Appreciate depreciation

By Steve Kenyon

Most farmers understand depreciation, right? When you buy a new pickup, it depreciates rather quickly once you drive it off the lot. Your tractor will depreciate over time as well as the rest of your equipment. Your accountant will depreciate your assets each year in your books. Pretty straightforward, but there are a few places where depreciation might not be so obvious. How about appreciation? Can your assets appreciate in value?

To calculate depreciation, you take the purchase value of an asset, subtract the salvage value from that and then divide it by the number of years that you have owned the asset. For example, let's say that we bought a tractor for $35,000, owned it for 10 years and then sold it for $15,000. To get a percentage, we divide the depreciation per year by the beginning inventory value:

- $35,000 - $15,000 = $20,000/10 = $2,000/year or 5.7% depreciation/year.

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When we are working with our gross margin analysis, we need to plan to cover depreciation in our businesses. On paper, we would need to take the $2,000 out of the profit that the tractor makes each year and then place that in a bank account. If we did this each year for the ten years we own the asset, we would have $20,000 saved up. Then when we sell the tractor for $15,000, we add the $20,000 to the $15,000 and replace the tractor. That is how you would cover depreciation in your business.

Do you know how most farms deal with asset depreciation? Usually with land appreciation. Because your land is worth more, the bank will give you a loan for a new tractor. This is not always repeatable.

Did you know that your livestock can also depreciate? Let's do the same calculations for your breeding herd. This is the same for any type of livestock. In this example I will use a beef cow and don't get hung up on the values I use. These are just hypothetical examples. Let's say that the value of a bred cow is $2,000 and her cull value is $1,200. Now what is the average lifespan of a cow in your herd? We all have that cow that is 15 years old, but the average is much lower than that because of all of the bred heifers and first-calf heifers that do not make the cut. Most farmers are shocked when

they hear that the actual average in North America is three years. For arguments sake, let's use five years:

$2,000 - $1,200 = $800/5= $160/year or 8% depreciation/year.

So our beef cow depreciates at $160/year. This means that to cover your depreciation, you need to take $160 from the profit of every calf that you sell and place that money in an account. After the five years, you would take the accumulated $800 in the account and add it to the $1,200 from the cull sale to buy a replacement cow. This, of course, is done on paper. You could actually save this depreciation in a bank account or wisely invest it into something else. The key word being "wisely."

Just make sure that you are accounting for it in your gross margin. In our gross margin, we calculate for this in our stock flow chart with our cull losses. This is a spreadsheet that allows me to keep track of all the animals and value changes within the breeding herd. It's a very handy tool. When we sell a cull, we also deduct the cull loss from the total value of our herd. This is a hidden cost, as we don't see this in our bank account, but if you looked at your balance sheet, that $800 disappears every time you cull a cow. It is important that you account for this in your business.

In order to see if a profit centre is repeatable we need to account for depreciation.

One way to lower your depreciation is to establish a long-term genetic plan. By selecting for low maintenance and high reproduction in your herd, longevity would increase and thus lower your depreciation per year.

But wait. Our beef cow herd does not just depreciate. There are times you also need to account for appreciation in the herd. As animals grow and develop from calves to replacements, from replacements to bred heifers, and from bred heifers to bred cows, they usually gain in value. As we are putting feed into them, they should be more valuable as they transfer from one class to another. They are appreciating as they move through the stock flow. So we need to account for both depreciation and appreciation within the herd.

There is another time when appreciation should be accounted for in your livestock. Indeed, I believe this is the only time most producers actually make a profit. That's when you choose to sell.

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In my opinion, selling the calf every year only covers your day-to-day costs like feed, veterinary and supplies. True depreciation — opportunity cost, labour and equipment costs — are not always accounted for on most farms.

By working with the markets and the cattle cycle, you can plan and time when to buy and sell to capture the appreciation of your herd. Every stock market guy will tell you to "buy low and sell high." A lot of farms do the opposite and I know from experience that some bankers encourage this. If the cattle markets are up, we all want to jump in and buy more cows because the calf prices are good, then when the market drops (as it always does) we are forced to sell. I have seen it a few times.

Instead, let's plan for a profit, to build our herd when the markets are low and plan to sell off, or cull really hard when markets are

ANSWER OUR SURVEY — and have a go at winning one of our caps

We have a goal to be the best beef cattle magazine in the business. But we need your help. If you could just fill in this survey and return it to me, you would be helping us set the future editorial direction for Canadian Cattlemen. All you have to do is tell me what you like about the magazine, and what you don't like. There's also some space for you to tell us what you would like to see in future issues.

CLIP AND ENCLOSE YOUR MAILING LABEL. Each month, we will draw one name from all the surveys sent in and send that person a Cattlemen cap. It could be you!

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

☐ I'm ranching or farming

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

☐ I no longer take an active part in farming

If not an owner/operator of a farm, are you:
☐ In agribusiness (bank, elevator, ag supplies, etc.)
☐ Other (please specify) _____

My approximate age is:
☐ a) Under 35 ☐ b) 36 to 44 ☐ c) 45 to 54
☐ d) 55 to 64 ☐ e) 65 or over

What do you think of: On a scale of 1 to 5, how do you and your family like these features?

5 – I *always* watch for it; let's see more of it
4 – I *regularly* read it and like it
3 – I *usually* read it
2 – There are things I'd *rather* read
1 – I *don't want* it; get *rid of it*

Regular Columns	5	4	3	2	1
Comment					
Newsmakers					
Letters					
Our History					
Nutrition					
Vet Advice					
Research					
Free Market Reflections					

Regular Columns	5	4	3	2	1
Straight from the Hip					
Prime Cuts					
CCA Reports					
News Roundup					
Purely Purebred					
The Markets					
Market Talk					
Sales and Events					

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

What would you like to see? _____

How much time do you and your family spend reading Canadian Cattlemen? ☐ Under 2 hours ☐ Over 2 hours

Canadian Cattlemen THE BEEF MAGAZINE
1666 Dublin Avenue
Winnipeg, Man. R3H 0H1

MARKETPLACE

high. This way we can take advantage of the appreciation of our herd and eliminate the hidden cost of depreciation.

For example, take a farmer who purchased a herd of cattle in 2008 when prices were low. Let's say he bought some young bred cows for $1,000/cow. (Yes, this is opposite to what most people did). Calf sales and cull sales were on the rise all through 2009 until 2015 when they hit a high point. If he decided to cull really hard and only keep his best genetics, the sale of his older bred cows might have brought him $2,000 in 2015. (Young cows were selling for over $2,000.) We have an appreciation of $1,000 per cow over seven years:

$2,000 - $1,000 = $1,000 / 7 = $142/year or 14% appreciation/year.

That is an appreciation of 14 per cent. (We divide the appreciation per year by the beginning inventory value.) Plus he had pretty good prices on his calves throughout that period.

If we back up, it also happened in 1996 as young cows could be bought for $800 and by 2001, that older cow could be sold for $1,500.

$1,500 - $800 = $700/ 5 = $140/year or 17% appreciation/year.

That was an appreciation of $700 or 17 per cent over five years for the person who bought and sold to capitalize on the markets. Again, don't get hung up on the values I use.

My point is, as the manager of your business, would you rather learn how to calculate the depreciation of your livestock, or plan for appreciation in your herd? Either way, you need to include this calculation in your gross margin analysis.

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

By Mike Millar

PurelyPurebred

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

■ At Canadian Western Agribition, the Saskatchewan Simmental Association recognized their Commercial and Purebred Breeders of the Year. Black Gold Simmental made up of the Noble family, Randy and Vanessa Noble and sons Ryley and Toby, was awarded the 2017 Purebred Breeder of the Year and Andy Hofer from Spring Creek Colony, 2017 Commercial Breeder of the Year.

Black Gold Simmental is a family farm operated by the Noble families in the Hillmond area northeast of Lloydminster. It was established in 1973 when Randy's parents Jim and Sabra Noble purchased two 1/2 blood heifers from the Agribition sale which was the start of the purebred herd. The four sons Randy, Lyle, Owen and Neil worked with their parents to grow the herd to 180 fullblood red and black Simmental cows and 70 commercial cows. Five years ago, along with Red Willow Ranch and Little Willow Creek Ranch, they esablished the Next Generation annual bull and female sale in Lloydminster to market Simmental genetics to a larger audience. Noble contributed their success to many mentors over the years including the Harlands of Little Willow Creek Ranch, Stanley Palmer, who was a partner in many sales, and the Mapletoft family of Little Pipestone Ranch. In the early years the boys showed cattle with Frank Mapletoft and learned about selecting good cattle, and having fun.

Noble is encouraged by the number of young people today who are interested in cattle and the Simmental breed.

Andy Hofer from Spring Creek Colony is a promoter of Simmental cattle. The colony gets its mail at Walsh, Alta., but is located in Saskatchewan, west of Maple Creek. Originally established in 1956, Spring Creek's cow herd has grown to 900 females with 150 heifers being bred every year. Hofer took over as cow boss in 1995 and immediately started to integrate Simmental genetics into the herd to decrease cow size while at the same time increase weaning weights. Heifers are bred Red Angus to calve in March and cows bred Simmental to calve in April and May. The breed's maternal traits worked well in their herd but Hofer says the real payday has been in the 1,000-head feedlot, where the colony finishes their own cattle. Spring Creek Colony has won the prestigious Medicine Hat commercial show and numerous first place honours in the open heifer calf competition. In 2008 it was recognized as Commerical Breeder of the Year by the Canadian Red Angus Promotion Society.

■ The 2017-18 Canadian Limousin Association board of directors was elected in July and had their winter board meeting in Calgary in December (l to r): Bill Zwambag (treasurer), Ont.; Mike Geddes, Ont.; Matthew Heleniak, Ont.; Cody Miller, Alta.; Tim Andrew, Alta.; Erin Kishkan (president), B.C.; Terry Hepper (past president), Sask.; Joe Cooper, N.S.; Eric Boon (vice-president), Sask. Missing: Dan Darling, Ont.

2018 Saskatchewan Simmental Association Purebred Breeder of the Year.

■ The Canadian Hereford Association launched new EPD in December 2017 based

2018 Saskatchewan Simmental Association Commercial Breeder of the Year.

on a new system of analysis called "BOLT" Single Step technology, which is the most accurate calculation possible. It reduces the time it takes to complete an EPD run, better incorporates genomic data and will calculate real accuracies. This changes keeps the CHA in line with the AHA.

Four key points that will drive change in AHA/CHA EPDs:

- BOLT handles genomics better.
- BOLT incorporates genomics into the evaluation in a more correct fashion.
- BOLT separates traits. In the past, other traits had influence over the trait of interest through correlations, but now individual traits have been separated to allow for better selection on the trait of interest.
- BOLT uses a data cutoff to remove bias. Performance data is cut off at 2001, any data recorded before that date has been removed from the evaluation. This will have an effect on the accuracy of old bulls and potentially their EPDs, if they have no progeny born since 2001. This removes potential bias that could be seen in the data before whole herd reporting began
- BOLT calculates accuracy differently. In the past, our genetic models could only estimate accuracy, this was the best tool at the time, however with BOLT accuracy can be calculated, not estimated.

Most noticeable changes:

- Largest changes you will notice are in calving ease and manternal CE. This is due to two things: More calving observations are being used. In the past if a calf crop was all scored as unassisted, the data could not be used in the evaluation, because the evaluation needed variation to determine a deviation from average.
- BOLT uses a different method that uses all data, even data that is uniform across a calf crop. Accuracies have seen a more significant change as in the case of older, currently unused bulls. Some (and possibly all) of their progeny records have been removed from the analysis due to the data cutoff; however, the change in accuracy on a population basis has been quite small.

Check out the Canadian Hereford website for more information. www.hereford.ca.

■ Canadian Young Leaders:

Carley Henniger

Carley originated from the West Kootenay region in British Columbia, and moved to Edmonton to attend the University of Alberta to complete a double major in political science and international relations.

Carley Henniger

She does not have a farm background but during her time in Alberta she decided to pursue a career in agriculture. After graduation she moved just outside of Calgary to work as a farm hand for a large mixed grain and feedlot operation, eventually moving up to a position on the business side of the operation. She also became a junior board member for the 4-H communications board. From there she headed home to B.C. to work for Douglas Lake Cattle Company, and recently completed the rural finance and entrepreneurship program at Olds College. She currently lives in Kamloops, working for the B.C. Angus Association, volunteers with 4H B.C. and is in the beginning stages of becoming a first-generation cattle rancher.

Continued on page 70

Continued from page 69

Carley may not have grown up on a farm, but she sure got there as soon as she could.

Lee Creech

Lee Creech

Lee Creech was born and raised on a ranch just north of Lloydminster, Alta., and grew up spending his summers building fences and calving cows. His family's ranch, M.C. Quantock, has grown in size significantly over the years, currently calving around 1,000 cows. The herd is predominantly purebred Red Angus and Angus with a couple hundred Hereford and Charolais cows. These cows produce the bulls that go into their annual M.C. Quantock "Canada's Bulls" Bull Sale on the final Saturday in January.

After graduating high school in Lloydminster, he attended the University of Lethbridge, Alta. graduating with a bachelor of management in marketing. Upon graduation, he moved to the ranch and started working various assignments on the business side of the ranch. To diversify his skill set he then accepted a job in Wetaskiwin, working with two ruminant nutritionists testing forages, balancing rations, and making recommendations for hundreds of cow/calf producers, seed stock operations, and backgrounding feedlots.

Next he opened his own business importing utility vehicles from overseas and completed the World Wide College of Auctioneering course in Denver. That led into a job with Global Auction Guide, a technology company that helps auction markets and auction houses market their sales online.

After some ranch succession planning timelines were established back home, he decide to pursue a master's of science degree in ranch management at the King Ranch Institute for Ranch Management at Texas A&M University-Kingsville. The institute admits only three new students per year. Creech was awarded the Joe Marlin Hilliard Endowed Fellowship, as well as the unique honour of being the first-ever international student.

Kaitlyn Polegi

Kaitlyn Polegi

Kaitlyn was raised on a mixed grain and commercial cow-calf operation near Jedburgh, Sask. She joined the local 4-H club at the age of six and was a member for 12 years. At age 15 she began to build her own purebred Hereford herd and joined the junior association. This past spring, she completed a bachelor of science degree in agriculture from the University of Saskatchewan majoring in animal science. Her undergrad thesis was entitled, "Minimizing the Stress of Weaning on Beef Calves."

Kaitlyn is currentlly an inspector with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, and she and her fiancé Mark are ranching alongside her parents Allan and Juanita. Kaitlyn volunteers with her local 4-H club and plans to do more volunteer work while helping Mark and her family expand the family ranch.

Sales results

Stromsmoe Hereford & Angus 33rd Annual Production Sale

Results, December 5, 2017, Etzikom, Alta.

34 Angus long yearling bulls, av. $8,106
9 Angus bull calves, av. $6,667
19 Hereford long yearling bulls, av. $6,461
8 Commercial cows, av. $2,300
78 Commercial bred heifers, av. $2,026
Sale gross $634,800

Bar Pipe Hereford Ranch Production Sale

November 28, 2017, Okotoks, Alta.

Auctioneer: R.C. (Bob) Balog

35 Long yearling bulls, av. $5,933
34 Bred heifers, av. $2,378
1 Border collie, $6,750
Sale gross $288,507

Fenton Hereford Ranch Inc. — 53rd Annual Production Sale

November 18, 2017, Irma, Alta.

47 Long yearling bulls, av. $6,250
41 Bred heifers, av. $3,780
97 Commercial heifers, av. $2,500
6 Geldings, av. $9,750
14 Foals, av. $1,350
Sale gross $790,825

2017 Nelson Hirsche Purebreds Production Sale

November 4, 2017, Del Bonita, Alta.

52 Hereford bulls sold
41 Angus bulls sold
9 Charolais bulls sold
25 Hereford heifers sold
5 Angus heifers sold
2 Charolais heifers sold
Sale gross $1,327,350

By Debbie McMillin

TheMarkets

FED CATTLE

Fed cattle prices averaged $153.89/cwt in 2017 which was over $3/cwt higher than 2016. The fed market in Canada had an exceptional run as 2017 came to a close. The last two weeks of the year saw a $8.87/cwt rally up to $160.86/cwt on December 22 and by the first week of 2018 the market had jumped nearly $7/cwt more to average 167.44/cwt. The strong Canadian market saw the average steer price with a $13.90/cwt premium over the U.S. market. With a basis this strong it was not a surprise to see a bit of a correction in the market by mid-January with the average coming down slightly to $165.66/cwt by January 12. The current rally has seen all Canadian packing plants looking to buy cattle only as supplies start to tighten and steer carcass weights lighten over the past month. A cold snap in recent weeks has lead to poorer performance for feeders which, combined with a very current feedlot inventory, has resulted in the reduced weights. Slaughter statistics for 2017 told the story of more cattle being killed in Canada in all classes throughout the year. Fed steer slaughter was up two per cent at 1,499,887 head while heifer slaughter at 886,047 head was up 11 per cent. Domestic non-fed beef production increased three per cent. By year-end fed cattle exports totalled 330,331, increase of five per cent from 2016.

FEEDER CATTLE

It's hard to determine the tone of this market as we start 2018 with very light trade reported. Prices were mixed during the first week of regular trade but under pressure. Light volumes, less pen space available and undesirable risk management options had some buyers pulling back. Hedging options are undesirable, cost of gain is above a year ago on a 32 per cent bump in barley, and the Canadian dollar is five per cent stronger than a year ago. Both the light and heavy weight calves were down from the last trading week of December; however, in the past month the 550-lb. feeder calves dropped just $3/cwt of the average while the heavier steers have fallen more. The 850-lb. feeder steer lost $10/cwt off the average. The week ending January 12 saw 550-lb. steer prices at $226.88/cwt which was down $1/cwt from the week prior to Christmas, however, still much stronger than the price that started 2017. The 550-lb. feeder steer average the second week of January last year was $204.80/cwt.

Heavier steers started 2018 at $187.88/cwt, which was also lower than the end of 2017, however, up $15/cwt when compared to the same week last year and still trading at a premium to the U.S. market. The 850-lb. feeder basis was $7.94/cwt in the second week of January.

Feeder cattle exports accounting for most of the 2017 calendar year totalled 117,243 head, which was down 34 per cent from 2016. Fewer exports in 2017 meant more feeder cattle were placed into Canadian feedlots. In addition, feeder cattle imports into Canada from the U.S. were up.

NON-FED CATTLE

The D1,2 cow price has followed the trend set by the fed market as 2017 came to a close. An increase in the non-fed market was noted on all classes with the D1,2 cow price increasing $4.20/cwt in the last two weeks of the year to end the year at $90.80/cwt. The January 12 average jumped nearly $5/cwt more to $95.70/cwt, which was the highest seen since August. The current price at $95.70/cwt was $2.05/cwt lower than at the start of 2017. Domestic cow slaughter in 2017 totaled 446,962 head, a 14 per cent increase over 2016. Up to December 23 cow exports totaled 133,227 head which was down 34 per cent. Butcher bulls started 2018 at $101.86/cwt. Bulls slaughtered in Canada through 2017 was 18,870 head which was up 39 per cent from 2016, while bull exports were down six per cent at 51,411 head.

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

More markets ▶

DEB'S OUTLOOK

FED CATTLE

At the start of 2018, tight supplies should help elevate fed cattle prices as market-ready supplies through the first few months seem quite manageable and packers are already showing signs of reaching to ensure their orders are met. In 2018 increased beef production is expected and demand will have to remain strong to ensure the product keeps moving both domestically and internationally. In the near term, the market seems to be responding in a typical seasonal manner which would indicate well-supported prices through the first quarter as packers look towards BBQ season demand come spring.

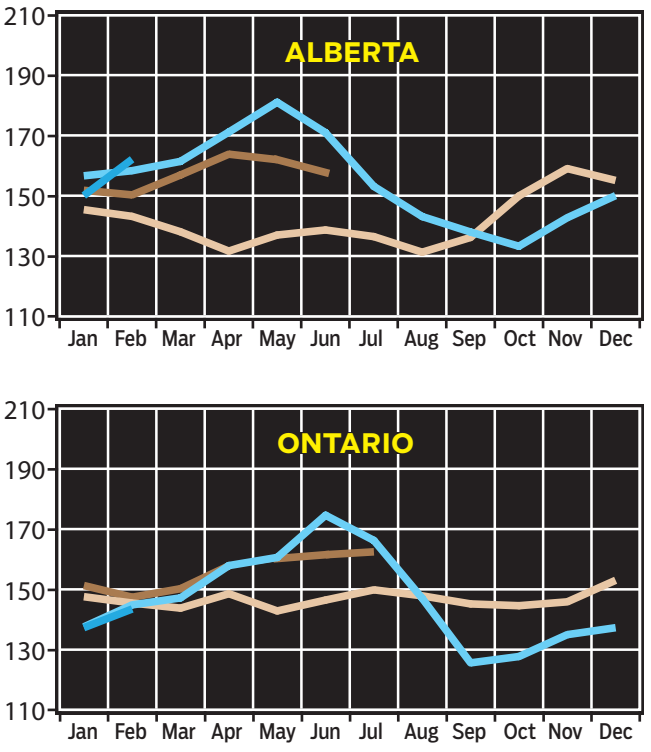
FEEDER CATTLE

Key factors to watch will be fed cattle trends, feeder futures and the dollar. Negative moves in any of these factors would not favour feeder cattle prices. Heavy-weight cattle placed against typical fed lows generally are under pressure through the start of the year. A higher Canadian dollar, reduced hedging opportunities and increased cost of gain support this trend in 2018. Light-weight volumes are smaller through the first quarter in Canada which generally supports prices; however, we will wait to see if weather has an impact on how grass cattle demand is influenced.

CULL CATTLE

Typically, the non-fed market has a fairly strong seasonal trend which suggests strength through the first quarter, often reaching highs sometime in the second quarter when volumes are small and demand for hamburger is great. While the seasonal trend for a strengthening market over the next few months is strong, it will still be important to watch factors such as the Canadian dollar as additional upward movement would have a negative impact on non-fed prices.

Break-even Prices on A-Grade Steers



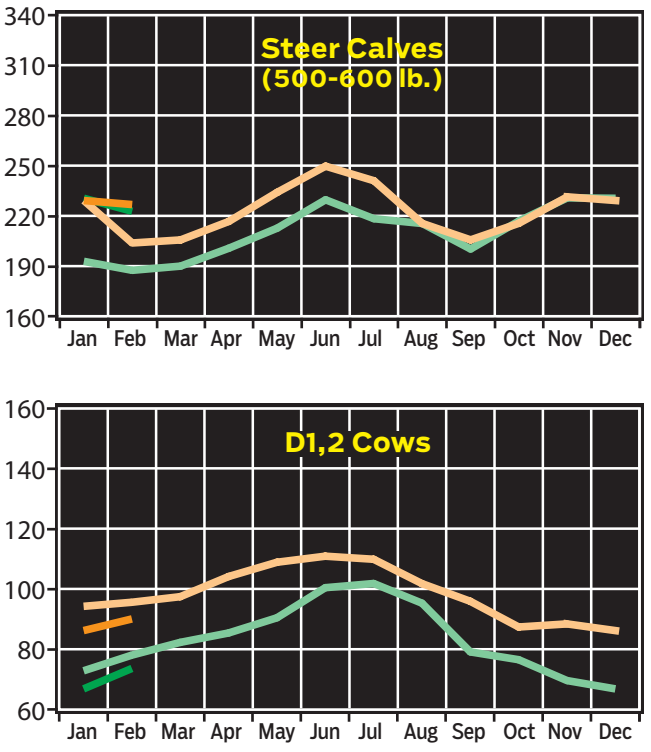
Canfax weighted average price on A-Grade steers

2018
2017

Break-even price for steers on date sold

2018
2017

Market Prices



Ontario

2018
2017

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

Alberta

2018
2017

January 2018 prices*

Alberta

Yearling steers (850 lb.)	$190.01/cwt
Barley	4.90/bu.
Barley silage	61.25/ton
Cost of gain (feed)	75.66/cwt
Cost of gain (all costs)	107.77/cwt
Fed steers	162.09/cwt
Break-even (June 2018)	157.70/cwt

Ontario

Yearling steers (850 lb.)	$198.35/cwt
Grain corn	4.50/bu.
Corn silage	38.00/ton
Cost of gain (feed)	73.07/cwt
Cost of gain (all costs)	108.60/cwt
Fed steers	143.49/cwt
Break-even (July 2018)	162.45/cwt

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

Market Summary (to January 6, 2018)

	2018	2017
Total Canadian federally inspected slaughter	40,756	39,757
Average steer carcass weight	912 lb.	918 lb.
Total U.S. slaughter	1,152,000	1,152,000

TRADE SUMMARY

EXPORTS	2017	2016
Fed cattle to U.S. (to December 30)	330,331	315,126
Feeder cattle and calves to U.S. (to December 30)	117,358	179,045
Dressed beef to U.S. (to November)	572.62 mil.lbs	551.48 mil.lbs
Total dressed beef (to November)	774.07 mil.lbs	729.00 mil.lbs

IMPORTS	2017	2016
Slaughter cattle from U.S. (to November)	0	0
*Dressed beef from U.S. (to November)	225.03 mil.lbs	225.11 mil.lbs
*Dressed beef from Australia (to November)	37.87 mil.lbs	59.37 mil.lbs
*Dressed beef from New Zealand (to November)	38.76 mil.lbs	42.70 mil.lbs
*Dressed beef from Uruguay (to November)	24.62 mil.lbs	32.13 mil.lbs

Canadian Grades (to January 6, 2018)

% of A grades	Yield +59%	54-58%	−53%	Total
Prime	0.1	0.5	1.9	2.5
AAA	15.0	26.9	24.2	66.1
AA	15.9	9.1	3.8	28.8
A	0.9	0.2	0.0	1.1
Total	31.9	36.7	29.9	

Total A grade 98.5%

	Total graded	Total ungraded	% carcass basis
EAST	9,603	440	78.4%
WEST	30,308	405	76.8%

Only federally inspected plants

By Jerry Klassen

PRICE INSURANCE FOR FEEDER CATTLE

I've received inquiries from cow/calf producers and backgrounders regarding the purchase of price insurance for feeder cattle. In early November the March futures made contract highs but since then have trended lower. At the same time, ther cash continues to trade near 52-week highs.

It appears the Canadian feeder market has divorced from the feeder cattle futures for the time being.

Price insurance for feeder cattle (in Western Canada) is largely based on the cost of put options on the feeder cattle futures, so producers need a good idea of the market structure for the cash and futures market to determine the most optimal period to buy price insurance.

Given the current environment, producers are finding the premium high relative to the price level being protected. This has made the program somewhat irrelevant for now. However, there will be opportunities in the future and in this article, I want to discuss a few helpful ideas so that producers have a good idea when to buy price insurance.

As mentioned earlier the program is largely based on put options for feeder cattle futures. The administrators account for exchange rate and relevant basis level to come up with the premiums and price levels.

So Canadian producers need to watch the cash market for U.S. feeder cattle. Staff at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange (CME) track the cash markets and provide a daily update. The CME composite price is the official cash settlement price for the CME feeder cattle futures at contract final settlement.

From prices reported by the USDA they calculate the seven-day average price for 650- to 849-pound feeder steers.

SALE DATE	WEIGHTED AVG. PRICE
01/04	155.20
01/03	155.60
01/02	155.90
01/01	155.33
12/29	156.02
12/28	146.51
12/27	145.88

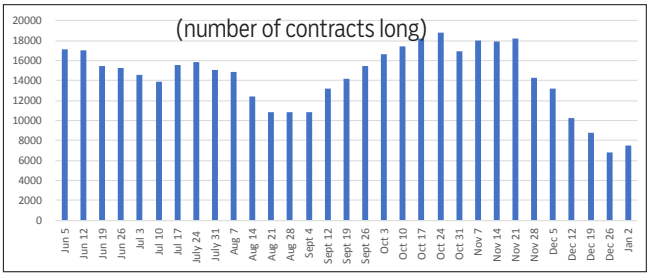
It's important that producers watch this contract settlement price. In this example, notice the cash market took a rather large jump from December 28 to December 29; however, the futures market traded in a relatively sideways range and then faded the next week. The cash market was stronger but the futures market was weaker. On January 4, the January feeder cattle futures closed at $149.025. Obviously not a good time to buy the price insurance when the futures market is sharply below the cash price. Producers should wait until the futures market catches up to the cash price. Sometimes, the futures market can lead the cash market and sometimes it's the other way round. During the delivery month, there has to a be a convergence of the cash and futures markets.

I also watch the large speculative position on the feeder cattle futures. The weekly commitment of traders report shows a breakdown of commercials which includes producers, merchants, and processors. The managed money position is the large speculator and the non-commercial is often referred to as the small speculator.

The commitment of traders report comes out every Friday afternoon and releases the positions as of the previous Tuesday's close. Tracking the positions can be quite useful in determining when to purchase insurance. I've attached a chart of the "managed money" position. Notice back on October 31, the managed money was at a high for the year. On November 3, the March feeder cattle futures made a contract high of $158.925. The managed money was record long and the futures market was at a contract high.

You may not have even bought feeder cattle at this time but if you knew you were going to have feeder cattle to market in March or April, this was the time to buy some price insurance or take some price protection by placing hedges.

FEEDER CATTLE FUTURES MANAGED MONEY



From December 26 through January 2, the funds have changed from net sellers to net buyers. The commercials have also been net buyers. When the commercials and the large speculative funds are on the same side of the market, this is a fairly good indication that the market has limited downside and we'll likely see further upside. Notice the net buying by the commercials and the managed money coincides with the rise in the cash market during the last week of December.

COMMITMENT OF TRADERS REPORT FEEDER CATTLE FUTURES ONLY

Commitment of Traders Disaggregated Report Futures Only

	Nov. 28	Dec. 5	Dec. 12	Dec. 19	Dec. 26	Jan. 2
Pro/Mer/Pro/User	-11,968	-11,623	-11,095	-10,305	-8,842	-8,403
Swap dealer	7,927	8,552	8,875	8,708	8,342	8,206
Managed money	14,315	13,198	10,227	8,738	6,754	7,502
Non-commercial	718	785	1,340	1,196	1,721	1,357

Producers/Merchant/Processor/User

In conclusion, cow-calf producers and backgrounding operators should be up to date with the official cash settlement price for the CME feeder cattle futures. Second, watch the net position of the large speculator (managed money) and the net position of the commercials for indications of when to insure the price of calves or feeders.

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.

Sales&Events

EVENTS

FEBRUARY

6-8 20 Western Canadian Feedlot Management School, Travelodge, Regina, Sask.
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.
21-23 15 Annual Alberta Beef Industry Conference, Sheraton Hotel, Red Deer, Alta.
22-24 2nd Annual Young Canadian Simmental Assoc. Leadership Conference, Calgary, Alta.

MARCH

14-15 Livestock Care Conference at the Pomeroy, Olds, Alta.
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.
26-31 Royal Manitoba Winter Fair, Keystone Centre, Brandon, Man.

MAY

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

SALES

FEBRUARY

9 Anchor D Ranch 19th Annual Simmental Bull Sale, Rimbey, Alta.
10 MJT Back to the Basics Bull Sale, at the ranch, Edgerton, Alta.
11 Diamond M Ranch 7th Annual Bull Sale, at the ranch, Estevan, Sask.
13 8th Annual Ranchers Bull Sale, at the Holloway sale barn, Castor, Alta.
15 Corbiell Herefords Bull Sale, Silver Sage Arena, Brooks, Alta.
15 Nordal Limousin & Angus Bull Sale, Saskatoon Livestock Sales, Saskatoon, Sask.
16 Stephen Charolais & Guests Bull Sale, Whitewood Auction Mart,Whitewood, Sask.
16 Mader Ranches 29th Annual Bull & Female Sale, at the ranch, Carstairs, Alta.
19 Ole Farms Family Day Bull Sale, Athabasca, Alta.
20 Ulrich Hereford Ranch Bull Sale, Balog Auction Mart, Lethbridge, 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.
23 Maple Leaf Charolais & Guests Bull Sale, Calnash Ag Event Centre, Ponoka, Alta.
24 Sandan Charolais/Springside Farms 21st Annual Bull Sale, at the farm, Erskine, Alta.
28-Mar. 1 Calgary Bull Sale, Century Downs, Calgary, Alta.

MARCH

1 JP Cattle Co./Stewart Cattle Co. Annual Simmental & Angus Bull Sale, McAuley, Man.
2 Chittick Family Bull Sale, Diamond Centre, Mayerthorpe, Alta.
2 M & L Cattle Co. Bull & Female Sale, at the farm, Indian River, Ont.
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.
3 44th Annual High Country Bull Sale, at the fairgrounds, Pincher Creek, Alta.
4 R Plus Simmentals 18th Annual Bull & Female Sale, at the farm, Estevan, Sask.
5 Pride of the Prairies Bull Sale, Lloydminster Exhibition Grounds, Lloydminster, Sask.
5 Coyote Flats Charolais Bull Sale, at the farm, Coaldale, Alta.
6 Belvin Angus 5th Annual Bull Sale, at the ranch, Innisfail, Alta.
8 JoNomn Hereford Ranch Bull Sale, North Central Livestock, Clyde, Alta.
8 Excel Ranches Excellence Bull Sale, at the ranch, Westlock, Alta.
9 A. Sparrow Farms Annual Bull Sale, at the farm, Vanscoy, Sask.
10 LLB 32nd Annual Spring Spectacular Bull & Female Sale, at the farm, Erskine, Alta.
11 Steppler Farms Charolais Bull Sale, at the farm, Miami, Man.
12 Remitall Farms Bull Sale, at the farm, Olds, Alta.
12 Palmer/Nielsen 7th Annual Charolais, Black & Red Angus Bull Sale, at Palmer Charolais, Bladworth, Sask.
13 9th Annual Harvie Ranching Bull Sale, at the ranch, Olds, Alta.
13 McTavish Farms & Guests Charolais & Red Angus Bull Sale, at the farm, Moosomin, Sask.
14 Medicine Hat Bull Sale, Medicine Hat Ex., Medicine Hat, Alta.
15 Creek's Edge Land & Cattle Co. Charolais Bull Sale, at the farm, Yellow Creek, Sask.
16 East Central Alta. Bull Sale, Shorncliff 4-H Centre, Czar, Alta.
17 Hwy. 16 West Multi-Breed Bull Sale, Mayerthorpe Ag Grounds, Mayerthorpe, Alta.
17 5th Annual Canada's Red, White & Black Bull Sale, Johnstone's Auction Mart, Moose Jaw, Sask.
17 Pleasant Dawn Charolais Bull Sale, Heartland Livestock, Virden, Man.
19 Fraser's Total Performance Bull Sale, Bow Slope Shipping, Brooks, Alta.
19 45th Annual Triple S Red Angus Bull Sale, Triple S North Sale Facility, Calgary, Alta.
20 Diamond W Charolais & Angus Bull Sale, Valley Livestock, Minitonas, Man.
21 HTA Charolais & Guests Bull Sale, at Beautiful Plains Ag, Neepawa, Man.
22 Elder Charolais Bull Sale, at the farm, Coronach, Sask.
24 K-Cow Ranch Bull Sale, at the ranch, Elk Point, Alta.
27 Anderson Cattle Company Annual Bull & Female Sale, at the farm, Swan River, Man.
27 Bulls Eye Sale, Bow Slope Shipping, Brooks, Alta.
27 Prairie Distinction Charolais Bull Sale, at Beautiful Plains Ag, Neepawa, Man.
28 23rd Annual Hamilton Farms Bull Sale, at the ranch, Cochrane, Alta.
29 Rivercrest Angus Ranch, at the Rivercrest ranch, Alliance, Alta.
29 Tannis Ranches 2nd Annual Bull Sale, at the ranch, Water Valley, Alta.
31 Tri-N Charolais & Guests Bull Sale, Heartland Livestock, Virden, Man.

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