



Grey
Wooded
Forage
Association

The Blade

"Creating an Awareness of Forages"

JUNE 2014

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Save the Date!!

West Country Ag Tour
August 21, 2014



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VISION STATEMENT

GWFA – The centre of choice for gathering and dispersing of forage and livestock information, providing a strong link with producers and the research community.

MISSION STATEMENT

To enhance awareness of the organization as an information exchange centre, illustrating forage and

livestock production practices that are environmentally and economically sustainable for the agricultural community.



"Going Beyond Sustainability"

SAVE THE DATE!

Dec 9, 10 & 11, 2014

Radisson
HOTEL EDMONTON SOUTH

Who's Jim Gerrish?

Jim Gerrish is an independent grazing lands consultant providing service to farmers and ranchers on both private and public lands across the US and internationally. He currently lives in the Pahsimeroi Valley in central Idaho and works with numerous ranchers across the US and Canada using both irrigated pastures and native rangeland as well as working in the high natural rainfall environments of the eastern US. He received a BS in Agronomy from the University of Illinois and MS in Crop Ecology from the University of Kentucky.

His past experience includes over 22 years of beef-forage systems research and outreach while on the faculty of the University of Missouri. The University of Missouri Forage Systems Research Center rose to national prominence as a result of his research leadership. His research encompassed many aspects of plant, soil and animal interactions and provided foundation for many of the basic principles of Management-Intensive Grazing (MIG).

He has written a regular monthly column in The Stockman Grass-Farmer magazine for over 12 years. He has authored two books on grazing and ranch management. *Management-intensive Grazing: The Grassroots of Grass Farming* was published in 2004 and *Kick the Hay Habit: A practical guide to year-around grazing* was published in 2010.

Jim was co-founder of the very popular multi-day grazing management workshop program at FSRC. These schools were attended by over 3000 producers and educators from 39 states and 4 Canadian provinces from their inception in 1990

through 2003. Fifteen other states have conducted grazing workshops based on the Missouri model and Jim has taught in eleven of these states. He is an instructor in the University of Idaho's Lost River Grazing Academy held annually near Salmon ID. He typically speaks at 40 to 50 producer oriented workshops, seminars, and field days around the US and Canada each year.

For 22 of the years he spent in Missouri, he stayed in touch with the real world on a 260- acre commercial cow-calf and contract grazing operation. In this setting, he took a worn out marginal crop farm and converted it to a highly productive grass farm. After the move to Idaho in 2004, Jim keeps his day-to-day grazing tools sharp through management of a ranch unit consisting of 450 center pivot irrigated pastures, 90 acres of flood ground, and several hundred acres of rangeland.

Jim has been deeply involved in the "Green Hills Farm Project". This is a grassroots producer group that's all about the sustainability of family farms and is centered in north-central Missouri. He is currently working with local, natural food networks in western US. His research and outreach efforts have been recognized with awards from the American Forage and Grassland Council, Missouri Forage and Grassland Council, National Center for Appropriate Technology, USDA-NRCS, the Soil and Water Conservation Society, Progressive Farmer, and American Agricultural Editors Association.



Learn how to manage highly productive grass-legume pastures with minimal reseeding or fertilizer use!

Jim Gerrish, the man who coined the phrase "Management-intensive Grazing", has a huge wealth of knowledge and experience to draw from. Jim's ability to "read" a pasture and assess its health and productivity is second to none.

While walking Iain Aitken's pastures on the morning of July 9th, Jim will be talking about a simple way of assessing how much forage is available and how to go about allocating it. We would get into things like training the eyeball to estimate standing forage availability, feed budgeting, and using leaf growth stage as an indicator of grazing readiness.

As Iain grazes his cowherd about ten months out of the year in most years, Iain manages his pastures to stockpile as much forage as possible for grazing in winter and in spring when he's calving out his cows. Iain and Jim will be discussing with us how this is done. Iain also grass finishes some steers each year, so Iain and Jim will also be discussing grazing management for finishing cattle.

In the afternoon, at Sigurd De Bruijn's pasture, Jim will be discussing with us the management of high percentage legume pastures for grazing yearlings. Again, Jim will demon-



strate how to assess standing forage availability, feed budgeting, and using leaf growth stage as an indicator of grazing readiness. Sigurd's pasture however, is quite different from Iain's. This pasture is fairly high in alfalfa. As well, the location east of Red Deer has different soils and climate than Iain's farm west of Rimbey.

You can choose to attend the morning pasture walk at Iain Aitken's farm or the afternoon walk at Sigurd De Bruijn's pasture, or both.

Join us for a Pasture Walk with the renowned Jim Gerrish

A Special Event in two locations
on July 9th



Where: Iain Aitken's farm south west of Rimbey

Time: 7:00am breakfast, 8:30-11:30 pasture walk.

What: year round grazing and grass finishing beef

Cost: \$25.00 includes pancake breakfast

Where: Sigurd DeBruijn farm east of Red Deer

Time: 2:00pm to 5:00pm light snack & beverage

What: yearling cattle on alfalfa pasture

Cost: \$25.00 includes light snack & beverage

Improve animal nutrition through increased pasture health & productivity.

To pre-register and get directions call
GWFA by July 4th at 403 844-2645 or
email gwfa3@telus.net



Grey Wooded Forage Association

"Creating an Awareness of Forages"

Manager's Notes:

By Albert Kuipers

Do you have a story to tell?

I'm sure lots of you have a story to tell about something you did or built on the farm that you're proud of. For some of you it might be about management choices or systems you developed; and for others it might be about equipment you built or modified.

Well, this is an opportunity to tell your story. Just give us a call. You'll do the talking and we'll do the writing. It's that easy.

At a recent GWFA Publicity Committee meeting we got talking about way back when the forage association got started 30 years ago. Ken Ziegler, a Beef Specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, and a government EX-officio to our board, was present at that committee meeting. Since he was involved with starting GWFA, Ken was able to tell us why our organization was started.

At that time there wasn't a whole lot of grazing management and forage production information readily available. Yes, there were the government fact sheets and the District Agriculturalists were still available to help folks with their questions. What those early pioneers of our association really wanted was to hear the stories that other forage producers had about what worked and what didn't work for them. Back then the tours and seminars, and the newsletters were mostly about telling those stories. That was the foundation the founding members built for us.

Now, 30 years later we're taking a look at what attracted people to GWFA back then and we realised that, while we publish lots of good articles, we don't have much for stories of what worked, or didn't work for you. We want to bring that back.

We know lots of you have some accomplishment you have made on your farms and ranches that you're proud of, and would like to share. We know there are lots of members who'd love to hear and learn from you. So, give us a call and we'll get your stories told.



The Lowly Dandelion - Friend or Foe?

Every year about this time the topics of discussion turn to those plentiful yellow flowers we see out on the pastures. The ones I'm talking about are dandelions. Tall Buttercup is another one that's found on way too many pastures in the West Country, but that's not the subject of this story.

Now, it seems to me that there are some people around who have a vendetta against pretty much anything with yellow flowers. I've seen some nasty weeds with yellow flowers, but some have undeservingly been given a bad rap.

I've heard some say that dandelions compete with forages for moisture and nutrients. Yes, I'll agree that there is competition between plants for water and nutrients. Dandelions, though, can access moisture and nutrients at far deeper levels in the soil, so I'd suggest that competition between plants is not as big an issue as some believe.



Back a bunch of years I managed a cow/calf operation for a couple of brothers while they worked full time in the oil patch. I remember having quite a discussion with one of the brothers about spraying dandelions on the pastures.



He was looking at the dandelions like they were the cause of poor production on the pastures. I maintained that what looked like a dandelion problem, was actually a symptom of the problem, the problem being low soil fertility. Even though he was the boss and I was just an employee, I won that discussion because I had evidence that supported my position.

Earlier that year I had been feeding the cow herd by rolling out bales side-by-side each day on a pasture that was particularly unproductive. Tiny little dandelions covered that pasture and even tinier grasses and clovers could be found between the dandelions.

As it turned out, I was able to feed on about half of that pasture before I moved the herd to their calving pasture. Come June that year I had lots of lush growth of grasses and clovers with a few large dandelions mixed in. There was no seeding done, other than some seeds dropping out of the hay that was fed and nothing was done to remove the dandelions. OK, so the dandelions were the symptom and not the problem in that case.

Since then I have also learned that dandelions, with their long taproots, bring nutrients from deep in the soil, back to the surface. Dead and decaying dandelion roots near the surface leave calcium and other minerals where shallower rooted forage plants can access them. Now that's a pretty good benefit.

Also, livestock readily eat dandelions along with the rest of the forages available. The livestock benefit by receiving minerals from grazing dandelions, minerals that might not be available in the other forages.

So, I'd say it's time to include dandelions as valuable contributors to the forage mix in pastures. They're highly nutritious and contrary to popular belief, a benefit to the pasture.





LJB Ranch

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Grazing Yearlings? Reduce Shrink Losses!

By Albert Kuipers

Have you ever wondered how much weight yearlings lose between your pasture and the scale at their destination, whether it be the auction-mart or a feedlot? Have you ever wondered why the cattle you sent from pasture to the auction-mart weighed a whole lot less than you expected them to? I've asked and heard questions about this subject many times.

Over the years I've learned that there are many factors that could contribute to these "shrink" losses. I've also learned that these losses can be a whole lot more than we think, and certainly a lot more than the pencil shrinks of two or three percent that we often agree when selling cattle.

For starters, I've noticed that cattle typically shrink a whole lot more when coming straight off pasture than when they're fed typical feedlot rations and shipped from a feedlot. Why is that? Well, for starters there's the moisture content difference between typical feedlot rations and pastures, especially the lush green pastures of spring and often those of intensively managed pastures.

Added to the moisture differences are the differences in nutrient levels and balances. Youthful pasture swards tend to be high in protein and low in fibre. Most of us have seen the effect these high protein, low fibre diets have on cattle and many have learned how to read the consistency of the manure from cattle to determine if the protein/fibre balance is right, or close to right for the animals in question.

I remember way back, I had the opportunity to participate in a project at the farm where I worked, that involved weighing cattle off pasture with minimal handling stress and then comparing that weight with their weight at the auction. A number of the cattle were fed a supplement that was supposed to reduce weight loss from shipping. Others were just weighed.

It was my job to get the animals to the scales with minimal stress. My recent education in "low stress livestock handling" helped me immensely in getting that done.

Now, I thought we'd be seeing shrink losses like two, three, or maybe five percent. I was surprised and shocked that some animals' shrink losses were pushing twenty percent.



Yearlings on a pasture I managed back in the late nineties.

I remember one bunch of my own yearlings I had on some rented pasture a few miles from home. After three months I decided to ship them straight off the pasture to the auction-mart. Due to my grazing management, forage quality was still quite high. To make things worse, the load-out facilities were far from ideal. These yearlings were highly stressed by the time we got them on the trailer and they were squirting manure, yes I say squirting because they were shooting manure waaaay back.

Anyhow, I was really disappointed with my cheque from the auction-mart and especially with their weights at the auction-mart. It seemed that they hadn't gained a half a pound per day on that pasture and it was good pasture. This led me to searching for whatever I could learn about reducing shrink when shipping cattle.

As it turned out, the supplement turned out to help some. Animals fed the supplement didn't shrink as much as animals that didn't get the supplement. I also tried feeding hay for the last few days before shipping cattle. Low stress livestock handling helped quite a bit, especially when the animals went straight to a feedlot and weighed coming off the truck. At one point I learned that the truck drivers started calling me the "Cow Whisperer". For a student of low stress livestock handling I considered that to be a great complement.

I also got better results when the protein/fibre balances of the pastures were lower. I got better results when I allowed pastures to get more mature before grazing, well into the reproductive stage. I started getting feedback from the feedlot that the cattle I shipped were "hard". This was highly valued by the cattle feeders, so I considered that to be another great complement.

So, if you're going to be shipping yearlings directly off pasture, consider some of these experiences of mine. If you get a chance, talk with others who are, or have grazed yearlings and shipped them straight off pasture.



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Alberta **AOF**
Agriculture Opportunity Fund

How I Got Rid Of Canada Thistle With Grazing

By Albert Kuipers



Got thistle problems? Can't use herbicides due to proximity to water-bodies, or don't want to use herbicides? Well, here's what I learned over the years since I first started learning controlled grazing management back in the early nineties.

I can't remember if I was a student at the time, or just newly graduated from Olds College. In any case, I was working at a farm near Bentley and had just attended a GWFA Controlled Grazing Course in Rimbey. I was excited about using my new found knowledge on the pastures I had recently fenced to accommodate controlled grazing.

One of the things I learned at the Controlled Grazing Course was the value of "stock density". I think I got that better than anything else I learned.

Anyhow, the first cattle we were custom grazing were some heifers with Texas Longhorn bulls running with them. I don't remember just how many head I had there, but I do remember that I had the stock density well over a hundred head per acre.

Now, the paddocks I started these heifers on had a strong population of Canada Thistles with a few other weeds and quackgrass making up the rest of the species on that part of the pasture. Not the greatest pasture I'd say, but it's what we had.

So, as I was saying, I started out with a high stock density, but I didn't really have a good handle on estimating forage

availability at that point. The morning after I started that herd, I found that the heifers had not only severely grazed that first paddock, but had pretty much blackened it with hoof action. At the time I hadn't yet heard about "mob grazing", but I think I had those kinds of results and maybe I'd taken it a little too far.

Over the next few days I began to learn how to allocate sufficient forages for each day of grazing. I continued with a fairly high stock density and pretty much started to get a handle on stock density and forage allocation by the end of that first trip over the pasture.

So, over the course of that grazing season I started to see a shift in plant species on those first paddocks I grazed. Not one thistle survived that initial high stock density grazing. Neither did the quackgrass. Alsike clover became the dominant species with very few weeds of any kind present. Now, alsike clover had not ever been seeded there and that part of the pasture had been in annual crop production with no forage crop ever seeded there. In fact, I never saw thistles in those paddocks for at least five years.

Wow! I had learned the power stock density has to change plant species. I also learned a not so pleasant lesson. Those heifers didn't gain worth a darn that summer. As well, more heifers were open than there should have been. I had pushed the stock density thing too far. Those heifers were simply not getting enough to eat. They didn't appear to be thin, though, they just didn't gain much weight.

So, this experience taught me a couple of things. First, that it's not a good idea to graze severely at a high stock density all the time. I should have made sure I had allocated enough forage each day so the animals wouldn't be short on forages every day. If I wanted to use livestock to control thistles, I should have done this for only one to three days at a time. I should have given them ample forages to fill their bellies to gain weight most of the time. This would allow the animals to compensate for those days they were made to clean up paddocks with major thistle issues.

Second, rather than have the livestock graze everything right to the roots, I should have allocated enough forages each day so they could eat the best and trample the rest. I learned later that there's nothing wrong with grazing as little as 25% of the sward, leaving the rest to be trampled, especially on that



A heifer munching on Canada Thistle.

Photo Credit Fito Zamudio, WCFA

Alberta Ag-Info Centre

310-farm

Phone 310-FARM (3276) toll-free to contact Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, or visit one of our field offices across the province for your agricultural information needs.

Canada

Alberta
Government

Growing Forward
A federal provincial territorial initiative

first trip over the pasture. *Please note my comment in the May, 2014 issue of The Blade.*

Another thing I learned from that experience is that I should have considered the class of livestock I chose to use as a thistle control tool. Yearling livestock that needed to gain weight should not be pushed like that. It would have been better to use cows, even cows with calves at foot for this. Even with cows, I wouldn't use them for weed control all the time. I'd work them at weed control for one to three days and then I'd allocate sufficient forages so the weed control days wouldn't reduce the performance of the cows and their offspring.

A few years back, maybe ten or more, I learned that a young lady by the name of Sue Schattle De Bruijn, a University of Alberta student at the time, was conducting a research project that showed how livestock could be used to control thistles. In fact, we held a GWFA tour that visited her project site just west of Rimbey.

Sue compared grazing at a high stock density and long recovery periods with grazing at a low stock density and short recovery periods for the pasture. These were also compared to continuous grazing and a deferred rotational grazing system.

She determined that grazing at a high stock density with long recovery periods did by far the best job of controlling thistles and allowed the grass sufficient recovery time to become strong and competitive. The other systems Sue tried did not do a good job of controlling thistles, or producing forage biomass.

So, I'd say this project pretty much supports what I learned the hard way about ten years prior. Other graziers have told me they've had good thistle control results with high stock density grazing as well.



You can advertise in The Blade!

You likely have seen the advertising in our spring and fall newsletters, but did you know you can advertise in The Blade? Well, yes you can.

For some time now we have accepted a limited number of paid ads submitted by GWFA members. (Membership is only \$20/year.) If you have a bull or production sale coming up, or if you have hay for sale, pasture for rent and you'd like to reach our audience, give us a call. Also, if you sell products, equipment or services that would be of interest to our readers we can help you reach our audience. Of course, we do want to make sure that ads we put in The Blade are for products and services that would be of considerable benefit to our members, so ads will be accepted for The Blade at our discretion.

So, give us a call at **403-844-2645** or email Muriel at gwfa1@telus.net or Albert at gwfa2@telus.net to learn more about our advertising policy for the Blade and to find out what it would cost to have your ad in the next issue.



AGM & Forum

June 20, 2014

At the Quality Inn North Hill 7150 50

Avenue Red Deer

9:30am-3:30pm

(\$20.00 charge to cover lunch)

A.M. Board Member Elections

P.M. Presentations: Biodiversity in the
RD River Watershed,

Community Consultation, & Engagement Strategies.

For more info or to register go to

www.rdrwa.ca or e-mail info@rdrwa.ca

Can Cattle be Taught to Eat Weeds?

In recent years a concept that has come up that cattle can learn to eat thistles and a whole lot of other weeds as well. Hmmm, what an interesting idea.

Dr. Raymond Provensa was the first person I heard who had done research in this area. He claimed that, just as a mother cow teaches her calves to eat what she eats, so can cows be taught to eat plants they historically avoided. In turn, once you have cows trained to eat certain weeds, the mother cow will teach her calves to eat the same plants.

These calves will continue to do so and then, teach their calves to do the same. As long as eating those plants don't make them feel sick, or give the animal some other nasty experience that they associate with eating those plants, they will continue to eat those plants.

In 2004, Kathy Voth developed a process for teaching cattle to eat weeds. This process mainly consisted of training cattle to eat certain weeds by feeding them in a controlled environment like a feedlot pen. She then gradually increased the amount of the weed in question offered to the cattle and after roughly a week or so, she had them readily eat that weed. Once the livestock were done that training program, they were turned into pastures high in that particular weed. The cattle ate those weeds right along with other forages they recognized. In some cases the livestock actually selected the weed in question.

Anyway, Kathy went on to learn that cattle can and will eat a wide variety of weeds, including various species of thistle. In fact, many of these weeds can be as nutritious as alfalfa and more nutritious than many grasses. Kathy, and others before her, found that sheep and goats could be trained the same way.

Kathy has developed this knowledge into a highly successful business. She assists many ranchers in training their

By Albert Kuipers



livestock to eat whatever weed plagues them on their pastures. As well, Kathy is a sought after speaker on the subject across North America. Kathy has been in Alberta as well. She, along with partner Rachel Gilker, have a very informative website <http://onpasture.com> and publishes a weekly e-newsletter she emails to a huge number of interested contacts.

So, has this been done in Alberta? Yes, Foothills Forage & Grazing Association conducted a project with one of their members and were able to show that, yes indeed, trained cattle will eat thistles.

A friend in the Innisfail area tried it as well. He said it was somewhat successful even with up to two weeks between the training period and being turned out into a pasture with lots of thistles.

Another friend and current GWFA Director, told me his cattle didn't have to be trained to eat thistle. His Luing cattle will eat many weed species and don't turn their noses up at poor quality forage. This breed was developed under very harsh conditions in the UK, so you could say these cattle were bred to eat weeds.

In the West Country the most challenging weed issue is Tall Buttercup. Can this be done with Tall Buttercup? One concern is its toxicity. Cattle can get lesions in their mouths if they eat too much Tall Buttercup. However, I learned that the harmful effects of toxicities is all about dosage. I know of cattle that eat Tall Buttercup right along with forages. I had someone else tell me that some of his cattle preferred Tall Buttercup to Meadow Foxtail.

So anyways, the long and short of this story is that livestock can and will eat many weeds, including thistles. Not only will they eat them, but their performance doesn't have to suffer because they're eating these and other weeds. That's great news for anyone who doesn't want to use chemicals on their pastures and for anyone who's pastures border on streams and other types of water-bodies or wetlands.



BRING YOUR APPETITE
FOR LEARNING AND
SUPPER



OPEN HOUSE

Medicine River Watershed
Society

**New
Members
Welcome**

Wednesday, June 18, 2014
Trade Show, Beef on a Bun,
Special Presentations
Starting at 5:00pm

Location: Gilby Community Centre
(Located 1 1/2 miles west of Hwy#766 on
Highway #12)

SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER:

- Jeff Renton, Agroforestry and Woodlot Extension Society: "He Who Plants the Most Trees Wins"

For more information contact:

- Keith Pregoda 403.746.2796
- Garth Yeomans 403.746.5990
- August Liivam 403.746.5712





Save the date!

LAND EKG-CANADA School

EKG Blink Monitoring Basics - June 24 & 25, 2014 - Rain dates - July 2 & 3, 2014

Participants will leave this two-day course with well-practiced abilities in choosing monitoring sites, transect layout mechanics, and EKG photo procedures. This class is designed for any rancher or conservation manager seeking a rapid, repeatable monitoring program, right away.

Participants will practice thorough land monitoring basics, soil survey using Alberta Soil Information Viewer, grazing indexing, forage production measurement methods, surface cover percents, and EZ-EKG assessments, but will spend the majority of time learning monitoring mechanics for EKG transect lines.

Additional time will be spent on "situational monitoring" and site recording techniques including an introduction to EKG DataStore. Monitoring kits will be available for those wishing to purchase this item.

Prerequisite: None, bring a camera if you have one.

JOIN TED SUTTON FOR THIS INFORMATIVE 'HANDS-ON' COURSE

For course content information contact Ted Sutton
Tel: 403.764.7402, Cell: 403.909.1772, Ted@ekgcan.com

For registration information and to register
please contact the GWFA office at 403-844-2645



Can you measure what you manage?

The ability to 'eyeball' a landscape and evaluate range health/condition and productivity is a complex and difficult skill to acquire. It requires (at least) an understanding of plant/range communities, key indicator plant species, a comparison of what plants ARE there vs. (theoretically) what SHOULD be there and a good understanding of animal distribution patterns within the area to be evaluated. Plant identification is key to your range management skill as well as a better than passing, ability to visually estimate productivity relative to rainfall and season of growth. If you don't happen to have a Range Management degree it's not only difficult but possibly very misleading if you attempt this yourself. And yet there is a dearth of range management specialists such that, at least here in Alberta, frequency of assessment is often less than optimal.

Land EKG offers an alternative methodology; one that can be rapidly acquired and applied on an annual basis by non-range management specialists – ranchers and conservation land managers. An often referenced analogy is related to the health care system wherein the doctor (expensive and scarce) doesn't diagnose the common cold but relies on nurses and mothers to monitor the health of children and to only use the expensive help when absolutely required. Similarly, we encourage ranchers to become skilled at a monitoring/evaluation process that is well within their capabilities and to rely on the range management specialist only when the need arises. Not only is this a cost effective alternative to standard range health assessment

but because you can do this yourself, it can (and should) be done every year so that a pattern of change can be identified well before long term damage is inflicted. The converse also holds, where annual monitoring can tell the rancher if there is the potential take more grass without damage to the environment; a profitable undertaking if done well.

One of the fundamental differences between standard Range Health Assessment and what you can do relates to a series of measurements that do NOT require a detailed knowledge of plant species identification. By measuring parameters that are associated with range health and productivity the rancher can obtain most of the key information desired. By completing this assessment every year, the rancher can add to the base set



of information and thus establish health 'trends'; for better or worse. These trends will then tell you if you need to adjust your management, for example, stocking rates or rest periods etc. It will even tell you when you need to get "professional help" well before irreparable damage is done.

Another difference is the concept of point sampling vs landscape evaluation. Land EKG monitoring typically uses two basic techniques; photo points and transects. Both of these techniques record what is happening with a specific area rather than the normally larger landscape focus. The key here is to monitor changes to this smaller area every year at the same time every year. Within a few years, you will be able to identify if the change (if any) is positive or negative and therefore if management change is advised. The assumption is either that each of the sample points are representative of the whole or that the monitoring site is so chosen to protect vulnerable and/or heavily used areas. In this way a positive result in this 'worst case' would indicate that the balance of the landscape is likely in better health. Photo points are particularly useful when tracking erosion or large undesirable plant species invasion.

Riparian areas are often well suited photo point recordings over an extended period of time. Transects, are well suited to monitoring more subtle and often less visible changes. Ideally representative of range landscapes, transects are also useful in tracking vulnerable areas such as heavily used paddocks, native grass communities, plant communities on poorer soils etc. In the second scenario, non-representative transect sampling will assure the rancher that if these areas are healthy then the remaining areas are likely also healthy. In both cases, sampling on an annual basis will identify health trends earlier than range health assessments done every 10 or even every 20

years. It's up to you to decide if your point sampling is good enough or if you need more expert help or if you can change your management in response to these trends and monitor again next year. Remember, annual monitoring is well suited to mob grazing or HDLF grazing as you don't have to wait very long to see what the effects have been and it will also tell you if your productivity relative to rainfall has changed, assuming consistent sample periods.

Land EKG monitoring is intended to help ranchers and land managers better understand their land. It is hoped that these methods will be used in conjunction with a keen eye to the landscape even if you're not a range specialist. As you continue to develop your 'eyeball' skills, Land EKG methods will help by confirming your visual assessment with hard data.

Measurement is not only a very good way to develop your best management practices but it is also a great way to demonstrate your environmental stewardship to the public and defend your practices. "Be prepared" is a great motto and one that will serve you well in these changing times.

We would love to have you join us for our Land EKG Blink Monitoring Basics Schools scheduled for various locations across Alberta this summer. In the meantime, here's wishing you healthy calves, plenty of rain and a bit of family time this summer.

Cheers

Ted Sutton, Land EKG Canada



News Release

ARECA Hires New Executive Director!



ALBERTA, May 29, 2014 – "ARECA is pleased to welcome Janette McDonald as our new Executive Director," says Bill Gaugler, chair of the board of the Agricultural Research and Extension Council of Alberta (ARECA). "Ty Faechner, our former Executive Director has moved to a new position. We appreciate the professional leadership Ty provided ARECA in his 5 years as Executive Director, and 3 years as Research Manager with our organization, and look forward to the experience that McDonald will bring to ARECA."

ARECA is an association of producer groups working with farmers to enhance and improve their operations through access to field research and new technology. ARECA acts as a strong, united voice for producers by speaking on their behalf to industry leaders and government representatives.

McDonald worked for 10 years as a District Agriculturist and 13 years as Executive Director of the Alberta Pulse Growers. "I respect farmers and the whole business of producing food," says McDonald. "I am excited about the opportunity to help farmers get the information they need to maintain soil and water health while paying the bills. The balance has always

been tricky, and it will continue to be a challenge in the future."

"Our member organizations are looking forward to working with

McDonald to advance the interests of Alberta farmers and the agriculture industry," says Gaugler. ARECA's member associations are directed by farmer-run boards and represent producers across the province.

"I have worked with farmers all across this province, and with organizations across the country. I will do my best to deliver the creative management that ARECA is looking for," says McDonald.

For more information, please contact:

Bill Gaugler, Chair

Agricultural Research and Extension Council of Alberta
780-836-5349

Agricultural Research and
Extension Council of Alberta
www.areca.ab.ca

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These publications are available to our members by phoning or emailing the GWFA office!

Booklets:

- Forage & Grasslands Guide - A Canadian Forage and Grasslands Association publication
- Management of Canadian Prairie Rangeland
- Pasture Planner - A guide for developing your grazing system
- Sod Seeding - Seeding forages into existing stands using minimal tillage
- Stock-poisoning Plants of Western Canada (Not many left)
- Grazing Notebook - A handy pocket-sized pasture records booklet
- Wintering Site Assessment and Design Tool - A guide to selecting and Managing Wintering sites in Western Canada

Factsheets:

- Agronomic Management of Stockpiled Pastures
- Agronomic Management of Swath Grazed Pastures
- Beef Ration Rules of Thumb
- Nutrient Management on Intensively Managed Pastures

Other:

- Wealthy Rancher Calculator - A simple Excel spreadsheet calculator on a CD