



The Blade

"Creating an Awareness of Forages"

JUNE 2012

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- **Western Canadian Grazing Conference - November 27, 28 & 29 - Pg 12**

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.

Approved May 2012



Annual General Meeting

Get involved in your watershed!

Join the Red Deer River Watershed Alliance for their Annual General Meeting to find out how you can be involved and to learn more about your watershed. The meeting will include an election of new RDRWA directors, as well as presentations from guest speakers Bob Mills and Andrea Hiba Brack from NOVA chemicals. JOIN US.

RDRWA

Annual General Meeting

9:30 am - 3:00pm

June 21, 2012

Quality Inn North Hill
7150 50th Avenue
Red Deer, Alberta



For further details or to register contact the
RDRWA office at 403.340.7379 or
email info@rdrwa.ca



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Hello Everyone!

My name is Bonita Knopp and I am this year's summer student for the Grey Wooded Forage Association. I started working with Albert and Muriel at the beginning of May and I plan on staying until the end of August. I have enjoyed the past few weeks, and I am very eager to spend more time working in the great outdoors!

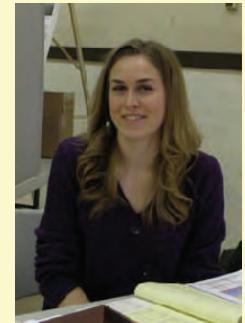
Fortunately, I was able to attend the AGM this year and had the pleasure of meeting a lot of you already! For those of you I have not met yet, here are a few things about myself.

I grew up on a farm in the Leslieville area, where I currently like to spend most of my free time. Over the last three years, I have attended the University of Alberta working towards an Education degree. My desire is to teach young students somewhere between kindergarten and grade three, but I will happily teach whatever I can get my hands into.

I was very lucky to be a part of the Ag Theme Park this year giving me that little bit of extra experience! This fall I will be entering my fourth year of school making the light at the end of the tunnel shine even brighter!

Looking forward to meeting more of you throughout the summer!

Bonita

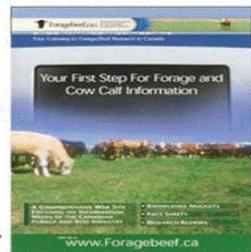


What's on Foragebeef.ca?

See Front Page News
New information on forage beef issues from across Canada

New and Improved Swath Grazing Manual Available Soon!

Summarizing research done by Western Forage/Beef Group and Others



Coming Soon!
Greenhouse Gas Research Summary as it affects the forage beef industry

www.foragebeef.ca

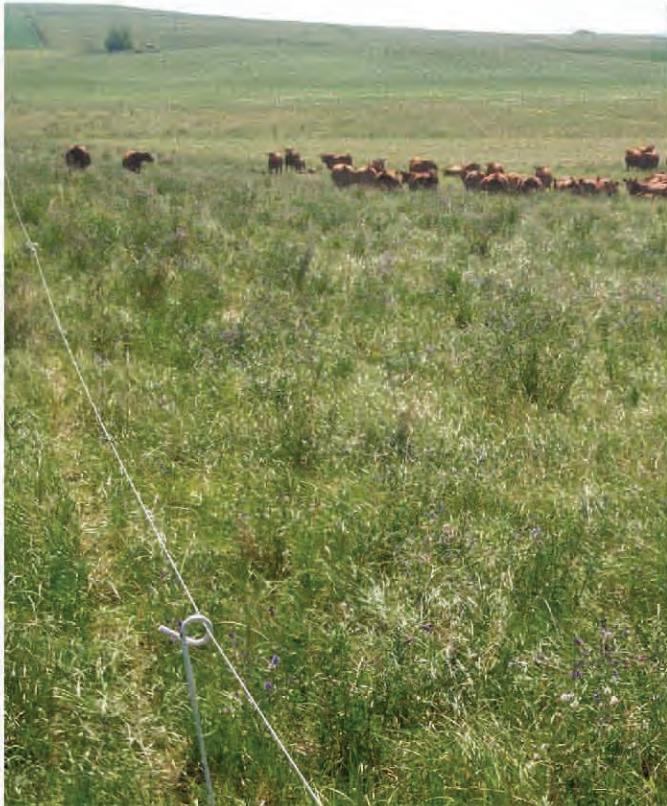
WANTED: Part time help managing pastures this summer. "If you know of someone who might be interested, please give them my contact information." Thanks, John.

John C. Reid, PAg, CAFA
Solar Harvest Ventures Inc
Box 17, Site 4, RR 1
Rocky Mountain House, AB
T4T 2A1
Home/office phone: 403-729-2416
Cellular phone: 403-358-2137
Fax: 403-729-2417



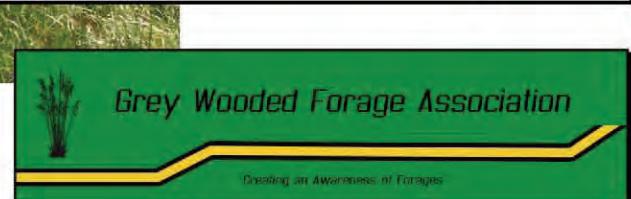
Get more green from your green!

**Sign up today, for the
CONTROLLED GRAZING SCHOOL**



What is “controlled grazing”?

- A grazing management program based on maintaining control of animals, animal numbers and the length of time each area is to be grazed or rested.
- The Controlled Grazing School will teach you how you can do this on your farm.
- Learn in class and “out on the grass”



June 19, 21, 26, 28

****Different topics covered each night****

5:30 to 9:00 PM

Olds/Bowden area (east)

Cost: \$15 per participant, per night (includes suppers)

Register Today by contacting one of your Hosts:

Grey Wooded Forage Association (Albert Kuipers): 403-844-2645

Mountain View County (Amber Hines): 403-335-3311 ext. 135

Kneehill County (Bowen Claūsen): 403-443-5541

Red Deer County (Ken Lewis): 403-342-8653



Red Deer County



Manager's Notes:

By Albert Kuipers



Getting Intimate With Your Pasture...

Each summer I'm asked to walk several pastures with their owners or managers. We deal with questions like "Why isn't my pasture better than it is?" or "Should I tear this pasture up and start over?" As we've just got into the grazing season on most pastures, taking a look at the symptoms and identifying the underlying problems is a good idea.

There are two major issues I see most often and plant species are usually not among them. I see the lack of certain plant species or the abundance of others, like Dandelions, as symptoms of the real under-lying problems. Besides the question of which plant species are there or not, I ask myself, "What is the health and productivity of these species."

I've now ruled out two factors commonly seen as 'the problem' on many pastures. The first thing I look at is the condition of the plants that are present. Am I looking at miniaturized versions of forage plants I know have greater potential? We've all seen them.

In most of our area, we'll readily identify them as Creeping Red Fescue, Kentucky Bluegrass and White Clover. We've gotten so used to seeing these species in miniature, that many of us believe that that's all these species are capable of. Others of us have seen the massive potential that these lowly plants can produce.

We often see many small Dandelions, Yarrow and Wild Strawberry hiding the tiny grasses and legumes on these pastures as well. I think many of us don't have too far to look to find pastures in this condition.

So here are some questions I start asking: Are we looking at over-grazing? Are we looking at nutrient or mineral deficiencies? Or, are we looking at both over-grazing and nutrient or mineral deficiencies?

The next things I look for are urine spots and old manure spots. If I know the grazing management is pretty good and these spots are dark green, 'thick as the hair on a dog', and producing a lot more forage than the surrounding ground, I have a pretty good clue that lack of nutrients is the main problem on that pasture.

I sometimes see pastures that are dark green and pretty uniform in color and density, but they're just real short, with miniaturized plants. I would tend to think that over-grazing is the main issue on these pastures.

I often see pastures that tell me they're over-grazed and badly in need of nutrients as well. On these pastures it seems that the tiny forage plants are well hidden or non-existent. Many tiny dandelions and/or lots of strawberry with some yarrow thrown in, seem to have taken over. It's easy to see how many of us think the first thing we have to do is spray to get rid of all these 'weeds'.

Now, most of us don't like to spend any money on nutrients for our pastures so the first thing I look at is, "How can we change the management to help the pasture realize more of its potential?" Managing a pasture for appropriately longer rests and shorter grazing durations at a higher stock density can address the over-grazing issues at a relatively low cost.

It's interesting how most of us have no problem putting enough nutrients and/or manure on our annual cropland, hay land or even when we're re-seeding a pasture. Why is it that our mature pastures are expected to produce for us **for nothing**?

Often, by taking care of nutrient problems and over-grazing on our pastures, we can avoid the huge costs of re-seeding pastures. On pastures in poor condition with good grazing management, I have seen forage production increases of greater than 200% from winter feeding on the pasture or purchased pig manure.

We are often hesitant to spend even a few dollars on some good soil tests of our pastures. I guess they really are expected to produce for nothing. Soil fertility is not even considered worth thinking about. Keep in mind that a pasture cannot produce any more than that allowed by its most limiting nutrient. You can pile the nitrogen on, but if calcium is limiting, much of the nitrogen could be wasted.

I believe that in the management of our pastures lies the sustainability and profitability of our industry. We have considerable evidence that, with appropriate inputs, our pastures can produce the nutrient needs of our livestock cheaper than any stored feed alternative. We also have evidence that many of our pastures can produce two to five times more forage than they are currently producing, with the appropriate inputs of management and nutrients.

This should give us some food for thought and discussion while we're walking those pastures this summer. May your pastures be healthy and productive, and may you prosper because of them.



Alfalfa Pasture Management

From:



Trevor Lennox, Regional Forage Specialist, Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture, Swift Current

Alfalfa is one of the most productive and nutritious forages available. However, the practice of grazing beef cattle on alfalfa pastures has been limited because of the tendency of alfalfa to cause bloat. This article discusses some pasture management strategies to help reduce the risk of bloat while grazing alfalfa.

Seed alfalfa/grass mixtures rather than pure alfalfa.

Having a mixture with 35% alfalfa will provide most of the nitrogen fertility for the pasture stand while keeping the potential for bloat to a minimum.

Graze pasture after alfalfa begins to flower.

The greatest risk of bloat occurs during rapid vegetative growth before flowering. Prior to flowering the plant has low levels of fibre, which increases the rate of digestion and the risk of bloat. Prior to flowering alfalfa also has high levels of soluble proteins which have been attributed to bloat. In one trial, bloat was eliminated after the alfalfa began to bloom.

Divide the pasture into paddocks and move livestock before alfalfa re-growth occurs.

When livestock begin grazing a paddock with alfalfa in flowering stage, the risk of bloat in the first 7-10 days is relatively low. However, with long day-length, moderate temperatures, and adequate moisture, alfalfa re-growth can be very rapid. Alfalfa plants that are initially grazed when the livestock enter a paddock may re-grow enough by day 14 to cause bloat. The risk becomes greater if the animals are selectively grazing for the lush re-growth.

Cut and graze windrows.

There are two benefits from this strategy. Firstly, the cutting of the plants forces the animals to consume the entire plant stem, and not just select for the highly digestible leaves. A second benefit is the alfalfa plants will begin to wilt after cutting. In a series of trials where swaths were fed fresh, wilted for 24 hours, and wilted for 48 hours. The incidence of bloat was reduced significantly by wilting. In some years there was no bloat with the 48 hour wilted material.

Mob graze.

A relatively large group of animals is rotated through a set of relatively small paddocks.



Photo by Tia Stadnicki

For example, a herd may be moved 2-3 times per day. This strategy does not allow individual animals enough time to selectively graze large amounts of lush growth. Because of the time requirement, this strategy requires a large group of animals to justify the cost of a full time herd manager.

Introduce the animals to alfalfa when they are relatively full.

In the short term this prevents stock from gorging themselves. Also, do not allow livestock to become too hungry before moving to a new paddock.

Graze alfalfa for short time intervals during the first few days.

This strategy introduces alfalfa to the diet more slowly and allows the producer to remove animals more susceptible to bloat. However, this must be tried with care because bloat is often associated with discontinuous grazing which generally results in more intensive feeding periods.

Graze early spring or when alfalfa is short.

In this case the animals cannot ingest enough alfalfa in order to bloat. If this strategy is used continuously on the same pasture, it is not good for the long-term health of the pasture.



Seeing Is Believing

A yield trial of two corn fields was conducted during the summer of 2009, when Mexico was experiencing its worst drought in 68 years. During this time, dryland-farmed corn failed all over the country. The difference between microbiological treated organic corn and a field of non-treated organic corn is an eye-opener. The benefits of microbiological farming is clear.



Control non-treated organic corn: Sept. 18/09



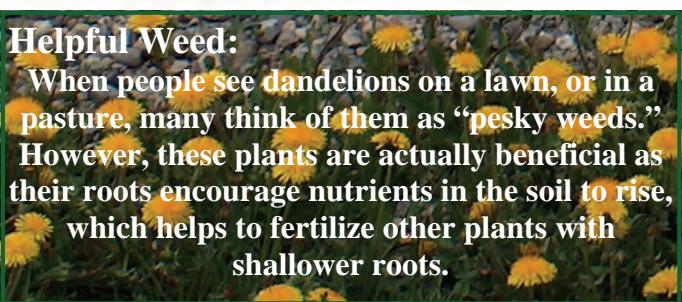
Microbiological treated organic corn: Sept. 18/09



Control corn on left—Biological on right

Helpful Weed:

When people see dandelions on a lawn, or in a pasture, many think of them as "pesky weeds." However, these plants are actually beneficial as their roots encourage nutrients in the soil to rise, which helps to fertilize other plants with shallower roots.



Soil Doctor

"Making More With Microbes" Soil Training Program With Doug Weatherbee July 5 – 8, 2012

At

Rancho Relaxo Rural Training Centre (Located 10 minutes outside of Rocky Mountain House – Free onsite camping is available or accommodation in Rocky)

Learn the essentials of soil microbiology and composting to help boost your next crop.

Reduce your costs and dependence on Chemical fertilizers/biocides, and irrigation.

This seminar will introduce land management practices virtually any landowner can integrate, leading to improvements in soil moisture, microbiology, and most importantly...crop yield and productivity.

Learn how beneficial soil microbes can provide soluble nutrients and plant disease suppression to your farm, ranch, orchard or garden.

This Workshop is only **\$499** and delivers \$4,000 worth of information

What are the benefits of creating a healthy Soil Food Web?

- Increased water holding capacity
- Disease resistance
- Less compaction
- Improved uptake of nutrients by plants
- Higher fertility rates
- Reduced weed presence

Contact:

Genesis Permaculture @ 403.923.5090
Jeff or Juli (Rancho Relaxo) @ 403-845-7993
Register online at Eventbrite:

<http://makingmorewithmicrobes.eventbrite.ca>



Join us on a pasture walk with Jim Gerrish

Jim Gerrish of American GrazingLands Services LLC is dedicated to aiding farmers and ranchers to more effectively manage their grazing lands for economic and environmental sustainability. Jim and his wife Dawn provide on-ranch consulting services and participate in many workshops and seminars across the US and Canada.



Jim's experience includes over 20 years of beef-forage systems research and outreach while on the faculty of the University of Missouri, as well as 20 years of commercial cattle and sheep production on their family farm in northern 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-animal interactions and provides foundation for many of the basic principles of Management-intensive Grazing.

July 9 & 10, 2012

Location: Crossview Farms & Tomahawk Cattle Ranch, Keephills AB

Lunch both days and supper on Monday night provided.

\$60 members, \$80 non-members

Pre-register by calling: 866-725-4447



Growing Forward 2 (GF2) Key Messages

May, 2012

Industry Update

Key Messages

- Alberta's 5-year Growing Forward agreement with the Federal government expires March 31, 2013. Although the launch of Growing Forward 2 (GF2) is less than a year away, planning for it has been underway since the fall of 2010.
- As Growing Forward 2 continues to take shape, you can check for updates on Alberta's Growing Forward website: www.growingforward.alberta.ca/GrowingForward2.
- Direct media enquiries to the Alberta Agriculture Media Line 780-422-1005.

Results of National Consultations - "The Future of Agriculture Policy in Canada"

- You can learn more about what was heard during the public and online consultations conducted between March and September of 2011 by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), in partnership with provinces and territories. The "As It Was Heard" Report from the consultations has been posted on AAFC's website: www.agr.gc.ca/GrowingForward2.

Policy Accord – Saint Andrews Statement

- In July 2011, Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Ministers agreed to the Policy Accord or the Saint Andrews Statement (SAS) which set the national direction for the development of GF2.
- The intent is to achieve a profitable, sustainable, competitive and innovative agriculture, agri-food and agri-products industry that is market responsive, and that anticipates and adapts to changing circumstances and is a major contributor to the well-being of Canadians.
- GF2 will constitute an integrated approach to agriculture, agri-food, and agri-processing policies by focusing on two broad policy outcomes and two key drivers.
- For more information on the national policy objectives for GF2 or to read a copy of the Saint Andrews Statement visit the AAFC website: www.agr.gc.ca/GrowingForward2.



Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Ministers Meeting – April 20, 2012

- Agriculture Ministers met and launched the formal GF2 negotiations. During the meeting Ministers agreed that GF2 will focus on investments in innovation, competitiveness, market opportunities, adaptability and sustainability.
- Ministers aim to sign the GF2 multilateral agreement at their next annual meeting in September and to have the new policy framework in place by April 2013.

Grass Cattle & Pasture Rent

The price of cattle and the rates charged for pasture rent are intertwined. The current reality is that the relationship between the two is not that positively correlated. I'm often asked by pasture owners why pasture rents have remained flat and have not risen given the increased prices that the cattle industry has experienced for the past 18 months. The straight forward explanation can be found in the old law of supply and demand.

The recent Statistics Canada January 1, 2012 inventory report indicates an increase of 0.9% in the number of cattle on Alberta farms. However, this increase comes mainly from the classes of cattle that we typically do not see on pasture – feeder and slaughter cattle. We do see an increase of 2.3% in beef heifer replacement but we also see a decline of 1.5% in beef cow numbers resulting in a net loss of about 20,000 breeding females in the Alberta beef herd. Bull numbers are also down by 0.9%. It is beef cows, heifers and bulls that predominantly use pasture. With a reduced demand as a result of lower cattle numbers coupled with a static supply of available pasture we typically see a flat pasture rent.

Compounding the situation is the tremendous price slide found in feeder cattle at the present time. The price slide for mid range 6 weights going to mid range 7 weights is about 17 cents for feeders in central Alberta according to AARD's May 25th Weekly Livestock Market Review. The 7 weight to 8 weight price slide is 18 cents.

Producers purchase grassers in the spring to take advantage of economic gains on pasture often in the 2 pounds per day range. A 650 pound steer grazing for 100 days will weigh in at about 850 around the first week of September. A 650 pound steer bought at \$1.70 per pound would cost \$1105. By September that 850 pound steer could be worth \$1147 factoring in the 35 cent price slide. If pasture rent cost 50 cents per day, the result would be a loss of \$8 per head on those grass cattle. Add to this hauling costs, possible death losses, interest costs, cost of day riders and marketing costs and one can see that there is not a great deal of motivation for someone to run grass cattle this summer especially if they are faced with increased pasture rent.

The following information is available on



Weekly Livestock Market Review [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/sdd6247](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/sdd6247)

January 1, 2012 Livestock Inventory Estimates - Alberta/Canada
[http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/sdd13897](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/sdd13897)

Understanding the Cattle Market Sliding Scale [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/sis12357](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/sis12357)

If you have any questions regarding farm management, give us a call at the Ag-Info Centre a call. Our phone number is 310-FARM (3276).

Ted Nibourg, B.Sc.Ag, MDE
Farm Business Management Specialist, Ag-Info Centre

Alberta

Alberta EFP

Environmental Farm Plan

Please call **GWFA Manager, Albert Kuipers at (403) 844-2645** or your local County Agricultural Services staff if you would like to complete an Environmental Farm Plan. Your EFP is required to apply for funding to the Environmental Stewardships Plan Program of Growing Forward. Grazing & Winter Feeding, Integrated Crop Management and Manure Management are the 3 Stewardship programs available.



Soil Chemistry Now Available
@ Soil Foodweb Canada!

Soil Foodweb Canada is proud to announce that effective immediately we will be offering not only biological testing but chemistry testing as well! We are using a 'Melich 1' extraction

to assess the water soluble portion of the macro and micronutrients.

Go to <http://soilfoodweb.ca/SFC-Newsletter4.4.pdf> for more information!

Soil Foodweb Canada Ltd.

285 Service Rd. Box 420

Vulcan, Alberta T0L 2B0

403-485-6981

If you're interested in starting or being involved in a Grazing Club, please call: Arnold at 780 495-4593 or Albert at 403 844-2645.



Agriculture et
Agroalimentaire Canada

Agriculture and
Agri-Food Canada



This publication is made possible by funding from Alberta Agriculture & Rural Development & Alberta Environment and Water via the Agriculture Opportunities Fund (AOF).

Alberta



!!!Don't miss any issues of The Blade!!!

Join Grey Wooded Forage Association

Or renew your membership!

**2012 – 2013 Memberships are available now for \$20.00
and run from April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013**

For more information phone 403-844-2645

Become a part of an enthusiastic group of people who are exploring ways to turn grass into \$\$\$.

Membership is open to anyone interested in forage production and grazing management in an economically and environmentally sustainable way.

Members benefit by:

- Receiving discounts on Controlled Grazing Courses, seminars, tours, farm calls and consulting on grazing management, pasture rejuvenation, feed production (annual forages) and more.
- Receiving *The GWFA Newsletter* in Spring & Fall and *The Blade* monthly.
- Receive up-to-date information on G.W.F.A. activities via The Blade.

Please mail the portion below with a cheque for \$20.00 to:

Grey Wooded Forage Association
Box 1448
Rocky Mountain House, Alberta
T4T-1B1

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY:

Renewal _____ or New Member _____
Canada Post _____ or Email _____

Name..... Phone.....
Address..... Fax.....
Town. Prov. Email.....
Postal Code..... Confirm Email.....

Please give us an idea of what area of forage production you are interested in:

Controlled Grazing & Pasture Management: _____

Growing Annual Forages for Extended Grazing or Swath Grazing: _____

Growing Annual Forages for Silage or Greenfeed: _____

Growing Hay: _____ Ration Balancing: _____

Soil Biology: _____ Pasture Rejuvenation or Renovation: _____

Low Cost Cow/calf Production: _____

Environmental Sustainability: _____ Economical Sustainability: _____

COMMENTS: _____



October 2004

Agdex 420/52-4

Beef Ration Rules of Thumb

This factsheet can both guide producers through a feed test and help them understand the results.

With a feed test in front of you, look at the following rules and compare them to the feed test. Remember, these are rules of thumb, which means they hold true most of the time, but variations in management and cow type will affect the end result.

These rules of thumb should not be considered a replacement for balancing rations with proven software, but rather an aid to understand the feed and where it fits in the management.

Rules of Thumb

Dry matter

Always refer to the "dry matter" numbers. These numbers have the moisture factored out and allow the comparison of all feeds, from silage to grains.

Crude protein

Protein is a building block. The Beef Cow Rule of Thumb with protein 7.9-11, which means an average mat requires a ration with crude protein 9 per cent in mid pregnancy, 9 per cent in late pregnancy.

Energy

Energy gives the ability to use the building blocks for growth and other productive purposes. Learn one of the six measures for energy and stick with it. Using Total Digestible Nutrients (TDN) per cent, the Rule of Thumb is 55-60-65. This rule says that for a mature beef cow to maintain her body condition score (BCS) through the winter, the ration must have a TDN energy reading of 55 per cent in mid pregnancy, 60 per cent in late pregnancy and 65 per cent after calving.



August 2009

Agdex 130/536-1

Nutrient Management on Intensively Managed Pastures

Pastures are unique to agricultural production systems in that only a very small portion of the nutrients

effect of legumes

and environmental risks

and pathways

total pools of nutrients including soil, plant litter, living plants, plant litter, living animals, large herbivores, above and ground invertebrates (beetles and soil microbes), and the atmosphere.

Cycles develop as nutrients flow through them from pool to pool. The processes and pathways of nutrient cycles are different for various land uses and human intervention cycles. Balances are made up of outputs and losses of nutrients from a pasture system.

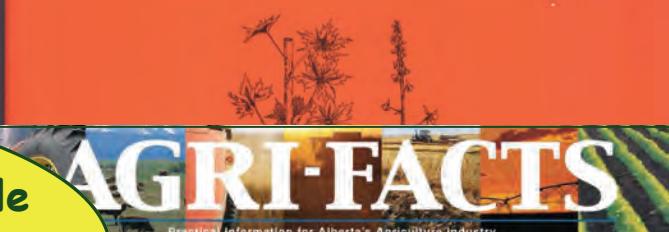
Inputs = outputs + losses when they are removed or added by man. These expected losses are the same type of fertilizer or seed inputs that are applied.

Pasture Planner



Stock-poisoning Plants of Western Canada

W. MAJAK, B. M. BROOKE and R. T. OGILVIE



Agdex 420/56-4

Agronomic Management of Swath Grazed Pastures

Fod, feeding, cow management and manure disposal can account for up to two-thirds of the total cost of production in a cow-calf operation. Systems that can extend the grazing season and reduce these costs are of great interest to cow-calf producers. One of these is swath grazing.

Swath

Some

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

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada



Agriculture and

Agri-Food

Canada

SAVE THE DATE!!



"GRASS ROOTS OF GRAZING"

November 27 - 29, 2012

Sheraton Hotels & Resorts, Red Deer AB

Keynote Speakers: Neil Dennis David Irvine Charley Orchard Glen Rabenberg

For More Information Contact: West Central Forage Association

westcentralforage@gmail.com (780) 727-4447



New for 2012:

A Tour at the Lacombe Research Centre!!!

