



Grey
Wooded
Forage
Association

The Blade

"Creating an Awareness of Forages"



JUNE 2015

Box 1448, 5039 - 45 Street, Rocky Mountain House, Alberta T4T 1B1,
Phone: 403 844 2645, Website: www.greywoodedforageassociation.com
Email: Albert: GWFA2@telus.net, or Ginette: GWFA3@telus.net

Due to the enormous cost of printing and postage, an additional fee of \$10 will be required from anyone wanting to receive printed copies of The Blade in the mail!
Effective July 1, 2015

GB



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New!

MISSION STATEMENT

To promote environmentally and economically sustainable forage and agricultural practices.

VISION STATEMENT

The community is engaged in regenerative agricultural production methods.



Grey Wooded Forage Association

"Creating an Awareness of Forages"

Thank you to everyone who contributed to
the success of our 2015
Annual General Meeting & Tradeshow!

Your contributions of Silent Auction items, Cash
and Door-prizes are very much appreciated!

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Victor Penner
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Rocky Mountain House Coop
Bunch Welding
Crop Production Services

A special thanks to all who attended.
Your commitment to our organization is of great value to us.

Graze for Clean Water!

**Producer Information Evening
at the Last West Hall! (West of Rimbey)!**

June 10, 2015, 5:00 to 8:30PM

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Manager's Notes:

By Ginette Boucher, Manager

Greetings,

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to all of you who contributed to the success of our AGM. The Tradeshow brought in \$1250.00 and all of it matching dollars which is required by our funders. Thank you for your contributions. To all of you who attended our AGM your presence and participation was appreciate. Your input into the decisions that had to be made to assist in the growth and vision of our organization was extremely important.

Regarding the Bylaw change of one signature on checks we understand your concerns; we are currently working on a policy to insure financial integrity of GWFA. Upon completion of this policy we will publish it in the Blade.

We thank our outgoing Board for their hard work and dedication to our organization. Our new elected Executive and Board member positions are as follows: Ken Ziegler - Chairman, Vance Graham - Vice-Chair, Herman Wyering - Treasurer, Brendon Anderson - Secretary, our additional Board members are Andrew Ritson-Bennett, Cyril Newsham, Deborah Skeels, Chris Sande and Theodore Chastko. Thank you to the new Board & Executive Directors for your willingness to contribute to the future of GWFA. I feel that we have a good balance in our new Board with some fresh ideas and a variety of skills. In the July Blade we will have a new Board photo and an



introduction of each Director.

We are adding a "producer feature" in the Blade to develop a stronger relationship with our membership and learn from each other. We invite you to become the "producer feature" of the month. When I am in your area I would be pleased to come and get to know you, visit your operation, take a few pictures, walk your pastures and hear your story. What we would like is to write the story about how you started out, type and breed of livestock, what improvements you have made to your operation in the last several years in regards to your fencing, watering system, winter feeding, and building organic matter, as well as how you have overcome adversity. We feel that by sharing your stories this will add incredible value to the Blade and assist new young producers to learn. If you're willing to share this with us we would be pleased to publish your story. Please contact us by email or phone if you're are interested.

We would like to invite the membership to participate in our committees. We need one additional member to assist us with projects, and two members to assist with the publicity committee. If you would like to contribute to these committees please contact us, we really need your help and input.

Printing and postage of the Blade has become a considerable expense. To assist us in being able to continue this service the Board has decided to add a surcharge fee of \$10.00 per year for printing and posting to everyone requiring a printed copy. This surcharge fee will be implemented on July 1st 2015. Everyone who has already paid this year's membership is good until April 1/2016. The annual fee will remain \$20.00.

We have been looking at ways to improve GWFA's farm call services. In order for this service to continue to be viable the Board has decided to implement a flat rate of \$100.00 for farm calls services. Albert will continue to be available to do farm calls. Email and telephone consults will continue to be free and you're welcome to drop in at the office anytime.

Our printer has been repaired and we are on track for June printing and posting. We are currently looking at options for purchasing a much needed new printer.

So far we haven't received the much needed moisture required for the grass to come, so your pasture management strategies are extremely important at this time to insure you have sufficient pasture for the season.

I wish you an excellent & productive season,

Ginette





Soil Carbon Challenge with Peter Donovan of the Soil Carbon Coalition

There will be a
**Soil Carbon Challenge
Location Near You!**

Fairview	June 15th	PCBFA
Manning	June 17th	NPARA
Ft Vermilion	June 20th	MARA
Westlock	June 25th	GRO
Bonnyville	June 27th	LARA
Oyen	June 30th	CARA

Contact your local ARECA
group for more Information
and to register for
a workshop
near you!

Cost \$20/
Member &
\$25/Non-Member

For more Information on
Peter Donovan and the
Soil Carbon Coalition visit
soilcarboncoalition.org

For more information about the
Agriculture Research & Extension Council
of Alberta and its member groups, visit
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Chelated Mineral: the What and the Why!

As most of you are well aware, the majority of forages grown in Alberta are not providing your cows with their required vitamins and minerals, especially as we, if not already, will soon be asking a great job of them: to get breeding!

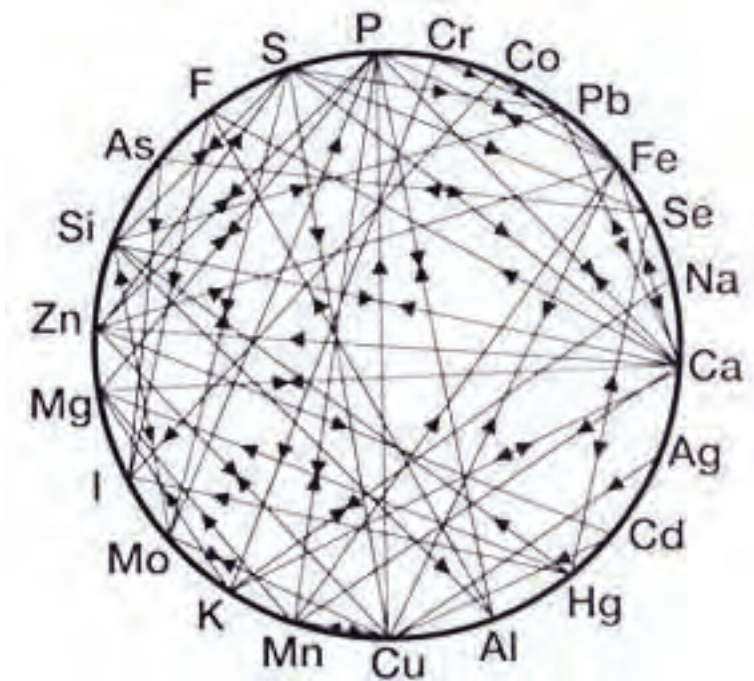
Mineral supplementation is one of the most debated practices in the industry. However, one thing we can be certain of, that we are not feeding the same cattle as we were 30 years ago. So why are we feeding them the same?

Trace minerals are one aspect of mineral supplementation that has seen a large amount of change. Let me shed some more light on the Chelated Trace Mineral debate.

The image you see beside this, that looks a little like a ball of yarn, is a representation of what is known as Antagonistic Interactions, or what I like to refer to as “mineral tie-ups”. Historically there has been a trend that “if at first we don’t succeed [meet requirements], just add more”. This does not always work, and in some cases it may cause the mineral that is provided to cease being absorbed and just be flushed out of the system. Also, in some serious cases, over-supplementation of one mineral may cause a deficiency in another.

So how can we protect the trace minerals from becoming “tied-up”? We can use chelated forms of trace minerals. This will help maximize absorption and minimize antagonistic mineral interactions within the animal.

For years and years, and still the norm today, minerals are typically fed in inorganic forms e.g. sulfates, oxides and carbonates. These are metallic forms of minerals. They are being fed at levels recommended by Nutrient Requirements of Beef Cattle (NRC, 2000). However, animals are designed to digest minerals found in plants. In a plant the minerals are readily available, so we must mimic this for best results. So Chelation defined: a Trace Mineral joined to Amino Acids and Peptides. This makes those minerals neutral and mimics what we find in plants, allowing easier passage through the gastrointestinal tract. This leads to greater absorption, and can result in



lower amounts needing to be supplemented due to less waste.

This is where tag shopping for minerals becomes problematic. It can give a false representation of what is going to be utilized by the animal. It is important to look deeper into what forms the provided minerals are supplied in. Start asking questions, it will pay you back in the long run.

Research shows that chelated minerals have greater absorption and retention. This leads to greater efficiency in meeting the animal’s health, reproduction and growth requirements, while at the same time having less waste, less contamination by heavy metals and less environmental impact.

For more information please give me a call.

Rebekah Ricketts

EMF Nutrition
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Sainfoin & Alfalfa



GWFA Staff photo

5

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Photo by Amber Kenyon

Pasture Pork

When most people think of rotational grazing and sustainability, they automatically think cattle. I'd like to bring attention to the fact that the grazing principles work for any animal. When I first started getting into this industry I was confused at the difference between a 'rancher' and a 'farmer'. In my mind they are much the same thing, as a person cannot take care of animals without tending to the land. My husband likes to say that we are land managers, I believe that this is a much more accurate title for what we do. Our job is to make sure that the land and riparian areas are in good condition, not just for today, but for generations. This mindset says nothing about which animal you're able to take care of the land with. This week we had our summer herd of 40 pigs make their way to Greener Pastures. A couple of weeks ago we purchased 25 laying hens. All of these animals will be managed with the same goal in mind that we use to manage our 1200 head of cattle; both for profit and for sustainability.

This is our third year raising pigs for butcher. We direct market them into the city in the fall of each year. We run our pigs and our chickens on a rotational basis using a mobile pen and electric wire. When they're still little we use electric netting, both to keep them in and to keep predators out. This year we have also added our llama to our pig protection program. He is fairly aggressive towards other animals and we're hoping will add that little extra bit of deterrence to any predators. Once the pigs are a little bigger we will put them out to a one wire electric fence, as by this point they are too intimidating for most other animals to bother with.

I am often asked about the damage that the pigs do to the land that they're on. They do enjoy rooting as they get bigger, but we've found that as long as they're moved on a regular basis, it's not an issue. In fact it does more good than harm, as they provide excellent animal impact as they're moved across the pasture. We use the grazing concepts when moving them, which are GRAS (graze period, rest period, animal impact and stock density). We give them enough space so that they all have access to adequate pasture at the same time, but not so

much that they don't hit each piece of pasture at an equal intensity. This year we are also letting our laying hens have access to the same pasture as the pigs. This will accomplish a couple of things, first it will make movement easier, as we only have to move one electric fence, rather than two. It also allows us the ability to water both species at the same time using a retired farm truck as a water truck. With the help of an old grain truck we will be able to both hold and distribute feed, as well as pull both the chicken and pig cages. As for environmental benefits, the poly-culture of animals is much better for attracting soil life, which will break down both the chicken and the pig manure and share it with the forages that the animals are on. We are also finding that there is a lot less feed waste, as the chickens will eat anything that the pigs leave behind.

Another very common question that we receive is how we sell our pork at the end of the season. We generally take hogs to the butcher at the end of October. Preferably right around the 200 lb mark. We started out selling by the half or the whole, and our customers get to choose their cuts from the butcher's pre-made cut sheets. Although we still offer this as an option to our customers, we added in a \$100 butcher's cut package last year. This is a generic package that we put together with a mix of different cuts for our customers to sample. We found that this was a very attractive option for some of our customers in the city without a whole lot of freezer space, or for those with small families and not quite as much household demand for pork.

As for marketing we put a lot of effort into 'selling our story'. This is a phrase that I've heard at many conferences in the past couple of years, and I'm sure it will become more popular in the next while. Basically, in order to market our product we need to sell to the consumer on both who we are as farmers, and why our product is worth the extra effort or money that it might take to buy it. We market our pork as all natural, pasture raised, antibiotic and synthetic hormone free. We also market the fact that all of our animals have constant access to fresh

Producer Feature: Pasture Walk & Talk

Once in a while one needs to assess what you're doing and what you've done to know what you're going to do next. After having a good pasture walk and chat with Ginette a few things have come to light. Just half way through calving now and it's been a very enjoyable calving season so far. Just 17 days in and very little assistance, calves are enjoying the weather, yearlings will head to grass this weekend to do their last jaunt before heading to town in August or September.

Now, the water system has been a challenge. The old yard well that supplies the house and cattle started to go south last fall, pumping hours at a time to keep up with cattle and house, so I decided to go for a new well. After witching two locations and drilling two dry holes 300' & 360' this was not looking good. A neighbour who had the same problem had found a website (ags.gov.ab.ca) that had maps of underground streams.

After acquiring a map and finding a stream close to the yard we witched there many times and drilled 145' to get 5 to 6 gallon per minute well, not great but enough. We tied it all in with valving to help the old well if needed. Thankfully we did that, as this spring the old well was down to a trickle. We added two new waterers, one powerless and one very low power unit and their first winter was trouble free.

The Bale grazing has been working very well for the cow herd for 10 + years now, but the trash left in the spring is still a bit of an issue. I so want to try and spread it around, but best just left alone and let nature turn it back into lush green grass. "It really does work" and not having to worry about getting the tractor running in the middle of January is very nice.

The calves this year will get their first kick at bale grazing and we will try a week's worth of hay and see how it goes. As the next generation starts to take a hand in the operation we intend to simplify things even more.

Our intensive grazing has to be stepped up this year, breaking the herd of 60-80 cows up into three groups to accommodate 3 different bull breeds and getting best usage of the pas-

tures has been a challenge. Not enough head to do a good job so cutting the pasture even smaller will be a task. We have decided to take our small amount of hayland & make it fall and early spring pasture. We'll buy all of our hay now and try to cut the hay feed days down.

We are rejuvenating some older pastures now. Doing this without the help of iron is the next challenge we'll face over the next few years. Revisiting some older ideas and maybe some no-till seeding into sod are some things we will be playing with.

It's been interesting looking back on ideas and always experimenting with our operation, whatever it may be. As the weather patterns appear to be changing, new problems will face us ahead, but we'll adapt and move forward as we always have.

Paul Pritchard, Member since 1984

For assistance with acquiring maps of aquifers (underground streams) with planning wells and watering systems; and with Growing Forward 2 funding, contact Brandon Leask at 403-340-5851, or email brandon.leask@gov.ab.ca.



Pasture Pork continued

pasture, good quality feed and clean water. At Greener Pastures we think that it is crucial that we truly believe in the product that we're marketing. As for where we market, I have a number of ideas that we have not yet needed to put into action. So far an ad on Kijiji, promotions on Facebook, and word of mouth have been more than enough to sell all of our available product. This year we have also added the food event 'Indulgence' in Edmonton to our current projects. At this event we will be working with Red Ox Inn and Eau Claire Distillery to present our pasture pork and a terrific scotch to attendees. There are many different marketing avenues available to us as producers. It really ends up coming down to what works for you and how creative you can be with finding these avenues.

For anyone that might want to add another profit center to their farm, or doesn't have the space, inclination or cash flow to run cattle; I recommend looking into the option of smaller animals. Whether you have 5 acres or 3300 acres to run animals

on, with proper management you'll improve both your soil, your forested areas and your riparian areas. GRAS works to improve your land, whether you're running cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, chickens or any other type of livestock that might suit your needs and preferences. (We've even heard of a guy that sells water buffalo milk). The market is out there for alternative protein sources, we just need to look in the right places for it.

I'm not saying that everyone should sell their cow herd and buy pigs, but I do believe that we would do the environment and our industry a ton of good if we were to look at the bigger picture when considering our job title. We are so much more than just ranchers. The cattle may be our end product, but we wouldn't have that product without the land under their feet and the water that they drink. I want our environment to be sustainable for generations. Do you?

Amber Kenyon



Prepare for the Summer Grazing Season: Consider Creep Feeding Calves

Cool dry conditions across most of Alberta have slowed forage growth in pastures and hay fields. If it stays dry; the amount of growth will be limited and it is possible that pastures will run out much earlier than normal. In general 70% of total forage growth occurs before the 15 of July. If significant amounts of rain do not come soon, total growth could be compromised.

One strategy to stretch limited forage supplies is to creep feed calves throughout the summer. Calves that are 45 to 60 days old can digest grains and use the nutrients to improve growth rates. An Ontario Ministry of Agriculture factsheet indicates that on poor pastures, for every 5 pounds of creep feed consumed; calf growth rates improve by 1 pound. A second advantage of creep feeding calves is that the amount of grass consumed by the calf is reduced which stretches the amount of grass available for the cow.

Calves under 700 pounds eat grain slowly and chew the material sufficiently that processing is not required (Ohio State University Extension). Average daily gain and feed conversion efficiency is equal to that of processed grain.

Using whole oats or barley as the sole ingredient in a creep ration for small calves does not work. A creep ration requires 14 to 16 percent protein to “frame out” the skeleton properly and to develop muscle. Intakes generally are in the 2 to 3 pounds a day range for 350 pound calves and can get as high as 8 pounds a day when the calves are 600 to 700 pounds. A rec-



ipe for a home grown creep feed is to include split or cracked peas at 35% of the mix with oats or barley (or a combination of the two grains). If wheat is to be part of the creep feed, inclusion rate should not exceed 20 to 25% of the mix to minimize the chance of acidosis. If no additional protein is added to the creep feed, it is possible to have short fat calves that could be discounted at the auction market come fall.

A commercially prepared creep ration is another option. These products should contain a minimum of 75% TDN and again the 14 to 16% protein content is required. Screening pellets generally have lower energy content than grain and do not deliver the necessary energy needed to get the additional gains on the calves.

Creep feeding the calves for the majority of the grazing season can result in 25 to 100 pounds of additional gain compared to animals that are not supplemented. If 700 to 800 pound calf prices stay at the current price of \$2.85 a pound for steers, this could increase the value of the calf by \$70 to \$285 per calf. A good return on investment.

Barry Yaremcio – Beef/Forage specialist.
Alberta Agriculture & Rural Development
Ag-Info Centre, Stettler, AB
Email: barry.yaremcio@gov.ab.ca

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Forage & Grazing Points to Ponder

By Albert Kuipers,

Forage & Grazing Specialist



Lately I've been hearing a lot of concerns about drought resulting in reduced productivity of pastures. This is a very legitimate concern as pasture productivity and rainfall are closely tied together.

There is, however, something you can do to reduce the effects of drought on your pasture. A long time member called me this week and asked me if what I wrote in the May issue of The Blade applied in a drought situation.

My answer to him was, "Most definitely!". When you're entering a possible drought situation the principle of taking no more than 25% of the standing forage on the first round is even more important than it is when rainfall is plentiful.

There are two very important things that happen when you graze only 25% of what's there. First, when you take only 25%, the defoliation does not trigger the sloughing off of roots. This allows the forage plants to have access to more water available at deeper levels than if the roots did slough off. Access to deeper soil water is extremely important during drought times.

The second point is canopy cover. A thick cover of forages helps to prevent the soil from drying out. I remember a time when I walked a pasture with a member, where this was illustrated very clearly to me. We started our walk near the watering tank, also near the main farm yard. That area was grazed short with lots of wild strawberry to be seen. There were grasshoppers galore in this area where it was so dry the plants crackled under-foot when we walked over it.

As we walked to the far end of this continuously grazed pasture, the forage s became increasingly deep and dense. A heavy growth of bluegrasses, clover and other forage species covered the ground so well we couldn't see bare ground even when we parted the grass to get to the soil surface. Very interestingly, the lower parts of the plants and the thatch that covered the soil was moist, moist enough that kneeling in it made the knees of our jeans wet. Also, no grasshoppers were to be seen there.

While writing this, I'm also reminded of the pastures I used to manage on the hills north of Sylvan Lake. I had to manage for drought all the time as it seemed that rain clouds would split up and go around those hills more often than not.

My grazing strategy of grazing less than 25% in that first round and then grazing no more than 50% in the second round kept the soil surface well covered with forages throughout the summer. I had excellent pasture productivity each year in spite of dry conditions. Neighboring pastures often dried out and became unproductive by the beginning of July.

Yes, it takes planning and work to accomplish this. At the very least you would have to move livestock and temporary fences daily. I'd have to say though, that the time I spent implementing this all-important grazing strategy was the most pro-

ductive and valuable time I spent working for that cow/calf outfit.

If you're reading this and find that you'd like some coaching on how you can drought proof your pastures, please feel free to contact me. I'd be more than happy to help you get started down the road of building healthy productive pastures and building healthy soils while you're at it.



GWFA Staff photo

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SOLAR WATER PUMPING 101



The first thing a producer needs to do is sit down and make a list of all of his possible water sources. These may include natural waterways, dams, ponds, wells and even neighboring solutions. Look at these sites and determine where you want the water from and list all the different pumping elevations that may be required. Elevation, or lift, is the vertical difference in feet from the water source to the top of the water tank. Do not confuse this with transfer which is the horizontal distance from the pump to the water tank. Try to be very accurate with these measurements, go out and take a look and shoot a level line up the hill, go to this spot and continue on, each time you move it is approximately six feet of lift. Do not guess at this number from the coffee table! This number is very important in the size and cost calculations of the system. PLEASE do not under estimate the lift in order to save money, you cannot cheat the system. It will only perform as well as the numbers you provide. A properly sized system using the correct lift and cattle numbers will provide you with a quality, long lasting, reliable tool that you will be proud to own. Compare this to a properly sized tractor to do the work or a garden tractor to do the job. They are both tractors, but which one do you want? Check well reports, if you can find them, on water quantity, depth and static level of wells. Decide the time of year you'll be requiring usage, such as late fall, summer or winter.

Remember to look at the project under a new light. If you have always watered cattle in corner "A" that does not mean that you can't look at other options. Too often producers get tied up in what they want, or what their parents did and miss a very easy solution. Remember with a solar pump we can put the water where YOU want it. Make the system work for you. Think long term, with room for expansion. After determining the top, or top two sites, you can start to look at what style of pump is required.

The system may be a battery powered system or what is referred to as a "Solar Direct" system. This simply is a pump that is plugged directly into a solar module, when there is enough energy in the sun to power the pump. It turns on and delivers water. This system is very popular in the United States, for a few reasons such as length of the summer grazing season and the average herd size. This system is usually cheaper, but does require a large water storage tank that can cost \$ 1 per gallon. This tank should be sized for a minimum of three days of water storage. I.E 100 pair each drink 15 gallons / day x three days = 4500

gallons of storage.

A properly sized battery system should also have enough energy stored in the batteries to pump the water required for a minimum of three days. This energy is stored in the form of amp / hrs. in the battery. As an example, if your battery bank is fully charged you should be able to unplug your solar modules and have the 100 cow/calf pairs receive their complete requirement of water for three days before your system goes dead. If the system is in a more remote area, we can easily increase the amount of back up storage.

Both these systems can be operated with a float switch or a pressure switch, if the correct pump is used. A pressure switch merely allows you to turn the water off a considerable distance away with a change in pressure with no long runs of wire being required.

Included are some pictures of a true example of thinking outside the box, a design that changed the value and operation of the ranch for generations to come.

This system is a Solar Direct submersible pump located in a bored well west of Claresholm, Alberta. In my estimation it will be the largest solar water pumping system installed in Canada. The system delivers enough water for 200 pair in the summer, lifting the water 430 ft. vertically and transferring it to a tank 1800 ft. away. From this large storage tank (10,000 gallons) the water is gravity fed to seven different quarters of land, that are not cross fenced. The livestock simply rotate from one water site to another. The pipelines all flow through a manifold so each tank can be shut off when desired.

Initially there was only a dug out in one corner of the property. Many acres were never grazed because of the lack of nearby water. Since the installation four years ago, the grassland has improved and the AUMS has increased dramatically. The owner now estimates the value of the property to have increased \$200,000. This site certainly shows how a new water site design can have a significant impact on your long and short term investment.



WESTERN CANADA

Conference on Soil Health

December 8th, 9th & 10th, 2015

Radisson
HOTEL EDMONTON SOUTH



2015
International
Year of Soils



Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS

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



Alberta

re.vi.tal.ize

verb: to give new life to or vigor to.

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Building Soil - Creating Land (Part 2!)

A Field Day with Dr. Christine Jones

July 23, 2015

Dr. Jones is returning to Alberta in July for a continuation of her very successful visit to Alberta last fall!

We will start off the day with a presentation on soil health basics and then will visit two different field sites where Christine will assess rooting depth, forage/pasture condition and soil microbes.



AGENDA (8:30 - 4:30)

Meet at Olds College Visitor Parking Lot D at 8:30 AM
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Location 1: Sandy Loree's, Olds

Location 2: Graeme Finn's, Airdrie

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Price includes lunch and snacks, transportation, a great day of learning!

Please register by July 16 to Fiona McCarthy at (403) 335-3311 ext. 143 or fmccarthy@mvcounty.com



Hi! My name is Sandy Loree. My wife Terri and I live west of Olds in the County of Mountain View. Our property has been chosen to be one of the stops on a forage tour being planned for July 23 this summer. I don't know all the details yet but we are so looking forward to that event.

The Foothills Forage and Grazing Association and the County of Mountain View are involved in the planning and production of the tour. Grey Wooded Forage Association is helping to promote the event. I am told that Dr. Christine Jones will be the featured speaker.

We acquired this quarter section of grassland a few years ago and currently rent the grass to a neighbour who brings in cow/calf pairs. We have become acutely aware that our land is in poor shape. My goal is to improve/rejuvenate the soil to achieve a high level and high quality of forage production in a cost effective and sustainable manor.

I have been a member of these two forage associations over the last few years and have gained a tremendous amount of usable knowledge by reading the news letters, attending tours and workshops and interacting with fellow members. We are selfishly excited to have Dr. Christine Jones and a bus load of like minded producers here on our place addressing issues specific to our situation.

Terri and I whole heartedly welcome the tour to our place and hope it will be a positive experience for all those who attend.



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To register please contact Steve Kenyon

780-307-6500

skenyon@greenerpasturesranching.com

www.greenerpasturesranching.com

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- Receive a printed copy of **The Blade** in the mail monthly for a \$10/year printing and postage fee, in addition to the \$20/year membership fee, effective July 1, 2015
- Receive up-to-date information on GWFA activities via The Blade, the website and by email.

Please mail the portion below with a cheque for \$20.00, or \$30 (\$10 printing & postage fee added) to:

**Grey Wooded Forage Association
Box 1448, Rocky Mountain House, AB, T4T 1B1**

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