



Grey
Wooded
Forage
Association

The Blade

"Creating an Awareness of Forages"

MARCH 2013

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'The Blade' online on our new
website:**

www.greywoodedforageassociation.com

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gwfa1@telus.net

Manager's Notes:

By Albert Kuipers

Wow! March is here already. Time to start thinking about spring activities. Yeah, I know, we're a ways away from green grass yet, but it is a good time to plan ahead. If you would like help with your pasture & grazing plans, give me a call. Or, if you have some forage seeding plans up your sleeve, and would like some input, give me a call. I'd be more than happy to discuss ideas and options with you.



Last Friday Doug and Deb Skeels sent me some information on the new draft **Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Beef Cattle**. I had included this in the January issue, but they brought it to my attention that there were very few beef producers putting their comments in.

To make matters worse, most of the comments entered were from people who don't understand the realities of beef cattle care and handling. Many of these comments have an "animal rightist" slant to them.

I think it's very important for beef producers to take the opportunity to review and comment on this document that will have an impact on how you care for your livestock. I have reviewed the document and have added my comments.

I know it's getting very close to the deadline, but if you



get this on time, please take the time to add your comments.

Now, I realize that not all of you are in the beef business. There are draft codes of practice for the care and handling of other livestock available for comment as well. Many of you have a few horses, or maybe a few too many horses. Some of you may have sheep, or goats, or poultry.

It would be of value for you to review the codes of practices that affect you as well. Some of the comments being submitted are totally unreasonable, so we need to balance them off with comments from those who actually understand the care and handling of the livestock in question.



This is the time of year when we start looking for new GWFA Director nominees. The term of office for Directors is three years. Those completing their terms of office will not be eligible for re-election for at least one year, so, no matter how much they've enjoyed being on the Board, they have to make room for new directors to enjoy this experience. Most past Directors have commented that they received much more than they gave to the organization.

As we have three Directors completing their terms, we are looking for at least three nominees. If any of you have a desire to be part of directing the focus of our organization, or if you know someone who you think would enjoy this position, please contact me.



Director's Corner:

The Grey Wooded Forage Association has an exciting future. Agriculture and forage production practices are continuously being tweaked. The need to effectively communicate up to date and meaningful information to forage growers is still required but is changing as well.

This past year the GWFA proved that it is up for the challenge by adding a couple new ways for members to get information, a website and facebook link. I am impressed with both Albert and Muriel's newly developed skills in website mechanics and facebook operation. Great work!!

As the GWFA looks to continuously improve on its extension activities and develop its research services it will need to be continuously flexible and ingenuitive. Over the past three years that I have been involved on the board of directors both of these traits have been practiced, I think GWFA has an exciting future.

I would like to thank Albert, Muriel and the rest of the board members for making my tender a fantastic experience, one that I really enjoyed. I encourage anybody that wants to learn more about forage production to volunteer for a board position.

Sigurd Debruijn



We need your help!

All you guys who swath graze, could you please let me know what cereal forage species you prefer, and what varieties do you prefer, or have used, and why.

We need this information to contribute to forage and beef research at the Lacombe Research Centre.

Thanks, Albert.

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

Getting to the Meat of the New Beef Code

Ryder Lee of CCA provides insights on the process and what matters for producers, as the public comment period hits the home stretch run

Posted: February 19, 2013



The new draft Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Beef Cattle has entered a two-month public comment period. This is an opportunity for beef producers and others to review the draft and provide feedback before it is finalized and implemented as an important tool for managing beef cattle welfare in Canada.

There has been a lot talk about the Codes of Practice for livestock species in recent months as several are moving through the development process, which is coordinated through the National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC).

Ryder Lee, manager of provincial/federal relations for Canadian Cattlemen's Association (CCA) has been the point person representing beef producers at the NFACC table during this process. In a webinar hosted by Alberta Beef Producers, he provided insights on the process and what matters for producers, as the two-month public comment period that began January 8 gets set to wrap up on March 8. In no particular order, here are highlights of some of the key perspectives he provided.

Eight perspectives on progress

1. NFACC model has advantages.

NFACC is a unique organization in the world with its multi-stakeholder structure for coordinating a national approach to farm animal welfare. It brings together livestock industry representatives such as CCA with representatives of the veterinary and research community, processors, transporters, animal welfare groups, enforcement and government. "We all sit at the same table and move things forward by consensus," says Lee. "The fact that the Code comes from this multi-stakeholder process rather than any one group has a lot of benefit. I think it results in a better document that has greater credibility and is more defensible. The process and the

outcome hold up better with the public and the different [interest](#) groups."

2. Tackling the 'creep' issue.

The draft Code is organized in a way that clearly separates "requirements" from "recommendations." There has been some concern in the industry that practices identified as recommended could over time 'creep' into becoming requirements. In fact, the intent is exactly opposite, says Lee. "Recommended practices are not meant to be [deal](#) breakers in terms of Code compliance now or in the future. One of the measuring sticks of requirements is they have to be applicable for everyone. Practices that don't fit that but can still be very positive stay in the recommended category."

3. Impact depends on the individual.

It's the most common question surrounding the draft Code: "How is this going to affect producers?" For Lee, it's important each individual producer asks themselves that question. "Everybody should have a read through the draft Code and consider how their current practices fall in relation to the text. If things are really different, then examine why they're different and consider if comments need to be made into this process."

4. Kick starting constructive discussion.

One of the most important roles of the Code is simply to advance the discussion on animal welfare, says Lee. "I think for the most part producers aren't going to be affected by the Code in a major way on a day to day basis. But I think it will help reinforce good practices. It will make people stop and think more about how they can do things better. We want to support that culture of continual improvement."

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Website: bigdealgalloways.com

Continued on Pg 4

5. Will the Code provide a weapon for industry critics?

If anything, the Code will likely serve the industry in protecting against attacks, says Lee. "If there's no Code, it's easy for someone to look at an industry practice and say it's not right or not good enough. With the Code we have something to point to, to reinforce we have accepted standards in place that we follow."

With today's increasing scrutiny of animal welfare practices and the rising activity of activist groups, it's more important than ever that livestock industries are clear on what they do or do not support, he adds. "We've seen time and again how instances of bad welfare practices get caught on video and spun in the media as the way things are done in the industry. The Code gives us a tool to fight against that and show what's actually the accepted practice."



6. Common sense rules the day.

The draft Code covers all parts of the livestock lifecycle, with chapters on environment, feed and water, animal health, husbandry, transport and euthanasia. "Producers who are reasonable in looking after their cattle and address situations when distress arises are not going to have major issues in complying with the Code, he says. "The vast majority of what's in the Code is common sense and reflects the common industry practices." Examples of new elements in the draft Code include pain control requirements for castration and dehorning of older calves and requirements for veterinary relationships and certain health protocols, he says. "A lot of this is what you likely want to be doing anyway. There are not only welfare advantages, but also economic and management advantages."

7. Benefits outweigh costs.

There are always costs associated with any practice change, says Lee. What's harder to measure is the cost of not having something. Tools such as the Code help industry address the concerns of society and build a strong future. "What's the value on being able to maintain a freedom to operate without a lot of restrictions or regulation? I would argue the benefits of developing and following a Code of Practice far outweigh the



Ryder Lee of CCA

cost."

8. Reasons for optimism.

On a personal level, Lee says having been involved in the process of developing the draft Code, he is encouraged there are more opportunities than hurdles ahead for the beef industry in managing the farm animal care issue. "I think it gives us a basis to keep getting better and to manage this issue better," he says. "An example is research. Going through the process has helped identify where we need to invest more in research to help us improve recommendations and improve options."

9. Mindset makes a difference.

Being open minded to change is another key to success, he says. "Because something has worked well in the past doesn't mean there can't be new and better ways to do things. I think in the beef industry we are practical, common sense people and that will be an important asset as we continue to look ahead."

Not everyone is going to like everything in the Code, says Lee. But the indications are it's a big step forward and on the right track. "The comments I've heard to date have been mainly positive. They've tilted toward the opinion this is a workable, livable document that will serve the industry well. But the most important thing right now is to participate and have your say, however you feel about it. The feedback opportunity is a critical part of the process and it's going to have an influence on the final document."



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www.meristem.com

REMINDER NOTICE:

The draft Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Beef Cattle is available for public comment until March 8, 2013.

The draft Code can be viewed and submissions made through NFACC's web site at:

nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/beef-cattle.

All submissions must be made through the online system and easy to follow instructions are provided.

The beef cattle Code is one of eight Codes of Practice currently under revision as part of a multi-year NFACC project. Codes of Practice serve as our national understanding of animal care requirements and recommended practices. It is important Codes be scientifically informed, practical, and reflect societal expectations for responsible farm animal care.

The final beef cattle Code of Practice will be released in June 2013. More information on the Code development process is available at:

nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice.

Plan Ahead to Avoid Common Forage Establishment Issues

If you are going to be seeding forages this year, be sure to plan ahead. Knowing your seed quality, properly preparing the seed bed and calibrating your seeding equipment will help you avoid common issues that crop up when establishing perennial forages. Here are a few examples of how to diagnose and prevent those common problems.

Thin Stands Throughout the Whole Field

If your whole field is thin, there could be an issue with the size and quality of the forage seed you used. Dig around in the soil and see if there are seeds that have not germinated, or seeds that germinated but did not grow into a seedling. To prevent this, purchase high quality certified seed and get a copy of the Seed Testing Certificate. Then you will know the germination and vigour of your forage seed.

If you did use high quality seed, then your seeding rate might be the culprit. Did you have a lot of seed left over after seeding? Did you calibrate your seeder before going out? Did you blend the seed with a carrier? Always check the calibration and setting of your seeding equipment and re-calibrate as necessary. If you are using a carrier for your forage seed, make sure you are mixing thoroughly and in the proper ratio for even flow and distribution.



Patterned Poor Establishment

If you see patches or a pattern of thin areas in your field, there could be a few variables to consider. First off, how deep did you seed? If you seeded too shallow, you will likely notice some seed lying on the soil surface and poor seed to soil contact. If you seeded too deep, you will find seeds deep in the seedbed that germinated but ran out of gas before they were able to reach the surface. If you can, do a few trial passes with your seeding equipment to double-check the seeding depth. It is also a good idea to make sure your seedbed has been properly prepared. This will help ensure good seed to soil contact and increase the chances of establishment success.

Poor Legume Colouring

Are the legume plants in your hay field or pasture stunted



and a sickly yellowish-green? If so, they are showing symptoms of nitrogen deficiency. Pull out some of the plants and examine their roots for signs of nodulation. If there are no nodules, that means there is an issue with inoculation. It could be that the inoculant used on the legume seed was not good, or was improperly applied. The seed used might have been left to sit too long between being inoculated and being seeded as well.

If you are using pre-inoculated legume seed, make sure the seed is inoculated in the year of seeding. If you are applying the inoculant yourself, check its expiry date and keep it in a cool dry place until use. Make sure it is the correct inoculant for your legume, and then apply it properly and seed the day of application.

These are just a few examples of common issues that can emerge with perennial forage establishment. For more tips on forage stand establishment, check out the Forage Stand Establishment Trouble Shooting fact sheet on Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development's website, www.agriculture.alberta.ca.

Stephanie Kosinski
Ag-Info Centre
310-FARM



Cows, Creeks and Communities

Thursday, April 25, 2013
Kurt Browning Complex
Caroline Alberta



Trade Show in the arena

2:30 to 5:30 - NO CHARGE

Includes two sessions - safe livestock handling at 3:00 pm and stock dogs demonstration at 4:15 pm.

Evening Program in the hall

5:30 to 8:30 - only \$20 per person - limited tickets available at Caroline Supplies, Clearwater County Ag office, Caroline Ag Society office and Central Alberta Co-op (Hardware) in Spruceview.

Includes supper and two speakers:
Dr. Masaki Hayashi talking about ground water and Mr. Rick Friedl talking about surface water storage (dams).

**For more information
call 403-845-4444**

...The Best for Each...

"Cows, Creeks and Communities" (CCC) is an event that has been around since 1999. Originally an event for livestock producers raising livestock near creeks and rivers, the event has broadened to include other types of agriculture, those living rurally but not farming and as an extension to those in small urban developments such as hamlets, villages and multi-parcel subdivisions. The logic is everyone living on the land has an impact on water and we are all part of the solution to healthy land and water. Discovering new ways to manage the land on which we live, the groundwater we draw upon or the surface water nearby is what the "Cows, Creeks and Communities" is all about.

The CCC committee is a partnership between Clearwater County and its watershed initiative known as Clear Water Landcare, the Caroline Ag Society, the Grey Wooded Forage Association and the Caroline Chamber of Commerce.



The audience is made up of all age groups from the farm and non-farm rural and urban community. Participants come to learn ways to use their land and water efficiently and effectively. Each year the committee ensure the topics are interesting, educational, and beneficial to 21st century farmers and ranchers and their rural and urban neighbors.

The "Cows, Creeks and Communities" event covers a variety of topics typically with a theme assigned to each program. For instance in 2012 the event was about good fencing and soil for productive pasture and gardens. Our speakers vary from local experience and expertise to more academic presentations.

So, come join us for an afternoon of good fun, good food and good information!



2013 Livestock Care Conference

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& Friday
March 22**

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WHAT'S ON THE AGENDA?

Thursday:

- Student Meet the Expert Session
- AFAC Annual General Meeting
 - Open Poster Session
 - Social Networking Event

Friday:

- Sessions on Animal Welfare Assessments
- Perspectives from Education, Processors, Industry, and Retailers
 - AFAC Awards of Distinction
- Bear pit Session - 'What does the Alberta Livestock Industry need to do now?'

The 2013 NEW Calgary venue will offer convenience for most travelers with easy access to the Deerfoot Trail and close proximity to the Calgary International Airport.

View the program and register online.

Early bird Registration deadline:
February 28, 2013

LivestockTransport.ca



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click here for details on ALERT



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



Agriculture Opportunity Fund

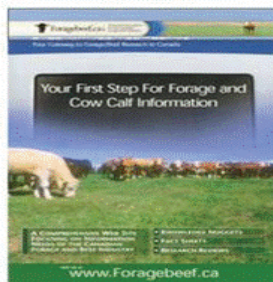
Alberta

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



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EFPs and the World of Ag Sustainability: An Insider's Thoughts

Alberta Beef Producers' (ABP) Rich Smith is an ag engineer, a respected industry consultant, the first environmental manager for ABP and now its executive director

Few people have been as close to the discussion about agriculture and sustainability in the new world of assurance today as Rich Smith. He has been on the frontlines at several key levels – working with producers, providing technical expertise and working in to industry management for one of the largest agricultural organizations in the province.

Alberta EFP website editors sat down with Smith to discuss his perspective on EFPs, developments in sustainability and his thoughts on the best way to manage these components for agriculture's future. Here is an edited version of that discussion. It's a personal view rather than official policy, covering everything from who is driving sustainability and what is the role of EFPs, to verification, assurance, brands, and building effective producer support.

Q: You've had very broad experience in sustainability. Tell us about that.

Smith: I am an ag engineer by training so I spent a good part of my career on the approvals, designs, management and operations of livestock facilities. As my career progressed, environmental approvals became increasingly important and I developed a fair bit of expertise in environmental management of livestock operations.

That gave me a natural interest in the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) process right from the beginning. When I worked in the swine industry we started the process of doing EFPs for our operations. We looked carefully at a wide range of environmental programs we could follow and settled on EFPs.

Admittedly, part of that was to be eligible to qualify for some funding support under ag policy framework. But there was also a genuine interest, and when we looked at other programs, we could see that EFP contained most of the elements we wanted in an environmental management system.

I started working with ABP as environmental manager because ABP recognized it needed some expertise in that area. When I became executive director, I still did some work in that area and continue to work with our environmental committee today.

Q: What is role of EFPs today in your opinion?

Smith: The original role of the education and awareness was excellent in terms of making producers aware of their environmental management and stewardship. In the cattle industry a lot of people are already good stewards. But EFP provided them with information about some of the potential impacts of activities on their operation that they may not have been aware of. Then it gave them direction for things they could do to help protect the environment and enhance stewardship.

I think it was doing a really good job of that. It should have been, with proper attention, the foundation for the next step



Rich Smith, ABP executive director, (left) and Greg Bowie, ABP vice-chair.

which would have been for people to take actions to improve the environment. Or in some cases to achieve some level of verification or certification. I still see EFP as a foundation for a pretty broad range of environmental and sustainability activities.

Q: What is Alberta Beef Producers doing on sustainability?

Smith: We are working with Canadian Cattlemen's Association on an industry strategy for sustainability.

It's not like we have this vast void in terms of environment and animal care.

We are already doing a number of very good things and it is a case of using a lot of the tools we already have to help us with demonstrating sustainability.

But one issue for the beef industry is the range of size and type of operation. Because of that, communications within our sector can be challenging. We have to be pretty careful where we go in terms of sustainability requirements. It can't be too costly or too onerous.

One of the real benefits of the EFP was that it was something producers could do themselves if they were willing to spend the time, and they didn't have to hire a consultant. That thinking has to be an element of whatever we are doing because a 30,000 head feedlot can afford to hire a consultant, or already have one engaged, but a small producer does not have those resources.

Q: How do we demonstrate stewardship in a business way?

Smith: That is a real challenge and one we are wrestling with in the beef industry.

At ABP, we do things like the Environmental Stewardship Award which celebrates the outstanding environmental stewardship of Alberta producers.

But one of the challenges we face with sustainability initiatives - the ones going on with some major retail and food service customers and organizations outside of our industry – is I'm not sure we've done as good a job of demonstrating stewardship and sustainability as we could. We need to be able to demonstrate that these changes are occurring.

So whether that is some form of verification or certification is something we as an industry are wrestling with now. We don't want to create a situation where people are required to go through some highly onerous certification verification process.

There is a limit to which producers can afford to go through, because for most of them there's not going to be a return on it. If you are part of the supply chain and it is part of your marketing then you will do it. But, for a lot of producers producing beef for the large processors rather than part of a supply chain or niche market, it becomes challenging.

Q: So what are our options?

Smith: One of the things we look at is, we already have a national Verified Beef Program (VBP) program. There is a thought we could introduce some environment, animal welfare, overall sustainability components into that program. On the environment side, the EFP would be a very good foundation for that.

Q: The trend today seems to be to verification and brand specific. Is that where we need to go?

Smith: There will be some of these programs but as an industry we need to go outside brand specific. We need to think industry specific verification. This is very much my personal view, but there will be a lot of producers who will not be part of a brand.

Canada Beef Inc. is trying to make Canadian beef a brand and part of that brand would encompass all producers. And we would like to define some sustainability attributes that would attach to the whole Canadian beef brand.

Will we see industry rally around a single approach? The answer is very much a "yes." If we could establish something that industry could come around there would be tremendous value in that.

There would still be room for individual beef brands that want to go further. But, if we can get enough of the large retailers and food service people engaged then everybody needs to do it.

As an industry we need to be able to deal with the pressures on the whole industry to be sustainable and be ready to respond to it. On environmental side I keep coming back to the fact that the EFP is a very good foundation for that.

Q: Who's driving sustainability?

Smith: I think retailers see a sort of a latent desire from consumers for sustainability. So retailers are likely saying "We can see this latent desire and it will likely grow and in the meantime we can use this to help us with our social license and our marketing."

I think they are driving this because they are saying "We think this makes us look better in the eyes of the consumer." So instead of Wal-Mart being in the news for the pressure they are putting on North American suppliers to compete cost wise,

the consumer hears about Wal-Mart promoting sustainability.

A concern I have is that it doesn't cost them money. From an industry perspective, if we use the gestation stall issue from the pork industry for example, it won't cost the retailer any money but it will cost hog producers a lot of money.

That's one of the reasons for us to catch up to this before we face a situation where our producers are facing requirements that make them not competitive. We need to try to get ahead of it if we can.

Q: So you're saying we need to make sure we have a good footing as that world changes.

Smith: Yes, we need to be on firm ground. Not just saying we are sustainable but to show we are. Hopefully we as industry will be able to guide the definitions of sustainability. If we don't we may be faced with a definition we can't meet.

I would argue that the consumer is quite open to having someone define sustainability for them. If we can, in collaboration with retailers and food service people, make that definition and make sure that it doesn't put us out of business, then I think we can get on firm ground.

Q: We have to define what is good for the beef industry and then we have to convince the beef industry that is the case. How do we do that?

Smith: One of our great challenges is we can do the greatest job of defining sustainability and then we have a real job of communicating to producers and getting them on board with that.

One of the problems we face with all of these things and it is kind of related to what happened with EFP, is that Alberta used to have a very good ag extension service that's gone. The opportunities to get info to farmers and get them on board with various initiatives are limited. It's way more challenging today.

Reprinted with credit to "The Alberta Environmental Farm Plan, www.AlbertaEFP.com."

Top 5 reasons to complete an EFP:

- improving farm health and safety
- building acceptance of the operation among neighbours and the public
- increasing personal satisfaction and knowledge
- adding value to the farm property
- agricultural sustainability

Other important reasons:

- to reduce farm inputs like herbicides, insecticides, fertilizers and fuel.
- to demonstrate to the public, governments, regulators, lenders and/or investors that you are managing your environmental risks.
- to increase your understanding of your legal requirements related to environmental issues.
- to identify what you are already doing well and pinpoint where improvements could be made.

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 that will be available in Growing Forward 2.

Alberta EFP
Environmental Farm Plan

Growing Forward 

Joel Salatin coming to Rocky?

Hey everyone,

He's not really coming to Rocky in person, but we could bring him here by web feed...

Joel Salatin, **internationally acclaimed farmer and author**, will visit Alberta, Canada in **March 2013** to teach his highly-praised how-to's for [starting and succeeding on a beyond-organic, small-scale farm](#)... and for the first time ever, Verge Permaculture will be [broadcasting it to the world!](#)

No matter where you are in the world, you can learn from the man who demonstrates the realities of a **profitable, healthy, sustainable, small farm** enterprise and food system. You'll be able to see the live audience and Joel's slide presentation, send in questions and hear him respond, even interact online with on and off-site participants.

But beyond the advantages of a typical live-stream course - getting the high-tech, real-time delivery in the comfort of your own home - Verge Permaculture is inviting you to **think even bigger**. Why not make it a community event, and jump-start those ideas and inspirations with group energy right from the get-go? **For the cost of just one registration**, Joel's message can inform and inspire groups of friends, schools, or neighborhood associations... garden clubs or CSAs...even businesses. There are even organizations that are using this training as a **fundraising event**, charging a low registration fee to cover the cost of their one ticket, and taking everything over that as pure profit. Not sure what this would look like? Visit <http://vergepermaculture.ca/blog/2013/01/31/joel-salatin-message-of-local-small-scale-farming-goes-global/> !

Joel's live-stream course includes [Three Days of How-To Workshops](#):

- You Can Farm, March 20, 8:30 am to 4:30 MST
- Pastured Poultry Profits, March 21, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm MST
- Salad Bar Beef - March 22, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm MST

Of course, if you're in the Alberta area, you can catch Joel live and in person at one of his three days of workshops or 2 evening presentations/community networking events:

- [The Sheer Ecstasy of Being a Lunatic Farmer](#), March 20th, 2013, 6:30 pm, Highwood Memorial Centre, High River, Alberta, Canada ***
- [Folks, This Ain't Normal](#), March 22nd, 2013, 6:30 pm, SAIT Campus, Orpheus Theatre, Calgary, Alberta, Canada (co-hosted by Green Calgary, SAIT & the Slow Food Youth Group)

***Psssst... if you're a farmer, or want to reach out to farmers and/or eaters - you can [host a table at Joel's talk!](#)

With three generations of family farming history, a lifetime's experience in entrepreneurial small farming, and growing international acclaim to back him up, Joel demonstrates conclusively that the dream of a **profitable, healthy, sustainable, beyond-organic small farm enterprise and food system** is quite **achievable**... it should be an **inspiring and instigating learning opportunity!**

Thanks!

Juli & Jeff Gillies
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ALBERTA FORAGE INDUSTRY NETWORK

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Low Cost Cow/calf Production:_____

Environmental Sustainability:_____ Economical Sustainability:_____

COMMENTS:_____

AGRI-FACTS

Practical information for Alberta's Agriculture Industry

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.

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.

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 stage 1 grains.

Crude protein

Protein is a building block. The Beef Cow Rule of Thumb with protein is 7-9-11, which means an average mature cow requires a ration with crude protein of 7 per cent in late pregnancy, 9 per cent in late pregnancy

AGRI-FACTS

Practical information for Alberta's Agriculture Industry

August 2009

Agdex 130/536-1

Nutrient Management on Intensively Managed Pastures

Pastures are unique to our agricultural production system.

and
polluting and environmental risks

Soils and pathways

Several pools of nutrients including organic matter, growing plants, shoots, plant litter, living animals, including large herbivores, above and below ground invertebrates (beetles and worms) and soil microbes, and the atmosphere.

Nutrient cycles develop as nutrients flow through pathways from one pool to another. The processes and pathways of nutrient cycles are different for various inputs, but nutrient balances control the cycles. Balances are made up of inputs, outputs and losses of nutrients in the pasture system.

Inputs = outputs + losses

Inputs are those that enter the system, either are removed or are exported from the system.

Pasture Planner

A Guide for Developing Your Grazing System



AGRI-FACTS

Practical information for Alberta's Agriculture Industry

September 2008

Agdex 420/56-3

Agronomic Management of Swath Grazed Pastures

Feed, feeding, cow management and pasture 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.

Many factors come into play to determine forage quality, quantity and unit cost of production in a swath grazing system. Some of these factors, such as weather, are

Swath

Swath

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

AGRI-FACTS

Practical information for Alberta's Agriculture Industry

October 2008

Agdex 420/56-4

Agronomic Management of Stockpiled Pastures

Stockpiling pasture is a form of deferred grazing. The producer stockpiles the forage grown during the spring and summer for use when the pasture is in short supply or when cows need fall or winter feed. This practice can mean savings for the producer:

- harvesting, hauling and feeding costs associated with wintered
- to be removed from feeding

Winter grazing on the prairie works best with little or no snow cover. Supplemental feed is needed if snow cover is too deep and forage yields are low.

In the Parkland and Northern areas, a multi-pass system, where the second or third cut or regrowth from pastures is grazed in late fall or winter makes more efficient use of the land and is generally economical. Forage quality of the regrowth is higher than that of the summer first growth, especially if it is saved until fall or winter. Winter grazed cows are often required to forage through more than 30 cm (12 in.) of snow, so stockpiled forage plants must be tall.

Stockpiled forage for pasture can mean savings for the producer

Species selection

Species selection depends on the system being used. Ideally, in cut-and-graze or multi-pass rotational grazing systems, a species used for stockpiling should be able to do the following:

- regrow rapidly following early harvests to provide at least 2,000 kilograms (kg) of forage per hectare (1,785 lb./ac) for good fall grazing
- maintain high quality following fall frosts

If grazing is to occur after snowfall, forage must needs to be higher as grazing efficiency is reduced and grazing losses increase. Using an erect species makes it easier for cows to get at the feed under the snow.

In a single-pass system, a species that maintains its quality as it matures is a good choice.

Management of Canadian Prairie Rangeland

Grazing Notebook



Name: _____
Year(s): _____

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