



Grey  
Wooded  
Forage  
Association

# The Blade

"Creating an Awareness of Forages"



**MAY 2015**

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

**URGENT! Call ASAP to register for the  
upcoming GWFA AGM & Tradeshow!  
Find out what's new!  
Roast Beef Supper & Silent Auction!**

## In this Issue:

- 5 Forage Establishment Mistakes to Avoid - Pg 5
- Graze for Clean Water - Pg 7
- Fencing for the Grazing concepts - Pg 8
- Spring Staggers - Pg 10

## Upcoming events:

- GWFA Annual General Meeting May 14 2015 - Pg 4
- Graze for Clean Water Producer Information Evening - Pg 6

## 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.





## Grey Wooded Forage Association Announcement

### ***Membership fees are due!***

The Blade will not be mailed if the membership fees are not received by May 14, 2015. We will not be invoicing for membership.

Please advise us if you would prefer a digital copy and provide a current email address.

Please contact gwfa3@telus.net to update your email address

**2015–2016 Memberships are available now for \$20.00**  
**and run from April 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016**

**For more information phone 403-844-2645**

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

### **Membership benefits:**

- Receive discounts on Controlled Grazing Courses, seminars, workshops, tours
- Farm calls and consulting on grazing management and any other forage production questions.
- Receive *The Blade* monthly—printed and mailed, or via a link sent to you by email each month.
- 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 to:

**Grey Wooded Forage Association**

**Box 1448, Rocky Mountain House, AB, T4T 1B1**

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY: Renewal\_\_\_\_ or New Member\_\_\_\_ Your preference: Canada Post\_\_\_\_ or Email\_\_\_\_  
Name\_\_\_\_ Phone\_\_\_\_  
Company Name\_\_\_\_ Mobile 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:\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_





# Annual General Meeting

May 14/2015

Don't forget to register!

Thank you to our Annual General Meeting & Tradeshow sponsors!



Green Earth Nutrients Ltd.



Thank you to our corporate sponsors who support our organization and all of its activities throughout the year!



Rocky Mountain House





## Manager's Notes:

By Ginette Boucher

Greetings,

It is with great pleasure and enthusiasm that I accepted the opportunity to become General Manager of GWFA. This is an exciting opportunity even under uncertain times. We want to continue to grow and develop using our best resource "**our people**". I plan to build on our strengths and explore other opportunities. With a depressed economy one must look at other opportunities & create your own economy. With this in mind, I will keep a very close eye on our finances, budget very conservatively and continue to develop and build strong relationships with existing and new sponsors.

Our funders require that we raise 30% of our own revenue as matching; they fund us 70%. I am continuously looking at ways for raising the much needed dollar to delivery our program effectively. I welcome any ideas you may have to contribute to successful fundraising. We can achieve more as a community than we can on our own.

The UN declared 2015 the year of the soils; this could not have come at a better time. More and more we see how our soils have become depleted, plants have become dependent on fertilizer, weeds have become glyphosate resistant and there is very little organic matter or soil structure left. Our responsibility to family, community and business includes being a steward of our land. If



we take care of the land she will in turn take care of us now and in the next generations to come.

This year and the coming years Grey Wooded Forage Association's events and activities will reflect improving soil, water and air quality through improved grazing management practises. We are fortunate that Albert has remained with GWFA and his focus will be extension delivery as our Forage & Grazing Specialist. I look forward to meeting every one of you, learning about your operation and assisting in the development of your long term management plan for environmental sustainability.

The moisture is lacking this spring and we have had a very mild winter, this would be a good time to do the rain dance.

Best regard and I look forward to an exciting and prosperous year.

*Ginette Boucher*



**Don't forget to register for the GWFA AGM  
on May 14, 2015!**

**Call 403-844-2645 or email [gwfa3@telus.net](mailto:gwfa3@telus.net),  
or go to [www.greywoodedforageassociation.com](http://www.greywoodedforageassociation.com)  
for more information or to register.**

**Pre-registration:**

- on or before May 8th: \$25.00
- after May 8th: \$30.00

## GWFA News Release

April 21, 2015

**Grey Wooded forage Association is pleased to announce Ginette Boucher as our new General Manager:**

"We are very excited to have Ginette accept the position of General Manager of GWFA," says GWFA Forage Specialist, Albert Kuipers." Ginette brings strong business management and leadership skills to the organization and her decision making abilities are sound. Ginette has demonstrated a strong ability in financial management and in raising much needed matching dollars for GWFA. Ginette does an excellent job of development of sponsors, and building relationships. I believe her sales and marketing abilities are essential for our organization to survive and thrive. Ginette has a diploma in environmental studies from Olds College and is passionate about agriculture and the interactions agriculture has with the environment.

I am very happy to continue serving GWFA as For-

age Specialist. I have been finding the management of our organization to be increasingly stressful, to the point of having a considerable negative effect on my health. With Ginette's input and agreement, I proposed this change of roles as staff of GWFA at our last Board meeting and was pleased to hear that they ruled in favour of my suggestion.

These changes will make the best use of Ginette's leadership, management and marketing skills. My skills and years of experience in extension of forage production and grazing management will be best used this way as well. I will be able to focus on providing you with lots of high quality information.

I truly believe that this decision is in the best interests of our organization. I look forward to being able to serve you and this organization better than ever before.

*Albert Kuipers*



# 5 Forage Establishment Mistakes To Avoid

It's springtime and we are anxious to get on the land and get our new forage seed in the ground. There are a few common mistakes made that limit the success of new forage seedlings and future yields and quality.

## 1. Not Seeding New Forage Stands Often Enough

Many alfalfa-based stands are simply too old, resulting in huge losses of forage yield. Alfalfa yields are usually at their maximum during the first year or two following the establishment year and then decrease. By the third year, yields have often declined by about 15-20%, and possibly 35% by the fourth year. That is a lot of yield to give up! There are many benefits from alfalfa in crop rotations in addition to the improved soil health and environment, including a 100 lb/ac (110 kg/ha) nitrogen credit to the crop following alfalfa in the rotation, and yield increase in the crop following alfalfa. The value of increased nitrogen and yield go a long way in paying the cost of forage establishment somewhere else in the rotation.

Forage stand rotation decisions should be based on forage yield potential, not on the cost of re-establishment. Establishment costs are typically less than 8% of the total cost-of-production (COP) of hay, with the seed costs often less than 4%. Land and harvest costs per acre change little as yields decline, so those costs increase dramatically on a lb of yield basis. Depending on where you farm in the province, the opportunity cost of land rental can represent over 40% of the COP. With high land and harvesting costs, lower yields cost much more than forage establishment costs. When in doubt, rotate!

## 2. Poor Packing Before and After the Drill

This is a big, but all too common mistake. Forage seed is very small, making good seed-to-soil contact essential for germination, particularly in dry soil conditions. A loose, lumpy seedbed dries out quickly, and lumps make the uniform emergence of young seedlings difficult. A firm, level, clod-free seedbed is very important for uniform seeding depth and good seed-to-soil contact. Avoid creating a soft, fluffy seedbed by deep tillage. Using a spike-tooth harrow before the drill loosens the soil rather than packing it. Soil should be firm enough at planting for a footprint to sink no deeper than 9 mm (3/8 inch). If necessary, pack before seeding, in addition to packing after the drill. Packing after seeding results in more rapid and even germination. Use press wheels or pull a packer behind the drill. Sprocket packers are preferable over smooth rollers to reduce the risk of crusting and to push any seed on the surface into the soil.

## 3. Neglecting Soil Fertility

Forage crops remove a lot of phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) and have high soil nutrient requirements. Alfalfa yields decline rapidly as soil tests drop below 12 ppm P and 120 ppm K. We are seeing more and more soil tests that are critically low in these nutrients, particularly K. In a recent East-Central Ontario Soil & Crop Improvement Association survey of 1,200 samples, 76% were below 100 ppm K! Be sure to soil test and fertilize accordingly. Suggested P and K application rates for new seedlings are provided in OMAFRA Publication 811, Agronomy Guide, Table 3-7, Phosphate Recommendations for Forages, and Table 3-8, Potash Requirements for Forages. (<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/pub811/3fertility.htm>) (Don't Lose Hay Yield To Poor Fertility

<http://fieldcropnews.com/?p=3760>)

Over the years, with our newer drills we have somehow lost our ability, or our willingness to band starter fertilizer in new forage seedings. Starter fertilizer can be especially advantageous in stands where P fertility levels are low to medium. Ideally, MAP starter should be placed 2.5 cm (1 inch) below the seed. Additional fertilizer required can be broadcast and incorporated before seeding. If sulphur is required, sulphate can be applied at establishment or elemental sulphur applied the previous year. (Sulphur On Alfalfa <http://fieldcropnews.com/?p=9092>)

## 4. Using Cheap Seed

Buying cheap forage seed is a poor way to save money. Significant performance differences exist between varieties. The cost of seed is only a very small percentage (typically < 4%) of the cost of producing forage. As land costs increase, the seed cost percentage decreases. The use of the best research proven forage varieties provides high yields of more persistent stands with better disease resistance and appropriate maturity. Using cheap seed has the potential to result in significant yield losses with more risk of disease and winterkill over the life of the stand. It takes very little extra yield to justify higher valued seed.

Certified seed sold under a variety name must meet specific requirements for germination and weed seed content. Forage seed may also be sold as "common seed" or as a "brand" that may be blends of different seed lots. Germination and weed seed content requirements are less rigorous than for certified seed. Common seed has no assurance of characteristics such as disease resistance or winter hardiness. The performance of stands established using common seed is unpredictable and will vary from year to year. The use of high performance, proven varieties, rather than unknown brands or common seed, is strongly suggested.

## 5. Poor Weed Control

Lack of weed control during the establishment period will impact yield and forage quality for the life of the stand. Perennial weeds should be eliminated before seeding. Herbicide control of broadleaf annual weeds at establishment is especially important in direct seedings. Determine the optimum time of spraying by the stage of development of the new seedlings. The risk of injury to alfalfa seedlings is greatly increased when 2,4-DB application is made outside of the first- to the third-trifoliate stage. 2,4-DB can suppress legume growth for a period of 2 – 3 weeks and severe injury can occur under drought or high temperatures. Uniform emergence as a result of good seedbed preparation and packing make it easier to properly time the herbicide application with reduced risk of legume injury. Target the first-trifoliate stage, where weeds are smaller and easier to control. Grower experience suggests that injury to seedling alfalfa plants can be minimized when reducing the lowest labelled rate of 2,4-DB by 25%. A reduced rate may reduce the level of weed control. (OMAFRA Publication 75, Guide To Weed Control. <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/pub75/pub75ch10.pdf>)

Refer to "Successful Forage Establishment"

<http://fieldcropnews.com/?p=9535>.



by Joel Bagg  
OMAFRA



# Graze for Clean Water!

**Producer Information Evening  
at the Last West Hall!**

**June 10, 2015**

**Beef on a Bun Supper**

**Learn how to:**

- ◆ graze for clean water!
- ◆ assess pasture health!
- ◆ assess riparian health!
- ◆ collect water samples!

**Only \$20/person**

**Call 403-844-2645**

**or email [gwfa3@telus.net](mailto:gwfa3@telus.net)**

**to register by June 5th!**

**Medicine River Watershed Society**





# Graze for Clean Water!

Graze for clean water? What? What does grazing have to do with clean water? Most people think of reducing, or eliminating grazing to clean up water. That's why fencing of riparian areas has become so common. In most cases they're only thinking about the riparian area itself, not the adjacent pastures.

I'm suggesting that the appropriate grazing management of adjacent pastures can improve water cleanliness and quality. So how does this work? Well, I'd say it's kind of a domino effect.

For starters, the appropriate grazing management improves plant health and diversity on pastures by allowing plants to fully recover from a previous graze before being grazed again. We've been talking about this for years and it's been done for years. We know we can improve pasture health and productivity with grazing management.

Now we're going to take a look at what happens beneath the soil surface. As we don't see this process, we don't think about what happens there too often, but this is a very important part of the picture. As forage plants are grazed, portions of the roots slough off, more so with a severe graze than with a light or moderate graze. As the plants re-grow, the roots recover and grow as well. This process of sloughing off and re-growing is a large contributor to the pool of organic materials in the soil. In addition, dead and live plant materials are trampled to the soil surface during grazing, contributing more to the pool of organic materials.

Now, this is where the soil critters come in. Some can be seen with the naked eye. Worms and dung beetles are the most well known of this group. They're largely responsible for bringing organic materials into the soil from the surface, but there's a lot more going on in the soil than that.

There's a huge army of bacteria's, fungi, protozoa, nematodes and microarthropods (spider like critters) at work in healthy soils. They're usually called soil microorganisms, or microbes. The way all these critters work together to feed plants is truly amazing.

Now, as most of us know, there are good and bad microorganisms. They're everywhere, on every surface, in our bodies and in the soil. Now here's something important - for the most part, good, or beneficial microbes are aerobic. They require oxygen to survive and thrive. Most damaging, or disease causing microbes are anaerobic, surviving and thriving where there's little or no oxygen. This is why soil structures with lots of space for air is so important.

OK, let's talk about soil bacteria. There are many species of beneficial bacteria in the soil. Most feed directly on plant materials and retain nutrients in their bodies. These nutrients, including nitrogen, are not available to plants as long as they're tied up in the bacterial biomass. Nutrients tied up in bacteria are insoluble. Now here's the neat part.

Bacteria prefer to stick to surfaces. They produce glues that help them stick to soil particles and any other surface they can cling to. These bacterial glues also stick soil particles covered with bacteria together, giving the soil structure. This is how nutrients and soil particles are held in place, preventing leaching and washing of nutrients into waterways.



Now let's take a look at fungi. There are many species of fungi in the soil, with the beneficial ones being of the aerobic type. Like bacteria, most fungi retain nutrients within, or on their bodies. Nutrients retained in fungi, like nutrients retained in bacteria, can only be released through feeding of protozoa, nematodes and microarthropods.

Mycorrhizal fungi are the exception. They have symbiotic relationships directly with the roots of plants and can exchange nutrients directly to plants in exchange for nutrients they need. Fungi are long and threadlike in structure and bind soil and other particles together, adding to good soil structure.

The next group of microbes are called protozoa. They feed primarily on bacteria, but do eat other protozoa and some fungi. Through their digestive processes, they release nutrients from the bacteria they eat in plant available forms.

Nematodes are the next group of organisms. Most farmers are somewhat familiar with plant, or root feeding, harmful nematodes, but there are many beneficial and essential nematodes in healthy soils. Beneficial nematodes eat bacteria and fungi and release plant available nutrients in much the same way as protozoa.

Microarthropods are another group of organisms that feed on bacteria and fungi, releasing plant available nutrients. They also contribute to soil structure and transport organic materials within soils.

Can you see how this is starting to fit together? Grazing management results in healthy plants that contribute lots of organic materials for bacteria and fungi to feed on, retaining nutrients in a way that's not easily washed into waterways. Other organisms eat bacteria and fungi and release nutrients as and where plants need them.

All this activity is part of the natural nutrient cycling that occurs in healthy soils under good management. On forage stands, grazing management that incorporates short grazing durations at high stock densities with long recovery periods is what's needed.

When the appropriate grazing management results in healthy forages on healthy soils with healthy microbe populations, rain, or precipitation events do not wash nutrients and soil particles into waterways near as much as on over-grazed forages on soils low in organic matter and microbial activity.

If you want to learn more about how to manage pastures in this way, please feel free to contact me.



*Albert Kuipers*

# Fencing for the Grazing Concepts



This past month our 10 year old daughter took part in the Edmonton Regional Science Fair. As my husband and I were walking around all of the different science experiments, I noticed an obvious tendency for the experiments to go in one of two directions. The prevalent topics were either regarding food, or regarding the environment. This really spoke to me as a farmer, it told me that our youth are paying attention and interested in what we are doing. Not only that, but these are our future farmers and our future consumers. Even in grade four they are concerned about the animals, the soil life and the air quality. There were experiments on the effects of RFID on the human body and at what speed different types of food rot. There was even a sweet girl there that told us all about how different vegetables will grow if they are re-planted.

All of this of course got me thinking of the upcoming grazing season and what we are doing to take care of our own local environment. Rotational grazing and good management of our riparian areas are our top priorities. So far we will be having five more herds of cattle arriving next month, so we are needing to make adjustments to some of our current cell designs. We will be adding some new fences and adjusting some of our animal movement in order to make better use of the land. We have also been looking into how we can improve on our current water systems.

When we go to set up a new rotational grazing cell, we have a few things that we look at. This is done easiest while looking at an aerial photo of the land. We want to break up the different land types, so we try to graze the bush paddocks separate from the open and we fence off the riparian areas. We also separate tame pastures from the native pastures. We do this because each of these unique pieces of land are going to need different graze and rest periods. In our environment, we believe

that it takes a minimum of 16 paddocks to properly manage our land. This will of course increase depending on the carrying capacity of the property. One of the main considerations when placing fences is GRAS (no worries, I didn't forget an 'S'). GRAS is an acronym for the four main grazing concepts. Graze period and Rest period go hand in hand. Graze Period is how long your animals are on a piece of land, and Rest Period is how long your land gets a chance to rest before the animals come back to it. Ideally you want to only have the animals on a piece of land while the grass is in late stage two of growth, so once it's well established, but has not yet had a chance to go to seed. When the animals are on this piece you want to keep them on only long enough to take no more than one bite of each plant. You then also want the animals off of that piece of land long enough that the

grasses have a chance to get back to late stage two of growth. Animal impact and Stock density also tend to go hand in hand. You want to have enough animals on the land that they can utilize every plant before you need to move them in order to avoid that second bite. Good Stock Density, or having the right number of animals on a paddock, will also guarantee that what comes out of the back end of the animal is spread evenly across ground. Animal Impact is the impact on the soil that the animal's hooves make as they walk across it. This will allow any undesirable plants to be stepped on as the animals search for the more desirable ones. This will allow for an equal competitive playing field for each plant throughout the rest period. This is one of our best options for controlling 'weeds'.

To manage our grazing concepts we need fences. On our perimeters we prefer a very strong barbed wire fence. Our cross fences tend to vary though, depending on our future plans for the land. Because all of our land is leased, we look at how long we might have the pasture for and what the owners want done with the land before we decide on our cross fencing. A single poly wire on a roller with good quality step in posts makes for a fantastic temporary fence. If you're putting rotational grazing into practice for the first time, or you think you might want to change your fence line down the road; this is definitely the way to go. A poly wire fence is fairly visible and quite reliable. It is also incredibly easy to put up and take down. The other option that we often use is semi-permanent. We have quite a number of fences that use one high tensile wire with wooden posts. These are very strong and usually require very little in the way of repairs. They do require a little more setup time and they aren't all that visible. Cattle usually figure them out quite quickly, people on quads and skidoos are another story.



As for fencers, we tend to use a good quality three joule fencer. Because very few of our pastures have power, we set the fencer up on a deep cycle marine battery with a solar panel. This is quite reliable in mid-summer, although come fall we do find that we need to check the batteries regularly. We don't get quite enough sunlight in our area to maintain the energy level needed to keep the fencer going through a solar panel alone. When setting up our fencers we prefer there to be a minimum of 5 kV in the fence. While choosing your fencer make sure that you know the distance you're wanting to put energy through; this will determine the strength of fencer you need. How clear the path of the fence is will also highly impact the strength of your voltage. For instance, a tame pasture with little in the way of trees will be a lot easier to energize than a forested area with a lot of brush that could come up against the fence. A fence tester is one of our 'required tools of the trade'. Although you can test the strength of your fence by holding a blade of grass against it (this dilutes the shock by approximately 10 times), a quality fence tester will be able to point you in the direction of any faults. It will also give you peace of mind by knowing exactly how hot your fence is.

When shopping for new fencing supplies, I recommend trying out different brands and styles and figuring out what works best for you. They all have different pros and cons. A lot of people have differing opinions depending on their preferences and needs. What really matters in the long run is planting the fence posts. Rotational grazing will go a long way towards rejuvenating your pastures and keeping your animals healthy.

The Science Fair showed me that our children are paying attention to environmental issues and farming. Let's give them something worth imitating as they become adults. Happy fencing!

Amber Kenyon  
Greener Pastures Ranching Ltd.  
[www.greenerpasturesranching.com](http://www.greenerpasturesranching.com)



**Greener Pastures Ranching Ltd.**  
Presents:  
**The Greener Pastures Walk**  
(aka Hay Ride)

Our annual Pasture Walk will be held on July 11, 2015 on our ranch near Busby, Alberta. Don't miss out as we spend a day looking at everything grazing! We will look at the grazing concepts & principles, natural weed and gopher control, high legume grazing, fencing, cell design, water systems, bale grazing and so much more. A BBQ lunch will be provided. The cost will be \$75/person or \$50 with a group of 5 or more.

Admission is free for kids under 16.

To register please contact Steve Kenyon  
(780)307-6500

QUALITY  
SPRING BORN 2 YEAR OLD

# Gelbvieh Bulls

POLLED RED & BLACK  
100% FORAGE FED  
SEMEN TESTED  
\$3500/CHOICE

**Abel Farm**  
Lacombe, Ab  
403 782-1009  
403 872-0612  
me.abel@xplornet.ca

**Dayspring Cattle**  
Sylvan Lake, AB  
403 887-4971  
dayspringcattle.com  
info@dayspringcattle.com

## For All Your Livestock Needs



- Bulk and Bagged Feed
- Animal Health
- Livestock Equipment
- Twine
- Fencing Supplies

**GWFA  
Silver  
Sponsor**



**Rocky Mountain House Co-op Home Centre**  
4323 45<sup>th</sup> Street, Rocky Mountain House, AB.  
Phone: 403-845-2844 Fax: 403-845-6570

**Toll Free: 1-855-845-4166**



# Spring Staggers

Spring is here, and it's very different from this time last year. May 1<sup>st</sup> last year I recall driving home from the airport in a major snow storm having just come home from Jamaica. I'm betting many of you remember those spring snow storms as another interruption to the already difficult calving season. Especially this year, spring is a time of year to look forward to. Cattle prices are high and we are enjoying watch healthy calves hit the ground! Once the ground warms up, the moisture starts soaking into the ground and the wonderful sight of green grass appears. Everyone is itching to start grazing and get into the fields. We have some pretty dry areas here in the province, but we still have lots of time to hope for some rain.

Spring time brings a couple of challenges to grazing. Along with the warm weather and moisture comes rapid spring growth resulting in access to large amounts of highly palatable forage. As much as we love to see this grass grow, grazing problems must be monitored and managed. Grass tetany and pasture bloat are the two most common spring time problems producers face. Today I am just going to cover grass tetany.

Grass tetany is hypomagnesaemia, or in plain English: a deficiency in magnesium. This is a metabolic disorder that occurs primarily in lactating cows. We find that older cows are more susceptible because older cows do not seem to be able to mobilize magnesium out of their bones as readily as younger cows. In mild cases of grass tetany, milk yield is decreased, and the animal appears nervous. Animals may suddenly stop grazing, separate themselves from the rest of the herd, show discomfort, or become ADR (ain't doin right). Staggers and twitching skin can also be an indication that you have something a little more serious on your hands.

As the metabolic disorder progresses an affected animal that is stimulated may start bellowing and running while developing a staggered gait. The animal then may collapse and show



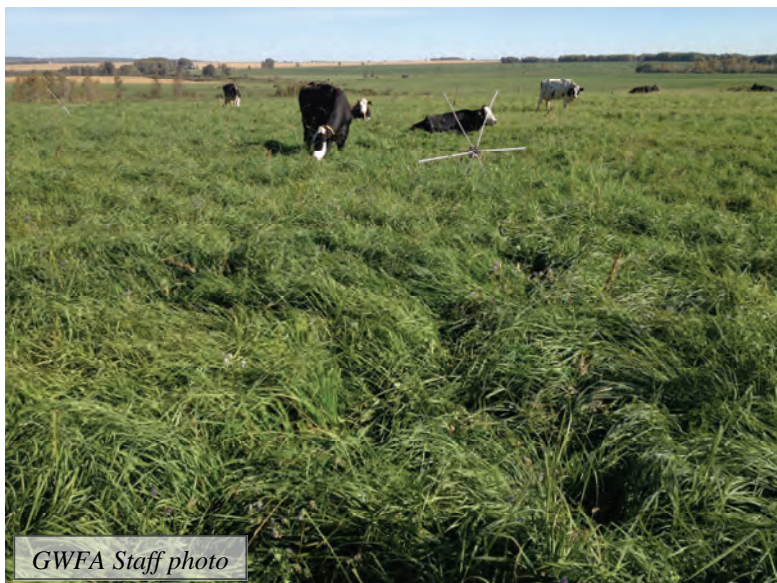
GWFA Staff photo

signs of stiffened muscles and convulsions. Body temperature and respiration rate increases. Unless treatment is given, the animal often dies once it has reached this point. What we hear from producers is that they found a dead cow with no other signs of sickness who appeared fine the day before. Around the animal there will be signs of paddling and the head stretched back from convulsions.

So how do we get there? You have been faithfully filling the mineral feeders all winter (following the great advice from your local nutritionist of course), and yet we find ourselves with a problem. Grass tetany usually occurs when animals start grazing lush pastures at this time of the year, but it can occur in the fall and winter as well. It is commonly seen during cool, rainy weather that is followed by a warm few days where the combination of moisture and heat result in lush grass growth. In addition, grass tetany is more frequent in fertilized pasture vs. unfertilized pastures. It is most likely to occur on pastures that have low available magnesium and sodium and have excess levels of potassium.

Sodium is involved in magnesium transportation into cells, therefore it is important for proper magnesium utilization in the animal. This is one of the reasons free choice salt needs to be provided year round. On the other hand excess potassium interferes with this whole biological system. Excess potassium in the diet is taken care of by being excreted in the urine. This would be fine if it didn't interfere with that all important magnesium absorption in the small intestine.

For all the feeding testing we do in a year, nearly 300 results throughout the province, I have not seen any forages with deficient levels of potassium. Producers can exacerbate a grass tetany problem by adding potassium to the diet through the mineral. Forage containing less than 0.2 percent magnesium and more than 3 percent potassium and 4 percent nitrogen (25 percent crude protein) are likely candidates to exhibit grass tetany problems. Just to throw another mineral in there to confuse you, low phosphorus levels can contribute to grass tetany problems as well. This just is an example showing the complexity of the interactions between minerals.



GWFA Staff photo



**So, how do we prevent grass tetany?** Evaluate your pasture fertilization needs before putting a generic cocktail on the land. A simple soil test can tell you so much about what is going on under the sea of green! Animals should have a free choice mineral with magnesium provided prior to and while grazing new lush growth.

The mineral program that you use in the winter will have an effect on magnesium mobilization from the bone, so ensure that you are feeding an appropriate mineral to compliment the feed and match the physiological status of the cow (stage in gestation, lactation, growth and pregnancy etc). Don't feed excess potassium. Feed test, or grass test to evaluate.

**Can grass tetany be treated?** Yes, it sure can! Increasing stress can take these critters a few steps closer to the grave. Handle sick animals in a low stress way. Roping, chasing, driving is not going to help your cause. Injection of magnesium (as directed by your veterinarian) will often get them going in the right direction. Take note of the animals that have experienced grass tetany symptoms. It is not uncommon for it to be recur-

ring, especially if they are some of the older girls in your operation.

#### Key points:

1. **Knowledge is power:** The fact that you are still reading this is a good sign! You will know how to prevent grass tetany, recognise the signs and treat in the case that you do have grass tetany issues.
2. **No potassium please and thank-you!** Try not to purchase mineral that has potassium in it unless you have a feed test to support the need for supplemental potassium.
3. Feed a mineral with **magnesium** throughout the winter and into the spring.
4. Always provide **salt free choice**, sodium is a **magnesium transporter!**
5. Mineral nutrition is complex: More is not better. **Achieving a balance is the goal.**



By Kristen Ritson-Bennett,  
Nutritionist - Blue Rock Animal Nutrition



*Cow receiving intravenous treatment for Grass Tetany*

# BLUE ROCK

## Animal Nutrition Ltd.

**Lee Eddy** Bsc. Ag  
General Manager

**Kristen Ritson-Bennett** Bsc. Ag  
Animal Nutrition Manager

Toll Free: 1(855) 588-5889

CUSTOM MINERAL PRODUCTS  
PROUDLY SERVING ALBERTA

www.bluerocknutrition.com

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

## re.vi.tal.ize

**verb: to give new life to or vigor to.**

This spring revitalize your soil with calcium, phosphorus, trace minerals and microbes.

**Its like a vitamin pill for your soil.**

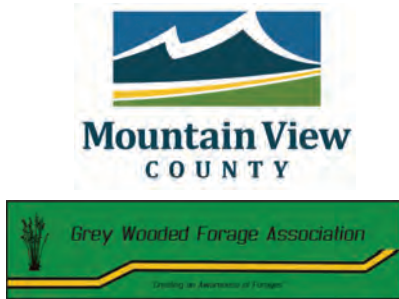


Call Greg to Book your  
**'Spring Field Walk'**  
Leduc, AB | 780.902.1234



# Save the Date!

## Soil Health Tour with Dr. Christine Jones on July 23, 2015! In the Olds/Carstairs area



### DR. CHRISTINE JONES

**INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED GROUNDCOVER & SOILS ECOLOGIST**

Jones works with landowners to implement regenerative land management practises that enhance biodiversity, maximize photosynthesis, increase soil biological activity, sequester carbon, activate soil nutrient cycles, improve water holding capacity and infiltration, increase productivity and create new topsoil.

"Organic carbon is the basic building block for all life on and in the earth. We cannot live without it. Neither can our soils.

Rebuilding carbon-rich agricultural soils is the only real productive permanent solution to taking excess carbon dioxide from the atmosphere."



GWFA Staff photo

GWFA Staff photo

## 12<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL SOUTHERN ALBERTA GRAZING SCHOOL FOR WOMEN



**DINOSAUR PROVINCIAL PARK  
JULY 22<sup>ND</sup> & 23<sup>RD</sup>, 2015**



#### TOPICS INCLUDE:

- Grazing Practices
- Range Health
- Plant & Weed ID
- U of A Research Ranch
- Riparian Health
- Riparian Grazing
- Ranching Women
- Aquatic Invasives
- Integrated Pest Management
- Animal Welfare: Jennifer Woods

**REGISTRATION DEADLINE: JULY 10<sup>TH</sup>**  
**REGISTRATION FEE: \$100.00 Meals Included**  
(Accommodation Not Included)

#### ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS:

Camping Dinosaur Provincial Park, \$38/night  
Cabin Rentals, double occupancy \$30/night  
Call Holly White at (403) 633 0352 to book accommodation at Dinosaur Provincial Park  
Brooks – 30 Minute Drive

For more information or to register contact  
Amanda Halawell: ahalawell@cowsandfish.org  
Phone (403) 451-1182 Fax (403) 274-0007

[www.southernalbertagsw.blogspot.ca](http://www.southernalbertagsw.blogspot.ca)



Find us on Facebook!  
"Grazing School for Women"



Use the Hashtags  
#RanchingWomen #SAGSW2015





Alberta Ag-Info Centre

**310-farm**

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

Canada

Alberta  
Government

Growing Forward  
A federal provincial term table

**LJB Ranch**

3D Fencing  
Project  
Sponsor!

**Jim & Barb Bauer**

Ph. 403.546.2427 email: jim.bauer50@gmail.com

Offering Electric Fencing Solutions

Now handling Tru-Test scales and RFID Wand readers!

**speedrite** **TRU-TEST** **PasturePro**

## Bunch - Maintaining a Competitive Edge

Technology is evolving all around us each and every day and this has many implications for Canadian companies. According to a recent article in the Financial Post (David Paddon, Canadian Press, April, 2015) a new study by Deloitte has found that most Canadian companies are not prepared for how quickly they will be affected by major advances in technology. According to this study, 87% of Canadian companies are completely unprepared for the extent and speed of the technological change that is occurring all around us.

Although the majority of Canadian companies are technologically unprepared, Bunch, located East of Rocky Mountain House is maintaining a competitive edge by installing automated equipment and having our Staff attend advanced training in as faraway places as Vancouver. These technological assets, along with our country get it done attitude, will ensure we stay competitive, and continue to provide cost effective solutions for a range of projects including facilities, pipelines and fabrication.

Innovation and keeping up with technological advances will assure Bunch continues to provide quality products and services that will be delivered with the greatest efficiency, safety, timeliness, and value; making Bunch the right choice.

Jill Pattison



**Save the Date!**

## The Western Canadian Conference on Soil Health

*on Dec 8 - 10, 2015.*

*Presenting  
scientific and practical information  
on soil health*

**Radisson**  
HOTEL EDMONTON SOUTH



**GALLAGHER**

Looking for Gallagher  
Energizer Repair? You found it!

LONE STAR  
RANCH & SALES

is Western Canada's Gallagher Repair Centre!  
Also carrying a full line of electric fencing supplies,  
weighing and tag reading equipment.

Toll free: 1-855-391-9314  
Red Deer, AB.

## Bunch. The Right Choice



### *Delivery, Above Expectations*

Bunch is recognized as one of Western Canada's leading mechanical contractors, serving the oil and gas sector in the areas of pipeline, fabrication and facility construction. We take great pride in our high quality workmanship and safety record.

*Integrity*

*Safety*

*Quality*

*Efficiency*



**BUNCH.ca**  
1-800-333-6850





## ALBERTA ENVIRONMENTAL FARM PLAN

### General Inquiries:

Alberta Agriculture & Rural Development

Toll free help line: 310-FARM (3276)

or Email: [Info@Albertaefp.com](mailto:Info@Albertaefp.com)



For more information contact the ARECA office:

Phone: 780-612-9712

or Email: [steeple@areca.ab.ca](mailto:steeple@areca.ab.ca)



Growing Forward 2



A federal-provincial-territorial initiative



## It's the Prairies' best kept secret for high performance livestock

GWFA  
Silver  
Sponsor

Please visit our  
Canada website at  
[www.cpsagu.ca](http://www.cpsagu.ca)



Your herd requires top-quality forages to keep pace with growing market needs. Proven® Seed stands behind our forage varieties with the same pride you take in your operation.

For more information, please call our Forage Help Desk at 1-800-661-3334, visit [provenseed.ca](http://provenseed.ca) or contact your Crop Production Services representative.

**Proven®**  
SEED

*The Power to Grow®*

Proven® Seed is a registered trademark of Crop Production Services (Canada) Inc. CPS CROP PRODUCTION SERVICES and Design is a registered trademark of Crop Production Services, Inc.

10/14-40191



powered by **Altech®**

**Quality | Innovation | Customer Service**

For over 50 years, EMF Nutrition has been providing customers across all species with innovative and researched livestock feed solutions, of the highest quality, supported by market leading customer service.

We are here to help build your future in the livestock and forage industry and supply all of your needs!

**Rebekah Ricketts**

Sales & Nutrition Consultant | Ph: 403-741-9714

**EMF Nutrition**

4747 - 60th Street | Red Deer, AB

**New!**

GWFA  
Silver  
Sponsor

[emf-nutrition.com](http://emf-nutrition.com)





# Free Buy & Sell Classified

## FOR SALE:

**4020 John Deere** - Fire damage on cab. Good restoration project. Call Les at **403-729-2354**

**For Sale:** 28' 7550 Easy On Air Drill-5" rubber packer wheels-10" spacing. Also a 1720 Flexicoil Air Cart. Call David at **403-586-5050**

**For rent:** Pasture land for cattle Hwy 22 N near Hwy 12 - all fenced Dennis Coderre (403) 895-0965

**Land for rent** beginning 2016: 488 acres crop & forage For more info **403 773 2125** or email: [brianbiggs@hotmail.ca](mailto:brianbiggs@hotmail.ca)

**Custom Farm Fencing** (Barbwire) Contact Lee at Blue Rock Animal Nutrition: **403-804-4350** Call now for spring installations.

**Harsh 4 Auger Feed Wagon** Model 375H. Heavy tandem axles & electronic scale. **403-556-2282**

**12' Pull Type Brillion Seeder** on hydraulic transport. Needs large & small seed boxes. **403-895-1722**

**Custom Lawn Furniture** - Log picnic tables & benches. Call now for spring orders. Call Doug @ **403-722-2605**

**For Sale:** Large tight round bales of wheat & canola straw. Good for bedding. Call David at **403-586-5050**

## WANTED:

Would like to talk with a young couple, or gentleman who has a passion to go cattle farming. Email: [rjfarm1@telus.net](mailto:rjfarm1@telus.net)

Looking for a Highline 7000 HD Bale Processor **403-728-3992.**

You are invited to submit ads of up to 150 characters in length to our Free Buy & Sell section of The Blade.

To submit an ad, call Ginette at **403-507-5478** or email it to her at [gwfa3@telus.net](mailto:gwfa3@telus.net)

**Looking for pasture** for between 50 and 70 medium sized cow calf pairs with March calves. Location within 1 hour of Lacombe. Call or text **403 844-6239**

As we have very few new ads coming in we are considering discontinuing our Free Buy & Sell Classified section. Please let us know if you see value in continuing this section by sending us your ads. Please email Ginette at [GWFA3@telus.net](mailto:GWFA3@telus.net), or Albert at [GWFA2@telus.net](mailto:GWFA2@telus.net), or call us at **403-844-2645.**

*Thanks, GWFA Staff.*



**UFA ATWORK**

**NO TIME, EFFORT OR DAYLIGHT WASTED.**

**New!**

**GWFA Gold Sponsor!**

\*In-stock inventory only. Certain substitutes available — see in-store for details. Discount calculated from standard retail price. Offer expires June 30, 2015. © 2015 UFA Co-operative Ltd. All rights reserved. 190545

What you need to get the job done. Save 12% or more when you buy a one-mile fencing package at UFA.

Package includes:

- Four bundles of 4.25" fence posts — 6' or 7'
- One bundle of 3.5" fence posts — 6' or 7'
- 16 rolls of barbed wire
- Two 30-lb pails of fence staples

Visit your UFA Farm & Ranch Supply store for all your fencing needs.



[UFA.com](http://UFA.com)



**GWFA  
Platinum  
Sponsor!**

# **LONE STAR RANCH & SALES**

**3D Fencing  
Project  
Sponsor!**

## **QUALITY LIVESTOCK EQUIPMENT AND SERVICE**

*"We know what it takes because we live it everyday"*

### **MORAND LIVESTOCK EQUIPMENT DEALER**

- complete livestock handling systems
- squeeze chute (with patented shoulder holder)
- maternity pens
- loading chutes (portable and stationary)
- gates and panels (all sizes and configurations)



### **GALLAGHER DEALER AND REPAIR CENTER**

- full line of electric fencing supplies and equipment
- Western Canadian Repair Center, and system design consulting
- weigh scales, load bars, and RFID readers

### **MIRACO LIVESTOCK WATERER DEALER**

- designed with clean out plug and completely rust free
- all sizes available for any size of operation



### **PROMOLD DEALER**

- solar pasture water troughs, bunk feeders, fence line feeders, mineral feeders
- calf feeders, calf shelters, stand alone panels and windbreaks
- Verified Beef Program reimburses 70% (up to \$5,000.00) of the cost of a new squeeze, load bars, scale and RFID reader.



**Phone: 403-391-9314**

**Toll Free: 1-855-391-9314**

**Fax: 403-347-1939**

**Email: [lonestarranchsales@gmail.com](mailto:lonestarranchsales@gmail.com)**

