



Grey
Wooded
Forage
Association

The Blade

"Creating an Awareness of Forages"



SEPTEMBER 2015

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Registration for the
2015 Western Canadian
Conference on Soil Health
is now open!

Visit

<http://albertasoilhealth.ca/>
for more information!

*GWFA Staff photo: Kim Nielsen's pasture
with high plant diversity*

MISSION STATEMENT

To promote environmentally and economically sustainable forage and agricultural practices.

VISION STATEMENT

The community is engaged in regenerative agricultural production methods.

Join us for a Field Day!

on September 23, 2015, 2:00PM to 6:30PM

Discover the Soil Below Your Feet!

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Manager's Notes:

By Ginette Boucher, Manager

Greetings,

Fall is upon us, and the summer has passed by much too quickly again. I want to share a little experience I had this summer. This spring I received a call from John Reid who is one of our members living east of Rocky. He was looking to place an ad in our classified section in The Blade for some casual farm help to check fence and the watering system while he would be away. After some consideration I called John and asked him if he would train me to do the job. Not being a farmer I was looking to gain some experience and I saw this as a perfect opportunity to learn. I had been around cattle before during calving and branding season, but I had never been responsible for a herd on my own.

John taught me to fix a leaky pipeline, how to operate a reel, how to remove a fence with pig tails and set it up again where needed to give the yearling's new grass. He also showed me where all the water lines were and if there was a water problem what to do and how to check the voltage of the fence. All and all, I thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to learn from John and spend some time on the farm. Thank you John Reid, for the opportunity and I hope you contact me again next year for a second round of learning.

I travel for GWFA to build and develop relationships with sponsors and partners. Any opportunity I get to spend on the farm is welcome. Through my travels I could easily drop in when I am in your area for a visit and have a pasture walk. I would be happy to learn about your operation and how GWFA could better serve your needs.

I often assist on the farm at butchering time to skin the animals and help with wrapping. I enjoy the fellowship and working in a community. The reward is fantastic because I get to take some good farm meat home. In my freezer there are no labels; I do all my own canning, including meat. Hunting season is fast approaching and I am looking forward to it. I never miss a year of putting draws in and this year I got a mule deer draw. I also plan to hunt whitetail and help a friend with his cow elk draw.

Being an avid gardener, I have a large garden in a farmer's field near Caroline. This is a community garden and I



have been blessed with the opportunity to grow my own food. Gardening this year has had plenty of challenges; which gives me a glimpse of the challenges you face as a producer. I am looking forward to the harvest. Thank you Bob Roper for sharing your land.

I am passionate about the environment and have an environmental diploma from Olds College. In combination with my personal interests and values and my schooling from Olds, I've been blessed with this wonderful opportunity to serve you as the manager of Grey Wooded Forage Association. These past months have been a tremendous learning experience on the administrative side. I hope that by completing my first year, I'll be able to deal with the administrative things easier and have more time to focus on the production issues that really interest me. Thanks for your support and I look forwards to getting to know more of you in the months and years to come.

Ginette

Message from the Chair

By Ken Ziegler

Well folks, welcome to the September Blade. I hope you'll find the information here both interesting and useful. Ginette and Albert work hard throughout the month responding to the various challenges that come our way as a forage association in serving you the member.



Considering this past month and the growing conditions, I marvel how the year has changed, moisture wise. One way that I measure soil saturation levels around the farm is monitoring the number of earthworms that are slithering along in the gravel on my laneway. If there's lots, I know the soil is saturated and they're looking for drier housing. This has only happened once this late summer after a tumultuous week of thunderstorms and the odd torrential down pour. Other years it happens quite often.

That said, re-growth has been as good as any year promising pretty good pasture conditions compared to earlier this summer. The one bad reality is that with the early season drought, growth had stopped or even receded resulting in dismal feed supplies for this winter. As an industry we are blessed with strong calf prices this fall again giving us resilience to the higher feed costs coming up. I'm glad calves are not \$600 each like a few years ago. At those prices, the decision to cull the cow would have been easy.

All in all, the challenge will be to feed straw based rations safely. The need to provide adequate protein and energy to the base of straw will be challenging to ensure that all the cows in the herd are getting their actual designated portion.

This is the year to broaden your base of experience. Be sure to ask others their experience. Be quick to listen and to learn. Everyone has some story. The challenge will be to listen and to incorporate the truths that so many people have. By asking the right questions, it will be possible to feed through this 2015/16 winter reasonably affordably.

Ken



The Community garden at Bob Roper's farm

4 Clover Ranch: Journey of a Pasture

by Ginette G. Boucher

“Grazing management has an incredible influence on overall pasture health and productivity” says Kim Nielsen, owner of 4 Clover Ranch. “My observations of the changes in one of our Ranch pastures, *“Cabin South”*, over the last 23 years has taught me a lot about the impact of grazing management” he said. He has now applied this approach to his whole farm.

Kim bought his farm in 1992 and the previous owner was embarrassed to show him some of the pastures. With respect to one of them he said “this pasture is really sod bound and needs to be worked up”.

There has been a lot of patience devoted to this pasture and all the others on the ranch. “This is now paying off” Kim says. Back in 1992, *“Cabin South”* was mostly yarrow, strawberries, dandelion, blue grass and a bit of fescue. The pasture had been continuously grazed

for a number of years by the former owner’s dairy herd and no matter what was initially seeded the species diversity had narrowed down to these plants, tolerant of continuous grazing.

The home quarter of 4-Clover Ranch has a gentle south slope and *“Cabin South”* typified this. Its southerly slope was an attractive feature when spring rolled around and cows and young calves were longing for some dry ground, free of scour bugs and mud.

Rather than breaking all the pasture, Kim decided to experiment and leave the northern half as it was and explore the benefits of deferred or stock piled grazing in May. This concept had caught his interest as a system that might assist in keeping his late winter calving cows and calves healthy and might also benefit the overgrazed pasture. The aging pasture had never been fertilized; in fact the entire farm was never fertilized with commercial fertilizer prior to 1992.

Kim had been in contact with his long time grazing mentor Grant Lastiwka from Alberta Agriculture. Some of Grant’s work in the early nineties in testing the feed value of stock piled pastures for early spring grazing had shown that several forage species had adequate nutrition at the end of winter to meet the needs of lactating cows grazing this growth as soon as the retreating snow allowed them. It was also right up the alley of Kim’s desire to graze for longer periods of the year rather than feeding hay.

The aging pasture was grazed once around mid July of 1993 then left for the remainder of the growing season. Cattle then grazed this pasture from early May the following year, before a short rest period and a second grazing by the end of July. This pattern was followed annually with the pasture exposed to extended rest each year from 1993 onward - it was basically rested from late July through until



GWFA Staff Photo: “Cabin South” pasture

early May the following year. The pasture was still grazed twice a year like most of the other 16 pastures that Kim developed over the years on the home quarter but unlike the rest, *“Cabin South”* went through the winter with a dense amount of stockpiled forage before the second grazing.

So here we are on a sunny August day in 2015 and I had the pleasure of looking at the same pasture that almost 23 years earlier was destined for the plow.

Like me, Albert Kuipers was intrigued by the transformation of the pasture and decided a few years back to look more closely at the species that thrived under the deferred grazing system. One of the species that appreciated the rest was smooth brome and while you didn’t see any in 1992 it is now throughout the pasture. Native plants such as American Vetch and creamy pea-vine, often referred to as the ice cream of pasture species, all of a sudden showed up and gained strength. White clover, alsike clover, red clover dotted the landscape along with a stronger presence of creeping red fescue, orchard grass and timothy.

The common yarrow and strawberry retreated. In around 2006, Albert counted over 20 species of forbes and grasses, quite a transition from 1992. No new species had been introduced; the change was simply a natural occurrence as the different grazing management began favoring species that were part of the soil seed bank, just never allowed to make a presence due to the continuous grazing pressure. While species diversity has increased across the ranch, no other pasture on 4-Clover Ranch has caught up this level of species diversity, Kim added. The pasture recovery is nothing but remarkable, taking an overgrazed pasture, likely seeded in the late seventies to what it is today, forty years later.



Photo by Kim Nielsen: A very lush “Cabin South” pasture

The “Cabin South” pasture isn’t the only pasture benefiting from the change in grazing management and there is a noted increase in species diversity throughout the ranch. Alfalfa seeded in two of the pastures in 2003 along with meadow brome has maintained a very strong presence 12 years later, something Kim attributes to his delayed grazing till the alfalfa is into flowering. This is also a good bloat management tool. The water pasture pipeline system installed in 1993, which provides water in each pasture via portable troughs, deserves some credit as well. The main benefit is even distribution of the manure in the pasture and not allowing it to be concentrated around a fixed watering point, which was previously the set-up. The effect of this is still very noticeable near the yard, where for years the cattle were watered. After a long walk for water and after a good rest chewing the cud, we are all familiar with the events unfolding when the cow gets up and before she heads back for another bellyful of grass.



GWFA Staff photo: One of the portable water troughs

The greatly increased species diversity has also helped keeping invasive weeds at bay. Tall buttercup is an on-going threat as seeds easily hitchhike on the fur of white tail deer, moose and coyotes so tackling infestations with eradication in mind has been a priority ever since 1992. In the summer of 1993 Kim sprayed roughly 10 acres of combined patches of tall buttercup. The 2015 program was reduced to the work of a 7 liter hand pump up sprayer, always handy on the quad when checking cattle.

So along with an expanded list of forage species has come some top quality grazing. Records are showing that “Cabin South” is now one of the top performing pastures. Knowing the exact performance of each pasture was greatly enhanced a couple of years ago, when Kim became aware of the “And-Measure” app that takes advantage of a smart phone’s built in GPS. Operating on Google Maps this has allowed precise measurement of the acreage of each of the 16 pastures on the home quarter and the 12 pastures on the other quarter of 4-Clover Ranch. Once the paddock sizes were known a simple Excel spreadsheet was set up with formulas to calculate Animal Unit Days of grazing by simply entering dates of the cattle entry and exit. The old pasture is competing very well against its much younger counter-



Photo by Kim Nielsen: Roots with good soil aggregation

parts with 2014 figures of 80 AUD per acre. The home quarter had an average of 99 AUD/acre for 2014. In 2015, the home quarter is stocked with 68 cows and calves and two bulls, which is a marked increase of the stocking rate from the nineties. The grazing spreadsheet also keeps tabs on the length of rest between grazings. It has evolved more towards a *planned* grazing than *rotational* grazing system, allowing extended grazing rests to be incorporated across all paddocks and at different times each year.

Apart from the years of swath grazing and the years of establishing some of the most recent pastures from 2004-2006, no fertilizer is used on 4 Clover Ranch, and the answers behind the rising carrying capacity likely lie in enhanced nutrient cycling of nutrients that are still plentiful in the soil, just needing soil microbes to come to the plants’ rescue. Micorrhizal fungi, free living nitrogen fixing bacteria and soil nematodes are all part of the complex soil microbe environment that Kim is just coming to a better understanding of. The symbiotic relationships these microbes have with plants is an amazing discovery that will continue to unfold in years to come.

Thank you Kim & Helen for the opportunity to learn about all you have done to improve your pasture productivity over the past several decades.



GWFA Staff photo: Kim & Helen Nielsen in front of their cabin

Forage & Grazing Points to Ponder

By Albert Kuipers,
Forage & Grazing Specialist

As Ginette mentioned in the previous article, I was quite intrigued by Kim Nielsen's "Cabin South" pasture and I was impressed by the plant diversity and health I saw there. It showed very well that a planned grazing management strategy that includes stockpiling a pasture for use in late winter/early spring and a summer graze in late July works. For all you guys who have a "sacrifice" pasture that you use for calving and/or feeding in early spring, this would be an awesome strategy to use.

Obviously pasture health has improved immensely from the time when it was mostly inhabited by a few invasive plant species with high grazing tolerance. Wow! What a way to rejuvenate a pasture. Yeah, it took a few years, but without costly inputs and with such excellent results that would be difficult, if not impossible to realize from breaking up and re-seeding a pasture.

Ginette also mentioned the impact of such management on soil health and the soil microbial populations. This is how to build long term sustainability in a pasture and on your farm or ranch. By sustainability I mean "in a state of such health that the land can perpetually support optimum production and the use of that production without outside inputs being added".



That's a bit of a mouth-full, but it gives you some idea of what I mean when I use that word that means so many different things to so many people.

Take another look at that photo of forage roots with lots of soil stuck to them. This is a picture of what a healthy soil looks like. All those little clumps of soil you see is called "soil aggregation". This only happens when soil microbes are doing their jobs. Those little clumps are what gives soil "structure".

This structure is what makes the soil a good habitat for soil microbes and all the other little critters that share in the job of feeding our plants. This is where water and nutrients are stored for use by plants. So, why are those soil aggregates stuck on the roots like that. That's because the soil microbes are in a symbiotic relationship with those plants, you might say a WIN-WIN relationship.



GWFA Staff Photo: Soil aggregation under forages

You see, the plants provide food/sugars made by photosynthesis to the microbes and soil microbes provide nutrients to the plants. There are many different microbes in the soil and each has its own function in the soil. Many of them are involved in breaking down organic materials into a stable form of organic matter, or soil carbon. Many of them and others are also involved in breaking down unavailable minerals and nutrients into plant available forms of those nutrients to make them available to their best friends - those plants that feed them the sugars they need.

Now, this is a highly complex system and I've kind of over-simplified it, but at least you'll get a bit of a picture in your minds of how living, healthy soil works.

Kim's many years of using his stockpile grazing strategy on that pasture has paid off in a high level of plant diversity on the pasture. In turn, that high level of plant diversity then feeds a high level of microbial diversity in the soil. This high biodiversity above and below the soil surface is what drives the whole mineral/nutrient cycle on your land. This is what can make your land healthy, productive and perpetually sustainable. For those of you who like the term "Permaculture", this is what true permaculture is. This is what drives the processes that can make your land permanently healthy and productive without, or with few expensive inputs.

Planned Grazing Management Workshop & Webinar

featuring...

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American Grazing Land Services
(joining online)

Producer Panel
Brian Luce, Lucends Ranch
Steve Kenyon, Greener Pastures Ranching
Blake Hall, Prairie Gold Meats

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10am - 2pm
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\$20 includes lunch
To register contact:
Ginette, GWFA, 403-844-2645
Melisa, Organic Alberta, 587-521-2400



This week, we had an excellent meeting with the new Minister of Agriculture and Forestry (AF), Oneil Carlier. Chair Ian Murray (FFGA) and two ARECA Board members, Herman Wyering (GWFA) and Tom McMillan (GRO) and Janette McDonald (ARECA Executive Director) attended.

Our primary goal was to talk about how we can enhance our partnership with AF. We talked about our nine member associations and the work we have done on Soil Health in 2015. We showed the Minister the long list of events planned and hosted by our associations this summer; on topics from pasture management, to stockmanship to crop field days, to soil health.

We talked about the province's carbon strategy and how our members can be a part of designing successful policy on maintaining and rewarding carbon sequestration in perennial pastures and grasslands.

We highlighted our delivery of the Alberta Environmental Farm Plan (AEFP). ARECA has delivered the EFP since 2013 and we talked with Carlier and AF Environmental Stewardship staff about our plans to strengthen the program in the future.

We talked about the Agricultural Opportunities Fund (AOF) and its fundamental importance to the operation of our organizations. We were very clear that without maintenance of the AOF funding, delivery of good applied research and extension through ARAs and Forage Associations would be impossible.

Ian invited the Minister to speak at our Western Canada Conference on Soil Health in December. We hope he plans to attend. Ian has also invited the Minister of Environment and Parks.



Photo by Janette McDonald

L-R: Tom McMillan (GRO), Herman Wyering (GWFA), Minister Oneil Carlier, Agriculture and Forestry; Ian Murray (FFGA).



By Janette McDonald



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Producer Feature: Four generations on a Rimbey farm

The Grey Wooded Forage Association (GWFA) has played an important role in our lives. As a director in the '80s, when Cecil Hoven was the Chair, I found it stimulating to be on the board. Being involved with forward-thinking farmers – questions and promising new ideas needed exploring and conclusions verified. That was the purpose of the GWFA, especially as we lost the District Agriculturists in the province. We were the “hands on” information opportunity for farmers thinking outside the box. The projects committee always had new projects on the go. Ingenious projects were introduced by the then manager, Jim Bauer. I give Jim a lot of credit for the introduction of electric fencing and intensive grazing in the area. New concepts at the time, these ideas have had huge impacts on understanding and improving grass production.

I was born and raised south of Rimbey. My parents purchased our farm near Rimbey in 1946. They came from New Brunswick after WWII, where my Dad had been a bomber pilot. Most of his training occurred near Ft. Macleod, but their flying practices took him over Central Alberta where he was impressed by the beauty, and the desire grew to relocate here when he could. Dad actively farmed until 2002. As of 1974, my wife, Jackie, and I farmed in partnership with my parents. Our first son, Jeff, was born in 1977 and second son, Brendon, in 1979. As the



The Anderson family

boys grew, they became more involved, and more important to the operation - learning about cattle, participating in 4H, and learning about machinery by helping run and fix equipment. Most of all, they developed a strong work ethic. We all worked together as my Dad gradually phased out. Jeff went off to university in Edmonton and Brendon to NAIT. They both worked off-farm until recently. Jackie was an early adopter of the computer and it became an important source of information and useful farm management tool. Between 1972 and 1976 Jackie was the first District Home Economist in Rimbey.

After taking my schooling in Rimbey, I attended Red Deer College for a year, and then Olds College. Jackie and I raised our family on a section of land with a 150 head cow herd.

In the '80s we adopted intensive grazing and the use of electric fencing to control cattle. Diaphragm nose pumps complimented our intensive grazing program as they allowed us to use the river water without allowing the cattle to wade into it.

In 1999, with the support of the Woodlot Association of Alberta, we completed a riparian demonstration site which involved fencing off the length of the Blindman River on our property and planting trees in an effort to protect the water quality. It is still maintained and has permanently improved the riparian area. We completed the Environmental Farm Plan which enabled us to apply for Growing Forward funds.

Unfortunately, diaphragm nose pumps would begin to freeze up in the fall and that limited our grazing plan. Over the period of a couple of years, by improving some existing technology and assistance from the Alberta Research Council and some old fashioned common sense, we developed a nose pump system that would work year round. All of a sudden our management opportunities for grazing and feeding opened up. →

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It enabled us to extend our grazing and feed cows away from the yard until calving. We felt other producers could benefit from this watering option, so in 2002 Frostfree Nosepump Ltd. was born and made its debut at Agritrade. Since then, over a thousand producers are now using one

or more Frostfree Nosepumps on their operation and many have successfully applied Growing Forward Funds to Frostfree Nosepump development projects. I would encourage anyone developing a watering site or other farm projects to look into this support. Today, our son Jeff is in partnership with us, manufacturing and marketing Frostfree Nosepumps as an energy-free, sustainable livestock watering system.

In 2012, our son Brendon, who is presently on the GWFA board, and his wife Melanie, became the third generation on our farm. They took over the farmstead my Dad and Mom settled on and we farmed for 37 years. That same year they became parents to twins, Henry and Ellie. As most know, both farming and parenting present challenges, but they are doing better than fine.

Today, Jackie and I live in our strawbale house. Started as a hobby project in 2009, it became a priority in 2012. Our focus is now the Frostfree Nosepump business, but I still get to help Brendon and Mel with the farming whenever they need a hand.

All photos included in this article are courtesy of the Anderson family



Life has been good to us in many ways. The twins are a hoot, and it's very heartwarming to have both of our sons so involved in our lives.



James W. Anderson

Winter Feeding Options

With snow fast approaching and a severe lack of hay in our area, every ranchers mind is on winter feeding. In our area at least, hay has already almost tripled in price, making it one of the more expensive winter feeding options available. So what other options do we have? For the herd of cow calf pairs that we are managing this year, we've been looking for available pea straw residue in our area. Pea straw has relatively high percentages of protein, calcium and phosphorus when compared to other straws. The grain farmer that we're working with loves the idea that we'll be putting in the fencing and doing the animal management, while he receives all of the nutrients in the soil that come as a benefit to having animals on your land. To top it off, he's actually being paid for this service!

We attempted to put the local research association's chaff buncher to work last week. This is a teeter totter device that attaches to the back of a combine and catches the chaff coming out of the back end. As the chaff builds and gains weight, the buncher drops small piles of it behind the route of the combine.

These small bunches allow animals to eat the residue while having less risk of the chaff being excreted on or slept on. Because of the bunches left on the field, this system allows the animals to find the chaff through fairly deep snow. In theory, this is a great idea, we did however learn that while this is a terrific tool to use on a field that has fairly strong, thick stubble to help pull the bunches off of the rake, it doesn't work quite so well with peas. Back at the drawing board the guys came up



Photo by Amber Kenyon

with a new tool using the same idea. This is a two bucket system that rotates on wheels, dumping as the buckets rotate. This also attaches to the back of the combine. In the next couple of days we'll have the opportunity to test out this new invention and see it at work.

The fields that we will be running the cow calf pairs on will be strip grazed using two poly-wire electric fences in series. Because these fields border a major highway, we will be putting up an electric two wire semi-permanent perimeter in the next couple of weeks. We make sure that our cows and calves are very well trained to electric fence in the fall. By having very strong training fences near areas such as water bowls we can train the animals to respect even the weaker cross fences that we use to strip graze the fields in the winter. —————>

Throughout this winter we will be supplementing with unrolled hay and protein tubs. Because a grain field is made up of primarily a monoculture, it is very rare that it will contain all of the nutrients that your animals need to get through an entire winter. We definitely recommend feed testing before implementing any new winter grazing plan.

Another viable option for winter feeding, depending on your climate, is swath grazing. By swath grazing you can make use of a crop that may have done poorly throughout the summer. By allowing your cattle to graze the swaths you are able to economically harvest your crop and again put those vital nutrients back into the soil. The process for swath grazing is quite similar to bunch grazing. You will want to strip graze swaths as well in order to ration out the feed that your field will supply, and to make the best use of the grazing concepts. Swath grazing can be a great alternative to feeding bales, depending on your environment. This method can have issues if your area is prone to large amounts of snow, or extreme temperature changes where the snow often melts and then freezes again. Overnight you can end up with frozen swaths that the cattle are either unable to break through, or are unable to find due to large amounts of snow. Although swath and bunch grazing are absolutely terrific options for winter feeding, not all grain farmers are always on board with it. It definitely doesn't hurt to try though, as this is a very economical way of getting through the winter.

You can also graze pellets as a supplement to feeding straw. Normally pellets would be fed in a trough or self-feeder, but this doesn't allow for the nutrients to be spread across the pasture. To remedy this, my husband has made a 'pellet feeder' using an old flotation tire with a foot and a half diameter hole cut into its tread. With our bale truck we put a piece of pipe inserted through the middle of the tire between the arms of the truck. This allows us to 'unroll' the pellets as we drive across the pasture, meeting the animal's nutrition needs while still allowing the manure to be recycled into the ground.

If you're one of the few producers that has an excess amount of grass this year would be stockpiled grazing. This works basically the same as summer grazing; the animals are turned out into paddocks with grass that wasn't grazed throughout the summer. You may have to supplement the stockpiled grazing, depending on the nutritional value in your pastures. Again, we always recommend a feed test being done before implementing a grazing program. This is also a terrific option for winter feeding, but can be very dependent upon the weather and your environment. Like swath grazing, heavy snow or snap cold spells can overnight make the feed inaccessible to the animals. When

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grazing stockpiled grass, we will often plan to have the animals out on the pasture until December in our area, but we always make sure to have a backup plan in mind in case we end up with severe weather.

Of course then there's always the option of bale grazing if you're one of the few people that are blessed with cheap hay. With any type of bale grazing, we put the winter's worth of feed out into the field with the bales on their sides. We then pull all of the twine in the fall. This saves the headache of having to pull frozen twine in the dead of winter. We will then strip graze the bales using temporary electric fences with step in posts. This ends up being very economical, as there is no need to start a tractor or the bale truck on a daily basis. Temporary electric fences are often moved on snowshoes once the snow starts to get deep. We try to give the cattle access to three days of feed at a time. By feeding this amount it allows all of the animals to have adequate "bunk" space, with no one being left out of the initial high quality feed as the animals pick out the most nutritious feed in the first two days. On the third day we will often unroll a bale, or put out a supplement, as we get the animals to clean up. By using a three day graze period on the bales we can also generally plan for severe weather conditions. It gives us enough time to get the animals to a sheltered paddock if necessary, without the worry of losing a large amount of half grazed feed under piles of snow.

Although this winter is bound to be a tough one for cattle producers in our area because of hay prices, we are blessed with some of the best auction prices for cattle that we've ever had during a drought. This may be the right time to either downsize, or better your herd genetics by culling more than you usually would. As long as our winter feeding plans are both economical and sustainable, we are sure to come out of this drought on top of the game. Happy grazing!

Amber Kenyon
Greener Pastures Ranching
aken-yon@greenerpasturesranching.com





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Topics include:

- Human Resources	- Pasture Rejuvenation
- Economics and Finance	- Weed Control
- Pasture Calculations	- Cell Designs/Water Systems
- Grazing Management	- Swath Grazing/Bale Grazing

To register please contact Steve Kenyon
(780)307-6500
skenyon@greenerpasturesranching.com
www.greenerpasturesranching.com

Are You Ready for Weaning and Receiving? *By Rebekah Ricketts, EMF Nutrition*

Remember your first day of school as a child? Your parents placed you on the school bus with other kids your age that you did not know and shipped you off to a brand new place with rules, books and teachers. You probably felt a little scared and jittery, and most likely a little stressed.

Now imagine how feeder cattle must feel with the tremendous stress placed on them during the transition from the ranch to the feedlot. During a period of two to three days, calves are often weaned, sold at auction, trucked as far as 3,000 miles and placed in a completely different environment with different food, water and social structure. This can cause stress to the animal and take money out of your pocket.

Many major feedlot management problems such as the occurrence of disease, death loss, and poor performance of calves are associated with the shipping event. According to the National Animal Agriculture Statistics Service, shipping fever costs the United States cattle industry \$624 million annually.

An animal under shipping stress will exhibit symptoms such as:

- A lack of appetite
- Very loose manure or a very dry and small volume of manure
- Drooping, cold ears
- "Gaunt" look or no fill
- General lethargy and head down
- Shivering during cold weather
- Mucus hanging from the nose
- Coughing
- Excess mud/manure on hair
- Blood in manure
- Kicking at the belly (hardware or calculi)

Stressed cattle that arrive at the feedlot can be more vulnerable to respiratory and enteric disease, especially if their previous home had a poor nutritional program. Feedlot owners will often see a lag in performance for the first 30 days and a spike in death loss and overall morbidity.

Vaccination programs, keeping resistance high through good nutrition, biosecurity, early detection and treatment of disease and a number of other management techniques are keys to keeping cattle healthy.

Another area of prevention that continues to be researched is probiotics, or beneficial bacteria. Alternative non-antimicrobial products, such as direct-fed microbials and/or

yeast sugars (Bio-Mos[®], a product included in the EMF Beef Program), have been identified as possible intervention strategies. Direct-fed microbials deliver a large amount of beneficial bacteria to the animal to improve the microflora and yeast sugars to support gut integrity. Both of these alternative methods take a much more preventative approach to maintaining proper gut health and function. Multiple field trials have demonstrated reductions in salmonella and *E. coli* in beef cows supplemented with Bio-Mos.

While many feedlot deaths are unexplainable, cattle producers can use good nutrition and management to help combat the sudden deaths. No matter what management technique or nutritional application an operation finds successful, every cattle producer knows healthy cattle are more profitable.

The EMF Nutrition Beef program is aimed directly at optimizing rumen efficiency and maintaining animal health as well as meat quality, lameness and fertility issues. To learn more about Bio-Mos or the Beef program,

contact us at (403) 741-9714
or rricketts@emf-nutrition.com



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Minimum purchase of 1 tonne

2.

Purchase 2 Tonnes of Blueprint Summer GFC Pre-Mix
Get \$1.00 off each bag in the 1st tonne
Get \$2.00 off each bag in the 2nd tonne

Expires Oct. 31, 2015
Minimum purchase of 2 tonnes

3.

Purchase 3 Tonnes of Blueprint Summer GFC Pre-Mix
Get \$1.00 off each bag in the 1st tonne
Get \$2.00 off each bag in the 2nd tonne
Get \$3.00 off each bag in the 3rd tonne

Expires Oct. 31, 2015
Minimum purchase of 3 tonnes



Contact Rebekah Ricketts
Cell: 403-741-9714

Blueprint

emf-nutrition.com



Should I Buy Expensive Feed or Custom Feed?

Lack of moisture curtailed pasture and hay production in many areas of Alberta this year. As a result, feed and hay prices have risen dramatically from a year ago. Producers are faced with either buying expensive feed or moving their livestock to feed if they want to keep ownership and equity in their animals. Choosing an option depends on the economics of each alternative.

The first step is to calculate the cost of putting feed into the feed bunk. This is the sum of (1) the cost to purchase the feed, (2) shipping costs, (3) yardage charge on the farm, (4) the opportunity cost of labour for feeding the animals, and (5) shrink and waste.

For example, if each cow needs about 35 pounds of hay per day to maintain her, it will take about 7,500 pounds or approximately 3.75 tons of hay over 215 days. Feeding days are suggested to be longer this coming winter due to a lack of fall grazing opportunities and to give pastures time to recover from lack of moisture. If good quality hay costs about \$200 per ton, the total cost of the hay will be \$750 per animal. Shipping charges to transport the hay to the farm need to be added. According to Alberta Agriculture and Forestry's custom rate survey, freight charges are approximately \$6 per loaded mile. If hay is picked up 100 miles away, the cost will be \$600 per load. Assuming 18 tons per load, the freight cost is \$33 per ton or \$123 per animal for the 215 days.

Yardage charges on the farm include the cost of operating equipment, corral cleaning, utilities, and wear and tear on facilities. Using approximately \$0.70 per head per day for "at home" yardage, the total cost of hay delivered to the farm is \$1,026 per animal for 215 days.

This example assumes that there is less than 15 to 20 percent of wasted hay per day and that the farmer has no opportunity cost for labour. That is, if the owner can use the labour to generate alternative income, then the opportunity cost of not feeding cattle must be added to the cost of purchasing and hauling feed.

The second step is to calculate the cost of moving the animals to a custom operator and pay for the feed and care there. This is the sum of (1) shipping the animals to and from the lot; (2) the cost of feed at the facility; and (3) the yardage charge by the feeder to care and feed the animals.

If the price of hay is the same at the custom feeder, the cost of feed would be \$750 per animal. However, the cost of freight for moving the cattle to and from the feed yard has to be factored in. The average custom rate for hauling cattle is about \$5.50 per loaded mile with 50 cows per load. A 100 mile round trip cost will be \$22 per head, making the total cost of hay and hauling \$772 per head for 215 days. If the feeder charges \$0.85 per head per day in yardage, the total cost will be \$954 per head for 215 days, or \$72 per head lower than the cost of buying feed.

These are examples and you must figure your own costs including the purchase price of feed and the cost of shipping hay and cattle. Comparing the two options, if the cost of feed is the same for the producer and the custom feeder, the primary factors in making your decision are (1) the distance and the cost to ship the hay or cattle, (2) the yardage charge, and (3) the

amount of feed waste. If you are considering custom feeding, both parties should agree on a body condition score going into and coming out of the feed yard as well as a fairly accurate estimate of pregnancy.

Saving the most equity in the cows should be the primary goal. Evaluate your decision based on your risk-bearing ability, market outlook and distance/availability of feed or custom feeding operations. After considering all the factors, choose the best single or combination of alternatives that will give you the best change at preserving equity.

Dean Dyck, P. Ag.
Farm Business Management Specialist
Alberta Agriculture & Forestry



Alberta Verified Beef Production Training Webinar

When: Thursday, October 15 from 9 to 10:30 a.m.

Where: County of Wetaskiwin Administration Building (1.5 miles west of Wetaskiwin on Hwy 13, south side of highway, across from Reynolds Alberta Museum)

Cost: No Charge

Registration is mandatory. Please register before October 13 by calling Kim at 780-387-6182 or emailing kbarkwell@county.wetaskiwin.ab.ca

Please arrive by 8:45 am to allow for webinar setup.
Space is limited, but there are no minimums.

This training is valuable to all beef operations, regardless of type or size.

Benefits include:

- Improved use of animal health products
- Readiness, should the market require it
- Heightened awareness of food safety risks
- Basis for training staff and family members
- Proof of responsible actions
- Opportunity for differentiated beef production

VBP training is required to access funding under the GF2 On-Farm Food Safety Program.



Growing Forward 2

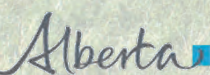


General Inquiries:

Alberta Agriculture & Rural Development
Toll free help line: 310-FARM (3276)
or Email: Info@Albertaefp.com

For more information contact the ARECA office:

Phone: 780-612-9712
or Email: faye@areca.ab.ca



Growing Forward 2



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FOR SALE:

4020 John Deere - Fire damage on cab. Good restoration project.
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For Sale: 28' 7550 Easy On Air Drill-5" rubber packer wheels-10" spacing. Also a 1720 Flexicoil Air Cart.
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Land for rent beginning 2016:488 acres crop & forage
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To submit an ad, please call

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2 tonne capacity feed mixer with weigh scale cells. 3 phase motor, but can be converted if necessary. In good shape. Located in Innisfail. Motivated to sell Contact Kristen at **403-358-1674** for more information.

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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



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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.

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Studying Life in a Cowpie

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Grey Wooded Forage Association

"Creating an Awareness of Forages"

**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 when discounts are offered.
- Farm calls at \$100/visit and free consulting by phone, email or office visit on grazing management and any other forage production questions, effective immediately.
- Receive **The Blade** monthly via a link sent to you by email each month.
- 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**

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY: Renewal _____ or New Member _____ Your preference: Canada Post _____ or Email _____
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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: _____

SHELTERBELT FIELD DAY

Tues Sept 29th 10:00 am – 3:30 pm
at the County of Wetaskiwin Administration Building

AM: Presentation by Agroforestry & Woodlot Extension Society (AWES)

Shelterbelt Renovation; Remedy and Maintaining Aging Shelterbelts
Shelterbelt Species Characteristics; Life Expectancy; Soil Preferences;
Keeping Trees in Good Condition so their Benefits can be Fully Achieved;
Planning and Design; Pruning and Uses of Waste Wood

PM: Self transport to County 1/4 Demonstration Site to learn about :

Insect and Disease Problems; Ungulate and Rodent damage;
Plastic Mulch Application and Pulp Mats; A tree Planter Demonstration;
Design and Species Selection; Native Woodland Rejuvenation;
Maintenance Issues; Tree Suppliers – Reforestation Listing



Light lunch
included!



To attend you must pre-register by Friday Sept 25/15!

Please contact Heather Dickau

hdickau@county.wetaskiwin.ab.ca

780-352-3321 or 780-777-9760

Growing Forward 2 



AWES
Agroforestry & Woodlot Extension Society



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