



Grey
Wooded
Forage
Association

The Blade

"Creating an Awareness of Forages"



NOVEMBER | 2016

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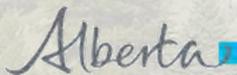


Photo Credit: Vance Graham

Mission Statement

To promote environmentally and economically sustainable forage and agricultural practices.

Vision Statement

The community is engaged in regenerative agricultural production methods.

Message from the Chair

By Ken Ziegler

Hello folks and welcome to this November version of the Blade. Ginette and Devin have done a splendid job in packing another newsletter with good material. We hope you take careful note of the many workshops that are planned for these coming winter months and do invite you to come join us as we learn and network with fellow farmer members.



The Board has been doing an excellent job in setting the direction around workshops, seminars, field days and projects for the year to come. We really are excited about 2017 and all the possibilities that exist. Feel welcome to join us as we move through the coming winter months.

Facebook and Twitter have become another way of staying in touch and communicating forage topics amongst the membership. If you haven't signed up, remember to do so on one of these long dark evenings. Facebook is an excellent forum to connect with like-minded people.

Also, for those of you that still have crop out and are been unable to either get onto the land or get the feed dry enough for harvest, know that we realise your dilemma, that our hearts are with you. We recognize the difficult spots you are in and empathize with you in the frustration of wanting to do your best, yet are unable.

For those of you that have feed for sale and have the opportunity to sell to a drowned-out neighbor in need, be considerate of their situation when it comes to price. Choosing to pass on a bit of good will at a time is immeasurably valuable to the well being of your neighbor. Regardless of whether you'll ever be in their situation, to pass on compassion is simply the right thing to do.

All said, enjoy this newsletter. Thanks for your interest. Pass it on to your neighbors and invite them to become part of our forage association community!

Ken

Manager's Notes

By Ginette Boucher

Greetings,
We have some great articles in this publication to assist you with the fall harvest conditions & winter feeding tips. Should you come across some content you feel would be valuable to share with other producers please feel free to send it in and we will publish it.



We hosted our Watershed Friendly Feeding Sites workshop on October 27th with 25 producers attending and heard about various ways to improve water quality, feeding site selection and GF2 funding opportunities. Thanks to all those who participated; as well as our partner Ponoka County, and sponsors the Medicine River Watershed Society & Sundog Solar. On November 14th, we are hosting an Environmental Farm Plan webbook workshop in

conjunction with the County of Wetaskiwin. There is still room for three families so join us if you're interested.

We have been meeting and working towards building our next 5-year strategic plan. This is your opportunity to contact staff and Board members and discuss how you see the coming years developing in agriculture. Our goal is to have it completed by end of December 2016.

Our projects committee is open to project ideas for the coming spring. We thank those members that have offered ideas and welcome more from you. We also need farm land for these projects as some are best replicated on various locations. If you could spare a piece of land and host a project, please let us know. We are currently considering two different

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perennial forage projects and there are a few more ideas still coming forward. We continue to gather data from our alfalfa project, and will be doing our plant clippings collection in a different way in 2017. Dr. Vern Baron is suggesting that we separate out the grass species to get a more accurate alfalfa measurement. More to come in 2017.

Our new sainfoin alfalfa and hybrid brome mix demonstration plot in Lacombe has had a few issues getting established this year due to poor weather conditions. We plan to re-seed in the spring and continue to monitor and collect data. We will likely have another high legume field tour in the summer 2017.

Our partnership with Lonestar Ranch & Sales in Red Deer has greatly assisted us in the upgrade of our 3D fences. We will be setting up the trail cams for another season to assist in the monitoring of the wildlife activities. Depending on the winter conditions we may be able to put the fence to the test. Our collaborators will be collecting daily information.

We are currently developing an operating reserve strategy to secure additional needed funding for long term sustainability of your forage association. If you have been successful in fundraising, or have some ideas on developing an operating reserve or securing funding, this would be an ideal time to contact us with your input. Also in the development stages is an updated orientation package for new Board members as we are fast approaching the end of our annual fiscal year (Mar 31st 2017) and are beginning our search for new board members. As we work towards updating the board benefits, roles and responsibilities we encourage you to consider a board position. The board directs the future of the association with the memberships input. If you feel you could contribute to the association in this matter; we need to hear from you. If you haven't the time but know of someone who may consider a board position just drop us note. Thanks for your help with the search of future board members.

GWFA continues to work with Red Deer County in their ALUS (Alternative Land Use Services) program

in an advisory capacity. ALUS pays farmers and ranchers for management changes they make to increase the production of ecosystem services from their land. The importance of Ecosystem Services are becoming recognized both by landowners and society. ALUS is a mechanism for society (who benefits economically from ecosystem services provided by agricultural producers), to pay those producers for providing those benefits.

Sincerely,
Ginette



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Body Condition Scoring

By Devin Knopp, P.Ag.

As with every year, cattle coming in off pasture means the inevitable, feeding. Given the year, feed quality is like the proverbial “box of chocolates”, most don’t know what they have or what they’re going to get. So instead of trying to assume your hay quality, get a feed test so you know what you’ve got and begin working from there. However, there is another important tool to use going into the feeding season, assessing your cattle and their body condition.



The optimal body condition score coming in off pasture is around a 3. Now you may be wondering what that means. In Canada, the standard scale is a 1-5. A score of one is severely emaciated, all bones visible, very little muscle and animal is extremely weak. A five is a roly polly beach ball that has no hip or shoulder bone definition, very little muscle definition, a table top flat back with absolutely no spine or tail head formation as everything is buried under fat. A 3 is halfway between both of those. There are fat deposits over the ribs that only make them slightly visible, as well as fat deposits on either side of the tail head, but the tail head is still distinguishable and hip bones are visible but rounded. There is still muscle tone definition in the hind quarters and shoulders. The cow looks healthy.

If you’re not sure about body condition scoring put a few cows into a squeeze and feel the ribs, around the tail head, and hip bones. This will give you a good idea of a fat cow, from a cow in good body condition. With fat cows, it’s hard to feel any bones, while cows in good condition you can feel the ribs, hips and around the tail head, they’ll feel rounded and padded because of the nice layer of spongy fat.

In a perfect world a producer should separate fat cows from skinnier cows and feed them separately. This way you can harvest some of the excess weight off your fat cows by feeding them a lower

quality feed. This becomes particularly important during calving and breeding. Fat cows are prone to calving issues. Fat deposits around the birth canal can restrict the birth canal preventing a calf from passing. It is important to make sure you harvest some of that excess weight prior to calving to reduce the chance of potential issues.

Feeding the skinnier cows separately allows you to either maintain or put body condition back on these cows by feeding a slightly higher quality forage. If these cows are on the thinner side during calving it may affect milk production and therefore calf performance. It may also increase the amount of recovery time post calving, affecting the breeding interval that season. If cows are severely thin during winter and at calving, you may end up with weak or dead calves and little to no milk production from the cow, not to mention she probably won’t re-breed.

Feeding decisions made early can have major effects later into next spring and even into the summer breeding season. Lower quality and higher quality, when talking about feed, are relative terms and change as winter feeding progresses. It’s important to speak with a nutritionist if you have questions about your feed tests to help you better understand lower and higher quality when it comes to the feed you currently have, and how you can use it to feed your cows effectively.

In short, look at the body condition of your cows, and the results of your feed tests. This will determine what you feed and when, to maintain, improve, or harvest body condition on your cows. If possible, split your herd and feed the fat cows different from the cows in optimal shape. It’s important to note, your feed cost will be about 25% more to put a half point of body condition score on a cow. Given this grazing season, it is unlikely there will be many thin cows coming in off pasture. This means there’s an opportunity to decrease your feed costs by harvesting weight off your fat cows.

13 Tips for Winter Feeding Cattle

By Kristen Ritson-Bennett, Blue Rock Animal Nutrition Ltd, Innisfail, AB.

This article is a bit of an up-cycle from last year, but the principles are the same. Biggest thing I can emphasize this year is to feed test. It will be invaluable. I've already had a couple hundred feed tests come in and everything is down. You can't manage what you don't measure, so tackle this issue before it causes you grief in the calving season.

Cost of feed is one of the largest expenses for producers and with calf prices down it makes it even more important to keep in check. This is my easy "GO-TO" list for strategies to reduce winter feeding costs. By implementing even just one of these strategies you will benefit in one way or another. By carefully managing our cattle, profit potential can be maximized!

1. TEST YOUR FEED, AND BALANCE THOSE RATIONS

Test your feed using proper sampling techniques and a reputable laboratory. Find out what you have to work with. You will then know what additions to your ration you will need to come up with before losing condition on cows.

Use a ration balancing program – A little bit of knowledge can be dangerous. Ask for help on how to use a program like COWBYTES and balance your winter rations.

Feed to the requirement of the cow. Deficient protein and energy will have long term effects on the productivity of cow (decreased calf weights, weak calves, poor milk production, poor return to estrus and low conception). Excess protein and energy in a ration is expensive. Optimize the use of your feed!

What is the pH of your silage? pH exceeding 5.2 will not preserve properly.

Do you have a recent water test to evaluate?

2. PROVIDE ADEQUATE WIND SHELTER, BEDDING AND WATER

Our cold Canadian weather has a significant impact on the energy and protein requirements of cattle. Providing access to good shelter will have an impact on cow comfort which translates into productivity. Getting cows out of the wind with shelters significantly effects energy requirements for maintenance. Cold stressed cows have an increased need for higher energy and will increase dry matter intake, therefore reducing your hay stores more quickly!

Bedding is not always required if they have access to shelter and are dry and clean with good winter coats. Providing bedding can have its benefits through: Gives cattle access to roughage to eat, and makes a difference in the ability of cattle to withstand cold stress.

Always provide access to fresh water. Especially in the case of cattle being fed straw. You increase your chances of impaction without adequate water intake. Providing snow as a water source is possible if the snow is there in adequate amounts, is clean and not hard and crusted over. Having access to fresh water is always the best option.

3. REDUCE WASTE DURING STORAGE AND FEEDING

Storage: Your goal for spoilage on stored feed should be less than 5%. Hay/greenfeed bales should be stored in North-South rows with space between all bales. Silage should be properly ensiled and well-sealed

Delivery and feeding: Processed hay fed in the snow has an average waste of 19% whereas long stem hay fed in the snow has a waste factor of 12%. Processed feed should be fed in a feeder to reduce losses.

Tub grinders/shedders may increase loss of fine material, which is where the nutrients are concentrated but at the same time can increase palatability of feed cattle would otherwise refuse such as course slough hay and straw.

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Waste can be as high as 25-45% when hay is fed free choice.

Limit Feed - Feed daily, restrict feed to daily requirement (When not cold stressed). This will force cattle to eat feed that may otherwise be refused. A cow can consume over 1500 lbs of extra feed over a winter feeding period just from waste.

When feeding on the ground use clean areas each time.

Grain and pellets have a low waste factor of about 5%.

4. FEED AN IONOPHORE IN YOUR WINTER RATION

Ionophore inclusion in a ration increases feed efficiency by 8-10%, and weight gain increases by 5-15%, as well as aiding in prevention of coccidiosis, acidosis and bloat. Talk to a nutritionist to determine which ionophore is best for your operation. Can be fed through a mineral program or delivered in a pellet. (Monensin or Lasalocid) Although there is an additional cost to feeding them, ionophores always pay you back in weight gains, feed efficiency, coccidiosis and bloat prevention.

5. BODY CONDITION SCORING YOUR CATTLE

Separate thin and younger cows from the group and feed accordingly. Cows in body condition 3-3.5 going into winter provide for more flexibility in winter rations and allow for some loss of condition without compromising performance.

Cows in a body condition score of 2, 2.5 going into winter can require up to an extra 1600lbs in hay. For a herd of 200 cows in poor body condition, that's an extra 213, 1500lb bales! At \$130/bale that's an extra \$27,690 dollars spent on winter feed and not in your pocket!

6. FEED LATER IN THE DAY

Cattle fed later in the day aligns digestion and rumination (heat production) with the coldest parts of the day. This will also decrease cold-stress impact.

7. FEED A BALANCED MINERAL

Feed a balanced mineral premix with macro-minerals, micro-minerals and vitamins. Ionophores, medications and urea can be delivered to cattle via a balanced mineral program. MORE IS NOT BETTER! Speak with a nutritionist to determine what mineral package is appropriate for you. A custom mix based on your feed testing might be the best route to go often at less expense than a floorstock product. Blue salt blocks do NOT provide the macro/micro nutrients or vitamins needed for optimal production.

Poor mineral balance can result in poor body condition, weak calves, vitamin deficiency, poor milk production, downer cows and poor immunity. Expect to budget in 10-15 cents/head/day for mineral.

8. FEED CONSISTENTLY

Remember that we are feeding microbes in the gut. Small, slow step-ups when changing a ration is important especially when introducing grain. Every other day feeding can cause rumen upset – acidosis and bloat. If they aren't eating, they are not gaining!

9. WHEN USING ALTERNATIVE FORAGES USE CAUTION

Can I feed hauled out canola? Yes! Feed testing will be important to ensure that sulfur levels in Canola does not reach toxic levels. Excess sulfur can cause polioencephalomalacia and tie up copper and selenium. To quote my friend Ken Ziegler – "The solution to pollution is dilution." Canola can easily be fed as long as it is tested, and "diluted" in ration with another forage.

10. TEST CEREAL FORAGES FOR NITRATES

If there is suspicion of frost, test for nitrates. Heavy fertilizer and heated Greenfeed can also have accumulated nitrates. Greenfeed bales that are low in nitrates when baled can be high in nitrites if they heat. Nitrate conversion to nitrite can be deadly. With that being said, not all is lost. "The solution to pollution is dilution." Talk to a nutritionist about how to build a feed with nitrates into your ration.

11. KNOW WHEN TO PROCESS GRAIN, AND

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WHEN NOT TO PROCESS GRAIN

Don't process oats and corn for mature, healthy cows. Increased digestibility is at most 10 to 15 percent. For barley and wheat, processing will increase digestibility by 15 to 25%. Do not process cereal grain for calves less than 600 lb. Younger cattle spend more time eating and chew feed more completely.

12. IF APPLICABLE, USE UREA IN RATIONS, BUT EXERCISE CAUTION!

Urea can be an excellent tool to boost protein a couple points when trying to meet protein requirements. MUST be limited in a ration, or toxicity can occur. Once the rumen is adapted to the higher level of nitrogen (over a 10 to 14 day period) toxicity concern drops significantly. Ensure urea is mixed well in feed. There needs to be sufficient energy in the ration for good utilization of Urea. Low levels of urea are utilized more efficiently and with less problems than high levels of urea. Calves less than 400 lbs cannot utilize urea and toxicity can result

13. CLOSELY EVALUATE THE COST/BENEFIT

OF PURCHASED SUPPLEMENTS SUCH AS LICK TUBS

Expensive, but can be very convenient. Weigh your labour costs.

Supplementing protein is a very expensive way to bring nutrients into a diet. Look at customizing a mineral instead, and balancing the ingredients you already have on the farm.

If you have any questions about any of these tips please feel free to give me a call! I would be happy to answer your questions! Good luck with your winter feeding plans and I look forward to hearing from you!



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Highlights from 2015 Market-Based Solutions for Used Agricultural Plastics: Survey of Municipalities

From www.growingforward.alberta.ca

A challenging issue:

With the increasing usage of agricultural plastics, like grain bags, twine, net wrap and silage bags, it is more important than ever to properly manage used agricultural plastics. Finding cost-effective, environmentally friendly ways to manage used agricultural plastics remains a serious challenge in Alberta.

Several Alberta studies and surveys have looked into this issue. For example, a 2013 report entitled Alberta Agricultural Waste Characterization Study: Final Report estimated that between 6,600 and 14,000 tonnes of agricultural plastic waste are generated in Alberta every year. The report "Agricultural Plastics Recycling: Agricultural Producers Survey", Final Report detailed the results of a 2012 survey of 660 agricultural producers in Alberta. It found that producers dealt with used plastics in various ways such as burning them, sending them to a landfill, sending them for recycling, burying them on-farm, and reusing them. The surveyed producers said they used burning as a means of dealing with various used plastics including: baling twine (52% of respondents), silage pit or pile covers (42%), bale wrap (27%), grain bags or tubes (20%), and silage bags or tubes (15%).

Burning of plastics can release highly toxic substances, like dioxins, heavy metals and volatile organic compounds. These substances have many potential health impacts ranging from headaches and dizziness to lung disease, cancer and growth defects. Burning of plastics can also leave toxic residues that impair soil and water quality. Due to these serious health and environmental impacts, burning of plastics is illegal under Alberta's Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act. For proper disposal, agricultural plastics should be either buried in a landfill or diverted from the waste stream into a market. Examples of possible markets

include recycling into other plastic products, conversion into fuel, and conversion into electricity. However, the 2012 producer survey results showed that producers faced barriers for the proper disposal of their used agricultural plastics. In addition, a 2012 report entitled Agricultural Plastics Recycling: Municipal Waste Authorities Survey, Final Report found that municipal waste authorities in Alberta also encountered challenges in managing used agricultural plastics.

About the 2015 Survey:

Alberta Agriculture and Forestry (AF) conducted the 2015 Market-Based Solutions for Used Agricultural Plastics study to get a deeper understanding of the current practices for disposal of used agricultural plastics. In this study, AF conducted a survey of municipalities in Alberta through the agricultural fieldmen and a similar survey followed for the Alberta municipal waste authorities. The two surveys build on the previous Alberta research. The goal is to use the survey results as a springboard to move forward on this issue and make progress toward solutions.

This summary highlights the key findings from the survey of municipalities with agricultural fieldmen. Agricultural fieldmen interact with agricultural producers, with municipal agencies, and in some cases with plastic recyclers. So agricultural fieldmen have valuable perspectives on the challenges involved in managing used agricultural plastics.

Agricultural fieldmen from 61 out of Alberta's 69 municipalities participated in the survey. The survey was conducted by phone, which allowed AF to provide greater context to the results.

Highlights of 2015 municipalities survey results:

Various used agricultural plastics were accepted at

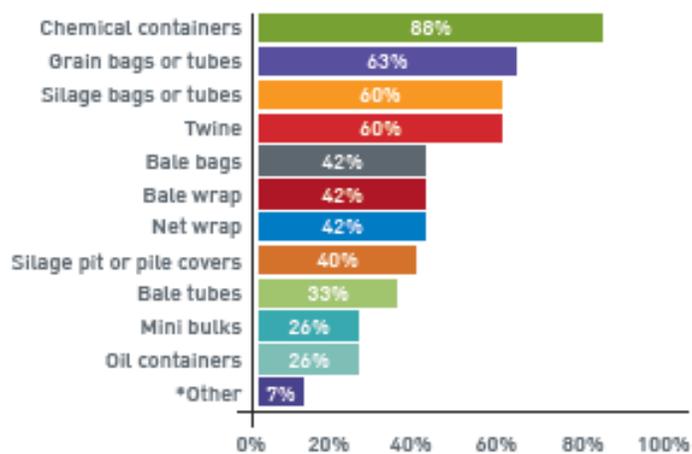
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Many municipal waste sites: Respondents were aware of assorted types of used agricultural plastics that were being accepted at their municipality's waste site. Grain bags or tubes and silage bags or tubes were the most commonly identified type (after chemical containers, which are collected in the CleanFARMS recycling program) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Used Agricultural Plastics Accepted at Municipalities Waste Site (n=57)

*Other: Antifreeze jugs, hay tarps

*Chemical containers accepted through CleanFARMS recycling



program

Used agricultural plastics were brought to landfills/transfer stations mainly by producers: The respondents said agricultural producers were the main agents bringing used agricultural plastics to landfills/transfer stations. Drop-off sites organized by municipalities and pickups by 4-H groups played a role in getting the plastics to the waste sites.

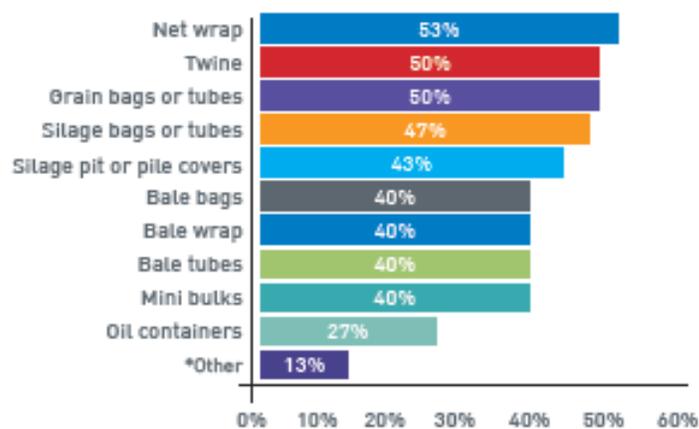
These results suggest that, for at least some producers, the distance to a landfill/transfer station was not an insurmountable barrier to taking their used plastics for proper disposal.

Some used agricultural plastics were not accepted at municipal waste sites: About half of the respondents believed that one or more types of used agricultural plastic were not being accepted at their municipal waste site. As Figure 2 shows, the most commonly identified unaccepted plastics were net wrap (53% of respondents), twine (50%), grain bags or tubes

(50%), silage bags or tubes (47%), and silage pit or pile covers (43%). It is important to remember that these responses reflect the perceptions of agricultural fieldmen, and that some of the agricultural fieldmen said they did not know if agricultural plastics were accepted at their municipal waste site. However, if a municipal waste authority does not accept certain types of agricultural plastics, then that would be a critical barrier for local producers wanting to properly dispose of their plastics.

Figure 2. Used Agricultural Plastics Not Accepted at Municipal Waste Site (n=30)

*Other: Hay tarps, tarps, totes, chemical barrels



Some municipalities accessed markets for used agricultural plastics: In this survey, "markets" are businesses that obtain used agricultural plastics for purposes such as recycling or energy production opportunities.

The only market type identified by the respondents was recycling. About 30% (18 municipalities) said they were sending used agricultural plastics to recycling companies.

Grain bags or tubes were the most popular used agricultural plastics for recycling: In a follow-up question, the 18 municipalities identified 11 types of used agricultural plastics that were going to recyclers (Figure 3). According to the survey responses, the following recycling companies were being accessed:

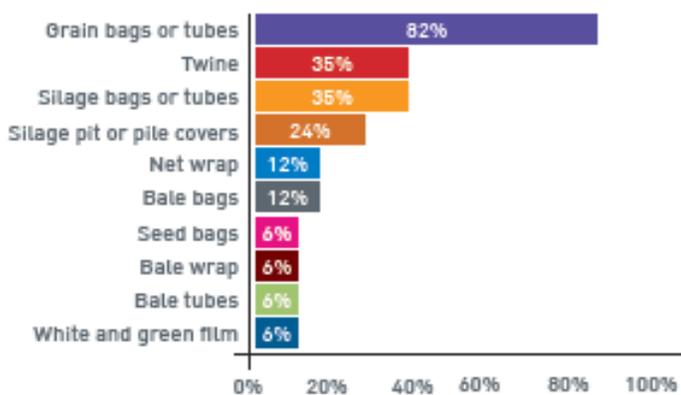
- Blue Planet Recycling
- Capital Paper Recycling Ltd.

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- Crowfoot Plastics Inc.
- Everclean Recycling
- Meridian Wealth Management Inc.
- Merlin Plastics Alberta Inc.
- SWA Developing Company Ltd.
- Vikoz Enterprises Inc.

Figure 3. Used Agricultural Plastics Entering Market by Type (n=18)

*Chemical containers were noted through the CleanFARMS recycling program.



program.

The intent of sharing the survey results is to communicate and not to endorse one company over another. Municipalities interested in accessing markets for used agricultural plastics would need to contact the individual companies to find out what types of used agricultural plastics are being accepted.

Used agricultural plastics had to meet a variety of requirements to be accepted for the recycling market: The requirements most commonly identified by the respondents related to proper preparation, cleanliness, shipping weight, and quality control/consistency of the plastics.

- Preparation: Respondents defined “properly prepared” in various ways, but generally it meant the plastic has to be baled, bundled or rolled for easy handling, transportation and storage.
- Cleanliness: Most respondents said the plastic has to be clean. However, there were different definitions of “clean” such as “less than 5%

contamination” or “less than 10% contamination.” Used agricultural plastics should contain only minimal amounts of dirt, plant matter and other materials because biological contaminants above a certain amount can negatively affect the recycled process.

- Weight: Responses about weight requirements ranged from 30,000 pounds to 33 tonnes. Weight and volume affect transportation costs. For instance, a recycling company or municipality may not want to transport used agricultural plastics until a full truckload is ready if transporting partial loads is not cost-effective. Similarly, a recycling company that ships used agricultural plastics overseas may need to fill a shipping container to a certain minimum weight to be profitable.
- Quality control/consistency: Respondents noted that prolonged sun exposure can negatively impact the quality of the plastic.

Some respondents indicated that their municipal waste authority accepted used agricultural plastics but the plastics needed to be clean and baled/bundled/rolled to enable access to recycling markets. Municipalities interested in accessing markets for used agricultural plastics would need to contact the individual companies to find out their requirements.

Most municipalities that were sending used agricultural plastics to a market did not have a formal written agreement with a company: Of the respondents who said their municipality was sending agricultural plastics for recycling, most (63%) said their municipality did not have an established agreement with the recycling company. Nineteen percent had verbal agreements, and 13% had written agreements. Not having a formal agreement can be risky for payment or delivery logistics.

Most municipalities were not making money from marketing used agricultural plastics: Respondents reported various prices for the plastics. For many municipalities, the inability to recover costs for handling and transporting used agricultural plastics

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was a significant barrier to recycling these plastics. Municipalities would need to contact the individual companies to find out their current prices.

Handling of used agricultural plastics required equipment, space and manpower: Respondents identified various types of equipment used by their municipality for handling used agricultural plastics such as grain bag rollers, vertical balers, ramps, forklifts and skid steers. A total of 23 types of equipment were identified, indicating that there is no particular “right” way of handling used agricultural plastics. In a follow-up question, respondents identified assorted challenges with this equipment

such as troubles with old equipment and difficulties with twine getting tangled in the equipment. They also identified the need for space for the equipment and labour to operate it.

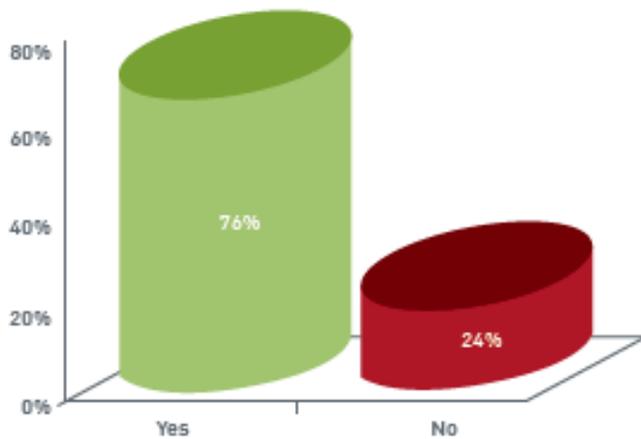
Municipalities faced significant barriers when attempting to access markets for used agricultural plastics: Respondents were asked several questions regarding barriers to accessing markets for used agricultural plastics. Table 1 lists examples of the identified barriers.

Table 1. Examples of identified barriers to participating in markets for used agricultural plastics

Government and/or programming barriers	Equipment, facility, manpower and cost barriers	Barriers related to marketing and/or companies	Barriers related to agricultural producers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of an organized program • Lack of support/ direction from municipality’s council or managers • Not a priority for waste management authority • Lack of coordinated information on dealing with these plastics • Lack of leadership • View this issue as the responsibility of Alberta Environment • View this issue as the responsibility of vendors • Lack of legislation • No regulatory body • No public demand; no push from ratepayers • No demand from producers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs associated with getting the plastic to market • Poor rate of return; costs are higher than payment • Need to close the gap between overhead and capital expense • Need to move the plastic to market before winter • Site logistics • Insufficient manpower, insufficient storage space, insufficient funding for manpower and storage • Additional equipment needed for plastic handling • Difficulties in handling the plastics • Preparation required for the plastics to go to recycler • Poor location or insufficient number of transfer stations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty in getting company’s confirmation to accept the plastics • Problems with reliability of company to accept the plastics on a yearly basis • Distance to market • No market contact • Requirements for agricultural plastics from companies • Difficulty in getting the right information to enter market • No certain market opportunities • Limited markets for specific agricultural plastics • Difficulty in getting enough volume/weight to make a load • Difficulty in getting enough supply of quality material • No market opportunity for smaller quantities of the plastics • Shipping or transportation issues • Need for clean plastics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to raise producer awareness of the issue • Need to educate producers on how to properly clean and prepare the plastics • Time, effort and expense involved for producers to clean, bundle and deliver their plastics to waste site • No financial incentive for producers to clean, bundle and deliver their plastics

Many respondents were considering entering markets for used agricultural plastics in the future: The respondents were asked several questions about potential markets they were aware of. Then they were asked if they were considering entering these markets in the future. Seventy-six percent said yes (Figure 4). In many cases, future participation was conditional on removal of some key barriers. Nevertheless, the strong “yes” response indicates a significant interest among agricultural fieldmen in participating in markets for used agricultural plastics.

Figure 4. Are You Considering Entering into Used Agricultural Plastic Markets in the Future? (n=55)



Conclusions and next steps

The survey results provide many examples of barriers to proper disposal of used agricultural plastics. However, the results also show that some municipalities are already involved in recycling, and that most agricultural fieldmen are interested in participation in recycling or other markets for used agricultural plastics in the future. This indicates that the agricultural fieldmen are focused on the long term. By finding ways to sustainably deal with used agricultural plastics now, they hope to be better prepared for any changes that may occur around the issue of used agricultural plastics.

The next step for Alberta Agriculture and Forestry is to complete the analysis and communicate the results from the municipal waste authority’s survey. Combining the results from the surveys of

the agricultural fieldmen and the municipal waste authorities will highlight the complexities and the important issues by shedding more light on this matter.

Alberta Agriculture and Forestry hopes the results from the two surveys will open the door to increased communication among stakeholders on this issue. Stakeholders include producers, agricultural fieldmen, municipal waste authorities, provincial government (Alberta Agriculture and Forestry and Alberta Environment and Parks), recycling companies, Recycling Council of Alberta, Alberta CARE, Alberta Plastics Recycling Association, agricultural plastic manufacturers and retailers and any other interested parties that could play valuable roles in the sustainable management of used agricultural plastics.

Alberta Agriculture and Forestry will be looking for opportunities to help connect and build relationships among stakeholders so people can share information and ideas, and learn from others’ experiences. Alberta Agriculture and Forestry looks forward to progressing together with stakeholders and partners as we continue to seek better ways to deal with used agricultural plastics.



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.

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Swath Grazing Mature Crops

By Karin Lindquist; Forage Beef Specialist, Ag-Info Centre, Stettler AB, Alberta Agriculture

Fall 2016 has turned out to be a difficult year to get the harvest in and done for many. With all the rain and heavy snowfall in October, incredibly muddy conditions have made it next to impossible for most producers to get into the field to get their crops off.



When the field looks and feels dry enough to walk on, it's a much different story with the heavy equipment. When two four-wheel-drive tractors are needed to try to get a combine out of a low spot, you know the phrase "it's pretty muddy out there" is being a generous understatement.

With very little options available to get at the crop, one of the better options that producers have been phoning in to the Ag-Info Center about was swath-grazing mature crops.

It sounds like a good idea, and it can be done, but a lot of management is needed so that the cows aren't going to be running into problems of their own.

Basically, if you put a herd of cows out free-choice onto a crop field you end up first with major problems of bloat, acidosis, and grain overload. Cows tend to go for the tasty stuff first (the matured grain heads) before going back to munch on the more fibrous and tasteless straw when there's no more seed heads to salvage. So when it comes down to the straw, cows go to the opposite end of the spectrum: Gut impaction.

The best way to be able to swath-graze cows on a mature crop then, is to first plan out a grazing plan where you will be using hot-wire to move the animals to one section of the field per day. You can use strip-grazing or a pre-planned paddock system to do so, depending on the size of the field, the size of your cows and cowherd, and how much temporary electric fence you're willing to put up.

Then, fill them up with hay before turning them out. I

always like to suggest keep feeding them a little hay for the first few days while they're on the field, though this is optional. As long as the herd is confined to the area they're to graze, they'll certainly figure out that they won't be moved until almost everything is cleaned up.

Swath grazing is more similar to a management-intensive grazing system. The once-a-day movement system forces cows to eat both grain and straw in the same day so that there is a good balance of energy and fiber for their rumens. You really don't need that much acreage for even 50 head to be able to clean up some mature barley, oat, or wheat swaths. Depending on tonnage and the average size of your cows, you could get away with swath-grazing 50 cows on half an acre for only a day.

This is from one of the links on the Swath Grazing section of Foragebeef.ca, a worthwhile site to check out for more information.

Dry mature cows are best for this type of winter grazing. Animals that are growing, lactating, or need improvement in body condition may need extra supplementation with protein especially; peas are definitely recommended since they're cheap and a little easier to get compared with other protein supplements often in the form of by-products (soybean meal, canola meal, alfalfa pellets, or dried distillers grains (DDGs)).

It will certainly be hard to know if this fall will improve for harvesting. But, one thing is for sure: It won't last forever. For the time being, use what options are available to make the most out of this bad fall season. They may not be the most ideal options, but they're options available to use nonetheless.



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