



The Blade

Monthly Newsletter of the

Grey Wooded Forage Association

APRIL-MAY 2021



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THE GREY WOODED FORAGE ASSOCIATION WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1984 TO HELP FORAGE AND LIVESTOCK PRODUCERS DEVELOP SOUND AND SUSTAINABLE STRATEGIES WITHIN THEIR OPERATIONS.

OUR EFFORTS ARE MADE POSSIBLE WITH SUPPORT FROM THE PROVINCE OF ALBERTA AND THROUGH MEMBERSHIP IN THE AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND EXTENSION ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA.



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Cover Photo: Brenda Kossowan



TAKE NOTE

Date & Time	Event	Location	See Page
June 8/12:30 p.m.	Invasive Weeds: Conditioning cattle to eat weeds	Zoom: https://bit.ly/3nKxi6VA	n/a
June 10/7:00 p.m.	GWFA AGM & Keynote Address: Blake Hall	Zoom: Attendees must register	4
June 22, 23 & 24	Riparian Grazing and Power Fence Field Shools	Various times and locations, Please refer to poster	4
Dec 13-15, 2022	Western Canadian Conference on Soil Health & Grazing	Edmonton	14

Business office update

By Brenda Kossowan, business manager



Change and growth are essential elements in maintaining a healthy business. The gurus will tell you that, if you're not moving forward, you're sliding backward. Therefore, I would suggest that the level of transition at Grey Wooded Forage Association has been such during recent weeks that we must really have gained traction.

Most notably, the association has been operating almost exclusively in online formats during the past year. It has been an effective way to deliver information during the peak of a coronavirus pandemic. But talking boxes are getting old, and who wants to be stuck in front of a computer when it's warm and sunny outside? As covid restrictions subside, this association and its partners are poised to feed the need for face-to-face presentations, where participants can interact in more familiar surroundings and without worry of interrupted transmissions. The first of these for GWFA will be a riparian grazing school to be held at three different sites throughout Central Alberta during the fourth week in June, hosted in cooperation with our partners from Mountain View County, Wetaskiwin County, Cows and Fish, Ellis Bird Farm and Range Ward. Thanks to the crew at Range Ward, all participants will receive a discount on their products and there will be door prizes plus one grand prize drawn from among people who attend the sessions. Check the poster on Page 4 for details.

While covid-related restrictions were not lifted in time for GWFA to organize a live AGM and conference as the board had hoped, we are pleased to announce that beef producer Blake Hall will offer some insight as keynote speaker at our June 10 AGM, as noted in a recent email fanout. Zoom links will be forwarded to all members in good standing and to those who had purchased memberships in the previous two years. Please note that you must be a member in good standing to vote and to be entered for one of two cash prizes of \$50 each. The winners will be drawn from among those current members who take part in the meeting.

A second major transition evolves around the introduction of our new business manager, who takes the helm on the day of our AGM. **Carolyn Jones** was selected from a short list of five highly capable applicants to take control of GWFA's business office and help the board find new ways to improve and grow the association. Carolyn brings great depth in human resources, marketing and business development, which should serve the association well in its approach to getting the biggest possible bang from its research and extension activities.

An aggressive and focused approach will be necessary in the next few months, as GWFA and similar organizations throughout the province adjust to meet the expectations of a new funding body set up by Alberta Agriculture and Forestry. Results Driven Agriculture Research (RDAR) was developed over the last 18 months to manage and distribute research funding on behalf of the AAF, under direction of Minister Devin Dreesen. RDAR's leadership has assured our association of funding for the next two years, while making it clear that they want to see measurable results if that funding is to continue, with a chance of an increase if our work warrants it.

Carolyn will work with the Board of Directors in making sure that this association fulfills its mandate and earns the ongoing support of its principle funder.

While she will be focused on the business of the GWFA, your former business manager has a new contract to help with extension, specifically in timely publishing of *The Blade* and in ensuring that our website and social media are up to date. Doing a good job with

the publication has been difficult when coupled with the demands of managing the association's affairs. I look forward to developing a great relationship with Carolyn so we can continue to offer a high-quality newsletter and so we can deliver that newsletter on time, once a month.

As a final note on transitions, we now have funding in place to offer access to extension specialists who were formerly part of the AAF's Ag Info Centre team. Please have a look at the

information on the bottom of Page 5 and get in touch with Ag Field Specialist Greg Paranych if you have any questions. Greg has helped develop a delivery plan for this service and, in some situations, may be able to help you himself. Please remember that free consultation, with some limitations, is one of the benefits of membership in GWFA.

GWFA members in the news

This association was founded in 1984 by a group of progressive livestock and forage producers who wanted to do more with less. In recent weeks, a couple of those hard-working stalwarts have drawn notice in the press.

Long-time member **Allan Rand** of Innisfail was featured in the April 4 edition of *Alberta Farmer Express* for his contributions to the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. Now retired from active ranching, Rand set up a small cow-calf herd on 80 acres near Red Lodge Park, west of Bowden. Writer Alexis Kienlen states in her article that he had found a program offered by the Canadian Baptist Ministries that would contribute \$10,000 to purchase cows. He feeds the cows (with donated help including labour, hay and trucking), calves them and watches the babies grow. In the four years since entering the program, Rand has grown the base herd from four to eight cows and received a donated cow with a calf at side. His latest sale of 11 calves and one open cow netted \$14,000, matched four-to-one by the federal government for contribution to the Foodgrains Bank.

"It's about more than money. It's about the realization that we need to do what we can to alleviate hunger," Rand said to the reporter.

Closer to our home office in Rocky, **John and Donna Reid from Solar Harvest Farm** were named the 2020 recipient of Clearwater Landcare's Environmental Stewardship Award, announced in March and highlighted in two local weeklies: *The Rocky Mountaineer* and *the Leslieville-based Western Star*.

In a press release distributed to the papers, the Reids were noted for their concerns about climate change caused by greenhouse gas emissions.

John and Donna value natural eco-systems and consider their own impact on the environment in everything they do, whether on the farm operation or in their personal lives.

Former professionals within AAF, the Reids apply the following five principles in their farming operation, located over three separate parcels.

- Keep the ground covered with organic material, dead or alive.
- Try to have photosynthesis through as much of the year as possible
- Grow a variety of species including grasses, forbs, legumes and brassicas.
- Avoid disturbing the land with cultivation
- Avoid use of pesticides.

John states in the press release that while he accepts that cattle emit GHGs, he believes that, with effective management, ruminants sequester more than they emit.

In parting, I would like to thank the GWFA Board for their faith in asking me to take care of their business over the last three years.

Cheers! ✓

Clearwater County's 2021

Conifer Tree Seedling Program

In cooperation with West Fraser, Clearwater County Agriculture and Community Services is pleased to offer affordable white spruce and lodgepole pine seedlings suitable for starting or renovating a shelterbelt and for enhancing or rejuvenating a natural area.

Application forms are available on the County's website at www.clearwatercounty.ca.

At this time, applications can be submitted via email to dens@clearwatercounty.ca or via mail to: Clearwater County, Attn. Ag and Community Services, 4340-47 Ave, Box 550, Rocky Mountain House, AB, T4T 1A4 or dropped off in the main County building drop box near the front doors.

Applications will be accepted until June 14, 2021.

For more information or inquiries, email dens@clearwatercounty.ca



West Fraser



**GREY WOODED
FORAGE ASSOCIATION**

2021 AGM Online

Thursday, June 10 at 7:00 p.m.

It's that time of year again.

The board and staff serving your association invite you to take part in shaping its future:

- See what's coming up in events and research
- Elect a new Board of Directors
- Review finances

PRIZES!

We really want to "see" you at our AGM
All participants will be entered in a draw for
One of Two \$50 cash cards!
You must participate to earn your entry!

Register by email or phone

(there is no fee)

Contact business manager

Brenda Kossowan

403-844-2645

office@greywoodedforageassociation.com

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Producer to Producer
with

Blake Hall
Prairie Gold
Pastured Meats

SURPRISES!

Be first in line for the
launch of an exciting new
fundraiser!

RIPARIAN GRAZING AND POWER FENCE SCHOOLS

LIMITED ATTENDANCE!
**PLEASE CHOOSE FROM THE FOLLOWING
LOCATIONS, DATES AND TIMES:**

June 22	East of Buck Lake	9:30-11:30 a.m. or 1:30-3:30 p.m.
June 23	East of Blackfalds	
June 24	West of Sundre	

PRIZES!

- ⇒ All registrants will be entered for a Grand Prize valued at \$205!
- ⇒ Door prizes valued at \$50 each will be drawn during each of the six sessions.
- ⇒ All attendees will receive a five per cent Discount on Range Ward power fence products.

YOU MUST REGISTER ONLINE FOR LOCATIONS AND FURTHER DETAILS
<https://riparian-grazing-and-power-fencing-2021.eventbrite.ca>

This is a outdoor event. Please dress for the weather and be aware that there are no washrooms.
Covid rules will apply. Please bring your own face mask, hand sanitizer, snacks and beverages.



**GREY WOODED
FORAGE ASSOCIATION**



Cereals – the breakfast of champion cows

By Greg Paranich, Agricultural Field Specialist

When it comes to annual forages, there are several choices out there. Annual forages can be grown to extend your grazing capacity over perennial forage and pasture and can also be a strategy for feed security and flexibility in times of forage shortfall (i.e. drought) for grazing or stored feed.

For now, we will look at the most common cool season annual crops used for forage. Cool season crops germinate and grow in cooler temperatures, and that is the agroclimatic region that West Central Alberta puts us in. These include spring cereals such as wheat, oats, barley, and triticale. Other cool season crops include peas and brassica species. Also included are winter cereals that will be discussed later.

Cereals are often used for greenfeed or swath grazing. If you wish to graze cereals later in the season, realize that they produce most of their forage within eight to 10 weeks after seeding. Therefore, crops seeded June 1 will be prime to graze end of July to early August. Grazing cereals at about 10 inches (25 cm) is best if you want them to tiller and regrow for potential grazing later, growing conditions permitting of course. Grazing too aggressively (lower than five inches) will reduce regrowth dramatically, if not eliminating it altogether. Properly grazed, they can be a very high-quality forage in a time of declining forage value.

Oats will tiller for grazing regrowth, but not as well as barley. Forage oat varieties include CDC Haymaker, CDC Baler, and Murphy. Barley is considered the best all around forage cereal for quality and yield. If used for swath grazing choose smooth awned varieties. Barley varieties listed as suitable for forage include AB Advantage, AB Cattlelac, AC Ranger, CDC Cowboy and CDC Maverick. Triticale can produce as well as oats or better.

It is a more drought tolerant cereal, but if allowed to become too mature will be less palatable than oats or barley. Varieties of triticale



used include AAC Delight, Bunker, Tyndal, and Taza. A newly available variety of spring triticale is Surge, which is very promising. More on that one later. Wheat is not considered to be as advantageous as any of these three, so I will not discuss it here any further, although it can be used.

Italian ryegrass can produce very high quality, leafy, palatable forage suitable for high production grazing. As a cool-season bunch grass, it is best adapted to cool, moist conditions. It is noted for its high fibre digestibility (NDFD), high relative forage quality (RFQ), palatability, ease of establishment, and its yield response to nitrogen. An advantage of Italian ryegrass is that it will stay vegetative the year of seeding. It will not form stems and head out the year of seeding, with the subsequent dramatic drop in forage quality. When seeded in the spring and harvested throughout the year, Italian ryegrass rarely survives the winter. It can be grazed or harvested alone, but usually in combination with other annuals to help boost nutritional value and yield.

To manage maturities in uncertain weather cycles, and to extend grazing windows, consider staggering two or more seeding dates to arrive at different prime grazing growth across the season. Some producers mix cereals to address varied maturity and have some risk management in a mixed cereal stand. The portions of each vary with their own preferences so trial and error might be required to find your farm's best choice.

Winter cereals have also been used successfully for annual grazing. They are adapted to most soil zones and are considered more suitable than annual cereals when it comes to providing late summer grazing. Spring seeded winter cereals (winter wheat, fall rye, winter triticale) will remain vegetative (leafy) throughout the season.

WE'RE *HERE* TO *HELP*!

Grey Wooded Forage Association has entered an agreement with ARECA, the Agricultural Research and Extension Council of Alberta, to provide expertise for livestock and forage producers who are interested in some old-fashioned one-on-one.

GWFA Field Specialist *Greg Paranich* may be able to fill the bill.

We can also connect you with additional experts, including these specialists formerly employed with Alberta Agriculture and Forestry:

- *Barry Yaremcio*
- *Grant Lastiwka*
- *Ted Nibourg*

Contact 403-506-4071 or field@greywoodedforageassociation.com

Breakfast for Champion Cows (*continued from previous page*)

Typically, they do not head out the year of planting, however, five to 10 per cent may be observed heading, depending on species or variety. Early spring seeding can provide grazing by mid-July and allow recovery for late summer or early fall regrowth.

By comparison, the winter cereals have better quality forage in late summer than spring cereals. Mixing winter cereals with spring cereals has proved to be a good strategy to provide mid-summer annual grazing and regrowth for the fall. Winter wheat and winter triticale are more palatable than fall rye, although fall rye is the most winter hardy. All three will yield similarly for pasture but fall rye will produce more in drought prone areas. If managing the winter cereal for winter survival for spring recovery, light to no fall grazing should occur.

Winter cereals in the following spring can be quite aggressive in early spring growth and could be utilized in a number of ways. Early spring grazing will be available but will need to be quite aggressive to keep the winter cereals from stem elongation before heading, otherwise no regrowth will occur for grazing, or any other option. Allowing the crop to grow in the spring will enable you to harvest an early silage crop as they will mature well ahead of spring seeded spring cereals. The milk to early dough stage is recommended, especially for fall rye, as palatability will decrease. All in all, some very versatile options and flexibility.

We could not have this discussion without including other cool season annual forages, as they have been the topic of grazing groups for some time.

These are the annual legumes (peas, clovers) and brassicas (canola, radish, kale, turnips, forage rape).

We will cover the brassicas, and other “cocktail” crops in a later edition. For now, let’s examine the most commonly used, field peas. More recently, forage peas are being included in annual stand combinations. Due to limited access (for now) they are not a widely used.

Usually in combination with cereals are pea mixtures which have produced similar yield per acre, but with more protein per acre, as cereals alone. Mixed stand seeding rate is important to maintain a full seeding rate of peas and 30 per cent cereal rate to keep the pea population in the stand at (100:30 lb). If the ratio is 50:50, the pea stand is reduced by up to 20 per cent. Grazing should be before podding if any regrowth is to be expected. Silage as the first pods begin to wrinkle. If in a mixed stand for silage, harvest at the proper cereal stage (usually early dough stage). Pea varieties that are suitable for forage include CDC Jasper, CDC Horizon, the forage varieties 40-10, and newly developed Survivor winter pea.

The Grey Wooded Forage Association has been in partnership with Clearwater County the past few seasons, examining various cover crop varieties and in 2020 various cereal-pea forage plots. We had the opportunity to observe the new variety Surge triticale and Survivor winter pea, both performing very well. We will have a result summary published in the near future.

We will continue to follow this direction of demonstrating these, and other forages in 2021 in partnership with Clearwater County. Hopefully we will all be able to gather in the field for a hands-on comparison of a number of forage options.

Until next time, take care and stay well. ✓



Field Peas, Clearwater County demonstration plot, 2020
BRENDA KOSSOWAN PHOTO



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ALBERTA FORAGE INDUSTRY NETWORK

Blocks, Tubs, Mineral or Supplement: What is the Best Choice?

By Barry Yaremcio, Yaremcio Ag Consulting Ltd.

After talking to various retailers, one comment comes out loud and clear. Sales of lick tubs, molasses blocks (mineral or protein) are continuing to increase. One would question: Are these the correct product or products to use for the animal being fed based on the quality of feeds provided. Is this a cost-effective method to supply additional nutrients to livestock? Do these products have the capability to supply the required nutrients?

Three things are required before rations can be balanced. Are there feed test results available? What are the weights and stages of production for the animals you are feeding? How much feed is supplied daily (i.e.: Do you know the weights of the bales)? Without answers to these questions, it is very difficult to build a properly balanced ration.

If feed quality is unknown, there is no way to evaluate if a tub, block, mineral or supplement is needed. There is no defined starting point, only a guess and average values for the types of feed available.

Farm and ranch owners or managers are trying to maximize the number of healthy live calves born every year. The ration feeds the cow and supports the calf. Cows need to be fed to maintain a high reproduction rate in the upcoming breeding season. This is sound management. Nutrition has a big part to play in calving and re-breeding success. Good management achieves these objectives as efficiently as possible. This includes minimizing the costs when feeding and supplementing cows. Harlan Hughes a beef economist in North Dakota stated in the mid 1990's, that reducing winter feeding costs by one dollar (\$1.00) increases overall profitability of the operation by \$2.48.

Supplementation programs are designed to supply a combination of energy, protein, minerals, and vitamins. Does the product of choice meet these requirements? In this example, the ration is short of protein and one pound of a 20- per-cent protein block (\$85 per 110 pounds or 77 cents a pound) is required. How does this cost compare to adding canola meal that contains 38 per cent protein at a rate of 0.52 pounds to supply the same amount of protein? Cost of canola meal is (\$455 per tonne or 20.6 cents a pound – Jan 29, 2021) at a cost of 10.7 cents per head per day. The canola meal should be fed with grain or mixed into silage. The cost of processing and delivering the grain needs to be calculated into the total cost. With the grain and canola meal feeding program, it is relatively safe to assume that every animal will receive some grain and protein every feeding. When feeding tubs, blocks, supplements or mineral free choice, there is no way to know how much product an animal is consuming and at what frequency. The free choice system has the greatest risk of over or under consumption and not achieving the required results.

In the above example, a 1,400-pound cow in late pregnancy requires a nine per cent protein diet (dry basis) or roughly 1020 grams of protein per day. Adding one pound of a 20-per-cent block or supplement increases protein content in the ration by 90 grams. The protein content of the diet increases by 0.5 per cent on a dry matter basis. If the supplied ration is at eight per cent, adding one pound of a 20 per cent product improves the situation, but it does not meet requirements. Without feed test results, the ration could easily be 12 per cent protein and there is a protein supplementation cost of 10.7 to 77 cents a day per cow that is not required.

When feeding cereal silage, greenfeed or swath grazing to pregnant and lactating cows, the largest problem associated with these feeds is a lack of calcium and magnesium.

In this situation an added product should have significantly more calcium than phosphorus.

Often the required ratio in the required mineral is 4:1 or 5:1 calcium to phosphorus ratio.

Block and tub products have lower calcium and phosphorus levels compared to dry minerals. It is difficult to have minerals (including calcium, phosphorus and magnesium) to stay in suspension during the production of tubs or blocks. To successfully register a feed product, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency requires that the nutrient content in the first block must be the same as what is found throughout the batch.

In order to register a product, concentrations of some nutrients are lowered to have a uniform product. Look at the tag and calculate what amounts of each nutrient are supplied at recommended intake levels.

In a swath grazing situation where the feed contains 0.32 per cent calcium and 0.2 per cent phosphorus and the calcium content in the tub or block is 4.7 per cent and the phosphorus is 1.75 per cent. It would require a cow to consume 3.9 pounds of the block product daily to achieve a 2:1 calcium to phosphorus ratio in the final feeding program. Cost would be \$3.00 per head per day (3.9 pounds at 77 cents a pound). It would not be possible for a cow to eat that much product on a daily basis. There would also be nutritional imbalances created for other nutrients if the cow did consume this amount. A second option would be to offer 30 grams of limestone per head per day in a salt - mineral mix fed free choice to swath grazing cows. The limestone would help achieve the 2 :1 calcium to phosphorus ratio. The cost would be one to two cents per head per day. The problem is to have the cows consume the correct amount.

Limestone is a product that cows do not like to consume free choice and this contributes to the variable intake that occurs.

Every farm or ranch is different and there are many possible feed combinations to provide a balanced ration. Unfortunately, there is no single answer that will fit all situations.

Adopting a feeding practice must fit your management style and operation. It is not acceptable to copy what a neighbor is doing because it seems to be a reasonable thing to do. Use a pencil and paper or computer to figure out costs.

If necessary, consult with a nutritionist to balance the ration or if you are not comfortable; use a ration balancing program such as CowBytes to do the work yourself. ✓

“There is no single answer that will fit all situations”



Acknowledging Emotion as the Way Forward

By Bluesette Campbell



There's no need to describe that the times we are currently living in have transformed the definition of 'normal' for everyone of us.

For months we have been taking every day, one day at a time.

Some have been affected more directly than others, but we have all been affected in some way.

These changes manifest themselves in many different ways and often come out in the form of emotion,

sometimes without us even realizing that's what is happening.

I think it is really important to make this distinction now because so many of us want to discount emotion or deny that we even have any. Showing emotion has somehow, over time, been perceived as a shortcoming or a sign of weakness. I beg to differ. Actually, I would like to suggest, in my own experience, acknowledging emotions can bring me closer to a solution or resolution of a challenge much faster than if I attempt to sweep it under the rug or pretend I don't have any. Once I accept the emotion for what it is, the road to 'letting go' and 'moving on' is more smoothly paved and easier going.

Throughout my day, I have been making a conscious decision to check in with my own experiences. What I have discovered is everything is requiring a little more energy, thought, and time. Just a trip to the grocery store, with all the added precautions, can be very time-consuming. Making plans for our upcoming brandings, with all the unknowns about large gatherings, requires more thought, conversation, and consensus-building at our management meetings. This can get cumbersome and frustrating. Upon reflection, this frustration is heightened due to indirect changes in our world. My personal struggles are tied to the greater whole and I am experiencing emotion because of it. This realization has allowed me call it for what it is, attach the emotion, and carry on.

To keep things simple, let's take a look at four key emotions: Anger, Sadness, Happiness, and Fear.

Because it rolls off the tongue nicely, we will call them: Mad, Sad, Glad, and Afraid. (Indulge me for a few moments and agree that any other words of emotion that you can name would, in one way or another, fall into one of these four categories.)

During the last three months with all the disruptions to our normal routines, there have been quite a few changes, perhaps some disappointments, and maybe some joys. To help you reflect, I'll list a few that may trigger your thoughts. Ask yourselves if you have been acknowledging them in your day-to-day lives or if you have been ignoring them. I am not suggesting that you have to do anything about it. Some people function very well with struggle and prefer to keep it that way. If you are not one of those people and want to move past your current struggles, maybe by identifying some of what you are experiencing and attaching it to an emotion, you can move on. Take a look at a few of these examples, try them on for size, change the wording, or brainstorm a whole new list of possible experiences that fit better with you and your circumstances. The idea is that if you can identify with these experiences and attach them to an emotion, you will be well on your way to letting go of what is holding you back.

Take a glance at the table and see if anything resonates with you. If you catch yourself silently nodding or shaking your head, saying, "Hmm..." inquisitively, or find your eyebrows in an elevated position, something is definitely speaking to you.

Take a moment. Think about the emotion that is attached to your experience and then decide if you want to do anything about it. It is entirely up to you. Keep in mind, however, that acknowledging your emotions could be the way forward. Might I suggest that if you are struggling at all, in any way, even if it doesn't seem to be related, it just might be connected to a much larger whole without you even realizing it? It might just be your emotions knocking at your door, ready to help you to the paved road of Easier Going! ✓

Emotion	Experience
Mad	Why can't things just get back to normal? People aren't taking Covid regulations seriously/are taking Covid regulations too seriously! Boxed beef prices are so high and producer prices are so low! The Gov't made me miss my Grandpa's funeral!
Sad	I can't visit my sick parent. People are hurting, going broke, dying or are less fortunate than I am. I wish things could just go back to normal. We decided not to bring the vet out for the cow/dog/sheep.
Glad	I am so fortunate to live where I live, do what I do, or have what I have. My family is healthy. The snow finally melted. Calves are dropping on green grass.
Afraid	What will the re-opening of society look like? I might get sick/get someone sick. We might not make it financially. What if I'm breaking the regulations unknowingly? Why are family members fighting all the time and what does it mean?

Profile of an ALUS Farmer Liaison: Tom Towers

By Ken Lewis, ALUS Program Coordinator

Tom Towers is Red Deer County's ALUS Farmer Liaison for the middle part of the County.

Tom and his wife Margaret run Tamara Ranch not too far south of Red Deer.

As an ALUS Farmer Liaison, Tom talks to other farmers and ranchers about the ALUS Program. He shares his experience with the program, and talks about things he's done on his farm to produce increased ecosystem services.


Tom and the Towers family are well known in Red Deer County and beyond. It's probably safe to say that Tom and Margaret are among the pioneers of what is now becoming known as "Regenerative Agriculture", at least in this part of the world.

In 2019, Tom and Margaret Towers won the Dave Reid Award in recognition of their long-standing stewardship of their land.

Like all of our ALUS Farmer Liaisons, Tom has done several ALUS Projects on Tamara Ranch. He's put up almost two kilometres of riparian and range management fencing, planted an ecobuffer, planted trees and shrubs, and even created a wetland. In all, 45 acres of Tamara Ranch have been enrolled into ALUS, to produce increased ecosystem services for the benefit of everyone. All while producing the world's best: Alberta beef.

To find out how ALUS can work on your farm or ranch, please give Tom a call at 403-352-6901.

Or call either of our other Farmer Liaisons: Stephen Smith at 403-318-3371 or Kevin Ziola at 403-352-0662. Or call me at 403-505-9038.



Tom and Margaret's Tamara Ranch is part of an important scientific research project that is helping demonstrate how ranching can sequester carbon and mitigate climate change. There is an excellent video online that showcases this project, called "The Luckiest Places on Earth". It profiles Tom and Margaret, along with the other farmers participating in the project. That video can be found online at <https://youtu.be/6yFsCTFrUo> or go to YouTube and search "Luckiest Places on Earth Carbon Cowboys"

Above: Tom (left) and Margaret receive the Dave Reid Award from Bryan Gilvesie, fellow ALUS Farmer and CEO of ALUS Canada.

Below: Rob Purdie of Rolyn Hills Ranch, shows Tom Towers his ALUS project: an Alternative Livestock Watering System.

ALUS CANADA PHOTOS



Over 20 Years of Riparian and Ecological Enhancement Projects and Now More Funding Available

For more than 20 years, Mountain View County, in partnership with the Alberta Conservation Association, has delivered funding for riparian and ecologically sensitive area projects. And for the last 6 years, there have been opportunities for wetland enhancements and marginal land improvements through ALUS Canada.

Eligible projects include:

- Riparian & Sensitive Area Fencing
- Off-site watering systems
- Creek crossings
- Buffers for wetland and stream preservation

For information or applications contact:

Lorelee Grattidge
403-335-3311 ext 163
ag@mvcountry.com



Alberta Environmental Farm Plan

The Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) is a practical way to view your entire farm through a different operational lens. The EFP process helps you to easily think through basic factors on your farm such as soils, water, inputs, waste, energy use and many other facets of your operation. Having a step by step guide to producing an operational plan can help you, those you work with and other professionals, have a greater understanding of what you do every day.

The voluntary and free Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) helps farmers highlight their commitment to the land. The program covers an entire farm using a self-assessment tool to help the producer identify the on-farm environmental risks. At the completion of the program, the farmer has an itemized list of improvements that can be made in their operation. Each EFP expires after a decade, at which time easily renewing the plan through the WebBook will keep the farm's EFP certificate current. The EFP is a useful tool for analyzing a farming operation and guiding improvements as time and resources allow.

The Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) WebBook, is an online educational system that guides producers step by step to build their EFP. The system is conveniently laid out online with resources at each step to give you all the information you need to make decisions about your farm. Once your plan is complete, submitting it to your technician to review is as simple as clicking a button. When your plan has been approved the online system will provide you with a checklist of everything you wish to do. Then when you have accomplished some or all of your goals, you can update your plan in minutes, making the renewal process seamless and easy.

The first step of registration begins through the Alberta EFP website www.albertaefp.com or by calling 1-587-200-2552 to receive over the phone assistance. Upon registering, you will receive a confirmation email to fully activate your account. You will be assigned a technician in your region within two weeks of registration. If you feel comfortable you can begin your online workbook, with the learning content guiding you through most of the process. However, if you have any questions, you can contact your technician or attend a local/online workshop to receive additional support.



Radiant Creek: Partnering to Improve Range Health and Fish Habitat

Submitted by Clearwater County Landcare, used with permission from Trout Unlimited Canada

Radiant Creek is a tributary of the Clearwater River, and an important habitat for threatened native Bull Trout in the Upper North Saskatchewan Watershed. In 2019, Trout Unlimited Canada completed a site assessment identifying possible riparian restoration opportunities along Radiant Creek and other tributaries of the Clearwater River. Over time, the section of Radiant Creek downstream of the Forestry Trunk Road has become overly wide and shallow, and there are several sources of fine sediments to the stream, which can be detrimental to fish spawning habitat. By early October of this year, much of the water in Radiant Creek except for some small pools had evaporated following a hot dry autumn, and there were dried up fish in depressions along the creek. Due to its potential for Bull Trout population recovery, Radiant Creek has been identified as a high priority restoration area. The reach of stream chosen for restoration suffers from heavy bank erosion due to flooding which exacerbated some of the existing issues. Unfortunately, due to decades of shrub encroachment throughout the valley, grazing opportunities have become more limited over time, resulting in increased grazing pressure along the riparian zone. Grasslands represent a small grazing area within the broader landscape and are shrinking over time due to shrub encroachment. The issue of shrub encroachment in this portion of the Rocky Mountain Forest Reserve was studied by Angela Burkinshaw and Dr. Edward Bork with the University of Alberta, who quantified the loss of open grasslands in the area over a 40 year period from 1958 to 1998 (Burkinshaw & Bork, 2009). The results of this research, published in the journal *Environmental Management* in 2009, showed that open grasslands had declined by 1111 hectares, a reduction of 58%. Grasslands are an important source of forage for native grazers like elk, cattle which spend the summer and fall on the range, as well as for horses.

While cattle grazing in the area is managed based on the health and productivity of the rangeland and only permitted during the summer

and fall, invasive horses are present in the area throughout the entire year, resulting in additional use of sensitive riparian areas throughout the summer and fall. Research by Salter and Hudson (1979) along the foothills of west-central Alberta showed that horses feed primarily on high quality forages such as grasses and sedges, and can spend considerable time foraging in previously grazed and disturbed areas, especially during the spring (1980).

Horse populations along the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains are rapidly increasing, nearly doubling in number from a minimum count of 980 in 2013 to 1679 in 2019; with populations in the Clearwater and Sundre Equine Zones of the west-central foothills increasing from 610 to 1082 over the same 6 year period (Government of Alberta, 2020). These population trends increase the potential for issues, due to a greater number of grazers utilizing a declining supply of forage, leading to increased pressure on the remaining grasslands. Furthermore, research has shown that grazing by horses may have a greater impact on riparian areas than grazing by only cattle and wildlife, and thus needs to be carefully managed especially where horses, cattle, and wildlife overlap (Kaweck, Severson, & Launchbaugh, 2018). This has implications for native trout, which rely on healthy and diverse riparian areas to hold together streambanks, provide shade over the stream, and contribute to aquatic habitat and food webs as plants grow, die, and fall into the stream. Trout Unlimited Canada (TUC) is interested in working together with all stakeholders in the Clearwater allotment to work on solutions to this complex issue which effects the health of riparian and aquatic habitats here and elsewhere in southwestern Alberta. Similar situations have been developing in the absence of frequent low intensity fires and the proliferation of horse populations along the eastern slopes and in the northwestern United States, where growing horse populations are impacting the health of the rangeland and riparian areas.

(continued on next page)



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Radiant Creek (continued from previous page)

In June 2020, TUC and our partners at Cows and Fish planned out the recommended restoration work in partnership with the grazing allotment holder who is keenly interested in the stewardship of this unique landscape for both grazing values and ecosystem health. Recommendations included installing a fence around a portion of the riparian zone to limit access for grazing, and by planting deep-rooted, native woody plants to strengthen soils, stabilize the banks and prevent the continued contribution of fine sediments into the stream, as well as helping to reverse the effects of scour and widening of the stream channel. During a handful of workdays in September and early October, over 200 willow stakes were planted along eroding streambanks, and a truckload of coarse woody debris (lodgepole pine tops) was distributed throughout the project area. A few weeks later, in mid October 2020, approximately 550 meters of aluminum panel fence was installed around Radiant Creek by the allotment holder, immediately downstream of the Forestry Trunk Road, to limit access to grazing for a period of five years. Cows and Fish completed a preliminary riparian health inventory of the fenced in area and a reference reach upstream of the trunk road. The exclusion area will be continually monitored for a period of five years to measure and assess the success of the project and determine if additional actions or adjustments are needed. Both riparian health sites will be re-assessed by Cows and Fish during the fifth year of the project to help understand how management actions have impacted riparian health along the stream.

TUC and Cows and Fish continue to investigate and advocate for other long-term management solutions for the Radiant Creek area and the Clearwater allotment, in partnership with government, and academia, to ensure that the landscape can support healthy native trout populations and productive rangeland for grazing.

This project was undertaken with the financial support of Environment and Climate Change Canada.

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