

Forage Fact #1

Date:
September, 2000

Peace Region Ranchers Knife Life into Forage Fields

AerWay's Features:

- 12 foot ballasted unit
- Alternating tines on a metal roller
- Includes chain harrows
- Can be pulled with 85 to 100 hp field tractor
- 1000 lb weights can be added to each side for better soil penetration
- Axles can be set at an aggressive angle, if necessary.

Benefits of the AerWay

During the last four years several PRFA of BC members have been using the AerWay as a method of pasture and field rejuvenation. Many of these farmer's fields (alfalfa/grass hay fields and pastures) have been suffering from low plant vigor, soil compaction, or decreased yield; and they feel that rejuvenation of some sort is necessary.

Farmers integrated the use of the AerWay into their farm management practices for several reasons. Plowing, discing and cultivating of fields exposes soil to moisture loss, water and wind erosion, which may be necessary if the field does not consist primarily of desired plant species. However, if the field does consist primarily of the desired species then the AerWay can be used for field rejuvenation.

The top 6-8" of the soil can be aerated without destroying the existing crop cover, because of the shattering and fracturing action of the AerWay. This relieves the compaction by loosening the soil structure.



The alternating tines on the AerWay perforate the soil surface, without destroying crop cover.

In addition, it increases the water holding capacity of the soil to absorb spring runoff and winter snowfall. With the unique design of the AerWay, a rancher can accomplish this without creating surface conditions that are conducive to erosion. The tines are alternating on the roller, so that there is never a continuous furrow or groove to channel water.

Based on the experiences of association

For more information or to rent the AerWay :

- Call Glenn Hogberg at (250) 843-7653.

Rental Rates (fall 2000):

- \$2.50/ac for members;
- \$3.00/ac for non-members.

AerWay Ideal for Many Uses

members from 1997-2000, we believe that the AerWay may be well suited for:

- ◇ Aerating and rejuvenating old hay fields in lieu of discing and reseeding.
- ◇ Aerating old pastures that need rejuvenation. Fertilizer or manure may be applied in conjunction with this field

operation if you desire, spring or fall.

- ◇ Rejuvenating calving pastures, either spring or fall. Aggressive settings and double passes may be required.
- ◇ Rejuvenating cattle wintering grounds where build up of manure is only a few inches deep.

There are various reasons why ranchers

Published by P.R.F.A. of BC:

P.O. Box 908

Dawson Creek, B.C., V1G 1L6

Peace River Forage Association
of British Columbia



Members' Experiences with Aerway



Dave Armstrong of Rolla used the AerWay to help incorporate lime into his hay field.

choose to use the AerWay. The way they each use the AerWay also varies greatly; i.e. time of year, the combinations with seeding or fertilizing.

Dave Armstrong of Rolla says, "The AerWay should be used for several years before the full benefits can be reaped. I'd like to use the AerWay after each hay harvest." He uses the AerWay on his timothy hay-fields expecting that it will increase the longevity of his fields.

Dan Rose of Groundbirch used the Aerway this spring in a pasture, consisting of alfalfa and orchard grass, where he calves in the spring. He aerated instead of discing because he wanted his field rejuvenated without the muddiness and looseness it gets with discing. He also wanted to incorporate the manure and fibers on the ground from winter-feeding. He said "aerating in a less aggressive mode and dragging harrows behind broke up the clumps of manure and feed and resulted in a more even spread of nutrients." However, Dan was concerned that using the Aerway in an alfalfa field might disturb the roots and kill some of the alfalfa crowns.

Barry Berg of Groundbirch used the Aer-

Way on an alfalfa field. He feels that "it did a good job, with the most aggressive setting." He also used it in a field where he winter fed and feels that the hay and manure left on the field from the winter was well spread by the AerWay throughout the field.

This spring **Jim Strasky** of Farmington used the Aerway on 15 ac of hay land which he also pastures cattle on regrowth permitting. He seeded 2 ½ bushels of oats, 55 lbs of alfalfa and timothy and fertilized with 100 lbs/ac of 24-24-0. He seeded and fertilized after a once over pass with the Aerway and chain harrows, at the most aggressive setting. He harrowed the field again after seeding.

Glenn Hogberg of Progress has used the AerWay several times on his alfalfa hay fields. Glenn says, "Using the AerWay can only improve my forage stand and the condition of my soil. I expect to increase the longevity of my hay field by a couple of years. I think that maximum benefit can be reaped if the field is exposed to multiple passes with the AerWay." Other farmers plan to use the AerWay in

"Using the AerWay can only improve my forage stand and the condition of my soil."
Glenn Hogberg

Ongoing Work With the AerWay



AerWay plots in Ben Hansen's pasture south of Baldonnel.

the fall, hoping to better utilize the snowfall and spring runoff. They also feel that less moisture will be lost from disturbance with the AerWay in the fall

Ben Hansen of Baldonnel has lent some of his pasture land to the Peace River Forage Association (PRFA) to evaluate the AerWay. He set up a plot with one pass, two passes and no passes; and he applied fertilizer to these different rates of AerWay

use. He is keen to watch this site over this season and in subsequent years to gain a better understanding of the most effective use of the AerWay.

To date approximately two dozen farmers and ranchers in the BC Peace have used the PRFA's AerWay. Everybody seems to be satisfied, if not more than satisfied with the results they are seeing.

Compiled by: Julie Robinson and Sandra Burton in Summer of 2000

AerWay Project Funded by: The PRFA of BC and Agriculture Canada through Peace River Agriculture Development Fund (PRAD) **Forage Facts Project Funded by:** The PRFA of BC thank all the donators and supporters at their Forage Goods & Services Auction on Feb. 5, 2000.