

FORAGE FIRST

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Age Verification and Radio Frequency ID Workshop

This spring the PRFA of BC had an information session with the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA). They explained to those present what was expected of producers and why and how the system works. Cody Lee Boulton, CCIA, walked

CCIA Approved RFID Tags



producers through the online registration of Age Verification program; she explained that they have 2 options when registering their cattle. Option 1 is to register individual cattle, so each animal has an individual birth date. Option 2 is to register animals as a group; this can be done 2 ways. # 1 is to register calves as a group using the start date of calving, however this means that on sale day all of your calves are aged to the start date of calving which may be a disadvantage over longer calving periods. # 2 is to register a group of tags and corresponding calves over a certain time period. This would enable you to register calves in whatever grouping you want, which may be advantageous over longer calving periods. She showed producers how to get birth certificates online after registering. For more info on the web go to: <http://www.canadaid.ca/index.shtml>

In the other concurrent session hosted by the Rep's from Compass, they explained to producers how Radio Frequency ID (RFID) tags worked and what producers needed to know to start working with them. First things first, currently the CCIA has stated that all cattle leaving their herd of origin must be tagged with a CCIA approved RFID tag by September 1, 2006. Next, producers do not need to own a reader; the reader enables a producer to use the RFID for herd management. The reader is just another tool to help producers manage production information. The RFID number can be used with scales to collect individual weights, for keeping electronic records of cattle treatment and the list goes on. RFID tags enable trace back of an animal to the herd of origin if a reportable disease is detected. CCIA controls access to the information stored in their database and will provide the information at the request of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, (CFIA) in the event of a health or safety concern.

We would like to thank the Peace Country Beef and Forage Association for providing us with an opportunity to be involved with this information session.

2006 Directors of the Peace River Forage Association of British Columbia

"Dedicated to putting forage first in the hearts, minds and pocketbooks of livestock producers and other forage enthusiasts"

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PRFA ACTIVITIES UPDATE

Environmental Farm Plans

By Julie Robinson

WOW! Environmental Farm Plans, (EFP) are booming in the Peace. Many producers are getting involved and all commodities seem to share an interest in this program. For many forage producers this program has provided them an opportunity to take a different look at their ranching operation. Many are looking at new ways to graze their land as offsite watering systems become economically feasible with 50% funding cost share through this program. GPS units have also been declared by some producers as the most economical change on their ranch over the last 10 years, saving them time and overlap costs.

Any producers with concerns or issues involving their creeks, streams, rivers and the areas around them now have an opportunity to seek free local advice. The Farmland – Riparian Interface Stewardship program has been developed to provide funding for producers with riparian area concerns. The local contractor available for free consultation to producers is **Murray Clark 250-786-7926**.

If you are planning to make some improvements on the farm or ranch this year you may be eligible for funding through the Environmental Farm Planning program. **Contact Julie Robinson for more info 250-782-4501**

Wildlife Surveys and Assessments

By Julie Robinson

We are all aware of the increasing wildlife numbers and conflicts with producers in the Peace River area. This year several producer groups are working together with Ministry of Agriculture (MAL) and Ministry of Environment (MOE), Ducks Unlimited Canada and other interest groups (i.e. local Rod & Gun clubs and Guide & Outfitters). These projects will involve selected producers across the area in detailed assessments of loss and damage, as well as responses to spot losses during the season. There will also be wildlife surveys distributed amongst producers in the Peace for general impact information.

The BC Grain Producers have a one year project to monitor losses to grain and oilseed crops due to wildlife damage (ungulate, waterfowl and bears). They will be looking at loss during the growing season, loss due to trampling, and levels of feces contamination in the fall. These studies will be carried out on several producers' land, looking at all five major grain and oilseed crops grown in the Peace (wheat, canola, barley, oats and peas).

Included in this mail out are 2 copies of a wildlife loss and damage survey, one is for 2005 information you may already have on hand and one is for 2006 information that could be collected if you wish to participate in the survey. The more people who fill in these surveys the better. Even if you can't fill all the boxes just fill in the ones you can. We need to be able to document how widespread the problem is in the Peace and how many people are impacted. The surveys will be compiled by the Peace River Forage Association of BC and BC Grain Producers. Your responses will be kept confidential. Please call **Julie Robinson 250-782-4501** for more information.

O'Till Drill

By Julie Robinson

As of the last directors meeting in April, the PRFA of BC has decided to sell our 20 ft Flexicoil drill with Barton disc openers and purchase a 752 JD press drill. The purpose of this project was to demonstrate Zero-till practices as they relate to forage. During this transition year we are trying to minimize the number of acres we commit to and not to custom operate. Contact **John Kendrew 250-786-5652** for more information.

WINTER EVENTS

Grazing Management – Basic Tools

By Julie Robinson

The PRFA of BC hosted their annual January Seminar again focusing on Grazing Management; we had **Jim Gerrish** and **Geoff Hughes-Games** as guest speakers. They talked about keeping pasture records, the importance of healthy forage and how that impacts soils and what healthy soil can do for you.

After hearing Jim's presentation 7 times this January, I am going to try and sum it up, leaving out some of the more entertaining parts, so as to keep myself and him out of trouble. Jim talked about getting the most out your pastures by building better solar panels. He emphasized that a plant is healthiest and growing fastest when it has lots of green leaves. This means that pastures that have been "pool-tabled" (grazed right off) and pastures that are over mature and gone to seed are not what we are aiming for. To keep pasture healthy, he gave us several tools and rules of thumb to help guide us through a grazing season. First and foremost, which he could not emphasize enough, is leaving residual.

Jim recommends leaving 4 inches of grass. Letting the cows graze it shorter than 4 inches means a longer wait before that pasture can be grazed again.

He talked about the benefits of rotational grazing, stating that continuous grazing is only 30-50% efficient whereas rotational grazing efficiency can range from 50-90% depending on how often you rotate. Jim also emphasized the importance of getting all your pastures grazed in the first 45-60 days of the grazing season.

Jim also encourages doing a pasture inventory, so you know what you have available to graze. This lets you know if and when you are going to run out of pasture - long before you do. In this month's copy of the Stockman Grass Farmer he talks in great detail about estimating cow days or sheep days (as he says sheep are just cows in sweaters) per acre. Jim explained that an average stand of grass is about 10 cow days per acre, per inch of grass. So if the grass is 8 inches high and you're leaving 4 inches residual, the pasture should provide about 40 cow days per acre.

Walkerton Visits the Peace

By Julie Robinson

In February, Dr. David and Carolyn Biesenthal, the beef farmers who were at the centre of the Walkerton contamination water investigation, visited the Peace for 3 days and gave a presentation on their experience. They raise about 50 head of beef on the outskirts of Walkerton and were accused at one time of causing the Walkerton water contamination tragedy.

David talked about their naivety toward the situation and its implications in the beginning, welcoming investigators onto their property, hoping to contribute to the search for an answer. Never once realizing that the investigators considered his farm the primary suspect, David assumed that they were doing an extensive investigation of all the farms and homes in the area. It came as a shock to the Biesenthal's, their family and friends when it was announced on TV that their farm was the primary cause of the contamination. No one had told them that this was going to be announced and so they were completely unprepared for the backlash. David told about the impact of this announcement, the media frenzy that followed and the drawn out

process to get to the bottom of the facts and all the contributing factors to the contamination and tragedy, some of which are still being looked into.

David emphasized the importance of good records and Environmental Farm Plans and how they were crucial in proving the farms 'due-diligence'. Fortunately David had a complete set of records of the timing of the application of manure on the field in question and had taken manure samples for analysis prior to spreading. He had also completed his EFP.

In the end he was exonerated of the charges and the following is a quote describing why the charges were dropped.

"Fortunately, Biesenthal had an environmental farm plan. A \$350-million lawsuit against him was dropped and a subsequent inquiry absolved him of any blame. In legal terms, this farmer had practiced "due diligence." Like everyone else, he knew there was increasing concern about farming's impact on the environment and so he took reasonable steps to anticipate problems on his farm and correct them." – FarmCentre.com



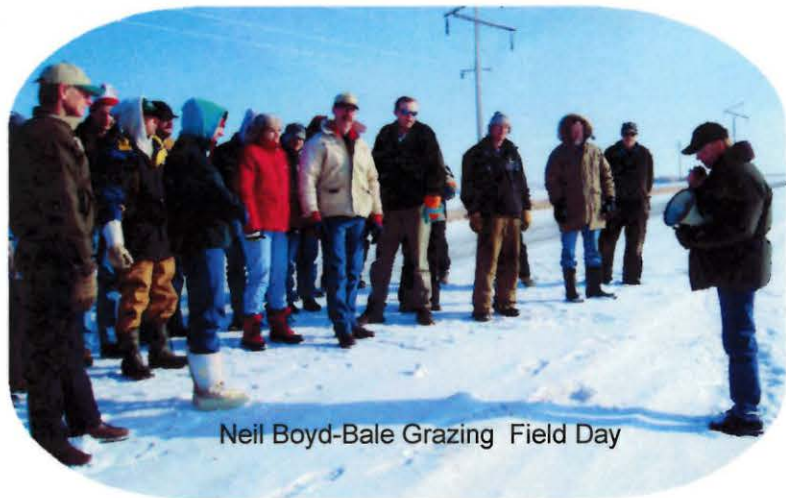
Dale Hansen keeps the crowd bidding!



Happy Cow Swath Grazing



Stockp



Neil Boyd-Bale Grazing Field Day



Julie's trip to



Buffalo swath grazing



CCIA Workshop



CCIA Workshop



Aerial View - Chetwnd Pulp Mill



Grazing



Baled silage - plastic



Jim Gerrish-Jan. Seminar



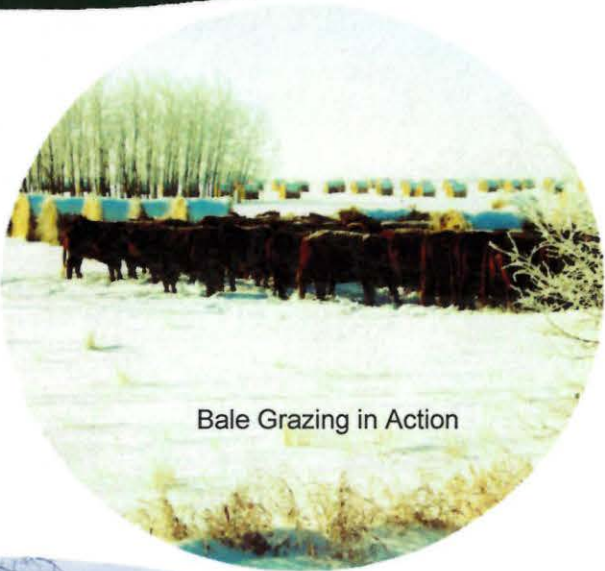
New Zealand



January Seminar



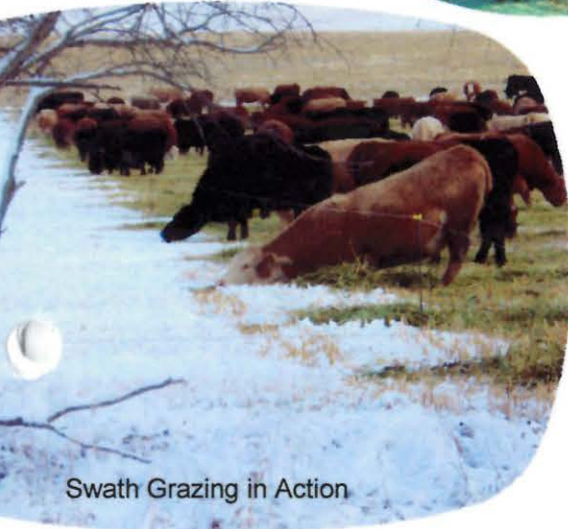
Bunk Feeder



Bale Grazing in Action



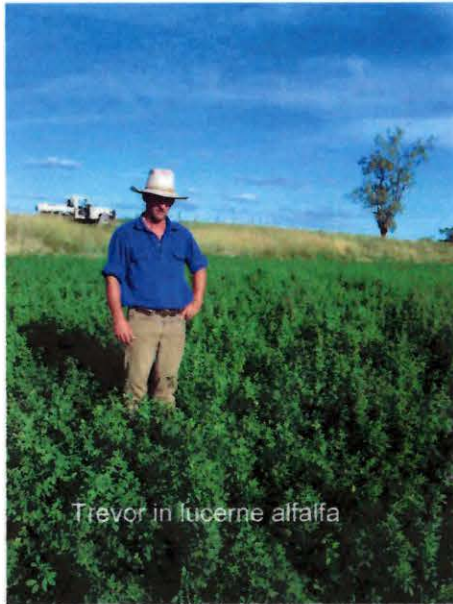
Elk Fencing



Swath Grazing in Action



Auction 2006 Crowd



Trevor in lucerne alfalfa

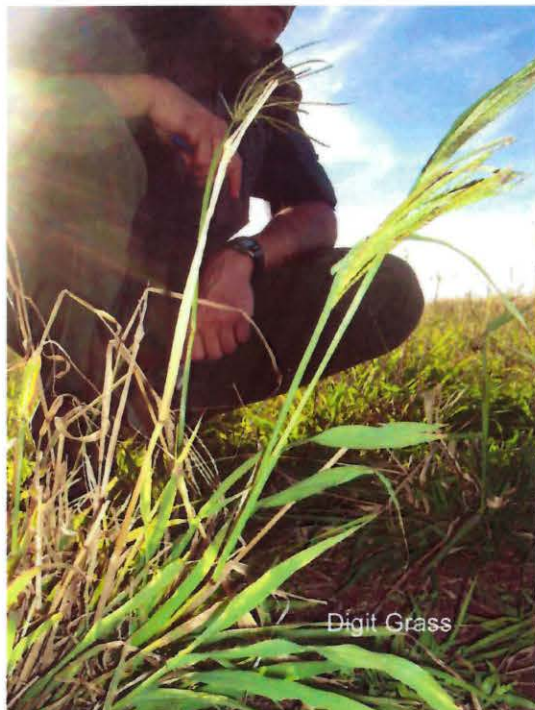
Trevor & Colleen Jorgenson, Belview Brangus, The Magnet, Delungra

My brother, Blair introduced us to his neighbours, Trevor and Colleen Jorgenson. They farm the "Magnet" place managing a herd of 1200; cows, bulls, calves, replacement heifers and steers, all Brangus cattle, on 2700 acres of land plus some leased high country of 1800 acres.

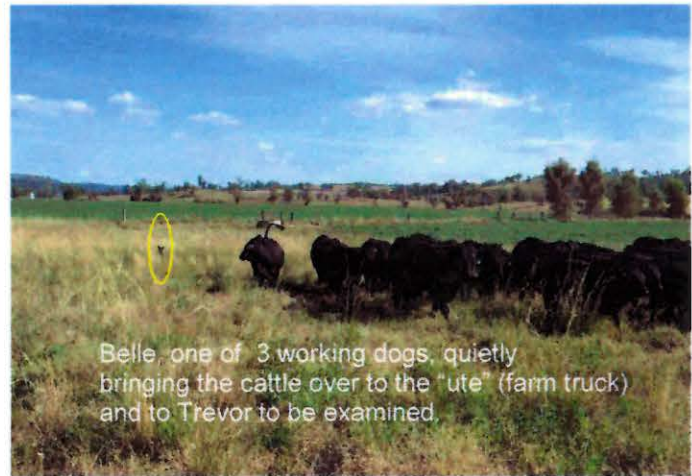
Annual rainfall is about 750 mm (25 in), with summer rains as intense tropical storms. There are 3 types of soil, the best in some small areas (about 300 ac) of Creek Loam, where the Jorgensons grow lucerne (alfalfa) for hay in rotation with winter cereals for grain and grazing. The 3 cuts of high quality hay are fed to growing or pregnant cattle to supplement winter grazing. This area gets frost in the winter, so the warm temperate grasses are not actively growing and are such poor quality (between 3 to 8% protein), they are really only a maintenance diet for dry cows.

As Trevor talked, I found it interesting that he used terms like "autumn weaners" and "spring weaners" reflecting that calving was split 150 in the autumn and 350 in the spring. These weaned calves were fed to a target market weight of 550 kg.

The Jorgensons have improved several pastures with Rhodes grass and Digit grass (pictured below). It was left to self-seed to improve pastures that had been leaned on heavily during the drought. They broadcast superphosphate and clover seed every 2nd or 3rd year.



Digit Grass



Belle, one of 3 working dogs, quietly bringing the cattle over to the "ute" (farm truck) and to Trevor to be examined.

Common themes

Even though the Oxtobys and the Jorgensons were managing quite different sized operations, there were some common themes. Both were very intent on improving the carrying capacity of their fields, and were tuned into the dry matter production of the various grasses. Both were becoming more aware of their costs of production on a per kg of beef basis. Both spread their calving out with about 1/3 calving in the fall.

Their target market weights are different: Oxtobys were aiming for 450 kg, Jorgensons were aiming for 550 kg; but both operations involved a grass based feeding program to reach that target weight. Both marketed directly to the nearest abattoir: Oxtobys to Casino, Jorgensons to Inverell. The Oxtobys are using the cattle ID system to link with carcass ID and track the grading of their meat (rib index, fat %, mottling) back to specific cows and bulls, and even what fields they had been on prior to being sold.

Graziers Down Under

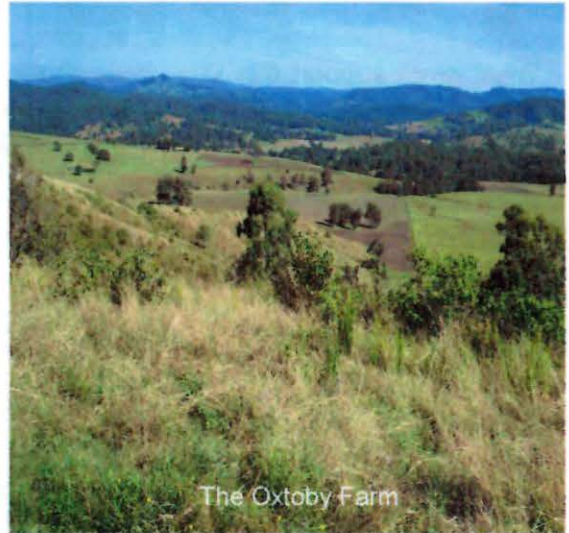
By Sandra Burton

Several forage members said to me, "Bring back lots of pictures and stories from the graziers down under! We are living vicariously through you." So, here are glimpses of 2 farms from New South Wales, Australia.

Dale & Pat Oxtoby, "Ngombe Shamba", Kyogle

"N'gombe Shamba" means cattle farm in Swahili. Nestled in a small valley in the upper part of the picturesque Eden Creek watershed this farm is owned by Dale and Pat Oxtoby, friends from Olds, AB. They have lived in Australia for 29 years, the last 12 at Kyogle in northeastern NSW. They own 500 acres and have 100 acres leased grazing.

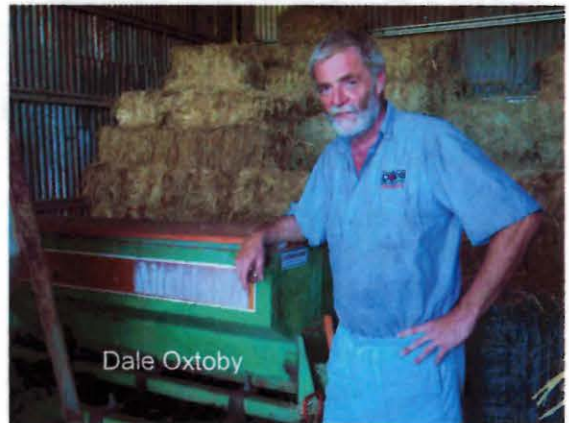
They have 144 breeders— Santa Gertrudis crossed with Hereford, with Black Angus or Charolais terminal sires - as well as 50 calves to wean and sell (half way through calving). Their farm has 3 types of soil. There is a ridge of droughty sandy soil, some lower areas of a red loam soil and larger areas of a black, cracking clay, a soil type that is relatively infertile.



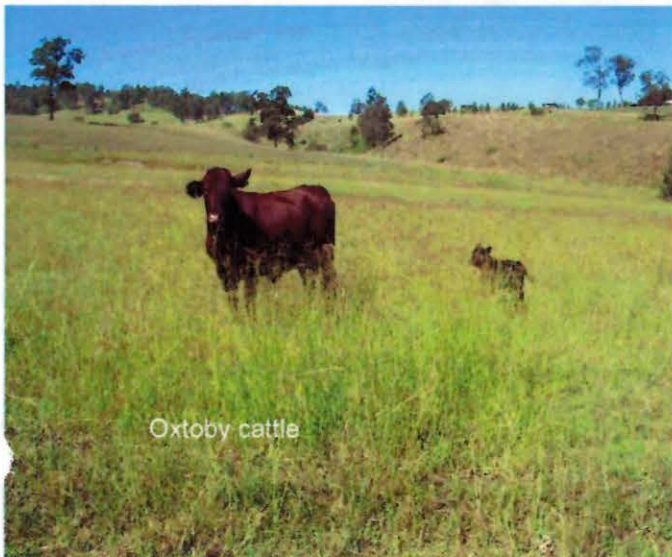
The Oxtoby Farm



Direct seeding at Oxtobys



Dale Oxtoby



Oxtoby cattle

Rainfall is extremely variable, with much of summer rain coming in short, intense storm events, where most of the rain runs off the land. If there were such a thing as average annual rainfall, it would be about 900 mm (35 in). They have had drought here for the last few years. They get frosts in winter months (July– August) that shut down all the native and subtropical grasses.

The day we arrived, Dale was direct seeding annual ryegrass into a droughty soybean field for fall grazing. He was also custom baling for a friend, organizing their cattle muster and getting ready to seed some awnless barley for green feed. With the longer more relaxed seasons here, Dale could still take time for a quick farm tour. They have improved several of their pastures by seeding Rhodes grass, a tropical grass developed in Zimbabwe, which has doubled the land's carrying capacity from 10 to 20 DSE per ha. Carrying capacity is expressed in DSE or Dry Sheep Equivalents; 10 DSE are needed to support one cow and calf. Dale designed a computer program to track each animal's productivity, market weight, carcass ID, and price and to help make management decisions.

FORAGE AUCTION

What great support this year from all those involved with the PRFA of BC Forage Auction fundraiser! Thanks to everyone who participated we cleared over \$4,400.00! As with every event there are some people who were key to our success this year and our heartiest thanks go out to them all: The **Weaver Brothers (Jeff & Greg)** for auctioneering, **Nelda Bennett** for organizing, calling, collecting and donating, the **Kiskatinaw River Ranch (Nimitz Family)** for the donation of their registered stallion, **Jim Forbes** and **Dale Hansen** for taking bids, and last but not least **Bill Wilson**, **Kim Strasky** and **Shelley Kirk** for keeping the finances and sales straight.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS

Ben & Wilma Hansen

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Dale & Sue Hansen

Steve Hartnell & Julie Robinson

Hogberg Ranches

Keddies Tack & Western Wear

Kiskatinaw River Ranch (Nimitz)

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Peace Country Seeds (Mielke)

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Gordon Perry

Pick Seed (Gino)

Ralph Raul

Connie Shortt

Barry & Barbra Sones

Mel & Ethel-Ann Stewart

Rod & Kim Strasky

Sunrise Farms (Clarkes)

Chuck & Pat Sutherlands

Tim Vanderhuval

Waine & Lorraine White

Wildcat Video

Harvey & Phyllis Wiles

Of course, the event would not happen without the fun, enthusiastic crowd that came out. Thanks so much to everyone and we hope you had as much fun as we did! We had a couple of extra things going on to keep things interesting. The table centres were toonie raffled and made over \$200 and the Wildlife Hunting game contributed another \$120 to the fundraising event.

Thanks again to all those who participated and donated. This money goes toward our many projects and demos and enables us to get matched funding (double our money) for forage related projects.