

FORAGE FIRST

Forty-Seventh Edition

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New in 2008

by Sandra Burton



Kari Bondaroff tries out bio-diesel after a workshop. Just one of many interests for this new Ministry of Agriculture and Lands employee.

Kari Bondaroff is donning the BC Ministry of Agriculture "hat" (previously worn by Jim Forbes, and then more recently by Todd Bondaroff). She will be based from the Dawson Creek office; and I am sure Kari will bring her characteristic energy, ideas and sense of humour to her new role.



Brenda Wilson and guest speaker Mark Raymond (BCMAL) discuss forage matters

Once again, the Forage AGM on December 1 was an opportunity to get updated and reconnect with great people. Mark Raymond was the unfortunate messenger of new regulations with regards to meat cutting and farm gate sales. Later in the day the elections were held resulting in the compliment of conscientious directors below for 2008. If you were unable to attend, any one of these people would be pleased to chat with you about it.

2008 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"

Rick Kantz	Deryle Griffith	Bill Wilson	Pat Gerlinsky	Sarah Davies	Chuck Sutherland	John Kendrew
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B.C. Forage Council - John Kendrew				Membership - Sarah Davies		
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Musings From My Quarter

by Deryle Griffith

The Best Insurance Money Can't Buy

The best asset anyone can have is to be surrounded by people who you trust and have your best interests at heart. In this atmosphere of trust and respect differences become assets to the community. The word community is the key, the realization that our neighbors aren't our competitors but the best insurance money can't buy.

Ernesto Sorelli in his book *"Ripples in the Zambezi"* writes about his model of economic development. In his book he explains that no one person has all the skills to start and run a business. We all need other people. We can buy their services or we can find people with different skill sets who share a common vision with us. I believe that a shared vision is the best way because reaching for your vision is way more satisfying than chasing money.

So what are the premiums which must be paid for this insurance? First, is the golden rule. You must give what you hope to receive. By giving, and I mean giving freely, not giving expecting something in return. So be generous with your trust and respect, and allow for differences, they add strength to your community.

Second, search out shared goals and visions so they can be the focus of the community, as opposed to

Editor's Notes: Forage History & Mentorship

Have you noticed a change in the Forage First? Julie, Kim and Sandra, the newsletter trio (it has taken at least 3 of us to partially fill the footprints left by the Nimitz Family Newsletter Team) put our heads together to figure out a way to get more members contributing articles. I think we are starting to succeed. Deryle gets the prize this issue for getting his article in first, well ahead of our deadlines. Congratulations Deryle! What do you readers think? Let us know whose articles you particularly enjoy? What topics would you like to see included in future issues? Who would you like to see writing?

In order to know where we are going, sometimes we need to pause and reflect on where we have come from. Check out the Vintage Page, revisit some Forage Association history, and if it inspires you.... dig up some old files and photos for us. For example, I found an article in the Interior News dated June 30, 1999 called "Grazing Cattle: An Electrifying Experience. It can be literally shocking but it works."

focusing on the differences. What we focus on and think about all day grows in our life, make it something positive.

Third, look for solutions inside the community to help reach your vision. I think you will be amazed at the assets that are available in a community when you look for them. Looking for what's lacking is an easy habit we all have but remember you find what you are looking for. So look for solutions like you really believe they are there.

Fourth, allow your vision to be broad and diversified enough to allow everyone in. As the trust and respect grows allow the community to grow so it never becomes an "us against them" situation. If everybody looks after their neighbor, then nobody is left not being looked after.

Deryle's Reading List

www.stockmagrassfarmer.com/

It was an editorial by Allan Nation about his experience with Hurricane Katrina that inspired this column.

www.sorelli.com/

Ernesto Sorelli explains so clearly how enterprise needs diversity and must come from within the community.

The article went on to say "Horst David of Tomslake near Dawson Creek, BC was in the Bulkley Valley last week showing ranchers and dairy farmers how he gets the most from his animals and land using electrified fencing to manage the cattle." Later in the article... "A farmer has to be patient though," David cautions. "It's like an open wound, at first your land is apt to get worse on this system before it gets better. But if you stick with it, in about 3 to 7 years, depending on what you start with, you'll notice a big difference."

Which reminds me, I am delighted that Horst has agreed to be a Grazing Mentor, so we can now pay him for advice he has been freely giving for years. That means that Peace ranchers have 2 wonderful mentors to choose from and inspire you, with a wealth of experience and ideas between them: Horst David and Sarah Davies. We currently have 2 mentorship's going in the Peace, so 2 ranchers have recognized this opportunity to learn from a great mentor, with every dollar matched 5:1. If you are interested in the Grazing Mentorship Program, call Sandra at 250 789 6885.

Better BS

by Dale Fredrickson



Getting the manure out of the corrals and back onto the fields is still a huge chore but the Peace River Forage Association of BC has made a grand attempt to ease the burden for its members. I had the opportunity to be the first member to demo the Lowlander 75, manufactured by BUNNING and distributed by GLEN MOR Ltd.



Walter Fritsche Sr. prepared the machine for pulling with a sturdy hitch and safety chain. I hooked onto the spreader with my light duty $\frac{3}{4}$ ton 4 X 4, which I soon found out was not enough truck for the hills I encountered from Walter's place to mine. It is heavy!

Once home, I attached it to the JD 4630 (150 hp) 2 wheel drive and found it pulled a lot easier. It takes 2 sets of hydraulics and a 1000 PTO. The model 75 stands for 7.5 tonne and this one has an extension to 10 tonne. The sides are approximately 8 feet high so most loader tractors have enough reach to fill the spreader. Because of the big single tires it has a lot of hitch weight when full. Steering in the rain was made a lot easier with the aid of the wheel brakes.

I can see what the rave is all about with vertical beaters. Using the raw uncomposted manure, it comes out finer than the standard horizontal unit we have been using. The uniformity of distribution is consistent even when I played with PTO speeds. All that seems to change is the spread width. When using composted material it came out extremely fine.

Having rented the Meyers 425(7-8) in the past, I found the Lowlander unit to do a better job with the raw stuff. In the well-composted manure, both types can do the trick. It would depend on your timing, costs, location to machine and availability, whether you should wait for this machine or "get 'er done" with another. With today's tight profit margins, it sure makes sense to rent. It certainly made short order of our piles. I wonder what Grandpa would say after having to load the dung onto a stone boat pulled by a team using voice commands.



Note: Glenn Hogberg, Rick Kantz and Bill Wilson also tried the Lowlander last fall and can be contacted for comments. Glenn Hogberg found his one-ton pulled it okay and that it was similar to towing the Aerway to and from fields.

Rental Rates for Lowlander 75 Manure Spreader:

\$225/day for current members
\$275/day for new members

To rent this manure spreader contact:

Walter Fritsche by telephoning (250) 782-5187 or by emailing pwfritsche@neonet.bc.ca



Soil Biology

by Sarah Davies & Rick Kantz



About a month ago Julie, Sandra, Rick, and Sarah headed to Athabasca for a two day course on Soil Biology, Compost, and Compost Tea and it was very, very interesting! The course was hosted by Soil Foodweb Canada from Vulcan, AB. (www.soilfoodweb.ca)

Soil biology is defined as the 'life in the soil that is a **living bridge** between plant roots and soil'. It is one of the essential pieces of the puzzle when talking about soil health and quality. There are 4 "bugs in your soil" that are responsible for health and fertility; Bacteria, Fungi, Nematodes, Protozoa. In the course we learned what each of these is, what their functions are, and why they are important. In a nutshell:

1. Bacteria

- Decompose organic matter and help with nutrient cycling
- Build soil structure
- Decompose toxins

2. Fungi

- Release, recycle, store, and transport nutrients making them more available
- Enzymatic breakdown of cellulose, lignin, wood, hair, etc.
- Decompose toxins

3. Protozoa

- Eat bacteria and make the nutrients available to the plants

4. Nematodes

- Create soil structure and aerobic conditions by tunneling
- Eat and digest fungi and protozoa
- If no fungi or protozoa available they will eat the plant's roots

We also learned that not all soil is the same and can have different amounts of bacteria and fungi in it. The ratio of bacteria to fungi in your soil will have a direct impact on what plants you will be able to grow. For example, legumes, grasses and annual crops are often associated with 1:1 ratio of fungi to bacteria. Shrub and bush areas in our northern climates with slower decomposition environments are often

associated with greater amounts of fungi than bacteria.

So, what does this really mean? Well, it means that there may be more to it than simply rain and sunshine. One of the easiest ways to increase the biology in your soil or change the levels of bacteria and fungi is to apply compost.

Apparently composting is not just a pile of manure piled and rotting out back of the barn. It really is the 'biological process of micro-organisms converting organic materials into a soil-like material called compost'. So what benefits or draw backs will this process have for us?

Benefits of Composting

1. Soil Conditioning

- Adds organic matter
- Improves soil structure
- Reduces fertilizer requirements



2. Manure Handling

- Reduces the weight (moisture content)
- Stores well without odors or flies
- Reduces volume if no amendments are added

3. Improved Land Application

- Converts the nitrogen into a more stable organic form
- Reduces leaching and ammonia losses when applied to the land
- Lowers high carbon manure/bedding mixtures to more acceptable levels for land application
- Heat generated by composting reduces weed seeds and destroys pathogens

Drawbacks of Composting

1. Time and Money

- Requires extra labour, equipment and management

2. Land

- Storage requirements for raw materials and composted product

3. Weather

- Cold weather slows the process
- Excess rain could limit access to rows

4. Slow Release of Nutrients

- Once composted most nutrients are in a complex organic form and must be mineralized before available to plants

For most of us, just reducing the volume, and increasing the value of the product we pack out to the field, will be enough. But for those who want more, it will be possible.

Compost can be changed to a high fungal or high bacterial content by what products you use in your starting recipe. Compost recipes are made up of three components:

High Nitrogen	Greens	Woody
Pig, chicken, cattle manure	Grass clippings (fresh)	Sawdust, wood chips
Alfalfa	Hay	Straw
Beans	Vegetables	Paper
Peas		Cardboard

The more greens in the starting recipe, the higher the bacterial level will be in the compost that is produced. To get higher fungal compost, you need to start with a higher woody content. Why change the end product? Mainly because Sarah wants to grow grass and Rick wants to have a canola field!

Summary

Now we're sure between the two of us we have completely confused most of you (Deryle not included). But through the next year's trials and demos, we hope you will see this stuff we walk on as living soil and not just dirt.

Benefits of a Biologically Active Soil:

- Improves aerobic conditions
- Helps break up compaction layers
- Improves quality of soil
- Converts inorganic minerals into plant available nutrients in 3 to 5 years

Signs of Poor Soil Biology:

- Manure pats that don't break down
- Poor fertility
- Poor plant growth
- Soil compaction
- Nitrogen deficiency



We think the following quote from a world renowned ecologist says it best:

"When a soil loses fertility, we pour on fertilizers...without considering that its flora and fauna, which built the soil to begin with, may likewise be important to its maintenance."

by Aldo Leopold, 1949



What I Remember

by Keith Carroll

What I Remember* from the Tower Lake
Grazing School on November 3, 2007

Jim Stone: heads up the national grazing mentorship program. He is a retired Voc. Ag. instructor from Olds who's managed to maintain his enthusiasm (maybe if I hadn't got side tracked into mostly administrative stuff...?). He told us that managed pastures in southern Alberta maintained their productivity through the drought much better than unmanaged ones.

Concurrent sessions: Of the 4 options, I chose the Reseeding session, led by Bill Wilson (Mile Zero Farm), and one on Rest, led by Sarah Davies (Rainey Ranch).

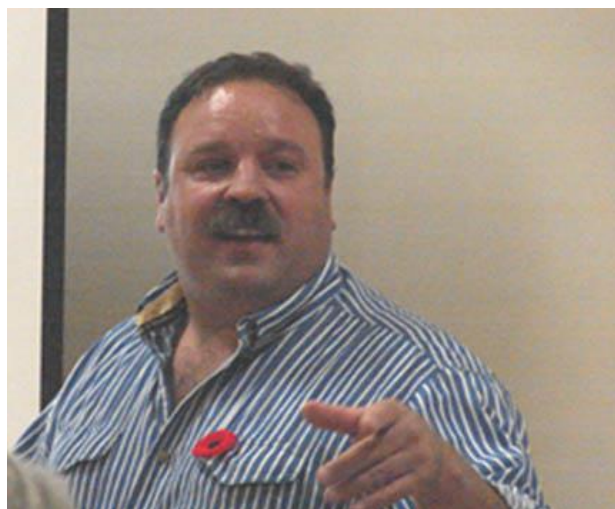
Reseeding Session by Bill Wilson: Bill has concluded, based on his own experience and results of other Forage Association members who have tried it, that direct seeding perennial forages into a perennial forage stand doesn't work. What does work is to direct seed an annual crop into a perennial forage stand, then direct seed the perennial forage mix into the stubble of the annual crop. (Who was the civil servant that decided we needed a new buzzword "direct seed" to replace "no-till"?). There was good discussion about rates and timing of herbicide application to make this work, and the possibility of toxicity of existing alfalfa to new alfalfa seedlings. (I'm still interested in "frost seeding" surface germinators like birdsfoot trefoil or red clover but my results so far have not been consistent enough to recommend it to anybody else.) As Carl Rose observed almost 30 years ago when air seeders were first being tried, you can throw it over your left shoulder and it'll work, if the moisture is right.

Value of Rest for Grass by Sarah Davies: Sarah brought along some sample sods and pictures to show the benefits of rest and bale grazing in rejuvenating "sod-bound" pasture - very impressive!

Which fits right in with these findings from the October 2007 issue of Rangelands magazine: *70 years of Pasture Rejuvenation Research by Duane McCartney (of the Western Forage and Beef Group at Lacombe)*: "...we have shown that depleted pastures in the aspen parkland can be rejuvenated through rest periods with no additional inputs."

Note: What I remember* often varies inversely with its importance.

Bruce Chern runs cows and backgrounders south of Yorkton and is also involved in the management of a very large operation. He grazes alfalfa based pastures, starting before bloom stage. Because of tightly managed rotational grazing and making sure cattle are not hungry when turned into a new paddock (and perhaps also because of a pound of cicer milkvetch per acre when seeding), Bruce doesn't worry about bloat.



Bruce Chern at Grazing School

Bruce had figures to show that good quality hay is generally a better deal than straw (especially when you factor in the cost of protein) so grows alfalfa based hay under agreement with local grain farmers. "Bale processors make poor hay better and good hay poorer." - goal is to have every quarter of owned land fenced for bale grazing. Bruce stands the bales on end and leaves the sisal strings on. Because getting past the twine and the bale surface is the hardest part, cattle clean up one bale before starting a new one. Bruce is surprisingly enthusiastic about forage-based livestock; and he markets to a grass-fed beef operation in the States.

Bruce then led us in a very positive discussion about the grazing club in his area. What Julie proposed at the AGM for local grazing clubs seems a little more formal than the one in Bruce's community, but regardless, I'm looking forward to participating.



**ENVIRONMENTAL
FARM PLAN**

EFP Update

by Judy Madden

Environmental Farm Planning is a voluntary and confidential process that producers can use to identify both environmental strengths and any potential risks on their property. There is no cost to complete an Environmental Farm Plan.

BC Agriculture Council delivers the EFP Program in BC on behalf of the federal and provincial government, and with the assistance of several commodity delivery groups and their planning advisors. Ducks Unlimited Canada has recently renewed their partnership agreement supporting the environmental stewardship practices of BC farmers and ranchers. Since their original participation and to June 30, 2007, Ducks Unlimited has contributed \$312,000.00 towards projects in the province that benefit waterfowl, wildlife and agriculture. During the same time frame \$810,000.00 has been provided by the EFP Program funding to these projects and producer applicants have contributed \$1.3 million.

Many Peace River producers have recognized the value of Environmental Farm Planning, have completed plans and utilized the Beneficial Management funding to help off-set the cost of environmental upgrades identified through the planning process. Many are still in the process of completing their farm plans.

The Agriculture Policy Framework (APF) Agreement, under which the Environmental Farm Planning (EFP) Program is being delivered to the agricultural community in BC, terminates Mar. 31, 2008. In November, federal, provincial and territorial Ministers of Agriculture agreed to continue existing APF programs for up to one year. This will provide for a transition period while Growing Forward programs are developed and implemented. The BCAC is discussing the details of the transition with federal and provincial officials.

At this time, it is important that those producers with approved BMP projects and those applying for new projects understand that all projects will have to be completed and receipts submitted by the March 31, 2008. Producers with outstanding BMPs will be asked to provide the BCAC with a written request by March 15, 2008, asking that their application be kept open for consideration during the extension period. If the project is not completed and a written request is not received, the project will be cancelled and the applicant will have to reapply.

■

If producers have completed BMPs, have submitted project receipts and have yet to receive the program cost-share funding, it is important for them to call the BCAC office to confirm that the receipts reached that office. There is still time to resubmit project receipts for payment. Any cost share funding not claimed could be diverted to other producer projects as we draw closer to the March 31 deadline.

Producers who believe they have a completed plan and who have been waiting to receive approval letters for any BMP project applications, should also contact the BCAC office to ensure their workbook number is registered with the BCAC and their BMP application(s) have reached the office.

EFP Deadlines

(All applications/letters/receipts to the BCAC Abbotsford office – contacts below)

Mar. 31, 2008: Completion of initial EFP workbooks and plans

Feb. 29, 2008: Applications for BMP funding

Mar. 15, 2008: Written request to keep application open

Mar. 31, 2008: Submission of BMP project completion info. and receipts

Some EFP Facts

Completed EFPs (as of Sept 30, 2007)
in BC – 1,994 in Peace – 87

Approved BMP funding to PR producers: nearing \$300,000.00 (to Oct 31, 2007)

Most popular BMPs in the Peace:

- Riparian area protection and restoration (i.e. fencing, corral relocation, off site water developments, grazing management)
- Improved cropping upgrades (i.e. GPS)
- Fuel and Chemical Storage upgrades

EFP Contacts

BCAC Abbotsford Office - Phone 1-866-522-3447

Fax 604-854-4485 & website <http://www.bcac.bc.ca>

Provincial Coordinators

Niels Holbek 1-877-334-6547 (toll free)

Ron Bertrand 604-308-6755

Peace River Advisors

Judy Madden 250-782-7875 or 250-719-8275

Karrilyn Vince 250 – 787-9774 or 250-263-1013



The Lighter Side of Forage

by Shannon McKinnon

A Cautionary Tale Concerning a Goat Named Cessna

When you have a good forage crop the first thing that comes to every astute farmer's mind is pretty obvious. Goats. After all, when you have extra feed to go around why not add some interesting animals to the mix, right? Wrong. Pour yourself a cup of coffee, sit down by the fire and listen closely my fine, forage friend and I will weave you a cautionary tale.

Once upon a time in the rolling hills of Bessborough there was a beautiful young princess who decided to buy a goat. Except the princess wasn't that beautiful nor was she young and she wasn't really a princess neither. She was me. Okay this isn't exactly a fairy tale. But it is a case of love at first sight. Here's how it happened.

A rangy doe with soft, curious eyes stared back at me through the soft gray planks of the barn stall. "Oh! What do you call her?" I asked, delighted. "Trouble, I'm guessing," muttered Darcy, who had been hauled away from his woodwork to go goat shopping against his will. I glared at him and he closed his mouth firmly, but he didn't look particularly sorry.

"We call her Cessna," said the goat's owner, a white-haired lady in a blue house dress with green gum boots leaving off at the knees. "Because she sails over fences just like an air plane?" Asked my husband. The lady looked up at Darcy. "Have you owned goats before?" she asked softly. "No," admitted Darcy. "But our neighbours did." "Oh," the lady said, looking at him thoughtfully before adding, "Not the same thing I'm afraid. Not the same thing at all." "So why Cessna?" I interrupted, anxious to change the subject. "On account of her ears, dear. See? They stand straight out on either side, like the wings on an air plane. That's what happens when you cross an Alpine with a Nubian." "Makes her more aerodynamic, I would imagine," Darcy mused out loud, before turning to me and asking hopefully, "Sweetheart, do you really think we want an aerodynamic goat?" "Yes darling," I told him. "We really do." "That's what I figured," Darcy sighed.

"See?" I explained excitedly, upon our arrival home. "Cessna can go right in with the sheep. The page wire is well over four feet high. If it can hold sheep, it can certainly hold a goat." Darcy just shrugged and said,

"Well, I better get back to work." And off he went in the direction of the shop.

I confidently set about settling Cessna into her new living quarters and then headed up to the house to make supper. I had just opened the front door, and was pausing to pull off my boots, when a loud bleat sounded behind me. "Bleat," Cessna repeated, telling me in no uncertain terms that she did not appreciate being left behind. While I stood there gaping, Cessna breezed on by me through the open door into the house, cheerfully tripping across the linoleum of the kitchen floor, an extremely pleased expression on her face. "Now this is more like it!" She bleated in perfect Goatese over her shoulder.

She trotted through the kitchen to the living room where she encountered Darcy, who wasn't in the shop at all, but instead, settling down on the couch to watch the hockey game. Darcy took one look at the goat, and let out a garbled noise that came remarkably close to sounding like an expletive in Goatese. "Bleat," replied Cessna, who was clearly not a prude, and hopped into the chair beside him.

Things still might not have been so bad. Cessna might have merely settled down and traded comments on the sad lack of refereeing, except for one sorry fact. The chair she chose was a rocker. For a few impressive seconds she pitched back and forth in a precarious act of balance. It couldn't last. With every rock the chair became less of a seat and more of a slingshot, until finally the back of the chair hit the floor and righted itself with a force of motion that sent Cessna, her aerodynamic ears flapping helpfully, soaring through the air before coming in for a solid landing in the snack bowl on Darcy's lap.

With a roar of pain and dismay, Darcy rose wildly to his feet sending goat, chips and remote control flying in all directions. Cessna could plainly see the time to talk hockey was over. Her thought was now singular. She wanted out. Considering all three of our minds were in complete agreement on this particular point, it took an unseemly amount of time to achieve it. To Darcy's credit, when the dust finally settled he never said, "I told you so."

I just can't help loving that old goat of mine and I am still pretty fond of Cessna too. I have also developed a deep affection for solid, six foot fences.