

FORAGE FIRST

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Tale of Two Tours



David Zirnhelt, Grasslands President (left) and PRFA of BC President, Rick Kantz discuss the day.



Nelda Bennett(right), Rae Haddow (middle) and Sara Bennett, Nelda's granddaughter enjoying our annual tour.

Teaming up and hosting visitors in our region was our theme for this season! We kicked it off by welcoming members of the Grasslands Conservation Council from all over BC to our annual tour in June. Our compost tea project attracted Arnold Mattson and Shannon Hall from Edmonton in July and Dr. Shannon Berch from Victoria in September. BCMAL people were also busy hosts: with wildlife damage workshops led by Mike Malmberg from Cranbrook in May and more recently a Gate to Plate event at Bondaroffs' farm with folks from Vanderhoof and Prince George attending.

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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"

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Musings From My Quarter

by Deryle Griffith

Learning From Nature

There is one book in my library that I try to read several times a year. It's one of those indicators in my life, the more often I read it the better my life seems to be. The book is called "The One Straw Revolution" written by Masanobu Fukuoka. It tells of his epiphany as a young biologist in Japan that led him back to his father's farm in the time leading up to World War II.

He learned the difference between neglecting the land and following nature's direction. While learning this difference he managed to devastate his father's orchard but eventually he came up with what he called the "no-work" farming method. The term no-work is a little misleading; maybe "no unnecessary or harmful work" would be better. His first question is what don't I need to do, and after 70 years of this system his production is as good or better than any in Japan with no fertilizer, cultivation or pesticides.

His methods are so far removed from any modern agricultural system it would be hard to find any social support except on the smallest scale. This is one of a few books I like to read regularly to help me understand that nature is the last word on our existence, not technology. As we move farther and farther away from nature as the teacher and closer to more and more powerful technical fixes I don't see

our lives getting better. Busier maybe, but not better.

As technology tries to fix the problems of the last technical fix the problems just grow. The problem isn't technology, it's our thinking. We are what we think about. We think about all the troubles of the human race. We believe if we can fix the next problem all will be well. Guess what? We just find a new set of problems. So, life becomes a problem to be overcome instead of a miracle to be experienced.

Nature provides a way off the chaotic merry-go-round of our modern world. For example compare the latest grazing techniques to a herd of bison. Great herds of bison (high stock density) roamed across the plains (rotational grazing) pushed on by predators (herding dogs and genetic improvement by culling). Grazing all year (stock piled pasture and grass finished meat) they left rich lush pastures in the driest parts of North America. Maybe our new pasture management isn't so new.

These books I read are important for me. They show me that there are people who are in touch with nature and I have hope. I can escape the egocentric view of the world for a brief time, changing my thoughts, and therefore who I am. A friend of mine said an interesting thing, "We aren't human doings, we're human beings".

Sage Advice

With this dry weather I was in dire need for some good advice. To my good fortune I was able to catch a ride, in early August, with Sandy and Vicky out to Ernie Nimitz's ranch in Sunrise Valley. Ernie knows dry. He grew up and went to university where his parents had a ranch in Texas. Then with the Bureau of Land Management he went to Arizona and then sliding up the dry side of the mountains to Coronation Alberta as District Agrolgist.

After buying his ranch in the Peace Ernie has a clear understanding of the importance of grass, water and trees in the health of the land. Ernie's son Michael took us along when he went to move the herd to a fresh pasture in their rotational pasture management system. It's interesting to watch these generational transitions as the ranch is seen through a different set of eyes. The rotational grazing is keeping the cattle on pasture longer than most and ample water to drink due to planning of dugout location and size.

Planning for the bad years with a more conservative approach seems less stressful than a maximum optimization of all resources with its crash on the bad years. Of course the good years sure sound good in the coffee shop. I asked Ernie how to deal with the dry weather. He put it in simple enough terms that even I got it. The land can't feed as many cattle. You can buy feed or de-stock, but you can't get as many pounds of beef as you did. He told of ranchers who went too long on dry pastures, with no plants left when the rains did come, the soil left, with the runoff leaving the land barren, taking decades to repair.

After having a fabulous lunch that Ernie's wonderful wife, Joanne, made (a delicious pork roast with all the fixings and pecan pie, it was soooo good) he left us with some words of hope. He told us something a lady in the ranching world said. "Whenever one door closes, another one opens". So this might be a time to look at what works and what doesn't? What are you doing that you don't need to do? Nothing like a little strain to show us the glitches in an otherwise perfect system.

Many Faces of Forage

by Vicki Moser



Last spring **Doug Summer** let his name stand for the vacant **BC Forage Council vice president** position. The newly elected VP was kind enough to take a break from his busy farming schedule, and give a few comments on what the BC Forage Council has been up to.

When Doug started his vice presidency, the Council was partly focused on the Wildlife Damage Compensation Program. The Council was and is working to get the forage industry involved and considered in the development of the program. At present the Council is also working on acquiring more funding, part of which involves working with the BC Cattleman's Association.

As for the proposal the Council has in to the Northeast Development Fund, Doug had nothing to report yet. "It is a work in progress", says Summer. The proposal is regarding winter feeding and forage demos that the Council would like to start throughout the province. They will be working with Brent Barclay and Julie Robinson of the BCMAL on it, and are hopeful some good news will be coming soon.

The BC Forage Council still has lots to do. Doug believes they need to become a truly provincial body, with representatives from all regions of the province. They should work with local associations and the government at a provincial level, in order to be more effective. "We all have our own wish list, and we have to mesh them all together into something workable for everybody."

Rick Kantz, the president of the Peace River Forage Association, seems to be frequently switching hats these days. Currently, Rick is working on or with a number of different committees and boards. One of these organizations is the **Northeast Energy and Mines Advisory Committee (NEEMAC)**, where Rick sits on the board representing the forage industry in the Peace. The committee is engaged in exploring and understanding issues related to petroleum development in Northeastern BC. Rick believes it is important to have someone there representing us, so that the government knows how the oil industry is affecting the forage industry. Since forage farmers only own the top six inches of soil, it is important to see that their rights as surface owners are protected. Rick's commitment to the committee involves attending meetings about 8 times a year. Most of the NEEMAC meetings are held in Fort St John.

Another of the hats Mr. Kantz is modeling this season is that of the Forage Association in conjunction with the BCGPA, the Cattleman's Association, and the Custodians of the Peace under the title of the **"Landowners Group"**. Members from these four associations are working together to develop a new standard lease for negotiating with oil companies, which is based off of the Custodians' revised draft of the previous standard lease. The lease is designed to lay out ground rules for site access, topsoil preservation, fencing, road lease agreements, and more. They hope to also start work on a standard pipelining lease. In a few weeks, Rick, Gwen Johansen of the Custodians of the Peace, and Larry Houley of the Regional District will be in Vancouver meeting with oil industry and government reps to go over changes the landowners would like to see happen. "It has been a slow process", says Kantz, referring to the fact that this process has been going on for a number of years.

The last of Rick's hats to mention are the **Peace River Enfranchisement Pilot (PREP)**, and the **Provincial Agriculture Zone Wildlife Policy (PAZWP)**. PAZWP is a provincial organization that is developing new wildlife policies dealing with wildlife in agricultural zones. PREP and PAZWP will probably soon be linked very closely. Rick represents the PRFA and the BCGPA at the PAZWP meetings, which are held four to six times a year in Kamloops. PREP is "one tool in the tool chest" according to Rick. It gives hunting options to producers for dealing with problems with wildlife. In Rick's opinion, parts of the program will make a difference, but the initial system is not cost effective. It is a good way to make introductions between hunters and landowners, but it needs to be fine-tuned. Rick also sat on a council talking with the Ministry of Environment about regulation changes for elk and deer in agriculture zones. "Hunting is one way, but it is not enough to fix wildlife problems. There are not enough hunters for it to solve the problem."

Representing the forage industry where its voice needs to be heard, and working towards positive changes for the industry are the major themes of Rick's hats. So it seems, no matter which hat he is wearing, our Peace River Forage Association president always has forage's best interest at heart. Or, you might say; on his brain.

Forage Tour 2008

by Chris Thomson

This was my first experience in attending the Forage Tour. I had no idea what to expect when Julie and Sandra asked me to help coordinate the food and refreshments.

It was really no surprise to discover that when people of like interests and occupation are put together in one place, they usually have no problem finding things to talk about, even if they have never met before. The bus was constantly filled with the rumble of conversation and exchange of ideas. Julie did a good job of keeping the Tour on track and giving an explanation and some background information on where the next stop would take us.

I found the compost demos at Rick Kantz's very interesting. It would be great if a practical and useful solution could be found to dispose of feedlot waste. I had never seen a compost turner before and the compost spreader is certainly much more 'high tech' than the one my dad had years ago. It is quite remarkable to me how excited someone like Sandy can get about "dirt" or as she keeps trying to train me to say "soil". I must confess that other than knowing that my flowers and vegetables grow in it, I have never stopped to analyze its composition. I was also amazed that Sandy was so involved in her description of the soil pits that she didn't even notice that everyone was being eaten alive by mosquitoes. She does have a passion for dirt, sorry, I mean soil!

I enjoyed the ride and especially the scenic view overlooking the Peace River. I did manage to get wet and muddy along with everyone else, when we stopped at the well site. It would have been a good time to stay on the bus! Arnold Bennett's solar watering system is a great idea. If each of us could incorporate one such energy saving device into our lives, I am sure the overall effect on our environment would be substantial.

My job as 'event coordinator' was made much easier through the help of others. A big thank-you goes out to Nelda and Arnold Bennett for allowing us to have supper in their beautiful yard. The Beatton Community 4-H Club was responsible for the delicious salads and desserts. Thank you to them for that. I would like to personally thank our summer students, Vicki Moser, Kim Schlaepfer, Selina McGuinnis, and Cynthia Lu for their help with organizing lunch and coffee breaks.

I would also like to thank our sponsors: Douglas Lake Equipment for providing great steaks, PRAD, Ducks Unlimited, Grassland Conservation Council, Ministry of Forest and Range, Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. Also, we appreciate the efforts of our great bus driver Penny, from Cardinal Coaches, who was not afraid to do a little "off-roading".

by Darrell Peterson

The tour was well organized, as usual, with plenty of food, beverages, lots of socializing, and an interesting program.

After getting on the bus at the Baldonnel School, we proceeded to the livestock and feedlot headquarters of Bickford Farms. Rick Kantz explained what they were doing with the composting program. While it was an interesting concept, it seemed to me that it might be quite costly and labour intensive with today's beef industry, economics, and no guaranteed market for the product that is supposed to be forthcoming. I would be afraid that the technical aspects of the procedures would "snow" most producers, even if a tried and proven system were known. It was, however, interesting to see; and from there, we saw an interesting field of Canola direct seeded into a fescue sod field in which Roundup had been applied.

After a good lunch in the Bickford Farms shop, we traveled to the north banks of the Peace River valley a few miles east of Taylor. What a vista to enjoy, while listening to speakers telling us of the vegetation present. From there, we traveled to view some hay fields that have been rejuvenated using by products from the Fibreco plant in Taylor. A representative from Fibreco explained the procedures and welcomed inquiries from producers. There appeared to be definite production advantages and is something that I think could really be utilized quite readily in the area, once proven spreading procedures are worked out. The Bennett's spoke very favourably about the project.

I was so busy visiting that I don't remember the exact order of the day, but we also visited alfalfa fields owned by the Clarkes. Soil profile pits were available, showing the various soil profiles as related to the ground cover and topography of several different fields. This was very interesting and provided me with new information that I don't remember knowing or learning over the past 40 years of my agricultural career.

During a rain shower, we viewed grass seed fields and a gas well installation on lands of Ed and Lori Hadland. A lot of "mud" was packed onto the bus after that stop.

Supper was served in the beautiful yard of Arnold and Nelda Bennett. As usual, Alex, Mike, and the crew of Douglas Lake Equipment served the "best ever" steaks and baked potatoes, with all the trimmings and beverages provided by the members of the local Beatton Community 4-H Club.

Again it was a good day and could only make one look forward to another "day off" on next year's tour, wherever it might take us.

Fond Farewells

Farewell to Ernie Fuhr

by Chris Thomson

Ernie Fuhr was one of the early directors of the Forage Association and a strong supporter of the auctions and summer tours over the last 15 years. Ernie passed away this summer May 27, shortly after determinedly attending our Van Han Auction.

From an early age Ernie was a passionate third generation bee keeper. When he was 12 years old he started a few hives, and at 18 yr was the president of the first 4H Bee Club in Canada. He worked for Park Apiaries in Dawson Creek and California in the late 50's and started North Peace Apiaries in 1960 with 300 hives.

Shortly after this, Ernie met and married Rose. He supplemented their income in the early years by hauling explosives for the construction of the W.A.C. Bennett Dam. The Fuhrs had 3 children, Gary, Lynn and Wayne. Their family and bee operation continued to grow strong in the 60's.

Ernie was an active member of many associations including: Peace River Beekeepers Association, FSJ Chamber of Commerce, BC Honey Producers and the Peace River Forage Association. Ernie saw strengths in people that others could not see. He is remembered as a leader, a teacher and always there to help others throughout the years.

Remembering Mark

by Sandra Burton

The Nimitz family experienced a devastating tragedy on Saturday August 23rd, the sudden death of their eldest son. The accident occurred on the ranch late in the evening.

There are no right words to use at a time like this, and I don't know if I am the right person to write this, but I feel we must pause a moment and reflect on a short life that touched so many of our lives. All members of the Forage Association were touched by Mark, even if they were unaware of it. For many years, Ernie and Joanne compiled, published and distributed the Forage First newsletter, and their boys, Mark and Michael helped with photocopying, stuffing envelopes, and assorted other forage communication jobs. Many of us enjoyed trail rides on horse back during Friendly Forage Field Days led by Mark and Michael.

It is hard to make sense of a young life, full of so much promise, cut short. When I think of Mark, I remember his huge smile, the twinkle in his eyes, and his wonderful sense of humour. Over the years our kids enjoyed the rambunctious antics of the Nimitz boys at family dinners and visits. We have watched them grow into unique and special young men with a growing commitment to the land and ranching in the Peace.

We had a laughter filled time with Mark, while traveling during our family sabbatical in Australia in 2006. We so enjoyed Mark that week. I kept expecting him to get restless and want to do and see more, or want to be with young free wheeling adults his own age, but he just seemed to melt into the deck with the incredible views with the rest of us. We so appreciated his versatility: from quietly reading and being supportive (with his wonderful sense of humour

of course) while Ted and Hanna did their school work.... To rambunctiously frolicking with them and being a kid again in the surf, instigating games of "touch surf rugby" and "keep away".... To storytelling with much laughter in the evenings about growing up with the best of both worlds: the opportunities of living in the city with rugby trips to places like NZ and the summers working on the ranch with playing and swimming in the Kiskatinaw River with the horses.... To serious discussions with Rick and I about whether to study agriculture or business, and which was the best to take back to the ranch. Mark was out seeing the world and having all these adventures, but he had already sorted out what was important, had both feet on the ground and knew where he was going.

In memory of Mark, contributions can be made to the Kiskatinaw Ecological Society, which will be pooled and administered by the Peace River Forage Association of British Columbia. More importantly, Ernie would welcome other kinds of contributions: ideas and discussions with you about how to best create a living legacy of Mark. The overall objective of the society will be to enhance and preserve the integrity of the Kiskatinaw River watershed. It will include an educational component, and involve youth and community of all ages. In Ernie's words "Mark loved the land, animals, outdoors, hi tech and helping people. We want to create something along these lines to honor his life."

Your thoughts and prayers are appreciated by Ernie, Joanne and Michael. They can be reached by mail at Kiskatinaw River Ranch, Box 908, Dawson Creek, B.C., V1G 4H9, by phone at (250) 843 2300 or by email at nimitz@pris.ca

Bio-control Insect Options

By Kerry Clark, Crop Protection Specialist, BCMAL

Bio-control insects improve the options for integrated management of scentless chamomile in the BC Peace. Scentless chamomile is a weed that became established in the BC Peace about 20 years ago. It is not a strong competitor, but when it has full sun, low competition and good soil, it can produce a large plant with hundreds of thousands of seeds that can last for 15 years or more and produce new plants whenever soil is disturbed. See the fact sheet on scentless chamomile at:

[http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex871](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex871)

In 1997/98 and again in 2002, 3 species of insects from Europe were released in some of the worst-infested fields in the BC Peace. The species were selected to attack ONLY scentless chamomile (they will starve to death without it) and brought into Canada. Two of the insect species have survived and spread in the BC Peace in the Cecil Lake area, and may now be having a suppressing effect on the weed.

<http://www.mcclay-ecoscience.com/agents.htm>

If the insects are present on your property, understanding their requirements can help you assist them to control your scentless chamomile. There are 2 main insects that are important for this discussion:

1. Seed eating weevils
2. Gall midges

1. Seed eating weevils: these spend the winter in the soil or ground litter, and in spring they become active, find scentless chamomile plants, feed on the opening buds (*upper right hand photo shows 3 of the weevils in a developing flower*) and lay eggs in the developing flower heads. The eggs hatch and the larvae eat some of the developing seeds, then develop into adult weevils that emerge in late summer to overwinter. If you have only a few scentless chamomile plants but want to maintain the weevils, one way to help the weevils may be to pull the plants in late summer before seeds are shed, place the plants (or at least the flower heads) into a box with holes that will allow the weevils to emerge. The seeds heads can even be teased apart to allow the weevils to exit. In late fall after the weevils have left, the remaining seeds can be destroyed (burned) before they have a chance to get to the soil.



2. Gall midges: are little flies that look a bit like mosquitoes. The immature form overwinters in the plants. In spring they emerge and lay eggs in scentless chamomile growing points (buds). Larvae feed in the plant and cause galls: a disorganized mass of leaves instead of a healthy stem, and often much fewer flowers (*see photo below*)

The midges have up to 3 generations a year, and can infest plants over 1 km away. Where many plants have obvious galls from the midges, such infested plants could be transplanted to new areas infested by scentless chamomile. If you would like to do this, contact the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands so a record of transplants can be maintained.



Gate to Plate Event

By Kari Bondaroff, A.Ag, Mountainview Acres,



As a new sheep producer in the Farmington area, I have discovered that finding marketing options for lamb slaughter and sales has been difficult due to federal regulations and slaughter facilities limitations. However, the Peace River region is very fortunate to have a convenient, low impact, low stress option in the area, "Gate to Plate Services Ltd.". This high-technology mobile slaughter unit provides humane, custom, on-site slaughter services to producers and processors. Stress and physical trauma suffered by animal transport is removed, thus improving the quality of meat and extending the shelf life of the final product. The design of the mobile slaughter unit allows for products to be certified as organic, halal, kosher, biodynamic, and humane. This service also lowers costs in production due to transportation costs, and may help lower the costs of specialty products, making the producers production more economically viable.

Out of curiosity, I contacted Lars Jorgensen, of Gate to Plate services to inquire about how to get the mobile unit to come to my farm. As a result, I discovered that I would need to have full days worth of animals to process, which was approximately 40 lambs. Because I do not produce this number of animals as of yet, I decided to ask other producers if they were interested in trying this new service and bringing their stock to my farm for slaughter. Finally, I decided to host a lamb slaughter demonstration and tie it into our farms second annual lamb roast.



Awareness of the mobile slaughter facility is present in the Peace River region, but smaller producers have been skeptical to utilize the facility due to the lack of knowledge on how the process would work for their farm. There is also a concern with smaller producers that they do not have the number of animals that the Gate to Plate requires. Three objectives for the demonstration were to show local producers that there are alternative options available for marketing government inspected meat through the mobile slaughtering facility and to increase awareness about the Gate to Plate Services. Also, a demonstration of desired carcass quality and generating discussions around finishing options surrounding lamb. And thirdly, to taste lamb prepared in a few different ways.



Gate to Plate Event con't

To answer the first set of questions surrounding the Gate to Plate services:

1. How do I get the services on my farm?

Contact Lars Jorgensen of Gate to Plate services to receive the appropriate paper work which includes Farm name, address, how you are going to dispose of the solid waste matter (a hole dug at least 200 m from water ways is ideal), and a hand drawn map of your farm and where the slaughtering will take place and the size of the pens. The office number in Fort St. John is (250)785-7738.

2. What do I need to do to prepare? What kind of handling facilities do I need?

To prepare you will need enough animals to make a full day for the Gate to Plate Services, approximately 40 animals. You will need a pen that is large enough to handle 40 animals but can be broken down into smaller pens. The idea is the 3 lambs will be processed at the same time. The smaller the pens the better, as the lambs tend to get excited and as we learned, will clear a 6 foot page wire fence if given a run and a couple of hops allowance. The best system would be holding pens that hold 10 animals at a time tightly, yet comfortably and then allow the animals to be funneled into a squeeze situation. The lambs should not be able to climb out and the fences should be strong enough to handle a bit of animal impact. I would also suggest that for your first time, you have extra hands and help to ensure you can handle the unexpected. (Yes, it all happened to us). You also need a tractor bucket or some sort of plastic container to transport the solid waste materials to your designated dumping area. The tractor bucket worked really well for us, but if you do not have a tractor, other forms of transport could be used as well. The hole that the Federal inspector requires must have at least 3 feet of soil to cover the waste once it is in the ground. We dug a 6 foot hole with the tractor and this was more than enough to handle 30 lambs. Prior to your slaughter date, Lars Jorgensen and the Federal Inspector in your area will come out to your farm to do an inspection and to sign off on the paper work. This is quick and painless and may also give you time to spruce up your facilities if need be.

3. What do my animals need to weigh?

Ideally, the animals should weight between 110-120 pounds on the hoof to ensure a carcass weight of at least 50 pounds. This ensures that you, the producer, and Gate to Plate generate ample profits. This also makes up for the smaller animals that you may have due to lambing timing and multiples that do not tend to grow quite as quickly as singles or earlier lambs.

From a producer's point of view, this event was a success. There were some stresses throughout the day with a quick modification of the handling facilities, and a chase of escaping lambs, but all in all, it was a success. If I were asked if I would do this again my answer would be, "Yes, with some corral modifications of course!"

Another highlight from the event was: getting smaller producers together to communicate about what others are doing. There are many small sheep producers in the Peace River area that would be interested in participating in a group slaughter day when there are enough animals to be slaughtered. Should anyone have any lambs that they have for any upcoming months, please contact Kari Bondaroff, with the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, and I would be glad to start a list to get producers together to experience the ease of on farm processing.



A special thank you to the following contributors, without their help the event would not have been possible:
Peace River Agriculture Development Funds, Mountainview Acres, Tim Hartnell,
United Spring and Brake, Rachele Bunnett, Sharon Yeadon, Pat Twomey, Margi Meekes,
Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, Brent Kinnear, South Peace Hutterian Brethren,
Vicki Studley, Anne Bondaroff, Howard Bondaroff, and Todd Bondaroff.

Grasslands Conservation Tour

Grasslands of the North Workshop: Threats and Challenges to Grasslands in the Peace

by Catrina Crowe

The Grasslands Conservation Council of BC (GCC) enjoyed meeting and learning alongside the Peace River Forage Association (PRFA) during the GCC's 2008 workshop in the Peace region June 6th to 8th. Over 50 participants came from around the province to discover and share ideas about the special characteristics of northern grasslands.



Richard Kabzems &
Sonia Leverkus

Many people associate grasslands with the south Okanagan or the Cariboo Chilcotin, but the Peace, too, has some amazing pockets of grasslands. While most native grasslands have long been converted into agricultural crops or developed, the remaining pockets are treasures and extremely important to wildlife, cattle and horses.

At the Friday night banquet in Dawson Creek, GCC chair David Zirnhelt introduced participants to the work the non-profit GCC does throughout the province. The GCC works with a variety of stakeholders, striving to balance ecological, agricultural, environmental and social concerns with conservation and stewardship of BC's most endangered ecosystems. Grasslands cover less than 1% of BC but are crucial to more than 30% of our species at risk and are a vital component to the province's ranching industry.



Ross Peck describes Site C effects

The field tour began Saturday near Taylor, where the participants learnt about the geology and human history of the grasslands, heard about oil and gas impacts in the area and had a chance to view the Peace Valley at the proposed Site C reservoir area, while discussing the projected impacts of a dam. During the tour, a variety of speakers described the connections ungulates, sharp tailed grouse, invasive plants and wetlands have to grasslands. Later in the day, the GCC tour joined up with the annual tour of the PRFA. The combined tours wrapped up the day on beautiful, south facing grassland slopes, discussing producer issues and range management. From there, participants enjoyed a BBQ generously hosted by the PRFA at Arnold and Nelda Bennett's farm.



View from Bennett pasture of the Peace River Valley.

On Sunday, the GCC tour convened again to view remnant native grasslands near Rolla. The day ended with a visit to the ecological reserve near Clayhurst, which has a number of rare grassland species, including prickly pear cactus, on steep south facing slopes.

A great number of people and organizations, including the PRFA, were involved in making the 2008 GCC workshop a resounding success on many levels. The GCC looks forward to continuing its work in the Peace. For more information, please visit our website at www.bcgrasslands.org or contact Catrina Crowe, Communications and Education Coordinator, Grasslands Conservation Council of BC at 250-374-5758.



Western Canadian Grazing Conference & Trade Show

Grass to Cash: Building a Plan That Works

December 3-5, 2008 at Mayfield Inn & Suites, Edmonton

Keynote Speakers:

Rob Leslie: A rancher from SW Saskatchewan, currently working for Canfax, will be addressing cattle market information and outlook during his keynote address.

Dr. Roger Gates: an Extension Range Specialist from West River Ag Center in South Dakota, will be discussing "Strategic & Scenario Planning in Ranching: Managing Risk in Dynamic Times" in a 2 part series.

Sheldon Atwood: a Range Ecologist will present topics from BEHAVE (Behavioral Education for Human, Animal, Vegetation & Ecosystem Management) Network such as "Understanding & Profiting From Grazing Animal Behavior" in a 2 part series.

Plus:

- * Leading Edge Producers who will present on a variety of topics of interest
- * Could you or someone you know be the 2008 Western Canadian Grazing Conference Innovator of the Year? Check the ARECA website for more details.

Brought to you by: ARECA 

**For information contact Joy Vonk at the Agricultural
Research and Extension Council of Alberta (ARECA)**

Ph. (780) 416-6046; Fax (780) 416-8915;

email: vonk@areca.ab.ca

Early Bird Registration Deadline: October 31, 2008



The Lighter Side of Forage

by Shannon McKinnon

Country Campers

When you live in the country, going camping almost seems redundant. What can a campground possibly offer that a country backyard lacks? We've already got the forest, the hiking trails and the fire pit. Better yet, we have plumbing, electricity and enough room inside our warm house to swing a cat. Not that we ever would, mind you, but we could.

For years, when it came to vacation time, my family voted for a complete change of scenery. We headed for the city and slept in a hotel. The city usually being Edmonton and the favourite destination The West Edmonton Mall. It was our way of getting away from it all. Away from the animals, the garden and the haying. Away from the outdoors and all of its chores. We sought out restaurants and antique shops. We went to hockey games and dinner theatres. We marveled at the endless stream of traffic outside our hotel room window; at how the city truly never sleeps at night. Going to the city was an opportunity to wear nylons and put on lipstick just to go down for breakfast. Well, for me, not so much for my husband and sons.

Sitting around our fire pit one evening, I started thinking about camping versus the country life, and I couldn't help but notice a few things I had previously overlooked. "We don't have a lake." I blurted out. "Or loons. We don't have a single loon calling to us at night."

My family eyed me warily, before our oldest son observed, "Well, I don't know about that. I just heard something that sounded pretty loony."

"Just a hayfield." I went on, ignoring him. "You know what the difference is between a hayfield and a lake?" "A foot of rain in half an hour?" Suggested my husband.

"Work and relaxation. Who can relax looking at that hayfield waiting to be cut and baled and stacked? You know what's just like living in the country but relaxing? Camping."

And while I'm asking questions, here's a fun little camping quiz: What do plates, can openers and matches all have in common? Answer: They are all items I forgot to pack into the trailer when we left to go camping.

I finally figured out why you see people camped out in Wal-Mart parking lots. Where better to test out the RV for the first camp out of the season than in the parking lot of a giant department store? These clever campers get to skip the whole unfortunate scenario of blame-the-mom for the forgotten plates or fault-the-father for the lack of an axe. When these pavement campers discover they have forgot to pack the sunscreen or left behind the marshmallows, they can simply sprint across the parking lot and cheerfully return with their purchase two minutes later. And I used to think they were crazy. They're crazy all right. Crazy like a fox.

Wal-Mart campers never have to spend three excitement filled hours watching Dad bang together two rocks in an attempt to ignite a campfire. No watching Mom use a bread knife to saw open a can of beans for supper, the whole time informing my whining family that their perception of events is flagrantly mistaken. They would not have more fun going to the dentist. In fact, the truth is that they have never had so much fun in their lives. I said never.

Now listen to the loons. Which we do. And they sound very nice. We also listen to the muted voices of two fisherman anchored in a cove on the other side the lake. The sigh of the summer breeze through the nearby stand of spruce. The slap of waves against the shoreline. The sudden roar of a . . . Grizzly? Enraged Sasquatch? Floater plane? Nope. That would be the neighbour's generator.

These apparently outdoor-phobic neighbours fire up their brand-new-in-1972 generator at seven o'clock in the morning and keep it humming at a fine tuned thunder until well into the night. My youngest son accurately points out that the West Edmonton Mall was never this noisy.

On day three we head back to the farm, stopping in town so I can pick up a CD with the sound of loons on it. When we step from the vehicle at home, I have never heard such peace. Such quiet. Until I fire up the tractor and head for the hay meadow. But that's okay. With my new loon songs downloaded onto my iPod I can barely hear the tractor. In fact I don't even hear the pickup horn blaring as my baler spits out bale after untied bale.

Shannon McKinnon lives with her husband Darcy on a small farm northwest of Dawson Creek, BC. Both their sons now live in big cities where they are frequently visited by their vacationing parents.

Annual General Meeting and Supper

Taylor Community Hall, Taylor, British Columbia

4:00 p.m. Wednesday, November 26, 2008

Peace River Forage Association of B.C. Agenda

1. **4:00 pm Topic: Managing Your Risk by Rob Leslie** (*tentative*)
Rancher from SW Saskatchewan & Senior Analyst for Canfax
2. **5:00 pm Call to order of AGM and approval of Agenda (Rick Kantz)**
3. **Minutes from December 2007 AGM (Sarah Davies)**
4. **Association Business**
 - A. Correspondence
 - B. Presidents Report (Rick Kantz)
 - C. Treasurer's Financial Reports (Bill Wilson)
 1. General Association Account
 2. Water Project Account
 - D. Wildlife Committee (Julie Robinson)
 - E. R&D Report
 1. Compost & Manure Project
 2. Environmental Farm Plans
 3. Upcoming Projects
 - F. Upcoming Events
 1. **January Seminar** – Wednesday, January 21, 2009
 2. **Annual Forage Livestock Tour** – Saturday, June 20, 2009
 - G. Nominations for Directors whose terms are expiring:
(Rick Kantz, Chuck Sutherland, Pat Gerlinsky, Sarah Davies)
 - H. Other business items, accepting reports, appointing auditor
5. **7:00 pm Adjourn for supper**

Thank You to our Sponsors: District of Taylor, PRAD, BCMAL

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Members, please note:

**This is your opportunity to renew your membership, to get a free supper,
and to hear our guest speakers.**

Directors, please note:

**Before the AGM - Directors meet for business at 3:00 pm
After AGM & supper – Directors meet for business at 8:00 pm**