

# FORAGE FIRST

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Forty-Ninth Edition

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## New Forage Member

by Sarah Rainey



Jake Brahm Rainey was born September 27, 2008 in Dawson Creek, weighed 7 lbs 11 oz. has blue eyes and tons of blond hair. He is currently about 11 ½ lbs and is quickly outgrowing all the cute outfits he received as gifts! He is making motions of being a good rancher as he gets up early in the morning, doesn't like being in the house, and loves anything with motion (i.e. the quad, mom and dad walking with him in the snuggly, riding in the truck). He has already helped with rounding up cows, loading cattle liners, and vaccinating calves! He is also just starting to smile which is very cute!



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- 2009 Membership Fee Due Now!**

### 2009 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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Newsletter & Composting - Sandra Burton		Events - Chris Thomson		Newsletter & Website - Kim Strasky		

PRFA of BC website: [www.peaceforage.bc.ca](http://www.peaceforage.bc.ca)



## Musings From My Quarter

by Deryle Griffith

### Let's Make Soil

Just recently I've reread an article by Christine Jones from Australia. In this article she tells how to make topsoil. Done properly our topsoil can be rebuilt amazingly fast. If we let our topsoil all blow away, whatever management practice we choose becomes irrelevant.

Christine Jones says there are six essential ingredients for soil formation:

1. Minerals
  2. Air
  3. Water
  4. Living things **in** the soil (plants and animals) & their by-products.
  5. Living things **on** the soil (plants and animals) & their by-products.
  6. Intermittent and patchy disturbance regimes.
- For soil to form, it needs to be living (4).
  - To be living, soil needs to be covered (5)
  - For soil to be covered with healthy plants & decomposing plant litter, soil needs managing with appropriate disturbance regimes (6).

#### Deryle's Reading Website List:

<http://renewablesoil.com/dr-christine-jones.html>  
<http://www.polyfacefarms.com/>  
<http://stockmangrassfarmer.net/>  
<http://www.ranchmanagement.com/>

Ranchers in the livestock business are in an ideal position to profit from this recipe for soil formation. You hear lots about mob or high density grazing from people like Joel Salatin or Greg Judy or many of the people who write in the Stockman Grass Farmer Magazine. This intense grazing and an adequate rest, plus all the trampled and soiled grass is ideal for the cooters in the soil to form the structure that makes the soil very productive.

So when I hear people on TV say to eat soybeans and corn to reduce your carbon footprint on this planet, I feel sad and afraid. As I have written before the best carbon sink is our soil, and the best soils for carbon sequestration are our grasslands and pastures. The best way to maintain these grasslands is to graze them with intensive rotational grazing. From this you get grass finished beef or lamb which is healthier than salmon and very nutritionally dense from which we can raise healthy and intelligent children who are our hope. So as rancher you are part of the solution, not part of the problem. Read Greg Judy's books to learn to ranch for profit, or take a ranching for profit seminar, or read Joel Salatin's books or columns to learn to market and integrate your farm. Subscribe to the Stockman Grass Farmer, a great publication. You are doing more than just producing a commodity; you'll be fixing the world. Good luck.

## Lost Ray of Summer Sunshine

by Sandra Burton

Readers may or may not be aware that Casey Moser was tragically killed in a vehicle accident on September 25, 2008 while on her way home from work. Casey was a vibrant member of the BC Ministry of Agriculture's Business Risk Management Branch in the Dawson Creek office and her passing leaves a huge gap in the Branch, especially among her colleagues in Dawson Creek and Fort St John.

Casey is also intensely missed by her family and her many friends. She was beloved wife to Karl Moser and loving mother to their 3 children: Tim Moser of Prince George BC, Steven & Randall Moser & daughter Sophie of Red Deer AB and Vicki (Victoria) Moser of Lethbridge AB (who worked for the Forage Association last summer).

Casey was very active with 4-H, music, weaving and their church, among other interests.

Expressions of sympathy may be made by way of a donation to Camp Sagitawa, Box 61, Moberly Lake, BC, V0C 1X0 or by way of a card sent to Karl Moser, Comp 6, S22, RR2, Dawson Creek, BC, V1G 4E8.

Casey was one of the most positive people I have ever met and her sunshine and cheerfulness, while tackling all parts of life, will be missed by us all!



# It's Been A Good Ride

by Darrell & Nancy Peterson

*Before they leave the area on their new adventure next summer, we asked Darrell and Nancy if they would share with us how they had come to the Peace and settled here. The following is Part 1 of a 2 part series....*



We met in 1966 while attending Montana State University in Bozeman, Montana. I was working on a degree in Ag Economics, while Nancy was taking Business Administration. Nancy had grown up on a cattle ranch in south central Montana, adjacent to Yellowstone National Park. I was from a grain farming/minor cattle environment located on the dry prairies of north central Montana, near the Canadian border. I had previously earned a two year diploma in a Farm and Ranch Office Management program. Following this, I had been employed by the USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture) in the administration of farm programs. I decided to go on for a degree, for the additional employment opportunities it might provide. I have always regarded this as a good decision.

Just before graduating in 1967, I accepted a position as a Territory Manager Trainee for John Deere, out of Minneapolis, Minnesota. After two weeks of thinking about it, I called John Deere and declined the position. My reason was that I did not want to leave Montana. I also didn't want to end up living in a big city. I then accepted a position with the University as a County Agricultural Extension Agent, to be located in Kalispell, Montana. Nancy and I were married in September of 1967. Our daughter, Shannon, was born in Kalispell in 1969. We lived in Kalispell for three and ½ years.

In the fall of 1969, I accepted an assistant manager position with a large grain and cattle corporation located in south central Montana. The operation was the oldest and the largest agricultural operation in Montana. It encompassed 125,000 acres, and included a cow/calf operation of 2250 cows. It was located on the Crow Reservation, with headquarters in Hardin, Montana. While in Hardin, Nancy was employed as the secretary for the USDA Soil Conservation Service.

This move was an "eye opener" but provided a lot of new and interesting experiences.

In September, 1971, through professional contacts, I was offered the farm manager position of South Peace Stock Farms Ltd, a 37,000 land development project, located north of Dawson Creek, BC.

It was owned by the Morrison-Quirk Grain Corporation, of Hastings, Nebraska. They needed a manager in place by October 1<sup>st</sup>. They spelled out the details of the job, and said we could think it over; they would call back about the same time the next day. It was a hectic decision. We had friends with a large family, from out of town, visiting us that weekend. We lived in a mobile home, so privacy was quite limited. We were personal friends with the current manager of the farm, (who the company was moving to North Carolina). We also knew the name of another retired agriculturist from Montana who had spent two years managing the farm. We telephoned these people. They both told us it was a tough project, very interesting, and the company was good to work with. The older agriculturist told us the place needed young people and we would never work for a better employer. The pay offer and amenities seemed quite satisfactory. The job sounded "intriguing".

Young and fearless, in three weeks time, we had sold our mobile home and most of our belongings, purchased a new car, and headed for Canada, "sight unseen". We arrived at Mile 26 on the Alaska Highway in the first week of October (so much for not wanting to leave Montana).

If the move to the corporate farming atmosphere on the native reserve was an "eye opener", we would have to say that our introduction to Peace River area grain farming in the early '70's was "life changing". We had just left a scenario in Montana where we had completed a harvest of 35,000 acres of wheat and barley over a total time period of ten days (it only involved one weekend.) in early August.

We arrived at Mile 26 to find a snowed down crop and severely muddy fields. After six more weeks of a struggled harvest with less than 1000 acres harvested; winter closed in. We left about 12,000 acres of unharvested crop under the winter snow cover. I think it was shortly after we arrived at the farm, we found out that we were the fifth management couple in the then short lifespan of the farm of 6 years out of "bush".

*Continued on next page.....*



## Good Ride con't

The job was different and more frustrating than we had anticipated. We were fortunate to be furnished with a beautiful home and we had a monthly paycheck. The company was financially stable and there was never a bill not paid on time. (Millions of dollars were sent north!) We continually questioned ourselves if we should have made the move. Each time, we agreed that we really didn't have much to go back to because we had sold most of our belongings. Maybe we would give it a little more time; things had to get better! The question went away after about three years, as we worked our way into husbandry changes such as less grain, more clovers and other forages, fescue seed, and a future plan for cattle.

It was about then that our feelings changed about crossing the Canadian/US border. Instead of feeling "home" when we crossed south into the US, we felt "home" when we crossed north into Canada.

Our family was enhanced with the arrival of our second daughter; this time, a "Canadian" who we named Cheryl. She arrived in August, 1972. Just to keep things interesting, we took in two small foster children in 1974. The two year old stayed with us for three years. Life was busy, but really quite fun. With a bunkhouse of 30-50 inhabitants, cooks, 11 family homes, 3 mobile homes, mechanics, farmers, tenants, life wasn't dull.

In the fall of 1975, the decision was made by the farm owners to go into cattle. It would be a yearling grass operation. I proposed that we start with 250 head, as we had no livestock facilities, fences, nor personnel experienced with cattle. That number was quickly pushed aside as not being enough to bother with. The owners felt we had to have 1000 head or more to make it worthwhile. We started purchasing cattle in November, 1975. We had our cattle buyer store the purchased cattle until we could build some fence. We built a two mile containment fence around a ½ section of bush, during Christmas and New Years. We had to pound fence posts in protected snow drift areas where the ground was not frozen. By spring, we had 1350 head of yearling steers and heifers, two miles of fence, and three saddle horses. We had built a corral and handling system the summer before. Livestock personnel were limited. There weren't many cattle in the area. The conditions were tough, and hectic. We did construct about 35 miles of fence that first summer. There was no newly fenced pasture that was void of cattle for more than just a few hours. The cattle numbers were consistently chasing the fencers.

The Refinery and Oil Industrial Union, from Taylor, attempted to unionize us in 1976. This was to be the first Farm Workers Union in Canada. This was disruptive and expensive as we had to distance ourselves from some good people as well as friends. We also lost a farm workshop filled with farm equipment to fire, in the middle of winter. The proposed agreement would not have worked in our environment. It was not at

all in tune with the agricultural economics we were working with, nor with our working conditions. In the end, the farm owners refused to cooperate, and the organization efforts dissipated. It also discouraged the farm owners enough that they cancelled plans to set up an alfalfa dehydration plant on the farm. They accelerated their desire to sell the farm, which had been for sale since the day of its inception.

The farm owners were very intelligent, experienced, world class agri-entrepreneurs: they had a worldly knowledge of most commodities. They expected a rise in the cattle market that had been depressed for several years. While the market had not really turned around much the first year; they put in 2500 head the second year. The third year, 1977, with a still stagnant market, they put in 3500 head of yearlings. In 1978, they purchased 4500 head of yearlings, and the market tripled from purchase price to sale price. That was a good year! The profit enabled the ranch to bury many years of red ink as well as produce a "balance sheet" and "profit records" anyone could be proud of.

These attractive financial results attracted the interest of a European investment group that was concerned of an Eastern Europe/Russian invasion of Western Europe. They wanted to move money out of Europe. They ended up purchasing most of the ranch in 1979, taking over the operation in 1980. Portions of land east of the Alaska Highway had been sold previously. One portion had been sold to another group of European investors and a large portion was also sold to the South Peace Hutterite Colony. Moving up in 1975, the colony was the first Hutterite colony established in British Columbia.

Prior to this, as we got into the later '70's; the Peace River country was interesting more and more foreign potential land buyers. Nancy and I were pondering our future, as one of our mandates with our job, was to sell the large development operation. My employers had assured us of other opportunities elsewhere when the operation sold. One alternative discussed was the possibility of leasing land and setting up our own personal farming operation on lands they had developed and owned in the Mississippi Delta areas of Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana. They said we should go down there and take a look. We never got around to arranging a trip down there. (In 1990, Nancy and I took a farm tour that included this area. We were glad that we had chosen to make Canada our "home".)

*To be continued in the next issue... Darrell & Nancy's stories of selling their herd during high interest 1980's, weathering the drought of 1992, and organizing annual sheep sales...*

# President's Update

*by Rick Kantz*

It's hard to believe that 2 inches of snow and – 4c can bring a city to its knees, but if that city is Vancouver, it will. It wasn't even long underwear weather, but they thought the world was going to end for most of them. This brings me to why I was in Vancouver.

The group that has been putting together a new surface lease for Oil and Gas was going over what appears to be the final touches to the document. It will be put into simple language by mid January and hopefully out to producer groups to have a look at in February.

The AGM was held in Taylor again this year, with the usual group attending. (We've got to figure out a way to have a sellout crowd attend this glorious event one year?) For those that weren't there, we had Scott McKinnon with Canfax lift our spirits. In a nut shell, people that have been saying for the past five years, that they are selling this year "no matter what", are actually doing it this year. It is reducing the cow herd to a level that, by late 2009, we may break even, and should be in the chips by 2010. (sounds like Grampa: "next year will be better.")

The Interim Wildlife Damage Compensation program has managed to survive its first year. Between the Caribou and Kootney pilot programs and the Interim almost \$1,000,000 was paid out in wildlife damages. Some changes to the program in 2009 should help more producers qualify. Multiple cuts and aftermath grazing are being looked at with a possible reduced minimum to qualify.

If Sandra would have given me more notice I could have come with something charming and witty. But she called while I was in Vancouver and I had my hands full trying comfort 1.5 million people and assure them that all would be OK. So until that incredible January seminar rolls around, have a Great New Year!



*2008 AGM participants*

## Successful Grazing Conference

*by Sandra Burton*

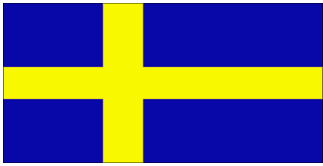
Over 300 producers came from across western Canada to attend the Western Canadian Grazing Conference and Trade Show in Edmonton from December 3 to 5, 2008. Brian Luce, co-chair of WCGC planning committee said "From the attendance at the trade show to the active participation in the many sessions we organized, we could see that producers from British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan are committed to expanding their expertise in grazing and to building profitable operations."

The conference started with greetings from the Honourable George Groeneveld, Alberta's Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. Dr. Bart Lardner, a Senior Research Scientist from the Western Beef Development Center talked about backgrounding. Sheldon Atwood, a specialist in Behavioral Education for Human, Animal, Vegetation and Ecosystem Management discussed how to train animals to control weed problems among other topics.

A panel discussion entitled "Graziers' Perspectives" highlighted Bruce Downey, Doug Wray and Bill Wilson. Bill said "there was a lot of interest in what we are doing with True North Beef, judging from the number of questions and the follow-up discussions afterwards".

Bill participated in a breakout session facilitated by Dr. Roger Gates, a well known extension range specialist from South Dakota. In groups of about 10, they did planning exercises looking at various options and risks with different livestock grazing management scenarios.

Freddie Schneider went from our region as well. He heard a talk by Ted Sutton about Ecological Goods & Services and ALUS (Alternative Land Use Services) where farmers are paid from public funds for providing environmental benefits to the public at large on private land. Freddie says "In Switzerland now, more than half of farm income comes from this program. But farmers have lost control of major parts of their farm." Freddie enjoyed the Grazing 202 and the backgrounding talks.



## Visitors from the Swedish University

*by Julie Robinson and Sofia Nyman*

Over the past 5 years numerous Swedish students and advisors, from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, have visited the Peace looking to learn more about Canada's beef production. This year Sofia Nyman and Pernilla Salevid visited the Peace for a week and a hearty thanks goes out to the **Hogberg's, Bill Bentley, Bill Wilson, Peterson's, Buchanan's, Kantz's, Aaron Collins** and any others who helped accommodate our guests.

Karl-Ivar Kumm of the Department of Animal Environment and Health in Sweden, a program supervisor, has been working with students and colleagues on how to increase the profitability of the cow-calf based beef production system in Sweden. They have decided to use the Peace River area as a study area because of the close correlations of climate and geographical features.

First a little bit about Sweden's agriculture and then some of the highlights of their visit in the Peace.

Historically, beef production in Sweden was composed by calves and culled cows from the dairy industry. About two third of the beef produced today is from the Swedish dairy industry and one third of beef originates from cow-calf production.



*Sofia Nyman, Rick Kantz & Pernilla Salvid*

The Swedish beef production is mostly characterized as small-scale production and is practised as a part time company or as a complement to other production branches in a bigger company. Only a couple of companies send more than 100 animals for slaughter per year. The average herd size of suckle cows has, during the last years, increased and is today about 15.

Consumers in Sweden have high preferences for Swedish meat and want to preserve an open landscape; despite this the self-sufficiency has decreased over the years. According to Ministry of Agriculture (2004) there will be a bigger production decrease in Sweden than in other countries, when decoupling of EU support is fulfilled. This could be due to shorter vegetation periods in Sweden, higher demands on buildings, small herd sizes, lack of bigger and more connected pastures and relatively high labour costs. This could also be reasons why it will be harder for Swedish producers to compete on the international market.

According to Swedish Animal Protection Agency only animals that are suited to be outdoor during the cold season, can be kept outdoor during the winter. These animals must have, during that part of the year, when there is no vegetation, a house for wind and weather protection. They also have to have a dry and clean space where they can rest. The house is recommended to have three walls and a roof.

Beef cattle in Sweden are housed for about 180 days per year. Since winter housing costs plays a big role in the economics and with rising house costs, it is of big importance to find ways to reduce these costs. Since suckle cows have lower demands for winter housing facilities than dairy cows and growing cattle it could be a good way to keep suckle cows outdoors during the winter. Around half of the costs for beef production in Sweden, with the technique and total stocking rate of today are buildings and labour. To reduce these costs there is a need to increase the stocking rate, have a shorter and more intensive finishing of calves and outdoor-wintering with cheap wind shelters.





*Pernilla Salvid and Ralf Hogberg*

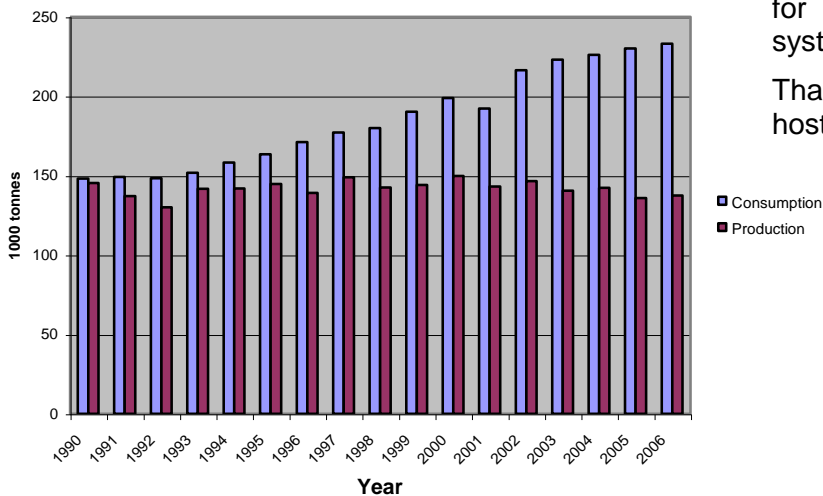


### Swede's Visit the Peace con't

Sofia and Pernilla enjoyed the diversity of the farms they were able to visit. They commented that each farm was so unique and different that it is hard to compare one to another within Canada, never mind to producers in Sweden! They asked a lot of questions about building costs and labour and the producers' candid answers were appreciated and insightful for the student's reports.

They were particularly interested in the size of equipment ranchers used, as well as the diversity of calving shelters and lack of winter housing for our animals. Swath grazing was a whole new concept for them as were many of the offsite watering systems such as nose pumps and solar systems.

Thanks again to our ranchers for taking the time to host our international guests.



*Figure 2. Consumption and production of beef and calf meat in Sweden 1990-2006 (Swedish Board of Agriculture, 2000; Swedish Board of Agriculture, 2006)*

## Thank You & Photo Credits

*by Sandra Burton and Kim Strasky*

We have been hearing compliments about the Forage First newsletter, and we need to pass these on to you. Because many members contributing articles, quotes, ideas and photographs are what makes it truly great. First of all, gigantic thanks to our regular contributors: Deryle Griffith, Shannon McKinnon, Rick Kantz and Julie Robinson. We know we can always count on you for every issue, and some of you even meet our deadlines! We also appreciate the writers, who enthusiastically respond to our special requests like: Sarah Davies, Darrell Peterson, Chris Thomson, Kari Bondaroff, Keith Carroll, Dale Gross, Judy Madden, Karrilyn Vince, Arnold Mattson, Todd Bondaroff, Kerry Clark, Dale Fredrickson and Karen McKean.

We would love to take credit for all the wonderful photographs you have been enjoying both here and on the website, but in fairness, we can only take credit for some. Photos have been shared graciously over the last year by all the writers listed above. In particular, we can always count on Julie to share her photographs for collages or gaps that need filling. Brian Haddow shared his whole collection from the grasslands tour and Horst David shared his whole "Forage Album" of vintage photos. Last year's summer students, Vicki Moser and Kim Schlaepfer, took some shots from interesting new perspectives and added some "artsy photos" to our collection. **Thank you everyone!**

# Who's Who in Northern Health?



by Julie Robinson

Ever wonder who you need talk to about selling or making processed foods for the public (i.e. beef jerky). What the rules are for cutting and wrapping meat for public consumption, or even what is required for a food safe kitchen?

## WHO YOU GONNA CALL?

### Public Health Protection!

The mission of Northern Health's Public Health Protection Program is to protect the health of northern communities in British Columbia through education and inspection strategies designed to reduce health risks to the public.

Environmental Health Officers, often called Public Health Inspectors, are vital members of the community health system. They safeguard the well being of both the public and the environment by educating people about public health issues, monitoring facilities and development, and enforcing health legislation.

#### Our responsibilities include the following services:

- Communicable Disease and Outbreak Control
- Drinking Water Safety
- Food Safety
- Institutional Environments (Schools, Hospitals)
- Community Care Licensing
- Tobacco Control
- Land Use (Subdivisions, Sanitation, Sewage Disposal)
- Recreational Water Safety (Pools and Hot Tubs)
- Indoor and Outdoor Air Quality
- Emergency Preparedness Planning and Response
- Personal Service Establishments
- Playground Safety
- Summer and Industrial Camps
- Public Health Engineering

### Contact a Licensing Officer Near You

#### **Dawson Creek**

Environmental Health Officers:  
Crystal Brown, Binny Sivia

1001-110th Ave, Dawson Creek V1G 4X3  
Phone: (250) 719-6500, Fax: (250) 719-6513

#### **Fort St John**

Shelia Withrow – Manager of Public Health  
Protection – Shelia.Withrow@northernhealth.ca

Environmental Health Officers: Jennifer Jeyes,  
Sarah Nicholson, Yvonne Liang

10115-110th Ave, Fort St. John V1G 4X3  
Phone: (250) 263-6000, Fax: 250-263-6086

#### Useful links include

<http://www.bcfpa.ca/> - BC Food Processors Association  
<http://www.bccdc.org/> - BC Centre for Disease Control – a lot of good info on health topics





## New Manure Mavens

**Kari Bondaroff**, (top left) a Professional Agrologist, works for the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands in Dawson Creek. The Peace River Region faces different challenges when dealing with manure management and the lack of information and training only escalates these issues. With the high cost of fuel and fertilizer, the region would only benefit from better manure management practices. Through the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, Kari is available for on-site evaluations and as well, for information on how to better manage manure and utilize the results to better crops and pastures.

**Karrilyn Vince** (top right) is a Professional Agrologist (P.Ag.) advising agricultural producers in completing their Environmental Farm Plans. In addition Karrilyn is also a manager with the Integrated Land Management Bureau (ILMB). Karrilyn started her environmental consulting company, Upward Environmental Planning in 2004 providing planning services to BC Peace River.



Karrilyn is no stranger to Northeast BC as she spent half of her life assisting in the management of her family's Guide Outfitting business before moving into the land and resource planning field. Karrilyn has completed two degrees: the first in Conservation Sciences with a major in Environmental Economics (University of Alberta) and the second in Environmental Planning (University of Northern BC). Karrilyn provides a variety of services from land and resource management, environmental farm planning, to landscape photography and now manure management. Karrilyn specializes in risk assessment for farms and manure management in the Peace River area. She is available for site consultations and workshops.

Try to stump the Manure Mavens with your questions by calling Kari @ 250-784-2600 or Karrilyn @ 250-263-1013

## Website Wrangling

*by Kim Strasky*

Some of us, who do our wrangling from a chair, (and some who do both types) got together recently to learn some of the secrets behind websites. Our teacher was Jeremy McDonald. Jeremy built our forage website back in 2001 when he was still in Grade 12. Since then he has gone on to have his own business called Digital West.

Since it has been a few years since our site was built the directors felt it was time for a makeover. So Jeremy walked us through the process of building a small website and now we know the basics. Next, Jeremy will be giving our site a "facelift" to make it easier to navigate around and to make it easier for me to do the upkeep.

One of the new features of the site will be a photo gallery of forage pictures. To encourage producers to send us their great photos, we are having a contest! Send us some of your forage and ranch photos and you could win a coveted PRFA of BC hat! You can email the pictures to me at straskyk@pris.ca.

So watch for the "new and improved" Forage website to appear early in January. Let us know what you think of the changes! Below is a "sneak preview" of part of the new main page.



**Peace River Forage Association  
of British Columbia**



[HOME](#) | [LINKS](#) | [SITE MAP](#) | [CONTACT US](#) |

[About Us](#) | [R & D Projects](#) | [Information](#) | [Forage Facts](#) | [Feed Listings](#) | [Services & Rentals](#) | [Photos](#)

# Agrologist Awards

by Sandra Burton

Ross Green, Kerry Clark and Rich Sewell were recently honoured by the Peace Branch, BC Institute of Agrologists during their AGM on Nov. 15. Here are some highlights of why the local branch felt they should be recognized.



**Ross Green** was named the Distinguished Agrologist of the Year. His nomination was prepared by Sandra Burton, Keith Carroll, Richard Kabzems, Dale Gross, Allan and Shirley Grayston. Ross Green's work in our region spans a number of roles over the last 30 years including Range Officer, Livestock Agrologist, Peace Forage Specialist and Community Pasture Agrologist. Ross is a true "Peace River Product", having grown up in a family of 4 children on the banks of the Peace near the Clayhurst Ferry. As a teen, he was instrumental in setting up the Blackfoot Park and worked several summer terms with Mac Taylor's High School Agriculture program. As a boy, he enjoyed raising, training horses with his Dad and giving wagon rides to campers at the Blackfoot Park. Ross' passion throughout his life has always been hunting. He was known for packing out a ½ moose while others usually packed out a ¼. Some of his peers feel Ross missed his true calling and would have made a great guide outfitter.

Shirley Grayston feels Ross had an "arranged marriage" with Mary Lou McTie of Groundbirch. Apparently Ross was looking for a summer student his first year on the job, and Shirley said "Would you consider hiring a lady? I know of a good worker." Ross wasn't sure but agreed to talk with Mary Lou over the phone...Ross and Mary Lou were soon married and started their family in 1982 and raised 4 children: John, Trevor, Alana and David. He is known as a "doting father".

Ross set up a significant collaborative forage research project that documented the value of native open pasture, where measured calf weights as good as those from tame pastures (Collaborated with Beaverlodge researchers, Northern Lights College profs, BC Ministry of Ag staff and community pasture associations). He also established long term plots at 6 locations in the Peace with large number of forage species, varieties and mixtures (we are still learning lessons from these plots, and taking tour groups to these sites). Ross established demonstrations of different methods of rejuvenation of pastures, and

coordinated the development of tame pastures on "community pastures" and individual license areas.

It was easy to under estimate Ross. He was known for always speaking slowly and thoughtfully, especially with radio tapes for ranchers and farmers. Bob Schneider once followed one of his radio tapes with a quip "this is the guy who left Little Smoky because the pace of life was too fast". Another time the range crew was out on Puggins Mountain looking for a particular plant community. Ross wandered off and appeared to be daydreaming. Then he called over "I think my Dad and I shot a grizzly over here." And there was the plant community they were looking for.

In summary, Ross is respected among his peers for his "people first" approach, and is known for consistently giving high priority for doing what is best for the local agricultural community.



**Kerry Clark** was named the Agrologist of the Year. He was being recognized for recent breakthroughs in bio control of invasive alien plants in our region including scentless chamomile, Canada thistle, toad flax and bull thistle. Kerry's interest in agriculture goes back a few years. Apparently while he was involved in 4-H in Maple Ridge/pit Meadows in the 1960's, he developed a keen interest in bee keeping. However "an unfortunate by-product of raising bees is honey production" so as a teenager along maple ridge highway, Kerry could be seen at his Honey-Ade stand selling jars of honey. He has continued this habit throughout his life (selling honey not roadside stands), now having the luxury of an established clientele that comes to him. Kerry is known for his thoughtful and continuing support of many initiatives in agriculture. His extensive knowledge and interest in the details of both insects and plants makes him a valuable asset to the agriculture industry. His nomination was prepared by Julie Robinson and Sonja Leverkus.

Next issue, watch for an article on Agriculturist of the Year: **Rich Sewell**.



# The Lighter Side of Forage

by Shannon McKinnon

## Mosquito Appreciation Day

One of the many great things about living in Canada this time of year is the lack of mosquitoes. This puts me in a much better frame of mind to celebrate Mosquito Appreciation Day on January 31. Never heard of it? Then you probably haven't heard of the Bloomin' Idiot Funny Farm. Located in Rimbey, just north of Red Deer, the farm is owned by Janet and Jerry McKay who are famous for befriending the mosquito. According to the book "Crazy Canadian Trivia" by Pat Hancock, The McKay's even went so far as to set up little houses where the mosquitoes, or what the McKay's affectionately refer to as mozzies, can breed in peace.

In 1994 the McKay's founded SWAMP, an acronym for Society for Wild Alberta Mosquito Preservation. For a nominal fee they will sell you a genuine Bloomin' Idiot Lifetime Membership that includes tiny playground toys and even a miniature outhouse to accommodate your more modest mosquitoes.

As if that weren't enough, the McKay's then started lobbying for a national Mosquito Appreciation Day - MAD for short; a day where people could show their affection for the little mozzies by refraining from swatting a single one the entire day. To ensure the success of MAD they decided to hold it on January 31.

You have to admit that it's a clever choice. If I have to celebrate the Canadian mosquito, there is no better time to do so than in the middle of winter. I appreciate not being woken to incessant whining that keeps me slapping myself upside the head until my ears are ringing. I appreciate the fact that two grams of catnip seed is available for the low, low, price of \$1.75. That's a whole lot of cheap mosquito repellent.

According to a recent study conducted by the Iowa State University Research Foundation, catnip oil is as effective at repelling mosquitoes as *at least* a 10 times larger dose of DEET. That's like, well, 10 times better than DEET. *At least*. This summer Mr. Fluffers won't be the only one in the neighbourhood hanging out at the catnip patch. Maybe foragers should consider planting catnip instead of clover.

Hmmm. A thought occurs. And not one of those pleasant ones, neither. What about the cats? What happens after you slather little Julie with catnip and send her out in the backyard to play? What then? I'll tell you what then. You'll be doing the dishes, congratulating yourself on keeping your daughter all herbal, healthy, and Deet free, when you'll look out the window and notice something strange.

Cats - lots and lots of cats. Big cats, little cats, tom cats and mama cats and every whiskered one of them heading for your own backyard. That's when you hear little Julie exclaim, "Mr. Fluffers! That's sure a whole lot of friends you got there. Mr. Fluffers? Mr. Fluffers? Bad Kitty! Bad Kitty! Arrrrghhh!

Good Lord! What if they bottle the stuff but call it something clever, like Mosquito-Be-Gone without any reference whatsoever to the fact it contains copious amounts of catnip oil? Then, what if some poor guy in Africa decides to slather it on before walking across the Serengeti? It could happen. He could be striding through the grass all happy, whistling a cheerful little tune, remarking to himself how the mosquitoes aren't bothering him a bit. Not one little bit. How clever of him, he thinks, to have ordered that bottle of Mosquito-Be-Gone on the Internet. And thank goodness he doesn't have to worry about that dastardly Deet.

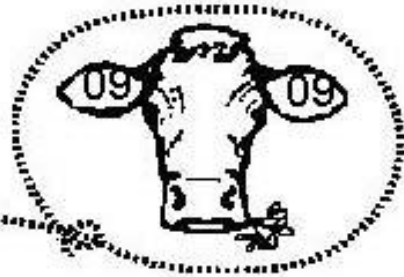
So there he is, strolling along, while all across the Tanzania plains lions and lionesses are jerking their heads up, lurching to their feet and hurrying in his direction. He doesn't know that there are worse things to be found in an insect repellent than a little Deet. He doesn't know that right now he is 10 times more irresistible to the rapidly approaching cats than a raw zebra steak. Ten Times!

Maybe mosquitoes aren't so bad after all. It's like I always say; better to wake up to a mosquito trying to eat you than a cat.

*Shannon McKinnon lives with her husband Darcy, on a small farm in the Bessborough area. A couple hay burners, two dogs, two rabbits, one cat and a small flock of Icelandic sheep also call their farm home. You can reach her at [peacecountry@msn.com](mailto:peacecountry@msn.com)*



## Peace River Forage Association of British Columbia



### “Managing Manure for More Resilient Pastures”

FORAGE SEMINAR – Wednesday, Jan 21, 2009

McLeod Community Hall, west of Dawson Creek off Hart Hwy on Rd 265A  
3:30 am to 9:30 pm

- 3:30 p.m. Welcome: *Rick Kantz*
- 3:45 p.m. **Soils & Composting: Why Do We Care?**  
*Marie Boehm (tentative)*  
*University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon*
- 4:45 p.m. Question & answer period
- 5:00 p.m. **Composting Beef Cattle Manure**  
*Frank Larney (confirmed)*  
*Ag Canada, Lethbridge, Alberta*
- 5:45 p.m. Question and answer period
- 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. Supper (*included in registration price*)
- 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. Station discussions: 30 minutes each  
**Compost:** *Rick Kantz & Bill Wilson*  
**Compost Coffee:** *Sarah Davies & Glenn Hogberg*  
**Manure Handling:** *Walter Fritsche, Dale Fredrickson & Kari Bondaroff*  
**Soil Biology:** *Julie Robinson, Sandy Burton & Deryle Griffith*
- 9:00 to 9:30 p.m. Closing Comments: *Frank Larney, Marie Boehm, Rick Kantz*
- Pre-registration to ensure there is enough supper is encouraged!  
**Please phone Chris Thomson at 250 793 8916 to pre-register.**  
\$20 for Members and \$30 for non-members or per couple

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