

FORAGE FIRST

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2 Great Events

by Sandra Burton



Field Day at the Compost Site at Kantz's. left to right above: Frank Larney, Shannon Hall, Rick Kantz, Arnold Mattson



Arvid Aasen & Calvin Yoder relax at Forage Workshop on April 1st

The Forage Association hosted 2 great workshops over the last months. In January, we learned about compost and soil microbes in a very "hands on" way. In April, a whole team of knowledgeable folks helped us select the appropriate seed for various grazing, haying or stockpiling situations. (see articles inside for more details.)

Today, as I listen to the chatter of our 2 new summer students, Courtney Thompson and Megan Harwood, I know you will enjoy meeting them. Courtney grew up on Big Lake Ranch in the Williams Lake area and is currently studying the Land Reclamation program at NLC in Fort St. John. Megan is from Dawson Creek and is just finishing her second year in Environmental Engineering at UNBC in Prince George. They will be working on a number of projects for this association and for the Peace Region Forage Seed Association including the compost demos, grass seed trials, Holos interviews and helping with tours.

You can meet them by joining us at one of the events we have planned for this summer. Call us for more information or check out the Events page of our website.

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Musings From Directors

Cycles
by Deryle Griffith

If you have read any of my previous articles, you have heard me go on about nutrient, energy and water cycles, and how important they are to the health of the soil. But these same principles apply to all things relating to time.

I've dabbled a little in the stock market, and it is really clear that there is a time to buy (get in), a time to hold, and a time to sell (get out), and no profit is made unless these things are done at the appropriate time. Also these assets cannot be used until the cycle is complete.

I'd like to expand on this example and say that these principles apply to everything that we put time, energy or assets into. Whatever we start, we should have an exit plan or at least be aware that nothing grows or expands forever, and the costs grow the longer we stay past the peak. It may come back but it may not.

The nice thing about getting out is, it frees up those assets (time and energy) for other things, which the time is right for in your life. You can act like a twenty year old when you're fifty, but it's expensive and a lot of work. Plus it just doesn't seem right.

So what is the point to all this rambling? Things change and that is all right. So let's watch for the cycles of nature, the economy, our relationships and ourselves, so we don't fight them all the time. If we miss one wave to ride up on, for sure there will be another if we watch. Above all try to enjoy the ride. We have such an opportunity to learn and love if we don't waste too much effort standing rigid, trying to stop the ceaseless flow of time.

My Thoughts on the Compost Workshop *by Glenn Hogberg*

I thought Frank Larney was very good. I wasn't sure about the statistical part of his presentation but really enjoyed how he first presented the benefits of what compost can do for our operations, and then we can look at the economics. The results from the work at Brandon showing a 2/3 decrease in phosphorus requirement of soils after compost applications were significant to me.

I now understand better the differences between manure, stockpiling, composting and where compost tea fits in. The stations were good, especially with what Rick Kantz had prepared, so that we could have a look at how the compost turner and the manure spreader worked at the demos. My discussions with Arnold helped me understand better the bacteria verses fungal dominated soils and teas, why he was interested in it and what we might accomplish with it at our demo.

Gino's comment was a good one, "if only 10% off feedlots are doing it, it must not make economic sense yet." But Frank had thought out answers to whatever he was asked. If in the future, nutrient loading regulations are to come into effect, it would

be good for us all to be informed and ready to make some improvements to our manure handling

I am trying to go away from each seminar with at least one idea that can be applied to our operation.

For our operation of 200 cows, we would only produce enough compost for 40 ac. That is only 5% of what we would need. In that context, it is difficult to justify the cost of a turner and the time. But Gino and I have been talking about it since and wondering how we could make small improvements in our stockpiling. We are asking ourselves: Is the first turn more important or the second or third? How could we accomplish this easier? Maybe we could add 2 to 3 ft long forks to our tractors that could be poked into the piles to aerate them. Gino's idea is to try putting in some weeping tile to aerate from the bottom, but what do we do with the tiles when we go to move the piles?

Thank you to PRAD, BCIA and BMCAL for their sponsorship of this worthwhile event. We had 45 people there, which was a better turnout than we expected. I think I went away with more than I realized at the time.

Compost Workshop 2

by Shannon Hall

In mid January, I had the opportunity to attend the Peace River Forage Association of British Columbia "Managing Manure for More Resilient Pastures" Forage Seminar in McLeod, BC. Along with the opportunity to attend the seminar, Arnold Mattson (PFRA-AAFC), Frank Larney (Lethbridge Research Station- AAFC) and myself (Shannon Hall- PFRA-AAFC) were fortunate enough to visit Bickford Farms to learn from Rick Kantz and Sandra Burton about the Bickford Farms demonstration project on composting manure.

The opportunity to learn from the producer what challenges he faced in dealing with manure, the sheer volume of the manure, and therefore handling and spreading costs as well as his interests in composting manure. This demonstration project allows the newcomer to composting to see the results of traditional methods of manure handling including stockpiling as well as composting techniques of windrows with monitored temperature, sampling and turning of the windrow. This demonstration project is a great look at what other producers can do because the logistics of when tasks are completed are lead by the producer and fit into his schedule rather than a traditional research project that may not consider the producer's logistics and therefore abilities to make composting work at their operation. I look forward to another opportunity to hear the results of monitoring the areas with compost applied.

The second portion of our day was the seminar in McLeod, which gave an excellent opportunity for those of all interest levels in the topics of composting and compost tea the venue to discuss current activities and opportunities. The seminar first gave a good background on soils and composting and why we might care about such endeavours through presentations. We then heard from Frank Larney of the Lethbridge Research Station – Ag Canada, he gave us a great presentation and review of the research he has been involved in over the years and how that can be applied to an operation.

Frank has been involved in many research projects and he gave a good link on how the elements of each could be linked to an operation. He was aware and acknowledged that the station is different than real life and made good effort to link the finding to real life on the farm. I thought Frank's presentation was great and look forward to one day making a trip to Lethbridge to see some of his research in progress.

The evening was concluded with an opportunity to visit stations for discuss different aspects of soil, composting, and compost coffee. I found this to be the applied research demonstration opportunity, real producers on real operations sharing their experiences with the group. There were five stations set up around the room, they were; "Manure Handling and Manure Mavens", "Compost", "Compost Coffee", Soil Microbes and Microscopes" and lastly "Soil Maps and Monoliths." Folks then had the opportunity to discuss with those positioned at stations the details of projects and ask any questions they might have. A great way to get a quick glimpse of a topic you may or may not know a lot about.

I thought the day was great as I had the opportunity to meet people and discuss projects of similar interest to my own as well as learn a great deal along the way. Given the opportunity to attend another PRFA Seminar Day I would welcome the opportunity.



At the workshop, Jake Rainey was presented with a quilt made by Nelda Bennett, Sarah Bennett, Ruth Ann Robinson, Julie Robinson, Barb Barringham and Sandra Burton.

PRFA Forage Seminar 2009

by Darryl Kroeker

About 30 people gathered at the Tower Lake Community Hall on April Fools Day to attend the second forage seminar. While spring calving undoubtedly kept some folks at home, those in attendance were treated to a variety of forage information that was certainly no joke!

John Kendrew welcomed the crowd on behalf of the PRFA and introduced the first speaker, Arvid Aasen of Lacombe, Alberta. Arvid drew on his experience with the Western Forage Beef Group to present a number of scenarios aimed at reducing costs of livestock production by keeping animals out of the feedlot and on pasture for extended periods. He presented tables packed with data comparing the relative feed values and performance of oats, barley, triticale, peas, corn, and turnips under a variety of seeding regimes and harvest strategies, including spring, fall, and winter grazing and swath grazing. Stockpiling perennial forages is another tool to extend the grazing season. Arvid presented tables illustrating how the feed value of various forage grasses and legumes held or declined over time. While alfalfa is a poor choice for stockpiling because of its tendency to lose its leaves after frost, meadow brome was a top performer in terms of production and retained feed value through the winter. Arvid closed his presentation with a plug for the new edition of the Alberta Forage Manual, which should be available in 2 to 3 weeks.

Kari Bondaroff reviewed the recently updated BCMAL Forage Factsheet, specifically focused on forages for the Peace Region. A number of key questions help producers decide on the best forage or forage blend to achieve their objectives. Tables of information compare the characteristics of forage varieties most commonly used in the Peace. All of this is valuable to producers making forage management decisions. Kari's closing comment, "Remember, lower yields may not always mean lower profits."

Keith Carroll shared information "based on anecdotal evidence, not research" on forages and pasture management and rejuvenation. Beginning with his youth in southwest Ontario on the Melody Ranch, Keith toured the audience through some of his experiences with forages in Zambia, the Little Clay Belt in northeastern Ontario, and most recently in the Peace. While Keith confessed to a love of plowing, his advice was, "Don't be in a hurry to break up pasture".

People who missed this seminar also missed a great supper of beef dip sandwiches, homemade baked beans, and Caesar salad, with chocolate cake for dessert.

Mark Johns of Viterra shared his experiences with forage establishment and management. The cost of planting a cover crop with forages was obvious from photos he presented where forages seeded alone showed better growth even in the second year following establishment. He also recommended adding a sod forming grass such as fescue or smooth brome to a meadow brome / alfalfa mix to fill in the bare ground and out-compete weeds such as dandelions.

Stephanie Haight from the Northeast Invasive Plant Committee invited interested people to attend their AGM on April 28th at the Peace River Regional District office. They are finishing a seeding manual directed towards the reclamation efforts of forestry and the oil and gas industry. The use of high quality clean seed is paramount in controlling the spread of noxious weeds. Once the manual is complete, Sandra Burton will be given copies of the seeding manual for those interested.

Brad Will of Brett Young gave a birds-eye comparison of many alfalfa varieties currently on the market. He reviewed 6 key areas to help producers decide upon the best alfalfa to meet their objectives. To compare any of 250 varieties of alfalfa on-line, producers can go to www.uwex.edu/ces/ag/alfalfa/ and enter the ones they're interested in.

Bruce Fatkin presented some background information on Holos, a whole farm greenhouse gas emissions calculator tool. If interested in exploring this tool, a version can be down-loaded at www.agr.gc.ca/nlwis and click on "tools". (see the article on page 6 of this issue)

After some time for questions and answers, Arvid Aasen and Calvin Yoder shared some closing comments. Judging by the discussion, the seminar was a success!

Generous sponsorship for this seminar was given by Brett Young, Viterra, Pickseed and Rolla Agricultural Services. Much appreciated!

It's Been A Good Ride Part 2

by Darrell & Nancy Peterson

Editors note: here is the "rest of the story" of the Petersons' time in the Peace continued from our January 2009 issue.....

About the same time, I was reading an agricultural history book describing the "Bonanza Farms" of the Red River Valley, located in North Dakota and Minnesota. The story told of the Northern Pacific Railway Company establishing huge farms throughout the Red River Valley. The purpose of these farms was to entice settlers to come to the area, set up communities, develop, and purchase tracts of land that had been given to the railroads, as a partial payment for building a railroad across the northern U.S. Each of these farms involved 100,000 plus acres, and utilized horses for farming; thousands of horses! For various reasons, all of these operations failed financially within just a few years of establishment. Some of their "professional" managers took up portions of these failed farms. They privately established and built prolific, profitable private farms for themselves and their families. The surnames of these original "managers" are still very prominent in today's agriculture in the Red River valley.

Upon reading this, I got the idea that maybe Nancy and I could do something like this. We had explored the financial aspect of going into farming/ranching on our own several times, each time giving the idea up as not worth giving up what we were presently doing. We always concluded that the possibility of farming or ranching on our own was an "impossible" dream. We just didn't have the resources, or the will to risk what we did have. With this new idea, we knew that we had learned a lot about agriculture in the Peace at the expense of the corporate checkbook. By doing something like this, at least we could capitalize on this knowledge. If we went somewhere else, we would be starting all over again, but on our own bank account. In 1977, I approached the U.S. owners with the idea of splitting off a portion of the large ranch, and purchasing it privately to set up our own operation. The brothers had no problem with this. They told us to figure out which area we wanted, and figure out how we might pay for it. They would carry the financing until we could get Canadian financing, if they were in agreement with the proposal, they would put the whole idea on the shelf, until we could sell the big ranch. They explained that they did not want us quitting their employment, once they had helped us establish our own holding.

Finally, in 1979, we sold the large farm/ranch to a European investment group, headed by a Swiss investment banker. Prior to the purchase, the group sent a European consultant to visit the area and determine whether they should purchase the holding. Included in his visit was a stop at the agricultural experiment station in Beaverlodge. The superintendent of the facility told the consultant that the purchase was in line with what other land was going for

in the area, but at the same time, they had to hire Nancy and me, as we were the ones who had really made the operation work. Before the Europeans would sign a purchase contract, they required me to sign a management contract for five years. I did this because it appeared to be the only way Nancy and I were going to get our own operation underway.

With the big ranch sale, Nancy and I began setting up our own ranch. This was fun! We were fulfilling a lifelong dream, and we thought (??) we had it all figured out. Optimism was high. The whole world economy, including the Canadian economy, was booming. Land prices were increasing; product prices were increasing. Food was going to be a very important commodity. It was easy to get money, as the banks were pushing out as much money as they could, based on the inflation of land values, and good agricultural commodity prices. Cash flows were of little interest to the banks as inflation was covering the lenders' positions.



We were quite heavily leveraged. Our first year bank payment was \$50,000, set up to be paid in late fall. When we paid it, we saw that we had only reduced our principal by \$1.68. We had never been exposed to the Canadian banks' custom of approving a loan, and then charging compounding interest on the entire principal from the first day of the loan, whether the money was utilized or not. We quickly looked for an alternative payment plan, and switched over to monthly payments. It was then that we started to realize that we probably needed an "off-farm" job.

In 1981, the economic climate changed. Interest rates soared. And farm commodity prices dropped. Banks demanded positive cash flows. Many businesses failed, including farms and ranches. Now, we really needed the "off farm" job to keep food on the table, and the banker off our doorstep.

It's Been A Good Ride con't

Slowly, the economics got a little better, but we were still highly leveraged, in a time of high interest rates. A government supported capital loan program, the SBDB (Small Business Development Bond) expired its' five year term. There was no replacement, other than conventional bank financing at prime interest rate plus two percent. We had purchased our equipment and built our buildings with this loan. The balance outstanding was still substantial. We decided that we did not want to try to continue to service it, so against the banker's advice, we sold our cow herd to pay off the loan. We kept back our heifer calves, and started a second cow herd.

The next few years were busy, but rewarding. We were very busy, but enjoyed most of what we were doing. While I was very involved with the big farm, Nancy, girls, and hired hands, did the bulk of the work on our own ranch. Nancy also kept the books and did the payroll for the big farm. When my five year management contract with the Europeans expired, we mutually agreed to continue on a year to year basis. This went on until 1997 (12 more years). Finally in 1996, I told the Europeans that I really wanted get home and work with Nancy. I recommended that they lease the ranch out. I found a renter, and negotiated a suitable five year rental agreement. The Europeans asked me to continue with them to administer the lease and keep the company books. I agreed to do this. In 1998, I came home to help Nancy on about a 2/3 time basis. From that time on, we hired very little outside help other than good neighbors as we might need them.

In 1992, the area suffered a severe drought. We had no hay to harvest. Our pastures were devastated, not only by the dry climate, but the hoards of grasshoppers brought forth during the drought. Again, we faced a dilemma. With a fairly large cow herd again, no feed, destroyed pastures for the coming year, and not very much reserve money, we had a problem. Once again, we decided to sell the cow herd. This turned out again to be a good move. We were able to pay off all of our bank loans that fall. Again we kept our heifer calves, by putting them out for the winter with a custom feeder. With these, we started our third cow herd. It started to rain in July of 1993. Our pastures greened up, and life looked good again.

By getting away from the bank, we realized what a good thing it was. We immediately started to prosper. We had our own money to do things with. We started to save money. We hadn't been in a position like this for a long time. We chose not to borrow any money again, other than maybe a few interest free (?) equipment purchase loans. While our equipment wasn't the newest and the latest, and the repair bills sometimes seemed very high; everything was ours!

Over the years, we tried many things, including grain farming, fescue seed, cow/ calf/ grass yearlings, background feeding, a range hog operation, horses, and sheep. Nancy liked the sheep project, because it was a livestock project that she could handle mostly by herself. As a marketing alternative, and with a lot of help from individual volunteer sheep producers from Fort St. John, Dawson Creek, and the surrounding areas, she was instrumental in establishing the annual Peace Country Sheep Sale. From a modest beginning in the corrals of South Peace Farms, it moved to the auction yard in Dawson Creek. It grew to be the biggest one day sheep sale in Canada. Nancy was in sheep for 16 years, and continued to chair the sheep sale for ten years until the auction burnt down. Eventually, Nancy traded the time commitment of tending sheep for grandchildren, when they started arriving in 2002.



As a family, we were all involved in 4-H; the girls as members, with Nancy and I serving as leaders. Our daughters attended grade school at Parkland School near Farmington, and graduated from high school in Dawson Creek. They went on to get their degrees at the University of Alberta, in Edmonton. Shannon got a degree in Accounting; Cheryl majored in Elementary Education, with a minor in Special Education. Today, Shannon resides in the Calgary area with her husband, David. They have two small children, a boy aged 6, and a girl aged 3. She is the Director of Tax for a large oilfield environmental company. David enables her intense and busy employment by working on a Computer Science degree from home, so he has time to do a lot of the family and household management chores. He also serves in some local political positions. Cheryl resides in Airdrie, (just north of Calgary) with her husband, Marc. They have two young girls, ages 6 and 3. Cheryl is a kindergarten teacher in Crossfield (15 miles north of Airdrie). Marc works with salvage surpluses with Shell Oil Company, based in downtown Calgary.

It's Been A Good Ride con't

After 1998, we continued with our own ranch activities, as well as looking after the European ownership responsibilities of the big ranch. Nancy and I enjoy working together on our own ranch. I was still involved with the big ranch about 1/3 of my time. This made for us, "still", a very busy life. I decided to withdraw entirely my involvement with the big ranch at the end of their five year lease. When I told them that I wanted to go home and work solely with Nancy; they asked me to give them another year in order that they could decide what to do. In that year, they decided to sell the ranch. The sale took place November 30, 2003. The renter purchased it.

It was good to get home full time, and Nancy was happy to have a full time ranching partner. She had been ranching full time since 1980, sometimes with hired help and sometimes not. Along with her jobs of wife, mother, cook, housekeeper, bookkeeper for our ranch (and also for South Peace Farms for many years), she had been tending up to 1000 cattle and up to 250 ewes plus their lambs. As long as she could use a John Deere tractor, she did most of the hay cutting and raking in most of the years.

A couple of years after leaving the big ranch, and the arrival of grandchildren, whom we didn't get to see very often, Nancy and I started thinking about slowing our life down. We decided that we would really stock up on cattle for a few years as prices were good, and we thought it might be a wonderful way to start our retirement program. As a complete surprise, "BSE" came into the picture in May of 2003. With the U.S. border closure immediately following, our Canadian cattle became almost worthless. The market has struggled ever since. "Profitability" is still a question.

In the spring of 2007, Nancy and I decided that if we were to do something else in what we would call our "retirement" years; it was probably time to sell the cow herd. Of course, that year the cow market "tanked" again. This was probably caused by the high Canadian dollar, the increasing cost of feed grains, along with increasing energy costs. We decided to "bite our lip" and continue our quest to retirement.

In the fall of 2007, we sold the cows and the calves, and our hay. We leased the ranch out for two years, with the provision that we could still live here. Now in 2008, we have an auction planned for our equipment in June, 2009. Our renter has agreed to purchase the ranch at the end of the lease period.

We have both enjoyed being involved in the politics of the industries that were our livelihood. For 14 years Darrell was a director for the South Peace Stockmen's Association and the Peace River Regional Cattlemen's Association serving on the wildlife, highways, weed, and other industry related sub-committees. Nancy was a 3 year Peace River Lamb Association director; 7 year secretary-treasurer for Dawson Creek Sheep Breeders, 10 year chairperson of the Peace Country Sheep Sale, 10 year member of the Dawson Creek Vet Clinic Scholarship Committee, 2 year member of the provincial BC Risk Management Advisory Committee, 2 year member of the provincial BC Cattlemen's Finance Committee, and 3 year member of the CAIS Board of Appeals for BC and Yukon. These have turned out to be opportunities to work with some wonderful people involved in agriculture—opportunities in which we have "gained" as much as we have "given".

We have purchased a large lot in the agricultural community of Olds, Alberta. In the next year, we plan to have a home built there. Our immediate family all reside in the Calgary area. Olds is about an hour drive to the north. It is a community of 7500 people and is made up of many agricultural retirees. It has an agricultural college, to help keep some of us "over the hill" producers from getting too "old". We hope to have lots of Peace Country visitors come see us if they are travelling our way. Our address will be: 131 Park Meadows Place, Olds, AB, T4H 1Y4.

It is not easy to "wind down". We have very strong feelings for "our ranch/our dream". It is with very mixed feelings that we are leaving the area. Canada, the Peace Country, and the livestock industry have been good to us and to our family. We have had and still enjoy a good life style. Our experiences and friends in the Peace will always be with us. It has been a good ride.

Thank you to these sponsors of our "Selecting Your Seed Workshop"

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Honored by Agrologists

by Sandra Burton and Arthur Hadland

Three people familiar in forage circles were honoured by the Peace Branch, BC Institute of Agrologists during their AGM on Nov. 15. Ross Green and Kerry Clark were profiled in the January 2009 issue of the Forage First. To continue... here is why the local branch felt Rich Sewell should be recognized.

Rich Sewell was named the Peace Region Agriculturist of the Year. Rich is a respected seed grower throughout Western Canada and his son Justin is continuing the legacy of providing seed for forage producers in the Peace. Rich was one of the leaders in developing the alfalfa industry in the Peace River area. He was a pioneer in the alfalfa industry, always trying new techniques, perfecting the number of shelters, trying new varieties, and developing the leaf cutter bees' and the associated procedures for handling them and over wintering them in the Peace Region. In Don Pedersen's words "Rich is an innovative inventor, when it came to setting up an overwintering facility for his leaf cutter bees.

Rich had an "I come to you" motto, when ranchers needed seed. He would buy locally grown and locally cleaned seed from Golden Acres (he was one of their largest purchasers) and combine it with the seed he grew on his own farm to make Peace grown blends for Peace country ranchers. He is well known by ranchers and farmers throughout the region. "Rich was everywhere, a friend to all, and welcomed by all."

As Rich moves over for a younger generation, he is still remembered for his innovative marketing skills, while always maintaining the priority of furthering the forage seed industry. He and Don Pedersen were quite the dynamic duo, as they helped and fostered the formation of the Peace Region Forage Seed Association and were both strong supporters of the Peace River Forage Association of BC, each facilitating the growth of the forage/ forage seed industry in their own complimentary way.

This nomination was prepared by Julie Robinson, Heather Kerschbaumer, Doug Summer and Sandra Burton. The two authors of this article had the pleasure of delivering the award to Rich and enjoyed his "sharp as ever witty" commentary on agricultural, political and community issues.



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Bits & Pieces

by Assorted Authors

I see in the vintage Forage First newsletters that energetic roving reporter, E.H. Bine, used to provide you with Short Snorts. Deryle and I have repeatedly approached Mr. Bine for a return guest appearance and he is considering the request, with many ideas for discussion on a slow simmer on the back burner. In the meantime, here are some quick descriptions of items of interest from assorted authors. (Sandra)

The Peace Country Beef and Forage is organizing a number of **Pasture Walks** in the Alberta Peace this summer. Call **Jaimie** at (780) 523-4033 for more information.

Alberta Forage Manual by Arvid Aasen

The newly revised **Alberta Forage Manual** is now available from Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development. The updated information and the numerous colour photos and illustrations identifying different crop species, diseases and insects as well as photos explaining forage activities will provide comprehensive information on a range of forage topics for producers. The fully illustrated manual covers a wide range of information for the forage industry.

The manual is organized into 12 sections:

- Forage adaptation
- Legumes (9 major species)
- Grasses (23 major species)
- Annual forages
- Perennial forage establishment
- Forage fertility
- Tame pasture management
- Harvesting high quality forage
- Pasture and hay rejuvenation
- Forage pest insects
- Natural enemies of pest insects
- Forage diseases

The 348-page **Alberta Forage Manual** is meant to be used as a guide to forage production as it applies to Alberta. Plant growth and regrowth are affected by factors such as the soil climatic areas where they are grown as well as the forage species and the management and utilization of these species. The revised manual provides information producers can use to choose the crop variety best adapted to their specific area and planned usage. Cost of this manual (Aged 120/20-1) is \$30 plus GST, plus shipping and handling. Copies of the manual can be ordered by calling toll-free 1-800-292-5697 or by visiting www.agriculture.alberta.ca/publications

There is a **new Sod Seeding Manual** produced by Manitoba Forage Council and partners. We have started distributing these at events over the last few months. If you haven't been able to attend one of our

forage events and would like a copy mailed to you, contact **Sandra** at (250) 789 6885.

A **Grazing Group Mentorship** was hosted by Sarah Davies of Rainey Ranch in partnership with the Sustainable Grazing Mentorship Program. While the program sorts out its future for the new season, this lively group wants to continue on as a new grazing club, alternating turns hosting the discussions. The next meeting with a pasture walk is rumoured to be hosted by John and Patt Kendrew located in the Pouce Coupe Desert. Bring your sunscreen. *by Sandra Burton*

The newly **redesigned Forage Website** was demonstrated at a recent directors meeting. I have been working with Jeremy McDonald of Digital West and the website is a work in progress. If you have time to visit our website and see pages you would like to see improved or have suggestions for new pages, please contact me. *by Kim Strasky.*

The **Kiskatinaw Ecological Society** has created a website as its 1st major activity. The 2nd major activity, an annual commemorative gathering in honor of Mark Ernest Nimitz will be held each long weekend in August. For more details, contact us at nimitz@pris.ca or (250) 843-2300. *by Joanne Nimitz*

Pernilla Folkesson, a Swedish agronomist, recently visited our region to check out innovations in winter grazing. Glenn Hogberg toured with her to Kendrews' bale grazing, with Bill Wilson on hand to discuss his years of swath grazing. He introduced Pernilla to the Verbruggens' operation and looked at the Hogbergs' winter feeding to control aspen regrowth. Next stops with Sandra included checking out how Sarah Davies has dramatically reduced their feeding days at Rainey Ranch by utilizing stock piled grazing (as early as the 3rd week in March in some winters).

Meet **Holos** ! On April 1, Bruce Fatkin from Soil Conservation Council of Canada introduced us to Kristine Schlamp and Holos. They have invited us to re-ignite the partnership between the Forage Association and the Abbotsford Soil Conservation Association to test out this tool called Holos. See next page for more details.



Abbotsford Soil Conservation Association

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Greenhouse Gas Calculator to be Tested

*by Bruce Fatkin,
BC Taking Charge Team Leader*

Holos

*A tool to estimate and
reduce GHGs from farms*

The Abbotsford Soil Conservation Association (ASCA) will be participating in another in a series of projects around Greenhouse Gas emissions from farming. This latest is the first test of a new tool to help quantify how management changes in one area might impact emissions from other parts of an operation.

In recent years ASCA has contributed to a series of national programs aimed at helping farms identify Best Management strategies that also reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions, sometimes by storing carbon on-farm in soils, compost and plants. These projects, while useful, also pointed to the need to better identify and understand how making a change in one area of farm management might affect net Greenhouse Gas emissions in another area. For example, we need to know are the emissions from on-farm composting and eventual application less or more than surface application of raw manures in various operating styles.



With information gathered from previous on-farm work and from research at several universities, Agriculture and AgriFood Canada has taken the lead in developing a computer software program that we are hoping will help forecast the net changes in emissions from, even slight changes in farming practices. Participating farms will input information about their farm including current management. The Calculator indicates the likely Greenhouse Gas emissions from that farm. It then presents the opportunity to change facets of farm management and forecast the net changes in Greenhouse Gas emissions from the farm. Several combinations of scenarios can be explored.

Called Holos, the prototype is to be tested on just under 1,000 farms across Canada, including about 90 in B.C. Farms operators will be assisted in testing Holos by ASCA Coordinator Kristine Schlamp and other trained operators, such as Sandra Burton. The aim of the testing is to confirm the Calculator's relevance and usefulness and to identify additions and adjustments that will enhance the effectiveness of the program and help make Holos more user- friendly.



The Abbotsford Soil Conservation Association invites producers in the Peace River region to partner in testing of the calculator. This will enhance feedback toward creating a tool that is useful to all of BC Producers.

Soil Conservation Council of Canada projects (like the Holos demo) are overseen by provincial teams of volunteers called Taking Charge Teams. In BC, team members are producers from the Fraser Valley and the Peace River area of the province.

Lighter Side of Forage

by Shannon McKinnon



Peace Country Prairie Oysters

Living far from the rollicking coast line you might think we poor Peace country folk have never experienced the thrill of cracking open an oyster to reveal a pearl inside.

Excuse me while I stifle a bored yawn. Now pack up your misplaced sympathy and toss it on a fast bus heading south, because here in the Peace, our version of oysters make one small pearl seem about as consequential as rabbit poop. Up here we don't just get pearl after predictable pearl. Our prairie oysters yield fully formed jewelry; necklaces, bracelets, watches and rings. Try finding that in a regular oyster!

And for those of you trying to wrap your mind around finding a gold watch inside a bull's testicle, let me assure you that those are not the only prairie oysters in these here pastures. No siree ma'am. Okay, that last sentence made absolutely no sense.

Anyway, the prairie oysters I'm referring to are chickens. I don't mean scaredy cats - which is kind of a weird expression when you think about it. I mean how scared are cats, really? Especially the big ones. I am far more scared of a lion or a cougar than they would ever be of me. It would be far more appropriate to say scaredy humans. Or scaredy chickens. But I digress. The prairie oysters I am referring to are of the poultry kind; bona fide chickens with treasures inside.

A case in point is the story of Aaron Giles who lost his ID bracelet, only to have it show up inside a chicken gizzard 20 years later. A meat cutter found the bracelet complete with name, address and phone number engraved on it and with this dated information was able to track Giles down.

I have to admit that I was a bit skeptical when I first heard the story. I mean, how many chickens do you know that live to be 20 years old? But that was not the case.

Apparently Giles had spent a lot of time as a child playing in his grandfather's barn. "I would spend most of my time out at his farm and that's the only place I can think of that I would have lost it," Giles said. The 31-year-old also added that he would have been around four or five when the bracelet went missing. A few years ago the barn was dismantled and Giles believes the bracelet must have been lodged in the floor boards all that time and shook loose when the barn was being taken down. It was then gobbled up by a passing chicken that in turn ended up at the meat locker.

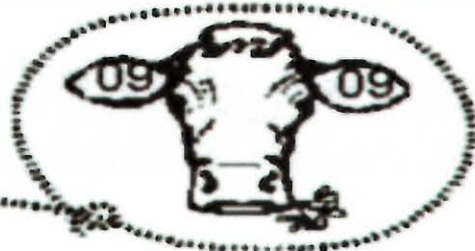
There are lots of stories like that one. In fact, when I was growing up in the rolling hills of Bessborough, rumours ran amok of a gentleman back in the thirties who found a gold nugget in his chicken's gizzard. Since his flock often scratched out a living down by Willowbrook Creek the news created a small gold rush. For a space of time everyone found an excuse to take a wash pan down to the creek under the guise of excellent personal hygiene, when in reality they were hoping to pan out a nugget or two to get them through the depression.

The skeptics in the community suspected the chicken had actually gobbled up a pendant from a necklace or some such thing, which was probably the case since to the best of my knowledge not so much as a speck of gold has never been found in Willowbrook Creek.

So there you have it. Checking a chicken's gizzards is just like checking an oyster for pearls. Chickens are the prairie people's answer to oysters. It gives the term "prairie oysters" a whole new meaning. And a far more pleasant one, I might add. But not for the chicken.

Shannon McKinnon lives on a small farm northwest of Dawson Creek, BC. You can reach her at peacecountry@msn.com

Peace River Forage Association of British Columbia



18th Annual Summer Forage and Livestock Tour Fairview, Alberta

Saturday June 20th, 2009

BC Time (AB Time)

7:00 am (8:00 am)

Registration and bus loading Fort St. John

7:30 am (8:30 am)

Depart Fort St. John

8:00 am (9:00 am)

Registration and bus loading Dawson Creek

8:30 am (9:30 am)

Depart Dawson Creek

9:30 am (10:30 am)

Laurie & Liann Read, (Silver Valley)

Holistic management & rotational grazing with sheep

11:30 to 1:00

(12:30 -2:00 pm)

Lunch in Fairview, in the park (weather permitting)

supplied by **Grassroots Bistro**

1:30 pm (2:30 pm)

Paul and Lori Kinnee, (Brownvale)

Bale grazing, milk vetch stands, spring seeding legumes and summer calving

3:00 pm (4:00 pm)

Wineglass Ranch – Ken Herlinveaux or Judy Bowcott (Grimshaw)

Cattle, bison, canola crusher for biodiesel

5:00 pm (6:00 pm)

Golden Acre Seeds -John & Heather Kershbaumer (Fairview)

Family operated seed processing plant, legume and grass stands

6:00 pm (7:00 pm)

Steak supper at Golden Acre Seeds

provided by **Douglas Lake Equipment**

10:00 pm (1:00 pm)

Return to vehicles Fort St. John

11:00 pm (12:00 pm)

Return to vehicles Dawson Creek

Cost: for Members \$30 each or \$50 per couple. Non-members \$40 per person.
Includes lunch, steak supper, bus ride and a great day!

Many Thanks to our Sponsors:

Peace River Agriculture Development (PRAD)

Douglas Lake Equipment

BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands