

FORAGE FIRST

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Fiftieth Special Edition

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\$10

Celebrating!

by Sandra Burton



One cause for celebrating: it actually rained in the "Pouce Coupe Desert" this July. No one minded getting soaked on the pasture walk at Kendrews' ranch, not even our youngest member, Jake Rainey!

The Forage Association is celebrating! We are saluting 50 editions of the Forage First newsletter with this Special 50th Edition Issue "Celebrating Forage, People and Their Diversity". The first issue was sent out to members in August 1992, and subsequent issues have continued the trend: to share valuable information with forage enthusiasts on a wide variety of topics, contributed by a wonderful diversity of authors. The fact that members continue to tell us they truly enjoy receiving the newsletter is a testament to the time, energy and thought our contributors have put into their articles. Thank you everyone. We have a couple of surprises for you in this issue. So please enjoy this special issue and join us in saluting the Forage First.

Inside This Issue:

- The Grazin' Patch
 - Congratulations
 - Tour Quiz
 - Interviewing Presidents
 - Years of Wildlife
 - Wildlife Timeline
 - Tour Highlights
 - Summer Events
 - Dance with Your Animals
 - Lighter Side of Forage
 - AGM and Other Events to Come
- Inserts:** 1992 First Edition of Forage First, 2010 Membership Form, a photo collage, two new Forage Facts & a list of PRFA equipment rentals

www.peaceforage.bc.ca

2009 Directors of the Peace River Forage Association of BC

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

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The Grazin' Patch

by E.H. & Disca Blne

Certainly everyone is familiar with the Oil Patch and all the jobs that they provide to the local citizenry and all the money that they bring to support the economy of the B.C Peace River Country. Now we are introducing something that is really important: "THE GRAZIN' PATCH"! Here you will get taste morsels not tasteless articles!

Nothing is more important on the earth towards achieving and maintaining a long-term healthy and balanced ecosystem than the proper management of the domestic grazing livestock, the resident wildlife and the totally wild varieties of grazing ungulates.

Meanwhile around "the GRAZIN PATCH", it appears that in London and Brussels the flavour of the month for the media and politicians may soon be **HATE CRIMES AGAINST AGRICULTURE**. Three gentlemen who come immediately to mind (not only for destroying their countries grazing resources; but, pretty well their entire agricultural production system as well) as excellent candidates are: Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe/Rhodesia; Joseph Stalin, the Soviet Union; Mao Tsetung, China.

Recently the Royal Order of Loyal Fireweed Lovers presented their award for **Political Scientists of the Century**. To who else: Al Gore ex-U.S. President and lifetime politician turned deluxe environmentalist and David Suzuki very well known Canadian scientist who now spends a lot of his time pushing the political pendulum around. This duo truly gives new meaning to the phrase political science! If you think these two dudes don't affect your ranching and grazing program give your head a shake.

When the Baler Twine Bunch did up their Environmental Farm Plan they decided that **anything that impacted environment of their ranching land unit (not just themselves, livestock and Farm Machinery) should be identified and solutions offered.**

So they prepared a new section and added it to the standard EFP forms. It dealt with various forms of pollution concerning the forestry industry and the oil patch which also are present amongst the grazing livestock and resident wildlife: Noise, Air, Water, Soil, Noxious plants. What a novel idea! There is limited comment as yet from the burrocrats down across the mountains who supervise the EFP program.

Are you interested in the **Natural Resources Conversation Service** dealing with soil, H₂O and grazing topics? Do you think farmers, ranchers, and rural land dwellers should have a bigger say in how their valley is developed? Well maybe you should check out **www.kiskatinawecologicalsociety.com** and become involved?

Some of the Reading List from the Society's Website
Conservation and citizen participation in the Cheney Lake Watershed **www.cheneylakewatershed.org**

The BC Forest Practices Board
<http://www.fpb.gov.bc.ca/fpb.htm>

Terms of reference for a special investigation. "A Cumulative Effect Assessment of the Kiskatinaw Planning Unit, Dawson Creek, B.C.

Guess where the photo was taken. This is where Santa stops his reindeer for a little browsing on Christmas Eve. (see page 9 for the answer!)



Congratulations on 50 Editions!

by Patsy Nagel

It is a real privilege for me to be asked to write a column for the Forage First Newsletter. Since I have retired from my Northern Horizon column, I have put most writing on the back burner. However, I would really like to thank Sandra Burton for asking me and I would also like to congratulate the Peace River Forage Association of BC for carrying on their publication, Forage First, to its 50th edition! Way to go!

We first became involved with the Forage Association in 1988 when we had one of our hay samples place first in the top legume hay class. This was when producers first began talking about an organization that would promote forage in the Peace. The BC Department of Agriculture was very encouraging and helpful in getting the new group operating. The organization began in 1992. I would credit Ernie Nimitz for getting the group off the ground. He was a serious ambassador and wanted to get forage promoted and improved here in the Peace. He also started the Forage First newsletter and produced it for several years.

At that time, I was interested in promoting all kinds of agriculture and attended as many meetings, etc. as I could. I enjoyed promoting the 4-H clubs, the beef producers, Agriculture in the Classroom, and the forage producers. I was concerned that our children were growing up 'agriculturally illiterate' so at the request of the BC Women's Institute, I got a program going here. I must thank the PR Livestock Association and Judy Madden for cooperating in starting the program here in the Peace. Many ranchers and farmers helped make this a very worthwhile program by hosting students to their farms and ranches and also going into classrooms to show and tell students about how they produced food. Jim Forbes, with the Dept. of Agriculture, was also very helpful with AITC and with the beef and forage programs.

As time went on, Ernie and his board made great strides in promoting forage in the Peace. Soon PFRA got involved by encouraging good water for livestock, fencing dugouts, using nose pumps, solar power for watering in pastures, and promoting winter watering systems. Ernie also organized tours to other areas to investigate swath grazing, rotational grazing, and low stress livestock handling. Many cattle producers are now using Bud Williams' system of moving cattle with less stress on the animals and also the handlers. Horst David was, and still is, a great promoter of Bud Williams' program and also the use of electric fencing for pasture rotation and farm dugouts.

When the local auction mart burned down, Forage members and True North Beef members helped to start a program for backgrounding calves in the fall and then having a sale at the site. This enabled producers to sell calves that were sorted as to size and could be sold by liner loads, making a few cents above other prices when shipping to other markets. This was a big help to those taking part in the venture.

Ernie Nimitz, John Kendrew, Glenn Hogberg, and Bill Wilson were strong promoters of this sale.

I remember going on a bus tour to the Rocky Mountain and Rimbey areas where we visited rotational grazing operations, and stock piled feed for winter pastures. While there we were treated to a real old fashioned supper at a local country hall. Although somewhat skeptical about how swath grazing would work in the Peace, I see some producers are using rotating pastures for summer and fall grazing with good results and are also doing swath grazing. Other forms of haying are also becoming more popular, such as silage in pits and also in bags. This helps when you can't get your hay dried! The Forage Association encouraged this and other ways of getting the most protein possible in hay and pastures.

Meetings in winter brought producers together to discuss problems and possible solutions. The Forage group also organized tours in the Peace so that producers could find out how different ways of feeding, watering, etc. worked. These tours turned out to be a popular social event with snacks and lunches, followed by a wonderful beef cook out in the evening. The bus is usually full for these excursions.

I was greatly honoured to be given a life membership in the Peace River Forage Association. a few years ago. Although I am now retired, I am still very interested in promoting agriculture and protecting our precious farm land here in the Peace. I am especially interested in saving and promoting the Peace River Valley for farming. It is microclimate and rich soil that make it some of the most valuable farmland in BC. It is capable of producing many of the fruits and vegetables now imported from the USA, Chili, Argentina, Mexico, Australia, and let's not forget, China! We, BC WI, have been lobbying the government to refuse BC Hydro's plans for Site C. I, for one, am very happy to see the giant wind turbines on Bear Mtn. turning to produce power without damaging farm land.

I remember when our Peace River Forage Association, hosted the BC Forage Council producers. Many had never been to the Peace and were very impressed with quality and diversity of our products and the very up to date equipment in use. The PRFA have been in the forefront in times of need, such as hay shortages, fencing of hay yards, wild life damage compensation, and brush control in pastures. Forage members were among the first to take part in the Environmental Farm Planning that the BC Government was proposing.

In fact, the PRFA have so many different areas they are active in that it is hard to remember all of them. Did you know that they had an Aerway that they rented out to enable ranchers and farmers to experiment with it as a tool for pasture aeration and rejuvenation?

(Con't next pg.)

In partnership with the PFRA staff in Dawson Creek, there was a demonstration of a pasture pipeline plough to put in pipe for remote water access; and another demonstration of dugout purification using chopped barley straw to reduce algae growth in dugouts. For a number of years, they rented out a 20 ft. Flexicoil 8000 air drill to enable members to experiment with direct seeding forage crops and/or placing fertilizer into forage stands. Many producers have become interested in improving and rejuvenating pastures, learning new ways to water their livestock, and reducing the cost of winter feeding, thanks to the Peace River Forage Association.

Congratulations *by Grant Lastiwka*

Thank you Sandra. This is an honour to be asked for comment on the Peace River Forage Association of BC in your 50th edition of Forage First. My first contact with your organization was back in 1995. Ernie, your key instigator, was arranging a bus trip for your members down to the Rimbey/Rocky Mountain House area. The purpose was to talk with Grey Wooded Forage Association members first hand. That great visit was a starting point of a long series of partnering that has continued to this day.

The first Western Canadian Grazing Conference in 1996 was my next contact with PRFA of BC. This turned out to be a huge success that you were a key part of. A group of PRFA members have come to each one of the six we have had since then. In 2008, PRFA member, Bill Wilson was a presenter for others to learn from.

With the start of the Western Forage Beef Group, in 1997 we were fortunate to have one of your members serve terms on the producer advisory board each year with Glenn Hogberg, Ernie Nimitz and Sarah Davies fulfilling the duties. They were very active in giving great feedback and making the science and art of research/extension come together.

I also had the fortune to come up and meet with you on your own turf. I attended one of your annual winter sessions at Farmington and talked about some of the extended grazing work the Western Forage Beef Group and I myself were doing. Ben Hanson and Glenn were great hosts as I was welcomed into their homes.

Whether it was Pasture Schools in Lacombe, Pasture Walks in the Western part of the Alberta Peace or input into the Alberta Forage Industry Network (A United Voice for Forages) it seems that we keep crossing paths. Your organization has had a lot of successes. I hope we continue to mutually benefit from continuing to partner as we move forward in forages.

Congratulations Forage First, and the Peace River Forage Association of BC!!

Members can attend seminars on many subjects, the pasture school in Lacombe, AB, or the annual grazing conference held in December. They can also enjoy a local winter forage seminar, or the Biannual Forage Fundraising Auction and Mid Winter Fun Day, usually in February. So, are you a member of the Peace River Forage Association? If not, just see what you are missing! The board members are listed on their web page - www.peaceforage.bc.ca - now isn't that right up to date! Congratulations and may you have many more years of promoting 'Forage First' in the Peace.



Patsy Nagel at a 1992 Field Day

Forage Association History **Quiz from Tour**

Our forage history buff and quiz winner, Bill Wilson, requested that this quiz from the summer tour bus ride be shared with rest of our membership. If you are really stumped, you will find the answers later in this issue.

1. What year was the Peace River Forage Association formed?
2. Can you name the original 7 directors when the Forage Association was recognized as a non profit association?
3. The famous dance step "The Moo Cow Three Step" was taught to forage members in what year and can you describe "The Moo Cow Three Step"?
4. What was the name of your roving reporter, who covered events and shared items of interest in the Forage First newsletter over many years? Where was he from?
5. What was the name of the local ranch that won a top award in Canada, The Fantastic Foraging and Conversational Conservationists Ranch of the Year Trophy in 1996?
6. Now she is an animated and respected speaker at many events. When was Julie Robinson's first public speaking to this group, and what was the topic?

Find the answers on page 9

Celebrating Our Diversity

Interviews by Sandra Burton

Glenn Hogberg (1992-1993) Don Pedersen (1998-1999) Arnold Bennett (2000-2001)
Chuck Sutherland (2002-2005) Rick Kantz (2006-2009)

1. When and how did you first become involved with the Forage Association? Or what first attracted you to the Forage Association?

Glenn: "Back in 1992, our goals were to get producers together to share information. We wanted to learn more about extending the grazing season and which varieties to grow. I think many of us found out that we had lots of knowledge right here in this region."

Don: "Well, Ernie can be very persuasive. I got involved because I thought I had some knowledge about growing forages that I could share, like things I had learned the hard way, such as the link between winterkill and nutrition, or different establishment practices that reduce the competition and risk for the forage plants."

Arnold: "I was there at the very first meeting, and just felt I should continue to go."

Chuck: "I attended some field days about some demos in Sunset Prairie, and was impressed with the intelligent discussions. I liked getting new information from this group and discussing it with my neighbour, Johann Tietjen."

Rick: "I came to the Peace Pasture School and decided to get involved with the Forage Association because it fit in with what I was doing."

2. What was the most memorable moment during your term? Or what was your favourite event or project organized by the Forage Association? Or what was your biggest challenge when you were on the Board?

Glenn: "The first big challenge I remember from the early years was participating in drought meetings. We found that being part of an association gave us more of a voice than we had as individuals. But it was very challenging for us to come up with a common strategy amongst all the different agricultural commodities."

Arnold: "The best memories were going on the grassland tours and seeing crops in other areas. My biggest challenge while I was president was: not knowing what to do or how to handle the people there." (Arnold's favourite expression during those lively controversial meetings was "Okay! I think we have thrashed out that topic enough. Let's move on!")

Chuck: "One of the most memorable moments was the pasture walk in Kilkerran in 2002. Another unforgettable moment was meeting a dairy farmer at the Lacombe Pasture School, who left more residue for his land after grazing, than we get here to bale. But my favourite time was getting a nutrient demo here, and what we learned by doing that."

Rick: "Our biggest challenge is how to get more people willing to get involved and move ideas out beyond our core group. We used to get people involved with hands on, grass roots projects. But as we have grown, we have had to get more politically active and deal with bigger regional issues. We have become a sounding board for policy makers and this has detracted from time for working on projects."

3. Why do you continue to be a member of the Forage Association? Is the Forage Association still providing what you are looking for?

Glenn: "We are still trying to improve our operation, and the Forage Association helps us take an idea from a workshop to the next step and apply it to our operation. That is why the R & D Committee has made equipment available to its members to try for a time such as the Aerway, the zero till drill and now the manure spreader."

Don: "The main attraction is the camaraderie and sharing of knowledge. You can't go to a field day or seminar without coming home with some new idea. It is so good to talk with others who share an interest in forage."

Arnold: "I am still trying to figure that out myself. I continue to be a member for the knowledge I get from the newsletters and meetings."

Chuck: "The people I have met in this group are all whackos and weirdoes! They are free thinkers with the most brilliant ideas. I don't know where they come up with these things."

4. What have been the key triggers or driving forces for the Forage industry and/ or the Forage Assoc.? Where do you see the Forage Assoc. in the next 5 to 10 years?

Glenn: "Ernie was our visionary, but he was 10 years ahead of his time. He had this idea of creating Long Term Forage Productivity Benchmarks to record how our cattle and grazing practices were an asset to the environment. If we had taken this positive proactive holistic approach, it would have fit in so well with current Environmental Farm Plans; and we would have long term reference points."

Arnold: "If there are still any cattle producers left at the current market prices, we will need new producers with new ideas to upgrade these old brains."

Chuck: "I think a key driving force was getting Soil Conservation Council of Canada funds. That really opened up possibilities for us. This manure-compost project has really taken my attention now. It is what we need to look at next."

Rick: "Wildlife is still a big issue in our region. The issues and projects change as the context surrounding our farms and ranches change and what's the hot topic of the day. Today – to be exact - my compost is hot!"

Presidents we will catch up with in future editions are Steve Shipton (1994) and Keith Weaver (1995-1997)

Years of the Wildlife

by Julie Robinson

The other day while talking with Burnem Grant, I asked him how he first got started with the wildlife committees and initiatives. He pointed to Glen Kilgour, who was standing next to us and said "Glen provided the idea that got the ball rolling for him." After supper one night Glen and Burnem had been talking about agriculture and wildlife conflicts in the Peace and possible solutions. Glen had said, "If you really want to get governments attention about wildlife and agriculture conflicts, you need to threaten the hunting on private land."

Burnem took this concept to Ernie Nimitz, and through Ernie's perseverance and persistence, he and Burnem wrote a letter to the government bodies and PRRD threatening to boycott hunting on private land. Burnem said "all of sudden we had everyone's attention and people were willing to talk about the wildlife problems on agriculture land and resident wildlife and the challenges we presented."

There were many steps along the way and many people who played key roles in assisting this initiative, Karen Gooding, chair of the Peace River Regional District Problem Wildlife Committee, being one. While the above letter was being written by the PRFA, by Burnem and Ernie, many other people were meeting trying to solve wildlife challenges at a government level, (Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture) but this group had been at a stalemate for quite a while. The idea came forward that this should really be a working group consisting of all stakeholders including producers and other interest groups. Karen was instrumental in leading and initiating the PRRD Problem Wildlife Committee that is still functioning today. This a group of all interested parties that meets biannually to discuss wildlife challenges and work towards solutions. This committee has been shared as a role model for what other regions in the province should be working towards. Thanks to all those people who have given their time over the years to make this a success.

Brian Clarke remembers "We joined the Forage Association back when they had forage competitions. We knew how to feed dairy cows but we were moving into beef cows. I learned so much in those early years about grazing, waterers, fencing and zero till; and I still remember how the things learned from Calvin Yoder at those early seminars. Because of the dairy work, I was the one who got to go; but now Andrew is going to the seminars, and we have interesting discussions when he gets home."

The PRRD Problem Wildlife Committee has built a tool chest of mitigation options for local producers and one of the feathers in this committee's hat was the Stackyard Fencing Program (funded by the Green Fund, then Investment Agriculture Fund, and finally the Environmental Farm Plan Program). Andy Ackerman was instrumental in getting this program going in the Peace. This program is no longer available but during its time assisted many producers in our region with fencing their stored feed. There are still many other mitigation options to be explored.

Both Burnem and Karen, and many others involved in these initiatives have always felt "It should be mitigation first, compensation second." Over the past couple of years Ministry of Agriculture and Lands has implemented a provincial compensation program which now provides some support to both forage and grain producers. Producers feel that the province is still in need of a complimentary provincial wildlife mitigation strategy supported by Ministry of Environment. There has been progress in mitigation in our region but Karen and other have always felt that mitigation is more than just hunting.

This fall the PRRD Problem Wildlife Committee will be hosting a regional mitigation workshop, open to all interest groups. This will be held at the end of October and we look forward to seeing you all there with your valuable input.

Thoughts From Our Members

John Kendrew comments "A key trigger for me was a seminar our association hosted at the George Dawson Inn in January, 1999. We talked about keeping our calves in the Peace. I think that spark of an idea led to our current efforts with True North Beef."

Ben Hansen says "I will never forget our tour to Rimbey and Rocky Mountain House area when we went to Ula deBruin's pastures and the discussions we had there about watching the cow patties."

Glenn Hogberg thinks "My involvement with the Forage Association led to getting involved with PRASP. For the first time, many smaller commodity groups were able to get funds easily and effectively to develop their industries through PRASP facilitation."

Wildlife Damage Compensation & Mitigation Timeline

- 1995-1999 Wildlife issues were simmering on a number of burners. Burnem Grant organizes a network of volunteer Forage members to help MOE with wildlife counts.
- 1999 Burnem Grant and Ernie Nimitz write key letter threatening to boycott hunting on private land.
- 2000 Karen Goodings instrumental in the PRRD Wildlife Committee expanding to include all interested stakeholders and producer groups.
- 2000-2001 Two wildlife workshops instigate lively discussion amongst a variety of groups, organized and facilitated by PRFA of BC.
- 2000-2004 Key ideas and terminology became accepted such as "resident wildlife" and "social carrying capacity" rather than just "ecosystem carrying capacity"
- 2001 to 2004 Grazing ungulates as part of the winter forage losses documented by Tom Pittman and Sandra Burton during 3 year alfalfa winterkill study.
- 2003 to 2004 First funding is available for ranchers for Stackyard Fencing under Green Fund.
- 2005 to 2008 Stackyard funding was available for a time under Environmental Farm Plan program.
- Summer 2005 Assessment methods were developed and recognized provincially for wildlife grazing damage when key provincial people, including Mike Malmberg, Greg Tegart, Wray McDonnell visit the Peace and producers fields such as Len Donaldson.
- Fall 2005 Peace River Forage Association move from documenting damage during growing season to emphasis on damage during dormant season.
- Fall 2005 Wildlife excretia problem in grain industry shuts down markets. BCGPA is effective in getting provincial recognition of issue.
- 2005-2006 Drought for all commodities in the region and shortage of feed in the Peace Region. Beginning of monitoring of losses due to wildlife in grain crops.
- 2005- 2006 Work on hunting regulations. Structured decision making process in Min of Environment meant consultative hunting regulation revisions.
- Winter 2006 Moose & deer were sick and starving throughout the region. Huge losses of stored feed were incurred by ranchers in our area.
- 2006 8 producers from Peace receive first compensation through a pilot project through PREP efforts.
- 2007-2008 Julie Robinson and Todd Bondaroff develop the first provincial wildlife compensation program ("fanning all the candles lit by other members of the team along the way throughout the years.")
- 2008-2009 Rick Kantz represents both PRFA of BC and BCGPA on wildlife issues provincially.
- Fall 2009 PRRD Wildlife Committee revisits tool chest for mitigation & host a regional mitigation workshop.

*Note to members: Timeline presented here as the "young upstarts" remember it.
Please do correct us where you feel we haven't got it quite right.
We seek your help in documenting this valuable part of our history as an association.*

Tour Highlights

On the Road Again

by Megan Harwood

This year, the tour kicked off in Dawson Creek, where eager attendees were greeted by a scrumptious supply of coffee and doughnuts (as well as a few special-order cherry cheese danishes). After some kind words and a joke from our friendly bus driver from Napp'n Sons, we hit the road for our first stop at Laurie and Lianne Read's in Silver Valley, Alberta.



Laurie Read led us out into his field where he explained his rotational grazing with sheep and their holistic management practices. Read explained that they had recently broken new land, and in order to keep new brush and willows from coming up, they let the sheep do what they do best and watched as their grazing did an impressive job at keeping the willows at bay. This cut down on operating costs and made for some happy sheep. In previous years, the Reads had been hard-hit by predation from both the coyotes and wolves. They tackled this obstacle by weaning the lamb's only a day before they were sent to market. Not only did this relieve stress on the sheep, but the protection of the lambs from the ewes severely cut down on predation.

After a fantastic lunch in Fairview at the Grassroots Bistro, the bus pulled off the highway at Grimshaw and stopped by a grazing field to meet with Paul and Lori Kinnee. Here, they have incorporated cicer milk vetch into their grassland to increase the nitrogen in the soil. They seeded the vetch 7 years ago and started to see results after 4 years. The field was intensively grazed, and the action of the cattle hooves helped the seeds to break out of their pods and become buried in the soil. Members were awed at the impressive stand, as milk vetch is known for being such a hard plant to establish. Duane Friesen commented, "I am impressed at how the milk vetch thrives with livestock traffic; and it will be interesting to see how long the stand lasts."

The Kinnee's also showed us their bale grazing site, where the manure from the cattle helps enrich the nutrients in the soil. Although there is a lot of residue left on the ground from the bales, it was noticed that there were a few sprouts of meadow brome growing through, thriving in the moist soil, which was kept moist by the residue.

Canola Crush & Clean Clover

by Courtney Thompson

This summer's PRFA tour was held on the road with stops in Silver Valley, Brownvale, Grimshaw and Fairview, Alberta; and was so packed full of events that it lasted until 11 pm.

In Grimshaw, our stop was at Wineglass Ranch, operated by Ken Herlinveaux and Judy Bowcott. Here we learned about the process of making bio-diesel using heated

canola and camelina. It takes a 50 lbs bushel to make 8L of bio-fuel, and the left over components are used as supplements for the cattle that are raised there. The set up at the ranch was very impressive and made for a lot of conversation between the tour attendees. When Walter Fritsche entered the bus with a 4L milk jug containing some finished product he was asked, "Taking a souvenir Walter?" he replied, "Yeah, we can make a salad, or I can put it in my tractor." The presses that were used for crushing the canola were from Europe and China, and can be seen at www.oilpress.com

The next stop on the tour was Golden Acre Seeds, where we were welcomed with the aroma of steaks being grilled, courtesy of Douglas Lake Equipment. On the agenda was a wonderful tour provide by Mike Ash of the fescue and brome grass cleaning plant that showcased the process of cleaning the seeds through a series of screens. The next site on our expedition was to the hard seed separating facility where small seeds such as alfalfa, clover and timothy are separated and cleaned. The sieve machine in this building fills 40 bags an hour, and the seed count for a pound of seed can reach a million. Golden Acre Seeds is a custom cleaning resource that is utilized by many growers in the Peace River Region, and offers specialty services such as cleaning small batches and native seeds as well as blending custom mixes of seeds.

After a wonderful dinner and riveting conversations, we said goodbye to our friends from Fairview and headed back to Dawson Creek. Thank you to all of our sponsors: Peace River Agriculture Development (PRAD), Douglas Lake Equipment, Golden Acre Seeds, BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, Dawson Creek Vet Clinic, Keddie's Tack and Western Wear, Peace River Regional District and the North Peace Veterinary Clinic. Without your support this tour would not have been a possibility. And a final thank you to Chris Thomson who organized this brilliant tour; her hard work and dedication made this tour run smoothly and gave many people a day to remember.

Forage Events Over the Summer

by Sandra Burton

As we reflect back over the past months, we had a whole host of smaller but memorable forage events this summer! Courtney Thompson has compiled a photo collage to accompany this article and to give you some glimpses.

A central headliner this year was the wedding of Heather Fossum to Ryan Frost on June 6th. Competing for "rare and special events" status was both Julie and Heather in fancy dresses. Wow! Many of you will remember the years and energy both these ladies have put into the Forage Association.

Darrell and Nancy Peterson held their farm auction on June 13th. There was definitely an eclectic grouping of members there. Keith and Marilyn Carroll came to buy a horse trailer and instead, went home with a Weaver horse named Lily.

The 4 pasture walks were a great time for those that could participate in them. The first was when Walter Fritsche hosted Courtney, Megan and I for a delightful pasture walk, where he showed us different ways he had tried establishing forage stands and spreading manure/fertilizer on them. We were impressed with all the tree planting he had done, and we also enjoyed meeting Victoria, the donkey that was boarding there.

In June, John Kendrew, Bill Wilson and I joined in a Pasture Walk with Wayne Burleson in the Fairview area. Bill wondered "What will Jaime pull out of her pickup next?" as she took care of logistics "behind the scenes". John enjoyed Wayne being a lively spark in our pasture assessment group and showing us a quick way to estimate forage yields.

July's pasture walk was hosted by John and Patt Kendrew, where we all celebrated rainfall in the "Pouce Desert". John showed us a pasture where he had bale grazed last winter. He told us of the variety of management styles: "Jodi moves the cattle with her horse, Bill moves the cattle with his dog, and I move the cattle with Patt!" If pasture walks bring rain, John says, "I will be hosting next year's event much sooner in the summer."

On August 1, the extended Nimitz family hosted a Memorial Trail Ride and Pasture Walk, with about 30 riders taking part. Michael was our trail boss, mounted on a young horse with an interesting collage of tack that was left, after he found mounts and tack for all his cousins. Burnem Grant, Lorraine White, Fred and Barb Burres all brought fleets of grandchildren, so there was a wonderful mixture of age groups represented. We honoured Mark's fun loving spirit by sprinkling the sad times of the day with lots of laughter.

There were other highlights for our summer students. Courtney energetically helped with the Beaton Swine 4H Club at their Achievement Day at the North Pine Fairgrounds. Megan redesigned and built our own compost tea brewer. She and Deryle Griffith came up with improvements that make the brewing equipment and process easier and more economical for members to consider on their own.

We took advantage of Rob Davidson's visit to the Peace to have a Friendly Forage Field Day on Aug 17. Rob demonstrated how easily and quickly that electric fence could be put up, using the Powerflex post system. Marilyn Carroll enthused "I could put up this fence with my young grandsons." There was a great exchange of fencing tips and shortcuts amongst those attending. After the fencing demo, Megan Harwood summarized her work with compost temperature and moisture at Hogbergs, and Courtney Thompson described the weed seed viability with composting study that we are initiating with Rick Kantz.

Forage, food and fellowship are always a winning combination. And true to our tradition, each of these events featured foraging new ideas, enjoying fabulous food and meeting interesting people.

Answers to Forage Association History Quiz

(from page 4)

1. The Forage Association was formed in 1992.
2. The original 7 directors were: Glenn Hogberg, Robert Tubb, Steven Shipton, Ernest Nimitz, James Scafe, Harvey Wiles and Arnold Bennett.
3. The Moo Cow Three Step was taught to members in 1995. It is described in the article "Dance with Your Animals" on page 10 in this newsletter.
4. E.H. Bine from Moo Mountain was your roving reporter for many years.
5. The local ranch that won The Canadian Fantastic Foraging and Conservational Conservationists Ranch of the Year Trophy in 1996 was the Runnemwild Land and Cattle Company, near Moose Gravel Butte.
6. Julie's first public speaking was about the Aerway project standing on the Aerway during 2001 Summer Tour.

The photo on page 2 was taken by Michael Nimitz from a small plane somewhere south of the Nahanni River.

Dance with Your Animals

Compiled by Sandra Burton

As you handle and move your livestock this fall, remember to dance with your animals. It's fun! I have tried it! Our current situation means that we walk or ride our horses 1 km each morning to graze and back again each evening to their home corral. The morning trip tends to resemble a fast paced **Bavarian polka**, while the evening stroll can be more like an **old time waltz**. If a big truck goes by us on the highway, our dance becomes a quick stepping **line dance** deeper into the ditch. Here are 2 dances you can try with your cattle: the **moo cow three step** or the **weedy belly dance**.

The Moo Cow Three Step

There is a new dance gaining quite a bit of popularity all around the Peace Country. It goes something like this: One step forward towards the cow, then you swing and sway to get her attention better, and take 2 steps backward away from her. Now 2 steps forward towards the cow always in a straight line and at an angle to the front $\frac{2}{3}$ of her body, swing and sway some more, then take a step backwards and away. Then you waltz her around the pen or pasture slowly and she goes quietly and calmly in the direction she wants to go which just so happens to be the directions you want her to go!

Bud and Eunice Williams of Lloydminster, Alberta are the "dance masters" and if you attend one of their Low Stress Animal Handling Seminars, you will get exposed to this concept plus many other useful techniques in handling your cattle and other animals in a less stressful way to both improve your relationship with your animals and their productive and economic performance for you..

Excerpt by Ernest Nimitz, reprinted from Forage First 14th Edition, October, 1995

The Weed Eating Belly Dance

I am learning to belly dance and it turns out that the techniques for improving my dancing are very similar to what I do to get cows to try a weed in pasture that they've been eating in training.

It's all about practicing in the right kind of environment. A little bit of pressure gets us to try harder. When there's no performance coming up, attendance at practice is more hit and miss. Troupe members have busy lives and without the pressure of a performance looming, we all tend to do what we always do in our daily lives. But, set a date for a performance and everyone gets back to the Grange for practice!

It's the same for animals learning to eat weeds. Even though they've demonstrated they can eat a new weed from a tub, given the option, they'd just as soon not practice harvesting it on their own. It's so much easier for them to do what they've always done. To give them some incentive to try, I create pressure by reducing the size of the pasture. They still have plenty of their familiar

forages, but the smaller pasture gives them the perception of scarcity, encouraging them to try harder. I recently worked with ranchers in Montana to teach cows and bison to eat Canada thistle. The most common mistake made was that the training pastures were too large. Your animals will do best in pastures with only about 1 to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ days of forage. Pastures larger than that seem to slow the learning process. It also helps take a good look at the mix of forages in your pastures. If the percentage of grass is high and the percentage of weeds is small, expect that they will eat a greater percentage of grass than weeds. Unless you overgraze your pasture, cows are not going to eat everything available.

We improve one small step at a time. My first performance was last December, only 4 wk after my first class. My troupe made it possible for me to participate by letting me be part of the chorus. I danced in the background and didn't have to lead any of the improvisational parts. I had fun and felt like I could succeed, so I was willing to lead a bit on our performance this past May. With that success under my jingling belt, I'm now preparing for my first solo.

To give my training animals the same chance to succeed, I use a series of small pastures. For example, when training cows to eat the extremely prickly Italian thistle, we didn't require them to eat the entire weed immediately. In the first pasture we could see by the bent over stems that they had gummed the tops in an effort to learn to eat them, and they'd eaten some of the large leaves from the bottom of the plant. Once the grass in that pasture was gone, rather than force them to eat the remaining weeds and risk them having a negative experience, we sent them to another small pasture. It took a series of about 5 small pastures before they were routinely nipping off the buds and leaves. When I turned them into large pastures, they continued their practice, eating more and more as they went.

Some belly dancing steps and some weeds require more practice than others. Late season diffuse knapweed was easy for Boulder County cows, perhaps because the size of the stems were more similar to the grass they were accustomed to wrapping their tongues around. From the first day in pasture, they were grazing it from one end of the pasture to the other. They quickly transferred their new knowledge to musk thistle, and this year, when I went back to visit there was almost no diffuse knapweed or musk thistle in the trial pasture...

Excerpt by Kathy Voth, reprinted from The Stockman Grass Farmer Magazine, the grass farming publication of North America. For a free sample issue: call 1-800-748-9808 or 1-601-853-1861, fax 601-853-8087 or visit www.stockmangrassfarmer.com and fill out the sample request form, or write us at SGF Sample, P O Box 2300, Ridgeland MS 39158-2300.

Lighter Side of Forage

by Shannon McKinnon



THE SHEEPISH TRUTH ABOUT COFFEE

Sheep get no respect. Oh sure, we might appreciate the pastoral image of a flock grazing on a green hillside. We might even think "wool sweaters are warm" or "mint jelly goes nice but I prefer rosemary" but respect? Not a chance.

See that Tim Horton's down the street? See all those people lined up like . . . like . . . like humans? Well, they wouldn't even be there if it weren't for sheep. They wouldn't be at Starbucks neither or for that matter at any of the coffee houses across the globe. But do you ever see a sheep on a coffee shop sign? How about their coffee cups? Or their menus? Nope, not a single woolly one. Not very respectful if you ask me.

What am I babbling about? I thought you'd never ask. According to my extensive research coffee beans were first discovered by a flock of sheep in Caffa, Ethiopia. Kaldi, their herder, noticed that his sheep became extra bouncy after eating red beans from a certain plant. Curious, he tried eating a few of these beans himself and was soon bouncing around the hill tops as vigorously as his herd. Word of these magical energy inducing beans soon spread and it wasn't long before the beans were being dried and brewed into the coffee we know and wake up for today.

So there you have it. The whole shebang started with Kaldi's sheep. Well, and Kaldi too. But without those bean nibbling sheep who knows how long it would have taken us to discover caffeine? Maybe never. Scary but true.

If this unsettling news should keep you awake tonight, try counting sheep. That's kind of ironic when you think about it. The animal that gave us the beverage we use to wake us up in the morning is the same animal we think about to lull us to sleep at night.

Not only did sheep discover the great brew bean, they were also aviation pioneers. Back in 1783 the Montgolfier brothers designed a hot air balloon and were eager to give it a launch. There was some concern, however, about the effects of the upper atmosphere on human life.

King Louis XVI of France and his Queen, Marie Antoinette, looked the balloon over and generously offered to send up a couple criminals for its trial run, but the inventors decided to send up a brave delegation from the barnyard instead.

This brave delegation consisted of a sheep, a duck and rooster. In truth, they weren't so much braver, as they were slower than their more fortunate barnyard companions. Thus caught, the sheep and his fowl weather friends were tossed into the basket and up they soared into the blue skies of September 19, 1783 in front of an appreciative crowd at the royal palace in Versailles. No doubt, somewhere deep below the city, criminals experienced a new and unexpected appreciation for the comparative safety of their cells.

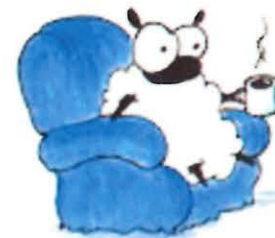
The flight lasted approximately eight minutes, covered two miles, and obtained an altitude of about 1500 feet. It would have lasted longer, but the craft tipped wildly upon launch allowing valuable hot air to spill from its mouth. Fortunately, the animals survived the flight and it was reported in the Versailles Daily News that the sheep "was discovered nibbling calmly on straw while the cock and the duck cowered in a corner."

Interesting that it was the one least capable of flight that was the most calm. You might say the sheep was too stupid to realize what was afoot - or afly as it were - and you would probably be right.

Still, I don't think it's fair that the discoverer of the bean was treated in such a lowdown - or in this case high up - fashion.

The next time you see a sheep you might want to raise your coffee mug and give them a thank you for their selfless contribution to humankind, though they would probably prefer oats.

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



**Peace River Forage Association
Annual General Meeting**

December 1, 2009
Taylor Community Hall

3:00 – 9:00 PM

3:00 Assemble at hall

3:30 – 4:30

Working stock dog demo with **Pam Boring** at Ben & Wilma Hansen's

4:30 Return to Hall

5:00 – 6:30

Supper and speaker, **Simon North** on *Guard Dogs for Predator Protection*

6:30 – 9:00 AGM

For more info or to register call Chris
at 250-789-6885

Look for these coming Events

Early February 2010:

Rob Davidson: *The latest in electric fencing & stock watering options & wildlife control*

Tentative Date:
April 7, 2010

Speaker:

Jill Clapperton, Ph.D.

Soil biologist currently residing in Montana, formerly with Ag Canada in Lethbridge, AB

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