

# FORAGE FIRST

"Published by the Peace River Forage Association of British Columbia"

Fifty-First Edition

January 2010

\$10

## Man's Best Friend

by Sandra Burton



*Attendees at the 2009 AGM enjoy a sheep dog demo presented by Pamela Boring as her daughter Sandra Cushway provides explanations and answers questions*

Members and their guests enjoyed learning more about working dogs before the recent Forage AGM on December 1<sup>st</sup> in Taylor. As Nelda Bennett says "The sheep dog demo at Ben and Wilma Hansen's place was awesome! It was interesting and Pam and her daughter are so personable." Then with a hearty hot supper (catered by Shirley Smithard) we were treated to Simon North's knowledge and sense of humor as he shared why he has guard dogs for his sheep. During the AGM, 2 new directors were elected: Freddy Schneider from Pouce Coupe and Don Kruse from Wonowon. Chris Thomson has compiled interesting articles to help you get to know them.

*See inside for more details.*

### Inside This Issue:

AGM in Review  
New Director Profiles  
True North Beef  
President's Message  
Kiskatinaw Ecological Society  
Lighter Side of Forage  
Events

### Inserts:

Membership Form 2010  
Forage Fact #49: Why Bother  
Composting?(for pd up members)

[www.peaceforage.bc.ca](http://www.peaceforage.bc.ca)

### 2010 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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Newsletter & Composting - Sandra Burton			Events & Membership - Chris Thomson		Newsletter & Website - Kim Strasky	



# AGM in Review

by Don and Eva Kruse

The December 1, 2009 Peace River Association AGM held at the Taylor Community Hall once again provided us with further information and additional challenging ideas with which to improve our varied agricultural businesses.

Our day started at 3 pm with a trip to Ben & Wilma Hansen's farm to watch and learn some very beneficial, skilful handling of working a stock dog, with our top "Dog Trials Winner" Pamela Boring from Pink Mountain, BC.

Her daughter Sandra Cushway also a stock dog & dog obedience trainer, kept us informed through-out the demo both in answering questions and in explanation. Pamela demonstrated the amazing skills and intelligence of her Border Collie dogs, through her very skilled expertise and close bond she has established with her dogs.

This was an especially informative demo, as we were shown how difficult a feat it can be, for a dog to obey commands and work sheep that were not used to being herded with a dog. The demo also showed us the heart of the dog to truly work for his master. The skill of both dog and handler were amazing

We were shown the ability of two different working dogs, one of which was older and the other a younger dog, still in training. Both were truly impressive. Pam trains her dogs on sheep to start with and then uses them to work cattle. Of great benefit to ranchers old or young alike!

We wish to thank Ben & Wilma for their generous help in providing their farm & clearing all the snow so we could have the demo. We also thank the South Peace Colony for providing & delivering the sheep for this informative opportunity and our sincere thanks to Pamela, Sandra and all 4 dogs for such an interesting demo. The two puppies were especially attractive!

After a delicious supper served back at the hall & enjoyable visiting, we were provided with another very helpful and informative presentation. This was by Simon North. Simon raises sheep, and as sheep producers all know, predators are a real problem. Coyotes being the main hazard but wolves, bears and foxes also can soon reduce all your profits, as they do love lamb & mutton as well. Simon gave us a very beneficial presentation on the breeds of guard dogs that will protect your flock and he also shared information on how best to train the dogs.

For example, when they are puppies, have them sharing close relationship with the sheep and becoming their friend & protectors in early life. Thanks so much Simon for your very interesting & enlightening presentation & answers to our questions.

As always, most interesting are the ongoing testing monitoring of: composts, temperatures taken to determine the effectiveness of destroying weed seeds in the compost and what all final conclusions have been obtained are valuable information to all in the agriculture business.

We wish to thank the Peace River Forage Association for their most beneficial organization & look forward to the ongoing presentations and speakers in the future.

## New Director Profile

by Freddy Schneider

Our farm is a cow/calf operation with mostly black and a few red angus. We also do some custom feeding with cows, replacer heifers and backgrounding calves.

My wife, Liz and I manage the farm. While Liz knows every number of every cow, I'm responsible for feed ration and pasture planning. Both of our sons and our daughter are involved in our business too.

We have been members of the Forage Association since 2007. The interesting Summer Tour in the North Peace first attracted me. I also like the educational events with speakers on all kinds of topics. We have not lived very long in the Peace Region, so I don't belong to many other organizations.

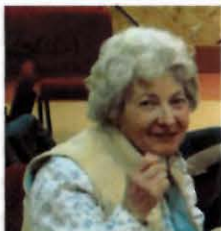
I have always been interested in growing forage and grazing cows. Through the Forage Association and a grazing mentor, I have learned a lot about growing forage and grazing cows properly in a region with not much rain. I have enjoyed being a member of the Forage Association and I am looking forward to working as a member of the board.

### Join the Temple Grandin Reading Club!

- ✓ Animals In Translation
- ✓ Animals Make Us Human
- ✓ Thinking In Pictures

Call Sandra or Julie to borrow these books.  
Read these and then join us in June to meet this world renowned author!





## New Director Profile

by Eva Kruse



Don and I have had a cow-calf operation since the 1960's. We started out with just a few cattle and then bought 200 head of sheep. The sheep were an ideal whole family venture since our five children were all old enough to really enjoy lambing out and were very helpful. Shearing was a bit of a problem to arrange, finding shearers when the timing worked for all. Don sheared our sheep a couple of years but it was very hard on his back. We developed a nice lucrative business in home butchering and selling cut and wrapped lamb to most of the doctors in Fort St. John. Business grew and we both enjoyed it. However, eventually trouble came in a form with which we could not compete. Predators, both coyotes and wolves, ended our sheep raising venture and we began to start selling them by the early & mid 1980's.

There was a demand for custom land clearing and breaking in the mid 1970's so we gradually purchased more and more big equipment. Don worked out, first in the oil field between clearing fields, building our house, etc. We all worked at making a home and ranch from our land, which was crown land and not surveyed in the beginning. It was April 1962 when we moved onto our land. Don purchased a couple of trucks, hired a driver and hauled logs from the local small bush operations into the big saw & planer mill in Wonowon.

Next, he worked out for Indian Affairs and built and renovated homes, hauled gravel and put in watering systems. The five kids and I kept the farm work going while Don worked out. We sold eggs, fryers, garden vegetables, milk & cream to over 20 customers, so life was never boring. Home schooling our children for 6 years, driving the local school bus, plus substitute teaching when needed, for 22 years was truly a busy time, but a real enrichment. With the combined income we bought enough big equipment for Don and the 3 boys to do custom land work from McBride to all around the north Peace area and as far north as Pink Mountain.

When interest rates began to rise in the early 1980's, the land development work pretty well ended. We then had more time to further develop our own land, which is still an ongoing dream being fulfilled.

A woodlot venture drew our interest and was a very viable and worthy project to start with in the mid to late 1980's, until all the rules agreed upon got changed by the government. Don & our sons all trapped on our land for several years when fur prices were worthwhile. It was a good business lesson for the boys as they took pride in a well dressed pelt and learned about the sales part of a business as well.

We continued to increase our herd of cattle and ran up to 200 head of commercial bred beef cattle. In the last 15 years we have preferred a Gelbveih cross herd. Our whole operation has been a family run venture. Now that the 5 children have grown and gone....ma & pa manage to operate the 3000 acre ranch together. In the late 1990's we decided to look into adding bison to our ranching operation. We spent much time and covered a lot of miles inspecting other bison operations. By 2001, we had upgraded several of our fences to bison standard, built up our handling facilities and then purchased our bison from three different dispersal herds. The prices were low and it was a good time to get in.

We have always been very impressed with the Forage Association. The informative tours first drew our interest. The wide range of agricultural improvement and diversification opportunities make this association extra interesting & valuable. We have been members for many years, but really can't recall just what year we joined. We belong to our local livestock association and the future of the whole agricultural industry is of great interest to us. We are concerned with the lack of importance the governments and most other industries place on the agriculture sector. The ability to feed oneself is the real backbone of a country and we have a desire to encourage that goal.

## Rangeland Management School

by Keith Carroll

The 2010 Rangeland Management School workshops are planned for April and August 2010. The spring workshop in the Peace will be on April 16<sup>th</sup> in the Taylor area. This one day, classroom-style workshop will focus on: plant growth, time & timing of grazing, animal nutrition and animal grazing behaviour. Registration fee is \$25 (incl lunch). Forms will be sent with the next issue of Beef in BC magazine; or watch the events section of our Forage website for more details about both the spring and summer workshops.



# True North Beef

by Bill Wilson



## Livestock Producers Can Work Together!! Joint Marketing Venture For Small Producers

I know, it doesn't seem possible but it can happen – just ask the producers involved with True North Beef. Not only can they work together but they can also make a little extra money in the process. True North Beef is a not for profit joint venture for small producers.

Let's back up about 6 ½ years. 3 Peace River producers, all active members of the Peace River Forage Association of BC, made the decision that if we were going to make it as forage & cow calf producers things had to change and we were the only people that had the power to make it happen. The 3 producers were John & Patt Kendrew, Glenn Hogberg and I. We were all practicing grazing program to help improve the production on our land but there was a problem. Marketing calves were killing our bottom line. You can be the best forage producer in the West but if you are only an average marketer of your livestock you are in trouble.

At the time John & Patt had a daughter practicing at a Veterinary Clinic in Ontario. Reports from Ontario indicated that feeders loved to get western cattle. The comment from one producer was "Western cattle might get sick – Ontario cattle will get sick". The first step was to call in a very good friend, who also happened to be a marketing expert with lots of experience selling livestock to Ontario & Quebec. Most forage & livestock producers will know Brenda Schoepp. We invited a group of producers who we thought would be interested in Brenda's information and experience. We were also privileged to have a young backgrunder from Ontario. This meeting made us determined that we had to make things happen.

Our next step, well not really a step, more of an airplane ride was to Ontario to visit feeder barns, slaughter houses and order buyers. We saw a totally different system of feeding. Calves were fed in covered barns with 16 to 25 square feet per animal. Sorts were different with colour and breed being more important than type. A common theme was they wanted western cattle. Treatment rates under 70% were considered good.

Our project was starting to cost us quite a bit of money so the next step was to the Enterprise Centre in Dawson Creek. The Enterprise Centre is a business development centre, which helps nurture new business in the Peace. We were able to get funding from BC Investment Agriculture (CARD funding – Alberta) to help with travel, educational material and seminars and to lease a scale.

Now we have an idea and enough money to cover the costs of developing the idea. For the next 4 or 5 months we put together a plan. Briefly the plan involved co-mingling producer calves, getting them on feed for at least 65 days, developing a strong immune system with a good vaccination program, grouping the calves into uniform liner load lots and selling to feedlots in Alberta or Ontario. We had a plan but did our plan match the needs of the feedlots? John, Glenn & I hit the road. We visited lots of feedlots – big, small, finishing and backgrounding. We were asking "What do you want the cow calf producer to send to your lot?"

Each lot was slightly different but the theme was the same. They wanted cheap shrunk healthy calves. Alberta feedlots indicated to us that a 20% to 40% treatment rate was acceptable. Without exception we were received with open arms in all the lots. I don't think a cow/calf producer had ever come to their feedlot asking about the type of animal the feedlot wanted. During this time we continued to meet and pass on information to a group of Peace River producers. We also continued to refine our plan. This planning process had now taken about 14 months.

Now it was time to commit to the plan. The group had 7 producers willing to commit about 500 calves. Producers agreed to follow a health program starting with a vaccination at branding time. Calves were weaned in early October and brought to a central feed yard (which happened to be my place). They were vaccinated with a booster, sorted, co-mingled and put on a barley silage ration. After about 65 days on feed the calves were weighted and grouped into uniform liner load lots.



### True North Beef cont'd

Feedlots and buyers were notified the calves were for sale by bid with a closing date and time. As I recall we sold 3 liner lots. Producers made \$85 to \$104 per calf extra compared to the traditional Auction Sale in October. The balance of the calves were fed to near 800 lbs in February and thanks the US border not opening an extra \$180 per head was made. We did follow-ups on the calves a couple of times over the next few months. We found nothing but happy Feedlot operators. Feedlots reported zero treatment rates on entire lots of calves. We continued to hold producer workshops and an open-house for new producers.

In year 2 we grew to 18 – 20 producers with about 1100 calves. We started having an on farm auction sale to sell 5 liner loads of calves in early December. The smaller calves were fed to March and were then sold by the bid process. The December sale calves received about \$65 per head over the Auction price. Because prices fell all winter the calves fed to March were at best, a break-even project. By the end of year 2 we were starting to gain a good reputation. All calves were uniform, liner lots and healthy.

We now have our fifth year of calves on feed. Prices have been so low over the last couple of years and with extreme feed costs any feeding has not produced much extra return.

In 2007 our calves sold \$0.08 to \$0.11 above the Auction Market in Dawson Creek on the same day. Buyers have never been disappointed with our calves. They are healthy, go on feed easily and are quiet. True North Beef is working. It has become a powerful tool for the cooperating producers and a real benefit for the feedlots.

The producers gain by co-mingling healthy calves and have the advantage of marketing their cattle in uniform liner load lots. The advantage to the feedlots is liner load lots of healthy calves that go immediately to familiar feed at the bunk. Feedlot operators start calling in early September asking about upcoming sales and what we have to offer. Another benefit for the producers is the networking, sharing and helping each other as producers. Oh yes, and did I mention the many excellent potluck dinners.

All the producers should be thanked for their courage, for their positive attitude and excellent co-operation. I also would like to thank the feedlots. They have been so helpful with their advice and information sharing. For me the experience of working with John, Patt, Glenn and Doris (from the Enterprise Centre) has been the highlight of the entire project. We learned so much, had a lot of fun and really did make a great team. Now that I have been reflecting back, maybe the best part of the project was the many, many breakfast meetings at the Kendrew house.

## President's Message

by Rick Kantz

Happy New Year and Season's Greetings. Where does the time go? Seems like only yesterday that Sandra was asking for some words of wisdom for the newsletter, but apparently it was in November sometime. Not to worry though I have learnt and am trying to explain the difference in deadlines to her. First off you have the deadline (Dec /1) doesn't mean anything as it came and went. Next you have the absolute deadline (Jan 1 and get it to Kim direct). Then there is pushing your luck (Sandra isn't ready for this level yet but may try it out later this year). If you need any clarification on this you can also contact Julie as she has explained and demonstrated all levels to me.

This year's AGM brought some new faces to the board. Welcome to Freddy Schneider and Don Kruse. It's great to see some new faces and energy at the table. Thanks go out to Deryle Griffith and John Kendrew for their many hours of dedication and work for the Association. I'm sure after a short rest Deryle's pen will yearn to flow again, and John really isn't going anywhere, as he still remains chair of the Management Committee.

While we have new members on the board to fill us with new ideas please take the time to let us know what you, the members, would like to see more time or work done on. This is the only way to keep us fresh and moving forward.

Thinking outside the box can be kind of fun. Take our next project for example "Three Dimensional Fencing". Sounds good, might work but what is it??? Stay in touch for Forage Facts and Field days to find out WHAT IS IT, WILL IT WORK, and the best part HOW CAN I MAKE IT WORK FOR ME.

On December 3, a number of forage members participated in a Wildlife Mitigation meeting in Fort St. John. Representatives from various organizations and agencies met to brainstorm new ideas and directions to revitalize the Peace River Regional Wildlife Committee. It was a good effort and we look forward to reading and implementing our strategy document being compiled by the Fraser Basin Council. That's over my 300 words and still no great words of wisdom so till next time "THE GRASS IS ALWAYS GREENER WHERE THEY GET RAIN".





Kiskatinaw Ecological Society



Box 908, Dawson Creek, British Columbia, V1G 4H9



*Above:* Aerial view of Kiskatinaw River Section 21 and Section 27 Township 79 Range 18 W 6<sup>th</sup>

*Left:* Looking east from the viewpoint at S 21 T 79 R 18 W6.



### Food for Thought

How has the river changed?

What or who is responsible for these changes?

Please check out our website  
[www.kiskatinawecologicalsociety.com](http://www.kiskatinawecologicalsociety.com)

And especially "The Soil, Water, Forage and Grazing Conservation Service".



# Lighter Side of Forage

by Shannon McKinnon



## IT'S A DEER, IT'S A COW, NO IT'S ICE WOMAN!

About a month ago I was given a super power. Now I know how Superman and Wonder Woman feel. And let me tell you, it isn't half bad. In fact, it's incredible.

My special power is the ability to walk on ice. Since our farmyard is glazed with ice this power couldn't have come at a better time. While other mere mortals are creeping along, their little hearts leaping for joy at the sight of a sprinkle of gravel or handful of hay to grit their way, I am striding straight up the middle of icy driveways in a single bound. Well, in several fairly quick steps anyway. Since discovering my ability I have become a walking fool. You can't keep me inside. While neighbours gape out their windows in wonder I am outside walking on ice.

When you pause to think about it, I'm really only a few degrees away from walking on water. I'm thinking it's only a matter of time before the folks at Marvel Comics show up to do a series on me. To tell you the truth, that has me a bit worried. What kind of outfit will they want me to wear? Everyone knows that super heroes wear tight fitting suits. Just look at cat woman. Skin tight rubber is not a good look for a 40-something woman with, well, let's just call it 10 pounds to lose. Even Halle Berry said she had to lose weight and get in the best shape of her life to play Cat Woman. And she was Halle Berry to begin with.

I have never been in good enough shape to play a muffin in an elementary school play, let alone Ice Woman. If nothing else, this has motivated me to walk faster. Sometimes I even break into a jog and work up a real sweat. However, mostly I like to focus on my hero capability rather than my waistline.

I am Ice Woman hear me crunch! I will let you hang on to my coat tail and pull you up slippery slopes. If I come across you pussy footing your way to the barn, I will extend you my arm.

If there is a 70% off sale I will hurry you safely across the parking lot. If someone's kitten should get itself stranded in the middle of an ice covered yard, I will come crunching to the rescue. "Here you go honey," I will say, depositing the kitten safe and warm into a little girl's arms, ignoring the annoying man who keeps insisting it's his kitten, but wouldn't suit the comic strip story line at all.

About now you are probably wondering two things. Possibly more. One is whether our northern winters have finally pushed me over the edge. The other is whether our northern winters have finally pushed me over the edge. However, the less skeptical among you might be asking, "Hey! How did Shannon get her super power anyway?"

The source of my power did not come about from being exposed to questionable chemicals. It did not come via an alien from an Ice Planet in a galaxy far, far, away. I did not get it after being bitten by a cat or a spider. Nor did I receive bionic feet when I was rebuilt after an unfortunate farming accident.

My super power came in a package from a Lee Valley catalogue. Inside the package was a pair of rubber tracks that fit over the sole of my boot with steel ice picks for biting the ice.

I suppose it could be argued that for less than 25 bucks, anyone could have this super power for themselves, which doesn't really make it a super power at all. But I ask you, where's the fun in that kind of thinking? I should also add that even if you do buy some genuine STABILicers for yourself, I am still the one small children should point to with awe and call "Ice Woman".

Because I said it first, that's why.

*Shannon McKinnon is a humour columnist from the Peace River country. When she's not rescuing kittens in a single bound, she can be reached at [peacecountry@msn.com](mailto:peacecountry@msn.com)*



**Peace River Forage Association  
Outdoor Winter Field Day**

**February 2, 2010**

Rob Davidson  
**Wildlife Fencing Demos**  
10:00 am to 4:00 pm

Phone Chris at 250-789-6885 for carpooling &  
other information

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**February 20, 2010**

**PRFA of BC Auction,  
Potluck Supper & Dance**

Tower Lake Hall  
5:00 pm - Viewing  
6:00 pm - Supper  
7:00 pm - Auction  
9:00 pm - Dance

To donate auction items call  
Nelda 789 3350 or Sandra 789 6885

**Plan for these coming events:**

**April 7, 2010**

**Tower Lake Hall**  
3:00 pm to 9:00 pm

**Jill Clapperton, Ph.D.**  
Soil biologist currently residing in  
Montana, formerly with  
Ag Canada, Lethbridge

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**June 19, 2010**

**Dr. Temple Grandin**

**Low Stress Livestock Handling**

Phone Chris at 250-789-6885 for  
information and registration for any of  
these events. Watch our website for  
updated information:  
[www.peaceforage.bc.ca](http://www.peaceforage.bc.ca)

**A special thank-you  
for years of support  
& BBQ'ing many great  
steaks goes out to:**



**Alex Reschny**  
Branch Manager

11508 8th Street, Box 418  
Dawson Creek, BC V1G 4H3

Toll Free (800) 663-3572  
Office (250) 782-5281  
Fax (250) 782-7511  
Cell (250) 719-9932

email  
[areschny@douglaslake.com](mailto:areschny@douglaslake.com)

***Our thanks also goes out to  
the following for their help  
and continued support:***

**North Peace Vet Clinic**

**District of Taylor**

**Ritchie Bros. Auction**

**Ben & Wilma Hansen**

**South Peace Colony**

**Classic Cuisine**

HEAVY EQUIPMENT   TRAILERS   AGRICULTURAL EQUIPMENT