

FORAGE FIRST

55th Edition

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Finding Market Advantages



Tate Creek Ranch buffalo are well adapted to their environment and winter grazing stock piled grass in January. These 2009 "yearlings" are very quiet and tolerant of visitors in a familiar pickup truck.

In this issue, we bring you new directors and contributors with fresh ideas and viewpoints. To honour the diversity within our Forage Association, we compile special insert sections in our newsletters. In the past we had special inserts on sheep, our history and events. This issue includes a Special Bison Section, featuring Kruses', Kyles', Grants' and Kitts' operations. If you have ideas and wish to help with future "special inserts" please call us at (250) 789 6885.

We are teaming up again with Nora of NPARA to bring top notch speakers to the Peace. Mark Grafton, Bar K Ranch will speak on the 2010 trade mission to Asia and Dr. John Basarab, Lacombe Research Station will talk on how we can shorten days to market beef. Please join us on Tuesday, Feb. 15 at the Rolla Community Hall north of Dawson Creek. (see back page). Also our records show that some of you need to renew your memberships if you wish to continue to receive info and newsletters from us.

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(for paid up members)

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(2nd notice - renew within a
month & receive your
complete newsletter)

2011 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

Rick Kantz	Bill Wilson	John Kendrew	Don Kruse	Freddy Schneider	Andrew Clarke	Heather Hansen
President	Treasurer	Director	Director	Director	Director	Director
785 1135	782 2866	786 5652	772 5013	786 5051	789 3379	827 6826

Wildlife Policy - Rick Kantz

R & D & Kiskatinaw Ecol Soc - Glenn Hogberg

SCCC - Bill Wilson

Equipment & PRAD Advisory - Walter Fritsche

BCMAL Advisor - Julie Robinson

Newsletter & 3D Fencing - Sandra Burton

Events & Membership - Chris Thomson

Website & Newsletter- Kim Strasky

Visit our website at www.peaceforage.bc.ca

Forage AGM Review

by Chris Thomson

The 2010 Annual General Meeting of the Peace River Forage Association was held on Monday, November 29, 2010 at the Taylor Community Hall.

Tim Schilds, B.Comm.,CA from Dawson Creek, started the afternoon with a short presentation on the HST and how the forage producers should be reporting their HST. He held a short question and answer period. Comments on the HST legislation were given by Pat Pimm, MLA, Peace River North.

Doyle Wiebe of Langham, Saskatchewan was the keynote speaker for the afternoon. His topic was "Carbon Credits and the Forage Producer". He gave examples of how the producer could reduce his 'carbon footprint' and benefit the environment.

Kelly Kilbreath introduced herself as the representative in the Peace for the Agri-Stability program. She gave a brief explanation of the program and how to apply for and receive benefits from the program.



Freddie Schneider, Walter Fritsche, Pat Gerlinsky and Glenn Hogberg (is this a mini board meeting?)



Annie and Dennis Madden enjoying AGM in Taylor hall (on left).



Julie Robinson & Dave Hoffer hosting our guest Doyle Wiebe on a tour of South Peace Colony.

After a wonderful hot supper, supplied by Shirley Smithard, Classic Cuisine Catering, and her assistant, Gina Spencer, the Forage Association held its annual meeting. The newest project of the Forage Association is the 3-D fencing to keep wildlife out of the stack yards and pastures. Rick Kantz, Glenn Hogberg, and Sandra Burton have constructed fences and seem pleased with the results so far. Bill Wilson, Pat Gerlinsky and the Spitzer's of the North Peace Vet Clinic are in the process of constructing fences as well.

Sarah Davies, Pat Gerlinsky and Chuck Sutherland have temporarily retired from the board of directors. The members would like to thank them for their service to the organization and we hope to see each of them on the board again in the future. Heather Hansen, Andrew Clarke and John Kendrew were elected to join the board. Returning to the board are: Rick Kantz as President, Bill Wilson as Treasurer, Don Kruse and Fred Schneider as directors. Please feel free to contact your board of directors with any questions or issues you would like to see addressed.



Fern Mertens and Ken Siemens entertaining our guest speaker, Tim Schilds (on right).

New Forage Directors in 2011

Compiled by Sandra Burton

Andrew Clarke

Andrew Clarke joined the Board of Directors after elections at the recent AGM. He is an integral part of Sunrise Stock Farms, along with his wife Darlene, his brother Brian and sister in law Christine and their parents, Bill and Jessie. They own or rent various parcels totalling 1600 acres with a range of soil types and land quality near Baldonnel southeast of Fort St. John. The Clarke family have been going through a transition over the last 7 years of changing primarily a dairy operation into a beef cattle and forage operation.

The Clarkes are familiar with transitions and changes. They originally came to the Peace Region in the mid 60's when Bill and Jessie sold their dairy farm in Saskatchewan to fulfill a life long dream of owning a ranch. They moved to Toad River, but after a few years of harsh and isolated experiences, they relocated to their current location in Baldonnel. They were fortunate in getting a loan from Farm Credit that helped them get a dairy operation set up. The Clarkes were very active in dairy associations, 4H clubs, etc. and have been generous contributors to rural community life over the years.

Five years ago, after much thought and discussion, they made the difficult decision to stop milking their dairy herd. The Clarke family gradually moved from Holstein to Holstein – Angus crosses to Angus – Gilveih crosses to straight Black / Red Angus cattle. Their current cow calf operation totals 200 head and they are nearly self sufficient in feed.



Clarkes' cattle questioning why those quirky horse people get the "best hay".



Andrew cheerfully dealing with one of his hay customers.

The Clarke family have cooperated with the Forage Association on several demonstration projects over the years including field scale evaluations of alfalfa varieties, nutrient management, phosphorus placement and demos involving the pulp residual material from the mill in Taylor. They have always been regarded as producers of high quality forage.

For a number of years, the Clarkes have sold hay to livestock producers, into the horse hay market and to places as far away as the Yukon. They sell alfalfa, alfalfa grass mix, timothy hay bales as well as barley and wheat straw bales. A recent interesting market for their straw is to owners of dogs used for sledding, where they have had to switch from barley to wheat because the awns get into the dogs fur and skin.

Andrew and Darlene have 3 grown children: Kurtis, a son who lives in FSJ and works for Rona, Matthew, another son who is an ambulance attendant in Fairview, and a daughter, Kyra, who is a house wife in Sexsmith. In total they have 6 grandchildren to keep life interesting.

Andrew says "I have experimented with composting manure. I find the process interesting and especially valuable in a minimum tillage situation which we have been adapting to over the past few years."

Andrew looks forward to getting involved with the current issues and projects in front of the Board.

Certified Weed Free Hay

There is currently an initiative in the Peace Region to certify hay as weed free, especially hay destined for the Fort Nelson area. This is consumer and producer led and is in the early stages of the first year for Northern BC. Freddy Schneider represents the Peace River Forage Association on a working group.

If you are interested in this type of marketing for your hay sales and would be willing to have your fields inspected for weeds, please contact Freddy at (250) 786 5051 or Shelley Kirk at BC Ministry of Agriculture at (250) 787 3241.



New Directors *(cont'd)*

Heather Hansen

Heather Hansen was recently elected to the Forage Board of Directors. Heather grew up on a grain/oilseed/pulse farm in the Peace Country owned by her parents, Bruce and Louise Baxter. She and her sister Colleen were active in 4H from an early age; and Heather fondly remembers participating in public speaking and leadership camps. After high school in Fort St. John, Heather attended one year at Northern Lights College and then transferred to Agriculture Science at the University of Alberta. While at university Heather Baxter was impressed with a young Mechanical Engineering student, Esbern Hansen. After graduating in 2002, they were married in 2003 and moved to Fort Nelson for a couple of years.

During these years Heather worked at a variety of agricultural jobs including: agricultural scout for Agricore, chemical sales rep for Dupont, labourer for Cargill, manager of a greenhouse and Range Agrologist for the BC Ministry of Forests and Range in the Fort Nelson office.

In 2005, Heather and Esbern bought a quarter section in the Montney area near the Baxters' farm. They started out growing mainly creeping red fescue. Heather began working for Pioneer Lands but then in her own words "Along came Maria and 14 cows and a bull that we bought from Esbern's parents in Daysland, Alberta! Esbern was working off the farm so the first calving season, 4 month old Maria spent a lot of time in a snugly, out checking cows with me. Our second calving season found me very pregnant with Eric and very sick. So I look forward to see what this calving season brings for me with an active toddler and baby. This year might be fun!"

Heather says she enjoys the opportunities getting involved with this association provides for learning and broadening her horizons. "I have just learned so much from the speakers and the other forage members. Getting involved with the Forage Association has been wonderful for contacts and it makes me feel that if we were having problems, we could phone someone with more experience and talk with them about it."

Heather looks forward to meeting you and talking with you at our next events.

Bud Williams Marketing School

This two day seminar will look at how livestock producers can improve their business model and profitability.

Cost \$500 per farm unit. Meals included.

Feb 25th and 26th

Stonebridge Hotel, Grande Prairie

Presented by

Cornerstone Cattle Marketing

in partnership with

North Peace Applied Research Association,
Peace Country Beef & Forage Association &
Agriculture Opportunity Fund

For more info contact Jaime at 780-523-4033 or
Alison at 780-835-6799 or Nora @ 780-836-3354

Register online at

www.cornerstonecattlemarketing.com
or phone 1-877-799-4577

Cattlemen's Forage Update

Feb 23rd, 2011

Savanna Rec-Plex,

6:00 - 7:00 pm Beef on a Bun

7:00 - 8:15 pm

Topics: "2010 Corn grazing Trials in The Peace"
"Rejuvenating Pastures"
"Annuals for Forage Production"

Speakers: Akim Omokanye- Peace Country Beef and
Forage Association
Bart Lardner- Western Beef Development
Centre, University of Saskatchewan

Sponsored by
the Saddle Hills County Agricultural Service Board
To RSVP contact Sandy at the Saddle Hills County
Office at (780) 864-3760.

Special Bison Section

Our Bison Venture

By Eva Kruse

Having grown up working with cattle all my life and loving it, the thought of venturing into an additional ranching project with "untameable" bison really did not enthuse me as much as it did my husband, Don.

We were in agreement that the wisest start would be to interview the real experts: those bison ranchers who actually had the "hands-on experience". After several interviews, tours of the various facilities and our numerous questions answered, plus much invaluable information on the pros and cons and tips of raising bison, we both became quite impressed.

What impressed "Mrs" Kruse? The fact that bison ranching is a lot less work. Bison cows calve on their own. Believe it or not, they don't "want", nor "allow" help and rarely have "any" calving problems. As with beef cows, a fat bison cow may be more inclined to have trouble calving. Bison calves are, in general, not real big. They are a long and lanky 35 to 45 pounds. They are a reddish-golden brown at birth and generally up and sucking within minutes. We truly enjoy calving our beef cattle for the first month; after 30 days of sleep deprivation everything gets quite blurred. We love it anyway. Our intention was never to replace the cattle with bison. However, just over a year ago the accumulated six years of drought here in our valley resulted in very poor yields, which made it impossible to feed both the cattle and bison herds with the hay we got. Bison require less hay than cattle. Economics made the options bitter. We had bought feed the previous year and the price of cattle compared to the feed & trucking prices gave us no option. We had enjoyed the management of "both" cattle & bison for almost 10 yrs.

Bison are well adapted to cold, stormy winter weather. Their feed consumption may even become reduced as their metabolism slows down, unlike a beef cow which needs more energy in cold weather. Also, bison do not have the need that cows do for a straw bed. They have a woolly coat which is amazingly comfortable for them. Simply put, Bison are very self sufficient. They require good pastures and also good feed in the winter months. As well, they enjoy good winter grazing as was their natural feeding habit.

Some of our challenges were and still are, the ongoing fence upgrading with the removal of our cattle fences and replacement of 5 feet high, 7 wire high tensile smooth wire bison standard fences. One wire is electrified and our braces are all very well made to withstand any pressure the bison may put on it. The only trouble we've had is bison bulls being put over the fence into our fenced fields when the boys were

fighting. The bison ranchers were right when they told us that, "If the bison are happy with your place, they will always want to come back into your pastures".

We upgraded our cattle working facilities and are now in the process of replacing a lot of it again, as well as adding more. These fencing projects of either upgrading or changing efforts are ongoing. There again, we've been appreciative of the additional ideas of other bison ranchers and web sites of working facilities.

We have always worked our animals in the quietest, least stressful way possible. We've continued to treat the bison in the same friendly quiet manner and are pleased to see that more and more they are responding when they are called as our cows always did. They are learning to trust because they have always been rewarded with a new pasture that they are called into or something to eat. No, they are not as tame as our friendly cattle, not yet. We are waiting impatiently for that rain we need so vitally. In the meantime we "both" do enjoy our bison venture. They are different, very smart and alert, as well as interesting and enjoyable to watch. It has been rewarding and is especially nice that they are a profitable industry. At least presently!!!

Buffalo Family Planning

By Jerry Kitt

When it comes to family planning, no farm animal does it better than the buffalo. Beef cows and pigs can give birth any time of year but the bison consistently reserve the month of August for breeding and May for birthing. It makes sense. May is when the new grass starts growing so the mothers get prime nutrition and the calves have excellent summer pasture to supplement their mother's milk.

Family planning was not in the mind of one buffalo cow, who got a little too close to the bull last winter. The result of her encounter appeared this fall when her calf was born. Although the mother and calf are doing well, all the bison in the herd have been affected by the new addition. Normally the herd is pretty quiet at this time of year and it's easy to walk up close to them. Sometimes I'll be cutting twines on one side of the bale and they'll be munching on the other side.

The new mother is very protective of her calf so as I get close, she runs away taking her calf with her. The other bison see this and as they do by instinct, "follow the leader". She sees the herd behind and just keeps going. After awhile they come to a stop and must think, "what am I doing way out here when all the food is back there?" They slowly start wandering back and resume munching until the next event spooks the new mother. "Oh, not again!"

Think like a buffalo

By Sandra Burton & Julie Robinson

We just spent the better part of a great day out at Tate Creek Ranch, and will try to share a portion of what we learned about the buffalo business from Burnem, Gertie and Shaun Grant.

Burnem reflected on why they had converted from cattle to buffalo in the early 90's. They thought that buffalo were better suited to their region's climate, rocky, sandy land and their land production capability. Normal farming practices didn't suit the land base they had, and the Grants thought the buffalo could make better use of what the land seems adapted to grow. For example, with their cattle, a large portion of their feeding expense was bringing in straw, whereas with buffalo straw was not necessary.

What were the major challenges of making this conversion? Burnem says "We had to learn to think like a buffalo." With Gertie then exclaiming "And that explains everything!" Burnem continued "you can't bully, push, squeeze or rope bison. You can't herd or entrap them. You have to ask yourself, what do they want now? We learned that we had to think about everything differently. From our fencing, gate placement, satellite handling stations, catch pens, handling system, and marketing, we changed the way we do things."

The Grants told us they used to try to herd them into the handling system. Now they feed them closer and closer, splitting off progressively smaller groups, so that up until that last minutes in the squeeze they have buddies with them all the way through. They used to leave the gate open in the catch pen, now they leave the gate closed. Burnem explains it this way "I had to learn over and over how everything is exaggerated to a buffalo.. maybe I am a slow learner, but what I do finally know now is that you will pay, if you don't pay attention. They can take out a ¼ mile of fence like it wasn't even there." It is a myth that strong fences are needed; it is much more about placement and movement through the pastures. After several more stories, Burnem summarized it by saying "It is not about getting them in, you let them go where you want them to go. It makes you think and plan ahead before you act, often months in advance."

There are about 300 head of buffalo currently on Tate Creek Ranch: 100 cows, 100 calves, and 105 yearlings, although "2009 calf crop" might be a better term, since ages can range from 12 to 32 months. With this latter group, Burnem taught us how to tell females from males and pick out replacement heifers. We toured winter grazed pastures, silage feeding areas and heard about their success grazing barley last summer. Pasture size varied between 70 to 90 ac. The herd of cows were not where they were expected to be, which illustrated the point of how a small change in their routine (in this case their feeding schedule and a bale delivered to the neighbours) can set them off roaming.

Shaun with sides of beef that were to be cut over the weekend.



The buffalo industry has gone through tremendous changes over the last 20 years and Tate Creek Ranch has adapted their strategies to cope. In the mid 1990's there was huge demand, the buyers came to them, and took their prices. But this turned out to be false market, more based on the numbers of breeding stock than the value of the meat. In 1996, their son Shaun set up a neighbouring feedlot to finish their calves and capture more of the value adding chain. After the highest prices ever in '98, the market went into decline in the spring of '99, with female prices dropping off sharply and meat holding for another year or so. Ten years later, the market is showing strong sign of correction. Tate Creek Ranch decreased cow numbers and were active in local bison associations promoting their industry. The Grant family had some unique contacts that still enabled them to market bison meat in southern BC and overseas through these times.

We paused in our tour for a wonderful bison lunch (thank you Gertie), then continued on to their cut and wrap facility. In September 2009, Shaun became a provincially certified meat cutter. This has brought significant changes to Tate Creek Ranch. Last year after a liner load of 72 animals (about 750 lb each at 20 months) headed for the U.S. thirty animals were held back for further finishing on the ranch. This has worked out well for them, selling to the local market. Being able to easily access finished animals for the summer market is important. Combined with Shaun's cutting expertise and Gertie's enjoyment of direct marketing to their customers, the Grant family are quite the team, offering a high quality meat product, with customized cuts for their clients.

The Pure North Foods Meat Cutting facility involves Shaun, his wife, Kim, and his in laws, Paul and Kauri Cook. As a family working together mainly in the evenings after their "day jobs" they processed 60 animals or 20,000 lb of beef, bison and venison since mid August of this year. The facility looked clean and efficient with a load cell for weighing incoming animals, package labeller, vacuum packer, meat tenderizer and some cool knives that Julie was coveting. They are provincially inspected but can handle both inspected and non inspected meat. We reluctantly left, saturated with what we had learned this day, overwhelmed with respect for this hard working, adaptive ranch family, and best of all with a taste of their bison jerky.

You Can Lead a Bison Anywhere It Wants To Go

By Shelley Kirk

Harvey and Jan Kvile run a 95-head bison operation located 10 km west of Prespatou. What makes this operation different from many of the other bison operations in the Peace Region is that these bison are raised organically. You may be asking yourself, 'Aren't all bison organic?', and you wouldn't be alone if this was the first thought to pop into your mind. But in fact there are differences between organic and non-organic operations. Feeding regimes, animal health care, slaughtering and processing are some of the management areas where differences occur. Despite these variances, there are both rewarding and challenging aspects within the bison industry, organic or not, and I was able to get a closer look during my interview with the Kviles.

After struggling with grain and forage production, the Kviles decided to make a switch to bison production in 1994. For the past 16 years bison have wandered their property, grazing on organic timothy, red clover and fescue while occasionally feeding on certified oats and hay. These animals also receive mineral supplements as bison are sensitive to deficiencies in certain elements, such as copper, zinc, magnesium and selenium. While trekking across the Kviles' pastures, the bison act as cultivators of the land, and the relationship between bison and pasture remains a happy one here. In fact, the Kviles conclude that the spacious pastures on which their bison graze are one of the top reasons why they see so few animals stricken with parasites. Though the Kviles do not vaccinate their animals, they have had only two animals sick with parasites in the past two years. While they do treat these particular animals, they do not sell the animals to their organic clientele (or to anyone for that matter). As mentioned though, animals with parasites have not historically been a problem for the Kviles, which translates into happier bison, lower veterinary fees and more animals to sell.

Having more animals to sell is certainly a positive occurrence when the market is there, but as the Kviles discussed bison marketing, I realized that there were a number of challenges. Their clientele tend to be from Fort St John and the surrounding area and are known to be a loyal customer group. They direct market approximately 30 animals a year and have a booth at the Fort St John Farmers' Market, though they have occasionally shipped animals to clients in central and southern Alberta in the past. Prior to the local Co-op closing, the Kviles used to provide organic bison to the public through mainstream grocery sales. However, while they have approached other grocery stores with their product, the response of late has not favoured the 'smaller' producer. The Kviles were told that in order to



Julie Robinson & Shelley Kirk both work for the BC Ministry of Agriculture in Fort St. John.

provide such a product for mainstream grocery sales, they would have to guarantee a certain (large) amount of bison meat at all times; often a difficult task for smaller operations to accomplish.

Marketing challenges do not stop there, however, but are often made more difficult due to lack of harmonization in slaughtering and processing standards between Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. In order to market bison in other provinces they must either be slaughtered in the province in which they are to be sold, or slaughtered at a federally-licensed facility, which are unfortunately few and far between in the Peace Region. To further complicate the matter, certified organic animals must be slaughtered and processed according to certain regulations, which the Kviles have occasionally found to be an added challenge.

After questioning the Kviles further about the challenges of running their bison operation, they unanimously decided that the bureaucracy, paperwork and number keeping surrounding them was the greatest challenge. They have found that it is also a challenge to increase the awareness to the public of the 'organic' in their organic bison. As most of us know, it is often difficult to balance the economic, social and environmental weights in our choices as consumers, as often times the economic force is stronger. Taking this into account, I asked the Kviles whether or not they had ever considered switching to a non-organic operation based on cost savings. They admitted that they certainly had contemplated this, as there has not been any additional financial gain in operating an organic bison farm, and in fact it probably made more financial sense to operate a non-organic farm. But monetary gains aside, their choice to have an organic operation has been strictly based on personal values and ultimately their concern for their own health and for the health of the public in general.

You Can Lead a Buffalo Anywhere It Wants To Go (cont'd)

By Shelley Kirk

On that note, my final question to the Kviles was 'What would make your operation more successful?' I'll admit, I expected an answer containing some thoughts on changes to regulations, or a request for more cut and wrap facilities, perhaps improved marketing opportunities, or something of the like. Instead they had a request for more honesty and truth about food. They believe that education and awareness of and, above all, honesty towards the general public regarding the food we consume, what it contains and how it impacts our health will be an important factor in increasing the success of their bison operation.

It appears that strong values and a keen sense of awareness have been instrumental in allowing the Kviles to strengthen their organic bison operation. I got the sense of this the first time I spoke to Harvey Kvile. He was telling me about his bison; their intelligence,

their moods and how they react in certain situations. Later on I read a quote from Ray Salmon, posted on the Manitoba Agriculture Food and Rural Initiatives website which seems to sum up this sense of awareness, seemingly almost required of bison producers:

"It is important to mention that for any management program to be successful, you must learn, understand and respect bison behaviour. Actually to manage bison you have to almost become one of the herd, and this means you will take a position in the pecking order status. By recognizing the position, and understanding the various guttural sounds and sign language, you will be able to handle your animals without a problem. Bison are very co-operative if you remember that saying, "you can lead a bison anywhere it wants to go."

Cut & Wrap Facilities in the Peace Region

Compiled by Shelley Kirk

Store Name	Operator	Phone Number	Address
101 Meat	Edward Urich	(250) 772-3165	Box 111, Wonowon, BC V0C 2N0
Bill's Specialty Meats	W.C. Vanderhorst	(250) 772-5222	Bag 6227, FSJ, BC V1J 4H7
Charlie Lake Meat Shop	Wally Pence	(250) 785-2210	Box 6773, Fort St. John, BC V1J 4J2
Country Cut Meats	Wes & Mary Harder	(250) 630-2259	Box 274, Prespatou, BC V0C 2S0
D&M Meats	David Loewen	(250) 630-2226	Box 294, Prespatou, BC V0C 2S0
Farmer Bob's Wild Game Proc.	Bob Beamish	(250) 774-3628	Box 1672, Fort Nelson, BC
Howatt's Meat Processing	Terry & Louise Howatt	(250) 785-4973	RR1 S11 C2, FSJ, BC V1J 4M6
Kent's Custom Cutting	Kent Billey	(250) 785-0036	9416 114A Avenue, FSJ, BC V1J 2X5
Lawrence's RTE	Lawrence's Meat Packing	(250) 782-4045	1088 4th Street, Dawson Creek, BC
Omineca Meat	Ben Ermantrout	(250) 782-3271	RR2 S19 C1, DC, BC V1G 4E8
Peace Country Meats Ltd	Lars Jorgensen	(250) 785-7738	10719 101 Ave, FSJ, BC V1J 5J4
Peace River North Meat Cutting	Tyson Van Patten	(250) 794-7753	RR1 S15 C66, FSJ, BC V1J 4M6
Peace View Meat Processing	Dave Hofer	(250) 789-3018	Box 194, Farmington, BC V0C 1N0
Peace Vale Dairy Farm	Chris Haab	(250) 785-4898	Peace Vale RR#1, FSJ, BC V1J 4M6
Pure North Foods Meat Cutting	Shaun Grant	(250) 782-0123	Box 98, Tomslake, BC V0C 2L0
Richard's Meat Processing	Richard Von Allmen	(250) 786-0408	Box 399, Pouce Coupe, BC V0C 2C0
Russell's Custom Meat Cutting	Robert M. Russell	(250) 788-2518	Box 1053, Chetwynd, BC V0C 1J0
South Peace Colony Farms	Ben Tschetter	(250) 782-8164	Box 475, Dawson Creek, BC V1G 4H3
Target Custom Meat Cutting	David & Brenda DeWetter	(250) 843-7413	Box 118, Groundbirch, BC V0C 1T0
The Butcher Block	Lawrence's Meat Packing	(250) 782 3031	1013 102 Ave, DC, BC V1G 2S5
The Meat House		(250) 785-1309	RR1 S13 C6, FSJ, BC V1J 4M6

Grazing Conference

By Albert Kuipers, Grey Wooded Forage Association

2010 Western Canadian Grazing Conference And Tradeshow – Foraging On Change: Eating Up the Opportunities

Close to 300 participants from across western Canada gathered in Vermilion from December 1 to 2, 2010, to participate in the Western Canadian Grazing Conference and Tradeshow.

“We were extremely pleased with the number of registrants and the response attendees had to our program,” said Albert Kuipers, co-chair of the WCGC organizing committee. “What was even more encouraging was the fact that everyone who attended had nothing but positive remarks about moving the conference from Edmonton to Vermilion. Attendees suggested that holding the conference in a rural community helped revitalize the event.”

In addition to the location change, the organizing committee decided to introduce an afternoon of hands-on lab sessions for conference attendees. Holding the conference at the Vermilion Regional Centre, with the keynote presentations, select-a-sessions, and tradeshow right across the road from Lakeland College, made this possible.

“We were able to forge a partnership with Lakeland College and utilize their facilities for our lab sessions,” Stephanie Kosinski, organizing conference co-chair, commented. “This gave attendees the opportunity to get their hands dirty with everything from soil texturing, plant identification, riparian management, and ration formulation in the college’s labs to ultra-sounding bulls, corn grazing, stock dogs, and on-farm solar solutions using the college’s arena, barns, and research facilities. Without the co-operation of the Agricultural Sciences staff and students, these sessions would not have been the successes that they were.”

The conference opened Wednesday, December 1, with a discussion on the variable climate found in western

Canada over the past 120 years and the impact it has on future conditions by renowned scientist Dr. David Sauchyn. Other keynote speakers included Wendy Holm, an award-winning resource economist, agrologist and journalist, who spoke on the changing view Canadians have of agriculture; Kevin Hursh, a well-known agricultural journalist from Saskatchewan, who discussed whether the cattle industry was a business or lifestyle for most producers; and Don Campbell, a Holistic Management educator who examined increasing production on your current land-base while remaining sustainable.

Other topics addressed during the conference included: Multispecies Grazing; The Use of New Technology in Your Beef Operation; Management Practices for Extending the Grazing Season; Stockpiled Grazing; Understanding Land Quality and Capability; Beef Cow Nutrition in the Grazing Season; Mob Grazing for Pasture Rejuvenation; & Grazing 101.

“The fact that many of the select-a-session presenters were producers and industry experts who were willing to share their experiences, positive or negative, really hit home with many of the attendees,” said Albert. “They appreciated being able to learn from their peers. As always, the chance to network with producers, sponsors, and other industry stakeholders from across western Canada only enhanced attendees’ enjoyment of the conference.”

Members of the organizing committee would like to express their gratitude to the agri-businesses and other industry groups who sponsored the event. Their continued commitment to the Western Canadian Grazing Conference & Tradeshow, along with support of the provincial and federal governments, producers, and students, made for an outstanding event.

Mark Grafton in the Peace

Mark Grafton, our guest speaker next month tells us about himself: “I grew up on the family ranch in Woodpecker BC, went off to California to go to University in 74'. I married a California girl in 79' and we have been managing the Bar K Ranch in Prince George for 30 years. At the Bar K Ranch we normally calve 1000 to 1100 head and background and grass our own calves. Depending on markets we sell yearlings or custom finish our cattle in Alberta and retain ownership of them to the packer. Currently I chair the Public Affairs, Education and Research committee for BC Cattlemen, which also deals with marketing.”

You can hear Mark on **Feb 15 at the Rolla Hall in BC** or on **Feb 16 in Grimshaw Elks Hall in AB** (see back pg). To pre-register In BC call Chris at (250) 789-6885 or (250) 793-8916. In AB call Nora at (780) 836-3354.

Ecological Winners

Ranch Maxi-ecosites Provide Foundation for Grazing Management, Livestock Production and Wildlife Habitat By The Nimitz Family

Since the early 90's we have been employing the concept of balancing our ranch ecosystem through intensive management and the controlled grazing of beef cattle. More specifically we employ time management. That is, large numbers of grazing animals in a small area for a short length of time, then rotated out followed by a lengthy pasture deferment. After 20 years roughly we have these processes reasonably well defined and refined a la The Holistic Philosophy. There has been a lot of trial and error involved and the learning process is still ongoing.

A keystone to achieving and maintaining ecological balance on our ranch is the identification and establishment of **Ranch Maxi-ecosites (RMEs)**. While these RMEs have been with us for a long time; it was only in 2005-06 when we were working on our Environmental Farm Plan that we decided to attach an official name to them; and, at the same time concentrate more on managing them individually.

The RME terminology was chosen because it identifies an area that requires maximum management be applied to it. Usually these are small in size. A majority of our RMEs have to do with offsite water supply for domestic livestock and are fenced with high tensile electric fence. Many are asymmetrically fenced thus adding a little more surface land area for wildlife habitat. Small mammals, amphibians, song birds as well as water fowl and the occasional large mammal, appreciate these natural, relatively undisturbed areas adjacent to our domestic livestock water source. Usually these are fenced with electric polytwine initially and then converted to high tensile electric in a few years.



In the past years the RME idea has helped us a great deal with our riparian management in the river valley and we expect this trend to continue into the future.

We maintain a highly flexible pasture rotational system based on what the daily, weekly and monthly climate menus are, always keeping in mind our three part Holistic goal: A means of economic production to provide for the social climate that our family requires and with a high regard for employment of desired, sound long term environmental processes on the land base.

During past centuries the large migratory game herds roamed throughout Western North America and provided intense grazing pressures periodically on various land areas, typically followed by long and-or intermittent rest periods for vegetation recovery, thus developing sustainable ecosystems. Massive herd effect over very long time spans created many positive influences on the environments that these herds lived in and travelled through. These points are well documented historically.

On our ranch we firmly believe that we can achieve the same positive herd effects on our ecosystem through intensive management and the controlled grazing of domestic livestock.



Whether on horseback or in pickup trucks, folks were toured through a number of Ranch Maxi-ecosites during the last two annual Mark Nimitz Memorial Trail Rides.

More ecological winners will be featured soon on the improved website www.kiskatinawecologicalsociety.ca

Lighter Side of Forage

by Shannon McKinnon

Before Email There Was Dmail



Everywhere you look people are wired. iPods' suction cupped to their ears, Blackberries glued to their palms, Bluetooth's hooked to their heads. Text messages fly from fingertips revealing vital information. Like how someone just finished eating a half portion of pasta salad for lunch. It's the stuff from early spy movies, only deadly boring. Yesterday I sent a chat message to Darcy asking what he felt like for supper. He was surfing his laptop on the couch and I was at my desk. I could have just asked him, but it was more fun to type it.

We have become a society with so many ways to communicate and so little to communicate about. I wonder if early settlers ever sent boring smoke signals to each other. Did they ever fire up the sticks and break out the blanket just to say, "Hey, I just ate some venison?" I doubt it.

My father tells a story he once heard about life in Saskatchewan back in the 1920's. In the late fall there was this family who had a horse up and die so they drug it out of the pasture and left it in the bush behind the barn. Now their cousins lived a couple miles away and had this dog that started coming over to feed on the dead horse. Every morning their cousin's dog showed up and ate his fill before making the journey home again. One blustery winter day the family with the dead horse needed to give the family with the live dog a message, but instead of setting out for the long cold walk to their cousin's house they had a brilliant idea. They waited for the dog to arrive and then tied the message to the dog's collar.

The next morning the dog returned with their cousin's reply. For the rest of the winter as long as the horse lasted they exchanged messages which became more trivial as time went on. It was the novelty of the thing that kept them writing. It was just like email only I suppose you could call it Dog Mail. Dmail for short.

As insignificant as the messages might have become, I doubt either family received a Dmail from a Mrs. Mohamed Wahhab from India proposing to deposit 9.5 million dollars into their account because her husband had passed away and she needed a foreign bank to hide her money in. Back then the only spam they ever received would have come in a can.

I admit that I am starting to max out on technology. I'm sick of my computer freezing up or learning that it has committed another fatal error. I don't want to update my adobe or java anymore. I must confess that I've even been thinking of getting off the grid completely. Closing my Facebook account, tossing the cell phone and trading it all in for a candlelit cabin and an outhouse in the woods.

The genius of an outhouse is in the plumbing. There's not a lot that can go wrong with a hole in the ground. The only thing that can freeze up is, well, my bum. Hmmm. Perhaps I need to think this whole thing through and get back to you - but unless my horse dies it probably won't be by Dmail.

Shannon McKinnon and her husband Darcy live on a small farm northwest of Dawson Creek, BC.

*The Peace River Forage Association
invites you to attend its*

Forage Seminar

**February 15, 2011
Rolla Community Hall
3:00 pm to 9:30 pm**

Seminar Speakers:

***Dr. John Basarab
“Less Days to Market”***

***Mark Grafton
“New West Partnership
Trade Mission”***

***Panel Discussion:
“3-D Wildlife Fencing”***

***Registration is \$20 at the door includes hot
supper. To pre-register or for more
Information, call Chris at
(250)789-6885 or (250)793-8916***

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Forage Seminar Speaker Profiles:

Dr. John Basarab is a Senior Beef
Research Scientist with Alberta
Agriculture, Food and Rural
Development in Lacombe. He has over
25 years experience in beef cattle
production and management. His
current research includes projects on
improving feed efficiency;
reducing wintering feed cost
of beef cows, and
improving beef carcass consistency
and quality.

Mark Grafton and his wife Laura
manage Bar K Ranch north of Prince
George. Mark has been active on a
number of committees and currently
sits on the Board of Directors for the
BC Cattlemen's Association. Mark will
speak on the New West Trade Mission
to Japan and China to promote
Western Canadian beef.

***Thank you to the sponsors of our
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