

FORAGE FIRST

55th Edition

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New Members, New Projects



A new calf checks out newest addition to the herd. Moment captured by Ann Grover.

Who is Ann Grover? Ann enthusiastically joined our Forage Association this winter. She is an accomplished writer and photographer. She enjoys getting out helping her partner Dan Stocking, who manages South Peace Ranch Site of Nilssen Bros. at Mile 26. Currently they are busy calving out 230 heifers and over 1350 cows, but Ann took time to contribute photos and an article about the seminar for this newsletter. Thank you Ann!

What new project? The Forage Association's proposal to compile information about wildlife mitigation options was approved. What works, what doesn't? We will answer those questions through matching funding from the Agriculture Environment & Wildlife Fund through BC Investment Agric. Fdn./ ARDCORP. Thank you to our funding partner and to Chris and Bill for your work on this proposal! Talon Johnson returns as a summer student. She will work for the Forage Association 1 day a week on this new project and helping us with events/ field days. Welcome back Talon!

We hope you enjoy the variety of topics in this issue.

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(3rd notice - renew by
June 11th & 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
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Newsletter & 3D Fencing - Sandra Burton Events & Membership - Chris Thomson Website & Newsletter- Kim Strasky

Visit our website at www.peaceforage.bc.ca

From Your Directors

compiled by Sandra Burton

Bill Wilson represented us at the Soil Conservation Council of Canada's (SCCC) Annual General Meeting. It is often held in March in Ottawa, coordinating with meetings of the Canadian Cattlemen Association, and when Parliament is sitting, so that if there are political issues, there are MPs in Ottawa to contact.

This year, SCCC contracted **Glen Haas** to facilitate a strategic planning session while they were together in Ottawa. Some of their objectives over the next few years are to build more working relationships and partnerships with other groups like CCA and with large corporations in the food chain like McCain's,

On a national/ international level, SCCC continues to lobby for a national soil carbon offset system that rewards farmers for sequestering soil carbon and agricultural practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. SCCC drafted a submission to the Western Climate Initiative on carbon offsets, & continued membership on the Industry Provincial Offsets Group committee. SCCC President **Don McCabe** represented agricultural producers and made presentations at the United Nations COP16 meetings in Mexico to press the case for international acceptance of soil carbon offsets in the reduction of greenhouse gases.

On a regional/ provincial level SCCC works on a number of soil, water and air issues, reminding the public & decision makers that farmers make important contributions to soil conservation. They also get messages out to farmers how we can continue to improve our soil conserving efforts. In Bill's words "As farmers we are good but we are not perfect yet."

Bill continues to enjoy the people he meets through these meetings. He enjoys working with **Jose Van Lent-Staden** on issues. She is Vice President of SCCC, the Dean of Agriculture at Lakeland College in Vermillion and along with her family, operates a grain and livestock farm with elk, bison and cattle. Bill appreciates the dual perspectives from **Paul Thoroughgood** who both works with Ducks Unlimited Canada and farms south of Moose Jaw. And Bill says "When **Peter MacLeod**, VP of CropLife Canada, (a crop production company), speaks, I pay attention because it is worth listening to."

Bill feels that the Peace River Forage Association should continue to cooperate with SCCC because of

the past and future long term benefits of working together on projects and issues. He will represent us at their summer meeting in Toronto, ON in early July.

If you are interested in more information about soil conservation, contact Bill or Sandra for a copy of the Soil Protector, the official newsletter of SCCC or visit their website www.soilcc.ca. Check out the Soil Champions, including a farmer from our region, being recognized nationally.

Glenn Hogberg is the R & D Chair, represents the Peace River Forage Association on the Board of the Kiskatinaw Ecological Society, and heads up a working group that was formed last July. The working group has been meeting by conference call over the winter, to develop a pilot project for the Kiskatinaw River Valley Watershed. They continue to document grass roots practices by Ecological Winners that are good for the environment via this newsletter and their website: www.kiskatinawecologicalsociety.ca

Freddy Schneider, Walter Fritsche & Keith Carroll are forage members that are participating in the collaborative effort to initiate weed free hay pilot project.

Weed Free Hay

by Shelley Kirk

The NEIPC – NWIPC Certified Weed Free Hay Program Pilot Project

There is currently a pilot project taking place in northern BC to promote the production and consumption of weed free forage, particularly for use in backcountry areas within BC. This is a consumer and producer-led initiative aimed at developing the market for weed free forage throughout BC. The pilot project focuses on preventing the spread of designated noxious weeds and undesirable plant species, and protecting private and public lands from their invasion. The project also aims to increase awareness of the environmental impact of non-native, invasive plant species.

If you are interested in either producing or purchasing weed free forage or if you would like more information on the project please contact Shelley Kirk with the BC Ministry of Agriculture at (250) 793-3651, or at Shelley.Kirk@gov.bc.ca.

Forage Seminar

by Shelley Kirk



On February 15th I had the pleasure of attending the PRFA's Forage Seminar, which included presentations from guest speakers Dr. John Basarab with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and Mark Grafton with the Bar K Ranch. Between John's presentation on reducing days to harvest in youthful beef cattle, Mark's presentation on the New West Trade Mission to Japan and China and individual producer explanations and anecdotes on 3-D fencing I was entertained and managed to learn a thing or two (or fifty, admittedly) as well. All in all it was an excellent evening.

The evening itself (and one of the editors of this newsletter, along with a well-versed Ministry colleague) had me thinking about the perspective of the Forage Seminar through the eyes of Ministry of Agriculture staff and about how I could take some of the information that I learned from the evening and incorporate it into my role as a Regional Agrologist. While there was much information to draw on, carbon offset projects and business management options are what came to the minds of Ministry staff.

John's presentation sparked some thinking on carbon offsets and the carbon credit market. Although there is not currently a carbon market system in BC, the Ministry could work with producer groups to demonstrate some of the carbon offset beneficial management practices, such as reducing the age to slaughter for beef cattle. During such demonstrations there could be opportunity for comparisons with the existing Alberta system which could start the dialogue in BC about a carbon credit system as well as enable discussions on what could work for BC, what would not be useful and how the Alberta system could be adapted for BC. There is a great deal of work that could be done regarding carbon offsets and if there is an interest within the producer communities then there is certainly opportunity for groups and individuals to work with Ministry staff on various projects.



The Carrolls & John Basarab enjoy a good discussion

More information on agriculture in the Alberta carbon market can be found on the Alberta's Agriculture and Rural Development website at: [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/cl11618](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/cl11618).

From carbon markets to beef markets, Mark's presentation on international trade and marketing shed some light on the unique marketable qualities of Canadian beef, as well as where there may be enthusiastic demand for Canadian beef versus where the demand may be tempered for a variety of reasons. The presentation brought about awareness for the opportunities within markets, be they international, regional or local. As one colleague noted, meeting the demands of the market in which the product is desired and tailoring the products for those consumers who would like to purchase the product, be it China or consumers at your local farmers market, is likely the best way to focus marketing energies.

The Ministry of Agriculture's farm business management program provides a good opportunity for the exploration of marketing options as well as provides consultant support in building this market for businesses large or small.

As a newcomer to the Ministry of Agriculture and to the agriculture scene in general, I have to say that one of the things that stood out for me at this seminar was not the topics discussed per se, but the fact that belonging to or becoming involved with an association such as the Peace River Forage Association provides such excellent opportunities for all involved. Between the knowledge sharing, the innovative thinking, the awareness of and access to funding dollars for various projects and the sense of community and connectedness that comes about during association events such as the Forage Seminar, those taking part have industry opportunities abound. As for me, I cannot say how much I've learned from attending association meetings, seminars and workshops; all I know is that it has been an enormous amount and I hope to continue to learn more over the coming season.

Canadian Forage & Grassland Association

We are very pleased to be the national voice for the forage and grassland industry and are striving to strengthen our Canadian livestock production systems and domestic and export hay industries via research and technology transfer and by growing our export market to the U.S. and abroad. Doug Wray, Chair of CFGA

Check out their website to sign up for the newsletters. <http://www.canadianfga.ca/>



Asian Frontier for Canadian Beef

by Ann Grover

In April 2010, Mark Grafton, ranch manager of the Bar K Ranch in Prince George, travelled to China and Japan with the New West Partnership Trade Mission to promote Canadian beef in those countries. Mark Grafton, along with Larry Garrett, represented the BC Cattlemen's Association.

The Trade Mission, which included representatives from industry and government from BC, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, had a busy week-long itinerary in Beijing, Shanghai, and Tokyo, visiting with many local business people & government representatives. Canadian beef was served at a special reception and enjoyed by all.

China, with its ever-improving economy, has vast potential. Its growing population of 1.3 billion people has an increasing appetite for high protein food and high quality consumer items. Forty-three percent of the population live in urban centres; twenty cities have populations of over one million.



Forage members enjoy the seminar

The Chinese perceive Canada as trustworthy and reliable with a good track record of integrity, and are therefore interested in increasing trade with Canada.

Currently, China uses domestic beef products, mostly from dairy herd sources, and China also imports beef from Australia. Neither are optimum; few domestic cattle are finished, and Australia's grass fed cattle are graded differently, resulting in inconsistency in quality.

China makes use of what is called the "wet market," a farmers market where all manner of goods are available for purchase, including beef. As well, illegal goods filter in from Hong Kong in what is known as the "gray market."

Unfortunately, China also sees Canadian products to be of lesser quality than those from the USA. They see Canada as "slow to respond" and perceive a lack of aggression on our part.

Grafton maintains that Canada must implement more vigorous brand marketing and endeavour to elevate the Canadian image in China. He feels the Canada Beef Advantage must be promoted while forging and strengthening relationships.

A Chinese delegation was sent to inspect Canadian products and to confirm quality and standards according to their specifications.

"The market in Japan is much tougher," says Grafton. The Japanese are very concerned with image and branding. The Agriculture Minister for Japan feels any trade policy should be based on "sound science," using WTO protocols. Security demands, both at local plants and on imports, are extremely stringent. Also, American trade is important to the Japanese and their economy, and they won't deal with Canada unilaterally.

Japan currently does not accept any beef over 21 months of age or any beef that manifests "islands of ossification" in the lumbar / sacral region, regardless of the animal's stated age.

Almost a year after the New West Partnership Trade Mission trip, Mark Grafton is pleased that the Canadian government is working to establish long term marketing of Canadian beef in Asia. Beef is already being shipped to Japan, with China and South Korea to follow.



Speaker, Mark Grafton and PRFA President, Rick Kantz



Ecological Winners in Kiskatinaw Watershed

Winter Feeding Strategies That Improve The Land & Our Bottom Line

by the Hogberg Family

Our objectives:

Prior to 2000, we focussed on genetic selection, higher production and bigger calves. With Gelbvieh influence, this gave our herd a baseline of high fertility. But over the last 8 years with the BSE effects and fuel/ fertilizer price increases, it has become critical to reduce our input costs. With less markets and less revenue coming in, we needed to reduce our costs of production. One way to do this is to reduce our winter feeding costs. We also changed the way we look at our operation and have made a number of management changes.

Changes to our operation:

After hearing about this from the Western Forage Beef Group researchers about 10 years ago, we moved calving one month later. We have found that now we match cycles of grass productive peaks to times when our animals have the highest demands during lactating. April 1st to mid May for calving seems a good compromise for us, in that we can still get marketable calves by fall sales.

We made the choice to relate everything back to the land and its productivity. Recent drought years have complicated this when we had to take on more land, as we ran out of grass & feed. We took the approach to continue rejuvenating to keep our hay stands young, because we felt we should grow more feed & not purchase it.

Changes to our summer grazing included extending the grazing

season by rotational grazing, and continuing to graze the aftermath from our hay fields.

We developed a method of converting recently logged areas into productive pastures by aerial seeding them, and then rotationally grazing to control the aspen regrowth. We did this successfully with 100 ac with smaller paddocks, more portable fencing and a gravity water system. This success led us to try another piece of land. Unfortunately, we had several drought years after aerial seeding it, so the growth of the forage mixture was poor. There was insufficient water system development and paddocks were too big to keep the aspen from suckering back with summer grazing. It became a natural fit to focus more on our winter feeding program.

Winter feeding strategies:

The last 2 winters we have been feeding our herd on this recently logged land converted to pasture. It is a good opportunity to try a new approach since its close to our stackyard. With this winter feeding method, we are using our cattle trampling and tractor to physically damage the aspen suckers.

We want to increase the fertility of the poor grey wooded soil by thinking about where feed is placed and therefore where the urine, manure and feeding residues are spread. We are feeding on knolls where the land is open to wind, the soil is thin and tends to dry out. Any wasted feed residue left is recycled.

Whether you feed at home or in the field, there is always some waste, but here we are not having to haul it out of our corrals. At first I rolled the bales out, but now things have evolved to more of a bale grazing system.

Bottom line:

- ⇒ Reduced feeding costs significantly by feeding every 2-3 days with a system of bale grazing
- ⇒ Reduced feeding time at home area by 40%
- ⇒ Reduced days of confined feeding = reduced costs of manure hauling by 40% (increased rates may be a factor here)
- ⇒ Reduced fuel use and emissions into the atmosphere.





Reuben Loewen (front left) explains his fescue rejuvenation techniques.

Soil Champion Reuben Loewen

by Terry Hockaday

Organic matter increase improved these B.C. northern soils

Forage anchors the future for this family farm

When he moved from Saskatchewan to the Peace Country of Northern B.C., Reuben Loewen had to change his farming habits. The biggest change was getting out of the wheat mentality that he had been accustomed to in his home province.

Next, was learning how to make the grey wooded soils on his northern farm near Prespatou, B.C. more productive.

Today, a concerted effort around growing fescue forage has improved those soils and built a solid foundation for Reuben and Arlene Loewen, who now farm with their son Grant.

"When I first came to the region I grew wheat because that is what I had always grown. But this land is so much better suited to growing grasses and legumes. I grow fescue seed and my goal is to have consistent, strong, healthy plants going into the winter that are nice and green, have a decent size, with some space between them.

"In my soils I want nutrients to be available at three critical times of year that a plant needs them: to get started in spring, at stooling and when it's setting seed."

Organic matter key

Organic matter has been a major focus. "To me, soil organic matter is everything," says Loewen. "For crops to live without soil organic matter is like people trying to live without eating protein. Organic matter is the host for plant nutrients.

"It bothers me so much when I see straw and all the crop residues taken off the fields and the land cultivated and tilled until it is exposed for the snowmelt runoff to take away the soil in the spring. We've experienced what it's like not to have good organic matter and it affects everything.

"I've increased the organic matter in my soils from two percent when I started, to six to seven percent because of growing fescue."

Soil recapture

Loewen has taken steps to reclaim topsoil in cases where it has washed off fields. He has used a scraper to capture the soil and return it to the field. Then he developed a strategy to get that land back into a more manageable state.

"We've learned that you can't stop water but you can lead it," he says. "So we move water flow from unstable areas to an area that we have stabilized. In some areas we used old truck tires to build dams and terraces in soil erosion ravines. We have been able to slow that water down and get grass established, and then eventually take the tires away so we can drive through with our farming equipment."

Stewardship Commitment

Loewen's strong feelings about stewardship are clear as he talks of farming's future.

"A true farmer is a person of the soil. Farmers need to be careful or they can become equipment brokers. In agriculture we can become too focused on the bottom line. We need to remember how we got to that bottom line."

The whole universe relies on the top six inches of soil, he says. "We cannot live without our topsoil and we need to wake up before it is all destroyed. It takes a thousand years to produce an inch of topsoil in central Saskatchewan. It must take even longer in the thin grey wooded soils in our area

"Topsoil is like a family. If you have a happy family you have happy children. If you have healthy topsoil you have happy soil and plant life. Topsoil is the catalyst."

Terry Hockaday of Meristem writes and compiles news releases for Soil Conservation Council of Canada. Read about these additional soil champions honored across Canada during National Soil Conservation Week:

- ⇒ *Eric Kaiser, Hay Bay, Ontario*
"Confidence is the cornerstone of this farm soil conservation plan"...
- ⇒ *Robert Theriault, Drummond, New Brunswick*
"Soil conservation anchors farm soil health"

Visit the website <http://www.soilcc.ca/>. When you are checking out the site, you might be interested in noting the local content i.e. a photo of our compost project is still front and center on the home page of this national website.

Lighter Side of Forage

by Shannon McKinnon



Cow Tipping: Rural Reality or Myth?

Ah, springtime in the Peace. Child sized fistfuls of dandelions grace the centre of table tops, water roars down the ditches and the smell of thawing manure perfumes the air. On the greening hillsides calves race about in happy packs while their mothers anxiously look on. On our muddy back roads happy packs of humans race about shooting up road signs and knocking mailboxes on the head in an annual rite of spring. Boasts of midnight cow tipping abound.

What I want to know is this. Is cow tipping real or simply a rural myth? A few years back the debate was tackled by Margo Lillie, a doctor of zoology and her student Tracy Boechler, at the University of British Columbia.

Boechler calculated that a cow of 1.45 metres in height, pushed at an angle of 23.4 degrees relative to the ground, would require 2,910 Newton's of force equivalent to 4.43 people. Since people do not normally come in .43 portions the number was rounded up to five. Lillie looked over her student's calculations and revised them to find that two people could exert the required amount of force to tip a static cow, but only if the cow failed to react. "The static physics of the issue say two might be able to tip a cow," Margo said. "But the cow would have to be tipped quickly - the cow's centre of mass would have to be over its hoof before the cow could react."

She went on to amend her conclusion by citing Newton's second law of motion; force equals mass multiplied by acceleration. "Biology complicates the issue here because the faster the (human) muscles have to contract, the lower the force they can produce. Even if a dynamic physics model suggests cow tipping is possible, the biology ultimately gets in the way; a cow is simply not a rigid, unresponsive body."

Boechler cites that cows are also easily disturbed. "I have personally heard of people trying but failing because they are either using too few people or being too loud. Most of these athletes are intoxicated."

Could this be where the more adamant stories of cow tipping expeditions stem from? If you're drunk and

you try to push over a cow in the dark, it's pretty clear what's going to happen. The cow is going to run and you - attempting to exert 2,910 Newton's of force into its fleeing flank - are going to do a face plant in a cow patty. From this vantage point - and carefully calculating the level of anti freeze in your bloodstream - it would be a forgivable leap to think you had fallen down because you had successfully pushed over the cow.

Whether it's true or not, here's the real beef: Why? What is wrong with the human psyche that makes the sight of Bossy standing in a pasture incite a wild urge to knock her over? Even in the spring, even if you're bored, even if you're drunk, even if crazy Earl is in the back-seat enthusing over the merits of cow tipping, what satisfaction can possibly be derived from pushing over a cow?

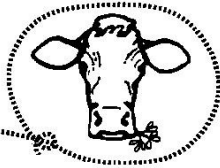
I bet Bossy has a few beefs on the subject herself. Like why cows? Why not pigs or goats or sheep? All perfectly tippable livestock sources going untapped. I was talking to one of my rural neighbours and he was startled to hear about the research findings at UBC. "Two to five people to knock over one cow!" He snorted and shoved his cowboy hat back on his head and gave his forehead a thoughtful scratch. "Well...maybe if they're a bunch of mammy pamby city kids."

He went on to assure me that not only was it possible for one cowboy to tip over a cow, it happens all the time. And what's more it takes place in front of large crowds of witnesses.

"But we generally use steers," he explained. "And real cowboys don't call it tipping, they call it steer wrestling."

Shannon McKinnon lives on a small farm between Fort St John and Dawson Creek with her husband Darcy, a few sheep, a couple horses, some chickens, two dogs and a cat. She doesn't have a single cow to tip. Or even a married one.

Peace River Forage Association
of British Columbia



&



Invite you to a joint **LIVESTOCK & FORAGE TOUR IN THE ALBERTA & B.C. PEACE**

DATES: FRI & SAT, JUNE 10 & 11, 2011

LOCATIONS: Rycroft, Dawson Creek, Swan Lake, Pouce Coupe, Bonanza

TOUR STOPS:

- ⇒ Year round solar watering system
- ⇒ Pasture to plate livestock operations
- ⇒ Extended grazing (this producer sold his haying equipment and purchases his feed)
- ⇒ 3-D wildlife fencing & electric fencing tips
- ⇒ Custom back grounding operation (pens constructed of electric page wire)
- ⇒ Restored channel & riparian grazing systems to restore vigour
- ⇒ Manure spreader demonstrations

BC/ PEACE RIVER FORAGE MEMBERS:

The bus will depart from Dawson Creek on Saturday, June 11 at 8 am
and return the same day.

Costs: \$30/ member; \$45/ non member; \$55/ couple.

AB /NPARA MEMBERS: The bus will depart from Grimshaw Friday morning,
picking up folks along the way and return to Grimshaw Saturday evening with
an overnight in Dawson Creek.

Costs: \$150/ member; \$180 for non members; \$200/ couple.

PRFA of BC would like to thank the following sponsors
for their support of our February 2011 seminar

Peace River Agriculture Development Fund (PRAD)

BC/Canada Growing Forward Program