

# FORAGE FIRST

56th Edition  
October 2011

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

\$10

## A Summer of Learning & Laughter



*Burnem & Shaun Grant "made friends with the microphone" & kicked off the summer tour in fine form.*

It has truly been a summer of learning and laughter. Of course increased rainfall this year helped boost all our spirits, as well as our grass and legume growth. A number of us have contributed articles to share what we learned at various tours, field days, handling workshops and pasture walks. Talon Johnson, our energetic summer student, has also been busy working on the Wildlife Mitigation Project. She asks that you help her by filling out the survey (disguised as a forage fact) in the center of this issue and mail it back to us (with your membership renewal, if you like).



SOS! We need your help! Do you have any photographs you would share with us of:

- ⇒ Sheep dog, lamas for protection against wildlife
- ⇒ Damage to equipment (swathers, combines, balers)
- ⇒ Predators & livestock (cougars, bears, wolves)
- ⇒ Damage to fencing, granaries, infrastructure
- ⇒ Electric page wire for gardens, chickens, apiaries
- ⇒ Innovative fencing, portable stackyard fencing OR
- ⇒ Wild bison or elk photos?

We would like to use these photos in future forage facts and talks about the Wildlife Mitigation Project. We would of course provide photo credits.

### Inside This Issue:

*(for paid up members)*

Summer Tour Highlights  
Livestock Handling  
Night Life in Toronto  
Weed Free Hay & Straw  
CFGFA & BCCA News  
Why Use Local Seed  
Tailgate Pizza Party  
Kiskatinaw Trail Ride  
Ecological Winners  
Pouce Pasture Walk  
Lighter Side of Forage  
Events Page

### Inserts:

3D Fence Forage Fact  
Wildlife Mitigation Survey  
Ag Recovery Info  
Mass Carcass Disposal  
Membership Form 2012

*(1st notice - renew by AGM on Dec. 1st & 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  
President  
785 1135

Bill Wilson  
Treasurer  
782 2866

John Kendrew  
Director  
786 5652

Don Kruse  
Director  
772 5013

Freddy Schneider  
Director  
786 5051

Andrew Clarke  
Director  
789 3379

Heather Hansen  
Director  
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](http://www.peaceforage.bc.ca)





# 2011 Forage and Livestock Tour

By Talon Johnson



The Peace River Forage Association (PRFA) and North Peace Applied Research Association (NPARA) collaborated again! Never have I seen two groups together who have so much fun learning and laughing together.

The NPARA group hopped on the bus early Friday morning and headed towards Dawson Creek. Their first stop along the way was with **Christoph and Erika Weder** near Rycroft, AB. They raise completely forage finished beef and market those animals right from their farm to the consumer. They have Lowline Angus cattle from New Zealand. They introduced the Lowline genetics to their herd originally with artificial insemination but have now moved to embryo transplants. Christoph and Erika grow meadow brome/alfalfa/clover mix in their fields and always include Anik alfalfa because it is long lived. They like to let their grass go to seed for stock piled grazing plus it then reseeds itself. They have bale grazed their cattle through the winter but are tired of wildlife going through their fences. This year they will fence smaller paddocks of up to 40 acres with only enough bales for 2 weeks. They use sisal twine on their bales so it doesn't have to be taken off. During the growing season everything is strip grazed and hit pretty hard so that the cattle have no choice but to eat everything.

The Manning group then ventured over to Sexsmith to look at plots involved in the Peace Region Forage Seed

intensively by a herd of approximately 300 wild elk from fall to spring. This study aims to collect information that may be useful in creating a compensation program for fescue seed growers.

This group then continued their travels to Dawson Creek where they settled into their accommodations and filled their bellies with a hot meal. Their night was not over yet however as we hauled them out to the **Hogberg Ranch**. This operation is managed by Glenn and Ann Hogberg and Glenn's parents Ralf and Ulla Hogberg. Glenn took us to an area that had been converted from poplar to pasture in 1999. This area consists of three 50 acre pastures with permanent fencing located on a hillside with a creek through the middle. In the spring of 2000, these areas were aerial seeded into a grass/fall rye mix. A dugout was then put into the top of the third pasture which just gravity feeds into several water tanks in all three paddocks. Through intensive livestock grazing by subdividing into smaller pieces and a good water supply, they have successfully converted these areas to pasture with little poplar re-growth.

Glenn then showed us another area that had been logged in 2005 and aerial seeded in the spring of 2006. Since this area was seeded during a drought year on



top of a hill, grass establishment has struggled with competition from poplar regrowth. Limiting the success of converting this area to pasture are the larger fenced areas and fewer water troughs. Glenn is planning on logging another area this fall and aerial seeding it next spring. The money that Glenn is paid by the loggers for the trees goes into paying for the aerial seeding, fencing and water setup. Following our tour of Hogbergs' pastures, we were welcomed to enjoy refreshments and goodies on Ralf and Ulla Hogberg's deck that overlooks most of their ranching operation.



Association's Wildlife Damage Study.

These plots are located in three of **Franklin Moller's** creeping red fescue fields. Franklin's fields were grazed





The next morning the Manning tour group joined members of our Forage Association for their annual tour bringing the tour group to 60 people. The first stop of the morning was at **Burnem and Gertie Grant's Tate Creek Bison Ranch** which started in 1993. Currently the Grants run a bison cow herd of 120, they have 100 of last year's calves and 20 – two year old calves. They also have a new calf crop on the ground as they start calving in May. The bulls are kept with the cows year round to help minimize fighting and fence repairs. Bison bulls are most active from 2-6

years old, whereas bison cows are maximally producing from 6-15 years old.

Bison calves are slaughtered between 22-36 months old depending on their finish. Burnem said "we talk to the customers when it comes to carcass weights; it all depends on what they want". Generally the calves range from 400-500 lbs. The bison are handled minimally to help reduce stress.

Next we travelled a short distance to **Shaun and Kim Grant's** meat cut and wrap facility. Shaun started cutting meat with his brother-in-law and they converted an old dairy barn into their working facility. They cut meat solely on evenings and weekends from fall to spring. This small facility that "started as a hobby and blossomed from there" has processed approximately 30,000 lbs of meat just since the middle of last August (equivalent to 100 head).

The grass fed animals from his parent's bison ranch are harvested and processed at the plant from the middle of August to beginning of October. Their grain fed animals can be harvested year round. The hanging time for each carcass processed depends on age, weight and species. After sharing some jerky samples with our group and having a coffee break we loaded onto the bus again and proceeded to the Ducks Unlimited (DU) office.

Sitting on 400 acres of land beside Swan Lake rests the **Ducks Unlimited** office. There were a few land management issues so DU started the Tupper Creek Habitat Enhancement Project. The creek that runs through the property had become stagnant due to previous management of diverting the water into a nearby marsh. Since the creek then ceased to flow and the surrounding areas were grazed intensively there was no aquatic life present.

Under the careful management of DU the creek now has a current and aquatic life present in it. DU set up several different fencing designs around the property and the creek to demonstrate the most

successful design. There are still some cattle that rotationally graze through the property. Occasionally the cattle are grazed along the creek edges to disturb the land.

We then enjoyed lunch with the staff from DU at their office. Following lunch we loaded the bus to go to



another DU site called the **Tupper Creek Restoration Project**. This project aims to restore the banks of the creek and create a route for fish to travel upstream. Restoring the banks included making a slope, stopping silt from moving and using rocks to stabilize. Four different techniques were used to help stabilize the banks:

1. Small crushed rock underneath larger rock on top.
2. Planting trees and shrubs (root systems stabilize banks)
3. Engagement fabric – lay on banks and plant trees through fabric
4. Bioengineering – cut the slope back and create humps (hold water). Plant trees and shrubs into the side.

Following the DU sites we travelled to **Freddy and Liz Schneider's** operation. Here the Schneider's showed us areas in their pastures where they had bale grazed



the past four winters to improve the quality of the soil and grass.

Currently the Schneiders run 185 cow/calf pairs as well as some yearlings. Depending on the amount of feed available they try to pasture the cattle until December 1<sup>st</sup>. Last year they bale grazed from December 8<sup>th</sup> until March 12<sup>th</sup>. The cows were fed every 3-5 days and the bales were placed on end 20 feet apart. Since the bales were net wrapped, the Schneiders would only cut off the top third of the wrap and use the rest as a make shift bale feeder. They would clean up the net wrap when the bales were finished and they tried to never place bales in the same locations. The areas where bales were placed retained more moisture and had organic material and nutrients from the cow's urine and feces. These areas were easily seen in the field as the grass grew much taller.

Another success story for the Schneiders is the establishment of cicer milk vetch in their pastures. This is an anti-bloating legume for cattle. It seems to have some drought resistance and remains greener longer than all other grasses in the fall.



Our next tour stop was at a pasture site of **John Kendrew's** seeded in 1992. Through rotational grazing and direct seeding John has improved the quality of forage here (and this pasture has not seen a plough in 20 years). John used the Forage Association's zero till drill eight years ago and Bill Wilson's zero till drill four years ago. This year John has hired Frank Schneider to seed a small piece of pasture with the Great Plain Drill. His pasture mix consists of cicer milk vetch, alfalfa, hybrid brome and tall fescue.

Last year John purchased a portable cattle handling facility to replace his old wooden system. John rotationally grazes his cattle and tries to move them every three days. He wants the cattle to tramp the grass into the ground a little to help build up the fibre in the soil. According to John he spent many years "learning all [he] could about grasses to learn we are never grass farmers – we now need to learn about microbes in the soil".

John then showed us a portable Sundog Solar watering system on loan from Agriculture and Agri Food Canada. This system has a water pump run from two 170 W solar panels and four 6 V batteries that pumps water from a nearby water source.

This trough can handle up to 480 head of cattle and comes equipped with a winter liner. There is also the

ability to attach a wind turbine system to the water tank.

The tour bus then loaded up and headed to the last stop of the day **Bill Wilson's** new place northeast of



Bonanza. Here Bill showed us his Beef Booster bulls that he will breed with this year. He then showed us a portion of the 3-D fence around his quarter. Bill wants to be able to swath graze his cattle during the winter but is unable to because of wildlife.

The three dimensional effect and electrified wires of the fence are effective in deterring wildlife from crossing. We then looked at pens that are built with the largest size of powerflex posts available and electrified page wire. These pens are used as Bill's corral system and he has little problems with fence repairs.

Following the tour, Bill hosted our group for a steak supper prepared by Douglas Lake Equipment. This was a great opportunity for everyone to share what they had learned throughout the day and their own knowledge. The Peace River Forage Association and North Peace Applied Research Association are by no means done collaborating, so stay tuned for more great events to come!

**Thank you to our sponsors:**

## Peace River Agriculture Development (PRAD)





# Dylan Biggs Workshop

By Talon Johnson



The North Peace Applied Research Association (NPARA) hosted a two day cattle handling clinic with Dylan Biggs. NPARA invited producers from the whole Peace Region to join them for this hands-on clinic in Grimshaw, Alberta July 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. Bill Wilson, Freddy and Liz Schneider and myself participated in this interactive and engaging clinic. Dylan learned his cattle handling techniques from a well known cattle handler, Bud Williams. In 1990, Bud came to the Biggs'

operation for three days to help them learn to minimize their stress. Dylan has mastered Buds stress-free way of handling cattle and has been presenting for the past 16 years to producers in Canada and the USA.

For first few hours of the clinic, Dylan explained where most of our cattle handling problems arise from. Through multiple diagrams he provided us with a base of knowledge. He explained how to gain control of an animal and then how to use your positioning to move that animal or herd of animals. What indicates to Dylan that he has control of one or more cattle is his ability to stop, start, turn, speed up and slow down their movement by only using his positioning. Cattle need to be able to trust and respect their handler. Indicators of trust are when an animal can turn away from you and have its head level with its withers.

One of the most common mistakes cattle handlers make is to ask their cattle to move in a specific direction before knowing whether they can control that movement. It takes time and patience to establish a working relationship with a single animal or even the whole herd. As Dylan said "it requires only having two microns more patience than the cow". He stressed that it is also important to be able to give ground to an animal otherwise they will try to run through you.

After lunch our small group travelled out to Michael Scott's Ranch. Here we were able to take the knowledge we had been given that morning and put it to use. One person at a time, we volunteered to go out with Dylan and move a single cow from the herd and put it into a panel enclosure. This allowed people to understand how their positioning affected where the cow went. When most people handle cattle they use lots of pressure to get the animals to do what they want. Dylan taught us to move cattle as if every step they took was their decision. We would put pressure on the cattle when they did something we didn't want and release pressure as soon as they did something we wanted.

It was very difficult for everyone to stay still the first time a cow went into the panel enclosure. When we would have all jumped at the gate to trap her, Dylan simply let

her turn and run out and started the process of getting her to go in again. He explained that if a cow accepts she should stay inside then she will walk in quietly and stand there while he comes up to close the gate. If she runs out then all you had done was get lucky that she even went in and you haven't trained her to do anything.

We slowly started to learn that many of the things we do instinctively, like rushing to cut an animal off or hastening to a gate, actually causes most of our handling problems. He paralleled many of the movements and positioning that he uses to those of dogs who work cattle. The day ended with a very generous supper hosted by Lorna and Michael Scott. The weather the next day hampered our plans of going out into the field and to gain more hands on experience. Instead Dylan pulled out many videos of how they move, process and load cattle on their operation. He



also introduced our group to very innovative ideas like the Bud Box and stripping calves from their mothers hassle free. He showed how to set up permanent and temporary handling systems to reduce not only stress on the cattle but ours as well! At the very end he invited producers, who wanted to improve their handling systems, to draw their facilities on the board and he helped them integrate easier handling techniques into them.

Walking away from the clinic, I felt so refreshed and excited to put what I had learned to use. In the truck I asked Bill and Schneiders their opinions on the clinic. Bill told me "it was the best seminar I have ever been to. I learned about even the simplest ideas like the calf stripper". Freddy Schneider commented that "this is why I like going on these tours you learn the simplest things to improve your operation". The rest of the trip involved them excitedly talking about how they were going to integrate a Bud Box and calf stripper into their operations.

What is a Bud Box and calf stripper you ask? You may just have to attend a Dylan Biggs clinic to find out!

# Toronto Night Life

By Bill Wilson

This year, the **Soil Conservation Council of Canada's (SCCC) Summer Tour & Meeting** was held July 11-12 in the Toronto area. I attended this cross Canada gathering, representing the BC Taking Charge Team.

The **tour** was full of contrasts in type of soil and agriculture. The first stop was at Holland Marsh, where we visited a farm with approximately 700 ac. They were growing carrots, onions and a type of oriental cabbage on soil with 25 % organic matter. The entire area of the Marsh was approx 7200 acres, and soil has tile drainage to a ditch where it is then pumped back into the fields for irrigating vegetables.

On our next stop, we got to tour the smallest Agriculture Canada Research Station; it was only 9 acres but very interesting. The Ag Station was also in the marsh and tested crops that could be grown in the marsh conditions.

The main reason for the next stop at a dairy farm was to see their compost turner. I was proud of how detailed we monitored our composting process, and we could share information and forage facts with them.

It was amazing to drive 15 to 20 miles from the marshy land and soils with 25 % organic matter to a vegetable farm on hilly land and soils with only 1.5 % organic matter. They grew corn and beans. One thing he did to build up his soil organic matter was seed red clover then desiccate it in the corn crop.

Next we stopped at an orchard. This operation was

diverse. As well as the fruit growing part of the business, they also had a saw mill, a stone oven bakery and cider press with homemade bread, cider, preserves and a restaurant.

The **SCCC meetings** were focussed in new directions. We defined new mission statements and identified issue/ policy positions and formed working committees to define these further. I am in a working group with Paul Thoroughgood from Ducks Unlimited and Werner Schur from Quebec from Quebec to draft a position for SCCC to take on mitigating climate change. All our working committees need to have their reports in by Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011.

We continue to participate in **international conferences**. Don McCabe will represent SCCC at the World Congress of Conservation Agriculture in Australia. We will be co-sponsoring an event with Ducks at the Grow Canada conference in November, 2011. We have applied to host the World Congress of Conservation Agriculture in 2014. If our application is successful, this will be the first time this congress has been hosted in North America.

The **highlight** during the tour was meeting the farmer that grew corn and beans as a cash crop on soils with no organic matter and could easily tell us all his input costs. The highlight during the meetings was seeing friends again and chatting with people. But the biggest highlight of all for me was seeing a skunk and a very fat woodchuck in downtown Toronto.

## Weed Free Hay and Straw

By Sonja Leverkus

**Northeast Invasive Plant Committee - North West Invasive Plant Council Certified  
Weed Free Hay Program Pilot Project**

The NEIPC-NWIPC Certified Weed Free Hay and Straw Program is underway in its first year of operation. With the support of local producers in the North, we are able to offer a much needed product for recreationists who take horses into our backcountry. A recent addition to our program is to also offer weed free straw. The request for this product originated from the oil and gas companies operating in the Horn River Basin. As with many pilot projects, there have been many opportunities for learning and building the program's capacity for future years.

There will be a meeting in December to discuss the strengths and areas for improvement of the program and how we can continue to build success for the 2012 season. If you are interested in either producing or purchasing weed free forage or if you would like more information on the project or would like to attend the December meeting please contact Sonja Leverkus with the BC Forest Service at (250) 774.5518 or by email at Sonja.Leverkus@gov.bc.ca.

# Canadian Forage and Grassland Association

By Grant Lastiwka and Doug Wray

The Alberta Forage Industry Network (AFIN) is a connection to our national body: the **Canadian Forage and Grassland Association (CFGA)**. Doug Wray, an AFIN board member was elected chair of the Canadian Forage and Grassland Association. Many may know Doug from all his activities in forages with the Foothills Forage and Grazing Association, Agricultural Research and Extension Council of Alberta (ARECA) and the Western Forage/Beef Group. Doug and his family are beef producers at Irricana, AB, who use forages for over 87% of feedstuff to background, grass and finish their calves.

The CFGA Exec Director is Wayne Digby from Brandon, MB. Feel free to contact him for more information at: [w\\_digby@canadianfga.ca](mailto:w_digby@canadianfga.ca)

The CFGA has received financial support to function from the Canadian Cattle Commission, Dairy Producers of Canada along with several provincial organization memberships. The committees within the CFGA that are at varied stages of development to full action are:

- ⇒ Domestic Hay and Export;
- ⇒ Research and Extension;
- ⇒ Producer and User.

The annual meeting of the Canadian Forage and Grassland Association is planned for December 13 & 14, 2011 in Saskatoon, SK. The theme is the Value of Forages for Livestock Production and the Environment. Watch for upcoming details at:

<http://www.canadianfga.ca/events/current-events/>

The CFGA is participating on the Forage Task Team to do the following:

- ⇒ Look at forage/ pasture insurance,
- ⇒ Determine the impacts of Roundup Ready Alfalfa use in Canada with a project led by Sask Forage Council.
- ⇒ Actively develop a forage export program through the Domestic Hay and Export Development Committee.

Don McLennan is currently the Chair of **Alberta Forage Industry Network (AFIN)**. Don has just retired

from AESB (formerly called PFRA) and is now a full time forage producer and grazier at Medicine Hat. Vice President is Lyndon Mansell (ABP and producer at Innisfree) Secretary is Dale Engstrom (retired from Alberta Agriculture and working with Alberta Feeder's Association). Treasurer is Jaime Borduzak (manager of the North Peace beef and Forage Association). Grant Lastiwka (from Alberta Agriculture) and Arnold Mattson (from AAFC) are advisory staff to AFIN.

The AFIN committees approved at the March 2011 annual meeting are:

- ⇒ Communication and Outreach;
- ⇒ Production and Marketing;
- ⇒ Partnerships and Coalitions;
- ⇒ Research, Education and Extension; and
- ⇒ Environmental Issues.

One of the first goals for the AFIN group was to try to determine the economic value of Alberta's Forage Industry. We are proud to say that through the help of Alberta Agriculture we now have a high quality draft report, which has provided a Value of the Diverse Forage Industry in Alberta. More work is needed though before it is ready for publication and use. George Adnam, from the AFFC in Regina is trying to work with all the provincial groups to get the value of forages from all across Canada compiled.

For more information about either the Alberta Forage Industry Network (AFIN) or the Canadian Forage and Grassland Association (CFGA) contact:

Grant Lastiwka, P. Ag.  
Grazing/Forage/Beef Specialist  
Agriculture and Rural Development  
201, Prov. Bldg., 5030-50 St., Olds, AB, T4H 1S1  
Tel. 403-556-4248, Cell 403-350-6394  
Fax 403-556-7545, Email: [grant.lastiwka@gov.ab.ca](mailto:grant.lastiwka@gov.ab.ca)

## BCCA Annual Convention in North Peace in 2012

The North Peace Cattlemen's Association will be hosting the annual convention & AGM of the British Columbia Cattlemen's Association (BCCA) this spring. It will be held **May 30, June 1 & 2**. Watch our website or the BCCA's website for more details. To get involved and help the organizing committee, call Barb Zunti (secretary for North Peace Cattlemen's Association) at 250 827 3371 or email her at [bzunti@telus.net](mailto:bzunti@telus.net)



# **2011 CAPTURING FEED GRAIN AND FORAGE OPPORTUNITIES CONFERENCE**



## **“Feeding is a Changing Game”**

Join us at the STRATHMORE TRAVELODGE, AB  
**November 22 & 23, 2011**

### **Highlights Include:**

- Changed Your Feeding System? How to Handle the Fall-out:  
Dr. Barry Robinson, Great Northern Livestock Consulting Ltd.
- DDG's and Other By-product Feeds: Are They For Me?  
Dr. John McKinnon, University of Saskatchewan
- From Round Bale to Corn Silage and Everything in Between:  
Dr. Robert Westra
- Wintering Sites: Where Do All the Nutrients Go? Don Flaten,  
University of Manitoba

**Banquet Presentation:** Beef Marketing Strategies - Debbie McMillin

### **Registration Fees (includes GST, coffee breaks, lunches, breakfast)**

-Individual \$140    -Farm Unit \$250    -Student \$100    -Banquet \$30

### **For more information:**

Check out the “Coming Events” at [www.agriculture.alberta.ca](http://www.agriculture.alberta.ca) OR  
the “Upcoming Events” section at [WWW.ARECA.AB.CA](http://WWW.ARECA.AB.CA)

**To Register: Contact the Chinook Applied Research  
Association at 1-403-664-3777**



# Why Use Local Seed

By Talon Johnson, Glenn Hogberg, Glen Mielke, Bob Noble & Sandra Burton

How important to you, as a producer, is using locally grown seed in your fields and/or pastures? Throughout the summer, I had the opportunity to work with producers who made very compelling points on why using seed grown in the Peace River area is beneficial to their operations.

Glenn Hogberg, a cattle producer, uses a seed mix for his pastures and hay land made for him by a local seed plant called Peace Country Seed. The seed mix that Glenn likes to use:

**Hogberg's Pasture Mix**  
40% Peace Country Alfalfa  
20% Orchardgrass  
15% Smooth Brome grass  
15% Meadow Brome grass  
10% Timothy

Why did you choose these specific grasses and legumes in this mix? What do you use it for?

Glenn: "This mix is not overly special to me but there are specific things I like about each variety. I use this mix to seed my hay fields, which I also fall graze. The alfalfa blend produces a good hay crop and regrows well for grazing. Orchardgrass works well in the pasture setting as it fills in areas and timothy grows in areas where the other grasses won't. Smooth brome grass gives a better yield in a hay cut and meadow brome grass has better regrowth after it is cut.

How long have you been using this mix? How do you ensure the longevity of your stand?

Glenn: "I have been seeding this mix for the past 6 to 7 years. We have gone away from using a cover crop in our establishment year, so that the forage has no competition for nutrients. This also helps reduce the number of weeds in our fields. I also add fertilizer in the first year to make sure I get the best establishment I can."

Why is it important to you that what you seed is grown in the Peace Region?

Glenn: "Since I pasture my hay fields, I need to know that what I am seeding will yield a good hay crop, have good regrowth, be hardy for grazing, as well as be able to survive our harsh winters. If the seed is grown locally then it should be well adapted to the Peace Region climate and produce plants that are the same."

Why do you buy your seed from Peace Country Seed?

Glenn: "I know that they go to great lengths to make sure their seed comes from the Peace Region and they are a small local business. I am also am sure that if there was ever a problem with seed quality, that I will be represented well."

**Peace Country Seed** is owned and operated by Glen Mielke and his family. Even with his busy schedule, Glen was very willing to answer some questions on why being involved in the seed industry is important to him.

How long have you owned Peace Country Seed? Why did you start your own business in the seed industry?

Glen: "My wife Donna and I started Peace Country Seed in 2001. I have been involved in the seed industry since 1985 and recognized the need for reputable seed quality and species/variety information in this area. We were also looking for an avenue to add value to the crops we were producing on our farm. It is truly a family business. Both our children are actively involved with the business and the family farm."

What varieties of seed do you sell? What is the most popular?

Glen: "The background behind the selection of our varieties is simple. Producers manage their crops within this region in specific ways. The varieties we have chosen to offer provide the best longevity and yield for our region. (An example: There is very little value in planting an alfalfa variety that is noted for strong 2nd cut yield when this region may only produce a 2nd cut option once in 6 years.) Our most popular sales include the Peace Country Alfalfa Blend and our Peace Country Haymaker Blend. I was the first in the region to introduce and recommend Alfalfa Blends, in 1997, which all companies in the Peace now offer."

Do you always make custom mixes that producers want or do you have regular mixes you sell? Glen: "Almost all of the seed we sell is in custom mixtures. Most customers will include the Peace Country Alfalfa Blend and add their desired species of grass and amounts based on site and desired feed purpose. We do stock 3 or 4 popular mixtures as well."

Why do you believe it is important to source locally grown seed? Glen: "We can not second guess what works here, so it is best to stick with the species that are known to work well. Introducing other varieties and species which are not propagated in the Peace likely will not meet the desired end result. We are fortunate that we live in an area that is terrific for producing grass and legume seed."

How do you make sure the seed you are selling to producers is adapted for the Peace Region climate?

Glen: "We try and source all of our seed locally though reputable growers we know personally. Alfalfa is not propagated to any large extent in the Peace Region."

**Interview with Glen Mielke cont'd:**

So we select specific alfalfa seed lots from compa-

## Why Use Local Seed cont'd

nies in Northern Saskatchewan - because they have a similar climate to ours. One thing we try to avoid is alfalfa that has been propagated under irrigation."

Do you believe that many producers are uninformed about where their seed comes from when purchasing from other companies?

Glen: "Yes. The most important thing here is that they buy their seed from a reputable person or company. All seed sold in Canada has to comply with the Canada Seeds Act. If producers are purchasing seed from sources other than a Registered Seed Establishment they run the risk of "getting what they pay for". All seed sold in Canada must be graded and have a certificate of analysis stating germination and weed purity. It is the responsibility of the seller to provide this to the purchaser upon request."

In your opinion, why do you think forage establishments fail or are poor?

Glen: "Weather and management are the causes of failures. Weather we cannot control, but management we can. It is crucial that the land is ready to be seeded back to forage - meaning it needs adequate fertility, and weed control. Seed placement and seed-to-soil contact are also extremely important. Seeding rate is often overlooked and is also a major cause of failure. Seeding at only 8 lbs per acre offers very little resistance to any mortality, however seeding at 12+ lbs per acre almost always results in a successful catch. Cover crops of annuals can be very competitive. Most of the short term yield gain of the annual crop impacts the establishment and yield potential for the life of the perennial forage stand. Seeding without a cover crop is the best option."

Do you think buying seed locally should be promoted to producers more? How?

Glen: "Perhaps, however, local seed growers need to embrace propagation of some of the new cultivars. There are many new varieties and some people are savvy to try new species in our area. Most of these "new" cultivars are not propagated in the Peace region. The Peace is one of the world's leading forage seed producing areas, yet the seed growers of this region have yet to embrace of these cultivars.

The best advice I can give is: know the person you're dealing with and do some homework on what grows best in your area so you're not persuaded to buy seed that will be short-lived on your land. Take a soil test of your field to determine fertility and soil pH. This gathering of information will help you make a better selection for what is best for you."

**Bob Noble** is a brome grass seed grower from farm near Manning, Alberta. Bob, along with his wife Nora and his family, has been producing smooth brome grass seed throughout his farming career.

Why do you include brome grass seed in your operation? How much of your operation is in seed produc-

tion?

Bob: "Brome grows well in our area and it helps spread out the harvest work load. We farm 11 quarters with 4 for annual cash crops, 1 quarter currently into smooth brome grass for seed production, 1 rented quarter was in chewings fescue for seed production and now we use it for fall grazing and the remainder is for pasture, hay, green feed and swath grazing."



How do you ensure your crops successfully continue producing for six years?

Bob: "We do not seed a cover crop in the establishment year because of the time it is seeded and it only introduces competition for the forage plants. Since the leftover residue from the field is utilized by baling it for our cattle, we add 46-0-0 fertilizer every fall."

What types of forage seed crops and varieties do you produce and what is your average yield?

Bob: "Mostly we now produce smooth brome seed. The varieties we grow are Carlton and AC Rocket, which are well suited for the Peace Region climate. On average our fields yield 300 lbs/acre; but last year we had a phenomenal yield of 850 lbs/acre."

In your opinion, why do you think forage establishments fail or are poor?

Bob: "I believe there are two main reasons why many forage establishments fail. Climate and lack of moisture would be the first one; and poor weed control would be the second."

This article is the start of a series of articles. We want to share what we have learned about the seed industry as it affects all livestock owners. Next time we will be looking into the cooperative relationships seed companies have with one another when creating seed blends for you, the producers and what information your seed tag can reveal to you. Stay tuned for our exciting and informative interviews with Janet Roy from Peace River Seed Coop, Heather Kerschbaumer from Golden Acre Seeds, Bernie Legault, an alfalfa seed grower from Eaglesham, Dave Wuthrich, a timothy seed grower from Cecil Lake and more!



# Tailgate Pizza Party

By Sandra Burton



It must have been the rainy weather! Everyone that we called to invite them to a spontaneous tail gate pizza party at the forage plots, said "Sure sounds great!"

On July 18<sup>th</sup> about twenty folks gathered at the research site near Fort St. John to see what we could learn from each other. We really had an interesting mix of grass seed growers, legume seed growers, forage and livestock producers.

Ben Hansen demonstrated his homemade soil moisture tester; and this was much more fun this July than in recent dry summers. Ben celebrated his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday this summer!

We walked through the newly seeded demos of all the grasses and legumes that we can grow in the Peace. There were also demos of what these forages look like a couple years after establishment. Talon highlighted some of the non bloat legumes that were easier to establish than most people thought including birdsfoot trefoil, sanfoin and milk vetch.

Next we took a look at the brome grass plots and



discussed differences between smooth, meadow and hybrid brome. There was also a fescue establishment trial where seed coatings and adding phosphorus were being tested.

There was an opportunity to discuss winter kill issues at the tall fescue and orchard grass before these trials



are discontinued. It was interesting hearing comments like "I think we should try tall fescue in our forage mixes again; there is lots of growth here." by Rick Kantz or these very different perspectives when Arthur Hadland said "I have tried growing orchard grass for several years now and it is just too risky for me as a seed grower." Andrew Clarke replied "I am sorry to hear that, because we bought seed from you a couple of years ago, and those are now our best pastures."

Bill Wilson thoroughly checked out both of the larger timothy trials and remarked "Wow! Sandra, your harvest is as big as mine!"



As the shadows lengthened, we enjoyed Ed Hadland sharing his experiences growing brome grasses. All in all, the evening was filled with lots of learning and laughter with such a great mixture of innovative, open minded forage and seed growers.





Kiskatinaw Ecological Society



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



*Over 30 riders enjoyed the camaraderie, the green forage and visiting some of the Kiskatinaw Ranch's maxi eco sites during the Mark Nimitz Memorial Trail Ride.*

## **AGM & Memorial Trail Ride of the Kiskatinaw Ecological Society**

At their Annual General Meeting on Saturday, July 30<sup>th</sup> in the Sunrise Valley District, the Kiskatinaw Ecological Society (KES) heard updates from Glenn Hogberg and Michael Nimitz about the KES Working Group's discussions over the past year. Controlling erosion in the Dead Daug Coulee tops the list of ranch's maxi eco sites that they would like to tackle as a pilot project this fall. This working group includes: Sandra Burton, Farmington; Fred Burres, Farmington; Connor Dixon, Calgary; Shalan Hauber, Arras; Glenn Hogberg, Progress; Michael Nimitz, Sunrise Valley; and Ernest Nimitz, Sunrise Valley. Check for updates on the website: [www.kiskatinawecologicalsociety.com](http://www.kiskatinawecologicalsociety.com)

After a wonderful lunch of ranch raised beef chili cooked over the campfire, Fred Burres gave a fitting meditation prayer in memory of Mark Nimitz. Then over 30 riders mounted up for the Memorial Trail Ride for the afternoon through some of the best grass this country has seen in several years.





# Ecological Winners in Kiskatinaw Watershed

By Fred & Barb Burres

## Improved Grazing & Drought Management

### The early years:

The land we ranch on now was bought by my folks in 1963. Dad was used to feeding for only 3 to 6 weeks in Oregon so he could not see the viability of cattle up here, so while he was working the place it was strictly grain. In 1979, Barb and I bought our home quarter from them and for a few years I used that as a base for training horses.

### Running cattle & custom grazing:

Then in 1983, we took over the rest of the ranch and started running our own cattle. We did that for a few years. Then, 2 years before B.S.E. we sold our herd and went into custom grazing. We learned a lot from the Peace River Forage Association about electric fencing, rotational grazing and stock density.

We began utilizing smaller pastures and shorter durations of grazing times. Each quarter is cross fenced by at least 1 high tensile electric fence. From that we can make poly twine pastures of any size. At that time, we also began poplar re-growth management on poplar logged areas by intensive grazing and high stock density. To service all these pastures we began using a solar portable water system. Through the use of water lanes or extensive water lines we watered each pasture.

On average now our cattle are on any one piece of ground 9 days per year, the rest of the time is R & R for our grass.

### The value of our bush:



*Barb & Fred Burres enjoying the forage growth and the other riders during the 2011 Mark Nimitz Memorial Trail Ride.*

We try to maintain substantial amounts of bush to facilitate wildlife and check wind. We also use the bush areas to winter the cattle. Each year they are wintered in a different area to increase the grass production in our bush areas. During dry times the bush retains moisture and produces better 2<sup>nd</sup> grazes than open fields.

### Effects on our calves:

The small pastures in our rotational grazing program help our conception rate and our calving times. Usually, 75 to 85% of our calves are born in the first 30 days.

In the spring before we start to calve, I plough off our calving areas. These areas are also ditched to divert run off, so our calves are on dry ground the majority of the time (then 10" of snow in May). The dry conditions help keep the calves healthy.

### The desired results:

The results we are trying to achieve are:

**Good Grass + Healthy Calves.**

# Amazing Pasture in the Pouce Coupe Desert

By Julie Robinson

## **"Never underestimate our power to resist change"**

Awhile ago, John & Patt were at a Ranching for Profit workshop in Fort St John and Dave Pratt was explaining the building blocks of a livestock ranch operation. It was here that things began to get more complicated than usual as far as understanding their operation.

Dave first asked him to identify what his neighbor could do differently to improve the neighbours' operation; John was quick to think of a few ideas. Then, Dave asked him about his own place and improvements that he could make? Well this pushed the wheel of change faster on the Kendrew Ranch.

As many of us know, it's easier to suggest change to others, than to think about it for our own place. John can often be heard stating "Never underestimate our power to resist change"

## **"What's all the fuss about this soil stuff?"**

John is basically a humble guy and would be the first to tell you he doesn't always understand this technical jargon of the "Biology of ranching". He used to say "I'm in the business of raising beef!"

Now you can understand why from his perspective, it was a shock for him to at first learn: he was in the business of raising forage (previously known as grass and alfalfa). Then one day in April while at a Jill Clapperton workshop, another shock was to learn he was actually in the business of raising "critters" in the soil to keep the soil healthy to keep the plants healthy to keep the cows happy... my how complicated things got, so quickly.

Many of you may be familiar with the "Pouce Desert", where the Kendrew family (John, Patt, Jodi and Kristin) has been working tirelessly and diligently on improving their soil/pasture health over the last several years. But it has been tough to rotational graze and take half and leave half, when there was nothing there to take in the first place; however, this year their hard works seem to have paid off.

Now we all know, as Burnem Grant so succinctly has been heard saying "6 inches of rain in June will a good ranch manager and crop make". ... Now this doesn't appear to be entirely true as most of the Peace has over achieved in the moisture department this year and not all pastures look awesome.

On our pasture walk, we toured Kendrews' fields where they are leaving a lot of carry-over/alfalfa stems etc behind in

their grazing rotation/mob grazing. Hoping to add organic matter, improve soil structure and over all soil health.. Ostensibly establishing a thickened thatch layer and enriching the Ah horizon in their soil.

## **"WHOA... hold it right there! trying to sneak this soil jargon in... busted!"**

The Ah horizon is accumulation of organic grassland type residues (plant material and other things) into a soil layer. Biological organisms (soil critters) colonize and break down organic materials, making available nutrients that other plants and animals can live on. After sufficient time a distinctive organic surface layer forms with humus which is called the A horizon or topsoil<sup>1</sup>.



What the heck is humus? Well, it refers to organic matter that has decomposed to a point where it is resistant to further breakdown or alteration. Soils with humus can vary in nitrogen content but have 3 to 6 percent nitrogen typically; humus, as a reserve of nitrogen and phosphorus, is a vital component affecting soil fertility. Humus also absorbs water, acting as a moisture reserve, that plants can utilize; it also expands and shrinks between dry and wet states, providing pore spaces<sup>1</sup>.

Boy! this "soil stuff" is sure complicated but well worth trying to understand. It's pretty evident how it can help protect our production from things such as drought or even erosion, in this land of extremes.

Kendrews are doing an excellent job of managing their pasture to improve overall soil health. Keep up the good work and thanks for sharing the experience with those that were able to attend the pasture walk.

## **Pasture Walk Near Manning**

By Sandra Burton

Can you believe this? This is all the space they left me to tell you what we learned during the great pasture walk with Nora Paulovich near Manning. But Julie is compiling a forage fact & you will get your chance early next June, when we tour there as a group.

<sup>1</sup> Foth, Henry D. (1984), Fundamentals of Soil Science, New York: Wiley, pp. 151, ISBN 0471889261



# Lighter Side of Forage

By Shannon McKinnon

## Close Encounters of the Wild Kind



I've had a very animal filled day. With horses, sheep, chickens, dogs and a cat you could say every day is animal filled around here, but this day was more about wildlife than the domestic type.

It started early this morning when I glanced out the window and saw the most amazing sight. Two flickers were doing a mating dance in the driveway. The male spread out his wing and started to trace a circle around the mesmerized female. I wanted to bear silent witness, to take in this rare gift of a glimpse into the ritual of woodpeckers but then I noticed something else. I wasn't the only one appreciating the dance.

At the edge of the driveway not three feet away from the birds a small eager face peered out of the tall grass; a little face that belonged to none other than Shoeless our cat. I had never seen him looking so happy. I didn't need to be a cat whisperer to know what he was thinking. Breakfast! How lucky could one cat get? Two plump juicy birds so absorbed in their dance they had thrown caution to the wind. As far as Shoeless was concerned a two for one special had landed on his plate. But just as he coiled himself up for the pounce a terrible thing happened. The human flung open the door to the deck and scared breakfast away. Both servings! The idiot! What was she thinking? The cat's mouth hung slack as he stared at me in disbelief. He didn't look happy anymore. I watched the flickers fly away and hoped they would find a safer place to resume their dance. And then I got some kibble and extra treats for the cat.

In the afternoon I took our little dog Cosmo for a walk around a trail we have carved through the forest that backs onto our house. Usually I talk to Cosmo or sometimes I even sing to scare off any bears with the munchies or grouchy moose. But today I was lost in thought as we quietly rounded a bend and almost tripped over a resting white tailed doe and her tiny fawn.

We all jumped several feet in the air. Well, except for Cosmo who was snuffling in the grass and didn't notice the deer at all. The doe ran a few feet up the path and then turned, stamped her foot and made a whooshing noise sort of like blowing air through a tube before streaking off into the forest.

I've spent almost half a century wandering these woods and I have stumbled across all sorts of wildlife, but in all that time I had never heard a deer make a sound. Still, I was pretty certain what it meant. I slowly walked over to where she had stamped her foot and made the whooshing sound before she fled and sure enough there was the tiny fawn. Its neck was stretched out flat to the ground in an attempt to make itself as inconspicuous as possible.

I wanted to kneel down and pet its trembling spotted back. I mean, how often do you get an opportunity like that? About as often as you get to witness a flicker's mating dance. But I knew the mother would return to this exact spot once I was gone and if she caught the scent of human hands on her baby's fur she might get confused and think the fawn wasn't hers. Or worse, I would scare the fawn away from their meeting spot. So I did the right thing and left as quickly and quietly as I had arrived.

My third encounter took place in the greenhouse and it was anything but quiet. Hanging from a hook is an old worn out handmade hippy purse that holds an assortment of trowels, small pruners, plant labels and marking pens. I reached in to get a pruner when a mouse erupted from the depths of the purse and *ran across my arm!* I screamed so loud my throat still hurts. If I was being chewed on by a grizzly I don't think I could have screamed any louder. Then I ripped out the cat repellent plant I had planted in the greenhouse to keep Shoeless from making unwelcome deposits. It might not seem very fair minded that I'm okay with the cat killing mice but not birds – especially from the mouse's point of view- but there you have it.

Wildlife; sometimes you're touched by the sight of them, sometimes you want to touch them and sometimes they touch you. Even when you really, really, don't want them to.

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

***The Peace River Forage  
Association will hold its  
AGM and Seminar on***

***December 1, 2011 at  
Farmington Hall, Farmington, BC***

***Registration - 3:00 pm***

***3:30 pm speaker, Shirley Hamblin***

***"From livestock to legal meat  
What BC farmers need to know"***

***5:00 pm Supper***

***6:30 pm AGM***

***For more information and to  
pre-register call Chris at  
250-789-6885 or 250-793-8916***

***Watch for these  
upcoming events!***

***Forage Auction  
January 14, 2012  
Tower Lake Hall***

***John Basarab,  
"Feed Efficiency & Fertility  
Livestock Gentec"  
February 21, 2012  
Taylor Community Church***

***Summer Livestock &  
Forage Tour  
Date to be confirmed  
Manning, AB***

***For info and to pre-register for  
any of these, call Chris at  
250-789-6885 or 250-793-8916***



***Dylan Biggs  
Cattle Handling Clinic***

***June 23 and 24, 2012  
Fred Schneider's in  
Pouce Coupe, BC.***

***Come out to this exciting clinic and learn  
to move your cattle with less stress for  
you and your cattle!***

***\$150 for hands-on 2 day clinic, members; \$200 non-members  
\$ 75 for observer of 2 day clinic, lunch included both days***

***Limited space available for hands-on clinic.  
Your space is reserved upon receipt of payment.  
To register, call Chris at 250-789-6885 or 250-793-8916.***