

FORAGE FIRST

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Featuring Fine Forage Folks



As you read this issue of the newsletter, what comes to mind again and again are the great forage people that are truly involved. As the articles update you about projects, describe events, share important milestones or acknowledge our partnerships, please note the good people that make it all happen. The range of ages, backgrounds and skill sets is powerful. We dedicate this issue to the fine forage folks in our midst.

In this issue, you will find one of our favorite columns "Introducing a New Member". We are also enthused to tell you about exciting new partnerships and new projects. Just as exciting are some of our "older projects" with new directions and new cooperators.

We have hosted several "Forage For Fun" events over the spring and summer months. If you missed these events, don't despair. Read about what is coming up this fall and please do try to join us for the laughter (oops I mean learning).



Caption for photographs: Talon & Marty Gauthier's cows want to help with their wedding photographs on June 27, 2015.

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(for paid up members)

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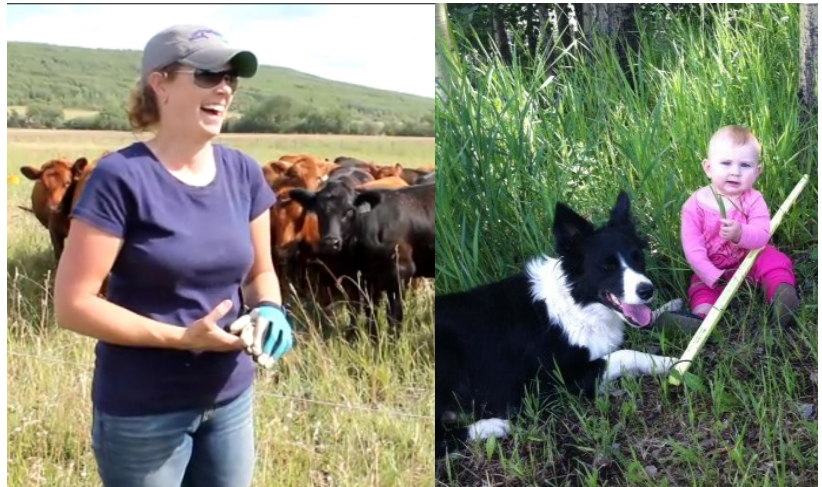
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Forage Fact # 90
Equipment & Rentals

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Meet Anna, Our New Member

by Jodi Kendrew



Jodi & her weed eating heifers; Anna with her herd dog & grazing stick.

A Day in the Life of a Third Generation Rancher

When I received the photo of the budding little forage enthusiast, I thought wouldn't it be fun to have a glimpse of ranch life, introduce Jodi and check in on intergenerational transfers from wee Anna's perspective. Please humour her Mom and I and enjoy the following bit of fun.

How does your day start, Anna?

I am an early riser like Grandpa John. After checking out all my pets and toys, I eat a hearty breakfast. If Grandpa comes to talk with my Mom, I talk to the cows and horses in the Beef in BC magazine page by page. (we need to get her a copy of the Forage First!)

Next I help my Mom with the orphan calves. I check that all the nipples for the bottles are working by squeezing milk on the porch floor. Bernie my kitty likes to hang out with me for this part and purrs loudly. Then its into the backpack for me, where I can growl and moo ("boo") as Mom feeds Gerta, Marie and Lucky. Their sales will start my education fund.

Next I help Mom by practicing all my animal sounds while the dog handler is busy moving cattle and directing dogs. We all like to make noise for this.

Then its time to say "hi!" to Salty and squeal with delight to help Mom catch her saddle horse. Sometimes I get a short ride in the saddle.

A quick catnap is next, as quick as I can make it so I don't miss anything. Mom may need my help in her office where I rearrange her papers and empty the recycling bin of all its contents.

Or sometimes I get to go hang out with Grandma Patt. She is lots of fun. She takes me for walks, or we sing and play the piano, or we read books together.

Grandpa John is fun too. He used to train black labs and retrievers but now I am training him to crawl and retrieve for me. All this activity usually brings us to lunch and a luxurious nap. (is this the Mom talking or does Mom ever sleep?)

Tell us about your afternoons on the ranch?

After my lunch and nap, I get to go in the truck with Mom. When we get to the pasture where the heifers are, it is into the backpack for the supervisor. I know lots about strip grazing. I lean over to inspect all the fencing reels, then I wait for the count of 25 then give my loudest "wohoo!" with Mom as she steps in a portable post. These heifers are the thistle eating stars so we often check on their progress with the thistles.

I also know quite a bit about solar water pumps and I hear words from my Mom near there that I don't hear anywhere else. Actually I did hear these words one day when Mandy and Mom were running and couldn't get the quiet heifers to move where they were supposed to go.

I like to round out my day, spending time with grass. I taste it, taste leaves and wave the grazing stick (I have my very own now) while my Mom feeds the heifers. Then its supertime, followed by bath and splash time. If there is any time before bed, I really like hanging out with my dogs, Dailey and Mandy.

Jodi Kendrew has always dreamed of coming back to the ranch and has been buying cows and land since 2003. She got a little closer when she left Ontario in 2008 to move her vet skills to a practice at the Northlands Racetrack in Edmonton. Here she met her husband and partner, Rob. In spring of 2015 Jodi and Anna moved to the Peace full time, while Rob still has his practice in Edmonton for now. You can see videos of Jodi's thistle eating star heifers on the front page of our website or on Utube.

Livestock Eat Weeds

by Kari Bondaroff and Vicki Moser

This summer the Forage Association, Peace River Regional District and Ministry of Agriculture have been busy with an exciting new project – teaching livestock to eat Canada thistle. We have been working with 6 different cooperators and their goats, sheep and cattle, using a method developed by Kathy Voth (Livestock for Landscapes, LLC) out of Montana.

How Do you Teach Livestock to Eat Invasive Plants?

When telling folks about the project the first comment we usually hear is “What do you do, lock them in a pen where all they have to eat is thistle?” Well, no. It is not healthy for the livestock to be eating just thistle, and even in their pasture it is important that there is a good mix of forage with the thistle stands. In fact, we do almost the opposite of starving them into eating thistle. Twice a day for four days the ‘trainees’ are fed a different ‘snack,’ in addition to their usual feeding regime. Each snack is a newly introduced feed, something with a different and unfamiliar taste and texture. The time in between snacks allows their body’s feedback systems to work, and to nutritionally inform them whether what they are eating is good for them. The concept is to gain the animals’ trust, and use their natural competitive instincts to lure them to feed bins within the pasture.



Snack day at Charlie Lasser’s ranch.



Tess Davidson and her border collie-eagles setting up for day 5 feeding of cut thistle + treats.



Day 5 with Sarah Davies: introduction of thistle with cracked corn. Half of the thistle has been eaten.



Kathy Voth developed her training methods from the results of extensive research by Dr Fred Provenza and his research team from 1990-2003.

TYPES OF FEED USED:

- Whole Oats
- Beat Pulp
- Milled Flax
- Alfalfa Pellets
- Horse Crunchies
- Horse Performance
- Challenger Ration
- Cracked Corn
- Yellow Peas
- Alfalfa Timothy Cubes

“We’ve been fighting with thistle forever. We have to try something different.”
-Chuck Sutherland

On Day one, bins large enough for multiple heads to fit into were placed in the pasture. A different feed was added to each bin twice per day for the first four days for a total of eight new feeds. The intentional differentiated feed was to instill the learning that even though some of the feed might be weird, they are always given something that their body says is good for them. The trainees eventually learn that new things can be good things, and whatever you are putting in their buckets is something nutritious for them to eat. The buckets also give the illusion that if an animal puts her head into it she must be enjoying something tasty. This way all the animals will want some. If the animals are competing over the buckets, they are less concerned about what they are eating and more concerned with eating it before the others. Thus they are trying new things without having time to be as picky.

Livestock Eat Weeds *continued*

by Kari Bondaroff and Vicki Moser



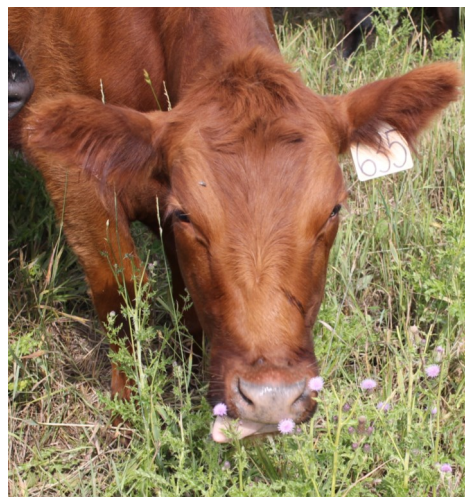
Above: Thistle stand in Tess Davidson's pasture before grazing. Below: The same stand after grazing.



"If this actually works, why wouldn't you try it? It's a better alternative than adding chemical to our forage, and it's worth the effort." -Charlie Lasser

MYTH BUSTERS:

1. Molasses is not required to train livestock to eat thistle.
2. Livestock do not need to be starved into eating thistle.
3. Once taught to eat thistle livestock will try new feeds such as sow thistle, curled dock, and stinging nettle.



Success with Jodi's all-star heifers.

Day five was thistle day. The morning snack was skipped to ensure the trainees were really looking forward to their afternoon snack. Thistle plants were harvested from outside the pasture, chopped into bite-sized pieces, and divided into the buckets. Next the thistle was topped with a small amount of a favourable powdered snack to entice them into putting their heads into the bucket. Day six was a repeat of day five with less powdered feed added, and on day seven the snack was straight thistle with no toppings. With the training process now complete, the animals were turned out to graze the thistle infested pasture. We are excited to continue to find evidence of them grazing Canada thistle.

Thank you to our funders and partners:

PRAD, South Peace Grain, PRRD, BC Ministry of Agriculture

Our Cooperators

Producer	Location	Livestock Type	Trainee #s	Management Style
Tess Davidson	Cecil Lake	Sheep	101	Daily herding with dogs
Jodi Kendrew	Pouce Coupe	Heifers	60	Strip grazing
Charlie Lasser	Chetwynd	Cow/Calf Pairs	18	Organic
Sarah Davies	Lone Prairie	Mixed Aged Cattle	44	Strip grazing
Chuck and Pat Sutherland	Groundbirch	Mixed Aged Cattle	20	Community pasture
Kari Bondaroff	Arras	Doelings (Goat)	2	Tether grazing

Looking Forward

As we stood monitoring one afternoon, Jodi Kendrew's curious critters eagerly displayed their new skills. Without even asking, these girls hunted out thistle tops, thistle leaves and even thistle stocks as if they were the tastiest things they had ever eaten. With several training successes, the project will now be focusing on answering questions such as: will livestock grazing of Canada thistle decrease the plant's ability to outcompete desirable forage? And how will the infestation react to continued livestock grazing?

Innovative Management for Resiliency

by Sandra Burton

This project uses a farming systems approach to identify nutrient & cropping management practices that are more resilient to climate change extremes. The 3 types of practices that are being evaluated are **whole farm nutrient management, alternative legume, and rates/ placement of fertilizer.**

The objectives of this 2 year project are:

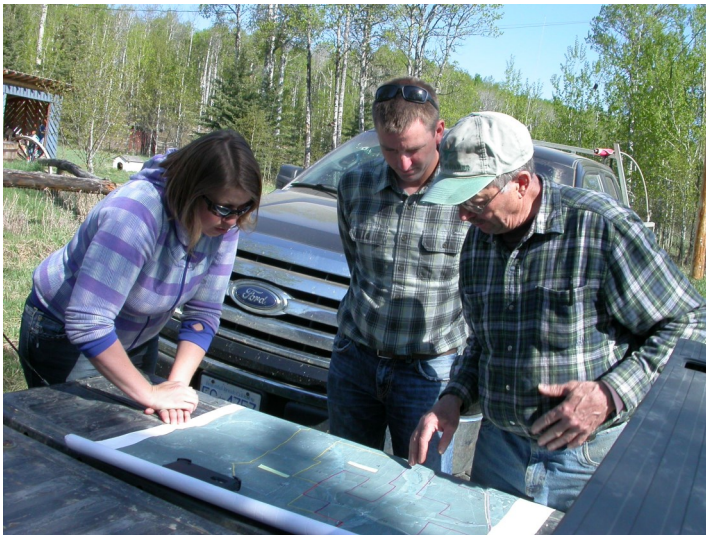
1. Optimize utilization of nutrients using manure or feeding management and fertilizer placement or variable rates to minimize losses;
2. Work with farmers and ranchers to establish forage and annual crop production that is resilient to weather extremes using economically environmentally sound practices.

A key component to producer adoption of practice is an economic evaluation. The project team is working with **George Geldart** to complete a **cost benefit** analysis of each innovation in the context of the ranching or farming operation.

Another key question is whether or not these innovative practices are good for the soils and crops? We are working with **Bill McGill** of UNBC to **evaluate soil quality with a field kit.** We are also working with **Matthias Loeseke** of Blackbird to map the vegetative response & extent of the practice.

A holistic approach is connecting ranchers and farmers with economists and researchers throughout the management of this project.

Cooperator	Location	Focus	Innovative Practice
Ron & Karen Buchanan	Lower Cache	Whole farm nutrient management	Fall fertilizing with spring feeding & fall grazing
Rod & Kim Strasky	Farmington	Fertilizer nutrient management	Deep placed fertilizer with variable rates
Andrew & Brian Clarke	Baldonnel	Alternative legumes	Birdsfoot trefoil & rejuvenating hayland
Arnold & Nelda Bennett	Two Rivers	Alternative legumes	Cicer milkvetch, sainfoin & rejuvenating forages



Julie Robinson, Matthias Loeseke and Ron Buchanan discuss the field layout before the drone mapping in April, 2015.

Whole Farm Nutrient Management

Ron Buchanan wanted to look at alternatives to the expensive and lengthy process of rejuvenating a hay-field. He is trying a number of strategies:

- ⇒ Fall fertilizing with a NPKS blend
 - ⇒ Replacing haying with spring feeding & timely fall grazing to recycle nutrients onto the field
- Forage & soil quality will be monitored over the project.



Rod Strasky explains how his drill openers place the seed and fertilizer and sense the rate to be applied.

Nutrient Management: Fertilizer Placement & Variable Rates

Rod Strasky wants to compare 3 practices:

- ⇒ Broadcast fertilizer
 - ⇒ Deep placed fertilizer at one rate
 - ⇒ Deep place fertilizer at variable rates.
- N losses are measured using dosimeters.

Innovative Management for Resiliency *continued*



Andrew Clarke seeds birdsfoot trefoil grass seed mix with Brillion seeder to compare with his usual alfalfa grass mix.

Alternative Legume: Birdsfoot Trefoil

Andrew Clarke seeded 3 hay mix comparisons:

- ⇒ Birdsfoot trefoil-grass mix
- ⇒ Birdsfoot trefoil-alfalfa-grass mix
- ⇒ Alfalfa-grass mix

Grass mix: smooth brome grass + timothy

Monitoring is being done at 3 benchmarks in each strip and will continue for the length of the project.



Above: Birdsfoot trefoil is a good legume alternative in **Gordon Lazinchuk's** 2nd year hayfield, where acidic soils cause alfalfa to die out after a year or so. Below: In **Ron Buchanan's** 7 year hayfield, the birdsfoot trefoil regrew vigorously this fall after an early hay cut & a droughty season.



Arnold Bennett repairing multi-weeder before light pass ahead of seeding with a Valmar broadcast seeder.

Alternative Legume: Sainfoin

Arnold Bennett rejuvenated and seeded a hay field in 3 ways:

- ⇒ Peace alfalfa alone, his usual practice
 - ⇒ VR Total alfalfa-grass mix, Nelda's suggestion
 - ⇒ Sainfoin-grass mix, to try an alternative legume
- Grass mix: hybrid/ meadow brome grass + timothy

Alternative Legume: Cicer Milkvetch

Arnold Bennett seeded a 2 way comparison to rejuvenate a 7 year old pasture:

- ⇒ VR Total alfalfa-grass mix
 - ⇒ VR Total alfalfa-grass mix + cicer milkvetch
- Grass mix: hybrid brome grass + timothy

Germination has been poor to date due to very droughty conditions, but monitoring will continue.

These 5 sites area are a promising project launch.

Thank you to our Co-operators:

Ron & Karen Buchanan
Rod & Kim Strasky
Andrew & Brian Clarke
Arnold & Nelda Bennett

Thank you to our Industry Partners:

Shaun Grant, South Peace Grain Co-op
Matthias Loeseken, Blackbird Environmental
Darryl Kroeker, Ducks Unlimited
Bill McGill, University of Northern BC
Peace Region Forage Seed Association
BC Grain Producers Association

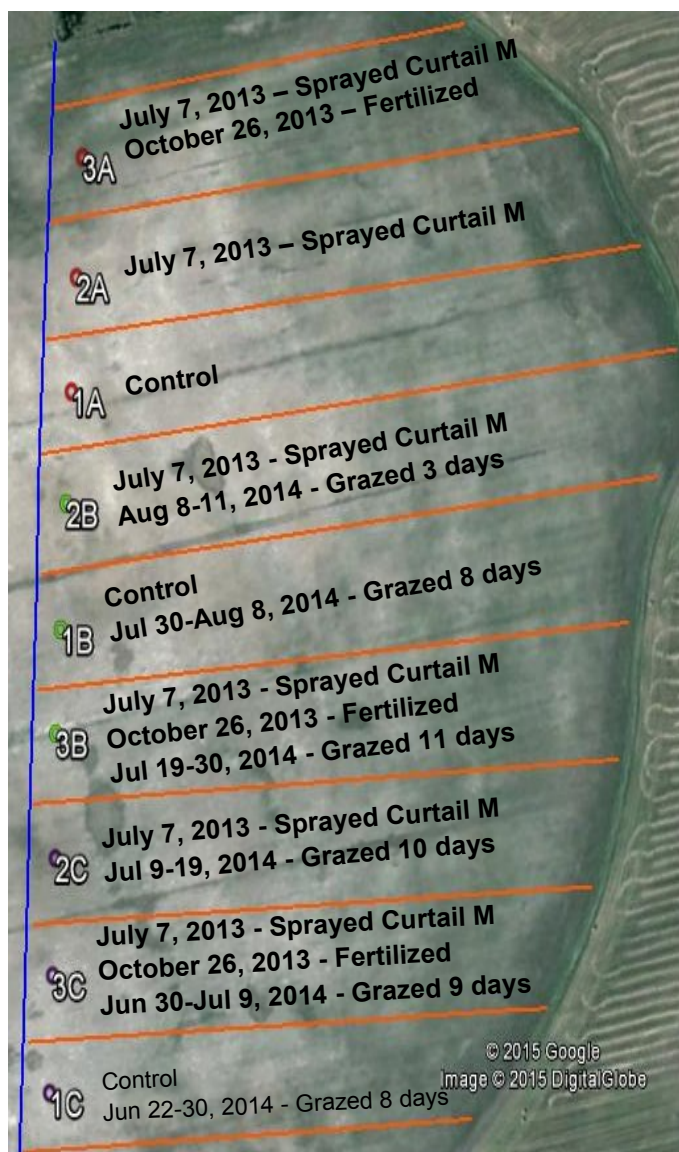
Thank you for our Government Funding:

BC Farm Adaptation Innovator Program
Business Knowledge & Adaptation Strategy

Controlling Canada Thistle in Pastures

by Talon Gauthier

Controlling Canada thistle remains a challenge for forage and livestock producers throughout the Peace country as this weed has colonized a vast majority of landscapes. It is a particularly daunting task in perennial forage stands where desirable plants are already established. How can you control the thistle without sacrificing too much of what you want there? Through the Healthy and Vigorous Forage Stands project, the PRFA of BC has partnered with Ducks Unlimited to try a variety of alternative control options on this challenging and persistent weed.



Map diagram showing 9 strips with treatments or methods of controlling Canada thistle in pastures in 2013 & 2014

The first thistle control method tested stemmed from research conducted by Dr. Edward Bork from the University of Alberta involving a weed and feed effect. Dr. Bork's research compares controlling Canada thistle in forage stands with a variety of herbicides as well as fertilizing the existing forage stand to increase its competitive advantage over the thistle. The second Canada thistle method control deployed is based on research done by Kathy Voth, founder of Livestock for Landscapes in Colorado. Kathy has been working with livestock and weed management since 2004 and has determined that many weeds, including Canada thistle, are actually quite nutritious! Learn more about teaching cattle to graze weeds and its benefits from the Grazing Weeds project article on pg 3.

A research trial was established in 2013 on 60 acres of fescue pasture in the Doe River area. The project focused on Dr. Bork's research first, dividing the area into 9 strips (3 treatments replicated 3 times).

These 3 treatments in 2013 were:

- A. control
- B. herbicide
- C. herbicide + fertilizer.

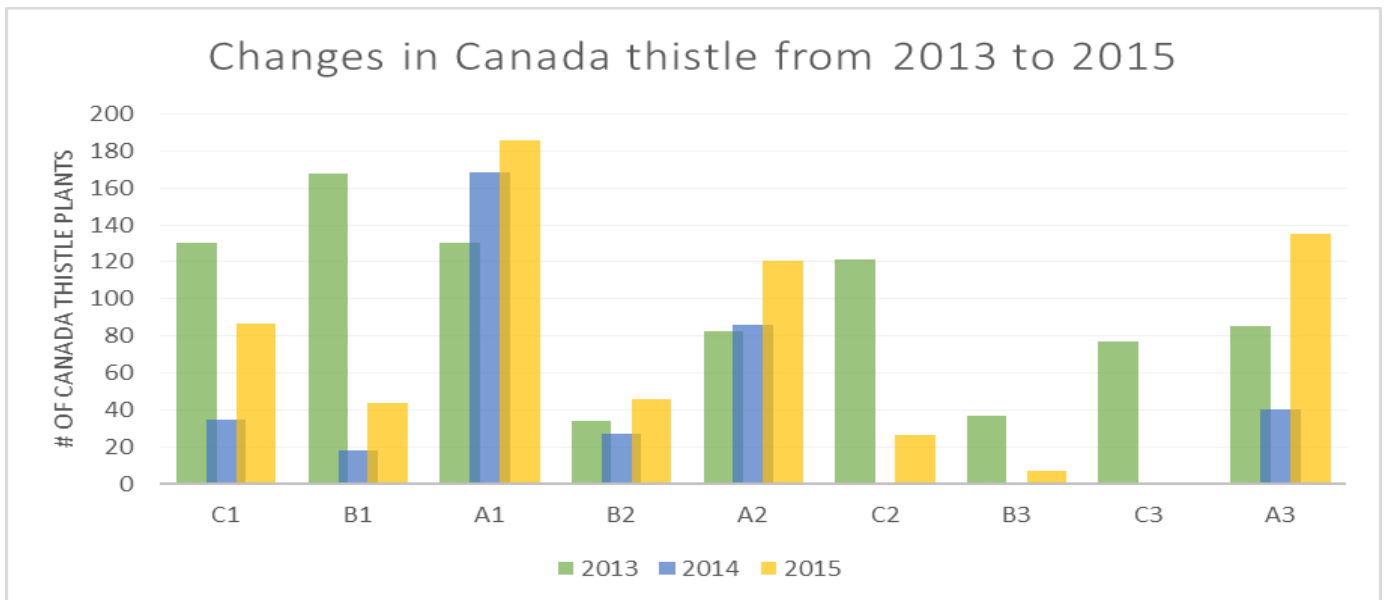
Herbicide Treatments: The strips that were sprayed with herbicide received a double rate of Curtail M (1600 ml/ac) to combat the heavy infestation of thistle.

Fertilizer Treatments: In October 2013, the 3 herbicide + fertilizer treatments (i.e. C1, C2, C3) were divided in half and two different fertilizer blends were applied with a broadcast spreader to each half. Two blends were chosen – one to meet the soil requirements (70-40-40-5 NPKS) and the other as a more economical choice for farmers and ranchers (50-20-20-5 NPKS).

Grazing Treatment: in 2014, Kathy Voth's method of controlling the thistle with grazing was overlaid on 6 of the existing 9 strips. Twenty six cow/calf pairs and a bull were used to graze the 5 to 7 acre pieces from the end of June to the beginning of August. *These treatment strips are illustrated in the map diagram to the left.*

Controlling Canada Thistle in Pastures *continued*

by Talon Gauthier



Graph Caption: Changes in Canada Thistle by Year & by Treatment (see below).

Legend for lower X axis of graph:

A1, A2, A3: Control or no treatment

B1, B2, B3: Herbicide treatment

C1, C2, C3: Herbicide + fertilizer

A2, A3, B2, B3, C2, C3: Grazed

Two monitoring sites were set up in each strip and the number of Canada thistle plants were counted in a 2 m circle. These counts were then used to estimate the density of thistle plants per acre. Thistle plants were not counted until the middle of June as they emerge slower through the dense fescue cover. The graph shows that the treatment involving spraying and then fertilizing was the most effective with an average 70% decrease in thistle plants per acre. Spraying alone reduced populations by 40%. In contrast, the control strips or doing nothing actually increased thistle plants by 50% from 2013 to 2015.

Cattle grazing on this site was moderately successful. There did not seem to be a visual impact until the thistle plants were more mature and then they started grazing the tops; removing buds and leaves. These cows did not go through any training to eat thistle but were choosing it on their own. One season of grazing did not have a profound effect on the number of thistles in each strip as this treatment needs to be measured over more seasons of grazing.

Overall greatest reductions in thistle populations occurred in the strips that had a multiple control methods applied. This further emphasizes that a multipronged approach is the best strategy.



Photo illustrating how cattle had grazed the tops of Canada thistle plants.

References:

Bork, Edward. *Canada Thistle Management in Pasture*. U of AB

Voth, Kathy. <http://www.livestockforlandscapes.com/cowmanagers.htm>

Funders: PRAD, PRFSA, Murphy Oil Corp, PRRD, Enerplus,

Grazing Management & Pasture Longevity June 6 2015

by Darryl Kroeker, Talon Johnson, Matthias Loeseken, Chandra Khadka & Sandra Burton



Michael Nimitz told us about the ranch, its history, its goals & direct marketing strategy.

The field based, 4th session of the Soils, Forages & Water Dynamics Course was held on Saturday, June 6th at the Kiskatinaw River Ranch. The day kicked off with some laughter as the participants were divided into 4 groups for the fencing skills relay game. The winning **Green Team** won some Rangeland Seeding Manuals and all errors were blamed on the non existent **Yellow Team**.

Michael Nimitz, one of our hosts, introduced the history of the Kiskatinaw River Ranch, and discussed the current goals of the people involved with the ranch. Michael described his herd and his direct marketing through Nimitz Beef at the Farmers Markets in Dawson Creek and Fort St. John. Then in smaller groups, we rotated through the stations. Group leaders share the points that were gleaned and some of the comments they overhead from their group (*in italics*) in each section below.



Mahesh Khadka & Richard Kabzems describe the tool, Grazing Response Index.

One station was hosted by **Mahesh Khadka** and **Richard Kabzems** where they showed us the value of using standardized photo monitoring and the GRI or grazing response index as tools to learn from grazing management.

- ⇒ The GRI tool is helpful in grazing management and is simple to use.
- ⇒ It involves finding out frequency (no. of days livestock are grazing), intensity (removal of biomass) and opportunity (how much rest the grassland or forages got during the grazing season).
- ⇒ GRI as an easy way to identify trends & adjust your grazing system. Dividing your pastures as Michael has done increases your opportunity for regrowth so your score improves. So if you split a season long pasture in half, you provide a half season opportunity for regrowth for both sides!
- ⇒ The photo point monitoring method helps in comparing forages over the season and helps determine the intensity needed for scoring GRI. Even if everybody is busy, there should be enough time to take some quick pictures and notes, with this quick, easy method. Consistent picture taking, following an easy system is important and enables better grazing management.
- ⇒ *"GRI is a rancher friendly way of monitoring!"*

Simon von der Wall and **Lori Vicker's** station asked "What are the links between riparian areas, water quality & livestock health?" We discussed water quality and the economic value of clean water in a cow calf herd. At approx. 20 additional lb per calf, a producer can pay for a solar waterer in as little as one grazing season. Herd health benefits are in addition to that. We also talked about balancing water quality, spring run-off and the need to redistribute manure back onto the fields. With a long term manure managing approach, it can be adjusted according to fall/winter conditions. Last fall we had good snowfall prior to the ground freezing so that moisture soaked into the ground throughout the winter. Knowing that, a rancher might choose to winter feed on some riskier areas (e.g. more slope, less cover or closer to water), anticipating that most of the runoff in spring would soak into the soil rather than flow down hill. But if fall conditions produced a solid frost seal (precipitation during freezing), a rancher would avoid those areas in favour of fields with lots of cover, less relief and farther from water sources.



Lori Vickers, Agrologist & Simon von de Wall, Hydrologist, discuss riparian areas, dugouts, water quality & properties important for both fish & livestock health.

- ⇒ *"Riparian area improvement is good for both the environment and herd health."*

Grazing Management & Pasture Longevity *continued*



Serena Black & Bill McGill discussed soil aggregate stability, slaking & their relation to erosion.

- ⇒ *"Organic matter is good!"*
- ⇒ *"Soil with no tilth (or aggregation) easily washes away."*

A soil erosion station was led by **Bill McGill** and **Serena Black**. At this station we learned that:

- ⇒ The probability of erosion depends on the size of aggregates, soil stability and soil slaking.
- ⇒ Slaking (breakdown of larger aggregates into smaller ones due to internal stress as a result of immersion in water) was a great way to quickly assess erodibility and compare different soils.
- ⇒ The importance of maintaining stable aggregates e.g. through grazing practices that encourage an increase in soil organic matter was evident in the discussions.
- ⇒ The soil tool kit found a lot of admirers in the green group: an ingenious way to get a lot of information about soils without spending a lot of money.
- ⇒ This kit is a cheap, easy and simple way to assess soil quality on the spot in the field.

At a 4th station, **Michael Nimitz** and **Julie Robinson** addressed the question "How do grazing management, fencing & water systems all enable healthy animals, plants & soils?" Here we had many conversations about grazing:

- ⇒ Smaller pastures allows Michael to fine tune his grazing and get better/ more uniform forage utilization.
- ⇒ The bale grazing sites were very interesting, but we had to get on our knees for the full story. While we noticed mostly dandelions from a distance, good things were happening in the soil. If you dug around, more desirable plants were taking advantage of improved soil organic matter.
- ⇒ Rotational grazing management keeps the forage cover throughout the year and livestock get the opportunity to have nutritious diet.
- ⇒ Distance to water as an important consideration for layout of electric fences.
- ⇒ Grazing can be managed to achieve desired species.



Michael Nimitz & Julie Robinson shared ideas for livestock waterers, fencing systems & grazing management.

- ⇒ *"Feeding and watering cattle in targeted areas improves productivity."*

At the day's end, **Bill Wilson** and **Bill McGill** integrated the lessons learned from each station. The common themes that emerged were: 1. the varied lenses or viewpoints people brought to each station, 2. the need to decide clearly what your goals are, and 3. the take home tools to help you get where you want to go.

Thank you to our hosts: Michael, Ernie & Joanne Nimitz, Nimitz Beef & Kiskatinaw River Ranch

Thank you to our funding partners:

UNBC, Shell Canada, Peace River Agriculture Development Fund, South Peace Grain, Blackbird Environmental & Synergy Aspen

Thank you to our enthused station masters:

Bill McGill, Serena Black, Mahesh Khadka, Richard Kabzems, Simon von de Wall, Lori Vickers, Michael Nimitz, Julie Robinson

Thank you to our knowledgeable mentors:

Matthias Loeseken, Darryl Kroeker, Talon Johnson, Chandra Khadka

Photo Credits: Sandra Burton, Chandra & Mahesh Khadka



A wise trio of graziers: John Kendrew, Ernie Nimitz & Sarah Davies.



Sandra & Bill leading a dialog linking soil properties & erosion processes.

July 4th Field Day

by Bill McGill & Sandra Burton

The latest field based soils, forages and water dynamics module again provoked lively discussions. On July 4th we focused on revegetation, erosion control & making pipelines blend into the landscape. We gathered at the Saturn Plant site and learned about the site, its history, management goals & construction practices from Jim Chramosta & Dan Arcand from Shell Canada.



David Miller listening to Jim Chramosta.

Splitting into groups we discussed issues from various perspectives. First we were regaled by Matt Edgar and Jim Chramosta on pre-project considerations & best management practices for revegetation, surface water management & reducing erosion. New tools are adding precision to this phase of a project.

"Is there potential for re-vegetating with native plant transplants &/or native and agronomic seed mixes?" This question was explored by Lenore Mallis & Julie Robinson. This topic proved to be a rousing one under Lenore and Julie's leadership with diverse considerations noted and conclusions drawn.

We learned the lessons gleaned from PRFA's re-vegetation project with Bill Wilson. A key message here was: "Beware the basis of seed mixes: is it weight or number of seeds – they are totally different methods of thinking about and ordering seed."

Meanwhile Sandra Burton and Bill McGill poured water in holes while participants destroyed soil aggregates. They wanted to know "Can we use the soil quality field kit to understand soil erosion processes? Are there ways we can prevent or mitigate the effects of erosion?" The answer: "Yes".

It was a bracing day with rain threatening early but in the end the sun shone warmly, spirits rose and discussion blossomed – a fitting ending to end the day and the course.



Julie & Lenore instigating discussions.



Cali Seater taking note of Wilson wisdom.



Matt Edgar, Pat Sutherland, Lori Vickers & Mahesh Khadka laughing together as they learn.

Thank you to our July field day hosts:

Jim Chramosta & Shell Canada

Thank you to our funding partners:

UNBC, Shell Canada, Peace River Agriculture Development Fund, South Peace Grain, Blackbird Environmental & Synergy Aspen

Thank you to our enthused station masters:

Bill McGill, Sandra Burton, Matt Edgar, Jim Chramosta, Bill Wilson, Julie Robinson, Lenore Mallis

Thank you to our knowledgeable mentors:

Cali Seater, Lori Vickers, Mahesh Khadka, Matthias Loeseken

Photo Credits: Vicki Moser

People First and Last (and in between)

by Bill McGill & Sandra Burton

A highly successful soils, forages & revegetation course was completed this year. It consisted of 10 modules of one day each delivered over 2 years; the first module in Sept 2013, the last in July 2015. Core funding from Shell Canada and PRAD made the course possible.

Development of the course started in 2013 through collaboration between the Peace River Forage Association represented by Sandra Burton and UNBC represented by Bill McGill. This interactive and integrative course placed people first and last using a case study approach. It met many needs by providing an on the ground learning opportunity for UNBC students, agricultural producers, forage association members and for consultants in the environmental aspects of the oil and gas industry.

Each module of the course started and finished with people using real life case studies involving real issues and management challenges. Each case study began with meeting the land owner, or person managing that site.

The management problems were wide ranging, and varied from "Where has all my alfalfa gone?" to "How can we re-vegetate this lease site berm?"; from "Can we improve our soils & forages with grazing & seeding management?" to "What are we learning about revegetating pipelines & leases?"; through "Can we make pipelines disappear or blend into the landscape?" and "Can we make forages last forever without starting over?"; to "Is there a role for grazing management in making pastures last forever?" and "How can we re-vegetate, control erosion & make pipelines blend into the landscape?"

Some of the tools that we explored included, learning about soils from the microscopic scale to soil profiles and regional distribution; use of maps, air photos, LIDAR and drones; identification of native and agromomic plants; use of web sites to understand soils and select forage species; sampling and analyses of soils, plants, feed, and seeds; use of the soil quality assessment kit; predicting likelihood of erosion; assessing weed dispersal mechanisms and control options; and following the flow of nutrients from soil to plant to animal to manure and back to the landscape.

**The Peace River Forage Association thanks UNBC
for this effective partnership & appreciates generous
funding from Shell Canada & PRAD**

Experts from the region and from away shared their understanding of the varied challenges and wide ranging tools. By virtue of the integrated, hands on and interactive nature of the course, subject experts also learned much from the participants.

Participation rates were high with an average of 35 to 60 people at each event. The total registration was 160 individuals, 79 of whom were from the Forage Association.

On reflection, much has been learned from this project. First, it takes more time, effort and coordination with resource people, station masters and group mentors to convert key messages from lecture format to a more interactive, hands-on format. But all participants were very complimentary about what they learned during this style of field day, and how much more effective the integrated take home messages are. Our most rewarding feedback was people asking when the next session of this course was and in a region where preregistration is not common, we had people committing well ahead of time.

Finally feedback from the course suggests that it generated ideas for participants who are taking them home for implementation. You may expect to hear more about outcomes from such ideas. Also the course stimulated new questions and brought possibilities to light. These too may germinate into fresh new ideas for trial.

We would also like to thank the mentors and presenters who enriched the course; the funders who financed the course and the many participants who made it all so very worthwhile.



Our very creative & resourceful course modules organizing team included Bill McGill, Richard Kabzems, Sandra Burton, Julie Robinson and Bill Wilson.

Kiskatinaw Ecological Society

by Ernest & Joanne Nimitz

Kiskatinaw Ecological Society holds Successful AGM on August 1st followed by another enjoyable Memorial Trail Ride for Mark E Nimitz in the Scenic Kiskatinaw River Valley.



A group of Kiskatinaw Ecological Society AGM attendees on August 1st.

Directors for 2015 after AGM:

Sandra Burton, Farmington
Bob Nielsen, Standard, Alberta
Kimberly Nielsen, Medicine Hat, Alberta
Laura Nielsen, Edmonton, Alberta
Joanne, Ernest & Michael Nimitz, Sunrise Valley
Alexandra Ratzke, Sunrise Valley.

Society Ex Officio Directors for the coming year are:

Rachel Bunnett, Sunrise Valley
Pat Gerlinsky, Pouce Coupe
Fred Burres, Farmington
Glenn Hogberg (Peace River Forage Association of BC), Progress.

Members of the Working Group

Sandra Burton, Farmington
Fred Burres, Farmington
Connor Dixon, Calgary
Glenn Hogberg, Progress
Michael Nimitz, Sunrise Valley
Ernest Nimitz, Sunrise Valley
Julie Robinson, Taylor.

The Society's Working Group Activities

For the past year the working group have been pursuing several projects. The Peace River Forage Association of BC has taken an interest in some of these projects. (See next page for more details).

Kiskatinaw Ecological Society *continued*

By Ernest & Joanne Nimitz



Folks fresh from attending the AGM of the Kiskatinaw Ecological Society crossing the Kiskatinaw River at speed during the memorial Trail Ride for Mark E. Nimitz

For more information:

Please check out our website
www.kiskatinawecologicalsociety.com

You can also watch for articles or factsheets produced through the Peace River Forage Association project Healthy & Vigorous Forages.

Are you interested in taking a feed rationing course?

If you are, we could offer

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&/or Sheepbytes
in late Nov, 2015**

*For more info please
call Talon Gauthier at (250) 219 3944
or Lori Vickers at (250) 784 2599*

Society's Working Group Activities *continued*

Most specifically the Forage Association has been involved in measuring and monitoring the soil and water management and forage production of the **23 pasture grazing cell setup on 473 acres** (Day Place) for the yearling heifer herd at Kiskatinaw River Ranch during the spring, summer and fall growing and breeding season. A portable solar wagon provides the water from three locations. This grazing cell also includes 10 Ranch Maxi Ecosites. Intensive management and controlled grazing is utilized, whereby a large cattle herd is moved rapidly thru small pastures. A field day/workshop which was a great success was held in early June at the center of the grazing cell.

Other Working Group Projects *(all currently at the Kiskatinaw River Ranch):*

Canada Thistle eating weevils were distributed at two sites in late summer/early fall. Currently Canada Thistle is controlled and eradicated by mechanical means with a Schulte 15 foot rotary mower; Stihl power slasher; handheld weed slasher. No herbicides.

Dead Dawg Coulee Rehab: A lot remains to be done here. At this stage this is being done in small increments annually; and is likely to remain thus. Grazing on the RME enclosure of 8 acres was conducted in June for a few days (for the first time in years) to reduce fire hazard and provide beneficial herd effect to both vegetation and soil.

Ranch Maxi Ecosites so named because they usually include a water hole, asymmetrical shape high tensile electric fence and require maximum management to utilize properly. This concept provides additional habitat for small and medium size mammals, birds, soil organisms, insects, spiders, amphibians and vegetation at really no additional cost while still at the same time providing healthy livestock water. In 2014 we had 30 of these RME, identified and in use thru July 31st 16 more RME sites have been identified and some completed. The RME concept allows us to make use of small dugouts for a long period of time and provide useful habitat too at a very economical cost.

Events Outside Our Region & Friends of Forage



Canadian Forage and Grassland Association
Association Canadienne pour les Plantes Fourragères



6th Annual Canadian Forage and Grassland Association Conference

November 17-19, 2015
 Sheraton Cavalier Hotel, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Capture the Intensity!

WESTERN CANADA

Conference on Soil Health

December 8th, 9th & 10th, 2015

Radisson
 HOTEL EDMONTON SOUTH



Nov 17 to 19: Canadian Forage & Grassland Conference in Saskatoon, SK

Dec 8 to 10: Western Canadian Soil Health Conference in Edmonton, AB

Please call Sandra, Chris or Talon at (250) 789 6885 or email coordinator@peaceforage.bc.ca

if you are interested in joining us for either of these "road trips"



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Forage Events Within Our Region

Mark Your Calendar!

*The Peace River Forage Association
Invites you to join them for their*



Teaching Livestock to Graze Weeds & Annual General Meeting

**Tuesday, Dec 1, 2015
12:00 to 5:30 pm**

**Taylor Community Church,
Taylor, BC**

12 to 1 pm Lunch

1 to 2 pm Luncheon Guest Speaker: Teaching Livestock to Graze Weeds
*Kathy Voth, Livestock for Landscapes,
Loveland, Colorado*

2 to 3 pm Rotate through 3 of the 4 stations about R&D projects
⇒ **Grazing Weeds:** *Kari Bondaroff & Lori Vickers*
⇒ **Healthy & Vigorous Forages:** *Talon Johnson*
⇒ **Innovation for Resiliency:** *Sandra Burton*
⇒ **Re-vegetating Disturbed Lands II Project:** *Bill Wilson*

3 to 3:30 pm Coffee break

3:30 to 4:00 pm Grazing Weeds Part 2 with Kathy Voth

4:00 to 4:20 pm Rotate through 1 more R & D station

4:30 to 5:30 pm AGM of the Peace River Forage Association

6 to 7 pm Directors' Supper Meeting With Guests

7 to 8 pm Intensive Session with Kathy Voth for Committed Cooperators
Teaching Your Livestock to Graze Weeds

***By Nov 25: Please contact Sandra / Chris/ Talon @ 250 789 6885
to ensure we have lunch for you***