

# FORAGE FIRST

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

74<sup>th</sup> Edition

Fall 2017

\$10

## Forage Then & Now



Summer tour guests foraging at the pasture site hosted by Rob Larson & Sharon Lewis. (Photo credit: Kenry Larson)

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### Inside This Issue: (for paid up members)

Fredricksons' Farm Celebrates	pg 2
Looking Back on 25 Years	pg 3
Meet Our Summer Students	pg 4
New to Blackbird & Forage	pg 5
Site C Agricultural Compensation	pg 5
Biosecurity, Kinship & Work Dynamics	pg 7
Community Sheep Shearing	pg 9
More Reading for Sheep Producers	pg 10
What is Your Weak Link?	pg 11
Highlights from the Summer	pg 12
Summer Tour	pg 13
Thank Yous for Summer Tour	pg 15
Upcoming Forage Event	pg 16

### Inserts: (for paid up members)

R & D Project Update,  
Friends of Forage, Info of Interest

**Inserts: (for renewing members)**  
2017/18 Membership Renewal Notice

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

# Fredricksons' Farm Celebrates 100 Years

by Carolyn Derfler & Dale & Sharon Frederickson

## Dale and Sharon Frederickson

have had a busy summer farming and preparing for the 100 year celebration of their family farm. On the weekend of August 12<sup>th</sup> they had visitors of all ages from Canada and the United States come to help celebrate. About 200 people attended the events of the weekend which included a float in the Fall Fair parade, nightly music by family members who wanted to have a turn playing and even a wedding! It was a great weekend spent reminiscing as people wandered around the farm looking at the original old buildings, including the house, which still contains spice jars, ligaments, clothing, furniture, journals and many old family photos.

The following is an article written by Dale and Sharon about the Frederickson family farm.

This is a brief history of the SW1/4, TP79, R16, W6M, or as it was commonly known as, head office! My grandfather, Smith Frederickson arrived in the Peace River area in the summer of 1017, along with two other men from the SE corner of BC known as Roosville. They filed on their chosen land and returned to fetch their families and belongings. Grandpa returned to the Peace with a new bride. You could say that he took the Roo out of Roosville as her maiden name was Myra Roo.

The area was quickly opening up to many settlers, and Granddad had a fine team of horses and was well adapted to doing darn near anything with them, to make a buck. There was lots of work to do at home proving up the new property, that was part of the deal. It was located on top of a hill, so first off there had to be a dam built to hold water. Buildings were required to protect not only themselves but the stock they used as well. Horses were the main transportation and Granddad made quite a reputation as a horse doctor of sorts.

Dale and Sharon in front of the original house with a commemorative plaque for the 100 year anniversary of the Frederickson farm.

A celebration was held in honour of the occasion with about 200 people attending.



No one had money to pay, so everyone was on the trade and barter routine. Grandma Myra planted a big garden, picked ample wild berries, had chickens and hogs and wild meat that could all be preserved in jars to last year round.

The land was covered with heavy timber and willow. The poplar trees were everywhere and dense. The spruce and pine were used for the buildings and the rest was burnt as fuel or just burnt. There was about 60 acres broke in total within a 5 year period. It seems strange that in all this time I have not done anything to improve on those numbers. With the exception of a few years of forage, seeded for hay production, this land has been cropped close to 100 times.

Smith and Myra had 4 sons: just what you need when you're taming a chunk of earth. Ernie, the oldest, homesteaded the quarter just north of Smith. Earle, the 3<sup>rd</sup> son, homesteaded the quarter north of that. Kenneth, the 2<sup>nd</sup> son, did 2 homesteads on either side of Earle's. The 4<sup>th</sup> son, Doug, pursued a career off the farm. The Alaska Highway passed close by and the hogs were ventured in a bit with the leftovers from the construction camp. Prosperity was in the air they used to say about the hogs. Cattle were a mainstay

and grain production was quickly starting to boom. With the addition of the modern tractor and thrashing machine, farming more acres was a possibility. That meant more land was purchased and more clearing was necessary. Grandma passed away quite young in 1943 leaving Smith and the boys on their own.

My father, Ken, sold his homestead to Earle and bought some land a little ways away in the valley. That is where I was raised, taking up farming officially in 1984. I farmed with Dad until 1992 when he retired. I married a girl from Saskatchewan in 1989. Sharon came from a mixed farm so we thought cattle might be more stable then straight grain farming. So in 1996 we purchased the head office quarter. The eldest son Ernie had never married and had remained on the original homestead after Smith's passing in 1973. He inherited the quarter and continued to farm up until we took over. We even bought the cows!

We had to build a new house in 1996 as uncle was still living in the original cabin. It still stands and is in remarkably good shape. We added 3 children, more sheds, a few more cattle, water storage, and additional acres. My wife and I are back working the farm alone as the children are pursuing other careers. We feel one or all will someday take over. This farm has never been overly prosperous but for 3 generations we have done our own thing and kept the place intact. I like to think we are passing along a chance for the next generation to do the same thing.

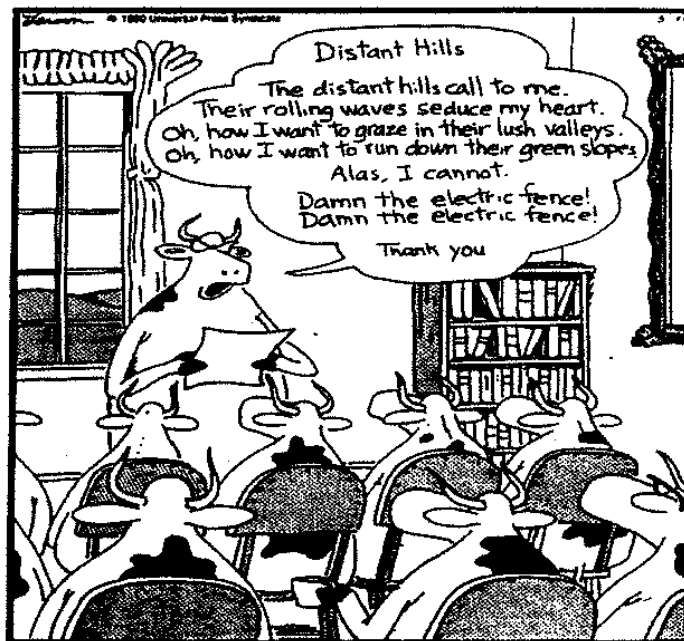


# Looking Back on 25 Years With PRFA of BC

by Darryl Kroeker

When I first started working on this article, I thought it would be interesting to go back through the Peace River Forage Association newsletters and contrast the issues and projects the association was dealing with in the early years to those we are facing now. I suppose I shouldn't have been surprised to find that there really isn't a lot of difference between then and now. The association has been consistent in its approach to providing information and using its knowledge and experience to work with and influence partners at many levels.

Using cattle as a tool to manage forage has been a relevant topic throughout the PRFA's history. In the inaugural Forage First issue, Ernie Nimitz shared his ranch's experience with grazing management and especially the use of electric fencing. Ernie's unvarnished perspective was that of the working rancher, a producer perspective that has been the foundation of the PRFA's projects. Readers were directed to a grazing demonstration at Tomslake with ranchers Horst David, Bruce Kutschker, Ernie Pilz, and Bob Tubb who were using solar-powered watering systems and portable electric fencing to improve livestock distribution. Producers were encouraged to read Allan Savory's book on Holistic Resource Management. Whether one agrees with Savory's approach or not, the book encourages producers to think of a different way to manage grazing from a traditional season-long approach. Ten years later, the topics are still relevant as the PRFA hosted a pasture management school at Doe River. Experiences in managing aspen growth with grazing were demonstrated at the ranches of Glenn Hogberg, Fred Burres and Ernie Nimitz. More recently, the association brought in Kathy Voth to provide instruction to ranching partners Tess Davidson, Pat Sutherland, Jodi Kendrew, Charlie Lasser, and Sarah Davies, training their livestock to eat Canada thistle as a further forage management tool.



Humour has been part of many of the PRFA's projects and communications. The Rancher's Starter Kit used this approach to deal with many of the challenges ranchers face. The "rain gauge used only once in the last 3 summers" and "thousands of holistic grasshoppers to eat up surplus pasture" remind us that, even with good forage management, events beyond our control have an impact. "Thirteen big round bales in storage for 4 winters" is another way to remind us the importance of feed testing when planning winter nutrition. "A hefty box of government forms, for approximately 19 handouts" might be a suggestion that groups like the PRFA need to come up with our own solutions to challenges, pertinent to circumstances in the BC Peace region.

The PRFA began in 1992, "the driest in recorded history", with an objective of preparing producers for present and future disaster situations in forage production. As we look at the past decade, the BC Peace River Region has experienced

successive years of drought interspersed with years of record flooding, resulting in crop disasters. Preparing for the challenges of extreme weather patterns resulting from climate change is more relevant now than it ever has been.

Looking back over 25 years, a generation, it is satisfying to see that the PRFA has been successful in its role of working with its members to share its collective knowledge and developing new information to improve the productivity and profitability of the producer community. It is especially rewarding to look across the attendees at our workshops and field tours and see the next generation well represented among our membership.

I encourage each of you to invite your neighbours, those young as well as the more experienced, to participate in the PRFA's activities so the membership can benefit from the knowledge and energy each new member brings.

# Meet Our Summer Students

by Erin Maxfield & Olivia Montero

Hello all, my name is **Erin Maxfield** and I am the 2017 summer student for Blackbird Environmental! I was born and raised in Fort St. John and it has always been a pleasure returning home for the summers. I grew up dancing competitively in the Peace Region and graduated from North Peace Secondary School in 2014. Following graduation, I attended Olds College for their Land and Water Resources program, in which I graduated from with my diploma last spring. This past year I transferred to the University of Alberta to complete my degree in Environmental & Conservation Sciences majoring in Land Reclamation and I am on track to graduate next winter.

Working for Blackbird this summer has been an amazing experience. I have had the privilege of assisting with bird nest surveys, water flow need assessments, data processing, drone work with Matthias and much more. A lot of my work has also consisted of taking part in the PRFA projects. I worked on the mentorship project analyzing satellite imagery, soil sampling with Sandra and working in GIS to put together productivity packages for our cooperators to help them better understand the capability of their land. I also worked on the Integrated Approach to Productive Forage Stands Using Livestock project, which would often involve thistle plot monitoring with Olivia and snacking on tasty treats provided by our wonderful cooperators. Most recently I have been working on the Forage Starting Over Do's and Don'ts Project with James. We have been monitoring the revegetated plots, gathering biomass clippings and exercising our plant identification muscles.

I came into this summer hoping to find a position that would allow me to gain experience and knowledge, but I have found so much more than that. In the past four months, I have worked closely with professionals who have not only been great co-workers but outstanding teachers and leaders. I would like to thank everyone who has been a part of my journey this summer as you all have made it one to never forget!



My name is **Olivia Montero Nunez de Villavicencio**, I have come all the way from Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario. I am a student at the University of Waterloo. I am on my third year of my five-year Bachelor Honours at the School of Environment, Sustainability and Resources. My background in the environmental field is conservation and rehabilitation; water, waste and energy management; and policy. I was hired by the Peace River Forage Association and I have been working in unison with Blackbird Environmental. I am an avid hiker, traveller and explorer, who loves cooking; and I am always ready for a challenge.



What called to me to apply for this job was the revolutionary thought of using livestock to graze weeds, a technique I had not heard of before. Naturally I was inclined to apply and everyday has been an adventure after another. Although the Integrated Approach to Productive Forage Stands Using Livestock project as been my main project I had the opportunity to work also in the Forage Starting Over Do's and Don'ts Project, soil sampling with Sandra, water sampling with Julie, and insect cleaning for Keith Uloth for his insect monitoring project. My work for the Integrated Approach to Productive Forage Stands Using Livestock project involved gathering data from the past three years of the project and doing vegetation monitoring. The purpose of these visits was to monitor the amount of prevailing thistle and to check the growth patterns of thistle after three years of grazing. I helped to

make the tour booklet for the Tour on June 15. I worked in Factsheet #108, Recipe for Using Cattle to Graze Weed for the Peace River Forage Association. The last portion of my project will be to make an instructional video for new co-operators that would like to use their livestock to graze undesirable weeds.

I would like to thank everyone that formed part of this experience because without them this experience would not have been as amazing as it has been. This summer has been incredible, full of unexpected occurrences and adventures, leaving me with the conclusion that this summer job has been more than just a summer job. I have gained so much knowledge and experience that could not have been possible without the amazing mentorship of an array of professionals in the environmental field. For my first experience in the west it has been truly wonderful, and simply unforgettable.

# New To Blackbird & Forage Team

by James Hegarty

Hi everyone, my name is **James Hegarty**. I am an Environmental Scientist with Blackbird Environmental. I'm a new addition to the Blackbird team, having moved here from Vancouver at the start of the summer.

Originally from Ireland, I moved to Vancouver in 2015 where I spent some time as a field sampler for a mineral exploration company. Prior to moving to Fort St John, I spent a year at sea as a fisheries observer on the BC coast.

It's been quite the busy summer here with Blackbird. I have been involved in a myriad of projects from cows and thistles to drone work and mapping, I have certainly been kept on my toes!

One of the main projects I have been involved with is the, PRFA Forage Starting Over Do's and Don'ts Project. Along with the summer students, we have collected data on various grass and legume species, seeded on both lease and pipeline sites in the region.

While there have been some wonderful moments throughout the summer, the real highlight for me has been the beauty of the region and its people. As a newcomer to the area, everyone has been very welcoming (note: this is subject to change as I get to know you all better and if I survive the winter!)



## Site C Agricultural Compensation

by Heather Fossum & Bill Wilson

BC Hydro is building another hydroelectric dam along the Peace River, which is going to remove agricultural lands from production through dam construction and flooding. BC Hydro is required to compensate individual land holder that are effected by the dam and also to create a separate Agricultural Compensation Fund that will support the Peace Region's opportunity for agricultural production and agrifoods economic activity. These funds will be targeted to directly benefit the agricultural sector in the Peace Region. The long name for this Compensation Fund is the BC Hydro Peace Agricultural Compensation Fund.

### Background

The Environmental Assessment Certificate (EAC) issued by the Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) is the approval document from the Government for this project. Condition 30 of the EAC issued to BC Hydro requires that BC Hydro establish an agricultural compensation fund of \$20 million to mitigate impacts to agriculture economic activity.

The EAC also requires BC Hydro to establish an approach for the governance and allocation of the Compensation Funds money. They are accomplishing this through development of the Site C Agricultural Mitigation and Compensation Plan (Ag Mit & Comp Plan) – however, the Compensation Fund is just one part of this plan\*. A Consultation

Steering Committee (made up of BC Hydro, Ministry of Ag and Ministry of Energy and Mines) guided

1. consultation with agriculture stakeholders regarding the Framework for the Ag Mit & Comp Plan, and then
  2. formulation of the final Ag Mit & Comp Plan.
- ◇ Initial agriculture stakeholder consultation took place Nov 2016-Jan 2016.
  - ◇ Representatives of regional agriculture associations met March 2016
  - ◇ Framework for the Ag Mit & Comp Plan was made public July 2016 and comments were received July-Sept 2016
  - ◇ The Draft Ag Mit & Comp Plan was made public Jan 2017.
  - ◇ Representatives of regional agriculture associations met Feb 2017
  - ◇ Comments were received Jan-March 2017 (re Draft Ag Mit & Comp Plan)
  - ◇ The Final Ag Mit & Comp Plan was made public July 2017

\* The Site C Agriculture Mitigation and Compensation Plan deals with (1) construction Management Practices, (2) Individual Farm Mitigation Plans, (3) Management of Residual Ag Land and (4) BC Hydro Peace Agricultural Compensation Fund.

*Continued on page 6*



# Site C Agricultural Compensation *Continued*

By Heather Fossum & Bill Wilson

The Peace River Forage Association of BC was represented at the two meetings with regional agriculture associations by Bill Wilson and Heather Fossum. Comments regarding the Draft Agricultural Mitigation & Compensation Plan (Ag Mit & Comp Plan) were submitted to BC Hydro by the Forage Association March, 2017.

## Compensation Fund Structure

The purpose of the Compensation Fund will be to support the Peace Region's opportunity for agricultural productions and agrifoods economic activity. Decisions regarding funding allocations will be made in the region and the diversity of agriculture sectors and interests will be recognized. The fund will be managed to maintain the full capital of \$20 million for the first five years.

The Compensation Fund will be made up of:

1. **Board**,
2. **Administrator** and
3. **BC Hydro**.

**Board (10 members):** will consist of 6 appointees from regional agriculture sectors, 1 Peace River Valley Ag Producer and 3 Agriculture sector Members at Large. The nominating organizations for the 6 appointees include BC Grain Producers Association, Peace Region Forage Association, Peace River Regional Cattlemen's Association, Peace River Forage Seed Association, Peace River Regional District Agriculture Producer Appointee, and BC Cattle Breeder and Feeders Association (The BC Cattle Breeder and Feeder Association was not part of the Board until the Final Ag Mit & Comp Plan was published in July – it was a last minute addition). All members will support the Peace Region agricultural industry as a whole, not just their own sector. A call for members will be made in Sept 2017 with responses due to BC Hydro by Oct 15, 2017. The Board members will be finalized Nov 2017. Initial terms will be randomly staggered at 1-3 years and all subsequent terms will be 3 years.

**Administrator:** will be contracted through BC Hydro with selection input from the Board. Major roles of the Administrator include:

1. Financial management of the Agricultural Fund,
2. Administration of the application and distribution processes, and
3. The provision of secretariat support to the Board.

All application or distribution processes will be developed with input from the Board.

An Administrator will be contracted by Jan 2018.

**BC Hydro:** will review and approve documents the initial 5 years to ensure that the Compensation Fund is set up and managed in accordance with Condition 30 of the EAC.

A link to the Final Ag Mit & Comp Plan is available on the Peace River Forage Association website or at the website address below. Information on the Compensation Fund begins on page 25 (section 2.6). The following appendixes are also relevant to the Compensation Fund: Appendix C: Board Terms of Reference, Appendix D: Administrator Role and draft Term Sheet, Appendix E: BC Hydro Role, Appendix F: Application Process and Eligibility Criteria, and Appendix G: Agricultural Fund Documentation.

<https://www.sitecproject.com/sites/default/files/site-c-agricultural-mitigation-compensation-plan-final-july-2017.pdf>

## Fund Eligibility

Applicants must present a project that will directly benefit agriculture in the Peace Region and eligibility will target agricultural organizations in the Peace Region.

1. Projects that enhance the agricultural sector in the Peace Region and can include:
2. Research and development that directly benefits agriculture in the Peace Region,
3. Market development for the agricultural sector
4. Training and education to support new entrants/youth/new agricultural enterprises,
5. Capital investment for agriculture industry infrastructure, and
6. Transportation and supply chain improvements for agriculture.

Agricultural groups that can apply include:

1. Corporations, cooperatives, individuals and/or partnerships active in agriculture in the Peace Region (including new agricultural industry entrants and young agricultural operators),
2. Non-profit agricultural organizations in the Peace Region,
3. Peace Region industry associations, agencies, Boards and councils, and
4. Educational institutions undertaking research directly related to the Peace Region.

The Board and Administrator will be established this fall and the plans/processes will be developed in 2018. This Compensation Fund has the potential to provide funding for agricultural projects in the Peace Region for years to come. It's exciting that the Peace River Forage Association and other Peace Region agriculture groups are being consulted regarding the Fund's structure and included in the Fund's operation through the Board.

## *Special Sheep Producers Insert*

# Biosecurity, Kinship & Work Dynamics

by Andy Tschetter

### **Biosecurity, Kinship & Work Dynamics Key for Alberta Farm Family**

January 14, Wetaskiwin: Stefan Kaiser, 31, exudes a refreshing tenacity in his knowledge and learning of the humble ovine. He is in charge of EweCan Genetics, the sheep branch of the extended Kaiser AG farm operation started by his parents, Martin and Helena Kaiser. Here in Alberta's pine dotted Wetaskiwin County, he wields a passion for the continued growth and welfare of the farms closed flock of over a thousand, mostly Rideau Arcott, ewes. "I have always been around them", he says, since I was a kid."

The teapot whistles in the spacious family kitchen as Martin Kaiser relates how EweCan Genetics evolved from an initial start-up flock of 20 purebred ewes: a first rate nucleus of 15 Rideau Arcott and 5 Charollais from Ian Clark of Medicine Ridge Farm in nearby Bentley in 1998.

Having conducted prior research, the goal for Kaiser was to further the prolific trait of the Rideau Arcott to increase profitability. They did this by selecting genetics for birth, weaning and finishing weights; by using Charollais, Canadian Arcott and Ile de France as terminal sire breeds and by creating groups of tailored genetics – the ewes' milking, mothering ability and overall lamb growth became paramount for the Kaisers as they sought to expand.

Like the Canadian Arcott, the Rideau was developed at the Agricultural Research Centre in Ottawa in 1968. Bloodlines include Finnsheep, Suffolk, Shropshire, Dorset and East Friesian with a sprinkling of Boarder Leicester, North Country Cheviot, Romeldale and Corriedale. The breed matures early, ewes are highly fertile with twins and triplets being the norm. Quadruplets are more common than single lambs. Ewes, which can breed as early as 7 months and wean more pounds of lamb than any other breed analyzed in the Canadian Flock Improvement Program, are very hardy in cold regions.



Ewes, due to lamb February, milling on fresh straw and enjoying a pre-lambing ration of barley and silage.

Working in conjunction with the Medicine Ridge Farm, whose initial sheep came from the Agricultural Research Centre in Ottawa, Kaiser subsequently acquired top performing animals from the Charollais, Rideau, Canadian and Ile de France breeds and with maternal and terminal performance traits in mind, worked to hone in on the farm's profitability by retaining high indexing stock, sustainably managing the farm's land base with the goal being to favourably synchronize the ewe's per acre ratio, and lastly to adopt stringent biosecurity protocols which became crucial for the farm. "We have done our utmost in maintaining the health of our animals," says Kaiser. "It was key in allowing confidence for us in selling healthy animals to our customers." No animal ever returns to the farm after it leaves. Visitors report to the farm office and wear disposable coveralls and footwear before entering the barn.

Kaiser AG's ovine program soon became synonymous with genetic vigour. With the initial investment of sound genetics and with dedicated management, literally thousands of lambs became marketable for the Kaisers who sold finished lambs, replacement and breeding stock. "Some years were tough," says Stefan. "Low prices had us looking to eastern Canada for better market incentives." Three barns were built to accommodate the growing flock. Although the initial approach with production was one of more confined management with the animals being housed mostly. The farm's 2000 acres quickly became utilized for the production of hay, silage and grain as feed for the animals. Stefan adds, "In recent years we incorporated more grazing for the ewes."

*Continued on page 8*



# Biosecurity, Kinship & Work Dynamics *Continued*

by Andy Tschetter

Production peaked in 2014 at 3800 head of ewes. With over 10,000 head of sheep and lambs, the decision came for the Kaisers to down size and disperse with valuable breeding stock, at least in part. Other ventures were being undertaken by the farm including custom farming and a foray into the poultry business, with Kaiser AG going to become a distributor of Völker GMBH poultry equipment.

The goal for the Kaisers in reducing EweCan Genetics to select a nucleus of ewes is to continue producing lambs that finish quickly as well as replacement stock, but with an eye towards integrating to finer production development. We'd like to see our label on lamb products or value added to our grain," says Stefan, referring to the farms' organic grain production. "The stage is changing towards gate plate business integration."



Lambing jugs all set up in the main lambing barn.

Martin and Helena Kaiser's four sons all play their role in the everyday capacity and function of the farm. For Benjamin, the oldest, his business acumen and determination is his advantage in assisting with sales in the poultry division. Stefan's younger brother, Peter, a journeyman mechanic, keeps the farm's machinery rolling, gears and wheels turning and helps with custom farming. Bringing up the rear is the loyal William. Tasked in part with seeding, combining, swathing and assisting Stefan with the sheep, the weight upon his shoulders is great. But William compliments the family's resiliency and with the characteristic Kaiser wit and charm at his disposal, he will surprise the family yet. (Pssst, hey Will, sneak some shop hand cleaner into Stefan's sandwich one time).

Together the Kaisers' make it work. Challenge and adversity over the years has only solidified their resolve for continued refinement. Like fine wine they are spoilt for this age. With the sun on their backs and the wind endlessly combing the pines, the family aspires with the Lord's blessing. By working together and with the toil of their hands, their wish is a simple one – and that is to be at home.

I enjoyed our talks immensely Stefan, you are an inspiration. Thank you!

## Fall Working Stock Dog Clinic

Carol Nelson will be hosting a working stock dog clinic this fall. If you are interested, call her 250 772 5315 and leave a message with your name and number. She will return your call with details as they unfold.





# Community Sheep Shearing

by Andy Tschetter

## Community Sheep Shearing Provides Fun & Enrichment for all Involved.

Winter here in British Columbia's northeast can be long and harsh. From October through to April, periodic snowstorms and bouts of frigid -20°C chills intermingle with the January and February chinooks. The encroaching spring and summer months are a joyful prospect for rural and urban folk alike.

The same goes for the sheep whose fleeces grow to over 3 inches in length by mid-April, and it becomes prudent for Peace Region farmers to shear their woolly ovine subjects with the arrival of warm weather.



Jordan Tschetter (above) learning the technique from some of the "shearing masters" like Andy Tschetter (below).



Our sheep shearing usually takes place over a 2 day period, as we opt to shear the rams and the ewe lambs the first day. The shearers consist of most of the young men in the colony, who have taken a break from their duties among the livestock divisions to assist with shearing for the day. Most are keen on developing their skills at harvesting the wool, improving on their shearing technique and on the proper maintenance of their hand piece and electric motor. Our fastest shearer is Karl Tschetter, from the neighbouring South Peace Colony. He has arrived with a few of his colleagues to help, bringing a few extra motors and clippers. Karl took a passion to shearing at a young age, developed speed and honed in on the technique of rotating the animal as he shears – all the while keeping it comfortable. His expertise is sought by all upcoming shearers eager to learn.

Uncle Paul stands by to operate the wool press, a hydraulic chute pressing over 300 pounds of wool into 5 by 6 foot nylon bags. The children arrive from school to watch the proceedings and are allowed to play "tumble" atop the growing stack of bagged wool. The young ladies keep the shearing floor clean carrying fresh fleeces to be processed and sweeping the floor of wool tags and dirty wool discarded by the shearers. The fleeces seem to fly off the ewes faster than Uncle Paul is able to press them into the bags.

Meanwhile in the communal kitchen the ladies prepare the noon meal. Lunch is brought to the sheep camp. We set up tables near the barn. Hamburgers, home baked buns, baked beans, French fries and apple pie - the men folk eat a hearty meal.



The South Peace & Peace View shearing crew (above). The young ladies remove the fleeces from the floor to be processed (below).



It is day 2 and there are 200 ewes waiting to be shorn. Says Uncle Paul, "By golly, at least now I'll be able to catch up to the guys with packing the wool. We'll see how fast you guys perform now with full bellies, huh?"

Just after 3 pm the final ewe is shorn, she takes a satisfactory leap from the shearing floor and runs to join her companions outside eating their daily ration of hay. All done! Tired bones for the menfolk – they've sheared 500 animals in a day and a half. There is a good feeling of accomplishment and "Happy Hour" consists of a glass of wine. The lowly ovine has succeeded in bringing everyone together!

*Continued on page 10*

# Community Sheep Shearing *Continued*

by Andy Tschetter

Animal nutrition is important in fleece quality throughout the winter. A consistent supply of good forage and access to mineral and water yields a nice firm wool clip. Interestingly the cold North American winter climate works to develop density and strength in wool. As grapes are crushed to produce fine wine – hence the lustre of fine wool breeds becomes dually pronounced in types such as Rambouillet – the French version of the Merino. Louis XVI imported 359 Spanish Merinos for his estate at Rambouillet in 1786 after the Spanish relaxed their centuries old ban and the Merinos were crossed with the resident sheep. The resultant Rambouillet ovine were first brought to the United States in 1840. A range sheep, they became popular in the Canadian west because of their ability to survive in harsh conditions. They are long lived and have a slightly higher prolificacy than the Merino. Although the lambs finish at a slower rate than the Down breeds, they produce a strong carcass. Down rams such as Hampshire, Dorset or Suffolk are often used to improve the meat characteristics while preserving the hardiness and flocking instinct of the Rambouillet. Hand spinners and weavers pay a premium for the fleece.

Although Canada's approximately 3 million pounds of raw wool is only a fraction of the world production, our wool has developed a niche in the world markets given its high elasticity. This springiness, enables wool to retain its original shape, and is blended with wool from other countries that have less of this trait. Roughly 10% of Canada's production is consumed here at home. The remaining 90% is exported to Spain, Britain, France, Germany, Japan, United States, China and India.

The Canadian Co-operative Wool Growers (CCWG), with head offices in Ontario, provides primary services in wool marketing, collecting and grading for most Canadian sheep farmers. Fleeces are sacked and shipped to various agents and CCWG branches across the country and shipped subsequently to Ontario for grading and marketing. Wool is weighed on arrival and is then graded and core tested. The raw wool is inspected by hand and classified by average diameter and length of fibre, colour, lustre and crimp. The graded greasy wool is packed into 600 pound bales and shipped to world markets.

## More Reading for Sheep Producers

The **N'Ewes** became the official voice of the BC Sheep Federation soon after the group's inception in November of 1991.

The publication grew from black and white to a full colour grassroots sheep magazine. It includes regional reports, province wide advertising, technical articles, opinion pieces and much more.



Content and Photos by  
Arlette Seib

To see more great photographs:

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# What is Your Weak Link?

by Kelly Sidoryk

As another growing season comes to an end and we start looking towards next year, it is valuable to take time and reflect on what went well this year and what did not. Think of it as part of the “where we are at” piece of long range/ strategic planning.

First, are there still any big **log jams** that are preventing us from moving forward? It could be financing, it could be blocks to a succession plan, it could be unresolved communication issues. It is important to recognize these from the point of prioritizing how we allocate time and money in the next year. Continue delving deeper by asking the 5 whys. Each time you uncover the cause of a problem, ask why again and dig deeper into the issue.

Then let's look at the operation from the **weak link aspect**. Think of the links in a chain beginning with the capture and conversion of solar energy – **resource conversion link** – or the growing one. Next is the **product conversion or harvesting link** followed by the **marketing link**. As we are allocating time and money again, it is important to start with the weakest link. So for example, if this year you didn't have enough forage to fall graze as long as you wanted and that was preventing you from keeping cattle longer to access a later market... then your weak link could be **resource conversion**. So perhaps start thinking about focusing energy, time and money to address that in 2018. By asking yourself “will it help improve my fall pasture situation? If not do I really need to do it now?”

Then, you determine “how can we best address the weak link in each enterprise?” To spend dollars on any other link in the chain before the weak link is addressed, would be a waste of money. The strength of a chain is that of its weakest link. Addressing that weakest link strengthens the entire chain.

You have **resource conversion** weak links when you have insufficient ability to convert sunlight into raw resources (grass, trees, corn, etc.) and/ or lack sufficient raw resources (including money, capacity, talent, etc.) to produce your product. Or, you may have more than enough raw resources, but you lack the capacity to convert them to a marketable form or harvest them. In that case, you have a **product conversion** weak link (grass to meat, for example). If you've created a great product or service, but have difficulty selling it, marketing is the weak link.

## Examples of Weak Links:

### 1. Crop Farming Operation

**Resource:** poor water management, wrong choice of crop, poor crop health, high fertilizer cost, low yields

**Production:** high damage loss (insect, disease), poor germination, high harvest and handling loss, poor product, inadequate equipment or labor to harvest

**Marketing:** low prices, market resistance due to insensitivity to demand, inadequate research, poor sales effort

### 2. Livestock Operation

**Resource:** forage shortage, paddocks too few to minimize overgrazing, species composition poor, high supplement cost

**Production:** unutilized forage, animal performance, poor product, not enough animals

**Marketing:** low prices, market resistance due to: insensitivity to demand, inadequate research, poor sales effort

### 3. Small Business

**Resource:** under staffed, lack of or confused strategic focus, lack of leadership and management, lack of raw resources (money)

**Production:** production challenges, shipping or transport issues, high production costs/poor profit margin, poor product, high damage loss

**Marketing:** low prices, market resistance due to: insensitivity to demand, inadequate research, poor sales effort, ignorance of market mechanisms (niche, wholesale, venture capital etc.)

There had been a time when we were simply not growing enough grass and had too much bare ground. For a number of years we worked on strengthening that link through better grazing management. At times such as a drought this was challenging. Particularly when we were trying to avoid destocking. Looking back that was not the best aim but as they say hindsight is 20/20.

Forage production did improve and the next weak link to surface was animal performance. This is a high priority that we are continuously managing for, and we were no longer getting the gains we once had. It is challenging to isolate just one factor. Is it the type of grass? time of grazing? legume percentage? quality, health and condition of cattle? At that time we were getting paid on a cost per pound. One of the first changes we made was going back to a per head per day fee. An equation we came across was using 12 cents /lb per day on weight going to grass. This is based on consumption as a % of body weight.

After a phenomenal growing season, our weak link is again going to be production, as we simply did not have enough animals. When we begin prioritizing expenses for next year, that is going to be a major consideration. But there has also been a significant boost to the grass with the amount of residual and litter we left behind. We have built **biological capital**.

Identifying log jams or weak links are part of the Holistic Management planning process. This has become increasingly valuable for us. Strengthening the weakest link in each enterprise can help prioritize your expenses as you do your annual financial planning.

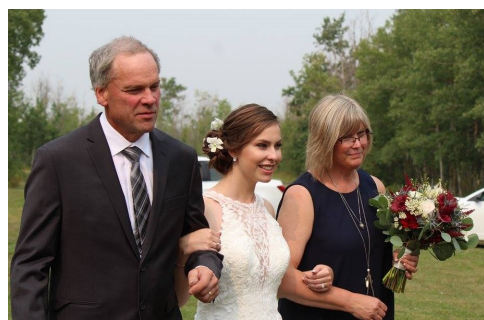
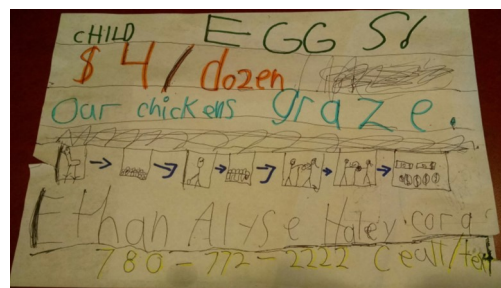
## Highlights From the Summer



Congratulations to Bill Wilson & Julie Robinson who got married on July 9, 2017 at the Tower Lake Hall.



Ryan Frost & Heather Fossum welcomed Cora Marie into their family on April 29, 2017! A little sister for Ethan, Alyse, & Haley! The three older children set up a new enterprise this summer, "Child Eggs"!



Emily, daughter of Brian & Carolyn Derfler, married Ben van Spronsen on August 12, 2017 in Farmington.



Nimitz Beef introduced more flavors of Just Jerky and hosted their Annual Beef Cookout, Saturday August 5, 2017 on the Kiskatinaw River Ranch.



Brette Madden & Craig Fossum celebrated the birth of their son, Boden Curtis Fossum, on August 8, 2017. A little brother for Andie & a new cousin for Ethan, Alyse, Haley & Cora!





# Summer Tour on June 15, 2017

by Olivia Montero, Charissa Enns & Sandra Burton



On a lovely sunny day, 55 people participated in all or parts of the PRFA 2017 Summer Tour. Our first tour stop was hosted by **Tess and Howard Davidson** in **Thistle Down Pasture**. Tess and her husband Howard started their farm 40 years ago. They own 320 ac and lease another 320 ac. They have expanded from 5 ewes to a flock of over 100. They also have a small herd of 25 exotic cross cattle, 3 border collie herding dogs and 2 guardian dogs.

Tess worked for 2 summers in cut blocks. In 2006 she herded 1600 goats to control native vegetation so that seedling trees could survive. In 2007, she herded 1300 sheep. The sheep had learned the behaviour and so were more effective. She became keen on teaching them to graze weeds. Tess demonstrated how her ewes and lambs graze Canada thistle, and **Lori Vickers** shared our monitoring methods.



**Carol Nelson** and her husband, Lowell, raise cattle and sheep near Pink Mountain. They have a commercial sheep flock of Black Face Scotties/ Cheviot/ Suffolk mix. They have two sons, Kyle and Eric and 7+ Border Collies. Carol and her mother, Pam Boring, host the 7up Stockdog Trial every summer in Pink Mountain and travel together for stockdog trials all over Canada and the United States. Carol puts on a training clinic every June. Tess credits Carol Nelson and Pam Boring, as her training coaches and advisors through many working dog training problems. Carol demonstrated the power of good working dogs during our stop with Davidsons.

Our second tour stop was at **Creek Bank Farms**, the **Enns family** business since 1986. The Enns' farm is a diversified operation that allows everyone to find their own niche. Over the years, they have grown many different species and varieties of grass seed, grains, oilseeds, pulses and in the days following BSE, had over 3000 head of bison on the farm. The bison herd included over 1100 head of breeding stock and a feedlot where calves were backgrounded and then finished. Cows and breeding bulls were kept on pasture, but once the calves were weaned, they were moved to the feedlot. In 2012, the bison breeding herd was sold, but Walter and Dolores kept back a select group of farm-raised heifers as breeding stock that currently make up the breeding herd of 330 bison cows. Over 30 breeding bulls have been selected from approximately 2000 head of farm-raised feeder bulls for traits such as average daily gains, size, conformation and temperament.

Bailey and Dolores own a herd of approximately 60 Black Angus/Black Simmental cross cattle as well as some purebred breeding stock from which they raise and sell a few of the top bull calves each year. Brittany and Scott also have a separate herd of Black Angus, Black Simmental and Red Angus cattle.

Walter and Dolores have spent a considerable amount of time and effort on genetic testing in the bison herd. In total, approximately 5000 head of bison from Creek Bank Farms have been DNA tested for parentage in an effort to find crosses that enhance performance.

Creek Bank Farms has switched about 60% of the acres to production of grains, oilseeds and pulses, all of which is no-tillage. Most of the grasses are taken out without tillage and rotated to grains, oilseeds and pulses with some fields being no-till for nearly 20 years. Approximately 25% remains as hay and pasture and 15% as grass seed. The grass seed consists of Boreal creeping red fescue and Carlton smooth brome grass while pasture and hay land consists of smooth and meadow brome grass as well as red clover, alsike clover and where it will survive, alfalfa. The grass seed is grown and stored when prices are low to be sold when market conditions improve. During some times of low prices, grass seed has been stored for over five years.

The tour paused for a delicious lunch from K & W Café at the Goodlow Recreational Park, organized by **Chris Thomson**. Thank you Chris!

## Summer Tour on June 15, 2017 *Continued*

by Olivia Montero, Charissa Enns & Sandra Burton



**Tara Holmes and Ben Harrington** were our hosts for the stop near Siphon Creek. They have 2 budding little scientist children, Roy and Iris. They own 2400 ac of land but are currently using 640 ac with perimeter fencing. They have an additional 800 ac grazing lease but there have been too many wolves to put their sheep there. Tara and Ben started with a small flock of sheep and off farm employment. They are now managing over 300 ewes, 200 yearlings and 750 lambs. They have 2 guardian dogs in training to compliment their robust perimeter fencing.

Their goals for their land are to increase organic matter and the quality of the soil. Tara and Ben are concerned about the denseness and compactness of some of their soils. They are interested in documenting this so that they can capture any future credits for carbon sequestration. They are collaborating with the Forage Association to set up and monitor benchmarks before, during and after they start their soil improvement strategies, such as winter feeding, and managed rotational grazing.

**Rob Larson and Sharon Lewis** were our hosts for the last tour stop. They have 3 children ages 17 - 12, Tanisha, Jordyn and Kenry. Rob is a custom grazer/feeder, who is managing over 1100 cows/ yearlings on about 10,000 ac (65% open) in the Rose Prairie area. He manages the animals in 11 herds of varying sizes, depending on the special requests from clients. He has 2 pastures that are part of the new PRFA project Improving Forage Productivity & Profitability. The soil landscapes are very different at each pasture posing unique challenges.

His goal at the first pasture (35W) is to improve the productivity by introducing rotational grazing. This 85 ac field was hayed for several years prior to 2015. In 2016, Rob setup portable cross fencing and moved the 50 cow calf pairs every 6 to 7 days. His goal was to subdivide the field into 12 paddocks and give each grazing cell at least a 70 day rest. The first graze occurred from June 3 to June 21. There was a second graze over the southern portion nearest the dugout last fall. This year Rob is grazing 90 purebred Red Angus cow calf pairs for Smoky River Red Angus from Teepee Creek. The plan again is to manage the paddocks for 70 days' rest.

At the second upper pasture (35E), Rob's original goal was to improve the carrying capacity of the land, the soil bacterial content and the plant rooting depth.



After the soil quality work with the project this spring, his goal now includes preserving the upper protective organic layer on the surface. There was a strip ploughed and disced along the north side that did not produce much forage. Rob's strategies now include winter bale feeding, and timely grazing to control the rose bushes. 380 yearlings were fed 420 bales from March 26 until May 15. After at least 70 days' rest, he will bring animals back to graze this fall.

A tasty supper was enjoyed at the Rose Prairie Hall, thanks to CCR (**Carolyn, Chris & Rick**) Catering.

Winners with the most knowledge of 25 years of PRFA won special collector hats: **Bill McGill, James Hegarty, Heather Fossum & Luc Lalonde**.

A big thank you also to **Julie Robinson** and **Lori Vickers** for biosecurity between farms.



**Thank You to Our Industry Sponsors & Government Funding Partners for the  
2017 Summer Tour  
From Sheep & Soils To Buffalo & Bromegrass**

**Thank you to our hosts:**

Tess & Howard Davidson  
Carol Nelson  
Walter & Dolores Enns & family  
Tara Holmes & Ben Harrington  
Rob & Sharon Larson

Peace River Forage Association  
of British Columbia



**Peace River  
Regional  
Cattlemen's  
Association**



**PRAD**  
Peace River  
Agriculture  
Development Fund

**BC AGRI**  
Strategic  
Outreach  
Initiative



**This event is part of two new projects: Improving Productivity & Profitability of Forages & Integrated Management of Weeds Using Livestock. These projects are partially supported through:**  
Peace River Agriculture Development Fund (PRAD) &  
federal & provincial government programs delivered by the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC (IAF).  
**This event was also partially supported through: BC AGRI Strategic Outreach Initiative.**

# Upcoming Forage Events

## Pasture Walk & AGM

*Celebrate Fall Equinox with the  
Peace River Forage Association  
Friday Sept 22, 2016*

Peace River Forage Association  
of British Columbia



*3:00 pm: Meet to vehicle pool at the  
Bessborough Community Hall, BC*

**Afternoon in field to include:**  
Tips for fall seeding grasses & legumes  
Demos from Forage Starting Over Do's & Don'ts Project

**5:00 pm: Return to Bessborough Community Hall**

**5:30 pm: Hot Supper catered by Classic Cuisine**

**6:30 pm: AGM of Peace River Forage Association**

**7:30 pm: PRFA Directors meeting to follow**

**Pre-registration is strongly advised!**

**For more info or to register please call 250 789 6885**



## 8th Annual CFGA Conference

Next Generation Forage Cropping Systems:  
**Profit Above, Wealth Below**

November 14-16, 2017

Delta Guelph Hotel & Conference Centre  
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WEALTH BELOW**

Edmonton, AB  
December 5 - 7, 2017