

FORAGE FIRST

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Singing & Dancing in the Rain



Collaborating for forages on June 20 at the Beaverlodge Research Farm required rain gear & biosecurity booties.

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Inserts: *(for paid up members)*

Friends of Forage
Test Your Skills Game Card
BC Agri Updates
Agri Stability Updates

Inserts: *(for renewing members)*
2019/2020 Membership Renewal Notice

Visit us at www.peaceforage.bc.ca

Member Profile: Mirko Jansen

By Carolyn Derfler

Mirko Jansen moved to Canada from Switzerland on August 15, 2015, just over 4 years ago and has accomplished a lot in that short time period. He started in Clearwater, BC doing steep slope logging but really missed farming. About 18 months ago, he decided to move north to pursue his dream of having a farm of his own.

Mirko grew up beside a farm in Switzerland and ever since he was a little boy of 5 years old, he has had a desire to farm. He drove his first tractor at the age of 7 and the farming in his life has only escalated from there. His work in Switzerland consisted of logging with European equipment and custom farming for about 9-10 years before immigrating. During that time he often came to visit the Peace Region, in particular Pouce Coupe, and his long time Swiss neighbours and friends Fred and Liz Schneider. Yes, Mirko and Fred & Liz were neighbours in Switzerland and now Mirko lives in a house on their property, neighbours once again!

Upon arriving in the Peace Region Mirko set up his own custom farming business along with help from his girlfriend Susanne Lüthi. Susanne works full time in the office for Triple J Pipelines, but helps Mirko whenever possible. He offers tillage services of plowing and discing, custom silaging services with a self loading, self chopping wagon and haying services of mowing, raking, baling and stacking of 3'x4' square bales.



Some of the equipment that Mirko uses for operating his custom farming business.

Susanne Lüthi and Mirko Jansen.



As if that isn't enough, Mirko has taken on 2000 acres of rented land in and around Dawson Creek, Farmington and Taylor to hay this year. He prefers to make large square bales rather than round bales as he finds the equipment to be more time efficient. But unfortunately they do not shed the rain as well and the wet weather this summer has been making haying challenging to say the least. When done, Mirko will sell his bales locally and to customers in southern and northern BC, as well as into Alberta.

Fred introduced Mirko to the Peace River Forage Association and he recently became a member. He is interested in renting the seeder that the PRFA purchased last year as well as realizing that he has so much to learn about forages if he wants to continue in this business and eventually own some land of his own. With his years of experience he has some knowledge, but wants to educate himself more through the various workshops put on by the PRFA and the newsletters. Being new to Canada and in particular the Peace Region, he feels it is also a great way to reach out and connect with people.

On a personal note: from helping my husband farm I find it encouraging to see Mirko offering his services to farmers in the area. The window of opportunity to get crops harvested in this region is short so custom services like this is just what we need. Thank you Mirko!

For more information call 250 784 8442 or email jankofarms.ltd@gmail.com



Summer Student Profile

by Courtney Wallace

This spring the Peace River Forage Association hired Courtney Wallace to help with project work throughout the summer. Here is a little information about her.

My name is Courtney Wallace, I am a grade 12 graduate student from Dawson Creek Senior Secondary School, a fourth year senior 4-H member, and a senior basketball player. I live on my family's farm in Farmington where we raise commercial cattle and are starting a registered herd. We mainly work with Purebred Polled Herefords but have recently started cross breeding Black Angus into our herd. As a 4-H member I have been able to work hands on with cattle and train them for show, sale and breeding purposes. I have gained many new and important skills that will help in my life from communication to dedication. As a member I am a role model for the younger members and a leader in the community. Through 4-H I have found a passion for the agricultural field and plan on taking further education to better myself.

I graduated this June with the class of 2019, and will soon be leaving for college. I am happy to say that I will be attending the Lakeland College Vermilion Campus, where I will be taking their Animal Science Technology program. I will be attending college for the next three years and will learn more about the agricultural field and gain some hands on experience. After I am done at Lakeland College I am hoping to continue my education and take an Agricultural Management degree. Following that I plan to return to the Peace Region and start developing my own herd and working in the agricultural field.

Over the summer I was looking to gain some experience in the agricultural field. As I have a lot of experience in the livestock side of agriculture I was looking for something to do with seed and forage which drew me to the Peace River Forage Association of BC. I was interested in the different forms of work they do from weed control to fertilizers and getting the information out there for other farmers and ranchers. Since starting I have been working with many different people and learning a lot of new things, from the soil itself to its management. I have also enjoyed working on the inter-seeding and soil sampling projects. I am very excited to be working with all those involved in the Peace River Forage Association and working towards better agricultural sustainability in the Peace Region.



Courtney helping Sandra Burton with field monitoring this summer.



Courtney & her 4-H steer, Bandit, a Hereford black angus cross.



Courtney recently competed in the 4-H communication provincials held at Trinity Western University in Langley BC. She is now the 2019 provincial speech champion. Way to go Courtney!



Thank You

Susie Lefferson from Tomslake joins the team working part time for Forage Friendly Enterprises & part time for PRFSA. Thank you Susie for cheerfully taking care of so many of the summer tour logistics & details.



Clay looking on as Ashley describes rotational grazing with her "Gypsy Chicks".

Who Is Improving the Soil More?

by Sandra Burton & Carolyn Derfler

A number of "soil health nerds" got together with Clay and Ashley at Armstrong Acres this summer to try to answer this question, as part of 2 research projects.

We first met Clay and Ashley 3 years ago at a Holistic Management International workshop in Demmitt. They were new to their farm at that time, full of energy and ideas. It was great to see their ideas becoming reality in our visits to their farm this summer.

Ashley had dreamed of having a business that she could manage as a "stay at home Mom" with their young children. Now fully a reality, they have 40 laying hens and 300 meat birds. They designed mobile cages so the birds can be moved regularly. The health of the soil, forages and ultimately the birds have all improved under this system. Now she is trying this rotational grazing with 12 pigs.

Clay had always wanted to raise cattle and was keen to try more intensively managed rotational grazing in the summer and bale grazing in the winter to improve his soil quality. With our soil quality field kit, we saw that Clay's 65 cow/ calf pairs had already dramatically improved the infiltration and the bulk density of the soil.

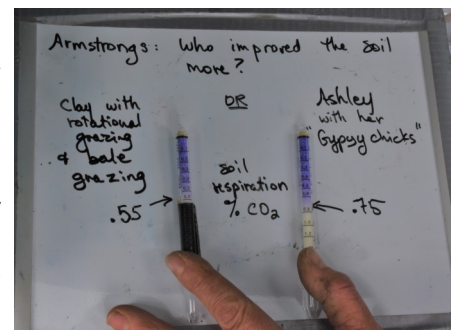
The "soil nerds" came from 2 projects. The first 3 ladies (see photos below) are from PCFB, out of Fairview. They are partnering with Dr. Yamily Zavala, CARA as part of a Alberta Soil Health Benchmark Project. The other 2 ladies that day (authors) are with PRFA of BC, partnering with Dr. Bill McGill, UNBC on a Soil Quality Benchmark Project. It was interesting to compare and better understand our sampling methods. We look forward to collaborating more when our field and lab results are processed and compiled. Then we will truly discover who has improved the soil more!

For more information about these 2 projects contact:
Dianne Westerlund at cara-dw@telus.net or
Sandra Burton at coordinator@peaceforage.bc.ca



Starting point for Armstrong Acres soil (left) compared to after the "Gypsy Chicks" have been pastured on it (right). Please note that improvements by Clay's cattle with summer rotational grazing and winter bale grazing.

Ashley's Gypsy Chicks improved soil respiration more than Clay's cattle with summer rotational grazing & winter bale grazing.



Johanna Murry sampling for bulk density.



Buthaina Al-Maqtari using a penetrometer for compaction.



Courtney Chaykowski measuring infiltration.



Carolyn Derfler measuring infiltration at a poorer site.

Grasslands, Fire & Grazing...Fitting Them All Together

by Jim White

Since the first pastoralist watched his first animal eating, humankind's observations have been confirming that all plants are not created equal – as judged by the grazing patterns of animals. Some plants are more palatable, others are more productive, and they may be grasses, forbs (flowering plants), or shrubs. Animals get fat eating some plants, just maintain themselves on others, while a few plants are actually poisonous and can cause sickness – subtle or dramatic, even ending in death. So plants do vary genetically... a lot, which is a major factor in determining the preference of grazing animals.

Season of use is another major factor that influences animal use. It also affects the impact of grazing on the plants themselves. Many plants are palatable when young... at maturity some species are considerably more palatable than others. And while there is only a slight physiological impact to a plant when it is grazed while dormant, grazing it in the latter part of its rapid growth period usually has a major impact. When a major part of a plant is bitten off the plant is stressed as it uses root reserves to get growth underway again. If that new regrowth is also bitten off, the plant is stressed again, but has used already used some of its root reserves to restart growth the first time. Now it is using more reserves, while it is nearing the end of its available moisture. It therefore may not be able to re-grow, and re-establish those reserves. That results in the plant going into dormancy without strong reserves to restart growth the next spring, resulting in slower and later growth. Inherent palatability, stage of maturity, severity of slope, and distance from drinking water are some of the factors that affect how animals use plants.

Also a key factor in determining where animals choose to graze is the previous experience of the grazing animals. When my father was changing from a steer operation to a cow-calf herd, he turned out some recently purchased cows on a mountainous grassland range on which we had been grazing yearling steers for many years. This range was not fully fenced, but the steers had never found the unfenced sections – even though yearling steers are well known to be restless, long distance wanderers. The gaps were too simply too far away for the steers.

But these old range cows had lived on a rough landscape in an area where water holes were far few and far between. The day after the newly purchased cows were turned out, Dad got an urgent call from a farmer who owned an alfalfa field adjacent to a far corner of our range.

The cows had traveled a couple of steep miles over a high ridge and down the other side to end up in a fence corner where there was no accessible water. The steers had never gone that far. The worried farmer called to warn Dad of a pending disaster. The cows were thirsty and it was a matter of time until they pushed through his fence to get a drink from his sprinklers - probably to die from bloat on the lush green alfalfa. Needless to say horses were hastily loaded and we quickly drove to the problem area to move the cows back to where they could get water safely. These old cows came from a big, dry country, and traveling was simply a way of life – a necessity to survive.

We learned that if these cows knew how to do one thing well, it was to travel. When they arrived on our range they just did what they were used to. It was an important lesson: the background and education of animals is a major factor shaping how they use the range, which is why it is so important to get them started with the right habits when they are introduced to a new range. Domestic or wild grazing animals may both do things a certain way simply because that is what they have learned.

A rancher near Lillooet once obtained a piece of steep, rugged rangeland. I rode through it with him some years later. The level of grazing was light and very widely distributed – it was most impressive. I asked how often he rode, assuming by the look of the range that he was there several times a week. But his reply was, "Oh, maybe every three weeks". I was a bit startled. Uniform grazing on steep terrain, when management was infrequent, made no sense at all. I would have expected pockets of severe grazing between large areas with no grazing use at all. Further questioning pointed to another great lesson. When the rancher had first used this piece of range, he had hired an old man from an adjacent reserve, with an old horse and an old dog, to look after the cows. Right from turnout, the new cows were quietly kept well scattered by the low-key efforts of those three. Years later the old man, the old horse and the old dog were all gone... but their legacy lived on - with the cows grazing lightly over a large area of rough rangeland – all on their own. That pattern had simply become their custom. It did not take high tech tools, nor skillful cowboys on fast horses - just 3 really elderly seniors quietly and slowly guiding where the cattle grazed, and in the process teaching those young cows good habits that would last a lifetime. Light grazing scattered over a large area had become the pattern for these cows... now it was just their normal way of life.

Continued on page 6

Grasslands, Fire & Grazing...continued

by Jim White

Grazing animals are largely taught the patterns that they follow. And a bonus is that an educated adult will also teach her offspring good habits, whether she is a cow or an elk. It is fortunate that we can also use other tools, such as water development, fencing, riding and salting to help shape how cattle grazing is distributed.

Burning can also be an effective tool for sustainability in the grasslands. Where shrub or tree establishment has become excessively dense, fire kills shrubs such as sagebrush, as well as encroaching small Douglas fir or Ponderosa pine. It will encourage re-sprouting of shrubs important to wildlife, such as Saskatoon and rose, resulting in more accessible browse. Burning areas that are being ignored by grazing animals while they overgraze other areas may be a useful tool to encourage animals to spread out their grazing. Bighorn sheep respond enthusiastically to the regrowth following fire, as noted by one biologist who said he could manage wild sheep grazing with a match. So true.

However the use of fire is both an exacting science and a refined skill. Its inappropriate use can lead to catastrophic escapes by those who are casual about observing the factors that control fire intensity. A lot is now known about the combination of fuel type, fuel moisture, humidity, temperature, wind and light intensity that produce desired results... or that lead to a dramatic escape. Spring burns are often safer than fall burns, even though one would assume that winter snows would surely extinguish a fall burn, while a long, hot summer may follow a spring burn. However, soils may be dry in the fall, allowing fire to 'hang over' by smoldering underground in dead roots and coming back to life the next summer - during hot, dry and windy conditions. Therefore spring burns when the soil is moist are the better choice in many circumstances. Developing personnel who are skilled in the use of prescribed fire is always a challenge. People trained in fire suppression develop a different skill set, and may do poorly managing prescribed fire.

It is unusual for fire to actually damage the main plants of a grassland. However, the new growth following a fire is very vulnerable to grazing damage. Without a mixture of old growth, it is very palatable, and there is no stubble line that restricts how low an animal grazes. Regrowth may be bitten off right at the soil surface - which is a very severe grazing impact. A rest from grazing for at least one growing season after a fire is therefore frequently recommended. The rest from spring grazing in a rotation grazing system can be a major benefit to recovery of a burned area, especially if full season long rest of

the pasture is not feasible. That works for cattle - seldom for elk or Bighorn sheep, which aren't much for following plans.

Due to the major increase of palatability following a fire, burning can be a tool to re-distribute wild ungulate use. That can be an asset or a liability - burning can pull animals to little used areas, or conversely if a preferred area burns it can become very hard to limit the use by grazing animals - wild or domestic. Fortunately the increase of palatability following a fire does diminish over time.

All grazing animals need water. They may be able to do without water when there is snow on the ground, but some ranchers say that even then their cattle do better if they have good water - even when eating in the snow. If water is too infrequent, development of any potential sources is a priority to prevent concentrated grazing. Hauling water may even be feasible where it would improve the distribution of grazing use. Sometimes hauled water makes forage available when and where needed to balance a grazing system, for the benefit of all the users of that grassland. Piping water long distances can often be done at a reasonable cost.

Season of use and frequency of cattle grazing are two critical factors that managers can control. It is nearly impossible to maintain, much less improve, the health of B.C. grasslands when grazing during the growing season occurs every year. Some form of rotation grazing is required that combines spring grazing, a season of rest, and fall grazing over a period of several years. Also repeated annual fall or winter grazing works well, and sometimes better fits the needs of the ranch. But if growing season grazing is needed on a grassland, a properly designed rotation of spring or fall use and rest on any given pasture over a sequence of years is necessary to maintain or improve grassland health, and to maximize the volume of grazing that can occur. And it is that greater productivity and increased grazing use are key incentives to making investments in more intensive management; management that will, in most cases also result in habitat improvement for a variety of species.

Our grasslands are a very valuable resource, on which so many of our listed species depend, as well as a source of high quality protein for humans - not to mention striking viewscapes for our mental health. They deserve our careful management.

Reprinted in Forage First Newsletter with permission of the author, Jim White and the publisher of BC Grasslands. Thank you Keith Carroll for suggesting this article.

Test Your Skills

by Courtney Wallace

Courtney Wallace came up with a great game on identifying plants for the summer tour and pasture walks this year. See how well you know your plants and write your answers on the postcard sized game card inserted in this newsletter.

You could win a one year membership to the Peace River Forage Association of BC (or a one year extension on your current paid up membership).



Joey Preston, Bess Legault, Pippa Roots & Keira Nichol testing their skills on the bus during the summer tour.

How to play “Test Your Skills - Courtney’s Plant Identification Game”

Step #1: Read over the identifying features and purpose of each plant.

Step #2: Find the game card inserted in the news letter and start filling in your answers by drawing a line from the letter for each plant in blue to the correct plant name.

Step #3: When your game card is completed please email or mail it to us at either of the following:

Email: coordinator@peaceforage.bc.ca

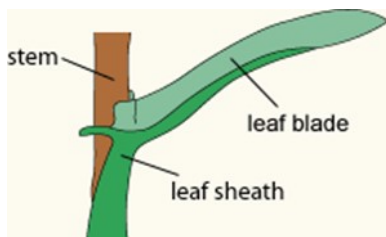
Mail: 3950 Hwy 97

Peace River Regional District, BC
V1G 0J4

All correct game cards will be placed in a draw to win a free one year membership to the Peace River Forage Association of BC.

A. Identifying Features:

1. The sheath is split part way and is green on top and pale green or white on the lower part.
2. Has flat stems and coarsely tufted head.
3. The leaf blade is V-shaped near the base, but flat towards the sharp, pointed tip.



Purpose:

The uses of this plant include pasture, hay, and silage. As well as being highly palatable to all livestock, it is also one of the best forages in northern areas under intensive rotational grazing systems. However, its lack of winter hardiness makes it difficult to maintain in a stand beyond 5 to 7 years in most of the Peace region.

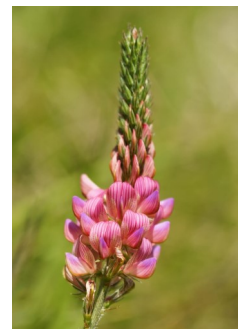
Fun Fact: This plant is adapted to shady and reduced light areas.

Test Your Skills...continued

by Courtney Wallace

B. Identifying Features:

1. Pinkish red flowers at the end of long stalks.
2. One seed per pod.
3. Leaves are compound with 5-14 pairs of oval-shaped leaflets.



Purpose:

This plant is used as hay and pasture for livestock as it is a non-bloating high quality forage.

Fun Fact: This plant has a single leaflet at the tip of the stalk.

C. Identifying Features:

1. Can grow more than 1 m (> 39 in) in height.
2. Has a deep root system.
3. Is a resilient plant in droughts.



Purpose:

This plant is used for hay and pasture to improve livestock energy and performance. Used in teas and supplements, it also improves energy in humans. It provides the most lb/ac and is a high quality forage in the Peace.

Fun Fact: The root system of this plant can stretch more than 9 m (>30 ft).

D. Identifying Features:

1. Is a legume with vigorous creeping roots or rhizomes.
2. Stems are hollow and large, upright when young, and will laydown and grow along the ground.
3. Flowers are pale yellow to white with 15-60 growing in a compact raceme.



Purpose:

This plant has many qualities that make it a viable choice as a non-bloating legume for hay or pasture. This plant can be slow to establish but reseeds itself well.

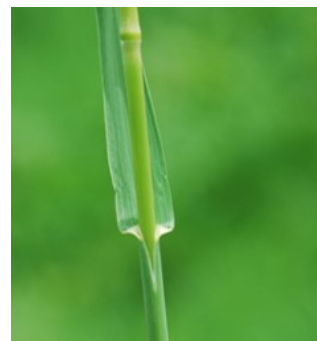
Fun Fact: The seed pods of this plant are bladder shaped.

Test Your Skills...continued

by Courtney Wallace

E. Identifying Features:

1. This is a very leafy plant, that grows 38 - 76 cm (15-30 in) tall.
2. There are no auricles present and it has a round edged ligule.
3. An "M" and "W" shaped leaf construction is usually present on the blade.



Purpose:

The use of this plant is best suited for hay production, but has little regrowth after grazing. This is a high volume producing plant and is often mixed in with alfalfa stands. Due to the size of the seed it can be difficult to get seeded through a metered drill.

Fun Fact: The regrowth of this plant is slow.

F. Identifying Features:

1. This plant is introduced as a long-lived, cold season perennial with short rhizomes.
2. The leaves are hairy, flat, 5-7 mm (0.1-0.2 in) wide, and 20-35 cm (8-14 in) long.
3. This plant has a fibrous root network.



Purpose:

The primary use of this plant in livestock production is for pasture as it is highly palatable to all classes of livestock and wildlife. It has good regrowth after grazing so will grow all season. As a seedling, this plant emerges early and provides ground cover quickly.

G. Identifying Features:

1. This plant is light-green bunchgrass.
2. The blade is 4-12 mm (0.2-0.5 in) wide 7-25 cm (3 -10 in) long, and flat with a sharp pointed tip.
3. The stems are round and 50-100 cm (20-40 in) tall.



Purpose:

The main purpose of this plant is hay and pasture for livestock. This is an early maturing plant and newer varieties have more leaf production that improves hay yields.

Fun Fact: This plant does not so well with continuous grazing.

Courtney's Plant Identification Game...continued

by Courtney Wallace

H. Identifying Features:

1. Plant has deep roots making it more tolerant to traffic.
2. This plant can reach 2 m (78 in) in height when flowering.
3. This plant is a hairless perennial, with erect, unbranched tillers arising from deep underground rhizomes.



Purpose:

This plant is used as hay and pasture for livestock. As a bunch grass it is well suited for grazing conditions and holds its forage value into the fall. This makes it an ideal forage for extending the grazing season, although livestock may prefer other forages.

Fun Fact: This is a cool season plant that grows faster in the spring and fall.

I. Identifying Features:

1. Cool season perennial bunchgrass.
2. Grows 0.3-0.9 m (1-3 ft) tall.
3. The seed heads are flattened vertically, with compact overlapping spikelets.



Purpose:

The main purpose of this plant in livestock systems is for hay and pasture. It provides excellent spring pasture, emerging immediately after the snow melts. This plant is well adapted to extremely dry conditions such as dugout berms. It is well suited for the Peace Region and it is not considered invasive in this region.

J. Identifying Features:

1. Claw or bird foot like seed pods.
2. Bright yellow flowers with brown to purple seed pods.
3. The seeds are very small, dark brown and round.



Purpose:

The primary use of this plant is for pasture and erosion control and it is also a non-bloating legume. It has also been used in some areas for hay production and yields as much as alfalfa.

Pasture Walk & Talk

By Courtney Wallace, Sandra Burton & Bess Legault

On May 14, 2019 **Alexandra Walter Rath** welcomed a few guests from the community to the Red Barn in Doe River for a pasture walk and talk. The area we walked through was pasture to two horses that was sectioned off. Some of her questions included how to reduce alsike clover, what types of herbicides & fertilizers would help with pasture production and what she could do about the low area in the middle of the pen. While going over some of the problems and solutions for Alexandra, we also identified a few different plant species on the property. We discussed the different types of seed she could plant to add more diversity to her forage crops. At the end of the walk and pH tests we returned upstairs to continue our discussions and to look at some soil samples that showed how bale grazing can help the soil. We thank Alexandra for welcoming us, sharing her questions and being open to our suggestions and possible solutions.

Dean Mattson hosted the next pasture walk on June 10, 2019 in the Landry area. While there, we looked at two different fields and discussed Dean's plans. In the first field we noticed there was a lot of wild oats but otherwise it was a good field. Dean's goal for this field was to turn it into half hay, half pasture. He was curious about what he should plant and if he should till it. After discussing his options, we suggested a seed mixture for Dean to plant and some options for tilling and seeding in the fall of 2019. Moving on to the second field, we noticed similar plants growing but a new problem of Canadian thistle and rose bushes. Dean stated that he tilled the field earlier in the year and the thistle came back. After discussing different aspects of the field we suggested the same seed mix as the first field. He was also interested in creating smaller paddocks with rotational grazing to help control the thistle and perhaps the rose bushes. We discussed whether to spray or not, but the group was not in agreement on the cost effectiveness of this. Overall we ended the walk on a good note, having made a plan for both his fields to become better forage stands and having developed a seed mixture to help him reach his goal.



Alexandra Walter Rath of Red Barn Equestrian Center in Doe River hosted us on May 14 to discuss controlling alsike clover & the role of soil pH in stand health.

We tested the soil pH from both a level area & a lower area. Both tests were a bluish color indicating basic soils. This is great for establishing legumes like alfalfa & increasing the availability of soil nutrients.



Dean Mattson hosted his family & friends on June 10 to discuss various rejuvenation options for hayfields and pastures.

Pasture Walk & Talk *continued*

By Courtney Wallace, Sandra Burton & Bess Legault

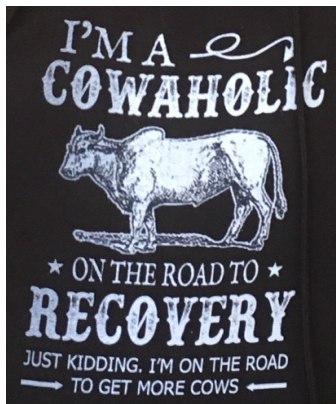
July 22, 2019 was the third Pasture Walk & Talk hosted by **Samantha and Mark Dilworth** of Exceptional Equine in Sunrise Valley. After enjoying empanadas (i.e. Argentina style pizza pops, thank you Richard Kabzems), Courtney tested our knowledge on plant identification. Next Sam toured us through some of their fields. At the first pasture, Sam's question was how to meet the needs of the mixed herd there. Her mares, foals and geldings all came over to join in the conversation of whether or not they should be grazing alfalfa and birdsfoot trefoil. We discussed different pasture management strategies and the role of various legume and grass species in those scenarios. The next field led us to discuss plant vigour, plant nutrients and whether to seed, fertilize or spot spray. Sam was delighted to meet her first baby legume nodule. It was a beautiful summer evening and everyone went away with something new to ponder.



Samantha Dilworth of Exceptional Equine hosted us on July 22 to discuss making a grazing plan for horse pastures (above). Sam meets her first legume nodule (right).



Lorne & Leanne Kelly (above left) near Rose Prairie hosted about 30 people on August 20. Next generation of foragers (above right). Bill Wilson (below) sporting a great hoodie!



The August 20, 2019 Pasture Walk & Talk was graciously hosted by **Lorne and Leanne Kelly** in Rose Prairie. It was a sunny evening at the end of a challenging summer when the Peace River Forage Association of BC and NEATs Northern Co-Hort gathered about 30 local ranchers, farmers, agrologists and families to discuss intensive grazing. Many of the attendees had also attended the Steve Kenyon workshops held in the region in the spring. The 2019 growing season has been cool and wet, providing lush pastures compared to some years. Lorne took us through a pasture recently taken over by their daughter. They have been increasing the intensity of grazing their cattle in some areas and leaving other areas left for comparison. Gazing on the landscape, Lorne reflected on his operation, "we're not quite to a Steve Kenyon level of intensive but we are working with what we have to get there."

Julie Robinson sparked some great conversation amongst ranchers during the walk, around what changes they have been trying on their own landscapes to increase the intensity and impacts of these changes. Michelle Schaffer, who ranches with her husband and young family down the road in Rose Prairie, shared their success at running chicken/turkey pens after their cattle grazing. This has proven to be an effective way to quickly add nitrogen, kick starting soil regeneration in their pastures. This pasture walk (and the others this summer) highlighted that both small and large scale ranchers want to learn more about managed grazing and regenerative agriculture.

Solstice 2019 Summer Tour

by Keith Uloth, Courtney Wallace & Susie Lefferson

On June 20 the Solstice 2019 Collaborative Forage Tour was held in the Beaverlodge - Demmitt area. The field tour this year was unique as there was cross collaboration between multiple associations in the Peace to make the event a great success. The Peace River Forage Association of BC, North Peace Applied Research Association, Peace Country Beef and Forage Association and Peace Region Forage Seed Association all joined forces to help bring information to a larger cross commodity base.

For all four associations, the day started at the AAFC Beaverlodge Research Station. Under a heavy wind and light rain, talks were given by Dr. Nitya Khanal, Jennifer Otani, Greg Semach, Breanne Tidemann and Hiroshi Kubota. Each presenter spoke on the current projects that they are involved with at the research station and also some general information about themselves and their role in forages. Dr. Khanal's morning talk focused on forage plant breeding with the demonstration of using various species of grass and legumes together to increase growth using a symbiotic relationship. Legumes used consisted of common sainfoin (*Onobrychis viciifolia*), alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*) and fodder galega (*Galega orientalis*). Grasses used in combination with legumes consisted of crested wheatgrass (*Agropyron cristatum*) and brome-grass. Jennifer Otani presented information on insect pests and projects that AAFC Beaverlodge is working on in respect to forage seed care. Greg Semach, Breanne Tidemann and Hiroshi Kubota presented on their project; understanding how the use of harvest chaff can help limit the amount of weed growth instead of using herbicides to control excess weeds.

From the Beaverlodge Research Station, participants were transported via bus to Fosters Seed & Feed/ Agri-World where lunch was catered and sponsored by Fosters. While there, groups from all associations were divided up and shown around Agri-World, the seed cleaning plant and the seed quality testing lab.

After lunch the seed production group and PRFSA members, headed back to Beaverlodge to hear talks given by Dr. Nitya Khanal, Dr. Bruce Coulman and Calvin Yoder at test plots. Dr. Khanal talked about the use of growth regulators on several forage crops and tour members got to check out the test plots to see for themselves.

Dr. Bruce Coulman gave a nice talk on the history of forage plant breeding and how advancements have progressed in aiding producers to grow forage crops. Dr. Coleman travelled all the way from Saskatoon where before retiring he worked for many years as a plant breeder in forage crops for Agriculture Agri-Food Canada and the University of Saskatchewan.

Calvin Yoder, who is a forage seed crop agrologist with Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, focused on the use of herbicides in forage crops. He works extensively with the PRFSA on developing advancements in herbicide and growth regulator use for forage seed crops. At the Beaverlodge Research Farm some field test plots are being used to determine the use of existing herbicides on new forage seed crops. Unfortunately, both his talk and Dr. Khanal's growth regulator talk were cut short due to weather conditions.



Dr. Bruce Coulman, Saskatoon & Dr. Nitya Khanal, Beaverlodge.



Fescue growers, Asenath & Don Herbison & Arthur Hadland, were intrigued with Fosters' seed quality & seed germination testing.



"This could be our brome-grass for sale!" Nora Paulovich, NPARA.

Solstice 2019 Summer Tour...continued

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For the livestock group, the afternoon started at Kendel & Lexi Toews, where they run a innovative cattle operation. Kendel started his own beef herd at the age of 17 and has been expanding his knowledge ever since. He has been developing a cattle handling system so one person is able to sort on their own. He has also been building moveable posts to allow for easy grazing management. We walked through his barn and saw his calving pens and panels that help mothers bond with their calves. We then went out to the pasture where he had recently seeded and took a look at his watering system. Overall everyone seemed interested in their impressive cattle handling and watering systems. The Toews family dream of owning a sustainable and progressive cattle operation where they can practice good stewardship.



Kendel, Lexi & their two sons
Colson and Briar.



Clay & Ashley with their two
kids.

We then loaded up the bus and headed out to Armstrong Acres. This operation is owned by Clay and Ashley Armstrong. As first generation farmers they run a mixed livestock operation with cattle, pigs and poultry. They found it difficult to sell their meats at local farmers markets, especially with two young children along, so turned to social media. Here they found it worked well because the people who contacted them were truly interested in what they had to offer and did not mind paying the higher prices for their pasture raised meats. As we walked around the farm we were able to see their meat chickens and laying hens, their cattle and a few of the many fields they graze in and finally their pigs. They purchase the pigs and meat birds when they are young and raise them until they are ready to be butchered and sold. As for the laying hens and the cattle, they produce offspring and stay on the farm till it is time to go. Clay and Ashly currently manage their land and animals holistically and utilize intensive rotational grazing methods for all of their animals. Their goals are to improve the land and animals by focusing on soil health and low stress handling.

Next it was time to head over to the Demmitt Hall for one more presentation where we met Jerry Kitt, the last host. Sadly due to the weather, we were unable to go to his farm so Jerry brought a slideshow for everyone to watch. First Nature Farms, located near Goodfare, has been certified organic for the past 30 years and uses holistic farming practices to guide its management. The farm operates year round and raises a variety of stock; Berkshire pigs, bison, Galloway cows, free range chickens and turkeys. His pasture operation is moveable from the pig pens to the turkey/ chicken pens. Jerry believes a good farm starts with good soil and everything he does is to better the soil.



Jerry Kitt
owner of
First Nature
Farms,
posing with
one of his
hogs.

Table displays were available to peruse while we were at the Demmitt Hall. Courtney Wallace's table demonstrated different types of forages found as seedlings, seeds and mature plants. Sandra Burton's table showed the different ways that Clay and Ashley Armstrong are improving their soil health with their management. To end the day, we enjoyed a wonderful dinner catered by Seppis. We thanked all of our hosts and also our sponsors; South Peace Grain, Fosters Feed & Seed, Farm Credit Canada, Dawson Creek Co-op, Prairie Coast Equipment & Janko Farms. Overall everyone took something away from this year's Solstice Summer Tour and are looking forward to next year.

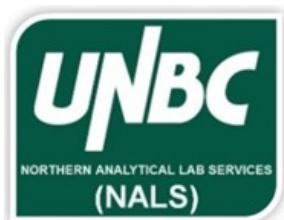
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The summer events were partially sponsored by two R & D projects: Forage Starting Over Do's & Don'ts & Improving Productivity & Profitability of Forages. These projects are funded in part by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Government of British Columbia through the Agri-Food Futures Fund.

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Peace River Agriculture Development Fund (PRAD).

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BC AGRI Strategic Outreach Initiative / Canadian Agricultural Partnership.

Upcoming Forage Events in BC & AB

Pasture Walk & Talk & AGM of PRFA of BC In the McLeod Groundbirch area **Saturday, Sept 21, 2019**

2 pm Pasture Walk & Talk

Meet & Return to McLeod School/ Community Hall

5 pm Hot Beef Supper

Catered by Classic Cuisine

6:00 pm AGM & Updates

Please pre-register at prfaevents@gmail.com
or by texting or calling 250 262 7576

Steve Kenyon Event

We are looking for your input for a future event with Steve Kenyon. Options include:

2-Day: Joel Salatin and Steve Kenyon co-instructing the Stockman Grass Farmer Business School;

3-Day: Year-Round Grazing Systems; or

2-Day: Profitable Pastures.

Please email your preferences to Bess Legault at co-hort@neat.ca

Bess is the Northern Co-Hort Coordinator, run by the Northern Environmental Action Team. She is working with local producers and consumers to support a sustainable localized food system in the Peace Region. For more info, please visit www.neat.ca



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FOR THE AGENDA & REGISTRATION INFORMATION VISIT:

www.absoilgrazing.com



**To enquire about group
travel options with other
PRFA members call:**

Sandra Burton at 250 789 6885
Julie Robinson at 250 262 7576.

**Space is often limited!
Please pre-register.**

by calling one of the phone
numbers above or emailing:
prfaevents@gmail.com

OR to pre-register directly go to
www.absoilgrazing.com