

FORAGE FIRST

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Keeping Warm & Resilient



Finding warmth on cold frosty days! (Photo credits: Carolyn Derfler, left & Ashley Armstrong, middle & right)

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2019/2020 Membership Renewal Notice

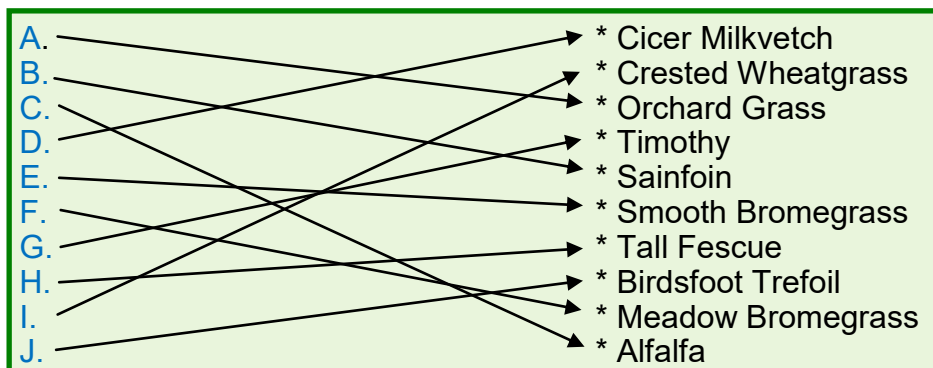
Friends of Forage

Our Plant ID Contest Winner

Answers to "Test Your Skills - Courtney's Plant Identification Game" found in the Fall 2019 Forage First Newsletter.

Congratulations to our contest winner: Shirley Smithard

Thank you to those that entered: Curt Gesch, Barrie Sones, Art Seidl, Arthur Hadland, Bruce Zunti, Dean Anderson, Terry Marriott, Warren & Cathy Fowler & Shirley Smithard.



Josh & Rachelle at Kinney Lake.

Josh Stobbe is one of three new directors that were elected to the Peace River Forage Association Board of Directors at the AGM in September 2019. Josh and his wife Rachelle live in the Goodlow area, east of Fort St. John, and they are excited to be expecting their first child in March.

Josh and Rachelle are part owner-operators in a family ranch along with Rachelle's parents, Scott and Kathy Wilms. Scott and Kathy have been ranching for thirty years and have lived in the Goodlow area for over twenty years. Together they have about 300 cow/calf pairs. They've been experimenting with cover crops for the last seven years and began cell grazing last year. "We are doing these practices in the hope that we can improve our moisture cycle and increase the quantity and quality of the forage available." On a ranch basis, they graze various owned and rented pastures, wintering the cows and backgrounding the calves. They make both hay and green feed.

New Director Profile: Josh Stobbe

By Josh Stobbe & Carolyn Derfler

Josh and Rachelle hope to be ranching for many years to come, raising healthy, happy cows. In their spare time they take part in many of the activities afforded by the ranching lifestyle, raising horses, spending time in the bush hunting, fishing, and trapping, and are involved in the Goodlow Church. On the side Josh works in the oil patch reclaiming leases and doing vegetation management and restoration. Rachelle plays in her family's band (The Wilms) and teaches music lessons on the piano, fiddle and banjo.

Josh found out about the PRFA through his father in law, Scott, who has been a member for many years. Josh became interested in the PRFA after attending several forage events learning about soil health, herd management, productivity and profitability. He was also sponsored to take part in a soil health workshop hosted by the North Peace Applied Research Association (NPARA). He realizes that ranching/farming is not a high profit industry and therefore is interested in the sustainability of ranching, especially as it applies to forage.

Josh is looking forward to his term on the PRFA board. He is interested in learning more about how to sequester carbon by managing soil health rather than just letting it become degraded by overuse.

He would like to explore ways producers can increase grazing days in the Peace rather than using stored hay as frost free days are very limited here and this will help to decrease the amount of inputs required by an operation.

One of Josh's favorite authors right now is Allan Savory. "I enjoy the different approach that Allan takes to farming. Rather than just doing what has always been done, he takes a step back and asks why. This is not saying what we are doing is wrong, but that at least we should be aware of why we do what we do." Josh likes the idea of holistic ranching and understanding how the many connected facets of nature interact to enable the producer to raise healthy forage and livestock.



Stobbes checking their herds on pasture.

New Director Profile: Bess Legault

By Bess Legault & Carolyn Derfler

Bess Legault is one of three new directors that were elected to the Peace River Forage Association Board of Directors during the September 2019 AGM.

Bess and her partner Mike moved to the Peace Region 7 years ago. Originally from Ontario, they came to BC after university as Bess heard that BC was the 'holy grail' of food security. Bess had obtained a Bachelor of Science in Biology and Environmental Studies while focussing on building community around food. For awhile they worked on organic farms in southern BC for free in return for fruit and a place to live. Mike was then offered a job as a pipefitter in the Peace area. So Bess moved here shortly after and began working for Roy Northern in Fort St. John.

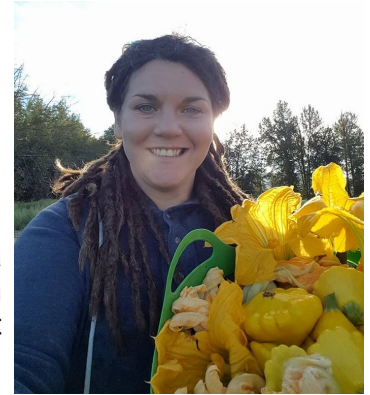
During her 4 years of employment with Roy Northern, the company supported continuing education so Bess was given the opportunity to attend many PRFA events and workshops. She was amazed at the amount of knowledge on soil management that was shared at these events and loved the connection between science, professionals and farmers all trying to work together for the betterment of the soil.

Bess and Mike are the owners and operators of their vegetable farm, Hip Peace Produce which they started in 2015. The farm is located at Bear Flats, mile 54 on Highway 29, and unfortunately is in the future flood zone of the Site C Dam. They chose this area to show people the richness of the soil and the uniqueness of the micro climate in this valley. They wanted to demonstrate that cantaloupes can grow in the Peace River Valley (which is closer to Alaska than it is to Vancouver). They sell their produce on the farm, at local markets in Fort St John as well as supplying weekly vegetable boxes during the summer months.



Bess and Mike checking on their squash just before the birth of their little girl Maggie.

Bess Legault with a tub full of squash from her garden at Bear Flats.

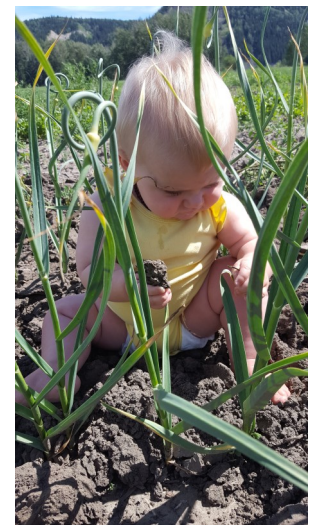


Bess currently works for NEAT, Northern Environmental Action Team, in Fort St. John. Through NEAT she coordinates a farmers' support program called the Northern Co-Hort. The Co-Hort is dedicated to engaging regional agriculture and horticulture producers to determine what supports are needed to generate a sustainable community of land users in the north.

Through this program Bess has discovered that there are 1600 farmers in the Peace Region. She is attempting to connect with producers with the desire to meet consumers' needs for local food to be grown, processed, stored and consumed sustainably.



Bess has planted over 100 varieties of vegetables, fruits and herbs as can be seen in the variety of carrots (*above*). Little Maggie checking out the soil quality amongst the vegetables (*right*).



Bess is excited to be part of the PRFA and see the bigger picture of what their goals are and what they are trying to accomplish. She wants to support them and the meaningful extension that they are reflecting already. She would also like to explore having producers quantify the soil carbon storage and where this might take the industry in the future.

New Director Profile: Shaun Grant

by Shaun Grant & Sandra Burton

I was always a farm kid and while I was growing up we always had livestock, and I owned a flock of sheep as a teenager. My parents bought land in Tomslake in 1980, and in 1993 they started raising buffalo. I had been working off farm but after my accident in 1995, I joined the buffalo ranching operation. We had an integrated system from cow/ calf through to finishing and shopping fresh meat monthly to European markets. During that time, I served as Chairman of the Canadian Bison Marketing Council, which was responsible for national brand development at the time.



Shaun & his father, Burnem Grant, hosted a large livestock and forage tour group in June, 2011.

In 2005 I start working at the South Peace seed cleaning plant as Jarvis Taylor's "second man" or seed cleaning operator. In 2011, I became the Manager and in the last 9 years we have embarked on aggressive diversification to increase our product and service offerings. For example, we have a growing feed and mineral business. We are now marketing Peace Region grain directly to distillers (20 regulars and 30 more additional customer). SPG also retails significant amounts of cereal, pulse and forage seed (both annual and perennial).

My dad was always involved but I think my first memory of the Peace River Forage Association was you (Sandra) and Tom Pittman getting me down on my hands and knees to dig up our alfalfa roots in our field. I have become more involved in the last years, especially supporting events, the forage seeding webtool and the Forage First newsletters. I am passionate about agriculture and forage and this organization shares so much information to help ranchers apply the research to our situations and help sort out the information relevant to our geographic location.



Shaun hosting tour at SPG.

I come from a long family history of meat cutting. I think this helped give me better insight into what makes a good product, as well as the work and cost that goes into producing quality meat cuts.

In 1997, I tried more intensively managed grazing for the first time. Horst David took the time to mentor me, set up the fencing and waterers and animal moves. Under his guidance I became a custom grazier.

In 2003 we became victims of BSE and a loss of our slaughter facility as a result of a fire. Those two events changed the course of my life.



Art Seidl, Jim Little & Allan Gifford discussing seed choices with Shaun Grant, SPG during tour in June, 2016.

Two of my goals while on the PRFA Board of Directors are:

1. to build a better communications network
2. to secure long term stable funding for the Forage Association.

Watch for a profile of our new president, Neil Ward, in the next Forage First issue.

Remembering Horst David

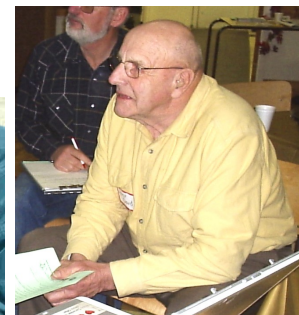
by Rob Davidson, Glenn Hogberg, Patt & John Kendrew

"Horst David passed away in Edmonton on January 1, 2020 after succumbing to organ failure. He was predeceased by Laurel, his loving wife of 61 years. Horst arrived with his parents and sister, Traudy in Tomslake, BC in 1939 as part of the Sudeten German refugee contingent. Life was difficult in the early days, but the Sudeten Community helped each other and thrived. Horst had a variety of work over the years including his father's sawmill, Borek Construction, Friesen's Trucking, oilfield trucking with Tompkins, chartered bus service and farming with his brother Fred. Horst was an active member of the Farmers Union and the Tomslake Community. He was instrumental in starting the Tomslake Junior Soccer program which ultimately led to the formation of the South Peace Soccer League for youth players and Horst being known as 'Mr. Soccer'. Horst was active in floor curling in Tomslake, Dawson Creek and Edmonton. He attended many tournaments with his curling teams! When he moved to Edmonton, he started floor curling for the residents at the Touchmark Retirement Home. He was recognized as the 'Athlete of the Week' and was also featured in the Edmonton Sun for getting older athletes participating in floor curling."

Excerpts from Obituaries in Edmonton Journal.

"Horst David was truly a pioneer and he definitely influenced a lot of people. I think in part because here was this older, wiser guy so enthused about these new fangled ideas about rotational grazing. All kinds of people watched what Horst was doing. He had the first solar waterer and the first electric fencing in the Peace. I first met Horst during PROPA's (Peace River Organic Producers Association) "Chow Down Project". Instead of clover plowdown we decided to try grazing the clover. When he first took on custom grazing of the demonstration plots, he told Bruce Kutschker and I not to go too far in case we were needed. But he really took to this new role as the first custom grazer and became passionate about sharing his experiences with others."

Rob Davidson, Creston



"It was the summer on 1999 and I was planning to do some fencing on a quarter section where the aspen had been harvested for sale to LP. I was interested in pursuing some electric fencing. I had only barb wire fenced to that point. I was in need of some direction and help on electric fencing techniques and pasture design. I talked to Horst David, who at the time was one of the first custom graziers in the South Peace area who used rotational grazing and electric fence. Horst was more than happy and willing to share what he had learned. Even back then Horst was an older guy, but he had the enthusiasm and interest of a young man. He had suggestions for post spacing, wire height, simple bracing and paddock design. He said I should use 2 wires around the perimeter, not because I needed the extra wire, but it would make me feel better and give me the confidence that the electric fence would work. He was right. He had good ideas on watering systems, stocking density, energizer selection and the need for good grounding. Most of the fencing I have done since then has been electric, still incorporating a lot of the same ideas we talked about back then. I will always be thankful to Horst for his willingness to give me the guidance that I needed. Horst was the local guy that helped pave the way using electric fencing for intensive grazing, making it easier for many of us that followed in his footsteps."

Glenn Hogberg, Progress

"Horst David was a local pioneer of our Forage Association and of managed intensive grazing. He was always willing to take time to talk about, as well as, demonstrate and teach from his fount of knowledge. He enthusiastically shared his knowledge of forages, land and herd management. He was one of the first in the area to show the advantages of electric fencing (high tensile and temporary), beyond barbed wire. He experimented with a variety of fixed and temporary posts, as well as different temporary fencing supplies. He will be remembered for his knowledge, wisdom and as a friend to all of us whom he mentored. He will also be remembered for his eager community commitment, beyond the Forage Association."

Patt & John Kendrew, Pouce Coupe

Horst David Pioneer of Successful Grazier Innovations

by Ernie Nimitz

Pretty well any region in Western Canada has a great story about grazing management, cattle ranches and conservation. Some of the most well known areas such as the Foothills of the Alberta Rockies have mythology mixed up with historical and practical grazing-cattle-conservation management to a very high degree. A few people have even suggested the ranchers-graziers in the Alberta Rocky Foothills between the Bow River and Montana border are the most successful graziers and conservationists in the entirety of North America! If you move further north to around 56 latitude and west of the 120th parallel you find the BC Peace River Country, a relatively newly settled farming and ranching area (1920's – 1930's) originally identified as the Peace River Block. Like any homestead area it took a lot of hard work, a minimum of cash and generations to turn the various districts into productive agricultural land. Success was slow to come but the large grain and hay production and good field crop yields – became well known and publicized by the original pioneers and brought more to try their hand at homestead type agriculture in the land of long summer daylight and plentiful moisture.

The 1980's saw available a plethora of information regarding sustainable ranching techniques involving ecosystem, management and improvement involving grazing livestock, electric fencing, solar livestock watering systems and high density of livestock for short durations then rapid movements through a series of many pastures. All of this was provided as a smorgasbord during winter seminars and summer field trips to interested ranchers and other forage enthusiasts in Alberta and British Columbia. Most of this info came via Allan Savory, Wildlife Biologist from Rhodesia, Africa (and recently arrived resident of Albuquerque) who had studied the Big Game migrations extensively in Africa and reckoned beef cattle could be managed somewhat similarly in North America to achieve ecological success plus profit. Bud Williams of California and Lloydminster added to the buffet and provided civilized and more profitable methodology for handling sheep and cattle herds in the late 20th century. As well the work of the original rotational grazer, Andre Voisin of France, was reintroduced into the Grazing and ecology smorg.

By the early 1990's there was indeed a lot of interest in Holistic Management of Resources and ecological sustainability of ranch operations including better overall forage production first and foremost. To some people intensive grazing management was the most exciting (and profitable) concept in Western Canada Agriculture at that time. In 1992 the Peace River Forage Association of British Columbia was formed to promote the exchange of state of the art information amongst its producer members and forage enthusiasts regarding good forage management, better livestock production and the favorable economics thereby resulting.

One of the original members in this forage movement was Horst David of Tomslake. During its first 10 years of existence the PRFA of BC introduced a great deal of leading edge forage technology to the North East BC region. Horst was a leader in the Association and he led by doing. He was an early adopter of these successful grazer practices. Many in the Tomslake - Dawson Creek areas view Horst as the pioneer of profitable forage production and utilization techniques with livestock including: low stress cattle handling, intensive rotational grazing, off site solar watering systems, portable electric fencing and custom cattle grazing. Horst was very good at sharing the information he gained from his grazer activities with the PFRA membership. As one of about 12 – 15 original dedicated members of the Association Horst was directly responsible for the PFRA of BC being named the Environment Stewardship Award winner by the BC Cattlemen's Association in 1999, a high honor indeed (*photo below from left to right: Ernie Nimitz, Glenn Hogberg & Horst David*).



Pasture Walk & AGM

By Lori Vickers & Sandra Burton

Thanks to everyone who was able to join the fall equinox pasture walk and PRFA of BC AGM on September 21, 2019. The pasture walk was hosted at Fallen Timber Farm by Chet and Jamie Jans. Fallen Timber Farm is a Registered Simmental ranch located in Groundbirch. It was a lovely fall day for a pasture walk! Unfortunately, due to the lack of consistent harvest weather this summer, many members were taking advantage of the nice weather window to finish putting up hay.

The first stop was to a relatively new pasture, that had been recently cleared of trees. One section was cleared in the dead of winter and the other in the spring. There was a noticeable difference in the ground. The pasture opened up in the winter months seemed to produce a more uniform, flat field, while the spring opened pasture had rougher ground.

This harvest season was a wet one! Several forage producers in the region wrapped bales this year to manage high moisture in their hay at harvest time. Chet and Jamie have been making baleage on their farm for quite some time. Baleage is partially dried forage and is usually baled at moisture of 45-55% and then wrapped in layers of plastic within 12-24 hours of baling. One advantage of baleage is an extend harvest window and fewer harvest delays due to weather. However, one disadvantage is plastic maintenance to repair holes from the environmental or wildlife to preserve forage quality. Producing baleage requires wrapping equipment. During the pasture walk, PRFA arranged to have several wrappers on site so members could compare the different wrappers available in the region.

The next field we toured as an oat stand .that has been a constant challenge for Chet and Jamie. It is characterized by having poor soil quality, poor moistures and wildlife pressure. Interestingly, we learnt that Groundbirch received its name from the plant, a shrub sized species of Birch, less than 2 m tall, that is known for growing on moist to wet soils, often with peaty surfaces and acidity.

We wrapped up the pasture walk by visiting the Simmental herd. The low pressure cattle handling philosophy implemented by the Jans and their meticulous selection of cattle for temperament were evident as the group walked amongst the docile herd.

Following the pasture walk, the group headed to the McLeod School for a hot supper catered by Classic Cuisine, followed by the AGM. Welcome to new directors Josh Stobbe, Shaun Grant & Bess Legault!



Chet Jans showing us their docile Simmental herd as part of our pasture walk through Fallen Timber Farm.



Chet was disappointed by the oat stand in the back field where the soil was poorer & more variable.



At this stop, forage members discussed baleage wrapping, hay moisture, feed quality & wildlife issues.

A big thank you to our directors whose terms were up: Fred Schneider, Dave Armstrong and Dale Fredrickson.

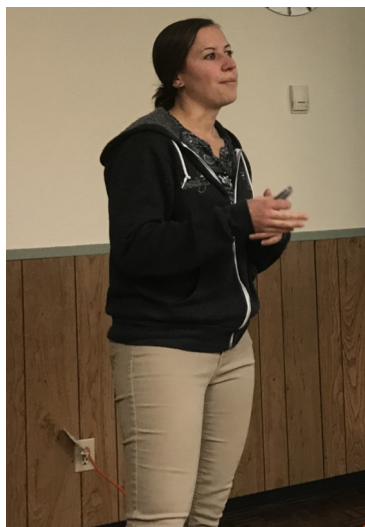
Intensive Grazing Workshops With Steve Kenyon

By Bess Legault

NEATs Northern Co-Hort was pleased to collaborate with the Peace River Forage Association of BC to offer two days of workshops on Building Biology with Steve Kenyon on December 4 in Dawson Creek and December 5 in Fort St John. Over 30 folks, primarily ranchers came out to expand their knowledge and learn about Building Biology in their soil to promote a healthy pasture and healthy herd/flock.



Steve Kenyon, Grazier



Dr. Carmen Schneider,
Veterinarian, DC Vet Clinic

Collaborating with the PRFA brought additional value to Steve's April 2019 workshops through their experience in providing hands on activities such as featuring Bill Wilson at both workshops with his favorite electric fencing equipment. The shift to handling fencing provided the space for a great discussion between producers about their experiences developing their fencing systems and what products/designs work best in which situations.

Steve's philosophy for building biology is all based on promoting soil health and living biology which leaves no room for chemical/medical applications to manage herd health. Steve reminded everyone of the importance of genetics in herd selection and how by using medical treatments on our herds we have eliminated the ability to see genetic advantages such as pest resistance within individual animals that can be selected for.



Bill Wilson, Grazier

Dr. Carmen Schneider was also featured at the December workshops, sharing her clinical perspective of the current use of pesticides in herd health management. Although removing anything with an "icide" in its name from your herd, land and operation sounds simple, Dr. Schneider warned producers that the risk of transitioning quickly (or 'cold turkey') away from applications that have been relied on could be devastating to herd health and a ranchers gross profit margin.

I am not a rancher but I am a biologist and vegetable producer who understands these beautiful concepts of supporting life in our soils to capture sunlight which it turn supports our production and profit. What inspires me is the number of ranchers in the Peace Region who have been adopting natural regenerative management practices for decades, developing their own philosophies and sharing their success stories of seeing cow birds return or noticing that when their herds have access to spruce trees they don't see lice on them. One thing I have learned is that there is always something we have not thought about and there is so much experience and expertise in this region!



Bill Wilson's hands on approach stimulates good discussion of fencing & grazing with group in Dawson Creek.



Julie Robinson leading discussion with group in FSJ.

Canadian Forage & Grasslands Conference

by Bill Wilson & Julie Robinson

In Nov 2019 Bill Wilson and Julie Robinson travelled to Moncton to take in the 10th Annual Canadian Forage and Grassland Assoc. Conference with an Eastern Canadian Forage Production School emphasis. Over 100 people attended the 3 day conference with a mix of producers, researchers, extension people, agriculture retail and media. The highlight of the week was a tour with researchers and extension experts from across Canada.



Left to Right: Dr. Nitya Khanal AAFC Beaverlodge AB, John Duynisveld AAFC Kentville NS, Christine O'Reilly Ontario Forage & Grazing Specialist, Bill Wilson Rancher AB, Dr. Mike Schellenberg AAFC Swift Current, Julie Robinson Rancher AB, Glenn Friesen Manitoba Ag, Kathleen Glover AAFC Kentville, Bill Houston AAFC Saskatoon, Darren Bruhjell AAFC Edmonton, Dr. Yousef Papadopoulos AAFC Kentville. *Photo Credit Dr. Yousef Papadopoulos.*

A great story we heard was from Dr. Yousef Papadopoulos about the new Trueman alfalfa variety. This is a branch rooted alfalfa cultivar that is tolerant to both drought and excessive moisture. It is now available in Canada through Quality Seeds in Ontario. It was very interesting to see the dyke land where the variety selection was made. It improved our understanding of the wet and freezing conditions this variety had been through in the development process. It was also a great opportunity to talk with Yousef and his wife Kathleen about other varieties they have been instrumental in developing including **AC Caribou** alfalfa, sold by Brett Young. It is very well suited to production regimes that require superior winter hardiness and superior yield and regrowth characteristics. **AC Caribou** is well suited to mixtures with adapted grasses such as meadow brome grass. (For more info read the *Canadian Cattlemen's* Oct 22, 2019 article by Trudy Kelly Forsythe.)

An interesting discussion we had was about **AC Bruce** birdsfoot trefoil sold by Interlake Forage Seed, Manitoba. This cultivar has been selected for vigorous seedling growth characteristics and for superior winter hardiness over previous North American cultivars. It has out yielded **Leo** by 5-13% in trials across Canada. When we shared with them that in plots over last 3 years in the Peace, AC Bruce out performed other varieties in emergence and establishment, Kathleen chuckled saying, "I hope so that is what we bred it to do!"

Another interesting conversation came up with Dr. Mike Schellenberg around **Yellowhead** alfalfa and **Anik** alfalfa, two yellow blossom varieties. We asked why Yellowhead always seemed a little more fragile and spindlier than Anik in our trials. We also weren't sure if they were different names for the same cultivar as we had been led to believe over the years. Mike clarified immediately saying, Yellowhead was bred as a grazing tolerant variety, which included characteristics like fine stems and slow regrowth, so livestock did not target its regrowth in the fall. It was very educational to chat with these scientists as the depth of their knowledge and often long history with Canadian plant breeding made them a wealth of information.



Dr Yousef Papadopoulos, AAFC, Kentville, Nova Scotia & Trueman Alfalfa. *Photo Credit AAFC*

An interesting discussion with Darren Bruhjell and Bill Houston was related to tall fescue. We were sharing how we didn't see a lot of value in adding tall fescue to our mixes as cows often seemed to avoid it or eat it last. Darren asked if we were talking about old or new soft leafed varieties. We had no idea what he was talking about. It turns out there are some new (i.e. 20 yr old) varieties of soft leafed, endophyte free tall fescue a person should be including in mixes.

In future, in our plots we may try Brett Young's **Cowgirl** or Barenbrug's **BarOptima** instead of varieties like **Courtenay** and **Kokanee**, to name a few.



Soft leafed vs older tall fescues.

Canadian Forage & Grasslands Conference...continued

by Bill Wilson & Julie Robinson

All in all there were some great conversations about forages and production. The last thing to leave people with is if they are seeding new varieties the scientists emphasize that much has happened in the last 40 years in plant breeding, disease tolerance, and production wise. So try some of the newer certified varieties to take advantage of the new genetics. It was great time spent with the researchers and they value the conversations with producers about production, some of them mentioning that is why they attend conferences like this is hear from the forage industry and producers.

Western Canadian Soil Health & Grazing Conference

Rob Larson: The Soil Health & Grazing Conference in Edmonton blew me away. It is hard to summarize 2 days of speakers but here are some of the comments I remember most.

I was surprised to hear about cash and grain farmers incorporating both cover crops and cattle grazing into their rotations. They had realized the value of cattle for their land enough to have cooperative agreements with their neighbours. We heard from Brendan Rockay (Palouse Valley, Colorado) how with this move, he had been able to stop using pesticides, herbicides and fertilizer. We heard from a farmer in Saskatchewan who improves his soil by intercropping cover crops into his cereal crops and by using implemented controlled traffic farming practices. Harold Perry from Taber uses cover crops and green manuring in his rotation to improve his cash crops of potatoes, peas and sunflowers.

From Dr. Allen Williams, a respected grazer, I learned that a cow's saliva is good for the soil. As a cow takes a bite of grass, the micro organisms in her saliva stimulate the micro organisms on the end of the grass, which in turn stimulates activity of the microbes in the soil.

Another memorable comment for me was from Dr. Duane Beck from the Dakota Lakes Research Farm. He told us "Tillage is to agriculture as fracking is to petroleum. Both increase the speed and extent that resources can be extracted from an ecosystem and both leave the resource depleted. This recognition has led to all the conservation farming, no-till and zero till that has become more widespread."

Dr. Joel Williams, a Plant & Soil Health Educator from Toronto talked about roots and shoots. We think that the roots are about getting nutrients to the plant shoots, but they have great importance to the soil. Roots provide protection against soil erosion and improve soil health.

Thank you to all the funding partners of the project "Improving Productivity & Profitability of Forages" that provided partial support for these delegates to attend these conferences.

Shaun Grant: This past December I attended the Soil Health Conference in Edmonton. This is the 2nd edition of the conference where they combined it with grazing as well. There was an incredible line up of speakers and panelists from all over North America. Participants heard from a variety of soil scientists, plant breeders, animal scientists, geneticists, researchers and innovative producers over the 3 days.

Sustainable agriculture has now become regenerative agriculture; Intensive management grazing has now become adaptive management grazing. The central goal is soil improvement (as a means to profitability), not only from a soil component basis, but how can we begin the process. There were many discussions on the carbon component of soil, the water infiltration ability of soil, the nutrient component of soil and the biological aspect of soil. Many of the speakers were able to describe what a healthy soil constitutes and what they have done, or had seen others do to improve their soils. Words like aggregation, mycorrhizal fungi, beneficial nematodes, exudates, humic acid and many others have now become commonplace when referencing soil.

From an agronomic perspective, there were many opinions on how to achieve healthy soil but most people agreed on a few key points:

- ◇ Disturb the soil as little as possible. Soil disturbance has a negative effect on soil fungi and bacterial populations.
- ◇ Keep a living root in the soil as long as possible. Plant roots to feed microbes in the soil.
- ◇ Use as much plant diversity as possible. This helps with disease and weed suppression, nutrient cycling and a multitude of other processes.
- ◇ Livestock is the key to soil health. Using livestock accelerates the rate of soil creation and improved health, but only if adaptively managed.

I have only touched on a few topics in this article. Regenerative agriculture or adaptive management grazing or whatever label you want to put on these things is gaining momentum and as farmers and ranchers become less and less profitable, my sense is that we will turn more to nature for solutions. I would urge all members to check out www.absoilgrazing.com

Reflections on 2019 Soil Health Meetings

By Julie Robinson

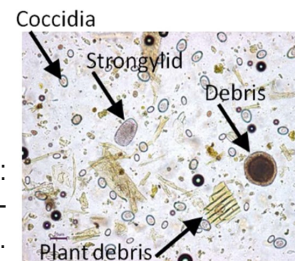
As producers attending many conferences and meetings, my husband and I always ask ourselves "what is the ACTIONABLE ITEM from this?" Increasingly we have been hearing about soil health & its importance in healthy sustainable forage production. This last year we have been challenging ourselves to think about pest management in our livestock and how that management may impact our soil health. Two years ago, we noticed a reduction in the effectiveness of our lice control in January across all our herd groups. We had been just doing Ivomec pour-on in the fall in November at preg checking time over the past few years. Then in January 2018 we saw almost no control. Now our deficiency was that we didn't look to see if we in fact had lice sucking or chewing, or shedding cows.

All we saw was some animals in the herd rubbing themselves bald and everyone was itchy. As usual when the problem occurred, I didn't even know enough, to know I didn't know.

As we heard speakers talk about the potential impact of macrocyclic-lactone, ivermectin, (eg. Ivomec) on the soil two things popped into my mind:

1. Why do we use generalist insecticide (that treat both lice and internal parasites) on the cows?
2. Do we have an internal parasite issue in our herd? If so, is there any chance there might be reduced effectiveness in our treatment of internal parasites?

Long story short: Glenn Hogberg got me thinking about targeted control for lice issues and helping me understand how utilizing pyrethroid-based (Boss) pour-ons that spread over the body via skin oil.



Source:
USDA Para-
site Control.

They have different active ingredients that help reduce parasite resistance in our herd. The second piece to the puzzle was filled in when I learned that we could do fecal egg counts ourselves. So for less than \$400 we got set up to start monitoring our internal parasites. This is a long road with lots of learning to come, but we feel we are on the first steps of better understanding what our herd health issues are and how they relate to healthy soils!

As a side note: it was interesting to learn the Ivermectin (i.e. active ingredient in Ivomec) was derived from the soil in Japan, an existing microorganism that was very effective against nematodes and other soil parasites.

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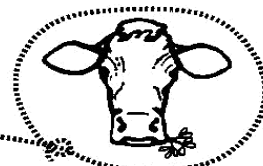
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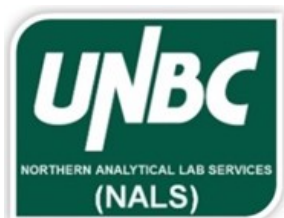
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