SASKATCHEWAN CATTLEMEN'S
CONNECTION
SCA THE VOICE OF SASKATCHEWAN'S CATTLE PRODUCERS VOL. 5 NO. 4

LEADING THE WAY: FROM THE FARM TO THE CORPORATE BOARDROOM

WEATHER: THE PRODUCERS BIGGEST CHALLENGE

WELFARE: THE PROOF REQUIRED TO MAKE A CLAIM

SEPTEMBER 2015

Connection is published in Saskatoon in partnership with Western Producer Publications. Mail Agreement No. 40069240

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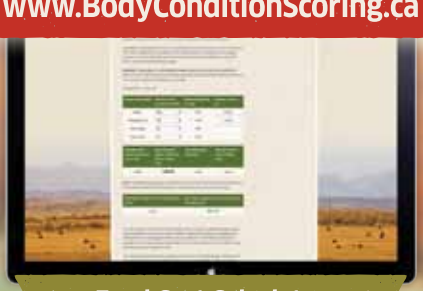

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2015 will be remembered as a year of weather challenges. Four producers discuss their winter feed strategies. | KELLY SIDORYK PHOTO

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Brodie Haugan, vice-president of the YCC says the council offers an avenue for young producers to express their views to industry leaders. | HAUGAN FAMILY PHOTO

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ON THE COVER: Susan Blair traces her journey from the farm to become the executive director, animal health, Boehringer Ingelheim (Canada) | PAULA SCHMIDT PHOTO.

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SASKATCHEWAN CATTLEMEN'S
CONNECTION

September 2015 Vol. 5 Issue 4

Published for the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association

www.saskbeef.com

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Connection magazine is published in partnership with Western Producer Publications.

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Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association, 102-2255 13th Ave., Regina, SK., S4P 2M6.

THE WESTERN PRODUCER

Printed with inks containing canola oil

Publications Mail Agreement No. 40069240
Registration No. 10676

MOTHER NATURE SENDS MIXED MESSAGES

BY BILL JAMESON | SCA CHAIR

THE OLD SAYING, "too little, too late," applies to many different scenarios. However, this year's rainfall for most areas of the province can only be described as "too much, too late."

Hay prices more than doubled during the June and early July dry spell and worries of catastrophic feed shortages were plentiful. Although the rain came too late for a normal hay crop (along with frost damage), the latest deluge should provide a decent supply of greenfeed.

My opinion is this should be a wake-up call. We need to wake up to the fact that this prairie province is not immune to drought, and we need to take steps to mitigate our losses when dry spells occur. This includes having an adequate stockpile of feed stuffs, which is the best protection we can provide to ourselves.

Further to that, we need an adequate forage insurance program. This is not something new, but it needs to be transformed into a workable solution that will keep our basic herd size intact.

The SCA is committed to working with the province on this issue. Any new program development has to work for producers who use their hay or forage crop as an input. Experience shows that crop insurance for hay and forage is just not attractive unless hay is a cash crop. When there is a feed shortage, prices for feed escalate rapidly, and a payout on production has not provided the tools needed to maintain herds. This is not an easy fix, as can be seen by the number of provinces struggling to come up with improved programs. Starting with an eye on what producers need to insure (feed needs instead of cash crop) is a good first step.

Recently, the national checkoff has become another topic of discussion among the provinces. Currently, it is a mandatory levy of $1 per head on all cattle sales in Canada. This money is used exclusively for marketing and research activities. The goal is two-fold: increase sales of domestic and export beef and improve efficiency and safety in beef production.

The Beef Cattle Research Council (BCRC) is responsible for the research side and Canada Beef Inc. (CBI) is responsible for marketing initiatives. This fund is matched federally on a one-to-one to one-to-three basis depending on the specifics.

This program was introduced in the mid-1990s and has stayed at $1 per marketed head for 20 plus years. At the present funding rate, along with inflation and other government funding reductions, it is obvious that in the not too distant future, both CBI and BCRC will struggle to survive.

Cattle prices have doubled since that time, and it is predicted that red meat demand worldwide will continue to grow.

It appears that we as cattle producers will be asked to "up the ante" to secure beef as the meat of choice among emerging new vibrant economies. It is probably a good investment. There will be more information about these discussions in the pages of this magazine in the future and at SCA fall meetings. Look at page 28 for the details of your district meeting.

On another note, our move to Regina is complete. The office number is (306) 585-2333.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE DEBATE CONTINUES

After reading the article, Horns: the debate continues (Connection, June/July) I can't but help think it's a stab at the Horned Hereford breed. Problem horned cattle that come through the market are obviously neglected, late-born scrubs that have been shipped for convenience reasons. The same could be said for young steers that have not been castrated.

The fact that you chose to picture only horned Hereford bulls speaks against the breed and plays with the livelihood of the people who raise them. Nothing is said of the benefits that come with horned cattle, such as the thick, easy-doing, low-maintenance cattle that have the ability to thrive in our harsh conditions.

I ask that if you had the right to print this article, then you also have the duty of printing the repercussions.

CHASE BANNERMAN | CATTLE PRODUCER

After reading the June/July article about the horn levy debate, I would like to take this opportunity to voice my opinion on the matter.

Similar to Brad Welter, I too believe that the horn levy should be abolished for numerous reasons.

Firstly, the market determines what the cattle are worth and the SCA should not be collecting money for the bias, which they solely possess, against horned cattle. If the buyers did not want to buy horned cattle, they wouldn't. Therefore the levy is purely a money-making tactic for the SCA and puts horned cattle at an unfair disadvantage.

Secondly, if the levy was indeed raised from $2 to $10, then I, as a cattle producer, would choose to market my cattle in Alberta, where no such levies exist. I'm sure that many other cattle producers would take the same steps as I, thus hurting the Saskatchewan cattle market and auctions.

Finally, the projected reasoning as to why horns need to be cut for the welfare of the animal during transport is quite exaggerated, and incidences that occasionally occur most likely reflect the way the animals are handled, not due to their anatomical features.

Thank you for or this opportunity to voice my opinion and I look forward to future discussions on the horn levy debate.

JASON DIAMOND | CATTLE PRODUCER

EDITOR'S NOTE:

There is one certainty when we show pictures of cattle obviously of a certain breed: we will hear about it and the bias the pictures show. We will continue to show pictures of cattle that fit the story regardless of breed and without prejudice. As to the horned cattle levy, that money does not go the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association. It goes to the Horned Cattle Fund and the Horned Cattle Purchases Act advisory committee decides what that money funds. The NFU, SSGA, SARM and Saskatchewan Cattle Breeders, as well as one Ministry appointee are represented on that committee as per the Act.

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FROM THE FARM TO THE CORPORATE BOARDROOM
SUSAN BLAIR'S JOURNEY

Susan Blair was a popular speaker at the Calgary Advancing Women conference in April. She shared her lessons learned and critical success factors in her journey from a Saskatchewan mixed farming operation to the corporate boardroom. Afterward, there was a long line of young agri-industry women entrepreneurs wanting to meet with her. | PAULA SCHMIDT PHOTO

Susan's sisters (Sandra and Christine), her parents (Wilson and Agnes), brother (Donald) and Susan. | PHOTO BY PAULA SCHMIDT, MYAEMERSON PHOTOGRAPHY

BY BONNIE WARNYCA | EDITOR

WHETHER IT'S MANAGING purebred Herefords, commercial cattle or negotiating a grain contract, Susan Blair wanted to learn the business acumen. She knew, thanks to her parents, that she had a strong work ethic, but she also knew she had to build on that.

When she left the family farm near Lanigan, Sask., in 1982 to obtain a degree in agriculture with a major in animal science and a minor in crop science, she had every intention to return. And, while still at the University of Saskatchewan, she made a land purchase that seemed to support the dream.

"When farmland becomes available, there is often only a short window of opportunity. In the early 1980s the economy was doing well and market signals were strong. But no matter what business or industry you're in, there are outside influences which affect the bottom line," acknowledges Blair.

"Interest rates were high and by the late 1980s world trade wars brought grain prices down well below what I had budgeted for. In addition, there were a few years of drought in my area and I recall in one field I harvested roughly six bushels of barley per acre.

"In the end, the economy didn't rebound as quickly as I hoped and I was grateful to have an education to help me find employment off farm."

Rather than looking to find work that relied heavily on her strengths, Blair opted to look for employment that would instead add to her skill set. Still hoping to farm, she chose pharmaceutical sales to continue to develop her expertise to negotiate better grain and cattle contracts.

In 1990, she took a job for what she thought would be a couple of years while waiting for the farm economy to recover.

"I worked as a representative for a drug company and was assigned an Ontario territory selling poultry, dairy, swine and some cow-calf vaccines and feed additives. It taught me a tremendous amount about how to manage a territory, it improved my selling skills and enhanced my relationship building," remembers Blair.

At the age of 28, I jumped at another sales opportunity in Alberta to be closer to family. The agricultural economy hadn't improved enough for me to return to the farm and I faced the reality that I had to let go of the land and the dream of farming. It was time to focus all my attention on a new career path."

In Alberta, Blair handled products targeted for cattle and swine, but she was already looking to the horizon for another job to continue to build on her marketing skills and for an opportunity that would help her develop a better understanding of the strategic side of the business.

"I transitioned into managing an Alberta territory for pets. I still called on veterinarians, but the change from livestock to pets helped me to gain a broader base of experience which was needed for a marketing role based in London, Ontario," she explains.

Build on others strengths

Unafraid to approach colleagues and others who displayed certain skill sets or management capabilities, Blair set up coffee dates and weekend meetings for mentorship opportunities.

"I really didn't understand the idea of mentorship at that point, but my parents taught me to surround myself with people who wanted to see me do well in life. I followed their advice and found many people along the way who were interested in helping me move forward. All I had to do was ask," says Blair.

"Be fearless about asking for advice or the sharing of information. Someone might say no, but that person will remember you. They may re-enter your life when they are in a different stage of their career or have more time to offer support."

Blair suggests choosing mentors who challenge you with the underlying value

continued on next page »»

> **I love the work that I do, and the company is a good fit for me.**
>
> **SUSAN BLAIR**

‹‹ continued from page 7

that they want to see you succeed.

Knowing that most animal health head offices were located in either Ontario or Quebec, Blair's next strategy involved moving back east to strengthen her marketing experience.

She moved and worked for another drug company before joining Boehringer Ingelheim, a family-owned pharmaceutical company, in 2003. Prior to her current role as executive director of animal health with Boehringer Ingelheim (Canada) Ltd., Blair held positions including national sales manager and business unit manager. She led the acquisition and integration of the Wyeth/Fort Dodge portfolio for Canada and worked on special projects including the development of the business plan and respective implementation strategy for Boehringer Ingelheim's Turkish animal health market.

Through it all, every career move was carefully calculated with an end goal, much the same as strategizing more than one move ahead in a game of chess. Blair credits her early years in the local 4-H club that helped to instil her mantra of "learn to do by doing."

She claims that the diverse and breadth of experience along the way builds skill sets, confidence levels and stamina both emotionally and intellectually.

When asked how she handles such high-powered challenges and if she's ever stressed, she says there are two kinds of stress, both positive and negative. She chooses to view most stressors as positive.

"While there are stressors beyond our control such as the heat and drought this year in Western Canada, there are also positive stressors which can drive performance in a healthy way," she explains.

"Not to minimize the stressors that life throws at us, but I prefer to strategize about solutions instead of focusing on a particular challenge. And whether I'm entering a small meeting, a board room or a speaking engagement, I never go unprepared."

Blair is big picture gal

She explains that in her position, it's important to identify the big picture perspective and work backward to set goals and strategies. It was something she learned while picking rocks and roots on her land.

"I wanted to do a perfect job of picking rocks and roots until my father pointed out that it would take roughly five years to accomplish the task. He suggested that I pick a particular rock and root size that could interfere with planting and ignore the rest. From that lesson, I realized that perfection is an opinion and what is important that you strive for excellence in a timely manner.

"I begin each year by backdating it with the big picture perspective, which involves a lot of discussion between my two supervisors and then with my team," she explains.

"We identify what the expectations are for 12 to 18 months ahead and agree on what we can realistically accomplish. With constant communication, we can also adjust and adapt along the way. I keep things organized in a detailed calendar to ensure I stay focused on the big strategic requirements while making time for daily needs. I also like to preblock time to be with my team in the field, which is always valuable and energizing."

Working for a science-based company

Boehringer operates its animal health business on five continents, and this global presence provides an ongoing learning dynamic that Blair says is invaluable.

"Interacting with the global team and my peers in other countries provides highly diverse perspectives which further expands my thinking."

This type of company fits well with Blair's curious nature and "big picture" approach to business. With animal wellness and welfare products, you have to be ahead of the demand and of course, strive to be ahead of the competition.

"Boehringer Ingelheim has always worked closely with key animal welfare specialists across Canada. We collaborate with experts from the University of British Columbia, University of Calgary, University of Saskatchewan and the University of Guelph. We have invested a great deal to bring animal wellness and welfare products to the marketplace," she says, putting on her executive cap.

"Pain medication for the pet industry has been around for a long time and research for mitigating pain in food animal production has been going on for several years.

"Working for a science-based company, we always want to be ahead of the curve for producer needs and consumer demands. Today's consumers are much louder in their call for pain mitigation for food animals, and we've certainly seen a spike in demand for pain products."

The company's current cornerstone for its animal wellness and welfare products is Metacam, a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) for cattle. More producers are using this pain medication for clinical mastitis and relief from pain following debudding of horn buds. Both dairy and beef producers now use it to treat scouring calves.

"It takes a long time to bring a product to the marketplace because as a pharmaceutical company we must be able to prove that it works. It takes time to find out how to measure pain and then evaluate how well a product like Metacam reduces pain," says Blair.

"Our goal is to allow the animal to be comfortable in a way that is efficient for those processing the animals, too. Studies suggest for maximum pain relief pre-emptive use is ideal, just prior to a procedure."

Blair says change is inevitable and the more we learn the more expectations change and therefore the marketplace will change. As an animal health company, it continues to investigate other situations where Metacam may be helpful.

TESTIMONIALS

KARLA HICKS of Bluestone Stock Farm near Moose Jaw was one of the more than 500 women that attended this year's Advancing Women Conference in Calgary. This was her second year in attendance and she was overwhelmed by the opportunity to listen to such highly motivated speakers including Susan Blair.

"I realized sitting amongst so many women from various aspects of agriculture that we were all in this industry together. I felt that my job as a ranch wife and mother, bus driver, cattle and pen checker, fence fixer and bookkeeper was validated listening to women who really understood the struggles that go along with being in the cattle business," says Hicks thoughtfully.

"It also occurred to me that though I may sit at the dining room table wearing sweats to do the farm books, I am no different than a women in another Ag business wearing a three-piece suit.

"The Conference put me in touch with new ideas from the podium, but also gave me the chance to network with many other ranch wives and government and Agri-industry employees."

Karla plans to take her daughter Lexi to the conference to show her just how many opportunities to dream big are in this industry. Currently, Lexi is in grade 11 and plans to become a chartered accountant and stay in agriculture.

LEFT TO RIGHT: Jessica and Kim Hextall pose in front of the AgricultureMoreThanEver.ca poster

KIM HEXTALL joined a group of other southeastern Saskatchewan ranch women to travel to the Advancing Women conference in Calgary. Her first thought when she heard Susan Blair speak, was that she knew Susan's parents. With such a tightly knit industry, the realization made it even more interesting to hear Susan's journey to become the executive director, animal health, Boehringer Ingelheim (Canada).

"I really didn't know what to expect at this conference and was blown away by the large number of women in attendance. As women, we are used to working with men on the farm and volunteering on industry committees which are mostly made up of men. It was refreshing to be able to discuss our roles with such a large group of many other enthusiastic women from so many different positions within the industry," recalls Hextall.

"While networking between the sessions, my daughter and I were able to connect with many new faces and discuss each other's view of how and where the industry was going.

"Also, it was great that the many powerful speakers all made themselves available for one-on-one discussions after their presentations."

Kim says it was interesting to hear how other women balance their time and energy between family and career. From Saskatchewan's own deputy minister of agriculture Alana Koch to a young mom who ran a home-based gourmet baby food business in Calgary, they all had their own take on how to make it work.

Kim and her husband Jack are well known participants in the industry. Kim was on the committee to develop the new Beef Code of Practice; she is a director for Saskatchewan Verified Beef Program (VBP) and is currently a director on Canadian Western Agribition. Husband Jack, is the current chair of Canada Beef Inc.

Daughter Jessica has just graduated from the U of S with a degree in agriculture and a major in animal science. Like her parents, she views getting out to industry events and volunteering at the 4-H level etc. all part of the right-of-passage to be able to remain within the agriculture industry.

The Hextall family including Jack, Kim, daughter Jessica and son Andy raise 300 purebred and Angus cross cows near Grenfell.

PRODUCERS WINTER FEED STRATEGIES

BY KELLY SIDORYK | FREELANCE WRITER

IT STARTED to feel like 2002 all over again when, no matter what the weatherman said, it did not rain. Of course the price of cattle is significantly higher and for many it has now rained. But moisture conditions are extremely varied throughout the province.

For Lynn Grant from Val Marie it is a drier year but it's probably not considered a chronically dry area. After five extremely good years, their pasture carryover was quite respectable.

They always plan more conservatively and flexibility is an important part of the Grant's strategy as they run yearlings as well as a cow herd.

"Twenty per cent of our yearlings never went to grass and were sold directly out of the backgrounding lot. Another 40 per cent were sold in mid-July, a month earlier than normal," says Grant.

"Winter feed is allocated first to the cow herd and the amount left will dictate how many calves we can buy in the fall."

Re-planning has been the theme. Their high land hay was not cut but they were able to bale a sweet clover crop seeded for green manure. Some hay they did put up yielded about a bale to the acre, which for the last five years, is terrible and comparable to the drier years of 2000 to 2008. The native pasture has done reasonably well, but the tame grass is poor because of the frost in May. A barley crop is being baled for greenfeed instead of combined.

"We have scratched and scraped a bit for feed but have also contracted 550 tonne of pellets. You can scratch by with some pretty rough feed as long as you are prepared to spend some money on grain," Grant adds.

Lynn Grant (right) from Val Marie, says 20 per cent of their yearlings never went to grass but were sold out of the backgrounding lot. | SHERRI GRANT PHOTO

"The two and a half to three inches of rain in the third week of July helped a lot. Most guys are resourceful enough in this business and can make things tick."

According to Bill McQueen from Tessier, just west of Saskatoon, moisture has been pretty slim in his area with only an inch of rain the end of July since spring.

As in most other places, the rains have been spotty. When seeding was getting later without adequate moisture, McQueen switched from seeding canola to seeding greenfeed. With the more recent rains, that has been a good decision. McQueen expects good alfalfa hay will be worth $300/tonne and the greenfeed $100/tonne plus trucking. They also have a two-year-old stand of alfalfa that has quite a few weeds but Bill says the weeds seem to grow when it is dry, so they are baling that up. They will use the hay with a ration of oat hulls and barley.

"The later July rains will help the late seeded crops and has sure helped the grass. Between that and a few other things we will get through, "says McQueen.

Even though recent reports indicate a herd expansion in the U.S., McQueen doesn't expect to see that here. He anticipates a further decrease.

"There will be guys that are 65 or over who are not going to pay a bundle for hay. The cows are worth good money and they will sell them and put the money in the bank," he reckons.

Kris Springer and his wife Jay farm near Foam Lake. He says they were more fortunate than some receiving a couple of 8/10 of an inch showers early on; just when the grass really needed it.

"If we had not been rotating and following a grazing plan, we would have been hooped. We really had to be careful on how fast our moves were," he says.

The general rains the third week in July, really helped but did impact the baling they were doing. They had a newer alfalfa stand that turned out quite good at 60 to 70 per cent of the last few years.

"We are very fortunate that the people we are buying hay from want to keep a longer term commitment and were willing to make a fair deal. It is generally in the 15 to 20 per cent higher range," says Springer.

Springers have expanded their numbers in the last few years

Across the province the summer of 2015 was a mixed bag of weather. It looks like straw and pellets will be used to balance the winter feeding rations. | KELLY SIDORYK PHOTO

with a mix of custom and owned cows. For winter feed they are planning on a straw, molasses and grain ration. They have been able to secure enough straw to make this feasible.

As far as numbers go, they may pare down their own animals and increase the custom herd. Probably going to a 25 to 30 per cent cull from a ten to 15. Springer suspects that many of the heifers that were bred are not going to be calved out as producers are more likely to keep cows and the heifers are still a good price as backgrounders.

In the northwest part of the province, Dave Crittall of Paradise Hill says the spring growth was severely delayed due the frost in April and May and compounded by no moisture. From April to June there was only two inches of rain. More rain started at the end of July.

"When we really needed it we weren't getting the rain so many guys turned their cows out on the hay fields to clip it and hopefully get a second cut. But I am not sure that is going to work," he says.

"One thing that helped in comparison to 2002, was the sloughs and dugouts all started with good amounts in them. There is a definite lack of hay in the area with production being around 25 per cent of normal." More green feed than normal was seeded, but there is going to have to be a lot of straw and chaff utilized. One of the challenges is that many grain farmers don't want to do that.

"We are going to need a lot of roughage and will supplement with grain or pellets or both since the quality and quantity of the roughage are lower. Likely we will save the better quality hay for calving," continues Crittall.

He thinks the market is strong enough that many of the heifers that were bred will likely end up in the feedlot. But, if he can keep heifers until December, the bred market could still be strong, Between the US dollar advantage and the large corn crop in the States, he expect the American buyers may be up in full force taking what they can get.

There have been some incredibly high hay prices talked about but the more realistic ones Crittall has heard of around Saskatoon are at six cents per pound in the field. With the recent rains, Crittall expects that there will end up being a fair bit of feed grain in the province. But it will be the end of August before the amounts are known.

Just another year of working around what Mother Nature doles out.

YOU MUST PROVE THE ANIMAL WELFARE CLAIM

It's not rocket science to understand that a difficult birth can be painful for both the cow and the calf, and with newer medications we can limit the impact.

DR. ED PAJOR
UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

BY BONNIE WARNYCA | EDITOR

IT'S NO LONGER good enough to refer to farmers and ranchers as "good stewards of the land." Nor is it enough to respond to negative animal welfare comments with, "if we didn't look after our animals, they wouldn't look after us."

More and more retailers are demanding that the beef industry verify their claims. McDonald's, Tim Hortons and Walmart have served notice that they want their protein suppliers to authenticate strong environmental, food safety and animal care and welfare programs. In June, giant dairy processor Saputo announced it would not accept milk from farms that dock tails or that fail to administer pain control for dehorning and disbudding calves.

The industry is responding. Last fall, the Anderson-Chisholm family of WA Ranches Ltd. at Cochrane, Alta., gave $5 million to the University of Calgary's faculty of veterinary medicine to create a chair to increase its ability to focus on animal care and welfare, primarily in beef cattle.

According to Dr. Ed Pajor, professor in animal care and welfare and Anderson-Chisholm chair at the University of Calgary, there are three major goals for this research-oriented chair position:

- Generate and assist in the application of new science-based animal care and welfare knowledge. Transfer of information to stakeholders is a key component.

- Independent and collaborative research that captures the strength and breadth of expertise at the veterinary college.
- To generate unique learning opportunities for veterinary students and support the training of experts (graduate students, advanced clinical trainees) in animal care and welfare.

"I've met with the Canadian Cattlemen's Association and the Alberta Beef Producers to talk about potential research projects we can collaborate on. This could include areas which haven't been addressed because of lack of funding," says Pajor.

"There's a real push for matching dollar programs, which are dollars from the industry and money leveraged. We can help researchers extend their research or fund something that may come up during their work which hadn't been included in the original fund proposal."

On his short list of research priorities are pain mitigation for castration, ways to better manage difficult births or dystocia calves, the cow-calf bond and improved handling around processing. Some of these areas do not require years of study before offering the industry solutions.

"We're considering increased study of the economic implications of lameness in feedlot cattle. Working with Dr. Karen Schwartzkopf-Genswein and Dr. Karin Orsel, we already have a good idea of the prevalence but haven't identified the associated costs," reports Pajor.

"By studying this more closely, we hope to identify the competitive advantage of reducing the number of cattle that come up lame. Leg problems are greater than most people realize. It is more than the increased costs associated with treatment because lameness impacts feed intake and weight gain.

"This research would include tallying days in chronic pens, cost of treatment, and it could be accomplished in a year or two which may then dovetail into the federal cluster program funding. If it qualifies for the cluster program, the next part of the focus would be prevention and more treatment options for lameness."

These researchers want to take a different approach when studying dystocia and difficult births. They want to assess the impact on both the calf and the cow.

"Dr. Clare Windeyer hopes to look at better ways to manage the cow-calf pair after a difficult birth. Each birth impact is different," suggests Pajor.

"I'm also interested in how a difficult birth affects the cow-calf bond. For instance, if you

Dr. Ed Pajor, professor in animal care and welfare and Anderson-Chisholm chair at the University of Calgary says, "Most retailers don't want to play policeman. They just want to rely on the supply chain to demonstrate they are in fact raising their product responsibly." | U OF C PHOTO

manage the pain associated with a difficult birth, does the cow recover quicker, allowing the calf to suck quicker and bonding to occur?

"Giving producers some direction on how best to manage their animals after a difficult birth seems simple, but it's not something that has really been investigated. It's not rocket science to understand that a difficult birth can be painful for both the cow and the calf, and with newer medications we can limit the impact."

Pajor has talked to some producers that give a shot of painkiller to the calf right after calving, but it isn't a widespread practice.

While there has been a lot of attention on the best age for castration and the method, Pajor says it's time to consider pain medication before the procedure.

"We recognize that producers don't want to run an animal through the chute twice, but it's worth investigating the benefits of earlier pain mitigation and explore possible other methods or ages for treatment."

Pajor has worked with many organizations such as McDonald's over the years and was a member of their original animal welfare committee formed in 1999, which has become a global committee.

"The beef industry is trying to respond to current pressures and perceived pressures that may come our way in the future. Codes of practice are a good start, but they are on paper and it's up to the industry to access verification programs to satisfy the consumer's appetite for assurances that these directives are met," says Pajor.

He adds that programs such as the Verified Beef Program and the Sustainable Beef Roundtable are excellent developments within the industry.

"Most retailers are interested in selling product and don't want to play policeman. They just want to rely on the supply chain to demonstrate that they are in fact raising their product responsibly. There are always things we could do better and it becomes a win-win for everyone."

Case in point, Pajor did some work for Maple Leaf's largest duck producer in the United States. He helped the company develop an animal welfare, biosecurity and environmental program, which included a review and changes to how they stored animal antibiotics and disposed of dead birds. It also included improving the company's lagoon design. In the end, Maple Leaf hoped for a premium product that it could charge more for.

"Retailers thought the review was great but didn't want to pay any more for the product, but when the company looked at their production numbers, they found there were fewer problems with animal health issues, feed efficiencies were gained and there were healthier birds going to the plant. They also had fewer issues around environmental concerns and spillage. The company kept the program and sees it as a positive business animal welfare program," says Pajor.

"People are often afraid of codes and assessments, but unless you have some way of verifying your management practices, those outside the industry will eventually dictate how they want things done.

"Retailers are caught in the middle, but in some ways I believe they are doing the industry a great service, and there are more food retailers coming on board such as Walmart. I'm told that 55 percent of Walmart sales in the U.S. are now in food." You must prove the animal welfare claim.

MCDONALD'S TAKES SUSTAINABILITY ON THE ROAD

John and Tracy Buckley southwest of Chochrane, Alberta were one of the first ranches to go through the McDonald's verification process. | PRASINO GROUP PHOTOS

BY BONNIE WARNYCA | EDITOR

WHILE THE CANADIAN Roundtable for Sustainable Beef continues to strategize to advance existing and new sustainability efforts within the industry, fast food company McDonald's has moved ahead with a Verified Sustainable Beef project to identify indicators of animal care, environmental stewardship and biosecurity.

McDonald's already uses 100 percent Canadian beef for their 65 million pounds of beef patties produced annually at Cargill's Spruce Grove Plant in Edmonton, but has given notice that they will begin using verified sustainable beef in 2016.

In the past, the hamburger wars were fought and won on taste and cost, but in today's fast food battle zone, the marketing strategies have been game-changers. While Sobey's has added 'certified humane' to their advertising, Walmart has launched a new animal welfare policy for their entire value chain covering several practices and issues from antimicrobials to housing system, painful procedures and euthanasia.

McDonald's has taken a much different approach by undertaking an ambitious pilot project across Canada to identify what percentage of their beef trim comes from verified sustainable farms and ranches.

They originally set out with a scoring system which included 40 indicators to grade members of the beef value chain. With an open-minded approach to gain as much knowledge as possible along the way, and recognizing it is a fact-finding mission, they admit the indicators may be adjusted. The end goal is to identify a percentage of their hamburger sales as processed under the 'sustainable' umbrella and over time, move that percentage upwards.

They aren't using the push or pull strategy to identify certain beef producers, backgrounders or feedlots, but have created this project to help the industry recognize and market their production attributes. They will provide the results of their Verified Sustainable Beef Canadian Pilot Project (VSB Pilot) to the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef.

The target for the VSB Pilot is to complete 130 verifications encompassing 36,000 head of western Canadian beef cattle, but at press time they were still short of that goal.

They continue to ask for beef operations to come forward to be verified including Canadian cow-calf ranches with calves born on or after January 1, 2013 and/or

> **You do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.**
>
> MAYA ANGELOU

backgrounder operations who supply cattle to Canadian feedlots. They also want Canadian feedlots who deliver fed cattle for harvest to the Cargill, High River or JBS Brooks plants during 2015 and prior to March of 2016.

Why Canada?

"McDonald's chose Canada because you have systems in place to track these cattle. The BIXS information system enables us to look at the chain of custody and track the animal from cow-calf to feedlot to harvest. That is a critical discipline that is missed in most countries if not the majority," according to Matt Sutton-Vermeulen, senior partner, the Prasino Group (a member of the verification team).

"We have a 15-member advisory board of diverse makeup which includes Dr. Joe Stookey from the University of Saskatchewan. We are working with the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, Alberta Beef Producers and the Alberta Cattle Feeders."

The verification process takes between four and six hours on site and confidential benchmark reports will provide each participant with a confidential comparison of their performance to their peers within their sector. The reports include:

- Comparison of their average scores for each of the five Principles
- Comparison of their score for each indictor
- Comparison to their peers (within the Third Party Provider (TPP) and across the entire population)

At press time there were a number of verifications booked for Saskatchewan producers but none completed.

John and Tracy Buckley, together with John's parents Harvey and Margaret, run 650 Beefbooster cross cows southwest of Cochrane, Alberta. John heard about McDonald's pilot project at the Alberta Beef Industry Conference in February and immediately volunteered to participate.

"In my estimation we can adopt change and move forward or be forced into making changes that we hadn't been a part of. We are four for five generations from the land and while a lot of our consumers are concerned about the environment, many are uninformed," he says.

"McDonald's is on a fact finding mission and helping to open the conversation between everyone involved in the beef industry. The key in my mind going forward is that we need a frame of reference for sustainability."

Buckley believes that for too long the industry worked out of sync from each other but is now beginning to come together to share information . He says it is an open dialogue between production, processing and retail that will help to create the competitive advantage.

"The industry has finally recognized its interdependency. The conversation among the entire industry has gone far beyond taste and price.

In order to maintain our social license to operate, we need to prove that we are producing our beef product in a sustainable manner," continues Buckley.

"What this pilot project is working towards is acceptable definitions of "sustainability" and developing a verification process to corroborate our "sustainable" production practices.

Buckley says that the verification process itself only took between four and five hours, but it opened up a whole new Pandora box of possibilities.

He says the verifiers were professional and in many cases, the family was able to easily answer verification questions relating to various procedures.

And, in some cases, where the family was unable to provide written proof of some of their own operating procedures, it was an easy fix.

The objectives of the McDonald's VSB Pilot include:

- Enable McDonald's to purchase a portion of its Canadian beef supply from verified sustainable beef sources by 2016.
- Inform the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (CRSB) and enable Canadian beef producers to share practices that are recognized as sustainable.
- Demonstrate leadership in the application of the Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef's principles and criteria for sustainable beef production.
- Serve as a starting place for the measurement, verification, and communication to consumers of sustainable beef.

Learn alongside the industry.

McDonald's will not have a cooler sort for the verified beef and will continue to purchase trim from both Alberta processing plants. But, by identifying the number of cattle in Canada that are raised under the VSB designated sustainability practices, it will enable them to tell their customers that a percentage of Canadian beef exceeds their production and safety-related expectations.

Any cow-calf producer, backgrounder or feedlot interested in participating in the VSB Pilot project are encouraged to quickly send your contact information to info@mcdvsb.com and a member of the McDonald's verification team will contact you.

According to the Buckley family, "We are eager to get the results of where our operation stacks up against others. I see this as a beginning not an end," says John.

"This is meant to be a verification process as opposed to a certification process. That to me, means the door is always open for improvement. We are a work in progress. Nothing is static. To me, that is what is so exciting about this journey."

INTENSIVE GRAZING ADDS MORE BITES

BY SHIRLEY BYERS | FREELANCE WRITER

WHEN IT COMES to grazing management, the basic principles are the same whether you're raising livestock on the desert or on an irrigated ranch, says Jim Gerrish of American Grazing Lands Services in Idaho.

"Things just happen really quickly with irrigation, and they happen really slowly in the desert."

Most pastures are producing at a quarter to half of their potential because of failures in grazing management, he says. Carrying capacity, the stocking rate that provides a target level of performance while maintaining the integrity of the resource base, is the product of not only the environment but also management.

While some people think of level of performance as weaning weights or breeding percentages, he thinks of it in terms of financial returns per acre. Depending on the environment, that number can range from $20 per acre to $1,000 per acre.

"That's target level of performance," he says, and adds that maintaining the integrity of the resource means that it will, with some adjustment for the rainfall of that season, perform consistently.

The role of water in pasture production

"Soil type and condition, past growing history, yada, yada, yada, all have their influence, but the overriding factor is, how much water do you get into the soil," says Gerrish.

The expected forage yield in perennial pastures is roughly a ton to two and a half tons per acre in a 15 to 20 inch precipitation regime. As you put more and more water into the environment, each inch of water generates more response up to a point.

In an area receiving 30 to 35 inches of precipitation per year, if a plant produces four tons of biomass above ground, it will also produce about four tons below ground. On the other hand, in central Saskatchewan, where the annual rainfall is 18 inches, about a third of the biomass is above ground and two-thirds is below ground.

When precipitation is low, pasture management can make a big difference. A shower yielding two-tenths of an inch doesn't sink very far into the soil. Pasture management dictates whether it will be lost or saved.

The objective is to have soil that will hold water and slowly release it back for plant growth. To meet that objective, you first need pasture plants adapted to your environment and broad species diversity with roots at different depths to capture the water.

Building the litter layer on the soil and developing deep organic matter will increase the dry matter yield for each inch of precipitation. Maintaining adequate phosphorus, sulfur, zinc and boron in the soil is also important so that when it rains the plants will grow.

Paying attention to these elements can increase the yield per inch of water, aid in increasing the seasonal utilization rate across your pastures and actually increase carrying capacity, he says.

"Most of these don't cost a great deal of money, especially if you plan ahead, understand what the relationships are and build all the pieces simultaneously and holistically."

Don't worry about wasting grass

What cattle eat, when they eat and where they eat are all business decisions, says Gerrish.

"Believe it or not, cattle are really not qualified to make business decisions."

And one hang-up producers need to get over, he says, is the fear of wasting grass.

"Get the cows onto the pasture and get them off it before they've overgrazed. Don't give in to the temptation to let them stay that extra day. Leaving adequate green leaf behind allows for lots of solar interception. That pasture will rebound much faster and profits will be higher than those gained by leaving cattle on the pasture even one day too long," he says from experience.

Stock density, the number of animals assigned to a specific area at a specific point in time, is the most powerful tool in the grazer's tool box. Once you have your carrying capacity approximately right, then stock density is the tool to manage almost all other aspects of the pasture.

Stocking rate is the animal live weight assigned to a grazing unit on a seasonal basis. Gerrish's ranch averages 270 stock days per acre and has been as high as 300 or higher, which is more than double what the neighbours are producing in the same environment.

"Management can make more than a two-fold difference in the productivity of land. That's just like having another ranch, another section of land given to you for free, if you just maintain the management," he says.

Grazing too short degrades the soil and the plant and lowers individual animal performance.

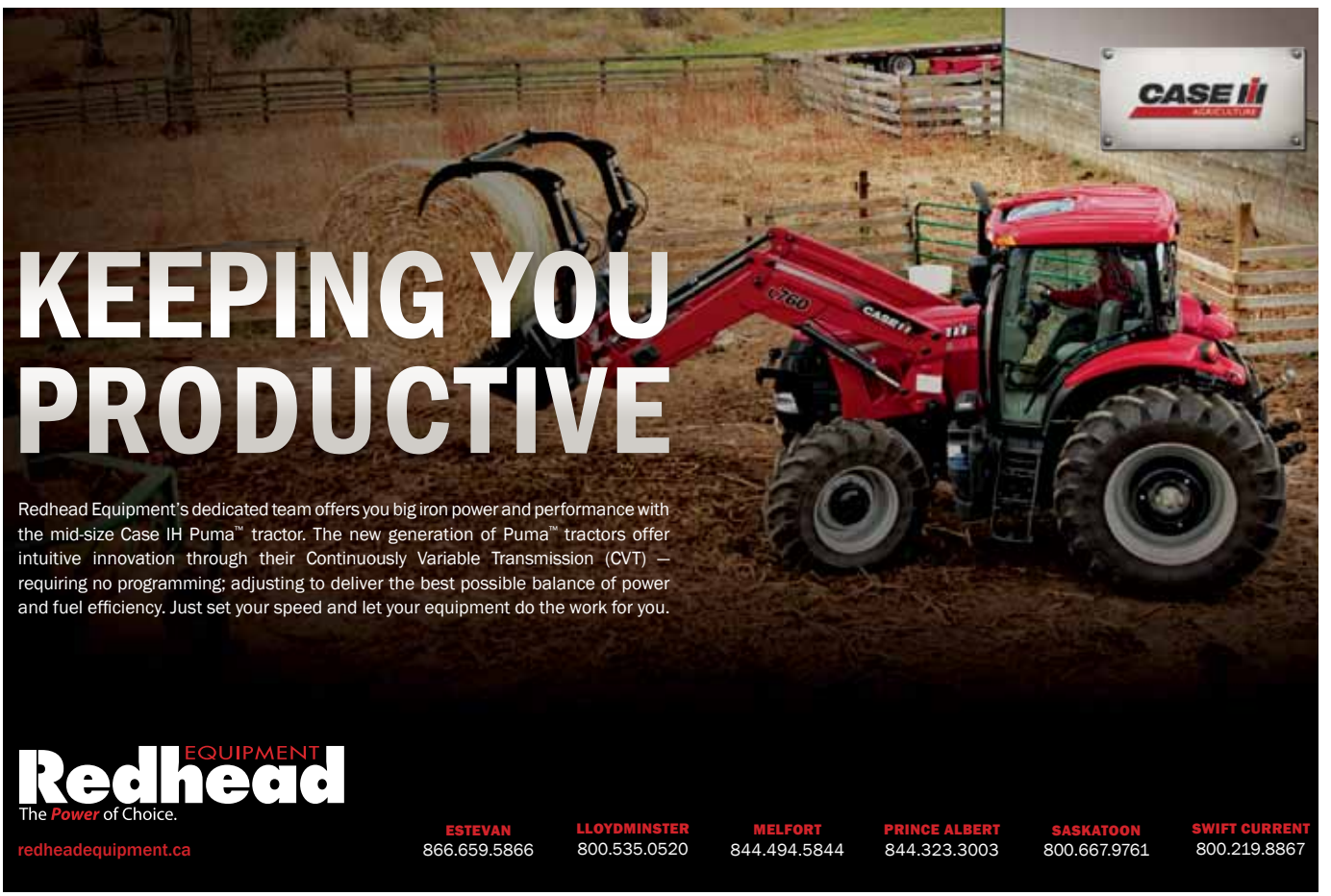
On rangeland pastures, grazing distribution across the landscape is largely driven by location and availability of stock water. Cattle will travel only so far away from stock water and still graze efficiently on the landscape.

Shortening grazing periods on rangeland allows ranchers to increase seasonal utilization but only to a small degree. A lot of ranch lands simply cannot grow enough biomass based on the availability of water to allow more than two grazings. But grazing efficiency can be gained by shortening grazing periods from two, three or six months to five days, a week or two weeks. The objective is what the animal needs to maintain performance goals.

But whether yours is an irrigated or desert pasture or something in between, it all comes down to attitude, says Gerrish: how you feel about your grass.

"If you view a pasture in the sense that grass feeds the grass, grass feeds the soil, and then grass feeds the livestock, the productivity of your pasture will increase tremendously. If you only see pasture as feeding the livestock, you will most likely be stuck in the rut of low pasture production and an ongoing need for supplementation or feeding stored forages even during the growing season."

Gerrish spent 20 years on the faculty of the University of Missouri in beef-forage systems research and outreach. He now runs an irrigated pasture unit in Idaho. About 60 per cent of the 1,000 cow herd at Circle Pi Ranch are pastured on public range land. The remainder are intensively managed on 450 acres of irrigated land which matches the productivity of over 100,000 acres of the public land. | SHIRLEY BYERS PHOTO



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CYL EXPANDS YOUTH MENTORSHIP

BY BONNIE WARNYCA | EDITOR

STARTING AS an Alberta pilot project in 2010 and rolled out nationally in 2011, the Cattlemen's Young Leaders program has made significant inroads in mentoring young Canadian beef cattle producers.

In fact, the CYL program has been referred to as the beef industry's succession plan.

Sixteen young producers from across Canada are chosen annually to participate in the year-long program.

By 2012, challenged to expand the mentorship model to include more young beef producers, the Young Cattlemen's Council (YCC) was struck as an offshoot of the CYL program. A steering committee made up of mentees began the work of developing policies and terms of reference.

Virgil Lowe, 26, from Bear Trap Feeders at Nanton, Alta., was one of the first mentees in the CYL program and instrumental in the development of the YCC.

"In 2011, I was just entering law and I was interested in learning about the behind-the-scene business environment that is so critical for cattle producers to have markets to sell in to," says Lowe.

"I was accepted into the CYL program when it went national, and I learned a great deal about how institutions such as the CCA and ABP operate. My dad has been a keen advocate for the industry, becoming a director for both of these organizations, and I wanted to know more about the work that they do."

"Early on, a group of people within the CCA realized that while the CYL program was great, it only benefited a handful of the next generation of producers. They wanted us to take the beef industry message to as many young people in the industry as we could and arm them with the facts surrounding their business. With all the challenges and opportunities facing our industry, we need to speak with one congruent voice to address the challenges and capitalize on the opportunities," says Lowe.

Lowe says that he can't possibly pay back the industry or the sponsors of the CYL program for the insight into another part of the industry that is just as important as raising cattle.

Lowe now has a law degree and is finishing his articling year at an international law firm in Calgary. He hasn't yet worked on an international trade file but he believes the soft skills he learned through the CYL program helped him get hired.

He says attending beef industry provincial and national meetings and becoming comfortable talking with many of our law makers helped him to interview for his position.

Brodie Haugan participated in the CYL program in 2012. Since then he's obtained his BSc in Agri-business from the University of Saskatchewan. After working for Meyers Norris Penny in business planning for a year, he decided to return home to the farm in 2014 and is vice-president of the YCC.

"I'm the fifth generation on our farm at Orion, Alta., where we run 300 cow-calf pairs and background a few," says Haugan.

"The YCC has two primary goals and that is to give industry youth an opportunity to learn how to lead the industry through direct involvement. The council provides an avenue to present our viewpoints to current industry leaders.

"We are just beginning to take our message to the larger beef community and get more young people involved. YCC isn't just for cattle producers but hopes to attract membership from the larger Agri-business community," continues Haugan.

The council plans to add membership through the online sign-up page, an active presence on social media, through personal connections and having YCC members attend local, provincial and national events. The council has developed a Facebook page at www.facebook.com/ycc.beef and a Twitter account at @YCCBeef.

YCC's main sponsor is New Holland, the CCA and provincial organizations, who send representatives.

Shane Klepak hails from a Saskatchewan grain farm at Melfort, and after graduating from the University of Saskatchewan has returned to work as an animal technician in the U of S feedlot.

Klepak is a member of the YCC and has

YCC FACTS:

- YCC elections will be held in conjunction with a CYL event in the fall of 2015. There are nine council members including president and vice-president (six from the provinces and three at-large). Individuals can only remain on the council for a maximum of two years.
- YCC members attend the CCA annual general meeting in Ottawa to build relationships with CCA committee chairs and members and to represent the youth of the industry.
- YCC plans to hold their first annual event in 2016 in conjunction with the proposed CCA national beef event.

LEFT & RIGHT: Virgil Lowe, former CYL mentee helped start the YCC program. He is as comfortable on horseback as he is in a Calgary law firm.

been chosen to participate in the 2015 CYL program. But leading up to this opportunity, he took every opportunity to expand his knowledge of the industry.

In March of this year, he was selected to participate in a job session with the Canadian Agriculture Human Resource Council, which was looking for characteristics for beef industry sector employees. He attended the CCA annual general meeting in Ottawa and sat in on the meetings for the beef value chain round table.

"There are now so many new doors open in our industry for young people to get more in-depth information that impacts the beef business. My dad encouraged me to work off farm and not only get an education but participate in broader industry events," says Klepak.

"He knew that if I had stayed on the farm I might not have been able to broaden my knowledge base in an industry that is more than just production-based. We need to increase our visibility and participation off farm in order to preserve our social license to operate."

SASK VBP ADDS NEW BEEF PRODUCTION TRAINING MODULES

BY BONNIE WARNYCA | EDITOR

THE CANADIAN Cattlemen's Verified Beef Production (VBP) program, Canada's Beef On-Farm Food Safety Program, has been running for more than 10 years. It is a national program with each province responsible for the funding and delivery. In Saskatchewan, the Ministry of Agriculture funds the VBP through the On-Farm Food Safety (OFFS) funding program under Growing Forward 2.

Coy Schellenberg, provincial co-ordinator for Sask VBP admits the program has been slow to gain traction on Saskatchewan cattle operations, to date, while roughly 4,500 producers have taken the one-day food safety training course, only 75 producers completed the farm audit. Across Canada, there have been almost 20,000 cattle producers trained in the VBP On-Farm Food Safety Program with 1,100 VBP registered.

But things are changing

"Much like CCA's BIXs program, VBP has been a work in progress and it's only in the last couple of years that more producers have begun to recognize the importance of such a program to help to elevate Canadian cattle production on the world stage," says Schellenberg.

"With the Global and Canadian Roundtables for Sustainable Beef, and fast food giants such as McDonald's coming to the forefront in the sustainability discussion, VBP has been working steadily behind the scenes at CCA to develop additional training modules to allow producers to prove their commitment to sustainable beef production."

Under the new name of VBP+, three new program modules are being added, including biosecurity, animal care and environment stewardship. The beef biosecurity funding program in Saskatchewan, which is funded under Growing Forward 2, was a joint effort between the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture and Sask VBP to increase disease prevention in beef cattle. The animal care module will use the Canadian Beef Code of Practice as a guide in development and for the education component. The environmental stewardship module will mirror the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) program.

"All the modules are in the design stages under the VBP+ pilot and will be phased in to the program over time. The three new pillars, in addition to the on-farm food safety foundation, will help producers identify and improve upon their already sound beef production methods. They will allow producers to measure their progress and hopefully be recognized for it in the marketplace," says Schellenberg.

As an incentive to attract more participation in this province, beef producers who take the beef biosecurity workshop may be eligible for funding (50 per cent up to $1,000) to work with their veterinarians to conduct a biosecurity assessment and help develop preventive practices.

The Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture and Sask VBP have also opened a new funding category for VBP-registered producers to use toward the purchase of eligible food safety equipment (50 per cent up to $2,000). The equipment eligible includes neck extenders, individual weigh scales and recordkeeping software and is an addition to the original (50 per cent up to $750) food safety funding that is still available.

Schellenberg believes the McDonald's Verified Sustainable Beef Pilot Project (VSB Pilot) underway in Canada will greatly assist the industry in picking up the pace to identify and improve their sustainability measures.

With the VSB Pilot finishing in the spring of 2016, he expects VBP+ to be in a strong position to continue to verify more cattle operations in order to showcase Canada's leading attributes in beef production.

"VBP has been working steadily behind the scenes at CCA to develop additional training modules to allow producers to prove their commitment to sustainable beef production.

COY SCHELLENBERG | PROVINCIAL CO-ORDINATOR FOR SASKATCHEWAN VBP

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WCCCS FINAL RESULTS

The Western Canadian Cow-Calf Survey is complete. The results are outlined in this article developed by the Beef Cattle Research Council (BCRC) in collaboration with Kathy Larson, MSc, PAg, Beef Economist with the Western Beef Development Centre .

WHILE IT IS good management to track and calculate one's herd production performance indicators on an annual basis, it can be helpful to have benchmarks to compare to. Benchmarks help a producer know if they are on the right track. They can help a producer identify if they excel in a certain area and/or could improve in another. They can also help show what production and management practices other producers are following. Benchmark productivity measures for the cow-calf sector can also help guide research and extension efforts.

For these reasons, a group of individuals from British Columbia to Manitoba, representing provincial beef producer groups, provincial ministry of agriculture specialists, the Beef Cattle Research Council, Canfax and the Western Beef Development Centre have revived, expanded and conducted a survey last conducted in Alberta in 1998.

The Western Canadian Cow-Calf Survey (WCCCS) was distributed to producers from November 2014 until the end of February 2015. A total of 411 survey responses were received (representing slightly more than 76,000 cows). Response rates varied by province with the greatest percentage of respondents being from Alberta (49 per cent), followed by Saskatchewan (24 per cent), Manitoba (18 per cent) and British Columbia (eight per cent). The average age of survey respondents was 50 with an average of 28 years in the cattle business.

Survey respondents provided details on their 2014 calf crop starting with the 2013 breeding season and ending with weaning. The cow-to-bull ratio averaged 25:1 and the breeding season length averaged 93 days, which was nearly unchanged from the results of the 1998 Alberta survey. A breeding season no longer than 63 days is recommended to maintain a 365 day calving interval and improve calf crop uniformity, but only 24 per cent of respondents achieved this recommended target.

Breeding heifers four to six weeks before the cows is recommended so that heifers have more time to recoup (i.e. longer post partum interval) after their first calf is born. Only 26 per cent of survey respondents bred their heifers earlier than

IMPROVE MANAGEMENT - IMPROVE BOTTOM LINE

Herd productivity is closely linked to herd profitability. The calculation for break-even price on calves clearly demonstrates this:

$$\text{Break-even Calf Price} = \frac{\text{Total Cow Herd Costs}}{\text{Total Lbs of Calf Weaned}}$$

The break-even price can be lowered by decreasing total cow herd costs or by increasing the total pounds of calves weaned. Increasing the total weight (lbs.) of weaned calves can be achieved by improving herd productivity, such as:

a) INCREASING – conception rates, weaning rate, etc.
b) DECREASING – calf death loss, calving span, etc.

FILE PHOTO

Figure 1. Calving Start Month, WCCCS 2014

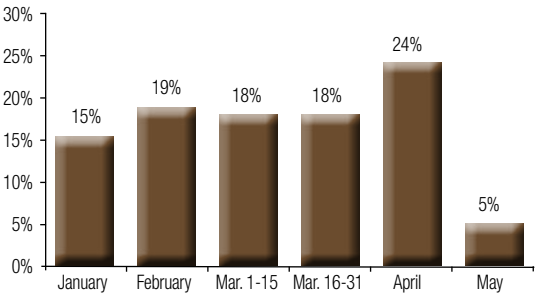
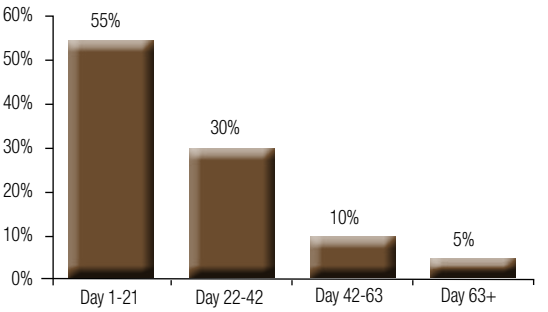


Figure 2. Calving Distribution, WCCCS 2014



SOURCE: WWW.BEEFRESEACH.CA

the rest of the herd, averaging two weeks earlier.

The average open rate was seven per cent in cows and 10 per cent in heifers. The conception rate for all females was 92.8 per cent, compared to 95.6 per cent in Alberta in 1998. Work is underway within the industry to gain a better understanding of recent years' lower conception rates.

The most popular month for calving start was March, with 18 per cent starting calving in the first half of the month and 18 per cent starting in the second half of March (see Figure 1). This is a change from 1998, when the majority of respondents were calving in February. This shift in the calving start date suggests the research and extension about calving later to avoid the high cost of calving during winter months was heard and adopted.

Calving distribution is an important indicator for a herd. Ideally, 60 per cent or more of females should be calving in the first 21 days of the calving season. A little more than 40 per cent of question respondents achieved this target. On average, 55 per cent of females calved in the first 21 days (see Figure 2), which is an improvement from 48 per cent reported in the 1998 Alberta survey.

Nearly 80 per cent of respondents provided details on their 2014 weaning dates. Most respondents weaned in October (41 per cent), followed by November (32 per cent).

The most common method for weaning was traditional separation (70 per cent), with others using low-stress fence line (22 per cent), two-stage/nose paddle (six per cent) or natural (three per cent) weaning methods. The average wean percentage was 86 per cent, with 533 lb. weaned per cow exposed, which was 28 lb. higher than in 1998. Only 24 per cent of survey respondents implanted their 2014 calves.

More than 69 per cent of respondents report having more than 90 per cent polled calves. Ninety-four per cent of producers castrate calves before six months of age, indicating the vast majority of producers are already in alignment with the beef care Code of Practice requirement (to be effective Jan. 1, 2018) of using pain control when castrating bulls older than six months of age.

More than 70 per cent of respondents sold a portion of their calves at weaning, with nine per cent preconditioning and 35 per cent backgrounding. Some producers used multiple calf marketing strategies. Most respondents (80 per cent) marketed calves via live auction, 12 per cent sold calves direct/private treaty, nine per cent used electronic auction and seven per cent used an order buyer.

The top four bull selection criteria were breed, conformation, birth weight and EPDs, respectively. Genetic test results ranked No. 9 in bull selection. Few respondents test their bulls for trich (12 per cent) and vibrio (10 per cent).

Nineteen per cent of respondents regularly body condition score their females and 91 per cent vaccinate. Forty-seven per cent lab test their winter feed for quality, and 80 per cent of those use the results to balance rations.

If you are interested in learning about more WCCC survey findings, please visit www.wbdc.sk.ca/wcccs.htm. Ideally, this survey will be conducted every five years.

WEATHER CHALLENGES PRODUCERS

BY SHIRLEY BYERS | FREELANCE WRITER

FROM KILLING FROSTS to devastating drought to warnings of flash floods, there's been something for everyone in the Saskatchewan growing season this year. In the end, summer pastures were depleted and forage crops significantly below normal.

"The western half of the province and much of the south were the hardest hit, but even the central and northeast parts of the province saw yields drop significantly," says Bryan Doig, provincial feeds specialist, regional forage specialist. "In a region where forages normally produce about three round bales per acre, they harvested about half that number. The hay was there but frosts in May and rains that didn't come on time impacted the yields."

When it finally rained in southern Saskatchewan on July 2, yields of cereals, aside from some possible tillering, had already been established. But pastures perked up and some producers got a second cut on their hay crop.

Producers are diverting crops from grain production into greenfeed. Other alternatives include collecting and feeding chaff and ammoniation.

Developed in the 1970s, ammoniation is a procedure that doubles the protein and increases the digestibility of straw by about 15 per cent. It involves sealing the straw in a gas-tight plastic enclosure then adding approximately three to three-and-a-half percent anhydrous ammonia based on the dry weight of the straw. It must be left sealed for at least 21 days. The cost of the anhydrous ammonia ranges from $12 to $14 per

bale, depending on the price and amount of ammonia used and the weight of the bales.

Doig says that scrupulous care must be taken to be safe when working with ammonia and a lot of fertilizer dealers don't deal with ammoniation too much anymore.

For safety reasons and because it's a time-consuming process, ammoniation has been largely replaced by feeding straw supplemented with protein, vitamins and minerals. Usable sources of crude protein include canola meal, distillers' dried grains and feed peas.

"Hailed out canola has been used as a salvage crop. It can be cut up to the early podded stage and would have a feed value similar to alfalfa. Cattle new to canola might balk at it for a day or two. It's like eating cabbage, but once cattle have developed a taste for the canola, they have no issues eating it," explains Doig. "

"But there are some issues to be aware of if considering canola as a livestock feed. Most crops of canola were not destined to be a cattle feed. Know what pesticides were applied to that crop and whether there were applications of insecticides, herbicides or fungicides. Some have grazing and feeding restrictions and some have not been tested for use in livestock feed.

Canola can also accumulate nitrate, especially if it was hailed, and typically high amounts of N fertilizer will have been applied to it."

Nitrate is a feeding management issue, he says. It has never caused full scale losses in herds, but a sudden introduction could cause problems. Introduce it gradually. Feed grain or pellets with it and cattle will quickly become accustomed to fairly high levels of nitrate and can handle it.

Producers should also supplement the cows through a mineral program. Magnesium in particular could be low in hailed out material. Use a mineral containing two to five per cent magnesium. Choose a 1-1 or 2-1 mineral, with extra magnesium to prevent downer cows.

Baling straw for roughage

Doig says they've wintered many cattle on straw, grain and protein supplement diets.

"Cattle have a rumen; the rumen has a purpose making them efficient at digesting straw with proper supplementation," he points out.

"Designing a balanced ration, he uses a formula of about 1.2 per cent of body weight. If you're looking at a 1,200 lb cow at

1.25 per cent, that's 15 pounds of dry matter. She can effectively digest 17-18 pounds of straw in a 24-hour period. We would balance that with grain or pellets for energy and protein supplement for crude protein for the bugs in the rumen."

Pea straw has a higher quality than cereals, but can be quite dusty and dirty. It is still palatable for cattle. It's higher in protein and more digestible. But any type of straw can be used as long as it's balanced properly with the other feed source, vitamin and mineral. Try to avoid rough awned varieties of barley to reduce the risk of mouth abscesses.

Put up the best quality feed you can and then have it tested for nutrients, for nitrates and other things that might be there.

Other strategies include looking at early weaning, creep feeding calves and supplementing cattle on pasture.

"In Saskatchewan anyway, we haven't seen any major sell down yet,"says Doig.

"Sale numbers haven't really differed a lot from last year. I think a lot of producers were holding out, waiting for the rain. We'll see what happens in early fall."

At West Central Pelleting in Wilkie, general manager, Lorne Davey, cautions producers to think about feed sooner rather than later. With a widespread drought across Saskatchewan and Alberta, supplies could be tight. In July, some producers were already using pellets to extend their pastures.

GET HELP

The Ministry of Agriculture has 10 regional offices. Each has a livestock specialist, trained in ration balancing. They can help develop rations for wintering cows.

Producers looking for forage or those who have forage for sale can go to The Forage, Feed and Custom Service listing found at: www.agriculture.gov.sk.ca/FeedForageListing it provides the opportunity to list fed products and custom services for sale or view products that have been listed for sale. This service is available without cost to the user.

Products can be listed directly online or by calling the Agriculture Knowledge Centre at 1-866-457-2377.

Products for sale include: baled forage, standing hay, pasture, feed grain, custom services and others.

THE "GLORY MARKET"

BY JOE JACKSON

LIKE A SURFER waiting for the perfect wave, Canadian cattle producers have been waiting and waiting for the "Glory Market" that would justify why they stay in the business of raising cattle.

Back in May of 2002, cattle numbers and markets were aligning to produce such a market. However, BSE appeared and in a blink of an eye, the market crashed and the Glory Market was gone. Then just when Canada was digging out of the impact of BSE, and getting markets and inventory back in line, country of origin labelling (COOL) came along. Once again, Canada's cattle producers were faced with operating on shoestring margins. Some didn't survive and the cow numbers in Canada have declined ever since.

Beginning in January 2014, cattle feeders began to see prices for fed cattle increase. By the end of 2014, fed prices were about $40/cwt higher ($560 per head) than a year ago. Cow-calf produces saw calves in the fall of 2014 sell for $100/cwt more than the year prior, or $600 dollars more for a 600 lb. calf. The Glory Market had again arrived.

Going forward, cattle feeders buying these record high price cattle have continued to make money. Cattle feeders selling cattle in May and June of this year saw record basis and record prices. Fed cattle bringing $2 to $2.04 per lb. live weight in May and June meant that cattle feeders were receiving as much as $14/cwt more than their U.S. counterparts, or about $185 per head over what cattle feeders in the U.S. were getting. The high was $14, but a positive basis lasted for about six weeks around $6/cwt.

Over the last six weeks, the Canadian fed market has dropped $20/cwt and the basis has dropped back to normal levels of minus 7 to minus 8, which clearly signals ample inventory and will increase the numbers of fed cattle exported for slaughter into the U.S. Feeder cattle prices have not shown any signs of weakness. Feeder cattle prices in the U. S. have dropped about $10/cwt, but the falling Canadian dollar has rescued the seller of feeder cattle in Canada.

My take going forward is that currently feeder cattle prices are too high and feeders will lose money. Does this mean that feeder cattle prices will go lower? Probably not, but cattle feeders feel the current fed market is near its low, and they look for fed cattle prices to rise come fall and into the winter.

I agree with this, but do not believe we will get back to levels that make current feeder cattle prices profitable unless they get saved by a continuing erosion of the Canadian dollar.

Packer drop credit is down substantially from a year ago, mainly for hides. In the U.S., a product called trim or grind, which is all the left-over fat and meat that isn't sold as a whole cut (and there is a lot of it) is substantially lower than a year ago.

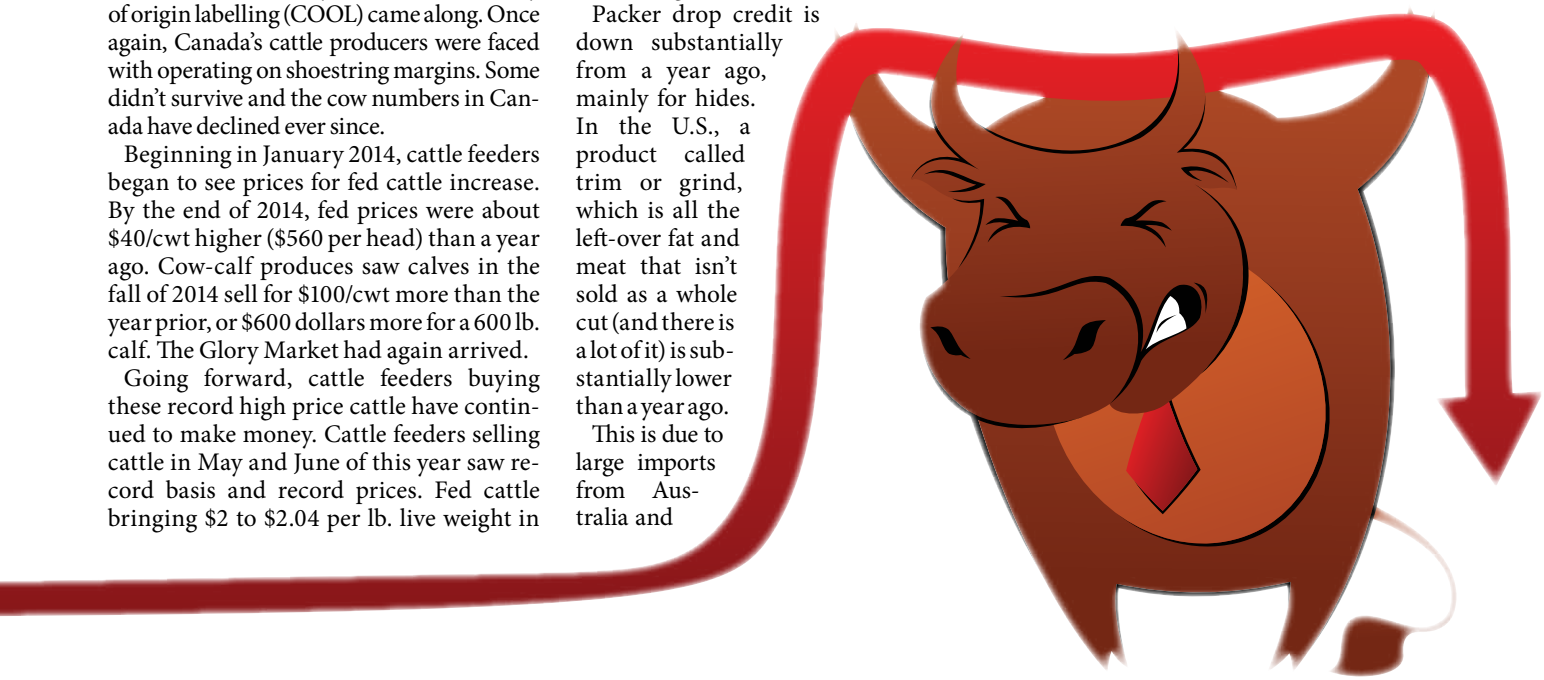
This is due to large imports from Australia and other countries. This, along with lower volumes of exported meat from the U.S. (worldwide), will keep a cap on fed prices until these factors rectify themselves.

I expect calf prices this fall will be higher than last year, if the fed market rebounds. Early calves will bring more than last year's calves, but, should the fat market not recover and be trading in the $175 range and barley trades over $210/tonne (FOB southern Alberta), calf prices will be about the same as last year.

For the past two years, cattle feeders have been in a no brainer market; however, caution should be taken. If you look at the cattle cycles and the profitability in the market, never in the history of the cattle market has the cycle failed to develop. Never underestimate the ability of producers to produce. And remember, higher prices usually only mean higher profits in the beginning of a cycle. After that, replacement costs will increase, not stabilize.

Prices will continue to rise until the market can no longer produce a profit, marking the beginning of the end of the Glory Market.

Joe Jackson is responsible for contracting, risk management and cattle management for JGL, Moose Jaw.



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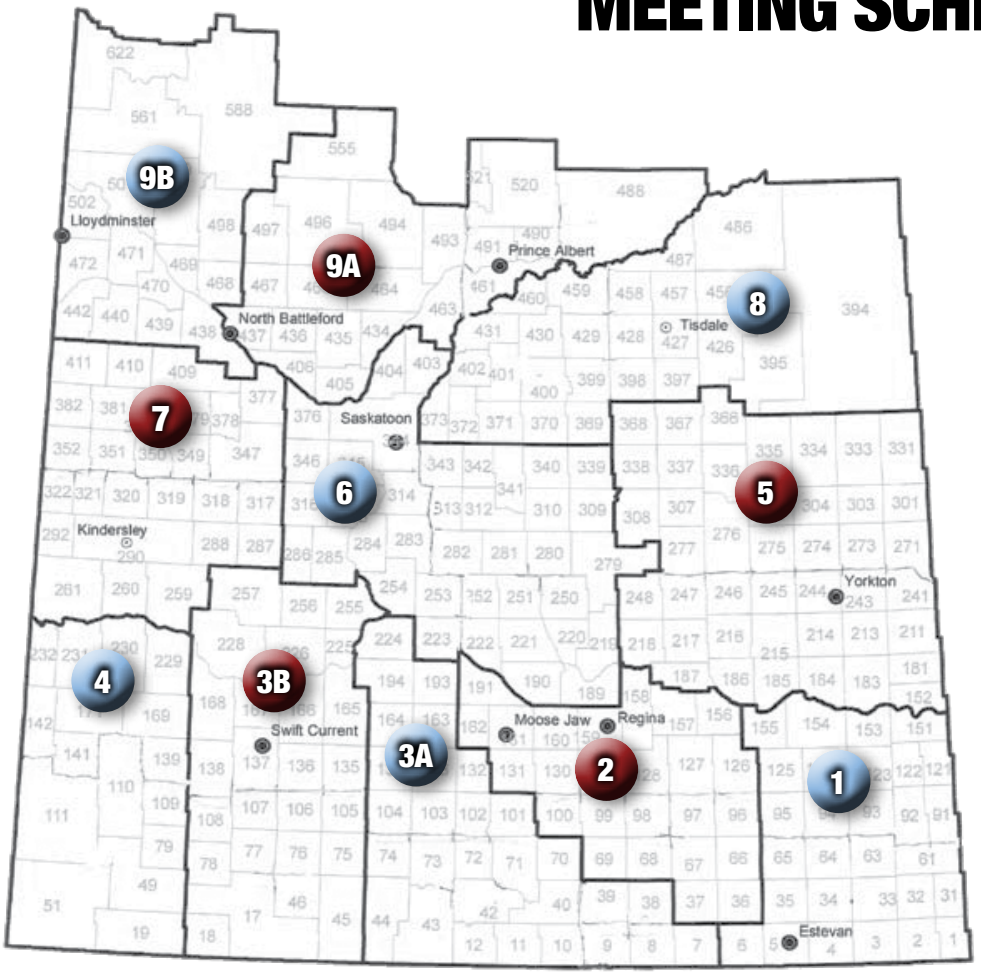
A federal-provincial-territorial initiative

Government of Saskatchewan

Canada

SCA 2015 DISTRICT MEETING SCHEDULE



	DISTRICT	DIRECTOR	VENUE	ADDRESS	DATE
*	1	Ryan Beierbach	The Armoury Building	902 Birtle Avenue, Moosomin	Oct. 26 - 7 pm
	2	Philip Lynn	Jubilee A Room	Heritage Inn, 1590 Main Street, Moose Jaw	Oct. 27 - 7 pm
*	3A	Laurie Disney	St. Georges Parish Hall	325 6th Avenue E, Assiniboia	Oct. 28 - 7 pm
	3B	Larry Grant	Room A, Days Inn	905 N Service Road E, Swift Current	Oct. 29 - 7 pm
*	4	Rick Toney	Piapot Legion Hall	McDonald Street, Piapot	Oct. 30 - 7 pm
	5	Levi Hull	Gallagher Centre	455 Broadway Street W, Yorkton	Oct. 26 - 7 pm
*	6	Garret Hill	Manitou Room	Manitou Springs, 302 Mcdonald Street, Manitou Beach	Oct. 27 - 7 pm
	7	Paula Larson	Brock Hall	2nd Street West, Brock	Oct. 28 - 7 pm
*	8	Michael Spratt	Tisdale RecPlex, Hanover Room	800 101st Street, Tisdale	Oct. 30 - 7 pm
	9A	Arnold Balicki	Senior Citizen's Hall	101 Railway E, Shellbrook	Oct. 29 - 7 pm
*	9B	Dean Moore	Lloydminster Exhibition Association	5521-49th Avenue, Lloydminster	Nov. 4 - 7:30 pm

* indicates an election year for this district. All directors are in with no challenges by acclamation.

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Obioha Durunna, PhD, PAg
Regional Livestock Specialist
SK Ministry of Agriculture
Prince Albert, SK

Obioha provides information and advice to livestock producers. He works with producers and industry towards improving important livestock traits by promoting performance recording and the adoption of relevant tools and technology. He is passionate about identifying production-efficient animals and improving livestock production systems.

"A professional agrologist (PAg) designation shows professionalism; that I am committed to providing excellent service and science-based knowledge to producers and the public."

Obioha was born and raised in Nigeria. He received an MSc in quantitative genetics from the University of Manitoba and a PhD in genomics from the University of Alberta. Obioha previously worked on forage-based cattle production research with Ag Canada's beef unit in Brandon, Manitoba.

Tracy Evans, PAg
Regional Manager - North
Regional Services Branch
SK Ministry of Agriculture
Tisdale, SK

Tracy works with the Regional Office Teams to ensure producer and industry extension needs are met. Regional Specialists in crops, livestock, farm business management and forage provide objective science-based knowledge and advice to producers and industry.

"A professional agrologist (PAg) designation ensures clients that the work I do and the way in which I do it is held to a high set of competency, ethical, and safety standards."

Tracy gained her passion for agriculture from her family farm at Carnduff, SK. She has a Bachelor's Degree from the U of S College of Agriculture and Bioresources, majoring in Animal Science. Previously, Tracy worked as a regional livestock specialist with the SK Ministry of Agriculture.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

AGRIBITION ESTABLISHES FOOD SHOWCASE

Canadian Western Agribition plans to offer a food pavilion at this year's show.

The new attraction, called The Food Pavilion, presented by The Mosaic Company, is expected to feature exhibits of food and kitchen products, workshops, cooking demonstrations and offer food samples.

Agribition President, Stewart Stone, says since Agribition already showcases the best cattle, grain and livestock, it was a natural progression to create a venue to highlight and market food from the Prairies.

"General consumer awareness about food and food products continues to grow. This new pavilion is a way to allow for dialogue between producers and consumers," says Stone.

The Food Pavilion will be officially launched on Nov. 23 during Agribition, which takes place from Nov. 23 to 28.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTRE INVESTMENT

Federal Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz and Saskatchewan Agriculture Minister Lyle Stewart announced a commitment of $22 million, through Growing Forward 2, for the construction of a new 150,000 sq. foot multipurpose facility at Evraz Place called the International Trade Centre. "Both Agribition and Farm Progress are institutions here in Regina and major contributors to the Saskatchewan economy," Ritz said. "This investment provides a world-class venue that will draw international visitors to Saskatchewan to get a firsthand look at Canada's dynamic agriculture industry."

"It is going to be an important facility with the ability to attract and host a variety of large events that benefit trade and Agri-business in our growing province," Stewart said.

The primary goal of the investment is to enhance the stature of significant agricultural events such as Canadian Western Agribition and Canada's Farm Progress Show, which generate significant agricultural-related spending and returns for the industry. In addition, the facility is expected to attract other large events. The facility will also connect to existing buildings on the grounds, making the network one of the largest interconnected event facilities in North America.

The project is expected to kick off in November 2015, following Agribition. Construction is expected to be complete by November 2017.

Growing Forward 2 is a cost-shared partnership between federal, provincial and territorial governments designed to support agriculture.

WALMART MAKES WAVES

Last fall, Walmart announced a commitment to making its food supply chain more sustainable including a stronger animal welfare focus.

The retail giant then launched a major new animal welfare policy that encompasses Walmart's supply chain and covers a broad number of practices and issues from use of antimicrobials to housing systems, 'painful procedures' and euthanasia.

"Our customers want to know more about how their food is grown and raised, and where it comes from," says Kathleen McLaughlin, president of Walmart Foundation and senior vice-president of Walmart sustainability.

"We believe it's important to promote transparency in this process, helping to put our customers in charge of their food choices by providing clear, accurate information about food ingredients. We appreciate the leadership our suppliers have shown to help us accomplish these goals."

The policy covers Walmart's U.S. operations and in practical terms sets a framework that Canada and other jurisdictions will need to operate within. However many people believe Canada already has a leg up through its proactive actions in recent years such as updating national codes of practice.

(This article was written and approved for re-publication by Meristem Land and Science)

SASKATCHEWAN'S PREMISES IDENTIFICATION DATABASE FOR LIVESTOCK AVAILABLE

The federal and provincial governments launched the new online Saskatchewan Premises Identification (PID) Database to improve the response to and prevention of livestock emergencies.

The PID program links livestock and poultry to specific land locations by assigning a unique number to each registered premises, and is an important part of planning for and managing animal health and environmental emergencies. The database will aid in rapidly notifying producers of disease threats and other potential disasters, as well as in dispatching emergency resources to appropriate locations.

PID is one of three pillars of a livestock traceability system, which also includes animal identification and animal movement reporting. The PID program has seen significant support from Saskatchewan's livestock industry.

To date, about 1,400 producers have registered. Commodity groups have also worked with the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture to complete the registration of their members.

continued on page 32 »

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THE WESTERN PRODUCER

‹‹ continued from page 30

CATTLEMEN'S FOUNDATION IS CREATED

The Canadian Cattlemen's Foundation has three main focus areas: youth, environment and research within the Canadian beef industry.

As an initial focus area the foundation is working to establish a fund that can support the youth pillar, specifically the already existing youth mentorship program, the Cattlemen's Young Leaders (CYL).

The creation of the foundation is timely given the increasing competitive pressures for agricultural land and the growing challenge for young producers to succeed in agriculture. It has been reported that between 2006 and 2011, nearly 3,756 acres a day have been taken out of production across Canada. The beef cattle industry will need on-going financial support to be able to respond to such pressures.

The foundation board is well resourced with past Canadian Cattlemen's Association presidents, such as Brad Wildeman and Stan Eby, as well as by passionate industry members such as Joe Gardner from Douglas Lake Ranch, Stan Carscallen a Calgary area rancher and lawyer, and Scott Dickson a chartered accountant who is director of livestock services with MNP. To see the full board or learn more about how to contribute to the Foundation visit: www.cattle.ca/sustainability/contributors-to-sustainability/canadian-cattlemens-foundation/.

2015 FORAGE INDUSTRY INNOVATION AWARD

The Saskatchewan Forage Council presented the 2015 Forage Industry Innovation Award to Janice Bruynooghe in recognition of her innovation, leadership, service and stewardship in Saskatchewan's forage industry.

With 20 years' experience in the forage and livestock industry, Bruynooghe has focused on creating working relationships and a partnership approach for all forage sector stakeholders. Her efforts, as the Saskatchewan Forage Network Co-ordinator, have led to an average 15.1 return on investment for industry levy dollars, which has resulted in numerous research and industry advancement projects.

Janice has partnered on the development of more than 20 forage and livestock focused extension publications, presented at forage and grazing conferences across Western Canada, and lectured for undergraduate grazing and rangeland management courses.

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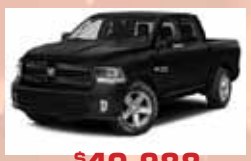

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$60,998
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$252 Bi-Weekly

2015 RAM 1500 QUAD CAB SLT 4X4

Stock #R7241
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$200 Bi-Weekly

2015 RAM 3500 CREW CAB SLT 4X4

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0% 48 mo.

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Dual Rear Wheel Package
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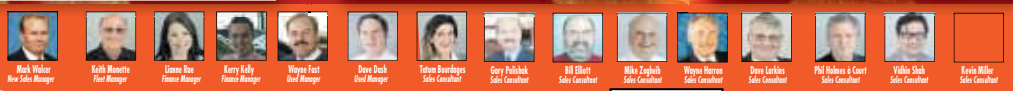

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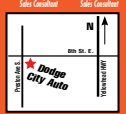

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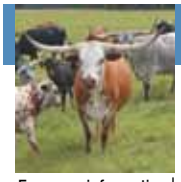

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MOVING

CHANGE IS upon the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association and my family and me. The SCA has moved its offices to Regina from Saskatoon and my family and I have moved back to Saskatchewan from Ottawa. It is exciting for us to be getting closer to family and for me to be taking on the role of Chief Executive Officer for SCA.

I have moved several times in my career. This is the first time with the added twist of moving with my wife and children. I find with a move there are many things that are challenging. I have come to realize that many of the challenges of a move are transitional. Once over the hump of moving and settling in to the surroundings, you are back to the same core challenges of life. These include how to manage work, family, friends, community and find the balance among all of these things while staying healthy.

It is not dissimilar for the Association during this time of transition. Right now there are a lot of things happening with personnel changes, moving and dealing with all the operational demands that come with this much change. It will take time before we are "settled into" Regina.

And when we come to that spot in time the challenges the Association faces will be the same ones they were before the move. I see the four keys to a successful Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association as:

- Developing and implementing solid policy.
- Soundly managing operations.
- Successfully advocating for the industry as a whole.
- And lastly but maybe most importantly, doing those three things while communicating what we are doing, who we are representing and why we are important.

These keys to success depend on two major things. The first is engagement and leadership from producers across Saskatchewan. The second is dedicated and motivated staff.

Engaged producers are the bedrock of policy development and advocacy. Beef cattle producers are the only people that should decide what needs to happen to improve the industry. That will not stop others from trying to decide what needs to happen or working to make things happen that impact cattle producers. But as long as producers are engaged and pushing for what is right SCA staff can take those ideas and leadership and push ahead.

It takes a dedicated staff to build the relationships, learn and watch files as they develop, research and prepare the board in policy development and ensure that tactics and strategy are executed in a way that moves things forward. This industry is important to me in a deep way. It is still a family business back south of Fir Mountain. That keeps me motivated and dedicated to moving things forward. I believe the SCA can play a strong leadership role in provincial and national policy areas and I face this challenge with anticipation. I hope to build a team that is just as passionate and dedicated.

I invite all cattle producers in Saskatchewan to engage with the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association through the website, Twitter, district activities, Email or pick up the phone and call me. The transition period has its challenges but underneath it all are the core activities that depend on engaged producers and dedicated staff. I look forward to meeting with and hearing producer ideas about how to successfully improve our industry. There is strength in numbers and it will take producers working together with the SCA staff to make it happen. A great opportunity to have your say and see what SCA is doing on your behalf is at your district meetings. See page 28 for the when and where of all the meetings. At these meetings there will be discussion about improving forage insurance, national checkoff and funding the national beef strategy, Verified Sustainable Beef, the Code of Practice and upcoming important dates and other current topics.

There will not be elections at this fall's district meetings. Incumbents all filed the proper paperwork by the July 31 deadline and no challengers came forward. Congratulations to directors Ryan Beierbach, Laurie Disney, Rick Toney, Garret Hill, Michael Spratt and Dean Moore.

Our new office is open in Regina at 102-2255 13th Avenue (just south and west of the Hotel Saskatchewan).

The phone number there is 306-585-2333. You can email me at ceo@saskbeef.com and follow on Twitter @saskcattlemens and @ryder_lee.

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1. Menge, M., Rose, M., Bohland, C., Zschiesche, E., Kilp, S., Metz, W., Allan, M., Röpke, R., Nürnberger, M. Pharmacokinetics of tildipirosin in bovine plasma, lung tissue, and bronchial fluid (from live, non-anesthetized cattle). *J. Vet. Pharmacol. Therap.* doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2885.2011.01349.x.
2. As per the approved Canadian product label concentrations and recommended dosages.

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