

Forage Focus

December 2008

MFC Website usage up 56%

The Manitoba Forage Council website was re-designed and re-launched in July of 2006. Since that time the traffic to the site has grown substantially.

During the period January 1, 2007 to December 31, 2007, the Council received 14,638 visitors. This calendar year to date (November 17, 2008) we have had 22,960 visitors – up 56% and we still have a month to go! Peak periods for visits correspond to key events such as Manitoba Grazing School and the Holistic Management Conference. Over 78% of our visits are new, a result of being driven by search engines by keywords such as grass-fed beef, holistic management, forage marketing and grazing clubs. Frequent posting of new upcoming events and the online registration to accompany them, plus the addition of several new buttons such as Grazing Clubs, Grass-Fed Beef and the Forage and Grassland Reference Manual also brings people to our website.

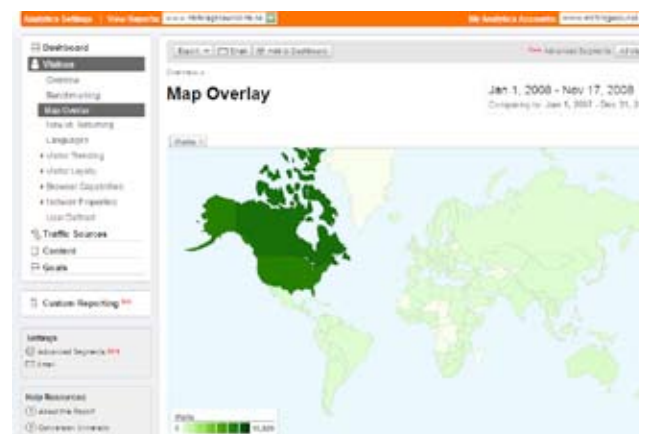
Visitors came from 151 countries/territories with the most from Canada 10, 447; U.S. 9,440; United Kingdom, 470; Australia, 295; South Africa, 166; India, 146; New Zealand, 99; Germany, 80;

Mexico, 77; Ireland, 67. Other countries include: Japan, Russia, China, Brazil, Algeria, & Japan. (continued)



Above: 22,960 visitors between Jan 1, 2008 & Nov 17, 2008.

Below: The darker colors on the map indicate the higher number of visitors.



Departments

2 Board News

4 MFC Reports

7 Events Review

10 Coming Events

11 Forage Bits

15 Affiliated Member Reports

16 Board of Directors

The average time a person spends on the website is 2.33 minutes and of the 55,554 pages they viewed they spent the most time on these pages:

- home page
- upcoming events
- forage and grassland reference manual
- forage and hay marketing

We hope you too are enjoying mbforagecouncil.mb.ca. Information is updated weekly and there are many publications online to help you with your operation.

If you have any comments or events to share please contact Corie Arbuckle at communications@mbforagecouncil.mb.ca.

Wayne's Clippings

Preparing this article on a quarterly basis is a great opportunity to reflect on the work of the Manitoba Forage Council and in particular the Executive Director position. Many people have asked what I think of the position. The short answer is that it is very busy, however, very interesting and challenging with fantastic people to work with. For this issue of Forage Focus I will highlight just a few of the areas that we are working on and provide a bit of an update:

Holistic Management International Conference – “Paradigm Shifting for the Future” was held Oct 22-25 in Brandon with approximately 260 attending. The evaluations for this event were extremely positive and a big congratulations to everyone who had a hand in organizing this excellent conference. As Executive Director I took in most of the sessions in addition to manning the MFC display.

Provincial Forage Industry Strategy - A funding proposal for developing a Strategic Plan has been approved by MRAC and we are awaiting a reply from MAFRI. At the recent MFC Directors’ meeting the decision was made for MFC to provide \$5,000 in funding along with in-kind contributions. I recently attended a Manitoba Forage Seed Association (MFSA) meeting to bring them up-to-date and gather their input as we move through this process.

Stakeholder /Government Workshop on the Canadian Forage Industry - following discussion with forage industry reps from other provinces and AAFC staff in Ottawa and Winnipeg, plans are in place to hold a Stakeholder /Government Workshop on the Canadian Forage Industry in Saskatoon on Dec 8, 2008. This workshop is being facilitated by Francois Catellier and will bring together stakeholders to address issues facing the Canadian forage industry and to develop a path for the advancement for the industry. Glenn Friesen and I are planning to attend the meeting in Saskatoon which will be held in conjunction with the Canadian Forum on Forages and Rangeland on Dec 9 &10, 2008.

Page	Pages	Views	Time of Page	Bounce Rate	% Exit
1. / default.asp	4,188	2,210	00:01:04	21.22%	
January 1, 2000 - November 17, 2008	4,188	2,210	00:01:04	21.22%	
January 1, 2007 - December 31, 2007	5,188	3,730	00:01:08	19.92%	
% Change	-18.31%	-13.40%	-5.38%	-2.70%	
2. / AccountManagement/default.asp	2,914	2,000	00:01:00	10.30%	
January 1, 2000 - November 17, 2008	2,914	2,000	00:01:00	10.30%	
January 1, 2007 - December 31, 2007	177	110	00:00:40	10.20%	
% Change	1,546.33%	1,840.55%	125.24%	8.20%	
3. / ForagegrasslandreferenceManual/	1,864	1,820	00:02:00	10.83%	
January 1, 2000 - November 17, 2008	1,864	1,820	00:02:00	10.83%	
January 1, 2007 - December 31, 2007	228	190	00:01:21	12.01%	
% Change	722.20%	729.53%	41.57%	-1.58%	
4. / ForageHayMarketing/	1,863	970	00:01:20	10.40%	
January 1, 2000 - November 17, 2008	1,863	970	00:01:20	10.40%	
January 1, 2007 - December 31, 2007	2833	895	00:01:47	19.20%	
% Change	-3.46%	-9.79%	-15.74%	-2.24%	
5. / AccountManagement/default.asp	1,648	1,217	00:00:20	10.11%	
January 1, 2000 - November 17, 2008	1,648	1,217	00:00:20	10.11%	
January 1, 2007 - December 31, 2007	341	250	00:00:50	14.18%	

Board News

MFC input into AAFC Research Consultations – Jim Lintott (MFC Chair) and I recently attended an AAFC Research Consultation workshop held in Portage. The intent of the workshop was to obtain input from various commodity groups and research scientists regarding the long term and short term direction/needs of agriculture research. This was a valuable opportunity for us to provide input regarding the role of forages and the need for forage related research.

PFRA Greencover Technical Assistance Program – a very important partner for the MFC is AAFC-PFRA and the funding support that has been provided through the PFRA Greencover Technical Assistance Program. We attended a PFRA Greencover Technical Assistance Program workshop in Carberry. This was an excellent opportunity for representatives of the different commodity groups to provide the results from previous Greencover projects and identify new project opportunities.

Kentucky-Florida Hay Market and Intelligence Gathering Trip –In an effort to better understand the opportunities for marketing hay into the Kentucky and Florida horse hay market an application has been submitted to the Manitoba Agri Ventures Initiative (MAVI) to fund an intelligence gathering trip to these areas.

Port of Churchill - Forage Marketing Opportunities! – With global warming the Port of Churchill faces the likelihood of a substantial increase in the length of its shipping season. With this in mind and the potential cost savings of shipping forage products through this Port to certain markets, a few of us recently met with representatives of the Churchill Gateway Development Cooperation (CGDC) to learn more about the Port of Churchill and its handling capacity, particularly for forage products. We have agreed to collaborate with CGDC to identify and investigate opportunities for marketing forage products through Churchill. Marketing forage products through Churchill may provide more opportunities for forage producers in northwest Manitoba.

MFC Board of Directors Meeting Oct 30th – Despite the weather being too nice for a meeting, we had a good turnout. Loni Scott, Director Agri-Environment Knowledge Centre - MAFRI, gave a presentation on Climate Change – Implications for Agriculture (is there a role for forages?). Further discussion highlighted areas that should be further investigated namely:

- Finding specifics on Best Management Practices (BMPs) and better managed grazing systems. Need to look at the role of forages
- Need to be considering ways of managing pasture lands, drainage, etc.
- Need demonstration farm(s) where we look at community farming options including the integration of enterprises on a larger scale – linking crop production and livestock production.



Wayne Digby, Exec. Director

Wishing you and yours a wonderful Holiday Season!

Wayne

Membership has its privileges

In the past, membership fees have been collected when a person registered for an MFC sponsored conference such as Manitoba Grazing School and the Manitoba Forage Symposium. Since they were a part of the conference budgeting process, MFC received funds only if there was a surplus. In an effort to be sustainable and continue to provide you with the newsletter, website, trade missions and many MFC sponsored events and projects, the Forage Council will be changing the membership collection process. Anyone may attend MFC sponsored events, however, those with memberships will receive a substantial discount on the conference fees. This December, existing members will receive their membership renewal invoice. Those who have attended the 2008 Manitoba Grazing School have had a portion of their conference fee allocated to membership. You will be receiving your Membership number in the mail for future conferences.

When registering for a conference online, people have three options: 1) pay their membership fee & pay reduced conference rate, 2) enter their membership number (previously sent to you), or 3) pay the non-member rate. All registration staff will have current membership lists to assist with registration. Spouses/immediate family members (*living in the same house*) of a current MFC member are entitled to register for conferences at the discounted conference rate.

Native Pasture Improvement Project

Manitoba's native pastures provide a significant contribution to the livestock industry. There are approximately 1.6 million hectares (4 million acres) of unimproved or native pasture in Manitoba. Brush control has become one of the key issues in pasture improvement in the Prairie Provinces as one of the current threats to native pastures and natural grasslands is invasive species such as brush (particularly aspen).

Encroachment of aspen onto grasslands is a slow process, but in time its effect is significant. A Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) study has estimated that the rate of aspen woodland expansion on their community pastures is 5.3% annually. Extrapolated to Manitoba's total land base, this would translate to an annual loss of 147,000 grassland acres. When grasslands revert to brush land, the productivity loss can be as high as 75% with the eventual closing of the canopy.

The Native Pasture Improvement Program (NPIP) was created with the following objectives:

- to expand and explore technologies designed to conserve natural grassland and native pastures
- to demonstrate brush management techniques within the natural diversity context.
- to monitor and analyze treated vs. untreated area through on-site measurements
- to disseminate information via publications and presentation to producers, land owners, land managers and agrologists involved in native pasture management and extension activities.

To address these objectives three components were established:

Inventory Assessment – i.e. Change in vegetation. The NPIP partnered with the University of Manitoba and Manitoba Conservation (Remote Sensing Unit) to document the change in vegetation cover over time relative to Western Canada and Manitoba land bases. Archived aerial photography and digitalized photo interpretation technology were used.

Four sites ranging in size from 2000 – 6000 acres were selected for aerial photograph interpretive analysis. The site blocks were located in the R.M of Alonsa, Armstrong, Portage La Prairie and Victoria.

Demonstration/Technology Development – The NPIP developed 49 demonstration sites of which 33 are being monitored. Treatment demonstrations are on average 40 acres per treatment type. The purpose of these sites are to demonstrate the various techniques that are evolving to control brush encroachment or timber harvest regeneration and evaluate them for their effectiveness of control and cost.

Education and Awareness – Information relative to brush management has been extended through demonstrations at tours, meetings, and fact-sheets/news articles. In September 2007, the NPIP along with the Northwest Livestock Foundation hosted a Provincial Brush Management Tour highlighting NPIP and other brush management projects in the parkland region of Manitoba. In March 2008, the NPIP helped host a Western Canada Conference on "Integrated Brush Management on the Western Canadian Plains," in Dauphin, MB. A new Guide to Brush Management is now available.

For more information contact Sarah Keen-Chanel at (204) 383-0202 or sarah.npip@xplornet.com



Map outlines the locations of projects across Manitoba

Tour to Bismarck

By: Wayne Lenfesty, Grazing Club Coordinator

The Manitoba Grazing Clubs held their fall tour to Bismarck, North Dakota on September 29th and 30th, 2008. Eighteen people from several southwest grazing clubs took part in the tour organized by Club coordinator Michael Thiele. The bus left Brandon at 11:00 AM on Sept. 29th, and arrived in Bismarck at 6:00PM. The following morning the group toured the farms of Gabe Brown and Marlyn Richter as well as the Burleigh County Soil Conservation Cover Crop Plots. It was a very interesting and informative tour which described the benefits of cover crops being sown in late summer on lands which have early harvested annual crops. The benefits include: improved soil health with increased organic matter, improved fertility, and increased water infiltration and moisture holding capacity. Over the long term it reduces input costs by decreasing the need for commercial fertilizers and herbicides on zero till operations. Cover crops also increase profits by allowing more production on the land either by grazing or haying. The benefits are many and these farming practices have been proven to be a profitable and sustainable way to manage your operation. This should be looked at by all Manitoba producers.

The group arrived back in Brandon at around 6:30 PM on the evening of September 30th.

Below: Participants of the Manitoba Grazing Clubs tour to the Bismarck, North Dakota area, viewing the cover crop plots managed by the Burleigh County Soil Conservation District.



Above: Gabe Brown showing the tour group the various crop mixtures he grows in the cover crops on his farm northeast of Bismarck, North Dakota.





Come to the Manitoba Forage Symposium

February 18, 2009

Southern Manitoba
Convention Centre
Morris, MB

Contact:
Dwayne Summach
(204) 268-6014



Lumber/Livestock Project Nears Completion

The Garland project was initiated in 1997 to evaluate managed grazing systems on hardwood harvested areas. The study examined the livestock benefits and the level of wood regrowth to determine if it would meet the provincial hardwood stocking standards.

The data collected from this project will ultimately assist in the development of provincial government policy to allow for the successful co-existence of timber harvesting and grazing. Research data has been collected on two aspects:

Forestry (stock density, growth and yield, health) and;
Agriculture (forage quality/quantity, livestock performance)

Samples have been processed (sorted, dried, weighed at the AAFC Brandon Research Centre). The final report will be prepared by March 31, 2009 and will include recommendations to the province relative to the co-management (forestry, livestock grazing), environmental protection and long-term multi-resource sustainability.

Project Partners include: - MFC, MAFRI, Manitoba Conservation, Louisiana Pacific Canada, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the RM of Ethelbert, and producers/cooperators.



WCB Coverage Provides Benefits for Agriculture

Following consultations with Manitoba businesses and representative groups, the Government of Manitoba announced a number of industries, including agriculture, will be added to those currently requiring workers compensation coverage effective January 1, 2009.

WCB coverage has been extended to agriculture operations with workers on their payroll. Coverage provides advantages for both Manitoba employers and workers. Covered employers receive protection from lawsuits for work related injuries and illnesses, allowing them to avoid the costs, uncertainty, and disruption of litigation. Employers also have greater access to consulting services and expertise since the WCB specializes in adjudicating and managing occupational injury and disease claims. Injured workers, on the other hand, receive a full range of benefits such as wage replacement, healthcare treatments and rehabilitation services.

Employers in agriculture are encouraged to visit the WCB website at www.wcb.mb.ca and fill out an online pre-registration questionnaire which will help the WCB determine if they need to register. For further information go to: www.wcb.mb.ca in the Newly Covered Industries section.

Holistic Management Conference Attracts Visitors from Afar

By: Pamela Iwanchysko, MAFRI

The first international Holistic Management Conference attracted 250 delegates from Nova Scotia, to British Columbia and all of the provinces in between. There were also delegates from North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Texas and Mexico.

The event was initiated with a wine and cheese reception on the evening of October 22nd to provide an opportunity for delegates and speakers to network.

The major objective of the conference was to offer the delegates information about Holistic Management that is being practiced throughout the world. It also enabled producers to hear from speakers (producers) who have been practicing Holistic Management for several years and how it is impacting their operations and more importantly, improving the sustainability of their operation and the environment.

Holistic Management is a revolutionary approach to decision-making and management that considers humans, their economies, and the environment as inseparable. It has been practiced by thousands of people around the world to profitably restore and promote the health of their land through practices that mimic nature, and by many others

who have sought a more rewarding personal or family life.

Holistic Management has its roots in land, agriculture and wildlife management, but it now extends well

Above: Conference delegates at the Keystone Center in Brandon networking. (October 22-26, 2008)

Right: Ron Chapman from Holistic Management International speaking on moving forward and developing Holistic Management into one's every day life.

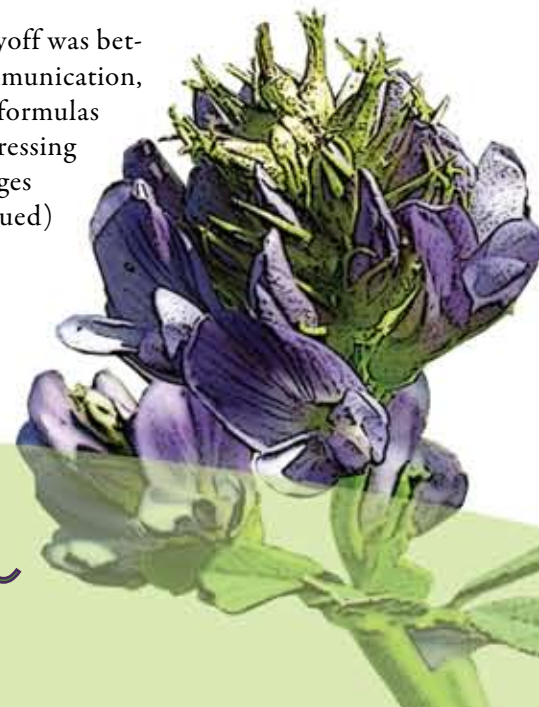


beyond that — to individuals in any walk of life, businesses of any kind, and to households, educational institutions, non-profit organizations, and even government agencies, because everyone makes decisions.

Day one of the conference was primarily keynote sessions in which participants were offered sessions from some of the primary leaders in Holistic Management. Speakers on Day one included the Honorable Rosann Wowchuk, Minister of Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, Peter Holter, Executive Director of Holistic Management International, Abe Collins from the Carbon Farmers of America, Ken Meter who spoke on the importance of Local Food Systems and Dr. Jill Clapperton who spoke on Soil Health and Productivity. Participants were very motivated by Ivan Aguirre who spoke about how he restored his Mexico ranch by practicing Holistic Management.

Day two of the conference focused on the social and human aspect of Holistic Management. Many of the keynote speakers spoke on resiliency and how it translates into enduring spirit, higher trust, better collegiality, better staying power, more laughter and greater alignment to organizational and family goals. They spoke on our greatest resources - our human resources and offered practical, doable, strategies for building cohesion, getting the right people doing the right things, and getting the most out of each team member.

The payoff was better communication, clearer formulas for addressing challenges (continued)



Holistic Management Conference continued

and a happier workplace.

Day three provided delegates the choice to visit with a Holistic Manager in the Brandon area – Gerald Bos, a tour of the Brandon Research Station or an open bear pit session to discuss the development and promotion of Holistic Management in Canada (especially to urban and even rural children who have lost the link to agriculture).

The afternoon session on the final day was a brush up session on the principles of Holistic Management followed by a two hour low-stress livestock handling clinic with instructor Dylan Biggs.

Jane Thornton, MAFRI, says it's important to think of this as long term marketing.

'Make contacts, nurture them and then the year you have hay to sell, you at least have an in with customers south of the border.'



Wowchuk also found the time to address 100 + guests at the International Forum for Women in Dairying on the topic "Leadership for Sustainability".

The group that made the trek to Wisconsin and either joined Minister Wowchuk on her tour or manned the MFC Trade Booth included Dori Gingera-Beauchemin, Assistant Deputy Minister of MAFRI, Nick Telgelow and family, Dwayne Kletke (MFC members), Phil and Derek Friesen, PhiBer Industries, Alice Tiel, Ellen Gore and others from the Manitoba Holstein Association, Brad Havixbeck, Manitoba Trade and Investment, Larry Fischer, Farm Production Advisor and Jane Thornton Farm Production Extension Specialist, MAFRI, Wayne Digby, Executive Director, MFC, and Ed & Elaine Newfield from Winnipeg.

Larry Fischer, MAFRI, said that many people stopped by to visit the MFC booth. There were a number of delegations that also paid the MFC booth a visit i.e: China, Japan, France, Barbados & Equador to name a few. 'This is a terrific place for us to promote our hay,' said Fischer. 'It's the place to be to show that we produce high quality hay and to establish new connections with buyers.'

Both Jane Thornton, Larry Fischer commented on the number of people that came up to the booth and said they had been there before. People are definitely interested in Manitoba hay, especially since so many states have experienced droughts.

Thornton says it's important to think of this as long term marketing. 'Make contacts, nurture them and then the year you have hay to sell, you at least have an in with customers south of the border.' She noted that this year MFC collected 37 names of producers at the booth, the

Minister Wowchuk

This year, Minister Wowchuk was a welcome addition to the group of Manitobans who traveled south to Madison, Wisconsin to network with both attendees at the world-renowned fair and representatives of the U.S. and Wisconsin agricultural industry. Wowchuk spent three full days in Madison, touring World Dairy Expo, meeting fellow politicians and visiting agricultural businesses. She visited Hoard's Dairyman Farm (the test farm for Hoard's Dairyman magazine), Crave Brothers Dairy, (a local dairy/cheese facility), Rushing Waters Fisheries (a large trout aquaculture facility), Sunshine Genetics (a world renowned dairy genetics facility) and met with representatives from ENCAP, an innovative manure management company from Green Bay WI.

Minister Wowchuk met with Rod Nilsestuen, Secretary of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, as well as the U.S. Department of Agriculture staff of the Wisconsin Buy Local Program and the Dairy Value Chain Group. Further visits were held with Judy Ziewacz, Head of the Office of Energy Independence for the State of Wisconsin and Maurice Egan, Deputy Consul General from the Canadian Consulate in Chicago.

Events Review

joins Trade Mission

to World Dairy Expo



Minister Rosann Wowchuk visits Hoard's Dairy Farm (left); the oldest purebred Guernsey herd in the U.S. and test farm for information reported in Hoard's Dairyman magazine. The farm was started by WD Hoard in 1899 (former WI governor) to prove that alfalfa could be grown and wintered in the Wisconsin climate. At that time it was only being grown on the west coast.

Group Photo: (right middle); (Left to right) Phil Friesen, Alice Tiel, Brad Havixbeck, Jane Thornton, Minister Wowchuk, Elaine & Ed Newfield and Wayne Digby.

majority who said they want to be contacted by growers. 'We've been promoting Manitoba Hay at World Dairy Expo for over 16 years now and buyers know we have really good quality hay.' Something we found out though is that these interested buyers are not being contacted by our Manitoba growers. 'We really encourage producers to take a few minutes and make some contacts this year so when they're ready to sell, they've got buyers.'

This was the first year that Canadian cattle were allowed to be shown since BSE. There were some very positive comments made by WDE officials that they were glad to see Canadian cattle back at their show. There were cattle from Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec and in one class of 52 head a Quebec cow took 1st and an Ontario cow took 2nd. MFC members can contact Wayne Digby at 1-877-726-9705 for the buyer list.

Manitoba Forage
Seed Association

presents:

Alfalfa & Seed
Conference

January 11 &
12th 2009

Victoria Inn

Winnipeg, MB

Market analysis,
export trends,
insect ID, new
research & more

(204) 376-3309

Midwest Horse Fair



Alliant Energy Center, Madison, Wisconsin

This three-day event will focus on bringing world class clinicians, provide promotional opportunities for equine-related businesses, and promote the importance of the equine industry in the Midwest. Here's two examples of the events, but there's many more.

Clinicians

Craig Cameron will be one of the world class clinicians presenting at the 2009 event. A native Texan, Cameron, is considered one of the original cowboy clinicians. He is on the road more than 44 weeks a year covering 80,000 miles demonstrating the style of horsemanship that he has perfected over the last 23 years. Called the "public defender of the horse," Cameron has dedicated himself to those who educate their horses by first educating themselves.

Cameron has created a program that builds confidence and trust between rider and horse. Rather than fight the animal, he offers patience and understanding that leaves the horse wanting to do what is asked of him. According to his website www.craigcameron.com, Cameron was fortunate to meet a man named Ray Hunt who opened his eyes to the art of working through understanding when training horses. Building upon his experiences, Cameron uses a philosophy of teaching that eliminates rough handling of horses, earning him a well-deserved international following.

Million Dollar Cowgirl

Charmayne James won her first World Champion Barrel Racer title at the age of 14. She earned National Finals Rodeo qualifications for 19 consecutive years, beginning in 1984. She was National Finals Rodeo (NFR) Average Champion seven times, and was inducted in the National Cowgirl Hall of



Fame in Fort Worth, Texas in 1992.

In 1990 James became the first Million Dollar Cowgirl, and holds the honor of being the all-time leading money earner in barrel racing. James is the holder of more World Championships than any other woman in professional sports. Since retiring from mainstream rodeo competitions, she has been devoting her time to riding, training and raising horses at her Running Bay Ranch in Athens, Texas. She also travels around the country giving clinics and making appearances at equine events, and she recently finished writing a book, Charmayne James on Barrel Racing, for Western Horseman.

Mustang Challenge & Adoption

Modeled after the Extreme Mustang Makeover in Fort Worth, Texas, the Midwest Mustang Makeover trainers have 100 days to gentle their American Mustangs. The 2009 Midwest Mustang Challenge will be open to qualified trainers to apply for the opportunity to train one of the 50 wild Mustangs. If chosen, they will receive \$500 for costs relating to the hauling, training, and veterinary expenses for the Mustang in their care. They will have until the 2009 Midwest Horse Fair "SuperHorse" event, April 17-19, 2009, to have their horses trained, prepared and ready for competition. These horses will again be available for adoption by qualified bidders.

Want Free Admission?

If you are coming to the Midwest Horse Fair® and would like to earn your way in, the Fair could certainly use the help!

We require a minimum of a 3-hour shift per person. One 3-hour shift equals a one-day wristband. Three 3-hour shifts equal a weekend wristband. Some volunteer areas fill up quickly, so please send your form back early. Go to midwesthorsefair.com to get the application and see all the details.

Coming Events

Beef & Forage Seminars



2009 Manitoba Beef & Forage Week Seminars		
Location	Date	Contact the Local MAFRI Office
Eriksdale	Monday, January 26	762-5649 (Lundar)
Ste. Rose du Lac	Tuesday, January 27	447-4030 (Ste. Rose)
Holland	Wednesday, January 28	723-3232 (Treherne)
Rosa	Thursday, January 29	425-5050 (Vita)
Teulon	Friday, January 30	886-2696 (Teulon)

Seminar Topics Include:

Lessons Learned From 25 Years of Finishing Cattle Research: Tri County Steer Carcass Futurity -Darrell Busby, Field Specialist Livestock/Beef, Iowa State University

Beef Marketing Update and Outlook, Senior Market Analysts from Canfax

Beef Herd Health -Dr. Wayne Tomlinson, DVM, MAFRI

Extended Grazing Trials-Rodger Sheldon, MAFRI

Succession Planning -RBC Representatives

Manitoba Forage Council Update

Manitoba Cattle Producer's Association Update



Manitoba Forage Symposium returns.....

February 18, 2009

Southern Manitoba Convention Centre, Morris, MB.
Check mbforagecouncil.mb.ca - details will be coming soon!



Forage Bits

Co-existence Strategies for 1

Feral Nature of Alfalfa and Implications for The Co-Existence of Genetically Modified (GM) and Non-GM Alfalfa

by: Muthukumar V. Bagavathiannan (University of Manitoba) & Rene C. Van Acker (University of Guelph)

Roundup Ready (RR) alfalfa® has approval for unconfined release in Canada allowing it to be commercialized. Because RR alfalfa is genetically modified (GM), organic and conventional alfalfa growers in Canada have concerns about the possibility for adventitious presence (AP) of GM alfalfa (or GM traits) in their crops and the agronomic issues and potential market loss that may be associated with AP of GM. Feral alfalfa populations occurring in natural and semi-natural habitats can act to increase the risks of the AP of GM alfalfa in non-GM alfalfa.

GM traits can escape to non-GM alfalfa via a) pollen escape through outcrossing [pollen mediated gene flow (PMGF)] and b) seed escape.

Alfalfa is an outcrossing crop where pollination is facilitated by insects (primarily bees). Bee mediated long distance dispersal of pollen from alfalfa seed and hay production fields has been confirmed for distances over 1 km (Amand et al., 2000), but pollen-mediated outcrossing tends to fall below 1% at distances greater than 200-500 m.

Feral alfalfa plants are commonly observed in road sides and other natural and semi-natural habitats in Canada. Studies in Manitoba revealed roadside alfalfa populations to be self-sustaining and truly feral and surveys revealed the widespread occurrence of feral populations in alfalfa growing regions with mean numbers of populations per km in Hanover, MacDonald and Springfield municipalities of 1.68, 1.32 and 0.21, respectively. On average, feral alfalfa populations were located within 87m (MacDonald), 210m (Hanover) and 328m (Springfield) of cultivated alfalfa fields. PMGF between cropped and feral populations has been confirmed at a distance of 230m with an outcrossing frequency of 92%, demonstrating that feral alfalfa can act as a bridge for GM trait dispersal to and from cultivated fields. Road verge management including mowing substantially reduces seed output but plants that escape mowing in June, continue to grow and produce mature seeds. Applications of 2, 4-D controls alfalfa seedlings and young established plants, but effective alfalfa seed banks have also been identified as common along roadsides in Manitoba and these can re-establish feral populations.

Stewardship approaches for GM and non-GM alfalfa coexistence

a) Minimizing pollen mediated gene flow

i) Seed production fields: Given the evidence of long distance PMGF in alfalfa, the commercial production of GM alfalfa may require non-GM alfalfa growers to increase isolation distances. Frequent testing of seed sources will also be required to provide assurance of the effectiveness of isolation approaches.

ii) Hay production fields: Extra vigilance will be required to prevent flowering in hay fields and farmers who have neighbors growing GM alfalfa may need to consider minimum isolation distances (perhaps 200m) to reduce the risk of PMGF.

b) Minimizing seed mediated gene flow

Farm equipments must be cleaned prior to and after use in any GM alfalfa field. Alfalfa seed (especially GM alfalfa seed) should be transported in spill proof containers to avoid seed escape and the establishment of feral GM alfalfa populations in road verges. The effective control of escaped and feral alfalfa populations can help to prevent predator mediated seed movement.

c) Sustained stewardship practices

Establishing region-wide stewardship practices will be necessary to prevent gene flow between GM and non-GM alfalfa. If GM alfalfa is commercialized, it would be helpful if GM alfalfa growers inform neighbors that they are growing GM alfalfa. Individual growers may want to monitor volunteer alfalfa populations to ensure that populations from one stand do not persist to flower in subsequent stands. In addition, all alfalfa growers (both GM and non-GM) could work collaboratively to identify and control escaped and feral alfalfa populations both on their farm sites and along roadsides. Special collaborative programs with municipalities, including weed supervisors, may be required in order to facilitate the management of these populations. Cooperative efforts from GM growers would greatly facilitate the coexistence of GM and non-GM crops.

Roundup Ready® Alfalfa

by: Todd Younglans
Licensing Business Manager Monsanto Canada Inc.

Monsanto is a strong advocate of dialogue and welcomes the opportunity to provide perspective on the report, “The Feral Nature of Alfalfa and Implications for the Co-existence of Genetically Modified (GM) and Non-GM Alfalfa” by Bagavathiannan and Van Acker.

Overall, Monsanto believes that much of what has been presented by Bagavathiannan and Van Acker in terms of potential coexistence strategies is worth consideration. However, we also believe – as does Forage Genetics International, the company responsible for any commercial decision related to Roundup Ready alfalfa – that recently published data by the National Alfalfa and Forage Alliance (NAFA) and Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST) offers the most comprehensive information on the potential for gene flow in Roundup Ready Alfalfa® (RRA).

The CAST publication on gene flow in alfalfa states that the risk of pollen-mediated gene flow is near zero for hay to hay fields. This is the most significant interface of alfalfa fields from a coexistence perspective. (Source: Council for Agricultural Science and Technology. 2008. Gene Flow in Alfalfa). In their report, Bagavathiannan and Van Acker state it is important that alfalfa growers recognize the various routes of gene escape from cultivated fields. They identify the possible means of gene escape as:

a) Pollen mediated gene flow between hay and feral alfalfa populations;

As noted in the CAST report, insect feeding, foraging by wildlife, or mowing will decrease the number of feral flowers along roadsides and ditches compared to a cultivated and managed plants. Most seeds formed on feral plants likely would perish because they would fail to germinate successfully, to compete, or to establish outside of cultivation. (Source: Council for Agricultural Science and Technology. 2008. Gene Flow in Alfalfa).

The study quoted from Amand et al. 2000 - this should be considered a worst case scenario for hay-to-feral gene flow potential because of the design of the trials. Specifically:

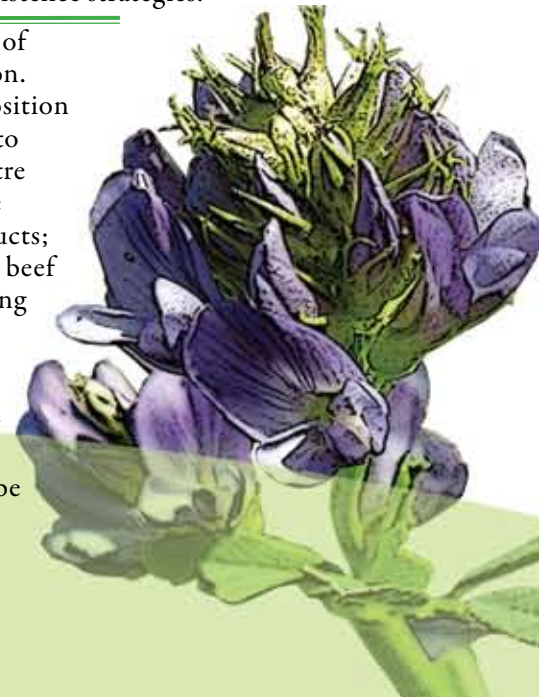
1. The trap plant groups were placed in a single path at regular intervals along one edge of a field. Feral alfalfa populations are much more random.
2. All trap plants were of the same genotype, thus they were unlikely to self pollinate which biases against short distance pollination. (Source: Council for Agricultural Science and Technology. 2008. Gene Flow in Alfalfa).

b) Seed escape during transport, harvest and farming practices. The report’s suggestion that seed escape can occur during transport, harvesting and other farming practices is not new information. These are all common stewardship concerns for any co-existence strategy in any crop. We agree that growers need to manage seed carefully at all levels of crop production so that seed remains in the intended areas. We would also agree that careful transport, handling and cleaning of equipment is required for coexistence to be successful. While no decision has been made with respect to the introduction of a commercial RRA, we welcome continued research and commentary on possible co-existence strategies.

MFC's RRA Position

The possible introduction of glyphosate tolerant alfalfa (RRA) is of concern to the forage industry and has raised a great deal of discussion. MFC formed a committee to study the issue and has formulated a position supported by the board. MFC is very concerned about and opposed to the introduction of glyphosate tolerant alfalfa (RRA). Concerns centre on: the potential for loss of gene confinement; the potential negative impact on export market opportunities for forage seed and hay products; the potential negative impact on organic markets including milk and beef products; and the potential negative impact of the loss of glyphosate as a tool for terminating stands of alfalfa in Manitoba and limited agronomic need.

We therefore requested that the CFIA reconsider the position taken with regard to the introduction of RRA and that immediate action be taken to place a moratorium on further field testing and trials in Canada until a complete environmental and economic impact assessment can be completed with all sectors of the forage industry and that arrangements be made for the destruction of existing field trial stands. Correspondence regarding the MFC position has been submitted to CFIA, the Minister of AAFC and the Minister of MAFRI.



Chinese Herders participate in training

Coordinators train grassland and livestock management/farm management skills

by: Yang Jing (Cindy), Project Officer, China-Canada Sustainable Agriculture Development Project based in Urumqi, Xinjiang

The conflict between rangeland degradation and a herder's eagerness for higher income by raising more animals is the major constraint for sustainable development in Gansu and Xinjiang. Long-term overstocking of the rangeland has caused a steady income decline and created a negative impact on the grassland environment and its sustainability. Six herders from the Sustainable Agriculture Development Project (SADP) pilot counties in Gansu province and myself, Yang Jing (participant and interpreter) from the Xinjiang SADP field office were selected to participate in this 3-week training course in Canada. The practical aspect was designed to immerse the participants in all of the grassland, livestock, and farm business management skills required to run a sustainable grazing based livestock operation upon returning to Gansu.

The participants spent the majority of their time on three community pastures in Saskatchewan and on farms in Manitoba. During the visits to the community pastures many subjects were covered including: watering systems, fencing, livestock distribution, rotational grazing, brush control, and a rangeland health monitoring system. Beef, sheep, hog, and goat operations were visited as well as several other farm businesses. Specific practices demonstrated to the group included a harvesting and stored forage system, direct marketing and manure management. The tour also included

This was a truly hands-on learning experience. The participants gained knowledge about production, marketing, sustainable grassland and environmental management systems. All three Canadian coordinators: Ron Moss, PFRA Dauphin, Bev and Kevin Yaworski, and Fraser and Bev Stewart were deeply impressed by the enthusiastic and attentive participants as well as the rapport between both Canadian and Chinese participants. 'We believe this was by far the best team that has been sent to Canada,' commented Fraser Stewart, the coordinator for the last week.

Living with ranchers/farmers, visiting local schools and museums plus watching sporting events was another opportunity for participants to understand Canadian culture.

The participants too, were very impressed by what they saw during their visit, especially the devotion and conscientiousness of technicians and extension personnel who work with farmer/ranchers to improve their operation, the hospitality of local people, the scientific approach of farmer/ranchers who run their operation, and the awareness of people from all walks about environmental issues and the conservation of natural resources.



Examining forages!



Hands on fencing training.



Solar panel presentation.



We are the best!

several agribusinesses; St. Rose Auction Mart, Interlake Meat Processing Plant, Manitoba Food Development Center, Farmers Market, and a Veterinarian. Yak producers also learned about the Manitoba Forage Council model and have since started a White Yak Association in Tianzhu County, Gansu.

AAFC- Brandon Research Centre

Brandon Research Centre to Evaluate Distillers' Grains as Feed Supplement

With support from the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association, the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Matching Industry Initiative, and Husky Energy in Minnedosa, the Beef Research Group will evaluate the use of distillers' grains as a supplement for wintering beef cows.

Distillers' grains and related products from the production of beverage alcohol have a reputation as a high quality protein source for ruminants and have been a valued feed for dairy cattle. Limited supplies kept distillers' grains prices high enough to prevent their economical use as a feed for beef cattle. The increase in ethanol fuel production has increased supply, thereby raising an opportunity for its use for beef cattle. Increasing feed grain prices are another incentive for producers to look at distillers' grains for beef cattle.

Existing distillers' grains research is on its use as high energy feed in grain-based feedlots. Grain-based feedlot trials have found that distillers' grains and related products can be used at levels up to approximately 40% of diet dry matter, with maximum feed efficiency often occurring at approximately 20% of diet dry matter. The limit on the inclusion level is related to the fat and sulphur content of distillers' grains. Excessive fat in ruminant diets impairs fermentation of feed in the rumen, and excessive sulphur can be reduced to hydrogen sulphide (H₂S) and induce thiamine deficiency causing polioencephalomalacia. With varying fat and sulphur content of distillers' grains and other diet ingredients, including water, the exact inclusion level limit also varies on a case to case basis. The optimal inclusion level of approximately 20% results from a combination of the high-energy value of the distillers' grains, often comparable to common cereal grains, and improved digestion of other diet ingredients.

What has not been well investigated is the value of distillers' grains in forage-based diets for beef cattle. A plausible scenario of interest to Manitoba beef cattle producers is the need to supplement marginal quality forage to wintering beef cows. A conventional choice to supplement the forage would be to provide a limited amount of cereal grain. Using distillers' grains has several possible advantages:

- there is no need to grind or roll before feeding, reducing equipment requirements,
- surplus nutrients (N, P, K, and S) can serve as fertilizer when cows are penned and,
- low starch content reduces the risk of grain overload, acidosis, and bloat.

The project will consist of a production trial and metabolism trial. Each will have an un-supplemented control treatment, a barley grain supplemented (approximately 20% of diet dry matter) conventional treatment, and a distillers' grains supplemented (also approximately 20% of diet dry matter) treatment.

The production trial will focus on assessing voluntary intake, in particular to what extent the barley grain and distillers' grains supplements affect forage intake, and any changes in cow weight or backfat gain. Although intended to reflect more extensive feeding scenarios, the trial will be carried out in a feedlot setting to permit more controlled measures of feed intake.

The metabolism trial will use individually penned and fed cows to determine diet digestibility and methane production. Digestibility is of interest as supplementation with barley grain can result in reduced rumen pH and impaired fibre digestibility, reducing the efficacy of the supplement. Methane production is of interest as increasing the fat content of the diet, within limit, by supplementing distillers' grains or other lipid sources can reduce methane production in the rumen and increase the efficiency with which digestible energy is used.

These trials will start as soon as the cows become available from a grazing trial they are currently involved in and will last for 2 months. The trials will be repeated again next winter with final results expected to be summarized, analyzed, and interpreted for late 2010.



2008/2009 Directors

Seasons
Greetings
from
your
Board
of
Directors



Jim Lintott, Dugald - Chair
Don Green, Fisher Branch - Vice Chair
Nevin Bachmeier, Kleefeld - Director
Russel Chapman, Virden - Director
Clark Combs, Deloraine - Director
Ken Harms, Snowflake - Director
Chris Kletke, Brunkild - Director
Fraser Stewart, Selkirk - Director
Michael Thiele, Shoal Lake - Director
Ken Wright, MacGregor - Director
Peter deJong, LaBroquerie - Director
Glenn Friesen, Carman - MAFRI Rep
Marcel Gousseau, Oak Bluff - MCPA Rep
Ken Gross, Brandon - Industry Rep - Ducks Unlimited Canada
Gary Halwas, Russell - Processor Rep
Heinz Nolting, Rosser - MB Forage Seed Assoc. Rep
Kim Ominski, Winnipeg - U of M Animal Science Rep
Shannon Scott, Brandon - AAFC Brandon Research Ctr. Rep
Eric Thornhill, Dugald - MB Sheep Association
Wayne Digby, Brandon, Executive Director

The Forage Focus is the quarterly newsletter for the Manitoba Forage Council.

Writer/Design/Layout: Corie Arbuckle
Masthead: Denice Girdner
Editors: Wayne Digby, Glenn Friesen,
Pam Iwanchysko

Manitoba Forage Council
125 Patterson Crescent
Brandon, MB
R7A 6T7
Phone: 204.726.9393
Fax: 204.726.9703
mfc@mbforagecouncil.mb.ca
www.mbforagecouncil.mb.ca



Directors

MFC
MANITOBA FORAGE COUNCIL