Manitoba Forage Council

Forage Focus

Volume 1, Issue 2

Summer 2003

IT'S SUPERBOWL TIME AGAIN…

The World Forage Analysis Superbowl, that is! ***September 5 is the entry deadline*** for this foremost forage quality contest that culminates at World Dairy Expo, September 30 to October 4 in Madison, Wisconsin. This year's top Superbowl prizes include a season's use of a forage wagon, disc mower-conditioner, TMR mixer, silage bagger, wheel rake or feeder wagon – as well as numerous other prices such as alfalfa seed and forage inoculants.

The Manitoba Forage Council urges interested producers to enter. Winning in this competition is not only a great marketing tool for the individual producer, but also for Manitoba's entire forage industry. In the past, Manitoba has always placed the top 10, and in 1998, Manitoba's André Grenier received the grand champion designation, you may recall.

Forage producers can enter in either the Dairy Division, open to growers with milk production information, or the Commercial Division, open to all other growers. The Dairy Division is divided into hay, haylage and corn silage classes, while the Commercial Division has hay and bale silage classes.

To enter, your hay sample and entry form must be delivered to AgSource Cooperative Services, Bonduel, WI by September 5, 2003. Complete address and entry form are available from the Manitoba Forage Council or by visiting the Superbowl sponsor's website at www.agsource.com .

More World Dairy Expo Information on Page 8.

Grazing School Replaced by Manitoba Forage Week

In light of the current market situation caused by the BSE crisis and the drought in some areas of the province, the Manitoba Grazing School which is usually held early December will be cancelled this year. The Grazing School committee felt that the financial impact of these situations would make it very difficult for many producers to participate in the two day event.

However, another informative event – Manitoba Forage Week – is scheduled for October 6 to 10 in five regional locations throughout the province (locations to be announced). It will feature a day-long livestock seminar; some of the topics covered will include: winter-feeding options for feeding your herd/flock; annual forages to consider for next year; drought strategies for next year; coping with stress; economic opportunities for Manitoba forage producers.

Stay tuned for registration and location details. See you at Manitoba Forage week! For more information, contact the Manitoba Forage Council at 889-5699 or your local Manitoba Agriculture office.

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NOTE:

The Provincial Hay Competition will take place at the Manitoba Forage Symposium in March, 2004. There will be three categories: Dairy, Horse and Commercial. Please hold a sample for this competition! Specific Details will be announced in the Fall.

Ducks Unlimited Provides Drought Support

Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) made headlines in August when it tendered additional acres of its lands (over and above the amount usually tendered) to producers for haying in response to the drought conditions in southwestern Manitoba. But how much land was that?

According to Rick Andrews, head of DUC Conservation Programs (Manitoba), tendering of additional acres actually started in July along with regular tendering, and new acres were added over the summer as the drought worsened. Total tendered acres in14 rural municipalities were 7,393 – of which 5,448, or 74 per cent, were a direct response to the drought, he said.

"There is clearly a need in southwest Manitoba now, and we are doing everything we can to support our partners in land management," said Bob Grant, DUC's manager of field operations in Brandon. "At this time, our uplands can sustain a limited amount of agricultural harvesting without causing long-term damage to their productivity as waterfowl habitat."

DUC's Drought Response Program is a Prairie-wide initiative; all revenues generated are re-invested into DUC conservation programs in the province where the funds originate. These programs include grazing management and forage establishment, among others.

Beware of Green Feed!

"Acute nitrate poisoning can occur in as little as four hours..."

A potential for nitrate poisoning exists in drought-stricken areas of the province as producers turn to green feed to make up for hay shortages while they wait for cattle to start moving again.

Manitoba Agriculture cow-calf specialist Melinda German says she expects to see significant elevations of nitrate levels in green feed, a situation that occurs when crops – particularly cereals and weeds – are stressed. The safe level is 0.5 per cent nitrate.

She says nitrate poisoning results in a lack of oxygen in the blood, and can result in death or abortions in pregnant animals. Even if the animal survives the poisoning, it may abort several days later as the fetus dies from lack of oxygen.

Acute nitrate poisoning can occur in as little as four hours, and signs include gasping, rapid respiration, muscle tremors, rapid and weak pulse, weakness, and terminal convulsions.

Ms. German advises producers to have a quick – and free – spot test done at any ag rep office, and if the results are positive, she urges them to have further analysis done at any lab (see related article in this issue) to find out what the actual nitrate levels are. The cost is around $40 for a lab analysis (including complete feed and nitrate) but only $10 for a nitrate test. It will be well worth it because if there is tainted feed, it can be blended off with other feed.

For more information, contact your local ag rep.

Grazing Clubs Up and Running

Last spring, through The Manitoba Grazing Club Initiative, the Manitoba Forage Council helped establish 20 grazing clubs province wide. As the clubs get up and running, each one is being provided with a well-stocked reference library. If you are interested in joining one of the clubs, or if you would like access to its library, contact the technical advisor listed below.

CLUB	TECHNICAL ADVISOR	WORK	ADDRESS	PHONE	EMAIL
Alonsa Grassland Association	Dennis Beernaert	MAF	Box 532, Gladstone R0J 0T0	385-6632	dbeernaert@gov.mb.ca
Arborg Grazing Club	Allen Kokolski	MAF	Box 2000, Arborg ROC OAO	376-3301	akokolski@gov.mb.ca
Argyle Farm Progress Association Inc.	Rejan Picard	MAF	Box 189, Somerset R0G 2L0	744-4053	rpicard@gov.mb.ca
Benchland Forage Consortium	Dennis Beernaert	MAF	Box 532, Gladstone R0J 0T0	385-6632	dbeernaert@gov.mb.ca
Border Grazing Club	Wayne Cowan	WCRR	14 Wadham Bay, Winnipeg R3T 3K3	261-4120	wcowan@mts.net
Cartwright Grazing Club	Wayne Cowan	WCRR	14 Wadham Bay, Winnipeg R3T 3K3	261-4120	wcowan@mts.net
Delta Grazing Club	Shawn Cabak	MAF	25 Tupper St. N., Portage R1N 3K1	239-3353	scabak@gov.mb.ca
Fisher Grazing Club	Dan Roche	MAF	Box 40, Fisher Branch R0C 0Z0	372-6526	droche@gov.mb.ca
Interlake Grassland Group	Kevin Yaworski	MAF	Box 260, Ashern R0C 0E0	768-2781	kyaworski@gov.mb.ca
Lawrence Cattleman Coop	Rodger Sheldon	MAF	Box 180, Ste. Rose du Lac R0L 1S0	447-2116	rsheldon@gov.mb.ca
Lizard Lake Grazing Club	Wayne Cowan	WCRR	14 Wadham Bay, Winnipeg R3T 3K3	261-4120	wcowan@mts.net
Lizard Lake Grazing Club	Vicki East	DUC	Box 1240, Killarney R0K 1G0	523-5505	v_east@ducks.ca
Meadowhen Cattleman Coop	Rodger Sheldon	MAF	Box 180, Ste. Rose du Lac R0L 1S0	447-2116	rsheldon@gov.mb.ca
Miniota and Area Beef Producers	John Patterson	MAF	Box 50, Hamiota ROM 0T0	764-2767	jpatterson@gov.mb.ca
Minnedosa Beef and Grazing Club	Wayne Cowan	WCRR	14 Wadham Bay, Winnipeg R3T 3K3	261-4120	wcowan@mts.net
Peguis Grazing Club	Dan Roche	MAF	Box 40, Fisher Branch R0C 0Z0	372-6526	droche@gov.mb.ca
Reston and Area Grazing Club	Marc Boulanger	MAF	Box 850, Souris R0K 2C0	483-2153	mboulanger@gov.mb.ca
Reston and Area Grazing Club	Shane Dobson	MAF	Box 519, Melita R0M 1L0	522-3256	sdobson@gov.mb.ca
Shoal Lake Grazing Club	Wayne Cowan	WCRR	14 Wadham Bay, Winnipeg R3T 3K3	261-4120	wcowan@mts.net
South Interlake Land Management Association	Kevin Yaworski	MAF	Box 260, Ashern R0C 0E0	768-2781	kyaworski@gov.mb.ca
Stuartburn Piney Ag Development Association	Wally Happychuck	MAF	Box 10, Vita R0A 2K0	425-5055	WHappychuk@gov.mb.ca
Woodworth Grazing Club	Wayne Cowan	WCRR	14 Wadham Bay, Winnipeg R3T 3K3	261-4120	wcowan@mts.net

Note: MAF – Manitoba Agriculture and Food; DUC – Ducks Unlimited Canada; WCRR – WC Rural Resources Inc.

Coping With the BSE Crisis

Information on federal or provincial assistance programs:

Melinda German – 945-5402

Michael Buchen – 945-7691

Farm and Rural Stress Line:

1-866-FOR-FARM or 1-866-367-3276

AFFILIATED MEMBERS UPDATE

Manitoba Milk Producers Affected by BSE

The BSE emergency is also having an affect on the dairy industry, points out Dick Heapy, the Manitoba Milk Producers rep on the MFC board.

Last year, Canada sold 82,000 replacement animals to the U.S. market, he said, and this year the animals are here but the market isn't. And that means producers have a lot of animals to feed.

"They're just holding them now," Mr. Heapy said. "There is an over-supply and there will be feed shortages if something doesn't happen soon."

In addition, the domestic market for bull calves and cull cows is pretty much non-existent, he notes, with calves selling for as little as five dollars each – although he has heard them go for as much as $50.

Some producers have pooled their efforts and shipped cull cows to Quebec, Ontario and Saskatchewan packing plants, he notes.

Sheep Producers Explain Effects of BSE Crisis

When Manitoba Sheep Association (MSA) directors met with Agriculture and Food Minister Rosann Wowchuk recently to brief her on the state of the sheep industry as a result of the BSE crises, they advised her that sheep producers are equally affected by the border closure because approximately 40 per cent of Manitoba sheep are normally shipped south.

The MSA directors pointed out that sheep and lambs are at extremely low to negligible risk for carrying BSE, and stressed the vital importance of getting the US border open to sheep and lambs at the earliest opportunity. If this does not happen by mid-September, the industry will face disaster, they predicted.

As things stand now, Manitoba feedlots are not filling their pens because of uncertainty as to when the border will open. In addition, lamb prices have begun to fall in eastern markets, and lambs from western Canada are being discriminated against by being bumped to the end of the sale line instead of being sold in order of arrival at the yards. The Minister indicated she would take this up with her Ontario counterpart.

The delegation also discussed their frustration with the compensation package for slaughter lambs and the BSE feed assistance program. For more information contact Graham Rannie at 204-532-2008.

Ducks Unlimited Starts Eight Grazing Clubs

With several program delivery partners and more than 500 participating ranchers, Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) has worked to establish eight grazing clubs in Manitoba and positively influence 95,000 acres of pastureland, its program organizers recently announced.

The clubs are increasing the economic potential of these important grasslands, while improving cattle health, water quality, and wildlife habitat, say DUC officials.

The grazing clubs are informal gatherings of cattle producers to discuss pasture management issues such as stocking rates, rotation, water systems, grass varieties, grazing native pasture, grazing alfalfa, spring grazing, and fall grazing. Each group's agenda is driven by its needs – but each grazing club facilitates technology transfer and provides a support mechanism to producers adopting new management practices.

Innovative and cost-effective remote watering systems have been a major focus of most groups. DUC contributes up to $1,000 towards the development of a livestock watering network – either solar powered or pipeline plow systems – for cattle producers to supply their herds with clean water.

DUC's program partners include the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association, Manitoba Agriculture and Food, Manitoba Rural Adaptation Council, and ProMark Seed.

For more details, contact DUC agrologists Vicki East (523-5505) or Michael Thiele (867-5228).

"Grazing clubs positively influence 95,000 acres of pastureland…"

Which Lab to Choose for Forage Testing?

Producers expressed concerns at last spring's Hay Marketing Symposium over the lack of Relative Forage Quality (RFQ) analysis in Manitoba, and asked the Manitoba Forage Council to investigate lab alternatives. We have done an in-depth survey of what's out there, and the information is now available.

In a nutshell, RFQ analysis is being offered only by American labs. There were three American and two Canadian labs surveyed, and costs range from $10 $32 U.S., and $22 or $32 Canadian – depending on the service you select. Turnaround time for U.S. labs is same or next day, while Canadian labs seem to be slower.

The final word is that producers selling to the U.S. market are indicating that American buyers are more comfortable with the analysis of a lab they are familiar with. In addition, more and more American buyers are requesting RFQ analysis.

For a detailed comparison of lab options, contact the Manitoba Forage Council at 889-5699.

"...RFQ analysis is being offered only by American labs."

Wooing the Mexican Market: Why It's A Good Idea

The Manitoba Forage Council has been negotiating with a Mexican buyer for some time now in order to develop a market for Manitoba hay in Mexico. At this time, the MFC executive thought it might be a good ideal to review for members the reasons behind the efforts that have gone into this project.

Clark Combs, a board member and forage grower in the Deloraine area who has been heavily involved in the work, says he became aware of the Mexicans' need for hay when he visited the Torreon area in 2000. He discovered that dairy herds are expanding to meet an anticipated population explosion in the next 10 to 15 years, while aquifer levels are dropping. What little water there is will go to the animals, and not into growing feed.

"There is a huge opportunity," he said. "The only problem could be the cost of shipping, but we're going into Texas and staying competitive now, so why not a little further south?"

Mr. Combs notes that the MFC has targeted the Torreon and Monterrey areas of Mexico because they not only have a high need for hay, but they are situated in the northern part of the country.

Serious negotiations are underway with Groupo Industrial Lala, a dairy corporation that services and buys from 220 Mexican dairies, for an initial trial shipment of Manitoba hay, said Mr. Combs. He anticipates this will take place in November or December, when the company will be willing to pay higher, winter feed prices.

In the mean time, Mr. Combs is working with CP rail on a plan to use outmoded rail cars that were slated to be mothballed, in order to get good freight rates. The cars will be packed with 150 large square bales each for maximum weight efficiency, and this will eliminate the need for compacting – a procedure that would drive the selling price up too high.

"We need to do this now because it takes a while to build up a relationship," he said. "If we don't, someone else will come along and move into the market."

Group Industrial Lala has a 20 per cent share of the Mexican milk market, Mr. Combs noted.

Update: Forage Cultivar Evaluation

Cutting is complete at the 34 sites in the cultivar evaluation program and agronomic/nutritional data is now being compiled, says testing co-ordinator Dave Campbell.

Mr. Campbell, a crop specialist with Manitoba Agriculture and Food, notes that there will be a change in the distribution of this year's results. While they will still be published in Seed Manitoba, the publication will now be produced and distributed by the Farmer's Independent Weekly. Watch for it on December 11.

The Manitoba Forage Council coordinates the program, in partnership with Manitoba Agriculture and Food, Covering New Ground and the Agri-Food Research and Development Initiative (ARDI).

Processor's Corner

Timothy Outlook

Prices for timothy hay are expected to be less than the record-high prices of last year because the increased demand is no longer there, especially from central Alberta where the huge timothy acreage suffered drastically from two years of drought. This year, Alberta has produced a relatively good crop, particularly in the Peace River region where the yields and quality are excellent. The northwestern USA has also had a good crop.

Prices are expected to be $60 to $70 less per tonne for higher grades, but it is predicted that lower grades will hold their value. A reduction of $20 per tonne is the expected maximum on lower grades.

Manitoba Agriculture and Food forage specialist Kevin Yaworski anticipates, however, that in the long term demand will still be strong for timothy. Japan will continue to import the same amount, and the increased demand from Korea and other places will continue to make timothy hay for export a good cash crop, he says.

New Hog Manure Research Will Have Far-Reaching Benefits

At press time of this publication, a team of researchers at the University of Manitoba, led by Dr. Kim Ominski, had just received funding from the Manitoba Rural Adaptation Council for an extensive research project that will investigate the effects of hog manure on forage. It will look at pasture productivity, cattle productivity, greenhouse gas production, soil nutrient profile, and potential bacteria transmission from manure to forage and animals.

This major project will be established on land owned and operated by a major pork producer in Western Canada.

Dr. Ominski, assistant professor with the U of M, notes that the creation of this site will give researchers, commodity groups and extension personnel the opportunity to identify and promote best management practices as they relate to the three major areas of concern – pasture performance, animal performance, and environmental sustainability. In addition, by increasing the potential for producers to benefit from a reduction in greenhouse gas emissons, the project will improve the productivity, profitability and environmental sustainability of the cattle and hog sector in the prairie region.

The project will involve manure application in the spring and fall to rotationally grazed forage systems, a well as to harvested forage systems – and that will mean the opportunity to explore the potential benefits associated with removal of excess nutrients from the grassland system in the form of hay.

Project partners include the University of Manitoba, Manitoba Cattle Producers Association, Manitoba Milk Producers, Manitoba Forage Council, Manitoba Pork Council, Manitoba Agriculture and Food, and Hytek Enterprises. The project has also received funding from the Manitoba Livestock Manure Management Initiative, the Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Fund, the Beef Cattle Research Council, and the Canadian Agri-Food Research Council.

Pass the Specialty Beef!

Pasture finishing has been shown to enhance the levels of conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) and omega-3 fatty acids (O3FA) in beef, and these fatty acids have been shown to reduce the incidence of heart disease, cancer and obesity in humans. However, pasture finishing may result in inconsistent beef grades.

On the other hand, when animals are brought off pasture for finishing and are switched from a forage to a grain diet, the levels of CLA and O3FA drop.

A cutting-edge project funded by the Manitoba Rural Adaptation Council (MRAC) and co-ordinated by the Manitoba Forage Council in cooperation with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) is aiming to enhance the properties of pasture-fed beef and create a specialty beef product for a niche market.

The goal of the project is to develop finishing diets that will prevent a drop in CLA and O3FA levels while maintaining a high grading, said AAFC's Dr. Shannon Scott who is leading the work.

Whole sunflower seeds will be tested in half of the test diets, because research by Dr. Mir of the Lethbridge Research Centre in Alberta has shown that sunflower seed oil increases CLA levels in feedlot cattle. In addition, carnitine, a vitamin-like compound, will be added to half of the diets because it has been shown to increase fat deposition and marbling in feedlot cattle that results in higher grading.

If successful, this approach will enable producers to maximize the use of forages on pasture, while minimizing off-pasture finishing time and the use of concentrates in the production system, Dr. Scott said.

In order to follow the effects of the proposed diets on levels of CLA and O3FA in beef, 48 steers will be brought off pasture and fed one of four finishing diets (with or without sunflower seeds and with or without carnitine) for up to 84 days. Every 28 days, a group of sixteen steers will be shipped and ribeye steaks will be collected after slaughter for analysis of CLA and O3FA levels in the meat – as well as for grading attributes.

Sixteen steers will be also be shipped right off pasture in order to determine the starting levels of CLA and O3FA in the beef.

Dr. Scott anticipates the research will result in a beef production model that is sustainable in every sense of the word, and will also suppress the production of methane gas because of the enhanced level of oil in the cattle's diet. Results are expected in the new year, and will be available from the Manitoba Forage Council.

Partner organizations in this project are Manitoba Agriculture and Food, Manitoba Cattle Producers Association, University of Manitoba, Prairie Sun Seeds/Fraser Ag Services, Lonza Group Inc., and the Beef Cattle Research Council.

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Join the MFC at World Dairy Expo

The Manitoba Forage Council is still in need of producers to help promote Manitoba Forage at the display at World Dairy Expo September 30-October 4. If you are interested to help out at the booth, your travel (via van) and accommodation will be covered. It's a great experience and one of the best ways there is to market our forage industry. Call Roberta Currah today for more information 889-5699.

If you would like to attend World Dairy Expo as a visitor, and are interested in seminars, here is the line-up:

- A.M-Harvested Vs. P.M.-Harvested Hay or Haylage – Oct. 1
- Forecasting Forage Quality of Standing Alfalfa and Corn Silage – Oct. 2
- Conventional Conditioning Vs. Super Conditioning Vs. Maceration – Oct. 3
- The New Relative Forage Quality Index – Oct.3
- Corn Silage Production and Dairy Cow Performance – Oct. 4

Protein in Alfalfa Hay and Haylage: Research Breakthroughs – Oct. 4.

For further information, visit www.worlddairyexpo.com/htl.main.cfm or call 608-224-6455.

Mark Your Calendar!

World Dairy Expo

September 30 to October 4, Madison, Wisconsin

The Manitoba Forage Council, in conjunction with Manitoba Agriculture and Food, will once again be promoting Manitoba's forage products at our display booth.

Manitoba Forage Week 2003 *Tentative Locations:* October 6 - Holland, October 7 - Ste. Rose du Lac, October 8 - Pipestone, October 9 - Camper and October 10 Teulon

Livestock Expo November 6 through 8, Brandon

All About Beef and Forage Seminars

November 18 – Russell, November 19 – Swan River, November 20 – The Pas

Beef and Forage Week January 12 through 16, 2004

Manitoba Ag Days January 20-22, 2004

Manitoba Forage Symposium March 23 to 24, 2004 Winnipeg - including Provincial Hay Competition Details to be announced.