



Exciting New Tools from ARD and ATTN Young Farmers! Make Your Voice Heard!

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COUNTRY
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FORAGE

The Nutrient Loading Calculator

Extensive winter feeding has been promoted to ranchers for many years now. Winter feeding through bale grazing, wind rows and feed troughs has the potential to keep a cow herd out on the land throughout the winter and can distribute nutrients more evenly across a landscape. These nutrients can be used to support abundant plant growth in the following growing season. Many ranchers across Alberta have adopted remote winter feeding practices and have benefited from these nutrient additions and the subsequent reductions in yardage, feeding and manure hauling costs. However, now cattle ranchers have access to a tool that will tell them exactly how much nitrogen and phosphorous they add to land through different winter feeding regimes. This tool, developed through provincial-federal partnerships of the Agriculture Departments across western Canada, will become available to ranchers early in 2013.

The nutrient loading calculator is essentially a pre-programmed excel spreadsheet. A rancher can start with either cow data or feed data and enters this information into the spreadsheet. Cow data includes number of cows, average weight and anticipated days of feeding. Feed data includes type of feeding regime (bale grazing, wind rows or feed troughs), primary and secondary bale types and type of supplemental feed. The calculator will even calculate the number of acres required and the appropriate spacing of bales for a beneficial spread of nutrients in a bale grazing scenario. The calculator assumes that all nutrients in the feed are deposited on site in the form of manure and urine, with the exception of those which are retained by the animal through weight gain. The calculator then gives the user a lbs/acre estimate of the nitrogen and phosphorous applied to the winter feeding site. Depending on current market values for commercial fertilizers, a rancher can easily determine the monetary value of this 'free' soil nutrition.

The end goal of this tool is to help ranchers achieve target animal densities per acre so that beneficial rates of nitrogen and phosphorous are applied to the land. When excess nutrients are applied through an overly intensive winter feeding program, they typically leach off of the land through winter snow melt and subsequent rainfall. This loss is ultimately an economic loss for the rancher and turns a valuable resource into a potential pollutant to neighboring watersheds. An excess of nutrients left on the land can also be a problem: excess nitrogen will cause cereal crops to lodge and an overabundance of salts impairs plant growth. An emphasis of the nutrient loading calculator is to demonstrate the importance of rotating wintering sites and returning to a previously used site only once nutrient deficiencies show up in either a soil test or in plant appearance. It is an extremely valuable tool for producers seeking to pair livestock with perennial or annual cropping systems for improved management and retention of on-farm resources.

The Winter Site Assessment Tool

A related tool also developed by our provincial and federal agricultural specialists is the winter site assessment tool. Extensive winter feeding poses a potential for excess nutrients, pathogens and sediments to become pollutants. The biggest risk is to water resources. Groundwater can be contaminated by polluted leachate infiltrating rapidly through soils that are formed of coarse materials—such as gravel. A lot of nutrients are also lost in snow melt. The ground is still frozen and dead or dormant growth has little potential to retain the nutrients shedding off the landscape in spring run off. The risk of surface water contamination is determined by the distance between the site and the nearest riparian area and the severity of slope the site lies on. With proper management, extensive winter feeding can be a tremendous asset to a rancher and can even improve soil structure and health. The intent of the winter site assessment tool is therefore not to discourage producers from extensive winter feeding, but rather to identify environmental risk based on a combination of site characteristics and management decisions and help producers understand and mitigate these risks wherever possible.

Young Farmers and Bad Spellers of the World—Untie!

In January and February we will be hosting young farmer World Cafés at several locations throughout the Peace Region. A World Café is a conversation model that helps people feel at home sharing their views on a topic. It also works to help the participants prioritize their goals. We will be asking: What direction would you like to see the beef and forage industry go? What information do you need to access in order to make that happen? If you have any interest in grazing animals or growing forage crops for feed or seed, we NEED to see you there!

EVENTS

January

Young Farmer

Round Table

January 11th / 12th

Fairview / Worsley

Entrance to this networking event is FREE

Winter Watering Systems

WARM Bus Tour

January 19th

High Prairie

See what innovations ranchers in MD Big Lakes have developed to address their winter watering needs!

Winter Grazing Schools

January 29-31st

High Prairie, Valleyview,

Spirit River

Learn how to use ARD's nutrient calculator and winter site selection tool and work with experts to perfect your winter rationing schedule!

February

Water Works Series #1

February 5-7th

Grande Prairie, Fairview,

Manning

Craig Sponholtz of Dryland Solutions, INC is an internationally renowned expert and teacher in watershed restoration. His workshops will develop the skill sets you need to restore degraded watersheds and bring water back to your land in a way that complements your production system!

For more info on any of these events call Karlah at 780-523-4033.



@pcbfa



FEBRUARY 8, 2013

Dunvegan Motor Inn

Fairview, AB

4:00 Registration & Meeting

6:00 Supper

8:00 Entertainment

\$55/person or \$75/farm pair

Includes 2013 Membership

RSVP WITH MORGAN

780.835.6799

Annual General Meeting

Bylaw Amendment General Notice to Members

Last year at the PCBFA 2012 AGM, members were polled as to whether they would be in favour of an increase in the 2013 Annual Membership fee from \$25/farm unit to \$30/farm unit. There were no members against the fee increase and as a result this bylaw needs to be amended and voted on at the upcoming AGM. It is required that 2 weeks written notice be given to the membership regarding this change. Please also have a look at the Corporate Membership document as it too will be discussed at the AGM regarding sponsorship levels and the overall concept. If a copy of the bylaws is requested or there are any questions, comments or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Morgan at 780-835-6799.

Current Bylaw:

v. Membership Fee:

1) Membership fee in the Society shall be \$25.00 per annum or as determined at an annual meeting. (Last amended Jan 1997)

Proposed Bylaw Shall Read:

v. Membership Fee:

1) Membership fee in the Society shall be **\$30.00** per annum or as determined at an annual meeting.

From all of us at PCBFA, we hope that you had a safe and festive holiday season and would like to wish you all the best for a productive and profitable 2013!!

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