

**SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:**

- Upcoming Events in Centerfold!
- Highlights from the Western Canadian Conference on Soil Health

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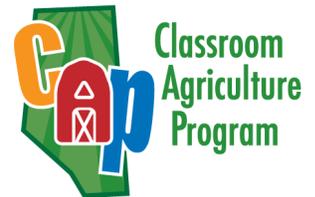
FORAGE COUNTRY

WINTER 2016

The Classroom Agriculture Program is Looking for Volunteers!

Submitted by Classroom Agriculture Program

When asked “where does food come from?”, too many kids say the grocery store. The Classroom Agriculture Program (CAP) is trying to change that. CAP has been around since 1985; during that 30 years, more than 600,000 grade four students have participated in the program. These students have learned where their food really comes from and why agriculture is important to Alberta.



The Vision of CAP is: “To provide students with quality, comprehensive agriculture learning experiences that lead to a greater understanding of and support for the agriculture industry in Alberta.” We do this through a volunteer base of about 300 people who work in the agriculture industry. Our volunteers are the real strength of CAP. A class may have presentations from a veterinarian, someone who works on a chicken farm, someone who owns a grain farm, works in a soil lab, or runs a country grain elevator. As you can see the variety of professions in agriculture is large and varied. In addition to the volunteer presentation each student also receives an “Activity Booklet”. The booklet is full of puzzles and games. Each of our commodity members has a page in the booklet. Our members are Alberta Barley, Alberta Beef, Alberta Canola, Alberta Chicken, Alberta Institute of Agrologists, Alberta Irrigation Projects, Alberta Milk, Alberta Pork, Alberta Pulse Growers, Alberta Veterinary Medical Association, Alberta Wheat, Eastern Irrigation District, and the Egg Farmers of Alberta, and our partner is Agriculture For Life.



CAP is endorsed by the Minister of Education and the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry. This year, we are honoured to be chosen as the winner for the 2015 Friends of Education Award, given out by the Alberta School Boards Association.

PCBFA is proud to be involved with the administration of the Classroom Agriculture Program in the Peace Region! If you would like to become a part of CAP, either as a volunteer, member, or partner, or if you

would like more information, please contact Don George, General Manager of CAP by phone at 587-877-2544 or email don.george@classroomagriculture.com or Kaitlin McLachlan with PCBFA at 780-835-6799 or email kmclachlan@gprc.ab.ca.



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High Prairie Provincial

Building

ARD/AFSC Office

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Peace Country Beef & Forage Association

Local Information for Peace Country Producers

Having worked in the Peace Country for many years, we have established ourselves as an innovative association, willing to work with local businesses, educational facilities, other research groups and always with the producers from across the Peace Region.

Our programs vary from environmental concerns to finding the newest technology and helping producers implement it on their operations.

Our board is made up of producers from across the Peace Region, who actively voice questions, ideas and concerns to address the needs of farmers and ranchers of the Peace.

Vision

The Peace Country Beef & Forage Association is a producer group with the goal to be a hub of innovative, relevant and local beef, forage and crop information for Peace Country producers.

Mission

A Peace Country producer's first stop for optimizing beef, forage and crop production to maximize profitability with innovative and credible information.

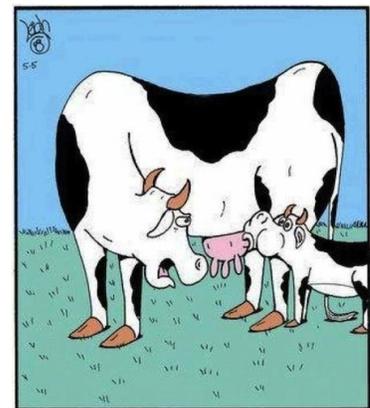
If you have any questions, comments or feedback about our current extension events or any of our projects, please do not hesitate to give us a call at either PCBFA office.

Your input matters to us!

We are beginning a new 3 year cycle of funding and with your help we have identified several areas in which we will be focusing our research and extension efforts.

- Forages and Livestock Program: *Optimizing Production and Profitability of Livestock and Forage Production in the Peace Country.*
- Environment Program: *Facilitating the Role of Agricultural Producers as Stewards of the Land.*
- Annual and Special Crops Program: *Long Term Profitability of Crop Production through Land Rejuvenation & Sustainability.*

These programs will all work together to improve production and profitability on all operations in the Peace Country with a focus on soil health and restorative, sustainable farming practices.



"For the last time, Junior, stop blowing milk bubbles! ... You're giving me gas!"

Wetlands are not Wastelands

By Cows & Fish

Wetlands are essentially lands that are wet. They are low lying areas where enough water collects to support water-loving plants, like cattail, rushes, sedges and willow. Wetlands also have perpetually wet soils because they are either saturated with water year-round or covered with water at least some time during the growing season of most years. Sloughs, ponds, potholes, bogs and muskeg areas are all types of wetlands. Wetlands include the area covered by water and the adjacent area of lush water-loving plants called the riparian area.



Wetlands vary in shape, size and permanence. A temporary wetland may have water only after snowmelt or a heavy rain. Whereas a semi-permanent wetland will hold water through most years, but may dry out after several years of drought. And a permanent wetland will have water present year round.

Wetlands are not wastelands. They are the connection in the watershed we often cannot see, linking groundwater, surface water in other wetlands, lakes and streams, soil moisture and weather patterns. Wetlands are so closely linked with other parts of the water cycle that drainage can have significant local effects such as lowering the water table, reducing local precipitation and creating greater temperature extremes.

There are many benefits to leaving wetlands and their surrounding riparian areas intact. Some are subtle, such as increased local soil moisture, reduced flooding, more stable stream flow, improved crop production and better water quality. Other benefits are more obvious such as supplying shelter, forage and water for livestock, habitat for wildlife and fish.



In drought some wetlands completely dry up, sometimes for several years in a row. However, even a dry wetland provides many of the same benefits listed above. Seeding a seasonal wetland while it is dry is a risky venture. There is increased danger of frost in the low area and a very high likelihood of flooding once wetter conditions return. Wetland substrates are usually quite impervious, and may be saline, which results in low crop productivity. Several studies have shown that the costs of draining and cropping wetlands are often higher than the crop returns.

What can you do to manage your wetlands on your farm or ranch? Consider leaving your wetlands intact including the natural extent of the riparian vegetation and an additional buffer of extra vegetation where possible. Not only will this trap more snow in winter, increasing soil moisture and recharging groundwater supplies, but this buffer will also filter out nutrients found in runoff from your pastures or cropped fields, improving water quality in your watershed. Manage grazing in wetlands to prevent over-use and trampling by livestock, and to avoid manure build-up.

Cows and Fish helps landowners and their communities to assess their wetlands and other riparian areas as well as develop management strategies to help conserve these valuable resources. For more information on wetlands contact Cows and Fish at 403-381-5538 or view their website at www.cowsandfish.org.

Find us online!
www.peacecountrybeef.ca

 [@pcbfa](https://twitter.com/pcbfa)
[@pcbfa_crops](https://twitter.com/pcbfa_crops)

 <https://www.facebook.com/peacecountrybeef>

Headed to School this Fall? Think Ag!

By Carly Shaw

Did you know that one in eight Canadian jobs are tied to the agriculture sector? This relates to some 2.1 million jobs and a 6.7% contribution to Canada's GDP in 2013!

Did you know that one job in agriculture generates four to seven more Canadian jobs? Also—did you know that there are 3 jobs waiting for every agriculture grad in Canada?

Not only are many people employed by the agriculture industry but there is still a large demand for workers, including those who have had Post-Secondary education, by 2022 there will be an estimated 74,000 job opportunities in Canadian agriculture alone. So whether you have a child who is nearing the end of their high school career or you are thinking of going back to school yourself, know that there is high demand for your skills and that there are many schooling options for you throughout Canada! Some of the best agriculture programs in Canada are offered right here in Alberta!

The University of Alberta offers degrees in:

- Sustainable Agriculture Systems
- Agriculture and Resource Economics
- Agricultural Business Management
- Agricultural Food and Nutritional Science
- Animal Science & Animal Health
- Crop science



The University of Lethbridge offers degrees in:

- Agricultural Studies
- Agriculture Biotechnology

University of
Lethbridge



Lakeland College in Vermilion offers diplomas in:

- Agribusiness
- Animal Science
- Crop Technology
- Western Ranch and Cow Horse
- Animal Health Technology
- Lakeland also is host to a Student Managed Farm, with purebred & commercial cattle, a working dairy, sheep, and a large grain operation.



Lethbridge College offers diplomas in:

- Plant and Soil Science
- Animal Science
- Agricultural and Heavy Equipment Technician Certificate
- Agriculture Equipment Technician Apprenticeship



Olds College offers:

- Agriculture Management
- Bachelor of Applied Science: Agribusiness
- Agriculture and Heavy Equipment Program
- Agronomy Certificate
- Rural Finance and Entrepreneurship Certificate



Grande Prairie Regional College offers a diploma in:

- Animal Health Technology

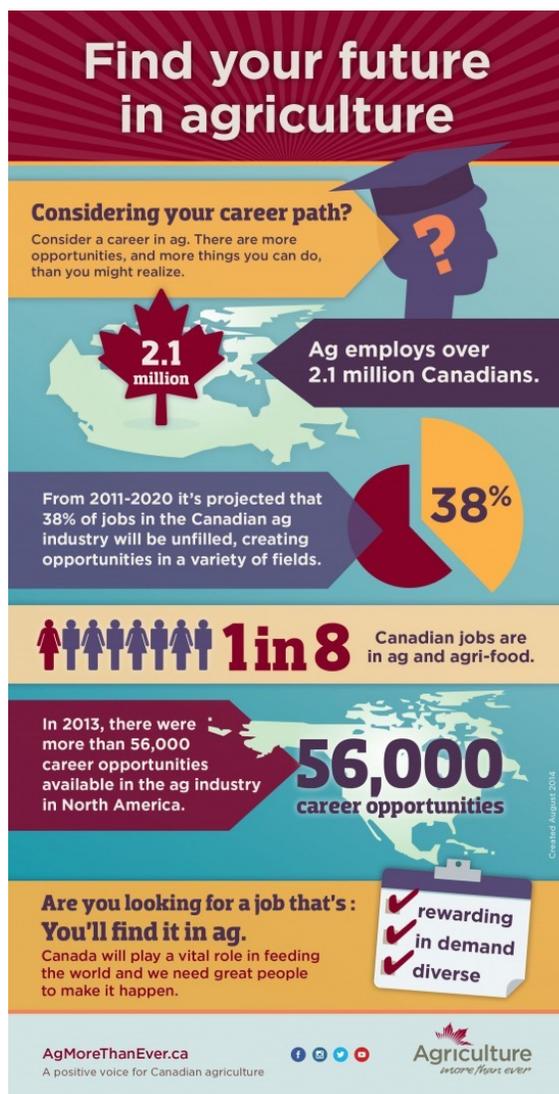


Each program varies from 1-4 years, with some programs even being offered online. If you are not interested in attending school in Alberta there are many more options, one of which is the University of Saskatchewan, a school with a variety of agricultural programs. It offers programs such as: Agribusiness, Agriculture Biology, Agricultural Economics, Agronomy, Animal Science, Horticulture Science, Prairie Horticulture Certificate, Rangeland Resources, and Soil Science.

For more information on these programs or for information about what other provinces offer check out <http://bit.ly/1OJj78f>, or go directly to the schools website. <http://beefcareers.weebly.com/careers.html> lays out many of the career paths you can choose related to agriculture. Some of the careers that post-secondary schooling can lead to and their yearly average salaries in Alberta are an:

- Agrologist \$81,051.00
- Soil scientist \$98,399.00
- Heavy duty equipment mechanics \$77,665.00
- Agricultural Engineer \$103,915.00
- Biological technician \$55,614.00
- Landscape Architectural Technologist \$49,630.00
- Mechanical Engineering Technologist \$77,835.00
- Purchasing agent \$77,753.00
- Marketing manager \$92,734.00

The above information was found on occinfo.alis.alberta.ca. Whichever path it is you decide to choose, know that the agriculture industry offers many rewarding opportunities to those who have a passion for it.



Growing Forward 2 Environmental Programs

By Stacy Pritchard

Environment-related Growing Forward 2 programs are still open and accepting applications! All of these programs are in great funding positions and are encouraging producers to apply! As always, GF2 funding is first come, first served, so getting your applications in sooner rather than later will ensure that your project gets funded.

GF2 is in the third fiscal year of the 5 year programing, and it is expected that the funding available could be a little tighter next year as the programs are winding down. So right now is a great time to take a look at your operations and see where you could benefit from one of these programs, sitting down and filling out an application.

Lets take a closer look into some of these programs and how Peace Country producers can take advantage of the funding available to them.

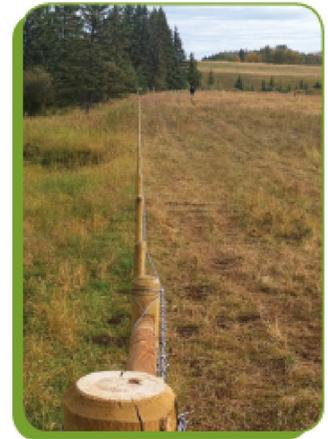
On-Farm Stewardship Program

Of all the programs relevant to livestock producers, the On-Farm Stewardship Program is likely the broadest and aims to improve the on-farm impact on water quality in five categories. In order to be eligible for funding from the On-Farm Stewardship Program, producers must complete an Environmental Farm Plan. PCBFA would be happy to help you get an EFP started for your operation. Depending on the activity, 30%, 50% or 70% of the costs can be covered. Each activity has its own set maximum funding, but in total, producers can receive a maximum of \$50,000 from this GF2 Program.

Grazing Management:

This program includes several activities, the first being Riparian Area Fencing & Management. This program will assist producers with 70% of the costs of fencing riparian areas and riparian area management practices. The eligible expenses in this category include permanent fencing supplies, the purchase and planting of approved trees & shrubs for riparian area management as well as labour and equipment.

The most popular activity we assist producers with applications for is the Year Round/Summer Watering Systems. This activity will assist producers with 50% of the cost of installation of remote watering systems or eliminating direct access to water bodies and sources. Eligible areas for funding under this program include portable watering systems, year-round watering systems, pumping systems, power sources (solar, windmills), and pipelines used to distribute water. Recently there has also been the addition of an alert monitor for remote watering systems used to monitor systems without having to physically make trips out to



the pasture. For more information on this new addition check out the January Forage Facts or visit www.growingforward.alberta.ca



The 2 other activities under this program are Wetland Restoration and Shelterbelt Establishment. Both activities provide funding for approved species for either the establishment of a shelterbelt (50%) or a wetland restoration (70%). Other expenses eligible for funding include fencing off your new shelterbelt, as well as the mulch to get it established, and earthwork related to restoring your wetland.

Manure Management

The Manure Management category will assist with 50% of the costs of earthworks, materials, supplies, labour and equipment required to develop improved manure storage facilities. It will provide assistance with the installation and upgrades to runoff control systems outside of livestock pens. This program will also cover 50% of the costs to relocating a livestock facility or wintering site and dismantling an existing on if it poses a risk to the watersheds.

Crop Input Management

Under this category, the purchase of sprayer cones, sectional control operation systems for sprayers and seeding equipment, and pulse modulating sprayer systems are eligible expenses. The cost share on this program is 50%.

Agricultural Waste Management

This category assists producers with 50% of the costs associated with double-walled storage tanks for used oil, and 70% of the costs for a roller for used grain bags.

Innovative Stewardship Solutions

This category allows producers the opportunity to design and submit a unique project they believe will improve water quality on their operation. Each project will be assessed on an individual basis by a technical review panel.

On-Farm Water Management Program

A program that closely complements the On-Farm Stewardship Program is the On-Farm Water Management Program. Producers who have completed a Long-term Water Management Plan are then eligible for 1/3 of costs related to their on-farm water supply and management up to \$5,000 for standard incentive projects and 50% to an unspecified maximum for special incentive projects. Standard incentive projects include construction of wells, dugouts, spring developments, dams, water pipelines, and off-site watering systems. There are size requirements for new or expanded water sources. Special incentive projects include well decommissioning, well pit conversions, purchasing water meter and water well depth measurement equipment and connecting to multi-user water supply pipelines.



On-Farm Energy Management

This program assists producers with the investments that improve energy efficiency on their farm. This program will cover 35% of the costs on most projects to a maximum of \$50,000 per farm. Some of the eligible expenses include high-efficiency equipment from the program's Funding List, retrofit projects that improve the operation's energy usage per unit of production, and installation of submeters to monitor on-farm electricity and/or natural gas usage; the program will cover 100% of the cost for the applicant's first 3 submeters. More project ideas can be found on the GF2 page for the On-Farm Energy Management Program.

Confined Feeding Operation Stewardship

This GF2 Program aims to help the industry in three key areas: 1) Less agricultural impact on water quality; 2) Improved business outcomes for livestock producers and commercial manure applicators and; 3) Improved market opportunities. The program is open to both CFOs and to commercial manure applicators and provides assistance with projects relating to the 3 key outcomes at 50% for most project categories, 30% for some and 70% for others to a maximum of \$100,000 per CFO and \$70,00 to commercial manure applicators.

Growing Forward 2 

 Alberta
Government

 Canada

Programs Accepting Applications

- * Agri Processing Automation and Efficiency - Livestock
- * Agri Processing Product and Market Development - Livestock
- * Agriculture Watershed Enhancement
- * Animal Health Biosecurity Delivery Agent
- * Business Management Skills Development
- * Business Opportunity
- * Confined Feeding Operation Stewardship
- * Food Safety Systems Delivery Agent
- * Food Safety Systems Processor
- * Irrigation Efficiency
- * Livestock Welfare Processor
- * On-Farm Energy Management
- * On-Farm Stewardship
- * On-Farm Water Management
- * Regional Water Supply
- * Traceability Pilot
- * Traceability Technology Adoption
- * Traceability Training

Programs Not Currently Accepting Applications

- * Agri Processing Automation and Efficiency - Crop
- * Agri Processing Product and Market Development - Crop
- * Animal Health Biosecurity Producer
- * Food Safety Systems Producer
- * Livestock Welfare Delivery Agent
- * Livestock Welfare Producer

Growing Forward 2 Programs are continuously updated and changes are made to the programs. All information on GF2 programs can be found at www.growingforward.alberta.ca

The best way to stay up to date on all things GF2 is to subscribe to the programs that you are interested in. The subscribe function can be found on the right side of the GF2 home screen.

PCBFA staff would be happy to help with your GF2 applications, so give us a call!

Soil Health Conference Highlights

By Stacy Pritchard & Monika Benoit



Conference on Soil Health

2015 was the International Year of the Soils, and to wrap up a year of soil health awareness and great events across the province, the Western Canada Conference on Soil Health was hosted in Edmonton Dec 8-10, 2015. We had a great turnout for this conference, selling out registration before the early deadline for a total of 400 registrants representing producers, industry and the scientific community.

We started the conference hearing from Dr. Yamily Zavala of the Chinook Applied Research Association, where she took us through the basics of soil health. She connected all of the components of soil health and showed us all how intricate the interactions between the physical, biological and chemical properties of soil are. One of the key messages was about the importance of mycorrhizal fungi, a topic that continued throughout the two days.

Following Dr. Zavala, Dr. Harold van Es of Cornell University in New York, brought us information on soil health assessment; what we should be measuring and how we can use the data we collect to build better soils. He talked about how soil health is the capacity of the soil to function and how when we improve our soil health we are investing in our land. One of his key messages was to start thinking beyond the traditional soil test and looking at soil holistic management with a soil health assessment. He also shared a great video on the Soil Health Institute that's worth checking out: <https://vimeo.com/147375088>

One of the highlights of the conference was Gabe Brown's presentation: Healthy Soils, Healthy Farms, Healthy Communities. I'm likely not alone in saying that I wish it had been longer! Gabe's experiences over the last 20 years have been influential in bringing about a change in thinking regarding how we view soil health and what is possible without the use of synthetic fertilizers. "The potential profitability of any farming or ranching operation is directly dependent on two things: the amount of carbon on one's operation and the ability of the owner to understand how soil functions." He spoke about the 5 principles of soil health that he has learned in the last 20 years, since 4 failed crops in a row drove him to looking at agriculture and soil in a new way. Those 5 principles are:

1. Least amount of mechanical disturbance possible
2. Armor on the soil surface at all times
3. Diversity drives soil health
4. Living plants in the soil as long as possible

Animal integration

These 5 principles along with holistic management have allowed the Brown Ranch to reach the highly productive state that it is in today!

Next up for speakers was Dr. Jill Clapperton who talked about how "Healthy Plants Grow in Healthy Soil." She spoke about soil structure being very important for optimal root growth as well as being important for the predator-prey lifecycles in soil and nutrient cycling. She spoke a lot on how crucial the predator-prey cycle is critical to soil health due to the biological processes performed by both predator and prey. It is this biological activity that transforms and mineralizes the organic nutrients into the inorganic nutrients that plants and soil microbes use to grow and thrive. By modifying the soil environment with tillage, crop rotations and grazing we influence the ability of the soil to perform these essential activities (some modifications hinder and some enhance). So what's the bottom line then? The amount and quality of the soil organic matter are key, and we have the tools and the knowledge to manage soil health now, and in the future.

Dr. Allen Williams was able to speak to us twice over the two day conference. With the unique perspective of being both a scientist and a rancher, he was able to discuss management practices on his own operation as well as some of the 3,500 farmers and ranchers he has consulted with over the years. In his first presentation he discussed the use of soil microbial research as a replacement for chemical fertilizer. In his second presentation he walked us through how to effectively graze for soil health, discussing methods and management practices he has seen, used and recommended over the years, particularly Adaptive Grazing Management. Adaptive Grazing Management utilizes multi-paddock grazing strategies instead of continuous grazing. This strategy using multiple paddocks allows for grazing at high stock densities and has many benefits including vegetation and animal performance, as well as increasing soil health in the parameter of: soil aggregate stability, water infiltration rate and water holding capacity. This practice can also improve the fungi:bacteria ratio in the soil. Dr. Williams was a great addition to the conference bringing expertise and experience to Alberta from Mississippi!

The banquet speaker featured Nuffield Scholar, Blake Vince. Blake is a 5th generation farmer from Merlin, Ontario. During his presentation he took us through his journey as a farm kid learning the ropes and getting involved in no-till farming in a time when everyone else was still tilling, to trying a 5 species cover crop in 2012, and being selected as a

Nuffield Scholar in 2013. He told us about his Nuffield Journey across the globe to learn more about soil health, cover crops and how to farm without tillage. He met a number of influential people on his journey and learned a great deal about multi-species cover cropping around the world. Many of the message he shared with us had already been mentioned earlier in the day, or would be discussed on Thursday, but being able to see the impact cover crops and soil health is making around the world was inspiring!

Day 2 started off with Neil Dennis, a producer from southeastern Saskatchewan. Neil practices intensive grazing and has regenerated his land over the past 30 years to greatly increase his carrying capacity. Neil took over managing his family farm, which has been in the Dennis family for 115 years, and after struggling along for several years, Neil and his wife took a Holistic Management course, and have been managing their land differently ever since. Neil says that the wealth of a farm is directly dependent upon the health of the land. He has rejuvenated his once poor producing land using high stock density and proper recovery time. Neil gave an inspiring presentation showing how his land has changed with a focus on the health of his soil and some beautiful photos of his grass and cattle. Neil is headed up to the Peace Country for the PCBFA AGM on February 26th in Fairview. He will be spending a good portion of his presentation expanding on his talk from the conference, with a focus on some of his inventions and practices that make his job of moving stock regularly easy and time efficient!

One of the highlights of Day 2 had to be Dr. Odette Menard, whose area of expertise is earthworms! We learned about the various types of earthworms, a few different species (Did you know there are 14 species of earthworms in Alberta?!?). We also learned that 1 ton of earthworms can make 2/3 inch of manure yearly. Dr. Menard took us through the relationship between soil health and earthworms. She talked about how the original reason we started plowing was for water management, weed control and fertility boosting, but those reasons are 150 years old, and yet we are still using them. She told us that the basis for healthy soil is to “cover and feed the soil”, going on to explain that we need to cover and feed the soil all the time by rethinking/redesigning rotations, and to cover and feed the soil properly by reducing or eliminating tillage. In terms of covering the soil – “brown is bad, gold is good and green is great.” And who can forget the videos Dr. Menard showed us. First of an earthworm pulling a whole corn leaf into its tunnel, and second, a video of earthworms mating!

The Conference wrapped up with a producer panel, each telling their story of “How & Why I Improved the Health of My Soil”. The panel consisted of 5 producers from across the province, including our own PCBFA member, Bill Hanson, who ranches with his family south of Valleyview. Bill talked about how they always makes decisions with the health of the soil at the forefront. They have implemented things like bale grazing and rotational grazing and have seen great improvement on their land over the 19 years they have been there. Besides improved grass production, they have also seen things such as a greater diversity of perennial species in their pastures, which they have never seeded. We heard from Ed Lang, of Walter Farms, a mixed operation that has been making management changes to improve their soil. They have been experimenting with cocktail cover crops, and have been very impressed with the results so far. Kelsey Beasley, who ranches with her husband in East Central Alberta gave us an energetic presentation, detailing how they are managing their land for long-term sustainability. Kelsey has a biology degree and had a very interesting perspective on looking after the biology in the soil. The Beasleys are currently running sheep on their operation, which they find to be great for having their young kids help out with. Ben Stewart of Prairie Land and Cattle Company near Hardisty gave a fascinating talk on the large operation that he is a part of. Ben is originally from New Zealand, and came to Canada years ago with a knowledge of intensive grazing practices and systems. He shared some of his knowledge on how he has adapted these systems for their ranch. Kevin Elmy was representing Saskatchewan on our panel, and gave us a very enlightening presentation on how his family manages their land for improved soil health. The Elmys run a grain operation and have adopted non-traditional agronomics, such as winter cereals in their rotation, millet and corn for grazing by their neighbor’s cows, soybeans and cover cropping. The Elmys practice holistic grain farming and have been successfully working with their neighbors to get the benefit of livestock on their land. The producer panel gave the audience a great opportunity to ask questions of producers who have been trying management techniques and systems designed with soil health in mind right in our own backyards. It was a very engaging conversation and a great way to wrap up an encouraging and enlightening conference!

2015, the International Year of Soils may be over, but PCBFA and other ARECA groups across Alberta will be continuing to hold extension events and we’re constantly working on applied research projects around this topic, so stay tuned! Keep this website, www.albertasoilhealth.ca handy, and watch for updates from PCBFA!



albertasoilhealth.ca



The PCBFA Board of Directors and Staff meet once every 2 months to go over the happenings with PCBFA. We will be electing 3 new board members at our Annual General Meeting February 26th at the Dunvegan Motor Inn in Fairview. For more information on becoming a board member, please give us a shout in Fairview at 780-835-6799 ext 2 or High Prairie at 780-523-4033!

Environmental Farm Plans on Alberta Operations

Many Alberta producers are wondering if they need a current Environmental Farm Plan (EFP). The EFP is meant to be reviewed and upgraded regularly for each operation. It's simple to do. The program is coordinated by the Agricultural Research and Extension Council of Alberta (ARECA) and EFP technicians are available across the province. A completed EFP is required for the On-Farm Stewardship categories of the Growing Forward 2 program. Stewardship is being tied to business opportunities and it is good to be prepared. There are many other reasons to complete an EFP too, including having a hard copy record of the environmental status of your operation, becoming more aware for the rules and regulations concerning the environmental impacts on farms including protecting water resources and air quality. EFPs can also contribute to the environmental sustainability of crop and livestock operations. Updating your EFP shows your commitment to being good stewards of the land and your commitment to meeting consumer expectations and food safety. By establishing that food is produced in an environmentally sustainable way in Alberta, also positions Alberta to be competitive in world markets.

Producers can use an online workbook. This workbook carries data entered to all areas of the plan where it is needed, provides quick access to information sources, ensures each section is complete prior to moving to the next and allows the EFP technician to see what is completed, answer questions and assist with finishing the plan.

To get started contact the ARECA office at 780-612-9712 or info@albertaefp.com. You will then be matched to an available EFP

Why Develop an EFP

- ◆ Improve farm health and safety
- ◆ To protect water resources, air quality.
- ◆ To preserve soil and biodiversity
- ◆ Building acceptance of the operation among neighbours and the public
- ◆ Increasing personal satisfaction and knowledge
- ◆ Adding value to the farm property
- ◆ Agricultural sustainability
- ◆ To reduce farm inputs and decrease storage time of herbicides, insecticides, fertilizers and fuel
- ◆ To demonstrate to the public, governments, regulators, lenders and/or investors that you are managing your environmental risks
- ◆ To increase your understanding of your legal requirements related to environmental issues.
- ◆ To identify what you are already doing well and pinpoint where improvements could be made.



Peace Region EFP Technicians

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GROUP

Upcoming P

Event	Date & Time	Location
Tactical Farming Conference	February 10-11th	Deerfoot Inn & Casino. Calgary
Working Well Workshop	February 11th	High Prairie AgriPlex
Cocktail Cover Crop Selection Workshop	February 23rd	Rycroft Ag Society Hall
PCBFA Annual General Meeting	February 26th	Fairview Dunvegan Motor Inn
Solar Workshop	March 10th	High Prairie AgriPlex
Anne Wasko Beef Market Outlook at Peace Country Classic	March 11th	Grande Prairie Evergreen Park
Peace Country Beef School	March 15th	Grimshaw Venue TBA
Succession Planning Workshop with Merle Good	March 30th	Debolt Venue TBA
Young Farmer Inspirational Event	April 2016	Grande Prairie Venue TBA
Study Tour to Denver Colorado for National Western Stock Show!	January 2017	



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www.peacecountrybeef.ca

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Cost	Contact	In Collaboration With
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It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year!

By Kaitlin McLachlan

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It is the most wonderful time of the year! That's right, calves are starting to hit the ground in the Peace Country! Whether you are in the midst of the calving madness or you have a few months to go before the fun begins, it's good to have some things in the back of your mind as we gear up for the calving madness!

Sometimes, when we get in the midst of calving, some things can start to fall by the way-side. We've had it happen on our farm – a spring storm rolls in, dumps a bunch of snow, cows (of course) have their babies in a snow bank or a puddle, then those calves then wind up getting sick. It is a vicious cycle that I'm sure most producers have dealt with – after all, we can't control the weather! We can however prevent other calves from getting sick with diseases such as scours, coccidiosis, and other nasty calving time illnesses that typically come on with the weather.

Prepare your facilities

The best way that we can help to prevent the spreading of calving time diseases is to start clean and stay clean! Make sure that your calving area is clean and dry, with close proximity to shelter. Mud and snow are ideal conditions for common pathogens to multiply. Make sure to address any physical hazards such as nails sticking out of plank fences, loose wire or balls of twine. We all know how clumsy and curious calves can be, and we don't want them hurting themselves on preventable hazards. It is also a good idea to make sure that you have everything on hand that you may need. Items like disposable sleeves and gloves, calving jack,



OB chains, disinfectant, tube feeder, towels, sulfa drugs, jugs for water, pails for milk, tags, notebooks, and tattoo equipment are all invaluable in the midst of calving season when a trip to town is not always warranted.

Vaccinate your cows

There are several diseases that can be vaccinated for before the calves even hit the ground. By utilizing pre-calving vaccinations on your cows, the anti-body in the vaccine becomes available to the calf through the cow's colostrum. If administered properly, this extra immunity boost in the calf's first hours can help mitigate the calf's risk of contracting diseases such as scours. Have a chat with your veterinarian about what pre-calving vaccinations are right for your herd.



Colostrum

Colostrum is critical to the survival of a new born calf. A calf should be receiving between 1.5-2 litres of colostrum within the first 6 hours of its life. Colostrum contains a plethora of beneficial antibodies and bacteria that give the baby calf's immune system a boost! Calves out of first calf heifers are especially important to watch. Heifers typically produce less, and lower quality colostrum than mature cows. So it is very important to ensure heifer calves get up and get that first drink! If calves are unable to drink within the first 3 hours of their life, it is time to step in. They may need help getting

a drink, or if the cow doesn't have enough, colostrum off of other cows or replacer can be used.

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Continued from page 15...

Controlling the “Bad Bugs”

Viruses such as E. coli, coccidia, cryptosporidia, and other nasty critters love damp conditions. The “perfect storm” for these viruses is a damp, crowded environment. Many of the pathogens that cause diseases like scours actually live in the cow’s gut and get spread whenever she lifts her tail. Then once a calf becomes sick, they start shedding billions of infectious particles themselves. In these kind of conditions, a ‘bad bug’ population explosion is imminent. If you are calving in a pen or a barn, it is important to try and keep those areas as dry as possible. Whether it’s busting out a fresh straw bale or moving animals to a drier pen after a heavy snow or a rain event, keeping a dry environment slows down the spread of harmful viruses significantly. Simple indicators like cow’s udders being clean and dry can indicate a favourable environment for preventing disease.

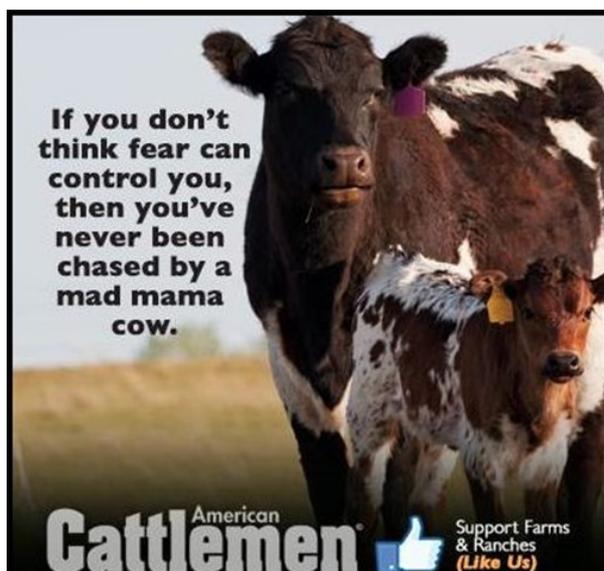


If you are having issues with calves getting sick with scours or coccidiosis, the next step is to separate the healthy and sick animals. This can sometimes be impossible due to facility restraints, but by getting the healthy calves out of the environment, you can be saving them from sickness and saving yourself some sleep! It is also important to ensure that we are not making calves sick with our own actions. Basic sanitation rules need to apply when dealing with sick calves – similar to dealing with sick kids. When helping out a child who is sick with the flu, you wash your hands before shaking hands with someone. Same should apply to the calving pen. In the spring when we’re calving, I have 2 sets of coveralls, one set for day-to-day use and one set I only wear when dealing with sick calves. Things like this help to mitigate the

spread of sickness in the calf herd. If you only have one set of coveralls, ensure that you are finished handling the healthy calves before tackling the sick ones and throw them in the wash right after. Never handle sick calves first! Also make sure that any equipment used in treating a sick calf is washed and disinfected between treatments. Separating equipment like tube feeders for healthy newborn calves and sick calves is also recommended.

Although we cannot control the weather or what comes out whenever a cow lifts her tail, we can control other variables. Learning how to best use the tools that we have available can make all the difference come calving time.

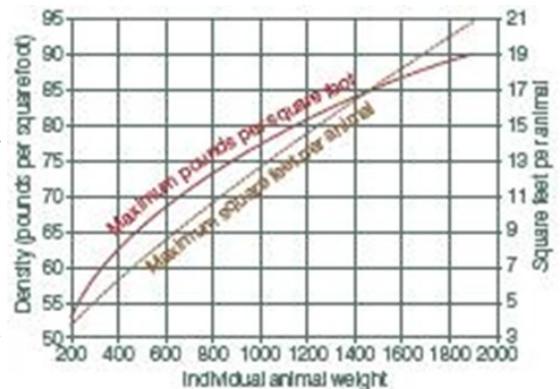
If you would like to learn more about mitigating sickness in your calves this spring, make sure to have a chat with your local veterinarian!



Compiled by Carly Shaw

When hauling livestock it is important to remember that there are many rules and considerations to keep in mind for the safety of your cattle, yourself and your hauler. Below are some of the transportation guidelines which can be found on Alberta Agriculture & Forestry's website.

- Shippers are to ensure that cattle to be shipped are suitable to undergo transport. The transporter should accept only healthy animals for transport or risk prosecution.
- If the shipper pressures a driver into accepting an infirm animal, the driver should try to contact a regulatory inspector for advice. If the driver must take the animal it should be recorded on the manifest that the animal was loaded under protest and the liability is transferred back to the shipper, or whoever caused the infirm animal to be loaded.
- Market ready animals, especially older cows, bruise easily when they are handled roughly. When slaughtered, costly bruises must be trimmed from the carcass and disposed of. This animal is referred to as a dark cutter and is discounted significantly so drivers and shippers need to be aware of how their actions affect the final product.
- Stock prods should be used with discretion only on haired portions of the animal and never on the face. Prodding an animal that is either already moving or has no room to advance is unproductive. Whips, sorting sticks and canes must not be misused as they can cause bruising or injury.
- According to the Health of Animals Act, livestock must be able to stand in their natural position without their head coming in contact with a deck or roof. To the left is a chart that recommends loading densities in trailers by considering animal density, individual animal weight and square feet per animal. However weight restrictions, class of animal, distance to be travelled, weather, road bans, cattle comfort and special needs also need to be taken into consideration.
- If transportation is going to take longer than 52 hours, the cattle must be unloaded at the 48 hour mark for feed, water and a rest for a minimum of 5 hours.
- The unit must keep rolling during hot weather to ensure proper ventilation for the cattle and in cold weather bedding, such as shavings, should be used.



Despite taking all these precautions accidents can happen. So it is important to have a plan in place for emergency situations. The first thing to do in an emergency is call 911 and check to see if any humans are in need of medical assistance before checking the state of the animal. If the animal is safe where it is, supply it with



food and water, giving you time to plan a rescue strategy. When planning a rescue strategy you need to decide if it is a self-rescue, where the animal is able to rescue its self with some assistance, or a technical situation, in which the animal is unable to rescue itself and go from there. Always remember to make your safety a top priority in these situations so greater tragedy can be averted. The above information and so much more about handling emergencies can be found on afac.ab.ca or their Facebook page Alberta Farm Care and keep a lookout for an emergency workshop put on by AFAC in your area.

Credit to Melissa Moggy & Alberta Farm Animal Care along with [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/beef11990](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/beef11990) for the wonderful information.

Keep Your 'P' Out of the River! As well as Your N, K, S & 2, 4-D!

By Kaitlin McLachlan

T-3 months until we see John Deeres and Seed Hawks roaring across fields here in the Peace Country! With all your seed and fertilizer pre-booked or already delivered, time to think about strategy in the field.

With commodity prices the way they are, you may be wondering how you can save some costs this year. Well time to bust out Alberta Agriculture's *Environmental Manual for Crop Producers in Alberta!*

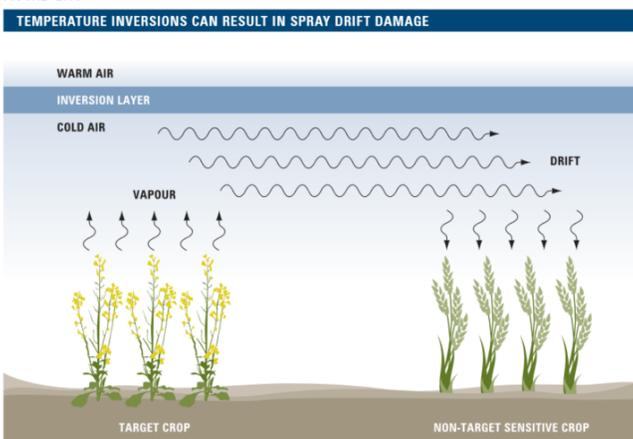
When putting down fertilizer, we want to ensure that we are getting the most bang for our buck! That means reducing the chances of losing the nutrient that we put down to things such as gas-off and run-off. Things to consider to prevent fertilizer nutrient loss:

- **Application Rate** – Set your yield goal and get your soil tested. Based on the recommendations given from your soil tests, you can match your nutrient needs based on your yield goal. However, make sure not to over apply! For example, the safe limit for side banding nitrogen with canola is 100-125lbs. After that, nitrogen toxicity effects the seedling and you become more susceptible to nitrogen loss.
- **Application Timing** - The most bang-for-your-buck comes from fertilizing in the spring when the crop goes in. This ensures the fertilizer being put down is there when the seed needs it.
- **Application Method** – Experiments done by Alberta Agriculture have proven that when broadcasting fertilizer, we actually loose more to run-off than we get benefit. Therefore, it is best to place fertilized in the seed row or side band. When placing in the seed row, use caution and ensure the rates aren't high enough to cause damage to the seedling.
- **Nutrient Form** – The chemical or physical properties of various commercial fertilizers affect how the nutrient is released – ie: urea vs slow release nitrogen. Make sure to apply fertilizers according to recommendations.
- **Buffer Zones** – By avoiding applying fertilizer in the wet areas around streams and wetlands, we won't be losing nutrient to the leaching process. According to the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act* under Alberta Agriculture, a buffer zone between where we are applying nutrients and a water body needs to be 30m wide.



Example of a buffer zone around a stream. Photo via: bwsr.state.mn.us

By ensuring that we are doing our best to decrease nutrient loss, we can save ourselves some money by using everything we put in the ground.



Adapted from: Figure 14 in Ozkan, H. Erdal. 2000. Reducing Spray Drift. Bulletin 816-00. The Ohio State University Extension Bulletin.

Once the crop is up, it's time to pull the sprayer out of the shed. We all know how pricy herbicides and pesticides can be, so it's important not to waste!

Did you know that you actually have a legal responsibility to make sure that when you're spraying that it does not drift off your land? And your neighbour can sue for spray drift damage? So let's ensure we all do our best to reduce spray drift! Some ways to reduce drift include: slower travel speed, lower booms, use of spray shrouds, increased droplet size, avoiding temperature inversion (illustrated to the left), and use the AOPA's buffer zone regulations when spraying property lines. If using a custom sprayer, ensure that they have their Applicator's Licence.

So we've covered how to keep your chemical from blowing away, now let's make sure it doesn't wash away either! Depending on which pesticide you are using, the risk of runoff varies. Below is a chart outlining the run off potential of some common chemicals. So how can we ensure we don't lose chemical to run off? Leaving wide buffer zones around water bodies including; streams, rivers, wells, dugouts and sloughs that at least meet AOPA's 30m regulation. If there is rain in the forecast, don't spray. Not only will you not get a good kill, but it will wash away!

LOSS POTENTIALS OF SOME COMMON AGRICULTURAL CHEMICALS		
PESTICIDE	RUNOFF POTENTIAL*	LEACHING POTENTIAL
Barvel	Small	Large
Basagran	Small	Medium
2,4-D Amine	Medium	Medium
Lexone, Sencor	Medium	Large
Linuron	Large	Medium
Poast	Small	Small
Roundup	Large	Small
Treflan	Large	Small
Counter	Medium	Small
Dyfonate	Large	Medium
Bayleton	Medium	Medium
Tilt	Medium	Medium

* Runoff potential: potential for transport of pesticide in runoff water.

Source: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food. 1992. Best Management Practices: Field Crop Production. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

Aside from the physical application, there are other factors that can affect a chemical's ability to reach water. Spills when mixing in the sprayer should be cleaned up as soon as they happen. Pesticides are very soluble and can move through the soil much like water. Also when filling your sprayer, ensure that there is a check valve on the line you are using to fill as backflow from the sprayer tank to your water source is also possible. Backflow can have serious consequences on your personal water supply. Soil texture, slope of the land, and other factors also affect the runoff potential of chemical. Below is another chart that takes in some more factors to consider when using pesticides near water.

FACTORS AFFECTING PESTICIDE TRANSPORT TO WATER		
CHEMICAL FACTORS	Solubility	Soluble pesticides will move easily with water and are more likely to leach through soil.
	Binding to soil particles	Some chemicals adhere very tightly to soil particles and are not subject to loss by dissolving into water, but can be carried to water bodies through erosion of soil particles.
	Rate of breakdown (half life)	A persistent chemical, because it is around longer, is more likely to be transported than one that breaks down quickly.
	Rate of application	A chemical with a low application rate is less likely to move away from the target.
	Timing of application	Chemicals applied in the fall or early spring have a greater chance of loss.
SOIL FACTORS	Texture	Sandy soils, which allow greater water movement and bind less tightly to chemicals, are subject to more losses.
	Slope	Steep slopes that are erosion prone are more likely to lose pesticides that are attached to soil particles.
	Depth to water table	Shallow water tables are more easily contaminated. In the spring and fall when water tables are high, chemicals are more likely to move downward and contaminate the groundwater.
APPLICATION FACTORS	Weather following spraying	Heavy rain within a few days of spraying can move significant proportions of the applied chemicals.
	Operator care	Excessive rates, uncalibrated sprayers, careless handling, spraying too close to streams or lakes, or spraying when it is too windy can all increase losses.

Adapted from: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food. 1992. Best Management Practices: Field Crop Production. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food. p. 36.

Properly Disposing of Livestock Carcasses

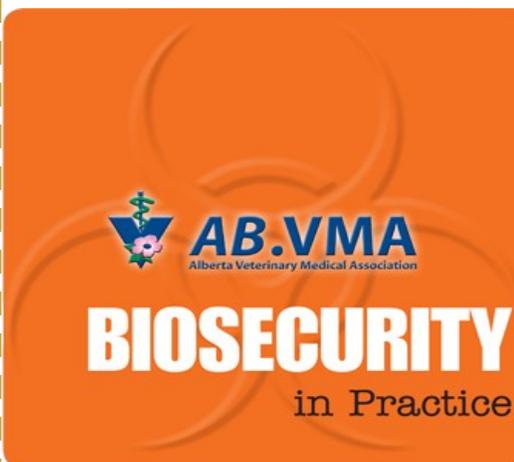
By Carly Shaw

When an animal dies it is often thought that it is okay to just dispose of it in the bush, but that may not always be the case. There are many rules, regulations and considerations to remember when disposing of an animal carcass. The book *Livestock Morality Management* put together by the Alberta government says some environmental considerations for improper disposal include:

- **Odour** – decomposition of organic matter, particularly the anaerobic (lacking oxygen) breakdown of proteins by bacteria, will produce a foul odour.
- **Scavengers** – ravens, magpies, coyotes, etc. and insects can transmit disease and are a nuisance.
- **Pathogens** – disease-causing spores may still be viable.
- **Excess Nutrients** – concentrated source of nitrogen.
- **Nuisance** – visible carcasses and bones fuel social issues and can puncture tires.



Depending on the reason of death there are five ways of disposal; (1) natural disposal, (2) livestock burial, (3) composting, (4) Incineration, (5) Rendering.



Natural Disposal

AB.VMA warns in their book *Biosecurity in Practice* that natural disposal is only acceptable when the following conditions are met: disposed on property owned or leased by the owner of the animal, the animal was not euthanized with drugs or a chemical substance, total weight of animal does not exceed 1000kg per site, a distance of at least 500m between disposal sites, disposal site is at least 500m from wells or other domestic water intakes, 25m from the edge of a coulee, major cut or embankment, must be 400m from livestock facilities, residences, road allowance, provincial park, recreation area, natural area, wilderness area or forest recreation area.

Livestock Burial

Livestock burial has both advantages and disadvantages, advantages being: inexpensive, biosecure and convenient. While disadvantages include: difficult/impossible in the winter, can cause ground pollution and pits must be 1m above seasonal high water table according to the AB.VMA. For more information on the exact regulations to follow when making a burial pit check out page 22 of the online manual created by AB.VMA at the following website: www.abvma.ca under manuals



PCBFA has a copy of AB.VMA's *Biosecurity in Practice* if you would like to learn more about Biosecurity on your farm.

Composting

Composting is a controlled process in which bacteria, fungi and other organisms break down organic material. For composting to occur there must be aerobic conditions, proper temperature, moisture, pH, proper carbon to nitrogen ration and maintaining at least a temperature of 55°C for at least 3 consecutive days. Some advantages of composting mentioned in *Livestock Morality Management* are: it is biosecure, can use year round, relatively inexpensive, environmentally sound, product can be sold or used, it is the best recommended method to handle catastrophic losses, and the heat given off in the composting process kills most pathogens, weed seeds, and insect larva. The disadvantages include; labour intensive, requires an impervious pad between the compost and the soil surface, bin disposal requires rot resistant walls and a cover to repel rain, takes time to develop the technique, and it requires a carbon source. The restrictions that must be followed can be found in the above mentioned website.

Incineration

Incineration must be done with correct equipment which does include a burn pile or barrel. You must use a double chamber incinerator which reaches temperatures of 850°C and provide oxygen to complete the burning process, reducing particulate and gas emissions (*Livestock Morality Management*). If you do not have access to an incinerator, this process may not be the best option for you.

Rendering

This process involves transporting or having carcasses picked up for a fee and transported to a disposal plant. The disposal plant then process the carcasses into feed ingredients like bone meal, meat meal or liquid fat to be used for various products. Costs for this process continue to increase and the logistics of collecting small volumes of carcasses on a frequent basis prevents this method from being widely accepted (*Livestock Morality Management*). Some advantages are that the carcass is removed from the farm and the rendering process destroys most diseases. Disadvantages to the rendering process include the risk of pathogenic transmission during pickup, and the increasing costs of the process.

Whichever way you decide to dispose of your carcasses make sure that you are following all of the rules and regulations in order to keep a biosecurity hazard off of your farm and a worry out of your mind!

**2016****Annual General Meeting**

DUNVEGAN MOTOR INN, FAIRVIEW

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26TH

4:30PM REGISTRATION

5:00PM BUSINESS MEETING

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On-Farm Food Safety Program & Verified Beef Production

By Carly Shaw

The purpose of the On-Farm Food Safety program “is to help producers invest in equipment and tracking systems to improve On-Farm Food Safety (OFFS) practices, enhancing producers’ business competitiveness and food safety performance (GF2 website).”

To be eligible under this Program, applicants must have completed the On-Farm Food Safety (OFFS) training for the species they produce. For beef producers, the OFFS training is offered through Alberta Verified Beef Production (VBP) as of the date of application. There are two ways in which you can complete VBP’s training program, either online at www.albertaverifiedbeef.com or watch for an in-person workshop being put on by PCBFA. In a nutshell, this training addresses the some of the main concerns when it comes to On-Farm Food Safety. If your operations has livestock other than beef, there are species appropriate training required for every species, and these are available on the GF2 website: <http://growingforward.alberta.ca>.



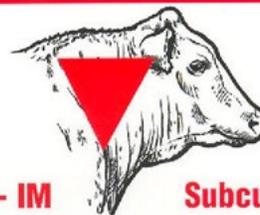
Example of an eligible squeeze chute with a neck extender under GF2’s On-Farm Food Safety Systems Program. Photo via: morandindustries.com

Some common on-farm food safety practices can include group health treatment records, ensuring proper insertion of needles so they don’t break, injecting needles in the proper areas and weighing cattle to ensure the proper dosage is being administered so as to not leave antibiotic residue. These are the types of activities that are eligible for funding. Under this program, successful applicants can receive reimbursement of 70% of eligible activities which include cattle squeeze chutes equipped with a neck extender, individual animal weigh systems, medical treatment software or herd management software that allows for tracking of medical treatments, and electronic animal thermometers. Maximum payment under the program is \$5,000 and you must complete your activities within the government fiscal year in which you apply (between April 1 and February 28). A complete list of all of the eligible equipment for cattle, including squeezes, medical treatment software or herd management software and scale systems can be found at on the Growing Forward 2 Website, under the FAQs on the On-Farm Food Safety Systems program.

Monitoring group health treatment records are an important aspect of food safety. Tracking this information allows you to consider the treatment dates and the withdrawal periods on medications to ensure that residues do not enter the food chain. Another important practice to implement during vaccinations is preventing broken needles. You can do this by; making sure that the animal is securely restrained with proper equipment like neck extenders on the chute, using only sharp, straight, detectable needles that are the appropriate size and length for the injection being given and changing needles every 10 animals or every time when dealing with a sick animal.



INJECTION TECHNIQUES FOR BEEF CATTLE

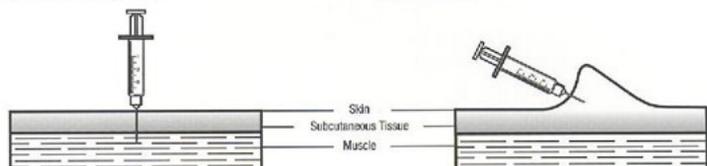


Intramuscular - IM

All intramuscular injections should be given in the neck muscle behind the base of the ear and ahead of the shoulder point. Use a 1-1½" 16-18 gauge needle.

Subcutaneous - SC

To minimize carcass damage, insert needle into loose, tented skin of neck in front of shoulder (preferred injection method). Use a 1 inch 16-18 gauge needle.



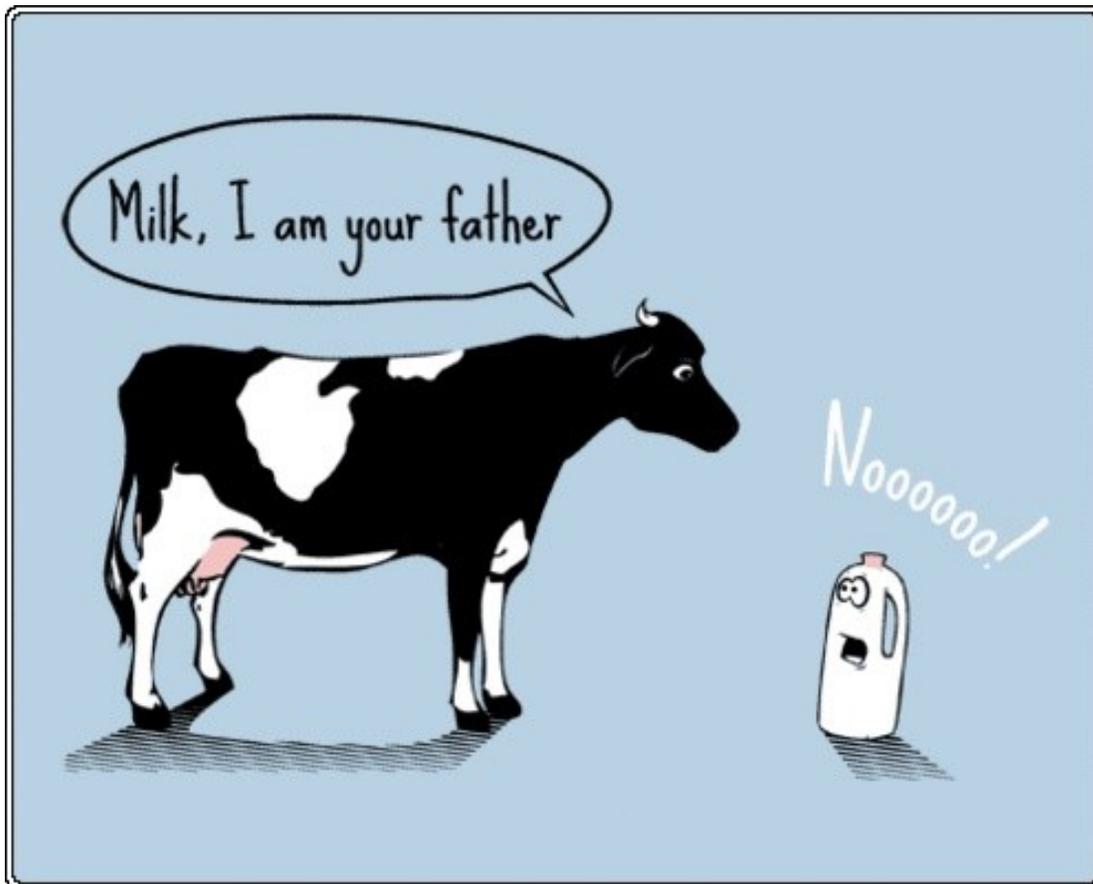
Remember to keep watch for the opening of the On-Farm Food Safety Program during spring and get your training done early in order to be proactive and ready to apply for equipment under this program! We expect this program to reopen after April 1st, 2016, so stay tuned for more updates and if you wish to subscribe to GF2 updates please visit the Growing Forward 2 website. And as always, if you would like assistance in filling out any Growing Forward paperwork, please feel free to give us a call or drop by the office!

Growing Forward 2 

A federal-provincial-territorial initiative

Alberta 
Government

Canada 



Even the cows are getting into Star Wars!

***Check Out Our Website For More Details on Our Projects,
Events and Past Publications:
www.peacecountrybeef.ca***



For more information about any of our field tours, workshops or project sites please call either Peace Country Beef and Forage Association Office.
Fairview 780-835-6799 or High Prairie 780-523-4033

Thank you to all our Funding Agencies



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