

# Forage Facts

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## Calving Season Reminders

By: Jen Allen

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Calving season is upon us, or for some has already begun! It is important for us to remember to always plan ahead and be prepared in order to have a successful calving season. It just takes one quick emergency or a few calves to drop 3-weeks earlier than expected for someone to say "I told you so!" while you're scrambling to finish last minute tasks, or discover that some of your equipment from last season is faulty and needs to be repaired or replaced.

Therefore, it wouldn't hurt to do a quick inventory of your calving essentials and stock up on what is missing. Here is a list

of items that should be ready and accessible if needed to assist in calving, derived from an article by Heather Smith Thomas that was published in the January 2017 issue of *Hereford World*:

### Calving Checklist – Things to Have on Hand

- ✓ Halter and rope
- ✓ Disposable long-sleeve obstetrical (OB) gloves
- ✓ OB lubricant in a squeeze bottle
- ✓ Plastic bucket for wash water and/or plastic squeeze bottles for wash water
- ✓ Rags or roll cotton for washing the cow
- ✓ Clean OB chains/straps and handles
- ✓ Calf-puller
- ✓ Oxytocin and epinephrine
- ✓ Suction bulb for suctioning fluid from the nostrils of a calf that's not breathing
- ✓ Iodine or chlorhexadine for disinfecting navel stumps
- ✓ Flashlight (with batteries that work!)
- ✓ Injectable antibiotics for cows/calves, prescribed by your vet
- ✓ Sterile syringes and needles
- ✓ Bottle and lamb nipple for feeding a calf
- ✓ Stomach tube (nasogastric tube) or esophageal feeder
- ✓ Frozen colostrum or packages of commercial colostrum replacer
- ✓ Electrolytes
- ✓ Toolbox to hold/carry needed items in one handy place

*Continued on page 2...*

## Reminder! 2016 PCBFA Memberships expire on March 31st!

If you haven't done so already, be sure to renew your Membership for 2017 for only \$30! Being a PCBFA member allows you to receive relevant and local information first, details on our projects and upcoming events, 2 free feed samples tested, and much more!

It is also important to do a walk-through of your calving facility or area. If your facility is indoors, be sure to have sufficient and reliable lighting, as you don't want to have to rely on a poorly lit lantern or flashlight when a calving cow is giving you grief in the middle of the night! In addition, calving areas should be clean and dry with fresh bedding and shelter nearby – “start clean, stay clean.” Remember that temperature and moisture play a big role for newborns. Pathogens have the tendency to increase in mud and snow, and cold stress can negatively affect a calf's immune system. Then, as always, be mindful of biosecurity! Dr. Ron Clarke from Canadian Cattlemen's *Beef Magazine* article says to “leave treating sick calves until after you have handled healthy ones – never before.” Make it a good habit to use disposable gloves and wash and disinfect clothes, boots, equipment etc. after dealing with sick calves and/or cows.

And we can't forget about colostrum! For those of you who don't know, colostrum is

the milk from the calf's mother consisting of essential antibodies and nutrients to help develop the calf's immune system. Colostrum management is a crucial part of calving – a newborn calf should obtain 5-6% of their body weight (1.5-2 litres) of colostrum within 6 hours of being born, and another 5-6% of their body weight after 12 hours of being born. Newborn calves rely heavily on colostrum until about 1-2 months of age, when their own immune systems begins to fully develop. Like the check list says, be sure to have a nipple and bottle or feeding tube ready in case you have to feed the calf colostrum. However, remember to not use the same bottle or tube on a healthy calf that was used on a sick calf. If you are going to purchase a colostrum product, ensure that is a replacer, not a supplement—discuss this with your veterinarian.

(Alberta Ag & Forestry, 2008; Canadian Cattlemen: The Beef Magazine, 2016; American Hereford Association: Hereford World, 2017)

Wishing everyone a safe and happy calving season!

### Introducing Mr. Carter Benoit— PCBFA's Cutest Model!

Monika Benoit, former PCBFA Manager who is currently on maternity leave, and her husband Mike welcomed a beautiful baby boy Carter Ross Benoit into the world on December 1st, 2016. He is “a big healthy farm boy born at 8 lbs 14 ounces and 20.25" long.” Congratulations Monika and Mike! Many of you may have met Carter at our AGM in February, and we can't wait to see Carter sporting his PCBFA shirt at more events in the future!



Photo courtesy of Monika Benoit

### Thank-You to the PCBFA Board of Directors

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- Soil & Livestock Water Quality Testing

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# What We Learned from Soil Health & Carbon Day



By: Jen Allen

Last month on February 21<sup>st</sup>, we had 3 amazing guest speakers join us for our Soil Health & Carbon Day event in Spirit River! We were privileged to host Dr. Richard Teague of Texas A&M AgriLife Research, Dr. Yamily Zavala of Chinook Applied Research Association (CARA), and Paul Jungnitsch of Alberta Agriculture & Forestry. All and all it was a successful and interactive day, with over 30 producers who were able to soak up all of the soil health and carbon information they could from these 3 experts! Although I could write many pages on what was learned at Soil Health & Carbon Day, I will just do a quick summary of some key take-home messages:

## Key Points Learned from Dr. Richard Teague:

- ◆ How we manage plants is critical – 90% of soil function is mediated by microbes, and microbes depend on plants
- ◆ One of the biggest limiting factors in rangeland is water in the soil
- ◆ High ecosystem biodiversity with more complex mixtures and combinations of desirable plant species leads to increased stability and productivity
- ◆ Overgrazing has little to do with number of animals, but with the amount of time plants are exposed to animals
- ◆ Adaptive Multi-Paddock (AMP) practices have been proven to result in higher conservation levels, improved plant biodiversity and wellbeing, enhanced soil health and carbon sequestration, and increased livestock production
- ◆ How to manage AMP for desired outcomes:
  - Flexible stocking to match forage availability and animal numbers
  - Rotate paddocks to spread grazing over whole ranch, one paddock at a time
  - Defoliate moderately in growing season
  - Use short grazing periods
  - Adequate recovery before re-grazing
  - Adaptively change with changing conditions
- ◆ Keys to a healthy soil:
  - Cover the soil (multi-species cover crops)
  - High plant diversity
  - Minimize soil mechanical disturbance
  - Grow plants for maximum days each year
  - Manage livestock to enhance soil function
  - Use organic soil amendments
  - Reduce N-fertilizer use
  - Incorporate livestock with regenerative grazing



*We had a very engaged audience, leading to great discussion periods with each guest speaker*

## Key Points Learned from Dr. Yamily Zavala:

- ◆ A healthy soil should have good tilth and soil organic matter content, sufficient rooting depth, good conditions for water storage and drainage, enough (balanced) nutrients and few toxic chemicals, diversity of beneficial micro-organisms – low soil born diseases and parasitic organisms, resistance to being degraded and eroded, and resilience – quick recovery from adverse events.
- ◆ Soil health emphasizes the integration of biological, chemical, and physical measures
- ◆ Nutrients are stored in soil organisms, C is a source of energy, N is the production of protein
- ◆ C:N ratio of organic residues influences nutrients availability and rate of decomposition
- ◆ Increasing soil organic matter and aggregation builds a healthy soil for carbon sequestration
- ◆ Proper rest following grazing is key! With recommended rest periods, roots will redevelop to approximately the same depth as uncut plants
- ◆ Biological activity, organic matter turnover, improved nutrient cycling, improved soil structure and aggregation stability, improved water availability builds a healthy soil for efficient yield and profit



*Yamily demonstrating a visual soil aggregate stability test*



# Upcoming Events

## Peace Country Classic

March 9th-11th

Evergreen Park,  
Grande Prairie

## Solar Power Workshop

March 15th  
9:30am registration

Westmark Hall  
13km west of Woking

## Smokey River Ag Trade Show

March 16th-18th

Falher Regional Rec  
Complex

## Shelterbelts, Eco-buffers & Beneficial Insects Workshop

March 20th  
10:30am registration

Bezanson Legion

## Shelterbelts, Eco-buffers & Beneficial

March 21st  
4:30pm registration

High Prairie Ag.  
Society

## Surface Rights Workshop

March 29th  
Time TBA

Worsley

## Clear Hills County Ag Trade Show

April 8th

Hines Creek

## New Zealand Ag Study Tour

Nov 12th-Dec 1st  
2017

Contact us for more  
details

For more information or to register for any of these great events, please call the Fairview office at 780-835-6799 or email Jen at [jen@pcbfa.ca](mailto:jen@pcbfa.ca)

## Contact Us

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