

Forage Facts

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DID YOU KNOW?

Relief has been announced through Agri-Recovery for drought-stricken livestock producers. Stay tuned for details on how to access funds coming soon.

Feeding Cattle Through Drought

By Johanna Murray

Feeding cattle through drought conditions can be a stressful and costly enterprise, but being able to hold on to good animals through tough times can give you a head-start when rebuilding the herd. Inventive rations and working with your grain farming neighbours can help a lot when you're looking to bolster your feed supply. So here are some tips for keeping your herd fed this winter.

Salvaged Cash Crops

Drought is hard on everything, and it's more than likely your grain farming neighbours are feeling the strain too. Salvaged crops can supplement drought-stressed feed supplies for livestock producers and provide a way for the crop producers to get some value from failed crops.

However, timing is key to quality feed. We don't want to harvest when there's still potential for yield

increases (i.e. when everything's still green.), but once the plant starts dropping leaves or going brown, feed quality can decrease very quickly. If you've got a neighbour willing to part with their crop for greenfeed, hay or silage, it's essential to keep a close eye on the crop. ([https://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/ba3468a2a8681f69872569d60073fde1/fa6620f500a8ad3a87256c2c005839b4/\\$FILE/salvaging.pdf](https://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/ba3468a2a8681f69872569d60073fde1/fa6620f500a8ad3a87256c2c005839b4/$FILE/salvaging.pdf))

If your neighbour can't get the crop released by crop insurance, or they decide to harvest for grain, the residue can still provide decent fall grazing and improve soil nutrients and moisture for next year. The nutritional value of crop residue varies depending on the crop type, stage of maturity at harvest, and the settings on the combine can affect as well. This year may see some pretty light seeds, and the quality of nutrition increases when the combine is set to throw light kernels. Bunched or swathed straw and the aftermath can make good feed, though it may be low in some nutrients. (<http://www.beefresearch.ca/research-topic.cfm/extended-grazing-45>)





Feeding During a Drought

When plants are under extreme stress, such as drought, cutting them too short can severely impact next years growth. Even in annual cropping, taller stubble can be used as late-season grazing after freeze-up as well as acting as a more effective snow trap. Another note on stubble height is that white mould in feed can be caused by dirt contamination, so setting cutters too low may decrease your feed quality.

Nitrates and Anti-Quality factors

Acid Detergent and Neutral Detergent Fibres can increase rapidly as plants dehydrate in the field, resulting in lower energy levels and reduced digestibility. These fibres can also restrict the amount of feed animals can consume.

Salvaged crops may have increased nitrate levels, high sulphur or other nutrients due to the more aggressive fertilizer regime used in cash cropping systems. Usually, these levels are still well below the danger zone; crops can still be fed or grazed, but be prepared to manage the feed and use feed tests if you aren't sure. Slow introduction and dilution by mixing it off with a higher quality feed can allow you to utilize low quality feed over time. Overall nitrate levels should be 0.5% or less, but cattle should be carefully monitored when there are any nitrates present in the feed. (Nitrate Poisoning and Feeding Nitrate Feeds to Livestock; Agrifacts July 1991)

Feed Testing

While it may seem silly, the best policy is that if you aren't sure about your feed, get it tested. The quality of salvaged

crops varies significantly, and colour and look of hay or silage can be deceiving since nitrates, protein, and energy are all invisible qualities. Feed tests can serve as an early warning system for toxins and deficiencies. Feed Tests are especially important when feeding different crops than usual, like canola silage, or wheat straw. The beef cattle nutrition rules of thumb from Agrifacts are a good reference when reading feed tests and estimating the quality of feed. (The Rules of Thumb can be found here: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/3035887>)

Feed tests can be used to formulate rations that make the best use of the feed you've put up. Cattle are more efficient and perform significantly better when their nutritional needs are being met. Animals are also more resistant to anti-quality factors when they're well fed. Cattle, in particular, can handle nitrates much better if their other nutritional needs are being met.

A good ration should keep your animals in good shape and may even help stretch your feed supplies.

PCBFA members can get two free feed tests per year and free shipping on subsequent samples, provided they aren't rush samples. PCBFA staff can also offer assistance with ration balancing and cowbytes software or references to independent nutritionists.

For more information on PCBFA's feed testing program or borrow one of our probes, give us a call, text, or email!

Thank You to the PCBFA Board of Directors

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Do You Have Project or Workshop Ideas?

We are always looking for ideas!
Give us a call!

PCBFA Member Perks:

- Two Free Feed Tests Per Year
- Ration Balancing Assistance
- CAP Application Assistance
- Environmental Farm Plans
- Scale & Tag Reader Available for Member Use
- Soil & Water Quality Testing

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Introducing Some New Faces at PCBFA!



Hello, my name is Shelley Henkel, I am back as PCBFA's new Research Technician Intern.

My road back to education was a long one. After 6 years of work experience, a cattle farm share agreement, a surprise bay filly, a pail bunter named Clair, and a family history of a love for Braunvieh cows, I have decided to pursue a Bachelor's degree in Agriculture. Having grown up in the Banana Belt area south of High Prairie, I've always found it fascinating how much the weather varies in the Peace Country and I am super excited to learn how this affects the Ag community, and the creative ways farmers have adapted and worked with it. Science has done incredible things for the Agricultural community, and I am fascinated by how much farmers will continue to change and move forward while still having the same goals as previous generations. I would eventually like to run my own cattle operation and contribute to an ever changing industry. I know no matter what happens this summer I will have learned something, and enjoyed it.



Peace Country Beef & Forage Association Feed Testing Program 2021



Samples should be about 2 litres by volume or 1/2 a pound by weight and kept in a sealed bag.

PCBFA Members receive **either 2 free feed tests or 1 free soil test** with their membership

Feed Test Prices:

Hay & Silage Tests for Members - \$40
Hay & Silage Tests for Non-Members - \$45
Rush Shipping - \$50
Hay Probe Deposit for Non-Members - \$100

For more information, or to book a feed probe call

780-523-4033 or 780-835-6799

Event	Date & Time	Venue / Location
DeBolt Perennial Plot Tour	Wednesday, August 25th	DeBolt Plot Site
Cattle Market Evening	Saturday, September 11th	Rycroft Ag Events Center
Nutrition Workshops	October 4-8th	Various Locations
Stockman Grassfarmer Business School	November 20th & 21st	TBA

For Directions to Our Events, Please Visit our Website.

All Events will Abide by Current Health Recommendations and are Subject to Change. Check our Website for the Most Up-To-Date Event Information

To Register for any of our Events:
peacecountrybeef.ca | 780-523-4033 | info@pcbfa.ca

Need to send out Feed Samples? We have feed sample drop sites at:

*Fairview Research Farm, west of Fairview
 Saddle Hills County Office, west of Spirit River
 County of Grande Prairie Ag Services, Clairmont
 MD of Greenview Office, Valleyview
 Lesser Slave Watershed Council Office, High Prairie*

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