

Forage Facts

Published by the Peace Country Beef & Forage Association

September 2021, Volume 17, Issue 200



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DID YOU KNOW?

The Canada-Alberta Livestock Feed Assistance Initiative (CALFA) will have up to \$200/hd available for producers. See Page 3 for what we know now.

Pasture Recovery: Actions this Fall That Will Affect Next Spring

By Katie McLachlan

2021 has been a real kick to the teeth. It's been a perfect storm for our pastures - early snow melt, a cold spring, hard June frosts, no rain, extreme heat, and grasshoppers have left our pastures bare. What can we do now to help get us get off on the right foot next spring?

There is no cookie-cutter solution for surviving a drought. Here are a few things to consider heading into fall.

Pre-Frost Regrowth

Much of the Peace has seen some decent precipitation at the end of August, not enough to save us, but enough in areas to kick-start some regrowth.

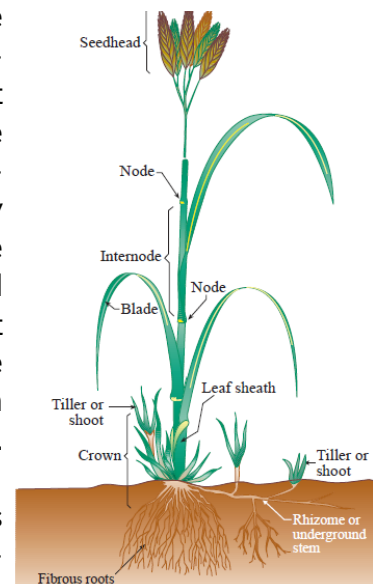
At our Perennial Plot Tour on August 25th, Grant Lastiwka emphasized the importance of allowing perennial forages to recover prior to going dormant. He says your best bet to protect your grass over winter is to ensure that the tillers (secondary stems) on your grass plants have at least 2 leaves on them. Anything less is going to set you back by up to 3 weeks next spring. This is pertinent in grass because grass plants

store the carbohydrates that they use as an energy supply through the winter and subsequent spring are stored in their leaves.

Alfalfa is considered more drought hardy than it is drought tolerant. Established alfalfa plants can have roots reaching down 6ft up to 40ft deep. This enables the plant to utilize deep soil moisture that other plants cannot access. Because of this deep root system, alfalfa ideally needs 28-35 days to recover from grazing. If you recall our many past soil health workshops - when we take matter off of the top of the plant, we lose an equal or greater amount below the ground in the root system. This is especially important from an over-wintering point of view as alfalfa and other legumes store their carbohydrate reserves in their roots and in the crown of the plant.

Fertilizer Application

Fertilizer application can be used to rejuvenate pastures and give them a boost come spring. As far as a fertilizer recommendation goes, the answer is 'it depends'. There are



many factors that go into fertility needs on perennial pasture such as; species present in the stand, soil moisture conditions, organic matter available, and nutrient levels already present in the soil. (Alberta Forage Manual, 2009)

With the price of fertilizer as high as it is, it is highly recommended to take a soil test of the pastures and hay fields you want to fertilize. Often times, nitrogen fertilizer alone is not enough. In PCBFA's experience, soils are typically also slightly deficient in phosphorus and sulphur as well. According to research conducted by Alberta Agriculture, applying a complete fertility blend can increase crop production by up to 90% over applying nitrogen alone. (Agdex 127/541-1, Fertilizing Grass for Hay and Pasture, 2005)

It is recommended that if you are applying nitrogen fertilizer, that you either band it into the soil in the fall or apply in the spring. This is due to urea's tendency to lose nitrogen when it is exposed to air and water.

Planning for Next Year

Drought is no stranger to the Peace, we've been through it before, and we will be again. What we don't know, is when the next drought is going to be, or how long this one is going to last. Ideally, planning for a drought needs to happen before the drought arrives. That being said, now is the time to start planning 2022.

Would it be beneficial for your farm to seed some annual forage, such as greenfeed or a cover crop next spring?

If we get a good snow pack and have good spring moisture, seeding an annual crop for grazing or feed supply is a good strategy.

What about a fall crop like fall rye? Granted, we are getting quite late for seeding a winter crop, but if you have the moisture and willing to take the gamble, winter crops such as fall rye can provide some high-quality spring grazing, and give your pastures a break.

What if we have a carbon copy of 2021's growing season next year? This year, bush pastures were the star of the season, followed closely by well managed, adaptive grazing systems. Perhaps the purchase of some additional electric fencing equipment, and some planning on where lines can be run will help give a leg up next year.

Risk management programs such as Moisture Deficiency Insurance through AFSC are a tool to hedge your grazing potential. If we are in another drought situation, an insurance payout can help to purchase feed or fencing supplies.

There is no silver-bullet for surviving a drought. What we can do, is share our successes - what worked, what didn't work, can we think outside the box and help each other through. It is in times like these that we need to come together as an agricultural community and help our neighbours out.

If you are struggling or in crisis, please reach out to the Alberta Mental Health Hotline at 1-877-303-2642.

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What You Can Do to Prepare for the CALFA Program



On August 6th, the Provincial Government announced funding for drought-stricken livestock producers through Agri-Recovery. They proposed a \$200/head relief for purchase of feed and water supplies. The federal government has confirmed their participation in the program, and here is what we know as of September 1st:

The Canada-Alberta Livestock Feed Assistance Initiative, or CALFA, will be administered through AFSC. We should have applications open in early September.

CALFA Funding will be available in two stages

1. The AgriRecovery initiative will provide an initial payment of \$94 per head for eligible feed and water access costs for breeding females to producers across the province.
2. Additional payments of up to \$106/beef cow

Animals other than beef cows have different support levels applied. Sheep, Goats & Alpacas are eligible payments of \$19 & \$21/head of breeding stock, and Horses are eligible for payments of \$113 & \$127/head of breeding stock. Bison qualify for the same benefit as beef cows.

How to prepare for CALFA

AFSC is finalizing CALFA details, and will share them as soon as possible.

In the meantime, producers should prepare for a smooth application process by:

- Ensuring you have an AFSC Connect account, and direct deposit. For those who aren't currently AFSC clients, AFSC asks that you sign up for an AFSC Connect account, and stay tuned for directions to sign up for direct deposit to receive program payments.
- Preparing an inventory of breeding females on hand as of August 6, 2021.
- Keeping records of any expenses incurred for

drought-related costs, including feeding livestock, up to December 31, 2021.

Other Supports for Producers

Expanded Grazing & Hay Opportunities

Alberta Environment and Parks has expanded opportunities for grazing disposition holders, producers looking for hay/grazing on vacant Crown land, and permitting grazers in the forest reserve, where possible. Farmers and ranchers interested in learning more about these opportunities are encouraged to call 310-FARM(3276).

Buying or Selling Feed

Producers are urged to use caution when buying feed, as several fraud cases have been reported.

Alberta Forage Industry Network (AFIN)'s Farming the Web offers a dedicated space for agriculture listings, including hay, feed, straw, and crop. This can be found by visiting farmingtheweb.ca

If you have any questions about the programs listed above, or any other funding that is currently available to producers, please reach out to Katie by calling or texting 780-772-0277 or email katie@pcbfa.ca

Join PCBFA for our Annual

Cattle Market Outlook Evening

Saturday, September 11th, 2021

3:30pm -8pm - Supper included

Rycroft Ag Centre

Free Admission - please pre-register for supper

Event	Date & Time	Venue / Location
Cattle Market Outlook Evening	Saturday, September 11th, 3:30-8pm	Rycroft Ag Events Center
Beef Cow Body Condition Management Webinar	Mid September Date TBD	Online Via Zoom
Beef Nutrition 101: How to Feed Test Webinar	Tuesday, September 21st, 12-1pm	Online Via Zoom
Beef Nutrition 101: Supplementation Webinar	Tuesday, September 28th, 7-8:30pm	Online Via Zoom
Beef Nutrition 101: What Do Minerals Do? Webinar	Tuesday, October 5th, 7-8:30pm	Online Via Zoom

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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

Contact Our Team!

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