

# Forage Facts

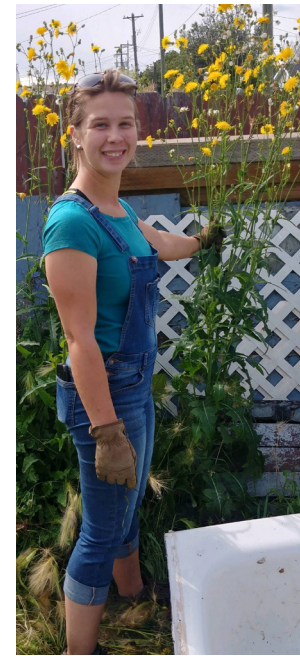
Published by the Peace Country Beef & Forage Association

June 2020, Volume 16, Issue 185



## Welcome to our Summer Research Crew, and Welcome Back Monika!

have learnt in college out in the field throughout my time at PCBFA."



"Hello, my name is Shelley Henkel, and I was born and raised in High Prairie.

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, 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

We welcomed our Summer Research Technicians to the Fairview Research Farm May 4th, and are very fortunate to have a few returning faces. Our all-girl crew is a knowledgeable, hard working bunch, and are an absolute joy to work with. We are really looking forward to what this research season has in store. If you see them around this summer, be sure to say hi and have a chat!



"Hi there, my name is Courtney Chaykowsky, I grew up on a farm outside of Hines Creek, Alberta.

I have recently graduated from Lakeland College from the program of Environmental Science majoring in Conservation and Reclamation. I was interested in PCBFA to advance my understanding of the research side of agriculture. I enjoy working outside and working with plants and soil. I hope to apply the skills I

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## DID YOU KNOW?

**We recently signed a 25 year lease for a total of 250 acres around the Fairview Airport, including the Fairview Research Farm! Thank You to the MD of Fairview for the support!**



# Welcome to our Summer Crew & Welcome back Monika!

enjoyed it."



"Hello! My name is Frances MacArthur and I am pursuing an Agriculture Management diploma at Olds College.

I have learned the importance of community growing up on a cattle ranch in the Mighty Peace Region. Which is why I am proud to work for a credible, producer driven association such as Peace Country Beef and Forage. As a technician I work hard to ensure the data I collect is accurate for Dr. Akim to analyze, and present to our producers."

We are also very excited to be welcoming our Extension Program Coordinator, Monika Benoit back from maternity leave on June 15th! She will be working part time, remotely from home.



"Hello Everyone!

I'm pleased to be back from maternity leave and to join the PCBFA team once again.

My two little boys and our family farm have been

keeping me very busy, but many times a week an idea for a PCBFA event or learning opportunity comes to mind, so I am excited to be back at it and to connect with my favourite people in the Peace Country!

Many things have changed since I took my leave last June, and now more than ever, as producers, we need to access tools and knowledge to get us through what is looking to be some challenging times ahead. Countless aspects of our farm and ranch businesses are out of our control, and while this is challenging and can be hard to deal with, focusing on the things we can control is the best place to spend our time and energy. New ideas and knowledge, ways of doing things and thinking are going to be what pulls us through, and the PCBFA network is the perfect avenue to access these things!

I am looking forward to digging in and working with the PCBFA members, board, staff and partners to come up with ways to strengthen our farms and ranches, from the business management side, to the soil, plants and our livestock. I would love to hear from you, send an email or give me a call, I would be more than pleased to talk things over and see where you're at and what PCBFA can do for you and your operation!

Wishing everyone a productive summer, with just the right amount of rain, lots of grass and healthy cows!"

Starting on June 15th, you can reach Monika via email at [monika@pcbfa.ca](mailto:monika@pcbfa.ca) or call 780-837-4752.

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# Managing Against Bloat in Pasture Cattle



By: Marianne Krahn

Adding legumes to a pasture stand can bring many benefits if well managed. These benefits include improved weight gains, increased soil health and forage production, and carrying capacity. Grazing legumes however, presents the challenge of bloat which can deter producers from incorporating legumes into their pasture. This article will address the question of bloat and how you can mitigate the risk while reaping the benefits of adding legumes to your pasture stand.

## What is bloat?

There are two forms of bloat; free gas bloat and frothy bloat. Free gas bloat is caused when there is a build-up of gas in the rumen because the animal is unable to eructate (burp). This can be caused by several things, including an obstruction in the esophagus or pressure on the vagal nerve. The second type of bloat is frothy bloat. Frothy bloat is more common and occurs in feedlot cattle and cattle grazing lush pasture.



The cause of frothy bloat is complex and not 100% understood yet. What we do know is that frothy bloat is a build-up of gas bubbles that become trapped in the rumen in a stable foam made from soluble proteins. Research suggests that chloroplasts from leafy plants that are broken by chewing also play a part in the production of foam.

Legumes are generally considered bloat inducing plants, but young cereals and even lush grass can also cause frothy bloat. Legumes with the highest

likelihood to cause bloat include white clover, most alfalfas and Persian clover. Red clover, crimson clover and subterranean clover would be classified as a moderate bloat risk, while berseem clover is a low risk legume. Legumes that have been shown to be non-bloat legumes include birdsfoot trefoil, sainfoin and cicer milkvetch.

Bloat-causing plants are easily broken down in the digestive tract, leading to a high passage rate through the animal. While a high passage rate is good for getting more feed into the animal, it

leads to bloat because the microbes in the rumen are rapidly breaking down the cell walls of the plant, releasing the soluble proteins and chloroplasts into the rumen faster than usual.

## How to reduce the risk of bloat

There are different strategies aiming at reducing the risk of bloat from pasture establishment to grazing management and diet supplements.

### *Pasture establishment*

Reducing risk of bloat starts at seeding time. Plant mixtures of legumes such as alfalfa or clover with grass or non-bloating legumes, so that the bloat-prone plant totals no more than 50% of the available forage. Look also for reduced-bloat varieties such as AC Grazeland for alfalfa. If you would like more information on pasture mixes that include low-bloat legumes that are proven to grow in the Peace, please feel free to reach out to us about



# Managing Against Bloat in Pasture Cattle

our applied research trials!

## Grazing management

The grazing strategies below can greatly reduce the risk of bloat.

- Never turn hungry livestock into bloat-prone pastures, as it can lead to overconsumption.
- Do not move cattle to bloat-prone pastures when it's wet with heavy dew or rainfall.
- Make paddock moves in the afternoon.
- Wait until bloat-causing legumes are in full bloom to graze. Bloat risk is highest when legumes are in vegetative to early bloom stages of growth.
- Do not graze bloat-prone pastures three days to two weeks following a killing frost. Delay grazing until the stands dries down.
- Some animals are more prone to bloat than others, known as chronic-bloaters. Observe cattle closely the first few days on pasture, and cull any chronic-bloating animals.
- Be extra observant for bloat when a rapid flush of bloat-causing plant growth occurs, such as during cloudy

wet periods and after plant stress such as hail or drought.

## Livestock diet supplements

- Provide a bloat preventive (poloxalene), like Bloat Guard or Alfasure, to livestock several days prior to and while grazing legumes. In order to be effective, it's imperative that each and every animal consume the product daily. Talk to your vet about the advisability of bloat-preventive products on your operation.
- Provide mineral supplement with adequate sodium and avoid too much potassium, calcium and magnesium.
- Give livestock access to another forage that is predominantly grass, whether it's another pasture or a few bales of hay or straw.

Even if frothy bloat is highly preventable, be prepared in case an animal is affected. Bloat is a true emergency and having an emergency kit on hand could very well save an animal. Talk to your veterinarian about the supplies recommended, and be sure to get proper training on their use to give you the best chance of dealing with bloat in pasture cattle.

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