

Forage Facts

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Oh I Can't Complain, No One Listens Anyway

By: Katie McLachlan

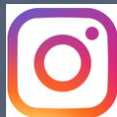
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DID YOU KNOW?

There are more microbes in a teaspoon of healthy soil than there are people on the entire planet

If I had a dime for every time I got the above response when I asked someone "Hey, how are you?" I would be pretty close to an early retirement.

It has been a whole year since we first brought up the subject of mental health. A year ago, I encouraged you all to take ownership of the conversation, and make steps to help break down the stigma around mental health challenges.

The past year has been a transformative one for myself, as well as for PCBFA. We made an effort to bring the conversation to the forefront in 2019. Last February, we welcomed Lesley Kelly from the Do More Agriculture Foundation to share her story at our Annual General Meeting, we held a Tough Enough to Talk About It workshop in Grande Prairie in September, and we hosted and were able to take part in a Mental Health First Aid for Agriculture course last March in Fairview in conjunction with Do More Ag. I have learned so much in the last year on how to change the conversation around our mental wellbeing.

However, life happens. This year was a roller coaster on the farm and at work. We started out extremely dry at our place this spring. We fed cows later than we ever have, and wound up culling hard. We were delayed getting cattle out to grass, because the grass was not growing. We were going to be happy if the cows were on grass until August 15th.

Then we pulled the discbine out of the shed on June 25th. On June 26th, it started to rain and did not quit. Haying

was a challenge this year to say the least. Long hours, trying to outrun the rain clouds, and doing our best impression of a meteorologist to try and decide when to lay hay down. When we finally got our feed tests back, we found out that our feed quality is outside of normal in almost every way.



The first promising rain cloud to pass over our place on June 17th. We were so excited we had to document it, but it had no rain in it.

2019 was a hard year. Despite everything that I have been fortunate enough to learn this year, I still find myself bottling everything inside, and struggling to see the bright side of things.

So why do I complain to you now? Because it is okay to!

I am not the only one who had a rough 2019. Hundreds of head of cattle were evacuated from the Manning area due to the Notikewin Fire this spring. Haying was a fight across the Peace this summer (the green hay bale is basically an endangered species.) The south peace was extremely wet all year, to the point that fence posts are falling over because the ground is so saturated. Thousands of acres of grain is still out in the fields, and grain dryers are still running 24/7. Because of the unusual weather, marketing cattle and grain both have been a challenge this fall with trucks not being able to get into the yard, and quality being down.

It is so easy to beat ourselves down and

take the blame for things out of our control - "if I would have gone just another couple hours, I would have gotten that hay up", "if we combined one more night we would have beat the snow", "if I grazed my pastures the other way, I could have gotten them out of there on time".

How do we break these habits? Taking care of your mental health may mean seeking out professional support, but it also means taking everyday steps to help improve your mental wellbeing. Here are some tips on protecting and improving your mental health from the Do More Agriculture Foundation:

1. **Value yourself:** Treat yourself with kindness and respect. Feeling good about yourself boosts confidence and helps when life takes difficult turns.
2. **Do something for yourself:** Put yourself as your number one priority. Take time to do activities that you enjoy and makes you feel fulfilled.
3. **Keep active:** Regular exercise can boost your self-esteem and can help you sleep, concentrate and overall, feel better.
4. **Eat well:** A diet that is good for your overall physical health is also good for your mental health.
5. **Socialize:** Whether you're around people at the farm all day or work by yourself, life can feel isolating. It's important to turn to real-life interactions for the sake of your mental health. This could be something as simple as reading a bedtime story with your kids at night, or getting involved in a sport or activity off the farm.
6. **Find and talk to your support network:** Talking about what is going on

in your life, whether that is to celebrate the great things or the challenges can help your mental health.

7. **Take a break:** This can be hard during the busy seasons of farming, but a change of scene or pace is good for your mental health. It could be a 5-minute pause or stretch on the tractor, a half hour lunch break, or a few hours enjoying an activity.



It is okay to take an afternoon with some buddies and go have some fun!

8. **Help others:** Caring for others is often an important part of strengthening relationships with people close to you.
9. **Understand that your mental health is always changing:** Mental health isn't something you deal with once. The state of your mind is something that is always changing and you need to treat it as such. Learn how to recognize the signs of a decline in your mental state so you can fill your life with activities and thoughts that make you feel empowered and joyful.
10. **Get help when you need it:** Seeking help is a sign of strength and it is important to remember that treatment is effective. People who receive appropriate care can recover from mental illness, and can lead full, rewarding lives.

Please note that this article is not a substitute for professional medical advice. If you want to learn about the resources that are out there, call the Alberta Mental Health Hotline noted below, or visit mymentalhealth.ca. If you are in crisis, please call 911.

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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 & Livestock Water Quality Testing

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Big Lakes County
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**Need Help? Call 211 (Alberta only)
or the Mental Health Help Line at 1-877-303-2642**

Calving Series Part 1: Content of Colostrum



By Johanna Murray

Colostrum, or the first milk produced by a cow at calving, is key to a calf's development, longevity, and disease resistance. At calving, the calf goes from a contained, clean environment to an environment teeming with pathogens and unfamiliar biology. Colostrum is key to how the calf's immune system will deal with this new environment. The primary antibody in Colostrum, known as Immunoglobulin G or IgG passes on 'blueprints' that teach the newborn's immune system how to function. If the cow has spent time on your operation, these antibodies will be optimized to deal with the pathogens and microbes that are present on your farm. Of course, colostrum also contains vitamins, minerals, proteins and fats to help kick start the calf's digestive system and other vital systems.

What if I told you that a calf's ability to absorb those antibodies and take advantage of those 'blueprints' decreases dramatically after the first four hours of life? It decreases again at six hours, and is practically non-existent after 24 hours? A calf needs to consume about 2 quarts of colostrum in the first 4-6 hours of its life (ideally in the first 30 minutes!) and another 2 quarts by the 12-hour mark. Calves that have not received enough colostrum are twice as likely to die as calves that received the correct amount. Calves that receive no colostrum at all are ten to twenty times more likely to die before weaning. (<https://extension.psu.edu/colostrum-and-calf-productivity-a-review>)

Generally, though, we don't have to worry about colostrum. Most beef calves get up and suckle without any interference at all. However, in some situations, intervention is necessary. A second-born twin, cold

stressed calves, lethargic calves, or calves that have had a difficult birth may need a supplementation or help with nursing. If a calf won't suckle the cow, the best solution is to milk the cow and feed the calf with a nipples bottle. The sucking reflex aids with absorption and can kick the calf's brain into gear. However, esophageal feeders, when used correctly, may provide an option for a calf with a weak suckling reflex.

Most calves need about a gallon of colostrum total. Extra colostrum from milking can be frozen in Ziploc bags and then defrosted in warm water to feed to other calves if necessary. If you need more colostrum you can purchase it from other operations; however, colostrum from a dairy or other farms should be used with caution, it may introduce diseases such as Johnes or salmonellosis to your herd. Also, dairy colostrum may be lower quality than beef colostrum because of a lower concentration of IgG.



There are powdered colostrum replacers available as well but be careful to read the label and ensure that there is a minimum of 100 grams of IgG per dose. Colostrum substitutes generally have lower IgG values, and while they are cheaper, they should be used as a supplement, not as a replacement.

Colostrum is key to the longterm performance of your herd. Calves that receive colostrum have better early gains, less disease, better survivability, and it may even be tied to milk production of first-calf heifers. So as we go into calving season, keep an eye on those calves that aren't as quick to get up and nurse. A little extra insurance in those first 12 hours, could result in more healthy calves and more pounds per calf in the fall.

Notice of Special Resolution to be Proposed at Our Annual General Meeting on February 22nd, 2020.

Our Board of Directors will be putting forward a motion to repeal and replace the Bylaws of Peace Country Beef & Forage Association. All PCBFA members should have received written notice, along with a copy of the proposed changes in the mail.

We ask that you please review the proposed changes, and send all thoughts, concerns, suggestions, or questions to our Interim General Manager, Chelsey Hostettler at 780-523-0443 or email chelsey@pcbfa.ca



Upcoming Events

Event	Date	Location
Peace Country Beef Congress	January 10th & 11th	Lakota Center, Dawson Creek
Peace Agronomy Update	January 14th	Dunvegan Inn & Suites, Fairview
You Can Get There From Here: Farm Business Planning Seminar	January 23rd & 24th	Debolt Community Center
Peace Country Beef Cattle Day	February 12th	Legion Hall, Grimshaw
PCBFA Annual General Meeting	February 22nd	Dunvegan Inn & Suites, Fairview
Soil Health Mini Conference	February 24th	GPRC Fairview Campus
Planning Your 2020 Cocktail Cover Crop	POSTPONED to Early March	St. Isidore

For More Information or to Register for any of these Events, Visit peacecountrybeef.ca/upcoming-events Email info@pcbfa.ca or Call 780-835-6799 ext. 3

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Save the Date!

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING SATURDAY FEB 22, 2020

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WE ARE LOOKING FOR 3 NEW DIRECTORS TO SIT ON OUR BOARD!

Positions Needing Filled:

- One in the South West
- One in the South East
- One At Large (Anywhere)

Positions Up for Re-Election

- Two in the North
- One in the South East

Questions about being a Board Member? Please contact Jordan Barnfield at 780-832-7148

Connect with Us!

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