

# EAST CENTRAL UPDATE

Highlighting Beneficial Management Practices in East Central Saskatchewan

July 2005 Issue

## Success Through New Ideas and Beneficial Management

Ranchers from the Langenburg area have joined together to launch an innovative new livestock production enterprise, and beneficial management practices are a big part of their plan for financial success.



- Leo Fuhr

Sunrise Cattle Ventures is a partnership of 10 producers who are taking a cooperative approach to the cattle industry. Through the venture, each producer has made an equal investment in a shared herd of commercial cow-calf pairs. Both the input costs of raising the cattle and the eventual profits from their sale are split equally among the partners.

Leo Fuhr was one of the driving forces behind the establishment of Sunrise Cattle Ventures. From Fuhr's perspective, the cattle industry, built on individual ownership of animals and land, needed to fundamentally change if it was to attract a new generation of ranchers – most of whom appear to be less willing to assume large, long-term loans.

"With the ownership thing, we're spending the rest of our lives trying to own it. And in my opinion, it's putting too much stress onto the individuals that want to go out there and be independent," says Fuhr, now Past Chair of Sunrise Cattle Ventures.

"We see our young people leaving the land, because they say 'I'm not going to go into debt and try and own this.' . . . We have to get young people back to the land, because this is a good way of life. But a young family just can't make it."

Fuhr and Tom Werle, another local producer, began looking for partners to join them in a cooperative cattle company about four years ago. At first, the two had trouble convincing producers in the area – most of whom had been buying, raising and selling their own livestock for years – about the potential benefits of cooperative cattle ownership.

"It was a task trying to change the thinking of these guys," laughs Fuhr.

"Now they're starting to see the benefits and how we need to look at these changes to remain viable . . . And it's something that I personally feel very strongly about as far as the future of the cattle business."

Today, Sunrise Cattle Ventures has a total of 143 cow-calf pairs. Fuhr says he would like to see the enterprise evolve into a community feedlot project, and also possibly into an ethanol plant sometime thereafter. In the nearer future, he notes that Sunrise Cattle Ventures could soon be opening up for increased public investment.

At present, Sunrise Cattle Ventures' livestock are grazed on eight quarters of pasture, including six quarters of land north of Churchbridge belonging to Ducks Unlimited Canada. DUC has agreed to allow the group to use the land for a five-year period.



- Tom Werle

In order to be successful, one of the things the group needed to do was to ensure that their pasture would remain able to support the livestock. So they took steps to manage their land use, with a focus on sustainability. For starters, the group installed additional fencing to create a paddock system on the existing pasture, through which the herd is rotated through the grazing season.

Currently, the group has established four paddocks on a half-section parcel of their pasture, with the paddocks sized between 60 to 80 acres each. They are also planning to erect more fencing on the other four quarters of Ducks Unlimited land this summer, which will increase the number of paddocks on that parcel from four to eight. The new paddocks will be about 80 acres each.



The cattle are rotated through the paddocks based on a set schedule that is determined by the productive capacity of each paddock. All 143 cow-calf pairs are placed in the same paddock until it is time to move them, and each paddock is then rested for between 68 to 80 days to allow the plants to recover.

“With our rotations we want to enhance the grass and create more grass by spreading the manure in strategic locations, and by doing the fencing. And then hopefully that’ll rejuvenate some of the native grass and bring some species in, and bring more production onto it,” says Tom Werle, who managed the pastures for the Venture last year.

The group also had to plan for the herd’s water supply, as only one or two of the paddocks had existing water sources that would be dependable enough to last through the grazing season. Fortunately, the land owned by Ducks Unlimited featured an existing well with power running to it, a leftover from an old yard site. A water trough was placed in roughly the middle of the parcel so it would be accessible from each of the paddocks on the six quarters.

According to Werle, this gives the cattle a dependable supply of quality water, which is particularly important in the drier late-summer and fall months, and after freeze-over in the late

fall. The location of the watering area also encourages the cattle to stay out on the grass, rather than around the watering bowl, and makes rotating the herd through the paddocks easier.

Overall, Werle and Fuhr are pleased with the path that Sunrise Cattle Ventures has taken in its first few years. They are also happy with the results of the management practices the group has implemented, both in terms of function and conservation.

“It’s a win-win, all the way around,” says Fuhr.

Sunrise Cattle Ventures is a featured demonstration site for a partnership between the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority, Ducks Unlimited Canada and other agriculture groups, extension and conservation agencies, and the Yellowhead REDA. The goal of this partnership is to provide information and assistance to producers in East Central Saskatchewan who would like to implement beneficial management practices within their operation.

For more information on Sunrise Cattle Ventures or on beneficial management practices, please contact Jason Puckett at (306) 786-5845.

## Coming Events

### First Annual

### Yorkton Cowboy Festival

AUGUST 13th & 14th, 2005

YORKTON EXHIBITION GROUNDS



### *Mosey on down and join us for two fun filled days!*

FOR TICKET & EVENT INFORMATION:

Tickets & Admissions – 782-2108

Ranch Rodeo & Roping – Ryan Fritz @ 728-3991

Cowboy Art & Gear Show – Elwood Turner @ 592-2701

Western Music Concert – Norm Wittevrongel @ 748-2262

Reined Cowhorse Competition – Angela Moore @ 548-5558

### For information on Environmental Farm Planning, please contact:

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Agriculture and  
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Agriculture et  
Agroalimentaire Canada



Ducks Unlimited Canada



Saskatchewan  
Agriculture, Food  
and Rural  
Revitalization



Saskatchewan  
Watershed  
Authority

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