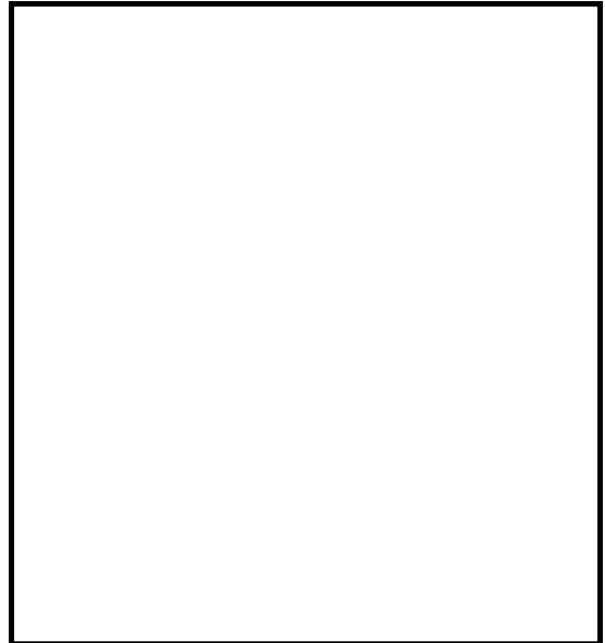
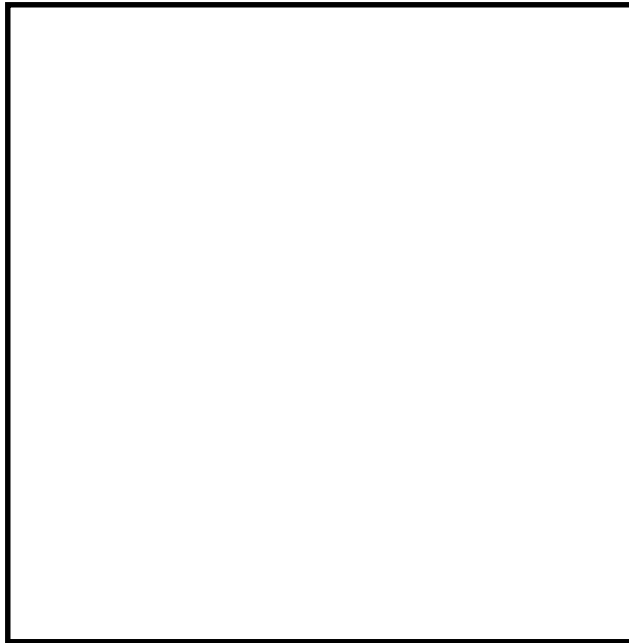


THE SASKATCHEWAN

# LIVESTOCK & FORAGE GAZETTE



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For tips on seeding a forage stand turn to page 7.

Efficient winter feeding will be critical this year.

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**Greetings!** You may recall reading the *Grazing Gazette* in previous times, which was published through the *Grazing & Pasture Technology Program*. This program is no longer operational. Many livestock producers have lamented the loss of the *Grazing Gazette* as it was seen as a "hands-on" practical publication geared towards extending knowledge about new grazing technologies. This new *Livestock and Forage Gazette* is the combined effort of 7 Saskatchewan organizations, all intent on trying to fill the valuable niche the old "*Grazing Gazette*" had. The only change is that this publication aims to appeal to both livestock producers and those solely involved in forage production. Our hopes are to publish 2 issues per year, one in October, and the other in March. Please take the time to contact someone on our Committee to give your feedback on how we are doing and to give us your ideas for future article topics (see back page for contacts and phone numbers).

-Chris Nykoluk, P.Ag, Newsletter Editor

# Grazing and Grassland Birds

By: Bob Springer P. Ag and Steve Davis MSc., Saskatchewan Watershed Authority

Saskatchewan's grassland birds have co-existed with grazing by bison, deer and antelope for thousands of years. Livestock grazing over the past 100 years has replaced the wild bison but today grassland birds continue to flourish on well-managed ranching operations.

Over 30 different species of grassland birds make their home on our seeded and native grasslands. Research has shown that some species prefer native range while others will use seeded pasture. Also, some species need tall, dense vegetation while others need areas with little cover. A large number of species require a mixture of both.

Grazing management that results in a diversity of cover throughout a pasture will provide the mix of habitats required by a large number of grassland bird species.

## Good Grazing Management and Good Habitat Stewardship Go Hand in Hand....

Saskatchewan Wetland Conservation Corporation (now part of the Saskatchewan

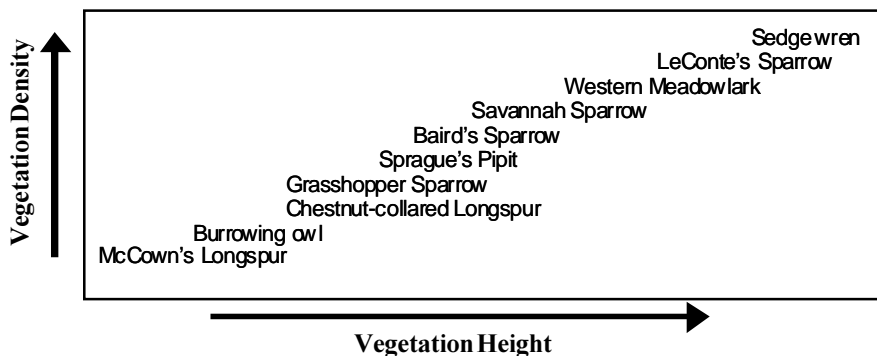
Watershed Authority) has been conducting research on grassland birds and their habitat preferences. The results indicate that many of the grassland birds have a strong preference for pasture that is managed with a diversity of patch cover. Pastures in **GOOD** or better range condition had the highest abundance of grassland birds.

Coincidentally, for ranchers to maximize forage production for economic purposes, they should also strive to maintain their pastures in **GOOD** or better range condition. Good pasture management results in good habitat for our prairie grassland birds!

## Grazing Intensity

Most early studies looking at the impact of grazing on grassland birds did not consider differences in grazing intensity. Our studies - looking at the effects of grazing intensity on bird occurrence - showed that moderate grazing intensity resulted in habitat attracting the highest number of grassland birds. **A sustainable ranching industry, employing good grazing management principles, is critical to the continued survival of grassland birds throughout the Prairies.**

## Grassland Bird Habitat Requirements



Graph from: Knopf. 1996. *Prairie Legacies - Birds*. In: *Prairie Conservation: preserving North America's most endangered ecosystem*.

For more information on grassland birds you can refer to the publication: *A Land Manager's Guide to Grassland Birds of Saskatchewan*, available from the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority, Phone (306)787-0726.



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# Managing Crested Wheatgrass Pastures

By: Michel Tremblay, P. Ag, SAFRR and Chris Nykoluk, P. Ag, AAFC - PFRA

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*This article addresses some of the more common concerns that producers have about managing crested wheatgrass.*

## 1. Forage Productivity Decline

Crested wheatgrass relies heavily on soil nitrogen. And after a few years, as the nitrogen in the soil becomes used up, plant growth becomes limited and the plant's leaves turn a light green. Does your old crested wheatgrass pasture look strangely light green in color? If so, this may be why. Old or unproductive stands likely need to be revitalized with fertilizer if they are to resume their former productivity. Fertilized stands will start growing slightly earlier than unfertilized stands in the growing season, and managers should take this into account.

## 2. Maximizing Yield

The start of grazing should not be delayed past the middle of May or the 3.6 leaf stage if maximum grazing potential of crested wheatgrass is desired. Regrowth of crested wheatgrass is encouraged with early spring grazing. No regrowth will be expected if grazing occurs at or after this peak in the growth cycle - after the 3.6 leaf stage. In the moister regions of the Prairies, crested wheatgrass can and should be grazed in two passes to maximize yield.

## 3. Proper Level of Use

Quite often, people who are good at managing native grass treat crested wheatgrass in the same manner. That is, they underestimate how heavily crested wheatgrass can safely be grazed during the spring. For maximum spring use on crested wheatgrass stands, grazing should be heavy during May and early June. This means that only about 2 to 4 inches of growth or 25 to 35 per cent of the current year's growth should be left ungrazed. Achieving this may necessitate earlier grazing, higher stock densities, electric fencing, or all of the above.

## 4. Crested Wheatgrass Requires Rest

Although crested wheatgrass is a hardy grass, many people do not realize that it needs to rest during the fall, even if there is regrowth. This lets crested wheatgrass restore its stored reserves. Maintaining tillers above ground is also an

important reason for avoiding significant fall use. The rule of thumb for this grass is, for every pound of forage you take off in fall, you will lose the equivalent in production next spring. *Repeatedly grazing crested wheatgrass in fall will deteriorate the stand prematurely and result in reduced yields in the spring when you need it the most!* To ensure a long-term forage stand that provides adequate spring grazing, crested wheatgrass should be rested after August 1st.



## 5. Management of Wolf Plants

If you can see both extremes - overgrazed and untouched wolf plants - this will indicate that your current stock density is not high enough and unused forage and grazing revenue is being lost. Wolf plants survive because livestock loathe sticking their faces into old spiky stems. In one study, crested wheatgrass plants with as few as three seed-heads were grazed 60 per cent less by cattle. Cattle also avoided stepping on large tussocks of crested wheatgrass. Other than using heavier stock densities, different ways to deal with 'wolfy' litter residue include mowing and burning. Some producers have even fed alfalfa cubes or sprayed molasses on unused areas to entice livestock into grazing it, and with success! Note that most of these options, except using cattle, require additional costs. Also, unless you change your grazing practices, the wolf plants will return and treatment will be needed again to deal with the problem.

*For more information contact Michel Tremblay, Provincial Forage Specialist, Saskatchewan Agriculture, Food & Rural Revitalization at (306) 787-7712 or Chris Nykoluk, Range Management Biologist, AAFC- PFRA at (306) 780-5066.*



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# 2001 SASKATCHEWAN COW CALF ENTERPRISE REPORT

By: Tim Highmoor, Production Economist, Western Beef Development Centre

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## Introduction

The Western Beef Development Centre co-ordinates a program that collects cowherd cost of production data from Saskatchewan livestock producers. Table 1 represents 2001 fiscal year data (typically January 1 to Dec 31, 2001), from 30 Saskatchewan cow-calf enterprises. On average these producers wintered 173 cows and weaned 162 calves weighing 510 lbs/head.

## Value of Production

Section A of Table 1 details the accrual value of production generated in the cow-calf enterprise. Value of production is represented by the value of calves when weaned from the cow, breeding stock sales and/or purchases and accrual based adjustments to herd size and other supply inventories. In this analysis the value of production was approximately \$684/cow wintered or \$1.43/lb. of calf produced.

## Variable Costs

In Section B, it is worth mentioning that weaning calves required a market value of \$0.99/lb. in order to cover all variable costs. The average variable cost per cow wintered was \$477.32 during the 2001 fiscal year. Please note this analysis has assumed all costs at market value. This means items such as grazing, winterfeed and bedding have been charged to the cowherd at the price they would have traded for in the market place.

A few of the categories listed in this section should be discussed as there may be some questions concerning them. First, note the fuel cost is stated to be approximately \$15.64 per cow wintered. This cost is comprised of fuel used when feeding the cows, hauling calves to the auction mart or pasture, traveling to town to pick-up parts, going to bull sales, meeting with the banker, etc.. The fuel costs associated with producing feed or straw have not been included in this analysis, given these items have been allocated to the cowherd at their market value.

The next category to focus on is the trucking and marketing charges associated with the cowherd. This category was intended to detail the costs of marketing and custom hauling calves and cows to and from pastures, auction marts, etc.. However, often times the commission and trucking costs of selling through an auction mart were not included in this category for two

reasons. First, these deductions were often subtracted from calf and breeding sales before they were presented in the value of production section. Second, in many instances producers retained ownership of their calves past the point of weaning and therefore did not incur the costs associated with selling calves directly off the cow.

## Fixed Costs

Section C denotes the “fixed costs” associated with the cowherds included in this study. Depreciation has been calculated assuming there is an annual market depreciation rate of 8.5 % on powered machinery (eg. tractors, trucks), 11% on non-powered machinery (eg. roller mill, or stock trailer) and 5% on facilities and buildings. Please note only capital interest payments made on enterprise debt and operating interest payments made on operating loans are included in this analysis. Principal debt payments were not taken into consideration.

The total fixed costs per cow wintered were approximately \$63 or \$0.13/lb. of calf weaned. Combining both fixed and variable costs resulted in an expense of \$540/cow wintered. Therefore, on average these producers needed \$1.13/lb. from the weaned calves, weighing 510 lbs/head, in order to cover all variable and fixed costs associated with the cowherd.

## Returns

The “gross margin” in this analysis was \$233/cow wintered or \$0.49/lb. of calf weaned. Gross margin is calculated by subtracting all production costs (excluding depreciation and unpaid labour) from the value of production. This number is often of great interest to producers, as this is the amount left over for personal draw, depreciation and principal payments on enterprise debt.

“Return to equity” is the return the cowherd is contributing to the equity of the ranch/farm after all production costs have been considered (with the exception of principal payments on enterprise debt). The average return to equity of the 30 producers included in this study was \$143/cow wintered or \$0.30/lb of calf weaned.



**Table 1 - 2001 Saskatchewan Cow-Calf Report**

<b>Average Pounds of Calf Produced/Cowherd</b>	<b>82,903</b>	
<b>Average Number of Cows/Cowherd</b>	<b>172.8</b>	
<b>Number of Producers</b>	<b>30</b>	
<b>Section A</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>\$/Cow</b>	<b>\$/lb.</b>
Value of Calves at Weaning (162.4 head @ 510 lbs/head)	744.88	1.55
Cull Breeding Stock Sales	156.06	0.33
Inventory Adjustment/Miscellaneous Revenue/Purchases	-216.72	-0.45
<b>Value of Production</b>	<b>684.21</b>	<b>1.43</b>
<b>Section B</b>		
Winter feed	174.89	0.36
Bedding	11.49	0.02
Pasture	116.19	0.24
Veterinary & Medicine	18.51	0.04
Breeding Fees / Bull Rental	4.23	0.01
Trucking & Marketing	6.09	0.01
Fuel	15.64	0.03
Repairs – Machinery	15.44	0.03
Repairs - Buildings /Corrals	4.68	0.01
Utilities & Miscellaneous	16.78	0.03
Custom Work & Spec. Labour	13.36	0.03
Operating Interest Paid	3.46	0.01
Paid Labour & Benefits	18.54	0.04
Unpaid Labour	58.02	0.12
<b>Total Variable Costs</b>	<b>477.32</b>	<b>0.99</b>
<b>Section C</b>		
Land Rent / Livestock Rent/Share Payments	13.14	0.03
Taxes, Water Rates, License & Insurance	6.36	0.01
Equipment and Building		
a) Depreciation	32.10	0.07
b) Lease Payments	1.98	0.00
Capital Interest	9.60	0.02
<b>Total Fixed Costs</b>	<b>63.18</b>	<b>0.13</b>
<b>Total Production Costs</b>	<b>540.50</b>	<b>1.13</b>
<b>Gross Margin *</b>	<b>233.83</b>	<b>0.49</b>
<b>Return to Equity</b>	<b>143.71</b>	<b>0.30</b>

\* Value of Production - Total Production Costs (excluding unpaid labour and depreciation)

**How do your numbers compare?** To participate in this study and also take advantage of your "check-off" deductions, contact Tim Highmoor at the Western Beef Development Centre in Saskatoon at (306) 966-2627.



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# Securing Livestock Water During Drought

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A secure, high quality water source will go a long way to help you and your livestock through a drought cycle. One of the best options is a deep aquifer. In general, a deep aquifer is more stable and less susceptible to drought conditions than a shallow aquifer. Consult a professional to determine the feasibility of developing a well in a sustainable aquifer in your area.

To develop the best well possible in your aquifer:

- use PVC or Fibreglass casing – it doesn't rust,
- ensure surface casing is deep enough to protect the pump,
- develop the well based on the type of aquifer; hard rock, softer sandstone, or sand and gravel aquifer - each one is different, consult your well professional,
- don't over-pump your well, you could damage the aquifer.

If your well is in a shallow aquifer of limited size and capacity, there are some things you can do to conserve and enhance your water supply. To enhance well recharge:

- refrain from draining all the sloughs and wetlands over the aquifer, as these tend to be recharge areas for shallow aquifers,
- increase the snow trapping by using snow fencing and field shelterbelts,
- use good agronomic practices over the aquifer that enhance the water supply, including leaving your stubble standing in the fall to trap snow, and practising zero till to help soil absorb moisture and transport it down old plant root channels.

Dugout recharge depends almost entirely on snowmelt. If you have 30 acres of standing stubble 200 mm (8 inches) long and it is full of snow, the melt water could fill a dugout 50 metres X 20 metres X 4 metres deep. This assumes 25% of it soaks in or evaporates before it gets to the dugout.

Evaporation has a major impact on water quantity. In southwest Saskatchewan, a typical dugout that is 50 metres long by 20 metres wide by 4 metres deep, will lose over 0.6 metres to evaporation over the summer. This lost water is enough to supply 72 feeder steers for 120 days. To reduce evaporation, construct a wind break on the spoil banks, plant shelterbelts (deciduous trees must be a minimum of 30 metres from the dugout to minimize nutrient loading when the leaves drop in the fall), or install a dugout cover. A wind break

constructed on the spoil banks can also be designed to increase the snow trapped within the dugout during the winter, effectively enhancing spring runoff.

If you have a secure water source and can use a surface or shallow buried pipeline to supply your various pastures, you will eliminate evaporation and provide a secure, high quality water supply to your livestock. Surface pipelines have been in operation on several PFRA Community Pastures for more than 20 years. Some of the longer runs are up to five miles and supply herds of over 600 cow/calf pairs.

The best way to reduce livestock impact on surface sources is to fence them out and pump your water supply. Numerous studies over the past 10 years show increased weaning weights on calves where fresh water is pumped to the livestock versus direct access to dugout water. This will pay for the pumping system in as little as six months in some cases.

Many remote powered pumping systems have been proven over the years, including solar, windmill, nose pumps, gas powered pumps, gas powered generators powering a 110/220 v electric pump, or windmill generated 12/24 v DC or 660v AC powering an electric pump. For design and cost estimates, contact your supplier or local PFRA district office.

## Summary

Your options during the current drought cycle are:

- to develop a secure source and pump to the livestock via a pipeline,
- enhance your surface or groundwater source with snow trapping using windbreaks, snow fence, shelterbelts, standing stubble and other crop residue, etc.,
- pump from temporary sources or consolidate dugouts into one,
- reduce evaporation losses with windbreaks or dugout cover,
- haul water, although inconvenience and cost must be considered.



*For more information on managing through drought conditions, contact your nearest Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada - PFRA office, or visit the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration web site at [www.agr.gc.ca/pfra](http://www.agr.gc.ca/pfra).*

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## ESTABLISHING A FORAGE STAND DURING DROUGHT

By: Michael Champion, P. Ag, Ducks Unlimited Canada

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During times of drought there are increased risks associated with seeding forages. Typical risks include inadequate moisture and increased insect and weed pressure. The decision not to seed should not be made overnight. If conditions are not optimal, seeding can still be done successfully, albeit at a higher risk. However, if conditions are extremely poor, a fallow operation or temporarily seeding a more competitive cash crop may be wise for the short term.

Careful thought is needed before seeding forages. Producers should be seeding forage species that will help meet their short and long term goals. Are there chemical residues from last year's crop? For more information on soil residual herbicides, please consult the Crop Protection Guide or an extension agrologist.

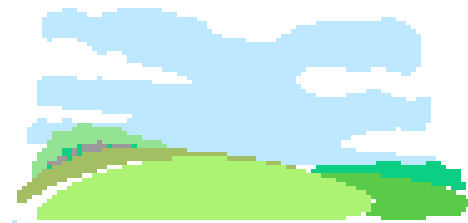
**Weed control** is critical. Control should start the year prior to seeding with a pre or post-harvest glyphosate application. If this is cost restrictive, a pre-seeding glyphosate application should be considered. Focusing on perennial weeds such as Canada thistle, dandelion, quackgrass and annual foxtail barley will give a producer the best overall weed control. Annual weeds are usually only a problem in the establishment year and are easily killed with the prescribed rates of glyphosate associated with thistle, dandelion and foxtail barley. If a field has a lot of thistle or dandelion in it, a pre or post-harvest application the previous year is recommended, as spring control on these species is more difficult. Foxtail barley is readily controlled with a mid May glyphosate application.

The **seedbed** should be firm to allow shallow seed placement and promote sufficient seed contact with moist soil. Pre-seeding burnoff with a full rate of glyphosate or a tillage operation is recommended to reduce weed competition in the first year. The seedbed will be ready for seeding one week after the application.

However, if tillage is used there will be a loose seedbed, which will necessitate a harrow packing operation. If seeding into a loose seedbed there will be difficulty in controlling seeding depth, leading to uneven seed placement and poor seed/soil contact. Adequate seed/soil contact is important because the soil holds all nutrients and moisture that germinating seeds need to establish and start photosynthesizing.

**Poor seed placement** is a common cause of failure in forage stand establishment. Generally, seeding depth should be no less than 0.25 inches (clay soil) and no more than 1.25 inches (sandy soil).

The smaller the forage seed, the more critical it is to seed close to the soil surface. Seeing a bit of seed on the surface of the ground while seeding does not always mean that the implement is not seeding deep enough. If 5% to 15% of the seed remains on the surface, chances are good that the seeding depth is correct.



**Timing.** Seeding early in spring to take advantage of spring moisture often allows the seedling adequate moisture to get up and growing prior to summer drought. Fall seeding when soil temperatures are below five degrees Celsius is also an acceptable alternative. Seeding equipment must have accurate metering, good depth control and adequate packing capability to ensure optimum conditions for the germinating seed. **Row spacing** is reflective of moisture conditions but generally should not exceed 18 inches or be closer than 6 inches. Wider row spacing is better for hay stands as it allows alfalfa to remain in the stand longer.

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(Article continued on page 9...)



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# LOW COST WINTER COW FEEDING OPTIONS

By: Bill Kowalenko, Saskatchewan Agriculture & Food and Rural Revitalization

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Feed costs can range from 65% to 75% of the total costs associated with a beef cattle production unit. Cow fertility and calf weaning weight are strongly influenced by your feeding program. Hence, it is very important to pay close attention to the feeding program in a beef cow operation.

Poor crops and grass growth have necessitated the need for many producers to scramble to find feed supplies. How can cow winter feeding costs be kept as low as practical and still maintain the desired production of the cow herd to keep the operation financially viable?

## **What can we do with the cow to reduce her winter feed needs?**

- Body condition entering winter months dictates the cow's nutritional needs. Cows in good-to-excellent body condition (ie. score of 2.5 to 3.0 or better) can have 75% of their energy needs met with good quality straw during the mid-gestation phase of pregnancy. The balance of their energy can be supplied with grain or screenings pellets. Additional feed will be needed during cold spells.
- Wean the calves earlier (ie. three to four months of age) than normal to allow time for cows to improve body condition before winter. Early-weaned calves are more efficient at converting feed to gain, than is the cow calf pair together.
- When the feeding season begins, sort cows based on body condition, age, or stage of gestation cycle to target feeding to each groups' specific needs.

## **What are some of the available opportunity feeds?**

- Examples of opportunity feeds are cereal, pulse and oilseed straws; chaff; kochia; and hail damaged crops.
- Crops written off due to very low potential grain yield are other potential feed sources that can be

harvested either as a hay crop, put up as silage, made into round bale silage, or grazed by cattle using electric fencing.

- Ammoniated straw and chaff is another opportunity feed. Ammoniation will improve the feed value of straw or chaff into a product very near to the equivalent of a low to mid-quality hay. Ammoniation will increase the crude protein value of straw or chaff from 4% to 10% and improve the energy from 35% TDN to 45 or 50% TDN.
- Liquid supplement injected into straw bales can be considered an option in some instances.
- Chopping feeds can help reduce costs and wastage and increase consumption; low and high quality feeds can be more easily mixed.
- Many grains can be used as an energy source besides barley or oats. Other options are wheat, rye, corn, manufactured range or screenings pellets, and various grain screenings either alone or in combination with grains. Commercially prepared pellets can be cost competitive with grain. Typically, range or screening pellets are priced competitively with barley, however, the pellets are fortified with a mineral package, vitamins A, D, E, and can be purchased with rumensin included. Monensin is useful in cow diets to eliminate coccidia loads that can be passed on from cows to newborn calves, thus reducing severe scour outbreaks in calves.

## **Feeds can contain toxic principles.**

Some of the toxic substances that may be found in different feeds are things such as nitrates and prussic acid in forages, molds in grain and forages, as well as other anti-quality factors. Feeds can be tested for these substances if there is some suspicion that they may be present. Once the levels are known, feeds can either be used at an appropriate dilution or avoided entirely.



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**Low Cost Feeding con't from page 8.....**

**Feed testing can help keep feed costs in line.**

Feed testing is very important in order to develop the most effective and efficient feeding program for a beef cow operation. Once the protein, energy, and mineral make-up of your different feed stuffs are known, they can then be used at the key phases of your cows' gestation phase. You should plan to save better quality feeds for phases when she needs them and lower quality feeds when needs are lower.

**Conclusions:**

There are many options available for planning effective, low-cost winter feeding programs that will meet the nutrient needs of beef cows. Balance the needs of the cow to her requirements at the different stages of her gestation cycle right through to the time when she is to rebreed so that you can maintain the expected yearly calving schedule.

Producers can contact their local Extension Agrologist or Livestock Specialist with Saskatchewan Agriculture Food and Rural Revitalization (SAFRR) for assistance in formulating winter rations for beef cows. In addition, many feed supply companies can be a source of assistance.

*For more information please call Bill Kowalenko, at (306) 867-5559 in Outlook, or your local extension agrologist.*

**Animal Diet Preferences Begin in the Womb**

According to Dr. Fred Provenza at Utah State, livestock diet preferences begin in the womb. Calves and lambs appear to be able to taste what the mother eats in her blood, and of course, later in her milk. These diet preferences continue on after weaning. This is why lead cows are so important with calves that are weaned and transported to a different forage environment, even if that forage is supposedly an "ice cream forage". Animals can be taught to consume more unpalatable species just by giving them some experience with them early in life, although the best training comes from Mom. You can hear Dr. Provenza speak at this year's Manitoba Grazing School in Brandon (see back page for details).

**Trivia Question:** The drawing below represents our provincial native grass emblem. What is its name? (Answer in next issue!)



**Establishing a Forage Stand con't from page 7....**

**Forage species.** Selecting the right species for the site will reduce chance of failure. Forage selection should be based on soil characteristics, topography and climate - not on what the producer wants to see growing. Some species simply will not grow on certain sites. Sites with salinity or alkalinity should be considered separately as should any portion of a field that floods regularly.

**Grasshopper populations** tend to increase during drought, placing more pressure on establishing grasses. Control of grasshoppers in the establishment year is crucial. Control can be achieved on young grasshoppers with bran bait, however, once grasshoppers are mature, control becomes expensive, with use of chemical being the most economical. Once grasshoppers begin to fly, the expense of control may be too costly.

*For more information you can contact Michael Champion at (306) 569-0424, or your nearest extension agrologist.*

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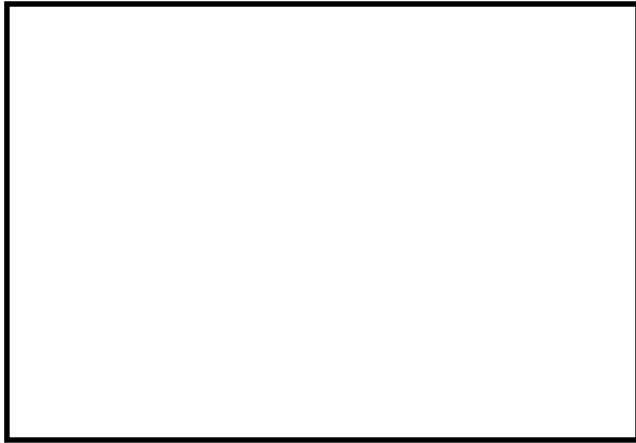
## PRODUCER PERSPECTIVE: HOW TO HAVE AN ECONOMICALLY SUSTAINABLE COW HERD

*By: Heather S. Beierbach, SSGA*

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At the Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association Convention in June 2002, we were very pleased to announce that the McGillivray Cattle Co. was the winner of The Environmental Stewardship Award (TESA) for Saskatchewan in 2002.

Murray and Selena's ranch is located south west of Radville and west of Lake Alma. Over 80% of their ranch consists of native rangeland for their 325 head cow-calf operation.



Since the dual "wake up call" of severe drought and depressed cattle prices in the 1980's, Murray and Selena began to seriously study their grass and cattle grazing patterns. How could they optimize their production and still have healthy rangeland? They sought help from various sources including agrologists, grazing and range management conferences, and worked with staff from Saskatchewan Wetland Conservation Corporation (SWCC and now called the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority) and enrolled in the Native Prairie Stewardship Program that SWCC then offered.

Major changes that Murray and Selena employed in their operation included cross fencing and developing additional stockwater sources. This was done while carefully studying and considering water access and the existing grazing distribution on the ranch. Rather than traditional "square" and "straight line" fencing, the McGillivray's have fenced across their land according to natural terrain, water access and the natural grazing patterns of their cattle. Cattle are then rotated from pasture to pasture.

Areas of tame grass are used for spring grazing, and later cut for hay. Areas that were not previously grazed were fenced separately so that

cattle could be held on these areas. Areas with big deep coulees provide good spring shelter. Flexibility is their key. Murray and Selena both keep a close eye on pasture conditions, conservatively grazing the native range. This keeps a good root reserve in the grasses and allows them time to regrow each year.

The McGillivray's feel that maintaining good ground cover (through abundant carry over) combined with alternating grazing periods and occasionally letting grasses to set seed creates a well insulated seed bed. This allows germination and rejuvenation of the pastures. With good ground cover, weed infestation and soil erosion have no opportunity to take hold. Where excessive encroachment of buckbrush is a problem, Murray finds that putting his salt feeder in the buckbrush will create enough trampling to keep it in check. Murray likes the shelter that buckbrush can provide the calves in spring.

Murray puts his rationale for his pasture management approach well: "we found that doing more cross fencing greatly enhances our carrying capacity and the health of the grass.....we are trying very hard to maintain our native pasture because it is our crop every year, and if we don't have a good crop we're not going to have the pounds of beef at the end of it. If we permanently damage the prairie we'd have to cut down our number of cows, and our income would be adversely affected".

Good range management is also conducive to maintaining excellent wildlife diversity on the ranch. In fact, when a study was done on the ranch to inventory songbirds, songs of species were recorded that weren't even known to be found in the area!

Cooperation with people and organizations that study wildlife and the environment is a big priority with Murray and Selena. They strongly advocate communication with the public that "we are stewards of the land" and that "livestock, plants and wildlife can all co-exist and be very beneficial to each other under good management".

Both Murray and Selena are very active in their community and beyond. Murray is a member and past-president of the SSGA, while both Murray and Selena have been very active in 4-H and other local organizations. They are excellent ambassadors and teachers of the environmental soundness of the cattle industry!

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# Prairie Conservation Action Plan (PCAP) - What is it?

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*By: Karyn Scalise, Prairie Conservation Action Plan*

Producers often wonder what the PCAP is. The PCAP is a diverse partnership of 24 Partner groups representing industry, federal and provincial agricultural and conservation groups, several non government organizations, and Saskatchewan's two universities. We meet three times a year and have been chaired by the Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association since our Plan was launched in 1998. The Plan is action-oriented, consisting of 85 action items which are tied to five goals. Actions are evaluated annually by Partners to track progress and identify shortfalls. Meetings have high levels of attendance and participation from our Partner representatives. Our current Plan expires in the spring of 2003 and work is in progress on Plan renewal. Representatives from 13 PCAP Partner groups met in March to review the current Plan and to participate in the re-drafting process. The PCAP vision and the first three goals remain unchanged, and goals 4 and 5 were amended slightly to better reflect the scope of activities related to these goals. The draft vision and goals for the renewal of the PCAP are as follows:

The PCAP is unique as it is the first livestock producer-led coordination of native prairie programming in Canada. This ensures that producers have a strong voice in issues regarding native prairie conservation and management. Many PCAP Partners contribute funding or in-kind support to its operations. We use a consensus-based approach to decision making and provide an important forum for information-sharing and discussion. As such, we can play an important role in guiding policy and programming related to native prairie conservation.



**Vision:** *The native prairie is to be sustained in a healthy state in which natural and human values are respected.*

**Goal 1:** **To sustain a healthy native prairie grazing resource,**

**Goal 2:** **To conserve the remaining native prairie resource,**

**Goal 3:** **To maintain native prairie biological diversity,**

**Goal 4:** **To promote complementary sustainable uses of native prairie,**

**Goal 5:** **To increase awareness and understanding of native prairie and its values.**

*The PCAP gratefully acknowledges funding and in-kind support from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada through PFRA, the National Soil and Water Conservation Program and the Canadian Adaptation & Rural Development Fund in Saskatchewan (CARDS), Canada Millennium Partnership Program (CMPP), Cattle Marketing Deductions Fund (CMDf), Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC), Environment Canada through the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) and the Habitat Stewardship Program, Grasslands National Park (GNP), Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC), Nature Saskatchewan, Nexen Canada Ltd., Saskatchewan Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization (SAFRR), Saskatchewan Burrowing Owl Interpretive Centre (SBOIC), Saskatchewan Environment (SE), SEs Fish and Wildlife Development Fund (FWDF), Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association (SSGA), Saskatchewan Wetland Conservation Corporation (SWCC), SaskEnergy, SaskPower, and the University of Regina's Canadian Plains Research Centre.*

**For more information on the PCAP you can call Karyn at (306)352-0472, or Allen Patkau, SSGA PCAP Chair, at (306)544-2778.**



## Upcoming Events

### **BEEF SYMPOSIUM**

Location: Travelodge, Saskatoon, SK  
 Date: December 10-11th, 2002  
 Contact: Bart Lardner  
 Phone: (306) 933-5700  
 Email: blardner@agr.gov.sk.ca

### **WESTERN CANADIAN GRAZING CONFERENCE**

Location: Red Deer, AB  
 Date: December 4 - 6th, 2002  
 Contact: Richard De Bruijn  
 Phone: (403) 782-0772  
 Email: info@forage.ab.ca

### **MANITOBA GRAZING SCHOOL**

Location: Brandon, MB  
 Date: December 3 - 4th, 2002  
 Contact: Fraser Stewart  
 Phone: (204) 482-5547  
 Email: fstewart310@mts.net

### **WESTERN RANGE SCIENCE SEMINAR**

Location: Medicine Hat, AB  
 Date: January 26 - 28th, 2003  
 Contact: Walter Willms  
 Phone: (403) 317-2218  
 Email: willms@agr.gc.ca

### **WDBC COW-CALF SCHOOL**

Location: Saskatoon, SK  
 Date: January 14-16th, 2003  
 Contact: Tim Highmoor  
 Phone: (306)966-2627  
 Email: thighmoor@wbdc.sk.ca

### **BRUSH MANAGEMENT FOR PASTURE IMPROVEMENT WORKSHOP**

Location: Travelodge, Saskatoon, SK  
 Date: February 18 - 19th, 2003  
 Contact: Bruce Coulman  
 Phone: (306) 956-7240  
 Email: coulmanb@agr.gc.ca

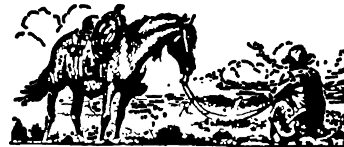
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Development Centre**



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*The Committee thanks the contributors and funders that made this issue possible. Please contact committee members if you have ideas for future articles - the next issue will be published in March 2003.*