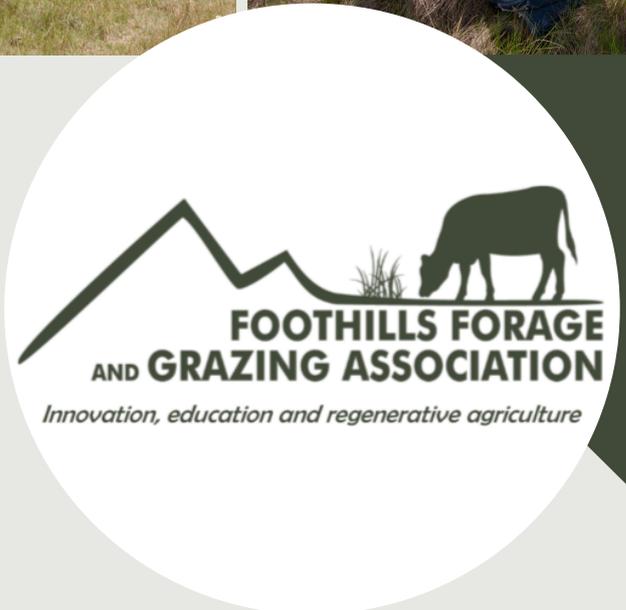


# ANNUAL REPORT

2018







# 2018 ANNUAL REPORT

Unit 4A, 710 Center Street SE, High River, AB, T1V 0H3

Phone: (403) 995.9466

Email: [enviro@foothillsforage.com](mailto:enviro@foothillsforage.com)

Website: [www.foothillsforage.com](http://www.foothillsforage.com)

## Mission

*Assisting producers in profitably improving their forages and regenerating their soils through innovation and education.*

## Vision

*We envision a global community that respects and values profitable forage production and healthy soils as our legacy for future generations.*



Find us on social media

@foothillsforage



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(403) 625.0180

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(403) 625-0337

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(403) 888-1517

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(403) 934-1666

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(403) 803-9190

**STAN WIEBE - DIRECTOR**  
(403) 888-7797

**TAMARA GARSTIN - ARECA REP**  
(403) 333-0376

**STEVE YULE - DIRECTOR**  
(403) 934-7855

**JUSTIN BLADES - DIRECTOR**  
(403) 646-5952

### STAFF

**MORRIE GOETJEN - DIRECTOR**  
(403) 863-7484

**LAURA GIBNEY - MANAGER**  
(403) 998.4687  
[MANAGER@FOOTHILLSFORAGE.COM](mailto:MANAGER@FOOTHILLSFORAGE.COM)

**SEAN LABRIE - DIRECTOR**  
(403) 999-3089

**SONJA BLOOM - ENVIRONMENT &  
COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR**  
(403) 700-7406  
[ENVIRO@FOOTHILLSFORAGE.COM](mailto:ENVIRO@FOOTHILLSFORAGE.COM)



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# CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

## Andy Hart

I would like to extend a warm welcome to all visitors and members to the 2019 Annual General Meeting of Foothills Forage and Grazing Association.

It has been my honour to sit as Chair of this dynamic organization for the past year. Five years ago, I allowed my name to stand for the position of Director. I've never had occasion to regret doing so. While every member of the board contributes in a meaningful way to the success of FFGA, I'm certain I speak for every member of the board when I say I have gained so much more from the shared knowledge and experience than what I have contributed. The board members are a passionate group of producers from significantly diverse operations, I've gained a nugget of useful information and feedback from each of them.

The past year has had more than its share of trials and tribulations. A long deep winter carried right through to a cold and miserable spring which served to deplete precious feed reserves. Reports of high calving mortality rates were widespread. What followed was an exceptionally dry growing season making it very difficult and expensive to restock bale yards. The response of many producers was to increase the cull rate and cull cow sales of more than 1000 head were common. It has certainly tested the ingenuity and fortitude of our producers.

Despite the gloom and doom there is reason for optimism going forward. Feeder prices have held relatively steady and an open fall and January eased pressure on feed stocks. Some producers have been very creative in generating rations with crop residues such as barley straw, pea straw, weathered grain, screening pellets and other byproducts taking on enhanced roles this winter. Those people who decry the use of "human" food grains as a reason to eliminate cattle should take a trip down to the farm to see just what cows are eating. I'm sorry I digress.

Occasionally to change the background noise in my tractor I will tune in 560 KMON radio out of Great Falls Montana. This summer I was pleasantly surprised to repeatedly hear mention of diverse cover crops, soil health and regenerative agriculture. I was further surprised to learn the source was none other than the USDA. Regenerative Agriculture is becoming mainstream south of the 49th Parallel. It's coming here as well. Just last month, Danielle Smith, on her morning talk show on 770 CHQR, spoke enthusiastically about what she had learned at the Alberta Agricultural Service Board Conference regarding healthy soils and carbon sequestration. Danielle vowed to double her consumption of meat and has since had Gabe Brown and Kimberly Cornish on the show to discuss building soil, carbon sequestration and carbon credits for graziers. Regardless of what you may think of her political past, I am delighted to have her using her position to go to bat for our industry.

FFGA, as always will be heavily involved in a number of events in the coming year. There are three highlights that stand out for me and include; two Soil Health Field Days featuring Dr. Jill Clapperton. Dates and locations TBA. In July the Waldron Grazing Coop will host a level two grazing school led by none other than Jim Gerrish. These have consistently been sell outs for FFGA. The third and largest function will be the return of the Western Canada Conference on Soil Health and Grazing in December in Edmonton. Our Manager Laura Gibney and our Environment & Communications Coordinator Sonja Bloom will have leading roles in organizing the conference, it's a guaranteed sell out. These two ladies do a wonderful job of organizing events, projects and board meetings. They truly make my job very easy. Thank you for all you do for FFGA and me personally.

As you may be aware FFGA is heavily dependent on funding from the Alberta Government. While we believe our funding is assured for the next couple of years, we have been working to achieve longer term funding assurances that will guarantee our work is ongoing. I also want to recognize the financial support of our corporate and county partners. They are listed elsewhere in this package so I won't list them here. I encourage all members to support our corporate sponsors if they can play a role in your operation.

At this time, I would like to recognize and thank Stan Wiebe for his contribution to our board. He has reached the end of his second consecutive term and must step down this year. That is the bad news. The good news is that creates a spot for a new member to step in at this AGM. I encourage interested members to give thought to putting your name forward. Every organization is stronger and benefits greatly from an infusion of new ideas and perspectives.

Thank you for your time, interest and attendance

Sincerely,

*Andy Hart*

Chairman Foothills Forage and Grazing Association



# FFGA MANAGER'S REPORT

## Laura Gibney

The winter of 2018 was memorable for the long, deep snow cover and cold temperatures that weren't broken up by the warm chinook winds we are so accustomed to in southern Alberta. The hard winter and spring storms had many producers dipping into feed supplies resulting in feed shortages for many. The late spring was highlighted with a fast melt that led into a hot, dry, smoky summer which increased the demand for feed and driving up hay prices into the fall. Early snow and wet weather in the fall resulted in many down graded crops. Cattle producers seized the opportunity to source alternate feeds for fall and winter feeding. These alternate feeds were a great option to overpriced hay but also came with a higher risk to ensure cattle are being fed a balanced ration, emphasizing the need for feed tests and supplementation.

Here at FFGA we had a busy spring with three agriculture tours to Spain & Portugal as well as an office move to a nice location on Centre Street in High River, if you haven't yet stop by the office for a coffee and a visit. I re-joined the FFGA team in late April after a wonderful year at home with my two young girls. It has been great to get back to FFGA, our enthusiastic board, innovative and passionate members and new partnerships we have been foraging.

In May we welcomed Sonja Bloom to the team as our new Environmental & Communications Coordinator. She brought with her an enthusiasm for the environment and a background in grain production, plant ID, weed management and valuable agriculture connections across the province. Sonja has been an asset to the FFGA team taking the lead on delivering Environmental Farm Plans (EFPs) across our region and providing EFP and Canadian Agriculture Partnerships (CAP) program updates to our members in collaboration with many of our county partners. We look forward to the continued environmental and social media campaigns she has been unrolling.

Some event highlights from 2018 include our two Forage to Beef Demo Days in partnership with local counties and Livestock Genetec at the Waldron Grazing Coop, Whiskey Ridge Cattle Co and Difficulty Ranch. We held a sold-out three-day Grazing school with Jim Gerrish in Fort McLeod and a Feed What You Need Fall workshop that focused on utilizing and managing alternate feeds near Swalwell. We partnered on many events including Ladies Livestock Lessons, Ranching Opportunities, the Southern Alberta Grazing School for Women, Range & Pasture Management, Soil Health and Soil Carbon Measurement and Cow Calfenomic workshops to name a few.

In 2018 the Canadian Agriculture Partnership (CAP) programs were rolled out by the Alberta government which provides funding for producers as well as associations like FFGA for specific projects and programs. Through this we have accessed funding to be a part of the Alberta Soil Health Benchmark Project lead by the Chinook Applied Research Association (CARA) in Oyen. This project will measure and benchmark the physical, chemical and microbial aspects of soil across Alberta over the next 5 years utilizing CARA's Soil Lab. We are excited to be part of this project and look forward to getting underway with sampling in the spring. FFGA has received addition funds through the CAP program for a Adoption of Regenerative, Environmentally Sustainable Agricultural Practices program we are looking forward to delivering over the next 2 years.

This year marks the final year of a three-year funding cycle of the Agriculture Opportunities Fund (AOF) which is our main source of funding through the Alberta government. We have been a part of the Agriculture Research & Extension Council of Alberta (ARECA) team to put a strategic plan together and request an increase of the AOF which hasn't seen an increase since its inception in the 1980's. The Alberta Government is in the procees of developing a new AOF program and releasing it in the new fiscal year.

We continue to deliver innovative, regenerative and pertinent agriculture information to our members through workshops, conferences, field days, our newsletter and social media platforms. Thank you to all of our partners, funders and producer members who provide the support, ideas and strength of this organization. A big thank you to the board of directors for their continued engagement, passion, dedication and leadership as we move forward with purposeful and sustained growth based on a clear vision and direction.

Stay connected for another great year,

*Laura Gibney*  
Manager



# ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNICATION COORDINATOR'S REPORT

**Sonja Bloom**

While writing my report it struck me just how much FFGA accomplished this past year. I have been in the Environment & Communication Coordinator position for roughly 10 months and I can honestly say this past year has been full of learning about the livestock and forage industry, networking with our amazing members and just plain fun!

My first few months gave me plenty of opportunities to learn about our industry and meet our membership as we hosted/partnered on 18 educational events in the FFGA region. My highlights included the Riparian Lands Management course in Crossfield, the Agricultural Producer Funding workshop in Cardston County and visiting the Stavely Research Ranch for 3 great events; Soil Health Field Day, Southern Alberta Grazing School for Women and the Alberta Range Stewardship Course. If you are new to the industry or want to continue learning I would strongly recommend attending these events.

I was quite excited to begin my career in Communications with FFGA. I don't have formal education in Communications but I do consider myself somewhat of a Social Media wizard. I began an Instagram account for my mountain adventures and worked diligently to build a strong following. I am also a passionate photographer with a sharp eye and strong attention to detail. I am proud to say that I have been able to combine my social media skills with my passion for photography and the agricultural industry and have worked hard to build on FFGA's already strong Social Media presence.

To date FFGA has 1682 followers on Facebook, 1151 followers on Twitter and our website sees an average of 331 views each month. I would like to bring attention to our Facebook statistics and the impact that FFGA has in our area. With 1682 followers we have the largest Facebook presence of any applied research or forage association in the province. With a large, diverse audience it is even more important that we remain focused on positive representation of the agricultural industry and focus on unbiased information that is important to many different groups and I think that we do an excellent job in that, (oops, my bias is showing).

I have a few new ideas that I would like to test using our social media accounts and I am counting on you, our members, to give me feedback on what is working, what needs to be changed and what should be scrapped altogether.

A couple of these ideas include live videos of our events/field days (where appropriate), and an idea that came from our dear friend Sarah Wray called "A Tribe of Grazers"; a monthly expose that will highlight our local producers who are working hard on their operations and making a positive impact in our industry.

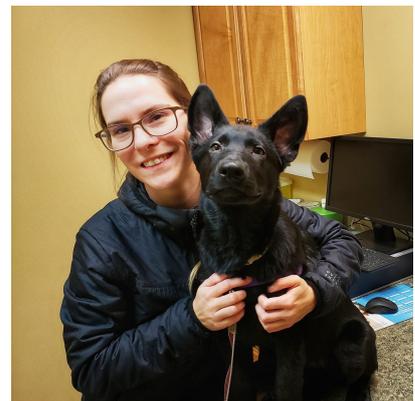
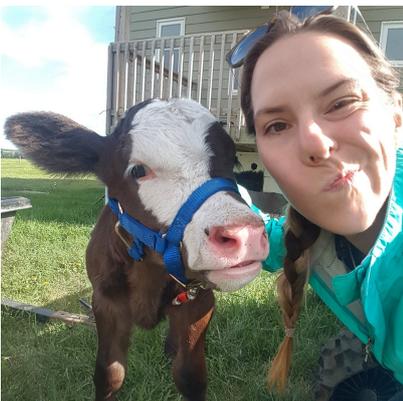
At the end of October I graduated my Environmental Farm Plan Technician training and became an Environmental Farm Plan Technician. Since then I have lead 3 Environmental Farm Plan Workshops and helped 34 producers develop their Environmental Farm Plan. The next step for these producers is to start implementing their Action Plans which could include applying for cost share funding grants under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP), the Farm Energy and Agri-Processing (FEAP) Program or the On-Farm Solar Photovoltaics (OFSPV) Program. You can find more details on these funding programs on our website at [www.foothillsforage.com](http://www.foothillsforage.com)

I am very excited for our upcoming extension season and hope to see everyone at one; or all, of our great events. If you have any ideas that you would like to see FFGA try on Social Media or need help with your Environmental Farm Plan/Action Plan implementation give me a call in the office or stop in, the coffee is always hot and the conversation is always stimulating!

Thank you;

*Sonja Bloom*

Environment & Communications Coordinator



# ARECA REPORT

Alan Hall



ARECA and our 8 member associations had another busy year. The hard work and excellent information and service from our various associations continues to be highly valued by Alberta's ranchers and farmers. They tell us that this has had a positive impact on their businesses.

Associations continue to be very active in holding many extension events such as tours, demonstrations, adaptive and applied research, farm meetings, conferences, media..... Key partners in these activities include many local businesses, several Commissions, municipalities and ASBs, Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, Agriculture and AgriFood Canada, Colleges, Universities..... ARECA and our member associations.

Often times the associations team up to deal with regional and provincial issues such as crop pest monitoring, soil health, sustainable environmental initiatives, grazing systems, regional variety trials, adapting cropping systems.... Sometimes these are issues that cover a lot of Alberta's geography, sometimes these issues are more local in nature. Either way, our associations work hard at coming up with solutions and valuable information that helps out farmers and ranchers with their operations and businesses.

ARECA and it's member associations continued their efforts on the prairie wide Operation Pollinator project that is seeking ways to improve habitat for mother nature's crop pollinators. Many of our crops (forages and annual) depend on bees and natural pollinators to achieve good yields and profitability.

We also have been working on the Carbon Pasture Management project. Our grasslands and perennial pastures are wonderful carbon sinks and work of our associations and ARECA on this project is another step in the journey to increase carbon sequestration in our pasture lands. This coupled with the work of the Canadian Forage & Grassland Association and others, has serious potential of developing and fine tuning practices for carbon sequestration and perhaps ultimately a carbon trading protocol. This journey continues.

ARECA continues to operate the Environment Farm Plan program and services. Upwards of 10,000 farmers and ranchers across Alberta have utilized this service over the past number of years.

This past year has seen ARECA and associations working hard with numerous partners to work out programs and services, and financing of these. Kudo's to Alberta Government for their continued support through Agricultural Opportunities Program and Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP) programs. Details are being worked out but the focus, deliverables and associated activities of these programs bring significant new economic value to Alberta's ranchers, farmers and in sustaining our environment.

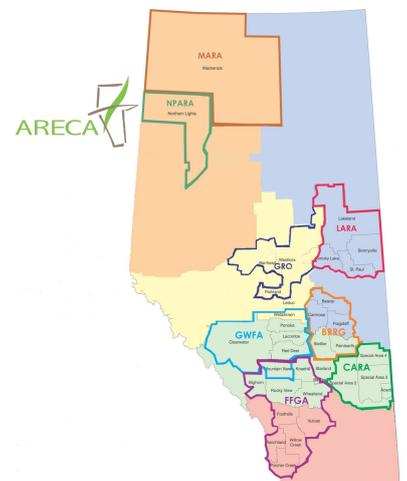
Strong support from municipalities and ASBs, from Commissions, from agribusiness, and from membership are critical to helping keep our programs and services focused on those things most important to ranchers and farmers, and being able to offer them in a thorough and high quality fashion.

I conclude with a heartfelt thank you to ARECA member associations, our ARECA Board and the ARECA staff of Val Fadden, Paul Watson, Lisa Nadeau, Devon Lloyd, and Sean Chuan. Being surrounded with strong people with a passion for leading/serving Alberta ranchers and farmers is indeed a privilege.

Respectfully yours

*Alan Hall*

Executive Director ARECA



Not included on this map is Cardston County, a county partner with FFGA

# EVENTS

In 2018 FFGA planned 18 events with over 1,100 producers in attendance



## FFGA EVENTS

- Spain & Portugal Agricultural Tour
- Annual General Meeting
- Forage to Beef
- Jim Gerrish Grazing School
- Feed What You Need
- Christmas Party
- Environmental Farm Plan Series

## PARTNERED EVENTS

- Agricultural Funding Workshop
- CFGA Conference
- Range & Pasture Management
- Riparian Lands Management
- Soil Carbon Measurement Workshop
- Soil Health Field Day
- Water & Agricultural Conference
- Ladies Livestock Lessons
- Ranching Opportunities
- Southern Alberta Grazing School for Women



# EVENTS

## Spain & Portugal Agricultural Tour - January & February 2018



During January and February 2018, 93 travelers embarked on a two week agricultural tour in Spain and Portugal. This tour was extremely popular and saw 3 groups join Foothills Forage and Grazing Association and Leader Tours to take in the sights of Spain and Portugal and to tour the agricultural industry of these two countries. Tours were set to run from January 13 - 28th, February 4 - 18th, and February 11 - 25th.



During the tour participants enjoyed many of the sights that Spain and Portugal offer such as; the Catalonia port of Barcelona, a visit to the Cooperative of Catalonia, a tour of an ancient Roman City, a visit of the Castle used to film "El-Cid", a tour of the famous Alhambra Palace, a tour of the Old Jewish Quarter and the Mosque of the Caliphs, a traditional "tapas" dinner and fiery flamenco show, a full day excursion along the southern coastline, a sightseeing tour of Lisbon and a morning to relax on the beach in Cascais.



The agricultural portion of the tour included visits to; Huert; a vegetable producing region, the Central Market in Valencia, Dolores for a visit to enterprise of Feeds for animal farming, a visit to a local Holstein Dairy, a tour of the Experimental Station belonging to the High Council for Scientific Research of Spain, a Spanish Olive tree orchard & olive oil mill tour and tasting, a visit of a local ranch that produces the brave bulls used in the bullring, a soy crop farm production tour, visit to a breeding stud farm of purebred Spanish horses, a visit to a turf farm, meeting with the Association of Breeders of the Alentejano beef race and a wine tasting tour at Jose Maria da Foncesca Wine Estate.



Foothills Forage and Grazing Association's International Agricultural Tours started in 2010 and are still one of our most popular events to this day. If you have suggestions for future trips or would like to join us in the future be sure to let us know.



## Ladies Livestock Lessons - January 20, 2018 in Acme AB



On January 20, 2018 118 ladies and gentlemen attended the Ladies Livestock Lessons at the Acme Community Hall. The jam packed agenda included sessions on Succession Planning, Sustainable Beef & Verification, how to use the CowBytes Software, a Calving clinic, and Plant Identification. Shannon Ruzicka with Natures Green Acres gave a passionate talk on bringing our products from the Farm to the Table and how to become a price maker which was the highlight for many participants. Ladies Livestock Lessons, Ranching Opportunities and Water & Agriculture Conference are hosted by the Red-Bow Agricultural Partnership.

## Ranching Opportunities - February 8, 2018 in Olds AB

On February 8th, 2018 at Olds College Alumni Centre 10 FFGA Members, 117 producers and 28 industry representatives joined together for Ranching Opportunities, a conference designed for producers involved in or interested in the profession of managing livestock. It was developed with the goal of promoting environmentally and economically sustainable livestock production. This years conference saw thought provoking speakers give great presentations on; Crafting a Farm Narrative, Chute Away (a hands-on presentation on different cattle handling systems), Focus on the Feed, Setting a New Standard: Harmony Beef, Smooth Ride (tips for cattle transportation), Environmental Hoof-print and the ever popular Producer Panel which focused on Consumer Verification Programs.



## Annual General Meeting - March 20, 2018 in Strathmore AB



35 members and 5 industry representatives were in attendance at the FFGA Annual General Meeting on March 20th, 2018 at the Travelodge Strathmore AB. Brian Perillat, BSc. MSc. P.Ag, a Manager/Senior Analyst with Canfax provided a market update titled "More Cattle, More Meat, Now What". At the Annual General Meeting directors Alex Robertson, Steve Yule and Ben Campbell were re-elected and began their 2nd, 3-year term. Both Justin Blades and Mike Roberts were elected and began their first 3-year term as directors. The board thanked Graeme Finn for his hard work and dedication to Foothills Forage and Grazing Association as he completed his terms and stepped down.

## Riparian Lands Management - May 31 & June 1, 2018 in Crossfield AB

The 2 Day Riparian Management course was developed to help producers & acreage owners with riparian areas manage said areas to their full potential. The course was a partnership between Agroforestry and Woodlot Extension Society (AWES), Cows & Fish, Rocky View County and Foothills Forage and Grazing Association and gave participants hands on instruction on how to complete a riparian assessment and restoration management tools. In total there were 7 participants from a variety of backgrounds.



## Range & Pasture Management - June 15 & 16, 2018 in Cochrane AB



The 2 Day Range & Pasture Management Workshop was a success with 7 Foothills Forage and Grazing Association members and 22 non-member producers attending. The 2 day workshop covered many topics like; Grazing Strategies & Range Health, Stewardship Programs, Watering Systems and a hands on plant identification presentation. The Range & Pasture Management Workshop was organized by the MD of Bighorn, Foothills Restoration Foothills Forage and Grazing Association and Tannas Conservation Services Ltd.

## Soil Health Field Day - July 6, 2018 in Stavelly AB

Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, Society for Range Management, Foothills Forage and Grazing Association and the University of Alberta; Faculty of Agricultural Life & Environmental Sciences partnered up to offer a 1 day Soil Health Field Day at the Stavelly Research Ranch on July 6th, 2018. It was a beautiful day spent outside featuring; Soil Carbon storage and GHG emissions from pasture, Effect of drought on dry mixed-grass plant communities, Soil biological health in rangelands, Downy Brome in southern Alberta grasslands, Cow patty critters, Recovery of Foothills Rough Fescue Plant Community from long term heavy grazing, Litter impacts on rangeland vegetation and soil health and a quick history lesson around the Stavelly Research Ranch. The day was well attended with 6 Foothills Forage and Grazing Association members, 12 non-member producers and 12 industry representatives. We were really lucky around lunch to spot a little black bear in the area!



## Forage to Beef - July 10, 2018 at the Waldron Ranch AB and July 11, 2018 in Didsbury, AB



The Forage to Beef Field days were a huge success in showcasing and promoting some new and innovative practices in the Forage and Livestock Industry. These events were developed by Foothills Forage and Grazing Association and Livestock Gentec with help from our partners, the MD Pincher Creek, MD Ranchland, Cardston County, MD Bighorn, Mountain View County, Rocky View County and the MD of Willow Creek. Because these events were hosted in 2 very different areas of the FFGA Region we had a few topics that were area focused and a few topics that were the same. Topics included; Grazing strategies such as continuous, rotational and never grazed pasture management; Economic advantage of vigour in the cow herd, Using drones in Ranch Management. At the Waldron we observed the use of sheep to graze & control Leafy Spruce. In Didsbury we were able to see the benefits of using Electric fencing with swath grazing, different watering systems and riparian management. Both days were successful with 32 members, 8 non-member producers and 31 industry professionals attending the Waldron and 9 members, 13 non-member producers and 21 industry professionals attending the Didsbury event. Thank you to our hosts Mike & Connie Roberts at the Waldron Ranch Grazing Cooperative, Sean & Holly LaBrie at Difficulty Ranch and Morrie & Debbie Goetjen at Whiskey Ridge Cattle Co.

## Southern Alberta Grazing School for Women - July 24 & 25, Stavelly AB

The Southern Alberta Grazing School for Women (SAGSW) returned for it's 15th year in 2019 and was a huge success with 12 Foothills Forage and Grazing Association members, 35 non-member producers and 21 industry representatives in attendance. Topics included Grazing Principals & Practices, Utilizing Electric Fencing, Verified Sustainable Beef Program, Range & Riparian Health, Hands-on Plant Identification and a fan favorite showcase of 2 amazing ranching women. The SAGSW is one of our most popular and sought after events and we are proud to partner with the following organizations to present this 2 day workshop; Starland County, Oldman Watershed Council, MD of Willow Creek, Operation Grassland Communities, County of Warner, Alberta Conservation Association, Nature Conservancy Canada, Chinook Applied Research Association, MD of Pincher Creek, MULTISAR , Alberta Environmenta & Parks and Cows and Fish.



## Jim Gerrish Grazing School - August 15 - 17, Fort McLeod AB



Jim Gerrish returned to the Foothills Forage and Grazing Association region in 2018 and brought with him all of his knowledge and experience as a renowned grazer with 20+ years of experience in beef-forage systems. Participants had an option to attend a 1 day introductory grazing management 101 course or attend the 3 day advanced grazing management school with key concepts around stocking rate & density, energy & nutrient cycles, residual grass, rest & recovery, ranching profitability, fencing & water development, high animal performance, creating pasture from the soil up, understanding pasture inventory and much much more! Attendance was high with 41 Foothills Forage and Grazing Association members, 20 non-member producers, and 7 industry representatives. This event was organized in partnership with the MD of Pincher Creek, Cardston County, Foothills Forage and Grazing Association and the MD of Willow Creek. An interesting observation around the Jim Gerrish Grazing School, we had roughly 64 people attend Day 1, 41 people attend Day 2 and 42 people attend Day 3.

## Soil Carbon Measurement Workshop - October 1, Irricana AB

Foothills Forage and Grazing Association, along with Food Water Wellness Foundation, Greenedge and Pachaterrae joined forces to present a workshop on Soil Carbon Measurements. Topics included the science behind soil carbon sequestration, how to measure soil carbon, how to increase soil carbon and soil health using the microbes in your soil and how to monitor soil aggregate stability. The event was well attended with 11 Foothills Forage and Grazing Association members, 6 non-member producers and 33 industry representatives in attendance.



## Environmental Farm Plan Workshop - November 5, Cardston AB



On November 5th Cardston County hosted an Environmental Farm Plan workshop in which Foothills Forage and Grazing Association attended as presenter and co-host. We had 14 producers from 12 different farms attend and work on their Environmental Farm Plan (EFP). This was the first workshop that Communications & Environmental Coordinator Sonja Bloom presented as a new EFP Technician.

## Canadian Forage & Grassland Conference - November 14 & 15, Calgary AB

Foothills Forage and Grazing Association; along with West Central Forage Association, North Peace Applied Research Association, and Grey Wooded Forage association, were proud sponsors of the Canadian Forage & Grassland Conference: Foundation Forage on November 5th. This 3 day conference was a huge success that saw roughly 120 producers and 50 industry representatives in attendance. Topics included; Carbon Policy, High Performance Forage Systems, Forage Breeding Systems, Soil First Focus, Export Forage Sector and Grassland Conservation.



## Water & Agricultural Conference - November 22, Crossfield AB

The Agriculture and Water conference was developed by the Red Bow Agricultural Partnership for producers in our region. It was developed with the goal of promoting environmentally beneficial practices around riparian areas, wetlands and other marginal lands. Topics included Farming Through Change: Adapting to changes in climate, soil moisture and water supplies, The Business Case for Farming with Wetlands, Working with the Alberta Wetland Policy, Economic Benefits of Wetlands and Water Use and Sustainable Agriculture. The afternoon provided breakout sessions for Crop and Livestock Producers. The event was well attended with 16 producers and 74 industry representatives in attendance.



## Feed What You Need - November 27, Swalwell AB

Feed What You Need was developed to help producers make the best decisions around their winter feeding plans. Due to hay shortages & high prices the Swalwell event was pushed back to November 27th and the Pincher Creek event was unfortunately cancelled due to low registration. The Swalwell event was extremely successful with 8 Foothills Forage and Grazing Association members, 24 non-member producers and 11 industry representatives attending. Topics included; Feed Test - How to effectively collect samples, what to test for and understanding results, Winter Feeding Systems - nutritional checklists, Cocktail Mixes for Grazing & Soil Health, Bunch Grazing, Watering Systems, and Fencing & Maintaining Pasture Health. Thank you to our partners; Kneehill County, Union Forage, Penta, Wheatland County, Blue Rock and Alberta Beef, Forage & Grazing Centre.



## **Agriculture Funding Workshop For Producers - December 11, Cardston AB**

The Agriculture Funding Workshop for Producers was developed by Cardston County to help producers learn about provincial/federal funding programs and receive application assistance. Alberta Agriculture and Forestry staff presented on the various funding opportunities such as: Canadian Agricultural Partnership - Environmental Stewardship & Climate Change, Farm Water Supply and Irrigation Efficiency and programs under the Climate Leadership Plan such as Farm Energy and Agri-processing program and On-Farm Solar Photovoltaics program. Foothills Forage and Grazing Association presented on the Environmental Farm Plan and helped producers start their EFP. The event was well attended with 5 Foothills Forage and Grazing Association members, 45 non-member producers and 9 industry representatives in attendance.



## **Christmas Party - December 14, High River AB**



On December 14th, Foothills Forage and Grazing Association Board of Directors and staff celebrated a successful year with 48 members and 6 industry representatives. Cowboy Poet Doris Daley and Singer/Songwriter Doc Mahl gave a thrilling and enjoyable presentation and even left a little time to collaborate with each other at the end. Tamara and Sean gave great presentations as trip leaders on Foothill Forage and Grazing Association's Spain and Portugal Agricultural Tour earlier in the year and made us all a little jealous.

This event was a great way to close up 2018. One of our strengths as an organization is our grassroots producer focus, any event where we can network and learn from each other is an event that should not be missed!

# PROJECTS

In 2018 FFGA was involved in 2 projects/demonstration trials across our region.



## Operation Pollinator - Year 2

Native bees are a key species of terrestrial ecosystems and provide valuable ecosystem services. As we all know, there is significant concern in both rural and urban areas about the loss of pollinator habitat and the resulting impact on the ecosystem integrity and our food supply. In order to support the health bee population, we need to provide for bees by offering a continuous supply of floral resources, most of which are native plants that in turn depend on native bees in order to successfully reproduce. Farmer members of Foothills Forage and Grazing Association have stepped up to seed 5 sites across our region. We had some amazing results in bringing pollinators back to the landscape, and these sites will become more than pollinator habitat. Eventually, Operation Pollinator Project can help Alberta to maintain healthy and sustainable pollinator habitat that will have positive effects on bee populations.

Operation Pollinator aims to provide the essential habitat to boost numbers of crucially important pollinating insects on farm land to:

- Protect and enhance overall biodiversity
- Improve crop yields and quality
- Secure a sustainable farming and environmental balance

Beginning in 2017 Operation Pollinator saw 3 sites seeded in 2017 and 2 more sites seeded in 2018. 4 of the 5 sites have established well and are already showing an increase in pollinating insect populations. 1 site did not have successful establishment and will be reseeded this upcoming spring.

All sites were seeded using a seed mix from Syngenta that includes: Alsike Clover, Birdsfoot Trefoil, Phacelia, Red Clover, Timothy, Yellow and White Clover. This mix offers both annual and perennial species that flower at different times of the growing season and can sustain pollinating insects throughout the spring, summer and into the fall.

Going forward we will continue to monitor the sites in 2019, the final year of this 3 year project.



### Perennial Forage Variety Evaluation and Demonstration Project - Year 3

The following results are from a 3-year study funded by the Alberta Beef Producers and the Alberta Livestock & Meat Agency. Project participants included BRRG, CARA, FFGA, GRO, LARA, MARA, PCBFA, NPARA & WCFA.

The study included evaluation of 12 grasses, 15 legumes and 9 grass/legume mixes. Leading entries in each category in different regions of Alberta are summarized below. Local results can be found on page 20.

#### East Central Alberta (Mixed Grasslands Area)

	Dry Matter Yield (% Check)
<b>Grasses</b> Greenleaf Pubescent Wheatgrass	150
AC Success Hybrid Brome Grass	132
<b>Legumes</b> AC Yellowhead Alfalfa	100
Rugged Alfalfa	107
<b>Mixes</b>	
AC Success, AC Knowles Hybrid Brome or Fleet Meadow Brome + AC Yellowhead Alfalfa	99-102
AC Success Hybrid Brome + Spredor 5 Alfalfa	98

#### Central Alberta (Boreal Transition Area)

	Dry Matter Yield (% Check)
<b>Grasses</b> AC Success Hybrid Brome Grass	128
Greenleaf Pubescent Wheatgrass	113
AC Saltlander Green Wheatgrass	112
<b>Legumes</b> AC Yellowhead Alfalfa	100
Rangelander Alfalfa	97
<b>Mixes</b>	
AC Knowles Hybrid Brome + AC Mountainview Sainfoin	112
AC Success Hybrid Brome + AC Yellowhead Alfalfa	107

#### Northern Alberta (Peace Lowland Area)

	Dry Matter Yield (% Check)
<b>Grasses</b> AC Saltlander Green Wheatgrass	137
Greenleaf Pubescent Wheatgrass	122
AC Admiral Hybrid Brome Grass	121
Grindstad Timothy	119
Killarney Orchard Grass	<b>118</b>
<b>Legumes</b> AC Yellowhead Alfalfa	100
20-20 Alfalfa	101
Oxley II Cicer Milk Vetch	101
Veldt Cicer Milk Vetch	96
<b>Mixes</b>	
Fleet Meadow Brome + AC Yellowhead Alfalfa	100
Fleet Meadow Brome + Spredor 5 Alfalfa	97

**Background:**

This project will provide performance information on a number of perennial grass and legume species and varieties. It is part of a provincial initiative with sites in 8 regions of Alberta. All are small plot replicated trials except for a demonstration site initiated by Foothills Forage & Grazing Association. Establishment, winter survival, yield and nutritional value are evaluated.

**General Project Objectives:**

1. To provide unbiased, current and comprehensive regional data regarding the establishment, winter survival, yield and economics of specific species and varieties of perennial forage crops.
2. To identify perennial crop species/varieties that demonstrate superior establishment, hardiness, forage yield and nutritional quality characteristics in different eco-regions of Alberta.
3. To assess any benefits from growing mixtures of selected species.

**Results and Discussion – Whiskey Ridge Cattle Co Demonstration Site Summary**

*Producer Cooperators Morrie & Debbie Goetjen, Cremona Alberta*

Single strips of 11 grasses, 14 legumes and 9 mixes were seeded on June 7, 2016 at a site near Cremona, see map page 21. Soil moisture conditions were dry at the time of seeding. Volunteer barley grew abundantly across the demo strips and was removed by cutting and baling on August 19, 2016. 19.1 inches of rainfall was received at the site between May 23 and September 11 that year with the majority falling from mid-July on. Individual strips within the site were marked for self-guided tours.

A good snow cover was received during the winter of 2016/2017, providing good soil moisture for the spring. 150 cows grazing swaths in the adjacent field had access to the demo for 7 days in January 2017.

The site again received a thick layer of snow cover during the 2017/2018 winter. 145 cows grazed swaths in the adjacent field as well as the site for one week in again in January 2018. The snow resulted in good spring moisture, however below average rainfall for that area (approximately 5 inches) was received during the summer.

Growth looked good throughout the site. All alfalfa and cicer milk vetch varieties were more prominent than the sainfoin. The site was not clipped or harvested in any way during the growing season throughout the three-year project, with only light off-season grazing by cows in January.



## PERENNIAL FORAGE TRIAL

*Whiskey Ridge Cattle Co*



*\*\*Sheep fescue has been seeded as a border between plots and as a border*

# FFGA BURSARY RECIPIENTS

Each year Foothills Forage and Grazing Association awards a \$500 bursary (or multiple) to deserving student(s) whose education will contribute to the Livestock and Forage industry. Let's meet our 2018 Bursary Recipients.

## Jack Vergouwen - Olds College: Bachelor of Applied Science - Agribusiness



I would like to thank the Foothills Forage and Grazing Association for selecting me as a 2018 bursary winner and supporting my post-secondary education. My name is Jack Vergouwen and I grew up on a ranch east of Strathmore where my family and I run a mixed cow/calf and grain operation.

I am currently in my 3rd year at Olds College, pursuing a degree in the Bachelor of Applied Science - Agribusiness Program. Following my 3rd year at Olds College I will be travelling to New Zealand and Australia to finish my degree. By obtaining a degree in this program, I hope to get a job in the agriculture industry and eventually be able to apply my knowledge to my family farm and contribute to its future success and sustainability.

Thank you again for supporting my post-secondary education as well as the future of the agriculture industry.

## Graydon Garner - University of Alberta: Conservation Biology

I would like to extend my greatest thanks to the Foothills Forage and Grazing Association board and member community for choosing me as a recipient for the annual bursary. Out of most people in the world, ranchers know the value of a dollar and are quite effective at stretching those dollars as far as they can go. As a student, it is no different and this bursary will go very far in helping me finish up my degree program in December of 2018! I look forward to meeting new friends this summer at one of the events and wish everyone the best in the upcoming season!

Graydon Garner



# ENVIRONMENTAL

FFGA is here to help producers with various Environmental programs and applications.

## Environmental Farm Plan (EFP)



Alberta Environmental Farm Plan is preparing for a future where the majority of commodities are sustainably sourced. Consumers and the agri-food industry are demanding proof that agricultural products are safe and healthy, and grown with minimal impact on the environment. We will achieve that by working with industry, sustainable sourcing initiatives, and other EFP programs to create national standards, reduce overlap and to simplify the EFP as much possible, while retaining its integrity. The Environmental Farm Plan has been developed to help meet the demand of sustainably sourced products and is a voluntary, whole farm, self-assessment tool that helps producers identify their environmental risks and develop plans to mitigate identified risks.

## Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP)



The Canadian Agricultural Partnership is a five-year, \$3 billion federal-provincial-territorial investment in the agriculture, agri-food and agri-based products sector that began in April 2018, and is the successor of the 2013-18 Growing Forward 2 partnership. In Alberta, the Canadian Agricultural Partnership represents a federal - provincial investment of \$406 million in strategic programs and initiatives for the agricultural sector. The program offers cost sharing support to producers looking to make their operation more efficient and environmentally sound.

## Farm Energy and Agri-Processing Program (FEAP)



The Farm Energy and Agri-Processing Program shares costs with the agriculture and agri-processing sector on energy efficiency investments. The Program is designed to encourage energy management which will result in cost savings, energy conservation, and ultimately, reduced greenhouse gas emissions. The Program offers financial support, subject to financial constraint, to applicants who incorporate high efficiency equipment that is identified in the applicable Funding List in their construction and/or retrofitting projects.

## On-Farm Solar Photovoltaics Program (OFSPV)



The On-Farm Solar Photovoltaics program provides funding towards solar photovoltaics on Alberta farms. This enables producers to conserve non-renewable fossil fuels and reduce carbon emissions, ultimately reducing the environmental footprint of Alberta's agriculture industry.

# FFGA PARTNERS



Foothills Forage and Grazing Association would not exist without funding from the Agricultural Opportunity Fund from the Alberta Government.

Foothills Forage and Grazing Association is a proud partner of



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## GOLD



## SILVER



## BRONZE

### JONES FARM SUPPLIES



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# MEMBERSHIP



Unit 4A, 710 Centre Street SE • High River, AB • T1V 0H3 • (403) 995-9466  
www.foothillsforage.com

## Producer Membership Form

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Business/Farm Name (*optional*): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Prov: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal code: \_\_\_\_\_

County/M.D.: \_\_\_\_\_

Email(s): \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to receive the monthly newsletter by:  email  mail (check one or both)

*Information collected on this form is confidential and is used in reporting and grant applications.*

Acres Managed (including rented land): \_\_\_\_\_

Livestock Managed: (number of each) Cow/calf \_\_\_\_\_ Yearlings \_\_\_\_\_ Backgrounding: \_\_\_\_\_

Feedlot \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Number of FFGA Events Attended Last Year: \_\_\_\_\_

I prefer to hear about events from (*circle all that apply*):

FFGA Newsletter    FFGA Website    FFGA Facebook    FFGA Twitter    Radio    Local Newspapers

Future Topics of Interest/Speakers of Interest/General Comments/Suggestions:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Annual Producer Membership: **\$30.00** *\*includes gst* GST#: 837100346RT0001  
(Cheques can be made payable to "Foothills Forage & Grazing Association". Please do not make them payable to "FFGA". Or you can pay online at [www.foothillsforage.com/membership](http://www.foothillsforage.com/membership))

*\*Memberships are valid from January 1 to December 31 of the respective year*

*\*FFGA membership covers one farm business unit or family and the people associated within that unit. It includes 2 e-newsletters or 1 hard copy newsletter/month and 1 vote at the Annual General Meeting.*