



GRASSROOTS NEWS & VIEWS

Photo credit: Lee Gundersen



Unit 4A, 710 Centre St. SE, High River, AB T1V 0H3
Phone: (403) 995-9466 ~ www.foothillsforage.com

OCTOBER 2018

Director's Note - Alex Robertson

Howdy,

Waking up to 6 inches of snow on October 2 was not what anyone needed to see after a somewhat challenging year. But as Dad always said, "it could be worse". Areas west of Calgary had well over a foot yesterday. Nothing like an early snow to keep pressure on the already high feed prices!

It was interesting reading Justin's note last month. We had already started early weaning and selling the teenaged cows before the market got flooded with cows, depressing prices even more. Through the lovely use of hindsight, I see that over the last month prices have only dropped 2 - 5 cents for old cows which isn't as bad as I thought it would be, and that's more grass for the rest of the herd to winter on. We also marketed 25% more calves in the September video sale than we did in 2017, and the prices there were up 10% over last year too. But with high feed prices and less grass, will that be enough?

A thoughtful article in an Alberta Agricultural and Forestry release came out and dealt with feed shortages. It analyzed four different ways to deal with it;

- Option 1: purchase feed
- Option 2: have cows custom fed
- Option 3: sell cull cows and buy back heifers
- Option 4: sell cull cows and replace with internal replacements

After a great deal of analysis of each option, the least expensive option is #4, sell cull cows and replace with internal replacements. However, with that being said, there are some factors to consider such as whether you are able to defer the sale of breeding livestock for tax reasons. For this I would recommend talking to your accountant. I know in our Municipality we weren't considered to be in the drought affected areas and therefore cannot defer the sale of breeding

livestock. After this year I really hope we don't experience another one like it that would make us eligible for the Livestock Tax Deferral Provision. The full AAF article was in the September issue of Alberta Farmer Express and is worth the read.

Over the years I have sometimes found myself being criticized by friends, neighbours, and some who weren't friends; for wasting grass, their view being to graze the fields longer than I typically do. I was always taught 'grass grows grass', and to 'take half, and leave half'. It is so important to keep a healthy and diverse grass stand mixed with both legumes and grasses that have deep roots and litter covering the ground. This keeps the soil temperature lower and thereby reduces evaporation of moisture. In this hot dry year, this practice was necessary if I wanted to have any winter grazing left. But I do have to admit that in late August, while grazing some of the non-drought affected fields, I sacrificed some of my tame pastures as I was delaying moving the herd to the native fields for fall and winter. As we moved into September it was amazing to see the grass turn back to green with the little bit of rain that we did get. It was probably more due to the cooler temperatures and higher humidity. The cows seemed much happier and weren't looking to be moved every time I checked them.

Given the circumstances of a summer of drought, it is very important to know what feed you have on hand and how best to ration it for this upcoming winter (which seems to be coming sooner than later). FFGA is hosting two - one day seminars on 'Feed What You Need'. The first is at Salwell Community Centre on October 16, and the second is at the Maycroft Community Hall on October 18. Also, the Canadian Forage and Grassland Association AGM and Conference is being held in Calgary this year. I always recommend going to these events. Even if you only pick up just one or two new ideas, the day more than pays for itself. As a bonus, you are also spending time with like minded individuals that you can share and exchange ideas with.

I wish everyone a good fall and winter grazing season and hope to connect with some of you and some of the seminars. Take good care.

Alex Robertson

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WLPIP Claim Window: What to Keep in Mind

As attention in the livestock industry is increasingly turning to the upcoming volumes of cattle coming into the marketplace, there are two important considerations for producers to take into account:

1) It's time to start monitoring the claim window for policies.

All WLPIP policies have a built-in claim window attached to them, which is often the three weeks prior to the expiry date associated with the policy. Settlement numbers are published on Mondays, except in the event of a holiday Monday, when Tuesday becomes the effective claim date. Clients are encouraged to review their policy expiry date and cross reference it with the WLPIP Calendar of Insurance available on wlpip.ca to find the dates when their policy will be in a claim window. It is important to note that not all policies have a full four weeks to claim, as policies that are near a "blackout" (periods when sufficient data is unavailable to calculate a settlement value) will have shortened claim windows.

Once the claim dates associated with the policy are identified, it is important to watch the settlement index that is published every Monday. A producer wishing to claim on their policy during this claim window must submit a Request to Claim form to any AFSC office or go online between 1:30 p.m. and 7 p.m. Monday to claim against that published settlement index. Claims are available only on Mondays. Clients can claim all or part of their weight on policies during a claim window. Any weight not claimed on the expiry date is settled against the settlement index published on their expiry date.

Claim windows are best utilized to match the actual sale movement of the

insured cattle. Policies can be claimed on while the cattle are still owned by the policy holder, but if market fluctuations happen after all the weight on a policy has been claimed, no insurance will be in effect to help manage any unforeseen declines in the remaining weeks. Producers are reminded that the claim window is built to help producers fit themselves into a policy as cattle may be sold in multiple weeks covered by the same policy.

Example:

Policy expires on October 29, claim window weeks associated with that policy are: October 22, October 15, and October 9.

October

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

Settlement indices are published based on weekly auction market data for the Feeder and Calf programs, and producer reported data for the Fed program. With the feeder and calf programs, the information regarding head sales volumes coming from participating auction markets is robust and current. However, to ensure that best data set available to Alberta producers, outliers that would skew the index are excluded. Therefore, when published, the settlement values represent the averaged price, averaged quality market in Alberta for each programs corresponding weight band. More information on the settlement details is available at wlpip.ca.

2) It's good to keep the future in mind.

If a producer is buying calves or feeders, or retaining ownership, it is a good idea to keep a thumb on the pulse of feeder and fed coverages to see if there is an opportunity to purchase insurance on owned cattle for the last few months of 2018, or into 2019.

°Feeder and Fed coverage is available to purchase year-round and serves as a valuable risk management tool for those looking to minimize price risk for a future sales date on cattle they are buying right now, or calves they are retaining ownership on.

°Coverage and premiums are available every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 2 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. and forecast coverage from 12-36 weeks from date of purchase.

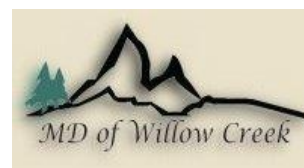
°From a historical average perspective, the peak month when feeder and fed purchases have been made in the fall has been November.

Premiums and coverage levels are published on the www.WLPIP.ca website. All local AFSC branch offices and the Client Contact Centre are available to help execute a purchase or discuss the program for any questions producers may have.

If you would like more information about your policy or the program in general, please contact your local AFSC office or the Client Contact Centre at 1-877-899-2372. The most practical way to access to up-to-date information is to subscribe to the e mail distribution of premium and settlement tables by sending an email to cattle@wlpip.ca.

Article submitted by AFSC

Thank you for your support!



Alberta Cattle Producer Plebiscite Regulations Announced

Alberta Beef Producers (ABP) is working together with industry groups for a stronger Alberta beef industry that invests in the future, drives efficiencies and cultivates opportunities.

Alberta cattle producers can vote to decide if check-off should continue to be refundable or become nonrefundable between October 19 and November 13, 2018 at one of the 27 ABP fall meetings around the province, by mail, or in person at the 46 AFSC offices in Alberta. Marketing Council has sent information packages about the plebiscite to producers and information can be found on the Government of Alberta website at [https://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/apmc16728](https://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/apmc16728).

This producer plebiscite is an opportunity to make a decision on future funding of Alberta's beef cattle organization and industry. ABP has issued over \$20 million in refunds since 2010 and many producers believe that this money would generate greater benefits if invested in industry initiatives.

The basis for the pursuit of a non-refundable check-off is a plan to create the Alberta Beef Industry Development Fund (ABIDF). Plans for the ABIDF and

an agreement between ABP and Alberta Cattle Feeders' Association (ACFA) on the allocation of a non-refundable check-off were the reasons ACFA is supporting the plebiscite.

"I encourage all cattle producers to vote this fall in the plebiscite to decide on funding for the future of your industry. ABP and ACFA have committed to working together on trade challenges, farm safety issues, investing in research and many other important issues facing the cattle industry. Please get out and vote," said Ryan Kasko, ACFA Chair.

A successful plebiscite would see the creation of the ABIDF. This fund would support the beef industry through strategic investments of producer check-off dollars in research and technology transfer, market development, education, consumer advocacy, and industry collaboration. The return to a non-refundable service charge would provide approximately \$1.4 million annually in funding for the ABIDF.

"This plebiscite represents an enormous opportunity for producers and our industry. Producers have the chance to decide how their commission should be funded and the industry has the chance to

invest another \$2.2 to \$2.5 million annually in strategic projects to make it stronger. This is your decision so please make sure you vote in the plebiscite," said Charlie Christie, ABP Chair.

Under the proposed funding structure, ABP will retain \$1.35 per head of the \$2 check-off, which is approximately the amount we currently retain after refunds are issued. The ABP allocation includes 53 cents per head to support the Canadian Cattlemen's Association and a rebate paid to check-off remitters, currently five cents per head. ABP and ACFA agreed that 40 cents per head, close to \$1.4 million per year, would be contributed to the ABIDF. Twenty-five cents per head, around \$850,000 per year, will be allocated to ACFA to cover operational costs and their commitment to the National Cattle Feeders' Association. Producers who do not want 25 cents per head to go to ACFA may apply to have this money allocated to the ABIDF.

The 2018 ABP Fall Producer Meetings schedule can be found here: <http://albertabeef.org/uploads/2018fallmeetingdatespdf-855.pdf>



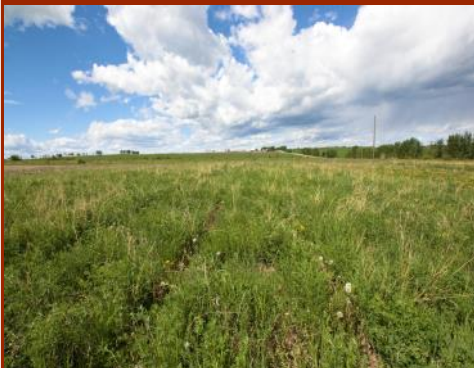
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Be Prepared for Nitrate Problems in Forages



Nitrate levels in forages can sometimes be a problem for cattle. Depending on growing conditions, certain plants may accumulate too much nitrate to be safely fed to cattle unless those high-nitrate feeds can be diluted by mixing with other forages.

Colby Elford, livestock and feed extension specialist, Ministry of Agriculture, Moose Jaw, Sask., says it is important to test nitrate levels in forages. When ruminant animals consume feed that is high in nitrates, the nitrates are quickly converted to nitrite in the rumen

by the rumen microbes. The original form (nitrate) in the plant is not poisonous. It's the nitrites that are toxic if they accumulate in the animal's system. If you are feeding a high level of nitrates it eventually becomes toxic.

As long as we stay below those thresholds while feeding nitrate-containing forages, the nitrates will be converted to nitrite in the rumen and the microbes continue the process of converting nitrites to ammonia, and ammonia to amino acids to create protein. Problems occur when cattle consume too many nitrates. Rumen microbes convert these to nitrites quickly, but the conversion of nitrites to ammonia is slower, and excess nitrites accumulate in the animal's body.

"If you know what the levels are in a feed, they can usually be dealt with by blending the high-nitrate feed in a ration," notes Elford. "We encourage pro-

ducers to go ahead and cut their feed for quality and then follow up with a full feed test that includes nitrates. This will enable them to make a feeding plan, after they know those numbers."

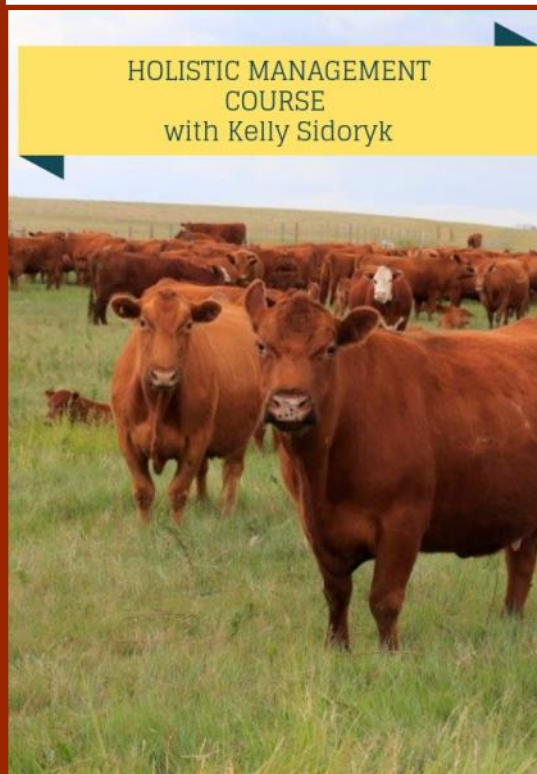
Researcher Tim McAllister at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Lethbridge Research and Development Centre says there are a number of different triggers that lead to nitrate problems. "The primary one is early frost when plants are still growing, producing a lot of proteins and enzymes," he says.

As the plant is growing, it's capturing carbon dioxide from the air and utilizing photosynthesis to create the protein it needs for growth. "When we have early frost, this damages the plant cells, causing them to rupture releasing the proteins. Then plant enzymes and microbes break down those proteins into amino acids and remove the nitrogen from them in the form of ammonium, which can be converted into nitrate within the plant."

The nitrite is the problem; it can be absorbed through the rumen wall or absorbed into the body via the small intestine. "When it enters the blood system it combines with the hemoglobin to form methemoglobin which causes the blue colour of blood that is characteristic of the inability of hemoglobin (in the red blood cells) to transport oxygen," explains McAllister.

This results in the "poisoning"

(Continued on page 5)



HOLISTIC MANAGEMENT COURSE with Kelly Sidoryk

Holistic Management is a values-based decision making framework that integrates all aspects of planning for sustainable social, economic and environmental considerations.

LOCATION	Irricana & District Ag Society
COST	\$1695.00/farm unit (2-3 people)
DATE	November 26 -28 and December 10 - 12
CONTACT	Kelly Sidoryk: kelly.sidoryk@gmail.com or 780.872.2585 Daryl Chubb: daryl@denovoag.com or 403.836.2202 Tim Wray: wraytimjo@gmail.com or 780.216.9729

(Continued from page 4)

we see in cattle. The body is literally starving for oxygen. "If you were to take a blood sample it would look blue rather than red, since the nitrite binds to the same place on the red blood cell that oxygen would normally bind to when hemoglobin transports it. Thus the animal is oxygen-deficient."

"Often you won't see any symptoms; you just find the dead animal," says Elford. If you happen to see them before they die, they might appear weak, struggling to breathe, with increased heart rate. They may slobber and drool saliva. They are essentially suffocating.

There are a number of things that

can increase this risk. "A high-protein forage is more likely to cause nitrate poisoning than a low-protein forage," says McAllister. "Excessive amounts of nitrogen fertilizer on a crop or pasture (or cattle manure as fertilizer) will increase the protein levels in the plant and increase that risk as well. The degree of damage, as from frost, will also be a factor. Some plants are more susceptible to damage because they are not as cold-tolerant," he explains.

Major issues with nitrates usually follow a frost but it can also happen with other stressors to the plant, like drought.

"The most common situation

where we hear about nitrate poisoning is with greenfeed or oat hay or barley hay," says McAllister. "You don't hear about it with silage because it's harvested earlier and not as apt to have frost damage. Also the proteins in the plants are converted during the ensiling process," he says.

Some classes of livestock can handle higher nitrate levels than others. Pregnant cows are often the most vulnerable, with the first sign of nitrate poisoning being abortion, especially in early pregnancy.

"If nitrate levels in a certain forage are too high to be safe, there are several ways to deal with this. The best way in most cases is to dilute the nitrates by feeding other forage along with the high-nitrate feed. The solution is through dilution. It's not like you have to throw it away; you can often mix it in the diet, starting with a small amount of the high-nitrate feed," McAllister says.

By letting the animal adapt, gradually increasing the amount of high-nitrate feed in the diet mix, the microbes in the rumen can actually adapt and become more efficient at converting nitrate to nitrite and the nitrite to ammonia.

"The microbes' ability to adapt is significant, to the point that you can get up to levels of nitrate that if you had fed that in the beginning it would have likely killed the animal," he explains.

"If you don't want to take that risk (of trying to adapt the animals to higher levels), you can simply keep feeding a mix of feeds to dilute the nitrates," says McAllister.

(Continued on page 6)



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Email: arno@gemstonecattle.com

(Continued from page 5)

“If you are going to have problems, it will usually be when you first introduce cattle to that forage, so you need to know the nitrate levels and manage accordingly,” says McAllister. Forage samples can be taken from the fields and pastures or core samples from bales, and sent to a lab that does the testing.

Elford encourages his clients to get a full forage analysis even if nitrates is their only concern. “If you are going to the trouble of taking samples and sending them off, you might as well check protein and energy levels,” he explains.

Phosphorus could be another concern with the higher grain content in an annual forage. “If that’s the case, we can tailor a mineral program to make a proper calcium-to-phosphorus ratio,” he explains. It’s a balancing act, and these things can change from year to year if the growing conditions are different, even if it’s the same field and same kind of crop.

Get a good sample

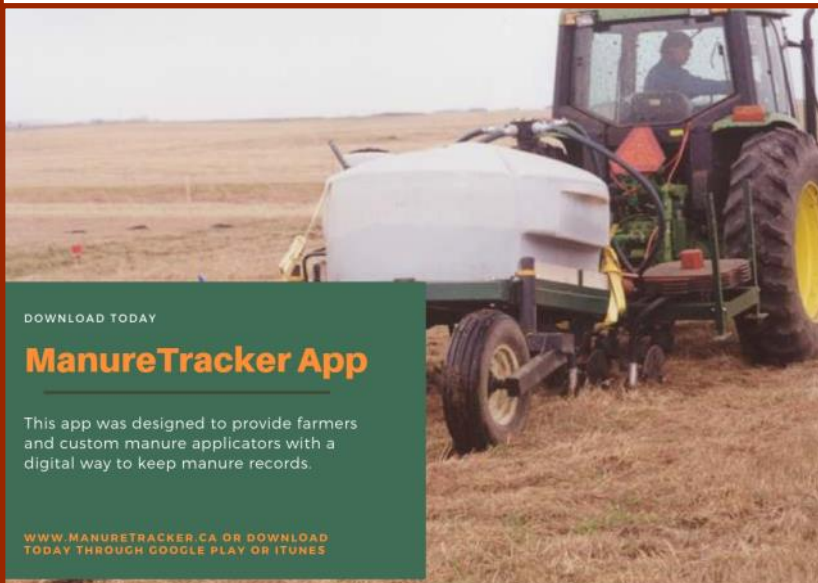
It’s easy to take core samples from a bale, but harder to check a forage that will be grazed. “This involves taking plant samples and trying to get a representative sample from throughout the field. It won’t be as good, but will give a clue. We suggest taking samples from different parts of the field, making sure you get some from the hilltops as well as the bottoms, and the edges as well as the middle. Pool all of those together and then take a sub-sample from the large sample after you’ve mixed them. Or, you can take several samples from different areas of the field and send them all for testing.” Then you’d know if one part is worse than the others, or the dry edge is worse than the middle.

“On a large field it would be a good idea to check several areas. If you are talking about an entire quarter section there could be a lot of variation,” he says. It’s

very inexpensive to do the tests, compared to losing animals or abortions.

“If you think you have an issue with sick or dead animals, have a veterinarian check them in case it is a disease or some other condition. It might not be nitrate poisoning. It would be good to figure it out before you have many losses, and all of that could be avoided if you’ve done a test ahead of time and can manage the feed appropriately,” says Elford.

Heather Smit Thomas—Canadian Cattlemen. <https://www.canadiancattlemen.ca/2018/09/18/avoiding-high-nitrite-levels-in-cattle-so-they-arent-starved-for-oxygen/>

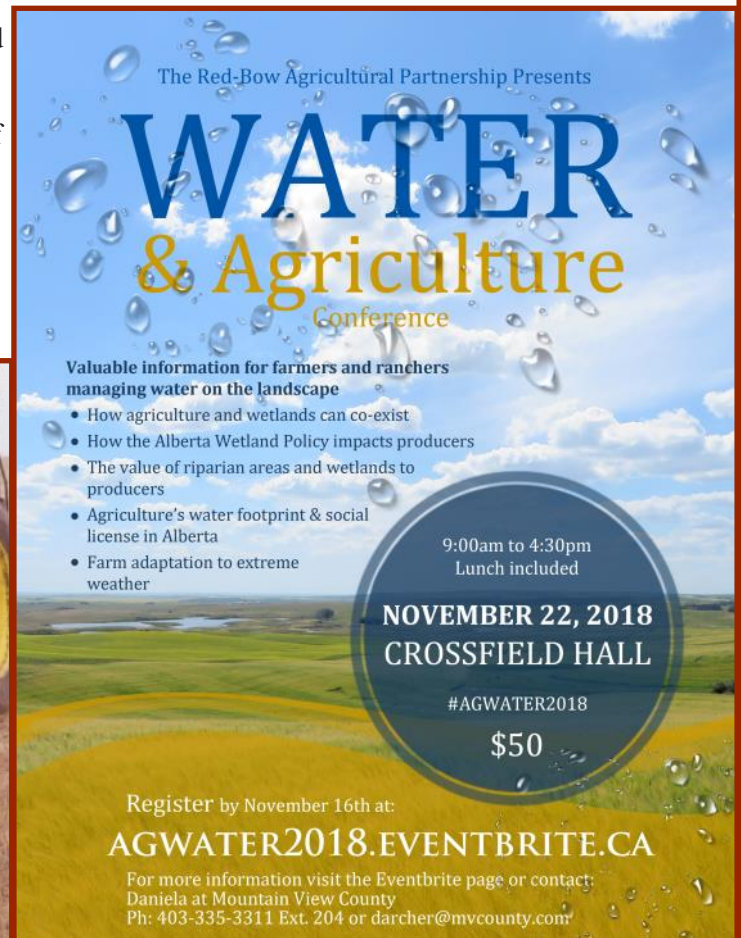


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Co-op
4123 3rd St E
403-625-4088

HANNA

October 22
Fox Lake Agro
Services
305 South
Municipal Rd
403-854-2820

OLDS

October 22
Richardson Pioneer
1.5 km north of
Olds - Hwy 2A
403-556-6606

VAUXHALL

October 22
South Country
Co-op
205 1st Ave N
403-654-2137

CARDSTON

October 23
Cardston County
Admin. Bldg.
1080 Main St
403-634-9474

CROSSFIELD

October 23
Nutrien Ag
Solutions
21185 Hwy 574
403-946-4588

FOREMOST

October 23
W. Buis Holdings Ltd
199 1st Ave West
403-867-2436

OYEN

October 23
Richardson Pioneer
Township Rd 280
1 mile East of Oyen
403-664-2620

BOW ISLAND

October 24
Parrish and
Heimbecker
Hwy 3, 1 mile west
of Bow Island
403-545-2748

CORONATION

October 24
Nutrien Ag
Solutions
36130 Range Rd 110
403-578-3302

STIRLING

October 24
Richardson Pioneer
Hwy 61
1 mile east of
Hwy 4
403-756-3452

STRATHMORE

October 24
UFA Strathmore
58 Slater Rd
403-934-6684

MEDICINE HAT

October 25
UFA Medicine Hat
1467 30th St SW
403-529-2424

THREE HILLS

October 25
Kneehill Soil
Services Ltd
204 1st Ave W
403-443-2355

TABER

October 25
UFA Taber
5813 60 Ave
403-223-8917

VULCAN

October 25
Richardson Pioneer
1/4 mile west of
junction Hwy 23 &
Hwy 534
403-485-6696

BROOKS

October 26
Nutrien Ag
Solutions
145074 Joanne
Trucking Rd
403-362-2072

HIGH RIVER

October 26
UFA High River
2006 10th Ave SE
403-652-2733

INNISFAIR

October 26
Central Alberta
Co-op
35435 Range Rd 282
403-227-3466

IRON SPRINGS

October 26
Nutrien Ag
Solutions
100 Railway Ave
403-732-4585

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FFGA MISSION & VISION STATEMENTS

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.

This Publication is made possible by our two major funders - the Agriculture Opportunity Fund and Alberta Agriculture and Forestry.

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