



## GRASSROOTS NEWS & VIEWS

Photo Credit—Graeme Finn—Southern Cross Livestock gallery



PO Box 458 Okotoks, AB T1S 1A7

Phone: (403) 995-9466 ~ [www.foothillsforage.com](http://www.foothillsforage.com)

# February 2018

## Director's Note

Well we're half way through winter and getting pretty close to calving for some eager folks! It seems like we're always planning on having a quiet winter but it never quite works out that way, at least not in our house with three little boys.

Foothills Forage is no exception to all the excitement! We have the Ranching Opportunities seminar on Feb 8 and our AGM on March 20th where we have CanFax economist Brian Perillat telling us how much money we're all going to make over the summer! The board met with David Irvine in December for a two day retreat focused on board governance and leadership. It was very powerful for many of us. Taking time away from the day to day distractions that make up 90% of our day to take a step back and look at the bigger picture is one of the reasons Foothills Forage has been so successful and has stayed true to our core values. David told us that life is made up of two types of actions, transactional and transformational. Transactional activities are things that we have to do to get by, pick the kids up from sports, buy groceries, bookkeeping, etc. Transformational activities incorporate the bigger picture and give purpose to life and also to some transactional activities. Raising intelligent, kind and confident children is a transformational activity and is why we signed them up for sports in the first place. This of course applies to our organization as well. Holding field days and putting out this newsletter alone are just transactional if not justified by our purpose for existing, which is to help producers profit from their soil and forage through innovation and education. Sometimes in life you can get in a rut where you're just going through the motions and it's helpful to take time to evaluate if those motions actually have a greater meaning.

I felt a real connection to other producers and why we are all in this when I was at the Western Canadian Soil Health and Grazing Conference in Edmonton. I felt like we are all part of a revolution and that a revolution is what we need in agriculture. We are pushing the leading edge of science, or as one of the scientists pointed out, we are actually a decade or two ahead of the scientific community. There are people increasing soil organic matter at rates previously thought to be impossible, but when presented with the facts that they have done it, science is now trying to explain how. It is really exciting and I wasn't the only one feeling that way. The conference sold out 500 spots, then added another 25 spots and sold those out and began building a wait list. All this was shortly after the early bird deadline! We have likely now outgrown even that venue.

Not bad for a conference that once had 76 attendees! One of my favourite speakers was Dr. J.C. Cahill who stars in the documentary (available free on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CrrSAc-vjG4&t=193s>) What Plants Talk About. He said plants behave like animals, foraging, competing, taking risks, making decisions and protecting family. He said we are running out of modes of action for modern pesticides and in 20+ years will be looking for totally different commercial products. One amazing fact was that some plants release specific scents depending on which individual insects are feeding on them to attract the specific predators of those pest insects. Gabe Brown said 95% of soil nematodes are beneficial and only 5% are harmful, but 95% of research is done on the harmful ones. Fascinating stuff!

"I've spent a lot of time and money in my life ranching, the rest of it I just wasted." –altered quote from George Bird.

*Ben Campbell*

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# WORKING WELL WORKSHOPS



## Working Well Workshop Schedule | Winter 2018

Workshops scheduled for January, February and March (updated December 20, 2017)

Please call or email the Workshop Host Contact to pre-register for a workshop and for more workshop details (e.g. venue/location and start time).		
Workshop Host (General Location)	Date	Workshop Host Contact
Yellowhead County (Peers)	January 16	Tara McGinn P 780-325-3782 E tmcginn@yellowheadcounty.ab.ca
MD of Foothills (Priddis)	February 6	Ryan Bull P 403-333-4764 E ryan.bull@mdfoothills.com
MD of Foothills (Davisburg)	February 7	Ryan Bull P 403-333-4764 E ryan.bull@mdfoothills.com
MD of Foothills (Highwood)	February 13	Ryan Bull P 403-333-4764 E ryan.bull@mdfoothills.com
Battle River Research Group & Stettler County (Stettler Ag Society Office)	February 20	Martina Alder P 780-582-7308 E env@battleriverresearch.com
Rocky View County (County Office)	February 22	Donna Eaton P 403-520-6301 E agevents@rockyview.ca

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We're celebrating our 10th anniversary in 2018!  
Learn more about Working Well and get resources  
for well owners at [www.workingwell.alberta.ca](http://www.workingwell.alberta.ca)



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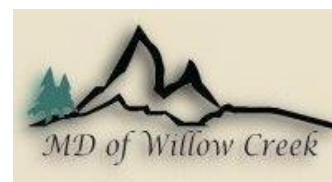
Please call or email the Workshop Host Contact to pre-register for a workshop and for more workshop details (e.g. venue/location and start time).		
Workshop Host (General Location)	Date	Workshop Host Contact
County of Vermilion River (Location TBD)	March 1	Jordan Smith P 587-220-4287 E jsmith@county24.com
Mountain View County (Olds area)	March 6	Daniela Lemus P 403-335-3311 ext 204 E dlemus@mvcounty.com
MD of Bighorn (Beaure Community Hall)	March 13	Andrew Richmond P 403.673.3611 ext. 241 E andrew.richmond@mdbighorn.ca
Minburn County (Location TBD)	March 15	Jordan Smith P 587-220-4287 E jsmith@county24.com
Wetaskiwin County (Lakedell)	March 20	Heather Dickau P 780-352-3321 or 780-777-9760 E hdickau@county.wetaskiwin.ab.ca
Parkland County (Location TBD)	March 27	Laura Duncan P 780-968-8467 E agriculture@parklandcounty.com

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## Thank you for your support!





# IT'S TIME TO RENEW!!

## 2018 Foothills Forage Membership!

For just \$30.00/year you can become a part of the innovative network of Foothills Forage! FFGA members receive our monthly newsletter, attend our events at discounted rates, have first access to FFGA events and much more! FFGA currently provides workshops within our region in Southern Alberta.

Payment & Renewal Forms Available ONLINE at:

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

We hope you join us!

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

\*\* FFGA Membership covers one farm business unit or family and 1 vote at the Annual General Meeting



## PARTNER EVENTS

### Septic Sense — Solutions for Rural Living

Monday February 12 @ 7:00pm

Highwood Memorial Centre

(FREE) Register Online:

<http://www.mdfoothills.eventbrite.ca/>



### 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.

### DEADLINE EXTENDED!

Albertans have more time to provide their input on recommendations to apply occupational health and safety (OHS) rules to the province's farms and ranches.

**The deadline for feedback to the technical working group recommendations is being extended to Feb. 26, 2018**, from Jan. 15, 2018, to ensure Albertans have the opportunity to review the recommendations and provide their input.

Four technical working groups reviewed OHS rules as they apply to farms and ranches and submitted their recommendations to government. You have the opportunity to look at those recommendations and let government know what you think about them. Government will take your feedback into consideration before making changes to OHS laws.

Visit [www.alberta.ca/farmandranch](http://www.alberta.ca/farmandranch) to view the technical working group reports. You may submit your feedback by Feb. 26 to [farmandranch@gov.ab.ca](mailto:farmandranch@gov.ab.ca) or via mail to:

*Farm and Ranch TWG Feedback,  
c/o Alberta Labour Workplace Policy and Legislation  
10808 - 99 Avenue, Edmonton T5K 0G5.*

Thank you for contributing to healthy and safe workplaces on Alberta's farms and ranches.



**Brian Perillat, BSc. MSc. P.Ag**  
Manager/Senior Analyst – Canfax

Brian Perillat has been the Manager at Canfax since April 2010. Brian grew up on a mixed farming operation near Duck Lake, Saskatchewan and continues to be involved with the family farm. Prior to working at Canfax, Brian worked as a livestock production economist with Alberta Agriculture and also spent over 4 years working with MNP as a farm management consultant. Brian has had the privilege of travelling and working on farms and stations in Australia and New Zealand, as well as visiting farms in north and west Africa.

## Annual General Meeting

**Featuring a Market Update  
with Canfax's Brian Perillat**

*"More Cattle, More Meat, Now What?"*

**10:00am Registration**  
(start at 10:20am)

**\$30/person**  
**\$30 annual membership**  
**\*Lunch Included\***

Also Featuring:

- Barb Archibald, Growing Forward Extension Specialist, Agriculture & Forestry
  - CAP Program Update
- AgSafe Program Information Update

Register online at:  
<https://ffga2018agm.eventbrite.ca>

**March 20, 2018**  
**Travelodge Strathmore, AB**

## CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Elections for five seats on the FFGA Board of Directors will be held at the AGM on March 20th. (2 vacant & 3 Directors up for re-election of 2nd term). Elected Directors are eligible to serve up to two consecutive three-year terms and must be an FFGA Member in good standing.

If interested, email nomination to [manager@foothillsforage.com](mailto:manager@foothillsforage.com)

**\*\*Please include a short description of candidate, which will be read prior to election\*\***



# RANCHING *Opportunities*

OLDS COLLEGE ALUMNI CENTRE  
**Thursday February 8th**  
**8:50 AM to 4:30 PM**  
**(8:30-8:50 Registration, 8:50 Start)**  
**- Free Parking -**

**EARNING TRUST IN  
FOOD AND RANCHING**  
**Crystal Mackay,**  
Canadian Centre for Food Integrity

**CHUTE AWAY**  
*Hands on presentation on how  
different cattle handling systems  
work and how to design your own.*  
**Jack Nester**  
Nester Livestock Equipment

**FOCUS ON THE FEED**  
*Interpreting Your Feed Test Results*  
**Barry Yaremco,**  
Alberta Agriculture and Forestry

**SETTING A NEW STANDARD:  
HARMONY BEEF**  
*Processing Facility Technology*  
**Cam Daniels, Harmony Beef Plant**

**SMOOTH RIDE**  
*Tips for transporting cattle*  
**Karen Schwartzkopf-Genswein**  
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

**ENVIRONMENTAL  
HOOF-PRINT**  
**Dr. Gabriel Ribeiro**  
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

**PRODUCER PANEL:**  
*Consumer Verification Programs*  
\* **Verified Beef**  
\* **Canadian Round Table for  
Sustainable Beef**  
\* **Environmental Farm Plan**

**REGISTER AT**  
**RO2018.EVENTBRITE.CA**

**FEBRUARY 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018**

## **REGISTRATION**

Registration closes February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
\$45 registration fee includes lunch, coffee and tradeshow  
Questions? Contact Daniela at Mountain View County  
Ph: 403-335-3311 Ext. 204 or dlemus@mvcountry.com

## **HOSTING PARTNERS**

Olds College, Kneehill County, M.D. of Bighorn, Rocky View County, Alberta Agriculture & Forestry, Wheatland County, Mountain View County, Foothills Forage & Grazing Association, Red Deer County

Twitter: #RanchingOpportunities



# Climate Change and Grassland Management



Photo copyright Terrie Wade

The science is becoming increasingly convincing that the weather patterns are changing and the repercussions of the change are being felt painfully as witnessed after the successive record-breaking strength hurricanes in the Caribbean during the late summer.

While we have yet to know whether the instability in climate phenomena will, in time, settle into new patterns or the instability will intensify to wilder fluctuations, one thing landowners can do is to adopt good management practices so that soil health is kept strong and their operations are less affected by major changes in moisture levels.

For good management practices, the first requirement for a producer is to know the characteristics of the land.

“Climate change affects different areas in different ways,” said Karin Lindquist, Forage-Beef Specialist at the Ag-Info Centre of Agriculture and Forestry, Alberta.

“Areas that tend to receive precipitation that is at or above 350 mm per year, like the Aspen Parkland, is more affected by drought than the dry mixed-grass prairie,” she added.

“The reason is that the prairie is already adapted to climatic extremes that include severe droughts or long hot, dry periods.”

But regardless of the differences in levels of vulnerability to moisture level fluctuations, one

constant, soil health, needs to remain at the top of all considerations for all producers.

“Some studies have shown that areas that are more heavily utilized... tend to be the areas most susceptible and sensitive to the effects of climate change,” Lindquist continued.

“The reason is that these areas do not have the litter cover to protect the soil and keep the soil cool, and plants have shallower roots than they should.

“If grasslands and forage crops can be managed so that they have enough root depth and volume and litter left to cover the soil surface, then they have a better chance at surviving climatic extremes than those that are mismanaged.”

And one of the most detrimental ways of mismanaging the grasslands is allowing overgrazing.

“Overgrazing is a function of time, and not the number of animals,” stresses Lindquist.

Because time is of essence to allow the plants to fully recover and to regain root strength so that the litter cover on the soil remains robust and the soil is not exposed to influences that harm its fertility.

“If there is reduced litter over the soil surface, this encourages soils to warm up, which, in turn, causes soil to lose water via

evapotranspiration,” she added.

But what happens under the surface of the soil alongside on top of it is important to understand, according to Lindquist.

“When plants are grazed, there is always going to be death loss in the roots. This naturally happens no matter if the manager is doing things right or wrong,” she said.

“Grass plants strip off the old roots and grow new ones.

But, just like with the top-growth, if plants are grazed before the plant has recovered and roots have been able to re-establish themselves, root growth is also going to be compromised to the point of suppression if plants are continually bitten before they have time to recover.”

So overgrazing not only harms the plants by suppressing their re-growth both on and under the surface of the soil, but also deprives it of nutrients those roots can add to its composition.

“This reduces the amount of organic matter in the soil, as it's the roots of plants that provide the most soil organic matter, not so much the litter above-ground,” Lindquist added.

“Plants that have not enough time to recover cannot put down as much litter as what's needed to protect and cool the soil. And plant populations can and will decrease in the stand.”

And that brings us to the problem of weeds.

“Weeds come up because of lack of competition from the grasses and other more desirable plant species,” she explained.

“But weeds especially are very likely to come up in areas... where bare-ground is present.

*Continued on Page 7...*

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Continued from Page 6...

"And what makes weeds so tough to get rid of, without resorting to herbicides, is that they tend to quickly take over with tiny seeds or anti-quality factors within the plants that force the animals to eat more of the over-utilized desirable plants and clear the way for more area for more of these weeds to flourish.

"It's a wicked negative feedback loop," she said.

Scientific evidence is pointing to increased average temperatures in the years and decades to come, which means hot and dry conditions will be more frequently experienced then before. That renders sound soil management practices even more important than they have been until now.

While management practices are vitally important, Mother Nature always has the final say over how the pastures and grasslands will perform in any particular season.

By: Mustafa Eric,  
Media Coordinator

Agriculture Financial Services Corporation

*For producers who might want to hedge their risks against droughts, the Moisture Deficiency Insurance offered by AFSC provides a number of options for pastures. AFSC website ([www.afsc.ca](http://www.afsc.ca)) under the insurance tab-perennial crop programs contains detailed information on the available options. More information is available at AFSC branch offices.*

## Do you have a project

involving design, prototype development, fabrication, modification, and/or repair? Maybe you have an idea but don't have the skill-set, tools or time to turn it into reality. Is it a machine needing modifications, overhaul and repair or a wood project like a tool shed, feed bunks, etc?

**I can help.** I am a semi-retired welder, farrier, blacksmith, carpenter, mechanic and farmer with a well equipped heated shop located 10 miles West of Olds. I enjoy custom designing, prototyping and fabrication. I am good at knowing what will work, problem solving, modifying and repairing things that don't work. I pay attention to quality and detail.

I don't have a personal project on the go this winter so I need someone to help me get my shop "fix".

**Sandy Loree** – GWFA & FFGA member

Phone: 403 586 1949

Email: [tlore@telusplanet.net](mailto:tlore@telusplanet.net)

## WCCCS II

2nd Western Canadian Cow-Calf Survey

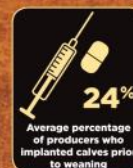
**TAKE THE SURVEY...**

*Share your numbers  
Compare your numbers*

**FALL/WINTER 2017/18**

**\$25**  
Gift Card  
Available for  
Completed  
Surveys!

## Some Findings from the 2014 Survey



- \* Only 24% had defined breeding season of 63 days or less
- \* 2/3 utilized extensive feeding for portion of winter feeding
- \* 47% tested their feed for quality

\*Based on 400 survey respondents with an average herd size of 200 cows

**GET PAID TO HELP UPDATE THESE NUMBERS WITH A \$25 GIFT CARD!**  
For more information visit: [www.wcccs.ca](http://www.wcccs.ca)

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## Bringing in Livestock Key to Rebuilding Soil



*Farm couple Cody Straza and Allison Squires will be integrating cattle onto their farm next year to improve the soil. | Jeremy Simes photo*

More farmers are starting to use livestock to help regenerate soils, which can reduce inputs and produce higher yields down the road.

They spoke about their livestock integration plans during the Western Canada Conference on Soil Health and Grazing held in Edmonton Dec. 5-7.

Cody Straza and Allison Squires have an organic grain farm near Wood Mountain, Sask., and aren't afraid to admit that they've degraded their soils by using rigid rotations and tilling green manure crops.

But now they want to rebuild the soil. They've begun cover cropping, seeding more diverse crops and instituting longer rotations.

However, they plan to go further by introducing cattle next year. "We can't keep doing what we've been doing," Straza said.

So they are partnering with a neighbouring rancher who will graze his cow-calf pairs on the couple's cover crops slated to be terminated.

They plan to see 10 acres grazed per day, and it'll all be done free of charge.

"We get our cover crops terminated for free and he gets all the free grazing," Straza said. "It's going to be a lot of trial and error this coming year. We're going to make mistakes but the goal is to improve from those mistakes."

But trial and error is part of the process to see what works and what doesn't, said Ray Archuleta, a soil scientist with the Social Science Society of

America.

"Bringing livestock into the situation really changes everything," he said, pointing to research that shows having cattle on land improves soil, as long as grasses aren't overgrazed and that the animals generally graze in tighter groups.

"The amount of fertilizer in every manure pie is incredible. You want that manure, hoof impact, cover and urine."

Ray Middleton, who farms near Morinville, Alta., knows first-hand the benefits of integrating livestock.

When he took over the farm, he decided to turn a section of it from forage to crop production. But when fierce winds and floods came in 2005, he soon realized he had made a mistake.

"We had three days of 100 km-h winds gusting to 120 km-h. It sheared a crop of borage off, just like you took a sand blaster to it," he said. "I did have reckless disregard of respect for the soil." So, he grew shelter belts and turned the section back into pasture for custom grazing.

"I never wanted livestock, but 4-H is like the gateway drug to farming livestock," he said with a chuckle. "Now, we're doing pasture-fed pigs."

Archuleta said he hopes more farmers adopt livestock into their operations, whether they buy their own or have custom grazers come in.

"The environment is really collaborative," he said. "When we can get them to mimic the buffalo and have that flexibility, we'll get quicker recoveries and even more cascading effects upwards."

By [Jeremy Simes](#), Western Producer (Jan. 4/18)

<https://www.producer.com/2018/01/bringing-livestock-key-rebuilding-soil/>

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### Staff

Interim Manager:  
**Jennifer Duckering**  
[manager@foothillsforage.com](mailto:manager@foothillsforage.com)  
Cell: (403) 560-0927

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