



GRASSROOTS NEWS & VIEWS

FFP Workshop at the M.D. of Willow Creek—Rachel McLean



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www.foothillsforage.com

April 2017

Chairman's Note

Spring has sprung, the grass is riz, I wonder where Foothills Forage is? (I'm not quite as poetic as Morrie Goetjen but I keep trying.)

Speaking of trying, I have just completed my first winter of swath grazing which came as a result of my attempt to solve a problem my neighbor was having.

Picture this: a field too wet to combine, an early frost followed by a few hot days, resulting in 73 acres of partially sprouted barley. Add to that, a creek running along the east side of the field and my cows just across the road, contemplating what is going to be on their winter feeding menu.

By providing a proposal to clean up the 'problem', a solar waterer, a solar powered electric fencer, $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of aircraft cable and some posts, the problem was transformed into a winter smorgasbord. This project came together thanks to a neighbor willing to try something new and input from various FFGA members and our nutritionist. Proof that teamwork can overcome almost any difficulty!



Foothills Forage just had it's AGM where Crystal MacKay, CEO of Farm and Food Care discussed how producers can be their own best advocates by building public trust and connecting through shared values. Tim Smith, FFGA's sponsored 2016 Nuffied Scholar, continued the social licence theme by sharing his research

topic Societal Recognition of Stewardship Practices That Provide Ecosystem Services.

Looking forward in 2017, we have a very full slate of events, workshops, projects, speakers, tours, and conferences to bring to our membership for a well-rounded learning experience.

In closing I would like to congratulate the newly elected FFGA board, and welcome our interim manager Jennifer Duckering. I also wish Laura Gibney an amazing year of happiness and good health for her family as she leaves us temporarily for the birth of her second child.

Cheers,

Sean LaBrie



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Bursary Winner: Marie Hettesheimer

I would like to sincerely thank the Foothills Forage & Grazing Association for choosing me to receive the chosen bursary to help support my continuing education and career in the agriculture industry. My name is Marie Hettesheimer and am currently enrolled in my last semester of my Agriculture Management Diploma majoring in production at Olds College.

I was born in Germany where my family operated a horse boarding facility and hay operation. From there we moved to Canada and have been involved heavily in a cropping operation, which was where I discovered my love for the cattle industry.

Growing up I always raised a few cattle of my own, I quickly realised I want this to be a part of my regular day to day which lead me to Olds College. I wanted to gain more knowledge and educate myself on everything from the finance aspects to



marketing and the hands-on production practices.

I cannot wait to use the skills I have learned at school and keep growing and expanding my knowledge about the industry and do what I love.

Thanks again to the Foothills Forage & Grazing Association for supporting the future generations.

- Marie Hettesheimer

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Press Release: Joel Salatin Becomes Editor of The Stockman Grass Farmer

The Stockman Grass Farmer is delighted to welcome Joel Salatin as Editor. With Joel's can-do solutions promoting local, regenerative food and profitable farming systems, The Stockman Grass Farmer will continue to serve as the informational foundation for a healthy planet and people through profitable grass-based livestock production.

Joel co-owns, with his family, Polyface Farms in Swoope, Virginia. Featured in the New York Times bestseller Omnivore's Dilemma and award-winning documentary Food Inc., the farm services more than 5,000 families, 50 restaurants, 10 retail outlets and a farmers' market with salad bar beef,

pigaerator pork, pastured poultry, and forestry products. When he's not on the road speaking, Joel is at home on the farm, keeping the callouses on his hands and dirt under his fingernails. He also found time to author ten books and write regularly for The Stockman Grass Farmer.

Members of Foothills Forage and Grazing Association, who are not subscribers, are invited to request a FREE sample issue, by calling 1-800-748-9808 or visiting www.stockmangrassfarmer.com.

The Stockman Grass Farmer was established in 1977 by Allan Nation, who spoke at several Canadian grazing conferences and workshops over the years.

Thank you for your support!



ROCKY VIEW COUNTY
Cultivating Communities

Jim Gerrish

3-Day Grazing School

June 12-14, 2017

Gem, AB

Whether you're a beginner, intermediate, or advanced grazer, this 3-day workshop will help you move to the next level. Key concepts of stocking rate, stock density, residual, intake, balancing use and recovery will all be covered in detail along with more advanced topics of year-round grazing and feed allocation. This combination of classroom and field sessions provides both the conceptual and practical application of Management-Intensive Grazing.



Includes classroom and field sessions!



Limited Space!

\$200/members, \$225/non-members

REGISTER: jimgerrishgrazing.eventbrite.ca

"Jim's experience includes over 20 years of beef-forage systems research and outreach while on the faculty of the University of Missouri. As well he has 20 years of managing a commercial cattle and sheep production on their family farm in northern Missouri. His research encompassed many aspects of plant-soil-animal interactions and provides foundation for many of the basic principles of Management-intensive Grazing."

-American Grazing Lands Services

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5 Forage Establishment Mistakes to Avoid



It's springtime and we are anxious to get on the land and get our new forage seeds in the ground. There are a few common mistakes made that limit the success of new forage seeds and future yields and quality.

1. Not Seeding New Forage Stands Often Enough

Many alfalfa-based stands are simply too old, resulting in huge losses of forage yield. Alfalfa yields are usually at their maximum during the first year or two following the establishment year and then decrease. By the third year, yields have often declined by about 15-20%, and possibly 35% by the fourth year. That is a lot of yield to give up! There are many benefits from alfalfa in a rotation in addition to the improved soil health and environment. Forage stand rotation decisions should be based on forage yield potential, not on the cost of re-establishment. Establishment costs are typically less than 8% of the total cost-of-production (COP) of hay, with the seed costs often less than 4%. Land and harvest costs per acre change little as yields decline, so those costs increase dramatically

on a lb of yield basis. Depending on where you farm in the province, the opportunity cost of land rental can represent over 40% of the COP. With high land and harvesting costs, lower yields cost much more than forage establishment costs. When in doubt, rotate!

2. Poor Packing Before and After the Drill

This is a big, but all too common mistake. Forage seed is very small, making good seed-to-soil contact essential for germination, particularly in dry soil conditions. A loose, lumpy seedbed dries out quickly, and lumps make the uniform emergence of young seedlings difficult. A firm, level, clod-free seedbed is very important for uniform seeding depth and good seed-to-soil contact. Avoid creating a soft, fluffy seedbed by deep tillage. Using a spike-tooth harrow before the drill loosens the soil rather than packing it. Soil should be firm enough at planting for a footprint to sink no deeper than 9 mm (3/8 inch). If necessary, pack before seeding, in addition to packing after the drill. Packing after seeding results in more rapid and even germination. Use press wheels or pull a packer behind the drill. Sprocket packers are preferable over smooth rollers to reduce the risk of crusting and to push any seed on the surface into the soil.

3. Neglecting Soil Fertility

Forage crops remove a lot of phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) and have high soil nutrient requirements. Alfalfa yields decline rapidly as soil tests drop below 12 ppm P and 120 ppm K. We are seeing more and more soil tests that are critically low in these nutrients, particularly K. Be sure to soil test and

accordingly. Suggested rates can be found at: www.omafra.gov.on.ca. Over the years, with our newer drills we have somehow lost our ability or our willingness to band starter fertilizer in new forage seedings. Starter fertilizer can be especially advantageous in stands where P fertility levels are low to medium. Ideally, MAP starter should be placed 2.5 cm (1 inch) below the seed. Additional fertilizer required can be broadcast and incorporated before seeding. If sulphur is required, sulphate can be applied at establishment or elemental sulphur applied the previous year.

4. Using Cheap Seed

Buying cheap forage seed is a poor way to save money. Significant performance differences exist between varieties. The cost of seed is only a very small percentage (typically < 4%) of the cost of producing forage. As land costs increase, the seed cost percentage decreases. The use of the best research proven forage varieties provides high yields of more persistent stands with better disease resistance and appropriate maturity. Using cheap seed has the potential to result in significant yield losses with more risk of disease and winterkill over the...

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.

...life of the stand. It takes very little extra yield to justify higher valued seed.

Certified seed sold under a variety name must meet specific requirements for germination and weed seed content. Forage seed may also be sold as "common seed" or as a "brand" that may be blends of different seed lots. Germination

and weed seed content requirements are less rigorous than for certified seed. Common seed has no assurance of characteristics such as disease resistance or winter hardiness. The performance of stands established using common seed is unpredictable and will vary from year to year. The use of high performance, proven varieties, rather than unknown brands or

common seed, is strongly suggested.

5. Poor Weed Control

Lack of weed control during the establishment period will impact yield and forage quality for the life of the stand. Perennial weeds should be eliminated before seeding. Herbicide control of broadleaf annual weeds at

establishment is especially important in direct seedings. Determine the optimum time of spraying by the stage of development of the new seedlings.

The risk of injury to alfalfa seedlings is greatly increased when 2,4-DB application is made outside of the first- to the third-trifoliate stage. 2,4-DB can suppress legume growth for a period of 2 – 3 weeks and severe injury can occur under drought or high temperatures. Uniform emergence as a result of good seedbed preparation and packing make it easier to properly time the herbicide application with reduced risk of legume injury.

Target the first-trifoliate stage, where weeds are smaller and easier to control. Grower experience suggests that injury to seedling alfalfa plants can be minimized when reducing the lowest labelled rate of 2,4-DB by 25%. A reduced rate may reduce the level of weed control.

By: OMAFRA

Source:

<http://fieldcropnews.com/2015/04/5-forage-establishment-mistakes-to-avoid/>



Visit the "Events" tab on:
www.foothillsforage.com
for more information

SPAIN & PORTUGAL AGRICULTURE TOUR JANUARY 13 - 28, 2018

Includes everything from sightseeing in Barcelona, castles, and palaces, to local farm visits producing vegetables, beef, field crops, purebred Spanish horses and olive oil, to shows, beaches, and performances all along the coast of Mediterranean Spain and Portugal.



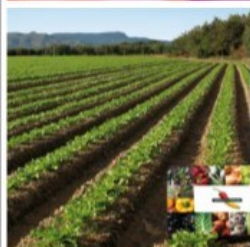
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Making Sense of Many Systems of Rotational Grazing

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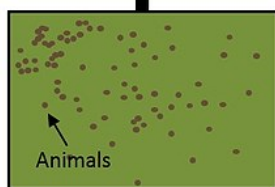
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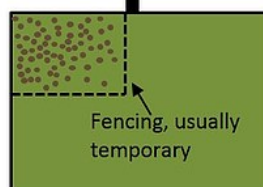
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Five minutes exploring the grazing literature is enough to be horribly confused about the many systems of livestock rotation. Each model has fervent devotees, and none is inherently right. The meaningful question is what level of rotation makes sense for your farm and life. That answer will almost certainly vary, by the day or over decades – to account for a weekend away, a poorly growing area, a desire to increase

Increasing Stocking Density, Increasing Frequency of Moves



Continuous Grazing
No Rotation



Basic Rotations



Intensive Rotational
Grazing

profitability, a problem with pink eye, kids to be kept busy, or any other of dozens of factors. Understanding the models as a continuum with trade-offs can be helpful in getting beyond the terminology and to the right decisions for you.

The main rotational grazing systems are distinct in two major ways. First, how tightly packed the animals are, defined as stocking density in animal units (AU) or pounds per acre (for ease, we are defining one animal unit as 1000 lbs, so 14 AU per acre equals 14,000 lbs/acre). Second, how often the cattle are moved, or, related how long they are in or out of a given field. The stocking density directly shapes how often the cattle must be moved, or rotated, to ensure they have sufficient nutrition.

Increasing Stocking Density

Increasing Frequency of Moves
At the core, each defined grazing system tweaks stocking density and rotation frequency. There are other differences, too, which we'll explore in a moment.

Deciding where you want to be on these continuums and which system or systems suit you requires

thinking hard about your goals and your limits.

Thinking about time commitments

For those working off the farm or otherwise very busy, perhaps the realistic option is to build permanent paddocks once and move the cattle quickly before and after work? Could you on weekends move them more frequently? Will being in the field mean being alone or can it be family time? Are others available to help? Does it make sense for you to invest in batt latches so livestock can move to an ungrazed field without assistance? Every farming operation takes a lot of time. Sometimes it's in bursts, when you're planting, harvesting, cutting hay, calving, or fixing machinery.

You make time for these demands because you have to. Intensifying rotation reduces these sporadic and intensive time demands while requiring more regular engagement with your animals and land. Doing a good job at more intensive rotational grazing means paying close attention to your soils, the forages, livestock performance, indicator species (earthworms, spiders, dung beetles, cricket and grasshoppers, pollinator insects, etc.), plant species diversity, wildlife and bird species diversity, and profitability. It's the trade-off of fixing machinery less and being out in the fields more that makes us argue that this...



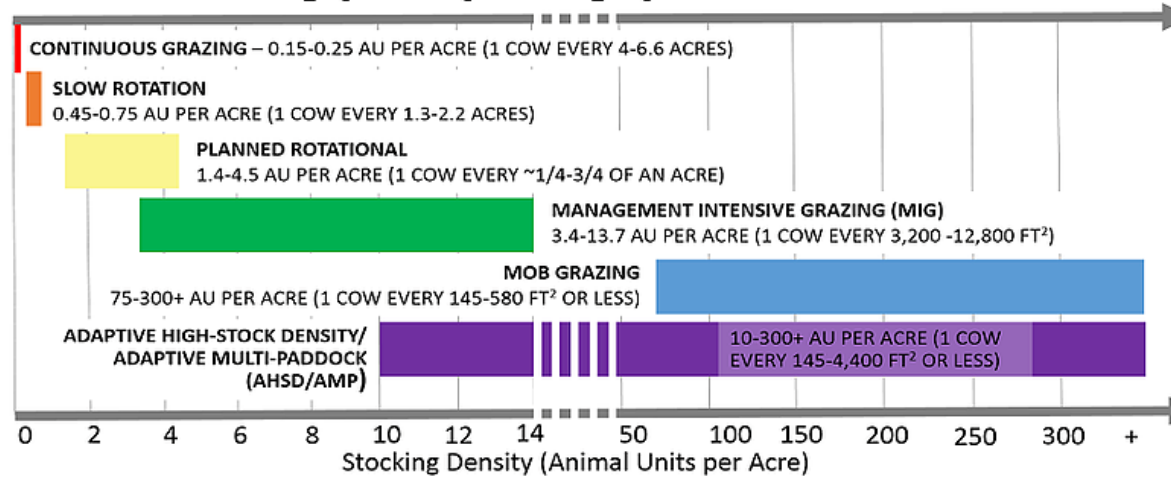
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This Publication is made possible by our two major funders - the Agriculture Opportunity Fund and Alberta Agriculture and Forestry.



Grazing Systems by How Tightly Packed the Animals Are



*Stocking Density calculated assuming 2 ton per acre dry matter (DM) forage production and that 1 animal unit (au) is 1000 lbs.

chemical weed and brush control
- soil erosion and harmful runoff
- drought and flood impact

TO THE LIVESTOCK Increased:

- utilization of forage on a year-round basis
- performance
- consistency in manure & urine application
- stocking rates over time (as biomass increases)

Continuous Grazing	Single pasture system where livestock have unrestricted access to all fields throughout the grazing season. There is no rotation of livestock.
Slow Rotational Grazing	Farm is divided into two or more pastures for livestock rotation. Livestock are moved occasionally from one pasture to another to allow for a degree of rest.
Planned Rotational Grazing	Farm is divided into 3 or more pastures for livestock rotation. Livestock are moved more frequently and intentionally to allow for rest.
Management Intensive Grazing (MIG)	A more formal and structured system than the first three. Farm is divided into multiple paddocks. Livestock are moved into paddocks when forage reaches a target height and removed when grazed down to a target height.
Mob Grazing	Involves grazing livestock at significantly higher stock densities per acre (generally 75,000 lbs/ac and higher). Paddocks and moves are designed to maintain desired high stocking densities. Multiple daily livestock moves are generally necessary. Farm is divided into many paddocks, often using temporary fencing.
Adaptive High-Stock Density (AHSD) / Adaptive Multi-Paddock (AMP)	Highly flexible or “adaptive” system that allows grazer to adjust daily to conditions. While MIG and Mob rely on key metrics to trigger a move or establish a paddock’s size, AHSD/AMP focuses on helping farmers develop observation skills and instincts to continuously experiment, learn, and adapt. The farm is divided into multiple paddocks with temporary fencing built to a size appropriate for nutritional needs of the livestock. Stocking densities can vary widely depending on conditions and needs of the grazer.

...is a more enjoyable form of agriculture.

Those new to rotational grazing may assume that fence building and moving cattle will be difficult or time consuming. Experienced graziers take anywhere from a couple of hours to a day to set their fences. Livestock quickly become trained so that most moves take between five and fifteen minutes.

Changes to expect as rotations intensify:

TO THE LAND

Increased:

- forage biomass
- soil organic matter
- soil aggregation
- soil microbial populations
- water infiltration
- water quality
- plant species diversity and complexity
- plant brix and nutritive value
- pollinator insects, birds and wildlife

Reduced:

- fertilizer needs
- need for mechanical or

- ability to support multi-species grazing

Reduced:

- external and internal parasites
- common disease issues
- need for antibiotic treatment
- need for administered hormone treatment
- supplementation – hay and/or other feedstuffs
- Livestock costs of production (COP)

TO YOUR LIFESTYLE

Increased:

- investment in fencing and watering systems
- time spent interacting with the livestock and observing them and the land
- observational skills
- net return per acre
- enjoyment (in our humble opinions)
- ability to capture available market premiums

Reduced:

- need for equipment, fertilizer, supplemental feed and hay
- labor needed for operating equipment, maintaining equipment, haying and feeding

By: The Pasture Project

Source: <http://pastureproject.org/pasture-management/rotational-grazing-systems/>

SOIL SCHOOL

featuring

Nicole Masters



Soil Health: The Bottom Lines

An introduction to soil health on a new level and the bottom line about what you need to know for healthy soils.

Topics covered:

- How to get maximum yield from your land
- Reduce costs while increasing production
- How to reduce pests, weeds, & disease
- The role of microbiology
- Sunlight Capture
- How to build the carbon cycle
- Biological soil indicators
- Weeds as indicators
- Benefits of proper soil management

TICKETS AVAILABLE ONLINE:
soilschools.eventbrite.ca

Cost

Member Admission: \$65
Non-Member: \$75

Questions?

Call 403-995-9466 or
manager@foothillsforage.com

*Note: This is a similar agenda to the one presented in Carstairs in June 2016

WHEN
May 23, 2017
9am-4pm

WHERE
Claresholm
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& Outdoor
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