



**FOOTHILLS FORAGE
AND GRAZING ASSOCIATION**

Innovation, education and regenerative agriculture

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GRASSROOTS NEWS & VIEWS FEBRUARY 2020

Treasurer's Note - Ben Campbell

Howdy Folks!

Hopefully everyone is in the routine of winter and enjoying some time off and time with family. We certainly are at our place here. It's been a bit of a hectic year to date. We bought the home quarter and moved into my Grandparent's house (now it's my house, but it sure doesn't feel like it yet). We have 4th generation Campbell boys terrorizing the neighbourhood. Renovations of a very old farm yard abound and changes are being made. When you buy overpriced land, you have to leverage the factors that caused it to be overpriced if you want to pay it off. So now there are a few non-farm enterprises up and running. We also have a few non-bovine animals mucking about in the summer too. I've heard there are a lot of cows paid for on the backs of pigs and chickens (and nurse's salaries). We are rotationally grazing 4 species on the ranch. More if you count the hawks and ravens that follow the chickens around!

We had a badger raise 5 cubs on the farm this summer and she's still out there digging holes in January! I can only imagine the nightmare of some darned gophers waking up to that! I know most people would tell me to shoot them, but we have, what seems like, 4 million gophers. So badgers, coyotes, foxes and hawks making a full time living on those gophers seems like a pretty good idea to me! I'm yet to see badger holes older than a few seasons, they seem to fill themselves in. They are strictly carnivorous so as soon as the gophers are gone, they'll be gone. Badgers have been here for thousands of years and are part of a natural grassland ecosystem. If I poison and shoot them all, and all my neighbours do too, then where the heck will they go? Plus, they seem to be the ONLY effective way to keep pocket gophers at bay, which spend almost all their time underground in shallow tunnels only a few inches below the surface.

FFGA Manager Laura and I attended a government consultation in Edmonton on January 27th, and many members attended sessions

across the province in the last few weeks. The government is considering making changes to the current Agricultural Research and Extension model so they hosted several consultation sessions for public & stakeholder input. FFGA is one group, with several more like us across the province that provides applied research and extension (think field trials, field days/tours, grazing conferences, grazing schools etc.). The common themes we heard from our peers was to work together as farmer organizations, academia and the government with some input from industry. There was an emphasis on long term, stable funding and research goals that don't change with new governments and the flexibility and independence to choose our own direction to some degree. It seemed very encouraging and the Minister of Agriculture was in attendance.

Our AGM is March 18, and it looks like it will be a fairly informative and entertaining session. Please come out and join us! Also, we have several director's terms ending which means there will be vacancies on the board. If you would like to nominate someone, please feel free to send an email to our manager Laura any time. Nominations can be sent now, rather than on the spot at the AGM and it gives people time to think about it! Obviously you don't need to be an expert to be on the board, otherwise I never would have joined! It's a really wonderful learning opportunity and despite what the rest of them say, they really are a fun group to hang out with!

Thanks for
supporting
local and
sustainable
agriculture!

*Ben
Campbell*

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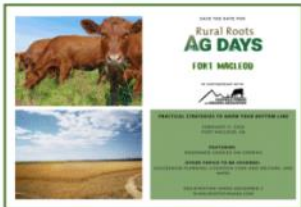
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Three great chances to see Jim Gerrish!!

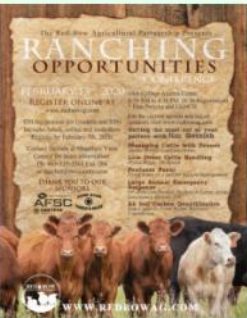
Rotational Grazing, Mob Grazing, MiG, AMP Grazing, Holistic Planned Grazing, Ultra-high Stock Density Grazing, Grazing Tall, Pasture Management, Economics...what does it all mean???

Jim Gerrish is back in Alberta this February as a feature speaker at these great events!!



Rural Routes Ag Days

- Tuesday February 11th at the Fort Macleod Community Hall
- Jim will present for 1.5 hours
- Register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/rural-roots-ag-days-fort-macleod-february-11-tickets-84170477163>



Ranching Opportunities

- Thursday February 13th at Olds College Alumni
- Jim will present for 1 hour and host a 45 breakout session
- Topics include: Getting the most out of your pasture & economics of grazing
- Register at <https://www.redbowag.com/ranching-opportunities>



Grazing Workshop

- Friday February 14th at Wheatland County Office
- Jim will present all day and cover a broad range of topics from Pasture Management to Economics
- Register at <https://jimgerrishwheatland2020.eventbrite.ca>

On the Cover: Callie with the Canadian Beef Centre of Excellence prepares a beef tenderloin chili at Ladies Livestock Lessons. Photo by Sonja Bloom

Canadian Agricultural Partnership

Farm Water Supply

The Farm Water Supply Program shares costs relating to enhancements of a producer's on-farm water supply management, arising from a Long-Term Water Management Plan (LTWMP).

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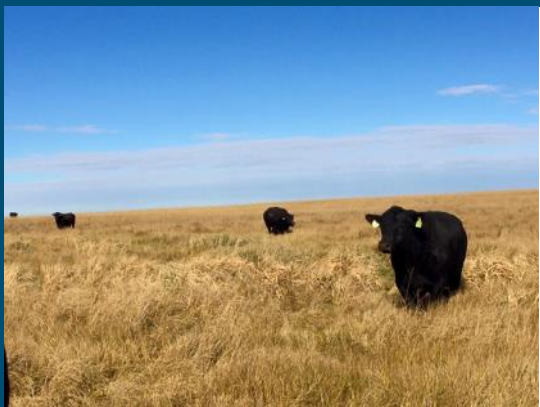
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- Standard incentives that support new/expanded water source development
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Visit https://cap.alberta.ca/CAP/program/FARM_WATER for more details

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Develop a plan for the year ahead



I'm glad the days are starting to be a fraction longer, even though it's not much more yet. While I wait for some daylight, I can usually be found reading early in the morning. I'm certainly a morning person, just ask my wife. There is no other good reason to be up at 4 a.m. this time of year, especially if I don't have to be. I am though, trying to catch up on reading while it's a bit easier to stay inside.

There is always something to be learned, reviewed, or perhaps occasionally unlearned. I like to take a second look at old ways of doing things and reading very old agriculture books. You would be surprised to learn that things that most would think are new ideas are sometimes over a century old.

As new ideas or innovations come to light, there is always somewhat of an incentive to evaluate and try them. Quite often they came about because of some new technology or product availability. Fads come and go, but the ideas that make the most sense and make a positive impact on the bottom line keep coming back and stay around until the next short-lived fad displaces them for a while.

In a depressed market, input costs will make the difference of using black or red ink. It's usually not the time to do anything that will raise the cost of production. It's usually a smart idea to try and keep production costs as low as possible even on good years. If you can make money on low years, then you have even a greater chance of making really good money on good years. A relative used to tell me not to get caught up in the game, but stick to what works year in, year out. There is a lot of truth in that statement.

Letting the livestock feed themselves and having enough acres available to supply that forage is a good place to start. Rarely, can you feed livestock cheaper than they can. The less grazable forage

you have available, the more feed that will be needed. All feed is input costs. You control these costs. Instead of baling more hay or buying hay or feed, are there more acres that can be grazed? Do you have some cropland, especially marginal cropland, that might be better off in forages?

Long rotations used to be the norm. Fields might be rotated from corn, to soybeans, to wheat. The wheat would often have perennial forages seeded with it, especially timothy, and then frost seeded with red clover. After the wheat harvest, a late season clipping was usually taken for cow hay, the next year was just hay or hay then grazing before going back to corn again. Four fields rotated this way would always ensure a harvest of each crop every year. This diversity was not only good for the soil, but it didn't put all the eggs in one basket either.

I tend to sit back and think hard about the year that we just left behind and do my best to develop a good plan for the year we are about to tackle. I spent too much in 2019. I know I did. But I also believe in being prepared and the memory of last winter and spring is still too fresh on the mind. I spent money on new winter-feeding pads and more waterers — money well spent so far. I try and remain optimistic, especially with the livestock markets, and I do believe that they will cycle back up. Some would say that this might be a good time to expand; I would tend to agree. That could pay dividends if the market becomes bullish again.

Whether you are grazing stockpiled forages, feeding hay or other feed, some winter days are more challenging than others for both the producer and the livestock. I'm not complaining about the milder days we have been having, but there is a lot of winter to get through yet. I'm sure that we will get our share of snow and wintery weather. It always surprises me how snow is usually no issue for most grazing livestock. If the quality of the stockpiled forage is good, then they will go after it, even if hay is provided. The quality of good stockpiled forage can easily be better than hay.

Ice, or enough ice to prevent grazing, is probably the number one reason to pull up stakes and move to some hay or other feed. Deep snow is next. How deep is too deep? That depends on two things: the livestock grazing it and the amount of

forage present. Experienced animals, those that have done it before, won't even hesitate; they know where dinner is and go after the good stuff. If you watch the younger, less experienced animals, they tend to eat first where others have been eating and then they soon figure it all out. Smaller ruminants, especially sheep, tend to have less issue with snow and are quite good at digging it out with their hooves. I've observed deer doing the same thing; they also are quite good in digging up turnip bulbs out of frozen ground and have been hitting some of mine quite hard. The amount of forage present becomes more critical as the amount of snow increases; the more forage present, the easier it is to get.

The quality of that stockpiled forage must be good. Energy, if anything, is usually the shortfall with protein second if too much mature forage is included. Energy can be a challenge. Growing and lactating animals may need supplementation. Winter annuals that are left will do a better job of maintaining enough energy and protein for those animals needing more as long as they last or can even be grazed depending on soil conditions.

Most producers are feeding hay or other feed by this time of year and there is certainly nothing wrong with that. There are, on the other hand, producers that want to reduce the amount of fed products and would rather move temporary fences than get a tractor out. I'm running out of stockpiled forage and will soon move to hay. I really needed those late summer rains that I didn't get. That shortfall impacts grazing now.

Permanent winter-feeding areas should ideally be in an area with some wind break, a good winter watering source, on a well-drained soil/site, and where runoff and manure/waste feed can be managed. This means away from water bodies or with adequate buffers and usually with rock or concrete pads to feed on. Mud, along with wet cold weather, really increases energy needs. Muddy, stressful conditions should be avoided when possible. Feeding on rock padded areas or grazing sufficiently heavy stands of stockpiled forage usually are adequate.

Author: Victor Shelton, NRCS State Agronomist/Grazing Specialist. Original article found at: <https://www.ocj.com/2020/01/develop-a-plan-for-the-year-ahead/>

Triticale attributes make for sound feed option



Photo: Practical Farmers of Iowa.

Perennial forage acres are declining across Western Canada and because of the expense of replacing them, farmers leave them in longer and the stands become less productive over time.

“Those have to be replaced with something and that provides opportunity for an annual forage like triticale or barley or corn,” said forage specialist Vern Baron of the Agriculture Canada Research Centre at Lacombe, Alta.

The attributes of triticale were discussed at an international symposium held in Lethbridge July 16-17.

Baron’s research includes studying the value of triticale as an annual forage or pasture crop. In Western Canada, it is often used for swath grazing or in annual mixtures for grazing.

Winter feed in Western Canada costs about \$3.30 per head per day. That includes the cost of growing, processing, storing and delivering it to livestock. Producers need to make sure they have at least 200 days’ worth of feed in a region with limited days of actual growth.

Triticale could offer an economical choice, provided it is correctly managed.

For swath grazing, it could be planted in mid-June and swathed in mid-September. The cows can graze it from early November until March.

Barley was the first crop studied in swath-grazing research and it was found that yields declined as planting was delayed to accommodate swath grazing. Triticale was less sensitive and could be planted from early spring to early June and could still be swathed in September without a yield loss. It added resilience to the system.

Five years of research at Lacombe monitored the costs of using barley, corn and triticale in swaths.

The crops cost about the same to grow but the daily cost of triticale made it cheaper to feed at about \$1.20 per head

consumed when the cows grazed on their own in winter rather than having feed hauled to them.

Different varieties of triticale make a difference and some exhibited lower digestibility and low acceptance. It is a waste if the cows won’t eat it.

Researchers also learned mixtures of winter and spring triticale have an advantage as a complementary forage source.

Triticale also needs different management.

“Triticale has not been treated for its attributes and the controls have usually been barley or corn. Harvests have occurred when barley and corn should occur, not triticale,” he said.

If winter triticale is planted in August or September, the forage quality is equivalent to fall rye grass. It has high sugar and high fibre digestibility. The crop is also less susceptible to diseases that plague barley.

Triticale silage is another option but needs to be treated differently than barley to take advantage of dry matter yield.

Triticale starch accumulation is slower than barley and if left until there is 30 to 40 percent dry matter, there will be more starch and digestible fibre available.

Overall, it is a good addition to a forage plan.

“Spring and winter triticale planted alone or in mixture can extend grazing season, summer, fall and winter,” he said.

“For triticale, timing of harvest is relative to percent dry matter, starch and digestibility has to be considered in production systems in order for them to be successful,” he said.

Triticale grain has also been studied. It out-yields other cereal grains in arid and marginal lands and is a suitable feed for monogastrics and ruminants, said Jayakrishnan Nair, a ruminant nutritionist with Agriculture Canada at the Leth-

bridge Research Centre. Triticale has more crude protein and starch than rye, but it is lower than wheat. The crude protein and amino acid balance is higher than corn and provides good value when it is added to the diet.

bridge Research Centre.

The fibre content is higher than corn but lower than barley.

The structure of the grain is similar to rye so it has to be processed to release the starch in the same way as corn and barley. Steam flaking releases the starch and improves digestibility and increases energy value so it is close to corn in feed value.

When fed to dairy cows, milk production was higher but the weight gain did not change when compared to other grains.

Sheep trials showed the grain did not need to be processed and animals gained well.

It is also good in swine rations and can be added to the diet because of the higher protein, digestibility and good dry matter intake.

“For non-ruminants, the higher protein is a big plus and so in diets containing triticale for non-ruminants, the protein source, like soybean meal, can be reduced,” he said.

Dried distillers grains derived from triticale showed a protein content higher than corn and fibre content comparable to other grain DDGs.

The inclusion rate for pigs is of five to 10 percent triticale DDGs but higher rates adversely affect performance.

Broilers can handle 10 to 15 percent DDGs in their diet, with added enzymes, without adverse effects.

Author: Barbara Duckworth with the Western Producer. Original article can be found at: <https://www.producer.com/2019/08/triticale-attributes-make-for-sound-feed-option/>.

Article published August 8, 2019.

The importance of getting quality colostrum



Photo: Pixaby

While colostrum from the dam is best, there are other options for emergencies.

The cow's first milk is vital to the newborn calf's survival. Calves that obtain adequate colostrum soon after birth stay healthier than calves that are slow to suckle or don't get enough.

"I have been working with many critical-care newborns and this is why I am interested in colostrum," says Dr. Lisa Gamsjaeger.

Gamsjaeger is a large animal veterinarian and currently a PhD student with Dr. Claire Windeyer at the University of Calgary's faculty of veterinary medicine. Windeyer has been researching topics around newborn calves for several years.

Gamsjaeger says that it can be difficult to fight diseases that could have been prevented with enough high-quality colostrum as soon as possible.

"This is because the calf is born without any antibodies," she says. The maternal antibodies from colostrum provide the calf with passive, or temporary, immunity against many of the infections it may soon

encounter.

"Colostrum also contains helpful cells and antimicrobial peptides, which are defense mechanisms that help protect the calf. In Canada, many producers calve in winter so the two main components that are crucial are the antibodies and the fat. The high level of fat in colostrum fuels the brown fat in the calf immediately, which provides instant energy and enables him to keep warm, and prevent hypothermia and frostbite. Colostrum at cow body temperature provides some warmth as well," she explains.

The calf also needs to pass meconium — the dark-coloured sticky material that was in his intestines at birth. Ingesting colostrum stimulates gut motility and

helps it pass the meconium, Gamsjaeger says. Once the colostrum is coming through the gastrointestinal tract, feces change from brown to yellow.

In cold weather, if a calf doesn't nurse quickly, it chills quickly. If its mouth gets cold, it can't suckle.

"The calf's ability to absorb antibodies may also be decreased; there is less blood flowing to the gut," Gamsjaeger says.

When cold, the calf's energy is directed towards vital organs such as heart, lungs and kidneys. That leaves less oxygen-rich blood servicing the gut to help absorb all the important ingredients in the colostrum, says Gamsjaeger.

Getting high-quality colostrum

Even though producers know that calves need to have colostrum soon after birth, there are still high numbers of calves that don't get enough.

"Immunoglobulin levels of 24 grams per litre or higher is adequate. Levels below that have been associated with increased risk of disease and death. About one-third of all calves don't achieve adequate transfer of passive immunity in Western Canada."

Hard winters or inadequate nutrition for the cow may hinder production of high-quality colostrum, leaving it lower in nutrients and antibodies.

Sometimes the producer doesn't find the newborn calf quickly enough, and doesn't know whether it suckled, or suckled soon enough. Gamsjaeger says the calf should have the first feeding within two hours of birth to transfer enough of the antibodies and nutrients, and stay warm. This is the optimum time for absorbing antibodies directly through the gut wall and into the blood and lymph systems. After about six hours the calf has lost half of the capacity to absorb antibodies.

"Every calf is different. Some lose that ability sooner. It depends on whether it was an easy birth or how much stress the calf has suffered. In the average calf, ability to absorb any

(Continued on page 7)

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2020 Annual General Meeting

Featuring Keynote Speaker
Danielle Smith



**MARCH 18, 2020 | 11:45 AM
HIGHWOOD MEMORIAL
CENTRE IN HIGH RIVER AB**

- Lunch served at 12:00pm
- AGM Business Meeting will begin at 12:45pm
- Keynote Address from Danielle Smith to begin at 2:30pm
- Cost - \$40.00 for FFGA Member
\$60.00 for Non Members

Are you interested in joining the
Foothills Forage & Grazing Association
Board of Directors? Email
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more details!

***Please note, you must be a member in good standing to vote during the Business Meeting.
Memberships can be purchased at the door (cheque or cash only) or online at
www.foothillsforage.com/membership***

Please visit <https://ffgaagm2020.eventbrite.ca> to register
before March 13, 2020.

(Continued from page 5)

antibodies from the gut is completely gone after about 24 hours,” says Gamsjaeger.

Colostrum still has benefits after that period. The calf can use some of the other ingredients for a longer period, including some of the defense mechanisms that fight bacteria locally within the gut.

In a natural situation, the calf nurses the dam frequently and is getting what is left of the colostrum she produced as it is gradually replaced by incoming milk. The passive immunity gained by the calf from the dam may last a few weeks or a few months, depending on the quality and quantity of colostrum ingested, management factors and stresses suffered by the calf.

Colostrum substitutes

Colostrum from the cow’s own dam, or another cow on the same operation, is best. The herd’s cows pass on antibodies.

“We spend money to vaccinate cows (such as pre-calving scours vaccines) and we want those antibodies to get into their calves. The antibodies in that colostrum will also be specific to diseases on your own farm — what the cows have been exposed to every day in that environment,” she says.

Twins and calves that had to be pulled are most at risk for not getting enough colostrum. Dr. Jennifer Pearson, who is also working with Windeyer, found that 25 per cent of calves that had difficult births didn’t get enough antibodies.

Calves from heifers also might not get enough colostrum, either because they don’t have the quantity and quality as mature cows, or because they’re slower to mother their calves. Sick cows may also have poor-quality colostrum, she adds.

If a calf is unable to nurse and a producer can’t obtain colostrum from the cow, there are commercially available alternatives. Gamsjaeger doesn’t recommend buying colostrum from dairies. Beef cow colostrum averages 150 grams of im-

munoglobulin per litre, compared to 50 grams of immunoglobulin in dairy colostrum.

“Beef calves are often smaller than dairy calves and their stomach is smaller. They can’t handle three or four litres of colostrum in one feeding like we sometimes give dairy calves. Dairy colostrum won’t give adequate protection to the newborn beef calf. It’s almost impossible to give a large enough amount to a beef calf to achieve adequate immunity.”

Dairy colostrum also presents a biosecurity risk, especially if it isn’t pasteurized.

“You may have increased risk for transmitting Johne’s disease, BVD, salmonella and other diseases that may be present in the dairy herd,” says Gamsjaeger.

The best option is to use colostrum from a beef cow in your own herd. Gamsjaeger says it will keep in the refrigerator for 24 hours, and a year in the freezer.

Some commercial colostrum replacements are good, says Gamsjaeger, while others are inadequate. She recommends checking the label. Look for a product with 18 per cent fat or higher and a good immunoglobulin concentration.

“The higher the better, because then you can give less volume and the calf will still feel a little hungry.”

The colostrum replacement will provide necessary antibodies and some energy to stimulate the calf to seek more food. The calf should get up to nurse the dam after consuming the colostrum. But if the calf consumes two to 2.5 litres, it might not feel like suckling again soon, Gamsjaeger says.

Some products available in Canada contain 100 grams or more of immunoglobulin per bag. A producer might choose a different product depending on whether the goal is to completely replace or supplement the dam’s colostrum. For a complete replacement, Gamsjaeger calculated that a 100-

pound calf would need 400 grams total to receive adequate immunoglobulin transfer.

Assessing colostrum quality

A person can get a rough idea about colostrum by its weight, colour and thickness. The more fat and protein it contains, the thicker and more yellow it may be.

Tests can provide an accurate assessment. Gamsjaeger and her colleagues have preliminary results from a project measuring colostrum quality on-farm.

“On-farm, we can use the Brix refractometer, used commonly to test dairy colostrum. For beef cattle, however, the cut points for good-quality colostrum are not well-established. People often use dairy values (about 22 per cent), which is considered good in dairy but not sufficient for beef cows,” says Gamsjaeger.

Gamsjaeger sets colostrum cut points for beef cows at 26 per cent with the Brix. Anything higher, with immunoglobulin concentrations of 125 or more, is good-quality beef colostrum. A calf would have to drink three to 3.5 litres within 12 to 24 hours, she adds, which should be easily achievable with a beef calf.

Another option is a hand-held refractometer. A good one runs \$100 to \$150.

“You put a drop of colostrum on it and hold it against the light and look into the small keyhole to see what percentage you get. There are also digital ones that give you the result in numbers so you don’t have to look through a little hole,” she explains.

Author: Heather Smith Thomas with Canadian Cattlemen. Original article can be found at <https://www.canadiancattlemen.ca/features/the-importance-of-getting-quality-colostrum/>

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Cows and Chaos webinar series back in 2020

The Cows and Chaos - Feed, Forage and Management Strategies webinar series gets underway Thursday, January 30, 2020 at 1 pm.

This edition of the series will be covering topics producers face in late winter and early spring - from maintaining stored forage to this year's calving season and making the most out of your livestock on pasture.

Barry Yaremco, beef and forage specialist at the Alberta Ag-Info Centre, hosts the January 30 webinar. He will be looking at what it takes to ensure the cow herd is set for calving and rebreeding.

Upcoming topics and registration links:

- January 30 - [third trimester and lactation rations](#)
- February 6 - [maintaining stored forage quality over time and the economics](#)
- February 13 - [public and stakeholder engagement - getting our story out](#)

- February 20 - [general grazing strategies](#)
- February 27 - [finding acres to run cattle - creative thinking](#)
- March 5 - [market outlook](#)
- March 12 - [utilizing annuals - cocktail crops](#)
- March 19 - [utilizing annuals - corn](#)

Webinars in this now weekly series will be available on AF's YouTube channel under the [Cows and Chaos - Feed, Forage and Management Strategies playlist](#). Each webinar will be uploaded to the site the week following the broadcast.

The series is presented by a team from Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, forage and research associations and the livestock industry.

For more information, contact the Alberta Ag-Info Centre: [310-FARM \(3276\)](#)

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2020 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

DUE BY JANUARY 31, 2020

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T1V 0H3

Annakah Drew

Seeking Summer Internship

Hello, my name is Annakah and I'm 19 years old from Quebec. I'm in college currently studying farm management and as part of my program we do an internship from May to August. I worked last summer in the Black Diamond area and am very interested in coming back to western Canada for my internship this summer! I have experience with cattle, as well as some other animals, and basic knowledge when it comes to running machinery. I am very interested in working with beef cattle. I don't mind what location, accommodations would be greatly appreciated! If anyone is interested or know someone who might be, you can contact me by email at annakah.drew@mail.mcgill.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.

This Publication is made possible by our major funder—Alberta Agriculture and Forestry.



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