

Fall Agriculture



Supplement to
Shellbrook Chronicle | Spiritwood Herald

Trade, climate top ag sector election issues

By Jordan Twiss

With election night less than three weeks away, and two leaders' debates slated for next week, Saskatchewan producers may still be wondering if agriculture, and the challenges that the industry faces, will ever make it onto any party's agenda.

For his part, though, Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association CEO Ryder Lee believed from the outset of the federal campaign that the industry would have to work hard to get agriculture on the radar of the parties.

"The big thing for us is getting agriculture even acknowledged, along with the things that we want to talk about," he told the *Chronicle*, arguing that a lack of focus on agriculture reduces it to an afterthought in the minds of most Canadians.

"Prioritizing and funding trade expansion and improvement always needs to be talked about it. It can't be taken for granted," he added.

On trade, Lee sees a number of issues that cattle producers would like to see any party – regardless of its political stripes – address in its election platform. These range from the obvious in repairing the flow of exports to China, to finalizing and taking full advantage of international trade deals like the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), The Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), or the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA).

Along with realizing the full potential of existing trade accords, Lee says producers would also like to see whichever party forms government push for more

consistent trade rules and regulations worldwide.

"Cattle and pork both face challenges getting approval for exports for the EU for our big processing plants, because they do some food safety interventions that the EU doesn't allow," he said, listing carcass washes as an example.

Explaining that the Canadian industry won't abandon these practices, which he says are proven to improve both the product and overall food safety, just to ship some product to the EU, Lee says producers would like the EU to recognize its own science on the matter.

"If it's good enough for Canadian consumers, it should be good enough for EU consumers," he said.

While Lee hadn't seen the full platforms of any party at the time of his conversation with the *Chronicle*, he said parties need to act as champions for the issues that are important to the agriculture industry, and that the Cattleman's Association would work with both the government and the opposition to get things done.

Aside from trade, Lee says he'd like to see the next government focus on making Canada more competitive, investing in science and research, and improving existing programs, such as the tax referral program.

"On a lot of things, there isn't a lot of disagreement. It's whether it's high enough up the priority list," he said.

One issue that seems to be high on the priority list of all parties is climate change. Here, Lee says the government of the day must listen to the story that cattlemen have to tell, rather than just blindly accepting the notion that "beef is bad."

"We've got a great story of improving our efficiency, of making the soil

healthy, of taking care of habitat for animals," he said. "We want to have that conversation, and make sure that policies aren't made that don't consider all the good that happens."

While mostly in agreement with Lee, Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan president Todd Lewis laments that many of the challenges producers face going into the upcoming federal contest are the same ones that plagued them in the 2015 campaign.

Some, he notes, have even persisted for far longer, with seemingly no clear remedy in sight.

"Rail transportation has been an ongoing issue for decades, and we have seen some improvement, but we're asking all parties to consider rail transportation, and infrastructure investment – be it in actual railroads or port facilities in western Canadian ports at Prince Rupert and Vancouver – to improve capacity and ensure that we have efficient grain movement," he said.

On climate change, Lewis says that the Saskatchewan government has APAS' support when it comes to the challenge of the Liberal federal government's carbon tax. He adds that the province should have jurisdiction over any carbon pricing models going forward, because it has a better understanding of Saskatchewan's agriculture industry, and the measures producers are taking to reduce their carbon footprints.

Far from arguing that climate change isn't an issue, or that governments shouldn't take action, Lewis says he just wants all parties to understand that the agriculture industry has been, and can continue to be, part of the solution, rather than part of the problem.

"We produce more pounds of meat and bushels of grain with a lower carbon

footprint than ever before," he said.

Turning to the always touchy subject of China, Lewis says he was encouraged by the appointment of Dominic Barton as ambassador to China, because Barton has a strong understanding of agriculture's role in the Canadian economy, and of the importance of trade.

He adds that he wants to see where all parties stand on ongoing trade issues, not just with China, but also with other problematic trading partners like India and Italy.

Lewis also wants to know what the parties' platforms will offer producers who have been negatively impacted by barriers to trade, such as China's ongoing ban of Canadian canola.

"We need to see a good plan in place to support agriculture, if need be, to get us through these trade disruptions," he said.

Noting that there are a number of key issues this election that are more tied to the agriculture sector than people might initially realize, Lewis says the most notable is the question of immigration.

With most work in the agriculture industry being seasonal in nature, labour shortages in the sector can be common and chronic. To fill these shortages, employers in the industry rely heavily upon temporary foreign workers.

"It would especially help agriculture if we get the right programs in place that allow these workers to come in," Lewis said. "We want to have the doors open so these people can become Canadian citizens as well."

Given agriculture's sheer scale in Canada (and Saskatchewan), Lewis says it's important for the general public, and for the parties, to realize that agriculture, and the agri-food industry, is the largest non-governmental employer in the nation.

What's more, Lewis says that agriculture doesn't end at the farm gate. Toronto, he notes, is one of the biggest centres in North America for food processing.

"Agriculture really does have long-reaching effects on the Canadian economy," he said. "Good support for agriculture is support for Canada."

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footprint than ever before," he said. "We want to see the parties recognize that, and the provinces should be

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Winter feeding plans start with evaluating feed resources

By Alicia Sopatyk, PAg,
Regional Livestock Specialist, Tisdale

In many parts of the province, forage supplies are low; however, there are several options for winter rations to strategically feed to meet your livestock's changing needs. It all starts with a good look at the feed stack to determine if you have the quantity and quality of forage to get you through any circumstance. Doing so provides an opportunity to match the feeds with the needs of your livestock, avoid over or under feeding and purchase supplements before potential price increases.

Time to pull out the weigh scale – for your livestock, but also your bales. Knowing how much your livestock weigh will help determine how much feed they will physically need. On average, beef cows will consume 2.5 per cent of their body weight in feed on a dry matter basis; a 1400 pound cow will eat approximately 35 pounds of dry matter. If your bales are 15 per cent moisture, you will need to feed 41.5 pounds of hay on an as fed basis to reach the goal of 35 pounds of dry matter. Keeping this in mind, you would need 4,150 pounds of hay (at 15 per cent moisture) for 100 head per day, or 830,000 pounds (376.5 MT) for 200 days of winter feeding. Knowing this, look at the quantity of feed you have available. Get an accurate average weight on your bales as they come off the field and the tonnage of silage as it



Feed sample ready to be sent for testing.

enters the pit. Does the quantity of feed match the physical quantity required by your livestock?

Next, we need to look at the quality of the forage. Unfortunately, visual analysis alone isn't enough to determine the quality of the feed. Feed testing provides specific values that can be cross referenced with your animal's requirements and referenced back to the quantity available to complete a winter feeding plan. Work with your nutritionist or Regional Livestock and Feed Extension Specialist to select the appropriate feed test package and sampling information. We

have compiled a list of laboratories that do feed testing. If other factors such as mycotoxins, nitrates and sulphates are a concern, those can also be tested for on an as-needed basis.

Nutrition is a factor you as a producer can control. Managing and planning your winter feeding period requires knowledge of your feed inventory both in terms of quantity and quality, an understanding of your animal's requirements at different stages of production, and some leeway with regards to length and severity of the winter feeding period and feed waste. The protein and energy requirements of a beef cow in good condition coming off pasture at five months pregnant, for example, are vastly different from a cow that is eight months pregnant. It is costly to overfeed the less pregnant cow like she

is heavily pregnant, especially if weather is good and even more so when supplies are limited. Take a close look at your feed stack and feed test results to prioritize what feeds are best suited to meet your livestock's needs as they move through the production cycle, keeping weather in mind. It pays to plan ahead and be strategic with your resources.

For more information, contact your local Regional Livestock and Feed Extension Specialist or call the Agriculture Knowledge Centre general inquiry line at 1-866-457-2377.

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Agriculture key to more election issues than one might think

As someone who lived nearly 27 of his 31 years in the city, I perhaps took for granted just how interconnected agriculture is with everything that happens in this country.

I knew on some level that the food I consumed, from fruits and vegetables, to meat, and bread, and pasta, was connected in some way to the farm. I knew, too, that I had some long-dead ancestors who were part of the industry.

But that, I thought, was pretty much where my connection to agriculture began and ended.

I was dead wrong, of course. It just took five years of being surrounded by fields of canola and wheat, and cows grazing on pastureland, for me to realize it.

Looking, for instance, at the upcoming federal election, in which three of the most important issues are climate change, trade, and immigration, it's easy

to draw lines from each of them all the way back to the farm gate.

With climate change, the line back to agriculture is less a single thread than it is a complex web. A changing climate naturally impacts producers, because it affects the crops they can grow, and also how they go about growing them.

And, just as producers are impacted by the effects of global climate change, they also play at least some small role in changing the climate, because food can't be produced or shipped to market without leaving an emissions footprint

in its wake – even as the vast majority of today's producers are striving to make their operations as environmentally friendly as possible.

If agriculture can be said to be closely tied to climate change, its connections to trade can be said to run even deeper. Canada, after all, exports approximately half of what it produces, and, in 2016 alone, agriculture exports were valued at \$62.6 billion.

A successful agriculture industry, then, requires that the doors of global markets be kept open. But recent barriers to trade put in place by China (canola, and pork, among other goods), and India (lentils) have created a great deal of uncertainty for Canadian producers.

None of this politicking matters, mind you, if producers can't even get their goods to market. In the west, at least, grain transportation has been a major concern for producers for decades, and seemingly little has been done to address the matter.

Then, of course, there's the always touchy subject of immigration. Given that the agriculture industry is seasonal by nature, producers often struggle to find Canadian workers who can afford to work just a few months out of the year.

This, of course, means that many producers rely on temporary foreign workers during growing season, and that doors for these workers, and for those who wish to stay in Canada permanently, need to be left open.

One could go on and on like this forever, drawing lines between agriculture and the election issues.

And yet, as the party leaders debate on national television, typically focusing more on schoolyard insults than anything of substance, and as candidates go from door to door, what are the odds that agriculture will receive more than a handful of mentions?

What are the odds that any party's electoral platform will prominently feature policy targeted at easing the concerns of producers, and the unique challenges that

the agriculture industry faces?

Call me a pessimist, but I'm pegging those chances as resting somewhere squarely between slim and none.

Looking at the campaign so far, only one party leader, Conservative Party leader Andrew Scheer, seems to know that small-town Saskatchewan exists. Mr. Scheer, as you may recall, made stops in Debden, Prince Albert, and Meadow Lake back in July, to drum up early support for his candidates in the Prince Albert and Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchill River ridings.

The others, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, NDP leader Jagmeet Singh, Green Party leader Elizabeth May, and People's Party of Canada leader Maxime Bernier (whose promise to end supply management is unlikely to win him any votes from some producers), remain blissfully unaware of us, or have simply resigned themselves to the notion that rural Canadians will always vote conservative and have given up trying to earn our votes.

What they don't realize, however, is that in keeping their distance from rural areas and producers, they send the signal that they don't understand, or, worse, don't care, about the things that matter to us.

Given the importance of agriculture in the larger picture of the Canadian economy, this hands-off approach to rural Canada and the agriculture sector simply makes no sense.

For all they do to put food on our tables, producers deserve their time in spotlight this election.



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News Editor

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Greenhouse gases and agriculture

**By Kelsey Ellis, Policy Analyst,
Environment and Resource
Policy**

Climate change is currently a top of mind issue for many. News and information on the subject make regular headlines. While the bulk of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Canada are often attributed to oil and gas, electricity, and transportation, some consider the agriculture industry to be a major source of GHG emissions as well. So, exactly how much does agriculture contribute? What are producers and industry doing to reduce their emissions?

The agriculture industry in Saskatchewan has several success stories to tell. Saskatchewan soils now sequester large amounts of carbon due to declines in summerfallow, reduced tillage, and conversion to permanent cover. It is estimated that Saskatchewan soils sequestered 9.8 million tonnes of carbon dioxide in 2017. This is equal to taking 1.9 million passenger vehicles off the road. In addition, it is generally understood that pasture lands serve as significant carbon sinks, but the research to determine the exact amount of carbon sequestration that



occurs in pastures is ongoing.

Aside from soil sequestration, changes in crop types have reduced the need for synthetic fertilizer which emits nitrous oxide. In 1990, there were 400,000 acres of pulses seeded in the province. In 2019, there were more than six million acres. Since pulses are able to sequester nitrogen in root nodules, this has resulted in less fertilizer use than would have

occurred without the shift toward more pulse acres. In fact, the increase in pulse acres is estimated to have led to an emission reduction of approximately two million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent annually. On the livestock side, improvements in beef production practices have resulted in a 14 per cent decline in methane emissions, a 15 per cent decline in nitrous oxide emissions, and a 12 per

cent decline in carbon dioxide emissions Canada-wide from 1981 to 2011.

In Canada, agriculture accounts for 10 per cent of the country's total GHG emissions. Saskatchewan contains 39 per cent of the country's farmland, yet only contributes about 25 per cent of total Canadian agriculture emissions.

The Ministry of Agriculture offers a number of programs which assist with climate change mitigation efforts. For example, the Agriculture Development Fund invested over \$14.6 million in climate change related research projects from 2000 to 2018. The Farm Stewardship Program also offers funding for beneficial management practices such as variable rate fertilizer to assist in emission reductions and permanent tame and native forage which increases carbon sequestration in soils.

Through emission reductions and carbon sequestration efforts, Saskatchewan's agricultural community has a positive story to tell. Advancements in science and technology, and adoption of the latest production practices, will continue to help the industry be part of the solution moving forward.



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How Vesicular Stomatitis affects Saskatchewan horse owners

**By Kathryn Tonita, MSc, PAg,
Animal Health and Welfare
Specialist, Livestock Branch**

An outbreak of Vesicular Stomatitis (VS) in the western United States has implications for Saskatchewan horse owners traveling or competing in the area this summer.

VS is a viral disease that spreads through contact with saliva or fluid from lesions of infected animals. Insects such as midges are also implicated in transmitting the virus. Horses, pigs, cattle, sheep, pigs and other ruminants, such as deer and llamas, can all become infected. This disease is significant because the clinical signs are indistinguishable from other vesicular diseases, such as foot and mouth disease (FMD), which affects ruminants and swine but not horses. Prompt diagnosis is important to contain a VS outbreak, which can restrict international trade, but more so to rule out a devastating vesicular disease like FMD. People working in close contact with the VS virus or infected animals can become infected and develop flu-like illness, and occasional cases of meningitis have also been reported.

The VS virus has been detected in the United States this summer, includ-



Vesicular Stomatitis can cause blisters and sores in the mouth and on the tongue.

ing in Oklahoma, Wyoming, Nebraska, Colorado, New Mexico and Texas. Cases have occurred primarily in horses, though some cattle have been infected. The VS virus is also prevalent from southern Mexico to northern South

America, but regularly spreads north from these regions in the summer, causing outbreaks. The virus is not endemic in the United States; however, it is introduced periodically into some areas. There have been no cases in Canada

since 1949. However, import restrictions to prevent introduction can affect cross-border equine movement.

Clinical signs

After exposure to the virus, it takes two to eight days for symptoms to appear. Animals usually recover within a few days or up to two weeks, unless other complications arise.

The symptoms of VS virus infection are:

- Blisters inside the mouth and on the lips, nose, hooves and udder;
- Mild fever;
- Excessive salivation or drooling;
- Refusal to eat or drink;
- Lameness (especially in swine); and
- Reduced milk production in milking cows.

Transmission

Transmission of the VS virus is not completely known. Insects, such as midges and biting flies, appear able to introduce the VS virus into populations of domesticated animals. Once it has been introduced into a herd, the virus is spread from animal to animal by direct contact through saliva and fluid from vesicles or blisters. Contaminated feed, water and milking machines are other ways this virus can be transmitted.

Continued on page 7

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The agricultural industry is the heart and soul of our province.



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How Vesicular Stomatitis affects Saskatchewan horse owners

Continued from 6

Preventing the spread of VS

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has taken the following measures to prevent the entry of VS into Canada:

VS is a reportable disease under the Health of Animals Act. This means that all suspected cases must be reported to the CFIA.

All reported suspect cases are immediately investigated by the agency.

If VS is diagnosed on a Canadian premises, a quarantine would be imposed to restrict movement of the animals. This quarantine would be lifted 30 days after all clinical signs have disappeared.

Due to the current cases in the United

States, the CFIA has put the following restrictions on all horses being imported or returning from the United States:

US-origin and returning Canadian horses for all end-uses from Oklahoma, Wyoming, Nebraska, Colorado, New Mexico and Texas: Importation is prohibited, effective immediately.

Returning Canadian horses: Importation is prohibited if they stayed in one of the affected states listed above during the 21 days immediately prior to returning to Canada. They will have to be moved to a non-affected state, stay there for at least 21 days and be certified by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) as follows:

The animal(s) or thing(s) must origi-

nate from a state certified free from VS.

All states in which the animal(s) have resided in the past 21 days must have been free from clinical and epidemiological evidence of VS during the 21 days immediately prior to export to Canada.

It's important to note that various states may also prohibit interstate movements without permit/certification/testing/post-entry testing, and the Canadian owner should check state requirements before movement.

Transiting VS-affected states: Whenever possible, US-origin and returning Canadian horses should avoid travelling through the affected states listed above. If the only route available is through a VS-affected

state, when the owner/shipper arrives at the Canadian port of entry they must complete a Supplementary Declaration Form.

US-origin horses for all end-uses from non-affected states: Importation is permitted. The following import requirements still apply and must be certified by the USDA:

The animal(s) or thing(s) must originate from a state certified free from VS.

All states in which the animal(s) have resided in the past 21 days must have been free from clinical and epidemiological evidence of VS during the 21 days immediately prior to export to Canada.

For additional information, contact your CFIA district veterinarian.

New technologies in farming

When you think of farming, you probably don't think of drones and robots. Nevertheless, farmers everywhere are using these technologies to increase the productivity of their farms and the quality of their crops. Here are just a few of the latest types of technological advances that are currently shaping the agricultural industry.

Drones. Also known as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), drones are one of the most important new technologies in agriculture today. Farmers use them to spray fertilizers and pesticides on crops, thereby reducing the amount of manual labour involved in performing these tasks. Drone technology can also be used to monitor crop fields and livestock, and create aerial maps using GPS technology to help with crop planning and land management.

Agricultural robots. Agrobots are increasingly being used to harvest crops and carry out other simple tasks. Unlike human workers, robots are not in danger of hurting themselves when working long hours and performing repetitive tasks, and

can be used when there are labour shortages.

Air and soil sensors. Sensors are installed on farms to monitor temperature and moisture levels in the air and soil, and generate real-time data about the environmental conditions affecting crops and livestock.

Genetically modified crops. Although they can be controversial, genetically modified organisms (GMOs) lead to higher crop yields and help farms to produce enough food to continue to support rapidly growing populations. Furthermore, because genetically modified plants are usually more resistant to pests and disease, farmers don't

need to use as many chemical fertilizers and pesticides, which can be bad for the environment.





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APAS releases 2019 election proposals

With a federal election looming, the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS) has identified five key issues facing Saskatchewan's agriculture sector, which it hopes will be addressed by all parties.

Reinvest in Agricultural Risk Management

Farmers are constantly looking for new ways to increase the productivity of their businesses and stay

competitive in a rapidly changing world. Producers have made huge investments into their operations over the past decade, generating significant growth within the Canadian economy, and supporting 1/8 of all Canadian jobs.

Ongoing trade wars, droughts, and escalating production costs have increased business risk for Canadian producers, and the Government's share of programs to manage these risks have not kept up.

AgriStability was intended to protect farmers against severe revenue drops during turbulent market conditions. Unfortunately, thousands of producers have left the program due to inadequate coverage levels and frustration with AgriStability's

administration. A recent APAS estimate of AgriStability coverage for price-risk suggested that a Saskatchewan farm with average yields, prices and expenses over the past 5 years would not qualify for coverage even if the price of canola fell to \$7.16 per bushel.

Market disruptions and rising costs have created an environment of serious uncertainty for Canadian producers, so in this federal election APAS wants to see real commitments to fix AgriStability:

- Remove AgriStability coverage limits that are based on a farmer's allowable expenses from the previous year.

- Restore AgriStability coverage to 85% of a producer's historical margin.

- Make AgriStability payments to farmers faster and more predictable.

Protecting producers from trade injury

Saskatchewan's producers expect the Government of Canada to maintain productive diplomatic and trade relationships with other countries because our business depends on access to global markets Canadian agricultural exports are currently

being impacted by foreign governments, who chose to hurt farmers as an easy way to send political messages to federal politicians in Ottawa.

Trade wars have caused serious income problems for Saskatchewan farmers and existing federal insurance programs weren't built to handle the economic fallout from price drops due to trade disruptions. Meanwhile, governments in other jurisdictions are stepping in to protect their domestic farmers from trade injury. Market loss compensation rates are as high as \$57 per acre in some counties in North Dakota.

In this federal election, APAS wants to see commitments to create a new "Trade injury Support Program:"

- Federally funded program to compensate farmers for lost export sales due to trade disputes.

- Support offered for the duration of trade disputes, or until Canada's existing risk management programs are changed to provide coverage for trade-related income drops.

Improving rail infrastructure and performance

Having an efficient and reliable transportation network for moving

grain exports to global markets is critically important to Saskatchewan's agricultural producers.

Canada's rail transportation system has struggled in recent years to meet the demands of increasing grain exports and this has caused costly delays for farmers, plus damage to Saskatchewan's credibility in export markets. Over the past 20 years, the average time a vessel sits in a Canadian port waiting to load grain has more than doubled from 4.3 days on average in 1999/2000 to an average of 10 days in 2017/18.

In this federal election, APAS wants to see a commitment from the federal parties to improve transportation infrastructure for grain exports:

- Investment into rail infrastructure programs to increase export capacity at a rate commensurate with forecasted production trends.

- Improve federal regulations to provide better enforcement of reciprocal service agreements between railways, grain shipping companies, and producers.

- Improve the transparency and oversight of overall rail network performance.

Continued on page 9

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APAS releases 2019 election proposals

Continued from 8

Fighting climate change through recognition and resilience

A carbon tax is clearly bad for Saskatchewan's agricultural producers. As price takers in global markets, farmers are unable to pass along the added costs of a carbon tax and it only harms their businesses without reducing carbon emissions.

Saskatchewan's cropland and prairie grasslands are critical assets in the global effort to fight climate change because of the carbon sequestration benefits these lands provide, and farmers are the owners and managers of these important environmental protection resources.

In this federal election, APAS wants a commitment to developing a federal carbon offset program that

- Provides meaningful recognition of current agricultural activities that offset carbon emissions.

- Provides financial support to maintain existing carbon sinks such as wetlands and grasslands.

- Provides fair compensation to producers for voluntary sequestration or emission reductions.

As an additional step towards reducing carbon emissions, APAS supports the development of a national mandate to allow 10 percent ethanol content in gasoline and 5 percent biodiesel content in diesel.

Improving rural quality of life

Despite its importance to the provincial and national economy, rural Saskatchewan faces significant labour and infrastructure challenges. We need additional federal leadership and investment to ensure that rural areas have the necessary services and infrastructure to attract and retain people and investment. In this federal election APAS calls for commitments to:

- Increase federal investment into rural internet and cellular coverage, including clear timelines for achieving meaningful improvements

- Change the Income Tax Act to encourage inter-generational transfers of farms and reduce the tax burden on retiring producers.

- Make it easier for beginning farmers to access federal capital programs like the Advance Payments Program and the Canadian Agricultural Loans Act.

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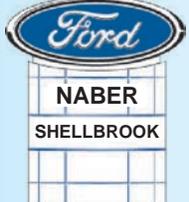
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Is it time to consider creep feeding?

By Colby Elford BSc., PAg., Livestock and Feed Extension Specialist, Moose Jaw

As the grazing season progresses, pastures typically decline in feed quality and quantity. When rain is limited, this process is expedited. When grazing cow calf pairs, it may be beneficial to look at providing creep feed for the calves if forage supply or quality is in question.

Providing a highly-palatable creep feed for calves will reduce nursing pressure on the cows as well as reduce grazing pressure on the pasture. A calf's first preference is milk, then creep feed and, lastly, forage. When milk and creep are available, pressure on the pasture will be reduced. Furthermore, as the dam's milk production decreases later in summer, the calf will be expected to meet its nutritional requirements elsewhere. A supplemental feed can meet this need.

In order to meet the requirements of a growing calf, the energy content of creep feed should be in the range of 65 per cent to 70 per cent Total Digestible Nutrients (TDN) and about 13 per cent protein. Vitamin and mineral requirements should also be considered. The creep feed could be made up of on farm grains such as oats. Depending on pasture quality, an additional protein source may be added to meet the calf's requirements. Nutritionally-balanced creep feed can also be purchased from a supplier and is often as cost effective as developing a balanced creep feed on farm.

When a creep feed is available to the calves there will be more forage present for the cows. It is estimated that for every pound of creep feed consumed by the calf, there will



be a savings of one-half to one pound of forage that will be available to the cows. Therefore, the grazing season can be extended or pasture health can be maintained rather than deteriorated.

The creep feeder design should ensure the feed will be kept dry, be capable of holding a one-week supply, be portable and have the ability to keep the cows out while allowing the calves to enter. To start calves on creep feed, the feeder should be placed near watering sources where the herd congregates. Once the calves have started to use the feeder, it can be moved to other areas of the pasture to encourage grazing in less-used areas. The feeder can be a useful tool during dry years to "lead" the herd to use areas of the pasture that they might otherwise avoid.

If considering early weaning of calves, creep feeding can be a good first step. It can also facilitate early weaning, particularly during a dry year. The creep feed gets the calves accustomed to consuming dry feed as well as aiding in getting them bunk trained. It is more efficient to wean the calves and place them on dry feed than it is to creep feed them. The feed conversion of early-weaned calves on dry feed is much better than the overall feed conversion of the cow nursing her calf. These young, weaned calves can be placed on a nutritional program to maintain their normal growth of 1.75 to 2.25 lb. per day. They will be able to achieve their normal weaning weights at their usual weaning dates and, at the same time, do it more efficiently. In this scenario, the feed requirements for the cows will be reduced once the calves are weaned, and it will allow them to

maintain or regain their body condition on less feed. Cows entering into the winter season in good body condition cost the least to over winter.

Creep feeding is a useful tool during times when pasture growth is inadequate to maintain normal calf performance, later in the season when pasture quality declines, or whenever the calves are retained to place them on a feeding program at home. It may not be something to undertake on a routine basis, but it may be worth considering when forage quantity is in short supply (e.g. during a drought), later in the season when forage quality has declined below the cows' nutritional requirements to maintain normal body condition, or to sustain normal rates of gain and growth of calves, and ultimately, weaning weight.

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Teaching the importance and methods of safe animal handling

By Miranda Burski, Communications Branch

Animal handling on a cattle operation has the potential to lead to injury or stress, to either the handler or the animal. With the proper skills, however, both are avoidable.

While farm safety is being discussed more often, there are still high rates of injury and stress in the agricultural community.

"Farm injuries are often avoidable and happen much too often," said Ryder Lee, Chief Executive Officer of the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association (SCA). The SCA wants to reduce farm injuries by ensuring producers across the province have the skills they need to make cattle handling as safe as possible.

"While all producers handle cattle regularly year after year, we still see people getting hurt," said Lee. "If we can reduce these incidents, it helps."

In an effort to help producers learn safer animal handling skills, the SCA, in partnership with the Beaver River Agri-Environmental Group Plan, hosted a one-day safe animal handling seminar in Makwa in January. The seminar, led by cattle-handling expert Dylan Biggs, focused on low-stress handling techniques, which benefit both producers and animals.

A particularly important lesson was how to move cattle from one area to another in as stress-free a manner as

possible. This involved teaching attendees to get cattle to move voluntarily, rather than using force which could result in damages to facilities or an injury to either the handler or one of the animals.

Participants in the event also learned about other benefits of stress-free handling, including improved gains and herd management.

"Good handling makes working with cattle a smoother affair, often requiring less people," said Lee. "It's a challenge to attract people to operations in a lot of rural areas. Some of these skills added in these workshops allow people to work cattle with fewer people."

Overall, producers considered what they learned to be of benefit, enough so that some requested a second, two-day event. While a second event has not been planned, Lee said SCA would consider one. In the meantime, he encouraged producers to continue to learn



Moving cattle from one area to another in ways that are calm and not forceful helps prevent damages to facilities or injuries to handlers or animals.

from each other.

"As with anything, there is always something to learn from

others doing something successfully. Having an open mind to learning is the best way to do

things better. "Stay safe out there," he added. "Please listen to that voice in your head when it says, "Maybe this isn't a good idea," and find another way or some help."

SCA received funding for the safe animal han-

dling seminar through the Farm Safety Program, funded under the five-year \$388 million Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP) between the federal and provincial governments. The Farm Safety Program provides funding to organizations to promote the awareness of farm safety issues and to encourage the adoption of safe farm practices in Saskatchewan.

For more information, visit: www.saskatchewan.ca/CAP



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Spreading awareness about mental health in the agriculture industry

In recent years, the topic of mental health in agriculture has been an area of increasing public concern. Due to unpredictable weather, unstable markets, heavy workloads and increasing environmental concerns, people who work in agriculture are at high risk for stress, anxiety, depression and burnout.

According to a study done by the University of Guelph, 35 per cent of farmers in Canada demonstrate symptoms of depression, while 58 per cent meet the criteria for anxiety. An additional 45 per cent of those working in agriculture are experiencing high levels of stress. Suicide rates are also higher in agriculture than in any other profession.

One organization in Canada that is working to create awareness about mental health in agriculture is the Do More Ag Foundation. Do More Ag recognizes that some of the industry's core values — such as hard work, resilience, strength and self-sufficiency — can become weaknesses when they inhibit farmers from sharing their struggles and asking for help. The foundation seeks to break the stigma surrounding mental illness and encourage those in the agriculture



Studies have shown that people involved in farming are at high risk for stress, anxiety, depression and burnout.

industry to “Talk More, Ask More, Listen More.”

Do More Ag operates according to three pillars: awareness, community and research. The nationwide non-profit is working to educate the public about the state of mental health in agriculture, foster an inclusive, empathetic community among agricultural workers, and promote research that examines mental

health issues in the industry. Recently, the organization partnered with the company Bayer CropScience to launch a “Not-So-Silent Auction” to call attention to the high suicide rates among farmers and raise money for creating more awareness and resources.

To learn more, visit the Do More Ag website: domore.ag.

Tips for keeping your cows happy and healthy this winter

Before the cold weather sets in, it's important to come up with a plan for keeping your cows comfortable and well fed during the winter months. Beef and dairy cattle alike can become sick and stressed when they get too cold. As you prepare your farm for winter, make sure your cows have everything they need to stay warm.

1. Provide adequate shelter. Cattle are fairly hardy, but they still need protection from the elements, especially during snowstorms. Make sure your cows have access to shelters that they can access when needed.

2. Keep cattle well fed.

Cows generally eat more in the winter because they have to burn more calories in order to stay warm. And although cows can graze through the winter, they won't be able to find much to eat if the fields are covered in snow. Make sure you're providing your cattle with other nutritious sources of food, such as high quality hay and energy supplements like corn or soy hulls.

3. Ensure cows have access to water. Cattle need lots of water to stay hydrated, but many water sources freeze over or become difficult to access during winter. Make sure to provide cows with unfrozen water a few times a

day and consider installing tank heaters in cattle water sources.

4. Attend to pregnant cattle. If you have any pregnant cows in your herd, keep a close eye on them during the winter, especially

during storms and intense cold spells. Making sure that these cows have the water, nutrition and shelter they need to get through the winter will help protect the health of their unborn calves.



Cows need to have access to nutritious food, fresh water and adequate shelter to stay healthy during the winter months.

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