

Grainews

PRACTICAL PRODUCTION TIPS FOR THE PRAIRIE FARMER

www.grainews.ca

Check water quality before spraying

You've got the sprayer ready and brought the right chemical home. Now make sure your water is right for the job

BY LISA GUENTHER

Before filling up the sprayer, you may want to check your water quality.

Dr. Les Henry says some farmers might not know that hard water is affecting herbicides because they're still getting a kill. But it may be that the chemical is "a lot less zippy than it could be if they were using good water."

Henry is a former University of Saskatchewan professor and extension specialist and a long-time *Grainews* contributor. "The big thing is just keep away from the hard water," he says.

Hard water, with high magnesium and calcium levels, is common in Saskatchewan because many wells tap into glacial deposits. Glyphosate binds to magnesium and calcium and becomes inactive.

Farmers, custom sprayers and crop consultants can purchase Hach kits from water well supply stores to measure hardness in well water, dugouts, and sloughs. A water well analysis should assign a value to hardness as well.

As a guideline, water with 20 grains per U.S. gallon is too hard to use with low glyphosate rates, and 40 grains per gallon isn't recommended for high glyphosate rates. Water with 35 grains per gallon also renders 2,4-D amine nearly useless. But 2,4-D ester isn't affected by hard water.

Finding an ideal water source to mix with glyphosate isn't always possible.

"If you have shaky water, the less volume you use the better. Now, if you're in some kind of situation where coverage is important or something like that, that might be another issue. But the higher volume results in more antagonism," says Henry.

Farmers using hard water should not cut glyphosate rates.



Rod and Brad Barlow fill the sprayer with water from a long-used dugout near Griffin, Sask.

PHOTO: LEEANN MINOGUE

WATER AND AMMONIUM SULPHATE

Mixing ammonium sulphate fertilizer (21-0-0-24) with tank water is also an option to neutralize hard water. The ammonium sulphate binds with minerals in hard water, allowing glyphosate to do its job. Henry says the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool used to sell ammonium sulphate to use in sprayers. But he doesn't recommend using sulphate fines, as they may contain other materials that would cause problems.

Henry says the practice doesn't seem to have caught on.

"It's another fussy thing to do. You're probably better off to look for a better source of water. But if you don't have any of that, that's an option."

Ken Sapsford is a research assistant at the University of Saskatchewan's department of plant Sciences. He says if farmers

are going to use ammonium sulphate, they should add it to the water before mixing in glyphosate so it can bond with the minerals.

Before glyphosate resistance was an issue, farmers were told to add more glyphosate to their tank mixes. The extra glyphosate tied up the minerals, letting the remaining active glyphosate do its job.

with hard water, by just increasing the rate of glyphosate that was in the mix," says Sapsford.

Using ammonium sulphate would allow farmers to use less glyphosate, but Sapsford cautions that ammonium sulphate won't help with glyphosate-resistant weeds.

Farmers in the United States routinely add ammonium sulphate to

Some products do require ammonium sulphate in the tank mix, Sapsford says.

OTHER WATER QUALITY ISSUES

Although hard water is one of the most common water quality problems affecting herbicide applications, it's not the only one.

Wells that tap into bedrock aquifers usually contain soft water, but that water might contain bicarbonate. When water contains high bicarbonate levels but low levels of other anions such as sulphate and chloride, it can interfere with the following herbicides:

- 2,4-D amine (but not ester)
- Tralkoxydins such as Achieve
- Sethoxydins such as Poast
- Clethoxydins such as Select and Centurion

Bicarbonate levels as low as 500

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



"If you have shaky water, the less volume you use the better."
— Les Henry

"And then as the price of glyphosate came down, it was cheaper just to add more glyphosate than to mess around with the ammonium sulphate. So therefore that basically overcame any issue

herbicide mixes to break down the wax coating on leaves and get better herbicide infiltration. But Sapsford says these additional benefits haven't been completely proven scientifically.

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Wheat & Chaff



STAMPEDE

BY JERRY PALEN



"You know that stupid gate nobody could open?"



LEEANN MINOGUE

My husband whisked me away for a spring getaway last week. A leisurely, romantic drive, then a hotel.

I know. Hard to believe. A grain farmer? Away from the farm, overnight? In the middle of spring seeding? Especially this year, with such cold weather and a late start. And Brad only had 230 acres in the ground.

You're right.

It happened more like this.

"I have to drive all the way to Melfort to pick up the parts! Four hours each way! Do you know how much canola I could get in the ground in four hours?"

I volunteered to make the trip on my own, so he could do something else. But since I've built a bit of a reputation lately for bringing home the wrong parts, it probably wasn't the best solution.

WEEKEND GETAWAYS

A few hours earlier, Brad had answered his cellphone from the tractor cab.

When the caller asked what he was up to, he'd said, "I'm watching the wheel fall right off the air seeder."

Literally. The bolts gave out. After we moved the truck and auger out to the field so he could unload the cart, and then moved everything back to the yard, Brad realized he needed a new rim.

The nearest one was at the Bourgault factory, four hours away. And the parts department wouldn't open until the next morning. It would be well after noon before he could start rebuilding, let alone get back in the field.

We left our six-year-old with Grandma, packed a bag and headed north.

"Damned bolts. Every other farmer in the country is out in the field."

This breakdown set seeding back at least two days. Not only did we need the parts, we needed to find someone from a tire shop to make a house call to the farm in the middle of the May long weekend.

About 3-1/2 hours north, we saw a sign for Melfort. 'City of Northern Lights,' it said. "Yeah. Right."

But a few minutes later we looked up, and sure enough. Lights.

Not the most spectacular northern lights we've seen, but definitely the best show we've had time to enjoy for a while.

"They're really shaking around up there," Brad said.

Then he stopped the truck, and we got out and stood together, watching from the side of the road. The lights were so beautiful.

Finally, Brad said, "Look, I don't know why you got out of the truck, but I only stopped to pee. Didn't want to waste time finding a gas station."



Read about our tour of the CNH combine factory in Nebraska on page 18.

NO GUESTS PLEASE, WE'RE FARMERS

Now the wheels are back on. Brad's out in the field again, and I've had time to check my emails.

The other day I had a message from a British friend, telling me her mother had died. They'd been very close, so I invited my friend to come to Canada and stay with us for a while this summer, thinking a change of scene might take her mind off things.

As it turned out, her summer was already mostly booked, and she couldn't make the trip from London. But that was probably for the best. By the time I got her email, I realized that our farm might not be the best place for a city visitor. Not if we wanted to make a good impression.

Here are three reasons that we may not be ready for urban guests.

1. The unpredictability

Farmers don't work from 9 to 5. You just never know what's going to happen next. It's hard to plan a week away — what if next Tuesday is a good day for spraying? It's also hard to plan to stay home (see above, about the trip to Melfort).

My friend would probably cope with this. Maybe she would find the surprise parts runs to Weyburn entertaining. But I suspect you need the right kind of guest to make this work.

2. The gunplay

No, not some sort of domestic dispute. But every now and then my husband will clatter into the house, run to the gun cabinet, load up a rifle and run back outside. Last time, he was dealing with a skunk harassing the dog.

Nothing illegal (no people, endangered species or out-of-season animals have been shot or even threatened). Just everyday pests. Nothing that doesn't happen on every Prairie farm. But I'm not sure I'd be comfortable explaining this to someone who's never been in a building with a gun.

3. The dog presents

Some city people have cats. Sometimes a house cat will catch

a bird, or a small mouse out in the backyard, and present the dead creature as a present to its owner. Some owners think this is kind of cute. Last week our dog won a battle with a muskrat.

After the second time I stepped over the dead muskrat to get to the car (I wasn't going to touch it), I started to get used to it. And by then I barely noticed the deer bone (complete with hoof) that the dog hauled home from who knows where.

When other farmers visit, they don't even flinch at the sight of the deer hoof. But I'm not sure I want to explain it to a jet-lagged urbanite, fresh off a plane from Heathrow.

Maybe it would be better for us to have guests in the winter.

Do you have a story about city people visiting your farm? I'd like to hear it. My email address and phone number are on the left side of this page.

IN THIS ISSUE

On the cover, you'll see that our *Grainews* field editor Lisa Guenther has put together an interesting piece on water quality. That photo on the cover is the dugout my husband has been using for water for his sprayer for years. So far, it seems to be doing the trick, but if we notice any changes in chemical effectiveness, we'll be sure to have the water tested.

The machinery section in this issue is all about factory tours — John Deere, Agco, Case, New Holland. As our machinery editor, Scott Garvey, puts it in his piece about John Deere tours (page 22), machinery companies are learning that "if you build it, they will come."

Most companies offer farmers some sort of factory tour, whether it's a straight-up tour of the factory hosted by your local dealer or a turnkey tour where you see your own new machine on the assembly line. You'll find the story of the tour my husband and I took to Grand Island, Nebraska so Brad could drive his new Case combine off the line on pages 18 and 19.

Enjoy this issue!

Leeann

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HEARTS

Ask for hearts

When you renew your subscription to *Grainews*, be sure to ask for six Please Be Careful, We Love You hearts. Then stick them onto equipment that you, your loved ones and your employees operate. That important message could save an arm, a leg or a life.



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Wheat & Chaff



FARM SAFETY

Don't let weather woes interfere with safety planning

After an unusually late spring, many farmers have been thinking and rethinking their crop plans. Mother Nature likes to throw curveballs. But whether you've completed your planting or not, don't let the stress interfere with your safety and well-being.

First a reality check. While the season is barely underway, already grim stories of farmers losing life and limb are beginning to appear in news headlines. Since April, reports indicate that farmers, farm workers and bystanders have died in tractor rollovers, machine-related entanglements, falls, crush injuries and vehicle collisions.

Individuals have also suffered severe injuries from auger entanglements and vehicle collisions. And these are just the stories that make the news. According to Canadian Agricultural Injury Reporting fatality trends, 70 per cent of all fatalities in Canada occur from May to October. In other words, most of the reports that have been coming in are still from the "low season."

Glen Blahey is a health and safety special-

ist with the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA). "Farm safety isn't something to observe only when conditions are ideal. It doesn't work that way. In fact, in tough years farmers should be even more vigilant about safety, as they are more likely to be stressed, and that could lead to dangerous shortcuts or human error if they aren't careful," he says.

This past March, CASA, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) and Farm Credit Canada (FCC) launched Get with the Plan!, a farm safety campaign focused on encouraging farmers to develop their own health and safety plans.

With the season in full swing, it's easy to overlook the message. But Jaime Beaumont, a dairy operator who participated in the Ontario launch of Get with the Plan!, says more farmers need to understand that they are working in an industrial setting with real risks. "How many times do we have to hear about a tractor rollover in a ditch?" he asks, pointing out that many of the recent fatalities were entirely preventable

Blahey agrees that planning is the key. "Farmers don't need to reinvent the wheel every year. If they put systems and policies in place to help reduce hazards in the workplace, this can go a long way to reducing injuries," he says.

For Beaumont, this planning takes the form of limiting hours of work for employees, conducting regular safety audits, holding annual training sessions, enforcing the use of personal protective equipment, and creating a staff safety representative position. In the middle of planting himself, Beaumont knows that thanks to unpredictable weather, a three-week window can shrink to one in bad years. But it doesn't mean farmers should take shortcuts. "Plan for breaks and arrange for help," suggests Beaumont. "If they get hurt or sick, then nothing will get done."

Blahey agrees. He says farmers and farm workers should take the time to cultivate some good habits along with crops this season, such as surveying worksites before

CANOLA M.D.

grainews.ca/DIAGNOSEIT

Diagnostic Tool

canolacouncil OF CANADA

starting any equipment, fixing equipment before it breaks down, taking extra time for breaks, carrying a cellphone or two-way radio at all times, and taking the few extra steps needed to accomplish a task safely. "How many times have you reviewed your crop plans? Now how many times have you looked at your safety plan? Mother Nature might up the weather ante, but there's no need to gamble with your safety," he says.

For information on developing a safety plan, visit agsafetyweek.ca. Do you have questions about safety? Contact CASA at info@casa-acsa.ca.

Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA).

You might be from the Prairies if...



You have ever used four-wheel drive to get out of a pothole.

AGRONOMY TIPS... FROM THE FIELD

PHOTO CONTEST

Longer, safer grain storage

With all the changes to the Canadian cereal industry in the last year, now might be a good time to rethink your storage practices. With more marketing freedom, you might be keeping cereals longer before they go to market. Here are some pointers to help ensure grain quality remains high, whether you are storing it in bags or bins.

For grain stored in bags:

- Keep the bags tight and dry. This is necessary to protect and maintain the quality of the grain.
- Be selective when choosing the location of grain bags. Be sure to place bags away from areas where water is likely to pool, seep into the bags and trigger storage diseases.
- When storing cereals in grain bags for periods longer than eight months, monitor regularly. Grain bags need to be almost airtight to work properly and they're susceptible to tears caused by mechanical damage and animals.
- Avoid storing malt barley in grain bags. The airtight nature that makes grain bags ideal for the storage of other cereals can contribute to poor germination in malt barley.

And here's a tip for storing cereals for extended periods in bins:

- Aerate grains when storing them in bins. Even properly dried cereals can get warm at the core of a bin when left for extended periods. Aerate or turn the grain monthly over the winter and twice a month in the summer.

This agronomy tip is brought to you by Aaron Bouchard, agronomic service representative for Syngenta Canada Inc. Aaron also farms in Saskatchewan and is a certified crop adviser and a P.Ag.

GIVE US YOUR BEST SHOT

Now that this long winter is finally over, we thought you'd want a reminder of what we've come through.

This is Lachlan McCallum and his barn cat Slippers. Lachlan is five. He was taking a break from riding the tractor and feeding the cows with Dad to help Mom watch the gate and play with his cat.

Lachlan and his brother Cameron live on a small beef cattle farm northwest of Camrose, Alberta. They love to help their parents, Myrna and Tim McCallum with the chores.

If you'd like to see your photo on this page and receive \$25, send your best shot to leann.minogue@fbcpublishing.com. Please send only one or two photos at a time and include your name and address, the names of anyone in the photo, where the photo was taken and a bit about what was going on that day. A little write-up about your farm is welcome, too. Please ensure that images are of high resolution (1 MB is preferred), and if the image includes a person, we need to be able to see their face clearly.

— Leeann



WEATHER LORE

Crows and rain

If crows make much noise; And fly round and round: a sign of rain

Crows, like all birds, have extremely sensitive hearing and can actually hear an

approaching thunderstorm when it is still many miles away. Also, the hollow shafts of their feathers enable them to feel as well as hear low frequency sound waves.

Shirley Byers' book, *Never Sell Your Hen on a Rainy Day*, explores over 100 weather rhymes and sayings. It is available from McNally Robinson at: www.mcnallyrobinson.com.

SEED

Resonance Carinata launched

Agrisoma Biosciences Inc. has launched Resonance AAC A110, the company's highest-yielding *Brassica Carinata* variety to date. Performance trials showed that this variety delivered an average yield increase of seven per cent over the existing Resonance Carinata variety, AAC A100. Agrisoma is the world leader in commercializing carinata, a plant whose oil profile is uniquely suited for biojet and biodiesel fuel production.

"We have proven the viability of Resonance Carinata as a sustainable

source of biofuel and are now concentrating our efforts on increasing its yield of uniform, high-quality oil. Resonance AAC A110 is a result of this focus," said Patrick Crampton, vice-president business and product development for Agrisoma.

Trials conducted last year with Resonance AAC A110 demonstrated yield results as high as 44 bushels per acre and an improved meal profile, compared to the A100 line. Resonance AAC A110 has the same seeding rates, crop inputs and costs the same to produce, treat, clean

and deliver to growers as Resonance AAC A100.

Resonance Carinata is a vigorous crop with a highly branching growth pattern and large seed size. It delivers excellent harvestability with good lodging and shatter resistance. As demonstrated by its commercial performance in the field in 2012, it is an extremely resilient crop, performing well under a variety of abiotic stresses, from drought to excessive moisture. Resonance Carinata is ideally suited to the semi-arid growing conditions commonly found in the brown soil zone regions of southern Saskatchewan and Alberta.

www.agrisoma.com

Cover Stories



GRAIN STORAGE

Simple grain bag unloading

Grain bag unloaded, plastic wrapped — all in one easy operation

BY LEE HART

Neeralta Manufacturing at Neerlandia, north of Edmonton, Alta., has this year introduced a new grain bag extractor, that not only unloads nine- to 12-foot wide grain bags but also wraps and ties the plastic into a handy bale for easy disposal — all in one easy operation.

The new extractor is available in both trailer and three-point — hitch models, says John Wierenga, who looks after sales and marketing for the family owned manufacturing business.

"It is the same machine, but is available in two transport models depending on a farmer's needs," he says. "Each unit comes with a self-contained hydraulic pump and reservoir, so it is easily handled by a 90-horsepower tractor. It doesn't take much power to run it."

The extractor that works with nine-, 10- and 12-foot-diameter bags can load a truck at up to 150 bushels per minute. A short video on the company website at www.neeralta.com shows how the machine operates.

"A unique feature of this extractor is the plastic wrapping mechanism that is all part of the extraction machine," says Wierenga. "You don't have to buy a separate bag wrapper, or come back later after a bag is empty, and may be all wet and muddy. With this machine you put the auger into the face of

the grain of an open bag and as the grain is moved into a truck, the machine automatically wraps the plastic and ties it with baler twine."

Once the plastic is wrapped, the hydraulic spool holding the bundle opens, the plastic bale rolls down a conveyor, gently dropping into the bed of a pickup truck. "It is a very slick operation and there is virtually no cleanup afterward," says Wierenga. "The bag is gone and you may have four or five pails of grain to pick up. It is very clean."

The extractor and wrapper can handle up to a 300-foot-long grain bag. Each unit also features an auger with adjustable height, and the unloading auger has a swivel spout. Trailer models also feature hydraulic drive wheels and hydraulic steering.

The extractor units, that retail for \$39,900, compliment the Neeralta grain-bagging system that was introduced a few years ago. The company makes 10- and 12-foot-wide grain baggers, which feature a self-contained 14-inch swing auger. Each unit has a hopper for unloading a combine or grain cart directly into the bagger, or the swing auger can be rolled out in a couple minutes to reach under a truck with a hopper bottom.

For more information on the extractor or grain-bagging system visit the company website. ✍

Lee Hart is a field editor for Grainews in Calgary. Contact him at 403-592-1964 or by email at lee@fbcpublishing.com.



PHOTOS: NEERALTA MANUFACTURING
The large "spool" at the top of the Neeralta grain bag extractor wraps the plastic as grain is unloaded.



As grain is picked up by the auger below, the used plastic is rolled up into a tight bundle at the top of the extractor.

SPRAYING

» CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

CHECK WATER QUALITY BEFORE SPRAYING

parts per million can interfere with herbicide effectiveness if herbicide rates are low, if it's applied late, or in poor growing conditions.

Farmers who can't avoid using water with more than 500 ppm of bicarbonate should use the maximum rate of herbicide. Herbicide should be applied when weeds are at the optimum growth stage.

Henry says bicarbonate water is rare in Saskatchewan, but there is some in the Unity and Judith River area. Southeastern Saskatchewan has the most bicarbonate wells. Manitoba doesn't have much bicarbonate water, either, but wells in the Interlake region and southern Manitoba might hit fractured shale aquifers with high-bicarbonate water. High-bicarbonate wells are common in Alberta.

SLOUGH AND DUGOUT ISSUES

Sloughs and dugouts can have water quality issues, too.

"The problem with sloughs, they can be anything. They can be really pristine, or they can be a real mineral-laden thing," says Henry.

Suspended silt and organic mat-

ter can inactivate several herbicides, including:

- Diquats such as Reglone and Reward
- Paraquats such as Gramoxone
- Glyphosate

Farmers should only use clean water when mixing these products. Dust flying up during spraying, and covering plant surfaces, can also reduce control.

Dugouts aren't always filled with run-off, either.

"Any time a borrow pit is cut below the water table, you're going to have water in the dugout that's groundwater," Henry says.

Generally, farmers should avoid using water from sloughs or dugouts ringed by salt. Water with nothing growing in it might be too salty to use in tank mixes. Water bodies that fill up without rain, and stay full through the summer and through dry periods, are likely drawing on groundwater and should be avoided as well.

eyeballing a dugout or slough's salinity isn't an easy task. Water that looks fine may be too salty. Farmers who rely on crop advisers can ask them to measure the electrical conductivity to get an idea of salt content.

Electrical conductivity, measured in microsiemens per cm, can also reveal how hard water is. If the water only runs through gla-



PHOTO: LEEANN MINOGUE
Sloughs and dugouts can have water quality issues.

cial deposits, dividing the electrical conductivity by two produces hardness in parts per million. Dividing electrical conductivity by 35 yields hardness in grains per gallon. Water with less than 500 microsiemens per cm isn't likely to affect any herbicides.

Henry says if a farmer has been using a dugout for a while and it's working ok, it probably doesn't need to be tested.

"But if they're starting in a new

dugout, just because it's clean doesn't mean that it might not have a lot of minerals in it."

For more information, check out Saskatchewan Agriculture's *Water Quality and Herbicides* fact sheet, available at agriculture.gov.sk.ca. This article also references Les Henry's *Henry's Handbook of Soil and Water*. ✍

Lisa Guenther is a field editor with Grainews based at Livelong, Sask. Contact her at Lisa.Guenther@fbcpublishing.com.

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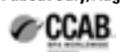
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GRAIN STORAGE

Bin installation and insurance

Many empty bins were destroyed by plough winds last summer. Not all damage is preventable, but there are steps you can take

BY ANDREA HILDERMAN

Farmers are purchasing more and more on-farm storage these days. With more bins on farms, there are also more reports of bin damage due, particularly due to catastrophic winds. While some acts of God cannot be guarded against, farmers can take precautions.

Meridian Manufacturing Inc. is the largest bin manufacturer in North America. Its head office and one of its manufacturing plants are at Winkler, Manitoba; Meridian also has manufacturing plants in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Iowa. Meridian has over 1,000 employees and services a global market.

Although Meridian does not sell directly to the public, Henry Wiebe, inside sales specialist at Winkler says they do advise dealers on bin installation.

SECURING BINS

"Each bin comes with a skid and can be installed on solid, compacted ground," Wiebe says. "Earth anchors or skid anchors are a recommended option to further secure the bin." He says installation on concrete pads is also rec-



Many Prairie bins were destroyed in 2012, including these bins in southeast Saskatchewan.

ommended. In that case the bin can be bolted down.

Jason Klassen is the owner of Wentworth Ag in Winkler, Manitoba. "I recommend our customers install their bins on concrete pads, if possible, and bolt them down," he says. "However, not everyone will do that. In that case, we recommend installation on good, compacted ground and using screw-in anchors, especially if the bins are going to be installed in an area that will expose them to wind." Over the

years, Klassen has seen the wind powerful enough to tear bins off concrete pads.

Farrell Agencies at Yorkton, Saskatchewan is a leading insurance brokerage with an extensive agricultural book, covering the Prairies and British Columbia. Dave Nussbaumer is a co-owner of Farrell Agencies and also farmed for 30 years. "Our experience with the six or more insurance markets we use is, when it comes to bin insurance, it ranges from no rules necessary to a minimum of four

anchors per bin, with three-eighths of a inch to quarter inch cables."

Nussbaumer says anchors can help to secure a bin, but the wind can overcome them. "We saw big bin losses in 2012," he explained. "With all the moisture in many areas, the ground became saturated and the anchors just gave way."

Insurance rates on steel bins are low enough, many farmers don't think it worthwhile to put cement pads down. "If you take into consideration deductibles and depreciation, over the long term the farm might be further ahead if the concrete is poured," he says.

LIGHTER THAN THEY LOOK

Nussbaumer has seen all sorts of bin destruction over the years and had some other points to share:

- Engineering improvements have made bins lighter and stronger and bigger. Now they are like big balloons sitting in the wind, sticking up 50 to 60 feet or sometimes higher.
- Many bins may remain upright but will collapse on the side facing the wind.
- Placing a row of bins one to two feet apart is like creating a solid wall to the on-coming wind.

In those cases, Nussbaumer sees the centre bins sustain more wind damage, and he sees it every year. Placing the bins six, eight or 10 feet apart will allow the wind to blow through and around the bins without causing damage, or as much damage.

• The majority of bin claims are for wind damage on empty bins. Even a few hundred bushels left in a bin will prevent it blowing over in most cases.

"Insurance companies are starting to look at reducing risk on their farm book of business," says Nussbaumer. "Up until recently, it was tough to try and raise rates as farms were just not as profitable. Now, rates are creeping up slowly." No one likes having to pay extra premium, but by the same token, Nussbaumer says farmers have expectations of how they want to be treated when they have to do a claim.

"Ultimately, my advice for farmers is to have the proper coverage, the right deductible and don't over-insure but insure to value," says Nussbaumer.

Andrea Hilderman has her master's degree in weed science and is a member of the Manitoba Institute of Agrologists. She writes from Winnipeg, Man.



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GRAIN STORAGE

Tarps versus grain bags

For farmers short on storage, tarps or grain bags can be a low short-term solution. It's not risk free, but these five tips can improve your odds

Farmers short on storage this year might consider tarping grain or using grain bags. But neither is good for long-term storage or high-moisture grain.

Tarping dry grain on the ground is okay for a day or a week, Dr. Chelladurai Vellaichamy says, but not any longer.

Chelladurai Vellaichamy is a Ph.D. student in biosystems engineering at the University of Manitoba. Vellaichamy and his colleagues have been researching canola storage in grain bags for three years, with support from the Canola Council of Canada and Growing Forward.

Vellaichamy says tarping high moisture grain is likely to cause mould growth and other problems. Humidity can also be high during harvest. "So that also makes it a difficult case if we just store it after harvesting right on to the ground."

GRAIN BAG RESULTS

High-moisture grain can be stored in grain bags for a few weeks maximum.

Vellaichamy and his colleagues stored canola with eight per cent, 10 per cent, 12 per cent, and 14 per cent moisture content in grain bags. They found canola with eight per cent moisture could be stored for up to 10 months without compromising quality. Canola at 10 per cent moisture could be stored for six to seven months, and 12 per cent about five months.

But once canola hit 14 per cent, it started to deteriorate within about a month. Vellaichamy says there was mould growth and caking in 14 per cent canola.

Moisture content in grain bags isn't likely to change over winter as long as they remain sealed. But once the weather warms, condensation can collect at the bag's top.

Even dry grain should be unloaded from grain bags before the temperature hits 10 C or 15 C, or it may be downgraded, says Vellaichamy. Last year researchers unloaded some No. 1 canola in late February, and it wasn't downgraded. A second batch unloaded the first week in May dropped one grade, and canola stored in grain bags until August fell to feed quality.

Grain bags are quite airtight, so when grain respire, it increases carbon dioxide concentration and drops oxygen content. "So that creates a condition where... insects or pests can't grow inside," Vellaichamy says. Grain bags can be fumigated as well.

Rodents and birds can rip holes in bags, making them less airtight.

Farmers should try to seal any holes so the bag remains fairly airtight. Vellaichamy says special tape provided by the manufacturer works best, but it doesn't work well below -5 C or -10 C.

Vellaichamy and his colleagues have also tried closing holes with duct tape and sealing styrofoam, but the special tape works better.

Farmers should make sure they can get to the bags at all times.

"You can't put those bags in

the middle of the field where (they're not) accessible to the trucks or anything. Because if something goes wrong we have to unload it right away, even at the peak of winter time," says Vellaichamy.

FIVE TIPS FOR GROUND PREPARATION

Ground preparation is an important fact for both tarps and grain bags, says Vellaichamy. Here are five tips:

1. Make sure the site has good drainage.
2. Clean the ground, removing any sharp objects, such as rocks, that might pierce the bag or tarp.
3. Pack the ground really well. Pressure needs to be applied while loading grain bags, so it won't work well if the ground is soft.
4. Cut grass to keep rodents away.
5. Apply lime to the ground before placing the bag, and around the bag once it's in place. Vellaichamy says they didn't see a single rodent after using lime.

If tarping grain, make sure the tarp is secure. Some companies recommend using an aeration fan at the bottom to keep the tarp on, Vellaichamy says, but he hasn't tried this.

Grain bags and tarps may seem low-cost, but farmers should take into account costs of a grain bagger and unloader, and any money they might lose if grain quality is downgraded.

"If you erect a bin in your yard, it will last at least 15 (to) 20 years. But these bags are one-time use," says Vellaichamy.

COSTS OF BINS VERSUS BAGS

Mike Pylypchuk, a business management specialist with Saskatchewan Agriculture, analyzed different grain storage system costs in 2012. Using numbers provided by Flaman's in Southey, Saskatchewan, he compared the cost of using flat bottom bins, hoppers, and grain bags to store 120,000 bushels.

The bottom line is the annual cost for grain bags came in at \$0.37 per bushel, while the flat bottom bins cost \$0.38. Hoppers cost \$0.59 per bushel each year, according to Pylypchuk's calculations.

Pylypchuk assumed the bagging system would last 10 years, and bins 25 years. He didn't include power costs for operating PTOs or power carts. Farmers can use a custom rate calculator to figure out these costs, which is available at www.agriculture.gov.sk.ca/custom_rental_rate_guide.

Pylypchuk used a two per cent spoilage rate in the grain bags, and no spoilage in the bins, which evened up the costs between the grain bags and flat-bottom bins. The actual spoilage cost will vary with crop prices. Pylypchuk encourages farmers to plug their own numbers into his spreadsheet. To get a copy of the spreadsheet with instructions, email him at mike.pylypchuk@gov.sk.ca.

Lisa Guenther is a field editor with Grainews based at Livelong, Sask. Contact her at Lisa.Guenther@fbcpublishing.com.



PHOTO: DR. CHELLADURAI VELLAICHAMY, UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA.

Grain bags and tarps may seem low-cost, but take into account the costs of the bagger and unloading, and potential loss from downgrading.

GRAIN STORAGE SYSTEM COST COMPARISONS

STORAGE PURCHASE COSTS			
	Steel Bins		Grain bags
	Hopper with Steel Foundation/Aeration	Flat bottom Concrete/Aeration	
Volume to store	120,000 bu.	120,000 bu.	120,000 bu.
Bin / bag size	5,390 bu.	12,500 bu.	12,500 bu.
No. of bins/bags needed	22.3	9.6	9.6
Cost of bin or bag	\$19,300	\$27,500	\$790
Total cost	\$429,684.60	\$264,000	\$7,584
Cost per bushel	\$3.58	\$2.20	\$0.06
Load-in auger	\$19,000	\$19,000	
Unload auger	\$10,500	\$10,500	
Bagger			\$33,200
Unloader			\$36,900
Grain Cart			\$34,900
Equipment cost:	\$29,500	\$29,500	\$105,000
Total Cost	\$459,184.60	\$293,500	\$112,584
Total invest cost/bu	\$3.83	\$2.45	\$0.94

ANNUAL STORAGE COSTS			
	Steel Bins		Grain bags
	Hopper with Steel Foundation/Aeration	Flat bottom Concrete/Aeration	
Years of life	25	25	10
Original cost	\$429,684.60	\$264,000	\$105,000
Salvage value	\$42,968.46	\$26,400	\$10,500
Depreciation	\$15,468.65	\$9,504	\$9,450
Opportunity Cost	\$9,453.06	\$5,808	\$2,310
Repairs/maintenance	\$8,593.69	\$5,280	\$5,250
Interest on investment	\$30,077.92	\$18,480	\$7,350
Augers			
Years of life	10	10	
Original cost	\$29,500	\$29,500	
Salvage value	\$2,950	\$2,950	
Depreciation	\$2,655	\$2,655	
Opportunity cost	\$649	\$649	
Repairs/maintenance	\$1,475	\$1,475	
Interest on investment	\$2,065	\$2,065	
Total annual costs	\$70,437.32	\$45,916	\$24,360
Annual cost/bu.	\$0.59	\$0.38	\$0.20
Annual bag cost/bu.			\$0.06
Spoilage cost/bu.			\$0.11
Total Annual Cost/bu.	\$0.59	\$0.38	\$0.37

Tables courtesy of Mike Pylypchuk, Saskatchewan Agriculture



CROP DISEASE

Aster yellows: hard to pin down

After heavy losses due to aster yellows in 2012, farmers are nervous. And rightly so

BY ANGELA LOVELL

Aster yellows caused significant damage and resulted in heavy yield losses in many canola fields across Western Canada in 2012.

With no economic threshold established for the disease, and no known way to effectively control the problem, it's something that's hard for farmers to get a handle on.

Aster leafhoppers have been arriving in Canada earlier and earlier every spring for the last five years. There is some speculation that drought conditions in the U.S. may have contributed to higher leafhopper infection rates and an increase in the numbers of leafhoppers in 2012.

Last year's aster yellows outbreak, the largest since 2007, coincided with an unseasonably warm Prairie spring that followed a mild winter. This meant there was more vegetation growing earlier in farmer's fields than usual, providing lots of food for the hungry adult leafhoppers, which arrived in record numbers. This year's collar spring may help.

ASTER YELLOWS THIS YEAR

This year could be a totally different story. It will depend on the

arrival dates of the leafhoppers, their numbers and infectivity, the crop stage and weather conditions.

It's basically a case of wait and see, says Dr. Chrystel Olivier, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada entomologist and leading aster yellows researcher. The only advice she can offer farmers as they head out to do spring field work is to try and keep their fields as weed free as possible. "The more weeds you have the more food source you are providing for the leafhoppers and they will have a tendency to stay there," she says.

Olivier is hoping to have a few more suggestions in a couple of years when new research into the effectiveness of seed treatments (funded by SaskCanola) determines which, if any, seed treatments are effective in providing protection against the leafhoppers.

"Most canola seed is treated for control of flea beetles. We need to know whether any of those seed treatments are effective in helping to prevent leafhopper feeding, and to see if this might explain some of the differences in aster yellows incidence and severity that we saw in different fields," says Olivier. She will test different temperatures and moisture regimes to determine if seed treatments used



The adult aster leafhopper is olive-green or straw coloured with six dark markings on the forehead. In flight they appear white.

to control flea beetles also control leafhoppers and reduce aster yellows infection in canola seedlings.

HOW ASTER YELLOWS SPREADS

Aster yellows is a bacterial infection caused by phytoplasma, which lives in plant phloem.

- The aster leafhopper is the main vector to spread the disease.
- Leafhoppers feed on infected

plants and then infect other plants when they feed on them.

- Generally only two to three per cent of leafhoppers are infected when they arrive in Canada from the southern U.S.

- Once infected, leafhoppers are infected for life.

- There is speculation that aster leafhoppers may be able to overwinter in small numbers in perennial weeds and grasses in some areas in the Prairies

- Migrant leafhoppers are the major source of infection. They generally arrive in early June.

- Leafhoppers need to feed for at least a few hours to infect a new plant.

- There is a delay of 10 to 28 days after a leafhopper becomes infected and is able to pass on the infection to new plants.

IDENTIFYING ASTER YELLOWS

Symptoms of aster yellows vary depending on the infected crop. Infected cereals will have a red or purplish discoloration and become very erect. The main symptom is empty heads.

In canola and other flowering crops, flowers are replaced by sterile, leaf-like structures and pods are malformed. Plants may turn purple or blue-green and leaves will

develop a red or purple tinge later in the season. Flowers and pods are malformed. Plants may become woody and are often taller than the rest of the plant canopy. Symptoms may be mistaken for sulphur deficiency or herbicide damage.

IDENTIFYING ASTER LEAFHOPPERS

The aster leafhopper is olive-green or straw coloured with six dark markings on the forehead. In flight they appear white.

The abdomen is charcoal and the wings are opaque. They fly between plants in short bursts and may appear to glide.

Nymphs resemble a wingless adult but are much smaller, ranging in size from 0.6 to 3.0 mm. They can be yellow to light brown or a pale, greenish-grey in colour. They scuttle sideways when disturbed.

Adult nymphs range from 3.5 to 4.0 mm. They are poor fliers and tend to glide along with wind currents.

The only way to determine whether leafhoppers are infected with aster yellows is to test their DNA.

Angela Lovell is a freelance writer, editor and communications specialist living and working in Manitoba. Find her online at www.angelalovell.ca.



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FARMER PANEL

Another season begins

Just getting started and almost done, and a range in between — that's how farmers described their seeding status in mid-May

LEE HART

Pretty well everyone was on their cell phones in the tractor cab when the evening call came in from *Grainews* asking about plans for the 2013 season. Some farmers said the season was late by a week or two, others said it just a bit later than last year and last year was a bit early, and others felt it was just about average.

A farmer in southern Alberta said it was getting to the point of being too dry in his area, while everyone else was dancing around some degree of moisture. With nice weather and wind in the days leading up to May 15, conditions were drying out fast and improving every day. Everyone was looking for another one, two or three weeks of good weather to get the job done.

And, again, all contacted said they were trying or evaluating something new this seeding season — new varieties, new crops, or new technology.

DALE LEFTWICH
ESTERHAZY, SASK.

Dale Leftwich was planning to start seeding May 15. It had just been too wet and cold on his farm at Esterhazy in southeast Saskatchewan, not far from the Manitoba border, to get on the land any sooner.

Leftwich, who along with family members crops about 3,800 acres, figured he was about two weeks behind from where he would be most years.

"There has been snow, and it has been cold, and everything was wet," he says. "The weeds weren't even growing. If we can just get two or three weeks of good weather we will get the crop seeded."

Two years ago because of excess moisture he only got half the crop seeded, and last year he got pretty well everything seeded, but that was followed by 26 inches of rain during May and June, which took its toll on plant survival and crop yield. With reasonable conditions at hand, he was hoping there are no weather extremes ahead this year.

Leftwich, a director of SaskCanola, has one field of winter wheat, which appears to be pulling through a wet spring. He was concerned earlier as there was standing water between the drill rows, but the water was gone and the crop appears to be making a good recovery.

This year he planned to seed mostly wheat and canola, although he is looking for more cropping options. He has grown oats, barley and peas in the past, but notes the weather in recent years has reduced his options. He is just on the fringe of what he considers viable corn and soybean

country — he'd like to see earlier, lower heat-unit varieties.

He is planning to try about 100 acres of faba beans this year. He is growing this field under contract so marketing shouldn't be an issue as long as they yield reasonably well. He likes having a pulse crop in rotation and faba beans may be the answer. Also with a few stones in his country it is nice to have a taller pulse crop that should be easier to harvest.

DUSTIN WILLIAMS
SOURIS, MANITOBA

Dustin Williams figured he was a week to 10 days behind in seeding compared to where he was last year at this time. By May 15, 2012 he had a good 50 per cent of the crop seeded and this year by mid-May he had only about 15 to 20 per cent in the ground.

"It was wet, but we've had a nice drying spring so conditions are good at the moment," he says. "Once we get the crop in we probably could use some rain."

Williams, who farms at Souris in southwest, Manitoba, was seeding cereals on May 15, but he was soon switching to seed an expanded soybean crop. Impressed with how 320 acres of soybeans had performed in 2012, he decided to seed about 800 acres this year.

With a lot of wind this spring



Robert Semeniuk and his wife Angela.

the soil dried out faster than he expected. He was planning to treat more land this spring with a new vertical tillage tool called a smart-till. It's a tool bar with a series of rotating spikes that can be adjusted to vary the degree of tillage.

"We did treat about 20 per cent of our land including some of the wetter areas with it last fall and I have been really impressed," he said. "It fractures the soil profile through the top eight inches, so the moisture goes down. We have been able to seed through some of those wet areas without any problem." He also used the Smart-Till on some pastureland being converted to cropland, and after a couple passes with the spikes "I'm really happy with the way it looks. I don't think I will need to cultivate it before I seed."

He was planning to smart-till more land ahead of the seeding equipment this year, but with general drying conditions it wasn't necessary. He will, however, need to be out with the mower to knock down tall stubble before seeding.

Williams is also trying some new pre-seeding chemicals on soybean acres this year targeting Roundup Ready canola volunteers and glyphosate-resistant Kochia. "And we also like to try the newer in-crop herbicides as well, to see how well they work," he says.

KRIS MAYERLE
TISDALE, SASK.

It was still pretty wet in the Tisdale area of east-central Saskatchewan, but Kris Mayerle figured they were only three or four days late in their seeding this year.

Mayerle who operates KRM Farms along with family members, said one seeding unit was seeding oats, another wheat and a third unit was seeding canola.

"Right now you have to pick and choose your fields because some areas are still pretty wet," he says. "But it is amazing how quickly it is drying up with this wind. Last Saturday there was one field we couldn't work in, but by Monday we could travel with no problem."

Mayerle is sticking pretty close to a usual rotation that includes wheat, canola, oats, and barley. He did grow some hemp last year and will have another field in 2013. And he is expanding his faba acres this year. He had a 10-acre trial field in 2012 and plans to seed about 320 acres in 2013.

"It grew well last year and seemed to handle the moisture better than some of the soybean crops in this area," he says. "Our pea acres are way down and we will put more into the faba beans."

ROBERT SEMENIUK
SMOKY LAKE, ALTA.

Robert Semeniuk jokes they are going in circles in more ways than one on his Smoky Lake area farm as he pushes ahead with the 2013 seeding season.

It was cool and wet in their area, northeast of Edmonton earlier this year, but he figures they aren't much delayed compared to most years.

"Typically we are seeding by May 6 so we may be a couple days off, but we aren't really late for this neck of the woods," says Semeniuk who along with his family operates RAS Farms. "We're not late, but the season is compressed. Conditions are good but we need to get it done."

The pulse crop was in and he was seeding wheat when contacted for comments for the Farmer Panel. One new wheat variety he is trying this year was a general purpose wheat intended for ethanol use.

And it had been an interesting day as Semeniuk had just seeded his first field using variable rate fertilizer technology.

"We have been working with our Agri-Trend coach. He came out this morning and got everything set, but even so you're wondering 'Is this really going to work?' But all went well," he says. "It was exciting to watch and amazing to see how well it all worked. You just go and it makes all the decisions."

Semeniuk applied VRT fertilizer to one 130 acre wheat field he refers to as his "Field of Dreams" in an on-farm trial to see how well the technology and concept works.

His air drill seeding system is equipped with three tanks. Prior to seeding, he used a floater to apply a flat rate of sulphur and potash to the field and then at seeding he put seed in one tank, nitrogen in another and phosphate in the third.

"It is a different approach because you have to keep everything separate, so when you refill the drill you have to have a truck for seed, then another for nitrogen and another for phosphate — it takes some getting use to."

But the technology worked well as the pre-programmed rate controller applied different rates of fertilizer over the different zones in the field. The first year of its effectiveness will be measured at harvest this fall.

"If I had to predict how well it worked, I would say at the very least, it makes fertilizer application more efficient," says Semeniuk. "We probably didn't use any less, but we applied at rates where it would do the most good and we weren't over or under applying fertilizer over the field."

Lee Hart is a field editor for *Grainews* in Calgary. Contact him at 403-592-1964 or by email at lee@fbcpublishing.com.

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Features



CROP PRODUCTION

CROP ADVISOR'S CASEBOOK

I SPY WITH MY LITTLE EYE

BY TERRY MOYER

A local farmer with an operation 20 minutes southeast of Winnipeg called our office at the beginning of July after he noticed some significant changes in one of his soybean fields over a 2-1/2 week period.

Roger, who farms 5,500 acres of wheat, winter wheat, soybeans and sunflowers, reported that large yellow patches were developing in his soybean field at the R4 stage, when the pod is three-quarters of an inch in the top four nodes.

"My crop is turning yellow," Roger explained. "I think it's suffering from an iron or zinc deficiency, but I'm not sure. Could you come out and take a look?"

I arrived at the affected soybean field to find Roger standing in the middle of it, in a very large and irregular-looking yellow patch of plants. "This is getting worse," he said, adding he'd been scouting diligently every day for additional signs of the problem. From my vantage point, things looked pretty alarming.

Besides the large, growing yellow patch within the field — the plants seemed to be suffering from chlorosis — no other symptoms jumped out at me upon first inspection. I reviewed records of recent rain events and temperature readings for

the area, but there was nothing that I considered unusual.

When I asked Roger about his field management practices, he explained that four weeks prior to my visit he had sprayed an insecticide to deter any soybean aphids, which had been a problem on nearby farms.

However, Roger was convinced a soil deficiency was to blame, so I agreed to conduct a soil test for carbonate and salt levels. I also tested for nitrogen and zinc levels within the soil strata. At the same time, I also conducted a field test that involved shaking an affected plant over a white board. Residue from the plant spread all over the board, and closer inspection of the plant's leaf revealed it was damaged. It was clear to me then that Roger had a big problem in this field, and one that was not going to be easily rectified at this stage of growth.

What is causing the chlorosis or yellowing patches in Roger's soybean field? Send your diagnosis to *Grainews*, Box 9800, Winnipeg, MB, R3C 3K7; email leeann.minogue@fbcpublishing.com or fax 204-944-5416 c/o Crop Advisor's Casebook. Best suggestions will be pooled and one winner will be drawn for a chance to win a *Grainews* cap and a one-year subscription to the magazine. The best answer, along with the reasoning which solved the mystery, will appear in the next Crop Advisor's Solution.

Terry Moyer is a regional sales agronomist for Richardson Pioneer Ltd. at Landmark, Man.



Terry Moyer



The plants seemed to be suffering from chlorosis.



Roger reported large yellow patches developing in his soybean field.

Casebook winner

This issue's winner was a combined entry from Geof Backman and Serena Giovanoli. Thanks for entering! We'll be renewing your *Grainews* subscription for a year and sending you a *Grainews* cap.

Leeann Minogue

CROP ADVISOR'S SOLUTION

PHYTOPLASMA CAN TAKE WHEAT'S STRENGTH

BY JEREMY KENNY

Harvest was just underway when I received an emergency call about some nearby wheat fields. Bruce, a local farmer who grows canola, spring and winter wheat, peas, oats, and soybeans on his operation approximately 20 kilometres south of Whitewood, Sask., explained he had some major concerns about multiple fields of wheat.

"I scout regularly, I don't understand," said Bruce. "This

week, I noticed an unusually high number of white, empty wheat heads. Could you come by and offer an opinion as to what may be causing this?"

On my way out to Bruce's farm, I thought about all of the diseases that could be causing the symptoms exhibited by the wheat plants. At the top of my list was take-all. This fungal disease causes a bleached appearance in affected plants and infects roots, causing discoloration. However, after examining the affected plants in Bruce's fields, I knew the cause of

the damage could not be take-all, since the white, empty heads were present throughout the wheat field — areas damaged from take-all occur in patches. In addition, the roots of the plants were healthy.

My next theory was that wheat stem maggots were causing the damage; however, stems did not pull out of the sheaths as they would when damaged by these pests.

I sent samples of the affected wheat plants to a laboratory to test for other diseases that can cause a bleached appearance to

plant heads, such as aster yellows and fusarium head blight. The test results indicated Bruce's wheat field had been infected with aster yellows. This disease is caused by phytoplasma, a simple, virus-like organism that requires living plant and insect hosts to survive, spread and reproduce.

Unfortunately, there were no changes to field management that Bruce could have made to deter this yield-robbing disease. In fact, there are few cropping options that are not susceptible to phytoplasma.

To help avoid infection of aster yellows, it's recommended that farmers try to control perennial weeds infected with phytoplasma, to prevent it from spreading to their crops. There is no evidence showing that spraying for the aster leafhopper (the insect vector) is economical or feasible. Simply using good agronomic practices to control weeds and early seeding are the only options to help minimize the impact of aster yellows.

Jeremy Kenny is a sales agronomist for Richardson Pioneer Ltd. at Whitewood, Sask.

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CROP MANAGEMENT

Soybean yields

Saskatchewan soybean growers probably shouldn't expect sky-high yields, but insurance coverage has been expanded

BY LISA GUENTHER

Saskatchewan farmers growing soybeans this year probably shouldn't bank on yields higher than 25 bushels per acre, says an agronomist.

"Drought and cooler temperatures can push that lower, whereas moisture and heat can push that higher. There are many agronomics practices we need to put into place before we have Saskatchewan growers consistently over that 25 bushels per acre mark," says Andrew Chisholm.

Chisholm has been a DEKALB agronomist for five years, and has worked with corn and soybeans for 15 years. He sees heat and moisture as the biggest yield limiters in Saskatchewan.

Fall frost is also a potential problem, but Chisholm writes the right genetics and earlier seeding lessens the risk. Chisholm also suggests seeding into moisture (between 0.75 and 1.5 inches). He also suggests a burn down and early weed control, between the first and third trifoliolate. To avoid salt injury, potassium and phosphorus should be applied the year before instead of being seed-applied. Farmers should also use inoculants and a full seed treatment.

"Those will definitely help the grower maximize yield."

Genetics have improved greatly in the last five years, but farmers north of Highway 16 should be cautious, as they may not have the heat needed for maturity. Farmers living around Highway 1 and further south will likely have the heat and moisture to grow soybeans successfully. Southwestern Saskatchewan has the heat, but may not have enough moisture.

"The Sask. Crop Insurance map for soybeans is a good spot to start looking on whether your area is suitable to grow soybeans," Chisholm says.

INSURABLE ZONE EXPANDS

Initially Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation only covered soybeans in southeast Saskatchewan.

"We were aware that there were producers trying soybeans outside of our insurable area. So based on that information we've expanded

to the west part of the province all the way up to the Alberta border," says Jeff Morrow, vice president of operations.

Each zone has slightly different yield coverage. In Zone 1, farmers can insure 21.5 bushels per acre. In the second zone, they can insure 18 bushels per acre.

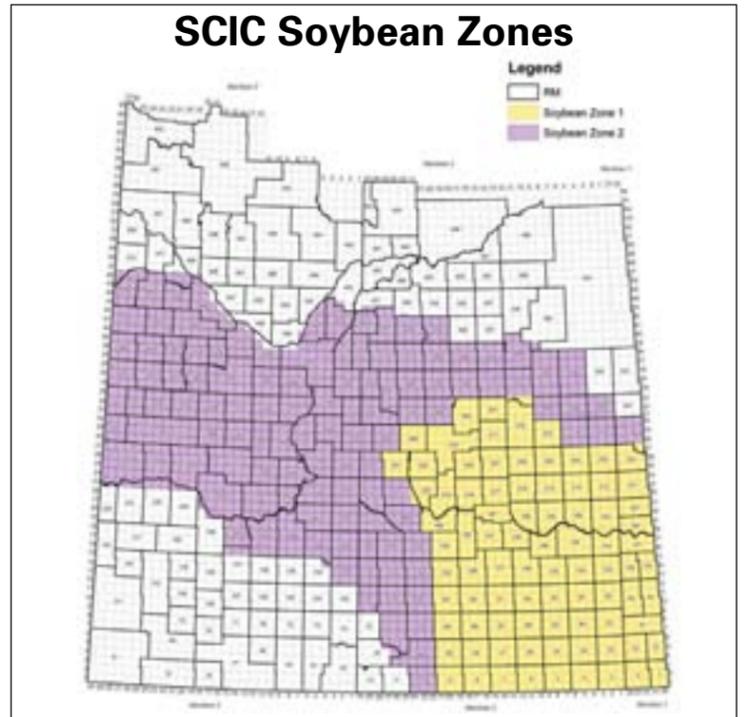
"They would pick 50, 60, or 70 per cent of that yield. Eighteen times 70 per cent, for example, would be the coverage. And if it's below that yield, we start paying out," Morrow says.

Excess moisture kept insured soybean acres down to 4,400 in 2010,

and 2,600 in 2011. But in 2012, 28,000 soybean acres were insured. Morrow says Sask. Crop Insurance gathers yield history from farmers each year and updates the long-term average yields accordingly.

"The yields in Zone 1 and 2 were based on actual producer historic data, whatever we could gather from producers. So that yield guarantee in Zone 2 was based on what producers had been growing and reported to us over the last few years."

Lisa Guenther is a field editor with Grainews based at Livelong, Sask. Contact her at Lisa.Guenther@fbcpublishing.com.



Insurable zones for soybeans in 2013. Map courtesy of Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation.

COULDA SHOULDNA WOULDNA DID



BY DAN PIRARO

Bizarro





Know your grain contracts

Knowing the ins and out of these four types of grain contracts could help you choose the best deal for your business

BY BRIAN WITTAL

Let's review types of pricing contracts offered by grain companies.

Most grain companies have come up with a number of variations of price averaging contracts, minimum price/options contracts, premium plus and target price contracts.

These innovations in contracting provide you with many different choices, but along with these choices comes more confusion. Choice is always a good thing, but you need to understand your options to make good decisions for you and your farming business.

1. PRICE AVERAGING CONTRACTS

Price averaging contracts offer you the ability to price your grain by taking the average of the daily price over a given period of time — 30, 60, 90 or 120 days or more.

These types of contracts will give you an average price. Some of them offer the ability to price out your contract on any given day so that if you think you have seen a market high for your averaging period, you can cash out your contract and be done.

In my opinion, price-averaging contracts have a tendency of making you sell your grain and then forget it. For some, this may be

what you are looking for if you don't have the time to manage the operations and do all the marketing. But if you want better than average returns for your grain, you need to pay attention to the market and try to lock in a price that will be better than the average offered under these programs.

A number of variations of price averaging contracts are being offered. Do some research and find what will work best for you before committing to anyone.

2. MINIMUM PRICE/OPTIONS CONTRACTS

Minimum price/options contracts offer you the ability to

establish a minimum (or floor) price for your grain while remaining in the market, so if futures values increase you can lock in the higher price.

These types of contracts have very specific time periods, and you will pay a premium — either up front, as a deduction off your net price, or blended into basis.

There is a cost to these contracts because the companies offering them hold all of the pricing risk. The only way for them to protect themselves is by hedging or using options contracts, and all of those come with a cost.

These types of contracts work very well in helping you lock in a guaranteed price for your grains

while leaving you the upside potential. But you need to pay close attention to what the markets are doing so you don't miss good pricing opportunities.

3. PREMIUM PLUS CONTRACTS

Premium plus contracts come with a few variations. Usually the contract offers you a premium when you sign up to deliver some old crop grain, if you agree to sell an equal tonnage of new crop grain to them after harvest.

I have also seen contracts where, once you sign one contract, the company will offer you a premium to sell them a similar amount of another crop (like canola, barley or peas) that they need at that time.

These types of contracts are a good way to make a few extra dollars. I believe that if you cannot deliver the extra grain after harvest due to production loss, there is usually no buyback. If you haven't pre-priced the grain, you just forfeit the premium.

4. TARGET CONTRACTS

Target contracts allow you to set a delivery period and a price target that the grain company will monitor for you. If the futures and/or basis levels change enough to meet your target price, the company will automatically convert your target contract into a priced contract.

You need to make sure you're following any target contracts that you have out there. Make sure you aren't double contracting any of your tonnes, as two companies could trigger a contract on the same day, which could mean you may have to buy back one of the contracts.

TWO MORE TIPS

This is a very brief and generic summary of some of the different types of contracts available out there in the grain industry. Here are two tips that might also help.

1. Don't over commit. Most of these different types of contracts offered by the grain companies commit you to delivery. You need to be very careful not to contract too many tonnes; if you end up with a production shortfall at harvest time, you will be required to buy back your shortfall tonnes.

2. Know the costs. Some of these contracts come with an associated cost. Make sure you understand the details and the costs before you commit to anything

To better understand the details of the different contracts offered by the various companies, I advise you go to their websites and review the information. Then call your local company rep, or send me an email if you have any questions.

Now you have some homework to do on those quiet evenings at home.



For unparalleled yield and quality in your wheat and barley crops, choose Prosaro® fungicide. It delivers premium disease protection against fusarium head blight (FHB), reduces DON levels and controls leaf diseases.

Two leading actives – tebuconazole for fast activity and prothioconazole for future defence – bring curative and preventative properties to your crop. Prosaro is truly the complete package for protecting both cereal crops and your peace of mind.

For more information, visit BayerCropScience.ca/Prosaro



Bayer CropScience



Free charting service to buy and sell stocks

Having more information and knowing how to use it can help you make more money with your investments



ANDY SIRSKI

While you're out in the field putting in your crop, you might have some time to think about how a free charting service called Barchart.com could help you buy good shares low and sell them a little higher to lock in a swath of profit from the middle.

There certainly is a lot of money out there to be had. We just have to learn how to get it and keep it. I try to teach readers these two things all the time. Some learn faster than others, but if you stick with it, odds are almost anyone can learn.

WWW.BARCHART.COM

To get to the free site, enter www.barchart.com. Next, on the left side of the screen, type in the symbol for the stock you want to study and click "go." Some days the site seems to prefer U.S. stocks; to find a Canadian stock type ".to" after the stock symbol.

Next, on the left hand side of your screen click on "Barchart opinion." You should see a screen full of stuff — find the word "trendspotter" and click on it. If all goes well you should see a blue chart of the daily price of your chosen stock and below the blue you should see a series of black dots that sort of follow the price chart most of the time, either above or below the blue chart.

From there on it is simple. If the blue chart is above the black it is a bullish sign and we might want to hold the shares (and, if we are selling calls, sell calls above the price of the day). When or if the share price falls below the black dots, that's a signal to sell (or sell calls well below the price of the day or even buy puts).

If the shares have bottomed and poked above the black dots,

it could be a signal to buy the shares. When or if the blue chart drops below the black dots it might be wise to sell the shares or sell calls deep in the money.

For many stocks I checked, if I had bought shares when the price jumped above the black dots and sold them when the price dropped below the black dots, I would have made money (or at least not lost money). Check to see how your stocks have behaved on those charts over the past year or so.

I did not study the background of this charting system but it seems to match about the 50 day moving average. That is a bit slow, but as I said it does take some of the judgment out of buying low and selling before the price of shares drops too much.

SPREADS AND COVERED CALLS

I think my education on doing bull put credit spreads is paying off. Here are a couple of rules I've set up for myself. One is to only do bull put credit spreads on rising stocks. If a stock drops after I do the spread, I should get out of the contracts totally or get out and roll them down a few notches.

The other rule is to do spreads on stocks that have a low beta. Beta on a stock is an indicator of how much the shares move up or down compared to the overall market. If a stock has a beta of one it moves more or less with the market. If the beta is two it would normally move twice as much as the market. If the beta is less than one the shares move up and down less than the market.

Last week I did a bull put credit spread on 1,000 shares of Home Depot (HD). I sold the May put with a strike price of \$67.50 and bought the May put with a strike price of \$65. I collected \$507 and spent \$332 (to keep \$175). That was on \$2,325 of margin money for three weeks — roughly eight per cent return for less than a month. The price of HD was around \$74 and more

or less rising. I did a bull put credit spread well below that price, reducing the odds that I might have to buy the shares.

A reader called and we talked about doing a spread on Phillip Morse (PM), the smokes company. The price of shares was around \$95 so I sold the expensive put at \$92.50 and collected \$315, then bought the cheaper put for with a \$90 strike price for May for a cost of \$172. I kept \$143 for two weeks and \$2,357 of margin money — six per cent for two weeks.

HD and PM both have betas around 0.86, so neither move much unless the market moves a lot.



All that really matters is what my stocks are doing

Finally, I bought 100 shares of PotashCorp (POT) for \$42.71 per share. This is a starter position. Ag stocks often go up starting in June but we could see some downturn for a while, so I figured 100 shares was a good way to start.

OTHER SHARES

Yamana (YRI): I owned YRI stock several years ago when shares were trading at \$11 to \$12. I made thousands of dollars selling calls around that price, then the shares moved up so I let them go. YRI went to about \$22; now they are again around \$12. I paid around \$15 for 1,000 shares but expect to break even over time. I sold a call with a strike price of \$12 for May; today I bought them back and kept about \$90. Then I sold a call with a strike price of \$12 for June and picked up another \$427.

Disney (DIS): On May 7 I did a spread on Disney shares. This might be the season for "sell in May and go away." Disney has a beta of 1.2, so I did the spread well below the price of the day

— \$65. I sold the June \$60 and bought the June \$57.50. I kept \$75, which on \$2,425 of margin money is a three per cent return for five weeks.

First Majestic (FR) After reading FR's annual report and talking to their investor relations person in Vancouver, I've determined that their in-house cash cost of silver production is \$5.20 per ounce. There is a big difference between the numbers used to calculate actual production costs, taxation costs and costs net of credits. The investor relations person said that FR's total cost of production was likely in the bottom 10 per cent of the industry.

FR has recently commissioned its latest silver mine, so its fixed costs will be spread over more ounces. I don't know if the price of silver will drop below \$20, but if it did, it sounds like FR would be a survivor. I own a few thousand shares that I bought between \$18 and \$20 per share, but by selling calls I've brought my paper cost down anywhere from \$2 to \$6 per share.

FR's business strategy is to stick to mining in Mexico, which is friendly to miners, and to stick to finding, mining and selling silver.

FR's investor relations person also said that the company has \$100 million in cash so it can withstand a short downturn in prices. He agreed with me that the price of silver was trashed by a series of events which included speculative action that triggered stop losses on margined silver and gold and the price of silver was oversold.

He also said that FR was in a position to hold back silver if the price dropped too much. Some in the industry have suggested companies should not sell more silver than necessary to keep cash flow going which would help drive prices up a little sooner. My chat with FR has more or less assured me that we are on a good track with shares of FR and with silver in general.

My big mistake this winter was that I was hoping the price of silver would go up as it normally

does in the early part of the year so I didn't sell calls on all of my shares. If I had believed the charts on silver and gold and their shares, I would have sold calls deep in the money or dumped the shares. While these commodities move up and down a lot, I don't think speculators can resist playing in this sand box so I look forward to believing the charts and making money as the shares move up and down.

Normally silver prices are affected by the seasons and by weddings in India, Christmas, Valentine's Day and so on. With FR's low production costs, good cash position and lots of silver to mine, I might be wise to buy more shares at these low prices but that might be overdoing it with one stock.

Next time (that famous "next time") when the price of silver crosses the 10-day moving average going down and the price of shares drops on the barchart I mentioned above, I will either sell some shares or sell calls well below the price of the day and get ahead of the drop.

This has been an interesting winter. I learned how to bring in cash by doing spreads on some select stocks. I figured out a few rules to use when doing spreads. Plus I proved once again that if the price of a commodity or stock is dropping we should not invest with hope: we should take steps to keep losses small and or to lock in profits near the top. After all it doesn't matter what any expert says or what the price of silver will be in five months or give years. All that really matters is what my stocks are doing. Price action really is all that matters, not promises or hope.

I believe, or at least hope, that I have a few thousand opportunities to make money with our stocks in my lifetime. If I screw up now and then I believe I can work my way back to success. ✍

Andy Sirski is more or less retired. He plays with his granddaughters, travels a bit, gardens and manages his own portfolio. He also publishes an electronic newsletter called StocksTalk where he tells what he does with his stocks and why. To read StocksTalk free for a month send a note to Andy at sirski@mts.net.

CANOLA M.D.

Columns



GUARDING WEALTH

Risk reduction through global diversification

Offshore accounts and investments can make financial sense if done legally

BY ANDREW ALLENTUCK

One way to increase your financial security is diversification — spreading your assets among sectors and markets. That way, a single event that injures one stock or bond will not crush your entire portfolio.

Farmers usually have almost all of their money tied up in their land, buildings and equipment. Therefore it is a good idea to invest off-farm income as far away from the farm as possible. That means investing in non-agricultural industry, perhaps putting money into foreign jurisdictions. Done properly, such diversification is wise and legal. Legality means complying with Canada Revenue Agency procedures. It is easy.

If you have more than US\$100,000 abroad or in property with a situs — that is, a base — outside of Canada (that includes American and other foreign stocks held in Canadian accounts), then you must complete and file CRA form T1135 each year at tax time.

The Canada Revenue Agency document is a tick-off that takes a few minutes. It asks what regions of the world are involved and provides a little set of brackets for tallying up amounts. Canadian assets, such as mutual funds based in Canada, are Canadian and not foreign assets, no matter what they are invested in.

There is nothing wrong with having a foreign bank or investment account. Canadians who have winter homes in Florida or Arizona can quite reasonably have U.S. bank accounts with which to pay bills, get money without having to be dinged for foreign exchange fees and perhaps to make U.S. investments. Canadian people and companies that do business in London quite properly have banking arrangements there. It facilitates trade and can provide other benefits such as getting you into contact with bankers who know the right people.

You don't need to be where your money is to justify having accounts outside of Canada. A child may go to a university in the United States or France. If you and the kid have accounts in the foreign country, it is easy to shuffle money without the bother of having your bank in Canada send money via the private money transfer network called Swift do it — always at a charge, of course.

Privacy is another reason for having foreign accounts. Your chartered bank or credit union may obey Canadian laws pertaining to privacy of information, but Swiss banks are the champs in the business of saying nothing to anybody, unless they are foreign tax authorities. These days they comply with requests for information from foreign revenue agencies, so hiding money in Zurich for tax evasion is not a good idea.

There are other reasons to bank in Switzerland. Swiss banks offer financial products and services not available in Canada. You can get a Euro denominated mutual fund that invests in Scandinavia, not a bad idea if you plan to retire in, say, Sweden. If for some reason you want a Japanese Yen fund that invests in Mexico, it's available. You can't get such investment products in Canada.

TAX MINIMIZATION

There are, of course, people who want to hide money from creditors or tax authorities. For them, there are many jurisdictions, scores in fact, where banks will be happy to take your money. But beware — some are one-way operations that will not give it back.

In reality, legal tax minimization is anything but a free trip. Advisors are ready to help, but at a charge. You want to keep things legal, so you'll need tax counsel in Canada at \$300 per hour and up. You will need advice and a lawyer in the foreign entity.

Transfers may require trips to the foreign country, bags of cash that attract attention and may be confiscated by customs authorities

and even payoffs to people who find out what's going on.

It gets worse. Vanuatu, population 225,000, an archipelago in the South Pacific east of Australia, is said to be a lovely place to visit and not a bad place to bank, but on the out islands, there continue to be rumours of cannibalism. The government of Vanuatu takes pains on its official website to deny them, but tourist guide books suggest that if you do go out from the capital, Port Vila, you take plenty of food as gifts for the locals.

There is a division between reasonable diversification of money and idiocy.

Canada is not such a bad place to keep money. The banks are honest, you know the law and customs and you can pick a province for low corporate tax rates or even

move with your money to low tax Alberta. Most of all, we have a reasonable and even generous regime of taxes at death.

In 2012, the U.S. taxed estates on a graduated scale in full over US\$500,000 at rates of 18 to 35 per cent with about US\$5 million exemption for U.S. citizens (2012 rates) and thus taxes thrift as well as the income used to build estates. Canada only taxes accrued but unrealized gains at death. Spouses get a shift of asset values, so that postpones tax of accrued gains for perhaps a generation. Canada is a death tax haven compared to the U.S.

Geographic diversification can be achieved by buying exchange traded funds that invest in foreign stock markets. The MSCI EAFE Index which holds stocks of companies in

Europe, Australasia and the Far East, provides a lot of diversification. You can buy U.S. stocks or ETFs that replicate the broad index of U.S. large cap stocks, the S&P 500 Composite.

Keeping money abroad can be part of the strategy and it works well enough as long as you report it to CRA and understand the problems that can arise when you try to do business across time zones with currencies that change in value. If you choose to put money in the places that do not report to Canadian tax authorities, most of which are dodgy and many of which provide havens for money from unsavoury activities, you are adding to risk, not reducing it. May the investor beware.

Andrew Allentuck's latest book, "When Can I Retire? Planning Your Financial Life After Work," was published in 2011 by Penguin Canada.



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TO SPRAY OR

FLAG LEAF TIMING

HEAD TIMING

DON'T SPRAY

The only time you shouldn't spray is when you have a poor looking crop and you are not in a fusarium head blight (FHB) area.

CONSIDER SPRAYING

If your crop doesn't look good, but you are in an FHB area, a fungicide application can still pay for itself and safeguard the yield and quality of your grain. Do some calculations and if your potential disease risk and ROI exceed the cost of application – you should protect your crop with a fungicide.

SPRAY

If your crop looks good, you will definitely want to protect your investment with a fungicide application. Which product will provide the most bang for your buck? It depends on crop staging, current disease pressure and potential disease risks. Here is a quick chart to help make your fungicide decision easier.

FLAG LEAF TIMING	HEAD TIMING
No visible disease present	No visible disease present
No visible disease present	No visible disease present SPRAY
Leaf disease on upper leaves and/or flag leaf SPRAY	–
Leaf disease on upper leaves and/or flag leaf SPRAY	–
Leaf disease only (lower to mid leaves)	Leaf disease only SPRAY
Leaf disease only (lower to mid leaves)	Leaf disease only SPRAY



Bayer CropScience

To see how It Pays to Spray in your area visit BayerCropScience.ca/ItPaystoSpray

BayerCropScience.ca/ItPaystoSpray or 1 888-283-6847 or contact your Bayer CropScience representative. Always read and follow label directions. Folicur® and Prosaro® are registered trademarks of the Bayer Group. Bayer CropScience is a member of CropLife Canada.

NOT TO SPRAY



FHB AREA

WHAT SHOULD YOU SPRAY?

GAIN IN YIELD*

NO

Even when you can't see disease symptoms, there is no such thing as a disease-free crop. A good crop is worth protecting – consider spraying an application of Folicur® EW or Prosaro® applied at head timing to help ensure top grade, quality and yield.

+ 4.6 bu./ac.

Folicur EW 3/4 rate, flag leaf

OR

+ 9.4 bu./ac.

Prosaro, head

YES

There is no such thing as a disease-free crop. Even in the absence of disease symptoms, the mere fact that you are in an FHB area means you need to protect your crop. Apply Prosaro at head timing.

+ 1.8 bu./ac.

Folicur EW full rate, head

OR

+ 3.1 bu./ac.

Prosaro, head

NO

Leaf disease damage to upper leaves or the flag leaf can cause irreparable injury to your crop and immediate action is required. Spray Folicur EW and re-assess at head timing to determine whether a second fungicide application is required.

+ 9.8 bu./ac.

Folicur EW 3/4 rate, flag leaf

YES

Spray Folicur EW and re-assess at head timing to determine whether a second fungicide application is required.

+ 4.4 bu./ac.

Folicur EW 3/4 rate, flag leaf

OR

+ 8.5 bu./ac.

Prosaro, head

NO

When leaf disease is limited to lower/mid leaves at flag leaf timing, the damage is negligible. Re-assess at head timing and if you still only see leaf disease you can spray either Folicur EW or Prosaro.

+ 7 bu./ac.

Folicur EW 3/4 rate, flag leaf

OR

+ 7 bu./ac.

Folicur EW full rate, head

OR

+ 10 bu./ac.

Prosaro full rate, head

YES

Whenever you are in an FHB area, you should spray Prosaro. However, if leaf disease is limited to the lower/mid leaves you have the ability to make your Prosaro application at head timing to cover both leaf disease and FHB.

+ 5.8 bu./ac.

Folicur EW full rate, head

OR

+ 8.5 bu./ac.

Prosaro, head

*Gain in yield based on multi-year wheat Demonstration Strip Trial (DST) results in Western Canada, 2008-2012. Results compared to yield of untreated check.



Columns



CAN'T TAKE THE FARM FROM THE BOY

Side benefits of farming

New neighbours — eight baby foxes — are binding Toban Dyck and his wife more tightly to the farm



TOBAN DYCK

It's busy on the farm now. My fingernails are outlined by what seems to be a permanent, u-shaped bead of grease. It feels right.

We've been here now closing in on 10 months. This farming season will be my first — from seeding to harvest — in many, many years. I'm excited. My wife's excited. But who wouldn't be, waking up to a big summer sky, spending evenings sitting outside listening to the symphony that is a forest alive and well? The frogs are loud, soothing, and the diversity of birds feasting at our feeder is best observed with a book: *Manitoba Birds*.

My wife was not expecting to find baby foxes living between our home and the cresting Dead Horse Creek. It took a bit to identify them as kits, and only after some Google image searches and much deliberation. It's hard to

distinguish features when animals are so young.

FINDING THE FOXES

Our dog had been suspiciously interested in a mound of earth and large, broken-up concrete slabs a few metres from the creek, a very industrial looking hill, especially for eight baby, heart-melting foxes.

The babies came out when our dog would come near. At first, we only saw three kits, yet unconfident on their legs, but fuzzy and open-eyed. One crawled right over my rubber boot, making a sound resembling what you'd imagine a whimper, meow, chirp and bark to sound in one noise. And it's a sound that makes you want to take the little ones home.

Our dog is big — a St. Bernard-Boxer cross, and we feared the worst. It would have been very sad. It would have been devastating for my parents, too, as in all their years on the farm, they had never before seen baby foxes on the property.

Our dog turned what I know

of farm dogs on its head. From what we could see, our massive dog wanted to mother these tiny creatures. And, they wanted to be mothered by her. It was, perhaps, the most adorable cross-species encounter I have ever seen. Our dog sniffed, then licked, then did the same to each baby fox. We called the neighbours over.

The next day, our dog buried her torso in the den and teased out five more kits. This time her mothering instincts seemed ramped up. Each kit got a little more attention from her.

The three brown, furry clumps my wife saw laying on the crushed rock inches from our house when she got home from work the next day caused her heart to skip a beat. Those clumps are baby foxes, and they are dead, she thought. A big dog can do bad things to small things without intending to.

They were very much alive. My wife walked towards them, heavy-hearted, and the little bundles perked up and started scurrying around. They were sunning themselves. But they were away from



Toban and his wife were not expecting to find baby foxes so close to their farm.

their den, and away from their mother. The woods can be a cruel place. Mothers will desert their litter for fraternizing with other species. We wore gloves.

This happened a few times, our dog bringing the kits back to our deck and yard, and us returning them to the den. The most caloused among us would have felt the same heaviness we felt.

The forest is still singing with frogs, birds and other things we haven't discovered yet. And the fox den has matured enough to

be of little interest to our dog. The mother is still with them, and the creek, which, for a day or two, left the kits marooned on their mound, is now at normal levels.

It was a nice distraction from a winter that didn't seem to end, and a seeding season that couldn't start soon enough.

We still hear the kits when we walk by. They are alive and well. ✍️

Toban Dyck is a freelance writer and a new farmer on an old farm. Follow him on Twitter @tobandyck or email tobandyck@gmail.com.

SOILS AND CROPS

Rain and roots: not always simple

It is not really true that crops need dry weather to force their roots down



LES HENRY

When we experience a wet May you often hear someone say, "the crop will be shallow rooted because the moisture is near the surface and the crop doesn't have to root down."

With a soil probe, I've seen for many years that a crop roots down very nicely in soil at the field capacity moisture content. In 2010 we had 11 inches of rain by July 1 and another three inches in July. Probing showed wheat roots down three feet or more. At the end of July the moisture was half gone in the top foot, but still at field capacity below that.

In 2010, folks at the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Scott Research Farm used a much more sophisticated technique to study rooting of several crops. They installed plastic tubes where a soil core had been removed and got actual pictures of the root. Despite 14 inches of rain, they found very deep rooting in July — sometimes deeper than the one metre soil depth they were studying.

So, roots grow down quite well in field capacity soil despite good rain early in the growing season. However, crop roots do not grow down through dry soil.

ROOTS IN DRY SOIL

If a soil is only moist to two feet or less at seeding and bone dry below that, early season rain can keep the crop growing nicely. But if July rains fail and

the crop has depleted the soil moisture, then it is all over but the shouting in a few hot days. That circumstance led to the "old wives tale" of early rains resulting in shallow rooted crops.

If a crop hangs on despite July drought, it is because of lots of deep soil moisture. The roots find it just fine, thank you very much!

Often an inch of rain in late July is credited with "saving" a crop. I remember a good rain many years ago on the weekend of the Craven Jamboree in late July. (If you have not heard of Craven jamboree you must live on the moon. Google it.)

That fall, my soil moisture probing for the Stubble Soil Moisture Map showed that the July rain was still resting comfortably in the top six inches or so. By the time the rain came

the crop was past the high water use stage.

All this talk of dry soil may have you thinking that this old fossil must be on the moon. Doesn't he know we've had a string of wet years?

That brings me to another scenario: The soil is at field capacity moisture at seeding time and the water table is within six feet or so of the soil surface. Then there are buckets and buckets more rain. When a soil is at field capacity moisture and more rain falls, the result is a rise in the water table. In a clay soil, an extra inch of rain will bring the water table up a foot. Less in medium or sandy soils.

That might mean that the water table is now two feet or less from the soil surface. Now, roots do say whoa. They will not root into the water table. Now you have a

shallow rooted crop that will do very poorly.

If you see water gathering in the ruts of the sprayer, you know the water table is right there and crops will indeed be waterlogged.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The take home message is this: *A crop does not need a dry spell to "force" the roots down.*

A crop will root down very nicely in a moist soil. The roots are then in place to deliver the water to the plant in a dry spell. ✍️

J.L.(Les) Henry is a former professor and extension specialist at the University of Saskatchewan. He farms at Dundurn, Sask. He recently finished a second printing of "Henry's Handbook of Soil and Water," a book that mixes the basics and practical aspects of soil, fertilizer and farming. Les will cover the shipping and GST for Grainews readers. Send a cheque for \$50 to Henry Perspectives, 143 Tucker Cres, Saskatoon, SK, S7H 3H7, and he will dispatch a signed book.

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FACTORY TOURS

Driving a New Holland combine off the line

Anyone buying a CR Series combine can make the trip to Grand Island, Nebraska, and be the first one to start their own machine

BY SCOTT GARVEY

There's a lot more interest now (from customers who want to see their combine being built)," says Jim Moellenberndt, the marketing specialist manager who oversees the customer drive-off program for New Holland combines at CNH's Grand Island, Nebraska, assembly plant. "We've actually done a lot more (customer visits) this year because of the later spring. Farmers should be in the fields, but because of the weather they can't be."

New Holland, like all the other major brands, offers farmers who buy one of its rotary combines the chance to be a VIP for the day; they can see their own machine being built and get an exclusive tour through the Grand Island plant, where nearly all the CR Series combines bound for North American farms are assembled.

Through their local dealer, farmers can arrange to be at the factory on the day their combine rolls off the line. According to Moellenberndt, the brand wants that experience to be well worth the trip. So customers aren't restricted to just standing on the sidelines and watching, they actually get involved in the process.

"We like to have (the customer) there before the engine is started for the first time," he says "He'll be the one to turn the key and start the engine for the first time. Then he gets to sit in the seat with the technician as it goes through its dyno checks. He'll also have the opportunity then to

watch the final check at the end of the line and drive the combine off the end of the line. If the combine has GPS on it, he actually goes out and drives the combine to set the A-B lines with the operator."

"We're currently in the process of promoting this program," says Mike Kizis, cash crop marketing specialist at NH. "We want people to come and do it. We're making it easier for our customers and dealers to arrange these visits."

TAKING THE TOUR

Any combine customer who visits the plant will also leave with a good understanding of how combines are built. The customer, and anyone who arrives with him, will get a personal tour guide to show them around the entire facility. "We have a tour guide who takes just this customer and anyone who comes with him," says Moellenberndt. "They'll get a complete plant tour; it's about two hours."

And NH wants their customers to get up close and personal with the people working on the assembly line. "They'll get a chance to go into the individual areas and talk to the operators that are putting these combines together," he adds.

"The opportunity to tour our plant is very unique, because you can go right up to the line and talk to the workers," says Kizis. "You can go right up and see things. We don't stage you in a lane and make you watch from afar. At Grand Island we want

you to bring your camera and we want you to talk to the employees."

"There are a lot of employees that will actually go over and thank the customer and shake his hand," adds Moellenberndt. "That's kind of a nice special touch that happens at the Grand Island plant."

And Moellenberndt says whenever possible the plant staff will try and accommodate special requests. "We had one customer that had several people from the plant sign the side sheet of the combine," he explains. "Then, they had that side sheet clear coated to preserve those signatures."

Would staff do that again if other customers requested it? "Sure," says Moellenberndt.

While NH doesn't charge combine customers anything to visit the plant, travel costs and arrangements will be the farmer's responsibility — unless the dealer decides to pick up the tab. NH will, however, provide you with some tips to help make the trip go smoothly. And, they have arranged special room rates with a couple of hotels near the plant to help farmers keep costs down. "We have hotels both at Grand Island and up at Racine that we work with that have special rates," he says.

If you buy one of NH's CX Series conventional models, though, they are built in Belgium. Seeing those combines built involves a lot more effort, but it is possible. "It isn't that they can't go to Belgium to see the CX being made, it's just that it's a long way to go for a four-hour tour," says Moellenberndt.

Each year NH arranges for tour groups



PHOTO: JIM MOELLENBERNDT

Two customers pose with their new combine and a company representative at the end of the assembly line at CNH's Grand Island, Nebraska, assembly plant. Both Case IH and New Holland rotary combines are built there.

from North America to travel to its Belgium plant and take part in a two-day arranged visit, but it isn't part of the drive-off program where customers can see their own machines being built. "We usually offer tours in Belgium during the January, February time frame," Moellenberndt adds. "If we have a customer that is in that tour that happens to be there at that time (when their machine is on the line), they can see their combine being built."

"We've done the Belgium tour now every year for 19 years," explains Kizis." ✍

Scott Garvey is machinery editor for Grainews. Contact him at scott.garvey@fbcpublishing.com.



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FACTORY TOURS

Driving it off the lot

When their new combine was at the end of the assembly line, Leann Minogue and her husband took a tour of CNH's Nebraska plant

BY LEEANN MINOGUE

My husband had known for years that when you buy a new combine, if you show up at the combine plant on the right day, you can drive it off the assembly line yourself. Brad had always wanted to do this, but when he found out our new Case IH combine was scheduled to roll off the line in April, he didn't imagine he'd be able to get away from the farm.

But when we still had six-foot snowbanks in the front yard in late March, Brad realized that the trip might be possible. He bought plane tickets, booked a hotel and worked out the logistics with our Case IH dealer.

WELCOME TO NEBRASKA

We flew in to Lincoln, Nebraska the night before our combine was scheduled to be finished. Lincoln is the closest airport to the factory in Grand Island — a city of about 50,000 people, 90 minutes west of Lincoln.

The next morning, we turned up at the plant at 10:00 a.m., to find out that our combine would be the last one off the line that day. We'd get to see as much of our combine's "build" as possible in one day.

We had been a little worried about that. Who would have guessed that a corporation that puts together as many combines as Case IH could accurately predict when one specific combine would be finished, three weeks in advance?

But not only were they finishing our combine on the right day, they had a private tour guide waiting for us in the visitor's area.

John Rasmussen spent the whole day with us. After 40 years as an engineer with CNH, Rasmussen seven years ago. Now he works part-time, leading factory tours. On average, one owner drives their new machine off the line every day. "Our record was seven in one day," Rasmussen said. He told us Case IH provides a guide for all buyers who come to Grand Island to see their own combine to completion. "We'll do everything we can to make this day special for you," Rasmussen said.

The first part of making our day special was outfitting us with hardhats, protective eye wear, and steel-toed shoe covers. Then, Rasmussen led us into the huge, high-ceiling factory area (900,000 square feet). He told us there were 1,110 workers in the shop, and another 130 in admin offices in the next building. And this is only one of CNH's three manufacturing buildings in Grand Island.

"Try to stay on this track," he told us, pointing to a pedestrian zone marked with white paint. Generally, forklifts, electrical carts and other machines try to keep out of this walkway, to avoid hitting guests and staff.

It's a good thing there was a safe track. There was a lot of stuff going on in this factor. With all the people, carts, and forklifts zooming around from place to place in the building, I was relieved that they



Assembly line workers at CNH's plant in Grand Island used remote control hoists to "marry" the cab to the frame of the combine.



Brad watched them attach the feeder house to the new combine.



Retired CNH engineer John Rasmussen now works part-time touring "special guests" through the CNH factory in Grand Island.



This was the big moment. Brad drove the combine out the door, and into a grey Nebraska day.

don't allow kids under 12 on these tours. It wouldn't have taken long for our curious kindergartener to find a way to get hurt.

ON THE LINE

As you might expect, there are several assembly stations in the plant. When things are running according to plan, every combine stops at each of 31 different stations for 15 minutes.

Above each station, a large digital sign counts down the seconds to the end of the 15-minute cycle. The signs show how many combines have been finished already, how many are left to finish today and what time they should be finished. If there are delays, workers will stay longer to finish the job. Generally, when the combines scheduled for the day are built, these non-unionized workers can go home.

These days, Rasmussen says, they're building 29 combines a day at Grand Island, most days. But, as he reminds us, "These are good times."

We got to the plant just in time to see the "marriage" of our machine — the big moment when the cab is attached to the frame for the first time. This is done by remote control, with hoists. This is the point where our combine begins to look like a combine for the first time — a perfect time for us to arrive.

I expected a combine factory to look like something from an old Charlie Chaplin movie, with each worker having a job like "attach Part B to Part A by turning wrench

six times." But it was nothing like that.

For one thing, there's more than one type of combine going through the plant.

Years ago, assembly lines would turn out rows of identical machines. End user options would be added on later.

But the Grand Island plant is a "mixed model manufacturer." Not only do they make both Case IH and New Holland brand combines in this plant, they make several different sizes of machine. Customer options are installed right on the factory floor.

The combine moving along the line behind ours was a yellow New Holland machine. The one in front was headed for Europe. It left the line with special EU road warning stickers. Lots of machines need special modification to meet foreign regulations — this is one of only two Case IH combine manufacturing plants in the world (the other is in Brazil). Combines built here ship to 34 different countries.

Rasmussen told us that all of the combines that come off this line are "complete when they go out the door." This makes the process more interesting for assembly line workers, but it also makes things more complicated. Staff need more skills, and need to work together as teams at each station. The serial number on each machine is used to track all of the options requested for the machine.

To get each combine right, workers use a "shopping list" to fill up

a "kit cart" with the parts needed for each individual combine. One of these carts travels down the line with each combine.

There are a lot of parts to track. "If it wasn't for computers, of course, there wouldn't be a chance," Rasmussen said.

STARTING THE MACHINE

Soon it was time for the part Brad had been most excited about. Fairly soon after we got there, he got to start the new combine for the first time.

Rasmussen warned Brad not to be alarmed by the noise when he first turned the key. The air had to bleed out of the hydraulics. "There will be a lot of growling," Rasmussen said.

I was nervous. What if we came all this way and it wouldn't start?

On average, Rasmussen said, there are 18,000 parts in a combine. To make each machine start properly, Rasmussen said, "a lot of things have got to go right."

Brad climbed the ladder and got into the cab. He turned the key. It started right up. Whew.

Brad stayed in the cab with the technician while they ran some basic tests. I waited with Rasmussen, watching from a semi-soundproofed area where we could see the same test results screen Brad and the technician were watching from the cab.

Brad's ear-to-ear grin faded when the machine didn't pass one of the tests. The screen was telling them to move the engine to high idle, but the results were showing 98.8

per cent instead of 100. Red lights on the screen were blinking "FAIL."

The technician shut the combine off and tried again. Again: "FAIL."

With so many moving parts, it seems quite possible that occasionally, a machine wouldn't start. I wondered how often it happened to visiting customers. Rasmussen didn't really answer my question, but he did say that problems or irregularities are noted electronically, and combines are always taken from the assembly line to another shop for fine-tuning before they're shipped.

Brad looked really nervous when they tried the test for the third time. But finally the number reached 100 per cent and the red "FAIL" switched to a green "PASS." Brad started smiling again.

PUTTING THE PARTS TOGETHER

Since our combine's next few steps on the assembly line weren't very interesting to watch, Rasmussen took us for some lunch, and then on a walk-around of the rest of the plant.

On the other side of the building, staff were using computer-programmed laser cutters to custom-make combine parts out of steel. Expensive computerized machines allow staff to change the set up quickly to make different parts. The parts section doesn't run on the same assembly line mode as the final assembly area. Here, different shift work seven days a week, 24 hours a day.



They make most combine parts right here, but not all of them. Transmissions are shipped in from Racine, Wisconsin. Fiat engines come from France. Tires are delivered continuously to the factory door during the day.

Every month, Rasmussen tells us, four to six million pounds of steel are delivered to the plant. They use a million pounds of welding wire a year. "That's enough wire to go around the world almost twice," Rasmussen said.

END OF THE LINE

We went back to the assembly line just in time to seem them attach the tires. "We only put one of the duals on," Rasmussen says, "so they can move around the plant." The rest of the tires, or tracks, are assembled at the end location, to cut shipping costs.

Then it was the side panels. We noticed that the Case IH panels were plastic, but the New Holland machines were getting metal side panels.

Rasmussen told us that our side panels are made of soybean-based plastic. "There's about two bushels of soybeans in every combine," Rasmussen said. "I tell customers that some of their own beans might be going home with them."

The decals came next. This is just the decoration on the cake, but Rasmussen says some factory staff say this is the most difficult part. Nobody wants a crooked decal. The woman at this station ran a roller over our decal to glue it across the side of the combine.

"Looks pretty good, don't it?" Rasmussen said. Brad said, "yup."

Finally, six hours after the start of our tour, we were at the end of the line. They opened the factory door.

Brad climbed up into the cab. It was snowing and miserable, but I followed Rasmussen outside anyway. Why come this far and not get a photo of the final drive out?

Brad drove his new combine out of the plant, then across the lot. When he got out he was still grinning.

"How does it ride?" I asked.

"Great," he said.

Let's hope it runs this well when we get it into the field.

Leeann Minogue is the editor of Grainews.

Heat in the seat

When John Rasmussen was explaining the importance of getting the options right for each owner, we thought of an example. "I suppose you wouldn't want to ship a combine with a seat heater down to Southern California."

But no. CNH sells lots of combines with factory-installed seat heaters to California rice growers. "As many farmers get older," Rasmussen explained, "they're finding they have back problems." Having a bit of warmth on their lower backs can keep owners and employees more comfortable on the job, making the work seem that much easier.

Leeann Minogue

Magnum and Steiger customer tours

"For our North American-built tractors we do offer tours through our marketing group for the North American facilities," says Ryan Schaefer, Case IH high horsepower tractor marketing manager.

Currently, the North American-built tractors include the Magnum line, which are built in Racine, Wisconsin, near the site of the original J.I. Case assembly plant. And the Steiger four-wheel drives, which are born in Fargo, North Dakota.

Case IH dealers can arrange for their customers to visit either of those two CNH facilities as part of a group tour or as individuals to see their tractor come down the line. For those who visit the plant to see their



Customers on a VIP factory tour pose in front of their new, Silver Anniversary Magnum tractor at the Racine, Wisconsin, assembly plant.

tractor built, Case IH will allow customers to get involved near the end of the assembly process. Just like combine buyers who visit the Grand Island

plant, tractor customers can turn the key for the first time on their Steiger or Magnum.

"The customer has the opportunity to start the tractor up and

run it through the initial stages, the quality and reliability tests," explains Schaefer. "Then we'll take the customer's picture with the tractor."

If, however, you've opted to purchase one of Case IH's Maxxum or Puma tractors, which are built in the UK, seeing your tractor go down the line isn't completely out of the question. "For the customer that is interested in travelling overseas and will be in the area of one of our European facilities, we do offer plant tours and customer experiences at our facilities in Basildon England and St. Valentine Austria," adds Schaefer. "The Maxxum and Puma tractors for North America are built in Basildon."

Scott Garvey

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FACTORY VISITS

AGCO's Hesston experience

AGCO's Hesston, Kansas, combine assembly plant gives customers a special welcome when they come to see their machine built

BY SCOTT GARVEY

This is a big thing for me," says Kevin Bien, AGCO's brand marketing manager for Gleaner, referring to the company's customer factory visit program for combines. "I started thinking, if a customer wants to come to our plant to see his combine built, what could I do to make it special. We want this to

be a really neat occasion. They've made a \$400,000 investment, so when they come I want this to be a special and fulfilling event."

Bein calls the program he created the Silver Medallion Customer VIP Experience. To help make customers feel like a VIP right from the start, the first thing they see on entering the plant's driveway is a personalized sign or banner welcoming

them by name, which they get to take home with them at the end of the tour. "You can't believe how many people over the years have hung these up in their steel building or other places," says Bien, who notes it's something many customers really appreciate having as a souvenir. "We've had people asking many of us to sign the banners," he adds.

The banner isn't the only souve-



PHOTOS: KEVIN BIEN

Customers arriving at the AGCO combine assembly plant can expect to find a personalized sign or banner welcoming them to the facility.

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New visitor program coming soon to AGCO's Jackson plant

Early last summer AGCO opened the Intivity Center at its Jackson, Minnesota, tractor and sprayer assembly plant, which gives visitors to the facility a look at some of the history of the machines built there. Executives at AGCO said, at that time, the new Center was just one part of an overall plan to make visiting the company's main North American assembly plants a memorable experience. And, they hinted, there was more to come.

This year, the plant is in the early stages of a US\$42 million expansion project that will significantly increase its production capacity to keep pace with demand for machines.


"This is a big thing for me."
— Kevin Bien, AGCO

Currently, customers who purchase new mid- or high-horsepower AGCO tractors or sprayers can get their dealer to arrange a visit to the Jackson plant so they can see their personal machine on the assembly line.

"We have our theatre where we show a short introduction movie welcoming the customers and visitors," says Jay Mulso, manager of visitor services at Jackson. "Then they go into the plant tour, which takes about two hours. The Intivity Center is basically the last thing they see on the tour."

Plant staff will accompany customers throughout the tour and take photos for them. Later,

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nir customers will be taking home with them. Bien or one of the other plant staff will present them with a Leeds embossed key fob, money clip and pen set at the end of the assembly line. And a professional photographer will be following them around during their visit. A selection of images will be burned onto a DVD and given to each customer.

DRIVING OFF THE LINE

But a visit to Hesston will be more than just a photo op. Customers will get to drive their machine off the line and watch as it gets put through its paces in the factory's new dyno testing station and 120 step final inspection process.

Customers can also choose between 90 minute or a 2-1/2 hour private, guided tour of the Hesston plant — a very large facility that builds haying equipment as well. Bien says customers often bring a larger group of friends and tour

several AGCO plants before arriving at the Hesston facility.

"We get a lot of customers that want to go to one of our other plants (too)," he explains. "I've had groups come down with a bus. Depending on where they're from, they'll stop in Jackson (Minnesota), go down to Beloit (Kansas) and then come over to Hesston. So they actually see three plants."

In the last year, AGCO has made investments in updating its manufacturing plants, including the Hesston facility. "We've just added a \$45 million upgraded painting system," says Bien. Along with that the plant employs new robotic welders that fabricate combine rotors. And much of the basic machining required to create components from raw stock also takes place in Hesston. "It's a very vertically integrated plant," he adds. "It's a fun plant to go through."

Scott Garvey is machinery editor for Grainews. Contact him at scott.garvey@fbcpublishing.com.



Customers, friends and family gather around their newly-built combine outside the assembly plant at Hesston, Kansas.



PHOTOS: SCOTT GARVEY

If you want to see your "baby" born on the assembly line, AGCO's Jackson, Minnesota, assembly plant will soon implement an improved customer visits program to make that an even more memorable experience.

customers get to log into a special section of the Jackson plant's online website with a password to download those images.

The plant builds 7600 and 8600 Series Massey Ferguson tractors, MT500 and MT600 Challengers, tracked MT700 and MT800 models and articulated MT900 tractors along with RoGator and TerraGator sprayers.

"There's a small window of time they can see their tractor (or sprayer) on the line," explains Mulso. "It's not on there long. Usually we can coordinate and get them (customers) here at the time its just coming off the line. We'll move it out to the test track and they'll get a chance to actually drive their tractor."

Even though staff at the Jackson plant have been accommodating visitors and customers at the plant for a while now, there is something new on the horizon. AGCO is getting ready to introduce an updated customer visit program at the facility, the details of what the enhanced visit will include are due to be released soon. And Mulso isn't giving too many details away just yet.

"There's more to come on that," he says. "There is going to be a more formal experience we're getting ready to roll out this summer."

Scott Garvey

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FACTORY VISITS



Customers participating in John Deere's Gold Key program can visit the factory on the day their machine is being built and interact with the workers on the assembly line, as these farmers are doing.

Deere watching

John Deere's Gold Key customer tour program now applies to a range of products built in five of the company's U.S. plants



Customers pose for a photo with their machine near the end of the assembly line.

BY SCOTT GARVEY

If you've just written a cheque to cement the deal on any new ag machine from John Deere, odds are you can arrange to go to the appropriate factory and see it built. The green brand first introduced its Gold Key program, which arranges for special customer factory visits, in 1995, but it originally applied to just tractors and combines. Since then, the program has been expanded to include most of Deere's U.S. assembly plants, providing opportunities for buyers of a pretty wide variety of ag equipment to see their machines being built.

"We have the best tour program in the industry," says Barry Nelson, Deere's North American media relations manager.

In all, the program will now get you inside operations at Deere's Waterloo, Iowa, tractor plant, the Moline, Illinois, Harvester Works, the Ottumwa, Iowa, factory that builds round balers, mower conditioners and self-propelled windrowers, the Des Moines, Iowa, Works that builds sprayers and the Commercial Products facility in Augusta, Georgia, that churns out utility tractors.

Apparently Deere believes if you build it, they will come. And so far they (meaning farmers) have been coming. These customer visit programs are gaining popularity with farmers across all the brands, according to marketing managers.

Here's how Deere described its program to us in a written summary: "During their visit, Gold Key customers are escorted by a friendly and knowledgeable tour guide for an exclusive 'behind-the-scenes' factory tour, meet and interact with the John Deere factory employees, enjoy a complimentary catered meal as well as a group photo, a certificate of recognition, a John Deere hat and a 'Gold Key'... all at no cost to the customer."

As usual, your dealer needs to arrange the visit for you. If you can't be at the plant on the day your machine is built, Deere will arrange for a similar tour on a date within 60 days of your machine going down the line, during which they will provide you with a similar experience, even if you won't get to see your particular machine.

Additionally, Gold Key customers visiting John Deere Harvester Works also receive a tour and catered meal at the Deere and Company World Headquarters and are encouraged to explore both the John Deere Pavilion and the John Deere Store in downtown Moline.

Basic factory tours for the general public are also available and can be arranged through John Deere Guest Services by calling 800-765-9588.

Scott Garvey is machinery editor for Grainews. Contact him at scott.garvey@fcpublishing.com.



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THE FOUNDERS

Theodore Kipp (1880-1941) Engineer

Born at Peoria, Illinois in 1880, he was educated at public school and Bradley Polytechnic. He came to Canada in 1908 and was Chief Engineer successively for the Tillson Company at Tillsonburg, Ontario, Robin Hood Mills Limited, and Ogilvie Flour Mills Company. In 1913 he organized the Kipp-Kelly Company in partnership with G. H. Kelly where he was Vice- President and Managing Director.

George H. Kelly (1860-1940) Engineer

Born at St. Germain, Cornwall, England on 29 August 1860, he immigrated to Canada at the age of 7 and settled at Glencoe, Ontario. He worked in flour mills before coming to Manitoba in 1879, where he operated an elevator at Brandon. He came to Winnipeg in 1881 and operated the Ogilvie Flour Mills. In 1886 he joined the Lake of the Woods Milling Company at Keewatin, Ontario as General Superintendent. He rejoined the Ogilvie Flour Mills in 1912 as General Superintendent. After building a large mill at Medicine Hat, Alberta, he left the company in 1913 to establish the engineering firm of Kipp-Kelly, in partnership with Theodore Kipp.

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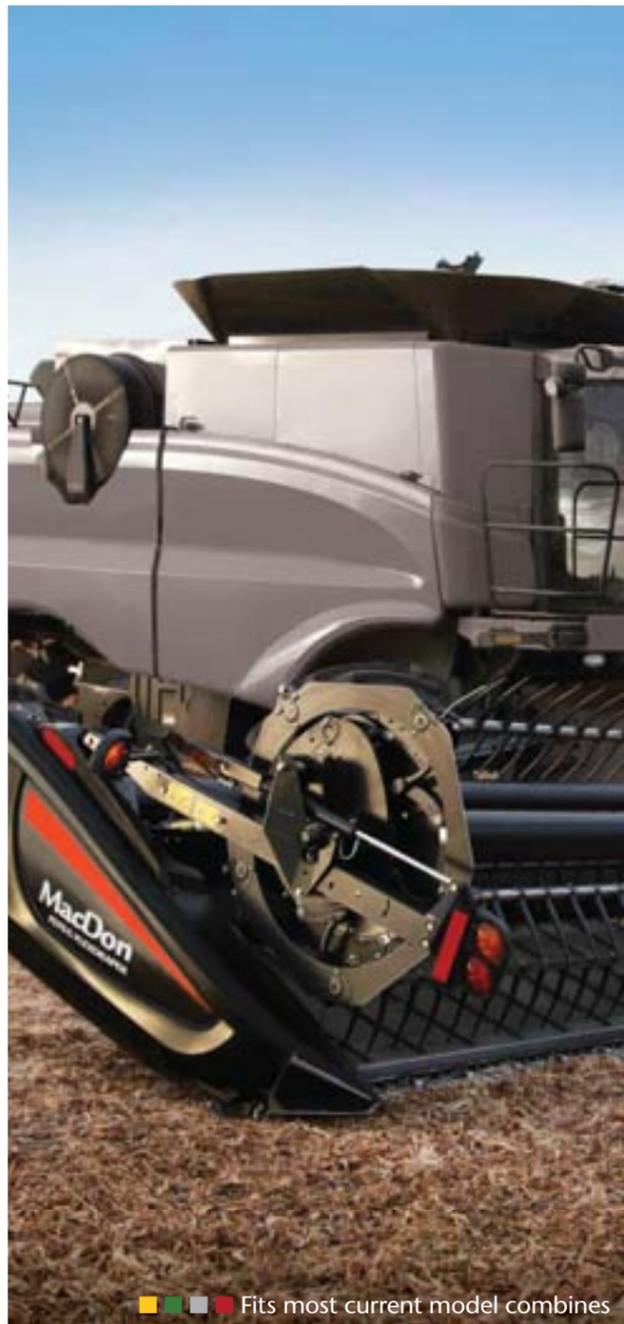
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Wall Corrugation	4"	4"
Galvanizing	G115	G115
Roof Stregnth	#5000	#4-5000
Roof Slope	30 deg	30 deg.
Ladders	Std.	Std.
Cone slope	35 deg,	35 deg,
# legs	9	9
Leg thickness	.125	.188
Rack and pinion	Yes	Yes
Painted inside/out	Yes	Yes

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Galvanizing	G115	G115
Roof Stregnth	#5000	#4-5000
Roof Slope	30 deg	30 deg.
Ladders	Std.	Std.
Door (inner panels)	No	Yes
Door (canola panel)	Yes	No
Door (Vertical lift)	Yes	NO
Available Steel floor	YES	NO
Available Seal Form	YES	YES

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Galvanizing	G115	G115
Roof Stregnth	#5000	#4-5000
Roof Slope	30 deg	30 deg.
Ladders	Std.	Std.
Swing Air option	YES	No
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UNLOAD SYSTEM option	YES	YES
Available steel floor	YES	NO
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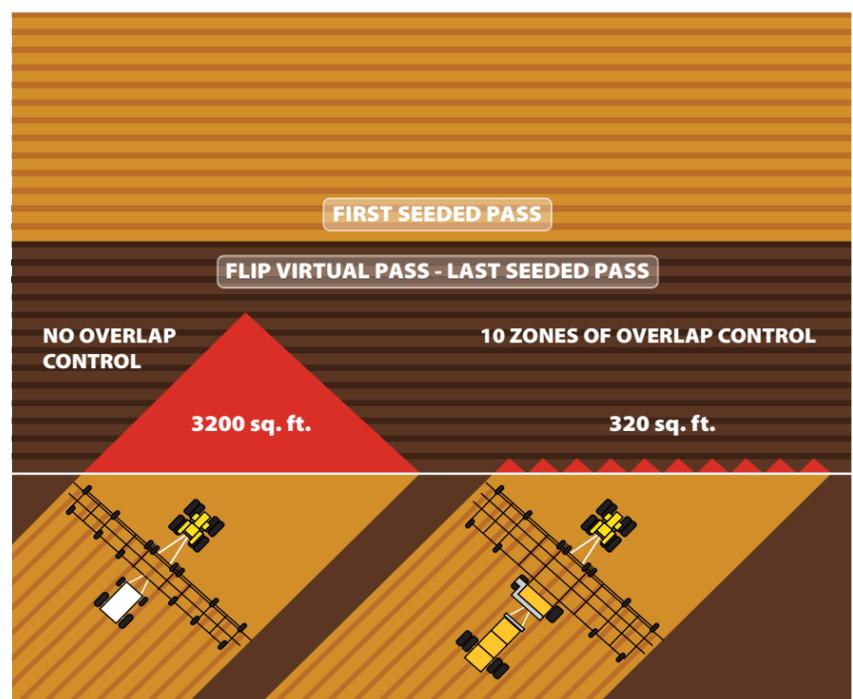
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<p>\$6.38 Cost Savings/Acre/Year x 5000 Acres Based on \$104.60 /Acre Average Input Cost = \$31,903 Input Savings/Year</p>					
4	5,000	7.30%	1.20%	\$6.38	\$31,903
5	5,000	7.30%	1.20%	\$6.38	\$31,903
<p>TOTAL 5 YEAR SAVINGS = \$159,515</p>					



The diagram illustrates how SeedMaster's Auto Zone Command turns off seed and fertilizer to each zone during headland passes. Without Auto Zone Command, the large area in red would receive double inputs, wasting considerable dollars.

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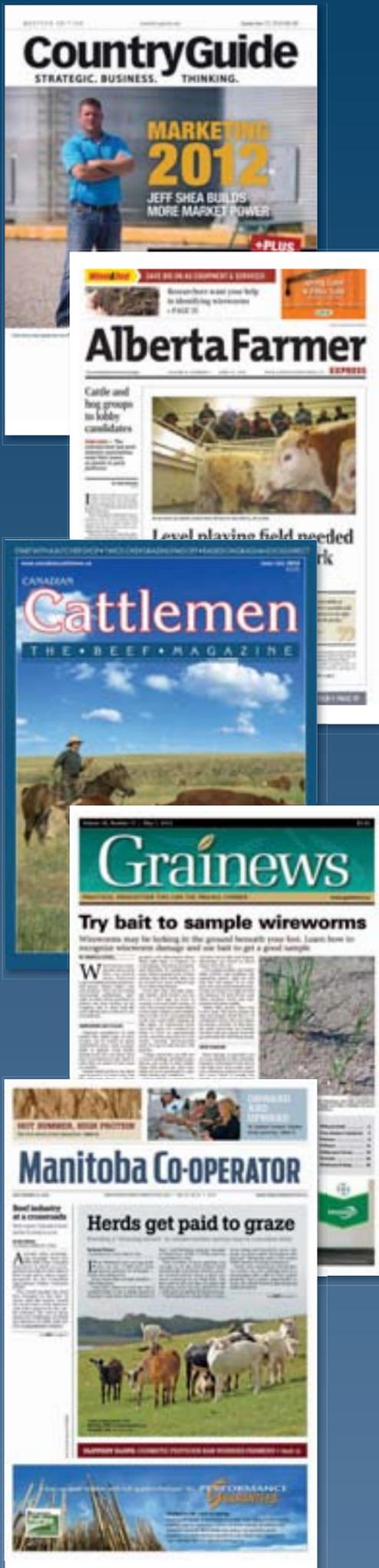
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PASTURE MANAGEMENT

Society needs to value good land stewardship

Proper land management benefits the beef producer, but also produces benefits the public needs to appreciate too

(EDITORS NOTE: This is part two of a three-part series with three Manitoba beef producers discussing what they consider important to the future viability of their ranches.)

BY ANGELA LOVELL

It's high time society properly recognizes the contribution made by farms like her's, says cow-calf producer Myna Cryderman.

"I believe society either has to get used to paying more for food, closer to the cost of production, or else society has to pay for the ecological goods and services that we (farmers and ranchers) are providing," says Cryderman, who runs a 100-head cow-calf operation on a section of land in the Turtle Mountains near Boissevain, Man.

Cryderman can appreciate the issue from both sides of the consumer-producer fence. Originally from Brandon, the first-generation farmer formerly worked in a medical rehabilitation facility. But the outdoors always beckoned.

"I lived on an acreage and had horses for many years — way before I had the farm — and always enjoyed working outdoors," she says. "I loved the work I was doing, but I didn't like being indoors all that much and always wanted to own a farm."

WILLING TO LEARN

After deciding that raising livestock would be her career, Cryderman took as many courses

as she could, including ones on operating a low-cost cattle operation and holistic management. She also picked up tips and information from her neighbours and peers in the agricultural industry.

Interestingly, she found her lack of knowledge wasn't a disadvantage because she wasn't hampered by any pre-conceived notions.

"Having no paradigms about how things should be done was actually an advantage," she says. "A lot of people said, 'How would you presume to do that without a farming background?'"

"But instead of doing things the way they have always been done, I would go to a course and look at different techniques and practices, and decide how I wanted to do it."

One of the most important practices Cryderman adopted is planned rotational grazing, in which pastures are divided into paddocks and grazed in sequence. She makes a point of not overgrazing each paddock, ensuring adequate plant material is left behind to allow for faster re-growth over a rest period before the next grazing.

"Some times of the year the pastures are dormant," says Cryderman. "I don't think it hurts then to take it down pretty severely when they are dormant, as long as the plants have good root reserves. I don't want the plants using up root reserves when they do begin to grow. Once the growing season ends, I don't believe you need to leave that much grass."

It's a different story during the growing season.

"I like to see at least six inches left when cattle are moved and I don't like to leave them so long (in one paddock) that they are grazing re-growth," she says.

She says that becomes a balancing act because it depends on the weather and moisture, and notes cattle prefer tender re-growth to more mature grass.

TIMING WILL VARY

The time allotted for both grazing and the rest period depends on each producer's situation, resources and goals. Many producers are reluctant to try the system because they are afraid of not getting it right, says Cryderman, who is a grazing mentor with the Manitoba Forage Council and assists other producers to set up their grazing systems.

"I don't think there's any wrong way to do it," she says. "Rotational grazing can increase your productivity and the health of the land so much that it's the most important element in the management of your farm."

Cryderman's beef herd calves in late spring, which is less stressful for her and the cows, and at the same time makes the best use of resources.

"By calving in May and June, the way nature intended, you are matching the nutritional needs (of the cows and calves) to what is being produced on the land. In my view, it is the least-cost strategy."



Plenty of grass in the paddocks and the hay yard is protected by an elk fence, allowing for multi-purpose use of the land.

Another key to productivity is an effective watering system. The farm is situated at the headwaters of the Pembina River and is fed by year-round springs found all over the property. A shallow buried pipeline provides water to pastures in the summer. The pipeline is supplied from a remote watering system that uses a solar panel to pump water from the creek and/or fenced-off dugouts fed by the flowing springs. This system not only keeps cattle away from sensitive riparian areas, but also solved a predation problem on the farm.

"Before (we installed the water system) we had quite a predator problem because we calve on the pasture in May and June. The cows were going too far for water, leaving newborn calves behind, and that made the calves vulnerable," says Cryderman, who lost nine calves in one year to coyotes.

She hasn't lost any since the pipeline was installed 10 years ago.

MANAGING FOR WILDLIFE

Wildlife continues to be an important factor on the farm

and has prompted some management changes over the years. Cryderman had to quit swath grazing because of the elk population, which has exploded in recent years. There were so many elk helping themselves to the fields and the hay, she finally had an elk fence installed around a hay yard a few years ago.

"If it wasn't for that fence I don't think we could have stayed in business because the elk would just stay there and eat all your hay until it was gone," she says.

It's not easy to make a go of it on a small cattle operation, says Cryderman, adding that's why society needs to recognize the benefits that such farms can bring in terms of environmental stewardship.

"If we lose our cattle industry, it isn't just the loss of beef on the plate, it's the loss of these kind of farms that were marginal and should only be grazed in the correct way," she says. "Society needs to start to value that kind of operation and start paying for it in ecological goods or services or pay a heck of a lot more for food."

Angela Lovell is a freelance writer based in Manitow, Manitoba.

THE MARKETS

Consumer demand boosting cattle market



JERRY KLASSEN

MARKET UPDATE

Fed and feeder cattle prices have been ratcheting higher in May as wholesale choice beef prices reached all-time highs. It appears after a long winter, consumer demand is stepping forward more aggressively on the retail and restaurant level.

Alberta fed cattle prices made yearly highs in May reaching up to \$121/cwt, which is the first time feedlot margins have been in positive territory since last summer. Renewed optimism in the feeding sector has resulted in solid demand for replacement cattle. Pasture conditions are excellent across Western Canada and the market for featherlight

calves is also starting to percolate higher. The key factor moving forward will be consumer expenditures and the economy in general. While retail beef prices continue to trend higher, the increase in beef tenderloins earlier in spring was inflation-related due to higher costs for labour and transportation. However, we now find wholesale beef prices also moving higher, which is a positive signal for the overall beef complex.

U.S. feedlot inventories have been running five per cent below year-ago levels but first-quarter beef production was only marginally lower than last year. Feedlot placements during March were up six per cent over March of 2012 as cattle moved off small grain pasture. However, the industry is projecting a sharper year-over-year drop in feedlot placements in the latter half of 2013, which

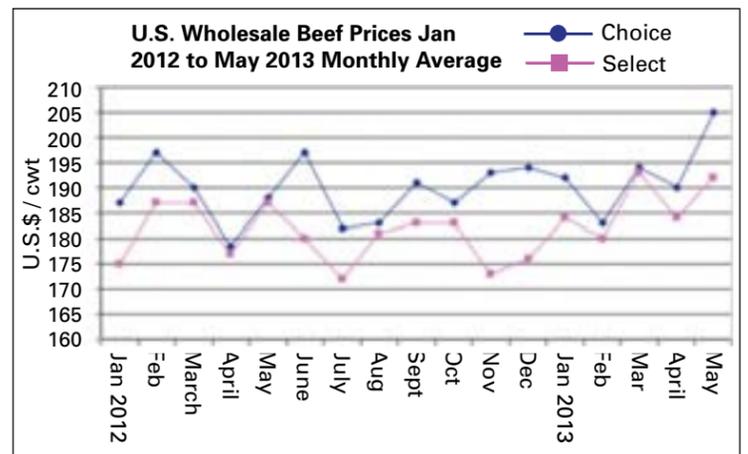
will translate into lower overall beef production.

The USDA also released its forecast for 2014 on its May WASDE report. The 2014 beef production is projected to be down over one billion pounds in comparison to 2013 and down nearly 1.8 billion pounds relative to 2012. This has serious implications for the consumer as the market will function to ration demand through higher prices. The market will have to move high enough to slow consumer consumption — therefore, average income levels need to be watched closely moving forward.

From January 1 through May 4, Canadian cattle slaughter was 885,000 head, down nine per cent from 2012. Total beef output was 333,000 tonnes for the same time frame, which reflects

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 42

U.S. QUARTERLY BEEF PRODUCTION (million pounds)					
QUARTER	2010	2011	2012	EST 2013	EST 2014
1	6251	6411	6283	6172	5795
2	6547	6559	6475	6430	6200
3	6768	6737	6584	6390	6250
4	6741	6492	6571	6115	5860
Total	26307	26199	25913	25107	24105





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FEATURED RESEARCH: NATIONAL BEEF QUALITY AUDIT

An ongoing industry-led initiative, the National Beef Quality Audit measures the economic impact of quality defects and supports strategies for cattle producers to maximize carcass quality, safety and value.

Visit www.BeefResearch.ca/NBQA for video presentations on the latest audit results, including:

Canada's National Beef Quality Audit
- Mark Klassen, Canadian Cattlemen's Association

Preventing discomfort and carcass defects caused by dehorning
- Dr. John Campbell, University of Saskatchewan

Implants and carcass quality
- Dr. Sandi Parr, feedlot nutritional and production consultant

Beta-agonists and carcass quality
- Dr. Scott Hurd, Iowa State University

Preventing dark cutting (Grade B4) beef
- Dr. Heather Bruce, University of Alberta

Packing plant perspective on how producers can improve carcasses
- Zach Ireland, JBS Director of Grading

How to prevent injection site lesions
- Dr. Joyce Van Donkersgoed, consulting veterinarian

Facility design and transport procedures to minimize carcass bruising
- Dr. Karen Schwartzkopf-Genswein, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Using body condition scoring as a tool to maximize profitability
- Doug Sawyer, cow-calf producer

Impact of morbidity on performance and carcass grading of feedlot cattle
- Dr. Eric Behlke, professional services veterinarian

Liver abscesses
- Dr. Darryl Gibb, cattle nutritionist

Impact of cattle tag on beef carcass value
- Dr. Joyce Van Donkersgoed, consulting veterinarian

VIDEOS

Beef Research School series, including:

- How do producers benefit from on-going research?
- Properly diagnosing lameness
- Using RFI to select for feed efficient seedstock

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Don't Miss:

- Upcoming field days, seminars and conferences
- Nominations, survey and application deadlines
- Online webinars

The Beef Cattle Research Council (BCRC) funds leading-edge research to advance the Canadian beef cattle industry. The BCRC administers the research allocation of the National Check-off, manages Canada's Beef Cattle Industry Science Cluster with cofounding from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and operates as a division of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association.



Keepers & Culls



Important events ahead for livestock industry



LEE HART

Here are several noteworthy dates over the next few weeks involving conferences, speakers and field days that may be well worth attending.

SASK STOCK GROWERS ANNIVERSARY

The Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association is marking the 100th anniversary of its founding this coming weekend, June 9-11, with special events during its annual meeting in Moose Jaw, Sask.

Based on the theme "Riding for the Brand," the event kicks off Sunday with a ranch rodeo, barbecue, and old-fashioned

ILC IN CALGARY

Coming up in early July is the Beef 2013: the International Livestock Congress at the Deerfoot Inn in Calgary. Two of the key speakers during the day will be Darren Bevans, general manager of Deseret Ranches of Raymond, Alta., and Stuart Thiessen, manager of Namaka Farms, (major cattle feeders) from Strathmore just east of Calgary. For more details and a look at the full program, visit the conference website at: www.ilccalgary.com.

barn dance. The business sessions begin Monday, June 10, with a strong lineup of speakers on a wide range of topics. For more information or to register visit the SSGA website at: www.skstockgrowers.com

WBDC FIELD DAY AT LANIGAN

And if you happen to be in Saskatchewan for Canada's Farm Progress Show June 19-21 at the exhibition grounds in Regina, you may want to stay on a couple of extra days and attend the 15th annual Western Beef Development Centre field day at the Termuende Research Ranch at Lanigan, Sask.

The one-day event begins with registration at 9 a.m. There will be a number of displays; several speakers on beef production, forage and grazing topics; and tours and demonstrations. Wrapping up the day is a steak supper. For more details visit the WBDC website at www.wbdc.sk.ca.

Mad cows was really a trade issue

BY SYLVAIN CHARLEBOIS

Most would agree that the 'mad cow' event of May 20th, 2003, following the discovery of our country's first native bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) case, wasn't really a food safety-centric crisis, at least in Canada. In retrospect, it was primarily a trade crisis.

As domestic demand for beef shattered records in Canada that year, 35 countries, including the U.S. and Japan, overnight issued an embargo on Canadian cattle and beef. Since half of Canada's \$7 billion beef industry was based on exports, the embargo was a catastrophe. Despite billions in compensation, many farmers went under, and livelihoods were destroyed. The BSE crisis was very real to the cattle industry, and a passing worry for Canadian consumers. But most importantly, it was a crisis that could have been prevented.

For the world at large, the mad cow crisis began on what is now known as "Black Wednesday" — March 20, 1996 — the day the British government admitted there was a probable link between exposure to infected meat and Creutzfeldt-Jakob's disease (vCJD), the human variant of BSE. The admission resulted in the culling of millions of animals in an effort to control the disease. Unfortunately, this did not pre-

vent the death of more than 200 people from vCJD.

The only significant regulatory change in Canada before 2003 came in 1997 with the ban of the practice of rendering ruminants for cattle feed. However, ruminant feed was still readily available on the market, and violations of the ban were reported.

With the establishment of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) in 1996, the post-May 20, 2003 era brought further policy changes.

This move was long overdue. Indeed, some argued it was several years too late. Implementing such a policy earlier could have resulted in significant advances in detection and preventative technology. Diagnosis of BSE continues to be a challenge, as the incubation period can last years without a cow showing any symptoms. There is virtually no way to detect the disease without examining brain tissue post mortem, using neuropathological methods. Since 2003, we have discovered new methods to detect BSE in living cattle, but none are commercially available.

Most damaging for the CFIA, proud of its science-based heritage, was its unfounded assumptions throughout the 2003 ordeal, significantly affecting its credibility. For example, the agency stated time and again that animals under the age of 30 months could not develop BSE. In Japan, which has dis-

covered more than 30 BSE cases since 2001, and where BSE testing is compulsory, two of the country's mad cow cases were in 21-month-old and 23-month-old animals. The CFIA seemed only concerned about the politics of food safety, which severely limited its understanding of the scope of the crisis that was unfolding. Food safety, after all, is first and foremost a public health issue.

Communicating food-safety risks to the Canadian public was also a challenge for the CFIA during the crisis, a challenge that the federal regulator faces to this day.

Looking back a decade later, it is somewhat reassuring to see the CFIA has matured into a learning, open organization that is still committed to evidence-based rigor. Looking at food safety from a scientific perspective, the regulator has shown it can proactively balance the economics of food safety with the concerns that modern Canadian consumers have regarding food systems in general. The 2003 mad cow crisis made the federal regulator more efficiently attuned with the realities of modern food-safety practices. However, when considering the XL Foods scandal that began in September 2012, there is still room for improvement. ✍

Dr. Sylvain Charlebois is Associate Dean of the College of Management and Economics at the University of Guelph. Column courtesy of Troy Media at: www.troymedia.com.

ANIMAL HEALTH

Proper implants lead to improved profits



ROY LEWIS

ANIMAL HEALTH

The practice of implanting cattle to improve rates of gain has been around since the 1950s but today's myriad of protocols and combinations of products can make it difficult to decide which combination to use. So it is important to clarify some points about implanting, as well as highlight new developments with implant manufacture.

Despite the fact implants have a return on investment of about 25:1, they are very much under-utilized in the cow-calf sector. Feedlot operators use implants to a far greater degree as they're keenly aware of how increased gains and improved feed efficiency boosts profits. (Unless, of course, they're producing hormone-free or organic beef, as those programs don't allow implants.)

IMPLANT BASICS

Implants should definitely be considered as calves are processed

prior to going to pasture. One cannot implant any bull calves intended to be raised for breeding purposes as it will affect their fertility and make castration at a later date more difficult.

Heifers can be implanted if they are not being kept for breeding. A couple of implants are approved for heifers to be retained for breeding as long as they are within a specific age range. But definitely do not re-implant these heifers as open rates the following breeding season will be very high. I personally have seen open rates in the order of 40 per cent when heifers are implanted twice before breeding. For replacement heifers, reduce the risk, and do not implant.

Implanted steers will grow near the equivalent of bull calves. My recommendation is to castrate bulls at as young as possible and then implant. With this approach, you avoid the much greater risk of infection or blood loss when they are castrated at a much older age. The problem of 'riding' is also greatly reduced when castration is performed at a younger age.

Most implants now contain TBA, which lays down more lean meat (muscle). Although grading is something feedlots really focus

on, by increasing the gain you make up for any losses a grading penalty costs. Nowadays overweight carcasses are almost a thing of the past — it is all about pounds of meat.

PROPER PROCEDURE

Animals need to be properly restrained during implanting. Hydraulic chutes or the shoulder restraint device on some chutes keeps the head still so implanting is easier. Crushing the implant capsule itself leads to improper absorption and bullers can result from these crushed implants.

When implanting, insert the needle and then pull back on the gun just a little bit so the implant will slide into the space created. Keep the gun and needle clean, disinfect between calves, and don't implant through manure or dirt on the ear. Producers should use a tray holding a disinfectant. The gun is then pushed through rollers immersed in the disinfectant. Abscesses and/or infection can make it possible for the implant pellets to fall out, or the area may be walled off and scarred, which greatly minimizes absorption.

Make sure the implant guns

are compatible with the implant being used. Each company has a different gun and they do wear out and get stiff. If there is any problem, get a new gun. Ralgro has the smallest needle and guns for the Revalor series of implants. The gun is designed with a metal hoop that pushes the ear away from the gun as the implant is dispensed, and this makes crushing almost impossible. Others have retractable needles. Many implants can now be given to both heifers and steers but producers need to pay attention to the labels to make sure they are using the proper product. They also need to be aware of how long the implant lasts, so they know when the next implant should be given.

As with all equipment, keep needles of the implant gun sharp and have spares. Start with clean equipment and keep swabbing the needle through the disinfectant tray after every use. Implant in the middle of the ribs at the back of the ear on whichever side there are the least tags. Tags have a tendency to be placed in the same ideal place as implants and now with lot tags, individual identification tags and RFID tags, many prime locations for implanting have been taken. Your next ideal

place is over the top of the ear half way out from the head.

DIFFERENT STRATEGIES

Every time calves are processed, keep in mind there are many different implant strategies. So work out one with your herd veterinarian that best matches your type of cattle, feeding regimen, and when you are most likely to handle your calves with adequate restraint to make implanting easy. With the proper program, you can capitalize on the extra gains calves will produce. If feeding or backgrounding, a second or sometimes a third implant can be made. You may need to use both ears and different locations each time you implant.

In the cattle industry today there is nothing safer (zero withdrawal) and has a better return on investment than implanting. I will describe the implant audits that are performed and where the main mistakes are made implanting in a later issue. For now, happy implanting and take care to do it properly. The returns are worth it. ✍

Roy Lewis is a Westlock, Alberta-based veterinarian specializing in large-animal practice. He is also a part-time technical services vet for Merck Animal Health.

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GET THE MOST FROM PASTURE AND RANGE WEED CONTROL

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SMART, EFFECTIVE, SAFE

If you could look back and describe range and pasture weed control efforts this year, those would be good things to aim for.

Cattle producers have some significantly improved products for weed and brush control on range and pasture. Under the Verified Beef Production (VBP) program, producers are responsible for managing all products of this nature to avoid contamination of feed, water or anything that directly affects animals.

THINK STEWARDSHIP

The math for using these pasture weed control products is straightforward, says Candice Manshreck of Dow AgroSciences, the company that has taken the lead with products for this market. "Weeds and brush take moisture, sunlight and nutrients and if you remove that competition the result is like a fertilizer boost for grass."

The big advantage of the main products being used is the sustained control over two, three or even four years. Each comes with specific tips to maximize effectiveness, and producers should make sure they understand product label information.

Producers receive a stewardship fact sheet outlining all of the key precautions, says Manshreck. While these products do not have a lot of restrictions, like any crop protection product, they are best treated with respect.

Watch trees, like shelterbelts or desirable trees in pasture. "With Restore II and Reclaim you can spray right up to the tree drip line. With Grazon and Tordon 22K stay back 1-1/2 times the height of the tree," she says.

Understand the restrictions around water bodies. Water flowing off your land is considered public and needs a minimum of a 30 m buffer (some provinces require more).

There are no grazing restrictions for beef cattle. "I usually advise people to pull cattle off the pasture when you spray, but as soon as the product dries they can go back on," says Manshreck. "Withdraw animals three days prior to slaughter."

There are some restrictions on cutting and removing forage from treated areas. As well the active ingredient will remain in the manure, so if cattle are moved from a pasture treated with these products to a legume, allow three days grazing on an untreated field to clear the animal's system.

Because they offer long-acting control, the active ingredient will remain in the soil surface. Newly seeded grass can be affected. Grasses can be seeded up to 10 months following an application, but legume re-establishment may be affected for up to five years.

HANDLING AND STORAGE

Keep things simple when handling and storing these products, says Manshreck.

Mix up only what you need. If you get rained out, the mixed product will last in the tank for a few days, but it may break down in sunlight, so throw a tarp over your sprayer. If you do have concentrate product left over, store it in a container with a lid to contain spills.

Sprayers can be cleaned with water. Triple rinse jugs and dispose of according to industry standards. If there are questions related to products, the Dow toll-free number is 1-800-667-3852.

PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITIES

VBP requires that products are used according to label recommendations and that records such as date, product used and location are kept. If potential cattle exposure of any product occurs an expert should be contacted for recommended procedures or actions. Actions taken should be recorded.



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RANCHER DIARY

Last calf of season hits the ground



HEATHER SMITH THOMAS

APRIL 23

Last Wednesday, Lilly Ann finally calved. We were glad the calf was normal and healthy, after her serious illness and high fever three weeks ago. He was small, but strong and lively.

The next morning when Lynn and I were feeding cows, we noticed a group of cows and calves coming down the road above our place. We got the four-wheeler and roared up the road to head them off before they got to our lane and into our haystack. We herded

them back up to the neighbour's place where a gate had been left open, and put them back into their own field.

Magrat finally started calving Sunday morning. She's never calved in a barn; her first three calves were born outdoors. However, the weather this year has been so miserable we were afraid we might have to put her in the barn. She's a huge, tall cow — capable of jumping over the division panel between the stalls and smashing it. In preparation for possible barn calving, Andrea and I put her and Buffalo Girl in the barn for a trial run last week, in adjacent stalls so Magrat wouldn't be by herself. She didn't mind being in the barn. This is much different, however, than being in labour — in pain and upset. That's when most cows get fran-

tic and try to "climb the walls" and get out. So a few days ago Andrea and I tied a pole across the low spot, above the panel, so it would be impossible for her to jump over.

Even though the weather was nice Sunday morning, by the time Magrat was in serious labour the wind was blowing and it was starting to rain. So we put her in the barn, again with Buffalo Girl for company. Magrat didn't try to jump out, and she had a nice bull calf. A few hours later, in the middle of the night, Buffalo Girl started calving, and we put her back in the barn. We are finally done calving!

APRIL 30

Last week Michael helped us tag and band the last bull calf,

and then helped Lynn take the post pounder off our smallest tractor, and put the blade on, to start cleaning ditches. Andrea and I hadn't taken time to work with the fillies for a while or ride Sprout, so on Thursday we caught the fillies, and then rode Ed and Sprout on a fast ride five miles up the creek and back. We hurried home so Andrea could get to town to take the little girls to dance practice after school.

Friday we checked on the cows and calves and discovered that one of the youngest calves (Maggeruete's calf) was sick with scours. He was fine that morning, but by 6 p.m. had watery diarrhea, very weak, and was not nursing his mother. We brought the pair in from the field and put them in a pen by the barn, and gave the calf 1-1/2 quarts of warm water

and electrolytes (with a liquid oral antibiotic and kaolin/pectin mixed in) via nasogastric tube.

We gave him more fluids/medication by tube in the middle of the night (at 1 a.m.). Andrea and Dani came down to help, and Dani held the flashlight for us. He seemed a little better by morning and was nursing his mother but by late morning had diarrhea and was very weak again. We realized he needed fluid more frequently to keep from becoming dehydrated. During this stormy weather we're glad we have the secondary barn for shelter. Maggeruete's calf is finally doing better after four days of intensive care. Yesterday I gave him a dose of probiotics paste containing some of the "gut bugs" he needs — in case the antibiotics killed the natural flora in his digestive tract. He has finally "graduated" and no longer needs fluids.

MAY 7

Last Wednesday, Michael and Carolyn moved their cows and new babies to the field above the upper corral, where they won't have access to the creek. Where they've been crossing the creek from the Wild Meadow to Gopher Meadow, there is risk for calves being swept away and drowning now that warmer days have resulted in high water. That morning they also found a freshly-killed deer along the road, with most of it eaten. It looks like a wolf kill.

MAY 17

Nick drove home from Iowa (William Penn University) last week. He and Michael took a few little bales up for their horses — for Lynn to feed when he did their chores. We were the "battery backup" for all the chores last weekend, with everyone gone.

Thursday afternoon, Charlie sang a solo in his school program, and then Andrea and kids drove to Utah for Sam's national dance competition (and her group got second place!).

We fixed a place in our barn for the calf where he could go in and out of the grassy pen in front of the barn. He gets a bottle three times a day — early morning before chores, again at 2 p.m., and last thing before bedtime.

We attended the annual Spring Concert at the high school. Charlie's fifth-grade band played several pieces (and Charlie had a trombone solo), and Emily's high school choir sang (and Em had a short solo). We are proud of both kids. Em has been too shy to sing a solo before now, and Charlie just started playing trombone in mid-January. We are glad that they both enjoy music.

Heather Smith Thomas ranches with her husband Lynn near Salmon, Idaho. Contact her at 208-756-2841.

BEEF INNOVATIONS

JULY 15 & 16, 2013
CALGARY, AB

Agenda will include leading genomic researchers from Canada, Australia, Ireland & the United States along with cutting-edge sector representatives who are utilizing genomic technologies in their business.

For a complete agenda and further details please visit www.simmentalinnovations.com

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Prevention is the best footrot medicine



PETER VITTI

Spring is barely here and many producers across the prairies are seeing an increased incidence of footrot in beef cowherds.

For some, this year's footrot might be traced back to the harsh winter or compromised herd health status. Others have not seen much footrot for many years, and then all of a sudden it strikes with a vengeance. In either case, quick medical treatment can get most limping cows back on their feet, but preventing this common hoof disease with good management and nutrition is the best medicine.

Most experienced beef producers know about three-quarters of all pasture diagnosis of lame cattle are valid footrot infections. An afflicted animal might be seen favouring one hind leg, while another cow could be limping and in visible pain. In checking an animal in a chute, chances are good the space between their claws (inter-digital space) is inflamed. Such progressive footrot infections tend to separate the hoof claws, and the skin between the toes is likely cracked and dying tissue is present. The classic smell of rotting flesh is also evident, which gives footrot, its name.

BROKEN SKIN

Serious footrot infection starts with a deep scrape, cut, or puncture wound around the inter-digital space (space between the claws) of the hoof. This opens the hoof to anaerobic (lives without oxygen) bacteria called *Fusobacterium necrophorum*, but also may include other invaders such as strep- and staph-organisms. All are found in soil, manure and sometimes even in the rumen of the cows themselves.

Since footrot cannot go through unbroken hoof tissue, it usually takes a significant penetration or abrasion from stubble, rocks, and stones in mud to cause the physical injury to hooves and expose them to invasion by footrot bacteria. It also seems cattle are more vulnerable to footrot when hooves are particularly pliable, such as when constantly standing in wet pastures. However, cattle raised under even the driest conditions can also be affected by footrot as the skin of their hooves become chapped and cracked.

It is also well documented that footrot is a contagious cattle disease. Pus and discharge from swollen feet will contaminate muddy ground or water and other cattle can become infected within a day. Several environmental studies have shown footrot bacteria can live a year in unfrozen ground, mud or manure.

TREAT EARLY

Regardless of how a cow becomes infected with footrot, immediate antibiotic treatment is always warranted. Footrot is a progressive disease and, if left neglected, the infection will travel to the pastern area below the dewclaws and upward to the point between the animal's ankle and

the hock. Its spread can encompass the soft tissues of this area, which includes the muscles and tendons. If footrot affects the fetlock joint, an endemic arthritis may result. Fortunately, it is relatively easy to control if the infection is caught early. Antibiotic treatments upon the advice of a veterinarian can get cows back on their "feet" within three to four days. There are vaccines available to control footrot, but at this time, they are not routinely used.

Despite the relative ease of treating one or two cows with footrot, any therapy is still costly and time-consuming. Therefore, prevention of footrot is good medicine. Preventing footrot can be accomplished in two major ways — drylot/pasture management and nutrition.

To start, anywhere cattle hooves can be injured such as on stubble-

grazed fields or in drylots with abrasive rocks or rough concrete pads is an opportunity for the footrot organisms to take up residence in the ground. Alternative grazing areas might be considered in place of stony fields where past injuries or footrot infections have been significant.

Since footrot is a soil-borne organism, it is equally important to manage pastures, particularly those fields with poor drainage, because increased moisture of the cows' hooves results in a loss of integrity and increased rate of hoof wear. Under wet weather conditions, it is a good idea to implement more frequent movement of cattle, especially in rotational grazing programs and reducing the stocking rate wherever practical. Large areas that are constantly under water might be fenced off or possibly drained.

MINERALS IMPORTANT

Nutrition is the other method used to combat footrot in many cattle herds. Of the many essential nutrients that play important role in the production of good hoof horn (re: protein, fat, minerals and vitamins), zinc fed to cattle in its "chelated form" (a zinc molecule attached to an amino acid) is thought to reduce the incidence of footrot in the cowherd.

Organic zinc can strengthen hoof horn walls, and therefore make them less susceptible to invading *Fusobacterium necrophorum* organisms. For example, the University of Illinois demonstrated when zinc-methionine was fed to a group of heifers for 75 days, they had significantly stronger hooves, which was thought to be a good barrier against pathogenic bacteria.

From a different angle, copper, selenium and vitamin E are also believed to improve hoof health. These nutrients are involved with supporting good cell integrity and health within the hoof. They are also essential for a strong immune system, which directly fights the actual footrot infection.

Keep in mind good footrot prevention through sound management and nutrition does not eliminate all footrot from most cattle herds, but are effective means of reducing the number of cows limping around. For individual cows seen limping with footrot, it is a matter of treating them early for effective control. Nobody wants footrot to get a "toe-hold" in their herd, and in their pocketbook.

Peter Vitti is an independent livestock nutritionist and consultant based in Winnipeg. To reach him call 204-254-7497 or by email at vitt@mts.net.

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Savory Grazing System may not be that great

PART 2

Editor's Note: After reviewing the research, Grainews columnist Hyland Armstrong presents, in this two-part column, a contrary view of the claims made by the popular Savory Grazing Method. Whether you agree or not, before you shoot the messenger, Armstrong has compiled a long list of the reference material supporting his view. For a copy of this list please email the Cattleman's Corner editor — lee@fbcpublishing.com — and read before you speak.

When asked his opinion of the Savory Grazing Method, Armstrong always has the same reply. "I usually take the time to go over the research conducted in North America and Africa to give the person an idea of just how complex the issue is," he says. "It is during this discussion I point out there is very little scientific evidence supporting the ecological and economic assumptions of the grazing hypothesis as proposed by Allan Savory. Finally, to drive my point home, I usually conclude, by adopting this grazing hypothesis, they would be placing the economic and ecological well being of their ranch in jeopardy." Part 2 of this column presents his thoughts on livestock productivity, the economics, and sustainability of the Savory Grazing Method.



HYLAND ARMSTRONG

LIVESTOCK PRODUCTIVITY AND ECONOMIC RETURNS

Supporters say the Savory Grazing Method is the ideal way for a producer to maximize livestock production and economic returns. However, the research conducted in Africa, the U.S., and Canada does not necessarily support this conclusion.

Research clearly shows that as stocking rates increase, individual animal production will increase, peak and then decline. Animal production/unit area follows this same rule. Therefore, at stocking rates that maximize individual animal production, the animal production/unit area is relatively low and vice versa. However, stocking rates that create high levels of animal production/unit area are ecologically unstable.

Net return also follows the same pattern. As stocking rates increase, net return rises, peaks and then falls. Research in the United States shows net return for most ranches peak at stocking rates 10 to 30 per cent above the stocking rates recommended by government agencies. However, similar research shows individual livestock production peaks at stocking rates below those stocking rates recommended by government agencies. Thus, although

the Savory Grazing Method may maximize animal production and economic return per unit area, it does so at the expense of individual animal production.

NATURAL ECOLOGICAL PROCESSES

Allan Savory used observations of natural ecosystems to create a working model that he later applied at the ranch level, i.e., the Savory Grazing Method. At first glance, this seems an appropriate way to create a grazing philosophy. However, subsequent research in North America and Africa has shown his ideas oversimplify the interactions taking place in these complex ecosystems. Nevertheless, Savory then commits a number of serious errors. He assumes the ecological processes associated with African ecosystems also apply to North American ecosystems. He believes herbivores control the ecological processes associated with arid and semi-arid ecosystems. He assumes it is possible to control a large number of ecological variables on a small scale using holistic management.

ECOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

Savory claims the Savory Grazing Method has superiority over conventional grazing (conventional rotation grazing and continuous grazing) in terms of both ecological sustainability and economic performance. However, a number of studies conducted in Africa and North America refute this position.



Does research support the sustainability of the Savory Grazing Method?

In 1972, using a short-duration grazing system designed by Allan Savory, the Liebigs Ranch was stocked at 100 per cent of the recommended rate. From 1972 to 1980, the ranch experienced above-normal precipitation rates and forage yields. Although the ranch experienced an improvement in range condition without any compromise to livestock performance, less intensively managed ranches also showed similar improvements in range health.

However, for the next two years precipitation fell to normal levels causing animal performance and range condition to deteriorate, and forcing the owners to reduce cattle numbers. A drought then forced the ranch owners to remove all of the livestock from the ranch due to the lack of forage. Some range specialists noted those ranchers who utilized a more conservative approach to stocking fared much better during the drought and did not have to destock as severely.

It is important to note this same series of events have taken place in North America. Ranchers using the Savory Grazing Method have stocked their ranches at high stocking rates during times of above normal precipitation, only to drastically reduce the stocking rate or by forage during a drought due to forage shortages. Invariably, this has created con-

siderable economic hardship for those ranchers.

In 1969, Savory played a major role in implementing the Charter Estate Trials to evaluate two short-duration grazing systems against a control grazing system. Despite the relatively small increases in economic returns, researchers concluded short-duration grazing tended to reduce individual animal performance and an increase production per acre. Nevertheless, this trial did not show there was any appreciable difference between short-duration grazing and conventional grazing systems when plant species composition or basal plant cover were measured.

FINAL THOUGHTS

There has been a considerable amount of research conducted on North American grasslands over the past 30 years. The purpose of much of this research was to test Allan Savory's grazing hypothesis. The conclusions reached by researchers on the research conducted on the arid and semi-arid native grasslands of North America and Africa include:

No evidence showing an improvement in water infiltration, seed establishment, nutrient cycling, improved litter accumulation or defecation rates at the stocking rates recommended by Allen Savory.

Significant deterioration in range health, and an increase in soil erosion, at the stocking rates recommended by Savory.

That it is not possible to halt patch grazing and simultaneously improve animal performance using the stocking rates recommended by Savory.

The best way to restore range health is to reduce stocking rates and improve livestock distribution.

At moderate stocking rates, the Savory Grazing Method does not offer any special advantage over conventional rotation grazing systems or continuous season-long grazing.

It is the stocking rate and the rancher's management capability, not the grazing system, which determines the effectiveness of a grazing strategy.

Stocking rates 10 to 30 per cent above the recommended stocking rates tend to maximize ranch income. Some researchers feel this is sustainable with rotation grazing, with adequate management, on rangeland in healthy condition and under normal precipitation conditions.

The high stocking rates and grazing practices, as recommended by Savory, are ecologically and economically unsustainable.

Hyland Armstrong is a consultant and retired rancher from the Cypress Hills, Alta. with a long educational and career background in animal science and range management. He can be reached at lightningbutte@hotmail.com or 403 528 4798.

» CONTINUED FROM PAGE 36

CONSUMER DEMAND BOOSTING CATTLE MARKET

an eight per cent year-over-year decline. Lower beef production has resulted in lower beef product exports, with a whopping 24 per cent drop to the U.S. as a larger percentage of production is being consumed in the Canadian market.

Looking at the demand structure, choice wholesale beef prices reached an all-time high just over \$205/cwt in early May. The market always struggled to

move above the magical \$200 level, but we now find some breathing room to the upside. Consumer confidence climbed to 68.1 in April, up from 61.9 in March and only 58.4 in January. Strength in the housing market is a positive signal because small business financing comes from home equity and credit cards. Approximately 60 per cent of all jobs are from small business, so this is needed to bring down the U.S. unemployment rate longer term. Unemployment continues to trend lower, dropping to 7.5 per cent in April, while GDP is now solidly above 2.5 per cent, which is also needed to bring

down unemployment and maintain growth. Positive economic data bodes well to sustain the higher beef market.

FEED GRAINS UNCERTAIN

Fed cattle prices may come under some pressure during the summer. Seasonally, beef production increases in June and July and consumer spending is expected to remain constant. Prices for Alberta slaughter cattle are expected to slowly percolate higher into the fourth quarter and readily trade in the range of \$125/cwt to \$130/cwt. I'm factoring in a bias for a weaker

Canadian dollar, which will also enhance fed values.

Feeder cattle prices have stabilized now that feeding margins are hovering near break-even. However, feedgrain prices will remain historically high until the harvest season. Pressure on the fed market will limit the upside on replacement cattle until late July. In August, feedlot operators will start factoring in lower feedgrain costs and higher fed prices for the fall and winter period. This will cause yearlings to slowly trend higher and when the bulk of the calves come on stream in October and November, feeder cattle prices are expected

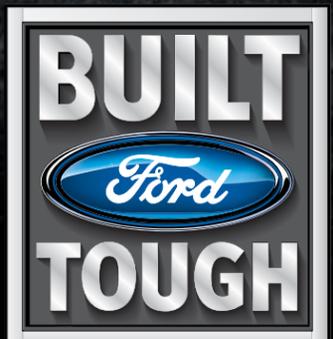
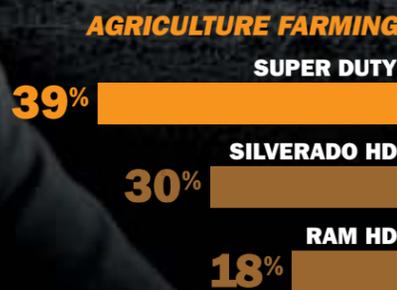
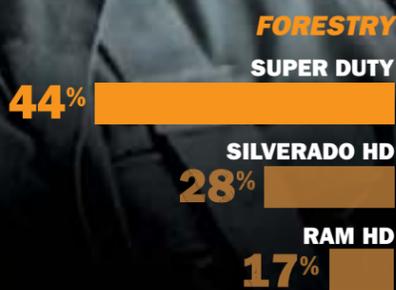
to be \$10/cwt to \$15/cwt above current levels. It is important to note the market needs favourable crop development in order for this projection to materialize. The later-seeded U.S. corn crop will pollinate during seasonally hot temperatures and timely rains are needed throughout the growing season. I don't expect major upside to develop in the feeder market until the Canadian barley and U.S. corn crops are more certain.

Gerald Klassen analyzes cattle and hog markets in Winnipeg and also maintains an interest in the family feedlot in Southern Alberta. For comments or speaking engagements, he can be reached at gklassen7@hotmail.com or call 204 899 8268.

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SEEDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Give Dad reasonable expectations

Have a clear understanding of what's needed to succeed



ELAINE FROESE

Another teary-eyed father sits in my coaching session rubbing his face, trying to hide his disappointment. He really wants to get things sorted out with his son, but his emotions are keeping him stuck. When I suggest that all he really wants is to be respected and appreciated for all he and his wife have done, he nods in agreement.

Father's Day on farms is a mixed bag of celebration, avoidance and "let's get back to work!" This year we will all be pressing hard to get the crop in, and hope that nature has a way of compensating delayed seeding. Delays in farm family conversations that embrace the need for affirmation and realistic expectations are not so forgiving.

According to the *Best of the Family Business Advisor* journal from Family Enterprise Publishers, part of succession... and personal maturity is "letting go" of the expectations one has towards one's parents. When successors take hold of these four beliefs, they can let go of problematic expectations.

Adult farm successors, heed this:

1. Appreciate that your parents are not perfect, and they have made some mistakes in judgment. "Cut them some slack" and model forgiveness.

2. Accept parents for who they are... with respect... and love. I am amazed at what I learn about dads in tears when they tell me about difficult sibling partnerships, and addicted fathers, and so on. Everyone's life experience has a back story that gives clues to their fears, dreams, and disappointments.

3. Understand that life is not fair. The cancer, strokes, divorce, heart attacks, and accidents that changed your farm's direction are part of the journey of life. Instead of bitterness, how do you choose to make better decisions, and count your blessings?

4. Assume personal responsibility for your own life, security and identity. It is not the role of parents to make all of their children economically equal. What actions are you taking to be emotionally and financially mature? You can change you. You get the behaviour from others that you accept. What do you need and want to do differently?

The *Family Business Advisor* found that parents' ability to let go of power correlates with the next generation's ability to let go

of emotional expectations of their parents. When farm parents see their adult children take personal responsibility for who they are, and their own success, the parents can't wait to support the next generation. "The parents seem to draw on my strength. It helps them," says one successor.

Some gifts to give Dad this year:

Grow up. Show up to the conversation as an adult, not an "entitled child." Work on being more self-reliant, competent, and eager to assume farm business leadership.

Be respectful. Treat others the way you would like to be treated and stop yelling at each other.

Make repair of the relationship with reconciliation. Forgive the past mistakes, and clean the slate to make better plans together.

Show verbal appreciation. Speak words of affirmation to each other.

Take time for fun together. Parents are not usually best friends with their kids, but it does help the emotional bank account of the family to have fun together. What is fun for you? Find the fishing rods, the canoe, the horse tack, or the bikes. Life will pass by very quickly and you will never regret the intentional time you take to rally reasonable expectations for being a family, who happens to farm together.

Unreasonable expectations are the shortcut to discontent.

Let go of expecting perfection. Embrace the courageous conversations.

Enjoy a clearer understanding of what Dad and you both need to succeed.

Being a dad in 2013 is a basketful of roles.

Honour each other.
Happy Father's Day!

Elaine Froese, CAFSA, CHICoach farms near Boissevain, Manitoba where she Skype coaches North American farm families across time zones, and watches the Prairie sky. Book her expertise for your fall farm conferences. Buy her books at www.elainefroese.com/store. Call 1-866-848-8311.

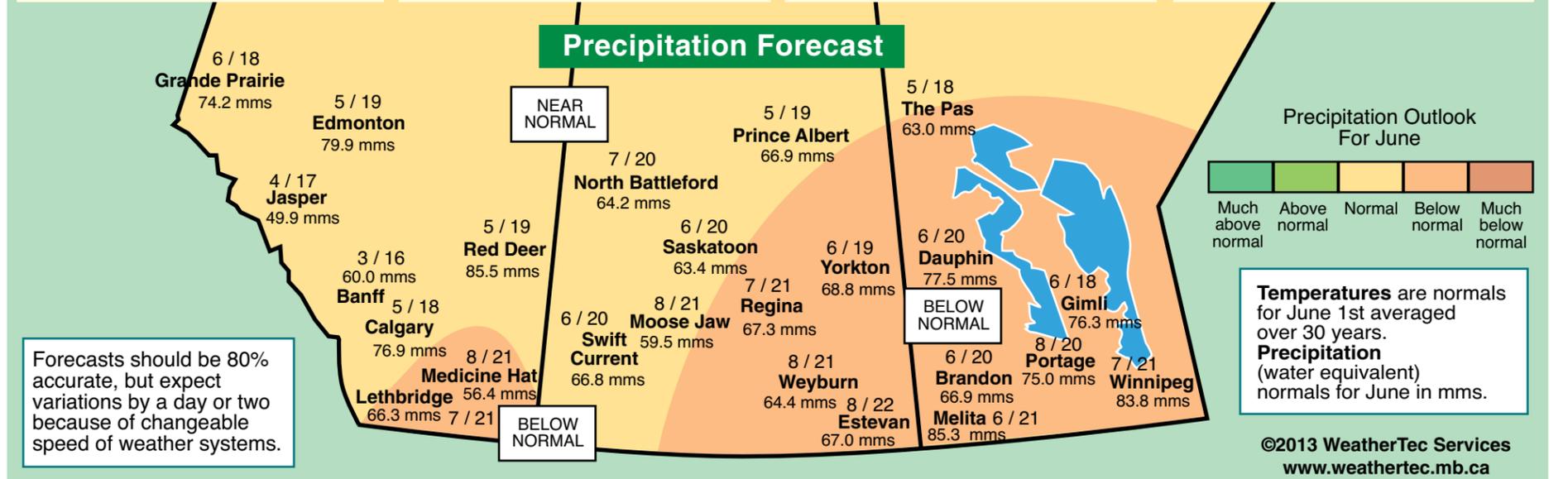
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EXTENDED OUTLOOK FOR THE PRAIRIES

Weather Forecast for the period of June 9 to July 6, 2013

Peace River Region	Southern Alberta	Saskatchewan	Manitoba
<p>June 9 - 15 Sunny aside from scattered showers or thunderstorms. Highs will be in the upper teens and 20's. Often windy.</p>	<p>June 9 - 15 Sunny, but expect scattered showers or thunderstorms. Highs will be in the upper teens and 20's. Brisk winds are forecast.</p>	<p>June 9 - 15 Sunny, but showers or heavier thunderstorms on a couple of days. Highs often in the 20's.</p>	<p>June 9 - 15 Sunny. Highs in the upper teens and 20's. Showers or thunderstorms on 2 or 3 days, chance of heavy in places.</p>
<p>June 16 - 22 Sunshine prevails, but expect showers or heavier thunderstorms on a couple of occasions. Warmer.</p>	<p>June 16 - 22 Sunshine prevails, but expect showers or heavier thunderstorms to develop on a couple of days. Warmer.</p>	<p>June 16 - 22 Sunny. Seasonal. Humid, warmer days set off thunderstorms, some heavy with gusty winds and hail.</p>	<p>June 16 - 22 Sunny. Seasonal. A few showers or heavy thunderstorms on a couple of humid, warmer days.</p>
<p>June 23 - 29 Sunny. Highs in the 20's, but hotter days trigger heavy thunderstorms in a few localities.</p>	<p>June 23 - 29 Sunny. Highs in the 20's, but hotter days trigger heavy thunderstorms in a few regions.</p>	<p>June 23 - 29 Warm and sunny most days apart from scattered heavier thunderstorms on a couple of hot days.</p>	<p>June 23 - 29 Warm under sunshine, but showers or heavier thunderstorms occur on 2 or 3 more humid days.</p>
<p>June 30 - July 6 Warm to hot. Sunny, but with isolated thunderstorms, possibly severe in places.</p>	<p>June 30 - July 6 Warm to hot. Sunny, but with isolated thunderstorms, possibly severe in places.</p>	<p>June 30 - July 6 Sunshine. Seasonable. A couple of hotter, humid days trigger thunderstorms, some heavy.</p>	<p>June 30 - July 6 Sunny. Highs near normal. One or two hotter, humid days trigger thunderstorms, some heavy.</p>





FROM THE FARM

Make family time a priority

DEBBIE
CHIKOUSKY

The value of a father's influence while growing up is often not apparent till the child starts to look back on their life. Usually that doesn't occur till a separation of some kind, hopefully not a permanent one, and the child realizes how much their father is a part of them. For a lot of dads, work makes enjoying their children's growing-up years hard to manage, but it is definitely worth the effort.

I grew up in the city and although a city job is not the same as a farm, jobs still make life complicated. When we visited the farm I was jealous of all the time that the children could spend just working with their dad. Country life just seemed so much more uncomplicated for family time.

Hard farming years have caused a lot more farmers to take off-farm jobs as well as trying to keep up with their farms, so having a quality family life is getting even more complicated. But even in the city we were always short on time. My dad worked six days a week and we had lots to catch up on, on Sunday. That was his day to cut grass or do whatever other repairs my mom and I had lined up, but every Sunday we saw my grandparents. When they didn't drive anymore we would pick them up and bring them over. My grandfather would work along with my dad or just take us kids to the park. My grandma would help my mom with her work and we had a day together. The only time we didn't have a Sunday family dinner was if my grandparents were travelling to visit other relatives. During our teenage years my brother and I would try and go out but that was never allowed. Sunday was for family — period.

Thinking about Father's Day this year made me realize how much things had changed. Sunday dinner with family is very rare and taking time for relaxation and spending time with our adult children is very difficult with everyone's schedules. I'm sure that we aren't the only farm family that has found the last few years more than a little trying. We might not be able to control the weather but we can certainly control our reactions to the stress that non-cooperative weather can cause. For us it has certainly restricted our quality family time and I would like that to change.

When our children were little, we were still in the city, and my husband used to love to barbecue. His favourite dish was barbecued chicken. Instead of baked potatoes he would chop up potatoes, onions, carrots and garlic onto a piece of tinfoil, add butter, salt and pepper and cook for about an hour once the chicken was almost cooked. When we were reminiscing about this I discovered our youngest doesn't even remember these fun times. So that has to change. Father's Day is a great place to start, to put the men in our families back into the place, head of the family, that they right-

ly deserve to be and spend some time with them to show them we do appreciate their efforts.

One of the keys to changing is planning. I read that if you want to develop a new habit or get rid of an old one it takes 21 days. So, the key to more quality family time is planning it. Pick something, like a barbecue once a month, and make a date. Tell all the people about a month ahead to put it on their day planners/BlackBerrys or whatever they are using and remind them once a week. This would be Mom's job. I learned quickly when our first son moved out that dads need their wife to keep up with the kids. He was always telling our son to make sure he called home because I worry but it was Dad who asked every day if I had talked to our son and what was happening.

Keep plans in the conversations.

Make it an event. It doesn't have to be anything more than an hour with a cup of tea but it has to be a commitment. It really isn't a lack of wanting to be together, it is a lack of keeping it in the forefront of priorities.

My mother-in-law taught us how to have successful chicken or pork (anything fatty) on the barbecue — parboiling. Boil a large pot of water with a pinch of salt in it and add meat. Boil till it changes colour but not till cooked. Chicken legs would take approximately five minutes. This removes the fat and blood and eliminates a lot of the flash fires in the barbecue. Reserve the water to make soup.

Place the hot meat in a metal bowl and cover with enough barbecue sauce to saturate it. During the cooking time more fresh sauce could be brushed on if desired.

This recipe is enough for about 10 pounds of chicken.

ZINGY BARBECUE SAUCE (FROM IN THE KITCHEN WITH HEDI)

1/4 c. oil
1 c. finely chopped onion
2 tbsp. brown sugar
1/4 c. vinegar
1/4 c. lemon juice
2 c. ketchup
3 tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
2 tbsp. prepared mustard
1 clove garlic, crushed
1/4 tsp. hot sauce
1/2 bay leaf
3/4 tsp. chili powder

Sauté but do not brown onion in hot oil. Add remaining ingredients. Bring to boil. Simmer uncovered for 20 minutes. Cool. Pour into jar with tight cover. Store in refrig-

erator. Makes 2-1/3 cups for beef, poultry, and pork.

Family closeness is a project worth working on. Even if being together physically isn't going to happen it is still important to communicate. A friend of mine shared that when her mother passed away in February it was the good-night call she missed the most. She works a night shift and she was always comforted that at least one person always knew she had made it home. My own grandparents used to talk with us every day till they passed. This Father's Day will be a year since my husband's dad passed and there isn't a day that goes by that he isn't remembered, especially when we could really use a mechanic. It is very important for family to make time for each other before it is too late.

Debbie Chikousky farms at Narcisse, Man.

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POSTCARDS FROM THE PRAIRIES

Life's secrets, according to you...



JANITA
VAN DE VELDE

I don't have a tattoo, but at the ripe old age of 38, pardon me, 27, I'd like to get the following quote inked on my body. (My mother will faint. But not before issuing an oral dissertation on how silly a tattoo will look when I'm 80. P.S. Mom, if I make it to 80, I'm going to get a tattoo AND start smoking again. P.P.S. I love Jesus.)

"Men are haunted by the vastness of eternity. And so we ask ourselves, will our actions echo across the centuries? Will strangers hear our names long after we're gone and wonder who we were? How bravely we fought... how fiercely we loved..."

— from Homer's *Odyssey*

As for my children, I won't be here to witness their entire journey, or see how their story ends. This is as it should be — I can only pray I'll be gone long before them. But I hope they never forget how deeply they were loved. Because in the end, all ego-related issues will be laid to waste; our pride, our quest to be perfect, our shame, our attempts to hide our weaknesses, our fears, our sadness, our pain. In the end, we'll come to realize that if only we had shared more openly along the way, then we could've helped ourselves, and in doing so, we would have helped others. As the saying goes, he who saves the life of one man, saves the world. This is what will matter. How bravely we fought, how fiercely we loved.

Here forthwith, are the remaining topics you think we should talk about more often. Part 3

Marriage, and how hard it is. Why do marriages fall apart? Why do some stay together? And not just stay together, but truly want to stay

together. Let's face it, "till death do us part" is a really long time.

How we really feel. I'm not talking so much at work, but at home. I know I'm not open (not sure why) with my husband about my insecurities, self-esteem, how some things he may do, or not do, make me feel, and that's really a shame. I do encourage my children to talk to me about things even though I can't. I don't want them to not open up. So far, it's working. People are often shocked at the honest conversations my daughter has with us. We encourage it and always have. If we didn't encourage her from a very young age, there is no way she'd be talking to us now as a teenager!

Equality. I used to bring it up all the time, however, a lot of my family is very closed minded (slightly racist and definitely homophobic) and they change the subject as quickly as humanly possible. I think the more we talk about equal rights for all, regardless of race, social status and sexual orientation, it eventually won't be that big of a deal.

Right now in public schools they're talking about sexual differences, and how everyone should fit in a public school. Ever try to be different in a small town? No fun. Ever try to be different in a small Catholic town? Impossible! Although I have my own personal (religious) views on this, I think that it's critical to teach kids (and adults) that we need to be respectful and tolerant and considerate of others, even if their choice is different than ours. I want that for my kids. Getting the guts up to address this in my small Catholic community is something else altogether.

I want to talk about having family night more often.

Sharing how we really feel. The good and the bad.

Health and society's lack of, should be talked about more openly! People need to be accountable and take responsibility for their actions. It's just too easy for people to be dependent on government, doctors and health care for their wellness.

My husband and I pretty well discuss everything.

I feel like society should be more willing to talk about the fact that whether we like it or not, the children that we're raising today are our future.

Integrity, accountability, hubris, materialism and constant labeling that create division in society. For example, the increase in obesity and inability to differentiate between needs and wants in increasing public debt loads.

God.

What we really want out of life.

Inequalities in the world.

What it means to move off the farm and down the road a bit... we're doing this at the age of 77 and 79.

Openly talk to children about sex and their bodies, and how their health problems are sometimes due to their eating and drinking habits. As a grandmother, it can be quite delicate talking of sex matters to teenagers.

Depression.

Personal finances.

Never feeling good enough, or adequate.

Everyone getting a fair share — how do you make that happen for your kids?

Drug use.

Dissatisfaction in my current job. I think parents should discuss more money, budgeting and financial things with their kids.

Feelings. Real feelings. Not what we think others want to hear. It's hard to be assertive about this and not have it backfire.

As a community, we should talk more about alcoholism.

I wish we'd talk more about the silliness of trying to fit in, and really, how stupid it is. We were made different for a damn good reason, and we should pay attention to that.

That's it for me, friends! I'll be

back in October... I'll miss your scandalous adoration and the never-ending fan mail (that I dream you send me). Until then, you can follow me on my blog at www.postcardsneverwritten.blogspot.com. I promise to keep you entertained. ✍

Janita Van de Velde grew up on a farm near Mariapolis, Man. She holds a bachelor of science degree in agricultural economics from the University of Manitoba, and has worked for a financial institution since graduating. She lives in Regina, Sask., with her husband Roddy and their children Jack, Isla and James. Her first novel, *Postcards Never Written*, was the recipient of the Saskatchewan Reader's Choice Award and also listed by CBC as one of the top funny books in 2009. She donates a portion of proceeds from the sale of her book to World Vision to help those less fortunate. For more information, or to order her book, visit her website at www.janita.ca.

Beekeeping 101 — Part 2

BY TERRA WEAVER

My husband Ron and I are new at beekeeping and this has been our first winter of keeping honeybees on the farm. As with the rest of our first year, there has been a lot to learn, and the bees' resiliency never ceases to amaze us.

We started preparing them for winter by leaving approximately 40 lbs. of honey in the brood boxes to feed them. Along with those 40 lbs of honey, we also filled a frame feeder with sugar syrup to help supplement the bees' feed source. Next we needed to consider a way to keep them warm.

We found that very few beekeepers in our area move their bees indoors for the winter. Studies show that even when it is -40 C outside, a bee colony will cluster around its queen, and the middle of that cluster will be +35 C, definitely warm enough to keep the colony healthy.

After buying Styrofoam insulation to cut to the exact specifications of the hive, winter snuck up on us quickly, so we had to improvise to something that would work temporarily until we had time to cut the Styrofoam.

We wrapped the hive with silver bubble wrap insulation, cutting holes to keep the top and bottom entrances open. It is very important to keep the top entrance open to prevent the hive from getting too humid, as humidity is very dangerous to the health of a honeybee colony.

Our intention was to leave the bubble wrap insulation on until this premature October snowfall melted away, after which we would install our perfectly measured and cut Styrofoam. As those of us from the Lloydminster area know, that premature snow stayed... and stayed... and stayed...

The bubble wrap worked beautifully. We took the Ski-Doo out to our bee site many times during the winter, and we were always happy to see a nicely wrapped hive with one



Winter arrived so quickly that we had to use bubble wrap insulation.

or two dead bees lying outside the entrance. A few dead bees outside the hive must mean live bees inside, because bees clean up their hive and will carry any dead ones out.

We visited the bees on April 7 and found that they were flying in and out of the hive for cleansing flights. It was very strange to be sitting in the snow in negative temperatures, listening to the buzz of bees flying overhead!

The hive appeared to be thriving. We would top up their sugar syrup feeder to make sure there would be enough food until the flowers start to bloom. What we found inside were bees that appeared to be healthy and clustered in a swarm, presumably surrounding the queen. We quickly topped up their frame feeder and closed the hive again to avoid getting them too chilled.

Our very quick hive check let us know a few things:

- There are a lot of live bees in the hive.
- The bees are active.
- They still have frames of capped honey in the hive that they haven't eaten yet, so food supply isn't a problem at this time. And...
- My bee suit over my snowsuit makes me look fat.

We are very happy with the bees' success over the winter, and looking forward to year two of beekeeping! ✍

Terra Weaver writes from Lloydminster, Alberta.

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At 39, 5'6" 138 lbs I have my life in order, I have great girlfriends, a nice home, my wonderful canine companion, and I am very successful at what I do. Money is no concern for me, I am healthy in great shape, look good in blue jeans, I've been told I have a nice booty, but I have a personality & brains too. I love sports, I enjoy being out on the water on a summers day, with the sun shining. I love chilling at bar with great food, watching a game too. Love motors sports & motor cycles, I was previous a model for a major beer company, but now that I am older & wiser all that stuff is only fun once in while I am looking for my soulmate. I like to cook, I enjoy dancing & yes I do attend church. I give back to my community & believe love conquers all. Mirander Lambert is a lady I admire.

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SINGING GARDENER

Interest is high in water dowsing

One man's pictures, perspective and personal experiences



TED
MESEYTON

June is the month of Father's Day. We are also into the high tide of summer weather as daylight hours continue stretching to their limit. In the third week of this month we'll experience the least hours of darkness and longest period of daylight for the entire year. Then a little further along comes that important day when we celebrate our nation's 146th year since confederation. Here's the first verse and refrain from "Happy First." It has several additional verses that go on to tell when remaining provinces and territories joined the initial four.

*Back in 1867,
Nova Scotia and N.B.,
With Ontario and Quebec,
A Dominion they would be.
Happy First, July first,
Let's shout it out with
joy and mirth,
Happy First, July first,
It's Canada's day of birth.*

DOWSER, DIVINER, WITCHER, SWITCHER

The above four words are interchangeable but refer to the same subject. I, Ted, have discovered there's a bunch of water dowser scattered out there across the country and the interest is quite high. The balance of this *Grainews* column focuses on pictures, perspective and personal experiences shared by one dowser named George McKenzie Box 3, Brownvale, Alta. T0H 0L0. He's a pioneer and experimenter in this field. Also, a followup on Grimshaw Gravels Aquifer later on.

We've spoken via phone several times and George also writes: "I read your article about the lady who was witching and notice there is a lot of interest in the witching rod. When I hold a 10-inch or



He's on top of something and it could be water, metal, bones, gold, a lost object or whatever. When George McKenzie, 82, begins dowsing, he moves forward with concentration of thought while holding a pair of rods level in front of him about eight inches apart. George says, "The rods will swing to the outside 180 degrees apart (as shown in picture) and will continue to stay apart as long as you are over the thing. When you move off the object, the rods will return in front parallel to each other again." George also mentioned when his hands are placed wider apart the rods will go right around and face each other in front of the belly button. Lots of times when rods are not held straight, they can cross in front of the dowser who doesn't find anything; usually giving a phony or false result. George emphasizes, "It's important that a dowser hang on and keep the rods level and not let them sag down. When the edge of the area is reached the rods return again to the original front position.

longer piece of metal or copper or brass in my left hand and go over some water or metal, nothing happens. If I put a piece of metal or copper or brass such as small pliers in my right hand and reach out over water or metal; the thing in my left hand will start going up and down. This motion will keep repeating as long as I hold the right hand over the object, water or metal. I assume that it would work if I switched hands."

He continues, "When I put an old house broom in my left hand with metal in my right hand, the broom starts to go up and down when I hit on something. The broom finds the same things for me as does a metal rod. This is a fascinating gift and the way I found out was I do a lot of welding and I was carrying a pipe across the yard and the pipe was going up and down and my friend said we're going over water and that was the start of it. I know

others who do it but I don't know anyone as active as I am."

Here are some of his discoveries. "I have found things such as a small gold ring in three feet of grass and buried animals. Also found out that a Y-shape willow stick will work; not any other kind of wood such as aspen. I went and cut a willow stick and the bark just peeled off when I hit water. I'll have to get my battery tester out and see if I can find out more about this gift. I can hold the wrist of others who can't do it and then it will work for them. Am I charging up their body? I don't think it has anything to do with witchcraft. A new witcher will often let rods sag down making them swing around so keep them level."

There's more! George has tried using a lot of other things too, including a carpenter square balanced on his second finger. "It would swing back and forth when

over metal, brass, water, bones, gold rings etc. I can take my grandfather's gold watch and hold it by the chain. It will start swinging back and forth up to 90 degrees with a strong pull that might be close to 50 pounds." George even plays with forks and knives at the dinner table. He calls them all "novelty things." Seems his sensitivity is so sharp that almost anything he tries will react for him in some fashion. George extends good luck in finding water or gold or whatever to his fellow dowser.

EXCERPT FROM AN EMAIL

Geophysicist Gary Johnston who lives near Onoway, Alberta writes: Ted: I enjoy your column in *Grainews*. In the April 15 copy you had a picture of a trio holding large potatoes. The caption stated that they lived on the Grimshaw Gravels, the largest underground lake in the world. I hate to break their balloon.

It is not the largest in Alberta. The Grimshaw Aquifer is 466 square kilometres. The Paskapoo Aquifer in Alberta is 150 times larger at 70,000 square kilometres. The largest in the world is the Guarani Aquifer in South America at 1.2 million square kilometres. There are also very large aquifers in Australia and Africa. The Grimshaw Aquifer would not appear on the list of the 1,000 largest aquifers in the world.

Ted's response: Gary is correct and we thank him for bringing the above to the attention of our readers and the Grimshaw Gravels Committee agrees. Poof goes the balloon that Gary mentioned. Gary is 69 years old and still working. He has done environmental and mineral consulting work for the past 30 years and enjoys the challenge of finding something hidden underground. His work record includes well over 1,000 spill sites. It also appears Gary likes to grow tomatoes although he was not impressed with selection of tomato bedding plants he saw at four greenhouses. His solution: "Next year I need to plant my own from seed."



This is Ted Meseyton the Singing Gardener and Grow-It Poet from Portage la Prairie, Man. With dowsing it seems you either have the gift or you don't. About one person in a dozen possesses it but many don't know it. The other 11 are sometimes quick to call the dowser a fake but in reality no trickery is involved. Wild animals can smell a waterhole miles away. Is there some natural instinct that descends from one generation to the next? Folklore says the power is inherited from mother to son and from father to daughter. Old-timers who desired a good, handy supply of water in their yard usually sought out a dowser known to be talented in this craft. Even Albert Einstein was interested in the whole phenomenon of dowsing. My email address is singinggardener@mts.net.



George uses a single rod to determine depth of water or any other object. Here's his calculation method. He says, "You hold one rod tight and level in your hands. The rod will begin to go sideways for a moment then it will go up and down. That's when you start to count the number of times it goes up and down. For example, if it goes up and down 34 times, the water or object is 34 feet from the rod. Subtract three feet allowing the distance of the rod to the ground making it 31 feet to the water. The rod will then repeat this over and over again."



To dowse with a metal crowbar, George McKenzie demonstrates how to hold and balance it on the middle fingers. For determining depth, hold the bar level when over the object you have located. As with the rod, George says, "The bar begins dipping up and down." He explains it this way. "When you locate something the end of the bar will first dip down and as you pass over it the other end will dip up and down. When this happens begin counting. Each down and up movement counts for one foot of depth. There's an amazing thing about this. It's not in metric." In George's words: "Maybe it is because I was brought up in the imperial system."

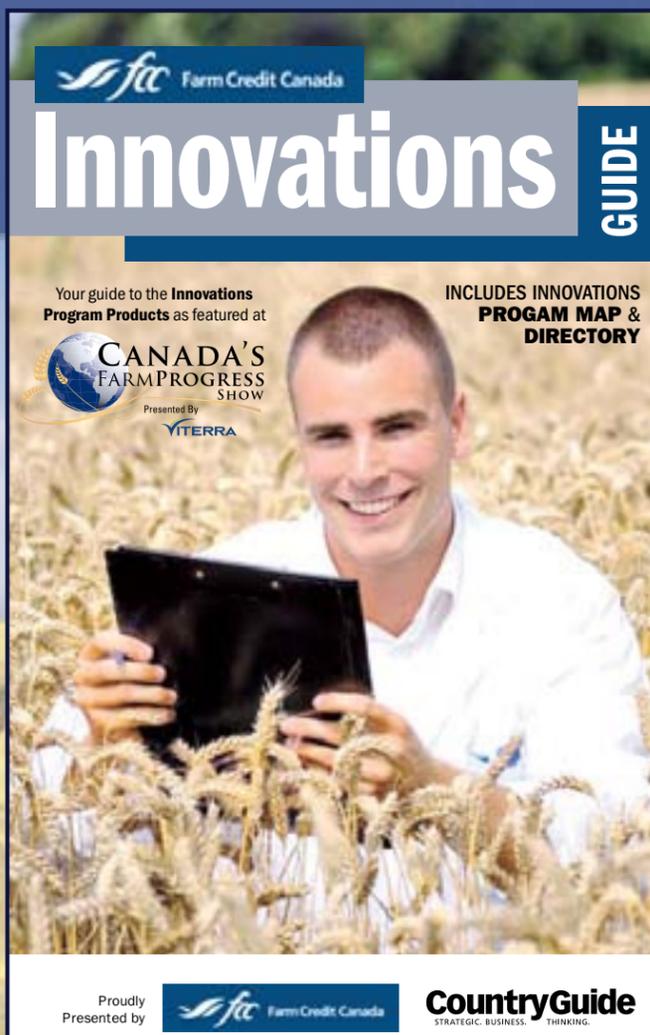


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