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EXPRESS



Mavis Breitzkreutz had moved away but was part of a committee that was first struck to hold a reunion and then decided to do more.

PHOTO: REBECCA DIKA

VALHALLA: *Tiny community hasn't just survived, but thrived*

RENEWAL ▶ With a thriving restaurant, charter school and community centre, Valhalla Centre remains a going concern

BY REBECCA DIKA
AF CONTRIBUTOR / GRANDE PRAIRIE

It's named for the afterworld of Norse legend, and Alberta's Valhalla might have passed into the Great Beyond save for the dogged efforts of a small community group.

Valhalla Centre, the tiny Norwegian community west of Grande Prairie, had been in a decades-long decline when the Valhalla Heritage Society was formed in 1988. Their efforts have since proven the wisdom of Margaret Mead's words that a "small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world."

Originally founded in 1912 by a Norwegian missionary, the community's claim to fame — aside from the Valhalla Brass Band — was its creamery, which opened in 1919 and later won first prize for its butter at Toronto's Royal Winter Fair. But it was sold and closed in 1946.

"When the creamery was sold in

1946 is when the downturn of the community started," said Mavis Breitzkreutz, a former local resident whose parents both worked in the creamery.

Breitzkreutz had moved away but was part of a committee that was first struck to hold a reunion and then decided to do more. The first move by the Valhalla Heritage Society was to have the town's store, which dated back to 1918, declared a historic site. Funding from the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation paid for a new foundation, which was poured a few feet back from its original site close to the highway. The 1,700-square-foot structure was initially leased to a private operator of a small restaurant and eventually taken over by the society. Today, Melsness Mercantile restaurant (named after the longtime operators of the store) employs eight, attracts patrons from as far away as Grande Prairie, and showcases community

SEE VALHALLA ▶ page 6

BARLEY:

UNIFORMITY BEATS PLUMPNESS FOR MALTSTERS ▶ Pg 12

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INSIDE »	LIVESTOCK	CROPS	COLUMNISTS
 TWO NEW COMMISSIONS UNDERWAY IN ALBERTA 15	 TWO-SIDED COIN 22	 DOES SUCKING BEAT BLOWING? 13	 BRENDA SCHOEPP THE "WHY BEHIND THE BUY" FOR BEEF CONSUMERS 29
 BLISTER BEETLE-INFECTED HAY CAN BE TOXIC 30	High grain prices are great — if you're not a livestock feeder	Vacuum planter may cut canola seed cost	 DANIEL BEZTE SKEPTICS ARE MELTING AWAY AFTER 329 STRAIGHT MONTHS 31
			 ROY LEWIS WESTERN WATER HEMLOCK IS DEADLY FOR CATTLE 28

BRIEFS

A good use for overripe tomatoes

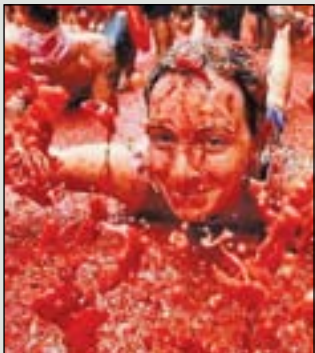
If you haven't planned your holiday for this summer, consider travelling to Bunol, Spain for the annual La Tomatina festival on Aug. 29. According to one of the U.K. travel websites promoting package tours to the event, between 20,000 and 40,000 people visit "The world's biggest food fight" where more than 100 tonnes of overripe tomatoes are thrown in the streets.

The fight culminates a week-long festival of music, parades, dancing, and fireworks. On the night before the tomato fight, participants of the festival compete in a paella-cooking contest.

At around 11 a.m., the first event of the Tomatina begins. Many trucks haul the bounty of tomatoes into the centre of the town, Plaza del Pueblo. Shopkeepers use huge plastic covers on their storefronts in order to protect them from the carnage. The signal for the beginning of the fight is firing of water cannons. Once it begins, the battle is generally every man or woman for him/herself.

Those who partake are strongly encouraged to wear protective safety goggles and gloves. In addition, they must squish the tomatoes before throwing for safety precautions. Another rule is that no one is allowed to bring into this fight anything that may provoke someone into a more serious brawl, such as a glass bottle. Although it is forbidden to tear someone else's clothing, the crowd tends to ignore this and invariably will rip the shirt of any clothed person, man or woman.

After exactly one hour, the fighting ends when the water cannons are fired once more to signal the end. Fire trucks spray down the streets, which are said to be quite clean due to the acidity of the tomatoes.



Peace-area grain grower diversifies into a unique crop

TRY FRUIT ▶ Kreg and Leanne Alde will soon be the province's largest haskap growers, but they predict others will follow in their footsteps

BY REBECCA DIKA
AF CONTRIBUTOR / SEXSMITH

Last year's closing of Cargill's Albright facility west of Grande Prairie prompted grain farmer Kreg Alde to try something completely different — fruit production.

The elevator closing was not a popular move with area farmers, who will see their transportation costs double as they ship to the next closest site, the Viterra facility in Sexsmith.

The Cargill closure was a wake-up call, says Alde, who grows mostly wheat, barley and canola on about 2,500 acres with his wife Leanne and in partnership with his father Wayne.

"I always like to balance risk and with the Cargill shutdown it got a little scary," says Alde. "As soon as I have to rely on other people, I get uneasy."

Alde, who is also co-owner of an oilfield environmental company, said he has long wanted to move away from a "one-window" farm operation. He previously tried hemp but encountered production and marketing issues.

But he has higher hopes for haskap, a so-called "super-fruit" with extreme cold hardiness. Derived from an edible honeysuckle from Siberia and resembling an oval blueberry, the haskap is tart, sweet and high in antioxidants.

It is also extremely hardy, fast growing and high yielding, say its advocates. Seedlings will produce fruit within three years, reaching maximum maturity at 10 years. The fact it can withstand winter temperatures of -47 C and its fruit ready to harvest by late June piqued Alde's interest.

Fruit in six years

Five commercial cultivars have been developed by the University of Saskatchewan, the only source of certified seedlings in Canada. They grow from four to six feet high, and yield 2.2 pounds of berries per plant in their third year and as much as 8.8 pounds by year six.

The Aldes bought 7,000 seedlings this spring and will



Kreg Alde examining one of the 7,000 haskap seedlings. PHOTOS: REBECCA DIKA

plant another 7,000 next year on about 40 acres taken out of regular crop rotation — making their farm the largest haskap operation in the province. They've installed a drip irrigation system at a cost of approximately \$25,000 and are hoping to eventually harvest about 80,000 pounds of fruit annually. Plans for a cottage winery and offering juice, fresh and frozen haskap berry products for sale are in the works.

Alde says more haskap growers will be needed to meet the demand as the market develops. One of the advantages of haskap production for small farmers, he notes, is the required infrastructure



"As soon as I have to rely on other people, I get uneasy."

KREG ALDE

compared to conventional farming.

"A new combine can cost \$400,000," he says. "A berry harvester costs about \$100,000. A used one is \$30,000."

And, says Leanne, there are other advantages.

"Even though we've been a farm family for years, I'm not comfortable operating today's huge farm machinery."

The idea that they'll be able to scale down harvesting equipment in both cost and size is very appealing, she says.

Harper celebrates marketing freedom

POOLING OPTION ▶ The new CWB says it's ready to compete in an open market and buoyed by a good crop, high prices and farmer support

BY ALLAN DAWSON
STAFF

The drama over the demise of the Canadian Wheat Board single desk showed no sign of abating as the new era of open grain marketing began.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper told several hundred cheering farmers gathered at a farm near Kindersley, Sask. Aug. 1 that farmers who ran the border to challenge the board's monopoly in the 1990s deserve much of the credit for bringing about the change.

"They held firm, their courage of conviction never faltered and it is to them much of this victory is owed because it is to them that the consciousness of the country on this issue was really raised," Harper said as open-market supporters celebrated their new marketing freedom. "And friends, by standing with them and by enabling western farmers to freely market their wheat and barley our government has kept a solemn promise that dates back to the earliest days of our movement."

Harper used the rarely used "Royal Prerogative of Mercy" to officially pardon farmers who were charged and convicted of illegally selling grain to the U.S. "For these courageous farmers these convictions will no longer tarnish their good names."

Harper said an open market will encourage new investment and value added in Western Canada.

"Never, never, ever again will western farmers and only western farmers growing their own wheat on their own land be told how they can and can't market their products," Harper declared to cheers and applause. Back in Winnipeg, the Canadian Wheat Board, now known as CWB, announced it is ready to compete in the first open market for wheat in the West since 1943.

"We begin the new era in a position of strength and a climate of optimism," president and CEO Ian White said as he unveiled the CWB's new logo July 31.

"We have a brand new look, a strong business model and the support of thousands of farmers who have told us they intend to market grain with the CWB and that makes the future very bright."

The CWB also has the support of the federal government, he added, noting it has contributed \$349 million to provide a "clean balance sheet."

The government is also guaranteeing the CWB's borrowings and most of the CWB's initial payments. "We have an expert sales team comprised of almost the same people as before continuing to sell as much grain as they pos-



The stage was set in downtown Winnipeg last week as single-desk supporters resorted to street theatre to protest the implementation of an open market in Western Canada. PHOTOS: KATHLYN HOSSACK

sibly can," White said. "And very soon we will be officially launching canola pools that can be entered into by farmers."

Up for sale?

The CWB has added handling deals with Louis Dreyfus Canada and Richardson International, joining other major handlers, including Viterra and Cargill.

Ottawa's support for the CWB is only temporary. Within five years the CWB must be privatized, sold or wound down.

"We've already had a couple of entities come forward saying they'd love to buy the CWB," Ritz said during a separate news conference July 31 in Saskatoon. "They have a tremendous Rolodex of marketing around the world and they (potential buyers) want to capture that. We're not prepared to entertain that takeover that quickly. I think there are some great roles for the CWB to play in the next two to three years and we'll analyze at that point. There's no rush."

White declined comment on how many farmers have signed CWB contracts, but did say it expects to handle 30 to 40 per cent of this year's wheat crop.

The CWB is also optimistic because western farmers have begun harvesting what's shap-



"We've already had a couple of entities come forward saying they'd love to buy the CWB already."

GERRY RITZ

ing up to be a bigger-than-average crop, with above-average quality. World grain prices are at near-record levels with wheat trading in futures markets for \$9 to \$10 a bushel due to the drought in the United States' Midwest.

Not to be outdone, single-desk supporters used street theatre outside the board's offices to protest the monopoly's elimination and predict doom for small farmers.

Former board farmer-elected director Kyle Korneychuk said an open market will force western farmers to compete with each other, driving their prices and margins lower.

No going back

Anders Bruun, the lawyer representing the Friends of the Canadian Wheat Board, which

has asked the Supreme Court of Canada to rule on whether Ritz broke the law when he introduced the grain-marketing freedom bill in Parliament last October concedes there is no going back.

"Things may have changed so much that the monopoly couldn't possibly be restored," Bruun said, adding that is why farmers are working on a \$17.5-billion class-action suit for damages.

"We're already seeing the NDP and the Liberals start to campaign saying as soon as they become government, God forbid, they'll bring back the single desk," Ritz said. "That'll probably keep them out of Western Canada for the foreseeable future and I welcome that."

With files from Rod Nickel, Reuters

Pardons for border runners raise questions

LAWS REMAIN ▶ Protesters were convicted under the Customs Act and for contempt, not under CWB Act

BY ALLAN DAWSON
STAFF

Prime Minister Stephen Harper's decision to pardon some of the western farmers convicted of contravening Customs Act regulations in the 1990s is raising eyebrows.

"Where does that stop?" Bob Roehle, a former CWB employee and member of Friends of the Canadian Wheat Board asked. "In a democracy, do I get to choose which laws I support?"

"What about these freedom fighters who don't like Medicare?"

A government official declined to release the names of the farmers pardoned, citing privacy laws. However, the official confirmed the convictions were under the Customs Act, not the CWB Act.

In some cases farmers failed to show custom officials an export permit, some were charged after they illegally removed trucks seized by custom officials and others were convicted of contempt of court.

"(T)hose farmers were charged, they were hauled into court literally in chains, convicted, fined, jailed, threatened, equipment seized, lives were interrupted," Harper said. "But let me be clear about this, these people were not criminals, they were our fellow citizens — citizens who protested injustice by submitting themselves peacefully to the consequences of challenging that injustice."

Harper said he was using the ancient power of the Royal Prerogative of Mercy to pardon the farmers.

"For these courageous farmers these convictions will no longer tarnish their good names," he said.

However, the Appeal Courts at the time saw it differently. "The appellants were properly charged for violating Section 114 of the Customs Act. The trial judge found that customs officers, acting in the scope of their duties, did seize the vehicles, and that the appellants did wilfully evade the customs' officers attempts to place those vehicles into custody," Madam Justice C.L. Kenny wrote in upholding their convictions.

The Parole Board of Canada website says such pardons can only be granted in clear cases of injustice and only "in very exceptional and truly deserving cases." The injustice should not have been foreseen at the time of sentencing. But in many of the cases farmers deliberately sought to be arrested and choose to go to jail rather than pay a fine.

"Furthermore, the Royal Prerogative of Mercy is not a mechanism to review the merits of existing legislation, or those of the justice system in general," the site says.

PostMedia quotes interim Liberal Leader Bob Rae as saying the pardons are partisan. "They're corrupting the process," he wrote in a Tweet.

But Harper spokesman Andrew MacDougall said the pardons were just because the law was not.

"The Liberals have always supported jailing farmers who resisted the old and unjust wheat board monopoly, so it's no surprise they don't approve of doing the decent and just thing now that the wheat board monopoly has been abolished," he said in an email.

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OPINION



A really good year for agriculture in Alberta?

TWO SIDES ▶ Crop production and prices firing on all cylinders, but buyers are not so lucky

BY WILL VERBOVEN
ALBERTA FARMER | EDITOR

There's a lot of quiet anxiety in the Alberta countryside at this time of the year — more than in most years. Anticipating the upcoming harvest tends to be top of mind with the usual angst about weather uncertainty. But this year is a little different being most of the province is looking at above-average to bumper yields in almost all crops. Only an early frost could spoil one of the best years for crop production. Recent years have seen drought or excess moisture at least somewhere in the province, but not this year. Even pasture and hay crops have done well almost everywhere.

For cereal and oilseed growers the outlook looks even better, thanks to the bad luck for growers in the U.S. Midwest. A widespread drought in much of that area may see as much as a 30 per cent drop in corn and soybean production. That has seen prices and futures markets for those crops rise considerably, dragging wheat, barley and canola prices higher. That's good news for growers in Alberta — a combination of bumper crops and high prices rarely happens at the same time. No doubt their bankers and travel agents are smiling too.

The present market will also give growers a chance to cash in on those price spikes that many claimed the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) was unwilling to act upon in the past. One recalls past horror stories of wheat selling on the spot market in the U.S. for \$20 a bushel with the CWB allegedly standing by and ignoring such sales

opportunities. I guess now those critics can prove those stories right and we will soon see semis full of high-priced wheat heading south across the border. And that would be good for those folks close to those markets. Interestingly, the revitalized CWB seems to be quite active in the market and far from dead.

Double-edged sword

However, true to the story of agriculture in North America, one producer's good fortune is another's misery. High grain prices invariably mean tough markets for those in the livestock business. It's a double whammy actually — drought in much of the U.S. has seen livestock producers cull or dispose their herds due to lack of pasture and hay. That's put pressure on overloaded markets and prices. Then add in high corn and barley prices and feedlot operators are either running in the red or soon will be when their supply of lower-priced hedged feed grains runs out.

That's always a costly and painful transition, and feedlot operators begin to squeeze calf prices to reduce their losses. For hog producers it's almost the same story. All of this is casting an ominous sense of foreboding on the livestock industry. One can just see large operators trying to juggle the numbers through hedging their input costs and futures pricing. I expect it's not a pretty sight for calf pricing.

Cow-calf producers, at least in this province, have some relief in that pastures tend to be excellent along with decent hay crops. That could stretch marketing out if calf prices start crashing before the fall run. No doubt many are considering hang-

ing on to to their calves and feeding them out, but I expect custom feeding charges will be a shock to many. Whether you take your beating now or later may be the only choice for those with calves for sale.

We are not there yet, but I expect government and lending agency number crunchers will be busy spinning the figures in anticipation of a livestock market crash and any possible financial payout from the various agri-support programs. That work won't be too difficult, being they have had practice in recent years.

I might as well say it, but not to rub it in, supply management producers don't worry about high feed prices. Their pricing system just passes on those increased costs directly to the consumer in real time — as it should. But I digress.

I can't help but comment on reports from the urban media about impending food shortages and sky-high prices due to the American drought. That's all conjecture at best. Most fruits and vegetables in North America are actually grown under irrigation and 40 per cent of the U.S. corn crop goes into ethanol production. A stroke of the president's pen could redirect that production if food prices got out of hand — a distinct possibility in an election year. Those of us long in the tooth remember former president Nixon freezing meat prices when they got too high. Gosh, high commodity prices might see the consumers' food expenditures rise from 10 per cent to 12 per cent, still the lowest in the world.

If all goes well by this time next month, there may be a bumper crop on its way to the bin, shed or pile. Well, at least part of the agriculture industry will be happy.

Be careful what you wish for

Sometimes unintended consequences are hard to see in a controversial, emotional issue, and that sure goes for the future of supply management (SM). Much has been said about the possible demise of SM as a trade-off for increased access to offshore markets. That appears to be the unmentionable mantra of the Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance, a lobby group of mainly free trade commodity organizations. The free trade theory is that the elimination of SM will see vast new profitable tariff-free offshore markets opened up that would offset the economic loss of eliminating SM.

Well, be careful what you wish for, particularly if you support that theory and happened to be a beef or pork producer.

Norman Storch, a prominent Hanna-area rancher and a founding father of the Alberta Hatching Eggs Marketing Board, put forth the observation that livestock producers in Canada may have much more to lose than gain with the elimination of supply management. He suggests that eliminating SM could see cheap American chicken and turkey products flood into Canada. Such a flood would in all likelihood put pressure on not only

beef and pork prices, but also reduce their consumption for a long time. That's a real threat considering the fickle nature of consumers who tend to vote with their wallets. For most consumers \$4/kg chicken would look a lot more attractive than \$20/kg beef or pork.

Sure there is the temptation for retailers to capture more profits from the importation of cheap tariff-free poultry products. But in the food-marketing battle, market share is as important as margin. Retailers and fast-food joints could well mount a campaign to increase their share of total meat consumption with an onslaught of cheap U.S. chicken. That would be hard for the beef and pork industry to withstand except with their own lower prices. We all know who will pay for that marketing situation. Sure robust high-paying export markets for beef and pork could offset a domestic decline in prices and consumption — but there is no guarantee that will happen.

Time will tell, but it would be ironic that the demise of poultry supply management would see a decline in beef and pork economics and consumption. Sometimes leaving well enough alone is a more prudent policy.



OPINION

Finding a safe investment haven close to home

THINK LOCAL ▶ Investing in your own community is gaining popularity in the U.S. and being successfully tried north of the border

BY BRUCE STEWART
TROY MEDIA / TORONTO

Canadians may not have to face some of the dangers others in the world are dealing with directly, but there's still good reason to be nervous.

After all, Bernie Madoff drained the accounts of his Canadian holders — including some of our most prominent institutions. If the shenanigans at Jon Corzine's MF Global or at PFGBest that defrauded customers of their assets didn't hurt most of us, that's only because we weren't dealing with those firms.

Repeated stories of retail investors losing money because of "flash crashes" and high-frequency computer trading haven't helped. There's a growing perception that at least some of the international markets are rigged against ordinary investors. So far Canadian banks, insur-

ance companies and brokerages have been not only sound, but honestly run — something it's getting harder to say elsewhere.

Still, many Canadians are nervous about the quality of the firms whose shares and bonds are in their pension funds, mutual funds and investment accounts — and about the trustworthiness of people their fund managers and brokers deal with.

And with real estate markets cooling, many investors are wondering where to put their money.

One idea gaining popularity in the U.S. would make a lot of sense here: Investing in your own community.

Here's how it works. Most public institutions are strapped for cash, such as aging schools with heating, ventilation and cooling (HVAC) systems dating back to the '60s and '70s. Replacing those systems would generate significant operating savings, but schoolboards are broke.

So the investor comes along, offers to pay for new HVAC system, and the schoolboard pays back the loan, with interest, over 40 years (the life of the replacement). In effect, this acts like a bond and since the school is a public body, the investment should be safe.

The value of investing locally isn't just in having a better community. You're able to keep an eye on things.

Do it in your 50s, and have a retirement income stream.

It doesn't have to be a school, of course. It could be other public bodies, such as

a charity that owns an aging building.

Another place to invest is with local entrepreneurs, such as a community business association. Or you could do what was done in P.E.I. this year, where the crowd-funding website Kickstarter was used to fund several local projects on the island. Although Kickstarter facilitates investments around the world, locals here used it simply to handle the money.

Their mantra was "Islanders investing in Islanders" — and given that a Kickstarter investment can be very small, on the order of a few dollars, it's open to the smallest investors.

Why did the people leading this use Kickstarter? To deal with the investor laws that most of our provinces have: An entrepreneur looking for investors typically can only deal with "qualified investors" — people of proven high liquid net worth — unless they

are personal friends or family members.

The value of investing locally isn't just in having a better community. You're able to keep an eye on things. (An angel investor I know — one of those high net worth types — won't invest in anything, no matter how good, if it's more than 30 minutes from his front door so he can easily check out what's happening.)

We're very used to the idea that our money has to go into the markets. We're also aware that there aren't always enough things in the Canadian markets alone to excite us.

If you're worried about what's happening in other countries, you can protect yourself and your assets by putting them to work where you live.

Troy Media columnist Bruce A. Stewart is a Toronto-based management consultant. www.troymedia.com



What happened to lamb prices, and what can be done?

CYCLE REPEATS ▶ A different marketing system is needed, says a longtime industry recipient

BY GORD SCHROEDER

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SASKATCHEWAN SHEEP DEVELOPMENT BOARD

"What's going on with the lamb prices?" This is a common question of late. In my May article for Saskatchewan's provincial lamb newsletter I encouraged producers to recognize that last year's prices were record setting, and that there would be some moderation this year. Slaughter lamb prices were very high last year, which translates into high lamb prices in stores. This normally creates consumer resistance and a moderation in prices would be required to increase consumption. To add to this, the high cost of feed grains would make feeding lambs less attractive and the price gap between slaughter and feeder lambs would narrow.

The numbers indicated no reason for a significant decrease — stocks of frozen and chilled lamb and mutton down four per cent and meat imports down 19.4 per cent over the same period last year, and a slight decrease in consumption in 2011 to 0.9 kg per person from 1.07 kg in 2010. Ewe numbers were up 0.6 per cent, replacement ewe lambs up 4.1 per cent and market lamb numbers up 4.9 per cent over last year. Nothing substantial and there was a shortage of lambs.

Well, my market assessment/prediction was not accurate. So what's happening?

The weather

Currently there is a backlog of heavy lambs created by a lack of demand.

Consumption is way down due to the extremely hot weather in Canada's largest lamb market.

Prices paid for lambs last year were not supported by product marketing. Consumers will pay more when there is perceived value. We asked them to pay more but did they perceive more value?

Lamb prices were driven up to a level which was not good for the industry as a whole. Producers did very well; buyers and processors did not. This year buyers and processors are being cautious as there is pressure to recoup losses from last year.

As predicted, there is also a worldwide price correction. The price of lamb is down in many countries, not just in Canada. Last year prices were an all-time record. We knew this was not the new norm.

Lamb slaughter plants are in control and there's currently a backlog of lambs — simply a supply-and-demand issue.

Panic selling

Auction mart numbers to date are up, created in part by producer panic rather than an actual increase in supply. Flock expansion was very modest across Canada over last year. Adding to the panic are weather conditions creating feed shortages and high feed costs in the East and the U.S.

The U.S. drought is driving up feed prices and driving lamb prices down. Heat is also reducing consumption. The markets in the U.S. have collapsed, making it attractive for processors to bring up American lambs. They are coming up by the truckloads. Buyers

are cautious because of the degree and speed of the collapse in prices. I've talked to many who bought lambs they thought were at fair prices. By the time they got possession or sold them the price at the plants had dropped to levels to where buyers were losing money. In one case the price dropped \$40 cwt in one week.

High feed costs such as \$8.85-a-bushel corn and \$5.75 barley, the heat and price decline make feeding lambs extremely risky and not very attractive, thus the poor feeder lamb prices.

Put it all together and the results are what we are seeing now. So when will the price rebound?

I am somewhat reluctant to make a further prediction as you know how good my last one was. But again going back to the numbers, I have some thoughts. Once we get through this backlog of heavy lambs and the weather moderates and starts to cool down in fall, consumers will again start eating lamb. We will eat our way through this. We are not in an oversupply situation as a whole in Canada. Only the timing of a number of factors created this situation. Consumers ate lambs last year at very high prices. With prices moderating, consumption should go up again. I encourage producers to hang in there. We are coming off an extremely good year last year which makes this hurt even more. Consider lamb prices over the last few years.

Marketing changes needed

Long term, I feel we need to make some fundamental changes to the way we mar-

ket Canadian lambs. To keep producers in the industry and attract new entrants, producers need to be profitable. What's happened recently will set the industry back once again. This frustrates me as I've seen this cycle over and over again. We've all heard the saying, "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."

The history of the lamb industry for the most part is this; it gets rid of its lambs; it does not market them.

What's happening to producers right now is exactly why the Canadian Lamb Producers Co-operative is being developed. We've travelled across this country talking to producers about their interest and the feasibility of a producer-owned marketing organization.

I would ask this; is the current marketing structure for Canadian lamb working? Many retailers long for access to Canadian product. There is no Canadian marketing organization; there is no Canadian brand, very limited value adding. Consumers are looking for Canadian product. The words "Canadian lamb" alone bring with it perceived value. Consumers will pay for value. How are we currently marketing the value of Canadian product? How can Canadian lamb producers capture some of this value?

The Canadian Lamb Producers Co-operative goals are to address many of the current marketing issues. There are some things we can't change but there are things we can. How we market our Canadian lamb is one of them.

No need for ad hoc Ontario drought aid, says Gerry Ritz

EXISTING SUPPORTS ▶ Minister says producers can expect payments through AgriInsurance and possibly AgriStability

BY ALLAN DAWSON
STAFF

The federal government doesn't expect to announce any ad hoc aid programs for Ontario farmers suffering from drought, Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz told reporters in Saskatoon July 31.

"I think we have fullness in our programming that allows us the latitude to address this," Ritz said.

Earlier in the day Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty asked Ottawa to join his government in assessing support options for livestock producers affected by dry weather under the AgriRecovery program, designed to provide farmers with disaster relief.

The request triggered a 45-day assessment period, Ritz said. In the meantime drought-affected farmers can expect support through AgriInsurance and possibly AgriStability, he said.

"We will work as judiciously and as quickly as we can in getting those assessments done so farmers have access to the cash they need to continue moving," Ritz said. "We're more concerned at this point about the livestock sector, which is going to need access to feed because pastures just aren't there."

Ritz said he hopes in the future Ontario livestock producers will protect themselves by purchasing forage insurance. Only about 10 per cent of Ontario's forage acres are insured, compared to 75 to 80 per cent of annual crop acres.

Farmers should get cash for lost crops through AgriInsurance relatively quickly and eligible farmers can also apply for advances against pending AgriStability payments, Ritz said.

Recently two inches of rain in some parts of agri-Ontario brought some relief, Ritz said. It should help the soybean crop, but it's too late for the corn, he added.

While touring farms in eastern Ontario, Ted McMeekin, minister of agriculture, food and rural affairs, also called on the federal government to accelerate tax relief for livestock producers in affected regions through the identification of Prescribed Drought Regions.

Ontario is committing that farmers in Prescribed Drought Regions will be protected from reductions in their AgriStability coverage if they are:

- Experiencing challenges from the lack of rain and dry conditions
- Forced to sell breeding stock due to hay and pasture shortages

Once an area has been identified as a Prescribed Drought Region farmers are allowed to defer a portion of the sale proceeds to a future tax year, according to an Ontario government news release.

Primary agriculture contributes \$4.7 billion to Ontario's economy.

About 15,000 Ontario farmers are enrolled in production insurance, 10,000 in the risk management programs and 18,000 in AgriStability.

Ontario has 74,840 farmers in total.

Glacier Media supports Nuffield program

ALBERTA RECIPIENTS ▶ Columnist Brenda Schoepp and Ryan Bonnett of Airdrie supported this year

STAFF

The Nuffield Scholarship, a prestigious international program for Canadians with a career in agriculture, has received an ongoing commitment of \$15,000 per year from Glacier Media, a large Canadian owner of print and online publications including *Alberta Farmer*.

One of the recipients of this year's Nuffield scholarships is Brenda Schoepp, who writes the "From the hip" column for *Alberta Farmer* and *Canadian Cattlemen*. She will study the needs and successes of women in agriculture and agribusiness around the world.

"Our agriculture division, including the *Western Producer*, Farm Business Communications and Canada's Outdoor Farm Show, has been a major contributor to the growth of our company," CEO Jonathon Kennedy said in a release. "We're pleased to be able to support the career development of the future leaders in this important industry."

"The contribution is particularly welcome in a year when we are making significant changes," said Nuffield Canada chair Barb Stefanyshyn-Coté. "Our new, revitalized Nuffield program includes a new orientation process, additional skills and leadership training, and formalized mentorship committees."

Kennedy said the commitment is being made in support of the "Agriculture More Than Ever" initiative spearheaded by Farm Credit Canada, and designed to demonstrate to Canadians both inside and outside agriculture that it has evolved into a dynamic industry operated under modern management practices.

International travel

Three Canadians are selected annually for the scholarship, which was founded by Britain's Lord Nuffield in 1947. Eight countries participate: the U.K., Canada, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, France, Zimbabwe and the Netherlands. It is open to those between 25 and 45 who farm or have a career in agriculture.

Participation requires extensive international travel — six weeks with a group of other scholars from around the world and then six weeks individually. Scholars must fund part of the travel themselves, and leave their farm or job while travelling. They must write a report on their experiences.

"We're pleased to be able to help the Nuffield recipients offset their costs, and to give them an opportunity to let other farmers know about their experiences by publishing their reports in our publications," Kennedy said.

Other scholars funded this year are Ryan Bonnett from Airdrie, a marketing adviser for Farm-link Marketing Solutions. He will study grain marketing and production risk management strategies around the world. Crosby Devitt, who farms near Ripley, Ont. and works for Grain Farmers of Ontario. He will investigate grain research partnerships involving farmers, and the structure of farm organizations.

Commitment is being made in support of the "Agriculture More Than Ever" initiative.

VALHALLA ▶ from page 1



The society's latest accomplishment is a new 3,800-square-foot community centre. PHOTO: REBECCA DIKA

artifacts and memorabilia in a room at the back.

Just down the road, the Valhalla Charter School is doing exactly what the Peace Wapiti School Division said couldn't be done. Three years ago, the school division, citing low enrolment and high costs, announced its intent to close the local school. The community had seen it coming and a group was already working on attaining charter school approval. The Valhalla Heritage Society purchased the building, borrowing \$1.3 million to make upgrades, including the roof, heating system and washrooms. The charter school opened in September 2008 with about 50 students.

Every year since, the school

has added a grade as well as students and today has reached its cap, with 116 K-9 students. Only about \$200,000 of loan remains.

"Too many times, a school closure is the absolute death knell for small communities like ours," said Jolene Kochendorfer, chair of the Valhalla School Foundation. "There were a lot of people who didn't want to see that happen here."

The society's latest accomplishment is a new 3,800-square-foot community centre next to the school that houses a library, meeting rooms and new change rooms for the adjoining school gymnasium.

Not bad for a community that claims to have a population of "approximately 57 people."

WANTED PRODUCER DELEGATES

Alberta Beef Producers (ABP) was established in 1969 for the purpose of initiating, supporting and conducting projects and programs to stimulate, increase or improve the production and marketing of beef cattle and beef cattle products. ABP is a democratic producer organization representing all sectors of the beef cattle industry. The delegate system ensures democratic representation, encourages feedback from the grassroots and enables the organization to be consistently revitalized with fresh ideas and representatives.

ABP IS CURRENTLY LOOKING FOR ZONE DELEGATES AND CATTLE FEEDER COUNCIL DELEGATES.

If you are committed to the well-being of the cattle industry and are interested in working with a group of highly dedicated and engaged cattle producers please complete a nomination form, available on the ABP website at www.albertabeef.org under "Becoming a delegate" or by calling the ABP office at (403) 275-4400, and send it in by August 31, 2012, midnight, attention Laura Procnier, Chief Returning Officer.



Improving the wheat-registration process

HIGHER YIELD ▶ Changes to the CWB prompt search for medium-quality varieties

BY ALLAN DAWSON
STAFF

The search is on for a way to allow higher-yielding wheats while protecting Western Canada's reputation as a premium producer of red spring and amber durum wheat.

"All of the sectors affected by variety registration have come together in a very positive spirit to work towards developing something that will address the concerns and preserve the existing brands," said Patty Townsend, executive vice-president of the Canadian Seed Trade Association.

The debate over protecting the milling and baking quality of the West's premium wheat classes — Canada Western Red Spring (CWRS) and Canada Western Amber durum (CWAD) — versus the desire of farmers to grow what they believe to be higher-yielding wheats, including Dark Northern Springs from the U.S., has gone on for years. But the demise of the Canadian Wheat Board has prompted more calls for "medium-quality" higher-yielding varieties. Some question



Setting end-use quality standards has made Canada famous for consistency. ©THINKSTOCK

the need for variety registration and Western Canada's system of eight milling wheat classes, plus the general purpose class, saying the marketplace should determine what farmers grow.

"Western Canada is known for some of the best-quality wheat in the world," Moose Jaw farmer Vaughn Cone said at the recent Farming for Profit conference. "We need to take that badge off and throw it in the bush."

Saskatoon farmer and former wheat board director Cam Goff acknowledges high-quality Canadian wheat doesn't always fetch a premium when supplies are high. But he argues you don't have to chuck the current system as long as lower-quality wheats aren't sold in the CWRS class.

One example is SeCan's Pasteur, a new general-purpose wheat aimed at the feed and ethanol markets. Last year in Manitoba,

it outyielded AC Barrie, a CWRS wheat, by 34 per cent.

Registration system supporters say farmers benefit because new wheats meet specific disease resistance and agronomic standards — and setting end-use quality standards has made Canada famous for consistency, which boosts sales and usually generates premiums.

The Canadian Seed Trade Association is trying to bridge the gap — starting with an April meeting attended by a cross-section of industry representatives from the private and public sectors, as well as farmers.

"It was a very good meeting," Townsend said. "A number of working groups were struck."

The goal isn't just finding a way to accommodate farmers wanting to grow American wheats, it's also about attracting beneficial germplasm for Canadian plant breeders to work with, she added.

Since the process is ongoing, she declined to comment further. But an industry source, who asked not to be named, said there was unanimous support to keep the wheat class system and protect the CWRS and CWAD classes.

Grain handlers like the class system because it allows them to commingle different varieties so long as they are in the same class. "Handlers don't want to segregate 47 different varieties of wheat," the source said.

The system also works well for end-users who get a consistent product cargo to cargo, year to year.

A Dark Northern Spring wheat class is also being discussed, although the industry generally isn't keen as it would tie up more elevator space. One alternative would be to broaden the quality standards for an existing class, such as Canada Prairie Spring (CPS) red, to accommodate American wheats.

But for critics such as Cone, it comes down to revenue per acre — not price per bushel. "It's simple math," he said. "I really don't care if they take my bushel of wheat and make fence posts out of it."

According to one industry source, Pasteur has the potential to yield 100 bushels an acre. It can fetch as much as \$6 a bushel at ethanol plants, generating a gross \$600 an acre.

CWB initial payments at 75 per cent of expected returns

POOLS ▶ Participation on a first-come, first-served basis

STAFF

The government-backed CWB, formerly the Canadian Wheat Board, has upped the ante in the new market environment by offering higher initial payments on its Early Delivery Pool and Harvest Pool.

CWB released information on its 2012-13 initial payments July 30, two days before the launch of the open market in Western Canada. The payments apply to wheat, durum and malting barley delivered to the board.

"CWB pools are designed to provide good value to farmers as we enter a competitive new grain-marketing era," said CWB president and CEO Ian White in a release. "Our pools are capturing strong current market values and are an excellent tool for farmers to manage ongoing volatility in price and protein spreads."

The federal continues to guarantee most of the initial payments and approves the basic levels at which they are set.

The initial payments are equal to about 75 per cent of anticipated final Harvest Pool returns, as projected when the payment calculations were prepared. In the interim, the markets have continued to strengthen. As CWB locks in these higher values, the initial payments will continue to increase.

The CWB also announced it would soon issue its first new-crop Pool Return Outlooks (PRO). However, PROs will be issued when market conditions warrant, no longer on a regular monthly schedule.

The payment for No. 1 CWRS



New logo, new official name. It's now CWB, not the Canadian Wheat Board, and its down to about 100 staff, who will use just one of the eight floors in the CWB building in Winnipeg.

wheat at 12.5 per cent protein is set at \$255 per tonne. No. 1 CWAD at 12.5 per cent protein is set at \$257. The payment for Designated barley, select Canada Western Two-Row is \$230 per tonne. A complete listing of initial payments for all grades in dollars per tonne and dollars per bushel is posted at www.cwb.ca/payments.

CWB says pool volume may be limited depending on farmer demand and logistical capacity. Farmer participation in CWB pools is based on a first-come, first-served basis.

The Early Delivery Pool has a sign-up deadline of Sept. 28, 2012 and a marketing period that runs from harvest to January 31, 2013 with final payment shortly thereafter. The Harvest Pool has a sign-up deadline of October 31, 2012 and a marketing period that runs from harvest to July 31, 2013.

IMPORTANT NOTICE



Canadian Grain
Commission

Commission canadienne
des grains

Attention: Grain producers

The registration for the following Canada Western Red Spring wheat variety will be cancelled effective August 1, 2013:

- Garnet

Effective August 1, 2013, this variety will only be eligible for the grade Wheat, Canada Western Feed.

The registration for the following flaxseed varieties will be cancelled effective August 1, 2013:

- CDC Mons
- CDC Normandy

Effective August 1, 2013, these varieties will only be eligible for the grade Flaxseed, 3 Canada Western/Canada Eastern.

Working together, we all play a part in maintaining Canada's grain quality.

For more information, contact the Canadian Grain Commission :

1-800-853-6705 or 204-983-2770

TTY : 1-866-317-4289

www.grainscanada.gc.ca

Stay informed. Get updates by RSS feed about changes to variety designation lists. To subscribe, visit the Canadian Grain Commission's web site.



Canada

Shelterbelts control drifting, but not just of soil

BUFFER ▶ Livestock barns with shelterbelts around them smell better because they look better

BY DANIEL WINTERS

STAFF / INTERNATIONAL PEACE GARDENS

Intensive livestock operations are tremendously efficient at converting grain into meat.

But all those animals gorging themselves under one roof generate a lot of odoriferous byproducts.

Shelterbelts, known in academic circles as vegetative environmental buffers (VEB), can help such operations stay on friendly terms with neighbours downwind by trapping and dispersing odours.

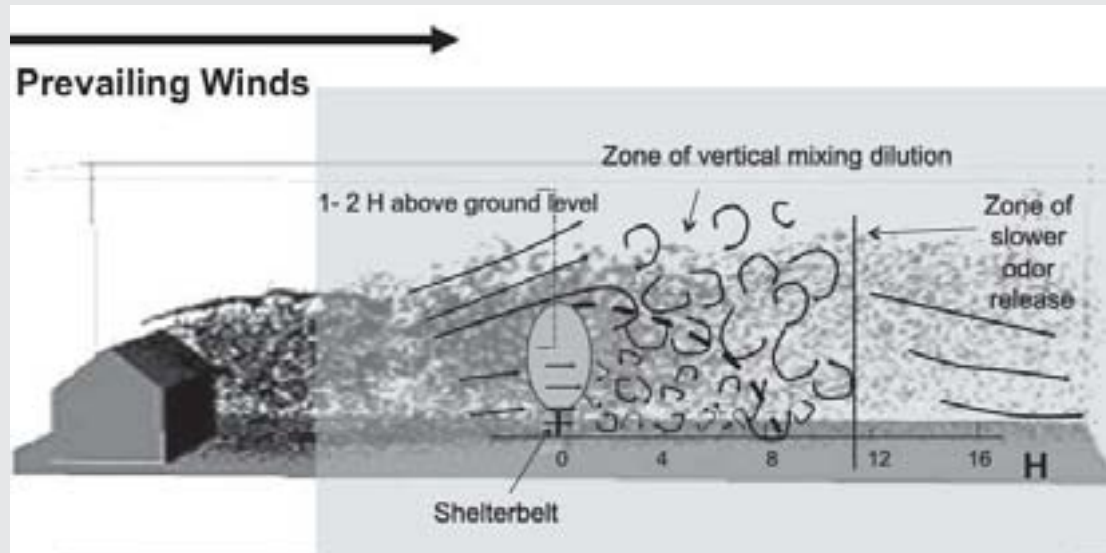
What's more, beautifying the production site with greenery somehow makes it smell better, said John Tyndall, a professor at Iowa State University.

"Studies have shown that as farms are viewed as being more attractive, perceptions of odour and other impacts from that facility tend to be reduced," said Tyndall, who gave a presentation on shelterbelt designs for odour control at the recent joint U.S.-Canada Great Plains Windbreak conference.

Apart from keeping massive barns "out of sight, out of mind" and providing "visual screening," shelterbelts provide more than just subjective benefits at a cost of around one to three cents per pig, he added.

Odour from intensive livestock operations happens because anaerobically decomposing manure gives off volatile organic compounds composed of 400 different chemicals.

SHELTERBELTS SIMULATION OF ODOUR DILUTION PROCESS



Simulation from Lammers et al., 2001; overlay adapted from McNaughton (1988). Note: overlay not to scale

Ammonia is lighter than air, and quickly dissipates into the atmosphere. Hydrogen sulphide is heavier than air, moves very slowly, and rarely makes its way far from the barn.

What really ruins barbecues and pool parties downstream, however, are the particulates. Volatile organic compounds cling to dust particles as they drift away from the facility on gentle currents of air.

"So, if you can control the movement of particulates, to a large degree you are going to be managing the movement of odours," said Tyndall.

Odours can be controlled to some degree by adjusting feed

rations. However, preventing particulate movements with shelterbelts or VEBs is the most effective, "last line of defence" tactic.

Temperature inversions during the hot summer months can trap odour "plumes" near the ground level and prevent them from being diluted. Landscape features such as hills and ravines can also funnel noxious odours in different ways.

Mechanical turbulence from VEBs mixes and dilutes the plume, slows its release, and the branches and leaves trap particulates and their stinky cargo. Particulate buildup over time leads to even more captured dust, because "dust grabs dust."

One good, five better

One row of trees can make a difference, and three to five more rows is generally better, but at some point, the law of diminishing returns takes hold.

All that gunk clinging to the leaves and branches isn't great for tree health, he said, but periodic rains help to keep them clean.

How effective are shelterbelts for odour mitigation?

There's no definitive answer for that, said Tyndall. Topography, prevailing wind direction and strength, ambient weather, distance from the "sensory receptor," as well as a multitude

of other factors mean that effectiveness is largely site specific.

Also, the fact that trees grow very slowly and research funding is typically short term, means that collecting hard data is "incredibly difficult," he added.

"However, most ag engineers are comfortable with a five to 50 per cent reduction in odour concentration moving downwind because of the VEB," said Tyndall, adding that incremental improvements in frequency, intensity, and offensiveness of odours are well documented.

Obviously, people like to see trees on the landscape, and VEBs around intensive livestock operations help to soften the visual impact of industrial agriculture. Focus group surveys of pork consumers have also found that there is a strong appreciation for farmers who make an effort to be a good steward and a good neighbour by managing odours.

"You can't see feed additives or a diet change," he said. "And some of the things you can see, like chemical scrubbers outside of buildings, are more intimidating than anything."

While mechanical solutions depreciate and add costs over time, trees — if well maintained and healthy — only get taller and more effective throughout their lifespan, he added.

Design is critical, however, because poor placement of shelterbelts can create back pressure and impact tunnel ventilation and airflows in hot weather, as well as snow accumulation in winter.



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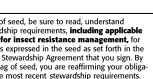
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WHAT'S UP

Send agriculture-related meeting and event announcements to: will.verboben@fbcpublishing.com

August 14/17 - CCA Semi Annual Meeting, Deerfoot Inn, Calgary. Call: ILC 403-686-8407

August 15 - International Livestock Congress, Deerfoot Inn 8:00 am, Calgary. Call: ILC 403-275-8407

August 15 - Summer Protein/Livestock Tours, Hardisty/Killam area 11:00 am. Call: Krista 800-661-2642

August 18 - Annual NE Grazing Association Tour, Grazing Reserve 12:00 pm, St. Paul. Call: Vaughn 780-721-3469

August 21 - Fruit & Vegetable Field Day, Olds College 9:00 am, Olds. Call: AFFPA 800-661-2642

August 23 - Flax & Hemp Crop Walk, Hwy. 16a/75 st. Plots 8:30 am, Vegreville. Call: Ruth 403-948-8516

August 23 - West Country Agricultural Tour, Community Centre 7:30 am, Leslieville. Call: Annie 403-845-4444

August 25 - Meet the AB Lamb Producers Board, Lakeland College 1:00 pm, Vermilion. Call: ALP 403-948-1522

Home for the good bugs, birds and bees

CREATING HABITAT ▶ Bees and insect predators can help boost yields and cut losses, but farmers have to provide a suitable home

BY DANIEL WINTERS
STAFF

Shelterbelts don't just keep topsoil from blowing away. They also provide homes for pollinator species, a group that includes butterflies, beetles, birds, wasps, flies — and even monkeys in some countries.

But far and away the most effective of all are the bees, said Mark Wonneck, an ecologist with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

"They are designed to do pollination. About half of all agricultural crops depend to some extent on bees," said Wonneck, in a presentation on enhancing pollinator habitat with windbreaks at the recent joint U.S.-Canadian Great Plains Windbreak Renovation and Innovation Conference at the International Peace Gardens straddling Manitoba and North Dakota.

To make habitat for bees, it's necessary to understand what they need to survive and thrive.

First, most wild bee species are solitary, unlike their domesticated counterparts.

Instead of hives, they live in nests, 70 per cent of which are underground tunnels such as gopher and mice holes and under rocks and logs. The rest nest above ground from materials they find in the



Shelterbelts provide habitat for a range of pollinator and pest control species.

PHOTO: DANIEL WINTERS

environment such as mud, leaves or rotten old trees.

Second, they need adequate pollen and nectar from flowers that is available throughout the spring, summer and fall.

Wild bees are "nest-centric foragers," which means that they tend to tap food sources close to the nest, unlike honeybees, which can travel up to 14 km from their hive.

Bumblebees, the ultimate pollinator due to their fuzzy haircoat and "buzz pollination" method, live in quasi-colonies numbering



50-400 individuals, and cover a "trapline" of potentially productive flowers stretching about one kilometre from their nest.

Smaller bee species may range only 200 metres from the nest, which means that suitable habitats must have a wide variety of plant species to cover their needs during the frost-free period.

Canola provides a lot of flowers, but its short bloom window isn't long enough to sustain bee populations on its own. Saskatoon, wild rose, pin cherry and other shrubs can extend the buffet season.

"There are guesses from the literature that natural pest suppression is in the range of 90 per cent. If that's true, then you might want to pay attention and not lose too much of that."

MARK WONNECK

Shelterbelts also provide protection from pesticides by offering an alternative foraging location during spraying so that a portion of the population can survive.

"They are like bankers. They only work from 10 to 3," said Wonneck.

Besides pollination, shelterbelts also provide habitat for natural pest control agents.

"There are guesses from the literature that natural pest suppression is in the range of 90 per cent. If that's true, then you might want to pay attention and not lose too much of that," said Wonneck.

BRIEFS

China to stockpile frozen pork to support hog prices

SHANGHAI/REUTERS
China will increase state purchases of frozen pork from the domestic market to stabilize live hog prices and maintain profitability for pig farmers, China's top economic planning agency said Aug. 7.

Rising feed and labour costs are squeezing profit margins for small pig farmers in China as wholesale hog prices remain under pressure due to slowing demand and abundant supplies.

"We will step up state reserve purchases of frozen pork to help stabilize live hog prices," the powerful National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) said in a statement on its website.

"Domestic hog production will remain at fairly high levels, so pork prices will likely stay low for a period of time."

China holds reserves of pork, both in live animals and frozen meat, to help stabilize domestic prices during extreme price fluctuations. The stockpiling is also used as a tool to try to curtail food inflation and steady its domestic industry.

China's pork prices have been steadily falling since January and fell 1.6 per cent in June from the previous month, according to a breakdown of the country's consumer prices index.

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IMPORTANT NOTICE



Canadian Grain
Commission

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Attention: Grain producers

Reminder of upcoming variety reclassification

Effective August 1, 2013, the following wheat varieties will move from the Canada Western Red Winter class to the Canada Western General Purpose class:

- CDC Kestrel
- CDC Clair
- CDC Harrier
- CDC Raptor

CDC Falcon, currently a CWRW variety, will move to the CWGP class on August 1, 2014.

Working together, we all play a part in maintaining Canada's grain quality.

For more information, contact the Canadian Grain Commission:

1-800-853-6705 or 204-983-2770
TTY : 1-866-317-4289
www.grainscanada.gc.ca

Stay informed. Check the variety designation lists on the Canadian Grain Commission's web site.



Canada

DDCs a useful tool, but consider all possibilities before signing

DETAILS ▶ Make sure you are comfortable with both delivery and pricing provisions of the contract

AGRI-NEWS

Many farmers find contracting a useful method for marketing production. The most common type is a deferred delivery contract (DDC), an agreement by a producer to deliver grain to a buyer by a certain date. The contract usually specifies price, quantity, quality or grade, the delivery location and date, and sometimes the transportation method. Many farmers use a grain-pricing order or GPO to create a deferred delivery contract. With a GPO, the grain seller sets a target contract price that, if and when this price is “hit” it results in a deferred delivery contract being created with that buyer.

Advantages of a DDC

- It eliminates the risk of price decline on the contracted quantity.
- It provides delivery opportunity that may coincide with the need for cash flow.
- It requires no margin money as with a futures account.
- It is widely available.

Limitations of a DDC

- The quantity specified “usually” must be delivered.
- It restricts the choice of buyers.
- It restricts the ability to take advantage of a price rise.

“It is important to read and understand a contract before signing it,” says Neil Blue, market specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development. “Have the buyer’s representative explain

the contract to you in detail. Then, read it carefully, consider the ‘what ifs’ and clear up any uncertainties that you may have. Contract concerns can usually be resolved by mutual agreement, but in cases of unresolved uncertainty, consider having it interpreted by a third party before signing it. Remember that all contracts are negotiable before signing.”

Items to consider

- **Grade discounts or premiums** — a contract specifies a base grade associated with the contract price, but not all contracts include a price schedule for delivered grades above or below that base grade. Producing a different grade than that specified in the contract usually does not remove the delivery commitment. The producer should completely understand how the final grade will be determined, and what implications a grade differential would have on product deliverability and price.

Note that base grades may differ between grain buyers, so when comparing contract prices, always check on the grade to which that price relates. The Canadian Grain Commission can provide a binding grade decision to producers who have a grading dispute with a licensed buyer.

- **Delivering lesser or greater amounts than specified** (i.e. underage/overage) — A production shortfall may result in a buy-out penalty, usually equal to the volume shortfall multiplied by the current price that the buyer would have to pay to replace the product. If the current price is lower than

the contract price, there may not be any further settlement requirement to that contract. An excess delivery to a contract usually only relates to a small amount of the last load. Unless specified, that excess could be priced at the contract price or at the current price.

- **Transferability** — some contracts could be filled by another producer, which provides a backup plan in case of a production or grade shortfall.
- **Disaster** (Act of God) clause — an Act of God clause in a contract would release a producer from the obligation to delivery on the contract in the case that weather or other natural event outside of the producer’s control causes a production shortfall. Note that if such a clause is contained in the contract, and the producer has a legitimate production shortfall, the amount produced may still be deliverable regardless of grade, but the shortfall would be excused.
- **Timing of delivery** — the contract should indicate the delivery period for the product. If a producer fails to deliver by a specified delivery date, will a penalty be levied? Does delivery delayed by the buyer past a certain date result in storage payments to the producer? Also, a delay in receiving payment from the buyer by a specified date should result in stated interest charges payable to the seller.

“Producers should carefully read and understand a contract before signing it,” says Blue. “Consider all the possibilities



A deferred delivery contract, but read the fine print. ©THINKSTOCK

of production and price. Ask for clarification of any uncertain point. Remember that a contract should be valuable to both parties, so make your concerns known. A contract is still legal if

written amendments are agreed to by both parties. If you have unresolved concerns about a contract being offered, you may wish to consult legal counsel or decide not to enter into that contract.”

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Further cut expected in Russian harvest forecast

STOCKS ▶ Russian officials scramble to reassure concerns about another export embargo

BYANDREY OSTROUKH
REUTERS / MOSCOW

Russia’s Agriculture Ministry signalled Aug. 2 that a further cut in Russia’s harvest forecast to 70 million to 75 million tonnes was in the offing, two days after Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev announced the crop would be lower than previously expected.

Visiting Volgograd, a provincial capital in the Volga River valley where drought is spreading and threatening yields, Medvedev had announced a new government forecast of 75 million to 80 million tonnes — a five-million-tonne cut in the range.

A government source said earlier that under a maximum forecast of 80 million tonnes, Russia could produce up to 50 million tonnes of wheat.

“Eighty million tonnes was the optimistic forecast. I think it will decline and go to a figure of 70 million to 75 million tonnes,” Deputy Agriculture Minister Alexander Chernogorov was quoted as saying at a conference in Novosibirsk, the provincial

capital of another drought-hit region in Siberia.

“This trend is present,” he said. Russian officials have been scrambling to reassure grain markets, which were shocked in 2010 by Russia’s snap decision to ban exports after that year’s drought. There is now speculation that Russia could limit exports again this year.

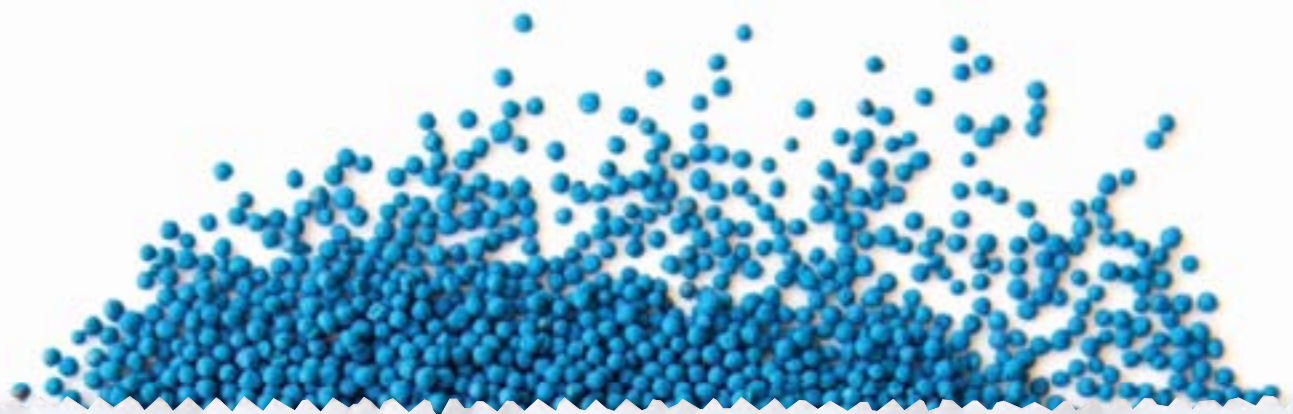
Medvedev said on Tuesday that Russia would still retain an exportable surplus and that domestic needs — which average 70 million tonnes per year — would be amply covered with new-crop grain and stocks.

His deputy, Arkady Dvorkovich, reiterated Medvedev’s 75-million-to 80-million-tonne forecast and said Russia could export 10 million to 12 million tonnes of grain.

He said the current pace of export — much slower than last year’s flood of exports when Russia lifted the export ban on July 1, 2011 — posed no immediate risk to inflation targets or domestic food supplies.

“Exports are now running at a moderate pace and will be below the 2011 level,” Dvorkovich told a briefing after a government meeting on Thursday.

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Which management factors affect malting barley quality?



The trial was conducted at a number of sites across Western Canada, from the Peace River region to Brandon, Manitoba. PHOTO: ALLAN DAWSON

UNIFORMITY ▶ It's improved by higher seeding rate, with some reduction in plumpness

BY ALEXIS KIENLEN
AF STAFF / LACOMBE

Agriculture Canada researchers are looking at whether good malting variety is just a combination of the right variety and good luck with the weather. At a recent field day here, Kelly Turkington, a plant pathologist at the Field Crop Development Centre, outlined research done by John O'Donovan, a research scientist at Agriculture Canada in Lacombe. Researchers are in a second round of trials examining factors that affect malt barley quality and productivity.

In the first round of trials, they tested seeding dates and rates, fertility rates, stubble type and nitrogen rates. When embarking on these trials, researchers didn't have an idea of how practical parameters that can be manipulated by producers would impact the malt quality of barley. O'Donovan found an increased seeding rate improved a number of malt quality parameters including lower protein, lower beta-glucan and a better modification of the barley. Turkington explained how these parameters are important to the maltsters. Uniformity is important in the malt house. The process of malting breaks down the cell walls in the barley kernel. Maltsters want all the modifications to the cell walls to happen at the same rate, so all the barley in the malt house is ready to be kilned at the same time.

"Plump barley doesn't necessarily always translate into better malt barley and malt quality."

KELLY
TURKINGTON

Increased seeding rates were found to improve seed uniformity. There was a slight reduction in plumpness, which may be a bit of a change in mindset for growers and buyers. "Plump barley doesn't necessarily always translate into better malt barley and malt quality," said Turkington. Higher rates of nitrogen caused a yield benefit, but had a detrimental effect on protein levels and extract and creating more variability. The results varied depending on the type of malting barley grown. In this particular trial, O'Donovan was looking at AC Metcalfe and CDC Copeland and found CDC Copeland was more able to adjust to higher nitrogen levels without compromising malt quality. In another trial, researchers tested five varieties using five different rates of nitrogen (zero kg per hectare, 30 kg, 60, 90 and 120 kg per hectare). All five varieties were seeded at 300 seeds per metre squared. Varieties tested in the trial included AC Metcalfe, CDC Meredith, Merit, Bentley and Major. All varieties yielded better than AC Metcalfe, an older variety. "The breeders are making a significant impact with the new varieties in terms of productivity," said Turkington. The trial was conducted at a number of sites across Western Canada, from the Peace River region to Brandon, Manitoba. "We're looking at these varieties not only in terms of productivity, but also in their ability to produce good malt barley for the maltsters and the brewers," said Turkington.



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Alberta Agriculture's Crop Development Centre North (CDCN) in Edmonton maintains a "weed garden" to help producers identify 15 species of prohibited noxious weeds and 24 species of noxious weeds. Knowing what to look for is a first defence in controlling noxious weeds in the province. For garden tour arrangements, contact Nicole Kimmel, weed specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, at 780 422-0885.



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CROPS

Is sucking better than blowing when seeding canola?

SINGULATION ▶ Precise seeding could cut seed cost and promote uniform emergence

BY ALEXIS KIENLEN
AF STAFF / LACOMBE

A group of researchers is testing to see whether it's better to suck than to blow when seeding canola. They're experimenting with a vacuum planter, which works opposite to an air seeder — a vacuum pulls seeds into rotating plates which place the seed into the soil.

The attraction is seed "singulation" — the ability to precisely place individual seeds and provide even spacing within the field. A group of producers involved in controlled-traffic farming has been experimenting with the vacuum planters, with assistance from researchers from Alberta Agriculture, Agriculture Canada, and the Canola Council of Canada.

The initiative started a few years ago when Steve Larocque, a farmer interested in controlled-traffic farming, began looking at vacuum planters for seeding canola. Then last fall, a group of producers approached a Monosem dealer in Lethbridge and asked for a small planter for trials to test different row spacing and seeding rates.

One of those growers, Craig Shaw of Durango Farms near Lacombe, tried a vacuum planter on his fields this spring.

Shaw said the technology might allow producers to reduce seeding rates. "You all know that seed is at \$10 a pound, so if you're seeding at five pounds and can bring your seed down to two pounds and maintain a crop, then you got \$30 in your pocket.



Craig Shaw, operator of Durango Farms, explains a vacuum planter at Controlled-Traffic Farming Day near Lacombe. PHOTO: ALEXIS KIENLEN

It doesn't take long to add up the numbers," he said.

"We need to find out if good even spacing of canola provides us benefits in terms of uniformity. The guys that are using the planters are saying that when the crop flowers, it flowers at the same time," said Shaw. He said that it is difficult to avoid clumping when using an air seeder. When a metre wheel is moving slowly on an air seeder, it's very difficult to get an even distribution. "That's when you see the clumping of seeds together," he said.

Vacuum planters may also be able to plant in high-moisture conditions. "If you want to seed at half an inch or an inch or into mois-

ture, you can consistently place all the seeds there," Shaw said.

However, seed quality is an issue in vacuum planters. If a seed treatment or a dry seed flakes, it can fill in the holes in the plate, which can mean the plates no longer pick up seed. Shaw said more tests are needed to look at this issue. Growers who choose plates with 1.2 mm holes can use a "knock-out" wheel, which pokes seeds out of holes. However knock-out wheels can wear out quickly and are not easy to replace.

The vacuum planters have no way to handle fertilizer and most of the growers who are testing them are relying on a two-pass system.

A 12-foot planter is being used for three years of trials at the Lacombe Research Station. Twelve-inch and 24-inch row spacings will be included in the trials.

"We're looking at a number of issues and learning as we go," said Shaw. "We're building a wealth of information."

Shaw said Monosem planters were designed to deal with small seed such as vegetable seeds, while Case and John Deere planters were designed mainly for corn, soy and sugar beets. Growers testing the Case and John Deere vacuum planters have had to adjust these systems in order to seed canola.

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Peace-area beekeeper victim of major theft

SAD AFFAIR ▶ Bill Termeer says the thief must have been familiar with his operation and the location of his hives as many were “quite well hidden”

BY REBECCA DIKA
AF CONTRIBUTOR / SEXSMITH

The theft of frames containing more than three million bees from 170 hives has been a “huge hit” for Peace-region beekeeper Bill Termeer — and he suspects it might be someone he knows.

“I think it is a local, someone familiar with the hive sites since some are quite well hidden,” said the owner of Moondance Honey, a large commercial operation north of Sexsmith.

“That sure narrows it down.”

The thefts occurred at eight locations over a four-week period beginning in May. Culprits removed frames of brood, larvae, eggs and queen and replaced them with empty frames that are not his. That made the thefts hard to spot, but with increasing reports of queenless hives and then employees noting the



More than three million bees from 170 hives have gone missing. ©THINKSTOCK

“Is it fair to your neighbour to put him into financial jeopardy as well?”

BILL TERMEER

replacement frames were different, Termeer notified the RCMP.

Alberta’s beekeeping community is close knit and Termeer said producers regularly share information and attend meetings and conferences together. That makes the thefts all the harder to take.

“If you were having wintering or disease/pests problems, why didn’t you reach out to the rest of the beekeeping community and ask for help?” says Termeer. “Is it fair to your neighbour to put him into financial jeopardy as well?”

He estimates the value of the stolen honey at \$40,000 and the value of the bees at about \$50,000. Termeer is offering a \$2,000 reward for any information that leads to the arrest of the individual responsible for the theft. The Alberta Beekeepers Association called this a very unusual case and said thefts of this kind are rare.

Termeer said he is optimistic he can recover up to 70 per cent of the bees over the winter.

“Some of the frames that were left had eggs and larvae and they’ve already begun raising queens,” Termeer said.

Other challenges

Termeer runs about 3,000 hives on 70 locations in a 50-kilometre-square area across the Peace country. He started in 1996 with about 600 hives, but like grain and cattle farmers, the honey industry has evolved into more larger operations, and fewer smaller ones. Moondance Honey employs eight during the high season.

Termeer overwinters his hives on site, wrapped in special insulation instead of moving hives indoors or to southern B.C.

“Wintering them on site in well-sheltered locations works best,” he said. “It’s less costly and time consuming with less stress on the bees.”

Still, Termeer lost 40 per cent of his bees two years ago due to a combination of harsh temperatures, mites and diseases.

“We have lots to deal with we didn’t have before,” he said.

After the border was closed to bees in the mid-1980s to keep out varroa mites, Canadian beekeepers were no longer able to buy packages (two to four pounds of bees and a queen) from the U.S. Queen bees can still be imported from the U.S., usually Hawaii and California. Bee packages can be purchased from New Zealand and Australia, but at \$150 each, the cost can be prohibitive. Termeer brings in 1,000 queens annually to split hives and raise populations.

“The bee industry has its ups and downs,” he said. “There was a period of very low honey prices where it’s been difficult to make a buck and then over the past five years we’ve had better honey prices, but also more disease and pest problems.”

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– Jason Rider, Ontario

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Two new provincial commissions underway

REFUNDABLE ▶ Checkoffs will be \$0.70 per tonne on wheat and \$0.50 on oats

STAFF

Alberta's wheat and oat producers now have commissions established under the Marketing of Agricultural Products Act. The commissions can now collect refundable checkoffs to fund research, marketing and promotion. They began operations on Aug. 1.

The Alberta Wheat Commission will represent the interests of 11,000 wheat producers of all seven classes of wheat grown in Alberta, and is the first all-wheat commission in Canada.

"The end of Canadian Wheat Board monopoly has left a lot of gaps that industry is scrambling to fill. We need this new commission now more than ever before, so that Alberta wheat can stay competitive in the world market," Kent Erickson, co-chair of the Alberta Wheat Commission Steering Committee said in a release. The committee

has been consulting with producers and grain buyers over the past two years.

Erickson gave credit to the Alberta Winter Wheat Producers and Alberta Soft Wheat Producers commissions for leading the project. They conducted a survey which indicated that 58 per cent of producers favoured a commission for all classes of wheat.

The commission's revenue will be generated by a mandatory but refundable checkoff of \$0.70/tonne on commercial wheat sales in Alberta. The estimated \$3.5 million annual revenue raised through the service charge will fund research, market development activities, policy and advocacy initiatives, as well as educational opportunities. Operations officially began on Aug. 1 under an interim appointed board until director elections can be held this fall in each of the commission's five regions.

For more information visit www.albertawheat.com.

Oat growers commission

An interim board will also lead the new Alberta Oat Growers Commission until director elections expected to be complete by spring 2013.

"Until now, an organization dedicated to the specific needs of Alberta's oat growers didn't exist. The new commission will work with our partners in Saskatchewan and Manitoba on initiatives that will benefit the western Canadian oat industry as a whole," Gordon Pope, director of the Alberta Oat Growers Commission Steering Committee, said in a release.

A refundable service charge of \$0.50/tonne for oats, raising an estimated \$140,000 per year, will allow the commission to fund oat research, market development and advocacy initiatives for oat-related issues.

It is expected that the newly formed Alberta Oat Growers Commission will join the Prairie



The oats checkoff is expected to raise about \$140,000 per year to fund oat research, market development and advocacy. ©ISTOCK

Oat Growers Association (POGA), which had successfully organized oat grower associations in Sas-

katchewan (2006) and Manitoba (2008). For more information visit www.poga.ca.

NEWS

Court finds Glencore grain unit bribed EU official

BRUSSELS / REUTERS

A Belgian court convicted a subsidiary of commodities trader Glencore and others June 27 of bribing a European Union official in return for market-sensitive information.

Glencore Grain Rotterdam, part of the world's largest diversified commodities trader, was found guilty of paying an EU official's bumper mobile phone bills and laying on a French holiday to secure information about grain subsidies.

"The holiday offered by Glencore Grain Rotterdam to Karel Brus in south of France in June 2003 was in relation to the obtaining of secret information," Judge Pierre Hendrickx told the court before fining the unit 500,000 euros (\$623,600).

The court also convicted the EU official and some other companies and individuals, including a French agricultural co-operative, accused of providing or facilitating bribes.

The case centred on Brus, a former EU Agriculture Department official, who was accused of passing confidential information about EU export subsidy applications in 2002 and 2003. Brus was sentenced to 40 months in jail.

The companies received confidential information that allowed them to put in favourable bids in tenders for European export subsidies. Glencore declined immediate comment.



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Don't paint all insects with the same brush

SPRAY SENSE ▶ Entomologist Jim Bratch says spraying as “a precautionary principle” may be a bad move

BY ALEXIS KIENLEN
AF STAFF / LACOMBE

It's easy to forget about the beneficial insects in your crops when you are focused on eradicating pests of all kinds. “When you calculate the economic loss from your pest insect, add about 20 per cent to it, and think about the beneficials that are in there,” said Jim Bratch, an entomologist with Alberta Agriculture in Lacombe. “Nobody will expect you to take an economic hit to protect those beneficials, but be aware that they are there. If you do get the urge to spray as a precautionary principle, maybe hold off.” There hasn't been a lot of research of beneficial insects, and Bratch is trying to learn more about the actual payback they provide. Some of the good bugs have very specialist roles, while generalists — largely two types of beetles (carabids and rove) — have multiple benefits.

Growers may also be surprised with the number of beneficials that may exist in their crops, he said. “When we did research about five years ago, we found about 50 different species of carabids and 10 different rove beetles in canola alone at this research station,” Bratch said. Only five or six of the species of carabids were in high numbers. The types of beetles found in a production system will differ depending on the region of the province. There are only a few people in Canada who specialize in identifying these types of beneficials, so samples are often sent all over the country. Researchers need to find different ways to trap insects in order to monitor and evaluate their presence in a production system. At the Lacombe research station, researchers are using pitfall traps, which capture rove beetle and carabid activity and density. Researchers are also using nets to sweep canopies and



Jim Bratch, entomologist with Alberta Agriculture, is studying the payback from beneficial insects.

monitor activity. Many of the traps are catching *Terastiscus*, a black beetle which will eat everything. These ones are generally in high numbers in most systems, but are often found in canola. Root maggots found in canola are a food source for all the generalists, said Bratch. The canola generalists also feed on cutworms when there's an outbreak. One type of insect that lives in canola is entirely dependent on root maggots for its dietary needs.



Carabids in a pitfall trap. This is one way researchers monitor insect activity and density.

“These really keep the root maggots from lowering yields,” he said. Some beetles will also eat weed seeds during certain stages of their life cycle, reducing the weed population in crops.

Drought to cut Serbia grain harvest, drive up prices

CORN HALVED ▶ Wheat fares better, but still down on 2011

BY ALEKSANDAR VASOVIC/REUTERS
Weeks of drought could slash Serbia's grain harvest by as much as a half, farmers and experts warned July 19, raising the risk of a surge in food prices later in the year. Vojislav Stankovic, an adviser with the Serbian Chamber of Commerce, said the corn yield from 1.25 million hectares (3.1 million acres) would likely be half the projected seven million tonnes, after weeks of dry weather and temperatures that hit 40 C in some areas. “The total damage from 40 days of drought could be about \$2 billion,” Stankovic said in a TV broadcast. Experts say wheat has fared better than corn, but this year's harvest of 1.91 million tonnes is still 7.7 per cent down on 2011, according to the Serbian Statistics Office. “A month ago I had a record corn harvest but now I have half-dried plants and I strained my neck looking for rain clouds,” said Zivojin Dragovic, a farmer in the southwestern village of Slatina. Vukosav Sakovic, head of the Zita Srbije association of wheat producers and exporters, said Serbia might still have about 350,000 tonnes of wheat for export, including 100,000 tonnes from rollover stocks. “But as things stands now,” he said, “the government will have to control exports.”

- Q: What are my options now?
- Q: How can this new open market for wheat benefit me?
- Q: Where do I find information about pricing?
- Q: How will premiums and discounts be applied to my wheat?
- Q: How do I upgrade my wheat marketing skills and knowledge?
- Q: Who can I call if I have questions?
- Q: Who will do the best job of marketing my wheat?
- Q: Who can I go to for advice?
- Q: Who can I trust?
- Q: Is there a lot of high protein wheat in the world?
- Q: How do I figure out what the CWB is offering?
- Q: Is the pool a safe place?
- Q: How do I know what quality of wheat I have?
- Q: How do I maintain the quality of my wheat in storage?
- Q: Are there times when the market will want my grain?
- Q: How will the sale of Viterra impact the market?
- Q: How is rail transportation going to work?
- Q: What should I plan for next year?

BIG WHEELS AROUND TOWN



This horse-drawn giant log hauler owned and operated by Fort Steele Historic Village was demonstrated at the Calgary Stampede.
PHOTO: CINDY VERBOVEN

NEWS

Seed sales boost Monsanto quarterly revenues

BY CAREY GILLAM /
REUTERS

Global agribusiness Monsanto Co. posted higher-than-expected quarterly profit on June 27 as net revenue grew 17 per cent to \$4.2 billion on gains in sales of seeds and genetic traits and surprising strength in herbicides.

Sales of corn seed and genetic traits jumped 35 per cent in the third quarter, which ended May 31, while soybean sales rose 15 per cent to \$698 million, the company said.

Monsanto, the world's largest seed company and a developer of genetically engineered corn, soybeans and other crops, benefited from an increase in U.S. planted corn acres this spring, as farmers rushed to respond to strong global demand.

"With our most significant selling seasons wrapped up, the third quarter gives us a near complete view of our business for the fiscal year and I feel very good about where we stand," said Monsanto chief executive Hugh Grant.

Feds fund food safety audit for chicken producers

MP James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake), speaking to the annual summer meeting of the Chicken Farmers of Canada in Winnipeg, has announced funding of \$72,500 to the CFC to undergo an audit of its on-farm food safety system.

The CFC will then proceed to the final stage of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's On-Farm Food Safety Recognition Program. This national program follows the Hazard Analysis of Critical Control Points (HACCP) principles to make sure that potential food safety problems are caught before products leave the farm gate.

An Agriculture Canada release said the CFC is working toward becoming the first organization to achieve full recognition by this program, and other organizations will be able to learn from the experiences of this pilot project.

This federal Growing Forward funding is being made through the Canadian Integrated Food Safety Initiative (CIFSI), which helps organizations develop national, government-recognized on-farm and/or post-farm HACCP or HACCP-based food safety systems.



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COMBINES FOR CURES SEEKS TO IMPROVE PROSTATE HEALTH IN RURAL ALBERTA

You would hardly think a grain donation might help save a farmer's life, but that is exactly the strategy behind the new Combines for Cures™ (C4C) program.

The Prostate Cancer Centre and Prostate Cancer Canada created this innovative program to increase the number of men in rural Alberta (aged 40+) to have a Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) blood test. This simple blood test can help with early detection and treatment of prostate cancer.

Part of the program asks farmers to give the gift of grain. Grain collected as donations from now until the end of the year will help Combines for Cures purchase a mobile testing clinic – a Man Van™ – with money raised in rural Alberta. This vehicle will be dedicated to testing men in rural Alberta.

"Making a grain donation is easy", says Jay Burrows of Western Feedlots Ltd. "Just allocate a portion of your currently contracted deliveries (or pledge a portion of your new crop production) to Western Feedlots Ltd. (barley), or to Richardson Pioneer (oilseeds and wheat). Simply allocate an amount and we will make a split payment, with your grain donation going to "Combines for Cures". We will do the paperwork, and forward a cheque to the Prostate Cancer Centre (PCC) on your behalf.

Burrows says the cash value of a grain donation will be the price of grain on an existing contract, or if not contracted, the day it is delivered. After the donation is made, PCC sends you a tax receipt. Agrium Crop Production Services (CPS) retail outlets in the pilot test area (central Alberta) are also accepting cash donations or grain pledges.

"Through CPS and ourselves we'll organize a central location where we can consolidate the pledged grain," explains Burrows.

The C4C test pilot program officially launched in March, 2012, and from five testing locations the statistics proved the need for a rural Man Van. Over 70 per cent of those tested had never had a PSA test.

"We believe universal access in remote areas to prostate cancer awareness and PSA testing is clearly important," says Pam Heard, executive director of the PCC. "When we involve communities in an important health initiative we stimulate change for a healthier future. It's a call to action for men to take charge of their health."

Airdrie rancher John Lee encourages his rural colleagues to get that PSA blood test when the Prostate Cancer Centre brings the Man Van to their community. Lee had five years of baseline blood tests that proved critical in his cancer diagnosis in September, 2009. "Early diagnosis is important because it gives you so many options. With today's medical technology it gives you such a huge opportunity for a complete cure," says Lee.

Burrows agrees with Lee. "We know our farm friends and clients are often too busy to go to the doctor," says Jay Burrows of Western Feedlots, one of the locations where farmers can make their donations. "With the purchase of the mobile testing unit, we'll help bring the medical experts to you."

Heard says statistics show that establishing a baseline PSA level at age 40, can help detect the early onset of prostate cancer, which will allow for more rapid access to treatment if necessary. "Ultimately, we will save lives," she says.

For more information about Combines for Cures go to www.prostatecancercentre.ca.

New home for DuPont Pioneer's research in Alberta

R&D ▶ Canola is the focus along with early corn



Research associate Brenna Kelley explains greenhouse facilities to visitors. The centre has 15,000 square feet and employs over 20 staff, depending on the season. PHOTOS: ALEXIS KIENLEN

BY ALEXIS KIENLEN
AF STAFF / ARDROSSAN

DuPont Pioneer has been conducting research in Alberta for several years, mainly at the University of Alberta, but it now has its own home near here.

Canadian president Ian Grant was on hand for the recent official opening of the DuPont Pioneer Centre, along with staff, government officials and community members.

"This Edmonton facility is really a great example of our commitment to western Canadian agriculture. We're expanding our business, growing our portfolio and investing heavily in research and development to create the best products we can for Canadian farmers," Grant said.

Research at the centre focuses on the development of early- and mid-maturity canola hybrids, corn hybrids and some soybeans. The centre includes a computer-automated greenhouse which can grow multiple generations of canola-breeding maturity, and two labs. The entire facility is over 15,000 square feet and employs over 20 staff, depending on the season.

"It's taken a long time to get this facility and our staff is very proud," said Dave Charne, a breeder at the centre. "In any profession, it's important to have a good place to do your work and the necessary tools to do the job well. That's what this research centre provides to our researchers."

The development process for a new variety of canola includes the growing of new material, to selections of genetics, to yield trials. The researchers can do quality analysis in labs on site. All varieties are screened for clubroot resistance and other disease resistance as part of the breeding process. It takes about eight years for a seed to go from crossing to registration.

"We're one of three companies making a significant investment in developing canola and we would like to believe that we can get our

rightful share of the market," said Grant.

Corn hybrid development

The new research facility is also focused on early-maturing corn.

Tom Van Moorsel, corn specialist and agronomist for central and southern Alberta, was part of the team who introduced corn to the Red Deer area in 1998. "They called us crazy then but now it's a general crop and many people have seen it and it's taking on well," he said.

Corn is doing well in the silage market, winning customers in the Alberta dairy industry. It's more drought resistant than cereal crops, adds another rotation option, doesn't lodge and can take up a lot of nutrients in manure, allowing livestock producers to spread it closer to home.

Silage corn has been grown in Alberta for some time, but until recently grain corn was restricted to the southern part of the province. Van Moorsel said shorter-season varieties are now grown around Lloydminster, Calmar and even High Level.

"Early on, it was a crop that was a hit and miss, but now it's pretty successful," said Van Moorsel. "We spent a lot of time developing good agronomy. We wanted people to come back to the crop year after

"We're one of three companies making a significant investment in developing canola and we would like to believe that we can get our rightful share of the market."

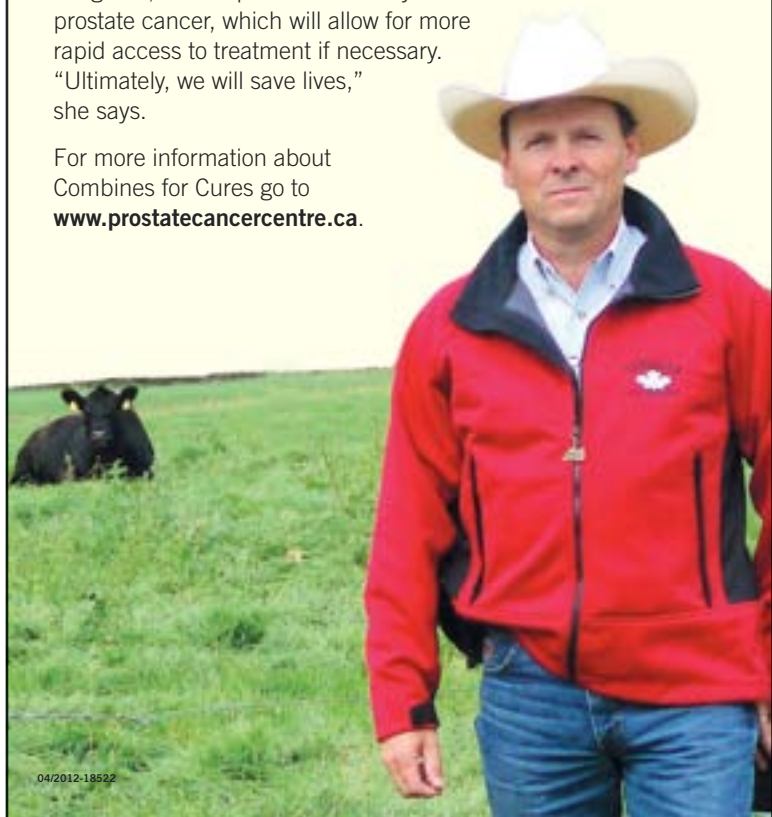
IAN GRANT
PRESIDENT, DUPONT
PIONEER CANADA

year." Van Moorsel expected acreage to increase as more producers buy equipment specifically designed for corn.

Since 2002, more producers, especially those in the north, have been grazing cattle on corn. "We have to help people to do it right so that they're doing it year after year," said Van Moorsel. The goal is currently at about a million or a million and a half acres of corn in Alberta. "There are a lot of people interested in it. The more that you throw at it in terms of inputs, the more you get back," he said.



DuPont's Tom Van Moorsel says grain corn is becoming an option for more growers in Alberta.



Famed wheat breeder Barrie Campbell passes

NAMESAKE ▶ AC Barrie named in honour of breeder who developed Neepawa and eight others

STAFF

Barrie Campbell, whose namesake variety AC Barrie still makes up an important part of Prairie wheat acreage, passed away in Winnipeg July 16 at age 89.

When Campbell retired in 1988 after 39 years as a wheat breeder at the Agriculture Canada research station in Winnipeg, his varieties accounted for more than 70 per cent of the red spring wheat acres in Western Canada.

During his career, Campbell registered nine wheat varieties, including Manitou, Pembina, Benito, Canthatch, Columbus, Napayo, Katepwa, Roblin, and Neepawa, the latter one of the most successful varieties ever. In 1987, it replaced the long-standing Marquis as the quality standard for all new varieties to

meet for registration in Western Canada.

In an interview in 1993, Campbell said that he came close to throwing out Neepawa before it reached the co-op testing trials. “I thought it might be too good to throw away and took another look. It was borderline. Sometimes there is only one chance, and if it didn’t make it, it’s dead.”

Ron DePauw, the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada wheat breeder who developed AC Barrie, has high praise for Campbell. “It was an outstanding contribution that Barrie made over the years,” he said from the Swift Current research station. “He contributed tremendously to benefit western Canadian agriculture. To this day Neepawa is still resistant to stem rust.”

AC Barrie, registered in 1993, was named to not only honour

Campbell’s work, but also to recognize that three of Campbell’s varieties — Neepawa, Columbus and BW90 — are part of AC Barrie’s lineage.

Campbell and his Agriculture Canada colleagues also helped western farmers by developing wheats resistant to stem rust, DePauw said. “There has not been any significant stem rust losses on wheat in Canada and that’s really the function of the work that people like Barrie Campbell and (others) did way back in the ‘50s and ‘60s. We’ve been able to maintain it but the foundation was really laid by those scientists during that time period.”

Campbell was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1989 and received an honorary degree of doctor of science from the University of Manitoba in 1992.

Looking for a different way to control wild oats

COSTLY PROBLEM ▶ Prairie producers spend \$500 million annually trying to control wild oats, but in Alberta, 50 per cent are resistant to Group 1 herbicides

BY ALEXIS KIENLEN
AF STAFF / LACOMBE

Wild oats are Canada’s biggest weed problem — and researchers at the Field Crop Development Centre hope winter wheat can become a big part of the solution.

Alternative methods for controlling wild oats are becoming increasingly important, said Neil Harker, an Alberta Agriculture weed scientist who is leading the research in this area.

“A lot of our herbicide tools are becoming a little less useful because of weed resistance to herbicides,” said Harker.

Prairie producers spend \$500 million annually trying to control wild oats. Already in Alberta, wild oats have about a 50 per cent chance of resistance to Group 1 herbicides, and are developing resistance to Group 2 herbicides. Wild oats in central Alberta may also be resistant to Avadex, which was used in continuous barley.

“We’re looking at practices where we can still maintain crop production, but use less selection pressure for resistance to weeds,” said Harker.

The current experiment includes different seeding rates and cutting silage to decrease wild oats. Previous studies

included rotations of wheat, barley, peas and canola, which are all summer annual crops. Reliance on summer annual crops has allowed wild oats to thrive, said Harker.

“That’s probably why the top three weeds in Canada are all summer annuals, because we grow summer annual crops,” Harker said.

Wild buckwheat and green foxtail are the other two weeds which cause the most problems for western Canadian farmers.

Winter wheat is becoming a more popular crop due to timing and labour advantages, but also because wild oat herbicides are not needed in winter cereals. Tests involve early-cut silage followed by fall rye or higher seeding rates. Many of the plots have three years of tests involving no herbicides.

“Our hypothesis is that some of these treatments, without herbicide, will be as good as the canola/wheat rotation that includes herbicide,” Harker said.

The current study included a much more diverse rotation which includes early-cut silage rotations and double seeding rates of crops. The five-year study is currently in its third year. Winter wheat and fall rye are now included in the rotation.



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ARGENTINE CORN AREA DOWN

PLANTING
▲

Argentina's 2012-13 corn area is expected to fall 20 per cent from the 2011-12 crop year to 3.1 million hectares, the Buenos Aires Grains Exchange said in a special report Aug. 7. Corn planting is set to start at the end of this month. The exchange says 3.87 million hectares were planted with corn in the 2011-12 crop year, which was hit hard by a December-January drought. Official estimates are not yet available for 2012-13 Argentine corn output. Production in the 2011-12 crop year will be 21 million tonnes, according to the Agriculture Ministry. — Reuters

MEXICO MAKES BIG CORN PURCHASE

Mexico has raided the U.S. corn market by making the biggest one-day purchase in over two decades. Mexico, the No. 2 importer of U.S. corn after Japan, bought 1.516 million tonnes, the U.S. Agriculture Department said Aug. 2. Mexico is particularly sensitive about corn. It is used there to make tortillas, a food staple, the price of which has already risen nearly 18 per cent since January, according to Mexico's Economy Ministry. Riots broke out over surging tortilla prices in 2008.

MARKETS



Markets continue to catch fire, except for oats

ICE WINNIPEG ▶ Open interest remains low, while Minneapolis reports record volumes

BY PHIL FRANZ-WARKENTIN

The canola market saw another week of ups and downs during the period ended Aug. 3, but managed to finish on the plus side overall. U.S. weather concerns and uncertainty over the size of the canola crop itself provided underlying support.

With early harvest operations expected to pick up steam over the next few weeks, the inevitable selling off the combine has the potential to limit the nearby upside potential in canola. However, many analysts these days, and farmers for that matter, seem to be of the opinion that a retest of the highs set only a couple of weeks ago is still possible. On the bullish side for canola prices are persistent U.S. drought conditions, the solid fall export program already on the books, and ideas that the Canadian crop may not be as big as earlier expectations.

Chicago (CBOT) soybeans, corn, and wheat experienced some volatility of their own during the week, as the futures reacted to the latest weather reports and outside economic news. Parts of the U.S. Midwest finally saw some much-needed rain, and the resulting profit-taking weighed on the agricultural markets at one point. However, corn is past the point of no return at this stage, while soybeans will still need more moisture in order to salvage the yields. Both commodities moved higher and the near-term focus should remain squarely on yield prospects out of the Midwest.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture was to release a key production report on Aug. 10, and pre-report analyst estimates called for sizable reductions in the crop prospects compared to earlier reports.

Oats lag other markets

The interesting development in the U.S. grain market over the past few weeks is the lacklustre performance in oats. Oats bids in Chicago were down during the week, despite the gains in corn, as the spread between the two commodities continues to widen. At the beginning of June new-crop corn futures were about US\$2.25 per bushel over oats, but that spread has since widened out to over US\$4.25.

Given the current situation, the downside for Canadian oats bids is virtually non-existent, with the bias to the

upside as long as the spread between corn and oats is so wide. If the market finds itself in a scenario of declining U.S. corn supplies, a firmer domestic barley market and tighter feed wheat supplies, oats that would typically go to the milling market will all of a sudden be competitive in the feed market. If more oats start finding their way into feed channels, the millers would be forced to pay up to bring in supplies.

CWB 2.0, ICE struggles

Turning to the wheat markets, Minneapolis and Chicago were both mostly lower on the week, while Kansas City managed to post some small advances.

It was a historic week for the grain markets in Western Canada, as the turning of the clock on the new crop year marked the end of the Canadian Wheat Board's long-standing single desk and the beginning of the new open market for wheat and barley. Gerry Ritz, Stephen Harper and supporters of the government's move were out celebrating their newfound "freedom" at a barbecue in Saskatchewan, while those on the other side were vowing to appeal and dressing up in costume in downtown Winnipeg.

The newly rebranded CWB, to its credit, was diplomatic as it unveiled its new social media-inspired logo and expressed confidence in its ability to remain an effective marketer in the new reality.

Right, wrong or indifferent as far as the marketing system is concerned, the fact remains that aside from the rhetoric there should be a good-size spring wheat crop to deal with this year. Whether or not any of that wheat is priced through ICE Futures Canada, however, remains to be seen. Open interest in the Canadian contracts is very light, while the Minneapolis Grain Exchange (MGEX) is reporting record volumes and appears to be the favoured choice so far. Milling wheat futures in Winnipeg saw a grand total of three contracts trade hands during the week. Durum and barley were both untraded.

ICE Futures Canada officials remain optimistic that their exchange will eventually be the exchange of choice for pricing Canadian wheat, but that remains to be seen and will take some initiative from participants.

Phil Franz-Warkentin writes for Commodity News Service Canada, a Winnipeg company specializing in grain and commodity market reporting.



For three-times-daily market reports from Resource News International, visit "ICE Futures Canada updates" at www.albertafarmexpress.ca.

House passes \$383 million drought aid bill for U.S. ranchers

ETHANOL MANDATE ▶ Pressure continues to ease requirement to mix biofuels with gasoline

BY CHARLES ABBOTT/REUTERS

The U.S. House of Representatives passed a \$383-million disaster relief bill on Aug. 3 that provides political shelter for lawmakers during the worst drought in half a century, but may not release the aid for months to come.

Nearly two-thirds of the continental United States, including prime ranch and farm territory, is in the grip of drought and lawmakers were under pressure to help livestock producers under siege from soaring feed prices.

Congress has been deadlocked on passing a full Farm Bill but the drought portion was seen as a way to get aid to hard-hit ranchers, although it was unclear whether the Senate will move on the legislation.

The House bill, which allows payments of up to \$100,000 per farm, will help cattle and sheep ranchers but not hog and poultry. Row-crop farmers have insurance but programs for livestock expired in 2011.

With Congress scheduled to begin a five-week vacation Aug. 4, there was little time for the Senate to act on the bill. Senators might reject it and insist on their five-year Farm Bill, which includes disaster aid for this year without the cuts demanded by the House, or let the bill wait until it returns on Sept 10.

“It’s as simple as that: There is a problem out there. Let’s fix it,” said House Agriculture Committee chairman Frank Lucas ahead of the 223-197 passage of the bill. He promised to press for a Farm Bill this fall.

Main line farm groups were lukewarm toward the disaster bill, saying it came at an unfair price — \$639 million in soil and water conservation cuts, including \$256 million for deficit reduction — when a full-scale Farm Bill is needed. Environmental, sportsmen and conservation groups opposed it.

“It’s better than nothing. It’s not what we should be doing,” said Collin Peterson, the Democratic leader on the Agriculture Committee. He predicted the bill would stall in the Senate.

If enacted, it could be nearly half a year before producers see aid. The House bill allows three months for the Agriculture Department to write rules for disaster aid before it accepts claims for aid and calculates a payment.

Under the bill, USDA would pay 75 per cent of the value of livestock killed by drought and 60 per cent of feed costs for one

to three months for stock on the range, depending on severity of drought in a locality. There was also \$20 million for feed and water shortages for livestock producers, beekeepers and fish farmers as well as a program to help tree farmers.

Bob Goodlatte of Virginia, a former Agriculture Committee chairman, said the Obama administration should reduce the federal requirement to mix biofuels into gasoline as a drought relief step, given the severe damage to the corn crop.

“We should not be in the position of choosing between food and fuel,” said Goodlatte, who helped organize a letter, signed by 150 representatives who support a “meaningful nationwide adjustment” of the mandate to use corn-based ethanol.



A cow feeds in a drought-damaged pasture as temperatures climb to over 100 F (38 C) in Jasper, Indiana, July 24, 2012. REUTERS/ JOHN SOMMERS II



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“It’s better than nothing. It’s not what we should be doing.”

COLLIN PETERSON



UAE FULLY OPEN TO BEEF

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is the latest country to fully reopen its borders to Canadian beef following its closure in 2003 when a case of BSE was discovered in Canada. A joint release Aug. 2 by Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz and International Trade Minister Ed Fast said the UAE is now open to beef over 30 months of age. The release said Canadian exports of beef from animals under 30 months of age (UTM) to the UAE were worth more than \$1 million in 2011. The industry estimates that full market access for beef could provide additional opportunities worth up to \$365,000 annually.

FARMER CONTINUES DAIRY FIGHT

An Ontario dairy farmer has been granted leave to appeal his conviction of producing, selling and distributing raw milk to the Ontario Court of Appeal. Michael Schmidt, who farms northwest of Toronto, was charged in 2006 following an undercover police sting operation into his dairy business, which supplied 150 families with raw milk. Each family had paid \$300 for partial shares in his 26 cows. A ruling by a lower court acquitting him in 2010 was overturned and he was convicted and sentenced to one year probation and fined \$9,150 for operating an illegal cow-share business.

LIVESTOCK

“The North American beef industry was built on \$2 or \$3 corn.”

High grain prices make for a tough time for livestock feeders

SHRINKING ▶ Already at the lowest since 1973, the U.S. cattle herd will decline again this year

BY MADELEINE BAERG
AF CONTRIBUTOR / CALGARY

The U.S. drought may not have extended north to Canada, but the financial squeeze on Canadian feeders has.

“The North American beef industry was built on \$2 or \$3 corn,” says Herb Lock of FarmSense Marketing in Edmonton. “Eight-dollar or \$9 corn sure takes the sexiness out of slogging through the mud and feeding it.”

“We’re very concerned about feed costs,” says Bill Jameson, chairman of the National Cattle Feeders Association. “We’re probably looking at a minimum of probably \$100 more to finish a steer in Canada than we had anticipated.”

The pork industry, already faltering due to low pork prices, will be especially hurt by high feed prices. “If you don’t have feed booked months in advance, you’re really getting hit hard by these rising feed prices,” says Darcy Fitzgerald, executive director of Alberta Pork. “Combining low price and high feed costs, it’ll drive a lot of producers out of business. You can’t blame them.”

On the positive side, excellent growing conditions, combined with the fact that few American cattle feedlots are equipped to feed barley, means there may be lots of Canadian barley available to livestock feeders.

However, ideal conditions make ideal grain, not necessarily feed grain. “Usually we have something going on weather-wise during the growing year that makes for some silage. But this year, we’re pretty close to saying it’s a perfect crop. Give us another couple or three weeks and we’ll have barley. It’s a lot easier to truck something off the farm than to walk it off. If they can sell it as barley, they’re not going to be feeding it,” says Lock.

The high grain prices also may work against feedlot operators simply because grain growers may be able to afford to store their grain.

“In the past, grain producers might have felt the need to sell to make their payments. But recently, the grain side of the industry has made such good



National Cattle Feeders Association says it will cost \$100 more than expected to finish an animal this year.

money that they can afford to sit on their grain and wait to sell,” says Fitzgerald. “We’re stuck every day needing to buy feed. Our product can’t be stored; it’s something that has to be fed every day and the selling dates are pretty much written in stone.”

U.S. feeder demand slows

In addition to pushing feed costs up, the U.S. drought is decreasing demand for Canadian livestock south of the border. Lock says U.S. cattle are pooling in northern

feeding areas which are suffering the least from the drought. That means feedlot space near the border is and will continue to be very limited, greatly decreasing space for Canadian cattle. “We fully expected that there would be quite a few cattle exported to the States this fall but that obviously won’t happen. Actually, we may be in an import situation with feeder cattle; the jury is still out on that,” says Jameson.

Lock says small feedlots may have the toughest time if high

feed prices continue. Many of the 3,000- to 5,000-head lots don’t grow their own feed but instead truck in silage they buy from big lots nearby. “If the big lots switch to hay, the little guys can’t buy. They can’t truck it, they don’t have the bunkers for it,” says Lock.

Feed hay, not grain

Unlike the U.S., Canadian producers have excellent pasture conditions, good hay carry-over from last year, and

“It’s a lot easier to truck something off the farm than to walk it off. If they can sell it as barley, they’re not going to be feeding it.”

HERB LOCK

what is gearing up to be an outstanding hay crop. Lock says this means that cow-calf producers will have the opportunity to add weight at a cost well below that of the feedlots. “If a guy can move the unfinished product up the value chain, he certainly stands to benefit.”

“Normally they come in at six or seven weight,” says Bryan Walton, CEO of the Alberta Cattle Feeders Association. “This year, some might get held over to a nine weight; each guy is going to need to make his own decisions on what works best for his operation.”

The U.S. cattle herd is at its lowest since 1973 and going lower as drought forces cow-calf operations to send heifers to slaughter rather than keeping them for replacements. Jameson says that in the long run, that may spell good news for Canadian producers.

“The U.S. calf crop is the smallest since 1942,” says Jameson. “This drought in the States, if there’s another round of liquidation of cows, is eventually going to work into a positive situation for the Canadian rancher. I can see a major shortage of protein in this country in the next two to three years.”

At this point, of course, the Canadian crop is not yet harvested, and as all farmers know, you can’t count on a crop until it hits the bin. “It boils down to what happens at harvest,” says Walton. “It’s all speculative right now.”



Accurate feed budgeting can boost nursery growth

OVERFEED ▶ There is always a tendency to overfeed the better – and more expensive – diets

BY BERNIE PEET

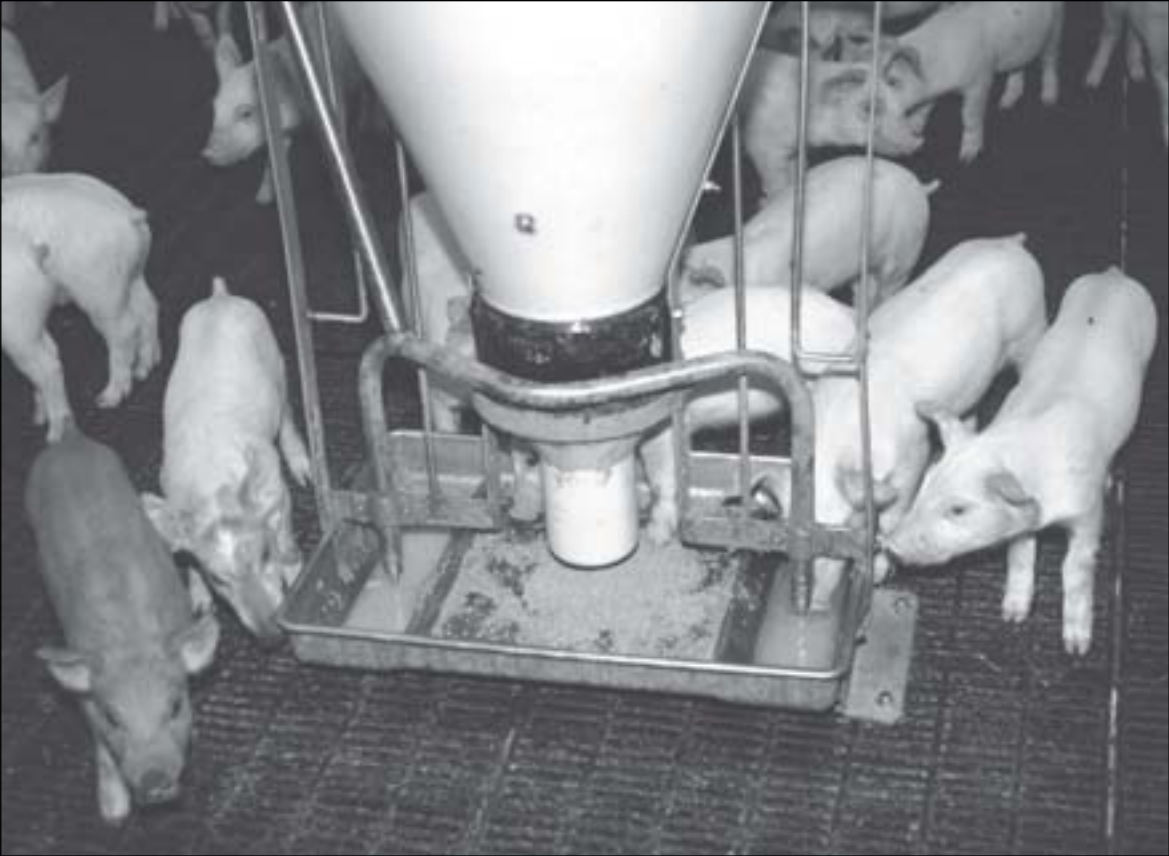
In my last article, I talked about the importance of stimulating feed intake very soon after weaning in order to get nursery pigs off to a good start. This has implications for growth performance, but it also impacts health, especially gut health. The pig faces two digestive challenges at this time. First, the change of diet from milk, which requires gut enzymes to digest lactose and fat, to a dry starter diet which requires different enzymes for digestion. Second, its maternal immunity has declined considerably, reducing its resistance to disease.

Low feed intake after weaning results in an increase in gut pH and pathogenic *E. coli* bacteria proliferate in the small intestine. These bacteria attach themselves to the villi — the minute finger-like projections in the gut which absorb nutrients — and produce toxins which erode the villi and surface of the gut. Once the gut is damaged in this way its absorptive capacity is greatly reduced, resulting in poor growth or diarrhea.

Modern pre-starter diets attempt to overcome this problem by including processed cereals, milk products such as lactose, and animal proteins, making the diet highly digestible and very palatable. Assuming the pig adapts to solid feed quickly, which stimulates production of hydrochloric acid in its stomach, gut pH is maintained and harmful bacteria kept at bay.

These complex pre-starter diets are very expensive and cannot be fed for long. Also, the pig’s enzyme system develops rapidly after weaning, making it increasingly capable of digesting unprocessed cereals and conventional protein sources such as soybean meal.

Therefore nutritionists design a series of diets — typically about four depending on exit weight — with increasing amounts of “conventional” raw materials and decreasing cost. In order to ensure the diets are fed over the correct weight ranges, the nutritionist will also develop a feed budget that can be applied on the farm. The



Feeding newly weaned pigs according to weight category can boost performance and reduce feed costs.

objective of this is to define the amount of each diet fed according to weight and to help ensure that expensive diets are not overused. It will make assumptions about growth rate and feed efficiency over each stage.

In order to get any value out of this, actual feed consumption of each diet for every nursery batch must be measured and recorded. This allows deviations from budget to be identified and adjusted. If entry and exit weights are available, growth rate can be calculated. Diet costs are also a key part of the feed budget and must be updated regularly so that overall nursery feed cost can be monitored.

There is always a tendency to overfeed the better — and more expensive — diets. Implementing a good feed budget program can not only identify where this is taking place, but illustrate the cost implications. After all, an extra kilo of a \$1,000/tonne starter diet increases cost per pig by \$1 and may be an unnecessary waste.

Implementing a good feed budget program can not only identify where this is taking place, but illustrate the cost implications.

the weight at weaning and then Starter 1 and Starter 2 diets are fed strictly according to the budgeted amount. Starter 3 is fed until the pigs are transferred to finishing. The performance figures are an estimate calculated from expected weight at transfer and FCE.

Varying the amount of pre-starter diet fed according to weight allows the smaller pigs to receive the better diet for longer, giving their digestive system more time to adjust. It also helps to improve their feed intake and get them off to a faster start than they would if fed according to age. While the management of both the feed budget and feed allocation program takes time and effort, it will help to maximize the growth of all pigs in the nursery. And, with feed costs at an historic high, effective feed budgeting has the potential to shave a worthwhile amount off total feed cost per pig.

Bernie Peet is president of Pork Chain Consulting of Lacombe, Alberta, and editor of Western Hog Journal.

TABLE 1 ▶ EXAMPLE OF FEED ALLOCATION PROGRAM

Category of pig		V small	Small	Medium	
Large					
% of pigs		2.5%	12.5%	70%	15%
Av. wean wt. - kg		3.86	4.66	5.49	6.52
Diet	Budget amount/pig (kg)	Amount fed per pig (kg)			
Pre-starter	1.00	3.00	1.75	0.90	0.51
Starter 1	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
Starter 2	5.75	5.75	5.75	5.75	5.75
Starter 3	20.45	14.23	17.70	20.66	22.60
Expected performance					
Weight out (kg)	25.00	20.00	22.57	25.05	27.51
Total feed/pig (kg)	29.20	24.98	27.20	29.31	30.86
Gain/pig (kg)	19.50	16.14	17.91	18.56	20.99
FCE	1.50	1.55	1.52	1.50	1.47

Assumes average weaning weight is 5.5 kg at an 18-day weaning age and pigs leave the nursery at an average of 25 kg.

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CIH 8010-2388, 2188 combine
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NH TJ 450, New Triples, Big Pump
8100 Wilmar Sprayer

JD 4710, 4720, 4730, 4830, 4920, 4930 SP sprayers
JD 9770 & 9870 w/CM & duals
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Western water hemlock is a deadly killer of cattle and on the rise

BEEF 911 ▶ Once almost never seen, this highly toxic plant has been found in several locations in my practice area this year

BY ROY LEWIS DVM

This year’s wet spring has seen increased sightings of western water hemlock — one of the most poisonous plants known in cattle production. Prior to 2006, I had only seen one occurrence of this highly toxic plant in 25 years of practice. This year, several multiple plants have been found a great distance apart in our practice area. One root bulb can kill a mature cow very quickly, and so it’s important to be on the lookout for this toxic plant and inform your neighbours if found. As with any toxic plant, accurate identification is critical. Water hemlock has narrow leaves with sharp tooth-like margins. The flowers are small, white and in umbrella-like clusters. The roots are very bulbous, which distinguishes it from look-alike plants such as water parsnip, which also has narrow leaves, but lacks tooth-like margins and bulbous roots. Cow parsnip is also very common in our area, but it is generally a larger plant and has very large fan-like leaves. In drier conditions, cattle and other livestock can graze cow parsnip and it actually has pretty good feed value. Poisonings to water hemlock generally occur in the early spring from its young shoots, which appear before much else is growing. Hemlock likes wetter conditions so is often found around dugouts, streams and other water sources. It generally does not like a lot of shade so is often in the

open. The late fall — when other vegetation is sparse — is the other critical time when poisonings occur from eating the bulbous roots. The plant in its entirety can be pulled out easily which is how livestock, especially cattle, gain access to the roots. If you have problems identifying this or other potentially toxic or noxious weeds there are several sources for advice. The local agricultural fieldman or crop specialist are well versed in identification. It is important these ag fieldmen also know this plant is present in your area. Sprayer operators are also well versed in weed identification. Veterinarians are well trained in the treatment of the poisonings and could reference pictures of the toxic plants. Water hemlock control involves manual removal, as plant numbers are generally low, close to a water source and there can be a fair distance between plants. The poison is toxic to humans so use gloves when picking and do not cut into the bulbous roots. Protective eyewear would also be a wise precautionary measure. The plant is a perennial, so try to pull the entire root out. This is generally easy especially on the bigger plants by grasping right at the base of the plant. Any small leaf shoots should also be removed. Dispose by incinerating, desiccating or composting. As with all poisonings, it is far better to be preventive than treat the disease. Be vigilant in subsequent years in case of regrowth, and check pastures before livestock are turned out. The seeds are not

considered toxic, but removing before plants go to seed goes without saying. **Rapid death** Rarely would you find livestock from hemlock poisoning alive as death can occur within 15 minutes. Most are reported as sudden deaths around water sources. Here veterinarians must rule out other causes of sudden death such as blue-green algae poisoning, anthrax, blackleg or bloat. Many of these toxins appear to be increasing in frequency. Convulsions and other nervous signs such as frothing and clamping of the jaws are observed if animals are found alive. Treatment by a veterinarian would consist of trying to control the convulsions. No specific antidote exists, but depending on the amount consumed, animals can recover from low-level poisonings with no long-term effects. All species of animals are vulnerable but because they are less fussy grazers, cattle, sheep, goats and bison are especially at risk. Cattle, because of the pulling action of their grazing, are most susceptible. Deaths in horses and swine have also been documented. Fortunately poisonings are very, very rare because conditions must be right between the stage of plant growth and the lack of other available pasture. Rotational grazing systems where large numbers of animals are forced on to a small area could actually increase likelihood of exposure to hemlock if it was present.



Water hemlock has narrow leaves with sharp tooth-like margins.

When walking pastures, look for what species of grasses, forbs and weeds are present. This gives us clues as to the health of the pasture, where production can be improved, and where overgrazing has occurred. If we can prevent poisonings by removing some toxic plants in the process, so much the better. *Roy Lewis is a large-animal veterinarian practising at the Westlock, Alberta Veterinary Centre. His main interests are bovine reproduction and herd health.*

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The “why behind the buy” for potential beef buyers

FROM THE HIP ▶ The beef industry needs to work harder on making consumers feel good about their decision

BY BRENDA SCHOEPP

Before we start the fall calf run and a series on marketing cattle in this column, we need to take one more look at what drives the consumer. We have discussed this before, but it is important because the source of our wealth as producers is from the consumer, and the integration between producer and consumer is almost non-existent.

That is not to say that I advocate that the producer is the one responsible to respond to consumer needs — that is simply not true. But as producers we do however have a stronger influence in our relationship with packer, processor, wholesaler and retailer when we are informed.

A report titled “The Why Behind the Buy,” which was almost a retail report card, laid out the realities of what drives consumers. In the frozen case there were actually 22.6 per cent fewer new items in 2011 than in 2009. The “me now” consumer has little tolerance for redundancy and the same old offerings did not bring them back unless it was for frozen breakfasts. That is a reflection of a growing trend and if the beef industry is going to survive on the shelf, it needs to appreciate the rush to meal-ready breakfasts.

The pharmacy, or drug store as we often call it, has become a close second to full grocery in terms of sales. With pharmacy there is an opportunity to one-stop shop and to promote healthy eating (assuming you believe that having fruit juice and pain relief a few steps apart is a wellness plan.) There is however no denying that many daily groceries are bought at the pharmacy and that clientele has a distinct taste for fibre-rich foods that they pair with energy drinks and vitamins.

At the fresh shelf in a grocery store, the consumer has changed spending habits considerably over the past 30 years, adding more baked goods and sweets, and cutting back on fruits and vegetables (natural sources of fibre) and meats (natural sources of vitamins and minerals). The move away from the meat case is the most dramatic with spending 10.4 per cent less than three decades ago. Despite the goodness of meats, the consumer has remained unconvinced. Why?

What’s on the label?

A full 64 per cent of consumers in this study say they need to see passion behind a label. If we are looking for a reality check at the meat case, then there it is. A black and white scrap of paper against a bloody-red or pale-white product on a black blotter under tubes of lighting that states a price under the name “Chuck” does not say much. It does not communicate “buy me for I am special and you will be a rock star if you do.” What it does say is “I don’t know who you are because I have not bothered to find out.” Understanding the demographic that you wish to sell to is of great importance and helps to target the product. The language on the label should match that demographic.

A plain white label does not

say “This is so good for you that you will feel like superman.” Its absence of nutritional information suggests commodity marketing. I would venture to guess that if we want to stop the stream of bad tidings from those consumers who class all meat as industrial, corporate, or foul agriculture, then we could start by changing the label to reflect passion about who we are, what we do and why it matters.

More importantly we have not played into the consumers’ learned helplessness. They don’t know how to cook. So cooking “Chuck” is a bit unnerving because he bites back if he hits a BBQ and he most certainly has no tender feelings. He needs to be coddled, much like his buyer, and everyone needs to be clear that “Chuck” is more than



A black and white scrap of paper against a bloody-red or pale-white product on a black blotter under tubes of lighting that states a price under the name “Chuck” does not say much.

just a slab of meat and that he can be teased into a remarkable eating experience. The label or additional peel-back label has to have step-by-step instructions for getting along with Chuck.

The “me now” buyers also have expectations from the retail outlet if they are expected to enter the store or return to it. They like apps, loyalty cards and coupons. That is quite a mix of wants, but if we want

wealth from the shelf then it is critical to know the why behind the buy. The pharmacy features fibre and feel-good quick fixes, while keeping the shelves seasonal to maintain customer loyalty, and the resistance in grocery to the frozen case thaws if there are new breakfast items.

Back at the meat case, hunks like “Chuck” continue to get the cold shoulder as they lack creativity and passion behind their label.

Brenda Schoepp is a market analyst and the owner and author of Beeflink, a national beef cattle market newsletter. A professional speaker and industry market and research consultant, she ranches near Rimbey, Alberta. brenda.schoepp@cciwireless.ca or www.brendaschoepp.com

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Blister beetle-infested hay can be toxic to horses

ALFALFA ▶ High numbers of the insect reported in fields in western North Dakota this summer

STAFF

The University of North Dakota Extension Service is warning that blister beetles, which are toxic to horses, could be a problem in the state this year.

According to insectsofalberta.com, the insect is also found in southern Alberta.

NDSU equine specialist Carrie Hammer says there have been several reports of alfalfa fields infested with blister beetles in western North Dakota this year.

“Horse owners need to be cautious because horses that consume alfalfa hay contaminated with these beetles have a high risk for serious illness and death,” she says in an NDSU release.

Several species of blister beetles can be found in the U.S., and all produce cantharidin, a toxin that causes inflammation and blistering of internal body tissues. Although all species produce the toxin, the cantharidin content varies among species. The striped blister beetle is known for consistently having higher toxin concentrations.

Hammer says that due to the variation in toxin concentration among beetles, it’s difficult to say how many beetles are toxic, but most studies report ingestion of 25 to 300 beetles is enough to kill an average-size adult horse.

Clinical signs of blister beetle poisoning usually occur six to eight hours after ingestion. Affected horses often show signs of colic and depression, although urinary, cardiovascular and nervous system problems also can occur. Horses consuming a toxic dose can die quickly (within three to 18 hours).

Blister beetles tend to congregate in certain areas of a field. Thus, hay bales from those areas often contain high beetle numbers, whereas bales from other areas of the field may be beetle free, the release says.

Hammer encourages horse owners to check alfalfa bales carefully prior to feeding the alfalfa to their horses and discard any contaminated bales.



A Nuttall’s blister beetle photo from the insectsofalberta.com website. Toxicity ranges among species.

Japan seen relaxing rules on U.S. beef in November

UTM ▶ Expected to allow beef from cattle under 30 months

REUTERS

Japan is expected to relax restrictions on imports of U.S. beef as early as November to make it easier for Tokyo to take part in Washington-led trans-Pacific free trade talks, the Nikkei business daily said July 18.

Currently Japan allows imports of U.S. beef only from cattle aged 20 months or younger, but given ebbing global concerns about mad cow disease, Japan’s Food Safety Commission (FSC) is assessing the risk of easing that limit to 30 months.

The rules, in place since 2005, permitted U.S. beef imports after a total ban in 2003, but have capped U.S. shipments while Australian beef has largely retained its dominant share of Japan’s 500,000-tonnes-a-year market for imported beef.

The commission’s panel of experts was scheduled to discuss a draft report on the risk of relaxing the age limit on July 24.

If finalized, the report would be open to public comments before submission to the Health Ministry, a commission official said. The ministry had asked for recommendations on this issue last December.

The Nikkei said the commission’s report would recommend relaxing the age limit to 30 months or younger, the international standard.

U.S. meat exporters have said they expected Japan to relax its import restrictions this year.



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DROUGHT SLOWS U.S. BARGES

TRAFFIC

The Mississippi River was closed to traffic at two locations Aug. 2 as barge tows ran aground near Greenville, Arkansas, and La Crosse, Wisconsin, due to low water amid the worst U.S. drought in 56 years. Low water has restricted barge drafts to a lighter-than-normal nine feet and limited barge tows to fewer barges on numerous sections of the Mississippi River. But even as vessels have lightened their cargo loads, numerous boats have run aground in recent weeks, forcing temporary river closures and snarling north- and southbound freight traffic.

QUALITY RISKS AS RAIN CONTINUES IN EU

A spell of dry, warm weather is needed to allow wheat harvesting to progress in Western Europe's top producing countries and to avoid the spoiling of a crop that has so far proved better than expected after a harsh winter, officials said last week. Persistent rain, which revived crops in France and Germany after they endured severe winter frost and a dry start to spring, has become a concern as crops have matured. "Overall the yields are good," said Cedric Weber, an analyst with French grains consultancy Offre & Demande Agricole (ODA). "In terms of quality, there are a few more headaches, mainly due to rain at harvest time." — Reuters

WEATHER



The U.S. drought – it's now expected to last till October

SKEPTIC REVERSAL ▶ New study acknowledges the existence and the cause of global warming

BY DANIEL BEZTE

This issue's article was going to be a look back at the weather across Alberta so far this summer, but Environment Canada seems to be having some significant difficulties with its online data feeds, as several Environment Canada stations either have no data available for the last month or two or are missing chunks of data.

Hey, I have an idea, let's cut more funding to Environment Canada! Maybe that will light a fire under their butts to get things fixed and working properly!

Seriously, try running something like Environment Canada with less funding and staff than pretty much any single U.S. state, and see what happens. So maybe I should rely on personal weather stations or some of the ag weather sites?

While the data from most of these stations are usually fairly good and reliable, the problem is, they do not have any long-term records with which to compare the current data. As most of you know, changes in topography and land use can create surprisingly different microclimates, resulting in significant variation in data from one location to the next.

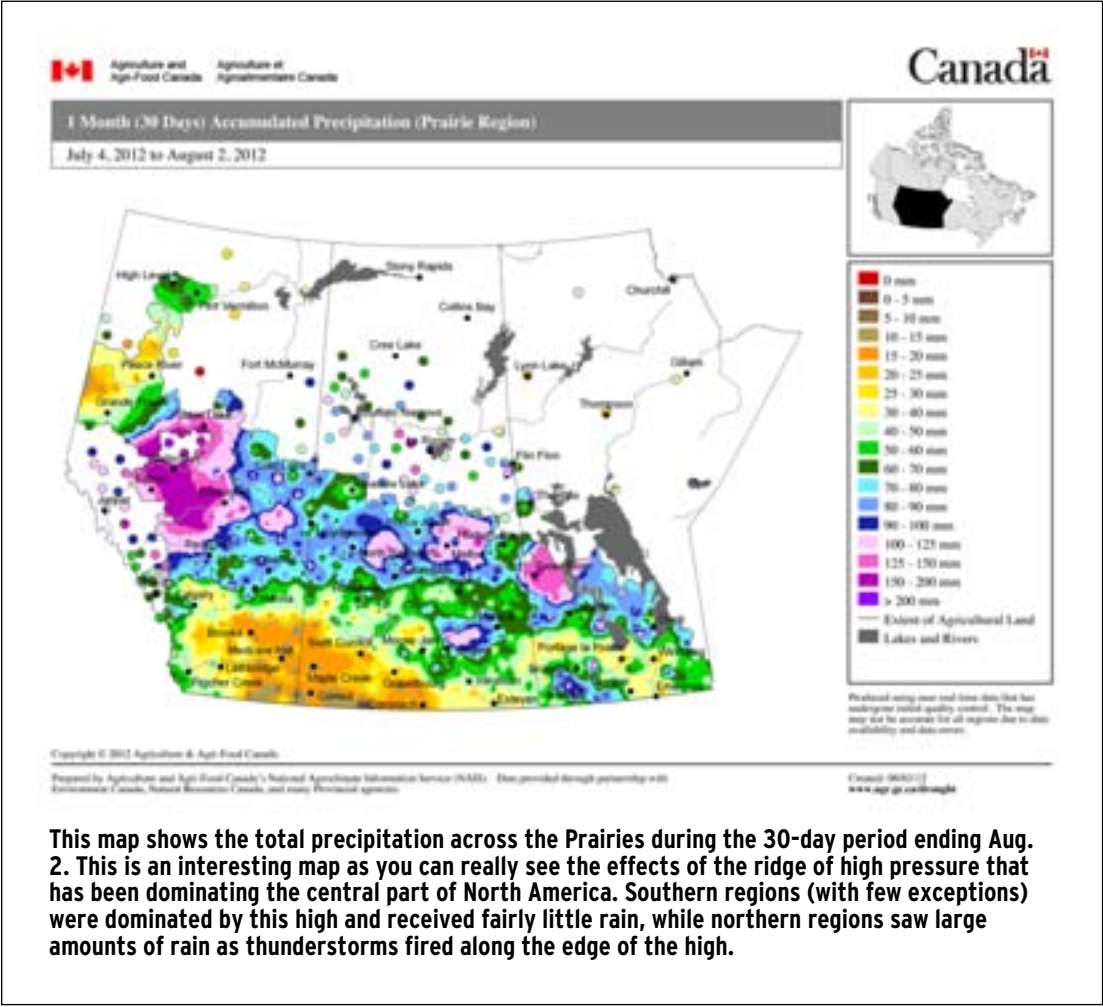
So I will wait and see if EC can resolve its data problems and instead, we'll take a bit of global look at the weather.

The first big story is the U.S. heat wave centred over Oklahoma. This heat wave has slowly been erasing the historic heat records set back in the dust

bowl of 1936. To get a bit of a feel for just how hot it has been down there, here are just a few examples. Oklahoma City broke its all-time record on Aug. 3, hitting a high of 45 C. The overnight low also broke the record for the warmest low, when the thermometer only dropped to 28.9 C. Oklahoma City has now recorded three days in a row with high temperatures greater than 44 C (112 F) which has never occurred before. To make matters worse, imagine 45 C temperatures, 12 per cent humidity, and winds gusting to 40 km/h — can you say fire hazard? If we take a wider view there are parts of Oklahoma that as of last week had seen 18 consecutive days with high temperatures equal to or greater than 37.8 C or 100 F.

Self-perpetuation

Overall, the drought in the U.S. remained about the same during July, with about 62 per cent of the country covered by moderate or greater drought (second only to July of 1934 at 80 per cent) and 41 per cent of the U.S. is covered by severe or greater drought. The bad news for this region is that the drought is expected to extend until at least October. Quoting NOAA's Climate Prediction Center, "Unfortunately, the self-perpetuation of regional drought conditions, with very dry soils and very limited evapotranspiration, tends to inhibit widespread development of, or weaken existing thunderstorm complexes. It would require a dramatic shift in the weather pattern to provide significant relief to this drought, and most tools and models do not forecast



This map shows the total precipitation across the Prairies during the 30-day period ending Aug. 2. This is an interesting map as you can really see the effects of the ridge of high pressure that has been dominating the central part of North America. Southern regions (with few exceptions) were dominated by this high and received fairly little rain, while northern regions saw large amounts of rain as thunderstorms fired along the edge of the high.

this. Unfortunately, all indicators (short and medium term, August, and August-October) favour above-normal temperatures. With much of the Plains already in drought and getting worse, above-normal temperatures expected into the fall, and a dry short-term and 30-day forecast, the drought should persist, with some possible development in the northern Plains."

Three hundred twenty-nine months in a row

Globally, the July numbers are not yet out, but it is looking very much like the Earth as a whole will have experienced the 329th consecutive month with global temperatures warmer than the 20th-century average. The last time the Earth experienced a cooler-than-average month was back in February 1985. Now that is one long warm streak!

For those of you who are still skeptical about global warming, a new study has just come out that was led by global warming skeptic scientist Dr. Richard Muller, and that was actually funded by the Charles G. Koch charitable foundation (which is mostly funded by the oil industry).

In this study known as BEST (Berkeley Earth Surface Temperature) they examined the last 250 years' worth of global temperature data. The group made it clear that it would

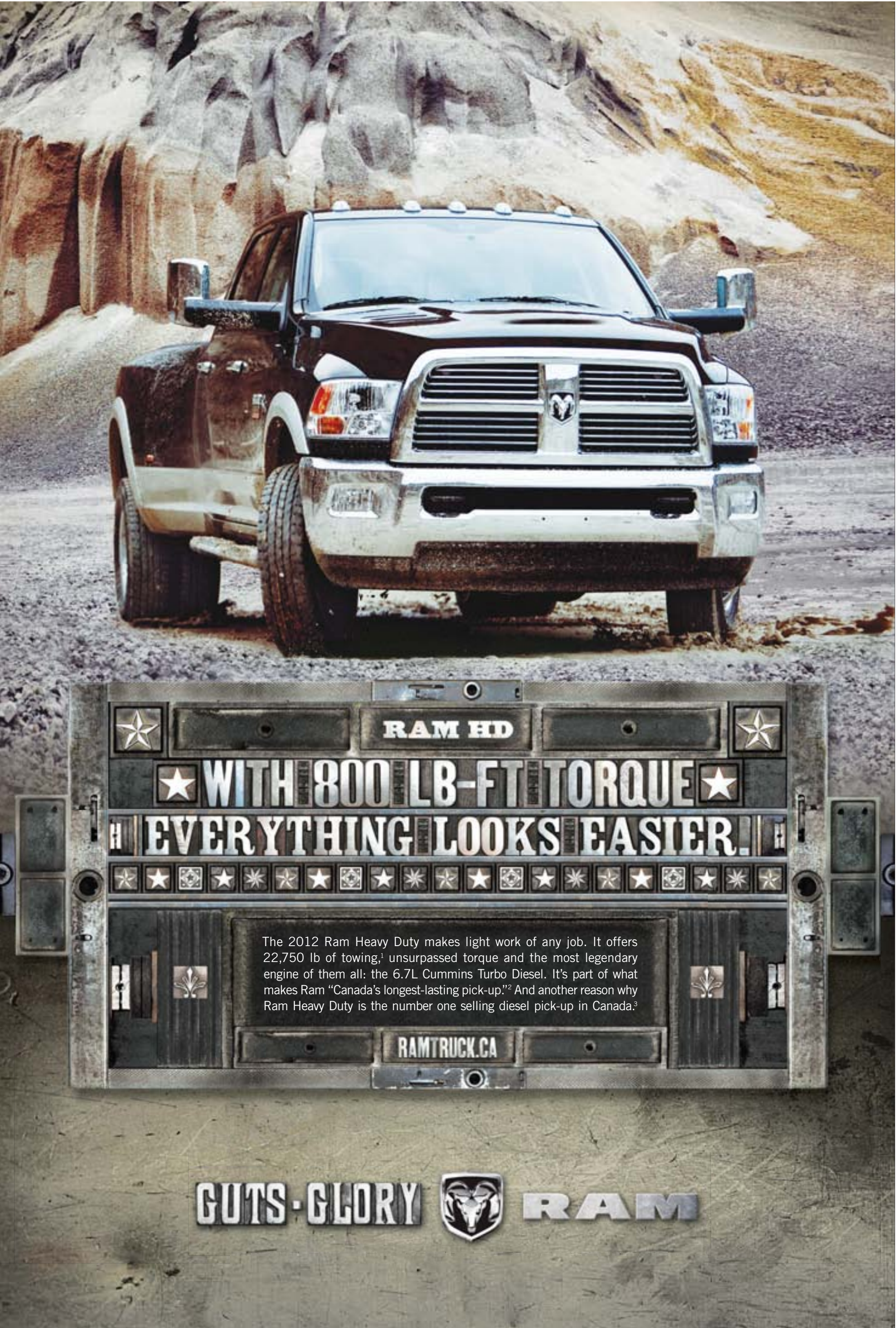
present its findings with "full transparency" and the funding sources would not impact its results.

What it found was that the Earth has warmed 2.5 F over the past 250 years with 1.5 F coming in the last 50 years. It also reported that pretty much all of this increase is the result of the human emission of greenhouse gases.

In an excerpt from an article in the *New York Times*, Dr. Muller states: "Call me a converted skeptic. Three years ago I identified problems in previous climate studies that, in my mind, threw doubt on the very existence of global warming. Last year, following an intensive research effort involving a dozen scientists, I concluded that global warming was real and that the prior estimates of the rate of warming were correct. I'm now going a step further: Humans are almost entirely the cause."



Changes in topography and land use can create surprisingly different microclimates, resulting in significant variation in data from one location to the next.



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