Manage wild oats with these five tools

Wild oats are a serious, ongoing problem for Prairie farmers. Keep them in check to prevent development of glyphosate resistance

BY ANDREA HILDERMAN

Wild oats continue to be one of the top five weeds in Western Canada. Controlling wild oats costs western Canadian growers about $500 million annually.

When Grainews looked at the wild oat situation in 2011, Nasir Shaikh, provincial weed specialist with Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, viewed wild oat management as an important ongoing process, especially in Manitoba where the frequency of herbicide resistance is higher than in Saskatchewan. Now, Shaikh’s biggest fear is that wild oats may develop resistance to glyphosate.

“Wild oat resistance to glyphosate has not yet been documented anywhere in the world,” says Shaikh. “However, looking at how extensively glyphosate is used in pre-seeding burn down, pre-plant, and pre-emergence applications in canola with RoundUp Ready varieties, it can’t be long in happening.”

If farmers lose the ability to control wild oats with glyphosate, costs will skyrocket.

“Wild oat resistance to glyphosate is one of the most serious concerns at present,” says Clark Brenzil, provincial weed control specialist with Saskatchewan Agriculture. “Then we’ll hear about it soon enough.”

Managing wild oats continues to be key in the business of farming field crops. Experts agree there are some important tools in farmers’ tool boxes that must be used judiciously to control wild oats and minimize the risk of developing or building populations of resistant weeds. “Integrated weed management is what farmers need to be thinking about,” says Shaikh. “In other words, bringing to bear all the options, agronomic and chemical, to combat this serious weed problem.”

Here are five tools that will help control wild oats on your farm.

1. DIVERSE CROP ROTATIONS

“One of the most important things you can do is get crops and crop rotations that are different from each other so that you’re not constantly spraying the same thing,” says Brenzil. “Growers need to diversify their rotations in terms of crop choice and narrow selection of crops. Increase the density of one weed species and you increase the risk of it becoming resistant to the herbicide or herbicides you use.”

In years past, crop rotations were more about agronomy than profits. Before growers had a large selection of herbicides to choose from, crop rotations were an important tool for managing weeds. Now, crop selection is more about maximizing short-term economic returns. That often means the rotation shrinks to one or two very profitable crops. This can result in over-reliance on a narrow selection of herbicides and herbicide groups. “The real danger wild oats presents is that it is in almost every field in high numbers,” says Brenzil. “This is a classic recipe for the selection of resistance, because resistance is a numbers game. The more weeds you have in a field before the herbicide is applied, the greater the likelihood that there is a rare mutant out in that field that is able to survive the herbicide treatment.”

Ideally, crop rotations should include winter and spring crops, broadleaf and grass crops as well as perennial forages. “If wild oats are really thick, consider perennial alfalfa as an option for control,” says Shaikh. “The regular cuttings over the summer for forage will reduce the wild oats seed bank significantly.”

Brenzil advises a minimum of a three-year crop rotation, preferably four, and ideally an eight- to 10-year rotation with the inclusion of three to four years of perennial forages.

“The seed bank is the driver of resistance,” says Brenzil. “Research shows a 95 per cent reduction in the density of wild oats and other troublesome weeds in crops seeded in fields broken out of a three-year alfalfa stand.”

2.  WELL-TIMED PRE-SEED BURN-OFF

Getting into the field and getting a pre-seed burn-off completed as close as possible to seeding is key. “Adjust seeding time if possible to be as close to the pre-seed glyphosate application as possible,” says Shaikh. “Growers want to get the crop established to be competitive against a second flush of wild oats.”

Brenzil also suggests growers consider the idea of two glyphosate applications in the spring, an early application for perennials and then another just prior to seeding that includes a mix with a herbicide with another mode of action for emerged annual weeds.

3. HIGH SEEDING RATES

Research conducted by Charles Mohler at Cornell University in weed ecology and management indicated a 50 per cent increase in seeding rate had a substantial effect on weeds without any adverse impact on crop quality. The real key is to get the crop to cover the ground ahead of weeds emerging, and allowing the crop to control late emerging weeds.

“The gradual widening of row spacing on seeders is also concerning,” says Brenzil. “Row spacings are getting wider, and mainly for engineering efficiencies. Equipment manufacturers promote research that shows no yield losses and are now even promoting using less seed as a way to cut input costs — but this assumes perfect weed control is a given. With wider rows and lower crop plant densities, there is more open ground available for weeds to establish and colonize, and there is more competition between individual crop plants within the row. I liken wide rows and lower plant densities to walking a tightrope with no safety net below. If something doesn’t go just right it could be disastrous.”

4. GOOD CROP ESTABLISHMENT

Do everything under your control to maximize the ability of the crop to get established, and emerge quickly, evenly and vigorously to close the canopy. “Fertilizer should be properly banded close to the seed,” says Shaikh. “Otherwise the wild oats will benefit.”

Seed quality is critical. “If you are not using your own seed, then use certified seed,” says Brenzil. “Certified seed has to meet certain specifications for weed seed content. But even with certified seed, request the certificate of analysis.
The delivery problem hasn't been limited to one specific area, or one specific grain company. Yes, grain companies have been having trouble moving grain. Yes, there are other problems in our grain transportation system. But when we can’t deliver grain we’ve agreed to sell, we have cash flow uncertainty, time management issues and an increase in our general stress levels.

Marketing experts urge us to time our grain sales to meet our cash flow needs. This is great advice, but impossible to implement when contract dates don’t match actual delivery and payment dates. Imagine reversed situations.

What if farmers booked fertilizer for February pickup, then didn’t actually pick it up or pay for it in February? Penalties would vary, but you can bet it wouldn’t end well for the farmers. Input supply companies couldn’t operate like this — how would they control inventory? How would they manage their cash flow?

Or, can you imagine going to a car dealership, negotiating on a car, signing a contract and then telling the sales guy you’ll pay for the car and pick it up in a few months, when you really need to take that trip to Edmonton? Car companies could never stay in business if all of their customers did that.

And yet, during the transportation problems this winter, Prairie farmers accepted inventory risk, paid storage costs and covered interest costs for much of the product that grain companies ultimately sold to their end customers. Hopefully, Bill C-30, the Fair Rail for Grain Farmers Act, will bring an end to this situation. The bill is reported to give the Canadian Grain Commission the authority to regulate compensation when elevator companies don’t honour contract delivery dates. Arbitration may be involved. It would be ideal if the grain commission took a proactive approach — setting standard interest and storage compensation rates and requiring farmer compensation for every late delivery. We can hope that actually collecting compensation for interest and storage won’t be a difficult, expensive process. Or a process that farmers are afraid to go through, for fear that local grain buyers will punish them with lower grades or lower prices in the future if they seek compensation for late delivery once. What we don’t need is a system where grain companies don’t have to pay compensation for missed contract dates if they can prove that grain transportation problems were beyond their control.

Assuming Bill C-30 is passed, it won’t be helpful to farmers unless compensation is automatic — not something each farmer has to fight for with each late delivery.

To deal with multinational grain companies that wield ever-increasing market power, we need a foothold. Our best solution would be enforceable, standardized contracts that require companies to pay fair storage and interest costs every time they don’t take delivery within the contract month. We’re not looking for taxpayer dollars or unreasonable legal privileges, just fair contracts that require both parties to actually do what they said they were going to do. Is that too much to ask? — Leann

Grainews invites you to nominate your all-time favourite piece of farm equipment! You name it — whatever your all-time favourite rig is, we want to know!

Any model not currently in production in the following 3 categories: tractors, combines, other farm machinery.

A list of finalists will be announced. Farmers can cast their votes at this year’s Canada’s Farm Progress Show in Regina.

Watch upcoming issues of Grainews for more information.

To nominate your favourite farm machine email us at: farmerschoiceaward@fbcpublishing.com

DEADLINE FOR NOMINATIONS IS APRIL 30th
FARM SAFETY

Keeping kids safe

You would probably do just about anything to keep your kids safe on the farm. That's what over 90 per cent of Canada's farmers said in a farm safety attitudes survey conducted by Farm Credit Canada in 2011. But how do you know what to do?

Since 1990 to 2008, Canadian Agricultural Reporting (CAIR) recorded 248 agricultural fatalities of children under 15 years of age. That's an average of 13 deaths a year. Approximately 44 per cent of those fatalities involved children under the age of five. The most common causes of fatalities included being run over by equipment, drowning, or equipment rollers. In many cases, these fatalities were work-related, though the child wasn't necessarily performing the agricultural task at the time of the injury. So what can you do to raise your children to celebrate farm life, while keeping them safe? You'll need to have a really good handle on child development levels, abilities and limitations, as well as when and how to set clear rules and boundaries, so that everyone stays happy, healthy and safe.

While you can't completely child-proof your farm, creating a safe play area can limit their exposure to hazards including traffic, agricultural production and environmental concerns. A safe play area is a carefully planned location with safe, age-appropriate play equipment designated by physical boundaries such as fences, gates or shrubs. Establish any necessary playground boundaries such as fences, gates or shrubs. Establish any necessary play areas and supervise your children appropriately.

Next, identify areas on your operation that are off-limits to children, such as confined spaces including grain bins or silos, pesticide or fertilizer storage facilities, bodies of water, and manure pits. Can a fence be installed to bar the way to a hazardous area? Can materials be stored inside locked cupboards or locked buildings? Do it. When it comes to visiting the barn, storage buildings or bin yards, establish age limits for entry. For example, if a child is younger than 10 years old, establish a rule that they stay in the fenced yard area, if a child is 10 to 13 years old, they can enter these areas if they are accompanied by an adult.

When it comes to farm chores, the ability of a child to carry out an agricultural task is dependent on several factors, including age, motor skills, cognitive function and awareness of the world around them. Children under seven years of age are dependent on adults to provide them with a safe environment and should not be engaged in agricultural tasks. A seven- to nine-year-old child generally doesn't have good hand-eye coordination. They have a short attention span and need parents to demonstrate a task each time. For this age group, short tasks that don't require a great deal of accuracy such as yard and garden work or feeding the animals would probably be okay, as long as they are under constant supervision.

Contrast this with 16- to 18-year-olds, who can usually begin adult tasks, but may have a tendency to be a bit reckless and easily distracted. However, every child is different, so be vigilant and adjust tasks based on your day-to-day assessment of their abilities. And when it comes to youth employment, whether you are hiring your own child or another youth, be sure to check legislative requirements to ensure you are operating within the legal parameters of your area.

Guide Blais, Canadian Agricultural Safety Association. This article was produced in support of the Canadian Agricultural Safety Week 2013 Let's Talk About It! campaign, which encourages farmers to engage in conversations about safety. CASAN is brought to you by the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, with support from the Government of Canada through Growing Forward 2, long-term corporate sponsor Farm Credit Canada, Ag for Life, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, CISL, Imperial Oil and Pioneer Hi-Bred Limited.

WEATHER LORE

Squeaky snow

The squeak of the snow will the temperature show. Around -10°C, snow begins to squeak underfoot. Why?

There are two reasons: Pressure and temperature. Says Paul Huttner, chief meteorologist for Minnesota Public Radio. When you step on snow the pressure of your foot on the snow crystals causes some of them to melt. This has a lubricating effect and the tiny crystals slide quietly over each other as they are compacted beneath your foot. But when the snow temperature is below -10°C the pressure applied by your foot is not great enough to cause melting, and the snow crystals break and crash into each other as you step. We hear it as a squeak.

Squeaky snow is a registered trademark used under license by Gowan Company, L.L.C.

AGRONOMY TIPS... FROM THE FIELD

Right reasons to use seed treatments

Growers are doing their own on-farm trials with seed treatments, and they’re shared. This is a trend that is expected to continue as we see value in treating their seed prior to planting. In this column, I offer the two primary reasons why producers continue to invest in these products.

First, growers have found that treated seeds produce a vigorous, uniform crop stand from the moment they germinate. And, as we know, you can’t have a good harvest without a strong start. Second, seed treatments can help control pests. Modern production practices can also increase pest pressure. Today’s more crop residue and intercropping rotations mean that crop-specific diseases and insects can get a toehold in the field and cause significant damping-off, resulting in poor crop stands—all the more reason to use seed care products.

This agronomic tip is brought to you by Ted Lukan, technical lead for seedcare with Syngenta Canada Inc. Ted has worked for Syngenta since 1981, and has focused on seed treatment technology for the last 12 years.

PHOTO CONTEST

Give us your best shot

Remi Gregoire sent us this photo, taken on his family farm at St Pierre, Manitoba. Remi found this hive in his machine shed. It measured 12 inches long, eight inches wide and five inches in diameter.

When our little boy was three, he found one of these under our deck. He found it the hard way. I've never seen a small kid run so fast. Remi, we'll send you a cheque for $25. Hopefully you don't need to use it to buy more hives— that's what we recommend.

Send your best shot to leaann.minogue@fpwebsite.com. Please send only one or two photos at a time and include your name and address. We love to see your photos, the photo where the photo was taken and a bit about what was going on that day. A little write-up about your farm is welcome, too. Please ensure that images are of high resolution (1 MB is preferred), and if the image includes a person, we need to be able to see their face clearly.

Leftover Bees’ Nest, Never Sell Your Hen on a Rainy Day explores our farm weather rhythms and sayings. It is available from McNally Robinson at www.mcnallyrobinson.com.
from your seed supplier that will list every weed seed found in the sample. Compare this to the weed control legislation for your province and do not purchase seed that contains seeds regulated at the provincial level or has weeds that you don’t already have on your fields.”

Randy Court of Court Seeds & Greenhouses at Plumas, Man., explained that wild oats is considered to be a secondary noxious weed under the Canada Seeds Act, the legislation that governs seed growers and their practices. “There are no wild oats seeds allowed in Certified No. 1 wheat seed,” explains Court. “The presence of a single wild oat in the sample will result in downgrading. This is the same for all primary and secondary noxious weeds seeds in wheat.”

The exceptions are for barley and oats. The official table for secondary noxious weed seed in oats and barley has zero wild oat seeds allowed per kilogram of sample, however, there is an exemption that allows for one secondary noxious weed seed per five kilogram sample of barley and up to one secondary noxious weed seed per two kilogram sample of oats. “Counting wild oat seeds is very subjective and the number of wild oat tolerances outlined in the Act,” says Court. “Or considerably better. Reputable seed growers do not cut corners on seed quality.”

5. VARYING HERBICIDES

Farmers have a range of herbicide options ranging from pre-seed and post-burn-off applications, to in-crop applications with a range of active ingredients from herbicide Groups 1, 2 and 8 in cereals as well as Group 3 for several broadleaf crops and Group 10 in canola.

“In an ideal world, we don’t want farmers to have to rely on one secondary noxious weed seed per five kilogram sample of barley and up to one secondary noxious weed seed per two kilogram sample of oats. “Counting wild oat seeds is very subjective and the number of wild oat tolerances outlined in the Act,” says Court. “Or considerably better. Reputable seed growers do not cut corners on seed quality.”

Typically, resistance first appears as individual plants escaping control that gradually form into patches. “Is the patch an escape or a resistant population? Growers need to answer this question quickly,” says Bremel. “When the grower is scouting, find out, ‘is it a single species escape?’ If yes, then it is more likely to be resistance, not a problem with herbicide efficacy. If two or three weeds escaped, then it’s likely a mix or the herbicide used didn’t perform the way it should have for another reason.”

If you suspect a resistant wild oat population has developed in your field, have samples tested at a provincial laboratory. The key is to actively start managing that resistant population before it’s identified. “Some weeds areAdrian Willden has his master’s degree in weed science and is a member of the Manitoba Institute of Agronomists. She writes from Winnipeg, Man.

Ensure you can recognize this serious grassy weed earlier in the season. Wild oats is easy to recognize when headed out. It has a distinctive ligule at the collar.

resistance so repeated tillage or mowing can be conducted over the season to prevent the wild oats heading out and going to seed. Continue monitoring the area in future years and give it special attention.

“Although we don’t have resistance yet in wild oat glyphosate,” says Bremel, “we know it would be like the Australian experience with rigid ryegrass, which is now resistant to every herbicide that used to control it. And we don’t want to get it to that point.”

Australian growers plagued with rigid ryegrass resistant to several herbicide groups are resorting to using technologies like the Harrington Seed Destructor — a pull-behind 200-plus horsepower implement that pulverizes everything coming out the back of the combine, doubling fuel consumption in the process. Australian growers have also outfitted their combines with bins to concentrate everything into a two-foot row, instead of blowing it across the field. Those same rows are traveled every year using on-board guidance systems. The result is that weed seeds build up in that two-foot path, weeds emerging in that area are less vigorous since they are competing with each other. Additionally, some growers burn these rows after harvest to kill the seeds and reduce the numbers returning to the seed bank.

The lesson for wild oat management is to diversity now rather than face the proverbial death by a thousand cuts. “There are only so many ways to kill a plant,” says Bremel. “While there may be new active ingredients that come along, should we be managing what we have now very carefully so we don’t lose these tools for the management of important weeds to the future to resistance. Growers need to be using every tool in the wild oat control toolbox to its fullest extent.”

Shaikh suggests, that an integrated management strategy is the only way to keep many options on the table as possible and to delay the onset of resistance to glyphosate.

Occasionally we make our list of subscribers available to other reputable firms whose products and services might be of interest to you. If you would prefer not to receive such offers, please contact us at the address in the preceding paragraph, or call 1-800-383-0502.

Don’t ignore patches of wild oats. Map the spot and pay special attention to the area with tillage and mowing to prevent seed rain.
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A visit with Lyle Walker

Milk River resident Elise Walker took time to check in with long time Grainews columnist Lyle Walker.

BY ELISE WALKER

After receiving a few phone calls from farmers across the Prairies wondering if I know Lyle Walker, I decided to stop in to chat with Lyle at his home in Milk River. Here is an update for all you Grainews readers wondering how Lyle is doing.

At the age of 84, Lyle Walker says he is doing well. Back in 2008 he suffered a severe hip injury that has required many surgeries, which left him crippled. He also says one surgery impaired his hearing badly. Lyle has also battled cancer in recent years. He likes to work in his shop, keeps the gopher population down with his 22 and helps at harvest. He still suffers a severe hip injury which left him crippled. He says he is doing well. Back in 2008 he suffered a severe hip injury that has required many surgeries, which left him crippled. He also says one surgery impaired his hearing badly. Lyle has also battled cancer in recent years.

Lyle still has his own farm. He likes to work in his shop, keeps the gopher population down with his 22 and helps at harvest. He still suffers a severe hip injury which left him crippled. He says he is doing well. Back in 2008 he suffered a severe hip injury that has required many surgeries, which left him crippled. He also says one surgery impaired his hearing badly. Lyle has also battled cancer in recent years.

Lyle’s family is doing fine: no drugs, no booze, no jail, which makes him proud. His son lives on a farm in the Milk River area with his wife and family. Lyle’s daughter is a doctor in North Dakota. Lyle’s mother passed away just over a year ago at the age of 106.

Lyle is very happy that farmers are making their own decisions on marketing their grain. He chuckles that the Canadian Wheat Board’s gross incompetence finally did it in. Lyle still has no patience for the Alberta Government although “pernicious preventers” of bygone years are just ordinary liars now.

These are just a few of the things we talked about. He will see this article as he still subscribes to Grainews and enjoys reading. If anyone would like to contact Lyle, it is best to reach him by mail. His mailing address is: Lyle K. Walker, Box 262, Milk River, Alta., T0K 1M0.

Former Grainews columnist Lyle Walker still enjoys reading and is happy that farmers are now marketing their own grain.

Lower-priced hail insurance

AG Direct Hail Insurance Ltd., established by Bruce Lowe, will be providing online hail insurance to farmers in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta at premiums it says will be up to 15 per cent less than the policies offered by its competitors.

“The main difference,” says Bruce Lowe, “is that we won’t be using brokers or agents. Farmers will apply for their coverage needs directly on our secure website and that alone will save about 10 per cent on costs.”

Costs will be further reduced through streamlining loss adjustments and minimizing their advertising and promotion.

“Loss awards will be on par with industry standards and farmers can be assured that we’re providing a solid product,” says Lowe. “We’re exclusively backed by Allianz Global Corporate & Specialty, the second largest insurance company in the world and a leader in cutting edge insurance products.”

They have solid hail insurance programs and I want to be the price competitive, second layer of coverage for farmers in those two provinces” Lowe says. In Manitoba, producers must first purchase $200 an acre in hail insurance from Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation (MASC) before buying from AG Direct Hail. In Alberta, $150 an acre is required from Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC).

Unlike Manitoba and Alberta, Saskatchewan farmers will not be required to purchase crop hail insurance before applying for an AG Direct Hail policy. “We anticipate our rates to be very competitive compared to Saskatchewan Municipal Hail Insurance (SMHI) and the private crop hail insurance providers in Saskatchewan.

Farmers will be able to purchase up to $200 an acre in coverage from AG Direct Hail. However, the amount of insurance liability will be limited in each township, so producers are advised to apply early to avoid disappointment. By completing a simple, no obligation registration now at www.agdirecthail.com, producers will receive a priority rate availability email near the end of April. Applications will be accepted beginning in May.
BY DAN FRIESEN

Mystery of the stunted soybeans

Back in early July I got a phone call from Ricky, a soybean farmer located near Headingley in Manitoba’s Red River Valley. Ricky was calling about the sorry state of his soybeans—the crop in one of his fields was stunted, and he was worried a bad batch of seed was to blame.

“I must have received some poor seed with low germination percentage when I was planting,” he said. “It’s the only thing I can think of to explain such a short plant stand as this.”

I told Ricky I’d come out right away to have a look. When I arrived at the affected field, I could see right away that Ricky’s soybean crop was struggling. The older plants in the field were short and spindly with a dark bluish appearance and necrotic spots on the leaves. The crop appeared to have the appropriate plant density, but was generally shorter than other fields close by that had been planted with the same soybean variety.

I asked Ricky about planting conditions and his crop inputs, to try to narrow in on the cause of the problem. Soil conditions had been cool and wet when the field was seeded in mid-May, he said, adding that no fertilizer had been applied at planting. Ricky had used dual inoculants and a seed treatment to enhance nitrogen fixation and control diseases and insects. No residual chemical had been used on the oat crop planted in that field the previous year. Ricky said he’d first noticed the symptoms, which included some patchiness across the field, when the crop was nearing knee height.

When I came out to see Ricky’s stunted soybeans, I didn’t believe that was likely, but I needed soil and tissue tests done in order to confirm my suspicions and provide a proper diagnosis.

Do you know the reason for Ricky’s soybean sorrows? If you think you do, send your diagnosis to Grainews, Box 9800, Winnipeg, Man., R3C 3K7; email leean.mignon@fbcpublishing.com or fax 204-667-3852. The Crop Advisor’s Casebook. Best suggestions will be pooled and one winner will be drawn for a chance to win a Grainews cap and a one-year subscription to the magazine. The answer, along with reasoning that solved the mystery, will appear in the next Crop Advisor’s Solution File.

By Kim Brown-Livingston

Weather to blame for purpling wheat crop

During the first week of July I got a call from Donald, who has a 1,800-acre farm just west of Dauphin, Man., where he grows wheat, canola and some rye grass. Donald said his wheat crop just didn’t look right, and he needed my help to figure out what was causing it.

Donald said the problem was discoloration in the wheat leaves. Initially, he thought herbicide drift originating from a different crop might be to blame, but since the field was surrounded by wheat on all sides, things didn’t really add up.

“It’s odd,” Donald said. “It looks like it might be herbicide drift, but not sure where it could come from since the field is surrounded by wheat on all sides. But what else could it be?”

When I came out to Donald’s farm to inspect the wheat crop, I could clearly see most of the plants had some kind of purpling, giving the whole field an off-colour appearance. The purpling plants were now turning brown, indicating dead tissue, and they were all damaged in exactly the same spot on their flag leaves, which were all bent in the same direction.

There were no signs of any diseases present and previous soil tests had ruled out a nutrient imbalance, so I decided to ask Donald: “What has the weather been like lately?” When he answered, I began to zero in on the source of the problem.

Donald said the weather had been really hot with bright, sunny days all the previous week. These weather conditions had caused environmental damage, not just on Donald’s farm, but also throughout the region — a fact that was confirmed in a subsequent conversation with Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Development officials.

The good news was there was nothing to be done that would immediately help Donald’s purpling wheat crop — it was simply a case of the plants having to grow out of it (which they did — Donald ended up having a bumper wheat crop). The only thing farmers can do to minimize environmental damage like this is to ensure their crops are as healthy as possible during the year, so they are better equipped to withstand environmental stresses.

The good news? Fortunately, there are lots of steps farmers can take to get their crops off to a healthy start, such as good crop rotation, a strong fertility program and proper seedbed preparation, seeding rates and seed treatment. Timely weed and disease control when necessary also contribute to a healthy crop.

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CASEBOOK WINNER

The Casebook winner for this issue is Joe Waldner, from Prairie Home Colony at Willingdon Alberta. Thanks for entering, Joe! We’ll renew your Grainews subscription for a year and send you a Grainews cap.

Also, thanks to Joe for pointing out that we ran the wrong fax number in the last issue. It’s fixed now, so if you’re using a fax machine, go ahead and hit “send” to enter your analysis of this issue’s case.
**Features**

**CROP PROTECTION**

**Make pre-seed burn-off a top priority**

Canola fields that have had a pre-seed burn-off produce higher yields than fields that have not

BY KARI BELANGER

It’s a tough call Prairie producers must make each spring — to start seeding or wait first. Sometimes the elements leave little choice but to seed, however, when conditions allow, farmers who burn-off early weeds ahead of canola reap the rewards at harvest.

“There is evidence that producers could see a yield increase upwards of 15 per cent when comparing a field that has been given a pre-seed burn-off with one that has had no burn-off in direct seeding situations,” says Angela Brackenreed, a Canola Council of Canada agronomy specialist. “Even if it means the crop is not seeded until later, there is evidence of a greater yield advantage to completing a pre-seed burn-off.”

Early weed management before seeding canola is particularly important due to canola’s vulnerability during initial growth stages. “Canola can be a little wimpy early in the season. It’s really important it’s not competing with weeds for nutrients and moisture, and that it gets off to a good start,” says Brackenreed.

“The more weeds you have competing with your canola, the more yield they’re going to rob from it at the end of the day. Often, at the beginning of the season, we can forget about the yield goal. Right from spring through fall these things affect canola’s yield potential,” she says.

A clean field puts canola at a distinct advantage. However, before spraying it is essential for producers to assess weed types — annuals, winter annuals and/or perennials — every year, field by field, to determine the length of time required between spraying and seeding as well as chemistry options.

Glyphosate may be the No. 1 product used for a pre-seed burn-off, says Brackenreed, but producers must still check labels for control of the specific weeds in their fields as well as to determine whether or not another chemistry should be added to the tank, such as a product with residual control.

**CHOOSE THE RIGHT PRODUCT**

Volunteer canola is another weed that should be controlled during a pre-seed burn-off. The type of canola volunteer — Roundup Ready, Clearfield or LibertyLink — will influence product choice to control the weed.

ClearStart, Amilo 240 and bromoxynil are also registered for pre-seed burn-off ahead of canola, and are the only options for control of volunteer Roundup Ready canola. Targeting volunteer canola while it is small is key to the efficacy of these products.

Crop safety and the use of registered products ahead of canola is especially important due to the plant’s initial fragility. “Crop safety is so important — you don’t want to hurt your crop with glyphosate when it’s small,” says Brackenreed.

“Know what’s out there.”

— Angela Brackenreed

**OTHER TIMING OPTIONS**

There are some years, like last spring for example, where the window of opportunity to burn off early weeds prior to seeding is too narrow or non-existent. But to rule the Zoe on a post-seed or pre-emergent herbicide application is also not a good bet.

“Don’t like recommending a post-seed/pre-emergent spray because in good conditions, canola can catch up with the ground much faster than you would expect. It can sneak up on you, and then you never get it done... and you have to wait for your first in-crop herbicide.”

By that time, those weeds could have robbed your canola of quite a bit of much needed moisture and nutrients,” says Brackenreed.

Ground crack is also of concern when applying a post-seed or pre-emergent herbicide as emerging cotyledons are hard to spot and will be damaged by spraying.

Farmers rely heavily each spring on glyphosate for early weed control. As glyphosate-resistant weeds continue to advance in Western Canada, taking measures to protect and prolong glyphosate’s efficacy is paramount. “In the long run, the economics of dealing with glyphosate-resistant weeds in your fields are really going to exceed the cost of adding in a tank-mix partner to your glyphosate,” says Brackenreed.

Farmers may be at the mercy of Mother Nature’s whims each spring, but a pre-seed burn-off ahead of canola reduces the odds of weeds getting the better of their yields.

“The key is knowing what is in your fields and to make early weed removal a priority. Sometimes you have to make a decision, and sometimes that decision is to get out and seed. Last year, there wasn’t a lot of pre-seed herbicide activity going on because we had two feet of snow in the fields at the beginning of May, but that’s just an example that every year is different and you have to work with what you’re given,” says Brackenreed.

Kari Belanger is a Winnipeg-based writer and editor.
Farm Dock app launches
Free web-based app helps streamline day-to-day farm management tasks

BY SCOTT GARVEY

The idea (to try and find a good farm management app) originally came to me in 2011,” says Scott Andrew, who farms near Morden, Manitoba. But his work with Andrew to create an app intended to meet both his needs and those of most Prairie farmers.

“FarmDock” makes those things you have to do for crop insurance easy,” Andrew says. “Up until this point I had to take binders in, do Excel sheets and make a report out of it. It took a lot of time and a lot of effort. I wanted to find a different way that allows you to do it once, not four times.”

“The concept behind this whole thing is we need to get a lot of farmers record all this information and carry it around in a black book in their back pocket,” says Bauer. “This is a way to capture everything seamlessly as you’re running the farm.”

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Farm Dock
management tasks

features speaking to web developers
in an existing app, he began wanting but unable to find it what I wanted.”

“Instead of having a binder of paper in each tractor to track everything and every operation, it’s a lot simpler to have it all in one place,” says Andrews. “If you have three or four guys working, it’s all instantly there.”

“I think it has a very powerful dashboard that others don’t have,” says Bauer. “It gives you all the latest jobs and all the work activity that’s going on. You can see it at a glance, based on jobs, inventory, work equipment activity. You can have all that stuff at your fingertips. If you have a lot of people involved in work activity in a day you can see what’s being done as it’s being done.”

“Keep a handle on costs

The app also allows farm managers to supervise one or more equipment operators. Multiple users can sign into the system and a manger can assign different field operations simultaneously. A manger can also see when employees log the jobs as completed along with the other related data.

“If you have a lot of people involved in work activity in a day you can see what’s being done as it’s being done.”

As farms get bigger you have to be more efficient,” adds Scott. “It’s a place to record that information.”

Getting started with FarmDock doesn’t require a lot of set up time. A farmer can initially input only as much information as is necessary to get started on one field operation. Other equipment, fields, inventory and job activity types can be added throughout the season as the need arises.

“What makes it (FarmDock) different is we really tried to streamline the app so you can use it without spending hours setting it up,” Bauer says. “You can do that in the fly of 10 seconds you can set up your first job. It allows you to build your configuration as you’re using it.”

“The other thing is we tried to make it as simple as possible. When you look at the app you don’t see a bunch of useless or complicated stuff.”

And Bauer believes FarmDock can be just as valuable to a small farmer as a large corporate operation. “It’s really flexible,” he says. “It will accommodate everything from the largest, most complicated farm operation to the single, couple-of-hundred-acre farmer. You can have one operation or multiple operations, like grain and dairy, together. You can also have multiple farms.”

Andrew says he’s happy with how FarmDock has evolved. “It fits my farm perfectly, because it’s exactly what I wanted,” he explains. “There are some things we discussed and want to add to it as well, which will only make it more attractive.”

Producers can now use the full-featured app for free. Eventually, Bauer says there will be two versions, the free one and a pay-for-use version. Exactly which features will remain free hasn’t yet been established.

“We’re going to have a free-forever version,” he says. “(The paid-subscription version) is going to be priced competitively and be affordable for any size farm operation.”

For more information visit www.farmdock.com.

Editor’s note: The FarmDock app is a product of Glacier FarmMedia, owner of Grainews and other Farm Business Communications publications and the Western Producer.

Scott Garvey is machinery editor for Grainews. Contact him at Scott.Garvey@fbcpublishing.com.
Volunteer canola in Roundup Ready soybeans

As soybean acreage increases, growers will have to find ways to manage volunteer canola.

BY JULIENNE ISAACS

The last time a weed survey was done in Manitoba—more than five years ago—there was no need to collect data on the impact of volunteer canola on soybean yields, as there weren’t enough soybean acres to justify the work. Just a few years later, soybeans are a major crop in Western Canada, often grown in rotation with canola, and growers are noticing more of an issue with volunteer canola in their Roundup Ready soybean fields.

ECONOMIC THRESHOLDS

According to Rob Gulden, a weed specialist in the Weed Ecology and Management Lab at the University of Manitoba, there is virtually no data yet on the problem of volunteer canola in Roundup Ready soybeans. “Things can look pretty bad at times, but we don’t have numbers,” he says. “Last time (the weed survey was done in Manitoba) we didn’t have enough acres to survey soybeans, so I suspect that this time around, because soybeans are our third biggest crop, they will be surveyed. We do need the numbers on this.”

Gulden and his students are two years into a four-year study focusing on the impact of volunteer canola on Roundup Ready soybeans. The first stage, according to Gulden, involved collecting threshold data—in other words, assessing the environmental and economic action thresholds that should be reached before growers begin spraying.

Paul Gregoire, a student involved in Gulden’s project, has generated initial estimates of thresholds, although final numbers are not yet available. “In terms of five per cent yield loss, comparing narrow and wide-row production systems, his estimates are somewhere between one plant per square metre and 10 plants per square metre,” says Gulden. “So an average of two to eight, depending.”

“If you assume five per cent yield losses in soybeans will pay for your herbicide, that’s where it becomes economically viable to spray,” says Gulden. “If you do have a pre-emergence herbicide, that’s where you can start to save some money.”

By the time the project reaches the four-year stage, the team will have collected data over two years of a four-year study across the region.”

Gulden’s student Charles Geddes is studying cultural methods of controlling volunteer canola, work which will continue to the next year or two. “Canola is a fast crop out of the ground and soybean is slow,” says Gulden. “That makes sense—want the crop to occupy as much space as you can as quickly as you can. Increasing the seeding rates, in comparison, had relatively little impact.”

This year, the team begins studying herbicides, and they’ll continue collecting data for the next two or three years. “Hopefully we’ll get some survey data in the meantime, and that will help a lot in giving meaning to the parts we’re doing,” says Gulden. “It’s an excellent way to protect glyphosate as an effective weed management tool.”

According to Dilk, the industry has been doing an excellent job disseminating information on how best to control the weed, promoting tank mixes, pre-mixes and the use of multiple modes of action. He believes growers are using every strategy they can to prevent volunteer canola from impacting soybean yields.

SPRAYING OPTIONS

Gulden’s project is primarily sponsored by the Manitoba Pulse Growers Association and ARDI, but other sponsors such as Monsanto are also involved. Sean Dilk, a technology development manager for Monsanto, says growers have been focused on the management of volunteer canola, their soybean acres for years and already have a handle on effective control methods. When volunteer canola is controlled properly there is virtually no impact to yields, he says.

However, this also depends on the volunteer canola. “There are quite a few factors that come into play,” Dilk says. “How many weeds there are, what stage they emerge in relation to the crop, and whether they are up before or after the crop.”

“But the fact is that growers want to control the volunteer canola that’s in their Roundup Ready soybeans. They want a proactive strategy. They don’t want it to go to seed and shatter and return to the weed seed bank,” he says.

According to Dilk, the industry has been doing an excellent job disseminating information on how best to control the weed, promoting tank mixes, pre-mixes and the use of multiple modes of action. He believes growers are using every strategy they can to prevent volunteer canola from impacting soybean yields.

Target volunteers before the four-leaf stage

“Even if they see a few volunteer canola plants they’re throwing in a tank mix partner, because they want to control that volunteer canola,” he says. “Adding that additional mode of action to glyphosate is an excellent way to protect glyphosate as an effective weed management tool.”

Dilk recommends that growers target volunteer canola before they reach the four-leaf stage, because if canola plants are allowed to go to seed, they shatter and the seeds return to the weed seed bank. Based on the data collected in flade-scale trials, he says that applying Heat or Valtera herbicides, prior to planting, is growing corn management.

Usually, this will help prevent any issues with volunteers, but if growers notice a second flush in-crop, they can follow up with Viper or Odyssey. “After that, your soybean crop will canopy and you won’t see any weeds,” he says.

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Controlling downy brome

This aggressive weed can be confused with fall rye. Luckily, there are several ways to keep it under control

BY MELANIE EPP

Downy brome is a winter annual grass that is a problem in every Canadian province except Newfoundland. A prolific seed producer, it germinates in the fall and overwinters as a seedling. Come spring, it resumes growth rapidly.

Generally, downy brome starts heading in late April to early May. By late April, it has an extensive, fibrous root system that is hard to control with tillage, making it especially problematic in no-till or minimum till systems.

An aggressive grassy weed, downy brome is a threat to winter and spring cereals, pastures and rangeland and dry hayfields. In both Saskatchewan and Alberta, it is considered a noxious weed. “It’s the lower category of the two,” says Nicole Kimmel, weed specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development. “If you do have downy brome you are obligated to control it so that it does not spread.”

Good rotations are key

IDENTIFYING DOWNY BROME

In the seedling stage, downy brome can be confused with fall rye. While both are purplish in colour, downy brome does not have auricles (those small hooks that encircle the stem at the base of the leaf blade). Once fully grown, the plant has densely hairy leaves and sheaths, a soft, drooping panicle and long, thin awned spikelets.

A lot of producers don’t notice it until it’s too late, says Neeser. “It sort of has a fuzzy appearance and you don’t notice it until there’s a solid stand.” Kimmel agrees that identification is difficult. “You’re looking for a grass in a grass. It’s not being found very easily or fast enough, so it’s getting out of control before it’s being recognized as a problem.”

When producers suspect they may have a problem with downy brome, Kimmel recommends bringing in a certified crop advisor or someone with expertise in grasses.

CONTROLLING DOWNY BROME

Josh Fankhauser farms some 7,000 acres of cropland in Claresholm, Alta. Growing a wide range of crops — winter and spring wheat, yellow peas, canola, flax and barley — Fankhauser says downy brome has been a problem on his farm, especially in winter cereals and forage production. For control, Fankhauser has tried products like Simplicity and Everest, with a preference for Simplicity.

In the fall cereals — because they germinate at the same time and the way you’re spraying — you don’t really have a chance to whack it with glyphosate before you seed, so it’s been pretty hard,” he says. “In the spring crops, it hasn’t been such a big problem, especially since you can spray glyphosate and set it back enough that it doesn’t rear its head until late fall.”

Downy brome is one of the earliest plants to get going in the spring, says Neeser, which makes it a particular challenge in winter wheat. Control options, he says, are limited, but he agrees that Simplicity does a fairly good job. Another option is a grass herbicide called Assure II. Its active ingredient is quizalofop. With Northstar winter wheat growers have another option, Sencor.

The seed survives for up to three years, making good control extremely important, says Neeser. And it can creep into fields from the margins along the road side. “A farmer should keep a close eye on the field margins and if downy brome is there then action is required,” he says.

Where possible, a pre-seed burn down herbicide is recommended; usually something mixed with glyphosate, like florosulam, says Neeser. “Glyphosate controls downy brome quite well, and so does florasulam.”

Fankhauser says that while products do work, good rotations are key when managing for downy brome. “Our general attitude is if you’ve got too much of one weed it’s probably because your cultural practice or your rotations are out of whack,” says Fankhauser. “So if one weed starts to look worse than all of the others and starts to become a problem you better start thinking about your rotations and adjust it to combat that problem.”

According to a report issued by Alberta Agriculture, in minimum or no-till systems, glyphosate applied in late fall or early spring does provide better control than tillage, especially in cool, wet conditions. After heading, higher rates of glyphosate will be required.

Melanie Epp is a freelance writer who specializes in writing web copy for small businesses. She is based in Guelph, Ont., and can be found online at melanieepp.com.

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Managing oat fertility

If you’re growing oats, here are five nutrients to watch

BY LISA GUENTHER

When it comes to oat fertility, soil testing is key. Thom Weir told CropSphere delegates in Saskatoon this past January. Weir is a senior agronomist with Farmers Edge at Yorkton, Sask. Here are five nutrients oat growers should keep an eye on.

1. NITROGEN

“It takes about a pound of nitrogen to grow a bushel of oats,” said Weir.

Soils lose nitrogen through crop removal, residue removal, denitrification, leaching and volatile loss. Nitrogen is locked away through fixation, leaching and volatile loss. Weir said there are two reasons farmers might apply potash. One is to boost early crop growth in cold, wet weather, which would require 15 to 20 pounds in the seedrow. Anything less than 15 pounds isn’t going to trigger a crop response, Weir said, and will cause problems. “Nutrients have sharp edges and tend to break off pieces of sulphur which turns into dust that picks up moisture that gums up your drill.”

If soil tests reveal potassium-deficient soils, broadcasting is just as effective as seedrow application. Weir suggested broadcast- ing 40 to 60 pounds to build deficient soils.

Potassium deficiencies will show up in the lower leaves, Henry notes. Leaves will look scorched and dead. Soil tests showing less than 120 pounds of potassium in the first six inches should spur farmers to apply plenty of fertilizer. Anything between 121 and 180 pounds means farmers can probably get by with lower rates of seed placed fertilizer, Henry writes.

Most Prairie soils have plenty of potassium. Weir noted that peat soils can be deficient. Henry writes that soils around Carrot River, Sask., and Manitoba’s Almagiawi soils are known to be deficient.

2. PHOSPHATE

As farmers have pushed yields, phosphate rates haven’t increased, Weir said. Peas often don’t see any phosphate, and many farmers push the phosphate with flax, too, he added. And farmers can only apply limited amounts of phosphate in the seed row now with canola because of toxicity.

“Most people I think assume that their nitrogen is virtually all available. It’s actually only 50 per cent available for the current crop, or 50 per cent removed by the current crop,” said Weir. That doesn’t mean the system is bleeding a lot of nitrogen. Some goes into straw, roots and weeds, Weir said. “In a no-till scenario it goes into straw, roots and weeds,” said Weir. It’s the nitrogen that’s released from the mineralization of the organic matter in the soil,” said Weir.

Knowing how much organic matter soils contain is also useful, as “organic matter is a sponge that holds a lot of nutrients,” said Weir. Black soil with five per cent organic matter will hold about 5,000 lbs./ac. of nitrogen in the first six inches, Henry writes. Crops will access a small percentage of that total each year through mineralization.

Varying levels of organic matter can account for the fluctuating yield monitor, especially on sloping land. “It’s not necessarily the fertilizer you put on. It’s the nitrogen that’s released from the mineralization of the organic matter in the soil,” said Weir.

3. SULPHUR

Sulphur deficiencies will show up in the leaves, Henry notes. Leaves will look scorched and dead. Soil tests showing less than 120 pounds of potassium in the first six inches should spur farmers to apply plenty of fertilizer. Anything between 121 and 180 pounds means farmers can probably get by with lower rates of seed placed fertilizer, Henry writes.

Most Prairie soils have plenty of potassium. Weir noted that peat soils can be deficient. Henry writes that soils around Carrot River, Sask., and Manitoba’s Almagiawi soils are known to be deficient.

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Lisa Guenther is a field editor with Grainews based at Livelong, Sask. Contact her at Lisa.Guenther@fbcpublishing.com.
Brazil invests in rail transportation

Like Canada, Brazil is experiencing transportation troubles. New investment and a revised system may resolve these issues.

The private sector plans to invest US$40 billion

The bidding process was delayed, but bidding on the first railway should wrap this year, Duarte Monteiro said. This first railway will run east from Mato Grosso, connecting the soybean state to the coast.

A north-south railway is being built as well and Duarte Monteiro told delegates it should be ready within five years.

Right now only one company can use a rail line, creating monopolies on each line, Duarte Monteiro said. But the Brazilian government is trying to change the system so that one company would control the track. That company wouldn’t be able to haul freight. Instead, it would charge other companies to ship freight on its lines, much like a toll road. Several companies would haul freight on the same line.

The company charging the toll would have to invest in the tracks. To offset risk, the government is trying to guarantee a minimum freight volume. “And if they don’t get that volume, the government would pay them for the difference,” Duarte Monteiro explained.

Duarte Monteiro said the new model “seems quite smart.”

“That brings competition to the same rail line. But it’s a new model so that comes with a lot of challenges as well that we’re getting right now.”

ROADS UPGRADED

Brazil’s government has also tagged nine main roads for private sector investment. Companies that win the bids must widen and maintain the roads, in exchange for charging tolls for 30 years, Duarte Monteiro explained.

The main soybean route, BR-163, connects Mato Grosso to the northern port of Santarem. The company that won the bid to upgrade that road has five years to add two lanes to the road, said Duarte Monteiro. He said the road should be finished next year, and more roads are expected to be in place in the next few years, too.

Railways and roads aren’t the only parts of the logistics system seeing investment. There are also six trans-loading terminals going up along the Tapagos River, at the port of Miritituba, said Duarte Monteiro. Soybeans will be trucked from Mato Grosso to Miritituba. Some will flow north on the Tapagos to the Amazon, while others may sail to the east coast.

Duarte Monteiro acknowledged Brazil faces plenty of infrastructure challenges.

“But we have a stable situation. We have a stable democracy,” he said.

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Cargill operates grain terminals in Santarem, which sits at the junction of the Tapagos and Amazon Rivers, north of Mato Grosso. The company used to truck all its soy 1,500 kilometres west from Mato Grosso to Porto Velho. From there it was loaded onto barges, floated up to Santarem, and then on to the coast.

Duarte Monteiro said although there are 44,000 kilometres of potential waterways in Brazil, only 13,000 kilometres are being used. “There is no investment at all in our waterways and that is something we’re trying to change as well,” he said.

Part of the problem was the government’s poor administration of PAC, Brazil’s transport infrastructure program, Duarte Monteiro told delegates. “Between 2007 and 2012, only 60 per cent of the entire budget was actually put into works, which means that they were not efficient enough to get on the ground,” he said.

But Brazil’s federal government is now bringing in private sector investment into infrastructure, said Duarte Monteiro. And the country is revamping the very same railway system.

US$40 BILLION SLATED FOR RAILWAYS

Duarte Monteiro told delegates the private sector plans to invest US$40 billion into 10,000 km of rail, which will add up to 12 main rail lines.

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Lisa Guenther is a field editor with Grainews based at Livingst, Sask. Contact her at Lisa.Guenther@Axialul.net. With files from Reuters.
Success or mess

Setting clear goals is an important part of successful farm succession. It could mean the difference between success and mess.

ANDREW DERUYCK  MARK SLOANE

This is the second article in our series on succession. You may recall from our introductory article that we looked back over the last 10 years identifying successes and messes in business transitions that we’ve witnessed. We’ve developed an extensive list of reasons why those transitions were successful or what caused them to go off the rails. We grouped this list into categories and eventually we ended up with five key areas that captured our list. It was obvious to us at that point that none of these five key areas or components operate independently of other areas within a successful business transition. We liken a successful business transition to operating a planetary gear. Our aim is to share the successful traits and habits in each of these components that we have seen to be crucial in a successful business transition.

GOALS

The first gear we want to green light or check is “goals” at the center of our planetary. Goals are one of those soft squishy areas that many hard-handed farmers don’t really want to spend a lot of time thinking about or discussing. For retiring generations, the acceptance of our own mortality really isn’t exciting or encouraging. One has to appreciate that the “goals” gear is at the center of our planetary model for a reason. Goals overlap with respect to family, business and asset ownership. If they are ignored, the mess may nicely sink their teeth into and clearly commit to achievement.

For example, we worked with a large family farm with tremendous wealth — large enough that the entire generation that was still in elementary school could have a place there. One of their clearly defined business goals was net income growth of 10 per cent per year. The value of this goal wasn’t necessarily the 10 per cent extra net income as much as the focus that it provided to their planning. It pushed management and ownership to think of new revenue streams and rethink existing ones such that efficiency and returns were always planned for and frequently achieved.

TWO COMMON RETIREMENT GOALS

Goals need to be clear and understood by both generations. We have seen great success when the retiring generation chooses one of two priorities. The first is to retire with plans and goals outside of the farm business, such as travel, hobbies, investments or other activities. The resources they don’t need to fulfill their retirement goals often remain to support the farm business. Harry Fosdick, a well-known preacher in the early 1900s and the author of some 47 books once said, “Don’t simply retire from something, have something to retire to.” The other priority we encountered is one where the retiring generation is absolutely committed to providing support to the farm business through succession, and willing to retire on whatever means necessary or available. Neither approach is wrong but if they are ignored, the mess may nicely sink their teeth into and clearly commit to achievement.

The other priority we encountered is one where the retiring generation is absolutely committed to providing support to the farm business through succession, and willing to retire on whatever means necessary or available. Neither approach is wrong but if they are ignored, the mess may nicely sink their teeth into and clearly commit to achievement.

A “mess” can result from goals that are non-existent, not written down, vague, always changing, unmeasurable, or more dreams than goals. Sometimes, when we come onto the scene, each generation seems to be waiting to set their goals in anticipation or assumption of what they would like the other generation to do. SMART goals force each of us to focus on what we can control. Goals for the older generation are important as they often revolve around capital and equity. The younger generation’s goals are equally important — they revolve around commitment to labour, energy and vision.

Goals don’t just provide you with an agreed upon end point to get everyone working together but also a measuring stick and evaluation tool that allows you to look back and evaluate your approach or better yet, learn a lesson. My grandfather always said, “None of life’s lessons are free.” It’s easy to tell when we are working with an operation that has discussed and set some goals. The process of discussing and setting goals is not easy, but farm businesses that develop good habits reap the rewards.

Use Multiple Modes of Action

Optimize weed control on your farm. Use multiple modes of action in your pre-seed burndown by tank mixing two or more herbicide groups.

ANDREW DERUYCK and MARK SLOANE manage two farming operations in southern Manitoba and are partners in Right Choice Management Consulting. With over 25 years of cumulative experience, they offer support in farm management, financial management, strategic planning and mediation services. They can be reached at andrewd@goinet.ca and marksl@eastlink.net or on Twitter @lindleyandrew and @lindleymark. They can be reached at andrewd@goinet.ca and marksl@eastlink.net or on Twitter @lindleyandrew and @lindleymark.

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Dinner times — they are a changin’

If adding “gluten free” to the label of Lee Hart’s ham is a good marketing tactic, it can’t hurt Grainews

BY LEE HART

I believe with this issue, Grainews is now officially gluten free. You can now read it and not get without belly, or otherwise gain weight from a carb overload.

I made the decision to declare Grainews gluten free after opening a package of Maple Leaf ham for lunch the other day and noticing one of the red letter claims regarding the health benefits of this ham is that it was in fact gluten free.

Initially I was very excited, but then being a skeptic I had to wonder why would any ham, pure and natural, ever contain gluten to begin with? I can’t wait to find watermelon that are gluten free, grown with no growth hormones and no antibiotics.

I figured if gluten free marketing worked for ham, it could work for a farm magazine.

This whole healthy eating thing is getting out of hand. Especially when it affects my dinner table. When our small family all gathers for a Sunday dinner it becomes a culinary challenge to get everyone happily fed — especially me.

My wife is going on holidays soon and wants to lose five pounds. She has been avoiding carbohydrates like bread and potatoes.

To my right, our daughter has recently been on a gluten free, no dairy, no eggs diet. She had a few health concerns and her naturopath suggested this diet.

Talk about limiting.

On the other side of the table, my son’s girlfriend is lactose intolerant — so again no dairy there.

My son, who is tall and trim has no limitations really, other than there are certain foods he doesn’t like — and if there happens to be gluten and dairy-free cake and ice cream for dessert the two food items just can’t touch each other on the same plate. Touching food doesn’t work for him.

My son-in-law is pretty well a general-purpose eater and likes — and if there happen to be gluten and dairy-free cake and ice cream for dessert the two food items just can’t touch each other on the same plate. Touching food doesn’t work for him.

So any meal that works for everyone has to be of any grain products, no dairy, no eggs, no starch, nothing deep fried, not include turkey or fish (because someone doesn’t like those), needs to be well cooked and eaten off separate plates because different foods can’t touch.

The only thing that comes right down the middle and might work for everyone is a bowl of chick peas, but then you’re getting into those pulse crops and let’s not forget the always looming concern over gas.

My Mom use to fry fat-lined pork chops served with mashed potatoes and gravy, a bowl of peas dressed up with a bit of flour, butter and mint, accompanied by plain white bread and real butter, and often one or two kinds of pie or chocolate cake for dessert. And if you wanted a drink you had a glass of 100 per cent whole, unpasteurized milk. And amazingly no one at that table ate that meal except me.

I am not sure what has happened in the world! The other day I was having lunch with some people at a work conference in Banff and the young couple sitting across from me were gluten free folks.

They both ordered some specialty lunch the other day and noticing one of the red letter claims regarding the health benefits of this ham is that it was in fact gluten free.

They both ordered some specialty lunch the other day and noticing one of the red letter claims regarding the health benefits of this ham is that it was in fact gluten free.

I guess I could eat mine with a gluten-free bun, but we bought some of those a while ago and get this, we bought them in September 2013 and the best-before date was September 2013 and the best-before date was September 2013 and the best-before date was September 2013 and the best-before date was September 2013 and the best-before date was September 2013.

I have to keep in mind the storage console between the seats into a canola oil deep fryer to whip up fries and corn fritters.

Attention. But… a burger without a bun, and no fries… that is a pretty drastic move.

I guess I could eat mine with a gluten-free bun, but we bought some of those a while ago and get this, we bought them in September 2013 and the best-before date was September 2013 and the best-before date was September 2013 and the best-before date was September 2013 and the best-before date was September 2013 and the best-before date was September 2013.

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My wife worked with a gal who was lactose intolerant — so again no dairy there.

She had a few health concerns and her naturopath suggested this diet.

Talk about limiting.

No one in the above crowd likes liver, except me.

So any meal that works for everyone has to be of any grain products, no dairy, no eggs, no starch, nothing deep fried, not include turkey or fish (because someone doesn’t like those), needs to be well cooked and eaten off separate plates because different foods can’t touch.

That weight loss part caught my attention. But… a burger without a bun, and no fries… that is a pretty drastic move.

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Milk. And amazingly no one at that table ate that meal except me.

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For early Prairie settlers, life and expectations were very different than they are for today’s farmers. He was intrepid. The Banmans braved the harsh, Prairie winters, surviving its seventies decades before motors, snowblowers and HBO. And it’s likely they didn’t have the time or feel entitled enough to complain about the conditions. The promise of a new life, distant from Russian oppression, only strengthened their resolve. Let’s not blame ourselves for the battery of far-from-intrepid traits that separate us from Mr. Banman and other Prairie settlers. We did not ask for them, and to say things have changed — that people have changed — since the 1870s is not a rationalization. The juxtaposition is stark. And it’s a leap to make it, a leap that clears all that has changed between the late 1860s and 2014. To mention Lumosity.com sits at odds with the telling of the Prairie settler experience. But doing so also highlights one specific and somewhat humiliating difference between those who believe they need the luxury of brain training offered through the website and those who are perhaps more like Mr Banman. “I work out my body, but it’s harder to work out my brain,” the company’s TV spot informs viewers. “Lumosity.com is based on neuroscience, and it just feels like games.” The company’s existence and presumed success speaks to an embarrassing fragility — to be displaced by a shift in perspective. You know how it goes. Those who settled the Canadian Prairies did not play brain games.

**THE STORY**

Imagine the following less a collection of historical facts, and more a series of moves that actually happened. It’s a history worth preserving in an academic library. This is a story, to be read by readers and told by storytellers.

You are now with Jacob Banman in Russia. You observe in him the dream, the hope that from nothing, from this fresh start, will come freedom and eventually prosperity.

Mr Banman arrived in Manitoba with about 7,999 other Mennonites between 1873 and 1884. Moving is difficult. Moving to a new land, full of promise and unknowns, would be more so. But such a risk must have seemed the best course.

“The first thing you’d do was figure out where you were going to put your sod house. Then you’d plow out that. Maybe 16 by 24. That is feet. You could make it any size. You see, what you were working with was the native soil and it was tough,” an excerpt from *Memories of Settlers Who Opened the West by Barry Broadfoot.*

The decision of where to dig must have felt arbitrary in 1878. Mr Banman chose a spot, an area, dug it out, and stacked the sod needed to build the first house on what is now a Heritage Farm. The *Dominion Lands Act was a golden ticket for the settlers who could hack it. Many died trying to farm, and many moved further west or east to Ontario, giving up the acres they purchased for the token fee of $10 per 160 acres.

Surveyed plots closest to towns and railways were chosen first, forcing later settlers further from towns, supplies and closer to scarcity. Mr Banman’s plot was a couple miles from town, a distance that on January 14, 1879 will have seemed a world away.

Most homesteaders lived in tents while they built their sod houses. It makes sense that the Banmans did the same. It had two bedrooms by the time it was finished. “Sod” conjures misleading images, keep in mind. Many plastered the interior walls of their houses. And many such homes had smart-looking interiors. Style wasn’t completely abandoned to survival.

The Banmans will have needed a garden for vegetables, a cow for milk, wood for heat, and the ability to hunt and process wild game. Adversity and the shared goal of survival bound most homesteaders to their neighbours. Doors were kept unlocked, and lanterns were kept burning as guides for those travelling at night. These bonds built communities, and the fun that was once confined to...
KELLY’S AGE EXPERT TIPS AND HINTS

Get the most from AgExpert Analyst

For better farm management, get the most out of your farm accounting software

Editor’s note: We realize that not all Grainews readers use FCC’s AgExpert software for their farm accounting, but it is a very commonly used program. We’ve added Kelly to our columnist line up in hopes that her accounting tips and tricks can save everyone a little time, and hopefully some money.

BY KELLY AIREY

Agricultural is an evolving industry. Only a few generations back we were working a few small acres with the horse and plough; now we run big equipment on large pieces of land.

With industry changes come changes in paperwork requirements.

One of the keys to being a successful farmer is being a strong manager and having the appropriate information at your fingertips to make management decisions. Farm Credit Canada’s AgExpert Analyst Accounting Software helps all types of agricultural producers manage their farm finances, and organize the information needed to know your bottom line.

I am glad to have this opportunity to introduce myself as an AgExpert Certified Advisor who has worked with the AgExpert Analyst Software for a number of years. I love using the program. My family runs a grain farm, a feedlot and cow-calf operation, and we raise registered quarter horses in western Manitoba. AgExpert Analyst has been the key to our maintaining a successful operation! I currently work through my Ag Consulting business to assist fellow farmers get setup and using the software. As well, I teach AgExpert courses in everything from setting up a new data file to using the inventory, payroll, and management tools.

I’m excited to have the opportunity to reach out to fellow farmers across the Prairies, and offer you monthly hints and tips for using this software! I will bring your attention to new features, timesavers and tips for making the most out of the program. Next month I will be giving you some great tips on effectively working with payables and receivables, including ways to avoid some common errors.

Kelly Airey is a farmer and ag consultant at Strudwick, Manitoba. If you’re interested in purchasing AgExpert software, she can help you receive $25 off your purchase. Contact Kelly at kelly.agconsulting@gmail.com or (204) 303-3342.

The complete solution. Grassly and broadleaf weed control for wheat and barley, no tank mixing.

For more information, please visit BayerCropScience.ca/Tundra

BayerCropScience.ca/Tundra or 1 888-283-6847 or contact your Bayer CropScience representative.

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

A single homestead soon became a small business and then a large operation.

Many farms failed within the first few years, according to records of the time. There were “disastrous attempts” at homesteading and high levels of transiency.

For those with an appreciation of the everyday, prosperity probably proved too long as high wheat prices were likely one poor yield, a failed cow or death in his herd could have ended his career and made him a “disastrous attempt” statistic. Wheat prices were low and must have forced second thoughts. But Mr. Banman and his family survived.

Conditions were better, prices were low at the start. It’s unclear how this affected him, as his beginning years were apparently vandals, and the hand in exchange for the use of horses to break his own land. If he farmed his own land before 1890, he would have been forced to deal with the poor wheat prices, a result, in part, of high shipping costs.

In the early 1900s, that changed. Wheat prices began to rise, as transportation costs decreased after a deal was reached between the Canadian government and the Canadian Pacific Railway. The rail company received government funding to allow them to extend their lines into the newly discovered mineral-rich zones of British Columbia via the Crowsnest Pass in exchange for eastbound and westbound rate reductions.

Conditions were ripe for Mr. Banman to start building a successful farm. In the early 1900s, he moved his family out of the sod and into a two-story, wood house. Sheds and barns were built.

Steam, gang plows and threshing machines allowed agriculture production to surge. When wheat prices skyrocketed during WWI, it’s even more likely Mr. Banman, or his son, Abram, would have purchased more land. Between 1901 and 1931, the amount of worked land in the Prairies leaped from 1.5 to 16.4 million hectares.

Mr. Banman’s farm built endured the Depression. His choices amid the advent of new technologies were smart and far-sighted enough to see the farm through the droughts and dismal commodity prices of the 1930s.

Mr. Banman had the right stuff, starting a farm that now spans 1,200 acres and is still in the family. It’s only a dimple now, but it’s clear where that first house was. There are trees nearby, and the site is only a 100 or so metres from the farm’s current main house.

The farm no longer requires horses. Its machinery would be unrecognizable to Mr. Banman. The mechanized harvester waiting in the machine shed for fall is roughly twice as big as that first sod house. And surviving winter is roughly twice as big as that first sod house. And surviving winter is a result, in part, of high shipping costs.

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Potassium fertilization

Some argue that farmers don’t need potash fertilizer and potassium soil tests are useless; Les Henry disagrees.

Saskatchewan is the hotbed of potash mining. It pays good coin to our provincial coffers so we take it seriously.

Work on potash fertilizers in Saskatchewan started in the 40s and 50s with little or no yield response to potassium. The conclusion was that our soils were well supplied. We did not need the good potash that rests comfortably 1,000 metres below our soils. The first potash mine did not come on stream until the 1960s. A curious and experienced Elephant Brand (then CMS& later Cominco, now Agrium) fertilizer dealer from Nipawin begged to differ. Roy Lanz said he had farmers who were getting great responses to potassium fertilizer. So, in the late 50s, the Soil Science Department at the University of Saskatchewan did more potassium field experiments west of Nipawin and still found no response. Then came 1966. Don Rennie convinced Saskatchewan Agriculture to pony up enough coin to set up and start operating the Saskatchewan Soil Testing Lab. He hired Ed Halstead as the first director. Ed was sporting a fresh PhD from Purdue University under the famous Stan Barber.

When Ed was planning the lab he said he was going to run available potassium tests on all samples. Lesser lights like Les Henry argued strongly that it was a waste of time. Any number of experiments had shown our soils were well supplied and we did not need it. Thank goodness Ed was way too smart to listen to me and potassium tests were run. Guess what? The Carrot River soils east of Nipawin were as potassium deficient as any known in the world. The 1966 farm soil tests showed it up. So, in 1967 Ed started simple field strip tests to check out the soil test. I was in charge of field work then so did the experiments that Ed designed.

Adding potassium took yields from 10 to 60 bushels per acre.

The Saskatchewan Potash industry was just getting going, so we were anxious to see more plots and helped with the funding. Many years of Potassium Soil Test Calibration work was done and a reliable set of potassium soil test benchmarks were set up.

I did much of that work and was very involved in extending the information to farmers. Many thought I was responsible, but all credit is due to Ed Halstead (1933-2008), a Nokomis farm boy.

**The Truth About Potassium**

Back to our original two points.

1. Yes, it is true that many farmers can get by with very little without potassium. On my Dundurn farm I have yet to use a pound of it.

2. The most potassium deficient soils are the Carrot River soils of Sask. and the Almaspippi soils of Manitoba. Sandy and peaty soils across the north of all three provinces can have potassium deficiency.

A few years ago when potassium fertilizer prices went through the roof and some were encouraging buying before it went even higher, I said “wait, prices will come down.” And they did.

Potassium soil tests are the best soil test we have. If a zero to six inch soil sample shows less than 100 pounds of potassium per acre, you’d better be using potassium, or you won’t be farming long. When the zero to six inch soil test potassium is more than 250 lbs./ac., potassium will not be a big issue on your farm.

Those that say the potassium test does not work are dealing with a range of high potassium soils that don’t detect deficiencies.

There may be medium- to high-potassium soils where an occasional small response is obtained —perhaps as much due to the chloride as the K. If grain prices are high and fertilizer prices low, a small response can make money. But the big money is made where real deficiencies occur.

Author’s note: After 37 years you can well imagine that some topics are dealt with more than once — this one several times. For another look at the same topic see “Grainews” page 13, June 4, 2012.

Every crop has its moment to shine. For cereals it’s at the flag-leaf stage, where up to 65% of the crop’s yield potential is determined. That’s where Twinline fungicide comes in, it controls key diseases in wheat like septoria leaf spot, tan spot and rust at this critical stage. And Twinline goes beyond protecting plant health by actually boosting it with the unique benefits of AgCelence™— greener leaves and stronger stems resulting in higher yield potential. Find out how a healthier flag leaf can lead to a banner year at harvest time. Visit agsolutions.ca/twinline or call AgSolutions® Customer Care at 1-877-371-BASF (2273).

*AgCelence benefits refer to products that contain the active ingredient pyraclostrobin. All comparisons are to untreated, unless otherwise stated.

Always read and follow label directions.

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If your fungicide doesn’t maximize plant health at flag leaf, that’s a red flag.

This photo was taken in 1968, of barley growing near Carrot River, Sask. The centre three rows had no potassium, and grew almost no barley. Adding potassium took yields from 10 to 60 bushels per acre.

**The Saskatchewan Potash industry is just getting going, so we were anxious to see more plots and helped with the funding. Many years of Potassium Soil Test Calibration work was done and a reliable set of potassium soil test benchmarks were set up. I did much of that work and was very involved in extending the information to farmers. Many thought I was responsible, but all credit is due to Ed Halstead (1933-2008), a Nokomis farm boy.**
**GUARDING WEALTH**

**Find a safe shelter in bonds**

Take shelter in bonds as stocks hit highs and the world sweats out the Ukraine crisis

**BY ANDREW ALLENTUCK**

**Making off-farm investments is tough these days.**

Stocks are trading at their highs with barely a step back, and since 2011. Investment grade bonds pay very little interest. House prices are forecast to tumble after a big run up since 2009. What’s a farmer to do with off-farm investments?

The problem in part is looking at markets with a long-range view and using the right strategies and tactics for what many would say is a recession that is already long in the tooth.

The dilemma investors face is that the recovery appears to be fizzling out. The recovery problem, specifically its weakness, is manifest in the lack of inflation. Unemployment has declined in both Canada and the U.S. to acceptable levels consistent with growing Gross Domestic Product, but inflation is far below the mid-target range of two per cent in each country.

Stocks return more than bonds over periods of 20 or more years. Moreover, we are at the end of a massive and prolonged bull market in bonds. However, interest rates are rising. Bond investments are at risk in this environment, but there are low risk ways to make them work.

It is wise to seek haven

Stocks as an alternative to bonds are a very mixed bag of the good, the bad and the ugly. The Standard & Poor's Composite Index of the 500 largest American public companies has been hitting new highs. The S&P's multiple of price to expected earnings is over 16. That means it will take 16 years to earn back an investment in this environment.

When investors worry about the market as a whole, they shop for defensive stocks. Typically, that means industries driven by non-economic forces. Drugs and pharmaceuticals are candidates, for they are less correlated with the broad stock market than are financial services and materials. Trouble is, each pharmaceutical company has its own issues of expiring patents, new drugs in or not in development, and, hanging over the whole industry, the potential of massive lawsuits for harm drugs may do. Labeled by some fund managers as “the next tobacco,” drugs can make or break investment plans.

There’s also alternative energy in the form of solar panel production, though much of that is offshore or small cap. There is uranium mining, which has yet to recover from the March 2011 Fukushima disaster. Finally, for non-macro investments, there are fashion companies driven by trends in ladies ready to wear and purses, among others. As a more numbers guy, I would not personally try forecasting trends in frocks and bags.

**Back to bonds**

In stocks, there is no getting away from market risk. But let’s go back to bonds. Ten-year U.S. Treasury bonds and Government of Canada bonds are trading in a range in which yields are 2.4 to 2.8 per cent. Prices, which move opposite to yields, are seemingly range bound. You will not get rich investing for such returns and, after inflation and tax, there will be barely anything left. But trade the range and you can do very nicely indeed. Here’s how.

The concept is to buy an investment grade corporate bond with very little default risk and match it to a short sale of a government bond. The corporate bond yields a good deal more than a government bond. It is not default proof, but it is investment grade and you should not go out more than 10 years, just to reduce default risk. After all, as time increases, even the biggest companies can have trouble.

For example, you can buy a Loblaws 4.86 per cent bond due Sept. 12, 2023 recently priced to yield 3.97 per cent. At the same time, you sell a Government of Canada bond with a 1.5 per cent coupon due June 1, 2023 recently priced at $92.83 to yield 2.37 per cent. When the yield on the Canada bond rises to 2.7 per cent, the price would be $90.25. The short would thus pay the difference, $2.58. You can sell and pocket your profit. The same trade would work on U.S. corporations matched to U.S. Treasuries of the same term. The trick is to keep maturities fairly well matched.

If straddling bond prices seems complex, then you can still buy U.S. Treasuries as actual bonds or as units of exchange traded funds with low management fees as a hedge against stock market mayhem that may be caused by tumult in the Ukraine and the question of who governs the Crimea. Every time the Kremlin rattles its word, stocks swoon. U.S. Treasuries offer safe haven and the possibility of taking profits on geopolitical jitters. This tactic will work with any U.S. Treasury bond and, to a lesser extent, with Government of Canada bonds.

It is wise to seek haven, but foolish to go far into the future. The worst case is that the move into government bonds does not work out. A 10-year bond may drop in price if interest rates soar in a recovery. At least with the 10-year bond, you’d get your money back in a reasonable period of time. If you want that period to be even more reasonable, keep your term down to no more than five years.

Seed, treat, repeat

With a new grain cart and a Storm seed treater, Sarah Weigum’s farm is ready for spring

Sarah Weigum

I

operatively by the time you read this, the new grain cart is ready to go. Typically, farmers give their new grain cart and seeding equipment a final tune up this time of year, and we’re doing that too, however, we also finished modifying a 1,000-bushel grain cart that will be used this spring for seed distribution any day now.

We have been using a 400-bushel gravity wagon with load cells to tender seed to our customers for 15 years. My dad added the scale to our large grain cart to make it an auger and treating system, and it has served Alect Seeds well. Many seed growers use their augers and then weigh at the scale. This system works, but it sometimes means more than one trip under the auger and over the scale to get the right amount of seed. The accuracy of the wagon saves us having to weigh twice and I believe has been valued by our customers.

However, as my dad points out, farmers used to come for seed in single axle trucks and now they come with super B-trains. It takes four fills and a lot of time to load out our bigger customers. Since last fall we’ve been discussing what piece of equipment would best serve our seed operation for the next era. The options were a larger gravity wagon or a grain cart.

A 750-bushel gravity wagon was initially attractive because we are familiar with it and because gravity wagons are easier to clean out than the grain cart with the auger. A new gravity wagon would require modifications, including an auger and load cells, but my dad had experience using the previous wagon. The bigger challenge for us was modifying the axles to put bigger tires underneath. We have a very high water table in our yard and when the frost comes out of the ground, the loaded wagon probably sinks up to its belly, so the solution was to put larger tires underneath. However, we talked to another farmer who had a 750-bushel gravity wagon that he used for feeding cattle and he complained that the large wagon was very heavy and tippy. Higher tires underneath were an issue for us and we weren’t sure the 24 inch tires would probably only exacerbate the problem.

Once we started looking inside the large wagons we saw that they had a lot more cross bracing and ladders where grain could get caught than our small wagon. We looked inside a few 1,000-bushel grain carts, and besides the auger, they actually didn’t have a lot more places to trap grain than the largest wagons. The pros of the cart: it comes with big tires, a scale (though still not legal for tender), and an auger (which we likely won’t use much, more on that later).

In the end, we settled on a Brandt 1020 cart because it looked the easiest to clean. The slide that covers the intake end of the auger goes completely outside the cart, rather than being sheathed inside more metal and Brandt capped the square tubing braces inside the cart with angle iron so they should shed grain. While we’ve never used a grain cart before in our harvest operation, we now have that option.

My dad estimates that the gravity wagon, with the modifications would have cost only about 60 per cent of the cost, so we have a higher upfront cost. But, ever the strategist, my dad pointed out that a grain cart would be a lot easier to sell at an auction sale. Besides his potential auction, another principle that guides my daily decision making on the farm is making sure that everyone who needs to can operate the equipment. Since many farmers, or a load of the seed, it’s been a family discussion about how to improve on our existing equipment. Because we climb in and out of the cart a lot to clean it out, we build a better ladder and put air lines into the cart so we can hook up to the compressor on the outside and just take the sand inside with us to blow the grain out the bottom.

Our Treat

We also added a Storm seed treater to our seed distribution system this year. My dad had built a treating system on our old wagon, but we needed something that would work with the new grain cart. The Storm treater, manufactured by Ag Growth International, is designed to take grain from a hoppered bin using a metered conveyor. It delivers the grain to a treatment application chamber where nozzles spray both sides of the curtain of grain. The treated grain then falls into a 40 foot by 1 inch auger which both mixes the seed and allows the treatment to dry on the grain before going into the truck. If our customers don’t want their seed treated it will go into their truck using the grain cart auger, but if they want the seed treated (as most do) we will position the hopper of the Storm treater under the sliding door at the bottom of the cart’s auger sump.

To accommodate this new treater, we had to undertake our biggest modification on the grain cart: raising it up by 10 inches to make enough clearance under the bottom of the hopper for the treater hopper. I won’t go into the details, since this is only a small story, but the “not my department” category on the farm. Suffice to say that plenty of iron, bolts, calls to the engineers and blue paint were required. The modification is reversible, should we wish to return the axle to its original position for harvest use. Looking at the Storm treater itself, there were a number of features that appealed to us. The treater has electronic controls where the user inputs the actual bushel weight of the grain being treated (not standard bushel weight) as well as the amount of treatment to be applied per unit of weight. The speed of the conveyor can be changed on the go and because of the cleats, the software knows how much grain is being delivered and adjusts the treatment rates accordingly. The software logs the chemical used and

Two clean out areas on the Storm treater can be seen here.

Something that at least one seed treatment company — Bayer CropSciences — is doing to make things a little easier on custom treatment applicators is accepting drum containers back without losing weight. They will be returned to Bayer’s facilities and refilled. This sounds like a little thing, but represents a huge amount of rinse water that farmers and small custom applicators will no longer have to worry about dealing with in an environmentally responsible way.

At $50,000 the Storm treater isn’t cheap, but it’s also about half the price of drum treaters which are cheap, but it’s also about half the price of drum treaters which are

Sarah Weigum grows pedigreed seed and operates at Three Hills, Alta. Follow her on Twitter: @swiegum.
Two peristaltic pumps can move product into treating chamber through kneading action on the hose. Beside the pumps is the electronic screen where we will enter data for specific seed treating operations.

Canvas hopper must be flooded for grain to meter properly.

Cleated belt delivers grain from hopper to treating area, where two nozzles spray a curtain of grain.

Two peristaltic pumps can move product into treating chamber through kneading action on the hose. Beside the pumps is the electronic screen where we will enter data for specific seed treating operations.

10" auger mixes the grain and treatment and allows treatment to dry. The Westfield or Wheathart auger has been slowed to about half speed to allow the proper time for these processes.

Peristaltic pumps knead product through tubes and can be run in reverse to allow for-up after treating.

Photos: Sarah Weigum

Seed will flow out of the bottom hatch on grain cart into Storm treater.

The wheels are off. My dad is raising the cart 10 inches so we can get the Storm treater under the bottom hatch. A desk and extra ladder rungs are also being added.

One small reason for going with the Brandt cart was the bracing capped with angle iron to make clean out on the cart easier.

This is my dad, Garry, and cousin, Jason, working on lifting the grain cart. This picture shows the extra beam with axle receiver below the original position of the axle.

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Two sides to stocks

Focus on the best time to sell as well as to buy stocks

Andy Sirski

I f you are a true blue buy and hold investor you might not agree with most of this article. Farmers understand there are two sides to farming — grow the stuff and sell it. Sometimes people who buy stocks forget there are two sides to owning stocks.

Over the years, stocks have sorted themselves into four groups. One group is up quite a bit from the high in 2007. Another group had stocks drop and recover and make some new highs since the bear market of 2008. Many stocks have dropped and not recovered. And the fourth group has deeds such as Nortel and Enron that have disappeared off the face of the earth.

Why am I saying this? Because investors who understood the two sides to stocks sold stocks as the last bear market started and then bought those same good shares back near the bottom. In most cases they have made lot more money than investors who kept their stocks right through the bear and bull markets.

Yes, die-hard buy and hold investors will argue the point and many investors who understood the two sides to stocks made lot more money than they were before November 2007. Yes, they paid dividends and have gone up some since October 2007 but the really good money was made by anyone who used a half decent selling rule in November 2007 and a half decent buying rule in early 2009. Neither selling nor buying needed to be perfect to work well.

Some argue that we cannot time the market. But a lot of sellers had to be timing the market (selling) in late 2007, otherwise stocks would not have dropped in price. And a lot of buyers had to be timing the market (buying) after March 6, 2009 or stocks would not have gone up as they have.

Since I started to run our portfolios in 1995 I have been in the middle of two bear markets.

One started in March 2000 when the techie boom went bust. The first sell signal was when stocks dropped through the 10-day moving average (10 dma). The next sell signal was when the 10 dma dropped through the 30 dma. Techies crashed. I got out with more money than I started and learned stuff.

In the bear market of 2007 to March 2009 I was selling covered calls on my 12 stocks and ended 2008 down one per cent. Yes, the shares were down a lot but the account was down one per cent because I was selling calls. And the portfolio started to gain after that.

SELLING WEEKLY COVERED CALLS

These days I don't count on much capital gain from my stocks. I choose to make cash by owning half decent stocks that let me sell covered calls weekly. Yes I do have to work a few hours on Thursday and or Friday to get ready for the next week and I do have to think and work on Monday as I sell covered calls for the upcoming Friday. But I get paid well.

My goal is to bring in about $1,000 a week by selling weekly calls on three to five stocks. I top it up by doing two or three spreads. If I can find good ones. I usually beat my goal of $1,000 a week.

With the spreads, I did try to make as much money as possible but it was far too busy for me. Now I do fewer spreads. I'm more cautious and I find it's easier on the brain to make $600 a week and keep all of it than to try make $2,000 a week and lose most of it now and then.

I usually beat my goal of $1,000 a week

With the covered calls I try to follow what I call my above and below rule. If the charts look like the stock wants to drop I will sell a call below the price of the day, which gives me downside protection. If the charts look like the stock wants to go up I will not sell a call right away or I will sell the call above the price of the day and give the shares a bit of room to make some capital gain.

I find that if a stock drops through the 10-day moving average the price often falls more. Then I have to decide if I will sell a call well below that price. But I do have to sell covered calls and sell the shares.

Since I stopped trying to “make as much money as possible” I find I can run a routine, have a life, free up time to talk to more readers, play with granddaughters, blow snow, work on income tax, go out for lunch and have a nap. I am richly blessed. And I help readers learn. Some learn faster than others but pretty well everybody is capable of learning this stuff.

I am mostly retired. I play with grandson, I tend tomatoes in summer, I talk to readers and publish an electronic newsletter called StocksTalk where I tell them what to do with his portfolio. You can read it free for a month by sending an email to sirski@mts.net.
When political unrest leads to market swings, the value of having a solid marketing plan in place hits home

By Brian Wittal

The past month has been a classic example of how quickly grain markets can be affected by world events.

Unrest in the Ukraine and Russia's moves to reestablish its hold on the region have ramped up world tensions and caused major market uncertainty. Stock markets, currency markets and commodity markets have all reacted swiftly to this uncertainty.

Add to this recent world weather uncertainties and you have the start of another commodity market roller coaster ride. Where's the top or the bottom? When will this ride be over?

Buyers, sellers and speculators are trying to determine where they should be positioned in these markets in an effort to either protect themselves or to try to make some profits in these volatile times.

The reality as to how quickly things can change brings with it a sense of urgency that pushes most to overreact, "before it's too late." That is the fundamental reason why the futures markets work. There are two sides to every trade, with someone on either side at any time. Add speculators who play on the panic in the markets to make profits and you have over-reactive markets that cause confusion and uncertainty that continues to feed the frenzy and move the markets even more dramatically.

Set your price targets

So how do you know when to price your grain?

Over the past couple of months we have been discussing the need for planning and preparation for the coming spring seeding season, and setting a marketing plan to establish and protect your farm's profitability. Some of you may have decided to pre-price some of your grains over the past two months to protect the slim profit margins projected at that time. Based on the situation at the time, that was the right thing to do.

To all who did some pre-pricing: good for you! You were following your plan and making solid business decisions that weren't based on hopes, what if's or "maybe" situations. You used the information you had to make the best marketing decisions at the time.

Now that markets have moved higher, you have an opportunity to lock in prices that will help you take advantage of your average price and allow you to be even more profitable.

Events such as political unrest in the Ukraine, extreme cold weather across North America, excessive rains in parts of South America and the U.K. and drought in parts of Australia and the United States are all what I would classify as "what if" and or "hope or maybe" scenarios. It would sure be nice for something like that to happen that would help improve grain prices but you cannot predict when, if ever, these events may occur.

You can't risk your farm business's future hoping for some event to take place to improve prices. You need to react to the situation at hand and determine the most likely outcome based on as much factual information as you can find. Then, make marketing decisions based on that information and your situation to ensure your farm's profitability and growth.

Too many producers I talked to this winter are running scared and don't know what to do when it comes to pricing their grain. Without fail, each of those did not have a marketing plan in place. This leaves them exposed and open to panic marketing or the do nothing plan. The do nothing, stick you head in the sand "ostrich syndrome" leaves you with your backside sticking up waiting for a good kicking.

These producers who didn't price their grain last fall had a common response: "Prices were falling and I was hoping they would come back up, and now that they have continued to fall I don't know what to do." This goes back to knowing your costs and break-even margins, setting pricing targets to ensure profitability and acting on those targets when the opportunity is there.

Last fall, prices were still at very profitable levels and should have been locked in. What is worse? The fear of locking in a price at a profit and then having the prices go higher, or the fear of not locking in a price because you think the price will go higher and then having markets crash? Locking in a profit is always good. Not locking in a price because you want to wait for futures to bounce back is putting your farm's profitability and future at risk.

Take the uncertainty and fear out of your marketing. Know your numbers, set your price targets and execute your marketing plan.

Keep emotions out of the equation or you will end up back in panic mode marketing.

A secure profitable future is far better than the gamble and risk scenario. You will sleep better at night knowing you've protected your farm for the future.
AGCO introduces new tractors

New models unveiled at U.S. farm shows in February

BY SCOTT GARVEY

A

t farm shows in Kentucky and California, AGCO pulled the wraps off new tractor models in all three of its North American brands: Massey Ferguson, Challenger and Fendt. The all-new 8700 Series Masseys, which will replace the existing 8600s, made their debut at the World Ag Expo in Tulare, California.

The new five-model line will span the same 270 to 370 engine horsepower range looked after by the 8600s, but the new tractors offer a range of updated specifications. All will use the AGCO Power 8.4-litre diesels that deliver 900 to 1,136 foot-pounds of torque. These engines use twin turbochargers and the company’s new Engine Power Management (EPM) ECU, which maximizes the engine’s efficiency by controlling the electronic fuel injection and coordinated transmission features. That helps bring down fuel consumption numbers.

To keep the engines cool, a new CYCLOIR cooling system is more efficient without using larger components. The hood and grill have been modified to increase intake airflow, while additional vents on the side panels let warm air out much faster. A bypass system manages airflow to the intercooler while maintaining airflow to the radiator.

To deliver all the power from the Tier 4 Final-compliant diesels, all 8700s come standard with the advanced version of MP’s Dyna-VT continuously variable transmission.

“The 8700 Series tractors deliver all the power and capability our customers demand with advanced features that boost fuel economy and enhance operator comfort for longer, more productive days in the field,” says Conor Bergin, product marketing manager, High Horsepower Tractors. “And, these tractors are built with pride in Jackson, Minnesota.

“We have more horsepower, more torque and better fuel consumption,” adds Ash Ak, field marketing manager for high horse-power tractors at AGCO. “The (8700s) get quite a few new features and upgrades.”

Power is the key. “The 800’s capacity is one of those upgrades. It gets bumped up to a new high of 104 gallons per minute. And a front, 21-spline PTO shaft is now available as a factory option. The cabs on the 8700s get a more ergonomic layout with a new gauge and control arrangement, with all of the commonly used controls in one area.

A new SIS (Set up and Information Screen) is now colour and 50 per cent larger and includes new software that provides more data on tractor functions.

All 8700s come equipped with the new AutoGuide 3000 precision farming software fully integrated into the cab.

The sister line to the MF 8700 Series, the Challenger MT600E, made its debut at the National Farm Machinery Show in Louisville, Kentucky. These tractors offer the same specifications in five similar models that wear Challenger yellow.

AGCO also had other tractors to introduce in Louisville. Eight updated models in the 800 and 900 Series of the company’s German-built Fendt tractors made their North American debut. The newest offerings span the 220 to 360 horsepower range.

Bergin is often referred to as the Cadillac of tractors, particularly in Europe (replace Cadillac with BMW there), because it offers some very high-end features. But marketers say those features do much more than improve operator comfort, they offer systems that enhance overall efficiency.

“The 800 and 900 lines represent the latest generation of Fendt’s high-horsepower tractors featuring cutting-edge technology and attention to ease of use and efficiency in the field,” says Bergin. “The new six-cylinder Tier 4 Final engines in these lines offer growers more offerings, better torque curves and improved fuel efficiency.”

Fendt remains the only brand under the AGCO umbrella that doesn’t use AGCO Power engines. Instead they have Deutz-Fahr-built diesels under the hood. During an interview at the company’s Bavarian assembly plant in 2012, Reid Hamre, Fendt brand marketing manager, said Fendt and DF engineers have worked closely to match the performance of the engines with the transmissions they’re coupled to. That has allowed them to achieve 10-section automatic overlap control that saves money by eliminating double seed and fertilizer application.

- Gentle metering and distribution that lets me reduce seeding rates while maintaining target plant populations.
- Hydraulic, ground-following openers that give me uniform seed and fertilizer placement, excellent emergence, strong growth and even maturity.
- Stress-free, in-cab automatic calibration that’s based on actual product usage thanks to weigh cells on each tank and a user-friendly monitor.

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SeedMaster’s cost savings and efficiencies are the new normal on my farm.

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Eight new 800 and 900 Series models raise the already high features bar Fendt is known for.
impressive fuel efficiency ratings, something the brand isn’t shy about mentioning.

Those diesels now feature twin turbochargers, too, and a three-pump fuel system that uses a 29,000 p.s.i. common rail. The injectors are capable of multiple discharges during each power stroke. To meet Tier 4 Final emissions levels, these tractors use a combination of selective catalytic reduction, cooled exhaust gas recirculation and a coated soot filter.

The Fendts also get a new engine cooling system that includes an electronically-controlled variable pitch cooling fan that can be reversed to blow debris out of the radiator and coolers.

The new VarioGrip feature allows operators to adjust pressure in all four tires right from the cab. That allows operators to reduce pressure in the field or raise it for road travel, all of which maximizes traction and bumps up fuel efficiency even further.

The enhanced X5 cab gets a new 10.4-inch Varioterminal, which has its software set up to look like apps on a smartphone. The Varioterminal can also stream images from up to two video cameras:

And like the MF and Challenger models, the Fendt, too, gets a redesigned dash, making for a more ergonomic layout.

At the top end of the horsepower scale, AGCO’s flagship four-wheel drive Challengers also get an update and a new designation as the MT900E line. They shared the spotlight in Louisville, also making their debut there.

No longer will you find a Caterpillar engine under the hood, instead these tractors now use the company’s own, newly-developed 16.8-litre AGCO Power diesels. “Unlike competitive models that rely on modified over-the-road engines, all MT900E series tractors feature AP168-4 diesel engines built just for agriculture,” says Bergin.

The three MT900E models offer 490 to 590 engine horsepower. And yet again, these diesels rely on twin turbocharger technology.

Hydraulic capacity gets bumped up to a 58 gpm, with a high-flow option lifting that to a maximum of 85 gpm.

Scott Garvey is machinery editor for Grainews. Contact him at Scott.Garvey@fbcpublishing.com.
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NEW HOLLAND
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Versatile debuts new SP sprayers

BY SCOTT GARVEY

In 2009 Versatile unveiled its first-ever, self-propelled sprayer, the SX275, at a dealer convention in Las Vegas. At the time, Versatile had recently acquired the U.S. sprayer manufacturer Redball, and the SX275 was a modified version of the design that company had manufactured. The basic rear-wheel drive concept with a mechanical driveline configuration made it a perfect fit for Versatile's simple and efficient design philosophy. And, of course, there was a Cummins under the hood, Versatile's traditional engine of choice.

In February of this year the brand used the Commodity Classic farm show in San Antonio, Texas, as the venue to introduce the public to two new successors that will replace the SX275, the SX240 and SX280. In a press release, Versatile says the two new models “represent an evolution on the current sprayer design.”

Now with five years of field experience under its belt in SP sprayer production, the company says it has accumulated and a lot of customer feedback and integrated it into the updated design used on the SX240 and SX280. The first thing you notice with these machines is there are some styling changes to the body and a completely new cab entrance, with the steps relocated to the machine's front. Climbing those steps gets you into what Versatile claims is the largest cab in the SP sprayer industry. The “HQ cab” has over 140 cubic feet of interior space wrapped with 77 square feet of glass. Interior design also takes a giant step forward with all controls now mounted on a large armrest.

Up front is a 6.7 litre Cummins putting out 240 or 280 horses, depending on which model you choose. Both engine versions use a variable geometry turbocharger, diesel particulate filter and EGR to meet emissions standards, so they don’t require additional DEF fluid. The new sprayers stick to the same mechanical driveline concept used on the SX275. So the Cummins engines are mated to an Allison five-speed automatic transmission capable of 57 km/h on the road.

Behind the cab, the SX240 gets a 1,000 gallon (3,785 litre) poly main tank with a 100 gallon rinse tank. The SX280 is available with that same-sized poly tank or a 1,200 gallon (4,540 litre), stainless steel option, which gets a 150 gallon rinse tank.

Boom widths stretch to 90 or 100 feet (27.4 and 30.5 metres) in either model. The chassis rides on an air bag suspension with auto height adjust and sway control, along with four-wheel disc brakes. The axle track width can be adjusted manually or hydraulically from 120 to 152 inches (3.04 to 3.86 metres).

To make things simpler for the operator, the new machines use a redesigned fill station. Control valves are oriented so that all handles are in the “up” position when the machine is ready for the field, which serves as a quick-glance indicator for the operator. The company adds that the overall plumbing on the machine is designed to be easy to service.

Both the SX240 and SX280 have already gone into production at Versatile’s assembly plant in Willmar, Minnesota, and are available in limited quantities for the 2014 season.

Base price for the SX240 is $291,168 and the SX280 starts at $304,863.
Running like a Deere

John Deere’s new high-speed planter maintains placement accuracy at 10 m.p.h.

BY SCOTT GARVEY

John Deere is breaking the planting speed and accuracy barrier of traditional row-crop planting with the introduction of a revolutionary new seed delivery system,” reads the opening line on the company’s press release announcing the launch of the ExactEmerge row unit. At the same time, the brand also introduced the MaxEmerge five-row row units capable of highly efficient operation at more traditional planting speeds.

Deere used the National Farm Machinery Show in Louisville, Kentucky, in February as the venue to unveil the new planter technology to farmers.

When operated at high speeds, the ability of many planters to singulate seed and place it accurately within the seed trench suffers. Deere’s ExactEmerge row unit uses a completely new metering and seed delivery system to ensure both of those critical elements remain consistent at field speeds of up to 10 m.p.h.

To achieve that, ExactEmerge row units use a new, rigid bowl-shaped metre and brush-style doubles eliminator that require no adjustment. They work together to provide a reliable seed handoff to the all-new and pretty innovative brush belt, which replaces the traditional free-fall seed tube found on many planters. Instead of just dropping seeds from the metre into the seed trench, the brush belt carries them down and draws them just above the ground speed.

The innovative brush belt used on the ExactEmerge row unit carries seeds down to the trench rather than dropping them down a seed delivery tube. Velocity allows the gentle placement of each seed in the trench without the normal bounce and roll that would otherwise happen at the higher speeds. We can do this with both corn and even with high-rate soybeans. And because we never let go of the seed until each one is in the trench, we’ve drastically reduced the ill effects of rougher planting conditions.

According to the company, ExactEmerge units handle all seed shapes and sizes, achieving a 99 percent singulation rate with no mechanical adjustments when switching between seed types — even over terrain with slopes up to 15 degrees.

“Another important feature is that our new brush belt does not have to be synchronized with finite metre speeds,” Krueger adds. “The systems are completely independent of each other, allowing the metre to turn at the right speed for the desired seed population, while the delivery system exactly matches ground speed.”

If it’s necessary to stop in the field and start again, the new seed delivery system prevents any gaps. The combination of seeds retained in the brush and the new Fast Start feature eliminates skips. Operators don’t have to back up to restart planting in the middle of a row.

To keep the row units correctly positioned, the new planters use an active Pneumatic downforce system. “Active pneumatic downforce means all row units maintain the required ground contact, even at higher speeds,” adds Krueger. “The operator easily sets the downforce pressure and the brush belt delivery system delivers the seed accurately to the bottom of the trench at the desired depth.”

ExactEmerge row units are compatible with 1775NT and 1795 model planters with central commodity systems in 15-, 20-, and 30-inch row spacings for corn and soybeans.

But if you’re not into speed or you need more versatility from a row unit, the MaxEmerge five-row units may be the ones for you. “For traditional planter customers, John Deere is also introducing an entirely new line of MaxEmerge row units, the MaxEmerge 5,” says Krueger. “These row units combine the best features of the existing MaxEmerge XP and Pro-Series XP units, which they replace. The MaxEmerge 5 features one common vacuum metre... And it offers the greatest versatility to customers needing a variety of different configurations.”

These field-proven units have double eliminator adjustments, three times longer-life gauge wheel arms and easy-to-adjust downforce capabilities (spring, heavy duty or pneumatic) for more uniform seed depth control, regardless of field conditions. All adjustments and seed clean out functions are now much easier to access and faster to accomplish because of the improved design of the row units.

A John Deere planter equipped with the brand’s new ExactEmerge row units was on display at the Commodity Classic farm show in San Antonio, Texas, in February.
You can rest assured that when you run a reliable, all-crop, all-condition John Deere baler, that you’ll keep baling long after other balers have called it quits.

How do we do it? The 9 Series feature roller shafts that are a 1/4 inch larger and bearings that are 1 1/2 inches larger than those found on the 8 Series. With an increased shaft size the baler can now handle even heavier loads in the toughest conditions. And the bigger bearings run cooler, last longer, and are more reliable.

Everything about a John Deere 9 Series Round Baler has been designed to raise performance to all new levels, while greatly reducing the chances of downtime. That’s why more and more hay producers run John Deere Round Balers than any other color baler. And should your baler ever need service, it’s good to know that there’s a local John Deere dealer standing behind you who will get you back up and running.

See your John Deere dealer today about a new 9 Series Baler — and elevate your uptime.
Bourgault expands its 7000 Series cart line

The tow-between L7800 becomes the third air cart added to the relatively new 7000 Series

BY SCOTT GARVEY

Bourgault has expanded its 7000 Series line of air carts, which it launched with the introduction of the high-capacity 7950 model in 2012. This year, the company added two additional models. During the winter, the company announced the introduction of the 7700, which was meant to replace the previous 6700 model. At Canada’s Farm Progress Show in Regina in June, Bourgault expanded the Series again and debuted the L7800 tow-between version.

The L7800 boasts an 800-bushel capacity split between four compartments, plus an optional 40-bushel small product saddle tank. Beside the saddle tank is a pallet storage area to keep additional canola bags stored and ready to add.

This cart is the first in what Bourgault is calling its “Leading” design. Translation: tow-between configuration. The L7800 gets the “L” in its model number to indicate that. “This is the first ‘Leading’ cart design in the 7000 Series,” says Bourgault’s Hayden Rice.

The L7800’s uses the company’s flex-tank design, which means the contents of one of its compartments can be metered out with the product in either adjacent tank and increase working time between fills. That also gives growers some flexibility, allowing them to get just the right mix of inputs on board.

Those inputs get metered out using Bourgault’s newest metering system, the PDM Pro, which is available on all the 7000 Series models. The L7800 can be equipped with up to five different metering augers and seeding rate control comes from a Topcon X-30 monitor. “It (the monitor) is laid out very well,” says Rice. “Switching from single shoot to double shoot is the same as you’d expect from any other Bourgault system with our Class A distribution system. You can put any product down any line.”

The L7800 also offers some design improvements intended to help make life a little easier for tractor operators. To start with, hitching up to this cart should be a breeze. A hydraulic hitch jack connects to the tractor remotes and adjusts the hitch height from the tractor seat, which eliminates the need for manual jacking.

Getting access to the tanks’ loading hatches is now easier, too. A stairway directly above the hitch means operators don’t have to walk around a drill or the tractor to get up on the cart. The stairs are just a few steps away from the cab door. “There’s no more climbing ladders,” says Rice. “You get to walk up stairs. It makes it easier for carrying pails.”

And the L7800 rides on 850 80R38 tires. That keeps its footprint relatively light and helps minimize compaction in the field. “They’re the same size as the tires on our 7950 tow behind,” explains Rice. “So we’re able to keep our tire pressure and ground pressure to 18 PSI. We’re able to carry a lot of weight, a lot of product, and keep our ground pressure down.”

The L7800 also uses 7-inch distribution lines. “It’s for increased capacity, pushing product out for the large drills we’re producing these days,” he adds. To get product in, the L7800 comes with a standard, remote controlled, 12-inch loading auger. “It’s very handy and user friendly,” says Rice. Bourgault also joins the ranks of seeding equipment manufacturers now offering sectional control technology. The company just introduced its new system at the Regina show. Like the L7800 cart, sectional control will be available in limited quantities for the 2014 season and in full production for 2015.

For a video look at the L7800 cart and Bourgault’s new sectional control system, watch the E-QuipTV episode at www.grainews.ca/videos.

Bourgault’s new 800-bushel, tow-between cart, the L7800, includes an easy-access stairway above the hitch, making climbing up to load hatches safer and easier.
Bull health is a year-round concern

The horned bull is often the most neglected animal in most cattle operations. Great emphasis is put on them just before and during the breeding season but the rest of the year bulls are often not thought of at all.

But the reality is producers need to be mindful of not neglecting the huge genetic potential bulls have on their herds. It is important to protect your investment and help maximize fertility to maximize that huge potential. Pre-breeding health and management should include bull health and management procedures over the bull’s entire life.

The easiest way to adopt a program is to be thinking of your herd—bail every time you pen the cows and decide then whether any treatment is needed. Poorly chosen dosages from handling bulls as they are larger and can raise havoc with even stout corral. There is also the issue of every time a bull is moved the fighting resumes and the movement routine must be re-established. This can be done with minimal good facilities and return on investment in time spent on pasture after processing. Sufficient physical exercise at all times of the year keeps a bull in better shape and gives the feet and legs in much better shape.

BULL VACCINATION

A vaccination program for bulls should correspond to what is provided to cows. All respiratory and reproductive vaccines as well as multivalent clotridials (blackleg) are valuable to bulls. As bulls can be the source or spread of disease especially the reproductive ones like tetanus, listeriosis or trichomoniasis if they are a problem in your area.

Our clinic further recommends a foot rot vaccination for bulls. A lame bull at breeding season is not desirable. This vaccine only protects for one cause of lame- ness in bulls but the footrot organism can gain entry through cracks in the bull’s feet. It is a small investment but annual dosing should be done in the fall with a pour on endectocide plus a drench like Bovatec. Internal parasites are becoming more of an issue and can build up especially in rundown breeding bulls. Use the proper dosage for the weight of the bull and don’t emphasize the dosage. There are always days when the sentinel animals when it comes to lice. Hair may lose lice but often lots of scurf will lead to scratching especially on hot days. Breeding bulls should be dewormed for the applicable anthelmintics. Semen evaluations most often are performed after winter and before breeding season. If a bull is wasted or stall bred then use done before bull sales in case decisions have to be made as to new purchases. If bulls are insured it is a very wise to adjust the test date to before the policy expiration date, sometimes the policy has happened over the winter. If a bull has been sick, had swellings develop in the sheath or testicles, or had cows returning to heat it is important to check the bull’s fertility and find a replacement if needed.

Fed bulls (five years or greater) have an increasing likelihood of becoming infertile because of lameness, udder or tracheal degeneration. Do as many procedures as possible at semen-evaluating time such as ear tagging if necessary, taking a hair sample in case genetic testing is necessary or checking the eyes for scarring. Get all laps and bumps and scuttle lameness checked out as well. There is never a more ideal time and tagging is made much easier by doing it at the same time as electroejaculation.

FEET AND LEGS

Many bulls are culled because of hoof problems and due to a large magnitude and grow bigger tremendous pressure is put on their feet up legs, especially in the breeding season. Preventive maintenance such as trimming feet may extend this in years or due to record-high fed cattle values can be somewhat easier by doing it at the same time as electroejaculation. A rising plain of nutrition or higher in their diets is ideal. A leaner bull is more desirable than a fat bull at breeding season. Fat, especially in the scrotum, can impair fertility for a considerable time. Remember after breeding season, when bulls are purchased the nutritional requirements decrease substantially.

Since a good breeding bull is never bulls are not could be a one worthy protecting. If breeding pastures have a lot of bush make sure bull nose rings are used. If hardware (pentotism) is a potential problem, as soon as the bull arrives on the farm, placing a good down 10 per cent of bulls (recticum) can be good insurance. Most illnesses with bulls appear high feeding weight loss is often the first sign.

When checking bulls during a visual inspection carefully. Wobbliness or knocking may be the sign of a broken joint possibly Swelling on the sheath from cuts or a broken penis require immediate bull replacement. By implementing the above strategies hopefully a long reproduct- live cycle can be attained from your bulls. Always buy bulls from reputable breeders and make sure they have had their initial breeding soundness evalu- ation done and are up to date on vaccines. Over the many years the breeding bull has died from a foot rot problem but it is a potentially preventable. The third factor is the price of feed grains. Canadian bar- ley acreage is expected to be down 10 per cent this spring. The barley market is expected to go through a fundamental shift as burdensome sup- plies in 2013–14 to a relatively tight fundamental structure for 2014–15. This will increase the cost per pound gain and feedlot managers will have to factor this into account when purchasing replacement cattle.

Old-crop barley prices have potential to be pulled higher by new-crop values due to the anticipation of lower production. We saw how the feeder market responded in 2012 when barley and old-crop feeders increased $0.35 to $0.40/cwt and new crop barley production will have a major influence on feeder cattle prices.

We saw how the feeder market responded in 2012 when barley and old-crop feeders increased $0.35 to $0.40/cwt and new crop barley production will have a major influence on feeder cattle prices.
If they hired me to hunt greater sage grouse, the population would not only be maintained but no doubt flourish. My track record of successful bird hunting — pleasant hunting in particular — has contributed greatly to the survival of that species.

Let’s just say I scare a few birds (I like to think of it as improving their distribution), but beyond the practical benefit of “taking” birds for both man and bird, pheasants have been quite safe for some time. Someone might say that hunting practice might help but that seems to be a highly over rated solution and a lot of smoke and mirrors. It is sort of like that word “action” in an essay. It is totally out of context, but you must assume that it was meant to say “action.”

Surely someone can come up with a more imaginative option.

To pull a Hart Simpson — if the greater sage grouse population is disappearing “you can’t blame me.”

It is fair to say the bird is in deep trouble. According to a recent Calgary Zoo report, the Calgary Zoo, planning to mount a $4 million captive breeding program to save the grouse), but according to their release there are only 138 greater sage grouse left in Western Canada. In Alberta, they can be found in two isolated pockets in the southwest corner of Alberta and southwest Saskatchewan.

That’s not very many birds. If they were to band these things they could name them rather than number them.

The zoo estimates the birds could be extinct within two to five years. The population is divided by sex and age. The female population is smaller. In addition to a captive breeding program, the Calgary Zoo has set up a $15,000 grant program to study the birds in the wild.

Along with this captive breeding program, the federal Environment Canada last December (after legal action by environmental groups) imposed “the first ever Emergency Order under the Species at Risk Act to protect the greater sage grouse on Crown lands.”

The order prohibits activities that are known to be harmful to sage-grouse and their habitat. The emergency order will achieve the best protection for the grouse while allowing farmers and agricultural producers, says a release. “It will not restrict activities only private land owners need concern — about 1,700 square kilometres — see accompanying map.”

That seems to be a bit of a “closing the barn door” move, but is any event now ranchers and oil and gas companies working in the affected area, are concerned about the economic impact of this emergency order. The order doesn’t apply to private land, but does apply to any government land under lease to ranchers.

The government estimated it imposed the order that it would cost oil and gas activity in the area the amount of $10 million over the coming years. They estimated there would be little impact on ranching.

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However, ranchers who use this land fear the order could have a significant impact by either eliminating or reducing the ability to graze lease land. More published reports suggest about 200 landowners in the designated area plan to form an association to mount a legal challenge to have the emergency order reversed.

In reports I have read ranchers have made two interesting points. Some say it isn’t ranching (or even oil and gas activity) that has decimated sage grouse numbers — there are two many predators. Another producer pointed out, in the vast open, native prairie grassland there are fairly large tracks with no cattle and no oil and gas activity and the bird didn’t survive there either. So you wonder where was the danger.

I doubt that ranchers want to see the greater sage grouse become extinct within two to five years. But I do worry even if cattle where raised in feedlots for the next 10 years, there will be no change in the numbers. Sage-grouse numbers to recover?

There will be more as this story unravels in the coming months. But it is an example of the how the public and environmental spotlight again is focused on the agriculture industry. There has been considerable talk of agri-business and service programs or an environmental tax, will the sage grouse issue enter a new phase in the coming year. The affected land owners should be prepared for a new phase of concern.

Lee Hart is editor of Cattlemen’s Corner based in Calgary. Contact him at 403-592-1964 or by email at lee@grainews.ca.

Cattleman’s Corner

PHOTO: FILE

Seven tips for reducing risk of pasture bloat

**Better Bunkers and Pastures**

Lee Hart

Disappearing sage grouse puts stress on ranchers

E ven in the last remaining snow mounds, green grass will start to sprout. It then only takes long for pastures to grow quickly and easily support many of the nutrient requirements that cattle need to nurse growing calves and get ready themselves for rebreeding.

Unfortunately, much of this nutrition is locked away in lush alfalfa plants, that may cause fatal bloat. Therefore, beef producers should take bloat-precautionary steps to introduce their cow herd to alfalfa pastures, so a safe and productive grazing season is assured.

Cattle that are not prepared for grazing alfalfa pasture and as a result bloat easy to see. In mild bloat cases, the left side of the animal is modestly distended and the animal might graze without incident. However, in more severe bloat cases, both sides balloon out and the animal appears to be in distress. If left untreated, a seriously bloatased animal may die, because the gut distention interferes with its breathing and the animal suffocates.

Approximately two per cent of all recorded cattle mortalities in Western Canada are attributed to bloat.

**Types of Bloat**

There are two main types of bloat that can be fatal to beef cows and calves. The first is “free-gas” bloat which is a straightforward accumulation of gas in the rumen. It occurs in about 10 per cent of all bloat cases. It is thought to be predominant among chronic bloaters (cattle that re-occurring bloat) that have physical damaged rumen gas receptors (ie. an ingested piece of metal). Free-gas bloat is rare in pasture cattle.

Alfalfa grazing cattle often suffer from a second common type of bloat, known as “frothy bloat.”

Frothy bloat occurs when the rate of forage consumption and digestion is so rapid a fermentation gases mix with the rumen fluid into slimy foam. Natural gas release is slow, because gases are trapped inside small emulsified bubbles as well as this gaseous foam (carbon dioxide and methane), that interfere with the rumen receptors that open up the esophagus for its gas expulsion.

Cattle are more susceptible to frothy bloat when grazing alfalfa pastures compared to other types of legume and grass pastures, due to alfalfa’s: (1) relative low fibre content; (2) rapid rate of consumption in a short period of time, (2) a rumen digestion rate that is 100 times greater than most grasses that produces lots of gas (carbon dioxide and methane), and (3) a high level of soluble protein that increases the viscosity of rumen fluid, which can easily trap fermentative gas bubbles and may prevent natural expulsion.

Therefore, the potential for frothy bloat production in cows (and their calves) grazing alfalfa pastures is greatest when alfalfa is in its vegetative to early-bloom stages of growth. As the grazing season progresses, alfalfa grass like other pasture plants matures as it enters its bloom stage; fibre levels in its stems increase substantially and soluble protein levels in leaves decrease. This natural maturation of alfalfa plants lead to a slower rate of digestion when consumed by cattle and then digested in the rumen; lessening its overall bloat risk.

**Preventive Measures**

As alfalfa matures it becomes a much safer bet for pasturing cattle, with a lower risk of bloat, but it is the early, lush, first-flush crop that really needs to be properly managed.

The following recommendations are some sound bloat preventative and cautionary guidelines:

- Plan out new alfalfa fields — these pastures should contain no more than 50 per cent alfalfa. Select companion plant species that have low bloat-risk properties (such as more fibrous grasses) that prepare cattle to adapt, reducing the chance of alfalfa bloat. For example, alfalfa grasses that carry a lower risk of bloat, but it is the early, lush, first-flush crop that really needs to be properly managed.

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No time of year represents the hope of the beef industry like the arrival of young calves each spring on Canadian beef farms and ranches. It’s a powerful time, with emotional, personal moments that can find producers thinking about what’s really important.

One of the things that Verified Beef Production (VBP) program provides is an opportunity to learn directly with those beef producers. It’s a privilege to be able to hear that feedback.

Here are some of their best thoughts about success and how producers can contribute to the end product regardless of size or scale of operation.

Credibility starts at the beginning. It all starts with the cow-calf industry. Credibility begins here and producers want to contribute to a wholesome, healthy food product.

Do what’s right for your industry. People are watching and expect the best. Don’t let them down. Lead through behaviour. Leading by example helps and modelling industry practices can help others do the right thing.

Record anchor trust. Keep the important information. It helps you identify trends and it provides a backup if something unexpected comes up. Many animals will have three owners in their lifetime and records can link them together.

You don’t have to be big to be good. It’s proven every day across this country in the beef business. The most passionate and successful players are not always expansive operations. Cattle quality is not necessarily a function of herd size.

Get involved. Industry programs aren’t perfect but participation builds reputation and tells others our industry is strong. It also helps demonstrate to customers what matters.

Build your own reputation. Leaving it to someone else to enhance your reputation doesn’t work in the real world. It starts at home.

Leadership means everything.

As producers get their calves on the ground this year, there’s promise of a new year and another production cycle. Whether it is food safety, animal care or environmental stewardship, the ball is in our court.

We can play the ‘A’ game ourselves or sit on the bench and let others determine the score. There’s a renewed interest in the power of positive actions. Help your industry thrive.

Producers care. It’s about proving that in real time. Stay in the game and like the Olympics, showcase your best for all to see.

Programming is low cost or no cost. Take a close look. The VBP program is designed to be built into your daily routine. Practices need not be complicated. Taking notice of a few key ones means one is ready in case something needs to be tweaked slightly. These actions are entry-level building blocks of a bigger opportunity.

One implant. That’s it. You’re done!
...s spring approaches cattle breeding starts to nudge in our minds. It is also time to look over our baby season and evaluate things. Our biggest problem for a long time has been providing shelter space for cattle, goats and sheep to have their babies. So our family has spent time lately discussing if we want to remain so diversified. We have decided for now it is best we do but we need to be mindful of when our next baby season starts. Each species we raise has a special job on our farm. Each species complements the other in their grazing styles so we get more out of our land. If my husband had to pick a favourite it would be the beef cows. Overall they require the least attention and the least amount and we will never forget that throughout the past few years our small livestock held their value and helped keep us afloat. When our next baby season starts. We want to remain so diversified. Our baby season stretches from about mid-January (cows first) to mid-June (goats last), which is too long. By the time we were finished everyone involved is exhausted and having is ready to start but the machinery isn’t. We have also found by kidding and lambing this late in the season we have to keep the kids and lambs over winter. This uses more pens, more shelters and more hay and our young females are often too young to breed till the following season. This schedule is costing us money and needs to be changed.

We’ve decided to move calving ahead to March. This will help with warmer weather over night and hopefully we will be finished before the really wet spring weather arrives. Over the years the only times we’ve ever had navel ill or scours was when we calved in the wet. Those health issues haven’t been a problem with the small stock. Lambing in late January to February worked well the last two years. This leaves the goats kidding for April.

REMODEL, REPURPOSE

This scheduling will work as long as the goats and cows can share the barn. We have been utilizing the existing quonset in the yard, which was remodelled as a winter shelter for goats and we can use it for some kidding. This doesn’t add to capital expenses and will allow us to overlap part of the kidding and calving seasons. With January calving all cows spend a few days in the barn with their calves. Once the calf is completely dry, including umbilical cord, they go back outside, weather permitting. For some reason our cows like to lick the ears of these little guys when they go outside and that is when they freeze. This could change with calving in March if the weather co-operates.

The last few years we have tried kidding and lambing in the warmer months so we weren’t as stressed about keeping the babies alive from freezing in the colder weather. We found however the little goats born in May often don’t go as well.

Instead of being out of the yard before November when the prices drop we are feeding them for the winter. This puts an extra strain on pen space and our always limited hay supply. By kidding in December and March they were always market weight by September. April kidding should be a safe bet. September market prices are usually higher for kids and lambs due to Muslim celebrations. This new plan will require careful management of our animal’s post-partum this year. According to our vet, we need to ensure we give all our females vitamin shots and be vigilant they maintain body condition. This also means keeping them in a constant supply of salt/mineral. We will also have to plan the post-calving and kidding and other field works get us side-tracked, to be prepared for goats/ cows to be pasturing earlier in the yard thereby better utilizing their brush-cleaning capabilities. By implementing this breeding/ baby season schedule we hope to utilize our work force, buildings and feed much better. This in turn will result in higher profits per head. It will also help free up time to get important spring jobs done such as fencing, machinery prepa-


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

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There are some important economics in having a diversified livestock operation, but when you have limited facilities it becomes a challenge to give each species the space and attention it needs.

- Keep the baby season schedule we hope to start but the machinery isn’t.
- Move calving ahead to March.
- Provide cattle molasses- or corn distillers-based blocks or tubs in different areas of pasture.
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SEVEN TIPS FOR REDUCING RISK OF PASTURE BLOAT

- Feeding dry roughage prior to cow herd release — Fill cows on grass hay before being turned out to alfalfa pastures. On pasture introduction, adjust to higher than normal stocking rates in order to increase competition among cattle. Consider dosing all adult beef cattle with CBC Rumenin boluses beforehand in order to help decrease the risk of bloat on pasture.
- First graze your grassy pastures — During the first few weeks of the pasture season graze cows and calves to continuously graze older pastures with a high proportion of grass and then move them onto pastures with a higher concentration of alfalfa. On some alfalfa fields it might be preferable to wait until the majority of alfalfa plants are past their vegetative vegetative stage. Avoid grazing areas of pure alfalfa stands, especially upon cattle introduction.
- Use other pasture management tools — Provide cattle molasses- or corn distillers-based blocks or tubs in different areas of pasture.
- Avoid frequent pasture changes — Once cattle are established on alfalfa pastures without significant problem, do not remove them or make them go both and down to a different pasture. Such irregularity prevents them from adapting to alfalfa pastures.
- Observe the pastures — It is a good idea to take an inventory of your pastures for rapid changes and during unusually wet periods in the spring or after a stressful period where rapid alfalfa growth may occur.

Peter Vitti is an independent livestock nutritionist and consultant based in Winnipeg. To reach him call 204-254-7497 or by email at peter@vitti.com.
Surprise calvers needed some shelter

Cattleman’s Corner

It’s called Good Horse, Bad Habits, which is coming out in late April. My next book, the bone and the break is separating. The tendons are pulled loose from the fracture with a metal plate. She had a long extension ladder up the wall full speed and broke her leg. She was intubated for so long in the ICU she has permanent damage to her nose, and ears, but she seems healthy otherwise. Andrea’s kids have two new puppies. A friend’s dog had a litter they needed to give away. These puppies are border collie and Brittany spaniel. They will help entertain Emily while she is recuperating.

MARCH 18

Emily had another leg x-ray. The doctor won’t be able to put a cast on until after it is surgically repaired. The tendons are pulled loose from the bone and the break is separating. I’ve been working on edits and page proofs of my next book, which is coming out in late April. It’s called Good Horse, Bad Habits, published by Trafalgar. This book is a collection of tips on retraining problem horses.

We had warmer weather last week; the snow is melting. On Wednesday Emily had surgery on her leg to reattach the tendons and stabilize the fracture with a metal plate. She has to stay off the leg for two weeks, keep it iced and elevated, and then she has stitches taken out before a cast can be put on.

With the warmer weather we’ve had snow slides closing several roads. Thursday water was running down our road and across the fields. Water coming down a draw by the upper place nearly washed out the road, the county crew brought a road grader up that evening and got the flood diverted. The next day brought two loadsof gravel to fix the washout.

MARCH 9

Emily played in the state hockey tournament in Idaho Falls, the last game of the season. Her team was doing well, but in the third game she and another girl were racing for the puck and Emily slammed into the wall full speed and broke her leg.

Our holding pen has thawed — getting boggy — so Lynn moved the rest of the stacked big straw bales into the hay yard. We need to clean out the barn stalls where the cows with surprise babies spent time, so we can get ready for calving.

Saturday morning we fed the cows at the lower end of the field by the gate, and sorted off five that are starting to get udders. We put them in the horse pasture and orchard where we can watch them. I’ve been writing the life story for a rancher friend in Oregon who is 86 years old. He wants it written for his children and grandchildren. I tape our conversations on the phone as he tells me his stories about his life and then I type them up. It’s been a very interesting project.

Other than losing skin on its nose and ears due to frostbite, this early unexpected calf appears to be doing well.
What would it look like if we paid attention to the true meaning of Easter?

And there are times when all we journey. “People can exhaust you. People? They saw him physically. And was seen by more than 500, yet he was living on earth.”

Coaching farm families in transition is challenging. Many times I offer folks to consider a change in their approach to stop exhaust- ing each other with conflict, and move toward love and respect. As I was driving on the Trans-Canada Highway to a family meet- ing, I spotted a rail car with a huge graffiti message which read “Jesus loves you!” That one can stay on that train forever as it crosses the country. Later I was in Langenburg, Sask. where the “Save Room for Dessert” Café offered me steel-lacerated magnets with great Easter messages: Rejoice!, Spirit!, Give! and even Kiss! These trea- sures were far more valuable to me than the rituals than his new wife does. She also may value celebrating faith, so she packs up the children for church faith- fully each Sunday while her hubby attends to the endless chores of the farm. Here is another conflict, track- ing time for family, faith and letting go of work. This life/work balance as it is commonly called, is not ever balance. It is an ongoing polarity or unsolvable issue that just needs to be managed, because it is never checked off the “to do” list.

Rabbits are part of the spring fertility rites of the old-country cul- tures, and eggs are part of the same harmony and less conflict on family farms. Forgiveness is a key issue. The model of forgiveness that Jesus gave us is a model of forgiveness that they employ and a way to make “quick repair” are much better off than the families that continue to offend, hurt and frustrate one another.

As of March 15, 2014, I have been writing in this paper for 19 years. The babies who tore the pages of Grainews apart on the floor are now tearing up the gravel roads in their pickups. They are also the ones call- ing me for new insights on how to have their folks say “I love you, and I am proud of you.” Ten years later they are back, asking how to get some equity. Twenty years later they are asking what control looks like. Seasons of the year mirror the legacy of richness in relationship towards God, and richness in relation- ship with each other.

I would like to know what changes you have made since you’ve been reading this column over the years. Send me encouragement; address mail to Box 957, R0K 0E0. Have a wonderful Easter!

Elaine Froese, CAFA, CHIC has been called “The Prairie furnace whisperer” by Faith Today magazine. Engage her resources to empower your team. Visit www.elainefroese.com or call 1-866-448-8371. Buy her new book for Mother’s Day!

Extended Outlook for the Prairies

Weather Forecast for the period of March 30 to April 26, 2014

Peace River Region March 30 – April 5 Variable weather with rain or snow on 2 to 3 days, heavy in places. April 6 – 12 Weather conditions and temperatures vary, with sunny spells. Expect high temperatures to interchange with cool, wet days. April 13 – 19 Sunny and seasonally windy, but look for a couple of cooler days with rain, and snow in places. Chance of heavy precipitation. April 20 – 26 Sunny with seasonal to mild temperatures, but expect periodic rain with a chance of heavier snow.

Southern Alberta March 30 – April 5 Variable weather with rain or snow on 2 to 3 days, heavy in places. April 6 – 12 Weather conditions and temperatures vary, as far sunny days can change to colder temperatures interchange with cool, wet days. April 13 – 19 Sunny and seasonally windy, but look for a couple of cooler days with rain, and snow in places. Chance of heavy precipitation. April 20 – 26 Sunny with seasonal to mild temperatures, but expect periodic rain with a chance of heavier snow.

Saskatchewan March 30 – April 5 Cool but with occasional thawing. Windy, sunny apart from snow or rain on 2 to 3 days, chance of heavy in places. April 6 – 12 Mostly sunny and milder aside from a couple of wet, cold days with some heavier snow. Blustery at times. April 13 – 19 Sunny to very sunny across the teens with a few frosty nights. Fair, windy days exchange with cool, wet days. Chance of heavy snow. April 20 – 26 Often sunny, mild and windy with some scattered rain or snow on 2 to 3 days this week, possibly heavy in places.

Manitoba March 30 – April 5 Cool but with occasional thawing. Windy, sunny days alternate with rain or snow, chance of heavy in some regions. April 6 – 12 Sunny, apart from a couple of days with rain or snow in the south, and heavier snow in the north. Windy. Mild days exchange with frosty nights. April 13 – 19 Unsettled, windy and changeable this week as sunshine alternates with rain and a chance of heavy snow. Frosty nights. April 20 – 26 Variable from mild to cool with some frost. Sunny, but with scattered rain or snow on 2 or 3 days.

Forecasts should be 80% accurate, but expect variations by a day or two because of changeable speed of weather systems.

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Temperatures are normals for April 15th averaged over 30 years.

Pretation Outlook For April

Precipitation Outlook For April

Above normal Normal Below normal Much below normal
Try these recipes and you just might change your mind.

Think you don’t like to eat liver?

T he most unpleasant dinner memories of my childhood are liver. Hated it. I know that is a strong sentiment but I can still feel the mushiness of it when I chewed. I couldn’t camouflage that away no matter how much ketchup we were allowed to pour onto it. Then I grew up and got pregnant and absolutely couldn’t take pregnancy vitamins without being very ill. So, the doctor and I had to come to an agreement. The worst part of it was that I had to, no getting around it, consume liver once a week. I am happy to say that once we started raising our own grain-finished beef, liver has become one of our favourite meals. My children even enjoy it.

Organ meats have gotten a bad reputation for cholesterol but for a healthy person organ meats in moderation can be a healthy addition to their diet. Of course people have to follow their doctors’ recommendations. Our family isn’t overly adventurous with organs but we do very much enjoy liver and will tolerate heart now. Organ meats are highly nutritious.

Liver is a fantastic source of copper, zinc, iron and vitamins A and D in abundance, and is also a rich source of antioxidants. It is an organ that is used by the body to filter toxins, therefore, it is best to know your source. Heart is a muscle so it is predisposed to having a nice firm texture. Beef heart has very concentrated levels of CoQ10, B vitamins, folate acid, selenium, phosphorus, zinc and amino acids that help burn fat, store energy and boost stamina and endurance. CoQ10 is speculated to be highly protective against cancer and is found only in animal foods, and its function is to protect the heart. Beef heart contains 40 per cent of our daily requirements per serving, and also has twice as much collagen and elastin. Our family enjoys chicken hearts as well as beef.

Knowing why it was important to eat these meats did help me to overcome the gag reflex and learn to love them. The first dish that made liver tolerable was stir-fry.

LIVER STIR-FRY

2 lbs. liver
Garlic
Ginger root (about 1/2 tsp. chopped)
Carrots
Celery
Broccoli
Cauliflower
Bean sprouts
1 c. beef broth
1/4 c. soy sauce
1/2 tsp. cumin
1 tsp. paprika
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. pepper
2 tsp. cornstarch

While the liver is still slightly frozen chop it into bite-size pieces. The narrower the strips the less the mushy texture is noticed. Soak the liver in water with a sprinkle of salt in it to help remove the excess blood while the vegetables are prepared. Cut up the vegetables in a method pleasing to your family feeling free to change the assortment. Drain the liver and dry on a clean dish towel. Season the liver with salt, pepper and garlic powder. In the melted coconut oil simmer the garlic but don’t brown it, then add the liver. Cook till it loses its pink. Remove from pan. Fry vegetables, adding more coconut oil if needed. When they reach the desired texture remove and add beef broth and soy sauce. Stir to thicken then add the liver and vegetables. Toss them well to coat. Serve with rice. Serves 6.

When this method was well tolerated we added the option of Fried Liver to our menu. It can be used for any species of liver/heart that happens to find its way into a farmer’s freezer.

FRIED LIVER/HEART

4 ozs. liver/heart per person
Onions
Whole grain flour (we use spelt)
Salt
Pepper
Garlic powder
Coconut oil

Slice the liver, while still a bit frozen, into very thin slices. Put the flour and spices into a freezer bag that will allow you to shake the pieces of meat, a few at a time, at comfortably. Brown the meat in the coconut oil and place in a baking pan. Coat with sliced onions and bake till it is cooked through, adding a bit of water if needed. Sometimes the flour and meat juices will make gravy on your own which is very tasty over mashed potatoes.

Another way to prepare heart that is very flavourful is to stuff it.

STUFFED HEART

1 c. onion
1 c. bread crumbs
1 1/2 c. butter
2-4 tbsp. coconut oil

Wash the heart and remove any fat along the top edge. Combine bread crumbs, onions, salt and pepper and butter very well. Stuff this mixture into the heart chambers. Grease a piece of aluminium foil big enough to wrap the heart in. Wrap the heart and place in a preheated 350 F oven, in an ovenproof baking dish, for about one hour.

Another idea for chicken livers would be this recipe that can be found at http://www.theclothesmakethegirl.com.

CRISPY SPICED CHICKEN LIVERS

1 to 1-1/2 lbs. chicken livers
2/3 c. coconut flour (we use spelt)
1 tsp. paprika
1 tsp. garlic powder
3/4 tsp. cumin
1/4 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. ground black pepper
1/4 tsp. cloves
2-4 tbsp. coconut oil

Fresh lemon and chopped fresh herbs (parsley, cilantro or mint) for garnish

Cut chicken livers into 2-inch pieces and pat dry with paper towels. In a small bowl, mix flour, paprika, garlic powder, cumin, salt, pepper, and cloves with a fork until blended. Pour the seasoned flour into a large zip-lock bag, add the chicken livers and shake gently until coated evenly. In a large saute pan, heat 2 tablespoons coconut oil over medium high until hot, about 2 minutes. Add about half the chicken livers in a single layer — try to arrange them so they don’t touch. Allow the bottom to brown well and form a crisp crust, about 3-5 minutes. Using tongs, flip the livers, and brown the other side. Set aside to drain on paper towels while you proceed with the second batch. You may need to add more coconut oil to the pan. Place the livers on a serving plate and garnish with a squeeze of fresh lemon juice and a sprinkle of chopped fresh herbs.

Prep 10 min.
Cook 15 min.
Serves 2-4

With these new recipes and the knowledge that organs really are a nutritious and usually economical meal choice feel free to be adventurous. Imagine how surprised my mom was to find out that I actually enjoy eating liver now and my children ask for it!
Life’s secrets, according to you…

People of the world, tell me this — what’s the one thing you wish you’d spend less time worrying about? Part Two

A s human beings, we’re all very different, and yet our worries are remarkably similar — we worry about our finances, mortality, what we look like, what other people think, what (we think) they’d say about us, often focusing more on keeping everyone else satisfied, rather than concentrating on our own happiness. We worry about being the best we can be for our families, and in the process, many of us live our lives solely to please others. Sometimes I think it all comes down to just wanting to be liked… feeling good enough, valued and appreciated for who we are. And if we don’t feel that, then we try to be someone else. What a world this would be if we all felt that we’re good enough and totally lovable, just the way we are… inherently knowing and trusting that those who come through us and after us would truly understand that we gave it all, that we fought hard, and loved hard. I worry a lot about not being good enough — I feel stretched in so many different directions that I often don’t even know which way I’m looking, or if I’m even standing anymore. I worry a lot about mortality — about the end and not having done enough. I worry that I’ll be lying on my deathbed with regrets about not being a better mother, wife, sister, daughter, friend, and that fills me with a sense of angst that can consume me if I let it.

Maybe there’s a real beauty in the collective similarities of our worries… perhaps this very flaw in the human condition is exactly what binds us all together. I don’t have a tattoo, but at the ripe old age of 39, pardon me, 29, I’d like to get the following quote inked on my body (Incidentally, my mother would faint if I got a tattoo. But not before issuing an oral dissertation on how silly a tattoo will look when I’m 80. Guess what, Mom? If I make it to 80, I’ll likely start smoking again to kick off my octogenarian celebrations, so the appearance of a wrinkled body tattoo will likely be the least of my concerns.)

“Men are haunted by the vastness of eternity. And so we ask ourselves, will our actions who across the centuries? Will strangers hear our names long after we’re gone and wonder who we were? How bravely we fought… how fiercely we loved….” — from Homer’s Odyssey

Here’s what I know: In the end, all material and ego-related issues will be laid to waste; our pride, our quest to be perfect, our attempts to hide our weaknesses, our worries, our fear of someone not liking us or thinking we’re not smart enough or good enough, our desire to be liked. In the end, none of this will matter. I’d like to think all that matter is how deeply we loved.

For now though, the remaining answers to what you wish you’d spend less time worrying about.

This one’s easy. I wish I would quit worrying about my weight and body size, but I fear that if I let it go, I’ll quickly weigh 300+ pounds.

Things getting worse again.

That my husband is going to stray.

What other people think or say about me… I’ve been working on this for the last year, and have made some milestones, but it’s always a work in progress. I believe it comes down to self-confidence.

I wish I spent less time worrying about my biggest regret.

Luckily I am not a big worrier. I take after my dad, thank God. In fact, I should probably worry more. Oh great, now I’m worried that I don’t worry enough!

What tasks are coming down the pipe at home and at work.

My body image.

Everyone else’s happiness. I’d love to spend less time trying to make other people happy; I’d love to resign from this neurotic career.

I wish I spent less time worrying about being a loser at work. I worry that I will suck at my job and that people will think I’m stupid.

I should worry less about pleasing others.

What I look like.

Having a child with learning troubles.

I wish I spent less time worrying about being competent — the pressure to be fair and yet keep it together as a functioning unit. Although I think that’s my job to do.

My grandchildren’s health.

I wish I spent less time worrying about being wrong or unliked.

If the work will ever get done on time.

Janita Van de Velde grew up on a farm near Mariapoli, Man. She holds a bachelor of science degree in agricultural economics from the University of Manitoba and has worked for a financial institution since graduating. She lives in Regina, Sask, with her husband Roddy and their children Jack, Isla and James. Her first novel, A Farmgirl’s Story, written under the pen name Nancy Whiten, was the recipient of the Saskatchewan Reader’s Choice Award 2009 and was also listed by CBC as one of the top 10 funny books in 2008. She devotes a portion of proceeds from the sale of her book to World Vision to help those less fortunate. For more information, or to order her book, visit her website at www.janita.ca.
Sharing tomato and RLS emails

Plus, a reader wants to know where to get Ogallala strawberry plants

This may come as a surprise but low-growing dill varieties make excellent companion plants dispersed here and there among nearby tomatoes. Shown is Ella dill that is densely leafy, bushier and short enough to even lend runner production.

Regardless of variety, strawberries are traditionally grown from bare root plants that should be set out as soon as soil can be worked in early spring. It’s recommended to pinch off all flowers during the first growing season to allow young plants to build strong roots. The exception is strawberries described as extremely hardy with very vigorous root systems can be left on after Canada Day for a fall crop, but harvest is usually sparse the first year. Well there you have it, Guinnes readers. Let’s move from the strawberry patch to the next email.

FROM THE QUEEN CITY

A Regina reader writes:

Enjoy your page — all of it, much interest. In reference to your Feb. 11, 2014 column pertaining to resting leg syndrome, I have no restless legs. She was prescribed a medication that is reserved for people with malaria that really didn’t work. I think restless leg syndrome is caused by mosquito bites. This became evident after a very busy bunch of insects made life anything but enjoyable, therefore, malaria medication was prescribed by a general practitioner. The druggist asked the patient when she got malaria, to which she replied that indeed she did not have malaria and the druggist was very puzzled as to why the medication prescribed for malaria. She passed away a number of years ago.

Perhaps a druggist can be of some assistance. I find that by raising my feet at bedtime I can get some relief. My discomfort has decreased in the past year.

Did you know that there are about 23 types of moss? I just enjoyed walking back home back road and along fencelines and checking stories, and the north side of trees. These are available at nurseries across the Prairies and elsewhere. If you have or rescued before the cold. It came in the house and over the winter grew slowly, but continuously.

CURIUM IN BRIEFLY EXPLAINED

It’s a substance in turmeric and both words are often intermixed. In India especially, turmeric is used to treat many health conditions. It is believed to have anti-inflammatory, antioxidant and perhaps even anti-cancer properties. Keep in mind that most studies are done in the lab.

MORE ON THE SUBJECT OF RLS

Researchers have puzzled for decades over this curious condition called restless legs syndrome and offered little explanation why some folks have difficulty keeping still at night. More recent studies suggest that RLS may be triggered by immune system disorders associated with excessive inflammation in the body. Based on that theory, episodes of inflammation and RLS may be reduced, reduced or controlled by avoiding and/or eliminating sources of inflammation from certain foods and medications. Follow guidelines prescribed by your physician and dietitian. Inflammatory contributors include processed foods, cured meats, refined carbohydrates and sugar. Ask your health-care provider about taking anti-inflammatory and calming supplements such as calcium and magnesium, herbal valerian, ginger, curcumin, omega-3 fatty acids especially 6, 9 and 12. Besides fish and walnuts, anti-inflammatory vegetables to include in your diet are beets, carrots, leafy greens, peppers, tomatoes and all kinds of beans and cherries.
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