



Innovation, education and regenerative agriculture

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GRASSROOTS NEWS & VIEWS July 2026

Coordinator's Note—Lori-Anne Forbes

Greetings FFGA Members

It was lovely to see some spring rain as we head into the official summer months. Sonja Bloom and I have been out in Newell County several times and she often comments on how much greener it is than her past visits.

I have now been with FFGA for about six weeks. With Sonja moving further south in the province, she will be strengthening the extension work there while I take on the extension work in the Northern and Eastern parts of the FFGA area. I hope I have been as good a student as she has been a guide!

I will take the opportunity to tell you a little more about myself and how I got to be at Foothills Forage and Grazing Association; I grew up on WineGlass Ranch near Cochrane, Alberta. In the 1990s, my Mom (Edith Wearmouth) and Grandpa became involved with Cows and Fish. The work they were doing together showed me the previously unknown world of agriculture innovation and collaboration. I later lived briefly in Lethbridge (my first university paper was on Cows and Fish!), then to Nova Scotia, where I earned an Honours degree in Cultural Anthropology and Social Research. In other words, I am deeply interested in why people do what they do and how ideas and concepts connect. After returning home, I worked on a different cattle ranch, in the Cochrane area, where a very innovative manager encouraged me to explore new approaches in agriculture even further. Essentially, if the neighbors were not looking at you skeptically, you probably were not trying hard enough! Over my time there the ranch bought goats for brush control, pasture chickens for cleaning and fertilizing pasture, and an extensive water pipeline. While working at this cattle operation I attended several FFGA events and got to know the organization further.

My husband, Danny, and I moved off the WineGlass Ranch in 2018 and now live in Cochrane. Our two girls (5 and 8) were fortunate to be at the other ranch with me most days from birth until 2025. My oldest practices managed rotational grazing with her chickens.

When I found myself looking for a new career path I was ecstatic to see FFGA was hiring. I am so pleased to be the Regional Extension Coordinator for FFGA. The mix of research, education and agriculture is a fitting recipe for my values and interest.

In my first month; FFGA staff members were involved in industry events such as the Newell County Ag Summit, and the RDAR (Results Driven Agriculture Research) Round-Up. The team hosted a Foothills Ranch History event in Longview and partnered in other events throughout the month. The highlights have been connecting and reconnecting with producers, researchers and partners in our industry. At the Newell Ag Summit we were able to tour the amazing Crop Diversification Centre where folks utilize labs, fields and greenhouses to conduct research and experiments. An incredible facility, especially with changes in agriculture research in the province. Right now, I'm working on two upcoming Virtual Fencing/Collar events. The first will take place near Cochrane in August and will showcase the use of virtual fencing collars in a grazing system. The second, scheduled for January near Nanton, will focus on how virtual fencing collars can be used to manage cattle during swath grazing.

I look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events

Lori-Anne Forbes



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On the Cover: Stewardship to Settlement: Ranching in the Foothills event at Alex Robertsons. Photo: FFGA

Thank you for your support!



Is it time to begin late-summer protein supplementation?



Photo: FFGA

As we move through July and August, forage quality across Oklahoma's tallgrass and midgrass prairie rangelands and bermudagrass pastures decline. Assuming adequate forage availability, forage quality becomes the primary factor limiting cattle performance.

Grazing studies have documented substantial declines in both crude protein concentration and digestibility as summer progresses. Native range crude protein commonly falls from approximately 15% in the spring to 7% by late summer and continues declining into fall. Consider that a 650 lb. steer gaining 2 lbs. per day requires a diet with about 11% protein.

When forage quality declines, cattle performance becomes limited by protein, energy, or both. In many late-summer grazing situations, protein is the first limiting nutrient. Rumen microbes require adequate protein to efficiently digest forage fiber. When protein becomes deficient, forage digestion slows, forage intake declines, and animal performance suffers. Therefore, in Oklahoma grazing systems, when dietary protein drops below 11%, protein intake is the primary factor limiting the animals' rate of gain.

Fertilized bermudagrass follows a similar pattern, although the protein concentration is higher initially and remains higher throughout the grazing season. The point in time at which protein becomes the limiting dietary factor is certainly influenced by stocking rate and grazing management. While both forage species can

be expected to fall below growing cattle's protein requirement, that point in time may occur as much as 60 days later in bermudagrass grazing systems.

Numerous Oklahoma studies have demonstrated that relatively small amounts of protein supplement can substantially improve the performance of growing cattle grazing native pasture during late summer.

Across several trials, stocker cattle receiving approximately one pound per day of a high-protein (30 to 38%) supplement gained an average of 0.37 lb more per day than unsupplemented cattle. These responses occurred because forage protein concentration was the first limiting nutrient, and filling the gap between protein supply and the animal's requirement increased forage intake and digestibility.

Research has consistently shown additional improvements in rate of gain by including an ionophore, a feed additive such as Rumensin® (monensin) or Bovatec® (lasalocid). Ionophores alter rumen fermentation in ways that improve feed efficiency and increase the amount of useful energy cattle obtain from forage. Research conducted in Oklahoma and summarized in recent meta-analyses indicates ionophores typically increase gains by an additional 0.13 to 0.28 lb per day. Combined with protein supplementation, total improvements in average daily gain commonly range from 0.5 to 0.6 lb per day.

These responses are especially attractive because supplement efficiency is generally favorable. In many Oklahoma grazing trials, less than two pounds of supplement were required to generate one pound of additional gain. Few management practices consistently provide that level of return on investment.

The benefits of ionophores extend beyond weight gain. A recent meta-analysis conducted at Oklahoma State University evaluated results from 18

studies involving replacement heifers and 21 studies involving mature beef cows. Across studies, ionophore supplementation improved average daily gain while reducing feed intake, indicating improved efficiency of forage utilization.

For replacement heifers, the ionophore Rumensin increased the proportion of females cycling before the breeding season by nearly 16 percentage units and reduced age at puberty by approximately nine days. In mature cows, monensin reduced the interval to first estrus by approximately 18 days and increased the percentage of cows exhibiting estrus before the breeding season by 19 percentage units.

Interestingly, these improvements in reproductive readiness occurred despite little evidence for increased pregnancy rates. Nevertheless, earlier puberty and a greater proportion of females cycling at the start of the breeding season are generally considered favorable outcomes because they increase opportunities for conception early in the breeding season.

Taken together, available research suggests that a modest amount of protein supplement combined with an ionophore can improve forage utilization, increase average daily gain by approximately one-half pound per day, and enhance reproductive preparedness in both developing heifers and mature cows. Few nutritional technologies have demonstrated such consistent benefits across a wide range of forage-based production systems.

Author: David Lalman

Original Article: <https://www.beefmagazine.com/livestock-management/is-it-time-to-begin-late-summer-protein-supplementation>



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Join us for a day of learning focused on the Pasture Powerup Project and the management of invasive species in pasture systems. Explore the role grazing systems play in the encroachment of invasive species such as Canada thistle, downy brome, and invasive brush, and hear insights from representatives with Corteva and Envu.

The day will include visits to two pasture sites, where participants will tour demonstration plots, compare treatment and control areas, and discuss product performance and management outcomes. You'll also gain practical knowledge on grazing management strategies and learn how these approaches can be applied to your own operation. Whether you're looking to improve pasture productivity, manage invasive species more effectively, or learn from on-the-ground demonstrations, this field day will provide valuable information and practical takeaways.

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Seven research sites to close, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada confirms



Photo: Central Alberta Online

Three Agriculture Agri-Food Canada research and development centres and four satellite research farms will close, the federal government has confirmed Friday.

Research and development centres at Guelph, Ont., Quebec City, Que., and Lacombe, Alta., will close, an AAFC spokesperson said in a statement on Friday afternoon.

Satellite research farms at Nappan, N.S., Scott, Sask., Indian Head, Sask. and Portage la Prairie, Man., will also close.

“Like other federal departments, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) has identified savings over three years while remaining focused on its core mandate,” AAFC said.

“AAFC will remain Canada’s largest agricultural research organization, with 17 research centres nationwide and research farmland in every province. There are no imminent site closures, and any wind-down of scientific operations would follow a careful decision process that could take up to 12 months. Many employees may be retained, re-assigned, or relocated. It is too early to determine final workforce impacts.”

Restructuring Canada’s agriculture research landscape

Cuts to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) could be a step toward restructuring Canada’s agriculture research landscape, according to national stakeholders.

Keith Currie, President of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) called the cutbacks a “necessary evil” and said Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Heath MacDonald and Deputy Minister Lawrence Hanson have their “fingers on the pulse of the ministry.”

“There’s nothing wrong with efficiencies,” Currie said. “And if ... there were hirings that didn’t make sense, taking a look at it and getting leaner and meaner, I think that’s what we do in business. That’s what you do on our farms.”

He added there have been jobs added in the last decade that some producers have “kind of scratched our head at.”

“Having said that, it depends where these cuts are going to happen,” he continued. “We’ve been clamoring for probably 10, 15 years about not enough public sector research.”

Tyler McCann, Managing Director of the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute (CAPI) said the cutbacks, particularly the reported closures of research sites, were a predictable development.

“(AAFC) has, for decades now, not been investing in its infrastructure,” he said. “It has not been keeping up the investments it needed to make to maintain quality modern research infrastructure.”

“It is inevitable, if you don’t invest, that at a certain point in time you will need to start to close facilities. And that appears to be where we’re at today.”

He added politicians were likely responding to the signals from the broader agriculture community, which he said has not always championed science and research among other issues like trade and business risk management.

“Hopefully this reminds everyone else in the ag ecosystem that research and development and innovation is critical to competitiveness, and we need to double down on making that a priority going forward.”

McCann said an upside of the cuts is that they could provide an opportunity for a renewal point in agriculture research in Canada.

“Hopefully Agriculture Canada will start to show some leadership on this and engage with the other stakeholders who have significant skin in the game, other R&D funders, other R&D performers, in what that renewal looks like.”

It could be a chance for the AAFC to do more with less. McCann said there is an argument to be made that the department “had too broad of a research footprint for the research funding envelope that they had.”

“What will determine whether or not we can be competitive at a time of cuts is whether or not they’re going to make other changes to how they fund and do research to streamline and improve the efficiency of the work that they do.”

Currie and McCann both said it would be important to keep on those with roles to play in the recently announced Next Policy Framework, which will cover the 2028-33 period.

“That is a real opportunity for governments and the stakeholder community around them to double down on innovation and to say, yes, we know that (AAFC) shrank its footprint, but in the Next Policy Framework, for the next five years, governments are going to commit more resources and more energy and more focus to innovation,” McCann said.

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Currie also pointed to the agriculture trade file and the temporary foreign worker/seasonal agriculture worker programs as areas he hoped would remain steady.

Competitiveness, productivity implications

University of Saskatchewan agricultural economist Richard Gray said the loss of research programs is concerning.

Public research cost-benefit returns are 35:1 in wheat alone, he said. Other countries that have cut public research in favour of private funding have seen productivity gains decline.

Gray added he hopes the government has a new funding model in mind since the cuts don't fit with the growth model currently touted by prime minister Mark Carney.

"I think it's a shame and disgrace that we're not, as a country, supporting one of the foundations of our country in an appropriate manner that will keep the industry competitive and vibrant on the world stage," said Ken Coles, executive director of Lethbridge-based research and innovation group Farming Smarter.

Coles said this was a problem with leadership in general, and basically underestimating the importance of agriculture to a country.

He said investment has slumped from provincial and private angles as well.

"Our agricultural innovation system is a complete HR crisis. I don't think we have the human capital to deal with any challenges that we might be facing in the future, and we certainly won't be able to take advantage of any opportunities and innovation," Coles said.

"It's been a critical loss in capacity that allowed us to do great things in agriculture. I think we no longer have it."

Coles said it's difficult for his organization to hire scientists with the right skills. They instead have to be trained "from the ground up."

"Everybody's excited and sold these grand new ideas of new technologies solving things. But you still hear the same message that we're failing at adopting and commercializing innovation," Coles said.

"All the innovation is on this public entrepreneur piece, and they don't know how to add value in agriculture. It goes well beyond just this layoff. It's another blow to breaking the innovation system in agriculture across the country."

There's an insidious aspect to cutting research, said Reynold Bergen, science director at the Beef Cattle Research Council.

"It's like a really long hose. Think of water running out of a long hose, and you shut the tap off and water keeps running until it doesn't," he said.

"We may not see impact right away from a production perspective, but the impact will come, they'll show up."

One way to predict the impact is to look at past benefits of forage, beef and cattle research from AAFC, Bergen said.

"If you think of some of the things that have come out, where would you be without them? So where would you be without new varieties? Where would you be without extended grazing? Where would you be without good controls on food safety? Where would you be without a good grading system? Those are the kind of impacts that we will see down the line."

Industry reacts

The Canadian Wheat Research Coalition said the staff cuts and resulting impacts are a tremendous loss for the industry.

"It is a loss of not only expertise and people who have contributed to farmers' success, but also of agricultural research capacity that is crucial to fueling innovation and maintaining progress throughout the industry," said chair Jocelyn Velestuk in a news release.

The CWRC was already reviewing Canada's wheat breeding innovation system and said this is even more vital now. It said long-term impacts aren't yet clear.

Manitoba-based producer group Keystone Agricultural Producers was attempting to parse out the implications of closures in an interview prior to the AAFC statement confirming closures.

General manager Colin Hornby said his first concern was how this would affect farmers.

"We want to make sure that there's no funding cuts that negatively impact the services programs or whatever value it is that producers get from AAFC," he said.

Hypothetically, Hornby said, mass shutdowns of research centres and layoffs would impact the science-based tools KAP needs, but it's difficult to know for sure until more details are made available.

"I'm just trying to wrap my head around what type of roles they are eliminating. Is it field research stations? Is it people in Ottawa?" Hornby said. "We're all piecing it together from different parts."

Author: Glacier Farm Media

Original Article: [https://](https://www.producer.com/news/saskatchewan-agricultural-research-centres-cut/?cf_chl_f_tk=YRHxCRE0UG5JcgPF1I2rhjepXeKegZpN7K3IAcjHYws-1783005797-1.0.1.1-kc2tBR7TyI-B71wPtZ58..51TNYgm.PnFRnEcq688EVw)

www.producer.com/news/saskatchewan-agricultural-research-centres-cut/?cf_chl_f_tk=YRHxCRE0UG5JcgPF1I2rhjepXeKegZpN7K3IAcjHYws-1783005797-1.0.1.1-kc2tBR7TyI-B71wPtZ58..51TNYgm.PnFRnEcq688EVw

Liver flukes: a hidden parasite spreading in Prairie herds

Photo: EFCA



I have steadily heard of the ever-increasing diagnosis of liver flukes in Western Canada. Both in clinical practise and then as a technical services veterinarian, I was hearing of increasing number of herds which have infestations. Most times, it starts as an unexplained death and a complete postmortem, where making many slashes through the liver will spot the adult flukes.

Veterinarians in other cases see reduced weight gains, lacklustre haircoats and diarrhea. This condition can be rather insidious to start. If you see one case, you must assume the rest of the herd has some level of infection. Death can be due to liver failure and the amount of liver damage done by the liver flukes or the association with *Clostridium hemolyticum*, or Redwater. The latter is a clostridial disease brought on by liver damage and we often see both these diseases hand-in-hand, meaning if we see Redwater we will look closer for liver flukes and vice versa.

This article will review the prevalence diagnosis life cycle and very treatment of this somewhat emerging disease in Western Canada.

Elk vectors

More positive diagnosis was more common when we had big numbers in the elk industry. It might have spread then to the wild populations of elk in some areas, although that may be just conjecture, but it does make some sense.

This is another example of veterinarians working with wildlife peo-

ple. We need to communicate with each other as to what is going on with the species we deal with. It has even been documented in bighorn sheep where they graze in very low land in British Columbia, so it covers a wide range of species.

Where flukes lurk

Liver flukes are more prevalent in wetter conditions and climates, as they rely on the snail as the intermediate host. Those snails hang out in low-lying areas on pasture. The general saying is, if you find low land and snails, liver flukes may be in the equation and worth watching out for.

In Canada primarily, I have heard of the deer fluke or giant liver fluke (*Fascioloides magna*). Another name we rarely hear of is the common fluke, *Fasciola hepatica*. The uniqueness of the deer fluke, both in cattle, bison, bighorn sheep and other species besides the deer species, is that it is a dead-end host. No further spreading of the flukes happens. The reproductive phase stops. No eggs pass out into the environment.

The issue is then that there is really no reliable diagnosis until one closely examines a dead or slaughter animal and cuts sections through the liver, exposing the liver flukes. This helps further spread, but the snails are the multipliers that get the infectious parts into the water supply.

I can't stress the importance of doing autopsies on sudden deaths enough, but this should also be one on poor-doing animals, checking all internal organs and especially the liver.

Identifying Redwater

Death from Redwater will give characteristic cartwheel shaped necrotic areas, or you find the flukes themselves or abscesses from bacteria showering into the blood stream and essentially being filtered out by the liver. All these things cause vary-

ing damage to the organ and, when bad enough, the liver fails. The key is, if finding one of these things, they can be to a lesser degree in the rest of the herd.

The proper diagnosis is essential for treatment for the rest of the group and prevention. Prevention will involve treating at the right time and with the appropriate medication.

Once found, consider flukes endemic in an area and yearly treatment will likely be the recommended practice. Avoiding low land where snails' habitat is great is best but likely not possible when large grazing areas are used with multiple low spots and access to water. Veterinarians find once you have it, routine treatment is necessary.

In countries such as Ireland and Scotland, you will see lots of medication for flukes in the veterinary clinics for use on cattle and sheep especially. It is a routine thing to treat.

Keeping farmers in the loop

I do really hope if any evidence of flukes are found on slaughter animals that it gets communicated back to you the producer. Having a liver condemned on slaughter animals is one thing, but the inciting reason or cause of the liver condemnation is what we need. Years ago, I knew of an extension veterinarian in Manitoba who gave demonstrations on cutting into the liver specifically to look for liver flukes.

In the other countries there is a lot of the common liver fluke so the common products as a flukicide are available. In Canada, treatment now involves bringing in a product that will get both types of flukes and that was triclabendazole. One trade name was "Fasinex."

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The issue is, it needed to be brought in under an emergency drug release. This meant being diagnosed by your vet and getting an import permit for your herd specifically. Most recently, a company is compounding it in Canada. Your veterinarian can bring it in and have it in stock until needed and the prescription is made to your herd when dispensed. It will make it much easier to get now in Canada if it is diagnosed. Oral product is generally given by drench. Two companies, Elanco and Solvet, are the only ones now able to get this very specific treatment in Canada.

Avoiding resistance

With all parasiticides, we want to only use if diagnosed and prescribed by your veterinarian.

The triclabendazole is in the family of benzimidazole dewormers but really specific in its effect on liver flukes. I am always hearing it is

the magna species being diagnosed in all species. The triclabendazole is given orally and mainly in the fall of the year once the immature stages of the liver flukes have been picked up from the water where the snails are.

Severe infestations may require more treatment, but that is where working with your veterinarian with the best treatment, timing and prevention comes into play.

I know the eastern slopes of the Rockies where we see Redwater disease and a few areas of Manitoba are the prime locations in Canada for the issue. Again, though, it is diagnosed more and more by veterinarians.

The eight-way or nine-way or 10-way clostridial vaccines should contain protection against Redwater, but always ask your veterinarian to be sure. Both Redwater and liver flukes are diseases which can be controlled with the proper vaccine and timing for Redwater as well as

proper control timing and treatment for liver flukes.

Always get autopsies done to determine death, but also as a way to evaluate parasitism, mineral status etc. Have your veterinarian do complete autopsies and if anything unusual is seen with on-farm butchering, take pictures or videos and have the situation checked out.

Author: Roy Lewis

Original Article: https://www.canadiancattlemen.ca/commentcolumns/liver-flukes-a-hidden-parasite-spreading-in-prairie-herds/?utm_source=Glacier+FarmMedia+LP&utm_campaign=f34a875122-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2026_07_07_08_40&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_be8da64209-f34a875122-90792164&mc_cid=f34a875122&mc_eid=8b7a7cf01a



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Jordie was raised on a mixed operation in southern Alberta. Jordie has attended various courses on stockmanship, livestock marketing, soil and forage. Since 2006 Jordie has taken numerous courses with Hand 'n Hand Livestock Solutions with Whit Hibbard and Dawn Hnatow. Jordie spent 12 years sorting cattle in auction markets before moving to the southern United States to operate a cow/calf program.



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