



Foothills Forage & Grazing Association

2009 Annual Report

PO Box 5145 High River, Alberta T1V 1M3 Phone: (403) 652-4900 Fax: (403) 652-4090
Email: laura@foothillsforage.com Website: www.foothillsforage.com

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Foothills Forage & Grazing Association is producer-driven and focuses on relevant issues, providing unbiased forage and grazing information to forage producers. We partner with industry, government and the agriculture community to achieve the goals of the association. The members of the association are actively involved and there is skilled leadership and management including staff and volunteers.

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Mission Statement

The Foothills Forage and Grazing Association encourages a profitable and sustainable forage industry by providing an information network for southern Alberta forage producers.

2009 Board of Directors

Vice President:
Morrie Goetjen
Cochrane
(403) 948-5460

Doug Wray
Irricana
(403) 935-4642

Rod Vergouwen
Strathmore
(403) 934-6228

Michael Monner
Milo
(403) 599-3790

Alex Robertson

President:
Graeme Finn
Crossfield
(403) 312-2240

Directors:
Longview
(403) 558-3799

Rick Kohut
Didsbury
(403) 335-9675

Ian Murray
Acme
(403) 546-0022

Wayne Robinson

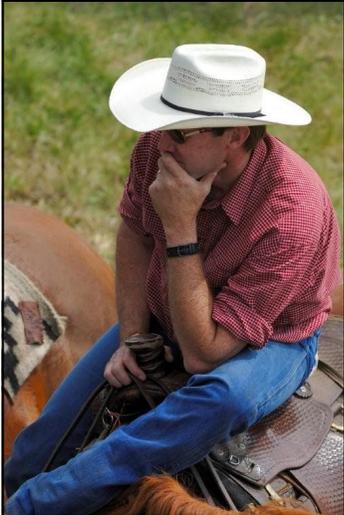
Treasurer:
Sean LaBrie
Didsbury
(403) 335-8189

Mossleigh
(403) 934-4083

Staff

Manager:
Laura LaBrash
Highwood Auction Mart
(403) 652-4900

Chairman's Report 2009



Graeme Finn

This last year (2009) has seen many big changes for Foothills Forage and Grazing Association (FFGA). Firstly the name was changed to more widely represent who we are and what we do. We moved the office from Calgary to the Highwood Auction Mart at High River and employed a full time manager, Laura LaBrash, to run the association the way we see fit and to help us move forward while better serving the membership. We have implemented a few new fund raising programs to support field days, seminars and field trials. We have started a corporate sponsorship program with corporate sponsors paying between \$350 to \$1500 for the year of 2009, which provides them with input in the *Grassroots News & Views* newsletter. The gold sponsors are also invited to co-host field days with FFGA based around some of their information and products. This initiative has been really well accepted by industry sponsors and 2010 has FFGA moving forward with an increase in sponsorship fees as well as more corporations partnering with us. The companies that joined us for 2009 as both corporate and event sponsors include Dow AgroSciences, Parkland Agri Services, Agrowplow Canada, R.A.WEST International, Brett Young Seeds, S.A.L.E, Gallagher, Sundog Solar, Wheatland County, Blue Rock Mineral 2002 Inc, Cartwright D Ranch and Cattleman's Corner. 2010 partnerships are looking promising with these 2009 sponsors as well as Cargill, Meyers Norris Penny, Vulcan, Kneehill, Rocky View, Mountain View and Foothills Counties joining us.

The year saw six tours and a few trials put on by FFGA. We started the year off with the AGM in March, which featured Sheldon Atwood and Rick Kohut who spoke on both grazing and chemical weed control methods. The spring tour in April was based on bale and swath grazing and we visited both Scott Copley's and Don Evan's to see it in practice. A low-stress cattle handling clinic with Dylan Biggs, and a fall seminar on livestock health and nutrition featuring Bryan McMurry, a Cargill Nutritionist, were also well attended, high calibre events. To wrap the year up there was a winter tour based on winter grazing, electric fencing and watering systems. The Thistle grazing trial at Sean & Holly LaBrie's had a promising start, until they were hailed out in early August. We are looking forward to kick starting that project again this season. Rod & Beth Vergouwen worked on a hay swath and bale grazing project which we viewed at our winter tour in December. Unfortunately our trial on swath grazing oat varieties and my trial on swath grazing hay where hailed out with 100% hail damage, we will try again this year along with trials on corn and millet grazing. If you are interested in being a co-operator on any of these trials please contact Laura.

2010 is gearing up to be an exciting and active year! We are looking forward to our 15 day tour to Brazil at the end of November for around 30 to 35 people. We have picked Brazil for our first international tour because it has become the neighbour that we should keep an eye on in the cattle industry. We are hoping that international tours will become regular events held every two years. Foothills stands to raise about \$200 per person for this trip which is another way to fund our group.

I would like say thanks to all the board members and Laura for everything that they have done to help move the Association forward. We have become stronger and more focused over the last couple of years and are moving ahead in new and exciting ways, we are always looking outside the box to improve Foothills Forage and Grazing Association.

Graeme Finn

Manager's Note



Laura LaBrash

FFGA has not only survived the season of change that came with 2009 but is thriving and growing! 2009 provided FFGA with new challenges that have been met with an enthusiastic and proactive board of directors. I am happy to report that my first months with FFGA have been busy, exciting and generally successful! The learning curve has been steep for me these past months and I want to extend my thanks to the board and the members of FFGA for their support and patience. FFGA is a great group to be a part of as it works towards positive and productive solutions in a some-what depressed industry. The level of commitment and positive attitude of FFGA to the success of forage and livestock producers is what gives us the leading edge.

FFGA has been busy bringing forward events, projects and information that is useful and beneficial to its members. FFGA has been increasing its activity and is proud to have provided several high quality events over the past few months. I have a feeling that 2010 is going to see even more progress with events, projects and the sharing of information amongst industry, government and producers. We hope that you have been enjoying the *Grassroots News & Views*, and are pleased to announce that it is now a monthly, 8 page newsletter. Feedback and topic ideas are always welcome for events, projects and the newsletter. FFGA has been working hard to reinforce old partnerships and peruse new ones. We feel that we have a lot to offer, and working with other agriculture related groups helps us to better meet the goals of our members and be able to provide more events, seminars, tours and information. Part of this initiative is to increase our funding as well as the diversity of our funding sources. A good start has been made and we will continue to explore and expand this avenue as best we can.

In recent years the forage and livestock industry, specifically the beef industry, has experienced a number of challenging situations; such as BSE, a high Canadian dollar, changing and demanding world markets, and regulations on trade to name a few. The future of forage and livestock producers is uncertain, and today's producers are challenged with a changing world market while high quality standards still apply. FFGA works with forage producers to meet these needs and support profitable and sustainable forage and livestock production. Despite the turmoil within the industry FFGA moves forward with a positive and motivated attitude. Those producers that are a part of FFGA are finding new and exciting ways to be successful producers in Alberta. FFGA takes pride in being able to share and test so many production strategies to assist producers in improving the industry at the grassroots level. FFGA is a producer-driven association and I take my hat off to our members who continue to adapt and put food on our tables. 2009 was a year of growth and 2010 is gearing up to be a great year for FFGA!

Laura LaBrash

Foothills Forage & Grazing Association Events

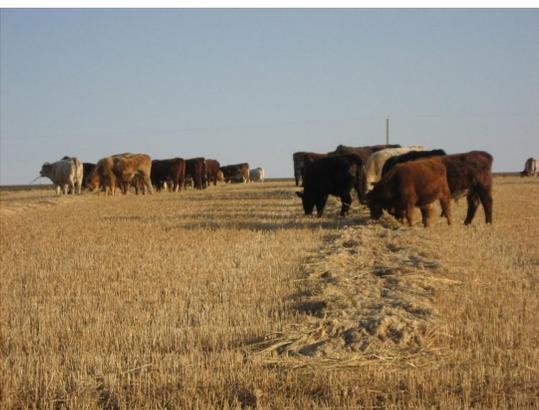
Annual General Meeting, March 11 2009

The FFGA Annual General Meeting was held at the Crossfield Community Center on March 11th. The future directions and plans of FFGA were discussed and moved forward at the AGM. Three new board members were elected; Wayne Robinson, Ian Murray and Rick Kohut. They have been active and engaged board members over the past year and FFGA appreciates their contributions to the association. The AGM was not only a time to gather and discuss the association and meet with friends and like-minded producers, but also a time to gather information and new ideas. FFGA was joined by Sheldon Atwood from Carrus Land Systems, Utah. Sheldon gave informative and motivating presentations on weed control, animal behaviour and how it can be used as a tool for pasture weed control. Parkland Representative and one of FFGA's newest board members, Rick Kohut, gave a presentation on controlling Canada Thistle in southern Alberta with the use of herbicides. The AGM was a great gathering for FFGA and those that attended.

Spring Tour, April 8 2009

FFGA's Spring Tour was held on a sunny warm day in April. The event examined different methods of winter grazing as well as giving an update on the "Stockpiled Forage for Winter Grazing" project. Around 25 people came out for the tour, with some coming from as far away as the Cypress Hills region. We were able to visit two sites which were using different methods of winter grazing as a successful management tool.

Scott Copley welcomed us to his operation to discuss and witness how he is bunch grazing and bale grazing his cow-calf pairs. He has found this method lowers production costs to improve his bottom line. He was able to provide financial backing to show how he is making this type of grazing work for him. The demonstration he had set up for FFGA inspired thought and productive conversation amongst the group. Scott Copley is a leader in extended grazing and incorporating it into a profitable beef operation.



The tour then headed to Don Evans' operation in the Balzac area. Don has had success with swath grazing yearling steers and provided useful information on setting up the fencing as well as other tips to make it practical for individual operations.

After lunch Tracy Lundago, with Cargill, gave a presentation on the importance, use and options of winter minerals. Grant Lastiwka with the

Department of Agriculture, based out of Olds, then gave a presentation on the use, nutritional value and economics of stockpiled forages. It was a great day of information and discussion based on increasing the number of grazing days in a year and some of the management strategies to make it work.



Parkland Agri Services Seed & Soil Expo, August 5 & 6 2009

Parkland Agri Services, a FFGA Gold Sponsor, held their first annual Seed & Soil Expo in August. Despite the rain and wet weather it was a successful two days full of information on crop varieties, fertilizer options and new innovative chemical products. Different winter feed varieties and options were discussed, including triticale, barley, oats, rye and corn. The expo was a great success with over 350 people attending over the two day expo.



FFGA followed the expo with a trip out to a trial pasture that was sprayed with Reclaim, an up and coming pasture weed and brush control product produced by Dow AgroScience. Director and plant specialist Rick Kohut guided the tour giving information on the new product as well as identifying various forage and weed species.



Low - Stress Cattle Handling Clinic, September 10 2009

The Low-Stress Cattle Handling Clinic was a day full of information, learning and collaboration among producers as well as their livestock! Dylan Biggs led over 30 people through classrooms sessions, demonstrations and hands-on learning. The theme of the day was moving cattle quietly and effectively. The information was well received and the group was interactive and eager to try out the techniques and ideas that Dylan presented. Using low-stress handling techniques saves producers time as well as having positive effects on stress-related diseases and shrink, in the case of transport. The clinic was held on a hot sunny September day near Longview, at Alex Robertson's. Thank you to Alex and Carol for being such wonderful hosts!



Thank you to the following sponsors for helping to make this event possible; Gallagher, Cattlemen's Corner, Cartwright D Ranch and Agrow Plow. The atmosphere was positive and I'm certain many participants had a similar response to Pieter Vander Mey (Gallagher) who "found it to be a very insightful day. Watching Dylan demonstrate the skill required to achieve control of the herd in a calm and quiet manner was a learning experience, it proved to me and many of the participants that Low Stress is the way to go". Thank you to Dylan Biggs for his expertise and to all those who attended.



Dow Pasture Walk, September 23 2009

FFGA and Dow AgroSciences put on a pasture walk at two test sites where Reclaim had been used as a pasture weed control product. Reclaim is an up-and-coming weed control product that works to increase grass production by providing extended control of western buck brush, wild rose, shrubby cinquefoil, silverberry, broadleaf weeds, and invasive plants in rangeland and permanent pasture. It is a unique combination of active ingredients, which is safe on grass while providing long lasting control of shrub and weed species. About 15 people came out on this hot sunny day for the tour. Thank you to FFGA director Rick Kohut and Dow Territory Manager Candice Manshreck for identifying plant and weed species present in the pasture east of Stavely and west of Nanton.



Winter Feeding & Nutrition Seminar, October 5 2009

The Winter Feeding & Nutrition Seminar was held at the Alberta Agriculture Center in Airdrie and was an informative day that helped producers evaluate their winter feeding strategies. Winter feeding options were discussed by producers, animal nutritionist Bryan McMurry, and veterinarian Nathan Ericson. The combination of producer experience and expertise on nutrient requirements made for a very compelling and beneficial day. Looking at feeding options considering the difficult 2009 growing conditions with drought, hail and an abnormally cool spring, provided ideas and management tools for producers to develop feeding plans with what they had last fall while maintaining and promoting production. FFGA was happy to have 45 producers attend the event. Thank you to all who attended! Also a special thank you to our sponsors for this event; Gallagher and AgrowPlow, their support helped to make this day a success!



Dr. Bryan McMurry
Cargill Nutritionist



Winter Tour, December 3 2009

On a cold December day we had our winter tour in the Strathmore area. We started the day off with information and presentations at the Wheatland County Office. We had Jim Stone discuss bale and swath grazing, as well as electric fencing tips for winter. Marvin Jackson with Sundog Solar discussed different watering systems, solar watering systems and ways to make them work for different producers. Murray Green offered information on different funding options available to producers through the Growing Forward program.



After a delicious lunch, sponsored by Sundog Solar, FFGA director Rod Vergouwen gave us some information on his winter feeding system. He is bale and swath grazing an alfalfa and meadow brome hay on the same field. Rod uses electric fence to let the cows into about 3 days of feed at a time. Lee Eddy with Blue Rock Mineral provided feed testing on Rod's bales and swathes which Lee then discussed from a nutritional point of view.



After the presentations we all headed out to Rod's place to view his cattle in the bale & swath grazing field. He also showed us the frost-free solar and wind generated watering system which he uses to pump water from his dug out. He has been using it for several years and finds it works quite well. This was another successful event with about 35 producers in attendance. Thank you to Wheatland County for helping organize the day, as well as Sundog Solar for sponsoring the lunch and Blue Rock mineral for providing the feed testing.



Foothills Forage & Grazing Association Projects

Stockpiled Forage Project

Assessing the Value of Stockpiled Forage in an Extended Grazing System

FFGA participated in a province wide project to assess the value of stockpiled forage fed over the winter months. Four FFGA producer co-operators participated; Rod Vergouwen, Morrie Goetjen, Justin Blades and Wayne Robinson, who used pasture situated in the Strathmore, Cremona, Long View, and Mossleigh areas respectively. All four of these co-operators found this system of extended grazing to be beneficial for their operation. Below is a summary of their experience and some of the results that were found.

Rod Vergouwen
Strathmore, AB

The sample site is the NE quarter of section 10-24-23 W4. The samples sites chosen are meadow Brome grass taken at a height that the cattle will graze to. The field is divided into 4 pastures approximately 30 acres each. 105 cow/calf pairs grazed together in one group. They grazed each pasture for 3 days starting June 5 and ending June 16, 2008. This field received 8 1/10 inches of rainfall from May 1 until Aug 19, 2008. This pasture was also used as winter pasture for 144 cow/calf pairs from Dec 23 until Jan 26, 2008. The cattle were fed hay and green feed at 20 lbs per day during this period as a supplement to the stockpiled grass. Estimated yields were 3/4 ton dry matter. Legumes were added to the pasture in the spring of 2009 to increase forage productivity.



This field was in crop production until 2004 when it was seeded to Meadow Brome (4.5 lbs/acre), tall wheat grass (4.5 lbs/acre), and barley (1.4 bu/acre) as cover crop. The barley was removed as green feed the summer of 2004. There has been no fertilizer applied since 2003. Most of the wheat grass has been replaced by the brome grass except in the low areas.

Sample Date	Aug 19 2008	Oct 13 2008	Jan 21 2009	April 7 2009
Average Weight	38.6g	28.44g	31.0g	29.38g

- Cow Condition in Dec 2008 with calves at their side was 3.5 on a scale of 5
- Cow Condition for April 2009 with calves at their side was 2.75
- There were 18 inches of snow in Dec 2008
- 50% removed by the end of April
- Hay and green feed were used as supplement at 20 lbs per pair in December
- Supplement feed was delivered in 3 day intervals
- Grass consumed per cow was approx 30 lbs/day from Dec 2008 until the end of April 2009

Rod Vergouwen



Morrie Goetjen
Cochrane, AB

The pasture site used is located 5 miles north and 2 miles east of Cremona. Our area generally has good growing conditions with 15-20 inches of rain annually. This particular pasture was a mixed alfalfa and timothy hay crop that was sown in 1999 and retired from haying in 2007.

60 cow/calf pairs grazed this 100 acre field in late June of 2008 for approximately 15 days. The condition of the field was quite lush and a lot of the crop was headed out with alfalfa approximately 50% in bloom when it was first grazed. 2008 was an excellent year for grass and the rains were very timely and at times heavy.

When I used this field in the fall and winter of 2008-2009, I had 115 pregnant cows on it, but no calves. I basically opened up all of the electric fencing and allowed the cows free access. They were fed periodically with baled hay and later with swath grazing. I forced the cows to go onto this pasture throughout the winter, whenever the swaths ran out, or they finished off the hay. Consequently, the cows absolutely bladed this field down as low as they could possibly graze it. Oddly enough in 2009 (in spite of drought) this grass exploded and was hip-high on a tall cow by July.

I'm not sure what my overall stocking rate per day was because I never controlled the cows on the duration. The cows were supplemented by the swaths and occasional bale of hay. Overall my cows were in good condition come calving in May, but I did have a few thin looking cows. In spite of this I had no calving difficulties in 2009.

Morrie Goetjen



Justin Blades
 Rocking P Ranch
 Nanton, AB

The sample site for Rocking P Ranch is a native range field located in the foothills south of Longview Alberta. It is a full section. The field is usually used to winter our cow herd. We typically use it through January and into February. This pasture was grazed by 250 steers from May 27 until June 9, 2008.

Rocking P Ranch is located west of Nanton and south of Longview in the foothills. The pasture is a native range with 1/3 invasive brome and timothy. It is usually grazed lightly in the spring and then used as winter pasture and grazing for the cows in the winter. In 2008 the moisture was about 22 inches which is higher than the annual 18 inches and the pasture was in normal condition. The re-growth following the spring grazing was normal.

Sample Date	Aug 2008	Oct 2008	Jan 2009	April 2009
Average Weight	41.6g	40.6g	45g	31.4g

- The cows went into the winter with a condition score of 5 or 6 (on a scale of 9)
- In April they were at a condition score of 3 or 4
- It was cold in Jan and Feb of 2009 and the cows lost condition over this time
- It was estimated that just over 50% was taken, resulting in 26 stocking days per acre
- The only supplement provided was minerals

Justin Blades



Wayne Robinson
Mossleigh, AB

The sample site is located near Mossleigh Alberta, 3 miles south of the Bow River on Hwy 24 and 2 miles east. It was seeded in the spring of 2006 with wheat grass, alfalfa, smooth brome, cicer milk vetch and meadow brome. Previous to 2006 it was seeded yearly to barley for swath grazing. 55 acres was grazed by 112 animals in the fall of 2007 from Oct 18th to Nov 10th. The Cow days are as follows:

$$\frac{112\text{AU} * 23 \text{ days}}{55 \text{ acres}} = \frac{47 \text{ AUD}}{\text{acre}}$$

Part of this pasture was grazed right down to the soil and part of it had more than 50% of the plant matter left. The moisture for 2007 and 2008 was normal. It was not grazed in 2008 until December 13th when the cattle were put back into this pasture. The forage was at a mature stage and the pasture composition in Aug was 43% legume, 57% grass (DM basis). It was colder than normal into January of 2009.

Date	Legume wt (grams)	Grass wt (grams)	Total wt (grams)
Aug 2008	25	32.8	57.8
Oct 2008	32.4	36.6	69
Jan 2009	12	23.4	35.4
April 2009	9	30.8	43.4

- Cow Condition going into Dec 2008 was 5.0
- Cow Condition by Jan 15 had dropped to a 3.0 due to the cold, at this point we supplemented with 1, 1400 lbs bale/day
- The cows remained on this piece until calving in April 2009
- The amount consumed varied from 1/2 to 1/5 by the spring

Wayne Robinson

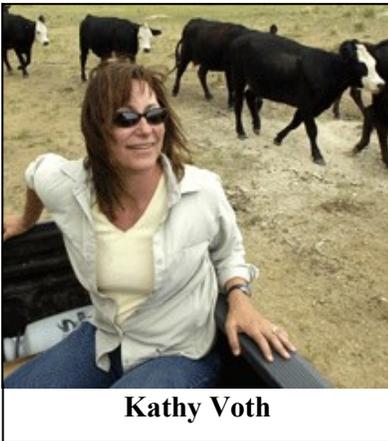


Training Cattle to Graze Canada Thistle

Weeds and brush are a major concern for any land owner. In grazing and range lands weeds can significantly decrease the potential of that land. Cattle are selective feeders and will avoid unpalatable and undesirable plants. This selection gives these unwanted plants an advantage to the desirable forages that are being harvested by our livestock. Therefore weed management and weed control is something to consider for livestock and forage producers.



Many producers turn to herbicides and other chemical control methods which are useful and have high success rates, but what if your problem is in an area that is difficult to spray, very close to a riparian area, or you are moving towards a more holistic approach? For these reasons among others, it may be that you are looking for an alternative method to spraying. FFGA started a project in 2009 to control specific weeds by training cattle to graze these undesirable plants. Grazing weeds knocks them back in the same manner as other forages, which gives them a fighting chance in competing with the weeds. It also takes advantage of the nutrients in those weeds rather than letting that area of land go unutilized by the cattle.



Kathy Voth

There are concerns related to grazing weeds such as nutritional value, toxins and palatability. These questions need to be addressed for each specific type of weed that you wish to target with grazing. FFGA began this project with Canada Thistle following the methods and training of Kathy Voth with Livestock for Landscapes based out of Colorado. Kathy has done research on grazing Canada Thistle, brush and other weeds. Her research indicates that many weeds can be consumed and are nutritionally beneficial for cattle, if done so in moderation. Canada Thistle is similar in nutritional value to alfalfa, therefore grazing it certainly has its advantages. The key is that the cattle should not be forced to graze it because there are no other options. Canada Thistle does contain some toxins, but if it is fed as part of a ration, they are diluted and the cattle are able to consume and utilize the plant.

Kathy's training method involves a week long process of training cattle to graze Canada Thistle. Ideally replacement heifers are used for the training as they are curious and impressionable. Each day the animals are presented with a different feed through the use of tubs or rolling it out off of a truck. The curious animals will try these new feedstuffs which they discover are tasty and enjoyable. Their behavioural patterns will cause them to approach each time you put out a new feed. After a few days of presenting them with nutritious feeds of varying textures and tastes, harvested chopped green Canada thistle is added to the mix. This is continued for the span of about a week. After this time the cattle will have acquired a taste for the Thistle and will begin sampling in a pasture setting. Kathy's re-



Sean and Holly LaBrie of Difficulty Ranch near Didsbury, enthusiastically prepared to teach their cows to graze Canada Thistle at the beginning of August. Using Kathy Voth's 'We'd Eat It' program, they spent a few hours watching the teaching videos and planning, with the help of a workbook and consultations with Kathy. Twenty nine heifers, one bull and one quiet cow/calf pair were selected for the trial. Training feed was purchased for approximately \$100, and ten empty Crystalyx tubs were donated by a local dealer, Albert Kendze. A small test pasture was fenced off with enough feed for the herd for one day, with around 30% of the pasture being thistle. Some patches were waist high and the thistle was just starting to bud.



Day one of the trial started off smoothly with the heifers behaving exactly as predicted by Kathy's program. At 1:00 am on the morning of day two, Difficulty Ranch was hit by a large hailstorm. The hail was marble sized, but the volume and force caused by the winds was enough to completely shred and flatten the thistles and pasture lands. Luckily the cattle were not harmed but what started as waist high thistle was no more than a few 10 inch shredded stalks, effectively putting an end to the thistle trial.

FFGA is encouraged by the beginning of positive results with this trial and looks forward to perusing it further next season with Sean and Holly along with other producer co-operators.



Bale & Swath Grazing - Forage Quality

Swath grazing is a practice that many livestock producers use as part of their winter-feeding program. By providing winter feed through a grazing program, livestock producers have been able reduce their labor requirements for winter feeding, lower winter feeding costs and provide a more efficient system for recycling nutrients from manure.

Rod Vergouwen, FFGA Director, undertook a bale and swath grazing project as part of his winter feeding program. On one field Rod used a combination of bale and swath grazing an alfalfa and meadow brome hay. Rod uses electric fence to let the cows into about three days of feed at a time. This field was swathed in September and both the bales and swathes were feed tested by Blue Rock Mineral in late October. This project offered a comparison in the quality of forage in bales and swathes.

Through this technique Rod has been able to reduce his labour to only a few hours a week as



well as reducing his winter feeding costs and improve the quality of his land by recycling the nutrients in the location they were harvested. FFGA enjoyed a tour of Rod's operation in early December to see how he operates this winter feeding program. Shown below are tables of the feed tests as well as some of the costs and inputs involved in this project.



Feed Test, Oct 28 2009:

	Protein (%)	TDN (%)	ADF (%)	NDF (%)	RFV
Bale Grazing	13.1	55.4	39.1	57.0	95
Swath Grazing	15.6	46.6	45.9	59.7	83

Cost Breakdown:

Expense		Cost (\$)	Total (\$)
Land Rental	60 acres	\$40/acre	\$2,400
Cutting	60acres	\$10/acre	\$600
	60acres	\$3/acre	\$180
Bales	126bales	\$10/bale	\$1,260
Stock	2hours	\$100.00/hour	\$200
Swath	40acres	\$10/acre	\$400
Irrigation	40	\$16.25	\$650
Pressure	40	\$6.50	\$260
Operating	40	\$7.00	\$280
Twine Removal	6hrs	\$25.00/hr	\$150
Fence Moving	25hrs	\$25.00/hr	\$625
Total			\$7,005

126bales * 1540lbs/bale = 194,040lbs

40 acres * 2,000lbs/acre = 80,000lbs

194,040lbs + 80,000lbs = 274, 040lbs of feed

Cost \$7,005/274,040lbs = \$0.25/lb

274,040lbs/40lbs per pair/ 143 pairs = 48days of feed



Foothills Forage & Grazing Association Is a Proud Member of ARECA

A year in review...

Message from the Executive Director

2009 was a significant year for Alberta producers, and particularly those in east-central Alberta, with one of the driest summers on record. ARECA and its 17 member associations were a part of an extensive extension effort to provide producers with alternatives to managing this ravaging drought.



The **ARECA office** has been through some major staff changes with the departure of Gayah Sieusahai and Grant Lastiwka to Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development in March. Dee Ann Benard left ARECA to pursue an opportunity with managing a non-profit organization, the Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN). Joy Vonk joined Dee Ann at ARDN later this past spring. Finally, Laura McNabb left ARECA to pursue career interests with the City of Edmonton. The ARECA Board of Directors appointed Ty Faechner as Executive Director and later Ty hired Jacqueline Lavigne to replace Joy Vonk.

A **strategic plan** was developed by ARECA and Association Board and staff this past summer. This led to establishment of a Governance Committee who undertook a revamping of the **ARECA Governance structure**, bylaws and policy manual. The revised vision, mission and mandate plus the above documents will be presented at the spring 2010 Annual General Meeting of ARECA for ratification by the Board. It is expected that this will lead to a renewed Board and member Association to sustain ARECA's future.

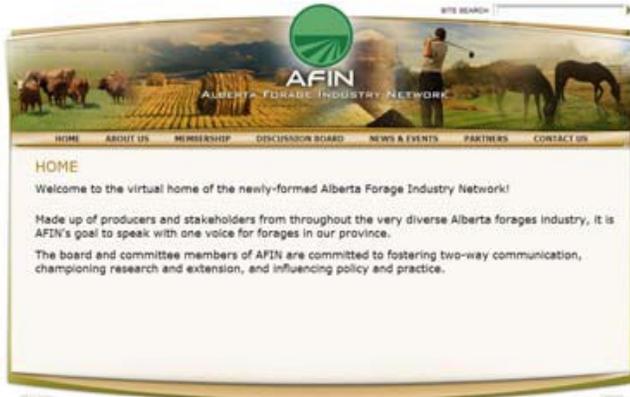


The **ARECA website** continues to be updated with Association activities and new projects. Blossom blight of alfalfa was a ESAIP funded project and all materials were developed by Dr. Bruce Gossen with Agri-Food and Agriculture Canada in Saskatoon. Blossom blight of alfalfa is affects alfalfa seed production in Western Canada. Other changes have included NPARA's new homepage (<http://www.areca.ab.ca/site/npara>) - they've made some awesome new changes! The readership of the monthly electronic newsletter keeps growing especially since it includes important announcements about emerging agricultural issues in Alberta.

Regional Variety Trials, once a part of ARECA, became the responsibility of Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (AARD) prior to spring seeding. This has ensured that producers can make informed choices about the viability of different crops for their area. ARECA is pleased that the program has continued, and even more so that Gayah Sieusahai has provided the continuity and expertise necessary to ensure its success.

Cattle producers grow ever increasing amounts of annual crops for feed (silage, greenfeed and swath grazing). With this in mind, the **Regional Silage Variety Trial** concept was born with six Associations participating. Six nutritional categories were reported including Crude Protein and Total Digestible Nutrients which is an estimation of energy. This is the first of three years, and the trial is sponsored by the Alberta Beef Producers.

This past year saw the extension of the **Sustainable Grazing Mentorship Program (SGMP)**, through funding provided by the Growing Forward initiative with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development. SGMP assists producers in improving their forage operations through training. Experienced grazing mentors work directly with producers to develop a grazing plan tailored to the needs of the producer. A Grazing Mentor is a respected producer peer with extensive grazing management experience and knowledge.



The **Alberta Forage Industry Network (AFIN)**, was established in the spring of 2009 with the election of its Board of Directors. AFIN represents an estimated 30,000 individuals involved with Alberta forages. It is the goal of the network to bring important issues regarding economic and environmental impact of forages to the attention of funding bodies and policymakers in Alberta. Producers interested in joining AFIN can get more information at its website, www.albertaforages.ca.

Alberta's Climate Change Strategy positions Albertans to be the leaders in using energy effectively and efficiently. ARECA will seek to further the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by transforming how we use energy, applying energy efficient solutions and conserving energy. ARECA recently initiated the **Energy Conservation and Energy Efficiency Project** to increase adoption of reduced tillage systems, especially low disturbance direct seeding systems. The focus of the project will include the co-benefits of soil quality, carbon sequestration, greenhouse gas reduction and risk reduction.

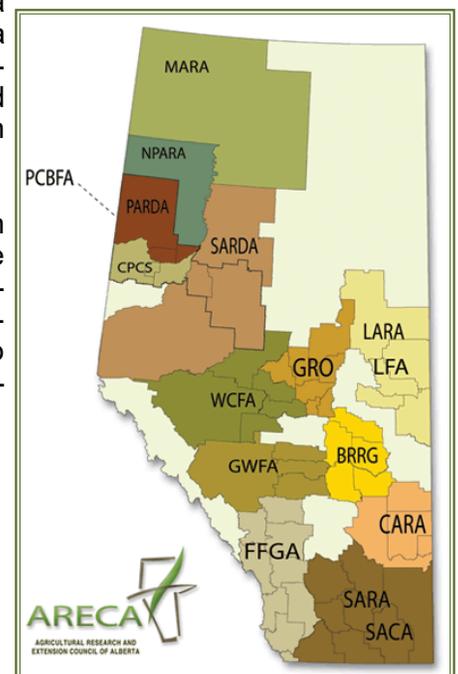


Precision agriculture is a general term that includes the application of global positioning systems (GPS) and geographical information systems (GIS). The Federal Government provided financial assistance to 2729 farmers in the last five years to assist with the purchase of GPS guidance, yield monitors and mapping software. Despite this accelerated purchase of technology, there continues to be limited implementation of the technology. ARECA and its member Associations began the **Precision Tools for On Farm Research Project** in 2009 with funding from ACIDF, Alberta Barley Commission, Alberta Pulse Growers and Novozymes to develop a method for doing field scale research

using precision agriculture technology.

With the dedication and cooperation of ARECA Board and Association staff, we are hopeful that the ARECA team is able to bring sound science and sustainability to Alberta farms. Our mission is to collaborate with member associations and partners to enhance delivery of relevant and unbiased applied research and extension. As we go forward in 2010, I wish to thank everyone for their enthusiasm and hard work in 2009 - may we continue to build on our mandate.

 Ty Faechner, Executive Director



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