



Innovation, education and regenerative agriculture

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GRASSROOTS NEWS & VIEWS April 2024

Coordinator's Note (A year in review) — Kayla Minor

Greetings FFGA Members

In 2023 spring came early and warm with the dry conditions continuing into June. The early weather delayed growth for forage producers in the south. Another year of drought for many parts of Alberta, but the mild winter helped producers reserve winter feed, with many discouraged producers with the lack of moisture, cattle prices did continue to remain high across our region.

I have now been with FFGA for 2 years! The number of opportunities for learning and networking have been great for myself personally and professionally! I am excited to report that in 2023 we hosted and partnered on the delivery of 25 events and webinars with an attendance of 1,992 people in the FFGA region.

Highlights for 2023 include the second successful Ranching for Profit School with Dallas Mount and Dave Pratt that FFGA hosted in partnership with Ranch Management Consultants in Okotoks in late November. At FFGA we are excited to maintain the relationship with Dallas Mount and Ranch Management Consultants and will continue to make the Ranching for Profit School an annual event in our region.

Another highlight from 2023 included the Greg Judy Field Tours that we hosted in Rumsey and Jumping Pound. I heard Greg speak for the first time at the Western Canada Conference on Soil Health and Grazing back in December 2022 but once the opportunity presented itself to have him speak at a couple FFGA events, we jumped on it! Greg Judy of Missouri runs a well-established grazing operation with many different techniques to manage livestock. Many people know him from his popular YouTube channel where he calls himself the Regenerative Rancher. The FFGA field tours that Greg spoke at included fencing and water techniques, how to think like a grazer, and

how focusing on daily animal performance can help you achieve maximum profits.

Communications continue to be strong for FFGA. We currently have north of 5,000 followers on our social media channels. Our presence has grown significantly in the last year, with event posts and photos from the grassroots level. I am excited to start working with Freshly Pressed Marketing to continue to enhance our appearance online that will appeal to our members, producers as well as benefit the consumer perception. I will continue to post relevant information on our social media channels such as articles, upcoming event, webinar posts, details from our partners as well as photos from the grassroots level. Our website sees around 1,400 visitors monthly with our upcoming events tab being the most popular. Our Newsletter, Grassroots News & Views, continues to be a favorable resource among our members and supporters and goes to 190 farms and ranches each month, as well as 60 companies, and 19 Municipalities.

I am excited to continue to grow the communication portfolio as well as advocate for our ever-evolving industry. I am looking forward to continue to grow professionally and learn from the best! We have an exciting year ahead of us and hope to see you at our events! Stay up to date with upcoming events on our website: <https://www.foothillsforage.com/events>

Kayla Minor
Communications Coordinator



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FOOTHILLS FORAGE & GRAZING ASSOCIATION

Member Renewal 2024

Foothills Forage & Grazing Association Membership is \$50 (+GST). Membership is per operation and covers family & staff of each operation.

FOR DETAILS: <https://www.foothillsforage.com/membership>

On the Cover: Calving. Photo: Kayla Minor

Thank you for your support!



5 Tips to grazing spring cover crops



Photo: FFGA

As fields start to green up from last fall's cover crops, cattle producers can't wait to get cows out of calving yards and onto fresh grass. Here are a few tips to remember when grazing cover crops.

1. How long do you want the forage to last?

If you want to terminate in a short time, graze as soon as it greens up, if you want some substantial grazing to occur, wait till the forage is about 6" tall to start grazing. Typically, cereal rye will be the first forage to break dormancy, followed a week or two later by triticale and

wheat. Giving the forage time to get established results in more season-long growth, but graze early enough to prevent it from getting ahead of the cows and getting too mature.

2. Transition the diet.

Nothing is worse on the rumen than an abrupt change from a dry forage and grain diet to a wet, high protein forage only diet. The rumen microbes need time to adjust to diet changes. Spring cover crops are both high in protein (13-19% CP) and high in water content resulting in a fast passage rate. The energy content tends to be fairly high (55-60% TDN) but because of the high water content it is a challenge for the cow to meet her energy and dry matter intake needs. Continue to supplement your dry forage diet while the cows are grazing cover crops, just cut back on the quantity fed, or provide free choice dry hay as a supplement. However, supplementing other feed in many cases is not practical since cows generally are not very

interested in stored feed once they are turned onto cover crops. The best compromise may be to fill up the cows on their existing ration before turning them out for the first time this spring and allow their gut fill to regulate how much they consume initially.

3. Have a sacrifice paddock or dry lot option in case of heavy spring rainfall.

Typical spring grazing should not negatively impact grain yields, and in some cases actually increase yields. However, excessive hoof traffic during extremely wet weather may cause some compaction or the need to smooth the soil surface or perform mild tillage to address some surface compaction that may exist. Move water and mineral sites regularly to reduce congregation areas. Consider strip-grazing to both increase forage utilization and to reduce the risk of compaction when raining. When heavy rain or a long stretch of rain occurs, move cows off

(Continued on page 4)

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DISTINCT BY DESIGN

(Continued from page 3)

the field.

4. Beware of grass tetany and nitrate risk.

Grass tetany is a risk any time cows are grazing lush spring forages which are high in protein, moisture and potassium, and low in magnesium, calcium and sodium. Feed a high magnesium mineral for a week or two prior to turnout to reduce the risk of grass tetany. Supplementing dry forage, if cows will eat it, can help to both slow the rate of passage through the digestive system and dilute the low-mineral grass with higher mineral dry forage. Grasses, including cov-

er crops, are good at scavenging nitrogen from the soil to produce leaf tissue and grain. Cover crops heavily fertilized, manured, or following a drought may accumulate nitrates which can be toxic in the cow. Because nitrates tend to concentrate in the lower part of the plant, use rotational grazing to leave more residue, along with supplemental dry forages to reduce the risk of nitrate toxicity.

5. Termination of the cover crop.

Remember that the cover crop needs to have green growing leaf tissue in order for contact herbicides to work. Plan for 1-2 weeks of regrowth

after grazing before herbicide application to be effective.

Keeping these few tips in mind will help make cover crop grazing a positive investment for your cattle operation.

Author: Iowa State University

Original Article: [https://](https://www.beefmagazine.com/grazing-systems/5-tips-to-grazing-spring-cover-crops)

www.beefmagazine.com/grazing-systems/5-tips-to-grazing-spring-cover-crops



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July 2, 2024 | Vulcan, AB

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Keep a close watch for these issues when calving



Photo: Kayla Minor

With spring approaching, I am going to attempt to summarize the many ways we can collectively (and hopefully) maximize calf survivability and productivity starting at calving time.

Each of you will have different management styles, strategies, and numbers — but if there are one or two new things, techniques, or observations you can learn from, then this read will have been worth it.

This may be more applicable to the producer who calves in late winter when cows are close at hand and easy to observe, but some treatments or strategies apply to everyone.

When calving, my key advice is to watch closely if possible.

During the calving process itself, the best advice I can give is to watch the time if possible. A cow or heifer that has been starting or even getting up and down incessantly and hasn't produced anything should be checked out. Rarely in my experience is this a wasted effort. From twins mixed up to backwards calves, full breech birth torsions to fetal oversize to a persistent hymen (band of tissue running through the vagina), something is abnormal which is delaying the cow's progress.

Once cows go into labour, time is ticking and I have seen many a calf saved by the diligent farmer who knows his cows and recognizes the lack of progression early on.

My theory is with an abnormality they often don't get into the true act of labour — which is why the problem is very hard to recognize. If your intuition suggests there is a problem, you are probably right. Then it is a matter of recognizing which abnormalities

you can handle and which you need a hand with. If you expect a harder pull, then another set of hands is really helpful to get the right angle on the pullers and with faster pulls (like backwards calves where the pull must be faster to get the calf to where it can breathe).

Breeding for easy calving has allowed us to come a tremendous way in the last 30 years in all the breeds. Some rarely use a puller but abnormal malpresentations still occur, and one must be diligent and watching for them whenever possible.

Sometimes the calf is rolled partially upside down and needs to be manipulated somewhat to facilitate a normal delivery. Intervening on time is the difference between a live and dead calf. Putting calves in sternal recumbency (sitting up facilitates breathing — but no hanging of calves) and having oxygen and/or a respiratory stimulant prescribed from your veterinarian can help with calves you have just got out in time. The cow is made to calve on her own but sometimes early intervention is necessary.

Lots has been written about colostrum but you should give colostrum any time there has been tough, or delayed calving, and also when a calf with a swollen face, twins, has a very sluggish suckle reflex (when you put your fingers in their mouth 10 to 20 minutes after birth), chilled calves, or when mother has very large teats or for a multitude of other reasons. This comes either in milking the cow (check cow for patency, mastitis, blocked teats — so check all four teats) or dried products such as Head-Start.

This helps initially with energy and vigour but we all know a colostrum-deprived calf is prone to diarrhea and pneumonia (even if it reaches weaning and beyond). Adequate colostrum in the first few hours is critical. Inadequate sucking or if the calf looks gaunt or can't find the teat are good reasons to instantly supplement. Co-

lostrum absorption rapidly declines after four to six hours but even if supplemented eight to 24 hours after birth, it may do some good.

Diarrhea, pneumonia and navel infection are the three most common ailments of young calves and if caught early, can be successfully treated. Prevention is the best approach, so most producers scour vaccinate their calves and for this, I consider timing before calving to be critical.

Intranasal respiratory vaccines (such as ONCE PMH IN for bacteria and INFORCE for viruses) have been on the market for several years. If cows are given viral vaccines to prevent against abortions, this protection should spill over into the colostrum as well.

If one suspects pneumonia (the first signs usually being a runny nose, slight depression and, of course, a temperature), your veterinarian can prescribe antimicrobials to reduce the fever. Often one shot is all that is necessary, but it's good to check the calf the next day.

A quick intervention has a very good prognosis on most leg breaks that can be cast and haven't broken through the skin. High breaks can be splinted with decent prognosis. If intestinal accidents such as a torsion or herniation of intestines are recognized immediately, surgery can save the day. Generally the veterinarian can give you a prognosis so you know when the odds are in your favour.

Here's to an uneventful spring everyone. But if needed, hopefully these tips will help ensure the survivability of more calves.

Author: Roy Lewis

Original Article: <https://www.albertafarmexpress.ca/livestock/keep-a-close-watch-for-these-issues-when-calving/>



Water Management for Livestock and Irrigation Webinar

June 5, 2024 / 7pm - 9pm

Joe Harrigton - Finding & Securing Water Supplies for livestock.

- What to consider when developing additional water supplies
- Long term water management planning
- Potential water sources, types of water supplies, legislation that is applicable.

Len Hingley - Managing Irrigation with Limited Water Availability

- Three principles for improving your irrigation management decisions.
- Deficit irrigation - Len will define it and review recent research.
- Irrigation systems - what systems are the most efficient and is it worth it to make a change.

Sonja Bloom - Available Funding for Water Systems in Alberta



Register for FREE at: <https://www.foothillsforage.com/livewebinars>



Let There Be Legumes



Photo: FFGA

Long recovery lets legumes reseed themselves

By Greg Judy; Green Pastures Farm; Clark, Missouri

This is our eighth year of mob grazing. It involves very intense grazing of cattle in relatively small paddocks and moving them frequently. We put 100,000 pounds of cattle per acre of pasture and move them to a new pasture twice a day. That's 100 cows of 1,000 pounds each on 1 acre.

Since we've been doing this, we haven't put down clover seed; it naturally reseeds itself. I just moved some cattle to a new field today, and I couldn't help but say to myself, "Wow, look at this clover!"

The secret is a full recovery period between grazings. Depending on the weather and season of the year, in our system, the cattle may not come back to graze an area for 60 to 65 days. In 60 days, the clover in the pasture has a chance to develop mature seed heads, and the seeds inside get fully ripe. We'll get 15 to 40 black, hard seeds per head. Those will germinate. If they are a light color and soft, they won't.

The cows eat some of those mature seed heads, and the hard seeds pass right through and come out in the manure and germinate in a cow pie. Other seeds fall to the ground, and the cattle's hooves tramp them into the soil. The system is reseeding itself every year, and we get a natural 30% to 35% stand of clover without seeding.

We also have Korean lespedeza and bird's-foot trefoil in our pastures, all from the long recovery period and natural reseeding. We also have some native grasses coming on naturally, especially big bluestem, in place of tall fescue. Big

bluestem has none of the toxicity issues. It grows well in the summer heat and has an 8-foot taproot.

Read about our system at greenpasturesfarm.net. It's let us double the stocking rate in the last seven years. It's like getting a free farm!

Drilling seed into frozen soil

By Wayne Shriver; Pleasant City, Ohio

I manage two cattle herds: my own private herd and one at the eastern Ohio agricultural research station at Caldwell, Ohio. In total, I manage several thousand acres of pastureland.

Sometimes, producers can get too wrapped up in choosing the right legume, when the real issue is just getting something that will thrive. Here, we have some ladino clover, red clover, bird's-foot trefoil, and a little alfalfa. I like all of them and want between 25% and 40% legume plants.

We very seldom renovate a pasture from scratch. Rather, we interseed into pastures and hayfields to get new legume growth. If you completely tear up a field to renovate then have a very wet spring, you can end up with not much growing there. If you interseed, you at least still have old growth.

My favorite technique is to frost-seed with a no-till drill when the ground is still frozen. You might think the drill wouldn't go into the soil, but all we care about is scratching the surface and putting the seed in soil contact. When the ground thaws, it will close over and give seeds a chance to germinate. We think the drill gets 25% to 50% better germination than broadcast seeding.

Of course, the drill takes more time and is more of an investment in equipment. That's the trade-off.

Another way I encourage legumes is to rotate cattle between pastures quickly, even early in the season. If you let the grass get taller and taller each day, it starts to crowd out the legumes. If you move the cows every two or three days, it keeps the grass shorter and prevents heading out. I use the illustration of trying to plant a tree seedling into a standing forest of mature trees. It just can't compete.


The secret to good legumes is to reduce competition. Take a cutting of hay or graze it early. Then the legumes can come through.

As for fertility, I like to soil-test and to apply nutrients to pastures in the fall. When you interseed in the spring, they are ready to help the new crop get going.

Author: Gene Johnston

Original Article: <https://www.agriculture.com/livestock/cattle/let-there-be-legumes>

PODCAST CORNER



What is FFGA listening to?


Monthly Podcast recommendations given by FFGA Directors

PODCAST CHANNEL

THE BEEF CATTLE HEALTH AND NUTRITION

TITLE

THE COLICKY CALF WITH DR. BLAKE BALOG



SCAN ME

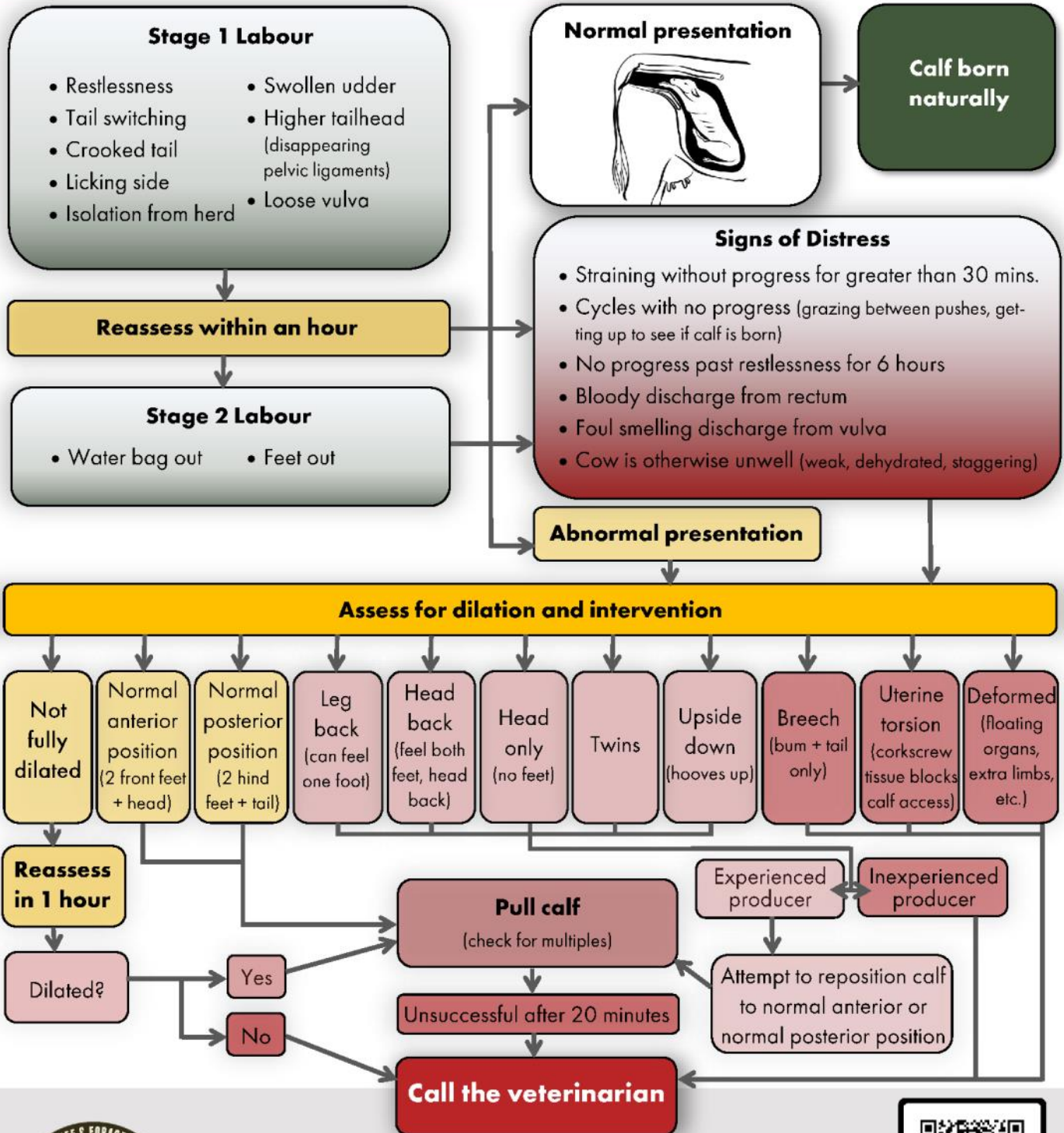
LINK

<https://bchn.transistor.fm/episodes/the-colicky-calf-with-dr-blake-balog>

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www.MBFI.ca

Version: 01.2023



FARM MENTAL HEALTH REFERRAL SHEET



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ALBERTA HEALTH LINK	811	TALK SUICIDE (TEXT)	988 (4PM - 12AM EST)

ALBERTA CALL LINES

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ADDICTION HELP LINE	1-866-332-2322	COUNSELLING ALBERTA	1-833-827-4230
EASECARE	1-587-323-8646		

NATIONAL LINES

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READY TO GET SOME HELP? STEPS TO BOOKING A SESSION

01

CHOOSE A THERAPIST

The members in our therapist network (see page 2 of this flyer) have experience with farmers and agriculture in Alberta, so you can spend less time getting them up to speed and more time getting to the root of the problem.

02

SCHEDULE A CALL

You have direct access to everyone in our Therapist Network, so you can find a therapist you resonate with, fill out their contact form on our website www.agknow.ca, or contact them at the information on page 2, and they'll connect with you to book your first session.

03

TALK ABOUT IT

Whether in person, virtual or through a telephone session, now is your chance to talk about how you are really doing. Remember, we were never meant to do this alone.

CONTACTING YOUR THERAPIST DIRECTLY? TELL THEM AGKNOW REFERRED YOU TO REDEEM YOUR 4 FREE SESSIONS



FARM MENTAL HEALTH REFERRAL SHEET



The AgKnow network is made up of agriculturally informed and connected practitioners across Alberta. Our current Free Sessions Pilot Program covers up to **four free counselling sessions** for farmers, their families, farm employees, veterinarians and registered veterinarian technicians.

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We would like to thank Justin Blades and Ryan Scott for their time, and work on the FFGA Board



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Mission: Assisting producers in profitably improving their forages and regenerating their soils through innovation and education.

Vision: We envision a global community that respects and values profitable forage production and healthy soils as our legacy for future generations.

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