



**FOOTHILLS FORAGE
AND GRAZING ASSOCIATION**

Innovation, education and regenerative agriculture

Unit 4A, 710 Centre St. SE, High River, AB T1V 0H3
Phone: (403) 995-9466 ~ www.foothillsforage.com

GRASSROOTS NEWS & VIEWS May 2023

Coordinator's Note — Kayla Minor

Howdy folks,

I have now been with FFGA for 18 months as well as covering a maternity leave for 12 of those months. I have already gained so many great experiences, and learned a significant amount of information that has helped me in my position with FFGA as well as at home on the ranch. Along the way I met a variety of unique, knowledgeable and industry leading people! My first few months gave me plenty of opportunities to learn and meet our members as we hosted and partnered on 22 in-person events and 7 webinars in the FFGA region in 2022.

Highlights for 2022 for me included being able to participate in the Ranching for Profit School with Dallas Mount that FFGA hosted in partnership with Ranch Management Consultants in Okotoks in early November. During the 7-day intensive school I learned so many beneficial aspects that have impacted me personally on the ranch and the role I want to play. During the school, myself and 48 other producers, learned about economics finance, people, ecology, grazing and production. One element that the school really focuses on is the Paradigm Shift. The concept is trying to get producers to look more at Working On the Business rather than Working In the Business. Not only did I gain top tier knowledge, but I also met a lot of great producers from all over Alberta, BC, and Saskatchewan that have helped develop my skills and my confidence to take on more responsibilities within my personal life, on the ranch and at FFGA. The attendees of the school have become a network of resources. At FFGA we are excited to maintain this relationship with Dallas Mount and Ranch

Management Consultants and are continuing to offer the Ranching for Profit School an annual event in our region.

Communications continue to be a strong for FFGA. We currently to have 2,721 followers on Facebook, and 1,395 followers on Twitter. I will continue to post relevant information on our social media channels such as articles, upcoming event and webinar posts, and sharing details from our partners. Our website sees around 1,500 visitors with our upcoming events tab being, the most popular. Our Newsletter *Grassroots News & Views*, continues to be a favourable resource among our members and supporters and goes to roughly 200 farms and ranches each month, as well as 60 companies, and 18 Municipalities.

In early 2023, Sonja Bloom returned from maternity leave to FFGA as the Environmental Coordinator. I am very grateful that this has allowed me the opportunity to stay with FFGA in a full-time, permanent position, as FFGA's Communications Coordinator. I am excited to continue to grow the communication portfolio as well as advocate for our ever-evolving industry. I am excited 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!

Kayla

(Photo: Kayla with her pup Harley)



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Regenerative Alberta Living Lab Baseline Survey



We have exciting news to share! As you may or may not know, we are partnering with the Food Water Wellness Foundation (FWWF) on the five year Regenerative Alberta Living Lab project (RALL) that is taking place across Alberta.

As part of that project we are sending out a short “baseline” survey now. We have a fantastic prize package that will be awarded to one lucky person who completes the survey. Cabela’s has donated a Pit Boss 3 Series Gas Vertical Smoker, plus a smoker starter package (wood chips, cookbook). To sweeten the pot even more, FWWF has added on an Inkbird bluetooth 4 probe digital thermometer that includes a time alarm.

The survey should only take about 10 minutes or less of your time.

We really appreciate you taking the time to complete the survey. It will help us make decisions on how best to tailor our project to deliver maximum value to Alberta farmers and ranchers.

SCAN FOR SURVEY



COMPLETE BY JUNE 15



On the Cover: Crocus found in the Foothills of Alberta. Photo: Kayla Minor

Thank you for your support!



Low-stress cattle handling's effect on improved health, productivity



Photo: FFGA

Aiming to make the most of spring processing efforts this year?

“Low stress handling presents a domino effect. By minimizing handling stress, you will see improvements in immune response, eating and producing. Calves go back to eating and gaining weight. Cows go back to eating and growing their calf. And, cattle respond better to vaccines,” says Julia Herman, beef cattle specialist veterinarian with the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA).

Defining Low-stress Handling

For anyone unfamiliar with the term and practice, “Low-stress handling is one part of stockmanship that incorporates the understanding of cattle’s natural behaviors and the handler using that knowledge to positively affect cattle movement and management. It’s responding to their movement, anticipating what the animal will do next,” says Dr. Herman. The Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) program teaches about this principle in preventing stress and disease in cattle, which improves cattle welfare and productivity.

While the practice of excellent stockmanship may have been brought more to the forefront in recent years, the skills are something that have, often, been passed down through generations of family ranches.

Dr. Herman remembers watching her husband and his dad work cattle years ago. “It was like magic,” she said. “They could sort cattle without making a sound. I think there are families where this level of stockmanship has been passed down from generation to generation, and it’s taken a couple of high-profile people, like Temple Grandin and Bud Williams,

to really bring low-stress handling and stockmanship to the forefront. They have been really good champions of that type of handling.”

The Benefits of Practicing It

When we are stressed, we’re more likely to succumb to a cold or change in behavior. The same rings true for cattle – they can experience health implications and even become moody – and the impacts can stem generations.

Tony Hawkins, Valley Vet Supply technical services veterinarian shared how, “Anything we could do to minimize stress in these animals is good – one, because of animal husbandry and two, because it will actually improve their response to vaccines. Low-stress handling is good for you, and it’s good for them.”

Long thought to be true, science has confirmed how cattle handling directly affects cattle behavior, in addition to health.

Interestingly, low-stress handling methods impact mothering behavior of today, plus the growth and behavior of her future offspring. Dr. Herman explained more, saying “We’re learning more about mothering behavior and how minimizing stress, such as practicing low-stress handling with the dam, in addition to her genetics, can impact multiple generations of animals. That’s because stress hormones circulate throughout the blood system. If you’re following good stockmanship, the heifer will have a better attitude and be calmer in stressful situations, and that can follow down lines. Good-behavior cows can pass that behavior on to multiple generations. I think people have known that, but we’re finally getting scientific proof of that.”

3 Tips to Implement When Working Cattle

1. Take advantage of their flight zones to move cattle. Picture an imaginary oval around a single animal; your placement encourages them to start or stop movement. Dr. Herman explained more, saying, “When you enter the animal’s (or group’s) flight zone, it encourages forward movement. When you retreat from the flight zone, it signals the animal to stop moving. These concepts

can be used whether you are handling cattle on foot, horseback, in a vehicle, or when the cattle are in a chute. If we provide good directions to handlers and the cattle through low-stress handling, we improve how the animals respond during handling events.”

2. When working cattle and you see a hiccup, it’s OK to pause, take a minute and investigate.

If you notice cattle are no longer moving smoothly through a specific part of the facility, pause and investigate the hold-up. Dr. Hawkins stressed that, “Really importantly, producers need to think about the design of their facility, and overall quality of the facility, because that plays a big role in how these animals move.”

3. Prioritize training, and have the right people for the right job.

Dr. Herman says, “I think that a huge thing is making sure that our people are trained in the jobs that we are expecting them to do. Stockmanship training creates confidence in our caretakers and improves human safety around cattle. Also, it’s important to be open to changing roles of people during processing events, so that they feel more comfortable and effective. Maybe someone is pushing cows but would rather give vaccines, or vice versa. And when they get tired, maybe we need to switch people out every couple of hours.” This will improve the human’s experience which will also improve the cattle’s experience.

At the end of the day, Dr. Herman asks, “What can the producer control? They can control the products they’re using, the facility they’re running animals through, and they can control how they are handling the animals going through it – all to set that cow or calf up for a positive experience and the most productive life possible.”

Education, resources and training are easily accessible for producers, to help further steward the industry we’re all passionate about.

Author: Valley Vet Supply

Original Article: <https://www.beefmagazine.com/beef/low-stress-cattle-handlings-effect-improved-health-productivity>

Pick the right forage for productivity and profitability

Photo: FFGA



There's an elephant in your pasture. "The elephant is disappointment," said Grant Lastiwka, forage specialist with Union Forage. "When you start to look at the average, Alberta hay yields are around 1.3 tonnes per acre across the province. That's a low number.

"When we look at pasture, all we're getting in grazing days across many pastures is the equivalent of two-thirds of a round bale. That, to me, doesn't pay a lot of bills."

But with the right varieties and the right management, cattle feeders can turn their forages from a disappointment into a high-value crop.

"I want to do my best to put together resilient stands that will meet my goals to be profitable and productive," Lastiwka said at Farming Smarter's virtual 'plot hop' at the end of June.

"That includes picking the right cultivars and the right management to maximize the potential across the stand so that perennial forage does become a crop of value."

One of the biggest challenges with forage in Alberta is that, in many cases, pastures are predominantly grasses, with little biodiversity.

"Those pastures aren't that productive," said Lastiwka. "That's where I look at pastures and see a dilemma — but also an opportunity: Why don't we consider a legume?"

In Alberta, pastures that include a legume have been found to be a quarter more productive and 31 per cent more profitable than typical tame grass pastures.

"What we're looking at is a real opportunity for more grazing, more pasture, and more profit," said Lastiwka.

"We know that legumes bring enough to the table that they have to be considered. Those people who do consider them reap the benefits."

Concerns about bloat are often cited as the reason for not including legumes, particularly alfalfa, in pastures. But with more varieties of less bloat-prone legumes — such as cicer milkvetch, sainfoin, and trefoil — hitting the market, feeders have more available options.

"Why don't people take advantage of that legume?" asked Lastiwka. "There are always good reasons (not to) but to me, they're not good enough."

Which legume you pick to add to the mix will depend on your operation.

"It's very hard to do fine carpentry with a post hammer," he said. "That's why I like looking at the species — I want to try my best to pick what fits my needs, and then manage accordingly."

Forage picker

In most cases, you'll want to look at a forage mix that includes "different species with different attributes," including both cold- and warm-season grasses and broad-leaf plants such as legumes.

"It's important to look at the species' adaptation," he said. "When you're looking at a lot of species, try to get a feel for the cold tolerance, lifespan, disease resistance — all of those things come together."

Lastiwka likes to start with rapid regrowth grass.

"In a pasture mix, I want something that's going to make me look good, and that's a rapid regrowth grass. It can make it a lot easier," he said. "If we want to do fine carpentry, let's set ourselves up with the right nail gun. Let's set ourselves up with something that's got the potential to work with our management."

Then you'll want to consider a legume — and you'll need more of it than you think.

"For most of us, we want to start high because it's more of a challenge to keep it in a stand. I want more legumes than people often have."

Adding some creeping grass to the mix can help in higher clay

soils or wet conditions.

"A little bit of a creeping grass is very forgiving to soil pugging and damage that can occur."

But the mix you create will ultimately depend on your land and your management. A new interactive forage selection tool was launched for Western Canada. Forage U-Pick offers a list of forages best suited to your zone and end use, making it easier to choose the right plant for your mix.

That's a good place to start — but it's not the only thing you should do to pick the forage that's right for you, said Lastiwka, who worked on the tool.

"Whenever we're talking about forages, the answer is going to be, 'It just depends,'" he said. "You can use that as a tool, but then get out to the plots and have a look at what's happening in your local area to understand what potential it has for you.

"Tools are tools. Use them for guidance, but don't lose sight of what's happening locally."

That local forage research is being conducted across Alberta right now, in part through Farming Smarter, he added. Once completed, this local data will be another tool in the tool box to "make some of those good decisions."

"I really think this trial is an opportunity for us to do more things right and to learn from our mistakes quicker," said Lastiwka.

"We're starting to look at some of these species we didn't look at before, like sainfoin and cicer milkvetch. We're starting to look at mixtures differently than we did before. We're realizing there's something going on here. We're realizing we can get highly productive native stands that will surprise us.

"So I think the time is now to see the value of forage as a crop."

Author: Jennifer Blair

Original Article: [https://](https://www.albertafarmexpress.ca/livestock/pick-the-right-forage-for-productivity-and-profitability/)

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Alberta Environmental Farm Plan

Maintaining a healthy environment is essential to the success of Alberta's agricultural producers. The Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) program helps you identify and address environmental risks in your operation. It will also increase your understanding of legal requirements related to environmental issues. An EFP is required for many funding programs!



To update or start an EFP, visit:
<https://www.albertaefp.com>

or

Contact Sonja at: enviro@foothillsforage.com /
 (403) 612-7204

Don't leave it until last minute! Contact Sonja today!



PODCAST CORNER

What is FFGA listening to?

Monthly Podcast recommendations given by FFGA Directors

PODCAST CHANNEL FARMER PODCAST CLUB

TITLE
 EROSION, SOIL
 BALANCE, AND COVER
 CROPS



LINK
<https://regenerativeagriculturepodcast.com/erosion-soil-balance-and-cover-crops-with-steve-groff-2/>

Thank you to our Corporate Partners

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Conserving
 Canada's
 Wetlands





EFFICIENT GRAIN HANDLING

- Assists primary producers with reducing overall energy use on farm. This program supports the purchase of grain handling system components that significantly improve energy efficiency over standard practice. To be eligible, an applicant must:
 - Have an EFP and
 - Be responsible for input costs
 - Generate at least \$25,000 worth of farm commodities annually
- Funding covers: 50% of Eligible Expenses, maximum grant of \$100,000
- Funding list - <https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/agi-scap-eghp-funding-list.pdf>



WATER

- Helps producers adopt agricultural water management practices for continued growth and long-term success of the agricultural industry. There are 2 program streams;
- On-Farm Irrigation & On-Farm Water Supply Stream. To be eligible, an applicant must:
 - Generate at least \$25,000 worth of farm commodities annually (both streams)
 - Own an irrigated agricultural operation in Alberta (On-Farm Irrigation only)
 - Not been previously approved for payment from the program for the same project type for the parcel described in the application (On-Farm Irrigation only)
 - Must speak with an Agriculture and Irrigation Water Specialist and receive an approved Construction Sheet prior to planning & construction (On-Farm Water Supply only). Call 310-FARM to speak to an Agriculture and Irrigation Water Specialist



ON-FARM VALUE-ADDED PROGRAM

- Helps primary producers grow sales, expand production capacity, explore market opportunities and create jobs in Alberta. To be eligible, an applicant must:
 - Be a primary producer, be an individual or corporation registered in Alberta operating in Alberta
 - Generate at least \$25,000 worth of farm commodities annually
 - Be responsible for input costs
 - Be adding value past harvest or slaughter of agricultural products
- Eligible activities include; processing capacity expansion, food safety improvement, new product and process development, market development and access



FARM TECHNOLOGY

- 2 Streams; Farm Technology Stream and Farm Security Stream
- Farm Technology - supports adoption of innovative technology that minimizes agricultural waste & optimizes farm efficiency
- Farm Security - supports producers in their efforts to secure business assets by encouraging adoption of best management practices in farm security. To be eligible an applicant must:
 - Have an EFP
 - Be responsible for input costs
 - Generate at least \$25,000 worth of farm commodities annually
- Funding covers: 50% of Eligible Expenses, maximum grant for Farm Security is \$2000 and for Farm Technology it's \$48,000



FOR MORE DETAILS VISIT:

<https://www.alberta.ca/sustainable-cap.aspx>



If you have questions, contact Sonja with FFGA at:
enviro@foothillsforage.com or (403) 612-7204



Resilient Agriculture Landscape Program (RALP)

On-Farm Funding Program's



Funding is offered on a per-acre payment basis for a term of 3 years so that RALP can better support producers in their ability to implement projects on their land that over time can provide significant benefits for producers, the public and future generations. Funding – Per-acre fee is calculated to cover most of the applicant's implementation cost and may also pay an opportunity cost. Additionally, applications may be evaluated based on project size, carbon sequestration improvement, number of livestock impacted, and water quality & biodiversity enhancement which may result in an impact adjustment.

Program Funding Maximums

- \$150,000 – active primary producers
- \$300,000 – Grazing Reserve Associations/Operators of a Community Pasture/Indigenous Applicants

Eligibility

- Must have an EFP (both primary producers and Grazing Reserves/Community Pastures)
- Must generate at least \$25,000 worth of farm commodities annually (primary producer only)

Funding available under the following Best Management Practice categories

- 01 **Pasture management**
 - Riparian area management
 - Rotational grazing
 - Adding legumes to existing forage stands
 - Targeted grazing for invasive plant bio-control
- 02 **Cropland conversion**
 - Annual cropland conversion to native or tame forages
 - Strips/Grass waterways/Salinity
 - Intercropping
- 03 **Tree establishment**
 - Shelterbelts
 - Eco-buffers
 - Establishment of pollinator strips
- 04 **Wetlands**
 - Wetland restoration and construction of new wetlands

For more information,
visit:

[www.alberta.ca/resilient-agricultural-
landscape-program.aspx](http://www.alberta.ca/resilient-agricultural-landscape-program.aspx)



If you have questions, contact Sonja with FFGA:
enviro@foothillsforage.com
or (403) 612-7204



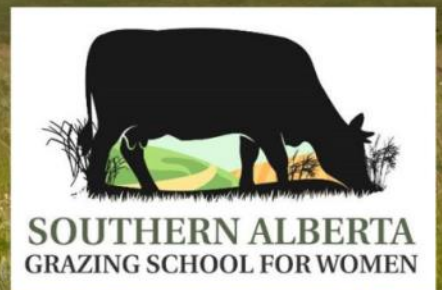
20th Annual

Southern Alberta Grazing School For Women

July 26 & 27, 2023 . Longview, Alberta

Topic's include:

- Grazing Principles and Practices
- Soil Health
- Hands- On Plant ID
- Range Health Assessment
- Livestock Handling
- Managing with Wildlife
- Electric Fencing Demonstration
- Riparian Health Assessments
- Ranching Women Talks
- And MORE!



Grazing Schools For Women

Cost: \$120.00 (includes all meals)

Details & Registration: <https://SAGSW.eventbrite.ca>



Alberta



SOUTH AFRICA AG & SIGHTSEEING TOUR



January 19 – February 4, 2024

Experience the nature, rich history, and culture of South Africa. There will be opportunities to take in the culture through a visit to the Blyde River Canyon, a mango sub-tropical farm, open land rover safaris and game drives as well as indulging on a traditional Boma Dinner. We will visit the Kruger National Park, Boulders Penguin Colony, House of J.C le Roux, , Boschendal Wine Estate, Abalone Tour, Table Mountain, and V & A Waterfront. We will also get the real agriculture experience by visiting to the Inyoni Crocodile Estate, Embryo Plus Centre, Beefmaster Alliance, Scientific Bonsmara crossbreeding programme & Eragrostis Pastures. We will visit sheep, cattle, corn, soybean operations and much more!

Package Pricing includes: Land Travel & International Flights

Prices vary depending on group size!

Twin prices will vary from \$8742.00 – \$9473.00 per person

For Full Itinerary: <https://www.foothillsforage.com/events>

To Book, Contact Lawrence Rowley
(403) 764-2044 or lawrence@leadertours.ca



Leader Tours Inc.

The QuadrApplicator

Did you ever wonder why we observe excessive rainwater runoff after a shower? One simple answer could be that we just don't have enough soil aggregation. This condition is often exacerbated by many of our past and current cultural practices, resulting in dry, dead soil with limited remaining aggregation and we are looking to restore that soil back to one with a living ecology. Unaddressed, this contributes to ever increasing soil erosion aided by prairie winds, often witnessed on both dryland and irrigated farms. Proper soil aggregation translates to increased soil permeation, hence greater moisture absorption and retention, with enhanced nitrogen content. Better soil aggregation can be aided by embedding a relay or cover crop into the soil of an existing mono crop with the purpose to provide a living root system in the ground that thrives for more than 250 days of the year. Past efforts in this regard have met with limited success due to current technological limitations and practices. Yet, nobody has stepped up to the plate with advanced technology, until now. Enter the "QuadrApplicator" our patent pending technological innovation that can address and arrest this phenomenon. While a critical piece of this invention includes

equipment modifications of an existing sprayer, it is equally important to understand that it must be coupled with proper seeding science that addresses carrier water droplet size and chemical composition, nurturing high seed germination rates. We have discovered, it is not simply about the displacement of the seed in a water droplet, but also about the chemistry of the water droplet. One must understand this science. With governments' ever increasing environmental focus on reduction of synthetic fertilizers, the need to promote this natural, healthy soil biology has never been more urgent.

To tackle this problem, we modified a Fast Big Acre pull type sprayer complete with tracks, a 5000-gallon tank, and 120 feet of suspended booms. A granular applicator was retrofitted to the unit with the necessary modifications to feed a venturi. The unit was further modified by the addition of a pump incorporated with this venturi to induce the seeds into the water stream in suspension, enabling it to be discharged in a manner that delivers uniform controlled flow volume. Significant research, development and testing was performed to ensure adequate flow to suspend the seeds in the liquid while ensuring even

seed application throughout, thus, solving many similar past efforts that resulted in inconsistent, uneven seed coverage. This equipment provides the flexibility to accomplish four distinct functions, including herbicide, fungicide, and fertilizer application in addition to this seeding application. This highly efficient innovation amazingly seeds +/- 170 acres per hour.

The result is our ability to embed a relay crop into a mono crop that is 60 to 80 days away from harvest, with seeds that germinate, root, and remain dormant, with healthy growth that only flourishes post completion of the mono crop harvest, not previously possible.

For more info, visit us at RA West International Inc.

<https://www.rawest.com/>
or email us at info@rawest.com



FFGA Gold Partner

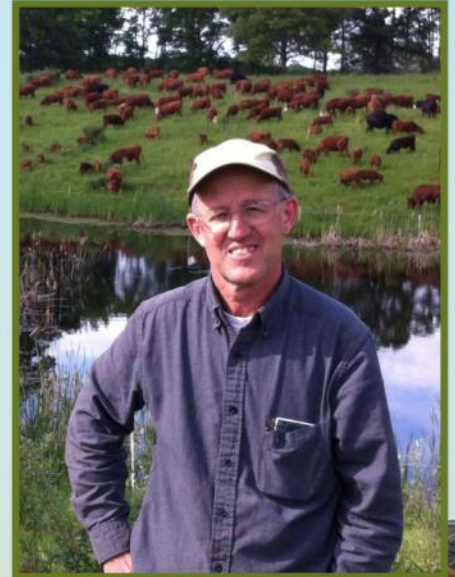




GRAZING SCHOOLS

With Greg Judy

When: June 26, 2023
Where: Rumsey Hall &
Two Valley Land and Cattle



When: June 28, 2023
Where: Jumping Pound Hall
& Lazy J Cattle Company Ltd.

Registration & Coffee: 8:30am
Lunch (provided): 12:00pm
Wrap Up: 4:00pm

Topics include:

- Think like a grazier
- Fencing and Water Techniques
- For Maximum Profits, focus on daily animal performance
- Pasture Walks

FFGA Member: \$40 / Non-Member: \$50

<https://www.foothillsforage.com/gregjudy>



Pro's & Cons of Cover Crops

With Union Forage

Join FFGA and Graeme Finn with Union Forage to discuss the Pro's & Con's of Cover Crops. What to expect from your cover crops. What cover crops can do for your grazing operation and your soil. Learn how to keep the blends simple. We will also discuss what problems to expect with cover crops and much more!

Details

Tuesday May 9th, 2023
7:00pm to 8:30pm MST

Register at:

<https://www.foothillsforage.com/livewebinars>



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(403) 363-4923

Ben Campbell
(403) 803-9190

Staff

Manager:

Laura Gibney
manager@foothillsforage.com
Cell: (403) 998-4687

Communications Coordinator:

Kayla Minor
comm@foothillsforage.com
Cell: (403) 682-7116

Environmental Coordinator:

Sonja Bloom
enviro@foothillsforage.com
Cell: (403) 612-7204

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.

This Publication is made possible by our major funder - Results Driven Agriculture Research



FFGA is a proud member of

