



**FOOTHILLS FORAGE  
AND GRAZING ASSOCIATION**

*Innovation, education and regenerative agriculture*

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**GRASSROOTS NEWS & VIEWS**

**March 2023**

## Manager's Note — Laura Gibney

### *Howdy folks,*

The start of 2022 found us slowly crawling out of the COVID-19 pandemic, lockdowns, and health restrictions. It was a time when many people were divided and trying to get back to normal. This made for a challenging start to the year for FFGA as we were holding some in-person events again, but with mandatory restrictions in place. It was a relief for everyone in the spring when things improved and we could get back to normal.

FFGA was ready and excited for this and with our partners we delivered 24 in-person events with an attendance of 1,311 producers, industry, and students from across our region and beyond! We also delivered 6 webinars with 502 registrants in 2022. The Grassroots News & Views newsletter continues to be distributed monthly to all our members and partners. Currently FFGA has a membership of 167 Farm Businesses, 1,200 hits on the website monthly, 2,721 followers on Facebook, 1,395 on Twitter and 464 followers on Instagram. Through our producer members, online followers and industry partners our impact on agriculture, the environment, and rural communities continues to grow.

In 2022 Kayla Minor held down the position of interim Environmental & Communications Coordinator while Sonja enjoyed maternity leave with her son Robert. Kayla stepped into this role with passion and an eagerness to learn, and what a year we had! Some highlights were the local summer field days, the 7-day Ranching For Profit School with Dallas

Mount and the 3-day Western Canada Conference on Soil Health & Grazing (WCCSHG) in Edmonton which sold out with 525 producers, industry, researchers, academia and students. It was an honour for me to Chair this renowned event and FFGA's contribution to the event was significant. It was rewarding to see it come off so well, have Agricultural & Irrigation Minister Nate Horner open the event and Senator Paula Simons attend all 3 days of the conference as well as share that Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry (AGFO) are getting their hands dirty with a study of soil conditions in Canada, the first of its kind since 1984. It was also hugely rewarding to see so many producers, especially from the FFGA region not only attend, but shut the place down every night networking, sharing ideas and laughing. While I am looking forward to being a part of the 2024 WCCSHG, I am relieved we have a year in between to catch our breath, and have our ear to the ground on future topics and speakers.

In the fall the FFGA Board and Staff took on the challenge of renewing FFGA's 3-5 Strategic Business Plan. This took a lot of time and energy, but we were successful in securing funding to hire a top-notch facilitator to assist with this process. Six of our sister associations as well as our umbrella association, the Agriculture Research & Extension Council of Alberta, are also updating their plans which will position us all well in individual and joint initiatives, while identifying areas of collaboration and gaps that need to be addressed. Thank you to the FFGA Board of Directors for putting in so much time, energy, and excitement into this process. Not only is it beneficial to unite the board and staff in an even more cohesive way and hone in on focused goals for the association, but it has also become a key piece of securing funding from our main funder, Results Driven Agriculture Research, as we move into the 2023 year.

It was a very busy and active year for FFGA with several different grants and projects on the go that come together in the delivery of our full program. The balancing of a wider variety of funds and projects comes at an administrative cost but has also enabled us to access more revenue streams. We were successful in our joint application

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for the Regenerative Alberta Living Lab and kicked off that 5 year project in the fall of 2022. FFGA continues to assist producers in navigating the On-Farm Climate Action Fund which will see dollars reaching producers for on-farm initiatives related to nitrogen cycling, cover cropping, and grazing management in 2022 and 2023.

With the added workload and funding opportunities available FFGA is excited to be expanding in a purposeful way in 2023. With Sonja returning from maternity leave 3-days a week in Feb 2023 to take on the Environmental Coordinator position, FFGA is excited to also be able to keep Kayla Minor on as our Communications Coordinator. This is an exciting time as we navigate this growth and potential for FFGA and her members.

As we move into 2023, we have been busy wrapping up the WCCSHG, writing grant reports, wrapping up the 2022 financial year, preparing for our AGM and continuing to deliver events. We are gearing up for another busy summer and growing season of events.

We continue to deliver innovative, regenerative, and pertinent agriculture information to our members through workshops, conferences, field days, webinars, our monthly newsletter, and social media platforms. As always, I very much enjoy working with the innovative and passionate producers through the FFGA membership and board. It has been fabulous being back to in-person board meetings where the energy and ideas flow and create an atmosphere of excitement for the future. Thank you to all of our members and

partners for staying connected and supporting us through another year, your support has been crucial in our building momentum and we look forward to what eh future brings!

*Laura Gibney*  
Manager



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*On the Cover: Ladies Livestock Lessons 2023 in Cremona Photo: FFGA*

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# Burke Teichert shares the secrets of a profitable cow

Photo: FFGA



In the two weeks prior to writing this article, the stock market took a big dive and the cattle market dropped for all classes of cattle. In that same time period, I read that average ranches in Kansas have only been profitable two out of the last 10 years when all costs are considered. I have also been told that most of the ranches of 50 cows or less are dependent on the owners' off-farm jobs to continue to operate.

The drops in the stock and cattle markets are not surprising. That has been happening periodically over the last 100 or more years. What is disturbing is that average ranches are not profitable—especially in the last 10 years. Except for those stricken with drought, we have never had better times in this business.

Ranches don't need to lose money, nor do they need to be subsidized with off-farm income unless you inherit or incur too much debt. Ranches should have been profitable during most of the last 10 years and preparing for tough times to come.

If your ranch has not been profitable most of that time, it might be a good idea to consider liquidation while prices are high. Otherwise, you very probably will need to give up equity by selling off some land or borrowing more money or maintain equity by depending on the subsidies from your off-ranch sources of wealth and income.

Last month I talked about "low-input, high-management cattle." I think it is nearly impossible for high-input ranches and high-input cattle to be profitable. Land, labor and equipment (overheads) can be very expensive. We need to keep land costs as low as possi-

ble and reduce labor and equipment to the lowest possible level to get "needed" work done. In other words, reduce overheads.

The other big cost is feed. If the feed comes from the land and cattle do the harvesting, that part of the feed cost is included in the land cost. The rest of the feed must be used judiciously and timed to fit the needs of the livestock.

## What's a "good cow?"

Good cows are those that get pregnant as a yearling and rebreed early in each subsequent breeding season. They do this on minimal fed feed inputs. The right cattle using low inputs will always be more profitable. Because we have manipulated their behavior and genetics, management is required to help the animals do their job. Too many of our modern-day cattle have become input dependent. They can't breed as yearlings and rebreed each year without significant use of fed feed and supplements. This does not have to be. Cattle can be developed to breed as yearlings in a short breeding season with minimal development. The same cattle can also be expected to rebreed in short breeding seasons each year thereafter.

For profitability, nothing is more important on a ranch than reproduction and calf survivability. This must be done on low inputs—grazing all or most of the year with hay feeding only in times of deep snow or prolonged severe cold; strategic supplementation of protein and minerals only to correct nutritional deficiencies and using very little labor for individual animal attention. This implies that selection pressure will be used for natural bred-in fertility, calf health and resistance to flies and parasites. Therefore, you will settle for less-than-maximum growth rate and carcass quality. However, they can be very acceptable for your area and management.

Now please be aware that you can't just suddenly reduce inputs and expect the same cattle to tolerate it. To move from high amounts of hay feeding with large amounts of supplements toward a low-input approach will take some time. I would start by grazing longer and feeding less. Protein supplementation will need to adjust to fit the need of the cows in relation- ship to expected

calving dates and quality of the grazed feed.

Simultaneously, I would shorten the breeding season for yearling heifers to not more than 30 days. This will require exposing more heifers than usual. Then I would make sure that each new bull would add or maintain heterosis at a good level and was born to a highly fertile cow. I would also want to know that he was showing signs of early sexual maturity at a year of age.

I am convinced that yearling heifer fertility and subsequent early breed back (or calving interval) are more highly heritable than the heritability estimates for fertility that we commonly see. What if:

Every bull you ever used was born to a cow that had calved as a result of conceiving in the first 21 days of the breeding season for her first three calves?

These bulls had good weight and muscling in relationship to frame size at a year of age and could also pass a breeding soundness exam at the same time indicating good early growth and early sexual maturity?

This could all be done on low inputs?

What if breed associations would develop EPDs for first cycle (not first service) conception and for subsequent calving interval? Stayability is not sufficient. We would like them to breed back in the first 21 days.

What if seedstock breeders treated their cows the way you would like to treat yours? Too many of us keep paying top dollar for bulls that are too big, whose daughters try to produce too much milk and that don't enable the maintenance of a good level of heterosis. We keep buying that kind of bull. Should we expect them to produce anything different? Good commercial cattlemen need to define what constitutes a good bull and quit buying what someone else wants to sell you unless it fits your definition.

Author: Burke Teichert

Original Article: <https://www.beefmagazine.com/blog/burke-teichert-shares-secrets-profitable-cow>

# 2023 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

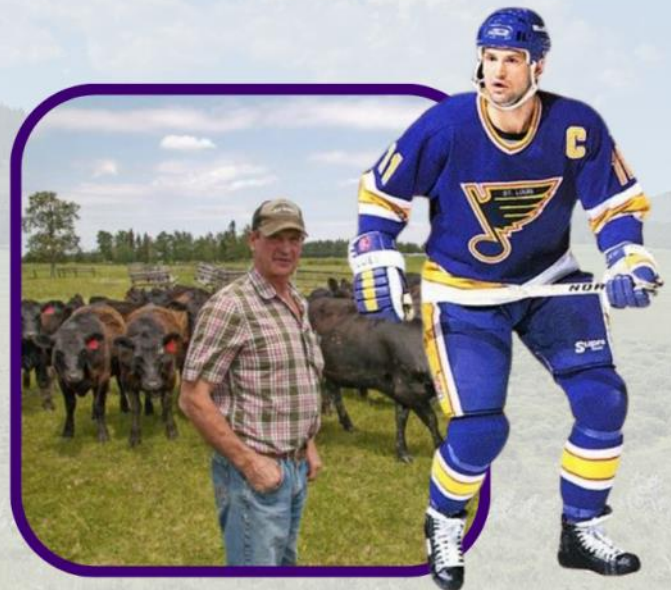
March 22, 2023 - 11:30  
Highwood Centre  
High River, AB

- Lunch served at 11:45pm
- AGM Business Meeting
- Keynote Address from Brian Sutter

**Cost:**  
**\$25 for FFGA Members**  
**\$30 for Non-Members**

*\*Please note, you must be a member in good standing to vote during the Business Meeting. Memberships can be purchased online at [www.foothillsforage.com/membership](http://www.foothillsforage.com/membership) or at the door (cheque or cash only)\**

Are you interested in joining the Foothills Forage & Grazing Association Board of Directors? Email [manager@foothillsforage.com](mailto:manager@foothillsforage.com) or contact a FFGA Director for more details!



## Featuring Keynote Speaker **Brian Sutter**

Brian Sutter is a Canadian former Ice Hockey forward and former head coach in the National Hockey League (NHL). Brian currently ranches near Sylvan Lake with his Wife Judy.

PLEASE VISIT: [HTTPS://WWW.FOOTHILLSFORAGE.COM/AGM-23](https://www.foothillsforage.com/AGM-23)  
REGISTER BEFORE MARCH 15, 2023

# Foothills Forage & Grazing Association



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# PRODUCER FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES



March 15, 2023  
Three Hills Centennial Place Arena

**Agenda:**

- Registration & Coffee | 9:45am
- Lunch ( provided) | Noon
- Wrap-up | 3:00pm

**Topics Include:**

- Grazing Principles
- Utilizing New and Existing Water Sources
- Pasture Design Tips to Improve Rotational Grazing
- Introduction to Cover Crops
- On-Farm Climate Action Funding
  - To offset the cost of implementing new rotational grazing plans, cover crops and nitrogen management on your farm.

**FEATURING: GRANT LASTIWKA**

Grant Lastiwka is a forage extension expert and is a director with the Alberta Forage Industry Network. Grant has worked in Central Alberta with Alberta Agriculture in varying roles: Forages/Grazing/Livestock/Economics Extension for over 30 years. These efforts are almost always related to trying to realize the value from seizing the opportunity of managing forages and grasslands to be a highly productive crop.

**Cost: FFGA Members: \$15 | Non-Member: \$20**

**Register at: <https://www.foothillsforage.com/fundingopportunities>**



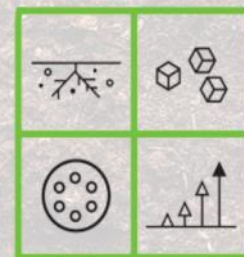
**THE SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE**

**Dr. James White**

How Plants Use Soil Bacteria to Obtain Nutrients

**Dr. Mir M. Seyedbagheri**

Humic Products & Balancing Mineral Nutrients for Soil Health



**THE PRODUCER PERSPECTIVE**

**Wayne Robinson**

The good, bad and the ugly. A producers soil health journey near Mossleigh Alberta.

**Chad Monner**

Trial and error on swath and corn grazing in Milo Alberta.

**Rick Bieber**

Utilizing Various Soil Health Strategies to Enhance Production Efficiency & Quality

**Cost: \$50**

**Optional Evening Workshop Session**

A maximum of 15 producers can discuss humic products and mineral ratio balance for their specific soils with Dr. Mir. A CARA Soil Health Benchmark report from the past 3 years will be required.

**Cost: \$75**

# MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES FOR SOIL HEALTH

Champion Community Hall  
March 20, 2023  
9:00am - 4:00 pm

Register at:

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



Agriculture et Agri-alimentaire Canada

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada



# Crop diversity intended to beef up the soil



Photo: FFGA

“If you take care of the grass, it will take care of you.”

These are the words of wisdom Alberta cattle producer Jerry Baerg received from one of his mentors, and which he has followed as he and his family set about building a sustainable beef operation near Linden in south-central Alberta.

Over the past decade the Baerg family have developed Ribbon Creek Ranch into a sustainable mixed farming operation that includes a commercial cow-calf herd as well as grain and oilseed farming. The enterprise incorporates regenerative practices in its everyday operations.

The Baerg’s efforts in protecting the environment, improving soil health and ensuring animal welfare earned Ribbon Creek Ranch’s recognition in 2022 as winner of the Alberta Beef Producers Environmental Stewardship Award (TESA).

Baerg says he’s amazed and humbled to receive the award, especially since he believes he is only doing what needs to be done to protect the land and make the operation sustainable not only now, but for generations to come.

He says the award is special to his family because it is not about the biggest or best production, but rather environmental stewardship.

## Ribbon Creek Ranch

Like the roots of their native grass, the agricultural roots of the Baerg family run deep, extending back to his great-grandfather, who homesteaded in the Linden area in 1901. Jerry’s grandfather farmed in the area his whole life, before the mostly grain farm was passed on to Jerry’s father, Murray. He expanded the operation to include broiler chicken production and a beef backgrounding enter-

prise.

Jerry and his wife Dawn worked off farm for about five years before returning in 2008. As they got involved, a new vision for the operation started to come into focus about 10 years ago.

“Cows are my passion,” says Baerg. So with that in mind, starting in 2013 it meant the end to raising broilers and moving away from custom-backgrounding cattle to a developing a commercial cow-calf operation. This led to the family buying the property with a lot of native grass east of Linden.

Today, Baerg looks after the beef side of the mixed farm, which includes a 200-head Angus-cross cow-calf herd as well as backgrounding of just their own steers and replacement heifers. He also helps with the no-till annual crop production, with wheat, barley and canola cash crops, as well as oats and peas for livestock feed, all direct seeded. He says it is a priority to apply proper management practices to both annual-crop acres and native grass prairie.

## Family affair

The day-to-day operation of Ribbon Creek Ranch is a family affair requiring all hands on deck as much as possible. The Baergs have six children. The two oldest daughters, although no longer living at home, help out when they can, while the four youngest — three sons and daughter ages 6 to 14 — are all still in school, living at home and have taken quite an interest in the operation. They also help with farm chores as much as possible.

“It can be a lot of work, some days are stressful, but we love what we do,” says Baerg.”

On the beef side, two important farm management tools involved construction of proper perimeter- and cross-fencing to accommodate a rotational grazing system, and extending a water system to areas of the pasture to improve livestock distribution.

The fencing system allows them to rotate the cattle through different areas of the pastures in a rest-rotation system. The cattle make a pass through a pasture and are then removed. The rest period allows the grass time to grow back and replenish itself, while the activity of the

cattle ensures nutrients are spread throughout the different areas.

While native grass prairie is productive, it is also fragile and needs to be managed properly. Baerg has been building and upgrading fencing on the farm for several years. To help with costs he has accessed the Canadian Agriculture Partnership (CAP) funding program to pay for the supplies. He says electric fencing has been one of the greatest tools in creating a flexible rotational grazing system.

Developing and improving the water system is an important part of pasture management. “Water is a key part of grazing,” says Baerg, noting it can be used to improve livestock distribution. As an example, he took a water trough that was located in a valley that was heavily grazed and moved it to the top of a hill that hadn’t been touched. Moving the trough encouraged cattle to use a different part of the pasture. Baerg has installed 1.5 miles of above-ground pipeline to move well water from the farmyard out to pasture. The water system was installed with the help of funding from the Growing Forward program (now known as CAP) and Kneehill County.

## Role for perennial forages

When the grazing land was acquired, Baerg committed to leaving the native grass as is, to be grazed rather than cultivated.

He has stayed true to his commitment, but also started to plant perennial grass into some of the annual cropland, a practice that has turned some heads in an area like Linden where everything is cropland.

Part of the plan is to seed grain crop acres to a blend of perennial forages such as alfalfa, cicer milk vetch, sainfoin and grasses for a few years before returning those acres to annual crops. “It is still a learning curve, but those fields might be in forage crops for seven to eight years before we convert them back to annual crops.”

Baerg is also conducting on-farm trials that involve interseeding clover into some grain fields.

“We did several quarters of barley and before we planted it we broadcast-

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seeded crimson clover with hopes that the added ground cover would compete with the weeds and the legume would also add nitrogen to the soil.” They planted crimson clover with the barley and some subterranean clover with the wheat.

Baerg says it’s been a learning experience. “We found out later that these clovers are actually a perennial in other parts of the world, but when grown here they act more like an annual. Being perennials, they are slower to establish than we’d hoped — they did not take root and provide the ground cover and weed control like a true annual.

“The subterranean clover did better than the crimson clover because it doesn’t grow as tall. The crimson clover grew to knee height. It wasn’t a bad thing, but I’m not sure I would plant it again. It didn’t cause much problem with harvesting of the barley.”

One benefit was that all the crimson clover was added to crop residue piles, providing a higher-protein winter feed for cows. Along with the feed value, Baerg also liked that clover kept growing after harvest, which benefits the soil. One of the keys of regenerative agriculture is to keep some type of crop green and growing on the land right up until winter freeze-up.

“Having a polyculture or species blend on the land has value in improving soil health, while the legumes will add nitrogen to the soil, as well,” says Baerg. “We also played with another crop combination, planting oats and peas together to generate some supplemental protein for winter. Oats and peas work well be-

cause we don’t have to roll the field after seeding.

Growing a cereal and a legume together has several benefits. The oats and peas made a great combination.

“One would shoot up and then the other would shoot up, and they did that all the way until harvest,” says Baerg. “They matured about the same time so we swathed and combined the crop, and they combined well together. The crop residue also made excellent feed for the cattle, and I also have a binful of oats and peas that I’m feeding as a supplement over winter. Straight oats is not a perfect supplement because even though it provides energy, it doesn’t have enough protein, but with peas the protein level is adequate.”

Baerg hopes regenerative agriculture practices will eventually lead to reduced use of crop inputs including fertilizer, insecticides and fungicides. Last year, rather than the conventional seed treatment on the cereal crops, he used a different product which is more of a biological stimulant.

“We liked how that worked, and plan to do it again,” he says. “We don’t want any more pink seed treatment that contains insecticides.” Along with pests, those treatments can also kill beneficial insects, and slow the biology in the soil, which can be even more detrimental.

“We prefer to spray on foliar stimulants later, rather than use a fungicide,” Baerg says. “Last year on some fields we also tried using less nitrogen at time of seeding, and then applied a foliar application of melted urea later.” It takes some experimentation to figure out what works best.

Baerg feels that as soil productivity improves through the use of regenerative agriculture practices, the farm will be able to rely less on traditional production methods that can have harm soil health.

### A journey

Baerg says he didn’t have a sustainability plan when he started building his cow herd in 2013. Since then, he has learned a lot about the importance of protecting grass. He credits mentors and the information he learned through the Foothills Forage and Grazing Association with helping him build up his sustainable practices.

Baerg says his team, which includes his family, veterinarians, nutritionist, and the ranch where he buys his bulls, has allowed Ribbon Creek Ranch to build a successful sustainable plan.

The ranch was nominated for TESA by the Veterinary Agri-Health Services.

Baerg says he wishes more consumers could come out to the farm and see the measures that producers are taking to protect the environment and produce food sustainably.

He says the family cherishes the award because it aligns with their values.

“I’ve been given just a little blip in this history to take care of this land that I have, and I want to hand it along to my children, whoever wants to take it on, better than when I took it.”

Author: Alberta Beef Producers, Canadian Cattle Association

Original Article: <https://www.grainews.ca/cattlemans-corner/crop-diversity-intended-to-beef-up-the-soil/>

# Save the Date

## July 26 & 27, 2023

### Southern Alberta Grazing School for Women

Longview Alberta



@Grazing Schools For Women



# Building Soil With “Wasted” Grass



Photo: FFGA

*With two decades of experience behind him, Greg Judy has learned how to make farming successful by mimicking nature with his grazing management, and building his operation on leased land. He's well-known in the grazing community for sharing his experience to help others be successful.*

By concentrating on combining our cow herds into one large herd as many months of the year as possible we have an easier time of building a full recovery period between grazings. The huge dividends from this management decision are starting to add up in much more forage grown in the growing season. Droughts are much easier to navigate as well.

Our cow mob is made up of June calving and fall calving South Poll cows. The South Poll is a red hided animal that was developed by Teddy Gentry of Fort Payne, Alabama. It is very hardy on grass only grazing systems. These cows have done nothing but excel in Missouri heat and humidity plus handle our winters very well. They are a four-way cross consisting of Red Angus, Senepol, Barzona and Hereford. They are very slick hided, which makes them excel in heat, but they do grow a nice winter hair coat for Missouri winters. They are very adapted to fescue grass which is the primary grass in Midwest.

Our goal is to get everything calving in June because we can get our cows in a body condition score of 6.5 by the time they calve. This is critical for a quick high percentage breed back after calving. Dick Diven has done a lot of research showing the importance of cows calving with a 6.5 body condition

score and a tremendous breed back is the result. In central Missouri it is tough to put a lot of weight on a pregnant cow coming out of winter with April grass. The grass in this time period is so high in protein that the cows have a hard time keeping on weight, let alone putting on weight. The May grass is a different story: the weight just piles on them.

Since switching to Holistic High Density Planned Grazing several years ago our rest periods have tripled over our previous grazing system. By moving the mob 1-2 times per day depending on the growing season and moisture conditions we are always keeping the cows in fresh recovered pasture strips. We are 100% focused on animal performance mode, getting as much quality grass through our cows daily as possible. Our cows do eat some of the seed heads, but most of them get trampled as the cows are ripping off the long succulent leaves down in the dense canopy.

As far as getting them to eat rank forage, we do not have to force our cows to do that. Our recovered pastures now have so many different plant species growing that there is always something tender and growing down in the mature grass sward. As the cows seek out these tender palatable plants they trample the ranker forage on the ground. The pinkeye issue has not been an issue at all this year, knock on wood. We have not had one case of pinkeye in the entire mob. This is probably the most amazing statistic for me. We always in the past have had some pinkeye in a few calves.

The biggest reason we have not had any pinkeye this year I believe is because we have been focusing more this year on high animal performance, thanks to Ian Mitchell Innes's constant comments on the importance of focusing on animal performance. We watch at 60 days before calving up until the time we take out our bulls after our cows are bred. Ian has convinced me that any health issue that shows up in an animal is a symptom of stress that the animal was subjected to 60 days or

more prior to the event.

After zero health problem issues, I am sold on the importance of animal performance. 70% of the unborn calf is developed inside the cow in the last 60 days. That trumps the importance of animal performance during this time period. So if a calf gets scours, pinkeye, or any health issue it is probably because you shorted the cow on quality forage during that time period. If a cow does not get everything that she needs everyday, how can she pass on the priceless antibodies in her milk to her calf? She cannot, so the calf may have health issues.

With the help of the free solar energy and a long recovery period we are building soil like never before. Our pastures have tons of litter trampled on them daily with the mob movement. It still amazes me the amount of forage they can trample in 12 hours. We had a farm tour the 13th of June on our farms where we had about 85 Midwestern cattleman show up. One of our farms that we toured that afternoon had not been grazed since March. When I told the group that this farm had never been limed or fertilized in the last 75 years, I had some looks of doubt on some of their faces.

The history of this 160-acre farm was that it had been continuously grazed and hayed. The whole farm had 12 cows and a bull on it right before I leased it. You could hit a golf ball at any point on the farm and have no problem finding it. A lot of the hills had moss, broomsedge and cedars covering them. We cut the cedars and started increasing our animal density with long recovery periods. The comment that I heard from several of our tour group attendees was that “This grass is too good to graze: you should be cutting it for hay!” I about choked. I quickly recovered from my choking condition and proceeded to tell them that this farm would never see a baler on it as long as I was alive!

I purposely took the tour group out into the middle of the field so that they could see first hand how thick, diverse

*(Continued on page 10)*

(Continued from page 9)

and lush the forage was. Several people were sweating and gasping for breath when I finally stopped in the middle of the field. The grass/legume pasture was so thick that people were having trouble walking through it, myself included! This farm had seen two years of high density grazing with recovery periods that allowed the plants to fully mature before being grazed again. No seeding was done, yet there were all sorts of grasses and legumes growing profusely.

There was one grass variety that formed a clump of rich dark green blades that no one in the group had ever seen before, including me! This farm still had 21 days before it would see our mob, which would give it a 60 days since it was grazed last. Several people in the tour group asked me, “Well aren’t the cattle going to waste a lot of this forage if you try and graze it first”. First I responded that nothing in high density grazing is wasted if it is trampled on the ground by ruminating animals. We are feeding our soil microbes, earthworms, laying down ground surface litter, building soil, increasing organic matter, preventing erosion, holding water where it falls and providing bird nesting habitat! Do any of those items that I just mentioned sound like waste to you?

I bent down on my knees in front of the group and pulled back the 2 foot tall forest of grass and exposed the ground surface. All you could see was a chopped up layer of dead plants covering the soil surface. One fellow took out his pocketknife and cut a wedge out of the moist soil surface. There were 2 worms in the tiny 4” wedge of soil. A lot of people walked out of that field in disbelief as to what they had seen. No fertilizer and no inputs other than good management with high density and long recovery periods between grazing.

On July 4th, we walked the mob two miles down public roads to this farm. I still could not tell any difference visually in the quality of the grass since June 13th. The sward was only taller, thicker, with much more mass. The cattle were grazed on 12-hour moves at 75,000 to 150,000 lbs per acre depending on the slope and terrain. I could not believe what was happening with the mob. They were absolutely doing exactly what I hoped they would do. They were eating the very best and in the process they

were trampling about 70 percent of it. Man were they “wasting” forage and I was so proud of them. Good job cows. The cows were all fat and happy, the field looked like you had taken an asphalt roller to it. You could count the few lucky weeds on one hand that survived getting knocked over.

Folks this was not at ½ million pounds stocking density, 75,000 lbs was what we were using where the grass was the thickest. They still trampled all the grass on the ground, covered with a slurry of manure over the top of it. We had another farm tour two weeks after giving this area the mob treatment. The whole field looked like you had covered it with dry grass/legume hay. You could reach down and pull up the dead decaying grass layer and the ground was just perfect underneath the trampled sward. There were visual sighting of earthworms everywhere feeding on the manure slurry trampled dead grass. The legumes were exploding up through the “wasted” dead grass with only two weeks rest.

Strong new plants with multiple leaves were everywhere you looked. The tour group could not believe that I had removed the cows from each daily strip with so much quality forage trampled on the ground. Most of their comments were “Heck I would have left those cows on those daily strips an extra day and made them clean it up better, rather than letting it go to waste on the ground.” There is that “waste” word again describing grass trampled on the ground.

People have a real hang-up seeing lots of grass trampled on the ground. This is our no-cost fertilizer program for our pastures that allows us to grow more forage each year than the previous year. I’ve never seen a pasture grow back any faster than that one did, where we let the cows “waste” the grass! After four weeks of rest, we went back out to the same paddock with a video camera to shoot some film of the area.

The grass was up 12 inches high with clovers evenly dispersed in the canopy. The individual leaves of the plants were the darkest lush green that I had ever seen. The thick litter was neatly placed between the plants holding in moisture and feeding the soil microbes. I bent down and pulled back the

dead moist 2” layer of litter on the ground. Immediately I noticed earthworms, centipedes, big black beetles, grubs, monster ant looking things with wings, caterpillars, several different species of hard shelled worms, and much more wildlife that I can describe.

There were earthworm castings everywhere on the surface of the ground, resembling a worm bed farm! It was one of the most beautiful sights I have ever seen in my life. This was the middle of August. You normally do not see earthworms on the surface of the ground in Missouri during this time period. The soil surface had holes of all different diameters going down into the soil everywhere. It looked like a freeway of bugs had been using this area for some time. It did not matter where I walked in the huge field, there was the same wildlife activity taking place on the soil surface.

I cut a wedge of soil out of the ground surface with my pocket knife and held it to my nose. It had a very rich earthy smell that went on forever! I literally could have spent the whole evening on that one field just walking around pulling back the blanket of dead moist litter and watching the magnificent soil builders at work. What a pleasure it was. Folks, we don’t have another grazing planning system on the face of the earth that can build so much soil with no purchased inputs.

With all farm purchased inputs skyrocketing out of control it sure is a nice position to be in, having all this free forage grown with “wasted” grass! It sure gives you a feeling of being in control of your financial grazing future. Since switching to Holistic High Density Planned Grazing we have reduced our work load by 2/3rds. We have increased our recovery periods by 300% and increased our animal impact by 300%. Thanks to Holistic Management our daily lives just keep getting better and more enjoyable each day.

Author: Greg Judy

Original Article: <https://greenpasturesfarm.net/2019/05/30/greg-judy-article-building-soil-with-wasted-grass/>

# Managing Hypothermia in Newborn Calves

Photo: FFGA



Plans for calving season should include how to identify and manage cold stress in newborns. In the 2007 National Animal Health Monitoring System report, 25.6% of operations reported weather as the main cause for death in calves less than 3 weeks old. Preventing hypothermia is vital to survival in the newborn.

## Interruptions to Thermoregulation

Difficulty during birth, also known as dystocia, can have detrimental effects on calf health. The contractions from the dam create periods of limited oxygen as the calf moves through the birth canal. When the delivery process is prolonged, calves will be born with critically low levels of blood oxygen. These low levels will be corrected when breathing begins. However, severe dystocia calves have such low levels that the respiratory system is suppressed, leading to a cascade of negative events.

The increase of blood carbon dioxide levels and the lack of oxygen lead to a condition called acidosis. The acidosis will depress the central nervous system and lead to weak calf syndrome. In these situations, calves are unable to stand and likely have a decreased shivering response, causing hypothermia. Hypothermic calves

lack a suckle reflex and fail to ingest necessary colostrum, which will delay the absorption of antibodies and essential nutrients needed for survival.

## Management Strategies to Treat Hypothermia

There are several ways to assist a hypothermic calf. This first step is understanding when to intervene. The normal rectal temperature of a newborn calf is 101.5-102.5 degrees F. A simple thermometer will help identify when the calf is in danger. Once the temperature drops below 101 degrees F, steps should be taken to prevent hypothermia. Another tip is to place two fingers into the mouth of the calf. The inside of the mouth of a healthy calf will be warm and moist and will attempt to chew or suck on your fingers. If the suckle reflex is absent, it's time to get involved.

Consider two routes when attempting to rewarm a calf: external and internal. Colostrum is the first line of defense for warming a calf internally. Comprised of up to 10% fat, colostrum acts as a heat source by burning the fat into energy and maintaining body temperature. Calves that can sit sternal and hold their head up need colostrum to begin the warming process. The best source will be from the dam, but other sources or replacers may be used as well. Ensure records are kept on what and how much was provided to the calf. More information on colostrum can be found at Colostrum 101, provided by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

External warming can be achieved through commercial warming huts, forced warm air such as the floorboard of your truck, or warm water bath. Never leave a calf unattended while using a heat source as there is potential for overheating. While warming huts are an easy option, they can also serve as breeding grounds for pathogens. Thoroughly

clean and disinfect the entire hut before adding another calf. If using a bath, ensure the calf is completely dry before placing back outside.

Author: Lindsay Waechter-Mead

Original Article: <https://www.drovers.com/news/beef-production/managing-hypothermia-newborn-calves>

## PODCAST CORNER

What is FFGA listening to?

Monthly Podcast recommendations given by FFGA Directors

PODCAST CHANNEL  
THE BEEF CATTLE HEALTH AND NUTRITION  
TITLE  
COLOSTRUM MANAGEMENT

Claire Windeyer from the University of Calgary School of Veterinary Medicine joins the podcast to discuss the importance of colostrum in neonatal beef calves and gives advice on how and when to intervene. She also discusses the pros and cons of various methods of colostrum supplementation.

### SCAN CODE

for direct access to Podcast



LINK

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/colostrum-management-with-dr-claire-windeyer/id1652384748?i=1000600036333>

The County of Newell is hosting a

# SHELTERBELT WORKSHOP

JOIN US FOR A FREE SEMINAR ON  
SHELTERBELTS WITH GUEST SPEAKER  
TOSO BOZIC

March 13th, 2023  
@ 11:00 am  
County of Newell Building  
Lunch will be provided

## Topics include:

- Care and Maintenance
- Uses and Types of Shelterbelts
- Diseases and Pests
- Exciting collaborations

For more information &  
to Register please  
contact:  
Donovan Kopp  
403-409-3510  
koppd@newellmail.ca



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**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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