



Innovation, education and regenerative agriculture

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GRASSROOTS NEWS & VIEWS

February 2026

Director's Note - Tanis Cross

Greetings FFGA Members

Hope you all are having a great start to 2026. I am one of the FFGA directors that my term is up, and I am happy to share that I have had a great time being a part of the board. If you are looking to meet new people, get involved, and learn a lot. I would recommend enquiring about becoming a FFGA board member. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

I was grateful to attend Doug Ferguson's Sell Buy Marketing school in November. We are a grass yearling operation here on the A7 Ranche so it was helpful to gain some education on this. What stood out to me was that the first morning of the school wasn't all about the math or the process of the market. It was a session on mindset. The importance of a clear and intentional mindset makes all the difference in our day to day operations and for sure in our strategic planning.

FFGA Christmas party was a producer panel type style with three talented ranching women. I found it very inspiring to listen to. All three had worked alongside their fathers on their operations and now, today they are managing their family operation with the

support of their talented husbands. To sit and listen to them share about their family history, their past of learning from their fathers to present where these women and their families run the successful businesses was very cool. Thank you for sharing, ladies.

Here at the A7 Ranche, we are looking forward to a new season with our grass yearlings. We are starting into year five of the yearling operation of always learning and striving to improve. We are thankful for natures resources like good forage and good water.

Again, grateful to be apart of such an amazing board and staff of FFGA, thank you all for the great times and looking forward to many more. Hope you all have a great year.

Tanis Cross

(In photo: Taylor Bagnall. Good moisture in 2025)



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FOOTHILLS FORAGE & GRAZING ASSOCIATION

Member Renewal 2026

Foothills Forage & Grazing Association membership is \$50 (+GST). Membership is per operation and includes all family members and staff within that operation.

If you've paid online before, you may already be set up for auto-renewal. If you're unsure, please contact Kayla at comm@foothillsforage.com.

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

On the Cover: Stockmanship School at Mt Sentinel Ranch. Photo: FFGA

Thank you for your support!



AgriStability: A practical, whole farm safety net for Alberta producers

Farming comes with risks—volatile markets, rising costs, and unpredictable conditions can all impact the bottom line, threatening a farming operation's long-term viability.

AgriStability is here to help. It's a practical, affordable program that protects farm income when profit margins take a hit.

If a farm's profit margin drops below 70 per cent of its historical average, AgriStability steps in. The program covers 80 cents for every dollar lost, up to a maximum of \$3 million. This whole-farm approach makes AgriStability different from other risk management tools—it looks at the entire operation, not just one crop or commodity.

"(AgriStability) keeps you farming for next year," explains Josh Lubach, a producer in the Ponoka area. "It doesn't make you rich, but it keeps you going—that's our mentality on it."

"It's a good tool to limit your risk. It just puts a floor on how much risk you're exposed to today."

Backstop in uncertain times

Global trade tensions, driven by retaliatory tariffs on commodities and the upcoming review of the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA), create uncertainty for producers. AgriStability helps stabilize farm incomes when outside forces threaten profitability.

"(AgriStability is) not an expensive program to get into and it could save your whole farm on a down year," says Abe Fehr, a producer in the La Crete area. "You won't go on to make a whole lot of money off of it, but there should be enough so you can get another kick at the can."

It can also help when prices fall after crops are in the bin. For example, recent price drops for canola and other commodities triggered AgriStability payments for the 2024 program year. Cattle prices, currently at record highs, could experience a

price correction in the near future, especially as the United States looks at importing beef from other areas in the world.

More responsive for livestock producers

While decreased prices and market corrections can affect all commodities, livestock operations face unique challenges, prompting changes aimed at making coverage more responsive to the realities of livestock production.

Starting in 2026:

- Pasture rent will count as an allowable expense.
- The valuation of opening and closing inventories for eligible crops fed on farm will be based on the fair value at the end of the year!

"In a disaster situation, like a drought, the value of feed increases, offsetting the inventory decreases," said Daniel Graham, manager AgriStability and Pricing with Agriculture Financial Services (AFSC).

"This change means the increase in value of feed will no longer offset the drop in feed inventory. This will help AgriStability be more responsive in the year of the disaster."

Easier than ever to participate

Alongside these coverage improvements, participation in AgriStability is now easier.

New participants now need only three years of historical data instead of five, and they can opt for an optional reference margin (ORM) based

on tax-reported income, eliminating the need for inventory or accrual records.

This flexibility is helpful for smaller farms seeking simplicity, while larger operations may prefer the default accrual adjusted reference margin for greater precision.

Comprehensive protection

AgriStability protects against production loss, increased input costs, decreases in inventory values, and changing market conditions—covering the full spectrum of risks that can reduce farm profitability.

It's a comprehensive safety net that works alone or alongside other tools like crop insurance and Livestock Price Insurance—helping you protect your investment and your livelihood.

"Producers face uncertainty as they monitor weather conditions, trade tensions and ongoing tariff threats," said Graham. "AgriStability, as a margin-based program, is best positioned to help producers meet those types of challenges."

It's time to take another look at AgriStability and see if it's the right fit for your farming operation.

To learn more, please contact an insurance relationship manager at your preferred AFSC branch office, call the Client Care Centre at 1.877.899.2372 or email info@afsc.ca

Risk	AgriStability	AgrilInsurance	Hail Insurance	Livestock Price Insurance
Production / Yield Loss	✓	✓	✓	✗
Loss In Inventory Value	✓	✗	✗	✗
Commodity Price Decrease	✓	✗	✗	✓
Input Costs Increase	✓	✗	✗	✗

FFGA



FOOTHILLS FORAGE
AND GRAZING ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

MARCH 18, 2026- HIGHWOOD CENTRE, HIGH RIVER

- 11:30AM - REGISTRATION
- 12:00PM - LUNCH
- 1:00PM - AGM BUSINESS MEETING
- 2:00PM - KEYNOTE ADDRESS: SHAUN HANEY
- 3:30PM - WRAP UP

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 or at the door!

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

COST:
FFGA MEMBER: \$30
NON-MEMBER: \$40



Shaun Haney is the founder of RealAgriculture, a leading North American ag media platform delivering news and insights on policy, agronomy, and farm management. He hosts RealAg Radio on SiriusXM's Rural Radio Channel 147 and RealAg on the Weekend across Saskatchewan and Alberta. Shaun is also a regular contributor to RFD-TV, Agritalk, and US Farm Report, and co-leads RealAgristudies, a farmer-focused market research initiative launched in 2019.

Visit: www.foothillsforage.com/2026AGM



Foothills Forage & Grazing Association

2026 BURSARY

CALLING ALL POST SECONDARY

Are you enrolled in a full- time program that will contribute to the future of the forage & livestock industry? If that is a 'yes', this bursary is for you!



FOR MORE INFORMATION:



For qualifications & to apply visit:
www.foothillsforage.com/bursary2026

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Proactive succession planning key to success



Photo: FFGA

The growing sophistication of farm operations is reshaping farm transitions, and the unprecedented challenges these legacy businesses face demand our immediate and strategic attention.

For generations, Canadian farms have been more than businesses.

They are the backbone of our national food security and rural economic infrastructure. They are also living legacies, passed down through families with pride, hard work and an intimate connection to the land.

The transformation of Canadian agriculture over the past few decades has been revolutionary. Farms that once relied primarily on manual labour and traditional knowledge now operate with GPS-guided machinery, drone technology and data analytics.

This shift has dramatically changed how farms operate, creating both exciting opportunities and complex challenges for farmers in terms of levels of capital investment required and the ability for knowledge to transfer between generations.

And with 40 per cent of Canadian farmers set to retire over the next 10 years, engaging the next generation in the industry isn't just important, it's imperative for modernizing and sustaining our agricultural sector.

Young farmers embody entrepreneurial risk-taking, often bringing fresh perspectives and embracing new technologies and sustainable practices.

By creating the right incentive structures that position farming as a strong entrepreneurial and innovation-rich venture, we can retain and attract the next generation of smart young farmers who are eager to apply their

drive to advancing agricultural practices.

As chief executive officer of Farm Business Consultants, a national network of accounting and tax specialists, I've seen firsthand how the evolving landscape of Canadian agriculture — from recent tax changes to advancing technology requirements and increasing capital demands — have transformed farm succession planning.

Young farmers play a key role in navigating these challenges. Their knack for embracing modern farming methods can boost productivity and help us make the most of our farmland in a sustainable way.

This approach is vital for maintaining food security over the long term and maintaining independence in the decisions we make regarding our food production.

Today's farmers face a complex and unforgiving economic reality. They are asset-rich but cash flow challenged and managing operations that can require millions of dollars in capital investment just to remain competitive.

The financial pressures on modern farmers are multifaceted. They must contend with the high costs of land, equipment and infrastructure while navigating the challenges of rising operational expenses and fluctuating fuel costs.

Additionally, technological advancements in precision agriculture, while promising increased efficiency, demand substantial upfront investment.

These cutting-edge tools and data-driven strategies are no longer optional luxuries but essential components for staying competitive in a rapidly evolving agricultural marketplace.

Land prices have skyrocketed, with some prime agricultural areas seeing values increase by more than 300 per cent in the last two decades.

For many farm families, their land represents their most valuable asset, but it's also the hardest to divide or

transfer without facing significant tax liabilities.

All of this means that it's important to consider several factors as farms plan for the future of their businesses.

Succession planning isn't only a financial exercise, it's also about preserving family values, maintaining operational continuity and ensuring the next generation has both the tools and the opportunity to continue a proud agricultural tradition.

Family dynamics play a vital role. Open, transparent communication about expectations, capabilities and long-term vision becomes as important as any financial strategy.

The most successful transitions I've witnessed are those where families approach the process with mutual respect, clear communication and a shared commitment to the farm's future.

Additionally, succession planning should consider the broader community impact. Farms are often central to rural communities, providing employment and supporting local economies. A well-executed succession plan can ensure that these community benefits continue for generations to come.

When succession planning begins years before the intended transition, families can successfully navigate complex tax situations, gradually transfer operational control and even expand their operations during the transition. Success stories all have one thing in common: they started early.

In contrast, reactive planning severely limits options, forces important decisions under pressure, often leads to higher tax implications and misses opportunities for strategic restructuring.

Without proper planning, we're seeing more families forced to sell to corporate entities or foreign investors, a trend that deeply concerns me as someone committed to preserving Canada's agricultural heritage and diversity.

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The difference between proactive and reactive succession planning could not be more dramatic.

Proactive planning opens doors for thoughtful structuring, maximizes tax efficiencies, preserves operational stability and often has far more chance of successfully maintaining family harmony.

Based on my years of experience, successful succession planning hinges on several critical considerations, which I believe farmers and the industry should prioritize:

- Engage early: begin the succession planning process years in advance to optimize operational structures and maximize tax benefits.
- Strategize with tax planning: stay informed about potential tax changes and prepare for various scenarios to minimize tax burdens during the transition.
- Evaluate operational structures: regularly review ownership struc-

tures to identify the unique benefits they offer and align them with long-term succession goals.

- Build financial resilience: diversify income streams, accumulate cash reserves and consider innovative funding models, such as community-supported agriculture or local business partnerships, to secure long-term sustainability.

It's also important to consider the human element in any succession planning conversation. This includes identifying and nurturing the next generation of farm leaders, whether they're family members or not.

Successful transitions often involve a gradual transfer of knowledge and responsibility, allowing younger generations to gain experience while the older generation can still provide guidance.

A succession plan isn't just about retirement. It's about preserving a legacy of Canadian agriculture that deserves to continue.

The challenges are significant, but they are challenges we can tackle. Remember, every farm's situation is unique. There's no one-size-fits-all solution. However, the principles of early planning, strategic thinking and open communication apply universally.

Don't wait until retirement is imminent. The most valuable gift that anyone can give their family's agricultural legacy is starting this process now while options remain open and the most beneficial strategies can be implemented effectively.

Author: Yves Millette-Analysis

Original Article: <https://www.producer.com/farmliving/proactive-succession-planning-key-to-success/>



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FORWARD
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Swath Grazing

Photo: FFGA



Feed makes up the largest expense on a cow/calf operation. In addition to the initial expense, producers need to consider the storage and waste associated with winter feeding in the northern United States. As expenses increase, and producers evaluate more-efficient management techniques to lower production costs, one alternative may be to incorporate swath, or windrow grazing. Swath grazing can be utilized with various crops and can improve utilization of the crops for feed, while decreasing fuel, harvest and feeding costs and also improving soil health.

Swath grazing is the practice of cutting hay, small grains or forage crops and leaving them in windrows for livestock to graze during the winter months. Rather than having the expense of baling the hay, moving it off the field and feeding it in the winter, the feed is left in windrows, and cattle are allowed access to a limited number of windrows at a time as a means to reduce winter feed costs and increase soil fertility.

Benefits of Swath Grazing

Swath grazing has its benefits in the Midwest, where colder temperatures and snow accumulation regularly occur. If utilizing a small grain crop, such as, but not limited to, millet, sudan or sorghum, swath grazing may provide an additional opportunity to utilize the forage.

A study conducted at Iowa State University evaluated forage quality

and utilization of swath grazing on the cow herd. Millet and sorghum were harvested in late July as a hay crop, allowed to regrow, and the regrowth was cut and raked in late December for a swath grazing trial. Cows in their third trimester of gestation were moved from corn stalk residue to the swaths, where they grazed in a similar method to intensive grazing. Cows were given enough swaths to graze for three days at a time, and then fencing was moved and cows were given access to the next section. Cow behavior became similar to that of an intensive grazing system, as cows became trained and knew what to do when they were supposed to move. The logistics of moving fencing during the winter can be a challenge, depending on temperatures and the situation, so take that into consideration, as ground temperature will affect fencing being moved during the rotation.

The nutrient value of the feed did decline toward the end of February when cows were switched over to a TMR; however, they saw no detrimental effects to the calves as a result. Cows were able to utilize the feed with up to 12 inches of snow accumulation and temperatures of -20 degrees Fahrenheit. Forage utilization was up to 70%, which makes swath grazing a cost-effective option in comparison to putting the forage in bales. With swath grazing, operating equipment and labor decrease, as harvesting and moving bales or manure hauling are minimal. The study also found that grazing crop residue was minimal and did not affect regrowth of a perennial forage crop, thus allowing grazing to occur on a hay field or permanent pasture.

From a soil health perspective, swath grazing increases soil health through manure and urine distribution. In a dry year, it helps create a potential seedbed and improved fil-

tration by breaking soil crust, fully trampling all the non-eaten materials, and spreading out dung piles, making them less fly friendly. This also provides a food source for soil microbes, thus increasing fertility of fields in the long-term.

Author: South Dakota State University

Original Article: <https://www.drovers.com/news/beef-production/swath-grazing>

PODCAST CORNER

What is FFGA listening to?

Monthly Podcast recommendations given by FFGA Directors

PODCAST CHANNEL WORKING COWS

TITLE
WINTER FEEDING
STRATEGIES THAT
IMPROVE PROFITABILITY



SCAN ME

LINK

<https://www.workingcows.net/461>

Building reputation cattle: Consistency and quality drive premiums through every cycle

Photo: FFGA



When weaned calf prices are high the revenue difference between the top third and bottom two-thirds benchmark farms in the Cost of Production Network has been minimal. But in 2021, when calf supplies were larger, and buyers were more interested in quality than numbers to fill pens, the revenue difference was 16 per cent.

Even in 2024, for herds with fewer than 200 beef cows, the average weaned calf price was 13 per cent higher in the top-third performing benchmarks (based on medium-term profit). This is what drove their overall revenue to be seven per cent higher compared to the bottom two-thirds, showing that putting time and effort into building reputation cattle is worth it at every stage of the cattle cycle.

Revenue per cow was not statistically different between the herds with more or fewer than 200 beef cows, suggesting that at current high prices and tight calf supplies, there may not be a premium for larger groups. However, this may change when the cattle cycle has ample supplies and more competition between sellers.

While prices are high right now, they will not stay that way. Preparing now can make a difference when low prices squeeze profit margins. Producers who consistently deliver high-quality, uniform calves backed by consistent performance can achieve “reputation cattle” status — and command premium prices. This is crucial to surviving the price cycle lows.

Reputation cattle aren’t built overnight. They’re the result of consistent management, honesty and reliable performance. By focusing on quality, transparency and buyer needs, you can build a brand that keeps buyers coming back and puts more dollars in your pocket.

Build a high-quality calf crop

Start by defining your target market — finishing lots or backgrounders — and select genetics to meet their needs. Use reputable AI sires or purchase bulls with strong expected progeny differences for the desired traits. Maintain accurate records.

Implement a strong herd health and nutrition program. Calm handling and bunk training go a long way in reducing stress and improving performance down the line. A tight calving window (45-60 days) will also help deliver a uniform group of calves at sale time.

Brand for reputation

Develop your ranch’s visual identity. Build awareness and loyalty among buyers by finding ways to connect the quality to the source of the product. Producers who stand out in the marketplace are those who back up their quality with verified practices.

On-farm assurance programs such as Verified Beef Production Plus (VBP+) demonstrate your commitment to food safety, animal care, biosecurity and environmental stewardship. Adding certifications from the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (CRSB) can open doors to additional benefits, but it does require producers to take extra steps. Operations certified by VBP+ simultaneously meet CRSB’s sustainable beef production standard.

A five-year Level 1 assessment (cow-calf or grazing operation) with VBP+ costs \$1,250, which can be paid up front or through five annual payments (\$250 per year). With a CRSB certification at \$20 per head qualifying cattle credit for cattle processed at Cargill, it would take approximately 1.25 years to pay off the assessment cost. This assumes you have a 120-cow herd with an 89 per cent weaning rate, selling only your steers (53 head = \$1,060 per year of additional revenue) to a certified operation and a qualifying packer.

In addition, assessment costs for verified or certification programs can be offset by incentives provided through some provincial programs to cost-share assessment costs or infrastructure linked to grant priorities. Other benefits include the Farm Credit Canada Sustainability

Incentive on lending.

Market for premium value

Choose a marketing channel. Pre-sort, internet and satellite sales are ideal for producers offering large, uniform lots with verified programs. Direct sales to feedlots or through an order buyer can help build relationships and generate valuable feedback. Some auction markets provide show lists, so that buyers know who is selling. Similarly, buyers know if sellers consistently sell at the same sale every year.

Market early and clearly. High-quality photos, short videos and weight data help buyers make confident decisions and reduce their risk. Share vaccination details and weaning protocols well ahead of shipping.

Once the deal is made, deliver what you promised. Clean, calm, properly tagged calves delivered on time leave a lasting impression. Follow up with buyers, ask for feedback and share performance results if available. c

What is the Canadian Cow-Calf Cost of Production Network?

The Canadian Cow-Calf Cost of Production Network uses standardized data collection which allows for comparison both within and between provinces, and internationally.

Since launching in 2021, the network has collected data from more than 235 producers contributing to 64 cow-calf benchmark farms that represent various production systems.

Each benchmark is based on data from three to seven producers. Data collection occurs every five years with annual indexing of input and output prices, as well as crop and forage yields, in subsequent years. Visit CanFax for free individual benchmark farm summaries.

Author: Canfax Research Services

Original Article: <https://www.canadiancattlemen.ca/management/building-reputation-cattle-consistency-and-quality-drive-premiums-through-every-cycle/>



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DETAILS



Friday

February 20, 2026



From

10:00am - 3:00pm



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biologybeneaththerows.eventbrite.ca

**Managing Potatoes,
A Biologically Based
Systems Approach**

Hazen Palmer

Northwest Biologic



**SCAP On-Farm
Efficiency Program
Overview**

Sonja Bloom

*Foothills Forage &
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**Potato Nutrient
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Peter Aleman

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ENVIRONMENTAL FARM PLAN (EFP) WORKSHOP

MOUNTAIN VIEW COUNTY OFFICE
DIDSBURY, AB
FEBRUARY 24, 2026

WORKSHOP DETAILS:

- Workshop will begin at 9:00am and wrap-up around 3:00pm
- Lunch will be provided
- Please bring laptop or tablet
- Please bring information on your water sources & water bodies if you have them
- If you are renewing your EFP and you have your old binder, please bring it as this can be helpful

Please register before February 17, 2026

TO REGISTER VISIT:

<https://www.foothillsforage.com/efp26>



Environmental Farm Plan (EFP)

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.

The EFP will play a key part in:

- Safeguarding your local environment
- Building credibility for your operation with financial institutions and the community at large
- Sustaining the health and future of the agriculture industry

The EFP program provides you with a voluntary, confidential self-assessment process to evaluate the environmental risks and strengths of your operation and develop a plan to address those risks and strengths.

Learn more about how agricultural practices affect the environment. Learn more about management options that protect soil, water, air and habitat quality. Identify what you are already doing well and where improvements can be made



To find out more about the Alberta Environmental Farm Plan, please visit www.albertaefp.com

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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