

Forage Facts

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Grazing Livestock in Riparian Areas

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DID YOU KNOW?

Yearlings drinking clean water from an off-site system gain up to 9% more than those drinking directly from a dugout or water body?

The snow is melting, dugouts are filling, and soon the grass will be growing! It is time to start making grazing plans for the summer!

Many grazing plans revolve around water availability. If you live along a creek, pond, or river, you likely have some areas that always hold a lot of water and seem to stay green late into the summer.

Riparian areas are the transitional zones between water bodies and upland areas. When healthy, these riparian areas work like nature's Brita filter; filtering and trapping runoff, recharging groundwater, and slowing erosion along banks. These areas also produce abundant, diverse forage species. Water availability and lush plant matter make riparian areas seem like the perfect place to kick the cows into to graze.

However, poor grazing management in these areas can be detrimental to this sensitive and important buffer zone. Water logged soils are highly susceptible to being punched out by livestock very quickly, which decimates forage growth, effective-

ly promoting soil erosion and bank degradation.

All is not lost however! Careful management that focuses on the unique qualities of these sensitive riparian zones can help to preserve the healthy function of these areas, while also reaping the benefit of grazing them.

Grazing that maintains or even improves riparian area health is a bit of an art form. Factors such as stocking rates, water access, rest periods, and soil moisture are much different than a typical tame pasture situation.



Stocking Rates

When grazing a riparian area, it is critical not to overgraze the area. A cow will consume approximately 2-3% of her body weight in forage everyday. Keeping this in mind, along with an estimate of the forage yield and the amount of time they will be in the area can help to stock appropriately.

Access to Water

When cattle drink directly from streams or wetlands, they can punch out and destabilize the bank, muddy the water, and cause nutrients to en-



Grazing Riparian Areas Continued

ter the water source. Off-site watering systems prevent degradation of banks and preserves water quality.

Rest Periods

Rest periods for a riparian area can be different from tame pastures due to the difference in vegetation and available moisture. As with all plants, a proper rest period allows plants to regrow leaves and root mass. Since overgrazing is incredibly detrimental to riparian areas, it is very important to make sure that plants are fully recovered before returning to regrow. Monitoring regrowth, spots of bare ground, and changes in species composition can help to determine whether a riparian area is being overgrazed or has had a proper rest period.

Soil Moisture

It is generally recommended to graze riparian areas later in the year when the ground has had a chance to dry up, around mid-summer. Wet soils are very vulnerable to punching out and compacting. Therefore, grazing during the spring, and after large rain events

should be avoided to maintain soil structure and stability.

Grazing Management & Livestock Preference

During the hot summer months, cattle tend to laze and linger around water and shade. This makes riparian areas a summer haven for the herd to hang around in those hot summer afternoons. So when access to riparian areas is given to cattle grazing upland, they will linger and likely overgraze the shady, cool riparian area. To prevent this, an off-site watering system and exclusion fencing is recommended. Having a riparian area as a separate pasture greatly improves our ability to manage it in a positive manner.

Under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP), there is funding available to cover up to 70% of eligible expenses through the Environmental Stewardship and Climate Change program for riparian area fencing and off-site watering systems. If you would like to apply for funding, please give us a call and we are happy to help!

Thank You to the PCBFA Board of Directors

Jordan Barnfield
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Do You Have Project or Workshop Ideas?

We are always looking for ideas! Give us a call!

PCBFA Member Perks:

- Two Free Feed Tests Per Year
- Ration Balancing Assistance
- CAP Application Assistance
- Environmental Farm Plans
- Scale & Tag Reader Available for Member Use
- Soil & Livestock Water Quality Testing

Thank You to Our Municipal Partners

MD of Fairview
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Clear Hills County
Saddle Hills County
MD of Spirit River
Birch Hills County
MD of Greenview
Big Lakes County
County of Grande Prairie
Northern Sunrise County

Looking into CAP funding or other Grants? Need to renew your Environmental Farm Plan?

EFP & CAP Open Houses

Day	Date	Location	Time
Wednesday	April 17th	Valleyview, Greenview Regional Multiplex	1-4pm
Thursday	April 18th	Worsley Community Hall	1-4pm
Thursday	April 25th	Clairmont, County of GP Community Services Building	1-4pm

Introducing... Alan Lee!



INTERCROPPING!

Okay, now that I have your attention, let me reintroduce myself. My name is Alan Lee. You may remember me as one of the summer interns helping our research coordinator Akim, and one of the many staff members helping out at some of the events PCBFA hosted last summer. This year, I am back as a master's student and bringing exciting new research to the farm.

Yes, you guessed it, the topic of my master's research is intercropping. Working at PCBFA and participating in the events last summer inspired me as to how many people were interested in new ways to be sustainable and the use of cocktails. I thought to myself: why not make a project out of it? A few months after I went back to school, I

discussed it with Akim and my professor and came up with the idea of looking into what makes intercropping so good.

Is it plants with different nutritional needs? Is it something in the soil? Is it maybe fungus? I aim to find out all about it this year and I'll be more than happy to share my findings with you. I hope to see you all around this summer and have a fantastic season!



**Please be Advised,
PCBFA Offices will be
Closed for Easter
April 19th & 22nd**





Upcoming Events

Event	Date & Time	Location
Clear Hills County Agricultural Tradeshow	April 13th 10am-5pm	Hines Creek, Dave Shaw Memorial Complex
EFP/CAP Open House	April 17th 1pm Registration	Valleyview, Greenview Regional Multiplex
EFP/CAP Open House	April 18th 1pm Registration	Worsley Community Center
EFP/CAP Open House	April 25th 1pm Registration	Clairmont, County of GP Commiunity Services Building
Peace Forage Tour	June 20th	Beaverlodge Research Station
Grazing School with Dr. Allen Williams	July 22nd & 23rd	North Peace
5th Annual Field Day at the Research Farm	August 1st	Fairview Research Farm
WheatStalk	August 8th	Teepee Creek
<p>For More Information or to Register for any of These Great Events, Visit peacecountrybeef.ca/upcoming-events Email info@pcbfa.ca or Call 780-835-6799 ext. 3</p>		

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