

Forage Facts

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Welcoming Some New Faces to PCBFA!

By: Kaitlin McLachlan

2016 is off to a wonderful start here at PCBFA! We kicked off the year with some of the highest event attendance numbers that we have ever seen, and now we are pleased to be welcoming some new faces to the Association! We hired our new Agri-Environmental Program Coordinator, who started on the 29th of March. As well, we elected three new board members at our AGM on February 26th! Let's get to know our new additions!

Jen Allen, Agri-Environmental Program Coordinator



First off, I am very excited for the opportunity to work with PCBFA as the Agri—Environmental Program Coordinator. Originally, I am from Ontario and recently moved to the Fairview area this past summer.

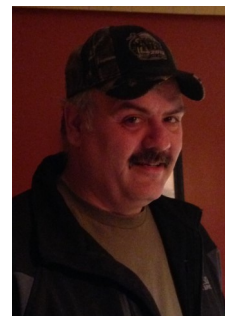
So far, I am really loving what the Peace Country has to offer. I graduated last spring in Ontario from the University of Guelph with a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Sciences, majoring in Natural Resources Management. I really enjoyed my schooling and am excited to put my education knowledge and experiences to work at PCBFA. Since moving to Fairview I have gained a lot of on-farm experience and have become more familiar with agriculture production systems. More specifically, I have been recently involved in the cattle production industry. Furthermore, I have gained familiarity of Alberta's northwest

Provincial Grazing Reserves from my past employment.

I am very eager about this new position as it is in my field and relates to my strong passion for the environment as well as my more recent interest in agriculture. As I take on this new job, I hope to assist in the introduction and maintenance of both environmentally and economically sustainable production systems. I also hope to help promote awareness of optimal farm management strategies and the optimal use of resources.

I am really looking forward to learning the new aspects and expanding my experience in both areas of agriculture and the environment. I am also looking forward to extending my roots in the community and hope to meet many of you while being a part of the PCBFA team!

Faron Steffen—Director, North



Tell us a bit about your operation:

We are running 100 commercial cow/calf pairs north of Grimshaw and also farm a bit of crop land.

How long have you been

in the area?

All my life

Where do you see your operation heading over the next 5 years?

We would like to expand and get some more cows.

Where do you hope to see the beef industry as a whole go over the next 5 years?

I would like to see it stay where it is. Prices

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are good and we finally have some long awaited stability!

What types of projects & events are you interested in participating in as you become more involved with PCBFA?

Cocktails! Tried one last year and I was quite impressed with how it turned out in the drought. As well, I would like to learn more about beef cow efficiency.

Joyleen Beamish—Director, South East



Tell us a bit about your operation:

We run 85 pairs of commercial cattle near High Prairie.

How long have you been in the area?

Born and raised!

Where do you see your operation heading over the next 5 years?

We are looking to expand our operation and working more with the family, and getting our son and daughter more involved with the farm.

Where do you hope to see the beef industry as a whole go over the next 5 years?

I just hope that cattle prices stay close enough to input prices that we can make ends meet!

What types of projects & events are you interested in participating in as you become more involved with PCBFA?

I am very interested in off-site solar watering systems! Would also like to learn more about options to extend the grazing season and

figure out a way to control those nasty grasshoppers!

Gary Gurtler—Director, North



Tell us a bit about your operation:

We run a purebred operation by the name of Gurtler's Polled Herefords near North Star, south of Manning, as well as a commercial herd. We are running about 150

cow/calf pairs and selling 50 purebred and hybrid bulls. I was also a delegate for Alberta Beef Producers for 16 years.

How long have you been in the area?

Since 1955!

Where do you see your operation heading over the next 5 years?

Over the next 5 years we will be transitioning the farm over to our son Ethan. I hope that 5 years from now he is making the decisions around the place and I take more of a mentor role helping him out.

Where do you hope to see the beef industry as a whole go over the next 5 years?

I would like to see more young people entering the industry.

What types of projects & events are you interested in participating in as you become more involved with PCBFA?

I would like to work more with extending the grazing season and stretching pastures in drought years. As well, I would like to learn more about wildlife management—namely wolves.

Thank-You to the PCBFA Board of Directors

Jordan Barnfield
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Keep your eyes on the *Growing Forward 2* website for programs that are re-opening!

www.growingforward.alberta.ca

If you have questions on any of the programs, or would like assistance filling out a *Growing Forward 2* application, give us a call!

McDonald's Verified Sustainable Beef Pilot Project—What Does it Mean to Us?



By: Kaitlin McLachlan

Did you know that 100% of the beef sold by McDonald's in Canada is in fact Canadian beef? They have been serving Canadian beef for several years now, since shortly after the BSE crisis rocked the Canadian Beef Industry. So how did the Verified Sustainable Beef (VSB) Pilot Project come about, and why should we care about it? We know words like "sustainable" and "humane" can be buzz words in today's industry, and since many of our consumers have little background in, or knowledge of primary agriculture, they want more information when it comes to their food and where it comes from.



Photo via: livescience.com

Back in 2009, McDonald's announced their plan to move towards sourcing sustainable beef. Since then, they have been involved in the establishment of the Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef and the Canadian

Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, which includes members from all steps of the beef value chain. McDonald's chose Canada as their venue for the VSB Pilot Project for a number of reasons. First, the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, Alberta Beef Producers, Alberta Cattle Feeders, and numerous other producer groups were more than willing to help out with the project as one way to help ensure a reliable market for Canadian beef. Second, Canada has the most advanced portfolio of programs already relating to sustainable beef production, such as Environmental Farm Plans, the Verified Beef Production program, the Beef Infoexchange System (BIXS), and Growing Forward 2. We have already taken most of the steps here in Canada to be "Verified Sustainable," and the VSB Pilot is a great indicator to test the effectiveness of our existing programs. Third, McDonald's is only selling Canadian beef in Canada – it is

a closed system. These reasons made Canada a very attractive host for this pilot project.

What does "Verified Sustainable" mean? During the past year, McDonald's has been working with producers who have voluntarily joined the project, and they have been sending third-party verifiers to inspect these farms. The verifiers tour the farm with the owner and have a checklist of indicators to inspect including: soil health, beneficial grazing management, good quality water sources, animal health record-keeping, humane handling of cattle to ensure safety and minimize stress, energy efficiency of the farm, and 24 other indicators. This program is outcome-based rather than practice based. This means that producers can demonstrate the outcomes of their practices rather than focusing on the practice itself. McDonald's is listening to producers and verifying them based on their final outcome, rather than forcing them to comply by a rulebook with a list of standard practices.

Outcome Based Indicators	Practice Based Indicator
Operation can demonstrate steps implemented to mitigate animal pain.	All males are left intact.
Operation can demonstrate how its facilities and handling techniques minimize stress on cattle.	Handling system is featured on VBP's approved equipment list.

Wondering how can you get involved with McDonald's Verified Sustainable Beef Pilot Project and what you will get out of it? This project is meant to test verification methods. By participating in the pilot project, producers are helping to develop a verification system that works for Canadian producers and consumers. It will also help stakeholders – such as the Canadian Cattlemen's Association – to move forward in their marketing of Canadian beef as safe, humane, and sustainable. The VSB Pilot will also create a benchmark for future sustainability in the Canadian beef industry. For more information or to get involved with the VSB Pilot Project, please visit vsbpilot.ca.



Upcoming Events

Clear Hills County Trade Show	April 9th 10am-5pm	Dave Shaw Memorial Center, Hines Creek
Sprayer Workshops	Tues, April 12th 1 pm Registration	Grimshaw Legion
	Thurs, April 14th 1 pm Registration	Spirit River Location TBA

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Or call Kaitlin at 780-835-6799, or visit www.peacecountrybeef.ca/event/study-tour-to-denver



For more information or to register for any of these great events, please call Kaitlin at 780-835-6799 or email kmclachlan@gprc.ab.ca

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