

Forage Facts

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Welcoming Two New Members to the PCBFA Board of Directors

By: Jen Allen

At our Annual General Meeting back in February, two new board members were elected to replace outgoing directors Conrad Dolen and Stan Logan. Our newest directors are Robbie Hale and Kirk Cowell. Welcome aboard, Robbie and Kirk! The board also elected director positions at our board meeting in March:
Chairman—Jordan Barnfield (At Large)
Vice-Chair—Preston Basnett (North)
Treasurer—John Prinse (South)
Secretary—Nancy VanHerk (North)
Now, let's get to know a little more about PCBFA's two new Directors...

Robbie Hale—Director, At Large



Tell us a bit about your operation:

Along with my father Curt and brother Darcy, we run a 1500 head cow calf/grain operation. Our cattle are Simmental Angus cross, and we calve out our herd in May. On the grain side we grow some cash crops,

and have been experimenting with different forage mixes for our silage. With the introduction of cover crops the future looks brighter, and we feel for the overall operation it has been beneficial. This is year 4 with the cover crops, and we still have lots to learn - but so far the results are very satisfactory.

How long have you been in the area?

My whole life—I love this area.

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

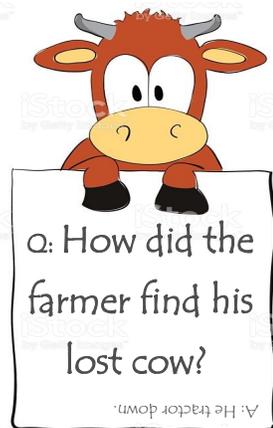
With our current Government, who knows! (ha ha) However; our goal is to keep growing and learning, and train up the next generation.

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

Profitable. And sustainable. Less major market swings and consistent profits for the primary producers. I would like to see a strong and feasible industry, where the next generation will be able to afford to carry on the farm if they choose.

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

In the past I have enjoyed sessions on cover crops and soil health, and hope to attend more. Field days, seeing what is working in our area. I have been very impressed so far with Akim and the team. I look forward to seeing what they have for us in the upcoming years.



Kirk Cowell—Director, South



Tell us a bit about your operation:

My wife and I, along with our two children, run about 130 head of cows. We background our calves and sell bred heifers. We also sell grass-fed, grass-finished beef. Along with the cattle we run about three hundred head of ewes.

How long have you been in the area?

We have been farming in the Spirit River area for about 18 years.

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

I see our operation becoming as close to sustainable as possible, using soil regeneration as a basis for the entire operation.

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

I hope to see the true value of the beef industry come back to the producers who do all of the hard ground work.

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

Anything to do with soil regeneration and permaculture.

Thank you to the PCBFA Board of Directors

- Jordan Barnfield
- Preston Basnett
- John Prinse
- Nancy VanHerk
- Faron Steffen
- Garry Gurtler
- Thomas Claydon
- Joyleen Beamish
- Kirk Cowell
- Robbie Hale

Have Project or Workshop Ideas?

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

PCBFA Member Perks

- Two Free Feed Tests/Year
- Ration Balancing Assistance
- Growing Forward 2 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
- MD of Peace
- 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



Our new tractor!



Plots at the Research Farm, July 2016

We were very excited to pick up our brand new tractor back in February! We can't wait to get it out in the field this season at the Fairview Research Farm!

Feel free to come check out our plots at anytime this summer. The Research Farm is located 2 miles west of Fairview, North of the airport on RR 35. We will also be hosting our annual Field Day at the Research Farm event this summer—stay tuned for details!

Energy Efficiency on Your Farm



By: Jen Allen

It is no secret that agriculture is an energy intensive industry, and using energy sources can sometimes become quite costly. Therefore if you haven't already, it wouldn't hurt to start thinking about being more efficient with your energy sources. Improving energy efficiency conserves energy, safeguards against energy price volatility, and reduces costs, greenhouse gas emissions, and energy input per unit of production. There are two types of actions needed in order to improve energy efficiency on the farm: (1) reduce the amount of energy used for the same amount of agricultural production, and (2) increase the amount of agricultural production using the same amount of energy. But first, it is best to figure out your energy efficiency management needs to give you an appropriate starting point.

To determine the energy efficiency management needs of your farm operation, assessments such as energy audits or surveys can outline areas where your energy demand is the highest and where you can start to make changes to be more efficient. These areas may include things such as your home (i.e. shell heat loss and heating/cooling system efficiency), farmstead shelterbelt (s) (better building protection and energy consumption efficiency with shelterbelt establishment vs. without shelterbelt establishment), buildings and yards (lighting, heat, insulation and ventilation), field operations (fuel use practices, maintenance of machinery, and engine use), livestock waterers (conventional vs. solar or nose pump), and/or grain drying (high and low temperature drying). Completing an Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) can also help self-assess and identify your energy management needs, among other things, as there is a chapter called Energy Efficiency (contact PCBFA's EFP Technician Jen Allen at any time if you would like to complete an EFP).

As mentioned, one way to enhance energy efficiency on your farm is through tractors and machinery. Tractors and machinery consume and burn off a significant amount of fuel during each use, contributing to fuel costs, air pollution and emissions.



Photo via: <http://www.ontario.gov.on.ca>

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (Agdex# 768, 2015) has outlined a number of tips and tricks on how cut back fuel consumption and improve the efficiency of tractors and

machinery, benefiting both your farm's bottom line and the environment:

- ⇒ Reduce tillage operations: Switch to no-till or minimum tillage options. This can reduce fuel use by 86%.
- ⇒ Read operator's manuals and follow the maintenance schedules recommended by the manufacturers.
- ⇒ If the tractor's exhaust smoke is black, clean the injectors.
- ⇒ Use manure more efficiently as a substitute for fertilizers.
- ⇒ Avoid using big tractors to pull small loads. Match the tractor to the power requirements of the job (Figure 1).
- ⇒ Replace air and fuel filters regularly, especially when working in dusty conditions.
- ⇒ Avoid idling the tractor for long periods.
- ⇒ Operate tractors in higher gears at low throttle settings rather than lower gears at high throttle settings.
- ⇒ Check tractor and equipment each day before starting work. Correct small maintenance problems before they cause a breakdown in the field.
- ⇒ Use engine oil with the proper viscosity for your engine. Change oil and oil filters according to the manufacturer's recommendations.
- ⇒ Use proper tractor ballasting to reduce wheel slip, thus reducing fuel consumption.
- ⇒ Replace worn drive tires, reducing excessive wheel slip and fuel consumption.
- ⇒ Check tractor and equipment tires to ensure they are at the recommended inflation pressures for the best traction and the lowest rolling resistance.
- ⇒ Use radial ply tires instead of bias ply tires for better traction and lower fuel consumption.

Furthermore, there are renewable energy technologies such as solar, wind, or biomass energy that produce fewer greenhouse gases, help conserve energy sources and save on overall costs. There is also funding available through the Growing Forward 2 On-Farm Energy Management and On-Farm Solar Photovoltaics programs that support projects to improve energy efficiency on Alberta farms. The On-Farm Energy Management is currently closed; however, it never hurts to be prepared to apply in case the program does reopen. You can get full program details and stay up to date with program openings and closings by subscribing to GF2 program announcements on their website:

www.growingforward.alberta.ca/

All in all, every action can contribute to energy efficiency, whether it be as big as installing a solar system, or as small as replacing your light bulbs with energy-efficient bulbs, or sealing up leaks and adding insulation to heated buildings. In the long run, being energy efficient on your farm will benefit both your operation and the environment.

(AEFP, 2016; GF2 GoA, 2016; OMAFRA, 2015)



Upcoming Events

Clear Hills County Ag Trade Show

April 8th

Hines Creek

Cows, Crops, Culverts & Fish

Heart River Watershed Restoration Plan Update

May 4th

1:00-5:00pm

Nampa & District

Museum (upstairs)

New Zealand Ag Study Tour

Nov 23rd-Dec 12th 2017

New Zealand

Western Canada Conference on
Soil Health & Grazing

December 5th-7th

www.absoilgrazing.com

Radisson Hotel

Edmonton

For more information or to register for any of these great events, please call the

Fairview office at 780-835-6799 or email Jen at jen@pcbfa.ca

Soil Health Practitioner Gabe Brown to Present at the 2017 Western Canada Conference on Soil Health and Grazing

Nora Paulovich, manager of North Peace Applied Research Association (NPARA) and conference chair is pleased to confirm Gabe Brown's participation in the newly combined Western Canada Conference on Soil Health (WCCSH) and the Western Canadian Grazing Conference (WCGC) in 2017. A number of Alberta applied research and forage associations organize and present these popular events.



The combined conference will take place on December 5, 6 and 7th at the Radisson Hotel Edmonton South, with the theme "Profit Above and Wealth Below".

The 2015 WCCSH featured Gabe Brown, soil health practitioner and producer from Bismarck North Dakota. "Gabe is really able to bring soil health and ag production into focus. People like to hear what he knows and what he has done" says Paulovich. "And he likes to visit Alberta".

Farming and ranching for soil health enhances biodiversity and increases biological activity, both of which are absent in current production technology. In both cases integrating plant diversity, keeping the soil covered, maintaining living roots as long as possible, and minimal soil disturbance leads to reduced crop inputs, greater infiltration and water holding capacity, and a myriad of environmental and social benefits. Soil health is greatly enhanced when practiced in conjunction with animal agriculture. "Gabe Brown is maybe the best at cropping and livestock integration" notes Paulovich.

Attendees will have the opportunity to attend two great conferences in one. "Some seats have been added, but interest is high and registrations may go quickly" cautions Paulovich. Registration information, agenda and speakers are being finalized and will be announced in the coming weeks. Current information is available at npara.ca.

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