

forage VIEWS



June 2017



In This Issue

Project Highlight: Industrial Hemp Variety Trial	1
All the Buzz for Bees.....	4
From Transitions to Soil Health...Extension Events	
Keeping Us Busy!	6

IMPORTANT DATES

June 19-21: WBDC Field Day "Field Trip"

June 30: Jim Gerrish Grazing School

Aug 9: Field Tour with Yellowhead & Woodlands Counties

Aug 30: Field Tour with Brazeau County

December 5-7: Western Canada Conference on Soil Health & Grazing

Project Highlight: Industrial Hemp Variety Trial

WCFA/ Brazeau County/ U of A Breton Plots

Brazeau County, West-Central Forage Association and the University of Alberta Breton Plots are excited to partner on a new research project featuring Industrial Hemp. In the past 5 years industrial hemp has grown over 25 per cent annually in Canada and WCFA and our partners wanted to be behind the research in order to better service the needs of producers in the region. In 2015, over 84,000 acres were grown in Canada and in 2016, over 32,000 acres were grown in Alberta, the most of any jurisdiction in North America.

Industrial hemp has been a federally regulated crop since 1994 in Canada and is a multi-purpose crop delivering seeds, fibres and bio-active chemicals for a number of uses and markets. Producers can maximize plant value by considering various markets for both the grain and potential new emerging markets for the straw.

"An Environmental Success Story" –Hemp is:

Rapidly renewable - grows to maturity every year

Fast growing plant, second only to bamboo, with a much lower environmental footprint



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(AOF), Alberta Agriculture and
Forestry



PROJECT HIGHLIGHT CONTINUED

Not genetically modified as
its naturally resistant to pests
and weeds

Valuable in crop rotations-
helps to control disease, adds
to nutrient cycling

Beneficial to aerate impacted
and disturbed lands due to its
strong tap root

Carbon friendly; it has the
ability to sequester 5 times
more Co2 than the equivalent
acre of forest

In our Variety trial we will be
using seed varieties from
Terramax, (X59), Parkland
Industrial Hemp Growers,
(Canda, Delbores, Joey) and

Hemp Oil Canada & Mercer
Seeds (Finola). We will be
comparing the 5 varieties
against each other and the
results from the Breton Plots
(which are using the same
protocol as us for the trials).

WCFA and our partners will be
a hosting a field day August
30, 2017 where you will be
able to join us in touring our
two industrial hemp plots and
Drayton Valley Bio Composite
fiber plant.

Please stay tuned for further
details on our projects and
upcoming events surrounding
the buzz of Industrial Hemp.


Melissa Freeman,
General Manager

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Trace Minerals										Common Ailments Due to Deficiencies in Trace Minerals
Potassium	Sulphur	Selenium	Copper	Manganese	Iron	Zinc	Cobalt	Iodine	Salt	
		•	•	•	•			•		Abortion
			•	•	•		•			Anemia
		•	•	•		•	•	•		Infertility
			•	•						Muscle Tone
•							•	•	•	Pica (Depraved Appetite)
							•			Poor Body Condition
•	•			•			•	•	•	Productivity (Vigor)
		•	•			•		•		Retained Placenta
	•	•	•			•	•		•	Retarded Growth
		•	•							Scouring
	•		•				•	•	•	Skin and Coat Abnormalities
			•			•				Weak Hooves (Footrot Susceptible)
•									•	Heat Tolerance
		•	•	•		•				Immune System



All A Buzz for the Bees....

June, 2017 Anna Harapchuk & Jessica Watson

You may have heard a bit about pollinator habitat and pollinators over the last while, and perhaps you've wondered to yourself: "What's all this buzz about pollinators?". Well we had the same question so we did some research to find out what all the fuss was about!

What is a pollinator?

Pollinator (noun): one that pollinates; an agent that pollinates flowers (Merriam-Webster). Essentially, pollinators are the vectors by which pollen grains are moved between flowers to facilitate plant reproduction (the process of pollination). There are over 140,000 species in Canada that play vital roles in pollination of plants, and over one fifth of these are insects. Insect pollinators include: butterflies, moths, flies, beetles, bees (most importantly), and many others. However, pollination is not just for the insects, there are over 1000 species of pollinating animals in Canada (birds and bats for example; although there are no pollinating bats in Canada, but thank them if you happen to like Tequila!)

Why are they important?

Pollinators, particularly bees, pollinate both native plants and crops, and thus



play a major role in food production systems. 88% of plants worldwide depend on pollinators for fertilization and around one third of what we eat depends on pollinators (pollinators account for roughly 70% of all crop pollination). Conservative estimates value pollination in Canada around \$1.2 billion per year, and globally it is estimated that pollination by bumblebees alone is worth

several billion dollars a year. Many of our major food crops are dependent on pollinators, and without them our diets would be limited and it would likely be much more difficult to attain the many minerals and vitamins we need. It's fairly safe to say that pollinators, and in particular bees (which are responsible for over 70% of pollination services in Canada), are critical to food security.

So what's all the fuss about?

It has recently become apparent that populations of some pollinator species have been declining (rather alarmingly). Several species of pollinating butterflies and bees have recently been listed as species at risk in Canada. Native bees are the most common pollinators in Canada, and it is thought that populations of native bees throughout North America are declining. As pollinator diversity begins to decline, there is the potential for crop yields to be reduced.

The primary threats to the native bee populations are thought to be habitat loss and degradation and pesticide use. Conservation of these species often tends to get overlooked due to their small size, and the difficulty in being able to identify them.

Native Bees in Canada

There are over 800 species of native bees in Canada, which includes bumble bees, sweat bees, mason bees, leafcutting bees, mining bees and squash bees to name a few. Native bees do not produce honey like the honeybee, which is an introduced species from Europe. Over 70% of native bees nest in the ground, which leaves them vulnerable to disturbances from tillage and pesticide use, and their suffering populations may mean there

are some soil health benefits missing from our systems, as bees that nest in the ground can improve soil quality (their tunneling improves texture, increases water movement, and aids in the mixing of nutrients in the soil).

What does this have to do with WCFA?

Performance seed, which specializes in forage seed, has provided us with a "Pollinator Mix"—a forage mix combined with specific ecosystem wildflowers. 'Traditional' initiatives to provide habitat for pollinators have been largely focused around planting wildflowers (pollinators are attracted to the color and scent of the flowers; they like bright colors—blues, yellows). Performance did some research into why these wildflower planting initiatives were not more popular and found that they are quite expensive to put in on larger scales, and they tend not to be really economically or agronomically feasible, and offer little commercial value to producers. The idea behind the forage pollinator mix is to try and create a product that will attract pollinators (particularly native bees), provide pollinator habitat, but also be something that can be utilized on farm (as a forage crop). Pollinators need plants that flower from early spring and into the fall

to supply nectar for them, so the pollinator mix has been formulated so that not everything is blooming at the same time, and for some species to flower later in the season (after the cropping season is complete) to provide services for pollinators when they need it most. We will be seeding two pollinator mix test plots, in Wildwood and Brazeau, and will be monitoring these over the summer and into the fall to see how well they are attracting pollinators, and whether the wildflowers are able to compete and grow in the forage mix. We're hoping we can play a role in aiding the pollinators, and are excited to see how these plots turn out. Watch for photos of the project in upcoming newsletters!

Interested in being a part of the pollinator project? We're looking for a few producers who would like to put in small plots of the pollinator mix!

For more information please contact Jessica at 780.727.4447 or conservationag@westcentralforage.com

From Transitions to Soil Health... Extension Events Keeping Us Busy!



Visiting a soil pit & assessing the plant diversity as it relates to the soil profile and health

The end of May and beginning of June have had us fairly busy with our Extension Programming, with our Setting Up for Farm Business Success Workshop, Soils workshop with Jill Clapperton, a Classroom Agriculture presentation and the first of our four Pond Days all delivered.

Setting up for Farm Business Success

WCFA, along with Woodlands County and Gateway Research Organization, held an introduction to transition planning and succession workshop on May 30 at the Blue Ridge Community Hall. The workshop also provided brief overviews of some financial options available to producers in Alberta.

Joel Bokenfohr with Alberta Agriculture and Forestry kicked off the morning with his presentation "Transitioning the Business: Setting Up for Farm Business Success." Joel's presentation covered common transition issues, considerations for transition planning, touched on strategic and financial planning, outlined some of the tax considerations to be aware of when setting up a business and during transitioning, as well as some thoughts on how to transition farm assets.

Following Joel Rick Dehod of Alberta Agriculture and Forestry gave a presentation on "Buying Farmland? Have a plan!" Rick's presentation gave an overview of land

prices, and went through many considerations one should make prior to buying farmland (for example: is it a business decision or an emotional decision?, how does it fit with your business plan?, etc.)

The lovely ladies of AFSC, Michelle Rigney (Westlock office) & Sarah Lowery (Barrhead office), followed our Alberta Agriculture and Forestry speakers and provided those in attendance with an overview of AFSC, and provided information on the various lending products they offer.

The final presentation before lunch was given by Joe Kuhr, General Manager of Feeder Associations of Alberta Ltd, who provided attendees an overview of some of the programming delivered by FAA Ltd. He went over the Alberta Breeder Finance Inc. (ABFI) program, which provides Alberta producers with a method to finance breeding stock and the Western Cash Advance Program Inc. (WeCAP), a cash advance payment program available for 36 commodities.

To wrap up the afternoon we had Dave Horner of Farm Succession Solutions and his presentation "Farm Transitions: The Cost of Doing Nothing..". Dave's

presentation focused Farm Business Transitions & Estate Considerations, as well as Collaborative Farming (which Dave described, and believes will be our ‘superpower’). Dave spent quite a bit of time discussing life insurance and the value it can bring to farm operations, and how it can aid in transitioning the farm to the next generation.

Soils Workshop with Dr. Jill Clapperton

WCFA was generously asked to partner with a number of other organizations to bring a full day soils workshop with Dr. Jill Clapperton at the Lakeland College campus in Vermillion on June 6.

The morning portion of the workshop consisted of a presentation by Jill on some of the physical, chemical and biological properties of soil and how they all relate to one another. Prior to lunch we covered some methods that can be utilized to measure or infer soil health. Following lunch we were treated to some field time in a couple of soil pits the college has, and we buried some underwear to be dug up later to get an idea of the soil activity near the soil pits. We were then back in the classroom to discuss some management and cropping options that Jill utilizes to help improve soil health. Finally, we were treated to the first Canadian appearance of the rainfall simulator, which was able to

show the differences in run off & infiltration between soils with various levels of residue.

We would like to thank Lakeland Agricultural Research Association for doing all the ‘heavy lifting’ in planning and organizing, and all the other organizations involved: Gateway Research Organization, Battle River Research Group, and Chinook Applied Research Association for asking to us to partner with them on this opportunity! It was a great day and it was wonderful to spend some time with our fellow organizations and get our soil nerd on.

Top Right: Burying undies to be dug up later to assess soil activity

Middle Right: The rainfall simulator making a Canadian debut!

Bottom Right: Attendees focused on Joel at the “Setting up for Farm Business Success” workshop.



Featuring:

Jim Gerrish



ONE-DAY GRAZING SCHOOL JUNE 30, 2017!

This workshop will feature renowned grazing expert Jim Gerrish and will consist of classroom instruction in the morning, followed by in field learning on Management Intensive Grazing in the afternoon!

Coffee & Check-In: 8:30 AM

Cherhill Legion Hall

(Railway Ave, Cherhill, AB T0E 0J0)

Lunch Provided



*Note: Registration is not considered complete until payment has been received by our office.
No late registrations will be accepted.*

Space is limited! Register early!

Registration may be completed:
By contacting our office at 780.727.4447

OR

Through Eventbrite
(link on our Facebook page/website)

COST: \$30 MEMBERS/ \$40 NON-MEMBERS

Please RSVP by June 23, 2017