he survey is open until May 8, 2017.

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AGRICULTURAL POLICY FRAMEWORK ENGAGEMENT

Alberta is working with the federal government, other provinces and territories to develop a new five-year agricultural policy framework to replace the current Growing Forward 2 agreement, which expires on March 31, 2018. Albertans have the opportunity to share ideas about the future of provincial and national agriculture programs through an online survey.

The survey can be found at: https://www. alberta.ca/agricultural-policy-frameworkengagement.aspx _____

West-Central Welcomes New Board Members

The Annual General Meeting of WCFA was held on March 29, 2017 at Carrot Creek Hall. We had 65 people join us for the evening. The program included: 2016 updates on happenings at WCFA from Melissa, Fito and Jess, a wonderful meal provided by the catering staff at the hall, the general meeting and finally, local musician Matt Robertson played the night away.

Following the general meeting, we saw a few changes to our board of directors, as three positions were open for election. Ted Commandeur's position with the board came to end, as he has served on the board for six years. West-Central would like to extend our thanks to Ted for all his hard work and dedication over the six years he acted as a member of the board. We greatly appreciate his service.

When the final votes were all in and counted we welcomed two new members to the board, and saw Grant Chittick remain for another term as a board member.

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome our new board members:





April 2017



WCFA Board of Directors

Frank Maddock Grant Chittick Larry Kidd Dale Engstrom Shayne Horn Eric Vanderwell Stacey Meunier Brett Byers Brian Dickson Greg Malyk Grant Taillieu

Staff

General Manager Melissa Freeman Forage & Livestock Program Manager Fito Zamudio Baca

Conservation Ag & Extension Program Manager, Jessica Watson

Contact

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Agriculture Opportunity Fund

This publication is made possible by funding from our major sponsor, the Agriculture Opportunities Fund (AOF), Alberta Agriculture and Forestry

West-Central Welcomes New Board Members continued

- Brian Dickson. Brian and his wife operate a cow/calf operation in Yellowhead County.
- Shayne Horn. Shayne and his wife are sheep producers from Leduc County.

We look forward to working with Brian and Shayne throughout their terms as members of the board.

As we welcome the new board members, we must also say farewell to another. West-Central would like to extend a heart-felt thank-you to Therese Tompkins for her time serving on our board. We truly appreciate the time she has dedicated to West-Central in her position, and we wish her all the best. The night would not have been as successful without the support received from our mini-tradeshow vendors:

- UFA
- Union Forage
- Stony Plain Co-Op
- Remedy Animal Health
- Alpine/ Har-De Agri Services
- Parkland County ALUS
- Martin Deerline

We would also like to thank everyone that attended our AGM, we appreciate each and every one of you taking time from your busy schedules to join us. Your input is valuable to us, and we would not be able to be successful without it. We look forward to continuing to serve you all throughout the year.

VERBEEK HEREFORDS

Hereford Bulls For Sale by Private Treaty

Errol & Barb Verbeek And Family

> Box 649 Evansburg, AB TOE OTO



Home: 780.727.2775 Cell: 780.542.9794



LAST CALL FOR 2017 MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS!

Haven't paid your 2017 membership yet? If you wish to continue receiving newsletters and membership benefits in the future make sure your WCFA membership is up to date!



Workshop #4

Woodlot Management for Ecosystem Services

Sat. April 29, 2017 | 9:30am - 3pm Glenevis, Lac Ste. Anne County

Landowners recognize many values in their woodlot; wildlife & pollinator habitat, slowing & capturing water, as well as livestock forage. By understanding the ecology of the lot and setting up a management plan these benefits can be preserved and enhanced. With classroom instruction and a woodlot tour this workshop covers the basics for developing a plan.

*Inquire about workshop costs & further details

RSVP By April 25, 2017 Contact: Jessica Watson, Conservation Ag Coordinator Phone: 780-727-4447 Email: info@westcentralforage.com Online at: www.westcentralforage.com/events.aspx

Sponsored in partnership with:



Preparing Cows for Breeding

By: Les Anderson, Beef Extension Specialist, University of Kentucky

A successful breeding season actually begins with management decisions made at calving. Cattlemen can impact rebreeding efficiency by focusing on body condition score (BCS), early assistance during calving difficulty, scheduling a breeding soundness exam for the herd sires, planning their herd reproductive health program, and developing a plan to regulate estrus in their first-calf heifers and late-calving cows.

Reproductive management begins with evaluation and management of BCS. Body condition score is a numerical estimation of the amount of fat on the cow's body. Body condition score ranges from 1-9; 1 is emaciated while 9 is extremely obese. A change in a single BCS (i.e. 4-5) is usually associated with about a 75 pound change in body weight. Evaluation of BCS prior to calving and from calving to breeding is important to ensure reproductive success.

Rebreeding performance of cows is greatly influenced by BCS at calving. Cows that are thin (BCS < 5) at calving take longer to resume estrous cycles and therefore are delayed in their ability to rebreed. Research has clearly demonstrated that as precalving BCS decreases, the number of days from one calving to the next (calving interval) increases in beef cows. Females with a precalving BCS of less than 5 tend to have production cycles greater than 1 year. For example, cows with a precalving BCS of 3 would be expected to have a calving interval of approximately 400 days, while a cow with a precalving BCS of 6 would have a calving interval of approximately 360 days. South Dakota research illustrates the influence of precalving BCS on the percentage of cows that initiated estrous cycles after calving. This experiment demonstrated that the percentage of thin cows that were cycling in the first month of the breeding season (June) was considerably lower than for cows that were in more moderate body condition. During the second month of the breeding season, 55% of the cows with a BCS of 4 had still not initiated estrous cycles, while more than 90% of the cows in more moderate condition had begun to cycle. Thin cows need a longer breeding season, which results in more open cows in the fall. They may also result in lighter calves to sell the next year because the calves from these thin cows will be born later in the calving season.

Management of BCS after calving also impacts rebreeding efficiency. Maintenance requirements for energy and protein increase 25-30% for most beef cows after calving. Ranchers need to plan their supplementation to match or

exceed this increased nutrient requirement. Rebreeding efficiency is enhanced in cows that calved thin if their energy intake is increased. Although the best management plan is to calve cows in a BCS of 5+, increasing the energy to cows that are thin at calving can boost reproductive performance.

Dystocia (calving problems) can severely delay the onset of estrus after calving. Research shows that for every hour a female is in stage 2 active labor there is a 4 day delay in the resumption of estrous cycles after calving. Early intervention helps; 16% more cows conceived when cows were assisted within 90 minutes of the start of calving. The best method is to reduce the incidence of dystocia via selection but early calving assistance will increase the opportunity of cows to rebreed.

One often overlooked management tool that can improve reproductive performance is breeding soundness exams in bulls. Ranchers need to think of breeding soundness exams as breeding season insurance. These exams are a low-cost method of insuring that your bull is not infertile. Bulls should be examined for breeding soundness about 30 days before they are turned out.

I have worked in reproductive management for nearly 20

years and it amazes me how many cattlemen still do not vaccinate their cow herd against reproductive diseases. Several diseases are associated with reproductive loss (lepto, BVD, vibrio, trich, etc). The main problem is that most reproductive loss due to disease is subtle and ranchers don't notice the loss unless they have a massive failure. Most cattlemen are not aware of their losses due to abortion. Ranchers need to work with their local veterinarian to develop an annual vaccination plan to enhance reproductive success.

Lastly, ranchers need to develop a plan to enhance the rebreeding potential of their first-calf heifers and late-calving cows. Young cows and late-calving cows have one characteristic in common that will greatly impact their reproductive success: anestrus. After each calving, cows undergo a period of time when they do not come into estrus. This anestrus period can be as short as 17 days but can also last as long as 150 days depending upon a number of factors. Typically, mature cows in good BCS will be anestrus for 45-90 days (avg about 60 days) while first-calf heifers will be in anestrus for 75-120 days. Research has shown that only 64% of mature cows have initiated estrous cycles about 70 day after calving while on 50% of first calf heifers have initiated estrous cycles at nearly 90 day after calving. Let's consider the impact of anestrus and calving date for a



herd that calves from March 1 until May 10. Bull turnout is May 20 and the length of anestrus for mature cows is 60 days and for young cows is 90 days. A mature cow that calves on March 1 will begin to cycle on May 1 and is highly likely to conceive early. However, the mature cow that calves on April 20 won't cycle until June 20 and her opportunity to conceive early is very limited. A first-calf heifer that calves on April 20 won't begin to cycle until July 20 and will have limited opportunities to conceive. Cattlemen can reduce the anestrous period by fenceline exposure to a mature bull or by treating the cows with progesterone for 7 days prior to bull exposure. Sources of progesterone include the feed additive melengestrol acetate (MGA) or an EAZI-Breed CIDR

insert (Zoetis Animal Health). Both sources have been shown to induce estrus in anestrous cows and exposure of anestrous cows to progesterone for 7 days before bull exposure will not reduce fertility. Pregnancy rates will actually be increased in these females because inducing estrus will increase the number of opportunities these cows have to conceive in the breeding season.

Managing for reproductive success actually begins at calving. Cows need to calve with a minimum BCS of 5 and with little assistance. Effective planning for reproductive health and management plan for limiting the impact of anestrus will ensure that cattlemen are happy, happy, happy at the end of the breeding season.



STEWARDSHIP ALLIANCE FOR CONSERVATION AGRICULTURE

Yellowhead County Woodlands County West-Central Forage Association



Spring Means It's Time To Order Weevils!

It's here! Spring is on its way, and this year it's bringing with it time to get your weevil order in! We are now accepting orders for the 2017 delivery of the Canada-thistle stemmining weevil. Ordering will run through April and May, with the deadline for ordering being June 1, 2017!

So what are stem-mining weevils?

They are biological control agents that will help control Canada thistle. They were first introduced to Canada as a biological control agent in 1965, and West-Central has been facilitating the delivery of these agents for a number of years.

How do they work?

Eggs are laid in rosette leaves in early spring. The larvae internally mine the stem of the thistle plant as it elongates during the summer, consuming plant tissue. Fully developed larvae exit the plant at the root and pupate in the soil, leaving exit holes, which may allow for microorganisms to enter the stem and have adverse effects on the plant as well. They emerge in adult form in late summer to feed on thistle leaves prior to winter (this is the time they are collected for us in Montana, and when new releases occur). The adults over winter in the soil, and will emerge to attack the thistle again the following year.

STEWARDSHIP ALLIANCE FOR CONSERVATION AGRICULTURE

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How quickly will they work?

SACA

Even in the most successful cases they will not be a quick fix for your thistle problem. However, once they establish themselves and "catch-up" with the weeds they will be a permanent, self-perpetuating, cost-effective control tactic. They will expand/spread over time, but this happens extremely slowly (field studies indicate a spread of about 90m in six years).

What happens if they run out of thistle?

Sorry, but it is unlikely that they will eat themselves entirely out of "house and home". Your weeds will unlikely be fully eradicated, even in the most successful cases of biocontrol, there are always a few plants that do not succumb. This is actually a good thing, it allows the bugs to sustain themselves in years of low weed density, so you won't lose your investment. Once they have exhausted a thistle patch they will migrate to look for more food.

How many do I need?

Ah, the magic question. Unfortunately there is no simple answer to this, it is not as simple as saying you need x many trays for x many acres of thistle (unlike chemical).

There are 3 approaches you can take when deciding how many to order:

- Inundate the infestation with as many releases as is affordable the first years of introduction and reinforce in isolated areas in the future. This reduces the time it takes to build a population and disperse throughout the infestation.
- Release in most critical areas first, then reinforce with additional releases in future years.
- 3. The least costly approach is to introduce one or two releases into the infestation and do nothing more. This will get a population started, but it may take more years to spread throughout the entire infestation.

And the million-dollar question: Will I get my weevils this year?

First off, we would like to apologize to anyone that has ordered in the past couple of years and not received their orders. When dealing with a natural system we are not in complete control, and the last couple of years have thrown a couple of curve balls at us (bad weather, etc.) and we were unable to fill orders.

But...we have a plan this year to help reduce the risk

of this happening again, as much as we can (we're still dealing with an unpredictable, natural system that we are still not entirely in control of). For this year's order we will be using two suppliers to fill our order. The hope is that this alleviates some of the pressure on a single supplier, like we've been using in the past, to have to fill one exceptionally large order from us. We are also prepared to make a couple of trips down to pick up and deliver the weevils, if necessary. Again, the hope is that we reduce the number of weevils to be collected and supplied all at once, increasing our odds of filling all our orders. And lastly, as you may have noticed, we are taking orders earlier this year than we have in the past. We are hoping that by finalizing our order numbers sooner, we will be at the top of the priority list with our suppliers and will get our orders filled first.

For more information, or to order your weevils please contact Jessica at:

780-727-4424 or conservationag@ westcentralforage.com

West-Central Forage Association: Annual Member Survey

1.	Have you	previously atten	ded any of	our events?
	🗌 Yes		🗌 No	

- 2. If you have not attended past events, what has prevented you from attending?
- West-Central Forage would like to assist producers in our region better. In order to achieve this we would appreciate your feedback. Please rank the following on a scale of 1-3 (1 being most important and 3 being least important)

_____ Small Plot Research

_____ Extension (workshop, classroom style)

Extension (field tours, trips (ex: to research

7. Are there any specific topics you would like to see

_____ Field Scale Demonstrations

covered in future events?

centres & packing plants)

- 3. Which event formats do you find most appealing? (Select all that apply)
- Hands-on workshops
- Classroom instruction
- Expert speaker
- Panel speakers
- Field days/tours
- Other (please describe)
- 4. How would you prefer to receive information about upcoming events? (Select all that apply)
- Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc)
- Website
- Mail-outs
- Phone Calls
- Monthly Newsletter
- Email blasts
- Other advertising (Radio Ads, etc)
- Other (please describe)
- 5. In terms of when events are held, when would you be most likely to attend? (Select all that apply)

\Box	Days
	Evenings
\Box	Weekends
	Spring/Summer
	Fall
	Winter

- 9. What would make you more likely to maintain a membership/participate in events and/or projects in the future?
- 10. Do you have any other comments or suggestions for us?

WCFA is committed to serving our members and producers in the area. We always appreciate feedback to ensure we are properly serving the needs of our members. Please do not hesitate to contact us at any time throughout the year with suggestions for extension events, demonstrations, research or anything else you would like to see us do.

8. Do you have any suggestions for rental equipment to be offered by WCFA to our members?