FORAGE VIEWS

WINTER 2020

IN THIS ISSUE

WCFA will be closed December 19-January 3.

Cover Photo: Ebbie & Ellie feeding cows. Credit: J. Watson

A Letter to Our Readers

As the year draws to a close, we wanted to take a minute to thank you, our readers, members and supporters.

We well know that this year has been challenging for many of us, and we were certainly no exception.

We faced another challenging spring weather-wise, which greatly impacted our small plot research for the year (more about this later on in this newsletter). Perhaps one of the greatest challenges we continue to face is the inability to host in-person events. These events are an important aspect of the work we do, and we know many of you are missing them as well. We promise that just as soon as we are safely able to, we will return to offering workshops, etc. in person. We miss all your wonderful faces and the great conversations just as much as you do.

Although this year has certainly been, shall we say 'different' (no one wants to see the word unprecedented ever again), one thing remained constant. You!

This year was a wonderful reminder to us that we have some of the best supporters out there! Thank-you for sticking with us this year, and for continuing to support our organization in all the ways you have. We made some big changes this year (you heard we moved right?), but we're confident this makes us stronger as an organization. We are looking forward to the year ahead, and in continuing to work with and support you all in reaching your goals.

We're still here, ready to assist you in any way we can, and we greatly appreciate the stead-fast support you continue to give us. Thank-you, thank-you, thank-you.

2020 IN REVIEW

We've reached the final issue (and month) of 2020! As we get ready to tackle another year, we would like to reflect on some of our accomplishments from the past year.

Establishing Forages Seminar with Rianne Bouma of Nutrien Ag Solutions

3rd Annual Ladies' Ranching Retreat: 50 ranching women were brought together to network, learn and inspire!

Industry AGMs: Alberta Forage Industry Network AGM, the Alberta Forage and Grazing Centre AGM and the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef AGM attended

67 feed samples submitted by producers

38 soil health benchmark sites sampled

Farmer-Led Research: two engagement sessions attended & hours of consultation and advocacy on AB Ag's farmer-led research initiatives.

1 NEW Location: WCFA relocated to Sangudo! You can find us inside the Lac Ste. Anne County Administration Building.

Virtual conferences: Canadian Beef Industry Conference and Canadian Forage and Grassland Association Conference attended

117 Varieties/Mixes Tested

- 14 grasses
- 16 alfalfa
- 2 sainfoin
- 2 cicer milkvetch
- 14 perennial forage mixes
- 14 barley
- 10 triticale
- 12 cereal mixes
- 10 oat
- 10 alternative (chicory, forage brassica, forage kale, forage radish, forage turnip, japanese millet, phacelia, plantain, red siberian millet, sorghum sudangrass)
- 6 dual-purpose hemp
- 7 grain hemp

Projects in Progress:

1. Regional Silage Variety Trial
2. Perennial Forage Variety Trial
3. Industrial Hemp Variety Trial
4. Sire-progeny links in multi-sire breeding scenarios
5. AB Soil Health Benchmark
6. Soil Moisture Probes in Forage Systems
7. Soil Revitalization
8. Rancher Researcher

1 new staff member: Melissa Howard joined the team in June, following the departure of Jessica Stambulic

Social Media

- 845 Facebook followers
- 838 Twitter followers
- 356 Instagram followers
- 9200 website views

16 Environmental Farm Plans Initiated

100+ DEDICATED MEMBERS

Board of Directors

President
Grant Chittick

Vice President
Brian Dickson

Treasurer
Greg Malyk

Secretary
Therese Tompkins

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Duane Movald
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Municipal Partners

Yellowhead County
Woodlands County
Lac Ste. Anne County
Parkland County
Brazeau County
Leduc County

This Publication is made possible by our major funder, Alberta Agriculture and Forestry.

2020 PERENNIAL FORAGE VARIETY TRIAL
PRELIMINARY RESULTS SUMMARY

MELISSA HOWARD, FORAGE RESEARCH COORDINATOR

The 2020 WCFA Evaluation of Perennial Forage Mixes for Hay or Pasture or Perennial Forage Trial (PFT) is a partnership trial organized by our friends at the Chinook Applied Research Center (CARA) and done in cooperation with eight other research organizations. The PFT is a carryover of the earlier perennial evaluation trials. The purpose of this trial is to observe and report on the seedling mortality, perennial survivability, yield and nutritional quality of a number of perennial forages.

For the 2020 trials, field work included the seeding of four blocks of legumes (alfalfa, sainfoin, and cicer milkvetch), grasses, and mixtures (legumes and grasses) at the Wildwood Research Site in late July. Field staff were out doing emergence plant counts at 7, 14, and 21 days post-seeding and first season mortality at 70 days post-seeding.

In the coming year we expect to do winter survivability counts in early spring and after sufficient establishment has occurred yield and nutritional quality samples will be taken.

Overall there is very little to report for results on the PFT. Some grasses fared extremely well, alfalfas looked as though they may possibly survive the winter and we did have some surprising –yet sparse sainfoin establishment.

Counting blades of grass and legumes is a daunting task, we would like to extend our gratitude to Jayden Calvert for the long hours she spent assisting in the counting of our young perennial forages. We look forward to bringing you more exciting news from this project in the coming years.

A grass block at 14 days post-seeding

A grass block at 70 days post-seeding

Happy Holidays

It's in the spirit of the holiday season that we extend our thank you to all of you for supporting us this year.

Best wishes for this upcoming year, and we look forward to working with you soon.

-Jessica, Rachael, Melissa H.

WCFA will be closed for the holidays December 19, 2020- January 3, 2021.

Regular hours (8:30 am-4:30 pm) resume January 4th.

COW FERTILITY, PREGNANCY RATE IMPORTANT ECONOMIC NUMBERS

Beef cow pregnancy rates are important numbers to track

NDSU AGRICULTURE COMMUNICATION - NOV. 25, 2020

https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/news/newsreleases/2020/nov-23-2020/cow-fertility-pregnancy-rate-important-economic-numbers

Reproduction is the most important economic trait in a beef cow herd.

“Selling more calves as it relates to cows exposed and cow input costs is a greater indication of business success than any other production parameter,” says Gerald Stokka, North Dakota State University Extension veterinarian and livestock stewardship specialist. “Unfortunately, the majority of our expected progeny differences measure production traits not related to reproduction, while the index values focus on gross revenue, not input costs.”

Take, for example, a 300-cow herd with a 15% open rate and a normal average of 5%. The open rate is 10% higher than normal. This means that 270 cows must assume the cost of maintaining 300 cows. If cow costs on an annual basis are $700, then each of the 270 pregnant cows will pick up the tab for $778.

Easy answers to reducing the rate of open cows, such as changing vaccination protocols, usually are misguided and don’t address the fundamental reasons for low pregnancy rates, according to Stokka.

“Meaningful discussion to find solutions requires a systematic approach to practical management recommendations,” he says.

“Veterinarians need to have access to production information related to calving dates, pregnancy checking information by fetal age, cow body condition scores (BCS), cow BCS by age, cow age, cow age by pasture information, bull age and cows exposed per bull, length of the breeding season, and biosecurity of the herd related to purchases, exposure to the main herd and exposures to neighboring cattle.”

Here is information producers need to investigate this problem:

- ***What time of the year is calving season?*** Late winter/earlier spring calving requires more energy in the diet to prepare cows to be rebred during the breeding season. Late spring/ summer calving cows may experience a decrease in forage quality in late July and August, which can impact fertility.

- ***What is the calving season distribution, or when are the majority of calves born?*** Is it the first 21 days, the first 45 days, the last 30 days or scattered throughout the calving season? This information provides some evidence of inadequate bull power, which may be related to dominant bulls, lame bulls, injured bulls or inadequate BCS and cow nutrition during the breeding season. A large number of cows determined to be pregnant late in the breeding season could be an indication of reproductive disease such a vibrio or trichomoniasis.

- ***What is the number of calves born related to the number of cows determined to be with calf at the previous pregnancy checking event?*** This number could indicate fetal loss due to abortions not noticed, or obvious abortions and stillbirths. This can be evidence of fetal infections such as BVDV, IBR, leptospirosis, Neospora, fungal infections and a host of other possible pathogens. In addition, fetal losses can be due to high nitrates in forage resources.

- ***What is the cow BCS and by age?*** Younger cows (2- and 3-year-olds) and cows more than 12 years old generally will carry less condition than middle-aged cows. This will have a direct relationship to the ability to rebreed and conceive for the next season because young cows still are growing and lactating, and older cows will have more difficulty staying in condition because most of their incisor teeth will be missing.

- ***What are the cow and bull ages and numbers by pasture?*** Herds with younger or older cows in common pastures regardless of bull numbers generally will have a greater number of open cows. The number of cows exposed per bull is important, but perhaps even more important is bull age. Older and more dominant bulls tend to serve the majority of cows, so the number of bulls may not be as important as the age of all the bulls in a pasture. Running two 14- to 16-month-old bulls with a single dominant older bull counts as three bulls. However, in reality, the herd may have only 1.5 bulls because the dominant bull dominates the breeding. All bulls should have had a bull semen evaluation prior to the breeding season. Bulls from pastures with low pregnancy rates should be tested again.

- ***Do you make biosecurity and vaccination a priority?*** All purchased and additions to the herd should have a testing and vaccination history. If not, then implement quarantine procedures. Even with testing and vaccination, do not introduce new additions into the herd just prior to the start of the calving season.

“Beef cow pregnancy and weaning rates are important numbers to track,” Stokka says. “High numbers without increased input costs are related to profitability and “High numbers without increased input costs are related to profitability and sustainability of the ranch business. Work with your veterinarian and nutritionist in herds where appropriate benchmarks or goals of these rates have not been achieved.”

2020 REGIONAL SILAGE VARIETY TRIAL

PRELIMINARY RESULTS SUMMARY

MELISSA HOWARD, FORAGE RESEARCH COORDINATOR

The Regional Silage Trial (RST) focuses on determining the nutritional qualities and yield of several silage crops commonly used in Alberta. West-Central Forage Association has participated with nine other institutions both public and nonprofit, to grow, harvest, and report this data to research and industry partners for several years. The data has been used to provide important variety and yield information for the Alberta Seed Guide. This article was written to provide a preliminary summary of our trial information, with a full detailed analysis to be made available early next year as part of our annual report.

The 2020 trial consisted of six major silage crop types. Unfortunately, we only had the opportunity to seed five of these and only four reached a stage where they could be harvested. The four silage crop types (or trials) included barley, oats, triticale, and winter/spring cereal mixes. These were seeded at our Brazeau site on June 11 with the cooperation of Bart Guyon. A fifth –the alternatives, was seeded at the Wildwood site provided by Yellowhead County. The alternatives trial did not grow to a harvestable amount due to late seeding and as such no additional data will be presented regarding it.

In the RST each crop trial utilizes a check variety for comparison. These check varieties are ones that have been grown in Alberta for a significant number of years, and they provide consistent long-term data (sometimes called plot years). Crop data is often presented as percentage of each variety's attributes compared to the check as 100 percent. For example, if the yield of a variety was less than that of the check it may be presented as 99 or below and if it fared better than the check it could be 101 and above. In this summary raw data will be presented and compared against the check data, but a comparison percentage of the check variety will only be provided in the annual report.

The 2020 barley trial consisted of 14 varieties with CDC Austenson used as the check. For the oat trial there were 10 varieties using CDC Baler as the check. The triticale trial also had 10 varieties and used Taza as the check. The winter/spring cereal mixes used all three of the previous checks and used nine mixtures at varying combination rates.

The silage trials received regular plot maintenance in the form of mowing, hand weeding, weed whipping, and a single early season spraying of MCPA Amine. During the month of September trials were harvested when each crop reached the appropriate stage as determined by the trial coordinator. West-Central Forage trial plots are harvested using a sickle mower, harvested crops are raked into piles to be bucketed and then weighed for wet yield. Subsamples of each variety are taken, dried, used to determine dry yield and sent to A&L laboratories for feed quality analysis.

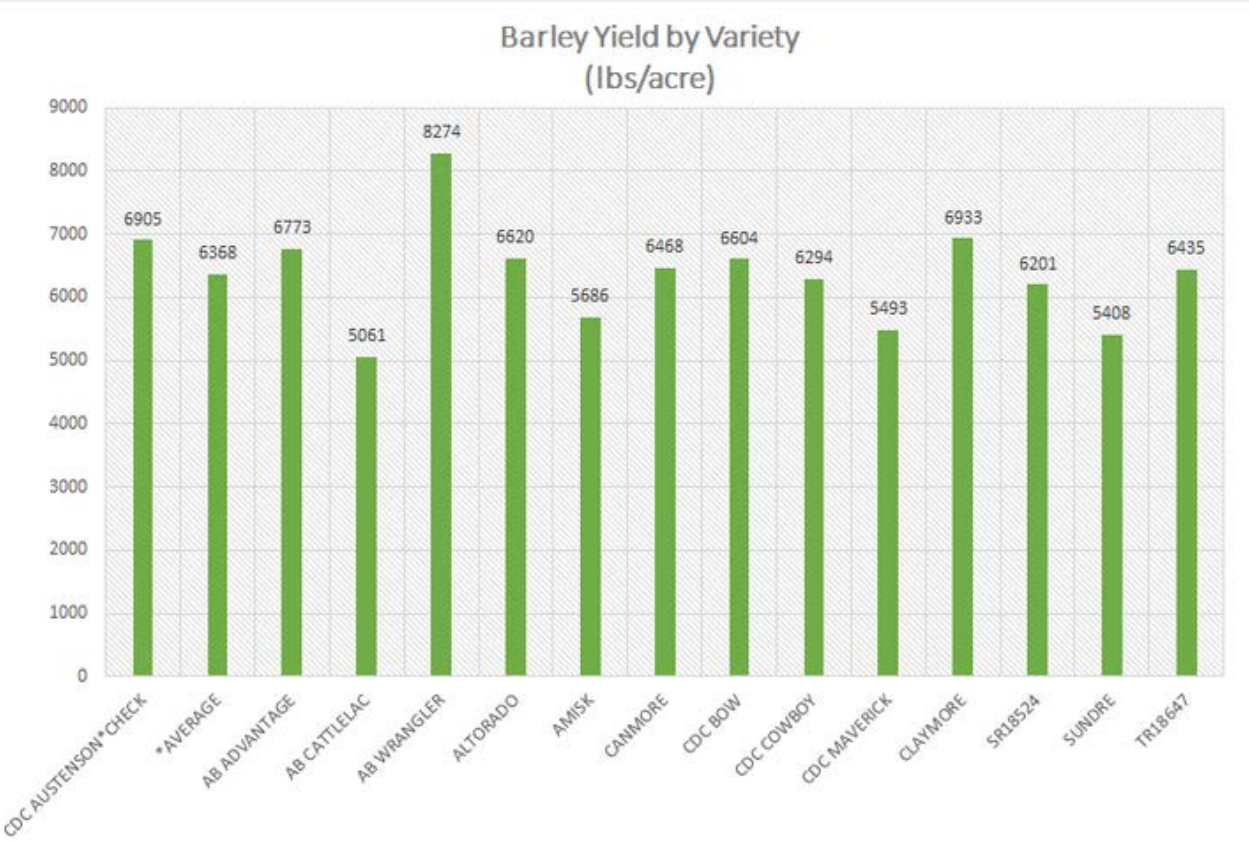
Results

Throughout the beginning of the season the trials were subjected to significant rainfall. They fared better through the latter half of the season, but a substantial weed problem had already resulted from the early rainfall. This may have resulted in considerable amounts of weeds contributing to yield weights.

Overall, we harvested 3048.96 lbs (1382.75 kg) of dry silage from the plots at Brazeau. By silage crop type the yields were 872.4 lbs (395.65 kg) of barley, 580.05 lbs (263.06 kg) of oats, 664.28 lbs (301.26 kg) of the winter/spring cereal mixes, and 932.23 lbs (422.78 kg) of triticale. All the silage crops performed at varying yield values both above and below the check varieties that were grown.

RST BARLEY RESULTS

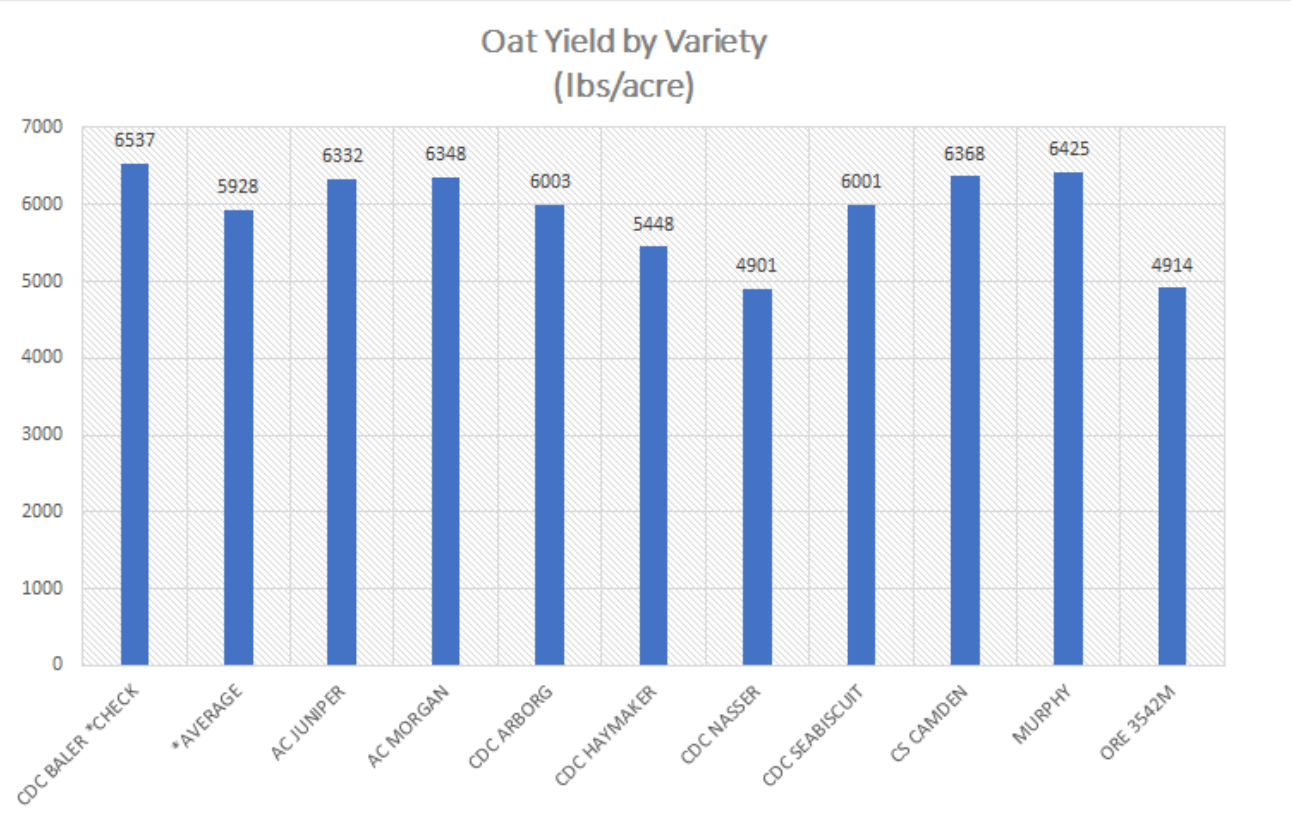
The barley trial showed the check, CDC Austenson, performing better than most of the other varieties as evidenced by its yield being above the average. The feed quality analysis of the barley trial show that CDC Austenson underperformed in comparison to most of the other varieties for several nutritional qualities.



Variety	CP	TDN	Ca	P	K	Mg	ADF	NDF
CDC AUSTENSON*CHECK	7.99	68.91	0.3	0.17	1.38	0.09	36.5	54.56
*AVERAGE	9.03	70.05	0.34	0.21	1.4	0.1	36	51.23
AB ADVANTAGE	10.68	70.34	0.4	0.26	1.41	0.11	34.26	48.15
AB CATTLELAC	9.85	69.5	0.4	0.24	1.56	0.12	35.42	49.67
AB WRANGLER	8.3	68.61	0.35	0.21	1.41	0.08	37.65	53.38
ALTORADO	9.49	70.98	0.37	0.2	1.39	0.1	35.48	50.97
AMISK	9.77	73.03	0.32	0.21	1.48	0.1	33.85	45.48
CANMORE	8.5	70.83	0.36	0.19	1.45	0.08	35.04	51.7
CDC BOW	8.91	69.09	0.35	0.18	1.06	0.1	36.68	53.93
CDC COWBOY	8.98	70.71	0.29	0.23	1.44	0.12	34.97	50.81
CDC MAVERICK	9.15	70.9	0.29	0.23	1.29	0.11	33.34	50.76
CLAYMORE	8.26	68.87	0.41	0.16	1.31	0.09	36.99	55.48
SR18524	8.5	70.32	0.31	0.21	1.44	0.11	35.7	49.15
SUNDRE	9.07	69.2	0.36	0.29	1.52	0.13	36.53	50.28
TR18647	9	69.51	0.27	0.22	1.56	0.09	36.39	53

RST OAT RESULTS

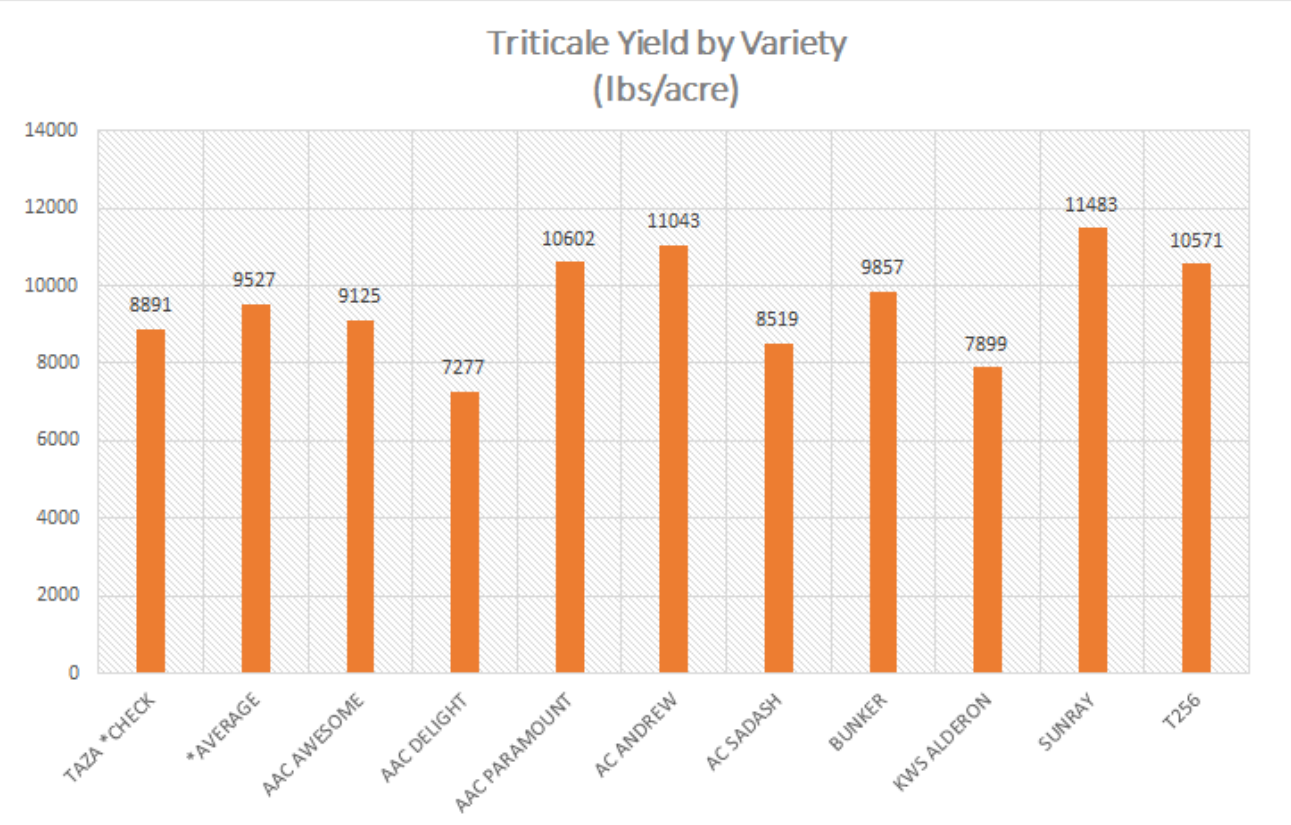
None of the oat trial varieties had higher yield values than the check, CDC Baler. The feed quality analysis showed that values ranged significantly in comparison to Baler with few noticeable trends.



Variety	CP	TDN	Ca	P	K	Mg	ADF	NDF
CDC BALER*CHECK	10.73	63.39	0.35	0.24	1.98	0.12	38.96	57.63
*AVERAGE	9.77	68.28	0.30	0.27	1.83	0.11	36.19	49.95
AC JUNIPER	9.35	69.85	0.27	0.26	1.73	0.11	35.41	46.08
AC MORGAN	9.49	66.99	0.31	0.27	1.99	0.11	37.48	51.87
CDC ARBORG	9.70	68.02	0.25	0.27	1.99	0.11	36.81	48.89
CDC HAYMAKER	9.97	67.05	0.32	0.27	2.04	0.10	36.18	52.98
CDC NASSER	9.70	67.24	0.31	0.26	1.75	0.12	37.19	52.11
CDC SEABISCUIT	9.80	70.24	0.31	0.26	1.60	0.10	33.74	44.85
CS CAMDEN	9.84	70.64	0.30	0.28	1.67	0.12	36.18	49.51
MURPHY	9.84	69.82	0.31	0.25	1.48	0.10	34.45	46.10
ORE 3542M	9.32	69.56	0.30	0.33	2.11	0.11	35.53	49.51

RST TRITICALE RESULTS

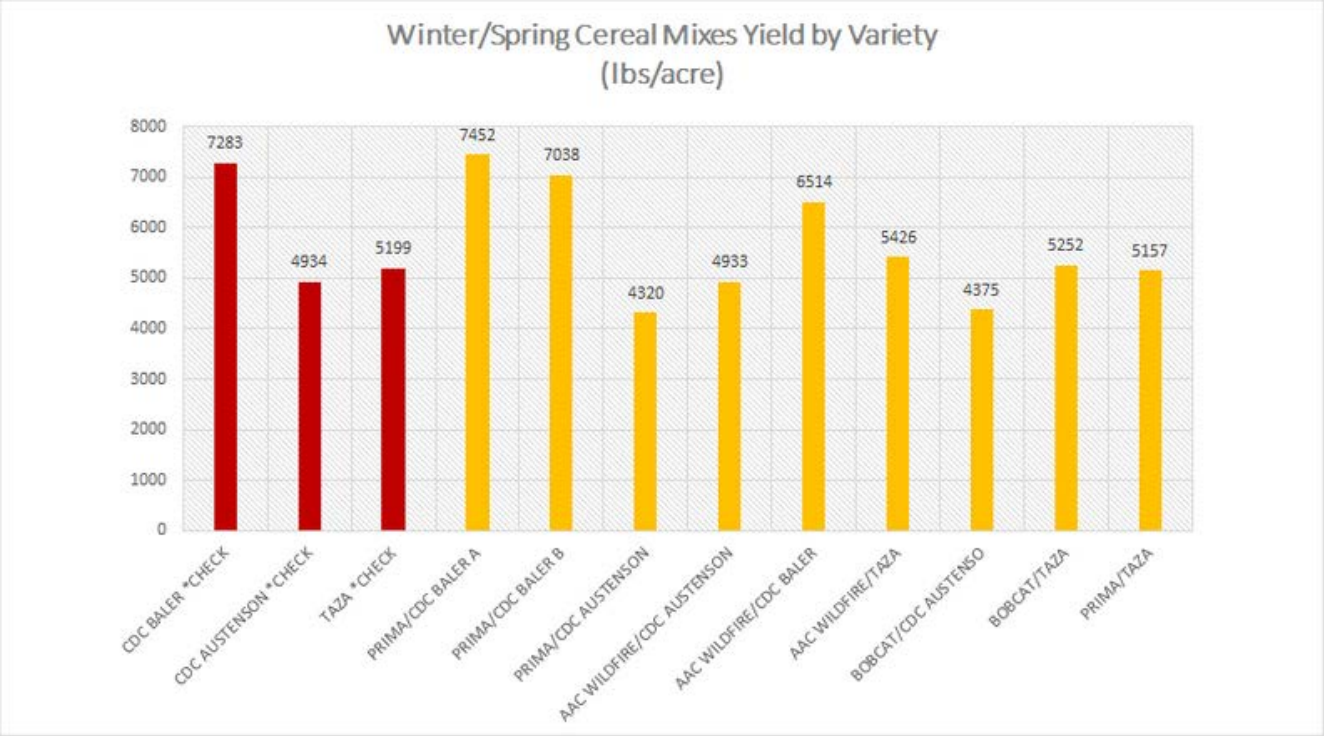
In the triticale trial the average yield was slightly above the check yield, indicating that many varieties outgrew Taza. Nutritional values showed significantly less range than the values seen by yield, with most of feed quality values being either on par with that of the check or slightly lower, indicating that many of the varieties did not perform well in comparison or if considered along with higher yield values were possibly at a later stage of development.



Variety	CP	TDN	Ca	P	K	Mg	ADF	NDF
TAZA*CHECK	9.35	67.81	0.18	0.19	1.09	0.07	35.96	56.68
*AVERAGE	9.29	70.61	0.15	0.19	1.02	0.08	34.12	51.69
AAC AWESOME	9.38	70.01	0.15	0.15	1.10	0.08	34.31	52.63
AAC DELIGHT	9.13	72.00	0.14	0.18	0.88	0.06	33.14	48.45
AAC PARAMOUNT	9.16	70.31	0.18	0.18	1.23	0.08	34.25	52.00
AC ANDREW	9.40	72.39	0.13	0.23	1.04	0.09	33.08	47.04
AC SADASH	8.63	71.46	0.14	0.18	1.00	0.08	33.41	50.00
BUNKER	9.05	69.16	0.16	0.19	0.87	0.08	35.58	54.47
KWS ALDERON	10.06	70.73	0.14	0.20	1.00	0.10	33.69	52.74
SUNRAY	9.26	71.89	0.17	0.18	1.05	0.07	32.88	51.73
T256	9.47	70.40	0.16	0.19	0.93	0.10	34.90	51.21

RST WINTER/SPRING CEREAL MIX RESULTS

The winter and spring cereal mixes combined different varieties including all the checks previously mentioned. Of those in the trial, CDC Baler and mixes with CDC Baler seemed to have higher yields than all other mixes. There is no comparison of the checks to an average in this instance as there is too much variability and range of values for an average to give any significant information. The feed quality analysis likewise shows either significant range or none at all.



Variety	CP	TDN	Ca	P	K	Mg	ADF	NDF
CDC BALER*CHECK	9.29	65.52	0.28	0.23	1.76	0.11	38.43	55.91
CDC AUSTENSON*CHECK	9.09	71.99	0.28	0.21	1.34	0.10	33.47	48.02
TAZA*CHECK	9.71	68.56	0.16	0.21	1.26	0.06	34.76	55.17
PRIMA/CDC BALER A	9.00	66.69	0.23	0.23	1.52	0.10	37.17	54.83
PRIMA/CDC BALER B	9.04	66.95	0.30	0.25	1.90	0.11	37.42	54.66
PRIMA/CDC AUSTENSON	8.97	71.37	0.21	0.24	1.04	0.08	34.11	48.84
AAC WILDFIRE/CDC AUSTENSON	8.34	68.89	0.24	0.24	1.53	0.10	36.44	53.74
AAC WILDFIRE/CDC BALER	8.83	66.27	0.24	0.27	1.57	0.11	37.68	54.45
AAC WILDFIRE/TAZA	9.47	68.48	0.12	0.24	1.06	0.05	35.74	57.77
BOBCAT/CDC AUSTENSO	8.66	69.63	0.24	0.21	1.20	0.09	35.29	52.19
BOBCAT/TAZA	9.32	67.63	0.12	0.21	0.95	0.05	36.13	58.07
PRIMA/TAZA	9.26	68.00	0.12	0.22	1.02	0.05	36.09	57.33

Overall, the 2020 research year proved to be a difficult one with regard to balancing timing, environmental factors, and an access to resources -including human ones. Our crops were slow to start, at times drowning in water, overrun with weeds, and took some logistical juggling to get off the field. Despite all this the 2020 Regional Silage Trial gave us an abundance of information. This trial was made possible by our many contributors, cooperators and staff, without whom the work would never have come together. The 2021 trials may prove to be just as challenging in many regards. Yet even with the many uncertainties ahead we look forward to bringing you, our association members as much valuable research as we can.

HAVE YOU HEARD OF ALUS?

INFORMATION PROVIDED BY LOCAL ALUS COORDINATORS

The ALUS program works with farmers to produce valuable ecological services on Canadian farmland.

More specifically, ALUS helps farmers and ranchers restore wetlands, reforest, plant windbreaks, install riparian buffers, manage sustainable drainage systems, create pollinator habitat and establish other ecologically beneficial projects on their properties. What's more, ALUS provides per-acre annual payments to ALUS participants to recognize their dedication to managing and maintaining all the ALUS projects on their land.

ALUS programs across Canada follow similar principles. However, ALUS programs are also community led and farmer driven. Therefore, there are similarities across all ALUS programs along with aspects unique to each community.

As ALUS is a community driven program, each active ALUS community establishes a local Partnership Advisory Committee (PAC) to direct local programming. The PAC includes a broad spectrum of community members, such as representatives from local environmental groups, local government agencies and local industry. Approximately 50 percent of each PAC is made up of farmers.

While in other parts of the Country the ALUS program may run through stewardship groups and conservation authorities, here in Alberta, partnering with a municipality is beautiful thing. The ALUS coordinator can host events at local community halls and council buildings, use the information that the municipality has to reach out to farmers, and be available for the farmers to talk to the ALUS coordinator directly. The partnership between ALUS Canada and municipalities brings great opportunities to fund environmental projects directly and support local farmers.

ALUS Programs in our local area include: ALUS Brazeau, ALUS Lac Ste. Anne, ALUS Parkland and ALUS Leduc-Wetaskiwin.

And did you know WCFA sits on ALUS Brazeau and ALUS Parkland's PACs? We enjoy supporting these local initiatives and getting a first-hand look at the innovative project ideas that come forth. We ♡ the ALUS program!

It's a great time of year to start thinking about and planning ALUS projects for 2021, and we know the coordinators would love to chat with you!

For more information or to discuss potential projects contact your local ALUS coordinator.

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ALUS Lac Ste. Anne
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ALUS Leduc-Wetaskiwin
Kim Barkwell
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Curious about what types of projects are covered and what an ALUS project looks like? On the next page we showcase the ALUS Leduc-Wetaskiwin program and one of their participants.

LEDUC-WETASKIWIN ALUS

KIM BARKWELL, ALUS COORDINATOR

Did you know that Leduc and Wetaskiwin Counties run a joint ALUS program?

The Leduc-Wetaskiwin ALUS program began in 2016.The program has enrolled over 800 participant acres that produce ecosystem services. Our community program has experienced modest growth and focused on building sound and reliable processes that producers can trust.

Leduc-Wetaskiwin ALUS cost shared with producers on the following project types. These projects can provide multiple ecosystem services.

Project	Ecosystem Services Provided
Wetland and Creek Riparian Fencing	Water quality, wildlife habitat, biodiversity
Riparian tree planting. Eco-buffer. Pollinator planting.	Cleaner air, carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat, biodiversity
Off-site watering systems	Water quality

In 2018, Leduc-Wetaskiwin ALUS participants Michelle and Brad Kuny planted an eco-buffer on a hard to farm piece of cropland adjacent to a drainage course and large wetland. They seeded a slow growing grass mix and used plastic mulch between the trees for weed control.

Photo Credit: Sarah C's Photography

Photo Credit: Sarah C's Photography

WCFA IN THE NEWS

We were in the news! In case you missed it:

Performance test results researched

The Western Producer published an article November 26, 2020 in which Sean Thompson from Olds College and Jessica talk a bit about the Sire-progeny links in commercial herds project we have underway.

If you missed the article you can find it at:
www.producer.com/livestock/performance-test-results-researched

TRUSTBIX INC. delivers data solution for West-Central Forage Association

In a press release on November 17, 2020 BIXs announces their involvement in the Sire-progeny links in commercial herds project we have underway.

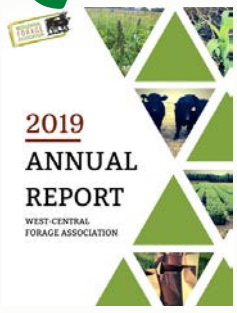
To view the press release:
https://blog.trustbix.com/press-releases

2021 LADIES' RANCHING RETREAT POSTPONED

Unfortunately, as we're sure is no surprise to any of you, the 4th Annual Ladies' Ranching Retreat has been postponed.

As this is one of our most anticipated events, we will be looking into options to provide content virtually, or moving the date to later in the year when we may be able to safely host an in-person event. Keep your eyes on our social media for updates.

Digital copies of WCFA's 2019 Annual Report available!



Email info@westcentralforage.com to receive your pdf copy. Printed copies will be available in early 2021.
**Note: annual reports are available to active WCFA members only.*

HAY FOR SALE

65 Clover/Orchardgrass/Brome Mixed Hay Bales

Large Round JD 538 Net Wrapped
No Rain
Located in Wildwood, AB

780-727-2711