



Forage and Livestock eNews

Updates and information from across the industry

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Greetings!

Much like the crocuses blooming in the pastures, in the forage world announcements of upcoming pasture tours and field days are a sign of spring! Many of these are popping up so check out our upcoming events section near the end of the eNews or on the [SFC website](#) to keep in touch.



This month's Forage and Livestock eNews will have you thinking about the new forage season, with articles on seeding native species, spring pasture assessment, upcoming Saskatchewan tours and conferences and much more.

Please feel free to forward the eNews on to others you think may be interested in forage and livestock industry updates -signing up is as easy as clicking the 'Join Our Mailing List!' on the left. We always appreciate your feedback, event listings or article suggestions.

Saskatchewan Pasture Tour 2016

by: Rachel Turnquist, BSA, P.Ag, Regional Forage Specialist, Moose Jaw
Regional Services Branch

The Saskatchewan Pasture Tour is in the Harris area for 2016! This year's tour will visit sites with forage rejuvenation through bale grazing, sod seeding legumes, rotational grazing, pasture pipeline and polycropping. In addition, participants will take part in native pasture management discussion and plant identification as well as an invasive plant stop.

The tour will begin at 9 a.m. Participants will board a chartered bus at the Harris town hall. As an option, participants may board the bus in Saskatoon at the Confederation mall near McDonald's at 7:30 a.m. The bus will return them to Saskatoon in the early evening.

A bagged lunch, snacks and drinks will be supplied throughout the day. The tour will return to Harris Hall where supper will be served. All this is included in the \$80 participation fee. Register with the Saskatchewan Forage Council early to ensure your seat on the bus! For more information contact Leanna Rousell at (306) 329-3116 or office@saskforage.ca or Rachel Turnquist at (306) 694-3721.

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Planning for Planting - Seeding Native Species

Reprinted with permission from SODCAP Inc.

by: Tara Mulhern Davidson

As mild winter weather transitions into a warm spring, producers are gearing up for an early seeding season, including those who are planning to seed forages. For farmers and ranchers who are used to looking on the horizon for the next raincloud, seeded native grass species may be the ticket to long term sustainability. Producers who are considering seeding perennial forages should investigate whether native species are a good option for their operations.



The South of the Divide Conservation Action Program Inc. (SODCAP Inc.) is a species at risk conservation organization focused on working with producers in the Milk River watershed, also known as the South of the Divide. The group is currently offering programming to assist area producers who are interested in converting cultivated land to native prairie species.

"Producers will benefit from forage stand longevity when they choose to seed natives," says Larry Gabruch, a native restoration agrologist working with SODCAP Inc. "Well-managed seeded natives hold their productivity over the long term," Gabruch explains, adding that while tame stands may require rejuvenation or inputs, native species likely will not. For ranchers or farmers interested in a long-term low-maintenance method of increasing their grazing resources, native plants are a great option.

Because they are native to the region, prairie species such as needle-and-thread, northern wheatgrass, purple prairie clover, green needle grass, blue grama, and June grass are most adaptable to local climates. "Native species are able to withstand weather extremes, particularly drought," says Gabruch, adding that a well-planned native seeding project will adapt to changing weather conditions and patterns.

Gabruch acknowledges that there are some misconceptions about natives, including the notion that native stands are far less productive than tame stands. "A lot of producers rely on tame grass in the southwest, and they work in many circumstances. However, a well-designed native planting including native legumes can rival performance compared to seeded tame forages. Over the long term, natives will withstand drought conditions and maintain longevity better than tame species, which is where the main differences and advantage comes in," Gabruch explains.

The benefits of seeded native species don't stop at producers. An established diverse mix will contribute to the overall biodiversity in an area. This diversity helps to provide quality habitat for species at risk as well as a source of food and an area for species to forage in. Species at risk, such as the burrowing owl, Sprague's pipit and chestnut collared longspur, all require prairie grassland habitat to complete their life cycles. Native plantings can help connect fragments of habitat, fill in holes, and benefit the overall ecosystem, in addition to increasing grazing capacity on a farm or ranch.

When it comes to seeding native species, planning is key. Gabruch advises producers to implement a strong pre-seeding weed control plan and to plant shortly after a pre-seeding herbicide application to give the native seedlings a competitive advantage over weeds. Timing is critical, suggests Gabruch who says preventative weed control will save time and effort in the future. "Use high quality, weed-free seed that is well-suited to the area it will be planted in," he adds, saying that a seed analysis showing purity and germination will help determine the proper seeding rate.

For more information on SODCAP Inc.'s seeded native program which includes financial incentives and technical advice, contact agrologist Larry Gabruch at 306-716-9603.

*Image: Needle and Thread and Northern Wheatgrass
Image Credit: Larry Gabruch*

Forage Breeding Faces Funding Challenges

Reprinted with permission from Canadian Cattlemen magazine, April 12, 2016

By: Ron Friesen

Government has cut back, private companies are not keen on crops that don't need to be reseeded every year, and you can't check off sales to farmers' own livestock

Forages are Canada's biggest crop but you wouldn't know it because of the few resources that go into breeding them. You'd think that, given its size, forage would be a giant in the world of plant breeding. Unfortunately, it's more of a midget.

Canada has only four major publicly funded programs for breeding tame forages, along with two smaller programs for native grasses. Research funding has been static for the last 10 years except for some from the Beef Cattle Research Council. It's estimated that only about one-third as much forage research is being done nationally as in the 1980s. Research today concentrates on major species such as alfalfa, clover and grasses because there aren't enough breeders to cover all the others.

"Considering the importance of the crop, that is a small breeding effort, especially when you consider the number of species to be worked on," says Bruce Coulman, a University of Saskatchewan forage breeder who works on dryland grasses such as brome and wheatgrass.

Similar in the U.S.

In the U.S., the pattern is similar, despite more private companies involved in forage research. Mike Peterson, the global traits lead for Forage Genetics International in Janesville, Wisconsin, says variety evaluation is "way less" than it was 10 or 15 years ago. He recalls that an alfalfa-breeding group meeting in the U.S. used to draw 300 people. Now only about 60 attend.

"It's crazy. It's just eroding," Peterson says. "We have almost as many acres of alfalfa and we're just not doing the research that we used to." Peterson stresses the work that is being done is cutting edge and high quality. It's just that the talent pool is so thin. "The quality of the work has never been higher. There's just not enough of it."

Another problem is a lack of uptake for the research that is being done.

"The work that our breeders are doing is certainly very valuable. But we also don't have a huge uptake from industry to use a lot of these new varieties," says Cedric MacLeod, executive director of the Canadian Forage & Grassland Association.

"There is some reluctance by growers to adopt the newest technology. It's hard for the public purse and private industry to justify the expense that goes along with breeding new varieties because the return on investment is a difficult case to make."

To view the full article, [click here](#).

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ADOPT Forage Seed Research Project Plans and Reports

Saskatchewan Forage Seed Development Commission

by: Ray McVicar, executive director

The Agricultural Demonstration of Practices and Technologies (ADOPT) initiative under the Canada-Saskatchewan Growing Forward bilateral agreement provides funding for applied research and demonstration projects. SFSDC has successfully applied to the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture over the years for ADOPT funds to carry out a number of important projects. By doing this, SFSDC continues to achieve one of its goals to increase forage seed research by using a small amount of check-off money to leverage significant research funding.

In 2016, three new ADOPT projects are planned with the Northeast Agriculture Research Foundation (NARF) at the Melfort, SK Research Farm. They are:

- Evaluating the Placement of Companion Crops in Forage Seed Production using Alternate Row Seeding;
- Evaluating the Use of Direct Seeding and Pre-Seeding Cultivation in Forage Seed Establishment;
- Control of Lesser Clover Leaf Weevil in Red Clover.



SFSDC has completed numerous ADOPT projects over the past five years with NARF and other cooperators. Reports for these completed projects are located on the SFSDC website and include:

- Fertilizing Forage Grasses for Seed Production;
- Pod Sealant Technology in Birdsfoot Trefoil Seed Production;
- Bromegrass Seed Midge Control in Hybrid Bromegrass;
- Fungicides for Use in Forage Seed Grasses (2012);
- Controlling Noxious Weeds and Improving Seed Quality in Established Forage Legume Seed Crops - Registered herbicides on established red clover, alsike clover, sweet clover, birdsfoot trefoil and cicer milkvetch;
- Controlling Noxious Weeds and Improving Seed Quality in Established Forage Grass Seed Crops - Registered herbicides on established timothy, hybrid bromegrass, slender wheatgrass and tall fescue;
- Demonstrating the Proper Timing and Application of a Desiccant on Red Clover Seed Crops;
- Evaluating the Placement of Companion Crops in Forage Seed Production using meadow

bromegrass, perennial ryegrass and wheat; and

- Fungicides for Use in Forage Seed Grasses (2015).

For more information about these and other research projects, please go to the SFSDC website at www.skforageseeddc.com and click on Research and look under Past Research.

Image: ADOPT SFSDC NARF Forage Seed Projects

Image Credit: SFSDC

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Spring Pasture Assessment

By: Blain Hjertaas, Redvers SK

All of us love to get out and look at our grass. We marvel at the new growth, the beauty of what we do and our returning feathered friends.

It is an excellent time to evaluate last year's management. Here are a few things I look for as I wander across my pastures

Take a close look at the bare spots. If there are new seedlings around the periphery, your management is making the land better. If there are mature dead plants at the edges, things aren't as good. If this is an issue, you need to evaluate and make a change. Those of us on the eastern prairies have been inundated with water the last few years and will have lots of bare patches as the water recedes. This is normal and it will return to health as the land dries. It goes through a successional process with annuals first, then short lived perennials and finally back to desirable perennials.

It's easy to see the ground this time of year so get down on your hand and knees, part the litter and take a look. Is your litter down or is it erect? Is there a distinct layer between litter and soil or is it a gradual transition and hard to tell where litter ends and soil begins. Having the land covered with litter is the first step in improving our land. Look for diversity. More is always better than less. If it's not as good as you want, what actions could be done over the summer to address this issue? Can you see evidence of earthworm castings, dung beetle activity or any other soil life? Once again diversity is wonderful and all we can do to encourage it will make our system healthier and more profitable.

Look at last year's grazing patterns. Do you see evidence of trailing or patchy grazing? These are signs that stock density was too low or the land was exposed to the animals for too long. Again what can you do for the coming season to rectify these issues?

Your grazing chart should be done for 2016 showing where you plan to be. This is another opportunity to check your plan. Usually where the oldest grass is, is the logical place to start. The other thing to note is animal days (AD's) is a harvested number, not what you grew. To be

accurate you need to be aware of what is left from last year's grazing and add this to AD's harvested from last year. These totalled together are what go in column one of the grazing plan.

It is a great time to evaluate the overall health of the system. On our farm, as the poorest areas are identified, is where we plan for winter feeding. This is the best time of year to identify those areas. An over seeding with a legume is another option you may wish to consider?

These are a few of the things that I think about as I walk across my paddocks. It is an easy time to spot problems and plan to make changes to correct the issues. Plus it's a wonderful time of year to be out and smell and feel the new life all around us. A farmer's footprints are the best fertilizer.

Wishing you all a great grazing season.

To take a peek at Blain's operation, navigate to his Virtual Farm Tour presentation from the 2015 CFGA Conference by [clicking here](#). Questions or comments? Contact Blain by email at bhjer@sasktel.net.

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10th Annual International Rangeland Congress (IRC)

Upcoming Saskatchewan Event

Delegates from around the globe will be attending the IRC in Saskatoon from July 16-22, 2016. The Congress theme is "The Future Management of Grazing and Wild Lands in a High-Tech World" and the week will present numerous opportunities to learn more about rangeland management, conservation and grazing. The aim of the IRC is to promote the interchange of scientific and technical information on all aspects of rangelands. Speaking topics range from ecological goods and services to climate change to resource extraction impacts and attendees can also take advantage of workshops and tours before and during the IRC.

To learn more about the Congress, or to register, visit the comprehensive International Rangeland Congress 2016 [website](#). May 30th is the deadline for Early Bird registration, so register soon to ensure the best price possible!

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Tune-Up or Trade-In or Up to New? Evaluating your Mower Conditioner

New Holland Agriculture

Most people who consider themselves to be mechanically inclined often struggle with this question. With hay season just around the corner, it's time to look at your mower-conditioner.



Regardless of mechanical inclination, the reward for buying new is always updated model features, renewed warranty coverage, and trouble-free operation. If buying new, start by researching the latest models and features then think carefully about how a new machine would fit your operation. Consider taking advantage of a larger model or self-propelled machine. It's important to remember when you up-size your mower-conditioner, up-sizing your

supporting equipment such as tedders and hay rakes may also be necessary.

To learn more, navigate to the New Holland [website](#).

Image: Mower Conditioner

Source: New Holland Agriculture

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Managing Risk in Winter Grazing Systems

Video series by Chinook Applied Research Association in partnership with Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, West Central Forage Association, Lakeland Agricultural Research Association and cattlemen from across Alberta.

This series of 47 videos provides practical tips on managing many of the risks associated with extended grazing systems. Whether you're thinking of extending your grazing season or you've already implemented one of these systems and you'd like to hear from others in the industry who've encountered the challenges and seen the benefits, these videos will be worthwhile to check out!

These videos are free to view on YouTube through Alberta Agriculture. Topics include fencing, feed quality, watering systems, weather, managing and handling livestock, planning your systems, understanding costs and much more.



To see the playlist and watch the videos on YouTube, [click here](#)

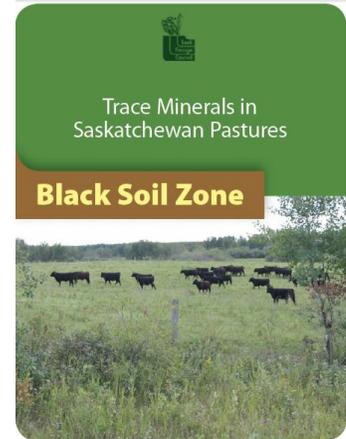
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Saskatchewan Forage Council Featured Project...

Trace Mineral Status of Saskatchewan Pastures

"Iron levels of over 0.3ppm can cause problems with zinc, copper, and selenium absorption, further complicating deficiencies in grazed forage. Iron levels of over 0.3ppm were found in several of the water sources sampled during this project (range 0.19 - 0.55ppm) with no significant difference between soil zones or season. Attention should be paid to total iron in the diet from both water and feed sources and the interaction with other trace minerals and possible secondary deficiencies that can occur with excess iron intake."

This project was supported by the Agriculture Development Fund (ADF) initiative under the Canada-Saskatchewan Growing Forward bi-lateral agreement. Project partners were the Western Beef Development Centre, University of Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture.



To view the Saskatchewan Forage Council's ongoing and completed projects, [click here](#).

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Upcoming Events

SK PCAP Speaker Series -

Natural Urban Landscapes: How to grow native plants in Saskatchewan

April 20, 2016 at 12:00pm

Webinar

Join Fidji Genderon from the Regina First Nations University and Malin Hansen from the University of Regina in this free webinar.

To view the poster, [click here](#) and to register, [click here](#).

Different, Not Less-An Evening with Dr. Temple Grandin

June 12, 2016

Regina, SK

Presented by the Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association and the Autism Resource Centre, plan to attend this evening at the Conexus Arts Centre. Tickets start at \$30 and are available through the Arts Centre box office.

To view the poster, [click here](#).

Western Canadian Farm Progress Show

June 15-17, 2016

Regina, SK

What's the secret to success for this popular event? No secret. Just a proven track record for staying on top of economic shifts, changing demographics, emerging issues and advances in technology in a fast-moving industry. Successful farms are cutting edge, so is Canada's Farm Progress Show.

To learn more about the Farm Progress Show, visit their [website](#).

NPAW 2016

June 16 and 17, 2016

Maple Creek and Cypress Hills, SK

This meeting and field tour held in conjunction with Saskatchewan's Native Prairie Appreciation Week (NPAW) and will begin in Maple Creek, SK and include a tour in Cypress Hills Interprovincial

Park, local producer tour and much more.

To view the poster, [click here](#). Watch for upcoming details at [visit the SK PCAP website](#).

SaskOutdoors Spring Camp

June 17-19, 2016

Cypress Hills, SK

This event takes place alongside the PCAP Annual NPAW meeting and tour. Join us for a weekend of canoeing, geocaching, hiking, night games, campfires and adventure in the beautiful Cypress Hills!

To view the poster, [click here](#). For more information contact Madeleine Bemrose at maddiebemrose@gmail.com.

International Rangeland Congress 2016

July 17-22, 2016

Saskatoon, SK

The future management of grazing lands in a high-tech world. Plan to join us!

Event Registration is now open! [Click here](#) to register online today.

For more information, go to www.irc2016canada.ca.

2016 Saskatchewan Pasture Tour

August 4, 2016

Harris, SK

Save the date for this one day, producer-focused tour. Attendees will have the opportunity to hear directly from forage producers, researchers and extension staff. This year's tour will include bale grazing, pasture rejuvenation, plant ID, annual forage cocktail mixtures and more.

To view the announcement poster, [click here](#).

Stay tuned to the SFC website for updates or contact the SFC at 306.329.3116 or office@saskforage.ca.

Canadian Beef Industry Conference

August 9-11, 2016

Calgary, AB

This inaugural Canadian Beef Industry Conference is set for August 2016. All beef industry stakeholders share a common goal of taking steps to enhance the productivity, profitability and competitiveness of the various sectors within the industry. Supporting the National Beef Strategy, the conference provides a forum for industry engagement and learning opportunities across the

beef supply chain.

To learn more, visit the [website](#).

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Saskatchewan Forage Council Membership

Be Sure Your Voice in the Forage Industry Counts!

- Incorporated under *The Co-operatives Act*, a membership fee for the SFC is a one-time cost of \$25.00;
- The SFC has worked in the province on behalf of **ALL** forage industry stakeholders (and that's a very extensive and diverse group) for more than 20 years;
- If you are involved with production, management, protection, harvesting, storage, utilization or marketing of forage products, the SFC wants your involvement and input;
- The SFC is committed to placing a focus and awareness on the importance of forages in our province.

The SFC at a glance...

With a mandate to enhance the province's forage and grassland industry, the Saskatchewan Forage Council (SFC) strives to partner with all sectors of the industry - producers, industry organizations and companies, government and university.

Formed in 1988, our objectives are focused on the development and dissemination of information related to the production and utilization of all forage resources, prioritization of forage research and collaboration with governments to develop and implement effective policies and programs as they relate to forage production and marketing.



To learn more about becoming a member [Click Here](#).

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We welcome questions about article submission or to find out more about sponsorship,
please contact the Saskatchewan Forage Council at:

Email: office@saskforage.ca

Phone: 306.329.3116

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Fund:



**The Saskatchewan Forage Council
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