



Forage and Livestock eNews

Updates and information from across the industry

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Greetings!

Welcome to the June 2017 eNews. Read highlights from forage research, events and news happening around the province. There is always lots going on in June in Saskatchewan!

This month's edition of the eNews is packed with information about forage research: new varieties, different blends and new ways to use forages are being looked at. It's great to see researchers taking a closer look at forages and everyone benefits when this knowledge is shared.

Have you checked your alfalfa for signs of damage this spring? Read the article on alfalfa winterkill in this edition and drop us a line to let us know what you're seeing in your fields!

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.

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Your *Forage and Livestock eNews*
Editor,
Laura Hoimyr

CFGA Conference



Canadian Forage & Grassland Association
Association canadienne pour les plantes fourragères

8th Annual CFGA Conference

November 14-16, 2017, Delta Guelph Hotel & Conference Centre, Guelph, ON

*Next Generation Forage
Cropping Systems:*
Profit Above, Wealth Below

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Swift Current Forage Researcher Pays Attention to Annuals and Perennials and Everything in Between

By: Tara Mulhern Davidson, SFC Communications

No two research projects are alike, but for Michael Schellenberg, a range and forage plant ecologist and research scientist at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, his diverse project work is all about systems. "The reason I've always had an interest in grassland communities and enjoy working with forages is because it allows me to understand how systems work, how these plants come together and function," said Schellenberg. At the Swift Current Research and Development Centre, Schellenberg has several projects at various stages that address everything from annual forage mixes to native plant cultivar development.

Polyculture Production

Polycultures, the use of a mixture of different species to provide forage, build soils, or control weeds, has been a hot topic. "There is a lot of interest in

polyculture work," said Schellenberg who added that many groups, including forage, organic, and low-input sectors, are paying particular attention to the benefits these crops can provide. While there is much anecdotal evidence about the success of mixed species crops, also known as cover crops, there is a lack of data from the semi-arid or southwest region of Saskatchewan, which is something Schellenberg is addressing.

"The combinations of species are infinite so we have looked at a range of how many species are optimal," he explained, adding that they found ten plant species worked very well. Initially, they studied species that were already being grown in an area and noted that using multiple species provide a definite advantage in yield and productivity. "With polycultures, we have better weed control as well as pest control," he said, citing an example of a Brassica species, when used alone, was almost entirely consumed by flea beetles, however when incorporated in a mix, was not.

The next steps are to define polyculture best management practices. "In some systems, most of the plant material is removed - are we supposed to remove all material? How do we fit polycultures into annual cropping systems?" Schellenberg questions, saying he's looking to establish some recommended practices for cover crops in semi-arid regions.



Michael Schellenberg at Swift Current Research and Development Centre
Photo credit: Tara Mulhern Davidson

Native Species in Novel Spaces

Native perennial species aren't exactly a new topic, but they are receiving lots of interest for their potential to create highly adaptable and resilient plant communities. The Swift Current Research and Development Centre is one of the only facilities actively breeding native species such as prairie clovers, milk vetch, wheatgrasses, and many others. Gaining an understanding of the production capabilities of the species as well as how they can fit into modern systems is crucial.

Understanding that there are some differences between seeding natives and tames is essential.



Purple Prairie Clover

Photo credit: Tara Mulhern Davidson

"Native species don't respond the same way that tame forages do," explained Schellenberg. "They seem to have a delayed response to the environment, they don't respond to fertilizer the year of application, they germinate differently under diverse conditions" he said, but added these characteristics help the species thrive when the going gets tough. Native species tend to have harder seeds that stay dormant and have delayed germination, which isn't necessarily a bad thing. "Delayed germination can almost be an insurance policy," he commented, adding plants may continue to pop up in

spite of conditions that would be unfavourable for tame species.

Some native plant seeds are fluffy, such as winterfat, and require broadcasting rather than drills, and it's best to seed natives when soil temperatures are cooler. In fact, certain species must be over-wintered in cold storage conditions in order to maintain their viability, Schellenberg advised.

Schellenberg maintained one of the biggest advantages to native species is their ability to withstand drought. "Natives show a lot of promise from a production standpoint and have done better than adjacent introduced species," he said. Using a recent PhD project as an example, western wheatgrass (*Pascopyrum smithii*) was found to produce the same amount during drought conditions as compared to non-drought conditions. "Instead of western wheatgrass being impacted immediately by the adverse conditions, it adapted, whereas the tame species didn't."

The Swift Current Research and Development Centre continues to move forward with developing species and seed lines that may be used commercially. "Seed production is a challenge with natives," Schellenberg acknowledged. Understanding that developing a breeding program for native species is much different than for other types of forages, and they are looking to see if they can improve on seed quality and production as well as looking at past seed material. Different species the centre is currently working with include prairie clovers, milk vetches, rough fescue, side-oats grama, sand reed grass, northern wheatgrass, and nodding brome. Their recent work with winterfat resulted [in the development of this fact sheet.](#)

Schellenberg said he appreciates the opportunity to work with producers, and feels that industry has really come on board to identify what their main forage priorities are. While researchers are still challenged to provide hard data that supports forage-based systems, a lot of the key research that has been done is taken up on a grassroots level, which is gratifying.

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Variety Demonstration and Testing System Underway

By Terry Kowalchuk, Saskatchewan Agriculture

In 2014, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) eliminated requirements for pre-registration testing and merit assessment of new forage varieties in Canada. Prior to this announcement a combination of industry consolidation, reduced breeding capacity, and regulatory uncertainty led to a decline in testing to the point where no performance data was available in Saskatchewan for several years. In the meantime the introduction of new varieties from areas with climates that differed from the prairie region increased.

In September 2015, the Saskatchewan Forage Council (SFC) held a consultation session with seed

industry, researchers, government, and producer representatives. A decision was made to move forward with comparisons of current commercially available forage varieties to know standards. Thanks to collaboration and funding from various government and industry groups (including the SFSDC) several demonstration plots were seeded this spring.

The main goals of the Saskatchewan forage variety demonstrations are to:

1. provide reliable and independent performance information for Saskatchewan producers, seed companies and plant breeders; and
2. provide publicly funded forage breeders at the University of Saskatchewan (U of S) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) with the ability to compare new germplasm against existing registered varieties.

The forage variety demonstrations will be conducted on a four year cycle (2017-2020). After the establishment year, plots will be harvested for three consecutive years then ploughed under. Seed yield demonstrations will be carried out at the Melfort site while hay yield data will be collected at Melfort, Saskatoon, Scott and Swift Current.

Although the main focus is to provide performance data for commercial varieties, the selection is by no means comprehensive. The plots are a representative sample of the main forage seed types used as monocultures or in mixtures within the prairies.

Plans are to report the data each year at the Saskatchewan Advisory Council on Forage Crops meeting in the beginning of November with a full report made public annually. The plots will also be featured at various field days and tours throughout the summer months.

For more details about the variety demonstrations contact the SFC at 306-329-3116.

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2017 Forage Seed Summer Field Tour and Barbecue

Saskatchewan Forage Seed Development Commission (SFSDC)

This year's forage seed research Field Tour and Barbecue will be held on Thursday, July 27, 2017 at the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) Research Farm, located 2.5 km south of Melfort SK on Highway #6.

The tour will be hosted by SFSDC, the Northeast Agriculture Research Foundation (NARF), AAFC and Saskatchewan Agriculture. There is no charge.

Register on-site at 1:15 PM with plots tours from 1:30 to 4:30 PM. A barbecue will follow at 4:30 PM. This will be an excellent opportunity to look at the forage crop research being done at the Melfort station and to visit with fellow forage seed producers.

NARF, located at AAFC Melfort, has been home to many forage seed research projects over the past 4 years. This year's tour will include the site of the revived Saskatchewan Forage Variety Demonstration and Testing System. One of the provincial system's 4 sites is at Melfort and includes varieties of: hybrid, meadow and smooth brome grass; crested wheatgrass; Festulolium; tall fescue; Timothy; alfalfa; cicer milkvetch and sainfoin. There will also be a number of other non-seed forage crop research projects included in the tour.

Tour Highlights:

- Forage Crop Variety Trial
- Alternate Row / Companion Crop Planting
- Direct Seeding vs. Pre-Seed Tillage in Forage Seed Establishment
- Lesser Clover Leaf Weevil Control

- Herbicide Tolerance
- Plant Growth Regulator Evaluation
- Additional non-seed Forage Crop Research Projects



For more information:

SFSDC: www.skforageseeddc.com or sfsc05@gmail.com or (306) 789-1958

Image: Forage seed research tour 2014, Melfort SK

Image Credit: SFSDC

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Forage Insect Pest Identification and Control

As forage crops grow across Saskatchewan this spring, so does the risk for crop damage due to forage pests. Being able to identify common pests, as well as the damage that they incur on forage crops, is a key factor in developing a plan to appropriately control, or mitigate, the effects of forage pests.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada developed Field Crop and Forage Pests and their Natural Enemies in Western Canada, an identification and field management guide, to assist producers in developing effective integrated pest management strategies for common insect pests. The guide, which includes helpful diagrams and keys, also includes life cycle information, monitoring methods, and economic thresholds for control.

The guide covers insects affecting perennial forage crops, including alfalfa and clover weevils, grass bugs, lygus bugs, grasshoppers, alfalfa plant bugs, and clover cutworms, as well as numerous species that would impact annual, greenfeed, or cover crop forage crops.

To view the guide, [click here](http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2015/aac-aafc/A59-23-2015-eng.pdf), or copy and paste this link in your browser:
http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2015/aac-aafc/A59-23-2015-eng.pdf
and click on link "Continue to PDF"

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Photo Contest 2017

Farm & Food Care is launching a nation-wide farm photo contest with \$4,000 in cash prizes available for winners in six categories.

Winning photos will be used in the updated 2017 edition of The Real Dirt on Farming, a publication that answers common questions about food and farming practices in Canada. For more information on this publication and to view the 2014 edition, visit www.RealDirtonFarming.org. Photos may also be used in other Farm & Food Care initiatives.

Contest deadline is July 14, 2017. Learn more at: <http://www.realdirtonfarming.ca/photo-contest.php>

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Alfalfa Winterkill and Frost Damage

Depending on where you are located in Saskatchewan, you may have had cold winter conditions, freezing and thawing, late frosts, too much or not enough spring moisture. Forage growers are scouting fields for signs of damage to perennial grasses and forbs.

Winterkill of alfalfa is a concern in some areas, and frost has damaged plants in other parts of the province. Reports from Manitoba and the Dakotas indicate that extreme cold temperatures followed by a period of melting and re-freezing of snow on alfalfa plants has meant that some stands did not survive the past winter. Read more from the Manitoba Cooperator: [Eyes on winterkill as Manitoba producers assess forage stands](#) and the Dakota Farmer: [Winterkill might be high](#).

Our perennial forages are a valuable resource, and the longer we can maintain a healthy stand, the most cost-effective it is. Below are some articles that might be useful to help assess alfalfa damage this spring and prevent plant injury and death in upcoming years.



[Risk of Frost: Assessing the Damage](#) from Saskatchewan Agriculture is helpful for those concerned about frost damage in alfalfa and other crops.

[Risk of Alfalfa Winterkill factsheet](#) from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture explains many of the factors that may lead to increased risk of losing alfalfa plants over winter.

[Fall Cutting Management of Alfalfa](#) from foragebeef.ca written by Paul Jefferson, Ph.D. discusses the critical fall cutting period for alfalfa as well as other ways to improve the changes of winter survival for alfalfa stands.

[Wait to Clip Drought-Stressed Alfalfa](#) is an article from North Dakota State University

Have you been out scouting your alfalfa or grass crops? We'd love to hear how your forage crops are doing this spring. Let us know on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#), or drop us an email at office@saskforage.ca.

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Sainfoin, alfalfa and grass mixtures being tested

by: Duane McCartney

Canadian Cattlemen, April 28, 2017

A sprinkling of a new sainfoin was enough to ignite renewed interest in high legume pastures across Alberta and British Columbia last year.

The case for high legume pastures was made long ago, both in research trials and in the field by experienced producers with the skill and nerve to turn up the alfalfa content of their grass pastures.

Higher yields, higher gains, better-conditioned cows, longer grazing seasons and more profit per acre is how Alberta forage and livestock specialist Grant Lastiwka sums up the most obvious benefits.

"High legume pastures also build soil quality and increase nitrogen content in the soil for use by the grass," adds Lastiwka.

Added diversity is another selling point, always a welcome trait in pastures, particularly in times of drought. Carbon sequestration is also improved by mixing in some legume with your grasses.

The downside, of course, is bloat, or more accurately, the fear of bloat. And that is why the results of the new sainfoin developed in Lethbridge was pricking up ears at pasture tours last summer and forage meetings this winter. Sainfoin is a non-bloating legume and when mixed in a sward with alfalfa and grass greatly reduces the risk to grazing cattle.

As long as a cow gets a mouthful of grass and sainfoin along with the alfalfa, bloat shouldn't be a problem.

Ten forage research associations applied for some Growing Forward 2 money to test the productivity of such a mixture.

Read the full article: <https://www.canadiancattlemen.ca/2017/04/28/sainfoin-alfalfa-and-grass-mixtures-being-tested/>

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Federal Funding for Livestock and Forage Centre of Excellence (LFCE)

The Government of Canada recently announced they will be providing \$4.47 million dollars toward the construction of the University of Saskatchewan's Livestock and Forage Centre of Excellence (LFCE). The funding, announced on May 26, 2017, will support the construction of two new facilities that will be used for forage, beef, cow-calf, and environmental research that will make up the LCFE near Saskatoon.

"The Livestock and Forage Centre of Excellence is a great example of cooperation amongst all

stakeholders to create jobs, grow our economy and help people in their everyday lives," announced David Lametti, Parliamentary Secretary to Navdeep Bains, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development and Minister responsible for Western Economic Diversification Canada.

The Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association is the initial recipient of this federal grant, and will allocate the funds for the LFCE to the University of Saskatchewan through a partnership. "This will help modernize and integrate cattle research infrastructure in Saskatchewan," said Ryan Beierbach, president of the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association. Beierbach added that the LCFE partnership between industry, government and the University of Saskatchewan will enable more effective research to be done.

Mary Buhr, Dean of the College of Agriculture and Bioresources at the University of Saskatchewan, noted that this model of partnership can be used across the Northern Great Plains. "It's not just about the research, it is about the training, it is about the outreach, it is about a new way of thinking about things that will foster the economic development and entrepreneurship that this province has always taken such a lead in," Buhr stated.

For more information on the Livestock and Forage Centre of Excellence, [visit their website](#). A video of the funding announcement is also available [for viewing here](#).

Saskatchewan Forage Council Featured Project...

[Demonstrating the Use of Yellowhead Alfalfa in a One-Cut and Two-Cut Harvest System, Year Two](#)

Completed: March 31, 2017

"Protein levels amongst all three varieties for all treatments were very similar in both 2015 and 2016. The AC Yellowhead did not appear to maintain protein and energy levels longer than Equinox and Spredor 4 in the late cuttings in 2016. The increased TDN for AC Yellowhead in 2015 for the late and after CFP cuttings was not seen in the 2016 results. In general, 2016 protein levels were similar between the July 5 and July 29 cuttings while in 2015 the late July cuttings showed a drop in percentage protein."

This project was supported by the Agricultural Demonstration of Practices and Technologies (ADOPT) initiative under the Canada-Saskatchewan Growing Forward bi-lateral agreement. Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture Forage Specialists and Ducks Unlimited partnered on this project to oversee the demonstration sites.

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

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Upcoming Events

Invasive Plant Field Day

June 14, 2017

Moose Jaw, SK

Hosted by the Moose Jaw River Stewards, event topics include field ID of invasive plants, integrated approach to control, funding opportunities and more. Cost is \$10 to reserve your spot. Includes lunch.

To register contact Janine Heinrich at 306.691.3396 or janine.heinrich@mjrriver.ca. View the event poster [here](#).

Invasive Plant Tour

June 22, 2017

Broderick, SK

The South Sask River AEGP in conjunction with the RM of Rudy is hosting an Invasive Plant Field

Tour June 22, 2017 from 10AM-3PM. Meet at teh RM of Rudy shop (Broderick, east of 4-way stop). Lunch courtesy of RM of Rudy. Topics include invasive plant ID and management, Weed Act and SARM Program, Highways weed management, and more.
To register contact Kerry at 306.460.4987 or RM of Rudy at 306.867.9349.

Swift Current Research and Development Centre Grazing and Forage Field Day

June 27, 2017

Swift Current, SK

The Grazing and Forage Field Day at the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) Swift Current Research and Development Centre will showcase the latest forage and grazing research projects supported by government and industry. Join us for plot / pasture tours and oral presentations focused on new and long-term forage and grazing research that is relevant to Southern Saskatchewan. Admission is \$10 and includes beverages, snacks and lunch.

For more information [click here](#). To register contact Trevor Lennox at 306.778.8294 or email trevor.lennox@gov.sk.ca

WBDC Summer Field Day

June 20, 2017

Lanigan, SK

Western Beef's 19th Summer Field Day is scheduled for Tuesday, June 20th at the Termuende Ranch east of Lanigan, SK. The theme for this year's Field Day is "Moving Research Into a New Corral". Registration and coffee starts at 9:30 AM in the Coverall building with presentations starting at 10 AM. Invited speaker, Chip Hines will share his perspectives on managing for efficiency in the cowherd. Chip is a retired Colorado rancher who has authored three books including "Cow Country Essays and a Little Slantwise Logic". Following Chip, Dr. Bart Lardner will share the Top 10 research findings from Western Beef's 20 Years at Termuende. Learn about the "new corral" from our last speaker of the morning, Dorothy Murrell, Project Manager for the Livestock and Forage Centre of Excellence.

View the agenda [here](#).

Soil Health Workshops

June 27 and 29, 2017

Mervin and Swift Current, SK

Plan to attend a workshop at Mervin on June 27 or AAFC Swift Current Research and Development Centre on June 29: a practical overview of soil health with Nicole Masters of Integrity Soils. Nicole is an agro-ecologist, educator and systems thinker with over 18 years of extensive, practical and theoretical experience in regenerative farming practices.

To register contact the Agriculture Knowledge Centre at 1-866-457-2377. Registration deadline June 22, 2017. View the: [Mervin Poster](#), [Swift Current Poster](#).

International Bison Conference

July 4-8, 2017

Big Sky, MT

The International Bison Conference (IBC) is held every five years and is a celebration of the American bison. The event draws nearly 500 attendees from around the world! The 2017 IBC will be an exceptional event in part due to its location, Big Sky Montana. Big Sky is just one hour outside of Yellowstone National Park, and just 30 minutes from Ted Turner's famed Flying D bison ranch, both of which we'll tour as part of the conference. Please mark your calendars for this special event that is not to be missed!

To learn more visit the [website](#) or view the [agenda](#).

Bus Trip and Private Tour of Brown's Ranch-second date added!

July 11-13, 2017

Bismarck, ND

The SSCA has organized a second bus trip to Brown's Ranch in Bismarck, North Dakota due to continued interest. The price includes chartered bus travel from Saskatoon (or points along the highway south by request), bus transportation from the hotel to Brown's Ranch, a private 8-hour

tour by either Gabe or his son Paul with lunch included, accommodation for two nights in Bismarck (single or double occupancy as requested), and two breakfasts at the hotel. Seats reserved on a first registered basis - full payment due by June 15, 2017

To learn more view the [poster](#) or contact Gerry Burgess (SSCA Office Manager) by email at info@ssca.ca or by phone 306.371.4213.

2017 Forage Seed Summer Field Tour and BBQ

July 27, 2017

Melfort, SK

This year's forage seed research Field Tour and Barbecue will be held on Thursday, July 27, 2017 at the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) Research Farm, located 2.5 km south of Melfort SK on Highway #6. The tour will be hosted by SFSDC, the Northeast Agriculture Research Foundation (NARF), AAFC and Saskatchewan Agriculture. There is no charge. Register on-site at 1:15 PM with plots tours from 1:30 to 4:30 PM. A barbecue will follow at 4:30 PM. This will be an excellent opportunity to look at the forage crop research being done at the Melfort station and to visit with fellow forage seed producers.

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

Saskatchewan Pasture Tour

August 3, 2017

Foam Lake area, SK

Save the date for the Saskatchewan Pasture Tour! Scheduled for August 3, 2017, this annual event is a great opportunity to get out and connect with forage and livestock producers and to see innovative ways to manage forages. View the [poster here](#).

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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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