

**FOOTHILLS FORAGE
AND GRAZING ASSOCIATION**

Innovation, education and regenerative agriculture

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GRASSROOTS NEWS & VIEWS December 2024

Director's Note — Tanis Cross

Greetings FFGA Members

Happy Holidays, we have so much to be thankful for. From the mild temperatures to the good moisture to wonderful family and friends this year.

FFGA is apart of the 2024 Western Canada Conference on Soil Health and Grazing coming up this month. How many of you are going? We are all looking forward to it.

Our staff has many talents and skills to keep our association and events so strong, thanks Laura and Sonja for another great year. You two are great teachers as you've brought Kayla along now on three years with FFGA. Us as a board would like to thank you, Kayla Minor, for being such a great addition to the team! Congratulations on your three years and looking forward to many more.

Happy to share, that all of us at the A7 Ranche had a great season with our grass yearlings. Water, the springs were still a little bit slower than average but strong enough to water our yearlings for our grazing period. This was our fourth season running yearlings and we sure are enjoying it. Grateful for the feedlots that care for them as weaned calves over the winter. Shout out to our mentor and teacher, Dustin Gonnet. We are learning so much from him about dogs, horses, people, grazing, cattle, the list goes on. Ranching is sure an interesting

lifestyle to live, a person needs to be able to wear many hats.

Sure grateful for our team at the ranch, Chance, Todd and Taylor. How they are able to develop springs, implement the water lines and build their own troughs onsite is sure incredible. We are able to run a higher number of animal units each season thanks to them. Planning and development is a large part of keeping an operation going and expanding. Looking forward to seeing what it's like to run two even larger herds this spring. Water sure makes the world go around, we must protect this pure resource.

Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year,

Tanis Cross

(Photo: Tanis Cross)



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Ladies Livestock Lessons

January 17th, 2025

Acme Community Centre

139 Allison St Acme, AB T0M 0A0



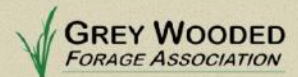
To register, visit:

<https://www.redbowag.com/ladieslivestocklessons>



Topics Include:

Neonatal Management,
Solar Watering Systems,
Pasture Pollination, and
More!



On the Cover: Swath grazing cattle in winter. Photo: FFGA

Thank you for your support!



Don't overlook cattle protein needs this winter



Photo: FFGA

Every spring and summer bring new challenges to growing crops in Wisconsin. This year was no different. To optimize cow productivity, evaluating nutrient levels in winter feed for cows is necessary. All nutrients are vital in raising healthy cattle, but protein is commonly overlooked during winter.

Because the growing season was challenging, supplementing protein could help maintain the performance of your herd through the colder months. Protein supplementation can be a costly part of a nutrition plan; however, keeping feed quality high for your cows can pay off in the future.

Why supplement protein to cows?

Inadequate protein levels deprive rumen microbes of the nitrogen needed to digest forage efficiently. Feeding the microbes in the rumen is important for overall cow health. When nutrient needs are met, cows can gain and maintain body condition more easily.

Correctly fed cows can produce offspring that have increased value at weaning and beyond. Steer offspring have been shown to fetch a higher value at slaughter because they earn a higher quality grade without affecting yield grade. This can be especially valuable if feeding out your own cattle, but can also help improve the reputation of your cattle if they are sold to be finished elsewhere.

Heifer offspring tend to have a higher pregnancy rate and tend to hit puberty earlier. To reap benefits of high-performing calves, adequate nutrition must be provided to the cow

during gestation. Since 75% of fetal growth happens in the last third of pregnancy, inadequate nutrient levels during the third trimester could damage the future performance of calves.

When to supplement protein

Before buying costly protein supplements, you need to know how much protein you are already feeding. Get your winter feed tested to ensure you are providing adequate protein. If you identify a deficiency, investigate your options.

For the rumen microbes to do their job well, adequate protein must be fed. Actual protein needs vary based on animal size, gestation period and lactation stage. For example, a 1,200-pound dry cow in the last third of her pregnancy will consume 22.3 pounds of feed on a dry matter basis per day, assuming a common beef cow-type hay is used at 53% total digestible nutrients. In this example, she will need 1.7 pounds of protein a day.

Knowing the pounds of protein needed and the pounds provided by the hay will allow you to determine how much may need to be supplemented.

Best protein supplement?

Which protein supplement is “the best” depends. Protein comes in many forms, such as blocks, liquids, high-quality forages and commodity coproducts. Supplementing a nonprotein nitrogen, such as urea, could be an option, but be sure to avoid ammonia toxicity. Urea should never exceed a third of the animal’s total protein requirements.

Other protein options include soybean meal, alfalfa, distillers grains, corn gluten meal and many more. Be sure to shop around to see what best fits your needs.

Before buying, analyze the cost per pound of utilizable protein, not just the cost per ton of the supplement. Remember, you are buying the nutrient, so a cost evaluation should be done on the nutrient itself.


Supplementing protein may be necessary for this winter. Evaluate

what your cows are eating for protein and other nutrients as well. A proper diet can help rumen microbes function correctly, allowing cows to produce high-performing calves.

Author: Beth McIlquham

Original Article: <https://www.farmprogress.com/cattle-news/don-t-overlook-cattle-protein-needs-this-winter>

PODCAST CORNER




What is FFGA listening to?

Monthly Podcast recommendations given by FFGA Directors

PODCAST CHANNEL
WORKING COWS

TITLE
INVESTING HERD HEALTH
WITH DR. TOM ROSKOS



SCAN ME

LINK
<https://workingcows.net/ep-389-dr-tom-roskos-investing-herd-health/>



ROOTS SO DEEP

COMMUNITY VIEWING

JOIN STRATHMORE HIGH SCHOOL COMMUNITY GREENHOUSE, WHEATLAND COUNTY AND FOOTHILLS FORAGE & GRAZING ASSOCIATION FOR AN EVENING SOCIAL WHERE COMMUNITY MEMBERS WILL VIEW THE FIRST OF A 4-PART DOCUMENTARY SERIES CALLED: ROOTS SO DEEP (YOU CAN SEE THE DEVIL DOWN THERE). THESE VIDEOS FOLLOW INVENTIVE FARMERS AND MAVERICK SCIENTISTS BUILDING A PATH TO SOLVING CLIMATE CHANGE WITH HOOVES, HEART AND SOIL. ATTENDEES WILL HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS WHAT THEY LEARN FROM THE VIDEO WITH LOCAL RANCHERS & FARMERS. FREE TO ATTEND. REGISTRATION IS PREFERRED BUT NOT REQUIRED: WWW.FOOTHILLSFORAGE.COM/EVENTS

FEBRUARY 13, 2025

5:30 PM

STRATHMORE HIGH SCHOOL THEATRE

Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) Workshop



February 18, 2025
Mountain View County Office
9:00am - 3:00pm

Workshop Details:

- Workshop will begin at 9:00am and wrap-up around 3:00pm
- Lunch will be provided
- Please bring laptop or tablet
- Please bring information on your water sources & water bodies if you have them
- If you are renewing your EFP and you have your old binder, please bring it as this can be helpful

Please register before February 11, 2025
www.foothillsforage.com/efp2025



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Top 3 myths of cattle marketing



Photo: Kayla Minor

Current cattle market dynamics

This week in the markets feeders were mixed. This caused the value of gain to be mixed compared to last week. Even with that in play the VOG is signaling this remains a weight gain business.

Several factors were in play this week. Multiple load lots fetched a few dollars more than load lots. Unweaned calves were up to 10 back, while feeder bulls were up to 50 back.

With higher cattle prices and cheaper feed costs, some buckled to the temptation to creep feed their calves and as a result took a \$15 discount. The extra weight gained from creep, coupled with the discount made this about a break-even practice when factoring in the cost of the feed. We must know the market we are selling in to and sell our customers what they want to buy.

To me, wearing that brand new feed company hat was free advertising for them. If we're going to advertise someone else's product I think we should be getting paid to do so.

On the female side of the business, I noticed that some USDA reporters are finally segregating by trimester instead of lumping two trimesters together. This makes these reports more meaningful. For the reporters still lumping them, get with the program.

On the pair side of things, depreciation was not very noticeable. Heifer to 4-year-old pairs were only \$300 more than short solid pairs. Depreciation was noticeable on second period females. And what stood out was the drop in price between 4- and 5-year-olds. One trip around the sun cost \$600. From there on it was a slow and steady decline in price. Cows in the third took little depreciation in price until the broken mouth cows, making these one and dones a good buy. First period females have no fans.

Value-added cattle marketing

My definition of value-added marketing is: It is only value added if we capture the added value. The Show-Me-Select bred heifer sales in Missouri are great at doing this. While some only brought \$2,500, there were quite a few that were between \$3,000 and \$4,500.

Age is doing little to set up relationships, while it is stage of pregnancy and body condition that is creating the opportunity to prosper.

I don't spend much time on social media. It is full of misinformation. I would venture to guess that it was buzzing about the nearly \$2,000 replacement five weights. Most five weight replacements are a great buy, even against pound cows. However, in this case, two people were bidding like drunk monkeys and bid all the profit potential out of them.

Cattle marketing myths

I need to live at the sale barn to be a sell/buy marketer. This is not true. In the beginning of my career, I didn't own any cattle and was still trading time off the farm for dollars. At that point my time was better spent working for someone else.

What we do need to know is what is going on in the markets weekly, especially in our local sale barns. Some sale barns do a lousy job reporting their markets, therefore we must have local knowledge in order to make sense of those reports.

I also realize that not everyone is equipped to be a buyer. Developing a relationship with an order buyer is one way to handle this. I know some outstanding sell/buy marketers that rely heavily on order buyers and have great success. Between market reports and communication with their buyers, they are highly aware of what is happening in their area.

If I buy at a sale barn, I am buying someone else's problem. What I just heard was I shouldn't buy your cattle. That line always gets them back peddling fast. So what if it is someone else's problem? A great entrepreneur takes someone else's problem and fixes it. There is good money to be made cleaning up cosmetics and settling a wild cow.

There is conventional knowledge that has been passed down about health wrecks. You can see this on the video I mentioned above. I have only had health wrecks on the stocker side of my operation.

I told a guy yesterday at the sale I was at that the feed yards are appreciative of what we do. It is the cow/calf operations that don't have any appreciation for the stocker operations. Not because they are stuck up – many just have no clue what happens beyond dropping them off at the point of sale.

I have never experienced any health wrecks on the breeding stock side of my operation. My breed back percentages have always been higher than the closed herds in my area. I must confess I run more bull power than most of us think is required. I also haven't had any calving issues to speak of.

My money is undervalued so I should hang onto it. The money is not undervalued. There is no way it could be since it is a proxy. If the economy imploded and we are in a third-world bartering system to market these animals, the proxy could easily change to something else. The only thing in question here is our perception of the proxy.

If we sell an undervalued animal, then it makes the money we received for that animal appear undervalued. Therefore, we simply avoid selling undervalued animals. We do this by not selling an animal until we have the replacement identified.

I will be blunt. This money undervalued nonsense is being taught by people who do not practice sell/buy marketing. When I was growing up, I remember my elders belittling those who taught something they didn't practice. I am fully aware of the old essay about money being undervalued and if we read it to understand it, what it said was what I wrote above – don't sell undervalued animals.

It has become clear to me that teaching the money undervalued nonsense is an escape hatch for being a lousy instructor. This allows them to deflect responsibility and give their students a manufactured excuse, to hold onto it and begin again with a virgin buy.

In 20 years of implementing sell/buy marketing, I have never been in a situation where my money was perceived to be undervalued because I have always been able to find a buy back against what I sold. In that time period, I have seen people implement this excuse and take massive inventory valuation losses, and miss out on opportunities to prosper.

(Continued on page 7)

(continued from page 6)

Time value of money

Then there is the time value of money. TVM means the sooner we take a profit, the sooner we can reinvest and be well on our way to capturing the next profit. When I was young and beginning, I never heard of TVM. Over years of successfully implementing sell/buy, I came to understand it by osmosis. This led me to become an aggressive marketer. TVM is a big focal point in other investment areas.

With sell/buy we capture the profit on the buy. Stopping the process midstream

makes no sense. With sell/buy, it used to be a belief that today is the best day to buy because there is always something undervalued in the offering. I believe that because I have lived it. With legit sell/buy, our exposure to market risk is the time between the sell and the buy. Stopping midstream opens us up to more risk. I do not understand why people don't catch that the people who spread this nonsense are talking out of both sides of their mouth.

In the coming weeks I will address the nonsense of the no depreciation cow theory, repeated virgin buys, advanced

levels of sell/buy, looking back to be forward thinking (which I lightly touched on in the video from this week's webinar) and how some people are giving up their control. Legit sell/buy marketing ensures we retain control.

Author: Doug Ferguson

Original Article: [https://](https://www.farmprogress.com/cattle-news/top-3-myths-of-cattle-marketing)

www.farmprogress.com/cattle-news/top-3-myths-of-cattle-marketing



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FFGA 2025 Bursary

Calling all post secondary students

Are you enrolled in a full-time program that will contribute to the future of the forage & livestock industry? If that is a 'yes', this bursary is for you!

For all qualifications & to apply visit:

www.foothillsforage.com/bursary2025



SCAN ME

The ins and outs of watering cattle in winter



Photo: FFCA

Winter is here, and if you're winter grazing, it's not easy to know how best to deliver water to cattle on pasture.

But Stacy Pritchard of the Peace Country Beef and Forage Association has some tips to get the best results from your watering program.

Contrary to popular belief, snow can be an effective water source for animals, but it requires careful management, and that starts with knowing how much water your cattle need, said Pritchard.

"Bred heifers and dry cows require between 20 and 33 litres of water per day," she said. "In the winter a good average to use is 20 litres per cow per day and lactating animals require 50 per cent more water than dry cows. It takes 10 centimetres of snow to get one centimetre of water."

However, the snow has to be the right texture.

"Snow must be clean and soft in order to be used as a water source; cattle must be able to lick large quantities into their mouths," she said. "Trampled or crusted snow with lots of ice crystals makes it difficult for cattle to consume enough to meet their requirements."

There is also the safety factor to consider.

"Watering on dugouts and cutting holes in ice to water is risky to both people and animals," she said.

Watering on snow can also affect the condition of cattle, said Conrad Dolen, a mixed farmer from Silver Valley, north-

west of Grande Prairie.

"We have our cows eat snow sometimes but we're not comfortable with it unless they're in really good shape and we have high-quality feed," he said. "We find our cows don't eat enough if they're licking snow, especially in the cold weather or if they're eating marginal feed."

The bottom line is that producers should have some kind of backup such as a remote waterer, said Pritchard.

"You could get some freezing rain or super high winds that crust the snow over or there may just not be enough snow in a given year. Either way you need a backup."

Off the grid

Geothermal waterers are probably the most popular type of remote watering system. Although these are constantly evolving — mostly in the ways animals access the water — the basic components are the same: A supply line which enters an insulated tube below the frost line.

"The insulated tube, whether it's a culvert or even industrial tires, contains the geothermal warmth and keeps the supply line from freezing," said Pritchard.

Geothermal systems that don't require electrical power offer substantial energy savings, said Pritchard. And electrical systems such as motion-controlled water bowls can be made more flexible and cost effective with the use of battery power.

"Incorporating solar as well will help in accessing your pastures that don't have access to the power grid."

Pritchard recommends marine or leisure deep cycle batteries. One way to make sure batteries stay charged is to use discarded chest freezers as storage compartments.

"These will protect batteries from the elements. Warm batteries charge better so keeping them insulated against the weather is important," she said.

Other factors

Geothermal units, or at least the geothermal components of the watering system, typically do not require a lot in the way of maintenance simply because there are not a lot of moving parts involved. However, it pays to be vigilant.

"When you're watering in -40 C,

every kind of watering system is going to require some maintenance because there's always potential for even the best insulated ones to freeze," said Pritchard. "When it gets as cold as it does in Alberta you want to make sure you're keeping an eye on them to make sure there's water for your animals."

Solar-powered systems should be regularly monitored no matter what the temperature.

"In the north, for example, we only get so many hours of sunlight in a given day, so if you're running your waterer on solar panels and batteries, it's a good idea to check it every so often to make sure you still have juice in those batteries to run the pumps," said Pritchard.

"Consider providing a backup power source like a wind generator for stretches without much sunlight."

Solar panels also need to be kept clear of snow and should have a minimum angle of 15 degrees. "This prevents buildup of dust and dirt and the rain can wash the surface of the panel."

The capacity of the trough also needs to be matched to herd size.

"If you have capacity to water 100 head but you're only watering 25 head there's not enough circulation in the system and there's potential for it to freeze up," said Pritchard. Most of the water troughs on the market carry a rating on how many head of cattle they can easily water."

There is funding available for some remote water system projects through Growing Forward 2's On-Farm Stewardship Program.

"There is money available for producers for year-round watering systems, which includes winter watering systems, so that can help them out a fair bit," said Pritchard.

But before investing in a system, find out what other producers in your area are doing. Many of the innovations in remote watering have been made by producers themselves, said Pritchard.

Author: Jeff Melchior

Original Article: <https://www.albertafarmexpress.ca/livestock/the-ins-and-outs-of-watering-cattle-in-winter/>

RANCHING OPPORTUNITIES

February 5, 2025 - Olds College

SAVE THE DATE





CONTROL STRATEGIES GOPHER, UNGULATE & PREDATORS

January 30, 2025 - High River, AB
10:00am - 3:30pm

This workshop will cover the Gopher Lifecycle and Control Methods, Managing and Preventing Ungulate Damage, Strategies for Predation Management, and Understanding Landowner Protection: The Legal Framework Surrounding Gophers.

This workshop will also be livestreamed and available to watch after the event. If you choose to watch the livestream event, you will be able to interact with presentors and ask questions.

COST:

FFGA MEMBER: \$25

NON-MEMBER: \$30

LIVESTREAM TICKET: \$10

www.foothillsforage.com/gophers



Mountain View
COUNTY





FOOTHILLS FORAGE
AND GRAZING ASSOCIATION

SECURING SUCCESS

PRODUCER OPPORTUNITIES

January 8, 2025
Delacour, AB
9:00am - 4:00pm

Join us to explore producer funding opportunities, network with experts, and participate in one of three afternoon breakout sessions: Environmental Farm Plans, RALP Funding Support, or Grazing Plan development.



Canadian Forage & Grassland Association
Association canadienne pour les plantes fourragères



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Cost:

\$25 - FFGA Member

\$35 - Non-Member

www.foothillsforage.com/securingsuccess25



MERRY CHRISTMAS
 &
 HAPPY NEW YEAR



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Mission: Assisting producers in profitably improving their forages and regenerating their soils through innovation and education.

Vision: We envision a global community that respects and values profitable forage production and healthy soils as our legacy for future generations.

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FFGA is a proud member of



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