

# The Grazing Mentor

The Newsletter for the National Sustainable Grazing Mentorship Program

Enhancing Profits and the Environment through Grazing Management

## From the Editor

In an age of such uncertainty it is easy to become overwhelmed and feel powerless. The traditional cycles in the cattle industry are no longer predictable, nor the market signals consistent with past patterns. Recent years have seen producers face everything from border closures to misconstrued information about the impact of livestock on global climate change. With most of us working within a very slim profit margin (if there is a profit margin) every decision we make can have a significant impact on our well-being.

By well-being I'm not just referring to the finances of the operation, but also the personal side. It seems it is an automatic response to feel fully responsible for things we have no control over. While celebrating the Thanksgiving holiday, I hope folks took some time to focus on what they are truly grateful for. As Canadians we are exceptionally fortunate and for those of us that are living the life we always dreamed of in a rural

environment, we are extremely privileged. If you neglected to do this at Thanksgiving, it is time to take stock of all of those things we do have going for us and remind ourselves of them today and every day.

Realizing that "worrying does not empty tomorrow of its troubles, but empties today of its strength" helps us redefine our focus on things we do have control over.

After speaking with some of our grazing mentors and following up by talking with folks they have mentored, I can see the true power of the Grazing Mentorship Program lies in our peer-to-peer approach. Coast to coast, livestock producers experience similar situations. By exchanging thoughts and ideas, creative options and solutions come to surface. As voiced by Grazing Mentor Dean Manning, "Any time you can share ideas, new ideas seem to take shape. People need encouragement in order to change any aspect of their operations. There is nothing worse than having your ideas repeatedly beat down. Mentors are a gateway to greater ideas."

...Cont'd on page 4

## From the Mentor-in-Chief, Jim Stone

We are a little late getting out of the starting gate again, but we received funding, which is a good thing. This is similar to last year as far as the Sustainable Grazing Mentorship Program is concerned. We are ready, willing and able to carry out a mentorship on your farm or ranch. March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2009 is the deadline for completion of the mentorships, so it is imperative that you act quickly and contact your provincial partners to get the process started on your operation.

The success stories from the past three years keep coming in and all of the provinces are looking forward to another successful year. Every province has

added more mentors to their roster of capable producers available to spend time working with you on your ranch or farm.

Sustainability, including improved productivity and profit for producers, is our focus. Our mentors have been in this business for many years and are reaping the benefits of better grazing practices, better fencing practices, better water systems and stronger grass stands.

One of the few things producers have control over is our input costs. We potentially can improve these by adopting practices on our farms and ranches that move us toward sustainable grazing management.

We would like to help you accomplish this. Call your provincial contact soon (see page 4).

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Canada

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## Meet a Grazing Mentor

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### Mentees talk about their experience with a Grazing Mentor

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#### Lundberg Mentee, Wayne Wikkerink ...

*"From the grazing mentorship point of view, Sten's most useful offering was encouragement. Our background was in dairy farming but we didn't have a lot of grazing experience. It wasn't so much the technical aspects [of growing grass] we needed help with as compared to the knowledge part. Sten helped us with those practical aspects of grazing management."*

#### Dobb Mentee, Lorne Landry ...

*"Allen Dobb has been an excellent source of information and has helped me immensely. We have completed a plan which includes many aspects of my grazing project including land preparation, seeding suggestions, grazing timelines and an operational outline which included a discussion of how electric fencing can enhance the rotational system developed. I feel very lucky to have been connected with Allen who obviously has a tremendous knowledge of grazing management and somehow finds a way to pass on as much of his knowledge, which he knows is required by a producer such as me."*

#### Sten Lundberg

**Region: Southern Alberta Foothills, near Nanton**

During high school, Sten found summer employment on local dairy farms. After graduation, he spent five years on an extensive cattle operation in southern Alberta where he "cut his teeth" in the livestock industry. He went on to receive his diploma in Agriculture Production at Alberta's Olds College.

For 25 years, the Lundberg's, have operated their family's dry-land farm converting it into an intensive grazing operation. They built their ewe flock up to 500, but disbanded it in 2001 for other business considerations. Subsequently Sten began grazing yearlings primarily as custom cattle, but also raised some of his own animals. In addition, he spent 15 years developing and managing a grazing operation under contract, plus owned and/

***"If the grass is looked after, the livestock will be fine."***

**Sten Lundberg**

or managed cattle for the past 35 years.

Sten has taken many courses in grazing and grass management, including water systems and riparian area management and has 12 years experience as a forage seed and forage management consultant.

He is a past member and former Chair of the Alberta Sheep and Wool Commission and currently a member and past Chair of Foothills Forage Association. Sten does private consulting in the reclamation and agricultural use of forages.

Sten and Cheryl Lundberg have been married for 29 years and raised three children - Chad, Travis, and Brittany, all graduates or attending university in Alberta.

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#### Allen Dobb    **Region: British Columbia's Vancouver Island, near**

Raised on a farm near Beaverlodge in Alberta's Peace River Country, Allen Dobb became interested in grazing at a young age after attending a Society for Range Management field tour near Williams Lake, B.C. He went on to earn a Masters Degree from Washington State University in Forest and Range Management and has worked to improve grazing management in Africa, Arizona and B.C.

Allen is currently mentoring a small-scale multi-enterprise farm near his home in the Highlands on Vancouver Island, with the goal of improving pasture productivity using animal impact, grazing and rest. According to Allen, "As well as producing beef, this small herd is an integrated part of a composting

operation for the organic market garden.

Managing grazing animals is an ancient and worldwide practice, and the Grazing Mentorship Program is a great way to initiate discussion, get out on the land and exchange knowledge. Through my travels I have definitely come to appreciate the cultural aspects of raising livestock and grazing – when you understand what's behind a way of doing things, you have a much better chance of helping improve the land and quality of life."

***"The economics of food production are changing, and there will be a need for small scale agriculture, with food being produced where it is consumed – sustainable grazing management definitely has a role to play."***

**Allen Dobb**

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#### Dean Manning    **Region: Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley, near Windsor**

***"The difference between talking to an academic and a grazing mentor is that we're not just talking about it, we're doing it!"***

**Dean Manning**

Located at the gateway of Nova Scotia's fertile Annapolis Valley, Dean Manning, his wife, Catherine, and their two children, own and operate Oakdale Farm - locally recognized as the Manning Family Farm Market.

This second generation farm initially grew market vegetables for off-farm sales, but evolved into an operation specializing in farm-gate sales offering the choice of a significant bounty of vegetables. In Dean's words, "If it's growable, we grow it!"

To facilitate the seasonal demands of their vegetable market, Manning's cows are calved out in the late summer and early fall on green pastures. Feeder calves not kept for their on-farm "freezer beef" sales are sold locally at auction in the spring, usually April or May.

Pastures often begin "greening up" in early April and his herd has access to fresh grass when the conditions for grazing are right. Dean matches the class of the animal to the grazing conditions and in a productive year he may get three to five grazings on his intensively managed sites and one, two or three on the others. Recovery varies depending on the fertility of the land, ground cover and the growing conditions. Where conditions and terrain permit, tumble wheels are used to regulate the amount of forage available to the animals as they move through the pasture rotation. Dean says recovery times vary, but laughingly notes the following tried and true method works well for him, "If the grass is up to the top of my rubber boots, I let them in. When it only comes to the top of the toe of my work boots, it's time to give the pasture a rest. It's a balancing act depending on Mother Nature."

This is Dean's second year working with the National Sustainable Grazing Mentorship Program. He sees it as a good opportunity for those new to grazing, as well as more experienced producers looking for some encouragement in trying a new idea. In Dean's words, "Any time you can share ideas, new ideas seem to take shape. People need encouragement in order to change any aspect of their operations. There is nothing worse than having your ideas repeatedly beat down. Mentors are a gateway to greater ideas. Sometimes I get as much from my mentees as they get from me!"

**Grazing Mentee,  
Norman Mossman  
says,**

*"The Grazing Mentorship Program provided me with the opportunity to have someone else see what I was doing. I have been rotational grazing for 15 years, but when I walked the pastures with Dean he brought up some things where there was room for improvement and suggested changes in others. Dean confirmed what made sense and made suggestions for different things I might try. The Grazing Mentorship Program is an excellent program."*

## The Grazing Mentorship Program

### What Is It?

The Grazing Mentorship Program provides a unique opportunity for producers to receive individual input and suggestions on how to improve their profits, efficiency, and forage productivity as well as land and water resources through improved grazing management. Individuals selected as grazing mentors are respected fellow producers with extensive grazing management, knowledge and experience. Extra training has been made available to them to better assist with the mentoring process.

### What's In It For Me?

Your grazing mentor has hands-on working knowledge of your region - their operation is based there too. Your mentor will help you assess your grazing resources, as well as the opportunities and challenges. Working with you, your mentor will make suggestions and provide input about fencing, watering systems, grazing systems, plant growth, forage species selections, dormant season grazing, winter feeding strategies...or just about anything you have questions about.

No matter how large or small your land base is, your grazing mentor can spend a total of up to 16 hours with you. Their work may be conducted as 'in-person' visits or telephone follow-ups to guide you through any additional questions or decisions you may be making. To get started, your grazing mentor will contact you by telephone to make arrangements to visit your farm/ranch,

### How Much Does It Cost?

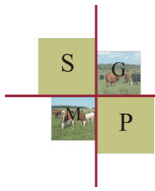
Your investment as a producer is only \$100, which you pay to your provincial partner in the program (see listing on page 4). The program will pay the balance of your mentor's time up to a maximum of 16 hours as well as his/her travel expenses to a budget maximum.

### How Do I Find A Grazing Mentor?

To connect with a grazing mentor, contact your provincial partner organization - see the list on page 4. Their representative will find someone who meets your needs and location. In the event you already know one of our grazing mentors who you would like to work with, you can make direct arrangements with him or her.

### How Soon Do I Have to Decide?

We urge you to get the process rolling as soon as possible. If you have access to maps or aerial photos of the land you manage, it will help move the mentorship process along more quickly. If you completed maps with an Environmental Farm Plan (EFP), those will usually be fine to get you started. *Please note:* it's not necessary to complete an EFP prior to working with a Grazing Mentor. Extra photocopies of your maps are helpful.



## Upcoming Conferences and Workshops

Although we don't have space for a full listing of upcoming conferences and workshops, going on across Canada, we like to feature a few every month. If you want to list your event, contact Lee Pengilly at '[walksfar@sasktel.net](mailto:walksfar@sasktel.net)'.

Group	Conference	Dates	Location	Contact	Website
<b>Manitoba Forage Council</b>	Manitoba Grazing School	November 25-26, 2008	Brandon, Manitoba	Pam Iwanchysko	<a href="http://www.mb.foragecouncil.mb.ca">www.mb.foragecouncil.mb.ca</a>
<b>ARECA</b>	Western Canadian Grazing Conference and Trade Show	December 3-5, 2008	Edmonton, Alberta	Joy Vonk	<a href="http://www.areca.ab.ca">www.areca.ab.ca</a>

### From the Editor *...Cont'd from page 1*

The Grazing Mentor format has a new look this issue, featuring profiles of grazing mentors from across Canada. This edition highlights grazing mentors from B.C., Alberta and Nova Scotia, featuring comments from one of their mentees (individuals assisted under the "The Grazing Mentorship Program").

Canada's national network of 60 experienced grazing mentors are ready to accept new applicants into the program. If you think your grazing operation would benefit from another set of eyes, get in touch with your provincial contact noted below.

Happy Trails,  
Lee Pengilly

## Provincial Partner Organizations and Contact List

For program information, questions or comments, please contact your provincial partner organization.

Province	Partner Organization	Contact	Telephone	Email Address
<b>British Columbia</b>	B.C. Cattlemen's Association	Sandy Burton	877.630.2198	<a href="mailto:sburton@xplornet.com">sburton@xplornet.com</a>
<b>Alberta</b>	ARECA	Grant Lastiwka	403.227.6392	<a href="mailto:lastiwka@areca.ab.ca">lastiwka@areca.ab.ca</a>
<b>Saskatchewan</b>	Saskatchewan Forage Council	Leanne Thompson	306.454.2777	<a href="mailto:thompsonleanne@sasktel.net">thompsonleanne@sasktel.net</a>
<b>Manitoba</b>	Manitoba Forage Council	Pam Iwanchysko	204.648.3965	<a href="mailto:pamela.iwanchysko@gov.mb.ca">pamela.iwanchysko@gov.mb.ca</a>
<b>Ontario</b>	Ontario Cattlemen's Association	Jack Kyle	705.324.5855	<a href="mailto:jack.kyle@ontario.ca">jack.kyle@ontario.ca</a>
<b>Quebec</b>	Gatineau-Outaouais Beef Improvement Club (GOBIC)	Hubert McClelland	819.827.1793	<a href="mailto:hubert.mcclelland@sympatico.ca">hubert.mcclelland@sympatico.ca</a>
<b>Atlantic Canada</b>	AgraPoint International, Inc.	Jonathan Wort	902.896.0277	<a href="mailto:j.wort@agrapoint.ca">j.wort@agrapoint.ca</a>
<b>National Sustainable Mentorship Program</b>	Mentor-in-Chief Newsletter Editor	Jim Stone Lee Pengilly	403.438.0172 306.728.5484	<a href="mailto:JSTONE05@telus.net">JSTONE05@telus.net</a> <a href="mailto:walksfar@sasktel.net">walksfar@sasktel.net</a>