



The Grazing Mentor

The Newsletter for the National Sustainable Grazing Mentorship Program
Enhancing Profits and the Environment through Grazing Management

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Canadian Cattlemen's Association



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From the Editor

As I write this, the temperature in my corner of the world has risen to slightly above zero, and like so many others, I'm asking – wondering – hoping – could this winter finally be drawing to a close? I know that I am always impatient for the arrival of spring for indeed it is my favourite season, but to almost everyone I have recently spoken to, this winter has been particularly wearying.

With this month's interviews I had the opportunity to speak with grazing mentee, Don Heinrich, who was in the midst of calving during this last particularly nasty cold spell. Although he was running short of sleep, he was still gracious enough to talk with me and offer that usual upbeat attitude that I have come to appreciate in folk involved in this program be he/she a grazing mentor or a mentee.

Gladys Wachowich, who joined the administrative team of the National Sustainable Grazing Mentorship Program last year, sent me the following quotation that we thought was particularly well suited to this program:

"A mentor is a shortcut to success in any area of life. So, don't use mentors unless you are in a hurry. A mentor will

shorten the journey, help you avoid the pitfalls, teach you patience, challenge you to be your best and help you start where they left off."

- Chris and Janet Atwood
www.thepassiontest.com

Mentoring has once again come to the forefront as a beneficial and extremely successful technique in that timeless loop of learning and teaching - of teaching and learning. Many of the agricultural and business magazines and papers that I receive have featured articles on mentoring programs. Most recently, and of interest to this program, has been the Country Guide (Western Edition) articles by Danielle Harder. In Part One of her three part series she indicates, "Mentoring programs are a growing trend in many industries, including agriculture, as producers look for new ways to stay competitive...The goal of a mentoring program is to learn from someone with more experience or new ideas. It's also collaborative."

Quoted in her February article is Ontario Grazing Mentor, Alec MacGregor and in the March issue is Alberta Grazing Mentor, Jim Stone. The third and final article in the series will appear in the April issue.

Mentorship is in the news and will continue to be as more and more folks cite the benefits of this unique learning experience. If mentoring looks like a positive step for you and your operation, or you know of somebody who could benefit, it's not too late to receive program information. This current funding year will come to a close at the end of March, but you can be made aware of program updates by logging onto the Canadian Cattlemen's Association website at www.cattle.ca and click on Environment and Stewardship. You will find all issues of The Grazing Mentor there as well.

This will be the final issue of The Grazing Mentor for this funding period and to each of you, on behalf of Gladys, Jim and myself, I wish you the best of grazing seasons!

Happy Trails,
Lee Pengilly

The Grazing Mentor

From the Mentor-in-Chief - Jim Stone

My thoughts and observations after 20 years in the business of helping others see the light at the end of the tunnel of life.

“What you really need to do is change HOW you are doing WHAT you are doing... It will not cost a lot of time or money, mostly thoughts and planning...The extent of the improvement will depend on YOUR WILL to make it happen and as much support as you can get. One of our grazing mentors who has the training and the experience can help you through these processes.”

- Jim Stone, Mentor-in-Chief, National Sustainable Grazing Mentorship Program

How would your bottom line look if:

- Your existing land-based would support twice as many cow calf pairs?
- Your grazing season was extended by one month?
- Winter feeding costs were reduced by 75% for your cowherd?
- You could sell all of the machinery you have and manage a large cowherd with an ATV?
- You never had to make hay or put up silage again?
- Your daily winter chores could be done in a few minutes per day?
- You were selling 900 pound yearlings rather than 500 pound calves?
- Your ranch became more sustainable?

This may sound like a personal dream came true, or maybe you better check it out - it could be a scam. What you really need to do is change how you are doing what you are doing to meet all of these improved cost saving goals. It will not cost a lot of time or money, mostly thoughts and planning.

A mentor from the Sustainable Grazing Management Mentorship Program could provide you with many options that have been proven to work on their farms and

ranches and could support you through your journey of management changes.

Some proven options to effect a change in your bottom line are:

- Changing to a controlled grazing or cell grazing option will improve your production on any pasture anywhere just by allowing grass and legumes adequate time to recover after grazing. You will never need to reseed pastures again. This will extend the grazing season for the existing cowherd or allow you to increase your cow numbers. Or you may find that carrying calves through to be yearlings will fit your operation well and provide larger cash flows annually.
- The process of swath and bale grazing has proven to be very successful in reducing winter feeding costs “in excess of one dollar per day per cow.” Where does this money go? Yes, it goes straight into your pocket. For an average of 200 days on winter feed per year per cow, that’s works out to \$200 per calf in reduced costs of production!
- Fertilizing will become a thing of the past as 85% of what goes into cattle

as feed is passed out the rear as usable plant nutrition at no cost to you.

- “It is not the cow that breaks the cow-man. It’s the iron he has to farm around it.” When people have reduced or sold their equipment they have found a great savings in upkeep, operation and capital costs. An ATV could be all that is necessary to manage a large cowherd.
- You will find that you can purchase hay for less than you can grow and bale it yourself on your land. You will save on the feed costs, and will have soil nutrients imported from your supplier that have been valued as high as \$25 per 1200 pounds per round bale.
- 500 cows can be fed in a swath grazing system in about 15 minutes per day and you don’t need to start a tractor or other equipment.
- These changes in financial and environmental stewardship of the farmland you are blessed with will, through these processes, provide greater sustainability to both your financial and environmental future.

The proven options I have outlined will, in some way, improve your bottom line. The extent of this improve-

From the Mentor-in-Chief cont'd from page 2

ment will depend on YOUR WILL to make it happen and as much support as you can get. One of our grazing mentors who has the training and the experience can help you through these pro-

cesses.

Good luck and I look forward to your success in implementing and operating your farm in a new and profitable way. Many of the people I work with as cli-

ents have found their place in agriculture to be what they had hoped it to be because of their commitment to change.

"I think the Grazing Mentorship Program is very good. We spent time at Don's place and at mine. I found him to be very informative and we both got a lot out of it. It was \$100 very well spent – I received a lot of good ideas."

- Don Guilford Grazing Mentee, Don Heinrich

Profile of Manitoba Grazing Mentor – Don Guilford

Mentor's Name: Don Guilford

Closest Town: Clearwater

Region: "The beautiful Pembina Valley"

Province: Manitoba

Quotable Quote: "A producer can't afford to keep high input animals nor afford high input costs."

Don began his agricultural career in the early 1970s when he, his brother and his dad ran a mixed farming operation. In the early 1980s, Don realized he preferred the livestock side of things and by 1986, he and his wife, Diane were the owners and managers of Guilford Hereford Ranch. For over 80 years the family had specialized in Hereford breeding stock and today Don and Diane raise and sell Hereford and (black) Angus replacement heifers and bulls.

Their 1200 acre operation is located in the south central portion of Manitoba's Pembina Valley. The land is all in grass and at the height of the grazing season 56 permanent grazing paddocks are utilized. The breeding

season is carefully managed to insure the integrity of Guilford's breeding program. For the first 25 days, Hereford bulls are placed with Hereford cows and Angus bulls are placed with Angus cows; for the final 35 days of the breeding program, Angus bulls are placed with Hereford cows. For the balance of the grazing season the herds are combined to optimize pasture and grazing management.

According to Don, "We are purebred people, but not necessarily show people. Our focus is on local markets and we sell most of our bulls within 25-30 miles from our home. We look after our customers and believe me, your toughest customers will be your neighbors! Our customers raise commercial cattle so we breed cattle that will work for them. Our herd spends the winter bale grazing. Windbreak is provided for them, but believe me, it's no palace up there! We raise and sell tough, economic animals that don't need grain."

"We are looking to raise

cattle that will finish on grass and are economical to raise. When you see the health benefits of grass finished beef, why would you want grain finished? We are looking to further improve our genetics toward grass finishing and dropping the frame size of the cows to get back to a smaller framed animal. In our opinion, you just can't afford to keep high input animals or afford high input costs. With a smaller more efficient cow you can see at least some profit. People have to examine their cow/calf costs of production. It's a tight squeeze to turn a profit."

"Sometimes it's depressing to know what's going on [in the cattle industry], and because of that we have sped up the rate we're making changes. We have to focus on things that make us more competitive in a global economy. When we see the improvements in our land that managed grazing has provided us with, we realize we could never have afforded those kinds of inputs.

The Grazing Mentorship

Profile of Grazing Mentor Don Guilford cont'd from page 3

Program has been a good fit for Don. In his words, "I feel it is my job to give mentees a wide variety of options and to challenge them to find ways to adapt and modify these new ideas into their operation as they see fit. Ultimately they have to be comfortable, committed and prepared to do the

work to see the changes through. It also teaches me about my land and forces me to self-analyze our operation. When we are hosting mentees on our ranch we have to answer lots of questions. On the other hand, I haven't visited another place that I haven't learned something."

Don and Diane have 3 adult daughters, 2 who work in the agricultural service industry and one who is a schoolteacher as well as 2 grandsons and as of March 11th, a granddaughter!

"The Grazing Mentorship Program was very worthwhile for us. We've made quite a few changes as a result of working with Alec – enough changes to see positive results. In fact, our cattle are still out grazing on our corn stubble!"

*- Alec MacGregor
Grazing Mentee, Glen Irvén*

Profile of Ontario Grazing Mentor – Alec MacGregor

Mentor's Name: Alec MacGregor
Closest Town: Jasper
Region: Eastern Ontario
Province: Ontario

Quotable Quote:
"The more I learn about grazing and pasture management the more I feel I'm farming the way my father and grandfather farmed. They did it because they did not have the technology and machinery we have today. I'm doing it because it works."

Grassview Farm, located on the edge of the Rideau River, was founded by Alec's grandparents in 1924; a tradition that carried on with Alec's parents and then, with a certain amount of pride, onto Alec and his wife, Darlene.

After graduating from Agricultural College, Alec worked for the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food with a primary focus in the 4-H Program, but when the opportunity arose to become a partner in the fam-

ily farm, Alec and Darlene chose to take advantage of it. The sudden passing of Alec's Dad created a huge vacuum in the MacGregor Family and put Alec on a steep learning curve. Plans were adapted and goals reprioritized with Alec's Mom playing a pivotal role in the evolving structure of the farm.

When Alec and Darlene began their farming career, they purchased four bred heifers. Since that time both the size of their herd and of their land base have had significant increases in size. Today their cow herd is primary a cross of Hereford and Angus cows with the addition of some Simmental and Gelbvieh genetics. All cows are bred to easy calving Charolais bulls. The calving season begins in mid-February and wraps up by the end of April. Calves are marketed in an exclusive presort calf sale in mid October.

The MacGregor cows spend the winter on grass. Bales are unrolled on a daily ba-

sis – a management practice that keeps their cows clean and in good shape for the upcoming calving season. In addition, by allowing the animals to remain on pasture, the cattle equally distribute valuable nutrients over the grazed area. An increase in spring grass seedling development has also been observed through this process. Although it does require starting an engine on a daily basis, the high moisture and warmer temperatures prevent the rolling out of more than one day's hay ration at a time. The MacGregors raise and put up their own hay and are pleased with the quality. When necessary, the cows are provided with mineral supplement blocks.

The grazing season can begin as soon as the first week of May with an early flush of grass; the first pasture rotation is done quickly. As the grass growth levels off, the herd remains in paddocks for two to three days with a minimum rest period of 30 days in the spring and 45 days in the summer. The

cont'd on page 5

 Profile of Grazing Mentor Alec MacGregor cont'd from page 4

MacGregor grazing lands are divided into 40 to 50 paddocks with the hay land included after the hay crop has been taken off. Always looking for ways and opportunities to extend the fall grazing season, Alec and Darlene have also put cows into cooperating neighbor's fields of harvested corn stalks. The remaining corn leaves, stalks and grain provide a great opportunity for the cows to put on some additional weight prior to the onset of winter.

Since winning the Ontario Pasture Award in 2002, MacGregors have been asked to make many pasture presentations and host Bus

Tours. Included with those tour groups have been annual visits from the Beef Production Classes from Kemptville, a local Agricultural College. Alec particularly enjoys these visits and the opportunity to provide the students with a different perspective on grazing and pasture management.

Alec enjoys the opportunities being a grazing mentor provides. "I'm always learning, and if you can help someone get over the hurdles they feel are keeping them from a more successful grazing season, then they will improve their bottom line. There are all kinds of ideas and resources that

can get producers thinking and approaching their challenges from another angle. One of the most critical lessons to learn about grazing management is how to avoid overgrazing and allow an adequate rest period. We may all have a different vision of what this is, but getting it right on your farm can greatly improve productivity and profit potential."

Darlene and Alec have two adult children; Adam who is in an apprenticeship program to become a diesel mechanic and Carrissa who has completed an early childhood education program and is employed at a local daycare.

"The Grazing Mentorship Program has been super for us. We specifically approached Ulla for her knowledge and expertise in helping us formalize our record keeping and monitoring. It's going to be great to have a system that will help us go forward and aware of where we have been."

*- Ulla Thomsen
Grazing Mentee,
Sean McGrath*

Profile of Alberta Grazing Mentor – Ulla Thomsen

Mentor's Name: Ulla Thomsen
Closest Town: Ponoka
Region: Central Alberta
Province: Alberta

Ulla was born and raised on her family's farm in Denmark. Her parents believed in their children and saw the importance in providing ample opportunities for their personal growth and development. Ulla always wanted to farm and had an active role in the family's operation. After graduating from school, the common practice in Denmark was that if you wanted to be a good farmer you had to work on a variety of other farms – and so Ulla did. After completing that appren-

ticeship she attended an agricultural college and it was there she was able to continue her learning in the biology of agriculture – from the microorganisms in the soil to the microorganisms in a cow's rumen – Ulla was eager to learn and to apply her knowledge.

Upon graduation from college, Ulla was made aware of a new international agricultural exchange program that came to be known as the International Agricultural Exchange Association (IAEA). When the first plane of 80 students left from Denmark for Canada, Ulla was among them. The students were to be placed on various farms across Canada from the first

of May until the middle of October. Ulla's placement was on a farm near Lacombe (Alberta) and as fate would have it, during that period of time she met the man who was to be her future husband. Jim convinced her to "just stay for the winter" and the rest is history!

Ulla and Jim bought a house on a ¼ section (160 acres) of land and it was there they raised their family. Jim was employed as a schoolteacher specializing in French and Ulla operated their farm. Their cow herd grew over the years from a humble beginning of one cow. Their first priority was to pay off their mortgage based on the European premise that

“Attitude is perspective. Change the perspective and you change the results. You can’t do the same thing the same way every day and expect to magically succeed. But once you change someone’s perspective, once you change how they see problems, once you change how they believe things can be, you change results.”

- Kevin Burns
Author and Attitude
Adjuster
www.keyburns.com
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“if you missed one payment, the bank will take it.” They lived off their land and achieved their goal of “mortgage free”. Soon after the birth of their fourth child, Jim and Ulla bought a bigger and newer home and the ½ section of farm land it was situated on. Tragically, in 1979, Jim was killed in a car accident while on his way to school. Ulla remained on the land and continued on with her farming operation and the raising of her family.

By the late 1980s, Ulla was beginning to see the “writing on the wall” for her small mixed farm. Her extensive background in economics and agricultural management told her that to continue on with single ownership of land and cattle plus farm and hay equipment was not going to be a recipe for her success. In 1989 she took her first training in Holistic Resource Management and found exactly what she was looking for – a management system that went along with her beliefs that to be successful in agriculture, you had to work with Nature and not against. With her

passion for life long learning, Ulla continued to take more Holistic Management training, culminating in 1990 with a ten-day program facilitated out of Ponoka. In 2004 the management club that had its genesis at that training program celebrated their 10th anniversary with plans and a strong commitment to continue on.

After completing the 1990 management training course, Ulla switched her entire operation to “Grazing Intensive Management”. Over the next 15 years she fine tuned the grazing and expanded the water system so water was available in every paddock. She quickly discovered that grazing planning gave her excellent gains, healthy cattle and the peace of mind knowing the carrying capacity of her land. Her customers were well satisfied and thus became repeat customers.

Ulla used to own ½ of the cattle she grazed on her 500 acres, but later moved to a straight custom grazing operation. Over the years she has hosted many tours on

her farm. In Ulla’s words, “My philosophy is to share my knowledge and experience with as many people as possible to promote a healthy, sustainable attitude to the land and us, the people who make our living from agriculture.”

In 1999, Ulla married Poul Thomsen and in 2003 they moved into Ponoka. After spending some time traveling and operating forage based operations in other areas, Richard, Ulla’s youngest son and his wife, Sue, have taken over Ulla’s farm utilizing the same “Grazing Intensive Management” philosophy that Ulla had implemented.

Today, Ulla and Poul have acquired ¼ section on which Ulla continues to manage custom cattle during the growing season. She has been a grazing mentor since the introduction of the Grazing Mentorship Program. As Sean McGrath, one of Ulla’s 2009 grazing mentees, so eloquently put it, “Ulla is one neat lady!”

Upcoming Conferences and Workshops

Although we won’t have space for a full listing of upcoming conferences and workshops going on across Canada, we would like to feature a few every month. If you’d like your event listed contact Lee Pengilly @ walksfar@sasktel.net.

Update: Please note the correct Saskatchewan Forage Council phone number and my regrets to the Council for my error of last month.

Group	Conference	Dates	Location	Contact	Website
Saskatchewan Forage Council	Saskatchewan Pasture School	June 17-18, 2009	Saskatoon, SK	Saskatchewan Forage Council 306.966.2148	www.saskforage.ca

About The Grazing Mentorship Program

What Is It?

The Grazing Mentorship Program is a unique opportunity for producers to receive individual input and suggestions on how to improve their profits, efficiency, forage productivity as well as land and water resources through improved grazing management. The folks 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?

As a mentee, a grazing mentor from your region will contact you by telephone and make arrangements to come to your

farm/ranch, no matter how large or small your land base is. He/she will discuss with you and help you to assess your grazing resources, as well as the opportunities and the challenges. He/she will work with you in making suggestions and providing 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.

Your grazing mentor can spend a total of about 16 hours with you and that may be in the form of in-person visits or telephone follow-ups to guide you through any additional questions or decisions you may be making.

Please Note: A person who is being mentored is referred to as a mentee.

How Do I Find A Grazing Mentor?

When you want to be put in contact with a grazing mentor, contact the appropriate provincial partner organization listed below and he/she will find someone who meets your needs and location. In the event you already know one of our grazing mentors and would like to be working with that person, you can make direct arrangements with him or her.

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). 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 Soon Do I Have to Decide?

We urge you to get the process rolling as soon as possible. Your mentorship will move along more quickly if you have access to maps or aerial photos of the land you are managing. If you have completed maps with your Environmental Farm Plan (EFP), those will usually be fine to get started with. Extra photocopies of them would be helpful.

Please note: It is not necessary to have completed an EFP prior to working with a Grazing Mentor.

Group Plans - An Option to Explore

With requests coming in from both grazing mentors and folks interested in the concept of group plans, it is important to know that this is a totally acceptable and encouraged concept. Whether it's around a kitchen table with a couple of neighbours or in a local facility drawing from a larger area and lots of people, a grazing mentor (or perhaps two depending on the size of the group) could come to you. For further information contact your provincial coordinator (see listings in this newsletter) or Jim Stone at 1-403-438-0172 or e-mail at jstone05@telus.net.

Provincial Partner Organizations and Contact List

Province	Partner Organization	Contact	Telephone	Email Address
British Columbia	B.C. Cattlemen's Association	Sandy Burton	877-630-2198	sburton@xplornet.com
Alberta	ARECA	Grant Lastiwka	403-227-6392	lastiwka@areca.ab.ca
Saskatchewan	Saskatchewan Forage Council	Leanne Thompson	306-454-2777	thompsonleanne@sasktel.net
Manitoba	Manitoba Forage Council	Pam Iwanchysko	204-648-3965	pamela.iwanchysko@gov.mb.ca
Ontario	Ontario Cattlemen's Association	Jack Kyle	705-324-5855	jack.kyle@ontario.ca
Québec	Gatineau-Outaouais Beef Improvement Club (GOBIC)	Hubert McClelland	819-827-1793	hubert.mcclelland@sympatico.ca
Atlantic Canada	AgraPoint International, Inc.	Jonathan Wort	902-896-0277	j.wort@agrapoint.ca
National Sustainable Mentorship Program	Mentor-in-Chief Newsletter Editor	Jim Stone Lee Pengilly	403-438-0172 306-728-5484	jstone05@telus.net walksfar@sasktel.net

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