

Ontario Forage Council

Welcome Back Forage Expo!

Waterloo County

July 14, 2022

**Hosted by Scott & Darlene Martin &
Family**

161 Hawkesville Rd., St. Jacob's

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A Message from the President Terry Nuhn



It has been a slow start to spring in Ontario this year. The snow left very fast in March, but April was quite cool and delayed any hopes of an early season. I'm optimistic that this will translate into normal and seasonal weather for the upcoming months!

Unfortunately the OFC could not host any live events this past year due to Covid-19 concerns. We continued with the success of our virtual events by hosting Forage Focus and Profitable Pastures conferences online. The ability to have International speakers and flexible viewing times for our audience has proven to be a great format. I invite everyone to check out these videos through our online YouTube channel to see the quality of information that is available.

The large bale market for most of Ontario has been softer than expected this past winter, but has started to pick-up as I write this. We were fortunate to have good forage yields in the majority of the province, but there are many areas within a couple days drive that were not so lucky this past year. These areas are in much need of hay, but fuel and logistics has been a major hurdle to access these markets. With the high commodity prices we are experiencing, there will be a greater demand and pressure put on forage acres. I would expect to see the cost of hay and straw follow

the commodity prices upward due to increased input costs.

An exciting new hay processing system has recently come on board in Southern Ontario. The Hay Press Company hosted their inaugural open house in late April to introduce forage growers to a Steffen 3400 Hay Press. This unit will process 3x3 and 3x4 Large Square bales into packages as small as 50lbs. This unit opens up new market access for Ontario hay and gives us the opportunity to go after International contracts. The Hay Press can maximize shippable weight in containers and trucks. Compressed bales are how most hay is sold on the global market.

The OFC is planning to host the Forage Expo this summer; our first live event in 2 years! We are working on the details at this time and we will keep everyone updated on the date and location. We are excited to see everyone again and feel this will be a great venue to re-connect with the forage industry.

I wish everyone a good planting season and a great forage season ahead!

Regards,

Terry Nuhn

President, OFC

Have you missed any of the Forage Focus or Profitable Pastures webinars?

[Catch up on our YouTube Channel!](#)

Subscribe to be notified of new content!



Forage Information Resources:

Ontario Forage Council <https://onforagenetwork.ca/ontario-forage-council/>

Ontario Hay Listings <http://ontariohaylistings.ca>

Beef Cattle Research Council <http://www.beefresearch.ca>

Forage U-Pick <https://upick.beefresearch.ca>

Field Crop News <http://fieldcropnews.com>

Forages and Pastures - OMAFRA <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/field/forages.html>

Canadian Forage and Grassland Association <http://www.canadianfga.com>

Forage Beef http://www.foragebeef.ca/app33/foragebeef/index_body.jsp

OFC Manager's Report



After a couple of years of Zoom contact, and very minimal “face to face” connection, it appears that the world is now venturing out again, although some caution is still wisely advised.

I must say, “Staff have done an admirable job in handling the communication for the organization.”

Certainly, less communication with members than I would like, but meeting was not an option under the circumstances.

Even though it's been a real challenge for OFC, two of our major conferences have actually been quite successful from a participation and financial perspective. Both Forage Focus and Profitable Pastures conferences have attracted good registration numbers and our loyal sponsors have been truly appreciated.

The Ontario Forage Expo has always been a real favourite but was a wash for both 2020 and 2021. We are hopeful we can bring it back again this year for 2022.

Even though we have not been able to meet as a group, the Ontario Hay Marketing Forum continues to be an important element of OFC. They have often been described as the “All Star Team” within the forage industry. They are a highly reputable group and has proven to be a good marketing arm for forages in Ontario and beyond. The Ontario Hay Marketing Forum is the first entity we think of when referring producers to a reputable hay supplier. It can be an excellent marketing tool, that gives you constant exposure to a broad clientele and at a reasonable price.

OFC took a lead role in planning the new OFC web site. Referred to as the Ontario Forage Network, It includes OFC, Ontario Hay & Forage Co-operative and Ontario Bio-Mass. It also includes the Ontario Hay Listings web site.

OFC has taken the lead role to include our Eastern Canadian forage colleagues to expand the reach of the Forage U-Pick tool from coast to coast. This initiative will not only result in a comprehensive forage selection tool customizable by the producer but is also an excellent opportunity to connect with forage councils across the country.

Funding approval was approved and moving forward..

Continual Interest in Canadian Hay from Foreign Markets

The Ontario Hay and Forage Co-op Inc. has made great progress and moving forward. Hay drying is changing the industry and a double compaction and processing system is now in operation at Marhaven Agri Farms in Wellington County. A very successful “Open House” was held on Saturday April 23rd with a large attendance.

Hay and Straw Shortage –

The severe drought conditions across Northwest Ontario

and Western Canada caused extreme shortage of hay for livestock producers. OFC assisted in the following ways.

Provided direct response to many producers

Promoted the Ontario Hay Marketing Forum and the Ontario Hay Listings

Website to provide additional forage options to producers

Promoted the Ontario Hay & Forage Co-operative which also played a major role in co-ordinating and transporting hay to the drought areas.

Canadian Forage & Grassland Association

CFGGA Advanced Grazing Systems – The curriculum review has been completed and identified nuances and suggested adjustments have been submitted to CFGGA. Three mentors have been approached (Anita O'Brien, Robert McKinlay, and Birgit Martin). Anita has committed to being a mentor, Birgit has commenced the training but has not firmly committed, and Robert's commitment to the program relies on co-operation from BFO to approach the position as a team effort.

I want to express my appreciation to the directors for their support throughout 2020 and 2021, and everyone who assisted with the various events. Your patience has been truly appreciated as we have tried to keep OFC covered as best, we could, through these unprecedented times.

As I am sure, everyone fully understands the challenges we have faced, I want to extend a very sincere thank you to Patricia Ellingwood, who has done a good job of assisting with the daily administrative work for OFC. The Staff at the Ag Centre in Markdale have always done an admirable job, in assisting with the day-to-day activities as required, and despite all the challenges this year, I extend to them, a very sincere “Thank You” on your behalf.

Ray Robertson

Manager, OFC

Forage Expo returns for 2022!!



After a two-year hiatus to comply with COVID-19 restrictions, OFC and Waterloo SCIA are excited to bring Ontario Forage Expo 2022 to the farm of Scott and Darlene Martin and family, **161 Hawkesville Rd., St. Jacob's, Waterloo County on July 14, 2022!**

Demo and Tradeshow forms for interested companies can be found on our website: <https://onforagenetwork.ca/ontario-forage-council/forage-expo/>

What's new with the Canadian Forage & Grasslands Association?

CFGA Annual General Meeting – To wrap up the 2021-2022 fiscal year, CFGA held a very successful annual general meeting in March, with close to 80 attendees online to hear updates on CFGA projects. Recordings from the AGM can be viewed on the CFGA YouTube channel in English (https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLPvGM1j9_osh4CPAiQhTwW3RQEkEC6aMK) and in French (https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLPvGM1j9_osjtEA5syLQ1hmfxxEELztNC).

2022 Annual Conference – Planning is underway for the 13th annual conference, which will take place virtually from Nov. 29 to Dec. 2. The theme for the 2022 event is Cross-Pollination: Co-Creating Ideas in the Forage Industry. The conference will again be a virtual, fully bilingual event with the program including information on the forage components of the Living Labs projects across the country, exports and best management practices; panel discussions and grazing mentorship sessions; and concluding with the CFGA business meeting

Exports – As part of its export activities, CFGA organizes and attends trade missions and events such as the World Dairy Expo and export members receive quarterly updates on the Canadian and world forage markets from the Hoyt Report, the authority covering forage markets and prices in the Western United States.

Alfalfa Management Research – this research will provide forage producers with valuable diagnostic and decision-support tools to help alfalfa crops thrive. The first tool will improve yield and forage nutritive value from alfalfa fields while the second will assess and improve alfalfa winter survival rates and persistency;

predict and assess winter survival; identify the factors and field zones leading to poor alfalfa winter survival and provide predictions of the impact of alternative management practices.

Grassland Inventory Project – The overall objective of the National Grassland Inventory Project is to complete grasslands classification and ecoregional distribution across Canada as well as to characterize carbon sequestration functions of native grassland types.

Development of the Canada Grassland Protocol - this protocol provides a standardized approach to quantify, monitor, and verify the greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions saved when landowners choose to retain grasslands at risk of conversion to other land uses that significantly disturb the soil. This protocol resulted in the creation of the Forage BMP Manual.

Advanced Grazing Systems - a program for extension professionals and farm operators to learn the basic techniques of rotational grazing. OFC has stipend funds to train 3 mentors in ON who will connect with 10-15 producers/year to assist in developing intensive rotational grazing plans. Funding opportunities to implement plans is expected to be available through OSCIA.

Habitat and Biodiversity Assessment Tool (HBAT) - an online tool developed in Alberta that enables interested agricultural producers to integrate the needs of multiple native species in the management of their land. Under the leadership of the CFGA, the online tool is being adapted and customized for use in provinces across Canada as a source of conservation information for all of those interested in habitat stewardship.



Canadian Forage and Grassland Association

13th Annual Conference

Cross Pollination:
Co-Creating Ideas in
the Forage Industry





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Stop in to **Minto AG** today to see all of **KRONE**'s hay and forage solutions.



Welcome to OMAFRA's new Field Crop Soil Fertility Specialist



Please join us in welcoming Colin Elgie, the new Field Crop Soil Fertility Specialist to OMAFRA beginning Monday, May 16, 2022. Colin is based out of the Ridgetown office, and his contact information is colin.elgie@ontario.ca and cell (548) 388-3496.

Colin completed a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture from the University of Guelph and has over 10 years of experience working in soil fertility across Ontario as an Agronomy Solution Specialist with Sylvite Agri- Services. Colin has demonstrated industry leadership by training industry agronomists on 4R nutrient management, soil fertility and soil test translation. He has been a Certified Crop Advisor since 2012, and achieved his 4R nutrient management specialty in 2016, and volunteers with local agriculture associations like the Soil and Crop Improvement Association and Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS). His interest in agriculture came from being raised on a farm operation and he continues to support his family's cropping operation in Southwestern Ontario.

Hay Press Company Introduction

Hay Press Company Inc. has launched Ontario's premier Hay Press! Located at Marhaven Agri (7715 Wellington Road 8 Alma Ontario) the Steffen Press is now completely operational and ready to process loads of hay. Using the press saves essential time in the field and reduces hay shed space needed, as large squares can be pressed into two small square bale sizes and can be packaged via flat pack or bundles.

The hay press can process up to 16 tonnes of hay per hour and has compaction capabilities required for the export hay market. Hay Press Company is proud to provide compaction services to the Ontario Hay and Forage Cooperative as the OHFC expands the export hay market.

This is the next level for commercial hay production in Ontario! Interested? Check out the Hay Press Facebook Page for updates @HayPressCompany or connect directly with Hay Press Company's General Manager at generalmanager@haypress.ca.



Photos show the compaction process from full-sized large square bales entering the press, to the final compacted product, ready to ship!



Grey County Bison Farm wins Mapleseed Pasture Award

Mark & Heather Shouldice of Big Rock Bison near Shallow Lake in Grey County, are the recipients of the 2021 MAPLESEED Ontario Pasture Award. For their environmental and pasture improvements and management, the recipients will receive \$250 and a bag of forage seed.

The Big Rock Bison operation includes 140 bison which are on pasture twelve months of the year. The 150 acres of pastureland is set up with 9 paddocks to practice rotational grazing, allowing sufficient time for each pasture to rest, re-grow and recover before the bison go back on that paddock.

Mark says, "The bison stay out 12 months of the year in a low-stress environment, with room to roam and be social. They are built for and thrive in the winter, but we do have to sacrifice pasture for the wet and muddy spring season, so typically the bison move out on fresh pasture May 7th and this is when we stop feeding hay for the season".

Mark commented that they "are committed to sustainable and regenerative farming practices that have a positive impact on the land and the bison, while producing both a nutritious and delicious red meat protein." For pasture health and vitality, Mark says, "We try to prevent pasture from getting grazed below 4" in forage height, to maintain maximum growth and health, as well as to prevent erosion due to rain and/or wind."

The Shouldice family believes that healthy pastures and soil create a diverse and robust ecosystem, which positively impacts climate change. As Mark says, "Healthy pastures = healthy bison = healthy meat = maximum profit."

In reviewing this nomination, Scott Fisher, Sales Manager (Western Ontario) with MAPLESEED said, "I find it exciting and encouraging, that land stewardship is front and centre across all portfolios of meat production."

Ray Robertson, Manager of the Ontario Forage Council commented that "Even though this applicant is truly unique in the area, it demonstrates the economic and environmental benefits of a well-managed pasture operation."



ATTENTION GRAZERS!!

The Beef Farmers of Ontario, Ontario Sheep Farmers, Mapleseed, and the Ontario Forage Council, invite you to nominate a deserving producer for the **Mapleseed Pasture Award**. The Mapleseed Pasture Awards are also a way of recognizing producers who implement pasture management strategies that maximize production per acre.

Prizes include; a cash award of \$250 to the winner, an invitation to share a presentation about their operation at the BFO or OSF AGMs, a 25kg bag of their choice of a Mapleseed Forage Mix.

Sheep Application Deadline: **October 3, 2022**

Beef Application Deadline: **November 30, 2022**

Check our website for entry forms

Grazing Livestock and Forage Palatability: How They Go Hand in Hand

Breann Saulnier, OMAFRA Grazing Livestock Assistant

You may look out into a pasture and see an abundance of tall, delicious-looking grass for livestock to graze but this is not necessarily what the livestock see. The amount of forage available for grazing is the portion of plant material that the animal chooses to eat, not the total amount of forage growing that is visible. So how do you know what the animal will choose to eat? Well, the palatability and the utilization forage for animals is influenced by what stage of growth the grass is in. In the context of grazing, palatability refers to a measure of when animals are given free choice, choose to graze one pasture over another. Utilization is the amount of forage that is consumed out of the total available forage.

Grazing livestock have a strong preference for green plant material. Green plant material refers to the new growth or regrowth of forages that are in the vegetative phase. The vegetative phase consists predominantly of leaves on the tillers and less stem material. Livestock look to eat the new green leaves of the plant before eating stems, as leaves are more palatable. From a nutritional perspective, new growth leaves also provide a large amount of energy, protein, and important nutrients that grazing animals require to meet their demands.

Mature forage is not as palatable to livestock and when present will reduce their consumption out on pasture. Not only is the mature grass unappetizing to livestock, it is also tough to digest and more difficult to bite off due to the tall height of the grass.



Grasses that are flowering or setting seed are unpalatable to livestock for grazing.

PERFORMANCE AND GRAZING MANAGEMENT

The performance of grazing animals is affected by the quantity and quality of forages. The goal of managing pastures is to grow forages to an optimal nutritional value and have it consumed by livestock with little waste. However, pastures vary in the dry matter content, fibre, nutrients, and palatability. This variation could lead to lower milk production and animal gains compared to animals fed a concentrate ration. Producing a lot of forage will also not be beneficial if it cannot be properly utilized by the animal. The same can be said about too short of forage available. Animals will graze down to about 5 cm above the ground and forage shorter than this is difficult for them to bite off. Variability can be minimized by properly managed grazing systems and understanding the selectivity of the animals grazing.

Pastures that are grazed with low intensity, such as in a continuous system, will have low pasture production. Cattle are more spread out in continuous systems which causes both overgrazing and undergrazing throughout the pasture. Forages that are undergrazed will be too mature for consumption, while the forages overgrazed will have slower rates of regrowth. If the management intensity is increased like in a rotational or strip grazing system, there will be a significant increase in the pasture output per unit area. This is due to a higher stocking density with shorter grazing periods in multiple paddocks and a longer recovery period for grass regrowth. Utilization is improved and the forage is able to regrow to optimal heights and palatability for grazing.

Improving the grazing management can also improve your land efficiency by allowing you to graze more cattle or even devote the extra land to other uses such as for hay. The decision to go from one type of grazing system to another has to be based on the potential output of the new system and the overall cost of developing it including fencing, water, labour, and time to move the animals.

ANIMAL GRAZING BEHAVIOUR

Observing the behaviour of grazing animals can provide helpful insight into what the forages are like on pasture from the perspective of the animal. When there is limited green plant material in the pasture, livestock will spend more time selecting and searching for it, increasing time spent out grazing in order to get their nutrients. With a pasture containing high quality and quantity forage, livestock are seen to reduce their time spent grazing as they can eat less while still getting the nutrients they need to feel full. With cattle, their strong preference for new growth plant material will take over their impulse to eat quickly until full, potentially causing some loss in body condition when new growth is low. Cattle that appear restless can also indicate that the

Continued on page 8

pasture available is poor. In addition, herd animals can be seen to graze together as a herd when there are large amounts of forage available, versus grazing more individually when forage is less available.

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