



CCA IS THE NATIONAL VOICE OF CANADA'S 60,000 BEEF FARMS

In This Issue...

- CCA priorities continue to evolve with industry
- CCA discusses trade with USTR
- ICYMI: CFIA investigation into bTB outbreak in Western Canada now closed
- Primary Agriculture Review of Temporary Foreign Worker Program
- Celebrating Environmental Stewardship
- VBP+ website gets an upgrade
- Maintaining momentum this breeding season

Representative (USTR) in Washington, DC. There, they met with key officials to discuss many trade issues including how Canada and the U.S. can work together to resolve ongoing trade issues with China and the European Union (EU). For example, the U.S. and Canada face identical Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary (SPS) barriers in the EU that undercut their negotiated access for beef. Working together to remove these barriers will be more effective than going it alone.

The CCA outlined several ways that Canada-U.S. beef and cattle trade could be improved, such as by eliminating redundant inspections of beef and removing duplicative requirements for animal ID.

CCA priorities continue to evolve with industry

Established in 1932, the CCA is continually evolving with the industry, as policy concerns and priorities change overtime. The recently updated [CCA's Priorities Document](http://www.cattle.ca/assets/2018CCA.prioritiesFINAL.pdf) provides a breakdown demonstrating how CCA carries out its vision: to have a dynamic, profitable Canadian beef industry with high-quality beef products recognized as the most outstanding by customers at home and around the world. (<http://www.cattle.ca/assets/2018CCA.prioritiesFINAL.pdf>)

CCA discusses trade with USTR

CCA Executive Vice President Dennis Laycraft and Director, Government and International Relations John Masswohl participated in discussions at the Office of the U.S. Trade



CCA EVP Dennis Laycraft and John Masswohl at the Office of the USTR in DC. Photo credit: CCA.

The CCA also shared the Canadian perspective of how the Canada-U.S. live cattle trade might change once Canada implements the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) without U.S. participation. Given the tariff preference Canada will enjoy over the U.S. on beef exports, one likely outcome is on the trade in feeder cattle. Historically this trade has been predominantly from Canada to the U.S., but with the tariff preference it is likely that more feeder cattle will remain in Canada and it is possible that we will see some feeders moving from the U.S. into Canada.

ICYMI: CFIA investigation into bTB outbreak in Western Canada now closed

The [Canadian Food Inspection Agency \(CFIA\) investigation](http://www.inspection.gc.ca/animals/terrestrial-animals/diseases/reportable/tuberculosis/investigation-western-canada/eng/1477438380160/1477438380659) into the bovine tuberculosis (bTB) outbreak in Western Canada is now closed, following the receipt of the final laboratory culture results - all of which tested negative. The investigation found a total of six confirmed cases which were all the same strain of bTB. No source of infection was found. A summary report on the investigation and lessons learned will be posted on the CFIA web site in June 2018.

The CFIA has cited the cooperation of producers and their associations as playing a crucial role throughout the investigation with no disruption in access to international markets as Canada maintained its bTB free status.

Primary Agriculture Review of Temporary Foreign Worker Program

The acute labour shortage in Canadian agriculture continues to be an issue that threatens the viability of food production and the competitiveness of beef cattle farmers in Canada. The Government of Canada's Employment and Social Development department has initiated another review of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) for Primary Agriculture, which kicked off with consultations in Ottawa on May 11.

The CCA attended the session along with many other representatives across the agriculture and food processing industries to raise awareness of current challenges with the TFWP and offer solutions that will improve access to foreign labour when Canadians are not able to fill job vacancies. One solution farmers provided is to improve service delivery standards for the Labour Market Impact Assessment process. Addressing inconsistent rule changes, such as wage rates, and fostering better communications with applicants about any changes would be another welcomed change. Improving administrative issues regarding housing that add excessive costs and advancing further pathways to permanent residency for agriculture workers were also key areas discussed. Addressing these issues would be critical to alleviating long waiting times, unnecessary application refusals and added costs for producers trying to access workers to sustain and grow their operations.



CCA participated in a consultation on workforce shortage challenges in primary agriculture and food processing. Labour is a key issue that impacts competitiveness, adding value in Canada and growing the sector. Photo credit: CCA

On the previous day, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture hosted a discussion focused on bringing agricultural representatives together with departmental officials to discuss steps to improve the fairness, efficiency and transparency of service delivery in the TFWP. This included a roundtable discussion with Patty Hajdu, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lawrence MacAulay, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Rodger Cuzner, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour and Serge Cormier, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

The message from Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries was that while Canadians need to be the first choice for agriculture jobs, it is critical that farmers and food processors have access to the workers they need. The CCA remains committed to working closely with the Government of Canada and other agriculture commodities to address workforce shortages in the sector. Primary Agriculture reviews for the TFWP will be ongoing across Canada in May and June. If you are a beef producer facing challenges accessing labour through the TFWP, please reach out to CCA so that your concerns can be raised in the review.

Celebrating Environmental Stewardship

Celebrating Environmental Stewardship profiles provincial stewardship award recipients in the running for CCA's national **The Environmental Stewardship Award (TESA)** (<http://www.cattle.ca/sustainability/the-environmental-stewardship-award/>) in 2018, to be announced at the **Canadian Beef Industry Conference** (<http://canadianbeefindustryconference.com/wordpress/>) in August. A common theme among recipients is a profound sense of obligation to care for land and animals. Through sharing their stories, insights, beliefs and values, readers can gain perspective on the relationship between stewardship and cattle production and the benefits of conservation to society.

In this issue, we feature Brian and Sonja Harper, Circle H Farms, Manitoba Beef Producers (MBP) 2018 environmental stewardship award recipient. This is the second installment in the series which began in the **April 16 edition of Action News** (<https://us1.campaign-archive.com/?e=&u=77960ebbac4f7a733b0b3d14d&id=1457cbad13>) with Alberta Beef Producer's 2018 Environmental Stewardship Award recipient, Shoestring Ranch, owned and operated by Ian and Carman Murray.

Harpers build success from the soil up

By Geoff Geddes

At first glance, "Better Living through Dirt" might not sound like a compelling read. But for the winners of Manitoba Beef Producers' 2018 The Environmental Stewardship Award (TESA), their focus on soil health and erosion, along with other environmental practices, is writing a success story that's hard to put down.

On Circle H Farms near Brandon, Brian and Sonja Harper – along with son Thomas (26) and daughter Kristelle (24) - have been running a purebred operation on 500-acres since 1990. Using three breeds designed for production on grass/forage only, the Harpers' cattle program focuses on breeding, developing and marketing forage-only breeding stock to commercial producers.

As their farm is situated on light soils, problems with soil erosion and vulnerability can be a challenge, especially during droughts. In response, the Harpers employ a multi-pronged approach that includes planting perennial forage, perennial crops and 5,000 trees. They also installed off-site watering systems, dug wells to feed water lines and employed a solar-powered winter water system.

Benefit plan

"Erosion - both wind and water - is most concerning to me as it's causing the industry to lose soil structure year after year," says Brian. "We keep the ground covered year-round because that has so many benefits: erosion and evaporation control, temperature control and feeding and enhancing soil biology. Ground cover is the key to driving that system. Once you get the soil working for you, your costs go down and the positives live on indefinitely."



Part of earning awards is leading the pack on crucial issues, and the Harpers did that for carbon sequestration without ever realizing it. “We’re always trying to maximize photosynthesis and didn’t know until recently that we were sequestering so much carbon. Now it’s a hot topic for industry, but we got there by mimicking nature in how we manage our livestock.”

As part of high-density grazing, they try to maximize plant density and diversity and achieve as many days of photosynthesis per year as possible. “As long as they are pumping those sugars into the ground, we are sequestering carbon and feeding soil biology, and as your biology increases, you grow more grass, which then lets you add more cows.”

Their environmental efforts to date have earned them several honours, including “Conservation Farm Family” in 2002 and the “Manitoba Grazer of the Year” award in 2007. Still, Brian sums up the TESA in one word: overwhelming.

“We never manage in a way that is trying to catch the limelight. We just focus on what works best environmentally and economically. There are a lot of people in the industry right now doing innovative things, so we’re honoured to be included in that group.”

Though their environmentally-friendly practices would fill a novel, the Harpers are most proud of two in particular. “Reducing erosion and increasing water infiltration are huge for us. Water is such a critical resource, so rather than having it leave the land, we incorporate it in the soil profile where it can do some good. These days, I feel there is room for improvement in agriculture’s water cycle, as too much water runs into rivers and lakes. While we don’t have water infiltration data for our farm yet, it’s clearly improving. When you see that our fields have dried up and there is still water on the neighbour’s land a quarter of a mile away, it tells me we’re on the right track.”

Regeneration gap

Ideally, the Harpers would like to see everyone join them on that track.

“The present agriculture model needs restructuring, so we are rewarding people for more than just high yields. Regenerative agriculture – regenerating life in the soil – leads to healthier food and better, more sustainable production. Once you bring that life back, everything else comes together in the form of improved water infiltration and higher nutrient density.”

Clearly, it’s a philosophy that has been fully embraced by the Harper family.

Thomas and Kristelle have worked endlessly on the farm since they were old enough to open gates, and they both continue to help out where time permits, in spite of their off-farm jobs. Kristelle now has her own small herd of cattle on site and is committed to being part of the regenerative agriculture movement.

While some in the Harpers’ shoes might feel they’d reached the finish line, Brian and Sonja say they’ve just left the starting blocks. “What we are doing now is the tip of the iceberg. Our plan is to use even higher stocking density and see how much faster we can regenerate the soil. For the food system itself, I’d like to see a greater emphasis on nutrient value. You can pay now and get medicine in your food or pay for drugs later in life, and to me it’s an easy decision.”

In keeping with his commitment to continuous improvement, Brian will remain a regular at industry conferences and workshops, learning something new at every turn. “We’re getting better at this, but we still have a long way to go.”

In the meantime, ask the Harpers if their focus is healthy soil, healthy food or healthy profits, and the answer is clear: Yes.



Environmental DYK?

The pastures and rangelands that support beef production are an important part of the water cycle. Because these lands are not cultivated, they are covered in living plant material all year round and are anchored by well-developed root systems that **hold the soil in place** (<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1191/0309133305pp443ra>). This above- and below-ground vegetation serves to trap snowfall, slow meltwater movement over the soil surface, and helps reduce runoff, overland flooding, soil erosion, and the movement of silt and nutrients into waterways. In **grassland environments** (<http://www.ducks.ca/our-work/grasslands/>), this water often collects in sloughs, pot holes or other low-lying areas that provide valuable nesting sites for birds. Grasslands also have improved soil porosity due to healthy root growth and earthworm activity. This allows more water to infiltrate the soil and **recharge groundwater reserves** (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02626669909492234>).

VBP+ website gets an upgrade

The website for the Verified Beef Production Plus (VBP+) program is now quicker and easier to navigate, hosts a fully integrated on-line training course, and comes with new display and filter tools to find VBP+ Registered beef cattle operations across Canada.

Located at verifiedbeefproductionplus.ca or verifiedbeef.ca, the site launched in March 2017 as the national face for the new and enhanced VBP+ program. From the start, a lot of information packed the website, a necessity to create a one-stop resource for all the information producers, consumers, retailers and others needed to learn about, and get signed up with, VBP+.

The site is built on a responsive design platform, meaning it is easily viewed on various screen sizes, however as more material populated the pages user feedback noted difficulty to quickly find specific documents, articles, videos and other copy. With the update, specific pages, where the most information is housed, now feature a tab format making it faster and easier for site visitors to get to the information they seek.

The VBP+ on-line training course is now fully integrated with the website - and it's a speedy process to register for and take the training online when it's convenient for the producer. Trainees can also stop the course and finish it later if they get side-tracked. VBP+ training is also offered at workshops around the country if producers prefer an 'in-person' learning experience. Contact your provincial VBP+ coordinator to find out if there's a workshop near you at: verifiedbeefproductionplus.ca/contact-us.cfm

The VBP+ website now contains a national listing of all VBP+ Registered beef cattle operations. A Google map tool, which can be filtered by province, has been added showing the geographical location of VBP+ Registered operations across the country. The listing can be searched by name, province, town, and postal code with an additional filter for operation type (cow-calf, backgrounder, feedlot) to be added in the near future.

Check out the latest upgrades to the website on your smartphone, tablet or laptop. We're eager to hear what you think, just click on the 'Questions? Give us a shout' button on the top of the home page and let us know.

The Beef Cattle Research Council operates VBP+. Funds to develop and deliver VBP+ come from the Canadian Beef Cattle Check-Off and, formerly, the AgriMarketing Program under Growing Forward 2 – a federal, provincial, territorial initiative.

CANFAX MARKET BRIEFS

Week ending May 11th, 2018

(in Cdn\$)		This wk.	Change
↓	Fed Steers	157.77	-6.06
↓	Fed heifers	156.19	-6.34
↑	Feeder Steers	---	+4.09
↑	Feeder heifers	---	+2.45
↑	Cdn Feeder Index	186.47	+3.41
↑	Cdn Calf Index	217.44	+3.38
↑	D1/D2 cows	98.30	+2.87
↓	Slaughter bulls	112.25	-1.75
(in US\$)			
↑	Cdn spot dollar	78.28	+0.53
↑	Feb live cattle	107.53	+1.00
↓	Mar feeder cattle	138.60	-2.00



CANADIAN
CATTLEMEN'S
ASSOCIATION

Maintaining momentum this breeding season

Reproductive wrecks can happen all at once or slowly over time. Using fertile bulls is one thing that can help to maximize conception rates but what about the reproductive management of cows? Read on to see why Dr. John Campbell from the University of Saskatchewan's Western College of Veterinary Medicine recommends front loading your breeding season as well as to see what he recommends for reproductive goals and targets:

<http://www.beefresearch.ca/blog/maintaining-momentum-during-the-breeding-season/>

CCA Action News

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The Canadian Cattlemen's Association is the national voice for Canada's beef cattle industry representing 60,000 beef farms and feedlots.

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