



BCRC BEEF SCIENCE CLUSTER

RESEARCH

Facts

IN PROGRESS



Canada's Beef Science Cluster: Forage and Grassland Research

-  Approximately 80% of Canada's beef production occurs while animals consume only forage
-  Keeping all of Canada's beef cows and replacement heifers on pasture for one more day every winter would save the cow-calf sector \$3.8 million annually.

Objective: Increase research program capacity to develop annual and perennial forage varieties with increased yield, maintained or improved nutritional value, improved water efficiency, and appropriate economic characteristics. Improve grassland management to increase productivity and sustainability.

New strategies are necessary to produce forage in arid conditions. Many grasses and forage legumes will grow in dry conditions, but all have drawbacks. Alfalfa's large taproot helps it to grow in dry conditions, but contributes to bloat. Sainfoin contains condensed tannins that reduce the bloat risk, but this plant has not competed well with alfalfa. Purple, white and hairy prairie clover may help improve the productivity of native grass stands.

Two Beef Science Cluster studies are designed to evaluate the establishment, persistence, competitiveness, forage yield and quality of forages and their effects on performance of grazing cattle.

-  Breeding Drought Tolerant Forages (FRG.01.09)
-  Grazing Alfalfa Safely (FRG.02.09)

Swath grazing has become an economically attractive and popular alternative for extending the grazing season across Western Canada over the past 10 years or so. Several questions about how best to manage and fit swath grazing into a system giving optimum results remain. One Beef Science Cluster project will optimize seeding dates for different annual cereal crop to maximize swathed crop yield and to identify least cost crops or crop combinations.

-  Reducing Swath Grazing Costs (FRG.03.09)

The potential human health benefits of grass and forage-finished beef has renewed interest in revisiting this production practice. A Beef Science Cluster project to investigate the potential beef quality benefits and limitations of forage finishing is discussed under the Beef Quality section.

The Beef Research Cluster is funded by the Canadian Cattlemen's Association and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to advance research and technology transfer supporting the Canadian beef industry's vision to be recognized as a preferred supplier of healthy, high quality beef, cattle and genetics.

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