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Maximizing Herd Health and Profitability with Feed Testing

BY LYNN GIDLUCK

SASKCATTLE TIMES STAFF

For cattle producers, one of the largest expenses is winter feed, accounting for nearly 40 per cent of total production costs. Yet, despite its significant impact on profitability, many producers in Western Canada still rely on visual appraisals rather than laboratory feed testing to assess the nutritional value of their feed.

Although cattle may "look healthy," a deeper dive into their nutrition could reveal deficiencies that affect reproduction, weight gain, and overall herd performance. Feed testing is a practical and cost-effective tool that allows producers to optimize feed efficiency, improve herd health, and reduce unnecessary costs.

"If you don't know what they need, how do you know what to give them?" asks Roger Meyers, a third-generation cattle producer from Minton, and SCA Board Member. "We wouldn't plant crops without testing the soil, so why wouldn't we test our feed to ensure our cattle are getting what they need?"

Meyers, who has been feed testing for over 20 years, believes in using science to support better outcomes. "The biggest benefit is just overall animal health. Reproduction is better. Colostrum is stronger. Calf survivability improves, and even bull fertility benefits."

A recent survey of Western Canadian cow-calf producers found that 60% of respondents had tested at least some of their feed in the past three years. Among those who test, the main reasons cited were to meet production goals (27%), determine supplement requirements (24%), and save money (20%).

The most common reason given by non-testers was that their cattle seemed healthy, so there was no need to test. However, as research indicates, when cows don't receive adequate nutrients, their reproductive efficiency is the first to suffer.

Feed testing is a straightforward process that involves collecting a feed sample, sending it to a laboratory for analysis, and using the results to develop rations to meet the animals' nutritional requirements.

To collect a representative sample, producers are advised to take multiple samples from their feed—whether hay, silage, or other forages—mix them in a clean pail, and extract a sub-sample from that mixture. For baled forages, a forage probe should be used to core at least 10% of the bales. In the case of silage, samples should come from various areas of the pit or bunker to account for variability in moisture and nutrient content.

Meyers often helps others with this part of the process. "For producers who feel overwhelmed, I'll go out myself and collect samples. I've even grabbed samples of pasture through the summer just to see what's there and what's missing," he said.

Once the sample is collected, it must be sent to a reputable lab for analysis. The two test methods are: Near-Infrared Reflectance Spectroscopy (NIR), and Wet Chemistry.

NIR is a faster, more affordable option that is generally accurate for energy and protein, but less reliable for minerals. Wet Chemistry is a costlier method but more precise, particularly for testing mineral content and mixed feeds.

Most producers either consult an extension specialist, feed company or consulting nutritionist to determine the appropriate test package and to develop rations using test results.

"Over 60% of producers rely on third-party support for interpreting their feed test results," noted Kathy Larson, an extension economist at the University of Saskatchewan.

Once the results come back, they can be used to formulate rations that meet the specific needs of your herd. Rikki Wilson, a livestock and feed extension specialist with the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture, said that "we can sit down and go through those results with you, break down what the feed test is telling you, and help formulate a ration tailored to your herd."

Meyers takes a customized approach. "Everything I do is based on my own feed and water test results. I work with nutritionists to create a program that's tailored to my herd. The result? Healthier animals and reduced costs." *(Continued Page 3)*

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Minimizing Herd Health *(cont.)*

Some producers hesitate to test their feed due to cost concerns, but the reality is that not testing can be far more expensive in the long run. “The cost of feed testing is not as much as people might think,” said Larson. “NIR tests can be as low as $30 per sample, while wet chemistry tests range from $50 to $80.”

When compared to the potential financial losses from reduced fertility, lower weaning weights, or costly health issues, the return on investment for feed testing becomes clear.

“It’s $50 a test but if I can save myself a thousand bucks on mineral costs over time, that’s worth it,” said Meyers. “Plus, I know my herd is getting exactly what they need — nothing more, nothing less.”

In addition to optimizing feed efficiency, feed testing can help prevent serious health issues, such as nitrate toxicity in drought-stressed feeds or mineral imbalances that lead to poor growth and reproductive performance.

Feed testing goes hand-in-hand with other important herd management practices. Survey data shows that producers who test their feed are more likely to also test their water quality, body condition score their cows, weigh their bales, and monitor their cattle’s manure for signs of nutritional deficiencies.

“For me, water testing is just as important as feed testing,” said Meyers. “You can’t expect animals to thrive if you’re not sure what they’re drinking or eating.”

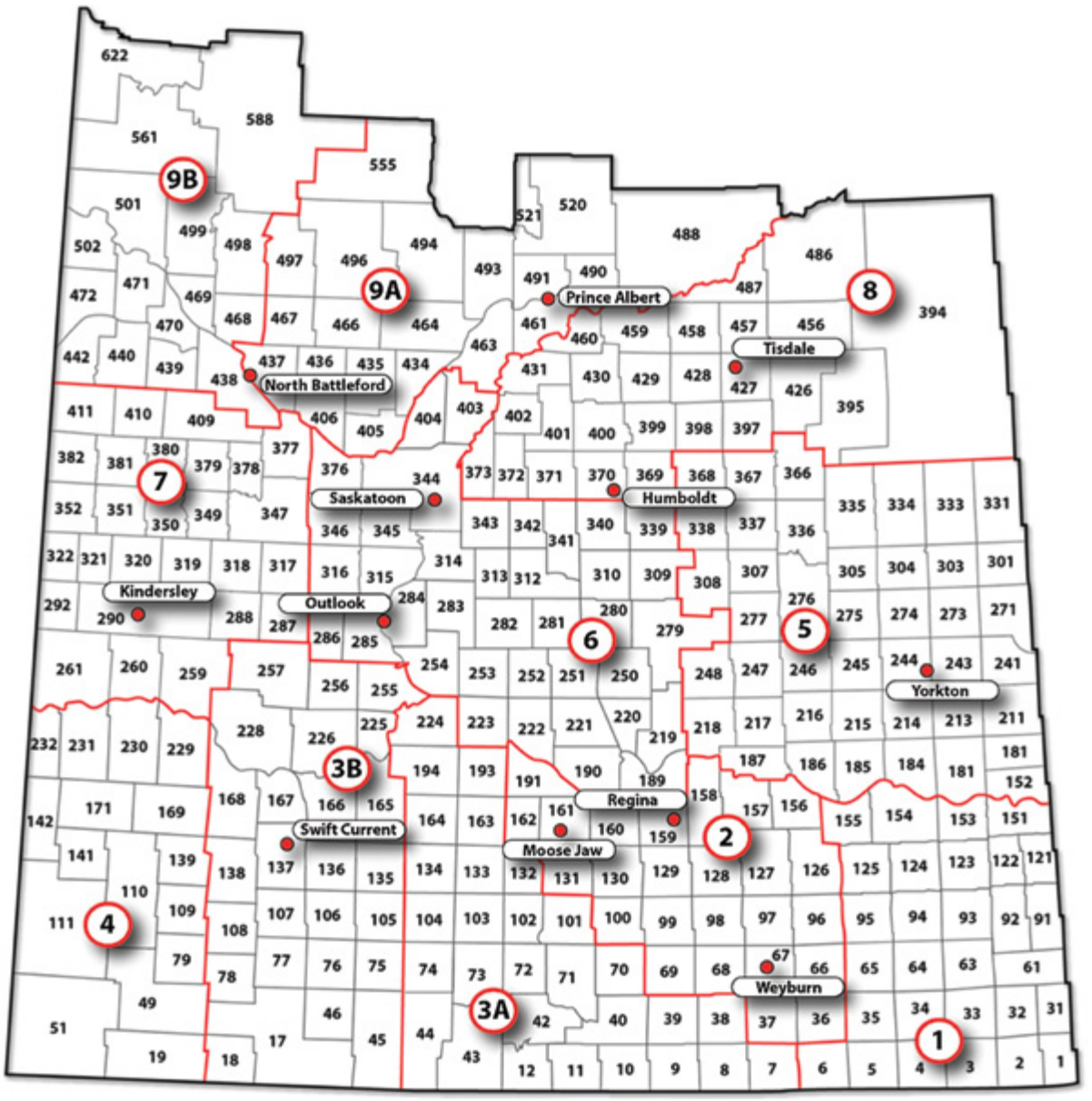
Meyers also cautions against relying on products without proven effectiveness. “I’ve never seen acceptable intake data from the tub companies,” he says. “To me, that’s spending money with a negative return on investment.”

Feed testing is a valuable yet underutilized tool that can help cow-calf producers improve herd health, increase efficiency, and reduce costs. Whether working with an extension specialist, a private consultant, or developing a custom solution, taking the time to test feed can have significant benefits.

“You can’t manage what you don’t measure,” Meyer emphasized. “It costs me an extra ten bucks a cow per year, but I’m getting 98% conception, great calf survivability, and strong fertility — even in my younger bulls. That’s a return I’ll take any day.”

The Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture does free livestock water testing at each of their regional offices.

For more information on feed testing, visit the Beef Cattle Research Council’s feed testing resources or contact your local extension office for guidance on getting started.



Open Innovation Day Near Estevan Bridges Ranching with Technology

BY MARIANNE POSSBERG

SASKATCHEWAN CATTLE ASSOCIATION

In a compelling fusion of agriculture and technology, the Open Innovation Day: Beef Cattle Ranch unfolded on August 11 at the Ross L-7 Ranch near Estevan, spotlighting how smart tools are reshaping ranch management.

Organized by the Saskatchewan Cattle Association (SCA) in partnership with the Southeast Techhub, Southeast College, and the National Research Council, the event gathered forward-thinking producers and technology advocates for a hands-on showcase of advancements tailored to the beef industry.

One of the main demonstrations showed how ration balancing, once a time-consuming process, can now be completed in minutes using a cloud-based feed mixing system linked to an iPad and Bluetooth scale. The ranch also showcased its adoption of RFID tagging to improve livestock traceability and disease response, along with precision tools for regenerative grazing and winter management.

The event emphasized how technology adoption in the beef sector has historically lagged behind crop production due to narrow margins, but innovations like these are beginning to change the landscape. By streamlining operations and improving resilience, ranches can better adapt to challenges while protecting profitability.

Organizers noted that Open Innovation Day provided an opportunity for collaboration between ranchers, researchers, and tech developers, ensuring new tools are designed to fit the realities of Saskatchewan's diverse cattle operations.

While this was the first Open Innovation Day of its kind, the goal is to establish it as a recurring event that fosters greater awareness, collaboration, and innovation in the beef industry. Organizers hope to continue this discussion at the Beef Tech Breakfast during the Saskatchewan Beef Industry Conference on Thursday, January 25.

New Research Reveals Root of Barley Lodging

Scientists have made a breakthrough in understanding what keeps barley standing tall in the field, potentially saving farmers millions in lost revenue and grain quality.

A comprehensive four-year study led by researchers from the National Research Council of Canada and the University of Saskatchewan has identified specific root traits that help barley resist lodging - the tendency of plants to fall over before harvest.

"Lodging is a critical issue in barley causing decreased yield, harvest difficulty, increased disease and reduced grain quality," said Dr. Allan Feurtado, lead researcher on the project. The displacement of plants from their vertical position can reduce yields by up to 80% in extreme cases.

The research team discovered that barley varieties with wider root angles and more spread-out root systems demonstrated significantly better resistance to lodging. "Barley varieties with shorter stature, wider crown root angle and a diffuse root system tend to be more resistant to lodging," the researchers noted among their key findings.

Importantly, the study found that these critical root traits are established very early in plant development. "Root angle is established immediately after germination thus allowing breeders to select for this trait in an indoor environment with relative simplicity and high-throughput," the team reported.

Through extensive field trials conducted in Saskatoon and Rosthern between 2020 and 2023, researchers evaluated 13 barley cultivars varying in lodging resistance. They measured stem strength, root crown characteristics, and pushing resistance while developing innovative indoor screening methods to predict field performance.

The researchers identified a trait called "solidity" - the ratio of root area to convex area - as strongly associated with lodging resistance. Lower solidity indicates a more spread-out root system that provides better anchorage.

"The identification of root angle and solidity as traits which can be used to assess lodging resistance is a significant step forward," the team concluded. These traits can be measured indoors using high-throughput imaging, creating an efficient screening tool for breeders.

The research has potential applications beyond lodging resistance. The root system architecture data collected could also help develop more drought-tolerant and nutrient-efficient barley varieties in the future.

This project was funded by the Agriculture Development Fund with support from the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association, Western Grains Research Foundation, Saskatchewan Barley Development Commission, and Alberta Wheat and Barley Development Commission.

Study Reveals Insurance Key Factor in Grassland

A recent study from the University of Saskatchewan has found important insights into why cattle producers convert native grassland to cropland in Western Canada.

Researchers Rebecca Zanello and Eric Micheels surveyed 339 cattle producers across the prairie provinces to understand the underlying motivations behind grassland conversion decisions.

"Approximately 1.31 million acres of grassland were lost in Canada between 2016 and 2021," the researchers note, with agricultural tillage being one of the leading causes.

The study found that crop insurance availability significantly impacts producers' land conversion decisions. When producers faced a 10-year wait period before being eligible for crop insurance on newly converted land, they were much less likely to convert grassland to crops.

Researchers identified three distinct producer types: "Moderates" (42.7%) who value community impacts and environmental protection, "Rejectors" (45.4%) who didn't strongly identify with any proposed values, and "Profit Enthusiasts" (11.7%) who placed emphasis on financial success.

The study also revealed two behavioral segments: "Conversion Cautious" producers (36.7%) who operate smaller farms with more pasture, and "Insurance Oriented" producers (63.3%) who are sensitive to insurance availability and more likely to have larger cropland operations.

"Risk attitudes were an important driver of utility in both types of analysis," the researchers noted, with risk-loving producers more likely to convert land than risk-averse ones.

The findings suggest that policies similar to the U.S. SodSaver program, which restricts crop insurance on newly converted land, could be effective conservation tools in Canada.

The study also highlighted the need for better risk management programs for cattle producers. While crop insurance is heavily subsidized, livestock price insurance premiums are not, making cattle production appear riskier than crop production.

Only 37% of surveyed producers had purchased Moisture Deficiency Insurance for their pasture, with many unaware of its availability.

"By providing programs that reduce income volatility, producers may begin to see cattle production as a reliable part of their business model rather than something that can be inherently riskier than crop production," the researchers concluded.

Learning in the Grasslands

2025 Saskatchewan Pasture Tour Showcases Innovation and Resilience

BY MARIANNE POSSBERG

Against the backdrop of rolling native prairie and endless summer skies, producers, researchers, and agrologists gathered in Val Marie on August 6 for the 2025 Annual Saskatchewan Pasture Tour, a hands-on field day dedicated to the future of grazing and grassland management.

Organized by the Saskatchewan Forage Council, with support from the Saskatchewan Cattle Association, Ducks Unlimited, SODCAP, and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture, this year's tour took participants through two pastures as well as the Grassland National Park in Southwest Saskatchewan, each site highlighting challenges and solutions in sustainable grazing.

As the event was shifted due to welcome rain (though inconvenient for tour purposes), Pat Hayes provided his talk inside the Val Marie Hall, rather than at his pasture. He shared how incorporating prairie species back into the land can restore ecological balance, strengthen forage resilience, and create healthier rangelands for future generations.

The first stop on the bus, at the Auvergne Wise Creek Pasture, offered participants a deeper dive into range health assessments, plant identification, and drought management strategies. Participants broke into several groups, which allowed for more discussion and learning at various parts of the land.

At Lynn Grant's pasture, attention turned to practical innovations: a FarmSimple Watering System designed for efficient livestock hydration, and strategies for tackling invasive species, including the encroachment of crested wheatgrass into native pasture.

The last stop of the day was at the Grasslands National Park, giving attendees a chance to connect in the very landscape they work to steward. They noted their work to reduce leafy spurge using the leafy spurge beetle.

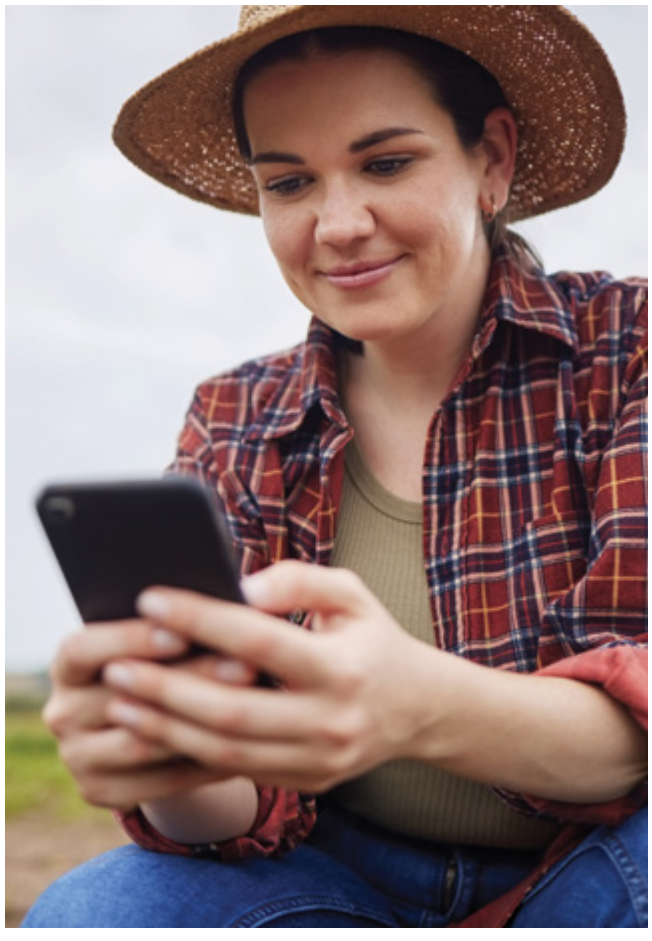
Supper and networking followed the day's tours, rounding out a program that blended science, tradition, and community spirit.

"This tour is about learning from the land and from each other," said one organizer. "Producers face increasing pressures, from drought to invasive species, and events like this give us the tools and connections to adapt."

The Saskatchewan Pasture Tour continues to serve as a bridge between research and real-world application, ensuring the province's iconic grasslands remain both productive and resilient.

Partnered Digital Sustainability Campaign Wraps with Strong Results

A successful six-week digital sustainability campaign highlighting the Canadian beef sector's environmental sustainability progress wrapped at the beginning of May. The public-focused campaign entitled *Confessions of a Canadian beef farmer* was delivered in partnership by the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (CRSB), Canada Beef, and the Public and Stakeholder Engagement Program (PSE). The partnership allowed for combining of funds and resources for a more impactful, wider-reaching campaign.



Confessions of a Canadian beef farmer centered around a lead story video and three extension videos, each of which built on the lead with concrete examples of sustainability progress based on key messages shown to resonate through consumer message testing. The key messaged leveraged data and information from the CRSB's National Beef Sustainability Assessment (NBSA).

Carbon Under Cover highlights the role of Canadian beef cattle in climate stewardship. Land used for raising cattle stores an incredible 1.9 billion tonnes of soil organic carbon, which is an amount equal to taking two billion cars off the road for an entire year.

In *Raising Cattle, Lowering Emissions*, we see how the industry has already made significant progress. Between 2014 and 2021, the greenhouse gases created from bringing every kilogram of Canadian beef from farm to table dropped by 15 percent. And the journey doesn't end there: we're on track to reduce emission intensity by 33 percent by 2030.

Hooves and Habitat reminds us that pastures aren't just for cattle. They pull double duty, supporting beef production while also providing 74 percent of the critical habitat that wildlife need for reproduction across Canada's crop and pastureland.

Confessions of a Canadian beef farmer highlighted the sector's sustainability progress, reaching over 19 million Canadians through digital channels.

Alberta feedlot operator Andrea Stroeve-Sawa graciously served as the face and voice of the campaign and in the video footage other producers' faces and production systems were represented.

The campaign uses digital tactics including advertising on Meta, YouTube, and Digital Out of Home (eg. malls, office buildings, subway stations) to reach Canadians. The campaign garnered a total of over 19.1 million impressions. The click through rate (CTR) of the campaign was 1.48% and cost per click (CPC) was $0.34, well above the 0.48% average CTR and well below the average $0.96 CPC for an awareness campaign from the agriculture sector delivered through social advertising.

Throughout the six weeks of the campaign, audiences were refined and advertising dollars were shifted among tactics (for example from Meta to YouTube), to capitalize on channels seeing the most success. For this campaign, YouTube was far and away the most effective tactic, bringing in over 54% of the impressions and 85% of the clicks ($0.16 CPC). In addition to digital advertising, an updated benchmarks webpage on the CRSB site was created and served as a campaign landing page. Here you can see all videos, as well as source reports and scientific assessments from the NBSA. You can also find the videos on CRSB's Youtube channel @CRSB_beef.

From Pasture to Classroom

Teachers Gain New Perspectives on Beef and Agriculture at AITC-SK's Teacher Expedition

BY CHANDRA GUSIKOSKI
COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

This summer, 22 teachers from across Saskatchewan traded in their whiteboards for boots and boarded buses for Agriculture in the Classroom Saskatchewan's (AITC-SK) Teacher Agriculture Expedition. Held August 12–14 in the Yorkton area, the three-day, hands-on learning tour immersed educators in the world of farming, food production, and sustainability—offering a firsthand look at the province's diverse agricultural sector.

One of the most impactful stops was at TD3L Hull Ranch, where teachers learned about cattle production directly from rancher and Saskatchewan Cattle Association member, Levi Hull. From watching a stock dog move cattle to touring a corn field destined for feed, educators were given a rare behind-the-scenes look at what it takes to raise beef in Saskatchewan. Hull walked teachers through essential practices, including pregnancy checking and the responsible use of antibiotics, while emphasizing the science, care, and commitment behind raising healthy cattle.

For many participants, this experience challenged preconceived notions and sparked new respect for the beef industry. Teachers who previously had little to no connection with farming were able to see the complexity and responsibility behind every decision ranchers make. "I didn't know all the steps and regulations required by farmers," shared one teacher. "From seeds to feed to animal care, it opened my eyes to the level of detail and oversight involved."

The theme of transparency and trust extended beyond the ranch. Throughout the expedition, teachers also learned about food safety regulations, sustainable practices, and the rigorous standards Canadian beef producers follow. For educators, this reinforced a sense of confidence in Canadian agriculture. "I now have a better understanding about the regulations for food production in Canada," another teacher noted. "From crops to milk to meat, I feel better and safer about the food I eat. I will continue to choose Canadian-made and grown food products."

The impact of the beef experience went far beyond the farm gate. Teachers began connecting what they learned to their classrooms, considering how to share these real-world stories with students. Some spoke of inviting local farmers to present, while others envisioned lessons on food traceability, sustainability, and careers in agriculture. "Being able to experience where the 'magic' happens firsthand is undeniably valuable for students," one participant explained.

The broader three-day expedition included visits to pedigreed seed, honey, vegetable, equipment, food processing, and bison operations, and presentations on dairy and chicken. The tour highlighted the diversity of Saskatchewan agriculture and the innovation driving it forward. Teachers left with a deeper appreciation for the people and practices behind the food they eat at their own dinner tables.

By the end of the journey, every participating teacher reported increased knowledge of agriculture and a commitment to share their learning with peers and students. For AITC-SK, this outcome underscores the value of connecting educators with agriculture firsthand. These teachers are now equipped to return to their schools as ambassadors—helping students for years to come understand where their food comes from and why Saskatchewan agriculture, including its beef sector, matters. AITC-SK is grateful for the organizations that supported this impactful tour, including Saskatchewan Cattle Association.

You can help continue this important work. AITC-SK relies on the support of volunteers and donors to provide these transformative experiences. Whether it's lending your time, sharing your expertise, or making a donation, your involvement helps inspire teachers and students to connect with agriculture in meaningful ways. Visit ***aitc.sk.ca*** to learn how you can get involved.

Agriculture in the Classroom
Connecting Kids and Agriculture

Locking in Today's Cattle Prices

SCIC
SASKATCHEWAN CROP INSURANCE CORPORATION

In 2025, cattle prices reached record highs. This is good news for Saskatchewan livestock producers, but high market prices can also bring risk. While conditions are currently strong, the market remains uncertain and unpredictable.

Prices have risen largely because of tight cattle supplies across North America, with both Canadian and U.S. herds at their lowest levels in decades. Saskatchewan feeder steers, for example, are trading well above their five-year average. Even with these supply constraints, demand for beef remains robust both domestically and internationally, where consumers continue to prioritize beef in their diets. Yet despite these strong fundamentals, there are still many unknowns ahead.

Market volatility is being shaped by several factors. Trade tensions and the threat of tariffs create uncertainty and make conditions fragile. Smaller herd sizes mean that any disruption — whether from disease outbreaks, export restrictions, or other shocks — can have ripple effects that are felt across the sector. Weather is another variable, with dry conditions in parts of Saskatchewan driving up feed costs and influencing herd management decisions.

Against this backdrop, Livestock Price Insurance (LPI) remains an important risk management tool. LPI allows producers to lock in today's high prices as a floor. If the market holds, cattle can still be sold at strong prices, but if prices fall, LPI coverage steps in. The higher the value of cattle, the greater the potential loss if prices drop, which makes protecting that value even more critical. LPI is designed to give producers peace of mind in uncertain markets by helping to safeguard their investment.

Prices have risen largely because of tight cattle supplies across North America, with both Canadian and U.S. herds at their lowest levels in decades. Saskatchewan feeder steers, for example, are trading well above their five-year average.

The program works by setting a floor price that protects against downturns while still allowing producers to benefit if markets remain strong. At no point are producers required to sell during the life of their policy, which means they retain full control of their marketing decisions.

Each producer can select the coverage level and policy length that best fits their operation. Coverage is based on data from the Chicago Mercantile Exchange futures, and the forward price methodology is actuarially certified, ensuring that the program is sound and credible rather than speculative.

You raise your livestock. LPI helps protect their worth. Even when cattle prices are high, insurance should not be overlooked. In an unpredictable market, LPI provides security, flexibility, and stability, giving producers confidence to plan for the future.

Raising Beef, Raising Standards

CRSB
Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef

As a Canadian beef farmer or rancher, you have a powerful story to tell. Thanks to generations of land and cattle stewardship and the daily dedication of producers like you, beef raised in Canada is recognized globally as being among the most sustainable in the world.

Canada is one of the most efficient beef-producing countries in the world, generating 52% fewer greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions per kilogram of beef when compared to the global average. From 2014 to 2021, the GHGs to produce each kilogram of Canadian beef declined by 15%, a result of advanced genetics, feed efficiency, and management practices.

This puts the Canadian beef industry on track to reach its 2030 goal of a 33% reduction in emissions intensity while achieving healthier and more productive cattle. This is a win-win both for producers' pocketbooks and the industry's footprint.

And the story of Canadian beef cannot be told without the story of Canada's grasslands. Land used for grazing cattle is one of the country's most important ecosystems. Backed by science, metrics from CRSB's National Beef Sustainability Assessment (NBSA) make it clear that Canadian beef is more than just food.

According to the CRSB's 2024 sustainability assessment, land used to raise beef cattle stores 1.9 billion tonnes of soil organic carbon — nearly 40% of all carbon in Canada's agricultural soils. Of those 1.9 billion tonnes, Saskatchewan holds 30%, highlighting the province's critical role in storing soil organic carbon. Most of this carbon is found in Canada's native grasslands (67%), followed by tame pastures (24%) and cropland (9%).

To put it into perspective, the total carbon these landscapes currently store is equivalent to the annual emissions from over two billion passenger vehicles.

Beyond carbon, land used to raise beef cattle provides critical wildlife habitat. While the overall habitat capacity across Canada's agricultural land has declined, the share provided by grazing land used for beef cattle has actually increased.

When considering all crop and pastureland combined, land used for grazing beef cattle provides 74% of reproductive and nesting habitat and 55% of feeding habitat for Canada's wildlife. Over 60 species at risk rely on grasslands — landscapes maintained by farmers and ranchers, because of grazing, not in spite of it.

Beef cattle also contribute to local circular economies by upcycling what humans can't or won't eat – in fact, 86% of global livestock feed is not fit for human consumption. In Canada, beef cattle consume by-products such as culled vegetables, distillers' grains, crop residues, and downgraded crops, converting them into high-quality protein, while diverting food waste from the land fill and supporting food security and local economies.

Canadians have a strong and growing level of trust in beef farmers and ranchers. According to a 2025 Consumer Research survey conducted through Public and Stakeholder Engagement, 70% of Canadians express positive perceptions of beef farmers, a jump of seven per cent in the past year alone.

Support for beef as part of an environmentally friendly diet has also strengthened. In 2025, 74% of Canadians agreed that beef is an environmentally friendly food choice — a 14% increase since 2023. Agreement is even stronger in Saskatchewan, where 80% of residents share this view.

Canadian beef is more than just a source of protein — it's providing ecosystem services, maintaining grasslands, supporting the Canadian economy, while contributing to a resilient Canadian food system.

These numbers reflect your hard work and dedication. Earlier this year, CRSB showcased that story through a public-facing campaign that we estimated to reach over 19 million Canadians. You can share this story, adding your voice to show your contribution to building a sustainable food system here in Canada .

The dedication Canadian farmers and ranchers have towards caring for the animals, protecting the land, and providing nutritious protein is the foundation of Canada's reputation as a leader in beef production. Behind every positive metric is a lot of hard work and commitment from people like you raising Canada's beef cattle, and for that, we as Canadians are very proud.

Balancing Risk and Resilience in Canada's Beef

BY TYLER FULTON
CCA PRESIDENT

Frustrating trade risk and uncertainty continue to prevail in our industry, but market conditions are strong and margins are high. Inter-provincial trade barriers are being reviewed and removed, new export markets are being explored, trade agreements are being pursued, and consumer demand for beef remains strong. There is much to be optimistic about as Parliament resumes.

CCA was invited to share recommendations as Prime Minister Carney's government prepares to present its first budget. The priorities, consistent with those outlined in our election document, focus on ensuring continued duty-free trade of live cattle and beef with the United States, updating Canada's Specified Risk Material (SRM) removal requirements to align with U.S. standards, and investing in Business Risk Management programs such as Livestock Price Insurance (LPI), AgriStability, and the Advance Payments Program (APP) to make them more affordable and effective for producers.

Investing in Business Risk Management tools is important to protect your operational investment. For cow-calf producers, the recently announced change in AgriStability compensation rate is significant, and if producers trigger a payment, more of the loss will be covered. Now is a good time to plan ahead for 2026. We hope that additional investments in BRM programs will be announced.

Saskatchewan was included in the initial list of regions that are eligible for the Livestock Tax Deferral (LTD) provision. Although the list of designated regions is preliminary and more regions may be added, we encourage producers to reach out through their provincial associations to see if they are within an affected region or buffer zone. CCA will continue to advocate for all impacted producers to be eligible for LTD regardless of their location.

The North American cattle herd is at its tightest level in more than 50 years. With the disturbing development of New World Screw worm infestation moving through long-established barriers within Mexico, the USA has been forced to place new restrictions on cattle moving from Mexico into the USA. These restrictions have further exacerbated the tight supply and threaten the processing sector due to capacity utilization reaching critically low levels. The North American industry can ill afford additional barriers on the US-Canada border which would alter the competitive landscape if we were to lose a plant to lack of supply.

CCA was fortunate to participate in an Indo-Pacific trade mission with Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Heath MacDonald. Trade missions such as these are critical to market expansion and relationship building. We saw first-hand that Canadian beef is very much in demand throughout the Indo-Pacific region.

While there, Australia re-opened to Canadian beef imports. While Australia is unlikely to import large quantities of Canadian beef, this is a very positive development. A few Asian countries still have some BSE restrictions in place, and we hope that they will soon follow Australia's example and we can further expand our export markets. Increased demand for Canadian beef around the world increases the demand for more Canadian cattle which will further strengthen our industry.

On August 12, 2025, Alberta Beef Producers (ABP) notified CCA of their intention to withdraw from our association by June 30, 2026. ABP and CCA have a long-standing collaborative and cooperative relationship, and we are both committed to continue working together to benefit beef producers in Alberta and across our country. CCA is committed to working directly with the Alberta Beef Producers and all of our provincial members to address this matter so we can all continue our work for the benefit of beef producers across Canada. I am optimistic that we can reach an agreement that will see ABP remain part of our national organization.

Canadian Cattle Association

Sustainability, Safety, and Success through Verified Beef Training

In today's competitive beef industry, maintaining high standards of quality, safety, and sustainability are more important than ever. For beef producers, taking the Verified Beef Training offers numerous benefits that can significantly enhance business operations and consumer confidence.

"Taking the time to complete the VBP+ training not only opens up SCAP funding for producers but it shows that they are willing to learn more about what best management practises they can implement to prove to consumers the food we produce is sustainable and safe," said Joleen Shea, Vice Chair of the Saskatchewan Verified Beef Board and rancher from Kindersley.

This training not only equips producers with essential knowledge and skills but also demonstrates a commitment to excellence that resonates across the supply chain. One of the primary benefits of Verified Beef Training is the emphasis on food safety.

While we are all ranching and farming because we probably love working with animals and being outdoors, the training emphasizes that at the end of the day we are producing food for people to eat and our actions on-farm can have consequences on the end product. Emphasis on records keeping ensures everyone involved on the operation knows which animals have been treated and what the treatment dates and withdrawal dates are.

Tracy Hebert, Knowledge Mobilization and Communications Director with the Beef Cattle Research Council explains that the "VBP+ training helps producers and their employees minimize risk and provides opportunity for adopting beneficial practices and innovations."The training delivers practical information, ideas, and tools that help producers strengthen their operations. It emphasizes better record-keeping practices to prevent problems such as double treatments, while also ensuring that if an operation is ever questioned, detailed records can demonstrate due diligence.

Producers also gain proper guidance on vaccine handling and injection techniques so the time and expense invested in herd health lead to the results they expect. By formalizing best practices, the training further enhances operational efficiency and supports long-term success.

The training provides producers with practical information, ideas, and tools that strengthen day-to-day operations. It encourages accurate record-keeping to prevent issues like double treatments and ensures that, if questions ever arise, detailed records demonstrate due diligence. Participants also learn proper vaccine handling and injection techniques so that the time and money invested in herd health achieve the intended results. In addition, by formalizing best practices, the training helps producers improve efficiency across their operations.

The training also strengthens the industry's reputation and reassures customers about the high quality of Canadian cattle and beef. It does this by providing guidance on reducing disease, minimizing carcass defects, and promoting best practices in areas of public concern such as painful procedures, livestock transportation, and grassland management.

Producers who complete the VBP+ training demonstrate that they are proactive in caring for animals, the land, and the food supply chain. It provides producers confidence that plans are in place for emergency

response, and that practices done on farm are in line with national standards."

"At times the industry is focused on reporting only how many operations are VBP+ Certified (completed the on farm assessment), but I think the bigger story is how many people and operations the VBP+ program is impacting by completing the training," explained Karla Hicks, Chair of Saskatchewan Verified Beef Production Board and rancher from Mortlach.

"The training provides new and different ideas that you can implement on your operation like adding additional information to your treatment records, having protocol around needle disposal, vaccine storage and correct temperatures that don't include the dashboard of the truck! Biosecurity is another big topic that is covered in the training. It is not meant to tell people how to manage their operation, but provide awareness of areas to improve upon to prevent a disease outbreak.

"For example, if you invite a neighbour or client to come and walk through a pen of calves or tour your cow herd, the biosecurity component of the training will help you think a little differently about the visit and provide practical suggestions on how you can still tour your cattle, but simultaneously having protocol

in place to prevent a disease outbreak. These practices aren't meant to complicate anyone's operation, only enhance what you are already doing. The training component of VBP+ is invaluable and I don't think we give enough weight to the outreach and impact it's having."

If you are interested in taking the training it is available online anytime at www.verifiedbeef.ca or you can contact Erika Stewart to set up an in person training workshop in your area. **sk@verifiedbeef.ca** or **(306) 774-2220**.

Inspection That Pays for Itself

Saskatchewan's livestock sector depends on secure commerce. That's not just a slogan —it's the day-to-day work of Livestock Services of Saskatchewan (LSS): facilitating transactions through inspection and identification services, documentation that protects ownership and facilitates movement, and the integrity management that underpins trust at the auction ring, on-farm, and across borders.

Our mission and values — credibility, accountability, proactivity, and integrity — are more than words; they are measured in real outcomes for producers, dealers, and lenders across the province.

The numbers tell a clear story. In our most recent audited year, inspection services supported revenue collection on 1,673,056 head, with industry remitting $4.56 million in fees net of dealer commission. Against that cost, the measured benefits to Saskatchewan's livestock industry totaled $35.03 million, producing a net measured value of $30.47 million.

Those benefits aren't abstract. They include $6.56 million in proceeds redirected to the rightful owner on 2,853 head, $370,300 from the identification of 161 stray animals, and $1.29 million associated with 559 reported missing or stolen livestock. Just as important for commerce, $26.72 million in cattle and proceeds were appropriately withheld for clearance on 11,618 head, ensuring integrity in transactions.

Add to that the value of legislated-use documents (manifests, permits, etc.) and the role of the LSS Inspection and Movement Database — utilized by the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) — and you have a system that protects ownership, accelerates dispute resolution, and keeps business moving.

These results are possible because LSS operates within Saskatchewan's Animal Production Act and Animal Production Regulations, providing services that the market relies on: issuing, transferring, and maintaining livestock brands; inspecting animals offered for sale in Saskatchewan (and in Manitoba for Saskatchewan producers); and providing permits for out-of-province transfers.

Our licensing administration, held in trust across 126 Dealers and 279 Agents, and management of the Provincial Brand Registry (11,001 registered brands) provide the backbone of secure, traceable commerce and modern digital documentation.

To sustain this reliability province-wide — and to keep pace with rising operating costs —the inspection fee will adjust to $3.25 per head effective September 1, 2025 Effective September 1, 2028 the fee will adjust upwards again by $0.50 per head. These adjustments are the outcome of industry consultations led by the Ministry of Agriculture through the owners of LSS over the past several months.

It is not an independent LSS decision. Our role is service delivery according to our Admin Agreement within the regulatory framework for inspection outlined in the Animal Production Act and Regulations as established by government and industry resulting in timely inspections, accurate documentation, strong brand integrity, and responsive support for producers and dealers.

For most operations, the change is predictable and manageable. In return, producers and the broader industry retain a system that continually demonstrates value — financially and operationally — by protecting ownership, assuring transactions, supporting affordable credit with verified collateral, and enabling efficient, secure marketing.

LSS remains focused on what matters: professional, impartial service; staying current with changing needs across the value chain; and enforcing regulations with integrity. As the sector continues its shift to streamlined digital documentation, we'll keep doing what we do best — keeping cattle moving with confidence — so Saskatchewan's livestock industry can compete and thrive.

Open Farm Days Gives Consumers a Closer Look at Farming

BY PENNY EATON
MANAGING DIRECTOR, STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS
FARM & FOOD CARE SASKATCHEWAN

Farm & Food Care Saskatchewan (FFC SK) is proud to partner with Saskatchewan Cattle Association to build connection between consumers and cattle producers. In 2024, Farm & Food Care Saskatchewan launched the first Saskatchewan Open Farm Days, an annual culinary and agriculture tourism experience that connects the general public with local farms, promotes agri-tourism, and celebrates local farm products. The project serves as an incubator for agri-tourism and rural sustainability, fostering educational and experiential agricultural-based opportunities to help people understand how food is produced.

FFC SK held the second annual Open Farm Days on August 9 and 10, 2025 and featured 35 farms and agriculture-related venues across the province. Open Farm Days also offered three curated bus tours that each showcased a unique region of Saskatchewan agriculture. The Saskatoon bus tour stopped at a grain farm, a cidery, a dairy and a national historic farm; the Regina bus tour visited a greenhouse, orchard, winery, farmers market and pizzeria; in Moose Jaw, participants visited a ranch, a meadery, a Hutterite colony and a heritage museum.

Visitors were encouraged to use the online map and suggested itineraries to help plan their farm visits. We also provided a free online Open Farm Days Pass for download that provided information at visitors' fingertips and offered a chance to win prizes.

At least four of our Open Farm Days venues included cattle production, including McNeil Ranching near Alameda, Creekridge Farms near Willowbrook, and Wander's Tiny Farm near Bradwell, close to Saskatoon. As well, Pine Ranch near Morse also opened their doors to visitors for an Open Farm Days bus tour.

Participants on the Moose Jaw bus tour got to meet Cyle and Erika Stewart, Saskatchewan's 2024 Outstanding Young Farmers and tour their cow/calf and yearling operation. In fact, tour participants got an extra adventure when the bus broke down and Cyle came out to help get it running again! Guests who attended the tour enjoyed seeing a working ranch in action, and remarked on how impressed they were with the Stewarts' honest, down-to-earth explanations about beef production and environmental stewardship on their farm.

Over 100 visitors also attended the Open Farm Day event at Creekridge Farms, which took place on August 10 and enjoyed sunnier skies than many other events on the Saturday. "I think overall everyone had a great experience," said Mary Frankl, part of the team at Creekridge. "We had lots of new participants this year, which was nice to see. We're already looking forward to next year!"

Open Farm Days was an incredible opportunity for Saskatchewan consumers to see cattle up close. This is something completely new for most city-dwellers. Participants appreciated the chance to see what modern agriculture looks like and to meet and ask questions of real farmers and ranchers. Find out more at **farmfoodcaresk.org**.

Farm & Food Care Saskatchewan

Introducing Flavia van Cleef

Dr. Flavia van Cleef is an animal scientist originally from Brazil and has built her academic and research career in forage and livestock systems. She joined the University of Saskatchewan in March 2025 and has since been establishing her research program with a strong focus on enhancing the productivity and sustainability of beef production systems.

She has been actively securing funding to support her initiatives, recruiting students, and fostering collaborations with fellow faculty members and producers, conducting field visits, engaging in discussions, and exploring opportunities for future projects.

Her future research aims to develop innovative strategies that integrate forage quality improvement, grazing management, and emerging technologies to optimize forage and animal performance and environmental outcomes. Dr. van Cleef is dedicated to building open conversations with producers and stakeholders, encouraging them to share their thoughts, hopes, and aspirations to help shape research questions and develop practical solutions together.

Belton's Sweet & Sour Meatballs

Who doesn't love a good meatball? This is one of my family's favorite meal to eat. These sweet and sour meatballs are tender, perfectly seasoned, and delicious!

MEATBALL

- 1 1/2 pounds lean ground meat
- 3/4 cup quick oats or old-fashioned oats that have been lightly pulsed in a blender
- 2 eggs, slightly beaten
- 1/2 cup finely chopped onion
- 1/4 cup milk
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp pepper
- 1 tsp Worcestershire sauce

SAUCE

- 1/4 - 1/2 cup brown sugar (depending on how sweet you want the sauce)
- 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar
- 1 tsp yellow mustard
- 1/4 cup barbecue sauce
- 1 tsp Worcestershire sauce

PREPARATION

Let's start by Preheating oven to 350°F. For the meatballs, combine lean ground beef, quick oats, eggs, chopped onion, milk, salt, pepper, Worcestershire sauce, and mix well. Form meat mixture into about 12 meatballs (right around 2-inches each). Place in a lightly greased 9x13-inch pan.

For the sauce, whisk together brown sugar, apple cider vinegar, yellow mustard, bbq sauce, & Worcestershire sauce until well-combined. Pour the sauce over the meatballs and bake for 30 minutes or until the meatballs are cooked through and the sauce is slightly thickened. Next grab a few meatballs and serve over hot, cooked rice along side of carrots and peas, and please don't forget to some of that sauce that you cooked with the meatballs.

Guess what?! It's eatin' time!!!

Belton Johnson Speaking at SBIC January 21, 2026

We're excited to welcome former Saskatchewan Roughrider Belton Johnson as an inspirational speaker at the 2026 Saskatchewan Beef Industry Conference on January 21, 2026.

for more information, please visit www.saskbeefconference.com or www.saskbeef.com

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