

A Webinar Recap: Adapting Grassland Grazing to Boost Carbon Sequestration

In March, SK PCAP hosted the 4th annual Prairie's Got the Goods week with five webinars about the many great things that the native prairie grasslands and wetlands do for society.

The first webinar, that took place on March 16th, was a presentation by Dr. Mark Boyce from the University of Alberta. The presentation discussing how adaptive grazing can boost carbon sequestration has had over 360 views on the SK PCAP YouTube channel already. Adaptive multi-paddock grazing or holistic management are where there is high concentrations of livestock grazing over short periods of time and moved frequently.

Allan Savory's concept of holistic management has had a lot of criticism over the years because replication is impossible. Dr. Boyce mentioned how

the scientific method failed to support adaptive multi-paddock (AMP) grazing in the past; therefore he and his team developed an unbiased rigorous assessment of AMP grazing. They examined a variety of variables: plant composition, above ground biomass, root biomass, plant litter biomass and plant diversity. Many soil variables such as organic carbon and nitrogen, inorganic carbon, salinity and pH were also examined. Dr. Boyce goes through the results of these various variables.

They examined avian diversity on the ranches as well. Although they found no overall difference in diversity or abundance between grazing types, they found generalist species, such as vesper, grasshopper and savannah sparrows, western meadowlark, and bobolink to

be more abundant on AMP ranches. Grassland songbirds have declined dramatically in North America since the 1970s, with some species undergoing steeper declines than generalist species. The species-at-risk we tend to worry about, Sprague's pipit, Baird's sparrow and chestnut-collared longspur, were more common on the comparison sites in this study. Ultimately AMP grazing is not a one size fits all solution and Dr. Boyce suggests the best strategy for grassland birds would be a mix of ranching practices across the landscape, as it would maintain the diversity of habitat types at a larger scale.

Some of the take home messages from the presentation include: light grazing allows for the most soil carbon stored in the soil, and on AMP ranches, more

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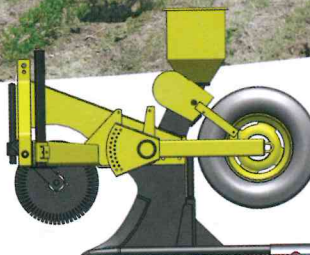
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A Report From Bill Huber President, Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association



The real problem we are seeing is the shift and facility closures of our beef processing sector as a result of COVID-19 transmissions among facility workers. This has created an imbalance between cattle ready to be processed and places for them to go. We are hopeful that, although difficult, these closures will be what is needed to get operations running with the new normal of safety standards required. And once operations are back to our new normal that we can see a correction of this imbalance and soon.

I truly hope at the time of reading that we will have seen some positive change. Most importantly, more stability in our beef processing sector but also indication of when and how things will eventually return to normal.

As always, please reach out if you have any questions or concerns. Take care,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

I write this article during a very unique and challenging time. I would normally be highlighting items such as calving season, the provincial budget and an upcoming SSGA AGM and Convention. Instead we are faced with a global pandemic that has changed the way we are all living and doing business. As you know, unlike some business, raising livestock does not stop but instead the industry has been faced with extreme challenges.

Since COVID-19 has reached Canada, SSGA has worked to stay up to date and involved with developments and decisions impacting the beef industry. The Canadian Cattlemen's Association's, Crisis Management Plan for the Canadian beef industry has been put in to play. In addition to Canadian Cattlemen's Association, SSGA continues to stay in touch with the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada with weekly, or in some cases more frequent, conference calls. Producers are encouraged to stay up to date by visiting: www.cattle.ca/cca-resources/covid-19/

Despite beef markets starting 2020 with optimism, things have sure changed. Uncertainties and challenges brought forward by COVID-19 are driving the market toward volatility. The current retail beef demand and price of beef have stayed strong but this is expected to change.

The beef industry is continuing to work with the Federal and Provincial governments to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. There continues to be discussions about modifications to the Western Livestock Price Insurance Program (WLPIP), Advanced Payments Program (APP) and AgriStability. With the significant reduction in processing capacity there is also discussion about implementing a set-aside program, like the one used during BSE. The proposal will help get the feet back under the market and align supply with processing capacity as it fluctuates.

Producers are encouraged to consider the Western Livestock Price Insurance Program (WLPIP). Although current premiums are much higher than we have seen in the past this could be a worthwhile investment. With the current market volatility this could be the only way to guarantee a floor price on your calves in fall.

The SSGA Board held a recent telephone Board meeting and made the decision to postpone the AGM and Convention which was being planned for June 7-9 in Assiniboia. Going forward, the plan is to make a decision on how and what format is acceptable to move forward with the business of our AGM. We hope to be able to provide you with that news in the coming months.

*Grazing
cont. from pg. 22*

methane is being harnessed into the soil by microorganisms. AMP grazing is effective but you need to be adaptive to environmental conditions.

Dr. Boyce also goes over a few carbon market options that are currently operational as well as Canadian programs that are being developed, which may be a worthwhile source of income for those who fit the criteria.

For more details about Dr. Boyce's study, you can find the recorded presentation, as well as all our recorded webinars, on SK PCAP's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/skpcap> or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HpoUNyWPLk8> for Dr. Boyce's presentation. 