



For Immediate Release

Long-Range Grass Planning is Mandatory for A Producer's Peace of Mind

Dry times accelerate need for plans and practices for the summer season while building for fall

Viriden, MB (MAY 15, 2019) – Larry Wegner has been around cattle operations all his life. Yet, when it comes to expert advice on preparing for possible dry times ahead, the Viriden-area cattle producer has only one answer: Plan, plan and then, plan again.

"I was checking for new calves and in the next few days I will need to decide on how many custom-grazed pairs we can bring in this year," said Wegner, Manitoba Forage and Grassland Association (MFGA)'s vice-chair and Manitoba Beef Producer (MBP)'s District 6 representative. "Although we were dry last fall, our management left us in good shape for this spring....but the lack of moisture has me guessing on how many pairs to bring in."

Wegner farms on the outskirts of Viriden with wife Rosemary and sons Maxwell and Herbert. Besides his work with MFGA and MBP, Wegner often loops in with the leaders of Manitoba's Regenerative Agriculture circuit and is a regular attendee at Manitoba Grazing Clubs, put on by Ducks Unlimited Canada. He says soil moisture and feed supplies are a constant topic in all dialogues.

"We are not in a drought yet and timely rains can change things quickly but it does not hurt to think of options now and start to plan for summer and next winter feed," said Wegner. "Now is the time for producers to start thinking of options."

Arron Nerbas runs Nerbas Brothers Angus with his brother Shane and his parents Gene and Cynthia Nerbas at Shellmouth, on the far western reaches of Manitoba near the Saskatchewan border.

Nerbas is a firm believer in utilizing planned grazing management to mitigate the effects of periodic drought. Increasing the water holding capacity of the soil and giving the grasslands extended periods of rest will pay big dividends over time and lessen the negative effects of dry conditions. Healthy soil and grass has higher resiliency to less than optimal conditions.

"If you try to prepare for a drought when you're in it, it's too late," said Nerbas, a MFGA board member. "Planned grazing mitigates drought but you have to be doing it before the drought for it to be effective."

Producers should also be aware that Manitoba Agriculture also keeps tabs on conditions around the province. When it comes to the impacts of supply and demand, one good source of pressure relief and

information for Manitoba producers is Manitoba Agriculture's Hay Listing Service <https://web31.gov.mb.ca/HayListClntExtrnl/> that helps connect those looking for hay, pasture or alternative feed with those that have supplies available. Producers wanting to make use of this service should call Manitoba Agriculture toll-free at 1-84-GROW-MB-AG (1-844-769-6224) and the department will call them back promptly to capture information. Manitoba Agriculture also promotes a planning page for producers <https://www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/livestock/beef/> - resources to help with decisions and situations.

SIDEBAR: MFGA's Top Ten Recommendations: Making Summer and Prepping for Fall in dry times

MFGA has canvassed the expertise in the organization to come up with some preparatory recommendations for producers to make the summer season and round into fall as forecasts continue to predict drier conditions on Manitoba's pasture lands.

1. Combine herds on pastures: one herd gives longer time for pastures to recover, allows pastures adequate time to recover and keeps livestock out of water to keep the source clean.
2. Wean early to reduce feed requirements.
3. Reduce need for feed via herd management such as pre-checking cows to determine energy needs and sell non-productive cows.
4. Buy/source feed in advance and feed to real weights. It's important to only feed enough hay to support the true weight of the cows in the herd.
5. Feed the right amount of hay and meet the nutritional needs at different stages of life.
6. Use Supplement and look for alternative feed sources.
7. Feed test your feed and balance your rations.
8. Start to consider annual crop fields to cut as green feed or to bale straw off.
9. Start discussion with other producers to line-up cornfields to take as silage, or have producers drop the stalks so they can be baled.
10. Talk to provincial agencies and conservation groups regarding their grazing access programs and drought plans for 2019.

For More Information:

Duncan Morrison, MFGA, Duncan@mfga.net, 204.770.3548