



Agri-News

November 19, 2007

Capturing feed grain and forage opportunities conference

Farming for feed, forage and fuel is the theme of this year's cropping and feeding conference being held at the Capri Centre in Red Deer on December 11 and 12, 2007.

The increased interest in biofuels and the additional challenges and opportunities surrounding this relatively new market will be discussed at length at the upcoming conference. Topics will include:

- the impact of the biofuel market on feed and livestock production
- federal/provincial incentives and policies
- national and local perspectives
- global perspectives on biofuels: what's the future?
- oil and energy industry perspectives
- on-farm innovation in biodiesel
- land management and environmental risk associated with biofuels: a Canadian perspective

"Ethanol production has had a significant impact on feed grain prices and on the future of the livestock industry," says Russel Horvey, beef and forage specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Food, Stettler. "While producers have already noted some of these effects, it is very possible that the full extent of the impact has not yet been felt. This conference will dedicate a full day and a half to helping producers in the feed grain industry and the livestock industry better understand what biofuel/ethanol production could mean for their industries now and in the future."

As well as addressing biofuel topics, the conference speakers from Alberta, across Canada and the U.S. will share their expertise and knowledge with conference attendees on subjects such as manure digestion; ration balancing and feed meal opportunities; and, green cover best management practices,

such as biodiversity, agro-forestry, range and forage management, and healthy riparian area management.

Registration deadline for the conference is December 6, 2007. Registration fee for the full conference, including GST, banquet, meals, coffee and proceedings is \$205 per person; \$330 for a two-person farm unit; and \$125 for students.

For further information, call the Agricultural Research & Extension Council of Alberta (ARECA) at 780-416-6046 or visit the ARECA website at www.areca.ab.ca.

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Joy Vonk (ARECA)
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Making an equine addition to the Green Certificate curriculum

Alberta's Green Certificate program is looking for Albertans actively involved in or associated with the horse industry who would be interested in helping create the curriculum for the Green Certificate Equine Project.

Green Certificate is an apprenticeship-style training program available throughout the province. There are currently eight specializations included in the program and a ninth, an equine technician, is in the development stage. There are two ways Albertans can get involved in helping design the equine curriculum – by attending a focus group as a participant or by agreeing to receive and review a validation package.

“To design a Equine Technician Green Certificate that is practical and of benefit to the students and to the industry, experienced volunteers who are willing to share their expertise are required,” says Nicole Hornett, Green Certificate program assistant with Alberta Agriculture and Food, Edmonton. “To ensure that the equine technician curriculum includes essential aspects of the equine industry and that it will provide information, learning and skill development for future industry employees, we are enlisting the help of expert volunteers to attend a focus group session in January 2008. During this session, the group will prepare an initial outline and framework for the Green Certificate equine course.”

To be a focus group participant, applicants must be able to meet for one or two days in mid-January 2008. Albertans who would like to participate in the focus group, or would be willing to receive and review the draft curriculum developed at the focus group session, are asked to submit a short introduction to Hornett including the following information:

- your equine experience
- equine organizations you are affiliated with (please list)
- aspects of the industry you feel you most adequately represent
- your availability to attend the focus group session in January 2008 (focus group only)
- your commitment to review the curriculum package and provide constructive feedback
- your familiarity with or experience with the Green Certificate Program
- your contact information – phone number, mailing address, e-mail address

Please submit this information by November 28, 2007. All questions and submissions should be directed to Hornett at 780-644-5378, fax: 780-422-7755 or e-mail: nicole.hornett@gov.ab.ca.

Alberta Agriculture and Food works in partnership with the agriculture industry and Alberta Education to offer the Green Certificate to all Albertans.

Contact: *Nicole Hornett*
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Education career forum

“I had never considered the possibility of working in the field of agriculture,” stated a third year education student after this year's Education Career Forum at the University of Alberta (U of A). “I always thought that agriculture meant farming.”

In October 2007, Brent Andressen, agricultural education coordinator, agricultural education and training branch, Alberta Agriculture and Food, Edmonton, joined a panel of speakers to address over 70 third and fourth year education students. Andressen spoke about the varied career possibilities open to students upon graduation if they choose not to pursue teaching in the traditional classroom. “When these young people focus on the many skills they develop throughout their teacher training, and see how these skills can be applied in agriculture-related careers, they become very excited about the possibilities,” says Andressen.

Career and Placement Services (CaPS) at the U of A supports students as they begin career planning and finding work. CaPS helps with resume writing, offers interview coaching, and connects students with a network of employers. Through this process, students stay informed about career-related developments in the modern workplace.

Amy Roy-Gratton is the events coordinator for CaPS. Each year, Roy-Gratton and her team present dozens of forums across the campus designed to give students in every faculty the opportunity to consider how many doors are open to them once they complete their academic training. “We appreciated hearing about the multiple roles (in agriculture) and how an education degree fits into them,” said Roy-Gratton after the event.

“These intelligent, skilled and hard working students will be an asset to any employer,” says Andressen. “Joining the panel was a great opportunity to start them thinking about applying their talents to the field of agriculture and food production.”

Nicole Hornett, also with the agricultural education and training branch, joined Andressen for a panel presentation to over 40 Biological Science students on November 7, 2007. “Attendees at this session were eager to learn more about how they might apply their learning in the field of sustainable agriculture, food safety and research,” says Hornett.

Contact: *Brent Andressen*
780-427-4225

Demand outstrips 2007's abundant berry crops

Berry crops were abundant this year and, although it was one of the better years for the province's berry producers, most growers sold every berry they could produce. "We're all sold out!" was a phrase that numerous customers looking for fresh Alberta-grown strawberries heard often in 2007.

"The demand for local Alberta berries continues to grow from discerning consumers who are becoming increasingly aware of the attributes of buying a fresh, quality product direct from a local producer," says Lloyd Hausher, provincial fruit industry development specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Food, Brooks. "Due to this increasing demand, there continues to be increased room for expansion into this industry. Good opportunity exists for new growers to enter the industry, and opportunity also exists for established producers to expand."

To assist new and established berry producers, the Alberta Farm Fresh Producers Association (AFFPA) orders strawberry plants in bulk each year for their members. Orders must be received in December to receive a discounted bulk price, and the plants arrive in early April. They are stored by the Association until producers are ready to plant.

The AFFPA also co-sponsors a berry production and marketing school each winter. The school presents information on basic and advanced production, and business and marketing details. The next annual Provincial Berry School will be held in Nisku on February 22 and 23, 2008.

For more information on the bulk strawberry order, AFFPA membership and the Annual Berry School, contact Don or Joan Gregorwich at 780-373-2503.

Information about how to start and maintain a commercial strawberry planting, what cultivars are available, what equipment is needed and what food safety guidelines have to be implemented, can be found in Alberta Agriculture and Food's publication **Commercial Strawberry Production on the Prairies** (Agdex 232/20-1). Specialists from each of the Prairie provinces have contributed their expertise to this 106-page book that provides a wealth of information about strawberry production and colour photos that show common diseases and pests that could affect commercial strawberry crop. The book also includes an extensive resource section that points producers to additional information sources.

Commercial Strawberry Production on the Prairies is available for purchase from Alberta Agriculture's Publication Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton. AB T6H 5T6, by calling toll free 1-800-292-5697 or 310-FARM (3276). The book can also be ordered online at www.agric.gov.ab.ca/publications.

Cost of the book is \$20, plus GST. Shipping and handling cost per order is:

- In Alberta – \$2, plus GST
- In Canada – \$3.50, plus GST
- In the U.S. – \$10

Contact: *Lloyd Hausher*
403-362-1309

Livestock trucking: insights into accidents

When it comes to trucking accidents, the majority of accidents happen in the fall, specifically in October and November. The fall is the busy season for cattle transportation, so the increase in transportation accidents is no surprise. However, the factors that contribute to these accidents may be.

Jennifer Woods, a livestock consultant in Blackie, collected data from livestock transport accidents in North America from the last 13 years in a study for AFAC (Alberta Farm Animal Care) with the help of funding from Alberta Agriculture and Food.

The data shows that of the 415 commercial livestock truck accidents:

- 59 per cent occurred in the early morning hours between midnight and 9:00 a.m.
- 80 per cent were single vehicle accidents
- 85 per cent of accident were attributed to driver error
- 1 per cent of accidents were weather condition related
- 56 per cent of accidents were cattle trucks
- 27 per cent of accidents were pig trucks
- 11 per cent of accidents were poultry trucks

"The majority of accidents involved rollovers to the right; this along with the early morning hours of accidents suggests that driver fatigue played a role in the cause of accidents," says Woods. "Driver fatigue is a major issue in all trucking sectors, but unlike other sectors, livestock truckers are dealing with live loads that are constantly 'moving' and 'shifting' and that leaves less room for driver error."

Companies need to ensure drivers are properly trained and aware of the risks of transporting livestock. One of these learning tools is the Canadian Livestock Transporter (CLT) program. The CLT is the only livestock transportation training program in Canada that provides accident prevention training as well as livestock handling, loading and species specific training.

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Truckers who complete the CLT course receive classroom and practical hands-on education to improve their livestock handling and trucking skills. The CLT is a great example of industry partnership to improve the quality of livestock handling in Alberta and Canada.

For more information on the Canadian Livestock Transporter program visit the website <http://livestocktransport.ca/> or call Adrienne Herron at 403-755-2047 or e-mail adrienne.herron@gov.ab.ca.

Contact: *Adrienne Herron* *Jennifer Woods*
 402-755-2047 403-684-3008

Learn Agri-Food Network – making small businesses bigger

Agripreneurs who are looking for ways to diversify their operation are invited to join in and glean new ideas at the Learn Agri-Food Network. The network is an informal, free two-hour information sharing forum that is held every month. It gives agripreneurs a chance to meet regularly with peers to help build agri-businesses that are based on rural experiences, products and services.

“The forum is fun and it’s easy to join,” says Karen Goad, with Alberta Agriculture and Food’s business and diversification branch, Grande Prairie. “Northwestern Alberta’s agri-business peer network is open for your business. Simply drop in to the next meeting and be ready to learn, share and exchange ideas.”

“It’s so welcoming and informal that I feel comfortable sharing my own business with the group,” says Teresa Romney of Teepee Creek and a vendor at the Bezanson Farmers’ Market.

Learn Agri-Food Network is a flexible and dynamic group that meets to talk through their business challenges, explore new ideas, collaborate with others and celebrate their successes in a confidential and supportive setting. The meetings are open to all agripreneurs and are held in at least two locations around the Peace on the second Tuesday of each month.

“Because of distance, I usually try to get to the Rycroft meeting, or Bezanson if I’m in Grande Prairie,” says Heather Porritt of Star Bright Farm near Bay Tree. “It’s a real commitment, but I always pick up at least one tip that makes it worth the two-hour trip.”

“The topics discussed at the monthly meetings vary. Conversation is always timely and targeted to the current business needs of the people in the room,” says Goad.

“Discussion usually centres around an issue that one or more of the group members is facing. It may be a distribution challenge, finding a packaging supplier, accessing a new market or almost anything business related.”

More than just a discussion forum, the Learn Agri-Food Network:

- **partners** with the Peace Value Added Food and Ag Association and PREDA on their Agriculture and Food Distribution in the Peace project. This project will construct cost effective and efficient agriculture and food distribution solutions for small scale and rural agripreneurs. Agripreneurs interested can call 780-538-5629 for more information. “It’s a huge opportunity for us,” says Darlene Hegel of Valta Bison. “Having the chance to talk one-on-one to a shipping industry specialist is timely. We’re just about at our limit in terms of supplying enough product to our Calgary markets. We’re ready for an alternative solution.”
- **connects** members to programs such as the Agri-Preneur Scholarship. This program sponsors agripreneurs to attend educational out-of-province, national and international conferences, tours and workshops. The next application deadline is November 30. Program guidelines and an application form are available at www.exploredirect.ca “I learned about the Scholarship Program through Learn Agri-Food,” says Gerty Sorenson of Mini Creek Farms near Bezanson. “I decided I was going to the Grow West conference as a birthday present to myself. The scholarship just made it easier.”
- **hosts** training sessions around educational topics such as nutrition labeling, internet promotions, display and merchandizing strategies. Workshops under development for this year include attracting and keeping employees and customer service. For example, within hours of attending the Web It Up session, Judy Bowcott e-mailed the news that they had registered their domain name, wineglassranch.ca, to cement the newly chosen name of their ranch east of Grimshaw. “It’s great to be able to use these tools,” says Jody Pellerin of Backyard Alpacas located just outside of Grande Prairie. “We now have a website, www.backyardalpacas.com.”

For further information about the Learn Agri-Food Network, and for upcoming meeting dates and locations, contact Susan Meyer at 780-538-5630 or Karen Goad at 780-538-5629.

The Learn Agri-Food Network is funded through the Renewal Chapter of the Agricultural Policy Framework, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative that aims to make Canada the leader in food safety, innovation and environmentally responsible agriculture production.

Contact: *Karen Goad*
 780-538-5629

Agri-News Briefs

Wildlife Management and Predator Control workshop

A workshop to help agricultural producers and rural residents deal with feed and garden losses due to wildlife is being held in Yellowhead County on November 21, 2007. The county is partnering with Alberta Agriculture and Food, and Fish and Wildlife to provide information to landowners who are experiencing wildlife related losses.

Topics at the workshop will cover:

- wildlife depredation control options if you are experiencing livestock feed losses
- what are your options if you are an acreage owner
- control options if you are experiencing predatory losses of your livestock
- which government body is responsible for what

Pre-registration is requested. To register, call the Yellowhead County Wildwood Office at 1-800-814-3935 or 780-325-3782.

Southern Ag Advantage conference

The Southern Ag Advantage conference and trade show are being held in Lethbridge on November 26 and 27, 2007. The agenda includes presentations on topics such as:

- the 21st century farm executive
- strengthening business relationships
- honing your crop diagnostic skills
- fine tuning fertilizer inputs for optimum economic yield
- wheat market situation and outlook
- irrigation management of timothy
- oilseed market situation and outlook
- soil biology relative to no-till and organic matter
- winter pulse crop update
- risk management
- profiting from the changing market place
- the biofuels frenzy
- an update on the Southern Alberta Conservation Association (SACA)

Registration for the full conference is \$150 per person or \$230 per couple. A one-day rate is also available, \$110 per person. For further information, contact Ken Biemans at 403-832-3961. To register, contact Robin Gardner at 403-380-3467.