



Agri-News

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What's In A Carbon Credit?

Carbon stewardship is a valuable practice that can be potentially rewarding.

"To most farmers, talk about climate change, global warming and greenhouse gas emissions might seem to be just hot air from environmental activists and politicians," says Ron Heller, Reduced Tillage LINKAGES, Vermilion.

Although the science behind greenhouse gas (GHG) issues cannot yet accurately measure net emissions, the main agricultural focus has been on how much and when various farm practices influence the carbon (C) flux associated with three culprit gases: nitrous oxide (N₂O), methane (CH₄), and carbon dioxide (CO₂). The majority of predictable agricultural greenhouse gases are linked to livestock, manure, and fertilizer – three very specific operations with risks and rewards for Alberta farm managers.

"While carbon stewardship directly benefits farmers, it's not a simple cheque in the mail," says Heller. "Governments don't yet agree how to quantify or allocate carbon removal and reduction credits. The missing link in carbon trading appears to be deciding on a value for carbon as a commodity. Contract offers and verification between eager buyers and willing sellers remains very intricate and cautious."

"As a reduced tillage agronomist I feel agriculture is actually in an enviable position with regards to carbon stewardship," says Heller. "That's because investment today in beneficial management practices (BMP) will pay dividends in the future."

Some practical ways prairie farmers can reduce on-farm GHG:

- soil test to match crop nutrient requirements
- apply nitrogen fertilizer in the spring rather than in the fall
- use rotational grazing and grow more perennial forage
- eliminate tillage-fallow (bare soil)
- switch to direct seeding (no-till)

"These methods not only lower GHG emissions but, more importantly, tend to improve a producer's input efficiencies and profit potential," says Heller. "In other words, good stewardship pays even if the actual carbon payback so far is small."

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Additionally, several of these management changes now qualify farmers in Alberta as providers of marketable carbon credits to offset industrial GHG liability, where agricultural land use is now recognized for carbon storage.

Soil carbon amounts differ significantly by soil zone and climate. However, individual farm and field practices such as reduced tillage and dynamic crop rotations can increase soil carbon.

“However, these practices must be appealing and make economic sense for the current occupants of our farmland, not just for future generations,” says Heller.

To try and help producers better understand some of these issues surrounding carbon trading, a series of workshops for producers will be looking at the opportunities and risks of carbon trading. Dates and locations are as follows:

- November 14 in Lethbridge
- November 21 in Fairview
- November 25 in Camrose
- November 26 in Westlock

Registration cost is \$30 per person, and includes a lunch and a resource package. Call 1-866-609-2700 register. Space is limited so register as early as possible.

The following sites are useful sources of information on climate change, carbon trading, and beneficial agricultural practices that mitigate green house gas emissions:

- <http://www.carbonoffsetsolutions.ca>
- <http://www.reducedtillage.ca>
- <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/> – search for carbon offset

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Industry Practices And Laws In Place To Humanely Transport Horses

The commercial transport of all livestock must be done by skilled drivers following strict federal regulations.

“We strongly advise all livestock owners and buyers to use a transportation company with drivers that are knowledgeable about industry animal care expectations and provide for the safety and comfort of the animals during transport,” says Bill desBarres, chair, Horse Welfare Alliance of Canada. “We do not condone any transportation by unscrupulous haulers who may compromise the welfare and/or safety of horses and public.”

The livestock industry in Canada offers training for livestock haulers. The Certified Livestock Transport (CLT) program (www.livestocktransport.ca) is a comprehensive training course and support service for livestock truckers, shippers and

receivers. It focuses on the humane and safe relocation of livestock and the regulatory requirements for Canada and the US. Since its launch in May 2007, some Canadian meat plants, feedlots and branded meat protocols demand mandatory CLT training for drivers delivering their livestock. Several horse haulers are CLT trained.

Part of CLT training includes how to respond in emergency situations like roll-overs. The content is taken from the comprehensive Livestock Emergency Response Course (www.afac.ab.ca/courses/lerc.htm). This program provides truckers, emergency response personnel, fire fighters, RCMP and other peace officers with knowledge on how to handle livestock in emergency distress situations.

“Unfortunately incidents do happen. We are prepared and have skilled livestock handlers to respond to livestock related incidents. The quick response to a recent trailer roll-over involving horses in Calgary is testament to this. Well-trained individuals were on site and resulted in improved animal well-being and enhanced the safety of those involved,” says desBarres.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) reminds horse owners and those who transport horses of the federal regulations that govern the humane transportation of animals in Canada. Anyone transporting horses for business or personal use must first ensure that the animals are healthy enough to handle the stress of transportation. When in doubt before loading animals, seek the advice of a veterinarian, contact the CFIA or review the *Humane Handling Guidelines For Horse* booklet, which can be downloaded at www.horsewelfare.ca.

To help protect horses during travel, transporters must:

- Provide feed, water and rest at required intervals. Horses must not be transported without feed and water for longer than 36 hours, after which they must have a rest period of at least five hours before resuming their journey.
- Provide immediate attention to animals that become unfit for transport, including veterinary treatment or euthanasia at the scene if necessary.
- Use suitable vehicles that provide adequate ventilation, non-slip footing surfaces, appropriate bedding and protection from the weather. Vehicles must also provide adequate space and headroom to allow the horses to stand in a natural position.

The use of double-deck trailers is not recommended when transporting horses. Because of their size, horses over fourteen hands can suffer head or back injuries in these vehicles.

Everyone responsible for transporting horses must follow Canada’s animal transport requirements. The CFIA recognizes that the majority of transporters treat animals with care. The few who do not may face fines or prosecution.

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Food: Today, Tomorrow, Together

A network of organizations is planning a January conference to discuss food security issues in the province. The conference will bring together farmers, policy-makers, retailers, and consumers to discuss how to work together to build a healthy local food system for all Albertans.

The conference, titled *Food: Today, Tomorrow, Together* is being hosted by a coalition of non-profit, governmental, and private sector organizations representing a diversity of interests from across the province, including Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Growing Food Security in Alberta, the City of Edmonton Community Services, the Alberta Farmers Market Association, and many more. The conference will take place in Edmonton from January 29 to 31, 2009.

“Why care? Because we all eat!” notes Susan Roberts, conference committee co-chair. “Producing food and eating is an enjoyable part of our social fabric – it’s the Canadian way. This conference will re-open our eyes to the tremendous impact that the food we eat has on our families, our communities, our health, our economy and our environment.”

The conference invites participants to learn and share with farmers, policymakers, activists, and others involved in the food system on the topics of the global food system, agriculture in Alberta, health and nutrition, buying local, hunger in Alberta, and the environmental effects of food production. A major focus of the event will be on networking and action planning.

Food: Today, Tomorrow, Together features keynote addresses by renowned authors, academics, and activists, including Carol Off, host of CBC radio’s *As It Happens* and author of “Bitter Chocolate: Investigating the Dark Side of the World’s Most Seductive Sweet.” Others in the line-up include:

- author Thomas Pawlick
- Herb Barbolet, associate in food security and sustainable community development at Simon Fraser University
- Elbert VanDonkersgoed of the Greater Toronto Authority Agricultural Action Plan

For more information or to register, go to the conference website at www.foodalberta.org.

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Cleanliness and Common Sense Equals Safe Food

A good dose of cleanliness and common sense together will go a long way to keeping food safe.

“There’s an old saying there are only three important things to good real estate: location, location, location,” says Karen Goad, farm direct marketing specialist, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Grande Prairie. “Well, the same rule applies to food handling. The words are different but the tune is the same: wash your hands, wash your hands, and wash your hands again.”

Washing hands is the single most important thing that can be done to ensure safe food, and should be done more often than many people realize.

“Wash your hands before you prepare or handle food,” says Goad. “And again after you handle meat or other uncooked food, change tasks during food preparation, use the washroom, take a break, eat, drink, smoke, chew gum or tobacco, handle dirty equipment, dishes, utensils or money, handle garbage, cough, sneeze, or touch your hair, pets or other animals.”

Goad says there is a right way and a wrong way to wash hands.

“Wetting your hands for a few seconds under running water just doesn’t cut it. It’s important to lather wet hands with soap and then scrub for at least 20 seconds. It’s the lathering and scrubbing action that really does the cleaning so make sure you wash the backs of your hands, your wrists, between your fingers and under your nails. Rinse thoroughly and dry your hands with a clean, dry towel or paper towel.”

But as important as hand washing is, there are many other simple things that can be done that are also vital to keeping food safe.

“Avoid the danger zone,” says Goad. “Bacteria grow rapidly in the danger zone, which is the unsafe temperatures between 4°C and 60°C. Limit the time foods are in this range to less than two hours.”

Always defrost and store frozen and perishable food at temperatures of 4°C or less. Keep hot foods at 60°C or higher and cool hot food quickly in shallow pans in the freezer. Use an accurate thermometer to track the temperature of the food during cooking and storage.

Change the dish cloth or sponge daily. Wet dish cloths at room temperature provide the ideal warm, moist conditions that bacteria need to grow and multiply.

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“Don’t cross contaminate,” says Goad. “Cross contamination is the transfer of harmful microorganisms from a person, object or place to food. To prevent cross contamination keep raw and ready-to-eat foods separate. Don’t let the juices of raw meat drip onto vegetables or cooked dishes. Cover food where possible. Clean and sanitize utensils, equipment and preparation areas between each task.”

“As well, avoid touching your face, skin, and hair or wiping your hands on your cleaning cloth,” adds Goad. “Skin and hair are loaded with microorganisms that are picked up by your hands and moved to cleaning cloths or directly to food. Keep clothing clean and pets and pests out of the kitchen.”

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“The Farm Women’s Conference is a great learning experience,” continues Jean. “Young farm women today are willing and eager to learn. They’re educating themselves on computers, GPS systems, and things I never had to learn. It’s a great place to pick up information on the newest and the latest.”

The registration deadline for the conference is November 10th. Brochures and registration forms are available from Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Agricultural Financial Services Corporation and municipal district offices throughout the Peace. For more information, call Melinda Trudel, 780-494-2627 (evenings), Cindy Trudel, 780-359-2107 (days) or Cindy Cuthbert, toll free 310-0000 then 780-538-5287 (days).

*Contact: Cindy Cuthbert
780- 538-5287*

31st Annual Peace Region Farm Women’s Conference

The 31st Annual Peace Region Farm Women’s Conference goes November 20 and 21, 2008, in Grande Prairie.

“This conference is always relevant,” says Jean Cameron of Grande Prairie, who’s attended the conference for over 15 years. “All the sessions have information you can take back to the farm and start using today.”

This year’s conference features a number of select-a-sessions including:

- Introduction to Grain Marketing will show how grain prices are determined and how they relate back to your farm.
- Livestock Handling explores how to use natural animal instinct to improve handling skills while minimizing stress to the animal.
- Communicate with Confidence will show participants how to make an excellent first impression.
- Understand this Business of Cattle outlines current trends and suggests marketing strategies to help increase business.

Agri-News Briefs

Alberta Barley Commission Annual General Meeting 2008

Farmers from across Alberta will gather in Banff National Park to grow the province's barley industry at the Alberta Barley Commission's 2008 annual general meeting on December 12, 2008, at the Banff Park Lodge. This year's agenda includes presentations and discussions about market challenges, crop and livestock industry partnerships, biofuel and export market opportunities, varietal updates and research progress. Registration is free. Pre-register by November 10 and receive free breakfast and lunch. To register, call 1-800- 265-9111 ext. 21 or e-mail barleyinfo@albertabarley.com.

2008-09 Agriwebinar™ Season Underway

Since 2004, the Canadian Farm Business Management Council has been connecting agricultural producers and professionals around the globe through Agriwebinar™, a unique, online conference series. This season's sessions run live at noon EST every Monday until March 30, 2009, and will cover topics such as organic farming, direct marketing from the farm, agritourism, global marketing opportunities, and more. There is no cost and anyone can participate as long as they have a computer and an Internet connection. For more information about the Agriwebinar™ series, go to www.agriwebinar.com.

Connect With Alberta Agriculture Specialists At 25th Annual Agri-Trade

Producers attending Agri-Trade on November 5 to 8, 2008, at the Westerner Park in Red Deer, will have the opportunity to connect with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development staff. The department's booth, located in the Parkland Pavilion, will feature different topics daily, and specialists will be on-hand to talk to producers about them. Staff will also be available to help producers with questions that fall outside of these areas. Producers can stop by booths 2004 to 2008 to talk to Alberta Agriculture staff over a cup of coffee. Featured topics are: clubroot and pest surveillance (Wednesday, November 5); nutrient management resources and research (Thursday, November 6); markets and Growing Forward (Friday, November 7); and, the farm water program and water well management (Saturday, November 8).