



Agri-News

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Technology To Measure Saddles For Fit

The department of equine sports medicine at the Michigan State University College of Veterinary Medicine is using 3D electronic display to measure saddle pressure on horses' backs. An electronic mat with 256 small embedded sensors measures and records the amount of pressure between the saddle and the horse's back. The sensors transmit wirelessly to a laptop computer as horse and rider move freely around the arena.

Comparing pressure distribution between left and right and weight shifts front and back of the saddle helps determine if the saddle fits the horse properly and comfortably. In this way, skin abrasions, friction rubs, pressure sores and swelling from a poor fitting saddle can be avoided.

Saddle Pressure on the Horse's Back is just one of the presentations that will be made at the 2009 Horse Breeders and Owners Conference. Dr. Hilary Clayton, chair of equine sports medicine and professor of large animal clinical sciences at the College of Veterinary Medicine, Michigan State University, will be discussing the work being done at Michigan State.

"Every rider knows how important it is to use equipment that fits a horse, whether the horse is being ridden in competition or pleasure," says Teresa Van Bryce, manager, Horse Industry Association of Alberta, Airdrie. "We are very excited to have Clayton on the panel of speakers for the next conference."

Alberta's Horse Breeders and Owners Conference (HBOC) is an annual event and is being held in Red Deer on January 9 to 11, 2009. The conference is organized by the Horse Industry Association of Alberta and the horse industry section of Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development.

Clayton is one of the 16 international presenters on the agenda at the 27th annual HBOC. Each year, the conference invites equine experts to speak on issues, current topics and subjects that are of specific interest to Albertans who breed or own horses, work in the equine industry in some capacity, or are simply horse enthusiasts.

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In addition to the educational aspect of the conference, event sponsors will be on-hand for the weekend to exhibit and talk about their equine products and services. Saturday night features the awarding of the prestigious Alberta Horse Industry Distinguished Service Award.

“The conference offers information on a variety of topics and is designed to appeal to horse breeders and owners no matter their equine interests,” says Les Burwash, manager of horse programs with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Airdrie.

Conference pre-registration is \$95 per person and cost for additional individuals registered at the same time from the same farm is \$80. Registration at the door will be \$95 per person. Registration includes a copy of the conference proceedings.

For more information about the 2009 conference, contact Teresa van Bryce, manager, Horse Industry Association of Alberta, at 403-948-8521 or Les Burwash at 403-948-8541.

Information is also available on the association’s website at www.albertahorseindustry.ca or by calling the association at 403-948-8521.

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Online Ammonia Losses Calculator

Reduction of ammonia losses from confined feeding operations may be economically significant for improving nitrogen utilization, increasing the crop yield and fertilizer cost saving.

“When reducing ammonia losses, the cost saving value increases as the cost of commercial inorganic fertilizer increases,” says Atta Atia, PhD, P Ag, livestock air quality specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Edmonton. “Reducing ammonia volatilization also has environmental and health benefits to society. Ammonia emission is receiving more scrutiny from both animal and human health perspectives.”

Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development has developed a calculator using fact sheet information that was developed by University of Nebraska to estimate ammonia emissions from livestock facilities. The information from U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Agricultural Waste Management Field Handbook and LPES Lesson 21: Manure Storage Structures was then modified to suit Alberta conditions and used to develop the calculator.

“The online *Ammonia Estimator* calculator provides an approximation of ammonia emission based upon currently available information,” says Atia. “The calculator also provides producers with the estimate of the money that they will save by reducing the ammonia emitted to the atmosphere.”

To view and use the Ammonia Estimator, visit the Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development website at www.agriculture.alberta.ca and search *Ammonia Estimator*.

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Direct Marketing in Cuba is Profitable

On the 2008 Canada/Cuba Farmer to Farmer Tour, participants had a chance to see Cuba in a non-tourist way – meet the people and farmers, and learn how they grow their food with little or no use of chemical inputs and how they apply cooperative marketing techniques to maximize their profits.

Most food grown in Cuba is grown to feed Cubans not for export. Farms may be privately or collectively owned but products are marketed cooperatively. Farm co-ops supply food and milk to the state, schools, hospitals and communities.

There is great incentive for maximum production because food that is produced over-and-above fixed contracts is sold on the open market for private profit at the many Cuban farmers’ markets. The extra income means that farmers are quite highly paid by Cuban standards and are well-respected.

Farm tour visitors were treated to a formal welcome and delicious and liberal spread of food. Local fruits including mangoes and guavas, dairy products such as water buffalo cheese which tastes similar to a delicate feta cheese, and whole pork roasted on the spit are just some of the palate-tempting fare participants enjoyed, and, of course, plenty of pure water.

A site that participants really enjoyed seeing was one of Cuba’s organiponicos. These organic gardens are built on urban wasteland, and their produce is used to feed the local population. El Rabanito organiponico is nationally referenced as a standard for organiponicos across Cuba. With 30 kilograms of soil per square metre, this garden spans 5,000 square meters, employs 14 people and is in production year-round. It supplies the city of Ciego de Avila with spinach, chard, carrots, lettuce, beets, broccoli, parsley, onions, garlic and cilantro.

“One thing we noticed about the organiponicos we toured was that they were all immaculate,” says Pamela Irving, a participant on the 2008 Canada/Cuba Farmer to Farmer Tour.

All organiponicos are managed organically using strategies such as companion planting. “We saw marigolds planted next to crop rows to deter pests from invading the produce,” adds Irving. “The gardens are irrigated through a drip system, and vermiculture is being introduced for compost.”

The organiponico produce is sold through a small retail stall at the garden and by farmers pedaling bicycle carts throughout the nearby neighbourhoods – a low-carbon home delivery service.

These are just a few of the highlights from one of Cuba’s farm tours. In Cuba, agriculture is subsidized by tourist revenue, so when the participants tipped well, they spent their foreign currency guilt-free knowing that they were helping to build a stronger local agriculture economy.

To experience the Cuban food and farm scene, check out:

- **GO Cuba** – February 23 to March 5, 2009 – join GO’s Ron Berezan, the Urban Farmer, for a special tour of Cuba’s organiponicos, gardens, farms, foods and culture events. For information go to www.goingorganic.ca and click the events tab or visit [www.theurbanfarmer.ca/GoCubaBroch\(Lo\).pdf](http://www.theurbanfarmer.ca/GoCubaBroch(Lo).pdf)
- **Canada-to-Cuba Farm Tours 2009** – January 12 to 26, 2009 or February 9 to 23, 3009. More information is available on the internet at www.farmertofarmer.ca

Pamela Irving was awarded an Agri-preneur Scholarship to attend the Canada/Cuba Farmer to Farmer tour in January 2008. Limited scholarships are available, so agri-preneurs are encouraged to apply now for an Agri-preneur Scholarship to attend appropriate winter learning events or self-directed study tours. Complete program details and guidelines are available at www.exploredirect.ca or contact Lisa Sharp (lisa.sharp@gov.ab.ca) at 780-679-5169 or Karen Goad (karen.goad@gov.ab.ca) at 780-538-5629. To call these numbers toll-free, dial 310-0000 first.

Scholarship application deadlines are **December 12, 2008** and **January 30, 2009**.

The Agri-preneur Scholarship Program is funded through 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.

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Farmers’ Advocate – Land and Energy Expertise

Carol Goodfellow, previously with Alberta Energy, joins the Farmers’ Advocate Office team as the Assistant Farmers’ Advocate for land and energy related concerns.

Goodfellow has 26 years with the public service of Alberta. Twenty-three of those years were primarily to surface and subsurface oil and gas administration.

From 1988 until 2004, she was employed with the Alberta Surface Rights Board in the capacity of land/expropriation administrator and hearing coordinator. The position entailed issuing surface approvals on freehold lands, all aspects of Surface Rights Board hearings and many areas of government administration.

In 2004, Goodfellow joined the oil and gas unit, land administration branch at Alberta Sustainable Resource Development. There she acquired the background necessary for issuing surface approvals and dispositions on Crown owned lands. In addition, she worked with the provincial roads and reservations program and was directly involved with the implementation of EAS (electronic assignment system) and electronic referral system currently in use by the department. While at Sustainable Resource Development, she sat on various departmental committees and was involved with project management.

In 2006, Goodfellow transferred to the tenure unit of Department of Energy and acquired a background in mineral leases and approvals.

The Farmers’ Advocate Office is fortunate to have this expertise on the team. Goodfellow brings skills that will enhance the Farmers’ Advocate services to rural Albertans.

For more information, visit the Farmers’ Advocate website at www.farmersadvocate.gov.ab.ca or contact the office toll-free at 310-FARM (3276).

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Books and DVDs Make Great Gifts and Stocking-Stufflers

Every year the same question comes up - what do you buy for the person who has everything?

Books and videos make wonderful gifts for the gardening enthusiast, farmer, rancher or 4-H member on the list. A full list of books and DVDs available from Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development is available on the website at www.agriculture.alberta.ca/publications.

Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office has dozens of agriculture publications ranging from \$3 to \$30, as well as DVDs and CD-ROMs that make terrific gifts and stocking-stufflers. For example:

- **Alberta Yards and Gardens** (\$15 plus GST) – gives a fresh, unbiased look at what grows best in Alberta. It's packed with information about selecting ornamental trees and shrubs, lawns, small fruits and berries, flowers, vegetables, herbs and even water plants. Homeowners, hobby gardeners, serious horticulturists and landscape artists will find this book invaluable. It also gives tips and techniques for pruning, wintering roses, container gardening and attracting birds and butterflies.
- **Pruning in Alberta** (\$3 plus GST) – this great stocking-stuffer takes the mystery out of pruning. This book shows how to control and maintain trees and shrubs without distorting their natural form and beauty. Also included are tips for increasing fruit harvest and improving flowering.
- **Nutrition and Feeding Management for Horse Owners** (\$20, plus GST) – provides information on horse nutrition and nutritional content of feeds, hay quality and making good choices when selecting hay, and feeding management tips for winter feeding and feeding older horses. This 112-page manual also covers basic digestive physiology and the horse's requirements for different nutrients.
- **Horse Health** (\$15 plus GST) – horse owners will love this book. It presents important information along with photographs and illustrations that give a thorough understanding of parasites, pests, infectious diseases, lameness and other common medical problems that can affect a horse's health. It shows how to prevent problems before they begin, how to treat problems and when to call the veterinarian.
- **The Beef Cow-calf Manual** (\$30 plus GST) – this 282-page manual contains up-to-date information for cow-calf producers. The manual includes sections on genetics, economics, calf management, nutrition and feeding, animal health, pests, handling facilities and fencing and herd management. It also includes a listing of additional online resources.

- **Growing Native Plants of Western Canada: Common Grasses and Wildflowers**

(\$30 plus GST) - with over 100 pages of text and photographs, this book looks at 48 species of native plants that have shown promise for ecological repair. It will help anyone interested in collecting, growing and commercially producing native plants.

- **Weeds of the Prairies** (\$20 plus GST) - full colour photos and illustrations detailing 112 weeds makes this the most complete work of its kind on the Canadian prairies. Weeds are colour-coded by flower colour for easy reference, and the full index makes it easy to find the species by common, scientific or family name. Charts on life cycle and habitat provide valuable information, and maps show how widespread particular weeds are. This 266-page book will make planning a weed control program easier and more effective. It can also help youngsters learn how to identify weeds.
- **Beekeeping in Western Canada** (\$25 plus GST) – for experienced beekeepers and those just considering beekeeping, this book gives the information needed to manage honey bees successfully. Learn about the spring management of bees, winter feeding, honey extraction, honey bee health and marketing beeswax, pollen and honey crops. The provincial apiculturists in Canada's four western provinces packed this publication full of the best possible information on beekeeping in the west.
- **Silage Manual** (\$15 plus GST) – for those concerned about winter feed for livestock, this manual can help producers develop nutritious, cost-effective feed supplies. Examining all aspects of silage making will help producers balance costs against benefits. This 84-page manual covers key topics such as the ensiling process, crops for silage, silage additives, harvesting, silos, silage quality, feeding value and costs of production.

And, for people who like getting their information in front of a computer:

- **Firm Steps: Identifying Lameness in Dairy Cattle** (\$20 plus GST) – this two-disk package will help producers detect lameness in dairy cattle at an early stage. Early diagnosis can help producers reduce the severity and cost of lameness and improve the welfare of the herd.

To order one of these books, DVDs and CD-ROMs online, or for a complete listing of Alberta Agriculture's publications, visit the department website at www.agriculture.alberta.ca/publications. All Alberta Agriculture book, video and CD-ROM titles can also be purchased at the Publications Office, 7000 – 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, or by calling toll-free 1-800-292-5697 or 780-427-0391 in Edmonton.

Contact: *Publications Office*
(780) 427-0391
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Canada Safeway Limited Recommits Its Dedication to Alberta 4-H

Canada Safeway Limited and Alberta 4-H solidified their Legacy Builder partnership for another three years at an event in Red Deer on November 20, 2008. A \$330,000 cheque presented at the event was representative of Canada Safeway's continued support for the 4-H program.

"Canada Safeway is proud to be a part of the 4-H organization, which has been developing the leadership, communications and life skills of Alberta's youth for more than 90 years," explains Betty Kellsey, Alberta public affairs manager for Canada Safeway. "By partnering with a program that is so ingrained in the communities in which we operate, we are able to see the benefits of the 4-H organization in a real way."

Focused on leadership development and skill enhancement, Canada Safeway's support affords the creation of grants and bursaries that provide 4-H members and leaders with the opportunity to take their potential to the next level.

"Member and leader programs such as Leaders' Conference, Leadership Through Counseling Training Seminar (LTCS) and People Developing People (PDP) offer participants an endless number of opportunities to increase their knowledge, expand their awareness and develop their social networks," explains Bruce Banks, CEO, 4-H Foundation of Alberta. "These types of programs are invaluable, not only as a means of providing a beneficial and complete 4-H experience, but also for creating a situation that will ensure continued success for our members and leaders."

Continued success for members and leaders translates into continued success for rural communities, which results in a strong partnership between Alberta 4-H and Canada Safeway Limited.

Building communities since 1917, Alberta 4-H has been mentoring the youth of this province in the ways of leadership and communication, all the while equipping them with confidence, life-applicable skills and a network of friends that spans the entire country. With 250,000 alumni, 4-H is proud to be the #1 youth organization in the province.

Social responsibility and good corporate citizenship has been an integral part of the culture at Canada Safeway since 1929. Annually, Canada Safeway provides over \$15 million in food product and cash donations to local charities including food banks, breast and prostate cancer research and programs which support families with disabilities.



Caption: (l to r) **Marguerite Stark**, head Alberta 4-H Branch; **Bruce Banks**, CEO 4-H Foundation of Alberta; **Ellen Bonde**, Alberta 4-H Council; **Sylvia Mathon**, Alberta 4-H Council; **Betty Kellsey**, public affairs manager, Canada Safeway; **Dale Gawryluk**, assistant manager, Red Deer Port o Call Canada Safeway.

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Agri-News Briefs

Value Plus Workshop

The two-day Value Plus workshop, a joint venture among the Canadian Farm Business Management Council, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development and Community Futures, is being held in Airdrie on January 16 and 17, 2009. The workshop will provide process information that will help farm and rural-based entrepreneurs tap into new value added opportunities from idea to market. Case studies of innovative rural and farm businesses that have developed value added ideas and opportunities will be explored and used as teaching models that will be beneficial for anyone wanting to start a new farm-related enterprise or to diversify their farm business, whether that business is custom farm work, grain elevation/trucking, breeding stock genetics, farm machinery invention/adaptations, trait specific identity preserved crops, woodlot products, processing farm products, ag consulting, farm gate marketing or other direct marketing - community shared agriculture. For more information, visit the Farm Centre website at www.farmcentre.com/EventsAnnouncements/Events/ValuePlus/2008-2009/ or contact Jan Warren, new ventures business development specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Lethbridge at 403-381-5844.

Pea-Wheat Rotation Fact Sheet

Pea-wheat Rotation in Southern Alberta is a new fact sheet for Alberta's agriculture industry. The fact sheet shows how a pea-wheat rotation can offer advantages in drier regions of the province. Information includes results from a long-term crop rotation study conducted in Bow Island, some of the advantages that can be realized using a pea-wheat rotation and some of the concerns that producers should be aware of. The fact sheet is available by visiting Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development's website at www.agriculture.alberta.ca/publications or by calling the Publications Office toll-free at 1-800-292-5697.

Showcasing Canada – A New Path to Export Opportunity

Canadian manufacturers of export-ready gourmet, gift or specialty food or beverage products are being invited to participate in the **Showcase Canada** showroom at the Pacific Market Centre, Seattle, Washington. The Pacific Market Centre, which officially launches in January 2009, has a client base of more than 135,000 registered buyers who visit to procure new and innovative products. Participants in **Showcase Canada** will gain almost a year's worth of access to these buyers, exposure to buyers, space to display products and meet with potential buyers, website listing in the Pacific Market Center directory, and more. For further information on **Showcase Canada**, eligibility and participation costs, contact Claire Citeau at 780-422-7103 or e-mail claire.citeau@gov.ab.ca.

Fertilizers, Manures and Pesticides Fact Sheet

Taking a proactive approach to using fertilizers, manures and pesticides can help minimize potential negative effects. A new fact sheet, **Use of Fertilizers, Manures and Pesticides for Sustainable Farm Management** provides helpful information on nitrogen and nitrates, making a shift to direct seeding, the effective use of crop rotations, using manure wisely and concerns about pesticide residues. The fact sheet is available by visiting Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development's website at www.agriculture.alberta.ca/publications or by calling the Publications Office toll-free at 1-800-292-5697.