



Agri-News

October 5, 2009

Mitigating the Effects of Dry, Cool Growing Conditions on Feed Quality

Broiler, egg and hot producers should consider developing a 2009-2010 feed strategy to mitigate the effects of this year's dry and cool growing conditions on grain nutrient composition.

"While some areas of the Prairies received enough rain and heat in 2009, others lacked both," says Eduardo Beltranena, feed research scientist/livestock production with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development. "The dry and cool growing conditions initially affected germination as well as crop yield, and could also impact feed quality at harvest."

- **Securing a portion of grain shortage by establishing delivery contracts** – while some producers are grain buyers only, others grow and feed their own grain. Poor crop yields will mean less pork, chicken and eggs produced per unit of cultivated land. Cereal grain starch is the primary source of dietary energy that propels hogs and broilers growth and drives egg production. Therefore, securing feed grain is a priority. "Act soon to establish delivery contracts to line up at least one third of the predicted fall and winter grain shortage," says Beltranena. "Inventories might be lowest in spring and summer, so consider contracting the largest part of your grain shortage in late fall or winter according to futures."
- **Hedge fat sources** – dry growing conditions produce high protein cereal grains, but the starch granules do not fill up. Although there is more protein, there is also slightly more fibre which lowers nutrient digestibility. To some extent, the shortage of calories can be made up by animals utilizing excess protein, but feeding fats is more effective. Except for some naked oats, cereal grains are generally low in fat. Locate fat sources in your area and monitor prices. Saturated fats (beef tallow, poultry fat, restaurant grease)

are a good, less expensive choice for broilers and hogs. Feeding unsaturated fats (rolled flax, canola oil) to layers may enhance egg size and mass.

- **Triticale, a better cereal choice than wheat** – barring an early frost, wheat prices could be high this year. Producers may want to seek out some triticale, a hybrid of wheat and

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rye. Triticale has slightly more starch and available phosphorus, yields 5 to 20 per cent more, requires 15 per cent less crop inputs and is more drought tolerant than wheat. Feeding trials have shown that triticale replacement of wheat yields comparable broiler and hog performance. Check in your area for growers of either spring or winter triticale varieties.

- **Field pea, more than just a protein source** – field peas are more than just a soybean and canola meal replacement. Over 50 per cent of each kernel weight is starch. There are occasions when cost per calorie has been lower from field pea than wheat – definitely a buy moment. Field pea tolerates dry growing conditions well, so supply may not be limiting. Find out who sells splits and clean product that does not meet export grade for human consumption. Watch for lentils, too.
- **Corn, not just for the starch** – imported corn may give a cost advantage this year. Unless crude oil price go up considerably, there should be less corn diverted to ethanol and more for feed. This year's U.S. corn crop might be the second largest ever. The strengthening of the Canadian dollar will also favour corn sourcing. In addition to having more starch than wheat, corn also has more oil; thus more calories per unit of weight. Due to the unsaturated type of oil (linoleic acid), table egg producers may benefit from increased egg size.
- **Corn or wheat distiller's grains with solubles** – dried distiller's grain with solubles (DDGS) currently prices well in broiler, layer and hog diets. "These dried distiller's grains are not a good source of starch, and don't consider DDGS for the protein; however, 10 – 12 per cent oil in corn DDGS and higher phosphorus availability especially in wheat DDGS will spare starch from cereal grain and phosphorus from inorganic sources. Again, do the math costing out calories and grams of available phosphorus," says Beltranena.
- **Protein meals in ample supply** – this year's canola crop will be the third largest; there are plenty carry on stocks, and more crushing capacity coming on line in Saskatchewan. Add increasing Prairie production of wheat DDGS, less expensive imported corn DDGS, and reasonable U.S. and South American soy crops, means protein meal prices are likely heading downward. Furthermore, Western Canada producers generally feed some excess protein. Wheat and barley provide more protein in diets compared to corn or sorghum grain. Protein deficient diets are therefore rare. Protein is like a chain made up of amino acids. With higher fat diets and greater inclusion of co-products (DDGS, canola meal), there will be a need to supplement limiting amino acids. Look for buying opportunities on lysine, methionine and tryptophan. Prices of amino acids may decline as soybean prices go down.

"In summary, cereal starch is the primary source of dietary energy that propels hogs and broilers growth and drives egg production," says Beltranena. "Grain inventories will be low due to cool and dry growing conditions this year. Producers should assure grain supply by establishing delivery contracts. Fats are a more concentrated source of dietary energy that can replace some cereal starch. Consider feeding corn, triticale and field pea. Crystal amino acids should be supplemented when feeding high fat and co-product (DDGS, canola meal) diets."

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Appropriate Temperatures and Moisture Contents of Cereals and Canola for Safe Storage

There have been unusually high air temperatures during harvest and some producers are coping with an unusually high amount of green material present in the grain sample due to variable crop maturity stages when combining. For these reasons, grain storage may be tricky for some producers this year. The two main factors to consider at this time are ensuring that grain temperatures are adequately low and that the stored material is dry. The presence and build up of insects, mites, moulds and fungi, which are all affected by grain temperature and grain moisture content, will affect the grain quality and duration of grain storage.

"If a higher than normal grain temperature is a concern, grain temperature can be lowered via aeration," says Neil Whatley, crop specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development. "If a higher than normal grain moisture level is a concern, stored grain can be mechanically dried with a grain drier. Moving and mixing grain with cooler grain can also prevent stored grain deterioration.

"Due to its high oil content, canola is more susceptible to deterioration in storage than cereal crops, so must be stored at a lower moisture level to prevent mould. Also, stored canola differs from stored cereals because canola continues a high respiration rate for up to six weeks after combining, which can raise the temperature and moisture content of the stored grain, producing conditions favourable for mould growth. Aeration bins are the most effective method to control this situation."

Researchers have devised some handy tools to assist with understanding the effects of varying moisture contents and temperatures on cereal and canola storage. Table 1 indicates the effect of temperature and moisture content on allowable storage time of wheat, oats, and barley, and Table 2 indicates the effect of temperature and moisture content on the storage quality of canola over five months.

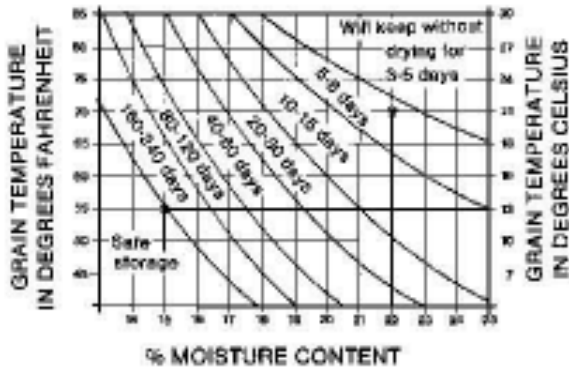


Table 1: Effect of temperature and moisture content on allowable storage time of wheat, oats, and barley

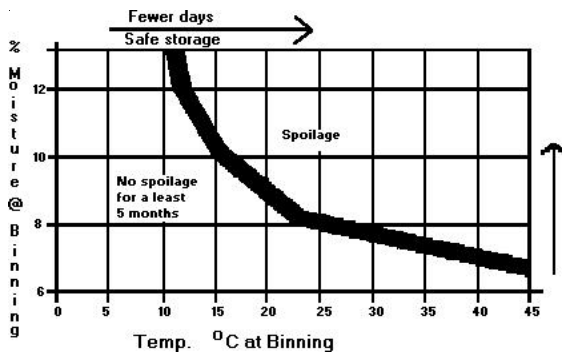


Table 2. Effect of temperature and moisture content on the quality of canola over 5 months

“Dealing with extra green vegetative material has been frustrating for producers during harvest,” says Whatley. “Although a lengthy period of unusually high air temperatures was welcomed in the province during September to assist with getting the crop off, it also meant that grain has gone into the bin at fairly warm temperatures. Taking some extra care to prevent stored grain from spoiling will ensure that the harvest of 2009 ended up much better than it was projected earlier in the growing season.”

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Program Assists Drayton Valley’s Bio-Mile Initiative

In response to the economic downturn, many Alberta communities are developing innovative economic development projects to help get them through these hard times. The Regional and Community Adaptation (RCA) unit supports these efforts. The RCA helps communities reach their goals and move toward long-term economic sustainability. The unit works with community project sponsors, providing advice, access to information and referrals to programs or funding sources.

“There are many resources available to communities. Knowing where to look and selecting the programs and supports that fit are obstacles for community economic development projects,” says Rodger Cole, director of the Regional and Community Adaptation unit. “We are ready, willing and able to help communities define what they need to do and how to access technical knowledge in government and funding programs.”

One case-in-point is Drayton Valley’s Bio-Mile initiative. This major economic development project will position the town as a leader in the bio-economy by attracting world class firms to develop new technologies to use and convert the region’s forestry and agricultural bio-mass into globally competitive products.

“Drayton Valley has a vision for an innovative and complex economic development initiative. We were able to help to define the individual elements of the project. Through our contacts within government, we identified resources and programs that could help move the project forward,” says Cole.

“When the RCA unit started to work with us, we were able to focus our efforts more effectively,” says Manny Deol, Drayton Valley’s town manager. “As a result, we were much more successful in putting financial resources in place which allowed us to make some real progress with our Bio-Mile initiative.”

With assistance from RCA unit, the town of Drayton Valley successfully applied for a \$500,000 grant from Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development. The grant will provide the resources to hire the right people to manage the many components of the Bio-Mile project.

On request, the RCA unit works with communities to establish their needs and build economic strategies. The team develops project plans and explores potential program and funding options.

The RCA is not a funding program. The unit’s main priority is helping communities facing difficult economic times. The team members have a strong background in economic and regional development.

To contact the RCA unit, call 780-427-2005 (toll-free by dialling 310-0000).

Contact: Rodger Cole
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Alfalfa Seed Commission Registered in Alberta

The newest producer organization to be formed in Alberta under the *Marketing of Agricultural Products Act* is the Alfalfa Seed Commission. The producer board has worked to establish the commission which will provide information, research and communication for the 80 plus growers of alfalfa seed in the province. The commission will be funded by a 1.25 per cent sales check-off which will be collected by seed companies at the time of sale. The Irrigated Alfalfa Seed Producers Association initiated the process, but the new commission includes non-irrigated growers outside of the Peace River region. Alfalfa seed produced in the Peace River region falls under the Peace Forage Seed Commission.

Karl Slomp, president of the Alfalfa Seed Commission, says, "We see tremendous opportunity in the future of the industry. The commission looks forward to working with other research groups, the government, and individuals in the industry to benefit all producers of alfalfa seed."

The commission already has a research project in progress. Plots with herbicides and fungicides recently registered or having potential for registration have been established in two locations. The commission has partnered with the Alberta Crop Industry Development Fund and the Crop Diversification Centre South to conduct these trials. The commission will continue a close relationship with the Prairie Pesticide Minor Use Consortium. Data from these trials is expected to be used to register Quadris as a fungicide on alfalfa seed. In addition, there is a ***Production and Marketing Manual*** available for sale as reference material for new and experienced producers. Suggestions for future research are welcome.

Michelle Gietz has been hired as the general manager and will be working on a part-time basis in Brooks. Gietz graduated from the University of Guelph with a B. Sc. Agri. and has a M.Sc. in Agricultural Economics from the University of Manitoba. She brings to the commission a wide variety of experience in both private and public institutions, including Alberta Agriculture and Sparks Companies Inc (now Informa Economics). She was the first manager of the Southern Applied Research Association from 1995 to 1997 and has recently returned from the U.S. where she was an instructor of economics at Southwest Tennessee Community College.

A general meeting for the commission will be held at the Heritage Inn in Brooks on November 24, 2009. All producers and industry representatives are welcome to attend. There is no registration fee to attend.

Questions regarding the commission and the meetings can be directed to Gietz at 403-501-3820 or e-mail at manager@alfalfaseedab.com

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Green Certificate Program Now Offering Equine Technician Course

A new Green Certificate Program course offered this year will help to raise the bar for equine care in the province and will expand career options for students.

The Equine Technician specialty, which is available to students this September, takes a stable management approach, allowing students to explore horse husbandry, business management practices and the basic applications of equine science. Students will apprentice with a trainer at their facility of choice, and will demonstrate hands-on learning covering topics such as horse identification, life cycles, handling and behaviour, facility maintenance, equine health and nutrition programs—with safety being central to all tasks.

"Since the Green Certificate Program began in 1975, it has enabled many students and adults to gain highly employable skills, get a leg-up on post-secondary studies and explore career options in agriculture," says Raelene Mercer, Green Certificate Program coordinator with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development. "Demand has been high for the Equine Technician specialty and we are pleased to be able to offer it this year finally."

Post-secondary institutions offering equine care programs are very interested in the Equine Technician speciality. This program was developed in partnership with the Equine Faculty of Olds College. Instructors of Olds College, Lakeland College and other post-secondary institutes within the province, are all very excited about the new Green Certificate equine technician training as a premier lead-in to their college courses. Students with Green Certificate Equine under their belt will be better equipped for an equine focused post-secondary training.

There are currently 1014 students enrolled in the Green Certificate Program, which is an industry driven agricultural training program. The Equine Technician is the ninth specialty in the program. The Green Certificate Program is driven by apprenticeship-style learning which is designed to give students experience in agriculture-related careers, as well as giving them a distinct advantage upon entering the workforce. This program is well-received by students and employers.

For more information, contact the Green Certificate Program Coordinator or a Regional Coordinator at www.agriculture.alberta.ca/greencertificate

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Final Year for AFC's Advanced Leadership and Management Development Program

In the final year of the popular and successful Agriculture and Food Council (AFC) Advanced Leadership and Management Development Program (ALMDP), \$75,000 is available for clients to access leadership and management-focused courses, programs and learning opportunities.

“ALMDP support is critical for many agri-food clients as it allows them to experience excellent learning opportunities and build greater networks throughout the industry,” says Amber Havens, chair of the council's Innovation in Agribusiness Management Fund (IAMF) action team, which oversees ALMDP. “In the six years that this program has been offered, we have invested more than \$242,000 in learning opportunities that have assisted approximately 60 clients through personal growth and changing the way they operate their businesses.”

ALMDP is a sub-project of IAMF and provides funding to assist Alberta agribusiness managers to develop their skills in the areas of leadership and management. A maximum of \$7,500 per year is available for individual applicants to support education and training through eligible courses and programs. Applications are currently being accepted; assistance is provided on a first-come, first-served basis.

The council is a leader in Alberta's agriculture and food industry. It is a unique agri-food industry agent with a vision for Alberta's agriculture and food industry to be competitive, profitable and sustainable in a global environment. To help realize this vision, the council has developed various partnerships with industry and governments. It operates a number of focused programs and initiatives, and is viewed by industry partners as a catalyst for policy discussions on important issues and trends affecting the sector.

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Agri-News Briefs

New Agri-Food Leadership Program

The Agriculture and Food Council of Alberta and the University of Alberta's School of Business Executive Education collaborated to launch a new program to encourage and develop leadership skills in the next generation of agri-food leaders. The program will guide participants across the value chain on a four-module experience that focuses on understanding one's self, leading others, coaching and mentoring, and leading the organization. Throughout the program, participants will work on an individual project that is applicable to their own personal situations and present the project to their peers in the final module. Funding support for the leadership pilot is provided by the Agriculture and Food Council's Innovation in Agribusiness Management Fund (IAMF), Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Canadian Adaptation and Rural Development Fund. **The deadline for program application is October 23, 2009.** Applications and other information about the Agri-Food Leadership Program can be found at www.agfoodcouncil.com/funding/iamf/leadership.aspx. For more information, contact Leanne Fischbuch, IAMF manager, Agriculture and Food Council, toll-free at 1-866-955-3714 ext. 228 or e-mail: iamf@agfoodcouncil.com

Alpaca Canada Conference 2009

The Alpaca Canada Conference is being held in Edmonton on November 6 to 8, 2009. The conference will include a full-day seminar with Dr. Norm Evans who will discuss:

- breeding through birthing
- mother and cria assessment
- breeding selection to maximize fibre
- how to produce fibre the judges award

As well, the conference will feature the Alpaca Canada AGM, the Canadian Llama and Alpaca Association AGM, a national fleece show, the AC fibre arts competition, a halter show and sale, and a fashion show with fibre displays and demonstrations.

Registration fee for the seminar is \$60 per person. For more information on the show and the seminar, visit the ALPACA site at www.alpaca.ca

New President and CEO for ALMA

Gordon Cove, an accomplished leader in the private and public agriculture industry with diverse experience in the agri-food business, has been named the new president and CEO of the Alberta Livestock and Meat Agency (ALMA). Cove will help ALMA achieve its mandate as a catalyst for innovation and competitiveness in the agriculture industry, under the auspices of the Alberta Livestock and Meat Strategy (ALMS). In his previous role with ALMA, Cove helped develop and implement the ALMS. With his past private sector experience, he was instrumental in developing ALMA programs and was a vital link to the meat industry. Cove has worked for Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development since 2003, moving to ALMA in 2009. His private sector experience includes 21 years in management roles with Olymel/Premium Brands Inc. (formerly Fletcher's Fine Foods Ltd.) in Red Deer. For more information on ALMA, contact Terry Willock, communications director with ALMA at 780-638-1929 or visit www.alma.alberta.ca