



# Agri-News

October 26, 2009

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## Utilizing Annual Cereals for Livestock Feed

In situations where producers find it necessary to feed more animals than anticipated due to any number of different reasons, additional feed requirements may partially be met by the harvesting of annual crops to supplement current hay production and carryover stocks.

To assist producers plan and make informed decisions, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development has revised and updated the **Utilizing Annual Cereals for Livestock Feed** fact sheet. The fact sheet provides information on points to consider when using annual cereals as forages for livestock, such as conducting feed test, developing balanced rations and optimizing the feeds available to minimize costs, necessary supplementation when feeding cereal forage, special considerations for rough-awned barley and other awned cereals, and nitrate levels, to name a few.

The nutrition topics addressed in this fact sheet will be of value for producers considering using cereals as part of their livestock feed. The fact sheet also provides information on developing a ration balancing program, discussing the very useful computer program **Cowbytes**, a ration balancing program available from Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development.

A demo version of the **Cowbytes** software is available at [www.agric.gov.ab.ca/ruraldev/homestdy/cowbytesdemo.html](http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/ruraldev/homestdy/cowbytesdemo.html) on the department's website.

This and other fact sheets are available on Alberta Agriculture's website at [www.agriculture.alberta.ca/publications](http://www.agriculture.alberta.ca/publications) under *Free Publications*. Producers are also welcome to call the Alberta Ag-Info Centre toll-free at 310-FARM (3276).

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### This Week

<b>Utilizing Annual Cereals for Livestock Feed</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Alberta Beekeepers Meeting in Edmonton</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Wood Energy for Farms and Rural Communities</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Understanding the Facts About Wood Fuel</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Wood Bioenergy Myths</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Gathering Information and Introducing a New Product</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Agri-News Briefs</b>	<b>5</b>

## Alberta Beekeepers Meeting in Edmonton

The 76th Annual General Meeting and Convention for the Alberta Beekeepers is being held in Edmonton on November 2 to 4, 2009. The three-day program includes presentations by speakers from Australia, Canada and Alberta. The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Hon. George Groeneveld is the guest speaker on Wednesday for the President's Luncheon.

“The speakers on the agenda for this year's meeting will make presentations on a wide range of topics,” says Nabi Chaudhary, senior crop economist with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development. “From Dr. Doug Somerville, technical specialist from New South Wales, Australia, speaking on small hive beetles in Australia, the nutritional values of bee collected pollens, and the Australian beekeeping industry, to local experts discussing the state of the beekeeping industry in Alberta, this convention will be of interest to all Alberta beekeepers and those involved in the beekeeping and honey production industries.”

The convention agenda presentations on topics such as: the state of Alberta's honey industry, honey bee health, possible causes of bee winterkill, crop insecticides and bees, treatments for *Nosema Ceranae*, beekeeper liability insurance, to name a few.

A full agenda for the AGM and convention is posted online at [www.albertabeekeepers.org](http://www.albertabeekeepers.org)

Registration cost is \$255 for single and \$385 with spouse plus GST. For further information or to register, contact Gertie Adair, general manager, Alberta Beekeepers Commission, at 780-489-6949 or e-mail [gertie.adair@AlbertaBeekeepers.org](mailto:gertie.adair@AlbertaBeekeepers.org)

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## Wood Energy for Farms and Rural Communities

The importance of wood as a fuel source fell drastically in the early part of the 1900s, with better access to electricity, heating oil and natural gas. Events in the early 1970s, which lead to oil price increases and threats of shortages, have renewed interest in wood heating.

“On a recent trip to Eastern U.S.A. and Canada, stopping by many small towns and farms, I noticed that almost every farm and smaller town house had several cords of stacked wood or storages of woodchips or wood pallets ready to use for the winter,” says Toso Bozic woodlot specialist/agroforester with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development. “The ice storm

that hit the eastern parts of Canada in 1998 must have been a wake up call for many, as the use of wood for energy needs seems to be common practice. The recent interest in wood bioenergy provides a number of opportunities for Albertans who own woodlots.”

In some areas, woodlots may have been mismanaged, neglected or over-cut simply because there was no market for wood from private land. The wood bioenergy market provides a reason to harvest poorer trees to make room for better wood-stands, lumber or veneer quality trees. This market may also provide an outlet for treetops, slabs, small trees and wood culled in the production of saw logs and veneer logs. Replacing fossil fuels by using wood biomass can provide a great number of financial opportunities, including opportunities in the carbon credits market.

“Wood can be used for a great number of heating requirements or, on a larger scale, even for electricity,” says Bozic. “Many rural residents already use some type of wood heating systems in their homes and shops, mostly through fireplaces or wood burning stoves. Due to high energy prices, highly efficient and fully automated wood-energy systems have been an established energy alternative for decades in other parts of the world, especially in Europe, led by Austria, Germany, Sweden, and Finland, proving that it can be viable here, too.”

Before deciding to use wood for your heating needs there are several things to consider:

**Wood supply** – know how much wood is in your woodlot, how much wood waste there is in your facility and how much wood is currently going into landfill. The key is understanding the sustainability of wood supply for a bioenergy operation and the required type and quality of wood fuel for a wood heating operation.

**Wood fuel types** – all wood types (logs, sawdust, wood chips and wood pellets) can be used for heating purposes, and different tree species have different caloric values. A pound of wood will produce nearly the same amount of heat, no matter what species it is. A cubic foot of air-dried white birch weighs about 16 kg, while a cubic foot of white spruce weighs about 11 kg; hence, a larger volume of spruce is required to get the same weight and the same heating value as birch.

Furthermore, moisture is one of the key components in the wood supply. Freshly cut timber contains 40 to 60 per cent moisture while wood pellets contain around 8 to 10 per cent moisture.

“Besides individual heat or energy needs, the type and quality of the wood fuel available will define which energy solution is right for you,” says Bozic. “Each wood burning system can require different fuel types with various sizes and shapes of fuel particles. For example, wood pellets, sawdust and wood chips can be stored in the various bin sizes that can automatically feed wood boiler systems, while logs are only for manual feed.”

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There are many products on the market in Alberta; unfortunately, very few or none from high efficiency European technology. Individual energy needs and wood fuel availability are key factors to consider when looking for the products that are suitable to your needs and requirements.

#### Wood burning systems for domestic use:

- open and enclosed fireplaces: secondary heating source – widespread in Alberta and relatively low efficiency and there are problems with smoke
- various wood burning stoves: suitable as an additional source of space heating and are an efficient way of burning logwood (efficiency is better than open but still have an issues with smoke)
- pellet stoves: unlike conventional wood burning stoves, pellet stoves are automatic – the wood pellets are fed from the storage hopper into the fire and warm air is circulated making it possible to adjust heat output, the system can be made completely hands-free with a thermostat
- pellet boilers: for space and water heating – performance and size similar to oil boilers
- logwood boilers: similar to pellet boilers, although larger for the same performance and operationally less flexible – there is a need for heat storage tank, and fuel management an issue
- woodchip boilers: fully automated fuel-feed systems – similar convenience as oil or gas boilers, controllable, no heat storage tank necessary, however a large wood chip storage facility required (more suited to applications where heat demand is high)

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## Understanding the Facts About Wood Fuel

If you are considering wood bioenergy as a source of heat for your home or small business, keep these facts in mind:

- **environmental issues** – full combustion systems have no or very minimal smoke, compared to fireplaces or other wood burning systems that emit a large amount of particles that end up in the air.
- **insurance** – many insurance companies may be reluctant to provide insurance for a house that uses wood as primary heat source. It is very important to let them know about the technology being used and be sure to present all of the safety precautions taken.

- **choosing wood boiler system** – there are many products available to rural residence, and several key factors that need to be addressed:
  - efficiency of the system – most of the European technology has high efficiency systems 85 to 95 per cent
  - automation of the system – how much time do you spend to run the system – again, most of the European systems are fully automated. Throughout the year all that is needed is to load fuel into storage and there is minimal maintenance and monitoring
  - heat load requirement – try to buy system that fits the heat requirements as many systems may be either too large or too small for the heating requirement
  - storage and space requirements for the system must be considered
  - cost and services – beside the cost of the unit, it is very important to know what kind of services and assistance the supplier can provide in case something goes wrong
  - smoke – most of the full combustion systems produce no or very little smoke once the initial start-up period is over, and there is minor smoke even during start-up

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## Wood Bioenergy Myths

There are several myths about wood bioenergy that can confuse and cause undo problems for people looking into wood bioenergy. Some of the major ones are:

- **Smoke** – many Albertans wonder about this issue, as they remember the smoke on farms and in small towns in earlier years. It is a very legitimate environmental concern; however, the technology has changed rapidly, especially in Europe, where environmental standards towards smoke and other emissions are high. Most European systems are fully combustible, safe and reliable. Here in Alberta, in the heart of Edmonton there is a wood burning boiler facility that heats over 37,000 square feet with no smoke and no environmental complaints.
- **Reliability** – a well planned and installed wood system is relatively close to the reliability of natural gas and the convenience of heating oil, though despite the automation of the technology, there are differences to be recognized. A wood boiler system has more mechanical components, where handling might cause problems (e.g. a piece of wood stuck in wood supply chain). By having a solid service partner and a natural gas system as a back up, such emergency should be easy enough to handle. During the ice storms in eastern Canada, many people found out that their back up for natural gas systems was wood burning stoves.

Cont'd on page 4

- **Fuel delivery** – storage is required for wood bioenergy systems and there are several options in regards to fuel storage. For most people in farm settings this is not an issue. In the urban areas, several various bin storages are available.
- **Price** – in North America, natural gas is priced by the market and market fluctuations. Many rural residents own forest resources and may find that they have a plentiful available source for wood bio-energy fuel. Many small businesses may find that wood bioenergy can be obtained at lower energy prices and become more competitive on the market.

“Wood bioenergy is a very possible and reliable option for many farms, local communities and businesses,” says Toso Bozic, woodlot specialist/agroforester with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development. “Education and understanding is the key to success in this field. Thousands of small farms and business have been using wood biomass for over 40 years in Europe and would not consider going back to other energy sources.”

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## Gathering Information and Introducing a New Product

Market intelligence, as defined by Wikipedia, is the information relevant to a company's markets, gathered and analyzed specifically for the purpose of accurate and confident decision-making in determining market opportunity, market penetration strategy and market development. BNET, a business dictionary, further defines it as focusing on competitors, customers, consumer spending, market trends and suppliers.

“Market intelligence is also the one tool that can assist agripreneurs plan and implement successful new product introductions and keep their products in the marketplace longer,” says Karen Goad, farm direct marketing specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development.

Local organizations are hosting workshops focused on market intelligence and value chain development, offered through the collaboration of the Canadian Value Chain Network. The Peace Region Economic Development Alliance (PREDA) and the Peace Value Added Food and Ag Association and Strathcona County are planning to host two workshops in partnership with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development.

The next in this series is **Market Intelligence: Gathering & Planning for New Product Introductions**. The leaders for this one-day workshop understand the local market and the challenges farm direct marketers and start-up food processors face when growing their business and accessing new markets.

The workshops are designed for farm groups, entrepreneurs, start-up food processors and business development teams in the food supply chain. Farm and small business operators will learn how to identify product and market opportunities and achieve successful product positioning in growing value added markets.

Experienced business people know that starting with the product is not always the best strategy for market success. First you must determine:

- the real value opportunity or gaps in the market within your product category
- the scope and potential of the market opportunity
- the current channels of distribution
- how the market works now and how it might evolve in the future
- the key product and service deliverables

“The market intelligence workshop will help participants determine relevant information to design a product and get it into a select market,” says Goad. “During the workshop, participants will also explore a range of cost effective means for gathering market intelligence, and discover how these concepts and tools are used in practice, particularly for introducing new products.”

The upcoming workshop will be held at the Strathcona County Hall, Sherwood Park, on November 17, 2009. Registration is \$40 for County residents and \$50 for non-residents. Workshop seating is limited, so early registration recommended. For workshop information or registration forms, contact Jennifer Brosseau at [brosseau@strathcona.ab.ca](mailto:brosseau@strathcona.ab.ca) or call 780-410-8511. Registration deadline is November 14, 2009.

In 2010, these organizations will host a **New Product Development** workshop in Grande Prairie on January 26, 2010, and again on February 2, 2010, at a location to be announced. To find out more about the Grande Prairie workshop, contact Linda Doucette at 780-538-6208.

These workshops are made available through the Canadian Value Chain Network with funding from the Agriculture and Food Council in Alberta and hosted by the local organizations of PREDA, Peace Value Added Food and Ag Association and the County of Strathcona.

Groups in Alberta that are interested in hosting these or other workshops from the series of eight are asked to contact Margurite Thiessen at 780-968-3513.

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## Agri-News Briefs

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### **Farmfair International**

This top business destination for the global livestock industry includes cattle shows and events, world class equine sales, competitions and clinics as well as a variety of small and specialty livestock programs. In its 35<sup>th</sup> year, Farmfair International will welcome international guests and local ranchers to Edmonton on November 6 to 15, 2009. This year, Northlands will charge a \$5 admission per person for Farmfair International. Individuals who purchase Canadian Finals Rodeo or Heritage Ranch Rodeo Tickets will receive free admission into Farmfair International. For further information, visit the event website at [www.farmfairinternational.com](http://www.farmfairinternational.com)

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### **Healthy Business Growth and Opportunity**

The Western Canadian Functional Food & Natural Health Product Network (WCFN) Annual Conference and Tradeshow will explore survival tactics in a competitive market by sharing information on challenges, success and lessons learned while integrating opportunity and innovation to create sustainability and profitability in the functional food and natural health product sector. The conference is being held in Edmonton on November 3 and 4, 2009. For information, visit [www.wcfn.ca](http://www.wcfn.ca), e-mail [info@wcfn.ca](mailto:info@wcfn.ca) or phone 604-822-6920.

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### **New Coordinator for CAP**

The Classroom Agriculture Program (CAP) teaches Grade 4 students the importance of agriculture in their daily lives. Since 1985, more than 550,000 Albertan students have participated in CAP. Recently, Karen Spelay was named the new CAP



coordinator. She has a background in public education, volunteer management and communications, as well as experience in the agriculture and agri-business industry. Her most recent position was with The City of Calgary where

she worked as a public education advisor. CAP is composed of one hour, hands-on presentations delivered by volunteers from across the province. The program offers rural and urban elementary students a unique opportunity to learn about the tradition and future of agriculture. A list of spring 2010 CAP volunteers is currently being compiled. If you are interested in volunteering or would like more information, please contact Spelay at [capcoordinator@albertabeef.org](mailto:capcoordinator@albertabeef.org) or at 403-710-1959. CAP is a multi-commodity initiative endorsed by the Minister of Education and the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.