Ontario

OMAF *Virtual Beef*

Volume 2, Issue 4 November, 2003

Feel free to use the articles in this publication in your publications. We would like to ensure that as many producers as possible benefit from the information provided. Details are listed on page two regarding reproduction.

If there are any upcoming events or timely topics you would like to see covered send us an email; suggestions are more than welcome. Watch for the next issue in February!

Inside This Issue

Extending The Productive Life Of Cows

The loss of export markets for live cattle and beef has affected how we market the different animals we produce and it will change how we produce beef. Cull cows are a product of the business that we don't like to have too many of, but pre-BSE those we did have contributed to the cash flow every year. Now the rules have changed.

Ontario markets approximately 125,000 cull cows and bulls annually. Table 1 outlines where Ontario cull cows went once they sold through auction barns. Only 10% were slaughtered in Ontario, with the other 90% split almost equally between U.S. packers and the Levinoff plant in Quebec. Of the 47% slaughtered in Quebec 65-80% of the resulting product was exported to the U.S. These numbers illustrate the reliance we had on export markets for cull cows.

Table 1: Percentage of non-fed cattle (cows) marketed through available channels in Ontario

	2002		2003 (first 20 wks)	
	# of Head/wk	%	# of Head/wk	%
Ontario	226	11	260	10
Quebec* - Levinoff	906	43	1203	47
Export (U.S.)	922	46	1092	42

* 65-80% of Levinoff output is exported to U.S.

The opening of the border to muscle cuts of animals less than 30 months of age has helped our markets; the rule currently being considered by the USDA for importing live animals less than 30 months of age will also be a huge help if implemented. However we will still have a reduced market for animals over 30 months of age and that is not expected to change any time soon.

Producers need to get more productive life from their cows. The cost of raising a replacement hasn't changed but her value at the end has decreased substantially. Beef cows are culled for a variety of reasons: unsound feet and legs, poor productivity, reproductive problems, age, disposition and cancer eye. An investment in the cows health resulting in one more calf per cow life is readily justified when her cull value is 25% of what it was pre-BSE.

Suggestions to maintain productive cows in the herd for longer involve changes in management and in how we deal with certain herd health issues. Roy Lewis, DVM, touched on some of the following herd health issues in an article published in the Oct./Nov. issue of *The Limousin Voice*. Extending the breeding season increases pregnancy rates. Retaining and breeding open cows in November and starting a fall calving season, is another option you need to consider before selling and bringing in a replacement. Trim feet and explore lameness to avoid unnecessary culls, getting a couple of more calves out of an otherwise good cow. Treat signs of cancer eye early, having the cancerous growth removed at early stages can prevent the disease from spreading. Select potential replacement heifers very carefully to eliminate poor producers before they enter the herd. Cows with reproductive problems can be palpated, treated and put back into the fall calving program. Reproduction is still the greatest reason for culling. Proactive measures such as diligently treating animals with retained placentas increases pregnancy rates. Good nutrition ensures quicker return to cycling and less chances for open cows.

Paying attention to detail can extend the productive life of females. We will still have a low value animal to market at the end of the day but by keeping her in the herd for one or two more calves fewer valuable young replacements are needed.

The Infosheet "Beef Cow Culling Options" assesses your options when culling cows and examines the financial impacts of your decisions. Access it at: http://www.gov.on.ca/OMAFRA/english/livestock/beef/facts/info_beefcull.htm

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www.foragebeef.ca Officially Launched

Canadian forage and beef producers will soon have a new source for the latest research information on forage and beef production. www.foragebeef.ca will be launched in early December and will focus on forage and beef cattle management for Canadian farmers and ranchers.

With four years in development and sponsorship from the cattle industry, federal and provincial governments, universities and the scientific societies, this site will highlight Canadian forage and beef research and present it to producers, university students, and agricultural extension workers in a user-friendly form. The scientific research from all across North America has been summarized into three levels:

Level 1 consists of 10 knowledge nuggets or the key points on each topic.

Level 2 is a collection of the best forage and beef fact sheets from around the world. Literally hundreds of fact sheets were located and reviewed by provincial agricultural extension specialists from Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. The best fact sheets appear on the site.

Level 3 consists of scientific review papers written by Agriculture and Agri-food Canada research scientists and university professors. These reviews summarize the current research knowledge on various forage and beef production topics.

In addition, producers will have access to current news items on forage and beef, current market reports, and weather information. The site was designed by Alberta Agriculture extension and information group.

With knowledge summaries, fact sheets, and research reviews, www.foragebeef.ca will be the gateway for forage and beef information for Canadian farmers and ranchers.

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OMAF Virtual Beef is produced quarterly by the OMAF Beef Team as a means to communicate research findings and results, recommended production practices and solutions to industry issues to beef cattle producers, agribusiness suppliers and industry stakeholders.

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The *Nutrient Management Act*: Does It Apply To My Farm?

The short answer to this question is "Yes". Now, for a longer answer to this question to see *how* this legislation might affect your farm, please read below.

The implementation of the *Nutrient Management Act* (NMA) and its regulations commenced on September 30, 2003. The timelines for the preparation of a nutrient management plan or strategy are explained below but there are some conditions of this *Act* and regulations that **apply to all farms** as of September 30, 2003 including:

- a ban on the winter spreading of sewage biosolids from December 1 to March 31 and at other times when the ground is frozen
- a ban on the use of high trajectory irrigation guns capable of spraying materials (less than or equal 99 percent water by weight) more than 10 metres for biosolids by September 30, 2003 and bans the use of these guns for liquid manure by March 31, 2005
- a requirement for a setback of 20 metres from the top of the nearest bank of the surface water for application of biosolids
- a requirement that land-applied biosolids or other non-agricultural source materials must not exceed certain limits for particular metals, as specified in the regulations.

The timeline for the preparation of a nutrient management plan or strategy will depend on the size of your operation and whether your operation is a new, an expanding or an existing operation. New operations of greater than 5 Nutrient Units (NU) or expanding operations greater than or equal to 300 NU are now required to prepare a Nutrient Management Plan or Strategy before a building permit can be issued. Existing operations of greater than or equal to 300 NU will be required to have a plan or strategy by July 1, 2005.

Some municipalities may require nutrient management plans as part of their by-law process for expanding operations with fewer animals. Consult with your local building official to determine your local requirements.

The above discussion may leave you with a couple of questions such as how many beef cows or feeders does it take to equal 1 NU and what is a "new operation" in terms of this legislation. The table at the bottom of the page will assist you in determining the number of nutrient units for your beef operation. For other species of livestock, visit our Web site at http://www.gov.on.ca/OMAFRA/english/livestock/production.htm

Under the regulation, a "new" operation is defined by three criteria:

- It generates more than 5 NU of manure,
- It is on a separate deeded property, and
- An agricultural operation that generated manure has not been carried by the person who owns or controls the property at this site.

Based on discussions with many cattlemen throughout Ontario on this topic, there are two common questions remaining: will the Government provide funding assistance for projects related to nutrient management and when will these regulations apply to existing farms with less than 300 NU? The Provincial Advisory Committee on nutrient management is considering both of these issues. The Committee is scheduled to report to the Minister in 2004 with their recommendations. Stay tuned.

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Type of Beef Animal	Number of Animals per Nutrient Unit
Beef cows (includes unweaned calf and replacements)	1.0
Beef shortkeepers (900-1300 lbs.)	2.0
Beef backgrounders (575-900 lbs.)	3.0
Beef feeders (575-1250 lbs.)	3.0

From the Nutrient Management Protocol. Regulation 267/03 under the *Nutrient Management Act*.

Act Now To Access Current Government Financial Support Programs

December 31, 2003 is the final deadline to access the following programs:

- 2003 Advanced Ontario Agricultural Payment
- Federal Transition Funding
- 2002 NISA Stabilization Year

2003 Advanced Ontario Agricultural Payment

On August 29, 2003 the province of Ontario introduced phase three of its strategy designed to support the competitiveness of Ontario's ruminant livestock industry as it struggles with the aftermath of a single incidence of BSE in an Alberta cow. As part of phase three, Ontario has made available $20 million to producers of ruminant livestock as an advance on future whole farm safety net programming for the 2003 tax year. Ontario first provided assistance to producers that met the program criteria who were enrolled in the Net Income Stabilization Account (NISA) for the 2002 tax year.

Producers are required to meet the following criteria for the advanced payment:

1. Have claimed ruminant livestock sales to Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA) in at least one of the last three years (2000 to 2002).
2. Sales of ruminant livestock have comprised at least 1/3 of total farm sales over the last three years (2000 to 2002).
3. On average for the last three years, had a positive production margin; which is the difference between total farm sales and direct production costs.

Each producer having met the above criteria will be provided an advanced payment equal to roughly 7.4% of their three-year average production margin.

If you are not currently a participant in NISA you will need to submit the following to the Ontario Farm Income Disaster Program (OFIDP) by mail or fax:

1. A signed and completed copy of the 2003 Advanced Ontario Agricultural Payment application form
2. Copies of your statement of farming activities (T2042 or equivalent) filed to CCRA for each of 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002 or as available based on the number of years you have been farming.

The deadline to apply for a 2003 Advanced Ontario Agricultural Payment is December 31, 2003.

Contact OFIDP at 1-877-838-5144 or visit the OMAF Web site at:
http://www.gov.on.ca/OMAF/english/policy/bseri/index4.html

Federal Transition Funding

Announced on September 19, 2003, this $600 million will be paid directly to farmers based on their business year ending in 2002.

Farmers enrolled in the 2002 NISA program will receive direct payments based on their net sales for the past five years.

Farmers not enrolled in NISA are eligible for a payment based on a percentage of their eligible net sales in 2002 and must complete an application form available by contacting
1-866-367-8506. **The deadline to apply is Dec. 31, 2003.**

Payments are expected around the first part of December 2003. Further information is available at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's website: http://www.agr.gc.ca/index_e.phtml

2002 NISA - It's Not too Late to Apply

Farmers who are not currently participating in the 2002 NISA program may want to check out this option again. Under current proposals, the NISA program is scheduled to end with the 2002 program year. By making a deposit in a NISA account for the 2002 year, farmers can still get 2002 matching government contributions. Farmers can gain access to these funds through the closure mechanisms even if they do not have margin or net income triggers in the 2002 program year.

Farmers are still eligible to apply for the 2002 NISA program until **Dec. 31, 2003**. There is a 5% per month reduction in deposit entitlements for each month after the June 15, 2003 Individual Deadline and the June 30, 2003 Corporation/Cooperatives deadline. The penalty would be 25% on applications made by Nov.15, 2003 for individuals or by Nov. 30, 2003 for corporations.

For example, a farmer with $100,000 of Eligible Net Sales (ENS) in 2002, who applies by Nov. 15, 2003 and with an 75% entitlement, would be eligible for matching government contributions of $2,945 ($100,000 X 4% X 75% -$55.00 Ind. Admin. Fee).

A beef feedlot operation that purchases calves, with Eligible Net Sales of $475 per head in 2002, who applies by Nov. 15 2003 and with an 75% entitlement, would be eligible for matching government contributions of $14.25 per head. The total net benefit to the farmer after administration fees would be $230 on 20 head ($9500 ENS) or $2,795 on 200 head ($95,000 ENS).

For further information contact NISA at 1-800-665-6472. The NISA website is:

http://www.agr.gc.ca/nisa/docs/handbook.html

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Cull Animal Program

Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Lyle Vanclief announced the Cull Animal Program on Friday November 21, 2003, that will pay producers up to $320 per cow when their older animals are sold for slaughter.

The Government of Canada has offered to cost share the program with provincial and territorial governments on a 60-40 basis.

With provincial and territorial government participation, the program for cattle would offer:

- a payment of $159 per animal slaughtered between September 1, 2003, and December 31, 2004; and,
- in addition to the $159, a dollar a day per animal from December 16, 2003, up to the date of sale for slaughter or May 24, 2004, whichever is earlier, to help offset higher winter feed costs.

If Provinces do not participate in this particular program, producers will receive 60% of the amounts stated above.

These amounts are in addition to the regular prices paid to producers when they sell their cattle to buyers. Eligible animals are those owned by a producer on September 1, 2003, up to a cull rate of eight per cent for beef cows and a cull rate of 16 per cent for dairy cows. Cattle will have to be slaughtered by December 31, 2004, to qualify.

Discussions are currently ongoing with provinces and territories about further program details. More information, including how producers can apply, will be released shortly.

Internet Sites

We hope to provide a few internet sites each issue that may be of interest and assistance to producers.

Western Beef Development Centre – www.wbdc.sk.ca

The focus of the Western Beef Development Centre involves three areas: Management and Economics of Cow/Calf Production; Grazing Management of Perennial and Annual Forages; and Sustainable Cow-Calf Production Systems. There are a number of useful technical articles in these areas available from the web site as well as some useful tools for analyzing your beef cattle business.

OMAF Business Development Web Site – http://www.gov.on.ca/OMAFRA/english/busdev/agbusdev.html

This site has some handy calculators and tools for analyzing your farm business. Budgets for cow-calf, backgrounder or feedlot operations can be accessed from this page by selecting Crop and Livestock Budgets and following the links to the Budgeting Tools page.

Forage and Beef Production Web Site – www.foragebeef.ca

This new website will be launched in early December and will focus on forage and beef cattle management for Canadian farmers and ranchers. See the article on page 2 for more information.

Budgets

These one page budgets focus on the economics of feeding cattle and features such things as calculating the total cost of gain, feed efficiency and net return/animal. The budget programs (which can be downloaded from http://www.gov.on.ca/OMAFRA/english/busdev/downtown.htm#beefbud) can evaluate past performance as well as projecting ahead. It allows you to look at "what if" scenarios before you purchase cattle. This issue features a Backgrounding Scenario, a Calf Finishing Scenario and a Shortkeep Finishing Scenario.

$$$ Ontario Feedlot Cost of Production Budget $$$
Backgrounding Scenario

Calf Information

Sale Weight (lb.)	900
Purchase Weight (lb.)	501
Days on Feed	200
Death Loss %	-

	$/Head	$/lb
Sale Value	$ 981	
Purchase Value	$ 666	
Death Loss Value	$ -	
Margin	$ 315	$ 0.79

Expected Cost of Gain

Feed ($/lb of gain)	$ 0.48
Health & Vet. Expenses ($/hd)	$ 20
Marketing/Trucking ($/hd)	$ 28
Yardage** ($/hd/day)	$ 0.25
Interest Rate %	5.5

	$/Head	$/lb
Feed	$ 190	$ 0.48
Health & Vet. Expenses	$ 20	$ 0.05
Marketing/Trucking	$ 28	$ 0.07
Yardage	$ 50	$ 0.13
Interest	$ 25	$ 0.06
Expected Cost of Gain	$ 312	$ 0.78
Net Return	$ 2	$ 0.01

Expected Market Situation

Sale Price ($/lb.)	$ 1.09
Purchase Price ($/lb.)	$ 1.33

	$/Head	$/lb
Breakeven Sale Price	$ 979	$ 1.09
Breakeven Purchase Price	$ 669	$ 1.33

Total Gain (lbs.)	399	A.D.G. (lbs./day)	2.00

Feed Requirements

	$/tonne	Lbs. per Head/Day	$/Head	Percent DM
Hay	$ 70	12.0	$ 76	90
Haylage	$ -	-	$ -	45
Corn Silage	$ -	-	$ -	35
Dry Corn	$ 145	6.0	$ 79	86
H.M. Corn	$ -	-	$ -	70
Beef Supplement	$ 300	1.1	$ 30	90
Salt & Mineral	$ 500	0.10	$ 5	100
Corn Screenings	$ -	-	$ -	86
Other	$ -	-	$ -	
	$/acre			
Pasture	$ -	N/A	$ -	N/A

Total Feed Cost	$ 190
Feed Cost per lb. of Gain	**$ 0.48**
Total DM fed (lbs. per head/day)	17.05
Feed Conversion (lbs. - dry matter basis)	8.55

** Yardage is hydro, telephone, taxes & insurance, bedding, manure removal, housing, equipment repairs

This budget examines the breakeven sale price for a group of Western calves purchased at the end of September for $1.33/lb. Assuming 2.0 lb/day gain for 200 days at $0.78/lb of gain, the breakeven for this group of calves will be a selling price of $1.09/lb.

$$$ Ontario Feedlot Cost of Production Budget $$$
Calf Finishing Scenario

Calf Information

Sale Weight (lb.)	**1,200**
Purchase Weight (lb.)	**450**
Days on Feed	**280**
Death Loss %	**-**

	$/Head	$/lb
Sale Value	$ 900	
Purchase Value	$ 414	
Death Loss Value	$ -	
Margin	$ 486	$ 0.65

Expected Cost of Gain

Feed ($/lb. of gain)	$ 0.45
Health & Vet. Expenses ($/hd)	**$ 20**
Marketing/Trucking ($/hd)	**$ 30**
Yardage** ($/hd/day)	**$ 0.25**
Interest Rate %	**5**

	$/Head	$/lb
Feed	$ 340	$ 0.45
Health & Vet. Expenses	$ 20	$ 0.03
Marketing/Trucking	$ 30	$ 0.04
Yardage	$ 70	$ 0.09
Interest	$ 25	$ 0.03
Expected Cost of Gain	$ 485	$ 0.65
Net Return	$ 1	$ 0.00

Expected Market Situation

Sale Price ($/lb.)	**$ 0.75**
Purchase Price ($/lb.)	**$ 0.92**
Total Gain (lbs.)	750

	$/Head	$/lb
Breakeven Sale Price	$ 899	$ 0.75
Breakeven Purchase Price	$ 415	$ 0.92
A.D.G. (lbs./day)	2.68	

Feed Requirements

	$/tonne	Lbs. per Head/Day	$/Head	Percent DM
Hay	**$ 70**	**4.5**	$ 40	**90**
Haylage	**$ -**	**-**	$ -	**45**
Corn Silage	**$ 30**	**12.0**	$ 46	**35**
Dry Corn	**$ 145**	**11.0**	$ 203	**86**
H.M. Corn	**$ -**	**-**	$ -	**70**
Beef Supplement	**$ 300**	**1.2**	$ 46	**90**
Salt & Mineral	**$ 450**	**0.10**	$ 6	**100**
Corn Screenings	**$ -**	**-**	$ -	**86**
Other	**$ -**	**-**	$ -	
Other	**$ -**	**-**	$ -	
	$/acre			
Pasture	**$ -**	**N/A**	$ -	**N/A**

Total Feed Cost	$ 340
Feed Cost per lb. of Gain	**$ 0.45**
Total DM fed (lbs. per head/day)	18.89
Feed Conversion (lbs. - dry matter basis)	7.05

** Yardage is hydro, telephone, taxes & insurance, bedding, manure removal, housing, equipment repairs

This budget examines the break even for a group of heifers purchased in late September at $0.92/lb. These heifers will be fed in a stepwise fashion, with more roughage fed in the early stages and mainly corn fed the last 100 days. Assuming an average rate of gain of 2.68 lbs/day for 280 days on feed and a cost of gain of $0.65/lb, the breakeven selling price for these heifers will be $0.75/lb.

$$$ Ontario Feedlot Cost of Production Budget $$$
Shortkeep Finishing Scenario

Calf Information

Sale Weight (lb.)	**1,450**
Purchase Weight (lb.)	**786**
Days on Feed	**220**
Death Loss %	**-**

	$/Head	$/lb
Sale Value	$ 1,465	
Purchase Value	$ 951	
Death Loss Value	$ -	
Margin	$ 513	$ 0.77

Expected Cost of Gain

Feed ($/lb. of gain)	$ 0.57
Health & Vet. Expenses ($/hd)	**$ 14**
Marketing/Trucking ($/hd)	**$ 28**
Yardage** ($/hd/day)	**$ 0.25**
Interest Rate %	**5**

	$/Head	$/lb
Feed	$ 381	$ 0.57
Health & Vet. Expenses	$ 14	$ 0.02
Marketing/Trucking	$ 28	$ 0.04
Yardage	$ 55	$ 0.08
Interest	$ 36	$ 0.05
Expected Cost of Gain	$ 514	$ 0.77
Net Return	$ (1)	$ (0.00)

Expected Market Situation

Sale Price ($/lb.)	**$ 1.01**
Purchase Price ($/lb.)	**$ 1.21**
Total Gain (lbs.)	664

	$/Head	$/lb
Breakeven Sale Price	$ 1,465	$ 1.01
Breakeven Purchase Price	$ 951	$ 1.21
A.D.G. (lbs./day)	3.02	

Feed Requirements

	$/tonne	Lbs. per Head/Day	$/Head	Percent DM
Hay	**$ 70**	**3.0**	$ 21	**90**
Haylage	**$ -**	**-**	$ -	**45**
Corn Silage	**$ 30**	**16.0**	$ 48	**35**
Dry Corn	**$ 145**	**18.5**	$ 268	**86**
H.M. Corn	**$ -**	**-**	$ -	**70**
Beef Supplement	**$ 300**	**1.3**	$ 40	**90**
Salt & Mineral	**$ 450**	**0.10**	$ 4	**100**
Corn Screenings	**$ -**	**-**	$ -	**86**
Other	**$ -**	**-**	$ -	
Other	**$ -**	**-**	$ -	
	$/acre			
Pasture	**$ -**	**N/A**	$ -	**N/A**

Total Feed Cost	$ 381
Feed Cost per lb. of Gain	**$ 0.57**
Total DM fed (lbs. per head/day)	25.50
Feed Conversion (lbs. - dry matter basis)	8.45

** Yardage is hydro, telephone, taxes & insurance, bedding, manure removal, housing, equipment repairs

This budget examines the breakeven sale price for a group of heavy calves purchased in September and being fed to finish. The calves were purchased for $1.21/lb and will be fed to gain an average 3.0 lb/day for 220 days at a cost of $0.78/lb of gain. The breakeven selling price for this group of calves will be $1.01/lb.

For more information or to determine your Cost of Production (COP) contact:

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Wintering Yards for Livestock

Northwestern Quebec farmers are using interesting wintering sites for their cow-calf herds. A tour by Ontario farmers provided a first hand look at some of these innovative methods which ranged from complete indoor housing of cows in a free stall barn to cows wintering in the bush.

One method that has worked well for producers, from a cow comfort and environmental protection point of view, has been windbreak yards made of bark and shavings. Producers with traditional cemented yards and barns are moving to this type of yard as they expand.

The windbreak yards (Figure 1), designed to hold 100 cows, are 200 ft. x 200 ft. with wooden, twelve foot high windbreaks surrounding the yard. Inside the yards are mounds of bark and shavings to provide resting areas for the cattle.

When the yards are constructed, tiles are installed (3 or 4 per yard) which provide drainage into a grassed waterway or collection pond. Three to five feet of bark are then spread over the entire 40,000 square foot area and compacted by a bulldozer. Two feet of shavings are then spread over the bark and compacted. The yard remains dry throughout the year. After the cows go to pasture the top foot or so of shavings is removed and the balance is left to sanitize over the summer. New shavings are brought in and compacted in the fall.

Calves have access to a creep area built along the sides of the windbreak. The creep area has a roof extending from the windbreak fence out over the pack area and cows are kept out of the area by a couple of strands of electric wire set at an appropriate height (Figure 2).

Costs for building this type of facility will range depending on the availability of bark and shavings in your area. In northwestern Quebec there is very little straw but an abundant availability of bark and shavings. Certainly for parts of Ontario this is true as well. From an environmental aspect, this system allows very limited runoff of manure, and there is very limited seepage even when melting. As well the cows remain very clean and dry, reducing the incidence of disease with the calves.

An off shoot of this concept were producers who were using the bark as diking (Figure 3) to control spring runoff from their traditional wintering facilities.

Figure 1.

Figure 2.

Figure 3.

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Winter Feeding Options From A Pasture Perspective

As we approach the winter feeding season it is an ideal time to be thinking about next year's pasture season. Even though the ground is frozen and covered with snow there are things that you can do over the winter to improve pasture growth in the coming year.

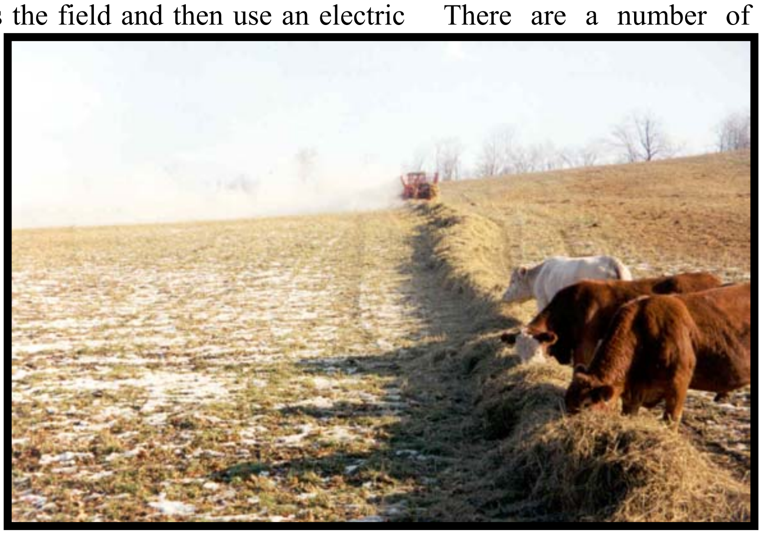
The first step is to evaluate the condition of your pastures as the 2003 grazing season draws to a close. Are there improvements and changes that you would like to make for the 2004 grazing season?

How you organize and manage your livestock during the winter feeding period can have a big impact on next year's pasture.

Let's take a look at some possible options to consider. Starting with the conditions of your pastures, is there a pasture that needs extra fertility to encourage grass growth? Feeding hay on this pasture field over the winter or part of the winter is a way to add this fertility. By moving the feeding site across the field you will increase the soil fertility of the field because of the manure that is deposited around the feeding area and any hay that is wasted. I have been in a number of pasture fields that received this type of treatment in the previous year or two. It is amazing how the grass thickens up from the increased nutrients and the grass seeds that are in the hay that was fed.

The idea is to always put the hay-bale on fresh ground. If you are using a bale feeder then it will be necessary to move the feeder before each filling.

With a feeder wagon, pull it to a new area every couple of days. A method that is used by some producers is to place the bales across the field and then use an electric wire to give livestock a few bales at a time. This has the advantage of placing all the bales at once, but the disadvantage of having to move an electric fence every few days while the livestock are in the field.



You will be amazed at the impact these practices will have on improving grass production in the following years.

Do you have the opportunity to use any crop residue for winter forage? If you have access to grain cornfields they can provide feed for several months during the winter. Cows can winter quite successfully on corn stalks. They will glean any grain that has been missed by the combine and the leaves and stalks provide reasonable feed value. An electric wire will allow you to control the area that is grazed and make for an easy feeding system for part of the winter. Cows can graze through fluffy snow that is 8-12 inches deep.

The third option to consider is stockpile grazing. Stockpile grazing refers to grazing the late summer/fall growth in a field after the growing season ends. Cattle and sheep can successfully graze through several inches of fluffy snow. Select fields with firm soil conditions and a good accumulation of forage growth. Animals should be given access to only part of the pasture area at a time so that they consume most of the available forage rather than picking out only the best. There are several good articles on the OMAF Web site relating to stockpile grazing; they can be found on the Forages and Pasture page at:

http://www.gov.on.ca/OMAFRA/english/crops/field/forages.html

Fields that are stockpile grazed will be slightly slower to become productive in the spring. The savings gained by not having to harvest and store the forage will more than offset this loss of early spring growth.

There are a number of options that may fit your livestock operation that will help keep costs down and can be used to improve the productivity of your pastures. Consider your needs and opportunities and choose the ones that will work for you.

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Feeding Forages

Have you heard the latest price of hay! Whether your barn is full of it, you're trying to sell it, or are looking like mad for a source of it; HAY and its price is the hottest topic of conversation at any farm gathering. So with availability down and up, how we get the best use out of our forages is the next best topic of conversation.

So in no particular order please consider the following….

- Inventory what you do have … this includes the number of bales, and what they weigh = # of lbs of hay, of what types (the good, the bad, and the gut fill).
- Test the major forage … This is not the year to feed based on "I think that it's pretty good hay". If a $35 test lets you save 1 lb of hay/cow/day at $.06/lb on 50 cows = $3/day.
- Figure out what your inventory will carry. Cut to that number or figure out your alternatives NOW. Failing to plan now is how we get thin cows and humane society calls in February and March.
- Consider buying gates so you can split the cows into 2 feeding groups (the very needy and the not so needy) and feed accordingly.
- Take a hard look at your feeders. Do they waste a lot of hay? Can they be modified? Do you have enough feeder space? When on a restricted diet, it's important that they all can feed at once.

- Consider what other forage feedstuffs are out there. Cereal straw can be fed as PART of a ration. Limit to 12-14 lbs to avoid impaction of the rumen. Make sure protein levels are adequate and lots of water is available.
- Consider if there is a way to use corn stalks. As grazing? Hay? Or Bedding?
- Consider Soy and Canola straw. They probably won't eat these unless they can be chopped and mixed with other forage, but use them for bedding, and they will pick at them.
- USE BEDDING. Lack of bedding increases energy needs by 10-15% (that's 1-2 lbs grain or 2-3 lbs good hay/cow/day). Consider anything that gets them off the cold ground or manure — soy straw, canola straw, corn stalks, bark or sawdust.
- If it looks like using grain to replace SOME hay may be a $$ wise decision, you will need to price out the costs on a lb of nutrient base. Five-six lbs of corn may replace 8-10 lbs of hay but it will need to be worked out for your set-up.
- Don't get carried away with grain however. Once you go over 10-12% of the diet (2-3 lbs/1000 lb of body weight) you will depress forage digestibility.
- If considering grain … will you buy from the mill, off the combine? Where and how will you feed it?
- If your hay is really tough fibers and low in protein, a protein supplement will help to drive the rumen and increase digestibility of your forage.
- Many mills offer beef pellets. These can be good, but shop around for price and content. A pellet is not a pellet is not a pellet.
- Go for a FAT FALL. Try to fatten them up in the fall period to save on energy needs in the winter. A fat cow has 6% lower energy needs than a thinner lady. A cow in good shape can lose 10-15% of her body weight from fall to spring. But this requires constant monitoring.
- So be frugal with your forage while hoping for an easy winter, and early spring!

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Management Tips

Late fall is time for round up, weaning and processing, which includes:

- weaning the calf crop and providing the booster to vaccines given three to four weeks previous,
- selecting replacement heifer calves,
- pregnancy testing and culling open cows,
- following your herd health protocol as set up by your veterinarian. This may include vaccinating and applying parasite control to the cowherd. Discuss a spring vaccination program for the cows with your vet! In demand by feedlots!

Utilize crop residues:

- Graze corn stalk fields at a rate of 1-2 acres per cow for 60 days. You may need to supplement energy and protein after the first 30 days.
- Strip graze re-growth on hay fields, be prepared to pull the cattle if conditions are too wet.
- Provide free choice mineral and be prepared to supplement protein.

Provide thin cows with extra feed now. Take advantage of weather, stage of pregnancy, lower nutrient requirements and quality feed ingredients to put gain on.

If you keep calves to feed over the winter, aim for the following minimum levels of performance:

- Replacement heifers: small framed 1.5-1.75 lbs per day, large framed 1.75- 2.0 lbs per day.
- Steer calves: going to grass following summer, 1.00-1.75 lbs per day; finishing by following spring or summer 2.75 lbs per day or greater.
- Bull calves: to be fed out and sold in spring as yearlings, 3.00 lbs per day or greater.

Winterize the barn and yards. Check water sources and pipes; ensure all are properly insulated.

New Product Launch

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food (OMAF) is launching a unique packaging of practical information under the title "Livestock Production and Financial Management."

This resource is directed to livestock producers in Ontario, particularly those affected by the detection of BSE in Canada. This collection of Infosheets, Factsheets and business evaluation tools is intended to help producers make the best production and financial management decisions regarding their own operations. The collection is available in print form and on CD. Producers can also access the information on OMAF's Web site.

How to Access "Livestock Production and Financial Management"

Call our OMAF Agricultural Information Contact Centre at 1-877-424-1300, or visit the OMAF Resource Centre in your area to get a print or CD copy. The information is also available on our Web site at www.omaf.gov.on.ca.

NEW: Subscription Service

OMAF's Web site now offers a "**subscribe**" feature that registers producers to receive electronic notification of newly posted information. Go to: **www.omaf.gov.on.ca**, click the Livestock Management/BSE Programs button, then click on "Subscribe to Updates".

BSE Programs — Overview

The BSE border closure on May 20, 2003 caused cattle market prices to significantly decline. Export markets partially opened on September 1, resulting in some price recovery. Since May 20, 2003, OMAF has announced three programs available to Ontario cattle producers. The Canada Ontario BSE Recovery Program also covered other ruminant livestock. OMAF continues to work with ruminant livestock sectors to address their BSE-related issues. For answers about the compensation packages, call 1-877-838-5144 or check the Web at http://www.gov.on.ca/OMAFRA/english/policy/bserp/index.html

The primary purpose of the three programs is to facilitate the continued viability of the Ontario industry and to maximize producer returns from the marketplace. Guiding principles for these programs include:

- Only animals owned by Ontario producers on May 20th are eligible
- Compensation will only be provided for each eligible animal once
- To ensure equitable treatment to all producers, compensation will NOT be provided without the required documentation (e.g. proof of slaughter)
- Payments are calculated to minimize disruption to the marketplace and to ensure that Ontario cattle producers are not at a competitive disadvantage to cattle producers across Canada

Canada Ontario BSE Recovery Program Phase 1

In June 2003, a Federal-Provincial BSE Recovery Program was announced to encourage ruminant livestock slaughter and to free up processor storage capacity. Market-ready livestock sold before August 31, 2003 and slaughtered in Ontario by September 5, 2003 were eligible for a compensation payment.

Ontario BSE Recovery Initiative

Phase 2 - Set-Aside

On August 25, 2003 the Ontario BSE Recovery Initiative was announced to provide compensation for cattle owned by Ontario producers on May 20, 2003 that were fully fed and market ready. Compensation was provided to eligible producers for eligible cattle that were set aside for a minimum of eight weeks. The deadline to apply for this program was September 5th. This program was fully funded by the Government of Ontario.

Phase 3(a) Slaughter Component

The Ontario BSE Recovery Initiative, Phase 3 (a), addressed market-ready cattle and veal calves that were held in inventory by Ontario producers on May 20, 2003 and were not eligible for a payment under either of the preceding BSE compensation programs. Ontario cattle producers were eligible for compensation upon sending the market-ready cattle and veal calves remaining in their May 20th inventory to slaughter.

The program terminated midnight, Saturday October 4, 2003. For direct-to-packer sales, no slaughter dates past Saturday, October 4, 2003 would have been eligible for compensation from this Initiative. For auction sales, no sales dates past Saturday October 4, 2003 would have been eligible. Cattle must have been slaughtered within 14 days of sale date to be eligible. The deadline to apply to this program was October 31, 2003. This program was fully funded by the Government of Ontario.

Phase 3(b) 2003 Advance Ontario Agricultural Payment

The Ontario BSE Recovery Initiative, 2003 Advance Ontario Agricultural Payment, provides assistance to any producer of ruminant livestock that meets program criteria. Payments were issued to NISA participants the week of October 6, 2003. Non-NISA participants must complete the 2003 Advance Payment Application Form. The deadline to apply to this program is December 31, 2003. This program is fully funded by the Government of Ontario.

Technical Information Regarding BSE

OMAF BSE Site

http://www.gov.on.ca/OMAFRA/english/livestock/general/health_management/bse/index.html

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is the lead agency for Canada and has the legislative authority to prevent the entry of BSE and detect, report or control any potential occurrence of the disease. The CFIA can be reached at **1-800-454-8408 (public) or 613-228-6682 (media)**.

Additional technical information and key messages prepared by the CFIA are available on their website at: http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/anima/heasan/disemala/bseesb/bseesbindexe.shtml

The **Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food's Agricultural Information Contact Centre** is available Monday to Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. to respond to your technical questions. They can be contacted at **1-877-424-1300**.

BSE Help Line

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food (OMAF) has implemented a **BSE Help Line** to better meet the information needs of clients affected by the BSE situation in Ontario. The BSE Help Line gives callers access to a team of OMAF specialists who will be able to offer technical advice to help producers make informed management decisions. The BSE Help Line allows farmers to get answers to their BSE-related questions at **1-888-292-5856**.

Financial Counselling

Farm Consultation Service. Through this federally administered program, farmers who are experiencing financial difficulty can gain the services of a professional financial counsellor to help assess the current situation and to develop a plan for future success. Applicants pay a nominal fee of $100.00 for this unique individualized and confidential service. Contact: Farm Consultation Service, Guelph, ON **1-866-452-5558**, www.agr.gc.ca/policy/adapt/national_initiatives/fcs.phtml

Emotional Support

The **Farm Line** is a toll-free and confidential, anonymous service that offers emotional support and referral services for Ontario farmers and their families. Callers can speak to a peer support worker regarding a wide variety of topics, including financial difficulties, stress, grief, family or marital problems, serious accidents and traumatic events. Access The Farm Line at **1-888-451-2903** Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. www.thefarmline.ca

Upcoming Events

January 31, 2004	Ontario Veal Association Annual Meeting - Stratford
February 24, 2004	Beef Improvement Ontario Annual Meeting - Toronto
February 24, 2004	Cattlemen's College - Toronto
February 25-26, 2004	Ontario Cattlemen's Association Annual Meeting - Toronto
March 13, 2004	Winchester Beef Day
April, 2004	Alvinston Beef Day