



Agricultural Research and Extension
Council of Alberta

News Release

2008 WESTERN CANADIAN GRAZING CONFERENCE DRAWS OVER 300 PRODUCERS

ALBERTA, December 8, 2008 – Over 300 producers from across western Canada gathered in Edmonton from December 3 to 5, 2008 to participate in the Western Canadian Grazing Conference.

“We were very pleased with both the number of registrants and the response we had to our program,” said Brian Luce, co-chair of the WCGC planning committee. “From the attendance at the trade show to the active participation in the many sessions we organized, we could see that producers from British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan are committed to expanding their expertise in grazing and to building profitable operations.”

“It was very encouraging to see the level of interest in grazing and forages,” said Dee Ann Benard, executive director of the Agricultural Research and Extension Council of Alberta (ARECA), the host organization for the conference. “During tough economic times, producers have to be even more innovative about the way they do business. We are confident that the information shared by our speakers and by fellow producers will help producers improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their operations during the difficult months ahead.”

The conference opened on Thursday, December 4 with an address from the Honourable George Groeneveld, Alberta’s Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. “It’s no secret that the livestock industry is facing some tough challenges these days,” said Minister Groeneveld. “Increased international competition for market access, greater demands for food safety and environmental measures, and higher input costs are all putting pressure on the livestock industry. Events like this give producers many of the tools they need to meet these challenges head-on and overcome them.”

Keynote speakers from the event included Dr. Roger Gates, a prominent extension range specialist from the West River Ag Center in South Dakota; Dr. Bart Lardner, a Senior Research Scientist headquartered at the Western Beef Development Centre; and Sheldon Atwood, a specialist in Behavioral Education for Human, Animal, Vegetation and Ecosystem Management.

Although all of the sessions were well received, many of the positive comments reflected an appreciation for the presentations given by fellow producers. The opportunity to network with those who are active within the industry and willing to share their real-life experiences and expertise was highly valued by those who attended. Some of the producers who participated in the panels included Craig and Marcella Van Stryland of Van Stryland Farms near Clive, Alberta; Leon Specht, who runs a custom grazing operation by Millet, Alberta; and Len Larsen, a producer with a background in multi-species grazing from Moosejaw, Saskatchewan.

In recognition of the innovative nature of farming, the Western Canadian Grazing Conference celebrated the ingenuity and creativity of our farmers and ranchers with the WCGC 2008 Innovation of the Year Award, sponsored by Lakeland College. Attendees had an opportunity to judge each submission and then vote for the winners during the trade show.

The first place winner was Jane Charlotte of Koru Farms. Jane invented a jig for building a corral and curved chute system. The jig allows a single person to build the system, keeps the planks in place during construction and ensures that the planks are in a continuous board run with no ragged edges. In recognition of her award, Jane received 75 PowerFlex fence posts.

Second place went to Stan Marshall, who created a small puller based on a simple lever system. Stan's puller can be used with a variety of posts including PowerFlex, small wood, fibreglass and steel T posts. For his efforts, Stan received a Garmin Rino 130 GPS.

Those who were unable to attend the 2008 WCGC but are still interested in obtaining the proceedings are asked to contact the ARECA office in Sherwood Park, Alberta by calling (780) 416-6046 ext. 12. Proceedings will be available until January 16, 2008 at a cost of \$10 (includes shipping).

The Agricultural Research and Extension Council of Alberta, along with the members of the organizing committee, would like to express their appreciation to all of those who sponsored the conference. The support of industry, government and producers made for a highly successful event.

For additional information, please contact:

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