



Manitoba Beef & Forage Initiatives Newsletter – May 2020

MBFI Update

The first few months of 2020 have brought some temporary changes and challenges along with the largest calving season yet to MBFI. The COVID-19 situation has thrown more than a few curveballs into MBFI's plans for 2020 including canceling tours and events until further notice. We are extremely disappointed to be missing out on canceled events and tours but look forward to hosting them again once it is safe to do so. Staff are currently working on building capacity to offer virtual field days and informational videos focused on ongoing work happening on site. Keep an eye on our social media accounts for announcements coming soon!

Calving season started early on March 30 which has been followed by a few weeks of long days and late nights with an unusually cold April. However, seeing the new calves play and run makes it all worth it!

The 2020 summer project season is now getting underway with field work starting and surveying pasture readiness for grazing already happening. Projects could not happen without the continued support and hard work from our project leads and collaborating partners who we are excited to work with in this coming year.

MBFI would like to congratulate Jane Thornton, Livestock Specialist with Manitoba Agriculture and Resource Development on her retirement after over 20 years with the department. We have thoroughly enjoyed working with Jane and wish her nothing but the best!

We are looking forward to a busy, project filled, and socially distanced summer at MBFI! We would like to encourage everyone to keep in touch virtually by finding us on social media (@mbbeefandforage), reaching out to us over email (information@mbfi.ca) or phone (204-761-3300).

Jordan Dickson

Extension and Research Coordinator





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Projects Happening in 2020 at MBFI

Forage & Grassland Productivity

Long term impact of annual forage polycultures and fertility management on soil health and functioning	AAFC Swift Current – Luke Bainard
Assessing the impact of grazing annual forage cover crops in an integrated crop-livestock system (pending COVID-19 development)	AAFC Swift Current – Jillian Bainard
Impacts of cattle grazing on the proliferation of foxtail barley in wet meadow rangelands	University of Winnipeg – Rafael Otfinowski
Keep Grazing – Exploring cattle grazing as a riparian management tool	Brandon University – Alex Koiter
Planned Grazing – Brookdale Farm	MB ARD – Pam Iwanchysko
Extensive winter grazing – Brookdale Farm	MB ARD – Shawn Cabak
Improving marginal pasture through planned rotational compared to high density grazing	AAFC Brandon – Mae Elsinger MB ARD – Jane Thornton
Understanding and manipulating leafy spurge populations with cattle grazing and biological control agents	AAFC Brandon – Mae Elsinger MB ARD – Jane Thornton
Using a novel seed mix to rejuvenate tame pastures and create pollinator habitat, replicated over 2 years	MB ARD – Kim Wolfe AAFC Brandon – Mae Elsinger
Demonstrating difference between monoculture and intercropping corn in extensive beef cattle winter grazing	MBFI
Fertilization comparison to increase rangeland health and yield	MBFI
Pasture cropping comparison	MBFI

Nutrition & Feed Efficiency

Strategic supplementation to improve beef cattle performance in grazing systems (pending COVID-19 development)	University of Manitoba – Kim Ominski
Demonstrating effects of bale placement and twine on bale grazing residue	MBFI
Strategic beef cattle herd development	MBFI

Environmental Sustainability

Edge of field runoff	AAFC Brandon – Henry Wilson
Response of rangeland ecosystems to extreme drought	University of Winnipeg – Rafael Otfinowski
Soil health assessment for enhanced productivity and resilience for cattle grazing systems in Manitoba grasslands (paired with Planned Grazing demonstration project)	Brandon University - Terence McGonigle



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Soil carbon monitoring to detect changes due to grazing management	MB ARD – Mathew Wiens
Wetland health assessments: Riparian health assessments for lentic wetlands at Brookdale Farm	MB ARD – Kim Wolfe
Operation Pollinator	MB ARD – Kim Wolfe
Rodent control at Johnson Farm	MBFI
Shelterbelt maintenance	MBFI
Protecting and Rehabilitating Ferruginous Hawk Populations in Manitoba	ACC Land and Water Management – Breanna Sheppard MBFI
<i>Under Development</i>	
Fostering and enabling on-farm research to promote Manitoba Grown Innovation	MBFI
Static composting bioreactor construction	MBFI
Demonstration of saline area management strategies	MBFI

Project Spotlight

ACC Capstone Project brings Ferruginous hawk habitats to MBFI

Building partnership and collaboration is a central pillar to activities at Manitoba Beef & Forage Initiatives (MBFI). Opportunities to partner with Assiniboine Community College (ACC) have most recently been collaborating with Land and Water Management students completing a capstone final project. The capstone project is designed to get second year students engaged with industry to identify a real-world problem and work with industry partners to plan and execute the project.

Breanna Sheppard partnered with MBFI for her capstone project to build two Ferruginous hawk nesting structures at MBFI's Johnson Farm. Breanna has combined her passion for conservation and endangered species to design a project around a need for Ferruginous hawk nesting habitat in southwestern Manitoba. Ferruginous hawks are found primarily on grasslands in southern Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba and are a specialist predator of Richardson's Ground Squirrels (RGS). They have been listed as a threatened species in Canada for the last 40 years due to habitat loss. The two nesting structures will be included as part of MBFI's rodent control trapping program and will serve as a model to others who are interested in becoming a Ferruginous hawk landlord.





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The overall goal of Breanna’s project is to help increase populations of Ferruginous Hawks by promoting the development of nesting sites in multiple areas in Manitoba with the help of landowners and farmers. Increasing Ferruginous hawk habitat contributes to biodiversity, or species diversity, which provides many ecosystem benefits to other wildlife and humans. Breanna has been working closely with Timothy Poole (MB ARD) to create an updated guide that will provide private landowners, conservation districts, farmers and the public with information and contacts to assist in providing this endangered species with suitable nesting habitat. The guide will include instructions on how to build a nesting structure and what to look for when monitoring for Ferruginous hawk activity. The guide and more information will be available on MBFI’s website at www.mbf.ca/ferruginous-hawk-acc-capstone-project for anyone to access.

Find the full article on page 10 in Cattle Country here: <https://www.mbbeef.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Cattle-Country-May-2020-FINAL.pdf>