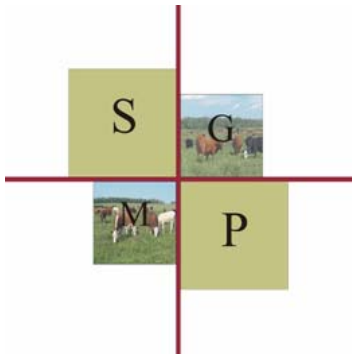


The Grazing Mentor

The Newsletter for the National Sustainable Grazing Mentorship Program
Enhancing Profits and the Environment through Grazing Management



Volume I, Issue I
August 2007

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From the Editor

Welcome to the first issue of **The Grazing Mentor!** Over the next months, I'm looking forward to providing you with first hand reports on the National Sustainable Grazing Mentorship Program. Each issue will feature one or more of our Grazing Mentors and at least one of the producers he/she has mentored. This is a unique program and one we have good reason to be proud of it. Mentoring is one of the oldest methods of sharing information and has time tested proven results in helping

people define their goals and begin the journey to reaching them. We have a skilled group of Mentors reaching from coast to coast and feel confident recommending any one of them to you. Whether you are an experienced grazier or just getting started, a Grazing Mentor can provide assistance. Through this newsletter you will read about the far-reaching benefits of working with a Grazing Mentor, but better yet, find out for yourself! Contact your Provincial Partner and make arrangements as soon as possible.

It's one of those things that's best to get done before the snow flies!

For comments or questions, you can contact me at walksfar@sasktel.net.

Happy Trails,
Lee Pengilly

About The Grazing Mentorship Program

What Is It?

The Grazing Mentorship Program is a unique opportunity for producers to receive individual input and suggestions on how to improve their profits, efficiency, forage productivity as well as land and water resources through improved grazing management. The folks selected as Grazing Mentors are respected fellow producers with extensive grazing management, knowledge and experience. Extra training has been made available to them to better assist with the mentoring process.

What's In It For Me?

As a Mentee (a person who is being mentored), a Grazing Mentor from your region will contact you by telephone and make arrangements to come to your farm/ranch, no matter how large or small your land base is. He/she will discuss with you and help you to assess your grazing resources, as well as the opportunities and the challenges. He/she will work with you in making suggestions and providing input about fencing,

watering systems, grazing systems, plant growth, forage species selections, dormant season grazing, winter feeding strategies...or just about anything you have questions about.

Your Grazing Mentor can spend a total of about 16 hours with you and that many be in the form of in-person visits or telephone follow-ups to guide you through any additional questions or decisions you may be making.

How Much Does It Cost?

Your investment as a producer is only \$100, which you pay to your Provincial Partner in the Program (see listing on page 4). The Program will pay the balance of your Mentor's time up to a maximum of 16 hours as well as his/her travel expenses to a budget maximum of \$700 per grazing unit.

How Do I Find A Grazing Mentor?

When you want to be put in contact with a Grazing Mentor contact the appropriate Provincial Partner Organization listed below and he/

she will find someone who meets your needs and location. In the event you already know one of our Grazing Mentors and would like to be working with that person, you can make direct arrangements with him or her.

How Soon Do I Have to Decide?

We urge you to get the process rolling as soon as possible. It seems to make sense that optimally, the first visit to your operation would take place before the land is covered with snow. That being said an early snowfall is not going to stop our Mentors! In the meantime, the process moves along faster if you have access to maps or aerial photos of the land you are managing. If you have completed maps with your Environmental Farm Plan, those will usually be fine to get started with. Extra photocopies of them would be helpful.

Please note: It is not necessary to complete an EFP prior to working with a Grazing Mentor.



Canada

Funds for this project provided by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Greencover Canada Program.

The Grazing Mentor

Interview with Grazing Mentor Neil Dennis

This is the second year Neil Dennis of Sunnybrae Farms located in Saskatchewan's southeast corner has been involved in the Grazing Mentorship Program. His enthusiasm for grazing and its benefits to land, cattle, people and pocket book is contagious. The efforts he and his wife Barbara have put into taking grazing from a chore to a highly skilled profession are apparent when one visits them or has an opportunity to view one of Neil's presentations. With his informative collection of slides it's easy to see the transformation taking place on their land. Neil and Barbara have pushed the envelope and challenged their own thinking time and time again and are passionate advocates for improved grazing management.

The Dennis land was homesteaded in the early 1900s and has had livestock on it since that time. Some of their land was once used for grain farming, but has since been converted to pasture. In 1983 Neil and Barbara went from conventional grazing to rotational grazing, but discovered there were still some missing pieces to the puzzle. In 1998 they took a class in Holistic Management and implemented timed

management grazing which has evolved for them into management intensive grazing (MIG) coupled with high stock density. They have yet to stop making changes to their grazing management and Neil reminds us that PLAN is a 24-letter word (plan-monitor-control-replan). They attempt to work as closely as possible with Nature and are the first to admit Nature is still teaching them lessons.

One of the most common things folks who have worked with Neil are initially interested in is how to increase their stock density. Neil explains, "The main thing is the fencing, then the cross fencing. Then comes the water. Without access to water you can't increase stock density." Neil points out that getting those things right are the primary components of improved grazing management. Once they are in place, you begin getting better distribution of manure and urine, a more effective water cycle, better plant growth and recovery." He recognizes all of these changes don't come about immediately, but there's no time like the present to get started.

The results on the Dennis land have reached far and wide and Dennis fields a variety of calls and questions from leading academics, scientists, range ecologists and plenty of average folks too. The proof is in the results with a land base that went from a summer carrying capacity of 100 cow/calf pairs, to 220 yearlings, to 330, to 450, to 640 and this year 800 yearlings will be quietly and contentedly grazing the summer away at Sunnybrae Farms. Neil cautions that such stocking rates don't come without a lot of hard work and dedication, but he and Barbara have seen it to be well worth their commitment.

Their land is thriving with organic matter levels skyrocketing, many new types of birds and wildlife moving in and every year more species of native grasses and legumes being identified.

Sunnybrae Farms is located in Saskatchewan's southeast corner near the town of Wawota on a land base consisting of both native and tame pasture mixed with treed bluffs. Neil and Barbara have two adult sons and a daughter who just graduated from high school.

"One of the mentors may well be holding the key to helping you along in your journey to improved profitability and sustainability."

Introducing Grazing Mentorship Program Coordinator Jim Stone

Jim brings passion, experience and optimism to this program. He is enthused to work with the Sustainable Grazing Mentorship Program (SGMP) at the national level. His role is to offer training, help and support to the Mentors as well as take care of their questions. With good initial moisture in many areas, Jim feels it's important to let producers know that this is the best time to take steps to moving their

conventional grazing system toward a more sustainable one.

"Strongly rooted plants allow producers to reap rewards more quickly and enjoy long-term results as compared to beginning with drought stricken overgrazed plants where progress is so much slower. It's sort of like starting with money in the bank!"

He encourages producers to take advantage this program and believes there is real value in it.

"One of the mentors may well be holding the key to helping you along in your journey to improved profitability and sustainability."



Interview with Grazing Mentees Barry and Sandy Schorr

Barry Schorr, his wife Sandy and three of their five children moved to southeastern Saskatchewan from southeastern Alberta five years ago. Relocating from what is commonly referred to as the short grass rangelands to an entirely different growing area is not without significant challenges. Their Alberta ranch had a traditional grass/grazing base, as compared to their new land in Saskatchewan, which was primarily over-worked farmland. The first couple of years in their new location were extremely busy ones as they built perimeter fences and seeded the old cropland into a forage base. It took three years before they got a decent catch of grass. In the meantime they had taken a six-day ranch management training program in Holistic Management that helped them outline and define their personal, financial and land planning goals. Class members

formed a Management Club and that group still meets, providing opportunity for the folks involved to continue improving their management practices with input and support from each other.

Last year a neighbor told the Schorrs about a presentation Neil Dennis was giving regarding his operation. By attending, they learned of the Grazing Mentorship Program. They made arrangements to work with Neil and would certainly recommend the services of a Grazing Mentor to others. They found the one-on-one relationship allowed for many questions to be discussed and provided extra confidence in making some major changes in their management. Sandy Schorr goes on to further explain, "I was so glad we had earlier taken the classes in grazing management. That foundation allowed us to take our grazing to the

next level. We already had a good understanding of the principles behind managed grazing and so it was easier to take those next steps." The Schorrs found they could have spent more time with their Mentor, as the time seemed to go by quickly. Sandy continues, "I think it would be great for people to have more access to Grazing Mentors. The more you learn about grazing and the more you see the positive changes happening on your land, the more interesting it becomes. This takes grazing to a whole new level of interest!"

Barry and Sandy Schorr ranch with their two teenage sons and their daughter and her fiancé in the Moosomin region of Saskatchewan on a land base that is a mix of open grasslands and bush. Their two other children are young adults with careers in Alberta.

The more you learn about grazing and the more you see the positive changes happening on your land, the more interesting it becomes.

-Sandy Schorr

Interview with Grazing Mentees Bill and Lindsey Ackroyd

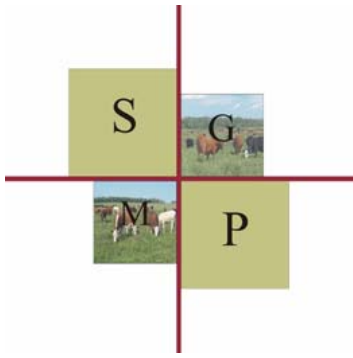
Bill and Lindsey Ackroyd and their two school-age daughters settled in eastern Saskatchewan having relocated from Britain five years ago. According to Lindsey, "It was like arriving in a whole different world. In Britain you can't stop the grass from growing and here you have to nurture it along." Through previous training they had taken, they knew Neil and Barbara Dennis and had remained friends with them. When Neil contacted them about the Grazing Mentorship Program they immediately knew they wanted to participate. They got together with two sets of neighbors and collectively hired Neil as their Mentor. By taking this approach, they were able to meet with him as a group for general information, then Neil visited each op-

eration separately, then the group once again came together for question/answer sessions with him. As is always the case, each participant gained tremendous value from the questions, answers and discussion generated by the group.

Bill and Lindsey already had effective maps of their land and had been carefully planning and monitoring their cattle moves. Their previous training had taught them to plan those moves based on recovery of the plant rather than a set period of rest time. In general terms, their livestock do not return to a paddock for a minimum of 60 days, but they find in their area 70-80 days is often required for full recovery. With their background and experience they

were well prepared to fine-tune their grazing management and they found a Grazing Mentor greatly helped that process along.

Would the Ackroyds recommend the Grazing Mentorship Program? You bet! As Lindsay said, "It's difficult to find such one-on-one opportunities, and for a cost to us of only \$100. What can you purchase today for \$100 and receive such value? There is the chance that spending some time with a Grazing Mentor could change your whole life. We received practical and down to earth information we were able to put into immediate use." Lindsey is the first to admit the payback for this year's management changes will only begin to be realized in next



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Continued from page 3

year's growing season, but they are already seeing tremendous benefits based on their commitment to continual refinement of their land management practices. A testament to this is the fact they are now able to successfully graze 216 cow/calf pairs on slightly less than 4 quarters (640 acres/259 hectares) of land from April through to the end of September still being mindful of plant recovery time. Lindsey is confident that next year they will see further increases. She concludes with, "We also see so much more life on our land; wildlife as both large and small animals, birds creating successful nesting sites plus new species of grasses coming all the time." Lindsey sees tremendous opportunity for agriculture in this country and urges young people to consider it. She concludes with, "You can't fight with Mother Nature and the closer you work with her, the better off you will be."

The Ackroyds make their home just north of southern Saskatchewan's beautiful Qu'appelle Valley on gently rolling pasturelands interspersed with bush.

Provincial Partner Organizations and Contact List

Province	Partner Organization	Contact	Telephone	Email Address
British Columbia	B.C. Cattlemen's Association	Sandy Burton	1-877-630-2198	sburton@pris.ca
Alberta	ARECA	Grant Lastiwka	403-227-6392	lastiwka@areca.ab.ca
Saskatchewan	Saskatchewan Forage Council	Ross MacDonald	306-447-4600	rsmacd@sasktel.net
Manitoba	Manitoba Forage Council	Pam Iwanchysko	204-648-3965	pamela.iwanchysko@gov.mb.ca
Ontario	Ontario Cattlemen's Association	Jack Kyle	705-324-5855	jack.kyle@ontario.ca
Quebec	To Be Announced	Hubert McClelland	819-827-1793	hubert.mcclelland@simpatico.ca
Atlantic Canada	AgraPoint International, Inc.	Sean Firth	902-678-7722	S.Firth@agrapoint.ca

For program information, questions or comments, please contact your provincial contact.