

Message from the President Bob Dippel

On behalf of the Executive of the Ontario Forage Council I would like to thank our Members for their support throughout 2010.

2010 began with the 'Profitable Pastures Conference' being held at Elmwood, Elmvale and Cobden in late March. Duane McCartney from Lacombe, Alberta was the keynote speaker and gave two very interesting presentations. The first being 'Opportunities in Grassland Farming' and the second being a presentation on 'Effective Pasture Renovation'. Bill Gallagher of Gallagher Fencing gave a presentation with an 'International Perspective on Pastures'. Jack Kyle presented an update relating to the 'Potential of Annual Forage Crops as a Supplement to Perennial Pastures'.

Forage Expo was successfully held at Veldale Farms in Woodstock during early July. There was an excellent turnout of producers and exhibitors.

On Nov. 30 and Dec. 1/10 Forage Focus was held at Shakespeare and Winchester with an excellent presentation by Tom Kilcer on 'Maximizing Forage Value and Profitability', followed by an update of OFCC Forage Variety Testing by Joel Bagg.

Another important development has been the formation of the 'Canadian Forage and Grasslands Association'. This body is a national organization to promote the growth of the Canadian forage and grassland sector at home and abroad and to provide a national voice for our industry.

On behalf of the Ontario Forage Council, I would like to thank Ray Robertson and his staff at Grey Agricultural Services Centre for their excellent services which have been provided to the OFC over the past year. ✨

A Wealth of Knowledge

www.goforages.ca, the official web site of the Ontario Forage Crop Committee, just got a whole lot better! If you have already visited you will know that it is simple to use and easy to load.

The 2011 Forage Variety Brochure is available there but so too is a link to a site at the University of Wisconsin where you can evaluate two alfalfa varieties head to head using all the available public data from Ontario and the Great Lakes states. In addition, www.goforages.ca provides access to previous Forage Variety Brochures and the Variety Trial data that is used to produce them. These data are available since 1955! You can also download the documents that explain how the Forage Crops Committee evaluates forage varieties being considered for use in Ontario.

Those of you who remember Prof. Bob Fulkerson will value the next statement and those who don't can take this opportunity to realize why his research is so respected within Ontario. Prof. Fulkerson was the forage production researcher at the University of Guelph for many years. A summary of his research is contained in the 1983 Management Trials document. This includes research on annual species, single vs double cut red clover, fertility trials on alfalfa and much more. In addition, to Fulkerson's work there are links to production recommendations for Ontario, Michigan, New York and Wisconsin including various Ontario fact sheets that are currently out of print.

This is a wealth of forage knowledge. We want to sincerely thank Dr. Steve Bowley, Plant Agriculture Department, University of Guelph and his staff for sharing this with us. This represents an incredible amount of patience and time to accomplish this task.

To access these valuable resources go to: www.goforages.ca ✨

Leave the beaten track behind occasionally and dive into the woods. Every time you do you will be certain to find something you have never seen before.

Alexander Graham Bell

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Making Hay In A Bullish Grain Market—Stepping Up Our Game

There is a great deal of optimism out there amongst cash croppers, as markets flirt with \$6 corn and \$12 soybeans. Side effects of this bullish market are higher fertilizer prices, increased demand for corn and soybeans land, and higher land rental rates. How will this impact our ability to produce profitable forages? What production strategies can we use to maintain our competitiveness?

High Fertilizer Prices

Fertilizer prices peaked about 2 years ago at what seemed to be unaffordable levels, but then declined as the economy softened. However, prices are on their way up again. While prices are very volatile, this spring many of us could be paying in the neighbourhood of \$600/T for urea, \$825/T for MAP, and \$700 for muriate of potash, plus application costs.

Forage crops remove a lot of nutrients and therefore have high nutrient requirements. With an alfalfa-grass mixture, the typical amount of phosphorous and potassium (P & K) removed per tonne of hay harvested is equivalent to about 14 lbs of P₂O₅ and 61 lbs of K₂O. Therefore the value of the removal is currently close to 2.0¢ / lb (\$44 / tonne) of dry hay harvested. As an example, assuming a mixed stand with a modest yield of 3.2 tonnes per year, hay will remove about 46 lbs of P₂O₅ and 193 lbs of K₂O, with a value of almost \$140/acre .

Without replacing P and K with manure or commercial fertilizer, the soil test will drop quickly. Assuming that it takes about 35 lbs/ac of P₂O₅ and 20 lbs/ac of K₂O to move the soil tests by 1 ppm on some soils, after only 4 years the P soil test could drop by 5 ppm and the K by 38 ppm. At lower soil test levels, this is commonly referred to as “soil mining” and is not sustainable. Low soil P and K fertility significantly reduce forage yields. The short and long term costs of poor fertility are much higher than the cost of the fertilizer.

Soil Analysis

Maintain reasonable P and K levels. Low fertility will significantly reduce the productive longevity of a stand. Higher fertilizer prices require targeting your fertilizer applications more strategically. Use a recent soil test to guide fertilizer applications. If the K soil test of the field is below 120 ppm, you can expect a yield response from top-dressing potassium. (<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/pub811/3fertility.htm>)

Nutrient Recycling In Manure

Livestock producers have an advantage in maintaining soil fertility where manure is available to apply during the rotation. The best option is still to spring apply manure to corn crops in the rotation. However, there are some potential advantages to applying liquid manure to forage crops, including yield and quality benefits, spreading the workload, reducing manure storage requirements, preventing soil compaction, and reducing environmental risk.

Need To Add Value To Marketed Hay

Hay producers that market hay off the farm need to consider the replacement cost of P and K removed in hay. They need to “add value” to their hay in the market place by producing a quality product. It just doesn't make sense to produce and sell \$20 round bales when they contain almost that much value in P and K.

Livestock will still need to be fed. Can the market pay the kinds of prices required to reflect high land and fertilizer prices? I don't know, but if it doesn't there may be a lot of hay acres move to other crops.

Historically, standing hay has often been an excellent buy. The P and K removal alone means that the historic 1 - 2¢ / lb of standing hay is way under the mark today, even before considering an opportunity cost for land rental and amortized establishment costs.

Higher Land Costs

High cash crop prices are also driving up land rental rates as farmers compete for land. Many older hay fields are being rotated to corn and soybean to take advantage of the higher prices. Some of the more marginal fields may be improved with tile drainage. What will all this mean to hay availability and prices? Are we moving to an era when hay inventories are much tighter and prices are on the increase?

There is a wide range in land rental opportunity costs across Ontario, from well over \$200 / acre to less than \$20. Assuming a \$120 rental rate for field that produces 3.6 tonnes of hay per year, the “land cost” portion would be about 1.5¢/lb. On the other hand, poorer land (likely not able to grow corn or soybeans) renting for \$25/ac and yielding 2.3 tonnes would have a land cost of about 0.5¢.

Increase Forage Yields By Shortening The Rotation

Where land costs are significant, forage cost-of-production (COP) can be reduced by increasing yields per acre. It's time to step-up our forage management by improved establishment and weed control, and by scouting for insects and disease. Let's give forages the same level of management that is given to other field crops.

Alfalfa yields are usually their highest the year following establishment, and then gradually decline with stand age due to disease, loss of vigour and plant thinning. By the 4th year following establishment, yields can often decline to

about 75% of the maximum yield. The decline can be even more rapid and significant with aggressive cutting schedules. This yield loss wouldn't be tolerated in any other crop without doing something about it, so neither should it be accepted with forages.

A strategy to manage higher land costs is to consider shortening the number of years of forage in your rotation, and using the legume nitrogen credit when rotating into corn. The optimum maximum age of an alfalfa stand will vary, but many stands suffer from "old age". Forage stands with greater than 50% legume content enable the grower to deduct 100 lbs/ac of N from the following corn crop's N requirements. That is currently equivalent to over \$60/acre, significantly offsetting the additional forage establishment costs. Stands that are one-third to one-half legume get a N credit of about 55 kg/ha (50 lb/ac). Research shows that in addition to the nitrogen credit, there is a significant yield benefit of alfalfa plowdown to corn of about 10 - 15%.

Establishment Costs Relatively Small

As an example, establishment costs using custom rates for machinery operations, herbicide and seed costs that total \$165/acre in a 4 year rotation at 3.6 tonnes / acre, are typically about 0.5¢/ lb of hay. In many cases, this will represent only about 7% of the COP, far less than either fertility, land, harvest or storage. (Table 1)

Use Improved Varieties

While some farmers are reluctant to use improved forage varieties because of perceived high cost, forage seed actually represents a very small percentage of the total cost of producing forage. Seed costs of \$63/acre (14 lbs @ \$4.50) pencils out to only about 2.5% of the total COP. Using cheap seed is a poor strategy, particularly with high land costs. Buying "common seed" or varieties of poor or unknown performance is no bargain when considering the risk of lower yield or winterkill.

Improve Forage Quality

With increased costs and the importance of every forage acre counting, forage quality will be increasingly important. It just doesn't make financial sense to spend the money to produce the forage and then lose quality to weather risk, poor harvest management and lack of storage. Cut early to avoid losing nutrient quality to advanced maturity. Use hay drying and silage technology and management to prevent harvest losses. Remove bales from the field as soon as possible. Store hay under cover and off the ground to prevent spoilage. It may be time to reconsider building that hay storage that you need.

Summary

Higher hay prices, and higher land, fertilizer and input costs requires us to do the best we can to grow, harvest and store our forage crops for maximum yield and quality, with minimum losses. Some strategies include:

soil testing and managing P and K fertility,

increasing yield with improved forage establishment, weed control, insect & disease management,

shortening forage stand age in rotations and using the N credit,

using improved varieties,

improving quality by cutting early, and using hay drying and silage technology,

storing hay off the ground and under cover, and

adding value to cash crop hay with quality, the right bale and marketing to cover higher costs.

By Joel Bagg
Forage Specialist,
OMAFRA

Table 1 – Relative Costs Associated With Hay Production

Notes		More Productive Land 4 Year Rotation 3.6 tonnes / ac / year	Less Productive Land 8 Year Rotation 2.3 tonnes / ac / year
		cents / lb of hay	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • return to risk & management not included • custom rates used in establishment & harvest costs • these are generalizations for comparison and discussion purposes only - use your own assumptions and calculations✂ 	Establishment costs	0.5	0.4
	P & K removal	2.0	2.0
	Land rental (opportunity cost)		
	\$120 / ac	1.5	n/a
	\$ 25 / ac	n/a	0.5
	Harvest (cutting, raking, baling, etc)	2.1	2.2
	Storage	1.0	1.0
	less N Credit	(0.2)	
	Total Costs	6.9	6.1

Rethinking Orchardgrass

Orchardgrass can be very productive, particularly in pastures and hay fields with aggressive cutting schedules. It is a very fast growing, perennial, cool-season grass. However, because it heads so very early in the spring and then declines quickly in digestible energy and protein, it has not been as widely used for stored forage in Ontario compared to other forage grasses. This is changing more recently, as plant breeders are researching and developing newer orchardgrass varieties with later maturity.

An Alternative To Timothy?

Timothy has always been the most popular grass in Ontario because of its late maturity, ability to mix with alfalfa and go through the small seed box, ease of establishment, and lack of aggressiveness with alfalfa in a forage mixture. However, timothy is shallow-rooted and susceptible to hot, dry weather. While it grows well in the spring, it has relatively poor regrowth and typically contributes little to yield in 2nd and 3rd cuts. This has resulted in many farmers considering at least partially substituting other grasses in their hay and haylage mixtures.

Orchardgrass Characteristics

Orchardgrass is a bunch-type grass that has profuse tiller formation at the base of the plant. This tiller formation begins early in the spring and continues through the growing season. It is this profuse tillering ability and rapid regrowth that make orchardgrass a great pasture species, especially when rotationally grazed or clipped to maintain quality. When orchardgrass seedheads are removed by cutting or grazing, the new growth is nearly all leaves.

Although it is fairly easy to establish, orchardgrass can have some winterhardiness and persistence issues. In older stands, orchardgrass tends to appear as large clumps scattered throughout the field or paddock.

In hay and haylage mixtures, orchardgrass can sometimes be too aggressive, and can quickly increase in proportion every year at the expense of the alfalfa. Relative to timothy, a small percentage of orchardgrass in the seed mix can result in a more significant proportion of the harvested forage.



By Joel Bagg
Forage Specialist,
OMAFRA

Heading Dates

Whereas early growth and maturity is desirable in pasture situations, the early heading and rapid decline in nutrient quality make orchardgrass more difficult to manage in a hay and haylage situations. Table 1 shows the orchardgrass varieties listed in the 2011 Ontario Forage Crop Variety Performance brochure. (www.plant.uoguelph.ca/performance_recommendations/ofcc/pdf/ofcc_performance.pdf) Yield index composites are available for both northern and southern Ontario. The heading dates at Elora and the distributors are also listed.

Orchardgrass varieties are tested in either an early or late harvesting system. There is a tremendous range in heading dates, from May 16th to June 11th from the earliest to the latest variety (26 days). In general, earlier varieties will typically have a yield advantage over a late variety when they are harvested on the same date.

The heading dates and relative maturities may be even more important than the yield index when selecting orchardgrass varieties. When selecting an orchardgrass variety for an alfalfa-based mixture, consider the anticipated date of first-cutting.

There are various breeding efforts in Canada and the northern US to improve late maturing orchardgrass varieties. The variety Dividend VL was developed in Ontario by Dr Steve Bowley at the University of Guelph with funding from the Ontario Forage Council. While Dividend VL has a southern Ontario yield index of 84% and a northern Ontario index of 101 compared to the check variety OKAY, it headed 10 days later. It is noteworthy that most of the “late” orchardgrass varieties headed only a few days earlier than the “late” timothy varieties listed in the brochure, and Dividend VL actually headed later.

Table 1 – Orchardgrass Varieties

(From the 2011 Ontario Forage Crop Variety Performance brochure – GoForages.ca)

Variety	Yield Index		Heading Date	Distributor
	South	North		
			Elora	
Early (% of Orca)¹				
ORCA	100	100	May 16	Pickseed
Rapido	102	95	May 20	Pickseed, Mapleseed
Late (% of OKAY)²				
Haymate	105	97	May 26	Growmark Inc.
Kay	98	98	May 30	Pride Seeds, Mapleseed
DIVIDEND VL	84	101	June 11	Quality Seeds Ltd
OKAY	100	100	June 1	Pickseed, Mapleseed

¹ Average yield of Orca in trials - southern Ontario 9.0 t/ha, northern Ontario 7.9 t/ha.

² Average yield of OKAY in trials - southern Ontario 8.3 t/ha, northern Ontario 7.5 t/ha.

GMO Alfalfa

In January 2011, the USDA deregulated the planting of genetically modified alfalfa. The current trait of interest is for tolerance to glyphosate, also known as Roundup Ready (RR). It is expected that RR alfalfa will be planted in the USA in 2011. The RR alfalfa trait was approved for use in Canada in 2005, but has not yet been commercialized for use on farms. Currently in Canada, there are no registered varieties of RR alfalfa, and glyphosate is not registered for this use on alfalfa. However, eventually it will likely be grown here as well. To understand the potential risks, we need to understand how alfalfa is currently grown and how GMO (genetically modified organism) alfalfa may potentially spread.

Limited Utility of This Trait In Ontario

In Ontario, most alfalfa is planted in mixtures with 10-30% perennial grasses. Grasses are planted to improve feed value, harvestability, and palatability for the livestock. RR alfalfa is only appropriate for use in pure alfalfa fields, which has not been the general preference of producers in Ontario. Spraying a typical hay field with glyphosate would kill all perennial grasses. The current practices of underseeding alfalfa mixtures with cereals for establishment, and short rotations of less than 3 - 4 years for the hay crop reduces the usefulness of this type of herbicide trait.

In the future we will likely see more types of GMO alfalfa introduced that may include increased yields, improved winterhardiness, or improved digestibility or other feed traits. These traits may have greater usefulness and potential for commercialization in Ontario.

Potential For Genetic Contamination Within Alfalfa Fields

A primary concern of GMO alfalfa is pollen drift and the pollination of non-GMO alfalfa plants. RR alfalfa will likely see its greatest utility in intensively managed alfalfa fields that are harvested in a 3-5 cuts per year system before the crop flowers. This early cutting would eliminate pollen spread. For seed to be produced the alfalfa would have to remain standing for another 4-6 weeks after flowering. This could happen if the pollen spreads to feral alfalfa plants that are growing outside the field boundaries. Feral alfalfa should be eliminated near seed fields where this is a risk. Care also needs to be taken at seeding to avoid seed spills of GMO seed and allowing seed to be spread into non-harvested areas.

Alfalfa plants are "autotoxic". If an alfalfa plant produces seed and that seeds falls to the ground it will not likely be able to produce a healthy plant within about 15 cm of an existing mature alfalfa plant. Adjacent grass plants in the stand also outcompete these new alfalfa seedlings. This reduces the chance of pollen from another field creating GMO plants within a non-GMO field.

Potential For Genetic Contamination In Seed Production

Most of our alfalfa seed is produced in western Canada or USA. The main concern will be to ensure the purity of the non-GMO seed. Isolation distance guidelines for alfalfa seed production will need to take this into account, as will other seed handling practices. Most alfalfa pollination is by leaf cutter bees that do not travel as far as honey bees.

Manage Potential Risks

Organic prohibits GMO. Organic farmers must manage their farms to reduce the chances of GMO in their organic products. Similar to pesticides, GMO's are part of the farm environment, and we must learn how to manage any potential issues arising from their use.

Another article discussing this issue is **Understanding Roundup Ready Alfalfa** by Dr. Dan Undersander, University of Wisconsin at: http://hayandforage.com/Understanding_Roundup_Ready_Alfalfa_revised.pdf

Other articles on biotech alfalfa and coexistence of genetically engineered traits are available on the National Alfalfa & Forage Alliance website at: <http://www.alfalfa.org/CSCoexistenceDocs.html> ✂

By Hugh Martin

*Organic Crop Production
Program Lead,
OMAFRA*

**The Ontario Forage Council thanks the
Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food &
Rural Affairs for its support**



Our Thanks to Gencor

The Ontario Forage Council would like to recognize Gencor who have supported them over the last number of years with provision of the board room for Directors and Annual meetings We thank them sincerely for their continued support of the Ontario Forage Council.

Disclaimer Statement

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2011 Ontario Pasture Award Winner

FEBRUARY 23, TORONTO -

The sponsors of the Ontario Pasture Award - the Ontario Cattlemen's Association (OCA), MAPLESEED and the Ontario Forage Council (OFC) - are pleased to announce that James McKinlay "Silver Springs Farms" at Ravenna in Grey County, is the winner of the 2011 Pasture Award. The prestigious award was presented today at the OCA Annual General Meeting. For his environmental and pasture improvements and management, McKinlay will receive a cash award of \$750 and a bag of forage seed, courtesy of MAPLESEED, plus a complimentary stay for one night at the OCA Annual Meeting.

James and his wife, Joan McKinlay, operate Silver Springs Farms with approximately 400 acres of pasture and 500 acres of cash crop including winter wheat, soybeans, canola, barley and corn. James is quick to point out that, in their operation, a good crop rotation is extremely important and forages play a vital role in that rotation.

James grazes about 150 cow-calf pairs, plus an additional 80 heifers are bred for herd replacement and breeding stock sales.

The cows are pastured in groups and are rotationally grazed on several different farm locations. James is a strong believer in a good rotational grazing system and states, "Keep it simple and achievable. By doing so, you will accomplish successful results. Fresh clean water is also of utmost importance, so fenced corridors have been constructed to protect the water source and provide restricted access to quality water close to each paddock."

Bobolink, the ESA and Farmers

The Bobolink has recently been listed as a threatened species under Ontario's Endangered Species Act 2007 (ESA). This came as a surprise to many as bobolinks are still quite common in parts of the province but the populations have declined over 50% in the last ten years, prompting the Committee on the Status of Species at Risk in Ontario (COSSARA)'s recommendation for listing.

The bobolink designation has potential impact on normal farming practices. The ESA prohibits killing or harming an endangered or threatened species or damaging or destroying its habitat. Bobolinks nest in hayfields and the timing of haying coincides directly with the peak nesting season. This puts farmers in potential contravention of the Act.

A host of agricultural and conservation interest groups, including Ontario Cattlemen's Association, Ontario Sheep,



Winner of the 2011 Ontario Pasture Competition, James McKinlay, Ravenna (centre) pictured with Gerrit Van Keulen Sales Manager, MAPLESEED (left) and Ray Robertson, OFC. (right)

As James says, "We recognize the responsibilities we have as food producers and ambassadors for agriculture, especially the importance of demonstrating good land stewardship to our urban neighbours who form an integral part of our local community."

Gerrit Van Keulen, Sales Manager with MAPLESEED, comments that the pasture management program being utilized on Silver Springs Farms is a model that not only makes greater use of pasture resources, but is also another good example of positive and

sustainable environmental practices.

Ray Robertson, Manager of the Ontario Forage Council, said that as producers try to cope with the challenging times, the practical techniques being followed by the McKinlays are great examples that can help many producers maximize their net returns.

The deadline for applications for the 2012 Ontario Pasture Award is November 30, 2011.

For details, call the Ontario Forage Council at 1-877-892-8663 or visit either the

Ontario Forage Council's Web site at www.ontarioforagecouncil.com or the

Ontario Cattlemen's Association Web site at www.cattle.guelph.on.ca.

For further information contact:

James McKinlay, Ravenna, Ontario, 1-519-599-6236
Ray Robertson, Ontario Forage Council, 1-877-892-8663
Gerrit Van Keulen, MAPLESEED, 1-519-281-0032
LeaAnne Hodgins, Ontario Cattlemen's Association, 1-519-824-0334✂

Dairy Farmers of Ontario, Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association, Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Ontario Nature, Carolinian Canada and Bird Studies Canada among others are involved in ongoing discussions to find workable solutions.

Delayed hay harvest until mid-July is not the answer. While this can significantly increase reproduction of grassland birds quality of forages decrease dramatically. The highest densities of bobolink occur in a broad band across southern Ontario coinciding with the beef industry's cow-calf belt. Modifying rotational grazing practices to leave ungrazed pasture blocks for suitable habitat may be a solution says Jack Kyle, OMAFRA Pasture Specialist.

Working with farmers and understanding their needs is crucial for bobolink survival says Jon McCracken of Bird Studies Canada.

Excerpts from the Media Release Bobolink, Farmers - Sharing Common Ground. This can be found on the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association web site www.ontariosoilcrop.org Search for Bobolink.

The Key to Top Pasture Performance

The pasture season will be upon us as you read this article. Commodity prices are at some of the highest levels we have seen, it is important to realize the full opportunity for your livestock enterprise in these times. What steps have you taken to maximize your pasture returns for this year?

Pasture is the lowest cost feed source available, and the opportunity for improved production is significant on most farms. Pasture gains of up to 600 lbs per acre and over 300 lbs per head have been reported to me by beef producers with a good rotational system and attention to detail on both the forage and livestock management. A well managed pasture will be very competitive with any other crop use that you might consider for that land base.

The key steps to maximize both forage and livestock production is to manage the forage for optimum growth and optimum bite size for the animals grazing.

To get optimum growth from the forage plants they need to be in a rapid growth state for as much of the growing season as possible. Maintaining a grazing forage height between 10 cm (4 inches) and 30 cm (12 inches) will allow the plants to maintain good growth and capture all the available sunlight to drive the photosynthesis. This plant height will also maintain a substantial root system that will be able to gather water and nutrients throughout the summer and minimize a summer dormancy period should we get into hot dry weather. To maintain this level of forage growth the pasture manager needs to move livestock to fresh grass every couple of days. If too much pasture is offered at a time then selective grazing will take place and the less desirable plants will not be grazed and become mature.

After a plant is grazed it needs time to rest and re-grow, this is the key point of pasture management - rest and

recovery.

From an animal management standpoint maximizing bite size is the key to good productivity. Cattle bite at a rather constant rate and for about 8 hours each day. The variable that you can control is the size of the bite. By providing pasture that is the optimum size for the animal to bite (10-30 cm) you will have taken the first big step to maximize intake. The second step is to have fresh forage on offer at all times. Livestock are not going to eat forage that has been laid on or fouled with manure or urine. The longer the animals are in a given paddock the

greater the percentage of forage in that paddock that is going to be unpalatable because of what has been done to it, thus the importance of frequent moves to fresh pasture.

Fencing is the tool that will allow you to manage your livestock to provide re-growth time for the grass and manage the quality and quantity of forage available for your livestock. Temporary or semi-

permanent single or double wire electric fence will allow you to control your livestock to achieve improved pasture performance from both the forage and the livestock.

Moving livestock to fresh pasture every 1-2 days will optimize plant growth by allowing the plants adequate rest and recovery time, (it takes 15-20 days to recover from grazing in the early part of the season and 30-45 days in late summer). These same 1-2 day moves will encourage optimum bite size by the livestock – readily available fresh forage.

This combination of readily available forage will give maximum forage production and maximum animal performance. By applying these two principals to your pasture system you will make pasture a profitable part of your farm operation.✂



By Jack Kyle

Grazier Specialist,

OMAFRA

Six members of CFGA in **US Hay Marketing Mission** Ontario and Quebec have just returned from a five day fact-finding mission to central and southern Florida which has one of the largest horse populations in the US. The purpose of the mission was to learn more about the type of hay that is currently being fed and what type of package is required. We had always recognized that Florida has been a good hay market for the horse industry for many years, and considerable amount of hay is also imported into that area from the western part of the US which is certainly much further than many areas in Canada. Considerable concern was expressed by several people in that area about losing significant forage acres in the western US to corn production.

It was an enlightening experience and certainly created a much better awareness of what is required to successfully participate in that market. A seminar is being planned to update the members on the mission and a number of resource people will also be in attendance to ensure an excellent educational session. Details will be available soon and for more immediate information feel free to contact Ray Robertson. Email; ray@ontarioforagecouncil.com Phone 877-892-8663 or 519-986-1484.✂

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 : **2010 Ontario Forage Master** :
 : **– Evert Veldhuizen Jr.** :

O u r
 congratulations to Evert Veldhuizen Jr. General Manager of Veldale Farms on being named the 2010 Ontario Forage Master. Evert and his family operate under the name of Veldale Farms in Woodstock. The farm consists of 1450 acres owned and rented. They milk 125 cows in a four row sand bedded free stall dairy built in 2008. Between the four enterprises of dairy, custom work, seed sales and cash crop, they employ 5 full-time, 4 part-time, a bookkeeper plus the three owners which are his father, his brother Jan and himself. With forages making up 70% of the ration on the farm, they realize even though they do not pasture their cows, the importance of forage is huge. Evert says, “Minimizing risk and be willing to change or tweak is part of our everyday philosophy on Veldale Farms.” People were able to see some of their innovations when Evert and Veldale Farms hosted the 2010 Annual Forage Expo sponsored by the Ontario Forage Council and the Oxford Soil and Crop Improvement Association.

A key component of the competition included an engaging exchange between Evert and the judges on the merits of forage management. It is his ability to try and to present innovative ideas and forage management techniques to peers and visitors that impressed the judges. He demonstrated this at the Annual Meeting of the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association in February where he talked about how they are now making haylage in a day using techniques described by Tom Kilcer. More details about how to make haylage in a day can be found on the OFC web site www.ontarioforagecouncil.com and look for Forage Focus proceedings 2010 or google Tom Kilcer. Veldale is making it work in Ontario.

Evert now qualifies to compete in the 2011 American Forage and Grassland Council’s Forage Spokesperson Contest to be held June 12-15, 2011 French Lick, Indiana.

“All competitors in the Ontario Forage Masters competition are winners in their own right, having been recognized as top producers in their own Counties. The person selected as the Ontario Forage Master for this year is chosen not only as being top producer but as an excellent spokesperson for the forage sector” said Barry Hill President of the OSCIA.

We wish Evert and his family Marije (Mariah) and their three children Romee, Ruben and Femke all the best as he competes in Indiana. We will be well represented.✂

OFC Activity Report 2011

2010 has definitely been a very eventful year and the Ontario Forage Council has spent considerable time and effort on both the national scene and on forage export initiative which is certainly raising the profile of forages. We are receiving significant praise and encouragement for our efforts. I also want to express appreciation to Shannon McCarthy and Athar Shah in the Food Export Division of OMAFRA for their interest and offer to support the forage export promotion initiatives. Many of the plans started and seeds planted this year will continue to bear results well into the future. The continued support of an active membership and OMAFRA are most essential in achieving the goals and objectives of the OFC as we strive to add greater economic value and stability to the forage producers in the agricultural community.

The Ontario Hay Marketing Forum continues to maintain a keen interest in Forage exports. Two meetings of the group have been held during the year and a sub-committee spent considerable time on developing a branding statement and a draft copy of a promotional brochure. The group had a trade show display at the 45th Annual Grey-Bruce Farmer’s Week. They agreed to take over the forage display at the CanAm Equine Emporium at London.✂

Gold Level Members
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