



In this Issue....

A Message from the President Terry Nuhn	Page 2
A Special Thank you to Don Oliver	Page 2
OFC Manager's Report	Page 3
Managing Ash Content in Hay	Page 4
2019 Milk Maker Forage Competition Winners	Page 5
Nitrogen Management for Pasture	Page 6
Ontario Hay and Forage Co-operative Inc. Update	Page 7
Ontario Hay Marketing Forum Report	Page 8
OFC Members	Page 8

Save the Date!

Forage Focus
December 5, 2019
Stratford Rotary Complex
353 McCarthy Rd, Stratford

A Message from the President - Terry Nuhn



I am very honoured and excited to be the newly elected President of the Ontario Forage Council! I have spent my entire life involved in the Forage industry and have a keen interest in the important role of forages, pastures and haying.

The past fall/winter/spring has been challenging for farmers across Ontario. The early cold and wet weather made for less than ideal fall planting conditions, followed by a delayed harvest due to early snow. The winter months experienced many extremes with a lot of ice in Southern and Eastern Ontario. Add in the current cool spring and it has been stressful for winter wheat and forage crops.

Stored hay and straw inventories in Ontario are generally lower compared to most years. This same pattern is prevalent throughout most regions in Canada as well. The weather impact on the wheat crop will put added pressure on the straw market and should lead to good returns for high quality hay and

straw. When inventories are low and environmental conditions are a factor, a greater emphasis on forage management is a must.

The Ontario Forage Council looks forward to bringing you two Forage Expos again this July. The locations will be in Perth County and Victoria County. These events showcase the latest in equipment and technology and are always very informative and hands on.

I invite everyone to follow the Ontario Forage Council on social media. There are many exciting things happening in the forage industry and this is a great place to get the latest and most up to date news feeds. Be sure to follow us on Facebook, Twitter and visit our website regularly.

I wish everyone a prosperous year ahead and good luck with the upcoming season!

Terry Nuhn

President, Ontario Forage Council

A Very Special Thank You to Don Oliver

The Ontario Forage Council would like to thank Don Oliver for his three years of service as President. Don accepted this role in 2016, and has provided excellent leadership to this position. In addition to his term as President, Don also served OFC in both the Vice and 2nd Vice Chair roles.

Thank you Don, your contributions are appreciated!



If you missed our Profitable Pastures Conference in March, you can still access Dr. Carole Lafreniere's presentations on our [website](http://www.ontarioforagecouncil.com/programs/profitable-pastures): <http://www.ontarioforagecouncil.com/programs/profitable-pastures>

**Ontario
HAY
LISTINGS**

Looking/sell to buy
Hay & Forage Products?

Post an ad on
www.ontariohaylistings.ca

Submit your entries to the Milk Maker Forage Competition for the chance to win 1 of 3 cash prizes in each class!

Classes for Alfalfa Hay, Grass Hay, Hay Silage, Corn Silage, and BMR Corn Silage!

This competition is open to ALL forage grown for dairy production in Canada!
For more information visit
www.ontarioforagecouncil.com/programs/milk-maker-forage-competition

OFC Manager's Report

By Ray Robertson - Manager, Ontario Forage Council

As I prepare this article in mid April, we are enjoying a spring shower today, which we are assured will bring forth May flowers. A cheerful thought indeed, and at the same time, hopefully getting those forage plants well on their way to a productive start. I am hearing positive reports about the hay markets this spring, and most are saying it has been one of the best markets they have experienced in many years. It's always good to hear producers comment on good markets, especially when it is for one of the best environmental crops we produce, and soil health is top of mind for most producers. In recent years, there has been some reduction in forage crop production acres, but hopefully with better hay prices and the awareness that forages are an important component of a good crop rotation, that trend may start to reverse.

The Ontario Forage Council held the Annual Meeting in Guelph on April 10th. I want to congratulate Terry Nuhn from Perth County on being elected Chairman of the Board. Appreciation is extended to Don Oliver from Peterborough, who has completed his term as chairman, and we thank him for his support and leadership to the council. Scott Bowman was elected 1st Vice Chair and Jack Smit was elected 2nd Vice Chair.

Considerable discussion focused on forage research with the resulting priorities being identified.

1. Provide independent third-party data on forages grown in Ontario. Expand data collected to include digestibility, milk/beef/acre, pre-cutting, weed control, crop diseases, climate related risks, influence on stem diameter, quality, maturity, and comparing management practices to improve yield.

2. Fertility management. Use of 4 R Nutrient Management. Best forage species to maximize utilize these practices.

3. Influence of amount and type of forage on animal health (reproduction, longevity). Also, the economics of forages in this situation.

4. Utilization of forages for improved carbon sequestration, soil health, and quality.

5. Utilization of cover crops for pasture and stored feed.

As referred to earlier, the hay prices have been slightly above the normal levels, as most producers had smaller reserves of good quality hay than usual and hay quality in 2018 was above average for the first cut. The Ontario Hay Listings web site is a good place to get an idea of hay prices, once we get into the haying season and start to get the 2019 hay crop listed on the site for sale.

From a forage perspective, there are a lot of things on the go. The forage faculty position at the University of Guelph is on our agenda, as their last forage breeder / specialist retired in mid-summer 2018, leaving Ontario without the public expertise that producers and

extension personnel require. The Dean of University of Guelph, Dr. Rene VanAcker and some of his staff are very supportive of the need for a faculty person, and they have advertised to fill that position. Arrangements are being made to accommodate some charitable funding for the forage sector. In order to support the position, the applicable sectors will be required to contribute some financial support. At a time when there is so much hype around soil health, organic matter, loss of soil and cover crops, forages are right at the root of everything soil. The forage faculty position should be a no-brainer, so we cannot allow this topic to get swept under the rug.

The Ontario Hay Marketing Forum (OHMF) continues to attract considerable attention and is an excellent way to constantly market good quality hay and keep abreast of hay export market opportunities. OHMF members are also eligible to join the Canadian Forage & Grassland Association (CFGAs) Export Group, to further expand your reach.

The 2019 Milk Maker Forage competition at the Canadian Dairy XPO in Stratford was a huge success this year. There was an excellent attendance and the forage competition certainly created more interest, as our entries increased significantly again this year. Since OFC is an active member of the CFGAs, we have encouraged national participation of Forage Councils across Canada and we continue to work with DFC for English/French translation of forms and press releases. There is an even greater response anticipated for 2020.

OFC continues to see increased use of social media on Twitter and Facebook accounts as we use it as a tool to encourage producers and potential members to visit the OFC and Ontario Hay Listings web sites.

The dates for the 14th Annual Ontario Forage Expo 2019 are fast approaching as we have teamed up to deliver another outstanding event with Perth County and Victoria County Soil & Crop Improvement Associations on July 9th and July 16th respectively.

- Perth County will host the western location on Tuesday, July 9th, 2019 at Pendor Dairy Ltd., owned and operated by Rick & Ingrid Portena near Monkton in Perth County
- Victoria County will host the eastern location on Tuesday July 16, 2019 at Vosbrae Farms, owned and operated by John De Vos and family near Kawartha Lakes in Victoria County.

Tradeshows and sponsorship opportunities are still available for this year's Ontario Forage Expo events as we prepare this announcement.

As we look to the near future, Canada's Outdoor Farm Show is just around the corner. Hard to believe!!! We need to decide on the format of this year's display. The Ontario Forage Focus Conferences are also on our radar, so the committee will be

Continued on page 7

Managing Ash Content in Hay

By Christine O'Reilly, OMAFRA Forage and Grazing Specialist

In 2018, forage analysis laboratories in Ontario reported a trend of increasing ash content with each subsequent harvest. While the average ash content from first cut samples from each lab were less than 10%, one lab reported average ash contents of 10.14%, 10.91% and 12.17% for second, third, and fourth cuts, respectively. These averages represent 849 samples of Ontario hay and haylage.

Ash is a value on the forage analysis that often gets overlooked, but it can indicate an issue in the forage harvesting process and can affect how livestock perform on that feed. Understanding what causes elevated ash content enables producers to address production issues and protect the good quality feed they work hard to grow for their livestock.

What is ash?

In a forage analysis, "ash" represents the minerals in the sample. This term comes from the laboratory method used to measure total mineral content. Complete combustion burns away all the other components of the forage sample, leaving only the mineral ashes behind. NIR can estimate ash but is not as accurate as complete combustion.

There are two sources of ash in a forage sample. Minerals that are present inside the plant, known as internal ash are an important part of an animals' diet. Alfalfa contains about 8% internal ash, while grasses have about 6% internal ash content. The other source is external ash, which comes from soil or other dirt contamination of the forage. Ash numbers above 10% in a forage analysis indicate excessive soil contamination in the feed.

Why is soil contamination so bad?

Soil contamination affects preservation, palatability, nutritional density, and anti-quality components of forage. Livestock do not want to eat dirt and intakes will decline if they are fed forage with high ash content. The nutritional density of forage decreases when there is soil contamination: for every 1% increase in ash content there is a 1% decrease in total digestible nutrients (TDN). This decrease in TDN has the same effect on nutritional value as delaying first cut by 4.5 days or delaying second cut by two days (Blank et al, 2001).

Soil contamination can also bring anti-quality components with it. Anti-quality components are non-nutritional factors that limit animal production. Soil contamination of forages can act as buffer preventing the pH of a forage falling to a desirable level during preservation. Contamination can also introduce undesirable bacteria such as Clostridia and Listeria. Clostridia are usually associated with hay-

crop silage that has a pH of 5.0-5.5. These bacteria produce butyric-type silages, which can smell fishy or putrid and may be slimy and dark green or black in colour. Butyric silages are not fermented efficiently which results in a low energy, high soluble protein feed with poor palatability characteristics. Intakes of butyric silage are low. Clostridia bacteria in silage can sometimes cause botulism in livestock. Listeria is another example of pathogenic bacteria that can be introduced into silage by soil contamination, and cause listeriosis. Other soil-borne bacteria and fungi species can produce mycotoxins that negatively impact livestock production. External ash can turn what would otherwise be good quality forage into poor quality forage.

How does soil get into forage?

There are many ways that soil can be incorporated into forage. Low cutting heights on uneven ground pose a risk of scalping the field and throwing soil into the forage. Even without scalping, the spinning action of the blades in a disc mower creates a slight vacuum that below 7.5 cm (3 in.) cutting height can draw soil particles up with the cut forage.

Any time the crop is moved horizontally across the field there is a risk for soil contamination. Because they are ground driven, wheel rakes are the worst offenders for increasing the ash content of forage. Wheel rakes should be adjusted to the point where they have the least amount of contact with the ground that will still turn the wheels. As a guideline, any time a raking or tedding operation raises a dust cloud, regardless of the type of equipment used, it is adding 1%-2% ash to the forage (Undersander, 2016).

Filling bunker silos adds another opportunity for soil to get into the forage. If the tires on the packing tractor are not clean, this dirt gets mixed into the haylage. Even with the best management, dirt can find its way into forage: rain can splash soil onto plants or storms may cause lodging. Trying to pick up forage that was blown flat to the ground results in picking up a lot of dirt with it.

What can I do to reduce soil contamination in my forage?

There are many things producers can do to reduce the external ash content of their forages. Select forage varieties that are resistant to lodging and avoid harvesting lodged crops. This will significantly reduce the amount of soil coming in with the forage. Raise the cutting height to 7.5 cm (3 in.) or higher which will minimize scalping and provide more stubble to hold windrows up off the ground. Use flat

Milk Maker Forage Competition

Congratulations to the 2019 Winners!!

Grass Hay Class

1st Place-Pedro Slits, Slits Dairy Farm Ltd., Brunner, ON
2nd Place-Roger Wikkerink, Wikkerink Farms Ltd., Norwich, ON
Innoc./Pres.:None Variety: Barenburg-Speare Seeds

Alfalfa Hay Class

1st Place-Rob Kirkconnell, Valleykirk Farms Ltd., Owen Sound, ON
Innoc./Pres.:Pioneer CMT Variety: PICKSEED
2nd Place-Larry Davis, Daveland Farm, Burford, ON
Innoc./Pres.: Nuhn Forage-The Juice Variety: ProRich
3rd Place-Larry Davis, Daveland Farm, Burford, ON
Innoc./Pres.: Nuhn Forage-The Juice Variety: ProRich

1st Cut Hay Silage Class

1st Place-Sherman Martin, Springflo Holsteins, Fergus, ON
Innoc./Pres.: Silo-King Variety: Pioneer
2nd Place-Clayton Martin, Gowanstown, ON
Innoc./Pres.: Silo-King Variety: Quality Seeds
3rd Place-Paul Martin, Everlane Farm, Elmira, ON
Innoc./Pres.: Silo-King Variety: Quality Seeds

2nd Cut Hay Silage Class

1st Place-Sheldon Grant, Les Fermes Grantholm, Elgin, QC
Innoc./Pres.: Silo-King Variety: Lelia
2nd Place-Murray Schnarr, Farfield Farms Ltd., ON
Innoc./Pres.: Silo-King Variety: Dekalb
3rd Place-Rob Kirkconnell, Valleykirk Farms Ltd., Owen Sound, ON

Corn Silage Class

1st Place-Henk Dirksen, Dirksen Holsteins, Alma, ON
Innoc./Pres.: Silo-King Variety: Pioneer
2nd Place-Roger Wikkerink, Wikkerink Farms Ltd., Norwich, ON
Innoc./Pres.: Chris Hansen Variety: Masters Choice
3rd Place-Gerald Gingrich, Alma, ON
Innoc./Pres.: Silo-King Variety: Quality Seeds

BMR Corn Silage Class

1st Place-Mervin Gingrich, Merka Holsteins, Gowanstown, ON
Innoc./Pres.: Silo-King Variety: Masters Choice
2nd Place-Earl Albrecht, Milverton, ON
Innoc./Pres.: Silo-King Variety: Masters Choice
3rd Place-Wayne Wagler, Claynook Farms Milverton, ON
Innoc./Pres.: Silo-King Variety: Masters Choice

For information on how to participate in next year's competition, please contact us:
1 877 892-8663
support@ontarioforagecouncil.com

Please stay tuned to our website for announcements on the 2020 Competition!!
www.ontarioforagecouncil.com

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THANK YOU TO OUR 2019 COMPETITION PARTNERS!!



Next year's winning entries will be displayed for all to admire at the "Milk Maker Forage Competition" display at the CDX in April 2020!

Nitrogen Management for Pasture

By Jake Munroe – Soil Fertility Specialist (Field Crops), OMAFRA

When a forage stand contains a significant portion of legumes, such as alfalfa or clover, biological fixation provides an ample supply of nitrogen (N) and fertilization is not necessary. However, in older stands and fields with a high proportion of grasses, nitrogen application is key to achieving higher yields and more economical forage production. Split applications help to improve the efficiency of N uptake.

Nitrogen guidelines

The nitrogen guidelines for perennial forages from the Agronomy Guide for Field Crops (Publication 811; page 87) are included below. Manure and urine deposition from grazing animals generally won't supply enough nitrogen for a grass-dominated pasture but should be credited. Applied manure will also likely need to be supplemented. For average manure nitrogen values, refer to the OMAFRA Factsheet: "Available Nutrients and Value for Manure from Various Livestock Types 1."

Proportion of legumes	Suggested nitrogen rate
50% or more	0
33-50%	60 kg/ha (54 lbs/acre)
<33%	23 kg/tonne (45 lbs/ton) of expected dry matter yield

Ontario nitrogen guidelines are in line with other nearby jurisdictions. For example, Wisconsin guidelines call for 130 lbs N/acre for pure grass pasture, which is equivalent to Ontario's guideline for a 3 ton/acre dry matter yield.

Timing of application

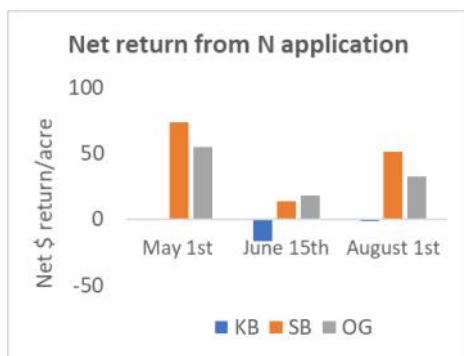
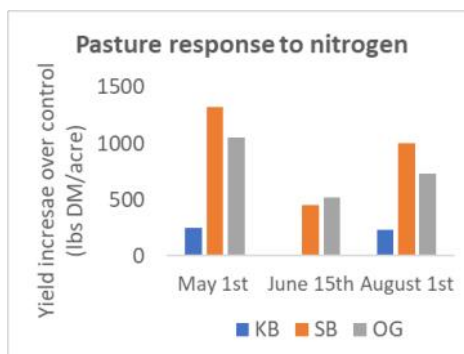
Split application of nitrogen is essential for its efficient use on pasture. According to the university of Wisconsin's Forage Extension Specialist, Dr. Dennis Cosgrove, N applications above approximately 50 lbs/acre are not used by pasture growth². Even in seasons with a dry period, production is improved with multiple rather than a single N application.

The timing of N fertilizer application should match the periods of grass growth. For cool season grasses, early spring and late summer are the best time to apply. If you can manage the extra growth in a pasture situation with a higher stocking rate or mechanical harvest, target the first application shortly after green-up. For higher yield potential fields, apply the second application ahead of late summer growth, e.g. early August.

Late spring or early summer applications are not ideal, as they coincide with reduced grass growth

and higher temperatures, which can put urea-based fertilizers at risk of loss through volatilization.

The results from a study performed in 2004 and 2005 in west-central Wisconsin² illustrate the value in applying nitrogen at specific points in the season. The greatest (and most profitable) response to 50 lb/acre application rates of nitrogen occurred in May and August for three different types of grass species.



Adapted from "Nitrogen management in rotationally grazed pastures" by Dr. Dennis Cosgrove, Wisconsin Team Forage. KB = Kentucky bluegrass/white clover; SB = smooth bromegrass and alfalfa; OG = orchardgrass and red clover.

Conclusion

For pasture that contains a significant proportion of grass, nitrogen application is critical to achieving improved production. Split applications improve the efficiency of uptake and the return on your fertilizer investment. Consider opportunities in your operation where you can use nitrogen strategically to improve pasture production and profitability.

References

Available Nutrients and Value for Manure from Various Livestock Types. Agdex #538. Order #13-043. Christine Brown, OMAFRA. 2013.

Nitrogen Management in Rotationally Grazed Pastures. Dennis Cosgrove, University of Wisconsin-River Falls. <https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/forage/nitrogen-management-in-rotationally-grazed-pastures/>

Continued from page 3

looking for speakers. Your ideas are always encouraged and welcomed

Canadian Forage & Grassland Association (CFGAs)

Being one of the founding directors of CFGA, I finished my 2nd term as Chair of the Board, and officially, this was my final year on the Board. Chris Martin from the Alma area who is a member of both Ontario Hay Marketing Forum and the Ontario Hay & Forage Co-operative was elected Chair of CFGA in November 2018. As past Chair, I have been asked to serve on the

Continued from page 6

knives on disc mowers rather than angled ones, as these create less of the suction that draws up fine particles of dirt. Adjust rakes and tedders properly for field and crop conditions and try to minimize the amount the crop is moved horizontally across the field. When making haylage in a bunker silo, ensure the tires of the packing tractor and the yard area around the silo is clean and dry to keep dirt out of the silage.

While producers cannot avoid external ash entirely, reducing soil contamination has a positive effect on forage quality. Normal levels of external ash are usually 1%-2%. Laboratory tests cannot distinguish between internal and external ash, but by subtracting 8% from the ash value of an alfalfa hay's test, or 6% from the ash value of a grass hay, it is easy to see if

Executive Committee. Several members from Ontario also attended the CFGA 9th Annual Meeting and Conference in Calgary, and everyone will agree that it was very successful. The 10th Annual Meeting and Conference for CFGA will be held in Moncton, New Brunswick in November 2019.

As we look forward to a great 2019, I wish everyone a safe and productive year.

Ray Robertson, P.Ag.
Manager, Ontario Forage Council

external ash exceeds 2%. If it does, some small changes during harvest can help lower ash content in the next cut.

This article was originally published in Ontario Beef magazine.

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Blank, S.C., Orloff, S.B., and Putnam, D.H. 2001. Sequential stochastic production decisions for a perennial crop: The yield/quality trade-off for alfalfa hay. *Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics*. 26(1):195-211.

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Ontario Hay and Forage Co-operative Inc. Update

By Larry Davis, OHFC Director

Well we indicated to you last year that we were working on showing the world that we are serious about marketing Ontario hay, bringing our hay to an unprecedented quality level, how to maximize growth and harvest and store that hay to retain quality. We've accomplished that and more.

Work has continued with research and expertise to bring the CHINOOK hay dryer to market. How does it perform for operators? There have been several hay dryers sold to members and they have been reporting positively on the outcome of the dried hay. Chris Martin and other directors have much input into the production of the CHINOOK.

Our AGM in March was attended by a capacity audience who learned the value of hay in a cash crop rotation. Ian McDonald delivered on the topic "What Hay Does for Our Soils and Our Wallets". Christine O'Reilly spoke on the importance of the 4R nutrient program when maximizing the fertility for growing alfalfa and timothy. She also gave information on genetics and growing pure stands of alfalfa. We recognized the retirement of founding Director and Vice President Don Rowntree at the AGM. Don's expertise in building the Co-op to a world recognized entity is greatly appreciated. Meghan Richardson also announced her retirement from the Board at the AGM, but has been retained as staff to fill the Treasury role. Meaghan's offer to maintain this role is greatly appreciated by the Board. We also accepted two new directors to our Board; Mike Faulkner and DJ Wassenaar. Their knowledge of growing and marketing hay will be an asset to the Co-op. The

OHMC AGM has become a premier event to attend for hay growers. Following the AGM, Chris Martin was elected by the board to the position of Vice President.

Several ambitious Directors, led by President Fritz Trauttmansdorff, searched for a representative sample of Ontario Timothy Hay. They then took the effort to accumulate it and move it to Eastern Ontario where, with the assistance of director Andre Larocque, large square bales were compacted into very dense 2'X2'X3' bales weighing about 70 lbs. each. A container was loaded, and our Ontario Timothy is expected to arrive in Saudi Arabia soon. Director Chris Raich monitored and reported the efforts and compacting on social media. It was interesting how much activity took place on Twitter and Facebook during this time.

In Late April, the co-op hosted a Timothy Car Tour and Twilight Meeting highlighting the timothy fields at Director Josh Dekkers, Greg Dekkers and Director Matt Bergman's farms. Much discussion ensued about those fields. Countyline Custom Farming hosted the informative evening with a panel discussion moderated by Ian McDonald following a delicious barbecue by Strodes catering. The entire evening was graciously sponsored by KC Ag Solutions and NUHN forage.

Our goals at this point are to:
SIGN UP MEMBERS, so that we can
ACQUIRE AND EQUIP A COMPACTING FACILITY and ultimately
MARKET MEMBERS QUALITY, ONTARIO HAY WORLDWIDE

Ontario Hay Marketing Forum Report

By Ray Robertson - Manager, Ontario Forage Council



As the old saying goes, "Patience is a virtue" certainly holds true when we are experiencing the weather patterns of the past few weeks. Farmers are anxious to get on the land, but experience has taught us that we must be patient and not push the envelope to fast. At the end of April, our forage stands are still lacking the colour and growth of areas in the south/west of the province, but then as stated earlier, we must be patient and count our lucky stars.

The Ontario Hay Marketing Forum (OHMF) teamed up with the Ontario Hay & Forage Co-operative Inc. on a recent Timothy hay tour in southwestern Ontario. We saw more advanced stands of timothy and witnessed a few different methods of planting and fertility applications being utilized. We heard many positive comments about the current forage situation, as well as reports of this being one of the best times hay producers have experienced.

The emphasis is certainly focused on producing a high-quality forage product, that will compete very well with any other cash crop and at the same time. We also saw evidence of how forages can improve soil health and fertility. To maximize our bottom line in hay production today, we must employ a totally different management system than grandpa had done in his day. We only need to look at the cereal crops and how their production levels have advanced in recent years. Hay can more than equal those production levels, if we revise our production and management practices. From a market perspective, all of Canada can not supply the total export demand and there is certainly a growing awareness of the true value of good quality hay.

If you are in the hay marketing business, or regularly sell hay or straw locally, you may find it beneficial to join the Ontario Hay Marketing Forum. The Ontario Hay Marketing Forum is the first entity we think of when referring producers to a reputable hay supplier. It can be an excellent marketing tool, that gives you constant exposure to a broad clientele and at a reasonable price.

This is an exciting time for the forage industry and producers, or potential hay producers are invited to join the Ontario Hay Marketing Forum and be part of this entrepreneurial endeavour. You could also become eligible to join the Canadian Forage Export Group.

If you would like an application form or have further questions, you are invited to contact our office.

If you would like an application form or have further questions, you are invited to contact our office.

Ray Robertson, Manager, Ontario Forage Council.
Phone: 519-986-1484 or 1-877-892-8663
Email: ray@ontarioforagecouncil.com



**The Ontario Forage Council thanks the
Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food
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