

February 2015

Volume 9, Issue 1

Have an interesting topic you want discussed in the Newsletter or municipal meeting? Suggestions to Asst. Agricultural Fieldman Tanis Ponath, [asb@mdwainwright.ca](mailto:asb@mdwainwright.ca) or 780-842-4454



The Municipal District of Wainwright No. 61 is now accepting price proposals for mowing operations for the 2015-2017 seasons. The requested price proposal is for a one (1) year contact with the M.D. option to extend for two (2) additional years (one year at a time). Packages can be picked up at the M.D. office.

Municipal District of Wainwright No.61

# The Municipal Agricultural Connection



Partners in Rural Conservation  
[www.mdwainwright.ca](http://www.mdwainwright.ca)



## Ergot Toxicity

In the last couple of years there has been a spike in the number of reported ergot poisonings. This can partly be contributed to the amount of rainfall we have been receiving early in the growing seasons.

Ergot toxicity is caused by the fungus *Claviceps purpurea*. It infects cereal grains, wild and cultivated grasses at the flowering stage. Ergot is contained in the ovary of the flower.

Ergot contains alkaloid toxins which are vasoconstrictors in nature which means they restrict blood flow and can also restrict milk flow. It also causes convulsions, hallucinations, gangrene and death in very severe cases.

First signs of poisoning include lameness because there is restricted blood flow

become present and sloughing of the tail, ear tips, and hooves. Symptoms will start to occur 4-6 week after eating infected feed.

To treat ergot you must remove the source of the contamination. You only need 0.1-0.3 percent contamination to see symptoms. Ergot infected fields can be grazed before flowering. In addition, using certified seed, blending feeds, crop rotation, and feed testing can all help to prevent ergot poisoning.

For more information you can visit [www.realagriculture.ca](http://www.realagriculture.ca)



to the extremities. Pregnant females can abort. As symptoms progress gangrene will

## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!!!!



Here at the MD of Wainwright we are looking for better ways to serve you!

We are looking to bring a few workshops to the M.D. area.

Here is just a few examples of what we can bring to YOU:

- Solar and Wind Energy Workshop (on farm)

- Off site watering for cattle
- Range and Upland Health Assessments for riparian areas
- Working Well workshop
- Tree health informative sessions

Please send your ideas to Asst. Agriculture Fieldman Tanis Ponath at [asb@mdwainwright.ca](mailto:asb@mdwainwright.ca) or 780-842-4454

# Wintering Sites for Cattle

Choosing an adequate wintering site for your cattle can have significant environmental advantages. The number one risk associated with wintering sites is nutrient accumulation. There is increased risk of nutrients being transported into surface and groundwater sources. As we all know water is a very important and precious resource.

Excessive feeding systems contribute to contamination from manure, pathogens, and sediment loading. For example when excess phosphorus is released into the environment it promotes plants growth. Increased plant growth in water bodies cause a decrease in the oxygen content in the water, which can inevitably lead to fish death. It also promotes growth of blue green algae which is toxic to humans and animals. Manure can carry the deadly bacteria, *Ecoli*, which is also very toxic to humans. Increased

sediment deposition decreases the capacity of water bodies and harms aquatic life. The most crucial time of year when transportation of nutrients is most prevalent is during spring run off. Off site watering is starting to become very popular, and it decreased degradation on sensitive riparian areas when cattle have direct access to water bodies.

Another thing to take into consideration is soil conditions. Nutrients and salt can build up in the soil and have negative effects. Watering, feeding and bedding areas are the most common problem areas. This can cause problems in your crops. Excess salt decreases crop productivity, and increased nitrate levels causes cereal crop lodging.

If cattle are wintered in areas that are wetter, it can cause soil compaction. This can also decrease growth and productivity of plants. The more the soil becomes compacted it decrease water infiltration which causes your soil to be drier and increases the risks of soil

erosion. In addition, properly managed feeding systems can have a positive effect on poor soils. It will add nutrients and organic matter that may be lacking in the soil.

Wintering sites should be positioned up– slope to prevent run– off.

Feeding systems are categorized into two systems :

1. Non– Imported feeds
2. Imported feeds

Non imported feeds are separated into 2 categories, lower input and higher input. Lower input have significantly



lower environmental hazards. Examples include swath grazing, grazing stock-piled forages, grazing annual forages and grazing crop residues. Nutrient loading is low cause feeds wastes are distributed across the field. Higher input fields include corner grazing because your inputs for growing corn increase and it has increased dry matter yields with means more cattle and more accumulation.

Imported feeds is the second category. Bale grazing and processing hay is just a few examples. Cattle will tend to linger around feed which can create nutrient “hot” spots. Bales also have a tendency to spread weeds. Adequate bale spacing and moving portable bunk feeders, can reduced wastage. Moving regularly will decrease accumulation. The goal is to spread feed over large as area as possible.

Another way to use best management practices is to rotate wintering sites. Crops can then take better advantage of available nitrogen. Its good to do a 3-4 year rotation.

Do not have a wintering site where flooding occurs. You want a 0-25% flooding range in your field. Flooding can directly transport nutrients, sediments, and pathogens into the water .

Shelter placement is also important. Portable shelters are better for the environment because they can be moved. It is recommended that you

move portable shelters every two weeks. If the only thing your cattle has access to is trees. Putting up a perimeter around the trees can

save the understory. Removing excess manure in the spring before the melt can also be beneficial.

Soil testing can be used as a backup to ensure there isn't negative affects happening on your land.

Constantly moving the feeding and bedding will encourage cows to utilize the whole winter feeding grounds.

More information can be found on Ropin the Web, “ The Wintering Site Assessment and Design Tool”. With the tool it can also give you information to calculate whether you have the proper number of cows per acre and other ones to ensure proper management systems.

## Western Canadian Cow— Calf Survey



The Western Canadian Cow—Calf Survey will target productivity measures for the cow-calf sector which are important gauges for profitability. This survey will allow for the

understanding of production and management practices. This will aid in guiding research and identifying improvements and areas of excellence among cow—calf productions.

It is important to participate in the survey to ensure appropriate samples size to make the survey meaningful to producers.

The survey is available at [www.wbdc.sk.ca/wcccs.htm](http://www.wbdc.sk.ca/wcccs.htm) , Western Beef Development Centers Website.

## Cooks Corner

### Italian Sausage Penne pasta

#### Ingredients

- 1 package of your choice of hot/ mild Italian sausage
- 1 jar of pasta sauce
- 1 cup of grated parmesan cheese
- 3 cups of un-cooked pasta
- 1/2 cup of water
- 2 cups of mozzarella cheese



- Cook pasta until just tender
- Add all of the ingredients into a casserole dish excluding the mozzarella cheese
- Cover and bake at 350° for 30 minutes
- Remove the lid and add mozzarella cheese
- Bake until cheese is melted and bubbly

#### Directions

- cook sausage how you desire
- After cooked, cut sausage into bite sized pieces

## Solar Energy Workshop

*Generating Electricity From the Sun*

*" It is becoming increasingly popular for farmers to generate there own electricity, and sell it to the grid"*

The M.D. of Wainwright is hosting a one-day workshop focusing on utilizing renewable energy sources right on your property. The focus of this workshops is generated towards solar energy.

### Solar

Focus on micro-generated options for Famers

**Rob Harlan: Executive Director of the Solar Energy Society of Alberta**

Rob has taught workshops and classes in solar technologies in the United States and Canada. Mr. Harlan has provided renewable energy policy consulting to the City of Edmonton and the Province of Alberta. He served as the solar site assessor for the Alberta Agriculture Growing Forward Solar PV Equipment Pilot Program in 2012. In addition he has visited over 50 Alberta farms to facilitate their process of going solar.

April 16, 2015

9:00 – 5:30

Center for Sustainable Innovation, Vermilion AB

Transportation from Wainwright will be provided

**\$15.00** Registration Fee to cover lunch.



*If you would like to attend or have any questions please contact Tanis, Asst. Agricultural Fieldman at the M.D. of Wainwright. 780-842-4454 or [asb@mdwainwright.ca](mailto:asb@mdwainwright.ca) by April 10, 2015. Limited Space Available.*

# WATER WELLS

## Nine tips to protect your well and groundwater supply

### 1. Design and build a good well, and get rid of your well pit.

Use a licensed water well contractor, who knows what they're doing. You can check out the Water Well and Design Factsheet from Working Well for more information

### 2. Plug Old Wells and Holes

If you are getting a new well drilled on your property, it's good to have your old wells decommissioned. In doing this you will decrease the chances of contamination into your aquifer.

### 3. Understand your Drillers Report

This report contains pertinent information, make sure the driller gives you a copy.

### 4. Manage activities on your land

Pay careful attention to where you store/mix fertilizer and chemicals because they can seep into your groundwater. Take extra precautions where you have sandy or gravelly soils.

### 5. Test your Well

You can contact your local Alberta Health Services district environmental health office for sample bottles and additional information. You should test for coliform bacteria in your well at least twice a year, and do a routine water chemistry test every two



### 6. Shock Chlorinate your Well

You will have to shock chlorinate your well if you test positive for coliform bacteria. In addition to, if you notice slime build up in your toilet, this can be iron or sulphate reducing bacteria. This type of bacteria is not dangerous to you however, it can affect the smell and taste of your water and be hard on your equipment.

### 7. Do Not Over Pump your Well

Over pumping is one of the biggest cause for well problems. Get your driller to perform a full test pump to provide you with the recommended pumping rate.

### 8. Inspect your Well and Properly

Regularly inspect your well and the surrounding area. Ensure that:

- The well cap is secure and no vents are blocked
- There are no open gaps around the outside of your well casing
- There is no ground settling or water pooling around the well casing
- The pressure tank and water treatment system are operating properly
- Your septic system is working and is the recommended distance away from your well

### 9. Keep Records

Keep records of your driller reports, well inspections, water tests and treatments.

For more information visit  
[www.workingwell.alberta.ca](http://www.workingwell.alberta.ca)