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CFIA regulations raise many questions



CFIA representative John McCann (left) with Dr. Mark Godwin (center) and Dr. G. Brian Ross (right) of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency at the recent symposium on BSE in Toronto regarding new CFIA regulations regarding BSE.

Andrew McElduff
Advocate Staff Reporter

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is stepping up efforts to eliminate any chance of BSE occurring in Canadian cattle with regulations that will increase paperwork and add administrative tasks for beef producers.

As of July 12, 2007, beef containing any quantity of specified risk materials, or SRM, can no longer be fed to livestock. SRM are any nervous system tissue from cattle over 30 months old, such as the skull, brain, eyes, spinal cord and others. From cattle of all ages, the distal ileum—a portion of the small intestine—is also classified as SRM. (For a detailed description of all SRM found in dead cattle please see the February 06 production article in Quebec's article in the

June 2007 issue of the Advocate.)

"The main species that is subject to BSE is cattle," says Dr. G. Brian Ross, veterinary program specialist for the CFIA, who gave a presentation to QFA and QPA members regarding the new regulations in Leclerc on September 17. "But in our industry we can't be 100 per cent sure that there won't be cross-contamination. That's why we've found it necessary to eliminate all SRM—all nervous system tissue. But there can even be slight levels of infectivity in non-SRM tissues."

The enhanced CFIA regulations give beef producers all the more reason to tag cattle early in their lives and replace the tags when necessary for easier traceability and record-keeping.

Perhaps that motivation for Canadian beef producers is the

government's new rule that requires a permit from the CFIA to handle, transport or dispose of cattle carcasses and certain cattle tissues. According to the CFIA's official release on the regulations, "If cattle die during transportation, the carcass is considered to be SRM. Therefore, a permit is required to bring the carcass back to the premises of origin or to a facility in Canada that is permitted by the CFIA to store, process or dispose of SRM."

This has left many beef producers wondering how they are supposed to apply to the CFIA for a permit when they are on the road with deadstock in their trailers. Currently, permit applications can be made by telephone, and CFIA employees say that the service will soon be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. (See page 2 for a list of

CFIA telephone numbers to call to obtain emergency slaughter permits and transportation permits.)

"The legislation is directed mostly at large transporting companies," says Hadden. "Deadstock facilities are an SRM, but we realize that most farmers are only taking their cattle a very short distance and that those animals will be in good shape."

The CFIA acknowledges that the new changes will put greater demands on producers. As compliance with the regulations depends largely on the good will of beef farmers, CFIA staff are available to attend producers' meetings anywhere in the province to help clarify the new policy and answer any questions.

"Before we talked to the CFIA personnel, I thought the regulations were going to be a complete total disaster," says QFA executive board member John McCann, who attended the September 17 meeting. "But now, if you apply for the transportation permit, you should be all right as long as your trailer stop is equipped to handle a cow over 30 months old. If your feed trailer stop doesn't want to touch it, you're not to touch it."

The good news is that deadstock remaining on a farm are not subject to any CFIA requirements. Cattle disposed of on the farm can still be buried according to municipal and provincial standards. However, CFIA permits are required to transport cattle carcasses to and from, including deadstock, and to transport cattle carcasses containing SRM for testing and

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Our most often can be pretty dumb sometimes, but for real home job capability, there ain't nothing like real teamwork.

—Edward Wiley

Have you saved your spot at the QFA's 50th anniversary annual general meeting?

See page 12 for details...

QFA EDITORIAL

The following editorial is the first of a seven-part series of commentaries by QFA Vice-president Chris Judd, entitled “The Seven Bank Accounts of a Farmer.” It’s not only money that makes a successful agricultural operation, says Judd, but also education, seed, soil, family, neighbours and politics, which make up any farm’s healthy “bank accounts.” In this issue, Chris talks about the very foundation of a successful farm—having a balanced “soil bank.”

The Seven Bank Accounts of a Farmer — # 1: Soil bank account

Chris Judd
QFA Vice-president

When agricultural producers get together to talk, it’s not at all uncommon for at least one envious person to comment, “I’d sure like to see his bank account” when conversation gets around to an older, established farmer in the community. But like a good card player, any older farmer probably has a few aces up his sleeve—a few helpful cards he’ll only show when the game is over.

This series will give a little insight into the many different “bank accounts” we farmers have. Or, to put it another way, the different trick cards all producers hold in the game of farming. First, I’d like to talk about the foundation of our farm—the soil bank account that is our land.

Most successful farmers have a good idea of what kind of shape their soil is in. They know the pH level of all their fields, they know their Ca/Mg/K ratio, their CEC, their P/Al ratio and their organic matter. And they’re aware of their fields’ base saturation.

Most of us can also walk into a field and tell what its lacking (and what it has in excess) simply by observing the type of weeds that grow. (If you’re not able to do this, get your hands on a copy of “Weeds and Why They Grow,” an excellent book by crops specialist Jay L. McCaman.) Similarly, most successful farmers also know their soil drainage, and what corner needs “another run.”

But at the same time, some unscrupulous farmers will “pull down” their soil bank for the last three or four years before selling the farm. On a clay-loam farm they might do this for the last ten years. Then, the unlucky producer who buys the farm might find out that it may take up to \$1,000 per acre to bring that farm back into profitable production.

Problems and bad farming practices can deplete your soil bank at every turn. How many times have you seen an impatient farmer drag his corn picker through the mud with two or three tractors after a very wet fall because he couldn’t wait till spring to take off his grain corn? That can ruin a good field’s ability to grow properly for perhaps twenty years.

And how many of us have seen a “V” ripper being used to break up hard pan that is probably in a field with a very low calcium saturation?

What is an abused farm soil worth compared to one that was properly looked after? Maybe the best way to answer that question is to ask: what is a full soil bank account worth compared to an empty one?

CFIA regulations raise many questions

Andrew McClelland
Advocate Staff Reporter

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is ramping up efforts to eliminate any chance of BSE occurring in Canadian cattle with regulations that will increase paperwork and add administrative tasks for beef producers.

As of July 12, 2007, feed containing any quantity of specified risk materials, or SRM, can no longer be fed to livestock. SRM are any nervous system tissue from cattle over 30 months old, such as the skull, brain, eyes, spinal cord and others. From cattle of all ages, the distal ileum—a portion of the small intestine—is also classified as SRM. (For a detailed description of all SRM found in dead cattle please see the *Fédération des producteurs de bovins du Québec's* article in the June 2007 issue of the Advocate.)

“The main species that is subject to BSE is cattle,” says Dr. El Mehdi Haddou, veterinary program specialist for the CFIA, who gave a presentation to UPA and QFA members regarding the new regulations in Lachute on September 19. “But in our industry we can’t be 100 per cent sure that there won’t be cross-contamination. That’s why we’ve found it necessary to eliminate all SRMs—all nervous system tissue. But there can even be slight levels of infectivity in non-SRM tissues.”

The enhanced CFIA regulations give beef producers all the more reason to tag cattle early in their lives and replace the tags when necessary for easier traceability and record-keeping.

Perhaps most worrisome for Canadian beef producers is the government’s new rule that requires a permit from the CFIA to handle, transport or dispose of cattle carcasses and certain cattle tissues. According to the CFIA’s official release on the regulations, “if cattle die during transportation, the carcass is considered to be SRM. Therefore, a permit is required to bring the carcass back to the premises of origin or to a facility in Canada that is permitted by the CFIA to store, process or dispose of SRM.”

That has left many beef producers wondering how they are supposed to apply to the CFIA for a permit when they are on the road with deadstock in their trailer. Currently, permits applications can be made by telephone, and CFIA employees say that the service will soon be accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week. (See page 2 for a list of CFIA telephone numbers to call to obtain emergency slaughter permits and transportation permits.)

“That legislation is directed mainly at large transporting companies,” says Haddou. “Deadstock bovines are an SRM, but we realize that most farmers are only taking their cattle a very short distance and that those animals will be in good shape.”

The CFIA acknowledges that the new changes will put greater demands on producers. As compliance with the regulations depends largely on the good will of beef farmers, CFIA staff are available to attend producers meetings anywhere in the province to help clarify the new policy and answer any questions.

“Before we talked to the CFIA presenters, I thought the regulations were going to be a complete and total disaster,” says QFA executive board member John McCart, who attended the September 19 meeting. “But now, if you apply for the transportation permit, you should be all right as long as your butcher shop is equipped to handle a cow over 30 months old. If your local butcher shop doesn’t want to touch it, you’re out to lunch.”

The good news is that deadstock remaining on a farm are not subject to any CFIA requirements. Cattle disposed of on the farm can still be buried according to municipal and provincial standards. However, CFIA permits are required to transport edible carcasses in any form, including deadstock, and to transport edible carcasses containing SRM for cutting and processing. In addition, records of all SRM and deadstock movement must be kept for ten years.

More paperwork is required of beef producers who now must keep records of feed and feed ingredient purchases for two years. Records must specify the supplier’s name and address, the date of purchase and the amount purchased. The feed ban continues to apply. Packages of feed containing prohibited material now carry a clear warning statement.

“For me, personally, I can’t see why anyone would feed animal by-products back to their animals,” says McCart. “I know it was done in the past with bloodmeal, and perhaps when feeding your animals a different species like fishmeal, but the enhanced feed ban won’t mean much for those of us who never fed our animals that kind of feed in the first place.”

At the time of the announcement, then-minister of agriculture Chuck Strahl noted that these “new measures will help increase access to foreign markets, and support Canada’s status as a controlled risk country for BSE from the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).” Strahl’s prediction turns out to be correct: on July 14, 2007 the U.S. federal appeals court overturned an injunction keeping Canadian cattle over 30 months of age from crossing the border.

The CFIA states that the federal government is investing \$80 million in provincial SRM disposal programs. Canada has had six cases of BSE, the most recent occurring in May of 2007.

QFA welcomes African farm leaders

Pamela Ledoux
Advocate Staff Reporter

For the first time in their history, the QFA and UPA-DI joined forces and co-hosted a capacity building program aimed at farm leaders from English-speaking countries in Africa earlier this month. Eight delegates from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia spent two weeks on Canadian soil, participating in a wide variety of agricultural adventures in Eastern Ontario and Western Quebec.

UPA-DI, the UPA's international development subsidiary, has organized such programs before, but always only for French-speaking African countries. "Everyone from Africa or Quebec who has taken part ends up speaking highly of the opportunity and recommending it to their friends and colleagues," said Ivan Hale, QFA's executive director.

The group, which included seven men and one woman, were here to learn about the Canadian agriculture model and about the marketing systems we have put into place to help farmers sell their produce. All participants work for farmer groups, either at the sub-regional or national level or representing a specific production type. Although their job descriptions sound very bureaucratic, all eight participants had very close ties to agriculture, with many of them still farming themselves. It is very common in Africa for everyone to either farm or have a close relative who farms to ensure regular and inexpensive food provision. The average farm size in their region is half a hectare or less.

Wow! Canada is far!

The African visitors arrived in Canada after more than 24-hours of travel time, some with more than one change of airplane. "Wow! Canada is FAR!" was the general consensus.

They spent their first night in Montreal then headed to the Ottawa/Gatineau region with Ivan Hale and myself for their first week of activities.

The first day began with an introduction to Canada and Canadian agriculture from the Canadian Federation of Agriculture's (CFA) president Bob Friesen and executive director, Justin To. The group also met with representatives from Agriculture Canada and toured the Central Experimental Farm.

Subsequent days featured meetings with local cooperatives such as the St-Albert Cheese Cooperative in St-Albert, Ontario (who make and sell their own cheese), the Embrun Coop in Embrun, Ontario (which sells a wide variety of farm equipment, fertilizers, seeds, feed, and even has a local coop grocery store!), and the Fitzroy Beef Marketing Initiative in Fitzroy, Ontario (which slaughters and markets their own beef at local farmers markets). They also toured Kemptville College, met with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Agri-food Roundtable of the Outaouais, and representatives from MAPAQ.

Bio-safety first!

But they wanted to get to see the good stuff too! Because our visitors were arriving from foreign countries, the QFA had to enforce the Canadian International Development Agency's (CIDA) foot-and-mouth-disease safety protocol which required that they all buy a new pair of shoes and spend at least four days in Canada before setting foot on a farm. And even then, they were required to wear very "stylish" bio-safety plastic shoe covers. Upon their return to their countries, their shoes will also have to be extensively cleaned to ensure no diseases take the trip home with them.

Once protocol was met, we visited Gladcrest Farms in Shawville, Quebec, owned and operated by Chris Judd, QFA's vice-president, his wife, Jeannie and their two sons Robin and Scott who were nice enough to give us the full tour! This incredibly modern dairy farming facility impressed our visitors very much.

Other farm tours included touring Gib Drury's Hays Pride Farm, in Lascelles, Quebec. The QFA president even hosted the group for an evening BBQ which featured live entertainment from an authentic Scottish bagpiper, an instrument most of our visitors had never heard before and were quite enthusiastic to try!

They also visited Christophe Marineau's exotic mushroom farm in Farrellton, Quebec, and Christian Bellaar-Spruyt's sheep farm in Rupert, Quebec.

Forum on Market Access Mechanisms

The second week of their visit was spent in Montreal with a three-day conference at the UPA headquarters with researchers from Quebec and abroad on agricultural marketing mechanisms. The forum heard about experiences with production of a wide range of commodities such as coffee, tea, rice, vanilla and cacao under different types of supply management. While it was agreed that no "one size fits all" there are nevertheless a number of basic principles that should be maintained in any regulatory system to ensure equity and fair returns to farmers.

Although our participants were saddened they didn't get to see any snow (well, perhaps only half-saddened), we did "canadianize" them by taking them for a good cup of Tim Horton's coffee and some maple donuts!

Our African visitors were delighted with their experience and say that QFA members are welcome in East Africa anytime! They have requested that QFA stay in close touch in the years ahead.

Will the Bloc decide the fate of the prairie farmer?

Barry Wilson
Special to the Advocate

On the face of it, the situation is absurd. Politics indeed do make for strange bedfellows. As Parliament started a new session of minority Conservative rule in mid-October, the *Bloc Québécois* suddenly emerged as a key player in the Conservative campaign to end the Canadian Wheat Board monopoly over sales of western Canadian barley into export markets or for domestic human consumption. That is not a misprint. At least in the short term, the future of a 72-year-old western Canadian grain-marketing agency depends on the decision of a political party from Quebec whose mission is to break up the country that created and sustains the CWB.

The reason is parliamentary mathematics. Last summer, a federal court in Calgary ruled that Conservative attempts to end the barley monopoly through regulation were illegal. The only way to do it is to change the CWB Act in Parliament. And since both Liberals and New Democrats support the monopoly, the only way the government could push through amendments is with the support of the BQ.

In August after the federal court ruling, Prime Minister Stephen Harper told prairie farmers that one way or the other, the government would end the monopoly. One way, of course, would be to win a majority in the next election so the CWB Act can be amended without opposition support. The other way, he mused, would be to try to win BQ support for an amendment in this Parliament. Immediately, defenders of the board declared victory. Surely the BQ—great defenders of supply management and under pressure from the UPA to see the CWB single desk in the same light as supply management single desks—would never agree to support undermining a farmer marketing board.

But Conservatives have an interesting argument to put to the Bloc. What is it about a referendum result they don't accept? A barley producer referendum last winter saw 62 percent of those voting support either getting the board out of barley altogether or ending the monopoly so the CWB would have to compete against the grain trade for barley supplies. Board defenders denounced the referendum as bogus and undemocratic and insist the 62 per cent is inaccurate because the question is misleading. The CWB could not survive without the monopoly so the question offered a false choice.

But again, the Bloc is familiar with fuzzy or misleading questions—and in the case of Quebec sovereignty, insists that a one-vote victory would be a mandate to separate. No matter what the question, voters know the issue is Quebec sovereignty, they argue. Well, Conservatives will say, farmers on the Prairies understood the issue was the board monopoly and many of them simply don't believe the board will disappear if it loses its monopoly.

A Bloc decision to refuse to accept a farmer referendum results surely would be fodder for Conservatives to use against the BQ in Quebec. Are these guys really democrats? And there is a precedent for the BQ standing with the Conservatives against wheat board defenders. Last year over the vehement opposition of the CWB and its defenders, the minority Conservatives moved

in the House of Commons to make the board subject to the access-to-information law. The Bloc supported them in the name of transparency and it happened. So while the prospect of Quebec separatists deciding the fate of a prairie farmer marketing board seems absurd, it also is logical in the current political climate.

Now whether the Alberta-based prime minister could defend on his home turf using separatist allies to undermine a Canadian institution is another question.

Still, on the CWB file, Harper appears to be a politician who believes the end justifies the means.

Barry Wilson grew up on a West Quebec farm and has spent more than a quarter century covering agricultural, rural and trade issues on Parliament Hill as National Correspondent for The Western Producer newspaper.

DEVOTION TO DAIRY

The road to good health

Paul Meldrum
Dairy Supervisor
Macdonald Campus Farm

A dairy calf will pretty much double its weight in the first two months of life and will double that weight again by five to six months of age if properly cared for. The road to good health and performance begins with good hygiene at birth and early feeding of colostrum as discussed in last month's column. How we treat the calf from this point will determine how quickly we get her into the milking herd and how well she will produce. The approach can be divided into three areas: housing, feeding and regimen.

Housing calves in hutches outdoors has become the most popular method—and for good reason. The air is always fresh, the calves are not exposed to bacteria from older animals against which they have no immunity, and the cost is relatively cheap. The drawback of course is that someone has to go out to tend to these calves in all kinds of weather, including, cold, wind, rain and snow. The benefit is that calves rarely get sick. In 25 years of using hutches, I have only had to treat a respiratory problem once. Conversely, calves kept in the dairy barn and tied in front of or behind the cows are living in a mixing bowl of bacteria-laden air which is often not vented from the barn frequently enough. Young lungs get infected, and even if treated, there can be scar tissue in the lungs which will adversely affect the growth rate and eventually milk production. Some producers have built calf barns or rooms with separate ventilation systems. These can be functional but are certainly more costly. No matter what type of housing, the calf must be clean and dry. Dirty, wet bedding equals sick calves. In winter, straw is much preferable to shavings because it reflects body heat better. In severely cold weather at the Macdonald Campus farm, we

will put calf coats on the younger animals and all calves are outfitted with ear muffs custom made by one of our employees to protect from frost-bite.

Cold weather also presents challenges when it comes to feeding. You will have to increase the amount fed by up to 20 per cent in cold weather to provide enough energy for the calf to keep itself warm and continue to grow. At a younger age, this extra energy should come from a feeding of milk at midday. For older calves, an increase in grain will do the job. We like to introduce grain to the calf at three days of age. They may not eat much, but we keep grain in a pail in the hutch feeder and put some in the calf's mouth three times a day. A sprinkle of milk replacer on top of the grain will encourage a calf to put its head down into the pail to eat. This also helps when we train a calf to drink from a pail at the end of the first week.

I am incredibly fussy when it comes to the quality of calf grower. It should be moist, smell good, have an anti coccidia agent, be 20 per cent protein or more and be delivered fresh. It has to smell so good that you almost want to eat it yourself! Calves should be consuming at least two kilograms of grower by week seven at which time you can introduce a nice soft second cut grass hay. If you feed hay earlier than this, they may leave the grain to fill up on hay (hopefully your hay is that good!) which will result in poor rumen development. Weaning is always debatable. A rule of thumb is to wean when the calf is consuming 2.5 kg of calf grower/day. This can sometimes be achieved at six weeks, and should be easily done at eight weeks. Calves weaned at four weeks will survive but they will not thrive.

Remember, the goal is to raise a healthy heifer who can start producing milk at 24 months or earlier. After the calf is weaned, we give them a week on hay, grain and water (water should be made available by about the third week—earlier in summer), before moving to a super hutch. This means the stress from weaning does not coincide with the stress from moving. It is important to try to limit incidents of stress to one source at a time. So when we de-horn, we don't vaccinate. When we vaccinate, we don't wean. When we move a calf, we don't vaccinate etc. etc. It is very easy to overwhelm a calf with too many stressors at the same time. As for vaccinating, this is a no-brainer. Your vet can put you on a program and stick to it!

Finally, one of the best things you can do to raise healthy calves is to observe them. Watch for droopy ears, scours, depression, infected navels and act quickly. A good pair of eyes and a thermometer can go a long way to nipping a problem in the bud and keeping your calves on a smooth road to good health and profitable production.

Paul Meldrum is Dairy Supervisor at McGill University's Macdonald Campus Farm. In the past, he has run successful dairy operations in both Ontario and New York State, hosted and produced CJOH TV's "Valley Farmer," and has been heard on agriculture reports for CBC Radio Noon in Ottawa.

Is a grazing coach for you?

Hubert McClelland
Special to the Advocate

About ten livestock producers from the Outaouais–Laurentides region have the opportunity to benefit from a unique experience in grazing management this year. They are eligible to participate in a program new to Quebec that helped several hundred producers last year in Ontario and the western provinces. The program is called the National Sustainable Grazing Mentorship program.

The program works by having producers subscribe a modest fee to join. This entitles the grazer to 16 hours of visits and accompaniment from a reputable, experienced producer who has proven his or her excellence in intensive grazing management. Such producers are rare, but can be found in every province and region. Your grazing mentor will visit your farm to help you decide and plan the best approach to improving your pasture's productivity. The idea is not to tell you how to do your grazing management, but to help you choose the best path in achieving your goals in planning and improving your grazing system. The goal is sustainable grass management and low-cost, profitable livestock production.

This help can take the form of suggesting improved watering methods, establishing better fencing systems and learning when to not overgraze. Using your farm plans, your mentor can suggest paddock designs to minimize fencing costs, improve cattle traffic flow from paddock to paddock, eliminate farm lane problems or extend the grazing season. Having learned the management of the growth of grass in abundant years and drought conditions, the mentor will suggest how best to manage your forage resources according to the soil types and the forage species on your farm.

What does the program cost? \$100 covers the registration fee 16 hours of visits and telephone consultation—including your mentor's travel to your farm. The program will pay the mentor a total of \$700 for their efforts. After decades of seeking out help from professional consultants such as accountants, notaries, agronomes, nutritionists and engineers on specific areas of farm operation, producers may find it unusual to have other producers advising on grazing management. However, grazing management is a complex subject that is not specific to any one area of expertise. It is management intensive in that it requires knowledge of the forage species, of livestock behaviour, of soils and soil fertility, of electric fencing and water systems with particular knowledge of managing grass growth. Only producers who have managed a herd through several seasons of both drought and abundance, of good markets and poor ones, by grazing too severely or by not grazing soon enough, can really provide expertise intensive rotational grazing management.

To sign-up, contact Hubert McClelland, agronome and coordinator of the National Sustainable Grazing Mentorship program for the Gatineau Outaouais Beef Improvement Club at 819-827-1793 or by e-mail: hubert.mcclelland@sympatico.ca

Hubert McClelland grew up on a farm in Cantley, Quebec and worked for 35 years as a pasture specialist in MAPAQ's Outaouais sector. A member of the Ordre des agronomes du Québec, he specializes in grassfed beef production and intensive pasture management.

“We have become globalized in spite of ourselves,” says Aminata Traoré

“We have become globalized in spite of ourselves,” said African speaker Aminata Traoré at the “D’abord nourrir notre monde” conference on September 6 in Montreal. “The rich and powerful have advanced this model to feed the war machine called globalization. The fight for food sovereignty, which gives each person the right to a healthy diet, is one of the essential steps in establishing world peace.” It was a speech from the heart Traoré, Mali’s ex-minister of Culture and Tourism, gave in favour of food sovereignty.

“The winners of this economic war are telling us that what we are doing is not right because they have to sell!” she declared. However, “over many centuries, populations have managed in harmony with ecosystems without the help of a global market. The organization of agricultural production led to the strengthening and diversification of crops. Men had a bond with nature, living from their labour, not worrying about accumulating wealth; work was not a commodity to be bought, but rather to be exchanged in a united fashion.”

Much of Traoré’s speech commented on the dispossessed state that has befallen Africa as a whole. “We do not have our place in the global market and we no longer have access to our own markets, flooded by imported products being sold cheaper than our own,” she noted. “Africa is being used to recycle your surpluses, since what it produces is destined primarily for export. We pay a high price for this prosperity in which we have no share.”

Even worse, “Africa must deal with a sentiment of self-shame. International public opinion contends that Africa is getting what it deserves. Yet, we have paid with our lives for this system, which put us through slavery, colonization, neo-colonialism and now globalization. What more do you want?”

In light of the continent’s misfortune at the hands of the world’s empires, the challenge is enormous. “The balance of power has tilted completely away from the markets of the South. If we have not been able to build an African market, which consists of more than 800 million people, it is not the fault of the men and women there—it has to do with the system. We elect officials who always say yes to the dominant forces. Our elite went to the same schools as yours did and are unable to understand another way of doing things.” Certainly, there is corruption, she admits, “but the money has to come from somewhere.”

Dignity

“We do not need increased investment or development assistance, which has benefited mostly the businesses in the North that are reaping huge profits,” maintains Traoré. “We want to be able

to choose, to have the right to live in dignity, the right to produce what we eat, so we do not have to beg and give up, or to helplessly witness our own ruin.”

Is Mali doing better after having set food sovereignty as the basis of its agricultural policy? “Honestly, I do not believe that Mali has a future outside the global system. The rural peasants, forced to grow cotton, find themselves without any income because of American and European subsidies given to their own producers. Apart from Hugo Chavez, who can fall back on oil revenues, the division is such that any country that tries to stand up for food sovereignty has little chance.” Thus, the necessity of a combined effort from the North and the South and an alliance for the whole planet.

Jean-Charles Gagné
LTCN 2007-09-20

Free markets don't work with farming, says John Ralston Saul

The World Trade Organization (WTO) wants supply management, which is working fairly well, to be dismantled so that Canadian farmers will experience the same insecurity as the rest of the world. This comment, with its ironic tone, comes from John Ralston Saul, the Canadian philosopher and author of “The End of Globalism.”

Supply management does not siphon from consumers to subsidize agriculture, contrary to the opinion of the Montreal Economic Institute, he added. “It is a different model and it works, while other systems work less well.” He also noted that “all the great civilizations managed their agriculture. The free market concept cannot function in agriculture because a drop in markets can result in starvation.”

The current dialogue that stresses efficiency and open capitalism, is incorrect, according to Saul. “We are evolving under the domination of private distribution monopolies that are making a lot of money, while farm prices are dropping almost everywhere and consumer prices are increasing only modestly.” For Saul, “it is illogical that New Zealand lamb can be bought cheaper in Quebec than the locally-produced product, after travelling some 13,000 kilometres. And we find strawberries from Mexico, even during our local growing-season.”

Quality

According to Saul, the solution during this period of world agriculture surpluses is through food sovereignty, which is efficient and avoids the enormous cost of transportation. Agriculture should not produce more, he says, but rather concentrate on quality, as shown by the example of Quebec specialty cheeses. However, the quality must be accessible to the whole population and not just the elite. A different logic must be used, based on quality and on the reduction of investment, in order to generate a decent profit for farmers. Saul does not believe that organic farming will be the miracle remedy. “We can now find products grown in California—100per

cent organic—produced industrially and transported long distances, but without any taste... in short, we have fallen back into the same problems we were trying to solve in the first place!”

Paralysed

We should not rely on the elite in order to attain food sovereignty, according to Saul. “Those elite, especially the economists, the managers and administrators, who have all studied out of the same book at university, are all paralysed because they believe globalization is inevitable.” This is a false reading, according to Saul, who believes that globalization is losing momentum practically everywhere in the world. In short, “we find ourselves between two periods, not really sure which way to go. Periods of crisis are, in fact, opportune times to make choices.” The population must pressure the politicians to take on this important change, by “creating a critical mass in each political party having the least sleeping members.”

Ignored by the elite, the 10,000 cooperatives in Canada, with their revenues of \$36 billion per year, will have a major role to play in this change of direction, because they are aligned with the local markets.

Jean-Charles Gagné
LTCN 2007-09-20

Coulombe will have to deal with the pork crisis

Guy Coulombe has taken on a tough job, to say the least, in accepting to find a solution for the long-term survival of the pork industry in Quebec.

All of the sector’s representatives contacted by the newspaper *La Terre de Chez Nous* welcomed his nomination, although few are directly acquainted with the expert troubleshooter. “It’s going to be an huge job—there are diverging interests in the industry,” asserted Vincent Breton, slaughterhouse manager for *Aliments Breton*. “Since Coulombe is from outside the industry, he will not be biased,” declared Yves Lacroix, president and CEO of the *Association des industries de nutrition animale et céréalière (AQINAC)*. According to UPA President Laurent Pellerin, Coulombe “has proven himself in other sectors,” and will be able to bring about compromise, which has not been evident at the negotiation table from the start. The president of the *Fédération des producteurs de porcs*, Jean-Guy Vincent, acknowledged that he was “pleased” with Guy Coulombe’s nomination and believes that he will be a “rallying force.”

The root of the problem

The diagnosis of the present crisis varies enormously from one stakeholder to the next. “The legal constraints in Quebec do not help us to remain competitive,” asserted Breton, making reference to the environmental regulations (two moratoriums), the higher cost of grain compared to the West and the difficulties in working with vertical integration. The same message is being sent by AQINAC, which tabled demands before the Pronovost Commission, calling for “free

choice for producers” regarding marketing. The association also favours the “co-management” of the joint marketing plan.

“I am continuously fighting for better prices,” affirmed Jacques Poitras, president of *Aliments Asta*, while explaining that his good customers can sometimes pay up to five cents more per kilo for high quality Canadian pork, but not more. Poitras also believes that the economic uncertainty associated with the rise of the Canadian dollar was predictable and that we just have to wait until it passes. “I compete every day with packing plants of this size (80,000 hogs per week),” Poitras declared when asked if his “little” plant of 20,000 head per week can continue to steer the course. His similar fixed costs and tight control on management allow him to continue. However, Poitras does not expect Coulombe to be a miracle worker.

Producers see the situation in a different light. Laurent Pellerin maintains that pork production is simply not profitable any more with the rise in grain prices and the drop in pork prices to \$115 per 100 kg. “It doesn’t make any sense at all,” declared the UPA president. Some 20 per cent of pork producers are in arrears with their payments to *La Financière agricole*.

“Cuts are always passed down to the bottom of the pyramid,” asserted Jean-Guy Vincent, adding that Quebec pork producers and those from around the world, who met last week in China for the World Pork Conference, are unanimous in acknowledging that “retail prices do not correspond with the cost of feed.” World pork prices are therefore “held artificially low” and producers suspect that a form of dumping could be the cause.

Thierry Larivière
LTCN 2007-09-27

Liberalization is destroying agriculture and the planet, says Hervé Kempf

The journalist, Hervé Kempf, author of “How the rich are destroying the planet,” says that we must oppose the all-out liberalization of trade being promoted by a powerful oligarchy, extremely greedy and irresponsible, even in agriculture. According to Kempf, this economic model is the cause of the present historical ecological crisis and the impoverishment of a large part of the planet’s population.

“The theoretical economic principle that alleges that more and more trade is necessary to reduce consumer costs has led to a shift from the value-added production sector to the distribution sector and the agri-food industries,” Kempf explains. Names like Danone, Nestlé, Kraft and others represent some of the largest fortunes in the world.

Kempf believes that “this predatory oligarchy continues its deliberate policy of the destruction of agriculture and the environment, in its quest to maximize profits.”

This economic growth is done on the backs of the rural population, who constitute three-quarters of the South's 850 million people, he maintains. And industry will never be able to provide jobs for the millions of Chinese, Indian, African, Brazilian and Argentinean peasants who leave their farms and end up in city slums. In fact, poverty has increased even in rich countries over the last ten years and one-third of humanity is living on less than two dollars a day.

“The obsession with low prices for farm products does not take into consideration the social, ecological and health costs that result from it, such as the rural exodus, the malnutrition, the loss of biodiversity, the cancers, the obesity and the water pollution.” According to Kempf, we have reached the ecological limit of the planet. Climate change, the biodiversity crisis and chemical contamination are all perfect examples.

“The maintaining of a human-dimensioned agriculture is desirable in order to correct the ecological crisis and encourage social harmony,” he concludes.

Jean-Charles Gagné
LTCN 2007-09-20

Working towards forest certification

Both public and private forests in Quebec should be certified in the long term, says Quebec government, which is presently working on a bill concerning forest certification. “It is true that we are working towards forest certification, and our intention to proceed with it is irreversible,” declared Normand Bergeron, deputy-minister for the *Ministère des Ressources naturelles et de la Faune du Québec* (MRNF). Bergeron made the announcement during the National Woodlot Owners Forum, held in conjunction with the *Carrefour de la recherche forestière*, bringing together some 3,000 participants last week in Quebec City. The delegates for the woodlot owners appeared to be surprised by the declaration, not knowing if private forests would be included in the certification.

The new head of the Private Woodlot Development Service in the ministry, Robert Gagnon, confirmed that the bill currently being prepared would also include private forests. “We do not want three or four different certification models,” he affirmed. “It is true that private forests have their own particularities, but both the public and the private sectors must be dealt with simultaneously. They are all part of the whole and we want something that is coherent. We have to think about the customer on the other end.”

The president of the *Fédération des producteurs de bois*, Pierre-Maurice Gagnon confirmed that he has received assurances that his members will be given time to adjust. Gagnon explained that discussions among producers regarding certification are progressing smoothly. He believes that it will be preferable to implement the law as a function of territory rather than on an individual basis for each owner.

Residuality principle

Delegates from several provinces at the national forum also brought up the question of marketing. Gagnon had some scathing remarks for forestry companies who are supposed to respect the *principle of residuality*, which gives priority to private woodlot owners when companies buy wood. Following the failure experienced in the Gaspésie region, the federation demanded that Minister Claude Bécharde ensure that the residuality principle would be applied in Abitibi-Témiscamingue.

“So far in 2007,” Gagnon declared, “the forestry companies have not bought a single log in Abitibi. There is wood rotting along the side of the roads. It is normal that they cut wood from forest-fire sites, but they are also harvesting wood from their concessions (CAAF). We have been collaborating with them and they stab us in the back!”

The president of the Canadian Private Woodlot Owners, Peter DeMarsh believes that the federal government should also provide increased support to ensure the sustainable development of forests. He is demanding that it be permitted to spread revenues over several years, to take into account the effect of natural disasters, such as the 1998 ice storm or the mountain pine beetle epidemic in British Columbia. “These phenomena create unfair situations,” he claims.

The general manager of the *Fédération des producteurs de bois*, Jean-Pierre Dansereau, is also a private woodlot champion at the national level concerning the renewal of the National Forest Strategy. The results of this forum will provide him with arguments at his next meeting with the National Coalition, to be held in Toronto in two weeks. “There have been small gains,” he concedes, “but generally speaking, there have not been many changes concerning what is being offered to private woodlot owners. Forest certification, a fair access to markets, more support for silviculture, the transfer of knowledge and the creation of a carbon credit program are all very high in our demands.”

Pierre-Yvon Bégin
LTCN 2007-09-27

The U.S. lifts its embargo on cattle over 30 months old

November 19 is the date finally announced by the United States when their borders will re-open for Canadian cattle born after March 1999. This is a significant softening of the U.S. position, since until now, only cattle under 30 months of age could cross the border. With this announcement, all ruminants eight years old or less, as well as their meat, can be exported.

According to the Canadian Cattlemen Association, the positive impact on prices could be in the range of \$400 - \$450 million. It is also good news for the genetic breeders' sector, which had lost its largest market. Animal by-products will also be able to be marketed between the two countries.

Slaughterhouses for cull cattle, such as Colbex, will again be able to export meat. However, they will also be in direct competition with American packing plants for the purchase of cattle. All is not yet settled, since the new regulation must be officially published on September 18 and the American Congress, with its Democrat majority, will have until November 19 to make amendments to it. Attempts by R-CALF to obtain an injunction are also possible. However, chances are good that the position of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will be upheld.

The finer details regarding the implementation of the new measure are not yet known. What tests will be required to prove that the exported cattle, or meat from the animals, are eight years old or less? The costs and delays associated with these tests may discourage exporters who may not generate sufficient added value to their products.

Positive reactions

The federal Minister of Agriculture, Gerry Ritz, was quick to welcome the American decision. “I join with the Canadian (cattle) sector in welcoming this good news and I am pleased with this regulation which will finally stabilize the cattle and beef market in North America,” the minister declared in a press release on September 14.

The president of the Canadian Cattlemen Association, Hugh Lynch-Staunton, predicts that there will not be a rush of cattle to the border on November 19. The Canadian slaughter capacity has increased since 2003 and a good portion of the animals will therefore be processed in Canada. It should be remembered that some were forecasting a possible flood of 650,000 animals to be exported when the border opened. Present estimates are more like 75,000 head.

The *Fédération des producteurs de bovins du Québec* (FPBQ) has stated that it is encouraged by the news, but prefers to wait until it can study the USDA regulation, which will be published on September 18.

Thierry Larivière
LTCN 2007-09-20

EDITORIAL

The industry must regain its sense of collective action

Laurent Pellerin
UPA President

The drastic price drops, the constant threat of reduced purchase volumes, labour strikes in slaughterhouses, closings or threats of closings, arrears in payments and the continuous stress regarding animal delivery: 2006-2007 will surely be written into the annals of pork production as “the year of great uncertainty.” And the situation is far from over.

As of last September 10, some 17,000 hogs were still waiting to be shipped for slaughter. In fact, for several months now, the situation on Quebec hog farms has become utterly unbearable. The insecurity is palpable. Rumours are rampant.

The *Fédération des producteurs de porcs du Québec*, it seems, can no longer keep the hogs moving. As a result, a host of false solutions—individual marketing agreements, premiums, guaranteed purchases—are emerging, causing a breach in the negotiation position of farmers with regard to buyers. The federation still possesses all the tools required to sell the hogs produced in Quebec. If buyers are able to offer premiums, then the base market price is below what they are really able to pay. These individual rebates of all sorts are unfair, non-transparent and can jeopardize the autonomy of producers (for instance, their capacity to negotiate the prices of raw materials). In addition, they weaken their collective strength to fight for a fair return in the marketplace.

If there is one thing that producers should keep in mind, it is the importance of maintaining cohesion between the various collective tools that they have put into place over the years; tools obtained through considerable struggle and built on the values of fairness and justice. The transparent mechanisms of collective marketing, along with income security programs (also collective), form a comprehensive package. One cannot exist without the other! It is impossible to maintain consistency in the pork sector if, on one hand, the imperfections of the marketplace regarding prices obtained are compensated by our collective tools, while on the other hand, we permit premiums to be paid to supplement the income of a privileged few. Furthermore, since when should our income security programs have to prop up the profitability problems of the other links of the chain!

Although some players may wish to “torpedo” the production sector, the men and women working in it have proved themselves to be “honourable players” in this struggle. They have conceded a superior weight grid to buyers, thus delivering heavier and more costly hogs. They agreed to priority deliveries, notably to the *Coop fédérée*. They even helped to narrow the gap between workers and employers, with the hope of re-establishing the profitability of the processing sector. Each time, they were promised that it would improve the situation. However, here they are back at the starting gate: neither the prices nor the volumes have improved. Furthermore, because of increased inter-regional deliveries, transportation costs have practically

doubled, resulting in losses to producers in the order of \$1.2 million. And, to top it all off, exports to the most lucrative markets (notably Japan) have decreased.

In this context, a change of direction is necessary. On that much at least, everyone agrees. Dialogue must resume, based on new premises. The opportunity has now been made possible by Minister Lessard who, acting on the demands of farmers, has named an experienced facilitator—Guy Coulombe—to come up with a common vision among all of the concerned stakeholders, regarding the future of the industry. The task before him is enormous, especially since it should have started some time ago. However, if all of the players participate with genuine good intentions, his mandate is attainable. Not that long ago, these same partners sat around a table and worked together in a civil manner to develop markets and results were forthcoming. Now, it is this same climate of cooperation that Guy Coulombe must regenerate, using his rallying talents to bring people together.

LTCN 2007-09-27

Province gives money to fight blue-green algae

The Charest government will inject \$90 million in new money over ten years to help Quebec farmers reduce non-point source pollution on their farms—notably for the establishment of protective buffer strips along the banks of rivers and lakes that are particularly susceptible to erosion. This was one of the principal measures announced at the Summit on blue-green algae, presided by Premier Jean Charest on September 25, 2007 at Sainte-Adèle in the Laurentians.

The Charest government did not announce any new regulations regarding agricultural activities, respecting its promise of a regulation truce for agriculture until 2010, which was made at the UPA's general congress in 2006 by the then-minister of the environment, Claude Béchard.

In total, the Quebec government has decided to adopt 35 measures, requiring an investment of \$195 million over ten years to fight against the blue-green algae problem, which is affecting 158 lakes, and particularly in 31 where its presence is has become generalized. Of this total budget, \$113 million will be new money.

The measures affecting the agricultural sector will require a total funding of \$145 million over ten years. The *Prime-Vert* program will provide the difference between the announced \$90 million in new money and the total budget of \$145 million. Quebec does, however, expect a contribution from the federal government of \$82 million.

Measures

Quebec Environment Minister Line Beauchamp announced the adoption of a regulation prohibiting phosphates in dishwasher detergents. The minister also indicated that Quebec will tighten up regulations on domestic waste water from individual residences. Municipalities will be given additional powers, notably concerning septic tank pumping and the labour required to comply with the norms. They will also be able to levy heavier fines against offenders and to keep

the money in their own coffers. Quebec plans to hire 15 new inspectors to ensure compliance with the regulations.

Municipal Affairs Minister Nathalie Normandeau announced that 60 of the 125 municipalities that do not yet have sewage treatment have been given the go-ahead regarding their subsidy requests.

The UPA president, Laurent Pellerin, asserted that “the improvement of water quality in lakes affected by the cyanobacteria will require the concerted effort of all the stakeholders involved with this problem: farmers, citizens, municipalities, watershed organizations and governments.” Pellerin expressed that agriculture is not the only party responsible for the cyanobacteria problem.

*Jean-Charles Gagné and
Thierry Larivière
LTCN 2007-09-27*

FARM PROPERTY TAXES

Report on the summer season and upcoming steps

If you are a farm owner and operator who completed a joint application for payment, and signed a consent form authorizing the disclosure of credit information, you should recently have received a statement of payments. This document is a summary of the credits applied to the tax account and of the cheques received for the period from January to June 2007.

Since April 2007, the *Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation* (MAPAQ) has issued payments and cheques for more than 70,000 assessment units, for a value of some \$93 million. Payments will continue to be issued weekly for owners who have not received credits and who are eligible for payments.

Next steps

- Exchange of information about gross farm income between *Revenu Québec* and MAPAQ has begun and will continue until November. This exchange makes it possible to determine eligibility for the farm property tax credit program.
- **A new document entitled “Status Report” will be mailed to you soon.** It indicates the requirements for registering a farm operation and its assessment units, a prerequisite for the farm property tax credit to be applied directly to 2008 municipal tax accounts.

- The same conditions described in the status report will be used by MAPAQ to determine the payments it will issue in 2007.
- In compliance with the directives specified in the status report, **the deadline for putting your file in order is November 30, 2007**. To do so, contact your service centre.
- **After November 30, it will be too late to act**. If you do not satisfy registration requirements, no credit will be applied directly to your 2008 municipal tax account. Instead, you will receive a payment from MAPAQ sometime in 2008.

Checklist of the main points to verify in the status report:

- Your farm operation must be registered with MAPAQ (or registration must be renewed before November 30, 2007).*
- Your farm operation must be located in an agricultural zone.
- Your farm operation must have a minimum gross farm income of \$8 for \$100 of recognized property value.
- You must have gross farm income of at least \$5,000.
- Your UPA membership fees must be paid up.
- You must meet cross-compliance requirements.
- If necessary, you must complete a joint application for payment.
- If you are a tenant, the expiry date of your lease must be later than December 31, 2008.

Quebec cheesemakers recognized for their excellence

Quebec cheesemakers exceeded all expectations this year by bringing home 31 prizes from the American Cheese Society (ACS) competition that took place a few weeks ago in Burlington, Vermont. This unprecedented showing is a 30 per cent increase over that of 2006, when Quebec cheesemakers won 24 ribbons, for a total of 101 prizes awarded to Quebec at the competition over the past six years.

The Quebec companies honoured this year were Agropur, Damafro, *Fromagerie Bergeron*, *Fromagerie Le Détour*, *Fromagerie Tournevent*, *La Maison Alexis de Portneuf*, *La Moutonnière*, *Liberté* and Saputo. Quebec cheese producers took first, second, and third place in over 26 categories, which highlights the diversity of the industry when it comes to cheeses made from cow's milk, goat's milk or sheep's milk. In the Soft Ripened Cheeses – Brie Made from Cow's Milk category, it was a clean sweep for Quebec, which earned first, second and third place standings.

Recognized as the authority in judging and promoting farmstead and artisanal cheeses and cheese products in the United States and Canada, the ACS is a not-for-profit organization that rates cheeses based on aesthetic and technical criteria. This year, a record number of cheeses (1208) from more than 200 American and Canadian producers were entered. This impressive figure is indicative of the high calibre of the ACS competition.

The involvement of the Quebec Delegations in Boston and Chicago and of *Transformation alimentaire Québec* (TRANSAQ), which supported the efforts of Quebec's fine cheese industry in this competition, deserves mention. Let's hope that Quebec's cheesemakers will do just as well at the 2008 competition in Chicago, Illinois.

Sweet pearl millet for ethanol *and* fodder

Marc F. Clément, agronome
MAPAQ
Outaouais sector

Since it was first cultivated in 1997, pearl millet has constantly amazed us. A strain that produces highly sweet sap now heralds a significant change in farming methods in the sandy soils of Quebec, as it provides not only fodder but also ethanol. It's like having your cake and eating it, too!

Introduced in the late 1990s by AERC Inc., fodder pearl millet is known for its ability to reduce lesion nematode (*Pratylenchus penetrans*) populations and adapt to light and acidic soils like potato soils. Fodder pearl millet occupies approximately 1,500 hectares in Quebec and 2,650 hectares in Eastern Canada; it is primarily used as green manure and also provides a backup fodder supply. The potential yield is eight to ten tonnes per hectare (t/ha) for a base

consisting of 100 per cent dry matter. Given that pearl millet provides no direct income as a rotation crop, many potato producers still choose rye and oats, even though these grains offer no protection against the lesion nematode—different from the golden nematode discovered recently in Quebec.

Introduced in the early 2000s, grain pearl millet has an estimated seed yield of 2.5 t/ha. It could be sold on both human and feed grade food markets. In addition, since the grain is rich in omega-3 fatty acids, poultry and hog producers are very interested in the animal nutrition testing underway in Guelph, Ontario, and Macdonald College in Quebec. Grain pearl millet cultivars provide the same nematicidal properties with respect to crop rotation as fodder pearl millet. However, this plant suffers from competition with annual grasses, as it is short and allows light to penetrate down to the ground. For this reason, herbicide is needed for the plant to grow. Despite this major difficulty, grain pearl millet is cultivated on some 60 hectares in Eastern Canada, including 20 hectares in Quebec. On March 26 at the Canadian Minor Use Pesticide Priority Setting Workshop organized by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Pest Management Centre, this problem (lack of a graminicide) was chosen from a long list of registration applications. Work begun three years ago by *Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation* (MAPAQ) and *Centre de recherche et de développement technologique agricole de l'Outaouais* (CREDETAO) will continue with a view to securing graminicide registration.

More recently, new data has shown that selected fodder pearl millet produces highly sweet sap, consisting of over 20 per cent sugar. This sap could be used for ethanol production, while the fodder itself could be used to feed cattle. Ethanol production using this plant is akin to production from sugarcane, with one major difference: once pressed, foliage and stems can be used as fodder. CREDETAO and MAPAQ are working on this project in the Outaouais region by calling on area producers and community organizations to help finalize the financing package required to carry out scientific research. According to preliminary studies conducted in the Outaouais, sweet pearl millet could produce 6 to 8 t/ha of fodder (100 per cent dry matter base) of equivalent quality to grass silage, as well as over 3,000 litres of ethanol.

There are many benefits for the Outaouais region. Pearl millet cultivation would double the fodder yield of sandy and acidic soils, and strengthen cattle production in the area. Additional revenue from sap sales would increase and diversify the income of farmers. Although pearl millet is an annual crop, it is grown in narrow rows and yields a significant amount of stable humus. While the objective is not to do away with perennial crops in favor of an annual crop, increased crop rotation in the Outaouais would be highly beneficial.

The area currently occupied by all forms of pearl millet represents only a tiny portion of what Quebec and Eastern Canada farmland could become in terms of crop rotation. With its considerable adaptability to sandy and acidic soils, as well as excessive drainage, pearl millet could be the key crop for all rotations across hundreds of thousands of hectares.

For more information contact Marc F. Clément, Agronomist, Large Scale Farming and Agroenvironmental Consultant, MAPAQ, Outaouais Sector, tel. 819-986-8544, ext. 225

Made-to-measure training for producers

Maryse Harnois, agronome
Horticultural Production Advisor
MAPAQ-Outaouais sector

Since agricultural training is considered one of the critical factors in the success of a farming enterprise, the *Collectif régional en formation agricole de l'Outaouais* prepares and organizes made-to-measure activities and courses for its farming clientele. During the year 2006-2007, the *Collectif* gave more than 25 courses to over 310 individuals. Course participants had no shortage of favourable comments concerning the quality of instructors and the content of courses and workshops. In fact, some participants immediately adopted the innovative production methods they discovered through taking one or another of the courses.

The *Collectif* is now preparing its training lineup for the year in progress. In setting up activities that are of interest to different sectors, and contribute directly to the development of agriculture, the *Collectif* works in close collaboration with members of the agricultural community. The courses and activities it offers deal notably with acquiring management skills, diversifying production, sustainable development practices and value-added strategies.

Is there some particular training topic that could meet your needs? Don't hesitate to let us know—contact the person in charge of agricultural training, Nathalie Matte, at 819-427-5511, ext. 461. She will be happy to organize the right activity to help you make your farming enterprise more successful. All that's needed for a course to get rolling is a minimum of ten participants, a teacher and a room!

Agricultural training collectives are subsidized by grants from *Emploi-Québec*, the *Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation* and the *Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport*. This enables them to offer training activities and courses to the farming community at a very affordable price. Visit the web site at www.formationagricole.com.

Reap the benefits—they're for you!

The evolution of knowledge is an essential factor in ensuring the competitiveness of farming enterprises and the sustainable development of the sector.

A new year begins when feeder calves arrive in the feedlot

André Cécyre, veterinarian
Veterinary Consultation Program coordinator
FPBQ

For slaughter steer producers, the end of summer often means the start of a new year in their feedlots. It's the ideal period to make changes and to proceed with any necessary improvements. Since the feedlot is often less occupied in the summer, it is a good time to repair or improve the infrastructure. If required, gates and pen partitions can be strengthened, floors patched and feed bunks repaired. If time permits, it would be wise to do a complete cleaning as well, followed by a thorough disinfection to reduce the chances of sickness and the spread of ringworm—a very nasty condition once it appears.

Those tasks can be done much more efficiently if a list has been carefully made in a notebook throughout the year, describing the work to be done. Once summer arrives, the list will be a helpful reminder: a lack of ventilation in one area, a roof that condenses or leaks in another, a floor that injures the animals' feet, causing foot rot or ringworm. Then, once the repairs have been completed, the calves can be put in with confidence.

The importance of exercise!

During the first weeks, while space still permits, it's advantageous to increase—or even double—the floor space per head. Sickness rates will decrease with lower animal density and improved animal circulation. Remember that the calves have probably just come off pasture before arriving at the feedlot. Not only is a lack of movement a considerable stress on them, since they have been accustomed to walking several kilometres per day, but the competition at the feed bunk and at the waterers is something they're not used to.

The sooner the better

Providing that your new animals didn't have too far to travel to your feedlot (less than ten hours), you can proceed almost immediately with their vaccinations against the Bovine Respiratory Disease Complex (BRDC) viral infection, and against the most common bacterial infections: *Histophilus somni*, *Pasteurella multocida*, *Manheimia hemolytica* and various *clostridium*.

How to deal with animal stress

Calves coming from long distances (Western Canada, for example) should be vaccinated as soon as possible, but only after the transportation stress has subsided. Therefore, they should be left to rest for several hours on comfortable bedding, allowing them to rehydrate and eat a bit before proceeding. Statistics show that for each day of delay in administering vaccinations after arrival, sickness rates increase considerably. Consequently, local animals should be vaccinated almost as soon as they come out of the truck, while the more stressed, tired and dehydrated cattle should be given a rest period of several hours. I repeat, several hours—not several weeks.

In conjunction with vaccinations, the new arrivals should also be treated for parasites. This means both internal parasites (gastro-intestinal and pulmonary worms) as well as external (lice and mange). In the majority of cases, the use of avermectins should be sufficient. Recently treated animals should be kept separated for several weeks from those that have already been there for a while, mainly to prevent a re-infestation of lice from new arrivals.

Preventive antibiotherapy merits consideration

The use of antibiotics for prophylaxis (for prevention) or for metaphylaxis (when the sickness appears in a certain percentage of the animals, say, 15 per cent) is a fairly common practice in feedlots. The more a group of calves is considered at risk, the more this strategy is recommended. A group can be considered at risk if the calves are purchased late in the fall, in November or December for example, if the animals are lighter than average, if they have been subjected to bad weather conditions during transport or have undergone any other form of considerable stress. For this category of animals, an injection of long-acting antibiotics (oxytetracycline, LA, Micotil, Nuflor, Draxxin, etc.) administered to all the animals at the same time as the prophylaxis vaccination or several days after, as soon as 15 to 20 per cent of the calves show a fever of over 40 degrees celsius (metaphylaxis), could prove to be a good investment. Discuss this with your veterinarian, as well as which vaccines will require a booster in three weeks, and if another vaccination will be required before the end of the feeding period in order to ensure the proper functioning of the immune system.

Restore appetites

With regard to feeding, following a forced fast of 12 to 24 hours, the thing to do is to re-establish the rumen environment—in other words, do not leave it empty too long. There is nothing better than good hay to do this job in the majority of subjects. Quality hay should therefore be given for 12 to 24 hours, and then grain added on top to provide a rapid source of energy for the animals. Silage should not be introduced before the animals are eating 1.5 to two per cent of their weight in dry matter per day. The fibre will stimulate contractions of the rumen and the grain will provide the necessary energy required by the immune system to perform well. Remember the slogan: “Sick animals don’t eat, and animals that don’t eat get sick.”

Growing-finishing ration can be started once the dry matter feed consumption reaches 2.5 per cent of their weight, that is, about two to three weeks after arrival. For calves coming directly from pasture, care must be taken to ensure that they can easily find the waterers. At first, it may even be advantageous to use very visible water troughs to help the less resourceful animals to rehydrate.

Add selenium and continue surveillance

Since calves from Eastern Canada are generally lacking in selenium, an injection of selenium upon arrival (6 mg/45kg) should aid the immune system. After taking all of these precautions, you would expect to have a feeding season without problems. Unfortunately, additional interventions may be necessary regarding respiratory problems, especially during the first month. In these cases, the success of your treatment will depend more on your ability to rapidly detect

the animal's fever rather than the multitude of antibiotics and additives that you can use. A broad-spectrum, long-acting antibiotic is usually all that you will need in this case.

Sheep producers: solutions that will save you time!

Sylvie Boutin
Information officer
Agri-Tracabilité Québec

Being ever concerned about helping you with your traceability tasks, the ATQ team has prepared various tools that will allow you to prepare your traceability declarations quicker, thus eliminating paperwork and...saving precious time!

Free software

Do you have newborn lambs or other new animals that have entered your flock? In order to accelerate and facilitate your traceability declarations, we recommend that you use the free software program available on our website, www.agri-tracabilite.qc.ca, which will allow you to fill out the forms directly on your computer and transfer your data to ATQ over the internet with a simple click of the mouse. This software is also compatible with electronic tag stick readers and enables you to save all your data on your computer. Away with paperwork!

In addition, this program contains several new elements of particular interest to sheep producers, including real-time readings for recording animal weights, as well as the use of Bluetooth (wireless) technology.

A very useful summary

Would you like to update your file but have become lost in a sea of documents? Then, simply contact our customer service department and ask for your producer summary report ("*Bilan au producteur*"). This report includes all of the information that we have received for your farm (i.e. the activated tags, animals that have left and those that remain) and can be sent to you either electronically or as a paper copy, at your convenience. With this document, you may then proceed with a complete update of your traceability file.

Tag reading tools

Do you need to do a complete inventory of your flock? Will you be doing multiple weighing using an electronic scale? We can recommend several models of tag stick readers that will enable you to read your animals' electronic tags. These readers can store hundreds of tag numbers that you can then transfer directly into electronic forms and/or to herd management software. In addition to eliminating paperwork, this process allows you to save a lot of time!

Would you like to try a tag stick reader first, in order to make a more informed choice? Check out our 30-day stick-reader lending program, offered for the modest sum of \$25 (to cover shipping and handling).

ATQ Direct

You may also complete your declarations via *ATQ Direct*, which allows you to access your ATQ file directly via the internet. You may consult your file at any time and proceed with any updates—and you don't need a high-speed connection either. To activate this option, all that is needed is a password that you can obtain by calling the ATQ customer service department at 1-866-270-4319.

Happy traceability!

Contact us!

For any information concerning the various automation tools and/or questions regarding traceability in general, please contact the *Agri-Tracabilité Québec* customer service department at 1-866-270-4319