

# Beef and Forage Technical Bulletin 12<sup>th</sup> Edition



## Why you should consider using Cowbytes - A ration balancing program for beef cattle

Have you ever had poor quality hay and were unsure how to mix it with higher quality feed? Do you need to purchase energy or protein supplements to meet the nutrient requirements for your herd? How much and what kind of mineral do you need to feed? How do energy requirements change with colder weather and wind chill?

These are just a few questions that can be answered by using CowBytes, a user-friendly ration-balancing program that is now available to purchase from the Beef Cattle Research Council (BCRC, QR code below).

CowBytes can help develop timely rations to improve herd nutrition, while tracking costs and predicting cattle performance. The accuracy of the ration or feeding plan will depend on the quality of information entered into the program.

Having all your homegrown feeds tested is highly recommended and should provide a more precise estimate of production outcomes. A water quality test can also be entered to track what the water adds to the ration and can potentially help identify mineral imbalances or interactions with anti-nutritional factors.

You can select the animal type you wish to develop a ration for; including rations for feeders and replacements, bred heifers, lactating cows, dry cows or herd bulls. Other information that can be entered:

- Breed, body weight, desired average daily gain, body condition score, months pregnant, if feeding Ionophores, month of lactation and peak milk production and lactation number
- Weather conditions such as wind speed and current temperature
- Hair condition, hair depth and mud in lot

CowBytes comes with a feed table based on long-term nutritional averages of various Alberta feeds. You can select your feeds from the feed table and modify the nutrient content based on your own feed test results. Input the amount fed of each feed and then balance the ration for energy, protein, macro-minerals such as calcium and phosphorus, and trace minerals such as copper, selenium and vitamins A and E. Enter the current cost of each feed ingredient, and CowBytes will calculate cost per head per day and total feed cost over the specified feeding period.

Once the ration is balanced, there are eight different reports that CowBytes can generate, including feed mixes, batch-scale sheets, custom feeding and feed inventory reports. These features can help you make decisions about purchasing feed or selling animals to match your feed inventory. CowBytes can identify if you are over-feeding or underfeeding your cattle. This feature alone can save you money in feed costs and improve the overall productivity of your herd through proper nutrition.



**Cowbytes Training is available.**

**Please contact your local Livestock and Forage Production Specialist at Manitoba Agriculture.**

## Manitoba Agriculture Livestock and Forage Extension Staff List

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## Flexible Financing Options for Beef and Forage Farmers

With 2023's record high prices and a lack of feed in some regions, now is the time to start thinking about expanding your herds and forage acres.

Livestock producers likely know Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation (MASC) by its risk management programs, the corporation also offers programming that's customized to accommodate the various financial demands of a Manitoba livestock producer.

MASC lending programs are tailored to meet the financial needs and requirements of Manitoba farmers, such as the Direct Loan program, that covers many substantial farm purchases.

"Direct Loans give a farmer access to financing for agricultural land, buildings, on-farm homes, equipment, breeding stock, and more," says Kevin Bartinski, MASC's Lending Director. "MASC's Direct Loans feature no loan prepayment penalties, up to 80 per cent financing and 25-year terms, and offer the flexibility of renewable interest rates or fixed rates for up to the loan's entire length. They're a great, flexible option for Manitoba farmers."

Young and beginning farmers often find it difficult to secure financing to develop or expand their farming operations. As part of MASC's Bridging Generations Initiative, the Young Farmer Rebate (YFR) assists the next generation of Manitoba farmers during the critical start-up phase of their agricultural careers. The YFR is open to Manitoba farm operators aged 18-39 and gives them an annual rebate of up to two per cent on the first \$200,000 of principal, with a lifetime maximum of \$20,000. Young farmers qualified for the YFR also have access to 90 per cent financing, which reduces their down payment, or five years of interest-only payments, which can assist with cash flow pressures.

Aside from Direct Loans, MASC also offers targeted programs, like the Stocker Loan program, that is well-suited to the unique needs of livestock producers. Stocker Loans provide short-term financing to purchase livestock, or to retain owned livestock for feeding.

"Stocker Loans can put up to \$750,000 towards a farmer's purchase of feeder cattle, and offer terms of up to 18 months," explains Bartinski. "A producer can also use a Stocker Loan to retain steer and heifer calves to feed over the winter. In these cases, Stocker Loans can be considered a cash advance on owned cattle. It is a simple and easy way to borrow and is secured by your own animals."

Farmers wanting to protect the prices of their livestock should also consider the Livestock Price Insurance (LPI) program, which guarantees a floor price if livestock markets diminish over winter.

"LPI provides added risk protection to livestock and couples well with our Stocker Loans," says Bartinski. "As an added bonus, MASC offers a one-time interest rebate of 0.25 per cent if an LPI policy is applied to cattle financed by a Stocker Loan."

With livestock markets being high, now is a great time to think about growing your livestock operation. If you are exploring your options to expand, consider MASC programs tailored to the financial needs of Manitoba's livestock producers, and a knowledgeable staff that can help you get started on your road to success.

For more information about Direct Loans, Young Farmer Rebates, Stocker Loans, and Livestock Price Insurance, please visit [www.masc.mb.ca](http://www.masc.mb.ca).



## Stock Talk!

Manitoba Agriculture is offering a series of interesting livestock and forage presentations, packed with information and featuring innovative leading experts, aimed at helping Manitoba beef producers best manage their cattle operations. Find out the latest news on research and production for beef and forage management by participating in these virtual sessions.

**Date:** Dec. 7, 2023

**Time:** 1:00 - 2:00 p.m.

**Place:** Your computer, smartphone or tablet

**Register for StockTalk webinar:**

[https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_U6k8yuJ-QLG9eFOXVAeHKg](https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_U6k8yuJ-QLG9eFOXVAeHKg)

Please add the webinar series to your calendar once you are registered.



## Agenda

- 1:00 p.m. Developing Feeding Strategies Using the Cowbytes Ration Balancing Program**  
Juanita Kopp, Manitoba Agriculture
- 1:20 p.m. Alternative Feeding Strategies**  
Breenna Kelln, University of Saskatchewan
- 1:50 p.m. Livestock and Forage Programs- SCAP & RALP**
- 2:00 p.m. Adjourn**



## Future webinars

- Jan. 12 Beef and Forage Conference Highlights**
- Feb. 15 MASC Forage Insurance, Livestock Predation Prevention & Cattle Market 2024 Update**
- March 14 Ask the Vet: Calving tips & Vaccination programs**
- April 11 Forage and Pasture Management- Poisonous Plants & Replacement Heifer Development and Management**

For more information, call Manitoba Agriculture

1-844-769-6224 or email [shawn.cabak@gov.mb.ca](mailto:shawn.cabak@gov.mb.ca)

Or visit our website at [manitoba.ca/agriculture/online-resources/stock-talk.html](https://manitoba.ca/agriculture/online-resources/stock-talk.html).

## CowBytes Training Workshop

**CowBytes** ration balancing software is now available for purchase from the Beef Cattle Research Council (BCRC). This workshop will give you the basic knowledge in entering your feeds, cattle types and balancing rations to ensure feed supplies are meeting the needs of your cattle. This workshop will also touch on the basics of feed testing and nutritional requirements of cattle during different stages of production.

**Note:** It is suggested that you have CowBytes installed on your laptop and bring it along with you to the workshop.

CowBytes can be purchased here:

<https://www.beefresearch.ca/blog/cowbytes-ration-balancing-software/>

**Date:** Wednesday, November 22, 2023

**Time:** 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

**Place:** Kinsmen Community Centre, 111 Burrows Street, Grandview, MB

**Register at:** 204-648-3965 or [Pamela.lwanchysko@gov.mb.ca](mailto:Pamela.lwanchysko@gov.mb.ca)

**Date:** Wednesday, November 22, 2023

**Time:** 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

**Place:** MBFI - Bookdale Site, Corner of highway 353 and #10 north of Brandon

**Register at:** 204-851-6087 or [Andrea.Bertholet@gov.mb.ca](mailto:Andrea.Bertholet@gov.mb.ca)

**Date:** Thursday, November 30, 2023

**Time:** 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

**Place:** Beausejour Ag Office Boardroom, 20 First Street South, Beausejour, MB

**Register at:** 204-431-1688 or [Kristen.BouchardTeasdale@gov.mb.ca](mailto:Kristen.BouchardTeasdale@gov.mb.ca)



## Beef and Forage Days Pipestone, Austin & Eriksdale

**Beef & Forage Days** is packed with information and innovative leading experts aimed to help Manitoba beef producers best manage their cattle operations. Find out the latest news on research and production for beef and forage management at this one-day meeting across several locations in Manitoba. Watch for upcoming information for your area.



**Date:** Tuesday, January 9, 2024  
**Time:** 1:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
**Place:** Pipestone Community Hall

**Date:** Wednesday, January 10, 2024  
**Time:** 8:45 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.  
**Place:** Austin Community Centre, 60 - 1st Ave.  
Austin, MB

**Date:** Thursday January 11, 2023  
**Time:** 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.  
**Place:** Eriksdale Community Centre,  
21 Railway Ave. Eriksdale, MB

### Agenda

**Coffee and registration**

**Pasture and Hay Production and Rejuvenation**  
Livestock and Forage Specialist Manitoba Agriculture

**Cattle Market Update and Outlook for 2024**  
Rick Wright Cattle Consulting

**Optimizing Greenfeed and Silage Production  
with Annual Crops**  
Greg Penner, University of Saskatchewan

**Ask the Vet- Animal Health Update**  
Local veterinarian

**Livestock Predation Management and Control**  
Ray Bittner Manitoba Beef Producers - Eriksdale location only



For more information contact the Manitoba Agriculture office in:

**Killarney** 204-851-6087  
**Arborg** 204-768-0534  
**Portage** 204-239-3353

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## Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership Programming



New programming for livestock producers was launched in 2023 through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership. The Resilient Agricultural Landscape Program (RALP) seeks to increase environmental resilience of agricultural landscapes by accelerating the adoption of beneficial on-farm land use and management practices. While there are two separate streams of RALP Programming (Watershed Resiliency is offered to Watershed Districts), the Carbon Sequestration and Grassland Resilience stream funds projects that sequester carbon, such as pasture planning, infrastructure and rejuvenation, as well as agro-forestry. In addition to sequestering carbon, these projects support environmental objectives including improved soil and water quality, improved nutrient and water retention, and increased biodiversity and wildlife habitat. While these projects contribute to an overall improvement in resilience, they can also increase productivity and economic gains.

RALP: Carbon Sequestration and Grassland Resilience offers a 75% cost-share for approved eligible costs, to a maximum of \$15,000 per project. Applicants can apply for more than one project, and there is no overall funding cap per applicant. Successful applicants will have up to eighteen months to complete projects upon notification of success.

For information regarding program updates and intake dates, please subscribe to the Growing Manitoba Ag newsletter (<https://www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/online-resources/signup-for-growing-manitoba-ag.html>) and follow @MBGovAg on X (formerly Twitter).

Please see <https://www.gov.mb.ca/scap/climatechange/carbon-sequestration.html> for a list of eligible applicants and additional information.

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# Manitoba Beef and Forage Production Conference

## Working On the Farm with Hands-On Science!

Tuesday, Dec. 12 and Wednesday, Dec. 13, 2023

Victoria Inn, Brandon Manitoba

### Conference presentations include:

**Smart Farm Technology** - Dr. Susan Markus, Livestock Research Scientist, Lakeland College

**Cow-Calf Production Network** - Dr. John Campbell, Professor, Dept. of Large Animal Clinical Sciences, Western College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Saskatchewan

**Setting Up a Grazing Plan** - Anneliese Walker, a Grazing Success mentor for MaiaGrazing, a market-leading grazing management software solution.

**Each breakout technical presentation is paired with a producer presentation to show how the science can be applied on farm.**

### Breakout topics include:

Healthy Soils; Setting up a Grazing Plan; Using Implants in Beef Production; Intercropping for Forage Production; EG and S on the Landscape; Beef Nutrition and more...

Evening Banquet featuring **Lewellyn Melnyk** -Author, farmer and mental health advocate, a journalist by trade and a farmer by choice.

For more information contact: 1-844-769-6224, [agriculture@gov.mb.ca](mailto:agriculture@gov.mb.ca) or visit [mbfi.ca/conference](http://mbfi.ca/conference) or scan the QR code.



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If you would like to be added to our information-sharing list, please email or text Juanita Kopp ([Juanita.Kopp@gov.mb.ca](mailto:Juanita.Kopp@gov.mb.ca), 204-825-4302). Your input or topic ideas are always welcome.

## Contact us

- [Go to manitoba.ca/agriculture](http://manitoba.ca/agriculture)
- [Email us at agriculture@gov.mb.ca](mailto:agriculture@gov.mb.ca)
- [Call us at 1-844-769-6224](tel:1-844-769-6224)
- [Follow us on X \(formerly Twitter\) @MBGovAg](https://twitter.com/MBGovAg)
- [Visit your local Manitoba Agriculture Service Office](#)