

WILD ROSE



NEWS

PUBLISHED BY WILD ROSE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS

Volume 29, Issue 1

JANUARY - MARCH 2002

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO CONVENTION 2002 BY NEIL WAGSTAFF

Many big changes have occurred in Western Canadian agriculture during 2001. We have witnessed the loss of two major Western Canadian Co-ops that were founded, developed and supported by many Alberta farmers over the past 75 or more years. In 2001 many Alberta farmers experienced one of the worst droughts since the 1930's. We have also witnessed new pest infestations, global animal health and food safety issues, and the impact that the September 11 terrorist attack has had on our industry and our government.

With these types of changes there should be no doubt about the need for a strong general farm organization in Alberta which can be a voice to speak out on behalf of the best interests of Alberta farmers.

Unfortunately, when I compare Wild Rose Agricultural Producers with general farm organizations from other provinces, I am embarrassed that Alberta, which produces approximately 35% of Canada's agricultural production, has the weakest general farm organization. Every other province now has some type of ample stable funding mechanism for their major general farm organizations through a system of check offs, Commodity Group contributions or direct government support. Many of these general farm organizations have a large budget and are able to have a complement of staff that allows them to conduct significant research and provide

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT — CONT'D

many services to their members. They are also all full members of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture and contribute their fair share of resources to CFA, where as Wild Rose is an associate member of CFA and often cannot afford to fully participate in CFA.

Wild Rose is the only major general farm organization in Canada that relies on voluntary membership for it's financial resources.

This has some advantages in that Wild Rose can be very independent. However, relative to other provincial farm organizations, we have very limited financial resources that all too often handicap our ability to undertake some projects that we should be doing.

Our membership has continued to grow slowly and we have just been through a fairly successful membership drive. This has taken a lot of personal time and dedication by many people. However, it has become fairly obvious that it is difficult to build up a voluntary membership base to where it includes a large majority of Agricultural producers in Alberta. Despite this comment, we must continue to increase our membership, as most Alberta producers are willing to become members if they are personally approached.

If Wild Rose is to become the strong organization that it should be, it is going to be necessary for every existing member to take the initiative to encourage their friends and neighbors to become members of Wild Rose. As well, every member needs to contact their MLA to make them aware that Alberta needs to have stable funding for it's general farm organization.

Despite our limited resources I want to assure you that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers has been quite effective on many issues. In the second last sentence of Chapter 16 in the Unifarm History book, Carrol Jaques assessment says it very well: ***"The new organization is leaner and more focused, but more pro-active when dealing with provincial and national farming issues."***

Wild Rose is well recognized by government, politicians, media, and the Ag industry as the organization that represents the general interests of all farmers and ranchers in Alberta. The media continue to recognize Wild Rose as a primary contact for comment on agricultural issues. During the past year I have had numerous interviews on a variety of issues. I have participated on talk shows and was part of a CBC television Town Hall election forum production. Our members have even been interviewed for a feature story on the drought in

the Toronto Star! On many occasions our comments have been on the front pages of major dailies and have been features by local weekly newspapers. A letter I wrote to the Editor was published as a guest column in The Edmonton Journal.

Now a quick review of some activities during the past year.

During my second year as president, I have traveled from one corner of the province to the other. I have had the opportunity of meeting farmers, both large and small, who produce many different commodities. I have attended the annual meetings for a number of Commodity commissions and other organizations such as; the Pulse Growers, Canola Commission, Winter Wheat Growers, Federation of REAs, Sugar Beet Growers, Soft Wheat Growers, and the Surface Rights Federation. I have also had the privilege of getting to know the leaders of farm organizations from across this country. These experiences have helped me get a good understanding for many of the issues faced by Alberta producers.

Shortly after last year's convention I attended a crop insurance review meeting where Charlie Mayer outlined the recommendations his committee would be making for crop insurance changes. Many of the recommendations made in this report were suggestions that Wild Rose had submitted to the review committee. Unfortunately, to date most of the significant recommendations have not been brought into effect. ***Alberta crop producers want and need the opportunity to adequately insure themselves against the possibility of losing income from all forms of crop loss that are beyond their control.***

Some other meetings of interest that I have attended that I would like to comment on are:

Canada/U.S. Advisory Committee on Grain

The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and Agricore organized this meeting. It brought together representatives of farm organizations from the grain producing States and the three Prairie Provinces for one day of informative exchange and discussion. I developed a better understanding of U.S. farm programs and it was clear to me that U.S. farm groups will continue to seek additional government support for some time in the future. ***So despite the fact that our Canadian government may have achieved some positive developments at the recent World Trade Organization negotiations, any***

PRESIDENT'S REPORT – CONT'D

likelihood of significant change to U.S. subsidization is not going to take place for 10 to 15 years.

prime time television advertising for Agricultural chemicals.

CFA Round Table Discussions

The Canadian Federation of Agriculture organized a one-day round table discussion with the federal Minister Agriculture, representatives from each provincial Agricultural Ministry, and organizations who are members of CFA. This provided a framework for ongoing discussions towards long-term solutions for primary agriculture across the country.

The CFA membership represents all commodities produced in Canada, except for beef cattle. With the recent new membership from the Agricultural Producers' Association of Saskatchewan, each province's general farm organization is now a member of CFA. Wild Rose has been permitted to participate as an associate member only through the goodwill of the other CFA members. ***Alberta producers and the Alberta government should be ashamed that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers cannot afford to maintain a full membership in CFA like every other province's general farm organization.***

The **Canadian Federation of Agriculture** is well recognized nationally and internationally as the voice for Canadian agricultural producers. Agricore United recently decided to not maintain its membership in CFA. This is very unfortunate since Agricore in many ways provided representation for Alberta producers. ***It is now even more imperative that Wild Rose becomes a full member of CFA, as soon as possible, so that Alberta producers are better represented at the national level.***

Crop Protection Institute

Rod and I met with the executive director and two board members of the Crop Protection Institute. We had a discussion about many issues including our concern about

Safety Net Programs including NISA

All safety net programs including NISA are under review. The NISA program has had considerable attention and study. Unfortunately, many politicians and bureaucrats (federal and provincial) have concerns about NISA and have been critical about this program, even though more than 26,000 Agricultural producers in Alberta and approximately 150,000 in Canada participate in NISA and most feel it is one of the most effective programs that can be used to stabilize their income.

Wild Rose has consistently expressed a desire for cattle sales in Alberta to be eligible for NISA contributions. In 2001, cattle sales in Alberta became eligible for NISA contributions and during 2001 more than 3000 new NISA accounts were started in Alberta that were mostly as a result of this change!

There have been many good changes suggested for Safety Net Programs but the fundamental problem is that such changes require a bigger funding commitment from the Federal and Provincial governments. It is difficult to make improvements if the overall financial support is inadequate!

As we proceed with the business portion of our convention, keep in mind that an important function of this meeting is to provide an opportunity for members to give the board of director's feedback and guidance on issues and policy. The adoption of resolutions provides your board with policies to set the direction for the organization during the coming year. I look forward to hearing your thoughts and opinions during the rest of the day. It is important that you give the directors of Wild Rose your thoughts on issues, so feel free to talk to myself or any the directors either today or in the future.

IMPORTANT REMINDER!!!!

INCOME TAX CLIENTS

BOOK NOW FOR YOUR 2002 TAX RETURNS

CALL THE OFFICE NOW TO SET UP YOUR

APPOINTMENTS.

EXCERPTS FROM CONVENTION CLOSING REMARKS

BY NEIL WAGSTAFF

There is no doubt that Wild Rose is well recognized as Alberta's general farm organization and that every farmer in this province is benefiting from the work being done by Wild Rose. We have just had a very successful membership campaign and yet, there are still some producers in this province who do not even know what Wild Rose Agricultural Producers is, and even more who do not appreciate, or understand, the function of a general farm organization.

In Alberta we have many commodity specific organizations that are all doing a very worthy job on behalf of producers of that particular commodity. However, there are many issues facing Alberta farmers that are not commodity specific. Wild Rose Agricultural producers needs to take a leadership role in getting the many farm groups in Alberta working together on issues of common concern.

There seems to be no shortage of general issues facing Alberta farmers. Some of the current issues of most concern to Agricultural producers in Alberta are:

1. Conflicts with urban and industrial development are becoming a bigger concern for many farmers. Too often agricultural landowners and operators encounter individuals who have no respect for private property rights.
2. The active oil and gas industry is creating many conflicts with the Surface owner and/or farm operator.
3. There is as a growing need for a change to the economic and political environment so that well-established and well-managed farms can continue to be viable.
4. There is a need for an improved system of safety nets so that pro-

ducers can adequately protect themselves from risks that are beyond their control.

5. There are going to be many environmental and scientific issues facing farmers in the near future. Water Management, animal waste disposal and chemical use on the farm, are just a few of many environmental issues. We are only just beginning with many issues related to Biotechnology and genetic modification.
6. There is also a growing and clear need to better inform the non-farming public about agricultural practices and issues.
7. All levels of government will continue to propose new legislation and regulations that affect farmers and ranchers.

The challenge that we face is how do we strengthen the resources of our farm organization so that we are better able to tackle more of the issues facing Agricultural producers in Alberta?

Organizational structure and Constitution need to be re-viewed

I have a number of concerns about our organization's future. When Wild Rose was established in January 1996, we inherited an organizational structure from Unifarm and a new Constitution was developed. Many things have changed in the past 6 or 7 years and I believe it is now time to review the operational structure and Constitution. For example, our system of regions and regional directors is working very well in some parts of the province and not working at all in others.

Financial stability

I get very concerned when I compare

Wild Rose Agricultural producers with other major general farm organizations in Canada. The major provincially based general farm organizations in every other province have ample stable funding through a system of check offs, commodity group contributions or direct government support. Many of these general farm organizations have a large budget and are able to have a complement of staff that allows them to conduct research and provide services to their members. They are also all full members of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) and contribute their fair share of resources to CFA, where as Wild Rose is an associate member of CFA and often cannot afford to fully participate in CFA. We are the only major general farm organization in Canada that relies on voluntary membership for our financial resources.

When every other province has a stable funding mechanism for their general farm organizations, the opportunity for Alberta farmers to have as strong a voice as farm organizations from other provinces is weakened. Is it OK for Alberta farmers to have a situation where strong Ontario and Quebec farm organizations have significantly more influence on federal agricultural policy development?

As I traveled around the province during November and December, time and time again members and non-members have asked me; "why does Wild Rose not have a check off like our Commodity groups have?"

As I read through the Unifarm history book it became very obvious that the need for stable funding for a general farm organization has existed for a long time in Alberta.

EXCERPTS FROM CONVENTION CLOSING REMARKS – CONT'D

It seems that requests have been made for some type of check off on a continual basis since 1962 or earlier, with no success.

So what can we do in the coming year?

In order to convince the provincial government that a check off for a general farm organization is appropriate and would be accepted by Alberta producers it will take a significant lobbying effort by everyone here today and many other members as well. The method by which stable funding is achieved is not as important as the acceptance in principle that if Alberta is to have as strong a voice as other provinces then some method of providing adequate stable funding to a general farm organization must be developed.

The board of directors and myself need your help to convince legislators in this province that it is time to analyze what the status of Alberta's general farm organization is relative to other provincial farm organizations in this country. So I'm asking each of you today to personally take the initiative to contact your MLAs and have a discussion with them about why we need something better than a strictly voluntary general farm organization. ***It is past time that we had an open public debate amongst farmers, farm organizations, bureau-***

crats and politicians on this issue. This will not happen unless each and every one of us takes some action to initiate such discussion.

Maintaining and expanding membership

For the past two years at the close of our convention I have made statements cautioning members that the financial resources of Wild Rose could be better and that membership growth is critically needed for the long-term viability of your organization.

Through the efforts of director Bill Dobson and many other members during the last two months we have made a significant improvement to our membership numbers. However, as long as we must rely on voluntary membership to support our organization, our biggest challenge will continue to be how do we continue to increase our membership.

So, again I plead with you to please make an effort to get your neighbors and friends to support Wild Rose Agricultural producers by becoming members. By becoming a member they will be objectively informed on farm issues and they will be helping to advocate what is best for all Alberta farmers and ranchers.

HAVE YOU 9 MINUTES TO SPARE? THOUGHTS FROM TERRY LEE DEGENHARDT

Welcome to all the new Wild Rose Ag Producer (WRAP) members! And thank you to those who faithfully renew your membership year after year. WRAP attempts to represent your interests to both the provincial and federal government, and to lobby on your behalf. You, the paid-up members, allow WRAP to represent not only your best interests, but also the interests of those Alberta farmers who are not WRAP members. Your membership dollars provide the funds by which the organization operates. WRAP is the only general farm organization in Canada which depends on volunteer farm membership. As such, it is grossly under funded, and therefore unable to attend many meetings and events that, for representation of your interests, they should be at.

Because WRAP deals with general farm policy, all Alberta farmers benefit as a result of your commitments to it. If all farmers belonged, the responsibility would not

only be shared equally, but the benefit to each would be more because there would be more adequate funds available to develop policies, attend significant meetings and events, and lobby governments. In order for WRAP to have some form of stable funding, the provincial government must pass enabling legislation. To date they have chosen to not do that, despite numerous petitions from Wild Rose. If you can answer yes to:

- (1) Do you support WRAP policy? ;
- (2) Do you want to see the responsibility of funding shared by all Alberta farmers?;
- (3) Do you have 9 minutes to spare? – then you will want to write or phone your MLA encouraging him or her to ask for stable funding for WRAP, with a carbon copy, or similar phone call to Shirley McClellan, Minister of Agriculture-Agrifood and Rural Development, and the premier's office.

LIVESTOCK BEHAVIOUR AND ITS IMPACT ON SAFETY FOR HANDLERS



North American Farm and Environmental Safety Centre

Animals perform best when their lives are tranquil and their environment is comfortable. They are also more predictable and, hence, safer for handlers under these conditions. Knowing animal characteristics that affect behaviour will help a handler maintain conditions that are safe for both the livestock and the handler. Guiding animals by using their natural reactions will help the handler get the job done with a minimum of stress.

Personality

Each animal has its own unique personality, a combination of genetic and learned behaviour. Some animals are naturally more aggressive, stressed or nervous than others. Knowing an animal's personality will help you manage it safely. However, all animals can be unpredictable, and a handler should always be on the look out for warning signs of fright, aggravation and aggression to avoid dangerous situations.

Herding instinct/Social relationships

Traumatic experiences for animals include being isolated, loaded, moved, being medically treated or examined, or during other handling operations. Herding is a natural instinct that provides safety in numbers and shelter. Separation from the herd is an act typically used by predators to isolate prey, and animals are immediately anxious and put on the defensive in this situation.

An animal that normally lives in a flock or herd can become lonely, depressed, frightened, or agitated if separated from other animals. For example, a dairy cow left by itself during the milking procedure can overreact to sudden movements or situations that normally would not be frightening. A horse removed from the company of others to be ridden, may act nervous and be easily excited or frightened. A lone cow left in a pen may become aggressive when its path to an exit is blocked.

Creatures of habit

Animals are creatures of habit and are comfortable in a normal routine, such as gathering around the barn at milking time or wandering along the same path in the pasture. When a routine is interrupted, then the animal

is liable to be more easily excited and aggressive. Problems can arise when moving animals away from feed, separating them from a herd or when an unfamiliar human approaches. Animals tend to be most active at day-break and sundown, while their environment is changing.

Panoramic vision

Cattle and horses can see about 270 degrees, and have a blind spot directly to their rear. Any quick motion will spook most animals particularly near their rear where they cannot distinguish how close the perceived threat is or see it clearly. Movement needs to be slow and deliberate, preferably from the side initially, as an animal is approached. A clear, calm vocal announcement will help avoid a surprised reaction by the animal to the handler's presence.

Flight and fright zones

Animals have a flight zone, an area of personal space where the animal feels safe. The size of this area depends on the animal, its past experience, and the actions of the person approaching it. As a worker approaches the flight zone, the animal will move away until the person is left behind beyond the flight zone. Approaching the animal up to this flight zone can be used by the worker to move animals, with patience and relative calmness. However, once the person is inside the animal's personal space for a time, the flight zone can turn into a "fright" zone with the animal feeling it has no where to go and must escape or aggressively protect itself.

Sensitive hearing

Animals have developed very sensitive hearing and can detect sounds that people cannot. Loud noises often frighten them, causing them to react defensively to startling noises. Often, they bolt in the direction away from the noise and may crash into fences or people nearby and may crush the person.

Colour blind and have poor depth perception

Many animals are colour blind and have poor depth perception. This makes them extremely sensitive to contrasts in light and dark and may make them balk when entering buildings or when shadows cross their path. Allowing the animal time to study the situation will prevent balking and bolting. Soft, uniform lighting will prevent animal reactions caused by sudden changes in lighting. Because of poor eye sight, animals may crash through objects including people on route to their "escape" when frightened.

Territorial instincts

Most animals have a strong territorial instinct and will develop a "homeland" in their pens, corrals and pastures. They develop a very distinctive, comfortable attachment to this area and may aggressively protect their territory, particularly during feeding. Feed distributed uniformly or in predictable patterns often results in behaviour to secure access to the feed and exclude others. Forcible removal from this homeland also disturbs the animal. This makes animals hesitant when going into new areas, passing through unfamiliar gates, or up chutes, etc. Shadows, lights, and noise may further compound the problem. To keep animals from fighting at the trough, distribute feed in large, unpredictable patches. Avoid uniform distribution, or placing specified amounts in areas for certain animals.

Maternal instincts

All animals have strong maternal instincts. A normally docile sow, mare or cow may suddenly become very aggressive and protective after the birth of its young. Sows may bite walls fences or people as an outlet to their excitement associated with nesting and having a litter. When startled or crowded into a small area, the sow becomes aggressive. Anticipating aggressive behaviour as the onset of birth ap-

proaches will help the handler be prepared.

Long memory

Animals do respond to the way they are treated and draw on past learning experiences when reacting to a situation. Animals that are chased, slapped, kicked, hit, frightened, etc. in their early life will naturally have a sense of fear when a human is near. Handling with force and abuse will make handling of that animal a more difficult and dangerous challenge in the future.

Once an animal balks or refuses to enter an area, they are thought of as stubborn. With each successive refusal, the animal will get a little more excited or dangerous. Make transitions easy for an animal when leaving its territory, herd or routine. Let the animal adjust to new surroundings and boundaries. Supply ample feed and water, reduce noise levels, provide familiar company.

Animal needs and feelings

Animals have feelings and experience hunger, thirst, fear, illness, injury and have very strong maternal instincts. Animals develop individual behaviour patterns; e.g., kickers and biters. The handler should be aware of these and take precautions accordingly.

Simple basics of safe animal handling:

- ♦ most animals will respond to routine; be calm and deliberate
- ♦ avoid quick movements and/or loud noises
- ♦ be patient; never prod an animal if it has nowhere to go
- ♦ respect livestock
- ♦ move slowly and deliberately around livestock; gently touch animals rather than shoving, slapping or bumping them
- ♦ use the animal's flight zone to move an animal or group of animals
- ♦ always have an escape route when working with an animal in close quarters
- ♦ remember that most male animals are dangerous. Use special facilities for handling breeding males and practice caution when handling them. Older breeding animals can be cantankerous and deceptive and their large size increases their potential to harm
- ♦ most mother animals are protective of their young and will be aggressive
- ♦ stay clear of excited or spooked animals

(Continued on page 8)

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LIVESTOCK BEHAVIOUR—CONT'D

(Continued from page 7)

recognize signals from the animal that show signs of fear, aggression, or contentment. An aggressive animal may give warning by:

- a) raised or pinned ears,
- b) raised tail or agitated flicking of tail
- c) raised back hair
- d) barred teeth,
- e) pawing the ground, and/or
- f) snorting

all manure handling facilities can be dangerous. Remove animals and people when agitating manure pits, fence and post outdoor manure pits or lagoons with danger signs.

wear protective equipment for the job; some examples are a respirator in dusty environments, leather boots with heel for horse work and with steel toes for handling cattle,

assign children tasks appropriate for their age, teach them the job and safety practices while performing the task, and supervise them closely

visitors of dangers and keep them in safe places

keep facilities in good repair

good housekeeping will help prevent falls and maintain healthy conditions for livestock

The majority of accidents are the result of "people problems." Lack of judgement or understanding due to inexperience is a major cause of accidents involving animals. Plan ahead to allow for plenty of time to move animals so there is no need to hurry. Do not try to manhandle animals when angry. Some handlers may exhibit a feel-

ing of physical superiority over animals; a foolish act when you consider the size of some farm animals.

People-caused injuries may also be the result of prodding an animal with no place to go, improper lifting of young animals, horseplay, tying a lead rope to a person, attempting a task without enough help, and not wearing personal protective equipment, such as safety shoes and gloves.

Facility problems are another major source of injury. Keep wall and work surfaces clear as possible and properly lighted.

Information from "Animal Handling Tips," PennState, <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/nasd/docs2/as63600.html>;

"Animal Handling Safety Considerations", University Extension, University of Missouri Comubia, <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/nasd/docs2/as24100.html>

"Know your livestock and be safe," University Extension, Iowa State University, John Beno, Charles V. Schwab, Laura Miller, <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/nasd/docs2/ia00200.html>

"Livestock Handling and Confinement Safety," Michigan State University Extension, Robert Wilkinson and Anthony Tilma, <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/nasd/docs/as12800.html>

"Leading the Way, Handling Livestock Safely" by Solnes Productions and available from the Manitoba 4-H Council - (204) 945-4525.

----Prepared through the Rural Hazard Management Project, funded in part by Health Canada, the Alberta Cattle Commission, and Farm Credit Corporation----

THE CO-OPERATORS

Wild Rose Agricultural Producers owns nine shares in the Co-operators Group. The Group is a co-operative owned by 30 co-operatives, credit unions and like minded organizations from all over Canada. Neil Wagstaff and Bill Dobson represent Wild Rose as delegates to the Alberta Region. Delegates in the Alberta Region elect three of the twenty-person Board of Directors. As one of the largest insurers of rural Canada, the Co-operators is very receptive to the input given by delegates who have a farming background. Wild Rose Agricultural Producers is able to make suggestions that will help provide appropriate insurance services to Alberta's farmers and ranchers.

The tragic events of September 11th will no doubt result in the largest insurance loss in history. Fortunately, direct exposure for the Co-operators will be minimal. There will be some financial implications through the re-insurance process.

Financial results for the Co-operators will be somewhat behind last years. Pre-tax profit for the first nine months of operation was \$18.9 million, \$33 million less than for the same period in the year 2000.

THE DEHORNING DEBATE

LARGELY CENTRES ON THE ISSUE OF PAIN

FARM ANIMAL WELFARE NEWS - JANUARY 2002

The Expert Committee on Farm Animal Welfare and Behaviour (ECFAWB) has endorsed the use of polled cattle as a means of dehorning, except in the dairy industry here the population of quality-polled genetics is limited. When dehorning is necessary the ECFAWB, "having reviewed present research, supports the recommendation that a combination of

- (1) a sedative,
- (2) a local anesthetic and
- (3) a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory be used under the guidance of a veterinarian."

The debate on dehorning largely centers on the issue of pain. Studies of the pain response in calves to dehorning indicate that there is significant pain felt for several hours post dehorning. In adult animals the procedure is painful enough to affect weight gain for up to 106 days post dehorning. Research involving Herefords, Charolais, Simmental, Limousin and crossbred lines have consistently shown that polled beef cattle are equal to horned counterparts with regard to productivity related characteristics. Individual differences in quality do occur, whether polled or horned, but the polled state is not related to productivity.

Some polled cattle producers in Europe for their superioring to Dr. Joseph Stookey, College of Veterinary Medicine is dominant to the removal of horns via genetic easy. However, cattle can still carry the genes for scurs, which are inherited independently from horns. Scurs are horn-like protrusions that can vary in size from small nubs to almost the size of horns.

Individual differences in quality do occur, whether polled or horned, but the polled state is not related to productivity.

are gaining markets polled genes according to Professor at Western. As the polled horned gene, the reselection is relatively

In dairy cattle, horned animals make up 99% of the Holstein population according to Peter Blodgett, of AltaGenetics, a global livestock genetics company. Horned animals have been intensely selected for and therefore are superior in productivity to the polled population. However, it is not the polled state that reduces productivity and attempts are being made to improve the polled population. "AlltaGenetics is testing polled genetics to be able to provide proven polled genetics to our customers," says Mr Blodgett.

Frank A. Bouie, a dairy producer in Ohio is dedicated to the promotion and improvement of polled dairy cattle. He writes, "The resources and tools exist to develop polled Holsteins without making major sacrifices in production or type traits ... it is important that we not just breed polled cattle but good polled cattle."

Joseph Stookey has been an advocate of dehorning via genetic selection. It concerns him that some beef producers have viewed the ECFAWB endorsement with suspicion. "Our motive is to help the beef industries ... to promote animal welfare and maintain a healthy welfare friendly livestock industry in the eyes of the public and for our animals ... we are not the enemies of the cattle industry. I want [producers] to understand that they have choices and they can have superior cattle that are also polled."

Producers know they have a responsibility to be current in livestock management practices, based on the best science that is available. There is no doubt that dehorning causes significant pain, so mitigative measures should be used to eliminate or reduce that pain.

Polled genetics offer one option. Alternatively, dehorning should be done at an early age with appropriate pain suppressants. It is unacceptable to leave horns on cattle destined for the feedlot.

Website Resources :

Frank A. Bouie -
www.midohio.net/~fabouic/polled.htm

WILD ROSE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS RESOLUTIONS PASSED AT THE SIXTH ANNUAL CONVENTION - 2002

CFA Membership

Be It Resolved that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers lobby our provincial Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development to cover our costs of a full membership in the Canadian Federation of Agriculture.

Cost - of - Production Program

Be It Resolved that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers encourage the Alberta Government to investigate and implement a non-countervailable program covering cost of production.

Funding permanent water development projects

Be It Resolved that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers encourage the provincial government to continue to fund permanent water development projects.

Water Well Registrations

Be It Resolved that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers encourage the provincial government to extend the deadline for registration of water well and dugouts:

Crop Insurance

Be It Resolved that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers lobby the Alberta Government to have Alberta Financial Services Corporation Crop Insurance apply the global positioning system acreage data beginning with the following years crop in order to have the insured and insurer working on the same acres.

Gopher Poison

Be It Resolved that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers encourage Alberta Agriculture to make available through municipal districts and counties effective gopher poison under special permit by March 1, 2002 and subsequent years.

GMO Wheat

Be It Resolved that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers oppose the introduction of glyphosate tolerant wheat into Canada until farmers are assured that the commodity has consumer confidence, customer acceptance and segregation concerns are satisfied.

Producer Car Licensing

Be It Resolved that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers request of the Canadian Grain Commission, that producer car users facilities not be considered an elevator even if a defunct elevator is being used to load cars, and thence do not have to be licensed as an elevator.

Grain Inspection Services

Be it Resolved that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers request that the Canadian Grains Commission provide grain inspection services for the Peace River Region.

RESOLUTIONS – CONT'D

Agricultural Assistant /Farm Assistant

Whereas farm sizes are increasing due to retirement, farm sales and farm amalgamations, and;
Whereas the supply of dedicated and competent farm assistance is decreasing due to depopulation of rural communities, a good supply of jobs in the oil and gas, forestry, and industrial sectors of the provincial economy, and many young people, of rural heritage, pursuing higher education, and professional and other careers,

Therefore Be it Resolved that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers request that local offices of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) add the job titles of Agricultural Assistant and Farm Assistant, to the General Occupations List*, and that HRDC assesses and allocate Occupational and Educational and Training Factors to the job titles.

*The General Occupations List is a compilation of jobs for which there is a short supply of suitable candidates.

NISA

Be It Resolved that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers lobby our Federal government to increase our NISA contributions and the government matching contributions on behalf of our provincial government, from a 3% program to a 6% program.

Research Tax Credits

Be It Resolved that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers lobby our federal government to allow farmers to receive tax credits for the dollars they are investing in research through the Western Grains Research Foundation and their commodity organizations.

Water Use

Whereas the petroleum and natural gas industries use vast amounts of fresh water to flood wells to enhance production as well as steam for insitu production and
Whereas they could use salty or brackish water from deep wells,
Therefore Be It Resolved that useable water should not be used by the petroleum and natural gas industry for injections for oil and gas recovery.

Trespassing

Whereas trespassing is quite common and our members have been threatened with arson and vandalism when asking a trespasser to leave,

Therefore Be It Resolved that the Alberta Government introduce stiffer penalties under the petty trespass act.

Flashing Green Light Program

Whereas the “flashing green light” program for volunteer fire departments signifies a request for right of way by volunteers in personal vehicles responding to an alarm,

Therefore Be It Resolved that Wild Rose lobby the provincial government to standardize, educate and promote the “flashing green light policy” for emergency responders.

ALUS Support

Be It Resolved that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers investigate the premise of supporting the concept of the Alternative Land Use Services proposal (ALUS) developed by Keystone Agricultural Producers.

RESOLUTIONS—REFERRED TO THE BOARD

Compensation to Farmers from Petroleum Companies

Whereas compensation to farmers for oil company seismic and well activities is similar to rates of twenty years ago, and;

Whereas inflation is a considered factor everywhere in society, (i.e. salaries, pensions, etc.)

Therefore Be it Resolved that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers lobby the provincial government to include inflation in their award calculations of the Alberta Surface Rights Board.

Annual Lease for Pipelines

Be It Resolved That Wild Rose Agricultural Producers seek changes to the Alberta Surface Rights Act whereby compensation for the acquisition of lands for class one pipelines can be by one lump sum payment or by an annual or periodic payment of equal or different amounts over a period of time; and that such agreements between land owners and pipeline developers are able to be reviewed every five years over the life of these installations.

ALBERTA FARM ANIMAL CARE REPORT BY KEITH DEGENHARDT

Alberta livestock producers address farm animal welfare issues, collectively, through Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC). Wild Rose Agriculture Producers (WRAP) is a founding member and Keith Degenhardt is your representative to their Board of Directors. WRAP, through AFAC, actively addresses animal care problems that need fixing, listens to the market place and consumer concerns regarding animal welfare and promotes animal behavior research to lead the industry forward.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR'S ACTIVITIES

1) Alberta Livestock Protection System (ALPS)

AFAC and all its members actively participated in the review of the ALPS resulting in Alberta SPCA being contracted to carry out a consistent, accountable livestock enforcement system. As well, ALPS, which is directed by representatives from Alberta Agriculture Food and Rural Development, AFAC, and Alberta SPCA, will have a strengthened role in communication and education in animal abuse situations.

2) In the area of humane handling of unfit livestock, Alberta Pork and AFAC endorsed the "hog sled", developed by Darren Malchow, to humanely move otherwise healthy hogs that go down or are injured while in transport, from the truck to the abattoir.

3) In the area of research, AFAC received a \$200,000 grant for applied research projects related to livestock welfare and transportation. AFAC is exploring the options for a research partnership on livestock welfare as it relates to production practices and economics. An example of this is research at the Lacombe Research Station indicating much higher stress levels in cattle transported, or withheld from water than in those being castrated or branded.

4) AFAC has lobbied Justice Canada and the MPs on Bill C15 (the Animal Cruelty provision in Canada's Criminal code) to ensure legitimate agricultural practices will not be put at risk or challenged in court. AFAC strongly recommended simple wording to accomplish this.

AFAC, along with the livestock industry players must continue to take a leadership role, provincially and nationally, in improving the welfare of livestock in our care. We must look at our on-farm quality assurance programs and build in an animal welfare component. Consumers are more aware of animal care issues and pushing for changes. We are challenged to help our industries, built on lifelong behaviors, to move quickly and change when change is needed and expected – be it more on-farm euthanasia of unfit livestock, more training and certification to ensure generally accepted practices, or major shifts towards enriched confinement housing systems.

WRAP RESPONDS TO CANADIAN BIOTECHNOLOGY ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

In response to the Summary of Interim Recommendations, Wild Rose Agricultural Producers would like to show its support for the work done by the Canadian Biotechnology Advisory Committee. We feel that the recommendations could improve the future of Genetically Modified foods in Canada.

Structure, Organization and Operation of the Federal Food Regulatory System

In terms of the recommendations regarding the structure, organization and operation of the Federal Food Regulatory system, we agree that the government's regulatory and promotional roles must be further separated and clarified. Any conflict of interest, perceived or real, undermines the faith that Canadian and overseas consumers have in products developed and grown in Canada. Publishing Standard Operating Procedures and having the Auditor General monitor regulatory bodies is also essential if the process is to have credibility with producers and consumers.

Evaluation of Long-term Health and Environmental Impacts

Improving the regulatory process is also key in building credibility of the recommended evaluation of long-term health and environmental impacts. This research must be done independently of interested parties to ensure that results are valid. Furthermore, the research findings must be made public, not simply the conclusions of the research, which often reflect the bias of the author. People must be able to form their own opinions based on findings.

Transparency

This leads to a question of transparency; an issue that cuts across all others. Producers and consumers are faced with a barrage of information from all sides of the biotechnology debate. However, it is often unclear where this information stems from and how valid the sources of the information are. We support your call for the release of detailed scientific data about health and environmental assessments, as well as records of products under review et-cetera. It is important that this information can be made public before products are improved so the general public and agricultural producers can have input into the approval based on facts and their willingness to take on the risks as assessed.

Information and Informed Choices

It would also be valuable to take periodic surveys of producers and consumers in Canada and abroad to find out what their perception and knowledge of GM foods is, and what their degree of acceptance of products is. It is of central importance for agricultural producers to know if the organisms they grow will have a market. We hope that you will add such a proposal to your recommendations.

Establishing a food information service and labeling (based on internationally accepted criteria) would allow people to make informed decisions about what they produce and consume. However, labeling without education is counter-productive. Simply placing a "non-GM" label on foods may lead individuals to feel that there is something wrong with GM products whether this is the case or not.

Environmental Stewardship

Farmers are becoming more concerned about their impact on the environment. As stewards of the land they must have assurance that producing GM crops will not have an adverse effect on the environment. Therefore we support your recommendation to take a precautionary approach regarding GM foods.

However, missing in your report was a call for assessment of GM crops on other agricultural sectors and producers who do not grow GM crops. For example, if products were labeled, how would GM and non-GM products be effectively and efficiently segregated? Furthermore, many farmers have concerns or have already faced the problem of contamination of non-GM crops with GM organisms. Procedures must be put in place before more GMOs hit the market.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT

JANUARY 2002

BY KEITH DEGENHARDT

The Board was involved in a wide variety of activities over the past year. I am going to present activities to you in chronological order, rather than by Director.

I gave a presentation on behalf of Wild Rose to the Intensive Livestock Review Panel in late January, stressing the need for local control, with provincial, scientifically justifiable, sustainable rules with a third party monitoring of the ILO's. The province has implemented province-wide control in the Confined Feeding Operations Act, but what we lost was local control. As I write this the regulations are not yet available, so I can't comment on whether they are scientifically justifiable and sustainable.

With the on-going farm income crisis, the Wild Rose Board, and especially Neil, have been involved in meetings and discussions to find solutions and promote action around this issue. To compound the problem, a major part of the prairies suffered another severe drought, covering even larger areas than last year. Gord Smillie toured with Lyle Vanclief, Shirley McLellan and other parties to the worst hit drought areas in Southern Alberta. Neil represented us in what has become the Crop Loss Coalition consisting of the majority of western farm groups and grain and oilseed commodity groups. Unfortunately, at this time there is a lack of enthusiasm, both provincially and federally by the politicians and bureaucrats to come forth with any more dollars.

Wild Rose was the only organization that raised agricultural concerns during the provincial election. We also sent a list of agricultural concerns to the various parties and candidates requesting their positions.

Paul Thibodeau, Neil and I were interviewed by the Toronto Star for a feature article on the drought in Alberta. It was an excellent article, with excellent pictures and served to draw attention to a serious situation. The Board and Rod Scarlett, executive director of Wild Rose, have had numerous media interviews –print, radio and TV – over the past year. Adam Campbell has made many good contacts with the press, and is often contacted for a comment.

Wild Rose, and other farm groups, is still struggling to improve our present Safety Net Programs. Crop Insurance is falling quite short of people's expectations, and over the last year had only minor improvements made to it. Not all changes were improvements, as evidenced by

some of the resolutions before this meeting. Neil is chairing the Alberta Safety Net Coalition, and Wild Rose is doing the administration for it. Neil and Terry Lee Degenhardt are serving on the National Safety Net Advisory Committee, a group, which offers, advise on safety nets to Lyle Vanclief at his request.

Rod and Gordon spent a great deal of time on grain transportation issues, especially early in the year. Their opinions were sought, as transportation decisions were made public. Transportation costs significantly affect farmer's decisions about what to grow. Handling costs are also raising the issue of producer car facilities. This will be an area of discussion and policy setting for this meeting.

There was a good turnout at our summer Regional Council meeting, with many an interesting discussion. One major endeavor coming from it was a commitment by the Regional Directors and Board of Directors to run a membership campaign this past fall. A committee was struck, which Bill Dobson chairs, and Adam Campbell, Robert Filkohazy and Neil Wagstaff serve on. The committee put in a tremendous amount of work, but I will let Bill give you more details on the campaign.

Wild Rose hosted a very successful Canadian Federation of Agriculture meeting in Calgary. A majority of the Board attended the meetings. One interesting highlight for me was learning that the problems in Europe which lead to labeling of genetically modified food was a result of food retailers shooting themselves in the foot. The group had a gentleman's agreement to not use GM labeling as a marketing tool, but one of the major retailers saw a marketing advantage and broke ranks by labeling their products as GM free – even though there was no audit trail to prove it. Once one company had taken that route, it forced all others to do the same. So farmers are not the only ones who sometimes can not see the long term costs of a short term decision.

In summer and fall, Wild Rose executive, and Rod Scarlett met with the Alberta Standing Committee on Agriculture.

As a result of that meeting, Neil met privately with Shirley McLellan, at her invitation. Adam Campbell met with the Federal Justice Minister, Anne McLellan. Rod and Neil met with Lyle Vanclief in Edmonton for a frank discussion on agriculture. Wild Rose was singled out, and honored to meet with the Prime Ministers task force on Agriculture which 4 directors attended.

(Continued on page 15)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT - CONT'D

I represented Wild Rose at a meeting facilitated by the CWB on GMO crops in September. It was attended by a wide spectrum of Western farm groups. Regardless of philosophy, there is a concern that our markets could be at risk, especially with the introduction of a Round-Up ready wheat. However, nothing was settled and debate will continue.

Like the rest of the world, the Wild Rose Board was shocked and saddened by the events of Sept 11. We are still monitoring the effects of that event on World Agriculture and specifically Alberta farmers.

Robert Filkohazy, on behalf of the Board is our representative to the Environmental Farm Plan Steering Committee which is being sponsored by AESA (Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture). The Wild Rose Board, along with CFA feels environmental farm plans are a very important tool to be used by farmers when interacting with their urban cousins.

Bill and Neil are serving as delegates to the Co-operators Insurance Group, in which Wild Rose has shares. Bill is also on the Food

Safety Committee of the Canada Grains Council. Wild Rose has a representative on the Clean Air Strategic Alliance, a group that works by consensus of all stake holders to keep Alberta's air clean, clear and odorless. I am on the Board of Alberta Farm Animal Care. There is a report in your meeting package on AFAC. I also represent Wild Rose on the Western Grains Research Foundation. Western Grains Research, along with Wild Rose and other groups have been lobbying for farmers to get tax credits for the dollars they invest through Western Grains Research Foundation, and the commodity groups. It looks as if farmers may be successful in achieving that. Rod, with the help of directors Paul and Elaine, has been quite involved in Farm Safety. You may have seen the commercials on TV promoting a farm safety web site contest, with reference to Wild Rose's web site. The Board, Regional Directors and some members have been very active in manning the Wild Rose Booth at the different trade shows across Alberta.

We have had many strong annual regional meetings with good resolutions. Director Elaine Jones was happy to see a new regional director, Ron Matula, elected for her area, but we do

have some areas of the province that need rejuvenation. We look forward to help from past and presents members to do so

We sometimes forget to make public mention of how much we appreciate those Wild Rose members who have always supported us through the years. The membership drive has brought home to those out canvassing how easy it is to sell the worth of Wild Rose, but how much time it takes to do so on a one on one basis.

This past year has had many frustrations and success for Wild Rose and the Board. Wild Rose is involved with over 18 other organizations through its Board members, or individual farmer members. We appreciate all the time and effort this entails. We are committing to do more, but are depending on all Wild Rose members to increase our membership so we can pay the costs associated with doing more. For the size of the Wild Rose budget, the organization accomplishes much, and is well respected throughout Canada.

Call: 1-800-506- CARE (2273)

Animal Care Alert Line

If you have concerns regarding the care of livestock;

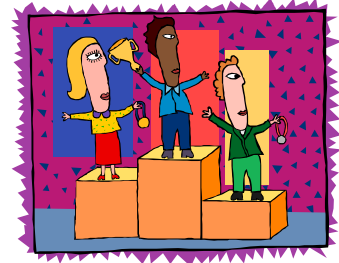
If you are experiencing management problems

FARM SAFETY WEBSITE DESIGN CONTEST WINNERS

In November of 2001, a panel of judges made up of members of Wild Rose Agricultural Producers, Alberta Agriculture and CBC Television chose the winners of the Farm Safety Website Design Contest. The judges were impressed with the creativity of the designs and the strength of the farm safety messages of all of the entries.

The winners were as follows:

First place: Crystal Miller of Woking, Alberta
 Second place: Sean Granigan of Edgerton, Alberta
 Third place: Brandon Wong of Edmonton, Alberta



Now the next generation of farmers can attain information on farm safety over an interactive Internet site. We are proud to have such a high quality pages as the winners designed as part of our own website. The winning site, along with fun, farm safety games, can be accessed through the home page of Wild Rose Agricultural Producers at www.wrap.ab.ca. Formal awards presentations to the winners will be conducted during Farm Safety Week in March.

YES! I wish to join Wild Rose Agricultural Producers



Name: _____
 Spouse: _____
 Address: _____
 Town: _____
 Postal Code: _____ Telephone: _____ Fax: _____

I enclose - Membership fee :

Producer	\$ _____	(\$117.70)
3 - Year	\$ _____	(\$321.00)
Associate	\$ _____	(\$ 58.85)

Wild Rose Agricultural Producers, 14815 - 119 Avenue, Edmonton, AB, T5L 4W2
 Telephone: 780-451-5912 Fax: 780-453-2669 e-mail: wrap@planet.eon.net

FEbruary 7 WAS FOOD FREEDOM DAY FACTS ON FOOD FREEDOM DAY BY CFA

- Food Freedom Day, February 7, 2002, is the calendar date representing when the average Canadian has earned enough income to pay his or her grocery bill for the entire year.
- In 2000, Canadians spent 10 per cent of their income on food. (Income per capita was \$27,016 in 2000, while expenditures on food and non-alcoholic beverages (including restaurant meals) totaled \$2,790. *Source: AAFC, Statistics Canada*)
- In many other parts of the world, the cost of food is significantly higher. See the table below.

1999 – Percentage of Net National Disposable Income (NNDI) spent on food and non-alcoholic beverages (excluding restaurants) *Source: OECD***

Canada* – 6.73 %	France – 9.21%	Germany – 7.73%	Italy – 10.58 %
Australia – 8.75%	USA – 5.49%	Netherlands – 6.65%	UK – 6.9%
Sweden – 7.28%	Mexico – 19.03%		

*Note: the difference between CFA's number (10 per cent) and the OECD's (7 per cent) is that the 10 per cent also includes expenditures in restaurants.

**The difference between the OECD's 1999 numbers versus 1996 (which were used last year) is that they changed their methodology -- they used personal disposable income before, whereas now it's the NNDI, which tends to be higher

- The share of NNDI spent on food in Canada has been declining since 1992. It was 7.39 percent in 1988, and was 6.73 per cent in 1999. The OECD gives a few reasons for the decline, including "the considerable choice and availability of high quality food both domestic and imported, at reasonable prices."
- Canadian farmers are proud to provide safe, high-quality food at a reasonable cost. Food producers work hard to contribute to an industry that provides jobs and generates billions of dollars in economic activity.
- Between December 1997 and December 2001, the price Canadian consumers paid for food increased by 11 per cent. In contrast, the price received at the farm gate increased by only 2 per cent, on average. *Source: Statistics Canada*

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EDITORIALS

Recently, Wild Rose Agricultural Producers was contacted by Global Television to do a series of national editorials. Here are some excerpts of those editorials.

Water

Potable fresh water is a finite resource. Due to drought, which has dried agricultural lands in areas throughout Canada, farmers have become acutely aware of the need to protect our water resources. Drought should serve as a reminder to Canadians that although we appear to have an abundance of water compared to other regions of the world, we are still vulnerable to water shortages. Farmers add tremendous value to water by producing grains, oil-seeds, vegetables, meat etc; a value that resonates throughout the country. Therefore, legislation preventing the export of water in bulk to other countries must be made clear and enforceable. The federal government must take a lead role in this initiative.

In addition Canadians must reduce and improve our own use of water. For example, in Alberta more surface water is injected into the ground every year for oil and gas extraction than is used in agriculture, excluding irrigation. Such unsound practices must be stopped. Water unfit for human or animal consumption could be used instead. It is imperative that agricultural producers work in partnership with all Canadians to preserve our fresh water resource.

Environmental Farm Plans

Environmental farms plans are a tool for farmers to identify the environmental strengths and weaknesses regarding their current practices. In Alberta, for example the program will provide primary agricultural producers the opportunity to voluntarily self-evaluate the environmental risks of their operation. The program will help producers develop an action plan with short and long-term goals to correct environmental risks and to find practical, scientifically sound management practices to reduce risks.

The advantages of taking this step are varied. For farmers, completing an environmental farm plan may demonstrate due diligence on behalf of the farmer. Under many circumstances, an environmentally friendly farm is a farm that is more profitable.

Finally, farmers who make a commitment to use environmentally safe practices may have an advantage in local and global markets. For society, the advantage will be the assurance of documented environmental practices that will ensure the continued production of safe, high quality food.

As society grows more environmentally aware, responsible stewardship has become even more important. Canada has a reputation for top quality; safe agricultural products and promoting environmentally sound practices will protect and enhance this reputation.

The Family Farm

The family farm is the most cost effective and sustainable model for food production. Support for the family farm is not about preserving a way of life for rural Canadians, it is about promoting economic growth and reinforcing the social fabric of Canada as a whole.

The family farm is the foundation of a healthy agricultural sector and strong rural communities. As employers, producers and consumers they keep rural communities alive at the same time as they depend on the services these communities provide. Without family farms, recreational facilities, health care and other social services along with businesses would be consolidated to larger service centers furthering the depopulation of rural areas. Furthermore, family farms provide employment to a greater portion of the rural population than larger operations which are highly automated and run by a few managers. These larger operations depend on smaller units for experienced labour, farm inputs and commodities.

Family farms also provide consumers in Canada and abroad with affordable, high quality and safe foods. Family run operations are usually a small to moderate size, enabling producers to keep close watch over the health of the soil, water and livestock which provide their livelihood. Many farms have been in the same family for generations, giving these farmers a unique understanding of the environment they work within. Thus, family farmers act as stewards of the land as well as providers in the food chain.

WILD ROSE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS PRESENTATION TO THE PRIME MINISTERS TASK FORCE ON FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR FARMING

Future Direction of Safety Net Programs

Safety net programs in agricultural represent a significant safeguard for the industry. Many Alberta farmers are doing reasonably well financially. This is largely due to a vibrant cattle and livestock sector as well as supply managed commodities. However, about one third of Alberta's farm income is from grains and oil seeds and this type of crop production has not been very profitable for far too long. Existing safety net programs have proven themselves to not be adequate or effective for many farmers who are in crop production.

There is an urgent need to make improvements to safety net programs in order to provide better risk management tools for grains, oil seeds and other crops. Serious consideration needs to be given to quickly developing a national insurance program that can provide coverage for income loss that is due to circumstances that are beyond an individual farmers control. Since margins are so small, crop producers need to be able to insure for the full value of their current crop. Crop insurance, as it presently exists, does not do this.

What is needed is a new safety net program that provides a combination of enhanced crop insurance, margin insurance, revenue insurance and cost of production insurance. Wild Rose supports a feasibility study on a national insurance program based on the above mentioned concepts in order to provide immediate support to the crop sector. It is important to note that farmers in general are willing to pay higher premiums for greater coverage.

A fundamental change in thinking needs to take place relative to financial support for farmers. Public funds paid to farmers need to be considered an investment in the agricultural industry and the rural economy and should not be thought of as the payment of a subsidy.

Some specific safety net changes that could be made include:

- Revising NISA to include freight and elevation as a allowable expense
- Provide incentives for farmers to enhance their land stewardship practices
- Enhance initiatives for beginning farmers

Rural Economic Development

The economic viability of many rural communities is being seriously damaged as a result of long-term low levels of farm income.

Many well-established, well-managed farm enterprises have had very small margins for an extended period of time and the shortage of disposable income is seriously affecting the service and community infrastructure that is needed to support these agricultural producers.

The importance of healthy agricultural rural communities for the sustained profitability of the agricultural and agri-foods industry cannot be overstated. Many farm families find it necessary to supplement their income by working at jobs that are away from the farm. To a great extent this off farm employment is subsidizing the farm operation. These individuals are often under extreme stress, and all too often cannot find time to dedicate to community activities. This trend is detrimental to the economic well-being of many rural communities.

Farmers should not have to use 15% of their gross farm receipts as a proxy for calculating net farm income when allocating self-employment earnings against EI benefits arising from off-farm employment. Unlike other self-employed people who can calculate self-employment earnings based on net income, farmers should not need to automatically deduct from their EI benefit 15% of the gross farm receipts regardless of the actual income earned from the farm operation. A five percent calculation of gross farm receipts as a proxy for net farm income is far more realistic.

The relationship between rural economic development and agriculture is so closely tied that we recommend that a

new ministry be considered that would focus on primary agricultural production and rural development. This Ministry would also look at the relationship between economic development and health, education, telecommunication, and other infrastructure related activities.

The Effect of Taxation on Farmers

Direct and indirect taxation has a large impact on the viability of many farm enterprises. A complete review of taxation at all levels of government and its affect on agricultural producers needs to be undertaken. We have a number of specific recommendations but we feel that the potential for helping the farm sector through changes in taxation is so great, that it justifies a specific task force to study and make recommendations on changes that are needed in our tax system. This task force would also examine the cumulative effects of taxation on input costs and other fees that have been downloaded on the agricultural community.

Specific suggestions include:

- The introduction of five year block averaging for income tax. This could also assist those farmers who are considering exiting the business
- Increasing the capital gains exemption to reflect current values due to inflation
- Allow for the roll-over of NISA accounts
- As recommended in the Estey Report, reinvest excise taxes received from fuel back in roads

International Policies and International Trade Issues

Many Canadian farmers are at a competitive disadvantage in the international marketplace. This is a result of farmers geographic location within Canada; the distance Canada's location is relative to our customers and our competitors; and all too often subsidies that our competitor countries provide to their farmers.

The federal government must take the responsibility to provide financial compensation to offset the drastic reduction in farm income that is a result of the disadvantage that Canadian farmers are faced with due to high subsidies that European and American farmers receive. Canadian crop producers may not be able to survive long enough to see an improvement in trade agreements. In the short term, it may be necessary for Trade Agreements to be ignored or challenged if the federal government is not able to stop the unfair competitive advantage European and American farmers receive from subsidies.

The need for an advocate for farmers

Canadian farmers have a reputation for producing high-quality products in an environmentally friendly way. The general public needs to better understand how modern farming works in Canada. Governments alone cannot do this effectively. Ideally, farmers should do this but who will do this on their behalf and how can in be done?

We recommend that the federal government provide funding to provincial and national general farm organizations to assist them with a long-term campaign to improve public understanding of farming practices and agricultural issues.

One opportunity for a many-fold return on investment is financial support by governments into research. Currently, research is often left to private companies who have their own self-interest in mind and not necessarily the profitability of the farmer. There needs to be more cooperation between governments, producers, and private companies as it pertains to applied research projects. This cooperation enables the public to feel secure that research is sound and poses no threat to the health and welfare of all Canadians. Additionally, biotechnology and biotechnological research are very important tools for the agricultural sector and they need to be supported with moral conviction and financial stability.

Benefits to Agriculture

Canadian farmers have a national and international reputation for producing high quality products in an environmentally friendly manner. Governments need to provide farmers with as many tools as possible to assist them in maintaining that reputation. At the same time, the immediate financial needs of many producers has to be addressed. Our rural communities are dependent on such action. We look forward to helping develop those programs and tools that are desperately needed to ensure that areas of common concern among all producers are dealt with to benefit of agriculture as a whole.

RESEARCH PROGRESS FROM FARMERS' INVESTMENT A BUSINESS REPORT ON FUNDING ACTIVITY AND PROGRESS, TO THE 17 MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS OF WESTERN GRAINS RESEARCH FOUNDATION.

Farmers around the world continued to grow as major players in crop research funding in the past year, and Western Canada was no exception. The result is a robust research base across the Prairies and strong farmer input into research.

In 2001, Western Grains Research Foundation allocated approximately \$4.4 million to research on behalf of Prairie farmers. The Wheat Check-off Fund generated around \$3 million for wheat breeding and the Barley Check-off Fund collected \$625,000 for barley breeding. The Endowment Fund allocated \$700,000 for a range of crop research projects.

This funding builds on years of farmer research support that is churning out major investment returns. Wheat and barley breeding activity has more than doubled in the region, producing superior new varieties. Targeted funding for a range of crops research is helping farmers diversify and improve their operations.

Overall, Prairie farmers have made a dramatic impact on research – an increasingly powerful sector shaping the future of their industry.

Farmers in Australia, the U.S., Great Britain and other major crop export countries have significantly increased their research check-offs – in several cases, they are out-funding Canada. But the investment of Prairie farmers remains strong, particularly because it is often multiplied by matching funding. The best example is at the federal research centres, where check-off dollars are frequently matched by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Matching Investment Initiative.

The bottom line for producers is the deliverables – new varieties in the field, new knowledge and technology to boost their operations.

Wheat breeding progress

The Wheat Check-off Fund is deducted at \$0.20 per tonne from Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) final payments to producers. About 30 percent of the fund is invested in Canada Western Red Spring wheat breeding and close to 25 percent is injected into Canada Western Amber Durum breeding. Canada Prairie Spring Red, Canada Prairie Spring White, Canada Western Extra Strong, Canada Western Red Winter and Canada Western Soft White Spring share the remaining funds.

Breeding is a long-term process, with new varieties usually taking eight to 12 years to reach farmers. However, there is already significant progress from farmer funding, including:

- New white-seeded wheat
- 10 to 15 percent higher yields

RESEARCH PROGRESS FROM FARMERS' INVESTMENT—CONT'D

(Continued from page 21)

- Resistance sources to wheat midge
- New extra-strong durum
- Sprouting resistance in Canada Prairie Spring
- Wheat nursery to screen lines for Fusarium Head Blight resistance

Barley breeding progress

The Barley Check-off Fund is deducted at \$0.40 per tonne from CWB final payments to producers in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. In Alberta, the Alberta Barley Commission administers its own refundable check-off.

As in wheat, breeding barley is a long-term effort. To date, some of the major developments to date spurred by check-off funding include:

- Superior malt successors to Harrington
- Hulless barley with major yield and threshability gains
- Feed types with nutrition tailored to modern livestock production
- 10 to 15 percent higher yields
- Resistance to scald and net blotch
- New nursery to screen barley breeding lines for Fusarium Head Blight resistance.

Endowment Fund Progress

The Endowment Fund is the Foundation's longest running research effort. Endowment Fund projects are supported through the interest on a \$9 million nest egg turned over to western grain growers by the federal government in 1983. Since that time, the Endowment Fund has supported over 200 projects worth close to \$18 million.

Endowment funding is awarded based on two main considerations: which research is most important, and where farmer dollars are most needed. High-priority projects may not receive funding if the Foundation feels those projects already have adequate funding from other sources. As a result, funding often goes to a range of projects that otherwise would not get support.

New Endowment Fund projects approved to begin in 2002 include:

- Development of a rapid assay to measure beta-glucan levels in cereal species
- Improving the efficiency of multi-factor and multi-location agronomic experiments
- DNA mapping of durum end-use quality traits
- Medics in Prairie grain cropping systems
- Improved control of Mychosphaerella blight in field peas
- Assessing the best chickpea canopy strategy for different production zones
- Developing canola with enhanced deterrence to flea beetle feeding

Key Foundation activity

This past year, the Foundation was active on several fronts.

Managing royalties. The first plant breeding royalties from new wheat and barley varieties developed with farmer funding have started to stream back to the Foundation. This signals the major equity stake farmers are gaining in the genetics of wheat and barley through their check-off investment. Under funding agreements with research institutions, one-quarter to one-third of plant breeding royalties come back to the Foundation. For 2001, over \$70,000 in royalties have been confirmed. The total collected since 1998 is over \$116,000. The royalties will be re-invested into the breeding programs that produced the varieties.

RESEARCH PROGRESS FROM FARMERS' INVESTMENT—CONT'D

Pursuing a tax credit. After several years of lobbying, the Foundation is close to receiving official approval for a research tax credit for farmer contributions to the Wheat and Barley Check-off Funds. If approval is granted, farmers would be eligible for the Scientific Research and Experimental Development (SRED) tax credit that is now available to individuals in other industries who invest in research and development.

Delivering crop research updates. The Foundation revamped its Web site, www.westerngrains.com, which features key sections on wheat and barley breeding progress. This is the fastest and easiest place for farmers to get complete, updated information on Check-off funded progress, a look inside the breeding network, and class-by-class descriptions of breeding challenges and new varieties developed.

The site also includes background on the Foundation and opt-out information, along with latest news releases, research reports, the *Industry Report* newsletter, *Annual Report* and an updated list of Foundation Board members.

Progress reviews. The Foundation has several checks and balances in place for administering the funds to research centres. These include long-term agreements with researchers that outline work plans, required progress reports from researchers, and regular reviews by the Foundation Board and its technical committees. One seat on the board is given to a senior member of the research community and the other 16 seats are for active farmers representing producer organizations.

Variety tendering. When seed that was partially developed through farmer funding is tendered, that is, put up for bid to seed companies, breeding institution officials, including a Foundation representative, decide which company is best suited to commercialize the seed. This is based on the company's ability to make the seed widely available to producers at a reasonable price.

Opt-out changes. The Foundation is preparing for changes to the opt-out deadline, to accommodate the Canadian Wheat Board in making the 2001/2002 crop year final payment earlier than January 1, 2003. Legislation is pending and a change is expected for the 2001/2002 crop year and subsequent years.

Close to 95 percent of western producers support the Check-off each year, but farmers who do not wish to support research have the right to opt-out. The required process is that once producers become CWB certificate holders (have delivered grain to CWB in the crop year), they must notify the Western Grains Research Foundation office of their intent to opt out. Notification must be in writing, and delivered by letter or fax. The notice must include: CWB producer ID number, crop year, name as it appears on the CWB Permit Book and full mailing address.

Contact Us

Most important, the Foundation welcomes comments and questions from members and producers.

Contact the Foundation directly, visit the Website or contact your Board representative.

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WILD ROSE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS DIRECTORY OF OFFICIALS

DIRECTORY OF OFFICIALS - 2002

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