



Western Stock Growers' Association

December 2011



**MERRY
CHRISTMAS**

New email address for WSGA: **office@wsga.ca**

President's Message

It's been quite the year. Education could be the one word that sums things up. Who's education? Well that depends on where you stand. The WSGA has been working on, delving into, and otherwise reviewing and perusing Government Bills and Acts that affect our members and all those folks that make their living from stewarding the environment.

Our main focus of concern has been around the Land Use Bills known as 19, 36, 50 and then 24. The Western Stock Growers' Association embarked upon cooperation with other concerned groups and individuals to learn about and disseminate information so that land owners can make up their own minds regarding these Acts. Interestingly as a policy organization we were there when the Government held consultations, but the result was not what we hoped for or expected. Of course, even lawyers can't agree on how these Bills should be read, what the words mean and our interpretation is at odds with that of the Government. WSGA, along with many other groups, helped sponsor Keith Wilson's information and speaking tour in Southern Alberta, as well as a few sessions in Northern Alberta, in order to present information that was not readily available to land owners to disseminate, ruminate and otherwise educate themselves. Several of our MLA's were less than happy with us and remain so but since our inception as an Association under the authority of the North West Territories of Canada we have endeavored to take positions that were in the best interest of our constituents even at the possible peril of not being in the current Government's favor. There are many shared reasons for our concerns but as a member you have already been informed via position papers and the joint letter with the Alberta Grazing Leaseholders Association to all who will be reading this. Our think tank is working on these bills still and reviewing the changes to the Land Assemblies Act, Bill 19 as it is known. In a recent meeting with the Honorable Evan Berger we also asked to make a presentation to the Land Bills Task Force, co-chaired by Agriculture and Rural Development Minister Berger and Environment and Water Minister Dianna McQueen. We requested a joint session that encompassed all Beef Industry Groups including WSGA, ABP, Intensive Livestock, Feeder Association and Alberta Grazing Lease Holders Association. An answer has not been offered at the time of writing.

Looking back over the year we see things to be optimistic about and things that are concerning. Cattle numbers in Canada continue to fall, raising questions about why and when will it stop. Market indicators with the most positive calf prices since 2002 suggest there should be heifer retention rather than more slaughter. We are not sure that is happening as the older of us decide this is not a bad time to exit the industry. The WSGA are very concerned about succession and the retention of the next generation on the land. Even with positive economics in the cattle industry, an uneven playing field exists with the competition of opportunities for our young people and the ranch operators average age increasing each and every year. We will continue to work on this troubling problem and ask for your input and suggestions. In recent meetings with Sustainable Resource Development Minister Frank Oberle and Agriculture and Rural Development Minister Evan Berger, as well as conversations with staff from both Ministries, we have discussed these issues at length. It will be up to us to find and drive solutions to the Government. That is the mandate of the WSGA and that is the challenge we gladly embrace. On behalf of the Stock Growers' I would like to wish you the best of the Christmas Season and a very prosperous 2012.

Phil Rowland, President

A Circle In Time

Bill Hanson, our Past President from Valleyview, has brought to the table for discussion of the problem of elk consuming feed in his winter pastures. Indeed, compensation has not been adequate for the amount of feed that has disappeared. He has had to stop rotation bale feeding and return to starting the tractor to lay out bales in a timely manner – not only does he lose feed, he incurs a conservative additional cost of \$0.70/da/cow starting his tractor and hauling feed in the winter. Blaine Marr, Pincher Creek, has shown us pictures taken by government cameras, of the grizzlies in his area breaking into grain trucks and cavorting in farm yards. Needless to say, WSGA has presented and will continue to lobby with respect to these concerns surrounding predator control and compensation in the meetings with the various government departments. (We know that there are many issues of similar nature about the province)! Roy Clark, our Honorary President reminded us that one of the reasons that spurred the beginning of WSGA was predator control and compensation – wolves back then! “A circle in time”?

Office Upgrade – To Serve You Better

The Executive has been working hard to upgrade our office and our communications to you, the members. We have a modernized website which has been moved to a platform which allows us more flexibility as we move forward. You will see many changes to the site as we progress. We are updating our communication strategy so as to be able to deliver information in a more timely manner – one of our goals being more frequent newsletters, flyers, and updates of information on the website.

How can you help WSGA in their communication strategy? Contained within this package there is a business card and a return envelope. Please check your information, and update any missing information. Also, please let us know if you would be willing to receive your newsletter via email. This will generate considerable savings on copying and mailing charges. We will also be putting the most current newsletters on the “members only” section of the website. (They will be archived on the public portion of the website after 2-3 months). It will also allow you to download additional copies to hand out to your friends and neighbors. For those who do not have email, we will continue to serve you by traditional mail service.

We have been providing well researched and relevant information for government departments, and our voice is certainly respected. As you know, WSGA was instrumental in the achievement of the voluntary check off. We have been working with various groups to lobby the government with regard to the Bills 36, 50, 24 with regard to Land Stewardship, Power Lines, etc. We have been instrumental in development of “think tanks” that are crucial to the update of the Public Lands Act and Grazing Lease implications. We want to keep you abreast of our progress in a more timely fashion.

Voluntary Check Off Dollars

Included in this package is the form which you can use to apply for your check off dollars to be returned to you. The application period is for activity between July 1 and Dec 31. You must apply for reimbursement by Jan 31, 2012. WSGA would appreciate if you would consider supporting our Association by forwarding all or a portion of your check off dollars to WSGA. This would be treated as a voluntary membership contribution and will be receipted as such so that you may use it for tax purposes. Our Executive and Directors work on a voluntary basis, and travel sometimes great distances without reimbursement. However, we do utilize your membership contributions (both mandatory and voluntary portions) to enable us to do research projects and/or participate in studies with other associations. In our effort to reach out to the members and meet you “where you live”, we are moving our Board meetings around the Province – this requires some contribution toward meeting space and perhaps, in some cases, guest speakers. As mentioned above, we wish to increase our communications with our members and this does require additional funds to be dedicated to a communication strategy. Please consider supporting us.

COUNTIN” (Phyllis Kozroski – 1995)

We often get caught up
In the countin’ that we do
We count cows, an’ bales, an’ acres
Bills – too many. Bucks – too few.
Should more often count our blessin’
Calves that lived, an’ hay that grew
Memories shared, good times together
Friends an; neighbors, tried and true.

