



Western Stock Growers' Association

NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



I have a dream.

Without a doubt that title conjures up a gift of hope. Well just like the author of that famous and historical speech where Martin Luther King spoke of his dream for society, I can also say the I have a dream. A dream that originally attracted me to the Western Stock Growers' Association. A dream that involves the industry that I love. A dream that builds on what our forefathers dreamed of. A dream that is shared by my friends and foes alike. A dream of a prosperous and sustainable cattle industry in our province and indeed our country.

Dreaming is an essential part of vision and as a friend pointed out to me recently, seeing without vision is worse than being blind. In a response to a letter I wrote, a WSGA member suggested I was living in the past and not looking to the future. He may be correct but I respectfully submit that history is a great teacher of things that work and things that don't. The model I was referring to was actually one of a country that is prospering. So why not look at what worked in the past and apply it to the future? We likely should, but he is absolutely correct that we can't let the past stand in the way of the dream for the future.

Recently the WSGA was invited to participate in an across the industry think tank on where we want the beef industry to go and how to get there. To take a wholisitic (with a w) view of the industry chain that turns sunshine into a high value protein as well as an abundance of other products that end up in various places around the world. We looked at our capabilities and possibilities and dreamed about all the things we could be if we shared a vision. The group committed to compile our collective thoughts, share them and meet again sooner rather than later to find a way to implement the findings. Stay tuned as this is a dream that just might become reality.

Headline in the Calgary Herald Nov 11, 2012... "Aguila Exploration no longer leasing downtown office space." Well look at that, as we finish our first year working from a virtual office it seems a trend is developing in Alberta. From my vantage point, the virtual office looks to be very successful. Lindsye Dunbar took the hand-off from Wendy Adam and we are functioning like a well oiled machine. Lindsye has our website up-to-date with interesting links and letters that are relevant to the fast moving events of the industry.

Daring to dream. We have spent an inordinate amount of time doing what the WSGA has done for more than a century. Our collective dream involves balance, three strong legs to the proverbial stool. There always seems to be a leg or two on fire and we see it as our job to provide the balance that often seems to be missing with well intentioned folks suffering from tunnel vision.

There was once a nice lounge in my hometown called "Dreamers Lounge". It was named after a couple of young ambitious entrepreneurs who were busy making their dreams become reality. I continue to strive to realize my dreams and truly believe that the WSGA can be a major catalyst in the collective vision of our industry.

Phil Rowland

Inside this issue:

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WSGA establishes wildlife fund

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In Wake of XL Recall Producers Require Accountability

The Western Stock Growers' Association (WSGA) sent a letter to the Government of Canada in October respectfully asking for the launch of an independent investigation into the crisis surrounding the closing and long process to re-open the XL beef plant in Brooks.

WSGA was joined in this request by the Alberta Beef Producers when producers at a zone meeting in Fort Macleod supported a motion to call for an inquiry that will go beyond the internal review so far promised by government.

Some of the unanswered questions WSGA requested the government address in a thorough investigation include but are not limited to:

1. When an outside audit conducted in May by Silliker Inc. found that sampling of trim product was "inconsistent" with the standard, why was not a Corrective Action Request (CAR) issued?
2. When a 2010 survey by FSIS indicated that the majority of the largest meat packers diverted or destroyed all trim in a batch or on a day if 5 percent of its tests were positive for E.coli O157:H7 and the HACCP plan for XL only diverted product if more than 10 percent of a batch tested positive or more than 20 percent of the days production was tainted, why did the CFIA approve this process?
3. Between Sept 17th and Oct 12th, CFIA issued 17 Health Hazard Alert updates, each of which has expanded the list of recalled products in excess of 1800 products and an estimated recall of 45 million pounds. What parameters did CFIA use in making these decisions?
4. As 17 Health Hazard Alerts is very high considering it was for the same event, did the CFIA give any thought or regard for the damage to the reputation of the beef industry?
5. Of the recalled shipments of beef, how many tests were positive for E.coli O157:H7?
6. Is it unusual to recall whole muscle cuts and why was it deemed necessary in this situation?
7. Why did the CFIA not think it would be useful to require companies to analyze test results for the potentially fatal E.coli O157:H7?
8. Why were most of the CFIA inspectors at the plant not trained in Compliance Verification System (CVS)?
9. The Canadian Traceability System is comprised of two components that being on the live side with the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA) and on the processed side with Canadian Food Product Traceability (CFPT). Why is the CCIA mandatory and punishable by fines whereas the CFPT is voluntary and participation is much lower with no consequences of non-compliance?

For a copy of the complete letter sent to all levels of the four western provincial governments as well as the Prime Minister and federal agriculture minister, visit the WSGA website.

WSGA Update

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This year the WSGA AGM is taking place in Banff at the Banff Springs Hotel Convention Centre. Please mark off February 20, 2013 on your calendar and plan to join us there. The meeting starts at 3:00 pm and is followed by the Alberta Beef Industry Conference opening dinner reception.

We have two director positions expiring this year, Zone 6 and Director at Large. Nomination forms have been sent out. If you or someone you know is interested in becoming a WSGA director, please fill out a nomination form and return it to the WSGA office.

ALBERTA BEEF INDUSTRY CONFERENCE

To celebrate the 10th anniversary, ABIC 2013 will be held in beautiful Banff at the Banff Springs Hotel Convention Centre from February 20 to 22, 2013. With the theme this year "From Brands to Barcodes" it speaks to the evolution of our industry and the supply chain that delivers our products to the consumer. You should have received a registration package in the mail from the WSGA office. If you have not, please contact the office to get ASAP.

Hotel rooms are available at a special convention rate. Call 800-257-7544 to book your room and mention you are a delegate with the Alberta Beef Industry Conference.

South Saskatchewan Regional Plan meetings

The public and stakeholder consultation meetings are just wrapping up. WSGA has made it a priority to give our input with many members and directors attending these meetings. We have left many sticky notes behind on the walls of these meetings in hopes our concerns will be heard. Specific concerns we brought to these meetings include the protection of property rights for public and private lands and how the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (SSRP) will deal with statutory consents and compensation for regulatory takings as well as how the Plan for Parks will play into the SSRP.

WSGA will be closely watching what comes of these consultative meetings and what the SSRP will look like at the end. For more information, go to our website www.wsga.ca.

WSGA Establishes Wildlife Enhancement Fund

Livestock producers are able to get compensation for livestock losses to predators from a fund populated by funds from hunting licenses and tags. The amount of compensation has nearly quadrupled since 2008, indicating predation on livestock has become a significant problem to many livestock producers.

Instead of coming at the problem from a compensation angle, there may be something we can do from a proactive angle. It raises the question, what can we do to cut back on the number of livestock killed and thus reduce the pressure on compensation?

At the last board meeting, the WSGA established the Wildlife Enhancement Fund. The fund, administered in partnership with the South Country Trappers Association, will pay licensed trappers a bonus for every wolf trapped. The goal is to reduce the population of wolves in livestock areas and, as a result, drastically reduce the livestock losses to predation.

In other news...

New e-newsletter available

A new e-newsletter for Canadian livestock producers was launched recently. The *NewStream Farm Animal Care* is a digital news source capturing latest developments, progress and ideas in farm animal care. It includes short items as well as links to longer feature articles that showcase innovative thinking, case studies, best practices and success opportunities. The newsletter is sponsored by Alberta Farm Animal Care and the Alberta Livestock and Meat Agency. To sign up for the newsletter go to www.meristem.com.

Carnivore Working Group offers help for livestock producers

The Carnivore Working Group was established to support community-based, landowner driven project initiatives to reduce human-carnivore conflict issues in southwestern Alberta, with a specific focus on grizzly bears, black bears and wolves. A large part of the mandate of the Carnivore Working Group (CWG) is to reduce attractants for carnivores and projects for this include the deadstock pickup program and feed storage security. CWG can help with grain bin retrofits including bear-proof doors, steel bin floors and installation of hopper bottoms. For more information on projects or if you have suggestions for projects that may fit within the CWG mandate, contact Jeff Bectell at info@watertonbiosphere.com.



Merry
Christmas

*Warmest holiday
greetings from the
WSGA*



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