



NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2025



ANNUAL LETTER FROM WSGA PRESIDENT

Greetings and celebrations to our faithful membership of the Western Stock Growers' Association. Celebrations for having been through a monumental year in cattle prices, with calf prices nearly doubling inside of a year. That is truly worth celebrating! We hope ranchers are rejuvenating, rebuilding, and using the great prices to gear up for long term success. May this be a new era of profitability, next generation involvement, and rebuilding of the cow herds so necessary for our rangelands, ranchers, rural municipalities, and our loyal beef eating consumers.



I have enjoyed my role chairing the Western Stock Growers' Association this year so far. We are taking some deep dive looks at our organization to see how we can improve and refocus on what has made this organization so effective since its inception in 1896. This organization has a deep history of advocating for ranchers both in the political arenas and on the home fronts, and we will continue to do so.

We held a strategy session in July to review how we can revamp our association and reposition ourselves amid the many industry associations out there. We remain steadfast in our approach towards protecting ranchers' property rights, the rights to operate businesses freely and unencumbered from government and public interference, and maintaining rights to basic necessities such as water and control of surface activities on private and Crown lease lands. We are also steadfast in ensuring historic agreements such as Crown lease agreements and the Water Act are honored by the governments that represent us.

Our action items from that strategy session include and are not limited to:

- **Developing our Grasslands Capital X program** which is the development of a market-based approach for rewarding stewardship on rangelands. We are conducting a pilot project with environmental firms Solstice Environmental and Green Analytics to explore and beta test an index we have developed. We believe this index could be turned into a market-based tool for compensating ranchers for stewardship of biodiversity, water, soil, and societal benefits of keeping grasslands in their native state.

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- **Reviewing and revising our membership structure.** This involves our fee structure, how we interact with our membership, and the way the organization earns revenues. With shrinking numbers of producers in our province each year, we need to get creative to keep our association strong and active. We will be deep diving on this topic all year to be sure our members are getting good value, and new membership continues.
- **Positioning WSGA.** There are other associations out there, many of them checkoff funded, competing for rancher's time and interests. We feel by being volunteer funded, we have liberties and opportunities to take strong viewpoints on key principled issues that other larger, more bureaucratic associations may not be able to deliver on the same way. Our principled history is a rock we will not untether from.
- **Maintain laser focus on key issues.** Issues that matter the most to longevity of ranches and ranchers. These include succession, water rights, property rights and preservation of grassland ecosystems. Our organization cannot get mired in petty politics and flavoured issues of the day. We must keep a strong focus on core issues that matter from a generational perspective.
- **Establish a charitable foundation** for working on key issues and developing legacy opportunities for members to contribute to long term preservation of grasslands, ranching, next generation, and the strength of the organization.

We had a very interesting and well attended summer meeting in Dorothy, Alberta this year where we talked about the Water Act, the government's Mature Asset Strategy, our Grasslands Capital X project, remote virtual fence technologies, and updates from Deputy Minister of Agriculture Jason Hale and our other industry associations. It was a great gathering and involved very interesting tours of the surrounding areas. Our tours and meetings were hosted by the Dorothy community, the Peake family, The Hand Hills Lake Club and the Calgary Stampede Ranch. What a wonderful opportunity to view that great country and the good people that live there.

The number of cattle producers and the cattle herd in general in our province and country continue to shrink, which puts pressure on membership of organizations such as the Western Stock Growers' Association and others. We want you to know that we are refocusing and exploring ways to reinvent our organization without sacrificing what has made it so great an organization for 129 years. As the checkoff industries are in transition with the recent announcement of abdication of Alberta Beef Producers from the Canadian Cattle Association potentially by July of 2026, it puts more focus on our role as a voluntary organization. We have a strong charter and historical governance model that has lasted generations. This positions us on the forefront as champions of freedoms, rights and maintaining the heritage and historical significance of our great cattle industry. We will also commit to working with our other industry organizations to ensure a stronger united voice in advocacy on key issues that matter.

The Western Stock Growers' Association stands ready to serve and advocate on behalf of our membership. We need your continued support and encourage you to reach out to your local WSGA zone directors or our organization directly on matters that are important to you. Don't ever allow erosion of fundamental rights, as we are prepared to fight for these rights with all we have. As always, we need your support and thank you for your trust in our association. Thanks to our members, board, governors, general manager and all those who take time and personal resources to ensure the WSGA continues to function and progress.

May 2026 be a year of strength and rebuilding to you, your families and your organizations. Have a good Christmas and a very Happy New Year!

Regards,

Ryan Copithorne
President, Western Stock Growers' Association

EXPLAINED: ABP WITHDRAWAL FROM CCA

You might have missed the headlines, but since you're reading this as a member of the Western Stock Growers' Association, it's safe to assume you care deeply about Alberta's cattle industry — along with property rights, free markets, our ranching way of life, and the many other issues your WSGA board works on year-round.

By now, you've likely heard that in August, Alberta Beef Producers' board voted to notify the Canadian Cattle Association (CCA) of ABP's intention to withdraw its membership effective July 1, 2026. This article is my humble attempt to explain how we got here — and why it matters.

For several years now there have been concerns over the under representation by Alberta at CCA. We account for well over 50% of CCA's budget but do not have even close to a proportionate number of seats at the CCA Board Members table (Alberta has 7 out of 24, just in case you were wondering). For a long time, Alberta has expressed that we would like to see a formal "Governance Committee" with an elected Chairmen. As well as a "Finance Committee" with an elected Chairmen. These concerns have fallen on deaf ears. Also, for many years Alberta has raised concerns regarding the need for greater transparency, Specifically, towards "Fiscal Policies" as well as accountability for the use of our producer dollars. (Even if you take your refund of Alberta check-off, \$0.53 of every sale still gets sent to CCA).

ABP released the following "Key Factors" Influencing ABP's withdrawal:

Funding and Fiscal Transparency

- ABP requires that provincial funding assessments be based on retained marketings across all provinces to ensure fairness and consistency.
- The assessment rate of \$0.53 must be maintained.
- There are ongoing concerns regarding fiscal transparency and ABP recommends the establishment of an elected Finance Chair within the CCA to enhance financial oversight.
- ABP seeks reassurance through regular reporting that there is an active and effective Audit Committee in place.

Organizational Structure and Governance

- ABP strongly urges the unfreezing of board seats and a revision of the representation formula to reflect the financial contributions made by each province. Currently, ABP contributes over 50 per cent of CCA's budget, yet holds only seven of 24 seats under the existing freeze.



- To ensure strategic and unbiased leadership, ABP encourages CCA Executive to engage a reputable third-party executive search firm in hiring the Executive Vice President.
- ABP has significant concerns regarding governance and recommends the formation of a dedicated Governance Committee.
- Additionally, ABP suggests engaging an independent third-party to conduct a comprehensive review of CCA's governance structure, with input from elected representatives.
- It is important to reaffirm that the CCA is directed by nine member provinces, not by 60,000 individual producers.

Communication

- It is essential that both elected representatives and provincial organizations are given adequate time and opportunity to review, digest, and collaborate meaningfully on key issues.

In early December, provincial managers and representatives from the 12 member provinces will meet in Toronto to try to agree on recommendations to put forward to CCA. If those recommendations are accepted by the provincial boards, they will then be taken to CCA Directors Board. (It is made up of 17 seats, 2 are from Alberta) I am not personally convinced that they will be accepted. However, there was a motion passed at the semi-annual in Quebec that they would consider them. Time will tell.

For the foreseeable future, the Alberta CCA representatives are continuing to work with CCA in committees and at the members board, directors board, and at the executive levels. ABP is preparing for Alberta to represent our own beef producers both federally and internationally. I do expect that many changes will occur in the upcoming year. We, as Alberta's producers, should expect the absolute best promotion, advertisement and advocacy for our hard-earned dollars, and I sincerely hope that we receive it.



Respectfully submitted,

Graham Overguard
Past President Western Stock Growers' Association

WORKING TOWARDS A MARKET FOR ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

WHAT WSGA IS DOING

Grasslands in Alberta are under growing pressure from conversion to cropland, urban expansion, and other land uses. These changes erode biodiversity, soil health and water regulation functions, while also diminishing the economic and cultural livelihoods tied to ranching communities. Conservation incentive programs have proven insufficient to halt this loss. To maintain working grasslands as healthy, functioning ecosystems, a credible and scalable market-based solution is required.

The Grassland Capital X (GCX) Index developed by WSGA is the central tool for delivering such a solution. It is designed to measure ecosystem function health across biodiversity, soil, water and social dimensions, and to serve as the basis for transactions in a voluntary conservation marketplace. The GCX Index aims to align private stewardship with emerging corporate sustainability goals through a credible, investable conservation marketplace.

WSGA is currently conducting a pilot project to refine the GCX Index. It started with an analysis examining how leading initiatives in this field define, measure and verify ecological outcomes and identified transferable metrics and market structures to strengthen the GCX Index framework. With the findings from gap analysis, metric review, market positioning and corporate demand assessment in our back pocket, we can look forward to GCX Index refinement, technology feasibility assessment and the integration of opportunity cost in the modelling.

Field testing the updated GCX Index in summer 2026 will ultimately help position GCX as a leading model for conservation markets and finance in working grasslands.



ALBERTA BEEF INDUSTRY CONFERENCE

Why every cow-calf producer should be there

If you run a cow-calf operation in Alberta, you already know there's no shortage of challenges coming down the pipe – markets, policy, land use, predation, input costs, water, traceability, you name it. The Alberta Beef Industry Conference (ABIC) is where the people shaping those decisions gather, and if you're not in the room, you're letting someone else speak for you.

Here's why you should be there.

1. **It's the best industry intel you'll get all year.** Market forecasts, trade updates, policy changes, research breakthroughs – it's all delivered directly by the people who actually know what's coming. Instead of hearing rumours at the auction mart, you get the real story from economists, scientists, and industry leaders.
2. **Networking that actually matters.** ABIC puts cow-calf producers in the same room as feedlot operators, packers, vets, researchers, and government decision-makers. Deals get made. Problems get solved. And you meet the folks who can help you when you need something down the road.
3. **You'll learn something that makes you money.** Take in the trade show, have conversations about grazing strategies, animal health innovations, or cost-saving tools. You are nearly guaranteed at least one "why didn't I try that sooner?" moment. Even one good idea can pay for the whole trip.
4. **You get a real voice in the future of Alberta beef.** Our industry is changing fast – and producers who show up shape the direction. Your industry groups AGMs are part of ABIC. Being there means you're part of the conversations that determine the policies, advocacy, and priorities that affect your ranch.
5. **It's good for the soul.** After months of winter chores, long days, and never-ending to-do lists, a few days surrounded by people who "get it" is downright energizing.

So come join us.

Learn something.

Meet someone.

Influence something.

Your operation and your industry will be better for it.



JAMES LAWRENCE

Also known as "The Iron Cowboy", James is a world-renowned speaker, bestselling author, and endurance athlete.



MATT MAKENS

Meteorological futurist with insights on 2025's upcoming weather patterns



CHRIS MATHERS

Internationally recognized expert in fraud and cybercrime.



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2026: INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF RANGELANDS AND PASTORALISTS

The International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) celebrates the people, landscapes, and livestock systems that sustain one-third of the Earth's land surface and millions of livelihoods worldwide. Its vision is simple yet powerful: to elevate the importance of healthy rangelands and the pastoral communities who steward them. The goals of the IYRP include increasing global awareness of rangelands' ecological value, strengthening policies that protect grazing lands, supporting sustainable livestock systems, and recognizing the cultural, economic, and environmental contributions of pastoralists.

IYRP is a chance to shine a global spotlight on something Alberta ranchers already know: healthy rangelands are the foundation of strong cattle operations, thriving wildlife, and resilient rural communities. For Alberta, the IYRP isn't just a global campaign — it's an opportunity to highlight the stewardship, innovation, and leadership of the producers who care for some of the most iconic rangelands in the world.

Look for special articles and bulletins from WSGA throughout 2026 to celebrate rangelands and, especially, pastoralists. Also - enter our photo contest that runs from January 1 2026 to September 30 2026. We're calling on producers, families, and rural photographers to capture the beauty, grit, and stewardship that define life on our grasslands. Whether it's cattle on native range, winter feeding, hands-on management, or everyday moments that reflect the connection between people, livestock, and land, your photos help tell the story.

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF RANGELANDS AND PASTORALISTS

CAPTURE THE MOMENT

WSGA PHOTO CONTEST

We're calling on producers, families, and rural photographers to capture the beauty, grit, and stewardship that define life on our grasslands. Whether it's cattle on native range, winter feeding, hands-on management, or everyday moments that reflect the connection between people, livestock, and land - SNAP IT, SUBMIT IT, AND HELP SHOW WHY ALBERTA'S RANGELANDS MATTER.



PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR ENTRIES TO OFFICE@WSGA.CA
DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION IS SEPT 30, 2026

STATUS OF bTB INVESTIGATION IN SASK

Following the detection of a bovine tuberculosis (bTB) case in Saskatchewan on November 29, 2024, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) confirmed the disease in several animals in the herd where the infected animal spent most of its life before slaughter. The CFIA disease investigation and testing remain ongoing.



Investigation status as of 2025-11-27

Infected herd

- 1 infected herd has been humanely depopulated. In addition to the index animal, there were 27 cases confirmed in this herd.
- Cleaning and disinfection is underway.
- The strain found in the infected herd is not a close match to any strain previously reported in livestock or wildlife in North America.

Lifeline herds (herds traced from an infected animal in the infected herd)

- 7 herds identified with 6 herds released from quarantine

Trace-in herds (herds that provided animals to the infected herd)

- 11 herds identified with 5 herds released from quarantine or no quarantine required.

Trace-out herds (herds that received animals from the infected herd)

- 123 herds identified with 106 herds released from quarantine or no quarantine required.

Contact herds (herds that shared a fence line or may have co-mingled with the infected herd)

- 1 herd identified and released from quarantine or no quarantine required. The CFIA continues to identify these herds and prepare for testing.

Proximity herds (herds within 5 km of the infected herd)

- 14 herds identified. These herds will be tested later in the investigation.

The CFIA is applying a modified trace-in period to correlate with the date when the disease was most likely introduced to the infected herd. The standards period for identifying trace-in herds is the 5 years before the detection of bovine TB in an infected herd. Trace-in herds are tested so that a source of infection might be identified and eradicated. Several operations in Alberta have been affected.

Based on several epidemiological and disease risk elements, including genomic analysis of the bacterial cultures from those animals, CFIA will:

- Identify trace-in animals for the 15 years prior to the 2024 confirmed infection
- Prioritize testing for herds who provided trace-in animals prior to 2021
- Based on epidemiological information, complete testing for herds who provided trace-in animals after 2021 once the priority testing is complete.

There has been a lack of positive animals in trace-in or trace-out herds despite the high numbers of infected animals in the herd where the disease was found. The impact on producers who are required to test and quarantine is not recognized in the compensation program. Only when animals are euthanized is compensation paid. Given that some of the testing and quarantining has happened during fall run, the impact for this investigation could be very high for some producers.

Of some concern is that, of all the bTB cases in memory, the strains in each of the infected herds do not match strains previously reported in wildlife or livestock in North America. The question remains - where are these diseases coming from?

OWNING COWS IN WINTER: A CHARACTER-BUILDING EXPERIENCE (WHETHER YOU WANTED IT OR NOT)



If you ranch in winter, you already know the truth: the cows are fine. You, however, are three breakdowns and one frozen hydraulic line away from a full existential crisis. Now add snow. Everywhere.

Winter cow ownership begins each morning with the sacred ritual of convincing frozen gates to open. This usually involves kicking, swearing, and questioning your life choices. Once the gate is open, you're greeted by a herd of cows staring at you like they're auditioning for a protein-rich version of *Les Misérables*. They haven't eaten in three whole hours, which, according to them, is grounds for a class-action lawsuit.

Feeding cows in January should count as an Olympic event. Step one: climb into the tractor cab that's somehow both freezing and humid. Step two: locate the exact spot in the hay yard where the bales have fused into one solid monument to poor summer stacking decisions. Step three: attempt to spear a bale while your tractor tires spin like you're auditioning for *Fast & Furious: Agricultural Drift*.

Once you finally deliver the bale to the cows, they surge forward like they've been living on hopes and prayers since November. The boss cow will glare at you with a look that says, "As expected, human," while the heifers behave like they've never seen food before.

Of course, the twine never comes off cleanly in winter. You'll wrestle it, swear at it, and inevitably lose feeling in at least two fingers. The wind slaps you in the face and a cow named Doris breathes hot fog onto your neck like a large, judgemental dragon. She will also sneeze-cough directly on you at least once per week. It's in the handbook.

Watering is equally delightful. Yes, the tank heater is plugged in. No, it does not care. You'll spend half of January inventing new swear words while chipping ice with the enthusiasm of a Victorian chimney sweep. Feeding cows in winter might wear on your tractor, freeze your eyelashes and test your patience but yet—somehow—you love it. The frosty mornings, the bellowing chorus demanding breakfast, the satisfaction of keeping everyone alive through another Arctic episode... It's chaos, comedy, and character-building all at once.

Because wintering cows doesn't just build resilience.
It builds personality.
Mostly yours.



2025-2026 WSGA BOARD OF GOVERNORS

****Keep for your records**

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The WSGA Board of Governors is a non-voting advisory board. It ensures the directors are supported and mentored by industry pillars and it ensures continuity of WSGA principles and procedures. Governors are nominated for appointment to the board at the WSGA AGM and voted in by the membership. Having a board of governors and a board of directors is an integral part of the responsible and accountable governance model that WSGA embodies.

2025-2026 WSGA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

****Keep for your records**

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