MBP's 38th AGM a success

While recognizing the challenges on the horizon, there was optimism about the year ahead at the 38th Manitoba Beef Producers (MBP) Annual General Meeting Feb. 2-3 in Brandon. The theme for the 38th AGM was Sharing Our Story as the industry continues to work on maintaining public trust by focusing on the great work being done by producers in areas such as the environment and animal welfare.

Continued to Page 2

Upcoming Events

The West Souris River Conservation District is hosting seminars featuring Dr. Allen Williams Feb. 21 in Pipestone, Feb. 22 in Minnedosa Feb. 23 in Mather. Topics covered include: Cows, Cover Crops, High Stock Density Grazing and Soil Health. Call Michael Thiele to RSVP at 204-365-6334. The seminars are sponsored by West Souris River Conservation District, Lower Souris Watershed Association, Ducks Unlimited Canada and Manitoba Forage and Grassland Association.
welfare. General Manager Brian Lemon said the association’s goal was to help producers understand the important role they play in that area and provide them with ideas and tools to help them share their story. “We were fortunate to have excellent speakers who talked about the important role that producers play in telling the industry’s story,” Lemon said. “The message throughout the two days was if we don’t tell our story, someone else will and we might not like what they are saying. I think that hit home with our members and, hopefully, has encouraged many of them to think about sharing their story.”

Lemon noted attendance for the AGM was strong with more than 200 people attending the two-day event, which also included resolutions debate on topics ranging from carbon policies to beef grading, and a sold-out trade show.

We were encouraged to see the level of interest and engagement from the industry. We are aware that prices are not where we would like to see them and there are challenges to the industry such as water management, predation and trade, but there was a sense of optimism at the meeting. I think that was reflected not only in the discussions we had with members but also in the attendance numbers.”

A new executive was elected during a meeting of MBP’s 14 directors Feb. 2. District 13 Director Ben Fox was elected as president by his fellow directors. Three incumbent members maintained their positions as Ramona Blyth and Tom Teichroeb will continue as vice-president and second vice-president respectively, with Peter Penner as treasurer. Dianne Riding will replace Fox as secretary.

Speaking at the conclusion of the AGM, Fox thanked his fellow board members for placing their trust and confidence in him and thanked his family for their support as he takes on this role. Fox also paid homage to the men and women who formed the association over 40 years ago and said MBP will continue to work towards those same ideals. “Their belief was to make the beef industry stronger in Manitoba by allowing producers to make their own choices; to raise and feed and market their cattle unencumbered by ordinance and legislation and regulation. This group had the vision, the fortitude and the dedication to see it through,” Fox said. “There were battles but they were victorious in delivering this organization we get to enjoy today. It’s this foresight and this dedication that I hope we can capture over the next few years and help deliver and direct a Manitoba beef industry that is the strongest in the country. “There will be struggles and trials in the coming months but I am excited about these challenges and willing to meet them head on.”

Fox also recognized outgoing President Heinz Reimer, who served in that role for three years and will remain on the board for one year before retiring. “Heinz serves on numerous national boards for MBP and he has been a true workhorse for this organization. I’m glad that I am going to have you to rely on for the next year. I appreciate having the opportunity to work with you and look forward to carrying on that relationship.”
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**ARBI watching Spring Flood Forecasts Closely**

*MFGA Aquanty modelling project underway in Assiniboine River Basin on schedule for 2018*

Winnipeg, MB, January 30, 2017--The Assiniboine River Basin Initiative (ARBI) is watching all flood forecasts closely these days.

“Our network crosses the entire Assiniboine River Basin (ARB) and we make it our business to keep informed with what’s going on in the basin by interacting with all interests,” says Dr. Allan Preston, ARBI chair. “While it is much too early to accurately forecast what spring may herald in terms of flooding, this winter’s heavy snowfall across the Souris River sub-Basin in particular, coupled with saturated soil conditions over the entire Assiniboine Basin, certainly have begun to raise some potential concerns.”

The latest flood forecasts for the ARB from the various agencies that monitor flood conditions are beginning to be released. Regardless of the details of the forecasts, the key message will no doubt confirm what all Prairie flood forecasters know – the severity of spring flooding is contingent much more on the speed of the snow melt, the thawing out of the ground, and the extent of early spring precipitation, than it is on the actual amount of snow currently on the basin landscape.

Preston says ARBI is determined to better understand the water movement across the basin and to help identify best practices for adaptability and resilience of the ARB that crosses large areas of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and North Dakota. One such model is the Manitoba Forage and Grassland Association (MFGA)’s Aquanty project, a HydroGeoSphere model on the ARB primarily funded by the Canada and Manitoba governments through Growing Forward 2, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative. The MFGA Aquanty model will model the effects of flood and drought on soils and topography as well as simulating various mitigation measures to lessen flood and drought event impacts on agricultural lands.

Preston is co-chair on the MFGA Aquanty steering committee with Henry Nelson of MFGA. Nelson says the MFGA Aquanty project model is well underway and on schedule after 10 months of the 25 month project.

“It would be premature at this point to make any statement that advocates the use of the model for predicting the behavior of the 2017 spring melt,” says Nelson. “That being said, when complete, there will be extensive winter hydrologic process functionality built into the model which could warrant some application towards spring flood analysis in the future.

Nelson says once completed the MFGA Aquanty model will be a valuable tool for the ARB.

“At the end of March 2018 we will have a working model that can be used to predict the impact on water movement within the Assiniboine River Basin of certain basic changes to infrastructure as well as the impact of changes in the area dedicated to perennial forages and/or grasslands,” says Nelson,
adding at some point in the future the MFGA Aquanty model could possibly be used similarly with cover crops.

ARBI is also nearing completion of its “Framework for Water Stewardship” – a detailed document that identifies key issues of importance to basin-wide stakeholders. The Framework clearly defines ARBI’s goals, objectives, key strategies and expected outcomes that need to occur in the basin to reach the future that stakeholders envisage. Certainly, flood preparedness and flood mitigation are of significant importance within ARBI’s mandate.

“Flood preparation and mitigation activities have been ongoing across the basin since the 2011 flood,” says Wanda McFadyen, ARBI executive director. “While never a completed task, there is no question that everyone in the basin can be more comfortable with the knowledge that many improvements in addressing flooding concerns leave us much better prepared for whatever Mother Nature has in store for us this spring and in the future.”

In order to assist stakeholders across the basin, ARBI has developed a page on their website (http://assiniboinerbi.weebly.com/) with direct links to all government departments in the basin that provided flow and flood forecasting as a point of reference.

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The CCA town hall circuit made its most recent stop in Ashern, Manitoba on January 27, 2017. Hosted by Manitoba Beef Producers and CCA, the event brought in more than 100 local producers and marked the first town hall of 2017.

Following a complimentary dinner sponsored by Farm Credit Canada, participants were given updates from across CCA including its operating divisions and partners. CCA President Dan Darling began the evening with an overview of the organization and updates on recent trade missions and files. The reiteration of support for a bilateral trade agreement with Japan and enhanced lobbying efforts in the U.S. was particularly timely following the inauguration of U.S. President Donald Trump and his announcement to withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Executive Vice President Dennis Laycraft provided an update on CCA’s domestic efforts, addressing policy, labour shortages, traceability, and involvement with the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef. Other presenters included Ron Glaser, Canada Beef Vice President, Andrea Brocklebank, Beef Cattle Research Council Executive Director, Brian Perillat, Canfax Manager and Senior Analyst, Emily Ritchie, Youth Leadership Coordinator, Brett McRae, Young Cattlemen’s Council President, and Stina Nagel, Advocacy Coordinator, with an update on Issues Management and the Beef Advocacy Canada program. Overall, the program was robust and the audience was engaged in discussion and asking a variety of questions.
Manitoba 4-H students take honours in video contest

Ottawa, ON – January 25, 2017 – 4-H Canada and Syngenta Canada are pleased to announce the national winners of the Proud to Bee a 4-H'er video contest. 4-H’ers from across Canada were asked to create a short video, either as a club or as individuals, demonstrating their pride in being a part of the 4-H program and reflecting the wide variety of Canadian 4-H clubs, projects, communities and age groups.

The videos submitted during the contest entry period in November—coinciding with National 4-H Month—highlighted the common values and central experience of 4-H in building responsible, caring and contributing young leaders, and the sense of pride and accomplishment they all feel as 4-H’ers.

“Congratulations to all of the winning 4-H clubs and 4-H members who did such a wonderful job of showing their enthusiasm and excitement for 4-H in their videos, making this contest a great success,” said Shannon Benner, CEO of 4-H Canada. “Thanks to Syngenta and the Proud to Bee a 4-H’er initiative, 4-H youth across Canada have had incredible opportunities to grow their knowledge of the important work of pollinators and show leadership in their communities by supporting the creation of pollinator-friendly habitats.”

Approximately 3,800 votes were cast during the online public voting period. The winning entry received a GoPro HERO5 camera. The first and second runner-up entries each received an Apple iPad mini 2 and the remaining top ten entries received a selfie stick. Each of the top ten entries also received 4-H Canada branded items to continue displaying their 4-H pride in their communities.

Proud to Bee a 4-H’er – Winning Video Entries

1st place - The Pas Helping Hands                      4-H Manitoba
2nd place - Aidan Tully                               4-H Manitoba
3rd place - Colton Skori                             4-H Alberta
4th place - Comox Valley 4-H Calf Club              4-H British Columbia
5th place - Boots N Bridles 4-H Club                 4-H British Columbia

This fun and engaging video contest wrapped up the third year of Proud to Bee a 4-H’er, a national initiative encouraging 4-H club members to learn about the amazing world of bees and other pollinators, which includes planting and tending pollinator-friendly gardens in their communities.

Since 2014, close to 100,000 seed packets have been distributed across Canada, through the generous support of Syngenta, giving 4-H’ers and others the opportunity to create pollinator-friendly habitats and to enjoy the outdoors.

“The addition of the Proud to Bee a 4-H’er video contest in 2016 was a fun and fitting way to cap off a successful year of activities that saw more than 120 4-H Canada clubs from coast-to-coast-to-coast support the important work of pollinators. The enthusiasm that 4-H’ers brought to their Proud to Bee a 4-H’er activities was on full display in their video submissions,” says Dr. Paul Hoekstra, Stewardship and Policy Manager with Syngenta Canada.

Syngenta support for Proud to Bee a 4-H’er is through its Operation Pollinator program, which is focused on research and other initiatives that contribute to enhanced biodiversity and habitat in support of healthy pollinator populations.

To watch the winning videos, please visit www.youtube.com/4HCanada.
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Summer Students Required for Brandon Area

Manitoba Beef & Forage Initiatives is looking for summer students for our beef and forage research and demonstration farm located near Brandon MB. The positions to be filled are Research Assistants, and are responsible for fulfilling the duties listed in the job description below.

Duties
The bulk of the job will be linked to assisting where needed in the daily management of beef and forage applied-research trials. Listed below are some of the expected duties:

- Collecting forage, soil and manure samples;
- Operating large and small farm equipment;
- Sorting and moving cattle;
- Maintaining cattle handling facilities, including electric fencing;
- Heavy lifting;
- Data entry and record keeping of trial activities and livestock performance.

Assist the Site Manager in coordinating the construction of new farm yard outbuildings and other infrastructure.

General farm labour, farm yard maintenance, using power tools, and towing trailers.

Term of employment
The summer student will be employed by MBFI on a full-time basis commencing in April or early May and ending with the beginning of school in September of 2017. Part time work may also be available from September 2017 to April 2018 depending on the situation.

Hours of work
The hours of work are dependent on activities requiring your assistance but are generally 40 hours per week. Evening and weekend work may be required during busy periods.

Requirements
This position requires a valid Class 5 licence and the ability to travel to and from the MBFI sites located within ten miles of Brandon. A Class 3 licence is an asset. The applicant must be a registered student at the time of application.

Please send resumes to:
Kristelle Harper, Research Coordinator, Manitoba Beef & Forage Initiatives Inc.
kristelle.mbo@gmail.com
1-204-740-0376

Application open until position is filled
**What is VBP Plus (VBP+)?**

Beef producers like yourself care greatly about your animals, the product you produce and the environment in which you farm. It’s just common sense.

In today’s world the majority of people consuming your product are far removed from the farm, and often don’t understand what it is you do. Combine that with negative stories, misplaced myths and uncertainty about what to buy, only increases the need to trust. This is true of all commodities: from vegetables and fish production to raising beef.

To bring transparency and reassurance back to their buying choices, the industry and marketplace has increasingly adopted verification programs to reassure all levels of buyers that what we say we do – we are doing!

Buyers concerns cover a wide range of topics from food safety, animal health and welfare, the environment and even your well-being and survivability. Being “sustainable” is a popular term in the marketplace to describe all this with consumers wanting to make sustainable choices when purchasing goods and services.

**Why VBP Plus (VBP+)?**

The Verified Beef Production (VBP) program, known in Canada for on-farm food safety, has been helping producers meet industry standards for food safety for over a decade. VBP coordinators and auditors are available to help you meet those standards in every province and are field proven, and trusted suppliers of information and audit services.

It makes sense to add animal care, biosecurity and environmental stewardship components to enhance the program and provide the entire sustainability package. The resulting program is cost effective and utilizes existing tools and programs wherever possible (e.g. programs such as animal care codes and environmental farm plans). This successful formula is aligned with other industry efforts, such as the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef.

Verified Beef Production Plus (VBP+) is building on the strong base of VBP by making it into a valuable program that will be a global leader in providing education and verification of ALL the good things you do.

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**How do I become VBP+ registered?**

**New producers to VBP+**

For those not registered in the VBP program now it’s still an easy entry process:

1. Learn about the program – through various educational media (e.g. self-assessment tool, online materials, webinars, teleconferences or by attending a regional workshop where offered).
2. Implement the program – review your practices, update your records where necessary and complete the self-assessment checklists making changes where and if necessary.
3. Complete the voluntary verification audit – this takes approximately 3.5 hours, and involves a trained auditor who is knowledgeable in the beef industry. To be ready for the audit, a cow/calf producer must have the applicable records for at least 6 months, while a feedlot operator needs 3 months. The program is easily adaptable to any size of cow-calf or feedlot operation.

**VBP Registered Producers**

For those producers registered in the VBP program now, they can transition into VBP+ on their next renewal

1. Continue to maintain the food safety records and practices as before.
2. Complete the VBP+ Supplemental Self-Assessment for the new components (biosecurity, animal care and environment), review your practices, update your records making changes where and if necessary.
3. The VBP+ program will be seamlessly integrated into your current audit cycle. Depending upon where you are at in your audit cycle, you will be required to submit:
   a. a VBP+ self declaration or records assessment and,
   b. a verification interview or VBP+ on-farm audit.
4. Feedlots will be required to complete a feedlot cattle chute side handling and pen condition assessment.

*Producers who successfully complete the above steps will receive a VBP+ certificate, and can market themselves as VBP+ registered. In some provinces VBP+ farm gate signs are also provided.*

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**For more information on VBP+**

To learn more about VBP+ workshop schedules, module information, self-assessment checklists and program costs please contact your provincial coordinator or visit our websites:
Workshops are being delivered by webinar during the evening using two formats
• One for existing registered producers who have been through the VBP program before
• One for producers completely new to the program
• Webinars take place in the evenings so producers aren’t taken away from their daily chores
• The interactive webinars are delivered using web-based video conferencing software
• Participants can interact during the presentations, hear the presenters, and ask questions or make comments in real time
• Also available via app for smartphone and android

Webinars FOR EXISTING REGISTERED PRODUCERS
– 2nd and 4th Monday of each month at 7:00 pm
• VBP registered producers or those who have attended a VBP workshop in the past can sign up for the VBP+ added module webinar
• VBP+ enhanced module webinars will be held the 2nd and 4th Monday of each month at 7:00 pm

Webinars FOR NEW PRODUCERS
– 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month at 7:00 pm
• Producers who have not attended a VBP workshop in the past can sign up for the VBP+ full program
• VBP+ training for new producers will be held the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month at 7:00 pm

How to register for webinars
• To sign up to attend a webinar or the LIVE workshop, please contact Melissa Atchison or email at verifiedbeedmanitoba@gmail.com.
• Alternate times and days can be arranged based on producer demand