



THE ROARING TWENTIES

Inside this issue:

Mental Health in Farmers	2
Building the Basics	3
Riparian Health Assessments	4
Environmental Farm Plan	4
Canadian Agricultural Partnership	5
Communication During Crisis	6
Pest Watch	7

I don't think that when we bid adieu to 2019, that we could have foreseen what a train wreck 2020 is turning out to be. 2019 was rough with the cold wet summer, where first cut hay was happening in September, to the brutal harvest conditions. It is scary to think that spring time harvest is becoming the new "normal". At New Years', we welcomed in the roaring twenties, which reminiscent of the 1920s is filled with a devastating disease, the economy in the tank, and instead of alcohol we have prohibition on social gatherings.

This pandemic has had a drastic effect on how we operate as a society. In a culture that made being busy a badge of honor, and that we feel pressured to "keep up with the Joneses", many of us have now had a chance to reflect and to reprioritize our lives.

Farming and the rural lifestyle are at an advantage during this pandemic. Not only do we have the space for social distancing, but many of us have had family at the forefront of our priorities prior to this happening. But farming doesn't stop. There are cows to calve, livestock to feed, planning for seeding (and most likely finish last year's harvest), grain to ship and the list goes on. All of this work has to happen during the good times and the bad. We might have to do our work a little further apart, but the work gets done. However, it should give a few producers' pause. Many operations rely on a sole producer. What happens if that person gets sick or injured? Who then takes over the farm to get the work done? Many would rely on neighbors, but at some point they too have to prioritize their own operations. Does your operation have a plan in place?

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Continued from page 1 It is definitely not a pleasant thought to think about, but it is a conversation and planning that needs to take place. The “what ifs” on the farm can be numerous: what if I get hurt?; what if I am working alone?; what if I get sick and hospitalized?; what if there is an accident? And the list can go on. Working alone can be a tough one, as many of us do it and question how we can do it safely. Is there a friend or family member that you can check in with at the end of the day or predetermined time? There are also several apps and services that you can subscribe to for working alone check-ins.

This pandemic has also taken a toll on our mental health. We are all missing our family and friends outside of our households. Our relationships help keep us healthy and connected. Many of us are feeling isolated. This in turn can lead to depression and also affect our physical health. There is no shortage of negativity out there. Turn on the news and we are stifled with the spread of COVID-19 and how many people have died. We are inundated with how the economy is spiraling down and there is a perceived hopelessness for the near future. It is normal to feel uncertain and some stress, most of us have coping skills to deal with these feelings and stress. If you find yourself struggling, please reach out to family, friends or professionals. You can contact the farmer distress line anytime at 1-877-303-2642; there are also many resources out there accessible for you to use or if you have concerns about someone else.

Alberta Farmer Distress Line: 1-877-303-2642

This toll free number is available 24 hours a day, seven days per week. This confidential crisis line is to help farmers and ranchers with: stress; anxiety; depression; suicide; emotional or psychiatric crises.

For other information or non-emergencies check out: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/amh/amh.aspx>



Building the Basics

When we build a house we all want a strong foundation and structure. Much like building that house, our soils, which are the foundations of our operations, need good structure as well. A beautiful soil structure is one that closely resembles cottage cheese. Your soil is made up of minerals in the form of clay, silt or sand, with pore space for air and water. Just like every living creature, soils need air and water to function properly. This allows for the biological component of soil to thrive. Soil productivity and function is a reflection of the biological capacity of that soil. Of course soil formation is also a factor of the climate, topography, parent materials and organisms and their relationship over time.

It is important to understand your soil properties as they will impact how plants grow in your soils, as well as how nutrients and water move through the soil. Sand is chemically inactive, as is silt; whereas clay is chemically active and holds water and nutrients. It is relatively easy to understand what your soil is comprised of by hand texturing. By placing a bit of your soil in your hand you add a little water and using your fingers from one hand, roll the moist soil across your palm. You will not be able to get the specific breakdown, but you should be able to have a general idea if you have a predominantly sand, silt or clay soil. Sand when dry is loose, and gritty when wet. Silt is powdery when dry and greasy when wet. Clay is hard when dry and sticky when wet. If the soil can roll into a ribbon and not break apart when you roll it across your palm, you have a clay based soil. Loam occurs when you have transitional properties between sand, silt and clay.

Plants require nutrients for growth and are classified as primary (nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium), secondary (calcium, magnesium, sulfur), and as micronutrients (boron, copper, iron, chlorine, manganese, molybdenum, zinc). These nutrients are affected by the soil mineral make up as well as soil pH, as the pH will control which chemical processes take place and dictate the chemical form of the nutrient which affects its availability to the plant.

Many producers use fertilizers to increase yields and have a successful growing season. However how are you calculating what you need to add? We all know that it doesn't take long for that fertilizer bill to add up and what is it doing to your profitability and bottom line? Many have moved from just book values to soil testing and fertilizing to a sufficiency approach. Soil testing is a valuable tool to understand your soils and answer questions such as: does my soil have problems?; does my crop need fertilizer?; what type of fertilizer do I need?; and how much fertilizer should I apply?. Even if you only get a very basic soil test, you would be able to determine the soil pH and available macronutrients. From there you can get a more elaborate analysis to determine other limiting factors such as soil salinity, organic matter (carbon), aluminium and micronutrients. For those that have never soil tested before it may seem like a daunting task. To see if soil sampling will make a difference on your operation, start small with one field and you can always scale up.

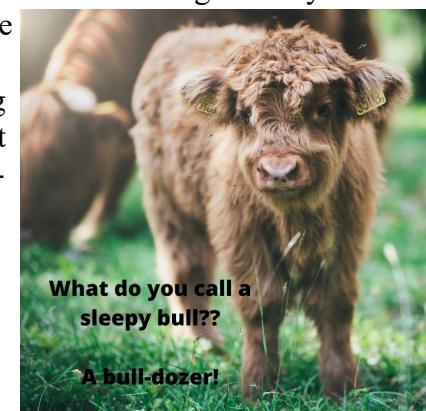
The one key to soil sampling is consistency. You can sample in either the spring or fall, but pick a time of year and stick to it. Ensure that the same depth and amount is collected at each site. The sampling depths recommend are taking the top six inches as one sample and then the 6-12 inch depth as the second.

You can always hire an agronomist to soil sample, but you can easily do it yourself. You can use a GPS and pick the same locations consistently, especially if you are using variable rate; but ensure that you have an adequate number of samples to create a composite sample (several samples mixed thoroughly together and one sample taken from that mixture). If you have variations noticeable in crop growth or in natural vegetation you may consider submitting them as a separate sample, but other reasons could include differences in slope, drainage, or management history.

When you feel comfortable with basic soil sampling you could consider submitting for a Haney test. This test is better for determining soil health as it determines what quantity of soil nutrients are available to soil microbes. It also evaluates health indicators such as soil respiration, and the ratio between water-soluble organic carbon and organic nitrogen.

If you would like to know more about soil sampling contact the LARA office.

Watch for the next newsletter for the article *Organic Matter: The Game Changer*.



Environmental Farm Plans

The environment is becoming a more prominent issue. It is a large factor in marketing agriculture and food products in today's global markets. Consumers are demanding more transparency and are demanding high quality and safe products. Reputation of food safety is critical to retain and gain access to domestic and international markets.

Environmental Farm Plans (EFP) provide a tool for producers to self analyze their operation and identify environmental risks, current standards, areas for improvement and also highlight what they are doing well. Having a completed EFP allows producers to access different funding opportunities, such as the Growing Forward Stewardship Program. It is also useful in product branding that demonstrates specific environmental standards.

The EFP Process

An EFP can be completed through workshops, online or one-on-one session(s). The EFP first identifies the soil and farm site characteristics. Following this, the producer completes only the relevant chapters that apply to their operation; such as wintering sites, fertilizer, pesticides, crop management etc.

Upon completion the EFP is submitted to a Technical Assistant for review. Once reviewed the EFP will be returned along with a letter of completion.

The EFP is a living document and should be reviewed and updated periodically.

If you wish to complete an EFP or have any questions regarding EFP please contact Kellie at the LARA office at 780-826-7260

Riparian Health Assessment

The riparian zone is the interface between the upland and a water course. A healthy riparian area: traps and stores sediment; builds and maintains banks and shorelines; stores water; recharges aquifers; filters and buffers water; creates primary production and much more!

A riparian health assessment is a tool designed to evaluate the site and can provide a foundation to build an action plan and identify priorities.

If you would like a FREE Riparian Health Assessment conducted on your property or more information please call Kellie at 780-826-7260 or email sustainag.lara@mcsnet.ca



CANADIAN AGRICULTURAL PARTNERSHIP

The Canadian Agricultural Partnership is a five-year, \$3 billion federal-provincial-territorial investment in the agriculture, agri-food and agri-based products sector set to begin in April 2018, and is the successor of the 2013-18 Growing Forward 2 partnership. In Alberta, the Canadian Agricultural Partnership represents a federal - provincial investment of \$406 million in strategic programs and initiatives for the agricultural sector.

Currently accepting funding applications is the Environmental Stewardship and Climate Change program and Farm Water Supply.

Funding Opportunities Stewardship covers projects such as:

Riparian Area Fencing and Management	Permanent fencing and potentially cross fencing	Funding Maximum: \$75,000 Cost Share: 30% or 50%
Year-Round / Summer Watering Systems	Portable or permanent systems that are not in your yard site	Funding Maximum: \$50,000 Cost Share: 30% or 50%
Watercourse Crossings	Construction materials needed for watercourse crossing in accordance with the Water Act	Funding Maximum: \$10,000 Cost Share: 30% or 50%
Riparian Management Strategies - OPEN	Activities which are not explicitly ineligible and which can be shown to meet or exceed the program goals. Potential projects include: pond levelers for beaver management, riparian buffer establishment, native prairie management, grazing management consulting, wetland restoration	Funding Maximum: \$100,000 Cost Share: 30% or 50%
Relocation of Livestock facility or confined wintering site	Relocate a livestock facility that poses a significant risk to water quality or the environment, and properly remove the existing facility	Funding Maximum: \$100,000 Cost Share: 30% or 50%
Improved Land Application of Manure	To adopt technologies that result in more efficient nutrient use and decrease nutrient loss through run-off and volatilization. Eligible costs include: load cells, flow control meters, on the go nutrient analysis technology, compost turners and much more.	Funding Maximum: \$100,000 Cost Share: 30% or 50%
Agricultural Input and Waste	Improved pesticide management; improved nutrient management (sectional controls); plastic rollers; shelterbelts; wetland assessments	Funding Maximum: \$7,000 - \$15,000 Cost Share: 30% or 50%

More Information On Funding Opportunities

For more information on these funding opportunities go to: <https://cap.alberta.ca/CAP/index.html>

Call the LARA office to set up a time to go over funding possibilities and for assistance with the application forms.

Please note that applications must be approved prior to work being done or purchases made to be eligible for the funding.



Stuck in the mud? Consider an offsite watering system.

12 Tips to Boost Farm Communication During a Crisis

By Elaine Froese

Communication is important all the time, but communication during a crisis is essential. How has the current environment changed communication on your family farm? To help you out, I want to share tips from Patti Durand, a friend and an amazing transition specialist at Farm Credit Canada, as well as some extra tips that were shared during Connect Ag. 2019.

Communication: Why Should You Care?

Families who communicate on a regular basis with business meetings are 21 percent more profitable, according to research by Dr. David Kohl, a retired Professor of Agricultural Finance. Talking things out during this (and any other) crisis can boost your bottom line and will also likely help you alleviate the stress that everyone is likely feeling.

Patti Durand says, “Efficiencies found will save relationships and money. Each person will have clarity, allowing for better focus and sleep. Good habits for talking about the little stuff lead to better outcomes when talking about bigger decisions.”

You've heard me say before: you get the behaviour you accept. If communication needs improvement on your farm team, how are you addressing key habits?

You can only change you, so take care in how you deliver your messages and think about whether it warrants a face to face discussion rather than a quick text.

And when you are communicating, are you focused on listening with curiosity? Durand suggests channeling your inner 3-year-old and asks “Why? Why? Why?” This is a classic conflict resolution behaviour where you are clear in sharing your intent. Durand encourages families to assume that each of your family members is acting with good intentions.

Another key tip is to consider the other person's perspective. Put yourself in the other person's shoes and work toward the common interests, collaborating to reach a common goal.

Communication During a Crisis: Durand's Tips

These tips from Patti Durand will help boost your communication during a crisis...but remember to practice them all year long! 1. Recognize the symptoms of a fight, flight or freeze response.

A fight, flight, or freeze response indicates that you're not in a good state of mind for a conversation. Acknowledge that you need to talk about this issue after you've taken time to calm down first.

2. Use a scheduled meeting to deal with the issues.

This is what I call the “undiscussbulls.” Use your flipchart, talking stick (a soft toy), and your phones to record the pages of the flipchart. Rather than having lots of side conversations or blow-ups by the shop, come together with an agenda to make decisions as a group.

3. Recognize when a 3rd Party advisor needs to be brought in.

As a coach, I have even done this via the video computer tools (Zoom). A face-to-face meeting is impactful, but even being there by speakerphone can add huge value to the meeting.

4. Use guidelines for spending.

“Team members have the authority to make purchases of less than \$____ without consulting the team. (Don't fight about anything worth less than \$____).

5. Have an agenda.

Having an agenda for the discussion works well in any family farm meeting. You can even write the agenda on a white board in the farm workshop. List the priority tasks for the week, assign names, delegate, then park the rest for jobs to do if everything else gets done. Email me at elaine@elainefroese.com if you would like a copy of Durand's tips, and Dick Wittman's sample meeting agenda.

Connect Ag Tips for Communication During a Crisis

These tips were discussed during Connect Ag 2019. These are vital elements that will improve your communication during a crisis or during any important family farm meeting.

1. Have all players at the table.

Think about who should be at the table. In my experience, it is usually best to include spouses, even if they are not active in farm roles. There are certain meetings that don't translate well if everyone is not in the room. And make sure the meeting itself is distraction-free. Get childcare and shut off phones.

2. Determine the goal of the current meeting.

You can only prepare for very clear outcomes if you know what the goal of the current meeting is. Be sure that the meeting is focused and establishes concrete steps and timelines to reach a decision. Sometimes you may need a 24-hour rule to cool down if things are emotional, or to allow counsel while you sleep on a big decision.

To report prohibited noxious weeds call the Alberta Pest Surveillance System at :

310-APSS (2777)

Yellow Clematis

Clematis tangutica (Aka Golden Clematis, Golden Tiara, Virgins-Bower, Radar Love, Helios)

Provincial Designation:
Noxious



Alec McClay



Alec McClay

Overview:

Yellow clematis is a perennial vine of the buttercup family, native to high mountain areas of China and India. It reproduces both by seed and vegetatively from stem pieces. Vines grow rapidly either along the ground or will climb and cover other shrubs/trees, fences and trellises. It is widely available as both an ornamental plant and seed under a variety of names - Golden Clematis, Golden Tiara, Virgins-Bower - from seed; Radar Love, Helios. *C. tibetana* is a very similar yellow flowered clematis that is also available and hybridizes with *C. tangutica*.

Yellow clematis has become very common and becoming abundant at some sites in the Bow Valley corridor from Wheatland County through Calgary to Canmore; also in city of Medicine Hat, town of Jasper, city of Edmonton, MD of Pincher Creek².

In Alberta there is a native blue-flowered clematis which grows in the foothills – *C. occidentalis* or common names Blue clematis, blue Virgin's Bower³. A white-flowered clematis native to western N. America is *C. ligusticifolia* var. *ligusticifolia* – Western white clematis or white Virgin's Bower.

gusticifolia var. *ligusticifolia* – Western white clematis or white Virgin's Bower.

Habitat:

Yellow clematis is tolerant of cold, drought, nutrient-poor soils, and part shade, but prefers full sun. It develops a long taproot³ can be found thriving in open woodland, grassy areas and even gravelly areas such as railway ballast and industrial areas. In its native habitat it grows at elevations of 1300-5400 m⁴.

Identification:

Stems: Several stems per plant, growing up to 3-4 m long¹. Young stems are green while the older stems are tough & woody.

Leaves: Are bright green and compound with 5-7 lance-shaped leaflets 5-6 cm long, which may be lobed. Leaf tips are pointed and leaf edges are coarsely toothed. Leaves may be slightly hairy on the underside and are deciduous.

Flowers: Are lemon-yellow, nodding, with

four petals, and appear mid-summer through late fall. Flowers are bell-shaped at first and then flatten as the petals spread. Petals may be silky-hairy on the outside and occasionally tinged purplish-brown¹. Flowers are borne at the ends of stems or in leaf axils – usually solitary but sometimes 2 or 3 together - on a short (0.5-3 cm) peduncle¹ (flower stem). Bracts are similar to the leaves but smaller⁴. Seeds are oval (3.5-4.5 mm long) with silky tails about 5-6 cm long⁴.

Prevention:

Yellow clematis is distributed mainly through the nursery trade, and then spreads far beyond the gardens and flowerbeds via its abundant, wind dispersed seed. Do not purchase plants or seeds labeled with any of the names listed above.

Control:

Grazing: Not known. Invasive plants should never be considered as forage.

Cultivation: Not known. Unlikely since stem pieces can produce new plants and vines climb and out-shade any competing vegetation.

Mechanical: Repeated hand pulling prior to seed set can provide effective control and possibly eradicate small infestations³.

Chemical: Currently no herbicides are registered for use on yellow clematis. Always check product labels to ensure the herbicide is registered for use on the target plant in Canada by the Pest Management Regulatory Agency. Always read and follow label directions. Consult your local Agricultural Fieldman or Certified Pesticide Dispenser for more information.

Biological: None researched to date.



REFERENCES

- 1 Gray-Wilson, C. 1998. *Clematis orientalis* (Ranunculaceae) and its allies. *Kew Bulletin* 44: 33-60.
- 2 McClay, A. 2007. Risk assessment fact sheet for golden clematis, *Clematis tangutica*.
- 3 Yellow Clematis fact sheet. Non-native Vegetation Control Plan, Jasper National Park.
- 4 Gray-Wilson, C. 2006. *Clematis*, the genus: a comprehensive guide for gardeners, horticulturists, and botanists. Timber Press, Portland, Oregon. 219 pp.

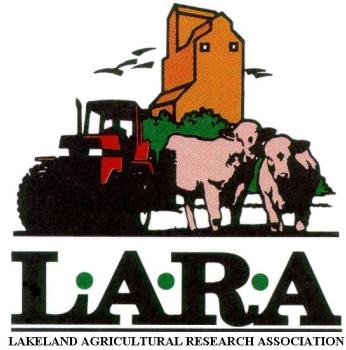
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Sustainable farming encompasses a wide range of practices and principles; combining environmental stewardship with profitability and ensuring that the family farm will be there for generations to come.



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Quick Things You Can Do To Improve Your Mental State

- ◆ Tell yourself something positive
- ◆ Write down something you are grateful for
- ◆ Focus on one thing (in the moment)
- ◆ Exercise
- ◆ Eat a good meal
- ◆ Open up to someone
- ◆ Do something for someone else
- ◆ Take a break; step away and have 10 deep breaths
- ◆ Get a good nights rest
- ◆ Be Kind To Yourself

Continued from page 6

3. Commit to addressing the big emotional problem in the room.

Use my key challenge audit sheet, which you can find here, to understand the key things you need to unpack in your communication.

4. Make sure the conversation is open and safe.

No yelling or disrespectful behaviour. You are running a multi-million-dollar business. There will be no drama if you choose not to show up for the performance! If this is not the current culture of your farm, then it is time to have an outside facilitator to help demonstrate positive communication habits.

5. Everyone has a voice at the table and TIME to express themselves.

Holding the talking stick means that you speak without interruption, and then ask for the stick if you want to give a response. This simple tool empowers all voices. Be prepared for emotions to be expressed if this is the first time all voices are being heard. Have Kleenex tissues handy and don't be afraid of emotions being expressed.

6. Record the information that was shared.

You can do this easily with phone photos of the flipchart papers, or digitally with a meeting template (ask me for it: elaine@elainefroese.com). You can list what was discussed, assign a person to each task, and then give deadlines for completion.

7. Always have the date for the next meeting.

And make sure you put that date on the calendar before leaving the meeting! Meet when folks are rested, full and ready to make plans. One farm family meets every first Wednesday for operational planning, and the 3rd Wednesday of the month for strategy transition planning. Only 2 hours from 9 to 11 am. It is blocked off on everyone's calendars and part of the farm routine. Designated meeting times might also work on Sunday night to plan for the week.

Communication during a crisis may be tough, but when you model trust, good listening, respect, and curiosity without judgment, many amazing things will happen, and a huge weight of stress will lift. It also will feel good on the balance sheet to be more profitable. You can do this!

WWW.LARAONLINE.CA