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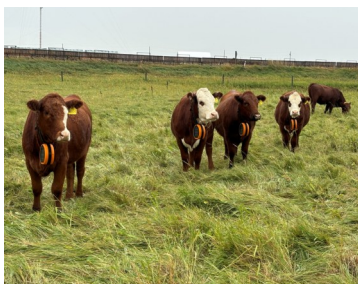


Grain, Grass & Growth

October 2026

The Future of Fencing

By Karin Roen, CARA



In early 2026, CARA was gifted a significant donation from Anchor J Ranches, through the Anchor J Fund, by means of the Community Foundation of Southeastern Alberta. A portion of

the donation was designated for the evaluation of a new technology, virtual fencing, in the Special Areas. CARA purchased 100 Gallagher eSheperd Cellular eS1 Neckbands, most of these neckbands are currently on cattle near Cereal, with Rafter 00 Ranch, for use in a rotational grazing system. In addition to hands-on use by producers, CARA technician's set-up a month-long demonstration by Oyen with five heifers, supplied by Jerry and Gabe Logan, to gain an understanding of the technology, including paddock set-up, animal behaviour and training, and practicality.

Virtual fences are created through the eSheperd software that communicates with the neckbands via GPS. The eSheperd platform is available for iOS and Android mobile devices or by desktop. Gallagher offers two types of virtual fencing collars: Cellular eS1 or LoRa eS1. The cellular collars communicate using a global SIM card, connecting to the local cellular network (Rogers), and are recommended for use in areas with adequate cell coverage. In rugged, isolated terrain with poor cell service, LoRa collars must be utilized. The LoRa collars communicate using wireless long range radio signals to an eSheperd LoRa Base Station, each base station has a 5 km radius connectivity zone.

Gallagher recommends that cattle weigh a minimum of 440 lbs to comfortably wear the 5.5 lb collar. Fitting the neckband is one of the most important steps, mature cattle neckbands should have 1" of

room between the top of the neck and neckband whereas yearlings or any animals expecting to gain weight should have up to 2" of slack. Collars that are too tight could cause bruising and swelling around the jaw and neck area. The collars have adjustable chains that can be shortened or lengthened to fit around the neck. Once the collars are properly fitted, plastic locking clips are put on to reinforce the buckles that hold the chains and neckband together.

Livestock learn how to navigate the virtual fence by being trained to respond to the audio tones coming from the collar. As cattle approach the boundary, a high-pitched audio tone is emitted as a warning, if the cattle continue forward over the boundary, ignoring the tone, the chains will give off a mild pulse. This two-part warning happens nine times before the animal is considered "escaped" from the virtual boundary. Nothing happens to the animal after escaping, the collar will become responsive again once they've crossed back into the virtual boundary. An animal is considered trained to the virtual fence once their audio ratio is above 80%, meaning they're responding to the audio tone alone, more than eight out of ten times. A training paddock should consist of three real fencelines and one virtual fenceline for the cattle to test.

After four days in the training paddock, the heifers in the demo had experienced the audio-pulse warnings and were very wary of approaching the virtual boundary. There was only one instance of a heifer "escaping" during the training period. The heifers were quite hesitant to move past the virtual boundary when it came time to change paddocks on day five. They tended to stay in the middle of the paddock or near an existing fence to stay "safe". By day ten the heifers had "graduated" and reached the 80% audio ratio goal. They became very responsive to the audio tone, moving away quickly or changing direction as soon as the tone

Continued on page 3

Fall Weed Control

Article from Canola Council



Fall can be an excellent time for weed control.

Perennials move resources down into their growing points and roots at this time of year, making fall a particularly effective time to spray these weeds.

Fall is also a good time to spray winter annuals, and possibly annuals in circumstances described below. Ideal timing is often different for each weed group – early fall for perennials, late fall for winter annuals and annuals.

Controlling fall weed growth also limits weed uptake of soil moisture and nutrients, although by October these uptakes will be minimal.

Use effective herbicide tank mixes to prevent selection for or to manage herbicide-resistant populations. Note: Producers have more herbicide options for fields planned for cereals next year.

Perennial weeds

Perennial weeds can continue growing for years. With the onset of lower temperatures and shortened days in the fall, they start moving sugars to below-ground tissues to enhance winter survival. Spraying perennials in fall takes advantage of this downward flow, providing better control than at any other time of year.

Perennials to target in the fall: Canada thistle, dandelion, quackgrass, foxtail barley

The best spray timing is from mid September to early October, before a killing frost. Perennials need time after harvest cutting to accumulate new leaf tissue to absorb herbicides. Weeds need to start actively growing again after harvest because herbicide uptake and translocation happen more-efficiently in actively growing weeds. Wait at least 10 days after harvest and four to six weeks is ideal. Even when waiting this long, leaf surface area is still just a fraction of what it

was prior to harvest. Therefore fall glyphosate rates will need to be higher (possibly two to three times higher) than the pre-harvest rate to get the same concentration of glyphosate into the plant root.

Warmer temperatures and bright sunshine improve herbicide activity. Apply glyphosate and other systemic herbicides during the heat of day when perennial weeds are actively growing and putting energy into their roots.

The trade off with waiting too long for leaf regrowth is losing healthy leaf tissue to frost. Without healthy leaf tissue, the herbicide can't translocate to the weed's crown and storage roots – the targets for control. (More on frost below.)

Winter annual weeds

Winter annuals germinate in late summer or fall, survive the winter, and get a head start on crops and annual weeds in the spring. Late summer moisture will bring on more winter annual emergence.

Winter annuals to target in the fall: narrow-leaved hawk's-beard, stork's-bill, annual sow thistle (common and spiny), cleavers, downy brome

October until freeze up is usually the best time to control winter annuals. Apply herbicide when winter annuals have emerged and are at the right stage for control. Many of the post-harvest product labels have weed staging listed, and winter annuals can hit those stages fairly quickly.

If waiting until spring, control may not be as good as in the fall. In spring, winter annuals have less leaf area to target early on, have a more established root system, and are moving energy out of (instead of into) root systems. If pre-seed burnoff is delayed due to field moisture, winter annuals can quickly outgrow the stage for adequate control.

With winter annuals, the goal is to break winter dormancy (which you can do with a Group 4 herbicide) or kill new buds being laid down for next year (which you can do with glyphosate).

A special note on cleavers

Cleavers have become more of a winter annual, perhaps due to no-till and direct seeding. Fall is a good time to manage them because by spring, many cleavers are big enough to escape control with usual pre-seed burnoff herbicide rates. Look for cleavers this fall in fields planned for canola next year. Grading tolerances are fairly low for cleavers, and the weed seems to be getting worse in some fields.

Annual weeds

Annual weeds grow for one season. If they germinate in late summer or fall, they don't usually survive the

winter.

Annuals to watch in the fall: volunteer canola, kochia

If weeds in a field are mainly annuals and significant further seed set is unlikely before freeze up, leaving them untreated to die through the winter is probably the most economical choice.

Kochia

Research out of southern Alberta suggests that kochia regrowing after a mid-August (or later) harvest will not produce seed before a killing frost in most years. Using glyphosate to control those annual weeds in fall may simply add selection pressure for the development of glyphosate resistance.

Volunteer canola

Leaving canola seeds undisturbed so they germinate in the fall or get eaten by birds and insects is a good way to reduce the volunteer seedbank. Canola seeds that remain on the soil surface when the snow flies will deteriorate over the winter. If you want to do something, Charles Geddes, in his U of M PhD, showed that light harrowing promotes fall emergence of volunteer canola. This emerged canola winterkills and helps to deplete the seedbank going into next spring.

Frost effect

Killing frost for weeds is hard to define since so many factors influence it. Different plants have different inherent tolerance to frost and weather preceding the frost can affect tolerance. A Canada thistle plant with little exposure to cooler temperatures may be susceptible to a frost of -3 to -4° C, whereas a plant that has gradually acclimatized to cooler conditions and progressively deeper frosts may survive a frost of -10°C or more. This is why it is critical to continually check the condition of leaf tissues before filling the sprayer.

If weeds are green and leaf tissue is still relatively pliable after a frost, growers may still have an opportunity to control perennial or winter annual weeds with glyphosate or another systemic herbicide. Control is possible on warm sunny days after a frost if at least 60 per cent of the leaf area is healthy. If most of the weed leaf area is dead, herbicide uptake will be minimal and waiting is recommended.

For glyphosate to be effective after a frost, weeds need at least 48 hours with nights above 4°C and daytime highs of at least 13°C.

***The Future of Fencing
continued from page 1***

started. As time went on, the heifers began to become more confident in testing the virtual boundary, they did not need to be led into the new paddocks anymore, they simply responded to the tones. Virtual paddocks can be created and turned on or off whenever, or the paddocks could be scheduled to turn on at specific times. The heifer’s locations on the map were updated every 30 minutes and their movement could be observed using “Tracks” on the mapping platform. Specific date and time windows could be selected for any number of animals in the mob, showing their movement across the paddock. Gallagher has a Heatmaps feature that can overlay an individual animal or mob’s movement onto a pasture or virtual paddock to determine where the most utilized and underutilized areas are, where the mob continually groups up, if a mob is using certain water sources, and to help plan what areas will need additional recovery.

With cattle in control of how many audio-pulse cues they receive and how to respond, they’re easily trained to the virtual boundary, it is the grazing management and technology that producers will need to adjust to. Using Tracks to watch cattle movement will not replace direct, visual inspections or good animal husbandry. Simply putting the collars on does not equal rotational grazing. The manager will need to plan moves, assess forage availability and utilization, increase forage recovery time, assess body condition, rumen fill, and manure indicators. At the field day on September 10th, producers who attended were excited about the new technology but questions about battery and collar-life expectancy, greater herd health insights, real-time GPS tracking, and the differences between virtual fencing options available came up. With virtual fencing collars becoming adopted for commercial use, the technology and possibilities will continue to evolve quickly. The collars should save producers a lot of time and resources by reducing the need for any type of fencing or repair. Thousands of dollars are spent creating even a mile of fence, that is stationary and only serves one purpose, versus \$415-350/collar for unlimited fencing possibilities that could also increase the number of grazing days. There is huge potential for improved grazing management, grazing salvage crops, marginal areas, field corners, or through terrain that is too tough to fence.

CARA staff have welcomed producers and industry to three workshops and field days during the past few weeks.

Inside Education Summer Tour

On July 8th, thirty-two participants of the Inside Education teacher professional development tour stopped at the Williams' Cooperator Site, south of Hanna for a discussion around applied research and regional seed variety trials. With the theme, "Roots, Ranches, and Rivers", Inside Education toured from Red Deer to Lethbridge over five days to build content knowledge and first-hand experiences that translate directly into the classroom. The group experienced a multitude of agricultural operations throughout the week, highlighting



rotational grazing, watershed alliances and riparian health management, dryland and irrigated crop research, technology in agriculture, and feedlot systems. The teachers, who came from various backgrounds, classrooms, and training, had little knowledge of farming systems or the work non-profit groups, such as CARA, contribute to the agricultural sector. Some had enlightening moments, realizing seed is planted, only to be harvested for seed again at the end of the growing season! They had an opportunity to walk through the plots, identifying the different crop types, and discussing how they could develop similar replicated, randomized research designs in their classrooms. Karin led the discussion at the Williams' site on the protocol, methodology, and justification for regional variety trials. Between the Alberta Regional Variety Advisory Committee (ARVAC) and CARA-led cereal trials, the site consists of twelve durum, ten barley, and twenty-five hard red spring wheat varieties that are being tested for differences in yield, quality, lodging, and resistance to disease and pests. Regional Variety Trials (RVT) provide meaningful data for local producers as the results reflect their own soil and moisture limitations versus relying on information from other parts of the province, that vary greatly from the Special Areas and MD of Acadia. Useable data from the Alberta RVT is submitted to ARVAC for final approval and relevant, significant data is incorporated into the AB Seed Guide.

2026 Summe

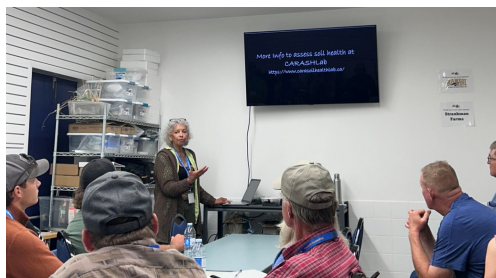
Alberta Summer Soil Health Tour

CARA partnered with several members of the Agricultural Research and Extension Council of Alberta (ARECA), to host Joel Williams on an Alberta Summer Soil Health Tour. Joel Williams, Integrated Soils, is a renowned soil health educator. His work has taken him from Australia to the UK and Canada with a focus on the importance of soil biology and plant physiology from



both a science and practical knowledge perspective. CARA's event was held July 24th at the Soil Health Lab training room in Oyen with eighteen producers in attendance. Joel led discussion on the utilization of cover crops, relieving soil compaction, managing soil microbiology to "unlock" existing nutrients for plant-root uptake, and what soil and tissue testing can indicate. Joel provided scientific research and producer testimonies from across the globe to emphasize these topics.

Dr. Yamily Zavala shared information on monitoring management alternatives for soil health (MASH),



measuring microbial activity, and the role of amendment products. Dr. Zavala led a hands-on demonstration for the group that emphasized

the importance of aggregate stability. Producers had four RODAC plates set out on the table, each containing 2 mm particle sized soil that has been under different management practices, then distilled water was added to mimic the effect of rainfall or soil water saturation to visualize how stable individual soil aggregates maintain their shape and size. The aggregates with low organic matter and poor management disintegrated, creating a cloudy sample. Soil aggregates that have higher organic matter and microbial activity remained completely intact, producers were able to see the aggregates and water move freely on the plate. The demonstration was an eye-opening example of why stable aggregates are important for maintaining water and air pore spaces in the soil that allow for better water infiltration and conditions for microbial activity.

Event Sponsors: Organic Alberta, FaRM Resilience Mentorship, RA West International Inc., Strankman Farms, Canadian Forage and Grasslands Association

er Field Days

CARA Annual Crop Field Day

CARA’s Annual Crop Field Day was held on July 28th. Meeting at CARA’s Grudecki crop trial site south of Acadia Valley, discussion focused on controlling kochia, using humapost products in field peas, management alternatives for soil health, as well as new pea and lentil variety comparisons. CARA Crop Agronomist Braeden Peers shared information on a trial he is leading, evaluating various residual fall and spring applied herbicides in controlling kochia in peas. Braeden explained how nuisance weeds like kochia can become herbicide resistant over time due to improper herbicide management. He emphasized the importance of timing, following the label directions for rates and water volumes, and integrating other control options like mowing problem areas to reduce the amount of kochia seed that builds up in the soil weed seed bank. From the trial, CARA has seen improved kochia management with treatments that include sulfentrazone. 2026 is the third year and final year for the trial which is duplicated by the Battle River Research Group (BRRG) near Forestburg. Braelynn Ekstrom, Research Agronomist with BlackEarth, explained the process of harnessing humic



acid from the coal mined in Sheerness and the incorporation of Grade A compost to create the new HumaPost product. The trial also included the use of humaPlus Liquid Carbon, a 12% liquid humic acid. Both products were broadcasted onto the soil surface before seeding peas. Braelynn explained that these products are intended for long-term soil health improvements. This project has also been duplicated at BRRG. CARA’s Dr. Yamily Zavala addressed approaches to management alternatives for soil health in a demonstration of cocktail crop combinations and application of Johnson-Su compost tea. She showed differences in root and above ground growth between treated and untreated plants as well as plants grown as monocultures as well as in combination with others. After enjoying lunch in the field, producers were invited to check on the latest comparisons of new varieties of field pea and lentils. The trials at the Grudecki site include both the Alberta Regional Variety Trials administered by the Alberta Pulse Growers as well as separate trials with a local focus managed by CARA. **Sponsors: RDAR, Black Earth, Special Areas Board, MD of Acadia, Alberta Pulse Growers**

Forage First Field Day



The cold, windy morning of August 6 began with a discussion of a water monitoring project led by Dr. Susan Markus of Lakeland College’s applied research team. She and Technicians, Grace Burton and Brittany Thomas offered free water analysis for anyone who brought samples. Improving pasture productivity and forage quality, as well as soil health, are the focus for a study hosted by Eaton Farms near Sibbald. The study includes evaluation of several physical, biological, and chemical treatments on aged forage stands. The replicated trial includes monitoring forage growth and quality within each of the 15 applications made in the spring of 2025. Three forage harvest systems are represented within each treatment: monthly, bi-monthly and once per growing season. Each forage sub-sample is analyzed for feed quality.

Discussion at the Eaton project site was lead by CARA Forage Agronomist Karin Roen, who relayed information on the specific treatments as well as monitoring procedures. Forage Consultant Grant Lastiwka discussed sod-seeding alfalfa and sainfoin to improve grass stands and mitigate bloat risk. The biggest take home message for increasing the success of sod-seeding is to set back the existing stand via mowing, intensive grazing, or with herbicide, to decrease moisture and nutrient competition for the new seedlings. The tour group also visited a Native Grass Propagation demonstration. Karin explained the purpose of the project was to assess the viability of planting locally harvested native seed. Target species included western wheatgrass, green needle grass, and needle and thread grass which were gathered in the summer of 2024 and then planted in both the fall of 2024 and the spring of 2025. Karin shared the challenges in locating seed, cleaning, planting, and reducing weed pressures. The stand from all three species exceeded expectations. Seed from all plantings has been collected this summer. **Sponsors: RDAR, Special Areas Board, MD of Acadia, Lakeland College Research Program, Alberta Agriculture**

Bulk Density is an Indicator of Soil Health

Article from Hans Klopp, South Dakota State University Extension Soil Health Field Specialist

Having adequate pore space in a soil is important for allowing air and water to move through the soil, and for plant roots to be able to penetrate through the soil. Bulk density is a commonly measured soil property that can indicate how compacted a soil is, and it can be used to calculate the percent pore space in the soil. Bulk density is the mass of soil solids + pores in a given volume of soil, and particle density is the mass of soil solids (sand, silt and clay particles and organic matter) in a certain volume of soil solids.

Determining Bulk Density

Trimmed Soil Cores



Figure 1 An example of a slide hammer device that is used to collect samples used to measure soil bulk density. Courtesy: Hans Klopp



Figure 2 An example of samples that were collected to measure bulk density that were trimmed to be flush with the metal rings used to collect the sample.

One method for determining bulk density is by pounding a ring into the soil of a known volume and then determining the mass of dry soil. A soil core sampler is frequently used to pound the ring into the soil. An example of a slide hammer device that is used to collect samples to measure soil bulk density can be seen in Figure 1. After cores are removed from the soil, the sample inside the ring is trimmed to be flush with the ends of the metal core. Soil is then removed, and soil mass (dried weight) inside the ring is determined. An example of trimmed soil cores is pictured in Figure 2.

Other methods for soil bulk density determination are with a soil probe (core) or the clod method.

Core Method

Core method bulk density is determined by inserting a metal probe into the soil of a known diameter and then cutting the soil to a measured length. The soil that was contained in the probe then can be dried to determine the oven dry mass of the sample that was taken with the probe. This can be measured on soil samples taken with push or hydraulic probes. The core method is generally not as accurate when compared with the clod or coring device methods.

Clod Method

When using the clod method, bulk density is determined by measuring the volume of a soil clod and then drying the clod to determine the mass of clod. This involves dipping the soil in paraffin wax, then determining its volume by displacement in water. For more information of techniques to measure soil bulk density, look at Blake & Hartge (1986), which is cited in the references.

In soils that have clays that shrink and swell, bulk density values may vary depending upon how wet or dry the sample was when it was collected.

Calculating Soil Properties

Sample Volume

The volume of the sample taken inside a metal ring or push probe can be calculated by *Equation 1*, where V is the volume of the sample, π is approximately 3.14, r is the radius of the sample (which is half the diameter of the sample), and l is the length of the soil sample.

Equation 1: $V = \pi \times r^2 \times l$

Once the sample is collected, it is then taken to the laboratory to be oven dried. Samples are frequently oven dried at 221 degrees Fahrenheit (105 degrees Celsius) for 24 hours then weighed to determine oven-dry soil mass.

Bulk Density

Equation 2 can be used to calculate bulk density. Where MD_s is the mass of the oven-dry soil sample and V_s is the volume of the of the soil sample. Scientists usually report bulk density in the units of g cm^{-3} , which can be converted to U.S. units from SI (metric) units, where 1 g cm^{-3} is equal to 62.3 lb. ft^{-3} .

Equation 2: Bulk Density = $MD_s \div V_s$

Porosity

The bulk density of the soil can be used to calculate the percent pore space in the soil, which is referred to as

porosity (p). Porosity can be calculated by *Equation 3*, where p is the porosity, V_v is volume void space and V_s is volume solids. The p in *Equation 3* is in units of a fraction.

Equation 3: $P = V_v \div V_s$

Another way that is frequently used to determine the porosity of the soil is the relationship between particle density and bulk density. P can be multiplied x 100 to get the percent pore space. The particle density of the soil is assumed to be about 165.1 lb ft⁻³ (2.65 g cm⁻³), which is about what the density of the primary minerals that make up soil solids are. Porosity can be calculated from bulk density by *Equation 4*.

Equation 4: $p = 1 - (\text{bulk density} \div \text{particle density})$

Ideal Soil Porosity

Ideal soil porosity is considered to be 50%, which corresponds to a bulk density of about 82.9 lb. ft⁻³ (1.33 g cm⁻³). Soil bulk density values can vary depending upon the depth below soil surface, sand, silt or clay content of the soil and the soil organic carbon content. Generally, sandy soils have a higher bulk density, and soils with higher clay and organic carbon content will have a lower bulk density. Bulk density is generally higher in the subsoil than in the topsoil.

Land Management Practices

Land management practices can affect soil bulk density. Driving agricultural equipment across the field can compact the soil, especially when fields are wet. Minimizing the amount of equipment driven throughout the field can reduce the risk of soil compaction in the field. Also, driving heavier equipment across field is more likely to increase soil bulk density. Much of the soil compaction occurs on the first pass, so following in the tire tracks of the first piece of equipment that crosses the field will minimize the percent of the field that has an increased bulk density. Having lower inflation pressure or weight of the implement spread out over a larger area, such as having more axles or wider tires, can reduce the increase in soil bulk density from agricultural equipment.

To reduce soil bulk density, management practices can be done that increase soil organic carbon, protect the soil surface, reduce agricultural equipment trips across field and increase the number of roots in the soil that may create pores. Some management strategies that may do this are reduced or no tillage, retaining grain stover, and planting cover crops. However, recent review papers suggest planting cover crops reduced bulk density 31% of the time compared to no cover crops, retaining grain straw or stover reduced bulk density only 30% of the time compared to mechanical removal, and no tillage only reduced bulk density 19% of the time (Blanco-Canqui & Ruis 2020, Blanco-Canqui & Ruis 2018, Klopp & Blanco-Canqui 2022).

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\$10/producer

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Maximizing Spring Runoff Starts This Fall

By Jason Falk, AAg, Agriculture Program Specialist, Swift Current
September 2026

Fall is a good time for producers to check their water supplies and start planning improvements for next year. Whether expanding a dugout or building a new one, starting early can help make sure the project is ready to capture spring runoff. Using snowmelt and seasonal runoff can increase water storage and help build water reserves.

One of the most common questions producers ask is where and how to build a dugout that will provide a reliable long-term water supply. According to Duncan Spenst, Supervisor of Extension Services at the Water Security Agency, good planning is the key to a successful

dugout. “Producers should size their dugout based on the amount of water required on an annual basis, while also accounting for losses due to evaporation and ice formation,” Spenst explained. “Constructing enough capacity to provide two years of water supply is



Partially filled dugout with exposed

recommended to allow for carryover during years with poor runoff.” Choosing the right location is just as important. What is below the ground can affect how well a dugout holds water. Looking into site conditions before construction can help avoid problems later. One way to check a site is by digging test holes before work begins. Spenst recommends digging five to six test holes at least 100 feet apart and at least four feet deeper than the planned dugout depth.

“These test holes can help identify sand seams, water tables or other soil conditions that could affect water storage capacity or water quality,” he said.



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Pervez Sunderani (403) 340-5851, Red Deer Office

Contact the CARA office for more information or for assistance in completing an application!

Website: <https://www.alberta.ca/water-program>



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