

# AGRI-FACTS

Practical Information for Alberta's Agriculture Industry

Revised July 2004

Agdex 420/63-1

## Utilizing Annual Cereals for Livestock Feed

During challenging industry times, producers may have more animals to feed due to reduced sale opportunities. In such a situation, the livestock industry may rely on annuals for a portion of the winter feed needs. Here are a few points to consider when utilizing annuals.

### Things to consider:

- Feeding annuals during the winter requires a very specific mineral package. In addition to a standard 1:1 mineral, producers are encouraged to add supplemental calcium, magnesium, and/or potassium. Ask your feed company for details.
- Feeding rough awned barley greenfeed carries with it the risk of mouth abscesses. The rough awns cause lesions or accumulate in the cheeks, resulting in an infection in the mouth. Watch for signs of this problem, which is most visible as a lump on the jaw, and consult your veterinarian for treatment.
- Cows grazing annuals, especially on lands that had higher fertilizer levels applied in spring, have a potential to develop higher blood urea nitrogen (BUN) levels. These higher BUN levels can reduce conception rates for a period after the cows begin to graze these annuals. Providing a source of effective fiber at turnout, until the cows adjust to the new feed, will help minimize this potential.

- Annuals have the potential to be high in nitrates during a drought year. Nitrate risk increases on land that had manure or high levels of fertilizer applied. A feed test after the feed is harvested will determine the nitrate levels. If the levels are too high, the feed can be blended with low nitrate feed to make the ration safe. If you're planning to graze annuals, feed test before turnout. Once again, consult your nutritionist.
- Harvesting annuals for silage requires an adequate level of sugars for the ensiling process to occur. Proper ensiling is very difficult to ensure if the crop is over mature and/or over dry. Plan on harvesting annuals for silage while they are still green and while the stand moisture is above 50 per cent.
- All the nutrition topics addressed above can be better understood with the use of CowBytes. Cowbytes is a ration-balancing software program designed by Alberta Agriculture to meet the needs of the beef industry. It is very user friendly, cost effective and will help producers or consultants understand proper beef nutrition and balance their own rations. It is available through Alberta Agriculture for \$150 plus GST. More detail on Cowbytes, and a demo version are on Alberta Agriculture's Ropin' the Web site.

*Annuals have the potential to be high in nitrates during a drought year*

### For more information, contact:

Alberta Ag-Info Centre at 1-866-882-7677

### Prepared by:

*Trevor Yurchak*

Beef/Forage Specialist, Athabasca