



# EVENTS

## Pasture Walks

### June

**Grant Lastiwka** from Alberta Agriculture will join us for three days in June to discuss all things grazing! How does a healthy pasture put money in your pocket? Attend to find out!

#### June 14th

These Farm  
County of Northern Lights

#### June 15th

Johnson Farm  
MD of Fairview

#### Lentz Farm

Clear Hills County

#### June 16th

Vanherk Farm  
Clear Hills County

10:30am-3:30pm

6:00pm-10:00pm (Lentz's)

\$25/member, \$40/farm pair  
\$30/non-member, \$45/farm pair

**Contact: Karlah  
(780) 523-4033 and register today!**

### SAVE THE DATE!!

Western Canadian Grazing  
Conference  
November 27-29, 2012  
Red Deer, AB



Join us on our  
Facebook Group!

<http://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/pcbfa/>

Akim Omokanye  
Research Coordinator  
Fairview, AB  
780-835-6799  
780-835-1112

Morgan Hobin  
Manager  
Fairview, AB  
780-835-6799  
780-835-8614

Karlah Rudolph  
Extension/ASB Project Coordinator  
High Prairie, AB  
780-523-4033  
780-536-7373

## Eat Pastured Pork! Or, as your grandparents called it, pork

There has been a lot of buzz going around lately about pastured pork. The thing about pigs, however, is that they are omnivorous and will eat whatever they can find. So, the term is really a misnomer. A pastured pig is one that has been raised outdoors with free access to water and shelter. Similar to the typical cow on pasture, pastured pigs graze within a paddock or field. So, they exercise as often as they like and forage on grass, forbs, trees, roots, fungus, detritus and whatever else they sniff out. In addition, pastured pigs often get a supplement of grain, pulses or oilseeds. In the pre-industrial farmscape, these critters were fed kitchen scraps and excess milk and whey.

So, what's driving this new – I guess I should say old – trend in pork? You guessed it: many eaters and increasingly farmers and ranchers are none too pleased with modern industrial animal operations. The complaints are so numerous it's hard to choose just one. Briefly, eaters are saying they don't want barn-raised pork because they think the animal has an inherent right to see sunshine and run around at will. Many urban eaters say they would like a closer relationship with their food provider. Concerns about human health also play a role. Many reports have found that pastured meats contain higher overall levels of conjugated linoleic acid (CLA), stearic acid and a higher ratio of omega 3 to 6 fatty acids. These are all the 'good fats' that are considered beneficial to human health.



Finally, there are the environmental concerns. While manure from industrial barns can be a natural input to agricultural fields, there are issues with nutrient loading, particularly in regions prone to flooding and rapid run-off events. The most notorious water pollution case occurred in North Carolina after Hurricane Floyd swept through in the fall of 1999 with the end estimates suggesting that 250 hog operations and 38 lagoons flooded out, killing 30,000 hogs and washing 250 million gallons of pig waste into creeks, rivers and wetlands.

Farmers and ranchers cite many of these same concerns. After all, they are eaters too. In addition, many of these food providers say they would like to see a more decentralized approach to slaughtering and processing with more facilities located in smaller communities. These farmers suggest that a local economy for meat combined with a direct market relationship with urban eaters would contribute to rural economic development, allow farmers to capture a greater market share and provide a desirable livelihood to young farmers.

Food bloggers such as Jo Robinson of eatwild.com, organizations like the Weston A. Price Foundation and authors like the radical farmer Joel Salatin are doing a lot to promote both the production and consumption of pastured meats. Most recently, a researcher with the Agricultural Research Program at North Carolina A&T placed 27 Ossabaw pigs with farmers who raised them on wooded and pastured lots with supplements of peanuts, acorns and alfalfa. Preliminary results suggest a 15% increase in monounsaturated fats (good fat!) in the adipose tissue of these pigs. On a scale of 1 to 9, meat from these pigs scored from 7.3 to 8.3 in colour, tenderness and flavour, compared to meat from a confinement operation, which scored from 5.6 to 6.2. Perhaps most importantly to anyone considering getting into the business of pasturing pork, this same report suggests farmers can net \$1,000 per sow per year using a pastured pork model.

Whether your market is haute cuisiniers, upscale restaurants or simply individuals and families wanting to access pastured meats, it certainly seems that pastured pork is taking off. Brace yourselves. The locavores are coming, and they've got a big appetite.