



Farmer Kurt Rookes of Manson, Manitoba took this photo of brother Bray seeding recently.

Farmers optimistic as spring seeding underway

BY DONNA BEUTLER

For grain farmers in Southeast Saskatchewan, seeding is well underway, and while it's a long way off from seeing the fruit of their efforts in the bin, the spring seeding season is filled with hope and anticipation for a good year.

"We are in good shape for moisture," John Van Eaton told the World-Spectator on the May long weekend. "The top soil was dried out but this rain helped out," he said of the moisture he received in his area. Van Eaton grows canola, wheat, barley, flax and oats on his 7,000-acre farm near Maryfield and, as of May long, was about two-thirds complete.

Van Eaton says the challenges farmers like him face today are not agronomic but rather economic, saying that rising fuel costs, fertilizer costs and machinery parts costs are concerning, but he noted that the markets have improved somewhat in recent weeks.

Van Eaton says he is watching some of his cropland for potential crop loss after a couple of days of strong winds in mid-May and was reminded of the windy days of 1984 when dust filled the air and left piles of topsoil along the edges of the fields.

Van Eaton spoke of the geo-political climate that is driving energy costs up, saying that it affects everything and for Saskatchewan farmers, this is a big concern as, in his words, "there can be no hiccups in this business."

That 60 per cent completion figure (as of May long) seems to be where many farmers are at, and according to Jason Krupski of Richardson Pioneer Grain Terminal in Whitewood, most of the wheat is in the ground, but not as much of the canola is in yet.

"Wheat is about 80 per cent seeded," Krupski said, according to Richardson's crop report for the area as of May 19. "Canola is about 25 per cent, so essentially we would be a bit further overall, maybe 60 per cent," he added.

As for fertilizer usage this year, Krupski says it hasn't dipped too much.

James Stratton, a 4900-acre wheat and canola farmer northwest of Whitewood, feels the moisture conditions are all right, though he noted it has been cooler than normal so far this spring. Stratton was about 62 per cent complete as of May long.

"Grain prices have popped up a bit," Stratton said, adding that more is always better but that there are big-

ger concerns right now, including fertilizer and fuel prices which have both seen significant increases this season.


"Grain farming is not for the faint of heart," says Stratton, who has been farming full-time for the past 16 years. "It's a high-risk business."

He acknowledged how different it is from 30 or 40 years ago when his dad was full-time farming. "I haven't had a crop failure since I started," he said, "whereas there were many crop failures during the '80s."

Stratton says farmers have to wear many different hats in their business, from running equipment (what he personally loves most) to marketing and staying on top of the business side of things.

"When all is said and done, though," Stratton says, "I love seeing the success from start to finish."

Blake Duchek farms about 10,000 acres in the Atwater area near Esterhazy where he sows wheat and canola. As of May long, he had 80 per cent of his wheat in the ground but had not planted any canola yet. His operation includes his dad, one full-time employee and two part-time employees who help out during seeding and harvest.

Continued on page B2 

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Farmers optimistic as spring seeding underway

Continued from B1
 "Input costs are the biggest challenge," Duchek said, referring primarily to the high fuel and fertilizer costs. "Grain prices have been unstable but with the U.S. wheat crops projected to be lower, the product won't be there and we may see prices go up," he added. "If canola was \$16 and wheat \$8 (a bushel), that would be good. If prices go up too much, then the costs go up as well."

As for moisture in his area, the snow (May long) set them back but he feels they are on track with fairly decent moisture levels going into the spring seeding season, a bonus compared to some areas of the province that are extremely dry.

Wendy Leeds, an agronomist with Sharpe's Soil Services in Moosomin, says it's "business as usual" this year.

"The earlier seeded crops are slow to emerge due to the cooler temperatures," she told the Spectator last week, "and it was a bit dry going into seeding but recent moisture means things are looking good."

Farmers in the Moosomin and surrounding area are seeding their usual crops this year and she feels things are, in general, looking good for this seeding season.



Klint Brownridge submitted this photo of seeding at Moose Mountain.

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Stoughton Bull Rider wins big at Vold Pro Rodeo in Alberta

BY STEPHANIE ZOER

Kaden Piper is a 20-year-old from Stoughton who has a passion for riding bulls. Standing at 5'8" and weighing 150 pounds, he is not afraid to climb on a 1,200-pound bull for eight seconds.

His love for bull riding began when he was eight years old. His two older brothers, Kiene and Cale, found a rodeo called Little Spurs in Weyburn hosted by Blade and Becky Young. At an early age they ride cows and when they reach a certain age, they graduate onto riding bulls.

Piper's brothers only rode for a short time, but Piper was hooked and now 12 years later he is riding to win. He knew that this was what his future was going to hold and he has not looked back. He loves what he does and will continue as long as he is able. Bull riding is hard on the body and injuries can happen at any time.

For a short time, Piper went to Texas. Here he improved his riding skills through a coach to get him stronger and better at staying on the bulls. He returned to Canada and is in Alberta riding.

He has attended several rodeos in the past months in Alberta with PBR. He started in Ponoka finishing third place. He then moved to Forestburg, finishing in seventh place.



Kaden Piper is congratulated by one of the chute organizers at the Vold Pro Rodeo.

Submitted by Kaden Piper

During this time Piper collects points. It did not end there for the young rider.

He went on to Byemore where he came in a respective fourth place, continuing on to Thorhild to place fifth. From there he went to Eckville and took fourth place.

His next stop was in Lamont where he double entered. This is the Vold Pro Rodeo. He drew a bull named Misery Business giving him a score of 79.

The second bull he rode was Keep it Simple. This bull gave him a score of 84.5 for the win in the long round. In the short round he rode Black Suga giv-

ing him a score of 83 and winning the short round as well.

"I felt good riding them and I just tell myself to have fun and keep it simple," said Piper.

His next places to ride are Cold Lake, and Penhold, both in Alberta. His goals are to win the BRC and work to get his pro card in the coming year. With a pro card he is able to ride at the Calgary Stampede.

Piper has a bright future ahead of him, and he loves what he does. He hopes for great bulls, excellent rides, and injury free events.



Kaden Piper wins the Vold Pro Rodeo riding the bull named "Keep it Simple" with a score of 84.

Submitted by Kaden Piper



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Meeting in Indian Head focuses on research farm

A meeting was held at Indian Head Thursday to discuss the future of the Indian Head Research Farm.

Saskatchewan Agriculture Minister David Marit and Moosomin-Montmartre MLA Kevin Weedmark visited Indian Head and met with Mayor Steven Cole and local officials.

The federal government announced closure of the research farm in January.

Since then, provincial officials and the community of Indian Head have been working on ways to continue agriculture research at Indian Head.

"We are working toward a solution," said Weed-

mark.

"In the meantime, seeding is taking place as normal at the research farm and summer staff have been hired. Thank you to Minister Marit for all his work on this file and thank you to Mayor Cole for tirelessly advocating for Indian Head."

The planned closure of the federal agricultural research farm could slow the development of higher-yielding crops, weaken long-standing research partnerships and cost the province tens of millions of dollars in future agricultural gains, agricultural economists say.



Above: Indian Head Mayor Steven Cole, Saskatchewan Agriculture Minister David Marit and Moosomin-Montmartre at the Indian Head Research Farm. Below, aerial shots of the farm.



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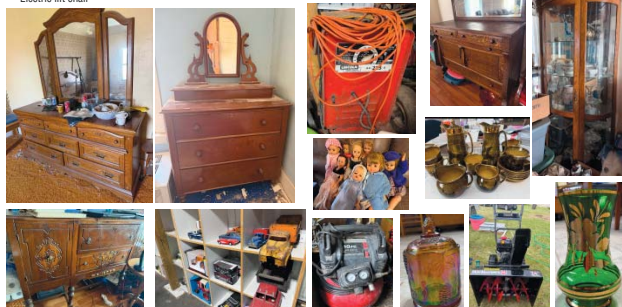
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Oh the sights and sounds of spring!

I have to say it's really hard to sit down and write a spring ag column when outside my kitchen window, all I see is more and more snow building up on the lawn. We are into the last couple of weeks of May and I feel somewhat resentful that I needed to wear a winter coat thick mitts during my morning walk. On the other hand, how beautiful the morning sunshine against the beautiful blue skies were—Saskatchewan at its best!

By the time I finish this column in the next day or two, chances are, the white stuff will be gone and the guys will be itching to get back into the field and finish what they started doing on May 1st—if it doesn't rain, that is.

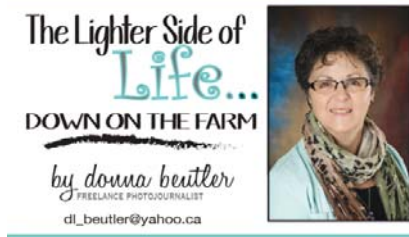
Our "move" from town to our 'tiny home' on the farm more or less coincided with our seeding start date. It's only a five-mile trek out of town but it sure is handy to be close to the land and the machinery when 'start day' arrives. You know how it goes, one day you are merrily doing this, that and the other thing around the farm yard and suddenly there's not a soul in sight—all the men are out in the field except for the odd trip into the yard for seed or fertilizer. Ahhh, the sights and sounds of the spring seeding season—the roar of the tractor; the semi slowing down on the highway as it approaches the yard; the half ton trekking across the north 40. Oh, and the green, green grass along the roads (isn't that the most beautiful sight?) and the hint of green leaves the trees are displaying, which by the time you read this will be out in full display (hopefully).

Oh how I love Spring! I am positively sure I was born to live outdoors—cutting the lawn, whispering those blades of grass along the flower beds and outbuildings, planting a few potatoes in my raised garden bed, and building something totally unnecessary are the highlights of my day, at least until I need to be baking snacks, making meals and hauling them to the field.

Fortunately, there have been a couple of nice enough days to tackle adding a little four-foot square of decking to my RV deck, something that's been on the backburner of my mind for a few years now. That poor little deck has had little additions built onto it every couple of years to the point where it has ended up as an "L" shape with a rolling/sliding piece that can be snugged right up against the camper or easily pulled away for the times we take the camper on an actual camping trip. Last week, after some years of procrastination shall we say, I "filled in" the "L" so it is finally the "rectangle" it was meant to be. It's not the prettiest RV deck by a long stretch but considering it was constructed at different times with different wood of different colors (ie green treated 2x6, brown treated 2x6 and brown treated deck board), it's practical and functional. And the farm dogs seem to like having a secondary deck to stretch out on as well.

Our usual evening campfires haven't been as plentiful as usual so far this year which likely speaks to the fact that we prefer the warmth of the furnace inside the RV to the one-sided heat we get around the firepit. I'm pretty sure the older I get, the colder I get but I am optimistic enough to believe we'll catch a few nights in a row around that old campfire ring.

No one can be happier than the 'farm kids' for the arrival of spring and the opportunity to ATV out in the creek and surrounding area. On the flip side, their dad is likely tired of the interruptions to his meals/evenings (if he happens to get in from the field at a reasonable hour) when he gets word that one of the kids' adventures has



landed them stuck or broken down out in the back country somewhere, perhaps even in the bottom of the wet, muddy creek.

We, of course, quite love it. Been there, done that, as the saying goes, and we totally understand the groan that escapes their father's lips when word of an adventure requiring intervention comes across his phone. The twins, now 15, are outdoorsmen to say the very least and oh, the stories they could tell, many of which most likely, I am sure, involve mud and water. It leads me to think I maybe should have gotten them blue jeans for their birthday because I am sure their many pairs are more often in the washing machine than anywhere else. Even their friends who were over for cake on their birthday a couple of weeks ago seemed in dire need of clean, dry jeans by the time they left the farm.

On the flip side of teen adventures are the day-to-day chores both the twins and their older sister tackle. One early morning as I walked around the farm with my camera, I was able to snap a few shots of one of the boys out with the herd, quietly standing and scratching the cows behind the ears and watching the calves as they bounced around the corrals. There was no hurry on his part as he made his way through the pens with a watchful eye. The school bus wasn't due for a good two hours yet and the morning sun was warm though the air was a tad on the cool side. Every morning for this young cattleman is a perfect morning to just "be" with the cattle.

The farm kids are, at this time of year, prepping for 4-H shows and sales which are not much more than a month away. It's a busy time as they halter break and groom and lead their animals around as they prepare them for the annual Whitewood Local and Regional shows and sales. To think of the years of efforts these kids and all the 4-H'ers out there put into this work makes me so proud of all that they are learning but also of the great work ethics they are building. Ahhh, there's no life like it!

This seeding season has been met with what seems like cooler-than-usual days for this time of year but the men keep on doing what needs to be done. I love having the 'Find My' app on my phone for at least a couple of the guys so I don't always have to call to see where they are when I run out with their meals. Of course, the sweetest is when those "dots" on the app happen to be in the same field. Now there's cause for a happy dance!

My biggest struggle when it's time to feed men is coming up with "the plan" for the day (keeping in mind I actually have a six-week menu/grocery plan nearby.) The

menu idea was great in some ways, but restrictive in other ways and so it's back to what comes most naturally—winging it. I always start my day, once I get back home from my overnight stay in the RV, with bun dough. If I play it just right, the buns I make will be cool enough by 11 a.m. to make sandwiches for the guys in the field plus will be a great addition to the lunch table for the "Lunch Bunch" kids that make their way over from the school at noon.

By the time mid-afternoon arrives, supper is usually underway and with any luck at all, I can get all three guys fed and be back at the camper by 7 p.m. to await hubby's eventual arrival in from the field. There's something extra special about being "on the farm" with the farm-grands during the busy times of year. Plus, come morning, if I crawl out of bed early enough, hubby will have my breakfast on the table for me! It doesn't get much better than that!

Sometimes, bear from the creek a couple of miles away make their way up into the barnyard and such was the case during the twins' birthday cake event. Fortunately we were able to watch its antics on camera as it climbed up the trees and eventually back down, giving us a bird's eye view of where it was. It certainly helped explain what the cattle in the corral had their eyes on and why they were a bit riled up.

While farming takes up the better part of our days at this time of year, I have been able to sneak in some vehicle detailing moments, amongst other things. When hubby brought the side-by-side to town for washing, I tackled it with gusto, which essentially meant going over it three times with the pressure washer. I am certain I was simply moving mud and straw around and around until finally I got to the place where it looked quite acceptable. That's when I realized I should have moved the half-ton off the pad and down the street because it now needed washing too. Once I finished the half-ton, I thought I better wash down the inch of mud that covered the pad only to realize that once the pad was clean, the side-by-side and the half-ton need to be washed yet again. Talk about feeling defeated. Three point five hours later, drenched, muddy beyond recognition, and not entirely satisfied with the finished look, I called it quits for the day. Enough was enough!

So many times, as I sit down to write this column, I wonder if it's really worth it, especially as the grandkids get older and don't say all the "cute" things they used to say when they were little. What they used to say always gave me great 'fodder' for these columns. Over the last few months especially though, I have gotten notes and texts and have met people in-person (some who I know and some who I don't) who have shared with me how they can relate to these "Life on the Farm" columns and for that, I just have to tell you how much that means to me. And as disjointed as some of this rambling can sometimes get, it's really all about life that Saskatchewan folk, for the most part, can 'feel'. Life on the farm has lots of challenges and setbacks but boy, it's a life that's filled with rewards (and I don't mean monetarily) and fulfillment in ways that many people who have no connection to agriculture could ever understand.

To all of you whose heart, or at least a part of it, have a strong connection to agriculture in one way or another, this one's for you! See you on the other side of seeding season!!

Financial modelling: A crystal ball for smarter risk decisions

By Trevor Bacque, AgriSuccess

Farmers face a multitude of decisions throughout a growing season, and with the proper business tools, you can be well-prepared to roll through the production year. A robust business includes planning to identify the essential tools and tactics needed to be prepared for the years ahead.

J.P. Barnabé, a partner at BDO Canada in its financial advisory services group, says two of those tactics are careful and regular financial modelling, coupled with regular reviews and mid-season budget adjustments. Both are designed to reduce worry and costly missteps.

The importance of financial modelling

In any industry, including agriculture, a proper financial modelling system allows owners to take a high-level look at a situation and truly understand the overall picture of their business. Simply put, financial modelling uses historical data and assumptions to forecast a company's future performance. It covers revenues, expenses, cash flow, debt servicing and capital expenditures. Models are usually built in spreadsheets or software, like FCC AgExpert, to organize data and guide strategic decisions. Without this, it can be difficult to grasp a farm's financial health.

"It's important to understand that from a debt and cash flow perspective, but also to plan what that might look like going forward," Barnabé says. "If you're looking to expand or if there's some significant cash outlays that are occurring, what does that look like? How are you going to be able to make those payments?"

Many factors impact a farm's finances, so knowing cash flow and financial modelling is imperative. For example, in seasonal or production cash flow cycles, agriculture tends to have high costs and little income in the spring, with lower costs and more income in the autumn.

Financial modelling uses historical data and assumptions to forecast a company's future performance.



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Continued on page B8

Saskatchewan value added agriculture revenue reaches record \$8.4 billion

Saskatchewan's value-added agricultural sector is showing steady growth, reaching a record \$8.4 billion in revenue for 2024-25, almost double the amount achieved 10 years ago.

"Thanks to the strength of this sector and the quality of our crops and livestock, Saskatchewan is on track to achieve its Growth Plan target of \$10 billion in value-added agriculture revenue by 2030," Agriculture Minister David Marit said. "Recent plant openings and expansions demonstrate investor confidence in the province and position us for future growth."

"With more than 300 food processors employing over 5,000 people, value-added agriculture is playing a vital role in providing food security to over 160 countries across the globe," Trade and Export Development Minister Warren Kaeding said. "It also strengthens Saskatchewan's economy by keeping more value in the province, increasing investment, creating jobs and building opportunities here at home."

Man wearing hair net and safety goggles in food processing plant dressed in lab coat standing by conveyor belt, the text reads "Value-added Agriculture, Record \$8.4 billion in revenue for 2024-25, March 2024-March 2025, Source: Statistics Canada"

In 2024-25, food manufacturing made up close to 95 per cent of the province's total value-added revenue (2024-25 numbers are based on preliminary estimates provided by Statistics Canada). Saskatchewan's food manufacturing value increased by 150 per cent between 2012 and 2024, surpassing other provinces in the percentage increase.

Saskatchewan is also on track to achieve its Growth Plan target of processing 75 per cent of canola grown in the province with the opening of Cargill's new Regina facility and the expansion of the Louis Dreyfus Company (LDC) canola crush plant in Yorkton.

The Government of Saskatchewan and partners are hosting the Agri-Value Forum and Networking Event April 30 to May 1 in Saskatoon. More than 150 people from the value-added industry including food processors, suppliers, investors and government representatives will attend.



Value-added Agriculture

Record \$8.4 billion in revenue for 2024-25

March 2024-March 2025
Source: Statistics Canada



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Ty Cutler of Moosomin named Man/Sask Champion Auctioneer

Ty Cutler of Moosomin was recently named Man/Sask Auctioneer of the Year at the Canadian Livestock Auctioneer Championship. The competition was held from May 7-10 in Medicine Hat and Maple Creek. The Man/Sask Auctioneer Championship is the highest award at the competition. Cutler previously won the Man/Sask Rookie of the Year Award in 2024. Cutler's dad, Ward, is also an auctioneer and is a former Man/Sask Champion Auctioneer.

Forty-one auctioneers competed this year. Johnny Startuliak of Ethelbert, Manitoba, who sells at Killarny Auction Mart was awarded Rookie of the Year. Rhett Parks of Whitewood Livestock Sales finished in the top 10.



Man/Sask Champion Auctioneer Ty Cutler receives his award presented by Boehringer Ingelheim rep Bria Bently and LMAG President Allan Munroe.



Above, 2026 Auctioneer Champion belt buckle awarded to Ty Cutler.



At left, Ty Cutler with his family at the Canadian Livestock Auctioneer Championship.



At right, Chad Kelly, Ty Cutler, and Rhett Parks of Whitewood Livestock at the awards ceremony.

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Financial modelling: A crystal ball for smarter risk decisions

Continued from page B5

Poor financial planning results in anxiety, potentially costly missteps

Barnabé encourages farmers to break the norm and first look at their financials before the end of the growing season.

"There are too many farmers out there that are still doing their books on a paper ledger," he says. "Depending on how often they're updating that, they might not have any idea what position they're in at the end of the day."

A feeling of dread may hang over you all season, not knowing if you're over budget, or should have any sense of security – all because your financial position is unknown.

Lack of a clear financial picture hampers your ability to plan. Barnabé uses the example of fertilizer, suggesting that if there's never a review on how much was purchased versus how much was used, it becomes impossible to fine-tune future purchases and possibly save money.

Similarly, perhaps a farmer should defer certain purchases for a year but didn't because of an unclear financial picture. This can lead to unnecessary fees on a line of credit that could have been avoided with a regularly monitored financial model.

"If there's a tightness in the cash flow, if the line of credit is high and it's creeping up there to the max, they can start selling crops off. They won't know that unless they're really paying attention and monitoring their financials."

Check in on financials multiple times per growing season

The most prepared and stress-free clients Barnabé works with realize that more information is a net positive.

He suggests you sit down with your accountant or financial advisor to review and adjust budgets at least twice during the growing season.

There are only benefits as it provides direct insight to business health and compares actual spending against the spring outlook. With a clear plan, surprises should be minimal, especially given the costly nature of capital expenditures, input costs and external fees.

"Rather than being reactive at a year-end meeting with their accountant, farmers can update and understand where they sit financially, and maybe plan for cash outflows."

Farmers often make sizeable purchases in December to defer taxes. However, this should only be done if you're making an informed decision based on your farm data.

While using financial modelling to plan for the future of the farm operation, it's important to take business, and life, highs and lows into account. Ensure you have sufficient and strategic insurance to manage unfortunate events such as a death of a family member or worker, divorce or workplace accidents. Have insurance on everything from your own home to each piece of machinery.

Overall, it comes down to understanding your debt ser-



vise ratio to avoid reborrowing but not actually paying down debt.

Up-to-date financials make stronger farms

"Financial models that are regularly reviewed and adjusted can really reduce that anxiety and stress and also

allow farmers to understand how they're doing from a financial perspective," Barnabé says. "In farming there are so many variables. A farmer can take charge of the variables through proper budgeting and help reduce financial stress and ensure financial security over the operation."



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Training available to producers planning to participate in Strychnine Stewardship Program



Online training is now available for producers planning to participate in Saskatchewan's Strychnine Stewardship Program. The training is a required step for producers in eligible rural municipalities (RMs) seeking access to two per cent liquid strychnine for targeted control of Richardson's ground squirrel (RGS) infestations.

"Those planning to use strychnine are encouraged to complete training as early as possible to access supplies once they are available," Agriculture Minister David Marit said.

Training is one component of the Strychnine Stewardship Program, which is available in 208 RMs through an Emergency Use Registration (EUR) outlined by Health Canada's Pesticides Regulatory Directorate. The EUR is in effect until November 2027.

The 90-minute online training course, available through the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, addresses responsible strychnine use, environmental protection, integrated pest management and pesticide safety. A mandatory Treatment Plan and Declaration Form is also required to become a certified strychnine user.

Training can be accessed at sarm.ca/strychnine-stewardship-training
Participating RM offices will distribute strychnine to

certified users later this spring. An initial, limited supply of strychnine is expected in early June, followed by additional monthly shipments. Strychnine will be distributed evenly among participating RMs with a per-producer cap to manage supply.

As the spring application window closes on June 15, producers are encouraged to use alternative registered rodenticides, as well as biological and cultural controls, for RGS control in the next month.

Strychnine inventories are expected to increase during the July 15 to September 1 application window.

For full details on the Strychnine Stewardship Program, including a complete list of participating RM offices and information on integrated pest management for RGS control, visit Saskatchewan.ca/RGS-Control.



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USask researchers discover new reproductive method that will revolutionize cattle production

By ERIN MATTHEWS

There are sure signs of spring on the Canadian Prairies — snow melting, pelicans splashing down in the South Saskatchewan River, and the sight of brand-new calves taking shaky first steps in the field.

Behind those brand-new calves is an industry, deeply rooted in research, that works tirelessly to ensure cows are healthy and thriving. Cattle production is integral to Saskatchewan's economy, and the University of Saskatchewan's (USask) is, in many ways, leading the charge in beef cattle research in the province.

Dr. Jaswant Singh (DVM, PhD), researcher at USask's Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVM), has spent his career researching the reproductive management of cattle and working on new methods to help farmers increase the number of healthy herd members.

In two recent papers published in *Biology of Reproduction and Theriogenology*, Singh and graduate student, Dylan Farmer, demonstrated their findings on a revolutionary method of cattle reproduction that has been in the making for over 25 years.

Singh joined USask as a PhD student in the 1990s when WCVM researchers were developing methods to control ovulation in animals called ovulation synchronization.

"Ovulation synchronization gave producers the ability to have 400 animals inseminated on a Tuesday afternoon," said Singh. "This kind of control is very important for beef cattle production."

The original USask method



Dr. Jaswant Singh (DVM, PhD), researcher at USask's Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVM), has spent his career researching the reproductive management of cattle. Erin Matthews photo

used the hormone estradiol to synchronize cattle ovulation and was so effective that it was soon the preferred protocol used around the world. But, by the early 2000s, the hormonal method began to fall out of favour in Europe and the United States.

"The hormone estradiol is a form of estrogen, and there were environmental and consumer

concerns at the time to use estrogens in food producing animals. That sent us back into the lab to try and develop an alternative method," said Singh.

Over the next 25 years, Singh and his colleagues at the WCVM worked tirelessly to find an alternative protocol that was just as effective and simple to use. But after decades of work, each

method came up short.

Then, in 2018, Singh and his graduate student Carlos Leonard were conducting a separate study on another reproductive hormone that led to an unexpected discovery. The unrelated experiment revealed a possible new candidate for the long sought after ovulation synchronization method.

"When we used the drug Cetrorelix, a popular drug used in IVF treatments in humans, we saw that it worked beautifully to synchronize ovulation in animals, and we thought maybe this was the estrogen-free alternative we were looking for all along," said Singh.

Continued on page B11



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USask researchers discover new reproductive method that will revolutionize cattle production

Continued from page B10

There was only one problem—Cetrorelix was still under patent, making the drug very expensive. Not giving up on this discovery, Singh and his colleagues waited years for the patent to expire, which made the drug more affordable. Over the last seven years, Singh's team has continued to test its effectiveness in animals, designing new protocols for its use.

Singh and his colleagues have now shown in the Biology of Reproduction paper that Cetrorelix induces a new follicular wave in cattle, which is the necessary step to synchronize ovulation and allow for fixed-time artificial insemination. According to Singh, Cetrorelix performed as well as the original estradiol method without using steroid hormones like estradiol.

According to Singh, Cetrorelix has a direct action on reproductive hormone secretion, and in many ways is a more reliable treatment that works in all stages of the cow's cycle.

USask currently has a patent on the protocol designed by Singh and his team for the innovative and new use of the drug. USask's Innovation Mobi-



Developing effective reproductive methods and protocols gives farmers control over the number of calves that will be introduced to their herd and allows producers to time their arrival.

Erin Matthews photo

lization and Partnerships team and Singh's research group are now working closely with a pharmaceutical company to commercialize Cetrorelix for reproductive management in cattle, sheep, horses and other mammals.

Developing effective reproductive methods and protocols gives farmers control over the number of calves that will be

introduced to their herd and allows producers to time their arrival — meaning better health outcomes for cow and calf while also bolstering productivity by introducing superior genetics through the use of artificial insemination.

According to Singh, this new method doesn't add additional manual labour for ranchers and,

in fact, reduces the observation time needed with other methods. It is also a method that dairy farmers could also easily adopt.

"This is going to have a positive impact on millions of animals around the world and promote a much better protocol for beef cattle. I believe it will revolutionize production in Canada and South America," said Singh.



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Sarah Leguee submitted this photo of seeding in the Fillmore area.




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Finding balance: A farm CEO approach to succession

The following fictional case study was created by BDO:

For most of their adult lives, Gerald's two kids, Heather and Gord, had almost nothing to do with their parents or the family farm. Heather left home right after high school and only came back once or twice a year for a short visit. She had moved to the city and established a career and family far removed from the farm.

Gord stayed local and started his own farm. He drove a truck for many years until he was able to start farming full time. He rarely visited home or asked for help from his dad.

Gerald knew his strong personality and need to control every detail were a benefit to his farm, but a problem with his interpersonal relationships – especially with his family. As his wife Jenny often said, "You're all three the same—stubborn and independent to a fault!"

When Jenny became ill five years ago, both Heather and Gord stepped up to help as much as they could. Gerald came to understand that he could talk to his kids and lean on them for support, softening his "my way or the highway" attitude. When Jenny died, he was thankful that he was building a fresh, adult relationship with his children.

Changing times, changing plans

Now almost 80, Gerald wants to revisit his estate plan. When he was estranged from his kids, he assumed that when he could no longer farm, he would sell everything and retire and that when he and Jenny died, Heather and Gord would simply split the value of the estate. But he feels differently now. He wants



to help Gord grow his farm business and support Heather and her family.

Gerald ran a very successful mid-sized grain operation and all the land and equipment was owned by his farm corporation. He hadn't been diligent in building a personal financial portfolio outside the farm corporation or even taking out life insurance. Priorities were on re-investing in the farm by buying land when it became available and keeping the equipment up-to-date and in immaculate condition.

Multiple options

When Gerald met with his accountant to discuss his desire to pass the farming assets to Gord and find a way to be fair to Heather, he learned there were numerous options with different pros and cons:

1. Transfer his entire corporation to Gord and Heather,

either now or after he dies.

Heather could be given preferred shares with a set value that could be sold to Gord over time. She wouldn't share in any growth of the company or have a say in operations, but she would receive her share of the value of Gerald's company over time. This assumes that Gord would be able to generate enough revenue to fund payments to Heather. The accountant cautioned that this path requires a solid relationship between the siblings.

2. Sell shares in Gerald's company to Gord. He could pay for the shares now or in the future via a promissory note that would be transferred to Heather after Gerald dies. This option has Gord as eventual sole owner of Gerald's company, but it creates a liability

between Gord and Heather. This could be problematic if Gord's farm business runs into financial difficulty down the road when Gerald is gone.

3. Merge Gerald's company with Gord's. They would have to jump through some hoops to get all liabilities and assets into one corporation, but it would simplify things for Gord going forward. They would still need to create a plan to get Heather her share of the company's value.

4. Split Gerald's company. He could move some land into a separate corporation allowing it to be transferred to Heather. This path would require a lot of accounting and legal work but it

would mean the siblings affairs weren't intertwined with Heather relying on future payments from Gord.

5. As Gerald worked through the options, other ideas popped into his head:

• Equipment

Maybe Gord had sufficient equipment within his own company. Could Gerald sell his equipment to generate cash that could go to Heather?

• Sell a farm

Gerald didn't like the idea of dispersing land assets that he had worked so hard to buy, but maybe selling a farm, paying the tax and gifting the proceeds to Heather would be a simple way to resolve the challenge of getting funds to Heather without burdening Gord's farm business.

• Pull value from his business now

Gerald had some RRSPs but not a lot. The farm company did owe him some money and he could pull that cash and hold it personally. He could also start taking higher compensation from the farm so that there would be more to pass to Heather in his estate.

There is a lot to consider, but Gerald had always been good at working through these kinds of management challenges. The bigger adjustment would be to learn to work cooperatively with Gord and Heather and get comfortable involving them in the decision-making process.

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How digitized KPI tracking powers smarter investment

BY TIM PARENT

Key performance indicators (KPIs) are the backbone of modern farming, but how producers track them is changing as digital tools replace spreadsheets and guesswork, giving farmers more confidence when making decisions.

"For the majority of farms we've worked with, a receipt capturing and processing application that integrates with your bookkeeping software is usually the most impactful," says Taylor Phillips, chief technology officer at Maverick Ag. "They're inexpensive, easy to use and dramatically reduce data entry."

Phillips says that small shift to using an app on your smartphone to gather KPI data can save hours each month and make data cleaner and more useful.

"Think about how impactful it would be for your bookkeeper to have all of your receipts and the extracted data ready to be posted in their software with a click of a button," he says.

On a day-to-day basis, say, for example, you want to optimize your input costs but need more details. Capturing receipts into an app means you can track spending and do a cash flow analysis. With that data, you can then determine which metrics you want to monitor, which will help you to decide whether to stay consistent or improve spending. An app can also be set to track specific spending.

Start with cash flow

Phillips recommends beginning with something simple.

"A spreadsheet that maps out your cash flow is a great first step," Phillips says. "Current bank balance, sales and planned expenditures or budget – these give you a clear picture of where you stand."

Once you're comfortable collecting the data and digital KPI tracking, implement digital tracking in other areas of the farm. Phillips says to find the right fit by balancing cost, integration, utility, stability and data security.

"You want something that connects to your other systems, provides real value in automation and will still be around next year," Phillips says.

Put AI to work

Artificial intelligence is playing a larger role in how farms measure and interpret KPIs. Tech companies are investing to increase AI capabilities and push the function to clients.

"I look forward to a future where farms are able to automatically cross-reference diverse data sets like agronomists' notes, weather data and historical prices to unlock patterns that weren't visible before," Phillips says.

Despite all the new tools, Phillips' advice remains simple: start small, focus on impact and build good habits. "Focus on a small project with big impact and an easily formed habit," he says. "Something that saves time and builds consistency is how you turn data into something useful."

Start small, focus on impact and build good habits.



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2025 Rental rates outpaced by cultivated farmland values yet again

If you've been watching land prices recently, you're not alone. The latest FCC Farmland values report shows average farmland values rose another 9.3% last year - matching the pace seen in 2024. FCC has also been tracking Canadian farmland rental rates for years to better understand their relationship to farmland values. Rent to price ratios, however, did not climb at the same pace as farmland values. Canada's rent to price (RP) ratio has steadily compressed from 2.70% in 2020 to 2.50% in 2024, and most recently, 2.35% in 2025.

For many farm businesses, renting land is a practical way to expand without the long-term financial commitment of buying. Still, lease terms - length, inclusions and renewal provisions - shape what tenants will pay. Because many agreements are fixed, rental rates often lag land values and adjust gradually. Ultimately, rents are limited by farm economics: tenants must cover costs and earn a return amid weak commodity prices and elevated input costs.

Rent to price ratio analysis

While there are different types of rental agreements used in the agriculture sector, this analysis focuses on cash rental agreements, which are measured as follows:

$$\text{Rent to Price (RP) ratio (measured in \%)} = \frac{\text{Cash rental rate per acre}}{\text{Value of cultivated farmland per acre}}$$

In 2025, Canada's average rent to price (RP) ratio was 2.35% (Table 1). Across most provinces, the ratio remains within a relatively narrow 2% to 3% range, with the maximum and minimum values extending beyond this band, reflecting more outlying provincial observations. No rates are published for British Columbia as data in multiple regions of that province were deemed insufficient to provide an accurate average RP ratio. Rates are also not published for Newfoundland and Labrador or the Territories due to insufficient province-wide data.

Table 1: 2025 Rent to price ratio by province, with minimum and maximum range by province, including 2024 Rent to price ratio

Province	2025 Rental Rates			2024 Rental Rates
	Average Rent/Price Ratio	Range		Average Rent/Price Ratio
		MIN	MAX	
AB	2.20%	1.30%	3.30%	2.35%
SK	2.90%	1.60%	4.40%	3.10%
MB	2.35%	1.10%	3.20%	2.40%
ON	1.20%	0.50%	2.10%	1.20%
QC	1.55%	0.60%	2.70%	1.60%
NB	1.85%	1.20%	3.60%	2.00%
NS	1.90%	1.25%	2.90%	2.00%
PEI	3.90%	3.00%	5.00%	4.10%
Canada	2.35%			2.50%

Source: FCC calculations

Provincial Perspectives

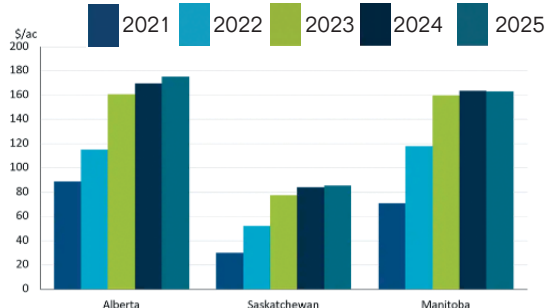
The Prairies recorded the strongest gains in farmland values nationally; however, RP in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba declined, as rental rates did not increase at the same rate as rising land values. In Ontario and Quebec, average farmland value growth was modest in 2025, and RP ratios remained essentially unchanged relative to the previous year. RP ratios in the Maritimes also softened.

Cashflow advantage of renting over purchasing farmland has stabilized

Renting remains an integral option for operations looking to expand their land base. To compare any cash flow advantages of cash rental agreements versus purchasing land, we subtract the costs of land rental from new land purchase costs, assuming a 25% downpayment and a 25-year amortization (Figures 1, 2, and 3). Based on the province-wide RP ratio, the cash flow benefits of renting versus buying can vary significantly across different regions.

As the 2025 RP ratio in the Prairies declined, the cash flow advantage of renting land was nearly unchanged this year compared to purchasing for Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Alberta grew by \$5 per acre, the most in Canada. Farmland purchase costs were helped by lower interest rates balancing out higher farmland values (Figure 1). Since 2021, Alberta's rent advantage increased by \$87 per acre, Saskatchewan's by \$55 per acre, and Manitoba's by \$92 per acre.

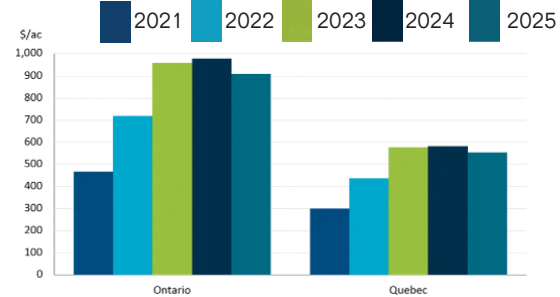
Figure 1: Per acre difference in profitability for renting vs newly purchased land in the Prairies



Source: Statistics Canada, FCC

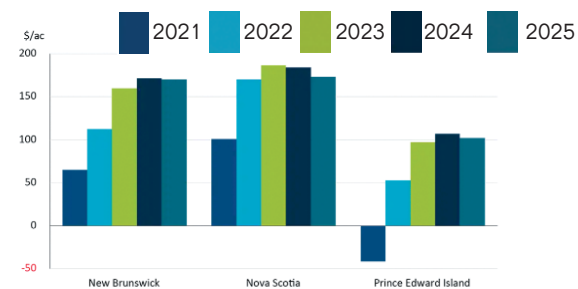
Ontario and Quebec producers have also experienced better cash flow with rental agreements than purchasing land although in 2025 that advantage decreased slightly. Between 2021 and 2025, Ontario's rent advantage over purchasing increased by \$442 per acre, and Quebec's by \$255 per acre (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Per acre difference in profitability for renting vs newly purchased land in Ontario and Quebec



Atlantic producers are like the rest of the country as they have experienced improved cash flow from rental agreements compared to land purchases (Figure 3). From 2021 to 2025, New Brunswick's rent advantage rose by \$105 per acre, while Nova Scotia's increased by \$72 per acre. Prince Edward Island is an interesting case. Back in 2021, PEI producers experienced better cash flow from purchasing land over renting (the negative bar below) - the only province/year that we find in our data that this is the case. However, since then, the situation has reversed with trends mirroring the rest of the country. The RP ratio in PEI has dropped the most in Canada over the last 5 years due to rental market adjustments, which has improved the cash flow advantage for renting by \$144 per acre.

Figure 3: Per acre difference in profitability for renting vs newly purchased land in Atlantic Canada



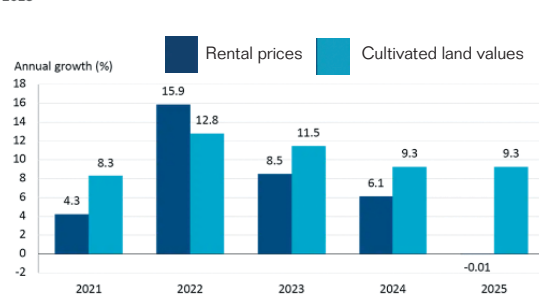
Farmland values rose sharply in 2021 and 2022, creating a wider gap between purchase and rental prices. In the past three years, this trend leveled off, with some provinces seeing reduced rental cashflow benefits. Lower interest rates have helped decrease annual payments for newly purchased ground, even as cultivated farmland values increased in 2025.

Rent in dollars per acre is growing slower than cultivated farmland values

As noted above, the RP ratio decreased this year for most provinces and for Canada as a whole. This does not indicate that rent in dollars per acre necessarily increased or decreased; rather, it demonstrates that changes in rental rates were surpassed by the rise in farmland prices. To better understand the growth trends of each variable, it is useful to examine their respective \$ per acre annual rates of change.

We anticipate that, because of the multi-year nature of rental agreements, rent growth will generally lag increases in cultivated farmland values which we see in Figure 4 for Canada on average. Notably, in 2022, rental price increases outpaced cultivated farmland values. This can happen in the short term when there is immediate demand for farmland due to strong margins and with a fixed supply of land for sale, the growth was felt most in rental markets. The other year that stands out is 2025 where \$ per acre rent growth was zero, despite continued robust growth in cultivated farmland values. In an environment with tighter margins, producers may have chosen to strategically purchase land suited to their operations, while exercising greater caution with rental agreements.

Figure 4: Cultivated land values have been increasing at faster rate than rental rates since 2023



Bottom line

The decision to rent or purchase farmland is influenced by multiple considerations, including the comparative cash flow benefits commonly linked to leasing and the asset appreciation evidenced by the significant increase in farmland values across the country. While the cash flow advantages of renting have remained stable over the past three years, potential changes may arise from 2026 onward. Producers are advised to continually assess their options for expansion, considering their individual financial circumstances and carefully weighing short-term profitability against long-term asset growth.

Canadian seeded acreage: Will fertilizer prices reshape 2026 planting decisions?

By LEIGH ANDERSON
SENIOR ECONOMIST

Seeding is only weeks away, but final planting decisions are clouded by a higher degree of uncertainty than usual. Many Canadian crops are expected to face tight margins in 2026, and rising fertilizer prices are adding pressure just as plans are finalized. In our 2026 crop outlook, we noted that crop export pace and cost management would be key to profitability. Since then fertilizer costs have become an even bigger factor amid the turmoil in the Middle East.

While many acres are already committed through crop rotations or contracts, some swing acres remain flexible. Crop rotation usually guides planting decisions, and most years farmers make only small changes. This year, however, may be different. Higher fertilizer prices could shift acres toward lower input crops, reduce fertilizer use, or even take some marginal land out of production. This blog explores where those acreage shifts may occur.

Digging into current seeding projections

Early seeding projections offer a useful snapshot of how farmers are positioning themselves heading into the growing season. Statistics Canada's 2026 Field Crop Survey suggests Canadian farmers plan to seed more canola, corn, barley, flax, and soybeans, while acres of wheat, oats, lentils, and peas are expected to decline (Table 1).

Table 1: Statistics Canada 2026 preliminary seeding intentions

Crop	2025	2026	yr/yr
Barley	6,135,800	6,440,800	5.0%
Canola	21,623,100	21,839,200	1.0%
Corn for grain	3,782,200	3,846,200	1.7%
Corn for silage	1,043,600	957,500	-8.3%
Flax	620,200	753,200	21.4%
Lentils	4,379,600	4,137,600	-5.5%
Oats	2,996,100	2,903,400	-3.1%
Peas	3,509,700	3,078,300	-12.3%
Durum wheat	6,531,500	6,377,600	-2.4%
Spring wheat	18,808,900	18,781,100	-0.1%
Winter wheat	1,691,600	1,578,800	-6.7%
Principal field crops	75,212,500	75,004,400	

Note: winter wheat acres are seeded in the fall of 2025.

Sources: Statistics Canada, FCC Economics

It is important to note that this survey was conducted before the outbreak of the U.S. war in Iran. Since then, fertilizer prices have risen, which could influence final planting decisions. To assess the potential impact, we analyzed historical variability in seeded acreage over the past decade. Year-over-year changes for each crop were used as a proxy for the potential range of "swing acres" relative to current Statistics Canada projections (Table 2).

Table 2: Acreage variability and potential swing acres

Crop	StatCan estimate 2026	10-year average variability (+/-)	Swing acres (+/-)
Spring wheat	18,781,100	7.4%	1,390,000
Canola	21,839,200	3.4%	740,000
Barley	6,440,800	10.5%	670,000
Soybeans	5,889,500	10.6%	620,000
Durum wheat	6,377,600	8.2%	520,000
Lentils	4,137,600	11.9%	490,000
Oats	2,903,400	13.4%	380,000
Peas	3,078,300	11.9%	360,000
Flax	753,200	21.5%	160,000
Corn for grain	3,846,200	2.3%	86,000
Corn for silage	957,500	7.7%	73,000
Principal field crops	75,004,400	7.3%	5,489,000

A statistical analysis was conducted for each crop to assess variability in acreage changes. The analysis examines changes in seeded acres over a 10-year period and serves as a proxy for the potential range of swing acres relative to current Statistics Canada projections.

Sources: Statistics Canada, FCC Economics

Historically, acreage shifts among major field crops have been limited. We estimate that up to 5.5 million acres—or 7.3% of total principal field crop acres—could still shift from preliminary intentions. Under current market conditions, some of these acres may move toward lower input or more favorable margin crops, including shifts away from high nitrogen crops such as corn toward alternatives like soybeans. Below, we delve into some of the crops to assess the likely direction for those swing acres.

Soybeans versus corn

Statistics Canada is projecting soybean and corn acreage to both increase by nearly 2% from last year; however, these estimates were made before the war began. As a

result, corn acreage could ultimately be lower, as producers shift land away from higher-cost crops. Soybeans require less nitrogen fertilizer, making them more competitive in today's high input-cost environment.

There is room for soybean acreage to move higher, as historical variability exceeds 10%. This appears plausible given current fertilizer prices, particularly in eastern Canada, where producers are more exposed to fertilizer price shocks at planting due to less pre-buying earlier in the season. The soybean-to-corn futures price ratio continues to favour soybeans, reinforcing incentives for additional acreage gains this year, especially in Manitoba and eastern Canada (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Soybean-corn futures price ratio favours planting soybeans



Corn acreage in Canada has historically shown limited flexibility, with swing potential of only about 2.3% because much of the corn crop is tied directly to inelastic local livestock demand. As a result, any expansion in soybean acres is more likely to come at the expense of spring wheat, particularly in Manitoba, where producers have greater flexibility to shift soybean acres from corn and wheat.

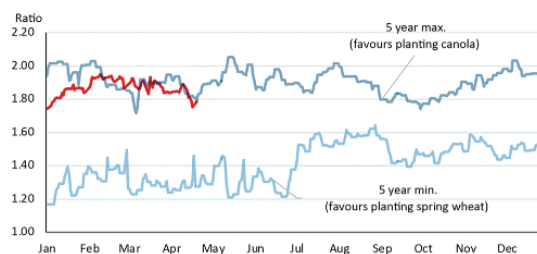
Canola versus wheat

Statistics Canada estimates 2026 canola acreage at 21.8 million acres, about 1% higher than 2025. Historically, year-over-year changes in canola acreage have been modest, averaging 3.4%, though even a typical shift can amount to more than 700,000 acres.

Despite expectations for large ending stocks, several factors continue to support canola plantings. China's lowering of canola tariffs has improved market access and boosted producer confidence, while expanding domestic crush capacity should help absorb additional supply. Prices have risen, and current price relationships versus spring wheat favour canola (Figure 2).

As seeding decisions are finalized, canola acreage could move above 22 million acres, with a reasonable range of 22 to 22.5 million. Growers also tend to prioritize fertilizer spending on canola over wheat, further supporting acres. While Statistics Canada survey results suggest spring wheat acreage will be largely unchanged in 2026, spring wheat faces the greatest downside risk from acreage shifts into other crops. Canola has additional upside potential, as conflict in Iran is pressuring oil prices higher, improving biofuel economics and potentially incentivizing increased canola acreage.

Figure 2: Canola-spring wheat futures price ratio favours planting canola



Shifts in other crop acres

Shifts in other crops are also possible. While none are major crops on their own, together they represent more than 2.5 million acres of potential swing acres that could still influence overall supply.

Lentil and durum acres are under pressure due to ample supplies and weaker prices. Lentils also face market access risks, including the possibility of higher import tariffs from India. However, both crops require less fertilizer than many alternatives, which may limit acreage declines and keep plantings closer to recent levels. In some regions, durum and lentils are central to crop rotations, making large acreage shifts difficult.

Pea acres are more uncertain. Large ending stocks of peas are a headwind, but they remain worth watching given the removal of tariffs for the Chinese market, high nitrogen prices, and burdensome lentil and durum supplies. Peas are often included in rotations not just for current returns, but for the benefits they provide to profitability in the following year.

Oats and barley remain key wildcards. Oat acres have declined since peaking in 2022 at 3.9 million acres, but history suggests they can still surprise. Over the past decade, oat acreage has varied by about ±440,000 acres, or 13%, year to year. Oats are relatively cheap to grow, which could support acres, but current low prices are a challenge. Barley acres have also trended down longer term, but lower fertilizer needs and a growing cattle herd could support more barley acres in 2026, particularly on marginal land or for silage.

While swing acres among principal field crops often dominate the discussion, other acreage categories—including hay land and unseeded acres—are becoming more relevant as market incentives and profitability pressures shift.

Canadian seeded acreage: Will fertilizer prices reshape 2026 planting decisions?

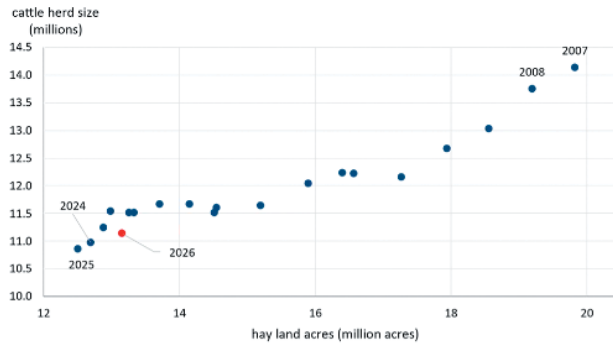
Continued from page B16

Cattle herd rebuilding: will acres shift back into hay land?

Canada's cattle herd is finally starting to grow again. As of January 1, 2026, beef replacement heifers were up 4.8% from last year, signaling that producers are making longer-term investments to rebuild their herds. This supports expectations for continued herd growth, and hay land acres could follow that same trend.

Cattle herd expansion points to potential increases in hay land acres. Much of the hay land converted to cropland over the past several decades tended to be marginal land. With cattle prices strong and producers increasingly focused on rebuilding their herds, some of that land could shift back into hay production. If the rebuilding trend continues, past relationships between herd size and hay acres suggest up to 650,000 acres could move into hay, although greater use of corn and barley silage may limit the scale of that shift (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Cattle herd expansion indicates possible acreage shift to hay land



Will unseeded acreage rise this year?

Decisions to leave land unseeded typically depend on factors such as soil moisture, crop prices, and spring weather conditions. With higher fertilizer costs and tighter projected farm margins, unseeded acreage is a key area to watch this year. Historically, unseeded acreage has shown significant variability, sometimes changing by as much as 25%, most often due to crops unable to be planted caused by excessive moisture. Based on that historical range, unseeded acreage could increase by as much as 280,000 acres this year to 1.4 million acres, particularly if producers choose to take marginal land out of production.

Bottom line

Input costs are a major concern amid low crop prices and surging fertilizer prices following the U.S. war in Iran. Overall, we do not expect large swings in seeded acreage, but there is enough flexibility to help farms adjust in a higher fertilizer price environment. If more acres swing into canola and soybeans, wheat is likely to see the largest acreage losses, though smaller adjustments could also come from other crops. Hay land and unseeded acres may also deliver surprises. It will be important to watch how markets move between now and planting, how crop price relationships change over the next month, and how this influences decisions on the remaining acres.

Thank you to all of our hardworking farmers, ranchers and agri-businesses!

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Rick Fredlund submitted this photo of seeding above the Qu'Appelle Valley north of White-wood.

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Supporting our kids' well-being

The farming way of life offers children a chance to grow up around nature and build responsibility – and it can also place emotional demands on young shoulders. You can help your kids navigate wellness in healthy, supported ways.

"There's an incredible stoicism in farm culture – getting chores done even when you're ill, ensuring things are looked after," says counsellor Tammy Thielman, MSW.

That same determination that keeps operations running through long hours and financial pressure can also lead families to absorb stress or handle it poorly – shaping how children learn to manage pressure.

Working from Salmon Arm, B.C., where she and her family raise sheep, horses and chickens, Thielman supports children, youth, parents and families.

She's seen children who love the farm and those who don't, adding that mental health challenges can stem from events such as family conflict, divorce or changes in farm ownership.

Farm kids often witness the ups and downs of weather, markets or production. Those uncertainties can ripple through a household, affecting how secure they feel.

"It's sometimes the ripple effect. Children are observing and deeply connected to what's happening around them. Giving them tools to process those experiences builds coping skills. They're incredibly thinking and feeling little beings, and these are big things for a young nervous system," Thielman says.

Observe the kids

As adults, we're logical, but children's thoughts often show through behaviour more than words.

"Kids live in their hearts. I've treated children who are really sad, angry or overly cheerful, trying to mask feelings," Thielman says.

Warning signs include aggression, worry, sadness, disinterest in activities, poor school performance, clinginess, isolation, sleep or appetite changes, fatigue, or headaches.

"I've had five-year-olds say, 'My back hurts,'" Thielman says. Such symptoms may be stress-related and should be evaluated by a medical professional.

In adolescence, kids may push you away or act mean, but Thielman says parents and caregivers remain the best barometers.

"Listen to your instincts. If you sense something, check it out. Ethical providers will tell you if they see a need for intervention," she says.

Being attentive isn't just good parenting – it's part of strong leadership on the farm. Families who communicate openly make clearer business and succession decisions because they operate from trust and emotional safety.

Small, consistent actions make a big difference

Even during the busiest seasons, moments of connection and honesty help kids feel safe and supported. One of the best preventive measures is teaching emotional language.

"Let them know some feelings you have – frustration, sadness or confusion. Naming emotions models that we are thinking and feeling people."

Farming is full of teachable moments: disappointment after a poor yield, relief when equipment works or gratitude after a good day. Sharing these reflections helps kids understand emotions as part of managing both people and production.

It's also helpful to read with them about emotions. "Even short picture books open the door for discussion. We don't always nail it as parents or clinicians, but they know we're trying. They know we care."

Thielman cautions that asking too many questions can make kids shut down. Encourage young children to express their feelings through drawing. She often uses emoji pictures to start conversations.

Routine and stability at home provide a sense of secu-

rity. Social interaction with peers is important too.

"We all have moments when we need a little extra support," Thielman says. "When we model caring for our mental health, like we would a sprained ankle, kids learn that looking after mental health is just part of staying well."

That mindset also builds resilience into the business – healthy leaders make steadier decisions and create workplaces, even family ones, where others can thrive.

Intervene early

Early support leads to better outcomes. Finding the right provider takes time, so start early. Look for a qualified counsellor, psychiatrist or psychologist with recognized credentials and membership in a professional regulatory college.

"Be the squeaky wheel," Thielman says. "Advocate for yourself and your child. That's also part of some providers' role – helping with system navigation."

Parents are a child's biggest support, but they can't be therapists.

"Within confidentiality limits, caregivers have the right to know how sessions are going," she says. "Parents are often the first to notice a problem – and to see progress."

On farms, where family and business overlap, early support isn't just personal – it's practical. Wellness strengthens communication and teamwork, helping ensure the next generation is emotionally ready to thrive.

Help your child build emotional strength and stability

- **Name your feelings.** "I'm frustrated right now, but it'll pass." Kids learn emotional language from safe adults.
- **Read children books about emotions.** It opens the door for discussion, even with little ones.
- **Keep routines steady.** Predictability helps kids feel safe.
- **Connect regularly.** A quick check-in, shared activity or an extra hug goes a long way.
- **Talk about mental health like physical health.** It's all connected.
- **Avoid unregulated social media or "pop psychology" trends.** There's no quick fix.
- **Normalize asking for help.** Let kids see you reaching out – it shows strength, not weakness.

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- Intermission Noemy Coeurjoly, Roman Riding Act followed by Sheep Scramble
- Wild ponies following rodeo performance
- 9^{pm} Saturday night - DJ Platinum Music in the Beer Gardens

SUNDAY

- 9^{am} Pancake Breakfast at Kennedy Friendship Centre
- 11^{am} Cowboy Church Service at the Rodeo Grounds
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- Intermission Noemy Coeurjoly, Roman Riding Act followed by Sheep Scramble
- Wild ponies following rodeo performance



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