

## Open Gate: Sunnybrae Farm

### Regenerating Land through Livestock and Improved Fertility

Wednesday, July 22, 2015

Sunnybrae Farm

Wawoda, Saskatchewan



The Sunnybrae Farm field day is part of the Holistic Management Canada Open Gate Learning Series. Open Gates are peer-to-peer action-based learning days with short presentations and small group exercises geared for participants to share discoveries and management techniques with guidance from experienced facilitators and producers. Whether you are an agricultural producer, wildlife manager, local agency representative, or just interested in ranching, and land stewardship, this is a day for you.

#### What to Expect

- How to use biological monitoring procedures
- Concepts of regenerative agriculture
- The importance of biodiversity and how Sunnybrae Farm has improved it
- Why management practices are important to sustainability



#### Registration

Farmers, ranchers, and land stewards with any length of agricultural experience are welcome to attend. Whether you are raising cattle, broccoli, or wheat, you'll find helpful advice, tips, and techniques to build a profitable, sustainable operation. Registration is \$35.00 per person including lunch, and is non-refundable when purchased online. At the gate registration is \$40.00 per person. Space is limited at each event, so you are encouraged to register in advance.

This is a rain or shine event. Please bring appropriate clothing and footwear



#### Agenda

9:00 am – Registration

9:30 am – Introduction and Orientation – Ralph and Linda Corcoran

9:40 am – Sunnybrae Farm – Neil and Barbara Dennis - Overview of the operation

10:45 am – Wil Rex – Using Tools to Improve your Operation

12:00 pm - Lunch

1:00 pm – In the field – Blain Hjertaas – Certified Holistic Management Educator

- Farm Tour
- Grazing Inventory Exercise

2:00 PM In the field – Ralph and Linda Corcoran – Certified Holistic Management Educators

- Looking at Soil Health Exercise

3:00 pm – Questions, Discussion and Evaluation

4pm - Adjourn

## **LOCATION AND DIRECTIONS**

Sunnybrae is located on NW12-9-34-W1 in the south east corner of Sask. Approx. 30 miles west of the MB border, & 60 miles north of U.S. border in the lea of the Moose Mountains. Coming from the West -Take Hwy #13 to Manor - 1/4 mile east of Manor, north on Grid #603 to Historic Park road: east 3 miles to meridian, must turn south, and then back east for 1 more mile to Sunnybrae sign, 1/2 mile north- 2nd set of buildings.

Coming from the East -Take Hwy #13 to Wauchope - 1/4 mile west of Wauchope, take Grid #601 north to just over railroad tracks, west on farm access road for 1 mile, north for 1 mile, west for 1 mile to Sunnybrae sign, 1/2 mile north - 2nd set of buildings.

Coming from the North - Come south of Whitewood on Hwy #9 either to Carlyle or to Whitebear First Nations land: turn east at the light standard on the highway at the top of hill above main entrance to park. Follow gravel road as far as it goes (approx. 12 miles) Should then be at meridian and must go south, then east 1 mile, to Sunnybrae sign, 1/2 mile north- 2nd set of buildings.

Coming from the South -Take Hwy #9 to Carlyle, go east to Manor and proceed same as Hwy #13 from the west.

## **SPEAKERS**

**Neil and Barbara Dennis** - Neil W. Dennis, owner/operator of Sunnybrae, land his great grandfather homesteaded in 1900. Neil is a member of the South East Sask. Holistic Management Group. For the past 30 years Neil Dennis has been exploring new pathways in the science of grazing cattle. Thirty years ago, working long hard hours, struggling as a mixed farmer to stay one step ahead of his financial institution, Neil was not having any fun. Forced to take a second look at his situation, by his pocket book and his hesitancy to depend on technology (chemicals); he came to the conclusion he needed to make some changes. So began his journey that has led him here today. Dennis' love of the land and his passion for his agricultural heritage, and sheer stubbornness to make it work, have given him fuel to forge into the realms of the unknown when it comes to soil health, grass management and cattle grazing.

Dennis has evolved with his land. Once a purebred cattle and sheep producer and a mixed farm operator, (1800 seeded acres, 640 acres in forage and as many more in permanent pasture) Dennis now knows the wealth of a farm is directly dependent upon the health of the land. He has: successfully naturally rejuvenated a 1949 seeded pasture with the use of nothing more than high stock density and proper recovery time; increased the carrying capacity of his lands by 300-400% (biodiversity is appreciated as a pasture once seeded to crested wheat grass now claims 40 species); and increased water infiltration up to a level of 5-10 inches per hour; improved the mineral cycle of his properties and thereby increased carbon sequestration.

Neil Dennis is now living his dream: having fun in his fields where he has developed systems to move 1000 plus head of cattle, easily, single-handedly and with minimum stress to man and beast; restoring health to land that was previously being mined since 1900; traveling, meeting like-minded people and having a blast doing it. Sunnybrae is situated in the dark brown soils of southeast Saskatchewan: prairie pot hole country! Average 13 inches of rainfall (April to Nov.) plus snowfall (most of which is now captured).

**Blain Hjertaas** - Blain is a Certified Educator with Holistic Management International® based out of Albuquerque, NM and a 3rd generation farmer on the 100 year old Hjertaas Farm. Blain and his wife Naomi have raised 3 children and are now enjoying 3 grandchildren. Their oldest son Martin is involved in the farm, their second Allan is involved in the cattle business and their daughter Kathleen has a keen interest in regenerative agriculture from a developmental point of view. Blain & Naomi have been involved in the Holistic movement for 12 years and their group has met faithfully every month ever since. They are both involved in community affairs, They enjoy travelling and have been to India in 2014 and Malawi and Zimbabwe in 2012.

**Wil Rex** - Wil was born and raised on a ranch on the Canadian prairies in southern Manitoba. For many years, he partnered with his father and brothers raising pigs, cattle and horses, growing cereal crops and corn. He continues to live on the family ranch with his wife, Sandra. They have four children and three (perfect) grandchildren! Wil is passionate about the livestock industry and so as part of this deep interest, he moved into sales and worked for Gallagher Power Fencing for 17 years. In his career with them, he led countless seminars and workshops on livestock containment and management. As a side to this, he has developed watering systems using solar pumping and wind powered watering set-ups. As well, he has helped many to develop rotational grazing systems. Following his time with Gallagher Power Fencing, Wil moved to Hi-Hog Farm and Ranch Equipment. He felt that this company offered the best quality and safest systems in the industry. For some time he combined this position with sales for Speed-Rite Power Fencing. He continues to be passionate about the livestock farming and ranching business and is excited about the future of the industry.



**Canadian Forage and Grassland Association**  
*Association Canadienne pour les Plantes Fourragères*