

A PEAVEY INDUSTRIES PUBLICATION | SPRING 2021

Connected TO THE LAND

THE
Ag
ISSUE

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A MESSAGE FROM PEAVEY INDUSTRIES LP PRESIDENT AND CEO, DOUG ANDERSON

Welcome to the Spring 2021 issue of Connected to the Land. As Canada continues to navigate through the Covid-19 Pandemic, with all the twists and turns, Peavey Industries and our retail banners continue to pivot as required. It is important that we continue to always do the right thing for our customers and staff across many different regions in Canada, most experiencing protocol and regulatory changes on a regular basis. Throughout this last year, we have not sidelined plans to combine our two major brands into one, with the conversion of our Ontario stores to Peavey Mart stores. A huge undertaking at any time, we remained focused on our goal and are genuinely excited to have this Spring 2021 project completed, introducing the Peavey Mart brand to our Ontario customers. We are 100% Canadian and employee owned, and are very proud to be Canada's Largest Farm and Ranch retailer.

This issue offers a variety of articles and topics of interest for our variety of customers and readers. From hog farming and gardening to tractor pulls, there is something for everyone – plus new ideas or 'relevant-to-the-times' information, such as specialty farming and produce. Of course, we also continue with our 'Rural Spotlight' series in this issue, introducing the story of an Ontario farm family and their generations of work and growth within their industry.

I hope you enjoy the Spring 2021 issue as much as the last, and if this is your first, welcome to Connected to the Land! Please share any comments or suggestions by email to feedback@peaveyindustries.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

Last year we developed a website to supplement this magazine and further grow our connection with you, the land and our communities. Please visit connectedtotheland.info – where we have vlogs, blogs and more for you to enjoy!



Doug Anderson

Photo by Drew Kenworthy.



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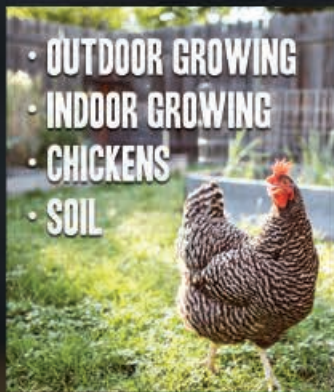


CONNECTING TO THE LAND TOGETHER

“Connected to the Land” embodies Peavey Industries and our retail brands – and has essentially become a brand of its own. The concept began with our original magazine and now includes a dedicated website showcasing e-versions of the magazine.

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At Peavey Industries, we firmly believed 'you reap what you sow'; with great service comes the best customers, from hard-to-find products comes innovative solutions. We would not have been able to establish our solid reputation over the last 50 years without you, your families, your businesses and homesteads. This is why we commit \$100,000 each year to the Peavey Industries Community Agriculture Grant. This annual grant works to leverage the meaningful work happening in your backyards, everyday. Whether it is a community garden project, funding for research, or to address the complexities that come with food insecurity, where we can we endeavour to help with partial or complete funding for projects and programs that directly impact the communities we live and work in, the communities we all call home.

The Community Agriculture Grant opens annually for submission on March 1st, and the deadline for applications is May 31st. For information on past recipients or how to apply, please visit our website, peaveymart.com



Peavey Rooted in Communities Endowment Program

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This is a smaller scope funding initiative to help big ideas take root. For more information on how to apply, please visit our website peaveymart.com.





DIVERSIFICATION

A KEY PART OF VEENSTRA FARMS

Story by Lee Hart. Photos courtesy of Ashley Veenstra.

Expanding the farm land base and taking the opportunities to diversify farm enterprises have been an important part of Andy Veenstra's philosophy as he and family members have built a profitable south-central farming operation over the past 60 years.

After completing high school in the early 1960s, Veenstra started out by growing up on a 125 acre dairy farm near Sherston, about 15 miles from Niagara Falls. Later the land next door was purchased and the cash crop growing operation began.

He and wife Dorothy raised a family of nine children; their three sons are taking the lead in the Andy Veenstra Farms operation today, which involves about 1,800 acres of soybean and wheat production along with a number of value-added enterprises. The farm is not far from the northeast shore of Lake Erie, and Buffalo, New York is about 25 kilometres to the east.

"We were fortunate to be able to expand the farm as we did over the years," says Veenstra. "We took the opportunity to buy land at a reasonable price when it became available. Today pretty well everything we are cropping is within about two miles of the home place, which makes it pretty nice."

Born in Holland, Veenstra was just a youngster when he along with his parents, two sisters and a younger brother immigrated to Canada

in February 1951. Arriving in Halifax, the family took a train to Dundas, ON. His dad had a job working on a large dairy farm in Boston, Ontario. "It was a large farm for those days," Veenstra recalls. "They were milking 80 cows and they were all milked by hand, it was a lot of work."

About a year later, the family moved to Smithville in south-central Ontario. Although they lived on a small farm, Veenstra's dad worked for a nearby factory.

"When I left high school in 1962 my dad bought a dairy farm near Sherston and that's where I started," says Veenstra. "It was sort of your typical Ontario dairy farm on 125 acres and I was the dairy farmer."

Veenstra ran the dairy farm with his parents until the late 1960s. When he and Dorothy married in 1969, they bought another 125 acre farm next door to dairy farm. "The house on the farm we bought was built in 1867, so in those days it was just over 100 years old," he says. "We did some renovations and we've been there ever since."

As Veenstra was always more interested in crop production than dairy farming, he was soon able to purchase adjoining properties at Sherston expanding the cash crop operation, producing mostly corn with winter wheat used in rotation.

As they produced corn on their own 250 acres as well as some rented land, Veenstra soon built a "small elevator for our own crops, but some neighbours used it as well," he says.

He continued producing corn and wheat for about the next 15 years and always kept his eye open for opportunities to buy more land. "We rented land from neighbours and then if they decided to sell we usually had the first opportunity for buying the land. I was always interested in buying more land and expanding our land base."

In about the mid-80s Veenstra made a change in cropping operations as the farm switched from corn production to soybeans. While there was a commodity market for soybeans, he was also aware there was a good demand for roasted soybeans to be used in livestock feed, mostly in dairy rations.

"So since we are so close to the U.S. border, I spent some time canvassing dairy farmers and feed mills in New York State to see if they would be interested in buying roasted soybeans," says Veenstra. "They were and the business grew quickly."

As they began growing soybeans, they installed a roasting facility and almost immediately began selling roasted soybeans, with most going to feed mills in New York State. "We made the investment in a fairly large roasting plant built on the farm," says Veenstra. "We

could roast about 10 tons per hour.” The process involved roasting the raw soybeans at 280 degrees Fahrenheit, then they had to be crimped (cracked) to produce the proper texture for livestock feed, then into a cooler to cool down before going into overhead bin storage until they were loaded into tractor trailer units for transport to feed mills. About 99 per cent of their production goes to the U.S. in 35 to 40 ton loads, although some product is also bagged and sold for horse rations.

By the mid to late 80s, the farm had grown to about 1500 acres of their own land (as they bought some additional neighbouring farms over the years) and today also still rent another 300 to 400 acres as well.

The demand for roasted soybeans has remained steady over the years. “What we produce on our farm is not enough to supply our market completely,” says Veenstra. “So we are also buying a lot of soybeans from neighbouring soybean producers.”

Shortly after they began producing roasted soybeans, people were asking if they could buy bagged beans for feed, and that soon led to the development of an on-farm bagged grain outlet which today is pretty well a full time job for one person,” says Veenstra. They produce about 15 different ration mixes, that can include ground, crimped or rolled oats, wheat, corn, soybeans and other ingredients according to customer specifications. A lot of the bagged product is sold as a ration to horse owners.

And with a lot of horsepower needed to keep the farm operating, referring to the diesel engines in tractors, combines and other power equipment, the Veenstras decided about 25 years ago to also get into the biofuel industry.

After doing some research they built their own biodiesel refinery, based around converting used vegetable oil from the fryers of restaurant industry into biodiesel. They collected the used cooking oil from between 40 and 50 area restaurants, processed it on-farm to produce about 10,000 gallons of biodiesel per year.



What they didn't need for their own farm was sold into the commercial fuel market.

The Veenstras modified materials to build the small refinery, and after it had been operating for a while, Andy Veenstra decided it might be wise to have a professional engineer inspect the operation for any recommendations on improvements.

“So we hired this engineer who specialized in biodiesel facilities and he was here for about two weeks, watching our process,” says Veenstra. “And when he was done he basically said he had learned more from our operation about producing biodiesel, than he could tell us. So that made us feel pretty good about what we had built.”

The farm produced biodiesel right up until mid-2020, when the price of diesel made from fossil fuels dropped to the point where their biodiesel production was no longer economical. “For our operation to be profitable we need to get at least \$1 per litre for the biodiesel,” says Veenstra. “We could do alright when fuel prices at the retail level were in the \$1.50 per litre range, but last year diesel prices dropped so low, it just wasn't economical.”

The farm still collects the used vegetable oil, which is sold to a broker in Canada who markets it to biodiesel refineries in certain

parts of the U.S. where grants and other biofuel incentives are available.

Another value-added venture which had a short lived hay day involved straw pellet production. It got off to a robust start about 25 years, but after a short run, turned into very much of a sideline operation. Veenstra originally set up the pellet mill to produce alfalfa hay pellets

“One year we were contacted by this company in Ohio, asking if we could we could make wheat straw pellets,” says Veenstra. “Initially I said no not this year because we were just about to start harvest and the combine was all set up with a straw chopper. But then they told us how much they wanted and what they were willing to pay so we reconsidered, took the chopper off, and we had to hire a neighbour to bale the straw.

“That first year they took 300 tons of straw pellets and said they would take all we could produce. We couldn't produce it fast enough,” he says. The Veenstras supplied pellets for a couple of years then the market started slipping and eventually the Ohio company disappeared.

“We still do a very limited run of straw pellets. We run the mill for about three days a year and that produces enough bagged pellets for the market we have,” says Veenstra. “Mostly the pellets are used for livestock bedding and they can be used as a low protein filler in a feed ration. But pellets are very much a sideline.”

With the farm most years producing about 1,200 acres of soybeans along with about 600 acres of winter wheat, the Veenstras introduced the relatively new practice of growing cover crops about five years ago. Cover crops are seeded after the main cash crop has been harvested. The cover crop grows through late summer and fall providing “cover” for the soil, which helps to improve soil quality as well as protects the soil from erosion.

“Erosion really was what got us started with cover crops,” says Veenstra. “Our land is quite flat here, and in the winter we'd get snow, and when that snow melted in the spring the runoff would cut into the soil and some places we'd have these channels that were 18 to 24 inches deep.”

Andy and Dorothy Veenstra





The farm uses two types of cover crops. After the 600 acres of winter wheat is harvested usually in late July or early August they seed a cover crop blend that includes about eight different plant species such as oilseed radish, sunflower, oats, sorghum and crimson clover. These are all annual species that will keep the soil covered with growing plants during the fall, which benefits soil quality. The cover crop dies off with the first killing frost of winter. The crop residue helps to protect the soil until the new crop is seeded next spring.

With the soybeans harvested usually in October, the Veenstras seed fall rye as a cover crop after soybeans. The fall rye gets well established with four to five inches of growth before winter settles in and then is still providing good ground cover in the spring. The new soybean crop can be seeded into the fall rye “which is pretty much flat to the ground,” says Veenstra then an application of glyphosate can be applied to kill out the fall rye after the soybeans are seeded.

“The ground cover provided by the fall rye also appears to help control weeds the following spring, so most years we can eliminate one in-crop herbicide application as well,” says Veenstra.

While Andy Veenstra got the farm rolling about 50 years ago, he says it has truly been a joint effort over the years to build Veenstra Farms into a successful operation.

“Dorothy has certainly been the key to this farm’s success,” he says. “It wouldn’t have happened without her support. She looked after the house and family and also looked after the books for many years.”

Veenstra says the farm has also been fortunate to have the help of long-time employee Ed Young. “He started here when he was 18 and he’s been here 36 years, so it must have been not too bad of a place to work,” he says.

And of course the second generation of Veenstras, their three sons, Andrew, Brian and Jonathan, are all actively involved in production and management roles.

“We are in the process transitioning the farm to the boys as they look after the bulk of the work these days,” says Veenstra. “I’m still involved. I live here so it is pretty difficult not to be involved. But mostly I just walk around and act important. But I have been blessed with good health during my life and as long as you feel healthy I figure you might as well keep busy with work that you enjoy.” 🍁

As a journalist for more than 40 years, Lee Hart has focused on reporting on and commenting about the Canadian agriculture industry for the past 30 years. A former field editor for Country Guide Magazine, he has been a writer and editor for Grainews for the past 15 years — based in Calgary, AB.

*Do you want to share your agricultural family’s story? If so, we’d certainly be interested in considering you for the next issue’s **Rural Spotlight**. Please contact Marketing@PeaveyIndustries.com with your information.*





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ROB BERGEVIN

A LONG-TIME AUCTIONEER REFLECTS

Story by Lee Hart. Photos courtesy of Rob Bergevin

As a city kid, born and raised in Edmonton, Rob Bergevin didn't know how or where he would connect with the agriculture industry; he just knew from a young age that being around livestock was something he wanted to do in his life.

Now a few decades later, as owner of a southern Alberta livestock auction mart, with 30 years experience as an auctioneer, and 20 years as a professional rodeo pickup man also woven into the past, he's pretty sure he made the right decision.

"Being around agriculture and livestock was just always something I wanted to do," says Bergevin, who along with his wife Sharon today are part owners of the Foothills Auctioneers Inc. in Stavely, AB, about an hour south of Calgary. "One of my first jobs as a teenager was working as a ranch hand for a place west of Calgary. That definitely got me hooked. And as I look back on my career, I'd say it all worked out pretty well."

Along with being part of the Stavely auction facility for the past 17 years — he still makes the call on the estimated 45,000 head of cattle sold through Foothills annually — Bergevin is also active in industry associations. He is a past president of the Alberta Auction Market Association serving from 2016 to 2018, and today serves as president of the national organization, The Livestock Markets Association of Canada (LMAC). He is completing his second two-year term in 2021.

Bergevin was 14 in the early 1970s when he moved south from Edmonton and began working for a ranch near Calgary. That connected him to ranch life, being around and learning to ride horses and even learning a bit about rodeo.

In the late 1980s he started working on the rodeo circuit, eventually becoming a professional pickup man for long established Alberta rodeo companies such as Richards Rodeo of Cochrane and Vold Rodeo Company of High River. The pickup man, is another

rider in the ring during rodeo competitions such as bronc and bareback riding events who is responsible for getting the bronc rider off their horse safely as the ride ends. The pickup man brings their horse along side of the competitor's horse at the end of their ride and "picks up" the rider. It allows the competitor to grab onto the pickup rider and safely get off the bucking animal, as the pickup horse quickly moves him out of harms way.

While the rodeo work was busy at certain times of the year, and often on weekends, Bergevin also found himself in 1988 working at the Calgary Stockyards, which at that time was still located in southeast Calgary. That's where the magical rhythm of the auctioneers chant really caught his attention. "Again it was something when I first heard it really appealed to me and it was something I wanted to learn," he says.

So in 1990 he was off to auctioneering school in Mason City, Iowa and as they say, there was no looking back. After completing the

auctioneering program, Bergevin returned to Calgary and for the next several years divided his time between professional rodeo work, and being a freelance auctioneer.

"I contracted my services with different companies," says Bergevin. "But basically I worked as a freelance auctioneer and I worked all kinds of auctions including livestock sales, car auctions, heavy equipment auctions, and farm auctions as well."

And when he wasn't calling bids, he was out on the rodeo circuit working with rodeo contractors across Western Canada. "I travelled from B.C. to Manitoba working rodeos as a professional pickup man," says Bergevin. "There were many, many events in many communities. A couple of the bigger ones in central Alberta were the Ponoka Stampede and Innisfail Pro Rodeo."

He retired from the rodeo circuit around 2007 and after about 15 years as largely a freelance auctioneer, he and his wife Sharon settled into a more regular routine in 2005, as they partnered with Blair Vold, a principal with the long-time Alberta auction mart company Vold Jones Vold, in joint ownership of the Foothills Auctioneering Inc. in Stavelly.

"We began building the auction mart business in Stavelly," says Bergevin. "We started with a weekly cattle sale, and then we added bull sales, and bred cows sales came next and we also did farm sales, too. The business grew



An advertisement for Stanfield's Premium Work T-Shirts. The background is a grey metal wall with rivets. On the left, the word 'STANFIELD'S' is written vertically in large, yellow, stylized letters. In the center, the text 'LASTS TWICE AS LONG AS 100% COTTON MOISTURE WICKING!' is written in white and yellow. Below this text is a red circular logo with a white maple leaf and the words 'MADE IN CANADA' and 'FABRIQUÉ AU CANADA'. On the right, a man in a grey t-shirt and blue jeans is holding a silver level against the wall. At the bottom, the words 'PREMIUM WORK T-SHIRTS' are written in large, white, bold letters.

eventually to a point where we were having three to four auctions per week.”

In 2014 there was another change in the auction career, as the Bergevins took over as the sole owners of Foothills Auctioneering. Also during his years in Stavely, Rob became active with both the provincial and national auctioneer associations. In 2017 there was actually a bit of overlap as he was president of both associations at the same time.

And the most recent change in auctionmart ownership came in 2019 as Foothills Auctioneering partnered with the long-time Lethbridge-based, Perlich Bros Auction Market.

“Perlich Bros has been around for more than 50 years, and they are a larger well established auction service,” says Bergevin. “Partnering with them has certainly provided us with resources and connections in the industry we didn’t have before. And we are both in the livestock sales business in southern Alberta, so as we form a partnership we are not competing with each other.”

So what are some of the highlights and challenges Bergevin sees in the industry during his 30 years as an auctioneer?

He says a personal highlight was being involved with special events at the Calgary Stampede for a number of years. For about 18 years, Bergevin was auctioneer for what is known as the tarp auction for the annual chuck wagon races at the Calgary Stampede. The opportunity for sponsors to have their names on the canvas covering the chuck wagon was auctioned off each year with sponsors bidding to support their favourite chuck wagon operators. Some of the top bids some years reached \$150,000 for the favoured wagon, with the auction raising more than \$3 million annually - all going to help wagon owners cover expenses.

At another venue, Bergevin also served for about 10 years as the auctioneer at the annual Calgary Stampede art auction.

Across the industry, he says as part of the national LMAC he has been involved in important changes affecting auction markets as well as the overall livestock industry.

“Some of the bigger files we continue to work on are the new livestock traceability measures, improved animal welfare practices and improved livestock transportation practices,” says Bergevin. “And these are important areas in developing public trust in the industry, ensuring food safety and also in improving proper livestock care and handling. As an association we were pleased to provide input into adopting these new practices, while at the same time making sure they did not impede the speed of commerce.”

One of the biggest changes in the past year was a much broader adoption of on-line marketing services of cattle. While there have been electronic and video marketing services


available for several years, protocols around the COVID-19 pandemic pushed more of the industry to adopt on-line sales.

“Livestock markets have been very responsible in response to pandemic protocols,” says Bergevin. “We developed our protocols based on Health Canada requirements and further modified them to comply with protocols in each province.”

Using an on-line video platform called CLIX, livestock producers were able to deliver their cattle to a local auctionmart one day, and then back at home go on-line the next day to watch those cattle be sold at the weekly auction.

“If an auction facility had capacity for 200 people and COVID protocols set a limit of 20 per cent capacity, that meant that auction

could only have 50 people, in attendance, with masks and socially distanced,” says Bergevin. “So we followed those restrictions, but visitors, consignors and buyers could certainly be part of the sale by logging on to CLIX.”

Bergevin says as protocols ease over the coming months he expects a certain number of producers will continue with the on-line sales services, “but I think people will also be interested in getting back to the live auction facilities,” he says. “There is the social aspect of connecting with other people, but producers have also invested time and money and effort in producing these animals, so there is an emotional connection as well as they want to be there to see their cattle through the auction process.” 



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PIG TALES

PROTECTING A BILLION-DOLLAR INDUSTRY

Story by Richard A. Nichols.



Canadian hog producers are the first link of a value chain that provides rural, suburban, and urban communities with more than 100,000 jobs and contributes almost \$24 billion to the nation's economy.

From coast to coast, more than 7,000 farm families, caring for about 14 million animals, produce high-quality, affordable meat that is in great demand in Canada and almost 100 other countries.

"We export about 70% of what we produce, either in the form of meat or live animals," said Gary Stordy, director, government & corporate affairs for the Canadian Pork Council.

"We export high value meat and other pork products to the U.S., Mexico, Japan, and China," he added.

In many ways, hog production is an ideal industry for Canada. Our export costs are lower than those of most other major countries; our trade deals give us access to the markets of other G7 countries, and we have a more than adequate supply of feed grain for the animals.

What's more, the Canadian hog industry has one of the world's most sophisticated food safety management initiatives – PigTRACE.

"PigTRACE is contact tracing, just like COVID-19 contract tracing," said Jeff Clark, director of PigTRACE Canada. "We enter every transaction and shipment in Canada into our data base. If there is a health or food safety issue affecting any pig in the country, we can trace that animal's movements in a minute."

The concept was adopted after the BSE and hoof and mouth outbreaks experienced by the beef production industry in the early 2000s in North America and the Netherlands.

"The hog industry is so reliant on exports that if shipments were cut off, the entire business would be in jeopardy," Clark explained.

It took several years to set the system up but since July 1, 2014, any time you ship or receive pigs – whether you're the biggest exporter in the country or a hobby farmer with three little pigs – you are required by law to report that movement to PigTRACE. There are about 800,000 such events reported every year.

Using that data, PigTRACE tracks movement patterns to determine what's normal and what's not. This information can be critical. Canadian producers, like their counterparts in other countries, are extremely concerned about a porcine disease, African Swine Fever, that thankfully has not come to North America.

"If African Swine Fever were to break out, exports would shut down immediately," said Rick Bergmann, president of Buckingham Ag of Steinbach, Manitoba, and chair of the Canadian Pork Council, "and if major importers like China, Japan, and South Korea closed their doors, it would create a massive backlog. Our industry would quickly dry up."



As the world's consumers become more and concerned about food safety, PigTRACE has quickly become an important weapon in the fight against disease.

"Knowing what we do about movement patterns, PigTRACE can recommend that the industry stop specific movements before the government declares an emergency," said Clark. "This enables us quickly apply very precise safeguards in the unlikely event that something bad happens. It greatly enhances consumer confidence in Canada as a source of supply.

"Canada was one of the first countries to initiate a national swine tracing program and it's available to producers at an extremely low cost," he added. "The government provides funds to maintain and improve the system, but its operating costs are 100% paid for by the sale of ear tags to pig farmers."

The Canadian Pork Council is also currently introducing a quality assurance program (PigSAFE) and an animal care program (PigCARE).

Moving up the value chain, Canadian packers and processing companies are among the best managed and best equipped in the world.

They have an excellent reputation for meeting the exacting specifications of buyers from many countries. Since pork is a meat that can be part of any meal during the day, Canadian packers and processors have developed a range of products to suit many applications.

The sector promotes its products overseas through Canada Pork International, a joint venture of the Pork Council and the Canadian Meat Council, which represents the pork packers and trading companies. Its role is to identify potential export markets and work with importers, processors, and retailers who show interest in buying the products.

By and large, it has been successful. But times have been tough for the hog industry recently. The past five years have witnessed extremely volatile commodity prices.

"Price volatility has impacted the industry in different ways," said Rick Bergmann. "Farms that are integrated into the processing cycle have actually

increased production. Those that are not have been impacted adversely. There has been little expansion of the family farms. The money just isn't there."

The situation has forced producers to review the Canadian pricing model. "I hear more producers than ever before saying they need a fairer share of the total return that comes into the system from the consumer," said Rick Bergmann.



Currently, pricing is based on formulas that originate in the United States, where there are more processors than in Canada and competition for the product is greater. Commodity prices tend to be higher.

“The consumer pays what the consumer pays,” Bergmann said. “It then works backwards from the retailer to the processor to the farmer, with the occasional wholesaler between the retailer and the processor. The more steps in the progression, the smaller the slice of the pie for each step.

“The primary producers are at the bottom of the pyramid, so they are most likely to take it on the chin in times of volatile pricing.”

Bergmann views Quebec as a model for the rest of the industry to follow. It has an umbrella system for pricing its agricultural products. Because of that, producers have been able to negotiate better prices for their market hogs. Bergmann sees this as one way of maintaining stability in the sector. And as an entrepreneur, he also sees a need for greater co-operation among producers.

“I am a third-generation farmer,” he said. “I love agriculture and I love pork production. When I look at the future, I think we’ll have to work together. I already work with partners and looking ahead, I think there will be more of that.” 🍁

Richard A. Nichols (www.ansoncopy.com) is a farm writer from Okotoks, Alberta.



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TRACTOR PULLS

A BALANCE BETWEEN POWER AND TRACTION

Story by Mary MacArthur.

The pull of vintage tractors is irresistible to Robert McKell.

Farmers and ranchers work hard, especially during peak seasons. It is easy to think that the body is sufficiently exercised during the work day when your job is physical. Unfortunately, most farm work is ergonomically incorrect and can lead to repetitive strain injuries.

Add in vintage tractor pulls and McKell can't think of a better way to spend a day, or an entire summer.

"I love old tractors. I love hearing them and I love playing with them," said McKell, who collected more than 40 vintage tractors before competing in his first tractor pull 15 years ago.

"There is nothing better than competing in a tractor pull," said McKell, of Calmar, Alta.

McKell is a member of the Leduc West Antique Society, an organization dedicated to restoring and maintaining antique equipment, buildings and other items used by early settlers. Leduc West hosts three tractor pulls each year, including the provincial finals. The top three winners from sanctioned tractor pull



Robert McKell in front of his barn with an Oliver tractor. Photo by Mary MacArthur.

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Terry Hanlon in his shop full of rebuilt tractors and other collectibles. Photo by Mary MacArthur.

competitions across the province can compete in the Alberta finals, hosted at Leduc, just south of Edmonton, in September.

With more than 30 Vintage Tractor Pull competitions across the province, McKell spends most of the summer attending competitions, often hauling eight or nine tractors to the events.

To compete in Vintage Tractor Pulls, competitors must have a tractor that was manufactured in 1960, or earlier. Tractors are entered in six main categories based on the weight of the tractor. The classes range from 4,000 up to 12,000 pounds (1,815 to 5,444 kilograms). Some events have classes for lighter weight tractors.

In the competition, tractors are hooked to a sled, a specially built trailer designed to transfer the weight from the trailer to the tractor as the tractor moves forward. As the tractor pulls ahead, a conveyor on the sled moves a box of weight forward transferring the weight from the sled to the tractor. More weight is added to the sled as tractor weight

classes increase. In the higher weight classes, the box of weight moves up the trailer faster.

The tractors pull the sled down a dirt track until it spins out or stalls out. Officials measure the distance travelled and the tractor that has travelled down the dirt track the furthest is declared the winner.

Winning a competition is a combination of luck and driver skill. The tractor with the most power doesn't always win. A novice driver often pulls the throttle wide open and races up the track before spinning out part way up the track.

Seasoned drivers know how to control the power through gently adjusting the throttle to ensure the tractor keeps moving forward.

"You need to get power to the ground, but not in a way that it will spin out the wheels. If the engine is going slow the tires won't spin out," said McKell.

"It's not always about the power of the tractor. It's about getting the power to the tires."

Fellow competitor and Leduc West member, Terry Hanlon, agrees winning is about knowing your tractor, using the throttle and gently stepping on the brakes for the final push before the tractor spins out.

"It's a balance between power and traction," said Hanlon, who has competed in vintage tractor pulls for 16 years after buying his first vintage tractor in 2004.

"There is a little bit of skill. I've got a trophy case. I've got some bragging rights," said Hanlon, of Devon.

Hanlon got hooked on vintage tractor pulls when he bought his first tractor at an auction. The 1952 Fordson Major tractor reminded Hanlon of the Fordson tractor on his family farm in Ireland. Unlike most Fordson tractors with diesel engines, Hanlon's tractor has a gasoline engine.

"That's what caught my attention."

Since buying his first tractor, Hanlon has added another 11 to the collection, most used for competition. "My shed is getting pretty full."

While some collectors acquire only one brand of tractor, Hanlon has a variety of tractors including Oliver and Massey Ferguson tractors. Over the winter he rebuilt a vintage crawler tractor in hopes there will soon be an additional tractor pull class for tractors with tracks instead of tires.

The retired mechanic said it is not uncommon to have more than 100 vintage tractors at weekend competitions. He often brings six tractors to a competition to be able to pull in all classes. Competitors are generally over 60, retired, have a connection to farming and enjoy friendly competition.

"It's something to do in the summer. It's become a hobby of mine and I like meeting other fellow tractor pullers. It's a lot of good fun," said Hanlon, who has attended competitions in Florida and competed in England.

Each competitor is allowed two pulls with each tractor per day. As organizer of the Leduc West's tractor pull, McKell races between his tractors and the officials booth to ensure the event runs smoothly.

Track conditions can change throughout the day and McKell watches and listens to the tractors to help adjust his strategy. A wetter track provides more grip and possibly more distance.

McKell can tell if a tractor is running smoothly and pulling well by its sound. A change of engine noise may mean something is wrong, or the tractor is buckling down and pulling hard. "To me, you hear those tractors and listen for those different sounds."

A tractor hobby, especially tractors that need restoration, is not inexpensive. It costs money to haul them to events, fill them with diesel and general maintenance.

Depending on the tractor, it can cost \$2,500 to \$3,000 for tires for one tractor. Often the diesel engines, more than 60 years old require additional maintenance. To rebuild an injection pump may cost \$2,000, restoring the metal to its original luster may be another \$5,000.

McKell has restored 10 tractors and has five in different states of restoration.

"I've got every different make of tractor. This is my passion," said McKell, a retired electrician.

"I can't imagine waking up and saying what am I going to do today."

While all vintage tractor pull events were cancelled in 2020 because of COVID-19, organizers are hoping to host some events in 2021. 🍁

When Mary MacArthur isn't writing stories about agriculture she is busy mowing grass and pulling weeds on her central Alberta acreage. An avid hiker, Mary is hiking the Great Divide Trail from Waterton, on the US border to Kakwa Falls, near Grande Prairie. Mary can also be found running down the gravel roads trying to stay in shape and train for future races.



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Story and photos by Geoff Geddes. Top photo: a cheque presentation at our London, Ontario location.

If a good relationship is based on trust, shared values and mutual respect, the partnership between Peavey Mart's parent company, Peavey Industries LP and 4-H Canada is the perfect pairing. From coast to coast, Peavey Industries has been a proud supporter of 4-H since approximately 1970; however, the partnership was not at the level it is today. The current relationship spans across each provincial 4-H organization from British Columbia to Ontario, encompassing approximately 15,000 4-H members, 88 Peavey Mart store locations and 3 MainStreet Hardware store locations.

"The partnership is truly a natural fit," said Kim Gillis, sponsorship & community engagement coordinator for Peavey Industries. "Both Peavey Mart and the 4-H organization developed their strong roots through rural Canada. 4-H works to build youth as leaders within their communities, and Peavey Industries is proud to be a strong supporter of our youth and future customers."

While each provincial partnership is independent from one another, all work toward the greater goal of enhancing the 4-H programs on a local level. A prime example of this collaborative effort is the joint annual national 4-H Days campaign. This event occurs for one week in August and includes fundraising events such as a one-day, 4-H member-run BBQ at some store locations, in-store paper clover sales, giving at the till, online e-commerce donations and donations collected through social media on the Facebook fundraising platform.

"We are very happy and proud that this event has trended and grown to be more successful year over year," said Gillis. "Peavey Industries and local Peavey Mart stores also have the opportunity throughout the year to be involved in regional or provincial 4-H events by serving as event sponsors and sometimes event judges."

TO AGRICULTURE AND BEYOND

Perhaps nowhere is the synergy between Peavey Industries and 4-H more evident than with 4-H Ontario. Boasting a history that dates back more than a century, the Ontario chapter includes 50 associations, 6,000 youth and 2,000 volunteers. While it is committed to 4-H's agricultural roots, its reach extends much further.

"We still have agriculture at the core of our programming," said Sheena Switzer, communications manager for 4-H Ontario. "In fact, our largest subscribed project is centered around dairy, involving 1500 members and 310 volunteers. We also cover a wide range of agricultural topics including livestock, field crops and the impact of science and technology on this sector."

At the same time, 4-H Ontario offers a broad scope of life skills and career-related programs covering everything from bread-making and pizza clubs to marketing and community involvement. Of course, all of these programs need funding, and that's where Peavey Industries really shines.

"We launched Ontario's first 'give at the till' campaign in 2019, and we were thrilled to

have the support of a major farm and ranch retailer like Peavey Mart," said Shannon Muir, acting manager, philanthropy for 4-H Ontario. "They were also a huge part of the fundraising barbecues at several stores, providing all the supplies, space and promotion. Usually our volunteers are tasked with running such events, but they took on the heavy lifting, which was an amazing gesture."

WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH...

Strong relationships are also about weathering the storms, and Peavey Industries rose to the challenge in 2020.

"When COVID-19 hit, we were heartened by the amazing people at Peavey Mart and their commitment to 4-H at a difficult time for retailers," said Muir. "Their front line staff worked so hard to keep things going with 'give at the till' while launching online giving and a Facebook presence to reach a digital audience."

Peavey Mart also extended their sponsorship in 2020 to the membership plaques distributed by 4-H Ontario.

"Our long-term sponsor of the plaques was no longer able to support them, so Peavey Mart stepped up," said Muir. "New members are given a plaque, and each year they receive a number plate that attaches to it. The plaques are important trackers of the journey for our members and a tangible record of their commitment to 4-H."

PEAVEY INDUSTRIES ON THE PRAIRIES

That commitment extends from east to west, with chapters like 4-H Alberta also feeling the impact.

“4-H Alberta and its 5200 members went through a restructure in 2020 and Peavey Industries was there to support us as always,” said Bianca von Nagy, director, business development with 4-H Alberta. “We have had a great relationship over the years, and that partnership continues to evolve in terms of how we engage with them.”

One prime point of engagement is the discount card given to 4-H members for use in Peavey Mart and MainStreet Hardware stores. Armed with the card, 4-H youth develop a budget, purchase supplies and tackle a range of projects such as building a new pen or erecting a fence.

“Learning by doing and building that confidence is a huge part of the 4-H experience,” said von Nagy. “We see up to 10,000 projects a year, so many members have multiple projects, and they can be expensive; the discount card helps make it all possible.”

Support from Peavey Industries also facilitates life skills development for 4-H Alberta, such as the communication program where kids learn to prepare presentations.

“As they progress, members move from club to district, region and provincial level, learning to

be comfortable with public speaking,” said von Nagy. “Many adults are still not at ease in that situation, but the program ingrains this skill in the kids’ DNA.”

Though the life of a 4-H member can be a hectic one, the impact of the partnership is always top of mind.

“Without supporters like Peavey Industries and Peavey Mart, we simply could not do what we do,” said von Nagy. “They help us to help kids succeed and become future leaders, and for that we are incredibly grateful.”

All told, the efforts of Peavey Industries resonate from Ontario to B.C. and touch many lives in the process.

“We truly value the partnership we have with Peavey Mart in Ontario and across the country,” said Christine Oldfield, executive director of 4-H Ontario. “Their support allows us to impact youth, not only at the provincial level, but also at the local level through direct community engagement. This is a unique opportunity that we are so proud of, and that we hope to see grow and flourish in the years to come.” 🍁

Geoff Geddes is a freelance writer/editor based in Edmonton. He specializes in writing articles, blog posts and website content for the agriculture industry.



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CROP SPECIALIZATION

FINDING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

Story by Pat Kerr.

When it comes to lessons after a year of pandemic, there are two things, needed: living more sustainably and products with real world value. Like all businesses, farms need to be profitable.

There is money in agriculture but it seems to elude most farmers. Perdue University said, "Agriculture is the most important of the industries dealing with the biological resources of Canada, exceeding the value of forestry, fishing, and trapping." However, choosing a profitable crop is more than about climate and region.

The top two most profitable specialty crops in Canada today are: bamboo and lavender. Both these products have multiple uses and many of the secondary products have a long shelf life making them excellent when shipping and storage conditions are challenging. For big farms, tree nursery, fish and dairy are potential money makers. For small land owners in most of our regions, it is herbs, bees, microgreens or mushrooms.

Conrad Richter of Richter's Herbs said, "Covid has been a boon to the industry. (In January 2021,) we have shortages of dried herbs and seeds already for this season. Herbs as a crop is so broad. It is like comparing tomatoes and corn. Some struggle while others sell out all they have. No one is getting rich. Those that stay, stay because they have a love for herbs. It is not a get rich quick scheme. You can make money if you are dedicated. Start small and establish a market. You will need samples. Not everyone can grow herbs."

One of the most surprising aspects of the new market conditions in this technological age is the break down in communications. There are challenges such as hearing through Plexiglas with masks. More challenges, hitting of wrong buttons due to big hands or stress leading to lost messages, and of course the frequent fluctuations in market demands leaving farmers scrambling to distribute perishable products while businesses open and close with little notice to the farmer supplier.

During the early days of the pandemic, a couple of guys in Northern Ontario were starting a micro green business. They had produced samples. They had developed markets, a supply chain and were ready to open their new business, the day before the lock down. Their new customers, all restaurants were closed. All orders cancelled. They were discouraged but they had an essential, nutritious product. That first crop was compost but a new one was ready with a new supply chain two weeks later. They were flexible and exhausted but they got the job done and now supply to the local take out market.

Mellisa Spearing is a Seed Biologist with NR Canada and a garlic farmer. "Garlic has always been considered an easy crop with low pests. In the last five to ten years that has changed. We now have leek moth, nematodes and white rot. The biggest culprit is trade. Everyone plants garlic so they bought. Everyone names their garlic but these are not new plants. You only get a new plant if it is started from seed. The best stock is from PEI and BC. Any new

stock (including the related flowering allium) brought in should be quarantined. And pay attention to curing. Garlic is the pandemic product."

Shiitake mushrooms and other gourmet, limited supply products like chocolate/maple mint sauce and maple vinegar can be used as attractants to bring customers to small rural outlets with appropriate advertising. The advertising does need to be timely and have a wide coverage of the target market but the availability of these niche items can increase sales of other stock items. Whether stocking your own farm market or supplying to a retail shop, keep limited supply, high value items up front and visible so customers don't have to walk through the entire store to find them. Use items of necessity to draw your customers into browsing. The goal is to make their shopping experience pleasant, efficient and friendly.

When looking to how to adjust to the changes Dalhousie University has some facts to help. They did a survey on the pandemic and food literacy. Food Literacy is about understanding the impact our food choices make on health, the environment, and our economy. 70.5% of Canadians believe health is most important. Economy is 52.7%. The environment is third at 28.3%, and community last at 23.0%. It seems the local food movement needs to expand their marketing.

Only 35.5% of people learned a new recipe this year. 8.6% of Canadians did not know one recipe before the pandemic and that only dropped to 7.0%. The groups that made

the greatest change were Generation Z and Millennials. Boomers were doing the most cooking before and they changed little in their recipe choices.

Canadians are trying new ingredients especially spices. Vegetables and oils were second. They also found people trust internet sources for facts about nutrition 14% more than they trust their doctors. The internet also influences people 37.7% more than health professional.

National Geographic had some advice for farmers planting this year. "You can always plow back under crops you can't sell but when there's a rush on peppers, you'd best be sure you have some." They also suggest diversity. If you have 50% of your business in one market and that market changes, you aren't going to make it.

Making the shift to pandemic living isn't always easy. Growing food and making money are not options. Adding new products means assessing the local area's needs and developing a marketing and distribution plan that works even under emergency conditions.

With decades of experience Richter struggles with the changes his business needs to make. "I am pondering how much I need to invest... expecting a return on that investment to better serve and supply my customer's needs. Young people have taken up cooking at home. It is becoming a deep seated interested. They are bringing plants into their apartments and plants into their lives. They are especially interested in herbs and food plants. If there is a silver lining, it is that. Getting their fingers in the soil is taking hold. It is taking root." 🍁

Pat Kerr is a Master Gardener and author of 2 books promoting native diversity. My Tree, My Forest encourages gardeners to support their yard trees to be part of a thriving eco-system. We are Planting a Forest is a short children's pamphlet on growing native trees from seed.

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ANIMAL PANDEMICS

USING WHAT WE LEARNED FROM COVID-19

Story by Roy Lewis DVM.

2020 will no doubt go down in history as the year of dealing with a pandemic.

A lot of what the general public learned about dealing with a pandemic was implementing social distancing, minimizing contact with each other, implementing biosecurity measures and wearing a mask. I really believe that most businesses have been made quite safe with the social distancing signs and having the checkouts and other key areas shrouded in plexiglass as well as minimizing hand contact. In our daily lives working from home where possible and having virtual meetings has also minimized contact.

I also believe this has made us very safe in preventing other ailments, such as influenza, as we have greatly reduced its transmission with the biosecurity measures being implemented - some of which I have no doubt may be wise to keep permanently.

Because the specific Corona virus originally came from animals, it is considered a zoonotic disease. It is no fluke that the theme for last year's Animal Health Week in October, from the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, was preventing zoonotic diseases of which there are several.

Knowing there are certain diseases we may get from animals heightens our awareness. From mild infections like ringworm, that I have seen on people when washing and showing cattle, to a very serious and fatal disease such as rabies, this is zoonosis. This keeps the veterinary and medical communities sharing their disease surveillance to help each other out.

There are two potential "pandemics" that livestock producers have been planning to ideally prevent or stomp out if they ever show up in Canada. If either did show up the economic fallout would be exponentially massive. I am referring to Foot and Mouth disease in all cloven hoof species but more likely to occur in cattle or African swine fever that has devastated the swine herd in China that led to massive die-offs.

The public can now fully grasp the concept of disease transmission and what it means. Beyond eradication, if that's possible, it falls back to good husbandry, biosecurity and potential vaccination. The best defence is a potent offence to keeping these diseases out of the country in the first place. We have all learned how travel and close contact of people can quickly spread a relatively contagious virus worldwide.

So, travel from another part of the world must be closely scrutinized. The questions one gets asked at the airport about coming from and going to a farm should be taken far more seriously. Also, many times people are trying to smuggle in meat and meat by-products even though they're asked that question specifically when travelling.

This is exactly how the only time Foot and Mouth disease got into Canada in the 1950s in contaminated meat. It was only because it was in Saskatchewan in the dead of winter and a very astute local veterinarian recognized it, that a huge outbreak was averted.

With all these diseases, experts always talk about the contagious nature of the organism. COVID 19 is considered quite contagious and doctors talk about a number three coefficient. This means in a group of people at a gathering, a Covid positive result could be expected to be passed to three other people.

Foot and Mouth disease is even more contagious than COVID, which is why the last outbreak in Britain spread very quickly to different cloven hoofed animals across the country. The organism got there from people feeding swill (food wastage) to pigs, which are an ideal multiplier for the virus, which then was spewed out of the exhaust fans and

aeroginously spread to nearby sheep. Some of these sheep travelled almost the length of Britain to slaughter, and before you know it, caused a massive spread.

There are multiple sources of Foot and Mouth vaccine stored in the event of a massive outbreak in different countries. Some countries want to eradicate it and keep it out altogether. Others, if the disease is somewhat endemic (meaning ever-present in low levels), will look at regional or zone vaccination strategies. Countries in Africa live with the disease endemically whereas countries like Canada, Britain and the United States elect to try and keep it totally eradicated. Alberta and Western Canada have had many mock outbreak strategies on how to contain movement in people and animals to curb the spread.

Also, I don't believe the public would allow the widespread emergency slaughter necessary to try and curb the spread. The disease causes vesicles like blisters primarily on the mouth and feet so there isn't really a high mortality but production losses associated with it can be great.

Closer scrutiny at airports of people coming from these endemic countries is one key plus a zero tolerance for illegal meat being brought in. Stiffer fines and even turning people back is necessary in my eyes. Maybe I watch too much border patrol, but the various dogs that sniff out not only drugs, citrus fruits, and meat among other things are an absolute invaluable necessity to helping prevent the next pandemic in cattle. COVID 19 has really brought attention on how travel can spread between people and animals.

African Swine Fever (ASF), the very serious viral disease of pigs we have heard about in China, is considered very contagious. Although not on the same level as foot and Mouth or COVID, if pigs get it the mortality rate is extremely high. People can again be a mechanical transmitter and there is the potential for pigs to get it from a contaminated feed source. The swine industry would be decimated if it got into their barns, so hyper-vigilance is being directed at importation. In some countries,

the issue has been it spreading into the wild feral pig population. Wild pigs are very hard to contain, range over large territories and have a high reproductive rate, so this is a very big concern in North America.

By these explanations of two serious diseases in production animals, one can see where the hyper-vigilant cleaning, clamping down on safety of travel and extra screening is necessary for people and animals to be safer. Everyone must realize how these extra steps we take on a daily basis- with masks, social distancing and testing-are extremely necessary to keep both ourselves healthy, but also potentially to the animals that are under our care.

Those of us who work in the agriculture industry have known this for a while and now I believe the general public is getting the message. We need to all co-operate and, directly or indirectly, we can help curtail, slow down and potentially eliminate the current and future disease outbreaks. We are all connected and agriculture especially, as an essential service, is super-necessary for food production. Let's be careful and help each other out in this whole disease transmission prevention process as it has taught us some very valuable lessons.



Dr. Roy Lewis graduated from WCV (Western College of Veterinary Medicine) in 1981 and was a partner at the Westlock Veterinary Clinic until Jan 2013. He has been a large animal practitioner for 38 years, mainly with beef cattle (both commercial cattle and purebred herds). His interests are preventative medicine, fertility (both bulls and cows), and animal welfare. He has written numerous producer articles in magazines such as the Western Producer, Alberta Farmer Express, Simmental Country and the Charolais Banner. Roy joined Merck Animal Health 2012 as a technical services veterinarian part time until 2020. Roy is also part of Lewis Farms, a family-owned purebred Simmental & Angus cattle (1000 cows), grain and potatoes mixed farming operation near Spruce Grove Alberta.

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BAKED BBQ BABY BACK RIBS

WITH A DELICIOUS SPICE RUB

Recipe by Tu Le.

Gather the following:

BBQ SAUCE

- 1 tablespoon butter
- 2 cloves minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon grated ginger
- 1 cup ketchup
- ¼ cup orange juice
- ¼ cup honey
- ¼ cup apple cider vinegar
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne

In a saucepan over medium heat, melt butter add garlic and ginger and cook until translucent. Add the remaining ingredients and simmer on medium low heat for 15-20 minutes stirring occasionally.

2 racks of baby back ribs, silver skin removed.

SPICE RUB

- 1 tablespoon chili powder (ancho or guajillo)
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¼ teaspoon onion powder
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne (optional)

Mix all spice rub ingredients in a bowl. Generous sprinkle over ribs, really pressing it down into the flesh. Let sit for 30 minutes at room temperature. Preheat oven to 250F. Place ribs on a foil lined sheet pan and bake

for 2 hours. Increase heat to 325F; brush ribs with BBQ sauce and continue to brush ribs with sauce every 10-15 minutes for 45 minutes. Remove ribs from oven and rest for 10 minutes. Serve with remaining BBQ sauce.





Tu Le is chef and co-owner of Jack's Burger Shack, Jack's Sandwich Shack and Jack's Mobile Shack, in St. Albert, Alberta.

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ICEBERG WEDGE SALAD

WITH BUTTERMILK DRESSING

Recipe by Tu Le.

Gather the following ingredients:

- 1 Head iceberg lettuce, cored and cut into 6 wedges
- cherry tomatoes
- ½ thinly sliced onion
- 5 strips of bacon, chopped and rendered until crisp

BUTTERMILK DRESSING

- 1 cup buttermilk
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- juice of ½ lemon
- 1 garlic clove minced
- 1tbsp chopped fresh Italian parsley
- 1 tsp fresh thyme leaves
- salt + pepper

In a mixing bowl, mix buttermilk, lemon juice, garlic and mayo until smooth. Sprinkle in herbs and season with salt and pepper.

Assemble salad by topping iceberg wedge with dressing and garnish with tomatoes, onions and bacon. 🍁



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