

# BCCA Launches Technology Transfer Program: Helping Producers Adopt Innovation on the Ranch

## What is Technology Transfer?

Extension activities like on-the-ground field days, workshops and education days are the traditional ways that ranchers have learned about new research and ideas for ranch operations. Technology Transfer, or knowledge transfer, is a new term referring to extension programs; knowledge and research is “transferred” or delivered to the end user, in this case B.C. cattle producers. In modernizing the approach in an effort to reach more people, we are adding a new twist by introducing new ways to deliver the information utilizing new technologies available, such as webinars, blogs, connecting remotely to live events, etc.

With this in mind, and with funding from *Growing Forward* 2, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative, BC Cattlemen’s Association is embarking on a pilot program to provide technology transfer to cattle producers across B.C. The pilot program will identify several technology-based mechanisms to deliver information to a wider audience in remote corners of the province and beyond. Assessment of these delivery mechanisms throughout the project will inform the ways we deliver future technology transfer to B.C. producers.

In July 2014, we gathered an advisory committee consisting of producers, researchers and other beef industry stakeholders to brainstorm topics of research or information important to ranchers. The group identified and ranked several main subject areas that would be of most interest and beneficial to beef producers’ operations. These include (ranked from highest):

- Forage Development
- Environment [including Ecological Goods & Services (EG&S), Water and Carbon Sequestration]
- People and Business Development
- Commodity VS. Branded beef programs
- Land Access
- Traceability & Data Management
- Wildlife

The Advisory Committee also brainstormed a number of delivery mechanisms that could be used to present industry information to producers across the province, utilizing technology in order to reach a wider audience, and reducing the need for producers to leave the ranch and travel long distances to attend industry events.

Some of these ideas include (in no particular order):

- Webinars
- Remote feed to live event
- Blogs
- Interactive mail outs
- E-newsletters & electronic documents
- Interactive websites
- Videos
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## Producer Survey

Following the advisory committee meeting, BCCA wanted to evaluate the recommendations of the committee against ideas generated by the BCCA membership. Therefore, a producer survey was carried out to evaluate the ideas recommended by the advisory committee. The survey was also designed to gather information about the level of experience with various types of technology-based learning methods, as well as the barriers to technology that producers face. Results showed that, in general, producers agreed with the ranking of research topics identified by the advisory committee, with Forage Development, Environment and Commodity/Branded Beef topping the most popular topics of interest. See Table #1.

Producers indicated the highest level of experience with YouTube videos, electronic newsletters, prepared audio-visual and online learning, though the percentage of producers with any exposure was just over 60%, indicating a high need for a training component, which was anticipated when we started this initiative, and therefore, had already been identified in the project plan. See Table #2.

Survey results also indicated that beef producers’ confidence with using technology is an obstacle to be overcome. See Table #3.

Nearly half of respondents indicated that Internet connection was the biggest barrier to accessing technology (46%), as well as access to computer equipment (26%) and computer literacy (23%). See Table #4.

## Event Plan

Based on the recommendations of both the industry advisory committee and producer feedback, BCCA is in the process of developing an event plan to present at least three events over the next year featuring the highest-ranked research topics, and including evaluation of a number of technology-based delivery mechanisms. The first of these events will take place at the annual Education Day at the BC Cattlemen’s Association Annual General Meeting & Convention in Merritt, B.C. on Saturday, May 23, 2015. The theme of the event is “The Long Game” and will focus on the future sustainability of the beef industry,

Photo by Lauchlan Fraser, TRU



Traditional extension activities like those provided at the BCCA Education Day, AGM 2013 will be getting a new twist with the Technology Transfer Project.



and ties in well with the People/Business Development category. We hope to inspire and invigorate ranchers and producers of tomorrow to grasp the opportunities that a thriving and sustainable beef industry can offer. We are excited to present Bruce Vincent’s keynote “With Vision, There is Hope”, an inspirational call to action to embrace the opportunities of environmental stewardship for our industry, and how to best tackle the “hot button” issues. We will also present an industry panel to discuss the various aspects of industry sustainability, including:

- Cherie Copithorne-Barnes – Chair, Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (CRSB) and Rancher
- Dr. Murray Jelinski - Professor and Alberta Chair in Beef Cattle Health and Production Medicine, Western College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Saskatchewan
- Dr. Reynold Bergen – Science Director, Beef Cattle Research Council
- Brett Stuart – Global AgriTrends, Denver, CO

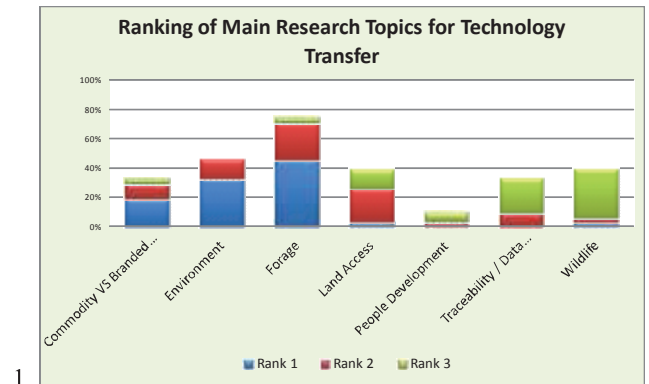
We hope to provide a live feed to the event to enable producers in a number of the more remote corners of the province to participate if they aren’t able to attend the AGM & Convention. We also plan to create a number of shorter videos of various portions of the event to be featured on @BCcattle’s YouTube channel and on our website so people can access the event at a later date.

Other events are still in the planning stages, but we are planning a field day focused on forage development, likely either in the North Okanagan or the Cariboo regions, and we hope to develop a webinar series to accompany the field tour. We are also considering a workshop and “demo day” (akin to speed dating), where a number of exhibitors collaborate to present a series of shorter presentations to small groups in a series of stations, encompassing various topics around Ecological Goods & Services, water management and carbon sequestration. Videos from each of these as well as electronic resource materials will be made available to producers from this event. We look forward to planning all of these events and “transferring” the information to producers across the province and beyond.

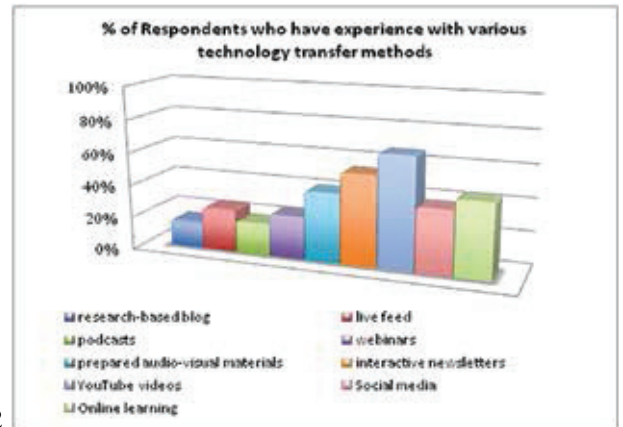
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**Disclaimer:**

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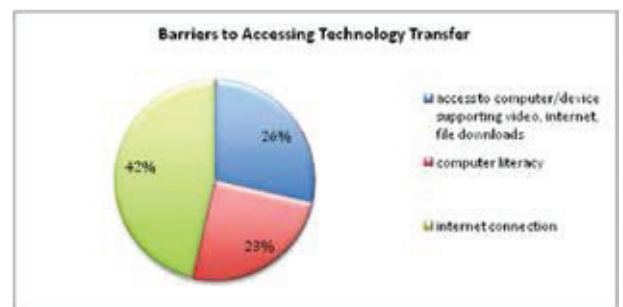
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