

Soil Health Producer Highlights Series

My Farm, My Soil, My Story

Jordan Barnfield—Aspen Acres, Teepee Creek, AB

- * What does “Soil Health” mean to you and why is it important?

Soil Health is the life of our farm. Without healthy soil we don't have our farm, we can't produce anything. Without healthy soil, there is no healthy life!

- * What management practices have you used to improve soil health on your operation?

In the winter we bale-graze and leave taller grass and stubble & in the summer we intensively graze to leave hoof impact on the ground. We do this to put organic matter back into the soil, increase water holding capacity and increase the biology in the soil. We also want to give the plants a chance to rest and increase diversity.

- * What changes have you seen?

Our place was a conventional grain farm before we bought it (using commercial fertilizer & chemicals). We have seen large improvements, denser plant stands and it holds water much better even though it's on sandy soil. We've also seen an increase in plant diversity.

- * What are the biggest challenges for soil health in your area?

Lack of rain and moisture are definitely challenges, especially because of the sandy soil, so lots of our challenges surround water. Water holding capacity and putting nutrients back into the soil are real challenges. It's also hard to have topsoil when the soil is so sandy.

- * How do you advocate for soil health?

We are soil builders. We advocate and educate by being part of the Peace Country Beef & Forage Association (Jordan is a director). Talk to lots of people about what we do on our farm and share our story with everyone (whether they're interested or not!). We educate people on cover crops and intensive grazing and it's surprising how many people don't know much about it. We are part of a Holistic Management Group as well, the “Sun Harvesters”.

- * Do you have any future plans for improving the Soil Health on your operation?

We plan to keep on plugging away to build as much organic matter as possible. We want to improve our intensive grazing and our hoof impact. We also want to incorporate more zero-till grass seeding to increase diversity as well as continue using cover crops.

- * How has improving your soil health improved other aspects of your operation?

We can run more numbers on fewer acres because the land is more productive with healthy soil. We have better water holding capacity and a higher harvest as well. We also have diversification of our plants, with better plants available throughout the year and better quality grazing for our livestock.



Jordan farms with his family outside Teepee Creek at their farm, Aspen Acres. They run both sheep and beef cattle on their 900 acre operation.



The Peace Country Beef & Forage Association

(PCBFA) stretches from High Prairie to the BC Border and from Manning to Valleyview. We are a producer group with the goal to be a hub of innovative, relevant & local beef, forage and crop information for Peace Country producers.

