



# OVER THE FENCELINE

FALL 2023



## IN THIS ISSUE

- Pg 1 Director's Note
- Pg 2 Extension Events
- Pg 7 Winter Grazing Systems
- Pg 11 The Shifting Landscape of Cattle Farming in Alberta
- Pg 15 Upcoming Events

# DIRECTOR'S NOTE



DON KROETCH  
PRESIDENT

As harvest is winding down, many of our producers are reflecting on the 2023 growing season. Remembering the challenges faced, and celebrating the many successes the past year has had, producers are already contemplating the 2024 crop year. At Battle River Research Group, the board and staff are also looking back on some of the challenges and are celebrating the many accomplishments achieved in 2023. With a strong staff and great support from our seasonal workers, we have planted and harvested all our plots. Now our team is focused on collecting all the data to provide our producers with the best information to help them ensure a productive and profitable 2024 crop year.

In 2024, we hope to increase engagement with all our diverse producers within the BRRG service area. As such, the board and staff are already planning for programs and services for 2024. The Mission Statement for BRRG is “to perform high-quality producer-driven research and knowledge-transfer for the advancement of agriculture for all stakeholders” and so, to achieve our goal, the board and staff needs to hear from the very producers we serve. We need to hear from them as to which programs and services are priorities for 2024. For example, is there a specific forage, cereal, legume, or alternative crop that some of our producers would like to have a test plot next year? Another example would be – are there any extension programs, speakers, or workshops that our producers would find valuable? By hearing from our own producers, this information enables BRRG to offer unbiased and local programming. Another example of the importance of feedback is that in 2024, we are going to expand our large plot trials program directly to interested producers in our region. This will give BRRG the opportunity to have plots throughout our entire service area. This will help us to glean important data from our diverse agricultural landscape.

If any producers have ideas regarding our small plot trials, extension programming, or are willing to participate in a possible large plot trial, please reach out to our manager Khalil, 780 582 7308 or at [manager@battleriverresearch.com](mailto:manager@battleriverresearch.com), or to the attention of any of our great board members and your suggestions will be considered for our future programming and services. Please visit our website <https://www.battleriverresearch.com> for information on the latest plot trials or search our archive for information on any of past trials. Stay updated on all extension programming by following us on Twitter @BRRG\_AG, or Facebook, or sign up for our newsletter from our website.

The entire staff and board are looking forward to hearing from our producers in order to help us bring the most timely and unbiased information to members. Thank you.

# EXTENSION EVENTS

In the ever-changing landscape of farming, staying up-to-date with the latest innovations and best practices is vital for success. The Battle River Research Group has been at the forefront of providing valuable insights and knowledge to Alberta's farming community throughout 2023. So far, they have hosted an impressive array of 17 extension events, each designed to equip farmers with the tools they need to thrive. Let's take a closer look at the events that have unfolded over the year.

## February - A Strong Start To the Year

The year kicked off with a two-pronged approach to livestock management. The "Webinar on Dugout for Livestock Operations" offered valuable insights into water management and its importance for livestock well-being. Simultaneously, the "Webinar on Calving Clinic" provided farmers with the know-how to ensure safe and healthy calving on their farms.

## March - Diving into Hemp and the Annual General Meeting

As spring approached, the focus shifted to the incredible potential of hemp. The "Webinar on Hemp Agronomy Seed And Fiber Production" showcased the versatility of this crop. Furthermore, the "2023 Annual General Meeting" brought the farming community together to discuss plans for the year ahead.

## April - Embracing Innovation

April was a month for embracing innovation in farming. The "Seminar on Cutting Edge Technology in Farming" opened doors to the latest advancements that are changing the face of agriculture. Concurrently, the "Webinar on Spray Drones in Row Crop and Beyond" explored the skies to enhance crop management from above.

## May - Sustainable Farming and Income Boosts

With sustainability at the forefront of agricultural practices, the "Webinar on Carbon Asset Solutions" introduced a groundbreaking concept of adding a carbon revenue stream to farm and ranch income. This innovative approach ensures not just environmentally responsible practices but also profitable ones.

## June - Grazing Management Insights

The farming community was treated to a "Field Day on Grazing Management" led by Greg Judy. His expertise in pasture management provided valuable insights for optimizing resources.

## July - Prioritizing Farm Safety and Mental Health

In a month dedicated to well-being, the "Seminar on Farm Safety & Mental Health" underscored the importance of caring for both the land and the individuals who work it. Concurrently, the "Battle River Research Group Field Day" allowed for networking and knowledge-sharing.

## August - A Month of Learning and Touring

August was filled with activity. The "BRRG Tailgate Tour on PEA-OLA" provided practical knowledge about specific crops, enhancing agricultural practices. The "Low-Stress Livestock Handling Workshop" led by Dylan Biggs was an invaluable opportunity to improve animal care. To top it off, the "BRRG Tailgate Talk on Swath Grazing at Schulte Farms" showcased innovative farming techniques.

## September - Resilience and Diversity

September introduced the concept of resilience through diversity in farming. The "Paddock Walk" led by Kevin Elmy at Ugly Head Feeders Farm encouraged farmers to diversify their practices for greater resilience during challenging times.

## October - Mitigating Livestock-Wildlife Conflicts

In October, Louise Liebenberg's "Webinar on Using Livestock Guardian Dogs & Other Management Practices" offered valuable strategies to protect livestock from encounters with wildlife.

## November - Insights into Rye

November is set to bring more insights with "Webinar on Highs & Lows of Hybrid Rye" featuring Matt Gosling, an expert in the farming world.

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### Low-Stress Livestock Handling Workshop By Dylan Biggs from TK Ranch

<b>9 AM</b>	<b>Saturday August 12</b>	<b>Agriplex 4516 52 Street Stettler, AB</b>	<b>Lunch Included, \$25 Fee</b>
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Whether it's calving, branding, turning out or pulling bulls, weaning, treating animals or simply moving them to fresh pasture, cattle handling can be stressful and hectic. If you'd like an introduction to a low stress approach to handling your livestock that will give you the skills to make these jobs easier on you and your cattle, plan to attend Dylan's demonstration.

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OR  
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### BRRG TAILGATE TOUR PEA-OLA (PEA/CANOLA MIXES)

**COFFEE & DONUTS  
AUGUST 10 , 2023 10 AM  
LOCATION- GALAHAD SW-33-40-15-W4  
Co-ordinates 52.479559, -112.115232**



Blair Kuefler, a grain farmer in the Galahad/Forestburg Area, holds a Bachelor degree in Agriculture from the University of Alberta. With a diverse background in cultivating various crops like Peas, Wheat, Barley, and Canola, Blair's expertise is highly regarded in the agricultural community. This year, he is excited to showcase his latest venture, growing Pea-Ola (Pea/Canola Mixes), at the upcoming event. Attendees can look forward to benefiting from Blair's extensive knowledge and experience, as he shares insights and practical wisdom gained from years of successful farming endeavors.

**BLAIR KUEFLER**

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### WEBINAR

#### Using Livestock Guardian dogs and other management practices to reduce livestock/wildlife conflicts



Louise Liebenberg owns and runs a purebred and commercial beef and sheep ranch in Northern Alberta. Involvement includes lecturing, speaking at conferences, and discussing topics such as predator-friendly ranching, coexistence between ranching and wildlife, as well as the training, raising, and working of both Livestock Guardian Dogs and herding dogs. The ranch in Northern Alberta holds the distinction of being the first in Canada to be certified as "Predator Friendly." Predators are not killed on the ranch; instead, predation is managed through the implementation of good husbandry skills and management. Emphasis is placed on seeking and employing long-term sustainable solutions for predator management.

**PRESENTED BY  
Louise Liebenberg**

**3rd October 11 AM**

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### BRRG FIELD DAY 2023

<b>WEDNESDAY JULY 26, 2023</b>	<b>9 AM</b>	<b>GALAHAD SE-18-41-14-W4 (52.522503, -112.007512)</b>	<b>Free lunch at 12PM and no entry fee</b>
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**Wheat Midge Resistant Spring Wheat Varieties  
BY  
Harpinder Randhawa Singh (AAFC/AAC)**

**Hybrid Fall Rye  
BY  
Matthew Enright**

**Full Season Cover  
BY  
Adam Smith**

**Live Spray Drone Demo  
BY  
Markus Weber From Landview Drones**

**COME CHECK OUT OUR RESEARCH PLOTS FOR 2023 (LUPIN DEMO, PERENNIAL WHEAT & RYE, ALFAFA, WHITE CLOVER & SAINFOIN)**

**REGISTER NOW**  
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## Catch Up on Missed Webinars

For those who missed any of these enriching events, Battle River Research Group offers the opportunity to catch up on their website [here](#) or our [YouTube channel](#).

Stay connected with Battle River Research Group on Twitter: Battle River Research Group @BRRG\_Ag for updates and information about upcoming events.

With a year filled with growth, learning, and community spirit, Alberta's farming community is thriving, and the Battle River Research Group is at the forefront of this growth, continuously enriching the lives of farmers and promoting sustainable agriculture. Here's to a year of growth, learning, and continued success!

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## WEBINAR

# Highs and Lows of Hybrid Rye

### Topics covered

- How do I deal with volunteer rye
- Seed like canola, (or shallower)
- 180lbs actual N is too much N
- Use and abuse this crop
- Fun Factor farming



**Matt is the founding partner of Premium Ag Solutions Inc., a precision agronomy company operating in Alberta for the last 20 years. At night and on weekends, Matt pursues his cravings to "Learn to do by doing", on their family hobby farm around Strathmore AB. He's grown hybrid rye 3 times in the last 5 years and loves to share his knowledge of this high-powered crop.**

**Matt Gosling**

**23rd November 10 AM**

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# WINTER GRAZING SYSTEMS: SUSTAINABLE LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT IN ALBERTA'S CHILLY CLIMES

Alberta, a province known for its vast landscapes and agricultural heritage, faces unique challenges when it comes to livestock management during the winter months. With temperatures dropping and snow blanketing the fields, farmers must adapt to ensure the health and well-being of their livestock while maintaining sustainable agricultural practices. In this article, we will explore various aspects of winter grazing systems in Alberta, focusing on crop options for swath grazing, fencing, feed quality, weather considerations, water accessibility, and coexisting with wildlife.

## Crop Options for Swath Grazing

Swath grazing is a popular practice in Alberta during the winter months. It involves cutting and windrowing crops like barley, oats, or canola in the fall and allowing livestock to graze directly from the swaths during the winter. This approach offers several advantages:

**Cost-Effective Feeding:** Swath grazing reduces the need for stored feed, such as hay or silage, which can be costly to produce and store.

**Improved Nutrient Cycling:** Livestock distribute manure directly onto the fields, enhancing nutrient cycling and soil fertility.

**Reduced Soil Compaction:** Compared to traditional winter confinement, swath grazing reduces the risk of soil compaction since animals are not concentrated in one area.

Crop choice is critical for successful swath grazing. Barley and oats are popular options due to their winter hardiness and high nutritional value. Canola can also be used but should be supplemented with additional feed due to its lower energy content.

## Fencing for Winter Grazing

Proper fencing is essential for managing livestock during the winter. It helps control grazing areas, prevent overgrazing, and protect sensitive areas like riparian zones. In Alberta, where snow accumulation is common, fencing should be designed to withstand the weight of snow and the pressure of curious wildlife.

Electric fencing is often preferred for its flexibility and ease of installation. It can be used to divide fields into smaller grazing areas, allowing for rotational grazing and preventing excessive forage consumption in one spot.



## Feed Quality and Supplementation

During the winter, maintaining adequate feed quality is crucial for livestock health. While swath grazing provides natural forage, it may not always meet all nutritional requirements. Farmers should regularly assess the quality of the swaths, especially for protein and energy content, and consider supplementing with additional feed if necessary.

Supplementation can include providing hay, silage, or grain, depending on the specific needs of the herd. Ensuring a balanced diet is essential to prevent weight loss and maintain overall livestock health.



## Weather Considerations

Alberta's winter weather can be unpredictable, with extreme cold temperatures and heavy snowfall. Farmers must take weather conditions into account when planning their winter grazing systems. Adequate shelter, windbreaks, and bedding are essential to protect livestock from harsh weather.

Additionally, it's crucial to monitor animal behavior and body condition regularly. Thin or weak animals may require special attention and additional feed to maintain their health throughout the winter.

## Water Accessibility

Ensuring access to clean, unfrozen water is a constant challenge during Alberta's winter. Livestock need water to stay hydrated and maintain their health. Several strategies can be employed to address this issue:

**Heated Waterers:** Installing heated waterers in designated grazing areas can help ensure a constant water supply, even in freezing temperatures.

**Regular Monitoring:** Farmers should check water sources regularly to break ice and ensure livestock can access water.

**Snow Management:** Managing snow accumulation around water sources is essential to prevent ice buildup and ensure access.



SOURCE : CANADIANCATTLEMEN

## Coexisting with Wildlife

Alberta's natural landscapes are home to various wildlife species. Farmers need to find ways to coexist with these animals while protecting their livestock. Fencing can help deter wildlife from accessing grazing areas, and electric fences can be an effective deterrent.

Farmers should also be aware of the regulations and guidelines related to wildlife management in their area and implement best practices for coexistence.

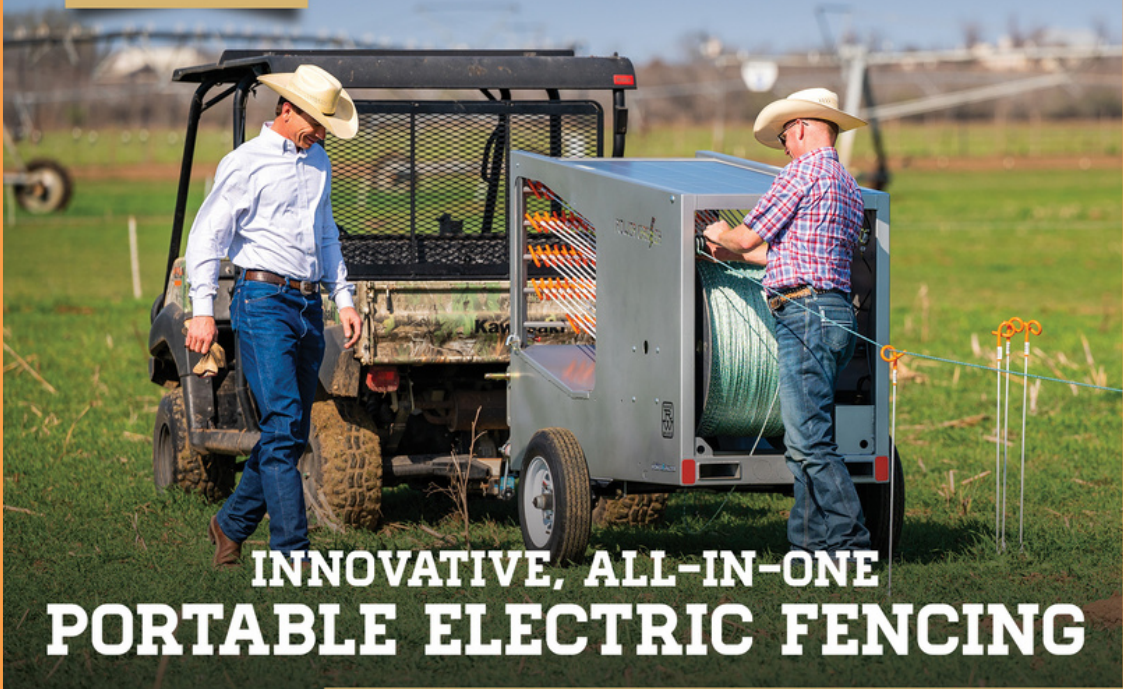
In conclusion, winter grazing systems in Alberta require careful planning and consideration of various factors. Crop selection, fencing, feed quality, weather preparedness, water accessibility, and wildlife management all play vital roles in successful winter livestock management. By implementing sustainable practices and adapting to the challenges of Alberta's winter climate, farmers can ensure the health and well-being of their livestock while maintaining the integrity of their land.



SOURCE : WILDERNESS SOCIETY

In conclusion, winter grazing systems in Alberta require careful planning and consideration of various factors. Crop selection, fencing, feed quality, weather preparedness, water accessibility, and wildlife management all play vital roles in successful winter livestock management. By implementing sustainable practices and adapting to the challenges of Alberta's winter climate, farmers can ensure the health and well-being of their livestock while maintaining the integrity of their land.





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# THE SHIFTING LANDSCAPE OF CATTLE FARMING IN ALBERTA: EXPLORING REASONS FOR TRANSITION AND THE ROLE OF CORPORATIONS

Cattle farming has deep roots in Alberta, Canada, with a rich history of family-owned ranches and vast expanses of grasslands. However, in recent years, there has been a noticeable trend of cattle farmers selling their herds and exiting the industry. Additionally, the next generation often hesitates to take over the family farm. While some attribute these changes to the influence of corporations, there is a myriad of factors at play. In this article, we will explore the reasons why cattle farmers in Alberta are selling their cattle and why their successors may not be stepping into their boots.

The chart illustrates a decline in cow-calf operations, with a significant portion of these operations being family farms that experienced a decrease.

## The Role of Corporation

One commonly cited factor is the presence of large corporate farms in the cattle industry. These corporate entities, with substantial financial resources and economies of scale, can outcompete smaller, family-owned operations. This increased competition can make it challenging for family farms to remain profitable, leading some to sell their cattle and assets. While corporate farming is a factor, it is crucial to consider the broader context of challenges facing the industry.

## Economic Pressures

One of the primary reasons for selling cattle and leaving the farming business is economic pressure. The cattle industry can be volatile, with fluctuations in cattle prices and rising operational costs. Some farmers find it increasingly difficult to achieve profitability, leading them to make the tough decision to sell their herds.



SOURCE : STATISTICS CANADA

## Changing Interests and Generational Shifts

The next generation of potential farmers often has different interests and career aspirations than their predecessors. Many young individuals pursue education and careers in non-agricultural fields, which can lead to a lack of interest in taking over the family farm. This generational shift is not solely driven by corporate influence but reflects evolving societal and economic trends.

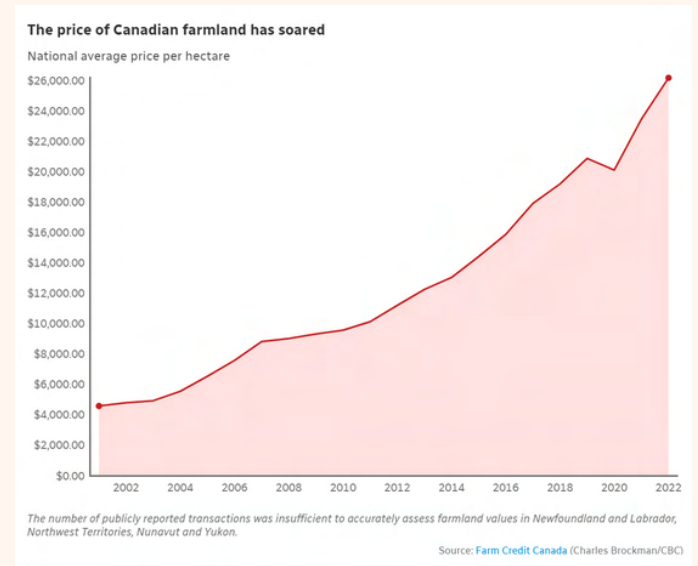
## Regulatory Complexities

Farming, including cattle ranching, involves navigating a complex web of regulations related to animal welfare, environmental standards, and food safety. Complying with these regulations can be daunting for newcomers to the industry and can deter the next generation from taking on the responsibility.

## Financial Barriers

Entering or taking over a cattle farm requires a significant financial investment. High land prices and the cost of specialized equipment can be prohibitive for younger generations without substantial financial support. Access to capital and affordable land is a challenge for many aspiring farmers.

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SOURCE : FARM CREDIT CANADA

The CCPA report highlights a shift from fair land ownership to a situation where farmland is increasingly under concentrated control. The report emphasizes that acquiring access to farmland has become significantly more challenging, which in turn hampers the potential for young Canadians to pursue farming as a viable career option.

## Urbanization and Land Development

The urbanization of previously rural areas in Alberta has led to the conversion of agricultural land for urban development. This can make it increasingly difficult for family farms to continue their operations as they face pressure to sell their land for development.



SOURCE : PRODUCER.COM

Calgary's urban area expanded to 754 sq. km in 2013 from 242 sq. km in 1984, indicative of increasing urban sprawl in Alberta. | Mike Sturk photo

## Technology and Efficiency

Cattle farming in Alberta has long been a source of pride for many family-owned ranches. These operations are deeply rooted in tradition and have played a vital role in the province's agricultural heritage. However, as technology continues to transform the cattle farming industry, family-owned farms face unique challenges in adapting to these advancements due to financial constraints. This article explores the hurdles that family-owned cattle farms in Alberta encounter when trying to integrate technology and efficiency into their operations.

- Financial Limitations

One of the most significant challenges facing family-owned cattle farms is the financial burden associated with adopting modern technology. Precision livestock management systems, automated feeding, and advanced data analytics require substantial initial investments. For many family-run operations, accessing the capital necessary to purchase and implement these technologies can be a daunting task.

- Lack of Expertise

Integrating technology into cattle farming often demands a level of technical expertise that may not be readily available on family-owned farms. Hiring specialists or training existing staff can be expensive and time-consuming. Without the necessary expertise, these farms may struggle to utilize technology effectively and efficiently.

- Resistance to Change

Family-owned cattle farms often have deep-rooted traditions and methods that have been passed down through generations. The introduction of technology can be met with resistance, as it may be perceived as a disruption of these established practices. Convincing older generations to embrace technology and change long-held beliefs can be a challenging process.

- Access to Resources

Access to reliable internet connectivity is crucial for implementing technology-driven solutions on a cattle farm. Many family-owned farms are located in remote areas of Alberta, where internet access can be limited or unreliable. This lack of connectivity can hinder the use of data-driven systems and automation, further complicating the adoption of modern farming techniques.

- Ongoing Costs

While initial investments are significant, family-owned cattle farms must also consider the ongoing costs associated with technology adoption. Maintenance, software updates, and data management require continuous financial commitments that can strain the budgets of these smaller operations.

- Competitive Disadvantage

Family-owned cattle farms that are unable to keep pace with technological advancements risk falling behind their larger, more technologically advanced counterparts. This competitive disadvantage can impact the farm's long-term sustainability and profitability, further exacerbating the challenges they face.







SOURCE : plugandplaytechcenter (Cainthus)

## Conclusion

While corporations indeed play a role in the changing landscape of cattle farming in Alberta, it is essential to recognize that the reasons behind farmers selling their cattle and the next generation's reluctance to continue farming are multifaceted. Economic pressures, changing interests, financial barriers, regulatory complexities, urbanization, and technological challenges all contribute to these shifts. To ensure the sustainability of cattle farming in Alberta, addressing these factors and providing support to new and existing farmers will be essential. Balancing the tradition of family-owned ranches with the realities of a changing agricultural landscape is a complex challenge that requires a holistic approach.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

Association	Event	Date	Registration information
	WEBINAR ON MENTAL HEALTH	6TH NOVEMBER 10 AM MDT	<a href="https://chinookappliedresearch.ca/calendar-of-events">https://chinookappliedresearch.ca/calendar-of-events</a>
	FOREST GRAZING WORKSHOP	10TH NOVEMBER	<a href="https://www.peacecountrybeef.ca/upcoming-events">https://www.peacecountrybeef.ca/upcoming-events</a>
	FUNDING & GRAZING STRATEGIES FOR YOUR OPERATION	24TH OCTOBER 8TH NOVEMBER 21ST NOVEMBER	<a href="https://www.foothillsforage.com/securing-success">https://www.foothillsforage.com/securing-success</a>
	WEBINAR ON HYBRID FALL RYE	23RD NOVEMBER 10 AM MDT	<a href="https://conta.cc/3Q8FNIF">https://conta.cc/3Q8FNIF</a>



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