

SCOOPS

ALBERTA FARM WRITERS' ASSOCIATION

Tour 2006 planning under way

Get set for AFWA Tour 2006!

AFWA prez Kendall Olson and Tracey Feist are busy lining up an impressive list of tour stops for farm writers during this year's tour, set for June 8-9.

Tentative tour stops include:

- Edmonton City Farm
- U of A Farm
- Superior Mushrooms, Ardrossan
- Parkland Conservation Farm

- CV Technologies (Cold FX)
- Ceapro
- Kinnikinnick (gluten-free breads)
- Wow! Factor Desserts at Sherwood Park
- Harvest Festival, Gary Fakeley (bison producer at Ardrossan)

More details about the tour will be forthcoming via e-mail as plans progress.

In the meantime, we're looking for sponsorships to help offset the costs associated with the tour.

Cash, swag, transportation costs are all up for grabs. If you or your company can help out, please contact Janet Kanters at janetkanters@shaw.ca.

If we get enough sponsorship, the cost of the tour will stay low.

Three easy ways to connect with AAFRD

Alberta producers wanting to access Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's information network can connect with the department in three easy ways: by phone, online or by ordering from a catalogue of over 600 information products.

On Mar. 13, AAFRD launched a new toll-free phone number, 310-FARM, to make it easy for clients to connect to Alberta Agriculture's people, services and programs across the province.

Specialists provide expert advice in the areas of crops, specialty crops, beef forage, business management and new ventures. They answer pro-

ducer inquiries, ranging from program information and production questions to diagnosing complex agricultural issues.

The department's Ropin' the Web website has been popular with Alberta producers for over 10 years, with 22 million visits to the site in that time. The site has over 10,000 documents available, making it easy to access the departments many resources such as soil and climate records, weather maps, market prices, crop calculators, and a wealth of relevant industry information.

Alberta Agriculture's Information Packaging Centre works with internal and external

experts in the agriculture industry to develop and produce a broad range of practical, up-to-date information products for the industry. The 2006 catalogue lists the 675 different fact sheets, books, maps, videos and CD-ROMs that are currently available - most of which are free and can also be viewed online. Information products can be ordered by calling the distribution centre directly at 1-800-292-5697, by calling the new toll free 310-FARM number and asking for publications, or online. Fax and mail orders are also accepted.

Alberta Agriculture, toll free 310-FARM (3276)

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The report breaks the river into eight major reaches and explores the water quality, quantity and sources.

The State of the Basin road show

By Claudette Lacombe

In the spring of 2005, the Bow River Basin Council (BRBC) released a comprehensive State of the Basin report that details the river's health along its course from the Bow Glacier to its confluence with the Oldman River.

To accomplish this, the report breaks the river into eight major reaches and explores the water quality, quantity and sources. It then details what exists in each reach that plays a part in the health of the river. These include geology, cli-

mate, hydrology, water quality, ecosystems, population, water licenses and allocations, agriculture, industry and stewardship activities.

In April 2006, volunteer BRBC members will present this information in five communities representing different reaches. The BRBC presenters involved are two extremely knowledgeable and entertaining gentlemen that promise to make every one of the 60 minutes worth the time the audience dedicates to this learning opportunity.

- Canmore : Apr. 24, 7 pm, Canmore Collegiate High School Theatre, 1800-8 Ave
- Cochrane: Apr. 25, 7 pm, High School School Library, 529-4 Ave N
- Brooks: Apr. 26, 7 pm, Brooks Junior High, 124-4 Ave E
- Strathmore: Apr. 27, 6:30 pm, Strathmore Travel Lodge, Hwy #1
- Okotoks: Apr. 28, 9 am, Good Shepherd School, 52 Robinson Dr

Brokeback Mountain — Busted

By Will Verboven

(Writers Note: This column appeared in the Calgary Herald as a much-needed spoof of a movie that is way too serious about itself. From the Letter to the Editor response, it would seem a lot of city folks just don't have a sense of humour about this movie.)

Considering most movie critics have written adoring reviews of the movie Brokeback Mountain, one with a contrarian view does approach this topic with trepidation. One also fears that any deviation from this movie's sensitive reviews could result in a visit from the human rights police.

However, having seen the movie, I can say with some cynicism, that if it weren't for the same-sex main characters, this movie would be just another relationship chick flick.

Once the gay undertones become tiresome, what becomes bemusing is the unlikely concept this movie is based on - that may be why there is no uproar from the usual guardians of our morals.

The presumptuous stereotyping of rural people and culture are somewhat amusing. But those of us that actually lived in the rural west during that time period don't quite remember it being that way - but then Hollywood has always had its own fantasy version of the west.

It would seem critics felt obligated to the political correctness of this movie, but they miss the obvious; the beginning of this movie suffers terribly from cowboy incorrectness.

To be fair, most city folks

would have a romanticized perspective of cowboys. Seeing that traditional view tweaked and titillated by a storyline based on forbidden fruit, so to speak, does have some delicious irony.

I expect most movie goers would be skeptical of the concept of gay cowboys and probably see this flick as having fun with a western icon. Therefore, I will resist the temptation of belaboring that obvious point.

Let me pursue some niggling nuances in the movie that would escape most city folks. In another life as a rancher, I was the owner of a few hundred sheep.

(See Brokeback, page 3)

Snapshots at jasonlove.comSnapshots at jasonlove.com

"And that wraps up today's news. For a preview of what's happening tomorrow, here's Cassandra..."

Snapshots at jasonlove.com

Brokeback *(continued from page 2)*

And as every sheep owner instinctively knows - one would never hire two dim-witted cowboys to look after sheep. Cowboys may fantasize about what to do with sheep - but herding isn't one of them.

Any rancher would also see the economic folly of hiring two cowboy losers where a real shepherd with herding and guard dogs are what's needed. There is a saying that any old sheep herder can become a cowboy - but there isn't a cowboy that could ever learn to herd sheep - not that a real cowboy would actually want to - it just doesn't fit their iconic image.

But then perhaps the producers of this plodding movie wanted to boldly expose and empower two oppressed minorities at once - gay cowboys and sheep herding cowboys. I expect the sequel to this movie may involve a cowboy having to choose between his gay

lover and his sheep. But I digress.

This may be trivial, but I was bemused by the love-making scenes in a small tent. It appears in the movie that bathing was rudimentary, and there would be explosive consequences of eating so many beans. As a result the intimate cowboy cavorting scenes would have been rather unhygienic exercises. Perhaps the sheep would have been a better option for their lust; at least the sheep would have been cleaner and less malodorous from being out in the rain.

But intimate scenes being done with innocent animals would face the wrath of the SPCA and humane societies - no matter how tastefully it was done. I don't think society is ready to accept that taboo - although after this picture Hollywood must be fantasizing about the next step.

Interestingly, the sheep in this movie were rented from southern Alberta Hutterite Colonies. I suspect that the people of these deeply conservative religious communities would be somewhat chagrined if they had known the nature of this movie. All the poor sheep got was the humiliation of being in a movie with two love-sick but inept cowboys. Perhaps the sheep deserve an Oscar award for patience.

This movie struck gold by being deemed politically correct about a sensitive topic, that makes it a must-see by folks of a liberal persuasion. That would be in the spirit of another tiresome but politically correct movie "Bowling for Columbine." The producers of both the movies are laughing all the way to the bank. It causes one to envy the sheep - at least they won't be seeing this brokebusted movie.

Any rancher would also see the economic folly of hiring two cowboy losers where a real shepherd with herding and guard dogs are what's needed

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The Alberta Farm Writers' Association (AFWA) exists to serve the common interests of agricultural journalists, including reporters, editors and broadcasters, as well as those in business and government whose primary responsibility is agricultural communications.



Founded in 1955, the AFWA is a provincial off-shoot of the Canadian Farm Writers' Federation (CFWF). Membership in the CFWF, as well as the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists (IFAJ) is automatic upon an AFWA membership.



For more information: www.cfwf.ca



Thirty-five years ago, John Schmidt wrote:

"History as written by the professional historians can be deadly dull and stuffy and full of dates and places that never bring out any human interest. And what is history other than a great number of human experiences told by the people who were actually on the scene at the time?"

John T. Schmidt was the quintessential 'farm writer' of his day, right up until his passing last May.

The Alberta Farm Writers' Association (AFWA), of which John was an Honorary Life Member, is pleased to offer for sale John's last book, "John T. Schmidt's Beat: From Barnyards to Boardrooms," a random collection of his newspaper articles covering a span of 60 years.

Purchase this collector's item today, at a cost of \$20. All proceeds from the sales of the book go to John's widow, Margaret.

Send your \$20 cheque or money order, payable to the AFWA, to:

Alberta Farm Writers' Association, P.O. Box 2147, Strathmore, AB T1P 1K1