Local business pumping up interest

By Cait Wills — FGW

"It's nice to see a cow doing some work for themselves!"

Jim Anderson knows what he's talking about. With 115 cows to feed and water, sometimes it gets a little much. So, he and his wife, Jackie, lit upon an answer they think will revolutionize cattle breeding. And, it seems, they're right.

Their Frostfree Nosepumps business, based on their second-generation cattle farm in Rimbey, AB, is being touted as a boon to the Alberta cattle industry, and the Andersons have had inquiries about their invention from cattle producers all over North America and as far south as Argentina.

"We've had up to 135 cattle on one pump with no sign of distress," Anderson said. "It took them a few days to figure out that they had to take turns, but after that you would see two or three at the pump at a time."

The pumps work in a simple way; by drilling a vertical culvert, water is pushed out of the ground by the cow pushing on a lever.

"The nose-powered lever operates a piston pump which is suspended in the well," he said, "much like the old hand pumps many of us are familiar with."

And because of the vertical steel culvert, there is no risk of frost, as the water drains back in the winter. And, Anderson said, there isn't any risk of water contamination, as a short riser nipple in the trough prevents foreign bodies entering the well. It is recommended, though, that the ice, which accumulates around the mouth of the pump in winter from the cows splashing, be chipped away regularly. "That can impede the mechanism for the pump," he said.

Anderson said that the most sophisticated part of the process — and the most expensive — is the installation of the culvert. In this case the old adage rings true: "measure twice because you can only cut once."

"Installing the culvert properly to meet government regulations requires obtaining the services of a licensed water well driller to drill the well and install the culvert," said Anderson. He recommends contacting local authorities to obtain information on requirements in each area, which he says, saves a lot of time and headaches in the long run.

While the installation process can seem complicated, Anderson said that the total costs of the installation and the pump system, is comparativ inexpensive when considering the costs of finding water sour and moving herds to those supplies."

"The total cost of the complete system varies with the requi depth [of the well]," he said, but estimated costs — including cost of the pump, the culvert, hose, lid, rod, platform, and installation drilling or trenching, are usually between $3,000 - $5,000 CDN. A one-time cost that provides producers with independent, self-watering system.

And the most important factor, Anderson says, is that it's e gy efficient. In fact, it uses no energy at all, besides the nosing the cows to pump.

"Some of our cows just push on it for fun," he laughed, say that the majority of his cattle took to the system immediately. of the cows are comfortable and capable of using the system said, which involves a function very similar to the rooting me anism.

"It's so simple, and the cows don't seem to need to be trai or even shown what to do.

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Pumping up, cont'd

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"Maybe it's instinct," said Anderson about his invention.

The system works on larger groups that what Anderson has now, too. "We've had up to 135 cattle on one pump with no sign of distress," he said. "It took them a few days to figure out that they had to take turns, but after that you would see two or three at the pump at a time. If you need it, though, two or more nosepumps can be installed off the same culvert, no problem."

Anderson said he and Jackie have found through trial and error what seems to work best. "We feel the best applications will be to convert dugouts to a year-round source of water and for wells with standing water of 30 feet or less, although the nosepumps will draw from deeper dugouts," said Jackie. With the water source covered, water areas on farmland are protected, while cattle are cared for.

"It keeps the cattle out of the rivers, creeks and dugouts," said Jim. "It's ideal!"