



The Grazing Post



The Grazing Days semi-annual newsletter

Issue 2. winter/spring 2015

Happy March everyone! Welcome to the second edition of the Grazing Post. In the following pages, we will give you a brief summary of our first-year-on-the-farm adventures, share some thoughts about the new butchering / packaging of the beef this past year, highlight some of what we have in store for the 2015/2016 growing and delivery season, get our cook on with another tasty recipe, invite you to some fun farm events we have planned, and shine a light on another Canadian food policy issue. Let's giddy-up!

A Year in Review

The Grazing Days of February 2014 is hardly recognizable when compared to the Grazing Days of today. Although our deliveries "interface" is very similar, almost every other aspect of our business has changed dramatically.

February 2014:

We rented about 65 acres of land just south of the Ottawa airport. We lived in downtown Ottawa and Paul commuted daily on his bicycle during the growing season to move the cows. We raised 40 yearlings. Apart from the fencing and water ponds, there was very little infrastructure on the farm and as a result, we did not keep any livestock during the winter. We traded beef for tractor / farm equipment usage from the owners of the land. Our beef was processed in a small provincially (Ontario) inspected abattoir and we rented storage space and a delivery vehicle.

February 2015:

We own about 100 acres of land and are renting an additional 170 acres that we hope to own sometime in 2015 (pending governmental approval). We live on the farm. We have 45 cows and their calves on the farm year-round and we raise an additional 40 yearlings. We have amazing farm infrastructure, 4 farm buildings, fencing, low-stress animal handling facilities, year-round watering ability on most of

the 270 acres we manage, walk-in freezers, our own tractor and hay making equipment and a delivery vehicle.

Two factors have drastically changed the way we do things on our farm from a management perspective. The first is that we have transitioned the farm from a very mobile, fluid and short-term structure due to our lack of assets, and short-term land tenure to a more predictable very long-term structure with many assets and long-term land tenure. A quick look at the assets under our management highlights this. In February 2014 Grazing Days managed about \$2000 worth of assets. In February 2015 Grazing Days is managing about \$750 000 worth of assets (although "the bank" owns most of it).

The second factor is that we have transitioned from a farm with only 1-year old cattle on the farm during the 6 month growing season, to a



farm where we have livestock on the farm year round. This change has led to a huge learning curve as we've had to find answers to questions like: how do we get water to the cows in winter?, what will they eat?, how do we make sure both the calves and the cows meet their nutritional requirements?, how will they stay warm?, or how do we make sure our family gets some time away from the farm? Hopefully the rest of this newsletter will shine some light on these and other questions we have been exploring.

Building Infrastructure

If I were to summarize this past year in two words, it would be “Building Infrastructure” – used loosely of course... Not including the renovation projects that took place in our new (to us) house, we worked on 6 major infrastructure projects:

Building soil fertility (natural resource infrastructure)

We took soil samples from 14 different fields on the farm and had them analyzed by a laboratory that follows the teachings of William Albrecht, a soil scientist who saw soil health as the foundation of plant health, animal health and human health. Based on the recommendations of this laboratory, we aimed to get the mineral levels in our soils in balance by spreading major nutrients such as Calcium, Magnesium, Phosphorus, Potassium, Sulfur (note that we are aiming to supply nitrogen through the use of legumes like alfalfa, clover and birdsfoot trefoil), and trace minerals such as Boron, Copper, Zinc and Cobalt. We will be sampling and monitoring the mineral levels in our soil every year or two to continue to keep them in balance. The idea is that if the minerals are in balance, the soil biology will flourish and will enable the growth of thriving plants that are nutritious and have high resistance against pests and disease.



Seeding land into pasture (feeding infrastructure)

Of the 270 acres of land that we currently manage, about 180 acres were being cash-cropped before we bought them. Crop production is quite hard on soils. The great thing about grazing livestock is that most of the plants we work with are perennials, meaning that we only have to till and seed them once and they will grow year after year. This allows for the soil to recover from previous tillage and for the soil biology to increase its population thus helping the soil’s ability to store water, carbon and to make nutrients, water and air available to the plants.



After extensive reading, we settled on a mixture that contained equal parts orchard grass, perennial rye grass, festulolium (a grass that is a cross between fescue and rye grass), alfalfa (non-GM), white clover, and birdsfoot trefoil. Since perennial grasses take some time to establish themselves, we ended up companion planting them with oats, an annual grass which grows quickly and provide a nice protected habitat for the grasses and legumes to establish themselves.

Building fencing (and tearing down old fencing)

This past summer we built approximately 10 kilometers of fence line. We are about half way done and aim to fence the remaining 10-ish kilometers this summer. Although we have set up fences many times before, one of the most daunting tasks is figuring out “where” the fences should go. Just because the previous farmer had a fence there, does not mean that it is the best place for the fence to go. Now that we have one season of grazing and fencing under our belt, we have a much better idea of how we should be laying out the farm and where the fences should be – making sure that we can easily rotate the cattle from one pasture to the next, have easy access to each field with hay making equipment, and making sure the cattle are protected from the wind during our winter feeding rotations.



Building a low-stress animal handling facility

Last winter, we came across the work of an Australian vet who, over the years, has thought about and designed corrals that are as little stress on the cattle as possible, are built with readily available and inexpensive building materials, and can be operated by one person working alone. In July and August we spent a significant amount of time building one of these corrals, slightly modified with other ideas gleaned from the book to make the corral work excellently in our situation. We are thrilled with the result. It is probably the piece of infrastructure built on the farm last summer of which Paul is the most proud.

Building our walk-in coolers and freezers

Last summer we converted the old cattle barn into our beef cold storage area. We cleaned (and then cleaned some more), poured concrete, laid down a washed gravel floor and installed two used walk-in freezers, and one used walk-in cooler. We then installed an alarm system that notifies us via text message and email if something goes wrong and we arranged for a tractor-powered generator to make sure that the beef stays properly cooled in the event of a power outage.



Building our livestock watering infrastructure.

Getting water to the cattle in the winter is tricky at the best of times. In our research we came across something called a Frost-Free Nose Pump. The cattle use their noses to push a lever that brings water from a reservoir about 8 ft underground to the surface. The pump then drains the water left in the pipe back to the reservoir below the frost-line. This fall, an excavator spent a few weeks working on the farm to help us dig in about 7000 feet of water pipe and install 4 of these frost-free nose pump sites. We can now water cattle all over the farm, in the summer and winter for many years to come. The best part is that it is virtually maintenance free.

Word of thanks to everyone who helped out on the farm this year

We wanted to take the opportunity to thank all of the wonderful people who helped to make this challenging, super productive, and infrastructure rich year possible. They are (in no particular order):

Jason Garlough, Claire Sales, Brad Wright, Leela Ramachandran, Dan Hara, Angela Keller-Herzog, Avi Caplan, Val Stam, Marissa Lepage, Madeleine Bluteau, John Nyman, Francine Charlebois, Steve Morison, Mike Horler, Laura Sie, Nadine Bernard, Cory Wanless, Chris Evans, Christine Braun, Ramsey Hart, Danny Howard, Chris Richards, Kristin Stark, Matt Retallack, Heather and Trevor FreemAnderson, Thulasy and Graham Lettner, Jenn Dysart, Jan and Marian Slomp, Jackson Couse, Leah Stokes, Matto Mildenberger, Virginie Lavallée-Picard, Alex Fletcher, Amy Lounder, Roxanne Charlebois, Sophie Ducharme and Robin Nobleman. We undoubtedly are forgetting valuable contributors here. We apologize to those whose names are missing. Know that this is mere forgetfulness and not a lack of gratitude.

Winter hay

This winter we have 45 mature cows on the farm and 39 calves (less than 1 year old). Over the course of the winter, each cow will eat (or waste) about 8000 lbs of hay, and each calf will go through about 3200 lbs of hay. In total – that’s a lot of hay. Our plan is to make all of our own hay on the farm – although this year, our one hay making attempt was a dismal failure. Since we had so many other infrastructure projects on the go, we made the decision to buy in hay this year and we will try making our own again in 2015.



Grazing Days Prices for 2015/2016

In the last edition of the Grazing Post, we had an article about beef cattle prices being on the rise in recent years. The price of cattle has continued to rise since the last newsletter. The graph on the right (updated weekly through the Beef Farmers of Ontario) shows the price of 600-699 pound heifers (which tend to be about 15 cents a lb more expensive than the 800 lbs heifers we purchase). We purchased at about week 20 last year for \$1.75 per lb. Based on this chart, we are guessing that we will be paying about \$2.20 per lb for our heifers this year.

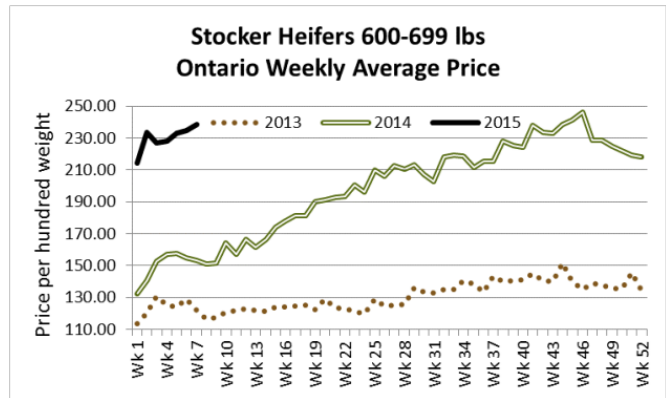
The unfortunate part about this cattle price increase is that we too need to increase our prices this year. Last year, we purchased 40 yearling heifers, averaging 800 lbs at \$1.75 per lbs for a total of \$56,000.

This year we will be purchasing 40 yearling heifers, averaging 800 lbs at \$2.20 per lbs for a total of \$70,400. That is an increase of \$14,400. We sell between 310 and 320 lbs of beef per animal for a total of between 12,400 and 12,800 lbs. If all of our other costs remain the same, we would have to increase our prices by \$1.13 to \$1.16 per pound to cover the increased price of these yearlings. As such we are raising our prices by \$1.15 per pound this year, from \$8.75 per pound to \$9.90 per pound. We realize that this is a 13% increase over last year, but unfortunately we have very little choice. We hope you understand.

Our pricing formula for 2015 works as such: we charge \$9.90 per pound of beef to cover our cost of production and wages and then \$10 per delivery to cover the cost of packaging, storing, handling and delivery. For example, the half share costs 40 lbs X \$9.90/lb + 4 deliveries X \$10/delivery = \$396 + \$40 = \$436.

If all goes well, this is the last year that we will be purchasing stockers. The calves that were born on the farm this past summer will be ready to be butchered in the fall of 2016. Our goal is still to peg our annual

price increases to Canada's annual inflation rate.



Grazing Days grass-fed beef orders for 2015/2016

In the middle of March you will receive an email from Grazing Days letting you know that we're starting to take orders for the 2015/2016 grass-fed beef delivery season. At that point you will be able to visit our website www.grazingdays.ca to place your order.

Last year, we stated accepting orders on March 8th and we were sold out by March 24th. Based on the feedback we have been getting from our current customers and the size of our 2014/2015 waiting list, we expect that we will once again be sold out by the end of March. If you are again interested in receiving Grazing Days beef, please make sure you sign up early. The orders we receive this spring are for beef to be delivered between October 2015 and June 2016.

Grazing Days Beef CSA 2015/2016 Pricing and Order Guide

| | | Amount of Beef Eaten in Household | | |
|---------------|---------------------------------|---|---|---|
| | | 80 lbs / year (1.5 - 2 lbs/ week) | 40 lbs / year (about 1 lb/ week) | 10 lbs / year (about 1 lb/ month) |
| Freezer Space | Small (Freezer above Fridge) | Full Share \$872 (8 deliveries of 10lbs between October and June) | Half Share \$436 (4 deliveries of 10lbs between October and June) | Sample Box \$110 (1 delivery of 10 lbs) |
| | Medium (Small chest Freezer) | Bulk Share \$832 (4 deliveries of 20lbs between October and June) | Mixed Eighth \$406 (1 delivery of 40 lbs) | |
| | Large (Chest Freezer) | Mixed Quarter \$802 (1 delivery of 80 lbs) | ↓ | ↓ |

- Every animal is made up of approximately 25% steak, 25% roast and 50% ground beef, which means:
- Every 10 lbs consists of approximately 2 (1lb) packages of steak (2 per package), 1 (2.5 to 3 lbs) roast, 1 (1 lb) package of stewing beef or sausage, and 3 or 4 (1 to 1.5 lbs) packages of ground beef

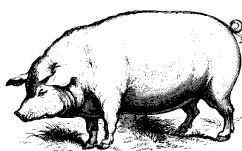
**With an Oink Oink here
and an Oink Oink there...**

Last year as we were taking orders for our beef CSA, we asked you what other kinds of meat you would be interested in purchasing from Grazing Days in the future. The results are in! Here are the Top 10 items out of the 234 orders received:

| Rank | Item | Votes | Rank | Item | Votes |
|------|---------|-------|------|-------------|-------|
| 1 | Chicken | 210 | 6 | Tilapia | 71 |
| 2 | Pork | 170 | 7 | Rabbit | 55 |
| 3 | Turkey | 142 | 8 | Goat | 51 |
| 4 | Lamb | 134 | 9 | Guinea Fowl | 41 |
| 5 | Trout | 107 | 10 | Eggs | 12 |

We'd like to give an honourable mention to the person who suggested Mammoth and Kangaroo.

The number 1 on the list—chickens are marketed through a supply managed marketing board (as are Turkeys) and tight controls exist on who can raise and sell them. In Québec, we are allowed to raise 100 meat chickens without purchasing quota. It is difficult to write a business plan for 100 chickens (which would probably supply about 4% of our customers with chicken). Next winter we will put some effort into figuring



out if there is a way for us to raise more than 100 chickens. It helps knowing that 90% of you are interested in purchasing pastured chickens from us if we raised them.

There are no restrictions on who can raise and sell Pork – our number 2 on the list. As such, we will be starting to raise a few pigs this year. We are still figuring out the details and we will not be selling shares of pork with the beef shares in March, but stay tuned and we will keep you informed with an email when we start taking orders for these pigs.



The Affordability Fund

During the 2014 / 2015 season, we ran an experiment called the Affordability Fund. The basic premise of this fund is to make quality grass-fed beef available to those who have a difficult time affording it. We asked people to pay an additional 10 cents per pound of beef (with an opt out clause) which went into our "Affordability Fund." Low income families who were unable to afford Grazing Days beef applied to purchase the beef "at cost" and paid \$6.75 per pound. The Grazing Days income portion of their order (\$2.00 per pound) would be paid out of the Affordability Fund. Here is a quick overview of how the experiment worked:

The Households:

| | | |
|---------------------------------|-----|--------|
| Total Grazing Days Customers | 234 | |
| Customers who participated | 163 | (70%) |
| Number of benefiting households | 4 | (1.7%) |

The Money:

| | | |
|--|--------|-------|
| Total Money Raised | \$1037 | |
| Beneficiary Households | \$400 | (39%) |
| Centre 7 Out of the cold (20lbs roast) | \$175 | (17%) |
| Food Bank (80 lbs ground beef) | \$480 | (46%) |

We have been very impressed with the generosity of our customers. We have also been very pleased with the result of this experiment and we will continue it for another season. Our goal this year is to see if we can find an additional 2 households who can benefit from the fund. Please help us get the word out to those you know who would be interested in grass-fed beef, but could otherwise not afford it.

The FAQs

Send us your question via email: editor@grazingdays.ca or snail mail: 567 rg Ste. Julie Est, St-André-Avellin, QC, J0V 1W0

Q: Where is your beef processed?

A: Meat processing is heavily regulated – mainly for food safety reasons. As such, the processing of our beef is not something we can do ourselves. As we mentioned in the last edition of the Grazing Post, most of the abattoirs in Eastern Ontario and South Western Québec are provincially inspected. This means that the meat processed in these abattoirs can only be sold in the province where it was processed. This makes selling beef in the Ottawa / Gatineau area a bit tricky.

Lucky for us, there is a small federally inspected abattoir called **Les Viandes de la Petite Nation** less than 1 km from our farm here in St-André-Avellin. Federally inspected facilities are recognized by all provinces and meat processed in those facilities can be sold anywhere in Canada and can also be exported.

This past year, our cattle were processed in this federally inspected abattoir which was very good on many fronts:

- They are right next to the farm, meaning that our cattle spend very little time in a truck, keeping cattle stress as low as possible and keeping transportation costs low.
- Their facility is designed by Dr. Temple Grandin – who focuses on low stress and respectful handling and slaughter of cattle and other livestock.
- They are owned by a local venison farmer whose focus is low stress for animals and high quality meats.
- They are federally inspected, which means we are able to sell the meat in both Ontario and Québec and there is an extra layer of food safety. For example in a provincial facility, all animals are visually inspected before and after the slaughter. In a federal facility, samples from these animals are taken at regular intervals and tested for pathogens such as E. Coli.
- They are under new management and are hoping to expand the number of local beef cattle they process.
- They are already set up to process certified organic meat, which we hope to be doing in a few years.
- Management at the plant are meat connoisseurs and have been able to provide us with some great suggestions (i.e. which new cuts to try).
- They are a fun group of people to work with.

Unfortunately there have also been drawbacks, some of which have affected the service that we've been able to provide:

- The abattoir's main focus is primary cuts (whole chucks, rounds, etc.) which are shipped on to retail butcher shops and restaurants. The further level of butchering Grazing Days requires is new for them and as a result, the processing has been slow and there have been a number of mistakes (such as steaks that are too thin).

- The plant, though small for a federal abattoir, is large and there are many managers involved in the processing of our order from start to finish. Since the processes are all somewhat new, there is a fair amount of miscommunication, which has led to issues such as certain cuts becoming steaks instead of roasts and vice versa. Logistically, this miscommunication has made getting boxes out to you on time, with the proper proportion of steaks, roasts and ground beef a bit of a nightmare. Our apologies again for the shipments of this fall with not-yet-frozen beef.
- The processing is more expensive than in a provincially inspected facility (about \$200 per animal more).

Since there are a number of hiccups in this relationship, the jury is still out on whether we will continue to work with this abattoir in the long term. There are definite benefits to working with them – especially the ease with which we can sell beef in both Ontario and Québec. Unfortunately though, some of you have also been negatively affected by this imperfect relationship which makes us very uneasy. You pay a lot of money for our beef and we expect to deliver a quality product that meets your expectations. This fall we are giving this abattoir one more chance, but if it doesn't work out, we will figure out another way of getting our beef processed.

Gathering feedback on packaging

One of the major changes with our beef this year is the packaging. Previously, our beef was wrapped in butcher paper. The new butcher encouraged us to use vacuum packs. Josée and Paul debated this change for quite some time, but decided to give it a try and get feedback.

The pro butcher paper side : likes that the packaging is compostable and that eating our beef thus packaged produces no garbage – something that is in line with our values. A smaller contingent raises the concern about plastics leaching into the beef.

The pro vacuum pack side : likes the fact that you can see the meat before you unpack it and that the beef is easily (and quickly) thawed in cold water. A smaller contingent really likes that the beef has a much longer shelf life.

To help us plan our packaging for this coming delivery season, we will be asking you to specify the packaging of your choice when you place your beef order. We are not sure we can please everyone, but having some statistical guidance to help us make this decision will be useful.

Recipe Corner : Beef Company Stew

Shared by Linda Evans.

Ingredients

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 4 large carrots | 2 celery stalks |
| 1 small rutabaga | 3 onions quartered |
| 1 ½ pound round steak or stewing beef | |
| 1 tbsp butter | 2 garlic cloves, minced |
| ½ tsp thyme | ½ tsp marjoram |
| ¼ cup all purpose flour | 1 cup beef stock |
| 1 cup dry red wine | 1 cup |
| frozen peas | |
| 3 potatoes, cut into small chunks | |
| 19 oz canned tomatoes | |
| Salt and pepper to taste | |
| 2 tbsp Parsley chopped, fresh | |



Instructions

1. Heat oven to 325 degrees.
2. Peel and cut carrots, rutabaga and celery into 2 inch chunks.
3. Slice steak into 1 ½ inch wide cubes.
4. In large dutch oven, heat butter over medium heat on top of stove and brown beef in batches for about 5 minutes each batch.
5. In same dutch oven add more butter, add onion, stirring occasionally until lightly coloured. Add garlic, thyme and marjoram. Cook, stirring for 1 minute.
6. Add browned beef, carrots, rutabaga and celery; sprinkle with flour and cook, stirring until flour is moistened.
7. Stir in stock, wine and tomatoes, breaking up tomatoes with spoon. Bring to boil. Cover and place in the oven for 1 ½ hours.
8. Stir in potatoes, cook, covered for 60-75 minutes or until meat and potatoes are fork tender, stirring once. Stir in peas, cook for 2 minutes or until heated through.
9. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve, sprinkle with parsley.

Save the Date : April 10th, 2015 Sausage Fest! and Grazing Days Annual Meeting

This year we are catering our annual meeting and combining it with a Sausage Fest. Since we have had to change butchers and find an alternative sausage maker, this will be a chance for you to taste a number of different sausages (some with gluten, others without) to help decide which should be included in our standard delivery boxes.

Unfortunately all of our sausages do come in a pork casing. For those of you who have asked us to look into pork-free sausages, we have not yet come up with a solution. Please get in touch with us if you have any ideas.

Who: Everyone is welcome. Anyone who is a Grazing Days customer or a farm supporter. The only catch is that the room's capacity is 80 people.

What: 6:30pm Sausage Fest! Come taste and vote for the sausage that will be included in our boxes this year. We will also have a chef supply us with some delicious foods to compliment the sausages. / 8:00pm An interactive business meeting to go over the 2014/2015 season and explore what will be happening in 2015/2016.

When: April 10th, 2015 from 6pm to 10pm

Where: Centretown – exact location TBC

How: An email will be sent shortly with location and ticket information. Tickets are \$10 per adult/\$5 per child to help cover the cost of catering.

Call for recipes

If you have favourite recipes that you'd like to share, please email them to us at editor@grazingdays.ca and we will be sure to post them on our website. Thanks!

Important note about deliveries and being home to receive your beef.

Over the years, we have noticed a trend in our deliveries. In October and November, early on in the delivery season, people are always quite eager to get their beef delivery. During the winter deliveries, people start getting a little bit more relaxed about the beef delivery and sometimes people are not home to receive their beef packages. Since it is generally cold enough, it's easy enough for me to leave the beef on the front or back porch without too much worry. As April, May and June roll around though, this relaxed winter absenteeism trend continues and the WHOO-HOO-IT'S-T-SHIRT-WEATHER-AND -I-AM-PLAYING-IN-THE-PARK-WHAT-BEEF? trend starts increasing. All of this adds up to making deliveries in the spring-time a bit tricky from our end. We know you pay a lot of money for our beef and we feel responsible for it until we are able to properly transfer care for it over to you. **We ask you to please let us know ahead of time if you will not be home to accept your order and to leave a cooler out for it or to make other arrangements. Thanks.**

Policy corner – The Genetically Modified Apple

Although there are a number of topics that we could talk about (some more beef-related than this topic), we thought we would use this article to showcase how our food regulatory agencies are highly inadequate when it comes to regulating bio-technology and genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

A few weeks ago, the United States Department of Agriculture approved the commercial release of the genetically modified (GM) apple. According to Okanagan Specialty Fruits, the company who developed this apple, they are expecting that the first GM apples will be ready for sale in 2018 or 2019. Although the apple has not yet been approved for release in Canada, it is widely expected that the GM apple will be approved by Health Canada soon.

The apple is genetically modified to prevent it from turning brown after it has been sliced. It sounds interesting, but here is the problem – only a handful of people actually want this apple. A study conducted by the BC Fruit Growers' Association and the Federation of Québec Apple Growers shows that 69% of Canadians say they do not want the apple approved. The apple growers themselves do not want it approved for fear of losing the confidence of consumers in their non GMO apples and the related economic

ramifications. Food processors that use apples also have no desire for a non-browning apple since there are simple techniques (such as adding lemon juice) to prevent apples from turning brown.

All this just highlights the problem with the way GMOs are regulated in Canada. Our regulatory systems allow the desires of a select few to subject the rest of us to something we don't want for a number of reasons : (1) economic —the loss of markets for apple growers due to consumer avoidance of certain products; (2) environmental—unknown effects of GM genes released into our ecosystems; (3) health — unknown health effects of long-term consumption of GMOs.

To learn more about and to support the campaign to stop the GM apple from being approved in Canada, please visit the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network's website : www.cban.ca

Easter Egg Hunt at the Farm: Save the Date!

On Easter Sunday (April 5th, 2015) we are planning a massive Easter Egg Hunt on the farm. We would love to see you all here. More information will be sent out via email closer to the date. See you then!



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Grazing Days
567 rang Ste-Julie Est
St-André-Avellin, QC
J0V 1W0
(819) 516-0600
editor@grazingdays.ca
www.grazingdays.ca
www.aubeauxchamps.ca

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