



The Grazing Post



The Grazing Days semi-annual newsletter

Issue 1. winter/spring 2014

We Found our Farm

Well, it's almost official – we have found a farm! Although there's still one piece of the puzzle that needs to fall into place, it's looking like Grazing Days will be starting its farming season this spring at our own farm, one hour outside of Ottawa in Saint-André-Avellin, Québec.

We are purchasing a 100 acre farm, with a house, garage, barn, shop and hay shed at 567 rang Sainte-Julie Est. All but one of the conditions have been met; the only thing still remaining is the approval of the sale by the Québec commission responsible for the protection of agricultural lands (la Commission pour la protection du territoire agricole du Québec, or CPTAQ), which according to our notary should be a simple rubber stamp since we are intending to move to and live on the farm.

Additionally, we are in the final stages of negotiation for an additional 160 (ish) acres directly adjacent the 100 acre farm. It will take some time before the sale of the 160 acres is finalized because they need to be severed from a 450



signed five year lease on these 160 acres which will allow us to start farming there this spring as well.

In total, we will have about 260 acres of farmland at our disposal. About 30 acres of this is rock and bush and the rest is arable.



Although it's taken us almost a year from the time we seriously started looking for a farm until now, we are very happy with the result. This farm is close enough to Ottawa that we can continue to serve the same customer base we've been serving, the farm has the acreage and the quality of soil that we were looking for, and it's about four kilometers from downtown Saint-

André-Avellin which has a thriving population of young families and has everything we will need, from schools, to groceries, to farm supplies. We are very excited to get started on this farm this spring. We're even more excited to invite you all out to the farm to come and see it – but more on that in the next edition of the Grazing Post.

The Benefits of Owning our Own Farm Property.

Over the course of the next few years, the operations of Grazing Days will slowly morph into a new type of farm. We will continue to deliver quality grass-fed beef into Ottawa, but how we go about doing this will change.

Up until this point, Grazing Days has been renting pasture in Manotick Station without the infrastructure necessary to winter livestock. Our main business has been purchasing one year old beef cattle from a farm in Vankleek Hill where the cattle are raised following Grazing Days protocols—no artificial growth hormones, no antibiotics, and a grass / forage based diet—and then grazing them on our farm in Manotick Station during the summer. In the fall, these animals would go to the abattoir and then we would store and deliver the meat in the fall, winter, and spring – and the cycle would start over again in the spring with the purchase of another herd of one year old beef cattle.



Although Grazing Days did very well as a farm, the transition to our own farm in Saint-André-Avellin opens up many opportunities that we were unable to explore previously.

The first major opportunity is that we'll now have the necessary infrastructure to keep livestock over the winter. Instead of purchasing one year old cattle every year, we'll be able to graze and breed a year-round herd of cows to raise our own one year old cattle. Although this means daily chores in the summer and the winter, it does bring the following benefits:

- We will be able to certify organic. It has been very difficult to find organic one year old cattle and we will now be in a position to raise our own. Given that it takes three years to transition from conventional to organic farming, Grazing Days is aiming to be certified organic by the fall of 2017 or spring of 2018.
- Improved herd health. Being trucked from one farm to another is quite stressful on cattle and unfortunately leaves them more susceptible to disease. Once we breed our own cattle, we will not need to bring in cattle from elsewhere.
- **Improved livestock manageability.** Since we'll be working with these cattle daily (from the time they

are calves), we'll be able to build a relationship with them and they will be less stressed and easier to work with as a result.

- Improved meat quality. The meat with the best taste profile comes from cattle that are older than 24 months of age when they are processed. In Canada, it is very expensive to keep cattle in the winter and the vast majority of beef (including Grazing Days beef) comes from cattle that are about 18 months old. This new farm will allow us to keep cattle in the winter and in a few years all the beef Grazing Days sells will come from animals that are 24 months old before they go to the abattoir. Additionally, through our breeding, we can select for cattle that grow well on the grasses grown in our climate.
- Improved net income. The sale price of one year old beef cattle is very volatile. The price has nearly doubled since we started in 2010. Currently, about 42% of our gross revenue goes towards the purchase of one year olds. Breeding our own cattle will help us **move from the "bachelor income" of \$25,000 per year to a "family income" of \$50,000 a year.**

The second major opportunity that this farm brings is our ability to look after and care for smaller livestock. **Up until this point, we've had to commute to the farm on a daily basis.** Since cattle are large and relatively low maintenance, it worked out very well. Smaller livestock, such as goats, chickens, lambs, and pigs all require **more attention than cattle so we've not been in a position to keep these smaller animals until now.** In 2014, we will have our hands full establishing the grass-fed beef business, but we're looking to start raising other meats as early as 2015.



What would you like to see?

As you are signing up for this year's grass fed beef delivery (for information about when you can sign up see page 3) we're going to be asking you a number of questions with regards to what other meats you'd like to see Grazing Days raising. We're thinking we'd start with pork, lamb or goat. Before we commit to raising chickens and turkeys, we need to look into Québec's rules for doing so as they are different from Ontario's. Other possibilities are rabbit, duck, and guinea fowl. We also get many requests for grass-fed butter and will be exploring this possibility if there is interest in having grass-fed butter as an add-on option to our current beef deliveries.

The third major opportunity the farm in Saint-André-Avellin brings is collaboration. Farming is hard work and can be quite isolating. At the same time, getting access to land and start-up capital can make it very difficult for new entrants into agriculture. Now that we have our own farm with many useable acres, we are in a position to invite other farming enterprises (like vegetable growers or bee-keepers) to join us on this farm. We will be exploring these opportunities in the winter of 2014/2015.

The Abattoir Question

Most of the small abattoirs in Eastern Ontario and South Western Québec are provincially inspected, which means that if Grazing Days plans to use one of these small abattoirs, the provincial meat inspection regulations will only allow us to sell meat in the province where it was inspected. Since most Grazing Days customers live in Ottawa, we have two options to continue to serve the same customers.

1. There is a small federally inspected abattoir less than 1 km from the farm in Saint-André-Avellin. If **they are willing to butcher Grazing Days' animals**, we will be able to sell that meat in any province and we may start doing deliveries in Gatineau as well.
2. We are allowed to ship live cattle across the provincial border and we have the option of continuing to use the same abattoir that we have been using in Eastern Ontario. If we do this, we will still not be able to deliver to Gatineau addresses.

We will be exploring both of these options over the course of the spring and summer to see which makes the most sense.

To everything there is a season:
new name, new logo

Up until this point, Grazing Days raised and sold its beef in Ontario. As we transition to our new farm in Québec, we will be operating Grazing Days in two provinces: Québec for raising the beef, and Ontario for selling it (although we do have customers in *la belle province*).

Grazing Days has been and will remain registered in Ontario, but as we have needed to register the farm in Québec, **we've had to think about what it is exactly that this new farm will be.**

As previously mentioned, we hope to explore the opportunity of inviting other farm enterprises onto the same farm property as Grazing Days. Since Grazing Days could be one **of many farm enterprises on this land base, we've decided to register a farm name that's more suitable to being an umbrella name that can encompass many farm enterprises including Grazing Days.**

We've settled on Ferme Aube aux champs which literally means "Dawn on the Fields Farm" but also has a *double entendre* when said aloud – "Ferme Aux beaux champs" which means "Farm of beautiful fields." Grazing Days is thus the first farm enterprise on Ferme Aube aux champs. Practically speaking for the time being, Grazing Days

(www.grazingdays.com and www.grazingdays.ca) will be the English version of the farm and Ferme Aube aux champs (www.aubeauxchamps.ca) will be the French.



So when you come to visit Grazing Days at the farm this summer, and you see a sign that says Ferme Aube aux champs – you have come to the right place!

Grazing Days grass-fed beef orders for 2014/2015

In March you will receive an email from Grazing Days letting you know that we're starting to take orders for the 2014/2015 grass-fed beef delivery season. At that point, you will be able to visit our website: www.grazingdays.ca to make your order.

Last year, we started accepting orders in the middle of March and we were sold out by the middle of June. Based on the size of our 2013 waiting list (175 households who did not receive beef from us, but are keen to sign up for this year), we expect to sell out even more quickly this year. 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 2014 and June 2015.

Grazing Days Prices for 2014 / 2015

Beef animal shortages and market price volatility

Unfortunately, there is currently a shortage of beef animals in North America (including the one year old stockers that Grazing Days buys each year) due to a number of factors. For one, many farmers in Canada stopped raising beef due to the US border closure for Canadian beef after a case of Mad Cow was found in Alberta a little over 10 years ago. In the US, farmers got rid of their cattle during two drought years in 2011 and 2012 as their pastures dried up and the price of cattle feed increased. Now that feed prices have once again fallen after a good growing season in 2013, farmers on both sides of the border are looking to build up their herds again. This increase in demand is driving up the price of cattle which in turn is sparking the interest of those who once again believe that there is money to be made in beef which is also leading to an increase in demand.

In Ottawa, the purchase price of these one year old beef animals has increased from \$1.00 per lb live weight in 2010 to about \$1.62 per lb live weight as of February. For Grazing Days, the purchase price of one year old beef animals accounts for about 42% of our gross revenue. Our prices have not really changed since 2011, but this year we have no choice but to raise our prices by 50 cents per pound to maintain a \$20,000 - \$25,000 income for our family.

Our pricing formula for 2014 works as such: we charge \$8.75 per lb 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 40lbs X \$8.75/lb + 4 deliveries X \$10/delivery = \$350 + \$40 = \$390.

In the future, we will be raising our own one year old beef cattle on our farm and will not suffer from the market price volatility. We will peg our annual price increases to Canada's annual inflation rate. (Interestingly, using the inflation rates published by Statistics Canada, Grazing Days beef should cost about 45 cents per pound more in 2014 than in 2011.)

Balancing the need for living wages and accessibility: Grazing Days creates an "Affordability Fund"

One of the main issues that Grazing Days has been wrestling with is the accessibility of our beef prices. On the one hand, the price of quality beef like Grazing Days' is often out of reach for lower income households. On the other hand, farming (especially small scale farming), although very rewarding in other ways, is seldom a money maker. If we expect our food to be priced so that everyone can afford it, then our farmers would not be making a living wage. Inversely, if we expect our farmers to make a living wage, then the price of food becomes too high for it to be accessible to lower income households.

The question we've been asking ourselves is "how do we, as a society, ensure that low income families can afford to eat good quality food AND that our farmers make a living wage?"

With the increase in beef prices this year, we've been trying to think of creative ways of addressing this issue. This year, we're going to try an experiment and ask people to pay an additional 10 cents per pound of beef (with an opt out clause) which will go into our "Affordability Fund." Low income families who are unable to afford Grazing Days beef can apply to purchase the beef "at cost" and pay \$6.75 per pound. The Grazing Days income portion of their order (\$2.00 per pound) would be paid out of the Affordability Fund.

If there is no more money in the Affordability Fund, we will not accept any additional "at cost" orders. If there is money left in the fund when all the orders have been received, Grazing Days will donate that amount of beef to Centre 7, an "Out of the Cold" supper program that runs weekly Saturday suppers in Old Ottawa South. If everyone opted in, we would be able to provide 14 half share orders "at cost."

Grazing Days Beef CSA 2014/2015 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 \$780 (8 deliveries of 10lbs between October and June)	Half Share \$390 (4 deliveries of 10lbs between October and June)	Sample Box \$100 (1 delivery of 10 lbs)
	Medium (Small chest Freezer)	Bulk Share \$740 (4 deliveries of 20lbs between October and June)	Mixed Eighth \$360 (1 delivery of 40 lbs)	↓
	Large (Chest Freezer)	Mixed Quarter \$710 (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

Save the Date – Grazing Days CSA Customer Meeting and Potluck – March 29th, 2014

The main way that Grazing Days markets its grass-fed beef is through its Community Shared Agriculture or CSA program (the monthly or bi-monthly home deliveries of beef). This is very beneficial for Grazing Days for a number of reasons.

First, we know at the beginning of the season how much of our beef has been spoken for and how much marketing / outreach we need to do throughout the growing season to **ensure that we don't end up with a few thousand pounds of unsold meat for which we won't be paid.** Second, as people pay for their beef orders in advance, prior to receiving their first delivery, it helps Grazing Days manage its cash flow. Finally, by participating in the CSA, our customers acknowledge that there is a lot of risk involved in any agricultural enterprise (due to weather, pest and disease, etc.) and as a result, they agree to be flexible with their expectations (in regards to the exact content of the beef delivery, its timing, etc.)

In return for these benefits, Grazing Day has a number of responsibilities to its members. First, we agree to be completely transparent in terms of our farming practices, challenges that the farm is facing and the direction in which we are hoping to take the farm in the future. Second, we agree **to make public the farm's financial statements.** We acknowledge that our customers pay a lot of money for beef each year and in return, we want to show you where that money goes.

One of the main ways we live up to our responsibilities is by inviting everyone to an annual Grazing Days customer meeting and potluck. This year is no exception. Here are the details:

A note about "Family Friendly"

In the past, we've advertised Grazing Days customer meetings and potlucks as "Family Friendly". It has become painfully clear to us that we had no idea what that meant prior to having a child—and that having paper and crayons on offer does not make a meeting "kid and parent friendly."

Our apologies. Although the meeting is still not really an ideal place for children, we are completely open to having rambunctious children in our presence during the meeting and we have moved the meeting time to the afternoon/early evening to be more accommodating. If you have any ideas about how these meetings can be more family friendly please let us know, we're all ears.

(That being said, there will be crayons and paper)

Who: Everyone is welcome: Anyone who is already a Grazing Days customer, is thinking about becoming a customer, or is a farm supporter in some other way.

What: 4:00pm: An interactive business meeting to go over our 2013/2014 season, look at the Grazing Days finances, and explore the future direction of the farm.

5:30pm: Potluck and social time

When: March 29th, 2014 from 4:00pm until 7:00pm

Where: Meeting room of CCOC Beaver Barracks at 464 Metcalfe Street, Ottawa, ON K2P 0P3 (near Metcalfe and Catherine)

How: Please RSVP by March 24th at paul@grazingdays.com and let us know how many of you are coming.

Please bring: A dish to share with everyone at the potluck and your own plates, cutlery and cups. (There are power outlets and there is one stove/oven in the Beaver Barracks meeting room).

There's demand and then there's supply.

There has been a steady increase in the demand for grass-fed beef in Ottawa in the past few years. There are currently about four farms selling grass-fed beef into Ottawa and in 2013 all were sold out early and had to turn people away. Even if all of us were to expand our operations, we would not be able to keep up with demand.

Although Grazing Days is moving to a larger farm, we have opted to continue selling grass-fed beef from about 40 cattle and focus on raising our own one year olds instead of growing our customer base by selling more beef. Our current grass-fed **beef sales provide our family with enough work and enough income.** Instead of jumping on the "growth for growth's sake" bandwagon, Grazing Days has been helping three new grass-fed beef farmers in the Ottawa area over the course of this winter as they prepare to start raising a few cattle on their farms this summer.

We believe this to be a much better long-term strategy to ensuring that all people who are looking for grass-fed beef in Ottawa can find it.

FAQs

One of the things that we'd like to start featuring in our newsletter are answers to questions that you have for Grazing Days. Have you been wondering why Paul decides to frost seed by broadcasting or how effective the solar powered electric fence system is? Send that question our way and we'll be more than happy to print and answer it here:

Q: Is it possible to visit the farm?

A: Yes, we love having visitors on our farm. Please come to visit. We try to organize an official farm tour or farm visit once a year to give people a chance to see how we raise our animals and how our pasturing systems work. On top of that, we move our cattle daily between the middle of May and the middle of November and everyone is welcome to make an appointment to join us on these daily moves.

Submit questions via email at editor@grazingdays.ca or snail mail at 367 Fifth Ave., Ottawa, ON, K1S 2N6.

Rolling up our Sleeves

Although the farm we're purchasing has been a cattle farm in the past, in recent years, it has mainly been used for cash crops such as soybeans. There are about 50 acres in pasture right now, but the remaining 180 acres will need to be converted back to pasture. As such, we will be amending the soil and seeding grass. Additionally we will be working on many infrastructure related projects such as building about 15 kilometers of fencing, a low-stress handling facility (a corral), wind breaks, watering infrastructure and a large walk-in cooler/freezer. If you're interested in helping out for a day or two, please send us an email at josee@aubeauxchamps.ca and we will gladly take you up on your offer. Thanks!



In recent years, we've been approached by a number of our customers who were interested in investing in Grazing Days. Although we already have financing in place for the purchase of the farm, we do understand the value of having our financing come from the end users of the goods that we produce and are open to exploring financing parts of our farming operation this way. Please contact us at paul@grazingdays.com if you are interested in meeting with us about investing in Grazing Days.

Grass-fed Beef Recipe Ideas: Braising Ribs – a.k.a Beef Short Ribs

The cut of meat we get asked about the most is the Braising Rib – “**what is it and how do we cook it?**” It turns out that the more common name for Braising Ribs are Beef Short Ribs. Here is a great slow-cooker recipe for Beef Short Ribs that was shared by Valerie Stam. This recipe was originally found at <http://southernfood.about.com/od/beefribs/r/r91118a.htm>

Slow Cooker Braised Short Ribs

Ingredients:

- 4 to 6 beef short ribs
- 1/2 cup flour
- 2 tablespoons sweet paprika
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 cups apple cider
- 1 cup beef broth
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 to 1 1/2 cups pearl onions



Preparation:

Toss short ribs in a food storage bag or paper bag with the flour, paprika, chili powder, salt, and pepper. In a large skillet over medium heat, heat the butter. Sear the ribs on all sides, about 2 to 3 minutes on each side. Transfer ribs to the slow cooker. In the same skillet, heat the apple juice and beef broth; pour over the ribs and add chopped onion. Cover and cook on LOW heat for 6 hours. Add the pearl onions after an hour or two of cooking.

Serves 4.

Call for recipes

When I am making deliveries, people often ask me how to cook certain cuts of beef. I usually feel ill-prepared for these questions and realize that the three minute delivery period is not really ideal for sharing recipe ideas.

This year we're aiming to get a full repertoire of beef recipes up on our website. If you have any favourites 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!

Canadian Food Policy Corner

As you may or may not know, Grazing Days is quite active in the National Farmers Union (www.nfu.ca) a direct member organization that advocates for family farms in Canada and works in solidarity with family farm organizations internationally for a global food system that is fair and just for all. In this section, we hope to provide information and updates about some of the key policy issues that are affecting our food system.

Campaign to Stop Bill C-18: *the Agricultural Growth Act*

For more detailed analysis and other campaign tools please visit <http://www.nfu.ca/issue/stop-bill-c-18>

On December 9th, 2013 Bill C-18: *the Agricultural Growth Act* was tabled in the House of Commons by Federal Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz. This is an omnibus bill that if passed would make changes to the ***Plant Breeders' Rights Act, Feeds Act, Fertilizers Act, Seeds Act, Health of Animals Act, Plant Protection Act, Agriculture and Agri-Food Administrative Monetary Penalties Act, Agricultural Marketing Programs Act, and Farm Debt Mediation Act.***

Although a few of these changes might well be worth exploring, the National Farmers Union launched a campaign to stop omnibus Bill C-18. Here is a brief overview of the concerns that we have with the legislation:

The bill introduces new Plant Breeders Rights rules. Although seeds cannot be patented, plant breeders can protect the intellectual property of new plant varieties by applying plant breeders rights (similar to copyrights on books). These plant breeders rights allow plant breeders to charge a royalty on the seeds they sell. The plant breeders rights that are in force in Canada now, protect the rights of farmers to save and reuse seeds on their farms. Bill C-18 changes the rules around Plant Breeders Rights and removes the customary right of farmers to save, store, clean and reuse seed on their farms without the express permission of the entity holding the Plant Breeders Rights. If granted, such permission is dependent on the government adopting, on a crop by crop basis, an exemption called the **farmers' privilege which may be time-limited**, could be removed at any time by Cabinet and would likely entail payment of royalties to the Plant Breeders Rights holder.

The proponents of these changes to Canada's Plant Breeders Rights say that the increased royalty revenue on seed (paid by farmers) will allow Plant Breeders (such as

Monsanto, Bayer, Dow, DuPont, Cargill, Glencore International, Syngenta, Bunge, Limagrain and BASF) to invest in their plant breeding programs and develop new varieties.

There is however no guarantee that the increased royalty revenue will actually lead to more investment in developing new varieties – especially if they have a captive market that is restricted in the seed they can save and reuse themselves. Moreover, these changes need to be seen in light of the many budget cuts to public plant breeding programs in Canada that, in the past, have developed many new plant **varieties suitable for Canada's growing conditions**—in the public interest. To counter these changes to Plant Breeders Rights, the National Farmers Union has put forward a document called **"The Fundamental Principles of a Farmers Seed Act"** which outlines the principles needed to foster a strong, healthy, and democratically controlled food system that allows farmers to retain their customary use of seed.

Bill C-18 amends the laws governing such things as veterinary medicines, seeds, feed ingredients and fertilizer additives to allow the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to use the science of regulators in other jurisdictions instead of its own science when making a decision on approving or licensing new agricultural products.

Although at first glance these changes seem like they would allow a more efficient use of resources, given that

Please join Grazing Days and the National Farmers Union in our campaign to stop Bill C-18.

Here is what you can do:

- Attached to this newsletter you will find a copy of the Stop Bill C-18 postcard. Sign it, write the name of your MP on it and drop it in the mail.
- Contact your MP and other elected representatives and tell them you do not want Bill **C-18 passed**.
- Collect signatures on the NFU's Right to Save Seed petition and take it to your MP.
- Join the NFU (as a non-farmer associate member) and/or donate to the NFU's A Seed Act for Farmers, not Corporations – Stop Bill C-18 Campaign. Make cheque payable to the National Farmers Union and mail to: 2717 Wentz Ave., Saskatoon, SK / S7K 4B6, or for credit card payment, please call us at (306) 652- 9465, or join/donate online at www.nfu.ca

the Canadian Government would not have to replicate studies already done in other countries, the challenge arises when we look at things like Bovine Growth Hormone (rBGH) which was approved (for use in the dairy industry to increase milk production) in the United States, but not in Canada. Similarly, this could foreseeably be used to fast track the introduction of new varieties of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in Canada without Canadian authorities needing to prove their safety or their benefit to Canadians. In short, these proposed changes would **undermine Canada's ability to safeguard Canada's food and agriculture system** for the benefit of all Canadians.

Finally there is a fundamental problem with omnibus bills in that they are designed to push through legislation without proper examination or debate. Although there are parts of Bill C-18 that could make improvements to **Canada's food system, it is much more democratic to deal with each of these proposals in separate legislation.**

Please join Grazing Days and the National Farmers Union in the Campaign to stop Bill C-18. See the text box insert on Page 7 to find out how.

The *raison d'être* of The Grazing Post

In these days of email and inboxes full of e-newsletters and e-updates, and many thought about (but seldom written) blog posts—Grazing Days is pleased to launch the Grazing Post—a semi-annual newsletter for everyone in the Grazing Days farm community. Although we deliver tasty beef to **many of your homes, the two minute interaction doesn't** really give us a chance to share a full farm update nor to talk about the issues the farm is facing.

Hopefully the Grazing Post will help fill this gap and provide us with a venue to share the latest and greatest, and **provide you with an opportunity to find out more about what's** happening behind the scenes at Grazing Days.

We're aiming to release the next edition of the Grazing Post in August. If you'd like to write an article, share a recipe, take some photographs of the farm or have ideas of what should be showcased in this publication please contact us.



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Grazing Days
367 Fifth Ave. Apt. 1
Ottawa, ON, K1S 2N6
(613) 898-9136
editor@grazingdays.ca
www.grazingdays.ca
www.aubeauxchamps.ca

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