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# Compost Coffee at Hogberg Ranch

For more information on our compost coffee or tea demonstrations see Forage Fact # 44 & # 45, or visit our website: [www.peaceforage.bc.ca](http://www.peaceforage.bc.ca)

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Measuring aspen sucker height with grazing stick

## Original Objectives

Glenn Hogberg has recently logged an aspen stand to convert it into a pasture. It was then aerially seeded with a Peace Country Seeds grazing blend in May of 2006. The newly cleared land is full of low cut stumps and new aspen suckers. Glenn's objectives focus on minimizing aspen re-growth while encouraging grass growth for livestock grazing. By using a specific compost coffee recipe we are trying to alter the soil biology to an environment favourable for the grasses rather than for the aspen regrowth.

## The Demo Site

At our second compost coffee demo site, located at Glenn's, we will be comparing the benefits of compost coffee to mob grazing/grazing management. The plots for our demo are currently covered with a mixture of desirable seeded forages, aspen re-growth 3 to 4 ft high, stumps, branches, native herbs and weeds. Soil samples taken in late May indicated similar soil biology to those taken at Rainey Ranch. The soil at the Hogberg demo site, according to the analysis, is low in active bacteria, but has good total bacteria content and excellent active and total fungal content. This meant that we would need to increase the active bacteria to encourage a more balanced soil, and to favour the desired forage stand. Aspen thrive in a more fungal soil, so in theory by increasing the active bacteria content, it should provide a more favourable environment for forage growth and bacteria therefore discouraging aspen re-growth.

## Our Cunning Plan

Similar goals and similar soil biology ratios at our two compost coffee demo sites meant that we would be able to use the same compost coffee recipe for both sites. This meant we only needed to do one brewing of the coffee, which we did at the Rainey Ranch site and transported from there to the Hogberg site. Transporting the coffee from one site to the other did mean the possibility of damage to the brew. The sloshing that would take place during transport could damage the micro-organisms we had just very carefully multiplied. On the other hand, it meant a considerable saving in time and supplies, therefore we took the risk and hoped for the best.



Above: Vicki, Shannon, and Sandy monitor plots  
Below: soil plug from future mob grazing plot area



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## The Plan in Action

The brewing process at Rainey Ranch took two days: 24 hours to let the water reach air temperature, and 24 hours to aerate the brew, once all the ingredients had been added. On the third day, we did the compost coffee application at Rainey Ranch, and then went to Hogbergs' that afternoon, to do the application there. The compost coffee was transported in the same tank that it was brewed in, and the same sprayer was used for both applications. We decided to go with a quad mounted sprayer, because it was the best suited to maneuver the difficult and bumpy terrain at Glenn's. Due to technical difficulties we had to borrow a different quad runner from each of our co-operators to use in the spraying process.

Once we arrived at Glenn's the sprayer was attached to the quad, the tank of the sprayer filled with our special brew, and the brew applied to the plot. It was applied

at a rate of 100L/ac and 2 passes were done. The compost coffee was approximately 50% foliar and 50% soil applied.

As the brew was being sprayed on the plot, site monitoring was being done. We limited ourselves to two benchmarks: one in the compost coffee plot, and one in the mob grazing plot. At each benchmark a 36"x36" square was marked using grazing sticks, and inside it percent vegetation assessments were completed, vegetation heights were recorded, penetrometer readings were taken, and pictures were snapped facing N,S,E, and W from the benchmark. A soil plug was also dug near each benchmark, and a picture taken of each. The data recorded and the pictures taken as a part of this monitoring will be used to compare with future monitoring, in order to see any visible changes that have taken place and assess the effects of the compost coffee application.



Above: Kim holding marker stake  
Below: quad mounted sprayer/tank



Julie spraying using quad sprayer, & showing the spray pattern of the boomless nozzle

## What We've Learned So Far

We have found that a quad mounted sprayer will actually work to spray the rather difficult and bumpy terrain at this plot. The aspen re-growth is abundant, but some of the native and planted grass seed plants are also present.

## The Future

After mob grazing has been carried out for a substantial amount of time, we will be able to compare the areas where the compost coffee was applied versus no compost coffee areas. We will be doing more compost coffee applications in August as well. Soils monitoring, current and future, will be described in a separate Forage Fact.

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