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Review of *Trails and Trials: Markets and Land Use in the Alberta Beef Cattle Industry, 1881-1948* By Max Foran

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Trails and Trials: Markets and Land Use in the Alberta Beef Cattle Industry, 1881-1948. By Max Foran. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2003. xv + 317 pp. Photographs, maps, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 paper.

Max Foran's *Trails and Trials* does a superb job of filling a conspicuous gap in Alberta's agricultural history. By covering the period 1881-1948, the book extends the standard accounts of Alberta's ranching history well into the twentieth century. And it expands on traditional ranch history themes with its clear and consistent focus on the importance of cattle exports in relation to Canada's small domestic market and on the importance of markets in understanding land use change. Foran periodizes and organizes his story clearly. Each chapter follows a similar structure with sections and subsections describing major market and policy developments and their land use implications, making the book easy to use as a research source and keeping the reader attentive to key themes. The book's thoroughgoing documentation shows Foran's mastery of Alberta's historical record and will prove useful for future Great Plains historians.

So what do we learn from *Trails and Trials*? First, beef cattle were and are an important staple export. The vicissitudes of export markets were and are fundamental to the prosperity of many regional economies on the Great Plains. Canadian cattle producers' export dependency has been vulnerable to sudden market shocks, notably Britain's 1892 schedule on Canadian cattle imports and, in the United States, the devastating Fordney-McCumber and Hawley-Smoot Tariffs of 1922 and 1930. Canada's Wartime Food Corporation prohibited cattle exports to the US from 1943 to 1947, a policy shock that accounts for some of the lasting bitterness in the relationship between Alberta cattlemen and Canada's federal government.

A second notable achievement of the book is its original contribution to our understanding of Alberta's failure to develop a cattle feeding industry up to 1948. This sets the stage for the massive growth in Alberta's feedlot complex in recent decades, which other Great Plains provinces and states have viewed with admiration and sought to emulate. By providing us with a solid background in the *Trails and Trials* of an export-based industry, this book offers insights for planning the industry's future trajectory. Max Foran shows us that the current crisis in cattle exports is not without precedent. As Alberta cattle producers cope with export embargos imposed after the discovery of a single case of BSE, such a contribution is both timely and thought-provoking. Great Plains producers and policy-makers would benefit from reading Foran's study. **Ian MacLachlan**, *Department of Geography, University of Lethbridge*.