



InFARMation



Yukon Agriculture Branch Quarterly Bulletin

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Message from the Agriculture Branch

Season's Greetings. This message is being written on December 1, 2002 with the outside temperature at -3°C and virtually no snow on the ground. In early December 1995 when this message was written, ice fog was hanging over Whitehorse and the temperature was -40°C. We all know that the fall of 2002 was terrific and so far early winter has also been very nice, making it pretty easy for those folks that are feeding and managing livestock or still wrapping up some of those fall duties on the farm.

With the end of the year rapidly approaching some reflection is in order. Overall the Yukon Agriculture industry had an average year in 2002. Forage production (both hay and greenfeed) was a little below average, but prices were good, with local demand for feed very strong. Production of both red and white meat may have increased slightly in the past year, as did the production of honey. Other sectors like vegetables, poultry and eggs may have decreased some in the past year. Game farming did not decrease over the past 12 months, but prices were certainly down in terms of breeding stock and antler velvet.

A highlight of the past year was the signing of the Agriculture Policy Framework Agreement between Canada and Yukon. This is a cost shared (60 Federal/40 Territorial) agreement and ensures some level of federal funding to the territory over the period April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2008. These funds should provide a real boost to the growth and development of the industry.

Results of the 2001 National Farm Census were also released in 2002. Comparisons made between the 1996 and 2001 results are very encouraging. Farm numbers, farm income and value of farm assets are all increasing! The amount of agriculture land being released by government has averaged about 12 titles a year for some time. This continues to be the trend in 2002 with 14 titles expected to be issued by the end of the year.

On a final note the Agriculture branch welcomes the Honourable Archie Lang as the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. The staff of the Agriculture branch looks forward to working with the newly appointed minister.

I hope you have a great Christmas and the best to you in 2003.

David C. Beckman, Director

North of 60° Agriculture Conference

The 15th annual North of 60° Agriculture Conference was held on November 2 this year at the Gold Rush Inn, Whitehorse.

The day started with Dave Beckman providing an outline of the Canada-Yukon Agriculture Agreement that is being developed to provide programs in everything from risk management to food safety over the next five years. Master gardener and fall fair grand champion, Randy Lamb followed Dave with a presentation on backyard composting in the Yukon that was interesting for any northern gardener trying to build a productive garden soil. Matt Ball and Tony Hill rounded out the morning with a presentation on raspberry and strawberry variety trials and what they were learning about the best management practices for those crops.

The afternoon session was devoted to tips on food processing beginning with a presentation by Kristy Long. Kristy is a home economist from the Alaska Cooperative Extension Service. She spoke about jams and canning, and preserving foods safely. Peter McPeake shared his insights on the production and marketing of Yukon honey, and then Kevin Bowers provided tips on processing country meats. The afternoon wrapped up with a presentation by Lesley Hornby from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. This presentation covered the food safety processes and requirements that are to be followed before selling these products to the public.



Yukon farmers of the year Bill and Barb Drury show the federal Minister of Agriculture Lyle Vanclief and Sharon Vanclief around the Circle D Ranch (Agriculture branch photograph).



Yukon Farmers of the Year for 2002

Larry Bagnell, the Yukon's MP was on hand to make the Yukon Farmer of the Year presentation at the North of 60° Agriculture banquet following the conference at the Gold Rush Inn. Barbara and Bill Drury, owners of Circle D Ranch on the Alaska Highway, were awarded the title this year with a number of nominations citing their willingness to share their knowledge of farming in the north and the countless hours they have spent working with the Yukon Agricultural Association for the benefit of the industry.

Several nominations were also made for the Yukon Game Farm's Danny and Uli Nowlan along with farm manager Randy Haddock in recognition of their years of pioneering game farming and the contributions they have made in assisting other game farmers establish in the Yukon.

As tradition would have it, the evening was hosted by Dave Beckman, Director of the Agriculture branch. Dave's Yukon agriculture trivia and jokes have become a familiar part of the evening. A silent auction was held during a delicious meal of Yukon grown and raised foods. The auction was a success and the money raised was given to Yukon 4H clubs. The banquet was well attended and provided a good opportunity to visit with farmers from around the Yukon after another busy summer.

Congratulations Bill & Barb Drury!

Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA) Survey Planned

Over the past couple of years many people have come into the Agriculture branch and expressed strong opinions on Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA) and what we should be doing about it.

EIA is caused by a virus present in the blood of infected animals. It is also called "Swamp Fever." The transmission usually occurs via blood sucking insects such as horse flies, black flies or mosquitoes, but it can also occur when humans use a single needle on multiple horses. EIA can also be passed from mare to foal in utero.

A serum test is the only way to accurately determine whether a horse is infected with the EIA virus. The most commonly used method is the Coggins test, named after the veterinary researcher Dr. Leroy Coggins who developed it. By law, EIA is a reportable disease. All positive cases must be filed with the veterinarians at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

If the worst should happen and your horse tests positive for EIA, your options are extremely limited.

Federal and territorial health agencies, as well as humane societies support euthanasia as the most prudent option, albeit a difficult one. Lifelong quarantine in a screened stall is another, less acceptable and less practical alternative.

Due to concerns expressed, the Agriculture branch has planned a survey of horse owners in the Yukon to gauge opinions on EIA. The survey will determine whether EIA is perceived as a problem to horse owners and what, if anything, horse owners feel is best to do about the disease.

An unrelated but important part of the survey will examine locally grown versus imported hay preferences. This information will be used to inform local producers of horse owner needs.

The Yukon Bureau of Statistics will conduct the survey sometime in December. All responses are strictly confidential and will be presented to the Agriculture branch in a manner that insures respondent anonymity. Results of the survey should be available for the spring newsletter.



Outfitters' horses along the Dempster highway (Yukon government photograph).

Outgoing YAA President Urges Participation

The following letter appeared in the Yukon Agricultural Association November, 2002 newsletter.

– Reprinted with permission.

President's Message

We had a general YAA meeting on November 3rd at 7 pm at the Riverside Hotel in Whitehorse, and there were 4 Whitehorse members present, 5 Mayo members, 1 Dawson City member, 1 Watson Lake member and one government representative. Not a great showing for the YAA! Especially the Whitehorse Chapter.

This was a very important meeting to look at the future and direction of the YAA, and formalize the structure of the organization. It was decided that each area (Whitehorse/Mayo/Dawson) would have 3 Directors represent them, voted on by their membership. The general Yukon YA membership would in turn elect an overall President, Vice-President and Secretary-Treasurer.

At the present we will continue with the current executive, and then in March 2003 the elections of President, Vice-President, and Secretary-Treasurer will be done by mail out ballot to all YAA members.

I am stepping down as President in March, and will look forward to working with whomever next fills that position.

It's discouraging for me to hear farmers say they don't want to be members of the YAA because the YAA has "never done anything for them."

How is the YAA to deal with issues of concern to farmers if they don't come forward and express those concerns? The YAA has undertaken to create an effective, efficient organization to lobby on behalf of Yukon farmers, and we have had some successes over the past several years.

But it takes some input from you farmers to keep the YAA directors up to date on your concerns and issues.

Are you interested in cheaper fertilizer, or how about an abattoir in the southern Yukon? Maybe help with organic certification, maybe cold storage, or marketing your products? What about an equipment rental outlet?

If I haven't made myself clear to this point, we're asking for your help to direct the YAA. That means come to meetings, get your input in the newsletter, talk to us!

In June 2002 the YTG signed on to the APF that will bring \$320,000 of federal monies per year for 5 years into the Yukon. In order to make this happen YTG must contribute another 40% per year to bring the total to \$500,000 per year. That's \$2.5 million over 5 years... pretty coarse change.

There are 5 components to the APF: strengthening food safety and quality, creating economic opportunities through science and innovation, enhancing the environment, renewing the agricultural sector through skills training, and improving access to crop insurance and income stabilization programs.

The YAA looks forward to negotiating with government on how this money will be distributed within these 5 areas; ie. equally, all in one, or any other combination.

There is also a concern that if we in the YAA do not get more interest by our members, the present directors (who are all close to burn-out) could all resign, the YAA could "fold" and then say goodbye to all this federal money everyone.

As many of you may realize, the YAA office has been without an executive director since September. A number of applicants answered the ad for this position; the application deadline closed September 25th. Due to the reorganization plans scheduled for the YAA at the November 3rd meeting it was decided to hold off on hiring a new executive director until after that meeting. No date has been finalized on when the office will re-open. We are currently short listing for this position with interviews to happen in the next month.

If you have a CARD concern, contact Deborah Cassidy at her home phone number 393-2728 or Valerie Whelan at her office number 667-5272.

If you have a YAA concern, and we hope you do, contact one of the acting Directors. In the Whitehorse area they are: Dave Andrew 667-7844, Wayne Grove 393-1942, Bill Drury 668-1045, Doug Craig 668-5774 and Susie Rogan 667-4088.

The Agriculture Branch had another successful Symposium on November 2nd this year. I didn't attend the workshops during the day as I was busy farming, but I understand that they were good, well attended, and that those people who did go felt they were very worthwhile. The banquet was delicious as usual, featuring our top quality Yukon-grown products. Barbara and I were pleasantly surprised to be chosen as "Farmer of the Year", an honour for which we are most grateful. The 4-H group organized the Silent Auction this year, did a great job, and raised \$1500 for their organization. Well Done!

That was a busy weekend, for the next morning a group of us met for a Circumpolar Agriculture planning meeting to discuss ideas for the upcoming 2004 Circumpolar conference in Sweden. It is only 22 months away, and if you would like to go think now about possible presentations you could make at the conference, possibilities about funding and so on. We are fortunate that Dave Beckman is one of the Vice-Presidents of the CAA (Circumpolar Agriculture Association) and so if you would like to find out more, talk to Dave at the Branch 667-5838.

The territorial election was the next day, and what a seismic event that was! We look forward to working with the new government. We only had a brief opportunity to work with Scott Kent, but it was a pleasure, and I would like to wish him the best success in his future endeavors.

It is with sadness that I learned of Joyce Scott's passing. She was an active member of the YAA for many years, known for her keen interest in animal welfare. On behalf of the YAA, I would like to extend our sincere condolences to her family at this time.

Contact information:

YUKON AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION (YAA)
203-302 Steele Street, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C5
Phone (867) 668-6864 Fax: (867) 393-3566 Email:
yukonag@internorth.com

Pulletsurprise!

Zebediah was in the fertilized egg business. He had several hundred young layers, called pullets, and eight or ten roosters, whose job was to fertilize the eggs.

Zeb kept records, and any rooster that didn't perform well went into the soup pot and was replaced. That took an awful lot of Zeb's time; so, Zeb got a set of tiny bells and attached them to his roosters.

Each bell had a different tone so that Zeb could tell, from a distance, which rooster was performing.

Now he could sit on the porch and fill out an efficiency report simply by listening to the bells.

Zeb's favorite rooster was old Brewster. A very fine specimen he was, too. But on this particular morning, Zeb noticed that Brewster's bell had not rung at all!!

Zeb went to investigate.

The other roosters were chasing pullets, bells a-ringing! The pullets, hearing the roosters coming, would run for cover.

BUT, to Zeb's amazement, Brewster had his bell in his beak, so it couldn't ring. He'd sneak up on a pullet, do his job and walk on to the next one.

Zeb was so proud of Brewster that he entered him in the county fair.

Brewster was an overnight sensation.

The judges not only awarded him the No Bell Piece Prize.

But also the Pullet-surprise!!



When InFARMAtion asked Edward Lee, Agriculture branch Lands Coordinator for a season ending article on the Land's program, we received...

Just the Facts Ma'am...

*** Twelve agricultural titles have been issued in 2002. They represent a total of 276.8 hectares of developed lands which passed to private title ownership. We expect that two more titles will be issued by the end of this year, bringing the 2002 total to 14.

*** Ten agricultural Agreements for Sale have been issued in 2002. They represent a total of 345.51 hectares of new lands for agricultural use and development in the Yukon. At least one more Agreement will be issued in late 2002 or early 2003.

*** Two new grazing leases have been issued in 2002. They represent a total of 802 hectares of new grazing lands made available to the two farmers and grazing rights holders.

Editors note: The preceding story is true. Only the names have been omitted to protect the innocent.

Where's the Beef? – Update on the Canadian Cattle Identification Program

Did you know that since July 1, 2001 all cattle leaving the herd of origin and any point beyond the herd of origin must bear an official Canadian Cattle Identification tag? Monetary penalties for non-compliance went into effect on July 1, 2002 with fines of \$500 per violation and serious prosecution if violators put the health of the Canadian cattle herd at risk.



The Canadian Cattle Identification Program is an industry led initiative to help the Canadian Food Inspection Agency trace and eliminate the sources of disease and food safety problems that threaten public health and safety. Most disease problems and food safety threats are uncovered during routine inspection at slaughter.

The Canadian Cattle Identification Program requires that Canadian abattoirs (including ours) report all incoming ear tags to the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency's database. This ensures that a trace can begin immediately upon disclosure of a problem at one of those sites.

For more information on the Canadian Cattle Identification Program, call the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency at 1-877-909-BEEF or visit their web-site at www.canadaid.com. We also have copies of the information on how and where to order ear-tags at the Agriculture branch and maintain a file on the latest program information. Interested persons can call us at 667-5838.

How did Yukon Agriculture Stack Up Against Alaska in 2001?

The Alaska Agriculture Statistics report arrived at the Agriculture branch earlier this month and your InFARMAtion editor compared production figures and a few prices with our northern neighbour.

In 2001, hay production in Alaska averaged 1.3 tons per acre with an average value of \$325 Cdn (\$210 US) per ton. Average hay production in the state between 1994 and 2001 was 0.97 tons per acre, indicating that the harvest in Alaska in 2001 was every bit as good as ours. While we don't have yield statistics for the hay harvest in 2001, Yukon prices averaged between \$220 and \$280 Cdn, depending on whether it was picked up or delivered.

Potato production was harder to compare, considering that the reported production in the Yukon was on 30 acres while Alaskans produced potatoes on 910 acres. Due to our lower rate of production, Yukon producers often received prices of a dollar or more per pound while in Alaska the average selling price was 20.7 cents US or 32 cents Cdn per pound.

APF Update

Public Consultation on the Agriculture Policy Framework Agreement (APF) Underway

Comparing potato production at the Agriculture branch demonstration site with Alaska for the 2001 crop year provided closer numbers. At the demonstration site in 2001, potatoes yielded a harvest of 24,464 lbs./acre. At the time, we estimated an average selling price of 30 cents a pound, providing a gross return of \$7339.20 per acre. Our expenses were estimated to be \$2,219.95 per acre for a net return of \$5119.25.

In Alaska in 2001, the average yield was 25,275 lbs. per acre. At an average selling price of 32 cents (Cdn) per pound reported in Alaska, the crop had an average gross return of \$8,088.00 per acre. Unfortunately, expenses were not reported so a comparison of net return was not possible.

What do the numbers tell us? For one thing it looks like Alaskan farms are making a little more money than we are when you compare similar production. Why? It could be that they are literally that much further down the road and when importing hay or potatoes, freight costs make the difference. Is there a market there?

On November 26th and again on December 10th the Agriculture branch held meetings to consult with industry members to seek input into the construction of a Canada-Yukon framework agreement supporting the agriculture industry in the territory. A public open house was also held on the night of December 10th to seek input from a wider range of stakeholders.

Those attending the meetings, suggested that the branch use this newsletter to keep them informed about the results from other meetings and to report progress on the development of programs under the APF. Results from these initial stakeholder meetings are not available at the time of printing for this issue, however, we encourage anyone who would like to contribute suggestions or learn more about the Agriculture Policy Framework Agreement to contact us at the Agriculture branch. The next newsletter and APF update, is scheduled for mid-March.



Greenhouse trial conducted by the Carmacks Little Salmon First Nation in 2002 (Agriculture branch photograph).

Yukon Rangeland Fertilizer Trial

The growing season of 2002 was the first year of a two-year fertilizer trial on Yukon rangeland. The study site was located on a southeast slope at the Takhini Forestry Farm. A randomized block design was used to compare the grazing capability of unfertilized native range to native rangeland fertilized with varying levels of potassium, phosphate and nitrogen. The study looked at the productivity and nutrient level in plants palatable to livestock and the productivity of unpalatable plants under the various fertilizer treatments.

Soil analysis of the study site before fertilizer was added showed that the soil had very low levels of nitrogen, was deficient in phosphorus, and had optimal levels of potassium.

The amount of precipitation at the study site in June 2002 was approximately one quarter of the 30-year normal. The precipitation received in the rest of the growing season was close to the 30-year normal. Until the study area received rain in July, fertilizer pellets were not absorbed by the soil. Since native range is usually not irrigated, the use of fertilizer in dry regions might not be a benefit to rangeland.

Treating soil with nitrogen increased the productivity of plants desirable for grazing by two times and the productivity of plants undesirable for grazing by 3.5 times. Since the soil in the area was deficient in nitrogen, it was not surprising that adding nitrogen increased productivity, but the greater increase in undesirable plants over desirable plants was a

worrisome outcome. If fertilizing rangeland with nitrogen causes weeds to outgrow grasses, then this is not an economically feasible method of range improvement.

The effect on plant productivity of adding fertilizer with phosphorus was inconclusive. This is possibly because of the delayed uptake of phosphorus by plants. The effects of phosphorus on plant growth might be more evident next growing season. Adding potassium to the soil did not increase plant growth. This was expected because the soil present already had optimum levels of potassium. The average crude protein level in grass harvested from untreated plots was 9.2 per cent, which is fairly nutritious. Grass grown on soil treated with nitrogen had crude protein levels as high as 16.8 per cent, making this highly nutritious feed. This indicates that fertilizing stands of native grass where there is little weed growth could be beneficial. Adding phosphate and potassium to the soil did not increase the crude protein level of the grass grown.

The level of phosphorus in plants did not vary significantly among plants grown on untreated soil and soil treated with nitrogen, phosphorus or potassium. The level of potassium was slightly higher in plants grown on soil with added potassium and nitrogen than in plants grown on untreated soil. The level of nitrates in plants grown on soil treated with nitrogen was .02 per cent, which is well below toxic levels.

This study will be repeated during the 2003 growing season.



Making strawberry planting beds at the Takhini Forestry Farm in June 2002 (Agriculture branch photograph).

Yukon Agriculture Trials 2002



Matthew Ball lends tractor driver Gary Zgeb a hand laying mulch in the strawberry trial (Agriculture branch photograph).



Spreading straw to prepare the strawberry trial for winter (Agriculture branch photograph).

Marketing Yukon Grown

We are once again encouraging Yukon agriculture producers to contact us so they can be included in the *Yukon Agriculture Products Directory*. This free publication puts consumers in touch with producers by providing information about who you are and what you produce.

This is also a reminder for those producers that advertised in the guide last year to please take a moment to ensure that the information is correct and advise us of any changes. This publication was used many times this past year to provide information to consumers looking to buy local agriculture products. Changes received prior to January 31, 2003 will be included in the new edition, however, feel free to submit changes at any time.

The other project that was undertaken by the Agriculture branch last year was to coordinate the construction and placement of a number of Farmer's Market booths.

In your travels, you may have noticed these green and metal roofed structures at the Carcross corner and the corner of the Takhini Hotsprings Road. By the time the dust settled in the fall, more than 18 individual producers took advantage of these booths during the summer to sell a wide variety of products. Most of the people using these booths are local producers so if you are out and about next year give them a break and check out "Yukon Grown," you may be surprised at how diverse the Yukon Agriculture industry is.

From the feedback we received at the branch, both of these projects were well received by both producers and consumers. For more information on either of these projects, contact Kevin Bowers at 667-5838.



Farmer's Market booths at the corner of the Mayo and Takhini Hot Springs Roads (Yukon government photograph).

The Master Gardener Course: Help Home Gardeners By Becoming A Yukon Master Gardener

The Yukon Agriculture branch offers this Master Gardener Course to train volunteers to assist home gardeners by providing information and technical instruction in northern gardening techniques.

This year, eight instructors will deliver the 40-hour course that will cover subjects as diverse as: plant botany and physiology, soils, plant taxonomy, outdoor and greenhouse gardening, lawns, houseplants, pests and pest control, herbs and medicinal plants, and ornamental horticulture.

Your \$101.65 registration fee will also get you the *Yukon Gardener's Manual*, various written handouts and fact sheets. Registration is limited to 25 students on a first come, first serve basis up to Wednesday January 22, 2003.

The course will be held over three weekends from February 1 –16, on Saturdays and Sundays at the Yukon College.

Your pre-requisite is to be familiar with Yukon gardening conditions and to be committed to volunteering 40 hours of your time to provide gardening information to others.

For more information and to register, contact Mary Lynn at the Yukon Agriculture branch at 667-5838.



Master gardeners writing their final exam in 2001 (Agriculture branch phototgraph).

For Sale



- Kubota 8030 tractor – 4X4, 2780 hours, 76 hp w/ quickie loader, forks, bale spear, 9' hydraulic snow blade and cone seeder.
- Irrigation wheel-line – like new - 38 sections, 2880 ft of 6" aluminum pipe with hydrants, 4" pipe and rolling gun, Bauer 6" pto pump, various fittings to complete set, \$22,000.
- Land roller – 10.5 ft. for \$2000.

Call Arctic Pastures
Julius and Anne Ruechel
633-3276

Merry Christmas to All and to All a good night!



Season's Greetings from the Agriculture branch staff. From left to right: Tony Hill, Edward Lee, Dave Beckman, Patricia Smith, Matthew Ball, Valerie Whelan, Mary Lynn Drul, Kevin Bowers and David Murray (Agriculture branch photograph).

InFARMation is...

A Yukon Government newsletter published by the Agriculture Branch at the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. If you would like to add your name to the newsletter mailing list, comment on an article or contribute a story, then please write to:

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