

INFARMATION

Yukon Agriculture Branch Quarterly Bulletin

Winter 2014

Volume 27 Issue 4

NORTH OF 60° BANQUET AND CONFERENCE

The 2014 North of 60 Agriculture Banquet and Conference was held at the Westmark Whitehorse November 1st and 2nd. The Saturday evening banquet sold out again this year, with Westmark putting together a delicious Yukon-grown feast. The meal is a key part of the banquet because it provides an opportunity to highlight Yukon food.

Showcasing local foods is a growing trend in the culinary industry, and the willingness and enthusiasm of the Westmark's chefs working with local ingredients to create an authentic Yukon meal experience does Yukon's food industry and producers proud. The banquet features just a small sample of some of the good food produced in the territory. This year's meal featured:

- Beef: Horse Haven Ranch
- Yukon Gold Potatoes & Beets: Yukon Grain Farm
- Leeks: McClintock Valley Farm
- Goat Cheese: Lendrum Ross Farm
- Low Bush Cranberries: Tracy Bowers
- Arctic Char: Icy Waters
- Mixed Berries: Dawson Growers

Following the meal Energy, Mines and Resource Minister Scott Kent highlighted Yukon's agriculture industry and announced government's efforts to develop a Yukon Local Food Strategy (see page 4 for more information). Minister Kent also presented producers Mary and Rolland Girouard with the 2014 Farmer of the Year award.

The evening included insight into Alberta's agriculture industry with Business Management Specialist Ted Nibourg from Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development. Spirit Riders 4H club hosted a silent auction and brought in local greenhouse expert and comedian Roy Ness to host a live auction for a pig. Roy kept everyone entertained thanks to his sharp wit and entertaining jokes. Thank you to Spirit Riders and Roy for helping cap off a wonderful evening. The auction raised \$4,800 for Spirit Riders 4H Club.

(Continued on page 2...)



Photo: Mary and Rolland Giourd (second & third from left), receiving Farmer of the Year Award from Minister Scott Kent (far right). MLA Brad Cathers and Speaker of the House David Laxton were also on hand for the presentation.

MESSAGE FROM THE AGRICULTURE BRANCH	2
FARMER OF THE YEAR	4
POTLUCK COMMUNITY CO-OP	5
HELP US GROW A YUKON LOCAL FOOD STRATEGY	6
LIVESTOCK EAR TAGS	7
YUKON PRODUCER PROFILE; YUKON VALLEY FARM	8
ARE ELK "YARDING" ON YOUR AGRICULTURAL PROPERTY?	10
EMR LIBRARY GERMINATES A NEW IDEA	11
ANNOUNCEMENTS	12

MESSAGE FROM THE AGRICULTURE BRANCH

Happy New Year everyone! The past year brought a full slate of events in the Yukon agriculture sector and it's time to reflect on a few notable milestones.

Last spring, 35 people from across the Yukon gathered for two days to share their experiences and learn together about challenges and successful strategies for running community gardens in Yukon. The workshop, appropriately titled "*Working Together to Grow More*", was the first gathering of this kind and provided the opportunity for this group to identify opportunities for strengthening the network of Yukon community gardeners.

The workshop was conducted in partnership with Artic Institute of Community Based Research (AICBR) and facilitated by Heidi Marion. Participants summarized the importance of community gardens in several ways, including providing access to local healthy foods for preventing diabetes and other chronic diseases; contributing to development of capacity in local farming; providing healthy options to offset the high costs of food in grocery stores; and, facilitating the connections between food and community members, particularly elders and youth.

Through the summer, the Yukon Agriculture Association worked with Urban Systems on a site plan for the Association's agriculture property on the North Klondike Highway. They identified two development nodes: one for community events and recreational activities and a second for agriculture processing infrastructure, equipment storage and farming activities.

The Agriculture Branch open house at the end of July attracted a record number of participants to our research and demonstration farm. The BBQ lunch featured local foods from farms in the area providing a great opportunity to let visitors know about the local producers and where local foods can be sourced. The research site also hosted local schools in September for "Envirothon", where high school science students learned to harvest test plots, record data and learn about the soils and environment we farm in the Yukon.

In the end, the summer was a little cooler and wetter than normal: great for hay farmers, with better than average harvests being recorded on both dryland and irrigated farms. The Takhini Valley elk herd noticed the excellent growing conditions this fall as well, arriving on farms in record numbers to clean up anything and everything remaining on fields.

Finally, the North of 60° Agriculture Conference and Banquet was held at the Westmark Whitehorse on the first weekend in November. Over two days young farmers, new entrants and some of our more experienced farmers networked on everything from holistic farm management to land leasing and from horses to poultry. The seminars were a great success thanks to our industry association partners, and there were some really good ideas discussed as we move forward with the industry in the coming year.

Looking forward to it.
Tony Hill
Director, Agriculture Branch

NORTH OF 60° BANQUET AND CONFERENCE CONT...

This year's conference featured holistic management, horse nutrition and a round-table discussion on local production. The conference started Saturday morning with two of our keynote presentations happening simultaneously. In one room, horse owners were developing their knowledge of horse nutrition with equine specialist Wendy Johnston from Olds College. The other room featured Peter Lundgard's introduction to holistic farm management.

Peter Lundgard introduced a holistic management decision-making model on Saturday morning. Holistic management evaluates the whole farming ecosystem to develop a balance for your farm, and how to best manage for the future health of your operation. His introduction also outlined how to test your decisions to meet your social, environmental and financial goals. Peter also reminded everyone to proactively monitor the performance of their farms as a way to keep farm ecosystems in balance.

Wendy Johnston's equine presentation looked at the role of horse feed nutrients (water, vitamins, minerals, energy and protein) and feed sources specific to horse activity and breed. The presentation helped develop Yukon horse owners' knowledge on horse nutrition and its relation to equine health. Wendy also kicked off the conference afternoon sessions with a class on calculating the rations your horse needs, and how those rations change, with your feed source.

Thanks to the Yukon Horse and Rider Association and the Equine Association for suggesting Wendy as a presenter.

Both presentations, along with the rest of the conference topics, were well attended and judging by the note-taking and questions the topics throughout the weekend kept everyone engaged.

This year's conference also featured some Yukon presenters, providing a local context while showcasing some of our at-home resources. Dr. Jane Harms, Program Veterinarian from the Animal Health Unit at Environment Yukon, was on hand to talk about the Animal Health Unit and its role. Jane also discussed livestock options and the benefits or challenges Yukon producers may need to consider. For example, some of our common livestock species are potential hosts to diseases that can seriously affect our native wildlife. If you want to learn more about livestock health related issues contact the Animal Health Unit at animalhealth@gov.yk.ca, or call 867-667-5600.

Treharne Drury, researcher from the Yukon Research Centre, shared some of his work on alternative feed options for Yukon. Treharne's family background and interest in Yukon agriculture brought a prospective to the presentation that is rooted in the specific challenges experienced in growing in the territory. The presentation took conference attendees on his journey researching alternative feeds that may be more practical for Yukon growing conditions. Treharne's research examined what feeds are used in other circumpolar regions, along with how Yukon's climate compares with these regions and also presented some practical alternatives for Yukon producers. His final report is almost complete and should be available in 2015. Check the Yukon Research Centre and the Ag Branch web page for the finished research report in 2015.

Land leasing was presented at this year's conference to help develop alternative land options for new entrants and expanding operations looking for agriculture land. Ted Nibourg, Business Management Specialist from Alberta Agriculture, presented options and solutions for leasing land. Although the presentation was focused on leasing in a mature agriculture region, the presentation demonstrated how common it is in the prairies and how leasing can be an option if titled land is not available. There were many take-homes from Ted's presentation. One highlight that stood out was that no matter what kind of land agreement you embark on, it should be formalized and benefit both parties.

Saturday finished with a presentation from the Potluck Food Co-op's Development Coordinator Karin Voogd. Karin was on hand to show the success in building the Potluck Food Co-op and continuing to build relationships with producers.

Sunday morning the conference continued with another full room on hand for the second half of Peter's holistic management strategy.

Peter turned his focus to how he manages his operation, and how it works with livestock, relating holistic concepts he presented in his introduction to decisions he has made for his farm operation.

Following Peter's presentation it was time for discussions amongst industry via round table sessions focusing on increasing meat production in Yukon, and the potential for moving beyond farm gate sales. The sessions provided an opportunity for everyone to talk about the challenges seen in Yukon's red meat sector, with a different theme for each table, and a person leading each table to help stimulate the discussion.

Yukon Young Farmers concluded the conference, providing lunch for everyone who shared part of their Sunday, and a slideshow introducing some of the young producers in the territory.

The Agriculture Branch would like thank everyone who made this year's conference a success. Thank you.

Photo: Yukon Valley Farm Highland beef. Go to the Producer Profile to find out more about Yukon Valley Farm



MARY AND ROLLAND GIROUARD YUKON'S 2014 FARMERS OF THE YEAR AWARDED FOR INNOVATION

During the annual fall North of 60° Agriculture Banquet, a farmer of the year is formally recognized. Although only one farmer/farm family is identified with this distinction, the identification of a farmer of the year provides an opportunity to celebrate the contribution from all Yukon farmers and the steps taken by those who make Yukon's agriculture industry stronger.

This year, Mary and Rolland Girouard, operators of Rivendell Farm near Whitehorse, were named the 2014 Farmers of the Year.

"The Government of Yukon recognizes the contributions Rolland and Mary Girouard have made over many years of farm production, agri-tourism and education of Yukon's young people on the importance of local food production," Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, Scott Kent, said. "The Girouard's long-term commitment and leadership in the farming community has made a lasting contribution to the development of local food production in Yukon."



Rivendell Farm, located off the Takhini Hot Springs Road north of Whitehorse, is one of the longest-running food producers in Yukon and one of the first in the Takhini River valley. They began more than 25 years ago, and now have a wealth of experience in a variety of agri-business ventures ranging from bedding plants to market vegetables to livestock, including elk and wild boar.

"Rivendell Farm has always been a business, it was never a hobby farm," Mary Girouard said.

The Girouards achieved organic certification for their market garden and re-branded their operation with an agri-tourism focus this past year, identifying their business as Yukon's Organic Experience.

"Mary and Rolland have made Rivendell Farm an important part of an expanding industry," MLA for Lake Laberge Brad Cathers said. "Their farm produces food that goes on the tables of many Yukon families. This recognition as Farmer of the Year is well deserved."

Opening their farm to the Yukon Culinary Festival this past summer, the Girouards participated in the successful Feast of Farms event, which drew national acclaim from visiting chefs and a full house for an evening meal of locally-grown foods.

Mary and Rolland also help to educate the next generation of Yukoners by participating in the school program From the Ground Up, which gives kids the opportunity to visit Yukon farms and learn more about where our food comes from.

Tom and Simone Rudge of Aurora Mountain Farm were also nominated for Farmer of the Year by a new entrant into Yukon's agriculture industry. The nomination highlighted the sharing of knowledge, support and incredible generosity they received from Tom and Simone.

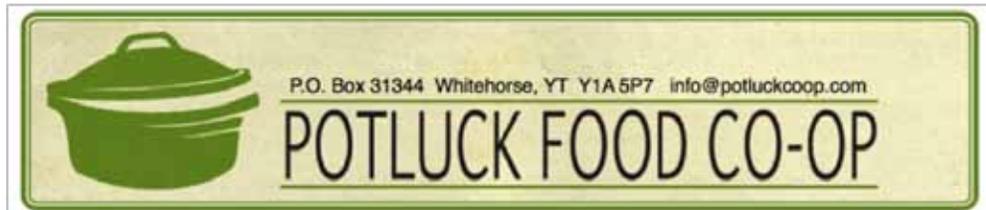
Tom and Simone are past recipients of Farmer of the Year Award. The following is a list of our 15 alumni. This distinguished list of Farmers of the Year is only a small sample of the many producers contributing to Yukon's agriculture landscape.



FARMERS OF THE YEAR:

- 2014 Mary and Rolland Girouard
- 2013 Wayne and Allison Grove and family, Eldorado Game Ranch
- 2012 Steve and Bonnie MacKenzie-Grieve, Yukon Grain Farm
- 2011 Lucy and Jack Vogt, Vogt Enterprises
- 2010 Alice Boland, Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation Community Garden
- 2009 Grant Dowdell and Karen Digby, Dowdell and Digby Market Garden
- 2008 Ralph and Norma Mease
- 2007 Brian Lendrum and Susan Ross, Lendrum Ross Farm
- 2006 Tom and Simone, Rudge and family, Aurora Mountain Farm
- 2005 Mike and Sylvia Blumenschein
- 2004 Steve and Bonnie MacKenzie-Grieve
- 2003 Garrett Gillespie and Heidi Marion
- 2002 Bill and Barb Drury, Circle D Ranch
- 2001 Dave and Tracy Andrew, Rafter A Ranch
- 2000 Rod Tait
- 1999 The Bradleys, Pelly River Ranch, Recognized as Yukon's Farmer of the Century

Please keep our farmers in mind as we roll through the year. If you want to recognize a producer, please forward your thoughts to the Ag Branch. We can start collecting nominees for next year now.



The 200 member owners of Potluck Food Co-op have recently celebrated the anniversary of their first year in business. Over the past twelve months, the co-op has offered local food on each of its bi-weekly online orders, putting local consumer food dollars directly into the pockets of 17 Yukon producers, decreasing the gap between field and fork, while also helping build the local food system.

Potluck Food Co-op's mandate is to source wholesome, sustainable food for Yukon residents from as close to home as possible. This means that the co-op buys local food first before bringing in product from regional partners in B.C. Driving this philosophy is the notion that if local farmers have a guaranteed, year round market for their product, they will be far more likely to grow or raise additional food to meet the demand. In this way, the co-op acts as a catalyst for growing the local agricultural economy and addressing issues pertaining to food security. The co-op is also recording sales statistics for any regional (out of territory) product that they sell, so that they can eventually offer this information to local farmers to show demand for certain products.

The co-op aims to be the Yukon's one-stop-shop for both local and organic food, and they want to work with as many local producers as possible to establish this goal. The co-op is currently selling local produce, dry goods, baking, and preserves through their online store and pop-up shop, but hope to expand to include local dairy, eggs, and meat in the near future.

The North of 60° Agriculture Conference in November was a great opportunity for the co-op to engage with producers in a round-table setting on how the partnership between producer and co-op can be bettered, and how the co-op can expand their product line to suit both producer and consumer, particularly in the capacity of locally inspected meat. The benefit of a producer using the mobile abattoir and retailing inspected meat through the co-op has some real perks, including the reduction of marketing and the alleviation of coordinating with customers for pick-up and payment.

Visit their website at www.potluckcoop.com/producers for more information on how you can retail your product-line through the co-op.

*If you are a producer with available produce, dry goods, or preserves and want to sell product through the co-op, contact us at info@potluckcoop.com or 336-4663.

** If you are a producer with dairy, eggs, or meat for sale via farm-gate and want to advertise product to our members on our website, contact us at info@potluckcoop.com or 336-4663

HELP US GROW A... YUKON LOCAL FOOD STRATEGY

At the North of 60° Agriculture Banquet on November 1st, 2014, EMR Minister Scott Kent restated that increasing the production of local food is a priority of this government, and signaled the beginning of research with industry to develop a Yukon local food strategy. What that policy will look like and how it will impact Yukoners' access to locally grown and raised foods will be determined. The food strategy is the result of the government's platform commitment aimed at "significantly increasing the production and use of local grown vegetables, meats and food products". Motion No. 616 in the Yukon legislature on April 16, 2014 urged YG to "investigate the merits of introducing a local food act, modelled on legislation passed in Ontario in 2013" and the Agriculture Branch has begun work to meet this commitment.

The Ontario Local Food Act approved in 2013 includes a number of policies and programs aimed at increasing support of local food. The purpose of the Ontario act is to foster successful and resilient local food economies and systems in Ontario, to help increase awareness of local food in Ontario and to develop new markets for local food. You can find out more about Ontario's programs at: www.emr.ca/infarm21

The Yukon agriculture and agri-food industry and Yukon's consumers will be the main players in this endeavour. YG has several agencies and programs already supporting agriculture and promoting production and consumption of locally grown food. Initial work will come from the Yukon Agriculture Industry Advisory



Committee (AIAC). Subsequent consultation will occur with other non-government organizations involved in food-related activities will provide the opportunity to develop concepts to meet strategy objectives.

The starting point for developing the strategy will come from conducting baseline research similar to the appendices in the 2008-2012 Multi Year Development Plan (MYDP). The MYDP identified the state of Yukon's agriculture and agri-food industries, goals for those industries for the next five years, and strategies and resources to meet those goals. The MYDP included a complete overview of the state of the agriculture and agri-food sectors in the Yukon, and stakeholder surveys to determine strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and constraints (SWOC).

The development of a Yukon Local Food Strategy can involve a similar process to the MYDP, but we need to identify the gaps that exist between where we are now (i.e. where demand exceeds production) and where we want to be.

Agriculture Branch will work with industry stakeholders to discuss the concepts that would enable industry expansion. This initial research regarding the development of the strategy should include:

1. What research and stakeholder consultations need to take place to inform the strategy?
2. Should the research be contracted to a third party? (As with the MYDP)
3. Are the objectives proposed the right ones to guide the strategy? What are the barriers to meeting the objectives?
4. What initiatives will fulfill the objectives in recognition of those barriers?

Answers to these questions will form the basis of our draft strategy. The Agriculture Branch will continue to consult and then share this draft with other stakeholders and the public. Feedback from this process will inform the final version of a Yukon Local Food Strategy for Yukon producers and consumers.

MOVING YOUR ANIMALS? WANTING TO USE THE MOBILE ABATTOIR?

YOU WILL NEED TO HAVE A TAG.

If you are buying, moving, or processing cattle to slaughter you will need an identification tag. The Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA) is a non-profit, industry-led organization established to promote and protect animal health and food safety concerns in the Canadian cattle herd and administer the identification tag program. You can go to the CCIA website to find out more information about the agency and its programs. But most importantly you can go to the website and order your tags online from the comfort of your home. Find the site at www.canadaid.com. Look for the tag order website in the quick links on the right side of the page.

The national identification program was developed to safeguard our national herd and assure consumer confidence at home and in our export markets. The CCIA was formed at the direction of elected cattle industry representatives and given the mandate to develop an individual animal trace back system for animal health and product safety. The Agency is led by a Board of Directors made up of representatives from all sectors of the industry – cow/calf, feedlot, auction market, packing plant, veterinary and dairy. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada are represented on an ex-officio status.

The identification program is important and provides traceability to address:

- Animal health, public health, food safety, emergency management and value chains;
- Addressing natural disasters;
- Market promotion and access – i.e., competing in a competitive world market and addressing changing consumer demands;
- Zoning capabilities that can allow trade to continue (e.g., Avian influenza, contaminated feed supplement).

A fully-functional traceability system is based on three pillars:

1. Animal identification – Associating a unique animal identification number to an animal
2. Premises identification – The assignment of a unique identification number to a physical land location
3. Movement – Associating the animal identification number with a premises and time

The national identification program for cattle is governed by the Health of Animals Regulations. Traceability implementation is guided by National Performance Targets, National Data Standards and Data Dictionary.

The cattle industry is committed to:

- Protecting the integrity, efficiency and confidentiality of the industry-led, national system for animal health and food safety trace back in Canada;
- Supporting domestic and international animal health emergency response capabilities;
- Supporting the principles of traceability – expanding its infrastructure, enhancing technology and full system compliance.

To contact Canadian Cattle Identification Agency go to Tel: (403) 275-2083 Fax: (403) 275-1668 Toll-free: 1-877-909-2333, or go to www.canadaid.ca



YUKON PRODUCER PROFILE

HIGHLIGHTING PRODUCERS AND THEIR AGRI-BUSINESSES

This column is an opportunity to introduce readers to Yukon farm operations. This segment features Yukon's amazing producers, farm products and strategies Yukon producers use to overcome some of our climate, production and market obstacles.

YUKON VALLEY FARM

On 145 acres in the heart of the Whitehorse agriculture area, Yukon Valley Farm is raising beef and pork for the local market. On their land located at the corner of Burma Road and the North Klondike Hwy, Trevor Amiot and Marie Schneider have been building up their new farm operation. They bought a subdivided agriculture lot four years ago and have been developing a livestock operation with a focus on supplying red meat to the Whitehorse market.

Trevor and Marie are part of a handful of new entrants and the next generation of producers hoping to take advantage of a market eager for local production. They are investing seriously in their land, equipment and infrastructure and are expecting a return that will eventually generate income to support their family.

The property has about 100 cleared acres, and Trevor and Marie viewed this property as a good land option for Yukon Valley Farm because it is close to market, in a warm valley with good frost drainage, and flat, productive soils. This property provided an opportunity to set up a home based business and allowed Trevor to get back to his agriculture roots.



Photo: Trevor Amiot and Marie Schneider, Yukon Valley Farm. Raising cattle and pork for the Whitehorse market.

In the first couple of years, Trevor and Marie have rejuvenated their fields from the weeds, shrubs and trees that were re-populating the land. The reworked fields have been planted with 40 acres of timothy and brome mix and another 60 acres into oats. They have installed irrigation on the hay field and are irrigating from a well and dug out they developed in 2014. They do a run of pigs in the summer and are working on their beef operation. They slaughtered 14 steers this fall and are carrying almost 60 animals through the winter with the plan to slaughter a few more in spring for barbeque season.

The herd is made up mostly of Highlands, with a couple of Angus and a new Shorthorn bull. Trevor is focusing on raising Highlands because the long-haired cattle are known to winter well. The decision to raise Highlands seems to be proving out. Trevor notes the spring slaughter showed an increased fat layer in his Highlands versus the Angus. A Shorthorn bull has been added to the mix to help with size because the Highlands tend to be

slow growers and often Highlands require an extra year to size up. He is hoping that the addition of the genetics from the Shorthorn bull will improve the size and time to maturity of the herd.

In addition to working with herd development and improving the state of the land, Trevor and Marie are also working on their feed options. They are over-wintering 60 animals, which means covering the cost of winter feed. They have been working with neighbors to provide feed, and have established some relationships with other local landowners and farmers to help meet this demand. They feed mostly large round bales, and supplement with a wrapped round silage oat bale that the animals "just love," Trevor says.

Feed options are an important part of the business for Trevor and Marie, and they need more feed that stores well, is economical, and converts to a finished product that meets their customers' high standards.

Currently they have a customer base that is interested in grass-fed product that is sustainably produced, with minimal inputs. But, they understand there is also an art in finishing beef to improve flavour and texture, along with improving finishing weights. They have been successful with finishing their animals on grass, but are investigating grain finishing as a means of broadening market opportunities. They are not changing their process at this time because they have a strong customer base for their current product. As they look at new markets, and start slaughtering at other times in the year, grain finishing may become a valuable option.

Every producer profile asks what your biggest challenge is: for Trevor and Marie it is the agriculture landscape. Trevor and Marie want to farm, they want to make a living from the farm, they want to feed people, and they want this to be their family business, but they need

to grow to make their operation sustainable. In Trevor's words, "a lot needs to change". When asked "what needs to change?" they had a list of a few major things that Yukon Valley Farm needs to develop their farm business.

- Access to land (they are limited on feed to grow the size of their herd and require affordable graze and land for crops.)
- Abattoir use (their long term plan is to be providing beef year round, to a retail market. The mobile abattoir does not work in winter months and slaughtering in the fall results in a glut of animals to the market in this narrow window.)
- Butchers and markets that can move their product. (They are finding it difficult to schedule slaughter that will support the butchers in retailing their product and develop demand for a local red meat.)

"We have a lot of ideas about farming and ranching in the Yukon, but we feel Yukon Valley Farms is at a crossroads and we are not sure if the money we have invested into the farm will result in a financial return." Trevor and Marie have brought a Whitehorse agriculture property back into production, figured out how to produce, and have developed a good product. This young farm family is the next generation of Yukon producers that will help provide a convenient and accessible red meat product for our local consumers. For more information about Yukon Valley Farm or to source some quality pork or Highland beef, contact Marie or Trevor at yukonvalleyfarm@gmail.com or 334-5384.

Thank you Trevor and Marie for participating in this edition of the Producer Profile. You have a beautiful property and animals, and we look forward to you finding your place in Yukon's agriculture landscape.

Photo: Trevor describes using his well to fill a new dug-out he uses to irrigate 40 acres employing a wheel line.



ARE ELK “YARDING” ON YOUR AGRICULTURAL PROPERTY?

“Yarding”, of deer, moose or elk often occurs as the animals herd up for winter.

In Yukon, elk are gathering on agriculture properties in the Takhini River valley this winter. Although this may be part of the natural movement of the animals, the level of occurrence and the yearly visitation of elk onto agriculture properties is impacting some land owners.

Elk tend to cause fence damage in the form of walking through or not clearing fence lines as they move from one area to another. The bedding practice of pawing through snow to the ground and lying down for long periods of time disturbs the protective snow layer and the further melting of the snow and ground cover underneath the animal may cause winter survival issues for crops. The animals are also grazing on valuable forage crops that are there for boarding horses (a winter income source) or are part of the land’s organic material and protective layer to the field. This may not be an issue if it occurs infrequently and the number of animals on the field is low, but the increasing activity is impacting the bottom line for some land owners.

It is difficult to assess the damage and cost elk are having on agriculture properties, but Yukon Agriculture Branch and Department of Environment are working to better understand the movement of these animals out of their core range and the impact on agriculture properties.



Agriculture Branch is working with a Yukon hay producer located in the Takhini valley who is being impacted by elk grazing and bedding on this property. Exclusion fences have been set up randomly on the producer’s field to protect small areas of the hay stand from elk disturbance. In the spring, these exclusion areas will be compared to known areas where the elk were bedding and grazing to help verify and quantify the damage.

Why is elk grazing a problem when the practice of grazing cattle and horses is a common agriculture practice with little impact on winter survival? Observations during inspections suggest that the elk seem to be grazing more intensively as a result of sheer numbers, and/or they are more aggressive in their pawing and grazing habits. The bedding practices of elk are also creating a freeze/thaw event that may impact next season’s production in a way that does not occur with livestock. The exclusion fences research may provide data to support this.

We need your help:

- If you have issues with elk or other ungulates on your field, please call Conservation Officer Services Branch (In Whitehorse Mon-Fri 8:30AM-4:45PM call 667-5652) or call the TIPP line at 1 (800) 661-0525. A Conservation Officer will contact you to assess the issue and assist with mitigation. It is important that these matters are reported so producers can get some assistance protecting their livelihood, and to ensure these events are documented so trends can be considered when making human/wildlife management recommendations.
- You can also contact the Agriculture branch if there is damage to your fields to allow the branch to document the damage and keep record of the impacts. Depending on damage there is compensation available through the Growing Forward 2 federal-provincial-territorial agriculture funding initiative.

EMR LIBRARY GERMINATES A NEW IDEA

The following are recommendations developed by Environment and Agriculture that can be deployed to keep wildlife from accessing your crops:

- Hunting by licenced hunters/First Nations
- Specialized dog breeds
- Harassment using vehicles
- Deterrents such as noise makers (scare cannons/cracker shells/"critter getters"), rubber batons, flagging, scents, and "surrogate wolves"
- Remove crops from fields. Do not leave a standing crop or feed source in your field.
- Graze hay field regrowth after freeze up. This will reduce the amount of feed that may attract animals to your field.
- If you are feeding livestock, keep livestock feed areas closer to residences and deter any grazing by elk on these feed sources.
- Fencing hay storage areas with game fencing. Do not provide an attractant to the animals

Game fencing of high-value fields is an effective option to keep wildlife off your crops. This is a high cost option compared to standard four wire fences. Growing Forward2 Wildlife Damage Prevention Program provides funding to help with game fencing your field, and may fund producers with 50% to 60% of costs to a maximum of \$15,000 for a minimum 7-foot tall game fence to protect titled crop lands from wildlife damage. This program also provides funding for wildlife proofing of crop storage facilities, purchasing crop protection measures and purchasing a guardian dog.

To find out more about the programs go to agriculture.gov.yk.ca and click on the Growing Forward 2 image on the right side of the page. You can also contact the agriculture branch at agriculture@gov.yk.ca or 867-667-5838.

The folks at the EMR Library are starting a new initiative that will be of interest to gardeners and farmers. They are introducing a seed sharing library right in the existing library on the third floor of the Elijah Smith Building on Main Street in Whitehorse. The idea is that people can bring seeds from their vegetables and flowers grown in the Yukon to share with other patrons of the EMR Library.

"We have a cabinet we are hoping to fill with a variety of wonderful seeds that have developed northern hardiness" says Library Manager Anna Pearson. "Seed libraries are popping up all over the country and it seemed like a natural next step for us, since we already have an extensive and growing collection of gardening and agriculture resources."

"The primary goal of the Seed Library is to help nurture a thriving community of local gardeners, growers, and seed savers," Pearson says. In addition to providing access to free seeds, the EMR Library, which is the largest natural resources library in the Yukon, is hoping to support gardeners, from beginner to expert, through the process of educating, growing, harvesting, and saving seeds.

The Agriculture Branch has been involved in the planning for the seed library, and is looking forward to the development of this resource. "The Seed Library will provide new options for growers on seed stock. Locally-raised seeds develop traits based on their environment, which adds to northern hardiness, so the library's idea for the seed exchange is one that will add to Yukoners' agriculture tool box," says Bradley Barton, Agriculture Branch's research technician.

The idea behind how the seed library will operate goes something like this:

- You bring your donated seeds to EMR Library over the winter so they can augment the collection of available plants.
- Starting this spring, visit EMR Library and choose from many vegetable and flower seeds that have been added to the seed library.
- "Borrow" seeds with your EMR Library account and get planting!
- Return seeds harvested from plants grown in your garden. (Not to worry, there are no overdue fines or penalties for seeds not returned.)

"We'll be hosting a fun event to officially launch the seed library on Wednesday, March 11, 2015 so keep an eye on our website at www.emr.gov.yk.ca/library for more details," says Anna Pearson.

"We'd like to spread the word that our library has great books on gardening and agriculture and that we're open to the public and to people in all sorts of industries, including agriculture," she added.

The EMR Library is located on the third floor of the Elijah Smith Building, 300 Main Street, Suite 335, Whitehorse, Yukon. You can contact them by phone at 867-667-3111 or email: emrlibrary@gov.yk.ca.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SWINE HEALTH WORKSHOPS COMING IN MARCH

If you raise – or plan to raise – pigs in Yukon, consider attending a free workshop on pig health in March. One workshop will be offered in Whitehorse and one in Dawson City.

Led by a swine veterinarian, the workshops will address health topics for grow/finisher pigs as well as breeding animals and piglets, including:

- Common diseases and health conditions of swine
- How to recognize signs of disease and keep your pigs healthy
- Nutrition and husbandry
- What to consider before purchasing piglets
- Tips for breeding and raising pigs

Staff from the Animal Health Unit and Agriculture Branch are organizing the workshop. More information on registration, dates, and other details will be available soon on the Agriculture Branch website, www.agriculture.gov.yk.ca

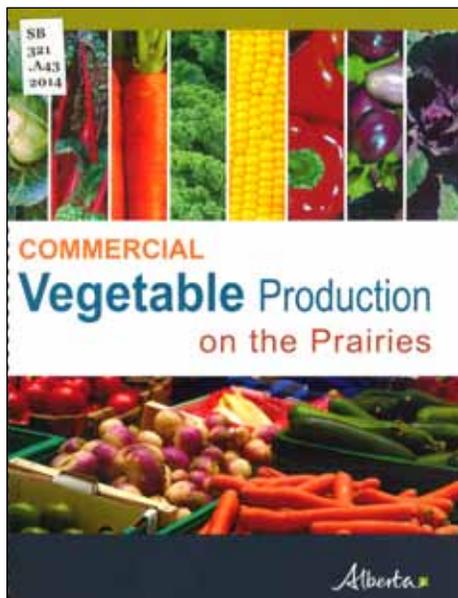
EMR LIBRARY

YOUR ONE STOP SHOP FOR AGRICULTURE INFORMATION

Yukon Energy, Mines and Resources (EMR) Library has agriculture specific newspapers, magazines, books, DVDs and other helpful resources such as reports, air photos and maps.

New to the the library is an updated Commercial Vegetable Production resource from Alberta Agriculture.

The EMR Library is located on the third floor of the Elijah Smith Building, 300 Main Street, Suite 335, Whitehorse, Yukon. You can contact them by phone at 867-667-3111 or email: emrlibrary@gov.yk.ca. Hours of operation are Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Check them out!



YUKON COLLEGE NORTHERN GARDENING COURSES

Yukon College in partnership with the Yukon Agriculture Branch is again offering a suite of gardening courses this winter. The northern gardening courses offered through the College's continuing education include:

- Yukon Master Gardener
- Companion Planting
- Composting
- Container Gardening
- Greenhouse Design
- Landscape Planning and your Landscape Design
- Soil Analysis
- Summer Gardening Mentoring (this is a summertime course)

For the schedule of courses or for more information, go to www.yukoncollege.yk.ca and search "Northern Gardening". Or contact the college at 867-668-5200 or email: ce@yukoncollege.yk.ca

InFARMation is:

A Yukon government newsletter published by the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, Agriculture Branch. If you would like to add or remove your name from the newsletter mailing list, comment on an article or contribute a story, please feel free to contact us.

Agriculture Branch Contact Information:

Energy, Mines and Resources, Agriculture Branch
Box 2703, Whitehorse, YT, Y1A 2C6

(867) 667-5838 | Fax: (867) 393-6222
toll-free outside of Whitehorse
1-800-661-0408 ext. 5838

Email: agriculture@gov.yk.ca

Online: www.agriculture.gov.yk.ca

Visit: Agriculture Branch on the third floor, room 320 of the Elijah Smith Building, 300 Main Street in Whitehorse.