

INFORMATION

Yukon Agriculture Branch Quarterly Bulletin

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LOCAL FOOD STRATEGY FOR YUKON

In early May, Energy, Mines and Resources Minister Scott Kent announced the release of the final version of the *Local Food Strategy for Yukon: Encouraging the Production and Consumption of Yukon-Grown Food 2016–2021*. “We have followed through on our commitment to develop a local food strategy to encourage the production and consumption of fresh, healthy local food,” Kent said. “The real work will be done in seasons to come, by Yukon’s farmers, ranchers, gardeners and community groups to enhance Yukon’s agricultural economy and food security.”

Work on the strategy started in 2014 with a meeting between the EMR Agriculture branch, Yukon’s Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee (AIAC) (comprised of representatives from Yukon Young Farmers, Yukon Agriculture Association, Growers of Organic Food Yukon, Fireweed Community Market Society, and Yukon Game Growers) and the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition.

Draft goals were developed over the course of several meetings, and follow-up research with First Nation governments and within Yukon government (including departments of Health & Social Services, Education, Environment, Highways and Public Works, Economic Development, and EMR). Food community and industry participants, including growers, processors and retailers as well as the general public were consulted along the way.

The goal of the final version is to increase the production and use of local foods, in order to support the development of a sustainable localized food system. The strategy addresses production, processing, distribution, access and availability, consumption, and resource and waste recovery. Some of the initiatives outlined in the strategy include:

- providing low-cost leasing options for agriculture land;
- enhancing food safety systems;
- improving food access;
- building infrastructure to support community and backyard food production;
- supporting community food processing;
- researching cold climate food production;
- implementing food waste reduction programs;
- increasing government’s purchase and use of local food; and
- supporting the development of certified organic compost.



Minister responsible for agriculture Scott Kent and YAA’s outgoing president Alan Stannard, show off the new local food strategy document.

The Local Food Strategy for Yukon is sowing the seeds for long-term development of the agriculture sector, enhanced food security and increased access to local food for Yukoners.

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MESSAGE FROM THE AGRICULTURE BRANCH

HOW DO YOU GROW AN AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY?

The fact is that an agriculture industry is a by-product of farming. An agriculture industry is only possible with lots of committed people called farmers, but the “industry” part is the complex network of relationships between farmers, customers, agriculture service providers, industry associations and governments and government programs at all levels.

When that ‘web’ of connections is dense and strong you have an industry.

Yukon can point to critical connections made and thresholds crossed in the past few years. I would like to take this opportunity to list some that are important in building Yukon’s agriculture industry. Although not comprehensive, listed here are bright spots in growth from the Ag branch’s perspective.

The pursuit of abundant good tasting food has many milestones. This edition of InFarmation Producer Profile salutes Yukon Garden Tomatoes. From here the producer list, once started, grows lengthy quickly.

Tasty Yukon-developed products such as Klondike Kettle Corn, Home Sweet Home Pies, and Midnight Sun Coffee are finding unprecedented retail space. Penetration into retail space is key to growing an industry and the Fruit Stand, Riverside Market, Independent Grocers are notables for supporting local products. Farmer Roberts provides an outstanding example of Yukon industry sensitive expansion into retail.

Yukon Pigs and Rigs are providing catering with a strong Yukon agriculture dimension. Fireweed Market provides a venue for farm gate sales and a plethora of small producers contribute at the farm gate level. A strong community garden program that is supported in part by Yukon First Nations is another link in industry growth.

Agriculture infrastructure begins at the individual farm level. Growing this infrastructure is facilitated by the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Growing Forward 2 funding agreement. GF2’s project-oriented funding helps to fill gaps in higher level infrastructure. A new inspected meat facility, Naturally Northern Meats, is now available to provide a stationary abattoir in the Whitehorse area. Other important projects are currently under development.

Finally the *Local Food Strategy for Yukon: Encouraging the Production and Consumption of Yukon-Grown Food 2016–2021* that resulted from consultation and research over the past two years, provides a map for linking and augmenting existing initiatives in the near term. Growing an agriculture industry takes time and the development is gradual. It is sometimes helpful to think about (and feel pride in) what has been achieved while looking at the fields yet to be sown.

Acting Director
David Murray

LOCAL FOOD STRATEGY CONTINUED...

This home-grown document supports the commercial agriculture sector and also encourages community and backyard food production in our territory. An implementation plan will be used to track progress on the strategy between now and 2021.

Hard copies of the document are available at the Agriculture branch in Room 320, Elijah Smith Building, 300 Main St., Whitehorse.

Both French and English versions are available online at www.emr.ca/yukonfood

YUKON FARM PRODUCTS AND SERVICES GUIDE – ONLINE!

Thanks to funding from Growing Forward 2, the online version of the farm guide is new and improved! To see how it has changed, go to www.yukonag.ca/guide. The changes to the website make it easier to search: just visit the site and click on the name of the farm, business or organization for contact info and to find out what agricultural products or services are available this year.

Here are some highlights:

- Searchable: You can create your own search, either enter a search term in the search box or select a search term(s) from the list of farm products/services. The search will filter the full list and then will produce a list of relevant results.
- Easy to add farms, business or organization: we can easily edit and update – new information and listings can easily be added or edited, so if you are a new

AGRICULTURE DEMONSTRATION DAY

DATE: WEDNESDAY AUG. 3, 2016.

TIME: 11 A.M. TO 3 P.M.

LOCATION: RESEARCH FARM

The Agriculture branch is hosting its annual demonstration day Wednesday, August 3, 2016. The event is our opportunity to bring Yukon's producers, agriculture advocates and supporters together during the growing season to highlight the projects being conducted at the Research Farm and to share the season's challenges and wins.

The gates open at 11:00 a.m., with a barbeque over the lunch hour featuring Yukon-grown food, thanks to the hard work of our territory's agriculture producers. After lunch Ag branch staff will be giving a farm tour talking about the work going on this year. The tour will go through the different trials from grains and pulses, forages, fruits and market garden. The focus of this year's farm tour will be on soil development, and some of the learnings gained from using city compost in our market garden amendment trial.

The research farm is located in the Gunnar Nilsson and Mickey Lammers Research Forest just north of Whitehorse near the corner of the North Klondike Highway and the Hot Springs Road. We will have a sign out on the North Klondike Highway to point you in the right direction. If you are driving from Whitehorse and find yourself at Takhini Gas, you have gone about 200 metres too far.

Please join us and take a tour of the research farm. Bring your lawn chairs and stay awhile, or bring your hiking boots and take a stroll on some of the research forest interpretive trails.

Hope to see you there,
The Agriculture branch



farm operation or want to add to your listing this summer, please email office@yukonag.ca and we will upload your contact and production information or make the necessary changes and updates.

- Maps: The mapping feature has also been upgraded. Instead of using rural addresses, we now have the option to use latitude and longitude coordinates to identify locations and landmarks more accurately.
- Press PRINT!: This is a new feature of the online searchable farm guide. Once you have finished your search, press print and your search results will appear in a ready-to-print format.

Printed brochures are being circulated so that we can spread the word about this online search option.

Try it! Find out which Yukon farms keep alpacas or raise turkeys. Have fun finding out more about Yukon agriculture products and services!



Agriculture Research Technician Bradley Barton, threshes grains from the Agriculture branch research and demonstration trials.

YUKON PRODUCER PROFILE

HIGHLIGHTING PRODUCERS AND THEIR AGRI-BUSINESSES

This column is an opportunity to introduce you to Yukon farm operations. This segment features Yukon's producers and farm products, and the strategies Yukon producers use to overcome climate, production and market obstacles.

YUKON GARDENS

LORNE METROPOLIT AND KELSEY

Some may remember the days when Yukon Gardens was 20 acres of show gardens demonstrating what can be grown in the North. When it opened back in 1985, Yukon Gardens also known as Yukon Botanical gardens was a tourist destination for travelers passing through the north and wondering what grows in the Land of the Midnight Sun. There has been changes for Yukon Gardens in the 30 plus years of operation, but what has not changed is the energy they have for growing.

Lorne Metropolit started this business back in 1985 and has grown it to what it is today. He has



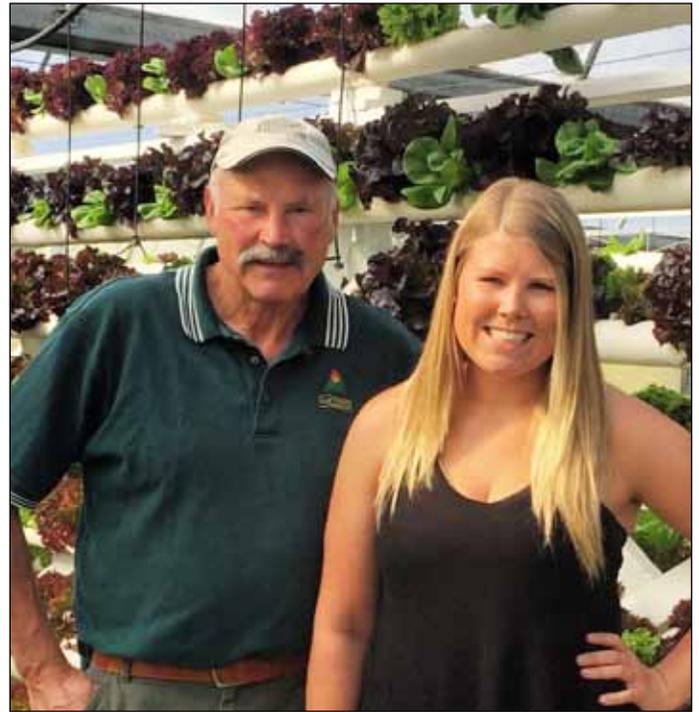
always included his family and today it is a father, daughter operation with Kelsey coming into the fold after a few years away for schooling.

Lorne and Kelsey are running this diversified operation that supplies a wide range of garden and yard products and services. They still have a small show garden, but gone are the days of the botanical garden with flowers, rock gardens, beautiful living pond and medicinal plants. If you were around a few years back you may even remember the Old MacDonald Farm with some unusual heritage farm stock and a Gold Rush-themed mini putt.

Today Yukon Gardens is known as the stop for all your gardening and landscaping needs. The operation has much to offer from soil to just about anything you would like to grow and the supplies you need to grow successfully. They carry a broad range of flowers, perennials and an assortment of trees, to go with their fertilizer, soil potting supplies and garden consulting.

The focus of Yukon Gardens continues to grow. Lorne says they have always grown tomatoes and cucumbers, and have supplied restaurants, grocery stores and direct customers over the years, and now they are renewing their energy in growing greenhouse veggies.

Yukoners saw the start of this renewed energy last summer when Yukon Gardens had their



Lorne Metropolit with daughter Kelsey of Yukon Gardens

fresh tomatoes and cucumbers at a few different retail outlets here in Whitehorse. The fresh, vine-ripened, picked-at-the-height of sweetness is a treat compared to some of the products trucked up the highway from growers many miles away. As Lorne and Kelsey gloat, you can just taste the difference growing local and picking fresh has.

Yukon Gardens is focusing on the greenhouse veggie market because they constantly evaluate their business and adapt to the changing market in Whitehorse. They can see the demand for local, fresh, good tasting veggies. They have the infrastructure and now that Kelsey is back they have additional expertise.

Kelsey is a recent graduate of Olds College Horticulture program. She originally went away to school exploring other avenues, but never lost interest in the growing business her dad developed. She realized Yukon Gardens is home and wanted to be part of its continuing success. Lorne and Kelsey may not have a formal succession plan, but working

together, eating together and always discussing the business and how to continue improving it sounds like there is an informal plan. They don't just do this analyzing over the table, as Lorne explains they take time in the down season to go over the past season and determine what has worked, what hasn't and what they need to do next year. It must be something in the water at Yukon Gardens; they keep growing and are always looking for ways to foster the health of their business.

Of course, growing and growing their business is what Lorne and Kelsey do best, with the greenhouse veggies they have started experimenting with leafy greens and have built a multi-tiered stand to grow a new product. They are in their experimental stage trying to figure out what grows best, how long it takes to grow, and what are the management requirements. In the short time they have been working with their new leafy green unit they have already started making changes, and figuring out what grows well, how it tastes, when you can pick it, what seeds work best and the things that can go wrong. Most importantly they are bringing their new product to market supplying a couple of grocery stores in Whitehorse, including the Fruit Stand with lettuces, kale and swiss chard.

They are adopting sustainable greenhouse best management practices and are using integrated pest management to go along with their conventional hydroponic system. Their greenhouse practices come from years of experience, some of the learning Kelsey gained at Olds College and from attending greenhouse industry courses in the off season. Last winter they attended a talk from the bug lady, as she is known, who taught them how to

use beneficial insects to manage the aphids, mites and thrips, which are pests commonly seen in greenhouse vegetable production. To stay abreast of all the goings-on and best management practices in the greenhouse world they are members of the Alberta Greenhouse Growers' Association. Lorne has been involved for years, and he is a director on the association board.

Yukon Gardens does have its challenges, when asked what is the biggest challenge Lorne does not hesitate to say it is growing too much of the wrong thing. For Yukon Gardens, it is easy to grow, but the trick is to not get too heavy into one type of flower, especially with some of the big box stores bringing in large amounts of the same product, the same year which floods the market.

He says you can also get too heavy into one type of tomato. "But you learn, adjust, diversify and make sure you get into the market when the crop is at its prime and if possible before everyone else", are his words of advice. We interviewed Kelsey at a different

time than her father, but you can tell the apple is not falling far from the tree. She has a similar strong understanding of the business, part from her diploma at Olds College but also from having a good mentor in her dad. Kelsey shared the same business concepts and management practices that will keep Yukon Gardens supplying Yukoners with garden products and services, and now fresh grown local veggies. Kelsey did admit she has a hard time keeping up with old dad's crazy work hours, and three a.m. wake-ups to turn on the boiler in the greenhouse when the temperature drops.

Thank you Lorne and Kelsey, for sharing your history, learnings and the cucumbers. We do agree that cucumbers are so much sweeter picked at the height of freshness, and we look forward to trying the tomatoes and greens.

Keep an eye out for Yukon Gardens greenhouse veggies at your next grocery shop, if you want to learn more, Facebook them at @yukongardens or contact them at 867-668-7972 or email ytgardens@klondiker.com .



Hydroponic lettuce and kale at Yukon Gardens.

INCREASING THE AWARENESS OF AGRICULTURE RISKS TO YUKON'S DALL SHEEP

For the past six years or so the Dawson District Renewable Resource Council has been trying to raise awareness about the potential threat that domestic sheep and goats pose to wild Dall sheep here in the Yukon. Dall sheep are abundant in the Yukon and are an integral part of the ecosystem, putting a dollar value on this would be almost impossible. They are also a food source for many Yukoners, and the hunting opportunities generate millions of dollars of revenue each year. Supporting healthy wildlife populations is one of the major roles of the Renewable Resources Councils. The Dawson resource council's concerns came about when a wild Dall ram came into contact with domestic sheep that are located a few miles from the town of Dawson. The young ram actually jumped the fence and was in direct contact with the domestic animals, as shown by the picture in this article. Healthy domestic sheep and goats can be carriers of several different pathogens (bacteria and viruses) that can cause pneumonia in wild and domestic sheep. These pathogens can result in illness and die-offs if spread to susceptible wild sheep populations, as has been seen with some bighorn sheep herds in the U.S. and Canada. In some cases, where bighorn sheep have come into contact with domestic small ruminants and were infected with pneumonia-causing pathogens, mortality of up to 80% occurred. The remainder of the infected herd is sometimes destroyed because they may become carriers of the pathogens themselves. In the case of the ram in Dawson City, the direct contact with domestic sheep

presented a significant risk since the ram may have become infected with pneumonia-causing pathogens and potentially carried the infection back to his herd. As a result, the ram was hunted and shot by local conservation officers.

So far there have been no documented disease outbreaks in wild thimhorn sheep in the Yukon associated with domestic sheep or goats. However, if a pneumonia outbreak occurred in any wild sheep herd in the Yukon, the results could be devastating. Wild sheep populations are quite large in the Dawson area and are connected by travel corridors, which would make it very difficult, if not impossible, to control the disease.

In 1986, several Dall sheep in a zoo were moved to an enclosure that was next to domestic sheep. There was a fence that was sheeted with plywood separating the two species but almost all the Dall sheep got sick with pneumonia and at least three died shortly after becoming infected. Although there are no reported cases of free-ranging Dall sheep becoming infected with

pneumonia-causing pathogens carried by domestic sheep or goats, the incident in the zoo would indicate that they are susceptible to infection with these pathogens and may succumb to disease.

With the growing agricultural industry in the Yukon, the number of domestic sheep and goats is likely to increase. This may result in the risk of pathogen transmission and disease in wild sheep also increasing. Steps should be put into place to deal with these risks. So far there are no regulations dealing with this issue but there are some awareness documents published by the Department of Environment and can be viewed online. Recommendations to reduce or prevent contact between domestic small ruminants and wild sheep include using electric outrigger fencing or double fencing around areas where domestic animals are kept, using guardian dogs with your herds, and reporting sightings of wild sheep or escape of domestic livestock.



Wild sheep in pen with domestic animals in Dawson area. Photo courtesy of Peter Dunbar.

The Dawson District Renewable Resource Council recently held a public workshop in Dawson City on the risk that domestic sheep and goats may pose to wild Dall sheep. A spokesperson from B.C., Jeremy Ayotte, was brought up to give a presentation and the turnout was good. We had approximately 40 people attend this workshop and our goal was to raise awareness and talk about workable solutions. One of the things that caught everyone's attention was the potential to test domestic sheep and goats for some of the pneumonia-causing pathogens. Not all domestic sheep and goats are carriers of pneumonia-causing pathogens, and if testing was accurate and readily available, livestock owners may be able to test their flocks to determine if their animals were shedding or carrying some of these pathogens at the time of testing.

The Yukon government has recently completed a risk assessment on pathogen transmission from domestic small ruminants to wild sheep and the potential for pneumonia outbreaks in wild sheep. This report is publically available online on the Department of Environment's website. We encourage everyone to report all sightings of Dall sheep that have come close to or have had contact with domestic sheep or goats as soon as possible to a conservation officer or the nearest Department of Environment office.

Yukon Agriculture branch also has Growing Forward 2 programming to help farms mitigate these risks. The GF2 Agriculture funding program can share in the cost to install fences that reduce contact between domestic and wild animals. For more information contact the agriculture branch or visit www.emr.ca/GF2Yukon



VETERINARY SERVICES PROGRAM EXTENDED

A pilot program to improve access to veterinary care for animals raised for food has been extended until March 2017.

The Veterinary Services Program can help farmers take steps to improve the health of Yukon livestock. The program also helps Yukon veterinarians build their capacity for treating livestock by helping cover the cost of consulting with other experts.

HOW DOES THE PROGRAM WORK?

The program reimburses enrolled farmers up to \$1,000 per year to help cover:

- Veterinarian travel costs;
- Professional service and farm call fees; and/or
- Fees for phone consultations with the veterinarian, or for veterinarians to consult with other livestock health experts.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Qualifying livestock species are: beef and dairy cattle, goats, sheep, poultry, swine, alpacas, llamas, yaks, elk, bison, rabbits, and fish. Horses are not covered as they are not raised for food in Yukon.

Farmers with six or fewer poultry are eligible for up to \$250 of coverage.

Farmers are still responsible for paying fees for testing samples and drugs, vaccines or treatment required for animals.

A maximum of 30 Yukon farmers can enroll.

HOW DO FARMERS ENROLL?

Livestock owners already enrolled in the program are automatically re-enrolled until March 31, 2017. A short survey will be issued to enrolled farmers to help assess whether the program is effective.

Livestock owners who were not previously enrolled are welcome.

Fill out and submit an enrollment form to the Animal Health Unit at the address below. You must also have or apply for a Premises Identification Number.

If you haven't signed up but need a veterinarian because of a livestock health emergency, ask your vet for an enrollment package at the time of their visit to your farm. Some of your costs might be covered if you apply within seven days of the visit.

For more information:

www.emr.ca/infarm23

Contact Animal Health Unit

Phone: 867-667-5600

Toll-free: 1-800-661-0408

ext. 5600

Fax: 867-393-6263

Email: animalhealth@gov.yk.ca

YUKON AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION

Yukon Agricultural Association's Annual General Meeting took place on May 11th at the Yukon Transportation Museum. Catered by Farmer Robert's, the evening saw thirty people in attendance. Minister Scott Kent announced the publication and launch of the newly available *Local Food Strategy for Yukon*. Members heard reports from YAA's outreach, equipment, storage bin, and Mayo Road land committees. Alan Stannard stepped down as YAA President but remains on the Mayo Road Land Committee and will manage the conclusion of the business planning process. The evening concluded with a slide show by historian Sally Robinson who told some lively stories about Yukon farming at the turn of the 20th century.

Eloise (Lou) Clark is YAA's new president. Lou has lived in the Yukon for over 20 years. She grew up on a dairy farm in Saskatchewan. Lou and her family operate Prairie Acres Farm near Braeburn. Cain Vangel is back on the YAA board as vice president. YAA will benefit from his previous board experience and work with policy development. Teddy Fagbamil, a practicing accountant, is the association's new treasurer. Teddy grew up on a farm in Nigeria. He and his family have just purchased a farm on the Mayo Road.

New YAA directors include: Leona Dargis from a large cattle ranch in northern Alberta; Sonny Gray of Flat Creek Farm; and Krista Roske of Sunnyside Farm. Andre Fortin, Steve Mackenzie-Grieve, and Gail Reiderer will continue serving on the YAA board, providing continuity and support. Thank you to Duncan Smith for serving on the YAA board last year. And much gratitude goes to Ralph Mease for his many years of service on the YAA board.

NORTH OF 60 AGRICULTURE CONFERENCE

Every year the Agriculture branch hosts a North of 60 Agriculture Conference. This year's conference is scheduled for the weekend of November 5th and 6th at Yukon College. We are in the midst of developing the agenda for this year's conference and would like to hear from you on who or what you would like to see or learn more about. If you have some suggestions you would like to share, please email them to agriculture@gov.yk.ca or call the branch at 867-667-5838. Reference that you want to share your idea for the North of 60 Agriculture Conference. Thank you for your input, and the Agriculture branch will do our best to develop a conference that meets the needs and wants of Yukon's agriculture community.

YUKON PIGS AND RIGS BARBECUES

Yukon has a new business that will make having a pig roast a lot easier. Yukon Pigs and Rigs Barbecues (YP&R) offers the following:

- Rental of propane and charcoal rotisserie and barbecue units.
- Help with sourcing pigs, chickens, lamb or goat if required.
- They support both locally raised and "down south" animals depending on size, preference and advanced notice.
- For folks who don't want to lift a finger, they offer full service catering for the main course.

YP&R propane units are certified to cook indoors and out. The units are 6ft by 3ft wide and can be wheeled to almost any location. They can roast up to a 150lb pig or 36 chickens and offer year round service, 7 days a week. Want to find out more about Yukon Pigs and Rigs, visit their face book page Yukon Pigs and Rigs, or contact Kim or Jesse at 867-335-6598 or yukonpiggrigs@gmail.com.

AGRICULTURE ACREAGE

Private 28 acre waterfront parcel, presently run as a small market garden, fields, setup for beekeeping and great horse property with barn, riding area and trails. Includes tractor and implements and all garden and irrigation equipment. 55 minutes south of Whitehorse on Little Atlin Lake. \$899,000. Contact Dirk & Carol-Anne at 867-399-7099 for more information, or visit www.realtor.ca referencing mls 10404.

I N F A R M A T I O N 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.

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