

InFARMation

Yukon Agriculture Branch Quarterly Bulletin

Fall 2018

Volume 31 Issue 2



What We Heard

Ploughing Towards an Updated Yukon Agriculture Policy

The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, Agriculture Branch launched a public engagement to collect public input on Yukon's agriculture policy during the summer of 2018. The engagement covered a variety of topics from the commercial availability of locally grown farm products to issues such as the availability and use of agricultural land, food safety, and environmental concerns.

Two surveys were created for this engagement, an online survey questionnaire hosted on the Yukon government engageyukon.ca website, and a stakeholder survey released through email and also available through the Yukon Agricultural Association website.

The department advertised each of the surveys through various channels. The stakeholder survey was available from April 30 to August 1, 2018. The online survey was online from May 24 to July 6, 2018.

We received 206 valid responses to the online survey. All but one respondent said they were Yukon residents, with 76% of respondents living in the Whitehorse area. Most respondents completed the survey as private citizens or businesses (97%), while three respondents completed the survey on behalf of a Yukon government department, and four respondents completed the survey on behalf of some other non-governmental organization.

Those who completed the survey as private citizens or businesses identified as: an interested member of the public (44%), a gardener (31%), a hobby or commercial farmer (22%), or a business owner involved in agriculture (4%). Through the stakeholder document we received input from 18 individuals. As well as face to face conversations and email submissions from another 30 individuals, and group meetings with farmers in Dawson and Whitehorse. Submissions included first nations, farmers, ag business owners, municipalities.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to comment. The full report will be available at engageyukon.ca



2018 MLA Farm Tour - Yukon Grain Farm. This September, Yukon MLAs went on a farm tour to develop a better understanding of what is happening on Yukon farms.

Director's Message

Hi folks, well another growing season has come and gone, it was a cool start to the year, but thankfully we got some good warm weather to get plant growth back in line. It was a difficult year for perennials, due to the challenging winter conditions and cool spring, many hay stands and berry crops were slow to get going.

We wrapped up consultation on the Agriculture Policy. Please feel free to send me an email or call if you have anything you want to discuss around the policy. We'll be releasing a *What We Heard* document, and then roll up our sleeves with the Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee through the winter to look at a new policy document.

Please mark your calendars for the North of 60 Agriculture Conference starting Friday November 2 and running all weekend.

Please make sure to seek out and buy local foods whenever you can. Although the Fireweed Community Market is done for the year, there are still a number of local products at the local grocers, and online the Potluck Food Co-op is providing opportunity to support local as well.

Our Agriculture Branch staff were out and about throughout Yukon this summer, we had folks up in Dawson and over to Ross River and Watson Lake, and west to Destruction Bay and Beaver Creek. If there is anything we can support you on whether you are in Whitehorse or elsewhere, please give us a call.

Matthew Ball

Director, Agriculture Branch

Trends from Policy Consultation

The following themes and areas of comment were recorded during our 2018 consultation:

1. Vision
2. Industry growth, government work, industry work
3. Concerns and Improvements
4. Strengths, Opportunities, Issues and Challenges
5. Support for Yukon Agricultural products
6. Agriculture in the Environment
7. Access to Agricultural Land
8. Utilization of Agricultural Land
9. Expanding Agricultural Uses
10. Support Services
11. Organic Farming
12. Challenges for new entrants

Was this little piggy allowed at Market?

Yukon agriculture has experienced growth in produce, livestock, eggs and feed, with more farmers growing and raising products for a local market. As a result, products are entering the sales stream by means of farm gate sales, farmers markets, grocery stores and online sales. It is important however, for producers and farmers to understand how to market their products correctly under the appropriate legislative authority.

Eggs

When discussing the sale of eggs in Yukon, the familiar terms ungraded and graded are used to differentiate a sales process. Graded refers to eggs which have been inspected in a licensed egg grading station and are deemed fit for retail sale by CFIA and Environmental Health. Graded eggs can be sold in grocery stores, commercial kitchens, restaurants and via online sales.

Ungraded refers to all other eggs. These eggs can only be sold directly between the producer and the consumer and may not be used in any commercial kitchen or retail outlet. Ungraded may be advertised and sold at farmers markets, but must be clearly labelled ungraded. An information pamphlet, "The Sale and Use of Ungraded Eggs in Yukon" is available at the Agriculture Branch and online to help with the sale and use of ungraded eggs in Yukon.

Meat

The sale of meat in Yukon is regulated under the *Agricultural Products Act*. Meat sales are differentiated between inspected and uninspected (farm gate). In the act, farm gate sale is defined as the occasional sale of a live animal. Farm gate sale of any animal is an agreement between the producer and the purchaser prior to a slaughter occurring. This means that the sale of processed or frozen animals is not considered farm gate unless there is evidence that a purchase agreement was made prior to slaughter.

Any meat products destined for retail sale, or being advertised for sale must be slaughtered in a licensed abattoir and processed or stored in an inspected facility. A meat inspector must be present during slaughter and a stamp of approval will be placed on the carcass. Only inspected meat products may be used in commercial kitchens or restaurants or sold at farmers markets. It has become evident that some producers are advertising and selling uninspected animals post slaughter. This contravenes the *Agriculture Products Act* and requires a reaction from the Government of Yukon to help promote and strengthen our local food system.

Produce

Although produce falls under the territorial *Agricultural Products Act*, there are no specific restrictions in place that govern the sales of locally grown produce. A permit is not required to sell Yukon-grown fresh, uncut fruits and vegetables within the territory. This would include root vegetables; greens such as kale, chard, spinach and lettuces, legumes such as peas; and cultivated fruit and berries.

Produce (fresh, uncut fruits and vegetables) can be sold, uninspected, to retail markets, at farmer's markets, to caterers and to government procurement agents. The grower and the vendor are responsible for the quality and safety of produce that will be sold to the consumer. The vendor is required to notify their environmental health inspector that they are using or selling Yukon grown products.

For more information on the sale of Yukon products, the document "Summary of the Regulatory Regime Governing the Sale of Local Meats, Eggs, Produce and Manufactured Foods in Yukon" can be found on the Agriculture Branch website.



Reducing Winter Damage

The winter of 2017-18 resulted in winter damage to some crops across Yukon. A week of above average and daily averages above freezing temperatures in the middle of March, closely followed by an extreme overnight cold of -28°C resulted in damage to perennial crops.

What can you do to mitigate harsh winter conditions? Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, Ag-Info Centre published an article on winter survival that has some recommendations on enhancing winter survival. The following is some key information from this publication.



Enhancing Winter Survival of Horticulture Crops - Frequently Asked Questions

Prepared by Robert Spencer, Ag-Info Centre, Alberta Agriculture and Forestry

Many horticulture crops are perennial, with a significant amount of the total production returns achieved beyond the first season. Some crops are maintained for two to three seasons (e.g. strawberries), whereas other crops may grow for five to 10 years before being harvested (e.g. nursery crops). Ensuring that crops survive the harsh Alberta winters will protect against lost investments. Generally over-wintering of all plants involves the same basic guidelines:

Use hardy plant material

Plant species and cultivars vary in their relative hardiness; their ability to withstand winter temperatures.

Ensure excellent plant health throughout the growing season

Plants that are healthy and have minimal stress are generally less susceptible to winter injury. Proper cultural practices includes:

- Ensuring that plants are well established if transplanted (up to six weeks before soil freeze up).
- Ensuring adequate moisture throughout the growing season. On the other hand, excess water late in the summer may result in late acclimation of plants for winter.
- Avoiding excess applications of fertilizers, especially late in the summer.

Prevent desiccation and moisture stress

Many types of winter injury are a result of a deficiency of moisture in plant tissues. Desiccation leading to winter injury can be prevented by:

- Ensuring that there is adequate moisture in the root zone. Roots of many plants are active to soil temperatures of 5°C . A slow and heavy application of water should be applied after deciduous trees have lost their leaves, prior to covering strawberries and prior to freeze up of the soil. Roots are not active once the soil is frozen so watering is not necessary.
- Protecting plants from winds using shelterbelts. This can also increase snow accumulation, which may insulate plants.

Protect sensitive plant parts from extreme temperatures

Plant parts are not equal in their ability to withstand extreme winter temperatures. Despite the ability of many plants to acclimate, some damage can occur if additional protective measures are not taken. These can include:

- The use of snow fencing and shelterbelts to reduce winds can help build up an insulating snow cover, protecting plants.
- Using straw or bark mulches to cover whole plants or root systems.
- Protecting roots system in pots i.e. container-grown nursery crops require winter protection that insulates against the cold temperatures, such as covering with snow, straw, insulating foam etc.

Protection of sensitive plant parts from temperature fluctuations

Winter damage often occurs when temperatures fluctuate or when there are rapid and extreme changes in temperature. When conditions improve (i.e. increase in temperature), plants begin to lose their acclimation, which leads to a resumption in growth and the emergence of sensitive plant parts. If cold winter conditions resume after a period of warm conditions, plant injury can occur. This is particularly a problem in flowering tree or shrub species (e.g. Saskatoon berries).

Bright winter sunlight can cause localized warming of plant tissues, triggering water flow, which can later freeze and the ice crystals cause tissue damage. Desiccation of plant tissues in this circumstance is important also – damage would be hard to distinguish in either case but it mostly happens on the south and west sides of plants. Protection of susceptible plant parts can be accomplished using paints or trunk wraps. Mulches should be left in place until spring air temperatures have stabilized (i.e. frosts have passed).

The use of any type of over-wintering strategy should be adjusted based on suitability for the plants and cropping system. Some crops require special care in over-wintering. Protection of sensitive roots by burying and/or consolidating containers, using mulches and/or micro-foam blankets to insulate, or placing containers in a sheltered location (hoop house, barn, storage, etc.) with insulation or covering.

Prepared by Robert Spencer, Ag-Info Centre, Alberta Agriculture and Forestry



Seeking Nominations for Farmer of the Year

We are seeking nominations for the 2018 Yukon Farmer/Farm Family of the Year.

Nominate local people who show a commitment, passion or contribution for Yukon agriculture. This includes a Yukon farmer, a farm family, a farm advocate or others that have boosted agriculture in the territory.

To submit your nomination(s), please write a brief explanation on why the candidate(s) are worthy of the award

All nominations are due by noon on Wednesday, October 31, 2018. Submit your nomination(s) in writing to the Agriculture Branch. Alternatively, drop off nominations in person to Room 320 Elijah Smith Building, 300 Main Street, Whitehorse Yukon. Fax to 867-393-6222 or email to agriculture@gov.yk.ca.

Many Yukoners are worthy of some extra recognition. Please submit your nominee.

The Corner L.O.T.

Land, Opportunities & Tidbits from the Agriculture Branch Land's Unit

Agricultural Land Releases

Lot 1581, Hotsprings Road

During August, this six hectare non-soil based lot progressed through the Agriculture Planned Land Application Review (APLAR) process. This is a competitive process whereby each applicant's Farm Development Business Plan (FDBP) is reviewed and scored by both Agriculture Branch staff and an independent consultant. The successful applicant was the plan that had the highest score and met a minimum standard. Agriculture Branch would like to congratulate all six applicants for the time and hard work they dedicated to their farm projects.

Murray Agricultural Subdivision, Ibx Valley

Later this month, three, 63 hectare soil-based lots will be released through APLAR as phase one – watch the Agriculture Branch website for more details. Alsek Valley Contracting in conjunction with Highways and Public Works constructed the access driveways on budget and on time this fall.

During the completion of the survey for the Phase 1 lots, Agriculture Branch in partnership with the Ibx Local Area Council and the family agreed to name the subdivision after David Murray. David was the Agriculture Lands Manager for many years. As many of you know, David passed away in September of 2017. David's dedication to agriculture in the Yukon showed through his accomplishments of creating new lands for Yukon Agriculture. David worked on many planning projects including this one. Naming the subdivision after him is a meaningful way to recognize his contribution to agriculture in Yukon.

Planning for Phase 2 continued with an open house with local residents on October 16, 2018. The information received will be applied to the upcoming planning and development stages of Phase 2.

Silver Trail, Mayo

A 17 hectare and one 43 hectare soil based parcels, adjacent to the new rural residential subdivision, will be released through APLAR in November. Progressive planning now allows guest cabins on these farms to be used for much-needed seasonal farm staff, or seasonal farm volunteer accommodation.



Hot Topic!

Windrows – to burn or not to burn – what is your view?

The standard practice for trees bulldozed during agriculture land clearing is piling into windrows, left to dry, and then burnt. There may or may not be wood salvage at the time of clearing. Given the present nationwide, or worldwide, debate on climate change and carbon taxes, it is worth considering how to best manage woody materials. A quick investigation of CO₂ production from wood reveals (for guideline purposes only):

- One tonne of burnt wood releases 1.927 tonnes of CO₂ (or equivalent)
- One ha Yukon woodland carries between 120 and 480 tonnes of wood

How can agriculture best use these wood resources and build the soil? We will need to think about the harvest of usable timber, while the remaining timber could be chipped and ploughed back into the ground to improve soil health. We would welcome any comments, research proposals, or any other alternatives on this topic. Contact us at agriculture@gov.yk.ca, 867-667-5838, or visit us in Whitehorse, room 320, 300 Main St.

Agriculture Lands Unit New Manager - Jonathan Lucas

The Agriculture Branch hired a new Manager of the Agriculture Lands Unit in July. The following is a lighthearted Q&A to introduce Jonathan Lucas to Yukon Agriculture readers.

Welcome to the Agriculture Branch and congratulations. You have had a chance to familiarize yourself with some of the files. To help our agriculture community to get to know who you are, let's do a quick Q&A.

Q. We hear a slight accent in your voice, so... Where were you born, when did you move to Canada, and specifically when did Yukon become home?

A. **Born in the central Midlands of England near Coventry; moved to Canada and Yukon September 9, 2001.**

Q. What experience and education helped you reel in and land this prestigious job as the Territorial Manager of the Agriculture Lands Unit?

A. **1st Class Degree, Zoology; Post-Grad studies in the effects of farm wastes on freshwater invertebrates, followed by 23 years of smallholding style farming in Scotland, Chile, and Yukon, then five years commercial livestock production in Yukon all the while supporting my agricultural endeavours with full-time fish farming, culminating as Vice-President Aquaculture at Icy Waters, and a recent 2.5 years running a state of the art intensive recirculation system in Nova Scotia.**

Q. We understand you have a small farm operation just north of Whitehorse, Grizzly Pigs Farm. What led a fish guy into agriculture in the North?

A. **An insatiable interest in agriculture, biology, and growing things. Yukon gave me the opportunity to develop, expand and learn and I gratefully took it. I hope to be able to give something back.**

Q. To put you in the hot seat: You have been involved with the Agriculture Lands program as a producer in the past, and now you find yourself on the other side of the desk. What do you think works well with regards to government's administration of agriculture land and where will be your unit's biggest challenges.

A. **I am afraid that would fill the newsletter, so let's take one challenge at a time: "encouraging" land titled agriculture to be fully used to grow food...the demand for new agricultural land is high, yet the utilization rate of existing land is...not. So the trick will be to encourage those with land growing currently back to forest, to switch gears and have their land made productive again.**



North of 60

Agriculture Banquet

Saturday, November 3,
6:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

Coast High Country Inn, Con-
vention Centre, 4051 4 Ave, White-
horse

Enjoy a delicious dinner made from ingredients locally sourced from Yukon farms. More seats have been added for this year's banquet. Please get your tickets as soon as possible.

Tickets are \$30 plus GST, available through the Agriculture Branch:

Room 320, Elijah Smith Building
300 Main Street, Whitehorse
Phone: 867.667.5838 or
1.800.661.0408 ext. 5838
Email: agriculture@gov.yk.ca

North of 60 Agriculture Conference

Pigs, Permaculture and a Little Bit More

November 2, 3 and 4, 2018

Yukon College, Lecture Hall A2206

Conference events are free, and open to all. No Registration necessary

The Future of Food – Transitioning Farms to Resilient and Profitable Production and Ecological Market Gardening (Zack Loeks – educator, designer, permaculture farmer, author)

Yukon Food Forest – A Yukon Approach to Permaculture (Agnes Seitz, Needle Mountain Food Forest and Gardens)

Swine – Good Management, Practices, Treatment Options and Prevention (Dr. Frank Marshall, Marshall Swine and Poultry Health Services, Camrose, Alberta)

Understanding Swine Health, Disease and Food Safety – Risk and Prevention (Julia Keenlside – Veterinary Epidemiologist, Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, Edmonton, Alta.)

Biosecurity – What's on Your Shoes? (Dr. Michelle Thompson, Yukon Animal Health Unit)

Traceability – The Ins and Outs of Traceability. (Jeff Clark, Pig Trace, and Jesse Walchuk/Yukon Agriculture Branch)

Growing Hay in Yukon, Findings from literature review and local hay producers. (Kristine Ferris)

The conference kicks off on Friday evening, November 2 at 5:30 p.m. and continues on Saturday and Sunday at 8:30 a.m.. For more information about the topics and to find out times, go to www.agriculture.gov.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, contribute a story, or post an advertisement, please feel free to contact us.

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