

THE COUNTY CHRONICLE

COUNTY OF WARNER NO. 5



SPRING/SUMMER 2024



Message from Reeve

Hello everyone. Just a quick note from Council. On everyone's mind is the drought situation we were in, heading into winter. We started talking to Government in October, meeting with three Ministers in Calgary, Environment, Ag and Irrigation and Municipal Affairs, to bring obvious concerns of the water shortage facing our residents. I was invited to represent SW Mayors and Reeves and the County of Warner at the Water Sharing talks with Irrigation Districts that the Government initiated. It was a very positive experience, and there will be a press release by the Minister mid April with results of the consultations. Although it appears a normal wet spring, we have to remember our reservoirs are critically low, and it will take all of us working together this year to ensure our reserves are built back up. Every drop we



Randy Taylor, Reeve

save, will add up and help. AEP Operations on the St Mary's system do an amazing job, managing our water, and diverting to where it has to go. So lets all help. Council has been meeting with Ministers regarding Doctor retention, securing Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants to keep Milk River hospital a complete health care facility. Things are looking up, and we are hopeful things will come together.

Although we are focused on MR hospital, we advocate for rural Alberta as well.

We have started on the budget, and sorry to say, we can't cut taxes. Feds are making sure of that. We will do the best we can for our ratepayers, while keeping the level of service you are expecting from us.

I would like to again thank all the County staff for the great job they do for all of us.

Have a great spring and summer.

Randy Taylor, Reeve

IMPORTANT DEADLINES

YARD GRAVEL REQUESTS
Deadline for requesting gravel is **May 15th**

The request form can be found under the resident's tab on the County Website. The form is removed from the Website May 15th and put back up January of the following year. Calls that are received after May 15th will be notified of this deadline and informed of when to expect the form back on the Website.

DUST SUPPRESSION REQUESTS
Deadline for requesting dust suppression is **May 15th**

The request form can be found under the resident's tab on the County Website. The form is removed from the Website May 15th and put back up January of the following year. Calls that are received after May 15th will be notified of this deadline and informed of when to expect the form back on the Website

www.warnercounty.ca

County of Warner No. 5



Contact Information:

County of Warner No. 5
Administration Office

300 County Road, Box 90

Warner, AB T0K 2L0

Phone: 403-642-3635

Fax: 403-642-3631

New Toll Free Number: 1-888-642-2241

Website: www.warnercounty.ca

Shawn Hathaway, Administrator/ Economic Development Officer
shathaway@warnercounty.ca

Logan Wehlage, Property Assessor
403-381-0135

County of Warner No. 5

Agriculture Service Board

172008 Twp Rd. 4-2,

Box 90 Warner AB, T0K 2L0

Phone: 403-642-2255

Fax: 403-642-2256

Toll Free Call: 1-866-642-2221

Jamie Meeks, Agriculture Fieldman

jmeeks@warnercounty.ca

PUBLIC WORKS:

Phone: 403-642-3833

Fax: 403-642-3832

New Toll Free Number: 1-888-642-3831

Larry Liebelt, Public Works Superintendent

lliebelt@warnercounty.ca

COUNCIL MEMBERS

David Cody, Division 1 dcody@warnercounty.ca

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PUBLIC NOTICE

Roadside Spraying

The County of Warner will be controlling broadleaf and noxious weeds on:

- Developed and Undeveloped Road Allowances
- Newly Constructed Roads
- Bladed Trails
- Established roads
- Other public areas as necessary.

As deemed necessary by the Ag Fieldman.

Commencing May 1, 2024 to September 30, 2024

The County will be conducting Roadside Spraying activities with care and consideration. Selective Spray to ensure effective control of target plant species.

If you have any question about which weeds are Noxious or which weeds are considered Prohibited Noxious within the County of Warner, please contact the Ag Fieldman at the Ag Service Board Shop by calling (403) 642-2255



Public Works Spring 2024

Public Works would like to remind everyone that they will be out repairing culverts, replacing signs, patching, re-graveling, and upgrading roads for snow storage and drainage. While County crews are out working, please keep safety in mind, follow the signs that are placed, and slow down when passing workers.

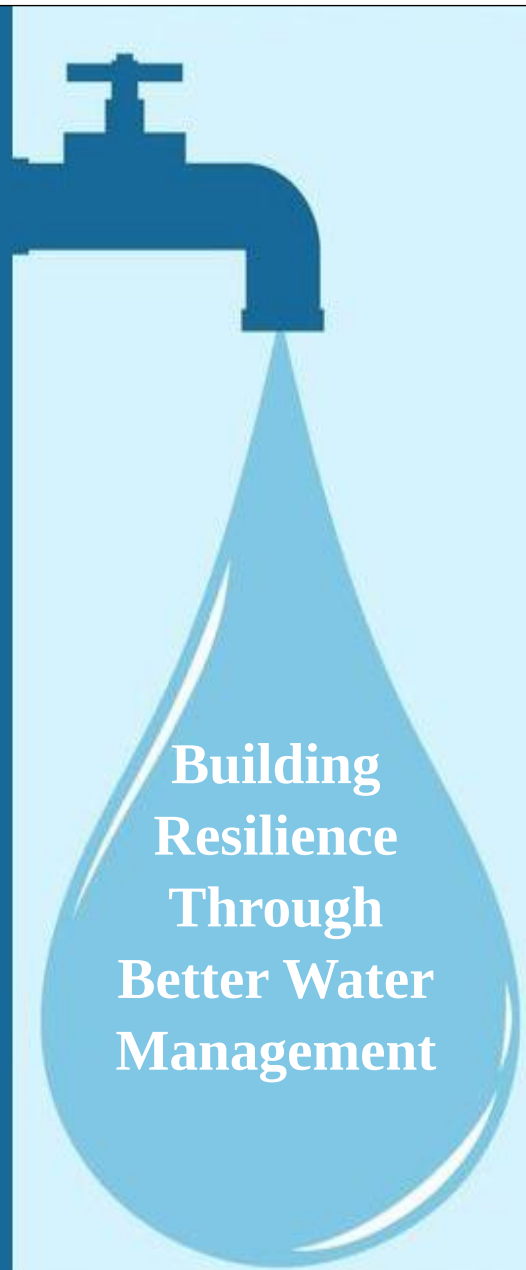
We plan on trying to keep everyone informed of updated road construction when possible.

Work being done will be posted on the County website. Projects planned for 2024 include.

- Culvert repair to maintain drainage across the county and prevent flooding.
- Twp Rd 6-4 from Sec Hwy 846 to Bridge. Repair and rebuild road structure.
- Repair and re-oil Rng Rd 20-5 from Twp Rd 7-0 to Twp 6-4
- Re surface approximately 400km of gravel roads.
- Bridge deck maintenance.
- Tree pruning on areas that the trees are encroaching road surface.

Southern Alberta is a semi-arid region where periodic and prolonged drought conditions can be experienced, and currently there are long-term moisture deficits in place. Water shortage is an inevitability that is critical to understand and prepare for because the impacts on the environment, economy and society are cumulative.

Since August 2023 the County of Warner has actively advocated to the Province of Alberta to improve communication with stakeholders, to review how water is managed within the province, and to increase water storage. At the start of 2024 the County of Warner participated in Alberta's water-sharing negotiations to develop water-sharing agreements that aim to maximize Alberta's water supply. Governments, Irrigation Districts, and industry are all working together to create a more resilient system.



Water Conservation Tips for the Home

We can all take small and large steps to conserve water and take part in creating a secure, safe and reliable supply of water. In addition, lower water use helps save on costs!

- Leaky plumbing or toilets that run after flushing can waste thousand of litres per year so fix them right away if you notice an issue.
- Run dishwashers and washing machines only when full and use efficiency settings to save both water and energy.
- Don't let faucet water run while you brush your teeth, clean fruits or vegetables, or wash dishes.
- Let your lawn go dormant in the summer. A brown lawn is not a dead lawn, and it will go green again when the rain returns in the fall. Make sure to mow it before letting it go dormant to reduce the risk of fire.

Water Conservation Tips for the Farm

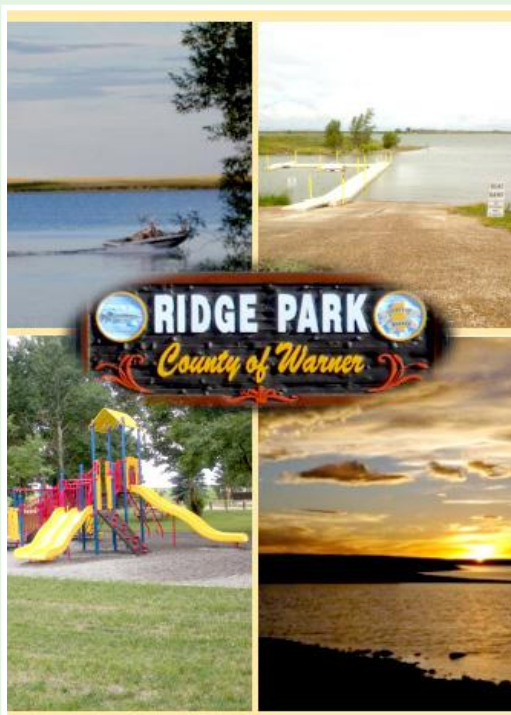
Water is an essential resource in the agricultural industry and intentional use will play a major role in continuing to improve water management.

- Update and include water management as an important aspect of your Environmental Farm plan.
- Apply only as much irrigation water as you need through tracking of soil moisture and climate information while watering at the most opportune times of the day.
- Continually check irrigation systems for leaks and proper function. Irrigation sprinkling on road allowances not only wastes water and costs money; it is also prohibited under Bylaw 972-21 as it may damage roads.
- Grazing management should be planned with drought in mind and may include insulated or shaded water troughs, early livestock weaning, fertilisation, and forage diversification.

PARK OPENINGS

**Ridge Park Campground
Opening - MAY 13TH**

**Chin Park Campground
Opening - MAY 1ST**



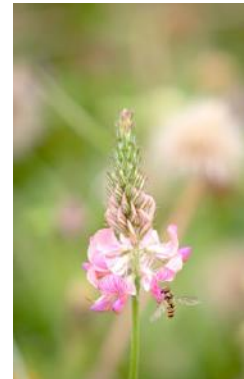
DRYLAND Forage Establishment Tips

Establishing a dryland forage crop can be a trying task for even the most seasoned producers. In Southern Alberta the most limiting factor to crop and forage success is moisture. Utilize your local agronomists and resources to support you through the establishment and lifespan of your forage crops.

Species Selection

Pay close attention to your site when making decisions on what to grow. Each factor may impact your establishment and long-term goal.

- Drainage
- Salinity
- End use (pasture /hay)
- Management (fertilizer/weed control/ seeding method)
- Fertility
- Longevity



Seeding Date

Seeding date can often be overlooked as forage seeding may take place when most convenient for the producer and not when timing is optimal for the crop. On dryland acres aim to seed when there is moisture or moisture is anticipated. Moisture deficiency is a common cause for forage establishment shortfalls. Fall dormancy planting can be a useful tool to take advantage of early spring moisture.



Seedbed Preparation

Ensuring a weed free seedbed will help to get your stand going as the seedlings won't be competing for moisture and nutrients. The seedbed should be firm enough to provide good seed to soil contact. It is also imperative to understand the chemical use history on the field in dryland forage establishment as some herbicide residues can impede growth of forages.

Weed Control

Starting off your forage stand weed free and maintaining a weed free forage stand will depict the longevity of the stand. Weeds are competitive and advantageous by utilizing seasonal moisture, nutrients, and sunlight, often more efficiently than forage species. If the site has a history of weeds, consider a species mixture that won't impede herbicide control.

Cover Crops

A cover crop or nurse crop can be a useful tool to provide income during the year of establishment however there can also be downsides to cover crops. They can compete with the forage stand for moisture and nutrients, limit weed control, and decrease forage yield in subsequent years. If a cover crop is desired, cut seeding rate of the cover crop preferably to 1/3 of normal. It is not advised to use cover crops in the brown soil zone.

Useful Resources:

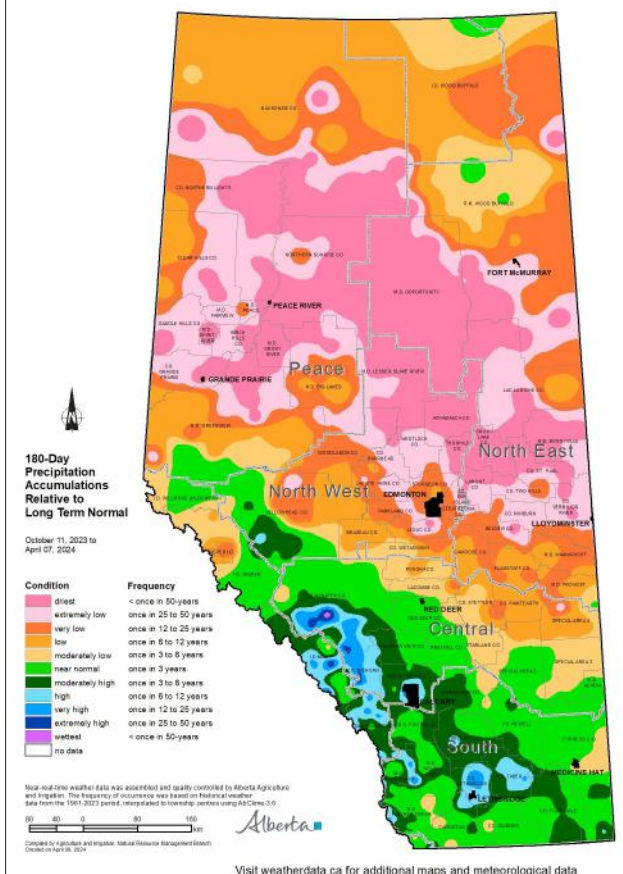
Alberta Forage Manual 2nd Edition (Government of Alberta) • upick.beefresearch.ca

Deadlines



Date	Action
Apr. 30/24	Perennial Crop Insurance: Last day to remove grazing livestock from insured Hay fields.
Apr. 30/24	Annual Crop Insurance: Last day to apply, make changes to (including updating your declared acres) or cancel coverage.
May. 15/24	Bee Overwintering Insurance: Notify AFSC 10 days prior to unwrapping hives. Coverage will be denied if AFSC is notified after May 15.
Jun. 20/24	Annual Crop Insurance: Last day to file Land Reports, and report acres that remain unseeded due to excessive moisture. Login to AFSC Connect to complete.
Jun. 25/24	Hail Insurance: Premiums received by AFSC the later of June 25 or within 15 days of billing date receive an early payment discount.
Jun. 25/24	Perennial Crop Insurance: Premiums received by AFSC the later of June 25 or within 15 days of billing date receive an early payment discount.
Jun. 25/24	Annual Crop Insurance: Premiums received by AFSC the later of June 25 or within 15 days of billing date receive an early payment discount.
Jun. 25/24	Annual Crop Insurance: Last day to file Land Reports (with penalty). Login to AFSC Connect to complete.
Jun. 30/24	Bee Overwintering Insurance: Last day to apply, make changes, or cancel coverage.
Jun. 30/24	Honey Insurance: Last day to return hives to their primary location and file Report of Producing Hives and Hive Yard Location forms.

MOISTURE ACCUMULATION





WHEN DO I TURN OUT MY COWS? MANAGING SPRING PASTURES DURING AND AFTER DROUGHT

FEBRUARY 28, 2024

Beef producers will soon be making grazing plans for turning their herds out to spring pastures. While [drought planning](#) should be a routine part of the development of short- and long-term grazing plans, many beef cattle herds have withstood successive years of drought. This has prompted producers to hone in on their management skills to make the best use of their pasture forage and carefully maintain carryover to prevent prolonged damage. The question of ‘when can I turn my cows out?’ is an important one, especially for those with dwindling hays stacks or for producers purchasing feed.

Dr. Edward Bork is a Professor of Rangeland Management in the faculty of Agricultural, Life, and Environmental Sciences at the University of Alberta. He says that, aside from spring rainfall, how your pastures looked when you brought cattle in last fall may be the best indicator of how they will perform in spring. “The better condition the pasture was in October, the faster it will recover,” Bork explains.

Reduce the long-term impact of drought

With high winter feed costs, it may be tempting for producers to place cattle in pastures sooner than they normally would, but Bork cautions to be aware of potential long-term consequences. He points out that when we stress forages, we not only affect the above-ground growth but the below-ground root system as well.

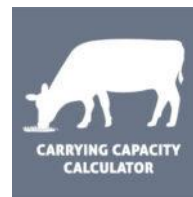
“Deep roots require the most energy to maintain so they are the first to go,” says Bork, which means that when those roots are not maintained, the plant can lose its ability to draw from deep soil moisture reserves. Those deep roots store energy to keep the plant active during a drought and are also important for long-term survival. Native and tame plants have different root systems. In some cases, native plants appear to bounce back from drought quicker, because as long as they are healthy, they have much deeper roots than many tame species, Bork explains.

As enticing as it may be to turn cattle out early, or in some cases even just at a “normal” time, producers should consider holding off if their pastures have been stressed recently. “By managing pastures cautiously in the short term, we can prevent having to deal with drought-related issues for the next 10 years,” says Bork. Avoiding long-term damage to plant health and root systems will help prevent erosion and even reduce a pasture’s risk for weed encroachment.

“When do I turn my cows out in the spring?”

Bork shares some tips for knowing when to turn cattle out, and how to make decisions that will support and maintain the long-term productivity of your pastures:

- **Know your carrying capacity:** Be realistic with the amount of forage you have and [develop your grazing plan](#) accordingly.



Use regional range health guidelines or the BCRC’s Carrying Capacity Calculator to estimate the amount of forage available and how many animals a pasture can support.

- **Wait until the three-leaf stage:** Using plant height is not a good way to determine readiness to graze as plants can vary greatly by height, especially in the early stages. Instead wait until plants have three leaves to start grazing. This gives the plant time to build the reserves it needs for long-term survival. A common grazing rule of thumb is that for every one day you wait to graze in the spring you save two days in the fall.

- **Match your grazing plan to your pasture type:** If possible, graze tame pastures prior to native pastures. Tame pastures are generally more grazing tolerant, and may be quicker to green up in spring, providing valuable early grazing. In contrast, native grasslands often take longer to reach peak production and therefore should be deferred longer if that is an option.

- **Pay attention to litter:** Litter is the standing or fallen dead plant residue left remaining in a pasture. Bork points out that litter serves multiple purposes on prairie landscapes by conserving rain and snow melt but can also be part of the forage reserve. Pastures with abundant litter will require less recovery and can be accessed earlier in the season than those where there is little or no litter remaining. Grasslands without litter may produce 25-60% less forage than grasslands with adequate litter, says Bork. Pastures with reduced litter lose moisture through evaporation and runoff and are at a higher risk of sun and wind exposure.

- **Look backward:** how was your forage managed in the previous year? If certain pastures were left in poor condition last fall, plan to use those in the following grazing season to allow ample time for rest and recovery.

- **Use rainfall rather than snow as your indicator of moisture recharge:** Although looking at the plants and pastures should be your first indicator for forage growth potential, many beef producers may look to soil moisture levels to help determine pasture turnout. Bork points out that while snow can contribute to moisture recharge, this is not a certainty and may have a limited effect on forage recovery due to its tendency to evaporate (with chinooks, for example), or run off if soils are frozen. “Up to seventy percent of our precipitation on the prairies comes from rainfall in the growing season as opposed to snow, meaning that each year our forage growth is closely tied to the

occurrence of May and June rainfall.” Bork is quick to note that when soil moisture is severely depleted by drought the prior year, spring growth will be even more dependent on timely rainfall.

- **Be ready to adapt:** Recognize that grazing plans made in early spring are a moving target and will need to be adjusted based on rainfall, heat, and other environmental factors. Monitor pastures throughout the grazing season and consider what potential back-up plans might need to be implemented to ensure pastures are managed for drought resilience.

“If the pasture isn’t ready, what do I do?”

If producers are faced with drought conditions again, pastures will benefit from extended recovery time. It might be necessary to implement some early steps to prevent long-term damage to pastures.

- **Consider alternative feeds:** Are there [alternative feeds](#) or byproducts such as soybean hulls, beet pulp, pellets, screenings, or other feed sources that can be used to extend the winter-feeding season or as supplements on pasture? [Read this article on utilizing byproducts](#) for more information.

- **Annual forages may fill the gap:** Annual forages can be grazed four to six weeks after seeding and can often be stocked heavily. This strategy may help to alleviate pressure on grasslands, thereby allowing them to reach their peak growth potential which can help get your grazing plan back on track.

- **Determine if destocking is necessary:** Making the decision to cull is never an easy one but it can help to reduce reliance on stressed pastures and aid in faster recovery. [This article](#) shares tips for making decisions on which cattle to cull.

- **Shorten the breeding season:** By shortening your breeding season and pulling bulls sooner you are selecting for cattle that rebreed earlier, tightening up your calving season, and may be able to take advantage of higher grasser market prices for open heifers. This can help with culling decisions. [This recent webinar](#) shares additional information on shortening the breeding season for heifers.

Managing grasslands through drought is not an easy task, but having a plan going in, monitoring pastures and being willing to adapt as the weather changes can prevent pasture decline. Facing pasture productivity challenges head-on can help producers be better poised for recovery and reap the rewards when moisture is abundant.

The sharing or reprinting of BCRC Blog articles is welcome and encouraged. Please provide acknowledgement to the Beef Cattle Research Council, list the website address, www.BeefResearch.ca, and let us know you chose to share the article by emailing us at info@beefresearch.ca.

2024 EVENT SCHEDULE

JOIN OUR INNOVATION NETWORK

JUNE 26 & 27

Farming Smarter Field School

AUGUST 17

Alberta Open Farm Days

DECEMBER 11

Global Crop Production Conference



FUELING AG INNOVATION

SAVE the DATE

JULY 24 & 25

SOUTHERN ALBERTA GRAZING SCHOOL FOR WOMEN

SEVEN PERSONS, ALBERTA

@grazing schools for women

ALBERTA OPEN FARM DAYS

PRESENTED BY servus credit union

Your Invitation Behind The Farm Gate

August 17 & 18, 2024 | Culinary Events & Farm Tours

The 12th Annual Alberta Open Farm Days

This is your opportunity to support your rural neighbours and the province's farms, ranches and agricultural businesses. Meet the farmers, shop at local retailers and experience the best Alberta agriculture has to offer.

Check out participating locations and plan your farm and culinary events at albertaopenfarmdays.ca or scan the QR code today

Discover more at AlbertaOpenFarmDays.ca

Terra Alberta, ALBERTA ASSOCIATION OF AGRICULTURAL SOCIETIES, Alberta, Peavey, FORTIS ALBERTA, UFA, Global NEWS

Wild Nights

Monitoring Project

Help Us Understand Bats and Amphibians in the Milk River Watershed

What is the project about?
In 2024 the Milk River Watershed Council Canada (MRWCC) will be creating a comprehensive inventory and distribution of bats and amphibians, with emphasis on the endangered Little Brown Myotis and Northern Leopard Frog across private lands within the Milk River Watershed. This is to help us grow our understanding of these species at risk and to aid in preserving their habitat.

Why Bats and Amphibians?
Bats and amphibians are both experiencing population declines, and they need our help. Not only are they important insectivores that keep insect populations in check, their presence indicates a well functioning landscape. They are both facing numerous threats including habitat loss and disease. By participating in this project not only are you helping us understand their current presence in the watershed, but in protecting their habitat as well.

How Can you Help?
If you have a wetland, stream, man-made water body or riparian area on your property you can help by providing the MRWCC to place monitors on these locations.

What's in it for you?
Every landowner who participates in the project will receive a report card that will include...

SPECIES REPORT	SITE ASSESSMENT	WATER QUALITY
All information on species found and usage will be provided.	Will include wetland classification, vegetation, and land usage.	Surface water testing on site.

FUNDING FOR ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS

Landowners who participate in the monitoring program will be eligible for projects aimed at enhancing or protecting habitat found to be of importance to the Little Brown Myotis, or Northern Leopard Frog. These projects could include alternate watering systems, fencing, riparian plantings, etc. Not only will these projects be aiding important species, they will also be adding to your operation, and can be beneficial for weight gain, and drought management.

To be involved in this project or to learn more please contact Tyler Eresman at tyler@mrwcc.ca or 403-647-4035

BIKE & SCOOTER SAFETY

RAYMOND RCMP, RIDGE REGIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICES AND SOUTHERN ALBERTA ROAD SAFETY ARE PARTNERING TO HOST A BIKE RODEO. THERE WILL BE DEMONSTRATIONS AND EDUCATION ON BIKE SAFETY AND RULES OF THE ROAD

EVENTS ARE TO TAKE PLACE IN RAYMOND AND MAGRATH AND WILL BE HELD IN MAY AS WEATHER WARMS

THE SCOOTER EDUCATION SESSION WILL ALSO BE HOSTED SEPARATE FROM THE BIKE RODEO, DIRECTED TOWARDS TEENS

SAFETY, EDUCATION AND FUN!

Southern Alberta Youth Range Days

Save the Date: July 16th-18th, 2024

The Southern Alberta Youth Range Days are an interactive multi-day camp to engage youth on topics such as rangelands, watersheds, wildlife, and natural resource management! This year's camp will be held in **Etzikom**. Special in-field activities and presentations will cover everything from wildlife surveys, paleontology, bats, rangeland management, and more! We invite youth of all backgrounds and ages to join us on this exciting trip to learn more about the important landscape that we call home.

Ages: 13-18, families welcome!

For more information please contact youthrangedays@gmail.com or follow us on Facebook at Southern Alberta Youth Range Days

Brought to you by:



OFCAF Program Guide

Program information

What is the On-Farm Climate Action Fund (OFCAF)?

OFCAF is designed to help producers tackle climate change by supporting new actions to lower greenhouse gas emissions. This program is intended to reduce the risk of new practices while expanding, sustaining, and documenting activities that may not occur without this funding. The program is delivered by Results Driven Agriculture Research (RDAR) with funding from the Agricultural Climate Solutions initiative managed by Natural Resources Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

OFCAF provides financial support to producers to accelerate the adoption of beneficial management practices (BMPs) that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support increased production efficiency, sustainability, and resiliency in their farm operations.

RDAR is a program delivery partner that will administer OFCAF in Alberta to benefit Alberta's producers. RDAR is delivering OFCAF in three activity categories:

1. Improved nitrogen management
2. Enhanced soil health with cover crops
3. Strengthened rotational grazing systems

Quick facts about OFCAF

- Activities to support the adoption of BMPs, like outreach, education, and training are part of the initiative.
- Applications from 2023 that were not reviewed due to a lack of OFCAF funds must be re-submitted for 2024.
- Project activities in 2024 must be submitted and pre-approved by RDAR in writing before starting projects planned for implementation after April 1, 2024. Approvals apply only to Legal Land Descriptions (LLDs) listed in the approved BMP Action Plan.
- Invoices must include LLDs of approved project fields, proof of payment (see Invoice Guide), and be paid only after you have received written approval of your project.
- Invoices accompanied by proof of payment must be submitted before January 31, 2025.
- A project is closed once OFCAF has paid the costs. Any unused portions of approved funds will not carry over.
- As applications are reviewed, some BMPs and eligible expenses may not be approved as targeted outcomes are reached.
- Maximum limits are set within some categories to allow more producers to try new practices.
- Invoices cannot combine BMP activity categories (nitrogen management, cover cropping, rotational grazing).

Costs and program details may be updated throughout the year. Please [subscribe to the OFCAF newsletter to receive updates and notifications of program changes \(https://bit.ly/3PDLITd\)](#).

Important dates

Topic	Activity	Year 3
Applications	Open	March 1, 2024
Applications	Close	When all available funding has been allocated.
Paid invoices	Submitted	January 31, 2025
Payments	Sent by	March 31, 2025

Funding eligibility

Who is eligible to receive funding?

To receive funding, applicants must meet these conditions:

- Be an active producer (includes a proprietorship, corporation, or registered partnership) that can demonstrate a minimum of \$25,000 gross farm income in Alberta.
- Work with a Professional Agrologist (PAg) or Certified Crop Advisor (CCA), see [Guide to Accessing Agricultural Recommendations in Alberta \(rdar.ca/funding-opportunities/resources#forms-guides\)](#) to develop a BMP Action Plan that is based on agronomic advice and identifies the cost difference from usual practices.
- The BMP Action Plan must include labelled maps of project field boundaries and LLDs on aerial photos or images. Any labelling method may be used, or see [Guide to Locating and Labelling BMP Action Plans \(rdar.ca/funding-opportunities/resources#forms-guides\)](#).
- Complete an online application using RDAR's [Agriculture Research Grant Organizer \(ARGO\)](#). The forms describe current practices and planned improvements ([rdar.smartsimple.ca](#)).
- Document pre and post-project conditions with date-stamped GPS-located photographs (these details are typically automatically recorded on digital photos in a jpg format).
- Provide permission for post-project inspections.
- Be headquartered in Alberta and apply funds only to lands in Alberta.
- Have a minimum eligible total project cost of \$2,500.
- Pay 100% of the costs upfront (no in-kind).
- All reimbursement payments are considered taxable income.
- Pre-approval by RDAR **in writing** is required to be eligible for program funding.

Landlords whose only interest is in the land and not raising crops or livestock are ineligible.

Report rabies exposure or disease

EXPOSURE: if you suspect a pet or other domestic animal has been exposed to rabies:

DISEASE: if you suspect your animal has rabies:

- Isolate it so that it cannot come into contact with people or other animals
- Contact your veterinarian

You can also contact the Alberta Rabies Program at:

Phone: **1-844-427-6847**

Contact County of Warner Agricultural Service Board @ 403-642-2255 for Rabies concerns in our County or visit <https://www.alberta.ca/rabies-in-animals>

Update on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in Alberta

During the spring months, migration of wild birds and warmer weather increases the risk to poultry.

Poultry shows, swaps and auctions also present a risk for spread of avian influenza. It is recommended to avoid holding or attending these events with birds.

For more information <https://www.alberta.ca/avian-influenza-in-domestic-birds-updates> HPAI is a reportable disease, so if you suspect or confirm a case in your flock, you must report it to:

- the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)
Phone: 403-338-5225
Email: cfa.absickbird-lesoiseauxmalades@inspection.gc.ca
- or the Office of the Chief Provincial Veterinarian.

If you have concerns about sick or dead wild birds, call 310-0000 or your local Fish and Wildlife Office.

What happens if you suspect your flock may have Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza?

Contact your flock veterinarian and at least one of the following:

- The Office of the Chief Provincial Veterinarian: 1-780-427-3448 or 1-800-524-0051
- The Canadian Food Inspection Agency Sick Bird Line: 403-338-5225

Protect your flock from highly pathogenic avian influenza



WATERCRAFT INSPECTIONS STATIONS

2023 Summary

Remember, watercraft inspections are now mandatory in Alberta. All passing watercraft, including non-motorized, commercially-hauled and privately-hauled watercraft, must stop every time, regardless of where you are coming from or going to. It's the law!

8,818
Inspections in 2023

19
Mussel-fouled boats

1314 HOT WASHES
to prevent all aquatic invasive species from entering Alberta

5
STATIONS

STOPPING AT A WATERCRAFT
INSPECTION STATION IS
MANDATORY



\$324 Fine
for skipping inspection

In 2023,
9 Warnings
29 Charges

**PULL
the
PLUG**

Standing water in bilges, ballasts, live wells and buckets can harbour aquatic invasive species and diseases!

9% of watercraft inspected did not have drain plugs removed

\$180 Ticket
for plugs not removed
In 2023,
5 Warnings
1 Charge



<https://www.albertaefp.com/>

Completing an EFP allows for greater awareness, education, and access to market opportunities for producers across the province. Once an EFP is completed, it is valid for 10 years and provides you with an action plan that you can implement as time and resources allow.

Resilient Agricultural Landscape Program & Farm Technology Program

The current Farm Technology Program application intake closed on December 22, 2023.

Programming is expected to resume in April 2024, under Year 2 of Sustainable CAP.

Resilient Agricultural Landscape Program

The Resilient Agricultural Landscape Program's (RALP) objective is to accelerate the adoption of Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs) that maximize provision of Ecological Goods & Services (EG&S), particularly increased carbon sequestration and enhanced climate resilience.

Eligible Applicants

- Primary producer responsible for the day-to-day management of an agricultural operation (crop, bee, or livestock) that produces at least \$25,000 worth of farm commodities annually.
- Groups such as Grazing Reserve Associations and Community Pastures.
- Indigenous applicants (First Nation, Métis Nation, Inuit).

and

- Has a current Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) certificate or letter or will receive one before the end of the project term.

Funding

Funding is determined using the calculation below and is paid over a three-year term. Funding is retroactive to February 1, 2024.

Implementation Costs + Opportunity Cost (if applicable) + **Impact Adjustment**

Approved projects will be funded to:

- minimum grant of **\$2,000**
- maximum grant of **\$150,000** for Primary Producers
- maximum grant of **\$300,000** for Indigenous and Group applicants

Funding List

- Funding list may change, check website for most up-to-date list
<https://www.alberta.ca/resilient-agricultural-landscape-program>
- Eligible BMP activities must be implemented by November 30, 2024, and maintained for an additional two years, until November 30, 2026.

Additional Information

- Applications are reviewed as they are received and evaluated according to the eligibility criteria and funding availability.
- Applicant name must match name on submitted invoices and receipts to be reimbursed.

Resources

General Inquiries and Existing Applications **One-on-One Application Support**

Phone: 310-FARM

Phone: 1-866-310-RALP

Email: RALP@gov.ab.ca

Email: info@RALP.ca

Farm Technology Program

This program (2023 to 2024) focuses on sensors and security devices that support the adoption of innovative technology that minimizes agricultural waste, optimizes farm efficiency, or improves the security of farming operations.

Supported activities will fall under two streams:

- 1. Farm technology** – Digital sensors that contribute to greater precision, more accurate matching of inputs with requirements
 - a. Eligibility varies by farm type. To be eligible, technology should be innovative and not commonly adopted for the applicant's farm type or sector
- 2. Farm security** – Farm security devices to protect business assets and deal with trespassing, theft, vandalism and biosecurity threats

Eligible Applicants

- Individual or corporation registered in Alberta that is responsible for day-to-day management and input costs of a crop, bee, or livestock operation and produce at least \$25,000 worth of farm commodities annually.

- Approved Indigenous applicants (First Nation, Métis Nation, Inuit).

and

- Has a current Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) certificate or letter or will receive one before the end of the project term. The name on the EFP does not need to match the name on the grant application but must be for the same farm.

Cost Share

Grants will be funded on a 50% cost-share basis

Eligible expenses for approved projects will be funded to:

- minimum grant of **\$500**/applicant
- maximum grant of **\$48,000**/applicant for Farm Technology Stream
- maximum grant of **\$2,000**/applicant for Farm Security Stream

Note: the program is retroactive to April 1, 2023

Funding List

- Funding list may change
- Check website for most up-to-date list
- Subscribe to the program for automatic updates: www.alberta.ca/sustainable-cap.aspx

Additional Information

- Applications are reviewed as they are received and evaluated according to the eligibility criteria and funding availability

- Incomplete applications will be returned to the applicant

- Email questions to S-CAP.FTP@gov.ab.ca or call 310-FARM (3276)



abinvasives.ca
info@abinvasives.ca



Last Updated January 2014

Hoary Cress

Lepidium appelianum and *L. Draba subsp. draba* and *chalepense* (Aka whitetop, pepperweed, globe/lens/heart podded hoary cress)

Provincial Designation:
Noxious



Overview:

Hoary cress is a long-lived perennial of the Mustard family. It develops an extensive system of deep, vertical taproots and horizontal, rhizomatous roots. It reproduces both by seed and sprouting from lateral roots – one plant can produce a large colony. Mustards are prolific seed producers – 1000 to over 4000 per plant – however the viability of hoary cress seeds is only about 3 years.

Native to Europe and Asia, it is believed that hoary cress was introduced to North America in the 1800's via seed contaminated ship ballast and/or contaminated crop seed. The seeds have been used to make pepper, hence the common name of "pepperweed."

Previously classified as *Cardaria* genus but DNA evidence prompted move to *Lepidium* genus. The three species listed above can be differentiated by the shape of the seed capsule.

L. appelianum globe-podded

L. draba subsp. draba heart-podded

L. draba subsp. chalepense lens-podded

Habitat:

Hoary cress requires full sun and moderately moist to slightly dry soils. It will tolerate alkaline soils.

Identification:

Stems: Are erect, slightly hairy and can grow up to 0.6 m tall. There may be several stems per plant.

Leaves: Are gray-green or blue-green, arrowhead-shaped, 5 to 10 cm long, alternate and covered with soft, white hairs. Lower leaves are stalked and emerge from the root crown – upper leaves clasp the stem.

Flowers: Are white, about 3 to 4 mm wide, and have four petals. Numerous flowers are borne at the ends of stems in flat topped clusters. Flowering takes place early summer and they are pollinated by insects.

Seed chambers: Two per flower – contain 1 or 2 seeds each.

Prevention:

Hoary cress requires disturbance to estab-

lish and is often spread in contaminated hay. Seeds can be spread by animals, vehicles and water. In the absence of competition from other plants, it can rapidly colonize an area. Insist on weed free forage and maintain healthy rangelands. Early detection offers the best chance of eradication. Once established, hoary cress infestations will require a variety of control methods repeated through the season for a number of years.

Control:

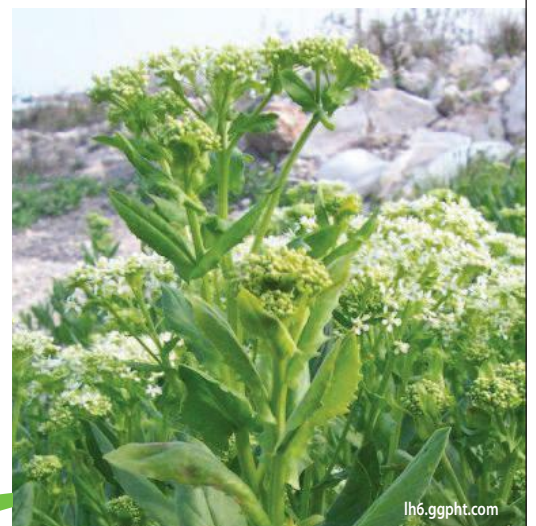
Grazing: Hoary cress is unpalatable to grazers.

Cultivation: Tillage can be very effective but must begin early in the season and be repeated about every 10 days. Sow and fertilize competitive grasses/legumes.

Mechanical: Repeated mowing will prevent seed production and limit spread but the plants will re-sprout. By repeatedly removing the stems the energy in the roots will eventually be exhausted. Mowing is especially effective when followed by herbicide application.

Chemical: 2,4-D, Aminopyralid in a product mix with 2,4-D, Amitrole, Glyphosate and MCPA are registered for use on hoary cress. Always check product labels to ensure the herbicide is registered for use on the target plant in Canada by the Pest Management Regulatory Agency. Always read and follow label directions. Consult your local Agricultural Fieldman or Certified Pesticide Dispenser for more information.

Biological: Searching and screening of agents is being done by the Hoary Cress Consortium!



REFERENCES

1 <http://www.sidney.ars.usda.gov/hoarycress/people.html>



abinvasives.ca
info@abinvasives.ca

TEACHING OLD DOGS NEW TRICKS

Addressing increased safety risks for farmers as we age

By Ian Chitwood

As an industry, it's time for those of us in agriculture to acknowledge an uncomfortable truth: we are getting older.

According to the latest agriculture census data, the average age of Canadian farmers is now 56, while the average age of farm operators has risen to 58.

That same data confirms that these older farmers now make up the majority: more than 60 per cent of farm operators in Canada are now 55 and over, and that number has grown six per cent since 2016.

However, this isn't necessarily a bad thing.

Older farmers are a huge asset to our industry. They are a generation that has struggled through hardships unknown to newer generations, maintaining viable farms and ranches throughout challenging weather cycles, restrictive political and social environments, and fluctuating global market conditions.

They are invaluable to our industry, our businesses and our families, and we need them and their expertise more than ever. However, we must acknowledge another uncomfortable truth: these farmers are also our most vulnerable. The proof is in the stats, as 80 per cent of farm fatalities in Alberta from 2020-21 involved someone 50 or over.

No one can take your place, so please consider the risks that come with farming as we age and the easy steps we can take to mitigate these risks.

Let's consider why risks increase after age 50. As we age, so too do the number of health issues we experience. These can include hearing and vision loss, slower reaction times, reduced sleep quality and muscle strength, as well as new medical conditions and side effects from medications.

Another factor is that older farmers tend to have established behaviour patterns, which they can be reluctant to change. While you might have been able to get away with doing things a certain way before – by luck, chance or physical abilities – this becomes less likely over time.

One final consideration here is that older farmers and ranchers often work alone. We know that this puts them even more at risk, as 50 per cent of farm safety incidents in Canada occur when the victim is working alone.

The greatest threat when working alone is being in an emergency situation without the ability to call for help. Unfortunately, I have my own experience in this area.

We had an incident where an employee pulled a pin on a loaded round bale wagon. There were no wheel chocks on the bale wagon, so it rolled forward, trapping them between the wagon and the tractor tire.

The employee was stuck there, with no phone, for more than 30 minutes before help arrived. We are extremely lucky this resulted in only minor injuries, but that is often not the case.

Unfortunately, stories like this are shockingly common. You could get caught in, or trapped under, a piece of equipment you were in the middle of repairing. You could have a medical emergency, such as a heart attack, and be left incapacitated. You could fall from a height and be left unconscious or so injured you can't move.

In all these scenarios, if you're working alone, without the means to call for help, the outlook can be grim.



I'm not asking you to imagine these things to make you miserable or anxious. I'm doing it because just knowing these risks makes you safer. Once you know the risks, you can better plan for how to mitigate them – and if you need help with those safety plans, AgSafe Alberta is here to assist you.

Older farmers often worry about the safety of everyone else around them – their family, their employees – without giving their own well-being a second thought. This is not a sustainable approach to safety.

Remember, no one can take your place.

Ian Chitwood is the chair of AgSafe Alberta and farms near Airdrie, AB.

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Scan to connect with local crisis support and resources or visit domore.ag for more.

hello@domore.ag

domore.ag



SCAN

The Do More Agriculture Foundation

How are you feeling?

Look at your internal dashboard. Do you see all green lights? Are there any orange or red lights tipping you toward overload and stress? **Take care of yourself so you can continue doing what you enjoy most.**

	Green Healthy Optimal	Yellow Reacting Stress	Orange Injured Burnout	Red Illness Depression Mental illness
Physical	Well-rested Good diet Active Rarely sick Zero or occasional alcohol use	Mild insomnia Crave junk food Unmotivated to exercise Occasional illness Need alcohol/drugs to relax	Exhausted Overeating Lethargic Many aches and pains Depend on alcohol/drugs to function	All or no sleep Erratic eating patterns Can't leave bed/couch Chronic illness Abusing alcohol/drugs
Mental	Clear and focused Solves problems Finds solutions	Sometimes distracted Tends to procrastinate Sees obstacles	Often preoccupied Avoids making decisions Focuses on negative	Impaired judgment Paralyzed making decisions *Has suicidal thoughts or actions
Emotional	Motivated/excited Balanced Good social network	Irritable/discouraged Impulsive Seeing people is a chore	Angry/anxious Overwhelmed Avoids social situations	Apathetic/helpless Out of control Isolates from all interaction
Strategies	Find self-care activities that give you a serotonin boost. Take a work break or vacation.	Reach out to friends and family and find activities that help you relax.	Seek peer support, assistance programs or mental health first-aid. See your family doctor.	Get professional or clinical support like a doctor or psychologist. *If you're having suicidal thoughts, seek help immediately and call 911.

Toolbox Talk



Talk Led By: _____ Date: _____
 Site/Location: _____ Time: _____
 Weather Report/Conditions:
 _____ High: _____ °C Wind Speed: _____ km/hr
 _____ Low: _____ °C Wind Gusts: _____ km/hr

Storing Bales & Handling Bales Safely

Bale Storage:

- Chose a level, even, stable and well drained area to store bales, as soft or uneven ground increases the risk of an incident.
- Store bales in areas that are uncluttered and are a safe distance away from overhead powerlines (at least 7 meters).
- Where possible, store round bales in single rows to ensure both safety and reduce spoilage.
- If you must stack round bales, do not stack them more than 3 bales high. If the bales are not very dense or are soft, a maximum height of two bales is advised. Stacking soft round bales on their ends is not recommended.
- Make sure that bales are stacked so that the lower supporting bales are stabilised by overlapping and interlocking upper bales.
- Appropriate fencing can keep all kinds of uninvited guests out, two and four legged alike.
- Post signage warning of the danger.

Handling Bales:

- Regardless of how bales are stored or their size, do not allow anyone to be in the immediate work area (especially children) as bales may shift or fall.
- Use equipment designed for lifting and stacking bales and ensure only trained and competent individuals operate it. Ideally, this equipment would include an approved cab or Falling Object Protection System (FOPS) to protect the operator.
- Do not carry bales in a way that obscures your vision.
- Remove stacked bales from the upper row first; do not remove bales from the bottom or middle of the stack as it creates instability and increases the risk of being crushed by a falling bale.
- Watch for spoiled bales and bales partially eaten by wildlife as they will be weak and may shift.

Additional Topics/Discussion:

Might include task/job details, hazards and hazard controls, worksite specific emergency response, etc.



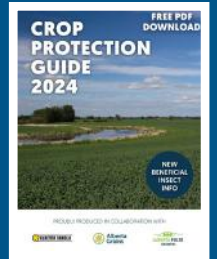
Attendance:

Print Name	Position/Trade/Company	Sign Name
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
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8.		
9.		
10.		

ALBERTA'S CROP PROTECTION GUIDE

Available for purchase or download at <https://www.albertabluebook.com/>
 The Blue Book is reviewed and updated annually to include the latest information on pesticide application products, along with new product additions.

The Alberta BlueBook App is no longer supported and should not be used. Please consult the print and digital PDF versions of the Blue Book for the most up-to-date crop protection information.



PEST CONTROL

Richardson Ground Squirrel (Gophers)

The County of Warner No.5 Agriculture Service Board is urging all farmers and ranchers to consider early control of the gopher population.

Rozol (anti-coagulant) Rodenticide Products are available for purchase through the Ag Service Board.

Products include:

Ready-To-Use Premix in 20 lb pail

Ready - To - Use Premix in 50 lb bag

■ Also registered for ground squirrel control in Alberta is the fumigant, aluminum phosphide and is available to producers with a valid Farmer's Pesticide Certificate (FPC).

** You cannot buy fumigants if you don't have a valid Farmer's Pesticide Certificate **

Other gopher control methods include:

■ Shooting, using traps, cultivating burrows.

■ Biological controls – nest boxes for owls and hawks. Leaving existing lone trees in place and protecting lone trees from rubbing or damage by cattle.

■ Cultural controls – crop rotation, use of buffer zones etc.

To purchase these products please stop in at the Ag Service Board Building (403) 642-2255.

Cleanfarms' ag chem jug recycling program is changing!

Collection sites are transitioning from municipal to retail locations

The Cleanfarms <23L container collection program is gradually changing to align it with other provinces, enabling farmers to bring these empty and rinsed containers back to their local agricultural retail outlets. The transition to ag retailers is being phased in over three **empty, rinsed agricultural chemical containers for recycling effective December 31, 2024**. After this date, your local ag retailer will be the primary drop-off location for these containers. Many ag retailers are already accepting them for recycling; however, before returning them to your local retailer (where you purchased them), please call to see if they have begun taking them.

What to know: Get a free Cleanfarms collection bag when the product is picked up or delivered, and then:

1. Rinse

- Use a chemical handler or a pressure nozzle to triple-rinse the containers to ensure no product is wasted

2. Remove & Bag

- Remove paper booklets, and discard
- Place rinsed containers in a Cleanfarms collection bag and tie closed

3. Return for recycling

- Return rinsed and bagged jugs to your participating ag retailer

4. Seed treatment containers

- Caps are to remain securely ON
- Place in a separate collection bag (seed treatment containers are processed separately from chemical containers and need to be kept in their own bags)

More info is available at <https://cleanfarms.ca/mb-ab-jug-transition/>

Local Ag Retailers



Core Ag Inupts, Warner AB
Ph. (587) 762-0122



Nutrien Ag Solutions, Warner AB
Ph. (403) 642-3951



Parrish & Heimbecker,
Milk River AB
Ph. (403) 647-3633



Richardson Pioneer, Stirling AB
Ph. (403) 756-3452



Return empty ag jugs to retail **Call for hours of operation**
All municipal ag jug depots to close by December 31, 2024

Grain Bag Recycling

3 steps to ensure your used grain bags can be accepted and recycled:

Please contact your local 'Alberta Ag-Plastic. Recycle It!' pilot collection site to confirm that it collects grain bags and/or twine, its hours of operation and if assistance is available.



County of Warner Ag Service Board Shop
SE-15-4-17 W4M
403-642-2255 | warnercounty.ca
Please contact the office to schedule a drop-off for collecting grain bags & twine.



1 Shake

- Please shake off as much organic material (spoilage, dirt, etc) as possible*



2 Roll

- Must be rolled and tied with twine
- Rollers and compactors are available at some Alberta collection sites
- Contact your local collections site in advance to confirm



3 Return

- Bring grain bags that are rolled and tied securely to your local pilot collection site

*Excessively dirty or loose/unrolled bags may be rejected, subject to a landfill tipping fee or to additional charges at drop off.
For more information: 403-942-6012 cleanfarms.ca

Twine Recycling

3 steps to ensure your used twine can be accepted and recycled:

Please contact your local 'Alberta Ag-Plastic. Recycle It!' pilot collection site to confirm that it collects grain bags and/or twine, its hours of operation and if assistance is available.



County of Warner Ag Service Board Shop
SE-15-4-17 W4M
403-642-2255 | warnercounty.ca
Please contact the office to schedule a drop-off for collecting grain bags & twine.



1 Shake

- Remove as much debris, snow or ice as possible*
- Do not include net wrap



2 Bag

- Obtain Cleanfarms recycling bag from county or collection site
- Place loose twine in a Cleanfarms recycling bag
- Poke small holes in bag at the bottom to drain water
- Secure bag tightly closed with twine or zip tie



3 Return

- Return to your local pilot collection site

*Excessively dirty twine, especially if knotted, may be rejected, subject to a landfill tipping fee or additional charges at drop off.
For more information: 403-942-6012 cleanfarms.ca



Prevent the Spread of Dutch Elm Disease

ELM PRUNING BAN TAKES PLACE BETWEEN APRIL 1st and SEPTEMBER 30th

Elm bark beetles (EBB), the vectors of DED, are active between these dates and can be attracted to the scent of fresh tree cuts, possibly infecting a healthy tree.

'Elm tree' means any tree or part of a tree of the Ul-



(Left top to right) **Figure 1.** American elm. Credit: Steven Katovich, Bugwood.org **Figure 2.** Siberian elm. Credit: Patrick Breen, Oregon State University **Figure 3.** American elm leaf shape. Credit: Paul Wray, Iowa State University, Bugwood.org **Figure 4.** Siberian elm leaf shape. Credit: Patrick Breen, Oregon State University, Bugwood.org

mus genus and its cultivars, including the American, Siberian and Japanese elm.

Overview

American elm (*Ulmus americana*) is not native to Alberta and has been planted in our communities for hundreds of years. It is often seen arching over the streets and has a distinctive umbrella-like canopy (Figure 1).

Siberian elm (*Ulmus pumila*) is not native to Alberta

and is much less susceptible to DED. This species is similar to the American elm, but the leaves are smaller and it is known for its delicate, wispy branches and heavy seed crops (Figure 2).

Shape

American elms have tall, straight trunks. Branches start high and grow upward to form an arching shape

like a vase or umbrella. Siberian elm can have a variety of forms, depending on location and pruning, ranging from a shrubby hedge to a single tree similar to the American

Leaf

Oval or egg-shaped with a pointed tip. The leaf has double-serrated leaf margins (meaning the 'teeth' have 'teeth'). The leaf base where it connects to the stem is asymmetrical. Elm leaves are dark green, up to 9 centimetres (3.5 inches) long and 2.5 to 5 cm (1 to 2 inches) wide. The underside of the leaf is rough because of raised veins.

For DED compliance and enforcement issues, contact your local municipality or Agricultural Fieldman

Report Elm Trees displaying symptoms of DED to the Provincial Hotline 1-877-837-ELMS



Site preparation for successful tree planting

By Toso Bozic



Either you plant trees for shelterbelts, windbreaks, eco-buffers, or afforestation proper site preparation is essential for the successful tree establishment. Tree seedlings require four basic elements to grow: water, nutrients, sunlight, and space. Site preparation refers to the process of modifying and improving the physical and chemical properties of the soil to create favorable conditions for tree establishment and growth. It involves a range of practices aimed at enhancing soil fertility, structure, moisture retention, and aeration while minimizing competition from weeds and other undesirable vegetation.

Prior site preparation thoughtful planning and site assessment conducting a thorough site assessment is essential to evaluate environmental conditions and identify potential constraints. Key factors to consider include soil characteristics (texture, pH, fertility), topography (slope, aspect), hydrology (drainage patterns, water availability), climate (temperature,

precipitation, wind speed), and existing vegetation.

Soil preparation is a fundamental step in site preparation for tree planting. Soil preparation techniques aim to improve soil structure, fertility, and water retention capacity, creating an optimal growing environment for tree seedlings. Common soil preparation techniques include:

1. Mechanical tillage involves using equipment till soil and to break up compacted soil, incorporate organic matter, and promote root penetration. Depending on site conditions, tillage depth and intensity may vary to achieve desired soil loosening and aeration.
2. Soil compaction is one of the key factors for tree mortality as it can restrict root growth and water infiltration, impeding tree establishment and growth. Soil decompaction techniques such as subsoiling, deep ripping, or aerating break up compacted layers, improve soil structure, and promote root development.
3. Poor drainage can lead to waterlogging, root suffocation, and tree mortality. Drainage improve-



Pictures: Site preparation with plastic mulch installed (L); Strip site preparation (C) herbicide site preparation (R)

ment measures can help redirect excess water away from planting sites, preventing waterlogged conditions, and promoting healthy root growth.

4. Reduce or eliminate weed competition is one main goal of site preparation. Weeds can inhibit tree growth and establishment by competing for water, nutrients, and light. Weed control methods such as herbicide application, mechanical removal, mulching, or cover cropping help suppress weed growth, reduce competition, and create favorable conditions for tree seedlings.
5. Adding organic matter maybe required in certain

soil to improve soil fertility, enhances water retention, and promotes microbial activity. Organic matter increases soil organic carbon content, provides essential nutrients for tree growth, and enhances soil structure, porosity, and aggregation.

To avoid high tree planting mortality, site preparation is a fundamental aspect of successful tree planting. By addressing site-specific factors such as soil conditions, drainage, weed competition, and species selection, site preparation techniques create favorable conditions for young tree establishment, growth, and thriving.

Spring Tree Care

By Toso Bozic

As the long winter cold and frost retreats and the first signs of spring emerge, trees and shrubs awaken from their dormant state, ready to burst into vibrant life. Spring is a crucial season for tree care, offering a unique opportunity to support their growth, health, and resilience throughout the coming months. Below are some tips for landowners for spring tree and shrub care.

Tips for spring tree care

1. Assessing winter damages- Before diving into the active care of your trees, it's essential to assess any potential winter damage to trees and other landscape plants. Inspect the branches, trunk, and roots for signs of stress, such as broken limbs, cracks, or lifting roots. Snow and ice can cause substantial harm, and addressing these issues early on can prevent further damage and promote a healthy recovery.

2. Assessing for **winter burn and dieback damages** - Many coniferous tree varieties, including spruces and cedars, are displaying symptoms of winter burn, evident in the browning and bronzing of their needles. The combination of winter's intense cold and strong winds has led to the desiccation of plant tissues, causing the shedding of needles in evergreen trees and the dieback of branches in deciduous trees. This dieback mechanism is a survival strategy employed by the trees, enabling them to sacrifice needles and twigs to ensure the overall survival of the tree.

3. Assessing for pests- prior leaf comes out it is great opportunity to insect trees and shrubs for you pests. During your inspection, look for the

following signs:

- a. Diseases such as cankers (dead sections of bark on branches or tree trunks), blackened and curled twigs, **black knot**, Cytospora canker, and other fungal infestations and decays.
- b. signs of insect infestation such as scales, mites, beetle and borer infestation (exit holes, sawdust).
- c. Lastly look up for wildlife damages – porcupines, voles, deer, moose and beaver

4. **Pruning** – late winter and early spring is the best time to prune trees. Remove dead, damaged, or diseased branches to promote air circulation and reduce the risk of pest infestation. Additionally, shaping the tree by selectively pruning can enhance its structure and fruit production. However, be cautious not to over-prune, as this can stress the tree. Prune dead branches within shelterbelts as they pose fire risks.

5. **Soil health assessment** - Healthy soil is the foundation of robust tree growth. Conduct a soil test to determine its pH and nutrient levels and possible needs to add nutrients. Fertilize only based on soil lab test results and do not fertilize if your lawn is regularly fertilized, as your trees are probably receiving adequate nutrition for good health. Adjust ONLY pH if necessary and provide a balanced fertilizer to replenish essential nutrients. Slow-release fertilizers are often preferable, supplying a steady nutrient stream throughout the growing season. Avoid excessive fertilization, as it can lead to nutrient imbalances and harm the tree. Fertilizers injected into the soil and fertilizer spikes foster leaf growth in trees but force trees to neglect needed functions like root growth and pest resistance. Fertilizer spikes in particular burn roots, causing root dieback.

6. **Mulching** – Re-mulching and adding wood chips up to 4–6-inch-

thick layer of an organic mulch, such as shredded bark or wood chips, replicates what nature creates on the forest floor. Known as duff, this accumulation of twigs, leaves and other organic debris fosters rich microbial activity beneficial to tree roots. Mulching is a fundamental practice to shield roots. One of the primary advantages of tree mulching is its role in soil enrichment. Organic mulches gradually decompose, releasing essential nutrients into the soil. This process enhances soil fertility, promoting healthier tree growth. The decomposition of mulch also improves soil structure, aiding in water retention and drainage. Mulching inhibits weed growth, protects roots from extreme heat, and retains moisture. Establishing a donut-shaped wood chip cover around your tree is a simple yet efficient approach to conserve moisture and minimize soil freezing.

7. **Watering** – as dry fall and winter with little moisture available to trees watering is crucial in early spring. Proper watering is critical in spring, especially during dry periods. Young trees, in particular, require adequate moisture to establish strong root systems. Water deeply and consistently, ensuring the root zone is thoroughly saturated. However, be cautious not to overwater, as excessive moisture can lead to root rot. Mulching helps retain soil moisture, reducing the frequency of watering. **Test your soil and water** for sodium levels and avoid watering with high levels of sodium

Conclusion

Spring tree care is a dynamic and rewarding undertaking that requires a combination of vigilance, knowledge, and proactive measures. By incorporating these tips into your tree care routine, you can create an environment where your trees not only survive but thrive, contributing to the beauty and sustainability of your landscape. Remember, each tree is unique, and understanding its specific needs is the key to successful spring tree care.