

# INFORMATION

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## NEW YUKON GRAZING POLICY APPROVED

On March 10, the new 2015 Yukon Grazing Policy and regulations came into effect. The grazing policy is available on the Agriculture branch website. The approved changes reflect the growth of Yukon's agriculture industry in the past two decades, as well as changes to local area plans and other government policies and legislation that affect grazing.

The changes to the grazing policy and regulations will improve administration of grazing agreements and help ensure that suitable lands are made available for grazing agreements.

The Agriculture branch would like to take this opportunity to introduce the new Yukon Grazing Policy. The following is a summary of the changes to the policy and regulations.

- A change in the eligibility for grazing agreements from Yukon resident to Canadian citizen to be consistent with the Wildlife Act requirements for ownership of a big game outfitting concession.
- An amendment to incorporate grazing fees under regulation instead of just under the policy. Fees will rise to \$3.00 from \$1.00 per animal unit month. The current fees haven't changed since 1988. A typical grazing lease fee would rise to \$197.70 from \$65.90 per annum.
- An amendment to update the Grazing Regulations to recognize the Director of Agriculture as the Director responsible for grazing administration, as opposed to the Director of Lands, Community and Transportation Services.
- A regulatory amendment under the Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act to ensure that new grazing lands or grazing land issued under the TL(Y)A are subject to the Grazing Regulations currently applicable to the Lands Act.
- Addition of the new objective of providing for animal welfare.
- Overhaul and clarification of the Definitions section.
- Clarification of inclusion of arable lands within grazing areas and a maximum of less than 10% total grazing area to consist of arable (Class 5 of better) lands.
- Grazing Agreement holders will be required to make an annual declaration stating their use of the agreement area. This declaration will be submitted with the annual fee payment
- Mobile dwellings on grazing area will now be subject to the grazing management plan and require agreement from Yukon government.



This photo depicts a mixed open forest where the predominant tree species is aspen with some spruce and willow. This open-canopy forest allows light to penetrate, resulting in the abundant growth of native grass species. Grazing agreements that have this forest complex usually demonstrate above-average kilograms of forage per-hectare ratio. Active grazing will stimulate regrowth of grass and with proper management practices will result in long term sustainable available forage for livestock

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## MESSAGE FROM THE AGRICULTURE BRANCH

It's that time of year. Seeded flats are sitting in south-facing windows and gardens are emerging from under the last remnants of snow lingering in the yard. Calves are being born, chicks and weaner pigs are arriving and spring is underway.

Many of you have heard by now that the Yukon government together with the Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee have been researching initiatives that will lead to the development of a Local Food Strategy. Over the past winter the focus has been on the production side of the strategy recognising the challenges that Yukon farmers face with climate, market size, regulations and input costs. The strategy is being developed in an effort to find ways that our producers become resilient to these challenges, responsive to the local market and competitive with imported foods that can be grown or raised here.

The priority areas within the Local Food Strategy include production, food processing, product distribution, access and availability and consumption. All of the priority areas will contain an education and awareness component as there are benefits associated with strengthening all areas of the local food system. Soon we will be seeking wider input on a draft strategy with all local food stakeholders, First Nations and the many Yukoners that could be impacted by the strategy. Watch for it on our website [www.agriculture.gov.yk.ca](http://www.agriculture.gov.yk.ca) or in newspapers early this summer.

Another event that reminds us of spring is the recent workshop called Working Together to Grow More 2: Community Gardeners & Economic Development Gathering 2015. This second gathering took place in Whitehorse Tuesday and Wednesday, March 24th and 25th. Organized by the The Arctic Institute of Community-Based Research, the workshop brought together 58 participants including 16 Yukon community gardens, Atlin, and the Northwest Territories. The gathering happens once a year and is the only organized opportunity for community growers to get together and exchange information. Community gardens are another important component of the local food strategy, addressing food security, education, capacity building, wellness, nutrition and economic development – to name a few of the benefits these gardens provide.

The Yukon Agriculture Association (YAA) has just revised and updated the Yukon Farm Products and Services Guide for 2015. It's a great resource for consumers looking to find out where to order chickens, beef or produce and it's a good time of year to get your order in before farmers start to sell out. For farmers and gardeners, there are agriculture suppliers, businesses, bankers, consultants and farm organizations listed in the guide. Development of the guide was funded by the Canada-Yukon Growing Forward 2 program. Hard copies of the products and services guide can be obtained by visiting the YAA office located at 302 Steele Street or from the Agriculture Branch at 300 Main St, Room 302, in Whitehorse. On-line you can find the guide at the YAA website: [www.yukonag.ca](http://www.yukonag.ca)  
Have a great summer everyone!

Tony Hill  
Director, Agriculture branch

## YUKON GRAZING POLICY CONTINUED...

### IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING PRICE INCREASE FOR GRAZING AGREEMENTS:

- If you have a grazing agreement you will not see any increase in fees as long as the current agreement is in force. Renewals of agreements at the end of the 30 year term will be subject to the increased fees on available forage.
- When renewing, reassigning or for new applications, there will be a modest increase in forage fees. The fees rise to \$3.00 from \$1.00 per animal unit month. The current fees haven't changed since 1988. Even after the increases, the fees are among the lowest for grazing leases across Canada.

NOTE: A comprehensive implementation document for the new 2015 Grazing Policy and regulations is available on the Agriculture branch website.

Photo: Piggy peeking through the fence at Birch Hill Farms. Learn more about Sylvia and Berwyn of Birch Hill Farms in the producer profile on page 6.





## PROTECTING YOUR LIVESTOCK FROM WILDLIFE

### WHAT ELECTRIC FENCING CAN DO FOR YOU

This past winter, staff with the Agriculture Branch met with officials at the Department of Environment about issues related to wildlife/livestock conflicts and learned that Environment staff are seeing an increasing number of incidents leading to loss of livestock and wildlife. In many of these interactions, it has been observed that with additional precautions, these losses could have been avoided.

Livestock production in the territory is generally a seasonal activity starting in the spring and concluding in the fall. This time frame does not provide much latitude to recover from an occurrence of predation. This loss of production can seriously affect the financial bottom line of an operation, result in the loss of a valuable home grown product and even the loss of customers due to an interruption of supply.

Wildlife such as bear, martin, mink, coyotes, fox and predatory birds as well as domestic dogs can cause devastating losses and problems when they get into fenced areas or even feed stores.

Most problems are a result of poor fencing construction and design. Improvements to fencing and including a perimeter electric fence system go a long way to reduce losses and nuisances from wildlife. Protecting feed is another area to consider preventing wildlife conflicts and losses.



When considering the type of enclosure that will be constructed for your livestock needs you must include what you want to contain and what you may want to keep out and then select materials that will achieve this. Not to be forgotten is what goes on top of the pen. Even with careful consideration to these materials, wildlife (bears, coyotes) and domestic animals (dogs) can be both formidable and determined to breach your fence to get at your animals. The addition of an electric fence system can provide that extra level of protection to deter potential predators.

Electric fencing comes in many sizes and configurations. When properly set up, fencing can provide reasonably priced piece of mind.

In spring 2015, Matt Larsen and Kevin Bowers from the Agriculture Branch received training in the design, construction and maintenance of electric fences and will be able to share this information with Yukon livestock producers.

Growing Forward 2 can also help with the cost of installing electric fencing options to mitigate wildlife conflicts. The wildlife damage, prevention and compensation program will fund individuals who reside in high-risk areas for livestock wildlife conflicts. Applicants must show a firm commitment to preventing and/or reducing interaction with wildlife. Individual producers are eligible for 50% to 60% of costs associated with wildlife prevention to a maximum of \$15,000 during the life of the program.

2015,  
INTERNATIONAL  
YEAR OF SOILS  
HEALTHY SOILS FOR A HEALTHY LIFE

The 68th UN General Assembly named 2015, as the International Year of Soils – Healthy Soils for a Healthy Life. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations was subsequently charged with implementing a series of initiatives directed to raise awareness and understanding the importance of soils in sustaining life on our planet.

The following article, published by the FAO in January of this year, explains how soils function, the basic components of soil, why it's important to maintain soil health, and why it's important to value soils both for agricultural purposes and for ecosystem health.

Healthy soils are the foundation of the food system. Our soils are the basis for agriculture and the medium in which nearly all food-producing plants grow. Healthy soils produce healthy crops that in turn nourish people and animals. Soil quality is directly linked to food quality and quantity.

Soils supply the essential nutrients, water, oxygen and root support that our food-producing plants need to grow and flourish. They also serve as a buffer to protect delicate plant roots from drastic fluctuations in temperature.

#### A HEALTHY SOIL IS A LIVING SOIL

A healthy soil is a living, dynamic ecosystem, teeming with microscopic and larger organisms that perform many vital functions including converting dead and decaying matter as well as minerals to plant nutrients (nutrient cycling); controlling plant disease, insect and weed pests; improving soil



structure with positive effects for soil water and nutrient holding capacity, and ultimately improving crop production. A healthy soil also contributes to mitigating climate change by maintaining or increasing its carbon content.

#### WHY IS SOIL ORGANIC MATTER SO IMPORTANT?

Soil organic matter - the product of on-site biological decomposition - affects the chemical and physical properties of the soil and its overall health. Its composition and breakdown rate affect the following: soil structure and porosity; water infiltration rate and moisture holding capacity of soils; diversity and biological activity of soil organisms; and plant nutrient availability.

Nutrient exchanges between organic matter, water and soil are essential to soil fertility and need to be maintained for sustainable production purposes. When the soil is exploited for crop production without restoring the organic matter and nutrient contents, the nutrient cycles are broken, soil fertility declines and the balance in the agro-ecosystem is destroyed.

#### SOILS ARE A CRUCIAL ALLY TO FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

Food availability relies on soils: nutritious and good quality food and animal fodder can only be produced if our soils are healthy. Over the last 50 years, advances in agricultural technology and increased demand due to a growing population have put our soils under increasing pressure. In many countries, intensive crop production has depleted the soil, jeopardizing soil productive capacity and ability to meet the needs of future generations.

#### MAINTAINING A HEALTHY SOIL IMPLIES MANAGING THE LAND SUSTAINABLY

With a global population that is projected to exceed nine billion by 2050, compounded by competition for land and water resources and the impact of climate change, our current and future food security hinges on our ability to increase yields and food quality using the soils that are already under production today.



Holistic production management systems that promote and enhance agro-ecosystem health and that are socially, ecologically and economically sustainable are necessary in order to protect our soils while maintaining high productive capacities.

Farmers play a central role in this aspect. Numerous and diverse farming approaches promote the sustainable management of soils with the goal of improving productivity, for instance: agro-ecology, conservation agriculture, organic farming, zero tillage farming and agro-forestry.

Ultimately, a better understanding of the linkages between soil life and ecosystem function and the impact of human interventions will enable the reduction of negative impacts and allow to capture the benefits of soil biological activity more effectively for a more sustainable and productive agriculture.

#### SOIL BUILDING IN THE YUKON

Soil building is a subject about which many Yukon farmers and producers are already quite familiar. Unlike the mature soils found throughout much of Canada, most soils in the territory do not have a reserve of all the nutrients on which to draw. This means that gardeners and farmers need to plan on developing soils and adding nutrients even before they plant the first crop.

#### DEVELOPING SOILS

There are many ways that soils are developed in the territory and most producers will find that a combination of methods will likely be the most effective. The type of soil building you choose will often reflect the type of crops grown and the amount of land requiring

amendment. For smaller scale agriculture and homes/market gardens, adding compost is an effective method of soil building. Whether you buy it from the city or make it yourself it adds much needed nutrients and organic matter to the soil.

If you have access to it, manure is another fantastic amendment; animal manures used from cows, horses, pigs and poultry can be found locally and good results are had with all. Compost and manures can be applied in early spring, prior to planting, and incorporated into the soil through tilling.

For large field scale agriculture, soils are commonly improved through the use of plow-downs and crop rotation, application of

manure and, if available compost. All of these amendments involve the addition of much needed organic matter to the soil and, as illustrated by the FAQ article, soil organic matter is vital for soil productivity and health.

#### AVOID DAMAGE TO SOIL

As important as building soil health is in ensuring healthy, productive land, it is equally important to establish management practices that are not actively damaging soils and plant health. These practices can include: limited/minimum tillage, leaving crop residues on the field, minimize compaction by limiting use of heavy machinery, avoiding application of excess water and nutrients, and minimizing grazing pressures in early spring and fall.



**Growing Forward 2**  
*A Canada-Yukon initiative providing funding to Yukon's agriculture, agri-food and agri-products industry*

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*Growing Forward 2 offers programs in the areas of business risk management, business development, food safety training and development, marketing, research and the environment.*

Take a look at the *Growing Forward 2 Programming Guide* on our website at [www.agriculture.gov.yk.ca](http://www.agriculture.gov.yk.ca) for funding opportunities. You can also contact the Agriculture Branch for more information or to request a hard copy of the programming guide.

**Currently accepting applications**

Phone: 867-667-5838  
 Toll-free: 1-800-661-0408, ext. 5838  
 Email: [agriculture@gov.yk.ca](mailto:agriculture@gov.yk.ca)

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## 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 amazing producers, farm products and strategies Yukon producers use to overcome some of our climate, production and market obstacles.

### BIRCH HILL FOREST FARM, ALSO KNOWN AS UNCLE BERWYN'S BIRCH SYRUP.

It is that time of year: time to make syrup while the sap is running. Sylvia Frisch and Lyndsey (aka Berwyn) Larson, of Birch Hill Forest Farm are busy making birch syrup on their farm property/lease about 125 km south of Dawson. The location is the result of much searching and traversing of the Yukon by Berwyn in 2002 & 03 for a birch stand that would provide a good home for Uncle Berwyn's Birch Syrup. In the process to make something sweet from the boreal forest Berwyn found a partner in his adventure. Berwyn met Sylvia, a born and raised Yukoner, who was also interested in foraging from the boreal forest, during one of his birch forest scouting trips.

Uncle Berwyn's Birch Syrup started up in the spring of 2005 and with the help of two good friends. The first year the gang lived in a wall tent, and they did not have the equipment to make true birch syrup, but they were able to tap enough trees to make 400 litres of original style birch syrup. "In our first year of business on a shoe string budget, bills and friends had to be paid and 400 litres of birch syrup had to be moved," Berwyn recalls. Berwyn sold his product at the Yukon Gold show, and was able to do well enough to pay off the bills.



Berwyn's Birch syrup has been gaining in popularity since the first sales at Dawson Gold show, being featured in many Yukon stores, along with beer, and being coveted by many chefs in the territory. Uncle Berwyn's Birch Syrup is continuing to grow, as they enter their 11th season.

They have three types of syrups:

- **Original Birch Syrup**, with 80% birch syrup and 20% raw organic sugar. This syrup has the rich flavour of pure birch syrup but it's sweeter. A great table syrup.
- **Pure Birch Syrup**, this is the strong dark syrup made from 100% birch syrup. With its full rich flavour, an ideal cooking syrup.
- **Birch-Maple Syrup**, the "All Canadian" syrup, is a blend of pure birch syrup with organic maple syrup from Quebec.

In the first years Berwyn's was only able to make the original blend and did not have the equipment to concentrate or evaporate the birch sap to make pure birch syrup. As they added a finishing pan to the evaporator and did pre-concentration with a reverse osmosis unit they were able to start making excellent birch syrup without over processing. To make only one litre of syrup, you start with approximately 80 litres of sap, this is double the amount of sap of maple syrup, which only requires 40 litres of sap to make one litre of syrup. The extra amount of concentrating or boiling need to make birch syrup adds to the challenges, but also contributes to the unique flavour.

Getting secured access to the birch stand took some time and work. In the first couple of years of tapping the birch trees, they had to do it without the security of permitted access to the trees because government did not have





are motivated to continue to grow with a chicken operation as they understand the hole left in the market without Partridge Creek Farms in operation.

With farming and birch syrup, Sylvia and Berwyn's time is accounted for. When they are not busy making syrup in the spring, they are cutting wood for the birch syrup process, lumbering wood through their mill to help build the infrastructure on their property, clearing land for their farm and homestead. All this while living and raising two kids in rural Yukon, along with harvesting from the forest to support Sylvia's Chaga tea business.

If you are looking for farm gate sales of chicken or pork from Birch Hill Forest Farm or want to learn more about Uncle Berwyn's Birch Syrup, go to [www.yukonbirch.ca](http://www.yukonbirch.ca) or contact them at [uncleberwyn@yukonbirch.com](mailto:uncleberwyn@yukonbirch.com).

Thank you Sylvia and Berwyn, for sharing your journey of developing Uncle Berwyn's Birch Syrup and all the best in developing your farm.

a process for permitting access to tap trees. They eventually were able to secure a land use permit from Yukon Forest Management branch which help them develop the history and success to take the next step and secure a lease agreement with Agriculture. This long term lease option gives Berwyn and Sylvia and their family the security to develop their property.

With a land lease they are able to diversify their operation and have started moving into farming. As they develop their property and clear land they have been working on their agriculture business. They've planted berry bushes including strawberries, raspberries, haskaps, currants and cherries. They have experimented with the natural vegetation/forest and have tried to develop an operation that requires less clearing of land but this is proving to be a challenge. Pigs and chickens have been added to the operation over the years and most recently have added their first goat. The pigs and chickens have been a bit of learning process. In their first year, Sylvia and Berwyn were undervaluing their meat sales, and have some work to do on understanding the market and pricing of their livestock. They

## CAN WE PREVENT TALL HAWKWEED?

Undesirable weeds threaten productivity on rangeland and agricultural fields in neighbouring provinces. The Yukon is in the fortunate situation of not needing to battle heavy infestations at this point in time. The Yukon Invasive Species Council (YISC) targets some of the nasty weeds in an early detection and rapid response program which relies on cooperation with people connected to the land.

Weeds or invasive species are often introduced to new areas by humans. Examples include, road side seeding, horticulture escapees and weedy seed used in agricultural projects. Most jurisdictions have noxious weed regulations that regulate species such as Orange Hawkweed, Perennial Sow Thistle and Creeping Thistle. The lack of Yukon regulations means that Yukoners need to act responsibly. We can reduce the chance of introducing noxious weeds by using Canada Certified Number 1 seed and when importing hay only bring in Certified Weed-Free Hay.

Local farms and growers in Yukon are important to our livelihood. Taking the steps to act responsibly, by not seeding or importing a problem, is a good start. It is equally important to keep an eye on weeds growing on the land. By spotting and reporting nasty weeds early, we have a good chance of controlling them and preventing their spread. For more information on invasive species visit [www.yukoninvasives.com](http://www.yukoninvasives.com)



Photo Courtesy of Andrea Altherr

## YUKON'S COMMUNITY GARDEN GATHERING...

Yukon's community gardeners gathered for a workshop titled *Working Together to Grow More 2: Community Gardeners & Economic Development Gathering 2015*, in Whitehorse on March 24th and 25th.

This gathering, the second such event held in Whitehorse, brought Yukon growers and others together to build relationships, network and share their learning and challenges with each other. They also had opportunities to benefit from experts in growing, build capacity for community economic development, and engage youth to become growers and leaders for food security in their community.

The workshop shared new resources, inspiration, and helped attendees develop a network of people that can be called on while undertaking the important challenge of organizing and running a successful garden that meets the needs of the community.

Some of the highlights included updates from each of the community gardens, Yukon Kids on the Farm, Recreation and Parks Association of Yukon's healthy menu and programs, Tr'ondek Hwech'in Wellness Farm, Raising Poultry in Old Crow, small scale agriculture, soil health, seed saving and business planning.

Kate Mechan, a local food advocate and producer, facilitated the two-day workshop. She introduced the gathering to Holistic Management Planning and organized breakout sessions to address some of the challenges experienced by community gardens. The gathering also enjoyed input and presentation from our neighbours in the Northwest Territories: Lone Sorensen of Northern Roots, Craig Scott of Ecology North, and Jennifer Broadbridge of Yellowknife Community Garden Collective.

Chief Mathieya Alatini of Kluane First Nation kicked off day two, with a presentation of the Kluane First Nation's Community Food Security Strategy. KFN's Food Strategy summed up the importance of the gathering and how important food is to the communities.

Community gardens are important in many ways. They contribute to local self-sufficiency and community food security; they provide access to local healthy foods that can prevent diabetes and other chronic diseases; they contribute to the development of capacity in local farming; they provide healthy options to offset the high costs of store-bought food; they facilitate connections between food, land and community, particularly among elders and youth; they promote community health, and they can provide economic opportunities for communities. Territorial support for these initiatives is very important

for long-term sustainability of Yukon food systems and food security.

58 participants attended the gathering, including 16 Yukon community gardens and representatives from Atlin and the Northwest Territories. The gathering happens once a year and is the only organized opportunity for community growers passionate about healthy local food to work with others to develop partnerships and facilitate opportunities that are both locally relevant and contribute to strengthening the Yukon's economy and food system.

The Arctic Institute of Community-Based Research hosted the workshop in partnership with the Agricultural Development Program supported by the Government of Canada and the Yukon Government's Growing Forward 2 Agricultural Programs, the Yukon Government's Community Development Fund, the Recreation & Parks Association of the Yukon, the Public Health Agency of Canada (Innovation Strategy), the Growers of Organic Foods Yukon, and others.

For more information or to get more involved with Yukon's community gardens you can contact Jody Butler Walker (668-3393; [jody@aicbr.ca](mailto:jody@aicbr.ca)) or Katelyn Friendship (668-3393; [katelyn@aicbr.ca](mailto:katelyn@aicbr.ca)) Arctic Institute of Community-Based Research.





## GREENHOUSE CONFERENCE IN WHITEHORSE

On March 24th and 25th the Cold Climate Innovation and Technology Innovations programs of Yukon College's Yukon Research Centre hosted their fourth annual Research, Innovation and Commercialization (RIC) Workshop. The event was held at the Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre in Whitehorse.

This year's conference theme, *Innovation in Cold Climate Greenhouses*, is a topic of interest to many northern growers.

Conference organizers identified that the critical challenge for agriculture in cold climate regions is to extend the growing season, possibly even to allow for year round food production. Although greenhouses are integral to cold climate growing, current greenhouse technology on the market is not able to deliver economically viable returns on investment through the colder months. Innovation in the field of cold climate greenhouses has the potential to make a significant impact on one of the largest economic and social issues facing northern communities.

The conference featured local and visiting presenters who discussed a broad range of greenhouse and greenhouse-related topics. The overall theme of the conference focussed on how technology could be incorporated into northern greenhouse designs and functionality and included the following topics areas:

- Northern greenhouse structures and design
- Optimizing energy and resource budgets through lighting and insulation



- Innovative growing techniques and processes
- Computers in the garden - intelligent growing systems
- Commercialization strategies

The conference was well attended and both days were sold out. There were some very high tech solutions put forward including: robotized production platforms, vertical growing, aeroponics, aquaponics, utilization of high technology insulating materials such as vacuum panels, and lighting options.

Local growers Bob Sharp and Roy Ness presented their "low-tech" (and cheap) solutions to common greenhouse problems such as efficient heat capture and storage, automated ventilation and methods of modulating the internal temperature and moisture of the greenhouse environment. Bob Sharp also covered basic design considerations for northern greenhouses as well as ways to source building materials for little to no money.

Agriculture Branch presented on Growing Forward II programming and the current development of the Yukon Food Strategy document.

On the second day was a panel discussion on local food markets hosted by Alastair Smith. This was a discussion between Mark Wykes of Your Independent Grocer, Leslie Carson of Yukon

Hospital Corporation Purchasing and Dylan Woo, manager with the Yukon Hotels Group. This discussion generated a good deal of engagement with the attendees and quickly became a discussion about food security and local food availability in retail and restaurant locations. All three panelists voiced an eagerness to source, purchase and retail locally grown produce and food products. There seemed little in the way of barriers for producers to market their products through these locations, requesting producers to pick up the phone so that they could have the conversation. One of the few barriers identified by all three panelists was the requirements for \$2,500,000 in liability insurance from producers prior to purchasing local products.

The 2015 RIC workshop hosted the unveiling of the NORTrakTor, an affordable open-source tractor designed for the northern farmer developed in partnership with Cold Climate Innovation and Arctic Automate. Both the conference and NORTrakTor received a portion of their funding from Growing Forward 2, the federal/territorial agriculture funding program.

For more information about any of the speakers or topics contact Eirik Sharpe, Technology Innovation Project Officer, Yukon Research Centre at 867-668-8792 or [esharp@yukoncollege.yk.ca](mailto:esharp@yukoncollege.yk.ca)

## FARMER ROBERT'S STORE

### LOOKING FOR LOCAL PRODUCTS

A new store with a focus on local products is looking to open this summer to provide local food to Yukoners. The following is a letter from owner/operators Robert Ryan and Simone Rudge to Yukon producers introducing Farmer Robert's Store located at 21 Waterfront place in the old Harley Davidson building across from the Feed Store. Robert and Simone are looking to help grow locally grown and sourced food and are looking at developing supply relations with Yukon growers.



DEAR FELLOW FARMERS, GROWERS, AND FOOD SUPPLIERS:

As farmers ourselves we have sometimes been frustrated with the difficulties of getting our locally grown food into the retail market. The Yukon does not have a model that allows us to easily retail our products. As a result, most of us rely upon farm-gate sales and other forms of direct marketing. For a new farmer, it takes time to build a strong client base. Even for old hands, direct sales can sometimes be a frustrating necessity to keeping our farm businesses viable. Please don't get us wrong; we love our customers as much as you do. Customers seeking out Yukon-grown are extremely enthusiastic about locally grown products and recognize the need to pay a bit more for our small-farm practices. What we find though is that the time to develop and work to build these direct relationships sometimes makes it difficult to find enough time to do the farming work we need to. In addition, not every Yukoner has a freezer large enough to accommodate half a pig or a few dozen chickens, nor is everyone willing or able to drive out of town to collect their great food.

Our intention is not to replace farm-gate sales, but to work alongside that model so more Yukoners can access the excellent food we all produce. In order to realize our goal of increasing local food in the market, we decided to build and run our own grocery store.

Farmer Robert's Store is located at 21 Waterfront Place across from the Feed Store. We feel lucky to own this building as it not only has a superb location but also looks the part with easy parking and plenty of space inside. The new store's primary focus is "Locally Grown" and then regionally sourced food.

We plan to sell:

1. Bulk: flours, beans, grains, spices, coffee, tea & liquids in as small or large quantities as you like
2. Dairy: milk, cheese & eggs
3. Preserves: dried, pickled, & canned items made in the Yukon
4. Meat: red meat, poultry, & charcuterie
5. Bakery: fresh bread, pastries & sweet and savoury pies
6. Hot and cold ready-to-eat food & beverages (with a lovely "barn" sitting area)

In order to assist farmers to easily access a retail market, we have been establishing a new way forward with regulatory agencies to provide simple, practical ways of certifying your product for retail sale. For example, we are installing an on-site egg grading/processing station, a vegetable washing and packaging area, an inspected butcher's shop, a commercial kitchen with opportunities for use by our suppliers and will be assisting with working toward year-round abattoir capacity.

The new business certainly has challenges to overcome but with them come some great opportunities. For you, the opportunity is to increase your production, create a new food line, or a new label. We hope that by offering to provide marketing and distribution, you will have more time to do what you love – produce great Yukon food. The challenge will be to meet the year-round demand which we expect will initially exceed what we can provide.



We will work with you to introduce your local foods and give our customers a clear understanding of who grew it, what went into it and how it was raised. We know our customers are concerned about the food they eat and really want the connection that comes from knowing who and where their food comes from. We wish to be totally transparent by providing as much information as we possibly can about our food producers and exactly what goes into making it. Although we may not be able to sell all the goods produced by every farm, we will try our very best to keep from becoming an exclusive club for a few large farms. We would like to see product on our shelves from a wide variety of Yukon farms, gardens, and kitchens. We are looking to purchase the very best of local foods at a fair wholesale price.

We will work with producers to arrive at that price: fair for both producers and consumers. This price will need to be below current farm-gate sale prices. We will sell your products at above farm-gate sale prices to ensure we can pay a fair wage to our employees and continue in business for many years to come. This way, our customers all get a fair price along with the convenience of shopping in town, but farm-gate sales continue to be an attractive option.

We would like our store to be a focal point for farmers to meet to discuss growing food and to get to know each other. We hope to encourage new farmers and growers by providing a place to share seeds, cuttings, gardening knowledge, and a garden hand-tool lending library. We will continue to be a trusted source of information for new livestock and poultry growers about housing and processing,

about sourcing new stock or the feed needed to successfully raise animals and poultry in the north.

We will be selling small quantities of organic feed on the same basis as our bulk foods where farmers can bring and fill their own containers so that even small producers can afford organic feed.

We have been in discussion with not-for-profit organizations interested in local food such as the Growers of Organic Food Yukon, the Fireweed Community Market Society, the Potluck Food Co-op, and the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition. We expect to work together so all can continue the work we do to help increase access to local healthy food.

We would like you to help us move forward. With our main focus on

local food we need your input on what you expect you can provide to our store. Please let us know what you hope to supply, quantities you expect to have available, and the timing for that availability. We would like to help you. Tell us what you need.

Sincerely,  
Robert Ryan & Simone Rudge

You can contact Farmer Roberts store at [Farmer-Roberts@yukonfood.com](mailto:Farmer-Roberts@yukonfood.com) or visit them at 21 Waterfront Place, Whitehorse, YT Y1A 6V1. They have a local food form they would like producers to fill out describing the farm and providing what products, how much, when you would expect to have product and how the store can help you get it ready for sale.

### THE CORNER LOT (LAND, OPPORTUNITIES & TIDBITS)

In 2014, the Agriculture Branch received eight new applications, issued three Agreements for Sale and seven titles. The titled parcels represent approximately 183 ha of new lands, and the average parcel size is approx. 26 ha.

Here are some Agriculture Lands statistics over the last 5 years:

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Avg
Applications Received	12	15	13	13	9	12
Agreements for Sale signed	15	9	8	6	3	8
Titled Agriculture Parcels	8	14	9	8	7	9

The data taken from the previous five years (2005-2009) have slightly higher averages than the current five year period. Out of the Total 46 titles between 2010 and 2014, Whitehorse claimed a smaller than usual share (39%) of the 46 titles. Haines Junction had a 22% share as a result of the Marshall Creek Subdivision. The remaining titles were widely distributed across the territory.

In follow up on the West Dawson / Sunnyside Land Area Planning, Ag Branch is hoping to release four Lots totaling 120 ha in this area. This project is being completed for submission to YESAB review. Also, to be ready for 2015 are lots in the Ibex Valley area. All planned agriculture land sales are well advertised.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

GET YOUR UPDATED  
YUKON PRODUCTS AND  
SERVICE GUIDE...

For those of us who like to support and eat local, there is a new Yukon products and services guide for all things agricultural (producers, suppliers, market gardens). The 2015 Yukon Farm Products and Services Guide is now available. The Yukon Agricultural Association championed the update to the guide and with this edition, they developed a new interactive online version. The online version is available on the YAA website. Look for the green Local Products button at the top of their website [www.yukonag.ca](http://www.yukonag.ca)



The online version lets you select a farm from a list or from an interactive Google map, or you can do a search by products. The product search option lets you pick from a list of products such as eggs, pork, or vegetables, to name a few, and when you select a product only the farms supplying said product show up on the map and in the list of farms.

One of the best things about the online version is the ability for new or existing operations to be added at any time. If you would like to be included in the directory please contact Yukon Agricultural Association at 867-668-6864, [admin@yukonag.ca](mailto:admin@yukonag.ca) or visit the office at 203-302 Steele Street.

You can still get a hard copy at Yukon Agricultural Association, Yukon Agriculture branch, or look for it at your local market or feed store.

For those looking to source local, this is the best time to contact the local producers and make your connections. Some producers only raise or plant what they can sell and may produce more if they had a better understanding of demand at the beginning of the season. So check out the website or grab the guide and connect to sources of local healthy food.

EMR LIBRARY HAS SOME NEW AGRICULTURE BOOKS

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

New to the library:

- *The Complete Guide to Saving Seeds: 322 Vegetables, Herbs, Flowers, Fruits, Trees, and Shrubs*, by Bob Gough and Cheryl Moore-Gough, 2011
- *Real Food Fermentation: Preserving Whole Fresh Food with Live Cultures in Your Home Kitchen*, by Alex Lewin, 2014.
- *Commercial Vegetable Production* resource from Alberta Agriculture.

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

InFARMation is:

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

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Box 2703, Whitehorse, YT, Y1A 2C6

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

Email: [agriculture@gov.yk.ca](mailto:agriculture@gov.yk.ca)

Online: [www.agriculture.gov.yk.ca](http://www.agriculture.gov.yk.ca)

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