

INFORMATION

Yukon Agriculture Branch Quarterly Bulletin

Spring, 2017

Volume 30 Issue 1

HONORED WITH SOVEREIGN'S MEDAL FOR VOLUNTEERS

FARMER, AGRICULTURE ADVOCATE, LONG-SERVING MEMBER OF YAA

Mike Blumenschein was presented with the Canadian Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers at this year's New Year's Day Levee in Whitehorse, on behalf of the Governor General of Canada, His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston.

The Honorable Doug Phillips, Commissioner of Yukon, presented Mike with the Medal for Volunteers for his longtime work with the Yukon Agricultural Association.

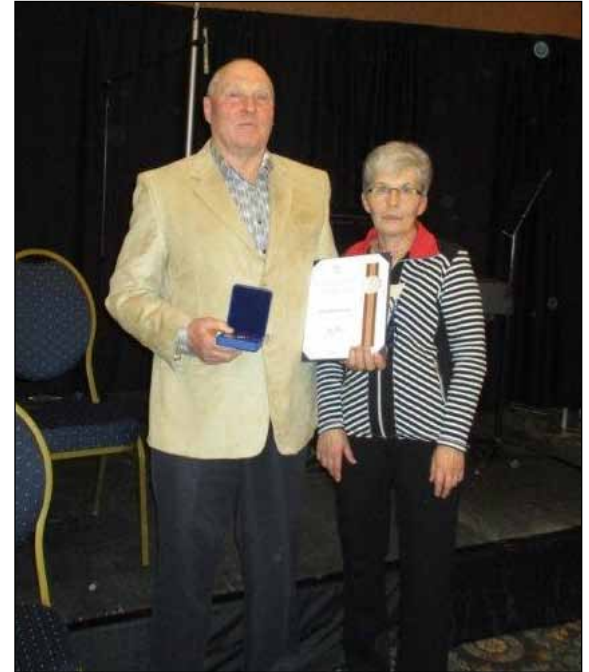
Mike Blumenschein has been a member of and served the Yukon Agricultural Association for over 20 years. Although not currently on the board, he is still very active with the association and continues to be a staunch advocate for agriculture in Yukon.

Mike has served as board member, Secretary, Vice President and five terms as YAA President. The award recognizes Mike's time and commitment to Yukon's industry on the YAA board. But for those who know him, it is really about his passion and knowledge of agriculture in the territory.

Mike moved to Whitehorse from Alberta in 1965, bringing his commitment and knowledge of farming with him. It took a few years before he returned to his agriculture roots on his own 18-acre farm with his wife Sylvia, on Takhini River road in 1986.

In 1994, after selling his automotive and recreation vehicle shop, he started custom farming and helping others develop or improve their agriculture properties. The custom farming business naturally grew, likely because of the need to develop agriculture land in the territory and the exceptional quality of service Mike provided. Mike has custom farmed on properties from Tagish to Braeburn to Mendenhall and was active in clearing land, breaking, seeding, fertilizing, cutting and baling hay.

Mike has been involved in agriculture from the time he was able to lift an oat bundle onto the wagon back in Debolt, Alberta. He constantly observes what is going on with the land through the seasons and what works for agriculture. His "hands in the dirt" understanding of how to farm in the Yukon stands out. He has shared his knowledge with many, and continues to do so, keying in on managing moisture, aeration, feeding your fields and timing of when to work your fields.



Mike and Sylvia Blumenschein following the Canadian Sovereign's Medal presentation.

MESSAGE FROM THE AGRICULTURE BRANCH	2
YUKON'S THINHORN SHEEP CONCERNS	3
TONY HILL RETIRES	4
HOW TO GET YOUR SOIL TESTED	6
MANDALAY FARM GETS INTO EGGS	7
GROWING FORWARD 2 ENTERS LAST YEAR	8
VETERINARY SERVICES PROGRAM	9
INTRODUCING THE NEW AGROLOGIST; RANDY LAMB	10
2017 CYFF YOUNG FARMERS CONFERENCE	11
ANNOUNCEMENTS	12

Continued on page 2

MESSAGE FROM THE AGRICULTURE BRANCH

The days are getting longer and spring is in the air. Our winter work wraps up on April 20 with our last Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee meeting and we should be in good shape to get back on the land in time for planting.

The advisory committee was busy this winter working on new programs to be offered under the next Canada-Yukon agriculture policy framework agreement. Many programs will be the same as in Growing Forward 2 but there are new offerings in anticipation of emerging needs and sector changes. For example, the livestock sector has been growing recently so programs are being constructed to help with on-farm handling facilities, transport of stock to processors and food safe practices. The committee also worked on a review of the 2006 Yukon Agriculture Policy to identify policy items that need to be addressed as we work towards a new Yukon agriculture policy for 2020 and beyond.

We have some new faces at the Agriculture branch to introduce you to. Jesse Walchuk is the new Agriculture Development Officer, coming over to Agriculture from our Land Management branch just before the new year. Jesse has been busy, getting up to speed on the operations of the mobile abattoir, sitting in on elk-agriculture working groups and recently working with the Animal Health Unit to staff a half-time Livestock Health Technician position. This new position will have primary responsibility to provide territorial meat inspection at licensed abattoirs and also spend time on livestock health extension services. Veterinarian Michelle Thompson has accepted the position and will begin training for her new duties later in April.

Randy Lamb has officially taken over as the branch Agrologist after Matt Ball vacated this position back in January. Randy has been busy acting in the position for close to a year, leading branch extension activities including the Yukon Master Gardener program and providing several presentations to the recent Community Gardening Gathering, hosted by the Arctic institute of Community Based Research in Whitehorse last month. New extension activities for the spring include moving some of our research trials to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Teaching and Learning Farm in the Klondike Valley, continuing to develop the research farm orchard, and getting out for farm visits.

And...this is my last message as I will have retired from public service on April 12. It has been a great pleasure for me to work in such a dynamic and developing sector of the Yukon economy and social fabric of our communities. I'd like to thank all of my government colleagues, the industry leaders, the stakeholders and the farmers that I have gotten to know, for your support and patience as we worked together on agriculture issues, over the past 10-plus years that I have served as Director. The future looks bright indeed and I have enjoyed working towards it with you.

Have a great spring everyone!
Tony Hill
Director, Agriculture branch

MIKE BLUMENSCHNEIN
SOVEREIGN'S MEDAL CONT...

Mike's best management practices for hay fields include:

- Prep your soil in the fall to reduce moisture loss in the spring
- Feed your fields. Adding amendments improves productivity. Timing of soil fertilization is key: fall fertilizing works in the Yukon. The transition of fall to winter incorporates the fertilizer into the soil and the nutrients will be there for the plant come spring when the fields start waking up.
- Aerate your fields. Aeration opens up the ground, brings in air, creates space for moisture. The cutting of roots during aeration forces the plant to tiller and stimulates growth.
- Don't go too deep! Only work the top four to six inches of soil, as going deeper increases the water demand or space for water to go. There is only so much moisture and the deeper you cultivate the more water that is needed. Keep the water in that top layer where the bulk of the root system is.

Congratulations Mike, for this well-deserved recognition and mentoring the next crop of Yukon farmers.

Photo: Mike's first hay harvest from his Gully Rd. property on a newly developed dryland hay field back in 2012. This Carlton Smooth brome stand yielded 4 tonnes per acre.



ARE AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES A CONCERN FOR YUKON'S THINHORN SHEEP POPULATIONS?

Concerns have been growing about transmission of pneumonia-causing pathogens from domestic sheep and goats to Yukon's wild thinhorn sheep herds. These concerns largely stem from serious disease and mortality that has occurred, and continues to occur, in bighorn sheep herds in the US and Canada. Sheep and goats are an important livestock option for northern producers, but the attention on the issue of pneumonia in wild sheep has led to increased discussion among animal health experts, interest groups and policy makers.

Feedback from Yukon's Agricultural Association indicates that farmers are looking forward to working with concerned individuals, groups and departments to develop practices that can be implemented to eliminate direct contact between domestic and wild sheep.

While some groups or individuals have suggested that domestic sheep and goats should not be allowed to be raised in Yukon, education and prevention of contact is the most effective tool to ensure that the domestic sheep and goats do not pose a health risk to wild thinhorn sheep populations. Ensuring separation of wild sheep and domestic small ruminants is one option to reduce the risk of contact between the species. Separation fencing, including using the use of double fencing or electric outrigger fencing around a domestic sheep or goat herd may be effective in preventing direct contact.

While less is known about the effect of guardian dogs on ensuring separation between domestic



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

ruminants and wild sheep, dogs provide an additional tool for separation. In addition, all of these measures have the benefit of helping protect domestic animals from predators.

Both time and money are required in order to implement any of these preventive measures. Funding is available to sheep and goat owners to help with costs associated with keeping livestock separate from wild populations. In addition to providing funding, the Agriculture branch and Animal Health Unit are working with farmers in other ways, including:

- providing information materials;
- discussing concerns regarding animal health with the agriculture industry;
- providing support to sheep and goat owners on options for keeping animals and wild sheep safe; and,
- visiting farms to work with producers to develop management strategies.

WHY IS DISEASE TRANSMISSION A CONCERN?

Yukon has the largest population of wild thinhorn sheep in Canada. This iconic species is part of Yukon's landscape and holds great environmental and commercial value. Wild sheep have little resistance to bacteria and viruses found in otherwise

healthy domestic sheep and goats. Although pneumonia has not been detected in Yukon's wild thinhorn sheep populations to date, there is concern that these herds may be vulnerable to pathogens transmitted from domestic sheep and potentially goats.

Thinhorn sheep appear to be susceptible to the pathogens that cause pneumonia. While pneumonia outbreaks like those seen in bighorn sheep herds have not been documented in wild thinhorn herds, this may be partly due to the limited exposure of wild thinhorn sheep to domestic small ruminants to date.

When wild sheep come into contact with domestic sheep and goats, there is a risk of pathogen transmission that can result in disease. It may only take one interaction to cause serious impacts to wild herds. Wild sheep herds that survive a pneumonia outbreak may continue to experience very poor health and poor lamb survival for decades, resulting in a significant decline to populations. Pathogens can spread between wild herds even with minimal contact between them.

Continued on page 5...

AFTER 22 YEARS...

**TONY HILL,
DIRECTOR OF
AGRICULTURE
BRANCH, RETIRES**

Tony Hill retires from the Agriculture branch following 22 years working with Yukon government. Tony is the second long term Director of Agriculture for the Yukon and has been an able advocate for the industry, as well as a real pleasure to work for during his 11 year tenure as Director. Although he gave it his best shot, his jokes at the North of 60 Agriculture Conference never quite reached the lows attained by his predecessor Dave Beckman. Oh well, no one is perfect. The following is a Q&A about Tony's time with Yukon's agriculture community and the changes, successes and challenges he has seen during his tenure with government.

You started with the Agriculture branch as the Agrologist way back in 1994. When you look back at those early years, what worked for our producers as it relates to growing/production and has anything changed?

A lot has changed since then. The focus in the 90's was on capturing more of the market for horse hay and getting new lands into agriculture production. The focus more recently has shifted to food production and opportunities in related agri-business like processing and retailing local foods.

You were involved with developing the Yukon Agriculture branch's research farm, back in 1995. How long did it take you to get this going and what was the first demonstration or research plot?

Research at the demonstration farm actually began back in 1988 with Margret Ames, who was the Crops Demonstrator for the Agriculture branch. When I took over in 1995, the soils had been beaten to flour with over-zealous rototilling



so we started on a series of soil building trials with green manure crops. After four years of soil improvement, we started a project using new management techniques for commercial raspberry and strawberry production in the North. That was fun.

When did you take over as Director? What do you recall from your first year in this role?

Dave Beckman retired in October 2005 and David Murray and I traded off the acting assignment until I was officially hired in August 2006. My first year in the role was really interesting; wrapping up the 2006 Agriculture policy and getting to work on a new multi-year development plan for agriculture in the Yukon.

What were your biggest challenges during your time as Director?

Walking the line between being a regulator, advocating for industry, and as a decision maker on agriculture land applications and project applications for funding.

With challenges, there are accomplishments, what are some of the more notable industry and government accomplishments you have seen during your career?

From a public service perspective, it has been the experience I have enjoyed working with the all of you at the Agriculture branch. We have developed a lot of policies and programs together that contribute to the success of the Yukon agriculture industry. On the industry side, it's really the same thing. Getting to work with interesting people on challenging issues. I'm sure I peed off a few but in the end we had a pretty good working relationship.

You worked with the agriculture industry to develop a local food strategy that is aimed at increasing the production and use of locally grown foods and will guide development of Yukon agriculture through to 2021. If you took a stab at predicting the future, how do you see this food strategy best supporting agriculture development?

The challenge with the Local Food Strategy will be coordinating all the different government and non-government players to work towards a common goal, that being a more self-sufficient and accessible food system. Many of the strategies identified are already being implemented and I think that we are well on our way, from an agriculture perspective.

You leave your role having worked with the Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee to scope out the issues for an agriculture policy review. What were the biggest hurdles and wins from our 2006 Yukon Agriculture Policy?

Land use and subdivision. These issues will always be there and you will just have to keep up with the curve balls as they are thrown at you. Each new policy takes a stab at addressing these issues but they evolve over time.

The Agriculture branch has a healthy and strong relationship with our agriculture industry, do you have any thoughts on why this is and what worked best when engaging with Yukon's agriculture community?

Making ourselves accessible and useful. The great thing about agriculture is that provincial and territorial governments offer extension services to the industry. Other government departments would be well advised to develop similar services if they want meaningful input from the stakeholders they work with.

In your opinion and experience what are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and/or threats faced by Yukon agriculture at this time?

As the industry develops, new opportunities arise all around it. There is local market share available for most agri-food products that can be grown or raised here. The constraints are often the same things that are our opportunities – distance from other production areas, socio-economic and environmental factors and the whole local food movement that Yukoners embrace. The size of the local market will keep the industry focused on small-scale and sustainable farming practices.

We all have a retirement wish list, what are you looking forward to?

I'm looking forward to working for myself again. There's a lot less process to follow before I get to make a decision.

Any parting words?

Just a word of thanks to all of you that have made my 20-plus years of public service such an enjoyable experience. See you around.

Photo: Tony on a farm tour for the Local Food Strategy in Dawson at Kokopellie Farm with Otto Muehlbach.



AGRICULTURE AND THINHORN SHEEP CONCERNS CONTINUED...

The crux of this concern is two-fold. Domestic sheep or goats may carry harmful pathogens that cause pneumonia but may not show any symptoms of disease. This may lead livestock owners to assume that their animals do not pose a risk to wild sheep, providing a false sense that “my animals are healthy and would not present a problem to wild populations”. Although there are tests available to determine if domestic sheep and goats are carrying some of the pathogens of concern, these tests only indicate if the animal is shedding the organism at the time of testing, and does not provide enough information to determine if an animal is completely free of the pathogens. However, testing domestic livestock may help us learn more about the health of domestic sheep and goats in Yukon and this information could be useful to develop disease prevention strategies.

The second challenge is that wild sheep do not only stay at high elevations on Yukon mountains. Although they do prefer the refuge of the rugged landscape, wild sheep are known to wander beyond mountain tops and are found in other habitats close to agricultural properties, including valleys. The roaming behavior of wild sheep indicates that a large area of Yukon should be considered potential sheep habitat. This adds to the concern that there is a risk for interaction between domestic and wild animals.

Please contact the Agriculture branch or Animal Health Unit for more information and to discuss options on what you can do to be good neighbors to wild sheep. Help spread information about this issue by sharing this article with other Yukoners and sheep and goat owners to facilitate good agriculture practices and sustainable strategies. Keep them separate. Keep them safe.

Contacts:

Agriculture Branch

Matthew Larsen
Grazing Management Coordinator
matthew.larsen@gov.yk.ca
867-667-5838

Animal Health Unit

Jane Harms, DVM, MVSc, PhD, Dipl. ACVP
Program Veterinarian
jane.harms@gov.yk.ca
867-667-8663

HOW TO GET YOUR SOIL TESTED

One of the best ways to understand what is going on in your field, market garden, greenhouse or even your backyard vegetable patch is to get your soil tested. The Agriculture branch can help with this. The branch has provided soil testing support for our agriculture industry for years and more recently for our master gardeners and backyard food enthusiasts. Soil tests conducted through the agriculture branch fall into two streams: one for Yukon producers who are selling products to customers or have entered into small scale agricultural activities, and the other stream for gardeners who are looking to fine tune their backyard and community garden activities.

COMMERCIAL AND SMALL SCALE AGRICULTURE PRODUCERS

For our agriculture producers we offer a little bit more as a function of the branch goals to encourage the growth of Yukon's agriculture industry, to promote high quality products for local consumption and to increase economic viability of the enterprise.

The agriculture branch will work with producers to:

- set up a field visit;
- discuss what is going on in the fields, or market gardens;
- do the soil sampling;
- provide an in-depth interpretation of the soil analysis;
- help to develop a nutrient management strategy.

Contact Randy or Brad to set up a farm visit.

GARDENERS

Yukon's Local Food Strategy recognizes the importance of backyard gardeners and community gardens, and how they are contributing to our territory's food



security. Soil testing can help to develop this stream of sustainable food production and contribute to the success of growing for the family. Although the Agriculture branch cannot get out to every garden in the territory or test every garden bed, we are providing one soil test a year to gardeners to develop the knowledge base of our local gardeners.

If you have one garden, or more than one, garden you have a choice here. For one garden bed: You want to take multiple samples across the garden. The best way to do this is take a your garden trowel and a pail, and randomly stick that trowel straight into the ground, about 6 to 8 inches, and scoop a trowel full into the pail. Do this 8 to 10 times across the garden bed to ensure you have a representative sample. Mix the soil in the pail, and grab a small sample from your mixed pail. We need approximately 500 grams or two cups worth for soil testing (approximately a medium sized sandwich bag full).

If you have multiple garden or greenhouse beds we regrettably can only provide one test per gardener per year, and you have a choice to make on which one to test. Your soil sample can be from one growing bed or a composite from several. The best plan is

usually to evaluate the one that is not producing as well. The sampling process is the same as above except that you will now sample from across all of the selected beds, scooping trowels of soil from 4 to 6 spots per garden/bed. Thoroughly mix the soil in the pail and fill a medium sandwich bag with your composite sample of soil.

Submit your soil sample to the Agriculture branch, or if you are from outside of town, please mail it. You can find the address and office location on the bottom of the last page of this newsletter. Please include your name, preferable email, phone number, location, sample description, and what you grow.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE SOIL SAMPLES?

The Agriculture branch ships soil samples to a laboratory in Edmonton for analysis. Exova Lab has a long history of soil testing for the agriculture industry and were formally known as NorWest Labs. Exova provides timely, accurate soil analysis and interpretation to growers, and provides a wide range of soil analysis around the nutrient content and other soil properties important to crop production. Test results usually take about three weeks to come back.

There is a long list of macro nutrients, micro nutrients and other soil properties such as soil pH, salinity and organic material that the lab can test for. The basic package tests for the macronutrients Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P), Potassium (K), and Sulphur (S) along with pH, electro conductivity and organic material. For our commercial producers, a more complete analysis of the soil may be conducted to understand some of the micronutrient levels and cation exchange capacity depending on production concerns and management requirements.

Every soil test is different and how you approach addressing any deficiencies is a personal preference. Some like the simplicity of using conventional fertilizers, whereas others look to organic fertilizer options, and some manage production with composts or manure. No matter how you manage your soils and nutrient sources, soil testing will support and help to improve your growing efforts.

If you are looking for more information on soils, how to interpret your soil test results, or what to use to address deficiencies, there are many resources available at the EMR Library including the Yukon Gardener's Manual. You can also purchase a copy of the manual from the Agriculture branch for \$20 plus GST.

HOW DO YOU GET YOUR RESULTS?

We can either email you the test results, or call you to pick up a hard copy of your report. If you have questions about your nutrient needs and your garden is not responding as expected, please contact the branch's Agrologist, Randy Lamb, for further advice.

For our commercial producers, and agriculture land owners, we can provide recommendations along with your test results and depending on time and need, arrange for a subsequent visit if required.

If you require any additional information regarding soil testing, please contact:
Randy Lamb, Agrologist
randy.lamb@gov.yk.ca
393-7410



MANDALAY FARM BUSY LAYING NEW FOUNDATIONS FOR LOCAL EGG MARKET

Alan and Cathy Stannard of Mandalay Farms have been busy working on developing a new layer operation and entering Yukon's retail egg market. Their operation on Burma Road is in the final stages of building and setting up a new egg layer barn with a grading station and egg storage for 2000 birds

The barn side of the building is designed to exceed the Egg Producers of Canada's Free Range Standard for layers. The barn is insulated better than some Yukon homes to help with energy costs, and the ventilation, humidity and temperature are all controlled to keep the birds happy and healthy.

Al and Cathy's setup provides the birds with access to an acre of graze outdoors when the weather is warm enough. Everything is automated to allow for Cathy and Al to keep this a family operation, and to take advantage of efficiencies. The operation has Lohman Brown birds, set to arrive in August, which will allow them to access the free range brown egg market.

In Cathy and Al's words, "we are focusing on a high quality product and are very concerned about the care of the birds. We enjoy the social aspects of laying birds and want to be known as a farm that is focused about the welfare of our 'girls'."

If you want to learn more about Mandalay Farm and check out the setup, you can follow their progress on the farm's facebook page "Mandalay Farm", and they are planning an open house in May to share what they are doing to produce their quality free range eggs. They will advertise through the Yukon Agricultural Association, in the paper and via word of mouth.



Growing Forward 2

A federal-provincial-territorial initiative

GROWING FORWARD 2 AGRICULTURE FRAMEWORK ENTERS LAST YEAR

The Canada-Yukon Growing Forward 2 (GF2) agriculture agreement is entering the last year of the five year agreement. The agreement focuses on innovation, competitiveness and market development to ensure Canadian producers and processors have the tools and resources they need to continue to innovate and capitalize on emerging market opportunities.

Over the first four years, federal and territorial GF2 programming has provided over \$2.6 million directly to a wide range of agriculture projects. This accounts for over 40% of the \$6.2 million invested into agriculture in the territory by farmers, organizations and governments.

Some of the key GF2 highlights to date:

- 17 different individuals, farms, or organizations have initiated farm business plans through the Agriculture Business Planning and Advisory Services program.
- Community Infrastructure component of the Agriculture Development program has supported 12 different community garden projects and four Community Garden Gatherings. This program helps support growing interest in developing community agriculture and local food security.

- Supported the purchase of root crop and berry harvesters, large scale bulk root vegetable storage, egg grading and production equipment, mobile processing equipment for meat birds and handling systems for large livestock are a few examples of on-farm projects funded through the Agriculture Development Program, which has seen over \$400,000 invested in direct on-farm funding.
- The From the Ground-Up Healthy Food School Fundraiser, Kids on the Farm program, 4H projects, and Yukon Horse and Riders have been supported through the Agriculture Education and Marketing Programs.
- The Agriculture Training Program has supported over 20 workshops and presentations in the territory along with sending different individuals out to agriculture related conferences.
- Under the Environmental Farm Plan, over 70 projects, equaling over \$800,000 in on-farm spending, have been funded to adapt best management practices to implement initiatives aimed at stewardship of the environment.
- 16 participants have been funded to attend the 8th and 9th Circumpolar Agricultural Association Conferences held in Alaska in 2013 and Iceland in 2016.
- The Fireweed Community Market, Yukon Products Guide, Yukon Culinary Festival and smaller community markets in Tagish and Dawson have been supported through the Market Development Program.
- 13 different projects have been approved to improve the utilization of existing titled farm land to support bringing agriculture land back into use through fencing and land cultivation projects.
- 40 projects to protect livestock and high value crops have been funded to help install electric fences, game fences or to purchase guardian dogs under the Wildlife Damage, Prevention and Compensation Program.

IS THERE ANY AGRICULTURE FUNDING AFTER MARCH 2018?

In July of 2016 Canada's federal, provincial and territorial (FPT) Ministers of Agriculture issued the Calgary Statement — representing a consensus among Ministers regarding the key priorities to develop a new agriculture funding agreement called the Next Policy Framework (NPF), set to launch in April 2018.

The Calgary Statement was developed by FPT Ministers based on ongoing discussions with stakeholders and it will guide the development of the next agricultural framework. The federal objectives and priorities of the NPF have been laid out and the provinces and territories are currently discussing how these objectives and priority areas line up with their agriculture needs. In the Calgary Statement, FPT Ministers commit to working together to enhance the sector's ability to compete, innovate, capture new opportunities, cultivate public trust, respond to new consumer demands and grow sustainably.

Over this past winter Yukon's agriculture branch conducted a review with the Yukon's Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee (AIAC), of the current GF2 programs to understand what is needed for Yukon agriculture in the NPF. The GF2 review looked at what has worked, what needs to be improved and where were the gaps. The analysis from the GF2 review is being compared to the objectives and priority areas set out in the Calgary statement and used in the discussion between the Yukon government, Agriculture Canada and the other provinces and territories.

The NPF will be the main topic of conversation at this summer's FPT Agriculture Ministers meeting. If all goes well, and the NPF meets the needs of the provinces and territories, a new policy framework will be announced, for the next 5 years, that will ensure that Canada's agricultural sector advances, grows and prospers and continues to be a cornerstone for the economy and for Canadians.

Between now and the ministers meeting in July there is still some details to be ironed out by the governments involved. If you want to find more information about the Calgary Statement and the objectives and priorities outlined for the NPF, you can go to www.emr.ca/infarm27.

If you have questions around any of the objectives or priorities please contact the agriculture branch.

VETERINARY SERVICES PROGRAM

The Veterinary Services Program to improve access to veterinary care for animals raised for food has been extended until March 2018. The program helps farmers take steps to improve the health of Yukon livestock, and also helps Yukon veterinarians build their capacity for treating livestock by helping cover the cost of consulting with other experts. Since the program began in September 2015, more than 20 farms from across Yukon have enrolled in the program.



HOW DOES THE PROGRAM WORK?

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

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

AM I ELIGIBLE?

Qualifying livestock species are: beef and dairy cattle, goats, sheep, poultry, swine, alpacas, llama, yaks, elk, bison, muskox, rabbits, and fish. Horses are not covered as they are not raised for food in Yukon. Farmers with six or fewer poultry are eligible for up to \$250 of coverage.

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

HOW DO I ENROLL?

Livestock owners already enrolled in the program are automatically re-enrolled until March 31, 2018. A short survey will be issued to enrolled farmers to help assess whether the program is effective.

Livestock owners who were not previously enrolled are welcome. Contact the Animal Health Unit to fill out and submit an enrollment form. You must also have or apply for a Premises Identification Number.

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

For more information contact the Animal Health Unit
Phone: 867-667-5600, Email: animalhealth@gov.yk.ca

**INTRODUCING
RANDY LAMB**
NEW TERRITORIAL AGROLOGIST

Randy Lamb is the new Agrologist with Yukon's Agriculture branch. Randy replaces Matt Ball, who succeeded current director Tony Hill as Agrologist back in 2006. Both Matt and Tony brought a broad background of knowledge to the position and Randy, who has been with Yukon government for 24 years, also brings a diverse set of skills to the job.

You grew up in Burnaby, BC, how long have you been in the territory and who was your first job with?

I first came up to Yukon in 1987 for a summer job as the Yukon government mosquito biologist. I also worked a couple years around that time as the BC provincial weed inspector for the Fort Nelson–Liard regional district in preparation for their Ag land program. In 1992 I moved up year-round to Whitehorse and started my own consulting business. Work ranged from gardening courses, migratory bird surveys and pesticide safety courses to hayfield and noxious weed inspections.

In the past you worked with the Agriculture branch: When was this, who was your director at the time and what was your position?

I was hired on by Dave Beckman back in 1993 as the Grazing Management Coordinator after Rob Johansen left the territory. I did that job for five years and then handed the reigns over to Patricia Smith.

You have been away from agriculture for 18 years, what were you doing with yourself during this time?

From Ag Branch I went up to Environment for 12 years. I worked there in environmental assessment and ended up as manager of their Environmental Affairs program.



I came over to Energy Mines & Resources in 2011 to get more policy experience in the Corporate Policy and Planning branch. I was the lucky candidate for the temporary assignment to back-fill Matt Ball's position during 2016 and then I won the competition for the agrologist job earlier this year. That pretty well takes me full circle. Of course during the entire time I taught sections of the Yukon Master Gardener course each year.

You have been acting as the Agrologist for over a year now, what changes have you seen since you last worked with the agriculture branch?

It is amazing how much the industry has grown and matured while I was away. The increases in meat, egg, vegetable and berry production are what I notice most. At the same time so many things have stayed the same.

You have a couple of hobbies and extra community activities that add to your knowledge of local growing and food production. Can you elaborate?

I've always been an avid backyard gardener but about 15 years ago Joan Craig drafted me onto the

board of the Whitehorse Community Garden. I'm still on the board and helping out with their annual operations and planning. In recent years I finally found time to take up beekeeping and that hobby has blossomed. I run two of my hives in a newly permitted apiary that we set up in the community garden downtown last year.

We know from your resume you are an insect biologist and a former BC provincial weed inspector. What skills and experience do you bring to your position?

On top of working as a mosquito biologist, hay field inspector, provincial weed inspector, and grazing coordinator, I have taught courses on pesticide safety training, gardening and integrated pest management. I also have decades of personal experience with growing berries, small fruit, greenhouse vegetables and field crops. Outside of work I keep honey bees, chickens and have helped run the Whitehorse community garden since 2002.

What do you see as the challenges for Yukon producers from the pressure of insects and weeds?

I have watched plant and insect pests slowly moving up the Alaska highway over the last 25 years. We have the unique opportunity of being able to stop some of the same pests and weeds from getting introduced and becoming established here. Patrolling the roads in the Fort Nelson-Liard regional district gave me a good indication of what problems we should watch out for here. If you spot something new on your farm, give me shout or drop off a sample and let's find out what it is early in the game.

The Agrologist is responsible for implementing the Agriculture branch extension program. How do you plan on engaging with industry to support extension services as identified in the 2006 Agriculture Policy?

I see the two big ticket items. One is helping farmers to learn more about accessing Growing Forward 2 funding to improve and expand their current farm operations. The other one is to see what research and innovations can be trialed and applied to Yukon. We have a diverse industry, so that means continuously learning and picking up new tools so that I can help them out as needed. I plan to visit as many farms as I can this summer to see where I can help and what extra skills I will need to learn to do so.

What do you see as the Agrologist's role in our Local Food Strategy and Growing Forward 2 agriculture funding program?

Helping our producers big and small to make the best products that they can, becoming more efficient and giving them the opportunity to try new things. Once they get their products ready this also means getting it out to their market and customer base.

As a bee enthusiast, how many bee stings does it take before you call it a day?

I prefer working in my hives with bare hands and I can go weeks without a sting, but one sting and I put the gloves on. That sting marks you and will make other bees attack. Once fully suited-up you can keep at 'er until the job is done.

In the ever changing world of communication, what is your preferred method of communication and how do producers contact you?

Phone or email works best for me, but otherwise drop by for a chat or invite me out to your farm.

email: randy.lamb@gov.yk.ca
ph: 867-393-7410



2017 CYFF YOUNG FARMERS CONFERENCE
February 24-26, 2017, Ottawa, ON

The 2017 CYFF Young Farmers' Conference held in Ottawa from February 24th to the 26th hosted 125 young farmers from coast to coast. This year's conference theme was Growing Canada for 150 years. The annual event brought young leading farmers from coast to coast for networking, education, farm management training and leadership building. Yukon had three delegates attend. As seen in the photo above Mike Hendersen, Amoree Briggs and Alex Poitras attended the conference thanks to support from CYFF for travel and accommodations.

The conference looks to identify solutions to young farmers' challenges and needs, and offer exceptional events and programming that support Canadian young farmers. Amoree presented a virtual tour of Poplar Flats Farm, a farm that she owns and operates with her husband. Mike Henderson participated in a strategic planning session and Alex participated in a roundtable discussion with delegates from each region.

The conference began Friday night with greetings from MP Francis Drouin on behalf of Lawrence MacAulay, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and concluded with the celebration of CYFF's 20th year. After two days of presentation, the conference concluded on Monday where 25 participants took part in the FMC AgriRisk Round Table. From there young farmers headed out on a bus and took in two farm tours in the Ottawa area.

If you want to hear more about the conference contact Mike, Amoree and Alex or visit the CYFF website at www.cyff.ca.

YUKON AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION'S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

AGM is set for Friday, May 5th at 6:00 p.m.. It will be held at the Yukon Transportation Museum. Sandwiches and refreshments will be served. Agenda items include: committee updates, financial reports and election results.

Like last year, YAA's AGM will conclude with a historical look at Yukon agriculture. This year, Michael Gates will be presenting pictures and stories of the Dawson Trail cattle drives. Please mark your calendars and new members are welcome.

For more information contact:

Jennifer Hall, Executive Director, call 867-668-6864 or email admin@yukonag.ca.

YUKON FARM GUIDE 2017 UPDATE

It's time for the annual update to the Yukon Farm Products and Services Guide! To update your listing for 2017 or add your business to the Farm Guide, call 867-668-6864 or email admin@yukonag.ca.

This summer we are adding two new categories to the guide: mentorships and contract farming. These search terms are available to farmers who are interested in training and mentoring new or young farmers. This is a good way for contract farmers to advertise their services. We hope that these new terms will help increase the utilization of agricultural land and support new entrants into the sector. Funding support from Growing Forward 2 is available to support both services.

YUKON AGRICULTURE SERIES BY MICHE GENEST

With funding support from Growing Forward 2, YAA commissioned Miche Genest to write a series of articles about Yukon agriculture referencing both historical and current content. Did you miss any of the series of articles that were published by Yukon News over the last few months?

You can find these articles on the YAA website, www.yukonag.ca/events.cfm or visit the EMR library, 335-300 Main Street, Whitehorse, Yukon (3rd Floor of the Elijah Smith Building)

CUSTOM CONTRACT SERVICES

All aspects of agriculture land development and rejuvenating including consultation services, land clearing, breaking, root cleanup and seeding.

Contact: Dave Andrew 867-334-3378 or daveandrewyukon@gmail.com

YUKON ENERGY, MINES & RESOURCES LIBRARY
EMR Library recently hosted an open house in March to celebrate the promise of spring and to launch the 2017 Seed Library season. Tons of seeds were borrowed; many seeds were planted in pots and taken away; and a host of tips were traded between gardeners. We hope to reap the rewards next Autumn when gardeners bring in seeds from the vegetables, flowers, and herbs that they have grown locally.

There are still lots of seeds left, so be sure to come by and pick some up. For further information please contact us.

Also a couple of new resources have recently been added to the agriculture collection at the library:

- *Your Essential, Honeyberry & Haskap Guide: simple ideas on establishing a healthy and productive orchard.* Logie J Cassells
- *Composting for Canada.* Suzanne Lewis
- *Composting, How to Plan, Build, and Maintain Your Own Compost System for a Healthy and Vibrant Garden.* Kim Pezza

Library Hours: Monday to Friday 8:30 – 4:30 (closed statutory holidays)

Location: 335-300 Main Street, Whitehorse, Yukon (3rd Floor of the Elijah Smith Building)

Email us: emrlibrary@gov.yk.ca

General Inquiries: 867.667.3111

INFARMATION is:

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

Agriculture Branch Contact Information:

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

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

Email: agriculture@gov.yk.ca

Online: www.agriculture.gov.yk.ca

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