

INFORMATION

Yukon Agriculture Branch Quarterly Bulletin

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AGRICULTURAL FEED OPTIONS FOR NORTHERN LIVESTOCK

The Yukon Agriculture Research Committee, led by the Agriculture branch, worked with Yukon Research Centre, Cold Climate Innovation (CCI) to commission a research project to investigate feed and feed management options for Yukon livestock production. Treharne Drury was contracted by the CCI to lead this research to identify best forages and best feed management options for livestock species that are currently being raised for the local market.

The objectives of this research project were as follows:

1. Identify other jurisdictions with similar agriculture conditions to those in Yukon.
2. Build a reference resource, from the identified jurisdictions, which compiles successful feed management options for the livestock species of interest.
3. Summarize and rank the most suitable agronomic crops and native feed options that would successfully grow in Yukon.
 - i. Factors included in the ranking system include: agronomic success, availability of seed, ease of use, equipment needs, benefits to Yukon, skills required, management decisions (including organic, synthetic, and closed system), and cost analysis.
4. Summarize the most appropriate feeding patterns to optimize production (quantity and quality) of each Yukon livestock species listed.
 - i. How can we adapt our current production to meet these feed management options?
 - ii. Determine the cost of production for the most appropriate options.
 - iii. Analyze the production strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and constraints for each livestock species.

The final version of the research report is now available on the publications page of Agriculture branch's website (www.agriculture.gov.yk.ca). This report gives readers who are investigating feed options for Yukon a starting point for which crops may be best suited for the climate. The report also ties in Yukon livestock options to the feed options.

The Agriculture branch, in conjunction with the research committee, will use this document to help direct Yukon government research over the next few years. As a result of this report, some work has already been initiated to understand the feasibility of domesticated low toxic alkaloid lupins as a continued on page 2...



Domesticated feed lupins being grown at the research farm

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MESSAGE FROM THE AGRICULTURE BRANCH

You'll never know until it's cut, baled and in the hayshed, but after two years of above average hay yields on dryland farms it looks like this year we are in for lower yields. We had an early start to the year with very warm weather. That warmth and the frequent winds have dried the soils out across the territory. Some locations have had a bit of rain, (It's finally raining now as I write this) but most of the ground is pretty darn dry. Across Alberta and Saskatchewan they are also experiencing dry weather resulting in low pasture and hay yields. We often have dry May and June weather, with some usual heavier rains into July and through the fall. After a pretty good harvest last summer, hay sat around in the hay sheds for longer than anticipated. This had some folks looking to put their hay into animals in order to get some income coming in. Unfortunately the price of calves and yearlings is at very high price. We're hearing about calf pricing above \$280 per hundred weight, this means a 600 lb calf is over \$1,600 and then you still have to get it up the highway. This price is forecast to drop some in the fall, let's hope that comes true.

We always encourage livestock and horse owners to buy hay locally. Agriculture branch tests a wide range of local hay and it is on par or better than what comes up the highway. With the potential for a below average harvest down south you may want to secure your hay order with a local grower soon. Wrapping up on this topic, have you noticed the price of beef in the grocery stores lately? Last night I saw a small package of tenderloin offered at \$55.00/kg. I usually buy direct from farmers I have gotten to know, and this year it looks like a bargain compared to the imports. I don't mind paying a bit more when

I know the people who have raised the animals and how they do it, but it's even better when you can support the local industry and not pay retail. Check out the Yukon Farm Products and Services Guide at <http://guide.yukonag.ca> and support a farmer near you. Have a great summer.

Tony Hill,
Director, Agriculture branch



YUKON LIVESTOCK HEALTH PROGRAM : VETERINARY SERVICE COMPONENT COMING SOON!

Raising healthy livestock is important to all farmers. The Animal Health Unit and the Agriculture branch are pleased to announce that the veterinary service component of the Livestock Health Program will be launched in summer 2015.

If you raise or plan to raise production livestock in Yukon, this program will offer assistance to support veterinary care of your animals and will provide an opportunity for farmers to work with animal health professionals on disease prevention and treatment, biosecurity, and other aspects of animal health on the farm.

The veterinary service component will:

- Help offset the costs of veterinary farm calls
- Provide funds for specific veterinary charges including professional fees, phone consultations, and travel costs
- Encourage collaboration between farmers and veterinarians to support livestock health in Yukon
- Improve understanding of livestock health issues in Yukon

Details on eligibility, how to apply and funds available for the program will be announced soon. For more information please contact the Animal Health Unit at 867-667-5600 or email at animalhealth@gov.yk.ca

AGRICULTURAL FEED OPTIONS CONTINUED...

potential high protein feed option for poultry, swine and ruminant diets. Lupins, with thanks to Treharne, have been sourced from Europe and planted at the research farm to assess the feasibility as a feed for Yukon Livestock. This is only one of the feed options identified from the report. More work is required to generate other research projects from the report, which could be added to the research farm crops or on other farm sites.

Check out the research report online or come to the Agriculture Demonstration Day August 5th to check out the lupins and discuss other possible feed options for livestock. More information on the demonstration day is available on Page 3.



AGRICULTURE DEMONSTRATION DAY

DATE: WEDNESDAY AUG 5, 2015.

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

The Agriculture branch is hosting its annual demonstration day Wednesday, August 5, 2015. The event is our opportunity to bring Yukon's producers, agriculture advocates and supporters together during the growing season to highlight the projects being conducted at the Research Farm and to share the season's challenges and wins. There will also be a barbeque over the lunch hour featuring Yukon-grown food, thanks to the hard work of our territory's ag producers.

With the increase in food production from our producers, the efforts at the research farm in support of our food producers, and the work by the Agriculture branch to develop a local food strategy, the focus for this year's demonstration day will be "Food and what we can grow to support the demand for local products".

With the focus on food, there are a few demonstration and research trials that are targeted at generating data to support market garden enterprises, develop alternative crops, or increase the knowledge of feed & fodder options for livestock. The farm has also expanded to include a new demonstration orchard. John Lenart, a local apple and fruit expert from Klondike Valley Nursery and Market Garden will be on hand to share his knowledge and discuss orchard management.

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

Please join us and take a tour of the research farm. The barbeque will start at 12:00 noon, a research farm tour will start at 1:00 with Agrologist Matt Ball. John Lenart will talk berries and fruit at 2:00. Bring your lawn chairs and stay awhile, or bring your hiking boots and take a stroll on some of the research forest interpretive trails.

Hope to see you there,
The Agriculture branch.

YUKON INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL WALK THE FIELD PROGRAM

Yukon Invasive Species Council (YISC) is looking to walk your fields as part of a "Walk The Field" program. The idea behind this is that the farmer/land owner would get support in detecting invasive species on their property. There are different levels of support from the "Walk The Field" program.

- Contact YISC and co-ordinate a walk of the property. YISC member will walk your property and help identify some of your unidentified plant/s.
- If you cannot co-ordinate a walk, take a pictures of the unidentified plant, send it to info@yukoninvasives.com and someone from the council will identify it and follow up with you.
- Check out the YISC website for some of the plants concerning YISC.

For more information on the program contact visit www.yukoninvasives.com.

YUKON YOUNG FARMERS is pleased to announce that Farm Credit Canada (FCC) will conduct a presentation on farm financing on July 26th from 2-4pm in the Whitehorse Public Library. For more information, contact yukonyoungfarmers@gmail.com or call 668-6864.

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.

CIRCLE D RANCH, BILL AND BARB DRURY

If you are looking to talk Agriculture in Yukon, there may be no better kitchen table to have this discussion than at Circle D Ranch in the Ibex Valley. Bill and Barbara Drury have been farming on this property together since 1986 and talking to them about food and agriculture in Yukon is more than just idle conversation. They have a strong passion for developing a farm business, have a long history in Yukon agriculture and are continually investigating different farming opportunities.

Circle D ranch started with Bill and his father, Bill Drury Senior. They stated grazing horses on a lease where the current property is in the Ibex valley back in 1962. The lease started off as a place to board horses and a retreat for Bill and Bill Senior to spend time. But with the land lending itself to good grazing and further development, the two Bills started improving the land for grazing and haying. Because the Drurys improved the land, the federal government, which managed Yukon lands at the time, needed to change this from a lease to title. They applied for the land and were granted title to 120 acres in exchange for the 455 acre lease. Going through this process of moving from lease to title and learning about the land process created somewhat of a land



maverick in Bill Jr. Over the years Bill may have not done everything according to conventional farming practices but he has been able to develop a strong land base for his agriculture business. Circle D Ranch currently has 1,000 acres in titled land, with over 500 acres cleared and another 1000 acres in grazing leases. The development of land is an important part of Circle D Ranch's success. Without the land they would not have been able to generate farm income from boarding horses, hay, red meat sales (both beef and elk), and market garden produce to make a living off the farm.

It is more than about developing enough haying and pasture land for the animals. When you sit down with Bill and Barb you find out that the farm is about family. Bill and Barb are farming with a vision to hand the Circle D Ranch on to the next generation. They are passionate about the continued success of the farm, because they are bringing the family together and will be working with a holistic farm business coach to develop a succession plan for the future of the farm to secure its place in Yukon agriculture.

Barb may have come on the property a little later than Bill, but in 1986 the couple brought their families together and have

raised five kids on the farm. They have worked together to develop Circle D Ranch and a strong farm business. Listening to them talk about the farm at the kitchen table; you quickly understand the roles they have on the farm. Bill is the "ideas person" and Barb is the practical dollar and cents partner. Barb quotes Bill senior when talking about farm income, "you can generate income from bringing down your expenses or increasing your revenue. Feeding five kids, reducing your expenses comes naturally on the farm by raising or growing your food. When you are good at this you can raise and grow more to generate good farm income. The challenge in selling farm products is to price it so that you are generating income". Bill and Barb have a strong understanding of their input cost and work diligently at capturing this cost when selling to the Yukon market.

The Drury operation's core business is red meat: they raise beef and game farmed elk. There is a very noticeable discrepancy between the prices of the two meat options. They currently sell their beef at \$5.50/lb for a hanging side and elk at \$9.75/lb hanging side. The elk take an extra year to size up and more management due to the need for game fencing that add to the extra cost for the meat. Circle

D also sells their products in 25 and 50-pound boxes for assorted cuts, along with some of the odds and ends like soup bones, dog bones, tongue and beef fat. You can go to their website www.circledranchyukon.com to see what is available and to get more information on the boxes. Over the years the Drury have been developing the meat operation to capture more of the cost of processing on farm and to improve the quality to their customers. They set up a docking station for the mobile abattoir, have started up their own cut and wrap operation which allows them to process the meat on farm instead of paying someone else to do the work. By having a place to process the meat, they don't have to worry about the schedules at butchering operations, which are typically busy when they want to slaughter.

Circle D Ranch also rents out the butcher facility and cooler to other users, which allows them to diversify their operation and generate other sources of revenue. This inspected facility meets all the environmental health requirements and can be used to cut meat for restaurants, grocery stores, and the valued Yukon farm gate customers. At present the facility has a meat saw, sausage stuffer, meat slicer and burger grinder. They also have a 14-rack commercial dehydrator that could be used for jerky making. Rental cost is approximately \$125 per day for the butcher facility and \$150 a week to hang a side of beef. More information is available on the Circle D website.

Bill and Barb also do a small amount of market garden sales when there is extra from the garden and have worked on growing kale to develop a small kale chip snack business. You can usually find

Barb selling her healthy alternative to potato chips at the Fireweed Community Market along with some of her preserves and bounty from her garden.

Most recently Bill and Barb have gotten excited about and invested in haskap berries. Barb is an avid berry picker and after a visit to the haskap orchard at Yukon Grain Farm, fell in love with the oblong blue haskap berry. She could not believe how tasty, early ripening and hardy these berries were and after finding out how easy they are to care for was convinced that these are the right berry to cultivate in the Yukon. Once they researched the berries even further and realized the health benefits and diversity of market opportunities that exist for these blue gems, they started prepping and fencing one of their fields near the river, and have allocated 15 acres to their new orchard. They have planted six acres of haskaps over the last two years: 3,000 were planted in 2014 and another 3,000 plants this spring. They have formed a growers' group with six other families and with help from Growing Forward 2 are bringing a berry harvester to Yukon to aid in the harvest, as the plants mature in another two to three years.

The Drurys are still working on their unique opportunity to grow food for the Yukon market. The berries they hope will help them in this direction but they still see a few challenges with accessing the local market. They are confident there is a premium for Yukon grown products, but they, like most Yukon producers find marketing to be a challenge and accessing those markets that want a Yukon product at a price that covers the cost of production is a challenge. They understand that costs have to be competitive and

have worked to bring prices down by keeping as much cost on farm, but in order to do that they have had to invest in the infrastructure first. Investing in infrastructure can be a risk if the market is not there. Their investments have been done incrementally and they are developing that niche by becoming only farm in the territory that does its own inspected cutting and wrapping to be able supply beyond farm gate sales. They are currently selling to a few restaurants and are looking at ways to expand their red meat operation.

The other challenge they are facing is time or help. They currently do not have enough labour to do all they want to and what they are finding is they don't have enough profit to warrant having employees, which limits the number of times they attend the Fireweed Community market and make those marketing connections that help they promote their business. They are still able to meet the work demand for their farm gate sales, but it takes more time and adds stress, as product moves a little slower without the visibility they get at the market. They have developed a great website that helps with the marketing, but you still need to find ways to encourage people to visit the site.

For more information about Circle D Ranch or looking to secure some home grown Yukon products, go to www.circledranchyukon.com or contact Bill or Barb 867-668-1045 or Email drury@northwestel.net, or strangerintheland@hotmail.com

Thank you Bill and Barb for sharing your thoughts on Yukon agriculture and introducing your operation and the challenges you face.

CERTIFIED ORGANIC
ASSOCIATIONS OF
BRITISH COLUMBIA
CONFERENCE

WRITTEN BY JOANNE JACKSON
JOHNSON OF M'CLINTOCK VALLEY
FARM

In the middle of a Yukon winter, a farmer gets to longing for the smell of the soil and the forest and it is really inspiring to be able to travel out to a part of the world only a couple of hours away by air, but really free of snow and full of blooms and earthy smells. Thanks to funding by Growing Forward 2, I was able to attend the Certified Organic Associations of BC (COABC) annual conference, along with Rolland Girouard from Rivendell Farm and Bart Bounds and Kate Mechan from Elemental Farm.

I have attended this conference on a couple of previous occasions and have always been inspired by organic growers, since I began working towards Certified Organic status in the mid 2000s. This 'sold out' conference was the best I have attended, with almost 400 attendees. I chose to arrive early for a one full day workshop on producing a farm-specific employee handbook. Presented by two guys that do this workshop on a regular basis and we could take away an existing guide that also has links to YouTube videos. They emphasized that the guide is a tool and that each farm has to work out its own specific processes: hiring, firing and work day routines, for example. The publication is: Guide to Developing a B.C. Agriculture Employee Handbook Fall 2012. www.agf.gov.bc.ca/busmgmt/labour_mgmt.htm

On Saturday and Sunday I chose to attend all the workshops on livestock. These included one on feed. The presenters were Steve Meggait of Fresh Valley Farms,



a fourth generation farmer in that region, who has set up his own mill in Armstrong, British Columbia and Paul Kelly, a feed mill production manager knowledgeable about procurement of certified organic feed. I learned that these people have some of the same problems as we do, as organic grain is in such demand everywhere and much of the grain grown in British Columbia and Alberta is shipped out to the highest bidder.

The value of others' experience also lay in the workshop/presentation titled Slaughter Panel, about the operation of mobile and static abattoirs in BC. The panel placed everything in the context of the evolution of the needs of the producers and the successes and failures of the facilities.

The most interesting presentation that I attended was by Dr. John Church of Thompson Rivers University (BC Regional Innovation Chair in Cattle Industry Sustainability) who is researching the health benefits of organic beef. He and his group have recently published the surprising findings that organic beef, even grain finished, has a greater proportion of

desired omega 3 fatty acids and an optimum omega 6/omega 3 content, over conventional grain fed beef. Grain finished organic animals spend a substantial amount of their time on pasture, so are almost equivalent to grass fed.

Concluding, I thank Growing Forward 2 for the opportunity to go on a fact finding trip and to attend the COABC Conference. As I mentioned earlier, these are

The COABC conference was jammed full of presentations, workshops and panels over two and a half day. For more information go to the COABC website at www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca and if you want to hear more from one of our Yukon attendees you can contact Joanne, Kate, Bart or Rolland them more, and thank you for sharing this information.

To find Joanne, Kate, Bart or Rolland's contact information, you can check out the online version of the Yukon's Agriculture Products and Services guide at www.yukonag.ca.

opportunities to be inspired and to share really good food (donated by the organic growers), information and conversation.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM KATE MECHAN AND BART BOUNDS, ELEMENTAL FARMS

We were particularly inspired by Sara Dent's work with Young Agrarians and her knowledge and push to link new farmers with aging farmers for mentoring and unique land sharing opportunities. She is a strong and passionate voice for the next generation who are currently growing food and is an encouraging voice to those considering making a move toward agriculture.

I (Kate) found it extremely helpful to hear from other farmers about their experiences with farmers markets and picked up some extremely helpful tips for increasing efficiency on market day in the session 'What About Farmers Markets?' There was tremendous learning in tracking the quantity of produce you bring to market and come home with at the end of the day to assess the true value of crops/varieties you grow, which of course is connected to the economic viability of your operation.

Finally, both Bart & I would agree that the session, Weaving an Indigenous Narrative Into the Movement Towards a More Sustainable Land and Food System was by far the most catalyzing workshop. It was a fantastic reminder of the connection between traditional Indigenous food systems and more modern examples of producing food. The speakers gently reminded the audience of the ways that we can work more complimentary and who working together will ultimately result in healthier communities and ecosystems.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM ROLLAND GIROUARD, RIVENDELL FARMS
Rolland captured a few different workshops and presentation on top of the Create Your Employee Handbook workshop that covered off the different aspects of staff control and ways of avoiding errors in staff relations.

Rolland attended the Connection to Community through Farm to School presentation, where they were introduced to *A Fresh Crunch in School Lunch* workbook from the BC Farm to School program. Getting along in the Potatoes Business, What about Farmers' Markets, Integrated Seed Saving Practices for Farm Business and Using Cooperatives to Achieve Shared Business Objectives were some of Rolland's presentation highlights. Rolland finished the conference on improving his understanding of organic standards by spending the day with Anne Macey, member of the Canadian Organic Standard Technical Committee on Interpreting the Canadian Organic Standard.

The conference was jammed full of presentations, workshops and panels over two and-a-half days.

GROWERS OF ORGANIC FOOD YUKON (GOOFY)

GoOFY is a Yukon association of farmers, gardeners and food enthusiasts. Our mission: "GoOFY promotes the use of organic farming practices, education and advocacy about organic growing and processing and the consumption of organic food in Yukon." We meet monthly in winter and sometimes in summer to share ideas and plan special events. All are welcome

For more information about GoOFY or to become a member, contact GoOFY at 633-4207 or email goofy@yukonfood.com.



Growing Forward 2

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

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 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

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

HIGHLIGHTS FROM YUKON AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION AGM

Yukon Agricultural Association had a strong turnout for their AGM held May 9th, 2015 in Whitehorse. Elected to the 2015-2016 Board were:

- Al Stannard-President
- Greg Paquin-Vice President
- Eloise Clark-Treasurer
- Ralph Mease, Teddy Fagbamila, Steve Mackenzie-Grieve, Andre Fortin, Duncan Smith and Gail Riederer (Directors).

Congratulations, and thank you for volunteering your time for the coming year. The Board looks forward to hearing from members with ideas and concerns.

The membership unanimously supported signing of a funding agreement to undertake a business plan for an "Innovation Centre" on the land lease on the North Klondike Highway. A plan is felt to be the next essential step in moving forward on the property. More news will follow in the coming months.

A panel discussion on the topic of local food was well received by the membership. Russ Knutson expertly facilitated lively discussion with Susan Ross, Steve Mackenzie-Grieve, Tracey Kinsella and Christina Sebol. Valuable information sharing led to better understanding of issues and challenges of getting farm products to Yukon markets.

A reminder that YAA has farm equipment to rent: a no-till-drill, an aerator, a manure spreader, a mower and a plough are available at non-profit rates by pre-arranging pickup and drop off at the office. Proof of insurance for transporting is required.



FIREWEED COMMUNITY MARKET

The Fireweed Community Market Society kicked off its 2015 season May 14th. The market is open in its usual location in the City of Whitehorse Shipyards Park, operating from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m. and will be running until Sept 10th.

The Fireweed Community Market Society Saturday market started its second season June 27th in a new location. The Saturday market is being held at the Whitehorse Wharf at the end of Main Street from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and runs until Sept 26th.

Events happening at the Thursday market include:

- July 9th - TBA - Kim Melton
- July 16th - Food Mapping - YAPC
- July 23rd - Quick and nutritious - Lara Melnik
- July 30th - Make your own toothpaste - Zero Waste
- Aug 6th - TBA - Amanda Mouchet
- Aug 13th - Fermented Drinks - Katherine Belisle
- Aug 20th - Slow foods - Barbara Drury
- Aug 27th - Food Mapping - YAPC
- Sept 3rd - Fermented Foods - Katherine Belisle
- Sept 10th - Make your own toothpaste - Zero Waste

For more information on the market or for some of the events happening at the Saturday market, follow the Fireweed Community Market Society on Facebook or check out their website at www.fireweedmarket.ca

INFARMATION is:

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

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