

InFARMation

Yukon Agriculture Branch Quarterly Bulletin

Fall 2003

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Message From the Agriculture Branch

As many of you are now aware, we have commenced with the first phase of the consultation process to review and revise the Yukon Agriculture Policy. Over the past number of years the industry has grown substantially and has matured significantly and thus now faces new issues and challenges. Some of these challenges are not reflected in our current policy. In addition the Agriculture Policy Framework Agreement that we have signed with the Federal government includes some program opportunities that need to be addressed in an updated and revised policy.

Phase One of the consultation process involves industry and First Nations. Comments and issues brought forward will be used to develop a discussion paper which will then be used for broader public consultation. Feedback from both the first and second rounds of consultation will be used to draft a new agriculture policy for the Yukon and will be submitted to the Minister for Cabinet consideration and approval.

I urge you all to take part in these rounds of consultation and bring forward concrete suggestions for revisions and change. This is your opportunity to help forge a realistic and long-term policy for the future growth and development of agriculture in the territory.

Looking to the future, please note that Saturday, November 1, 2003 is the date of our 16th Annual North of Sixty Agriculture Conference. As usual, there will be a "Yukon Grown" banquet on the evening of the 1st, as well as the announcement of the "Farmer of the Year" award. Watch for more details over the next few weeks.

On a final note, thanks to all participants, agencies, volunteers and sponsors of the fall fairs throughout the territory. There is an enormous effort put into the fall fairs and there are also great results achieved.

Dave Beckman
Director

Fall Fair Roundup

Another successful year of fall fairs. A wide variety of Yukon grown goods from crazy kohlrabi to beautiful flowers and delicious jams could be found at fairs held in several communities.

Whitehorse

In Whitehorse, Rotary Park was the place to be Aug 9th & 10th. People from all around town came to the Klondyke Harvest Fair to show off their wears.

Grand Aggregate

Senior

1st Joe McGillivray

2nd Rose Berndt

3rd David and Jane Wiebe

Junior

1st Wesley Walker

2nd Jody McGillivray

Section 1 Vegetables

Senior sponsored by Food Fair

Roy Ness

Junior sponsored by Helping Hand Recycle

Two-way tie: Karlie Knight and Lusia Stetkiewicz

Section 2 Flowers

Senior sponsored by Northern Elegance

Joe McGillivray

Junior sponsored by Lubbock Valley Flowers and Agriculture Branch

Three-way tie: Wesley Walker, Erin McGillivray, Annette Kitchen

Section 3 Farm Produce

Senior sponsored by Downtown Urban Gardeners

1. Other (Non Field Crops)

Joe McGillivray

2. Aggregate

Joe McGillivray

Section 4 Traditional Native Crafts

Senior sponsored Council of Yukon First Nations

Rhoda Gribben

Section 5 Preserved Foods

Senior sponsored by Super A Foods

Simone Rudge

Section 6 Home Baking

Senior sponsored by Yukon Meat and Sausage

Sherrie Walker

Junior sponsored by Yukon Meat and Sausage

Westley Walker

Section 7 Quilting

Senior sponsored by Bear's Paw Quilts

Karen Berrel

Section 8 Knitting

Senior sponsored by Folkknits

Ellie Settle

Section 9 Needlework

Senior sponsored by A Country Affair

Best of Show Marilyn Whiting

Original Design Marilyn Whiting

Section 10 Needlework

Senior sponsored by Debbie Throssell

Ellie Settle

Section 11 Home Made Wine

Senior sponsored by Wines by Design

Randy Lamb

Section 12 Special Contests

1. Best Livestock and Poultry Exhibit

Senior sponsored by Lewes River Farms

Jim Dillabough

Junior sponsored by Lewes River Farms

Clare Rudge

2. Pet Costumes

Junior sponsored by Jensen's Western Store

Teresa Desjardins

3. Recycled Creations

Senior sponsored by Raven Recycling

Kathy Pritchard

Junior sponsored by Raven Recycling

Teresa Desjardins

4. Scarecrow Competition

Senior sponsored by Lubbock Valley Flowers

McGillivray family

Junior sponsored by Lubbock Valley Flowers

Teresa Desjardins

Watson Lake

On August 24th the Community Center in Watson came alive with drum beats and vegetables. There was a good

assortment of flowers, quilts and vegetables. John and Jenny Skelton took top honours with some delicious vegetables.

Grand Aggregate

Senior

1st John & Jenny Skelton

2nd Johanna Nugent & John Hanchar

3rd Eve Kostiuk

Junior

1st Jason Carlson

2nd Vanessa Carlson

3rd Two-way tie: Taran Nugent & Liza Krause

Largest Pumpkin – Taran Nugent

Mayo/Stewart Crossing

A beautiful day greeted Tony Hill, the judge on tour. Everyone was excited to see him arrive for fear of frost was in the air.

Home Grounds

1st Ida-May Clippert

2nd J&B Smith

3rd H&G Davies

Vegetable Garden

1st William Hummel

2nd Three-way tie: R&N Mease, A&G White, M&L Persinger

3rd Two-way tie: D&L Easley, H&G Davies

Greenhouse

1st Two-way tie: R&N Mease, M&L Persinger

2nd William Hummel

3rd J&B Peters

Best commercial grounds

North Star Motel

Best rhubarb in town

R&N Mease

It was a great season and we hope to see everyone again next year.

16th Annual Agriculture Conference

The date for this year's "North of 60° Agriculture Conference" is Saturday, November 1st at the Gold Rush Inn, Whitehorse. Although the agenda has not yet been finalized, we are hoping to feature equine health issues including Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA) and West Nile Virus along with information on barns, stables and handling facilities. Other topics being kicked around include: a possible focus group on an agriculture risk management program for the Yukon, the results of a recent abattoir use study and possible scenario's for future use, a report on the development of a new agriculture policy in the Yukon and planning for the Circumpolar Agriculture Conference in Umea, Sweden next summer.

Of course, the conference will be followed by the North of 60° Agriculture Banquet featuring Yukon grown and raised foods, the annual Farmer of the Year presentation and Dave Beckman's corn ball jokes with Yukon agriculture trivia. (You don't want to miss it, so call now!) Get you tickets and register for the conference by calling Marylynn Drul at (867) 667-5838.



Couch Potato Kohlrabi from the Watson Lake Harvest Fair

Yukon Horse Owners Survey Results

This past summer, the Agriculture Branch contracted the Yukon Bureau of Statistics to survey Yukon horse owners and horse boarding operators. The information obtained through the survey gave the branch information on the number of horses in the Yukon and on the level of knowledge and concern about equine infectious anemia (EIA), also known as “Swamp Fever”. A second section of the survey focused on hay buying practices which will be of interest to local forage producers.

There were 210 surveys completed. 87 of these were returned by mail, the remainder were completed over the phone. Here are a few highlights:

Horses

- The total number of horses in the Yukon is estimated to be 1,748.
- The most frequently mentioned use for horses was “trail riding”.
- 39% of respondents kept their horses off their property either year round or seasonally.
- 11% of horse owners wintered their horses outside of the Yukon.

Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA)

- 98% of horse owners/boarders were aware of EIA.
- 77% have tested their horse(s) for EIA using the Coggins Test. 16% had horses with a positive result.
- Almost 7 out of 10 (69%) rated their knowledge of EIA as either “excellent”, “very good” or “good”.
- 77% of horse owners/boarders agree (either very strongly (50%) or strongly (27%) that horses gathered for an event should have a negative EIA test.
- 71% felt that horses transported in or out of the territory should have a negative EIA test.

Feed

- 1 out of 4 (25%) of horse owners/boarders grow hay.
- Of those who grow hay, just over half (53%) grow enough hay each year to meet their needs.
- 75% of horse owners/boarders buy hay. The most frequently mentioned “preferred way” to buy hay is small square bales.

- 52% of those that buy hay purchase just over ¾’s of their needs from a local farmer.
- The 3 most important reasons that hay is purchased from outside the Yukon are: quality, price and availability.
- The 3 most important criteria when purchasing hay are: mould free, dust free and protein.

The full publication of survey results is available at the Agriculture Branch office. Anyone interested in obtaining a copy can drop by or call (867) 667-5838 to have a copy sent by mail.

Transportation Incentive Offered to Yukon Beef Producers

In an effort to improve safe handling, slaughter and processing of beef in the Yukon the Energy, Mines and Resources Agriculture Branch is offering a transportation incentive to help producers make use of the territorial abattoir.

The incentive offered is \$0.20 per lb. of hanging slaughter weight and is based on the costs to transport, hang and back-haul meat to producers.

“It’s an initiative to benefit all Yukon beef producers so they can have equal access to the licensed abattoir, regardless of where they farm in the Territory,” said Energy, Mines and Resources Minister Archie Lang. “It is an opportunity to enhance food safety and handling procedures while supporting a facility that is vital to the growth of our industry.”

The idea behind the transportation incentive is to increase the number of producers who slaughter their animals at a government approved and licensed facility, with the added benefit for all of adding to food safe handling procedures and allowing access to retail food outlets.

By increasing abattoir use, approved licensed transportation systems could also be developed, adding another piece to the agriculture infrastructure picture in the Yukon.

The Whitehorse Yukon Agricultural Association office will administer the program.

Anyone considering using the abattoir this fall should

contact John Buerge at (867) 996-2068 to schedule slaughter times and arrange for the meat inspector to be present. The abattoir is located at Partridge Creek Farm, 50 kms north of Stewart Crossing on the Klondike Highway.

Research and Demonstration Field Day

The Agriculture Branch held a field day on July 29th to showcase the work being done out at the Research and Demonstration Site at the Takhini Forestry Farm. This years demonstration highlighted a trial on *Optimizing Irrigation and nutrient Inputs to Yukon Berry Crops*. This trial uses a variety of techniques to provide the most favorable growing conditions possible using row covers and mulches then adds in a very precise water and fertilizer delivery system based on the soil moisture and evaporation measurements taken each day. This is the second year for this trial and although the results will take time to analyze, it looks like the strawberry variety “Kent” grown under higher nutrient conditions and remay row covers provided the highest yield.

Once the dust settled we had over 60 kilograms of marketable strawberries, many of which were sampled by field day participants with the rest destined to become dessert at this year’s Agriculture Branch Banquet. For more information on Yukon Agriculture trials see our 2003 R&D report, due out in December.

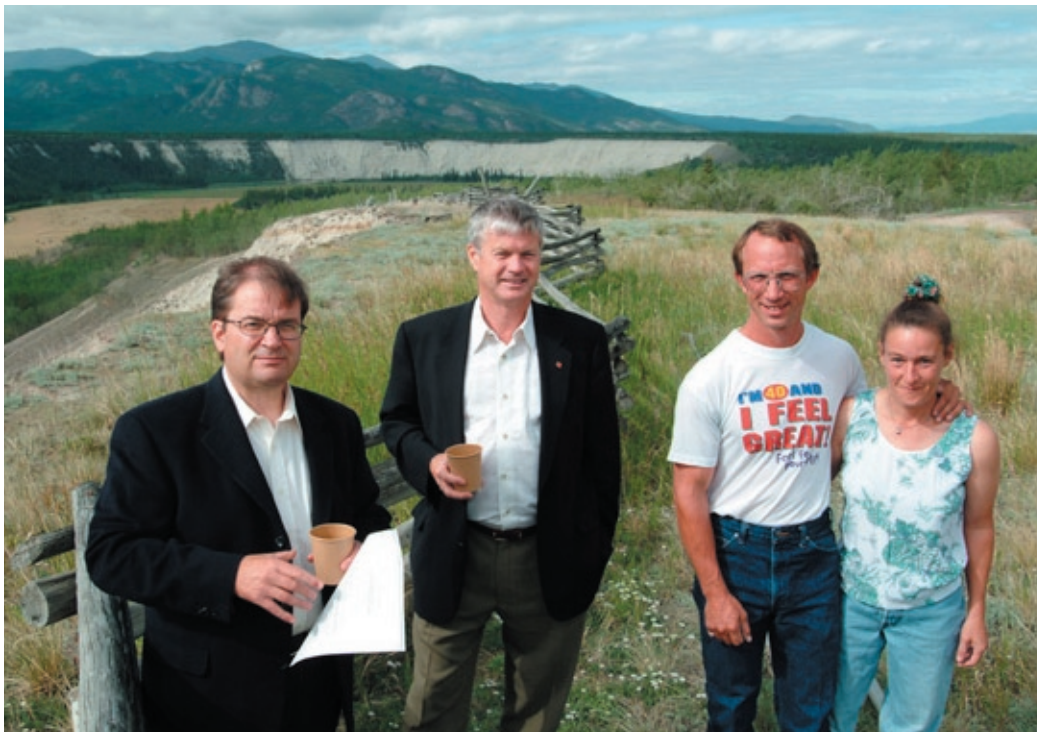
APF Update

The federal minister of agriculture, Lyle VanCleaf was in the Yukon on July 16 to sign the Agriculture Policy Framework (APF) *Implementation Agreement* with Archie Lang, minister responsible for agriculture in the Yukon. After a small press announcement and signing at the territorial administration building, the ministers headed out to the farm of Wayne and Alison Grove to meet with a group of Yukon farmers and tell them about the agreement.

In other APF news, an industry advisory group has been formed consisting of Bill Drury and Dave Andrew representing the Yukon Agricultural Association; Sheila Alexandrovich representing the organic farmers, Wayne Grove representing the Game Growers Association and Art Hutchison representing independent Yukon farmers. This committee will work to advise government on the needs of the sector and priority areas for APF programming. The first meeting between the advisory group and government will be held toward the end of September.

Agriculture branch staff have been working on risk management options for Yukon farmers under the APF throughout the summer by visiting farms to establish crop history and GPS mapping fields. This will assist in determining eligible acreage and the type of risk management needs Yukon farmers have. So far this

has just been a random sampling of farms but anyone interested in establishing a crop history to be eligible for any future risk management program should contact the branch.



EMR Minister Archie Lang and AAFC Minister Lyle Vanclief with Wayne & Alison Grove

Harvest and Storage of Vegetables

Harvesting vegetables when they are fully mature and storing them properly will help determine if this winter you will be enjoying flavourful carrots from your cellar, or their imported woody counterparts.

Some vegetables, such as lettuce, peas, and radishes, are harvested and appreciated all summer long as they become available, but many of the mainstays of the garden, the tuber and root vegetables, can be enjoyed throughout the winter. The first rule of thumb when harvesting any vegetable intended for storage is to ensure that full maturity has been reached. Maturity prepares your vegetables for storage as well as increasing the sweetness of many of them.

Harvesting Tips:

Potatoes should be harvested once the plant has matured and is slowly drying up. This allows the skin on the tuber to set, making it harder to bruise and cause nicks on the tuber that can result in dry rot. Tubers with an adequate skin set will also not lose moisture as readily as potatoes without proper skin set. Tip: Do not leave potatoes in cold, wet soil too long after they are fully mature or you will have an increased incidence of rhizoctonia.

Onions have reached full maturity when the tops have fallen over and are beginning to dry. It is very important that onions are fully mature when harvested because neck rots can occur if immature bulbs are picked. To hasten the maturity process, undercut the roots of the onion, and allow to dry outside for a few days before harvest. This is best done when no rain is expected for a few days. Onions will freeze when the soil temperature dips below -1°C , so ensure you do not wait too long into the fall before harvesting. Tip: Stop watering onions two to three weeks before you plan to harvest them as this will help in the maturing process.

Carrots can be harvested as soon as the taproot has reached your preferred size, but allowing them to mature will increase their sweetness and storability. Lift the carrots out of the bed and then cut or break off the greens right at the top of the carrot. The best time to harvest is when the weather is cool since less field heat needs to be removed once in storage. Be careful not to wound or bruise the carrots when harvesting so as to decrease the chance of fungal infection while in storage.

Rutabagas actually store best if they are fully mature and have been exposed to a light frost. Rutabagas are one of the garden crops least susceptible to freezing and normally can be harvested after all the other crops. The tops are removed prior to harvest, leaving about 1 cm on the root. Be careful not to trim into the crown of the rutabaga.

Beets should be harvested before the roots are more than 7.5 cm in diameter or else most varieties become tough and fibrous. The top should be removed during harvest, but don't throw them out since they are delicious and can be eaten as greens. Cut the tops off 2.5 cm above the root.

Tomatoes are different from the other vegetables mentioned above, since the edible portion is not in the soil. Most gardeners start picking tomato fruit as soon as the first ones are ready and then keep picking until the first frost. Green tomatoes are more susceptible to damage at temperatures under 10°C , while ripe red tomatoes can withstand $2-3^{\circ}\text{C}$ temperatures for a few hours.

One thing to remember when storing produce is to discard anything that looks like it will not survive the winter. When in doubt, throw it out! Otherwise, it will likely break down and cause irreversible harm to the rest of your vegetables.



What is the Yukon Master Gardener Program?

This is a program that utilizes trained volunteers to assist home gardeners by providing information and technical data to answer their questions. The program is operating throughout North America and has established itself as a valuable asset in multiplying local gardening educational efforts.

The First Yukon Master Gardener training was initiated in the fall of 1997. The basic training course involves forty hours of instruction and provides a broad background of horticultural subjects to the experienced gardener taking the course. Class subjects include plant botany and physiology, soils, plant taxonomy, outdoor and greenhouse gardening, lawns, house plants, bulbs, herbs, pests and pest control, and ornamentals.

The prerequisites for becoming a Master Gardener include a familiarity with Yukon Gardening conditions and a commitment to return forty hours of volunteer time by providing gardening information to others. After the course of instruction is completed and the student has passed the final exam, then he or she is ready to become a garden educator.

The Agriculture Branch Agrologist together with the Master Gardener determine those volunteer activities that the Master Gardeners participate in. These may include garden clinics, home garden visits, teaching basic gardening classes, working with youth and adult groups interested in gardening, writing newspaper articles, and answering phone inquiries at the branch office during the absence of the agent. The community needs and facilities will help to determine the most effective teaching methods.

Master Gardeners have also contributed time as fair judges and volunteers and have worked with horticulture therapy projects and with youth and adult groups.

How to Express an Interest to Take the 2004 Master Gardener Course

Last years course was held over three weekends at Yukon College. Other options include two nights a week over eight weeks or five days straight through the week. Please indicate your course time preference when registering your expression of interest. The course

will be offered in the time frame most requested by the participants.

This year's course is scheduled to take place in the winter of 2004.

Registration: YTG, Energy, Mines and Resources, Agriculture Branch, room 320, Elijah Smith Building. Phone 667-5838; Fax 393-6222

This will be a certificate course with a final exam to be written on the last day. The cost of registration includes the Yukon Gardeners Manual, various written handouts and 40 hours instruction. **Space is limited to 25 persons**, so please contact the Agriculture Branch soon.

The Story Behind the Silver Aspen Leaves...

This year you may have noticed that the Aspen leaves turned silver throughout much of the Yukon forest. The culprit is a leaf miner that's been working its way south from Mayo and Dawson the past few years and with last years mild winter exploded this spring in the Whitehorse area.

According to Don White, Silviculture Technician with Forest Operations at EMR, the aspen leaf miner is *Phyllocnistis populiella* (family Gracillariidae). Don asked, "Did you see any tiny white moths flying around earlier this spring? Sometimes there were clouds of them along the trails by Hidden Lakes in the Riverdale area and along the old wood cutter trails below Porter Creek. They are the critters." The adults emerge in the spring from under leaves fallen in the previous fall and wait until the aspen leaves flush to mate and lay their eggs. When the eggs hatch the larva bore into the aspen leaves chomping away until the leaves fall off in autumn, then over-wintering in the leaf litter.

The aspen leaf miner is not a tree killer. The aspens are still able to photosynthesize, so the pest looks more destructive than it is. Another insect attacking poplars this summer was a leaf roller, *Choristoneura conflictana* (family Tortricidae). They are related to the spruce budworm and cause the leaf to roll up around the larva when they hatch. Along with the usual attack of aphids on the poplars this summer, the trees have had a pretty tough go. A cold snap this winter should help to reduce some of the attacking insect pressure.

Nominations Sought for the Yukon 'Farmer of the Year' Award

Our annual fall conference is on the horizon and, as in the past couple years, the Agriculture Branch is calling for nominations for Farmer (or Farm Family) of the Year. The award is to be presented at the annual agriculture banquet on November 1, 2003, at the Gold Rush Inn in Whitehorse. Nominations should be submitted in writing to the Agriculture Branch with a brief explanation of why the candidate(s) are worthy of the award. Criteria may include their contribution to agriculture development in the Yukon, development of agri-business, assistance to the future of agriculture in the Yukon, good farm management practices or any other reason you feel your candidate should be chosen.

The deadline for nominations is October 29, 2003 at 4:00 p.m. This will give us a little time to compile the nominations, engrave the award and put together a little background information. So think about it, there are many people that have made a contribution to agriculture in the Yukon over the past year. All the nominations must be in writing and signed by the nominator(s). Facsimiles and e-mails will be accepted. These may be delivered to the Agriculture Branch Room 320, Elijah Smith Building, faxed to 393-6222 or emailed to: marylynn.drul@gov.yk.ca.

InFARMation is...

A Yukon government newsletter published by the Agriculture Branch of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. If you would like to add your name to the newsletter mailing list, comment on an article or contribute a story, then please write to:

InFARMation
Department of Energy, Mines and Resources
Agriculture Branch
Box 2703 Whitehorse, YT Y1A 2C6
Phone: (867)667-3417
Fax: (867)393-6222
Email: tony.hill@gov.yk.ca

If you would like to speak with someone in person please contact Tony Hill at 867-667-3417, outside of Whitehorse at 1-800-661-0408 local 3417, or stop by the Agriculture Branch. We will be at our new location on the 3rd Floor Elijah Smith Building.

Web site: www.emr.gov.yk.ca/agriculture

Young Farmers of the Yukon

Are you a YOUNG CANADIAN FARMER? Are you between the age of 18 – 40? The Canadian Young Farmers group would like to know how many young farmers are in the Yukon and how many would be interested in forming a Canadian Young Farmer's group in the Yukon.

People between the ages of 18 to 40 are encouraged to reply. Canadian Young Farmer's is having a forum in Regina in November and would like to showcase some new Young Farmer's from the Yukon.

The group would have access to ongoing support and resources available through the Yukon Agricultural Association.

Interested parties can reply by contacting the Yukon Agricultural Association at (867) 668-6864 or yukonag@yukonaa.com, Matthew Ball at matthew.ball@gov.yk.ca, or Gordon Kerr at gord@klondikeforge.ca.

PFRA Shelterbelt Tree Program

This is a reminder that there is a shelterbelt tree program in the Yukon. The deadline for PFRA shelterbelt tree applications is February 2004. The trees and shrub seedlings are available free of charge, however you will be responsible for paying the shipping costs. Standard shipping by bus varies from 10 to 25 cents a tree, depending on the varieties and volume requested. Orders usually arrive in the Yukon in May. Applications can be picked up at the Agriculture Branch.



Our new location is in the Elijah Smith Building, room 320. Stop by for a visit anytime.