

INFORMATION

Yukon Agriculture Branch Quarterly Bulletin

Fall 2006

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MESSAGE FROM THE AGRICULTURE BRANCH

That was one strange summer. I heard from a producer on the McIntock River that their crops suffered due to the lack of rain and from a second producer, on the radio, that the hay harvest near Faro was in doubt due to the wet weather. Overall, I don't think it was a banner year for harvests throughout the territory, but the reasons for this vary. I think most of us in the southern Yukon have the impression that there just wasn't enough heat.

The mobile abattoir is here! The 33' trailer was on display at the Fireweed Farmers Market on Thursday September 28th for the official introduction of the unit to Yukon producers by Minister Archie Lang and Minister Brad Cathers. Kevin Bowers from the Agriculture Branch provided tours of the facility and producers were introduced to Art Lock who has been hired to operate and maintain the abattoir for YTG. The mobile abattoir is designed to provide on-farm slaughter services to red meat producers and is a major step forward in delivering inspected, local meat products to Yukon consumers.

The annual North of 60° Agriculture Conference is just around the corner, scheduled for Saturday, November 4, 2006 at the Yukon Inn. This year we focus on agricultural soils to address questions producers have been asking for years, about how to interpret soil test results and different methods of reporting soil fertilizer recommendations, when to fertilize to optimize forage production and how to build and maintain soil health. After the seminar, please join us for the delicious Yukon Grown and Raised Agriculture Banquet and this year's Yukon Farmer (or Farm Family) of the Year Award. Ticket and nomination information can be found on the back page of the newsletter.

On a final note, I am pleased to let you know that I have accepted an offer to become the new Director of the Agriculture Branch. For those of you who don't know me yet, I spent the past 12 years as the branch Agrologist, working with farmers on production and farm management in the Yukon. In my new role, I will get to meet applicants in the Agriculture Land Program and work closely with industry groups and farmers to provide programs and services that will assist in industry development. I'm looking forward to working with all of you to continue the successful development of Yukon agriculture.

Tony Hill,
Director Agriculture Branch



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NORTHERN AGRICULTURE

THE YUKON MOBILE ABATTOIR

On August 27, 2006 the first Canadian mobile abattoir opened in Yukon. There were tours of the unit at the Fireweed Market and a demonstration out at Laprairie Bison Ranch in early September. This unit is fully equipped with chilling facilities housed in a fifth wheel custom built for Yukon conditions.

Yukon government's \$175,000 investment in the mobile abattoir will leverage federal funding under the Canada-Yukon Agriculture Policy Framework to operate the mobile abattoir for a five year period.

"This investment should grow the livestock industry and dramatically increase the amount of commercially available, locally grown, government inspected beef, bison, pork and elk for sale in Yukon," said the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources at the Fireweed Market. "By managing the operation of the mobile abattoir for the first few years we can establish the viability of the operation, meet or exceed industry and inspection standards for environmental health, food safety and food quality, and ensure it meets the needs of Yukon's meat producers."

Local retailers have indicated their desire to purchase and provide locally produced meat that is competitive in quality and price to the imported red meat it would replace.

"We expect a high demand because the quality is excellent," said Lang. "Yukon grown meat is hormone free, raised in pristine Yukon conditions, and since the abattoir will travel to the farms, the animals will not experience the stress of transportation to the abattoir or crowding on feed lots as they do



down south. These are qualities many Yukoners will appreciate and factor into their purchasing decisions once the products are regularly available in stores and restaurants."

Marketing the processed halves and quarters to commercial butchers and packers will be the responsibility of the livestock producers. "Yukon government has invested

in the necessary infrastructure to support commercial production and marketing of livestock. It's now up to Yukon livestock and game farmers to seize this opportunity to enter the local retail and wholesale markets," Lang said.

The mobile abattoir began operations on southern Yukon livestock producers' farms in September. Farmers can get price information and make arrangements

NORTHERN AGRICULTURE

for slaughter services by contacting the contractor directly at 393-4978 or by email at lock@northwestel.net

ABATTOIR BACKGROUND

The mobile abattoir was provided by Tait's Custom Trailer Sales, a locally operated business. The U.S. built Featherlite Fifth Wheel arrived in Yukon August 27, 2006. It is custom designed for Yukon conditions and will provide slaughter, inspection and refrigerated transportation services for red meats such as beef, bison, pork, elk, sheep and goats.

The operation and maintenance of the mobile abattoir has been contracted to Art Lock of Whitehorse. As a former Yukon hog farmer and outfitter, he has slaughtering experience as well as the mechanical expertise to maintain the fifth wheel and his truck unit.

The Yukon government has a meat inspector who will provide inspection services during the slaughter process to ensure all territorial regulations and health guidelines are met or exceeded.

The mobile abattoir can provide refrigerated transportation to a meat processor for cold storage, aging, butchering and wrapping services.

Farmers will be responsible for marketing their product to retailers, either directly or through arrangements with the meat processor.

The Mobile Abattoir went into service during the first week of September at LaPrairie Bison Farm. An inspector from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency was in attendance to provide some initial training and oversight to ensure

the service and the food safety standards are top quality.

The mobile abattoir will focus on serving livestock producers, including game farmers, in southern Yukon. Partridge Creek Abattoir north of Stewart Crossing is expected to continue operating and is the only Yukon facility equipped to handle poultry.

Yukon's mobile abattoir is patterned on one in operation in Washington State. It is the first mobile abattoir in Canada and has created a good deal of interest from other Canadian jurisdictions. British Columbia and Alberta are both looking at getting mobile abattoirs to provide their smaller livestock producers with access to inspected slaughter services.

The Yukon Game Growers Association, the Yukon Agriculture Association and other Yukon industry stakeholders have long promoted the need for a mobile abattoir in order to break into the commercial market and grow the livestock sector in Yukon's agricultural industry. According to Energy Mines and Resources' biannual Agriculture State of the Industry Report, Yukon consumption rates and sales patterns indicate an annual consumer and visitor demand for 6,000 beef, 12,000 hogs, and up to 200 head of both elk and bison.

The mobile abattoir will help Yukon livestock producers gain access to the commercial market. As livestock increases to meet new markets, demand for Yukon grown grain and feed is expected to increase, providing new field crop opportunities for Yukon farmers.

NOMINATIONS FOR 'FARMER OF THE YEAR'

Our annual fall conference is on the horizon and, as in past 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 4, 2006 at the Yukon Inn in Whitehorse.

Who has been working tirelessly for years? Who treats their animals with an extra bit of TLC? Who has gone above and beyond as a neighbour?

Nominations are to 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 Wednesday, November 1, 2006 at 4:00 p.m. This will give us time to compile the nominations, engrave the award and put together a little background information.

There are many people who 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). Letters, facsimiles and e-mails will be accepted. We are located in room 320 of the Elijah Smith Building.

Fax: (867) 393-6222
Email: marylynn.drul@gov.yk.ca

NORTHERN AGRICULTURE

KLONDIKE HARVEST FAIR

by Rosie Drury

It was another successful year for the Klondike Harvest Fair. There were a lot of people in attendance as well as a number of dogs in costume. A fair number of people brought animals from their farms on Saturday for the best livestock and poultry competition. The scarecrow making competition was a big family hit; stilt walking was a first at the park this year. A troupe from the Yukon Educational Theater showed up dressed as characters of the harvest, there were a lot of crafters in attendance but not as many farmers as we would have liked, although Yannik was there and so were Brian and Susan, and they had good produce. Nana even sold lettuce from the YAA information booth. We partnered with the Yukon International Storytelling Festival again this year, and we had good results, although attendance was down from last year, and bench show entries in baking, preserves, flowers and plants and vegetables were also down, but photography, traditional crafts, recycled creations, and wines and liqueurs were up! A lot of people “blamed” the weather saying that this was a bad growing season, I think that it was a number of things that we will outline in the final report, but timing (with the long weekend, the horse show, the weather, the fact that it’s two days) all contribute, we will be looking to make a few tweaks next year to boost the attendance.

Best Home Grounds

- 1 Wendy and Jim Pollock
- 2 Irene Kwok
- 3 Patti Toole

Best Vegetable Garden

- 1 Carol Nelson
- 2 Jane Reed
- 3 Betsy Troyer

Best Green House

- 1 Barbara Drury
- 2 Patti Toole
- 3 Macauley Lodge

Junior Flowers and Plants

Robyn Buenette

Junior Traditional Crafts

Shadunjen van Kampen

Junior Home Baking

Eric Bookless

Junior Livestock and Poultry

Daniel Senez

Junior Photography

Ingrid Love

Senior Vegetables

Ruth Headly

Senior Flowers and Plants

Jane Reed

Senior Farm Produce

Yannik Freeman

Senior Traditional Crafts

June Bruton

Senior Preserved Foods

Dorothy Burke

Senior Home Baking

Karen Berrel

Quilting

Karen Berrel

Knitting

Judith McCarthy

Needlework

Ruth Headly

Crocheting

Pat Bennet

Wines and Liqueurs

Tullio Albertini

Senior Livestock and Poultry

Krista Senez

Recycled Creations

Karen Berrel

Senior Photography

Lisa Marino

Bea Felker won the side of beef donated by Rafter A Ranch and Don and Vibeke Coates won the side of pork donated by D & H Farms.



Tug o War at the Klondike Harvest Fair

Photo courtesy Rosie Drury

SCIENCE & RESEARCH

FALL CONFERENCE

The North of 60° Agriculture Conference is coming up November 4th.

What lies underneath: Understanding Soil Health

The theme for this year's conference is Soil Health in the North. Join speakers from Western Canada and Alaska to learn about nutrient cycling, fertilizer management, nitrogen movement, organic matter levels, and irrigation. Answer questions such as - how to interpret soil tests, where does the nitrogen go in northern soils, what is the effect of organic matter on production, and how much water should be applied to various crops.

For more information please contact Matt Ball.

Phone: (867) 393-7410

Email: matthew.ball@gov.yk.ca

RASPBERRIES

This past summer was a tremendous year for raspberries. A combination of factors including frost free period during fruit set, no heat stress and an abundance of pollinators has contributed to a bumper year for raspberries at the agriculture test site. Last year our total raspberry harvest was 22 kilograms from an area of 10 rows, each row of 100 feet (total area of approximately 0.25 acres). This year our berry production reached 100 kilograms. From an economic perspective, if we calculate the crop retailed at 10\$/Kg, then a producer would gross \$1,000. There was also a significant portion of berries left on the canes after the first hard frosts that remained unpicked. Next year we will look to reduce the time to fruit set to increase the harvest before frost.

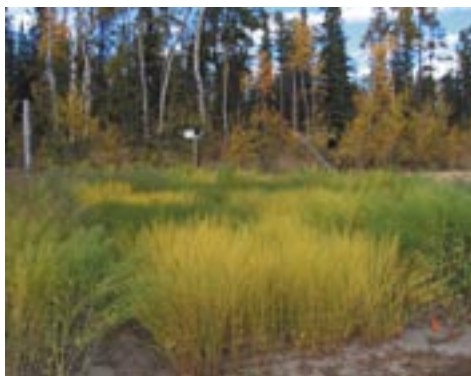
OILSEEDS UPDATE

As we stated in the last newsletter, this was not a great year for field trials, especially field trials with crops that are marginal in Yukon conditions.

The final oilseed crop will be collected through October. From the sites visited to date, only the false flax (*Camelina sativa*) has matured. This seed was the variety provided by the Agriculture Canada Saskatoon Research Center. We will look to this institution in future years for other potential varieties to attempt in the Yukon. The seed of the canolas and Flanders Flax did not mature and most was ruined during the hard frost of late September.

A final report will be written this fall and details will be found in the 2006 Research and Demonstration Report which will be released in the early spring.

Thank you to the Advancing Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food program for funding this project.



Matured False Flax at Steve Mackenzie-Grieve's (light coloured patches).

BEEKEEPER INFORMATION

We had an excellent seminar on September 21 with Paul van Westendorp, Provincial Apiculturist, British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture and Land, Apiculture. He gave a public presentation on the importance of bees to the food chain and in pollination. His presentation was full of amazing photos of bees and, yes, some wasps. Paul also provided detailed information about certain bee diseases that need to be monitored in the Yukon. One of the diseases of concern is the varroa mite. Friday afternoon and Saturday Paul toured some of the Yukon apiaries looking for varroa mites and sadly we did find some.

It is very important to know your bees are disease free before shipping them up to the Yukon. If you are concerned you may have a problem, please contact Matt Ball at (867) 393-7410. There are a number of detection methods to monitor for these mites. The most effective method is to use Coumaphos strips and sticky boards. You simply insert the strip into the hive for 24 hours and place the sticky board at the base of the hive. After 24 hours remove the strip and check the sticky board for mites (pictured here). The Agriculture Branch has available some Coumaphos strips and stickyboards.



Monitor regularly to obtain information on your disease status. Use this information to make informed management decisions. Feel free to contact the Agriculture Branch for further information.

TIPS & TRICKS

REQUIREMENTS FOR OPTIMUM
LONG COLD STORAGE

Beet, Parsnip, Radish
1-4.5°C 90-95%RH up to 3 months

Cabbage
0-3.3°C 90-95%RH up to 4 months

Horseradish
0-2°C 90-95%RH up to 12 months

Leek
0°C 90-95%RH up to 3 months

Onion, Garlic
0-4.5°C 55-75%RH up to 8 months

Potato
4.5-10°C 85-90%RH up to 8 months

Squash
1.5°C 55-60%RH up to 3 months

Turnip
3.3°C 90-95%RH up to 3 months

%RH = Percent Relative Humidity is the amount of water vapor in the air compared to the amount the air could hold at the same temperature if it was totally saturated.

Temperature is the most critical factor in storing vegetables properly. Temperatures should be accurately monitored (ground level = coolest temperatures) and if the optimum temperature is impossible then strive to maintain a steady level. A simple method useful in the Yukon is to allow cool air to enter the facility at night and to close the area off during the day. A small ventilation fan will make life easier. Be sure to cool the produce before storing. During the coldest part of the winter you may have to add a little heat to prevent freezing.

STORAGE NOTES

Apples and potatoes should not be stored together. One will pick up the flavour of the other. Turnips and cabbage will taint the flavour of other vegetables.

Pick up a copy of the Yukon Gardener's Manual for more information on storage techniques.

FEED VALUE

Yearly, we look at the moisture and protein values from the lab results to evaluate hay quality. This year the growth and uptake of nutrients was slower, with feed values coming back slightly below average.

Lab results provide two values for comparison: *dry matter* and *as fed*. The *dry matter* value equals the *as fed* value minus moisture. When comparing feed quality it is important to compare the *dry matter* value because the moisture level is different depending on cutting conditions which results in the *as fed* value varying depending on the moisture value.

The mean moisture content of Yukon hay that has been tested by the agriculture branch is 11.1%.

The total protein content of the feed is determined by measuring nitrogen content and includes all true proteins. The mean crude protein value of Yukon hay that has been tested by the agriculture branch is 11.8%.

WHY TO SOIL TEST

Don't guess, soil test!

It is often asked why should you have your soil tested. Soil testing has a number of benefits such as taking the guesswork out of fertilizer recommendations; making good economic sense; and ensuring fertile soil without excess fertilizer application or pollution of the environment.

This fall the North of 60° Agriculture Conference will look at some of the interpretations of soil test results from different labs and look into the science of soil testing and how different interpretations of the results affect the on-farm management.

DO THIN COWS HAVE MORE
DIFFICULTY MAKING IT THROUGH
THE WINTER?

Thin cows have less fat cover than cows in good condition. Fat is a good insulator, which in turn helps reduce energy requirements to keep the animal warm. An additional 1200 pounds of hay is needed to feed a thin cow (condition score 2) versus a cow in good condition (score 3) through the winter. Lower critical temperatures – the point where a cow requires to generate heat from feed consumed to keep warm – is more of a concern with a thin cow. It is a simple fact that thin animals cannot tolerate the cold as well as cows in good condition.

Adapted from Alberta Agriculture

PHOTOS FROM AROUND THE NORTH



An unusual sight in the Yukon - an aphid-munching praying mantis in one of John Lenart's greenhouses

Romanesco cauliflower grown at Grant Dowdell's



Grant Dowdell inspects his corn



Apple varieties being tested at John Lenart's



The community greenhouse in Carmacks



The Fireweed Community Downtown Market photographed from across the river

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

THE NORTH OF 60° AGRICULTURE CONFERENCE
What lies underneath: Understanding Soil Health
 Saturday, November 4, 2006 at the Yukon Inn.

The conference will run from 8:45 to 4 pm followed by the banquet with cocktails starting at 6:15 and dinner at 7:00 pm.

FARMER OF THE YEAR

Enter your nominations at the Agriculture Branch for Farmer (or Farm Family) of the Year by Wednesday November 1, 2006 at 4:00 p.m.

The presentation will be made at the Banquet.

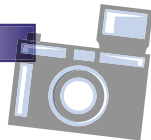
ABATTOIR

The abattoir is up and running, for more information phone Art Lock at (867) 393-4978

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PHOTO CONTEST

The Agriculture Branch is going to run another photo contest this year. Submit your photos to the Agriculture Branch. A showcase of the best photos and prizes for the top three will be on display at the Agriculture Branch through Christmas. Submission deadline is Wednesday November 15th.



YUKON GARDENER'S MANUAL

Yukon Gardener's Manual is available at the Agriculture Branch for \$20 + GST. This is the text used for the Master Gardener Course offered each year by the Agriculture Branch, includes chapters on botany, soils, outdoor vegetable gardening, lawn and ground covers, woody perennials, flowering plants, greenhouse growing, pests and diseases. A great gift idea for green (or black) thumbs this Christmas.

CLASSIFIEDS

Elk Meat For Sale

25 or 50 lb packages with lean burger, prime rib, t-bone, ribs, etc. Low fat, low cholesterol and high protein.

Ford Elk Farms Ltd 633-4342

Velvet Antler For Sale

30 or 100 capsule bottles. Natural and healthy.

Ford Elk Farms Ltd 633-4342

Top Quality Yukon Grown Hay For Sale

100% Guarantee. Buy 10 bales get 1 free!
 800 lb round or 50 lb square.

Rafter A Ranch, Ibex Valley

Phone 667-7844 or email raftera@northwestel.net

Milk Goat and kid

Dairy records available - great teets
 \$100

Wild Blue Yonder

(867) 399-7021

Polled Hereford cow with calf

Wild Blue Yonder

(867) 399-7021

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 or remove your name from the newsletter mailing list, comment on an article, or contribute a story, please write to:

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Or call Matt Ball at (867) 667-5838, outside of Whitehorse at 1-800-661-0408 local 5838, or stop by the Agriculture Branch. We are located on the third floor Elijah Smith Building.

Online: www.emr.gov.yk.ca/agriculture