

# INFARMATION

Yukon Agriculture Branch Quarterly Bulletin

Summer 2013

Volume 26 Issue 2

## CIRCUMPOLAR AGRICULTURE CONFERENCE TO BE HELD IN GIRDWOOD, ALASKA, SEPTEMBER 29- OCTOBER 1, 2013

Applications to attend the 8th Circumpolar Agriculture Conference in Girdwood, Alaska, are now being accepted under the Innovation Exchange Program of the Canada-Yukon Growing Forward 2 program. If you have an idea for a presentation or have reason to participate in the conference, the time to apply is now. The deadline for applications is July 2, 2013.

Yukon has sent farmers, agri-business people, researchers, First Nations representatives and 4-H delegates to previous conferences. Applicants need to fill out a Growing Forward application form found at [www.agriculture.gov.yk.ca](http://www.agriculture.gov.yk.ca) or drop by the Agriculture branch to pick up an application. There are a limited number of sponsorships available and proposals will be evaluated according to the Circumpolar Agriculture Conference guidelines. This is a great opportunity to exchange information and develop contacts with other circumpolar agriculturalists, and it is only available once every three years, so apply today!

### INNOVATION EXCHANGE PROGRAM

This program will provide opportunities for individuals to participate in research and innovation exchange and education with other agricultural regions.

The primary function of this program will be to sponsor participation at relevant agriculture conferences, such as Circumpolar Agriculture Conference 2013 and 2016. Emphasis will be placed on information exchange that provides for Yukon agriculture to become competitive in the marketplace and to adapt to changes that will provide sector sustainability.



Norma Mease inspects her greenhouse grown corn at Minto Bridge Farms.

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## MESSAGE FROM THE AGRICULTURE BRANCH

Another cool start to the spring this year but we are catching up quickly and with any luck crops will have been seeded by the time this newsletter arrives. Seeding of our research trials is a week to 10 days later than in 2012, but with a few warm days in June we should be able to make up for the late start.

There are a couple of new initiatives that the Agriculture branch has been working on this spring. First, the *Animal Health Act* is under review. We have been working together with the Chief Veterinary Officer to consult with farmers, game growers and stakeholders to talk about potential changes being proposed and to hear both suggestions and concerns being raised as we go along. So far, the meetings have been informative and helpful in the process. To find out more on the proposed changes and consultation, visit our website at [www.agriculture.gov.yk.ca](http://www.agriculture.gov.yk.ca)

The second project is a new planned agriculture subdivision in the Ibex Valley, about 30 kilometres west of Whitehorse. Public consultation is taking place on the design and development of the new lots and how they will be offered for sale to the public. One of the features being considered is a way to make some of the land available to new and young farmers who have not been able to access agriculture land before due to the high cost of purchase and development. Details haven't been

worked out yet, although options on long-term leases are part of the discussion.

On another note, I was sad to hear that Del Buerge of Partridge Creek Farm passed away on May 5 this year. Del, with his wife Virginia and five children, farmed in the Stewart River Valley raising livestock, poultry, laying hens and market garden vegetables. Partridge Creek Farm eggs were a staple throughout Yukon for many years, with the largest flock and only federally inspected egg grading station in the Territory. Partridge Creek was also the site of Yukon's first territorial abattoir. Del will be missed and our condolences go out to his family at this sad time.

Coming up this fall is the Circumpolar Agriculture Conference. This conference is held once every three years, and this time we meet in Girdwood, Alaska, from September 29 to October 3. We are planning to send a number of industry delegates to the conference through the Growing Forward 2 Program, so have a look at the website [www.uaf.edu/cac](http://www.uaf.edu/cac) to see if this might be something you could contribute to or benefit from and then check out the application information contained in this newsletter.

Have a great summer,

Tony Hill  
Director, Agriculture Branch

...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1.

### Eligible activities

Activities may include, but are not limited to travel for presentations, information gathering, network development, youth development or other activities that contribute to the development of circumpolar agriculture.

Proposals for attendance should contain an outline of benefits to Yukon agriculture and an information dissemination plan outlining how the applicant plans to share the knowledge with other members of the agricultural industry.

### Eligible applicants

Individuals, farm groups, cooperatives, non-profit organizations and governments.

### Eligible funding

Assistance may be provided for up to 100% of project costs for individuals to a maximum of \$4,000. Eligible costs include travel, preparation of presentations and reporting on outcomes from conference attendance.

Reimbursement for travel costs must be consistent with Yukon government travel expense guidelines. Eligible costs include transportation, accommodation, registration fees, meals and incidental expenses.



# 8<sup>TH</sup> CIRCUMPOLAR AGRICULTURAL CONFERENCE & UNIVERSITY OF THE ARCTIC INAUGURAL FOOD SUMMIT

## PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

**September 29-October 3, 2013**  
**Alyeska Resort, Girdwood, Alaska**

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 29

Welcome to Alaska and the Alyeska Resort, Girdwood

Settle into your accommodations and explore the Resort and spectacular surroundings.

Evening Registration

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 30 - MORNING  
 "GLOBAL FOOD POLICY AND FOOD SAFETY ISSUES"

Plenary Talks followed by a panel discussion.

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) sponsored speakers:

Steffen Weber, Secretary-General of the EU Arctic Forum and Chief Adviser on the Arctic region

Lassi Heininen, Univ. Arctic Thematic Network Lead, Geopolitics

Aria Routio, Univ. Arctic Thematic Network Lead, Arctic Health

Norma Kassi, Director, Indigenous Collaboration Arctic Institute of Community Based Research

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 30 - AFTERNOON  
 "FOOD PRODUCTION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT"

Plenary Talks followed by a panel discussion.

OECD and CAA speakers:

Svein Johansen, Univ. Arctic Thematic Network Lead, Managing Small and Medium Sized Enterprises in the North

Torfi Johannesson, V.P. Circumpolar Agriculture Association, Iceland representative

Poster Presentations: poster presenters will give a brief overview of their posters

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 30 - EVENING

Ice Breaker Reception

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1 - MORNING  
 "FOOD PRODUCTION AND SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES"

Session I - Horticulture

Plenary Talks followed by a panel discussion

OECD sponsored speakers:

Josepf Svoboda, Professor Emeritus, University of Toronto

Tom Allen, Associate Professor, University of Saskatchewan

Kreesta Doucette, Founding Director, Food Matters Manitoba

Poster Presentations: poster presenters will give a brief overview of their posters

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1 - AFTERNOON/EVENING

Tour: Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 2 - MORNING  
 "GO FORWARD" PLAN AND DISCUSSION

Facilitated breakout session

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3 - MORNING  
 "GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES IN ADVANCING FOOD SECURITY IN THE CIRCUMPOLAR WORLD"

Norway, Finland, Russia, U.S.A., Canada and Japan

"Go Forward Plan" Results

Final Words and Closing



## ARE YOU ATTRACTING THE WRONG NEIGHBOURS TO YOUR BACKYARD?

Whitehorse has been called the Wilderness City so it should not be a surprise that we have an abundance of wildlife right here in our backyards. Whether they live inside or outside the city limits most Whitehorse residents have been paid a visit by one of the many creatures that inhabit this landscape. In most cases a wildlife viewing opportunity is seen as a positive experience. It provides excitement and educational opportunities for kids and gives Yukoners a chance to say: "You will never guess what just walked through my backyard!" when talking to their friends and families in the South. Like most things, too much of a good thing can turn out to be bad. Reoccurring visits by wildlife can become detrimental to the animal and become less of a bragging right than what was perhaps originally thought. Once an animal has become habituated, it is reliant upon human activity and the unfortunate end result is inevitable.

The concern is not as great with small mammals like gophers and tree squirrels that hang around in your backyard or song birds that frequent your bird feeder. Song birds in Yukon are migratory and use bird feeders to replenish their



Last year, there were 94 reported conflicts between humans and bears in the greater Whitehorse area, the majority of which involved black bears.

energy supplies while gophers and red tree squirrels are gathering resources for the winter. However, precautions should be taken as squirrels can cause significant property damage if they get into your attic or crawl space and bird droppings are highly acidic and can also be damaging.

The primary species of concern in terms of wildlife interactions are the mega fauna, which are both fascinating and potentially hazardous. Encounters with mega fauna are not uncommon. According to Environment Yukon, for the season of 2012 there were a total of 94 human/bear conflicts in the greater Whitehorse district. The majority of those conflicts involved black bears. These interactions usually do not pose any threat to people; the bears are simply curious, exploring and looking

for food and end up in people's yards. Some of these bears were able to be relocated while other repeat offenders were terminated. It is the responsibility of home owners to ensure their yards and neighbourhoods are not bear attractants.

Education and taking precautionary measures go a long way in avoiding unwanted animal encounters. Attractant management has been identified as the most successful way to ensure that if a bear does wander through your yard it is not tempted to stay.

More information about attractant management and wildlife encounters and interactions can be found on these websites:

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

[www.bearaware.bc.ca/](http://www.bearaware.bc.ca/)



The concern of attracting visitors is not as great with small mammals such as the Arctic ground squirrels.

THINGS TO CONSIDER TO ENSURE YOUR BACKYARD IS NOT AN ATTRACTANT TO BEARS

**Garbage** – one of the main attractants for bears. A bear’s sense of smell is far better developed than in humans. That means you might not be able to smell garbage odours that a bear will be able to detect from far away. If you have garbage pickup, refrain from putting it out the night before. Ensure the bins are not overflowing and have tight fitting lids. Consider freezing fish or meat scraps for later disposal instead of putting them in with your garbage.

**Berry Bushes** – if and when your berry bushes ripen, pick them right away. If you have large quantities consider installing a low tensile electric fence.

**Livestock and Feed** – keep your feed in secure storage sheds and keep chickens in a chicken coop at night. Consider using a permanent electric fence for large livestock or a smaller temporary one for smaller animals.

**Compost** - ensure the compost receives equal parts of brown and green material for optimum decomposition and aerate frequently. Avoid putting meat, fish and oily foods in the compost.

**Pet Food** – feed pets indoors and ensure pet food is stored in a sealed container.

**BBQs** – clean BBQs often, and do not leave a full grease trap.

**Petroleum products and coolers** – store petroleum products in a secure location and ensure coolers are properly cleaned before they are stored.

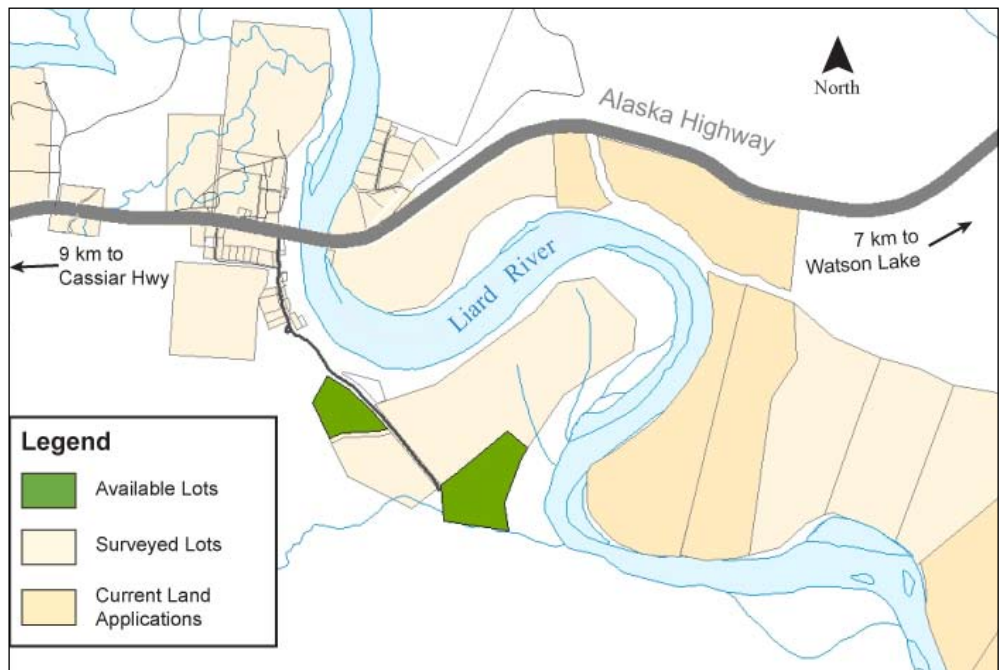
**Visibility** - To keep bears moving through an area, thin out trees to make areas more visible if close to walking trails. Install motion detector lights.

**THE CORNER L.O.T**  
(LANDS, OPPORTUNITIES & TIDBITS)

LAND OPPORTUNITY  
WATSON LAKE AREA: UPPER LIARD

In the past decade Agriculture branch has acquired two agriculture lots in Upper Liard because of failure to complete the development contracts. The parcels have remained in inventory with the Agriculture branch, as there had been no interest in acquiring agriculture land around Watson Lake.

This spring the situation changed and, in response, Agriculture branch is preparing to release the lots shown in green on the map by way of the planned land application process. These lots will be advertised for application this summer, and detailed information packages will be placed on the Agriculture branch website.



## OPENING DAY AT THE FIREWEED COMMUNITY MARKET

The opening of this year's market season on May 16 was marked by unseasonable weather. Vendors used the "power of numbers", and defied the strong, gusting winds by tying their closely-packed tents one to another. One food vendor even reported being frost-nipped that evening!

Two weeks later, as I set to interview farmers, it was a whole different story: the shining sun and warm weather attracted swarms of Yukoners and tourists alike, making for a bustling Fireweed Community Market.

A common theme among farmers was that this year's growing season is a bit later than average, with a lag time of about two weeks. While some, like Mary from Rivendell Farm, had almost finished planting their market garden, most others were not quite there yet. Rivendell Farm's stand was bursting with green foliage from Mary's multiple bedding plants. Next door, Simone was busy hand spinning wool in front of Aurora Mountain Farm's stand, filled with a variety of preserves made from locally harvested berries and herbs. Tom informed me that the farm uses successive planting to stagger the harvest over a longer period, and hence he currently spends most of his time tending to his operation's multiple animals, which include pigs, chickens, goats and horses.

Gardeners! Here are a few tips from some knowledgeable local famers:

- In front of an empty goat cheese cooler, Susan from Lendrum-Ross Farm suggested using cloth row covers and/or hoop covers to maximize crop protection against unexpected killer frost (-2 °C) when lows of around 0°C are forecasted.
- Joanne from M'Clintock Valley Farm advises that mulching with compost at the time of transplant will not only help to conserve moisture, but will also improve the fertility of the soil while reducing weed growth.
- Joan from Grizzly Valley Farm suggested using water to regulate the temperature of tomato plants. A 'wall of water' placed around a plant traps heat during the day and slowly releases the trapped heat at night, hence stabilizing the temperature. Commercial products are available, or you can create your own out of two-litre pop bottles filled with water and placed in a circle around the plant.



**FIREWEED COMMUNITY MARKET**  
**SHOPYARDS PARK**  
**OUTDOOR MARKET**

EVERY THURSDAY | 3PM  
 MAY 16 TO SEPT 12 | TO 8PM

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LOCAL PRODUCE, BAKED GOODS,  
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Canada Yukon




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## FROM PISOS TO PEASE: THE ORIGIN OF THE GARDEN PEA

The garden pea is a frost-hardy, cool season vegetable that finds a home in many Yukon gardens. It is one of the earliest cultivated crops in human history, equally as ancient as wheat and barley. The pea played an important role in the development of societies across the globe.

The geographical birthplace of the pea is considered debatable, but most sources believe it originated in central Asia – between Afghanistan and northern India. There is growing evidence that peas were being cultivated circa 5000 BCE or possibly even earlier. By the Bronze Age (3000 BCE), some form of pea was part of the diet in central Europe. Archaeologists have found pea remnants in ancient Troy and Egyptian tombs in Thebes. During medieval times, peas were an important staple. Once dried, they could be stored for multiple years and were kept as insurance against food shortages or famine.

The early pea had many advantages as a crop. Peas stored indefinitely, retained germination capabilities well and provided rich nutrition and protein. There was also only a relatively short period between planting and the production of food; this characteristic made it a “must have” item on the supplies list of English colonizers travelling to North America.

The true garden pea was developed and consumed by the aristocracy in England by the 17th century. Until this point, peas were much more similar to field peas and were dried and then cooked before eating. As fresh peas became fashionable, more effort was invested in the development of new varieties. By the early 1800s, English (shelling) peas were widely available to the average European gardener. In 1869, peas were one of the original three foods canned by the Campbell Soup Company.

The snap pea is the most recent landmark in pea development. In 1970, an unusual pea plant was discovered by Dr. Calvin Lamborn at the Gallatin Valley Seed Company in Idaho. He used the seeds and continued to cross it with edible-podded varieties to produce a pea that was large and sweet with a crisp, edible pod. The resulting Sugar Snap Pea debuted in 1979, and the reception was almost sensational. There are now more than ten varieties of snap peas available, and they continue to be widely grown.

Today there are three main types of garden peas:

English (shelling peas)

- Pods are not consumed,
- Peas are great for fresh eating or freezing.



Snow peas

- Pods are eaten when flat and crispy,
- Typically added to stir-frys and salads.

Snap peas

- Pods are eaten when plump with peas,
- Very sweet and typically have a long picking period.

The snap pea variety “Sugar Ann” has been planted at the Research Farm as part of the northern soil amendment trial. It is a short, bushy plant that does not require trellising. Pods will be harvested in the fall to compare the effectiveness of different natural and synthetic fertilizers.

To view the peas and learn more about pea production in Yukon, please come out for the Yukon Agriculture Branch’s Demo Day, August 7, 2013.

### THE EVOLUTION OF A NAME

Greek: pisos or pison  
 Latin: pisun  
 Anglo-Saxon: pise or pisu  
 English: pease

By 1600 CE, it was widely considered that ‘pease’ was plural and the name ‘pea’ became commonplace.

## INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES IN YUKON: THE BASICS

An invasive plant is defined as a plant that is not native and has negative effects on our economy, environment or our health. Not all introduced species are invasive: of the 154 introduced plant species in Yukon, only 20 are considered invasive. These unwanted invaders can negatively impact rangelands by reducing forage quality and quantity; forestry operations by competing with seedlings for light, nutrients and water; and water quality and quantity by increased erosion and sedimentation. Invasive plants are spread through several key pathways including increased travel and trade, transportation, horticulture, gardening, seed-mixtures, recreation, and wildlife, livestock, humans and pets.

Effective removal of perennial plants requires depletion of nutrient reserves in the root system, prevention of seed production and prevention of dispersal. Mowing or cutting to reduce root reserves and seed production should be done a few times a season for several years. When hand pulling, use a shovel and remove as much of the root as possible. When cut, flowering plants will continue to produce seeds. Plant material should be put in a clear plastic bag and placed in the sun until the roots and seeds are cooked.

Here are some invasive plant species of particular concern:

## FOXTAIL BARLEY

Scientific name: *Hordeum jubatum*



Foxtail barley is a perennial tufted plant that is native to North America, including Yukon. It has feathery looking awns that many find attractive but can cause physical harm because they are barbed and can work their way into the eyes, nose, gums and throats of animals, both domestic and wild. Though not technically an invasive plant, it behaves like one. It is particularly aggressive in the dry alkaline soil of southern Yukon, where it is problematic to agricultural producers and follows human disturbance.

## CREEPING THISTLE

Scientific Name: *Cirsium arvense*



Creeping thistle is native to Europe, Asia and Africa. This perennial plant can form new shoots from deep and extensive horizontal roots. It is one of the most invasive species in North America and is a noxious weed in most jurisdictions throughout Canada and the USA, including Alaska. (A noxious weed is a plant species that has been designated by a jurisdiction or an agricultural authority as one that is injurious to agricultural and/or horticultural crops, natural habitats and/or ecosystems, and/or humans or livestock.) Creeping thistle is competing directly for nutrients and water; it also produces chemicals that help displace native vegetation. It is an aggressive agricultural weed that has the potential to reduce crop yields by 100%.

Due to its abundant and flammable

litter it can increase fire frequency and severity.

## PERENNIAL SOW-THISTLE

Scientific name: *Sonchus arvensis*



Despite the name, sow-thistles more closely resemble giant dandelions than they do the true thistles. Perennial sow-thistle is considered a noxious weed throughout most of its range. This is an invasive species able to spread long distances by wind-blown seed. It is perennial, with rhizomes that grow up to 10 feet deep, and that are very difficult to remove by hand. It is particularly a problem for agricultural producers. Perennial sow-thistle may modify or retard the successional establishment of native species. At high densities it can dramatically reduce water resources and possibly decrease native plant diversity.

Thanks to Environment Yukon for information in this article. Further information on invasive plant species in Yukon can be found on Environment Yukon's website:

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

*Photos courtesy of Bruce Bennet, Yukon Invasive Species Council.*



## MOBILE ABATTOIR SLAUGHTER SERVICE

Great news! In an effort to introduce more livestock producers to the service and convenience offered by the mobile abattoir, free slaughter services are offered throughout the fall of 2013 and spring of 2014.

The Farm Gate Local Foods & Services operated by Cain Vangel was the successful bidder on the mobile abattoir operation and maintenance contract for the next year. Cain has expressed an interest in working with both red meat and poultry producers to provide inspected slaughter services and increasing the range of services provided to hog producers including scalding and scraping to allow for a "skin-on" product.

Cain's experience as an organic producer will be used to work towards certifying the mobile abattoir to the Canadian Organic Standards to support local organic farmers. For farmers outside of the Whitehorse periphery, kilometer fees will be waived to encourage use of the mobile abattoir in other communities or farms around the Yukon.

Farmers interested in using the mobile abattoir on their farm are required to complete an Application for On-Farm Operation of a Mobile Abattoir. This should be done well in advance (1 month) of the date that you intend to have the mobile abattoir come to your farm.

Some important information that you will be required to provide is what will be done with the liquid and solid waste generated during the operation of the mobile abattoir, if additional water is required for operating the abattoir, and where any needed water will come from. You are also required to provide site information for where the mobile abattoir will perform its work on-farm. Some permits may be required from Department of Environment or Health and Social Services, Environmental Health Services branch, so applying well in advance should avoid unnecessary delays.

The *Application for On-Farm Operation of a Mobile Abattoir* form is available on line at the Agriculture Branch web site ([www.agriculture.gov.yk.ca](http://www.agriculture.gov.yk.ca)), or it can be picked up in person at the Agriculture Office on the third floor (Room 315) of the Elijah Smith Building at 300 Main Street in Whitehorse.

For additional information on the application process you can contact Kevin Bowers, Agriculture Development Officer at 867-667-3043.

## EGG GRADING PRESENTATION

On Saturday, March 23, the Agriculture Branch hosted Brad Jones, a Program Specialist (Eggs), from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). Mr. Jones was in the territory meeting with local egg producers to present information on egg grading and the process involved in registering an egg grading facility to access retail markets.

With his breadth of knowledge on egg grading stretching back almost 25 years, Mr. Jones was able to respond to the many questions and inquiries from the 14 people who were in attendance. For those that were unable to attend, presentation information is available by contacting the Agriculture branch or YAA office.



**APPLICATION DEADLINE  
JULY 2, 2013**

## Growing Forward 2

Supporting innovation in agriculture

**Interested in participating in the next Circumpolar Agriculture Conference?**

Through *Growing Forward 2*, the Government of Canada and the Government of Yukon are providing assistance to participate in this conference. The theme is: Advancing food security and sustainable agriculture in the circumpolar north; building an integrated vision and creating a process for sustainable food security in northern communities. **September 29 through October 3, 2013 in Girdwood, Alaska.**

Contact the Agriculture Branch for more information or to request your copy of the application form. **Application deadline is July 2, 2013.**

Phone: 867-667-5838  
Toll-free: 1-800-661-0408, ext. 5838  
[www.agriculture.gov.yk.ca](http://www.agriculture.gov.yk.ca)

**Yukon**  
Government

**Canada**

## CLASSIFIEDS



PELLEY RIVER RANCH  
MARKET GARDEN

Summer 2013

Naturally Grown Vegetables: Potatoes, carrots, beets,  
parsnips, etc.

In season fruits and vegetables

Cowhides

Contact: Dorothy Bradley

Email: [bradleyd@klondiker.com](mailto:bradleyd@klondiker.com)

FOR SALE

2 Irrigation Wheel Lines

¼ Mile 5" x 5" Diameter Pipe

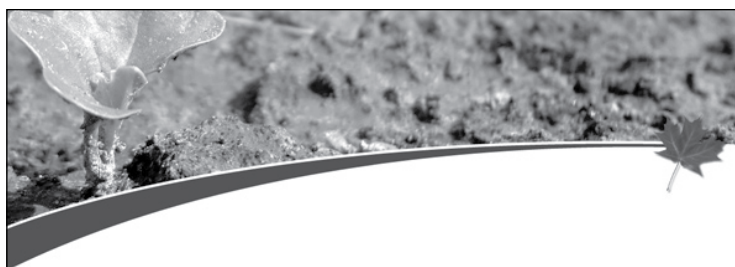
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## Growing Forward 2

Contributing to a sustainable farm and agriculture community

### Have a farm project or agricultural idea you would like to realize?

Through *Growing Forward 2*, the Government of Canada and the Government of Yukon are providing funding to develop agricultural projects that enhance regional economic development. A wide range of activities are eligible from expanding commercial agriculture to community gardens to infrastructure and irrigation projects.

Contact the Agriculture Branch for more information or to request your copy of the programming guide.

Phone: 867-667-5838

Toll-free: 1-800-661-0408, ext. 5838

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



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Visit the Agriculture branch on the third floor, Room 320 of the Elijah Smith Building,  
300 Main Street in Whitehorse