

NORTHERN AGRICULTURE

2007 NORTH OF 60°
FARMER OF THE YEAR

This year there were four nominations for the Farmer of the Year award. Two of the candidates had won the award, another had previously been a nominee, and a new candidate was nominated from the central Yukon.

Of the four candidates, **Brian Lendrum and Susan Ross** were recognized as the North of 60° Farmers of the Year.

Brian and Susan have been nominated before. This year's nominations pointed to new accomplishments and contributions made to the farming community in 2007.

Brian and Susan are indeed worthy recipients, not only for the excellent mixed farm operation and market garden they manage but also for their involvement with the Growers of Organic Food Yukon and the Fireweed Community Market.

Brian is a fixture at the Fireweed Market and their goat cheese is sought after by many patrons of the market on Thursday afternoons. Customers hear about and appreciate the high standard shown by this couple towards the welfare of the animals on their farm.

Brian represents the Growers of Organic Food at the national level and has also been secretary and a program manager for the local organization.

Susan was the project leader this year for a group of poultry producers in applying for and receiving funding to purchase mobile processing equipment. Close to a 1000 birds were processed this summer and fall

using this equipment. Susan was responsible for producing a manual to enable others to use the equipment safely and in a manner that produced a high quality food product for consumers.

Brian and Susan's farm is certified organic, the first in the Yukon, which has given them access to consumers through venues like the Alpine Bakery, Three Beans Health Food Store, and caterers like Mary-el Kerr and the High Country Inn.

In 2005 Brian and Susan expanded their goat operation at Lake Laberge and developed the first cheese processing kitchen in Yukon to be inspected and approved by Environmental Health.

This would be an achievement for any farm but considering Brian's disability and the fact that their farm doesn't have supplied hydro electricity underlines their abilities as good farmers.

2007 NOMINEES FOR FARMER OF
THE YEAR:

LUCY VOGT, from Dawson, operates a good sized greenhouse and market garden operation at Henderson's Corners.

Lucy supplies Dawson with bedding plants in the spring, sets up a booth at the Gold Show and also runs the Saturday Farmers Market from May through September from a high profile location on the dyke. She grows a full spectrum of quality greenhouse and garden vegetables, and is always at the ready with overhead sprinklers and row covers to avoid frost damage that can occur at any time throughout the summer.

Lucy soil tests every year, rotates her crops and manages her soils with great care and interest. This hard work has rewarded her with one of the Yukon's most productive acre and a half. Her nomination came from another well known gardener in the Klondike, Barbara Hanulik.



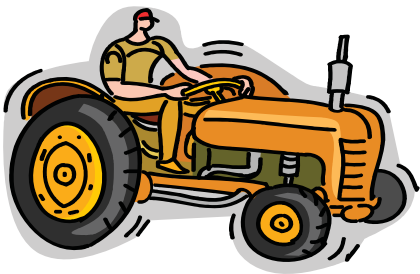
Photo: Brian Lendrum and Susan Ross receiving the Farmer of the Year Award from Minister Archie Lang.

NORTHERN AGRICULTURE

MIKE BLUMENSHINE was nominated again this year. Mike and Sylvia were Farmers of the Year back in 2005 and have been nominated many times for the award.

The nomination came from another farm owner. One of many that Mike helped to develop their fields and sow the crops needed for their livestock. They cite Mike as a role model and mentor and the right person to call when someone needs assistance with farm development. Well done Mike and congratulations on your nomination. Your good work is really appreciated by the farming community.

A nomination came from folks in the agriculture community that wanted to see ROD TAIT recognized for his contribution to Yukon agriculture. Rod was the very first to be awarded the Farmer of the Year title back in 2000. That, in itself, is recognition that Rod was held in very high regard and will be greatly missed.



ROD TAIT A YUKON AGRICULTURE PIONEER:

The Agriculture community lost a good friend and supporter when Rod Tait passed away this October. Rod was a professional farmer in an area that is known for its majestic mountains and not so much for its farming.

Haines Junction has been the Tait family home for the past 43 years. The family moved to Haines Junction in 1964 when Rod took on the job as foreman at the 1019 Experimental Farm. When the farm closed down in 1976, the Tait's stayed on in the Junction raising a family and farming part time, supplying the general store with potatoes and local horse owners with hay and oats.

Over the years, Rod's farming ability was recognized by his peers for the crops he was producing in an extreme climate that averaged only 21 frost free days. Rod was a mentor to many, and was recognized for this in 2000, when he was awarded the very first Farmer of the Year award in recognition of his contribution to Yukon agriculture.

At this year's North of 60° Agriculture Banquet, the Yukon

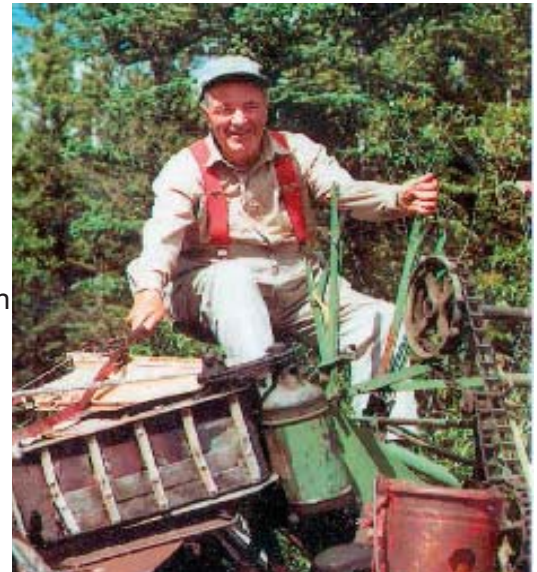


Photo above: Rod Tait

Horse & Rider Association donated and organized an auction to raise funds for the Rod Tait Memorial Scholarship Fund. A silent auction was capped off with a live auction conducted by Russ Tait for a bushel basket of Rod's famous Yukon Gold potatoes. The potatoes alone raised \$2,000 dollars and with the silent auction, \$5,668 was raised in honour of this Yukon farmer. The money raised was matched by the Yukon Agriculture Branch. The total proceeds from the banquet for the Rod Tait Memorial Scholarship fund is over \$11,000. The scholarship fund is for students to study in agriculture.

Our condolences go out to Enid and the rest of the Tait family.

Photo below: Rick Nielsen and a group of farmers, volunteered their services to help the Tait family harvest their field. The proceeds from the harvest will go towards the Rod Tait Memorial Scholarship Fund.



NORTHERN AGRICULTURE

NORTH OF 60°
AGRICULTURE
CONFERENCE
SUMMARY

The 20th Annual North of 60° Agriculture Conference was held November 2 and 3 at the High Country Inn. This year, the focus was on future pathways of northern agriculture. The speakers talked about agriculture programming, organic certification, the Multi Year Development Plan, weed management and genetically engineered crops.

Claire Desmarais provided a great presentation on how to become certified organic, laying out the series of steps you have to follow to be certified. Step 1 of the process is for the interested farmer to contact an accredited certifying agency. The one used most often in Yukon is the Pacific Agricultural Certification Society. The farmer can discuss the particular farm situation with the certifier to assess if it is appropriate to start the certification process, and what is required.

Claire provided a document listing all of the steps and much more. Copies are available at the Agriculture Branch.

Dave Loeks and Scott Ingledew spoke about the draft Multi Year Development Plan. Linda Hall and Neil Harker, our guest speakers from Alberta, provided detailed information about weed

management on Friday night. On Saturday afternoon they stimulated a good debate about genetically engineered crops (See article on page 7).

For more information on any of these topics please feel free to contact: Matt Ball (see contact information bottom right of page 5).



Photo: Dave Andrew and Tom Firth helping with the harvest on the Tait homestead.

2008 YUKON MASTER GARDENER COURSE COMING IN FEBRUARY

The Yukon Master Gardener Course will be held again this winter.

This training course involves over 30 hours of instruction and provides a broad background of horticultural topics. Class subjects include plant botany and physiology, soils, 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. Volunteer time may include garden clinics, home garden visits, teaching basic gardening classes, working with youth and adult groups interested in gardening, writing newspaper articles, or organizing community garden events.

The course will be held the first three weekends in February (2, 3, 9, 10 & 16) from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

This will be a certificate course with a final exam to be written on the last day. The cost of registration is \$125.00 plus GST and includes the Yukon Gardeners Manual and other written materials. Space is limited to 25 people.

To register for the course please contact the Agriculture Branch at 667-5838 or email: matthew.ball@gov.yk.ca.

NORTHERN AGRICULTURE

YUKON WILDLIFE DAMAGE PREVENTION PROGRAM INFORMATION

Until the winter of 2006-07, individual elk and small groups of deer occasionally grazed in farmers fields, usually during the fall and winter months. In December 2006 however, a large group of approximately 100 elk, primarily cows and calves, returned to farmers fields and stayed until April 2007.

Farmers expressed concern about the significant loss of improved pasture, damage caused by elk entering on to pastures, foraging on seeded crops, and mixing with livestock leading to potential disease transmission. Concerns were also raised regarding the return of these animals in summer when crops are standing, before harvest, causing significant potential loss to farm income and feed available for livestock use. Some wildlife species have also caused damage to low height wire fencing constructed to contain domestic livestock.

Farmers have agreed that they should improve management practices and stop practices such as leaving windrowed feed for domestic grazing or leaving unprotected stacked feed in fields. Program assistance will only be made available to those that have taken steps to prevent crop predation.

Wildlife damage to forage crops, seeded pastures and fences varies substantially from year to year depending on the severity of winter weather conditions. The Yukon Wildlife Damage Prevention Program is one of the

tools available to farmers to assist them in the transition to long term solutions to the conflict.

ELIGIBILITY

A producer is eligible if they farm in a documented high risk area or if they have suffered documented damage in excess of \$1,000, caused by elk, moose, deer, or bison on cultivated land that is currently in production and used to produce forage crops for livestock. Assistance is not intended for protection of feed crops which have not been brought in from the field or are stored in a manner which they cannot be protected.

FUNDING

Funding is provided through a contribution agreement, with 50% advance payment to purchase materials and 50% funding upon inspection of completed work and submission of invoices. Valid invoices are for cost of materials purchased after the date of the agreement.

There are two parts to the program: Fencing Assistance and Aversive Conditioning.

FENCING ASSISTANCE

Through the Yukon Wildlife Damage Prevention Program funding is available to producers experiencing severe, recurrent crop depredation for the purchase of approved game farm fencing material. The Fencing Assistance program will cover the costs of game farm fencing material that is installed on the affected agricultural titled lot. Approved game farm fencing material is woven wire that stands at least 7 feet (2.1 meters) high and is secured to solid posts no greater than 20 feet apart. Where the fencing material is purchased by the producer and installed in the manner for which it is intended, the

producer is eligible for funding. The maximum amount that any producer may apply for in one year is \$15,000. Multi-year claims for assistance will only be accepted in cases of severe recurrent damage which cannot be mitigated through other prevention measures and would otherwise be eligible for compensation.

AVERSIVE CONDITIONING

Producers that choose not to apply for fencing assistance or those that have not yet been able to construct approved fencing may apply to have a contractor with herding dogs visit their farm to have wildlife moved away from crop areas to more preferred areas.

Through the Yukon Wildlife Damage Prevention Program approved applicants can contact the Agriculture branch for herding dog assistance as soon as they experience crop depredation or fencing damage. As conditioning of problem wildlife may take some time, each farm will be eligible to make repeat calls for assistance more than once in a program year.

The maximum assistance amount that any producer may apply for in one year is \$2,500. Multi-year claims for assistance will only be accepted in cases of severe recurrent damage which cannot be mitigated through other prevention measures and would otherwise be eligible for compensation.

CONTACT

Please contact Matt Ball for further information at (867) 667-5838, toll-free outside of Whitehorse at 1-800-661-0408 local 5838, or stop by the Agriculture Branch on the third floor of the Elijah Smith Building in Whitehorse.

NORTHERN AGRICULTURE

WINTER TICK INFESTATION OF WILDLIFE

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

You may have heard recent news reports about the finding of 'winter ticks' or 'moose ticks' (scientific name *Dermacentor albipictus*) on Yukon's Takhini and Braeburn valley wild elk herds. Although this tick doesn't bother people or carry Lyme disease or bother elk much, it is cause for concern for Yukon moose and caribou. Winter tick has not been found on free-ranging wildlife in Yukon before, and it is likely the elk brought this unwanted hitchhiker with them when they were introduced from Elk Island National Park in the early 1990s.

Studies have shown, some species, like deer and bison, groom most winter tick larvae off themselves in fall, and so they are not seriously affected nor important as a source of ticks. However, moose and caribou do not groom many tick larvae away in fall, and so they are the most seriously affected later in winter when the ticks become large. Elk, on the other hand, groom off more tick larvae than moose, but elk can still carry one to three thousand ticks each. Because Yukon elk reuse the same fields fall and spring, they may also be increasing the tick numbers in their herd.

Winter ticks harm a moose or caribou by taking repeated large blood meals in late winter, causing the animal to groom out much of its own hair coat when it needs it most. A chemical in the tick's saliva can also cause the animal to stop eating.

Photo: Male and female tick feeding on a Yukon elk. Photo taken in late March 2007 while radio colaring elk.

There are many questions around what the impact of winter ticks would be on moose or caribou in Yukon. With lower moose densities, we might not see the large moose die-offs that occur periodically in southern Canada. That said, even smaller sustained losses in some of our moose populations could cause declines.

Winter ticks do not seem to have spread to Yukon moose or caribou in significant numbers yet, probably because there are low numbers of moose and caribou where most of the wild elk range. Whether or not it is necessary to control ticks and what methods could be used are being considered this winter through a risk analysis workshop with Environment, First Nations, partners and tick experts. As an interim plan this winter, elk will be fed medicated feed at bait stations, to reduce tick loads and the risk of transmission to moose or caribou. The many logistical details of how this will be done are being worked out by Environment and First Nations.

A key question of whether or not winter ticks in wild Yukon elk can or should be controlled is whether or not winter ticks will continue to come to the Yukon, for example, on other wildlife or on imported livestock from southern Canada.



LIVESTOCK & TICKS

The life cycle of the winter tick is an important factor in controlling or preventing it. It starts when a tiny winter tick larvae (barely visible to the naked eye) climbs up vegetation in the fall and grabs onto a passing animal. It stays on that same animal all winter feeding and growing into an adult, until it is the size of your pinky fingernail! In early spring it drops off the animal and lays two or three thousand eggs in the leaf litter. The ticks can't move more than a few centimetres from where they drop, so this spot is where the larvae will again be picked up in fall. Tick control programs in southern regions have had some success by trying to interfere in this cycle, such as burning fields in spring after ticks drop or feeding medicated feeds to wildlife.

The question around the role of livestock is one we need help with. To date we have only one documented case of winter ticks on an imported horse near Watson Lake (1991). Based on interviews with livestock owners and veterinarians in the territory, other cases of winter ticks on livestock are not known. It has been suggested by a winter tick expert in Alberta that our climate may be too cool for these ticks to survive over winter within the thinner coats of domestic animals. If this is indeed the case, the only domestic animals that would be at risk of harbouring winter ticks are animals brought into the Yukon in late fall to early spring, from 'tick-areas' of southern Canada.

The good news is that livestock owners can readily prevent their animals from bringing in winter ticks to the Yukon by treating animals they import. Please note: ticks are also too tiny to see in the fall, so

NORTHERN AGRICULTURE

consider treating imported animals regardless of what you find. Although it may be unlikely that ticks can survive in the coats of domestic stocks, good farm management strategies can reduce the likeliness of livestock becoming possible hosts for winter ticks. Strategies include:

- Developing an inspection and parasite control program with a veterinarian.
- Good livestock grazing practices should be followed when raising animals in wildlife areas. Keep livestock out of fields in the fall that may have had elk present in the spring when the elk drop their winter ticks. This prevents the pick up of tick larvae from that field.
- Creating barriers can be an option to prevent the exchange of ticks between elk and domestic animals. A game fence or exclusion fence, can keep elk from moving in and out of fields, and keep domestic animals in. Game fences can also help reduce damage from grazing elk on agriculture lands.
- Another important prevention measure is to not graze livestock in known wildlife areas in spring and fall, to prevent tick transmission.

Livestock owners can also help in the fight against winter ticks by sharing information they have on ticks, even to say you have never seen ticks on your livestock is very useful information! This way we can accurately judge the risks of this tick and likelihood of success of future control programs.

For more information or to share knowledge, contact Dr. Michelle Oakley, Wildlife Veterinarian, Yukon Government at (867) 634-2439 or 1-800-661-0408 or email: Michelle.Oakley@gov.yk.ca.



STRIKING A BALANCE WITH GENETICALLY ENGINEERED CROPS

Saturday afternoon at the North of 60° Agriculture Conference was dedicated to a discussion on Genetically Engineered (GE) crops. GE crops are living organisms that are engineered to contain genetic material from another living organism. This new technology differs greatly from past practices that selected for plant traits by planting specific species and manipulating the living plants and selecting certain traits. Now the plant manipulation takes place dominantly in a laboratory where genes from different organisms (plants, animals or bacteria) are combined with the genes of the plants we want to have for crops. There have been some interesting results of this technology; we are able to seed Bt corn which is resistant to worms and moths. We have canola crops which are resistant to glyphosate and therefore are good crops for weed control. There is the potential for drought resistant, frost tolerant and salinity tolerant species in the near future.

For the time being, GE technology is used in crops that have little application for Yukon producers mostly because they are targeting warmer season crops such as soybeans, canola and corn. There is glyphosate resistant alfalfa currently undergoing regulatory scrutiny, and this may be a good crop option in future. Nonetheless this technology will likely develop some crops that can be used in the Yukon in the future.

There have been multiple studies covering the effects of GE crops, looking at the human, environmental and economic effects of this technology. From the presentations on Saturday it was apparent that there is an economic advantage for a conventional farmer to substitute a traditional variety for a GE crops in order to improve weed control. This can also provide an environmental benefit in cases with reduced pesticide application and less diesel fuel being used in the process.

There are, however, some negative effects of this technology that need to be carefully considered before a GE crop is seeded. There is evidence of effects on the environment outside of the farm. A recent study printed in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America reports that nontarget aquatic insects feeding on Bt corn byproducts had reduced growth and increased mortality.

There is also concern about the spread of the pollen from a GE crop to the same conventional crop and that the resulting non-GE crop would contain GE seed. Pollen flow has been shown over short distances, so, as always, one should be considerate of your neighbors.

Yukon producers should read up on this technology, it has the potential to provide a benefit to an operator, but be sure to consider both the positive and negative effects of growing a GE crop before seeding.

NORTHERN AGRICULTURE



GROWING FORWARD A NEW AGRICULTURE POLICY FRAMEWORK

At their meeting on June 28-29, 2007 Ministers of Agriculture agreed to *Growing Forward*, a policy statement incorporating a collaborative, forward-focused vision for a profitable and competitive agriculture sector. It will guide the development of federal-provincial-territorial programming for the industry.

Since reaching agreement in principle on *Growing Forward*, governments have made a lot of progress. Governments are moving to implement new and improved Business Risk Management (BRM) programs. First out of the gate will be AgriInvest, the new producer account program and AgriStability, the new margin-based program. The following article provides more information on these programs. Officials are finalizing details for two other BRM programs, AgriInsurance and AgriRecovery. The Suite of Business Risk Management Programs (AgriInvest, AgriStability, AgriInsurance and AgriRecovery) respond to farmer demands for more responsive, predictable and bankable programs.

Governments are working together to develop new non-BRM programs for *Growing Forward*. Building strong programs takes time and governments are moving forward to ensure a smooth transition from Agriculture Policy Framework (APF) to *Growing Forward*.

APF programs will continue until new programs are ready to launch.

Governments will continue to consult with farmers and other stakeholders in the sector on program design and are committed to providing sufficient advance notice of any program changes.

If you would like to learn more about *Growing Forward Policy* visit www.agr.gc.ca, click on the *Growing Forward* link in the features column of the website.

NEW BUSINESS RISK MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

Federal, provincial and territorial governments are developing a new suite of Business Risk Management programs under *Growing Forward*; a vision for a profitable, innovative, competitive, market-oriented agriculture, agri-foods and agri-based products industry.

AgriStability and AgriInvest are programs that will replace coverage previously provided under the Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization (CAIS) program.

AgriInvest replaces the coverage under CAIS for margin declines of less than 15%. AgriInvest is a savings account for producers, supported by governments, which provides coverage for small income declines and allows for investments that help mitigate risks or improve market income.

AgriStability replaces the coverage under CAIS for margin declines for more than 15%. AgriStability provides support when a producer experiences larger farm income losses. The program covers declines of more than 15% in a producer's average income from previous years.

If you participated in 2006 CAIS, you will automatically receive an enrolment notice for AgriStability. If you did not participate, visit www.agr.gc.ca/agristability or call 1 866 367-8506. The 2007 AgriStability participation deadline is December 31, 2007.

HOW WILL AGRIIINVEST WORK?
After filing their taxes, producers will receive a notice indicating how much they can deposit to their account. Producers can deposit up to 1.5 percent of their Allowable Net Sales (ANS) into an AgriInvest account and receive a matching government contribution. For example, a producer with \$100,000 in ANS could deposit up to \$1,500 and federal and provincial governments would make a matching contribution totaling \$1,500.

WHY PARTICIPATE IN AGRIIINVEST?
AgriInvest will replace the coverage for the top 15 per cent of farm income covered previously by the Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization (CAIS) program. The accounts will help producers protect their farm income from small declines. Producers will also have the flexibility to use the funds for risk

NORTHERN AGRICULTURE

mitigation and other investments. The program will be bankable, as producers will be able to easily predict the government contribution to their account each year.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

Individuals, co-operatives and corporations will be eligible to participate. To be eligible, you must have reported farming income (or loss) to Canada Revenue Agency for tax purposes. Status Indians farming on reserves in Canada are eligible to participate in AgrilInvest.

HOW CAN PRODUCERS APPLY?

Producers will not have to provide additional information in order to participate in AgrilInvest. For individual producers, the application will be harmonized with the tax form in most provinces. For corporations, the application will be harmonized with the AgriStability application. Producers will not have to be in AgriStability to open an AgrilInvest account.

WILL THERE BE A CAP ON GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTIONS?

For AgrilInvest purposes, eligible participants will be limited to ANS of \$1,500,000 per year. Based on this limit, the largest matching government contribution would be \$22,500.

WILL THERE BE A LIMIT ON HOW MUCH MONEY CAN BE HELD IN THE ACCOUNTS?

For 2007, which is a transition year, account balance limits will not be in place. For 2008 and beyond, accounts will be limited to 25 per cent of a producer's average ANS for the program year and the two preceding program years. If ANS was not calculated for one or more of these years, the limit will be calculated based on the years available.

THE NEW MULTI YEAR DEVELOPMENT
PLAN FOR YUKON
AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD 2008-2012
IS AVAILABLE

The report outlines a five year plan for the development of the Yukon agriculture and agri-food industry. The Multi-Year Development Plan (MYDP) describes goals and objectives for the industry and for specific sectors, along with the strategies, resources, and timelines for achieving those goals and objectives. The MYDP covers the period from 2008 to 2012.

The report represents the collaborative work of industry and government. The project was managed by the Energy, Mines and Resources Agricultural Branch, with support from all Yukon agriculture and agri-food industry associations. The MYDP was prepared after stakeholder consultations with producers, retailers, processors, government, and First Nations. In addition secondary research has been completed on the markets for Yukon products, and on industry trends.

The report is available online through our website:
<http://www.emr.gov.yk.ca/agriculture>

HOW WILL PRODUCERS WITHDRAW THEIR FUNDS?

For 2007, which is a transition year, producers will be able to take up to two withdrawals from their account. Governments will review whether withdrawal triggers should be in place for 2008 and subsequent years.

HOW WILL AGRIIINVEST FUNDS BE TREATED FOR TAX PURPOSES?

Money is deposited to two funds within a producer's account. Producer deposits are held in fund 1 and government contributions are held in fund 2. Withdrawals from producer deposits (fund 1) will not be taxable. Government contributions (fund 2) and interest earned on both funds would not be taxable until withdrawn and would be taxed as investment income.

WILL ACCOUNTS BE HELD IN FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS?

Initially, accounts will be held by the federal government in most provinces. Governments are working with banks and credit unions toward accounts being held in financial institutions.

WHEN AND HOW WILL PRODUCERS MAKE THEIR DEPOSIT FOR 2007?

Producers will be required to make a deposit for 2007 AgrilInvest. Producers will be notified of their deposit amount after they have filed their tax information in 2008. Further details on the process for making a deposit will be available in early 2008.




NORTHERN AGRICULTURE

2007 CIRCUMPOLAR AGRICULTURE CONFERENCE
 "NORTHERN AGRICULTURE - EVOLVING WITH A CHANGING WORLD"

The 2007 Circumpolar Agriculture Conference was held in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Newfoundland and Labrador the beginning of October. The Yukon was well represented at the conference with 4 local producers attending the conference along with Valerie Whalen, Yukon representative for Agriculture and Agri-Foods Canada, and Tony Hill, Matthew Ball and Brad Barton of the Yukon Agriculture Branch. The producers who attended this conference, thanks to funding from the Agriculture Policy Framework, included Michelle and Cain Vangel, Tom Rudge and Lorne Metropolit. Matt Ball and Brad Barton presented at the conference on Sub-Arctic Nitrogen Fixation and Oilseeds for Biodiesel North of 60°. The conference was a great opportunity to meet fellow representatives of northern agriculture and share experiences and research.

Highlights from the conference included the marketing of vegetables through a School Vegetable Program. This program packaged a mixed bag of vegetables to be sold as a fundraiser for schools. The combinations of vegetables are the ingredients for a traditional NFLD Sunday stew.



Another highlight from the conference was the Dark Tickle Shoppe. The shop specializes in traditional wild berries and produced value added jams, jellies, sauces and vinegars right in their store in their multiuse kitchen. This shop is as much a tourist destination and educational experience, as it is a place for unique wild berry products.



It was surprising to see corn being grown for the NFLD dairy industry. This project uses biodegradable crop cover placed over the field at the time of planting.

This extends the growing season by approximately two weeks and gave the farmers an opportunity to mature corn in a cooler climate. The corn grows up through the row cover as the cover breaks down over the season. At the end of the season the remaining row cover is worked back into the field.



The next conference is to be held in Norway in 2010. For more information contact Brad Barton at the Yukon Agriculture Branch: brad.barton@gov.yk.ca or 867-667-3417.

TIPS & TRICKS

THE POLYFACE FARM DVD “ONE OF THE WORLD’S FINEST WORKING EXAMPLES OF AN ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY FAMILY FARM” A REVIEW BY JOANNE JACKSON JOHNSON

Lately Polyface Farm has been the focus of the attention of author Michael Pollan, among others. It was featured in his latest book “The Omnivore’s Dilemma”. Two farm family members, Joel and his son Daniel Salatin are in demand as speakers at scores of events all over North America. Only a hardworking farmer could keep up with such a speaking schedule. What is the reason for all this attention? Viewing the Polyface Farm DVD may give you the answer, depending on your interest in farming, or at least an inkling of why Polyface (the farm of many faces) has gotten so much press lately.

The DVD shows each aspect of the farm operation in some detail, hosted by Joel and his children, active members of the business. It doesn’t discuss the history of the three generation farming operation, except to allude to the bare fields that existed when Joel’s father purchased the land in the 1960’s. Joel says that you could walk across a field and not step on a blade of grass. Today the farm has lush grass, healthy animals and birds and its products are purchased and praised by its customers, all local individuals and restaurants. But how is it that a farm in Swoope Virginia in the Shenandoah Valley that doesn’t ship its products further than 200 miles has become known worldwide? One reason is that Joel Salatin has written books over the

last decade and a half, instructing people how to raise animals, birds and grass using his methods and now this video is available, to give an illustrated overview of the farm, section by section.

My own experience has been with the Pastured Poultry Profits book. I read and re-read this clearly written book when I started raising my own chickens on the pasture two years ago. There is almost nothing in the book that I disagree with, or have found to be wrong. One aspect of this book, and the material covered in the video, is that the author talks about what was learned from earlier failures. All the while he takes into consideration the behaviour of the animals he is raising and the requirements of the plants.

The farm is not certified organic, although Salatin was an early organic grower who became disillusioned with the lax standards of the USDA. He does not use chemical fertilizers or herbicides. His animals and birds do not receive antibiotics or hormones. He is a master of recycling nutrients within the farm. His cattle graze in a tight pack on grass that has a good variety of plants. The animals are moved daily to new pasture. The beef cattle graze on what Salatin calls “adolescent” grass rather than “infant” or “geriatric” grass. This is the most nutritious and is the best stage for the grass to be at to re-grow. The cows in his county get an average of 70 cow-days per acre and his animals get a minimum of 250 cow-days per acre and have gotten as many as 400.

The animals graze for six months and spend six months eating the baled hay in the barn. The bedding in the barn is seeded with corn, which ends up under the sawdust and manure and ferments. When the cows go back outside in the spring and pigs (“pigerators”) are let into the barn to turn the manure/sawdust to make it aerobic, while they root for the corn (their “pay”). The aerobic compost is then hauled out to spread on the field. No raw manure is spread on the fields during the winter when the grass is dormant. The farm is on the watershed that drains into Chesapeake Bay and Salatin says that on a good farm, there should be no smells and no leaching of nutrients. Manure plus high carbon hay or sawdust ties up these nutrients until they can get on the field in spring when active soil organisms start working on them.

The video shows not only farming practices, but also management of their woodlot and marketing strategies for all the farm’s products. It also includes an interview with Joel Salatin. He talks about the value of having two interns working on the farm for a whole year and what they are responsible for. When he talked about how they all spend time reading in the slow months, I know that this is not a family to rest on its successes, but is always learning.

The Polyface Farm video was produced by Moonstar Films in 2001 and is available at the EMR library, 3rd floor of the Elijah Smith Building.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Thank you from the organizing committee of the 2007 North of 60° Agriculture Conference and Banquet.

Linda Hall, Adjunct Professor, Alberta Agriculture and Food and Neil Harker, Weed Scientist, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Lacombe Research Centre for their presentations on Aspects of Weed Management on Friday night and A look at Genetically Modified Organisms from gene flow to agronomics on Saturday. And for their participation in a Round Table discussion on GE crops.

Tom Rudge, for his presentation and participation in the Round Table discussion on GE crops.

Scott Ingledew and David Loeks from Serecon Management Consulting for their presentation on the Yukon Multi-year Development Plan: Growing into the Next Decade.

Claire Desmarais for her presentation on Organic regulations and how to become Certified Organic.

Kelly Bowers 4-H pledge.

Yukon Horse and Rider Association for donating their fund raiser and organizing the silent auction in honour of the Rod Tait Memorial Scholarship fund.

Russ Tait auctioneer.

Tait Family for the Basket of Yukon Gold Potatoes.

Mary Lumbers for decorations.

Parker –Thomas Jazz Band.

Thank you to all who supplied the excellent ingredients for dinner:

- The Wharf on Fourth for the Arctic Char.
- Bill and Barb Drury, Circle D Ranch for the elk sausage.
- Dave & Tracey Andrews, Rafter A Ranch for the Prime Yukon Beef.
- Steve & Bonnie MacKenzie, Yukon Grain Farm for the potatoes.
- Garrret and Heidi Gillespie, Wild Blue Yonder Family Farm for the organic vegetables
- Brian Lendrum and Susan Ross for the fresh goat cheese.
- Shawana Williams, Yukon agriculture branch summer student for the raspberries harvested from the research farm.

CLASSIFIEDS

Hay, horses and equipment for Sale

- 800 lbs round brome bales for sale. Bales stored undercover. No rain.
- 2 year old filly, very quiet, loves people.
- Weanling Clyde-cross filly, black, 3 tall white socks and a blaze, very flashy, will be tall, very quiet.
- Portable electric grain roller, like new, hardly used \$1000 or obo.
- 4 sections diamond harrows, c/w draw bars for ATV's.
- Dump box trailer, works off tractor hydraulics.
- 12 foot land roller.

For more information contact Dave or Tracey at Rafter A Ranch. 867-667-7844.

Abattoir

To book the mobile abattoir or for information phone Art Lock at 867-393-4978.



InFARMation is..

A Government of Yukon 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 feel free to contact us.

InFARMation

Department of Energy, Mines and Resources,
Agriculture Branch

Box 2703 Whitehorse, YT Y1A 2C6

Phone: (867) 667-5838 | Fax: (867) 393-6222

Email: matthew.ball@gov.yk.ca

Call Matt Ball at (867) 667-5838, toll-free outside of Whitehorse at 1-800-661-0408 local 5838, or stop by the Agriculture Branch on the third floor of the Elijah Smith Building in Whitehorse.

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