



# Agri-News

June 9, 2008

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## Keep Water for Poultry Clean to Avoid Serious Diseases

Since contaminated water can transmit serious diseases to birds, poultry owners should always provide good quality water for their flocks.

“We know that avian influenza can be spread through water that wild ducks have been on,” says Gerald Hauer, assistant chief provincial veterinarian. “Most people know to keep their poultry away from dugouts and ponds, but we want to remind them to treat that water before they let their birds drink it.”

To determine whether water needs treatment, first consider the source. If the water is from a well or municipal source, the risk of introducing diseases is minimal. If using surface water, such as from dugouts or ponds, the risk is much higher.

Though there are several ways to treat water; chlorination is the most common and inexpensive. A concentration of two to five parts per million will kill most viruses, including avian influenza. Here are some formulas for mixing chlorine with water:

- For a bulk tank, add 45 mL of household bleach (five-per-cent chlorine) to 455 litres of water. This is equivalent to adding 1.6 fluid ounces of five-per-cent bleach to 100 imperial gallons.
- People treating water by the bucket can add 2.5 mL to 22.5 litres of water (half a teaspoon to a five-gallon pail).
- If using an automatic water treatment system, be sure to set it to deliver the proper amount of chlorine.
- Always let the water sit for 10 minutes with the chlorine added before giving it to the birds, (this is how long it might take for the chlorine to kill viruses present in the water).

Sometimes water contains impurities that can affect the chlorine’s ability to kill viruses. For example, soil particles, organic material, ammonia and minerals can make chlorine

ineffective. If there are high levels of any impurities, consult with a water quality specialist on ways to get around this problem.

Poultry owners should be aware that changing watering practices can have unintended effects on flocks. “You want to pay attention to your birds’ consumption whenever you make a change in their water,” Hauer says. “You need to make sure they are drinking enough.”

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### This Week

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Also, even a small amount of chlorine can kill modified live virus vaccine added to the water. If vaccinating birds through the water, use clean water with no chlorine.

The cardinal rule for birds is to keep them away from dirty water.

“Never let poultry drink untreated water from a pond, dugout or anywhere else that wild birds have access to,” Hauer adds.

“That is just basic biosecurity and it keeps all of Alberta’s livestock safe and healthy.”

*Contact: Ag-Info Centre  
310-FARM (3276)*

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## **Beekeepers Report Higher Than Normal Overwintering Losses**

Reports of overwintering losses in bees indicate that Alberta beekeepers have experienced a higher than normal incidence of winterkill in Alberta bees. The provincial apiculturist reports that across the province, producers are seeing approximately 25 per cent overwintering losses. Normal overwintering loss range is in the 15 to 20 per cent range.

“The hardest hit regions are the Peace region and the northwest region which includes Barrhead and Westlock,” says Paul Laflamme, head of the pest management branch with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Edmonton. “The provincial apiculturist is reporting that the main causes of these higher losses seem to be high mite loads and failure of miticides to control these pests. The mites are developing a resistance to the two miticides that can be used in Canada. Work is being done by provincial apiculturists and the Canadian Honey Council to get a new product registered with the Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) under their emergency use program. The final decision for registration is PMRA’s, and depending on the pesticide, this can take some time.”

It has been determined that these overwintering losses are not due to Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD). CCD and the symptoms that are described under that title in the U.S. have not been reported in Canada. So far, any reports of CCD-like symptoms investigated by Alberta Agriculture’s provincial apiculturist have been due to other causes.

“Last year, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development developed a fact sheet on best management practices to avoid overwintering losses,” says Laflamme. “There are some very good practices described in the fact sheet that if followed will minimize the risk of encountering high overwintering losses. I encourage all beekeepers to become familiar with the information contained in that fact sheet and to contact Medhat Nasr, the provincial apiculturist, if they have any questions or want some advice on how to incorporate those best management practices into their operation.”

Copies of this fact sheet and other beekeeping publications are available online at [www.agriculture.alberta.ca/publications](http://www.agriculture.alberta.ca/publications) by clicking on *Beekeeping* under the publication categories or by calling the Alberta Agriculture Publications Office toll-free at 1-800-292-5697.

A recently conducted, province-wide survey of beekeepers will shed more light on the state of Alberta’s bees and the industry. Results of the survey are expected to be released by late June.

Beekeepers are reminded that there are risk management programs that producers can enroll in such as Honey Production Insurance available through AFSC and the Agri-Stability Program. Participation in these programs is advised.

*Contact: Paul Laflamme  
780-422-4911*

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## **A Beneficial Practice That Agriculture Can Brag About**

A topic of considerable discussion amongst Alberta’s Reduced Tillage LINKAGES (RTL) agronomists is the impact of no-till in the province. Agronomists encourage no-till because it is a sustainable and beneficial practice.

“We know that no-till is good for the soil and for the farmers’ bottom line,” says Nick Underwood PAg. C.C.A., RTL agronomist for the Peace Region. “Because of the equipment available today, it is possible to direct seed any prairie crop into the uncultivated residue of almost any previous crop.

“There are rules, or practices, that have to be followed for each crop, and they are important. Without getting into the agronomy of no-till, I would like to see some recognition for the good that many farmers are doing. The benefits of no-till, not just to the practicing farmers, but to the province of Alberta are numerous.”

It was calculated, that for the black and grey soil zones, no tilling would accumulate approximately 0.32 tonnes of carbon in the soil each year, and about half of that amount in the brown soils of southern Alberta. While farmers were not financially rewarded for that good stewardship in the past, there is now a system in place to calculate those carbon credits which can be sold to the large final emitters of greenhouse gases (GHG) in the province who have to reduce their net emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>e each year because of provincial legislation. So far the dollar value has been disappointing, and only a few farmers have made a deal.

“We all are used to hearing about the hundreds of thousands of tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e that are emitted by this power plant or that oil sands business,” says Underwood. “No-till is a real ‘good news’ story to help offset the emissions tale.”

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In the 2006 Statistics Canada survey, 9,100 Alberta farmers reported 8,950,036 acres under no-till. Even if each one of those acres is only sequestering 0.12 tonnes of carbon, then over 1,000,000 tonnes of carbon is NOT being released into the atmosphere as CO<sub>2</sub> each year. That is a very large, but still conservative number. Farmers, who farmed 48 per cent of the acres in the province in 2006, deserve the appreciation of everyone. Now, in 2008, responsible farmers no till probably more than 50 per cent of the acres in the province.

The farmers using no till have larger farms, averaging 984 acres. They are burning less fuel to farm those acres, and in time as their soil becomes more fertile, their soil tests will show a slightly less demand for fertilizer. There will be almost total elimination of soil erosion by wind and water. This leads to cleaner streams and rivers that everyone can enjoy. Most wildlife also benefits from a reduction in the amount of tillage.

There are still 4,500,000 acres in Alberta that are being subjected to full tillage, but the number of no-till fields has grown and this practice is proving its benefits in many areas.

*Contact: Nick Underwood  
780-814-1232*

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## **Canadian South Devon Association Hosts World Congress**

The Canadian South Devon Association and its 22 members are hosting the South Devon World Association Conference and the World Association of South Devon Breeders Tour of Western Canada on July 2 to 19, 2008. The South Devon World Association represents the interests of South Devon breeders around the world. This is the first time Canada has hosted the prestigious World Congress, which is held every three years in a member country.

South Devon cattle were originally imported into Canada in 1969 and 1970 from southwestern England. The Canadian South Devon Association formed in 1975.

International delegates from Australia, England, New Zealand, the United States, and Wales arrive July 2, 2008, joining Canadian South Devon breeders in Regina, Saskatchewan, for an intensive agricultural coach tour through Saskatchewan, Alberta and B.C. Highlights of the professionally guided tour include South Devon and commercial cattle ranch visits, tours to historical and point of interest sites in the three provinces, major city tours and the Calgary Stampede.

On July 10, 2008, a special presentation on the IGENITY® profile from Merial Canada will accompany the tour of Cattleland Feedyards in Strathmore. All cattle producers and interested individuals are invited to attend the events at Cattleland Feedyards with pre-registration to Garth Elgie at [garth.elgie@merial.com](mailto:garth.elgie@merial.com).

The 7th World Conference, being held at the Delta Lodge in Kananaskis on July 13 and 14, 2008, will cover topical issues on international genetics, performance recording and world evaluations. Continuing from the last Congress will be discussions on crossbreeding, breed development and global marketing opportunities. All member association countries will make presentations on developments in their organizations since the last World Congress held in the United Kingdom in 2005.

The 18-day Congress concludes in Vancouver on July 19, 2008. Complete information and registration can be found at [www.southdevon.ca](http://www.southdevon.ca). For activities in local regions contact a South Devon breeder in the members directory on the website.

*Contact: Teresa Walker  
Box 44  
Redvers, SK S0C 2H0  
306-646-4460 or 306-435-7224  
E-mail: [teresa.walker@sasktel.net](mailto:teresa.walker@sasktel.net)*

## Agri-News Briefs

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### **Beekeeper's Field Day**

The Beaverlodge Research Farm is hosting the 55th Annual Beekeeper's Field Day in Beaverlodge on June 20, 2008. The field day will include research highlights from 2007 and will include presentations and informal networking sessions. Scientists, guest speakers, provincial aparists and industry specialists will discuss current trends in beekeeping. There is no registration fee for the field day, and all interested Albertans are welcome to attend. For trade booth and sponsorship information, contact Wendy Walter at 780-228-5901 or e-mail [walterwl@agr.gc.ca](mailto:walterwl@agr.gc.ca). For information on presentations and research information, contact Dr. Steve Pernal at 780-354-5135 or e-mail [pernal@agr.gc.ca](mailto:pernal@agr.gc.ca).

### **Stabilize Your Agri-business Energy Costs**

AltaGas Energy Limited Partnership (AELP) and Alberta Livestock Power Services (ALPS) are holding a series of electricity and natural gas informational workshops. The workshops are open to farmers and ranchers interested in finding out how to stabilize energy input costs. These are free-of-charge and no obligation meetings where producers will learn about the Alberta electricity and natural gas markets, what's driving energy costs, and what can be done to bring stability to their energy costs.

<b>Town</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>
Taber	June 16, 2008	7:00 p.m.
Strathmore	June 17, 2008	7:00 p.m.
Killam	June 18, 2008	7:00 p.m.
Ponoka	June 19, 2008	7:00 p.m.
St. Paul	June 23, 2008	7:00 p.m.
Nisku	June 24, 2008	1:30 p.m.
Grimshaw	June 25, 2008	7:00 p.m.

For further information and exact locations, contact Nowell Berg toll-free at 1-877-472-2600.