



Agri-News

July 14, 2008

Growing Forward, Moves Forward

Alberta's agriculture industry will soon be Growing Forward with a new national agricultural policy framework that will help build a more competitive and innovative agriculture industry across Canada.

George Groeneveld, Minister of Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, joined Gerry Ritz, the Federal Agriculture Minister and colleagues from across the country, on July 11, 2008, in Quebec City to celebrate the new Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) agreement.

"We're pleased to be moving forward with Growing Forward. This new agreement will further enable Alberta's agriculture industry to manage risk and capture opportunities," said Groeneveld.

The official signing, which took place at the recent FPT meetings, signals the beginning of Growing Forward's implementation phase. Together, Alberta's Agriculture and Rural Development Ministry and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada will now begin work on developing programs specifically geared to meeting the needs of Alberta's producers and agriculture businesses.

"Our work will include gathering industry feedback on the direction and details of proposed programs," confirmed Groeneveld. "Alberta's industry was an important voice in developing the multi-lateral agreement, and industry's insight and feedback will continue to be key as we develop the programs targeted to Albertans."

Programs under Growing Forward will complement a wide range of Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development initiatives, including the Competitiveness Initiative and the new Alberta Livestock and Meat Strategy that are also focusing on advancing

Alberta's agriculture industry through increased innovation, environmental stewardship and competitiveness.

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Vegetable Producers Urged to Check For Clubroot

Many vegetable growers in B.C. and in central and eastern Canada already know that clubroot can be a big problem in cole crops (members of the cabbage family). Because clubroot was found in two cabbage fields in the Edmonton area last year, scientists are asking that Alberta growers watch for symptoms of clubroot in crops such as broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, Chinese cabbage, kale, kohlrabi, radish, rutabaga and turnip this growing season. Clubroot doesn't usually affect other types of vegetables that are grown in Alberta.

"Clubroot is becoming a fairly widespread disease in central Alberta in canola, so it would be wise for vegetable growers in that area to examine their crops for the characteristic symptoms of this disease," says Dr. Ron Howard, plant pathology research scientist with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Brooks. "Surveys have been done to check for clubroot in canola and vegetable fields in Alberta since 2003. Fortunately, clubroot has only been found in two vegetable fields, one a very minor infestation and the other was more extensive which resulted in some economic loss. Currently, this is a relatively minor problem to Alberta's vegetable industry overall and we'd like to keep it that way."

From now until harvest is when growers should be scouting their crops and checking for above-ground symptoms of clubroot, things such as wilting, yellowing, stunting of crops, or other indications that there could be a problem. If any of these symptoms are noticed, growers can use a garden fork and dig up the roots to examine the plants further. If there are large galls on the roots, it is a good indication that the problem is clubroot.

"Alberta Agriculture's specialists are willing to work one-on-one with growers to help keep this disease from spreading," says Howard. "Growers are encouraged to contact Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development or their local ag service board fieldman if they find clubroot in their vegetable crops. Specialists in the province are tracking clubroot to determine how extensive it is and are collecting samples to determine races or pathotypes. Most importantly, specialists are working with growers to help them develop management strategies to minimize future losses."

Growers who suspect clubroot infestation can also send a sample to one of the commercial plant health labs in Alberta for confirmation. The labs that do clubroot confirmations and genetic analysis of the plant tissue are 20/20 Seed Labs in Nisku and BioVision Seed Labs in Edmonton.

Clubroot can go unnoticed as it is a below-ground problem, although it does manifest symptoms above ground. It is important that growers know what to look for so that they can spot this disease early and take steps to confine it to the

location where it is found. Clubroot can be spread easily with soil infested with spores adhering to tillage equipment. Growers who don't realize that they have clubroot can unknowingly spread the disease to other parts of their farm.

"We encourage growers to rotate away from the cole crop vegetables if they do have clubroot" says Howard. "Generally, a crop rotation of between four and six years is recommended between successive cole crops to minimize the risk of clubroot build-up."

Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development has produced several fact sheets that growers and other interested people can refer to for information on clubroot and for advice on managing this disease. These free fact sheets can be ordered from Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office by calling toll-free 1-800-292-5697 or can be downloaded from the department's website at www.agriculture.alberta.ca/publications.

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Praise for Poultry Producers' Emergency Response Plan

The poultry industry in Alberta has taken proactive steps in developing an emergency response plan to react quickly to the possibility of a serious disease being discovered in one of its birds.

"Their response plan is wonderful," says Dr. Delores Peters, a veterinarian with the Food Safety Division (FSD) of Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development. "They're well advanced in their preparations should an emergency hit their industry."

The poultry industry tests its plan every year so that key emergency response people, producers on the board of directors and office managers know what to do during an actual emergency response.

"They have put a lot of work into it," says Peters, "and they keep practising it. They deserve a lot of credit."

Peters focuses on the health of the birds in Alberta's poultry industry in her scientific research and projects. The poultry industry's emergency response plan was originally designed to address avian influenza, she says, but will actually serve in any poultry emergency.

The Alberta Poultry Industry Emergency Management Team includes representatives from four poultry groups – Alberta Chicken Producers, Alberta Hatching Egg Producers, Alberta Egg Producers and Alberta Turkey Producers and allied industries and agencies including the feed industry, processors and hatcheries, Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Office of the Chief Provincial Veterinarian.

There are many highly contagious diseases that could potentially affect poultry, including highly pathogenic avian influenza and Newcastle disease. “The emergency response plan is actually quite broad,” Peters says. “Parts of it could be used in case of toxic spills, contaminations and anything where the industry is at risk.”

An industry’s emergency response plan is developed to work in conjunction with the emergency response plans of government agencies at the federal and provincial level. The plan details the action required for dealing with each control aspect of a disease outbreak. The industry’s emergency response plan is continuously reviewed and tested in simulated emergencies.

The Office of the Chief Provincial Veterinarian of ARD has been involved in the development and testing of the Alberta Poultry Industry’s Emergency Response Manual. “The poultry industry is demonstrating remarkable foresight in the development of such a comprehensive emergency plan,” says Dr. Gerald Ollis, Chief Provincial Veterinarian. “We all hope that they never have to use it, but it is good to know that they are prepared, just in case.”

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Chair and Board Members Appointed to New Agency

The chair and three initial board members were appointed to the Alberta Livestock and Meat Agency (ALMA) on July 3, 2008. Joe Makowecki, president of Heritage Frozen Foods, was appointed as the first chair of ALMA, and Ted Bilyea, Charlie Gracey and Kee Jim were named as its first board members. The board will now begin its work leading the recently created agency to help transition Alberta’s livestock industry into competitiveness and sustainability.

“This agency will play a vital role in re-invigorating Alberta’s livestock industry and it was essential that we found the right people to lead it,” said George Groeneveld, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. “As chair, Joe Makowecki brings a wealth of knowledge, experience and a long history of success. Under his direction, the agency is well prepared to spear-head the kind of fundamental changes that are required.”

First announced in June as part of the provincial government’s Alberta Livestock and Meat Strategy, the new agency is modeled after similar successful organizations in other countries. It will redirect government funds, resources and programs to help revitalize the livestock sector, enhance the value chain and achieve the necessary changes to build a competitive livestock industry.

“Alberta faces intense competition in the domestic and international marketplaces for livestock products,” said Makowecki. “Our competitors are well organized – we must be too. I am looking forward to working with the new board as we work to create an environment where Alberta’s livestock industry can thrive and prosper.”

ALMA will help market Alberta as a leader and innovator in Canada and throughout the world. This year, the Government of Alberta will provide \$56 million to support its work.

Biographies of the ALMA are available on Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development’s website at www.agriculture.alberta.ca and search *Alberta Livestock Meat Agency*.

Contact: *Alberta Ag Media line*
780-422-1005

To call toll-free within Alberta dial 310-0000

Bedding Plant Season – More Than a Spring Thing

Victoria Day weekend, generally the third weekend in May, is well established as the time when greenhouses gear their production for the highest sales. The weekend is considered the tipping point for spring planting and is the weekend when many Albertans head to their local greenhouse to choose and purchase their bedding plants.

“Many growers have indicated that this year, sales were behind, likely due to the cooler temperatures; however, sales did pick up in June for Alberta’s robust bedding plant industry,” says Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza, greenhouse industry development specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Edmonton. “The growing trend in container gardening continued this year with an added feature of more vegetables being grown in containers. In addition to traditional tumbler tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers were also added into the plants being grown in containers. Many innovative growers also experimented this year with creating an exciting colourful mix of vegetables and flowers together in the same baskets.”

The season is not quiet for many greenhouse operators. Sales for flowering hanging baskets continue well into September. In the industry, there is a trend towards developing more in the direction of garden centres rather than just growing and supplying seasonal bedding plants.

For further information on the bedding plant and greenhouse industries in Alberta, contact Mirza at 780-415-2303.

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Dealing With Flies in Confined Feeding Operations

Flies are a common nuisance on livestock operations during the warm summer months. To help producers manage the fly populations on their operations, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development has posted some information to the Ropin' The Web website. Producers are encouraged to go to the website to access **A Guide for the Control of Flies in Alberta Confined Feeding Operations (CFOs)** and the five **Fly Control Checklists** specific to hog, dairy, feedlot, poultry, and to horse and other small livestock operations.

The guide is designed to increase understanding of the importance of fly control to reducing the risk of nuisance complaints. It is intended to assist CFO owners and operators in designing and implementing a fly management program specific to their operation. The guide provides:

- knowledge of fly biology
- identification of common fly species found in Alberta CFOs
- management options for fly control.

The checklists are a tool for CFO owners or operators to help identify sites where flies may be breeding on their operation. They can also be used as weekly cleanup and maintenance schedules of key fly breeding habitats.

Producers are welcome to download the guide and the checklists by searching *Production Fly Control* on Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development's website at www.agriculture.alberta.ca, or by following this link [www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/epw12257](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/epw12257).

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62nd Annual Provincial 4-H Dairy Show

From July 15 to 17, 2008, the **62nd Annual Provincial 4-H Dairy Show**, and the **24th Western Canadian Classic** qualifying show, will be showcasing some of Alberta's finest dairy cattle. This three-day event, being held at the Westerner Park in Red Deer, is more than just about milk, as members compete in clipping and showmanship, confirmation and judging classes.

In addition, the event will see 65 4-H members participate in a *Husbandry Quiz*, a test of memory and 4-H project material insight, and a *Knowledge Skills* competition that tests their awareness of the industry and of dairy farming. Members also have the option of participating in the *Print Marketing* competition – based solely on creativity, members must use only the materials that they are provided in order to create a full page, full-colour ad for a publication such as the Holstein Journal, with the ad's topic not being disclosed until registration into the event.

The clipping, showmanship and conformation components of the show run throughout Wednesday and Thursday and showcase the delegate's tremendous skills. The event winds up on Thursday with an awards ceremony. The **Provincial 4-H Dairy Show** and **Western Canadian Classic Show** acknowledge the support of title sponsor, Gas Alberta Inc; along with co-sponsors, Alberta Dairy Industry, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development and Westerner Park.

For more information on Dairy Show, contact the show organizer, Alberta 4-H specialist Leila Hickman at 780-853-8115. For more information on the 4-H program and potential projects, visit www.4h.ab.ca.

Contact: *Leila Hickman*
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Agri-News Briefs

Lacombe Field Day

Minimizing production risks through agronomy and genetics is the theme of the Lacombe Field Day, being held on July 31, 2008. Speakers and topics for this year's event include:

- **Jennifer Mitchell Fetch** – oat breeding for food
- **Neil Harker** and **John O'Donovan**
 - rotations and management for biodiesel crop production
 - production inputs: fertilizer, herbicides and seeding trails
 - integrated crop management
- **Kelly Turkinton** and **Kequan Xi** – cereal diseases: resistance, rotations, fungicides with herbicides, alternative seed treatments
- **Mark McLean** – net blotch: a spot of trouble
- **Kequan Xi** and **Pat Juskiw** – disease development and screening methods
- **Joseph Nyachiro, Pat Juskiw** and **Jim Helm**
 - barley breeding: strategies for minimizing production risks in feed improvement
 - defining quality for feed improvement through genetics

Registration fee is \$20 per person and includes lunch, tour and refreshments. Registration is requested prior to July 25, 2008. For further information and to register, contact Loree at 403-782-8114, Heather at 403-782-8100, ext. 0, or e-mail verquinl@agr.gc.ca. Certified Crop Advisors attending the event should note that Continuing Education Units (CEU) credits will be applied for.

Alberta Soils Tour

The 2008 Alberta Soils Tour, a two-day tour, is being held on July 22 and 23, 2008. The tour will begin at the Agriculture and Agri-Food Council (AAFC) Research Station in Lacombe on July 22. Stops include Alberta Agriculture's Beneficial Management Practices Evaluation Project at Whelp Creek, oil site reclamation projects where participants will have a chance to discuss current and future regulations with respect to well site reclamation in Alberta. Other stops in Red Deer county and Rocky Mountain House will also focus on land use planning and range and pasture health issues. The tour will take participants to areas that feature a number of different soils and geographic features in west central Alberta. On July 23, the tour will head towards Drayton Valley and then east on 616 back towards Highway 2. Tour stops on day-two include Premier Horticulture's peat extraction, area woodlots and the University of Alberta's famous Breton Plots and Bentley Preserve. Discussions on clubroot and municipal responsibilities and activities will round out the tour. For further information on the tour and to register, contact Dr. Jason Cathcart at 780-427-3432.