



# Agri-News

August 25, 2008

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## Alberta's Livestock and Meat Agency

The formation of Alberta's new Livestock and Meat Agency was announced in June 2008. The role of the Agency is to work as a catalyst with industry to help regain Alberta's competitiveness and return to profitability. The Agency will work with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development and other government agencies and departments to focus government resources on implementing the various initiatives that were outlined in the Livestock and Meat Strategy that was announced on June 5, 2008.

"The Agency programs will be designed to provide positive impact to the industry to help create an environment for industry to be successful," says Jeff Kucharski, CEO of the Alberta Livestock and Meat Agency. "While we will be working with industry on regaining Alberta's competitive edge, we will leave the specifics of marketing, business planning, the production of cattle and processing of meat with the industry, where it belongs."

The Agency intends to help the industry become more dynamic by bringing all segments of the value chain together to work on common goals. The Agency will focus on the eight priorities that have been outlined in the Livestock and Meat Strategy. Those eight goals are:

1. **Shared Vision** – establish a common vision for achieving a global competitive advantage, which includes the implementation of the LISA information system and the creation of the Agency to focus collective efforts.
2. **Animal Health and Food Safety** – strengthen on a foundation of animal health, food safety and public health, a number of initiatives will be undertaken to ensure that Alberta is doing a good job in this area and increase consumer confidence that the meat and livestock system is safe.
3. **Livestock Information System Alberta (LISA)** – invest in the infrastructure required to support information

exchange up and down the value chain in order to help better respond to customer needs and hopefully capture premiums in the market place.

4. **Differentiation Initiatives** – create an environment and infrastructure to enable industry to differentiate their products, capture new markets and added value.
5. **Marketing and Diversification Initiatives** – to help improve marketing effectiveness, access international markets and lower marketing risk.

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6. **Environmental Stewardship** – provide a platform for leadership in environmental stewardship in the livestock sector.
7. **Cost Reduction and Regulatory Barriers Initiatives** – there are a number of ways to reduce costs and regulatory barriers, at the producer level and especially on the processing side. The Agency will be working closely with the federal government to help reduce the costs and the amount of unnecessary regulations.
8. **Industry Governance and Transition** – help the livestock and meat industry move toward enhanced effectiveness. The Agency has engaged with the industry in a number of workshops already and have a number of workshops planned during the next few months. The workshops will focus on how to most effectively work together to improve competitiveness.

Producers can get in touch with and provide input to the Agency by:

- attending the AFSC producer meetings that will be held throughout the province this fall
- calling the Ag-Info Centre toll-free at 310-FARM
- writing to the Agency directly, at:

Alberta Livestock and Meat Agency  
100A, 7000 – 113 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta T6H 5T6

Over the next few months, the agency will be working with the agriculture department to increase the number of field personnel who can assist producers to age verify their calves in the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA) database, and assist feedlots and auction markets with tag readers and other technology to help improve the speed of commerce and the movement of cattle. The Agency will also be working with Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC) to answer producer questions about the requirements for the second Alberta Farm Recovery Plan (AFRP) payment in January 2009.

“The Livestock and Meat Agency is a new initiative, and I would like producers and others to know that we are doing our best to get up and operational as soon as possible,” says Kucharski.

“We have already started a number of initiatives and workshops; however, it will take some time before the Agency is fully operational and able to deliver on all the programs outlined. We want to do this right, so we are asking for patience while we move forward. We want to ensure that initiatives will be delivered in a way that has the most positive impact on the industry as possible.”

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## **Harvest – Time to Prepare for Direct Seeding**

“There’s more than one way to look at the harvest season, more than just another crop in the bin or getting the bales hauled,” says Ron Heller, agronomist with Alberta’s Reduced Tillage LINKAGES (RTL) program, Vermilion.

Decisions about harvest equipment and harvest methods play an important part in getting ready for next year’s crop.

“Nowadays, with all the adaptations farmers have made to their seeding systems by reducing tillage, deliberate and well-planned action is required before combine, baler, or even cattle go into any field,” says Heller.

Ideally, crop residue should remain in the field to rebuild organic matter and optimize soil quality. While this is something farmers should definitely think about, not all situations allow for it.

“Regardless of seeding system or tillage practice, dealing with straw and chaff before it hits the ground is the best rule for most crops,” says Heller. “In the spring rush, the best weather days are most likely needed for direct seeding – not for handling crop residue, so before the onset of harvest is the best time to prepare.”

Alberta farmers must harvest hundreds of acres of diverse cropland within a very short timeframe, and that means that managing their time can be a real balancing act.

“New-model combines offer increased capacity which brings efficiency factors to play; however, stuffing a double-swath into the threshing unit still requires a lot of grinding, shaking and blowing to effectively separate the wheat from the chaff. Even canola pods can be restrictive for direct seeding if dropped without uniform spreading,” cautions Heller. “It takes considerable power (fuel consumption), engineering (efficiency), and skill (experience) to process a profitable crop. When you consider all the benefits of a direct seeding system, you have to remember that the system and the rewards are only as good as the equipment and effort put into residue management.”

### **Harvest and crop residue tips:**

- balance workload and machinery use with crop rotation
- balance combine front-end load with back-end discharge
- balance crop nutrient cycling with appropriate residue management
- retained crop residues contribute nutrients to the soil that otherwise need to be replaced with purchased fertilizer
- wide row-spacing and narrow openers on direct seeding implements provide superior residue clearance in difficult circumstances

Big acres...big machines...big dollars! When it comes to equipment, even hay and silage operations are no exception to this rule.

“Nothing is cheap anymore, but some things are less expensive,” says Heller. “A good example of cost-cutting measures many direct seeders take is to improve the chop and spread of crop residue with the combine rather than relying on harrowing the stubble afterwards. Even the top-end straw and chaff handling options are available for a modern combine at about one-third of the cost of a good used round-baler or new heavy harrow drawbar.”

For the cattleman, advanced livestock management techniques such as swath grazing and field feeding are economically attractive. These practices ensure that crop and residue never leave the field except as beef, which means that valuable nutrients can be retained in a residue-friendly manner without compromise for direct seeding. Soil stays protected and biologically active with residue mulch.

#### **Harrowing tips:**

- improper timing of harrowing can compromise the pre-seed weed burnoff in early, single-pass direct seeding
- in case of emergency, plan to rent heavy harrows rather than buy

Planning and preparation pay! In the absence of tillage, cropping arrangements should be planned for “bumper” yields and “worst-case” harvest scenarios. “Over time, growers must strategically consider the impact of each different crop choice on subsequent field operations and soil quality,” says Heller. “Scarce labour plus rising fuel, fertilizer and machinery costs impose new challenges. Some crop sequences are easily managed while other circumstances demand special attention to rotation and residue handling.”

#### **Crop rotation tips:**

- harvest modes may vary significantly crop-to-crop and year-to-year due to weather alone – be flexible
- perennial forage in rotation reduces annual inputs and helps build soil organic matter
- livestock operations enhance direct seeding when crop residue is recycled back to the field as composted manure
- when removing straw and chaff, leave sufficient standing stubble to trap snow
- rotate fields where annual fodder crops are routinely harvested as silage or green feed
- sod seeding methods can replace tillage to terminate unwanted perennial forage fields

“Ultimately, in a farming system, it’s the bushel of grain or pound-of-gain that pays the bills, but there can be exceptions,” says Heller. “To optimize residue management during harvest, direct seeders need to be “thinking” about and seek the right

answers to questions concerning openers, crop residue value, soil nutrient supply, crop rotation, and existing or future field conditions.”

A top-notch approach to handling residue is required to avoid intensive, costly and undesirable tillage-based cropping methods while optimizing soil quality. A profitable outcome to harvest is certainly the goal. Moreover, successful direct seeders must create an overall management strategy that deals with crop residues.

“It all starts with uniform distribution of straw and chaff that accommodates low soil disturbance direct seeding to prevent erosion and conserve soil moisture,” says Heller. “The best system will provide economy and efficiency with a positive long-term impact on soil nutrient cycling. Harvest activities will determine if a field becomes a welcome mat or a battleground, in terms of adequate seedbed preparation for the next crop. Whether by cow or combine, residue management is an essential to avoid problems!”

RTL provides farmers with resources to make direct seeding work. For more information contact an RTL agronomist or check out our website on-line at [www.reducedtillage.ca](http://www.reducedtillage.ca).

Contact: Ron Heller  
780-853-8262

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## **Firewood Can Be Deadly!**

It may seem hard to believe, but it is true! Firewood can be deadly. Just one piece of firewood in the trunk of your car could cause the death of an entire forest or of certain tree species in a community.

“Transportation of firewood is a common way for invasive species to spread,” says Janet Feddes-Calpas, coordinator of Alberta’s chapter of the Society to Prevent Dutch Elm Disease (STOPDED). “Hidden under the bark where you can’t see them, the insect pests that spread diseases can be moved across Canada. There are a number of destructive pests such as the native and European elm bark beetles, emerald ash borer, Asian longhorned beetle, and the mountain pine beetle which threaten natural forests and urban trees.

“Storing elm wood is also a concern since this is a perfect breeding site for the native and European elm bark beetles, the insects that carry the deadly Dutch elm disease (DED) fungus. Albertans who have stored elm wood are asked to please dispose of it immediately by burning or burying.”

The Dutch elm disease pathogens, smaller European elm bark beetle, and the native elm bark beetle are named pests under the *Alberta Agricultural Pests Act* (APA). All municipalities, counties and MDs in the province of Alberta have the responsibility and authority to prevent and control DED under

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the APA. Under this act it is illegal to transport or store elm wood or prune elm trees between April 1 and September 30.

“When travelling and camping, please leave firewood at home and pick it up locally,” says Feddes-Calpas. “If everyone takes care of the forests, we will be able to enjoy them for years to come.”

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403-782-8613  
Toll-free in Alberta by dialling 310-0000 first*

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## **One-Stop Shopping for Farm Safety Information**

The mission of the Farm Safety Program is to promote agricultural safety and rural health to farm families and workers, enabling them to make informed decisions about managing their personal risk.

“As part of the Alberta Farm Safety Program, we’ve set up a one-stop information web presence that will give farmers and their families the tools, information and encouragement that they need to make Alberta farms safer for everyone who lives and works on them,” says Laurel Aitken, farm safety coordinator with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Edmonton.

The webpage includes links to fact sheets and newsletters that provide a wealth of information, safety tips, educational resources, reports and statistics, as well there are information links and newsletters designed specifically for kids. Also highlighted on the site is the **Safety Up** campaign aimed at young and new farmers, including new resources for this demographic. An additional feature in this campaign, those who complete the **Safety Up** survey online before September 30, 2008, will have their names entered to win **Safety Up** logo wear including belt buckles, jackets and polo shirts.

“The Farm Safety Program endeavours to engage farm families and help them think about safety and make farm safety an integral part of their way of life,” says Aitken. “There are several safety events held throughout the province each year, and these events, along with campaign news are also included on the site. The farm safety team encourages all Alberta’s farm families to take a moment and check out the resources that are available online, familiarize themselves with the website contents and bookmark the site for easy access. The site can also be used to contact the members of the farm safety team with suggestions, questions and ideas.”

The Farm Safety Program webpage, which can be found at [www.agriculture.alberta.ca/farmsafety](http://www.agriculture.alberta.ca/farmsafety), is the one-stop spot for access to upcoming program details, newsletters, reports and statistics and more.

*Contact: Laurel Aitken  
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## **A New Alberta Breed of Malting Barley**

A new barley variety, the first malting variety released from Alberta’s two-row program, is causing a lot of excitement in the industry.

“This new variety has great yields, almost as high as the highest yielding two-row feed variety,” says Pat Juskiw, barley breeder at Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development’s Field Crop Development Centre, Lacombe. “This variety has great silage and bio-mass yields and a very good disease resistance package. While we are still working on its scald resistance, it is proving to be a variety that should add great value for Alberta producers.”

The new variety has been named Bentley in honour of the world-renowned soil scientist, the late Fred Bentley.

“Before his passing, Fred received the Order of Canada for his work in soil science,” says Juskiw. “We are very proud to have named a barley variety in his memory.”

The seed company that has the tender rights for Bentley is Canterra Seeds and they are currently working on market development for this malting barley variety.

Four varieties being worked on at the Centre have been recommended for registration this year. One of these is Chigwell, a high yielding six-row feed variety, has been registered and is undergoing market development by SeCan.

The Lacombe Centre conducts research on barley, triticale, winter wheat and pulses to enhance forage and feed quality as well as working on malting barley.

*Contact: Pat Juskiw  
403-782-8691*

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## **Province wide Horse Enthusiasts attend 4-H Horse Classic**

The 2008 Provincial 4-H Horse Classic, held at Olds College on July 30 to August 1, 2008, included 78 members participants from 17 Alberta 4-H light horse clubs throughout the province, plus over 40 volunteer leaders. Many new faces and clubs were in attendance at this year’s event, which was the 14th running of the program.

“This program encourages participants to use their knowledge and experience,” says Ashley Eckel, 4-H specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Stettler. “The generous support Apache Canada Ltd., Eqvalan, Gas Alberta, Lammle’s Tack and Western Wear and Penn West Energy Trust that enables three industry/project clinics during the program is

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greatly appreciated. The programming at Horse Classic actively develops 4-H members' skills by testing horse knowledge and working on team and individual activities."

The top four members—based on individual hippology points—qualified for the Denver Western 4-H Horse Classic Award Trip, January 8 to 11, 2009. **Haley Scott** from the Blindman 4-H Lighthorse, **Shelby Crick** from the Blindman 4-H Lighthorse, **Jennifer Ruskowsky** from the Lakedell 4-H Lighthorse and **Luke Wrubleski** from Lakedell 4-H Lighthorse are this year's trip recipients.

Scott was the top category three member in the hippology contest. Top category two member was **Katie Garber** from the Milk River Multi and **Cassandra Crick** of the Blindman 4-H Light Horse was tops in category one.

The top category two/three hippology team consisted of Scott and **Hannah Smith** from Lobstick 4-H Beef & Multi, and **Ambur Henderson** from Midnight Express 4-H Light Horse.

The top category one team included **Cassandra Crick** from the Blindman 4-H Lighthorse, **Austin Perreault** from

Leslieville Trail Trotters, **Taylor Scheidt** from the Midnight Express 4-H Light Horse and **Morgan Sorensen** from Big Valley Rusty Spurs.

In the horse bowl team final, **Jennifer Ruskowsky**, **Jennifer Wrubleski**, **Jonathan Wrubleski** and **Luke Wrubleski** from the Lakedell 4-H Lighthorse Club placed first and **Carson Blackhurst** from the Bits N Spurs, **Dalyce Unruh** from the Circle V 4-H Multi, **Austin Perreault** from the Leslieville Trail Trotters, and **Katie Garber** from Milk River Multi were runners up.

Print marketing class winners, marketing competition winners and placement results from all of the categories and activities are posted to the 4-H website at [www.4h.ab.ca](http://www.4h.ab.ca).

For more information, visit the 4-H website or contact Eckel at 403-742-7547. Government numbers are toll-free in Alberta by dialling 310-0000 first.

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## Agri-News Briefs

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### ***A Solution to Eating Confusion***

In an *Afternoon of Food for Thought*, Dr. Joe Schwarcz, director, McGill office for Science and Society, will be talking about what the agri-food industry needs to know to make it easier for consumers to understand and make better food choices. In what has become a confusing arena, with new miracle foods and preventative claims for trusted old stand-by ingredients, it is no wonder that consumers are sceptical and wary. What are the wonders and what are the worries when it comes to foods, supplements, additives? These and other issues will be discussed by Schwarcz, a professor who has won awards for his ability to teach chemistry and interpret science for the public. Join Schwarcz and representatives from Growing Alberta at Festival Place in Sherwood Park on September 10, 2008 at 3:00 p.m., for an enlightening and interesting presentation. Cost of the afternoon, which includes a Dine Alberta sampler reception, is \$50 per person, plus GST. For further information or to register for this event, contact Nancy Kindler, project coordinator, Growing Alberta, at 780-466-7905, e-mail [info@growingalberta.com](mailto:info@growingalberta.com) or visit the Growing Alberta website at [www.growingalberta.com](http://www.growingalberta.com).

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### ***Northlands Horse Power***

Edmonton's Northland Park is hosting Northlands Horse Power, a new equine showcase, designed for horse enthusiasts, which includes various competitions, clinics, and an equine focused trade show. The event is being held on August 27 to 31, 2008, and also features the World Professional Chuckwagon Association Dodge World Championship for chuckwagon racing. Online entries for the open horse show and ticket sales are available on the Horse Power website at [www.northlands.com/horsepower/index.html](http://www.northlands.com/horsepower/index.html).