



Agri-News

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Alberta Forage Manual

The newly revised **Alberta Forage Manual** is now available from Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development. The updated information and the numerous colour photos and illustrations identifying different crop species, diseases and insects as well as photos explaining forage activities will provide comprehensive information on a range of forage topics for producers. The fully illustrated manual covers a wide range of the forage industry and has over tripled in size from the previously available manual.

“The **Alberta Forage Manual** provides a wealth of information for anyone in the forage industry, from producers to forage seed salesmen,” says Arvid Aasen, forage consultant, Lacombe. “It covers forage adaptation, species performance and the species-specific parameters that will assist producers when making forage choices and decisions.”

The manual is organized into 12 sections:

- Forage adaptation
- Legumes – a description of legumes and specific information on nine major species
- Grasses – a description of grasses and information on 23 different species
- Annual forages – including spring and winter varieties and the main species grown in Alberta
- Perennial forage establishment
- Forage fertility
- Tame pasture management
- Harvesting high quality forage
- Pasture and hay rejuvenation
- Forage pest insects – over 31 specific pest insects are discussed
- Natural enemies of pest insects

- Forage diseases – the major diseases of forage crops are discussed

The manual represents over 18 months of work by 11 contributing authors. “The last time this manual was revised was in the early 1990s,” says Aasen. “This revision includes a wider range of information for the forage industry, including practical information and newer research which has taken place since the previous revision. The extensive descriptions of

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forage species will help producers plan forage management programs, and the sections on forage pest insects and diseases will help producers identify the insects or pest damaging their forage crop so they can take the appropriate action.”

The 348-page **Alberta Forage Manual** is meant to be used as a guide to forage production as it applies to Alberta. Plant growth and regrowth are affected by factors such as the soil climatic areas where they are grown as well as the forage species and the management and utilization of these species. The revised manual provides information producers can use to choose the crop variety best adapted to their specific area and planned usage.

Cost of the **Alberta Forage Manual** (Agdex 120/20-1) is \$30 plus GST, plus shipping and handling. Copies of the manual can be ordered by calling toll-free 1-800-292-5697 or by visiting www.agriculture.alberta.ca/publications

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Do You Have a Farm Safety Plan?

Hazards exist in every workplace, so strategies to protect workers are essential whether the worker is the owner-operator or an employee. The health and well being of both humans and the business depend on it.

“You can’t take all the hazards out of agriculture. It’s just the nature of the work,” says Marcel Hacault, Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA) executive director. “However we can certainly reduce many of the hazards with a little thought and preparation and by making safety a part of each and every job.”

During Farm Safety Week, March 11 to 17, 2009, this year’s Canadian agricultural safety campaign theme *Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) only works if you use it!* was launched. The campaign focuses on the use, fit and access of PPE in agriculture.

“Safety isn’t something that only needs to be practiced for a week,” says Raelyn Peterson, farm safety coordinator, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Grande Prairie. “Farm safety should be practiced always. Having a farm safety plan for your farm, ranch or operation is a good first step that a farm operation can take and it shows family members, employees and farm workers how important safety is to the operation.”

In practice, there are only seven strategies available to reduce workplace hazards:

- engineering controls
- material substitution

- process change
- revised work practices
- equipment change
- administrative controls
- the use of personal protective equipment

A good safety plan considers the hazards, evaluates all possible control methods, integrates various approaches, and re-examines them frequently to ensure a safe work operation. It does these things by requiring that conscious decision-making, evaluation, and re-evaluation is done at various stages throughout the program.

All hazard controls can be put in two basic categories – pre-contact and point-of-contact.

Pre-contact control is the first and most important method because it prevents the hazard from reaching the worker. These controls include substituting materials or processes that are less hazardous, isolating hazardous processes, retrofitting existing equipment, or acquiring safer equipment. Pre-contact control can also be achieved by providing protection to the worker with local exhaust ventilation, machine guarding, better housekeeping, and safe work practices. Many Canadian jurisdictions legislate pre-contact controls.

Where pre-contact controls are not practical, feasible, or totally effective, point-of-contact controls must be used. The **point-of-contact control** is important but secondary because it cannot eliminate the hazard. It only manages the hazard at the point-of-contact with the worker. This form of control is primarily accomplished through personal protective equipment. It is to be used when pre-contact controls are not totally effective. Many Canadian jurisdictions also legislate point-of-contact control methods.

A physical, chemical or biological hazard cannot be eliminated by PPE, but the risk of injury can be greatly reduced.

PPE should be used as:

- a short term measure before controls are implemented
- where pre-contact control technology is not available
- where pre-contact controls are inadequate
- during activities such as maintenance, clean up, and repair where pre-contact controls are not feasible or effective during emergency situations

For more information on creating a farm safety work plan visit www.ccohs.ca

Information is also available by contacting Peterson at 780-538-5633 or by visiting Alberta’s farm safety webpage at www.agriculture.alberta.ca/farmsafety

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Summer Farm Employment Program

A summer employment program for farmers and students is running again in July and August of 2009. The program is designed to assist farmers with hiring help for the summer, and to provide an on-farm experience for young Albertans. Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development provides wage support to a maximum of \$400 per month as well as worker's compensation coverage and safety training information.

Employers must own or rent a farming operation in Alberta producing a minimum of \$25,000 worth of farm commodities. Employees must be residents of Alberta, between 15 and 24 years-of-age and cannot be a direct relative of the employer. The program requires that employees are paid at least minimum wage (increased to \$8.80 per hour this year).

Farm safety is an emphasis in the program, and all employees and employers are required to review a safety CD together. Employees must complete and pass a safety quiz based on the information on the CD in order to be accepted into the program.

Each farming operation is eligible for one employee and must provide full time supervision. The work done by the employee should be directly related to the farming operation. The program does not cover domestic or child care tasks.

It is important for the employee to have or apply for a Social Insurance Number as soon as possible, and they must not be working elsewhere or attending school during the program months.

This is an opportunity for Alberta youth to gain farm work experience and perhaps increase their interest in pursuing a career in agriculture.

Application forms and more program information are available on Alberta Agriculture's website, www.agriculture.alberta.ca or by calling the Ag-Info Centre at 310-FARM (3276). The **application deadline is May 31, 2009**. Applications are processed on a first come, first served basis.

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Local Entertainment and Products Available

The attraction of a novel experience is often that extra element that makes a visit to a farmers' market or a farm direct outlet so appealing. As well as the fresh locally grown produce and products to be found, there's the chance to go and do something different or special, to see stuff that many Albertans just don't see every day.

Alberta's farmers' markets and farm direct operations offer some great opportunities to visit the nostalgic good old days. They can be a wonderful way to revisit and experience some of the charming aspects of what may have been much more common childhood experiences, such as loading up the car to go pick Saskatoon berries. Whatever memories a visit to a farm or a farmers' market evokes, there are good times and great produce and products waiting on the farm.

"In Alberta, we are fortunate to have lots of opportunities to experience great, local entertainment while reconnecting with our rural roots," says Robert Spencer, commercial horticulture specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Stettler. "Whether it be re-experiencing the 'fun' of picking fruit, getting some dirt (or something else) on your shoes, or you are just looking for a rural experience, there are lots of places that you can go to get a reminiscent fix."

The annual list compiled by the Alberta Farm Fresh Producers Association, the *Come To Our Farms Guide* has recently been posted on the association's website. The guide can be viewed by visiting www.albertafarmfresh.com

"Be a part of it all and plan a visit at your local farmers' markets or find a direct market farm near you," says Spencer. "If one farm doesn't have everything you need or want, ask about other farms and operations in the area."

"Make a day of it. Not only will you be entertained and probably have more fun on the farm than you ever remember having, but you can get your hands on fresh, local product and connect with the people that grow it."

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Bronze Leaf Disease of Poplar and Aspen

In 2003, Bronze Leaf Disease (*Apioplagiostoma populi*) was found in Swedish Columnar Aspen and Tower Poplar tree plantings in Manitoba. This fungal disease affects a number of poplar and aspen species, with both Tower Poplar and Swedish Columnar Aspen being highly susceptible. Bronze Leaf Disease (BLD) does not affect tree species other than poplars, and not all poplar species are susceptible.

“If you were to go outside for a walk almost anywhere in Alberta, you wouldn’t have to go far to find a poplar or aspen tree,” says Robert Spencer, irrigated and specialty crops specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Stettler. “One of the most popular and best-selling tree species in Alberta is the Swedish Columnar Aspen. It is valued for its narrow, tall growth habit and rapid growth rate, but it’s also one of the aspen species susceptible to BLD.”

Over the past few years, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development staff members, led by Dr. Ron Howard, have conducted a survey project to determine if and where this disease is present in Alberta. Nurseries and municipalities across the province have participated and assisted in survey activities. The survey produced a number of presumptive positive samples that were collected from several municipalities.

“Symptoms of BLD typically appear in mid-August,” says Spencer. “Infected leaves turn a reddish-brown colour from the leaf margins (edge) in towards the leaf base, with the whole leaf eventually turning colour. The leaf veins and petiole (leaf stem) may remain green for a time. All or a few leaves on a branch may be affected. The reddish-brown or bronze colour can become darker as the season progresses. Infected leaves often remain on the tree throughout the winter. BLD is initially introduced by spores, but moves systemically within the branch, eventually causing the death of the affected tree. The rate of death can vary, but trees may die within three to five years.”

BLD cannot be controlled by chemicals. It can only be managed by ensuring good sanitation practices (removing leaves, pruning out diseased material) and maintaining good plant health and vigour (adequate water, fertility, etc.). Diseased material should be pruned out below the lowest visible point of infection. Trees that are so severely infected that pruning is impractical, or trees that have recently died from BLD, should be removed, burned and/or buried to reduce the risk of disease spread.

The challenge with this disease is that positive identification of the disease cannot be based solely on visual symptoms. Diagnosis is typically accomplished by examining the fruiting bodies of the causal pathogen; however, this is difficult because the fungal fruiting bodies only form after an over wintering period. Infected, over wintered leaves with fruiting bodies often have a “bumpy” texture to the leaf (similar to the pebbled texture of a curling rink surface).

To overcome some of the difficulties of diagnosis, a molecular test was developed by researchers at the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Research Centre in Lethbridge, which allows quick and accurate determination of BLD infection. Preliminary test results on material collected from central and southern Alberta in 2007 suggest that BLD was present in some of these samples.

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ATV Rider Course

ATVs (All Terrain Vehicles) are one of the biggest contributors to farm injuries and fatalities on Alberta farms each year. A one-day safe riding course is being offered at the Donnelly arena on May 2, 2009. Riding is an activity that requires the interaction of three things: personal ability, ATV capabilities and environmental or terrain conditions. Riding safely requires the rider to take responsibility for his or her own riding abilities, the riding environment and the capabilities of the ATV. Riding within your own personal limits may seem simple to do, but many injuries are caused by riders going beyond their abilities. The course will cover the following key elements:

- safe riding practices, strategies and risk awareness
- personal protective equipment and knowing your ATV
- riding on hills and terrain
- transporting materials, winching and ATV attachments
- transporting your vehicle
- environmental considerations and issues

Cost of the course is \$25 for participants ages 12 to 17, and \$50 for adult participants. Family rates are also available, \$110 for one adult and three youths, and \$135 for two adults and two youths. The course is sponsored by Smoky River Safety Council and Alberta's Family and Community Support Services. All participants in the course will receive a workbook and a First Aid Kit. Participants must bring their own ATV's and safety gear to the course. A certificate will be issued to all those who complete the course. To register, call 780-837-2786.

Holistic Management Course

The Tomahawk Cattle Company and the West Central Forage Association have organized a two part Holistic Management Course. The course will be held in Stony Plain at Selmac Sales. Dates for the two parts of the course are:

- Part 1 – May 14 to 16, 2009
- Part 2 – June 18 to 20, 2009

The cost of the course is \$300 per person and the registration fee includes coffee breaks, lunches, handbooks and materials. For further information or to register for the course, contact the West Central Forage Association toll-free at 1-866-725-4447 or e-mail westcentralforage@gmail.com