



# Agri-News

June 8, 2009

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## **Farm Equipment Efficiencies: Combining Field Operations in the Spray Tank**

Before venturing off into the new world of spraying multiple products, producers should ensure that any mix they use does what it is supposed to do, and is actually needed.

“With the movement toward reduced or zero-tillage, the sprayer has taken on added significance on many farms,” says Doon Pauly, crop specialist, Ag-Info Centre, Stettler. “As more and more land receives multiple spray passes per year, farm managers are now seeking ways to improve the efficiencies of their sprayers by combining diverse products in the spray tank to eliminate a spraying operation. These new combinations include herbicide-fertilizer, herbicide-insecticide, and herbicide-fungicide mixes. Although this strategy may reduce spray passes, it may not increase efficiencies if the applied products aren’t necessary.”

Pauly says to first make sure the solution is a registered mix. To be registered for use in Canada, the efficacy of a crop protection product and all its registered mixes needs to be supported by research. Product and tank-mix registration gives the user some level of confidence that the product will perform up to certain expectations.

“Unfortunately there are few registered fertilizer-pesticide mixes and it usually is a ‘buyer beware’ situation, even if the fertilizer salespeople claim it won’t form a sludge or gel in the spray tank,” says Pauly. “It doesn’t make much sense to save a \$7/ac spray operation and ruin a \$20/ac herbicide by mixing it with a fertilizer that reduces product effectiveness.”

Some herbicide-insecticide and herbicide-fungicides combinations are registered so users have some level of assurance that these will work properly.

“But before using one of these registered mixes, try to determine if the added cost of an additional product is really necessary by answering a few questions,” says Pauly. “For instance, is the targeted pest present? Is the crop stage right for the pest to reduce yield? Is the pest level above the economic threshold so control is justified? There is a real temptation to

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### **This Week**

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add an inexpensive crop protection product to a spray mix 'just in case' the pest may be present, or 'just in case' the observed low levels might become problematic in the future."

Sprays applied without considering the actual severity of the pest, or staging of the crop, are often ineffective and may even be detrimental. An improperly timed insecticide application may also kill beneficial insects and prolong existing pest problems or induce new ones.

"There is also growing evidence that low levels of some pests are actually beneficial and may contribute to good yields," says Pauly. "A 'just in case' spray mix may be an unnecessary input cost and may even do more harm than good."

If a mix is applied early in the season, another pass may still be needed at the more traditional time of pest control. This applies primarily to herbicide-fungicide tank mixes for early season control of leaf diseases in cereal crops, but can apply to other situations as well. "For cereal crops, the flag leaf and second last leaf are essential for proper kernel development and grain filling, so fungicides should protect these structures," says Pauly. "An early season fungicide-herbicide application will control diseases at the time of spraying, but offers little protection for the important leaves that have not yet developed. Cereal leaf diseases need to be controlled at the flag leaf stage if the disease is present and conditions favour disease progression, even if there was an earlier fungicide-herbicide application."

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## **World Angus Forum 2009**

The World Angus Forum (WAF) 2009, scheduled for July 13-16, 2009, in Calgary, Alberta, is shaping up to be the largest Angus event ever held in Canada.

It will take a 2.5 km walk to tour the 160,000 sq. ft. of cattle and breeder displays from the more than 200 exhibitors participating in the event, with Canadian breeders from P.E.I. to B.C. as well as the U.S.A., Denmark, Scotland and more.

It is expected that 1,000 head of Angus cattle will be on the grounds at Spruce Meadows, just south of Calgary, for forum participants and visitors to tour. Many will be entered in the open, junior and futurity shows while others will be the focus of breeder displays.

"This is a chance to promote our genetics to the world," says John Lee, chairman of the WAF 2009 organizing committee. "Canadian Angus breeders have responded with great enthusiasm. The forum will provide a unique opportunity for both purebred and commercial operations to view Angus programs and meet breeders from across the country and around the world all in one place."

A feature will be the first ever international embryo display highlighting genetics from nine countries. Embryos were implanted in Canada and the resulting calves will represent genetics from Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Denmark, England, Ireland, Scotland, Uruguay and the United States.

The World Angus Forum 2009 includes a technical conference, a western ranch tour, gala banquets, the Angus marketplace, western and Canadian art exhibits and a cattle sale as well as a special agenda geared to junior participants. Current registrations from all parts of the world stand at over 500.

Day visitors are encouraged to attend the shows, the sale and tour the exhibits and MarketPlace for free at Spruce Meadows July 14 and 15 with free parking provided. Food and beverage concessions will be on-site.

Complete details on all aspects of the forum can be found on the WAF website at WorldAngusForum.com. International forums in the Angus breed are held every four years in different countries. The last time a forum was held in Canada was in 1995.

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## **New Program Poises Graduates for Leadership in Meat Industry**

Olds College has recently added a new meat industry management certificate to its curriculum.

It will be the only true gate-to-plate program of its kind in North America, giving graduates a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the meat industry from slaughter right through to purchase by the consumer. The certificate will build upon the college's meat processing certificate, which aims to provide superior hands-on training and stringent standards regarding sanitation and food safety.

"Safety is always one of the big issues in the industry," says Brad McLeod, coordinator of Olds College's meat processing and management programs. "The other big concern is leadership."

According to industry estimates, the meat sector employs approximately 80,000 people in over 1000 Canadian companies, more than forestry and farming combined. Growing by about 6000 positions per year, it is the single largest part of the food manufacturing industry and the demand for qualified, knowledgeable employees is stronger than ever. With domestic hog production growing from 14 million head to 23.4 million between 1990 and 2007, and over three million cattle slaughtered annually, demand for knowledgeable management seems strong.

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Graduates of Olds College's meat industry management certificate program can be expected to become industry leaders in food safety, equipped with the skills to provide management and leadership expertise in their places of employment.

The program starts up in the spring of 2010 and will be 15 weeks in length.

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## **Using Historical Maps to Help Make Current Decisions**

Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development's website contains lots of information for those in the agriculture industry, including literally thousands of maps.

"These maps contain all sorts of information related to climate and current conditions," says Ralph Wright, soil moisture specialist, Alberta Agriculture, Edmonton. "Precipitation, temperatures, snow pack, soil moisture - these are just some of the areas the maps cover."

In addition to the maps that show current conditions and trends, there are historical maps that date as far back as 1961.

"These historical maps can be very useful for understanding the current trends," says Wright. "If you want to know what this year might look like, you can go back and look at the old maps to try and help put current patterns into perspective. The maps can help visitors answer a wide variety of questions. For example, in past years did low growing season accumulations follow low overwinter precipitation accumulations? What are the wettest months in the year and how much precipitation falls on average in each month? Or, how much precipitation occurs during the growing season during a one-in-five-year dry spell? How are soil moisture reserves in my area now? Just how cold was it last month?"

Wright says the map collection can even be a help when it comes to making marketing decisions. "Perhaps it's dry in your area, but what is it like 100 kilometers away? It's very useful to know what's happening around the province where your markets may be."

The moisture maps can also be very helpful when it comes to making insurance decisions. "The maps can show you what the historical trends have been for your area," says Wright. "If there's a strong gradient of precipitation in your area, for example, the maps will show that. And that sort of knowledge can be very helpful when it comes to deciding on insurance."

"Perhaps the most important thing about this map collection is that it is continually growing and evolving," says Wright. "Every week we add up to forty new maps describing current trends. These can be a real help for visitors who want to see how conditions are developing."

To access the maps, go to [www.agric.gov.ab.ca/acis](http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/acis) and click on the quick viewer tab near the top of the page.

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## **Importance of Early Season Crop Walks**

Early season crop walks are an excellent method for producers to find out how things are looking for the upcoming growing season.

"Basically it seems like every spring is just a little bit different," says Ross McKenzie, agronomy research scientist, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Lethbridge. "Going on a crop walk with researchers and agronomists can be invaluable for producers to find out how things may have changed this year from last."

Going on an early season crop walk can help producers find out what insects or diseases are starting to crop up early, so they can take appropriate action if necessary.

"For example, we've already seen significant damage from pea leaf weevil feeding on the winter pulses we seeded last fall," says McKenzie. "This will be something producers will want to be aware of, especially in southern Alberta where this pest can be a real problem."

McKenzie is an organizer for the crop walks hosted by the Lethbridge Research Centre. He says his group is interested in finding out what producers want to see when they come on the centre's walks.

"We'll be asking producers and industry agronomists what they'd like to see over the next few weeks in the Lethbridge or Bow Island areas where we do have research trials," says McKenzie. "We have our own ideas about what we want to show, but feedback from participants is invaluable in helping us to plan these crop walks. We also have trials in north central Alberta in the Vegreville, Gibbons and Barrhead regions and are considering doing crop walks in these areas if farmers are interested."

For more information on crop walks at the Lethbridge Research Centre, call Dr. Ross McKenzie at 403-381-5842.

Contact: *Dr. Ross McKenzie*  
*403-381-5842*

## **Agri-News Briefs**

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### **Stewards in Motion 7**

The Alberta Stewardship network is hosting its annual **Stewards in Motion 7** workshop and annual general meeting on Thursday, June 25, 2009, in Fort Macleod. This year's theme is Local Diversity, Helping Habitat at Home. Registration is free and open to all landowners, stewardship groups, organizations and agencies. The registration deadline is June 19. For more information or to register, call 1-877-727-5276 or go to [www.ab.stewardshipcanada.ca](http://www.ab.stewardshipcanada.ca)

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### **Incorporating Pulses into Existing Foods**

With support from the Canadian pulse industry, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development scientists have set out to determine how pulse ingredients can be added to a variety of foods. Pulse flours or fractions (protein, starch and fibre) have been added to snack foods, gluten-free crackers, burgers, low-fat bologna and breakfast sausages, and used to formulate a meat substitute. The researchers are also investigating how to shorten pulse cooking times by developing a quick cooking process that maintains their nutritional and health benefits. This development work is helping set the direction of further study of pulse ingredients and how they can be used to create high quality foods. For more information, contact Karen Erin at the Food Processing Development Centre at 780-980-4864.

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### **Peace River Forage Association Summer Tour**

The Peace River Forage Association is holding their summer tour on Saturday, June 20, 2009. Registration will begin in Fort St. John at 7:00 a.m. and in Dawson Creek at 8:00 a.m. local time. There is a registration fee of \$30 for members, which includes lunch, steak supper, refreshments and the bus ride. For more information or to pre-register, phone Chris at 250-789-6885 or 250-793-8916.

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### **Livestock and Meat Agency (ALMA) adds Two New Board Members**

The Alberta Livestock and Meat Agency (ALMA) has added two new board members. Ron Jackson is a semi-retired senior executive with a wide variety of business experience including crop input and horticultural product distribution. He is chair and co-founder of TriWest Capital Partners Inc., a private equity firm, and previously served as chair and CEO of Burns Food Limited, a food conglomerate that processed and distributed a variety of meat, fruit and vegetable products. Wayne McKnight has more than 33 years of food retail, procurement, and distribution experience under his belt in both domestic and international markets. Before he formed McKnight Insights and Solutions Inc., which provides business strategy and advisory service to the global food industry, McKnight was the vice-president of global procurement of food at Walmart Stores Inc. ALMA is a provincial corporation whose mandate is to act as a catalyst for success in Alberta's livestock and meat industry. For more information on ALMA, visit [www.alma.alberta.ca](http://www.alma.alberta.ca)