



April 25, 2011

## ***Farm Animal Care Leaders Recognized with Awards of Distinction***

Alberta's livestock industry honored three leaders in promoting responsible farm animal care in the province, at the Livestock Care Conference held in Red Deer on April 6 to 7, 2011.

"The Awards of Distinction are an opportunity to recognize people in our industry who have made exceptional contributions to farm animal care in Alberta," says Lorna Baird, executive director, Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC).

"The award recipients for 2011 are all tremendous ambassadors for progress in farm animal care. They are leading by example and truly making a difference in our industry."

The Award of Distinction for Industry Leadership was presented to Morris Airey, the recently retired former director of animal protection for the Alberta Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA). Among his many contributions to farm animal care, Airey has helped to foster teamwork and information sharing between Alberta SPCA and AFAC.

The Award of Distinction for Innovation was awarded to Dr. Steve Mason, a strong advocate of farm animal care progress throughout a long career with a major focus on technology transfer. A few highlights of Mason's work in producing extension materials include over 70 Alberta Dairy management technical articles, numerous additional technical articles on beef and sheep production, and 40 quarterly issues of Western Dairy Digest magazine – now Dairyman's Digest – which he has produced and edited since its inception.

The Award of Distinction for Communication was presented to Dr. Clover Bench of the University of Alberta. Bench is an instructor for courses in animal welfare, food animal behavior and companion animal behavior at the university, where she serves as teacher, advisor and mentor to dozens of students.

More information on the Awards of Distinction, including more detail on the contributions of each of the award winners, is available on the Livestock Care Conference website at [www.afac.ab.ca/lcc](http://www.afac.ab.ca/lcc)

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## Healthy U – a Program for All Albertans

Healthy U was developed as a public information and education campaign to support and encourage Albertans to lead healthier lifestyles by providing them with access to information on healthy eating and active living.

The goals for the program are:

- to encourage and support Albertans to become more physically active and in eating healthier and more wisely
- to increase the number of Albertans who are physically active
- to increase the number of Albertans who eat a balanced diet following the Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating

In keeping with the key directions of the action plan – improving the health of Albertans and helping Albertans to stay healthy – the Healthy U website has been developed to give Albertans access to current, evidence-based information about healthy eating and active living choices and factors that affect health. The site is designed to help visitors find reliable health information and encourage them to live healthier lifestyles.

Some features include:

Workplace Wellness – designed to help Albertans learn how easy it can be to start a wellness program in a workplace; Healthy U Tools & Resources – features free Healthy U resources all in one convenient place; News & Information – includes the latest news and updates on Healthy U programs and initiatives; and, Snackivity Box – is full of fun activities such as crafts, games, singing and dancing, all to help young children learn to form healthy habits.

All of the great advice, interesting activities and events and tools and resources including healthy living tips for all stages of life from nutritional needs during pregnancy, infant needs, feeding growing children at all ages and stages, and healthy foods and activity hints for adults, can be viewed on the Healthy U website at [www.healthyalberta.com](http://www.healthyalberta.com)

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## Food Safety on the Move

For this Lethbridge meat processor, a 2010 upgrade of a delivery truck and other equipment was key to maintaining and enhancing food safety.

Rhonda Roth has been known to call Lethbridge Meats and Seafood the last of a dying breed, but make no mistake; she's referring to the company's unconventional business mix, not its commitment to the future.

With an upgrade to meet new food safety requirements now complete, this 35-year-old meat processing company is looking ahead with confidence.

"We are a small meat processing plant, which includes an abattoir," explains Roth, Lethbridge Meats and Seafood's Manager of Operations. "We do custom kill for the industry, which is pretty unique these days. We also process beef and pork for ourselves, which we wholesale to restaurants and grocery stores in the area."

Over the years, food safety has been an important element of the company's solid reputation in the Lethbridge area and beyond. They employ a food safety officer to ensure that all of their products are fully compliant with regulations. More recently, those regulations have been evolving to provide an extra level of assurance for consumers.

Roth applauds the spirit behind these changes, but notes it's not easy for a small company to foot the bill. In 2010, Lethbridge Meats and Seafood saw a few areas where its food safety capabilities were due for an upgrade. Over the course of the spring and summer, the company made three capital investments.

Perhaps most importantly, they purchased a new refrigeration unit for a delivery truck. Next, they bought two new freezers for the front end of the plant. Finally, they put in a new refrigeration unit in the room where non-edible by-products are stored before disposal. These investments were cost-shared 50-50 with the federal-provincial Growing Forward Food Safety Processor Program.

These changes allow Lethbridge Meats and Seafood to provide its custom clients and wholesale customers with the same high quality they expect, with food safety protocols that reflect today's best practices. Roth has already observed how these higher-efficiency units have reduced the company's energy use and, presumably, its carbon footprint as well.

"These are things we could have done ourselves over time," says Roth. "Because of the cost involved, without the help of Growing Forward, we would have had to do it over four or five years. I'm glad we could make these changes so quickly and I think it shows. We just had an audit and received the gold standard level of certification under the *Meat Inspection Act*."

The Growing Forward Food Safety Processor Program helps processors improve their food safety practices.

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Daryl Loback, manager of Growing Forward's Food Safety programs with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, explains that this can be achieved in several ways: through adoption of food safety systems, undergoing food safety audits, participating in food safety training or, as with Lethbridge Meats and Seafood, through capital equipment purchases that directly impact food safety. Capital purchases can be cost-shared 50-50 to maximum of \$50,000, while the program will pay up to 70 per cent of non-capital costs up to \$25,000.

Loback applauds Lethbridge Meats and Seafood for stepping up to the plate and providing a great example of the Alberta meat processing industry's commitment to food safety.

"This was a substantial project that resulted in a big improvement in the company's capability with respect to food safety," says Loback. "We are seeing the same all over the province. We have an industry that is being very proactive in addressing the requirements they need to meet to be in business. They know it's not a matter of if, but when."

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## Controlling Prohibited Noxious and Noxious Weeds

Alberta Agriculture's Crop Protection 2011 (Blue Book) is a popular tool for those landowners who find themselves having to deal with invasive plants on their property.

The new Weed Control Act and regulation, which came into effect on June 16, 2010, brought with it enhanced protection for Alberta's agricultural land and natural spaces.

"One of the most significant changes in the legislation is an expanded list of invasive plants, which increases Alberta's ability to be vigilant in keeping invasive plant species out of the province," says Maureen Vadnais, acting supervisor, Agricultural Service Board Program, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development. "Many of the plants added to the list are the result of an extensive study of invasive plant species in bordering provinces and states which may pose a threat to Alberta's eco-system and agriculture industry."

The Weed Control Act organizes weed lists into two designations; prohibited noxious and noxious. It lists 46 prohibited noxious weeds and 29 noxious weeds.

Prohibited Noxious weeds are species with demonstrated detrimental effects in other provinces or states that are not established in Alberta. The objective of identifying them is to prevent them from becoming established in the province.

Noxious weeds are species that are widely spread in various areas of the province, but can still pose a significant economic hardship once established. Controlling the spread of Noxious weeds is critical to protecting areas that are not infested.

"Under the Act a person must control a noxious weed that is on land they own or occupy," says Vadnais. "However, if it is a prohibited noxious weed the landowner must eradicate it."

Controlling or destroying noxious and prohibited noxious weeds is where the the Crop Protection 2011 book comes in.

"The Crop Production 2011 guide, also known as the Blue Book is updated annually and provides producers with the most recent information on pesticide products," says Vadnais. "While the focus is on weeds in field crops, the book also offers chemical control solutions for controlling both noxious and prohibited noxious weeds."

The 496-page book includes information on products, tank mixes and formulation changes. Easy-to-use charts allow users to find information quickly. It includes a complete guide to safety, including protective clothing, first aid, emergency help and proper container disposal.

Copies of Crop Protection 2011 can be ordered through Alberta Agriculture's Publication Office, 1-800-292-5697, or through Alberta Agriculture's website at [www.agriculture.alberta.ca/sales](http://www.agriculture.alberta.ca/sales).

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## New and Improved?

While it may appear there are a lot of new pesticides released every year, almost all of them aren't new at all.

"A casual look at the index of the Crop Protection 2011 book can be very misleading," says Harry Brook, crop specialist, Ag-Info Centre. "It gives the impression that there are a huge number of new pesticides being released every year. However, a closer look at the chemistry behind the names tells a slightly different story. The only real, truly new herbicide in 2011 is Heat, a preseed burnoff product."

"With herbicide registrations lately, there are several trends that may confuse the user," says Brook. "One of the trends out there is to take two existing herbicides and put them into a box and give it a new name. It leaves the impression of a new product when, in actual fact, it only provides the convenience of packaging both products into a single box."

"A step beyond this is combining the active ingredients together in a single container and giving it a new name," says Brook. "This is convenient as it does away with tank mixing. However, this is not a new product, just a different way of packaging."

In some cases, the company will reformulate the active ingredients so that they can be mixed without antagonism between the two active ingredients. Without the reformulation the product might lose effectiveness on some weeds.

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“Another method of reinventing products is to package a number of common herbicides together and give the resulting combination a new name. Optica Trio is a reformulation of three group four herbicides. The separate chemicals have been around a long time but this product puts some of all three into one container. The advantages might include a broader weed spectrum controlled or a better tank mix spectrum with grassy herbicides. However, it contains nothing really new.”

Existing products are also reformulated for ease of use, or where an extra adjuvant is no longer needed. Usually, reformulation results in a different concentration of the active ingredient and a change in rates applied per acre. This can be confusing as, for example, Horizon NG needs to be used at a different rate than the older formulation of Horizon.

“The most common change seen over the last couple of years is the patent expiry on a number of popular herbicides and a proliferation of ‘look alike’ products,” says Brook. “They contain the same active ingredient and may have the same tank mix partners and uses but go by a different name.”

Brooks says it can get really confusing when you look at the registered tank mix partners. “Some companies register tank mixes with only their particular version of a broadleaf product. Not all labels are the same and mixing restrictions can vary between products.

“It gets even more muddy and confusing with glyphosate. For 2011, there are now 23 products registered for use on field crops. However, they come in six different concentrations, from 356 grams active ingredient per liter up to 540 grams active ingredient per liter.”

Bottom line, says Brook, is that the increased number of product names does not necessarily translate to more options for weed control. He says the trend towards using new names for existing products and product combinations is driving both producers and industry to start talking about herbicides in terms of the active ingredient and making recommendations based on the amount of active ingredient per acre.

“Don’t be fooled by the advertising hype,” cautions Brook. “Check the active ingredient concentration as well as weed spectrum when choosing your herbicide products. Make an informed decision.”

Copies of Crop Protection 2011 (the “Blue Book”) can be ordered through Alberta Agriculture’s Publication Office, 1-800-292-5697, or through Alberta Agriculture’s website at [www.agriculture.alberta.ca/sales](http://www.agriculture.alberta.ca/sales).

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## **Agri-News Briefs**

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### **AFC Membership Drive Underway**

The Agriculture and Food Council of Alberta’s (AFC) second annual membership drive is on now. Albertans engaged in any aspect of the agriculture and food industry are encouraged to apply for membership by May 10, 2011, in order to participate in the Annual General Meeting in June, and decide the organization’s future direction. “AFC attracted a diverse group of members last year, and continues to strive to represent the diagonal cross-section of the agriculture and food industry,” says chair Heather Broughton. AFC currently has 90 member organizations and individuals. Organizations and individuals who have become members by May 10 will be eligible to cast one vote each for three available director positions at the AGM, taking place in Edmonton on June 21, 2011. The deadline for nominations is May 24. A membership application and renewal form is available on the AFC website at [www.agfoodcouncil.com](http://www.agfoodcouncil.com). For further information, contact John Connolly, AFC executive director, at 780-955-3714 ext. 235, or e-mail [john.connolly@agfoodcouncil.com](mailto:john.connolly@agfoodcouncil.com)

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### **Ten Export Marketing Videos Available Online**

New this month on Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development website are ten export marketing videos. On subjects covering market topics such as effective marketing, trends, branding and positioning, this video series has been made available for all Alberta export marketers and Albertans considering a move into export marketing. The videos in the series can be viewed by visiting the website at [www.agriculture.alberta.ca](http://www.agriculture.alberta.ca) and searching Agriculture and Foods Exports: Home. Also included on this webpage are export basics and a list of contacts. For further information or if you have questions, contact Marcy O’Connor at 780-422-1762.