RURAL ROUTES

WELCOME TO THE 2024 SPRING EDITION OF RURAL ROUTES

IN THIS ISSUE

"My involvement with the Agricultural Service Board (ASB) began many years ago when I happened to visit the MD office in Flatbush during an ASB meeting. Invited to observe, I seized the opportunity to learn more about the ASB's functions. Upon dedicating myself full-time to farming, I volunteered to join the board. Serving on the ASB has proven to be an enriching experience, affording me the chance to contribute my perspectives and those of fellow producers. My aim has always been to bring forth valuable insights and proposals during my tenure on the board, and I remain committed to this objective for the remainder of my term."

-Damond Stadnyk
Chairperson

ASB MEMBERS

Damond Stadnyk *Chairperson*
Darren Fulmore *Councillor Div 1*
Sandra Melzer *Councillor Div 1*
Joe Borris *Member-At-Large*
Jessica Mittelstadt *Member-At-Large*

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ASB SEASONAL SUMMARY

2023 MUNICIPAL WEED INSPECTION PROGRAM

In the year 2023, our team of weed inspectors demonstrated dedicated efforts in collaboration with landowners to manage the issue of problematic weeds across our municipality. A total of 603 weed inspections were successfully conducted between the months of May and September, covering a substantial 9,943 acres. Noteworthy common weeds observed throughout the municipality include Canada Thistle, Common Tansy, Tall Buttercup, and Oxeye Daisy. All inspections adhered to the guidelines outlined in the Alberta Weed Control Act and the relevant policies and by-laws of the Municipal District. During the season, a single notice was issued. Looking ahead to 2024, the primary objective of the department remains to actively engage with and educate residents regarding the detrimental effects of noxious and prohibited noxious weeds throughout the entire season. The commitment to collaborative efforts and ongoing education underscores our dedication to effective weed control measures within the Municipality.

AT A GLANCE

603 Weed Inspections Conducted
9,943 Acres Inspected
1 Notice Issued

Weeds to Watch:
Tall Buttercup
Common Tansy
Oxeye Daisy

Weed Control Partnership Program Deadline:
October 15th, 2024

77 Clubroot Surveys Conducted

WEED CONTROL PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

The Weed Control Partnership Program within the Municipal District of Lesser Slave River stands as a well-established initiative designed to provide financial support for the management of noxious and prohibited noxious weeds. This program plays a crucial role in subsidizing the costs associated with herbicides used in the control of legislated weeds across various non-crop areas such as rangelands, pastures, hay lands, fence lines, and more. Landowners who have procured, applied, and undergone inspections for herbicides used in weed control activities are eligible to participate in this program. The rebate program witnesses substantial engagement each year, resulting in funds being returned to qualifying landowners. The deadline for applications in the current year is *October 15th, 2024*, with fund disbursements scheduled to occur after this date. The program's ongoing success underscores its significance in supporting effective weed control measures in the community.

CLUBROOT OF CANOLA

Comprehensive clubroot surveys were carried out on all canola fields within the jurisdiction of the municipality in the year 2024, encompassing a total of 77 inspections. This systematic survey adheres to the guidelines stipulated in the Alberta Pest Act, with the primary objective of identifying and addressing symptoms related to pests and crop diseases. The Municipal District of Lesser Slave River No.124 embraces the Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) approach to pest management. This strategic approach emphasizes proactive scouting for potential pests and diseases, working collaboratively with affected landowners on control measures. The implementation involves issuing weed notices and promoting best management practices to mitigate the impact of identified issues. In the case of Clubroot of canola, effective control measures include optimizing crop rotations, minimizing soil movement, engaging in self-scouting practices, and diligently cleaning equipment to prevent the inadvertent transfer of soil between fields. By adhering to these practices, the municipality aims to ensure early detection and timely response to potential threats, thereby safeguarding the health and productivity of canola crops.

CATTLE SUPPLEMENTS

In both winter and summer feeding programs, it is crucial to incorporate essential vitamins and minerals for optimal cattle health. Ensuring adequate protein intake is vital for their survival and has a direct impact on the success of next year's calf crop. As cattle enter the final trimester, providing trace minerals becomes particularly beneficial. These minerals contribute to enhancing colostrum quality, resulting in the production of healthier calves. Cattle that lack sufficient protein and energy from their diet often give birth to calves with lower birth weights. Harvested forages generally exhibit a lower mineral concentration compared to what cattle naturally graze on during the summer months. Various weather conditions such as drought stress or excessive rain can lead to nutrient loss in crops. Addressing these nutritional gaps by incorporating minerals into the feeding program is essential, and fortunately, there are numerous options available to make this integration seamless.

FERAL SWINE

In recent years, there has been an uptick in the presence of wild boars near the borders of the Municipal District. Feral swine fall under provincial agricultural pest regulations due to their potential to cause harm to property, agricultural crops, pastures, and the environment, posing threats to both people and animals. According to the Agricultural Pests Act, landowners bear the responsibility of controlling or eliminating pests on their land and preventing their establishment. Preferred control methods include a strategic co-ordinated approach involving surveillance and trapping. If you observe or notice signs of wild boar presence on your property, please reach out to the Agricultural Fieldman at the Flatbush Sub-office. The Agricultural Fieldman will help get residents get in touch with the provincial specialists.

EXPERT ADVICE

QUICK COMMUNICATION IS ESSENTIAL IN DEALING WITH FERAL SWINE

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ROADSIDE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

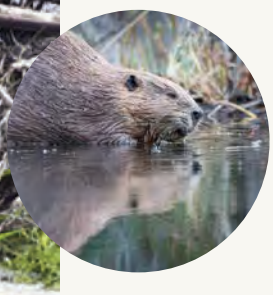
The Roadside Vegetation Management Program employs a comprehensive approach, combining chemical application and mowing activities. The Municipal District's roadside spray program follows a three-year spray rotation, with the Flatbush area being the focal point in 2024. In tandem, the roadside mowing program utilizes two sizable mowers situated on the north and south sides of the municipality. Throughout the summer season, all accessible roads undergo a complete right-of-way mow. This entails mowing the road as far into the ditch area as is safely and feasibly possible. The integrated efforts of chemical application and mowing contribute to effective roadside vegetation management in the Municipal District.

NUISANCE ANIMALS

Living in the country and in hamlets means residents have the joy of dealing with nuisance species such as skunks, beavers, and coyotes.

>>> SKUNKS

Skunks primarily consume insects and rodents, including mice. Although skunks don't undergo true hibernation, they tend to become less active during the coldest winter months. Property owners or occupants are permitted to hunt or trap skunks throughout all seasons. To discourage skunks from taking refuge, it is advised to eliminate potential shelters like brush piles and seal off confined spaces beneath sheds, porches, decks, and crawl spaces. Mothballs can be employed as a deterrent. Additionally, proper waste management involves storing garbage and recycling in containers with secure lids and either feeding pets indoors or promptly removing food containers after outdoor feeding.



Pond Leveller

>>> BEAVERS

Beavers can establish habitats in areas with sufficient trees and a permanent water supply. Their construction of ponds can bring about positive effects by creating wetland habitats. Being primarily nocturnal, beavers conduct most of their activities during the night. Hunting and trapping of beavers are permissible without a license and are allowed throughout all seasons. However, it is illegal to disturb or remove a beaver den or lodge without obtaining a Damage Control License. To coexist harmoniously with beavers, mitigation measures can be implemented, such as using pond water levellers and modifying culverts. These strategies aim to address conflicts while promoting a balanced relationship with these industrious creatures.

EXPERT ADVICE

A pond leveller is a simple way to keep a beaver pond from getting too deep and flooding neighbouring land.

>>> COYOTE

Coyote numbers have surged in urban regions, with certain individuals displaying altered behaviours to exploit available food sources. Urban coyotes easily access human food, constituting up to 30% of their diet. Animals carrying a significant parasite load are more inclined to venture into urban areas and consume human food. To minimize the risk of coyote encounters, it is crucial never to feed them. Timely disposal of garbage and regular cleanup of dog feces are essential practices, as the latter attracts coyotes. By adopting these measures, individuals can help reduce the likelihood of interactions with coyotes in urban settings.

For more information or advice contact the Agricultural Fieldman

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STRESS MANAGEMENT

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

IF YOU ARE STRUGGLING, YOU ARE NOT ALONE; HELP IS AVAILABLE

Farmer Distress Line
1.877.303.2642

Other Resources

AB Farm Mental Health Network:
farmmentalhealth.ca

In The Know
AgSafe Alberta Mental Health Literacy Workshop

Do More Ag
Not-for-profit organization with a focus of mental health in Agriculture across Canada

4H Canada Healthy Living Initiative

Do More Wellness Tips

Rooted in Strength

Buddy-up
Centre for Suicide Prevention

>>> TAKING TIME TO MANAGE STRESS

Agricultural professionals encounter unique challenges inherent to their industry, including unpredictable market dynamics, intricate intergenerational succession planning, fluctuating crop and forage yields, concerns for livestock well-being, and financial instability. According to a study led by Dr. Andria Jones-Bitton at the University of Guelph, part of the National Survey of Farmer Mental Health, 40% of Canadian producers expressed discomfort seeking professional help, primarily due to concerns about others' perceptions. The research further revealed that 75% of farmers experience mid to high levels of stress, with 58% meeting the criteria for Anxiety classification. To address mental health concerns, farmers can proactively focus on building positive relationships, sharing emotions with supportive individuals, and carving out time for self-care. Prioritizing mental well-being involves creating an environment conducive to open and non-judgmental conversations. Family and friends play a crucial role in supporting farmers by maintaining regular check-ins and modelling self-care practices, fostering a safe space for sharing and expressing emotions.

>>> FUNDING FOR PRODUCERS

The Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (S-CAP) in Alberta aims to foster innovation, growth, and prosperity within our agricultural sectors. Spanning from 2023 to 2028, this five-year agreement operates on a cost-sharing basis between the federal and provincial governments. Under the S-CAP umbrella, there are eight distinct programs: Efficient Grain Handling, Emerging Opportunities, Farm Technology, On-Farm Value-Added, Resiliency & Public Trust, Resilient Agricultural Landscape, Value-Added, and Water. Each program comes with its specific eligibility criteria. For those interested in understanding how their project aligns with these programs, detailed information can be found at *www.alberta.ca/sustainable-cap*. Alternatively, individuals can reach out to their Agricultural Fieldman for further clarification and assistance. This initiative is designed to provide support and resources for a sustainable and thriving agricultural community in.

ACCELERATING AGRICULTURAL INNOVATIONS 2.0 (AAI 2.0)-RDAR

AAI 2.0 aims to support research endeavours and projects focused on fostering innovation and progression. Prospective applicants must submit Letters of Intent endorsing research initiatives that showcase and expedite the on-farm adoption of agricultural innovations and processes within the livestock and crop industries in Alberta. The funding structure entails an 80% grant contribution and a 20% share from the eligible applicant.

For more information please visit Accelerating Agricultural Innovations 2.0 | RDAR.

THE ON-FARM CLIMATE ACTION FUND

Starting March 1, 2024, applications will be accepted for OFCAF, a program offering financial assistance to producers. The aim is to expedite the adoption and implementation of on-farm Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs) that contribute to reducing Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions. The program also supports enhancements in production efficiency, sustainability, and resiliency on participating farm operations. In supporting producers with the integration of new BMPs, the program provides resources for implementation and offers design recommendations for BMPs. RDAR has been designated as a delivery partner by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to oversee the distribution of funds associated with this program.

DROUGHT 101

Alberta relies on melting snow and precipitation for most of its water. Droughts are prolonged periods of dry weather that deplete water resources. Agricultural drought occurs when there is not enough soil moisture to meet the needs of crops and pastures during the growing season. Drought can cause economic losses throughout the agriculture sector and associated industries. One way the province tries to improve watersheds resiliency is through the 'Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program'. This program aims to reduce the intensity, magnitude, duration, and effects of flood and drought through natural watershed mitigation measures. This can be achieved through working collaboratively with multiple jurisdictions to restore and enhance degraded or lost wetlands, floodplains, and riparian areas.

For more information, visit Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program | Alberta.ca

AGRICULTURE GRANT RESOURCES

Alberta Beef Producers
www.albertabeef.org

Alberta Canola Producers Commission
albertacanola.com

Alberta Cattlemen's Penning & Sorting Association
altacattlepenning.com

Alberta Chicken Producers
www.chicken.ab.ca

Alberta Elk Commission
www.albertaelk.com

Alberta Food Processor Association
www.afpa.com

Alberta Lamb Producers
www.ablamb.ca

Alberta Pork Producers
www.albertapork.com

Alberta Water Portal Society
albertawater.com/virtualwaterflows/agriculture-in-alberta

Bison Producers of Alberta
www.bisoncentre.com

Canadian Cattlemen's Association
www.cattle.ca

WEEDS TO WATCH

OXEYE DAISY

BIO

Oxeye Daisy is often mistaken for a “pretty wildflower” when really this non-native weed is a serious invader. Its largest impact is on forage production in pastures and meadows. Since cattle avoid this species, it can lead to a decrease in available grazing area and hay production. When allowed to overtake an area it may also result in a lack of other plant types and increase the amount of bare soil.

IDENTIFICATION

Stems can grow up to 1 m tall and are smooth, sometimes branching at the top. Leaves are spoon shaped with jagged, tooth-like edges. Leaves typically bunch at the bottom of the plant while decreasing in numbers towards the top of the stem. Flowers can be up to 5 cm in diameter, with yellow centres, and 20 to 30 white petals that are slightly notched at the outer tip. They will have only one flower per stem.

PREVENTION AND CONTROL

While cattle don’t tend to graze on this weed, other livestock like horses, goats and sheep may be more inclined. Intensive grazing programs, coupled with trampling in a defined area can help to destroy the local population. Mowing an infested area before the flowers have gone to seed will reduce the chances of a second summer sprouting. If using herbicide, Aminopyralid alone or in a product mix with Metsulfuron-methyl or 2,4-D is registered for use on oxeye daisy.

TALL BUTTERCUP

BIO

Tall Buttercup prefers moist, well drained soils; thriving during wet years and decreasing dramatically in drought years. It is only able to spread via its seed and contains a bitter, irritating oil that is toxic to grazing animals and livestock.

IDENTIFICATION

Stems can grow to be 90cm tall and are highly branched on the upper half. Leaves have 3 forked lobes that can vary in length. The flowers have 5 bright, yellow petals that have a waxy surface, making them appear glossy. Seeds are tiny and can attach themselves to passing hair and clothing. Each plant can produce approx. 250 seeds that are viable for 2-4 years.

PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Avoid selling seed-contaminated hay and only use certified weed-free forage seed. Grazing isn’t recommended due to the plant’s toxic qualities, although dense competition of other grasses help to keep it from spreading and cattle tend to avoid. Pastures severely infested should be ploughed and reseeded to an annual crop for several years to reduce numbers. Tall buttercup does not persist under repeated cultivation.

EXPERT ADVICE

Always check product labels to ensure the herbicide is registered for use on the target plant in Canada. Consult your local Agricultural Fieldman for more information

WHITE COCKLE

BIO

Commonly found growing in rich, well drained soils and hayfields, White Cockle thrives in full sunlight and can problematically be spread via its plentiful seeds in bales and livestock forage.

IDENTIFICATION

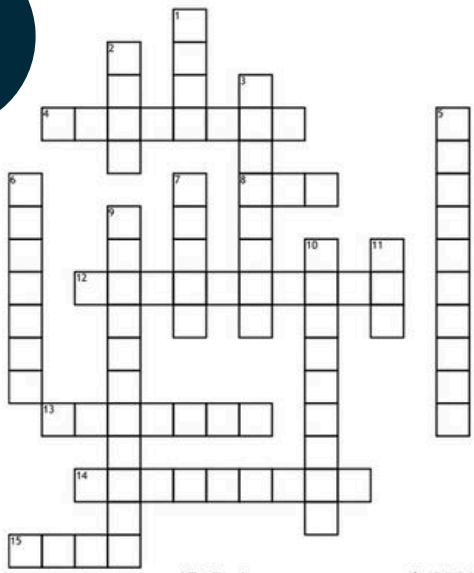
Stems are hairy and can grow to be 30 – 120 cm tall. They tend to have several stems per plant that branch near the top. Stems at the base of the flowers are round and swollen. Leaves are fuzzy with a long, oval shape and pointed at the tips. The flowers are white (sometimes having a pinkish hue) with 5 slatted, fragrant petals that only open up in the evening hours.

PREVENTION AND CONTROL

White Cockle seeds are plentiful and can be difficult to separate from other grass crop seeds such as alfalfa and clover. This can result in forage seed contamination. Mowing the area frequently can help to reduce seed production. This plant sprouts in early spring and is able to spread via its root systems. Cultivation only worsens the infestation by spreading these root systems and livestock tend to avoid grazing it. Applying approved herbicide (Mecoprop & Tribenuron-methyl) is a good way to ensure the decline of an infestation of White Cockle.

KIDS KORNER

Gardening Crossword



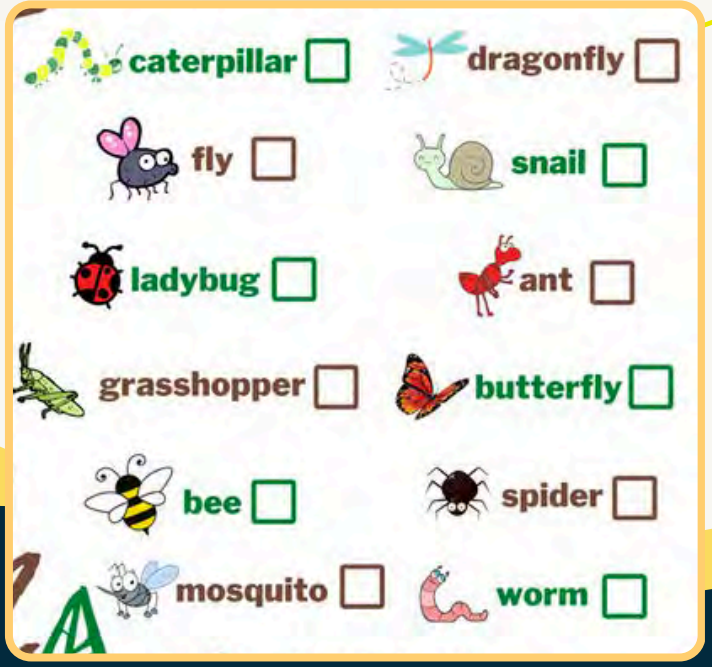
Across

4. Outdoor cooker (8)
8. Garden insect (3)
12. A glass garden building (10)
13. Wooden platform (7)
14. Something to cut the grass (9)
15. Fruit grown on a tree (4)

Down

1. A flower with thorns (4)
2. Digging tool (4)
3. You need SPF if you are going to do this (8)
5. Place for garden waste (7,3)
6. Picking fruit and vegetables (7)
7. Plants need this regularly (5)
9. Something to sit on (6,5)
10. Tall plant with big yellow flower (9)
11. Podded vegetable (3)

COLOR THE GARDEN



Spring is here!

Complete the crossword puzzle, colour the garden, and get outside to check off the insect scavenger hunt!

Follow our social media

HOT TOPICS

FARMING DURING A DROUGHT

During a drought, farmers face significant challenges in maintaining the health and productivity of their crops and livestock. To mitigate the impact, farmers can implement various strategies tailored to conserving water, optimizing resource usage, and ensuring the resilience of their agricultural systems. Water management becomes paramount during drought conditions. Farmers can prioritize water allocation, ensuring essential needs like drinking water for livestock and irrigation for crucial crops are met. Implementing water-saving techniques such as drip irrigation and utilizing water storage facilities can maximize water efficiency. Crop selection plays a crucial role in drought management. Opting for drought-resistant crop varieties with shorter growing seasons or higher tolerance to dry conditions can improve overall resilience. Additionally, practices like soil conservation, mulching, and cover cropping help retain soil moisture and enhance its water-holding capacity. Livestock management requires close attention during drought. Providing adequate shelter, ventilation, and access to clean water is essential for maintaining livestock health and productivity. Adjusting feeding practices and exploring alternative feed sources can help compensate for reduced forage availability. Financial planning is vital for farmers to weather the economic impact of drought. Developing financial reserves, accessing drought insurance, and seeking government assistance programs can provide crucial support during challenging times. Lastly, community support and collaboration among farmers and agricultural organizations foster resilience and resource-sharing, enabling collective efforts to combat the effects of drought and ensure the sustainability of agricultural livelihoods.

FARMING WITH DRONES AND SENSORS

Drones have revolutionized farming by enabling continuous aerial surveillance, identifying issues like irrigation problems swiftly. This innovation brings significant cost savings, efficiency, and profitability to farmers. Drones survey vast farmland, mapping property, assessing crop health, and monitoring livestock and irrigation systems. Real-time data analysis leads to improved decision-making, better yields, and reduced resource use for weeds and herbicides. With drones, farmers can intervene proactively, predict issues, and optimize resource allocation. Precision spraying minimizes pesticide and fertilizer use, promoting environmental sustainability. In summary, drones empower farmers with unprecedented monitoring and analysis capabilities, shaping a more efficient, productive, and sustainable future for agriculture.

VOYENTALERT!

Voyent Alert! is a multi-purpose communication service used to send alerts to residents, businesses, and visitors during critical events like fires or floods as well as for relevant day-to-day communications such as snow removal advisories, planned maintenance, and water advisories.

Signing Up is Super Simple
Registration for the service is FREE, simple, and totally anonymous.

For Mobile App Alerts: Download the Voyent Alert! app from the Apple or Google Play app stores.

For Email, Text Message, or Voice Call Alerts: Register online at register.voyent-alert.com.

NEW COMING SOON

Watch as we launch a new look to our website!

Get ready for an all new Municipal Facebook page dedicated to all news in the Agriculture sector!

Love the new look? Thanks!

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