



AGRICULTURAL FIELDMEN'S REPORT

2014 was quite the year, the Agricultural Department faced many staffing changes that occurred throughout the busy season. Due to unfortunate circumstances we lost our west division Mower Operator Dwayne Goreniuk, who was with Smoky Lake County for 11 years. His dedication to the County is appreciated and will be missed.

In 2014, protein markets hit all-time highs including the Cattle Industry and after years of rough times it looks like the cow calf sector is now profitable once again. In 2014 we saw some of the lowest oil seed and cereal prices in a while, hopefully 2015 will bring more demand for these commodities with higher prices as well.

The Smoky Lake County Agricultural Service Board will once again provide services to help enhance the agriculture industry and the residents of Smoky Lake County. These will include: Vegetation Management, Weed Inspection and Identification, Flood Control, Pest Management, Extension and Environmental Services. In 2015 we will be implementing our Tansy Reduction Plan, if you would like a copy of the plan please contact us.

In addition to conducting ASB operations, we will be offering workshops and information sessions throughout the year. If any topics are of particular concern to area producers please contact ASB staff at the county office.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

All the roads in Smoky Lake County (927 miles) were mowed once with some priority roads receiving a second pass. For the 2015 mowing season we will be adding an additional mower and targeting the entire right of way, where ever possible. 217 miles of road were sprayed between blanket spraying, spot spraying of problem areas and Public Works projects. Common Tansy will be the main priority for the 2015 year, with a Tansy Reduction Plan being implemented. We will also be introducing an informative weed control campaign with information letters, increased weed inspections and roadside spraying for the 2015 season. Do not be alarmed if you receive a letter in the mail regarding weeds on your property, this is **not** a weed notice, but a letter to simply make you aware of a weed problem and recommend solutions. Weed Notices will be issued only as a last resort in extreme cases. All aspects of this program fall under **Policy Statement # 62-14-02 "Weed Inspection and Notice."** If there is a weed you are unsure of, do not hesitate to bring in a sample and we can help you to identify it.

Landowners who do not want spraying to occur on the right of way adjacent to their property can come to the County office and fill out a **"Right of Way Vegetation Control" (chemical spray exemption)** application. All aspects of the **"NO SPRAY"** request fall under **Policy Statement # 62-11-01 Weed Control "NO SPRAY" Request.** Land owners are responsible for posting "DO NOT SPRAY" signs far enough in advance to give the sprayer operator enough notice to turn off sprayer. **Any weeds in the county right of way within this no spray zone then become the responsibility of the landowner.**

PROBLEM WILDLIFE

ASB staff will be available to assist producers with management techniques to help with predation of livestock. As a **last resort** option “1080” tablets will be available to producers to help control coyote predation. The “1080” program is an important tool for producers to have, so the program must not be abused. The “1080” tablets are to control predation during calving time. The producer must ensure that they are taking measures such as shooting or other management changes to reduce or control predation. As “1080” will only be given as a **last resort** measure in controlling problem coyotes. 48 tablets were distributed in 2014.

2% liquid strychnine, for the control of Richardson Ground Squirrel will once again be available for purchase at the County office for \$7 a bottle.

Beaver Control Program: The County dealt with many water issues affecting infrastructure and private land. 150 dams were opened to restore the natural flow of water and 149 beaver tails were brought in under our bounty program.

The ASB will still be offering the service of beaver dam removal in areas where agricultural land is being flooded. The fee for this service is **\$100.00/ parcel of land per visit**, plus **\$50.00/ stick** of dynamite. ASB staff will be focusing on municipal infrastructure flooding locations before any work on private land is undertaken. Please give ASB staff one week notice to co-ordinate blasting operations.

INSECT AND DISEASE INSPECTIONS

The Agricultural Service Board and I would like to thank all farmers that participated in the surveys and inspections that were conducted throughout 2014. ASB staff were busy conducting various surveys for the following pests and diseases:

Grasshoppers – Alberta Insect Pest Monitoring Branch indicates a 2015 forecast potential for very light to light infestations across the County. In 2014 we saw very low numbers in crop and hay land.

Bertha Armyworm (BAW) – 6 traps locations set in 2014 found very low to low BAW worm larva numbers. Alberta Insect Pest Monitoring Branch indicates a 2015 forecast potential for moderate infestations across the County.

Wheat Midge – 5 positive results found in the county. Alberta Insect Pest Monitoring Branch indicates a 2015 forecast potential for increased levels to be found in the west side part of the Smoky Lake County.

Clubroot – 6 positive fields were found in the county, more are expected to be found in 2015.

Monitoring fields on a regular basis throughout the growing season is an important part of pest management. If you find something you are unsure about in your field, do not hesitate to bring it into the county office or we can meet you at your field.

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Smoky Lake County will continue to offer sustainable agriculture programming to its producers through the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP), which is a great tool to assess and improve your environmental concerns on your operation. Which then allows producers to participate in Growing Forward Programs.

Producers can look forward to unbiased research throughout the county thanks to a partnership between Smoky Lake County and Lakeland Applied Research Association (L.A.R.A). L.A.R.A has the resources and manpower available to provide extension work for the ratepayers of Smoky Lake County, in a way that the Agricultural Service Board cannot, and improve agriculture. They provide producer driven agricultural research, demonstration and extension projects to obtain a profitable and sustainable future for producers. Some of their main goals in working with producers are to decrease costs of production, improve agricultural management practices and support environmental stewardship for grain, forage and cattle producers. Through trial plots for things such as spraying at night, or fungicides, they are able to provide unbiased third party information to the county residents.



ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA AGRICULTURAL FIELDMEN

Working for a Better Agricultural Industry Across Alberta, Canada

