

YUKON AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION (YAA)

November 2003 PLOWBOY NEWSLETTER

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President's Message

By Doug Craig

(Presented at the Nov. 1/03 Symposium Banquet at the Gold Rush Inn)

We extend the warmest greetings to all – the weather being what it is, this is easy to do. 2003 from the Yukon agriculture point of view has been one of the best years yet. Rainfall was favourable in schedule and amount, with rain early in the spring, good sunshine in the early summer and fine haying weather in early August instead of the other way around as in the year 2000 when much hay was lost.

World Food Day was given publicity in the foyer of the Elijah Smith building with good displays; this being done in a partnership between Yukon Agriculture Branch and the YAA. YAA is working in partnership with the Agriculture Branch and Agri-Food Canada to put together a calendar which should be available shortly.

The Yukon Agriculture Branch is also contributing, in the form of a transportation subsidy, to the shipping of animals to the Partridge Creek abattoir and the meat back to market. This is perhaps the Yukon version of the Crow Rates on the Canadian Pacific Railway. The Crow Rates were controversial in their day, but helped make the start up of our prairie agriculture, now a huge industry.

Our abattoir situation suffers from the wrinkle referred to as a Catch 22. Without animals to be

put through, there is little point in having a facility, festooned with cobwebs. And without an abattoir, farmers cannot afford to raise stock without a facility to process the animals. So, our cattle industry remains modest.

There are those who oppose subsidies of this sort. But it should be noted that on the CBC news this morning (Nov. 1) the Government of Canada was providing \$50 million to Atomic Energy Canada, presumably to make the financial aspects more favourable for perhaps our biggest lost leader in the export market – the Candu Nuclear Reactor. And the generous support for commercial atomic energy development and manufacturing has gone on for several decades.

The Canadian Adaptation and Rural Development Fund (CARD) provided support for bulk handling of fertilizer – transfer augers, storage hoppers and mixing facilities. Fertilizers can now be bought in bulk and blended here, rather than coming in the 25 kg bags. The unit price of the bulk fertilizer is roughly half the price of the 25 kg. bags.

A troublesome issue confronting some Yukon stock raisers is what is commonly called game farming. To the stock raisers, they are managing species such as elk which have been domesticated for several generations; to those objecting to this type of stock management it is referred to as “captive wildlife”. An important consideration is that these animals are better adapted to the subarctic conditions, such as we have in the Yukon than the European stock

which has replaced so much of the indigenous game species in North America.

The ambiguous term "wild by nature" is used and with it the implication that these animals, largely elk and bison, should not be farmed or ranched, but, when suitably abundant, can be hunted. One must have sympathy for this viewpoint. The image of these creatures, wild and free, is a romantic picture.

However, there are rather practical reasons to allow species such as elk, bison and caribou to be farmed for meat and musk oxen managed for their fine wool in preference to European cattle and sheep which should be characterized as "exotics", which they are. We are so used to cattle that we rarely think of Herefords (developed in England) as being exotic.

There should be ample room and scope for both wild populations of species such as elk and bison and the domesticated versions.

We do hope that these differences in opinions can be resolved so that these species, so well adapted to the Yukon conditions, and in some cases providing more healthful meat, can be managed as an important Yukon resource.

Wayne Grove resigned as a Southern Region YAA executive member as of November 3, 2003. There is now a vacancy on this executive that needs to be filled, at least until the AGM in March 2004. If anyone is interested in putting their name forward, please contact Debbie Throssell in the office at 668-6864.

November 1st Agriculture Banquet

By Barbara Drury

The 16th Annual North of 60 Agriculture Banquet, put on by the Agriculture Branch at the Gold Rush Inn and showcasing Yukon grown foods was really good this year. The hors d'oeuvres, smoked arctic char from Lanny

Anderson, devilled eggs from Partridge Creek, and elk salami from Wayne and Alison Grove were all very tasty. The main course featured beef from Jim and Kate Buerge, turkey from Kevin and Tracey Bowers, potatoes from the Tait's, carrots from the Kruse's, turnips from both Blue Yonder Herbs & Vegetables and Barbara Drury, a cabbage salad with cabbage from the Kruse's, and wholewheat buns from the Alpine Bakery. The strawberries on the cheesecake came from the Ag Branch's research plots. Everything was delicious.

The 4-H Club organized the Silent Auction, and raised \$1400 for their efforts. Well done! John Lenart from Dawson City donated his largest apple grown for the cause, and it was bid on and won by Evelyn Coleman from Northwest Territories for \$35!

The Farmers of the Year were Garrett Gillespie and Heidi Marion of Blue Yonder Herbs & Vegetables. Unfortunately they were not able to attend, but Archie Lang accepted the plaque on their behalf, and will be pleased to give it to them at their convenience. It was remarked that they have done a lot this past year in bringing organic produce to the consumer, in the form of selling over 70 CSA shares, with the mandate of twice-weekly deliveries of produce over a 16 week period. They are now embarking on a winter program. They will be delivering 4 varieties of potatoes, 3 varieties of turnips & rutabagas and also beets and carrots.

From the Office

By Debbie Throssell

Hello everyone. It is good to be back in the Yukon. I had a great holiday in England seeing castles and lots of old Churches. It was hard to adjust to the narrow roads that we drove over. Much, much different from here. However, I had fun shopping with my Dad, and he showed me all his old haunts. We had a mini family reunion and were able to get reconnected.

There is lots of history for people to partake in. I took lots of pictures of the different areas we toured. One day I would like to go back, two weeks is not long enough!!

Thursday, October 16th, 2003 was World Food Day. I would like to thank the Agriculture Branch for their help and support with the displays, Garret Gillespie and Heidi Marion for bringing in organic vegetables, Shirley Ford for the Elk information, Brian Lendrum for his Halloumi Goat Cheese, Sheila Alexandrovich for her vegetable display and Ying Allen for her honey display. Agriculture and Agri-food Canada sent grocery lists and tattoos, and a coloring poster for children, that were enjoyed by the public. We are now working towards getting the calendar ready for publication. With luck, it should be ready by December 1st for distribution.

Fertilizer 2004 Season

All members requiring fertilizer for the upcoming season, please contact the site holder where you picked up your fertilizer in 2003 as the prices are better in the fall. Or contact Debbie Throssell in the YAA office at (867) 668-6864 or Dave Andrew at (867) 667-7844.

**Please remember, current membership is required to partake in this program.

Membership

We are coming up to a new year for memberships. The membership year is from January 1st – December 31st. Enclosed with the newsletter is a new membership application for the 2004 year. Remember, as part of the YAA, the benefits are growing. We now have the Fertilizer Storage Bin program for bulk fertilizer, available to members. And the Red Meat Transportation Incentive was also a new initiative, available to members only.

Crop Insurance Workshop

By Debbie Throssell

On November 1st at the 16th Annual Agriculture Symposium a seminar on Crop Insurance programs was given by Rick McConnell and Tom Crozier, Agriculture Financial Services Corporation representatives from Lacombe, Alberta. They spoke on programs which are ongoing and a new program that will be replacing NISA and the Canadian Farm Disaster Program called CAISP, Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization Program.

Non-government sponsored program

With a regular crop insurance program and no government input, the premium is determined by risk. Northern areas are more risky than their southern counterparts with premiums set between 5 - 12 % of total crop value. Total acreage of crop is covered to 70%, 80% or 90%. Records need to be kept as to production of land. Premium prices are set in the spring. To insure quality, it must be defined. Perils must be listed and there is a deductible.

New government sponsored program

A new program is being designed to go hand in hand with the APF. CAISP uses the reference of the previous 5 years of production, taking out one high year and one low year for the margin. The payment schedule works from the bottom up. Using the reference of \$100,000, the producer puts his share in a separate account of his choice, and the government share is kept separate. From 0 – 70% coverage, the producer pays 14%. Government will not insure for 100% of the crop, but will pay to a maximum of 22% for 100% coverage. Maximum contribution is 1/3rd of the premium in the transition year for full coverage, and when the gross revenue goes up, the premium must be topped up.

In order for CAISP to be accessed in the Yukon, the government would have to take this to the

legislature for approval. The differences are with crop insurance, the perils must be listed and there is a deductible. With CAISP, perils are not listed and the whole farm income is considered. At this point, it looks like it could be 2005 before we could have this program up and running for Yukon farmers. A draft of the new policy is available in the office.

YAA COOKBOOK

Now that its winter, time to get your favourite recipes out and decide which ones should be submitted for the new Yukon Agriculture Cookbook!

Debbie will be working on this project through the winter, and it's a wonderful way to celebrate our great food and the diversity which we enjoy in the north.

There will be a section on game meat, both wild and farm raised, as well as the more usual sections on beef, pork and poultry. We hope to have some delicious recipes featuring our delectable wild berries, and how about a section describing our wild mushrooms and their uses? Lots of ideas to explore, and we are only limited by our imagination.

The next YAA meeting will be a lot of fun!
Come one, come all to the

SPECIAL CHRISTMAS YAA POTLUCK!

Where: TC Richards Bldg boardroom
downstairs

When: December 10th
Wednesday
6:30 pm

Bring your speciality with the recipe and we'll start contributing to the cookbook!

**DON'T FORGET TO BRING YOUR
RECIPES TO THE YAA
POTLUCK!
DEC.10TH @ 6:30 PM**

Update on the Agriculture Policy Review

By Debbie Throssell

(Based on the Afternoon Workshop of the 16th
Annual North of 60 Agriculture Conference)

In this workshop, Agriculture Branch went through the process for getting the Yukon Agriculture Policy through Legislature for final approval. The dead line for this process is Spring, 2004.

Main points for discussion featured the overall strategic approach, being that the focus needs to be on supporting commercial agriculture, rather than hobby farms. The new Policy is focusing on increasing productivity and new agri-based programming.

Marketing needs improvement to build stronger connections between the producer and the consumer. The new policy will have a strong marketing component to assist industry and look at infrastructure for food storage for winter sales.

The government has identified their extension program as doing well, but is looking at ways to improve and build on what is available. Through the Environment component, organic farming will be encouraged for good farming practices. Food and Safety Quality needs to be improved on, and new guidelines implemented. Science and Innovation Research on new crop varieties and product opportunity should be ongoing.

With the orderly development of agricultural land, spot applications should be maintained. The question was raised, "Should development

agreement time be lengthened?" No decision was reached.

Under Management and Regulation of Agricultural Land, it was discussed whether zoning of agricultural land should be allowed for a diversity of uses and whether subdivision should either not be allowed or only in extreme cases where the capability of the parcel will not be reduced.

At this time we have no word from the Agriculture Branch on when the new Agriculture Policy Draft will be out for Yukoners to review. We would like to see it before it goes to Cabinet.

If you have any comments, contact the Agriculture Branch at 667-5838.

The new YAA 2004 calendar that Debbie has been working on will be ready by the first part of December, and will be sent out to all YAA members FREE! Another benefit of being a YAA member!

Many thanks to Agri-Food Canada and the YTG Agriculture Branch for their sponsorship and help with the calendar.

Red Meat Food Safety Transportation Incentive Update

By Barbara Drury

The Red Meat Food Safety Transportation incentive went very well for the producers who took part in the program. 39 beef were slaughtered at the Partridge Creek facility this fall, (7 were from Partridge Creek). The producers who utilized the facility were Bill and Barbara Drury (Circle D Ranch), Dave and Tracey Andrew (Rafter A Ranch), Jerry and

Kathy Kruse, and Jim and Kate Buerge (Tagish Farms).

The abattoir was at full capacity for the month of October. John Buerge has indicated that he is willing to continue operating the abattoir during the month of October, but is unsure whether his schedule would allow for other months.

John Buerge has indicated that he is not interested in slaughtering game farm animals. Game farm producers will need to explore other options in order to get their animals into the larger retail market of stores, restaurants and other outlets. At present game farm producers are selling their meat "farm-gate".

Some of this fall's beef producers were able to sell their meat at the new butcher shop in Porter Creek, "B & B Butchers". This is a great "leap forward" in bringing Yukon's excellent beef closer to a broader cross-section of the Yukon public.

A follow-up meeting of the producers involved with this years harvest will be taking place at the Agriculture Branch on November 20th.

The YAA office will be closed
for the
CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS
from
DECEMBER 19TH TO
JANUARY 5TH.

Have a safe and happy Christmas season!

A Cowboy's Christmas Prayer

By Gail T. Burton

The worn and wrinkled cowboy
Slowly shaved and combed his hair.
He picked the finest clothes he had
And then he dressed with care.
He stomped into his new bought boots
And shrugged into his coat.
The others would have questioned him,
But his thoughts seemed quite remote.

He stepped out of the bunkhouse,
And pulled his hat down tight,
Then climbed aboard his private horse
And rode into the night.
The single footin' gelding
Ate the miles without a pause
And seemed to know the rider
Had a most important cause.

Twenty miles on through the night,
With the rider deep in thought,
The stars came out to guide his way
To the goal the ride had bought.
His horse stopped on a gentle rise,
Tho' the rider pulled no rein,
And the cowboy raised his head to stare
'Cross the quiet and lonely plain.

He crawled down off the weary horse,
Loosed the cinch so it could blow,
Then walked a yard or two away
And knelt down in the snow.
He crushed his had against his chest,
Raised his face up to the sky,
And then he started talking
Like a friend was standing by.

"Lord, you see I rode a piece tonight
'Cause I knowed that you'd be here.
Course you wuz at the bunkhouse too,
But on this hill ya' seems near.
As I look acrost this prairie
And see the things you've made,
Why, comparin' things us men has done

Really puts 'em in the shade.

"I thank you for the love you show
In everything you do,
And I'm proud to be a top-hand
With a loyal happy crew.
I've still got all my fingers,
My legs are bowed, but tough,
Rheumatiz' ain't touched my bones,
And my mind is sharp enough."

"Your spirit gives me comfort,
and I know that when I die,
You'll let me rest forever
At that bunkhouse in the sky.
Forgive me when I wander off,
Like a wild jug-headed hoss,
And I pray You'll not give up on me
'fore I learn that you're the boss."

"I've rode out here to tell you
I'm thankful for a Savior's birth,
And to send you Merry Christmas
From your folks down here on earth."
Then he mounted up and rode away
With a casual good-bye nod.
A cowboy with his heart at peace
In the palm of the hand of God.

Holiday Cranberry Walnut Bread

By Barbara Drury

2 c. flour

1 ¼ tsp baking soda

¼ tsp cinnamon

pinch salt

Sift together and then add:

¾ cup sugar

½ tsp grated orange rind

1 egg

2/3 cup milk

1 c. cranberries

1 c. chopped walnuts

Mix and stir until just blended then add at the end: ¼ melted butter

Pour into a greased loaf pan and bake 350 F for 50-60 minutes.