

YUKON AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION (YAA)

January 2004 PLOWBOY NEWSLETTER

203 – 302 Steele Street, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C5

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Presidents Message

By Douglas Craig

Sweeteners are both pleasing to the taste and providers of quick, abundant energy. As such, they are desirable contributors to our diets. It is when they are abused, either in amounts (excess) or deprive the body of other needed nutrients by substitution, that problems develop. And a plant species recently grown in the Yukon shows promise of providing sweetening.

Considering the role that sweeteners have played historically we now are faced with a reappraisal of these in our diet as they contribute to both obesity and diabetes. Up until about 1600 the European diet had little in the way of sweeteners. Probably honey was a rare and luxury item. Sugar from sugar cane when it first came into use we understand was a medicine, probably a broad spectrum cure all.

Syrup and sugar from both maple and birch supplied sweeteners but were labour intensive. Sugar beets provided sugar from a temperate climate source rather than sugar cane from the tropics. One surprising source of sugar was from carrots. Apparently in Germany during World War II there was some production from this unlikely source.

The role of sugar in our diets is a complicated one as this product provides only energy, what are sometimes called “empty calories”. Thus it would be something like alcohol in energy terms. Energy from carbohydrate sources such as potatoes, fruits or cereals typically

provide other nutritional requirements as well as energy. So, although sugar is not bad as such, it may substitute for a more balanced food product. And the sugar is used first and the other carbohydrates are stored as fats. Thus indirectly sugar contributes to obesity. Obesity is emerging rapidly as a health issue in European and North American populations. It is of special concern among children, where only a generation ago, the child obese to the point of injuring health and/or psychological development was a rarity. Now it is all too common. Sweet things are attractive to our taste and thus we are vulnerable. Excess use of sugar and sugar based products such as pop, candy or doughnuts are contributing to dental problems, obesity and some types of diabetes, which are reaching epidemic proportions in our society.

On the agricultural horizon is the possibility of attacking this major dietary flaw. A plant with impressive sweetening capability without the caloric burden is *stevia*. The plant, a native to Siberia, where it is apparently widely used, has recently been grown in the Yukon at Carmacks by the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation (LSCFN). This *stevia* project is an experimental agricultural project by the LSCFN. It is supported by the CARD program of the Yukon Agricultural Association. We commend the effort of the LSCFN and optimistically look towards increased production and use of *stevia* in the future.

OFFICE UPDATE for 2004

By Debbie Throssell

I hope that everyone had a very enjoyable Christmas and a great New Year. I am feeling very spoiled, as I now have a new printer, that is supposed to print two sided. I am still trying to figure it out, it should be a great paper saver. I also had a very enjoyable Christmas dinner, cooked by my children. It was nice to be lazy for a change.

It looks like we are going to be very busy in the New Year. Ladies, where are those recipes? It will be hard to put together the recipe book without them. I have quite a few from the last pot luck where we made a dish and brought the recipe. It would be nice to have some from different areas of the Yukon. You can email me at yukonag@yukonaa.com or fax me at 867-393-3566. I will keep an eye open for them.

The calendar should be here within the next few days, I apologize for its lateness. Due to the political arena changing, we had the calendar way laid. So, you should find it in the mail shortly.

I am rearranging again. EMR did some rearranging and Mary Lynn gave us two lateral filing Cabinets. Thank-you Mary Lynn. Everything is getting moved around again. Thank-you also to Bill Drury and Dave Andrew, for taking out the old ones and bringing in the new ones.

I am signed up this year for the Master Gardener Course, and look forward to learning more about Northern Gardening. I am also thinking of taking a Web Design course, to upgrade our Web page. If you would like to see information on the Web, give me a call and I'll see if I can find it for you.

Nominations for the Board are just around the corner. Think about who you would like to nominate for the office of President, Vice-President and Secretary/ Treasurer. We have set the date for the AGM for March 27th, 2004 at the Riverview Inn. We will have more information in the next newsletter.

I will be heading to Ontario in February, to attend the 2004 Excellence Conference, and will bring back lots of information. Stop by and I'll show you what I've learned.

I wish everyone a happy and healthy New Year. I look forward to seeing everyone in 2004.

Debbie Throssell, Executive Director

Agricultural Policy Framework-(A.P.F.)

By Dave Andrew, Vice President YAA and APF Committee member

The YAA's two industry committee members, Bill Drury and Dave Andrew have attended numerous meetings regarding the APF along with the other industry representatives from the Game Growers Association of Yukon or GGAY (Wayne Grove); Growers Of Organic Food Yukon or GOOFY (Sheila Alexandrovich) ;and the Independents (Art Hutchison).

It looks like the Independents will be joining the YAA as associate members as they do not wish to form a legal association themselves, there is also talk of GOOFY going the same route. You may have heard that Ontario has signed on to the APF which allows it to go ahead, without them it was on hold.

Also on Friday Dec.19/03 we were informed that the YAA's industry proposal to the Federal Government for the next Transition monies to be turned over to the YAA for industry use was APPROVED. This brings \$185,000.00 to

\$200,000.00 to the YAA and the other associations for their use. The YAA retains 15% off the top to administer and report on the funds.

Debbie, our Executive Director will be moving to a full time position to handle this once the money is received. The Committee Members have unanimously agreed that the remaining funds should be used by all of our members to advance our agricultural industry to the next level (such as accessing the retail market). These monies should also be used for educating us, along with finishing existing or new studies and creating marketing strategies and writing proposals which will give us a clear direction of how we want the five year yearly APF monies to be spent.

This is all in the early planning stages, therefore if you have any ideas give one of the committee members a call or attend one of our monthly meetings.

News from Stewart Valley

By Norma Mease

Well, here it is almost Christmas and winter is just about half over. Hasn't been bad so far with such a mild October. November was colder but lots of snow. We have more snow than all last winter. Should mean plenty of moisture for next year. The moose are on the roads so be careful when driving.

Seems to be a lot of money coming to the Yukon for agriculture. Let's see what we can do to pick up the industry.

Have a safe Christmas and all the Best for 2004!

Bulk Fertilizer Bin Project

By Dave Andrew, Project Manager

Well we are now in the year 2004 and it's time to start seriously thinking about this years

fertilizer requirements, there has not been too much activity to date. The first one and a half loads arrived to the bins in the past month or so for the 2004 season. We are noticing price increases since September and suppliers expect this to continue into the spring.

Traditionally the lowest prices are in September and steadily increase until the following years seeding time. Therefore I urge you to determine your requirements for 2004 and call the site holder who you worked with last year in the near future.

Just in case anyone has forgotten the structure on how this is supposed to work, here is a brief outline.

- Fertilizer users determine their requirements as in blend or straight Nitrogen and amount.
- Call the site holder who you worked with last year. Once he has a full load spoken for he will get a guaranteed price from the cheapest supplier. This price usually is guaranteed for approximately two weeks if paid for in that time.
- The site holder will call you back with the firm price per metric tonne for the fertilizer and the freight (the freight is a pre quoted price per 44 M tonne load).
- It is your obligation to arrange with the site holder to pay him for the fertilizer and freight quickly at this time, so that he can pay for the fertilizer within the time frame of the guaranteed price. He will also arrange a shipping date with the freight company at this time.
- The site holder will offload the truck into the bins when it arrives. You will make arrangements with him to pick up your fertilizer at a later date, as in the spring. If you arrange with him to help load your fertilizer into your mini bulk bags your cost will be reduced.

- As you can see there is a bit of coordinating to be done. If everyone picked a certain month as in **JANUARY** to place their order it would probably streamline the process. The tricky part is that although one person may be ready to order, there has to be a full load to guarantee a price therefore we all need to work together during the same month. Talk it over with the site holder as each site may be a different month.
- If a site holder has to pay for fertilizer out of his own pocket to fill a truck or finish a load, he is allowed to sell it at a higher price to cover bank charges therefore it is in everyone's best interest to cooperate and get involved early to save the most.

If there are any new users, special blend requirements or any problems to work out, give me a call.

Please remember that you must be a member of the YAA to qualify to order fertilizer by this method.

Dave Andrew Project Manager
 Phone: 667-7844
 Fax: 393-1966
 email: raftera@northwestel.net

Game Growers News

By Bill Drury, President of Game Growers Association of Yukon

After what seems like a life time of getting beat up by the press and by special interest groups the Game Growers Association decided to try another approach getting our message across to the Yukon public.

Our Elk industry has been attacked and slandered by innuendo on issues of 'humane

slaughter', disease, risk to wildlife, and ownership or privatization of wildlife. People like Graham Van Teigan who is funded by the Gordon Foundation and Clayton White the past president of the Yukon Fish and Game association have used their personal bias to influence others against game farming in the Yukon. Graham Van Teigan is paid to be the liaison between the Fish and Wildlife Management Board (F+WMB) and the Renewable Resource Councils (RRCs). Clayton White sits as a member of the F+WMB as does Niels Jacobsen a past director of the Fish and Game association. The balance and equanimity of the F+WMB was brought into doubt by the personal bias and opinions of some of their members. A lot of pain and conflict for our industry could have been avoided if this obvious conflict of interest had been dealt with properly at the time.

The job of protecting and promoting our industry should be the task of government, but the bureaucrats have been too busy worrying whether we are agriculture or wildlife to have paid any attention to that. Shirley Ford and I realized that it was up to us to present the facts on the issues of our industry.

Wayne Grove, Shirley, and I had the opportunity to meet with Grand Chief Ed Shultz in October. We explained the inconsistencies in the information regarding game farming, captive wildlife, economic opportunities, etc., and Mr. Shultz offered us the opportunity to speak to his council, the 'council of chiefs', to present the facts from our industry perspective.

So now Shirley and I had to get our facts down in a coherent way and make a presentation that would hopefully shed some light on the situation and bring balance back to the debate.

We made presentations to the RRCs in Carmacks, Pelly Crossing, Dawson, Haines Junction, and Teslin as well as to the Fish and

Wildlife Management Board and to the territorial government department of Environment.

Due to the death of an elder our meeting with the Council of Chiefs was postponed to a later date. We hope this will take place in early Feb./04.

In all we met with positive response and thanks for addressing the issues from the industry point of view.

It was stated that 'game' as in the Fish and Game association and 'game' as in the Game Growers association is different.

It was stated that Yukoners 'wildlife', our public resource, is different from farmed 'wildlife' that is domesticated on our farms.

It was stated that our industry is conscientious about assuring that our alternate livestock is disease free and poses no risk to Yukoners wildlife.

We agreed with Gerry Couture's motion for the Fish and Wildlife Management Board to set up a sub-committee to deal specifically with game farming.

We felt that by and large the issues are created by biased special interest groups like the Fish and Game association and the Canadian Wildlife Federation and a good solid dose of common sense will clear things up simply and effectively.

It's interesting to note that Clayton White is the Yukon representative for the Canadian Wildlife Federation.

We felt that generally there was a new willingness to cooperate to sort out the differences created by these special interest groups.

I had the opportunity to hear Steven Kakfwi, the then Premier of the Northwest Territories, speak when he was in Whitehorse. He said something to the effect... "friends often ask how my opinion can be so different today than it was yesterday and my answer is I have learned so much more in that short time and armed with this new knowledge my position has changed". We feel that armed with 100% of the information on the topic everyone can make better decisions.

On another topic, almost a third (1/3) of Yukons domestic elk herd has been harvested for meat in 2003. Every brain stem has been sent to a 'lab' to be tested for CWD. All have come back negative! This gives our customers the added comfort of knowing that if it is raised in the Yukon it is of 'superior' cleanliness and quality. With all the concerns 'down south' to do with beef, I am glad our industry can offer Yukoners a product that is proven clean and healthy.

The members of the Game Growers Association of the Yukon are the only ones who can provide you with clean, disease free Yukon ranch raised elk and bison meat. Give us a call if you want to try this unique Yukon product that people in the rest of the world only wish they had access to.

On another positive note, we would like to congratulate the territorial government for acquiring a world-class game preserve, the Yukon Game Farm, that can be enjoyed by Yukoners and people from around the world for generations to come. It is planning for the future, and we are all grateful that this ideal location and habitat for such a wide variety of animals will now be protected for the public benefit.

We wish you all the very best in 2004.

Bill Drury, President GGAY
drury@yt.sympatico.ca

Yukon CARD Fund Update

By Deborah Neibecker

The Yukon Agricultural Association (YAA) Canadian Adaptation and Rural Development (CARD) Committee met on November 30, 2003 to review CARD project proposals that had been submitted in response to the Fall 2003 Call for Proposals. One project, submitted by Dawne Mitchell from Dawson City, entitled "From Seeds to Harvest", was approved for funding of \$5000.00 to provide an agricultural training program in Dawson.

The Yukon CARD program is in its final year and is scheduled to end on March 31, 2004. This program has been very successful in the Yukon, providing close to \$400,000 in funding for approximately 50 agricultural projects over the past six years. At this point, it is not expected that there will be any further project proposals considered for funding under this program.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) representatives were in Whitehorse on September 7, 2003 to consult with the YAA CARD Committee and Yukon agricultural industry members regarding a new proposed program that will replace the CARD Fund in April 2004. The new program, tentatively called the Advancing Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food (ACAAF) program, will focus on the three "pillars" of innovation, technology transfer and agricultural information gathering and is intended to complement programming that is being implemented under the Agricultural Policy Framework. AAFC is currently seeking final approval for the ACAAF program and more details on the program will be forthcoming early in the new year.

Recipe of the Month

By Barbara Drury

We're going to feature a new column for the next few newsletters, the "Recipe of the Month." We'd like to keep it uppermost in your minds that we are looking for your best recipes to add to the growing YAA cookbook collection...and we need your help! We had some great entrees at our December potluck/meeting dinner on the 10th, but many more need to come in.

The recipe this month is timely, as many of us are fighting cold and flu bugs, and this soup is guaranteed to help with that!

Garlic Soup

By Bill and Teresa Barr

¼ cup butter
2 Tbsp. Olive oil
3 large onions, sliced
2 heads of garlic, cloves separated and peeled
½ tsp cumin
½ tsp dry mustard
4 – 5 cups chicken stock
1 cup half and half cream
chopped parsley for garnish

Melt butter, add oil and sauté onion and garlic in saucepan. Cover and cook on low heat for 1 hour, until mixture is soft. Add cumin and mustard with half the chicken stock and simmer for 10 minutes. Transfer mixture to food processor and puree. Return mixture to saucepan, add rest of stock and cream and heat to simmer. Remove, add parsley for garnish and serve!

A great pick-me-up or energizing soup, which also happens to be delicious

PROPOSAL TO YTG FOR ALLOCATION OF LANDS.

By Tracey Andrew

Many of you may have heard about this project that Dave Andrew is currently working on. He is presenting a proposal to YTG for allocation of terrands to the YAA to be used for the new YUKON EXHIBITION & FAIR GROUNDS.

This land as the name implies will be used for many things, by many Associations and frequented by many Yukoners, Alaskans, Northern British Columbians and many other people.

The land transferred to YTG during Devolution from the Federal Government. It is situated between the Takhini River and the Hot Springs Road, the Mayo Road (Klondike Highway) and Fred and Debbie Last's place.

The land would be used for the purposes as its name implies along with becoming a **PERMANENT HOME** for:

Yukon Horse & Riders Association

- to move their existing facilities there
-home for their new Indoor Riding Arena (a facility which would be used year-round)

Yukon Rodeo Association

- would move their facilities there

Farmers Market ;

-to provide a larger area that is required

Growers of Organic Food Yukon ;

- large vegetable storage building so that they can sell their produce year round.

Residence for grounds keeper

(Such a large and varied exhibition and fair grounds would require a full-time resident caretaker who would live on-site. Wages would

be paid for by usage and other fees collected).

Open flat spaces to be used for a multitude of activities

Large central parking area

Overnight camping area for people wishing to stay with their horses

Large trailer parking area

Additional land for future expansion.

If there are any comments or concerns by members regarding this proposal as in letters of support or intervention please contact Dave Andrew at 667-7844 or Debbie Throssell at 668-6864 in the YAA Office.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

2003 was a very good year for our growing membership of 89 members. 2004 is now upon us, and the membership renewal is due January 1st, for the new year. To date, we have 27 members for this coming year and we hope to grow. Get your dues in, as voting for the Executive is just around the corner. Also, to access the Fertilizer, an active membership is required. See you in January.

Young Farmers Upcoming Conference

There will be a Young Farmers Conference held in Ottawa, Ontario, from February 24th – 28th, 2004. If there are any young farmers out there between the ages of 18 – 40 who would like to attend please contact Debbie at the office (668-6864) or Gordon Kerr at 633-6498. All travel fees will be covered.

It would be good if the Yukon could have representation at the conference.

NOTICE

RFP for industry experts to be posted in early 2004

Public Works and government Services Canada (PWGSC) on behalf of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), will issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) to retain the services of financial and business consultants with a sound knowledge of the agriculture sector. These consulting services are integral to the Farm Business Assessment component of the new federal-provincial-territorial initiative and Canadian Farm Business Advisory Services (CFBAS).

A national advertising campaign will be launched in selected dailies and farm media across the country. Consultants are encouraged to watch for ads for further details.

Interested parties must register with the Government of Canada's electronic tendering service, MERX, and respond to the Request for Proposal. The RFP will provide details on CFBAS, including the availability of the service in each province, the expertise, knowledge and experience required of the consultant, and the process which will be used to select consultants.

For additional information on the RFP process, visit www.merx.com

Farmer of the Year Award

As many of you are no doubt aware, Garret Gillespie and Heidi Marion were the recipients of the 2003 Farmer of the Year Award, but they chose to not accept it. What follows is a copy of their letter to Minister Lang, explaining their decision.

Dear Minister Lang,

We write to inform you of our decision not to accept the Farmer of the Year Award. We decided to take this course of action following discussions with our peers at a GOOFY meeting. We present our reasoning as follows.

As you are no doubt aware, Canada is a member of the World Trade Organisation and the North America Free Trade Agreement. Being party to these agreements, Canada is subject to their rules and regulations, which invariably support United States trade agendas. The issue that relates to this story is that of food.

The U.S. government is free to heavily subsidise its export agriculture industry. This has a direct impact on us here in the Yukon. Potatoes, for example cross the Canadian border in the south for less than 5 cents CDN per pound and end up here in the Yukon for approximately 20 cents per pound wholesale price. (Ironically the U.S. restricts the importation of Canadian potatoes). There are very few Canadian Farmers who can compete with that kind of pricing. Our cost of production is about 70 cents per pound.

With our relatively small farms and higher production costs, Yukon farmers cannot compete against these highly subsidised U.S. agribusinesses.

Even though people in the Yukon generally recognize the superior quality and flavour of locally grown produce, the majority base their purchasing decisions on price. This immediately excludes Yukon growers from a large section of the local market. When this is combined with the opening of the new Superstore in Whitehorse, who does not buy locally as a policy, we are denied access to the local retail market.

We already sell potatoes and other vegetables direct to household customers, and have possibly reached the bottom of that market. In short we find ourselves in a situation that many Canadian farmers know only too well : we are unable to sell enough of our farm produce to remain viable. This situation is almost entirely due to the unfair, unjust and environmentally devastating force we call "free trade."

Heidi and I are the bright, young, up-and-coming farmers that the Canadian and Territorial governments like to trumpet as being the face of modern agriculture, and in one sense we are. What point is there in having a Yukon Farmer of the Year Award when we are unable to earn a living wage from farming? Yukon farmers will continue to struggle at the margins until we have access to the local mass market. This is a huge issue that underscores all Yukon farmers' efforts. We feel that the government only pays lip service to Yukon farmers and that the government sanctioned Farmer of the Year Award is part of that veneer of support for local farmers.

The Yukon lacks a safe and secure supply of local food to feed its population. This might seem like no big deal right now. But what about in the future? Transport costs continue to rise, oil prices rise, the threat of terrorism increases, the increase of extreme harvest failure, are but a few of the many events that make it more difficult to feel secure in our lives here. As Yukoners, we need to think carefully about our food supplies in the future.

Now is the time to support and nurture local growers so that we may be here in the future to provide the Yukon with the food security it so desperately needs.

In view of these issues we call upon you to, at the very least, introduce policy that will ensure that when the Yukon Government needs to buy food it buys locally grown food first and

foremost. The Yukon Government already has similar policy with regard other locally sourced goods and services. This same assistance needs to be widened to include Yukon grown produce. As you said yourself in the 2003 Yukon Agriculture Products Directory:

"By purchasing local agriculture products, you are providing support for Yukon family farms and encouraging the productive use of agricultural land."

Now there is an opportunity for you to put your money where your mouth is. When we feel that the government has assisted us and other Yukon growers in a meaningful way we will be happy to accept the Farmer of the Year Award. We challenge you to move forward on this issue and create a government policy that will truly benefit Yukon farmers.

We do not wish to hear any platitudes referring to the proposed new federal or territorial agriculture policies. Neither of these policies help Yukon farmers to be farmers, nor do they provide any meaningful assistance in the way that we are calling for.

We are but one of the few real Family Farmers of the north. And we need your help now for the sake of all our futures. We would be pleased to offer any assistance we can in helping this matter to proceed.

*Yours Sincerely,
Garret Gillespie Heidi Marion
Partners, Wild Blue Yonder*

*c.c. Yukon News
Dave Beckman, Ag. Branch
Todd Hardy, leader of NDP
Debbie Throssell, YAA*

Joke of the Month

10 Celsius

Californians shiver uncontrollably.
Canadians plant gardens.

1.6 Celsius

Italian cars won't start.
Canadians drive with the windows down.

0 Celsius

American water freezes.
Canadian water gets thicker.

-17.9 Celsius

NY City landlords finally turn on the heat.
Canadians have the last cookout of the season.

-51 Celsius

Mt.St.Helens freezes.
Canadian Girl Guides sell cookies door-to-door.

-73 Celsius

Santa Claus abandons the North Pole.
Canadians pull down their earflaps.

-500 Celsius

Hell freezes over.
The Vancouver Canucks win the Stanley Cup.

This newsletter is produced bi-monthly

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Any submissions must be in by the 5th of the
month of publication (ie. Next publication
month's deadline is March 5th)

Remember to mark your calendars for the

YAA

Annual General Meeting

On Saturday, March 27

Time to be Announced

At the Riverview Inn

Election of Officers on the Agenda, so get your
nominations into the office by February 27!

**Remember that your membership
needs to be paid to vote!!!**

When Debbie sends the nominations out they
will go to 2003 and 2004 members!

**Voting will only go out to
2004 paid members!**