

# The Plough Boy Newsletter



February 22, 2008

## Exploring Relationships and the Future of Agriculture in the Yukon

On February 7, forty four people from around the Territory gathered at Yukon College to discuss agriculture and it's relationship with our environment, wildlife, rural and economic development, the health, security and supply of our food, and other issues, concerns and values, many of which are in sharp conflict. Participants worked to create understanding and propose solutions which respect and balance everyone's interests and needs. *(Photos, l to r: some workshop participants; facilitator Angela Walkley; 'health break' food display; workshop coordinator, Donna Mercier, word processing group reports on site. Below: Some participants discussing issues and recommendations.)*



Individual participants and representatives of key stakeholder groups braved minus mid forties temperatures to come to this YAA initiated workshop to express their views and ideas on land use and the place of agriculture

in Yukon, which is often regarded as much negatively as positively against the high value everyone places on our natural environment. Yet, we need agriculture. Our food supply depends on it whether we produce it here or import it.

Presently, Yukon only produces 1% of the food we consume. The rest is hauled in from far away places by a constant flow of diesel belching trucks. But, shall we continue to depend solely on those imports and those trucks, or should we grow more here? What is the right balance of agriculture, and other values and interests in, and uses of, Yukon land?

## We can find workable solutions



Participants found the workshop valuable, particularly for the opportunity it presented to network, meet as equals and hear each other's perspectives. Many said their own perspectives had changed and most indicated an increased willingness to work with other stakeholders, and a desire to attend future workshops to address the challenges identified. Follow up is under consideration. Meanwhile, the workshop report is available by calling the YAA office or checking the website. Thank you to all the participants, to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada who provided funding through the Advancing Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food program and the local Yukon ACAAF Council, and to YTG's Dept of Economic Development and the Ag Branch who sponsored the food service.

## YUKON AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION (YAA)



### Wildlife Compensation Plan/Farm Safety

The Yukon Bush Team has just recruited 'Barry the Enforcer' to bring muscle to their next game against the Yukon Farm Team. Barry will play with Mikey Moose, El-

mer Elk, Fenrick Wolf and Billy Bison who regularly breach de fences of de Farm Team and score on their crops and livestock. The details of YTG's compensation plan will be forthcoming. Scouting reports note that Barry is a real animal and he has teeth as well as claws which are very sharp and dangerous. They caution the farm team's players to work and play safety conscious and safety smart whether dealing with Barry and the Bush team, or the machines, animals and many other things they work with on the farm.

### Certified Organic Hay and Chickens in the M'Clintock Valley

The 2007 hay crop at M'Clintock Valley Farm was the first ever certified organic in the Yukon. Joanne Jackson Johnson and Andy Townsend have been growing brome grass hay in the M'Clintock Valley since 1994. They took over the titled agricultural land 1991. It had been cleared and planted to brome, timothy and alfalfa in the mid-1970's, but had not been kept up for almost twenty years. A five-acre field was the only one still producing pretty good brome grass. About fifty acres had been cleared originally, but were growing back to willow, poplar, spruce and pine. The valley is known for its old growth conifers, and the forest re-growth was vigorous.

In 1994, after re-clearing, about twenty acres of brome grass was replanted with no nurse crop. The partners decided that no fertilizers or herbicides would be used and irrigation was not available or affordable. After clearing the newer fields, rye was grown as a plough-down, and to suppress weeds. The soil is sandy and plough-downs were done to increase organic matter. Plantings with nurse crops were done in 1997 and 2002. There are now about 80 acres of hay in production.

In 2006 Joanne decided to try pastured poultry on a small field near the house. She had met Lyle Young from Cowichan Bay Farm while attending Terra Madre and he advised this as a way to raise birds and fertilize the field simultaneously. It was a recipe for success, for the grass and the birds. In early 2007 the grass already showed a big improvement in the area where the chicken pens had been moved. The flock was increased from 30 to over 100 this year. Joanne was following Joel Salatin's (Pastured Poultry Profits) recommendation to start small and increase production gradually until you know how to manage it. The chickens were fed certified organic feed, as well as eating grasshoppers and greens from the field and weeds from the garden. The birds were certified organic in 2006 and 2007.

Joanne and Andy have now decided to follow up on soil tests from 2005 and apply rock powders and organic nitrogen to some of the fields and garden next spring, as well as continuing to move chickens around the hay-field. They are still dry land farming, and still have foxtail problems on the newer fields, but feel that encouraging the soil organisms will help to improve the water-holding capacity of the soil and perhaps discourage weeds.

The first customer in 2007 was Jim Ambrose from Diversified Livestock near Carmacks. Jim first bought oat bales for his cattle in 2002 and has been a customer ever since. Joanne has bought beef and pork from Jim and Mervel and this year the Ambroses bought some chickens from



M'Clintock Valley Farm. Photo: Jim Ambrose and Andy Townsend load hay. Below: Chickens in pen on field.



## YUKON AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION (YAA)

### For Sale!

**TRACTOR, \$36,900 CAN.** Farm Tractor Deutz Dx 160, MFWD (Manual Four Wheel Drive), 160hp, 3pt. hitch, 3428 hours on the machine, Front end loader with bucket and grapple, 6 ton hydraulic winch UNIFOREST with remote control and pto shaft

**TRAILER, \$9,800 CAN.,** Goose neck trailer, year 2007, 30 feet long usable deck, Drop down end can be used as extended deck, 3 -7000 lbs axels, GVW (gross vehicle weight 21,000lbs) Heavy duty brake shoes, Electric brakes on each wheel drum

Sonja Seeber & Paul Kloepfer, e-mail : [paulk@northwestel.net](mailto:paulk@northwestel.net)  
Box 1271, Marsh Lake Y.T. Y0B 1Y1, Tel.&Fax.# 1867 660 4124

### And Check This Out!

1. Allied 390, front end loader attachment with small bucket and forks. Unit has hydraulic controls and rams. Suitable for many smaller 40 to 60 hp tractors. \$2400.00
2. Monarch 4" intake by 3" centrifugal pump, PTO drive on pull behind frame with 8" diameter wheels. Will pump 60 to 75 gallons per min up 100 ft. Has less than 100 hours on it. \$2000.00
3. Monarch 4" intake by 3" centrifugal pump, with 18 hp Briggs and Stratton drive on hand cart with 6" diameter wheels. Battery start - needs new battery Will pump 75 to 90 gallons per min up 100ft. \$2200.00

Please contact either Rolland or Mary 633-6178 [<mailto:girouard@northwestel.net>]

### And the Best Deal of All....Membership in the YAA, still just \$10/year

Why not renew yours today and bring a friend. The YAA works hard to represent the interests and needs of Yukon farmers, and our agriculture and agri-food industry as a whole, and to grow our industry and our contribution to our economy. Agriculture is a community business. Be part of the YAA community. Unless you already have a multi-year membership in good standing, just bring or send us a cheque for \$10 for one year, or, if you wish a longer membership, just multiply by \$10/year. Our office is still at 203-302 Steele St., Whitehorse, Yukon, Y1A 2C3, TEL:668-6864, FAX:393-3566 E-mail: [admin@yukonag.ca](mailto:admin@yukonag.ca) Please confirm your full contact info - address, phone number, and e-mail address if you have one. We need to update our records.

Hey, You know what's even better than being a member of YAA? Being an ACTIVE member. Let us know your needs and concerns. Perhaps we can help. Come to one of our Board meetings which are regularly held every second wednesday of the month and see what your Association Directors have on their agenda. Better yet, volunteer to serve as a Director. Our AGM is coming up on April 19, 10:am, Riverview Hotel. Mark your calendar and come join us.

We are also going to need many people to sit on the working groups we expect will be forming soon to further the implementation phase of the recently released Multi Year Agriculture Development Plan. More on this later. The plan is a good read. It is available at the Ag Branch office in the Elijah Smith Building, or on their web site.

**..And Finally...**I just read an article on the dangers of heavy drinking....Scared the beejeebers out of me. So that's it! **After today, no more reading.**