

Shellbrook Chronicle & Spiritwood Herald

Spring AGRICULTURE EDITION

VOL. 114 NO. 17 PMR #40007604

Thursday, April 30, 2026

www.shellbrookchronicle.com | www.spiritwoodherald.com

Farmer Tan's mustard highlights farm diversity



Tanner Gaboury stands in his mustard field west of Spiritwood.

By BEVRA FEE

Spiritwood Herald Reporter

While browsing the annual fall craft sale in Spiritwood during the 2025 pre-Christmas season, local shoppers were introduced to a new product that proved to be a hot ticket. Farmer Tan's mustard, offered by Tanner Gaboury, sold out in its first market foray.

Farming 3,000-plus acres west of Spiritwood, Gaboury is the third generation of his family to make a living off the land that began with his grandfather in 1957. Growing the common Saskatchewan cereal and seed oil crops that comprise the province's farm commodities, Gaboury was not satisfied just selling onto the

large global markets.

"A few years ago, I started seeing some products on the shelves — like organic, glyphosate-free rolled oats — and I started thinking that it is a lot like what I grow on my farm. With trying to do things differently and watching what I am spraying, that was something that I wanted to look into," Gaboury said.

Adding that he's also passionate about food, Gaboury notes that moving into food processing with something like oats added complications in terms of infrastructure that he didn't want to undertake. While he briefly thought of other products like flour, peas, and legumes, he soon began to wonder if mustard might be a good

option to dip his toes into food processing.

With it already being late in the season, Gaboury couldn't find any mustard seed through his local contacts. But eventually, he had luck with a producer located south of Battleford.

Gaboury came home with some Rubbermaid tubs of mustard seed and planted it two years ago. That year, he made his first batch of mustard and thought it was pretty good.

"I realized that this is a unique product — unique because I grew it — and I felt that maybe this would be something that people would want to buy," he said. "Once I started giving it to people to test it out, asking for feedback, I continued tweaking reci-

pes and adding various pairings such as cranberry."

Gaboury grew mustard again the following year. He processed some that December and started selling it — much to the appreciation of patrons at the Spiritwood Lions Craft Sale, who bought all 40 jars he brought with him and were clamouring for more.

After some weather-related hiccups that all farmers can relate to, Gaboury is now looking at expanding the market for his mustard.

"I want to partner with like-minded business people who see the value in creating local products and selling farm-to-fork," he said.

Continued on page 2



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Farmer Tan's mustard highlights farm diversity

Continued from 1

Food security is a priority among many of the current generation's farmers, and a feeling of pride comes from being able to provide healthy food for their families. Gaboury is no different, and enthusiastically describes being able to prepare a complete meal from products grown by him and his cousins who farm nearby. When asked about how far he plans to diversify, Gaboury mulls the concept of a mixed farm.

"Growing our own food is very personal — it is kind of romantic, like having wood heat...you love the feeling but it is a lot more work than having natural gas," he said.

"But it is a source of pride that we grow high quality wheat as not only a commodity but also to mill my own flour, get some eggs from my neighbours to make pasta or focaccia, buy some beef from my cousin."

Gaboury also recently invested in his own canola press to make cold-pressed canola oil.

"Between my farm and my cousin's farm, we can not only feed the world but we can feed our own families completely with our own products," he said.

"Having access to food is something we all take for granted, but when one thing goes wrong in the food chain then you can quickly lose access."

Discussing his business plan for farming operations, Gaboury notes that the few acres he dedicates to growing mustard aren't going to alter the course of his mainstay crops overly much. However, when planting a couple of acres to mustard and "messing around" with exploring new products, such as dry mustard and prepared mustard, the long-term result of exploring the opportunity fully could mitigate the need to look into expanding the farm.

"Maybe I can diversify what acres I already have and make those acres convert a higher-margin, value added product," he said. "The costs that come with having more acres — more equipment, more time traveling to fields farther from the core farming operations because land adjacent does not just come available all the time — that's not necessarily good practice."

"When we can be on the farm, raising our kids and including them in the process, we are continuing to farm the way our family has done through the generations before ours," he added.



Tanner Gaboury (and kids) with jars of his locally grown mustard.

SRSD publishes facility condition report

By **MICHAEL OLEKSYN**
LJI Reporter,
PA Daily Herald

A new report looking at the state of Saskatchewan Rivers School Division facilities shows the schools are in good shape, but aging infrastructure could cause problems in the future.

The Saskatchewan Rivers School Division board received their annual Accountability Report on Facilities at their regular meeting on Monday. The Facilities or Plant Operations budget of \$7.3 million includes Preventative Maintenance and Renewal (PMR) funding and capital expenditures.

Superintendent of Facilities Derek Blais prepared the report for Monday's meeting. Afterwards, Director of Education Neil Finch said the buildings are in great condition, but

there are concerns.

"Our facilities are in great shape, but it's because of the preventative pieces that we do for our facilities," Finch explained. "The concern is that we have aging facilities, and as time goes on, our preventative maintenance won't be able to keep up."

"I would say we're proud of the state of our facilities, but we're concerned about funding as time goes on for preventative maintenance and even major capital projects," he added.

According to the report, the current deferred maintenance backlog and facility renewal requirement for buildings in Saskatchewan Rivers is roughly \$115 million to \$120 million. The replacement value for the division's assets is estimated at around \$780 million to \$785 million.

Based on these val-

ues, the overall Facility Condition Index (FCI) is 'poor' or approximately 20 per cent according to industry standards. The FCI is defined as the ratio of the cost to address the deferred maintenance backlog to the current replacement value of the assets.

The report states that without adequate funding, the conditions of the buildings will continue to decline into the 'Critical' stage over time.

Finch said that current funding levels slow the rate of deterioration, but will not eliminate it.

The report states that the current annual estimated funding of approximately \$5.45 million extends the life of buildings in the division but does not stabilize overall asset condition.

The newest Sask. Rivers building is 22 years old, while the oldest

is 112. Over half of the buildings were constructed prior to 1970 while the remaining buildings were built between 1970 and 2012. The division will also be constructing a new joint school in Shellbrook with plans to be announced in the future.

Schools built in the 1960s are called "Baby Boomer Schools" and were constructed hastily all over the province. Those schools are now in their second life cycle, and the chance of getting a third out of them is "very slim." The report states that as these facilities continue to age the demand for maintenance and capital renewal will continue to increase.

The division has replaced items like windows, rooves, and mechanical systems, but Hurd said sewer systems could become a problem at these schools because the

pipework is in the concrete slabs.

Finch credited the staff in the department for keeping the schools in good shape. He said they are great at staying on top of developing issues but that cycle cannot carry on forever.

"We're very proactive, but at some point, it's going to be concerning with our aging facilities," Finch said.

The Ministry of Education provides funding through the PMR program each year. The board approves a new PMR three-year plan each year in June.

The facilities budget is broken down into 45 per cent building operating expenses, 18 per cent amortization, 35 per cent salaries and two per cent other. Facilities currently employ 65 full time equivalent caretaking staff, 14 maintenance staff and three supervisors and support staff. Caretakers are as-

signed based on size of facilities. For example, Carlton has three full time staff assigned due to the size of the building.

According to the report they are averaging about 390 service requests a month. These are reviewed quarterly to make sure targets are met. Service requests are submitted electronically through Asset Planner software by administration and caretakers.

PMR projects are based on square footage of facilities. The division received \$3,452,330 in 2024-2025.

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Form P
[Section 56 & 58 of the Act]

NOTICE OF ABANDONMENT OF POLL (Municipal By-Election)

Whereas a poll is not required pursuant to *The Local Government Election Act* for the offices of:

Councillor of the Village of Marcelin

I hereby give public notice that no voting for the said offices will take place and the following person is elected by acclamation:

Councillor: Dwayne Ouellette

Dated at Marcelin, Sask. this 24th day of April, 2026.

Leanne McCormick
Returning Officer

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Lobster Fest catches funds for SARCS

By **BEVRA FEE**
Spiritwood Herald
Reporter

Spiritwood Area Recreation, Culture & Sports (SARCS) is a non-profit governed by a volunteer board of directors who are tasked with overseeing the recreation facilities in Spiritwood. Working with user groups such as minor ball, figure skating, curling and minor hockey, the board oversees the employees that work hands-on with clients and users.

Having staged many successful events annually or biennially — Pie in the Eye, Community Auction, Bull Riding, to name a few — SARCS decided to introduce a fresh fundraiser for the spring of 2026.

Enter Ronnie and the lobsters. No, this is not a 1950's musical quartet, but rather it is Ronnie Sawatsky and lobsters flown in live from Halifax. With a larger than normal catering crew and an even larger volunteer serving crew, the sold-out "Lobster Fest" was a combination of fine dining, fun, auctions, raffles and camaraderie.

Stuck in between all the winter sports and the upcoming fun of getting the crop in the ground, a large crowd of 150 turned out to celebrate the late spring blizzard and the fact that, despite

the late spring blizzard, lobsters were able to find their way from the east coast to Saskatoon International Airport without devastating delays.

It was further celebrated that SARCS' backbone, Sue Kahl, was able to navigate the storm and fetch the lobsters and deliver them the final leg of their journey to Spiritwood.

"Who would have thought we would have so much stress at the end of April, checking with flights and weather delays while trying to get our lobsters in," mused a very relieved Ronnie.

On the menu for the evening's feast/fest was a six-course offering, which consisted of starters (nacho platter, spring rolls, whiskey shrimp, bacon-wrapped sausage, fresh east-coast mussels, salt & pepper wings, bacon-wrapped water chestnuts, crab ragoon), the main course of lobster and/or rack of ribs along with roasted baby potatoes and carrots, and the decadent dessert of strawberry crepes.

The steady stream of food was conveyed in orderly fashion by two teams of wait staff, who serviced each side of the venue with plate service. Between each course, a few items in the live auction would be sold by Auctioneer Boyd Stuart.



A sold-out crowd of 150 people enjoyed the east-coast lobster and rib feast.

At the same time, the silent auction tables received steady attention by hopeful bidders carefully watching their chosen treasures.

The bar was a busy meeting place to discuss the amount of food, the ongoing blizzard, and the potential ensuing flood watch, before heading back to the table for another round of savoury delights. When the main event finally settled in, out came the plastic bibs and the selfies in lobster garb.

Buckets on tables

filled with crustacean shells and the wait staff hopped to keeping dishes cleared away and allowing as much elbow room as possible while guests cracked into their whole lobsters and worked their way through racks of ribs.

Nearing the point of crying "Uncle" and packing their leftovers into take-away containers, the guests were swayed back into action by dessert. Absolutely no one was overheard to say, "I could use one extra..." and the verdict confirmed that the evening meal was a success.

As the main fundraiser to prop up the semi-annual mortgage payment on the arena and rec facility, the Lobster Fest went a long way to accomplishing its goal. Sue Kahl reported that the final tally would fall in the range of a \$30,000 profit.

With donations from local businesses, many hours of planning by the SARCS committee, and donated catering services by Ronnie Sawatsky, the first Lobster Fest is likely not the last.



Bidders check their standing on the silent auction items.



The dessert crew gets ready to plate up the strawberry crepes.

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Growing season ripe with uncertainty

Though last week's wintry blast makes spring seem like little more than a far-off dream, farming operations will (hopefully) be getting into full swing across Saskatchewan in the weeks to come.

While every sector has its own unique uncertainties, agriculture is built almost entirely upon uncertainty and is far more vulnerable to the vagaries of chance.

Sure, producers can make extensive plans about how many acres of which crop to seed in the spring and which inputs to use to maximize yields.

But even in a growing season in which conditions are perfect, it only takes one little unexpected blip to derail a producer's plans.

- Too much rain, or not enough.
- Too much heat, or not enough.
- An invasive pest.
- A noxious weed.
- A crop disease.

These are things that can easily go wrong, and these elements of chance only cover what can happen to a producer's fields or herds. What happens on the farm, after all, is only the first step of agriculture.

Beyond the farm gate, producers have to worry about finding buyers for their crops, transportation, and trade conditions; a bumper crop of the highest quality canola means nothing, if there's no market to sell it to.

In ideal conditions, charting a successful path from seeding through to harvest is a lot like threading a needle.

Conditions this spring are far from ideal, and uncertainty abounds.

Take last week's late winter storm, for instance.

On the one hand, the extra moisture from the added snowmelt could prove beneficial, given how hot and dry Saskatchewan's summers have been in recent years.

On the other hand, it delays seeding operations until early May, which could have consequences for crop de-



JORDAN TWISS
~
News Editor

velopment and quality.

While we know all too well what current conditions across Saskatchewan are like, we can only guess what the remainder of spring, summer, and fall will bring.

If past growing seasons are anything to go by, we can expect this one to be mostly hot and dry. Much like a late snowfall, this can have a profound impact on crops and livestock.

And the crystal ball only gets murkier from here.

Though Prime Minister Mark Carney has spent the past year travelling the globe to forge trade pacts with new partners and strengthen existing trade agreements, the United States remains Canada's top trade partner.

In 2024 alone, Canada exported approximately \$62 billion (CAD) in agri-food products to the U.S.

Faced with U.S. President Donald Trump's erratic tariff policies and mixed signals on the future of the Canada-United States-Mexico trade agreement (CUSMA), Mr. Carney has called Canada's dependence on the U.S. a vulnerability that needs to be addressed.

This was the impetus for Mr. Carney's trip to China with Premier Scott Moe at the beginning of the year.

The trip resulted in the easing or elimination of China's tariffs on Canadian canola seed, canola meal, and peas. However, these gains could be partially offset if India increases its existing 10 per cent tariffs on lentils, peas, and beans.

Reflecting Mr. Carney's philosophy of strength through trade diversification, exports to the U.S. fell by 16 per cent in 2025 year-over-year, while exports to other countries actually rose by 17 per cent.

But the U.S. still accounted for 72 per cent of Canadian exports last year (down from 76 per cent in 2024), suggesting that the process of weaning Canada off its over-reliance on its closest ally will be a long-term one.



And the uncertainty caused by the U.S. and Mr. Trump goes well beyond trade policy.

The war with Iran allowed Iran to seize control of the Strait of Hormuz, a vital trade route through which 20 per cent of the world's oil passes. In addition to sending the price of oil skyrocketing, the conflict has also increased fertilizer prices, adding further strain to producers' bottom lines.

Some analysts suggest it could be months before shipping through the strait returns to normal levels, and oil and fertilizer prices will probably follow a similar pattern.

The best way to circumvent global uncertainty in the ag sector is to strengthen the sector domestically. Perplexingly, Mr. Carney has opted to do the opposite.

At the end of January, to save money and trim burgeoning government ranks, Mr. Carney's government announced cuts to staffing at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC).

Additionally, AAFC announced the closure of research facilities in Guelph, Ont., Québec City, and Lacombe, Alta., as well as satellite research farms in Indian Head, Sask., Scott, Sask., Portage la Prairie, Man., and Nappan, N.S., and the country's only Organic and Regenerative Research Program headquartered at

Swift Current.

Critics of the closures correctly point out that they will have a profoundly negative impact on Canada's public plant breeding program, which has been the bedrock of Canada's agriculture sector for the past century.

The impact of these cuts won't be felt immediately, but it will be significant.

Research is how Canada's agriculture sector adapts, innovates, and remains competitive in the global market. More public funding for research, not less, is needed to ensure that Canada retains its competitive edge.

Though the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food is investigating the impact that the cuts will have, this only adds to the maelstrom of uncertainty swirling around the upcoming growing season.

And amid all this uncertainty, it's not just producers who end up paying the price; as their operating costs increase due to environmental and trade issues, so do the prices consumers pay at the grocery store.

The myriad moving parts are all connected. And now, more than ever, it's vital that governments do everything in their power to aid producers through the chaos.

Shellbrook Chronicle

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Publications Mail Registration #07621

Published Every Thursday Morning

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Office Hours: Monday - Thursday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.;

Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.;

Advertising Deadline: Fridays at 4:00 p.m.

Websites: www.shellbrookchronicle.com

www.spiritwoodherald.com

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Seniors, students connect over games

By **JORDAN TWISS**
Shellbrook Chronicle
Reporter

Whether it's dancing to old-time music, playing games, or just sitting down for a good visit, the Shellbrook Seniors Association has a long history of connecting with students from Shellbrook Elementary School and W.P. Sandin High School.

The seniors and students continued this long-standing tradition on Tuesday, April 21, after Shellbrook Elementary School teacher Cheryl Ledding reached out to the seniors about having an intergenerational activity day with her Grade 4 class.

The seniors were delighted by the opportunity, and invited the kids down to the Shell-

brook Senior Citizens' Centre for an afternoon of card games like Go Fish and War.

Shellbrook Seniors Association member Lorraine Thibeault says she and Linda Greba even had the opportunity to learn a new card game called "Garbage" from her student partners, Sam Caplette and Brandi Pheil, making for an afternoon filled

with fun and laughter.

Thibeault says intergenerational days like these are important for her and her fellow seniors because they provide entertainment and a way to keep mentally active.

"Through the Alzheimer's Society, we have learned that this kind of mental engagement is linked to maintaining cognitive function and may even help delay decline associated with

conditions like Alzheimer's disease," she said.

Noting that it's impossible to feel lonely in a room of 20-plus Grade 4 students, Thibeault adds that the afternoon has important social benefits, and also brings a sense or purpose for the seniors, as they get to mentor the students (and also learn from them) and share stories with them.

"We love the energy and curiosity of chil-

dren, as it brings out joy and laughter," she said.

Thibeault hopes the students also feel as if they gained something from an afternoon spent with the seniors.

And most of all, she hopes they're just as excited as the seniors to visit again and play a variety of games, like shuffleboard, bocce ball, ring toss, bean bag toss, indoor horseshoes, crokinole, and ladder ball.

Scott Moe set for 2028 election

By **JORDAN TWISS**
Shellbrook Chronicle Reporter

Though Saskatchewan's next general election is still about two years off, Premier Scott Moe has announced his intention to continue representing the province.

On Thursday, April 23, Moe, who was first elected to represent the Rosthern-Shellbrook constituency in 2011 and became premier in 2018 after Premier Brad Wall's departure, became

the first Saskatchewan Party nominee for the 2028 election.

"Thank you to my friends and neighbours in my home constituency. I am honoured to be the Saskatchewan Party candidate for the fifth consecutive election in Rosthern-Shellbrook and I am looking forward to leading the Saskatchewan Party into the next election," Moe said in a prepared statement.

Despite rumours to the contrary, Moe said it was always his intention to run. He does so after receiving the support of 80 per cent of Sask. Party members at the party's convention in November, and as the third most popular premier in Canada (his approval rating sits at 51 per cent, six points higher than just before the 2024 election).

"Our Saskatchewan Party government will continue to provide strong, steady leadership at a very turbulent time throughout the world and we look forward to the chance to earn another mandate from Saskatchewan voters in the next election," Moe said in the release.

"We will be building a strong team to win in 2028, starting by nominating candidates this spring."



Premier Scott Moe has been nominated in the Rosthern-Shellbrook constituency for the 2028 election.

YOUR TWO CENTS

If anyone builds it, everyone dies

Dear editor,
Do you remember when Google's code of conduct included "Don't be evil?" Let's define evil as intentionally causing harm. Social media platforms did not set out to cause harm. Yet their algorithms optimize for profit by amplifying negative emotions, with no awareness of the harm they cause to individuals and democracy.

That gap between intent and outcome reflects how these systems are built. They are trained. Training an AI model is less like writing code and more like shaping a developing brain. Algorithms

guide how connections change with experience. Even if we could map every one of those connections, we still couldn't reliably predict what the system will do. Artificial superintelligence (ASI) would be trained the same way and it would be beyond our ability to fully predict or control.

Concerned AI experts and others warn that mitigating extinction risk from ASI should be a global priority alongside pandemics and nuclear war. This sounds like science fiction. But imagine a Mayan warrior watching Spanish ships approach, unable to conceive that

the men aboard had technology that could kill at a distance. Even without a physical form, ASI could exert real-world influence by exploiting the interconnected technologies we already depend on. We will be the Mayan warriors, outgunned before we even understand why.

The authors of If Anyone Builds It, Everyone Dies say many leaders see the danger but stay silent. When we speak up, we give them the mandate to act. Tell leaders to act now to build treaties and prevent any ASI.

Nancy Carswell
Shellbrook, SK



Seniors Lorraine Thibeault and Linda Greba enjoyed learning a new card game from Grade 4 students Brandi Pheil and Sam Caplette.

PUBLIC NOTICE

RM of Shellbrook No. 493 Public Notice Official Community Plan and Zoning Bylaw Amendments

Public Notice is hereby given that the Council of the Rural Municipality of Shellbrook No. 493 (RM) intends to consider two bylaws under The Planning and Development Act, 2007, to amend Bylaw No. 2018-09, known as the Official Community Plan (OCP), and to amend Bylaw No. 08-1981, known as The Zoning Bylaw (ZB).

INTENT: The proposed OCP amendment would redesignate on the RM's OCP Future Land Use Map, portions of NW ¼ 16-49-03-W3M from Country Residential Development Area to Agriculture Development Area and Industrial Development Area.

The proposed ZB amendment would: replace regulations, and exceptions thereto, with respect to the number of principal buildings or uses permitted on a site; introduce regulations applicable to horizontal and vertical integration (multiple complementary principal uses on a single site); add restaurants and similar uses, gas bars and service stations, to the M – Industrial District as permitted uses; add retail liquor sales and bulk fuel storage and sales to the M – Industrial District as discretionary uses and add/clarify regulation and evaluation criteria thereto; introduce a number of definitions of terms relating to the above or otherwise absent in the ZB; correct a District name on the ZB Map; and rezone portions of land within NW ¼ 16-49-03-W3M to the AR – Agricultural Residential and M – Industrial Districts.

AFFECTED LAND: The entirety of the RM would potentially be affected by proposed amendments to: modify regulations with respect to allowable number of principal buildings and uses on a site; introduce the concept and regulation of horizontal/vertical integration; and, introduce new definitions. Redesignation and rezoning of lands would affect portions of NW ¼ 16-49-03-W3M (the quarter section of land immediately north of the Town of Shellbrook bisected by Hwy 55). Legal description of the affected lands as follows: NW ¼ 16-49-03-W3M Exts. 138, 139, 141, and 142; Blk/Parcel F, Plan 85PA09448 Ext. 0; and, Blk/Parcel J, Plan 102060593 Ext. 0.

REASON: The RM is seeking to better legitimize a number of existing developments in accordance with its OCP and ZB, and assign desired land use policy designations and zoning to lands within NW ¼ 16-49-03-W3M to better reflect current and anticipated land uses; the proposed amendments are required to facilitate these goals. In addition, but related thereto, redesignation and rezoning of said lands is required to facilitate a subdivision proposal to sever parcel ties between 4 existing parcels (3 parcels being redesignated and rezoned for agricultural use; 1 parcel being redesignated and rezoned for future business development). Desired regulation and criteria for evaluation would be added to the M District, and new definitions are required for clear interpretation of the OCP and ZB as it relates to uses.

PUBLIC INSPECTION: Any person may inspect the bylaw at the RM office during regular office hours, excluding statutory holidays. Draft copies of the proposed bylaws are available from the RM office; hard copy at cost, digital copy free upon request or at the web address below. Copies of the proposed amendments, including maps showing proposed land use designation and zoning changes, will be posted on the RM's website at the following web address: <https://www.rmofshellbrook.com/notice>. The RM office is located at RM Office at 71 Main Street, Shellbrook, SK, S0J 2E0 (PO Box 250).

PUBLIC HEARING: Council will hold a public hearing on May 6, 2026, at 10:00 am, in the RM Office to hear any person or group that wants to comment on the proposed bylaws. Please contact the office prior to the hearing for protocols related to making in-person representation. Council will also consider written comments received by the undersigned by May 5, 2026. For additional information, please contact (306) 747-2178 or admin.493@sasktel.net.

Issued at the Town of Shellbrook this 9th day of April, 2026.

Duane Storey – Administrator – RM of Shellbrook No. 493

Studio 747 dancers triumph at competitions

By **JORDAN TWISS**
Shellbrook Chronicle
Reporter

The whirlwind gauntlet of competitions has come to a close for the dancers of Studio 747, and once again, they've come home with a plethora of awards and accolades.

"Competition season has been a huge success," said Studio 747 owner and director Kelly Woodley. "We have seen our dancers perform outstandingly every time they have stepped onto the stage, and we are so proud of each and every dancer."

Competition season kicked off in March with the Kindersley Konnection Dance Festival. There, the dancers earned highest group mark awards for

junior tap, junior ballet, pre intermediate tap, Intermediate jazz, senior lyrical.

Additionally, Brienne Grenier earned the highest mark in the 13+ category for her lyrical solo, and Woodley received the overall choreography award for the senior lyrical routine Tell You About Her.

Studio 747's next stop was at Saskatoon's SOARinYXE competition, where Grenier earned top marks for her acro solo, and Woodley received the most innovative choreography award for Tell You About Her.

Elsewhere, the senior jazz routine, Objection, placed fourth in the Group Elevation Challenge, Hayley Van Hereweghe placed third in the Senior Maximum



Studio 747 won the Top Studio Award at North Battleford's Collective Dance Challenge.

Elite Performer Competition, and Kyra Parsons placed second in the junior Maximum Elite Performer Competition.

From here, Studio 747 headed off to North Battleford's Collective Dance Challenge and danced its way to the Top Studio Award (the highest group average of all studios attending). Other awards included a Groove Street Productions scholarship for Emersyn Nahorniak, a Helping Hand Award for Parsons, and an outstanding choreography award for instructor

Bailey Doucette on the senior contemporary routine, Cellophane.

Studio 747 concluded competition season with the Prince Albert Festival of Dance from April 15 to 19 and kept the awards and accolades coming.

Among solos, duos, and trios, awards included: most outstanding hip hop trio (12+) for Ava Chmil, Makena Swystun, and Aria Warkentin, most outstanding lyrical solo (12 to 14) for Kyra Parsons, most outstanding jazz solo (9 to 11) for Bria Horricks, most outstanding tap solo (9 to

11) for Aubrielle Booth, and most outstanding lyrical duo (under 14) for Shaelyn McAleese and Aubryn Olson.

As for groups, the senior dancers brought home most outstanding awards for contemporary (Cellophane), ballet (Forest Echo), hip hop (Here We Go), and lyrical (Tell You About Her), while the intermediate dancers won most outstanding in jazz (I Wanna Dance with Somebody).

Finally, pre-intermediate dancers won most outstanding awards in lyrical (In Case You Don't Live Forever) and ballet (At the Doll Shop), and the junior dancers won in ballet (Jet Set).

For choreography, I Wanna Dance with Somebody and Tell You About Her both

brought home awards, and Woodley won both and Adjudicators Choice (any discipline) and Adjudicators Choice award.

Studio 747 also earned a number of Northern Lights Community Development Corporation awards for Here We Go, Forest Echo, and Cellophane (Adjudicators Choice group showing promise and dedication).

Meanwhile, Emersyn Nahorniak won Adjudicators Choice for a soloist showing promise and dedication, Hayley Van Hereweghe won Adjudicators Choice (16+) and a Harbor Dance Center drop-in scholarship, and Freya Johnson won Adjudicators Choice (11 and under) and the Stan & Lizabeth Oleksinski scholarship.



Kyra Parsons won a Helping Hand Award in North Battleford.



Emersyn Nahorniak won a Groove Street Productions scholarship in North Battleford.

VILLAGE OF CANWOOD PROPERTY FOR SALE BY PUBLIC TENDER

The Village of Canwood offers for sale the following property:

ISC Parcel #133173659
Lot 6 Block 02 Plan Y3516
Located at 560 - Main Street within the Village of Canwood;

A tender must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked: 'Property Tender - Lot 6 Block 02 Plan Y3516' Village of Canwood Box 172 Canwood, SK SOJ OK0

Tenders must be postmarked by May 29, 2026.

A certified cheque to the municipality for 5% of the amount of the tender must accompany the tender.

Highest, or any tender, not necessarily accepted.

Successful bidder will have 30 days to provide the balance of payment to complete the purchase.

All legal costs, title transfer fees and applicable taxes are the responsibility of the purchaser and are in addition to the bid price.

The property is sold on an 'as-is' basis.

Dated the 30th day of April, 2026.

Heather Sten,
Administrator, Village of Canwood
info@canwood.ca
306-468-2016

RM OF LEASK NO. 464

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The RM of Leask No. 464 is seeking applications for a **Seasonal Municipal Operator** with Class 1A; other skills will be considered, position to commence upon agreement of the parties.

The successful candidate must hold a valid driver's license, Class 1A an asset, mechanical skills, municipal general maintenance skills; the successful applicant will be provided with in-house training relevant to powered mobile equipment. Experience is an asset. The RM of Leask is a unionized environment; we offer a full benefit package and pension plan.

The position will be open until a successful candidate has been hired.

Deadline to apply is May 8/2025 by 12:00 p.m.

Please submit certifications and resume with 3 references to the RM of Leask, Box 190, Leask, Sask., SOJ 1M0 or email rmleask.464@sasktel.net.

Carriere wins April dessert



The Spiritwood Public Library's Dessert of the Month winner for April was Joyce Carriere. She won an Oreo poke cake made by Board member Jayde Tymchak.

By **HEATHER GATZKE**, Branch Librarian

Food basics must be relearned

The idea of improving food security is obviously a wise one.

However, food security will mean different things to different people.

For those with good careers and a healthy bank account, it comes down to a desire to have a system in place which ensures food bought at the store is safe once it hits the table. This is where concepts such as traceability are pushed, and with some merit.

If your income is stretched to the point that you are deciding which bill gets paid and

which you can put off for another couple of weeks, food security is much more basic – how can I afford groceries?

At its modest level, a viable solution would seem to be to produce more of our own food.

In Yorkton, Council recently took a baby step in helping with that by allowing five people to have up to five hens each in their back yards.

Backyard hens are not a new idea, many cities allow them as a family food source and an educational opportunity.

Is five licenses in



CALVIN DANIELS

a city Yorkton's size enough? Probably not, and the fees may be detrimental in terms of saving on the food bill. But as noted, this was a baby step forward.

The real tip of the hat goes to the five people who grab those licenses, as they are working

on their personal food security, something most of us have also totally surrendered to a store.

Backyard gardens were once just a matter of course for many, but now they are now about as scarce as hen's teeth.

It might not be logical to complain about the cost of food after planting lawn and pouring concrete over the backyard where you could grow lettuce and cucumbers and potatoes.

Of course, the idea of food security goes beyond growing a garden.

How many homes today have a cold storage

space to winter potatoes, or a deep freeze for veggies?

And how many people still know how to can pickles or raspberries without spending extensive time on YouTube?

Increasingly, one also has to wonder how many people know how to cook something that isn't popped in the microwave.

If someone were given a whole chicken, could they create a meal with it?

That may seem a ridiculously simple thing, if you are a farm boy like me (albeit de-

grades removed from the farm).

Mom was not a great cook – spices were salt and pepper – but she made pickles, butchered chickens, froze veggies, made bread, and canned fruit. And while I am aware dad struggled with bills at times, we never went hungry.

Somehow, we need to get back to growing more food – boulevard gardens would be a step – and then ensure people know how to store and prepare that food. Old skills regarding food simply must be relearned.

Op-ed: Fair food prices for who?

By NFU
Submitted

In 2026, Canadian consumers are paying almost 30 per cent more for their food than in 2020, while farmers have experienced stagnating prices for their products over the same time frame.

The National Farmers Union's (NFU) Fair Food Prices? report presents price data for 14 farm products and their retail equivalents for the last twenty to fifty years. Retail prices for consumers have increased while the prices farmers have received for their products have hardly budged.

"This report highlights a growing disconnect between rising retail prices and stagnant returns at the farmgate. For BC tree fruit farmers, that gap is critical. Our costs continue to climb, but our share of the retail dollar does not. If that trend continues, it directly threatens the viability of family farms and the stability of Canada's food supply," says Adrian Arts, Executive Director of the British Columbia Fruit Growers Association (BCFGA).

While reporting and opinion pieces trying to explain food price inflation in Canada have deemed the causes "complex" and many, the NFU's report shows otherwise. Four companies control 80 per cent of Canada's grocery sales, four companies account for 88 per cent of Canada's grain handling capacity, and two companies dominate Canada's meat processing.

Canada's agri-food oligarchs – the handful of corporations that have power to distort prices and markets – are the primary reason for the widening gap between the farmers' earnings and the grocery sticker price.

Last year alone the grocery oligarchs raked in over \$6 billion in profits, an astounding 200 per cent increase over their average net profit of \$2 billion/year between 2015-2019.

Just as this report has found retail grocers used the COVID-19 pandemic to increase their profits, the NFU is concerned that, unless we adopt strong regulations to protect Canadians from corporate greed, the inflationary costs of the ongoing war in Iran will lead to further profiteering at the expense of both farmers and consumers.

"The Royal Commission of 1959 showed that the large grocery retailers in Canada already had enough power to take money directly out of farmers' pockets," said Phil Mount, Vice President of Policy of the NFU. "Our report shows that nearly

60 years later, the handful of grocery giants left in this country are so powerful that they can openly profiteer during a pandemic, taking money directly out of the pockets of both farmers and consumers, with no consequences."

The decline in farmers' share of retail grocery prices is also related to the farm income crisis. Falling real net farm income over the last twenty years has jeopardized not only individual farm businesses, but rural economies and the diversity of the Canadian agricultural system. We are losing more than three farms per day, farmland consolidation is making land access untenable for new and young farmers, and we are seeing a decline in sustainable mixed-farming businesses and on-farm biodiversity.

"This report lays bare the lived reality of farmers. Government policies and business advisors tell us to grow our businesses to be more competitive, while handing control over costs and the market to profiteering oligopolies which serve their shareholders' dividends instead of a reliable and equitable food system," says Jenn Pfenning, President of the NFU.

Both farmers and consumers face the immense power of the agri-food oligopolies in their everyday lives. Corporate power is the common enemy of Canadian farmers and consumers, and it is a time for all of us to come together to fight for meaningful, structural policy changes that will curb corporate greed.

"In order to fix a problem of this magnitude, we need to cooperate at a scale we haven't attempted in recent history," says Katie Sardinha, member of the BCFGa and NFU. "We need our politicians to unite across party lines and commit to fixing this problem beyond the four-year election cycle. We need Canadians to understand the nature of the

problem so that they can mobilize along with us to build a better food system."

Farmers and consumers must organize to compel the federal government to establish profit caps on the grocery oligarchs and to set up public grocery stores as non-profit competitors. We must also work together to protect and expand supply management and collective marketing institutions, as they help to ensure a fair return for farmers. We need to ally with food sector unions to expand worker power. Only when we come together to advance policy goals that put producers, people, and the planet above profits will we achieve a just and sustainable food system in Canada.

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SAT., MAY 23RD – 10:00 am – Richard and Bonnie Williams: Farm Auction – Rabbit Lake, SK
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SAT., JUNE 6TH – 10:00 am – Barry Fusick:
Farm/Acreage Sale – Shellbrook, SK
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SAT., JUNE 13TH – 10:00 am – Glen and Shannon Caffet: Farm Sale – Spiritwood, SK
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SAT., JUNE 27TH – 10:00 am – Roy and Lori Mayo:
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Kerri English's students showcase talents

By **JORDAN TWISS**

Shellbrook Chronicle Reporter

The Shellbrook Theatre was the home of lively music and a livelier audience on Saturday, April 25, as Kerri English and her music students took to the stage for their annual spring recital.

With proud parents and loved ones cheering them on from the theatre house, English's 28 students of vastly varying ages bowed, plucked, picked, strummed, and sang their way through 32 numbers, playing everything from classic country, gospel, and folk songs to classic rock jams and pop chart toppers.



Raef Debruijn plays "Sous le Ciel de Paris."

Throughout the nearly three-hour show, the musicians were accompanied by back-up musicians Dennis Adams (guitar), Boyd Falconer (bass), and Dean Kushneryk (drums). Running the light and sound booth for the show, and also adding some ambient lighting to the theatre, was Diskotek Entertainment owner John Earby, who ensured not a single note was missed.

English expressed gratitude to these professionals for their continued commitment to the students year after year, noting that their kindness and guidance helps the budding musicians gain invaluable confidence and experience.

"Your support means so much to my students," English wrote in the show's program. "Each performance represents hours of practice, perseverance, and a genuine love of music. I am incredibly proud of my students for their growth, dedication, and courage in sharing their talents."

In keeping with a longstanding recital tradition, Saturday afternoon's show began with a large group performance of Great Big Sea's "When I'm Up I Can't Get Down," with vocals by the Debruijn brothers — Burke, Raef, and Winston.

Sixteen solo performances followed the show opener, with Madison Graham, Lupin Holowachuk, Kally Bick, Rebecca Robin, Rylee



Wren Wiersma plays "Amazing Grace."

McLellan, Ginny Gradin, Aubree Aiken, Aurelia Wiersma, Winston Debruijn, Domisaya Holowachuk, Raef Debruijn, Jocelyn Robin, Marj Bradley, Elisha Johnson, Maria Robin, and Jude Reynolds all taking the stage.

A second group performance



Amy Robin plays "Lament for the Death of Reverend Archie Beaton."

bookended the solos, as a selection of students performed Sweet Child of Mine, with vocals by Amy Robin, Jocelyn Robin, and Elisha Johnson.

No stranger to bringing in special guests, English followed the intermission by playing conductor for her side project, the Prince Albert Strings Orchestra, through a selection of three numbers. The group includes many of English's current students, and a few other familiar local faces.

Another diverse mix of solos came after this, with performances by Wren Wiersma, Brynlee Aiken, Dayton Graham, Burke Debruijn, Cora Robin, Amy Robin, Alethea Reynolds, Sayward Holowachuk, Kael Bick, Raef Debruijn, Sarah Johnson, and Jachin McLellan.

The show closed with one last group performance — this one a live rendition of "Footloose."



Relative cello newcomer Sarah Johnson performs "Sound of Silence."



Aubree Aiken plays "Boil the Cabbage Easy."



Jachin McLellan performs "Devil's Dream."

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

SPIRITWOOD: Wapiti Regional Library - Tuesday 10am - 5pm; Wednesday 10am - 5pm; Thursday 1pm to 5pm; Friday 10am - 5pm

LEOVILLE: Wapiti Regional Library - Wednesday 10am - 4pm; Thursday 10am - 4pm

SHELL LAKE: Wapiti Regional Library - Tuesday 11am - 4pm; Wednesday 12 pm - 5 pm

BLAINE LAKE: Wapiti Library - Wednesday 1pm - 6pm; Thursday 1pm - 6pm; Friday 1pm - 6pm; Saturday 10am - 3pm. Contact us for more info 306-497-3130, www.wapitilibrary.ca.

BIG RIVER: Wapiti Library - Tuesday 11:30am - 5:30pm; Wednesday 11:30am - 4:30pm; Thursday 11:30am - 4:30pm. Phone # 306-469-2152

CANWOOD: Canwood Branch of Wapiti Regional Library Hours: Tuesday 9:30am - 4pm; Wednesday 10:30am - 5pm; Phone: 306-468-2501

DEBDEN: Wapiti Library hours: Tuesday 10am - 4pm; Wednesday 12pm - 6pm. Librarian: Aline Hannon

LEASK: Wapiti Library & Legacy Gallery Hours - Tuesday 9am - 2pm; Wednesday 2pm - 8pm; Friday 9am - 12pm

MARCELIN: Wapiti Library - Saturday 10am - 2pm; Thursday 2pm - 8pm. For information on all your library needs, please contact 306-226-2110.

SHELLBROOK: Shellbrook Branch of the Wapiti Library located at 105 Railway Ave., West (Provincial building). Library Hours: Monday 2pm - 6pm; Tuesday 2pm - 8pm; Wednesday 2pm - 8pm; Thursday 12pm - 6pm; Friday 10 am - 5pm (Story Time 10:30am - 11:30am); Saturday 10am - 4pm.

BIG RIVER: Alcoholics Anonymous Meeting - Every Wednesday, 7:30 pm @ Train Station in Big River (Railway Avenue)

CANWOOD & LEASK: Walter Willoughby Horticultural Society Bedding Plant Sales - Canwood Seniors Hall (640-2nd Ave E), Wednesday, May 20, Noon to 4pm. Leask Seniors Hall (231A-1st Street), Friday, May 22nd, Noon to 4pm. Pie & coffee/tea will be served at both sales for \$5.

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Music festival showcases youth talent

By **BEVRA FEE**
Spiritwood Herald
Reporter

Under the direction of their music teachers, many local music students annually prepare for the Spiritwood and District Music Festival's adjudicated performance. Beginning on Sunday, the Festival spanned the dates of April 19 to 21. Piano solos and duets, folk songs, musical theatre, and choral speaking were all categories among others on the program.

Adjudicator Nancy Loper, who hails from Caronport and graduated from Briercrest College with a Bachelor of Arts in Music, is trained primarily in vocal performance. Loper teaches private lessons to both children and college stu-

dents and is in her third season as an adjudicator for the Sask. Music Festivals Association.

School groups from Hartley Clark Elementary School, Rivier Elementary School, and Medstead Central School entered their group performances in Choral Speech and the Mixed Ensemble categories in two different age groups.

In addition to the musical aspect of the festival, organizers once again collected visual art from the local elementary schools. Decorating the side walls of the Civic Centre were not only artwork but also creative birdhouses, pottery, and paintings by local artist Mavis Bellisle.

The Music Festival was capped off on Tuesday evening with the Awards Concert and Presenta-

tions. In total, 21 performances that were selected by the Adjudicator were presented for an audience of family and friends of the musicians.

Raleigh Davies was awarded the coveted "Outstanding Performer" plaque and \$100. Davies earned the title as this year's Outstanding Performer with his entries in 'Musical Movie Duet,' 'Folk Song,' and 'Musical Theatre Solo,' all of which he performed at the Awards Concert.

Music teachers involved in the annual festival — Carolyn Voss, Casey Davies, and Cheryl Janzen — were supported by the school groups' leaders, including teachers Gina Zerr, Brigitte Johnson, Lane Buswell, Kendra Kroeker, Lauren Booth, and Nissa



Piano Solo category winners: Mitchell Illioukevitch, Hazel Driedger, Chloe Corriveau with Lion Dave Hyndman.

Sheill.

During her comments on behalf of the committee, President Lynnda Berg acknowledged the efforts by the teachers and by the parents who all support the young musicians through encouragement and development.



Emili Loisselle performs one of her piano solo selections at the Awards Program.



Miss Gina Zerr accepts the award on behalf of her Grade 2/3 class from Rivier.



Raleigh Davies is presented with the Outstanding Performer of the Festival by Lion Dave Hyndman.



Students Regan Pain and MacKenzy Johnson accept the award for School Choral Speech in the Grade 4 & Under category, sponsored by Spiritwood & District Lions Club.



Langston Davies and Raleigh Davies perform their vocal duet "Friends to the End."



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RCMP news highlights

By **JORDAN TWISS**
Shellbrook Chronicle Reporter

Two people are dead, following a two-vehicle collision on Highway 40 near Blaine Lake on Friday, April 17.

According to police, the Blaine Lake RCMP Detachment received a report about the accident around 11:10 p.m. Officers responded immediately, along with local fire and EMS, and initial investigation determined that two SUVs had collided.

Police say there were four people in the first SUV. Two passengers, since identified as a 28-year-old male and 27-year-old male, both from the La Loche area, were declared dead at the scene, and their families were notified.

A third passenger was taken to hospital by EMS with injuries described as serious in nature, while the driver was taken to hospital with injuries described as non-life threatening in nature.

The driver of the second SUV was taken to hospital by EMS with injuries described as non-life threatening in nature.

Blaine Lake RCMP continue to investigate with the assistance of a Saskatchewan RCMP collision reconstructionist.

Officer cleared in Canwood shooting

An RCMP officer who shot a suspect in the arm following a vehicular pursuit acted within the law and will

not face charges, the provincial police watchdog has ruled.

The Saskatchewan Serious Incident Response Team (SIRT) released its report on the incident, which occurred near Canwood on May 28, 2025, last Monday.

According to the report, police attempted to stop a dark-coloured SUV believed to be associated with recent firearms incidents on the James Smith Cree Nation. However, the driver fled in the vehicle, leaving the road at multiple points during the pursuit to drive through fields.

The pursuit ended in a pasture after the SUV collided with an embankment. But as the driver exited the vehicle, the officer could see that he was holding a silver-coloured handgun, later determined to be an unloaded Norinco Model 1911 .45-calibre pistol.

After the driver disobeyed orders to show his hands and stayed behind the vehicle, the officer fired a shot through the vehicle's front windows, striking him in the arm. The man fell, discarding the gun and a bag that was found to contain ammunition, the SIRT report found.

The 31-year-old man was then taken to hospital and treated for a fractured left arm.

Under Section 25 of the Criminal Code, police can use as much force as necessary in the lawful execution of their duties, when they reasonably believe such force is needed to de-

fend themselves from death or grievous bodily harm.

SIRT ruled that the driver's actions met the threshold to create such a reasonable belief, and that the officer had no way of knowing that the man's gun was unloaded.

BRFN shooting

The Big River RCMP Detachment is asking for the public's assistance to locate a man involved in a firearm incident on the Big River First Nation on the evening of April 20.

According to police, the detachment received a report of the incident at around 6:15 that evening. Initial investigation determined an altercation occurred between a male and a female outside a residence. During the altercation, the male pointed a firearm at the female and later discharged it.

Two individuals nearby approached to assist the female victim. The male suspect fled from the scene. The female victim and the assisting individuals did not report any physical injuries.

Big River RCMP immediately responded, along with Saskatchewan RCMP's Critical Incident Response Team and Police Dog Services. Officers searched the surrounding area for the male suspect with the assistance of a police dog and a Remotely Piloted Aircraft System.

As of Monday afternoon, the suspect had not been located.

As a result of the investigation, 24-year-old Blaine Keenatch from Big River First Nation is charged with: two counts of weapons possession contrary to order, and one count each of discharging firearm with intent, possession of a firearm when

knowing possession is unauthorized, assault with a weapon, assault, and pointing a firearm.

A warrant has been issued for Keenatch's arrest, and police believe that he may be injured as a result of the altercation. As such, the Big River RCMP is asking the public for help in locating him to confirm his well-being.

Keenatch is described as 5'11", 180 lbs. with brown hair and brown eyes. He has numbers tattooed on both his hands.

Anyone who sees Keenatch should not approach him. Instead, report all information about his whereabouts, or information about this incident, to Big River RCMP by calling 310-RCMP (7267). Information can also be submitted anonymously by contacting Saskatchewan Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477) or www.saskcrimestoppers.com.

Big River RCMP continues to investigate.



Blaine Keenatch.

NDP bill aims to boost grocery competition

By **SASK NDP**
Submitted

The Saskatchewan NDP has introduced legislation aimed at lowering food prices by increasing competition in the grocery sector.

Bill 620, The Restricting Property Controls for Grocery Stores and Supermarkets Act, would prohibit grocery stores from using restrictive covenants or exclusivity clauses that prevent competing businesses from opening nearby or limiting what they can sell.

The Government of Manitoba passed similar legislation last year.

"With food prices through the roof, we need to drive prices down by ensuring more competition at the checkout, not less," said Saskatchewan NDP

Leader Carla Beck, who introduced the bill. "Right now, a handful of powerful companies are using legal rules to keep competitors out and keep prices high.

"The government should be using every tool at its disposal to make life more affordable."

A recent investigation by CBC's Marketplace found that major Canadian grocery chains including Loblaws and Sobeys have used property controls to limit competition from other grocery stores, dollar stores and pharmacies.

Food affordability is a growing concern across Saskatchewan. Prices increased 5.5 per cent over the past year alone, and certain items — ground beef, canola oil, strawberries and more — have shot

up nearly 50 per cent in price since Scott Moe became Premier eight years ago.

At the same time, food bank use has surged with nearly four-in-10 users being children — the highest rate in Canada.

"Families are being squeezed at every turn while Scott Moe sits on his hands," said Beck. "This bill is about restoring fairness and making sure no company can rig the system to shut out competition and drive up prices.

"More competition means lower prices, more choice and real relief for Saskatchewan families. It's time for change."

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Fresh looks for top curling rinks

Curling's game of musical chairs has begun.

Now that Brad Jacobs and his rink have won the men's world curling championship and Kerri Einarson came up one game short at the women's worlds, Canada's elite curlers are rearranging lineups to begin the next four-year Olympic Games cycle. The main goal, besides efforts to win the Brier, Scotties and world championships each year, is to represent Canada at the Olympics in 2030 in the French Alps. While occasional personnel changes happen from year to year, this year's avalanche of changes was sparked by Brad Gushue's announcement that he was retiring from competitive curling.

With Gushue no longer at the helm of the rink that won six Briers and one world championship, the remaining three members of his rink had decisions to make. Third Brendan Bottcher's decision was to become a

skip once again and take lead Geoff Walker with him, adding the Horgan brothers from Northern Ontario, Jacob and Tanner, who had been with John Epping of Ontario. The Horgans' departure left Epping scrambling for replacements, and he wound up forming a Manitoba-based team featuring B.J. Neufeld, Ryan Wiebe and Ian McMillan. Gushue's veteran third, Mark Nichols, will throw second stones for reigning Brier champ Matt Dunstone.

Veteran skip Mike McEwen departed from his Saskatchewan-based rink — whether he left on his own accord or was pushed is not known — but it didn't take long for him to find a new rink. He will throw fourth stones for the rink led in recent years by Rylan Kleiter, out of Saskatoon. The shell of the former McEwen rink — Colton Flasch, Kevin Marsh, Dan Marsh — remains intact and will now be skipped by Tyler Tardi,



BRUCE PENTON

who left the Kevin Koe rink, where he was the third.

With Tardi gone, Koe filled the vacated spot with Johnson Tao, joining the front end of Aaron Sluchinski and Karri Martin.

On the women's side, the major off-season news was the departure — firing? — of Val Sweeting from the Scotties' champion Einarson foursome. It didn't take long for Sweeting to find a new landing spot; she'll curl third on the Kayla MacMillan team from Victoria. Meanwhile, Sweeting's position with

Einarson was quickly filled by veteran Jocelyn Peterman, who teamed with her husband Brett Gallant to represent Canada in the Olympic Games mixed doubles in February. Peterman will throw lead stones but hold the broom for Einarson while Shannon Birchard moves up to third and Kaylee Burgess takes over at second.

Long-time Manitoba skip Kate Cameron announced she is moving to Quebec to take over the rink formerly skipped by Laurie Ste-Georges, who will drop down to third. And Kaitlyn Lawes' Manitoba team, which finished runner-up at this year's Scotties, is breaking up altogether.

Year One of curling's new lineups will be experimental in nature. The evolution of rink personnel will likely continue until 2029, when the Olympic Trials will determine whether the changes were good, bad or indifferent.

• Frankie Fleetwood,

9-year-old son of PGA Tour star Tommy, on all the attention he received during the Masters Par-3 contest: "I'd like to thank everyone right now, but I don't know their names."

• Kyle Porter of Normal Sport, addressing rumours that an entity other than Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund might fund the LIV golf tour: "Some entities flirt with funding LIV but ultimately WD, mostly because LIV's balance sheet is messier than Haotong Li's 13th hole on Sunday (a 10)."

• Comedy guy Torben Rolfson of Vancouver: "Sabres in the playoffs and Panthers out. Who would have bet on that parlay back in November?"

• Super 70s Sports: "I don't know the pressure of playing the back nine on Sunday at the Masters, but I do know the pressure of standing on the 18th tee needing a six to break 100 while playing a decaying range ball because I chunked two Titleists in a pond at 17."

• Headline at theonion.com: "Rory McIlroy Struggling To Fit Big Check Into Mobile Deposit Photo"

• Columnist Norman

Chad, mocking NBC football reporter Michele Tafoya's run for the U.S. Senate for Minnesota: "Yes, 'the stakes were the highest' when you walked the sidelines for a game to decide the last AFC wild card spot. Yes, your job taught you how leadership works when you asked Andy Reid about second-half adjustments. Washington needs this experience."

• Another one from theonion.com: "LeBron Clarifies Which Teammates Are, Are Not His Children"

• Headline at fark.com, after the New York Mets lost 10 straight: "The Mets are Metsing earlier than expected."

• Another fark.com offering: "Golfer Sergio Garcia apologizes for acting like tennis player Daniil Medvedev."

• Steve Simmons of the Toronto Sun: "NHL players have voted William Nylander with having the best social media presence in the league and have voted him hockey's most fashionable player. So the Leafs don't have a GM and need to fire their coach, but they do dress well."

Care to comment? Email brucepenton2003@yahoo.ca

Spiritwood seniors happenings

By ARMAND SMITH
Submitted

The Spiritwood Pioneer Centre has been busy with activities the last few months, including birthday celebrations, Bingos, and card games.

Bingo players play every Wednesday afternoon, and 10 to 14 players come out to try their luck. Cribbage is played every Friday afternoon.

March Cribbage winners are as follows:

March 6: 1st Irene Marion, 2nd Maurice Bourassa, 3rd Judy Brule
1st 24 hand: Liz Valette
50/50: Shirley Turgeon



December and January birthday celebrants Eileen Primeau (left) and Marene Iverson.

March 13: 1st Louis Marion 2nd (tied) Marene Iverson and Pat Lutz
50/50: Irene Marion

March 27: 1st Rosanne Smith, 2nd Helen Mack, 3rd Marene Iverson

50/50: Irene Marion
Winners from our March 15 Kaiser Tournament were:

Men: 1st Ed Kulpa, 2nd Maurice Bourassa

Ladies: 1st Barb Lutz, 2nd Paulette Lafond

50/50: Joyce Willick
The third Wednesday of March,



February and March birthday celebrants. Back row, left to right: Jim Bedi, Judy Brule, and Elizabeth Horan. Front row: Richard Mudrak, Jean Ouelette, Bernice Tiringier.

the seniors had a delicious pot luck supper. Close to 35 people turned out, bringing salads, meats, desserts of all kinds. Following supper, birthday pictures were taken. Many stayed and played various board games and card games.

Several nights later, the club started something new. Games night was started with darts, tuck, shuffleboard, snakes and ladders, and card games.

We hope to have more games night and potluck suppers in the future.

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Ag research cuts pose long-term threat

By **JORDAN TWISS**
Shellbrook Chronicle Reporter

As spring operations get underway for Saskatchewan's agriculture industry, it's mostly business as usual this season — or, as usual as business can get in a global market made increasingly uncertain by erratic U.S. trade policy.

But storm clouds are gathering on the horizon, casting a shadow of uncertainty over the industry's future.

At the end of January, to save money and trim burgeoning government ranks, Prime Minister Mark Carney's federal government announced cuts to staffing at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC). Almost immediately, 665 department positions were eliminated, and more than 1,000 employees received termination notices.

Additionally, AAFC announced the closure of research facilities in Guelph, Ont., Québec City, and Lacombe, Alta., as well as satellite research farms in Indian Head, Sask., Scott, Sask., Portage la Prairie, Man., and Nappan, N.S., and the

country's only Organic and Regenerative Research Program headquartered at Swift Current.

"AAFC will remain Canada's largest agricultural research organization, with 17 research centres nationwide and research farmland in every province," AAFC said in a statement.

"There are no imminent site closures, and any wind-down of scientific operations would follow a careful decision process that could take up to 12 months. Many employees may be retained, reassigned, or relocated. It is too early to determine final workforce impacts."

Three months later, as the agriculture sector waits on the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food to publish the findings of an emergency study it commissioned to gain a better understanding of the impact the cuts will have, Cathy Holtslander, the National Farmers' Union's (NFU) director of research and policy, says it's clear that the government didn't do its research.

A letter shared with the standing committee by AAFC Deputy Minister Law-

rence Hanson two weeks ago shows that the department spent just \$40 million to operate the seven closed sites in 2024-25. With such a small budget, Holtslander says it could easily cost the government more to shut down the facilities than it does to operate them.

Even AAFC's projections suggests the closures will save only \$27 million within three years and \$233 million over the next decade.

More importantly, though, Holtslander says the government misled the agriculture sector about the cuts.

While AAFC claimed the staffing cuts would be achieved by eliminating vacant positions, retirement, and attrition, Holtslander says the department has cut a "huge structural part of our agriculture research system out."

Likening federal agriculture research — and the agriculture sector as a whole — to a complex, interconnected network, Holtslander adds that the cuts will have a harmful, long-term ripple effect throughout the industry countrywide.

"You can't overstate the importance of

having public research in the public interest," she said.

"What we get if they don't reverse these cuts is a weaker system that doesn't serve farmers as well. It makes it harder to have a good livelihood and accelerates the problems we're seeing in terms of people not being able to continue in farming anymore."

Primarily at stake, says Holtslander, is Canada's public plant breeding program, which has been developed over the past century with the understanding that Canada's climate poses unique challenges that aren't experienced in the U.S. or Europe.

Breeding plants specifically for Canada's climate ensures farmer's crops succeed in whatever growing conditions they face, be it different soil conditions, different climates, different lengths of growing seasons, or different diseases and pest pressures.

A strong public plant breeding program, then, means producers' crops are harvestable and high quality, meaning they can make a living.

Continued on page 13

GOOD NEWS

STRUGGLING THROUGH OUR STRUGGLES

By **DAVID BODVARSON**
Submitted

There was once a huge conference that took place with two speakers you could easily identify. The first speaker was Billy Graham, the second was Jimmy Carter before he was elected the 39th President of the U.S.A. The third speaker was a truck driver who wasn't accustomed to public speaking.

When it was the truck driver's turn to speak, he confessed to Jimmy Carter before he took the microphone that he thought he was going to die. He got up to the mic anyway and told his life story in five minutes. He spoke about his struggles with addiction and how he was able to overcome, and sat down.

I like Jimmy Carter's comment. he said that the audience wouldn't likely "remember what he or Billy Graham

said but they would never forget the rambling testimony of the truck driver." People can identify with struggles. We all face them.

When I grew up in Hay River, N.W.T., there is one year that would often be mentioned and that was 1963. That year, the Old Town, which is called Vale Island, partly flooded. The ice jammed at the mouth of the Hay River which flows into the Great Slave Lake.

I understand that the East Channel and Dene village flooded. I was four years old at the time. My parents Slim and Theresa Bodvarson were raising six children. When I wrote about this some years ago, I happened to stumble over a nugget. I actually found an interview that was written in a Manitoba newspaper.

The reporter must have called my dad in Hay River and asked how he was doing. Dad grew up in the Gimli Interlake area in Manitoba. The reporter was Al Arnason. As I

read the interview, I could hear the struggle my dad was going through as he told the reporter, "All we have is what we are standing in."

"I don't think there is anything left-the house is absolutely demolished. I don't think a man can get flood insurance," my dad was quoted in the article. "Money is a problem."

"I couldn't buy timbers for the foundation" my dad continued, going on to say that, "we're so broke we can't get out of here."

I tell you that to tell you this: in life there are struggles. Things happen. Dad and mom got through and remained in the N.W.T.

I have always liked the story of the student who decided to snip the end off of the cocoon. He thought he would help the monarch butterfly emerge. What the student did was no help at all. The butterfly popped out.

Unfortunately, only half of the butterfly looked okay. The bottom half was large and swollen. The butterfly crawled around and a short time later died.

The next day, the biology teacher told the students the butterfly's struggle to get through the tiny opening was necessary. The struggle forced the fluids from the swollen body into the wings so they would be strong enough to fly. The interesting thing was without the struggle the wings would never develop.

It has been put this way: "Struggles cause numerous things in our lives to develop. Rather than struggle against struggle, we need to 'struggle through our struggles.'"

I love that verse in Proverbs 24:16: "For though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again..."

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Ag research cuts pose long-term threat

Continued from 12

Holtslander says the federal government had already been underfunding the program. Noting that it already takes 10 to 15 years to bring new varieties to fruition, Holtslander says the federal government's cuts could make that timeline even longer and produce an inferior end product.

"When you're doing testing, you want to have as much data as you can as quickly as possible," she said.

"When you have all these sites to do your testing, you're going to get very rich data and you'll be able to quickly decide if a variety looks promising. All of that really feeds into developing varieties that will be good for farmers and our agricultural economy."

Looking at wheat breeding, specifically, a 2022 study conducted by the Canadian Wheat Research Coalition, in collaboration with agriculture researchers Dr. Richard Gray and Dr. Katarzyna Bolek-Callbeck, found that every dollar invested in wheat breeding yielded a return of \$33 for farmers.

The removal of thousands of testing sites from the public research network, Holtslander says, threatens this, and could ultimately lead to the catastrophic collapse of Canada's public plant

breeding system.

However, the full impact of the losses won't be known for some time.

"In 2012, under the Harper government, there was a massive cut to agriculture research, and we are just seeing some impacts of that," Holtslander said. "We've seen a reduction in the number of new varieties. These new cuts will accelerate that decline."

Focusing on the cuts' affects in Saskatchewan, Holtslander says the biggest loss from the closure of the Indian Head research farm is the seed increase unit, which provides seed to growers to grow seed crops, who then provide certified seed for producers.

The Indian Head farm was responsible for stewarding about 300 varieties in controlled conditions to maintain purity and quality and avoid contamination with seed-borne diseases and weeds. All told, it provided seed for 20 million acres of crops grown across western Canada.

Though there have been talks of relocating the seed program, a clear plan has yet to emerge. Holtslander says it's also not that simple, as there's no location with adequate facilities, and some seeds can't be transplanted.

"This is devastating for the supply of seed in the coming years," she said. "Even if they

were able to move it, it will be at least a three-year delay."

Meanwhile, the closure of the Organic and Regenerative Program in Swift Current comes at the worst possible time, as the ongoing war in Iran drives fertilizer and fuel prices up and threatens trade disruptions, further increasing costs for producers.

Coupled with the impacts of climate change and the rise of herbicide-resistant weeds, these added cost pressures have producers looking for means to use fewer inputs to grow their crops. The loss of the country's only Organic and Regenerative Program

makes it harder for producers to do this.

"A study that was cancelled because of the cuts is a study exploring living mulch: planting another crop with your main crop for harvest, something like clover, winter wheat, or another legume with your cereal crop," Holtslander said.

"That helps suppress weeds, increases fertility, and it helps the soil organic matter."

As for the Scott Research Farm, it was home to projects aimed at helping producers deal with herbicide residues left on their crops. The soil at the farm was especially important for Saskatchewan

producers, as it breaks down herbicides more slowly and doesn't exist anywhere outside of the province.

"It's an example of how these things are all interlocked, and how the research really does help farmers," Holtslander said. "These aren't just bureaucrats. The work these people are doing is directed at helping farmers succeed."

Absent a change of heart from the federal government, research and funding will increasingly move to universities. But Holtslander says they lack the capacity, both in terms of facilities and land base, to do the work AAFC research centres and farms have been doing, and actually have to make use of federal sites to carry out research they otherwise wouldn't be able to pursue.

What's more, academic research is often driven by the researcher's interests, rather than focused on what's best for the agriculture sector.

The only other option, then, is private sector-funded research. But this, too, is limited in its benefits for producers, as corporations have a built-in conflict of interest to fund research that increases their profits.

"It's really hard to see how we'd have any way to recover the losses," Holtslander said.



An aerial view of the Indian Head research farm, which has been closed due to federal cuts. Photo Credit: Nicole Taylor, LJI Reporter, Moosomin World-Spectator

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Watch for berththa armyworm in 2026

By **JAPJYOT SANDHU**
Ministry of Agriculture

Bertha armyworm (BAW) (*Mamestra configurata* Wlk.) is a concern for producers across the Canadian Prairies. According to the 2025 BAW map, a resurgence in populations was observed, showing a similar pattern to the high infestation years of 2012 and 2013. Outbreaks usually last for two to three years, followed by an eight-to-10-year break before the next major cycle. Given the 2025 trend, producers should stay alert in the upcoming growing season, as past historic patterns indicate the potential for continued or increasing BAW pressure.

The BAW life cycle consists of four stages: adult moth, egg, larva and pupa, with only one generation per growing season. Adult moths emerge from pupae mid-June to late-July and primarily feed on canola, mustard, cauliflower, broccoli, alfalfa and related plants. They may also feed on weeds such as Canada thistle and lamb's quarters and can move between fields, feeding on different hosts. Severe larvae infestations can damage plant stems, leaves and pods, negatively impacting crop yields.

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stems, leaves and pods, negatively impacting crop yields.

Proactive management can help reduce crop yield loss from BAW. In high-risk regions, producers should consider non-host crops where feasible and control host weeds, particularly around ditches to reduce the risk of damage. When an outbreak is forecasted, using early-maturing varieties and seeding as early as possible can help minimize crop loss. Fall cultivation can reduce BAW populations by mechanical damage and exposing them to freezing temperatures; however, it should be reconsidered in fields which are prone to soil erosion. Since adult moths can move to neighbouring fields, the benefit of fall cultivation may be limited.

BAW is a well-known pest, and to stay ahead of outbreaks, check provincial monitoring program maps, regularly scout and use insecticides according to label recommendations to minimize yield losses.

If you want to learn more about crop planning, please contact your local crops extension specialist or the Agriculture Knowledge Centre at 1-866-457-2377.



Bertha armyworm larvae.

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Ensure your seed is the best it can be

By **REBECCA HORT**
Ministry of Agriculture

Are you using bin-run seed or buying new seed this year? Either way, it is important to understand the guidelines for seed-borne diseases before you put the seed in the ground. It is recommended to have seed tested at an accredited lab to assess levels of seed-borne pathogens. A seed test can show several aspects of seed quality, such as germination, vigor, moisture, protein and thousand-kernel weight. Disease testing indicates the infec-

tion levels of specific pathogens on the seed. Knowing your seed quality is crucial for developing a healthy crop.

Crop diseases can have detrimental effects on yield; however, there are ways to lower your crops' susceptibility and protect plant health. For seed-borne diseases, prevention starts before the seed is in the ground. Many different pathogens can infect seeds and impact crops. Each disease has a threshold that varies by pathogen and crop type. Planting seeds below or within those thresholds is the best practice to mitigate

disease pressure. Applying a seed treatment can help protect your seed from certain pathogens; however, if the pathogen level is above the threshold, it is recommended to use a different seed source. Detailed information on mitigating seed-borne diseases and preventing further infection is available for both pulse and cereal crops. Interim data submitted by seed labs around the province show the average per cent infection of seed-borne diseases in both cereals and pulse crops.

If you are in an area with a high infection risk of seed-

borne diseases, taking preventative actions to protect your crop is important. Seed cleaning, treating seed with fungicide seed treatment and getting your seed tested are key strategies for dealing with contaminated seeds. Cleaning seeds can help remove some diseased kernels from the lot. Treating with a fungicide seed treatment can prevent further infection of the pathogens into the plant and protect against seedling blight and rot. As always, follow the label, more information can be found in the Guide to Crop Protection.

When buying certified seeds, the buyer must be aware that, according to the Seeds Act, certified seed must meet standards for germination and purity, but not for diseases. Ask to see the lab certificate and check disease levels before purchasing seed. Planting seed that is free of seed-borne pathogens is the primary way to limit disease in your field.

Ensure your seed is the best it can be for this year's crop. Contact your local crops extension specialist or call the Agriculture Knowledge Centre at 1-866-457-2377 to learn more.

How STEM powers modern agriculture

The image of farmers clad in flannel shirts while livestock pull plows through the fields may still be foremost on the minds of individuals asked to imagine farm life. But such images may no longer reflect an industry increasingly governed by advanced technology.

Even small-scale family farms have recognized the advantages of embracing technology to help make their operations more efficient and successful. Manual plows and tractors largely have been replaced by fleets of autonomous machines and precision farming technology.

Experts agree that the evolution of modern farming is a case study in the application of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. STEM is helping to address the problem of global food security and widespread climate change. U.S. News & World Report says 27 percent of new high-skills jobs in agriculture will require a STEM education. There are many ways STEM is utilized within the agricultural sector.

Genomics and biotechnology: Scientists can now identify specific

traits in plant DNA that will allow for more drought-resistant crops or those better equipped to tolerate problems like downy mildew. Other traits may make plants more capable of thriving in saline soils. Soil science also enables farmers to learn more about the complex microbiome of the soil, which ultimately can help to maximize nutrient



uptake.

Precision agriculture: STEM is a force behind precision agriculture, which the United States Department of Agriculture says is a term to describe farming based on observing, measuring and responding to within-field variability through crop management. Precision farming utilizes remote sens-

ing from satellites and drones, sensors embedded in the soil or devices worn by livestock to provide real-time data. AI tools also are used to predict harvest yields and optimize fertilization and irrigation.

Robotics: Automation and robotics fills a void created by human worker shortages. Agricultural engineers help design machinery or focus on the physical infrastructure of the farm. Engineers also are the minds behind innovative farming practices like vertical farming and controlled environment agriculture, which encompasses hydroponic and aeroponic systems.

Mathematical analysis: Math is vital in the agricultural sector. Statistics, predictive modeling, accounting, and risk management, are types of mathematical analysis employed to forecast global food supplies and profits.

The link between STEM and agriculture is undeniable. STEM is an important driver of the industry and only stands to gain influence in the years to come.

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Growing food in the garden

By **PATRICIA HANBIDGE**
Orchid Horticulture

We are living in a world of uncertainty. Fuel prices, groceries and many more products we purchase have demonstrated skyrocketing prices. When we take a moment to pause – scary thoughts are foremost in our minds on a regular basis.

We should realize by now that we all should be working towards living more sustainably. Thank goodness there is still a growing trend of people wanting to grow at least some of the food they consume. There is a huge spin-off to this trend as if we access a more local food supply chain this will in turn help to make our world a more sustainable place to live. Governments, businesses and societies together with the United Nations are in the process of achieving the objectives of the Sustainable Development Agenda. This universal, inclusive and indivisible agenda calls for action to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere.

One of the goals of this agenda is to end hunger, achieve food security

and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. As spring is just around the corner, it might just be the perfect time to make an individual effort thinking about what you could grow this spring and if there is anyone you can take along on your journey. Remember, that it is not necessary to have a large space or expensive equipment in order to achieve your goal of growing at least some of the food you consume.

For all of us growing our own fruits



and vegetables has many advantages. We have close access to fresh and local food that is raised in most cases without any pesticides and tastes insanely good! It is also true that fruits and vegetables that were grown decades ago were richer in vitamins and minerals, than most of what we consume today. This disturbing trend is due in part to soil depletion, as modern, intensive cropping has stripped increasing amounts of nutrients from the soil which in turn produces less nutrient rich food. In a smaller garden, that is tended and cherished by a home gardener, produce tastes better than that which is produced more quickly in a large grow operation.

Plants also offer us a host of health benefits, bringing fibre, vitamins and minerals into our diets. What they also offer us is other compounds that prevent a number of life threatening diseases which cannot be substituted with dietary supplements. So...as spring is just around the corner, let's address what we can plan to grow this growing season.

My suggestion is to be innovative in what you wish to grow. Some good ideas include a variety of types of

lettuce. They germinate quite quickly and can be harvested before too long, ensuring that you and those who are close to you can enjoy fresh home grown lettuce rather quickly. Other ideas will depend on your palette but arugula, corn salad, greens like amaranth, atriplex, beet, chard, choho, claytonia, cress, mibuna, mustard and kale are all fun to grow and great to eat!

Hippocrates proclaimed almost 2,500 years ago: "Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food." We love the idea that food can be the answer to our health and that if we eat nutritious food, we will not need medicine or supplements. How fitting that our medical professionals also concur that if we heap our plates with fresh fruits and vegetables, we will be closer to optimum health.

Watch for the next column which has more ideas to grow your own food in your garden. May your garden be a plentiful provider!

Hanbidge is the Lead Horticulturist with Orchid Horticulture. Find us at www.orchidhort.com; by email at growyourfuture@gmail.com on facebook @orchidhort and on instagram at #orchidhort.

Farmers' vital roles in our lives

For many Canadians, especially those living in cities, farms may not be top of mind. We eat the food they produce every day, and many of us commute past their fields, but farms play a bigger role in our day-to-day lives than you might expect. Here are just a few examples:

Crop exports help power our econ-

omy. Canada is one of the largest food exporters in the world. In 2024, we shipped over \$100 billion in agricultural and food products to other countries around the globe. Canadian legumes help feed households all over the world, with staples like lentils, peas and beans. Canola, itself a Canadian

invention, is a valued commodity on the global market, with the seeds, oil and meal all finding homes abroad.

Agriculture helps create jobs. Did you know that farming has an impact that reaches far beyond the fields? In fact, according to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, agriculture provides around one in nine jobs in this country. Several industries interact with it and support it, including shipping and logistics, packaging, marketing and grocery businesses. Add to that all the supply chains

that support those operations, as well as supporting farms directly, and the impact of the agriculture sector comes into focus.

Canada's farmers are helping drive sustainability. Farm operators are essential to Canada's culture of environmental responsibility. By developing new, more sustainable farming practices, they're helping to reduce waste, emissions and environmental impacts.

One important tool driving these decisions in the farming industry is the Census of Agri-

culture. It's a snapshot of the entire Canadian agriculture sector from coast-to-coast-to-coast, taken every five years. This year is a census year, so farm operators across Canada will be filling out their census questionnaire. Data from the census help provide the agriculture sector and policymakers with the information they need to make informed decisions.

Farms keep communities healthy. Besides providing a steady supply of fresh, nutritious food, local farms also contribute

to their communities' life and culture. They bring people together and create connections by hosting harvest festivals and running farmers' markets that offer people quality local fresh produce, as well as a variety of local arts and crafts.

Farms are deeply connected to the communities they support. If you're a farm operator, as of May 4 you can help capture a current snapshot of Canada's agriculture sector by completing your questionnaire at census.gc.ca.

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Start crops off right with seed treatments

By **AUGUSTINE OSEI**
Ministry of Agriculture

Early-season crop vigor and standability play a key role in effective weed management, efficient nutrient uptake and ultimately maximizing yield potential. In prairie production systems, early-season stresses such as cold soil, variable moisture conditions and relatively short growing seasons make uniform crop emergence particularly important. These challenging conditions can expose seeds and seedlings to diseases and insect pests at a vulnerable stage of growth. As a result, seed treatments have become a fundamental component of current crop production systems, as they act as an insurance policy against early-season risks, particularly, from seed- and soil-borne diseases and pests.

What are Seed Treatments?

Seed treatments are chemical, biological or physical substances applied to seeds before planting to protect seeds and seedlings from soil-borne diseases, insects, pathogens and abiotic stress while improving germina-

tion and stand establishment.

Benefits and Types of Seed Treatments

The Saskatchewan Guide to Crop Protection provides detailed information on all provincially registered seed treatments for crops grown in Saskatchewan and the protection they offer against different diseases and insects. Seed treatments generally fall into four main categories:

- **Fungicidal seed treatments:** These seed treatments protect seeds and seedlings from soil-borne fungi and diseases such as *Fusarium* spp., *Pythium* spp., *Rhizoctonia* spp., smuts, etc. Products frequently combine multiple active ingredients from different chemical groups to broaden the spectrum of protection and help manage resistance development.

- **Insecticidal seed treatments:** These seed treatments protect seedlings from early-season insect pests such as cutworms, flea beetles, wireworms, armyworms and seed corn maggots, which can cause significant damage during early crop development when seedlings

are most vulnerable.

- **Biologicals and Inoculants:** These include microbial products and inoculants that enhance plant growth and nutrient uptake. Examples include rhizobia inoculants which help nitrogen fixation in pulse crops.

- **Physical Treatments:** This type involves non-chemical approaches such as seed priming to condition seeds for improved germination and emergence. This seed treatment is rarely used in prairie cropping systems.

Considerations in Selecting Seed Treatments

To ensure effectiveness and maximize return on investment, seed treatments should be tailored to the specific threats, soil conditions and crop genetics in the field. Before selecting your seed treatment, ask these fundamental questions:

- What protection will my seed treatment provide?
- Is the product suitable for the environmental conditions on my farm?
- Is the seed treatment (i.e. inoculants) compatible with my crop?
- What is the active ingredient and mode of action in

my seed treatment?

- Are my seed-applied pesticides compatible with my biological products or inoculants I plan to use?

What Risk Factors on the Farm Justify the Benefit of Using Seed Treatment?

The following are important field-risk factors to consider when deciding on whether a seed treatment is warranted:

- **Field history:** Previous crop rotations and historical pest issues play an important role in determining risk. For example, continuous cereal production increases the risk of root rot diseases and wireworms. Similarly, fields previously in pasture have a higher risk of wireworms which will justify the need for seed treatment.

- **Growing conditions:** Cold, wet soil conditions favor many seedling diseases. In years with cool, wet springs, the economic return from seed treatments is often higher than in warm, dry springs, where disease pressure may be lower.


- **Time of seeding:** Early seeding increases risk of seed exposure to cold soil which can slow crop emer-

gence, increasing disease risk to seedlings.

- **Residue levels:** High crop residue can increase pathogen survival and carryover between seasons, elevating disease risk for newly planted crops.

Seed treatments are not a substitute for good agronomic practices such as selecting certified and high-quality, disease-free seeds or considering economic-threshold-based foliar applications when needed. Rather, seed treatment should be used as part of an integrated pest management plan. While it is important that seed treatments are evenly applied to every seed to ensure full and uniform coverage, it is even more important to remember that most seed treatments provide protection only during the early stages of crop development, typically for the first three to four weeks after planting. Hence, aligning seeding timing with this protection window is critical to maximizing the benefit of the treatment.

For more information, contact your local crops extension specialist or the Agriculture Knowledge Centre at 1-866-457-2377.




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Producers' top priorities for bison

By **TESSA THOMAS**
Ministry of Agriculture

According to the Government of Canada, there were approximately 149,539 bison in Canada in 2024, with 82 per cent of the herd found in Saskatchewan and Alberta. Being such a large contributor to the national bison industry, it is important for Saskatchewan to maintain a strong herd now and to set ourselves up for success in the years to come. According to Mike Silzer, a bison producer and grain farmer in the northeast part of the province, these three things should be top of mind for you in 2026:

Genetic improvement in the industry

While the industry is currently strong and prices are holding high, Mike knows that history shows this likely won't always be the case.

Strong genetics will increase the chances of turning a profit in the tough years, so getting set up with good stock now is imperative to being in the bison industry for the long run. Easy keeping cows and strong finishing calves with high carcass yields should be the main focus.

A good mineral and herd health program

The importance of a good mineral program cannot be overstated. Mike emphasized the importance of not only having a good mineral program, but also that proper intake of that mineral is essential to the success of the herd. He was able to work with a local feed and mineral company that collected water samples and designed a mineral plan specific to his ration, water and herd needs.

"Knowing what you are missing in your feeding program is key. A 10 per cent increase in conception rates can

add 20 per cent to your bottom line," Mike said on the importance of feed testing.

It is important to keep a good eye on the herd and investigate if the bison are appearing unthrifty or unhealthy in any way. As we know, bison are not always as convenient to handle, so keeping on top of your deworming program and checking stool samples with fecal egg counts, if concerned, is an effective way to stay on top of parasites.

Keeping an eye on stocking rates in the pastures

With the fluctuations in moisture from year to year, especially the last few years being dry in many areas of the province, keeping a close eye on stocking rates is another priority. Mike mentioned that as he expands his herd, a major concern is grass availability.

"It is better to have too much grass

than not enough because you can always bale it or find another way to use it," he said.

He also discussed the importance of doing your part to make sure the land can be as productive as possible: "Having a good fertilizer program and using rotational grazing can increase stocking rates and maximize revenue per acre."

Mike concluded that overall, the goal is to control as many variables as possible and learn from producers that have been successful in the industry. Learning from others, whether that be successes or failures, helps all producers, especially those that are new to the industry. For more information about bison production, you can visit our Bison page, contact your local livestock and feed extension specialist, or call the Agriculture Knowledge Centre at 1-866-457-2377.

Addressing limited resources in the ag sector

Limited resources in the agricultural sector are common pressure points for modern farm operations. Whether the resource is land, labor, water, or capital, lack of assets can cause strain. But there are practical ways to ease the pressure, and most solutions work best when combined with other methods.

Depleting agricultural resources

Resource depletion is a condition that affects many modern farmers. With an expanding global population, demand for food and other agricultural products is at an all-time high. This can put a strain on the finite resources available to farmers. Efficient use of resources must become a greater priority. Farmers may want to invest in precision agriculture tools, such as GPS-guided equipment, soil sensors and variable-rate application tools, to use resources only where needed. Even crop rotation and manual soil testing can significantly reduce waste.

Soil concerns

According to the agricultural firm Verdesian,

degrading and undervaluing farmland poses another challenge to today's farmers. Continuous farming practices can result in soil erosion, soil degradation and reduced fertility. Farmers can turn to sustainable practices to protect the soil and improve its health. Practices like conservation tillage and cover cropping help increase yields over time without the need for more land or chemicals.

Water management

Agriculture puts a strain on water sources. Approximately 70 percent of global freshwater withdrawals are attributed to agricultural needs, says the World Resources Institute. Micro-irrigation can involve the use of drip or sprinkler systems to increase water efficiency. In regions with limited energy infrastructure, use of solar pumps will provide a low-cost, sustainable means to accessing groundwater. Treated urban wastewater can be used for non-food crops, preserving potable water for high-value produce and human consumption on farms and elsewhere.

Capital

Limited capital can be a concern for farmers who are looking to invest in modern tools and practices. Cooperative financing and government support programs can reduce funding barriers. Farmers can pool resources to buy in bulk and share expensive machinery. Educating the public also can be a step in the right direction. Despite research indicating a need to invest in agriculture, investment remains minimal. Agriculture also is a market with very volatile prices. But with more interest, the tides may change and make investing in agriculture more attractive.

Addressing limited agricultural resources requires utilization of what's already available with an emphasis on sustainability. Through collaboration and discussion, farmers can find the assistance they need.



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Sask. Launches farmland ownership review

By **MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE**
Submitted

The Government of Saskatchewan will undertake a comprehensive review of The Saskatchewan Farm Security Act including additional public and stakeholder consultations after an initial review conducted by the Farm Land Ownership Advisory Committee.

“This review will ensure any potential changes to The Saskatchewan Farm Security Act are done right and continue to meet the needs of Saskatchewan producers,” Agriculture Minister David Marit said.

The Advisory Committee met with leaders in the agricultural, real estate, legal and financial services sectors as well as conducted their own research into farm land own-

ership. Their work confirmed there is no evidence of foreign ownership of Saskatchewan farm land under the current legislative framework. This aligns with the Provincial Auditor’s report, which found no instances of unauthorized foreign ownership.

The comprehensive review will explore opportunities to improve ownership verification, strengthen penalty and enforcement tools, modernize definitions, and strengthen reporting obligations and oversight of permanent residents. The review will also consider other components of the Act not reviewed by the Advisory Committee, including farm security and home quarter protection, to ensure ongoing relevance and effectiveness.

“The outcome of our outreach was very informative with no evidence of foreign

ownership reported,” Farm Land Ownership Advisory Committee Chairperson Ken McDonald said. “We feel this legislative review will help ensure the province’s farm land stays in the hands of Canadian farmers and that there will be a positive path forward for the next generation.”

“We appreciate the government’s efforts to continue to bring transparency around farm land ownership in Saskatchewan,” Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association President Jeff Yorga said. “Producers want a level playing field, and the upcoming consultations are a great first step to ensuring that. We look forward to working with all stakeholders to make sure producer voices are heard.”

“Protecting ownership of Saskatchewan’s pasture and hayland is of critical impor-

tance to our beef cattle producers and there are no better caretakers of Saskatchewan’s grassland and farmland than ranchers and farmers,” Saskatchewan Cattle Association Chair Chad Ross said. “The Saskatchewan Cattle Association supports the work of the Farmland Advisory Committee and the provincial government’s plans to undertake a comprehensive review of The Saskatchewan Farm Security Act and looks forward to actively participating in consultations going forward.”

“The Saskatchewan Farm Security Act is an important provincial statute designed to protect, support, and provide security for Saskatchewan family farms,” Wheat Growers Association Chair Darryl Fransoo said. “Today’s announcement shows the continued support our government

continues to provide, ensuring a prosperous future for farmers facing more challenges than ever before.”

“Our farmland is one of Saskatchewan’s greatest assets, and it’s important that the rules around who can own and use it keep pace with the realities of farming today,” Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities President Bill Huber said. “This review is a good chance to make sure the Act continues to protect family farms and support the future of our rural communities.”

Saskatchewan farm land is one of the province’s most valuable assets. As the nature of farming and business continues to evolve, the Government of Saskatchewan wants to ensure the legislative framework regarding farm land ownership meets the needs of the people of Saskatchewan.

WSA updates spring runoff report

By **WSA**
Submitted

The Water Security Agency (WSA) provided an update to the spring runoff outlook for 2026. Overall, most of Saskatchewan can anticipate near to below normal runoff this spring.

WSA continued to closely monitor conditions across the province over the last month. As part of this effort, additional manual snow surveys were completed at 12 selected sites across Saskatchewan on April 9 and 10, 2026, supplementing ongoing monitoring efforts.

Survey results con-

firmed the accumulation of additional snow since March 1, particularly in central regions of the province. As a result, above normal runoff is expected across much of central Saskatchewan. Well above normal runoff is anticipated in east-central Saskatchewan, including areas around Hudson Bay and north of Yorkton and Wynyard.

In the Quill Lakes Basin, above normal snowpack is forecast to result in above normal runoff.

Snowmelt has finished in the southern portion of the Qu’Appelle River Basin. In northern areas of the basin, snowmelt began earlier but has

slowed due to returning cold temperatures and remaining snow cover. All lakes within the Qu’Appelle River Basin are expected to remain in the normal operating ranges.

In the Churchill River Basin, runoff is expected to vary from below normal to above normal this spring.

Snow survey results also confirm that snowmelt and runoff were already underway in areas south of Yorkton and near the Quill Lakes, where snow cover had largely diminished. In contrast, areas north of Yorkton, north of Melfort and near Meadow Lake and Prince

Albert continued to have well-above-normal snow present due to continued cold weather.

Overall, the survey confirms that snow cover persisted across central and northern Saskatchewan, while melt conditions had advanced further across southern areas.

Most major water supply reservoirs in southern Saskatchewan are at or above normal levels for this time of the year. The exceptions are McDougald and Harris, which are below normal levels.

The Water Security Agency continues to monitor basin conditions

and manage Lake Diefenbaker accordingly. Lake Diefenbaker is currently above the median for this time of year but remains within the normal operating range.

Mountain snowpack remains well above normal and will be the main driver of May and June flows in the Saskatchewan River Basin, in conjunction with spring and summer rains. If these conditions persist, mountain runoff into Lake Diefenbaker is expected to be above nor-

mal.

In the Souris River Basin, reservoirs are projected to remain within normal operating ranges.

Long-range forecasts predict normal precipitation and warmer than normal temperatures across the entire southern part of Saskatchewan from May to July.

The Water Security Agency will continue to monitor and report on landscape conditions and water supply reservoirs to allow for timely response to changing conditions.



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How farmers can manage financial risk

Farming can be a rewarding career, but it's never been an easy one. The latest challenge facing farmers is the recent rise in trade uncertainty. When trade conditions can change by the day, farmers often can't know what prices their exports will earn. It's put the emphasis on resilience, flexibility and farmers' ability to navigate risk.

Classic risk management strategy is to assess your risks one by one based on how likely they are to affect your business, and their level of impact if they do. Then, for each risk, determine if it makes sense to avoid, transfer, reduce or retain it. Here's a breakdown of what that can look like for a farm:

Keep plans flexible to help avoid trade risks. If the past



couple of years has taught us anything, it's not to take trade conditions for granted. International pricing is much less predictable than it used to be, with producers and buyers now having to factor in the possibility of suddenly imposed or withdrawn

tariffs on their goods. Avoid getting caught out by diversifying production and leaving room in your business plan for a quick pivot if it becomes necessary.

Insure to transfer environmental risks. The agricultural sector was one of the

earliest to feel the effects of climate change, as extreme weather events become more and more common and severe. Some insurers have offerings tailored for farm businesses, and insurance is a tool that's best suited - for this sort of risk—high-impact, and tough to address by other means.

Get creative to reduce market risks. Carry out market research to get an accurate sense of what consumers actually want, so that you can plan your production to meet their demand. A brand is a powerful asset for any business, so don't neglect yours. Marketing your farm on multiple channels can help you reach a wider range of buyers, and direct marketing efforts can help build buyer

relationships and potentially capture a higher price for your product.

Determine your appetite for retaining risk. Some risks really are "the cost of doing business," but which risks, and to what extent will vary. Take an honest look at the market, trade and environmental risks your farm faces to help determine how much you're able, or willing, to take on. Once you know how much risk you're willing to accept, you can make more confident decisions about how much to invest in equipment and expansion and any debt that may come along with your growth.

Learn more about managing your farm's risks at rbc.com/riskmanagement.

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Optimizing grazing with tame and native forages

By **KEANA BOERE**
Ministry
of Agriculture

Pastureland in Saskatchewan can be broadly categorized as tame forage or native forage. There are a few considerations when managing both forage types.

Tame forages are species introduced to

Saskatchewan for agricultural purposes, like grazing or hay. These species have been selected for specific traits like palatability, yield or survival characteristics. Common tame forage species include alfalfa, smooth brome or crested wheatgrass.

As tame forages are those selected for specific traits, they often pro-

duce higher yields when compared to native forages. Tame forages are fast growing and have shorter growth cycles than native species, making these species better at withstanding heavy grazing pressure, closer grazing events or early season grazing. Tame forages are typically easier to establish when seeding com-

pared to native species and are often seeded in marginal cropland areas to provide production where annual crops struggle to grow.

Native forages are species found in undisturbed areas across the province. These plants naturally evolved over thousands of years by surviving Saskatchewan's harsh climate and

disturbances like bison grazing or fire. Across the province, native forages could be plants on native grasslands, aspen parkland areas or forested rangelands. Native species vary depending on the ecosystem, but common species include western wheatgrass, needle and thread grass, and purple prairie clover.

Native plants have survived life on the prairies for thousands of years. Native species are excellent at withstanding dry conditions, have extensive root systems and many species hold their nutritional value late into the fall. Healthy native rangelands are resil-

ient to harsh winters and are self-sustaining systems which do not require the addition of inputs like fertilizer to remain productive. Native rangelands also provide valuable habitat to many wildlife species.

When we think about using and managing tame and native forages in a grazing system, consider the strengths and weaknesses of each and how best to optimize both forage types.

Keep in mind that weather conditions, especially moisture, can impact the productivity of both tame and native forages. Monitoring stands throughout the year is necessary to avoid overuse. Remain flexible to making in-season grazing plan changes if needed and remember that both forage types require rest during the growing season to remain healthy.

Cross fencing between tame and native forage is a tool that allows producers to manage the forages differently. There are funding programs for establishing and managing tame or native forage stands under the Resilient Agricultural Landscapes Program.

For more information, call the Agriculture Knowledge Centre at 1-866-457-2377 to speak to your local agri-environmental specialist.

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Regular services, Sunday school and special services will be listed.

LUTHERAN CHURCH

Zion - Canwood
Sunday School, Worship Sunday, 9 a.m. (in-person only)
St. John's - Shellbrook
Sunday School, Worship Sunday, 11 a.m. (in-person and online via Facebook live)
Rev. Emmanuel Aristide

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Parkside
10:30 a.m. Worship
Pastor Lorne Valuck
306-747-3572
Shellbrook
Adult Study
9:30 a.m.
Sun., 10:30 a.m. - Worship
Rev. Jordan Clark
306-850-0429
Canwood
10 a.m. - Sunday School
11 a.m. - Worship
Pastor Lyndon Petten
587-973-2223
Leask Gospel Tabernacle
Sunday 11 a.m.
Pastor Josh
1-780-690-2100

UNITED CHURCH

Big River
Sundays
11 a.m. - Worship at Anglican Church
Rev. Dave Whalley
306-747-2804

ANGLICAN CHURCH

Leask - All Saint's
Sunday Service - 9 am MP
St. Andrew's - Shellbrook
Sunday Service - 11 am MP
H.C. Service Nov. 30 with Archdeacon Brody Albers
9 a.m. in Leask,
11 a.m. in Shellbrook
Minister's Warden:
306-922-5159

EVANGELICAL FREE

Big River
10:00 a.m. - Worship
Bible Classes resume in the fall
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Youth Nite:
Fridays at 7 p.m.
Mont Nebo
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IMMANUEL LUTHERAN

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10 a.m. - Sunday School

PRESBYTERIAN

Mistawasis
Sunday worship
11:00 a.m.
Rev. Stewart Folster

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Debden
Sun. Mass - 9:30 a.m.
Fr. Mariusz Zajac
Big River - Sacred Heart
Sun., 11:30 a.m. - Mass
Whitefish
Sun., 2:30 p.m. - Mass.
Victoire
Sat., 7:30 p.m. - Mass.
Fr. Mariusz Zajac
St. Agatha's - Shellbrook
Mass - Sunday 11 a.m.
St. Henry's - Leask
Mass - Sunday 9 a.m.
Mistawasis
1st & 3rd Sundays 1:30 p.m.
Fr. Tuan Doan

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Sat., 9:45 a.m. - Sabbath School
Sat., 11:00 am -Worship
Pastor Myshan Irving
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PRAISE & WORSHIP

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PARTNERS IN FAITH

Lutheran/United/
Christchurch Anglican,
137-2nd St. W.
Spiritwood
Worship 11:00 a.m.
Rev. Sarah Urano

UNITED /ANGLICAN

Worship Services
Glaslyn
Time is on the sign
Rev. Kun Kim
Rev. Don Skinner

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Medstead - 6:00 p.m.
SUNDAY
Leoville - 9:30 a.m.
Spiritwood - 11:15 a.m.
Shell Lake - 2:00 p.m.
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Glenbush
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BETHEL

Medstead
2nd Sunday, 10 am -
Worship
Pastor David Jensen
4th Sunday, 10 am - Worship
Pastor David Jensen

MENNONITE BRETHERN

Glenbush
10:00 am - Sunday School
Worship 10:50 am

Gideons International of Canada

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(306) 389-4633

PARTNERS IN WORSHIP

Shell Lake
Worship Services
Sunday 10:00 a.m.
306-883-8885

LAKELAND

COMMUNITY CHURCH
(Corner of 1st Ave. and 4th St., Spiritwood)
Sun., 11 am - Worship
Service & Sunday School
Pastor Michael Kluthe
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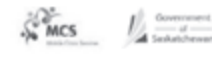
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Tools for selecting Replacement Heifers

By **CHELSEY SIEMENS**
Ministry of Agriculture

Selecting replacement heifers, either from your own herd or to purchase, has a major impact on future success. Developing those heifers also comes at a significant cost. It can be difficult to decide which heifers will possess the right genetic makeup to become successful cows on a particular operation. Fertility, mothering ability, soundness, feed efficiency and longevity in the herd are all important factors but are hard to determine when looking at a heifer that is one year old or younger. Many of the desirable traits that a beef producer is looking for in a heifer can't be seen or measured until after that heifer has had at least one calf. Many of the traits of interest depend on both genetic and non-genetic factors. There are some tools available to producers that can help bridge this gap in

information and can help to support confident decisions when selecting heifers.

Ministry livestock and feed extension specialists are currently working on a demonstration project funded by the Agriculture Demonstration of Practices and Technology (ADOPT) program, evaluating the use of genomic testing for replacement heifer selection on commercial beef operations. For this project, ear tissue samples were collected from heifer calves at branding time and sent to Neogen Canada where the Igenity Beef genomic test was performed. This test provides scores for 17 traits including maternal (birth weight, direct calving ease, maternal calving ease, stayability, heifer pregnancy rate, docility and milk), production (residual feed intake, average daily gain, weaning weight, yearling weight and scrotal circumference) and carcass (tenderness, marbling, ribeye area, fat thick-

ness and hot carcass weight) characteristics. Depending on the trait, a score between zero or one and 10 is assigned for each trait depending on the genotypes of each calf. Each heifer calf received a score for each individual trait plus three indices which rank the heifer calves on a combination of either maternal, production and terminal traits. The index most closely representing the goals of the operation can be considered when selecting replacement heifers. The producers participating in this project all wish to produce replacement heifers with strong maternal traits while also producing steer calves that will perform well as market animals. For this reason, they would most likely use the production index, which includes both maternal and growth traits in their selection process.

The intent of the project was to evaluate whether receiving the genomic data for heifer calves early in their lives could be used to identify replacement heifers that would meet the breeding goals of each unique operation. The heifers identified as being superior for each trait were compared against the list of replacement heifers chosen through the traditional methods of each ranch, which included visual appraisal, individual growth and performance and past performance of the heifers' sire, dam and siblings. The trial cooperators evaluated their experience collecting tissue samples and reviewing genom-

ic test results to determine whether the extra data would be an asset for heifer selection and whether the process of genomic testing fit into their usual handling activities.

As part of this project, tissue samples were also collected from herd sires at each ranch and parentage testing was done, providing information on the sire of each heifer calf. This process can help to identify productive or non-productive bulls and determine which bulls are siring the heifers with desirable traits.

While this project is still in progress, the results to date indicate that the producers find parentage data valuable to them and the tissue collection process fits in well with existing cattle handling events. Results are still being evaluated on the similarities or differences between the top heifers identified through genomic testing compared to those chosen by the producer through traditional methods. Genomic testing is one tool that can be used to gather more information on heifers early in life and can be used in combination with conformation, individual performance and performance of relatives to identify heifers that will develop into successful cows that meet the goals of a commercial beef operation.

For more information contact your nearest livestock and feed extension specialist by calling the Agriculture Knowledge Centre at 1-866-457-2377.

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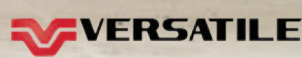
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