June 2020

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Have an interesting topic you want discussed in the newsletter or municipal meeting?
Send suggestions to Asst. Agricultural Fieldman Tanis Ponath , asb@mdwainwright.ca or call 780-842-4454

Municipal District of Wainwright No.61

The Municipal Agricultural Connection

Alberta Agriculture and Forestry

Partners in Rural Conservation
www.mdwainwright.ca

2020 Vegetation Management Program

The M.D. of Wainwright Council has made the decision to cancel the 2020 Rural Routes Supper in order to comply with the guidelines from Alberta Health Services.

Start thinking about the 2020 Calendar Contest! The M.D. of Wainwright's annual calendar photo contest is fast approaching. Submissions are due August 14, 2020. Showcase the diversity in the M.D. of Wainwright. Can't wait to see your submission this year!

A reminder to all residents, if you require Strychnine for the 2020 growing season please contact the M.D. office at 780-842-4454 and we will put your name down on a priority list.

It is that time of year again where you will see the Ag Services Department completing our roadside spraying program. Weed control is done on a 3 year rotation where roadsides are sprayed for prohibited noxious, noxious and general weeds once every 3 years. Brush spraying is done on a 2 year rotation where roads are spot sprayed once every two years for brush under 2m in height. Our staff continues to use selective herbicides according to label directions to ensure the health and safety of residents. Our weed inspectors continue to hold a current pesticide applicators licence through the *Alberta Environment Protection and Enhancement Act* which is the highest level of certification through the Alberta Government required to manage and apply pesticides. In this issue you will find a handout that shows which roads will be sprayed for weeds and brush during the 2020 season.

Private landowners can request assistance when dealing with prohibited noxious and noxious weeds on pasture lands. A weed inspector will come out and inspect your property and if a weed is identified we can assist with control (excluding Canada and sow thistle). The cost of the program is $20.00 an hour plus the cost of chemical. We will also work with you if you choose to administer control yourself. To follow public health measures put forward by Alberta Health Services regarding COVID–19 our weed inspectors will be following sanitization protocols and will be practicing physical distancing. Landowners will not be permitted to ride in M.D. vehicles and M.D. staff will not be permitted to ride in landowners vehicles.

The most commonly found weed in the M.D. of Wainwright is toadflax. It is well established in the south-east and south-west areas of the municipality. We also have populations of tansy, scentless chamomile, baby's breath, nodding thistle and leady spurge. There are isolated populations of hoary alyssum, orange hawkweed, tall buttercup and burdock. If you have questions about prohibited noxious and noxious weeds the M.D. has ID books available for pick-up. Turn the page to find quick information on our most commonly found regulated weeds. We want to remind residents it is important to control invasive species.

The M.D. of Wainwright's spray program begins on June 1 and will continue until fall. Roadside mowing will begin July 15 or later and go until August 31. If you have any questions contact James or Tanis at 780-842-4454.

M.D. of Wainwright Weed Inspectors

Division 1 & 2 :
Ray Enstrom, 780-842-8461
Division 3, 4 & 5:
Laine Maron, 780-842-8579
Division 5, 6 & 7:
Dennis Fuder, 780-842-7060

Leafy Spurge: This long-lived perennial primarily reproduces by its extensive creeping root system, but also by seed. Roots can extend 4.5m laterally and 9m deep. It grows in a range of soil types and tolerates very dry to very wet conditions. It grows in various locations in the M.D. of Wainwright.

Scentless Chamomile: Can behave as an annual, biennial or a perennial but reproduces by seed only. It is well adapted to heavy clay soils and tolerates periodic flooding and dry sites. Can be controlled with herbicide before flowering. After flowering, handpicking is the only efficient method.

Toadflax: This is a problem weed in the M.D. of Wainwright. Toadflax primarily reproduces by it extensive creeping root system, but also by seed. The ability of this plant to form large colonies allows it to crowd out other vegetation. Toadflax prefers sandy soils, but it is adapted to other conditions as well. Best time to use herbicide is when the plant is actively growing (flowering).

Common Tansy: Is a perennial forb that reproduces by both seed and short rhizomes. Tansy forms dense stands and the plants contain alkaloids that are toxic to both humans and livestock if consumed in large quantities. Tansy needs well drained, fertile soils and access to full sun to thrive. Tansy can be controlled by various herbicides. There are multiple infestations in the M.D. of Wainwright.

Yellow Clematis: This perennial vine reproduces by seeds and vegetatively from stems and pieces. Vines grow rapidly either along the ground or will climb and cover other shrubs/trees, fences and buildings. It is tolerant of cold, drought and nutrient poor soils. It can thrive in woodlands, grassy areas and industrial areas.

Baby's Breath: Is a perennial weed that reproduces by seed only. It develops a deep taproot than can extend up to 4m. It prefers fine to course textured, alkaline soils. It is drought tolerant once established. The M.D. of Wainwright has several areas with established baby's breath populations.

Invasive Phragmites: It is an erect, aquatic or sub-aquatic, perennial grass with an extensive rhizome system. Plants are highly competitive and form dense (>100 shoots m2), monoculture stands. It can grow in a variety of habitats, from freshwater alkaline waters to highly acidic wetlands. It prefers slow moving waters and irrigation canals. Be on the look out for this invasive plant along the railway. It's hard to miss as stems can grow 2-4m in height. The M.D. of Wainwright has one infestation near Chauvin.

Hoary Alyssum: Is an annual, biennial or short-lived perennial but reproduces by seed only. It is adapted to cold winters and hot dry summers and develops a long taproot to access moisture. Hoary alyssum is toxic to horses. The M.D. of Wainwright has populations SE and SW of Wainwright.

Nodding Thistle: Is a biennial or winter annual that reproduces by seed only. Growing up to 2.5m in height, nodding thistle prefers disturbed areas but can invade healthy plant communities. They can be easily identified by their single, large, flower head. The M.D. of Wainwright has a infestation around the Irma area and previously in Edgerton and Chauvin.

Diffuse Knapweed: Is a biennial, short –lived perennial that reproduces by seed only. It is a highly competitive plant that establishes quickly on disturbed sites and can invade undisturbed plant communities. A single plant can produce 18,000 seeds. Its roots exude a chemical which inhibits the root growth of surrounding plants.

Orange Hawkweed: This perennial herb reproduces by seeds and vegetatively by stolons and rhizomes underground. Hawkweeds prefer well drained, course textured soils. The leaves and stems are covered in hairs. The M.D. of Wainwright has identified one location with orange hawkweed, and control is ongoing.

Woolly Burdock: Is a biennial that reproduces by seed only. Flowers have both male and female parts and therefore it is self fertile. It grows in most soil types but prefers moist, loamy, well drained soils in full sun. The M.D. of Wainwright has found a few burdock plants in the municipality. There is also great and lesser burdock species.

Spotted Knapweed: Is a biennial plant that is a prolific seed producer. It can produce over 140,000 seeds a year making control very difficult. Spotted knapweed produces a chemical from its roots that prohibits the root growth of the plants around it causing degradation of native rangelands. Infestations form monocultures, displacing forage for wildlife and livestock

Good Grazing Management Practices

Good grazing management practices allows for more forage to be produced, fewer invasive weeds and healthier animals. Here are a few things to keep in mind when managing your pasture land.

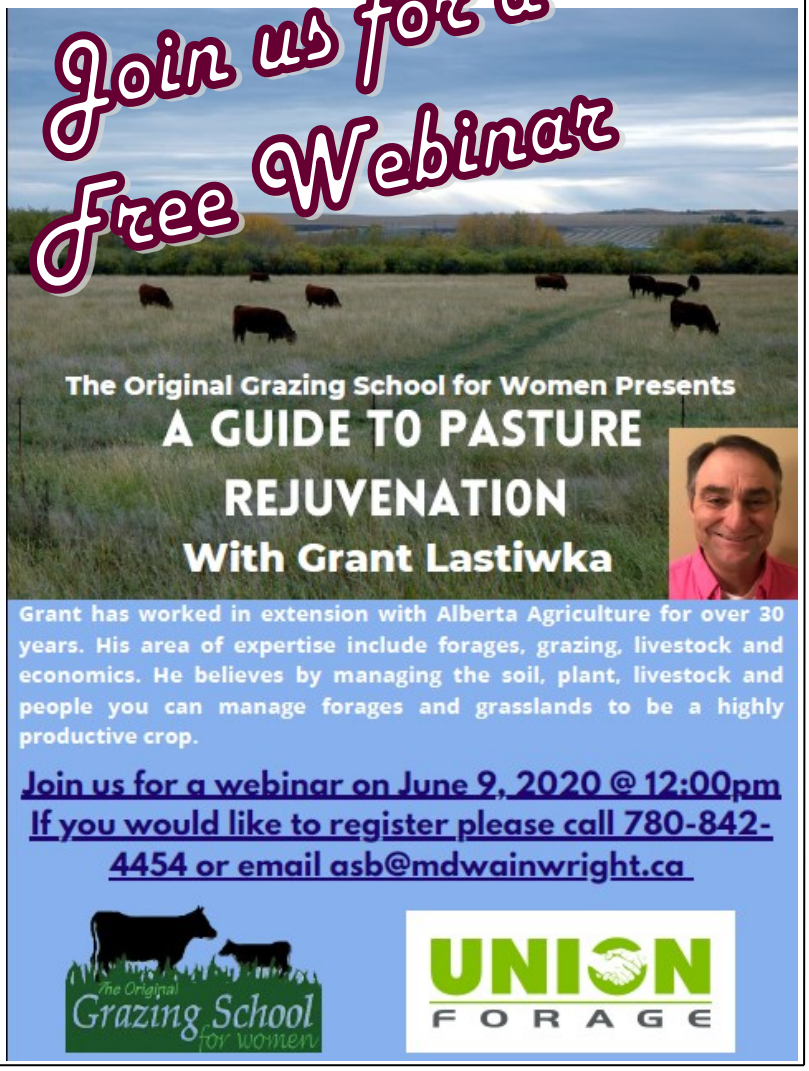
1. Water, this could be considered one of the most important factors but can also be the most limiting. Available moisture peaks in early spring following the snowmelt. Moisture becomes a limiting factor farther into the growing season (July) in most growing areas.
2. Litter is old grass residue that has been left over from previous growing seasons. Litter shades and cools the soil, traps snow, increases water infiltration, reduces raindrop impact and reduces water evaporation. Leaving and maintaining litter can also help plants recover quickly in times of drought.
3. Soil fertility increases pasture productivity. Grasses respond well to nitrogen and sulphur fertilizers and legumes respond to phosphorus potassium and sulphur. However, a healthy mixed pasture stand (grasses, forbs and legumes) can fix enough nitrogen to improve grass production.
4. Previous grazing history has a big impact on how the pasture is going to grow. When plants are stressed their roots stop growing therefore, less forage production.

To maintain pasture conditions, delay grazing until grasses have produced green leaves and are manufacturing and storing food. This can be difficult because different grasses grow at different times. It can vary by 6 weeks and their palatability to animals decreases as the plant matures. You have to find the balance between grazing a pasture too early or too late.

To maximize productivity pastures must be stocked with the appropriate number of animals to achieve uniform grazing. Proper stock distribution has many benefits including; nutrient cycling, improved range health, improved wildlife habitat, balanced use and more even grazing of the land base. Tools to achieve uniform grazing include a planned grazing system, fencing, water supply and locations, salt and mineral locations, herding animals to unused portions of the pasture and cattle oilers or rubbing post locations. After grazing, provide a recovery period suitable for the climate and severity of the previous grazing. In addition, leave adequate carry over for re-growth and moisture management. Carry over is the amount of forage left when grazing ends. It is recommended to leave 45% of current growth with 20% of seed stalks remaining on native pastures. This can also vary depending on the year and growing conditions. Carry over is not as critical for tame pastures as it is for native pastures. However, it does affect re-growth and moisture retention. Leaving a carry over of 25% on tame pastures is considered good practice.

Heavy grazing removes a high percentage of the plants leaves to the point where photosynthesis and re-growth are slowed. Overgrazing is when a plant is grazed before it has fully recovered from previous grazing. Over grazing can be either light or heavy grazing and not enough rest is given so the pasture can properly recover. Heavy or overgrazing also leads to the growth of undesirable weeds such as prohibited noxious and noxious weeds because there is no competition with native grasses. Most species of weeds are unpalatable to livestock and some are even poisonous.

If you are interested in more information and to learn more about managing your pasture, please join us for a free webinar with Grant Lastiwka on June 9 at 12:00 p.m.



M.D. of Wainwright Office Re-Opening June 1!

The Municipal District of Wainwright No.61 has passed a motion at our May 19, 2020 meeting to open our office to the public again.

We have implemented a few changes to ensure the health and safety of both our staff and the public. They are as follows:

- **Please use the hand sanitation station in the front vestibule when entering and exiting the building.**
- **There will be a log book at the sanitation station. Please fill in your name, date, time and phone number. This is in case of an outbreak to help AHS track any potential spread.**
- **There is a form that we ask you to fill in to ensure each person has been screened.**
- **We have installed crowd control measures to limit exposure so a maximum of 2 people will be allowed in the lobby at a time.**
- **Washrooms are not available to the public.**
- **Council meetings will continue to be streamed online. Please see our web page or Facebook page for details.**

We encourage people who require fire permits, ASB work, Development, or any other help to please call 780-842-4454 first to determine if its necessary to come into the office. If necessary, one on one meetings are allowed but an appointment time will need to be booked in advance. Committee and other meetings during or after office hours are not permitted. Please contact your committee chair for information.

<u>Update from the Tax Department:</u>

The Municipal District of Wainwright No.61 recently passed an updated Tax Penalty Bylaw. The primary purpose of reducing the tax penalty rate from twelve percent (12%) to six percent (6%) is to ease the financial impact of the penalty to ratepayers should they be unable to pay a portion or all of their taxes. Council is in touch with the economic crisis that our region is currently facing and while we require tax payments for our operation, we do not rely on revenue from property tax penalties.

Purple Loosestrife 101

Purple loosestrife was identified for the first time in the M.D. of Wainwright last fall. We want residents to keep an eye out for the highly invasive plant in wetlands, ditches, sloughs, canals and disturbed areas. Purple loosestrife is a prohibited noxious weeds under the Alberta *Weed Control Act*, which means it must be eradicated. Purple loosestrife can quickly choke out native vegetation, reducing biodiversity and degrades critical wetland habitat for native birds, insects and other species.

Identification:

Stems: Are woody and square having 4-6 sides. Plants can grow 1-1.5m in height. Mature plant stems can reach 3m in height and form short lateral branches.

Leaves: Are opposite and stalkless. Some leaves may be whorled near the base of the plant. Leaves are lance shaped and wider near the stem, they can be 3-10cm long and are sometimes covered in fine hairs.

Flowers: Are mostly purple but can sometimes be white or pink, have 5-7 petals and form dense clusters. Blooming begins at the bottom of the flowering stalk and progresses upwards.

A single purple loosestrife plant can have as many as 30-50 stems per plant and produce up to 3 million seeds per plant annually.

If you suspect you have found purple loosestrife contact either the weed inspector in your division or contact James or Tanis at the M.D. office, 780-842-4454.