

October 2020

Volume 14, Issue 6

Municipal District of Wainwright No.61

The Municipal Agricultural Connection

Alberta Agriculture and Forestry



Partners in Rural Conservation

www.mdwainwright.ca



Fuzzy Fall Caterpillars

The woolly bear caterpillar is very common across North America. It has very distinctive features with its fuzzy appearance, reddish-brown band around its abdomen and black ends. They are covered in short, stiff bristles of hair. The Isabella tiger moth is what becomes of the woolly bear caterpillar, the moth is orange-yellow to yellowish-brown with dark brown spots on its abdomen and wings. There are several species of tiger moth and you may come across similar caterpillars that are either all black or white. According to the Farmers Almanac the woolly bear caterpillar has the reputation of being able to forecast the anticipated winter weather. If their rusty band is wide, then it will be a mild winter, if the rusty band is skinnier it will be a more severe winter. Back in the fall of 1948, Dr. C.H. Curran who worked for the American Museum of Natural History in New York City conducted an experiment on the caterpillars. Dr. Curran collected as many caterpillars as he could and measured the average length of the reddish-brown segment. Dr. Curran then used that information to forecast the weather through a reporter at the New York Herald Tribune. The experiment continued for the next eight years as Dr. Curran attempted to prove scientifically a correlation between the caterpillars and the weather. The publicity that came from the experiment made the woolly bear caterpillar one of the most recognizable caterpillars in North America and you will notice quite a few crawling around the M.D. of Wainwright.



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.

The M.D. of Wainwright would like to thank all of those who participated in this years Calendar Contest. We had 32 entries this year! Out of the 14 photos that were selected for the calendar we had 9 brand new winners this year. The calendars are expected to arrive at the end of October. Stay tuned for the announcement on our Facebook and webpage.

Please remember that all municipal taxes are due Nov 30, 2020.



Clubroot Update

The Agricultural Fieldman and Assistant Agricultural Fieldman have been busy completing the annual Clubroot survey and unfortunately we have discovered additional fields that are suspected to have clubroot. Samples have been sent away for testing and we are waiting for the results. More information will be included in our next newsletter. We want to make producers aware as they are harvesting so that proactive equipment sanitation steps can be taken to help minimize the spread. In addition, inspect the entrance of your fields before entering them. While combining if you notice an odd dead spot that may be discoloured or is very thin, stop and do an inspection. You may also notice that weeds are growing in areas that may have clubroot. If you have questions contact the M.D. office at 780-842-4454.



That's a Wrap! 2020 ASB Programs

The purpose of the Agricultural Service Board is to provide effective and innovative agricultural and environmental programming to meet the needs of our rural residents, acreage owners and local industry in the M.D. of Wainwright.

This year brought some new challenges with COVID-19. The M.D.'s extension program had to come up with innovative ways to bring information to ratepayers. We decided on using a platform called GOTO meeting and hosted two webinars. The first was with Grant Lastiwka on Pasture Rejuvenation and the second webinar was with Carol Ohler on Effective Communication through Challenging Times. Both were a success and not only were we able to reach M.D. residents but residents in the northeast region as well. Stay tuned for more informative webinars this fall and winter.

James and Tanis continue to assist residents with tree pest and disease issues. The two main concerns from ratepayers this year was the aspen leafroller and Bruce spanworm. We also had calls regarding black knot, Saskatoon berry rust and gall mites. We may see outbreaks of aspen leafrollers and Bruce spanworms in 2021. Bruce spanworm outbreaks can last 1-2 consecutive years and aspen leaf roller outbreaks can vary but the outbreaks are known to coincide with each other. Both defoliators and leafrollers will rarely kill trees however, repeated outbreaks can affect tree growth and reduce tree vigour making it susceptible to other insects or diseases.

Our weed inspectors completed the scheduled brush and weed spraying for 2020 even though the wetter weather was challenging at times. The M.D. of Wainwright continues to work with Alberta Transportation, Saskatchewan Highways and CN Railway on controlling prohibited noxious and noxious weeds on their right-of-ways. We also completed year 1 of 5 of the Special Use Approval for the control of Purple Loosestrife on Enstrom pond.

The Agriculture Services staff were very busy at the end of the year responding to multiple calls for toadflax and scentless chamomile. We are seeing more toadflax and scentless chamomile showing up in areas where we historically have not seen the noxious weeds. If you notice small populations of these weeds or any other weeds on the prohibited noxious and noxious weed lists we encourage ratepayers to administer control before the weed becomes too widespread.

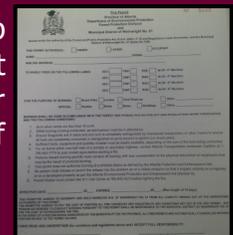
The ASB Pest Control Officer, Rod Gabrielson has been busy with rat inspections in division 1 and 2 along with beaver control on municipal infrastructure and assisting public works with dam removals across the M.D.

If you have any questions about any of the Agricultural Services programs you can contact the Agricultural or Assistant Agricultural Fieldman at the M.D. office at 780-842-4454.

The M.D. of Wainwright would like to remind all rural residents who are planning on burning this winter to have a valid fire permit before you burn. Fire permits can be picked up at the M.D. office or by calling your Councillor or local Fire Chief. If your unable to make it into town, you can call the office and we can email or fax the permit to you. Remember any requests for a fire permit to burn a standing building will be referred to the fire chief in that area.

Here are a few key reminders while burning:

- Burn when winds are less than 15km/hr
- Make sure fireguards are in place
- Any burning within one-half mile of a highway contact Emcon to post smoke signs before burning, 842-7774
- Make sure any burn is completely extinguished by mechanical manipulation or other means to ensure all fuels are completely consumed or extinguished so as to prevent re-ignition (i.e. brush piles)
- For a full list of material you can and cannot burn visit the Alberta Environment and Parks website or stop in at the M.D. office.



Reducing Energy Costs on Farm

Energy costs play a significant role in day to day operating expenses on farm. Cost for energy sources such as natural gas, diesel, electricity, and gasoline can vary and sometimes spike unexpectedly leaving you unprepared. Knowing your energy cost and implementing an energy management plan can help lessen the blow of cost fluctuations.

Energy management involves the following 5 main steps:

1. Adding up your energy consumption cost, called energy accounting.
2. Assessing your options to reduce energy use and costs.
3. Developing an action plan to make your priority changes.
4. Implementing your plan.
5. Beginning the process again to assess the effects of implementing your plan.

First, gather all energy bills pertaining to the last 12 months of billing, sort bills by energy sources. If you have several meters for the same energy source also sort them by meter. Lastly, complete bill trackers for each of your energy sources. Examples of bill trackers can be found on the Alberta Agriculture and Forestry Website in the "First Steps to Energy Management" publication. Once you have completed the individual bill trackers and summary report look at what these results show in terms of your energy use and the changes you might look at considering.

Assessing your numbers is the next step. Here are some questions that you can begin to ask yourself:

1. Have the equipment and buildings been regularly maintained?
2. Does the equipment need to run as long?
3. Can more efficient equipment be installed?
4. Can insulation be added or windows and doors be improved?
5. Can operating temperature be reduced?

Once you have assessed your numbers, identify the areas where you would like to conserve energy. All family members and farm staff should be included in this step because each person may have different ideas on how you can decrease energy consumption. With this information you can now develop your action plan.

Listed below are some energy saving tips that can be implemented on your operation:

- Switching to T5, CFL or LED lights compared to the widely used incandescent lights.
- High volume, low speed circulation fans.
- Energy free outdoor livestock watering fountains.
- Timers, photo-sensors, motion sensors, and programmable logic controllers for energy saving (for controlling lighting, block heaters, ventilation, heating, etc.).
- Installing submeters.
- Adding insulation to barns and shops.
- Installing energy efficient windows.

Now that you have developed your plan it is time to implement it. Your entire action plan does not need to be implemented all at once. Different action items can be applied as you go so you can determine what works and what doesn't. The last step is to assess your action plan to determine if it is benefiting your operation.



Preparing Trees and Shrubs for Winter

Our harsh Canadian winters are notorious for causing damage to trees and shrubs. Some of the most common damages occur due to cold temperature, dry air, winter sun, wildlife damage, salt, deep freeze, heavy snow and ice. Here are a few things you can do to reduce potential damages.

Cold Winter Damage and Prevention:

1. When planning your shelterbelt, choose species that can withstand cold temperature. Alberta belongs to Canada Cold hardiness Zones 1, 2, 3 and partially in zone 4.
2. Snow is an excellent insulator for trees and shrubs.
3. To avoid exposure to strong winds, plant new trees or shrubs in already protected areas such as around building or near already established shelterbelts.
4. Proper pruning will reduce the number of branch breaks during heavy snow or ice.

Root Injuries and Protection:

Protecting roots is one of the most important things you can do because root injuries are one of the most impactful damages that trees and shrubs can sustain.

1. Water trees both young and old just before freeze up. Frozen water is an excellent insulator and will reduce frost penetration to the root zone. If you have dry soil, it is easier for the frost to penetrate deep and dry out roots. The best way to water trees is slowly with a soaker hose at the rate of about 40 liters per inch of tree diameter.
2. An early snowfall will keep the soil from freezing even if the air temperature is below freezing. If snowfall happens after the soil is already frozen, the deep snow will protect roots from January to March especially when temperatures begin to fluctuate.
3. Mulching is another way to protect roots. A layer of 3-4 inches of woodchips will help maintain a constant soil temperature.
4. Instead of disposing of fallen leaves, blend them in with the soil or with mulch to retain nutrients. However, if you are concerned about leaf diseases, dispose of leaves to avoid future outbreaks.

Wildlife Damage and Protection:

Mice, voles, rabbits, deer, moose and elk will girdle and feed on tree bark, twigs, branches and buds.

1. Use mesh wire (1/4 inch) to protect the bark from mice, voles, rabbits and to some extent deer, elk and moose.
2. Plastic guards can also be used to protect from small animals.
3. Make sure the wire mesh and plastic tree guards are installed properly with no gaps between the cylinder and the ground where animals could crawl under the fencing.
4. For bigger problems with deer, elk and moose you will may need to construct a large fence or use a type of repellant.

Salt Damages and Prevention:

Various types of salt are used for de-icing Alberta's roads in winter. Studies show that sodium chloride can have damaging affects on trees and shrubs.

1. Plant salt tolerant trees and shrubs around areas with high use of salt.
2. Use other alternative de-icing material such as sand or gravel.
3. Wrap smaller trees in burlap to protect them from salt.

Pruning:

After leaves drop, which can be anywhere from September to October you may consider pruning dead, diseased and damaged branches. Prune so you do not damage the branch collar during the process. There are videos online that demonstrate the 3-way cut pruning technique. If there are no dead, diseased or damaged branches, avoid pruning at this time of year as this may create additional stress to the tree.

This information was provided by Toso Bozic P.AG, ISA Certified Arborist. For more information visit www.yardwhispers.ca or www.yardwhispers.ca.

