

InFARMation

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Circumpolar Agriculture Conference

The 10th Circumpolar Agriculture Conference was held in Rovaniemi, Finland from March 13 – 15th. The Arctic Centre, University of Lapland, together with the Natural Resources Institute Finland, hosted the conference. The theme for this event was “New thinking about local agriculture in the circumpolar Arctic – best practices, innovations and perspectives”.

This international conference, organized within the framework of CAA (Circumpolar Agricultural Association), brings together people involved in northern agriculture such as researchers, practitioners, administrators, managers, policy-makers and students. The conference theme took a bottom-up approach on new thinking about local agriculture, food production and rural development in northern areas.

Conference sessions examined best practices and resilient solutions in using animal and plant resources, local breeds, reindeer herding, small-scale farming and non-timber forest products. The conference included a discussion of the high quality of Arctic foods, their local profitability and business opportunities.

170 participants from 12 countries participated in this year's conference. There was a good contingent from Canada with representation from Yukon, NWT, Nunavut, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Newfoundland. Nine Yukoners attended and/or presented. Attendees from Yukon included: Jennifer Hall, Mary Cheney, Derrick Hastings, Randy Lamb, Kristine Ferris, Suzanne Crocker, Maria Leung, Randy Lewis and Andrijana Djokic. Canadian Agricultural Partnership funded the travel and participation for five of the Yukon participants under the Yukon Research and Innovation program.

This event takes place once every three years. It provides an opportunity for those participating to visit other circumpolar agriculture regions. This year's conference brought participants to the city of Rovaniemi, the capital of Lapland in northern Finland. Rovaniemi is located at the latitude of the Arctic Circle, so it has some climate and geography similarities with Yukon.

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Director's Message

Spring is marching along quickly this year. We are ahead of our normal melt and this should bring smiles to some, as the mud season is mostly over for farm equipment and livestock.

Provided you have access to water, this weather should be a good omen. We have local cucumbers and lettuce in the grocery store already. But the early spring may also present challenges for crop moisture. Pay close attention to your tillage this spring, and please feel free to contact our office if you want to discuss moisture saving techniques.

We have had a busy winter heading into this early spring. The updated Agriculture Policy continues to come together. All of your input over last summer and our work with the agriculture industry advisory committee that continued through the past winter is leading to a new policy. The updated policy will provide the Government of Yukon with direction in working with the agriculture industry.

We are wrapping up some last minute direct consultation with industry and stakeholders through April. When this is done we will be dotting the i's and crossing the t's before approving it.

We are continuing to roll out the control order for farmed sheep and goats. This control order will require that sheep and goat owners follow practices for fencing, testing and tracking. Please contact our office to learn more.

This past year has had over 100 projects funded through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership. Projects range from a pig scalding, to feed bins, to farm branding, to supporting community gardening and training. We look forward to the next year with this program and supporting your farm business. Please contact our office for more information or see our website.

I hope to get out and see some of you this spring, good luck with the start of the growing season. May the rains rain as you need.

Matthew Ball
Director, Agriculture Branch

Circumpolar Agriculture Conference Continued...

The conference included a field trip further north to a hay farm with a modern dairy operation, a cheese-making factory, a reindeer farm and a vocational school that specializes in forest foods development and processing (berries, mushrooms and more).



Topics at the conference have applicability to Yukon and can inspire future research in the territory. Reach out to some of our Yukon participants to learn more about the conference, and please keep an eye out for future articles highlighting some of the knowledge transfer.

The next Circumpolar Agriculture Conference will be held in 2022 in the Faroe Islands.



Photo: Randy Lamb, Agrologist, Kristine Ferris, Researcher and Jennifer Hall Executive Director Yukon Agricultural Association.



Kids on the Farm

The Kids on the Farm Program is entering its seventh year of farm learning opportunities for students from Kindergarten to Grade 12. The program invites teachers to bring students to local farms to explore life cycles, interconnections and ethical issues related to agriculture. Kids on the Farm also supports farmers to develop engaging, fun and educational farm tours, while mitigating and managing potential farm hazards.

Growers of Organic Food Yukon (GoOFY) developed the program to support education and advocacy about growing and processing in Yukon. This education program offers farm tours appropriate for each grade. For example, Grade 3 will learn about biodiversity on the farm by exploring the diversity of plant, animal and soil life found on a farm.

This program has proven to be an asset for educating Yukon youth on agricultural practices, as well as supporting and raising awareness of farms located throughout the Yukon. Since 2013, the program has facilitated 167 farm tours. These tours included a total of 3523 Yukon students and 785 chaperons.

Over the years, funding for Kids on the Farm has come from the Canadian-Yukon Growing Forward 2 and the current Canadian Agricultural Partnership, Agriculture Education Program. The Government of Yukon's Department of Education also became a funding partner in 2016, which highlights the education value of the program. In the spring of 2017, with demands for farm tours exceeding the funding contribution from government, Yukon Agriculture Association stepped in with a contribution to allow for additional farm tours.

In addition to funding support for the development and co-ordination of the program, funding along with student fees also pay farmers for their time developing and hosting farm tours. To date farmers who have participated in the program have earned \$79,000. On a typical 3.5-hour tour with two farmers, including 3 hours to develop and prepare for the tour, the host farm earns \$500.

If you are a teacher looking to book a tour or a farmer wanting to learn more go to <http://kidsonthefarm.yukonfood.com>. The website Curriculum Connections page outlines in detail the recommended themes and activities for each age group. The farm tour booking period for teachers opened on April 1st. Farm tours take place from May 1 to September 30, excluding school summer holidays.

For farmers, if you want to participate in next year's program, applications are due at the end of February, 2020.



Potluck Online Farmers' Market

In May, the Potluck Online Farmers' Market will launch its second season, enabling Whitehorse residents to order local produce, meat and other products online. Every Monday throughout the summer, you will be able to pick up your weekly order at 302 Hawkins Street.

"Potluck Food Co-op members have supported local producers in various ways since our inception", says director Alison Reid. "Last year, we tested this online marketplace idea with the financial help of the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, and willing volunteers. It was a small but solid success. A dozen local producers were involved, and we had an enthusiastic customer base."

Using the web platform Local Food Marketplace which was developed in Oregon and with funding from the Canadian Agricultural Partnership and the City of Whitehorse, the Potluck Online Farmers' Market is looking to expand the number of producers and customers participating.

"We've talked to members of the farming community and Fireweed Market, and have had great interest" says Simone Rudge of Aurora Mountain Farm. "The online farmers' market will continue to complement Thursday's Fireweed Market, enabling people to have two opportunities a week to buy directly from local producers."

Vendors each have their own page on the Potluck Online Farmers' Market platform, where they can include photos of their facilities and a description of what and how they produce or grow their products. Vendors set their own prices.

Customers can search by producer or by type of item and fill their online cart. Then on Mondays, vendors will bring what they have pre-sold to the wall tent behind the Yukon Conservation Society (YCS) building at 302 Hawkins Street. Potluck volunteers will organize the items for customers to pick up that evening. YCS is generously donating the use of this space for the second year.

Find the Potluck Online Farmers' Market at: <http://potluck.localfood-marketplace.com>. For more information: info@potluckcoop.com.

The Corner L.O.T.

Land, Opportunities & Tidbits from the
Agriculture Branch's Lands Unit

Farmers have been awarded to develop three available agriculture lots in the Murray Agricultural Subdivision in Ibex valley. The three planned lots in the new subdivision became available this winter and Agriculture Branch advertised the lots for a month to allow interested farmers the opportunity to apply for the land.

Under this process, applicants were required to submit a farm plan as part of the application process. The farm plan includes start up and production, financing and marketing components.

An Agriculture Branch evaluation committee and an independent farm business consultant from outside Yukon review each of the applications and assigned a score based on the outlined evaluation criteria. The land was awarded to the applications that best demonstrated the ability to develop the land and had a strong business plans.

We are pleased to announce three new agriculture properties have been offered on agreement for sale. The interest in these lots is an encouraging demonstration of the strength and growth of Yukon's agriculture industry.

The number of strong business plans that did not make the top three in this land offering emphasizes the need for more agriculture land in the Yukon.

The Agriculture Branch will be offering to work with unsuccessful applicants to assist them in finding other opportunities to expand or develop their commercial farming business. The Agriculture Policy review currently underway is also investigating other land tenure options to provide more opportunity to grow.

Raising Sheep and Goats

What has changed?



As of January 1, 2020 a Control Order comes into effect that sets conditions on how domestic sheep and goats are kept in Yukon. The order mitigates the risk of disease transmission from domestic sheep and goats to wild populations. Since the announcement of Control Order #2018-001, the Agriculture Branch and the Animal Health Unit have been meeting with farmers and industry groups on the rationale for the control order and what the implementation will mean for farmers. Some of the questions and answers that were addressed during the consultation period include the following.

Q: Why do we need a control order?

A: Domestic sheep and goats may carry the respiratory pathogen *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (M. ovi). In other regions, this pathogen has caused long-term impacts on the health of wild sheep and goats, and led to significant die-offs impacting ecosystems. A control order provides tools to lower the risk of this transmission.

Q: What is a control order?

A: A control order is a temporary tool under the *Animal Health Act* that allows the Government of Yukon to respond quickly to something that poses a significant threat to animal, public or environmental health. Control Order #2018-001 for domestic sheep and goats comes into effect on January 1, 2020 and will expire December 31, 2024 and applies to all of Yukon.

Q: How do I make sure I'm ready for the Control Order?

A: You can contact the Animal Health Unit (867-667-5600) for information on the steps you need to take to be in compliance with the Control Order. An Animal Health Inspector and a member of the Agriculture Branch will then make a site visit to your farm to discuss the Control Order, requirements for testing and fencing, and funding available to help you comply.

Q: I understand that my animals need to be tested for M. ovi. How do I access this service?

A: Your sheep and goats need to be tested for M. ovi before January 1, 2020. There is no cost to owners for testing and owners may be compensated for their time to assist with sampling. The test involves taking a swab from the nostrils of each sheep and goat. The exact testing schedule may vary slightly from farm to farm; however, it usually requires a series of three swabs to be collected from each animal with about 30 days between each swab. Ongoing testing requirements will be based on risk and determined on a farm-by-farm basis. Contact the Animal Health Unit to arrange for testing.

Q: What if I want to bring in domestic sheep and goats from outside Yukon?

A: After January 1, 2020, an import permit from the Agriculture Branch will be required before domestic sheep or goats are introduced to Yukon. This permit will outline conditions for import intended to reduce the risk of disease transmission. An Animal Health Inspector will work with you to set conditions specific to your farm.

Q: What are the fencing requirements under the Control Order? Are funds available to assist with fencing?

A: The requirements for fencing will be determined on a farm-by-farm basis, following three principles:

1. Prevent livestock from escaping an enclosure;
2. Prevent contact between wild and domestic sheep and goats; and
3. Discourage wild sheep and goats from getting into an enclosure.

Management strategies and the existing fences on the property will be factored into the requirements. Funding is available to help farmers upgrade fences, if required. Owners can contact the Agriculture Branch to learn more about funding and how to apply.

Q: What are my options if I do not want to continue raising sheep or goats under the Control Order?

A: If you no longer wish to keep sheep or goats under the Control Order, contact the Animal Health Unit to discuss your options. You may be eligible for funding support or compensation if you depopulate your herd through sale or slaughter.

For more information, please contact:

Agriculture Branch
867-667-5838
agriculture@gov.yk.ca

Animal Health Unit
867-667-5600
animalhealth@gov.yk.ca

Producer Profile

Food Network Yukon

This edition of the producer profile moves away from the farmers with dirt under the fingernails and introduces a group that gets their hands dirty by understanding what food security means and how it relates to local food production.

Food Network Yukon is a group born in October 2014 from a panel discussion recognizing World Food Day during Poverty and Homelessness Action Week. The panelists and the 50 people in attendance realized that the conversation around food issues needed to continue. These issues provided the impetus to form Food Network Yukon.

Food Network Yukon has been active since 2015. It is hosted by the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, with support from the Arctic Institute of Community Based Research. The network is a group of farmers, non-profit groups, governments and individuals who engage in conversations around access to food. The network allows for cross-pollination between all the players involved with food. Access to food is one of the main topics for this group. Although access may not be viewed as an agricultural issue specifically, for those involved it is instinctive to consider growing more food to address this challenge.

At the heart of the group is talking about the whole food system from production, to distribution, access/procurement, food waste and health. The network is comprised of about 90 people connected through an email distribution list. A core group of participants (approximately 15) meets once a month to share information. Originally, there was a push from the network to have a formal mandate and action items. As this group continued to meet and recognize the benefits of "networking", the formal aspect of defining a vision developed. Meeting, sharing notes, understanding others' activities and connecting dots between issues; networking has become the rationale for this group.

The network is going strong and maybe not surprisingly, the meetings include delicious eats over lunch, which is a good time to stay engaged with the topic of food. The group's biggest challenge(s), if they have any, may be being mindful of people's precious time, and a concern with being too Whitehorse-centric. The group does work to bring information around food issues from the communities to increase awareness of these challenges in the North.

When asked what this group's accomplishments are, there is pride within the network at how they are building community. Various associations, government branches and individuals who normally would not be in the same room, are meeting regularly. This is helping break down barriers by bringing different interest groups together to talk about a common topic.

The future of the network looks to stay fluid and organic allowing people's energy to drive the topics at the table. The network looks like it will continue to grow as members support one another to build a stronger Yukon food system.

If you want to become part of the network, contact the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition by email, yapcfood@gmail.com and share your interest in the Yukon Food System or call (867) 334 -9317.

Thank you to Kristina Craig, YAPC Executive Director, for sharing Food Network Yukon's story.



Students Learn How to Process a Pig

Students at Porter Creek Secondary had a recent visit from local butchers Tom, Simone, and Graham Rudge of Tum Tum's Black Guilt Meats. Students in Darren Susin's Professional Cook class - in partnership with Skills Canada Yukon - helped with the butcher and preparation of a locally-raised Yukon pig. Over the course of two classes, students helped butcher the animal and prepare a variety of different cuts. Three types of sausages - breakfast, Chorizo, and Saskatoon berry - were prepared in class. The sausages will be incorporated into meals that will be served in the cafeteria. The remaining parts will also be used in head cheese, bacon, pancetta, and soup broth.

This experience was a great opportunity for the students. Not only did they learn about the butchering and sausage-making process, they were introduced to local food and new career options.

Advancing Women in Agriculture

Yukon Farmer Krista Roske of Sunnyside Farm recently attended the Advancing Women in Agriculture West Conference in Calgary. The following is Krista's take on an excellent conference:

I recently had the opportunity to attend AWIC West, immersing myself in pre-conference workshops, a speaker series, a tradeshow and networking opportunities over two jam-packed days. This conference was by far the best conference I've ever attended and was extremely well organized for the 400+ women in attendance. The positive energy and the sense of unity with other women involved in agriculture, regardless of what or how they farm, was revitalizing and inspirational.

The pre-conference workshop on finance and what to provide to banks to leverage funds to grow your business was excellent (and a lot of math)! The speaker series provided a mix of presentations and panels on a range of topics applicable to our farm and to agriculture generally. Learning outcomes ranged from personal experiences to the application of neuropsychology for persuasion in business.

There were panels discussing ways to improve farm businesses, how other farm women became successful and how women can support other farm women locally and globally. The caliber of the speakers cannot be overstated and they were available throughout the conference for one on one discussions.

There were ample opportunities to network with other farm women, agribusiness entrepreneurs and organizations with initiatives helpful to women involved in agriculture.

Attending the conference provided me with many new practical ideas to improve our farm business, the optimism to take the next step in the expansion of our farm and the courage to say "yes" to new opportunities because you never know where they can take you.

I highly recommend other Yukon farm women consider attending this conference. I would definitely attend again in future. For more information, visit the website www.advancingwomenconference.ca.



Yukon Hay Production

A review of Hay Production in Yukon was conducted to capture the expertise of Yukon Hay producers and general industry practices. The review helped summarize local hay production standards in a single resource. The guide "Hay Production in Yukon, Best Management Practices" is now available. The EMR Library is the keeper of this guide and other agriculture resources. You can borrow a hard copy from the library or download your own electronic copy from their online catalogue. To access the library catalogue, go to the EMR library website (www.emr.gov.yk.ca/library), click on the 'Library catalogue' button and search for "Yukon hay production". There will be a link in the catalogue to the full version of the document. Contact the library at 667-3111 or emrlibrary@gov.yk.ca for more information.



Agriculture researcher Kristine Ferris interviewed farmers and conducted the research for The Hay Production in Yukon, BMP document. This was supported by funding accessed under the Canada – Yukon Canadian Agriculture Partnership, Research and Innovation Program.

Certified Organic Association of British Columbia Conference 2019

Growers of Organic Food Yukon (GoOFY) representative Bart Bounds attended the Certified Organic Association of BC (COABC) Conference 2019 from February 22nd to February 24th, 2019.

The 3-day event featured 19 presentations, and included the COABC AGM and the Pacific Agricultural Certification Society (PACS) AGM.

Bart was able to attend eight of the presentations and highlights included presentations on species at risk and bioregion specific management intensive grazing. Bart noted significant interest and enthusiasm for growing an organic food scene in the North on the part of student representatives from Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU).

Bart attend both AGMs on behalf of GoOFY and was invited to join the PACS Board and sit as a PACS representative on the Board of COABC.

Anyone interested in learning more about the COABC and the 2019 conference go to www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca. Or the next time you see Bart at the market, at a GoOFY meeting or in the street, ask him about his experience.

GoOFY's representation at the conference and AGMs was supported by funding accessed under the Canada – Yukon Canadian Agriculture Partnership program towards the goals of networking, learning, and exploring opportunities for organic agriculture in Yukon.

Western Canadian Holistic Management Conference

Growers of Organic Food Yukon (GoOFY) representative Sheri Bergen attended the Western Canadian Holistic Management Conference 2019 from February 1st to 3rd, 2019 in Russell Manitoba.

The conference had presentation from across western North America covering self-care as part of holistic farming, holistic farm planning and marketing, regenerative agriculture, and holistic financial planning.

Sheri's attendance was supported by funding accessed under the Canada – Yukon Canadian Agriculture Partnership program towards the goal of improving productivity and profitability in an ecologically sustainable manner and improving food security in Yukon.

Sheri Bergen has written a summary of her experience with a commentary on the applicability of each topic to Yukon agriculture. This document is available on the GoOFY website at organic.yukonfood.com



Many of the photos in this edition of InFARMatIon are courtesy of Kids on the Farm or Circumpolar Agriculture Conference Attendee Jennifer Hall from Yukon Agricultural Association.

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Agriculture Branch
Energy, Mines and Resources,
Box 2703, Whitehorse, YT, Y1A 2C6

Visit: Agriculture Branch, room 320, on the third floor of the Elijah Smith Building, 300 Main Street in Whitehorse.

(867) 667-5838 | Fax: (867) 393-6222,
toll-free outside of Whitehorse
1-800-661-0408 ext. 5838

Email: agriculture@gov.yk.ca

Online: www.agriculture.gov.yk.ca