



# InFARMatIon

Yukon Agriculture Branch  
Bulletin  
Fall/Winter 2021  
Volume 33, Issue 1



## Agricultural newsletter returns

Did you know that the first edition of InFARMatIon was published 34 years ago in the winter of 1987/88. Back then, the original newsletter communicated the services the Yukon government's Agriculture Branch had on offer as well as technical information on various types of agriculture production. The newsletters were published on a quarterly basis and were meant to be light and easy to read.

It has been a while since we have published our newsletter. Our last edition was in fall-winter 2019. During this hiatus brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, we took some time to review the purpose of the newsletter. While we've decided to keep the same structure, we decided to change the timing and the format.

We want this agriculture newsletter to be nimble when sharing information. We also wanted an option to share timely information directly with Yukon's active farming community. So, we decided we will now deliver InFARMatIon in three ways:

- **Newsletter:** we will continue to share agricultural information to Yukoners and beyond by publishing the newsletter three times a year. It will include updates from the Agriculture Branch, share activities happening that impact food producers, and pass along upcoming events. The publishing timing will follow Yukon's farming season. There will be a late winter/spring edition when Yukon producers are planning for the upcoming season. A summer edition, as everything is in full swing and growing. Finally, there will be a late fall edition as Yukon farms are settling-in for the winter. The newsletter will be published online with an email sent to all subscribers.
- **Special editions:** the special editions will focus on a common theme, e.g. a research edition. They will provide an avenue to share more in depth and technical information on ongoing agriculture research in the territory, industry metrics, and updates on agriculture land, when needed. We expect to publish special editions during the off-season as and when information becomes available. Again, these editions will be published online with an email sent to all subscribers.
- **"InFARMatIon Bites":** this will be an email sent directly to Yukon farmers and producers. The purpose of these "bites" is to share important and time sensitive information quickly. We expect to send these out at any time, as needed, to our list of farmers and farm producers.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 3...**



# Director's Message

Greetings!

It is a tremendous honor to join the Agriculture Branch. Over the past seven months, I have had the privilege of getting to know some of our farmers and food producers. I have seen first hand the ingenuity, grit and dedication that Yukon farmers bring to their work.

Not surprisingly, we like to celebrate our farmers. We hold them up for their vital role in producing food, working with the land, and adapting to the elements. Yet, we rarely shine a light on just how hard this undertaking can be.

On one of my farm visits this year, a long-time producer told me that their ability to farm was based on a willingness to make sacrifices in other areas of their life. It

remains for me an important reminder of what it means to farm.

Farming is dynamic. Farming is rewarding. Farming is hard work. So, I would like to thank every farmer who invited me to their farm, and took the time to show me their operations. To those whom I have not yet had the pleasure to meet in person, I look forward to seeing you over the coming months.

As I reflect on the past season, my thoughts immediately went to the weather. Of course, I hardly need to describe the weather to this audience. This season presented challenges and opportunities, whether it is was the late spring, a surprising frost, the wet fall or any other numerous factors. One of our valued hay producers was severely impacted by the unprecedented flooding from the southern lakes. The issue of elk in the Takhini valley persists with much work remaining to be done. The cutworms returned, to the delight of no one.

On the socio-economic front, ongoing difficulties with staffing and recruitment stretched already lean operations. This has been combined with increasing costs on many fronts, including building material, feed, fertilizer, insurance and of course fuel to name but a few.

While I hope that many of you are able to slow down this winter and take stock of the invaluable work you are doing, the Branch will be busy with some key initiatives.

As some of you will know, the current Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP) program with the federal government will end in March 2023. All CAP projects must be completed by then. Negotiations are now underway between the federal, provincial and territorial governments for next CAP (2023-2028). Over the coming months, the Agriculture Branch will be conducting outreach to understand the program needs of food producers and processors in the Yukon. (See related article on page 6.)

In a similar vein, we are also developing a tender for a new Multi-Year Development Plan (MYDP) for Yukon agriculture. The last such plan was released in 2008 and the sector has advanced tremendously since then. The MYDP will be an accessible, engaging, and inspirational document that both captures the state of the agriculture and food production industry in the Yukon today, and provides a well-researched, realistic vision for future development.

The Yukon's agricultural community is essential to the territory's future. Working together, I know this future will be bright. I look forward to it.

Thank you for all that you do.

Best wishes,

Bobbie Milnes  
Director of Agriculture Branch



*Agriculture Director Bobbie Milnes at the Yukon Agriculture Branch's experimental farm examining the test plots of potato crops in August 2021.*



Yukon government Minister of Agriculture, Honourable John Streicker announcing the Yukon Grown program and Local Food SOA for government at the Yukon Agriculture Branch

## Agriculture newsletter returns continued...

We decided to move away from mailing printed copies of the newsletter. We recognize that some readers may prefer a physical copy, however they are able to print themselves a copy. A printed copy will be available to read in-house at the EMR Library in the Elijah Smith Building or can be borrowed through inter-library loans.

We will be building an email distribution list for the InFARMation newsletter and special editions. Anyone interested in subscribing can contact the Agriculture Branch at [InFARMation.agriculture@yukon.ca](mailto:InFARMation.agriculture@yukon.ca). You can unsubscribe or re-subscribe to the newsletter at any time.

If you are farmer/producer, farmer in transition (entering or exiting), or a new entrant to the territory and registering with us for the first time, please identify yourself to us as a farmer/producer. We will add farmers and producers to our Agriculture stakeholders list too. This is the list that will receive the InFARMation Bites. (see page 8)

# Government to increase its purchase of local foods

The Yukon government recently awarded a standing offer arrangement (SOA) to Takhini River Ranch for the supply and delivery of Yukon food and food products to departments of the government.

Read the government [news release](#) that announced the SOA.

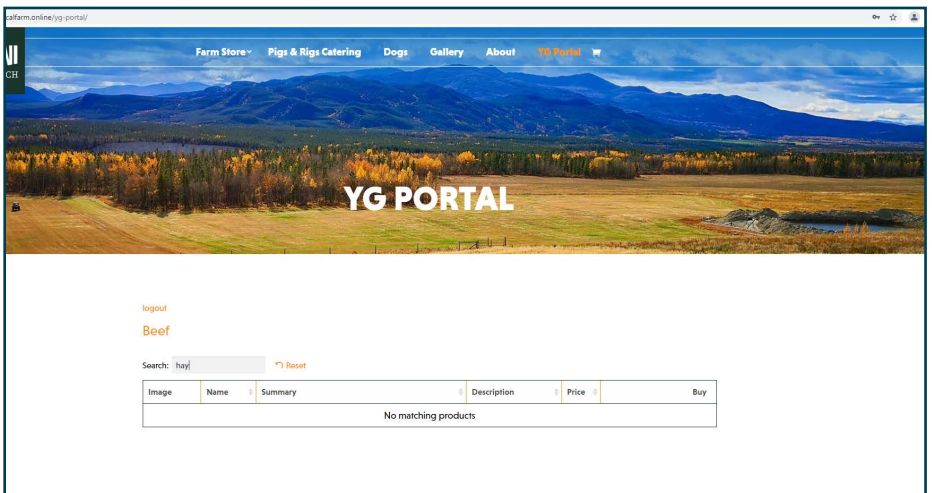
The SOA provides government grocery purchasers with the ability to order local food products from an online “one-stop shop”. Products available include meat, produce, eggs, and other grocery items.

If you are interested in supplying the Yukon government with your local food product(s), contact the Takhini River Ranch at 867-333-6376 or [localmeat@outlook.com](mailto:localmeat@outlook.com).

Food provided through the SOA must be processed and prepared following Environmental Health [standards](#).

For more information on requirements for sale of locally produced food to the government, visit [sell your agriculture products website](#).

For questions about the SOA, contact Stephen Gaim by email at [stephen.gaim@yukon.ca](mailto:stephen.gaim@yukon.ca) or call (867) 667-5432 or toll free 1-800-661-0408 extension 5432.



Screen shot of Takhini River Ranch's YG portal for Yukon government departments and services purchasers to order local products. Local farmers and food producers can register with Takhini River Ranch to sell qualifying products to the Yukon government.

# Rescheduled:

## North of 60° Conference and Banquet

The Yukon government is trying something new this year and moving the annual North of 60° Agriculture Conference and Banquet from fall to winter. This is to:

- take advantage of the renewed energy that comes with the flip of the calendar, the returning daylight, and the planning that begins for next agricultural season;
- better understand the funding priority areas that will be set out by federal, provincial and territorial Agriculture Ministers in their meetings this fall 2021. This will help us consult with Yukon farmers and food producers about these priorities at the conference;
- gain additional time to get feedback from Yukon's agriculture industry on agenda items and topics of interest for the conference and identify a banquet theme;
- monitor what happens over the Christmas season with the COVID-19 pandemic. This will inform us on whether we can potentially host an in-person agriculture banquet; and
- allow farmers and food producers from the Dawson area to potentially travel safely and attend the conference depending on the ice bridge conditions and winter temperatures.

We are tentatively scheduling the conference and banquet weekend for February 18, 19 and 20, 2022. This will be before the Rendezvous/Heritage Day long weekend and the Canada Agriculture Day scheduled for Tuesday, February 22nd.

The conference weekend will look to:

- showcase experts that share information about food production, business management, and/or marketing best practices;
- celebrate the Yukon's bounty through food served at the banquet. Hosting in February will be particularly interesting as it will raise awareness of the Yukon's local food production and of local products that may still be available in the middle of winter;
- provide information and highlight programs that support the growth for the Yukon's agriculture; and
- most importantly, acknowledge the hard work of Yukon farmers and food producers in building a resilient agriculture industry.

The conference will offer an online video conference option so farmers near and far can participate from home. All other details to be determined.

Of course, we want to celebrate a Yukon Farmer of the Year. Start thinking about who you would like to acknowledge and submit your nominees to us. There is no better way to recognize Yukoners contributing to the agricultural industry than by highlighting all the nominees for this award.

Finally, we welcome your ideas and suggestions for topics, speakers, and issues you want to explore at this 34th annual banquet and conference. Share your thoughts to the Agriculture Branch.

You can email your input to [agriculture@yukon.ca](mailto:agriculture@yukon.ca) or call 867-667-5838.



A reminder of the summer. Food production from Sarah's Harvest.

## Yukon Wetlands Policy

Visit [engageyukon.ca](http://engageyukon.ca) to:

- Fill out the survey by deadline: December 3, 2021.
- Learn more about the Wetlands Policy.
- Read the draft policy.

Further comments can be emailed to [tyler.kuhn@yukon.ca](mailto:tyler.kuhn@yukon.ca) or [amy.law@yukon.ca](mailto:amy.law@yukon.ca)

# Livestock Veterinary Services Program

## Past, present and future

The Livestock Veterinary Services Program (VSP) is a Yukon government program designed to help farmers get veterinary care for livestock raised for food or fibre.

The program launched in 2015 with a goal of supporting healthier Yukon livestock and ensuring the safety of Yukon-produced food. This is because healthy livestock are more productive and more profitable. The program gives local veterinary practices an opportunity to expand their capacity to diagnose and treat livestock. It supports on-farm biosecurity and enrollment in the national premises identification program (PID), as the first step to developing a better picture of livestock health in the Yukon.

After five years, it was time for an evaluation. In March 2021, a third-party consultant completed an evaluation of the program and found that the VSP progressed towards its goals. The number of producers enrolled increased each year. Some livestock owners said they felt better supported in improving livestock health. Better lines of communication between producers, veterinarians and the Animal Health Unit were established.

Despite this, there was surprisingly low participation in the program. On average, the veterinarian did one to two farm calls per month, with a maximum of four. Very few producers used all of the funding available. Most farmers held back to ensure they had funding available if an emergency arose. Very few producers took advantage of herd health planning or biosecurity evaluations. Lastly, the evaluation clearly identified that private veterinarians in the Yukon cannot meet all livestock health needs and remote areas were underserved.

The evaluation of the VSP comes at a time of change in the territory. The Yukon, like many other areas in Canada, is experiencing a shortage of veterinarians and livestock owners are finding it difficult to access veterinary care. The Animal Health Unit, in collaboration with the Agriculture Branch, is designing a new VSP to better meet farmers' needs and address limited veterinary capacity in the territory. This new program is to begin in April 2022.

The new VSP aims to address some gaps and challenges identified by the evaluation. For example – how can the VSP better serve livestock owners in remote locations? How can we improve preventative care? What additional services or program delivery methods would better serve our diverse Yukon farms? How can we improve service given the nationwide shortage of veterinarians? How can livestock extension specialists contribute to improve animal care in the Yukon?

The current VSP will continue until March 2022. Previous participants are re-enrolled each year. In addition to the current VSP, Dr. Michelle Thompson at the Animal Health Unit will provide a telemedicine service for Yukon livestock owners until the new program is announced. Participants can reach Dr. Thompson by phone (867) 667-5228 or email: [michelle.thompson@yukon.ca](mailto:michelle.thompson@yukon.ca) with livestock health questions. Dr. Thompson will share new program details and a link to an online telemedicine web application with VSP participants by the end of November 2021.

The VSP program updates will be publicly announced and included in future edition of the InFARMatIon newsletter.

For more information on the current VSP and to enrol visit [yukon.ca/en/livestock-health](http://yukon.ca/en/livestock-health) online.



Animal Health Unit, Veterinarian Dr. Michelle Thompson will be providing a telemedicine service for Yukon livestock owners on an interim basis.

# YUKON GROWN

## Marketing program pilot project

You may have noticed the Yukon Grown logo appearing around Whitehorse recently. This is an expansion of the existing Yukon Grown program whose goal is to help local farmers, food producers and food processors increase general awareness and sales of qualifying Yukon grown food products.

In August, the Agriculture Branch launched a one-year pilot program with changes to the ongoing Yukon Grown program. Under this pilot project, we are testing new approaches to delivering the Yukon Grown program, stemming from the 2020 Yukon Grown marketing strategy. We will evaluate this pilot project to see if it is effective at achieving its goals. Based on the program review, we will improve and fine tune the program for future years.

### WHAT'S CHANGED FOR THE YUKON GROWN PROGRAM?

Under the pilot project, we are formalizing and expanding the Yukon Grown program beyond just stickers. You must apply to become a member of the Yukon Grown program. Approved members can access benefits such as using the Yukon Grown stickers and additional authorized marketing materials.

### WHY DO WE NEED A MARKETING PROGRAM?

There are still people out there who don't know that Yukon farmers grow food or that Yukon food is available in our stores and restaurants. One of the Yukon government's commitments in the Yukon Local Food Strategy was to create a marketing strategy to promote Yukon Grown food products. The Yukon Grown marketing strategy was done in 2020. Our current pilot project evolved from this strategy.

The big goal of this pilot program is to help Yukon farmers sell more of their food products by increasing public and food-retailer awareness of products grown in the Yukon. The pilot project also aims to build on partnerships among stakeholders and to help increase food self-sufficiency in the territory.

### WHO CAN APPLY TO THE YUKON GROWN PROGRAM?

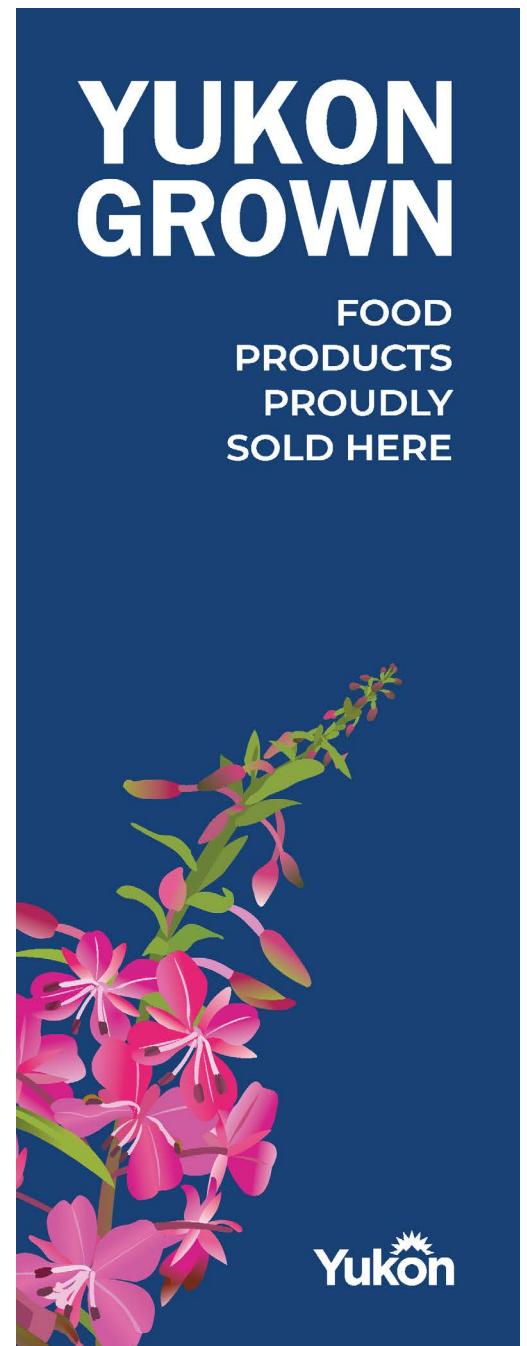
Potential applicants include:

- farmers, food producers, and food processors;
- retailers who sell qualifying Yukon Grown food products; and
- restaurants, food vendors, or caterers who use qualifying Yukon Grown food products as the main ingredient in their meal offering.

### HOW DO YOU SIGN UP AND GET LISTED AS A PROVIDER OF YUKON GROWN FOOD PRODUCTS?

Contact the Agriculture Branch at 867-667-5838 or email [yukongrown@yukon.ca](mailto:yukongrown@yukon.ca) to get an application form. Once your food products are confirmed as qualifying for the Yukon Grown program, you will receive marketing materials to help promote their sale. You will also be listed on our program webpage as an approved Yukon Grown program member. More information on the Yukon Grown program is listed at: [yukon.ca/yukon-grown](http://yukon.ca/yukon-grown)

If you are a producer of Yukon grown food products, please take the time to apply to the program. Participation levels will determine the need and influence the future of the program.



Apply for funding now

# Canadian Agricultural Partnership

Do you have a project in mind?

[Canada-Yukon's Canadian Agricultural Partnership \(CAP\) Funding Program](#) is entering its last year of funding in April. Federal, provincial, and territorial agriculture ministers are negotiating the next five year funding program to ensure a continuation of support to Canada's agriculture industry.

The challenge with ending one funding program and starting a new one, is that the dollars committed in the old program are not carried forward into the new program. Under CAP, we want to work with Yukon farmers to ensure these program dollars are spent and continue to grow Yukon's agriculture sector.

We are asking farmers who have an investment they want to make in their agriculture business to contact us and see if their project ideas would be eligible for funding. The plan is to allocate funding early to ensure all projects can be completed before March 2023 when the current program ends.

If you have a project idea please pick up the phone or bang on the computer keys and send us your idea before Christmas. If the project fits in the program you can move to the next phase of submitting an application before February 1st, 2022.

Email your project idea to [agriculture@yukon.ca](mailto:agriculture@yukon.ca) or call 867-667-5838.

To learn more about CAP funding check out the website at [yukon.ca/en/canadian-agricultural-partnership-programming-guide-yukon](http://yukon.ca/en/canadian-agricultural-partnership-programming-guide-yukon)

Also to see what type of project have received funding to date check out [yukon.ca/en/canada-yukon-canadian-agricultural-partnership-funding-report-2019-2020](http://yukon.ca/en/canada-yukon-canadian-agricultural-partnership-funding-report-2019-2020)



## CanNor

# Expression of Interest

The Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNor) has launched its [Expression of Interest \(EOI\)](#) for single or multi-year projects that are starting in the 2022-2023 fiscal year. The EOI will close December 15, 2021. Priorities and detailed information are available at [www.cannor.gc.ca](http://www.cannor.gc.ca).

In recent years, CanNor supported several agriculture and food-related projects across Yukon, including:

- \$100,000 to support Yukon Valley Farm's two-year project to diversify its product offering through the construction of a mill building to house equipment to turn local grains into flour and other high value products such as baking mixes.
- \$99,999 to support Farm Gate Local Foods & Services in the construction of a barn to brood and raise meat chickens for year-round production.
- \$49,500 to Yukon Berry Farms to increase the efficiency of their berry harvesting process and reduce costs for the farm through the purchase of a haskap berry harvester and the construction of a greenhouse.
- \$38,000 to support Silver Line Farm in its three-year project to increase honey sales. This would be done through the design and construction of a moveable honey processing facility and the purchase of honey processing equipment which will be rented out to other Yukon honey producers.

\$20,960 to Growers of Organic Food Yukon to support their two-year project to explore the feasibility and development of a management plan for a Northern Organic Farm Learning Centre. This facility would provide a venue for experienced farmers to pass on knowledge to new farmers and increase the capacity of farming and sustainability of Yukon food production.

Check out CanNor's May 20, 2021 [news release](#) announcing \$600,000 in agriculture and food related projects across the Yukon

## Yukon Agriculture Branch

# The only constant in life is change.

We regret that the COVID-19 pandemic put the InFARMation newsletter into a temporary hiatus. We recognize that not publishing a few editions of InFARMation made it more difficult to support good communication and provide the opportunity to share what is happening and changing in Yukon's agricultural community.

Getting back on the saddle, here's a quick update on what happened over the past 18 months:

- New agriculture policy: [Cultivating our future – 2020 Yukon agriculture policy](#) was released in the summer 2020. This document will guide the direction of Yukon's agriculture for the next ten years. The policy looks to support:
  - industry infrastructure: developing and maintaining infrastructure and human resources for livestock industry and increasing availability of local inputs;
  - land: dealing with underutilized agriculture land and developing innovative options for release of ag zoned land (lease and title); and
  - capacity and markets: business planning support, understanding and developing regulatory frameworks, keeping costs of production down and consumer prices accessible for all.
- New branch Director: Welcome Bobbie Milnes to the role! (See Director's message.). Thank you to outgoing Director Matt Ball for 19 years of service with the Agriculture Branch. We wish him all the best in his new role as Director of Yukon Lands.
- Farm Family of the Year 2020: Mario Ley and Dionne Laybourne of Can Do Farm as Yukon's Farm Family of the Year for 2020. Recognizing the growth of their operation over the years from their start as a hay producer to raising and selling cattle, pigs, chickens and turkeys to the Whitehorse market.
- Industry changes: Jennifer Hall stepped down as the Executive Director of Yukon Agricultural Association to pursue other projects. Thank you Jennifer for the many years with YAA your valuable contributions to the agricultural industry.
- New Agriculture Minister: With the territorial elections held in March 2021, the Honourable John Streicker takes over from the Honourable Ranj Pillai as Minister for Energy Mines, and Resources and becomes the new Minister for Agriculture.

We hope this quick update is useful and we look forward to resuming our delivery of the new InFARMation newsletters, special editions and "Bites" to you on a regular basis.



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InFARMation, InFARMation special editions, and InFARMation Bites are all published by the Yukon government's Agriculture Branch. To contribute an article idea, add an advertisement to the newsletter, or share your thoughts, contact us:

Email: [InFARMation.agriculture@yukon.ca](mailto:InFARMation.agriculture@yukon.ca)

Tel: (867) 667-5838 or toll-free outside of Whitehorse 1-800-661-0408 ext. 5838

Fax: (867) 393-6222,

Mail : Agriculture Branch Energy, Mines and Resources, Box 2703 (K320A), Whitehorse, YT, Y1A 2C6

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You can [subscribe](#) or [unsubscribe](#) from the InFARMation newsletter and special editions at any time by emailing us at [InFARMation.agriculture@yukon.ca](mailto:InFARMation.agriculture@yukon.ca)