



A scene from spring seeding a year ago.
 This photo was submitted by Bridget Wagstaff in the World-Spectator's 2021 Spring Seeding Photo Contest.

Farmers anxious to get into seeding

BY KEVIN WEEDMARK

Kristjan Hebert runs Hebert Grain Ventures, a 22,000 acre grain farm centered in the Fairlight-Moosomin area. He says he's hoping for warmer weather soon so farmers can get on the land as soon as possible.

"I would say for our area, the normal seeding start date is somewhere between April 25 and May 1," said Hebert.

"I would say prior to what's forecast to come on the weekend (of April 23) that's probably been pushed back to May 1 to May 5, and if we get another shot on the weekend it puts us back to May 10 at the earliest, if we get some hot weather, but probably more like May 15.

"The data would show you that any

crop seeded after May 15 has less yield potential, and anything after June 1 has a lot less yield potential and has frost risk at the other end. That's the big thing. In a perfect world, we'd like all the crop in by the May long weekend at the latest, now this year June 1 is the hope.

"Our goal on our farm is to always be done seeding in 21 days, and that includes a few rain days. If things went perfect and we didn't have any rain delays or big breakdowns, we could probably put the crop in, in about 13-14 days.

"We learned a long time ago we can't control Mother Nature, so there's no use worrying about it. The positive side is we're going to have a lot of moisture to grow good crops, and commodity prices

are quite high, so if you lose a couple of bushels it's not a big deal.

"The biggest thing is just hoping we get the window to put the crop in, even if that is May 15-June 1. If things dry up and the temperature gets up in May and we can be going by the middle of May, we just hope we don't get a lot of end-of-May rains.

"Because of the fall rains, our soil moisture was actually significantly better than it was going into last spring, it's up to average. These heavy, wet snows definitely add moisture, so I think the first ones were a good thing. It's really the cool temperatures that are causing the problem. Every single night is freezing, between minus-6 and minus-10, and daytime highs are lucky if they're over five. I would say the

temperatures are as much our issue as the snow.

"Everyone would like the soil to be five degrees or higher before seeding but I think the biggest thing right now is just that the ground is dry enough that we can pull the air seeders, then we'd all start going.

"In a perfect world we wouldn't get any more snow this weekend and as of Monday it would be 2-3 degrees at night and 10-15 during the day and we'd be in the field by the end of the first week of May, and have lots of good potential."

Hebert says farmers in southeast Saskatchewan have become used to early seeding over the last few years.

Continued on page B10 ^{ESP}

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Combine harvesting in the field. (Photo: GIFS)

Funding for Global Institute for Food Security

The Government of Saskatchewan has announced \$2 million in new funding to the Global Institute for Food Security (GIFS) at the University of Saskatchewan as part of its 2022-23 budget.

The funding, provided through the Ministry of Agriculture, has been entrusted to GIFS to define, accelerate, and communicate the agriculture sector's contributions to improved environmental outcomes.

"This announcement demonstrates the province's commitment to agriculture and the value the sector provides to Canada and the rest of the world," said GIFS Chief Executive Officer Steven Webb.

"It's a recognition of the contributions of a resilient value chain and the many stakeholders who have continued to work tirelessly through challenging global conditions to feed the world through sustainable agriculture practices."

The funding from the province government highlights agriculture's contributions to mitigating the effects of climate change while driving economic recovery from the pandemic and addressing other global challenges.

Saskatchewan has already proven to be a leader in sustainable agricultural practices.

Along with Western Canada, the province has led with the adoption of no till technology, resulting in economic, environmental, and social benefits to agriculture and farming practices.

"Saskatchewan's producers have always been advocates of best practices in farming and food production—something that has established our province as a global leader in proven, sustainable approaches to agriculture," said Agriculture Minister David Marit.

"This funding will help to promote and enhance understanding of these approaches as a model for continued progress."

A public-private partnership established by the Gov-

ernment of Saskatchewan, Nutrien and USask, GIFS is a founding partner of the National Index on Agri-Food Performance, an initiative to track sustainability success across Canada's agriculture and agri-food industry.

Working as a connector in the agriculture and food ecosystem, the institute will collaborate with sector stakeholders to demonstrate the economic, environmental, and social value that agriculture offers.

Using its unique scientific as well as data management and analytics capabilities, and connections throughout the sector, GIFS will analyze the science to define and demonstrate agriculture's role with reliably sequestering and significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions – helping to communicate this in effective ways.

"Agriculture is a solution to mitigating the effects of climate change, and Canadian agriculture in particular is one of the most sustainable in the world," said Webb.

"We have an advantage we should be proud of, that we need to share globally, and the funding from the province will help yield results that will drive benefits for agriculture, Saskatchewan and Canada's economy."

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Cattle, forage plants focus of research

Two University of Saskatchewan researchers have been awarded \$322,000 in total by a federal agency for developing drought and salinity-tolerant forage crops, and reducing heat stress in dairy cattle.

The funding is from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council's (NSERC) Alliance Grants program, which encourages university researchers and partner organizations to collaborate in generating new knowledge and accelerating the adoption of research findings to benefit Canada.

FUNGI AND FORAGES SYMBIOTIC PARTNERS IN BATTLING SALINITY STRESS

Dr. Jon Bennett (PhD), assistant professor in USask's College of Agriculture and Bioresources (AgBio), was awarded \$191,000 over three years to sustainably increase the productivity and salinity-tolerance of forage crops typically grown on marginal lands in Western Canada.

Forages comprise most of the diet of cows and are critically important to Canada's cattle industry.

Bennett's team aims to reduce the need for inputs and increase forage production by optimizing plant interactions with symbiotic arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi (AMF) that colonize plant roots. AMF can increase plant tolerance to low water, salinity, and pathogen resistance, and in turn thrive on plant-derived carbon.

"Our ultimate goal is to determine if we can develop forage varieties that are more broadly responsive to AMF, and develop AMF that benefit those forages," Bennett said.

To accomplish the goal, researchers will measure a suite of variables linked with plant-AMF interactions across multiple populations for two important forage legumes, alfalfa and sainfoin, and then study if these traits influence plant growth under different stresses.

Researchers sampled soils from saline and non-saline native grasslands across Alberta and Saskatchewan to culture AMF from these environments. They are using these cultures to predict which other locations have AMF that increase plant growth and salinity tolerance in three species (forage barley, alfalfa, and tall wheatgrass).

Industry partners in the project are: Alberta Beef Producers, \$77,910 in cash and in-kind support; Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association, \$27,300 in cash and in-kind support; and in-kind support from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's research centres in Swift Current (\$5,500) and Lethbridge (\$5,000).

HELPING COWS MUNCH THEIR WAY THROUGH SUMMER HEAT

Dr. Gregory Penner (PhD), AgBio professor and USask Centennial Enhancement Chair in Ruminant Nutritional Physiology, was awarded \$131,000 over two years to investigate dietary strategies to help dairy cattle deal with summer heat.

"We are specifically focusing on whether cations (sodium and potassium) or dietary buffers (carbonates)



Dr. Jon Bennett (PhD), assistant professor in USask's College of Agriculture and Bioresources (AgBio), and Dr. Gregory Penner (PhD), AgBio professor and USask Centennial Enhancement Chair in Ruminant Nutritional Physiology.

help to mitigate heat stress," Penner said.

At USask's Rayner Dairy and Research Facility, cows will be fed a specific dietary supplement. Researchers will study variables such as animals' core body temperature, feed intake, milk production, and indicators for inflammation, to see if the feed strategies help mitigate heat stress.

Cattle respond to heat stress with sweating and open-mouth panting—using respiration to dissipate heat—and lose saliva. As well, their body response is to increase blood flow to the ears and other extremities and reduce the flow to the gastrointestinal tract, increasing acidity of stomach contents.

Cation supplementation replenishes salt lost through sweating and encourages drinking, with the water helping to cool down animals. The carbonate acts to reduce stomach acid and the risk of gut disorders.

Research is sparse on assessing the separate roles that cations and carbonates play—especially since producers often use sodium bicarbonate in the cows' diet

during summer, leaving open the question of whether it's the sodium or the carbonate that's most effective, Penner said.

Industry partner Papillon Agriculture Company, owned by calcium- and manganese-carbonate producer Inter-Rock Minerals, is providing \$62,800 in cash and in-kind support. Papillon wants to understand the role its carbonate feed products play in mitigating cattle heat stress. SaskMilk, which is contributing \$23,500 in cash and in-kind support, is the other industry partner.



"And who, planting time and harvest season, will finish his forty-hour week by Tuesday noon, then, pain'n from 'tractor back,' put in another seventy-two hours. So God made a farmer."

~ Paul Harvey



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Canadian Agriculture Human Resource Council: Strategic plan for labor shortage in agriculture

Labour and skills gaps costing Canadian agriculture billions each year

The Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC), together with partners the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) and Food and Beverage Canada (FBC-ABC) have announced the launch of the National Workforce Strategic Plan for Agriculture and Food and Beverage Manufacturing.

With details to be presented during a virtual event this afternoon to over two hundred representatives from industry associations, employers, not-for-profits, academia, as well as federal, provincial, and municipal governments, the Strategic Plan is the launching point for what will be a comprehensive roadmap to workforce stability for the agriculture and food and beverage manufacturing sectors.

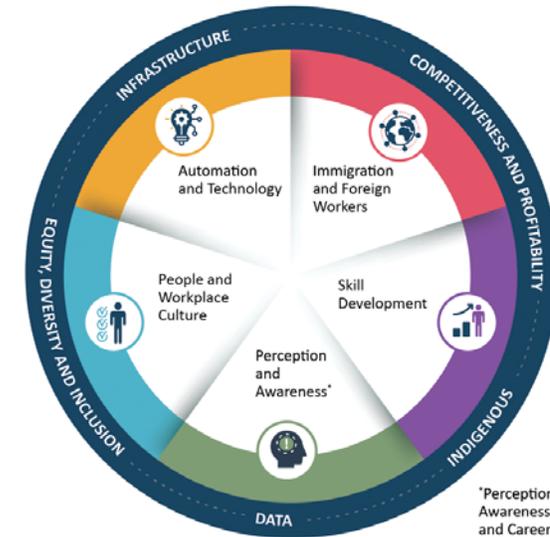
"Workforce issues in primary agriculture and food manufacturing are critical and need to be addressed urgently," said Jennifer Wright, Acting Executive Director at CAHRC. "While good work is being undertaken by many groups, industry also recognizes the gravity of the challenge, the need for new and different ways of doing things and most importantly the need for collaborative action."

Funded by the Government of Canada's Future Skills Centre, this industry-led initiative complements the work identified in the Prime Minister's Mandate Letters to Ministers Marie-Claude Bibeau and Carla Qualtrough tasking them with developing an Agricultural Labour Strategy for farming and food processing. Developed around five key pillars, the Strategic Plan is comprehensive, actionable and broad, as well as capable of adapting to changing times and realities. It includes short, medium and long-term solutions to address both immediate labour shortages and systemic workforce challenges.

"We knew prior to the COVID-19 pandemic that our labour supply was insufficient to meet the demands of our industry," continued Ms. Wright. "The vision for this Roadmap is a reliable workforce with the skills needed to weather future crises and bring us towards a strong future."

According to FBC-ABC, food and beverage manufacturers are short an average of 25 per cent of their workforce, according to recent Public Safety Canada data. Labour has repeatedly been identified as a key issue preventing the sector from realizing its growth potential.

"Food and beverage manufacturing is one of Canada's most important sectors, and Canada's largest manufacturing employer, contributing to Canada's provincial, regional and national economies,



National Workforce Strategic Plan for Agriculture and Food and Beverage Manufacturing Model Diagram

supporting our international trade goals, and underpinning local food production and food supply," said Kathleen Sullivan, Chief Executive Officer at FBC-ABC.

Similarly, employers in primary agriculture suffered earning losses of \$2.9B in total sales in 2020, directly attributable to unfilled vacancies tied to the pandemic. This is nearly double the \$1.5B in lost sales recorded in 2014.

"This is not just about lost sales and constrained future growth for Canadian producers", added Mary Robinson, President of the CFA. "A strong agriculture sector is the foundation of Canada's agri-food system and contributes to thriving communities in regions across Canada, offering good quality, secure jobs requiring an ever-expanding set of skills."

"The agricultural and food processing sectors are undergoing a huge transformation that will affect all of us, and it is crucial to prepare the workforce with the skills necessary to meet future needs," says

Pedro Barata, Executive Director of the Future Skills Centre. "Developing a national strategy to look at upskilling workers and future workforce needs is vital to ensure the strength of these industries. This project will provide vital labour market research to address these challenges, and it is a great example of the projects FSC is investing in to identify new and better

practices for the workforce of the future."

ABOUT THE CANADIAN AGRICULTURAL HUMAN RESOURCE COUNCIL

The Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council works with industry leaders, governments and educational stakeholders to research, develop and communicate solutions to the challenges in employment and skills development in primary agriculture.

ABOUT THE CANADIAN FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE

The Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) was formed in 1935 as a unified voice to speak on behalf of Canadian farmers. CFA's work continues today as a farmer-funded, national umbrella organization comprising of provincial general farm organizations and national and interprovincial commodity groups, representing producers of all commodities, who operate farms of all sizes. Through its members CFA represents approximately 200,000 Canadian farm families from coast to coast. CFA promotes the interests of Canadian agriculture producers to ensure the continued development of a trusted, sustainable, and vibrant agriculture sector in Canada. For more information visit www.cfa-fca.ca.

ABOUT THE FOOD AND BEVERAGE CANADA

Food and Beverage Canada (FBC-ABC) is the national industry association representing Canada's domestic food and beverage manufacturers. Its members include Canada's provincial and regional food and beverage manufacturing associations as well as leading Canadian food and beverage companies. FBC-ABC advances a competitive business environment that enables growth and sustainability through knowledge sharing, consultation, business-led solutions and proactive advocacy. Across Canada there are almost 8,000 food and beverage manufacturing establishments employing almost 300,000 workers.



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Local farmers concerned about delay to seeding

BY SIERRA D'SOUZA BUTTS

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

With snow on the ground in mid-April and the area facing down the possibility of more snow on the April 23 weekend last week, local farmers were expressing concerns over the snow and low temperatures pushing back the start of seeding.

"Before the first snow, it was looking to be a normal perhaps drier spring and then we got the last foot of snow or so, which has definitely set us back to a later start in seeding," said Mark McCorrison, who farms west of Moosomin.

"I was okay with a later start because the moisture that was coming with it, would mean it would be a wetter spring, but now if we get another 16 to 18 inches of snow, that might be getting a little bit on the excessive side and it's definitely going to push seeding back to the middle of May or later."

Last week, Southeast Saskatchewan and Southwest Manitoba were hit with two consecutive days of snowfall, leaving behind 20 to 30 inches of snow.

"I'm not overly concerned about the moisture. What I really don't like is the long-term low temperatures because once the snow comes it has to melt, and if the long range says it's going to be cooler than normal, then the snow is just going to hang around and we're not going to be able to get on the land," said McCorrison.

"Saskatchewan is definitely a land of extremes because last year I was seeding on April 18, the year before it was April 20, and this year we're getting to the tail end of April and my drill is in a snow bank, my tractors are still in the shed because we don't even have a dry spot in the yard to start working on stuff yet."

Normally, seeding would already have been started, said McCorrison.

"Normally by now, the drill would already be prepared and we would be putting seeds in the ground. The situation this year is just nothing like I thought it would be," he said.

"Never in my wildest dreams I would think we would go from a drought last year to what it's looking like right now, it could potentially be too wet to plant."

His biggest concern about the weather and its potential push back on seeding are the cold air temperatures that are expected to stay for rest of the month.

"The moisture we have now is good, I didn't mind the last snow but this next one, I would prefer if it missed us but it doesn't look like that's going to happen," McCorrison said.

"It gets stressful because I don't have a whole bunch of grain already pre-contracted, but I have neighbors and friends that have a fair amount of grain already pre-sold for this upcoming year and it's extra stress."

"Now the pressure is on for them because they have to plant, they have to seed something in order to have grain to fulfill their contracts."

McCorrison explained that if more snow continues to show up, it may impact his growing season.

"It will be like 2011, we simply won't get a crop and it's devastating because that's how farmers make a living. If you think of it from a perspective of a mechanic or potash miner and not being able to go to work to make a living, it's stressful," he said.

"It's a hard situation and for me I find it really shocking because last year it was a drought, this year it's the exact opposite."

"It shows that Saskatchewan is just a land of extremes, we never seem to be just right where we need to be, it's either too dry or it's too wet, it's too hot, or it's too cold. Farming in Saskatchewan, it seems mother nature tests you every year."

McCorrison said he bought an additional air seeder in case the spring blizzard further delays his scheduled seeding time.

"I would say I'm in the same boat as everyone else, I have friends who bought a second air seeder, I have bought a second air seeder so if we can get on the land, we'll try to put it out quicker than we have in the past, but ultimately if mother nature doesn't let us out on the land, then we're not going to get it planted," he said.

"When the first snow came, I did up my crop insurance for coverage on unseeded acreage from \$70 to \$100 per acre,



Elize Steyn submitted this photo in the World-Spectator's 2021 Spring Seeding photo contest. Local farmers are hoping we get to this stage soon.

but ultimately that's not enough to pay your bills.

"It's a stressful situation to say the least when normally we'd already be planting and as the looks of it right now, we don't have any idea of how much snow is coming in this next shot of snow."

"I think on average once the snow disappears, you're usually one to two weeks before you can get on the land. Basically the ground is still white everywhere, except for the few odd spots where dirt is starting to show again, but if we get another foot of wet snow on top of that, then I would say at the earliest, we can potentially hope to maybe be in the field is May 15 now."

"As I grew up, generally you try to have your cereals in the ground by May long weekend, which is kind of the cut off for the prime yield. We're looking at later crops going in the ground and now we're relying on mother nature to give us a warm fall, and a longer fall before we get our first frost."

He said farming is highly dependent on weather conditions.

"Farming is an interesting way to make a living, we're totally reliant on mother nature and mother nature hasn't been that good to us the last couple years," said McCorrison.

"It was too dry last year and now we're going from one extreme to the other, yes we needed moisture but an inch of warm rain would be so much better than these wet snows because it would cover all the ground and soak in evenly."

"Also from the cattle aspect, it is extremely hard on the cattle and the people that are calving, it's also hard on the baby calves."

Hruska worried about delays to seeding

Kevin Hruska, who farms in the north of Esterhazy, Bredenbury and Langenburg areas, said the longer it takes the snow to melt, the further it delays seeding.

However he also said that the snowy weather Saskatchewan has been receiving lately, is not a surprise.

"The weather we've been having in the past, as well as the weather forecasted for this weekend, unfortunately it's not unusual and it happens more often than we would like, at this time of the year," said Hruska.

"And when it does happen, it delays seeding, there's no question about it especially the temperature is forecasted so low."

"Another thing that happens when this weather comes in big winds is not only do you have the precipitation, but you have the snow banks and the snow banks take four to five days to melt. Rather than having rain that comes and it's done, it's like you're getting a five-day rain because the snow has to melt and there's no melting weather."

"Our wheat seems to do better when it's seeded earlier, but we can't overpower the weather it's out of our hands, unfortunately it's more common than we'd like to admit I guess."

Hruska said prior to the recent blizzard Southeast Saskatchewan faced, his farm already had adequate soil moisture conditions.

"We weren't as dry here as our friends out west and east of Manitoba were drier

last year than us," he said.

"I think in the fall we had a little bit of precipitation and we were fortunate, we were not craving the moisture like our friends with cattle would be. We had really good seeding conditions, we would have been fine if the snow had not come at all, and this actually makes it wetter and more difficult to seed because of the pothole nature of our land."

"I'm not speaking for all farmers, we have friends west of us who appreciated this snow and wanted more than they got because it seemed like the snow came where conditions were already pretty good, and didn't hit the really dry areas that wanted it."

He said if the snow arrives near the end of April, he plans to seed faster than usual.

"We'll get super organized so that when we do seed we can seed a little faster and more steady. We'll be prepared to go into wetter conditions that aren't as easy going, to fight it out a little bit and shred our way through the mud, we'll push the conditions a bit to get started," Hruska said.

"It's not uncommon to start seeding un-

til May 7 or May 8, unfortunately it's quite common. However us farmers would like to get started at least one or two days in April, and that puts us in a good condition, it puts the crops in a good condition and it mitigates some risk with the heat that comes later in the year, but it's out of our hands."

It is too early to tell whether the anticipated snow conditions will affect the overall growing season for this year, said Hruska.

"It depends on what happens after the storm and how it big it is, it's really the delay on the storm that would be the problem and the mitigating factor would be how much heat we get after," he said.

"The length of time it takes for the snow to melt is a big thing because right after a storm it seems to get cool for a couple days after and it just delays the time it takes for everything to melt."

Hruska said with the forecast and current weather conditions, he has delayed his seeding by a week and plans to start on the second Monday in May.

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Avian Influenza found in Sask, Manitoba

Avian Influenza has been confirmed in a Saskatchewan backyard flock and in a commercial poultry flock, and is suspected in wild birds in Manitoba.

Confirmed in two Saskatchewan flocks

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) has recently been confirmed in a Saskatchewan backyard flock and a commercial poultry flock.

The Government of Saskatchewan continues to work with the poultry industry and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), which is leading the disease response in Saskatchewan as well as in other provinces experiencing outbreaks in farmed birds. CFIA-confirmed findings of HPAI in domestic poultry are posted on the CFIA website.

Biosecurity remains the best tool for poultry producers and small flock owners to protect their birds from avian influenza.

Biosecurity protocols include keeping wild birds away from poultry flocks and their food and water supply, limiting visitors and monitoring bird health.

Small flock owners are encouraged to confine their birds indoors, if possible, during wild bird migration.

Producers should contact their veterinarian immediately if they have concerns about the health status of their flocks.

If avian influenza is suspected, producers should also contact their local CFIA office.

On April 14, 2022, Saskatchewan's Chief Veterinary Officer put in place an animal health control area order to limit the co-mingling of poultry due to the risk of HPAI.

The order, in place until May 14, 2022, prohibits the movement to and participation of birds in shows, auctions and agricultural fairs, as well as any other events where birds would be brought together from multiple locations.

There is no risk to food safety. The risk of transmission of avian influenza to humans is low.

However, people working with poultry suspected of being infected with avian influenza should use protective clothing.

Saskatchewan producers and farm families are reminded the provincial Farm Stress Line can be contacted 24-hours-a-day at 1-800-667-4442.

Suspected case in wild birds in Manitoba

Manitoba Natural Resources and Northern Development and Manitoba Agriculture are investigating a suspected case of avian influenza in wild birds in Manitoba.

Cases of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 have been confirmed in a number of Canadian provinces and the United States, including jurisdictions immediately south of Manitoba in North Dakota and Minnesota, along the route for spring migratory birds returning to Manitoba.

Samples from several suspect birds in southwestern Manitoba near Waskada and a single sample collected in the Dauphin area are being tested.

Further updates are anticipated in the coming days as confirmatory diagnostic testing is being completed.

The risk of avian influenza to human health is low.

There are no known cases of transmission of this strain of the virus from birds to humans in North America.

This strain of avian influenza does not pose a food safety risk. Manitoba poultry and eggs are safe to eat when proper handling and cooking take place.

Regular food safety and hygiene precautions should be followed when preparing wild game.

Hunters should avoid eating birds that are visibly ill. Although the risk of transmission of avian influenza to humans is low, people should not touch dead birds or other wildlife with their bare hands.

Protective eyewear and masks are recommended as an additional precaution. Hands should be thoroughly washed before and after with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

If a dead bird has to be handled, gloves should be worn and the dead bird placed in a plastic bag.

Manitobans are asked to contact the TIP Line (toll-free) at 1-800-782-0076, if they find any of the following:

- Clusters of six or more dead waterfowl (e.g., ducks, geese) or other water birds;
- Any number of dead raptors or avian scavengers (e.g., ravens, crows, gulls); and
- Large groups of dead birds, such as more than 20 of any species.

The public's co-operation is appreciated to help monitor this developing situation.

Manitoba Agriculture advises small poultry-flock owners to take precautions. Small flocks are considered at high risk for HPAI infection as they often have access to outdoor pens or free range.

This means there is a high probability of contact with wild birds that may be contaminated with the HPAI virus.

Small flock owners are encouraged to confine their birds indoors, if at all possible, during this high-risk period of wild bird migration.

Manitoba's commercial poultry farmers are advised to continue to monitor information provided through their sector organizations and the Office of the Chief Veterinarian.

For more information or help with animal health-related concerns, producers can contact the Office of the Chief Veterinarian or call 204-945-7663 in Winnipeg.



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Incentives upped for value-added ag startups

Legislation to enhance the Saskatchewan Value-added Agriculture Incentive (SVAI) tax rebates and regulations to increase the Saskatchewan Technology Start-up Incentive (STSI) tax credit cap were introduced last week, changes aimed at attracting major investment to Saskatchewan.

"The SVAI has helped incent global corporations to undertake major projects in Saskatchewan," Deputy Premier and Finance Minister Donna Harpauer said. "These corporations are investing billions, creating construction and permanent jobs, and establishing Saskatchewan's leadership in value-added agriculture."

"In 2021, a record \$17.5 billion in agri-food exports from Saskatchewan helped feed the world. Enhancements to the SVAI will make Saskatchewan even more competitive and effective in attracting investment to grow the industry and our province's economy."

The SVAI is a non-transferable 15 per cent tax rebate on capital expenditures valued at \$10 million or more for newly constructed or expanded value-added agriculture facilities in Saskatchewan.

The Income Tax Act Amendment Act, 2022 increases the credit from 15 per cent to 30 per cent for the portion of a project between \$450-\$600 million in value, and

from 15 per cent to 40 per cent on the portion of the project that is more than \$600 million in value.

The legislation caps the dollar value of the SVAI credit at \$250 million, meaning no single project can be eligible for more than that amount of SVAI tax relief.

Regulations for the Saskatchewan Technology Start-up Incentive (STSI) have been amended.

"The STSI has been a key part of our government's commitment to drive growth in the technology sector," Harpauer said.

"Since launching in 2018, the program has attracted over \$45 million of investment into 46 early-stage companies from over 230 angel investors."

The STSI encourages investment in early-stage technology start-ups that develop new products and create jobs. The program offers a non-refundable 45 per cent tax credit to Saskatchewan-based investors who invest in eligible technology start-up businesses.

Last year, the STSI was extended for five years.

This year, through amendments to the Saskatchewan Technology Start-up Incentive Regulations, the annual STSI tax credit cap is increasing from \$2.5 million to \$3.5 million.



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Schatz Leeds said there's still an adequate window for spring seeding

BY SIERRA D'SOUZA BUTTS
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER
Agronomist Wendy Schatz Leeds, at Sharpe's Crop Services in Moosomin, said the winter forecast expected to approach Southeast Saskatchewan near the end of April, should not affect farmers scheduled seeding, as there is still enough time for farmers to prepare for the grain season.

"We'll still be okay for moisture, typically 10 inches of snow would equate to one inch of moisture," she said.

"Our last snowfall measured just over a foot so we would've had about an inch of moisture. Some of the snow that had fallen over the weekend hasn't really melted very much yet, so we may not even get that full inch of moisture out of it."

"This next snowfall, these Colorado lows could typically be heavy wet snow which could bring another couple inches of moisture. Our soil profile can handle that, when in the last few years we've had normal moisture conditions so we haven't recharged our soil profile, so we have room, the only issue right now is the timing and where we are in the calendar."

Schatz Leeds said it may be too early to start panicking about the affects the potential spring blizzard could have for grain season.

"It will depend what comes on the weekend, we can also be back to normal if we get a heavy snow fall," she said.

"We're far from late yet, the last few years we typically started seeding this time in April and our cereals, especially wheat can go into the ground at a cooler soil temperature, as low as two degrees celsius. Because wheat can handle cooler soil temperatures, often farmers will start with that," she said.

"There's more research happening on earlier seeded wheat where they're even seeding into frost which is trickier, but there is research going into that to get your wheat in early."

Schatz Leeds said she is not concerned about producers not having enough time for seeding.

"We're still okay, I still do feel that we're not going to have really wet soil conditions, it really depends what's going to happen this weekend because those Colorado lows are hard to predict," she said.

"But if producers can put things in the ground really efficiently and if we have most of May, where we have no moisture events and the weather stays good, they can put a lot of acres in a day, if all conditions are good.

"I'm not concerned yet. If we were still not seeding by say the middle of May that would start to be a concern, probably for larger producers because you start to have issues if you plant crops in the first couple of weeks in June, they end up being in the wrong stage when the temperatures are high in July and then you also have the issue on the back end where how many frost free days do we have, so there's delays but we've still got a lot of weeks ahead of us."

"We've ended up in situations where we've been done seeding cereal in the early part in May and that's still too soon to seed canola. The canola needs eight to ten degrees soil temperature and we've had guys who had to physically wait a little bit to start their canola seeding."

She said if the air temperatures continue to stay low then that is when farmers should start to worry.

"It's less about the snow and more about our air temperatures, we're 10 degrees below normal right now and so the snow isn't going away, I think we all remember that spring snowfalls happen all the time but typically they're gone in a couple days and the snow is melted," Schatz Leeds said.

"The issue right now is our air temperature, less about the moisture. If things turn around and we get normal temperatures, the snow will slip away and we might be on the field. Lots of people are thinking the start of May, optimistically, which is still fine for seeding."

Schatz Leeds said in previous years farmers had the opportunity to start seeding in late April.

"We've had conditions that allowed us to seed earlier (in the past). We've taken advantage of those conditions to seed earlier and there's actually a movement now for early seeded wheat, where if you could seed earlier in the season you gain up to a bushel a day," she said.

"Let's say you seed two weeks sooner than normal, you can gain up to a bushel a day of yield. There is a movement, especially for wheat, because it can handle a two degree soil temperature."

"We've had conditions that allowed us to seed early and we had the crop that we can do it, it's been a win-win for producers."

"This is just a different year, I think you will always see guys try to seed in April for that specific reason with the cereal of wheat they can gain from advantage to that."



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Farmers anxious to get into seeding

Continued from front

"Last year was the earliest we've ever seeded," Hebert said.

"The last two years we were in a dry cycle in the spring so for sure, seeding has trended earlier. Start dates were more April 22-April 25, and I think May 1 is a lot more normal for our area."

Hebert said if seeding starts significantly later than usual, farmers may have to adjust.

"Depending on how late we get, you will start to see some crop rotations change," he said.

"Crops like oats and barley have less risk of fall frost, so depending on when the start date is, that's one thing you might see, some early-maturing cereal crops might go in."

"Right now some of the concerns are is it going to get dry enough that we can fill the air seeders right up without worrying about getting stuck. When you can only fill half full you can't get as many acres done in a day as you would hope. I think everyone is just concerned that they are 100 per cent ready. There can't be any mishaps when we do get the chance to go, because we're going to have to go pretty hard."

"My personal opinion is if we can still find a way to get this crop in the ground before June 1, it has the potential to be the most profitable year in southeast farms' history, because of commodity prices, even with higher expenses."

"After June 1, though, you start to get pretty nervous about what a fall frost could do. Those are expensive."

And the forces that have sent commodity prices higher show no signs of abating.

"I would say there are more things building up to keep commodity prices high in the next 12-18 months than things going against it. The big worry is on the expense side, fertilizer, equipment and fuel, does it continue to follow commodity prices up to a really high level? It's not that there's not margin left to be made, it's just that the risk that farmers have to take on in order to make the margin is higher."

"As farmers, we know if we don't do a good job of seeding, we don't make any money at all. It's always frustrating when you know you have to find those three weeks sometime in May, and every day you lose at the end of April and at the start of May are some pretty tough days to lose."

"It's not like we can take a tractor and push the snow off the field and start seeding. There's literally nothing we can do about it, so you focus on doing everything you can to be ready when the opportunity comes."

"Change is the only constant in farming, and in all businesses right now, so you have to be able to pivot with the data and with the circumstances you have in front of you."



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Soil health research helps expand Indigenous farming

BY BROOKE KLEIBOER

University of Saskatchewan (USask) undergraduate student Stephanie Le Courtois has been an integral part of a soil science research team collaborating with Indigenous communities in Saskatchewan to build strong, evidence-informed farming operations.

The research team is focusing on creating a detailed profile of soil health and quality of lands on the Mistawasis Nēhiyawak and Cowessess First Nations, working in collaboration with their lands departments. The knowledge will be shared with the communities to help with agricultural decisions.

"Agriculture is a huge player in the Saskatchewan economy," said Le Courtois, who is majoring in Resource Science in the Bachelor of Science in Renewable Resource Management degree program offered by USask's College of Agriculture and Bioresources.

"Being more informed about soil conditions helps to make more informed decisions regarding best agricultural and land management practices," she said.

Researchers collected soil samples in the spring and fall from cultivated land, native grassland, and forested regions of both Indigenous communities. The team is conducting lab analysis of these samples to determine soil health after previous agricultural activity in each area. Potential



USask agriculture undergraduate researcher, Stephanie Le Courtois

the amount of water and nutrients the soil can maintain and provides an indicator of its health.

"We collected samples from these different environments to compare the effects of different land uses on soil, contributing to a holistic understanding of the land. Eventually, it will provide a more thorough documented status of soil characteristics, and therefore health and quality," said Le Courtois.

The research, supervised and led by USask soil biogeochemist Dr. Melissa Arcand (PhD), aims to collaborate with Indigenous communities to understand the current state of their agricultural lands. Indigenous communities can ultimately use the knowledge to inform agricultural land use decisions, including potential farm expansion or restoration efforts.

The project will provide updated knowledge on important factors such as soil nutrient status, soil carbon, and salinity and form the basis for decisions on farming operations in the next growing season.

"This research can benefit Mistawasis Nēhiyawak and Cowessess because, by working with First Nations land managers, we can increase community awareness of the impacts of agriculture on reserve land. Knowledge about soil conditions helps to make more informed decisions regarding best agricultural and land management practices," said Le Courtois.

After completing this project, the team hopes to expand on the work by collaborating with Indigenous communities on agricultural issues related to climate change.

"Over the course of my life, I have developed a love and appreciation for the natural world—of its beauty and ability to sustain us," said Le Courtois. "Saskatchewan and Canada are beautiful and productive places, and I hope to develop a career that works to sustainably manage and protect these natural environments."

The research is supported by the Canada Tri-Agency New Frontiers in Research Fund's Exploration Grant program.

impacts of previous agricultural use include erosion and altered nutrient cycles.

Variables such as the level of carbon present and texture can help determine



An agricultural field work site at Cowessess where soil samples were obtained for the study.

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What does it really cost to live on the farm?

BY MATT MCINTOSH

It's hard to fix a problem when the problem itself is unknown. When it comes to finances, not knowing where your money is going makes planning difficult.

Living and working in the same place can make this even more challenging. On the farm, separating true business expenses from personal costs is critical to financial preparedness—whether in the transition process or day-to-day business management.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO LIVE?

"The biggest factor is so many things are blended. Sometimes it skews our idea of the cost of living," says Audree Morin, an FCC business advisor based in Guelph, Ont.

A dairy farmer herself, Morin lists a variety of expenses that commonly get confused between personal and business costs, including fuel, utilities, vehicle payments, and even seemingly straightforward expenses like rodent control. Putting the right expense in the right category can surprise farm families when they see just how costly it is to live on and maintain a farm property, or alternatively, how much it would cost to live away from the farm.

The consequence of not knowing these things is, for example, being unsure how much you need to retire. For an incoming generation, it becomes challenging to accurately determine how much income the farm needs to generate to support the family, and potentially multiple families, plus how much off-farm income may be required.

It's also harder to know where cuts can be made in tough years, or if the right approach is being taken with regards to taxes. Blurring the line between personal and farm expenses can result in surprises at year-end. Even misunderstanding how to move cash within the business—say, by paying one parent via corporate dividends in a way that compromises the family's ability to access certain childcare benefits—can add to the burden.

"If you have this conversation proactively you know exactly what you are in for and can stay on top of income tax," Morin says.

HOW TO SEPARATE EXPENSES

Thinking critically is the first step to identifying how much it costs to live on and run the farm. Doing so means seriously considering which expenses are leg-



gitimately business-related, and which are not.

Monthly payments for a new truck, for example, can sometimes lean more towards personal lifestyle preferences than business necessity. Similarly, it might be possible to fold otherwise unrelated house renovations into farm business costs. In both cases lifestyle expenses will artificially drop, while business costs inflate.

"Gas is another expense usually buried in the farm. Some customers already keep a log of personal kilometres, or you can use an estimate for your personal vehicle to make a projection on your fuel cost," Morin says. Regarding utilities, a percentage of existing electricity costs can be used to know the true impact on personal expenses, should the farm no longer cover the full amount.

Keeping track of expenses can be overwhelming, making it difficult to know where to begin. Morin says this is particularly true for those just beginning to proactively manage farm and personal finances, as well as those working through the succession process.

On her own farm, Morin began by using a budgeting spreadsheet acquired through

their personal finance advisor to manage their personal expenses. She also encourages the use of accounting software that can help articulate expense categories.

"Having clarity on your numbers allows for more meaningful conversations with technical advisors," she says. "It allows you to be more proactive. Any of these tools can help get you started. Always talk to your technical advisors."

FCC COST OF LIVING CALCULATOR

With her own experiences in mind—and with experience helping families transition generations—Morin and her colleagues Corey Henderson and Joel Bokenfohr began building a dual business and personal expense cost-of-living calculator for FCC customers.

"We were giving examples to families, but we could tell they wanted more guidance. I shared the tool I use at home and

wanted to make it more succession-friendly for our customers," Morin says.

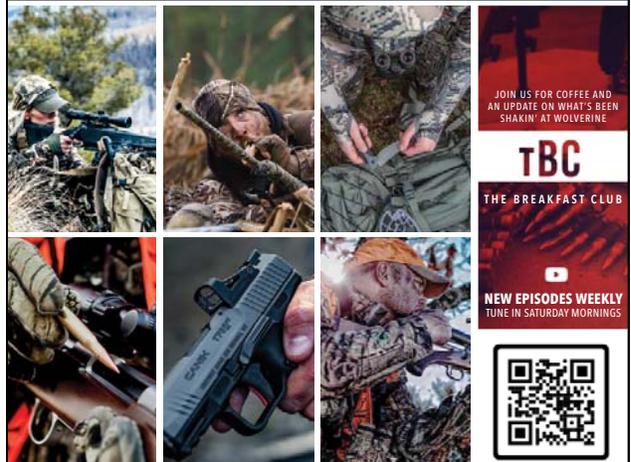
"A separate tab lets you keep track of income from different sources. It can be used by the senior generation to know what they need, and also the junior generation for evaluating what is needed to support them as the farming family." She adds data from the latest Statistics Canada agriculture census was employed to develop expense categories.

"You can enter data on an annual basis or monthly, whichever is easier. It helps with loans too, while giving you a good understanding of how much you need to live."

Try FCC's cost of living calculator for yourself. As with any accounting system, the calculator was built using common categories and statistical averages. Always be mindful of the unique characteristics of your individual business.

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APAS sends letter of recommendations for agricultural programs to government

BY SIERRA D'SOUZA BUTTS
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS) released a list of 19 recommendations for developing the next five-year funding agreement for agricultural programs, to the federal and provincial governments to consider, on April 12.

Bill Prybylski, vice-president of APAS, explained why the association felt it was important to release a list of recommendations that can assist in improving the agriculture sector.

"Recognizing that the next policy framework will come into affect April 1 of 2023, we felt this was a good opportunity to make some recommendations to the federal and provincial government as to how we feel some of the programs can be improved," Prybylski said.

"How the programs can be made to be a little more responsive to the needs of farmers in Saskatchewan."

Prybylski explained how APAS came up with the recommendations on the list.

"Through discussions with stakeholders of different commodity groups, accountants, we discussed it also with our APAS membership, and the members of our task force just sitting around the table," he said.

"We were discussing the programs as they are and where they felt there were shortcomings, and what we might be able to do to improve those programs."

The main recommendations APAS included in their list are the following:

- Restore AgriStability coverage through performance and participation incentives and allow Crop Insurance premiums as an expense.

- Maintain AgriInvest with enhancements to make the program more flexible.

- Reform AgriRecovery into a more comprehensive disaster response program.

- Recognize the importance of Agri-Insurance and create a national cost shared Livestock price in-

surance program.

- Improve access to Trade and Market Development programs for smaller acre crops and niche commodities and create a program to respond to trade disruptions.

- Support research funding from discovery science to commercialization.

- Recognize environmental benefits from agriculture in a separate funding category in the framework agreement and ensure regionally appropriate environmental programming.

APAS has been working on the list of recommendations with stakeholders and other businesses since October of last year.

"We started working on our recommendations back in October, when we first started meeting as a group to come up with some suggestions."

Prybylski further explains the recommendation of "recognizing environmental benefits from agriculture in a separate funding category."

"We want to recognize that producers over the last 30 years made changes to the way that we farm and many of those changes have been beneficial to the environment and we would like to be recognized for that," Prybylski said.

"We felt that the things producers are doing, are a benefit to the environment, it also benefits society as a whole and perhaps society should look at ways on how they can help fund those advances in technology, those operating procedures that are good for the environment."

"If it's good for the whole public, then maybe some of that funding should come from resources other than agricultural funding."

Prybylski was asked what his thoughts are about the federal government's plan on reducing fertilizer by 20 per cent, which was recently announced in the 2022 federal budget.

"I understand that the reduction target is in the emissions of fertilizer usage. I guess that's a tough



Vice-president of APAS, Bill Prybylski, explains why it is important the provincial and federal government considers the list of 19 recommendations developing the next five-year funding agreement for agricultural programs.

one for us to swallow here," he said.

"We've been adopting practices that have reduced our emissions from the use of fertilizer, the direct seeding, the GPS, so we've been doing things to reduce our fertilizer usage."

"Certainly there's likely things coming down the line, new technologies that will be adapted if producers can see some benefit to it they will adopt those practices, but picking a number out of the air and saying 'this is what we have to do', I don't know if it's realistic and benefits producers."

He said APAS's recommendation of "recognizing environmental benefits from agriculture" sits closely to the federal government's plan for farmers to reduce their fertilizer usage.

"Over the last 20 to 30 years, we've adopted technologies that have reduced our emissions from fertilizers to more efficient use of the fertilizer, and more target use of it," he said.

"We made the investments, we've not been

centives for improving the coverage levels of agriculture stability, we feel that's a very important recommendation," he said.

"There's been lots of criticism with AgriStability, but that's the program we have to work with and if we can make those improvements recognizing that producers are doing things on their farm to mitigate that risk so that they're not in a claim position, and that they should be rewarded for that somehow."

Prybylski explained how AgriStability can help producers.

"We felt that increased coverage levels would reward good producers for good management practices," he said.

"AgriStability is a program that will ensure producers margins to a certain level of their historical margin, basically if the insurance is to cover a percentage of their historical margins and by increasing that coverage level, every year we'll give producers more financial protection for their margins."

Anticipated response from the government

Prybylski said the purpose of the list of recommendations made by APAS is for the provincial

and federal government to consider the agriculture group's suggestions.

He was asked when he expects the government to acknowledge APAS's recommendations.

"We know that the federal, provincial and territorial ag ministers are meeting in Saskatoon in July, and we would hope that we will have an indication from them at least, what they think about our recommendations before that meeting," he said.

"Likely a lot of the lateral agreements will be signed at that meeting, we're hoping that maybe in a couple months from now we will hear back from them."

He was asked why the provincial and federal government should consider the list of recommendations in developing the next five-year funding agreement for agricultural programs.

"As a general farm organization I feel that we have a pulse on the needs of producers in the province and we feel that these recommendations are what's needed to help producers mitigate the increasing risks that they are facing every year," said Prybylski.

"By improving the programs that already exist, we feel that these are reasonable requests and is something we're certainly hoping the government considers."



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Canadian Agricultural Human Resources Council Winners named in National Business Case competition

Students from 10 institutions took part in inaugural competition

The Canadian Agricultural Human Resources Council (CAHRC), in partnership with the Business + Higher Education Roundtable (BHER) has announced the winning team in the inaugural Growing Our People: National Business Case Competition.

The successful team consisted of Emily Gibson (University of Guelph), Styn Nieuwenhuis (Olds College), and Partha Saha (College of the North Atlantic) who presented a well-articulated approach to the real-world business problem provided by Viana Farms of Alberta.

Overall, students from ten post-secondary institutions across Canada took part in the competition.

"Programs like Growing Our People provide unique opportunities for post-secondary students to explore rewarding careers in Canadian agriculture," said Jennifer Wright, Acting Ex-

ecutive Director at CAHRC.

"These students, often coming from outside agriculture, are the future of Canada and their new skills and fresh ideas are a tremendous opportunity for agriculture as a whole."

Under-represented groups, such as women, newcomers, Indigenous people, and people with disabilities were particularly encouraged to take part in the competition, as their unique

perspectives are what is needed in agriculture.

While the primary agriculture industry is already facing significant labour gaps, CAHRC research indicates that in 2017, 16,500 jobs went unfilled in Canada's agriculture sector, costing the sector \$2.9 billion in lost revenues, or 4.7 per cent of product sales.

This same research forecasts the sector's labour gap will

nearly double over the next 10 years, reaching 123,000 people by 2029.

Prize funds were generously donated by the Canadian Agri-Business Education Foundation (CABEF).

CABEF awards scholarships annually to Canadian students who are entering or currently pursuing an agricultural-related program full-time at a Canadian college, university, or apprentice-

ship (trade) institution.

"We are very appreciative of the support we received from CABEF as well as post-secondary institutions across Canada," added Wright.

"The participating students demonstrated remarkable insights in the case submissions. Agriculture will be a fortunate field with them in our workforce."

CAHRC will be running the next iteration of the Growing our People National Business Case Competition in fall 2022. Full details will be distributed closer to that time but for more information on participating contact Nadee Imran, AgriTalent Program Manager at nimran@cahrc-ccrha.ca. Growing Our People is part of a suite of programs aimed at introducing post-secondary students to rewarding careers in Canadian agriculture. Find out more at: <https://cahrc-ccrha.ca/programs/agritalent>.



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FCC offering higher credit lines in light of higher input costs

Farm Credit Canada is offering enhanced credit line options and increased crop input loan limits to address recent input cost increases in Canada's agriculture and food industry.

"We want to ensure producers and food processors have sufficient capital to bridge any cash flow gaps during this time of multiple input cost increases," said FCC President and CEO Michael Hoffort.

"In practical terms, this could mean being able to replenish the fuel tanks before heading out to the field or having the cash flow to hire additional employees to keep the processing plant running at capacity."

"We want to ensure our customers have the working capital to buy whatever inputs they need - when they need them - to keep their day-to-day operations running smoothly," he added.

FCC is offering credit limit increases to crop input financing customers who meet specific pre-approval criteria, ensuring they have access to the capital they need for the upcoming growing season.

Building strategies to counter inflation and interest rates

Inflation and interest rates can be touchy points for farmers, especially those who lived through the 1980s. Land prices dropped in the 1980s and in the early 1990s, driven lower by record-high interest rates, poor commodity prices and drought.

Concerns about inflation and rising interest rates returned in 2021, and although both are out of farmers' control, producers can use an understanding of these risks to mute their effects.

Inflation has a direct impact on farmers' costs of production, as well as interest rates, as the Bank of Canada (BOC) will adjust its policy rate until inflation is around 2%, explains J.P. Gervais, FCC vice-president and chief economist.

What farmers can do with in-depth knowledge of inflation and interest rates is develop a strategy, one that starts with understanding their debt repayment capacity and how higher interest rates would influence it:

- determine the net income your business generates
- calculate debt obligations
- work out how much room you have to phase in higher interest rates

"The idea is to understand what kind of risk you're exposed to and es-

tablish a financial strategy in line with your risk exposure, as well as your aversion or ability to take on some risk," Gervais says.

He believes one strategy may be to lock in interest rates to avoid paying higher rates down the road.

"When you lock in rates, usually you pay a higher interest rate, but you have this assurance that you're going to be okay from a financial standpoint paying that debt down."

If computing financial ratios seems overwhelming, there's nothing that says these steps need to be taken alone. Consult your banker, accountant, farm manager and anyone else who can help run relevant economic scenarios and simulations and devise a sound strategy for your operation.

The federal Crown corporation is also offering a two-year credit line for qualified customers to access up to a maximum of \$500,000 to provide customers with additional financial flexibility.

FCC will continue to consider other options, such as debt re-structuring, to support customers in financial difficulty.

"FCC is committed to the success of the Canadian agriculture and food industry," Hoffort said.

"We recognize this may be both a challenging and critical time for producers, agribusinesses and processors. By helping our customers throughout every business cycle, we help strengthen the industry and position it for long-term success."

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Still waiting for the promise of spring . . .

I am pretty sure I spoke of the promise of spring in my last column and here we are, one month later, still staring at mounds of snow with even more predicted to come. I would never have thought that when I left for Regina for an eye appointment a couple of weeks ago, I would end up storm stayed, only to return home four days later.

But my worries were minor compared to those of the cattle farmers in the SE part of our province and the SW part of our neighbouring province to the east. It was brutal for cows and calves alike but most especially for the newborn calves and all young livestock.

The cattle ranchers who braved the snowdrifts and the wind to care for their animals are to be commended for doing all they could for them - moving snow, digging calves out of snowbanks, drying calves off, getting them into shelters where possible.

It can sometimes be an impossible task when the weather makes it difficult to reach livestock, let alone care adequately for them.

Going way back in time, in fact some 45 years ago, on April 9, the temperature was 27 degrees C. I remember the day well for some reason and I have to say, in all that time since, we've never celebrated an anniversary with weather such as it was then.

I mean, there we were, about to be married and my hubby-to-be wasn't sure we should proceed with the wedding because the fields were dry and he was ready to start seeding.

It was probably a pretty good indication that the farm would forever be in the forefront of his every waking moment. I believed there ought to be a balance between work and leisure; alas he thought not, at least not for the first 40 years.

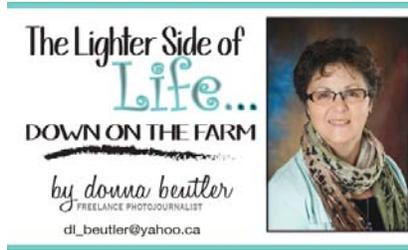
Though Covid has kept us mostly home for the past two years and now with personal bouts of Covid behind us (well, except for the lingering fatigue and loss of taste), we headed to the mountains for a five night get-away. Going through Regina, I suggested perhaps we should look at moving there because it would save us a lot of trips for medical appointments. Hubby had no words, literally no words. It was more of 'a look' moment as he glared from his side of the car.

It's amazing, isn't it, how getting away from home puts all the "busyness" of our lives and all things 'farm' onto the back burner, replaced only with the biggest decision of the day - where shall we eat supper tonight? It was a sweet retreat to be sitting in the hot tub at night beneath the star-studded skies amongst the tall evergreens and the mountains rising up all around us and to be able to just unwind, chat (no farm-talk allowed and apparently no retirement talk either) and enjoy some restorative do-nothing time.

Not only did we enjoy some 'mountain' time, but some time in Calgary with family. As we were heading south on Deerfoot (during rush hour no less), I was anticipating a visit with our nieces who grew up on the farm right next to us. I was feeling a bit nostalgic since it was to be our last night in Alberta and I was really enjoying being in the city. That prompted me to suggest retiring to Calgary some day! Hubby's response began more as a growl, I would say, before I heard, "We are never moving to the city!" Perhaps I should have made my suggestion while we were still on Stony Plain and not going down Deerfoot at rush hour? LOL, I guess we are staying put - on or near the farm - FOREVER!

Reality of course strikes fairly quickly once you arrive home and dreams of moving to the city quickly died the day we returned home. Those darn farm books were sitting right where I'd left them. Talk about a rude homecoming seeing that stack of files sitting on the corner of the kitchen table.

Of course, things could be worse than farm accounting woes as Easter week would prove. I welcomed my two youngest grands (8 & 5) that week, during which they would both get haircuts. I pulled hubby's truck into a spot on main street and parked. Then I decided to back up a bit further from the half ton parked in front of me for some reason. The kids and I went in and their hairdresser, bless her heart had hidden four little Easter eggs for each of them to find. They were so excited! When they prepared to leave,



she gave them a few more. Now I'm not sure which pockets they put them in but by the time we walked out the door, they were in tears because they each thought the other had taken some of theirs.

The five-year-old was sobbing, "I had four and ate one and got five more so I should have eight but I only have five," counting through her tears. She was devastated and it was obvious, at least to her, that the problem was her brother—he must have taken some of hers.

By the time we got to the truck, they were both crying over how many Easter eggs they each had (or didn't have). And that's when I heard a couple of people call out my name. I truly hoped they weren't thinking I was being an awful Grandma because I am sure they heard me saying, "Kids, kids, stop crying, just buckle up and we will sort it out at home!"

That's when I heard, "Someone backed into your truck, Donna," they said. Oh no!

You have to know my husband's OCD when it comes to his vehicles, not counting the old farm ones. It was bad enough someone had stolen that beautiful new-to-us 10-year-old half ton with only 29,000 k's on it a couple of years back, but now this! The new truck was no longer in a state of perfection and I was the one that was going to have to tell him.

I hopped into the truck, two crying children in the back seat, and headed home. We got into the house, two kids with tears falling and me searching through pockets, only to discover that we indeed could account for the necessary grand total of eggs. I dried the tears, told them they could eat as many as they wanted and turned to face my husband.

"I have something to tell you," I choked out. There was not a word from him, eyes big. "Someone bumped into your truck when I was parked on main street." Wow, I haven't seen him move that fast in a long time—out the door he went.

"Did you phone the police?" he asked when he came back in. "No," I said. "No one died." I am not absolutely certain, but I am guessing that wasn't the best answer. And so it came to be that lazy Tuesday afternoon, that hubby made his calls—to the witnesses on the street, to the police, to SGI and to the auto body shop. Meanwhile I maintained my response was appropriate for the time—no one had died and the kids were crying their eyes out over lost eggs. I was hardly going to call the police over the 'hit-and-run', not at least at that moment.

With all this excitement now fading into our memories, we have moved onto preparing machinery for spring seeding, moving cattle out to more open spaces and prepping for our move to the camper on the farm! The towels and bedding are boxed up, the kids' snacks bagged up and the camper groceries are piled high. Now if only we could actu-

ally get to the camper. Short of shoveling six feet of snow leading up to the unit, I think we will need to exercise a bit more patience. I can't wait for camper life at the farm - you know, those 5:00 a.m. tractor starts, the guys calling across the yard to be heard over the roar of machinery, hubby's burnt egg and the squeal of the smoke detector three feet from the bedroom. Oh the life! On a final note, though I was saddened to hear of Joe's passing, we won't be hearing that darn rooster crowing when the sun comes up anymore. So there's that.

The twins (nearly 12) are anxiously awaiting our return to the farm, most assuredly for the treats I am sure. They will laugh at my notebook on which I write what's been seeded where and when because they don't need anything in writing.

It's all up top and they are always bang-on, proof that what interests them is perfectly remembered. So when I mark down canola seeded on the SE quarter of wherever, they will stroke it with disdain. "Oh Grandma, that's canola stubble there. You don't seed canola on canola stubble." Bet they don't know the quarter section numbers like I do, though!

With my youngest grands visiting over Easter week, I have had some interesting discussions with them. On the first morning, after we cleared the cobwebs from our brain, we sat together on the couch and Hayden's first comment of the morning was to inform me that his mom and dad weren't having any more children. Hhhmmmm, how much more information was I going to glean from this eight-year-old?

In my best effort to steer the conversation away from family planning discussions, I told Hayden I needed to get to work and get the bed made and the dishwasher loaded. "Oh Grandma," he said, "It's Easter week, you don't have to do any of that on Easter week." "Ahhh," I said to him.

"We don't have to eat then either. Yayyyyyy, I don't have to cook this week." His half grin said it all and indeed, I think he got the message—there are some things you just gotta do, holiday week or not!

And so, as we grain farmers await warmer days and the disappearance of fence-line snowdrifts, we will make the best of our time, preparing machinery, moving cattle to drier plains, purchasing or picking up inputs and parts and supplies and on those snowy off-times, we will make the most of our time with the grands—playing games, baking, painting, watching movies, creating spa moments (oh the water on the floor) and making slime (oh the goo on my bathroom cupboard doors). Who knew I would one day have a slime lab in my bathroom?

And so, as I finally bring this column to an end and as we celebrate Ag Week at this time of year, my wish for all our cattle and grain farmers and all those involved in the agriculture industry is that the spring season is not just safe and successful, but that it is one that brings you a sense of accomplishment and pride as well.

Be sure to take the time to replenish your soul with some restful moments along the way and for those who are raising the next generation of farmers, may the wonder in their eyes never cease as you share your love of land and livestock!

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Risk of seed-placed fertilizer on canola emergence

BY WARREN WARD

Toxicity and salt effect from fertilizer can damage canola seed and seedlings, and reduce the return on investment for seed. One way to increase canola emergence rates is to keep all fertilizer out of the seed row—except for a starter rate of phosphate.

The risk of seed-placed fertilizer comes from the nitrogen component of ammonium phosphate, ammonium sulphate and all nitrogen fertilizers. Ammonia can damage crops through direct toxicity while nitrate will damage seedlings by desiccation through the salt effect. Potassium fertilizers also have a high salt index and should not go in the seed row.

Why is phosphorus the exception?

Phosphorus supply during the first two to six weeks of canola growth is critical to achieve optimal yield. Given that phosphorus availability is reduced under wet, cold conditions, canola benefits from a seed-placed supply of phosphorus fertilizer.

But not too much. Apply just enough to give each seed equal access to starter phosphate prills or drop-lets but not so much that the ammonium reduces emergence. A seed-placed rate equivalent to 20 lb./ac. of P2O5 (~40 lb./ac. of monoammonium phosphate) will balance those two objectives. This approach shows the interactions of the Right rate at the Right time in the Right place as part of 4R Nutrient Stewardship.

How to reduce the nitrogen risk

Under some circumstances, growers can safely apply a little extra ammonium phosphate or nitrogen fertilizer with canola seed. Factors that reduce the risk from seed-placed nitrogen are:

Seedbed moisture. Water dilutes the concentration of nitrogen molecules around the seed and seedling, and disperses nitrogen molecules throughout the soil. This moisture reduces fertilizer concentrations around the seed.

Fertilizer source. Polymer coating or urease inhibitors slow the release of ammonia and ammonium from urea.

Seed bed utilization (SBU). High SBU – which can be achieved with wider openers and narrow row spacing—will lower the risk because seed and fertilizer are spread over a larger area.

Soil pH. Lower soil pH reduces the risk from seed-placed nitrogen. That is why safe rates are generally higher in Saskatchewan and Alberta than in Manitoba. Soil texture. Heavy (clay) soils lower the risk and



A farmer seeding canola.

Canola Council of Canada photo

light (sandy) soils increase the risk.

Test the safety of seed-placed rates

These factors don't eliminate the risk entirely, so a large percentage of fertilizer will still have to go outside the seed row to give canola seeds a safe place to emerge and contribute to yield.

To test the effect of seed-placed fertilizer, turn off seed-placed fertilizer runs for a 100-foot strip in some fields. Mark these areas and then go back and do plant counts early in the season to compare treated and untreated strips.

The Nutrient Management section at CanolaEncyclopedia.ca has more on the placement of fertilizer (under each macronutrient heading), and a chapter on the 4R stewardship practices – Right source of fertilizer used at the Right rate, at the Right time and in the Right place. For a more detailed version of this article, look for "Right rates for seed-placed fertilizer" at canola-watch.org/fundamentals. While there, please sign up to receive our timely Canola Watch agronomy emails.

Warren Ward is an agronomy specialist with the Canola Council of Canada. Email wardw@canolacouncil.org.

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Spring blizzard impacted cattle producers mentally and financially

BY SIERRA D'SOUZA BUTTS
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Cattle producers have been affected tremendously since a snowstorm in mid-April hit Southeast Saskatchewan and Southwest Manitoba.

Many producers lost calves in the April 14 blizzard were worried last week about the forecast of another snowstorm on April 23.

Many producers lost calves in the April blizzard.

"If we get hit hard again and there's no support, then we would lose producers, they'd be done. They're that much on the line right now," said RM of Moosomin reeve David Moffatt.

"These bigger ranches took a major hit, we're talking anywhere from 800 to 1000 head calving out. A typical death loss on a herd in a season is around 10 per cent. These producers hit 10 per cent in those two days because of the weather, and some of these guys are getting 50 to 60 calves a day coming in."

Bill MacPherson, RM of Silverwood reeve, said he was fortunate to have a herd small enough that he could shelter all of his calves.

"The bulk of our calves are three weeks to a month old, but we're only 250 head, we're small enough we have places for them," said MacPherson.

"The reason larger producers calve now is to get away from the cold weather because they're calving in such big numbers they can't shelter them, but these producers need the sheer numbers to survive, that's why they're calving right now because they just can't afford to have all these facilities for them."

However, Moffatt points out that farmers whose herds calved in over the winter were impacted by the storm as well.

"Some of those who calved early, a couple producers I've talked to, they had 15 head they had to doctor already with sickness so it's affecting them too, not just the guys calving now," he said.

"The snow has come at a terrible time, everyone knows that even the producers know its moisture, even after what we've been through, with the dry conditions last year and the lack of feed, but it's a kick to the gut. It could have been rain, that would've been a lot better."

Farmers hurt mentally and financially from loss of calves

Moffatt said it is mentally draining for producers to dedicate countless hours to their calves, only to lose them by the snow conditions that arrive in spring.

"The workload that these producers do, they gather these calves up to get them dried up, so they need to be pulled from their moms then they go back to their moms afterwards," he said.

"By the time they're dried off, their scent is gone and producers are trying to match them up again. Between chores doing that, the mental stress on these people is unbelievable.

"They've done whatever they could to try and keep these calves alive and they get hit with this (snowstorm), and now we're in for another one right afterwards."

"The financial losses are hard to estimate. Some of the calves are under the snow, producers don't even know (what's missing)."

A decade ago, Moffatt said he experienced a similar situation to what is happening now.

"This storm we had a warning of, which I give credit to because I had a pile of time to prepare this time. In 2011 I didn't," he said.

"In 2011 our cows broke out of the pasture and came to the yard, we lost six out of a small operation. We were out looking the next day because we knew one of the cows had given birth, she calved somewhere, we were looking and looking and we never found that calf, until that storm started to melt a day or two after.



RM OF SILVERWOOD REEVE
BILL MACPHERSON

"Ten feet from the house, my son's big trampoline was there and the calf was under the trampoline, but the snow had piled in and he couldn't get his first milk. We lost him, we didn't even know he was there."

MacPherson said after experiencing the drought last summer and the snowstorm this year, it has been a rough season for producers.

"They fed these animals all winter, and with the drought last summer, all the cattlemen scavenged every bit of feed and straw we could get a hold of," he said.

"For ourselves, we start feeding October 1, we never start feeding before November 1, but everything was and grazed off, there was nothing growing past August."

In addition to the poor weather conditions affecting farmers, Moffatt said the prices and lack of grain in the country is an added stress to producers.

"There's hardly any feed grain in the country now and what is there, the prices are so high for the feed, for what we're getting for these animals, it's almost a backwards deal," he said.

Unlike grain producers, there are limited insurance programs to help cattle producers.

"The grain farmers with crop insurance and everything, they can go to the bank and the bank knows they're guaranteed a certain amount such as their input cost at least. The cattle industry doesn't have that," he said.

Moffatt said the best possible insurance program that could exist for cattle farmers would consist of "farmers knowing they can get their total production cost back."

"With the price of grains and land prices skyrocketing, it has forced a lot of these pastures to be broken up and they're out of the rotation now," Moffatt said.

"Everything's getting depleted, the grain cost has gone sky high which is allowing these lands to be bought, when the calf prices have been the same for years."

MacPherson also said throughout the years everything in the farming industry has increased in prices, except for cattle.

"When we did get a jump in cattle prices and actually made a profit when selling them last fall, all of a sudden that \$40 round bale was worth \$65," he said.

"Everyone jacked everything up on the other side so we weren't making anymore money."

He said cattle have not gone up in price because retailers have been in control.

"We have not got control of the industry, the retail and packers have control," said MacPherson.

He was asked if there is a way to prevent losing calves, knowing there is a chance of snow arriving during calving season every year.

"You can always back your calving up,



RM OF MOOSOMIN REEVE
DAVID MOFFATT

you can bring your calving forward, but there's so little to be made in this industry. Let's say you back your calving up further into the end of May to June, you've likely run out of grass at home. These cattle go to pasture all over the place so you're feeding them, and the price of feeding these animals right now is ridiculous, and there's no feed to buy."

Government support

The following Monday after the snowstorm hit town, Moffatt said the RM of Moosomin had a meeting with local farm producers and spoke about bringing back the Provincial Disaster Assistance Pro-

gram (PDAP).

"I started getting calls from the producers in the area and they asked if there's anything the RMs can do to help us," said Moffatt.

"We called them and they started having some meetings and we heard they're going to do that program again.

"If we have another bad storm, they'll be two separate claims that people can apply for."

PDAP helps residents, small businesses, agricultural operations, First Nations, non-profit organizations and communities recover from natural disasters.

Moffatt said producers can apply for PDAP to help them recover from the loss they took due to the snow storm.

"However farmers must meet the requirements of being in an "eligible assistance area."

The RM of Moosomin has already declared itself an eligible assistance area.

"If a vet can verify that these calves have gotten sick from the storms, then you can apply for this coverage," said MacPherson.

MacPherson said PDAP will help farmers financially, but further action is required in order to help farmers who are suffering mentally. "I can't stress enough the mental challenges these guys will be facing this year," he said.

MacPherson was asked why he chooses to be in the cattle industry with all the challenges. "There's nothing like a great week when you're calving and see all these calves running around playing, it's just the most wonderful thing you can ever witness," MacPherson said.

"I feel bad for everyone who lost calves. It's a feeling of accomplishment when you have those beautiful new calves and then all of a sudden this storm comes and they're dead. You hear the mamas calling for their calves for the next two three days and it just kills you."



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Nuffield Canada Scholarship applications are open

Applications for 2022 Nuffield Canada Agricultural Scholarships are now open and the deadline to apply is June 30, 2022.

The Nuffield Scholarship is a prestigious rural leadership program available to Canadian citizens who are involved in any aspect of agriculture. Its goal is to attract mid-career scholars with a passion for agriculture who are ready to challenge themselves in a program of self-directed international travel and study. The experience results in personal and professional benefits, while adding value to Canadian agriculture as scholars assume positions of greater influence in their field.

This \$15,000 scholarship provides individuals with a unique opportunity to: access the world's most extensive network in food and farming; achieve personal development through travel and study; and deliver long-term benefits to Canadian farmers and growers, and to the industry as a whole.

"Nuffield Canada is part of a global network of Nuffield alumni who support each other in their travel studies to learn more about various aspects of agriculture," explains Blake Vince, Nuffield Canada Chair and 2013 Scholar. "This unique scholarship opportunity develops new influencers that go on to reshape our Canadian agricultural sector with revitalized innovation, global perspectives, and



The 2022 Scholars for Nuffield Canada are from left: Odette Menard (QC), Lauren Park (NS), Ingrid Johnston (BC), Ken Coles (AB), Shawn Moan (SK), and Mark Phillips (PE). Nuffield Scholars have 24 months to complete their travel study, write a report, and present to the Board. 2023 Scholar applications are open now through to June 30 at nuffield.ca.

Theresa Whalen photo

leadership."

Recipients can come from any capacity of primary production, industry, or governance of agriculture and must do a minimum of 10 weeks of travel study within 24 months to examine and research an agriculturally relevant issue. They then write a report on their self-directed research findings and make a presenta-

tion at Nuffield Canada's Annual General Meeting.

"The opportunity to become a part of a global network of leaders in agriculture and the chance to explore new ideas abroad compelled me to apply for the Nuffield scholarship," said 2019 Canadian Nuffield Scholar Ryan Boyd from Forrest, Manitoba. "The scholars that I have

met over the years have been impressive individuals and all can't say enough positive things about their Nuffield experience."

The 2022 named scholarship sponsors are Canadian Canola Growers Association, Alberta Wheat Commission, Farm Credit Canada, and the PEI Department of Agriculture and Land. However not all sponsor-

ships are crop-related as additional sponsorships are coming online and there are also sponsorships by Nuffield Canada Alumni. Scholarships are open to livestock, aquaculture, fisheries, forestry, organic and Indigenous production, or any other relevant sector of modern agriculture. Anyone interested in learning more about Nuffield Canada and the application process please visit www.nuffield.ca.

Nuffield Canada was established in Canada in 1950 and incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1986. It currently has more than 130 alumni. As part of a larger international community, Nuffield Canada has affiliate organizations in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Kenya, Netherlands, New Zealand, South Africa, United Kingdom, United States of America, and Zimbabwe. Scholar recipients become members of the global Nuffield alumni network, more than 1,800 strong, who in return host and help current traveling scholars.



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