

Topsoil Offers: Pros and Cons

Development in the Calgary area has displaced an abundant excess of so-called “topsoil,” and many landowners have accepted the offers to improve the quality of their soil by taking excess soil. There may be some advantages, but there may be some hidden disadvantages in accepting soil on your fields.

Consider the following:

1. Topsoil may not be topsoil, but may include a high percentage of clay or contaminants.
2. Some of the most likely contaminants will be perennial weeds, spilled fuels and rocks.
3. If topsoil is high in clay and previously compacted, crop growth is usually reduced and the soil profile is changed (poor quality soil on top of your own better quality soil).
4. Poor quality topsoil may also decrease crop growth by preventing water infiltration and uptake of moisture by crops.
5. When top dressing permanent hayfields, any more than 2-3 inches may suffocate the crop, requiring re-seeding.
6. Filling low areas and wetlands is contrary to Provincial and County wetland policies.
7. The functions of wetlands is lost when filled in (groundwater recharge; sponge effect to capture rainwater, store phosphorus, prevent surface water runoff into county roadways; etc.).
8. Depending on placement of topsoil, drainage patterns can be changed, usually causing faster removal of rain and snow melt. Flooding of county roadways and neighbouring properties often result.
9. Berming of agricultural lands may provide some flooding protection, but may cause off-site flooding impacts as noted above.

Consider carefully whether you can live with the costs of these risks. Ask for some additional information about the site from which the soil came and a soil analysis to determine clay content and chemical contaminants (including residual herbicides). Also, check with the County for the development permit requirements before you make your decision. Development Services can be reached by calling 403-230-1401.

ROCKY VIEW COUNTY'S AGRICULTURAL SERVICE BOARD

Implementing agricultural policies, programs, and services which support a sustainable future for Rocky View County residents.

911 - 32 Avenue NE
Calgary, Alberta T2E 6X6

TEL 403-230-1401
EMAIL AgServices@rockyview.ca
WEB www.rockyview.ca



ROCKY VIEW COUNTY
Cultivating Communities

Certify your Hay as Weed Free

There continues to be demand within Alberta and across North America for hay that has been inspected and certified as weed free. The spread of weeds through hay has been well documented and the associated costs have increased demand for access to a weed free product. To meet this demand, Rocky View County offers a voluntary weed free hay inspection and certification program.

Fields which are found to be free of viable seed or other reproductive parts of plants identified in the Alberta and North American weed lists may be certified. It is possible that non-reproductive or vegetative parts of a plant on the weed list may be present in fields certified as weed free.

Fields must be inspected a maximum of 10 days prior to cutting. Inspections will be conducted on a field-by-field basis. Certification is based on visual inspection by qualified personnel using a standard inspection procedure. A certificate of inspection is issued to the producer if the field meets the requirements.



If you have established hayfields that look “pretty clean,” you might consider having them certified. It’s easy: contact Tim Dietzler, agricultural fieldman at 403-520-1271 or tdietzler@rockyview.ca for a no-cost inspection.

Agri-Environmental Incentive Program

Bona fide farmers are eligible to receive funding through this program. The program deadline is December 31, 2014. Any projects you wish to receive funding for must be completed on or before this date.

For a list of projects and available funding visit www.rockyview.ca and search for “Agri-Environmental.”

If you would like an application form sent to you or have any questions about this program, please contact Laura Poile, agricultural services officer at 403-520-7273, lpoule@rockyview.ca



Agricultural Tour Features

Indus Area Farms

Register now for Rocky View County’s annual Agricultural Tour, featuring farms and ag-businesses in the productive Indus area of the County. Both traditional and new diversified operations will be featured this year, as well as several Agricultural Service Board initiatives happening in southeast Rocky View County. The 2014 Master Farm Family Award will be presented at lunchtime.

The date is Friday, July 18, 2014, leaving the Balzac Hall at 9 a.m. sharp and travelling by motor coach to the various sites. Lunch and a BBQ supper are included. Check www.rockyview.ca in late June for specific sites we will visit. Registration can also be done online or by phoning Donna at 403-520-6301. Cost is still only \$35 per person.

2014 Ag Roundup Schedule

Scott Lake Transfer Site

Wednesday, May 21, 2014 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
252016 Sibbald Creek Trail – Highway 1 and Highway 68
in the Volker Stevin yard

Jumping Pound Hall

Wednesday, June 18, 2014 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
44208 Township Road 250 – north of the Jumping Pound
turn off on Highway 1

Viterra Grain Facility

Wednesday, July 9, 2014 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
29340 Highway 2A – between Crossfield and Carstairs

Westlife Church

Wednesday, July 16, 2014 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
32242 Township Road 245 – south of Callaway Park

Balzac Fire Station 107

Wednesday, July 23, 2014 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
291015 Rocky View Drive – Highway 566 east of
overpass on Queen Elizabeth Highway

Weedon Pioneer Hall

Wednesday, July 30, 2014 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
42299 Weedon Trail – Corner of Highway 22 and Big Hill
Springs Road

Bottrel General Store

Wednesday, August 6, 2014 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
#4 Bottrel Street – Range Road 284 west of Highway 22

Madden Transfer Site

Wednesday, September 10, 2014 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
285090 Symons Valley Road – northeast of the
intersection of Highway 772 and Highway 574

Delacour Community Hall

Wednesday, September 17, 2014 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
275194 Township Road 254 – east of the intersection of
Highway 791 and Highway 564

We accept: empty pesticide containers; tires;
e-waste; wire; agricultural plastics; paint; and
household hazardous waste.

We DO NOT accept: twine not in clear bags;
unrolled wire; wire with fence posts or concrete
attached; household plastics; or ag plastics
incorrectly prepared

For more information visit
www.rockyview.ca/roundups



Got Gophers?

Richardson ground squirrels, also known as gophers, usually emerge from hibernation in mid-March. Ground squirrels eat a wide variety of grasses and broadleaf plants and may compete with livestock for forage. Damage to cereals can be particularly severe on the edges of fields adjacent to native grassland. In addition, mounds of soil excavated from burrows smother vegetation and can damage farm machinery.

Managing crop and pasture land to discourage establishment of gophers is important as crop growth is slowed and stunted, grazing pressure is increased, and even smaller populations can consume large quantities of crops or pasture.

Farmers and ranchers considering a control program for gophers this year will want to begin soon. As males emerge first and the breeding season commences immediately, severe infestations may be prevented with early intervention. Many preventative and control methods are used including perching poles for hawks and owls, maintaining taller pasture and grass lengths, rotation of crops to disturb the burrow systems, and shooting, trapping, or baiting. Unfortunately, no one method will prevent or solve high infestation problems, but considering all options can be more effective.

If baiting is a consideration, timing is crucial. Farmers can purchase strychnine from Rocky View County Agricultural Services or anti-coagulant baits from other select local retailers.

Rocky View County Agricultural Services works with residents to resolve pest control issues and can make recommendations and help find effective solutions based on individual needs. For more information or assistance with gophers or other pests, please call 403-520-7273 or visit www.rockyview.ca/agriculture.

Air Quality Information for Livestock Producers

Good air quality in livestock facilities can have a positive impact on the health and well-being of animals and workers. Confined feeding operations (CFOs) can affect air quality through the emission of gases (ammonia and hydrogen sulfide), particulate matter, and volatile organic compounds. Odour can also impact neighbour relations. Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development's (ARD's) air quality specialists have put together a list of resources and links that pertain to livestock air quality and odour. These are all available at www.agriculture.alberta.ca/manure.

The Air Quality Resources for Alberta Livestock Producers was developed to:

- assist producers in addressing air quality issues,
- educate producers about the risks associated with exposure to harmful pollutants found inside livestock buildings, and
- provide producers with tools and strategies that can help them reduce the impact of air quality on surrounding neighbourhoods and communities.

Atta Atia, livestock air quality specialist with ARD says, "The government is committed to working proactively with the livestock industry, government and non-government partners to address air quality concerns associated with livestock production in Alberta." Through this commitment the following tools have been developed for Alberta producers:

Ammonia Emissions Calculator

The calculator is a simple tool for the producers to use to figure out how much ammonia they are losing from their livestock facilities and manure storage.

Ammonia Losses from Liquid Manure Applications Calculator

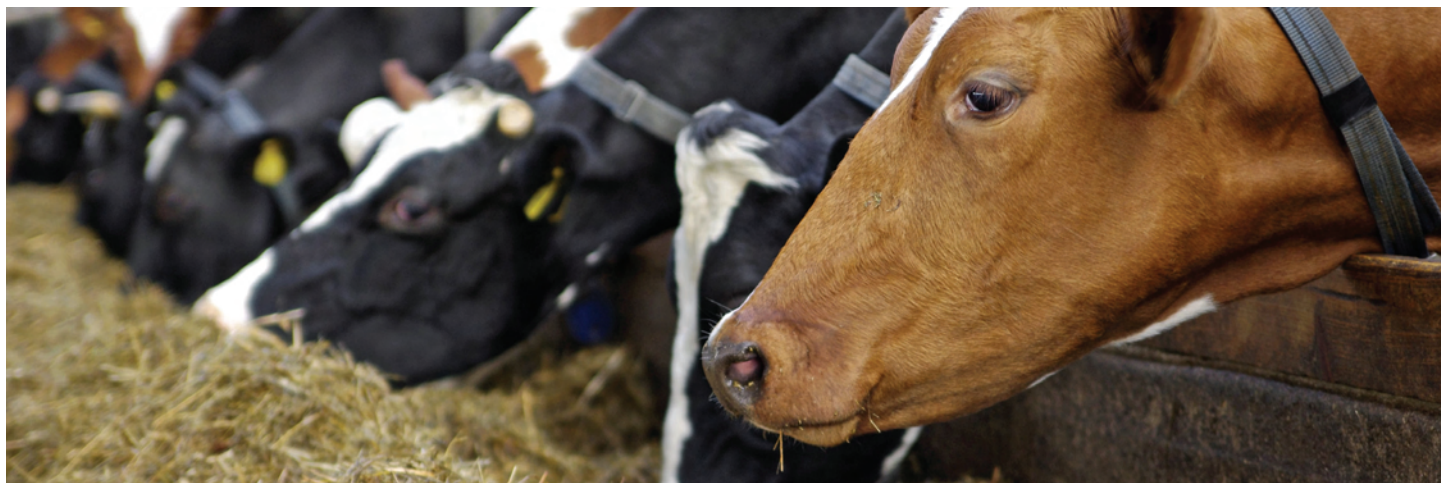
The purpose of this calculator is to estimate ammonia emissions that occur during and after liquid manure application on farm-land. It also estimates the economic value of the ammonia lost based on the cost of fertilizer nitrogen.

Odour Management Plan for Alberta Livestock Producers

The intent of the tool is to have operators assess their operation from an odour management perspective and identify those areas that may require improvement. It also helps identify options to improve odour management on the farm. For a relatively small investment of time in completing an odour management plan, a livestock producer can reduce the potential for odour complaints and the impacts of odour conflicts.

Ron Axelson, executive director, Intensive Livestock Working Group says, "Odour issues drive most conflicts between a confined feeding operation and its neighbours and we believe that the development and implementation of an odour management plan is the most effective way of improving those relationships."

To get a hard copy of the odour management plan (Agdex 092-1), contact ARD's publication office by phoning toll-free 1-800-292-5697 or download a copy at www.agriculture.alberta.ca/manure.



New clubroot data reinforces need for vigilant field scouting

April 22, 2014 – Canola Council of Canada media release

New data indicates some forms of clubroot resistance are no longer functioning well against a possible new clubroot pathotype in the Edmonton region.

Dr. Stephen Strelkov at the University of Alberta has investigated samples collected from several fields and verified higher levels of infection than expected in some clubroot resistant varieties. Further studies are underway to verify the true virulence of these clubroot strains.

“Current research indicates that the concern is limited to very few fields and patches within those fields,” says Curtis Rempel, vice president of Crop Production and Innovation with the Canola Council of Canada (CCC). “Clubroot resistance is expected to be functional in the vast majority of acres this year, but attention needs to be paid to prevent this situation from expanding.”

While it is too early to make specific variety recommendations,

the CCC advises that canola growers and agronomists scout their clubroot resistant varieties this summer with extra effort and vigilance. “This is very important in light of the potential for a new pathotype capable of overcoming the excellent resistance currently available in Western Canada,” says Rempel.

In order to protect this valuable genetic trait, the CCC will be working collaboratively throughout the canola value chain to learn more about this potential new pathotype and help prevent its buildup and movement. Factors that contribute to this risk are:

- Canola rotations with less than a two-year break
- Fields that are known already to have high clubroot inoculum
- Fields that are not scouted for clubroot regularly
- Planting the same resistant canola variety in that rotation
- Any tillage that is more than zero till

- Operations that do not limit soil movement between fields. Keep your soil at home.

Clubroot is a serious soil-borne disease caused by the pathogen *Plasmodiophora brassicae*. It lowers the bottom line for canola growers each year. The disease has been advancing through Alberta at a fairly steady 20 to 25 kilometres per year, and has been detected at low levels in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Visit www.clubroot.ca/ to learn more about clubroot best management practices and stewardship of resistant varieties.



Pasture Walk with Jim Gerrish: The Grassroots of Grass Farming

When: Friday July 11, 2014 from 9:30 - 3:30

Where: Meet at the Beiseker Esso Station on Highway 9 at 9:30 a.m.

Site 1: Shoestring Ranch

Managing high legume pastures at Ian Murray's

Site 2: Thurn Grazing Demonstration Site

Developing a management plan for the revitalization of dry land native and tame pastures, and utilizing your riparian pasture.

Cost: \$40/person
\$30/Foothills Forage and Grazing Association member
\$20/Student

Cost includes meals, snacks, transportation, and a great day of learning!

For information or to register, call 403-652-4900, e-mail laura@foothillsforage.com, or visit www.wheatlandcounty.ca/pasturewalk.

Agricultural supplies available

FOR RENT:

Pasture Sprayer

No charge to rent. Cost covered by the Agri-Environmental Incentive Program, \$1000 deposit required at drop off.

Skunk Trap

Free for 2 weeks, \$25 per week after the first 2 weeks, \$125 deposit required

Magpie Trap

Free for 2 weeks, \$25 per week after the first 2 weeks, \$125 deposit required

Pigeon Trap

Free for 2 weeks, \$25 per week after the first 2 weeks, \$125 deposit required

Hay and Soil Probes

Free for 2 weeks, \$25 per week after the first 2 weeks, \$125 deposit required

Tree Planter

\$50 per day

FOR SALE:

Pocket Gopher Traps

\$10.95 each

Weeds of the Prairies

\$30 each

Alberta Invasive Plant Identification Guide

\$5 each

Bat Boxes

\$30 each

Green Acreages Guide Workbook

\$30 each

Recycling Bags

FREE, pickup at the Municipal Building

For more information or to rent or purchase any of these items please call 403-230-1401 and ask to speak with Agricultural Services.

Workshop for Greenhouse and Field Growers

The Alberta Greenhouse Growers Association and the Alberta Farm Fresh Producers Association, in partnership with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, are pleased to present *Integrated Pest Management In Practice*, a workshop for growers interested in Integrated Pest Management. This workshop is geared towards both greenhouse and field growers and will take place the 28th and 29th of July at Olds College. Speakers include Dr. Michael Harding, Dr. Ron Howard, Dr. John Zang, Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza, Dr. Jim Broatch, Dr. Ken Fry, Dr. Kwesi Ampong-Nyarko, Dr. Kelly Turkington, and many more.

You can register by calling Valerie at the Alberta Greenhouse Growers Association office at 1-800-378-3198, or view the agenda and register at www.ipminpractice.eventbrite.ca.

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The Agri-View newsletter is a free publication for Rocky View County residents. If you wish to be on the mailing list, please contact Agricultural Services.

If addressing is incorrect, or if you wish to unsubscribe, please contact Agricultural Services at 403-520-7273 or e-mail AgServices@rockyview.ca



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**For more information
about Growing Forward
and EFP call 403-230-1401**

Growing Forward 