



AGRICULTURAL SERVICES BOARD
2025 ANNUAL REPORT

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OVERVIEW

The Agricultural Service Board Annual Report summarizes the activities of the Agricultural Services Program during 2025. This report will serve to inform the Agricultural Service Board and Council on what activities occurred in 2025, including vegetation management, outreach activities, enforcement, contractor accomplishments and various other activities.

2025 was a busy year for the department. An early and warm spring allowed many weeds to start growing earlier than normal, and conditions later in the summer allowed weeds adapted to drought to out-compete most kinds of vegetation. **Seven** seasonal staff were hired and trained before being assigned to various duties and areas within the County. Weed inspectors travelled the County, completing inspections for noxious and prohibited noxious weeds, carrying out control measures as needed, as well as doing provincial surveys for insect pests and crop diseases. Labourers managed vegetation at infrastructure around the County, including the fire halls, tower sites, bin sites, water treatment plants, the County Complex, and the Hamlet of Woking.

As per the *Agricultural Service Board Act* (the Act), each municipality may appoint individuals to act as an advisory body and assist Council and the Minister in matters of mutual concern. The Agricultural Service Board (ASB) and Council work together to provide viable and sustainable agriculture, to make it an economically viable venture for all producers and to develop policies that suit the mandate.

Section 4 of the Act states, 'A board must present a summary of its activities for the preceding year to the Council in a form acceptable to the Council containing any information required by the Council'. Examples of activities in which the ASB participates include advising, organizing and directing weed and pest control, overseeing water conservation programs, and aiding in the control of animal disease, under the *Animal Health Act*.

Saddle Hills County Agricultural Services Board consists of three Councillors and five members-at-large, who are all local producers in the County.

OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS



1,200
hectares sprayed

10 fenceline spraying agreements
3 small area spray agreements



4

new V.S.I numbers



0

compound 1080 tablets



1

wolves brought in



600

canola fields inspected



4

weed notices



3

enforcements



8

extension events



2,366

seedlings planted

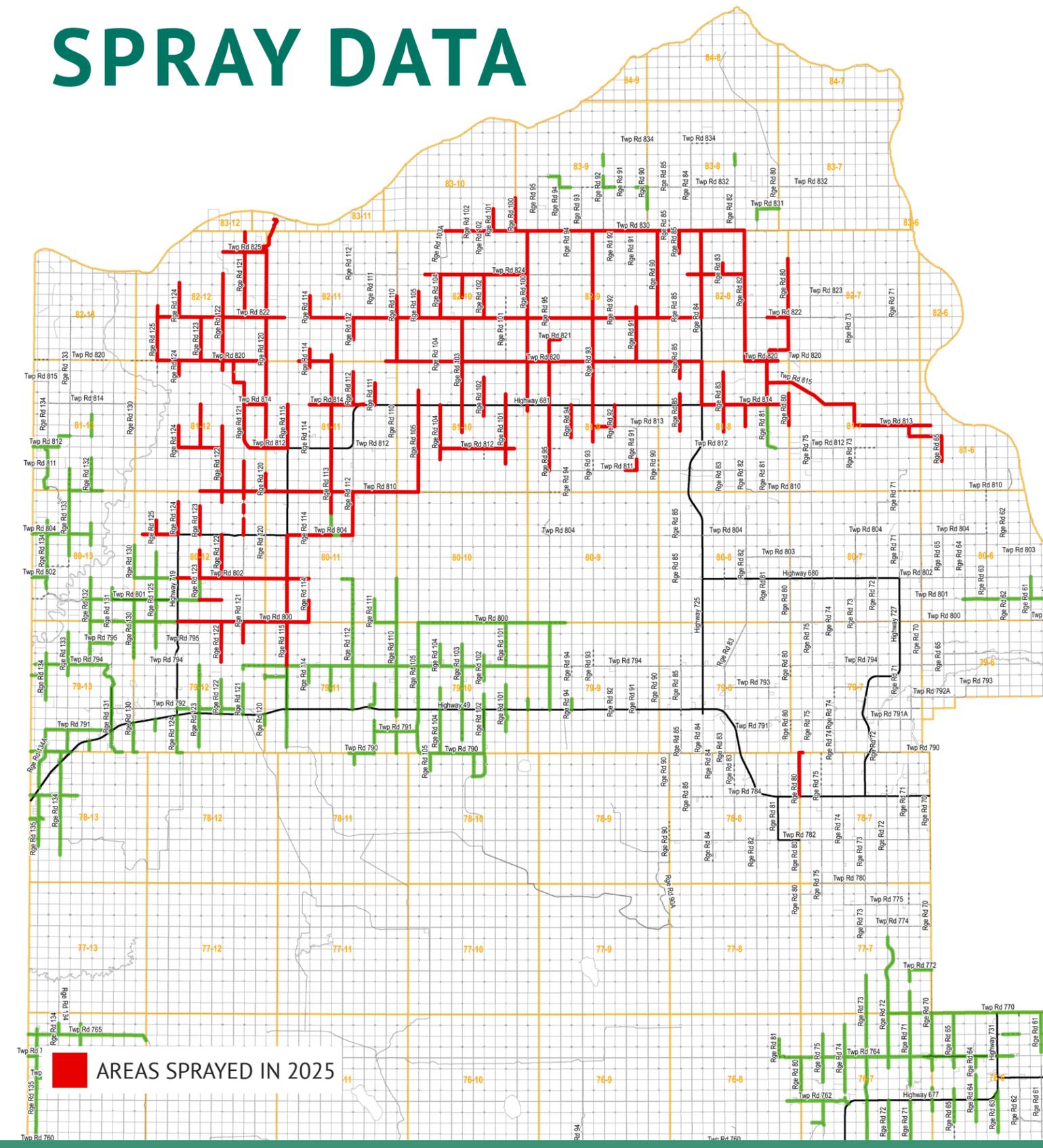


HERBICIDE APPLICATION

Roadside herbicide application was completed in-house with the spray truck, side by side sprayer, and other spray equipment in the fleet. Approximately 1200 hectares of County ditch in Fourth Creek, Silver Valley, Cotillion and Bonanza received a blanket spray with Navius Flex, a three-year residual broadleaf herbicide. Seasonal staff also completed spot spraying using the side by side, backpack sprayer, and second spray truck on locations not in the full right-of-way spray rotation, to control small infestations of noxious or prohibited noxious weeds and brush.

In 2025, ten fence line spraying agreements and three small area spray agreements were signed and completed.

2025 SPRAY DATA



DRONE INSPECTIONS

In 2025, the Agricultural Services drone was utilized in both inspection and non-inspection capacities. Most notably, the drone was used to monitor and inspect a previously known noxious weed site, located in an isolated creek, to determine the extent of the infestation.

The drone was also used to scout for kochia in pastures and on oilfield leases.

MOWING

The contract mowers began in early July in the Woking area, moving north and west to complete a shoulder mow on the east half and a full mow on the west half of the County rights-of-way, finishing in early August. Very few delays and extremely dry conditions throughout the summer allowed them to make quick work of the ditch vegetation and mow the entirety of the right-of-way in most of the planned spots. All fire halls, water plants, tower sites, transfer stations, the County Complex, the Hamlet of Woking, and other County-owned infrastructure were also mowed in-house throughout the summer months.



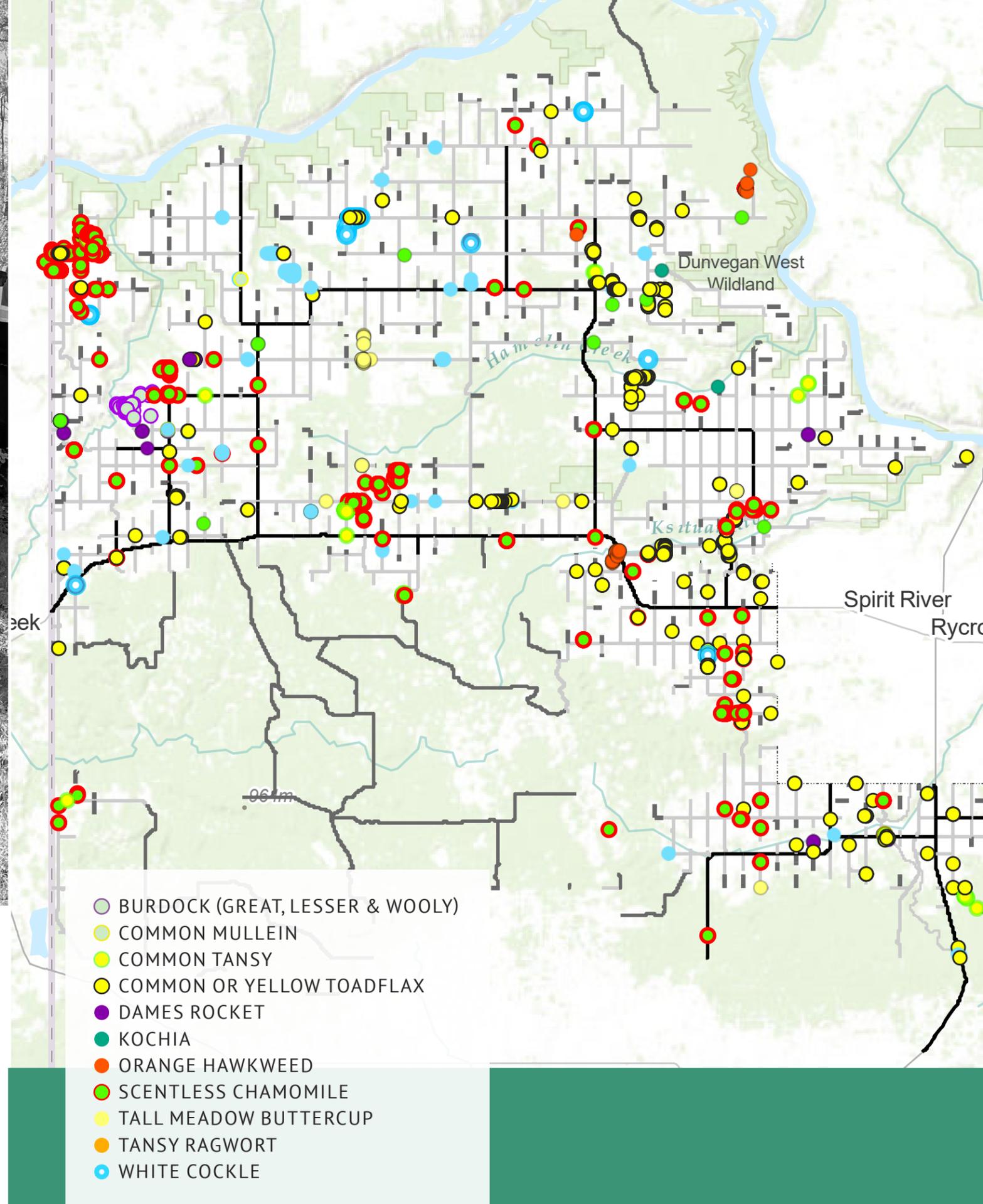
WEED INSPECTIONS

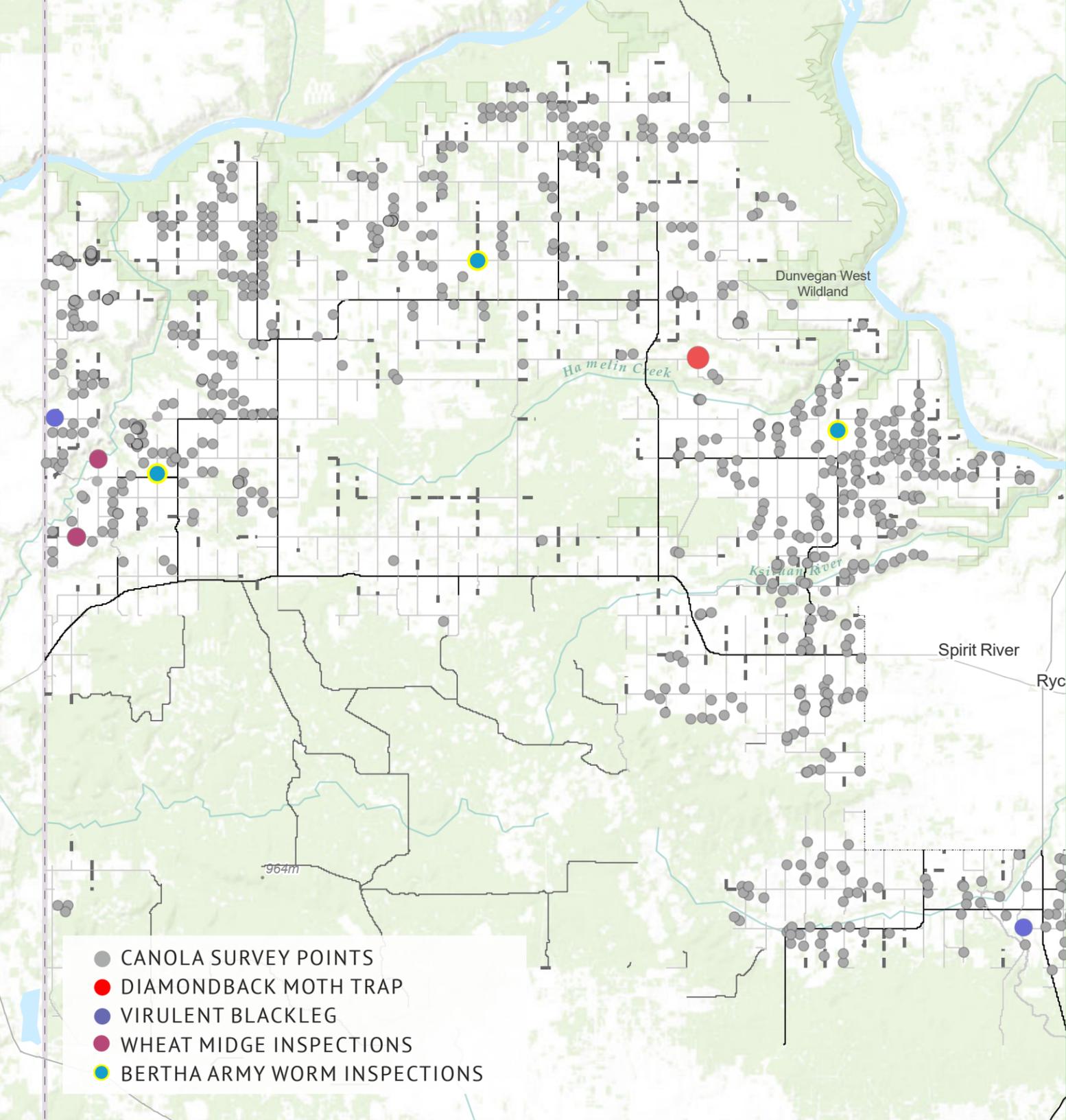
In 2025, substantial effort was made to contact producers who consistently have problem weeds early in the spring. Over the winter, letters were sent to these producers urging them to develop their weed management plans ahead of time.

Four weed notices were issued from the inspections done in 2025, down from the **13** that were issued in 2024. This year, the weed notices issued were for Scentless Chamomile, Orange Hawkweed, and Woolly Burdock.

For smaller infestations of weeds, seasonal staff picked and controlled the weeds instead of a notice being issued, and landowners were made aware of the location of the weeds so they could monitor and continue control measures.

Three weed notices went to enforcement level this year.





Over **600** canola fields were inspected for both Virulent Black Leg and Clubroot in 2025, as outlined in policies AG 15: Clubroot of Canola and AG 19: Virulent Blackleg of Canola. The first incidence of Clubroot in the County in was discovered in 2022, with no further infestations discovered in 2025.

Despite the removal of Fusarium Graminearum from the Agricultural Pest Act, Saddle Hills County participated in a provincial study looking at ergot, kernel bunt and dwarf bunt, and deoxynivalenol (DON) mycotoxin. **Four** cereal fields were sampled and sent away for testing, as part of a provincial survey.

County staff assisted Alberta Agriculture & Irrigation with the provincial grasshopper survey in July. Numbers varied across the County, but the overall average population was below the economic threshold.

Three Bertha Armyworm traps were erected within Saddle Hills County in 2025, one located in Silver Valley, one in Blueberry Mountain, and one near Bonanza. All traps reported numbers of moths below the economic threshold. **Two** Wheat Midge traps were also placed in Bonanza.

Saddle Hills County encouraged producers to monitor all their fields to ensure the economic threshold for any insect was reached before taking action.



PEST INSPECTIONS



LIVESTOCK

In 2025, **four** new Veterinarian Services Incorporated (V.S.I.) numbers were given out to Saddle Hills County ratepayers.

Reports of coyote predation remained low in occurrence throughout the year. In 2025 to date, **0** Compound 1080 tablets have been given out, down from **12** in 2024. With changes coming provincially to the Compound 1080 program, these numbers will likely remain low.

Wolf predation remained low in 2025, with a total of **one** wolf being brought in by producers.

RENTAL EQUIPMENT

2025 saw one addition to the rental fleet - a chicken plucker.

Overall, this was a typical year for equipment rentals. The BBQ trailer and Forage Probe were tied for being rented out the most – going out a total of **seven** times each. The grain bag roller was second, with **three** rentals throughout the year. The 10-yard Scraper was rented out **twice** and the Eco-Bran Spreader **once**.



ALUS PROGRAM

2025 started with **three** Expressions of Interest (EOIs) submitted to our ALUS program. One EOI was withdrawn by the producer prior to consideration by the Partnership Advisory Committee (PAC), while **two** projects were presented to and approved by the Saddle Hills County ALUS PAC. One of those approved projects did not move forward with the producer.

The result of this is that **one** project, our first, was successfully put in the ground. This project involved establishing a new upland grassland in an area where runoff water was flowing directly into a creek, causing erosion due to the lack of vegetation to slow the volume of water. Administration completed first-year reporting and were able to reimburse the producer for **50%** of their implementation costs, as well as issue the first of **five** annual payments.

Spring and summer of 2026 will provide the first opportunity to observe the results of this project, including the producer beginning late-season grazing to encourage increased root depth. According to the producer, there has already been an increase in bird population in the area.



ALUS helps farmers and ranchers build nature-based solutions on their land to sustain agriculture and biodiversity for the benefit of communities and future generations.

The ALUS Saddle Hills program coordinator works with local producers to help establish ALUS projects that work to address several important environmental issues. ALUS works to restore difficult to farm, and marginal lands into environmental projects that generate cleaner air and water, wildlife habitat, and other ecosystem services. ALUS enhances wetlands and riparian buffer areas, plants trees to boost wildlife, establishes new pollinator habitats, while also assisting with flood and drought resilience. ALUS Saddle Hills participants receive professional support and an annual per acre payment for the establishment, maintenance, and long-term environmental outcomes of these ecological projects.

saddlehills.ab.ca/ALUS
ALUS.ca





ENVIRONMENTAL FARM PLAN (EFP)

Our Agricultural Administrator had a very busy year as a newly qualified Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) technician.

Recent updates to the AgriInvest program resulted in increased producer participation, as more operations sought to qualify for the program and improve their long-term sustainability. In total, **18** EFPs were completed in 2025.



The Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) provides producers with an opportunity to identify strengths and assess potential environmental risks within their farming operations. It increases awareness of areas of possible environmental concern and helps develop site-specific, individualized plans to address, monitor, or mitigate these risks. The program is voluntary, free of charge, and considers the farm operation as a whole. EFPs are delivered through an easy-to-use, flexible, online platform.

The EFP began in 2003 and has been delivered by the Agricultural Research and Extension Council of Alberta (ARECA) since 2013.



TREE SEEDLING PROGRAM

The 2024/2025 Tree Seedling Program pickup was held on May 28 and 29, 2025, with **2,366** seedlings planted across the County.

For the 2026 Tree Seedling Program, an estimated **2,700** seedlings are projected to be planted. This steady annual increase reflects strong participation and continued growth of the program.

Saddle Hills County initiated a Tree Seedling Program in the spring of 2023, for residents to order tree species for planting within Saddle Hills County boundaries. There are a variety of species available through the Agricultural Services Department.

For details on individual species, we have compiled a handy brochure: **Shelterbelt Species Quick Facts**, available on our website. Those interested in learning more can also visit our Tree Resources webpage to see a list of Cold Hardy Prairie Trees, as well as a variety of other information, including articles and fact sheets on tree care, and a **Tree Resources Booklet**.

To be eligible to participate, you must be a registered landowner in Saddle Hills County and trees can only be planted within the County's boundaries.

- Participants will be restricted to one order per year.
- Participant order fulfillment could be limited based on available supply.
- Participants shall have completed the Tree Seedling Order Form and Agreement prior to planting.
- County staff will be responsible for placing the seedling orders and coordinating pick-up dates and times with the participants.

EXTENSION EVENTS

Agricultural Services facilitated several extension events in 2025, with varying levels of attendance.

February 6, 2025

An Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) Workshop was hosted at the County Office in February, with Kate Lovsin, the EFP Coordinator for the region. **10** producers were in attendance, who were walked through the process of filling out their Environmental Farm Plans.

April 8, 2025

The ALUS 'Riding Out The Drought' event in April, had **13** attendees. Presenters provided sustainable solutions for how to retain water on your land during drought conditions and how to manage land to prepare for drought.

April 30, 2025

A Tree Pruning and Care Workshop, featuring a hands-on demo of tree planting and care by Toso Botic, took place in April, with **31** ratepayers attending.

July 9, 2025

A Plant identification Workshop was hosted at the Blueberry Hall in July, with a focus on the Identification of noxious and prohibited noxious weeds in the area. **11** people were in attendance.

August 6, 2025

August saw an Ag Marketing Seminar hosted at the Fourth Creek Hall, by Agra Risk Solutions. The **50** attendees learned about solutions to help minimize the financial risk of both livestock and grain production.



October 22, 2025

In October, the Agricultural Services Department partnered with the Savanna Agricultural Society to host a Soil Health Workshop. Dr Kris Nichols explained the factors contributing to good soil health for the **20** ratepayers in attendance.

October 27 & 28, 2025

Agricultural Services partnered with Landview Drones to host an Ag Drone School in October, where producers were able to learn practical uses for drones on-farm, as well as how to operate a drone safely and successfully. There were **five** attendees.

November 26, 2025

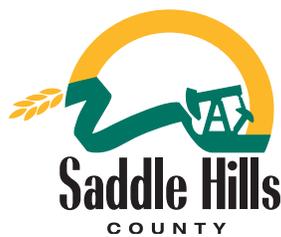
On November 26, a Succession Planning Workshop was held at the Fourth Creek Hall, in partnership with Farm Credit Canada (FCC), KMSC Law, and MNP, with **25** attendees. This workshop focused on succession planning and the transition process between generations on family farms.



CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

In 2025, the majority of the focus during the spring and summer months was dealing with historically problematic weed locations early. Herbicide applications took place throughout the summer, and Administration worked with ratepayers to spray small weed infestations.

Going forward, the Agricultural Services Department plans to continue to ensure weed infestations are dealt with early in the season and followed up on throughout the summer and fall. More emphasis will need to be put on attracting seasonal staff through attendance at career fairs, early advertising for positions, and continuing to hire quality candidates.



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