



AGRICULTURAL SERVICES BOARD
2021 ANNUAL REPORT

CONTENTS

03.

Overview
Agricultural Service Board

05.

Herbicide Application
Drone Inspections
Mowing
Weed Inspections
Pest Inspections

07.

Weed Inspections Map

09.

Crop Inspections Map

11.

V.S.I.
Predation
Outreach & Education
Rental Equipment

13.

Recommendations

The Agricultural Service Board Annual Report summarizes the activities of the Agricultural Services Program during 2021. This report will serve to inform the Agricultural Service Board and Council on what activities occurred in 2021, including vegetation management, outreach activities, enforcement, contractor accomplishments and various other activities.

2021 was a very hot, dry, and busy year for the department. Five seasonal staff were hired and trained before being assigned to various duties and areas within the County. The weed inspectors traversed the County, completing inspections for noxious and prohibited noxious weeds, and doing provincial surveys for diseases like clubroot and blackleg. The labourers maintained vegetation at infrastructure around the County, including the firehalls, ditches, tower sites, the County Complex, and the Hamlet of Woking. Seasonal staff (shown below) L-R: Hayley McNaught, Georgia Chipps, Evan Pullishy and Sophia Gustafson.



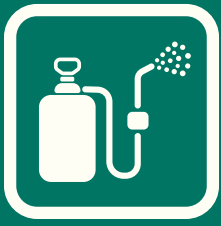
As per the *Agricultural Service Board Act*, each municipality may appoint individuals to act as an advisory body and assist Council and the Minister in matters of mutual concern. The Agricultural Service Board and Council work together to protect viable and sustainable agriculture, to make it an economically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

Section 4 of the *Agricultural Service Board 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 Agricultural Service Board participates include advising, organizing and directing weed and pest control, overseeing water conservation programs and to aid in the control of animal disease under the *Animal Health Act*.

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

OVERVIEW





>1,200ha

HERBICIDE APPLICATION

Roadside herbicide application was completed in-house with the spray truck, side by side sprayer, and other spray equipment in the fleet. Over 1200 hectares of County ditch in Woking and Happy Valley received a blanket spray with Navius Flex, a three-year residual broadleaf herbicide. Other locations in the County received spot spraying to control small infestations of noxious or prohibited noxious weeds and brush.

In 2021, one new Fence Line Agreement was signed and sprayed.

DRONE INSPECTIONS

In 2021, Agricultural Services acquired a drone for use in inspections of difficult to access locations. Administration used the drone to get aerial footage of several problem beaver dams in locations especially difficult to access on foot. Several problem weed spots in Gordondale were inspected using the drone this season. The drone was also used this season in a non-inspection capacity.

The drone was used at both the Spring Lake, Hilltop and Cotillion campgrounds to take video footage of the sites and amenities to be used as promotional material.



>60 canola fields inspected



11 weed notices



0 enforcement actions

MOWING

The contract mowers began at the County Complex moving west doing a full mow on the County rights-of-way in mid-July and finished in late August. The dry conditions allowed them to make quick work of the ditch vegetation and in most spots, mow the entirety of the right-of-way. All fire halls, water plants, tower sites, transfer stations, the County Complex, the hamlet of Woking and other county owned infrastructure was also mowed in house throughout the summer months.

WEED INSPECTIONS

Inspections

In 2021, an effort was made to contact producers who consistently have problem weeds early in the spring. A new policy was introduced in the department, allowing the Agricultural Fieldman to use herbicide to control small patches of weeds for producers at the Fieldman's discretion. 11 weed notices were issued from the inspections done in 2021, down from the 46 that were issued in 2020. This year, the weed notices issued were for Dame's Rocket, Scentsless Chamomile, and Yellow Toadflax. For smaller infestations of weeds, seasonal staff would pick and control the weeds instead of a notice being issued, and landowners were made aware of the location of the weeds so they could continue to monitor and continue control measures. Seasonal staff had several interactions with ratepayers, which were mostly positive.

Enforcement

None of the posted weed notices went to enforcement this year.

Over 60 canola fields were inspected for both Virulent Black Leg and Clubroot in 2021, as outlined in policies AG 15: Clubroot of Canola and AG 19: Virulent Blackleg of Canola. No clubroot was found and very low levels of virulent blackleg was reported. 10 soil samples were also taken and sent off to be tested for the presence of clubroot spores as a collaboration with Dr. Mike Harding and Alberta Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development regarding the relationship between clubroot spore load within the soil and the presence of visual clubroot symptoms. All 10 soil samples came back with negative results.

Since the removal of *Fusarium Graminearum* from the Agricultural Pests Act in 2020, sampling and testing is no longer required by the province. A new program was implemented wherein interested producers could request that their fields be sampled by County staff and sent for testing. Despite the removal of *Fusarium Graminearum* from the APA, Saddle Hills participated in a provincial study looking at ergot, kernel bunt and dwarf bunt, and deoxynivalenol (DON) mycotoxin. 5 cereal fields were sampled and sent away for testing.

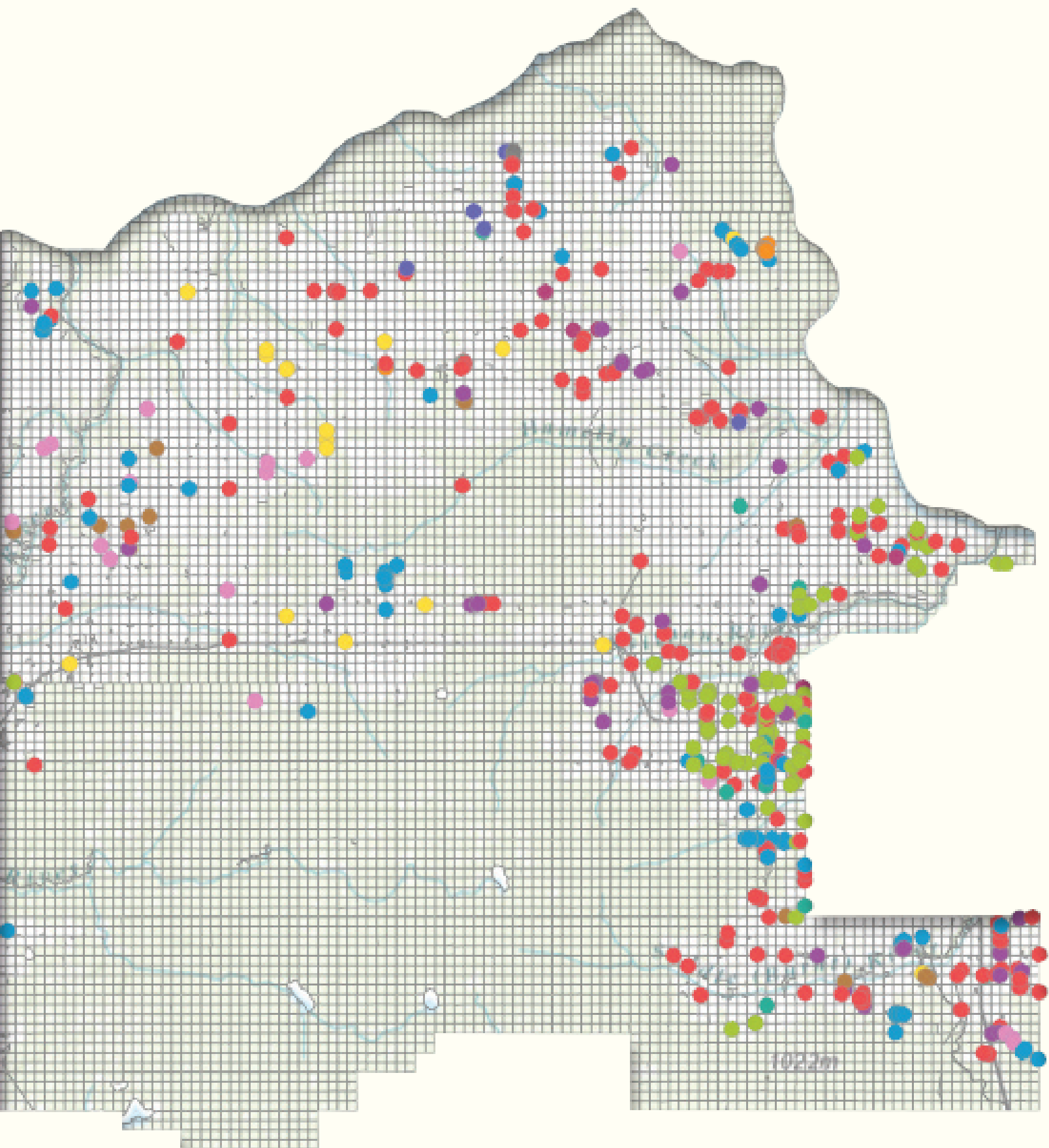
County staff also assisted Alberta Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development with the provincial Grasshopper Survey in late July and early August. Numbers varied widely across the County, but the overall average population was below the economic threshold. While completing the provincial surveys, inspectors also noticed high counts of lygus bugs throughout the County.

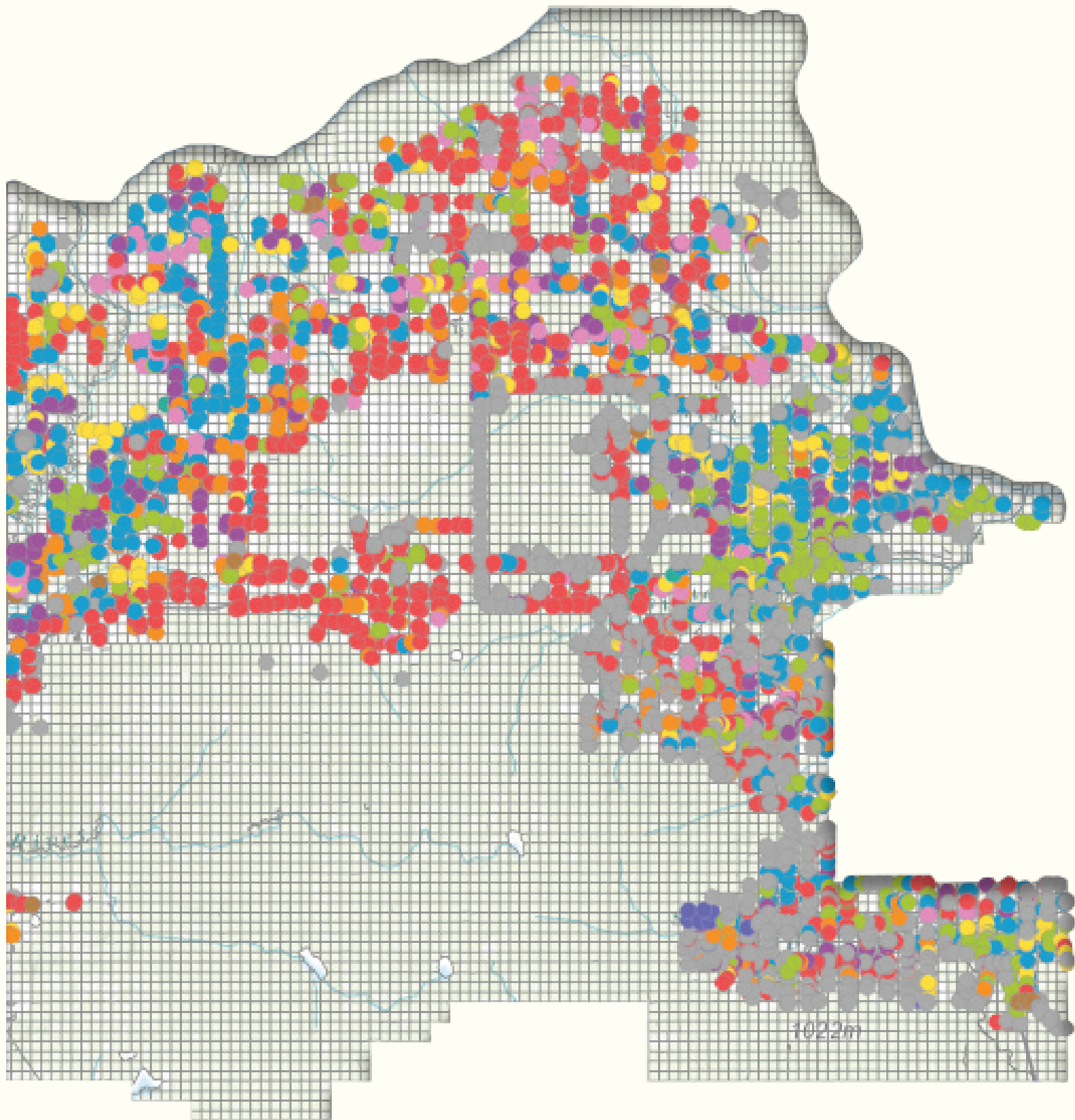
Two Bertha Armyworm traps were also erected within Saddle Hills County in 2021, one located in Cotillion and one in Woking. The Woking trap consistently had few to no moths present within it, whereas during the six weeks of monitoring the Cotillion trap had high numbers each week. Saddle Hills County encouraged producers to monitor all their fields.

PEST INSPECTIONS

WEED INSPECTIONS MAP

- COMMON TANSY
- COMMON OR YELLOW TOADFLAX
- CREEPING CANADA THISTLE
- CURLED DOCK
- DAMES ROCKET
- NARROWLEAF HAWKSBEARD
- NIGHT FLOWERING CATCHFLY
- ORANGE HAWKWEED
- OXEYE DAISY
- PERENNIAL SOW THISTLE
- PINEAPPLE WEED
- SCENTLESS CHAMOMILE
- STINKWEED OR PENNYCRESS
- TALL MEADOW BUTTERCUP
- WESTERN WATER HEMLOCK
- WHITE COCKLE
- WILD OATS





CROP INSPECTIONS MAP

BARLEY	●
CANOLA	●
FORAGE	●
GRASS	●
OATS	●
PEAS	●
RYE	●
SUMMER FALLOW	●
WHEAT	●
NONE	●
OTHER	●

OUTREACH

Agricultural Services staff focused heavily on outreach in 2021. Several surveys were conducted throughout the year, in order to facilitate communication between County staff and local producers on several important issues, such as crop conditions and elk damages to forage and crops. The ASB, working alongside a local wildlife biologist and ministerial bodies, composed a letter to the Minister of Agriculture regarding ongoing issues with elk damage being experienced by local producers.

A resolution was developed regarding elk depredation in the County, requesting that money be allocated in order for ungulate surveys to be done annually. This resolution passed at the Regional ASB Conference in November and is being taken to the Provincial ASB Conference in January of 2022.

Staff also worked on developing a stronger social media presence throughout the summer months, hosting a weekly 'Trivia Tuesday', and posting about relevant policies and initiatives to help educate the public on the work carried out by County staff.



4 V.S.I.
numbers



15 compound
1080 tablets



4 wolves
trapped

EXTENSION EVENTS

Market Outlook Webinar

In February, we hosted Neil Blue from Alberta Ag and Forestry and Anne Wasko from Gateway Livestock to provide information on the upcoming cattle and grain markets. Ten producers attended representing a mixture of both livestock and crop producers from the area.

Farm Transition Webinar with Merle Goode

In April, we hosted a farm transition webinar to help provide producers with strategies to better equip them for dealing with farm transitions. Keynote speaker Merle Good, a Farm Tax Specialist, spoke on operating ownership, creating tax free retirement income and land values. This event was extremely well attended, with over 20 producers from the area in attendance.

Generational Farming Webinar with Merle Goode

In October, we hosted a second webinar with Merle Goode, this time focusing on generational farming. This webinar discussed options, steps, and strategies to address problems such as decision control, financial viability and off-farm sibling fairness. This presentation was a success with many ratepayers returning to watch Merle speak for a second time.

Down in the Dirt Crop Production Webinar Series

In November, we hosted four webinars aimed at crop producers in Saddle Hills County. Dr. Ross McKenzie, formerly of Alberta Agriculture, presented on soil fertility and understanding soil test results. Dr. Charles Geddes of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada spoke about herbicide resistant weeds and offered insight into effective herbicide resistant weed management. Dr. Kelly Turkington from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and Dr. Shelly Barkley of Alberta Agriculture, presented on crop disease and pest species common to the Peace County, identification, and best management practices.

V.S.I.

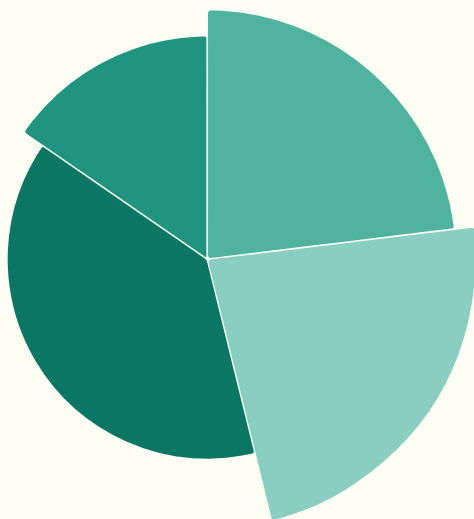
In 2021 to date there were four new Veterinarian Services Incorporated (V.S.I.) numbers given out to Saddle Hills County ratepayers.

The addition of bison as an approved species under the V.S.I. program was proposed at an Agricultural Services Board meeting in April and this change was approved in August.

Predation

Instances of reports of coyote predation continued to occur throughout 2021, although they decreased from the number of reports in 2020. In regard to 1080 tablets, in 2021 to date 15 tablets have been given out, down from 42 in 2020, and 18 in 2019. Coyote predation was exclusive to sheep producers, mainly in Gordondale and the Ktisuan areas.

Wolf predation was less of a problem with producers in 2021, with a total of 4 wolves being brought in by producers to date. Administration believes the lower numbers of predation are partially due to the excess elk population in the area resulting in an abundant food source for wolves.



In 2021, there were no additions made the rental fleet. It was another typical year regarding the rental of most of the equipment in the fleet. The 10-yard scraper was the most frequently rented piece of equipment in the fleet, going out a total of 5 times. Other traditionally popular items such as the BBQ trailer, the grain bag roller and the forage probe were also rented.

- 10 YARD SCRAPER
- BBQ TRAILER
- FORAGE PROBE
- GRAIN BAG ROLLER

RENTAL EQUIPMENT

In 2021, the majority of the focus during the spring and summer months was dealing with historically problematic weed locations early. As the summer continued, the hot and dry weather made herbicide application and control of seedlings/small weeds difficult. After the heat wave passed, herbicide applications took place.

Going forward, work needs to be done educating ratepayers on the various agricultural policies at the County and improving ratepayer interactions and responses in regards to stubborn weed issues.

In 2022 more focus will need to be put on encouraging development of agricultural programs within the County, continuing aggressive right-of-way vegetation management, working with recurring problem weed areas and expanding pest monitoring to include other pest/disease species such as lygus and sclerotinia.

Going forward, Agricultural Services will continue to strive towards achieving goals outlined in the 2020-2024 Agricultural Service Board Strategic Plan, such as developing and delivering collaborative environmental stewardship initiatives within the grain and livestock industry in Saddle Hills County and participating in opportunities for collaboration and inter-municipal initiatives at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels.





Junction of Highway 49 and Highway 725, RR 1, Spirit River, Alberta, Canada, T0H 3G0

Phone: (780) 864-3760 | Fax: (780) 864-3904 | Toll Free: 1 (888) 864-3760

Monday to Friday 8:15 AM to 4:30 PM



www.saddlehills.ab.ca



[@saddlehillscounty](https://www.facebook.com/saddlehillscounty)



[@saddlehillsab](https://twitter.com/saddlehillsab)



[@saddlehillscounty](https://www.instagram.com/saddlehillscounty)