



AGRICULTURAL SERVICES BOARD
2022 ANNUAL REPORT

OVERVIEW

The Agricultural Service Board Annual Report summarizes the activities of the Agricultural Services Program during 2022. This report will serve to inform the Agricultural Service Board and Council on what activities occurred in 2022, including vegetation management, outreach activities, enforcement, contractor accomplishments and various other activities.

2022 was a very busy year for the department. Six 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 laborers maintained vegetation at infrastructure around the County, including the firehalls, ditches, tower sites, 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 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.

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 1100 hectares of County ditch in Gundy, Bay Tree, Bonanza and Savanna received a blanket spray with Navius Flex, a three-year residual broadleaf herbicide.

Seasonal staff also completed spot spraying on locations not in the ROW rotation to control small infestations of noxious or prohibited noxious weeds and brush.



>1100ha

MOWING

The contract mowers began in late July in the Woking area and moved west doing a full mow on the east half and a shoulder mow on the west half of the County rights-of-way finishing 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.

DRONE INSPECTIONS

In 2022, the Agricultural Services drone was utilized in both inspection and non-inspection capacities. Several problem beavers dams were located in areas difficult to access on foot, and the drone was used to get aerial footage to pinpoint the dams exact location so removal could take place.

The drone was also used to inspect a noxious weed site located in an isolated creek to determine the extent of the infestation.

The drone was also used in collaboration with other Saddle Hills County departments. Administration operated the drone in several instances to assist in obtaining aerial photographs of household waste sites and the campgrounds.

PEST INSPECTIONS

Over 60 canola fields were inspected for both Virulent Black Leg and Clubroot in 2022, as outlined in policies AG 15: Clubroot of Canola and AG 19: Virulent Blackleg of Canola.

One plant sample sent to the Plant Health Lab for testing came back positive for the presence of clubroot spores. Low levels of virulent blackleg were detected.

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 assisted Alberta Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development with the provincial Grasshopper Survey in mid-July. Numbers were consistently low across the County and the overall average population was below the economic threshold.

Two Bertha Armyworm traps were erected within Saddle Hills County in 2022, one located in Fourth Creek and one in Woking. The Woking trap consistently had high counts each week, while the Fourth Creek trap maintained numbers below the economic threshold.

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



>60

canola fields inspected



18

weed notices issued



1

enforcement notice

WEED INSPECTIONS & ENFORCEMENT

In 2022, an effort was made to contact producers who consistently have problem weeds early in the spring. 18 weed notices were issued from the inspections done in 2022, up from the 11 that were issued in 2021. This year, the weed notices issued were for Canada Thistle, Scentless 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 monitor and continue control measures.

One notice for the control of Scentless Chamomile went to enforcement this year. The Agricultural Foreman and seasonal staff spent a morning hand picking to satisfy the notice.

LIVESTOCK

In 2022 to date, there have been four new Veterinarian Services Incorporated (V.S.I.) numbers given out to Saddle Hills County ratepayers.

Reports of coyote predation increased in occurrence throughout 2022. In 2022 to date, 30 Compound 1080 tablets have been given out, up from 15 in 2021 and down from 42 in 2020. In 2022, coyote predation affected both sheep and cattle producers, mainly in the Gordondale and Woking areas.

Wolf predation was less of a problem for producers in 2022, with a total of 3 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.



4

V.S.I. Numbers Issued



30

compound 1080 tablets



3

wolves harvested

EXTENSION EVENTS

Agricultural Services facilitated several extension events in 2022, with varying attendance.

The Home on the Range webinar series, which took place throughout the month of February, was comprised of 5 separate webinar events, covering a multitude of topics relating to cattle production. All of the webinars were well attended.

The second event that was organized for 2022 was a Standard Trapping Course through the Alberta Trappers Society. 10 ratepayers attended this course, all receiving their Trapping License at the end of the weekend.

A Tree Care Workshop with a hands-on demo of tree planting and care with Toso Botic took place in July, and one ratepayer attended.

In the fall Administration hosted several more webinars, with Dr. Michael Harding of Alberta Agriculture giving a Clubroot 101 webinar to educate producers on best management practices for mitigating the spread of the disease, and Toso Bozic presenting on Fall and Winter Tree Care.

Agricultural Services also partnered with Landview Drones to host a Drone School in December, where producers are able to learn practical uses for drones on-farm, as well as how to safely and successfully operate a drone.

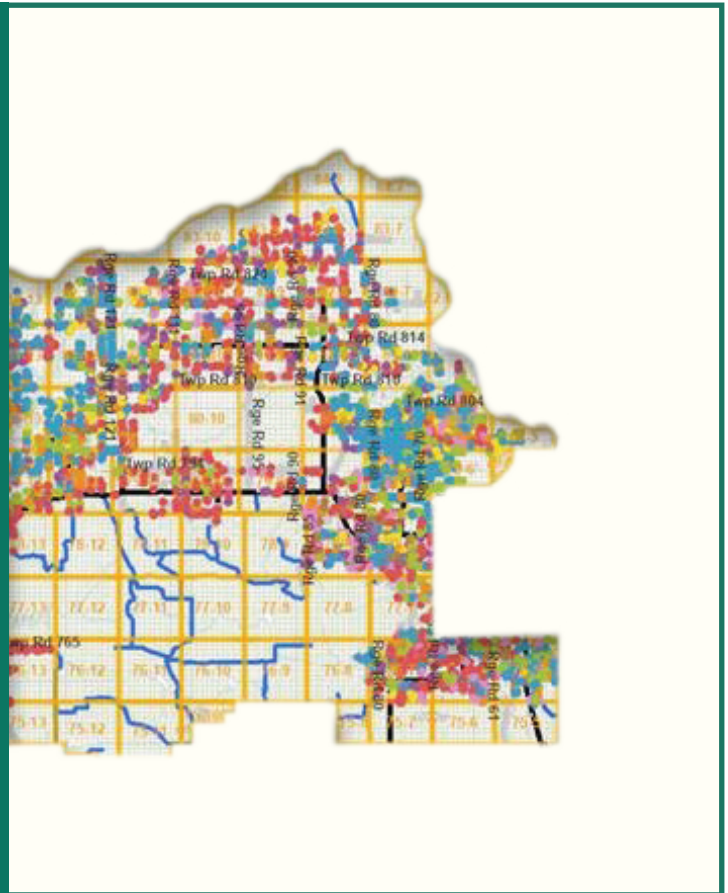
WEED INSPECTIONS

- SCENTLESS CHAMOMILE
- CREEPING CANADA THISTLE
- COMMON OR YELLOW TOADFLAX
- OXEYE DAISY
- TALL MEADOW BUTTERCUP
- DAMES ROCKET
- COMMON TANSY
- BURDOCK GREAT LESSER AND WOOLLY
- WHITE COCKLE
- GOATS BEARD OR SALSIFY



CROP INSPECTIONS

- FORAGE
- CANOLA
- WHEAT
- OATS
- BARLEY
- PEAS
- NONE
- GRASS
- SUMMER FALLOW
- CLOVER
- WINTER WHEAT
- RYE
- ALFALFA
- CORN



RENTAL EQUIPMENT

In 2022, there were no additions made to the rental fleet. It was another typical year regarding the rental of most of the equipment in the fleet.

The BBQ trailer was the most frequently rented piece of equipment in the fleet, going out a total of 7 times.

Other traditionally popular items such as the grain bag roller, the 10 yard scraper, the forage probe, and the tag reader were also rented.

The laser level was also rented out several times in 2022.

OUTREACH

Agricultural Services staff also focused heavily on outreach in 2022.

Staff developed several surveys throughout the year to gain insight from ratepayers on potential future Agricultural Services projects. Agricultural Services also hosted two Open Houses in order to facilitate communication between County staff and producers.

The Saddle Hills County Agricultural Service Board composed a letter to all other Agricultural Service Boards in the province to bring awareness to the desperate shortage of rural veterinarians who specialize in large animals.

In 2022, two resolutions were drafted and presented at the Regional ASB Conference in October. The first was directed at the Ministry of Advanced Education, seeking changes in admissions to the University of Calgary Faculty of Veterinary Medicine to prioritize admissions for students from rural backgrounds and students who intend to specialize in large animal practice following graduation. The second was a follow-up to Resolution 4-22: Properly Managing Ungulate Populations, and asked Alberta Environment and Parks to consider restructuring Landowner Special Licenses. Both resolutions were passed at the Regional ASB Conference in October and will be taken forward to the Provincial ASB Conference in January.

CONCLUSION

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2023

In 2022, 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, work needs to be done improving ratepayer knowledge regarding regulated weeds and pests, and emphasis will need to be put on working with producers and dealing with problem infestations early on in the season.

In 2022 more focus will need to be put on encouraging development of secondary agriculture 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 2022-2026 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.





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