

The Grain Exchange



FEATURED STORIES

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Chairs Messages

Collaboration benefits Canadian wheat farmers

Todd Hames | Alberta Wheat Commission chair

With the recent formation of research collaborations across Canada, we are seeing historical investments into cereal innovation. When the Western Canadian Deduction, a wheat and barley check-off that was collected across the Prairies, was nearing its end in 2017, the prairie provinces anticipated a gap in the funding of varietal development research, and a need for greater collaboration and coordination of research efforts. This recognition resulted in the creation of the Canadian Wheat Research Coalition [CWRC].

The CWRC is a revolutionary development for prairie research. The Alberta Wheat Commission (AWC), Saskatchewan Wheat Development Commission and the Manitoba Crop Alliance came together to support varietal development research. The CWRC has no dedicated staff and is supported solely by the three commissions. On a three-year rotation, each commission takes on the role of the "host" of CWRC, which supports the coalition by providing a president to lead conversations with stakeholders, accounting support to manage investments, and communications support to ensure that farmers and the broader industry are aware of opportunities and coalition efforts.

Today, AWC is proudly leading the way into 2021 with director of research, Dr. Lauren Comin, taking the role of CWRC president, and AWC directors

Janine Paly, Jason Lenz, and Jason Saunders representing the commission on the CWRC board.

A \$22.6 million core breeding agreement with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and a \$9.6 million agreement with University of Saskatchewan's Crop Development Centre initiated the first waves of movement within the CWRC that will see the expansion of capacity in variety development. Currently, the CWRC is busy exploring additional five-year breeding agreements with the University of Alberta and the University of Manitoba as well as continuing collaborations with SeCan which were announced in September 2020. Since then, a steering committee has been established between AAFC, SeCan and the CWRC and initial gaps within the variety development chain have been identified. Looking forward, the CWRC will be pursuing engagements with stakeholders and funders to discuss these gaps.

Throughout these activities, there is significant weight held by the voice of wheat farmers. With the ever-evolving list of demands from both national and international wheat customers, collaborations such as the CWRC will equip the research sector to deliver advanced genetics to keep western Canadian farmers competitive.

Going forward, prairie wheat farmers can expect to hear more about the CWRC's ongoing efforts and updates as they arise. We encourage Alberta wheat farmers to stay informed or learn more by visiting our CWRC website at wheatresearch.ca.



The evolution of the Canadian barley value chain

Tara Sawyer | Alberta Barley chair

In 2021, Alberta Barley will be focusing on a major transition of the barley value chain in Canada to more effectively represent barley farmers at the provincial and national level. Alberta Barley's board of directors has determined that we need to consolidate our efforts, eliminate duplication and reduce costs. In doing so, Alberta Barley has served a notice of our intention to cease funding for the Barley Council of Canada [BCC] effective July 31, 2021.

Currently we have provincial barley commissions and numerous national groups representing the barley industry including BCC, the Canadian Malting Barley Technical Centre [CMBTC] and the Brewing and Malting Barley Research Institute of Canada [BMBRI]. Provincial barley commissions – particularly Alberta Barley and the Saskatchewan Barley Development Commission [Sask Barley] – provide the majority of funding to BCC and are also major funders of CMBTC.

Two years ago, certain functions of BCC were contracted to Cereals Canada including communications services and market access efforts including maximum residue limits, pesticide registration and international trade issues such as non-tariff trade barriers. BCC is currently the administrator of the national barley research cluster, therefore the future administration of the cluster will be determined prior to July 31, 2021.

With the aim to align value chain efforts, we have assembled a transitional management team consisting of Peter Watts, managing director of CMBTC; Jill McDonald, executive director of Sask Barley; and Syeda Khurram, chief operating officer of Alberta Barley, who will lead this shift to a new model. This transitional management team will also ensure commitments are fulfilled for this current fiscal.

It is important to acknowledge that the barley industry has evolved. Over time, we have seen changes amongst our value chain to better align with emerging industry needs. The increasing international demand for malt barley created an opportunity for CMBTC to be leaders providing technical expertise and support to key international markets. CMBTC has also added feed barley market development to its portfolio. This approach has proven successful for our market access efforts. The same can be said regarding our national policy advocacy efforts with the Grain Growers of Canada, of which I am an active board member.

We are excited to be leaders progressing our industry forward and finding cost savings to benefit Alberta barley farmers. We are committed to keeping farmers and stakeholders apprised as this transition is taking place over the next few months. If you have any questions or would like to learn more, please don't hesitate to reach out to Alberta Barley.



General Manager's Message

Tom Steve, General Manager | Alberta Wheat and Barley Commissions

Making a difference: it's what we do

There is nothing that motivates our team more at the Alberta Wheat and Barley Commissions than doing great work for Alberta farmers. As we look forward to the annual mega-project known as spring seeding, our staff are focusing on several priorities aimed at maximizing the profitability of your farms.

Among the new things we are working on in 2021 include The Blue Book, Alberta's Crop Protection Guide. In collaboration with Alberta Canola and Alberta Pulse Growers we have taken over the publishing of this vital resource used by farmers, agronomists and ag retailers. Check us out at albertabluebook.com.

We have also launched a new integrated website for the two commissions aimed at getting more "news you can use" out to you, including a section on our home page titled "What Farmers Need to Know Now." We invite you to view the new site at albertawheatbarley.com.

In February, we announced the expansion of the *FarmCash* cash advance program to Saskatchewan, Manitoba and British Columbia. This builds on the success we've seen in offering *FarmCash* in Alberta since the fall of 2018. Offering the program prairie-wide allows us to share our high level of customer service across a broader customer base, reduce operating costs and offer competitive rates. More information on *FarmCash* can be found at FarmCashAdvance.com.

A long-awaited review of the Canada Grain Act will be a major focus for our commissions this year. For several years, we have advocated for changes in the role of the Canadian Grain Commission, an end to mandatory outward weighing and inspection of grain vessels and modernization of the grading system.

Also on the policy front, we have a number of files our team is working on including the potential re-design of business risk management (BRM) programs, including the Alberta government's proposal for a replacement for AgriStability. Other big files include the implications of a \$170 per tonne carbon tax by 2030 and potential changes by the Pest Management Regulatory Agency that would restrict tank mixing, the use of neonic seed treatments and remove Chlorpyrifos (Lorsban) from farmers' crop protection toolbox.

Finally, we were proud to recently welcome Dr. Sheri Strydhorst to our team in the role of agronomy research specialist. Strydhorst is an internationally recognized research scientist and will be an invaluable resource to farmers, working in tandem with our agronomy research extension specialist Jeremy Boychyn and the rest of our team in the coming year. Look for new features in The Growing Point newsletter and podcast in 2021 and hopefully if COVID-19 restrictions ease up we look forward to seeing you at WheatStalk and various other field days this summer.

New year, new website

Megan Evans, Events Manager | Alberta Wheat and Barley Commissions

Following months of work and consultations, the Alberta Wheat and Barley Commissions unveiled a new joint website on March 15.

The new website, albertawheatbarley.com delivers an intuitive and user-friendly experience to allow farmers to access information about the commissions and their programs.

There have been many new resources and features developed for highlighting key program areas on the new website.

One of the new website's key features is the "What Farmers Need to Know Now" space on the home page. This space houses timely news related to agriculture policy, market development initiatives, research investments and other commission-related updates.

The market development pages for both the Alberta Wheat Commission and Alberta Barley feature a world map highlighting key export countries and details such as yearly tonnage, customer end-uses and dominant varieties exported. There is also a daily grain price index chart added to the market development section from the PDQ website.

In the policy section, farmers can find the most important and relevant issues relating to both federal and provincial policy files and access key documents, including policy briefs, and letters that outline the positions taken by the commissions.

To highlight the Alberta Wheat and Barley Commissions' continued efforts as a non-biased agronomy resource, past and future editions of The Growing Point newsletter are available by monthly editions for easy access. Full recaps from our hit In the Field webinar series are available in the video library.

The new research section of the site utilizes a visitor-friendly research project search bar adapted from the original Alberta Wheat Commission website, with new key features that allow for filtering between completed projects and those still in progress.

With this new website, farmers can access more information about the broad portfolio of initiatives the commissions lead on behalf of their membership. The commissions are welcoming feedback from farmers on the newly launched site. Please reach out by email at info@albertawheatbarley.com or barleyinfo@albertabarley.com.



Two
commissions.

One integrated
website.

Your **NEW** go-to source for the latest
information from the Alberta Wheat
and Barley Commissions.

AlbertaWheatBarley.com



SPRING 2021 Webinar Series Coming Soon!

Check out albertawheatbarley.com
or The Growing Point newsletter
for more updates.

In The
FIELD
WEBINARS



Alberta
Barley



The
Growing
Point

The commissions welcome Dr. Sheri Strydhorst

Dr. Lauren Comin, Director of Research | Alberta Wheat and Barley Commissions

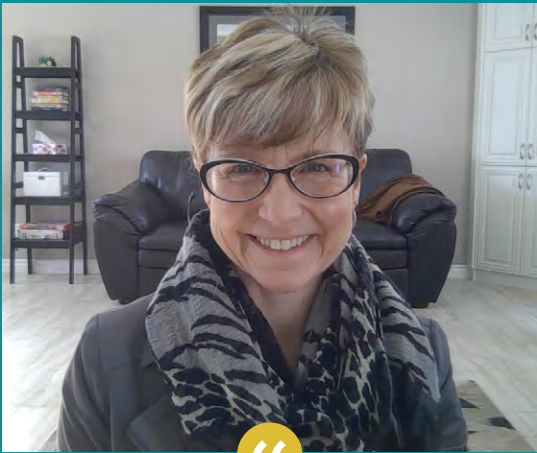
For many wheat and barley producers, the Alberta Wheat and Barley Commissions' newest hire, Dr. Sheri Strydhorst is a familiar face. Strydhorst joined our research and extension team in February, after a seven-year career as an agronomy research scientist with Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, followed by a brief stint at the University of Alberta after the provincial divestment of agronomy research capacity. In these roles, Strydhorst led and collaborated in research projects focusing on production challenges that were relevant to Alberta's cereal producers, such as plant growth regulators, pushing management of top-yielding varieties and comparing fertility treatments.

Working directly for farmers is nothing new for Strydhorst, in fact, it is where she is most comfortable. From 2008 to 2011, Strydhorst served as the executive director of Alberta Pulse Growers. "Working directly for farmers is like coming home. I find it greatly rewarding when my work can help farmers find solutions to on-farm problems and optimize their production systems, so they are profitable and practical," said Strydhorst.

Strydhorst will support the commissions' growing agronomy research and extension

program by assisting with refining research proposals to ensure they accurately address our member's production challenges and produce meaningful results at the farm level. Based on her location near Barrhead, Alberta, Strydhorst will also be able to lend her voice to extension activities in the northern half of the province, increasing reach and efficiency. Agronomy research extension specialist, Jeremy Boychyn will collaborate with Strydhorst on future opportunities for producer outreach along with continuing to build The Growing Point extension platform. Together they will be an effective team.

In addition to supporting our existing programing, Strydhorst will allow the commissions to take on a larger role in the provincial cereal and flax regional variety trials, acting as a coordinator of the trials to ensure that high-quality data on the latest varieties are available to farmers annually. Strydhorst is an ideal candidate for this role, given her previous participation in the field trials, her familiarity with popular genetics and her knowledge of key stakeholders in Western Canada. You can read more about this initiative in the article "Research variety trial data on track for 2021".



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Agronomy Update exceeds turnout goals, educates farmers on myriad of topics

Trevor Bacque | Bacque 40 Communications

Alberta’s four main crop commissions enjoyed never-before-seen success as they hosted more than 600 attendees during the 2021 provincial Agronomy Update, January 19-20. All presentations provided great value to farmers in attendance. Alberta Wheat and Barley Commissions’ in-house agronomist Jeremy Boychyn helped co-host the event and came away with a Top 5 Takeaways list for those not able to attend.



Crop rotation

This is not a new concept, but it is a critical one nonetheless. To increase diversity, the simplest, most effective way is crop rotation. Whether a farmer is trying to combat fusarium, clubroot, blackleg or weed resistance, crop rotation is a key piece of this action. Rotation also increases diversity within the soil microbiome.

At times there are market-driven decisions which result in a short crop rotation, but that may come with other issues. Shorter rotations may result in greater resistance and disease pressures, and with limited modes of action for specific issues, farmers need to be aware of the choice they make over a three to five-year rotation may impact their farm long-term.

When looking at a crop rotation to combat weed resistance, there is value to think outside the box. Farmers may consider pulses or winter-seeded crops or investigate land swaps. One season, you could swap land with a farmer hoping to rotate their swath-grazing land. It is an option not available to all, but if it's there, it may be a very good way to treat your soil right.

Marginal lands

Most if not all farms, have some amount of marginal land not in production, including old growth trees, headlands, waterways and more. Farmers often think about "cleaning up" these dirty areas and ready them for additional crop production. New research to understand the ecosystem in these lands demonstrate how they often team with beneficial insects. These insects represent a free ecosystem service where beetles, parasitic wasps and other predators naturally fight virulent pests in your crops.

Boychyn says work is underway to understand and calculate these insects' true benefit in a dollar amount. "We haven't put a value on it," he says. "We have value for a per acre crop and a farmer can put that on paper, but currently not on a low-lying wet area."

In doing so, there is hope that the positive spillover effect from maintaining or, at the very least, leaving these areas be, will continue to bring positive results to the farm.

Yield gaps

Conscious efforts are being made to help farmers reduce the yield gap, achieving greater financial sustainability on-farm. Led by Brian Beres at the Lethbridge Research and Development Centre, his work is currently focused on determining what he calls: G by E by M, or genetics by environment by management systems.

By understanding management challenges in the Prairies and how they relate to genetics and environment, researchers can identify where greatest yield gaps are, based on the yield potential genetics have in a given environment. From there, we can get an idea of where management adjustments can begin to close them.

The key takeaway is to eliminate siloed thinking, especially when we talk about genetics and management. Ultimately, it is hoped to bring greater profitability to the farm gate.

"It's the alignment and bringing together both agronomics and genetics within given environments that allow us to get to higher yields levels and close those gaps even further," says Boychyn.

Mental health

It's an area that was long-considered taboo but the times have changed, and for the better. Hosted by Saskatchewan farmer and Do More Ag founder Lesley Kelly, she said a farmer's mental health is akin to their slip tank. Just like how it's important to keep your real slip tank full, it is likewise beneficial to have your emotional slip tank full, as well.

Whether it's physical exercise, finding time to laugh, embracing a side hobby or even having a professional therapist or trusted confidant to open up to about the rigours of daily farm life, a positive, regular outlet for what is going on inside your head is critical.

"There's a toughness in ag that if you aren't working 24/7 as hard as you can, what are you doing?" says Boychyn. "The ag industry can be very stressful. There's value in taking breaks and taking time for yourself."

Fusarium tests

It's here. And it's spreading. What was once a region-specific disease to southern Alberta, *Fusarium graminearum* (Fg) has now moved into central and northern Alberta. Causing fusarium head blight (FHB), it will destroy a cereal crop's financial potential if unchecked.

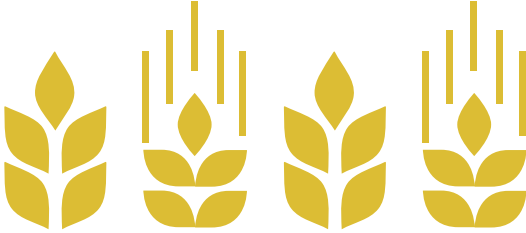
One new routine farmers in these areas, and beyond, will want to get accustomed with is seed testing. It doesn't matter if the seed is coming from on or off your farm, getting it tested for Fg will be essential to mitigate FHB impacts.

While the infection rate is low in certain areas, occurrences continue to increase. Farmers should also consider a seed treatment with fusarium species on the label as another pre-emptive step. Rates for seed treatments will vary, but a floor price of at least \$6 per acre on wheat is normal.

Beyond that, foliar fungicide application remains critical when FHB risk is high. Farmers should utilize the **Alberta Fusarium Risk Map** when the crop reaches flag leaf stage leading up to head timing fungicide application. This helps determine potential risk of infection and whether farmers should reduce infection risk via a fungicide at anthesis. Weather monitoring is critical as fusarium species thrives after a rain event and does well in humid conditions.

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We have value for a per acre crop and a farmer can put that on paper, but currently not on a low-lying wet area.”



Geoff Geddes | The Word Warrior

"We view the book as a vital resource that farmers can carry around in their truck or sprayer, or have in the office as a reference," said Tom Steve, general manager for the Alberta Wheat and Barley Commissions. "It contains critical information for growers and needs to be preserved."

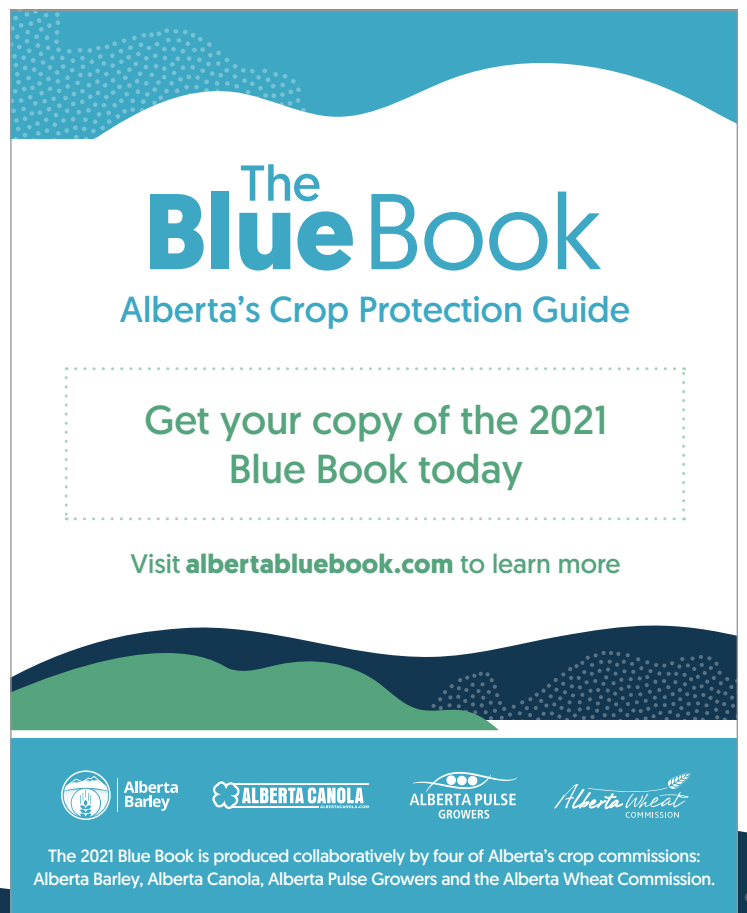
Seeing red about The Blue Book demise

Though the overall structure and content of the book will remain the same (subject to the regular yearly updates), the production team is making some refinements.

"First, we hired a certified agronomist to ensure that the information we were changing for the next edition was correct," said Tommy Wilson, content manager for GrainsWest. "We also had AgSafe Alberta rewrite the farm safety section and provide new content. We asked spraying guru Tom Wolf to redo the spraying section and provide spray sizing nozzle charts, and we updated the listing information for the pesticide container recycling locations in Alberta.

"You need 5,000 sales to reach the bestseller list in Canada, so that speaks to the popularity of the guide. It is a tribute to the hard work of our staff and the support we have received from Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, our board and our members."

"We want to look at how we can make production more efficient," said Steve. "Given that prairie provinces face many of the same agronomical issues, do we collaborate on a joint Blue Book? Where do we go with the printed issue of the book versus online publication?"



Research variety trial data on track for 2021

Dr. Lauren Comin, Director of Research | Alberta Wheat and Barley Commissions

Chances are if you are a farmer, you rely on side-by-side comparisons of the available options to help make decisions for your farming operation. The Alberta Seed Guide is an important resource that provides farmers with variety performance data to aid with deciding which varieties to grow and manage in the next crop year.

The data in the Alberta Seed Guide represents consolidated efforts from a wide variety of stakeholders, including seed distributors and growers, crop commissions, breeders, agronomists, academic institutions and applied research associations. Each year, these groups coordinate regional variety trials to be grown across the province and organize and collect the resulting data. Far from a simple task, data from the regional variety trials go through screening before the data is analyzed and results are organized into tables. The tables, organized by crop type and market class are published each winter in the seed guide.

The regional variety trials for wheat, barley, oats, rye, triticale and flax are coordinated

by the Alberta Regional Variety Assessment Committee (ARVAC). ARVAC is an unofficial industry group funded by variety entry fees and sponsorship from the producer commissions, the Alberta Seed Processors and Alberta Seed Growers. Before funding cuts, Alberta Agriculture and Forestry (AF) provided in-kind support to the regional variety trials through a trial coordinator technician who treated and set up seed, provided in-field quality control, collected data and analyzed results. In late 2020, this crucial position was eliminated by AF with no alternative support provided.

Losing AF's support meant that the committee needed to find new funding in addition to a contractor who could complete the tasks previously carried out by the AF technician. Replicating the specific role was to be a challenge as the role requires a very specific skill set. Despite this setback, ARVAC was committed to delivering the trials for the 2021 season.

To provide consistent support to the trials, the Alberta Wheat and Barley Commissions, decided to alter an open staff position to include coordination of the regional variety trials. Luckily, the commissions were able to add Dr. Sheri Strydhorst to their team as agronomy research specialist in mid-February. Strydhorst's role will greatly expand the capacity of the commissions' research team while also providing needed support to the regional variety trials. The commissions will also continue to support the regional variety trials through in-kind accounting support. Read more on how Strydhorst's unique role benefits Alberta wheat and barley farmers in the article "The commissions welcome Dr. Sheri Strydhorst".

Thanks to the dedicated efforts of industry stakeholders, including the commissions, farmers can count on using data from the 2021 crop year to make selections for their farms.

Know Before You Sow

In 2018 the Canadian Grain Commission (CGC) reclassified a number of wheat varieties, including some popular varieties in Alberta, and moved them into the Canada Northern Hard Red [CNHR] wheat class. There was one variety that moved into the CNHR in 2019, and there are five more CWRS varieties being reclassified by the CGC this year.

The following varieties will be moving into the CNHR class on August 1st, 2021.

- AAC Redwater
- AC Domain
- Muchmore
- Vesper
- 5605 HR CL

It is important to note that when you deliver your 2021 new crop harvest after August 1, 2021, these varieties will be classified as CNHR, not CWRS.

For more information please visit the Western Canadian Grain Commission [CGC] website at grainscanada.gc.ca.

Tell your neighbours – FarmCash has expanded across Western Canada!

Emily Johnson, Marketing Communications Coordinator | Alberta Wheat and Barley Commissions

The *FarmCash* cash advance program has expanded beyond Alberta to bring the same (and new!) great benefits of *FarmCash* to producers in British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba! If you're one of the hundreds of Alberta producers already using *FarmCash*, you'll know that the program is a competitive option for producers designed to help with cash flow management and increase the profitability and financial stability of your farm with impressive benefits for both the short and long-term.

FarmCash works for you – and now for your western Canadian neighbours, whether it's to provide marketing flexibility before the crop comes off the field, to cover input supplies for the growing season or to aid in succession planning for you and the next generation to take on the farm. In part because of the first \$100,000 being interest-free and the remainder at an ultra-low rate of TD Prime minus 0.75 per cent, *FarmCash* provides significant cost savings to producers of over 50 commodities throughout the ups and downs of farming.

The team at *FarmCash* knows that spring is one of the busiest times of the year for producers, and quick access to funds is crucial when it comes to making decisions and taking hold of opportunities. That's why we have opened the online spring advance applications two weeks ahead of

the program opening date, on March 15. Visit FarmCashAdvance.com today to view the commodity list, fill out a simple and convenient online application at no cost and receive your funds as early as April 1!

With the launch of the expansion across Western Canada and its third program year, *FarmCash* now includes additional features to bring you the best cash advance experience yet! Producers will now have a designated account manager to provide assistance throughout the use of the program along with access to a new online portal that provides account information up-to-date and at-a-glance. New and returning applicants can rely on the *FarmCash* team for transparency, education on benefits and application processing within three to five days – even in a global pandemic!

Learn more about the benefits of *FarmCash* from real producers at FarmCashAdvance.com, or call 1-855-376-2274 to speak with a *FarmCash* representative.

The Advance Payments Program is a federal loan program administered by the Alberta Wheat Commission. It offers Canadian farmers marketing flexibility through interest-free and low interest cash advances.

CASH
FLOW
TO HELP
YOU

GROW

Apply Now

Cash advances of up to \$1 million at FarmCashAdvance.com

FarmCash makes it convenient to apply for a low interest cash advance of up to \$1 million, with the first \$100,000 interest-free.

Our easy online application process – and support from our knowledgeable customer service staff – means you could have access to funds within 3-5 business days.*



Advances on 50+ commodities including all major crops, livestock and honey



Easy online application and superior customer service



Competitive interest rate of prime minus 0.75% on the remainder

Apply today at FarmCashAdvance.com to learn more or call us at 1-855-376-2274.

Now Available Across Western Canada

FarmCash has expanded beyond Alberta and is now available to producers in British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba!



FARMCASH
Cash Advance Program



Agriculture and
Agri-Food Canada
Advance Payments
Program

Agriculture et
Agroalimentaire Canada
Programme de
paiements anticipés

*Based on submission of a completed application.
The Advance Payments Program is a federal loan program administered by the Alberta Wheat Commission. It offers Canadian farmers marketing flexibility through interest-free and low interest cash advances.



Improving the Canada Grain Act

Geoff Backman, Business Development and Markets Manager | Alberta Wheat and Barley Commissions

The Government of Canada has opened a consultation on the Canada Grain Act and the role of the Canadian Grain Commission (CGC), and is looking for input from everyone. The Alberta Wheat and Barley Commissions view the consultation as an opportunity to voice concerns from members and advocate for improvements that ensure laws and regulations structuring the Canadian grain value chain are relevant for the modern business environment. The commissions will be submitting a response to ensure farmers have the rights and privileges they need to continue to succeed. Here are a few of the positions held by the commissions that advocate both for essential mandates to remain and for changes to the Canada Grain Act that would benefit farmers.

The commissions advocate that it is crucial to recognize the current CGC mandate, to work in the interest of Canadian producers benefits all Canadians. The success of Canadian farmers is a direct driver of success for all businesses in the agricultural industry, a direct driver of success for rural economies, and an indirect driver of success for urban economies.

Canadian farmers require continual protection from new policies in international markets that limit market access for Canadian grains. International buyers are looking for assurances of sustainable growing practices, setting limits on chemical residues, and are tightening expectations on clean grain. The Canadian grain value chain is already experiencing an increase in testing at both the elevator and export terminals. It is unlikely that the CGC alone can continue to provide sufficient accountability to international markets given the expansion of testing requirements for exports. There is a need for the CGC to reassign export testing services to private third parties who can efficiently provide an expansive set of testing services and for the CGC to move to collect the test results

to prove to international markets that Canadian grains are safe. The CGC will need to certify third parties providing testing services demanded by the market and set minimum expectations. These expectations need to acknowledge that greater accountability is being asked of the farmer, and should include the requirement to provide testing information and materials to farmers. Proper accountability would require that farmers have access to all information collected on deliveries and that this information is available to farmers promptly in a digital format.

The commissions believe that improved accountability to farmers requires fair and balanced input into the governance of the CGC. Current governance provides farmers with representation at some decision-making tables, such as the Western Standards Committee that makes changes to grading factors. While this committee has several seats reserved for farmers, the nomination process for representation is strict and includes significant input from the government. The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada makes the final decision on who sits at the table from a list of several potential representatives. The commissions would like the process changed to allow farmers to select their representative on the Western Standards Committee, rather than leaving that choice to the Minister. The commissions advocate that representatives for each meeting are put forward by a membership group ensuring farmers have a representative who is knowledgeable on the meeting topics.

Significant work has also focused on identifying which of the CGC programs and services have a proven track record of benefiting farmers and developing recommendations on how programs could improve. Two of these programs include the producer payment security program and the Grain Research Laboratory. Producers identified that the current

system for securing producer payments worked well recently when bankruptcies occurred in the pulse sector. While other models have been proposed, limited information is available on the benefits to producers. The commissions advocate for the CGC to look for improvements in the current model of the payment protection system. The Grain Research Laboratory is a subsection of the CGC that conducts cereals, pulse and oilseed science that benefits all Canadians. Although the lab receives funding from the Government of Canada, the amount has been insufficient for many years. CGC releases suggest that the Grain Research Laboratory is currently subsidized by farmers through CGC operating fees. The commissions advocate for the federal government to increase funding for the Grain Research Laboratory instead of asking producers to pick up the tab.

Through the review, the commissions continue to advocate for improved rights for farmers that will result in fair treatment and proper representation of grain abroad. It's time for the legislation regulating the industry to be updated and, if done properly, to set up Canadian farmers for success. Our members have been clear that success includes retaining the programs and rights that continue to ensure and promote competitive and fair domestic agricultural trade while also addressing and updating antiquated assumptions on how trade occurs at the elevator and internationally. The commissions call for farmers to share their input on changes to the Act needed to prepare the industry for the challenges to come.

“Through the review, the commissions continue to advocate for improved rights for farmers that will result in fair treatment and proper representation of grain abroad.”

Your resource for farm safety | agsafeab.ca

Turning accident prevention up to 11

Brian Kennedy, Grower Relations and Extension Manager | Alberta Wheat and Barley Commissions

Farmers care about a lot of things; weather, grasshoppers, community, family, country, soil, crop disease, debt, repairs, fertilizer, weeds, seed, sustainability, taxes, equality, railways, wetlands, trade, quality, high-speed Internet, employees, neighbours, etc. The list is almost endless.

Farmers also care about the health and safety of their workers, families, neighbours and themselves.

This year, AgSafe Alberta is turning farm safety up to 11 with their *Farmers Care* accident prevention initiative. As the character Nigel Tufnel believed in the old 80's movie *This Is Spinal Tap*, 11 is better than 10. Just like the list of things that farmers care about, farm and ranch safety has a long list of considerations that goes well beyond 10. A new piece of equipment, the next generation learning how to operate a combine or a swather, a new crop protection product or a simple thing like getting a bit older and less nimble requires farmers and ranchers to always consider the safety of everyone anew.

The *Farmers Care* campaign from AgSafe Alberta reminds farmers and ranchers to refresh their knowledge of risks and hazards by going through their "Take 11" challenge. There are 11 letters in the phrase *Farmer Care* and AgSafe Alberta has used each letter to create a quick and easy "Take 11" challenge for farmers and ranchers to reacquire themselves with the fundamentals of farm safety.

Each of the 11 letters is used to start a word relating to a safety section with risks and hazards neatly aligned.

Do you know the risk zones on your farm? How can you prevent an accident from happening?

"Take 11" is a refresher for farmers with a safety plan already in place and a great place to start for farmers looking to create a safety plan. If you are in the process of developing a farm safety plan and don't know where to start, AgSafe Alberta can help.

The vision of AgSafe Alberta is plain and simple, safer farms and ranches in Alberta. Their mission is to support a culture of safety on farms and ranches in Alberta through information, education and training. You can start anywhere and start today. AgSafe Alberta offers everything from quickstart guides, webinars and even expert advisors that are available to help develop a safety plan for your farm.

Start here, head on over to take11.ca and get started in preventing the possibility of an accident on your farm.

“The vision of AgSafe Alberta is plain and simple, safer farms and ranches in Alberta.”

'Take 11' and reacquire yourself with the fundamentals of farm safety!

Introducing **FARMERS CARE** - life saving opportunities for agriculture. What are your risk zones on the farm? How can you prevent an incident from happening? Take 11 seconds to refresh your knowledge of the risks and hazards of *falling from heights*.

Head over to take11.ca to get started.



The Growing Point

2021 growing season scouting considerations

Jeremy Boychyn, M.Sc P.Ag, Agronomy Research Extension Specialist | Alberta Wheat and Barley Commissions

The 2021 growing season is fast approaching. Being aware of pest risks can help with scouting and assist management planning if issues arise. Below are pests and diseases that growers and agronomists should be keeping on their watch list. Note that further reading on these pests is recommended to ensure proper management.

Stripe rust

The first on our list is stripe rust (*Puccinia striiformis tritici*). Stripe rust displays small orange-yellow coloured pustules. The pustules form in vertical lines parallel to the wheat leaf veins. Some stripe rust spores can overwinter in Alberta. However, the majority of spores blow in from the Pacific North West and Kansas/Texas corridor. Yield losses due to stripe rust in central Alberta for wheat can be 10-90 per cent and 5-50 per cent for barley.

Ideal stripe rust spore development is conditions of 7-20°C with moisture. Stripe rust can infect a plant and reproduce new infectious spores in eight days. This allows field infection to move quickly.

Keep this disease on your mind when scouting both wheat and barley. Monitoring can begin as early as herbicide timing. Apply fungicide before five per cent flag leaf coverage of the disease. Susceptible varieties may need more than one application. Fungicide application on resistant varieties is more likely to see a financial return in extreme cases.

Orange blossom wheat midge

The 2021 Alberta Agriculture and Forestry forecast map indicates increased orange blossom wheat midge risk in central Alberta. Risk counties include Vermilion River, Wainwright, Flagstaff, Beaver, Minburn and surrounding counties.

When enough rainfall occurs in May (around 25mm or more) wheat midge adults emerge from the soil in late June or early July. Emergence continues for up to six weeks. Emerged adults lay eggs for about seven days and the eggs take 4-7 days to hatch. After hatching, the larvae feed for 2-3 weeks.

Scouting for wheat midge begins as soon as wheat heads emerge from the boot until anthesis timing. After anthesis, risk and damage decrease. Scouting of 3-5 locations in each field should occur daily after 8:30pm when weather conditions are calm. Insecticide applications to limit yield impacts occur when there is at least one midge for every 4-5 wheat heads. For grade impact reduction, control for one midge every 8-10 wheat heads.

When possible, use a midge tolerant variety. See midgetolerantwheat.ca.

Bacterial leaf streak

Bacterial leaf streak (BLS) is a bacterial leaf disease that has increased in occurrence over the past few years. BLS is a seed-borne bacteria caused by *Xanthomonas translucens pv. undulosa*. When a seed infected with BLS is planted, plants from those seeds will be infected and display BLS symptoms. Symptoms include small, oval, light green, water-soaked lesions or streaks. Symptoms typically first show on the apex of the leaf, where dew stays the longest. Lesions can produce a milky exudate in high moisture conditions. This exudate can help differentiate it from fungal leaf diseases while scouting. As BLS develops, lesions will come together to form large irregular streaks. The streaks cause decreased photosynthetic area. Leaves may wither or die with high enough pressure.

Yield losses of up to 50 per cent due to BLS have been reported in other parts of the world. While mainly found in wheat, oats, barley, triticale and perennial grasses can be a host. Environmental conditions conducive to infection and spread are temperatures of 15-30°C with moisture. BLS can spread through rain splash, wind-driven rain, irrigation, mechanical field activities and insects.

Due to the seed-borne nature of BLS, utilizing seed that is clean of BLS is the first step to mitigating risk. While no seed test is available to identify BLS infection, producers can mitigate risk by scouting their fields for symptoms and avoid using seed from fields suspect of infection. Producers should discuss BLS risk with seed suppliers. Fungicide applications and in-crop or seed treatment will have no suppression or control of BLS, therefore producers should ensure proper identification of the disease before deciding to spray. This can be challenging as symptoms can be similar to other foliar diseases. Be sure to contact an experienced agronomist if you are unsure of BLS presence.

Wheat stem sawfly

The 2021 Alberta Agriculture and Forestry forecast map indicates increased wheat stem sawfly is a risk for southern Alberta in the 2021 growing season. Sawfly emerge from the soil in the spring and lay their eggs in elongated wheat stems. The larvae then feed on the stem pith tissue as they move down toward the stem base. Sawfly cause a reduction in yield from pith damage and crop loss from lodging due to stem feeding.

No chemical control options are available for sawfly. Producers and agronomists can scout for larvae a few weeks before harvest by splitting the base of stems and looking for feeding evidence and larvae. A high percentage of infection can lead to lodged crops that may benefit from early swathing. To reduce future risk, select solid stem varieties and lengthen crop rotation.



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Policy TRACKER

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Alberta crop insurance premium reduction

On January 25, 2021, the Alberta Government together with Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC) announced a reduction in crop insurance premiums for the 2021 crop year of 20 per cent. The Alberta Premium Reduction is projected to save farmers across the province around \$55 million on their 2021 premiums, with an individual farmer of 2,000 acres saving approximately \$8,000 per year. This reduction comes from AFSC’s healthy crop fund reserve, which has grown over the last decade because premiums collected have exceeded payouts. The reduction for Agrilnsurance premiums will include premiums paid for Hail Endorsement, Spring Price Endorsement, and Moisture Deficiency Endorsement but does not apply to Straight Hail Insurance. The discount will be applied to your net premiums for the 2021 crop year. The plan is to apply this level of reduction for a five-year period with the possibility for annual adjustments based on events of each previous year. For more information contact your AFSC branch office or visit the Alberta Premium Reduction Q & A fact sheet at afsc.ca.

Changes to Mandatory Entry Level Training for experienced Class 3 drivers

On November 26, 2020, the Government of Alberta announced two initiatives to help reduce the cost and times for Albertans to become Class 1 drivers.

The **The Experience and Equivalency Class 1 MELT program** will recognize the experience and knowledge that farmworkers, and workers in other industries, gain through work experience. The program will recognize Class 3 drivers with a minimum of two years of experience, allowing them to take an abbreviated Mandatory Entry Level Training (MELT), requiring 40-hours of training over the current 113-hours for the new Class 1 drivers MELT.

The **Driving Back to Work** program will cover up to 90 per cent of the costs associated with obtaining a Class 1 commercial truck licence for unemployed Albertans.

With the MELT extension period for farmers and farm workers now closed, the Alberta Wheat and Barley Commissions, together with Team Alberta, are working closely with Alberta Transportation to explore further measures to address the barriers and concerns that many farmers have with obtaining Class 1 MELT licencing.

More information on the program and applications is available on the Government of Alberta’s website alberta.ca.

Expiration of the Alberta Conservation Cropping Protocol

The Conservation Cropping Protocol has not been renewed by the Alberta government based on technical concerns associated with the saturation of conservation tillage in the province. This comes at a time when the value of the carbon offset, based on the federal carbon tax pricing is set to increase from the current \$30/tonne to \$170/tonne by April 2030. Alberta producers can continue to generate credits in the 2021 growing season until the

beginning of 2022 when the conservation cropping protocol will no longer be available. Through Team Alberta collaboration, the commissions have appealed to the government to re-assess the decision surrounding this protocol and consider replacing it with a new, sustainable cropping system protocol for 2022. You can read the Team Alberta submission from January 2020 at teamalbertacrops.ca.

Business risk management – federal changes to AgriStability

On November 27, 2020, the federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Marie-Claude Bibeau proposed changes to the current AgriStability programs which would see a removal of the reference margin limit and an increase in the compensation rate from 70 to 80 per cent, retroactive to 2020, until 2022 when longer-term changes could be explored and put into place. At the time of writing (Feb.17) the proposal has not received the support required from the prairie provinces to see the amendments advance under the existing Canada Agricultural Partnership agreement. Prairie provinces are concerned by the strain on their treasures at the existing cost-share funding arrangement with the federal government of 40/60 respectively. The commissions, together with other agriculture sector partners, have encouraged acceptance of the offer as a means of providing short-term improvements to AgriStability and leveraging an expected expansion of funding to the business risk management (BRM) suite envelope by an additional \$170 million. A focus on the next iteration of BRM programs, which come into place in March 2023, is imperative and the commissions are supportive of this process.

Recent decisions on chlorpyrifos of Health Canada’s Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA)

In May of 2019, the PMRA released a proposed decision to cancel all uses of the insecticide chlorpyrifos on cereal grain crops with a three-year phase-out period. The commercial product Lorsban, containing chlorpyrifos, has been used in cereal crops to control grasshoppers, cutworms, brown wheat mites and wheat midge. While other chlorpyrifos products are currently available (i.e. Pyrinex, Nufos, Warhawk), Corteva, the registrant and manufacturer of Lorsban, voluntarily opted not to renew registration when the re-evaluation was initiated by the PMRA as per the 15-year cycle. The commissions expressed concerns about the loss of this chemistry and available alternatives. Specifically, wheat producers will be left with only one registered product for wheat midge, dimethoate, which may not be as effective control. This decision will leave a significant gap in grasshopper control, a concern raised with the PMRA across all crop types. Nonetheless, the final decision was posted on **December 10, 2020**. Registrants have one year, until December 10, 2021, to cease the sale of products containing this active ingredient. Retailers have until December 10, 2022 to cease the product sales, and farmers have one year following to cease use of the product by December 10, 2023. For more information contact the commissions’ in-house agronomist, Jeremy Boychyn at jboychyn@albertawheatbarley.com.



**TEAMALBERTA**

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Team Alberta represents a working collaboration between four of Alberta’s crop commissions: Alberta Barley, Alberta Canola, Alberta Pulse Growers and the Alberta Wheat Commission.

We work together with the aim to provide input to policy makers, ensure long-term access to markets, promote the sustainability of the crop sector, and advocate on behalf of farmers while enabling grass-roots advocacy by our farmer members themselves.



With a mission to drive profitability for Alberta’s wheat and barley farmers, the Alberta Wheat and Barley Commissions operate with an integrated management team.

Our amalgamated staff results in administrative cost savings that allows the commissions to further advance innovative research, market access, farm policy and government relations. In this new era of collaboration, the Alberta Wheat and Barley Commissions serve as leaders in the Canadian agriculture industry.



Alberta Barley

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