

The Potato Minute

April 1, 2021



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT - Terence Hochstein



Hoogland Farms planting 2020

As I look back at the articles that I have written for the April edition of the Potato Minute over the last number of years, one thing is common, no two Aprils are ever the same. April has a way of combining every weather event imaginable into a very short time period. Sometimes its over in a few days, sometimes a few hours. With the Easter break coming up next week, I would imagine that the south will see some field activity, soon thereafter. Many of the northern seed growers are also indicating that they have a lot of bare ground currently, as well. This is also not normal for their growing areas. What we really need at this time is a good general spring snowstorm, to provide some much-needed moisture in the ground. There have been many days over the last 3 months where the west wind has removed any moisture that we had from last fall and early winter. When you look at the snowpack in the higher elevations, the numbers are indicating that it is average at best. There is a lot of open dry ground that needs to be recharged in the river basins before the water gets downstream. Most people involved in agriculture will say that we have never lost a crop in March or April, but it sure helps to have a good start and some assistance from Mother Nature when we start planting. Only time will tell how this all plays out and what the next 30-60 days looks like. Stay tuned!

To compound all of this, the unknown of what we are all facing, with the ever-changing COVID-19 protocols, is leaving most Albertans on a bit of an emotional rollercoaster. As we try to

navigate through this uncertainty, lets all be thankful for another day and another opportunity.

"Take a little time to be amazed by something you won't enjoy unless you consciously choose to focus on it. See the things you can't see when you're rushing. Hear the things you can't hear when you're stressing. Get so caught up in your senses that everything else seems to stop for a moment - because things don't actually stop. So, we have to be the ones to do it." - Lori Deschene



Growing areas across North America continue to work towards settling contracts with their respective processors. With only a couple of US locations already having contracts, there is a lot of work still required to reach agreements, that are amicable for everyone involved.

**" Take a little time
to be amazed by
something you won't
enjoy unless you
consciously choose to
focus on it."**

Our seed growers continue to report that shipments are brisk and, in some cases, ahead of last year. As the southern Alberta commercial growers ramp up their spring plans, the next couple of weeks will see a lot of seed moving across the province. Like every year at this time, the farm gets hectic and chaotic at times. Please remember to focus on what is the most important task at hand, the safety

of yourself, your family, and your entire farm staff. Everyone wants to go home at night, with the ability to return the next morning.

Until next month,

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SEED COORDINATOR UPDATE - Stacey Bajema

I was very grateful this past week to have the opportunity to get out of the office and drive down to Southern Alberta. After a month of video meetings, I admit that the thought of getting out on the road was such a relief, and even a little exciting. It is clear that the seed potato farms in Alberta are in full swing, as many farms had trucks rolling in and out when I arrived. It was great to get out and meet with these growers who haven't had much opportunity to get to know me face to face.

This month, Thomas and I will be on the road quite a bit delivering this year's edition of the Blue Books to all the growers. This is a great opportunity for us to get to know your operations and the questions or concerns you have regarding our industry.



Canadian Horticulture Council AGM

The Canadian Horticultural Council held its Annual General Meeting virtually, over a period of two weeks in March. This included the spring meeting for the Canadian Potato Council. Gord Visser (Norbest Farms) will continue as Chairman of the Seed Potato Sub Committee, with Deb Hart as his Vice Chair. Our voting members were Jeff Ekkel (Sunnycrest Seed Potatoes) and Terence Hochstein (PGA Executive Director). We are very fortunate in Alberta to have good representation from our grower base at these meetings.

This was a very busy year for the Canadian Horticultural Council as COVID brought with it some new challenges for our industry. Labour was an important file this year as travel for Temporary Foreign Workers and adaptation of worker housing became hot topics. A lot of work was done this year on Crop Protection and maintaining access to important crop chemistries needed in the potato industry. The CHC also actively pursued discussions with government around Business Risk Management programs and the new changes to AgriStability.

We are very grateful to the Canadian Horticultural Council for the support we receive on a National level, and more particularly, the guidance of David Jones, the Potato Industry Manager, for all the hard work put in this year advocating for our industry.

Temporary Foreign Worker Program

We continue to have regular interactions with growers, about the new rules and exemptions regarding Temporary Foreign Workers and travel. Currently workers, who are registered under a Federal Temporary Foreign Worker program, are exempt from the three-day hotel stay upon arrival, provided they are asymptomatic and have arranged for private

transportation from the airport. The Federal Government has developed a new web page to help answer frequently asked questions regarding Temporary Foreign Workers and the arrival process into Canada.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/foreign-workers/employer-compliance/covid-faq.html>



Changes To AgriStability

On March 25, 2021, the Federal, Provincial and Territorial (FPT) Agriculture Ministers met to discuss proposed changes to the AgriStability Program. Though an agreement could not be made regarding increasing compensation levels, the reference margin limit was removed. This change is retroactive for the 2020 year. The deadline to enroll in the program for the coming year has also been extended to June 30, 2021.

These new changes to the AgriStability program could mean an extra \$95 million dollars across Canada, going out into producers. All costs for this program are shared between the Federal Government (60%) and the Provincial Government (40%). Further changes to the Business Risk Management programs may be discussed at the next FPT meeting of Agriculture ministers, possibly some time in September.

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BLAST FROM THE PAST



Planting potatoes with a two-row planter in the spring of 1946—farm of E. Lewis, Winterburn, Alberta. Photo by J. W. Marritt.

AGRICULTURAL DIRECTOR - Thomas McDade

Hello all. It is quickly becoming another busy spring. I have been touring the country during the last week, dropping off this year's chemical book and other goodies from the PGA. Despite driving on some poor road conditions, it looks like most of the farm operations are ready to hit the field. If I have not made it to your farm yet, to drop off the PGA package, I will be soon. I do hope that everyone takes some time to spend with their family this Easter weekend. I am sure that, come Tuesday, we will see most farm operations begin seeding. I think this will be more than soon enough, as it is still very early in the season, and the soil temperature has a long ways to go to reach a reasonable level.

The Potato Research team in Southern Alberta is also looking forward to the upcoming season, as there are many activities planned. In addition to the insect and late blight surveillance programs, there are quite a few other research programs running this year, and the next. Dr. Willemijn Appels' Variable Rate Irrigation research project is continuing to operate, as well as Dr. Dmytro Yevtushenko's collaboration on the Potato Early Die Project in Southern Alberta. Dr. Yevtushenko will continue to monitor the potato fields this growing season, from those that were soil sampled last fall. There are also two new research projects that are starting this year, across Alberta. Dr. Michele Konschuh will be launching a study on blackleg in potatoes. Michele will be collaborating with researchers at the Lethbridge Research Station for this project. Additionally, Dr. Jonathan Neilson is launching a multi-year study on the storage issues with damaged tubers, as a result of an adverse weather event.

In the last couple of months, the PGA Research Committee has been very active in thinking about their structure and priorities. We took some time to look at our current activities and set priorities. In addition to surveying the PGA membership on their own preferences, we also looked at all the research projects that the PGA had funded in the past.

This prompted us to pull out all the old research binders, boxes, files and old computer files to identify what we had and what was missing. After a month, or so, of going through all these old files and talking with the Researchers that will soon retire, we realized that we were missing many of these projects' final reports, posters and presentations. At times, this project seemed like a very large scavenger hunt. However, we have been able to find most of the information that we did not have and we will start to enter this data into a Research Archive. This will be accessible through our PGA website. The PGA has helped to fund a lot of great work in the past and this research is still very valuable and should not be languishing in a dusty file. Some notable examples of the valuable research projects that the PGA has funded over the years is the Rotational Crop and Irrigation Study, Green Manure, Aeroponics, Alberta Variety Trials, Nitrogen usage and efficiency, and many more. Please check the PGA website for announcements on when the Research Archives will be available.

Thank you, and as always, do not forget to take a moment and work safe! Please read the Ag Safe information that I am dropping off with the Chemical Book and post the work safe poster in a place where you, your family and employees can read it.

Thank you and Happy Easter!

Thomas McDade
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RDAR ANNOUNCES NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS

March 9, 2021



Edmonton, Alberta (March 9, 2021) – RDAR is pleased to announce that it has its first elected Board of Directors.

In February, representatives from RDAR's 33 voting Member organizations came together to elect its new Board of Directors. RDAR's dedication to being producer-led is a fundamental part of the organization's DNA. Members have helped shape the overarching direction and now the leadership of RDAR.

The new Board Directors come from diverse agricultural and research backgrounds. They are representative of the broad spectrum of organizations that make up Alberta's agriculture and research industry. This Board brings years of experience and leadership in the areas of animal and crop production, agri-business, research, and governance to help RDAR create opportunities for Alberta's producers to positively impact the agriculture industry through producer-led research.

"A very sincere welcome to RDAR's new Board Directors, a group of professionals from every corner of the province and well representing of the industry. I look forward to working with you to make sure Alberta's farmers and ranchers are guiding agriculture research priorities."

Devin Dreesen, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry

RDAR Board of Directors:

D'Arcy Hilgartner (Camrose) Term Expires: 2024
Fred Lozeman (Claresholm) Term Expires: 2024
JP Brouwer (Ponoka) Term Expires: 2024
Stanford Blade (Edmonton) Term Expires: 2024
Brian Brewin (Taber) Term Expires: 2023
Melissa Downing (Metiskow) Term Expires: 2023
Steven Kenyon (Busby) Term Expires: 2023
David Chalack (Calgary) Term Expires 2022
John Kolk (Picture Butte) Term Expires: 2022
Jason Lenz (Bentley) Term Expires: 2022

To ensure that RDAR maintains a stable Board governance structure and continuity for its future, the decision was made to implement staggered terms of service. This design provides the organization with future governance continuity, for its Board of Directors. Each Board Director's term is directly determined by the number of votes received during the election.

"Thank you to Dr. David Chalack and the interim Board for their service over the past year. It's a lot of work to set up an organization from scratch, and they did it with enthusiasm and expertise. Through innovative research agriculture will continue to lead Alberta's economic recovery."

Devin Dreesen, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry

RDAR is confident that the installation of its new Board will continue to ensure that results driven research leads to innovation for our province's agriculture and food industries.

About RDAR

RDAR is a not-for-profit organization that will continually consult with Alberta's crop and livestock producers to set research priorities and distribute funds. Its mandate is: to support results driven agriculture research priorities and programs that will increase competitiveness and profitability of Alberta's agriculture industry. Arm's length from the provincial government, RDAR is funded by two sources: The Government of Alberta, and the Government of Canada and the Government of Alberta through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership.

Source: www.rdar.ca



SAFETY CORNER



This month's letter is R:

Roll Overs/Run Overs

Risk zones: Public & private roads, farmyards, fields

Hazardous Acts:

- Driving too close to ditches or embankments
- Driving on terrain with unexpected mounds or dips
- Travelling with heavy loads on a front-end loader
- Pulling heavy loads that are hitched higher than the drawbar
- Overloading the drawbar
- Turning on a steep slope
- Driving too fast into curves and when turning or when pulling rear-mounted equipment
- Pulling a load that is not balanced or not properly secured

What Can Result:

Broken bones, fractures, internal injuries, spinal injuries, compartment syndrome, lacerations, nerve injuries, psychological trauma, death

Source: agsafeab.ca

Do:

- Avoid driving too close to an incline, ditch, or embankment
- Slow down for curves, when turning and when pulling rear mounted equipment
- Keep the load as low as safely possible, if using a front- end loader
- Drive forward down steep slopes and back the equipment up steep slopes
- Install Roll Over Protection Structures (ROPS) on tractors, loaders, and similar equipment without one
- Always wear your seatbelt to prevent from being thrown under what you are operation in the event of a roll over (if there is a cab or ROPS in place)
- Install roll bars or crush protection devices (CPDs) on ATVs, where appropriate
- Consider an ATV with a wider wheel-base or one with dual wheels on your next purchase
-

Ask yourself:

- What is the condition of the ground I will be driving on?
- Am I trained and competent to operate this equipment?
- Is the load too heavy or too high for the drawbar?
- Is the wheel/tread setting wide enough on the tractor?
- Is the vehicle or equipment that I am towing with suitable for what I am towing?
- Is the load I am towing balanced and properly secured?





2021 CANADIAN
SPUD CONGRESS
- V I R T U A L -

CANADIAN SPUD CONGRESS **BURSARY**

The Potato Growers of Alberta along with Spud Smart are excited to announce a special **\$1,000 bursary** for the upcoming school year. This bursary is funded by the Canadian Spud Congress which took place in February.

Criteria for this bursary will be the same as the PGA Scholarship Program meaning licensed growers' children and grandchildren are eligible.

Visit our "Members Only" section of the PGA website or call the office for more information. **Deadline is Aug. 31, 2021.**



In May 2021...farm operators will be asked to complete the 2021 Census of Agriculture questionnaire to help update Canada's agricultural profile. This happens every five years.

Data from the census will provide farm operators, farm organizations, policy makers, stakeholders and citizens with relevant information about the Canadian agricultural sector, and will help them make informed decisions regarding agricultural investments and practices in Canada.

For more information visit...

<https://census.gc.ca/resources-ressources/cst-tsc/agriculture-eng.htm>

Source: census.gc.ca/resources-ressources



2021 Census of Agriculture



PGA SCHOLARSHIP AWARD PROGRAM

The Potato Growers of Alberta Scholarship Program encourages growers' children to enter university, college or other technical institutions. Applicants must be students of owners, shareholders or partners of a potato farm licensed by the PGA.

Five scholarships of \$1000 each are offered annually to all students that meet the requirements. Visit our "Members Only" section on the PGA website or call the office for more information. Deadline is August 31st, 2021.



Attention Growers...

**Please return your completed
PGA License Application along
with License Fee.
All seed and table levy invoices
have been mailed out.**



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